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Nietzsche and 'Aspect-Blindness'

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*Submitted for the degree of PhD in Philosophy at
Birkbeck College, University of London*

Declaration

I, Andrew Godfrey, hereby declare that all the work presented in this thesis is my own.

SIGNATURE: ANDREW GODFREY

Abstract

In this thesis, I draw on Wittgensteinian philosophical thought to critically explore Nietzsche's diagnosis of (and proposed therapy for) the alleged malaise in modernity. In chapter 1, I argue that Wittgenstein's concepts of aspect-seeing and certainty provide the resources to resolve several apparently contradictory claims Nietzsche makes about the predicament of his fellow moderns. I show that the condition Wittgenstein calls 'aspect-blindness' offers a unified account of the predicament Nietzsche describes. In chapter 2, I explore Nietzsche's claim that some overarching framework (what Wittgenstein calls a 'form of life') has 'died'. I argue that the pathological attitude of Wittgenstein's interlocutor towards frameworks provides the most satisfactory model for understanding the nature of the supposed 'death' of frameworks in modernity. In chapter 3, I argue that Nietzsche's proposed remedy for the malaise of modernity is a form of therapy akin to Wittgenstein's attempt to free his readers from a picture which holds them captive. I show that our understanding of Nietzsche's therapeutic method will be improved if we bear in mind certain distinctions and ambiguities highlighted by Wittgensteinian discussion of pictures. In chapter 4, I address the concern that Nietzsche appears to characterise modernity in two contradictory ways as both excessively and insufficiently emotional and excessively and insufficiently sceptical. I resolve the appearance of contradiction by showing that (on Nietzsche's view) the moderns are inherently prone to extreme shifts between poles and that many of the apparent emotions and ideals of the moderns are 'fake'.

To those who took different paths.

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Introduction

My readers, my rightful readers [...] Perhaps none of them is even living yet. Possibly they are the readers who understand my Zarathustra: how could I confound myself with those for whom there are ears listening today? –Only the day after tomorrow belongs to me. Some are born posthumously.

-Friedrich Nietzsche¹

My type of thinking is not wanted in this present age, I have to swim so strongly against the tide. Perhaps in a hundred years people will really want what I am writing.

-Ludwig Wittgenstein²

Nietzsche's madman famously announced God's death in *The Gay Science* (published in 1882); but over a century after his own death, Nietzsche himself lives on. Unlike God (if we accept the truth of the madman's announcement), Nietzsche remains a living part of the Western cultural and intellectual world, provoking renewed interest in every generation as a figure who is almost uniquely influential across the spheres of academia, literature and popular culture. Whatever we think of his views, he speaks to us in a voice that is undeniably modern, as are the concerns he expresses and the topics he addresses.

My approach to Nietzsche in what follows is based on this understanding of him as a distinctively modern voice. I read him, not as a 19th-century figure whose thought is rooted in 19th-century debates, but as a proto-Modernist: a thinker who anticipates and articulates many of the issues which engaged the Western imagination of the 20th century and which continue to resonate in the 21st century. Correspondingly, my approach is unapologetically anachronistic: I introduce philosophical vocabulary and conceptions that date from decades after Nietzsche's works appeared. However, I deem this preferable to

¹ *The Anti-Christ*, Preface. Cf 'The time for me hasn't come yet: some are born posthumously.' [*EH*, Why I Write Such Good Books: 1], which recalls Nietzsche's madman's words: 'I come too early [...] My time is not yet.' [*GS* 125].

² *Recollections of Wittgenstein*, ed. Rush Rhees (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 160 (Drury's contribution).

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smuggling in anachronisms under the guise of pure exegesis of ‘what Nietzsche *really* said’ (interestingly, a crime which those who most fiercely accuse others of committing often seem most prone to).

Specifically, I read Nietzsche here in the light of the tradition established in the wake of the later philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein.³ This may at first glance seem a surprising choice, given the apparently vastly different focus of Nietzsche’s and Wittgenstein’s philosophical enterprises (a view that is pithily summarised in the claim that Wittgenstein is the quintessential Analytic philosopher and Nietzsche the quintessential Continental one). Furthermore, there is little evidence Wittgenstein ever engaged more than superficially with Nietzsche’s works.⁴ So: why Wittgenstein?

We can of course only answer this question once we understand the task I aim to undertake here. The first thing it is important to recognise is that as modern as Nietzsche’s concerns are, they are not the typical concerns of mainstream contemporary philosophy. Although Nietzsche does formulate extensive views on core philosophical topics such as agency, normativity and aesthetics, he always does so in the service of diagnosing and responding to a perceived crisis in modern European culture. Ultimately, what matters to Nietzsche is not whether other thinkers are advancing correct or incorrect theories, but what kinds of values and conceptions are being expressed in the lives of his contemporaries – and what he sees in those lives alarms him greatly. The precise details change throughout the course of his writings, but Nietzsche consistently warns of a predicament of deep-seated malaise, variously described (in part or entirety) as ‘scepticism’, ‘nihilism’, ‘decadence’, ‘homelessness’ or ‘mythlessness’.

My overriding aim is to offer a reading of Nietzsche which places his concern with such matters firmly in the forefront. I critically explore his diagnosis of, and proposed therapy for, this alleged malaise in modernity. While a large part of this work is exegetical in nature, I am also interested in identifying problems in Nietzsche’s approach and suggesting improvements to it in a Nietzschean spirit. It is in the context of this exploration that I draw on a

³ This is construed reasonably broadly: I include a number of thinkers (especially virtue ethicists such as Alasdair MacIntyre) who would not usually be categorised primarily as Wittgensteinians but whose ideas are clearly indebted in relevant respects to Wittgenstein.

⁴ See Brusotti 2009 for a detailed examination of Wittgenstein’s reception of Nietzsche.

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Wittgensteinian vocabulary to describe both the malaise diagnosed by Nietzsche and Nietzsche's own response to this malaise. Some of these Wittgensteinian terms are ones that interpreters of Nietzsche already frequently reach for in order to elucidate Nietzsche's thought: 'forms of life', for instance, or the notion of freeing us from a certain 'picture'.⁵ To these I add the eponymous concept of 'aspect-blindness': the condition, described in the *Philosophical Investigations* and elsewhere, of one who lacks the capacity to *see as* (in the sense in which I can see Jastro's duck-rabbit *as* a duck or *as* a rabbit). The hesitant, detached stance of the aspect-blind (especially as interpreted by Stephen Mulhall) closely mirrors that of Nietzsche's 'Hartmannesque youths' from his *Untimely Meditations*.

But even if we accept that it is *possible* to read Nietzsche through a Wittgensteinian lens, we might still ask: what is the *point* in doing so?

One reason that should not be overlooked is that revealing parallels and continuities between Nietzsche's and Wittgenstein's thought is itself a valuable aim, independently of my aim of offering a critical reading of Nietzsche's own thought. I have found it deeply rewarding to uncover countless unexpected points of contact between the philosophies of these two supposedly very different thinkers, quite aside from any instrumental value of these discoveries towards other scholarly aims, and I hope these may also be of interest to my readers. That said, identifying connections *is* also instrumentally useful towards other scholarly aims: both in the general sense that it renders our overall body of knowledge more perspicuous and readily navigable, and in the specific sense that it contributes to the project of understanding Wittgenstein's position in a philosophical tradition he is not always recognised as being part of. This latter project, undertaken in recent years by writers including Stephen

⁵ 'Form of life' is particularly prevalent in critical commentary on Nietzsche: for instance, in just one recent volume [Ken Gemes and John Richardson (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)] the term is used by Julian Young [p. 50], Ivan Soll [p. 178], Keith Ansell-Pearson [p. 244], Maudemarie Clark and David Dudrick [p. 316ff], Richard Schacht [p. 344], Dylan Jaggard [p. 353], Randall Havas [p. 461], Ken Gemes [p. 556], Robin Small [p. 639], and John Richardson [p. 765]. See also e.g. Cavell 1979: 172–73, Clark and Dudrick 2012: 59ff, Cohen 2010: 127, Hatab 2011: 199, Hussain 2011: 164, Katsafanas 2011: 190, May 2011a: 83, Mulhall 2005: 32 Owen 1994: 64, 76, Pippin 2010: xvi, 29, Strong 1989: 155, Magnus 1979: 369–70, Schacht 1985: 63. Meanwhile, David Owen [2007: 29–30, 40–41, 144, 165] and Robert Pippin [2010: 45–46] both explicitly refer to Wittgensteinian pictures in their account of Nietzsche's method. Martha Nussbaum uses both terms in her Nietzschean critique of Christianity [1988: 252].

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Mulhall, Louis Sass and Raimond Gaita, emphasises the extent to which Wittgenstein's works do not just offer insights into abstract conceptual analysis but are infused with a deep appreciation of the significance of spiritual and cultural topics. This is something which comes into particularly clear resolution if we look away from Wittgenstein's canonical works and turn instead to collections of remarks such as *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology & Religious Belief*, *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough* and *Culture and Value* (many of the remarks in the latter volume in particular are strikingly similar to things Nietzsche might have said).⁶

A second reason is that I have found that typically Wittgensteinian themes and approaches have provided a useful framing device for my project. Coming at Nietzsche from this unconventional angle has helped to organise and give focus to my exploration of Nietzschean themes, and assisted me in getting a firmer grip on or clearer view of elements of Nietzsche's thought that tend to be neglected in the usual readings. This has been helpful since the aim of my project is to find a way of reading Nietzsche that brings certain neglected elements of his thought to the fore.

Not everyone will be persuaded by these first two reasons: some will not consider it valuable to discover parallels between Nietzsche and Wittgenstein, and some may find that, for them, Wittgensteinian language and approaches are bewildering rather than clarifying, and that some additional pay-off is therefore necessary to justify their inclusion. Two final reasons will hopefully satisfy even those unimpressed by the first two: firstly, bringing some of Wittgenstein's conceptual battery to bear on Nietzsche's thought allows us to bring out aspects of and perspectives on Nietzsche's thought that are otherwise difficult or impossible to articulate using only the conceptual apparatus provided by Nietzsche himself: either because such articulations lie beyond Nietzsche's full conceptual reach (revolutionary thinkers trying to express radically original perspectives may not themselves possess the concepts to fully express their insights), or because they lie outside the sphere of interests which determined the use Nietzsche actually made of the conceptual apparatus that he developed. Secondly, Wittgenstein has, along with many of those writing in the Wittgensteinian tradition, described states

⁶ See also Heller 1988 for detailed discussion of affinities between Wittgenstein's and Nietzsche's temperaments and philosophical approaches.

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that are recognisably similar to the malaise described by Nietzsche,⁷ such that there is sufficient similarity between the descriptions to warrant the claim that the differences between the descriptions are disagreements about a shared object of enquiry, rather than these differences constituting evidence that these other authors are talking about something entirely different from Nietzsche. This means that Nietzsche's assertions about this predicament can be measured against claims made about it by Wittgenstein and Wittgensteinian philosophers, who present reasons to suppose that this malaise manifests itself differently from how or where Nietzsche claims it does (for instance, this particular state of malaise may obtain only in fictional contexts or in isolated cases of pathology).

My thesis proceeds as follows:

In my first chapter, 'Doubt and blindness: Nietzsche's moderns', I note that in the *Untimely Meditations* Nietzsche makes a number of apparently contradictory claims about the predicament of his fellow moderns. I show that these apparent contradictions can be resolved only by distinguishing between the attitude of theoretically assenting to a proposition and a more practice-oriented form of apprehension of (apparent) features of the world, and argue that Wittgenstein's concepts of aspect-seeing and certainty offer a way of making this distinction. I show, furthermore, that the malaise Nietzsche diagnoses in his moderns can be seen as a form of what Wittgenstein calls 'aspect-blindness', and that this concept of aspect-blindness offers a unified explanation for the various elements of this condition of malaise, which includes hyperbolic doubt and diminished passion.

In my second chapter, 'Loss and disorientation: God's death, life's forms', I explore the root causes of the condition of malaise described in the first chapter. Nietzsche's claim is that some overarching framework (what Wittgenstein calls a 'form of life') has 'died'. I show that the most initially plausible construals of what this 'death' consists in turn out to be at best problematic and at worst incoherent, and argue that the pathological attitude of Wittgenstein's interlocutor towards frameworks provides a more satisfactory model for understanding the nature of the 'death' of frameworks in modernity. I show that this attitude turns out to be rooted in the continuation, rather

⁷ For instance, Sass's account of schizophrenic pathology, or Gaita's account of moral corruption.

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than the disappearance, of what Nietzsche regards as the 'Christian' form of life.

In my third chapter, 'Myths and pictures: Nietzsche's therapeutic method', I argue that Nietzsche's proposed remedy for the predicament described in the first two chapters consists not in providing a new theory but rather in providing a form of philosophical therapy which liberates the moderns from the myth that currently holds them captive and which re-orientes them towards a new myth. This notion of a 'myth' is analogous to Wittgenstein's concept of a 'picture', and by bringing some of observations made by Wittgenstein and Wittgensteinians about pictures to bear on Nietzsche's account of myth, I show that our understanding of Nietzsche's therapeutic method will be improved if we bear in mind certain distinctions and ambiguities highlighted by these observations (for instance, the distinction between pictures and applications of pictures, or between pictures as means of re-orienting and pictures as modes of thought).

In my fourth chapter, 'Ambivalence and artificiality: modernity's opposing poles', Wittgenstein recedes into the background as I address two pressing concerns about the account I have offered in the preceding chapters: firstly, the concern that I have mischaracterised Nietzsche as an unreformed and unattractive anti-rationalist Romantic. By expanding on my account, I show that this concern is unfounded and that (even in the *Meditations*) Nietzsche consistently recognises the need to steer clear of both hyperbolic Cartesian doubt and hyperbolic certainty, though he nonetheless accords primacy to the Romantic pole of certainty and instinct. Secondly, the concern that Nietzsche appears to be committed to a contradictory conception of moderns as excessively (not insufficiently) emotional and insufficiently (not excessively) prone to raising doubts. I resolve the appearance of contradiction by showing that (on Nietzsche's view) the moderns are inherently prone to extreme shifts between poles and that many of the apparent emotions and ideals of the moderns are 'fake' (I raise but reject the claim that the different poles Nietzsche describes refer to chronologically distinct stages of European history).

Two remarks in closing on my treatment of Nietzsche's texts. Firstly, one aspect of my approach that has become unfashionable in some quarters (dare I proclaim it *untimely* instead?) is that I emphasise the overall continuity of

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Nietzsche's thought rather than the discontinuities between different works or stages. Although my interpretation (at least in the first three chapters) is anchored in the period of the *Untimely Meditations*, I nonetheless move relatively freely between the *Meditations* and his later works. I do so not because I am carelessly overlooking the dramatic changes in Nietzsche's position on numerous issues (indeed, these are something I address directly in chapter 4) but because I believe that the vision of modernity offered in the *Meditations* persists as a strand of Nietzsche's thought throughout his entire later career, even alongside (apparent) repudiations of elements of that vision. So, for instance, I treat Nietzsche's later coinages such as 'free/fettered spirits', 'Last Men/*Übermenschen*', 'higher types' and 'slaves/nobles' as variations on and modifications of character types described in the *Meditations*, rather than impermeably separate concepts.⁸ Secondly, I have on occasion relied on some of Nietzsche's unpublished notes. While I recognise that these do not in every instance represent Nietzsche's considered or polished views and must be treated with caution, given the nature of the project I undertake here it did not seem necessary to exclude them altogether, particularly in view of the fact that much of the material by Wittgenstein that I rely on here likewise takes the form of notes that were not prepared for publication. Where I quote unpublished remarks by Nietzsche, I have always indicated this.

⁸ There is, of course, also a similar debate about the tendency to compartmentalise Wittgenstein into periods.

1

Doubt and blindness: Nietzsche's moderns

Ist Dir heimlich, fühlst Du Dich zuhause? Ich weiß es nicht, ich bin sehr unsicher. Meines Vaters Haus ist es, aber kalt steht Stück neben Stück als wäre jedes mit seinen eigenen Angelegenheiten beschäftigt, die ich teils vergessen habe teils niemals kannte. Was kann ich ihnen nützen, was bin ich ihnen und sei ich auch des Vaters, des alten Landwirts Sohn.

- Franz Kafka¹

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In 'On the uses and disadvantages of history for life' (the second of his *Untimely Meditations*) Nietzsche bemoans the condition of his contemporary Germans. 'Morbid doubt' has replaced 'boldness of feeling' [UM II:9, p. 115]; individuals have grown 'fainthearted and unsure' and can no longer 'let go the reins' to act without hesitation [UM II:5, p. 84]; they are 'withered and dry', and all their 'fire, defiance, unselfishness and love' is extinguished [UM II:9, p. 115]; they are incapable of any 'simple act of will and desire' [UM II:1, p 63]; they have 'lost and destroyed' their instincts [UM II:5, p. 84] and are instead forced to 'listen to reason', to 'calculate', to 'accommodate themselves to the facts, keep calm, blink' [UM II:9, p. 115].

This is a characterisation of modern Europeans as excessively cerebral, dispassionate and hesitant. Their attitude is what Louis Sass describes as 'an overly analytic, detail-oriented, and intellectual orientation', replacing one that is 'intuitive or holistic' [Sass 1992: 72]. Nietzsche continues to characterise his contemporaries in this way throughout his later works, using metaphors of coldness (or the absence of heat or fire), witheredness or castration. As Robert Pippin puts it, the later Nietzsche diagnoses the 'historical and psychological

¹ *Heimkehr* [1936] in Kafka, Franz (2006) *Die Erzählungen*, ed. Roger Hermes (Frankfurt: Fischer Verlag), p. 464

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situation' of the 'present age' [Pippin 2010: 52] as the *'failure of desire*, the flickering out of some erotic flame' [Pippin 2010: 54]. Typically, this 'flickering out' is still in progress; the flame is not yet entirely extinguished. Modern man 'is still rich enough [...] to plant the seed of his highest hope' [Z, Zarathustra's Prologue: 5]. But 'this soil will one day be poor and weak; no longer will a high tree be able to grow from it'. This will be the time of the Last Men prophesied by Zarathustra – the time when humanity will 'give birth to no more stars'. The condition of the Last Men is the apotheosis of the condition of the so-called 'Hartmannesque men' of the 'History' essay, with both merely 'blinking' in the face of a world that no longer arouses love or desire in them:

'What is love? What is creation? What is longing? What is a star?' thus asks the Last Man and blinks. [Z, Zarathustra's Prologue: 5]

Meanwhile, although the *Genealogy* purportedly describes a period long prior to the crisis of modernity described in the 'History' essay, it too echoes the 'History' essay when it claims that humans were 'reduced to thinking, inferring, calculating' when they were constrained within civilisation, where 'all at once all of their instincts were devalued and "disconnected"' [GM II:16]. Prior to civilisation, humans were 'half animals' [GM II:16] but, to put it in the terms of the 'History' essay, they have since ceased to be animals altogether and instead become 'cogitals' [UM II:10, p. 119].

This picture of declining instincts that Nietzsche paints is one that is familiar to us from Romanticism.² Consequently, the coexistence of different elements of this picture in Nietzsche's account of his contemporaries initially strikes us as thoroughly unsurprising and in no need of explanation or elaboration – if they are deprived of instinct, then *of course* the moderns will be devitalised and devoid of passion. But on further reflection, it is not immediately obvious why these features (which cut across various different categories- epistemic, affective, ontological) should hang together. It is the aim of this chapter to make sense of why this should be the case.

I do so by achieving a more precise characterisation of the apparently familiar condition exemplified by Nietzsche's moderns. Although (as I have shown) this is a condition that continues to be described throughout Nietzsche's later

² At least in general outline, though (unlike the Romantics) Nietzsche does not believe in a state of natural goodness and purity from which the cerebral moderns have been severed.

works, I focus in particular on the account of Nietzsche's moderns given in the 'History' essay. I do so because this account contains a number of intriguing and apparently paradoxical observations not found elsewhere. Several are expressed metaphorically: the moderns are both clear-sighted and blind, and both empty yet possessed of an interior. Others are expressed literally but no less paradoxically: the moderns are both wise and yet not wise (or else clever³ but not wise), and both know and do not know the terrible truth of human history.

These paradoxes add an extra urgency to the task of achieving a more precise understanding of Nietzsche's characterisation of the moderns – is it possible to understand this characterisation in a way that avoids self-contradiction? By introducing conceptual apparatus developed by later philosophers – in particular Ludwig Wittgenstein – I show that this *is* possible, and argue that the condition of Nietzsche's 'Hartmannesque men' can be seen as a species of what Wittgenstein calls 'aspect-blindness': although capable of interpreting the world on the basis of reflective inferential processes ('calculation'), Nietzsche's moderns are deficient in the capacity to directly and unreflectively see the world under the aspect of certain interpretations. Consequently, they fail to exhibit certain affective and active responses.

1.1 Paradoxes in the 'History' essay

The metaphorical scheme of the 'History' essay seems straightforward. The motif of the unobscured gaze, associated with light and knowledge, is contrasted with an opposing side of darkness, forgetting and blindness. It is the orienting picture of the Enlightenment myth, but its significance is inverted. In Nietzsche's hands the side of darkness and blindness is valorised as the side of life and action – in contrast to the Enlightenment's celebration of

³ The Last Men are also characteristically clever and knowledgeable about history: 'They are clever and know everything that has ever happened' [*Z*, Zarathustra's Prologue: 5]. The slaves and slavish moderns of the *Genealogy* are likewise repeatedly described as *klug* (the same German term used to describe both the Last Men and the moderns of the 'History' essay) but this may be obscured in translation: for instance, in the Swensen and Clark translation, *klug* is rendered variously as 'smart', 'shrewd' and 'prudent' (see Swensen and Clark's endnote 3:12 [p. 122]). The troubling anti-Semitic provenance of this term should not be overlooked: 'klug' was an epithet commonly applied to Jews in 19th-century Germany, and while Nietzsche inverts and plays with this rhetoric in sophisticated ways in his later works, we should perhaps be suspicious of the role the rhetoric plays in his earlier works that are (officially at least) aligned with Wagner's cultural project, which was notoriously anti-Semitic.

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reason and science (*Wissenschaft*). According to Nietzsche, an excess of the knowledge that science uncovers is harmful: it stifles activity, creativity and vitality by preventing us from acting with unreflective certainty. We need protective veils of ignorance and illusion to be able to survive and flourish in the world.⁴

Thus, children, who like animals are unburdened by knowledge of the past, enjoy a state of 'blissful blindness' [*UM* II:1, p. 61]. Those with the power to forget are similarly unburdened, and this capacity is equated with darkness: 'Forgetting is essential to action of any kind, just as not only light but darkness too is essential for the life of everything organic' [*UM* II:1, p. 62]. Sight needs to be veiled by an obscuring 'misty vapour' or 'veiling cloud' [*UM* II:7, p. 97]. By contrast, one who could not forget would be 'condemned to see [sehen] everywhere a state of becoming' [*UM* II: 1, p. 62, my emphasis]. This is the perspective of scientific scholarship [*Wissenschaft*], which 'hates forgetting' and 'seeks to abolish all limitations of horizon and launch humankind upon an infinite and unbounded sea of light whose light is knowledge of all becoming' [*UM* II:10, p. 120]. Those individuals who have raised themselves to a '*suprahistorical* [überhistorischen] vantage point' will 'no longer feel any temptation to go on living or to take part in history' because they would have 'recognized the essential condition of all happenings – this *blindness* and injustice in the soul of one who acts' [*UM* II:1, p. 65, my emphasis]. Although these suprahistorical individuals have 'wisdom' [*Weisheit*], Nietzsche rejoices rather in 'unwisdom', which is on the side of life:

We will gladly acknowledge that the suprahistorical outlook possesses more wisdom than we do, provided we can only be sure that we possess more life: for then our unwisdom will at any rate have more future than their wisdom will. [*UM* II:1, p. 66]

Nietzsche appears to be presenting a simple binary between light, sight and knowledge/wisdom (life-denying) on the one hand, and darkness, blindness and ignorance (life-promoting) on the other. But Nietzsche complicates this simple picture by exploiting the ambivalent potential of the imagery he deploys, so that the significances and references of these terms shift throughout the text.

⁴ This is distinct from his earlier position in *The Birth of Tragedy*, where illusion was necessary to provide a sense of metaphysical grounding or existential meaning.

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In the simple binary, light is associated with sight. But light can be dazzling as well as illuminating, and Nietzsche's overly historical contemporaries have been *blinded* by a 'too bright, too sudden, too varying light' [UM II:7, p. 98] (it is because of such light that a 'veiling cloud' is required). Elsewhere, Nietzsche claims (on behalf of his contemporaries) that 'we are ruined for living, for right and simple *seeing and hearing*' [UM II:10, p. 119, my emphasis]. Although children enjoy a state of 'blissful blindness', they are nonetheless able to see things which Nietzsche's peers cannot:

There are things they do not see which even a child sees, there are things they do not hear which even a child hears, and these things are precisely the most important things: because they do not understand these things, their understanding is more childish than the child and more simple than simplicity – and this in spite of the many cunning [*schlau*] folds of their parchment scroll and the virtuosity of their fingers in unravelling the entangled. [UM II:5, pp. 83–84]

Suprahistorical clarity of sight is contrasted with unhistorical blindness – and yet the suprahistorical are also blind, their sight deficient in comparison with that of the historical. The wisdom-life dichotomy that Nietzsche draws in his discussion of suprahistorical individuals⁵ is similarly upturned. Whereas wisdom is initially associated with the suprahistorical individuals (who choose wisdom over life), Nietzsche later makes the following remark about those afflicted by an excess of history: 'probably they attain to cleverness [*Klugheit*], never to wisdom [*Weisheit*]'⁶ [UM II:9, p. 115]. Cleverness without wisdom is like the 'cunning' and 'virtuosity' of the one who nonetheless has a less-than-

⁵The term 'suprahistorical' itself also appears to undergo a shift that inverts its significance: in UM II:1 the suprahistorical individual is aligned with science and knowledge against life (e.g. 'We will gladly acknowledge that the suprahistorical outlook possesses more wisdom than we do provided we can only be sure that we possess more of life' [p. 66]). The *historical* [historischen] outlook, by contrast, uses history, but for life: 'Looking to the past impels them towards the future and fires their courage to go on living' [p. 65]. Yet in the final section of the essay [UM II:10, p. 120], the suprahistorical [*Überhistorische*], along with the unhistorical [*Unhistorische*], is one of Nietzsche's recommended antidotes for the historical [*Historische*], which is what must be cured: suprahistorical powers 'lead the eye away from becoming towards that which bestows upon existence the character of the eternal and stable, towards *art and religion*', while the historical eye, associated with science, 'sees everywhere things that have been, things historical, and nowhere things that are, things eternal'.

⁶Wittgenstein reportedly (according to Rush Rhees) also drew a wisdom-cleverness distinction when remarking on Freud: 'Wisdom is something I never would expect from Freud. Cleverness, certainly; but not wisdom.' [LC, p. 41] (the anti-Semitic overtones here are unmistakable). Elsewhere, he uses 'wisdom' in a manner more closely aligned with Nietzsche's wisdom-life dichotomy: 'Wisdom is cold and to that extent stupid [...] wisdom merely *conceals* life from you.' [CV, p. 56; *wisdom* is being contrasted with *faith*].

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childish understanding , the one whose sight is more deficient than that of a child.⁷

How can someone be both wise and lack wisdom, both clear-sighted and blind? The answer to this question, I suggest, is related to something suggested by two other (seeming) paradoxes in the 'History' essay: namely, that there are two distinct *forms* of wisdom or apprehension.

Consider Nietzsche's remarks on critical history. Critical history is a mode of historicising that is occasionally necessary to 'break up and dissolve a part of the past' [UM II:3, p. 75] so that we are released from the burdensome hold that a particular historical myth or institution has on us. Critical history does this by bringing the 'part of the past' in question before a 'tribunal, scrupulously examining it and finally condemning it' [UM II:3, p. 76]. Nietzsche acknowledges that, in fact, 'every past [...] is worthy to be condemned' but remarks that it is nonetheless better not to condemn every single past, because we can only live if we 'forget the extent to which to live and to be unjust is one and the same thing' [UM II:3, p. 76].

As George Hull notes, there is a problem here. Nietzsche apparently has a 'blanket condemnation' [Hull 2011: 7] of all past practices and institutions to hand, which enables him to assert that 'every past is worthy of condemnation'. But if Nietzsche already has such a blanket condemnation at his fingertips, critical history seems to have little or no role: any particular past will already be known to be worthy of condemnation prior to critical historicising. At best, starting from the knowledge that for every past there is some reason to condemn that past, critical historicising could reveal the particular reason for condemnation in each individual case.⁸

⁷ Cf Zarathustra on the city-dwelling moderns: 'They are clever, their virtues have clever fingers.' [Z, Of the Virtue that Makes Small: 2].

⁸ Hull suggests that the distinctive role of a critical history could be to reveal that some particular *present* institution is worthy to be condemned in virtue of its past, which does not follow from a blanket condemnation of the past because not every institution with a condemnation-worthy past is thereby itself worthy of condemnation. However, since Nietzsche's blanket condemnation in fact extends to the present as well as the past (at least to a considerable extent, 'to live and to be unjust is one and the same thing') this role for critical history would amount to categorising condemnation-worthy present institutions according to whether they are worthy of condemnation in virtue of their past, or worthy of condemnation in virtue of features of their present state. This would, essentially, amount to one form that the task of revealing the particular reason for condemnation in each individual case could take.

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Worse: given how harmful it would be if every past were to be condemned, isn't it foolish for Nietzsche to casually bandy about the dangerous truth that every past is worthy of condemnation? At the very least, Nietzsche himself appears to be trapped in the very position he warns against: namely, shut out from life in virtue of his knowledge that every past is worthy of condemnation. How can Nietzsche possess and assert this life-denying suprahistorical knowledge and yet talk (as he claims to do) from an outlook that advocates forgetting and uses history only in the service of life?

Hull and other commentators⁹ attempt to neutralise this appearance of self-contradiction or -undermining by denying that Nietzsche is committed to any blanket condemnation; on their interpretation, his apparent endorsement of this view should be dismissed as an anomaly restricted to a single passage of the 'History' essay. But in fact, this view is anything but anomalous in Nietzsche's corpus: throughout his career, Nietzsche frequently claims that, by the standards of morality, human history and existence are profoundly immoral – even or especially those aspects of them usually regarded as moral or saintly. Furthermore, most human action and institutions also fall short of the kinds of non-moral standards endorsed by Nietzsche. However, most people most of the time do not apprehend these disquieting truths about human existence. Crucially, this is the case even if they assent (as Nietzsche does) to propositions such as 'To live is to be unjust'. There is a mode of apprehending these truths that is distinct from mere assent to propositions. The distinction in question is of the kind expressed by someone who says (in Robert Pippin's example) 'Yes, I knew that; but I guess I really didn't *know* it' [Pippin 2010: 40]. A truth that is really *known*, in this sense, is not something assented to following a process of deduction, but, as Giles Fraser puts it, 'something seen, or faced, or recognised' [Fraser 2002: 59].¹⁰

In the passage from the 'History' essay, Nietzsche's 'blanket condemnation' consists in his assent to the claim that 'every past [...] is worthy to be condemned'. But although he assents to this claim, he is not confronted by (he is not faced with) the truth that every past is worthy of condemnation.¹¹ The

⁹ See e.g. Stern 2011.

¹⁰ Mulhall uses the formulation 'bringing something home to ourselves' [Mulhall 2011a] to express a similar idea.

¹¹ It is such a confrontation with the terrible truth (and not mere assent to it) that would be harmful. A similar claim is made in *UM* III:3 [p. 140] with regard to Kant's

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distinctive role of a critical history is to enable apprehension in this second mode: through a critical history of something, one is confronted with how worthy of condemnation it is.

The argument of this chapter is that, on Nietzsche's account, moderns are 'clever' inasmuch as they possess a great deal of knowledge in the form of propositions to which they assent, but they are 'blind' to the extent that they are unable to apprehend ('confront', 'see') matters in the second mode. Elsewhere in the 'History' essay, Nietzsche hints at the difference it might make if the former capacity for propositional assent is overdeveloped at the expense of latter – and once again, this is a point made in terms of paradox. The 'most characteristic quality of modern man', according to Nietzsche, is 'the remarkable antithesis between an interior which fails to correspond to any exterior and an exterior which fails to correspond to any interior'. This antithesis arises from the 'huge quantity of indigestible stones of knowledge' which 'modern man drags around with him'. Knowledge which is undigested – that is to say, which takes the form of propositions to which we merely assent – cannot act 'as an agent for transforming the outside world but remains concealed within a chaotic inner world' [UM II:4 , p 78]. Knowledge must be 'digested' if this rift between interior and exterior is not to open up – in other words, if knowledge is to be expressed in practice.¹²

In the remainder of this chapter, I offer an account, based on Wittgenstein's notions of certainty and aspect-seeing, of just what this form of apprehension is which contrasts with 'cleverness' and 'undigested knowledge' (that is to say, with knowledge that takes the form of assent to propositions). Like Nietzsche's notion of digested knowledge, Wittgenstein's attitudes of aspect-seeing and certainty are more directly integrated with practice. Additionally, the absence

philosophy. There is a danger that a 'thinker who sets out from the Kantian philosophy' will come to 'despair of the truth' – but Kant's philosophy will not have this effect on someone who is 'a mere clattering thought- and calculating-machine'. The danger is not that people might come to assent to the truths of Kant's philosophy, but that it might produce a 'living and life-transforming influence' on them. Kant has achieved such an effect in 'only a very few people' – which is just as well, since 'if Kant ever should begin to exercise any wide influence we shall be aware of it in the form of a gnawing and disintegrating scepticism'.

¹² Hence, the quotation from Goethe with which Nietzsche opens the 'History' essay: 'In any case, I hate everything that merely instructs me without augmenting or directly invigorating my activity.' [UM II, Foreword, p. 59]. Wittgenstein likewise on occasion quotes Goethe in support of his own praxis-oriented philosophy: for instance, Faust's famous declaration 'Im Anfang war die Tat' [cited in PO, p. 395].

of aspect-seeing and certainty is internally related to other features of the condition described by Nietzsche, and so identifying the state of ‘indigestion’ that Nietzsche ascribes to the moderns with the absence of certainty and aspect-seeing offers an explanation for why these moderns, on Nietzsche’s view, are also e.g. deficient in passion and instinct.

1.2 Seeing and aspects

So what exactly is this mode of confronting the truth that is more direct, vivid or immediate than assent to a proposition?

I have already noted Fraser’s remark that Nietzsche often describes such a mode in connection with sight, and it may be tempting to think the distinction we want to make here really could be made in terms of literal visual perception: did you witness something yourself, or simply learn of it through inference or testimony? In everyday discourse, there is great appeal in the Humean idea that I have to see something to be truly struck by how worthy of condemnation (or celebration, or horror etc.) it is. I may know that the clothes I wear are made by people living in poverty or working in appalling conditions and assent to the judgement that this is terrible and worthy of condemnation, but it is only when I see the working conditions in a sweatshop that I *really* appreciate or recognise how terrible they are.

To be at all plausible, this claim would of course need to be generalised to other forms of sensory perception, else it will entail that people who are literally blind are incapable of being struck by e.g. the horror of sweatshops. In fact, in the ‘History’ essay Nietzsche often pairs seeing with hearing (e.g. moderns ‘are ruined for living, for right and simple seeing and hearing’ [*UM* II:10, p. 119]) rather than focusing on sight alone.¹³ Approaches that seek to

¹³ Stephen Mulhall claims that by the time he wrote the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche displays a ‘preference for hearing over vision’. Where sight is being contrasted with hearing, it is sight which is the mode of apprehension associated with ‘distance’ and ‘self-etherealization or self-subliming’, whereas (as we have seen) sight stands in opposition to such a mode when it is being contrasted with propositional assent. This point, if we accept it, may help to make more sense of the sight-blindness paradox in the ‘History’ essay: since sight stands closer to this mode of apprehension than other sensory modalities do, the orientation of the moderns can aptly be described in ‘purely intellectual species of sight’ (consonant with ‘the Socratic emphasis on vision’). But the opposing orientation, which moderns lack, can also be described in terms of sight if we emphasise sight’s affinities (rather than its discontinuities) with other sensory modalities: a form of sight attuned not to ‘intellectual content’ but to a ‘vividly material reality’ possessed of what Wittgenstein calls a ‘physiognomy’ [Mulhall 2009: 124–25].

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change attitudes on the basis of this claim generally also assume that indirect perception will suffice: hence, someone can be struck by the horror of sweatshop as a result of seeing photographic or video images of a sweatshop, or by the horror of war through hearing an audio recording of the screams of dying soldiers and civilians or grieving relatives. In the field of critical history, this would translate into a preference for graphic and realistic depictions of historical events that mimic indirect perception as a means to forcing the audience to truly confront how worthy of condemnation these events are.

But perception of something is neither sufficient nor necessary to be struck by the horror or joy of that thing. It is perfectly possible, indeed almost a daily occurrence, to witness photos of unimaginable horrors without being especially perturbed, even if we consciously entertain and assent to the proposition 'That is terrible!' while looking at them. Nor does the sheer proximity of a first-hand observer to the conditions in a sweatshop (perhaps as a tourist or manager) guarantee that their perceptions will be accompanied by any more vivid apprehension of the horror of what they are witnessing than that experienced by someone who witnesses it only indirectly or not at all. On the other hand, someone who is merely informed of (and does not witness, or at least is not at present at) the death of a loved one can nonetheless be struck by the full horror of the death.

Of course, there are *some* forms of recognition or appreciation which require sensory perception of their object: most obviously, aesthetic appreciation – I cannot be struck by the beauty of a painting I have not seen. Other forms of recognition or appreciation may be heightened by visual perception of their objects even if they do not require it; for instance, Lawrence Hatab mentions Nietzsche's citation of Aquinas, 'who says that the bliss of paradise is *enhanced* by the *enjoyment* of witnessing the torments of the damned'¹⁴ [Hatab 2011: 200]. Likewise, perceiving a tragedy or injustice may increase the power or intensity with which I am struck by how tragic or unjust it is – or alternatively, increase the likelihood of my being so struck. The degree of perceptual distance may also play a role, such that I am less struck, or less able to be struck, by aspects of something I perceive either only distantly or

¹⁴ Hatab wonders 'why simply *knowing* of these torments would not suffice for bliss, why *seeing* the torments is required' [Hatab 2011: 200]. I can only assume he is being facetious.

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too closely (e.g. through a microscope). Consider Harry Lime's famous words as he stares down at passersby from atop the *Prater* Ferris wheel:

Look down there. Would you really feel any pity if one of those dots stopped moving forever? If I offered you twenty thousand pounds for every dot that stopped, would you really, old man, tell me to keep my money, or would you calculate how many dots you could afford to spare? [*The Third Man*, 1949]

Lime, of course, assents to the proposition that the 'dots' are humans, but is speaking from a perspective where their humanity is obscured from his sight so that they appear to him as mere dots. But of course, the point of this scene is not that he fails to be struck by their humanity because he is on top of a Ferris wheel. Rather, it is that he (and we) find the language of visual perception at a distance apt for the task of expressing the detached, abstracting mode of apprehension that typifies Lime's general outlook on his fellow human beings. Lime's sight is not deficient in any way that could be diagnosed by an optician – when he looks at people, he perceives their visible physical and spatial properties as clearly as anybody else – yet he nonetheless sees them as 'dots'; distant and inhuman.

This should not be confused with visual delusions or illusions. If someone looked at a nearby person through goggles or a pane of glass with a highly distortive curvature, they might have a visual seeming *as of* the person being very far away. This visual seeming could be qualitatively indistinguishable from the veridical perception had by someone in a more normal situation (i.e. without distorting goggles) who sees someone who really is very far away. To say that a person like Lime sees people as 'dots' is not to say that that person's visual seeming is qualitatively indistinguishable from the perception of people had by someone atop a Ferris wheel or the visual seeming had by someone wearing distortive goggles.

The 'distance' from which Lime views other people is more akin to that experienced by some people with schizophrenia. Louis Sass quotes a person with schizophrenia who claims that they see everything 'as through a telescope, smaller and at a very great distance' [Sass 1992: 48¹⁵]. But, Sass notes, 'this was not so much a matter of actual perceptual illusion as of some

¹⁵ The quotation from the patient with schizophrenia comes from John Cutting, *The Right Cerebral Hemisphere and Psychiatric Disorders* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 266.

subtle change of atmosphere: things seemed “not smaller in reality,” the patient said, “but more in the mind ... less related to each other and to myself as it were ... [it was] more a mental remoteness.” [Sass 1992: 48]. The patient’s claim that they are not experiencing a perceptual illusion is borne out, Sass continues, by the noteworthy fact that

these alterations of spatial experience in schizophrenia do not have a commensurate effect on behaviour: the patient does not walk into things, for example, as persons with distorted spatial experience due to organic lesions are wont to do. [Sass 1992: 48]

The difference between how the patient with schizophrenia sees things and how most people see things, or between how Harry Lime and most people see things, is best described not in terms of a difference in visual perception but in terms of a difference in *aspect perception*.

‘Aspect perception’ is a term coined by Wittgenstein. He discusses it extensively in the second part of the *Philosophical Investigations*,¹⁶ but also in the comments collected as *Remarks on Philosophy and Psychology*. The most famous example in the discussion is the duck-rabbit. The duck-rabbit is an ambiguous figure that can be seen as either a duck or a rabbit – which is to say, under either a duck-aspect or a rabbit-aspect. It is possible for our perception of the figure to shift from one way of seeing it to another, and Wittgenstein describes the experience of such a shift as ‘aspect-dawning’ or ‘noticing an aspect’. The dawning of a new aspect might be expressed through an exclamation such as ‘Now it’s a rabbit!’ – which is an expression both of ‘a *new* perception and at the same time of the perception’s being unchanged’ [*PI* II:xi, p. 167]. In the experience of aspect-dawning, we see that the object remains unchanged and that no new visual-sensory features have come into view; and yet we also see that it looks different.

Wittgenstein distinguishes between aspect-dawning and continuous aspect-perception. It is possible that someone might ‘never have seen anything but a rabbit’ in the duck-rabbit figure [*PI* II:xi, p. 166]. They would not say ‘I’m seeing it as a rabbit’ or ‘Now it’s a rabbit!’, but a third-person observer could say of them that they are seeing it as a rabbit. The person who is seeing the

¹⁶ Called *Philosophy of Psychology – A Fragment* in the latest edition. Day and Krebs 2010: 357–72 offers a very useful page concordance for the various editions of the *Investigations*, with a particular focus on remarks on aspect-seeing.

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duck-rabbit continuously as a rabbit does not notice the aspect under which they are seeing it, or that it could be seen differently, but the difference between this person and the person who sees it continuously as a duck is not a difference in visual perception.

Wittgenstein's interlocutor raises the possibility that, when new aspects dawn, I don't 'see something different each time', but rather 'interpret what I see in a different way' [PI II:xi, p. 181]. Wittgenstein is inclined to reject this possibility on the basis that to interpret 'is to think, to do something' whereas 'seeing is a state' [PI II:xi, p. 181], but it's not immediately clear why *this* would provide a basis for rejecting his interlocutor's suggestion: after all, the conscious action of trying to see the duck-rabbit as a duck would also be 'to think, to do something'. Wittgenstein even concedes that it is all rather 'puzzling' – indeed, our problem is that 'we do not find the whole business of seeing puzzling enough' [PI II:xi, p. 181]. The intended contrast here seems to be between 'interpreting' construed as a very specific kind of activity – namely, the reflective formation of inferences and beliefs ('It is easy to recognise cases in which we are *interpreting*. When we interpret we form hypotheses' [PI II:xi, p. 181]) – and the state of seeing an object in a certain way. It is possible to form new hypotheses about an object, or employ new concepts to describe it, without coming to see it in a different way.

What is apt to cause confusion here is that Wittgenstein doesn't always use 'interpret' to refer to this kind of activity. Elsewhere, Wittgenstein says that when we 'see the illustration now as one thing now as another', we 'interpret it' [PI II:xi, p. 165]. But here, interpretation is not an activity (*interpreting*) opposed to a state of seeing, but itself a form of seeing or an element of a state of seeing: we 'see it as we *interpret* it.' [PI II:xi, p. 165], we 'see an object according to [*gemäß*] an *interpretation*' [PI II:xi, p. 171]. In another remark (not collected in the *Investigations*), Wittgenstein elaborates:

Something about the optical picture of the figure seems to alter here; and then again, nothing alters after all. And I cannot say 'A new interpretation keeps on striking me'. Indeed it does; but it also incorporates itself straight away into what I see [...] One might also say 'I do not merely *interpret* the figure, but I clothe it with the interpretation.' [RPP 33]

When a new aspect dawns, there is no gap between seeing and interpretation.

I do not start from my perception of an object and come to an interpretation of that object through an inferential process; rather, the new interpretation is inextricably bound up with my perception of the object, such that my interpretation of the object as e.g. a rabbit is directly given to me in my perception. The lack of a gap is not simply temporal – it is not just that I pass from seeing to interpretation very quickly, as it were instantaneously; in the state of aspect-seeing, the interpretation element and the visual element form a unitary state from which neither can be isolated even in principle. Hence, when a new aspect dawns, the change in perception cannot be isolated to a change in interpretation – even though I see that nothing has changed in the object to bring new features into view.

A key question that Wittgenstein addresses in his discussion of aspect perception is this: what difference would it make if someone were unable to see an object under an aspect? What, if anything, would be missing if they lacked this capacity? Wittgenstein introduces the term ‘aspect-blindness’ to describe this (in several remarks in *RPP*, he uses the related terms ‘meaning-blindness’ and ‘form-blindness’). The aspect-blind are those who are ‘lacking in the capacity to see something *as something*’ [*PI* II:xi, p. 182]. If presented with ambiguous figures, the aspect-blind person will (at least sometimes) be able to figure out what such figures represent. For instance, they would be able to pick out which of several pictures of white crosses are ambiguous double crosses which also contain a black cross, or to recognise that a schematic cube is a representation of a cube. But they would not exclaim, for instance: ‘Now it’s a black cross on a white ground!’ – for the aspect-blind person, the figures ‘would not jump from one aspect to the other’ [*PI* II:xi, p. 182]. In other words, the aspect-blind person is able to form the belief (and indeed come to know) that some object represents or is supposed to represent some x while being unable to see that object as x .

Now, if aspect-seeing and aspect-blindness only referred to the capacity and incapacity respectively to experience shifts in aspect in ambiguous pictures, this would clearly have little or no relevance to Nietzsche’s concerns. If one of Nietzsche’s moderns saw the duck-rabbit, they would be able to see it first as a duck, then as a rabbit. But although the ambiguous figure of the duck-rabbit is Wittgenstein’s most famous example of aspect-seeing, his wide-ranging discussion under the heading of ‘aspect-seeing’ includes many

examples which are not ambiguous pictures. These include encounters with words, faces and (unambiguous) images which, for whatever reason, we no longer see as 'clothed' in a certain interpretation: for instance, when we repeat a word over and over until we feel that it has lost its meaning, or when an image of a face has been reversed, or where we fail to see any form in the series of lines and squiggles which represent a rabbit. In these cases, I cannot flit freely back and forth between different aspects, and if the aspect does shift (so that I suddenly recognise that it is a rabbit) I do not necessarily have the experience associated with the *dawning* of a new aspect of an ambiguous picture – I am not struck by the sense that what I am looking at looks different and yet looks the same.

For this reason, although (as Stephen Mulhall notes) Wittgenstein's 'preliminary definition of aspect-blindness' only explicitly describes 'an inability to see a change of aspects', the notion should also be extended to cover cases where we lack the ability to see continuously under aspects [Mulhall 1990: 31]¹⁷ and to objects other than ambiguous figures.

This broader construal of aspect-blindness is, I want to suggest, useful in understanding Nietzsche's 'History' essay. For instance, the idea that someone could believe that something or someone was worthy of condemnation, without being able to see that thing or person *as* worthy of condemnation, is one way of explaining the apparent contradiction between Nietzsche's attitudes in the passage I discussed earlier. More generally, the condition of Nietzsche's moderns can be construed in terms of *aspect-blindness*. They are 'inquisitive tourists' [UM II: 2, p. 68] inhabiting a 'merely decorative culture' [UM II: 10, p. 123], interacting with their cultural and historical world in the manner of a 'strolling spectator' wandering through a 'world exhibition' [UM II:5, p. 83] or an 'idler who, hungry for distraction or excitement, prowls around as though among pictures in a gallery' [UM II: 2, p. 68]. They have a great deal of factual knowledge about cultural and historical objects and events, but they do not

¹⁷ Mulhall claims that it follows from the fact that 'someone cannot experience a change of aspect' that they also 'could not *continuously* see the schematic drawing of a cube as a cube' [Mulhall 1990: 31]. However, Naomi Eilan [2012] has noted that child development studies suggest that children develop the ability to see both aspects of an ambiguous figure at an earlier age than they gain the ability to experience a shift from one aspect to another. But since the former is a conceptual claim while the latter is an interpretation of empirical findings, it is open for Mulhall and Wittgenstein to reply that whatever capacity the younger child has, it cannot yet be fully-fledged *aspect-seeing*. However, see Day 2010 for a contrary view.

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see them under the aspects a member of a genuine culture would. Contrast this with the case of Ancient Greece (Nietzsche's paradigmatic genuine culture):

No Greek ever truly *beheld* their Apollo as a wooden obelisk, their Eros as a lump of stone; they were symbols whose purpose was precisely to excite fear *of* beholding him. [AOM 222]

(This remark dates from after the 'History' essay, but remains consistent with the line of thought developed there). In certain respects, this example parallels Wittgenstein's example of children who play a game where they pretend that a chest is a house;

if you knew how to play this game, and, given a particular situation, you exclaimed with special expression 'Now it's a house!' – you would be giving expression to the dawning of an aspect. [PI II:xi, p. 176]¹⁸

In the mode of ritual rather than play, the Greeks behold the icons of Apollo or Eros continuously under aspects inaccessible to the modern epigones.

One less prominent thread of Wittgenstein's discussion of aspect-seeing that is especially relevant to a reading of Nietzsche is the idea that certain *feelings* are forms of aspect perception. For instance, 'the feeling of the unreality of one's surroundings':

This feeling I have had once, and many have it before the onset of mental illness. Everything seems somehow not *real*; but not as if one *saw* things unclear or blurred; everything looks quite as usual. [RPP 125]

This is the kind of experience of one's surroundings under the aspect of unreality that Sass notes is common to schizophrenia. Wittgenstein makes the connection to aspect-perception explicit in a separate remark:

'The organisation of the visual image changes.' – 'Yes, that's what I'd like to say too.' This is analogous to the case of someone saying 'Everything around me strikes me as unreal' – and someone else replies: 'Yes, I know this phenomenon. That's just how I'd put it myself.' [RPP 535]

Later authors have expanded on the idea that certain feelings, in particular affective states, are forms of aspect-perception. According to Linda Zagzebski, for instance,

¹⁸ However, see also RPP 411.

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an emotion is a state of affectively perceiving its intentional object as falling under a ‘thick affective concept’ A, a concept that combines cognitive and affective aspects in a way that cannot be pulled apart. For example, in a state of pity an object is seen as pitiful, where to see something as pitiful is to be in a state that is both cognitive and affective. [Zagzebski 2003: 104]

The object of my emotion is ‘clothed’ in a concept in such a way that the affective component of my state is inextricable from the conceptual content. If I were simply to believe of the object that it fell under the concept without feeling the affect, I would not be seeing it as falling under that concept, because feeling the affect is an inextricable part of seeing it as falling under the concept. Hence,

I cannot see something as rude without feeling offended in the characteristic way that goes with rudeness, but I can see or judge that something is rude without feeling offended. I can do that in a way that roughly parallels the way in which I judge colors. I cannot see something as red without seeing red, i.e., without having a sensation of red, but I can see that something is red without a red sensation. I can do that if I see signs of its redness. Perhaps I am looking at it in the dark and I see that it looks the way red looks in the dark. [Zagzebski 2003: 119]

Similar understandings of emotion are operative in many interpretations of Nietzsche. For instance, Peter Poellner notes that ‘emotion necessarily presents its particular object under some description or, more generally, under some *aspect*’ [Poellner 2008: 237] while Paul Katsafanas claims that Nietzschean drives structure our experience so that we experience our environment under what Zagzebski would call thick affective concepts: for instance, the aggressive drive will cause us to see ‘aspects of [our] environment as *warranting* aggression’ [Katsafanas 2013: 746]. Nietzsche himself certainly frequently connects affect with a form of perception, including in the ‘History’ essay:

Imagine a man seized by a vehement passion, for a woman or for a great idea: how different the world has become to him! Looking behind him he seems to himself as though blind, listening around him he hears only a dull, meaningless noise; whatever he does perceive, however, he perceives as he has never perceived before – all is so palpable, close, highly coloured, resounding, as though he apprehended it with all his senses at once. [UM II:1, p. 64]

This changed perception of things is, needless to say, not a case of literal

heightened sensory vision: he does not have a visual seeming as of things being 'close', any more than Sass's schizophrenic patients have a visual seeming as of things being 'distant'. No new sensory visual features have come into the view of the passionate man – and yet the world appears utterly transformed, as they come to perceive it under a new aspect. Nietzsche's moderns, lacking passion, are unable to see under this aspect – hence, they are 'as though blind'.

1.3 Hesitation and blindness to humanity

A question arises at this point: *so what* if the condition of Nietzsche's moderns is a form of aspect-blindness? This question can be taken in two ways. Firstly, as the question which so intrigued Wittgenstein: if someone were aspect-blind, what difference would it make? In what respects would it be a lamentable malaise? Secondly, as a question about method: what is the point in showing that the condition with which Nietzsche diagnoses his fellow moderns is a form of what Wittgenstein calls aspect-blindness? In what respects does this help us to better understand this condition? The answer to the first question leads to an answer to the second: deepening our understanding of aspect-blindness in order to understand the respects in which it is deleterious also helps us to achieve a deeper understanding of the analogous condition suffered by Nietzsche's moderns.

On Mulhall's reading, 'the defect of aspect-blindness is not so much an inability or unwillingness to draw the *right* conclusion' but rather 'the need to *draw* conclusions at all' [Mulhall 1990: 87]. Mulhall discusses Wittgenstein's example of a picture of an animal transfixed by an arrow. For someone who sees the animal as transfixed by an arrow, this type of description (i.e. 'There is an animal transfixed by an arrow') would be immediately available ('ready-to-hand', in Mulhall's Heideggerian phrase) without any need to infer that it is a picture of an animal transfixed by an arrow. By contrast, someone who merely knows that some of the lines in the image are supposed to represent an arrow would 'not be unhesitating in his recourse to the relevant description; he would rather need to read the drawing like a blueprint, inferring certain things from its particular properties of colour and spatial arrangement' [Mulhall 1990: 18].

Mulhall illustrates the consequences of this need to draw inferences by

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considering the case of someone who is blind to expressive aspects of human behaviour. Mulhall claims that ‘*continuous* aspect perception might be the appropriate way of categorizing our ordinary attitude towards the behaviour of others’ [Mulhall 1990: 72]. Wittgenstein famously says: ‘The human body is the best picture of the human soul’ [*PI* II:iv, p. 152], which according to Stanley Cavell ‘is an attempt to [...] express the idea that the soul is there to be seen, that my relation to the other’s soul is as immediate as to an object of sight’ [Cavell 1979: 368]. But the aspect-blind lack, or are deficient in, this mode of apprehending the behaviour of others:

The person blind to psychological aspects regards human behaviour as behaviour rather than as the field of expression of a heart and mind: he has to infer from the physical properties of a face the inner state which is thereby revealed. [Mulhall 1990: 85]

According to Mulhall, this represents a ‘consistent extension’ of the notion of aspect-blindness, even though this notion ‘was not specifically defined by Wittgenstein with respect to the sphere of other minds’ [Mulhall 1990: 73].

The person blind to these ‘psychological aspects’ is hesitant in two respects. Firstly, they are not unhesitatingly certain that certain physical behaviours express ‘a heart and mind’. Ordinarily, there is no hesitancy in drawing the conclusion about what the behaviours express – indeed, no conclusion is drawn at all, no inference takes place – because there is no doubt. According to Raimond Gaita, if any doubt arises about ‘whether something behaves expressively’ – whether, for instance, that movement of the lips is a smile, or whether that contortion of muscles is agonised writhing – we are already not appreciating the behaviour as the behaviour of a human being [Gaita 2004: 181]. As Mulhall puts it: ‘we share the world with other people, not merely with organisms whose human status is in doubt’ [Mulhall 1990: 116].

Doubts of this kind are symptomatic of certain pathological disorders. For instance, in Danièle Moyal-Sharrock’s example, individuals with autism often have to develop a ‘late acquired, explicit Theory of Mind’ [Moyal-Sharrock 2004: 129] in order to work out what is being expressed by the words and actions of others. Meanwhile, Sass cites a schizophrenic author who describes how, in the grip of a schizophrenic episode, she lost her sense of the humanity of others:

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People seemed mere ‘puppets,’ ‘mannikins,’ or ‘automatons,’ or else somehow ‘in disguise’. [Sass 1992: 48]¹⁹

Similarly, Mulhall remarks that ‘the aspect-blind regard a human being’s behaviour as we would the behaviour of a robot’ [Mulhall 1990: 85].

The second respect in which the person blind to psychological aspects is hesitant is in their behaviour towards other people. Where we see someone as a person and not as a mere organism or automaton, we will automatically and unhesitatingly act in certain ways. Gaita [2004: 173] cites Simone Weil, who notes that

The human beings around us exert just by their presence a power which belongs uniquely to themselves to stop, to diminish or modify each movement which our bodies design. A person who crosses our path does not turn aside our steps in the same manner as a street sign, no one stands up, or moves about, or sits down again in quite the same fashion when he is alone in a room as when he has a visitor.²⁰

By contrast, where we see people as less than human, certain questions and doubts about how to treat them will arise. Gaita gives the example of the slave owner, who ‘sees his slaves as different from those whom he would never dream of enslaving’ [Gaita 2004: 167]. This attitude need not rest upon any belief on behalf of the slave owner that his slaves lack ‘certain morally relevant properties or capacities’ (the ‘kinds of capacities and properties philosophers list when they try to answer the question, “What makes an entity a person?”’) [Gaita 2004: 166–67]. Someone who does not see the slaves as human might still reason from moral principles that they ought not to treat the slaves in certain ways and might even refrain from treating them in this way on the basis of this conclusion. But for someone who truly sees another person as a human being in need, no doubt will arise about how to act: if such a person were asked why they helped another human being, she might reply ‘that she saw nothing else to do, or, more simply, that she had to do it’ [Gaita 2004: 76]. There is no hesitation because there is no gap between judging how she ought to act and acting. Margaret Little would say that it is the difference between, on the one hand, ‘noting that a homeless person is going hungry’ and inferring (on the basis of moral principles) that one therefore ought to help them [Little

¹⁹ Sass is citing Marguerite Sechehaye, *Autobiography of a Schizophrenic Girl* (New York: Signet, 1970), pp. 28–29.

²⁰ Originally cited in Peter Winch, *Trying to Make Sense* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), p. 146.

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1995: 125]; and, on the other, apprehending the situation under an aspect (Little uses the term ‘gestalt’) such that a ‘kindly response feels *of a piece*’ with this apprehension [Little 1995: 127].²¹

In line with the picture these authors paint of the aspect-blind,²² Nietzsche’s moderns in the ‘History’ essay are crippled by hesitation and doubt. Nietzsche does not make the specific claim that the moderns do not apprehend the humanity in others, though he does suggest that they apprehend their world more generally as soulless and deprived of vitality.²³ However, what Nietzsche emphasises above all is not that the moderns fail to apprehend vitality and humanity, but that the moderns themselves lack life and humanity.

This is a point Nietzsche frames in terms of one of the paradoxes I mentioned earlier: in moderns, the interior is both empty and yet contains something. Respectively, the moderns lack (a) individuality, (b) humanity and (c) life: (a) they are not individuals but ‘muffled up identical people’, or actors ‘playing a role, usually indeed many roles and therefore playing them badly and superficially’ [UM II: 5, pp. 84, 86], and if anyone attempts to seize the masks these actors wear, ‘one suddenly has nothing but rags and tatters in one’s hands’ [UM II:5, p. 84]. But as well as this empty, hollow exterior to which no interior corresponds, there is also an interior into which ‘individuality has withdrawn’ [UM II:5, p. 84] but which no exterior corresponds to. (b) ‘Our contemporary men of letters, popular figures, officials or politicians [...] are not human beings but only flesh-and-blood compendia and as it were abstractions made concrete.’ [UM II:5, pp. 85–86], though once again there may also be an interior despite the emptiness: ‘If they possess a character of their own it is buried so deep it cannot get out into the light of day: if they are human beings they are so only to one “who explores the depths”.’ (c) Moderns lack *life* too: in UM II:10 [p. 119], Nietzsche notes that ‘we are not even convinced we have genuine life in us’. What we *do* have in us is ‘empty “being” [leeres ‘Sein’], not ‘full and green “life”’. Note that once again the interior is both empty and yet

²¹ Little attributes a version of this view to Aristotle: ‘The difference, Aristotle notes, is a difference in the *quality of perception*: it is because the virtuous person sees more clearly that her response comes easily, directly, reliably (see, for instance, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1146b30–1147a4, 1147a10–24).’ [Little 1995: 127].

²² Note, however, that only Mulhall explicitly refers to aspect-blindness.

²³ For instance, ‘A historical phenomenon, known clearly and completely and resolved into a phenomenon of knowledge, is, for one who has perceived it, *dead*. [UM II:1, p.67, my emphasis]).

contains something – though here it is clearer that what it contains is not the same as what it is empty of (it is empty of life, it contains mere being).

I discuss the fuller significance of this paradoxical relation between interior and exterior in the next chapter. What I want to draw attention to at this stage, however, is that in the third instance, Nietzsche states both that the moderns lack life (they do not have a ‘full and green “life”’) and that they lack certainty about whether they possess life (‘We are not *even convinced* we have genuine life in us’, ‘the feeling that tells me I exist *warrants to me* only that I am a thinking creature’ [UM II:10, p. 119, my emphases]); moreover, he suggests that the lack of life and the lack of certainty are connected. Mulhall makes a very similar claim with regard to aspect-blindness. In those who lack the ability to see under psychological aspects – those who are not immediately certain that others are human, who ‘view others as if they were robots’ – this inability manifests itself in hesitancy. But because of this hesitancy in thought and act, ‘their own behaviour has the stiffness, the absence of fine shades and flexibility, the stumbling and hesitation, of a robot’ [Mulhall 1990: 149]. They don’t just fail to sense the ‘smoothness and spontaneity’ and ‘grace’ in ‘human practical activity’ in their apprehensions of others – they are also unable to manifest such smoothness and grace in their own actions and interactions with others (because how I treat other people will be different depending on whether or not I see them *as people*) [Mulhall 1990: 149]. In short: ‘The behaviour of the aspect-blind would be as mechanical or robotic as their perception of the behaviour of others; their blindness to the humanity of others is paralleled by a dehumanizing rigidity in themselves.’ [Mulhall 2001:174]. In terms of the ‘History’ essay: those who lack certainty about whether others are ‘alive’ (obviously, not in a purely biological sense) will themselves lack life – that is to say, they will fail to manifest behaviour that would make the attribution of ‘life’, ‘individuality’ or ‘humanity’ intelligible.²⁴

Another parallel with Mulhall’s remarks is Nietzsche’s use of the metaphor of

²⁴ Sass similarly reports that people with schizophrenia or schizoid personalities, who have an alienated apprehension of other people, often exhibit ‘a certain coldness and, going along with this, a sense of absence – as if the person did not actually inhabit his actions’ [Sass 1992: 106] and their behaviour has ‘a false or “as-if” quality’ [Sass 1992: 98]. Sass speculates that our alienation from people with schizophrenia (and, to a lesser extent, from people with schizoid personalities) – our apprehension of them as somehow lacking in genuine life or humanity – is actually a form of *empathy*: ‘it may be a *shared* alienation, a feeling evoked by accurate intuitions of what the patient is actually going through.’ [Sass 1992: 241].

mechanism to describe the moderns, who are ‘dissociated almost mechanically into an inner and an outer’ [UM II: 10, p. 119]. According to Mulhall, a mechanical mode of being – ‘machine-tooled, precise repetitions of a limited repertoire of movements that is invariant between cultures or persons’ – is the antithesis of ‘human behaviour’. Human behaviour exhibits ‘irregularities and variations of texture’ and ‘an individual style or character’ [Mulhall 1990: 86]. As Wittgenstein puts it:

The opposite of being full of soul is being mechanical. If you want to act like a robot – how does your behaviour deviate from our ordinary behaviour? By the fact that our ordinary movements cannot even approximately be described by means of geometrical concepts. [RPP 324]²⁵

It is to this notion of a ‘geometrical concept’ that I now turn in the next section.

1.4 Geometrical concepts and narrative

What are ‘geometrical concepts’? They are concepts amenable to the calculative approach of Nietzsche’s moderns: ones that can be applied in accordance with explicit universal principles of inference. Geometrical concepts, according to Mulhall, are characterised by ‘objectivity of application’ and ‘sharpness of boundaries’ [Mulhall 1990: 86].

Such concepts are incapable of ‘yok[ing] elements into a loose, flexible *Gestalt*’ [Mulhall 1990: 86]. Hence, someone who is only capable of deploying geometrical concepts will be unable to accurately trace the contours of *Gestalt* concepts with vague or non-codifiable boundaries. A number of thinkers believe moral concepts are concepts of the latter, non-geometrical kind. This would mean, as Little points out, that

there are no conversion manuals – not even immensely complex ones – for inferring moral properties from nonmoral properties, no algorithms into which one can feed the latter to derive all and only the right moral answers. Those then with merely parasitic competence in morality will go wrong. They can mimic genuine practice well in certain easy cases, for there are obvious rules of thumb to make use of. But their epistemological expertise will be compromised, and usually severely. It

²⁵ Elsewhere, this point is explicitly made in terms of ‘meaning-blindness’: ‘If someone were what we called “meaning-blind”, we should picture them as making a less lively [*lebendig*] impression than we do, behaving more “like an automaton”.’ [RPP 198].

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is no accident that amoralists, when trying to display their moral competence, tend to recite the crudest mantras about morality ('killing is wrong'; 'feeding the hungry is good'); for the subtle contours displayed by the moral landscape of lived experiences will escape them. [Little 1995: 129]

One possible answer to the question 'What is missing if someone is aspect-blind?' is that, like Little's amoralist, they will be unable to grasp the extension of non-geometrical concepts. For Little, through affective gestalt perception we can accurately discern the contours of moral properties:

Seeing more clearly is often a matter of discerning a different gestalt of the individual elements one already apprehends: one sees the elements in a way that lets one recognize some further property they together fix. [Little 1995: 127]

Moreover, this affective perception is *necessary* to being able to accurately discern these properties:

Appropriate affect is a necessary component of apprehending the moral properties themselves. If we were to succeed in transcending our affect and occupying a dispassionate epistemic stance, then, we would be blind to some of the most important truths there are, namely, moral truths. [Little 1995: 129–30]

It follows that someone who cannot discern the gestalt will be unable to 'go on' correctly with the extension of the moral concept (at best, they will be able to correctly apply concepts to the very simplest cases). If we take the plausible step of identifying Little's gestalt-blindness with aspect-blindness, then the aspect-blind person who is unable to see an object under a certain aspect and instead is forced to draw inferences about it will be limited to calculating with geometrical concept and hence, if the property perceived by the aspect-sighted is not describable by geometrical concepts, will be unable to acquire the knowledge available to the aspect-sighted.

While Little talks only of moral properties, Mulhall talks instead of psychological (as opposed to behavioural) concepts being non-geometrical, and claims that the aspect-blind will be unable to grasp them:

The aspect-blind cannot see (or regard) human behaviour in terms of the fine shades, the variety and the flexibility which our psychological concepts pick out and presuppose. They are incapable of applying our psychological concepts directly and unhesitatingly to behaviour and must instead infer its freight of human significance from those physical

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features of it that can in principle be described geometrically – and in the process of inference much of that freight is lost because it is not capturable in geometrical terms in the first place. [Mulhall 1990: 86]

Mulhall adds to this that psychological concepts are structured *narratively*:

Our application of a specific psychological concept to a given facet of human behaviour is grammatically related to the antecedents and consequences of that behaviour – in such a way that identical behaviour, when embedded in different ‘narrative’ backgrounds, carries very different psychological significance [...] (in contradistinction to behavioural concepts) any given attribution of a psychological state to a given person’s present behaviour makes sense only if, in general, that behaviour hangs together with a characteristic context of behaviour – in terms of both antecedents and consequents – in the absence of which the grounds for applying that concept are undercut. [Mulhall 1990: 63]

In a similar vein, Alasdair MacIntyre claims that we need to grasp behaviour in a narrative context in order to be able to understand it as an intelligible intentional action. Where the action is not grasped in a narrative that makes sense of it in terms of ‘a human agent’s intentions, motives, passions and purposes’ there arises a ‘kind of bafflement’ which according to MacIntyre occurs ‘when we enter alien cultures or even alien social structures within our own culture, in our encounters with certain types of neurotic or psychotic patients’ [MacIntyre 2007: 209–10]. Importantly, what is missing in such cases is a grasp of the significance of the actions, not an understanding of what type of action it is. In MacIntyre’s example: ‘I am standing waiting for a bus and the young man standing next to me suddenly says: “The name of the common wild duck is *Histrionicus histrionicus histrionicus*”’ [MacIntyre 2007: 210]. I can understand perfectly well the semantic content of his utterance, and even recognise that is a particular ‘type of speech act’ (‘He was answering a question’) or that ‘some purpose [is] served by his utterance’ (‘He was trying to attract your attention’), but nonetheless find his utterance unintelligible until it is placed in a narrative context that explains e.g. what question is being answered, why he is trying to attract my attention; MacIntyre suggests that perhaps he has mistaken me for someone else, or is a spy talking in code, or is following the advice of a therapist to talk to strangers in a mildly eccentric manner [MacIntyre 2007: 210]. MacIntyre also claims that we need a narrative grasp to be able to settle certain practical questions: ‘I can only answer the question “What am I to do?” if I can answer the prior question “Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?”’ [MacIntyre 2007: 216]. Those

who lack such a narrative grasp will be ‘unscripted, anxious stutterers in their actions as in their words’ [MacIntyre 2007: 216].

MacIntyre’s descriptions of ‘anxious stutterers’ and the experiences of encounters with alien cultures or psychotic patients certainly sound like Mulhall’s descriptions of aspect-blindness and Nietzsche’s account of his fellow moderns. Narrative is also crucial to the concerns of the ‘History’ essay; the German term *Geschichte*, which Nietzsche uses throughout the essay, means both ‘history’²⁶ and ‘story’. It is only through ‘once again making history out of that which has happened’ [UM II:1]²⁷ – through fashioning historical narratives out of facts about what occurred before the present moment – that ‘humans become human’ [UM II:1], but the currently reigning impulse is to accumulate historical data without any concern for identifying or assembling narrative structures in which these data are significantly related to each other. But it may not be immediately obvious why the concepts that the aspect-blind cannot grasp should be ones that depend on narrative.

A point made by David Velleman²⁸ may help to make it more obvious why this should be the case. According to Velleman, narratives recount events not necessarily in a way that reveals a ‘causal sequence’ but in a way that ‘completes an emotional cadence in the audience’; each event in the narrative is followed by a ‘fitting comeuppance’ that provides ‘emotional resolution’ of some kind [Velleman 2003: 6]. Emotional ‘ticks’, as it were, follow ‘ticks’ [Velleman 2003: 16]. If what holds elements in a narrative structure together is how emotionally satisfying the sequence is, it would make sense that the aspect-blind person who is insensitive to affective resonances and unable to trace the contours of affective concepts would also be unable to trace the contours of the emotionally satisfying narrative patterns which underpin these concepts.²⁹

²⁶ Though he uses another term, *Historie*, in the title of the essay itself.

²⁷ ‘Aus dem Geschehenen wieder Geschichte zu machen’ [KSA I, p. 253]. In the Hollingdale translation, this is misleadingly rendered: ‘Again introducing into history that which has been done and is gone’ [UM II:1, p. 64].

²⁸ I have reconciled myself to quoting Velleman’s work here only on the condition that I also note that I consider his apparently serious remarks elsewhere on the subject of homosexuality to be embarrassingly crass. For those unfamiliar with these remarks, in Velleman 2001 he in effect orders ‘homosexuals’ [sic] to stop flaunting their sexuality lest they bring unsuspecting heterosexuals out in a cold sweat by compelling them to imagine lurid acts.

²⁹ Note that Sass’s schizophrenic patients, who seem ‘devoid of emotion and desire’

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Where Nietzsche appears to differ decisively from most of those who argue that aspect-seeing enables us to grasp the extension of non-geometrical concepts is that (at least in a certain strand of his thought) he can happily accept that these non-geometrical concepts are *false* representations of reality. In this strand of Nietzsche's thought, although he accepts that it is advantageous to be able to see reality under the aspect of false non-geometrical concepts, this is not an epistemic advantage consisting in knowledge unavailable to the aspect-blind.

In the 'History' essay, the condition of the passionate individual who sees the world as 'palpable, close, highly coloured' is also the condition 'in which one is the least capable of being just' [UM II:1, p. 64]. The passionate individual sees the world 'shaded by the illusion produced by love' [UM II:7, p. 95] – for instance, such an individual 'loves their deed infinitely more than it deserves to be loved' [UM II: 1, p. 64] because they see it as more worthy of love than is actually the case.

The passionless suprahistorical individual who is blind to these non-geometrical aspects, by contrast, is 'clever' because they are instead adept at calculating with geometrical concepts which represent reality more accurately. As regards the supposed 'wisdom' of the healthy, non-suprahistorical pre-moderns, it is worth noting that Nietzsche has already elsewhere used 'wisdom' to refer to an illusory form of apprehension: namely, the 'Dionysian wisdom' of the Greeks which purports to offer true insight into the metaphysical nature of things but is in fact one of 'three levels of illusion' [BT 18, p. 85]. The sight of the suprahistorical individual would, then, be one that bores through these illusions to know things as they really are, describable purely in terms of physical and geometrical quantities. In a scene based on a remark by Nietzsche,³⁰ Thomas Mann describes the reaction of Hans Castorp (protagonist of *The Magic Mountain*) when Castorp looks at an X-ray of his own hand: 'He gazed at this familiar part of his own body, and for the first time in his life he understood [*verstand*] that he would die' [Mann 1999: 216]. His 'understanding' here is not self-mystifying, world-falsifying 'wisdom' but cold, austere 'cleverness'; the aspect of human significance is stripped away and he

[Sass 1992: 23] also perform poorly on tests which measure the ability to arrange pictures into a narrative sequence [Sass 1992: 129].

³⁰ The scene is based on an anecdote in which Nietzsche describes a dream in which he was able to see through the skin of his own hand. See Joseph 1996: 104.

sees himself as a decaying biological entity.

Nietzsche fears that it would be harmful to the interests of life if we *really* knew certain truths: the ‘doctrines of sovereign becoming’ (including the theory of evolution),³¹ for instance, Nietzsche considers to be ‘true but deadly’ [UM II:9, p. 112]. Various versions of this basic idea come up throughout Nietzsche’s writings: it would be harmful if we *really* knew the extent of human iniquity or inadequacy (i.e. how worthy everything is of condemnation)³² because it would lead to despair and paralysis, or if we *really* knew that our values or conceptual systems are arbitrary,³³ because then we would be unable to depend on the values and concepts we need to be able to take for granted in order to be able to continue with the kinds of activities Nietzsche regards as valuable. It is only in the ‘illusion produced by love, that is to say in the unconditional faith in right and perfection, that man is creative’ [UM II:7, p. 95].

But, crucially, if we apprehend reality under the aspect of illusions which represent it in life-promoting (but false) terms, we will not *really* know these harmful truths in the relevant sense. In Nadeem Hussain’s discussion of theoretical nihilism in Nietzsche (the belief that ‘nothing is valuable in itself’ [Hussain 2008: 166–67]) Hussain claims that we can operate under the illusion that things are valuable in themselves even while believing or knowing

³¹ ‘The doctrines of sovereign becoming, of the fluidity of all concepts, types and species, of the lack of any cardinal distinction between man and animal’ [UM II:9, p. 112].

³² In addition to the aforementioned remarks on the need to be shielded from the recognition that all human institutions are worthy to be condemned [UM II:3, p. 76], see also e.g. HAH 36, 249, GS 107.

³³ For instance, the arbitrariness of categorisation of complex objects as *gestalt* wholes. Robert Musil expresses this idea very strikingly: ‘We manage to produce a dazzling deception by the aid of which we are capable of living alongside the most uncanny things and remaining perfectly calm about it, because we recognise these frozen grimaces of the universe as a table or a chair, a shout or an outstretched arm, a speed or a roast chicken. [...] We know that life ebbs away both out into the inhuman distances of interstellar space and down into the inhuman construction of the atom-world; but in between there is a stratum of forms that we treat as the things that make up the world, without letting ourselves be in the least disturbed by the fact that this signifies nothing but a preference given to the sense-data received from a certain middle distance.’ [Robert Musil, *The Man without Qualities*, vol. 2, trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser (London: Pan Books: 1979), pp. 275–76, cited in Sass 1992: 143]. Sass notes that schizophrenic patients often lack this ability: in fragmented schizophrenic vision, ‘objects normally perceived as parts of larger complexes may seem strangely isolated, disconnected from each other and devoid of encompassing context; or a single object may lose its perceptual integrity and disintegrate into a disunity of parts’ [Sass 1992: 49–50].

that nothing is valuable in itself. These ‘honest illusions’ are a form of ‘regarding ... as’ [Hussain 2008: 166] akin to ‘seeing a cloud as an elephant, Gestalt figures, or seeing the once popular SEEING EYE™ images’ [Hussain 2008: 169]. Poellner likewise notes that ‘perceptual emotions’ (i.e. states of affective aspect perception) are ‘non-doxastic’ and ‘can persist in the presence of beliefs simultaneously held by the subject and contradicting their contents’ [Poellner 2008: 239]. If we see something under an aspect, we will continue to unreflectively and automatically interact with and respond to that object in the manner characteristic of aspect perception, even if we believe that our aspect perception misrepresents the object. Hence, on Hussain’s view, a theoretical nihilist who believes that nothing is valuable in itself can still be a practical valuer if they see the world under the aspect of value: ‘S values X by regarding X as valuable in itself while knowing that in fact X is not valuable in itself.’ [Hussain 2008: 166].³⁴

Hussain’s interpretation primarily addresses the later Nietzsche, but there are corresponding elements in the ‘History’ essay. In addition to critical histories, which present their subjects as worthy of condemnation, the ‘History’ essay describes other modes of history (the antiquarian and monumental) which present their subjects as worthy of preservation or emulation respectively. Although he assents to the proposition that every past is worthy of condemnation, Nietzsche only apprehends certain selected pasts in the mode of critical history as worthy of condemnation. But in addition, he more than likely apprehends other pasts as worthy of celebration (contra his belief that they are worthy of condemnation) in the mode of antiquarian or (especially) monumental history.³⁵ Indeed it is necessary, in the interest of life, that he does so. On Katsafanas’ reading, in the later Nietzsche a version of this idea is present in the claim that our drives structure our perception of reality in order to motivate us to act in accordance with the drives’ ends: in the example I mentioned earlier, the aggressive drive causes us to see ‘aspects of [our] environment as *warranting* aggression’ [Katsafanas 2013: 746] in order to

³⁴ Hence, ‘A philosophy of *logical world-denial*’ can ‘be united with a practical world-affirmation just as easily as with its opposite.’ [HAH 29].

³⁵ Wittgenstein’s description of the Beltane festival [RFGB, pp. 15–19] suggests what it might be like to experience something under the aspect of a certain type of history even if we believe actual historical evidence does not support the veracity of this experience as a representation of the actual course of history. The Beltane festival has a sinister, primordial mood and is suggestive of a history of human sacrifice: and yet it does not present us with any hypothesis or evidence regarding this grisly history.

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motivate us to behave aggressively (regardless of whether those aspects of our environment do in fact warrant aggression).

If aspect-seeing consists in apprehending the world under false representations, then the aspect-blind moderns will be disadvantaged inasmuch as they lack the illusions required for them to be able to flourish. However, it is only in one strand of his thought that Nietzsche regards the aspects under which we see the world as false representations. In another strand, he does appear to accept the view that the person unable to see under aspects would be unable to grasp certain truths that can only be expressed using non-geometrical concepts. For a particularly clear example of this strand of his thought, consider this following passage from one of Nietzsche's later works, *The Gay Science*:

Suppose one judged the *value* of a piece of music according to how much of it could be counted, calculated, and expressed in formulas – how absurd such a 'scientific' evaluation of music would be! What would one have comprehended, understood, recognized? Nothing, really nothing of what is 'music' in it! [GS 373]

In the 'History' essay, love is both 'the condition in which one is least capable of being just' [UM II:1, p. 64] and yet justice (by which he means a pursuit of truth which accurately tracks truth) requires 'loving absorption in the empirical data'³⁶ [UM II:6, p. 93]. In the third of the *Untimely Meditations*, he claims that the person 'equipped by nature with mental acuteness' who has 'grown accustomed to seeking the for and against in all things' has the potential not only 'to perish as a human being and to lead a ghostly life' but also 'to lose sight of truth altogether' [UM III:3, p. 144].

Nietzsche sometimes connects these two strands of his thought in (once again) a seemingly paradoxical manner.³⁷ When he claims that the condition of the person in the grip of passion is 'the condition in which one is the least capable of being just' he quickly follows this up with the observation that 'this condition [...] is the womb not only of the unjust but every just deed too' [UM II:1, p. 64]. Nietzsche talks here specifically of just *deeds*, but it would be consonant with the discussion of justice in the rest of the text (which focuses

³⁶ In contemporary philosophy, Martha Nussbaum has influentially advanced a similar position.

³⁷ Wittgenstein entertains a similar thought, also with an air of paradox: 'Our greatest stupidities may be very wise.' [CV, p. 39].

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primarily on epistemic justice) to interpret this as suggesting a more general claim: justice springs from the condition of the greatest injustice. This is congruent with a strand within the essay's metaphorical scheme in which light and darkness are presented not as opposing forces to be held in balance, but where instead light is borne of darkness: Nietzsche describes, for instance, 'the appearance within that encompassing cloud of a vivid flash of light' [UM II:1, p. 64]. Likewise, Nietzsche's image of 'a little vortex of life in a dead sea of night and forgetting' [UM II:1, p. 64, translation modified], where the implied contrast with 'night' makes the identification of the 'little vortex of life' with 'light' irresistible.³⁸ So the idea could be that, although aspect-seeings represent reality falsely, it is in some sense necessary to see under these aspects in order to be able to correctly grasp or operate with certain concepts.

But even if they accepted the possibility of some mechanism whereby apprehension under false aspects could ultimately be conducive to truth, I doubt many philosophers would accept that all aspect-perception misrepresented reality, nor even that all affective aspect-perception did so. Nietzsche himself certainly doesn't consistently hold onto such a claim, if he ever does; contemporary readings tend to stress that when Nietzsche denies that the world really has the properties we see it as having, he is denying that such properties correspond to any transcendent metaphysical reality. He can consistently deny this while affirming that such properties are part of the phenomenal world which actually concerns us. He could also consistently claim, for instance, that in cases of extremely heightened passion our affective perception is distortive, while accepting that more moderate affective perception is veridical. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that Nietzsche does place more emphasis on the potential value of non-veridical aspect-perception than most of the other authors I have been considering here, and moreover that this potential value does not depend on *all* aspect-perception being non-veridical.

³⁸ In *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche more explicitly outlines a process by means of which certain falsehoods could be a condition for getting at the truth: 'They who really want to get to *know* something new (be it a person, an event, a book) do well to entertain it with all possible love and to avert their eyes quickly from everything in it they find inimical, repellent, false [...] For with this procedure one penetrates to the heart of the new thing, to the point that actually moves it: and precisely this is what is meant by getting to know it. If one has got this far, reason can afterwards make its reservations; that over-estimation, that temporary suspension of the critical pendulum, was only an artifice for luring forth the soul of a thing.' [HAH 621]. See also Simon May's discussion of the value of untruth in May 1999: 153–55.

1.6 Significance and physiognomies

In the last section, I discussed one difference between Nietzsche and the other thinkers I have been considering here: namely, that Nietzsche emphasises the value of forms of aspect-perception that represent reality as falling under the extension of falsifying non-geometrical concepts. But it is possible that there is actually a deeper source of disagreement and that Nietzsche thinks that ‘seeing as’ does not represent objects as falling under the extension of concepts at all.

Wittgenstein connects the ability to see under an aspect with language: someone who does not know what a duck is cannot see the duck-rabbit as a duck (cf *RPP* 70). Understood in line with Zagzebski’s and Poellner’s views, the state of seeing a duck as a duck has conceptual content (i.e. the concept ‘duck’). But Nietzsche very often³⁹ draws an explicit opposition between words and feelings – between, on the one hand, a domain of cold, rational cognition, and on the other a domain of profound but inchoate affective stirrings. The notion of affective perception as intrinsically cognitive and linguistic seems to run counter to this opposition.

Poellner concedes that the subject of an affective aspect perception ‘may not have the descriptive resources fully to express [the relevant] aspect linguistically’ [Poellner 2008: 237]. This might be enough to resolve the conflict between the accounts, as long as it is noted that for Nietzsche the lack of ‘descriptive resources’ (‘cleverness?’) is not a deficiency (or, perhaps better put, not *only* a deficiency); for Nietzsche, it is a symptom of the moderns’ malaise that they ‘mistrust’ any feeling ‘which has not yet been stamped with words’, since cognising affects in this way weakens the ‘boldness of feeling’ [*UM* II:9, p. 115].⁴⁰

But this view would still imply that an aspect can in principle be articulated

³⁹ This is a consistent theme throughout *The Birth of Tragedy*. See also e.g. *UM* IV: 9, *AOM* 105, *GS* 354.

⁴⁰ Poellner draws a distinction between an agent consciously pursuing an aim (as it were, under an aspect) and an agent conceptually representing their pursuit of this aim: ‘Conceptualization requires attention, and reflective attention to our own mental states is – and arguably must be – generally absent when we are engaged in the world.’ [Poellner 2011: 134]. In these terms, the moderns’ constant attempts to conceptualise their own attempts to pursue various aims interrupts their immersion in these pursuits and their ability to pursue these aims.

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linguistically, which Nietzsche might well still not agree with. Perhaps more surprisingly, Wittgenstein might well also not agree.

For Wittgenstein,

The importance of [aspect-blindness] lies in the connection between the concepts of 'seeing an aspect' and 'experiencing the meaning of a word'. For we want to ask 'What would you be missing if you did not *experience* the meaning of a word?' [PI II:xi, p. 182]

When we experience the meaning of a word, we are struck by what Wittgenstein calls a 'physiognomy': 'The familiar physiognomy of a word, the feeling that it has taken up its meaning into itself' [PI II:xi, p. 186]. Our feeling of the physiognomy of word might be expressed by our saying that, for instance, 'Wednesday is fat' [PI II:xi, p. 184].

Cavell argues that this talk of 'physiognomies' can be generalised – 'Noticing an aspect is being struck by a physiognomy' [Cavell 1979: 355]. For instance, the aspect-sighted person can be struck by the physiognomy of another person's behaviour: the 'subtleties of glance, of gesture, of tone' [PI II:xi, p. 194]. But they may not be able to linguistically express this physiognomy, and 'not because the languages I know have no words for it. For why not introduce new words?' [PI II:xi, p. 194].

One possible reading (in line with some of the views I have already considered) here would be that the physiognomies are properties describable by words whose extension cannot be calculated on the basis of explicit principles; the 'evidence' for attributing such a property is 'imponderable' [PI II:xi, p. 194] or, to translate more literally, 'cannot be weighed up' [*ist unwägbar*]; the 'rules' for the attribution of such a property 'do not form a system, and only experienced people can apply them correctly. Unlike calculating-rules.' [PI II:xi, p. 193].

But this reading would fail to capture another strand of Wittgenstein's discussion. Wittgenstein claims that 'what I perceive in the dawning of an aspect is not a property of the object' [PI II:xi, p. 180]. Although experiences of physiognomies are often expressed using words that describe properties – for instance, 'Wednesday is fat' or 'The vowel *e* is yellow', in such instances the words are being used in what Wittgenstein calls a 'secondary sense' [PI II:xi, p. 184]. 'Fat' and 'yellow' could not be replaced here by alternative terms for some property that they designate, for they do not designate a property but

express a state that can only be expressed by means of *these* words which, in their primary sense, designate properties. Hence, although it is necessary to know the primary linguistic meaning of 'fat' or 'yellow' in order to be able to experience these physiognomies, these physiognomies do not possess conceptual content ascribing the properties of being fat or being yellow to some object.

In the same vein, when we see our surroundings as 'alive' (or 'dead'), 'close' (or 'distant'), 'real' (or 'unreal'⁴¹) we might think that these terms are being used in a secondary sense rather than referring to our discerning (or failing to discern) some property. Gaita (taking a Wittgensteinian approach) denies that seeing someone as human consists in the ability to discern a property of 'humanity' or an object such as a 'soul'.⁴² In support of his position, Gaita cites Cavell's remarks on the slave-owner who we are inclined to say does not see his slaves as human:

When he [the slave owner] wants to be served at table by a black hand, he would not be satisfied to be served by a black paw. When he rapes a slave or takes her as a concubine, he does not feel that he has, by that fact itself, embraced sodomy. When he tips a black taxi driver (something he never does with a white driver) it does not occur to him that he might more appropriately have patted the creature fondly on the side of the neck. [Cavell 1979: 376]

According to Cavell [1979: 376], 'nothing definite' is meant or can be meant by 'not human beings' when it is said of the slave-owner that he sees his slaves as not human beings; and yet this form of words nonetheless seems fitting to describe the slave-owner's attitude. This claim is not captured by the idea that the slave-owner is unable to grasp the correct extension of the concept 'human'; it is not that he is misclassifying them as not possessing a property of being 'human' but that he is not classifying them according to a definite concept at all.

For Gaita, figures like the slave-owner are not ignorant of facts about

⁴¹ Cf *RPP* 125: 'The feeling of the unreality of one's surroundings. [...]Why do I choose precisely the word "unreality" to express it? Surely not because of its sound [...] I choose it because of its meaning.'

⁴² Mulhall also officially rejects this position, and criticises Cavell for subscribing to it [1990: 87–88] (this contrasts with Gaita's reading of Cavell). However, despite his protestations to the contrary, if anything it is Mulhall rather than Cavell who seems inclined to treat aspect-seeing as a matter of discerning properties – or at least, his way of putting things misleadingly creates the impression that this is his view.

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properties but blind to the *significance* of some situation. For instance, when (as Hannah Arendt observes) Adolf Eichmann ‘forgot’ during his funeral oration that it was his own funeral he was speaking at,

he did not forget that Adolf Eichmann was being executed and that he was Adolf Eichmann. The reality from which he was estranged was not the *fact* of his death but its *meaning*. [Gaita 2004: 302]⁴³

The significance or meaning Gaita has in mind is *narrative*: to say that human lives have meaning is to say that humans are appropriate subjects for biography in a way that mere animals or objects are not [Gaita 2004: 118].

Now, I considered earlier the view that a grasp of narrative significance may be necessary in order to correctly apply certain concepts (especially those to do with motivation and intentionality) and understand matters in their light. But Velleman is sceptical of this view:

Having made subjective sense of historical events, by arriving at a stable attitude toward them, the audience is liable to feel that it has made objective sense of them, by understanding how they came about. Having sorted out its feelings toward events, the audience mistakenly feels that it has sorted out the events themselves: it mistakes emotional closure for intellectual closure. [Velleman 2003: 20]

According to Velleman, grasping matters narratively doesn’t provide us with a better ‘understanding’ or ‘explanation’ of them – or at least, the form of ‘understanding’ or ‘explanation’ it provides us with is radically different from what is usually meant by those terms – and may even get in the way of achieving understanding (by making us mistakenly feel we have achieved intellectual closure).⁴⁴ But even if grasping episodes in our life narratively doesn’t increase our (objective) understanding of them, it does still matter

⁴³ Gaita compares this case to that of the young people ‘of whom we say that they believe they are immortal, by which, of course, we do not mean that they have false factual beliefs. Each of them sincerely believes the proposition that he will die, and none of them has the sneaking suspicion that he might be the exception to the rule that all human beings are mortal; nonetheless, what they say about the meaning of death cannot be trusted.’ [Gaita 2004: 304]. This contrasts nicely with the view (presented in my earlier example) that Hans Castorp (a young man) *really* understands that he is going to die when he sees his hand under an X-ray; what Castorp takes himself to have discovered is that his death *has* no significance, whereas Gaita would say that Castorp has actually failed to understand the significance of his death.

⁴⁴ Nietzsche likewise draws an explicit contrast between a mythic, narrative mode of thinking (in which the world is conceived of as a ‘succession of events, actions and sufferings’) and a theoretical, conceptual mode: these are two ‘disparate spheres’ [UM IV: 9, pp. 236–37].

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whether we grasp them in this way, as otherwise they will lack ‘meaning’ for us [Velleman 2003: 6].⁴⁵

Similarly, Wittgenstein is hostile to the intuitively appealing idea that subjective experiences are functionally necessary in the determination of the extension of concepts (‘The meaning of a word is not the experience one has in hearing or saying it.’ [PI II:vi, p. 155]). But he retains a sense that such subjective experiences are nonetheless important in their own right: it matters whether or not we have them, regardless of any other advantages they might bring us. We might, for instance, think it counts for something if someone is struck by the humanity of a person whom they see to be suffering and does not merely believe of them that they are suffering and that this is bad, just on account of their having been so struck. Conversely, we might think that someone who lacks such subjective experiences is deprived of something important purely in virtue of that lack: they would be ‘dreamless’, as Wittgenstein calls the talk of the meaning-blind person who never experiences the meaning of words:

If I compare the coming of the *meaning* into one’s mind to a dream, then our talk is ordinarily dreamless. The ‘meaning-blind’ person would then be one who would always talk dreamlessly. [RPP 232]

The aspect-blind person has an impoverished inner life, and even if they could do everything an aspect-sighted person can do, this would still be a lack. When Nietzsche bemoans the impoverished inner life of his fellow moderns, whose hollow interior fails to correspond to any exterior, his lament will be misunderstood if we focus exclusively on the question of what a rich inner life is good *for* (i.e. what things are instrumentally promoted by a rich inner life).

Of course, neither Nietzsche’s moderns nor Wittgenstein’s aspect-blind do in fact act precisely the same way as healthy, aspect-sighted pre-moderns. The subjective experience of aspect-seeing is not a private internal object but something paradigmatically expressed in ‘fine shades of behaviour’ [PI II:xi, p.

⁴⁵ Velleman’s paper was originally presented at the Jerome S. Simon Lectures at the University of Toronto in 2002, and included some particularly salient remarks that do not appear in the published version: ‘Having a story to tell about an action doesn’t guarantee that we’ll understand why we performed it. We understand why we performed an action only if we know the relevant motivational or otherwise causal information, which could also be couched in non-narrative form.’ ‘The narrative intelligibility of episodes in our lives is what gives them meaning.’ I am indebted to Michael Garnett on this point.

173]. The person who sees a new aspect of the duck-rabbit dawn will exclaim 'Now it's a rabbit!' (the aspect-blind person will not), the person who is seeing a drawing 'three-dimensionally' will 'know their way about in the picture' better than someone who cannot see it this way [*RPP* 1009], and we will variously imitate, draw or describe things differently depending on whether or not we see them under some aspect: e.g. the person who sees the rabbit-picture as a rabbit says 'The animal had long ears', the person who does not says 'There were two long appendages' [*PI* II:xi, p. 168].

Perhaps most relevantly to Nietzsche, our experience of the physiognomy of words will be manifested 'by the way we choose and value words' [*PI* II:xi, p. 186]: the person who experiences the meaning of words will be attentive not just to the correct semantic meaning of the words they use but to which words have the right 'feel', and hence will sometimes talk, as it were, dreamfully. By contrast, 'aspect-blindness will be *akin* to the lack of a "musical ear"' [*PI* II:xi, p. 182]. One of the charges Nietzsche lays against his contemporaries is precisely that their words fail to express any 'inwardness'; he remarks that the German

has to be assessed according to his thoughts and his feelings, and these he nowadays expresses in his books. If only it were not precisely these books which, now more than ever before, lead us to doubt whether that celebrated inwardness really does still reside in its inaccessible little temple. [*UM* II:4, p. 81]

Wittgenstein seems never to have entirely settled just how fine these fine shades of behaviour are (it is worth bearing in mind that his remarks on aspect-seeing were part of an ongoing and uncompleted line of enquiry, not a published work).⁴⁶ Sometimes, they seem very subtle and fine indeed; at other points, they seem to constitute entirely new capacities for understanding or action: for instance, 'one will also estimate certain dimensions correctly, only if one sees the picture in *this way*' [*RPP* 994] or 'it is clear that only someone who sees the ambiguous picture as a rabbit will *be able* to imitate the expression

⁴⁶ Cf Edward Minar: 'Certainly Wittgenstein himself has qualms about the capacities of the meaning-blind. We feel a strong pull toward the intuition that the meaning-blind person is missing something, that he or she makes "a less lively impression than we do, behaving more 'like an automaton'" (*RPP* I §198), that he or she is "as it were sleep-walking" (*RPP* I §178). On the other hand, we decide against the meaning-blind with some hesitation, lest we fall prey to the dangers of identifying some particular "inner" experience as essential to the meaning of a word in the face of Wittgenstein's well-advised warnings against doing so.' [Minar 2010: 190].

on the face of the rabbit' [*RPP* 993, my emphasis]. Wittgenstein does generally seem to think that the fine shades of difference in our behaviour are substantial enough to warrant the claim that they have 'important consequences' [*PI* II:xi, p. 174] and that 'the "aspect-blind" will have an altogether different relationship to pictures from ours' [*PI* II:xi, p. 182].⁴⁷

Will the person who does not see others as human (does not see the behaviour of others as behaviour expressive of mind) also have an altogether different relationship to those people? Both Gaita and Mulhall think so, but express reservations about the kinds of changes we might expect. Gaita claims we should distinguish between different senses in which we automatically respond to our perception of another person as a person. On the one hand, there is the kind of automatic response described by Weil: 'A person who crosses our path does not turn aside our steps in the same manner as a street sign'. This is, of course, correct; but importantly, in the sorts of cases where we would want to say that a person doesn't see others as human, that person would *also* not adjust their steps in the same way they would adjust them to a street sign. Gaita claims that Weil talks as if the people in the parable of the Good Samaritan who walked past a starving beggar 'walked past as though they did so in the way they would if there were merely an inert thing in the ditch' [Gaita 2004: 187]. Even a slave-owner could, according to Gaita, 'automatically' give water to a slave found dying of thirst – and this would still be 'a reaction to a fellow human being' [Gaita 2004: 187]. The typical difference in behaviour between someone who sees another person as a human being and someone who does not is far less coarse than the typical difference between the behaviour someone exhibits towards a person and the behaviour one exhibits towards an inanimate object.⁴⁸

The slave-owner, according to Gaita, can respond to the 'suffering of another

⁴⁷ Mulhall gives a nice list of things only a person who sees a picture as a picture of so-and-so would do: 'Kissing the photograph of a loved one; feeling ashamed before the icon of a saint; being struck with awe at the immensity of the night sky in Van Gogh's "Starry Night"' [Mulhall 2010: 263].

⁴⁸ The latter kind of difference is one we might expect between someone who, waking up at night, mistakenly sees the outline of a piece of furniture in their room as the silhouette of a lurking intruder, and someone who simply sees it as a piece of furniture. This is not the kind of seeing-as under consideration here; cf *RPP* 28: 'Another possibility is that I say: I have always taken that for a bowl; now I see that it isn't one – without being conscious of any change of "aspect". I mean simply: I now see something different, now have a different visual impression.' For more on the distinction between these two kinds of seeing-as, see Romdenh-Romluc 2012.

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human being' but not to 'what it *means* for that human being to suffer as he does' [Gaita 2004: 188]. For someone who understands the significance of human suffering, and does not merely know that human suffering is something bad that ought to be alleviated, it will be *unimaginable* to allow them to suffer. Furthermore, it is only if we see someone as human that they will be intelligible objects for certain sympathies or the attribution of certain concepts. This *may* mean that we will only act (or refrain from acting) in certain ways if we see the human significance of someone else's situation; the Good Samaritan saw nothing else to do but help the man he saw suffering, and so he helped him [Gaita 2004: 188]. But Gaita notes that 'the fact that we judge that something should be *deliberatively* silenced [does not] ensure that it will be *motivationally* silenced' [Gaita 2004: 111]. A slogan of Peter Goldie's may illuminate this point: '*intelligibility can outstrip imaginability*' [Goldie 2000: 209]:

Soldiers in wartime, many of them undoubtedly good, kind family men, often do things like rape and murder women captives and shoot unarmed enemy soldiers who have surrendered. They know *why* they did it, for they know their reasons, terrible as they were ('Those people don't deserve any better after what they've done to us'). But the soldiers still might later ask themselves: 'How *could* I have done it?' [Goldie 2000: 209]

For Goldie, empathising with the behaviour of another person involves being able to imaginatively enact the narrative that that person could tell about that behaviour [Goldie 2000: 195]. These soldiers cannot even imagine a narrative in their own voice about their own actions. But the fact that it is unimaginable for somebody to do some terrible act does not mean that, for reasons we can find intelligible, though frightening, they will not do it; and the form of understanding we gain through being able to narratively grasp the significance of some act or object will not constitute an answer to questions about how I *ought* to act towards that object, but instead to questions about what the significance of such an act would be. To be the Good Samaritan, it is not sufficient (though it is necessary) that doing evil be unimaginable; one must also have, to use Gaita's phrase, unified one's soul ('the disparate springs of action') in accordance with the understanding of evil. [Gaita 2004: 238]

So the 'wisdom' or 'sight' lacked by Nietzsche's aspect-blind moderns might be something manifested more subtly than suggested in previous sections: in

their failure to appreciate significances or physiognomies, rather than in their failure to act or grasp concepts correctly or unhesitatingly, and even if aspect-blindness *does* include the latter kind of deficiency, the former deficiency may still matter on its own account, for the reasons given here. However, another possibility (that I consider in the next section) is that while the moderns are deficient in both these respects, it is only in the former deficiency that *aspect-blindness* is manifested. The latter deficiency perhaps relates instead to another pathological condition described by Wittgenstein: namely, *uncertainty*.

1.7 Instinct and certainty

In this section, to complete my discussion of aspect-seeing and aspect-blindness, I now address the relation (whether of contrast or overlap) between aspect-seeing and what Nietzsche and Wittgenstein call instincts and certainty respectively. Some readers of Wittgenstein may feel that some of the features attributed to aspect-seeing in the previous sections are actually manifestations of what he calls certainty; making this distinction clearer may help to clear up some contradictions in the characterisation of aspect-seeing, and in any case will help explicate the internal relations between various features of Nietzsche's account. It will also lay some of the ground for the work I carry out in my second chapter.

Wittgenstein discusses the topic of certainty extensively in his later writings, especially in the collection of remarks posthumously published as *On Certainty*. His core claim is that reflective deliberation about how to go on correctly with some activity can only take place against a background of certainty in which we generally act without such questions of how to go on arising. It is only in exceptional or abnormal cases, where the way to go on is not immediately certain, that we can and must engage in reflective deliberation in order to determine how to go on.

One of Nietzsche's claims in the 'History' essay is that moderns have lost this kind of instinctive certainty, and this is implicitly connected to their blindness and lack of wisdom. When Nietzsche says that the understanding of 'clever' moderns is 'more childish than the child', he claims that the reason for this is that

they have lost and destroyed their instincts and, having lost their trust

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in the ‘divine animal’, they can no longer let go the reins when their reason falters and their path leads them through deserts. [UM II:4, p. 84]⁴⁹

Where we are capable of doing something instinctively, we can do it without having to deliberate about how to go on. When we act on instinct, we act with absolute certainty without our act being preceded by any conscious reflection. Although the term ‘instincts’ suggests something natural, innate and unacquired, both Nietzsche and Wittgenstein agree that at least some of our ‘instinctive’ certainties are acquired. For Wittgenstein, either through a process of explicit training or ‘repeated exposure’, techniques can become assimilated into our repertoire of instinctive certainties, so that our performance of them is as ‘automatic’ and ‘thoughtless’ as our innate reflexes [Moyal-Sharrock 2004: 105–6]. As Nietzsche puts it: we ‘implant in ourselves a new habit, a new instinct, a second nature’ – and if this second nature is ‘victorious’, it ‘will become a first’ [UM II:3, pp. 76–77]. Nietzsche’s metaphor for this is digestion (which is why the instinctless moderns ‘drag around with them a huge quantity of indigestible stones of knowledge’ [UM II:4, p. 78]), whereas Wittgenstein talks of ‘hardening’ so that some things become fused into the ‘scaffolding’, ‘bedrock’ or ‘river-bed’ that supports our thought [OC 96–97, 211, 498; cf Moyal-Sharrock 2004: 143ff].

To master a technique is for it to become instinctive in this way. As Nietzsche later puts it in *Daybreak*: ‘One has attained to mastery when one neither goes wrong *nor hesitates* in the performance’. This is a characteristically unqualified statement on Nietzsche’s part: there are *some* mistakes or hesitations that can befall even a master. As Moyal-Sharrock points out in her reading of Wittgenstein’s *On Certainty*: ‘If I am a fluent speaker of English, I may hesitate, reflect, attempt recall before using the words “funambulist” or “phylloxera”’ [Moyal-Sharrock 2004: 118]. But, she goes on, ‘I *cannot be mistaken or uncertain* about the use of some words’ – specifically, basic words in common usage [Moyal-Sharrock 2004: 119]. A fluent speaker might accidentally use ‘funambulist’ when they mean ‘somnambulist’ but someone

⁴⁹ The image of the arid ‘deserts’ to which the instinct-less people of the ‘History’ essay are condemned contrasts with the common image of a ‘flow’ to describe seamless instinctive activity. For instance, in the passage from *GM* II:16 describing the humans who become disconnected from their instincts in the conditions of civilisation: ‘From now on they were to go on foot and “carry themselves” where they had previously been carried by the water’.

who systematically⁵⁰ uses 'table' when they mean 'chair' thereby betrays their lack of fluency (cf: 'If I make certain false statements, it becomes uncertain whether I understand them' [OC 81]). Uncertainty and hesitation about how to construct a basic sentence is likewise a sign that one has not yet mastered the language.⁵¹ The beginning learner must piece together the sentence word by word, consulting a dictionary or recalling grammar lessons. For instance, armed with a rule such as 'The verb always comes second in a declarative sentence in German', they would infer that 'The word *kommt* must come second in the German sentence that means "She is coming tomorrow".' No such explicit inference takes place when the native speaker pronounces '*Sie kommt morgen*'; they quite possibly know *how* to speak German without knowing *that* 'The verb always comes second in a declarative sentence in German' (for instance, consider a young child who is a native German speaker).

In other words, it appears that someone who possesses this kind of instinctive certainty already possesses all the advantages attributed in sections 1.3 and 1.4 to the aspect-sighted, and someone who lacks it suffers the same deficits attributed in those sections to the aspect-blind. Someone who is fluent in a language will not be forced to rely on inadequate geometrical concepts in order to determine how to understand language, nor will they hesitate or stumble in their articulation of basic sentences; they have acquired language mastery as a second nature.

Our normal attitude towards other human beings is likewise a matter of certainty. Wittgenstein imagines saying of a friend 'I believe that he is not an automaton'. But:

'I believe that he is not an automaton', just like that, so far makes no sense.

My attitude towards him is an attitude towards a soul. I am not of the *opinion* that he has a soul. [PII:iv, p. 152]

For Wittgenstein, it is usually pointless and hence meaningless to formulate

⁵⁰ i.e. they do not simply make a slip of the tongue on an isolated occasion.

⁵¹ At least in normal circumstances; a native speaker might hesitate if, for instance, they are a diplomat or politician carefully weighing up their words to avoid certain sensitive expressions.

an opinion on a matter that is certain. On his view,⁵² we can only meaningfully formulate opinions on matters which are subject to doubt, and since there is no genuine doubt about whether his friend is an automaton, it makes no sense to formulate an opinion one way or the other. If I genuinely thought there was any doubt here that needed allaying, this would be a pathological symptom.

What would it add to say that the person who is certain that their friend is human is seeing that person continuously as human? We might think that it adds nothing; it is harmless and superfluous to metaphorically describe the state of certainty using the language of continuous seeing, based on the fact that in normal circumstances the capacity for perception renders some things certain (e.g. if my bedside table is in view, there is no doubt that my bedside table is there).⁵³ At best, we might think, couching talk of certainty in visual terms offers the metatextual advantage of cohering better with Nietzsche's preferred way of putting things.⁵⁴

If we were to assimilate the notion of aspect-seeing to that of certainty, it would be not just implausible but impossible for our aspect perception to be universally misleading. If we went wrong every time we acted unreflectively, we would never go right with the activity of reflective reasoning either, on pain of infinite regress – if I had to reflect on how or whether to go on with the activity of reflective reasoning, I would also have to reflect on how or whether to go on with the activity of reflecting on how or whether to go on with the activity of reflective reasoning, etc. Nietzsche would only be able to discern that some of our instincts were misleading if not all of them were, since he would be relying on some instincts in order to discern the unreliability of others.

I have used the term 'misleading' rather than 'falsifying' because for Wittgenstein, we do not typically formulate truth-apt conceptions of matters on which we are certain: the certainty is instead manifested in our automatic actions. This view aligns itself neatly with the opposition that Nietzsche draws between instincts and concepts; one plausible reading is that for Nietzsche,

⁵² Others might prefer to say that there is no appropriate context for asserting such formulations, rather than describing them as 'meaningless' or 'unintelligible'.

⁵³ Cf McGinn 2011, which offers an extended account of perceptual judgements in terms of certainty.

⁵⁴ And not just Nietzsche's; Kevin Mulligan [2003: 10] notes that 'the primitive certainties' of which Wittgenstein gives an account are 'are typically described in a vocabulary drawn from perception' [Mulligan 2003: 10].

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the ‘wisdom’ of instincts consists in knowing how to go on without necessarily possessing ‘clever’ conceptual knowledge *that* such and such is the right way to go on.

If we were to attempt to formulate a proposition which purported to assert or contradict something which was instinctively certain, this formulation would be mere words and would not be manifested in any altered behaviour.

Wittgenstein imagines someone who says ‘that it is merely extremely probable that water over a fire will boil and not freeze, and that therefore strictly speaking what we consider impossible is only improbable’. To which, Wittgenstein asks: ‘What difference does this make in their lives? Isn’t it just that they talk rather more about certain things than the rest of us?’ [OC 338] (cf *PII*:303, *OC* 428]. He answers this question in the affirmative in the immediately following remark:

Imagine someone who is supposed to fetch a friend from the railway station and doesn’t simply look the train up in the time-table and go to the station at the right time, but says: ‘I have *no* belief that the train will really arrive, but I will go to the station all the same.’ They do everything that the normal person does, but accompany it with doubts or with self-annoyance [*Unwillen über sich selbst*], etc. [OC 339]⁵⁵

This suggests a way of explaining the situation of the person who assents to the proposition that all pasts are worthy of condemnation: we might maintain that this person instinctively acts out the certainty that human institutions and practices, past and present, are generally benign (a certainty it’s not usually legitimate to put into words). Against the background of this certainty, their formulation of a proposition which purports to contradict this certainty is merely a hollow gesture; it is only where they have managed to ‘digest’ critical histories into their bedrock of certainty that they will act out a certainty that some institution or practice is worthy of condemnation.⁵⁶

However: one reason we may wish to be cautious before assimilating aspect-

⁵⁵ Cf Nietzsche’s claim that the moderns ‘chatter’ about new ideas but ‘go on doing what they have always done’ [*UM* II:5, p. 87]. I expand on this point in chapter 2.

⁵⁶ Lagerspetz and Hertzberg [2013: 14] give an example of what it might mean for a history to become embedded as certainty: ‘A historian today could not seriously treat newspapers from 1944 as evidence for the fact that the Second World War took place. It would be easy enough to locate written material that implies there was a great war at the time. But to call it *evidence* would imply that serious disagreement exists about the matter. For anyone with an ordinary Western education such historical facts will count as at least as obvious as is the idea that old newspapers could be employed as historical sources in the first place.’ [Lagerspetz and Hertzberg 2013: 14].

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seeing to certainty is that Wittgenstein himself very often says that certainty is precisely *not* a form of seeing.

Giving grounds, however, justifying the evidence, comes to an end; – but the end is not certain proposition's striking us immediately as true, i.e. it is not a kind of *seeing* on our part; it is our *acting*, which lies at the bottom of the language-game. [OC 204]

A contrast with Little's characterisation of gestalt perception would be illuminating here. For Little, an unhesitating response to a person or object is one that *feels* of a piece with our perception of that object under a certain aspect. But for Wittgenstein, the unhesitating response is of a piece with a continuous flow of practical activity, not with any feeling or perception. Certainty or mastery of a technique consists, positively, in a disposition to perform some actions automatically and unreflectively in appropriate circumstances, and, negatively, in our *not* experiencing certain conscious episodes – not being *struck* by certain things.

So, for instance, certain questions or doubts simply will not arise. But I will also not experience certain affects – I will not be *surprised* that my desk was in my room when I entered it this morning, as I would be if 'another one had been standing there, or some unfamiliar kind of object' [PI I:602] – and I will typically not *notice* features of my perceptual experience:

If I had always heard a sentence in one and the same intonation (and often heard it) would it be right to say that I must, of course, have been conscious of the intonation? If that just means that I have heard it in this intonation and also pronounce it accordingly – then I am conscious of the intonation. But I need not know that there is such a thing as an 'intonation'; the intonation need never have *struck* me [*mir* aufgefallen], I need never have *hearkened to it* [auf ihn gelauscht]. [RPP 540]

In particular, I will not typically notice *that* things are appearing to me a certain way: 'When I contemplate the objects around me, I am not conscious of there being such a thing as a visual conception' [RPP 29]. What is peculiar to *aspect-dawning* is that I do become conscious of my visual conception of an object (such as the duck-rabbit). If someone were continually being struck by how things appeared to them, this would be a sign of pathology; Sass notes that his schizophrenic patients often seem 'preoccupied with the "experience of

experience” [Sass 1992: 166].⁵⁷

In much of his discussion of aspect-seeing, Wittgenstein does appear to be thinking of states by which we are only occasionally struck: although the aspect-blind person is *never* struck by the physiognomy of words and *always* talks dreamlessly, the aspect-sighted person ‘ordinarily’ speaks dreamlessly and is only *occasionally* struck by physiognomies.

There is an obvious reply open to the proponent of the view that we typically view objects or people continuously under aspects: namely, that to see something continuously under an aspect does not mean to be continually struck by this aspect. So, for instance, as Mulhall puts it: ‘When looking at the drawing of the transfixed animal in an everyday context, the arrow-aspect does not continuously dawn on us; we are not consciously occupied with the drawing as a transfixed animal the whole time’ [Mulhall 1990: 19]. The idea here would be that we continuously see people and objects under aspects, but only exceptionally notice these aspects. Annette Baier makes a structurally parallel claim about trust: ‘We inhabit a climate of trust as we inhabit an atmosphere and notice it as we notice air, only when it becomes scarce or polluted’ [Baier 1995: 98–99]. Analogously, we might hold that we typically only notice that we have been seeing or feeling under some aspect when we are no longer seeing under that aspect. For instance, if we typically have a feeling of the reality of our surroundings, this is an atmosphere that we only notice when that feeling vanishes and is replaced by a feeling of unreality (perhaps we would want to say that the feeling of unreality is better described as the feeling of the absence of the feeling of reality). This seems to accord with a remark Wittgenstein makes elsewhere: ‘it is easier to get at a feeling of unfamiliarity and of unnaturalness’ than at a feeling of ‘familiarity’ or ‘naturalness’ [PII:596].

However, Wittgenstein himself might well not have accepted that a peculiar episode of a feeling of unreality implies that habitually we have a feeling of reality. Consider his remark on an analogous case:

While I write, do I feel anything in my hand or in my wrist? Not generally. But still, wouldn’t it feel different if my hand were anaesthetized? Yes. And is that now a proof that I *nevertheless* do feel

⁵⁷ Cf Nietzsche’s suprahistorical moderns, who are acutely aware of the ‘eyes through which they see’ [UM II:1, p. 65]. I explore this point further in the following chapter.

something when I move my hand normally? No, I believe *not*. [RPP 208]

In the kinds of cases we are considering, Wittgenstein would generally not consider it intelligible to attribute a continuous seeing or feeling. For instance:

To say of either a real face or a face in a painting: 'I've *always* seen it as a face' would be queer; but not 'It has always been a face for me, and I have never seen it *as something else*'. [RPP 532]

For Wittgenstein, a statement such as 'I've always seen it as a face' is only intelligible if there is (and I know there is) some other way of seeing it. The intelligibility of the statement depends on my being able to invoke a contrast with some genuine possibility. That is why I can say of someone who has never seen anything but a rabbit in the duck-rabbit that they are seeing it as a rabbit, but they cannot themselves say 'I'm seeing it as a rabbit' (unless they know it is an ambiguous figure) and I cannot say of someone who has never seen anything but a woman in the *Mona Lisa* that they are seeing it as a woman.

It is this aspect of Wittgenstein's thought which Cavell has in mind when he notes: 'Isn't it on the face of it just against the Wittgensteinian grain to say, for example, that I see a person *as* angry who just *is* obviously angry, with no two ways about it?' [Cavell 1979: 370].⁵⁸ It also forms the basis of Olli Lagerspetz and Lars Hertzberg's critique of Baier's account of trust:

'Trust' just appears to be equated with the absence of outright distrust. But if this is done categorically and regardless of the circumstances, trust is turned into a trivial element of almost all interaction, indeed of many cases where people do nothing more than keep out of each other's way [...] Suppose I invite a good friend for dinner. Do I also trust that he is not going to pocket the family silver when I am not looking? The reader might reply, 'Of course!' But if you were to ask this question in a real life situation, I would probably not answer 'Of course!' but, 'What do you mean?' In other words, what makes you ask this silly question? Is there something I should know? To say I trust my friend not to steal from me is to imply that he *might* do it. [...] It would typically not be meaningful for me to say, out of the blue, that I trust my friend not to pocket valuables from the house. I could only say it meaningfully as a reply to what I can recognize as an intelligible expression of suspicion. [Lagerspetz and Hertzberg 2013: 4, 6, 8]

⁵⁸ Baz 2010 develops a critique along similar lines of Mulhall's reading of Wittgenstein on continuous aspect-seeing. See Mulhall 2010 in the same volume for a reply to these charges.

Chapter 1: Doubt and blindness

But Moyal-Sharrock in turn has a Wittgensteinian rebuttal of Lagerspetz and Hertzberg's position:

When Lagerspetz speaks of the breakdown of the natural order as *unimaginable*, and that therefore to speak of *trusting* would be superfluous or 'tautologous', he fails to envisage cases where the natural order, or the normal order, *does* break down [...] pathological cases. [Moyal-Sharrock 2004: 197]

That is to say: we can intelligibly attribute trust more widely than Lagerspetz and Hertzberg think, because we can invoke a contrast with pathological cases. To translate this point back into the structurally analogous case of aspect-seeing: we can intelligibly say of the normal person that they have a feeling of reality or that they see people as people by way of contrast with abnormal individuals who have a feeling of unreality or who see people as automatons. However, even if this kind of invocation of pathological cases is regarded as a permissible move, Wittgenstein would only need to accept that we can intelligibly attribute a continuous feeling of reality or perception of humanity if a 'feeling' of unreality is construed as an *absence* of a feeling of reality and a 'perception' of someone as an automaton as the *absence* of a perception of them as human. But Wittgenstein is more inclined to claim that it is the *abnormal* case which is analogous to aspect-seeing (the 'uncanny feeling' of 'seeing a living human being as an automaton', for instance, 'is analogous to seeing one figure as a limiting case or variant of another; the cross-pieces of a window as a swastika, for example' [PII:420]) – in which case, all Wittgenstein needs to claim is that it is intelligible to say that the normal individual generally *does not* have a feeling of unreality, or that they usually *do not see* people as automatons. (If we take up my earlier suggestion that the feeling of unreality is the feeling of the absence of the feeling of reality, then it would be intelligible to say that the normal individual does not normally have a feeling of, or as of, the absence of the feeling of reality).

However, even if Wittgenstein himself would not accept that people normally see continuously under aspects (and whether or not we agree with him), he would accept the following: certainty or mastery of a technique, as well as consisting positively in a disposition to perform some actions automatically and unreflectively in appropriate circumstances and negatively in our *not* experiencing certain conscious episodes – not being *struck* by certain things – further consists positively in our sometimes being struck by certain other

things which only a master of a technique would be struck by.

So, for instance:

We tend to take the speech of a Chinese for inarticulate gurgling. Someone who understands Chinese will recognise *language* in what they hear. Similarly I often cannot discern the *humanity* in a person. [CV, p. 1]

This is an early remark (dating from 1914), which on the face of it does not precisely express Wittgenstein's later position. The later Wittgenstein would deny that the fluent Chinese speaker *recognises* language in what they hear, because the fluent speaker of a language is not typically struck by – does not notice – the linguistic character of the utterances they hear,⁵⁹ they just hear what the person has said. By contrast, someone who hears a person speaking in a language they do not understand might be struck by the fact that that 'inarticulate gurgling' is *language*. However, the later Wittgenstein would accept (analogously to the final sentence) that the fluent speaker often *discerns* something in linguistic utterances which a beginning speaker would be blind to – a particular 'physiognomy' to the words. Similarly, someone who is blind to the humanity of others will be struck by 'uncanny feelings' that other people are automatons, but they will not be struck by (will not 'often discern') the humanity in others – an exceptional occurrence that Wittgenstein describes here:

Consciousness in the face of another. Look into someone else's face and see the consciousness in it, and also a particular *shade* of consciousness. You see on it, in it, joy, indifference, interest, excitement, dullness, etc. The light in the face of another. [RPP 927]

Similarly:

I might say: a picture does not always *live* for me while I am seeing it. 'Her picture smiles down on me from the wall.' It need not always do so, whenever my glance lights on it. [PI II:xi, p. 175]

This remark is directed against the idea that we continuously see pictures as alive; but it indicates that we *sometimes* see pictures as alive. Someone who is only able to infer that the picture depicts a woman (i.e. someone who has not mastered the technique of reading a certain form of pictorial representation)

⁵⁹ Being continually struck by this linguistic character is, again, something characteristic of schizophrenic pathology [Sass 1992: 202–3].

will *never* see the picture as alive.

To re-frame matters in the terms of the 'History' essay: if my instincts are intact or some activity or technique has become second nature to me, I am disposed to perform certain actions immediately and unreflectively, and to sometimes see things in a way that a clever but instinctless individual cannot (as e.g. alive, resonant). If such instincts are lacking, I will be uncertain how to continue with certain activities and forced to 'calculate' how to go on, and I will sometimes see things in a way that an individual with instinctive mastery will not (as e.g. cold, dead, static). In his commentary on Nietzsche's later works, David Owen makes a claim of this kind about 'ecstatic epiphanies' (which he regards as the paradigm for the affirmative state of *amor fati*). These are states in which we experience 'wonder and overflowing joy', 'utter clarity', 'sublime rapture' [Owen 1995: 107]. Owen notes that the features of such states are

captured by the sense that 'one can do no wrong' and has no need of 'conscious reflection' – 'knowing what to do without needing to think about it'. Indeed, it is a characteristic of such moods that as soon as something does go wrong or one is caught in hesitation, the mood is broken. The point suggests that the frequency and sustainability of *amor fati* is dependent on one's mastery of the activity in which one is engaged. [Owen 1995: 108]

Nietzsche certainly agrees with Wittgenstein that where we have an instinctive certainty – a disposition to unreflectively and automatically act in certain ways – this instinct will manifest itself in a conscious state of (affective) aspect perception: his way of putting this basic idea in a very early unpublished remark is as follows: 'How does instinct reveal itself in the form of the conscious mind? In delusions. [*Wahn*]' [WEN, p. 24; KSA VII.5[25]]. But he is more likely than Wittgenstein to accept that in addition to being disposed to be *struck* by aspects on occasional or exceptional occasions, the person with intact instincts will also be disposed to experience longer, continuous episodes of (affective) aspect perception.⁶⁰ In a work dating slightly later than the 'History' essay, for instance, Nietzsche is happy to claim that we do typically continuously see our surroundings (not just other people) as 'human':

⁶⁰ Though of course, their instincts will also dispose them to *forgetfulness*: that is to say, their instincts will impose limits on what is allowed to filter into their conscious apprehension of the world.

Chapter 1: Doubt and blindness

Nothing is more difficult for man than to apprehend a thing impersonally: I mean to see it as a thing, *not as a person*: one might question, indeed, whether it is at all possible for him to suspend the clockwork of his person-constructing, person-inventing drive even for a moment.[AOM 26]⁶¹

According to Katsafanas, Nietzsche shares Schopenhauer's view that 'drives typically move a person not by blindly impelling him to act, but by structuring his affects, thoughts, and perceptual orientation toward the world' [Katsafanas 2013: 739]. Drives (instincts) dispose us to (affectively) perceive things under continuous aspects so that we will act towards those things accordingly.

Note that even on the Wittgensteinian picture there is room for something like this. Although Lagerspetz and Hertzberg deny that our primitive *certainty* that other people will not act in radically abnormal ways can be characterised as an attitude of *trusting* them not to act in radically abnormal ways, they do allow that we can intelligibly talk of trusting someone not to do something if there are grounds for doubting whether they might do it. But like certainty, trust is 'characterized by the *absence* of certain feelings and thoughts such as suspicion and fear' [Lagerspetz and Hertzberg 2013: 2]: trust is an attitude that can only intelligibly obtain in instances where I am not certain, but is nonetheless also manifested in my *not* having certain doubts:

Trust is typically characterized by the fact that we *do not consider* the possibility that we might be let down. [Lagerspetz and Hertzberg 2013: 9]

Along similar lines, we might regard (certain forms of) aspect-perception as attitudes which can only intelligibly obtain where I am not *certain* (and so would not overlap, superfluously, with instinctive certainties) and which are manifested in my not having certain doubts about the object of my perception. Love might be a good example of such an attitude.⁶² We could perhaps distinguish along these lines between the slave-owner who is *certain* of the humanity of his slaves, and the Good Samaritan who is not merely *certain* of

⁶¹ Contrast Wittgenstein's claim that 'It is clear that the tendency to regard the word as something intimate, full of soul, is not always there, or not always in the same measure.' [RPP 324]. Cf also Sass's description of infantile perception: 'directed toward human intentions and physiognomies [...] even nonliving objects are perceived animistically, as if they were alive and conscious, and able to echo the yearnings and tremblings of the subject's inner life' [Sass 1992: 58–59].

⁶² Cf Freud: 'A man who doubts his own love may, or rather *must*, doubt every lesser thing' [Freud 1955: 241].

the humanity of others but truly sees them as human: the latter as an attitude towards them that goes beyond what we can be *certain* of.⁶³ I won't attempt to fully flesh out this line of thinking here,⁶⁴ but it is worth noting that even if attitudes such as trust or affective aspect-perception can only intelligibly obtain with regard to matters on which we are *not* certain, they nonetheless depend on our possessing instinctive certainties with regard to other matters: I must in general be certain that people will not perform radically abnormal actions before I can intelligibly trust another person not to perform some action that it is plausible they *might* commit.

1.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have sought to use Wittgensteinian concepts to offer a unified account of the apparently paradoxical condition Nietzsche ascribes to his fellow moderns. My suggestion has been that while the moderns are wise ('clever') and clear-sighted in the sense of being gifted in acquiring propositional knowledge through reflective inference ('calculation'), they are unwise and blind in the sense that they are deficient in a non-doxastic mode of apprehension. In terms of the Wittgensteinian language I have introduced, Nietzsche's moderns are *aspect-blind*: they are deficient in the ability to see under aspects.

As I have noted, there are different understandings of what aspect-seeing consists in, and consequently different understandings of what kind of deficiency aspect-blindness amounts to. On some understandings, aspect-seeing consists in non-inferentially seeing an object as falling under a concept,

⁶³ Note a parallel between Gaita's remark that we do not see a new property when we see someone as human and Lagerspetz and Hertzberg's that: 'By invoking the language of trust and betrayal, we do not simply identify facts out there. Rather we invoke a certain perspective. We are invited to see someone's behavior in a certain light.' [Lagerspetz and Hertzberg 2013: 1].

⁶⁴ Another possibility might simply be that the aspect-sighted person has certainty on a matter the non-aspect-sighted slave-owner does not in virtue of their quasi-perceptual stance towards some feature of the person; note that Wittgenstein himself groups together various things under the heading certainty that we might want to distinguish from one another. For instance, our certainty about the pain of others ('Just try – in a real case – to doubt someone else's fear or pain.' [PI I:303]) appears to be of a different order to our certainty about our own pain ('One says: "He appears to be in frightful pain" even when one hasn't the faintest doubt, the faintest suspicion that the appearance is deceptive. Now why doesn't one say "I appear to be in frightful pain" for this too must [*muesste*] at the very least make *sense*? [...] I don't say "I'm groaning dreadfully, I must see a doctor", but I may very well say "He's groaning dreadfully, he must ..."' [RPP 912]).

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by way of contrast with believing on the basis of inference that the object falls under that concept. On this understanding, being able to see under aspects may yield the advantage of being able to grasp the extension of concepts that cannot be derived inferentially; consequently, the 'clever' aspect-blind person may be 'blind' to some truths. Another alternative on this understanding is that aspect-seeing may enable us to maintain valuable *illusions* where we see objects as falling under the extension of concepts which we believe or know they do not fall under. One possibility is that this non-veridical 'wisdom' would be preferable to the veridical 'cleverness' of the aspect-blind person because aspect-seeing manifests in certain forms of valuable unreflective activity even where an agent believes their aspect-seeing is representing its object non-veridically; another possibility is that non-veridical illusion is in some sense necessary to achieve veridical 'wisdom' that would be unavailable to the aspect-blind person. On another understanding, the importance of aspect-seeing resides in our being struck by a particular physiognomy or having a grasp of the narrative significance of some object, something which should primarily be considered valuable in itself rather than instrumentally valuable as a means to better knowledge or action. On this understanding, the deficiency of the aspect-blind consists in their impoverished inner or moral life rather than their impoverished grasp of conceptual content. There is a further contrast between understandings of aspect-seeing as a continuous, ongoing state interwoven with a mode of unreflective practical interaction with the world, and an understanding of aspect-seeing as something which occurs only exceptionally and episodically when we are conscious of being struck by an aspect of some object. On the former understanding, aspect-blindness would consist in hesitation and stumbling in our practical activity; on the latter, in a more subtly manifested blankness or insensitivity.

Ultimately, the question of what exactly to classify as 'aspect-blindness' is a matter for Wittgenstein scholarship. What matters here is that the condition Nietzsche diagnoses among his contemporaries extends across these various dimensions of deficiency associated with aspect-blindness by at least some authors. As such, notions included under the heading of aspect-blindness offer the resources to describe the condition of malaise that Nietzsche diagnoses. We may wish to think of aspect-blindness as somewhat heterogeneous in nature, including features that range across these different understandings without being completely captured by any one understanding.

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Alternatively, we may wish to distinguish between features akin to Wittgensteinian uncertainty and those which belong to aspect-blindness proper: on this alternative, the moderns' lack of *wisdom* would consist in their lack of unreflective instinctive certainty while their *blindness* would consist in their incapacity to be consciously struck by physiognomies and significances, but the two deficiencies would be connected insofar as only those who lack instinctive certainty will fail to be struck by corresponding aspects.

However widely construed, the notion of aspect-blindness is probably not sufficient by itself to capture every element of the pathological condition described by Nietzsche. Other authors who describe recognisably similar pathological conditions often suggest they have symptoms not readily describable in terms of aspect-blindness (even if they also include features which are most naturally describable in this way): for instance, a deficient capacity to exercise judgement or adopt a first-personal stance.⁶⁵ But on the other hand, the notion of aspect-blindness still has the potential to describe further features of this pathological state that I have not been able to touch on here: aspect-blindness could, for instance, be interpreted as the lack of a capacity to transformatively re-imagine features of the world around us.⁶⁶ However, even without developing this extension of the notion, the Wittgensteinian conceptual apparatus I have introduced here has served its purpose in helping to make sense, in non-paradoxical terms, of the condition that Nietzsche claims is afflicting his contemporaries.

⁶⁵ Cf Pippin 2010: 40, Gaita 2004: 103

⁶⁶ I have in mind here an interpretation of aspect-seeing and aspect-blindness such as that advanced in Day 2010.

2

Loss and disorientation: God's death, life's forms

Er liebte zu lesen, trachtete nach dem Wort und dem Geist als nach einem Rüstzeug, auf das ein tiefer Trieb ihn verwies. Aber niemals hatte er sich an ein Buch hingegen und verloren, wie es geschieht, wenn einem dies eine Buch als das wichtigste, einzige gilt, als die kleine Welt, über die man nicht hinausblickt, in die man sich verschließt und versenkt, um Nahrung noch aus der letzten Silbe zu saugen. Die Bücher und Zeitschriften strömten herzu, er konnte sie alle kaufen, sie häuften sich um ihn, und während er lesen wollte, beunruhigte ihn die Menge des noch zu lesenden.

- Thomas Mann¹

2.0 Introduction

In the first chapter, I described the state of doubt and detachment which Nietzsche ascribes to his fellow modern Europeans, and showed how drawing on the Wittgensteinian notions of aspect perception and aspect-blindness allows us to make sense of the connections and apparent contradictions between various features of this state. In this chapter, I turn to the question of why (on Nietzsche's view) this state of aspect-blindness has come about.

In the *Untimely Meditations*, it is Nietzsche's view that the moderns' predicament is a consequence of the lack of a unifying and unified culture [UM I:1, pp. 5–6, UM II:10, pp. 122–23]. In his earlier work, *The Birth of Tragedy*, this lack is attributed to the loss of a myth which 'encloses and unifies a cultural movement'; without the 'horizon' of myth, 'mythless man stands there, surrounded by every past there has ever been, eternally hungry, scraping and digging in a search for roots, even if he has to dig for them in the most distant antiquities' [BT 23, p. 109] (note that this is the same condition

¹ *Wälsungenblut* [1921] in Mann, Thomas (1989) *Der Tod in Venedig: Erzählungen* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag), p. 177

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as described in the 'History' essay). In Nietzsche's later works, talk of the death of myth (particularly the tragic myth²) gives way to talk of the death of God, but the core idea remains: an enclosing and unifying 'horizon' has been wiped away [GS 125], leaving behind profound uncertainty and disorientation. Stephen Mulhall describes this as the loss of an 'atmosphere or framework that orients us in everything we say, think, and do' [Mulhall 2005: 22].

In the first two sections of this chapter, I expand on this notion of frameworks. I dispel the view that Nietzsche's claims about the 'death' of some overarching unity should be seen in terms of individual bodily pathologies and instead suggest that these claims concern the 'death' of a complex intersubjective framework that makes possible certain spheres of activity and conceptualising through framing the limits under which they operate. I explore this role and outline the various forms that such frameworks may take (physiological, linguistic, practical, conceptual) using a number of terms for such frameworks borrowed from Wittgenstein: 'forms of life', 'world-pictures'.

These first sections set up the main work of the chapter, in which I question what kind of disturbance or breakdown could be involved in the 'death' of the Christian form of life. One possibility (which I reject) is that exposure to a proliferation of frameworks has uprooted the moderns from all frameworks (including the Christian one). But the most obvious possibility – that the 'death' consists in the straightforward disappearance or disintegration of some overarching framework – is also problematic: firstly, because it is incoherent that the moderns could altogether lack a framework (human life is never formless); secondly, because the modern form of life, far from disintegrating into chaos, most plausibly appears to form an increasingly regularised, systematised order.

I outline a third, more plausible possibility, and it is here that my introduction of Wittgensteinian concepts proves its worth. This involves making two moves. The first move is one that is based on the situation of Wittgenstein's interlocutor. The problem with the interlocutor is not that they are not

² Nietzsche refers to the 'death of tragedy' in his 1886 introduction to *The Birth of Tragedy*, suggesting he views the decline of Greek tragedy as an earlier occurrence of the kind of cultural cataclysm exemplified by the 'death of God'. The metaphor of tragedy dying (as well as being born) occurs in the original text of *The Birth of Tragedy* too: 'A call now rang like the painful sound of mourning throughout the Hellenic world: "Tragedy is dead! And with it we have lost poetry itself! Away, away with you, withered, wasted epigones!"' [BT 11, p. 55].

embedded in an orienting framework, but that they are inappropriately oriented towards frameworks; this misorientation *towards* frameworks prevents their being properly oriented *by* frameworks. I argue that the predicament of Nietzsche's moderns should be understood analogously to the condition of Wittgenstein's interlocutor and that, consequently, the predicament of Nietzsche's moderns turns out not to be that all frameworks have disintegrated, but that they have a pathological attitude towards frameworks. I then make a second, Nietzschean move which builds on this initial, Wittgensteinian move and note that this pathological attitude must itself be framed by a peculiar form of life. The crisis of the death of God turns out to be a symptom of the continuation rather than disintegration of a Christian (or 'Christian') framework which orients moderns even as it misorients them towards frameworks in general.

It should be noted that in this chapter, I do not focus directly on aspect-blindness but rather on the related condition of pathological doubt. This is because Wittgenstein primarily connects his remarks on forms of life and related notions to his discussion of certainty, rather than aspect perception. However, in the previous chapter I discussed the relationship between doubt and aspect-seeing: on the one hand, certain doubts and questions will not arise for someone who is aspect-sighted; on the other, someone who has certain doubts (i.e. lacks instinctive certainty) will not be able to see under certain corresponding aspects. Either way, the unavailability of frameworks which ground certainty will hang together with aspect-blindness.

2.1 Physiology and individual differences

I begin my discussion by considering a view I wish to reject, since by doing so I will bring into sharper relief the contrasting view(s) that will form the core of this chapter's concerns. The view in question is one that appears in Nietzsche's later writings, in which he often emphasises the role played by physiological facts about individuals in determining their character or personality. For instance, differences between individuals' sensibilities are allegedly 'usually found in a peculiarity of their lifestyle, nutrition, digestion, maybe a deficit or excess of inorganic salts in their blood and veins – in short, in their *physis*' [GS 39]. Brian Leiter has argued that we should take such remarks seriously and correspondingly interprets Nietzsche as a 'fatalist' who

holds that ‘each person has a fixed psycho-physical constitution, which marks him or her as a particular “type” of person’. The relevant ‘psycho-physical facts’ (‘type-facts’) are ‘largely immutable’ and ‘*causally primary* with respect to the course of a person’s life’ [Leiter 1998: 230]. These type-facts ‘fix’ the ‘trajectory’ of one’s life as well as the ‘fundamental facts about one’s *character and personality*’ [Leiter 1998: 223, 224].

If this is right, it would seem that the moderns’ lack of instinctive certainty – their ‘morbid doubt’ – must primarily be determined by such ‘type-facts’. Nietzsche often talks about the lamentable condition of his contemporaries as a symptom of a physiological decline. For instance (in an unpublished note) he remarks that the ‘scepticism’ of the present era is ‘the expression of a certain *physiological constitution*’ [WLN, p. 5; KSA XI.34[67]] (this ‘scepticism’ is clearly a version of the predicament described in the ‘History’ essay: expressed in statements such as ‘I don’t know’ or ‘I no longer trust myself or anyone else’ and ‘I no longer know which way to turn’). In modernity, a ‘herd-like species’ [WLN, p. 5; KSA XI.34[67]] is emerging, dominated by ‘slavish’ types. These ‘slaves’ contrast with the ‘noble’ types: ‘men of instinct’ [BGE 191] who lack any ‘calculating prudence’ [GM I:2] but act with assurance and vigour.³ Such noble types are sorely lacking in the modern era.

If Nietzsche diagnoses a state of physiological decline in modernity, this is – needless to say – a deeply unattractive view. The fascistic overtones are unmistakable: if the determining psycho-physical features are immutable, this decline would only be amenable to solutions such as eugenics or extermination. Matters are somewhat ameliorated if, on Nietzsche’s view, these features turn out not to be entirely immutable: Nietzsche proposes various dubious cures which act directly on individuals’ physiological constitutions, such as nutritional or hygiene regimes. But this would still remain in dangerous territory (if genuinely effective cures of this kind could be found, how far could their application be extended before it simply amounted to another form of eugenics?), while offering an implausible and reductive account of human agency.

³ Gemes explicitly remarks upon the similarity between the comportment of Nietzsche’s nobles and Wittgenstein’s account of naive certainty: [Gemes unpublished: 20], as does Mulhall [2005] – but see chapter 4 of the present work for a discussion of the dissimilarities pointed out by Mulhall.

However, although his talk of ‘fatalism’ and ‘fixing trajectories’ would seem to suggest that Leiter interprets Nietzsche as holding that whether someone is e.g. ‘aspect-blind’ would be determined by their individual psycho-physical characteristics,⁴ the view Leiter actually defends is far less controversial: Nietzsche’s ‘fatalism’ turns out not to be ‘classical fatalism’ at all but a species of ‘causal essentialism’: ‘the doctrine that for any individual substance (e.g. a person or some other living organism) that substance has “essential” properties that are causally primary with respect to the future history of that substance.’ [Leiter 1998: 225]. ‘Causally primary’ turns out to mean simply that, with respect to some effect, a cause is ‘always *necessary* for that effect’ but ‘may not be *sufficient* for it’ [Leiter 1998: 224]. By this definition, if psycho-physical facts are ‘causally primary’ with regard to ‘fixing the trajectory’ of a person’s life, they do not ‘uniquely determine’ a particular trajectory but merely ‘*circumscribe*, as it were, the possible trajectories’ [Leiter 1998: 223].⁵ Furthermore, even if some psycho-physical facts are ‘causally primary’ with regard to a particular trajectory, other non-psycho-physical facts could *also* be ‘causally primary’, since both psycho-physical and non-psycho-physical facts could be necessary but not sufficient for that trajectory. In Leiter’s own example of a tomato plant, he notes that in addition to the causally primary type facts about the tomato plant, the trajectory of the plant’s life will also be affected by factors such as ‘the soil in which it is planted’ and ‘the amount of water it receives’ [Leiter 1998: 223]. The presence of water in the environment is *also* causally primary with respect to the trajectory of tomato seed to tomato plant.

Some of what seems to be promised by the use of the term ‘primary’ might be better captured by explicitly incorporating the claim that psycho-physical facts more drastically circumscribe the range of possible trajectories that an individual life could take than other factors. The ‘basic character’ of possible

⁴ The impression that Leiter would interpret Nietzsche this way is reinforced by his interpretation of the unpublished remark: ‘One will become only that which one is (in spite of all: that means education, instruction, milieu, chance, and accident)’ [WP 334, cited in Leiter 1998: 220]. Leiter interprets this remark as making a contrast between causally ineffective environmental factors and causally determinative type facts.

⁵ Note that by the definition alone, possible trajectories would be excluded only by the *absence* of a type-fact: if type-fact A is causally primary for trajectory B, then if A does not obtain, trajectory B is not possible. We would need to add the further qualification that some type-facts are mutually exclusive in order for the presence of a type-fact to exclude certain possible trajectories: if type-fact A is causally primary for trajectory B, and type-fact A and type-fact C are mutually exclusive of one another, then if type-fact C obtains, trajectory B is not possible.

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trajectories is fixed by type facts: it is impossible for a tomato seed to develop into a plant that grows corn rather than tomatoes. The potentialities of a human embryo with certain type facts are vastly more diverse than those of a tomato seed; depending on subtle differences in social and environmental circumstances, the same embryo could develop along a huge number of strikingly different trajectories. However, this ‘developmental openness’⁶ is itself a human type-fact; a tomato seed could not develop in the variety of ways that a human embryo could.

Of course, it’s presumably uncontroversial that an organism with the psycho-physical characteristics of a tomato plant can’t succumb to a condition of scepticism, nihilism or however else Nietzsche wishes to characterise the predicament of certain members of his own species, and the primacy (or not) of these characteristics in excluding such a possibility doesn’t really matter for present purposes. Even if it were the case that type-facts more narrowly circumscribed possible trajectories than other factors, it seems utterly implausible to suggest that a change could have occurred in the psycho-physical constitution of very many people of such a magnitude that the trajectory of ‘aspect-blindness’ is no longer circumscribed where it once was. It seems more plausible that any shift would have occurred at the level of environmental and cultural factors which affect how the relatively invariant psycho-physical potentialities come to be realised.

Note, however, while it is implausible that a sufficiently large change in type facts could have occurred to affect the overall prevalence of ‘aspect-blindness’ trajectories across large populations, we might more plausibly think that such variation in type facts as does exist within human populations is sufficient to explain why some individuals are aspect-blind and some are not. Throughout the last chapter, for instance, I noted that many of the features characteristic of ‘aspect-blindness’ which Nietzsche ascribes to his fellow moderns are also characteristic symptoms of schizophrenic pathology. This suggests the possibility that while Nietzsche might be mistaken about the prevalence of the condition that he describes, he is correct that where this condition does occur it has been determined by the presence of atypical psycho-physical features: whether these be organic abnormalities or disturbed cognitive processes. But there are two things to note here. Firstly, Louis Sass notes that schizophrenia

⁶ I owe this term to Goldie 2000: 98.

appears to be strikingly continuous with forms of consciousness that are especially prevalent in, and characteristic of, modernity (at least in Western cultures): he suggests that schizophrenia may be an extreme manifestation of such forms of consciousness, caused at least in part by the same broad cultural shifts and not exclusively a product of innate individual differences.⁷ Secondly, the kinds of differences between individuals that could explain why one is 'aspect-blind' and the other is not need not be exclusively limited to differences in individual psycho-physical constitution. Raimond Gaita, for instance, describes various individuals (such as Eichmann) who are aspect-blind not in virtue of an unusual psycho-physical constitution but because of differences in the course that their formative individual biography has taken.⁸

2.2 Forms of life

One way that we could make more plausible the idea that an increased prevalence in 'aspect-blindness' across a whole population is determined by widespread changes at the physiological level would be if these changes at the physiological level were said to consist not in changes in the *composition* of psycho-physical elements but in their *formal arrangement* relative to each other. Even if Nietzsche believes we are constituted by immutable psycho-physical elements, it does not follow from the fact that the elements are immutable that the self which they collectively constitute is also immutable, because on Nietzsche's view our sub-personal drives can be structured into different hierarchical formations (or into disorganised chaos). But it is not just within an individual that these drives are formally arranged with respect to one another. Nietzschean drives contend not just for dominion over the other drives of their possessor, but to impose themselves on the drives of others: in the case of a Napoleon, not only are all their drives unified under the subjugation of some overarching master drive, but this master drive stands in an interactive, hierarchical relation to the drives of others. A more plausible explanation for the prevalence of 'aspect-blindness' might be that the formal

⁷ Sass 1992, Epilogue: 'Schizophrenia and Modern Culture' [pp. 355–73].

⁸ This could be a matter either of the individual having received defective moral training or of their having participated in evil actions. Macbeth is an excellent example of the latter: the famous soliloquy in which he denounces life as a 'walking shadow [...] a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing' [Act V: Scene 5] expresses a form of blindness that is the result of his own moral depravity (i.e. it does not express an attitude that was widespread among Shakespeare's contemporaries).

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arrangement of the intersubjective constellation of drives within which these ‘aspect-blind’ people are entwined has been disrupted in some way.

Such a constellation would amount to a version of what Wittgenstein would call a *form of life*. In this section, I unpack this notion and interpret elements of Nietzsche’s position in its light.

According to Gertrude Conway, Wittgenstein’s preference to talk of a human ‘form of life’ (or forms of life) rather than of ‘human nature’ is due to the fact that

human life is not merely a continuous, unchanneled, unstructured, random flow; it displays recurrent patterns, identifiable structures, regularities, particular ways of being, of doing things, of feeling, speaking, of acting and interacting. Because there are such patterns, regularities, and structures, human life has form. [Conway 1989: 58]

A form of life consists in the particular *structuring* of a complex, dynamic system of organisms (including the form of the environment within which this system unfolds). While there are some differences – Nietzsche emphasises relations of antagonism and domination between sub-personal elements within such systems, while Wittgenstein emphasises relations of harmonisation and coordination between persons – there are considerable parallels between Nietzsche’s and Wittgenstein’s conceptions of how the *form* of human life sets the enclosing horizons necessary for ‘normal’ or ‘healthy’ operating within practices and conceptual systems. There are even those who interpret Wittgenstein’s notion of a ‘form of life’ as referring exclusively to ‘psychological and biological makeup’ [Conway 1989: 47],⁹ which would make the parallel to psycho-physicalist interpretations of Nietzsche particularly striking.

I shall consider shortly precisely how this function of setting enclosing horizons is supposed to work. But before I turn to that point, two things should be noted.

Firstly, exclusively ‘biological’ interpretations of what Wittgenstein means by ‘form of life’ are not popular. The notion of a ‘form of life’ is typically thought to include ‘sociology’ as well as ‘biology’ [Conway 1989: 47]: patterns or

⁹ Note that Conway is summarising the position of other authors here; she does not herself interpret ‘form of life’ as an exclusively psycho-physical notion.

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structures of social behaviour and organisation. And in fact, Nietzsche also needs 'sociology' to plausibly explain how arrangements of drives of a sufficient magnitude to affect the prevalence of 'aspect-blindness' across a population could be caused and sustained. The scope and complexity of this task would require enduring, coordinating social structures; no intervention by a single exceptional individual could be sufficient to bring about a change of such a magnitude in the absence of such structures. Moreover, any sufficiently complex constellation of drives involving multiple individuals would in effect constitute a social structure by itself.¹⁰ Form of life is better construed in terms of 'biosocial conditions and activities', i.e. as something that 'essentially involves both our biological make-up and our social behaviour' [Moyal-Sharrock 2004: 6].

Secondly, it is worth drawing a distinction, in both Nietzsche and Wittgenstein, between *the* human form of life – the 'very general form of life' in which 'simply as a human one can be said to participate' [Conway 1989: 58] – and human *forms* of life, more narrowly construed: different, particular forms of life found in different social settings. The general form of life comprises activities which 'sink so deep into human life that imagining them to be different would entail imagining a radically different kind of being' [Conway 1989: 58]. Particular forms of life, by contrast, are more localised in their distribution, and we can more readily imagine human beings from a variety of such forms of life. Many of the 'immutable' psycho-physical facts we are inclined to think of as 'human nature' would probably be categorised by both thinkers as part of the structure of the very general form of life, but the distinction between the general form of life and local forms of life does not map exactly onto the distinction between biological and sociological aspects of forms of life. Due to their different spheres of concern, Wittgenstein is typically more interested than Nietzsche in the general form of life, or at least less narrowly local forms of life, whereas Nietzsche focuses on the variation between different cultures¹¹.

¹⁰ See Richardson 1996: chapter 1 for an interpretation of Nietzsche on the constitution of societies and individuals out of drives.

¹¹ See for instance *Z*, Of the Thousand and One Goals: 'No people could live without evaluating; but if it wishes to maintain itself it must not evaluate as its neighbour evaluates. Much that seemed good to one people seemed shame and disgrace to another: thus I found. I found much that was called evil in one place was in another decked with purple honours. One neighbour never understood another: their soul was

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The particular biosocial form of life that Nietzsche describes in most detail is Christianity (or, rather, ‘Christianity’). In his polemic *The Anti-Christ*, Nietzsche repeatedly emphasises that Christianity is not a doctrine but a way of life:

It is not a ‘belief’ which distinguishes the Christian: the Christian acts, they are distinguished by a *different* mode of acting [...] A new way of living, *not* a new belief. [A 33]

It is false to the point of absurdity to see in a ‘belief’ [...] the distinguishing characteristic of the Christian: only Christian *practice*, a life such as he who died on the Cross *lived*, is Christian [...] *Not* a belief but a doing [...] To reduce being a Christian, Christianness, to a holding something to be true, to a mere phenomenology of consciousness, means to negate Christianness. [A 39]

Several thinkers have explicitly remarked on the parallels between Nietzsche’s account of Christianity and Wittgenstein’s notions of forms of life.¹² Giles Fraser approvingly notes that Nietzsche understands Christian faith in Wittgensteinian terms [Fraser 2002: 13]: as a matter, first and foremost, of practice rather than ‘assent to a series of propositions’:

Bedtime prayers precede intellectual doubt, Church-going and *praxis pietatis* come first; Christian ‘formation’ is already well established long before Christianity is reflected upon and reduced to a series of propositions. [Fraser 2002: 42]

In a similar vein, Mulhall remarks that Nietzsche ‘considers Christian religion and morality primarily as a form of life – one in which a certain set of values orients everything one thinks, says, and does’ [Mulhall 2005: 32]. (Note that this is an exact repetition of the phrasing of Mulhall’s description of the death of God as the loss of an ‘atmosphere or framework that orients us in everything we say, think, and do.’) [Mulhall 2005: 22] David Owen likewise describes Christianity as a form of life, and suggests that the crisis of the death of God consists in ‘the destruction of the *particular* public structures of

always amazed at their neighbour’s madness and wickedness.’

¹² In his biography of Wittgenstein, Ray Monk even cites [1991: 122] the passage from A 39 (above) as an example where Wittgenstein was influenced by Nietzsche’s thought: ‘The idea that the essence of religion lay in feelings (or, as Nietzsche, would have it, *instincts*) and practices rather than in beliefs remained a constant theme in Wittgenstein’s thought on the subject for the rest of his life.’ [Monk 1991: 123]. However, Marco Brusotti [2009] has questioned the basis for this claim: Monk claims that Wittgenstein took with him to Krakow ‘the eighth volume of Nietzsche’s collected works, the one that includes *The Anti-Christ*’ [Monk 1991: 121] but whether the volume that Wittgenstein read in fact contained *The Anti-Christ* would depend on which edition of Nietzsche’s works he owned, which remains unclear.

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recognition through which individuals relate to each other in terms of agreement in form of life' [Owen 1994: 64].

A form of life circumscribes trajectories in the following sense: those who share a form of life will act or react in some ways and not in others. In particular, there are some things they will not doubt or reflect on. For Wittgenstein, this is what certainty consists in: 'a way of *life*, not of thought; not an intellectual stratagem' [Moyal-Sharrock 2004: 76]. Wittgenstein emphasises the significance of the fact that certain doubts *do not* arise in the following exchange with his interlocutor:

'We could doubt every single one of these facts, but we could not doubt them *all*.'

Wouldn't it be more correct to say: 'we do not doubt them *all*'.

Our not doubting them all is simply our manner of judging, and therefore of acting. [OC 232]

The structure of a form of a life is directed towards certain ends, and those who share in that form of life will be oriented towards those ends. They will be thus oriented prior to engaging in any doubting or justification: doubting and justification are activities that take place within a form of life that is already underway and whose exercise is oriented towards the ends of that form of life. Consider Bernard Williams's remark on slavery in the ancient Athenian form of life (which, incidentally, was the other form of life besides the Christian form to receive considerable attention from Nietzsche):

Slavery was taken to be necessary – necessary, that is to say, in sustaining the kind of political, social and cultural life that free Greeks enjoyed. Most people did not suppose that because slavery was necessary, it was therefore just [...] life proceeded on the basis of slavery and left no space, effectively, for the question of its justice to be raised. [Williams 1993: 124]

What Wittgenstein considers crucial is that the general human form of life is the 'framework of common activity' which provides the 'ultimate basis of all linguistic communication and understanding' [Conway 1989: 61]. The human activity of language proceeds on the condition that they share a common form of life: that is to say, their patterns of action and responsiveness mesh.¹³ The

¹³ In *PII*:241, in response to a challenge by his interlocutor – 'So you are saying that human agreement [*Übereinstimmung*] decides what is true?' – Wittgenstein replies: 'It is what human beings *say* that is true and false; and they agree in the *language* they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life.' Compare *GS* 76: 'Man's

function of language is to enable beings who are oriented in a certain way to coordinate and interact in various ways; for beings who are not thus oriented, linguistic utterances would lack a function and hence (for Wittgenstein) meaning. As Conway puts it, according to Wittgenstein, in order ‘to have meanings, words must be imbedded in a way of life. Meaning is dependent on signifying activity.’ [Conway 1989: 41].

However, not everything that Wittgenstein considers crucial in his own investigations is entirely germane to the present work, so I shan’t dwell on the precise details of the position Wittgenstein occupies within the general philosophy of language. The key ideas I want to take away here are firstly, the idea of the form of life as a framework that ‘we cannot decide to accept or reject’ [Conway 1989: 67] as it is only from within the form of life that we are able to frame acceptance or rejection. A claim of this kind is advanced by Alasdair MacIntyre: ‘All questions of choice arise within the framework; the framework itself therefore cannot be chosen.’ [MacIntyre 2007: 126].¹⁴

Secondly, the conception of language as essentially ‘an activity of persons in a

greatest labour so far has been to reach agreement about very many things and to lay down a *law of agreement* [Übereinstimmung] – regardless of whether these things are true or false’. This ‘commonplace faith shared by everyone’ [*Allerwelts Glaube*] [GS 76, translation modified] is (as in Wittgenstein) the basis for language (cf GS 354). Nietzsche differs here from Wittgenstein in that (1) Nietzsche describes agreement as something that was constructed in the interest of the preservation of humanity, whereas for Wittgenstein this agreement in form of life is something given [PII:xi, p. 192] with at least the same conceptual priority as the possibility of humanity’s possession of interests. (2) Nietzsche seems happy to concede what Wittgenstein is strenuously trying to deny: namely, that the certainties embedded in our form of life could be false. The ‘great common faith’ is preserved through ‘*virtuous stupidity*’ [GS 76]; cf BGE 231, in which the certainties which constitute someone as an individual (‘At the bottom of us, “right down deep”, there is, to be sure, something unteachable, a granite stratum of spiritual fate, of predetermined decision and answer to predetermined selected questions’) are described as ‘the great stupidity which we are’. However, there is evidence that Nietzsche increasingly came round to a more Wittgensteinian position with regard to the truth of these certainties: see in particular his unpublished remarks on quantities/qualities (e.g. WLN, pp. 110–1; KSA XII.5[36] or WLN, p. 125; KSA XII.6[14]) and Maudemarie Clark’s interpretations in her 1990 and (with David Dudrick) 2012. (3) Nietzsche, unlike Wittgenstein, appears in GS 76 to think that there could be some rare individuals – ‘*the exception and the danger*’ – who deviate from the general agreement among their fellows. However, the structure of this relation between exceptional and general cases is in fact very Wittgensteinian, except that Wittgenstein does not map this structure onto different types of individuals. Nietzsche’s remarks that ‘the picture of things still moves and shifts continually’ and ‘there is certainly something to be said for the exception, *provided it never wants to become the rule*’ [GS 76] have close analogues in Wittgenstein’s thought; see chapter 4 of the present work for discussion of these issues.

¹⁴ Needless to say, this does not preclude the possibility of a conversion to a new framework: after all, such a conversion is precisely what MacIntyre and (as I argue in the next chapter) Nietzsche are attempting to achieve.

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world', rather than as a system of 'reference to things in the world' [Conway 1989: 21]. Languages are systems essentially interwoven with practice.

A further idea in this vein (though it is not an idea Wittgenstein himself expresses) is that it is only through their being embedded in such a framework that individuals are constituted as individuals. One element to this idea is the thought that individuals are necessarily constituted by the ends towards which they are oriented.¹⁵ Charles Taylor remarks that we are defined as selves only within the 'frame or horizon' provided by our 'commitments' [Taylor 1992: 27]. Another element is that individuals are necessarily constituted by membership in a community: 'One is a self only among other selves' [Taylor 1992: 35].¹⁶ Our identity as selves is constituted by our role within a social framework:

I am brother, cousin and grandson, member of this household, that village, this tribe. These are not characteristics that belong to human beings accidentally, to be stripped away in order to discover 'the real me'. [MacIntyre 2007: 33]

These two elements are related inasmuch as it is through being embedded in a form of life that I am oriented towards ends.

Note that this constitutive necessity is distinct from the causal necessity discussed earlier. Leiter claims that certain psycho-physical type facts are causally necessary for particular life trajectories, but we could also consistently claim that social structures can be causally necessary for particular life trajectories too: Nietzsche describes the causal impact of institutions and customs on the development of the trajectory of drives in e.g. *D 38* ('the same drive evolves into a painful feeling of *cowardice* under the impress of the reproach custom has imposed upon this drive: or into the pleasant feeling of *humility* if it happens that a custom such as the Christian has taken it to its heart and called it *good*')¹⁷ and *D 27* ('The institution of marriage obstinately maintains the belief that love, though a passion, is yet

¹⁵ An idea anticipated in Nietzsche's account of the constitution of the self by end-directed drives; see Gemes 2009 for discussion.

¹⁶ Note that for Taylor, this is tantamount to saying that we only exist as selves in *language*: 'A self exists only within what I call "webs of interlocution"' [Taylor 1992: 36].

¹⁷ See also David Velleman's discussion of empirical research suggesting that 'Subjects can be led to act annoyed or euphoric depending on whether they are led to believe, of artificially induced feelings of arousal, that they are symptoms of annoyance or euphoria' [Velleman 2005: 66].

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capable of endurance [...] All institutions which accord to a passion *belief in its endurance* and responsibility for its endurance, contrary to the nature of passion, have raised it to a new rank'). But in Leiter's curious example of the person who becomes a basketball player [Leiter 1998: 224], the necessity of the existence of the social practice of basketball for that person to become a basketball player is of a different order from the (supposed) causal necessity of that person's having certain psycho-physical characteristics. No matter what else they did, that person could never be a basketball player unless 'basketball' existed as a social practice. Furthermore, they would not count as practising the role of basketball player well or badly in the absence of such a practice. In Nietzsche's own examples, we might think that the customs and institutions in question do not merely causally alter the trajectory of drives but that what those drives *are* depends on the social and institutional setting within which they exist: it is in this sense, for instance, that 'no one in late twentieth-century Europe can experience the pride of a Samurai warrior' [Mulhall 2001: 251].

The pattern of activity embodied in social structures such as 'basketball' or 'Christianity' includes interpretative activity using a certain conceptual vocabulary: for instance, in the example I cited from *Daybreak*, the 'transformation' of drives by the 'institution of marriage' is effected through the introduction of a 'new *suprahuman* concept' [D 27]. As part of a form of life, such interpretative activity may play a distinct role in causally circumscribing the life trajectories of those who share in that form of life, as well as in causally circumscribing the future development of the form of life itself. It may also be constitutively necessary for trajectories or structures within the form of life to be the trajectories or structures that they are: there could be no basketball players or practice of basketball without a vocabulary of basketball.

Alongside 'form of life', Wittgenstein occasionally uses another term for an overarching orienting framework which appears to place greater emphasis on this sphere of *conceptualisation*: namely, 'world-picture'. A 'world-picture' is 'the substratum of all my enquiring and asserting' [OC 162] and 'the inherited background against which I distinguish between true and false' [OC 94]. David Egan describes such pictures as 'pre-theoretical frameworks' [Egan 2011: 64] – echoing Mulhall's definition: a picture is a 'pretheoretical framework or orientation' [Mulhall 2001: 37]. Such a world-picture orients our theorising

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but is not itself a theory (and hence is not on the same level as the theories of which one can meaningfully ask 'Is it true or false?' [OC 162]). Depending on which picture we are operating with, certain questions will not arise: for instance, in *PI*:352 the person who operates with a confused and confusing philosophical picture will be confronted with perplexing questions that would simply dissipate if they turned to a different picture instead. Through circumscribing which questions arise, pictures make possible 'a certain kind or range of theorizing' [Mulhall 2001: 37]: theories attempt to provide answers to those questions which *do* arise, but can do so only because there are limits on which questions arise.

Other thinkers describe frameworks which orient practical activity through embodying conceptions of goodness or value. Taylor claims that we are oriented in the 'moral space' within which we inevitably find ourselves by frameworks which provide 'the horizon within which [we are] capable of taking a stand' on questions of 'what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what [we] endorse or oppose' [Taylor 1992: 27]. They also thereby provide the horizon within which such questions arise; such questions 'inescapably pre-exist for us' [Taylor 1992: 30] but precisely which questions arise or make sense to us is circumscribed; hence, 'a set of questions make sense to us [moderns] which would not have been fully understandable in earlier epochs' [Taylor 1992: 16]. On Gaita's view, the primary defect in the orientation of the slave-owner (or, indeed, of the academic consequentialist theorist) is not so much that they come up with the wrong answers to moral questions but that they treat some things which are unquestionably evil or unquestionably good as if their status were subject to doubt; 'for someone who understands the nature of evil, certain deeds and thoughts are not an option' [Gaita 2004: 22; cf 229ff, 308ff].

Taylor notes that a framework usually remains 'largely implicit', unless 'there is some challenge which forces it to the fore' [Taylor 1992: 9] – as, for instance, when we are forced to 'spell out what it is that we presuppose when we judge that a certain form of life is truly worthwhile' [Taylor 1992: 26]. But Taylor credits Wittgenstein with the insight that such 'articulation can by its very nature never be completed. We clarify one language with another.' [Taylor 1992: 34]. If frameworks are challenged, they must be challenged from the standpoint of a framework which 'stands unquestioned' [Taylor 1992: 16].

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Taylor claims that some higher-order frameworks ('hypergoods') 'provide the standpoint' from which other frameworks 'must be weighed, judged, decided about' [Taylor 1992: 63]. In his reading of Nietzsche, Robert Pippin talks in similar terms of 'depth commitments' to certain ends which resolve conflicts between hierarchically anterior 'thin' or 'surface' commitments to other ends [Pippin 2010: 27–28]. These depth commitments, as the standpoint from which our deliberations are oriented, are themselves not typically 'subject to reflective, rational deliberation' [Pippin 2010: 29].

A world-picture, then, seems to occupy much the same role as a 'form of life': a prior, unchosen framework that orients and delimits a field of deliberative activity. Given this similarity of role, it is quite possible that Wittgenstein essentially intends the terms 'world-picture' and 'form of life' as synonyms (it is hard to know, given how little Wittgenstein says about 'world-pictures'). Alternatively, Conway suggests that a 'world-picture' is in fact an 'express articulation' of a 'form of life' (or at least an attempt at such an articulation); on Wittgenstein's view, these articulations are likely to 'strike us as odd' because the certainties embodied in a form of life cannot usually be meaningfully vocalised [Conway 1989: 85]. Conway's view likewise entails that there are not multiple competing types of implicit framework.

However, we may want to think of 'world-pictures' as frameworks that can to some extent come apart from social and practical structures. One reason we might want to make this distinction in the present context is in order to distinguish different views about the direction from which the 'death' of a framework diagnosed by Nietzsche is supposed to come. Both Pippin and Taylor believe that it is possible for certain orienting frameworks to become 'dead' to us [Taylor 1992: 96–97, Pippin 2010: 32] – that is to say, they cease to function for us as overarching orienting frameworks or depth commitments – without this 'death' being straightforwardly reducible to changes in 'material conditions'¹⁸ [Pippin 2010: 32]. Taylor notes that:

Sometimes it is thought that the large-scale institutional changes of the modern world [...] conspire to undermine all traditional forms of allegiance and belief [...] But this explanation won't resist close examination. [...] The evidence of non-Western societies is perhaps not yet fully in, but it doesn't indicate an unambiguous causal effect of

¹⁸ i.e. forms of social organisation and activity.

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these major ‘modernizing’ institutional changes. It rather appears as though each civilization will live through these changes in its own characteristic way. In at least some sectors in the West, it seems that unbelief was bound up with what was understood culturally as ‘modernity’, and *that* is why these changes have helped to spread it here. [Taylor 1992: 310]¹⁹

This does not mean, however, that world-pictures as orienting frameworks can be wholly detached from their social and practical setting. For a start, it is only through being enacted in patterns of practice that ‘world-pictures’ are able to orient us or set horizons. Gaita, for instance, notes that the slave-owner cannot regard a slave girl as an ‘intelligible object’ of love because: ‘we could not love what did not have a face [...] The slave girl had a face, but it was not one her master could find in the poetry which informed the language of love which taught him what love was’ [Gaita 2004: 161–62]; practices of poetry and story-telling shape what count as the horizons of intelligibility within the slave-owner’s form of life.²⁰ Likewise, Taylor claims that

a vision of the good becomes available for the people of a given culture through being given expression in some manner. The God of Abraham exists for us (that is, belief in him is a possibility) because he has been talked about, primarily in the narrative of the Bible but also in countless other ways from theology to devotional literature. And also because he has been talked *to* in all the different manners of liturgy and prayer. [Taylor 1992: 91]

¹⁹ Taylor’s discussion continues: ‘Why do certain life goods become prominent, virtually undeniable, in a given age? [...] Certainly, the underlying development of social, economic, and political forms plays a part; for example, the first stages in the rise of capitalism and the modern bureaucratic state were crucial to the story we’ve been following. But these can never provide sufficient reasons. The outcome crucially depends on the kind of moral culture these forms are interwoven with.’ [Taylor 1992: 316]. In certain respects, this parallels an unpublished remark in which Nietzsche explicitly denies that ‘social hardship’ or ‘physiological degeneration’ are the causes of the malaise of modernity, since ‘these can still be interpreted in very different ways’; rather the problem lies in ‘a *very particular interpretation*, the Christian-moral one’ [WLN, p. 83; KSA XII.2[127]]. Note that this directly contradicts other unpublished notes, such as WLN, p. 5; KSA XI.34[67] (which I discussed earlier), which assert that the cause of the malaise *is* physiological in nature; this should give us pause for thought before relying too heavily on these provisional, unfinished remarks.

²⁰ Martha Nussbaum also emphasises the role of stories in training people and enabling their initiation into forms of life: ‘Stories [...] contain and teach forms of feeling, forms of life’ [Nussbaum 1988: 226]. In the same piece, she also emphasises the educational role of forms of life themselves: ‘The evaluative beliefs that ground our emotional life are not learned in logical arguments [...] They are learned through exposure – usually very early and very habitual – to complex social forms of life, in which these beliefs and the related emotions are housed, so to speak, and by which, for the individuals who learn them, they are constructed.’ [Nussbaum 1988: 233].

Conceptual or evaluative frameworks can come to be out of sync with the patterns of practical activity which they articulate, so that

ideas and practices may come to be out of true [sic] with each other [...]Change can come about in both directions [...] [Indeed] in any concrete development in history, change is occurring both ways. The real skein of events is interwoven with threads running in both directions. [Taylor 1992: 205]

A version of a point made by Owen (with regard to Nietzsche) may be helpful here in clarifying the relation in question. Owen claims that

The *actual* ways in which we recognise ourselves and others as particular selves and others opens up a field of *possible* ways of acting on ourselves and others, while the *actual* ways in which we act on ourselves and others (and are acted on by others) opens up a field of *possible* ways of recognising ourselves and others. [Owen 1995: 41]²¹

Similarly: our actual conceptual or evaluative frameworks may circumscribe the range of possible practical and social structures, while our actual practical and social structures circumscribe the range of possible conceptual or evaluative frameworks. This could be both a circumscription of future trajectories (i.e. a limitation on the next stage of the development of the form of life: once this stage of development has been completed, different future trajectories will result due to a change in what is now actual) and of what actual world-pictures are compatible with what social and practical structures: not every world-picture could be 'at home' or rooted' in every social order.

2.3 Loss or proliferation of frameworks?

In the previous section, I expanded on the notion of a form of life: an interwoven biological, linguistic, conceptual and sociological matrix that frames our deliberative practices. Depending on one's precise interpretation, one of these elements may be emphasised over the others (and perhaps some elements may be reducible to others), but I don't propose to resolve that interpretative question here. The question I am interested in regards the nature of the disturbance in forms of life that Nietzsche claims has taken place

²¹ Note that Owen appends a footnote to this remark: 'Recognition does not have to be conscious, just bodily.' [Owen 1995: 53]. This leaves it open for naturalists to couch a version of the same point in their preferred terms, should they wish.

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in modernity, not precisely how this notion of a ‘form of life’ should be cashed out. Nietzsche describes various forms that such a disturbance could take that are more or less neutral with regard to how precisely we construe the internal make-up of forms of life. This is reflected in the fact that across his descriptions of such disturbances, Nietzsche variously conceives of the frameworks that are being disturbed as primarily biological, sociological or linguistic, moving relatively freely between these different conceptions.

The most obvious form that such a disturbance in a form of life could take would be a collapse or disintegration so that it no longer oriented us or framed our horizons, leading to incessant doubts arising about how to go on. This certainly seems to be the type of disturbance that Nietzsche’s madman is announcing when he proclaims the death of God. This disintegration could be construed in terms of a material breakdown in social structures (institutions, practices, socio-political systems) – either ones which play a causally formative role in creating individuals who do not have certain doubts,²² or ones which play an ongoing role in sustaining or constituting social roles from within which certain doubts do not arise. It could also be construed in terms of a diminution in the orienting power of a certain world-picture or language of worship,²³ perhaps partially in consequence of material (or, on a certain view, biological) changes, such as the breakdown of practices of storytelling or ritual: this is what Pippin has in mind when he notes that ‘the depth of the most important shared commitments in the Christian-humanist form of life is “thinning out rapidly”’ [Pippin 2010: 29].

However, countless forms of life have ‘died’ in this sense throughout history. It’s not immediately obvious why the death of the Christian (or pre-modern) form of life in particular should strike Nietzsche as uniquely tumultuous or dangerous. Where one form of life has waned, it has always been replaced by another. The transitional period is unsettling but temporary, as unfamiliar novelties become incorporated into a new framework. In the ‘History’ essay and elsewhere, Nietzsche describes how the accumulation of historical and scientific data can overturn traditional certainties: for instance, Darwin’s

²² On which point, it is worth noting that the early Nietzsche wrote extensively on the need for reform of German educational institutions.

²³ Many Modernist thinkers and authors (from Hugo von Hofmannsthal onwards) came to feel detached from language in general; see Sass 1992: 185ff for a detailed discussion.

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discovery of evolution shattered a host of certainties about the place of human beings in the natural and cosmic order. In her interpretation of Wittgenstein, Danièle Moyal-Sharrock describes the same process: due to developments in science and technology, beliefs such as ‘Human beings cannot walk on the moon’ or ‘A human being must be the offspring of two human beings’ go from being ‘disposition[s] that ha[ve] no meaningful verbal occurrence (an unmentioned norm)’ to being hypotheses that it makes sense to assert, deny or doubt. The former certainty ‘A human being must be the offspring of two human beings’ can now meaningfully be uttered as a sentence that is known to be false, because its inverse – the sentence ‘A human being can be the offspring of a single human being’ – remains ‘a hypothesis’ and ‘a novelty’; hence,

it still *bears saying*; its occurrence can be verbal. The repetition, drill, familiarity, banality, needed for it to become a hinge – that is, a disposition that can only meaningfully manifest itself ineffably – have not yet occurred. [Moyal-Sharrock 2004: 141–42]

But the words ‘still’ and ‘yet’ are significant here: it is only a matter of time before our form of life will come to be reconfigured around the new beliefs, which will thenceforth be unsayable certainties which frame our activity and thought: as, for instance, ‘Human beings can walk on the moon’ has replaced ‘Human beings cannot walk on the moon’.

What Nietzsche often seems to be suggesting is different in the present case is that the sheer volume of data that is accumulated in modernity threatens to exceed the threshold of what can be incorporated into a new framework, so that moderns remain permanently uprooted without new frameworks replacing the ones that have ‘died’. More often, however, the thrust of Nietzsche’s claims that the moderns are ‘overloaded’ is not so much that data overload has deprived moderns of a framework, but rather that it is precisely with frameworks that they are overloaded. The worry is that through excessive exposure to other forms of life, the moderns have become detached from their own form of life. ‘Learning many languages’, Nietzsche warns, ‘is the axe that is laid at the roots of a feeling for the nuances of one’s own mother tongue: it incurably injures and destroys any such feeling’ [HAH 267].

The analogy to the case of the polyglot can be construed in two distinct ways. Firstly, the ‘exposure’ to other frameworks can take the form of awareness of

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or knowledge about other frameworks – in which case excessive exposure would amount to a particular type of data overload i.e. an overload of data about other forms of life. Nietzsche quotes Niebuhr to describe the consequences of such knowledge: it forces us to recognise the ‘chance nature of the form assumed by the eyes through which [even the greatest and highest spirits of our human race] see’ [UM II:1, p. 65]. The thought here is that no one framework can make a unique claim to be privileged above all others when compared against the frameworks provided by the countless different forms which human life has assumed throughout the ages, and hence to someone who is aware of these other frameworks it will appear arbitrary to judge matters from within the framework of the form of life within which one happens to find oneself by historical accident; consequently, from this vantage point, one ‘could no longer feel any temptation to go on living or to take part in history’ [UM II:1, p. 65]. Secondly, ‘exposure’ can take the form of excessive *participation* in different frameworks (analogous to speaking languages other than one’s native tongue). In the modern settings described by Nietzsche, different forms of life exist in close proximity and their borders are sufficiently porous for individuals to be able to inhabit different forms of life at different times. Conway remarks that the experience of shifting between ‘widely varying cultures’ can, rather than ‘increasing mutual respect for other perspectives’, result in the ‘the vertigo of conventionality’ and a diminution in ‘the esteem one feels for one’s own perspective. Everything becomes leveled.’ [Conway 1989: 1–2]. This consequence is much the same as the Niebuhrian standpoint described by Nietzsche, but for reasons that shall become apparent shortly it is nonetheless important to distinguish the two different forms of ‘exposure’ to other frameworks.

Both these claims about the consequence of ‘exposure’ to other frameworks should also be distinguished from the claim that, in modernity, the moderns’ form of life has been destroyed by the encroachment of other forms of life. In the same unpublished note cited earlier, Nietzsche appears to suggest that this encroachment could be biological in nature: ‘Scepticism is the expression of a certain *physiological* constitution, one inevitably produced in the great crossing of many races: the many inherited valuations struggle with each other, hinder each other’s growth’ [WLN, p. 5; KSA XI.34[67]]. Elsewhere, the feared encroachment is sociological in nature: an influx of structural elements from foreign forms of life has resulted in a chaos in which the elements do not

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mesh together to form an overall unity but merely an aggregate. Moderns face the danger of 'being overwhelmed by what [is] past and foreign' and "German culture" and religion is now a struggling chaos of all the West and of all past ages' [UMI:10, p. 122].²⁴ Zarathustra describes a nightmarish vision of a future society that represents the apotheosis of this trend:

All ages and all peoples gaze motley out of your veils; all customs and all beliefs speak motley out of your gestures [...] [You] are paintings of all that has ever been believed [...] You are unfruitful [...] You are walking refutations of belief itself [...] Even the inhabitants of the underworld are fatter and fuller than you. [Z, Of the Land of Culture]²⁵

It would of course be disappointing, to put it mildly, if Nietzsche turned out to be a crude advocate of monoculturalism, anxious to shield some fragile bastion of purity against the corruption of outside influences. Fortunately, this is not Nietzsche's considered position: especially as he increasingly distances himself from Wagnerianism in his later works, Nietzsche's overriding cultural and philosophical agenda is to encourage the exploration and absorption of many different cultural frameworks and perspectives (see e.g. AOM 323). Few authors are better placed than Nietzsche to recognise that frameworks are always hybrid and becoming.²⁶ Moreover, even if we did accept that the experience of being confronted with a proliferation of frameworks is a deleterious feature of the modern condition, there are good reasons to believe that the types of account outlined above fail to capture the sense in which it is deleterious.

One claim was that the moderns are privy to such an excessive volume of data that they are not only uprooted from the traditional certainties embodied in their form of life but are unable to settle into a new form of life. However, merely being presented with data is not sufficient to overturn a framework. A framework is not like a theory which can be falsified by a single piece of data;

²⁴ Note that Nietzsche considers this analogous to the danger faced by Greek culture: 'They never lived in proud inviolability: their "culture" was, rather, for a long time a chaos of foreign, Semitic, Babylonian, Lydian, Egyptian forms and ideas.' [UMI:10, p. 122]. This would be another reason to suppose that the crisis of the 'death of God' is not unprecedented or uniquely dangerous.

²⁵ Cf 'The strong, weight-bearing one in whom dwell respect and awe: they have laden too many *foreign* heavy words and values upon themselves – now life seems to them a desert!' [Z, Of the Spirit of Gravity: 2]. As we will recall from chapter 1, the 'desert' also symbolises the condition of the instinctless moderns in the 'History' essay [UM II:4, p. 84].

²⁶ See chapter 4 of the present work for elaboration on this point.

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rather, a framework sets a filter or horizon on what counts as intelligible within that framework. If empirical data demonstrating the fact of evolution had been disseminated in pre-modern Christian Europe, this data would have posed no existential threat to the pre-modern form of life because such facts would not have been admissible within that framework. In order for empirical data to be able to dislodge some traditional certainty from its place in a framework, changes must usually first be wrought on the framework to make it receptive to the empirical data. The possibility of a framework being uprooted in its entirety by an influx of data would be determined not by the quantity of data but by the status of the framework itself; a properly functioning framework would not be vulnerable. Similarly, possessing knowledge about other forms of life need not lead to anxiety about the arbitrariness of one's own form of life. Knowledge of other cultures is acquired from within the unquestioned horizons of one's own form of life and these horizons would not typically admit the acquisition of such knowledge to bring that form of life itself into question.

The claim that knowledge of other forms of life could uproot one from one's own form of life by making a preference for that form of life seem arbitrary gets things entirely the wrong way round: it is only where one has already been uprooted from a particular form of life that it will seem arbitrary to prefer that form of life over any one of countless others. When *The Birth of Tragedy* describes 'mythless man' as 'surrounded by every past there has ever been', this surfeit of knowledge of other forms of life is not the *cause* of mythlessness: this knowledge has not stripped away the 'horizon surrounded by myths' that 'encloses and unifies a cultural movement' [BT 23, pp. 108–9]. Rather, it is precisely because myth has died that this horizon has vanished and mythless man is now condemned to

scraping and digging in a search for roots, even if he has to dig for them in the most distant antiquities The enormous historical need of dissatisfied modern culture, the accumulation of countless other cultures, the consuming desire for knowledge – what does all this point to, if not to the loss of myth, the loss of a mythical home, a mythical, maternal womb? [BT 23 p. 109]

This suggests that knowledge of countless forms of life is not what has caused the disturbance in moderns' form of life; rather, they acquire such knowledge as a result of the 'death' of their form of life either because they are motivated

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to acquire such knowledge in order find a replacement form of life or because they now lack a horizon which would shield them against acquiring such knowledge.

But what if the exposure to other forms of life does not take the form of knowledge of them but participation in them? If I frequently switch between different frameworks, I will cease to be firmly rooted in one form of life which provides unquestioned horizons. However, it does not follow from this that I need ever be struck by a sense of the arbitrariness of perspectives; while I may inhabit different frameworks at different times, whichever framework I *currently* occupy would provide me with unquestioned horizons. Furthermore, I may not be able to adopt a perspective on my own situation in which I am struck by the fact of my apparently capricious shifting between different perspectives, because that perspective could be excluded by each of the various horizons within which I find myself at different times.²⁷

However, this could only be the case if the plurality of forms of life that co-exist within modern society are each fleshed out as frameworks capable of providing a vantage point that moderns can participate in. If modern society were just a formless, motley aggregate composed of fragments of different forms of life, these fragments would amount neither individually nor collectively to a framework. But various difficulties lie in supposing that modern life is formless chaos (except, at least, for the minimal framework provided by the general human form of life). Firstly, if individuals are constituted by their place within a form of life, then if there were no form of life there would be no individuals (the general form of life is too thin to suffice for constituting individuals). This may be a bullet that Nietzsche (contra most philosophers) would be willing to bite,²⁸ but only with regard to a future society (the Land of Culture or that of the Last Men) since his own critique of modernity must spring from within a framework in which Nietzsche himself is constituted as an individual. Secondly, Nietzsche indicates that the moderns *do* have a form of life. In the 'History' essay, he remarks that the moderns are

²⁷ Alternatively, I might be able to adopt a perspective on my own shifts between different perspectives from the vantage point of a cosmopolitan framework from within which such shifts are not experienced as destabilising – at least, provided I do not shift away from the cosmopolitan framework itself.

²⁸ Ken Gemes has argued [2009] that Nietzsche really does think that most human beings are not persons: personhood is not a given for every human but something that must be *achieved*.

habituated to their ‘disorderly, stormly and conflict-ridden household’ and have acquired a ‘second nature’, albeit one that is ‘much weaker, much more restless, and thoroughly less sound than the first’ [UM II:4, p 78]. They are, as it were, habituated to their loss of habitual and instinctive certainty.²⁹ Furthermore and more substantially, there clearly is such a thing as a typically modern form of life which is not even approximately formless: a form of life exemplified above all by *the city*, which far from being a motley chaos is a sprawling, complex system. Indeed, if anything, the modern form of life seems to be characterised by greater systematisation and regulating order than earlier societies. Correspondingly, Julian Young detects a tension in Nietzsche’s writings on the ‘motley’ nature of modernity:

On the one hand, he claims modernity to be a motley ‘chaos’. But on the other, he seems to attribute to it an unhealthy *order*: that of (disguised) Christian morality. [Young 2010: 421]

So there are difficulties both with the view that the moderns have been uprooted from their form of life through exposure to other forms of life, and also with the view that modernity is formless, unframed chaos. But if their frameworks have not been disturbed in either of these ways, why is Nietzsche so drawn to talk about the condition of modernity in terms of the ‘death’ of frameworks and the loss of horizons?

In the following section, I offer an alternative explanation (rooted in Wittgenstein’s portrayal of his interlocutor’s pathological orientation) for the nature of the disturbance to frameworks that accounts for why Nietzsche chooses to describe the predicament of modernity in the way that he does but which avoids the difficulties associated with the other two views.

2.4 Misorientation towards orienting frameworks

Coming to inhabit a framework is analogous to becoming fluent in a language, and so the ‘death’ of a framework is equivalent to ceasing to be a native speaker of a language. The non-fluent speaker will have doubts about how to construct or interpret sentences in that language which would not occur to a native speaker. In his later writings, Wittgenstein confronts an interlocutor

²⁹ Nietzsche’s remark that the moderns ‘chatter’ about new ideas but ‘go on doing what they have always done’ [UM II:5, p. 87] is noteworthy in this regard; it prompts the thought that their talk of new ideas is mere ‘chatter’ because they are still acting out the instinctive certainties that they officially disavow.

who is plagued by such doubts. But there is a crucial difference between Wittgenstein's interlocutor and the non-native speaker of a language. There is nothing pathological or dysfunctional about such a beginning speaker's deliberations: they occur at an appropriate juncture where there is a genuine doubt about how to go on, and where deliberation can play a useful role in determining how to go on. By contrast, Wittgenstein's interlocutor is a perfectly fluent speaker of the language who insists on raising questions about how to go on (and formulating answers to those questions) without discriminating between appropriate and inappropriate junctures for doubt. The interlocutor fears that, unless and until such questions are raised and corresponding answers formulated, they will lack any guarantee that they are going on correctly with a technique or activity.

The interlocutor's insistence on raising questions indiscriminately prevents them from being oriented by the framework from within which such questions do not normally arise. They are, as it were, improperly oriented towards the framework which is supposed to orient them. This type of misorientation can occur occasionally even in the normal course of events. Moyal-Sharrock imagines a dance student who holds back from trusting their instincts and has to be instructed 'trust your body!' [Moyal-Sharrock 2004: 194]. Through thinking excessively about their body and movements, the student is unable to avail themselves of the embodied certainty which would steer them unconsciously through the dance if they allowed it.³⁰

It may even be the case that frameworks themselves can also occasionally trip us up so that we become misoriented towards them. Wittgenstein famously claims that many confused philosophical questions arise because

a *picture* held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably. [*PI* I:115]

³⁰ John Richardson's interpretation of Nietzsche's account of life and drives has a similar structure. On Richardson's view, Nietzsche holds that 'our *deepest* drives and aims are healthy, and track power' [Richardson 2013: 780] but that other drives misorient us towards these healthy drives. 'Most of the trick' will be to allow ourselves to be guided by these healthy drives by 'giving the body more place in our lives—and principle-driven deliberation less' [Richardson 2013: 779]. However, it is not in general necessary to the type of structural misorientation I am interested in that it be directed towards a specifically *physiological* framework.

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As Conway puts it ‘language itself can be misleading’ and ‘become knotted’, so that it requires ‘disentanglement’ [Conway 1989: 163] through philosophical therapy that frees us either from the problematic picture or from our problematic way of applying the picture, so that we become re-oriented and cease asking confused and confusing questions.³¹

But the interlocutor’s misorientation goes deeper than an occasional blip and amounts to an enduring pathological attitude towards frameworks.

Wittgenstein says that ‘the reasonable person *does not have* certain doubts’ [OC 220] – and by this measure, the interlocutor is *unreasonable*. Gaita modifies this point in a Wittgensteinian spirit: according to Gaita, the problem with people who raise certain doubts is not that ‘they cannot reason’ but that the ‘proper exercise of our critical concepts – the concept of sufficient evidence, for example – depends upon them not being exercised by cranks and madmen’:

If someone insanely believes that his food is poisoned, you cannot prove otherwise to him, because anything that would count, for us, as a proof is vulnerable to his paranoid ingenuity. [Gaita 2004: 309]

For Gaita, it is not merely *reasonable* not to have certain doubts (in Gaita’s example: ‘Normally, if we ask someone his name and he tells us, then we believe him’), because it would not be merely *unreasonable* to have these doubts, but *insane*. [Gaita 2004: 309]

Sass reports precisely this kind of indiscriminate doubt in one of his patients with schizophrenia:

One patient I interviewed, for example, was preoccupied with doubts about the trustworthiness of history. He justified his skepticism by

³¹ I expand on such therapeutic approaches in my next chapter. Note that Nietzsche famously similarly claims that ‘A philosophical mythology lies concealed in *language* which breaks out again every moment’ [WS 11] and that this mythology can incline us towards problematic philosophical conceptions: ‘Philosophers within the domain of the Ural-Altaic languages (in which the concept of the subject is least developed) will in all probability look “into the world” differently and be found on different paths from the Indo-Germans and Moslems.’ [BGE 20]. However, see also Steven Affeldt’s alternative reading of *PI* I:115 which rejects interpretations such as that offered by Conway; on Affeldt’s view, ‘§115 is not a neutral description of the nature of our language and how a picture lies within it and holds us captive [...] §115 is a description offered from within a process of self-captivation and self-bewitchment [...] We wish to conceive of language as simply containing traps which bewitch our intelligence in order to deny our own active role in the production of those traps and of our own bewitchment, in order to, in short, deny our “drive to misunderstand”.’ [Affeldt 1999: 265–67]. See the following chapter on the topic of being ‘held captive’ by pictures.

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asking how one could ever be sure that people weren't going into the archives and altering or replacing the pages they found there. It wasn't that these deceptive practices necessarily *did* occur; for him the fact that they were at least theoretically *possible* was quite sufficient, for he would then collapse any difference of degrees of probability, treating probable events and just barely possible ones in exactly the same way. [Sass 1992: 128]

Common to Wittgenstein's interlocutor, Gaita's crank and Sass's patient is that they confuse '*imaginary threats*' with 'serious possibilities' [Moyal-Sharrock 2004: 133]. Wittgenstein himself notes at one point that it would be insane to assert the untruth of things not susceptible of doubt [OC 155]. But it would also be superfluous to assert their truth, and Wittgenstein has a special name for one type of crank who does so: namely, *philosopher*. Famously, he recognises that philosophy could easily be mistaken for insanity:

I am sitting with a philosopher in the garden; he says again and again 'I know that that's a tree', pointing to a tree that is near us. Someone else arrives and hears this, and I tell them: 'This fellow isn't insane. We are only doing philosophy.' [OC 467]

The philosophical crank should be distinguished from the practitioner of philosophical therapy; whereas the latter assists in the 'disentanglement' of knots in language, the former 'ties the knots' [Conway 1989: 163] by pursuing empty lines of questioning.

Nietzsche's moderns are likewise pathologically indiscriminate in their exercise of the process of formulating and justifying assent to propositions. As he puts it in the third of the *Untimely Meditations*, they have 'grown accustomed to seeking the for and against in all things' [UM III:3, p. 144]. The 'History' essay generally describes a narrower portion of this wider tendency: namely, the impulse to endlessly accumulate historical data. According to Nietzsche, we need a 'powerful instinct for sensing when it is necessary to feel historically and when unhistorically' [UM II:1, p. 63] but this instinct is absent in his contemporaries. They lack a sense for what counts as an appropriate juncture to seek justification and evidence. This sense is likened to a healthy appetite; but the moderns consume (seek, formulate) knowledge 'for the greater part without hunger for it' [UM II:4, p. 78]. Despite lacking hunger, they nonetheless have an 'insatiable stomach' [UM II:10, p. 117] and German culture is in danger of 'perish[ing] of indigestion' [UM II:4, p. 79].

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'Honest hunger and thirst' [UM II:10, p. 117] have been replaced by the indiscriminate appetite of 'science' [*Wissenschaft*], a mode of scholarly inquiry akin to what Wittgenstein labels 'philosophy'. Science 'seeks to abolish all limitations of horizon and launch mankind upon an infinite and unbounded sea of light' [UM II:10, p. 120]. On the scientific conception, the unquestioned horizons of a form of life are limitations that must be superseded. The thought is that we have no reason to accept the legitimacy of whichever framework we contingently happen to have inherited, but must instead seek a firmer ground that provides ultimate justification for our systems of thought and action. Hence, the ideal scientific scholar would treat their own form of life as just one possible option among countless historical and hypothetical forms of life, none of which is regarded as having any privileged claim on them in advance of a justification being found to prefer it above all others.

This ideal of neutrality towards frameworks is peculiar to modernity; Taylor notes that unlike in earlier times, 'no framework is shared by everyone, can be taken for granted as *the* framework tout court, can sink to the phenomenological status of unquestioned fact' [Taylor 1992: 17]. The ideal is given expression in practical and theoretical liberalism, particularly in liberalism's conception of the individual as 'antecedently individuated' [Mulhall and Swift 1996: 71] prior to any framework. Liberalism supposes that the individual 'has some kind of inner being or personhood existing apart from or prior to his or her actions or social roles' [Sass 1992: 98] and as such is able to occupy a position beyond any form of life from which a choice between different forms of life can be made.

However, the enterprise of the scientific scholar is fatally self-undermining. Far from discovering 'eternal and stable' grounds, science sees everywhere only contingency and 'becoming': science deprives 'humankind of the foundation of all their rest and security', for it is not possible to live in science's 'sea of light' or to 'build a home' on the 'volcanic land' that remains after the '*concept-quake*' unleashed by science [UM II:10, pp. 120–21].

Wittgenstein's interrogation of his interlocutor in the *Investigations* makes clear precisely why this project is self-undermining. Like Nietzsche's scientific scholar, Wittgenstein's philosophically-minded interlocutor seeks an absolute ground for their conceptualising that provides an invulnerable assurance which contingent forms of life are considered to be unable to provide. The

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interlocutor believes this assurance can be found in explicit rules which exactly spell out the correct application of concepts. But Wittgenstein repeatedly demonstrates to his interlocutor that these rules would fall prey to the same hyperbolic doubt they are supposed to allay. If, having counted to 1,000 in 2s, we doubt whether we are supposed to continue '1,002' or '1,004', it will not help to be told that the formula for the sequence is '2n' (as opposed to e.g. '2n where $0 < n < 501$, $4n$ where $500 < n$ ') because we could just as well doubt how we are supposed to interpret the expression '2n': how do we know that we're not supposed to apply it differently on a Tuesday, or when we're following it for the 1,000th time? Faced with Wittgenstein's examples, the interlocutor now exclaims 'But how can a rule show me what I have to do at *this* point? Whatever I do is, on some interpretation, in accord with the rule.' [PII:198]. Any appeal to a special category of intuitions would likewise fail: when the interlocutor suggests that 'it must have been intuition that removed this doubt', Wittgenstein replies:

If intuition is an inner voice – how do I know *how* I am to obey it? And how do I know that it doesn't mislead me? [PII:213]

The philosopher or scientific scholar who is committed to provisionally treating all frameworks as equally ungrounded pending the discovery of an ultimate rational ground is thereby committed to treating all frameworks as ungrounded in perpetuity, because the search for an ultimate ground cannot even get started under this condition. The individual poised to choose between frameworks will be forced to conclude that any choice of framework would be a subjective whim without objective grounding.

Faced with this impasse, the only available recourse is to attempt to establish a *subjective* grounding by according absolute authority to the antecedently individuated self. On this conception, the horizons that encompass our world are not external limits within which the self is contained but are projections of that self onto reality. Sass describes this 'fateful development', whereby 'the world has come to be experienced *as* a view, as a kind of subjectivized picture' as having been 'initiated by Descartes, realized by the Kantians, and now reaching a curious and in some ways self-contradictory apotheosis in contemporary postmodernism and poststructuralism – human consciousness sets itself up as the foundation of all existence' [Sass 1992: 269]. But for Nietzsche, the view that the world is 'a *perspectival illusion* whose origins lie

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within us' would not ground us but would rather be the 'most extreme form of nihilism' (as he puts it in an unpublished note) [WLN, p. 148; KSA XII.9[41]]. Our subjective self can serve as the type of ground craved by the scientific scholar only at the cost of being treated as an *object* of scrutiny and inquiry:³² I look inwards to my self in order to answer the question: 'What subjective preference do I have which justifies my choice of this framework?'. This is something noted by both Sass and Taylor: Taylor remarks that, paradoxically, 'according a central place to the first-person stance' has

helped to create a picture of the human being, at its most extreme in certain forms of materialism, from which the last vestiges of subjectivity seem to have been expelled. It is a picture of the human being from a completely third-person perspective. [Taylor 1992: 175]

Sass likewise notes that

In addition to being felt as the ultimate subjective center, the constitutor of the All (or, at least, of all that *we* can know), consciousness beginning with Kant also became a prime *object* of study – and this development had various problematic consequences [Sass 1992: 328]

These 'problematic consequences' including the fracturing of the self into a disengaged observing subject and observed object, which 'undermines or contradicts the solipsistic sense of power and security' afforded through the conception of the self as the 'constitutor of the All' and 'may deplete the sense of subjectivity itself' [Sass 1992: 300–301]. The irony is that, in rendering the self as an object that is supposed to provide grounding, the scientific scholar has succeeded only in rendering it vulnerable to the same hyperbolic doubt it was supposed to block. If I must consult my own subjective preferences in order to assure myself of my justification for my choice of framework, a gap in my self has opened up which allows the question to arise: why should I (as observing self) trust what my observed self has chosen? How can I (as observing self) be sure *what* my observed self has chosen?³³

³² Similarly, Nietzsche's moderns in the 'History' essay attempt to treat their own culture as an object of knowledge.

³³ Recall Nietzsche's remarks in the 'History' essay on 'the remarkable antithesis between an interior which fails to correspond to any exterior and an exterior which fails to correspond to any interior' [UM II:4, p. 78]. Note that the attempt to establish a subjective grounding could be regarded as a misguided attempt to, in effect, set up the interior realm as its own exterior, which can result only in rendering everything as an interior (to which no exterior corresponds) or everything as an exterior (to which no

Thus, on the sceptical conception of Wittgenstein's interlocutor or Nietzsche's scientific scholar, 'sceptical doubts are not only articulable but irrefutable' [Mulhall 2001: 262]. The scholarly drive to 'abolish all limitations of horizon' depends on interpreting 'limits as limitations'. But, Mulhall notes,

it would only make sense to think of the conditions of human knowledge as limitations if we could conceive of another cognitive perspective upon the world that did not require them [...] What begins as an honourable attempt to guarantee our invulnerability to the sceptic's charge that our words are essentially unanchored in the real, ends by ensuring that we become guilty as charged. [Mulhall 2005: 94]

Wittgenstein rejects this conception which views frameworks as standing in need of grounding in an '*independent objective reality* or in a *transcendental subjectivity*' [Conway 1989: 137]. According to Wittgenstein, we do not need – and cannot obtain – the kind of guarantee that his interlocutor anxiously craves. 'If you tried to doubt everything you would not get as far as doubting anything. The game of doubting itself presupposes certainty.' [OC 115]. After all, doubting and seeking guarantees are themselves activities: if I had to allay my doubts about whether I was doubting correctly by seeking a guarantee, this would lead to an infinite regress, for I would also need to allay my doubts about whether I was doubting or seeking a guarantee correctly, etc. Furthermore, indiscriminate blanket doubt 'idles' because it fails to distinguish between genuine grounds for doubt, where formulating justification or furnishing evidence serves some particular point or function (for instance, to correct or regulate our conduct of some activity), and things that cannot meaningfully be doubted. If we doubt one of these latter things, we make it impossible for ourselves to ever be satisfied of its truth because any evidence that could be furnished for it would be no less susceptible of fantastical doubts than the original object of doubt. Wittgenstein asks pointedly: 'If I don't trust *this* evidence why should I trust any evidence?' [OC 672]. Our practices of reasoning, inferring from evidence, etc. depend on the fact that we do not doubt certain things.

Wittgenstein shows that it would be incoherent that anyone could occupy a position prior to all frameworks from which to judge between frameworks, because it is only from the vantage point of a framework that such judging can

interior corresponds). This attempt is misguided because it presupposes the interior/exterior antithesis rather than moving beyond it.

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proceed. Likewise, it would be incoherent to occupy a third-personal perspective on one's self that did not itself issue from the first-personal perspective of one's self. This was a point anticipated by Nietzsche: 'One who despises themselves still nonetheless respects themselves as one who despises.' [BGE 78]. He also, like Wittgenstein, recognises that reflection can only be initiated from a pre-reflective framework that is not itself subject to reflection: Nietzsche writes that if the living condemn life, then

the question whether the condemnation is just or unjust has not been raised at all. One would have to be situated *outside* life, and on the other hand to know it as thoroughly as any, as many, as all who have experienced it, to be permitted to touch on the problem of the *value* of life at all: sufficient reason for understanding that this problem is for us an inaccessible problem. When we speak of values we do so under the inspiration and from the perspective of life: life itself evaluates through us *when* we establish values. [TI, Morality as Anti-Nature: 5]³⁴

However, the fact that the pathological scientific/philosophical conception is incoherent does not mean it is powerless. As Mulhall and Adam Swift note with regard to MacIntyre's attack on liberalism (an attack which proceeds on a similar basis and against a similar target to Nietzsche's own enterprise), ideas which are discredited among 'academic political theorists' (such as the conception expressed by Wittgenstein's interlocutor) can nonetheless be central to the 'self-understandings and conceptions of moral and political life' that are dominant in our culture as a whole [Mulhall and Swift 1996: 22]. Sass likewise notes that ideas with dubious 'logical coherence' (Sass mentions Derrida's 'myth of the mirrors', a 'vision of a radical and depersonalized subjectivism' which is very similar to the position that Wittgenstein's interlocutor is ultimately forced to adopt) can nonetheless have 'psychological analogues' [Sass 1992: 281]. For instance, the conception of the antecedently individuated subject finds its expression in the modern phenomenon of 'role distance' in which individuals experience themselves as divided into 'a hidden, "inner" self that watches or controls, usually associated with the mind, and a

³⁴ Nietzsche makes a number of structurally parallel remarks in his earlier writings: e.g. 'Even if one is accustomed to and practised in reflecting on one's actions, when one is actually acting (though the action be no more than writing a letter or eating and drinking) one must nonetheless close one's inward eye' [WS 236]; 'Perfect knowledge kills action; indeed, if it refers to knowledge itself it kills itself. One cannot move a muscle if one first tries to know precisely what it takes to move a muscle. However, perfect knowledge is *impossible* and therefore action is possible.' [WEN, p. 19; KSA VII.3[10]].

public, outer self that is more closely identified with bodily appearance and social role and that tends to be felt as somehow false or unreal' [Sass 1992: 97] which, at its most extreme (in schizophrenia), can result in a loss of the sense of initiating one's own actions [Sass 1992: 214].

2.5 Frameworks against things which are also frameworks

Wittgenstein's portrayal of his interlocutor's pathological orientation towards frameworks provides us with the material to understand the nature of the pathology of Nietzsche's moderns: their misorientation towards frameworks, their ambition not to be framed by horizons, stands in the way of their being oriented by the frameworks in which they are embedded. But this is only half of the story: having drawn on Wittgensteinian themes to characterise the nature of the moderns' pathology, I now return to some points developed by Nietzsche to complete the story about the source of this pathology. I concluded the previous section by outlining considerations which imply the falsity of any conception according to which it is possible to conceptualise from a position prior to frameworks. But what Nietzsche recognises³⁵ is that these very same considerations show that any such conception must itself issue from within a framework. For Nietzsche, the conception which seeks to transcend the vantage point of life is itself 'the symptom of a certain kind of life: [...] declining, debilitated, weary, condemned life' [TI, Morality as Anti-Nature: 5]: it is from the perspective of a particular form of life that the attempt is made to call life in all its forms into question. Other authors similarly unmask parallel attempts to transcend other types of framework. Taylor claims that 'naturalism and utilitarianism' amount to moral frameworks of the very type they denounce [[Taylor 1992: 23]. Those moderns who reject tradition are acting in a 'tradition of "leaving home"':

Each young person may take up a stance which is authentically his or her own; but the very possibility of this is enframed in a social understanding of great temporal depth, in fact, in a 'tradition'. [Taylor 1992: 39]³⁶

³⁵ Affeldt claims to detect the same recognition in Wittgenstein: 'Wittgenstein must be suggesting that our expectations, natural reactions, forms of life, and the like, as they stand, are radically disordered or perverted' [Affeldt 2010: 277]. However, such suggestions are largely implicit.

³⁶ Cf Mulhall 2005: 6 on MacIntyre's gradual recognition in his later works that liberalism is itself a tradition which repudiates tradition.

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The 'characterless' modern self (the 'man without qualities') is itself a character type; the belief that Modernism is 'putting an end to fictions' and eschewing narrative form is itself 'an artfully constructed fiction' [Nussbaum 1988: 247].

What form of life would a misorienting conception of this kind be at home in? Wittgenstein never addresses this topic directly but seems to suggest that it is limited to the practices and institutions of academic philosophy. Other thinkers, including Nietzsche, consider it to be rooted in more broadly-based social structures. Abstracting and instrumentalising attitudes towards self and frameworks are reflected in the calculative, mechanised forms of activity undertaken in modernity and the systems of control which regulate such activity and produce agents capable of undertaking it. As Taylor puts it, these attitudes of 'disengagement' demand 'that we stop simply living in the body or within our traditions or habits and, by making them objects for us, subject them to radical scrutiny and remaking' [Taylor 1992: 175]. Spontaneous flows of activity, thought and feeling are subjected to frequent checks and regulation. Society is organised around the division of people's lives into individual private spheres, within which they are constantly confronted with decisions which require them to exercise volition or determine what their individual preference is; Nietzsche complains repeatedly³⁷ of the 'haste' in modernity, in which individuals are compelled to 'understand, grasp and assess in a moment' [UM II:5, p. 83] rather than being able to be guided by tradition or instinct.

According to MacIntyre, this division occurs within as well as between individual lives; 'modernity partitions each human life into a variety of segments [...] work is divided from leisure, private life from public, the corporate from the personal' [MacIntyre 2007: 204]. This liberal institutional order embodies a liberal conception of the public realm as a neutral arena within which individuals can pursue their preferences and form collaborations with other individuals. To members of pre-modern society, this liberal form of life would appear 'only as a collection of citizens of nowhere who have banded together for common protection' [MacIntyre 2007: 156] – though in fact the liberal institutional order is not the 'neutral arbiter' it pretends to be [Mulhall and Swift 1996: 32] but orients its citizens towards particular ends: whether

³⁷ Cf *UM* III:5, *GS* 6

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because the ideal liberal state is not neutral even in theory (because it necessarily prefers some goods over others, including the good of the liberal state itself)³⁸ or because in practice the liberal institutional order serves the interests of ‘impersonal capital’ [MacIntyre 2007: 227].

The liberal conception of the division of private and public is one instance of a more general picture in which some central ground is located beyond the ground occupied by some individual, such that the individual does not occupy the central ground prior to some sort of transition being effected. This conceptual geography is most strikingly mapped in the works of Franz Kafka, particularly in *The Castle*, which describes the efforts of the protagonist ‘K.’ to gain admission to the eponymous castle: the seat of authority in the town in which he finds himself. The attraction of this conception is that positioning the central ground in a definite (albeit distant) location promises to render the central ground capable (in principle) of being reached or circumscribed. But as Kafka’s parable recounts, this does not in fact prove possible: K.’s efforts to enter the castle are futile, and if any authority resides within it remains silent and elusive.³⁹

Nietzsche considers this conception to be part of the Christian world-picture, in which the ‘central ground’ (God, the self) is relegated to an inaccessible transcendental realm. This transcendentalising move is an expression of what Christine Swanton calls ‘hyperobjectivity’ – ‘a vice of resignation from the world’:

A form of disgust with all its messiness, plurality, particularity, resistance to systematization and codification. It exhibits as a desire for purity, escape, a will to absolutes and simplicity. [Swanton 2011: 299]

It is only by placing the central ground beyond the realm of contingency that Christianity can rid it of all traces of the intolerable features it strives to eliminate.⁴⁰ Martha Nussbaum remarks on this same attitude in her discussion of the voices in Samuel Beckett’s *Molloy* trilogy:

³⁸ Cf e.g. Mulhall and Swift 1996: 32, Mulhall 2005: 107

³⁹ Cf *An Old Manuscript*, another of Kafka’s stories: while the populace of a city endure attacks from nomadic raiders, the gates of the imperial palace stay shut and the emperor and his soldiers remain hidden from view inside, offering no help or solace to the people of the city.

⁴⁰ One element of this Christian intolerance for, and consequent need to eliminate, adverse states which is given especial prominence in Nietzsche’s writings is the drive

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Why is it that these voices are so intolerant of society and of shared forms of thought and feeling? Why aren't they willing to allow that the common to all might be and say themselves? Isn't it, really, because they are in the grip of a longing for the pure soul, hard as a diamond, individual and indivisible, coming forth from its maker's hand with its identity already stamped upon it? Don't they reject shared language because they long for a pure language of the soul itself by itself and for pure relationships among souls that will be in no way mediated by the contingent structures of human social life? Everywhere the voices turn, they find the group and its history. They cannot go beyond that. But this is a tragedy for them only because they are gripped by the conviction that nothing man-made and contingent could ever stand for them. Their very despair gives evidence of their deep religiosity. They have not been able to go far enough outside the Christian picture to see how to pose the problem of self-expression in a way that is not shaped by that picture. [Nussbaum 1988: 252]

The structure of the desire expressed in the Christian world-picture undercuts the possibility of its own fulfilment, because nothing can meet the absolute standards demanded. The ground on which they attempt to secure an absolutely firm footing vanishes beneath them as God is rendered transcendent – which is to say, empty. The death of God does not represent the end of the Christian picture's grip of us, but is itself framed within that picture. Mulhall remarks on Nietzsche's madman's paradoxical use of both spatial metaphors (in particular, 'falling') and metaphors describing the loss of spatial coordinates ('Is there still an up and a down?') to describe the death of God:

If the death of God precisely deprives of us of a framework within which to locate and track ourselves, why characterize its loss in terms which presuppose its retention? Nietzsche's choice of imagery here prevents us from regarding the condition he describes simply as a state of disorientation; it suggests instead the very specific kind of disorientation that Christianity calls 'the Fall'. [Mulhall 2005: 28]

Only someone whose horizons are framed by the Christian world-picture – who inhabits the peculiar conceptual geography described above – could experience the crisis of feeling themselves to be irrevocably sundered from all orienting frameworks and encompassing horizons.

to eliminate suffering. They 'want if possible – and there is no madder "if possible" – to abolish suffering' [BGE 225; cf AOM 187, GS 12, BGE 202]. In this regard, it is interesting to note that Wittgenstein too remarked that 'The way people are educated nowadays tends to diminish their capacity for suffering.' [CV, p. 71].

The possibility of freeing oneself from this experience of crisis depends on freeing oneself from this picture, which misorients us towards frameworks. It is noteworthy that in *The Castle*, characters often refer to the town as a whole being part of the grounds of the castle; hence, if he would only realise it, K. is *already* in the central ground he seeks.⁴¹ If we construe of ultimate grounds as objects to be grasped onto, in our conception we have deprived ourselves both of anything that we can grasp onto them with and of any object that we are capable of grasping, and so the ultimate grounds will constantly elude us. We would do better to understand them as a background or atmosphere. It is only through overcoming the Christian world-picture that the moderns will cease to be plagued by questions whose very form precludes the possibility of a satisfactory answer being obtained (cf May 1999: 183).

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that when Nietzsche proclaims the death of myth or death of God, the crisis he describes concerns complex orienting frameworks: forms of life, structures that interweave practice and conceptualisation. But his tendency to talk of this crisis in terms of the loss and disappearance of the Christian form of life (replaced by formless chaos) is misleading. Far from being deprived of the horizons of the Christian form of life, the moderns are more firmly in its grip than ever before. The highly systematic order of modern society continues, in secular form, many of the tendencies Nietzsche describes in the *Genealogy's* discussion of asceticism – most notably, the self-reflexive regulation of instinctive emotional impulses. These quasi-ascetic practices articulate a Christian world-picture of a kind of certainty based on grasping an absolute ground and, additionally, these practices also constitute the grounds of possibility for the pursuit of this absolute ground through scientific scholarship (an enterprise which demands a highly structured institutional basis, not formless chaos). However, in pursuing an absolute, unframed ground that is supposed to provide a more satisfactory calibre of certainty than any framework can, the moderns (like Wittgenstein's interlocutor) find that *all* certainty eludes them – except for the certainty, embedded in the Christian form of life, that certainty can only be obtained through such a pursuit of absolute grounds.

⁴¹ I owe this point to Godden 1977.

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This is the ‘disguised Christian morality’ that Young refers to; disguised both from those under its grip and, to some degree, from Nietzsche himself, who arguably sometimes loses sight of what is implied by his own analysis: in his rush to declaim the apparent fragmentation and loss of horizons in modernity, Nietzsche overlooks the extent to which these construals of modernity are framed by its characteristic form of life, which is anything *but* fragmented and unhorizoned.

One important qualification, however: while the moderns’ framework is ‘Christian’ in the sense that it corresponds in important respects to the framework Nietzsche designates ‘Christian’, this may not correspond to any or all actually Christian frameworks. Nietzsche’s ‘Christians’, who render the ultimate ground (God) as a transcendental entity rather than ‘a medium or system of coordinates’ [Mulhall 2005: 22] have more in common with the marketplace atheists addressed by Nietzsche’s madman than with the pre-modern Christians, for whom God was a living presence embodied in the world rather than an entity who transcended a disenchanted world.⁴² I shall explore Nietzsche’s slippery usage of ‘Christianity’ in greater detail in my final chapter.

⁴² See chapters 8 and 9 of Taylor 1992 for an evocative characterisation of this difference between the earlier Christian worldview and the later ‘Cartesian’ one.

3

Myths and pictures: Nietzsche's therapeutic method

«Ein Nietzschejahr wäre aber etwas Gutes.»

[...] «Na schön, gib acht: Du hast Nietzschejahr gesagt. Aber was hat denn Nietzsche eigentlich verlangt?»

Clarisse dachte nach. «Nun, ich meine natürlich nicht ein

Nietzschedenkmal oder eine Nietzschestraße» sagte sie verlegen. «Aber man müßte die Menschen dahin bringen, zu leben, wie-----»

«Wie er es verlangt hat?!» unterbrach er sie. «Aber was hat er verlangt?»

-Robert Musil¹

3.0 Introduction

In the preceding chapters, I have described Nietzsche's diagnosis of the pathological condition of his fellow moderns. But Nietzsche did not regard himself as a mere diagnostician: he also claimed to know how to cure (or at least treat) the moderns' condition. Moreover, while Nietzsche sometimes seems content simply to advocate the necessity of such a cure being carried out by someone (Wagner being the suggested candidate in Nietzsche's earlier works), in the course of his writings he increasingly claims to actually be providing the cure himself: 'I can write in letters which make even the blind see' [A 62] Nietzsche ambitiously (and perhaps hubristically) proclaims in the final section of *The Anti-Christ*.

In this chapter, I explore the nature and scope of Nietzsche's attempted cure. I argue that this therapeutic project should be distinguished from the method of reasoned argumentation towards a conclusion: its goal is not to persuade readers of the truth of a proposition, but to re-orient their entire way of

¹ *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, vol. I (Reinbek: Rohwolt Verlag, 2006 [1930]), pp. 352–54

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thinking and feeling. When Nietzsche declares his ambition to cure his readers of the 'blindness' of Christianity, he is claiming he can change their way of seeing (for blindness is, of course, a mode of sight – of *not* seeing). But 'ways of seeing'

are unaffected by reasons and refutations. One does not refute Christianity, just as one does not refute a defect of the eyes. [CW, Epilogue]

The change Nietzsche seeks to effect goes deeper than the change in opinion brought about in someone who accepts the conclusion of an argument; and consequently, he must use methods other than argumentation to bring such a change about.

Wittgenstein provides us with some of the concepts required to describe this alternative method: Wittgenstein's method of philosophical therapy does not consist in advancing theories to answer questions but instead in trying to free us from the grip of a *picture* which misorients our sense of what questions actually stand in need of answers. Nietzsche can likewise be understood as attempting to bring about a change in the picture which holds the moderns captive, though his preferred term is *myth* rather than *picture*. But what Wittgenstein's (and his interpreters') treatment of the notion of a 'picture' makes clear is the need for certain distinctions to be made which are not always explicitly made in Nietzsche's treatment of the notion of 'myth': in particular, (a) the distinction between a 'picture' or 'myth' as a means used to bring about a change in our way of seeing, and between a 'picture' or 'myth' as a way of seeing, and (b) the distinction between pictures/myths and applications of pictures/myths.

My discussion in this chapter is structured around these distinctions. I map out in detail various strands to Nietzsche's therapeutic project: his creation of new myths to re-orient the moderns towards a new, affirmative Dionysian or Zarathustrian faith, his re-application of existing (Christian) myths and pictures, the methods he uses to prise his readers free from pernicious myths or pernicious modes of applying pictures. Mapping out his project in this way makes it possible to clearly outline what Nietzsche needs his methods to achieve and what obstacles potentially stand in the way of this goal: both external (his readers' lack of receptivity to his methods) and internal (his particular implementation of the therapeutic method may undermine its

ability to achieve its goal). However, for the most part I am interested here in rendering the structure of Nietzsche's project perspicuous rather than engaging in critical assessment of its success or failure (though I do outline in conclusion a number of considerations, some of which Nietzsche was himself aware of, which weigh against the possibility of Nietzsche's project achieving full success).

3.1 Methodologies

In this section, I offer an overview of a number of methods that Nietzsche proposes or practices (at least on some interpretations) as a cure for the moderns' pathology. In each case, I show that these methodologies are either inadequate to their goal or amount to a part of the therapeutic project of changing the picture or myth that orients the moderns (either because they are a version of such therapy or complement its implementation).

(i) *Physiological therapy*

Nietzsche sometimes appears to suggest that what is needed are forms of therapy that work directly on the physiological constitution of the moderns, as opposed to therapy delivered through philosophical writings (this is, of course, a correlate to his suggestions, discussed in the previous chapter, that the source of modernity's crisis is physiological in nature). In the *Genealogy*, for instance, he claims that values require '*physiological* illumination and interpretation first of all' – a 'critique on the part of medical science' [GM I:17]. In unpublished notes dating from the same period as the *Genealogy*, he provides a rather eyebrow-raising list of 'The most promising curbs and remedies for "modernity"', including 'improved *nutrition* (meat)', 'increasingly *clean* and healthy dwellings' and the 'domination of *physiology* over theology, moralism, economics and politics' [WLN, p. 169; KSA XII.9[165]].

It is, of course, hard to take Nietzsche's specific eccentric physiological remedies seriously, but perhaps we could imagine advanced science-fictional technologies capable of effecting physiological changes that would alter the psychology and behaviour of those afflicted with 'aspect-blindness'. But while the sheer possibility of such technologies cannot be denied, any radical departure into the realm of speculative science fiction seems unlikely to bear

fruit, especially given that it is any case implausible that the pathology in modernity is rooted in physiological degeneration.

(ii) *Philosophical argumentation*

One thinker who argues against a ‘physiological’ reading of Nietzsche’s project is Bernard Reginster. Reginster denies that Nietzsche’s target is a physiological pathology (such as a ‘neuro-chemical imbalance’) but insists rather that it is something that can be ‘overcome only by distinctively philosophical means, including philosophical arguments’ [Reginster 2006: 38]. In fact, Reginster focuses more or less exclusively on philosophical arguments as opposed to other philosophical means (including philosophical therapy), because he regards ‘nihilism’ (the later Nietzsche’s term for the looming crisis in modernity) as a theoretical ‘position’. On Reginster’s reading, the problem that Nietzsche seeks to address is that the moderns believe that there are no higher values² or hold beliefs which imply that there are no higher values – beliefs which can be held independently of actually experiencing any ‘corresponding feelings of despair’ [Reginster 2006: 38] – and the way Nietzsche addresses this problem is by providing arguments which show that these nihilistic beliefs are untrue.

It is undeniable that a great part of what Nietzsche is concerned to do in his writings is to provide arguments against philosophical positions he regards as untrue, including theoretical nihilism. However, while Nietzsche certainly regards the position of theoretical nihilism as *a* problem, he does not regard it as *the* problem. Nietzsche’s overriding concern is with something closer to *practical* nihilism: a condition (what I have termed ‘aspect-blindness’) that cannot be reduced to the holding of erroneous beliefs but consists rather in a sensibility or set of practical dispositions.

One might think that even this practical condition could be corrected through the method of theoretical argument: changing my theoretical beliefs can often lead to a change in my practical attitudes or dispositions. Nietzsche does, after all, say in *D* 103 that ‘We have to *learn to think differently* – in order at last, perhaps very late on, to attain even more: *to feel differently*’. One might even

² This formulation is deliberately ambiguous, since Reginster distinguishes between two forms that nihilism can take: *despair* (the belief that higher values are unrealised and unrealisable in the world) and *disorientation* (the belief that our highest goals have no value). [Reginster 2006: 33–34].

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think that the framework which misorients us towards frameworks (which, I argued in chapter 2, is at the root of ‘aspect-blindness’) is an erroneous *theory* about frameworks, and that if someone were persuaded by argument that this theory about frameworks is untrue then they would cease to be misoriented towards frameworks.

Even if we did think this, it would still be the case that this method of theoretical argumentation is being deployed instrumentally; people are being persuaded of the truth of certain positions as a means towards ends that are ultimately therapeutic rather than theoretical.³ But Nietzsche would surely deny (correctly, in my view) that rational proofs alone could in practice bring about the desired change – especially given the fact that, as I noted in chapter 1, an overreliance on rational proofs is itself a symptom of the very condition that Nietzsche aims to cure. The misorienting Christian framework is rooted deeper than surface beliefs that could be dislodged by shrewd argumentation.⁴ Jonathan Cohen expresses a common view when he remarks that Nietzsche ‘must appeal to [his audience] emotionally as well as intellectually’ [Cohen 2010: 127–28] in order to achieve this, but even if we accept Nietzsche’s injunction that we must ‘*learn to think differently*’ before we can ‘*feel differently*’, coming to ‘think differently’ need not be construed as coming to have different *beliefs*.

(iii) Philosophical therapy – pictures and myths

An alternative construal of what it might mean to come to think differently, and a corresponding method to bring this about, is suggested by Wittgenstein. Many interpreters of Wittgenstein argue that his method consists in attempting to change his readers’ way of thinking about philosophical matters (teaching them to think differently), rather than in presenting arguments against their theoretical philosophical positions. Consider Wittgenstein’s famous commentary (at the very start of the *Investigations*) on Augustine’s description of how he learned language as a child:

³ Hans Sluga [2011: 833] notes that ‘diagnostic’ philosophers often end up using ‘normative-theoretical’ methodology in the service of their therapeutic ends – and vice versa. All translations of Sluga in this chapter are my own.

⁴ Cf e.g. Fraser 2002, Nussbaum 1988, Pippin 2010, von Tevenar 2013, Gemes 2013, Janaway 2007.

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[Augustine's] words, it seems to me, give us a particular picture of the essence of human language. It is this: the individual words in language name objects – sentences are combinations of such names. – In this picture of language we find the roots of the following idea: Every word has a meaning. This meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which the word stands. [PII:1]

One way of understanding this passage, and the project Wittgenstein undertakes in the *Investigations*, is that the Augustinian picture of language is a theory of language that Wittgenstein wishes to refute. But this reading presents us with a puzzle: if the Augustinian picture of language were a *theory* of language, why would Wittgenstein choose to say that an *idea* about language is rooted in this picture: isn't this doubling up superfluous, particularly given that there seems to be at best a slim distinction between the apparent content of the theories of language supposedly expressed in the 'picture' and the 'idea' respectively?

Gordon Baker claims that the Augustinian picture is not a theory of a language but a 'way of seeing things' or a 'way of looking at or regarding things': it is, as Baker puts it, not a concept of language but a *conception* [Auffassung] [Baker 2004b: 266]. David Egan summarises Baker's position thusly: 'pictures do not themselves give us false claims to refute, but are rather pre-theoretical frameworks' [Egan 2011: 64], echoing Stephen Mulhall's remark that a Wittgensteinian picture is a 'pretheoretical framework or orientation' [Mulhall 2001: 37]. On Baker's view, Wittgenstein's aim is not to demonstrate the falsity of a particular theory of language but to free us from a way of thinking about language in which false or confused theories are rooted. As Mulhall notes, this cannot be achieved by critiquing the theories rooted in the picture:

Theories can be criticized with respect to the accuracy of their descriptions of data, the validity of their reasoning, the correctness of their predictions, and so on; but if Wittgenstein's concern is with the way such theories manifest their authors' commitment to Augustine's picture, such terms of criticism would be futile and inappropriate. Any such theory could be altered to accommodate an inaccurate observation, an invalid line of reasoning, or a falsified prediction without losing its rootedness in Augustine's picture. [Mulhall 2001: 38]

Wittgenstein's approach, according to Baker, consists in tracing 'problems (confusions, worries) back to unconscious pictures or analogies, and his

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method for dissolving these problems is to persuade another to acknowledge such prejudices and to replace them by a different *Auffassung*' [Baker 2004c: 290]. To paraphrase his famous remark [*PII*: 115], Wittgenstein will free us from the picture that holds us captive.

Robert Pippin and David Owen have both acknowledged the parallel between this Wittgensteinian aim and the aim of Nietzsche's own enterprise. Owen explicitly likens 'Nietzsche's concept of a perspective' to 'Wittgenstein's concept of a picture' [Owen 2007: 40]⁵ and remarks that, according to Nietzsche, 'we are held captive by a metaphysical perspective according to which the source and authority of our values is entirely independent of us' [Owen 2007: 30]; Nietzsche's goal is to free his audience from the grip of this perspective [Owen 2007: 144]. Pippin, meanwhile, remarks that Nietzsche is attempting to 'break the hold that a philosophical or moral picture might have over us' – with the notion of a 'picture's having a hold on us' once again being explicitly attributed to Wittgenstein [Pippin 2010: 45].

According to Baker, 'an *Auffassung* can be displaced only by another *Auffassung*' [Baker 2004c: 284]. If this is right, then Nietzsche (like Wittgenstein) needs to find the picture that is capable of displacing his readers' current way of seeing matters. Both thinkers talk of 'pictures' expressed in language – Wittgenstein calls them 'illustrated turn[s] of speech' [*PII*:295] – which incline us to conceive of matters in a different way. Although these pictures are expressed in words, the way of conceiving matters towards which they incline us cannot be reduced to any proposition these words assert about those matters (although the particular propositional content that those words have may be essential to their being able to perform the function they do) [*PII*:295; cf Egan 2011: 56–57; also Kuusela 2011: 607 on the 'liberating word']. Nietzsche, meanwhile, remarks that when poets like Sophocles or Shakespeare use a 'vivid image', it is able to 'reveal a deeper wisdom than the poet themselves can put into words and concepts' [*BT* 17, p. 81]. So, for instance, according to Nietzsche, Sophocles 'paints whole characters':

⁵ A point he expands on in an endnote: 'One of the advantages of thinking about perspectives as pictures is that Wittgenstein's reflections on pictures usefully capture both the sense in which we inherit a picture (perspective) as a whole [...] and the sense that we can be held captive by a picture; it is just this condition of aspectual captivity, after all, that Nietzsche considers as obstructing his contemporaries from realizing that the death of God has significant implications for their moral commitments.' [Owen 2007: 165].

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Nietzsche does not mean by this that Sophocles imparts propositions describing every feature of some character-type: the latter is closer (on Nietzsche's view) to the method of Euripides, who paints 'only individual characteristics' [BT 17, p. 84]. Sophocles' metaphorical brushstrokes gesture towards a whole character, without attempting the futile task of capturing it in every minutiae: his 'vivid images' suggest a way of tracing the contours of the character beyond the specific stretches he himself describes to his audience.⁶ Nietzsche's own 'vivid images' and 'illustrated turns of speech' may likewise make available to his readers new ways of looking at matters, ones which free them from the picture that currently has them in its grip. Pippin discusses Nietzsche's images of 'truth as a woman and philosophers as clumsy lovers', of science as 'gay' – these images, according to Pippin, give us 'a different way of understanding what is happening to us' [Pippin 2010: 46].

Both Wittgenstein and Nietzsche also connect this notion of a 'picture' with those of 'myth' or 'mythology'. Nietzsche claims that the distinctive character of Wagner's music consists in the fact that 'it communicates an idea of the world' in a mythic mode [UM IV: 9, p. 236] – a claim that is later made as follows: 'Wagner's music as a whole is an image of the world' [*Abbild der Welt*] [UM IV: 9, p. 242]. Meanwhile, Wittgenstein occasionally describes world-pictures as mythologies [OC 95, 97].⁷

What is the nature of this connection between myths and pictures supposed to be? This depends on how exactly we pin down what we mean by 'myth' or 'mythology'. Sometimes, 'picture' and 'myth' seem to be used almost synonymously. Stanley Cavell refers to individual pictures – 'illustrated turns of speech' – as myths. Hence, for Cavell the picture 'I cannot know what is going on in him' [PI II:xi, p. 190]⁸ is 'the myth of the body as a veil' [Cavell 1979: 368], which Wittgenstein seeks to replace with the new myth 'The human body is the best picture of the human soul' [PI II: iv, p. 152]. Cavell

⁶ Cf *UM* III:3, p. 141: '[Schopenhauer's] greatness lies in having set up before him a picture of life as a whole, in order to interpret it as a whole; while even the most astute heads cannot be dissuaded from the error that one can achieve a more perfect interpretation if one minutely investigates the paint with which this picture is produced and the material upon which it is painted.'

⁷ Cf Nietzsche's unpublished note *WEN*, p. 44; *KSA* VII.7[125], which refers to a 'mythical world picture'.

⁸ "I cannot know what is going on in him" is above all a *picture*. It is the convincing expression of a conviction.'

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also gives the example of ‘the state is a ship’ as a myth [Cavell 1979: 365]. Egan follows Cavell in this regard:

Pictures are more like organising myths, which orient our thinking in a broad sense. In describing pictures as myths, I deliberately follow Cavell (1979, 364f), who distinguishes myth from metaphor. Metaphors are in principle replaceable and can be expressed in other words, but Wittgensteinian pictures, like myths, are not stand-ins for a more direct, literal expression of the same thing but are rather the most direct way of expressing what it is they express. [Egan 2011: 68]

Sometimes, however, we will want to make a distinction between individual pictures and images on the one hand, and myths on the other: a myth is a narrative, yet ‘The state is a ship’ or ‘The human body is the best picture of the human soul’ are not narratives by themselves. Rather, they are individual elements embedded in an overarching narrative (myth) and system of narratives (mythology), and it is only insofar as these individual elements refer in shorthand to these larger wholes that they themselves can be described as ‘myths’. This is something Cavell acknowledges when he describes the picture ‘I cannot know what is going on in him’ as a ‘fragment[] of a myth’ [Cavell 1979: 368],⁹ while it is noteworthy that the only pictures Wittgenstein describes as mythologies are *world*-pictures (complex global frameworks).

An individual picture depends for its effect on its place within a complex structured system: a myth or mythology. Sophocles’ ‘vivid images’ would not be able to paint whole characters and gesture towards ‘wisdom’ that cannot be propositionally asserted, were it not for the ‘structure of the scenes’ [BT 17, p. 81] in which these images are embedded and if Sophocles did not ‘harness[] myth’ [BT 17, p. 84]: their place within narrative structures ties them into chains of signification which gives them a power isolated images would lack. While both myths and pictures belong on the Apolline side of things in *The Birth of Tragedy*,¹⁰ myth represents a more structured channelling of ‘fantasy

⁹ Note that in his discussion of Nietzsche, Cavell expands in greater detail on the narrative structure (origin, existence, end) of a similar myth: according to Cavell, Nietzsche was ‘trying to break the myth of the soul, especially those parts about its origin (from nothing, by creation) and its existence (as opposed to the body) and its end (in a world beyond)’ [Cavell 1979: 366].

¹⁰ Compare the following two descriptions of the complementary roles of Apolline and Dionysian drives in tragedy: ‘Our metaphysical delight in the tragic translates instinctive, unconscious Dionysiac wisdom into the language of *images*.’ [BT 16 p. 80, my emphasis]; ‘Tragedy places a sublime symbolic likeness – myth [...] *Myth* shields us from music, but it also grants music its supreme freedom for the first time. In return

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and Apolline dream' which saves them from the 'aimless meandering' [BT 23, p. 108] that would ensue if Apolline images were not organised around myth.

So in order for pictures to be able to orient the moderns along a focused channel, the pictures must be embedded in a myth or mythology: a lone 'vivid image' or 'illustrated turn of speech' is not enough. This is why in his early works Nietzsche champions Wagner for having provided the moderns with a whole new mythology, and why in his later works Nietzsche himself sets out to provide the moderns with new mythic narratives (most notably, the myth of Zarathustra) and a new mythological landscape.

But having clarified the question of the distinction between myths and pictures, another question now arises: why does the complex structured system have to be a specifically *mythic* narrative or system of *mythic* narrative? A full answer to this question will have to wait until the following section, but I will address here another question which this one presupposes: what is the difference between a mythic and a non-mythic narrative?

One possibility is that the difference is *functional*: a mythic narrative is one that is serving a particular function in orienting a system of thought or practice. On this view, the narratives that Nietzsche and Wagner provide are, strictly speaking, not yet myths but are rather offered up as candidates to serve the role of myth. Furthermore, it becomes trivial to answer the question 'Why does the complex structured system that is supposed to orient the moderns have to be a specifically *mythic* narrative?' because the narrative that orients the moderns would count as mythic precisely in virtue of the fact that it serves this orienting function.¹¹

But it is clear that when a narrative is described as a 'myth', this is at least sometimes supposed to categorise the narrative according to its character rather than its function: there are certain subject matters and stylistic features that are typically 'mythical'. These two senses of 'myth' need not be in

music bestows on myth a moving and convincing metaphysical significance to which word and *image* alone, without that unique source of help, could never attain.' [BT 21 p. 100, my emphases] I return to the theme of Dionysian music later in the chapter.

¹¹ One common functional definition of myth is in terms of *articulation*: Marc Manganaro cites Webster's Third, which 'defines "myth" as "a usually traditional story ... that serves to unfold part of the world-view of a people"' [Manganaro 1998: 153]. Owen operates with a similar understanding of myth: for instance, he claims that 'myth in its festive embodiment provides a channel through which the communal re-affirmation of a culture is articulated' [Owen 1994: 43–44].

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tension; it could be that a narrative with a typically mythical character is particularly well-suited to serving a mythic function (though then the question becomes why a narrative with this character should be well-suited to this function). Characteristic features of mythic narratives include (1) myths convey a sense of a 'purposeful non-temporal order of reality' [Poellner 1998: 64] – they are 'felt keenly as a unique example of something universal and true which gazes out into infinity' [BT 17, p. 83]. (2) myths 'generally will deal with origins that no one can have been present at' [Cavell 1979: 365]. (3) myths typically concern the doings of supernatural beings and gods in fantastical settings, or heroes who are presented in Sophoclean manner as an 'eternal type' rather than naturalistically as individuals [BT 17, p. 84].¹² (4) myths typically convey the sense 'that this is all a repetition of something that has happened before' [LC, p. 43].¹³ These features are of course connected: supernatural mythical beings are representatives of a non-temporal order of reality; our present reality is construed in myth as a repetition of our primordial origins (which thereby transcend the confines of temporality).

In the next section, I explore the project of changing the moderns' myth and mode of mythologising in greater detail and in the light of a number of distinctions suggested by Wittgenstein's treatment of pictures. But in order to pave the way for this exploration, in the remainder of this section I first take note of the role played by narratives with some or all of the features typical of myth in two strands of Nietzsche's methodology which might not immediately be considered part of this project: firstly, affirmation and eternal return; secondly, genealogy.

(iv) *Affirmation/eternal return*

In his later works, Nietzsche champions the goal of achieving a stance of affirmation: in German, a 'yes-saying' (*jasagen* or *bejahen*).¹⁴ This is a version of the same goal of curing the moderns of aspect-blindness. An affirmative

¹² A probable advantage of 'eternal type' depictions is that they can be more readily applied as paradigms that orient or shape the characters of their audience.

¹³ Wittgenstein claims, further, that 'when people do accept or adopt this [mythical explanation] then certain things seem much clearer and easier for them' [LC, p.43]. This echoes the notion that when we shift away from confused philosophical *pictures*, certain things will seem much clearer and easier for us: certain questions will not arise, etc.

¹⁴ Christopher Janaway [2012] has catalogued Nietzsche's uses of these terms and the various objects and forms that affirmation takes in Nietzsche's writings.

stance towards an object does not consist in a belief about that object, just as seeing an object under an aspect does not consist in holding a belief about that object; my affirmation (or not) of some object is not reducible to my judging it to meet (or fail to meet) certain evaluative criteria.¹⁵ Furthermore, the achievement of an affirmative stance, like the restoration of aspect-perception, consists not in acquiring justification but in liberating ourselves from a pathological need to acquire certain justifications. On Daniel Came's interpretation, according to 'the later Nietzsche's view', to have 'the impulse to question the value of existence or search for the conditions of the affirmation of life is already to be involved in nihilism' [Came 2013: 219].¹⁶

Nietzsche's favoured form of, or means towards, an affirmative stance is presented in the doctrine of eternal return, which has two features worthy of note in the present discussion. Firstly, Nietzsche's primary statements of eternal return (in GS 341 and Z, Of the Vision and the Riddle) are issued in the form of mythic narratives: in parables populated by mythical beings (demons and dwarves). Secondly: these parables invite us to imagine our lives being repeated endlessly, without variation, throughout eternity: which recalls Wittgenstein's claim that mythic narratives convey the sense 'that this is all a repetition of something that has happened before' [LC, p. 43]. The parables of eternal return are effectively inviting us to explicitly regard our lives as mythical. This raises two issues: firstly, that eternal return may turn out to be nothing more than an explication of the effect that myths are supposed to have, without any additional content to actually instill the requisite sense of

¹⁵ Cf Janaway 2007: 259, May 2011a: 81–82. See also Gaita's fascinating discussion of Wittgenstein's deathbed request to tell his friends 'that it has been a wonderful life' [Gaita 2004: 196, citing Norman Malcolm, *Wittgenstein: A Memoir* (London: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 100]. According to Gaita, 'Wittgenstein was not expressing an assessment of his life [...] someone who understood what Wittgenstein meant could not suggest that although he said that his life had been wonderful, it had not really been *wonderful* although it had been, on the whole, quite good' [Gaita 2004: 196–97]. He 'expressed gratitude for his life considered as a certain kind of whole' [Gaita 2004: 196ff; see also his discussion of regarding life as a gift, 222ff]. Cf Simon May: 'To affirm life is to look with joy upon one's life as a whole' [May 2011a: 81] and Nietzsche's exclamation of affirmation at the start of *Ecce Homo*: '*How could I fail to be grateful to my whole life?*'. Note that the passage from which this latter quotation is drawn is also replete with imagery of light and sight to describe Nietzsche's affirmative stance.

¹⁶ Came attributes this point to May 2011a. Came also notes a similar view in Freud: '[t]he moment a man questions the meaning and value of life, he is sick' [Letter to Maria Bonaparte, 13th August 1937, in *Letters of Sigmund Freud 1873–1939*, ed. E. L. Freud, trans. T. and J. Stern (London: Hogarth Press, 1961), pp. 436–37, cited in Came 2013: 219].

repetition; secondly, that attempts to satisfy the need for our present life to be rooted in a mythic origin by (in effect) re-describing that present life as its own mythic origin are doomed to collapse into instability.

(v) *Genealogy*

Considerable attention has been given in recent years to Nietzsche's 'genealogical method'. This method is of course supposed to be exemplified above all by the *Genealogy*, which purports to provide an account of the 'conditions and circumstances out of which [moral values] have grown, under which they have developed and shifted' – such an account being necessary for a 'critique of moral values' [*GM*, Preface: 6]. This genealogy is a version of what Nietzsche, in the 'History' essay, calls a 'critical history'. Other forms of history described in that essay include 'monumental' and 'antiquarian'.

A genealogy, like a myth, is a narrative account, and many of Nietzsche's genealogical narratives have been described as mythological in character: Mulhall claims the *Genealogy's* first essay has a 'mythic as well as an archaeological register' [Mulhall 2005: 41], Peter Poellner claims that *The Birth of Tragedy's* genealogical account of the birth and death of the tragic myth is itself a 'mythical meta-narrative' [Poellner 1998: 65] and Ken Gemes and Chris Sykes regard the third and fourth *Untimely Meditations* as forms of 'monumental history' which offer 'mythologizing depictions' of their subjects [Gemes and Sykes unpublished: 8]. While, for the most part, these genealogies officially eschew the supernatural and the fantastical (with the notable exception of *GM* I:14, on which more later), their subjects are depicted as 'eternal types'. Furthermore, *The Birth of Tragedy* and the *Genealogy* both depict the moderns' primordial origins – including primordial precursors to contemporary crises, lending these crises the mythic pedigree of having already having happened before.¹⁷

¹⁷ Naturally raising the suspicion that Nietzsche has allowed a liberal dose of anachronism into his account of these precursory events in order to be able to lend contemporary developments this pedigree. I return later to the question of the significance of the truthfulness of Nietzsche's myths and narratives. Note that in *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche suggests that some historical accounts can be opposed to, rather than forms of, myth: 'This is usually how religions die [...] when the feeling for myth dies and is replaced by the claim of religion to have historical foundations.' [*BT* 10 p. 53–54]. But perhaps it would be better to think of these historical narratives as counter-myths that disguise their own mythic character.

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It is often claimed that Nietzsche provides genealogies in order to shift his readers (and perhaps the moderns more generally) towards a new framework – which, of course, is also supposed to be the goal that is served by providing them with new myths. Owen, for instance, claims that one of the tasks of genealogy consists in ‘freeing its audience from the grip of the perspective in terms of which they currently understand their ethical agency’ [Owen 2007: 144].¹⁸

However, to my mind it is not clear that a specifically *genealogical* narrative is necessary for this aim. Charles Taylor famously claims that ‘if true, Nietzsche’s genealogies are devastating’ because hypergoods (our overarching evaluative frameworks) arise from ‘reasoning in transitions’ and are vulnerable to attacks which challenge the transition to our current hypergood: ‘the conviction [hypergoods] carry comes from our reading of the transitions to them, from a certain understanding of moral growth’ [Taylor 1992: 72]. But the ‘transitions’ in question here are not necessarily temporal transitions, but stages in a process of reasoning. There is nothing inherently ‘genealogical’ about challenging the particular transition that was made to a current hypergood. Meanwhile, Owen claims that ‘genealogy opens a space in which we can envisage ourselves as other than we are’ through ‘revealing the contingency of what we are’ [Owen 1994: 150] – destroying, as it were, the ‘superstition’ that ‘our present highly disagreeable reality is the only one in any way possible’ [UM II: 10, p. 118]. Paul Katsafanas agrees:¹⁹ genealogy reveals that the perspective of Judeo-Christian morality ‘is not inevitable’ [Katsafanas 2011: 191]. This is visible only if we ‘step outside’ the ‘evaluative framework’ of Judeo-Christian morality [Katsafanas 2011: 190]. Genealogy allows us to ‘step outside’ because it reveals ‘competing perspectives’ [Katsafanas 2011: 191]. But again, it is not clear that the perspective from which the contingency of our current framework is visible *necessarily* has to be a *historical* one or one that is only capable of being revealed through *genealogy*. Another thought might be that genealogy is necessary specifically to free the moderns from the particular framework that holds them captive because they hold that this

¹⁸ As I showed earlier, this is explicitly echoing Wittgenstein terminology.

¹⁹ As does Mulhall: ‘The *Genealogy*’s fundamental aim is to re-present our slavish self-interpretation in terms of original sin as not necessary – as the outcome of ultimately contingent historical happenstance rather than as a revelation of our immutable essence – and thereby to open the possibility of our existing otherwise’ [Mulhall 2005: 44].

framework has on them derives from its claim to an authoritative historical pedigree. This claim would have to be revealed to be bogus by a genealogical account in order to release this hold. But this would overlook the possibility that the hold could be released not only by revealing the claim to a historical pedigree to be *false* but instead by revealing it to be *irrelevant* to the authority or standing of that framework: and this latter form of revelation would not need to be conducted by means of a genealogy.²⁰

It should be noted that not all commentators agree that the genealogical method is itself supposed to serve the critical function of shifting readers to a new perspective, but is rather supposed to prepare the way for such a shift (a 'reevaluation of all values') to be enacted. Particularly interesting in this regard is Hans Sluga's remark that in the context of a therapeutic philosophy, 'genealogy' is analogous to a 'medical history': 'The doctor asks how long the patient has felt unwell, how the symptoms began, how they progressed, etc. Genealogy is equally necessary and apposite in philosophical diagnosis.' [Sluga 2011: 826]. Note that a medical history provides information not to the patient but to the practitioner: on this analogy, providing a genealogy assists the reader in curing themselves.

3.2 Standpoints and landmarks

Wittgenstein's readers are held captive by a picture; they need a new picture – a new way of seeing things – to liberate them, and Wittgenstein's therapeutic method provides this liberation. I have suggested that Nietzsche is likewise seeking to liberate the moderns, who need a new myth to replace the one that currently holds them captive.²¹ So far, so straightforward. However, once we recognise certain ambiguities and the need to make certain distinctions (as revealed by Wittgenstein and his interpreters), it becomes clear that matters are more complicated than may at first appear.

²⁰ Alternatively, the hold might be based on a claim to being timeless: a claim that would be revealed to be false through a genealogy. But it would not be necessary to reveal the actual historical development of the framework in order to reveal that this claim to timelessness is false: it would also suffice if it were shown that it must necessarily have had *some* historical development, without it being necessary to show what particular historical development it actually had.

²¹ An alternative reading would be that he is seeking to fill a mythless void rather than displace an existing myth. However, the latter would make more sense given my conclusion in chapter 2, i.e. that the predicament of modernity described by Nietzsche should be seen (in his terms) as a continuation of a disguised Christian framework rather than the absence of frameworks.

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Consider, for instance, the following passage in which Nietzsche describes Wagner's mythologising:

The *poetic element* in Wagner is disclosed by the fact that he thinks in visible and palpable events, not in concepts; that is to say, he thinks mythically, as the folk has always thought. Myth is not founded on a thought, as the children of an artificial culture believe, it is itself a mode of thinking; it communicates an idea of the world, but as a succession of events, actions and sufferings. [UM IV: 9, p. 236, translation modified]

One crucial idea here is that myth consists not in a belief or system of beliefs, but in a 'mode of thought' – an adverbial *way* of thinking (namely, *mythically*): much as commentators have described pictures like Wittgenstein's Augustinian picture as a 'way of looking' or a 'framework'.

However, even within the short passage from Nietzsche cited above, the claim that myth is a 'mode of thought' stands in tension with other claims. In this passage, Nietzsche claims that myth 'communicates an idea of the world' [*theilt eine Vorstellung von der Welt mit*]: but a *mode of thought* cannot communicate an idea. What could perhaps communicate or convey an idea is a particular mythic narrative (such as *Der Ring des Nibelungen*) but a narrative is not itself a mode of thought, even if intimately related to a certain mode of thought. Likewise, a picture as an 'illustrated turn of speech' that inclines us to look at things a particular way should not be confused with a particular way of looking at things. The same ambiguity infects Taylor's talk of 'hypergoods' (orienting moral frameworks), which he describes both as 'a standpoint' from which evaluations are made [Taylor 1992: 63] (comparable to a mode of thought) and as 'landmarks for what [agents] judge to be the direction of their lives' [Taylor 1992: 62], which mixes the spatial metaphor (since I look *at* a landmark *from* a standpoint). Egan comes close to identifying a version of this problem in Baker's works: for Baker, freeing us from the grip of a picture is analogous to bringing about a change in aspect. But, as Egan notes, this is ambiguous, since a picture is distinct from one's perspective on it: 'Is Wittgenstein shifting the aspect of the same picture here, or is he offering us an alternative picture? Baker's work seems ambiguous on this point.' [Egan 2011: 66]. We could formulate the question as follows: is the picture Wittgenstein provides a new standpoint (somewhere we look *from*) or a new

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landmark (something we look at)? And we could ask the same of Nietzsche with regard to myth.

The most obvious answer would be that Nietzsche is providing both. Although a mythic mode of thought (standpoint) and mythic narratives (landmarks) are distinct, they are supposed to be related as follows: someone who thinks in a mythic mode must be oriented by a mythic narrative or narratives: in Nietzsche's own favoured examples [BT 9, p. 49], the Ancient Greeks are oriented by the myth of Prometheus, Judeo-Christians by the myth of the Fall. A tempting thought is that the moderns could be shifted to a mythic mode of thought through giving them the orienting mythic narrative that corresponds to this mythic mode: so for instance, they could be shifted to the Wagnerian mythic mode by means of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* or to the Nietzschean mythic mode by means of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, these being the myths which (at least in theory) orient the Wagnerian and Nietzschean mythic modes respectively. As Nietzsche says with regard to Wagner, those who are brought 'under the spell of the poet' will share in the mythic mode of thinking: one 'thinks with' the poet [UM IV: 9, p. 237].²²

If this is right, then it also allows us to answer another question I raised in the previous section: why does Nietzsche have to provide a specifically *mythical* narrative or system of narratives? The answer would be that only a narrative with the characteristic features of myth is able to orient a specifically mythical mode of thought – this being the mode of thought that Nietzsche prescribes as the best remedy for the moderns' current mode of thought, which stands in dire need of replacement.

But we must heed an important lesson from Wittgenstein here: a picture (in the sense of a landmark) can only orient us through being applied in a certain way, and it cannot dictate its application to us. Wittgenstein shows in the

²² An alternative possibility here is that Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* and Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* are *demonstrations* of a mythic mode of thinking: *Der Ring des Nibelungen* is an *expression* of Wagner's mythic thinking, while *Zarathustra* is a *depiction* of someone thinking mythically. Both works *show* examples of thinking in the mode of thought towards which Nietzsche wishes the moderns to be oriented. However, the same problem arises on this alternative as for the view I consider in the main body of the text: examples can only guide the moderns to 'go on' correctly with some mode of thought if they are appropriately prepared to receive those examples. This is a point Wittgenstein has made familiar: any number of examples of how to carry out some activity will be consistent (on some abnormal interpretation) with countless different ways of continuing the activity.

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Investigations that an expression that tells us what rule to follow (such as a signpost or mathematical formula) cannot tell us how we are supposed to apply this expression in order to find out what rule it is telling us to follow. The expression is only able to convey the rule to us if we have already been trained to apply such expressions in the appropriate way. The same applies to 'pictures' which are supposed to lead us to think about things in a particular way. A picture may 'suggest a certain use to us', but it is nonetheless possible 'to use it differently' [PI I: 139]. It may not be possible for *us*, given our form of life and training, to use it differently – indeed, rather than a certain way of applying the picture *suggesting* itself, it may go without saying that we apply the picture in that way – but there is no absolute necessity attached to a picture's being applied one way rather than another. A picture or myth that the Greeks are able to apply in a way that orients their thought in a particular mode may not be one that we can apply in a way that orients our thought in this mode.

So while it may be the case that someone who thinks in a mythic mode (standpoint) must be oriented by a mythic narrative or narratives (landmark/s), it could also be the case that only someone who is thinking in a particular mythic mode can be appropriately oriented by the corresponding mythic narrative/s. As I noted earlier, Egan suggests that we can ask, by analogy to aspect-seeing, whether Wittgenstein (or, by extension, Nietzsche) is offering us a new picture or shifting the aspect of an existing picture; but continuing this analogy, if a new picture were offered, what it will present to us will depend on what aspect it is seen under. We can imagine, for instance, beings (Martians, say) who would see a picture of a person climbing a hill as a picture of a person sliding backwards down a hill [PI I:139 n. 2(b)];²³ the latter picture obviously suggests rather different applications to the first. Someone who sees a picture under the wrong aspect will not apply the picture normally; analogously, someone who is unable to apprehend a myth in the appropriate mode will not be able to apply it in a way that orients their thought mythically.

Clearly, the moderns are incapable of being converted to the Ancient Greek mode of thought through being presented with the Greek myths which orient

²³ 'I see a picture; it represents an old man walking up a steep path leaning on a stick. – How? Might it not have looked just the same if he had been sliding downhill in that position? Perhaps a Martian would describe the picture so. I do not need to explain why *we* do not describe it so.'

this mode of thought.²⁴ But even if they are capable of being converted to a mode of thought oriented by e.g. *der Ring des Nibelungen* or *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, they may not be capable of being converted *by means of* the myths that would orient them post-conversion. Wagner, after all ‘does not address himself to [...] the theoretical person’ who ‘understands of the poetical, of myth, precisely as much as a deaf person does of music’, but rather to ‘the folk’ who have always thought mythically [UM IV: 9, pp. 236–37]. The aim of establishing an *orienting* myth should not be mistaken with the method of using a *re-orienting* myth to achieve this aim, even if one and the same myth could serve both functions. As Zarathustra notes, ‘you cannot learn to fly by flying’ [Z, Of the Spirit of Gravity].

Sluga notes a consideration that is central to therapeutic practice: ‘Therapy must always be tailored to the patient and the specific features of their illness. Although there are rules that govern therapy, these are only ever provisional in nature.’ [Sluga 2011: 827]. If Nietzsche is to administer therapy through providing new myths (landmarks), the form this needs to take is determined by contingent facts about the moderns he seeks to convert: as Poellner notes, ‘any concrete “filling in” of a mythic schema is ‘rationally arbitrary’ – ‘its effectiveness or lack of such is a function of its resonance within given cultural traditions and pre-dispositions’ [Poellner 1998: 68].²⁵

²⁴ One very obvious obstacle in the case of Nietzsche’s German contemporaries is that these myths narrate the origins of a *Greek* form of life, not a *German* one.

²⁵ Note, for instance, that one condition for the possibility of *Zarathustra*’s success is that the moderns do not need to believe that the series of events described in a mythic narrative actually happened in order to be oriented by it. This contrasts with the Greeks and Christians, who could not have been oriented by their respective myths if they had believed those myths to be false. Readers are never invited to believe that the events described in *Zarathustra* literally occurred.

This is not the case for some of Nietzsche’s other mythic narratives: namely, his genealogies and histories. These depend for their effect on being regarded as truthful accounts or depictions of their subject matters. Nietzsche remarks that subjects of excessively falsifying monumental histories will ‘have something strange and unnatural about them’ [UM II:2, p. 71] which will undermine their ability to convince and inspire us. But at the same time, these narratives must also falsify their subject matters to a certain extent in order to achieve their effect: monumental histories, for instance, must convey the (false) impression that past greatness can and will recur. But: ‘How much of the past would have to be overlooked if it was to produce that mighty effect, how violently what is individual in it would have to be forced into a universal mould and all its sharp corners and hard outlines broken up in the interest of conformity! At bottom, indeed, that which was once possible could present itself as a possibility for a second time only if the Pythagoreans were right in believing that when the constellation of the heavenly bodies is repeated the same things, down to the smallest event, must also be repeated on earth.’ [UM II:2, pp 69–70]. Nietzsche’s

Indeed, not only the effectiveness of using a specific myth but the effectiveness of using myths at all depends on such contingent factors. I suggested earlier that Nietzsche is trying to shift the moderns towards a mythic mode of thought (a standpoint) by means of providing mythic narratives (landmarks). A mythic mode of thought is a mode of thought oriented by a mythic narrative or mythic narratives. But perhaps although Nietzsche provides mythic narratives as landmarks to help shift the moderns towards a new mode of thought, this new mode of thought is not itself a *mythic* one. Nietzsche's narratives (especially *Zarathustra*) have the trappings characteristic of myth: set in fantastical worlds populated by mythical beings, suffused with an atmosphere of profundity and higher purpose, replete with quasi-Christian imagery (on which more shortly). Like all myths, they convey a sense of a 'purposeful non-temporal order of reality' that grounds 'transient human experiences' [Poellner 1998: 64]. Yet this seems at odds with Zarathustra's professed teaching: 'All that is intransitory – that is but an image!' [*Z*, On the Blissful Islands]. Arguably, Nietzsche wishes to shift the moderns towards a mode of thought in which the craving for an eternal metaphysical grounding (a craving that is central to myth) is absent. If so, the mythic form of *Zarathustra* is geared to appeal to its readers' current sensibilities (to which overtly mythical imagery still appeals²⁶) rather than to the sensibility Nietzsche ultimately wants to

narratives of the Greeks and the Christians in *The Birth of Tragedy* and the *Genealogy* respectively arguably distort historical facts in precisely this manner in order to mythically portray modern cultural developments as repetitions of happenings in primordial times.

This seems to put Nietzsche's genealogical narratives in a difficult position: they depend for their effect on being false but seeming true, and are thus vulnerable to their readers discovering inconvenient facts which shatter the illusion of apparent truth. But probably, the narratives only need to be true-ish: that is to say, not so egregiously false that it gets in the way of achieving their effect. Commenting on the 'myth of our origins' offered by Alasdair MacIntyre in *After Virtue*, Mulhall remarks that 'to worry overmuch about the objective scholarly validity of every claim MacIntyre makes about the central figures of the Enlightenment period and its aftermath would risk missing the main point of his enterprise' [Mulhall 2005: 5]. Small distortions, even if recognised as such, may aid rather than hinder the capacity of a mythic narrative to help orient us around the relevant sphere of knowledge or activity. Blurring over certain details may, as it were, help us to see the bigger picture. According to Cavell, what counts against myths is not whether they are untrue (which they mostly are) but whether they are 'mythically false': that is to say, 'not just untrue but destructive of truth' [Cavell 1979: 365]. Conversely, myths which are (at least partially) untrue can nonetheless be *productive* of truth if they are helpful to us in getting a handle on matters in such a way that we do not make certain mistakes or form certain false beliefs.

²⁶ Cf *HAH* 292: 'Do not underestimate the value of having been religious; discover all the reasons by virtue of which you have still had a genuine access to art. [...] One must have loved religion and art like mother and nurse—otherwise one cannot grow

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steer them towards: it is a myth that overcomes itself, to be discarded once its work is done.²⁷

Be that as it may: if Nietzsche is to shift the moderns' mode of thought through providing mythic narratives as landmarks, the narratives must be ones that the moderns are capable of applying from their current standpoint. I will consider here, firstly, the possibility that this is the case; secondly, the possibility that this is not the case (i.e. that the narratives Nietzsche provides are not ones that the moderns are yet capable of applying).

On the first possibility: Nietzsche has managed to come up with myths that his moderns are not deaf to – myths they are able to apply from within their current mode of applying myths. And not just myths, but pictures too: while (as I noted earlier) a lone 'vivid image' or 'illustrated turn of speech' cannot by itself overturn or do the work of a systematic whole, it may be able to extend congruities and open up new potentials within a system that it is already in place. Pippin claims that, 'most of the time, Nietzsche's metaphors and images do most of [their] unusual work by themselves' [Pippin 2010: 46]: his readers simply 'get' what to do with them, just as (in Wittgenstein's famous example) a normal individual 'gets' how to continue the sequence '2, 4, 6 ...' once they reach '1,000'. Nietzsche places particular emphasis on depictions of character: in *GM I:12*, Nietzsche yearns to be redeemed by a human being who is 'perfect, completely formed, happy, powerful, triumphant'. This yearning takes the form of a desire for 'just one glimpse' of such a paragon: Nietzsche craves an image to gaze upon. Nietzsche claims in an early work that 'I profit from a philosopher only insofar as they can be an example' [*UM III:3*, p. 136] and we may want to think of Nietzsche himself as attempting, through his own 'illustrated turns of speech', to present himself as an exemplary figure,²⁸

wise. But one must be able to see beyond them, outgrow them; if one remains under their spell, one does not understand them.'

²⁷ An alternative view is that the problem is not that people are oriented by a myth that conveys a sense of an intransient grounding, but that they are inclined to be intransiently oriented by one such myth. On this view, people's visions of eternity need to be periodically replaced with a new vision of eternity; this may require freeing them from their inclination to be held captive by just one myth. See the end of this chapter for further discussion of being held captive by pictures and myths.

²⁸ Cf Owen, who notes that Nietzsche views writing 'as a form of affective performance which seeks to communicate particular affective dispositions to the reader. This issue is addressed by Nietzsche in terms of a concern with *style*.' [Owen 1995: 47–48]. The view that Nietzsche is presenting himself as an exemplary character is of course most famously made by Alexander Nehamas [1985], but with a different end in mind:

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though he portrays other exemplary characters too: Zarathustra, the Wanderer, the Free Spirit, Schopenhauer, Wagner, Goethe, etc. These exemplary characters represent paradigms that can be absorbed into the moderns' repertoire of ready-to-hand modes of action or affect.

There is a further respect in which Nietzsche's myths and pictures must appeal to the moderns' current standpoint: in addition to being congruent with their current systematic mode of applying pictures and myths, Nietzsche's myths and pictures must appeal to their affective sensibility. According to *The Birth of Tragedy*, Apolline myths and pictures are only capable of achieving their effect through accompaniment by Dionysian music, which works directly on our unconscious affective dispositions. Although Nietzsche later abandons the idea that a myth (such as *Zarathustra*) must be literally accompanied by music in order to achieve its effect, he continues to believe that the words and image that compose a myth must be configured in such a way as to achieve an analogous effect. 'Perhaps the whole of *Zarathustra* may be reckoned as music,' Nietzsche wrote in *Ecce Homo* [*EH*, Thus Spoke Zarathustra: 1]: it is not literally sung, but (as Nietzsche says of Wagner's dramas) every word is 'able to be sung' [*UM* IV: 9, p. 237]. *Zarathustra* contains many songs and incantational mantras that replicate the Greek tragic chorus, and uses language and images which were supposed to resonate powerfully with his readers.

As Gudrun von Tevenar remarks, there is little doubt that they really *did* resonate powerfully with his readers '125 years ago when *Zarathustra* was written, and 50–100 years ago when it was Nietzsche's most highly acclaimed and popular work':

Part of the book's massive appeal then was precisely its language with its amazing capacity to arouse, to inspire, to summon – though, as to its what? or where? was usually not very clear [von Tevenar 2013: 284]

However, there are two things to note here.

Firstly, modern readers have a 'significantly different' sensibility. For these readers, *Zarathustra*'s style is likely to prove a 'barrier' and even if it does not it is incapable of arousing them to the state of 'sheer enthusiasm' experienced by earlier readers [von Tevenar 2013: 284]. Of course, this might be precisely

namely, to avoid falling into the trap of philosophical dogmatism.

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what we should expect if *Zarathustra* has done its therapeutic work: having worked a cure on the moderns' sensibilities (through appealing to those sensibilities), it might cease to have any appeal to the transformed sensibilities. But since the threat of something recognisably similar to 'nihilism' or 'aspect-blindness' continues to loom large in the contemporary imagination, it would seem that either the enthusiasm aroused by *Zarathustra* was not sufficient to cure the sense of malaise, or else it managed to do so only for earlier generations, or certain members of earlier generations, and a new cure is required for those living now.

Secondly, von Tevenar is sceptical about the potential of achieving a genuine transformational cure simply through using powerful language to arouse enthusiasm. What is experienced as 'transformational' is in fact just a 'temporary emotional rapture' [von Tevenar 2013: 283]:²⁹ the powerfulness of the *episode* of feeling that has been evoked obscures the fact that this has been achieved by triggering, rather than transforming, pre-existing dispositions to such feelings. If, like Jesus,³⁰ *Zarathustra* is to be a seducer, he must seduce us not to new feelings of love but to a new grammar and language of love. While the evocation of rapturous feelings may play an amplificatory role in the therapeutic procedure, we should not mistake the success of this evocation for the success of the therapy. Von Tevenar suggests that the arousal of rapturous enthusiasm belongs to *Zarathustra's* exoteric surface; the true 'esoteric wisdom' [von Tevenar 2013: 283] is buried deeper and works more subtly on those readers able to absorb it.

This brings us to the second possibility: that Nietzsche's readers are not (yet) able to apply the myths and pictures he provides in a way that brings about a shift in their standpoint. Nietzsche's readers would have to be transformed to become properly receptive to what he has to offer them. He provides exemplars of the character types to which they could be transformed, and even (in *Zarathustra*) depicts the process of transformation (as von Tevenar puts it, *Zarathustra* 'demonstrates the hero's successful transformation to a tragic worldview' [von Tevenar 2013: 282]). But of course even forms of therapy

²⁹ Von Tevenar describes these as 'simulated tragic experiences' [von Tevenar 2013: 283]. See my final chapter for a discussion of simulated ('fake') states.

³⁰ 'Was [Jesus] not precisely seduction in its most uncanny and irresistible form, the seduction and detour to precisely those *Jewish* values and reshaping of the ideal?' [GM I: 8].

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which attempt to transform their subject in order to make them receptive to further therapy still depend on that subject being receptive to the initial therapy. This is a point alluded to in the first of Zarathustra's discourses proper, 'Of the Three Metamorphoses', which names 'three metamorphoses of the spirit' – 'the spirit shall become a camel, and the camel a lion, and the lion at last a child' – but describes only the latter two. According to Lampert, this is because 'The transformation to camel cannot be taught' [Lampert 1986: 33]: if *Zarathustra* as a whole seeks to teach the transformation to lion (in its final passage, Zarathustra is symbolically transformed into a lion spirit), those to whom it teaches this transformation must *already* be camel spirits.

The necessary transformation would likely need to occur at the level of practice and institutions, for three reasons.³¹ Firstly, since Nietzsche's readers are shaped or constituted through the form of life in which they are embedded, deep transformations of these readers would require that these forms of life also be transformed. Secondly, as I noted in the previous chapter (citing David Owen), our actual practical and social structures restrict the field of conceptual frameworks that are possible for us. A mythic narrative will not be able to take root in a form of life whose actual practical structures exclude the possibility of the framework articulated by that myth. Consider a passing remark by Raimond Gaita, who discusses the case of a slave owner who is blind to the humanity of his slave because 'the poetry which informed [his] language of love' [Gaita 2004: 162] fails to portray black human beings as intelligible objects of love; what we should *not* conclude from this (and Gaita does not) is that if someone were to come up with a poem or myth (or body of poetry or mythos) and presented it to the slave owner, this could be enough to open his eyes to the humanity of his slave. It is impossible for this humanity to be fully disclosed to him while he still occupies the social role of slave owner. Thirdly, even if the particular mode of thought towards which Nietzsche seeks to shift the moderns is compatible with the present form of life, the myths and pictures will still need to be embedded into the fabric of that form of life: whether in rituals, festivals or customs. It is not enough to

³¹ Baker makes the same claim with regard to changing our picture: 'Augustine's picture is primarily a form of representation, a way of seeing things, an intellectual orientation. To displace or replace it is a *tremendous* undertaking. Wittgenstein aims at nothing less than transforming an entrenched way of thinking, habits of thought.' [Baker 2004b: 276]. 'Forms of representation are deeply embedded in our thinking and even in our pattern of activities (our forms of life). To change our form of representation [...] may be an *enormous* thing to do.' [Baker 2004a: 45–46].

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read the words of a myth on a page. As Nietzsche remarks in *The Birth of Tragedy*:

The images of myth must be the unnoticed but omnipresent, daemonic guardians under whose tutelage the young soul grows up and by whose signs the grown man interprets his life and his struggles. [BT 23, p. 108]

The myths of the Greeks and Christians are 'ready to hand' in those forms of life: members of these societies either reach to particular narratives instinctively when they need guidance, or else their instincts are so structured by these narratives that their lives are shaped by them without them having to bring the narratives to mind (any more than I need look out for 'landmarks' to find my way round my home town). These myths are ready to hand, and capable of orienting a mythic mode of thought, in virtue of being integrated into the patterns of habitual practical activity that make up their form of life.³²

If the pictures and myths Nietzsche provides are not embedded into a form of life, individuals will have to apply them consciously and volitionally instead. For instance, they will have to make a conscious effort to imagine 'truth as a woman' or 'philosophers as clumsy lovers' [Pippin 2010: 46], or they will have to engage in the reflective process of imagining their life as something which recurs eternally in order to come to affirm it.

Sometimes, Nietzsche has been seen as advocating a 'gigantic and heroic act of the will' [MacIntyre 2007: 114] in order that 'through force of will', an individual might 'draw about himself a firm horizon in which to live' [Sass 1992:153].³³ One feature that makes 'volition' implausible as a solution is that

³² Note that, according to Michael Bell, this understanding of myth that we find in Nietzsche is closer to 'Heidegger and Wittgenstein' than 'Schelling and Schlegel' [Bell 1998: 4]. Whereas the 'new mythology' of the German romantics was 'a voluntary, and therefore conscious, project', on later understandings myth is 'characteristically embodied, or enacted, rather than overtly stated'. It is this later understanding that is expressed in one of Bell's section headings in the volume: 'Poeticizing the Modern: Myth as a Form of Life.'

³³ 'The Nietzschean hero would be a person who could hold all these rival perspectives in mind while still managing to act – a person who, while somehow remaining aware of the underlying flux in all its uncategorizable immediacy, as well as of the arbitrariness of all schemata or perspectives, could nevertheless, through force of will, draw about himself a firm horizon in which to live.' [Sass 1992:153].

Sass and MacIntyre have some admiration for this bold vision, but are sceptical of its potential as a solution. Indeed, they see it as a symptom of what they take to be the problem. For MacIntyre, it amounts to an expression of 'aristocratic self-assertiveness' [MacIntyre 2007: 114] which assumes the very hyperindividualistic outlook that he takes to be responsible for the disintegration of any overarching framework; this

it is a highly conscious, effortful mental act, that cannot be sustained indefinitely and whose scope is limited by the synchronic nature of conscious activity.³⁴ There are also familiar problems about the potential success of conscious, willed self-deception (which is what this could amount to) – including the potential for ‘objective’ reality to come to be experienced as ‘subjectivised’ (a possibility I discussed in chapter 2).³⁵

However, these objections would only apply if the projection of the horizons requires continuous effortful and intensely conscious volition. But there is another possibility, suggested by analogy with aspect-dawning. One noteworthy feature of aspect-dawning is that, when looking at an ambiguous figure such as the duck-rabbit, it is possible to bring oneself to see it under a new aspect through an act of volition: one does not just have to passively wait until a different aspect dawns.³⁶ Crucially, subsequent to the initial act of volition which brings about this shift in how one sees the object, one does not have to continue to expend willpower in order to maintain this new mode of apprehension. A one-off act of volition effects a transition, rather than ongoing volition sustaining a projection (another helpful analogy would be the example of Moyal-Sharrock’s dance instructor mentioned in chapter 2: to follow the instruction ‘Trust your body!’, I must only will myself to switch to ‘auto-pilot’ – exerting ongoing volitional control over my action is precisely what I must *not* do).

‘aristocratic *self*-assertion’ (which Nietzsche, on MacIntyre’s view incorrectly, attributes to the Homeric heroes) contrasts with the ‘forms of assertion proper to and required by a certain *role*’ [MacIntyre 2007: 129]. For Sass, the excessive awareness of possible perspectives and the sense of their arbitrariness is itself a consequence of the excessive exercise of volition, and is to be overcome through stilling, rather than heightening, the activity of volition.

However, note that while Nietzsche does frequently champion ‘the will’, in his Schopenhauerian usage this refers to the domain of affect and drives (contrasted with ‘intellect’) rather than to the conscious mental sphere of volition. In other words, his advocacy of ‘will’ is opposed to, rather than aligned with, the project of applying myths through conscious volition.

³⁴ See Roy Baumeister’s studies on ego depletion for empirical research on this point [Baumeister et al 1998, Baumeister 2002, Baumeister and Vohs 2007].

³⁵ This would apply, for instance, to the project of ‘living life as literature’ (at least on certain construals of that project), whereby individuals self-consciously act out or interpret their life according to narrative schemas. It is noteworthy that one of Sass’s patients describes the experience of a schizophrenic episode as being like ‘living out a story I was telling myself’ [Sass 1992: 276]. See also Harcourt 2011 for a discussion of pathological aspects of aestheticism.

³⁶ I owe this point to Baker 2004c: 281.

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If the moderns could free themselves from an aspect-blind conception through punctual rather than durative acts of volition, this would bypass the objections mentioned above. However, if all Nietzsche does is provide us with pictures or myths that can we apply at will in order to shift us into a new way of looking at things, this hardly seems like a full cure if we still retain the periodic need to *be* shifted. It is not enough that the moderns are able to extract themselves through acts of volition whenever they lapse into aspect-blindness, they will only be fully cured if they stop needing to extract themselves from it – that is to say, if they cease being prone to lapsing into it altogether. This is Gemes’s concern about eternal return (a doctrine which, as I noted earlier, is presented through mythic narratives): the mode of affirmation enshrined in eternal return is *reflective*. The formulation of eternal return describes a procedure undertaken in response to the felt need to find a meaning or justification for life, but if the moderns were fully cured, they would not feel ‘the need to ask reflective questions about the value of life’ in the first place [Gemes unpublished: 19].³⁷ This was the condition of the Greek nobles, who affirm life spontaneously without such questions arising.³⁸ On Gemes’s reading,

what we need is a certain kind of therapy, possibly at the hands of someone like Nietzsche, or Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, so that we can again become like children. In our current state, then, the best that we can manage is the reflective affirmation of the kind exemplified in the eternal recurrence. Though perhaps one day after we have overcome the self-vivisection imposed on us by Judeo-Christian morality we will be able to return to a more naive form of life-affirmation. [Gemes unpublished: 22]

This echoes von Tevenar’s point from earlier: successful therapy consists in transforming our dispositions, not in providing prompts that trigger pre-

³⁷ Steven Affeldt has the same concern about the standard therapeutic readings of Wittgenstein, which describe Wittgenstein as guiding his readers out of confused philosophical ways of thinking about things without addressing their ‘recurrent’ lapse into such ways of thinking. Hence, according to Affeldt, ‘The sole moment of the therapeutic process recognized by the “therapeutic” reading [of Wittgenstein] is not, in itself, especially therapeutic.’ [Affeldt 2010: 285].

³⁸ A position which, Gemes notes, has ‘affinities to the later Wittgenstein’s stance towards philosophical notions of justification’ [Gemes unpublished: 20]. But see my discussion of the nobles and Nietzsche’s and Wittgenstein’s ideal type in chapter 4. Note also that in *GM* II:3, Nietzsche remarks that it is only ‘sovereign individuals’, shaped into reflective, autonomous human beings in the conditions of civilization, who are ‘permitted to say “yes” to [themselves]’ – this is ‘a late fruit’; [*GM* II: 3]. No norms yet governed the affirmation of the unreflective nobles of an earlier age, and their affirmation arguably amounted to little more than an animalistic surge of sensation.

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existing dispositions to temporarily shift us to a different way of looking at things whilst leaving those dispositions intact.

Recall my earlier suggestion that Nietzsche is trying to shift the moderns towards a mythic mode of thought (a standpoint) by means of providing mythic narratives (landmarks). I have already put forward one alternative to this suggestion: namely, perhaps it is only the *landmarks* that Nietzsche provides which are mythic, while the mode of thought towards which these myths are supposed to shift the moderns is not a mythic mode of thought. However, another alternative arises out of the preceding discussion: perhaps (contra the first alternative) the goal of successful therapy would be to shift the moderns to a mythic mode of thought, but (contra the original suggestion) the primary thing that therapy needs to do in order to achieve this goal is to change the moderns' modes of applying myths (as it were, their standpoint towards myths), rather than to provide new myths. In the terms in which Egan put matters: shifting the aspect under which we view pictures, rather than offering a new picture.

Sticking with this alternative: perhaps this primary therapeutic work is not being carried out by Nietzsche at all – perhaps Nietzsche's role is to come up with new myths and pictures, but he plays no role in changing the moderns' form of life in order to bring it about they actually apply, or are able to apply, these myths and pictures in a way that orients their thought in a mythic mode. But perhaps instead he does play (or at least attempt to play) a role in changing the moderns' way of applying myths and pictures – either in addition to providing myths and pictures for them to apply, or else *through* doing so (i.e. the myths and pictures he provides are themselves meant to change the moderns' way of applying pictures). I explore this possibility in the next section.

3.3 Changing the application of myths and pictures

At the end of the previous section, I suggested that changing our application of myths and pictures may play at least as great a role in Nietzsche's therapeutic work as providing new myths and pictures. This emphasis on the *application* of pictures derives, of course, from Wittgenstein, and to get an idea of the kind of work I have in mind, it will be illuminating to begin by considering Wittgenstein's own therapeutic project with regard to the Augustinian picture

of language. One way of understanding Wittgenstein's goal in the *Investigations* is that he is freeing us from the Augustinian picture of language and replacing it with another, better picture. According to Egan, the problem with pictures like the Augustinian picture is that they 'trend toward emptiness' because we are only able to hold onto our 'initial picture' by 'broadening our conception' to incorporate examples that don't neatly fit the original picture, so that the picture is 'gradually emptied of content' [Egan 2011: 72].³⁹ For example: the Augustinian picture of language ('The individual words in language name objects – sentences are combinations of such names' [PI I:1]) is emptied of content by progressively broadening the conception of 'object' or 'names' in order to fit the entirety of language – by which point the picture is failing to clarify anything. Similarly, the claim that 'all tools serve to modify something' could only be made to fit 'a rule, a glue-pot, and nails' by saying that these modify 'our knowledge of a thing's length, the temperature of the glue, and the solidity of a box' – but Wittgenstein is rightly sceptical whether 'anything [would] be gained by this assimilation of expressions' [PI I:14].

Egan wishes to show that, for Wittgenstein, although all pictures lack propositional content, only some are perniciously 'empty', and we must 'turn our eyes away' from such pictures (cf PI I:352). But note that it is only through being applied in a certain way that the Augustinian picture trends towards emptiness. When his interlocutor asks whether the Augustinian picture is a 'usable [*brauchbar*] representation [*Darstellung*] or not?' [PI I:3, translation modified], Wittgenstein replies: 'Yes, it is usable, but only for this narrowly circumscribed region, not for the whole of what you were claiming to represent [*darstellen*].' [PI I:3]. The Augustinian picture of language need not be discarded, but we must know how and when to apply it in order to help orient our understanding of language.⁴⁰ To paraphrase RPP 549:

³⁹ Cf Mulhall: 'As we find ourselves building more and more elaborate epicycles into our theory to cope with the apparent differences between kinds of word [...] Wittgenstein invites us to consider stepping back from our guiding, pre-theoretical assumption that all words are names.' [Mulhall 2005: 91].

⁴⁰ Though perhaps, once we have fully mastered our concept of language, we will no longer need pictures to assist us in finding our way round this concept and will be able to discard them as now-useless props.

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Not: 'We have formed a wrong picture of [language]' – but: 'We don't know our way about in the use of our picture, or of our pictures.'⁴¹

This suggests a different way of conceiving Nietzsche's project. The most obvious way of understanding Nietzsche's goal is that he is freeing us from the Christian myth or world-picture and replacing it with another, better picture. But what if, despite his fierce avowals that he is doing away with Christianity, Nietzsche is in fact re-applying rather than discarding the Christian world-picture? A number of commentators have suggested that he is doing just that. As Cavell puts it:

You may battle against the Christian's self-understanding from within Christianity, as Kierkegaard declares, or from beyond Christianity, as Nietzsche declares. In both cases, you are embattled because you find the *words* of the Christian to be the right words. It is the way he means them that is empty or enfeebling. [Cavell 1979: 352]

Von Tevenar remarks that, in *Zarathustra*, 'Nietzsche utilizes Christian devotional language and inverts it: the *Übermensch* replaces God, Saviour, and Messiah, and yearning for a transcendent "beyond" is turned into affirmation and love of earth' [von Tevenar 2013: 287–88]. Nietzsche often has Zarathustra draw explicit attention to the fact that he is performing this inversion (which perhaps undermines its effectiveness): e.g. 'Once you said "God" when you gazed upon distant seas; but now I have taught you to say "Superman".' [Z, On the Blissful Islands], 'We certainly do not want to enter into the kingdom of heaven: we have become men, so we want the kingdom of earth.' [Z, The Ass Festival: 2]. In other instances Nietzsche's appropriation of Christianity is more subtle and elusive. Von Tevenar believes that, beneath *Zarathustra's* overt references to the New Testament, a 'real [...] esoteric message is developed': namely, 'a "New" *New Testament*, *Zarathustra's Dionysian Testament*.' [von Tevenar 2013: 274]. Mulhall, meanwhile, notes that Nietzsche's imaginary interlocutor 'Mr Rash and Curious' recoils when he hears of the Christians' 'perverted' invocation of 'faith, love and hope' [Mulhall 2009: 126] at the very end of *GM I:14* (declaring 'Enough! Enough!'), but that

this same triad of terms has already been at work in section 12 of the treatise, in which Nietzsche turns aside from his analysis in order to pray for a glimpse of a man 'who makes up for and redeems man, and enables us to retain our *faith in mankind!*', in the light of what he sees

⁴¹ Originally: 'Not: "We have formed a wrong picture of thinking."'

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as the threat of losing ‘our love for him, our hope in him and even our will to be man’ (GM I:12). In other words, Nietzsche finds that the most intimate and powerful way in which to express his ideal for mankind involves precisely the terms whose presence in the mouths of Christians drives him to block his ears. He must turn the words of Christianity against themselves in order to liberate himself, and us, from it. [Mulhall 2009: 127]

Furthermore, according to Giles Fraser, on other occasions, far from challenging Christianity, Nietzsche’s mythological presentations of ‘the death of God’ and of this-worldly forms of salvation and affirmation are re-workings that breathe fresh life into, or tap neglected potentialities of, Christian myths and pictures: the ‘death of God’ on the cross is, after all, *the* Christian myth⁴² while ‘the paradigm conception of salvation within the Jewish scriptures is the Exodus, an act of liberation from captivity which seeks to express the full worth of the human-all-too-human’ – that is to say, an act that does not ‘invoke the super-terrestrial or seek to break through the constituent boundaries of our humanity’ [Fraser 2002: 74–75]. Similarly, Mulhall also sees Nietzsche’s works as re-articulating the Christian myth of the Fall (the *Genealogy*, for instance, recounts the mythic fall from the paradisiacal state of the nobles [Mulhall 2005: 38] while (as I noted in the previous chapter) Nietzsche’s ‘choice of imagery’ in the death of God passage suggests ‘the very specific kind of disorientation that Christianity calls “the Fall”’ [Mulhall 2005: 28].

Now, of course, even if we agree that part of what Nietzsche is doing is revealing ways in which some current Christian pictures and myths can be applied non-perniciously, it would stretch credibility to suppose that was all he was doing. Nietzsche surely holds that at least some elements of the Christian world-picture are simply not fit for purpose and must be replaced rather than re-appropriated. However, we may still need to change our way of applying a picture as an initial step towards discarding it. This is Pippin’s understanding of Nietzsche’s task (an understanding which Pippin expresses in Wittgensteinian terms). Nietzsche, according to Pippin, ‘plays with the figurative details’ of the Christian world-picture, ‘changing the way we imagine it, depriving it of its “aura”’, getting his readers to ‘see the traditional picture in

⁴² Fraser notes that ‘in Lutheran circles’ it was ‘hotly debated’ whether one could say that ‘God himself lies dead’: this ‘was a Christological question, and had no connotations of atheism’ [Fraser 2002: 37–38].

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a new way' – which allows them to 'understand the dispensability or even the arbitrariness of the traditional picture' and 'to appreciate the practical need for looking at things a different way' so that, later, 'a new picture might come to get a grip on us' [Pippin 2010: 45–46].

On this conception of Nietzsche's task, we must be freed from the grip of a picture that holds us captive before this picture can be replaced by a new one: a destructive critical moment must precede the conversion to a mode of thought oriented by a new myth. Being 'freed from the grip' consists in coming to experience the current picture as contingent or arbitrary – just one possible orienting landmark, or one possible way of looking at things. This function of freeing the moderns from the grip of the Christian world-picture is perhaps one that can be served through providing new mythic narratives and pictures. As I noted earlier, for instance, this is often how Nietzsche's genealogical method is understood: his genealogy (itself a form of mythic narrative) portrays the Christian world-picture as something contingent and dispensable. However, adopting the historical perspective of a genealogy is not the only way to suggest this sense of contingency (though it may be the most effective). Nietzsche's non-genealogical myths and pictures are also suited to this task: both because of what they portray (e.g. Heraclitean images of flux, and the corresponding Zarathustrian virtues that demand that this precariousness and contingency be faced up to) and their manner of portraying it (non-naturalistically⁴³).

However, there is once again an important distinction we need to make here that we will only be alerted to if we turn to Wittgenstein scholarship. Egan claims that, according to Baker, 'Wittgenstein's aim is to present us with objects of comparison that shift the aspect with which we view a matter,

⁴³ Terry Eagleton [1983: 187] has argued that the formal methods of naturalism ('itemize the furniture and aim for an exact "verisimilitude"') 'inevitably enforce upon us a sense of the unalterable solidity of this social world'. In order 'to break with these ways of seeing', it is necessary to use experimental, anti-naturalist forms which 'unsettle their convictions'. There is certainly a case to be made that Nietzsche's fantastical mythic narratives fall into the latter category; however, as I noted earlier, it's also possible to argue that the mythic form enforces a sense of the unalterable solidity of some intransigent world, and hence that the mythic form of Nietzsche's narratives undermines their message of flux in the same way that Eagleton claims that the naturalism of Bernard Shaw's dramas undermined their radical statements. However, even if we share this concern, we may still think that some of the other aspects of Nietzsche's method described later in this chapter come closer to Brechtian 'estrangement effect' praised by Eagleton, which renders 'the most taken-for-granted aspects of social reality shockingly unfamiliar'.

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allowing us to see as contingent and changeable what we had previously taken for fixed and necessary [...] [Wittgenstein is trying] to shift the aspect under which we conceive of a matter, and so to free us from the feeling of necessity that we can attach to certain pictures.’ [Egan 2011: 61, 64]. As Baker himself puts it:

When we are held captive by a picture or analogy ‘embedded in our language’, we are unable to see something in more than one way [...] [we are] aware of no other possibility [...] surrounding our practice with new possibilities (language-games) may have the consequence that we see matters differently. [Baker 2004a: 34–35]

This (especially as summarised by Egan) is strikingly similar to the understanding of Nietzsche’s aim outlined above. As it happens, Egan is dissatisfied with what he takes to be Baker’s reading of Wittgenstein’s aim, namely of releasing the grip that pictures have on us rather than shifting us to better pictures [Egan 2011: 65–66]. I believe Egan has misinterpreted Baker on this point, as Baker clearly thinks Wittgenstein wants to do both. But what is interesting is that these two aims come apart at all. If a picture’s having a grip on us consists simply in it being the picture with which we are currently operating (as Pippin’s usage suggests), then it is true that its status as necessary will not come into question while we are operating with it, as it is providing us with the framework from which such questions could be raised at all. But if that’s all that ‘having a grip’ consists in, then being freed from the grip of a picture is not separate from shifting to operating with a different picture: once a picture strikes me as contingent, it’s already not the one I’m operating with.⁴⁴ What Baker is instead suggesting is that ‘being held captive’ is a special and pernicious way of relating to a picture: one which holds us ‘in a cramped position’ or keeps us ‘in thrall’ [Baker 2004b: 264]. Wittgenstein’s readers stand in this relationship to the Augustinian picture; the problem is not just that they *do* not turn their eyes away from the picture, but that they *cannot*: Wittgenstein’s therapy must not just shift them away from the Augustinian picture or a certain way of applying it, but must first make it possible for them to shift away or be shifted away.

We may think that is true also of Nietzsche’s therapy: that the moderns do not merely occupy the Christian world-picture but are trapped in it, and this is

⁴⁴ Though I may assume a postmodernist or relativist pose in which I falsely claim to regard the picture which orients me as contingent.

why a two-stage therapeutic approach is required, first to free them from captivity and secondly to shift them to a new standpoint. Alternatively (or additionally), we may cast the Christian world-picture in a different role in this schema: instead of (or as well as) the Christian world-picture being the picture towards which the moderns stand in the relation of being held captive, perhaps instead (or additionally) it is through being oriented by the Christian world-picture that the moderns are caused to be held captive by pictures in general. Wittgenstein indicates that his readers' problem may consist in their 'not knowing their way about in the use of our pictures': they are infected with the confused impulse to apply pictures indiscriminately and invariantly across all contexts.⁴⁵ And of course, Nietzsche's complaint against the moderns is that they do not know their way about in the use of (mythic) narratives: it is noteworthy that, in the 'History' essay, Nietzsche's concern is not so much with creating a new history or re-orienting his moderns' application of any particular history, but rather to instil a new mode of *historicising*: a new way of creating and relating to historical narratives to displace the scientific mode (which is akin to Wittgenstein's readers' mode of relating to pictures). This new way would include a sense for when to *not* apply any historical narrative at all⁴⁶ (a sense for when to *not* think historically), as well as more varied ways of responding to or applying myths and pictures: for instance, treating historical narratives in ways other than as sets of propositions from which conclusions can be drawn, or responding to pictures of exemplary individuals in ways other than imitating the depicted individuals.

Of course, as I noted in the previous chapter, the scientific-Christian impulse which misorients us towards myths and pictures is itself oriented by one: something like the myth of the death of God, or Kafka's myth of the Castle. If

⁴⁵ As Egan notes, the problem is not just that they might apply pictures wrongly, but that their inclination to treat pictures as if these pictures dictated their own application 'makes [them] neglect the often important and revealing question of how and why [they] apply pictures in the way that [they] do' [Egan 2011: 60] and so become locked into fixed ways of applying pictures. Cf *PI* II:vii, p. 157: 'The picture is something like this: Though the ether is filled with vibrations the world is dark. But one day man opens his seeing eye, and there is light. What this language primarily describes is a picture. What is to be done with the picture, how it is to be used, is still obscure. Quite clearly, however, it must be explored if we want to understand the sense of what we are saying. But the picture seems to spare us this work: it already points to a particular use. This is how it takes us in.'

⁴⁶ Frank Cioffi suggests [2010: 292ff] that one element of Wittgenstein's method (exemplified in the essay on Frazer's *Golden Bough*) is to bring us to see things in a way that the need for a narrative historical explanation disappears.

our misorientation towards (and inability to properly apply) myths is itself rooted in a myth, then perhaps it could in principle be displaced by a new myth that would re-orient us properly towards myths in general.⁴⁷ But there is an obvious difficulty here: if the problem with Nietzsche's moderns is that their mode of applying myths and pictures is defective, how are they supposed to be cured by means of precisely the kind of thing that their pathology disposes them to make improper use of?

This brings us back to the difficulty described at the end of the previous section: how can Nietzsche, through his writing alone, change his readers' mode of applying pictures? Part of the difficulty is that these modes of application are embedded in a form of life: does the form of life need to be changed before Nietzsche's myths can perform any therapeutic work? Perhaps not: although, as I noted earlier, our actual practical and social structures restrict the field of conceptual frameworks that are possible for us (and hence restrict which myths will be able to take root in our form of life), it is also the case that actual conceptual frameworks determine the field of possible practical and social structures. Through changing the moderns' actual conceptual framework, Nietzsche thereby hopes to open up a new field of possible forms of life, in order that a form of life can be adopted that is compatible with the conceptual framework articulated through Nietzschean myth. Nietzsche's writings aim precisely to motivate his readers 'to adopt a

⁴⁷ For instance, Nietzsche's myth of the seafarer who is happy to be at sea without craving the absolute security of firm ground beneath their feet. 'The good taught you false shores and false securities [...] Now you shall be seafarers, brave, patient, seafarers! [...] The sea is stormy: everything is at sea. Well then! Come on, you old seaman-hearts! What of fatherland! Our helm wants to fare *away*.' [Z, Of Old and New Law-Tables 28; cf GS 240, 283, 289, 343, 'Toward New Seas' (p. 258)]. In a footnote to 'Toward New Seas' in Nietzsche's 'Songs of Prince Vogelfrei', Bernard Williams notes [p. 258] that Christopher Columbus often plays this role of the mythic figure of the seafarer in Nietzsche's works.

It is noteworthy that the seafarers who sail away from their father land are nonetheless sailing towards their '*children's land*'. Note also that this image of the seafarer is inverted at the start of *Zarathustra*: Zarathustra's descent from the mountain is likened to an ascent from the sea: 'You lived in solitude as in the sea, and the sea bore you. Alas, do you want to go ashore? Alas, do you want again to drag your body yourself?' [Z, Zarathustra's Prologue: 2; the simile recalls the *Genealogy's* account of 'water animals' becoming 'land animals']. It is also striking that in the 'History' essay, the seafaring motif is deployed in a rather different way: Nietzsche cries 'Land! Land! Enough and more than enough of the wild and erring voyage over strange dark seas! At last a coast appears in sight: we must land on it whatever it may be like, and the worst of harbours is better than to go reeling back into a hopeless infinity of scepticism' [UM II: 10, p. 116]. On these points, see my discussion in chapter 4 on 'brief habits'.

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certain form of life' [Cohen 2010: 127]⁴⁸ through working on their affects, providing new visions and paradigms of future forms of life and also by destroying the 'superstition' that 'our present highly disagreeable reality is the only one in any way possible' [UM II: 10, p. 118] – for 'reality', we could substitute here 'form of life' (this latter task being a form of the process, described above, of bringing the moderns to experience their current framework as contingent).

But a difficulty remains: as therapy, isn't this too passive to have its desired effect? I discussed earlier one constraint on Nietzsche's therapy: the myths and pictures he provides must be ones that are geared towards the sensibilities and dispositions that his readers actually have, else he might as well be talking to Martians or lions. But there is a danger too if the myths and picture Nietzsche offers up (or the modes of applying myths and pictures that he demonstrates) are *too* readily assimilated by existing systems of picture application: won't this just leave those systems more or less intact, without any radical re-orientation or re-organisation? The difficulty is particularly acute if the moderns are disposed to pathologically *misapply* myths and pictures. Any decisive break will have to issue from interruptions in the self-assured flow of their mode of thought and action.

Von Tevenar notes this problem with regard to *Zarathustra*. She remarks that *Zarathustra* can, on one level, be 'understood as a dramatic performance with Zarathustra as hero performing *his* transformation and inviting *all* to passively follow his progress' [von Tevenar 2013: 284]. But someone who passively follows a path laid down for them has not been truly transformed. What Zarathustra's words are supposed to do is far more radical: 'My words, like the snout of the boar, shall tear up the foundations of your souls; you shall call me a ploughshare.' [Z, Of the Virtuous].⁴⁹ Zarathustra's goal is not to gently

⁴⁸ Cf Wittgenstein: 'Christianity says [...] that sound doctrines [*gute Lehren*] are all useless. That you have to change your life. [...] The point is that a sound doctrine need not *take hold* of you.' [CV p. 53]. He could just as well have attributed this view to Nietzsche, whose style (unlike most philosophers) has been crafted to achieve more than expound 'sound doctrines'.

⁴⁹ Similarly, Affeldt suggests that Wittgenstein's 'therapeutic ambition' is not limited to 'revealing and dissolving moments of narrowly philosophical emptiness' but that Wittgenstein aims to 'transform' our nature [Affeldt 2010: 288]. Affeldt recognises that this is a bold ambition indeed: 'Who can seriously believe that this writing, or any writing, could transform human nature?' [Affeldt 2010: 288]. While we may question Affeldt's suggestion that Wittgenstein believes his writings to be capable of this task, there is no doubt at all that Nietzsche believes it of his writings.

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nudge his audience in the right direction, but to shatter them so that they can be remade (hence, Zarathustra loves those who will their own *Untergang* – their own self-overcoming [Z, Zarathustra's Prologue: 4]). According to von Tevenar, Zarathustra's performance which invites his followers to imitate him is an exoteric mask; behind it is the real, 'esoteric' Zarathustra who 'dismissed his disciples precisely because they were mere passive followers' [von Tevenar 2013: 284].⁵⁰

I am going to close by considering two 'esoteric' methods by which Nietzsche attempts to force his readers to actively develop new modes of applying pictures.

Firstly, a common feature of Nietzsche's style (both in his overtly mythic and his more discursive works) is that he presents us with elements whose application is not immediately obvious, and which therefore resist smooth, automatic uptake⁵¹: as it were, snares or traps over which we stumble,⁵² or hard morsels which cannot just be swallowed down but must be chewed. Such, for instance, are the many provocatively baffling, outrageous, extreme, paradoxical, oblique or straightforwardly nonsensical statements made by Nietzsche or Zarathustra. Readers are forced to develop novel ways of applying these elements, since with their existing instinctive dispositions they are at a loss to know what to make of them. Compelling readers to actively engage in a new mode of application opens up the possibility of this new mode becoming habitual and replacing the old, pathological mode.

⁵⁰ Cf Mulhall: Nietzsche must avoid 'encouraging his reader to fixate upon the particularity of her author, and so allow her to think that her own progress depended upon reproducing the process by means of which the author himself made progress'. Rather, Nietzsche must 'relate to the fettered reader in the role of her higher self, in order thereby to induce a disclosure and activation of that reader's own occluded higher self, and consequently render himself dispensable in that role – a mere transitional object in this therapeutic movement from fettered to free-spirited reading, and so from fettered to free-spirited living.' [Mulhall 2013: 173–74].

⁵¹ Compare Nietzsche's remark that the 'lesson of *Hamlet* cannot be drawn from the words of the play' – that is to say, from passive absorption of its 'vivid images' – but only 'from intense contemplation of, and reflection on, the whole' [BT 17, p. 81].

⁵² Pippin discusses the presence of what Bernard Williams refers to as 'booby traps' in Nietzsche's texts in the Introductory Remarks to his 2010 [p. xv].

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Particular prominence should be given in this regard to Nietzsche's use of aphorisms:⁵³ short, pithy observations or maxims. Susan Sontag describes aphorisms as 'rogue ideas':

Aphorism is aristocratic thinking: this is all the aristocrat is willing to tell you; he thinks you should get it fast, without spelling out all the details. Aphoristic thinking constructs thinking as an obstacle race: the reader is expected to get it fast, and move on. An aphorism is not an argument; it is too well-bred for that. [Sontag 2012: 512]

Now, Nietzsche is undoubtedly an aristocratic thinker; and Lampert agrees that aphorisms 'engage only the "tall and lofty"' and 'do not speak at all to most' [Lampert 1986: 45]. But doesn't Nietzsche expect precisely that the reader will *not* 'get it fast'? 'Something said briefly can be the fruit of much long thought' [AOM 127]: on Lampert's view, the reason aphorisms can speak only to the 'tall and lofty' is because of the exceptional 'effort' required to 'unriddle' them [Lampert 1986: 45]: whereas on Sontag's view, the aphorism's ideal reader will grasp its import effortlessly.

However, Sontag also notes that 'to write aphorisms is to assume a mask' [Sontag 2012: 512]. Nietzsche as author must not be conflated with the version of himself he presents in his texts. Nietzsche writes in the role of an aphorist whose implied addressee is an aristocratic reader to whom the significance of each aphorism is instantly clear. But this does not mean that Nietzsche's actual intended audience consists of such readers: rather, the actual readers are forced to reflect on how to apply such aphorisms: which, crucially, involves working out what the implied addressee is supposed to be like. As Lampert puts it, aphorisms 'create their proper readers' [Lampert 1986: 45]: as an alternative to presenting exemplary pictures of characters to imitate, Nietzsche's readers are forced to work out their own sense of the character of someone who thinks aristocratically (or mythically).⁵⁴

⁵³ Mulhall suggests a further advantage to using aphorisms: according to Mulhall, the value of Nietzsche's maxims resides in the fact that they constantly remind us that they are not 'perennial truths' but 'invite and then repel endorsement, again and again, unendingly' [Mulhall 2013: 160]. Engaging with Nietzsche's maxims forces us into the mode of applying pictures suggested by Nietzsche's myth of the seafarer, and prevents us from being held captive by any picture.

⁵⁴ Compare Mulhall's commentary [2011a: 238] on the opening lines of the *Genealogy*, ('We are unknown to ourselves, we knowers'): 'The real point of saying something to us whose apparent point presupposes that we are simultaneously both self-ignorant and becoming otherwise is thus not that Nietzsche thinks that that presupposition

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There are, of course, those readers who will be misled by the exoteric mask and flatter themselves that they are already the special kind of reader who *does* 'get it'. This complacency could stand in the way of growth, but Nietzsche sometimes exploits it to the opposite effect. Consider, for instance, Zarathustra's disparaging words on women in 'Of the Friend':

In woman, a slave and a tyrant have all too long been concealed. For that reason, woman is not yet capable of friendship: she knows only love.

In a woman's love is injustice and blindness towards all that she does not love. And in the enlightened love of a woman, too, there is still the unexpected attack and lightning and night, along with the light.

Woman is not yet capable of friendship: women are still cats and birds. Or, at best, cows.

These words will appeal to some incautious male readers who are drawn into a sense of sharing in the same aristocratic superiority as Zarathustra. But having allowed them to feel this, Nietzsche then pulls the rug from under their feet:

Woman is not yet capable of friendship. But tell me, you men, which of you is yet capable of friendship?

Having encouraged his readers into a stance of misogynistic disdain, Nietzsche now has Zarathustra turn that stance back on them: the readers are revealed to be worthy of the same disdain they presumed to feel towards others.⁵⁵

This is one of many instances of Nietzsche using irony as a 'pedagogic tool' (though it is also akin to the therapeutic methods of 'a physician'):

The ironist poses as unknowing, and does so so well that the pupils in discussion with them are deceived, grow bold in their belief they know better and expose themselves in every way; they abandon circumspection and reveal themselves as they are – up to the moment when the lamp they have been holding up to the face of the teacher sends its beams very humiliatingly back on to them themselves. [*HAH* 372]

currently holds true of us, his readers; it is that he hopes thereby to encourage us to *make* it true. For if our commitment to knowing does drive us to figure out this presupposition of Nietzsche's address, then in so doing we will come to realize not only that he apparently believes that our relation to ourselves might be other than it currently is, but also that only someone who was already underway in just that sense – already effecting this transformation in his own case – could have attained the perspective from which to offer such encouragement.'

⁵⁵ Needless to say, the fact that Nietzsche uses misogyny as an exoteric mask does not let him off the hook against accusations that he truly is misogynist.

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It wouldn't be quite right in this instance, of course, to say that the pupil (Zarathustra's audience) thinks they know better than the teacher, but otherwise the description fits; even more apt is Nietzsche's remark later in the same passage: 'All ironical writers depend on the foolish species of people who would like to feel themselves, together with the author, superior to all others.' [translation modified].

This is a second feature of Nietzsche's style: to first arouse in his readers symptoms of the very pathology he wishes to cure them of, and then to force them into devastating awareness of these symptoms. Nietzsche's books are 'dangerous' [AOM 58]. Someone might say of one of Nietzsche's works that 'I can tell by my own reaction to it that this book is harmful.' But:

Let them only wait and perhaps one day they will admit to themselves that this same book has done them a great service by bringing out the hidden sickness of their heart and making it visible. [AOM 58]⁵⁶

This process opens up a painful rift in his reader as they are forced to recognise the pathological nature of a perspective which they cannot help but admit they themselves occupy, having just been lured into experiencing it in a heightened form. This wounding, fragmenting result may seem to be the opposite of what Nietzsche needs to achieve: doesn't he wish to restore the moderns' unity and instinctive certainty, not undermine it? But as Mulhall puts it, for Nietzsche 'healing and new life are to be found in injury, in the vulnerability of living flesh, if they are to be found at all' [Mulhall 2011a: 245]. Corrupt instincts must be exposed and broken up before they can be replaced by healthy ones.

Christopher Janaway offers the most detailed reading of how Nietzsche uses such methods 'in pursuit of his diagnostic and therapeutic aims' [Janaway 2007: 102]. According to Janaway, Nietzsche's style is concerned with 'probing the affects of the reader' [Janaway 2007: 96, italics removed]. The idea is that by 'provoking a range of affects in the reader, Nietzsche enables the reader to locate the target for revaluation' [Janaway 2007: 96]. In order to 'detach' his

⁵⁶ But note that Nietzsche continues this remark as follows: 'Altered opinions do not alter a person's character' [AOM 58]. We may take this as a sign that this process needs to do more than alter *opinions*, or that this process is only a preparatory stage towards altering a person's character, both of which possibilities would be consonant with the position I advance in this chapter. However, possibly this is an indication that Nietzsche is sceptical of the prospect of actually bringing about the necessary changes: see my conclusion for discussion of this possibility.

readers from their current affective orientation, he must 'show' them that these are the affects they have – which he can only do by 'provok[ing] affective responses in them, and invit[ing] them to reflect on the explanation for their having them' [Janaway 2007: 99].

This directly parallels what (on some readings) Wittgenstein is setting out to do.⁵⁷ Wittgenstein's primary mode of undertaking this task is through depicting a dialogue between himself and an interlocutor: the reader is successively invited to identify with the interlocutor, only to be then drawn into recognition of the pathological nature of the interlocutor's concerns from the perspective opened up by the questions and analogies posed by Wittgenstein. It is interesting that Janaway chooses a rare (though not unique) instance where Nietzsche himself gives his reader an interlocutory voice in the text to illustrate his claims about Nietzsche's therapeutic method: namely, *GM* I:14, in which Nietzsche affects to call up a member of the audience ('Mr Rash and Curious') and engage in 'comic dialogue' [Janaway 2007: 102]. However, Nietzsche's dialogue differs from Wittgenstein's insofar as Nietzsche's interlocutor does not simply represent a perspective at odds with that represented by Nietzsche's authorial voice, but rather is the voice of a reader within whom a conflict between different perspectives has already been set in motion. According to Janaway, the 'Mr Rash and Curious' dialogue marks the culmination of a process in which Nietzsche has probed a complex range of affective responses in his readers – provoking both disquiet and admiration at the nobles' 'untrammelled exercise of power' [Janaway 2007: 103]. The aim of the 'Mr Rash and Curious' passage is to harness the attitude of disquiet and convert it into a 'still greater disquiet over the covert desire to exercise power that drives Christianity and the post-Christian moral attitudes which are likely to persist in the reader' [Janaway 2007: 103–4]. The reader is thus encouraged, in the awareness that they feel disquiet or disgust towards *both* poles of the inherited affective responses that they recognise in themselves, to

⁵⁷ 'While Wittgenstein does want to calm the restless and tormented voice of philosophical emptiness, he *must* also provoke it, call it forth. He must do this, in part, because it is his only means of discovering and investigating the aspects of human nature requiring his treatment. But he must also provoke the voice of philosophical emptiness because it is in and through that voice being called forth from each of us, in the encounter with Wittgenstein's text, that we discover ourselves to harbor the drives, cravings, anxieties, and the like that its emergence reveals. It is only in and through the voice of emptiness being called forth from us that we recognize our need for Wittgenstein's therapy and that it can begin to work upon us.' [Affeldt 2010: 287].

'reorient his or her feelings accordingly' [Janaway 2007: 101]. Mr Rash and Curious 'enact[s] disgust on the reader's behalf' [Janaway 2007: 104], drawing the reader who identifies with this figure some way along the path of carrying out this reorientation for themselves.

3.4 Conclusion

In the preceding sections, I have outlined various ways in which Nietzsche's therapeutic method – consisting in providing us with new myths and pictures, or in training us in new ways of applying myths and pictures – is supposed to work, or may be supposed to work, as a way of treating (or contributing towards the eventual treatment of) the moderns' pathological condition. Some of these ways are alternatives to one another, which I have laid out as possibilities without deciding between them – for instance, Nietzsche may provide mythic narratives as a means towards shifting the moderns to a non-mythic mode of thought, or else he may be demonstrating ways of applying existing mythic narratives that help to orient a non-pernicious mode of mythic thought, or else the main thrust of Nietzsche's therapeutic work may consist in his clearing obstacles that stand in the way of the moderns' being appropriately oriented by mythic narratives rather than in his providing those narratives (or demonstrating ways of applying existing narratives) himself. In conclusion, I now wish to briefly critically consider whether this method, as I have outlined it, can in fact do the work it is supposed to do.

One point I have already noted is that the success of this method is contingent on its intended addressees being constituted so as to be receptive to it: they must be receptive either to the myths and pictures Nietzsche provides, or to the methods he deploys to change their ways of applying myths and pictures. There is reason to doubt whether the particular myths and forms of words that Nietzsche has chosen are capable of doing therapeutic work either for us 21st-century readers or his original 19th-century contemporaries. Nietzsche himself was sensitive to this possibility; he has Zarathustra realise that 'I am not the mouth for these ears' [Z, Zarathustra's Prologue: 5].⁵⁸

⁵⁸ A particular issue might be that while Nietzsche presents pictures of great individuals or characters, modernity is no longer oriented by the myth of the great individual, and is consequently unable to apply these pictures.

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But then again, perhaps Nietzsche's readers are (or, historically, were) receptive to his particular implementation of this method – or, if they aren't (or weren't), couldn't someone else have succeeded where he failed by coming up with different implementations of this general method? Nietzsche is pessimistic on both counts. He thinks the vast majority of moderns (all except a select elite) are so entrenched in their misorientation that they lack any of the dispositions that would make them appropriately responsive to any re-orienting wisdom, no matter how or in what form it was delivered. They are akin to Zarathustra's ape, who will only ever use Zarathustra's teachings falsely [Z, Of Passing By]. In his vision of the Last Men, Zarathustra imagines a future where this misorientation has become universal, and in the fatalist vein running throughout his works Nietzsche appears to reject altogether the possibility of our being cured of our predicament; we must instead affirm the tragic necessity of how things unchangeably are.⁵⁹ On this conception, even those select few who are 'cured' by Nietzsche's writings turn out to have been secretly healthy all along, awaiting only the right treatment to awaken this inner core of spiritual health.

To my mind, what is interesting about this pessimistic or fatalist vein is not that it advances a theory showing why the type of mythic cure Nietzsche seems to be attempting elsewhere cannot succeed; rather, what is noteworthy is that Nietzsche appears to be articulating a pessimistic myth or affective orientation which counteracts the positive, emancipatory effects he is elsewhere attempting to achieve through myth. This is the same kind of charge that has been levelled against, for instance, T.S. Eliot: Marc Manganaro notes that while in *The Wasteland* Eliot 'tenuously put forward the possibility of World Culture' as a positive new myth for modernity,

ultimately, the strongest cultural work Eliot's poem does probably goes in precisely the opposite direction: that is, the waste land as splintered postmodern landscape, as a strongly resonant nightmare-memory of how culture from then on can and will be imagined [...] [The mythical method] ends up haunting us. Cultural centers cannot hold, home ain't what it used to be. [Manganaro 1998: 164–65]

⁵⁹ Mulhall suggests a similarly fatalistic reading of Wittgenstein, who according to Mulhall 'offers no reason to believe that the sceptical impulse to deny our linguistic conditionedness and condemn ourselves to eradications of speech that spin free of their objects as well as their source, will ever be eradicated (as opposed to being countered from case to case of its specific expression)' [Mulhall 2005: 121–22]. Affeldt 1999: 260–1 makes the same claim.

Chapter 3: Myths and pictures

If Nietzsche is articulating myths of inescapable decline and fragmentation, this will impede the success of any cure he attempts; it may even be that the crisis of modernity is not so much diagnosed and treated as constructed and sustained as a cultural horizon through his works.

Or at the least: Nietzsche's works are capable of being appropriated to that effect. The myths, pictures or other landmarks that Nietzsche provides the moderns with as a means to shifting their orientation cannot dictate their own application; consequently, they are potentially vulnerable to mythologising work performed by others which incorporates them into new and (from Nietzsche's point of view) pernicious modes of application. Most notoriously, of course, Nietzsche's words and images were found to provide apt material for articulating the fascist ideology of the Nazi regime. But they have also been domesticated into the fabric of the bourgeois-liberal social order which they were originally supposed to help destroy.⁶⁰

Furthermore, there is an additional consideration that may stand in the way of the success of Nietzsche's method (and, for that matter, Wittgenstein's). A great part of the appeal of Nietzsche's work consists in Nietzsche's own presence in them as a charismatic, authoritative authorial voice. It is precisely because he is so vividly embodied in his texts that he seems so suited to his role as a prophet or guide to whom we can stand in the relation of patient to therapist.⁶¹ There are two potential problems with this, however. Firstly, if

⁶⁰ Similar to the fate of the ideals of earlier Romantics in the late 19th and early 20th century: 'Changes in society, scientific theory, and the images articulating sensibility came together to make the old Romantic outlook virtually untenable. [...] The Romantic outlook seemed compromised by its co-option into the "bourgeois" world [...] Victorian piety and sentimentality seemed to have captured the Romantic spirit. For those who saw this whole world as spiritually hollow and flat, Romanticism could appear as integral to what they rejected as instrumentalism was. It merely offered trivialized, ersatz, or inauthentic meanings to compensate for a meaningless world.' [Taylor 1992: 457–58].

⁶¹ Gaita claims that 'we say of some people that they "have something to say" on moral or spiritual matters, but we do not mean that they have information to impart or a theory to propound. We mean that they speak with an individual voice [...] To have something to say is to be "present" in what we say and to those to whom we are speaking.' [Gaita 2004: 268]. Gaita presents Socrates as an example of such an individual, claiming that Socrates' words are capable of changing the moral understanding of his audience (represented by the figure of Polus), but if this happens 'it would be because *Socrates* changed him rather than because he was convinced by an argument that happened to be put to him by Socrates. If Polus came across such an argument written on a blackboard, studied it out of curiosity and was convinced of the truth of its premises and of the validity of its conclusion, then he would not understand what Socrates understood' [Gaita 2004: 276]. We might think of Nietzsche's therapy as depending on his having a similar authority to Socrates.

therapy proceeds on the basis of the domineeringly authoritative guidance of the therapist, there is a danger that the patient will continue to remain dependent on this guidance rather than developing a sense of their own authority. Even where Nietzsche does not lay down examples for his readers to passively follow, it is still Nietzsche's forceful promptings which are supposed to propel his readers' active engagement in their own development. Secondly, and perhaps more significantly, Nietzsche's presumed authority rests on precarious ground. As a modern, how can Nietzsche claim not to be mired in the very same malaise he hubristically claims he can cure others of?⁶² In the 'History' essay, he confesses he cannot: 'I have no wish to conceal from myself that, in the immoderation of its criticism, in the immaturity of its humanity, in its frequent transitions from irony to cynicism, from pride to scepticism, the present treatise itself reveals its modern character, a character marked by weakness of personality' [UM II: 10, p. 116]. Mulhall considers Nietzsche to be one of several thinkers (Mulhall includes Wittgenstein in their number) who struggle with the problem of how to offer 'redemption or reorientation' without recourse to 'divine assistance' from a position that transcends our own 'fallen' state [Mulhall 2005: 9]. Mulhall suggests that Nietzsche is often tempted simply 'to transpose the attributes of Christ' onto himself, presenting himself as a Christ-like figure in order to avail himself of a (disguised) claim to divine authority that would ordinarily be unavailable to someone 'occupying the merely human position of therapist' [Mulhall 2005: 122] – but this would of course an illegitimate move given Nietzsche's repudiation of divine authority. (Similarly, in the passage cited above [UM II: 10, p. 116], having demolished his own claims to authority Nietzsche is forced to appeal instead to the authority of the nebulous, quasi-religious spirit of 'youth' which speaks through him).

Alternatively, of course, we may think that Nietzsche is more like Gorgias, whose 'charisma' is a 'false semblance of Socrates' presence': capable of inducing 'belief but not understanding' [Gaita 2004: 276].

⁶² Sluga [2011: 832] claims that this problem plagues the practice of all therapeutic philosophers. 'Even our most resolute diagnostic thinkers seem to lack any sufficiently serious sceptical attitude towards the potentials and limitations of their praxis'. While Nietzsche is 'more sensitive' to the issue than other thinkers – 'When he diagnoses the decadence of his age, he well understands that he himself also belongs to this system of decadence and must understand himself as a product of decadence. As the diagnostician of nihilism, he recognises that he too is a nihilist' – there are limits even to Nietzsche's recognition of the extent to which his situation limits his potential as a diagnostician and therapist.

Chapter 3: Myths and pictures

By the own high standards for success he set himself, it seems hard to conclude that Nietzsche succeeded (or could have succeeded) in his ambition to re-orient his contemporaries towards a new form of mythic thinking that redeemed them from what he considered to be their present malaise. However, that is not to deny that his efforts in this direction were altogether unsuccessful. Through his imaginative creations and ingenious methods of presentation, he did (for better or worse) succeed in influencing to a considerable extent the forms of thinking and body of mythic images now woven into our forms of life. It is not beyond the realm of imagination that Nietzsche's works have effected partial or local cures or re-orientations for some of his many readers, and he remains an instructive example for how a therapeutic project could in principle proceed in a 21st-century context.

4

Ambivalence and artificiality: modernity's opposing poles

Du bist für diese einfache, bequeme, mit so wenigem zufriedene Welt von heute viel zu anspruchsvoll und hungrig, sie speit dich aus, du hast für sie eine Dimension zuviel. Wer heute leben und seines Lebens froh werden will, der darf kein Mensch sein wie du und ich. Wer statt Gedudel Musik, statt Vergnügen Freude, statt Geld Seele, statt Betrieb echte Arbeit, statt Spielerei echte Leidenschaft verlangt, für den ist diese hübsche Welt hier keine Heimat...

- Hermann Hesse¹

4.0 Introduction

In my first chapter, I characterised Nietzsche's diagnosis of his fellow moderns as follows: excessively cerebral, dispassionate and hesitant. I argued that this condition could be regarded as a species of what Wittgenstein calls 'aspect-blindness'. In subsequent chapters, I showed further parallels between Wittgenstein's thought and Nietzsche's account of the roots of this malaise as well as his proposed cure for it. In this chapter, however, I examine a different issue relating to my initial characterisation in the first chapter. The focus here is not so much on whether Nietzsche's account as I have characterised it can be compared to aspects of Wittgenstein's thought, but on whether Nietzsche's account can in fact be characterised as I have claimed.

My interpretation of Nietzsche's view has been rooted primarily in the 'History' essay from the *Untimely Meditations* (one of Nietzsche's earliest works). I have noted that the vision of modernity that Nietzsche presents in this essay can also be found in his later works, for instance in the figure of the 'Last Man' from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. However, there is another way that Nietzsche

¹ *Der Steppenwolf* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1974 [1927]), p. 194

Chapter 4: Ambivalence and artificiality

characterises his fellow moderns: namely, as a herd-like mass who never doubt or question anything. On this characterisation, they appear to be precisely the opposite of cold and cerebral: in contemporary Germany, Nietzsche remarks, a ‘cult of feeling’ has been erected ‘in place of the cult of reason’ [D 197]. Moreover, the ‘free spirits’, who Nietzsche celebrates as the much-needed antipode to the dominant ‘fettered spirits’, are marked out by their sceptical, deliberative nature: while the ‘fettered spirit takes up their position, not for reasons, but out of habit’ [HAH 226], the free spirit challenges the ‘habitual and undiscussable principles’ of the fettered spirits [HAH 224]. It is the *fettered spirits*, who lack ‘knowledge of how many possibilities of action there are’, and consequently make decisions ‘easily and quickly’ [HAH 228], who most closely resemble the unhistorical individuals praised in the ‘History’ essay; while it is the free spirit, who ‘is always weak, especially in actions; for they are aware of too many motives and points of view and therefore possess an uncertain and unpractised hand’ [HAH 230], who resembles the ‘History’ essay’s description of the overly historical moderns.

Since aspect-blindness is supposed to be manifested in excessive doubt and lack of affect, if the moderns (in accordance with Nietzsche’s second characterisation) instead display excessive affect and lack of doubt, it seems that whatever their malaise is, it cannot be aspect-blindness. It would also appear that whatever the cure for this malaise is supposed to be it cannot be a matter of restoring aspect-sightedness. We may worry, then, that there is a danger of distorting Nietzsche’s, or at least the later Nietzsche’s, thought if we attempt to read it through the lens of the Wittgensteinian notions of aspect-seeing and aspect-blindness.

But regardless of whether we bring Wittgenstein (or, for that matter, any other thinker) to bear on the matter, a pressing question remains: is there any way to reconcile the fact that Nietzsche apparently characterises the moderns in two contradictory ways, short of claiming Nietzsche is simply inconsistent? In this chapter, I consider a number of possible ways of resolving this apparent contradiction, including the possibility that the two characterisations are of chronologically distinct stages in the development of European modernity, the possibility that one is a characterisation of mere appearance and the other of reality, and the possibility that highly polarised tendencies can be the expression of a single underlying condition. I show that there is in fact no

contradiction in Nietzsche's account; however, I suggest in conclusion that the resources required to show this fact (especially the notion of 'fake' states) could also be deployed against Nietzsche's account. Opening this particular can of worms could threaten to undermine Nietzsche's entire project.

4.1 Ambiguity and Nietzsche's ideal

I begin by highlighting two areas where differences between Wittgenstein's and Nietzsche's views have the potential to obscure possible avenues for avoiding contradictions.

Firstly, Nietzsche and Wittgenstein (arguably) take a fundamentally different approach in their philosophical enterprises. Wittgenstein places a high value on clarity and perspicuity, and his philosophy aims to remove tangles and confusions from our understanding of matters. Nietzsche, on the other hand, revels in the irreducible complexity and ambiguity of the world, which resists any resolution into clarity. One potential issue with reading Nietzsche through a Wittgensteinian conception of philosophy is that it might lead us to expect that apparent contradictions ought to disappear, whereas for Nietzsche the elimination of such apparent contradictions is neither possible nor desirable. The idea could be, for instance, that no one characterisation could exhaustively encompass modern humanity to the extent of rendering all other characterisations superfluous. The ideal end point of Nietzsche's attempt to characterise modern humanity would not be a single characterisation but multiple characterisations, each apparently complete yet unable either to definitively oust all others or be combined with them. The impossibility of exhaustive characterisation has been a popular idea in the 20th and 21st century (particularly among those influenced by Nietzsche) but has its roots in 19th century Romanticism.² We may even think that Wittgenstein's figure of the duck-rabbit lends itself as a symbol for this idea: the ambiguous figure can be characterised under two wholly different and mutually exclusive aspects which nonetheless both encompass the *whole* of what is seen.

² A good example is the poem *Half of Life* (Die Hälfte des Lebens) by Nietzsche's childhood hero Friedrich Hölderlin, in which two juxtaposed stanzas express radically irreconcilable visions of life: on the one hand, a scene of serenity and beauty; on the other, a fragmented chaos. In English Romantic poetry, William Blake's *Songs of Innocence of Experience* provide many excellent examples of similar direct juxtapositions of irreconcilable visions.

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However, while I wish to note the possibility of interpreting Nietzsche's approach in this manner, it isn't an interpretive line I intend to pursue here. I believe that we can make sense of many of Nietzsche's claims without needing to struggle to render claims about inescapable radical ambiguity intelligible.

I would like to focus instead on a second dimension of difference: namely, between Nietzsche's and Wittgenstein's respective characterisations of their ideal (normal or healthy) types. I have remarked in previous chapters on striking parallels between Nietzschean nobility and Wittgensteinian certainty. But some of the claims Nietzsche makes about his nobles contradict those made by Wittgenstein and others about the aspect-sighted. For a start, Nietzsche's nobles are typically deeply individualist, isolated from the communal structures (linguistic, conceptual, societal) of the 'herd',³ whereas for Wittgenstein (and others) certainty is typically associated with integration within communal structures.⁴ Furthermore, the attitude of Nietzsche's nobles towards the 'slavish' masses seems to be akin to the state of *blindness* towards the humanity of others that other commentators illustrate using the figure of the slave-owner.

It would appear that Nietzsche is projecting features onto the nobles whom he admires which are characteristics not of sovereign mastery but of shrill narcissism. Alasdair MacIntyre claims that

What Nietzsche portrays is aristocratic *self*-assertion; what Homer and the sagas show are forms of assertion proper to and required by a certain *role*. [MacIntyre 2007: 129]

Clearly, even on MacIntyre's reading, the attitude of Greek nobles towards slaves or members of the lower orders would not be the attitude 'towards a soul' recommended by contemporary virtue ethicists; the attitude of the nobles

³ This characterisation is especially prominent in *Zarathustra*, e.g. 'The genuine, the free spirits, have always dwelt in the desert, as the lords of the desert; but in the towns dwell the well-fed famous philosophers – the draught animals.' [Z, Of the Famous Philosophers; cf Z, Of the Thousand and One Goals, Of Love of One's Neighbour]. The 'desert' metaphor is noteworthy here, given the association I have noted throughout between images of the desert/dryness and the death of instinct elsewhere in Nietzsche's works.

⁴ Nietzsche does in various places talk of non-conformist free spirits banding together in their own communities (for instance, see Young 2010: 247–49 on Nietzsche's ideal of a 'monastery for free spirits'). This may indicate that he does in fact recognise the need for some communal structures, though if we take Nietzsche's construal of his ideal type in terms of radical individualism seriously it is hard to see how free-spirithood could afford any basis for community.

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towards others is characterised in terms of hierarchical distance, rather than in terms of reciprocity between equals. But although Nietzsche talks approvingly of the nobles' 'pathos of distance', there is an important ambiguity in the term 'distance'. On the one hand, 'distance' could refer to relative coordinates within the space mapped out by social conceptions of hierarchy: from a socially elevated position, I may not see others 'as human' in the universal sense intended by contemporary writers, but I do nonetheless see them as determinately located within a system of human roles and practices; my attitude towards them is not best described as 'aspect-blind' because it is characterised positively by my seeing them under an aspect which happens to exclude seeing them under the aspect of universal humanity rather than characterised negatively by the fact of my not seeing them under the aspect of humanity.⁵ On the other hand, it is noteworthy that 'distance' is also the term used by the patient cited by Louis Sass to describe how things and people appeared to them during a schizophrenic episode: here, 'distance' does not express a sense of a determinate spatial-hierarchical relation towards another person or an object but rather a sense as of the lack of any such relation: as if one did not share space with that person or object within which one could be relatively close or distant, but were rather so radically disconnected as to be unsituated relative to that person or object. This, by contrast with the attitude of the Greek nobles, is an aspect-blind stance towards others. Like Harry Lime, Nietzsche would like to think that his nobles feel themselves distant from others in the sense of feeling unquestionably elevated above them, but there is always a suspicion that what they actually feel is detached from others and disoriented with regards to them. Ernst Kretschmer's description of 'schizoid' sensibility seems apt here: 'a light, intangible breath of aristocratic boldness and distance, an autistic narrowing down of affective responses to a strictly limited circle of men and things' [Sass 1992: 81].⁶ Far from manifesting

⁵ A helpful clarifying analogy here might be to the distinction between the case of an individual who cannot hear the exclamation 'Nine!' as the English word *nine* because they are hearing it as the German word *nein*, and the case of an individual to whom the word 'Nine!' ceases to seem like a word at all because it has been repeated over and over again (compare *PI* II:xi, p. 182: '[the feeling] that a word lost its meaning and became a mere sound if it was repeated ten times over'). Cf my discussion of the 'feeling of unreality' in chapter 1.

⁶ Sass is citing Ernst Kretschmer, *Physique of Character*, trans. W. J. H. Sprott (New York: Harcourt Brace and World: 1925 [1921]), p. 152. Interestingly, Sass presents both Nietzsche and Wittgenstein as examples of schizoid personality types [Sass 1992: 367]. Note that the schizoid personality type should not be confused with the condition of schizophrenia.

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easy self-assurance in their dealings with others, individuals with a 'schizoid' sensibility relate awkwardly to individuals outside their narrow circle and are 'highly vulnerable to slights and criticism' [Sass 1992: 77]. Seen in this light, the surprising brittleness of Nietzsche's nobles (delicate beings who must be cushioned against the outside world) seems to make more sense.

If Nietzsche has inadvertently ascribed features of aspect-blindness to the nobles who are supposed to represent an ideal of aspect-sightedness, this offers one explanation for his contradictory characterisation of his ideal type: namely, that this characterisation is indeed contradictory because elements that do not belong have been mixed in. However, this need not be a serious inconsistency, since the characterisation of nobility is sufficiently robust that it is clear which elements really belong to it and which should be excised in order to be truer to this characterisation than Nietzsche himself was. So could the apparent contradiction between Nietzsche's characterisations of his ideal types as unreflective and instinctive, yet also as sceptical and deliberative, be resolved by claiming that the tendency to scepticism is a feature of aspect-blindness that has accidentally been transposed onto what is supposed to be an ideal vision of naive certainty?

Now of course, if Nietzsche's ideal type, properly conceived, is supposed to be someone whose impulses are never interrupted by reflection, this is not terribly appealing. Giles Fraser considers the idea 'that total unselfconsciousness is a sign of spiritual excellence' to be a 'disturbing feature' of Nietzsche's ideal [Fraser 2002: 105].⁷ Idealising the person who never doubts or questions would serve only the most dubious of interests. If that is what aspect-sightedness and certainty amount to, then perhaps the aspect-blindness exemplified by Nietzsche's moderns is not such an unqualified ill after all.

However, we should resist the temptation to assume that the kind of nobility which Nietzsche presents as an ideal by way of contrast with the deplorable state of the aspect-blind moderns (who are afflicted by indiscriminate doubt) is an ideal of absolute, unquestioning certainty. To put it in a more familiar way: although the targets of Nietzsche's polemics can be more or less regarded as

⁷ e.g. 'Only *automatism* can enable perfection in living and creating ... But now we have reached the opposite point, indeed we have *wanted* to reach it – conscious to the most extreme degree' [WLN, p. 267; KSA XIII.14[226]].

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modern counterparts to the slaves of the *Genealogy*, he is not recommending the nobles of the *Genealogy* as a counterideal. Nietzsche's ideal of nobility is not an unreflective 'blond beast' but someone who ferociously raises questions and doubts (as Zarathustra proclaims, 'Woe to all living creatures that want to live without dispute over weight and scales and weigher!' [Z, Of the Sublime Men]). This sceptical tendency is not a misplaced element that has accidentally crept into Nietzsche's characterisation of the ideal type: rather, it is Nietzsche's occasional episodes of breathless admiration for the crude vigour of the unreflective nobles which intrude upon his considered characterisation of his ideal type (alternatively, these occasional episodes might be rhetorical devices to deceive unwary readers – recall my discussion in chapter 3 on the distinction between the exoteric and esoteric Nietzsche).

We might even think that Nietzsche, to his credit, realises in his ideal type the importance of an impulse to reflect and question in a way that Wittgenstein does not (which, if correct, would suggest another possible source of distortion if we read Nietzsche through a Wittgensteinian lens). Karsten Harries suggests that this marks an explicit contrast between Wittgenstein, who 'would recall philosophers from their airy heights back to the earth' and Nietzsche, who would instead 'set [philosophers] afloat by shaking their confidence' in the grounds (the 'language games') to which 'Wittgenstein would have us [re]turn' [Harries 1988: 32].⁸ Wittgenstein's normal individual (as opposed to a philosopher) would, as it were, be one who was so perfectly aligned with the contours of the language game already underway that they are never in any doubt how to go on with the game. Peter Goldie notes with disapproval a similar tendency among some virtue ethicists to talk as if 'the virtuous amongst us will glide through life unreflectively doing what the virtuous person should do, and that to stand back, so to speak, and check whether your motives do conform to the prized trait is somehow not right' [Goldie 2000: 159].

But Gertrude Conway warns against interpretations of Wittgenstein as 'the glorifier and preserver of the status quo' or the advocate of a 'hands-off, quietist policy' [Conway 1989: 158, 159].⁹ Wittgenstein is not 'endorsing all

⁸ Note also Nietzsche's remark that 'I fear we are not getting rid of God because we still believe in grammar' [TI, 'Reason' in Philosophy: 5], which suggests a repudiation of a certain strand of Wittgensteinianism.

⁹ See also Stephen Mulhall's defence of Wittgenstein against the charge of fideism in

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forms of existing language games' but 'contending that change must arise from the concrete needs, situations, and problems of language users rather than from disinterested philosophical reflection about the nature and meaning of language' [Conway 1989: 157]. What Wittgenstein thinks is abnormal about philosophers is not that they raise questions and doubts, but that they do so *indiscriminately*; he would regard the figure who acts entirely unreflectively as equally abnormal or deficient.¹⁰

Both Wittgenstein's and Nietzsche's ideal type, then, would be *relatively* but not *absolutely* unreflective; contrasting not just with Nietzsche's pathologically uncertain moderns (who are 'slavish' or 'aspect-blind') but also with Nietzsche's monstrously certain nobles (the same would be true of the virtuous agent, properly construed). Stephen Mulhall remarks on the striking parallel between the Augustinian picture of language or at least certain misapplications of it (that Wittgenstein attempts to turn us away from) and Nietzsche's unreflective nobles' conception of language: in both cases, language is conceived of as the application of 'names' to objects. But:

A world in which creatures do nothing but apply 'names' to things in accordance with their settled attraction or aversion to them is one in which utterances are closer to sound than to speech, because insofar as these acts of possessing the world are purely expressive of their utterers' unchanging character and its spontaneous, undeviating manifestations, they will be purely repetitive – utterly invariant, hence essentially unchanging and essentially unresponsive to any change in their environments. [Mulhall 2011a: 251]

Noting Nietzsche's 'partly parenthetical remark' [Mulhall 2011a: 252] that it is '*the herd instinct* which, with that, finally gets its word in (and makes *words*)' [GM I:2¹¹], Mulhall claims that

slave morality's getting its word in amounts to making words out of the masters' 'words' because the slaves' use of them involves, and so introduces (in the terms of section 10), reversal, opposition, and

Mulhall 2011b.

¹⁰ A distinct but parallel point is made by Steven Affeldt, who warns us against misreading Wittgenstein: 'Wittgenstein aims to dispel the sense of the mysterious, but not that of the remarkable. [...] He regards the sense of the mysterious as, in part, produced by a flight from the remarkable.' [Affeldt 2010: 280].

¹¹ This is Carol Diethe's translation, as cited by Mulhall (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994). The original German reads: '*Der Heerdeninstinkt, der mit ihm endlich zu Worte (auch zu Worten) kommt*' [KSA V, p. 261].

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reaction against the static iterations of the masters' essentially self-involved and self-reinforcing self-expressions. [Mulhall 2011a: 252]¹²

This kind of oppositional dynamism is central to the analogy Wittgenstein draws between 'language' and 'play'; Mulhall and Stanley Cavell have commented that the primitive 'builders' language'¹³ which Wittgenstein imagines in an attempt to find an example 'for which the description given by Augustine is right [*stimmt*]', has at best a highly contestable claim to be a language at all:

These builders evince no capacity or willingness to experiment with combining their words, to project them into new contexts, to play with them; they appear to be completely lacking in imagination, their future with words foreclosed, and hence the claim of their calls to be words uncertain. [Mulhall 2005: 110]

It is only through the injection of a slavish tendency to deviate from and react against the unreflective, instinctive outpourings of noble self-expression (or, rather, 'self-expression) that fully-fledged language is achieved. This general thought recurs throughout Nietzsche's works, except that generally it is *humanity* or *individuality* which is achieved (a substitution which makes sense if we agree that possession of language is a necessary condition of personhood). In *Human, All Too Human*, the fettered spirit who is a 'Christian' or 'English' not 'because they have knowledge of the various religions and have chosen between them' nor 'because they have decided in favour of England' but because 'they encountered Christianity and Englishness and adopted them without reasons, as someone born in wine-producing country becomes a wine-drinker' [HAH 226] is 'unfree' and 'narrowly determined by what is already existent' [HAH 228]. As Mulhall puts it, in the fettered spirit there is a 'complete coincidence of actuality and potentiality, of who one is and who one might be' [Mulhall 2013: 167]. It is the *free* spirits who are able to 'attain to a wholly individual perception of the world' [HAH 230] and enable '*spiritual progress*' [HAH 224] through rejecting tradition and custom and refusing to conform.

¹² Cf Gemes's unpublished remarks on 'language as substitute satisfaction', some of which appear in Gemes unpublished: 19.

¹³ 'A builder A and an assistant B [...] use a language consisting of the words "block", "pillar", "slab", "beam". A calls them out; B brings the stone which he has learnt to bring at such-and-such a call.' [PII:2].

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This is the point where Nietzsche seems to be turning the ideal of the 'History' essay on its head: in the 'History' essay, after all, it is those who doubt 'all concepts and customs' [UM II:7, p. 98] who end up as 'muffled up identical people' [UM II: 5, p. 84]. But of course, the 'History' essay does also advocate the occasional deployment of critical history to dissolve certain traditions or institutions. Furthermore, in the same essay, Nietzsche remarks that it is only by 'imposing limits' on the 'unhistorical element' through 'reflecting, comparing, distinguishing, drawing conclusions' that 'man became man' [UM II:1, p. 64].¹⁴

The passage continues: 'with an excess of history man again ceases to exist'. It is only between the two poles of excessive reflection and excessive certainty that human individuality obtains. Although Nietzsche focuses more in his later works on the dangers inherent in the latter pole, even in *Human, All Too Human* he acknowledges the need to avoid excessive reflection. For a start, a 'living sense of community' requires that only a minority should be free spirits who challenge the traditional certainties underpinning that community [HAH 224]; but 'rigorous science' is only capable 'to a limited extent' of detaching even free spirits from the 'power of habits of feeling acquired in primeval times' – and 'more is certainly not to be desired' [HAH 16]. Unconventional idiosyncrasy expressive of a unique inner self can tip over into the affectation or eccentricity of the schizoid individual who strikes us as peculiarly *empty*, while stripping away unquestioned certainties increasingly deprives us of any position from which to initiate actions or form beliefs. The reflective impulse of science has the potential both to set some individuals free from the herd-like conformity of the masses and to rob them of this achieved freedom and individuality by depriving their self of character. Both for Nietzsche and Wittgenstein, 'habit or routine is not an alternative to creativity or originality but rather a precondition for it' [Mulhall 2011a: 255]:¹⁵ only against a background of unreflective certainty can doubt and reflection – and hence, individuation, language, personhood – arise.

¹⁴ Metaphorically, this represents 'the appearance within that encompassing cloud of a vivid flash of light' [UM II:1, p. 64]. Cf Wittgenstein's remark on a certain kind of picture: 'The evolution of the higher animals and of man, and the awakening of consciousness at a particular level. The picture is something like this: Though the ether is filled with vibrations the world is dark. But one day man opens his seeing eye, and there is light.' [PII:vii, p. 157].

¹⁵ Mulhall is referring here explicitly to Nietzsche's sovereign individual, but the general point of course applies equally well to Wittgenstein's position.

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Moreover, although Nietzsche stresses the need to challenge and overhaul elements of our instinctive or habitual certainties, this ‘no-saying’ is only the first stage of his task: the second is of ‘*assimilating knowledge* and making it instinctive’ [GS 11].¹⁶ Nietzsche’s ideal type engages in critical scrutiny that uproots many instinctive certainties so that they can instead make new, better values or conceptions instinctive instead.¹⁷ Consider Zarathustra’s words:

‘Why?’ said Zarathustra. ‘You ask why? I am not one of those who may be questioned about their Why.

‘Do my experiences date from yesterday? It is a long time since I experienced the reasons for my opinions.

‘Should I not have to be a barrel of memory, if I wanted to carry my reasons, too, about with me?’ [Z, Of Poets]

It is not just that certain questions of justification do not arise for Zarathustra – crucially, they *no longer* arise. He has, as it were, become fluent in a new language.

Mulhall emphasises that the assimilation of new instincts does not mark a final resting point beyond which no more reflective questioning takes place; for Nietzsche, such an ideal would reek of stagnancy and ossification. Rather, Nietzsche’s ideal is one of continual self-overcoming: whenever a new state of mastery is attained, it ‘will reveal another, unattained but attainable state that neighbours it’ [Mulhall 2011a: 253]; the free spirit’s attitude ‘amounts to a perpetual willingness for self-overcoming, a willingness to sacrifice his present state in the name of some future, unattained but attainable, state’ [Mulhall 2013: 167].

Nonetheless, while none of these assimilations to the condition of instinct represent a *final* resting point, instincts at base still take priority over reflection in Nietzsche’s ideal. Nietzsche professes to hating ‘*Enduring habits*’:

¹⁶ Cf the following unpublished remark: ‘The great reason in all education to morality has always been that one tried to achieve the *sureness of an instinct*: so that neither the good intention nor the good means even entered consciousness. Just as the soldier drills, so man was to learn how to act. And indeed, this unconsciousness is part of every kind of perfection: even the mathematician’s combinations are done unconsciously ...’ [WLN, p. 254; KSA XIII.14[111]].

¹⁷ According to Jonathan Cohen’s [2010] reading of *Human, All Too Human*, a version of this idea is present in embryonic form in *Human, All Too Human*: free spirits begin their career by doubting and withdrawing from unquestioned societal structures, but later rein in their questioning and return to active roles in society as ex-free-spirits.

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[I] feel as if a tyrant has come near me and the air around me is *thickening* when events take a shape that seems inevitably to produce enduring habits – for instance, owing to an official position, constant relations with the same people, a permanent residence, or uniquely good health. [GS 295]

But although he prefers ‘brief’ to ‘enduring’ habits, better enduring habits than no habits at all:

The most intolerable, the truly terrible, would of course be a life entirely without habits, a life that continually demanded improvisation – that would be my exile and my Siberia. [GS 295]

In rejecting the ideal of a ‘permanent residence’, Nietzsche is not advocating the life of the homeless, postmodern ‘tourist’ to whom all things are foreign but rather that of the nomad who settles in many different homes temporarily. Hence, the goal (described in chapter 3) of enabling us to assimilate new instincts and inhabit new ways of seeing the world remains important to Nietzsche even though he also recognises a countervailing imperative to periodically uproot ourselves from them.¹⁸

4.2 Pre-modernity and modernity: ‘Christianity’ contra ‘Christianity’

In the last section, I argued that there is greater continuity than there may initially seem between Nietzsche’s ideals in the *Untimely Meditations* and *Human, All Too Human* respectively. In both works, his ideal lies between poles of insufficient and excessive reflection; it is dangerous to go too far in either direction. But even if Nietzsche’s earlier and later *ideals* do turn out to be roughly continuous, there does still seem to be a shift in his characterisation of what modern people are *actually like*. While they both agree that certain harms *would* be caused both by too much or too little reflection, the ‘History’ essay and *Human, All Too Human* appear to disagree about what *is* causing harm among modern Germans: the ‘History’ essay diagnoses too much reflection, *Human, All Too Human* diagnoses too little.

We might simply think that in the intervening period since the *Untimely Meditations*, the Nietzsche of *Human, All Too Human* has radically reassessed

¹⁸ It is probably worth stressing that there is a point of difference here with Wittgenstein: for Wittgenstein, questioning is governed by norms directed towards reforming practice. Nietzsche seems to think that periodically overcoming existing practices is valuable to avoid stagnation, regardless of whether the practices stand in need of reform as judged by Wittgensteinian standards.

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many of his salient beliefs about his 'patient' and so has also changed his diagnosis. There is certainly something in this, but this wouldn't account for why in works subsequent to *Human, All Too Human* Nietzsche continues to frequently describe the moderns in terms continuous with the 'History' essay's characterisation of them.

One possibility is that Nietzsche's dual characterisations simply apply to different individuals with different natures: some people are too reflective, some insufficiently so, and they must not be treated with a one-size-fits-all approach. But while this is certainly a prominent strand of Nietzsche's thought, its important implications are prescriptive rather than descriptive: it qualifies Nietzsche's ideal of not straying too far towards the poles of excessive or insufficient reflection by noting that what counts as 'too far' will vary from individual to individual. Nietzsche's commitment to the idea that there is great variety in individual natures can and does co-exist with his commitment to the belief that modernity is characterised by the predominance of a certain type of individual, and the former idea does nothing to relieve the appearance of contradiction if Nietzsche seems to have inconsistent ideas about the nature of the predominant type of individual.

A more promising possibility is that while one of Nietzsche's characterisations applies to the dominant type of individual in the conditions of modernity, the other applies to lingering remnants of a pre-modern form of life: Christianity.

The Anti-Christ portrays Christianity as a 'way of life' whose laws have been made unconscious, instinctive, beyond question, and are upheld by 'tradition' [A 57]. A 'complete automatism of instinct' has been achieved – which is 'the precondition for any kind of mastery, any kind of perfection in the art of living' [A 57]. The person of faith is a person of conviction and 'convictions are prisons': 'Not to see many things, not to be impartial in anything, to be party through and through, to view all values from a strict and necessary perspective' [A 54]. The person of faith is thus the 'antagonist of the truthful person – of truth' [A 54]; moreover, the perspective of Christianity is not just untruthful but pernicious, 'a vampirism of pale subterranean bloodsuckers!' [A 49]. By contrast to Christianity, 'Zarathustra is a sceptic' [A 54]. In the terms of *Human, All Too Human*, the Christians are the fettered spirits, while Zarathustra is the free spirit (a term also used in *The Anti-Christ*) who rejects

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tradition and conviction. Nietzsche was already warning against the dangers of conviction in *Human, All Too Human*:

Opinions grow out of *passions*; *inertia of the spirit* lets them stiffen into *convictions*. – One, however, whose spirit is *free* and restlessly alive can prevent this stiffening through continual changes [...] they will have in their head, not opinions, but only certainties and precisely calculated probabilities. [HAH 637]

Sometimes, Nietzsche claims that Christianity is already a historical relic rather than an active force: ‘The practice of every hour, every instinct, every valuation which leads to *action* is today anti-Christian’ [A 38]; ‘Really active people are now inwardly without Christianity’ [D 92]; most moderns ‘have lost the last remnant not only of a philosophical but also of a religious mode of thinking, and in their place have acquired not even optimism but journalism’ [UM III:4, p. 147]. But on the whole, he recognises that it will take a long time for Christian habits of feeling and valuation to lose their grip on us. ‘God is dead; but given the way people are, there may still for millennia be caves in which they show his shadow. – And we – we must still defeat his shadow as well!’ [GS 108].

Hence, although modernity is characterised by the increasing predominance of the hesitant, uprooted ‘aspect-blind’ moderns described in the ‘History’ essay who are too far towards the pole of excessive reflection, a dwindling but still considerable number of Christians (including ‘Christians’ who would describe themselves as atheists) continue to embody a form of life which is too far towards the pole of excessive certainty. This ongoing shift from pre-modern to modern brings both positives and negatives; hence, Nietzsche’s ambivalence between the two following general schemas for understanding the situation of modernity:

- A The superstitious stupidity, impulsiveness and barbarity of a more primitive age are increasingly being overcome by the progress of science and reason.
- B Moderns are increasingly being deprived of the vigour, passion, certainty and unity enjoyed by pre-modern societies.

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These correspond, of course, to 'Enlightenment' and 'Romantic' myths respectively, with A at the forefront in *Human, All Too Human* and B at the forefront in the 'History' essay, albeit in more sophisticated forms.

However, neither of these schemas can be applied unproblematically to Nietzsche's understanding of Christianity's relationship to modernity. They could be applied more straightforwardly to his understanding of the transition from the state of primitive Greek nobles or pre-human animals to civilised humans (something I shall return to shortly) except that this transition was one completed long before modernity. But while there is certainly something in the idea that Nietzsche thinks Christianity is more 'primitive' than modernity, he also seems to understand the transition from Christianity to modernity according to the following schemas:

- C The emotional repression and self-laceration inherent to Christianity is in abatement, emancipating moderns and enabling them to express their passions with greater freedom.
- D The discipline and order imposed on passions by Christianity is in abatement, and the spiritual condition of the moderns is chaos and laxity.¹⁹

Again, Nietzsche is ambivalent between these two schematic understandings, though he (usually) presents them in a less crude form.²⁰ This ambivalence isn't especially problematic: if both repression and unregulated expression of drives are harmful or undesirable, then the transition from repression to unregulated expression would be good in some respects and bad in others.

What is more problematic is the contradiction between what the two pairs of schemas seem to be describing. How can it be the case that the moderns are increasingly cold and dispassionate as Christianity recedes (A and B) if it is also the case that Christianity represses passion (C and D)? How can

¹⁹ As Nietzsche puts it in an unpublished remark, the 'European of the future' is a 'cosmopolitan chaos of affects and intelligences' [*WLN*, pp. 207–8; *KSA* XIII.11[31]]. By contrast, the Church formerly exercised a unifying function, holding together 'hostile forces' so that 'through the strong pressure [the Church] exerted' these forces were 'to some extent assimilated with one another' [*UM* III: 4, p. 150].

²⁰ In particular, one would struggle to find any moment where Nietzsche explicitly and unreservedly endorses the optimistic component of C, though perhaps the end of *GM* II:20 comes close.

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Christianity cause self-fragmentation through the drive to self-abnegation (C and D) and yet its decline be associated with an increase in self-fragmentation and a decrease in naive self-confidence (A and B)? In particular, given that Nietzsche regards the scientific will-to-truth as a form of the Christian ascetic drive to self-cruelty [*BGE* 229, *GM* III:9, *GS* 344] (C and D), shouldn't the scientific impulse diminish with the decline of Christianity rather than escalating (as A and B would have it)?

I believe there is a genuine muddle here, and that it is caused by failing to make certain distinctions that get conflated under the very general heading of 'Christianity'. On the one hand, Nietzsche's account of European modernity (in common with many other accounts) is structured around a two-place opposition between a primitive, unified pre-modern society and a rational, heterogeneous modern society. Assigning actual historical societies to the first place in this structure requires presenting them as far less complex and sophisticated than they actually were: Nietzsche's Greeks, for instance, are rendered as far simpler when cast in the role of primitive nobles (as in *GM* I) within this structure than they are in *The Birth of Tragedy*. MacIntyre warns that fitting medieval European culture into the same structure is likewise rather distortive:

Of all the mythological ways of thinking which have disguised the middle ages for us none is more misleading than that which portrays a unified and monolithic Christian culture and this is not just because the medieval achievement was also Jewish and Islamic. Medieval culture, insofar as it was a unity at all, was a fragile and complex balance of a variety of disparate and conflicting elements. [MacIntyre 2007: 165–66]

But distortive as it may be, Nietzsche's account of modernity is in part framed as a transition from 'medieval Christian culture' (in the role of primitive, unified pre-modern society). 'Christianity' designates this caricatured or mythologised medieval culture, and in this sense, 'Christianity' is not merely in decline but dead.²¹

However, most of the time when Nietzsche talks of 'Christianity', what he is describing is not (even in caricature) medieval Christian forms of life, but a

²¹ Or at least so Nietzsche would officially have us believe, though as I noted in chapter 3 there are suggestions in his texts that there are still some persisting continuities with this earlier form of Christianity.

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later complex of thought and practice that could inexactly be identified with Protestantism. 'Christianity' in this latter sense is not declining as modernity progresses – rather, the progress of modernity *consists in* the increasing dominance of 'Christianity' in this latter sense.²²

Nietzsche does not explicitly differentiate between these two different stages of Christianity (even though even this division into just two 'stages' is itself still a gross simplification), which creates some confusion in his thought. But it is abundantly clear that most of Nietzsche's account of 'Christianity' would not merely be a false account of medieval Christianity but would simply not make sense as an account of it. What Nietzsche identifies as the characteristic features of 'Christianity' are elsewhere overwhelmingly identified as features which distinguish modernity from the medieval period. Where Nietzsche claims that Christianity is the 'religion of *pity*' [A 7]²³ which 'preserves what is ripe for destruction' and curbed the overt, bloodthirsty cruelty of earlier ages (albeit through the application of cruel, immoral techniques), Michel Foucault famously notes that it was only as late as the eighteenth century that the extremely severe rituals of punishment enacted in medieval societies were replaced by forms of punishment with an 'attenuated severity' [Foucault 1977: 82]. Charles Taylor claims that the overwhelming imperative to alleviate suffering which Nietzsche identifies with Christianity is a distinguishing characteristic of *modern* morality: according to Taylor, 'the importance we put on avoiding suffering' is 'unique'; 'certainly we are much more sensitive on this score than our ancestors of a few centuries ago' [Taylor 1992: 12]. Taylor traces this 'moral imperative to reduce suffering' to the Enlightenment [Taylor 1992: 384]. Simon May remarks that it is an 'error' for Nietzsche to present Christianity as 'monolithically contemptuous of nature and flesh' as 'such unqualified contempt for body and nature would run up against a central Christian tenet, which is that the world is a site for God's self-manifestation' [May 2011b: 134]; Max Weber associates a 'disenchanted' perspective on the world (in which it no longer appears as the site of the manifestation of the divine) and contempt for the flesh with later forms of Christianity and modernity. The crushing, inexpiable guilt and relentless self-denial of

²² I anticipated this point in the concluding sections of chapter 2.

²³ Note that according to *BGE 202*, the modern movement of the 'placidly industrious democrats' has inherited 'Christian' morality – including its 'religion of pity' (this expression occurs in *BGE 202* as well as *A 7*). Their 'mortal hatred for suffering' means they are unable to 'remain spectators of suffering, to *let* suffer' [*BGE 202*].

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Nietzsche's Christian sound little like Weber's description of medieval Catholicism, whose practices of indulgences and confession respectively 'counteracted the tendencies toward systematic worldly asceticism' and provided periodic 'release' from tension [Weber 2001: 74, 71]. Instead, Nietzsche's Christian resembles Weber's Puritan, whose every action is subjected to exacting standards which forbid spontaneous enjoyment and emotional impulse.²⁴

In fact, as well as proclaiming that Christianity is dead or in terminal decline, Nietzsche also often makes remarks to the effect that things are becoming 'more Christian' [GM I:12],²⁵ not less. The essence of Christian morality is perpetuated in secular form in liberal democratic political ideals and bourgeois morality; Nietzsche suggests that explicitly Christian institutions no longer have any 'necessary task' in promoting the dominance of 'Christian' morality, and in fact may 'inhibit[] and hold[] back this progress instead of accelerating it' [GM I: 9].²⁶ It is these institutions, as well as the medieval forms of Christian life, which are dead or dying, but not the form of life that arose under Protestantism.

Distinguishing between medieval and modern 'Christian' forms of life makes it possible to resolve the contradiction between the two schematic pairs (A and B) and (C and D) by dropping the second pairing: to be consistent with his account of a transition from a primitive unitary culture ('medieval Christian culture') to a more complex modern one (A and B), he should *not* claim that this transition involves a move away from the self-abnegating affective structure of 'Protestant' Christianity (C and D).

However, this clarification of the role played by 'Christian' forms of life in Nietzsche's account of modernity undermines the attempt to use the figure of the Christian to resolve the apparent contradiction between Nietzsche's dual

²⁴ Though note also the similarity between the ideal of Weber's Puritanism and of Nietzsche's 'sovereign individual': 'The Puritan, like every rational type of asceticism, tried to enable a man to maintain and act upon his constant motives, especially those which it taught him itself, against the emotions. In this formal psychological sense of the term it tried to make him into a personality.' [Weber 2001: 73].

²⁵ In full: 'Things are still going downhill, downhill – into something thinner, more good-natured, more prudent [*klug*], more comfortable, more mediocre, more apathetic, more Chinese, more Christian'.

²⁶ Compare the unpublished note from the same period where Nietzsche notes that 'the vivisection and tormenting of the conscience [...] merely inheres in a particular soil where Christian values have taken root' but 'is not Christianity itself' [WLN, p. 190; KSA XII.10[96]].

characterisations of the moderns. The idea, we will recall, was supposed to be that one of these characterisations applies to the dominant type of genuinely modern individual, while the other applies to Christians who stubbornly continue to embody a pre-modern forms of life. This idea is undermined in two respects. Firstly, if 'Protestant' Christian asceticism is not typical of a pre-modern form of life but is instead a central component of the typically modern form of life, then it seems less plausible that Nietzsche is waging a war on two fronts. If the supposed representative of a pre-modern form of life has turned out to be thoroughly modern after all, who or what is supposed to be a credible opponent on that front? Secondly and more importantly, Protestant asceticism has certain features which appear to be incompatible with one or both of Nietzsche's characterisations of modernity, as well as containing several apparent contradictions or dualities within itself. If this asceticism turns out to be part of the modern form of life, then we seem still to be stuck with the appearance of contradiction between Nietzsche's characterisations of modernity we were trying to resolve by invoking a contrast between modern and pre-modern, as the apparently contradictory characterisations have both ended up on the same side of the modern/pre-modern divide. I elaborate on this point in the next section, where I suggest that the existence of dualities within Protestant asceticism is the key to resolving the appearance of contradiction between Nietzsche's characterisations of modernity.

4.3 Duality in 'Christianity'

In chapter 2, I already considered one apparent contradiction in Nietzsche's characterisation of the modern form of life, as pointed out by Julian Young:

A potentially serious difficulty in Nietzsche's cultural criticism is presented by an apparent inconsistency between the two strands of the 'motley cow' critique. On the one hand, he claims modernity to be a motley 'chaos'. But on the other, he seems to attribute to it an unhealthy *order*: that of (disguised) Christian morality. [Young 2010: 421]

I argued that this particular apparent contradiction can be resolved by viewing the two strands as part of a single dynamic rooted in 'Christian' asceticism: the experience of cultural fragmentation issues from the self-undermining attempt to impose an unhealthy order of absolute control and certainty. I shall

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argue here that other dimensions of apparent contradiction in Nietzsche's characterisation of the moderns can be resolved in not dissimilar ways

One seeming contradiction if the modern personality is supposed to represent a continuation rather than a repudiation of the Christian ascetic, for instance, is that Nietzsche's moderns are 'thoughtless, smug, self-satisfied boors' [Pippin 2010: 51], which sounds rather different from the self-loathing Christians. I would suggest, in fact, that this is simply another dimension of the *same* seeming contradiction as between the characterisation of moderns in *Human, All Too Human* (as incurious, unreflective) and in the 'History' essay (as hesitant, self-doubting). I have so far outlined various unsuccessful attempts to resolve this seeming contradiction by denying that both characterisations should be seen as applying to the same people. What I now wish to argue instead is that while both characterisations should be seen as applying to the same people, this does not involve any contradiction.

I have noted that both Nietzsche's and Wittgenstein's ideal type occupy a position of healthy certainty: they don't doubt or reflect on certain matters, but they do engage in reflective reasoning against this general backdrop of certainty. By contrast, the 'aspect-blind' lack (or are disconnected from) this healthy certainty and have excessive doubts, while 'primitive' nobles have an overabundance of certainty and never doubt or reflect at all. The difficulty seems to be that, on Nietzsche's dual characterisation, the moderns simultaneously occupy both the 'aspect-blind' and 'primitive' poles.

However, this difficulty would rest on the incorrect assumption that an excessive absence of reflection is necessarily a manifestation of 'primitive' certainty. But the lack of reflection in Nietzsche's moderns is different in form from the lack of reflection in Nietzsche's 'primitive' nobles.

This is mirrored in the fact that there is also a difference in form between the kind of reflection that the aspect-blind engage in and the kind that individuals with healthy instinctive certainty or mastery are able to engage in. The latter individuals do not simply engage less often in the cold, calculative reflection in accordance with universal principles practised by the aspect-blind: they are also able to engage in forms of reflection unavailable to the aspect-blind, such as the particularist practical reasoning described by Jonathan Dancy or the adverbially emotional reflection described by Peter Goldie (compare the

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‘scientific’ calculations of Nietzsche’s moderns with the ‘joyfully scientific’ reflections of his free spirits). Furthermore, even in instances where a person with healthy instinctive certainty or mastery is uncertain how to go on, their uncertainty will differ from the ‘hesitation’ of the aspect-blind: their doubt will typically be confined within a range of possibilities: only certain alternatives would occur to them as genuine possibilities and they will have a sense for how to judge between these alternatives; whereas the aspect-blind person who lacks mastery or doubts indiscriminately would not even be able to set limits on the range of alternatives to be considered.

If we now consider ‘primitive’ absolute certainty, we will likewise see that it bears little resemblance to the unreflective incuriosity of Nietzsche’s moderns. Recall Mulhall’s descriptions of the ‘Augustinian’ language of Nietzsche’s nobles and Wittgenstein’s builders: ‘purely repetitive’, ‘utterly invariant’ [Mulhall 2011a: 251], evincing ‘no capacity or willingness to experiment with combining their words, to project them into new contexts, to play with them’ [Mulhall 2005: 110]. Mulhall remarks that one interpretive possibility considered by Cavell is that the speakers of this language are ‘primitive human beings, a species of Neanderthal’ [Mulhall 2005: 110]. But Mulhall also remarks that these supposedly ‘primitive’ speakers would be ‘unlike human children’ [Mulhall 2005: 110] as the behaviour of children is precisely characterised by playfulness and spontaneity: yet surely we should expect ‘primitiveness’ to be aligned, rather than contrasted, with the state of childhood.²⁷ The stiffness and invariability of the builder’s language is closer to Mulhall’s descriptions of the behaviour of the aspect-blind (‘machine-tooled, precise repetitions of a limited repertoire of movements that is invariant between cultures or persons’ [Mulhall 1990: 86]) than to behaviour we would be inclined to describe as ‘primitive’. While ‘primitive’ beings who do not (yet) possess concepts would not be aspect-*sighted*, they would also not be aspect-*blind*: they do not have an empty or impoverished inner life, but rather do not have any interior that could contain or fail to contain any inner life, rich or otherwise. Furthermore, their behaviour would typically be better

²⁷ I take it that part of Mulhall’s aim is to dismantle this dubious concept of primitiveness altogether: Mulhall notes, for instance, that even in Nietzsche’s attempt to imagine the prelapsarian primitive nobles, Nietzsche is compelled ‘to impute fallenness to some of those who dwell in paradise’ [Mulhall 2005: 43] – namely, to the aristocratic *priests*.

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characterised as ‘fluid’ and ‘organic’ rather than ‘mechanical’ (to the extent that such a contrast can be made).

For this reason, I prefer a different ‘interpretive possibility’ offered by Cavell and re-stated by Mulhall: namely, that Wittgenstein’s builders are ‘an allegory of the way people in modern culture in fact speak’: not because the moderns’ ‘vocabulary [is] restricted to these four words’ but because the builders’ ‘unvarnished, almost psychotically functional deployments of their words’ exemplifies the orientation of modern culture to its words in general [Mulhall 2005: 111]. This robotic, mechanical orientation is very similar to how Mulhall’s descriptions elsewhere of aspect-blindness: except that here the orientation is marked by the absence of reflection, rather than by the presence of exaggerated hesitation. As we will recall, Mulhall claims that the ‘robotic’ behaviour of the aspect-blind will be a ‘matter of hesitation, stumbling, stiffness of joints’ [Mulhall 1990: 89]. This hesitation arises from the need of the aspect-blind to draw inferences that an aspect-sighted person does not need to draw. But as W.E.S. McNeill remarks, ‘facts about deliberation, reasoning and the *act* of inferring are primarily psychological rather than epistemological’ [McNeill 2012: 582]. The important difference between the aspect-blind and aspect-sighted person is not whether they do in fact consciously construct an inference, but whether their epistemic grounding for some belief about an object has an inferential structure. Linda Zagzebski distinguishes between seeing something as red and seeing ‘*that* something is red without a red sensation’:

I can do that if I see signs of its redness. Perhaps I am looking at it in the dark and I see that it looks the way red looks in the dark.
[Zagzebski 2003: 119]

McNeill would describe this as a difference between inferential and non-inferential seeing-that [McNeill 2012: 577]. Even if the person who sees that an object is red in the dark without seeing its redness (seeing it as red) does not consciously rehearse the inference ‘It is dark, and that object looks the way red things do in the dark, therefore it is red’, this inference describes the form of their justification for their knowledge that it is red. It is generally only where someone sees the redness of the object (sees it as red) that they have non-inferential knowledge that it is red.

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Hence, while the fact that the aspect-blind are forced to rely on inferentially-grounded geometrical concepts *could* manifest in hesitation while they draw the necessary inferences, it is possible that they could be drilled in geometrical concepts so that they were able to take each step in the extension of such a concept without needing to consciously reconstruct the inference leading to a conclusion about how to go on. The contours of their behaviour and utterances would be geometrical, but not hesitant or stiff: ‘robotic’ behaviour could just as well be inhumanly slick and exact as stumbling and awkward.²⁸

It is easy to imagine why a strategy of mechanisation – drilling into oneself a simulacrum of aspect-seeing – might seem attractive: it appears to offer an escape from agonising, paralysing uncertainty. But for reasons discussed in chapter 2, simply turning to geometrical concepts is no help in defeating the hyperbolic doubt exemplified by Wittgenstein’s interlocutor, since these concepts are just as vulnerable to that mode of doubting as the ones they are supposed to replace. In order to afford an escape from disintegrating doubt, mechanisation must involve not just instilling the ability to follow the steps of geometrical concepts without needing to pause to reflect, but a suppression of the doubts about which geometrical concepts to follow or how to follow them. Someone who lacks a sense for when is an appropriate juncture for doubt and reflection – who lacks, as Nietzsche metaphorically puts it, a healthy appetite which regulates when they do or do not ‘consume’ (i.e. reflect) – will doubt indiscriminately. This can manifest in blanket doubt – metaphorically, insatiable consumption without hunger (cf *UM* II:4, p. 78, *UM* II: 10, p. 117). But without repairing the sense for what is and is not an appropriate juncture for doubt, this tendency to blanket reflection can be inverted into an equally indiscriminate tendency to blanket certainty: not allowing doubts to arise even in cases where it would be healthy or appropriate to doubt.

The character of the ‘self-satisfied boor’, then, is not someone too close to the pole of the ‘primitive noble’; rather, the ‘self-satisfied boor’ is the typical self-doubting modern in the mode of flight from their doubt. Their self-satisfaction

²⁸ Cf Michel Foucault’s contrast between the drilling of soldiers in pre-modern and modern armies; in the former, soldiers were taught how to perform actions through the principle of ‘analogical repetition’ – they were shown the entire action and then copied it, whereas in the latter, instead of presenting soldiers with ‘exemplary’ actions to imitate, the actions were divided into short temporal segments of physical movement and these elements were copied until they could be seamlessly combined into an exact sequence [Foucault 1977: 158].

does not consist in a healthy sense of self-assurance in consequence of which certain doubts about their self and actions do not arise; it consists instead in a mode of being in which one is never *dissatisfied* with oneself, because doubts that might lead to self-dissatisfaction are never allowed to arise. It is the defensive stance of one who can protect themselves from doubt only by refusing all doubt, not the confident strength of Nietzsche's ideal type who will periodically face up to their flaws and inadequacies.²⁹ Likewise, the fanatic who insists on seeing things from only one perspective³⁰ is not akin to a member of a (caricatured) historical society with a single, unquestioned unifying framework, but someone who would quickly be overwhelmed by the multiplicity and arbitrariness of frameworks if they allowed any doubts to creep in regarding the perspective to which they cling. By contrast, Nietzsche's ideal is of someone sufficiently rooted that they are able to flexibly adopt different perspectives on matters³¹ without being stricken by a sense of the arbitrariness of perspectives.

Sass repeatedly emphasises this kind of duality within both schizophrenia and Modernist consciousness; indeed, the motivating aim of his project is to find a unifying explanation for these divergent poles of behaviour.

Schizophrenics can be hypersensitive to human contact but also indifferent. They can be pedantic or capricious, idle or diligent, irritable or filled with an all-encompassing yet somehow empty hilarity. They can experience a rushing flow of ideas or a total blocking; and their actions, thoughts and perceptions can seem rigidly ordered or controlled (exhibiting a 'morbid geometrism'), but at other times chaotic and formless [...] The illness therefore defies all attempts to bring its

²⁹ Cf *UM* III:5, pp. 157–58: 'In individual moments we all know how the most elaborate arrangements of our life are made only so as to flee from the tasks we actually ought to be performing, how we would like to hide our head somewhere as though our hundred-eyed conscience could not find us out there, how we hasten to give our heart to the state, to money-making, to sociability or science merely so as no longer to possess it ourselves, how we labour at our daily work more ardently than is necessary to sustain our life because to us it is even more necessary not to have leisure to stop and think. Haste is universal because everyone is in flight from themselves; universal too is the shy concealment of this haste because everyone wants to seem content and would like to deceive more sharp-eyed observers as to the wretchedness they feel; and also universal is the need for new tinkling word-bells to hang upon life and so bestow upon it an air of noisy festivity.' [*UM* III: 5, p. 158].

³⁰ Cf the 'eye' of the 'preachers of death' that 'sees only one aspect of existence.' [*Z*, Of the Preachers of Death]. It is noteworthy that the preachers are described as having a singular eye between them.

³¹ Cf Gemes on prescriptive perspectivism in Gemes 2013.

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features within the grasp of any overarching theory or model. [Sass 1992: 25–26]³²

Sass attempts to overcome the difficulty in developing an overarching theory, firstly by arguing against the fundamentally mistaken attempt to see schizophrenic consciousness as akin to ‘primitive’ or (as Sass terms it) ‘Dionysian’ infantile perception, despite superficial similarities; rather, it is an excessively self-conscious, self-controlling ‘Apollonian’³³ orientation; secondly, Sass views the constant shifting between different poles as strategic but self-undermining attempts to remedy the disorienting consequences of excessive self-reflexivity; people with schizophrenia alternate between different strategies as each attempt exacerbates existing crises or causes new ones.³⁴

To find an explicit acknowledgement of this kind of shifting between dual poles within Nietzsche’s characterisation of the moderns, we need to attend to his remarks on the affective style of the Christians and moderns.

As we will recall, one of the apparent contradictions in Nietzsche’s characterisation of his contemporaries is that, on the one hand, the moderns are supposed to be cold and deprived of passion; and yet on the other, these selfsame moderns have erected a ‘cult of feeling’ [*D* 197], their souls are ‘too easily moved’ due to excessive ‘emotionality’ [*D* 172], and they are distinguished by their ‘romanticism of feeling’ and ‘hyper-sentimentality’ [*TI*, *Expeditions of an Untimely Man*: 50].

³² Sass contrasts this with the superficially similar case of bipolar disorder: the shifts between ‘manic-depressive mood states’ can be ‘grasped as a dialectical shifting rooted in a disturbance of emotional control’ despite their ‘manifest inconsistency’ [Sass 1992: 25–26], while ‘schizophrenic vacillation and inconsistency [must be distinguished] from the distractibility of mania, in which attention moves rapidly but usually in a less radical, confusing, and self-paralyzing way. There is generally something fluid, spontaneous and exuberant about the manic person’s rapidly shifting attention.’ [Sass 1992: 131]. Interestingly, Young speculatively diagnoses Nietzsche with bipolar disorder [Young 2010: 559–62] but in light of Sass’s remarks, it seems that Young may have misread the schizoid features of Nietzsche’s personality and eventual psychosis.

³³ Again, this is Sass’s preferred term, though perhaps ‘Socratic’ might have been a more apt choice.

³⁴ Sass gives the famous example of Daniel Paul Schreber, who alternates between ‘compulsive thinking’ – the ‘intense self-consciousness of a mind compelled to watch its own functioning’ and ‘soul-voluptuousness’ – the ‘*absence* of such self-monitoring’. Voluptuousness offers ‘escape from the ‘mental torture’ of compulsive thinking’ but, since the schizophrenic orientation requires constant ‘panoptic’ self-monitoring to confirm the existence of the self, voluptuousness leads to a terrifying sense of the annihilation of the self [Sass 1992: 262–63].

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Again, this apparent contradiction can be resolved by noting that one state is actually simulated as a strategic response to being in the other state: what is different here is that Nietzsche makes explicitly clear that this is what is going on. ‘Romanticism’ or ‘hyper-sentimentality’ are not expressions of primordial impulsiveness and joy, but attempts to mimic such expressions undertaken by moderns who are disconnected from strong, spontaneous passions.³⁵ The same moderns who exhibit ‘romanticism of feeling’ and ‘hyper-sentimentality’ turn out to be animated by an ‘instinct of weariness’, a ‘nihilistic sigh’, a ‘not knowing which way to turn’ [*TI*, Expeditions of an Untimely Man: 50]. In ‘Schopenhauer as Educator’, Nietzsche describes the ‘artificial merriment’ of Germans who ‘hypocritically simulat[e] their happiness’ [*UM* III:4, p. 149] (cf the Last Men, whose claim to have ‘discovered happiness’ Zarathustra clearly regards with scepticism), and in the final of the *Untimely Meditations*, ‘Richard Wagner in Bayreuth’, the ‘artificially engendered excitement’ produced by modern art aims to alleviate ‘self-disgust and dullness’ by summoning up ‘suffering, anger, passion, sudden terror, breathless tension’ [*UM* IV: 5, p. 218] (this is precisely the charge Nietzsche later publicly levels at Wagner’s own art). Consistently with my identification of modern sensibility and the ‘Christian’ ascetic impulse, Nietzsche describes the ascetic ideal as doing precisely the same thing: ‘*serv[ing] an intent to produce emotional excess*’ in order to ‘waken man out of his slow sadness, to put to flight, at least for a time, his dull pain, his lingering misery’ [*GM* III:20]. Something similar is going on in the first essay of the *Genealogy* too when the slaves cultivate the self-deceit that they too possess the happiness enjoyed by the masters. Correspondingly, Nietzsche identifies in the New Testament ‘nothing but rococo of the soul’, ‘bucolic cloyingness’, ‘garrulousness of feeling’, ‘passionateness, no passion’ [*GM* III:22].

These simulated states are what David Pugmire calls ‘fake emotions’: ‘little more than the image of the emotion, an affective analog to “virtual reality” in perception’ [Pugmire 1994: 105–6]. Fake emotions are distinct from emotions that are felt unreasonably (anger at someone who I know to be blameless) or based on false beliefs (anger at someone who is blameless but who I falsely

³⁵ Note also the following unpublished remark: ‘My struggle against *Romanticism* [...] a false and imitated kind of *stronger* humanity, which values extreme states as such, seeing in them the symptom of strength (“cult of passion”)’ [*WLN*, pp. 172–73; *KSA* XII.10[2]].

believe to have acted such as to merit my anger), because in both these instances what I am feeling really is anger, albeit inappropriate anger. A fake emotion, by contrast, 'fails to be a real example of the sort of emotion it seems to be' [Pugmire 1994: 105]: Pugmire has in mind the kinds of states we would describe as 'forced', 'shrill', 'sentimental' or 'schmaltz' [Pugmire 1994: 106]. In the case of an 'ingenuous emotion', Pugmire writes, the emotion

is concerned specifically with its object and is caused specifically by this concern. It results directly from how one appraises the object. If genuinely affronted, what occupies me is the affront, and I am affronted (and perhaps feel affronted) because of that. [Pugmire 1994: 112]

By contrast, fake emotions are caused not by our apprehension of features of our environment but by our desire to feel that emotion; but 'to have an emotion because one wants to have it is not to have it because of what it is properly about' [Pugmire 1994: 113].³⁶ Pugmire suggests various means and motivations for working ourselves into fake emotional states; we can induce such states by 'acting the part' [Pugmire 1995: 115] of someone affected by the emotion or by deliberately construing our experiences 'in a way that invites the desired emotion' [Pugmire 1994: 116], and we might be motivated to induce an emotion either to 'savor the feelings that come with it' (particularly if we are bored or numb) or because we desire not so much what the emotion feels like as 'the fact of having it' [Pugmire 1994: 113].³⁷

The states that the aspect-blind simulate within themselves are likely to differ in a number of respects from the states experienced spontaneously by aspect-sighted individuals with instinctive certainty. Note that fake emotions would include emotions that we did not spontaneously experience in response to

³⁶ This has certain implications depending on our reading of Nietzsche's drive psychology. If drives are dispositions to experience certain affective episodes, those affective episodes will not therefore be fake. But if drives are construed as states that motivate us to experience certain affective episodes, those episodes will be fake if we bring them about under the motivation of our drives. Drives may also dispose us to certain motivational states which motivate us to experience certain affective states; again, these affective states will be fake if they are brought about under this motivation.

³⁷ Note that the presence of some simulated states within our overall affective economy is probably neither pathological nor undesirable; Nietzsche would likely regard someone altogether lacking in affectation and simulation as terribly dull and unsophisticated. The novels of Michael Cunningham are particularly noteworthy for the exploration of the place of what Pugmire would call 'fake' emotions within the normal traffic of human life. The problem as Nietzsche sees it is that the moderns *only* have fake emotions (or at least, they have excessively many compared with genuine ones).

their appropriate objects but were motivated to arouse in ourselves because we judged that we ought to feel them. However, if our judgements of what we ought to feel are based on geometrical concepts, these judgments will not track the fine-grained contours of appropriate emotional responses and our simulated emotions may misrepresent the objects they are felt about. Nietzsche, for instance, claims that the gushing compassion of his fellow moderns construes suffering ‘superficially’; he contrasts it with concern based on actual understanding of suffering, and regards this latter attitude [*Mitfreude*] as superior to compassion [*Mitleiden*] [GS 338]. Furthermore, the ‘too easily moved’ moderns are overcompensating for their lack of passion with emotional displays far in excess of those of a person with healthy emotional responsiveness: Nietzsche has warned us elsewhere that ‘the mother of excess is not joy but joylessness’ [AOM 77]. By contrast, the ancient Greeks were ‘hard to move’ but their pity would ‘seize[] them like a frenzy’ if it were aroused [D 172]. A plausible extension of this point would be the claim that while the Greek possesses a disposition not just to spontaneously feel certain emotions but to automatically and unreflectively perform certain actions (we will recall from chapter 1 that the capacity to be struck by certain affective episodes depends on our possessing instinctive certainty or mastery with regards to action), the moderns’ disposition to simulate such emotions will be disconnected from any disposition to action: the modern Romantic sensibility fetishises the experience of emotion itself in isolation from other considerations, such that what matters is not how someone acts but how they *feel* about things.³⁸

Of course, we may think that the differences between real and fake emotions are not, or need not be, so coarse-grained. Interestingly, in his discussion of aspect-seeing Wittgenstein considers the capacity to distinguish between ‘a genuine loving look’ and a ‘pretended one’; only someone (an aspect-sighted

³⁸ Milan Kundera’s definition of kitsch is relevant here: ‘Kitsch causes two tears to flow in quick succession. The first tear says: How nice to see children running on the grass! The second tear says: How nice to be moved, together with all mankind, by children running on the grass! It is the second tear that makes kitsch kitsch.’ [*The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, trans. Henry Heim [London: Faber and Faber, 1984 [1984]], p. 244, cited in Fraser 2002: 131]. See Fraser 2002: 125ff for discussion. No doubt Nietzsche would consider it revealing that the paradigmatic examples of virtuous emotional responsiveness in contemporary moral discourse tend to take the form of passive and potentially self-regarding spectatorial concern: common examples include sympathetic responses to the sight of a homeless person [e.g. Little 1995: 127] or to televised portrayals of far-off atrocities [e.g. Roeser 2010 154–55].

person) who is sensitive to the ‘imponderable’ evidence of ‘subtleties of glance, of gesture, of tone’ will be able to discern the difference [PI II:xi, p. 194].³⁹ But even if it were possible for the aspect-blind to imitate the aspect-sighted so exactly (without appearing ‘robotic’ or ‘unnatural’ or ‘forced’) that even the most discerning observer would be unable to tell their performance apart from the real thing on the basis of ‘imponderable evidence’, the fake expressions would nonetheless be different from the genuine ones precisely on account of being fake and not genuine. Fake states are differently caused (for this reason, there can be a “ponderable” confirmation’ [PI, p. 194] of the fakeness of an exact or near-exact imitation of an expression, if the causes rather than the appearance of the fake expression are investigated). For this reason, if what we desire is to really have a certain state, we will fail to satisfy this desire by imitating it: the person who manages to simulate anger in themselves has not succeeded in really feeling anger. Similarly, an aspect-blind person can exclaim ‘Now it’s a rabbit!’ while looking at the duck-rabbit but they have not thereby given expression to an experience of aspect-dawning; the self-satisfied person who has fashioned a simulacrum of self-assured confidence is not really self-assured and confident. Hence, even if cold, hesitant moderns were to simulate the appearance of the opposite characterisation (emotional, certain, aspect-sighted), it would still only be correct to characterise them in the first manner (i.e. as cold, hesitant) so they would not contradictorily count as both e.g. excessively and insufficiently emotional.

But the tendency to artificially simulate great passions is only one half of the story. Consider Nietzsche’s famous passage on Romanticism and two types of sufferer [GS 370]. Much of this passage echoes features of the modern condition already discussed: Nietzsche notes that those who suffer from an ‘*impoverishment of life*’ seek ‘intoxication, paroxysm, numbness, madness’. He takes care to differentiate this from the Dionysian impulse of those who suffer from a ‘superabundance of life’. For instance, while both types of sufferer periodically exhibit a ‘desire for *destruction*’, it is only in the Dionysian sufferers that this desire represents an ‘expression of an overflowing energy pregnant with the future’; in those who merely imitate wild Dionysian

³⁹ Goldie notes that the ‘genuine or ‘Duchenne’ smile’ involves ‘distinct muscles which we cannot directly try to move’ [Goldie 2000: 137] so there may be physiological reasons to suppose that an exact imitation of a genuine smile is not possible; however, the aspect-blind would presumably in principle be able to notice such physical differences.

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passions, this desire for destruction is an expression of weakness and *ressentiment*: ‘the hatred of the ill-constituted, deprived, and underprivileged one who destroys and *must* destroy because what exists, indeed all existence, all being, outrages and provokes them’.

But what is noteworthy is that the latter type of sufferer has ‘*dual* needs’ [my emphasis]: they seek not just ‘intoxication, paroxysm, numbness, madness’ but also ‘quiet, stillness, calm seas’ (these dual needs are satisfied by ‘romanticism in art and in knowledge’ – in particular, by ‘Schopenhauer and Richard Wagner’). The moderns crave not just the excitement offered by the arousal of passion, but also need to be soothed and calmed – confined to the ‘optimistic horizons’ of ‘mildness’, ‘peacefulness’ and ‘logic’ which allow them to feel assured that existence is comfortable and ordered. Once again, Nietzsche’s description of this affective dynamic in the moderns is mirrored in his account of Christianity: in *HAH* 142, the saint sometimes ‘seeks conflict and ignites it in themselves, because boredom has shown them its yawning face: they scourge their self-idolatry with self-contempt and cruelty, they rejoice in the wild riot of their desires, in the sharp sting of sin’, but at other times the saint ‘desires a complete cessation of sensations of a disturbing, tormenting, stimulating kind, a waking sleep, a lasting repose in the womb of a dull, beast- and plant-like indolence’. Note that ‘mechanisation’ is one form that this anaesthetisation can take:

Mechanical activity and that which belongs to it – like absolute regularity, punctual unreflected obedience, one’s way of life set once and for all, the filling up of time, a certain permission for, indeed discipline in ‘impersonality,’ in self-forgetfulness, in ‘*incuria sui*’ – : how thoroughly, how subtly the ascetic priest knew how to use these in the battle with pain! [*GM* III: 18]

What is noteworthy here is that the moderns are not only motivated to artificially arouse states of excitement and passion, but also to artificially dampen their feelings.⁴⁰ In other words, the supposedly characteristic calm

⁴⁰ Cf *Z*, Of Passing By: ‘They are cold and seek warmth in distilled waters; they are inflamed and seek coolness in frozen spirits’. Note that both tendencies may overshoot their mark and thus feed each other: the drive to eliminate undesirable emotions may also eliminate desirable ones, the drive to simulate desirable emotions may also simulate undesirable ones.

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and imperturbability of the aspect-blind moderns may *also* turn out to be just as fake as their kitsch displays of emotionality.⁴¹

This shouldn't surprise us since, as I noted in chapter 1, the uncertainty of the moderns manifests not just in blindness to certain aspects (including *not* being struck by certain affective episodes) but also in seeing things under aspects that people with healthy instinctive certainty would not (including being struck by affective episodes that would not strike someone possessed of healthy instinctive certainty). Hyperbolic doubt, for instance, is experienced affectively as anxiety. The aspect-blind moderns may also experience distorted *forms* of affect: for instance, they may 'feel in abstractions' [UM II:4, p. 81] in consequence of their overreflective orientation towards their affects, or experience what Wittgenstein calls 'feelings of unreality', or even, like Sass's schizophrenic patients, experience 'uncanny, objectless and somehow cosmic forms of euphoria, anxiety or ironic detachment' instead of 'worldly emotions like fear, sadness and joy' [Sass 1992: 275].

I would suggest that the aspect-blind moderns are motivated both to simulate desirable affective states they are unable to feel naturally and spontaneously, *and* to conceal or quash the uncomfortable or undesirable affective states that they *do* feel spontaneously (i.e. caused by apprehensions of features or apparent features of their environment, not by their motivated attempts to feel such states). This is something Nietzsche acknowledges even in the *Untimely Meditations*, a work where he primarily emphasises the moderns' *lack* of affect:

If it may be one-sided to emphasize only the weakness of the outlines and the dullness of the colours in the picture of modern life, the other side of the picture is in no way more gratifying but only more disturbing. There are certainly forces there, tremendous forces, but savage, primal and wholly merciless [...] That individuals *behave as though they knew nothing of all these anxieties* does not mislead us:

⁴¹ Note, for instance, that while the Last Men pride themselves on being healthy and free from indigestion – by apparent way of contrast with the moderns of the 'History' essay, who are sickly and unable to digest knowledge in a way that it becomes absorbed as certainty – this 'health' consists purely in strict avoidance of anything which could potentially trigger or aggravate symptoms of malaise. Zarathustra also indicates that the herdlike conformity of the moderns and the Last Men differs from genuine community and communal practice: 'You flee to your neighbour away from yourselves [...] You cannot endure to be alone with yourselves and do not love yourselves enough [...] I do not like your festivals, either: I have found too many actors there, and the audience, too, behaved like actors.' [Z, Of Love of One's Neighbour].

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their restlessness reveals how well they know of them. [UM III:4, p. 149, my emphasis]

A particularly pertinent example is the emotion of *guilt*: as I noted earlier, one apparent tension that stands in the way of identifying the ‘Protestant’ Christian with the typical modern individual is that (on Nietzsche’s view) the former is wracked with guilt, while the latter is altogether lacking in self-reproach. Robert Pippin thinks that while the moderns do in fact *appear* to be excessively prone to guilt, this guilt is a species of ‘fake emotion’: ‘a melancholic and ultimately narcissistic theatrical guilt’ [Pippin 2010: 54]. But there are reasons to suppose that the moderns would be excessively prone to genuine guilt in consequence of their condition of hyperbolic doubt. Nietzsche repeatedly claims that there is a connection between guilt and uncertainty: people have a ‘bad conscience’ about precisely those behaviours that have not yet become certain – not yet been ‘digested’ into instinctive or customary patterns of activity.⁴² Furthermore, even if there is no necessary connection between doubt and guilt, those who reflect indiscriminately on their actions are likely to become aware of grounds for guilt that would normally go unnoticed by a healthy individual who does not retrospectively dissect each of their actions. Finally, the tendency of the aspect-blind moderns to conceive geometrically and atomistically may contribute to a greater proneness to guilt: if one judges one’s actions against explicit and inflexible ‘geometrical’ standards, when one has failed to live up to these standards this fact (which warrants self-reproach) will be mercilessly unambiguous, while if one conceives of one’s actions as decomposed into precisely delineated segments rather than as a whole, this opens the way for each segment of action to be judged individually so that in place of a single overall evaluation of the action which can accommodate variations in how the action is carried out, multiple evaluations are made creating multiple opportunities for reprehensible failure.

According to Nietzsche, the moderns have a squeamish aversion to all suffering that has become an all-overriding imperative, which is why they so desperately wish to escape from unpleasant affects such as misery and anxiety. This excessive proneness to painful feelings of guilt means there is a particularly strong motivation for them to escape from or eliminate feelings of guilt: the moderns invert their tendency to hyperbolic guilt and replace it with

⁴² e.g. AOM 90: ‘Everything good was once new, consequently unfamiliar, contrary to custom, *immoral*, and gnawed at the heart of its fortunate inventor like a worm.’

an equally indiscriminate tendency to never feel guilt at all, just as the self-satisfied boor has inverted their tendency to hyperbolic doubt.⁴³

Nietzsche himself thinks that this impulse to eliminate suffering competes with a drive to inflict suffering upon oneself. These two impulses have a common origin in the repression of the drive to inflict cruelty on others, which is directed inwards to inflict cruelty against its possessor when it is denied external expression. This would be one explanation for the moderns' shifts between extremes: the impulse to eliminate suffering motivates the suppression of doubt and guilt and the creation of cosy 'optimistic horizons', while the impulse to inflict suffering motivates the arousal of such feelings.⁴⁴ The same would apply if the countervailing will aimed not at inflicting suffering against the self but simply at opening up doubts and questions. But even in the absence of such a countervailing will, the impulse to eliminate suffering and uncertainty would undermine the simulacra of certainty that it attempted to create (this is a process I have already described in chapter 2). Attempting to eliminate adverse states such as doubt or guilt will simply make 'even the inevitable mosquito bites of the soul and the body seem much too bloody and malicious' [GS 48]: the further the horizons are drawn in, the more destabilising even the tiniest crack in the facade becomes, until finally it disintegrates altogether, leaving its inhabitants back in the very state they were attempting to escape. Moreover, even those motivated to simulate certainty and comfort may *also* be motivated (for different reasons) to arouse passion and excitement; even if the moderns wish to repress or regulate drives and desires that they consider dangerous or intractable, such drives may nonetheless continue to make their demands [GM II:16], or they may still be motivated by the desire to experience such desires – even if they can only endure short and occasional releases from the safety of their false paradise of comfort.

⁴³ This is an instance of what Freud calls the 'logic of opposites'. I am indebted to Ken Gemes for this point.

⁴⁴ I do not, however, personally find it plausible that repression of drives would result in their being turned against the possessor of the drives so that they are directed at inflicting suffering on that possessor; it seems more plausible (and would suffice for most of what Nietzsche wants to say) that the suffering experienced by those who repress their drives is a by-product of this repression rather than its aim. It seems to be more generally the case that repressed drives *do* find external expression, only in a distorted form distinct from their typical character – so, for instance, the drive to sex gets expressed in a peculiarly sensuous, leering chastity ('With some, chastity is a virtue, but with many people it is almost a vice. These people abstain, it is true: but the bitch Sensuality glares enviously out of all they do' [Z, Of Chastity]).

4.4 The 'will' to truth and 'passion' for comfort

It is important to note that the fact that the moderns are motivated to simulate some affects means that they must possess at least some desires or motivating states which are not simulated: namely, the desire or motivation to simulate other states. If the moderns altogether lacked affect and desire, then they wouldn't *care* about their lack of affect, and wouldn't be motivated to simulate it. In other words, the dualistic affective style described in the previous section presupposes that the moderns are not altogether devoid of desire. This would make sense, since (as Ken Gemes puts it) Nietzsche's position is that 'desires are more or less inevitable' [Gemes unpublished: 14] since we are constituted by drives which constantly and ceaselessly dispose us to have certain desires. Consequently, our orientation to the world is necessarily desire-laden: 'The world tempts and repulses, threatens and charms.' [Katsafanas 2013: 744].⁴⁵

By itself, this wouldn't be inconsistent with the idea that the moderns are *relatively* devoid of passion compared with their mythical primitive predecessors. But Nietzsche also famously claims that the force – the 'will to nothingness' – which supposedly causes this reduction in passion is itself a drive.⁴⁶ If this drive to nothingness were to succeed in reducing our overall levels of erotic energy, it would thereby weaken or perhaps eliminate itself, since what causes this drive to nothingness to arise in the first place is the inward-turning of drives which cannot find external expression: if drives were sufficiently weakened that their entire energy could safely be expressed externally, no such inward-turning would occur. A version of this idea is prefigured as early as *HAH* 235, where Nietzsche notes that 'the warm, sympathizing heart' that passionately desires 'the *abolition* of [the] savage and violent character of life' necessarily desires 'the abolition of its own foundation', since it derives 'its fire, its warmth, indeed its very existence from that savage and violent character of life'. Are we, however, to suppose that levels of erotic energy would remain permanently subdued even once the force

⁴⁵ Note that Katsafanas and Gemes say that it is not just desire but *evaluation* which is inevitable. That distinction isn't important here.

⁴⁶ Simon May has suggested in personal communication that the 'will to nothingness' is strictly distinct from the drive (whatever we wish to call it) which causes the diminution of other drives. Although I disagree, not very much hangs on this point: 'will to nothingness' here is functioning simply as a name to refer to whichever drive it is that (on Nietzsche's account) is directed at the extermination of other drives, and a different name can be substituted if preferred.

that subdued them had weakened or vanished? Nietzsche sometimes seems to suggest that something like this is possible,⁴⁷ but this would be tantamount to supposing that subsequent to the removal of the subduing force, the magnitude of affective energy remained constant as if in a vacuum. This seems implausible; the erotic energies that were subdued by the drive to nothingness would increase again if the drive to nothingness subsided (which in turn would lead to the drive to nothingness regaining strength and subduing those affective energies once more, leading to a constant ebb and flow).

For this reason, Gemes argues that the passions of the Last Men are not weak in a *descriptive* sense (a low magnitude of affective energy)⁴⁸ but in a *normative* one: 'the erotic attachments of last men are such that they produce nothing of any real value' [Gemes unpublished: 15]. A 'weak' passion is no less causally efficacious in motivating us to pursue the desired end, but rather counts as 'weak' in virtue of the normative status of this end. It would follow that the weakness of the moderns' passions cannot be measured empirically and would be invisible to someone who lacked the correct normative perspective. So, for instance, Gemes claims that the Last Men have a 'passionate investment' in 'their creature comforts or their careers' [Gemes unpublished: 13]. This passionate investment is just as *motivating* as the passions that higher types have for their ends but nonetheless counts as weak because the ends of 'comfort' or a humdrum 'career' are normatively 'weak'. Note that even if the 'passionate investment' of the Last Men is a simulated affect, it could still be just as causally efficacious at motivating them as a genuine affect. Furthermore, Gemes's point could still apply to the Last Men's 'passionate investment' in the project of simulating passionate investment in creature comforts, etc.

I agree that to be consistent, Nietzsche would have to claim that the condition of moderns is causally sustained by an ongoing affective dynamic (the 'will to

⁴⁷ e.g. Nietzsche claims that when antiquarian history 'degenerates' and 'is no longer animated and inspired by the fresh life of the present', the 'habit of scholarliness continues without it and rotates in egoistic self-satisfaction around its own axis' [UM II:3, p. 75]. In a similar vein, BGE 6 speculates that 'there may really exist something like a drive to knowledge' in scholars: 'some little independent clockwork which, when wound up, works bravely on *without* any of the scholar's other drives playing any essential part.' [BGE 6].

⁴⁸ This is supposed to be a point against Pippin's view that the moderns lack affective energy, but it is not clear whether Pippin holds the view Gemes ascribes to him, as Pippin denies that the moderns' malaise consists in a 'matter-of-fact absence' of 'powerful urges or passions' [Pippin 2010: 55].

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nothingness') and that this affective dynamic has not diminished or died out as a causally efficacious force. After all, the form of civilized society in which the expression of impulses is restrained by morality of custom and which Nietzsche regards as the original causal condition for the emergence of this dynamic still obtains, arguably in stronger form than ever. Furthermore, the moderns and the Last Men continue to indiscriminately gather data in the manner causally motivated by the will to truth, itself a manifestation of the dynamic of the will to nothingness. This was, we will recall, one of the reasons why I suggested that Nietzsche's modern individual must be seen as a form of 'Protestant' Christian.

I would argue, however, that the reduction in passion in modernity should not just be construed as the increasing prevalence of normatively weak passions over normatively strong passions, but that many of the moderns' causally efficacious affective states do not count as 'passions' at all because whether a causally efficacious affective state counts as a 'passion' is itself a normative question.

Being caused by motivated artificial simulation is not the only ground on which we might deem an apparent emotion not to be genuine. Wittgenstein notes that the intelligibility of attributing a description such as 'sad' or 'fearful' is conditioned by the context in which the object of the attribution is embedded. When Wittgenstein asks 'Could someone have a feeling of ardent love or hope for the space of one second – *no matter what* preceded or followed this second?', he replies in the negative: 'What is happening now has significance – in these surroundings.' [PI I:583]. A behaviour or burst of affectivity that lasted only a second would not count as (an expression of) ardent love or hope. In a similar vein, the 'bodily expressions' that are characteristic of joy and sorrow where they occur in the normal 'weave of our life' would not be expressions of joy and sorrow at all if they 'alternated [...] with the ticking of a clock' [PI II:i, p. 148]. It would also be unintelligible to attribute states to subjects who lacked relevant capacities: a stone is not an intelligible subject for the attribution of 'pain', for instance, nor a dog an intelligible subject for the attribution of 'ennui'. Gaita adds to this that some objects are not intelligible objects of pity or love [Gaita 2004: 176ff] – it does not make sense, for instance, to love an object under the description of 'foetus', and an apparent expression of love for a foetus would not be a

genuine expression of love even if accompanied by the kinds of behaviours that would be expressive of love if adopted towards another object.

We might think that many of the supposed ‘passions’ of Nietzsche’s moderns do not count as genuine in this sense: for instance, the intense but momentary states of affective agitation which the overstimulated moderns are prey to would probably not count as genuine episodes of passion because of their shallow contextual embeddedness.⁴⁹ In general though it would probably be going too far to consider most of the moderns’ affective responses *unintelligible*: their behaviour would have to be much closer to the radically unconventional actions and affects characteristic of schizophrenia to warrant that attribution. However, two more plausible possibilities do suggest themselves here. One is the very Nietzschean idea that there may be certain ‘higher’ affects that genuinely deserve the term ‘passion’, where the criteria for this description depend on external or contextual features such as those discussed above.⁵⁰ It would not be *unintelligible* to describe a person as ‘joyful’ about their comfortable lifestyle, but it would be *wrong*; ‘joyful’ would apply rather to an artistic genius exalting in their latest creation. The difference between the two cases does not consist in any features of their behaviour that would be discernible to someone without the relevant normative perspective, but in the evaluative status of the subject and object of the ‘joy’: the affect only counts as ‘joy’ in the soul of a normatively higher type of individual and with regard to a normatively higher object (see also the opening quotation to this chapter by Hermann Hesse).

This first possibility would essentially represent a re-working and an expansion of Gemes’s claim (with ‘passion’ being used to mean what he means

⁴⁹ Cf the following unpublished remark on ‘Modernity’: ‘Sensibility unutterably more excitable [...] the abundance of disparate impressions greater than ever before [...] interested, but only, as it were, epidermally interested; a fundamental coolness, an equilibrium, a *lower* temperature kept steady just below the thin surface on which there’s warmth, motion, “storm”, the play of the waves.’ [WLN, p. 178; KSA XII.10[18]].

⁵⁰ Cf Z, Of Passing By: ‘Here all great emotions decay: here only little, dry emotions may rattle!’ Note that when Nietzsche draws such a distinction in *The Birth of Tragedy*, ‘affect’ is a disparaging term used by way of contradistinction with the higher feelings that the moderns are incapable of: ‘fiery *affects*’ have replaced ‘Dionysiac ecstasies’ [BT 12, p. 62] (cf BT 14, p. 69: ‘The translation of the *Dionysiac* into naturalistic affects.’ [BT 14, p. 69]). It seems that this distinction between ecstasy and affect could be based on the external criterion of whether the feeling enables or constitutes the apprehension of a transcendent metaphysical reality or not, though this would be problematised by the fact that even in *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche denies that Dionysiac ecstasies actually enable or constitute such an apprehension.

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by 'strong passion'). A second possibility would draw on the distinction I discussed in my first chapter between intelligibility and imaginability. As we will recall, it is sometimes said (by thinkers like MacIntyre and Gaita) that it is a *narrative* context which conditions the intelligibility of attributing emotion states, but as I noted, some thinkers (e.g. David Velleman) believe that a specifically *narrative* account of the contextual features is not necessary for *intelligibility*. However, the possibility of *imagining* someone having such a state may depend on our being able to formulate a narrative account of that person's having the state. Just as (in Peter Goldie's example) the veteran may find it intelligible but unimaginable that they committed war crimes ('How *could* I have done that?'), we may find the behaviours of Nietzsche's moderns intelligible but unimaginable ('How *could* they love *that*?'). We can describe the causal background and motivations for their actions and feelings (using, for instance, Nietzsche's account of an affective dynamic) but be unable to imaginatively re-enact a first-person narrative account of a modern individual's life. Although this 'affective dynamic' perpetuates the causal mechanics of the Christian 'ascetic ideal', it can no longer be interpreted under the Christian narrative. As Weber remarked, the asceticism has been stripped 'of its religious and ethical meaning' [Weber 2001: 124] so that it is no longer interpreted under an ideal. This is why, for instance, although the scientific impulse still motivates the moderns to reflect, doubt and acquire knowledge, it no longer counts as 'passion, love, ardor': despite perpetuating the dynamic of ascetic self-cruelty, it no longer serves an ascetic *ideal*: 'The fact that one now works rigorously in the sciences and that there are contented workers does *not* by any means prove that as a whole science today has a goal, a will, an ideal, the passion of a great faith.' [GM III: 23].

There are, to be sure, *fake* ideals: Nietzsche complains at length about the 'facade of clownery' of those who imitate the ascetic ideal dishonestly:

I do not like the whited sepulchres that play-act life; I do not like the tired and used-up who wrap themselves in wisdom and look about 'objectively'; I do not like the agitators spruced up into heroes, who wear a magic concealing-cap of an ideal on their straw-whisk of a head; I do not like the ambitious artists who would like to act the role of ascetics and priests and are basically only tragic buffoons; I do not like them either, these newest speculators in idealism, the anti-Semites [...] Europe today is rich and inventive above all in excipients [...] Hence also the enormous counterfeiting of ideals [...] I would like to know how

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many shiploads of imitation idealism, of hero-costumes and grand-word-noisemakers, how many barrels of sugared spirituous sympathy (firm of: *la religion de la souffrance*), how many wooden legs of 'noble indignation' for the assistance of the spiritually flat-footed, how many comedians of the Christian-moral ideal would have to be exported out of Europe today in order for its air to smell cleaner again. [GM III: 26]

These counterfeit ideals fail to offer an interpretation that makes satisfying narrative sense of their behaviours, which are thus deprived of any significance. This will only be apparent, of course, to the aspect-sighted who have a sense for narrative cadence.⁵¹

4.5 Conclusion

I began this chapter by observing that Nietzsche apparently characterises his fellow moderns in two inconsistent ways: on the one hand, as excessively cerebral, sceptical and detached (a condition I have suggested can be described in terms of 'aspect-blindness') and on the other hand, as excessively incurious, emotional and herd-like. After considering and rejecting a number of possible ways of explaining away this apparent contradiction, I settled on the idea (which enjoys considerable textual support) that the moderns' apparent gushing emotions and unshakeable certainty are *fake*: either simulated to overcompensate for their actual lack of emotion and certainty, or lacking the appropriate contextual surroundings to count as genuine instances of such states. Consequently, only the characterisation of the moderns as (relatively) emotionless and doubt-ridden would be correct, since it has turned out that they aren't *really* excessively emotional or certain but merely appear to be so.

However, while introducing this distinction between real and fake states offers a plausible way of resolving the initial problem of Nietzsche's apparently offering two contradictory characterisations of the moderns, bringing this

⁵¹ A suggestion of David Velleman's may help to expand this point. Velleman argues that different emotions are suited to different places in the emotional sequences that constitute narratives: so for instance, 'fear can initiate or continue an emotional sequence but it cannot resolve one; grief can resolve an emotional sequence but it rarely initiates one' [Velleman 2003: 15]. Pity falls into the latter category, so that 'Aristotle's requirement that a tragedy arouse fear and pity would amount to the requirement that it lead its audience through a complete emotional cadence, from an essentially initiatory emotion to an essentially conclusory one – from an emotional *tick* to an emotional *tock*' [Velleman 2003: 15–16]. By excessively cultivating the conclusory emotion of pity at the expense of initiatory emotions, morality may be undermining the possibility of developing narratively satisfying emotional sequences.

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distinction into play has the potential to problematise or backfire against Nietzsche's overall project. In this conclusion, I explore this potential and outline some of the concerns it raises against Nietzsche's diagnostic and therapeutic position as described in earlier chapters.

In the previous chapter, for instance, I touched on the possibility that Nietzsche's therapeutic method merely assists his readers to simulate the states they would genuinely experience if they were not pathologically afflicted, rather than the therapy bringing about a transformation that cures this pathology. If this is correct, then the affirmative Dionysian joy Nietzsche inspires in his readers would be just as 'fake' as the 'happiness' of the Last Men.

Perhaps, though, simulating such states is a step on the way to coming to experience them genuinely: Gudrun von Tevenar claims that 'tragic Dionysian transformations can only *begin* by way of simulation' [von Tevenar 2013: 295]. Nietzsche describes this sort of process in *HAH* 51:

The hypocrite who always plays one and the same role finally ceases to be a hypocrite; for example priests, who as young men are usually conscious or unconscious hypocrites, finally become natural and then really are priests without any affectation.

It is questionable how much faith can be put in this psychological mechanism; it seems just as likely that repeatedly simulating a state would train us to simulate it flawlessly as to train us to be disposed to experience that state 'naturally'. But even if it did work, there is the further concern that whatever method Nietzsche uses to help re-orient the moderns towards a different ideal, the Nietzschean ideal could itself turn out to be just one of the various 'counterfeit ideals' which are being peddled to the moderns. Fraser has coined the term 'aristocratic kitsch'⁵² to describe Nietzsche's mode of valuation [Fraser 2002: 133]. On Fraser's view, Nietzsche's mythical characters

⁵² On Fraser's view, although 'Nietzsche is consistently one of the fiercest critics of the pathologies inherent within mass movements' and lambasts the tasteless kitsch and fakery of such movements (with Wagner being particularly singled out on this account), it is 'at the point where Nietzsche looks to have set himself so much against kitsch that he is most disposed towards it' through his 'affirmation of the aristocratic' [Fraser 2002: 133]. We might say that while Nietzsche appears to criticise the kitsch Romantic ideals of organic community and unquestioned tradition from a position outside Romanticism, he is in fact reproducing the same duality that characterised Romanticism within his own works: the vision of the heroically unconventional radical who defies all authority and tradition belongs as much to Romanticism (and all the kitsch that goes with it) as its apparent opposite.

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(including, perhaps, the version of Nietzsche presented in the text) are 'little more than sophisticated cartoons' [Fraser 2002: 139] whose emotions and sufferings are the sorts of 'overly aestheticised' feelings had by a 'hero in a novel' [Fraser 2002: 136]; which is to say, mimics of 'genuine' feelings which meet the standards of narrative satisfaction appropriate outside fictional constructs.⁵³ This allegation of kitsch threatens to undermine not just Nietzsche's proffered counterideal, but also the very position from which he launches his scathing diagnosis of the moderns. What if Nietzsche's own outrage and disgust are just as 'fake' as the kitsch sentimentality at which they are directed? Perhaps the malaise runs so deep that even purported condemnation of it cannot amount to more than shrill adolescent posturing.

Or perhaps the situation is altogether different: perhaps it is the state of malaise itself which is 'fake'. This is a suggestion borrowed from Wittgenstein, who appears to have viewed the pathological doubt of his sceptical interlocutor as not really doubt at all but 'an *illusion of doubt* or *doubt-behaviour*' [Moyal-Sharrock 2004: 162] that merely 'resembles (what we call) doubt' [Moyal-Sharrock 2004: 74]. But grounds for this idea can be found in Nietzsche's works too. One possibility is that, on occasion, it serves the needs of those who are in fact powerful, supremely confident and comfortably at home in the structures of the present form of life to pose as hesitant, anxious epigones: for instance, as a way of re-framing their situation in terms of a redemption drama about their own self-overcoming in order to combat narratives which instead give centre stage to the sufferings of those oppressed by the powerful. This is a very Nietzschean story to tell, yet Nietzsche himself often seems so taken in by his disgust for the 'weakness' of the moderns that he takes appearances at face value and believes that the strong really have been infected by slavish weakness. It is only rather more occasionally that he acknowledges that the strong sometimes wear weakness as a mask: for instance, 'even those who command affect the virtues of those who obey' [Z, Of the Virtue that Makes Small: 2]. There is no doubt that Nietzsche considers this facade *distasteful*; however, this is distinct from considering it a pathological symptom. Another, complementary possibility is that it serves the needs of the powerful to manipulate the masses into fake states of doubt or

⁵³ i.e. the feelings bear the same relation to genuine feelings as a life lived as a self-conscious project of self-narration bears to a life lived through narrative structures which are typically not themselves explicit objects of attention.

emptiness in order to render them more useful or less harmful, rather than these states arising ‘naturally’ from a social or spiritual pathology. This could also offer an alternative explanation of the polarised nature of the moderns’ behaviour: on different occasions, the powerful might require the masses to be afflicted by paralysing doubt or inflexible conviction.⁵⁴

I will not attempt to deliver a final verdict on what weight should be given in any assessment of Nietzsche’s project to some of the potential concerns I have outlined here: it will have to suffice that I indicate in very general terms some of the trajectories along which critiques of Nietzsche’s project might proceed. A fuller assessment would lie outside the scope of the present work, as it would require undertaking a study of modern society against which to test Nietzsche’s claims. What I hope to have achieved here is a useful reconstruction of, rather than an overall assessment of, Nietzsche’s *Kulturkritik*: a reconstruction that may (I hope) serve to bring hidden problems and potentialities in Nietzsche’s texts closer to the surface, revealing what use can and cannot be made of the body of thought Nietzsche bequeathed to us. There are clearly some grounds to be cautious when drawing on Nietzsche’s account of modernity in order to understand our present society – narratives of cultural decline such as that provided by Nietzsche have the potential to be deeply reactionary⁵⁵ – but elements of Nietzsche’s position remain deeply illuminating for our understanding of our situation as a culture. To my mind at least, the potential for Nietzsche’s thought to be illuminating is increased – and the potential for it to be reactionary decreased – through aligning it with the more egalitarian and communitarian spirit of Wittgenstein’s thought, which is what I have attempted to do throughout this work. As regards the questions of whether I have succeeded in these goals and what potential

⁵⁴ Nietzsche briefly explores ideas of this sort in some of his unpublished notes: for instance, he speculates that utility demands that society breed souls in which ‘some affects have become almost rudimentary’ while other affects are more vigorously developed [WLN, 175; KSA XII.10[8]]. See also WLN, pp. 175–76; KSA XII.10[10–11].

⁵⁵ For instance, as I have already noted, many of the tropes in which Nietzsche’s account are couched derived from anti-Semitic discourse: Jews were often described as clever [*klug*] by way of contrast with the healthy folk wisdom of the Germans. Wittgenstein remarks that the portrayal of a group as lacking an inner life (as aspect-blind) could be used a strategy to legitimate immoral acts against them: ‘A tribe that we want to enslave. The government and the scientists give it out that the people of this tribe have no souls; so they can be used without scruple for any purpose whatever. [...] If anyone among us voices the idea that something must surely be going on *in* these beings, something mental [*seelisches*], this is laughed at like a stupid superstition.’ [RPP 96–97].

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avenues for Nietzschean thought are opened up in the light of my work here – that I must leave to my readers to decide.

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Primary works

I have referred to primary works by Nietzsche and Wittgenstein by the following abbreviations throughout. The numbers following the abbreviation refer to numbered sections of the work in question, unless otherwise indicated (e.g. *GM* I:3 refers to essay 1, section 3 of *On the Genealogy of Morality*).

Where applicable, I have amended translations of Nietzsche and Wittgenstein in cases where semantically male English (pro)nouns are misused to translate syntactically masculine German (pro)nouns (e.g. *er*, *Mensch*). I have also amended without comment a number of minor infelicities in the published translations.

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- AOM* *Assorted Opinions and Maxims in Human, All Too Human*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986 [1879/1886])
- BGE* *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1990 [1886])
- BT* *The Birth of Tragedy*, eds. Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs, trans. Ronald Speirs (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999 [1872/1886])
- CW* *The Case of Wagner*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1966 [1888])
- D* *Daybreak*, eds. Maudemarie Clark and Brian Leiter, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997 [1880/1887])
- EH* *Ecce Homo*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (with *On the Genealogy of Morals*) (New York: Vintage, 1989 [1888])
- GM* *On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. Maudemarie Clark and Alan J. Swensen (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998 [1887])
- GS* *The Gay Science*, ed. Bernard Williams, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001 [1882/1887])

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- HAH* *Human, All Too Human*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986 [1878/1886])
- KSA* *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe*, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980–1988)
- TI* *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (with *The Anti-Christ*) (London: Penguin, 1968 [1888])
- UM* *Untimely Meditations*, ed. Daniel Breazeale, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997 [1873–1876])
- WEN* *Writings from the Early Notebooks*, eds. Raymond Geuss and Alexander Nehamas, trans. Ladislaus Löb (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009)
- WLN* *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, ed. Rüdiger Bittner, trans. Kate Sturge (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003)
- WP* *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage 1968 [1906])
- WS* *The Wanderer and His Shadow in Human, All Too Human*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986 [1880/1886])
- Z* *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1969 [1883–1885])
- Works by Wittgenstein*
- CV* *Culture and Value*, ed. G.H. Von Wright, trans. Peter Winch (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980)
- LC* *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology & Religious Belief*, ed. Cyril Barrett (Oxford: Blackwell, 1966)
- OC* *On Certainty*, eds. G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright, trans. Denis Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974)
- PI* *Philosophical Investigations*, 3rd edition, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001 [1953])
- PO* *Philosophical Occasions, 1912–1951*, eds. James C. Klagge and Alfred Nordmann (Indianapolis : Hackett, 1993)
- RFGB* *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*, ed. Rush Rhees, trans. A.C. Miles and Rush Rhees (Bishopstone: Brynmill Press, 2010)
- RPP* *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, vol. I, eds. G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980)

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