Nietzsche's Critique of Kant's Moral Philosophy: A Study in Revaluation

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NIETZSCHE'S CRITIQUE OF KANT'S MORAL PHILOSOPHY:
A STUDY IN REVALUATION

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

Nietzsche, *Daybreak*
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CHAPTER ONE

NIETZSCHE'S HAMMER: REVALUATION, RECURRENTNE, AND KANT

Introduction

It might at first appear quixotic to attempt to locate a positive moral doctrine in Nietzsche's philosophy. No philosopher before Nietzsche, and perhaps none since, has given his "antimoral propensity" such unbridled expression.\(^1\) It is specifically in opposition to morality, and the moral interpretation of existence, that Nietzsche develops his conception of an "artists' metaphysics" in *The Birth of Tragedy*.\(^2\) In this work Nietzsche rejects the idea that morality is humanity's "truly metaphysical activity."\(^3\) It is only as an aesthetic phenomenon, Nietzsche contends, and not as a moral phenomenon, that the existence of the world is justified.\(^4\) In *The Gay Science* and *Thus Spoke...


\(^2\)Ibid., 24: "It was against morality that my instinct turned with this questionable book, long ago; it was an instinct that aligned itself with life and that discovered for itself a fundamentally opposite doctrine and valuation of life--purely artistic and anti-Christian."

\(^3\)Ibid., 22.

\(^4\)Ibid.: ". . . the existence of the world is justified only as an aesthetic phenomenon."
Zarathustra, Nietzsche proclaims the death of God, and thereby removes the metaphysical foundation upon which morality, especially Christian morality, rests. In later works, such as On the Genealogy of Morals, Nietzsche attempts to divest morality of any remaining vestige of metaphysical significance by tracing the moral consciousness to the internalization of the instinct of cruelty. In Beyond Good and Evil Nietzsche makes his hostility toward morality absolutely unambiguous: "We sail right over morality," he writes,

we crush, we destroy perhaps the remains of our own morality by daring to make our voyage there--but what matter are we!

Passages such as this give an indication of the difficulties faced by anyone who would attempt to locate a positive morality in Nietzsche's writings.

It is undeniable that Nietzsche is opposed to morality, as traditionally conceived. But what is implied by the phrase "traditionally conceived"? From Nietzsche's perspective, traditionally conceived morality refers primarily to Plato, whose "invention" of "the pure spirit

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6On the Genealogy of Morals, in Basic Writings, second essay, 493-532.

7Beyond Good and Evil, in Basic Writings, no. 23, 221.
and the good as such" Nietzsche calls "the worst, most durable, and most dangerous of all errors so far."8

Traditionally conceived morality also includes Christianity, i.e., "Platonism for 'the people.'"9 According to Nietzsche, the world view of Christian morality offers an interpretation of existence that is both antithetical to art and hostile to life:

Christianity was from the beginning, essentially and fundamentally, life's nausea and disgust with life, merely concealed behind, masked by, dressed up as, faith in 'another' or 'better' life.10

Nietzsche's opposition to traditionally conceived morality is, in other words, a rejection of any type of idealistic doctrine that locates the value of the world outside of the world itself. It is also a rejection of traditionally conceived morality's absolute value standards and universal moral norms, which Nietzsche takes to be at odds with the finite, limited, and perspectival nature of human existence.

Nietzsche's opposition to traditionally conceived morality cannot, however, be restricted to a rejection of Platonism and Christianity. Nietzsche also rejects Schopenhauer's morality of pity as a life-denying "new Buddhism."11 Nietzsche maintains that Schopenhauer's

8Ibid., preface, 193.
9Ibid.
10The Birth of Tragedy, "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," no. 5, 23.
11On the Genealogy of Morals, preface no. 5, 455.
glorification of pity, self-abnegation, and self-sacrifice is an example of "the will turning against life, the tender and sorrowful signs of the ultimate illness. . . ."\textsuperscript{12} Schopenhauer's morality of pity and metaphysical doctrine of the will represent a self-devaluation and self-denial of the will that is nihilistic and ultimately self-destructive.\textsuperscript{13}

The ideas underlying Nietzsche's rejection of the absolute metaphysical values of Platonism and Christianity and of Schopenhauer's morality of pity combine in his rejection of Kant's moral philosophy. On the one hand, Nietzsche maintains that Kant's fundamental moral principle, the categorical imperative, which holds that a will can only be considered good if it acts for the sake of duty is, like Schopenhauer's morality of pity, a destructive self-denial of the will.\textsuperscript{14} On the other hand, by insisting on the moral necessity of God, freedom, and the immortality of the soul, Kantian morality represents a variation on the metaphysical

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid.: "What was especially at stake was the value of the 'unegoistic,' the instincts of pity, self-abnegation, self-sacrifice, which Schopenhauer had gilded, deified, and projected into a beyond for so long that at last they became for him 'value-in-itself,' on the basis of which he said No to life and to himself."

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid.: "It was precisely here that I saw the great danger to mankind, its sublimest enticement and seduction--but to what? to nothingness?"

\textsuperscript{14}\textit{The Antichrist}, in \textit{The Portable Nietzsche}, no. 11, 577: "How could one fail to feel how Kant's categorical imperative endangered life itself!"
themes of traditionally conceived morality.\textsuperscript{15}

When Nietzsche writes that art and not morality is humanity's genuine metaphysical activity he places himself in stark opposition to Kant. For Kant, morality is the genuine metaphysical activity of human beings. Kant's \textit{Critique of Pure Reason} limits pure speculative reason to the domain of possible sense experience. Any pretension of speculative reason to extend its reach beyond the bounds of sense experience is rejected as dogmatic and unjustified. The objects of metaphysical reasoning, i.e., God, freedom, and the immortality of the soul, are thinkable only through the practical application of reason. Morality is the "\textit{ratio cognoscendi}" of freedom.\textsuperscript{16} The moral life is completed by the concept of the highest good, i.e., happiness in proportion to virtue, which, on Kant's view, requires the postulation of God and the immortality of the soul. Speculative reason is not extended in this postulation of God and immortality. That is, we cannot make any knowledge claims about them, but their possibility cannot be ruled out, and in fact is required by morality, according to Kant. Therefore, it is in morality, rather than in theoretical speculation, that we find humanity's genuine metaphysical

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., no. 10, 577: "Kant's success is merely a theologians' success: like Luther, like Leibniz, Kant was one more clog for German honesty, which was none too steady in the first place."

activity, on Kant's view.

Nietzsche is directly opposed to Kant's view that morality is humanity's genuine metaphysical activity. But when we look closer at Nietzsche's texts, and the substance of his philosophy, it becomes necessary to qualify his opposition to Kant. This is important for my purposes because I believe that it is in Nietzsche's critical relationship to Kant, specifically Kantian morality, that we will find the basis of Nietzsche's positive conception of morality.

Like Kant, Nietzsche places special emphasis on the role of autonomy, i.e., the will's self-legislation, as the criterion of authentic human moral agency. For Kant, only a will that is autonomous, i.e., one that freely and rationally legislates for itself, without being determined by external, material considerations, has genuine moral worth. For Nietzsche, similarly, only a will that actively creates values for itself expresses the nobility of soul characteristic of "master morality."\(^{17}\)

On the basis of this mutual emphasis on autonomy some argue that Nietzsche's conception of autonomy is a radicalization of Kant's conception of autonomy. Ludwig Nagl, for example, states that "[one] could pointedly say

\(^{17}\)Beyond Good and Evil, no. 260, 395: "The noble type of man experiences itself as determining values; it does not need approval; it judges, 'what is harmful to me is harmful in itself'; it knows itself to be that which first accords honor to things; it is value-creating."
that the center of Nietzsche's 'immoralism' is an
(excessively radicalized) version of Kant's 'autonomy,'
situated in an artistically redesigned Leibnizian world. . . .
Such statements are misleading, however, if no account
is given of Nietzsche's persistent and systematic opposition
to Kantian morality. This ambiguity in Nietzsche's
relationship to Kant generates the following question: Can
we understand both Nietzsche's general rejection of Kant's
moral philosophy and the similarities of their conceptions
of autonomy in terms of something more fundamental than a
simple "radicalization"?

Statement of Purpose and Thesis

In this study I will argue that Nietzsche's idea of the
eternal recurrence, like Kant's categorical imperative,
serves as a self-given directive principle of autonomous
human action. In their discussions of Nietzsche's idea of
the eternal recurrence, many commentators have attempted to
separate it into theoretical and practical aspects. Some
treat the eternal recurrence as a cosmological theory that
holds that all events repeat in identical and unending

18Ludwig Nagl, "The Enlightenment--A Stranded
Project? Habermas on Nietzsche as a 'Turning Point' to

19On the Genealogy of Morals, preface no. 3, 453.
This opposition is clearly expressed in Nietzsche's
description of his genealogical inquiry into the origin of
moral values as the command of an "anti-Kantian, enigmatic
'categorical imperative'. . . ."
cycles. I refer to this interpretation (in all its forms) as the "theoretical" interpretation of the eternal recurrence because it contends that Nietzsche is attempting to demonstrate that the eternal recurrence is a true or factual account of reality.

On the other hand, the eternal recurrence is also often treated as an ethical prescription that holds that we ought to live our lives as if all events repeated in an unending cycle, whether or not this is in fact the case. I refer to this as the "practical" interpretation of the eternal recurrence because of its emphasis on the role the eternal recurrence can play as a self-given directive principle of action. The practical interpretation of the eternal recurrence gives priority to the prescriptive rather than the descriptive value of the eternal recurrence.

Those who advocate the practical interpretation of the eternal recurrence often suggest that there is a parallel between it and the categorical imperative. As I briefly mentioned briefly, the categorical imperative is Kant's supreme moral principle. It tests the moral worth of subjective principles of action (maxims) by asking whether we can will our maxims to be universal laws:

So act that the maxim of your will could always hold at the same time as a principle establishing universal law.\[20\]

Like the categorical imperative, the eternal recurrence

\[20\text{Critique of Practical Reason, 30.}\]
appears to function as a practical imperative: Whatever you do, do it in such a way that you can will its eternal recurrence. In this sense, the eternal recurrence can be construed as an imperative of authenticity. Just as the categorical imperative serves as a test determining moral worth, the eternal recurrence tests our ability to authentically affirm our actions by asking us to imagine their infinite repetition.

Nietzsche seems to encourage a Kantian interpretation of the eternal recurrence by occasionally formulating it in the language of Kant's categorical imperative. For example, in a note from 1881, Nietzsche writes:

Meine Lehre sagt: so leben, dass du wünschen musst, wieder zu leben ist die Aufgabe--du wirst es jedenfalls!  

But it is important not to read too much into Nietzsche's quasi-Kantian formulation of the eternal recurrence. To do so would be to overlook a fundamental antithesis in Nietzsche's and Kant's general moral frameworks. We can begin to understand this antithesis when we recognize Nietzsche's opposition to what he refers to as "antinatural"
morality. Roughly speaking, antinaturalism is comprised of three basic features. First, antinaturalism is found in the unconditional will to truth as the highest value. Second, antinaturalism is found in the faith in opposite values that places the source of the highest values outside of the empirical world of nature and history in a transcendent "true world." Finally, antinaturalism is found in the presumption of moral equality which grounds all conceptions of universal moral norms. I will argue that the essence of an antinatural morality is that it gives priority to acts of value judgment over acts of value legislation. In other words, following Nietzsche, we could say that antinatural morality emphasizes a reactive, rather than an active, mode of value positing.

For Nietzsche, Kant's moral philosophy represents the epitome of antinaturalism. The unconditional will to truth is reflected in Kant's effort to establish the foundations of morality on a priori grounds. The faith in opposite values is found in Kant's denial of knowledge "in order to make room for faith." Finally, Kant's conception of autonomy, as formulated in the categorical imperative, is antinatural, according to Nietzsche, because it identifies autonomy of the will with the universalizability of the

2Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's, 1965), B xxx: "I have therefore found it necessary to deny knowledge, in order to make room for faith."
will's subjective principles of action. Universalizability of principles presupposes moral equality. On Nietzsche's view, however, universalizability is harmful to human beings if, as he maintains, they are not in fact morally equal. Nietzsche contends that the presumption of moral equality, and, consequently, the idea of universal moral norms, represent a secret will to revenge and judgment on the part of those who are incapable of creating values. Thus, Nietzsche holds that despite Kant's emphasis on autonomy and self-legislation, his emphasis on the universalizability of maxims as the content of autonomy places him in a moral framework in which judgment is tacitly and inadvertently given priority over legislation. In other words, on Nietzsche's view, Kant's account of autonomy implicitly undermines itself.

The primary thesis that I argue for in this study is that the eternal recurrence represents Nietzsche's attempt to ground a conception of autonomy on a naturalistic basis. Nietzsche's eternal recurrence offers a reconceptualization of human autonomy in light of the experience of modern physics. The eternal recurrence represents the lesson of

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24 *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "On the Tarantulas," 213: "I do not wish to be mixed up and confused with these preachers of equality. For, to me justice speaks thus: 'Men are not equal.' Nor shall they become equal! What would my love of the overman be if I spoke otherwise?"

25 Ibid., 212: "Out of every one of their complaints sounds revenge; in their praise is always a sting, and to be a judge seems bliss to them."
modern physics that we can find no independent laws within
nature and that, consequently, we must give ourselves laws
in the face of the experience of total, recurring
meaninglessness, if we want to have coherently organized and
meaningful existence.\textsuperscript{26} With its emphasis on self-
legislation over moral judgment, Nietzsche's conception of
autonomy remains Kantian, in a broad sense, but Nietzsche
rejects both the Kantian model of the moral subject and
Kant's moral metaphysics as antinatural. Nietzsche creates
a norm of autonomy in which value legislation is given
priority over value judgment without the need of postulating
a fixed, Cartesian self or a transcendent metaphysical
realm. Another way of putting the same point, perhaps more
sharply, would be to say that, on the issue of autonomy,
Nietzsche is more consistently Kantian than Kant.

In support of my main thesis I will argue for the
secondary thesis that the 'foundation' of Nietzsche's
naturalism is located in the idea of the will to power. I
read the will to power not as a metaphysical principle but
rather as a methodological principle of interpretation. As
an interpretive principle, the will to power provides the
means to overcome the three basic antinatural positions that
Nietzsche associates with traditionally conceived morality.
It provides a non-dualistic conceptual framework that

\textsuperscript{26}Hans Seigfried, "Autonomy and Quantum Physics,"
opposes the unconditional will to truth and eliminates the dualism of the faith in opposite values. At the same time, it provides the means to challenge the Kantian conception of universal moral norms by undermining the presumption of moral equality.

**Some Interpretive Considerations**

In this section I discuss the interpretive strategy that will govern my study. I will try to do this briefly, but hopefully not so briefly as to appear dogmatic. Two pairs of issues must be discussed. First, there is the issue of the relative priority I will give to Nietzsche's published texts over his posthumous writings, known as the *Nachgelassene Fragmente*. Second, there is the issue of whether I will take a thematic or an historical approach to Nietzsche's texts.

Regarding the first issue, I can state my position briefly. Generally speaking, I think that an author's published texts should be given priority over texts that, for whatever reason, the author chose not to publish. Published texts represent the author's ideas as he or she chose to represent them to the world. Therefore, I give precedence to Nietzsche's published works over the writings contained in the *Nachgelassene Fragmente*. In the event of a conflict between these two sources, I will give the published works priority. The only exception to this general interpretive principle involves the eternal
recurrence. Because of the relative paucity of material on the eternal recurrence in Nietzsche's published texts, I have employed both published texts and writings from the Nachgelassene Fragmente in my reconstruction of the eternal recurrence.

On the second issue, my position is perhaps more controversial. I do not subscribe to the view that Nietzsche's philosophy must be understood in terms of successive periods of development. I think that such periodization is arbitrary and artificial, and that it has very little explanatory power. I believe that Nietzsche's philosophy is more unified and consistent than many interpreters recognize. Therefore, I believe that an interpretation that emphasizes particular themes is the appropriate manner to approach Nietzsche's texts, rather than one that focuses on the chronological development of these themes.

A thematic approach to Nietzsche's texts is not without its problems, however. It could be objected that a thematic approach is problematic because it tends to artificially systematize Nietzsche's thought. This becomes questionable in light of Nietzsche's aphoristic style and his opposition to systematic philosophy. Therefore, it

might appear that my interpretation of Nietzsche is somehow "un-Nietzschean."

The search for a suitable framework in which to pursue my project has led me to Nietzsche's hammer metaphor. The hammer metaphor unifies many of the diverse threads of Nietzsche's philosophy. I believe that this metaphor, suitably interpreted, can also provide a unifying strategy for my study. In order to make this clear, I will conclude this introductory chapter with a brief examination of this metaphor.

Nietzsche's Hammer Metaphor

There is perhaps no more appropriate symbol of the substance and spirit of Nietzsche's philosophy than the hammer. During the final years of Nietzsche's philosophical activity the image of a hammer is found scattered throughout his unpublished notes and it is a ubiquitous presence in Twilight of the Idols, where it appears in the notorious subtitle, How One Philosophizes With A Hammer. In the preface of this work Nietzsche downplays the eschatological overtones of the title by characterizing the hammer as the instrument of the philosophical physician, who diagnoses the emptiness of traditional values, ideals, and institutions:

... regarding the sounding out of idols, this time they are not just idols of the age, but eternal idols, which are here touched with a hammer as with a tuning fork: there are altogether no older, no more convinced,
no more puffed-up idols—and none more hollow.\textsuperscript{28}

In the course of his series of lectures on Nietzsche’s philosophy, Heidegger has attempted to discourage the destructive reading of the hammer metaphor. Heidegger maintains that Nietzsche’s intent is not "to go in swinging, wrecking everything."\textsuperscript{29} Instead, he sees the hammer as emblematic of the redemptive character of Nietzsche’s thought which "wants to give things weight and importance again."\textsuperscript{30}

Heidegger’s claim is supported by texts in which Nietzsche discusses purely destructive philosophical criticism. Given Nietzsche’s predilection for the rhetoric of war and images that appear to celebrate destruction, it is understandable that his claim to philosophize with a hammer most naturally calls to mind destructive philosophical criticism. This manner of interpreting the hammer metaphor makes it particularly amenable to deconstructive strategies of interpretation.\textsuperscript{31} But upon

\textsuperscript{28}Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols Or, How One Philosophizes With a Hammer, in The Portable Nietzsche, preface, 466. Kaufmann’s translation deviates from Nietzsche’s subtitle, which reads "Wie man mit dem Hammer philosophirt."


\textsuperscript{30}Ibid.

examination we discover that Nietzsche expresses disdain for mere destruction that lacks an overriding creative component. The mutual implication of destruction and creation in the philosophical sense can be said to be one of Nietzsche's most fundamental principles:

If a temple is to be erected a temple must be destroyed: that is the law--let anyone who can show me a case in which it is not fulfilled! 32

The interaction between destruction and creation is reflected in the manner in which the genuine philosopher integrates the critical task of philosophical labor with philosophical creativity. Philosophical labor involves gathering and codifying "former positings of values, creations of value which have become dominant and are for a time called 'truths'." 33 According to Nietzsche, this is the task that Kant performs with distinction. Kant performs the "wonderful" preliminary work of consolidating and overcoming the past, but, according to Nietzsche, he fails to progress adequately beyond critique. Thus, even Kant, "the great Chinese of Königsberg," is regarded by Nietzsche

remarks that Nietzsche applies his hammer to idols in a manner that "destroys them in the sense of deconstructing them..." See also Jacques Derrida, "Tympan," in Margins of Philosophy, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), xii-xv.

32 On the Genealogy of Morals, second essay, no. 24, 531. See also The Gay Science, no. 58, 122. "We can destroy only as creators."

33 Beyond Good and Evil, no. 211, 326.
as "merely a great critic.--" Critique is an instrument of genuine philosophers who are also creators and legislators of values: "they say, thus it shall be!" In what manner does philosophical labor complement the creative activity of genuine philosophers? We can approach this question by returning to Nietzsche’s use of the hammer metaphor in the preface of Twilight of the Idols. In this context, Nietzsche draws an analogy between the philosopher’s hammer and a tuning fork. Just as a tuning fork is used to test the pitch of a note as a means of tuning a musical instrument, Nietzsche employs critique to sound out idols, i.e., traditional values, norms, and institutions, to see if they are hollow.

For once to pose questions here with a hammer, and, perhaps, to hear as a reply that famous hollow sound. Nietzsche does not dogmatically presume the hollowness of traditional idols, as is indicated by his use of the word "perhaps." Rather, the hammer functions here as a symbol of the diagnostic, experimental quality of Nietzsche’s philosophy, the intent of which is not necessarily to destroy values but to assess "the value of these values themselves." It reveals an attitude of reflective,

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34 Ibid., no. 210, 325.
35 Ibid., no. 211, 326.
36 Twilight of the Idols, preface, 465.
37 On the Genealogy of Morals, preface no. 6, 456.
critical detachment regarding traditional values and Nietzsche's openness to new and different ways of conceiving of values.

This notion of rigorous testing by comparison describes the work of consolidation carried out by the philosophical laborer and accords well with the image of the hammer as a tuning fork that critically sounds out idols. But the experimental testing of values to determine whether or not they have retained any value is not an end in itself. Extending Nietzsche's musical analogy we could say that just as tuning an instrument with a tuning fork is preliminary to actually playing the instrument, the sounding out of idols points beyond itself to a creative act.

Nietzsche makes this clear by extending the hammer metaphor to incorporate the activities of the genuine philosopher. Just as genuine philosophers must employ the hammer as a laborer to critically test idols, they must also use the hammer as a means to create new idols, or new ideals:

With a creative hand they reach for the future, and all that is and has been becomes a means for them, an instrument, a hammer. Their 'knowing' is creating, their creating is a legislation, their will to truth is—will to power. 38

The hammer is a doubly appropriate symbol for the creative task of the genuine philosopher. On the one hand, it represents the hardness of those who dare to create a new

38*Beyond Good and Evil*, no. 211, 326.
interpretation of existence. 39 On the other hand, it represents the tool of the sculptor, who uses a hammer to produce works of art from shapeless stone. In this case, the stone represents 'man,' "the as yet undetermined animal." 40 The work of art represents the overman, i.e., Nietzsche's new ideal for humanity:

But my fervent will to create impels me ever again toward man; thus is the hammer impelled toward the stone. O men, in the stone there sleeps an image, the image of my images. Alas, that it must sleep in the hardest, the ugliest stone! Now my hammer rages cruelly against its prison. Pieces of rock rain from the stone: what is that to me? I want to perfect it; for a shadow came to me—the stillest and lightest of all things came to me. The beauty of the overman came to me as a shadow. O my brothers, what are the gods to me now? 41

The intrinsic relationship between critique and creation, a relationship that is mirrored in the relationship of philosophical labor and philosophical creativity, is expressed by the multiple meanings latent within the image of the hammer. On the one hand the hammer is thought of as a tuning hammer and symbolizes critique. On the other hand the hammer is thought of a sculptor's hammer and symbolizes the creative activity of the genuine philosopher.

39 Twilight of the Idols, "The Hammer Speaks," 563. "And if your hardness does not wish to flash and cut and cut through, how can you one day create with me? For all creators are hard."

40 Beyond Good and Evil, no. 62, 264.

41 Thus Spoke Zarathustra, "Upon the Blessed Isles," 199-200.
The fact that Nietzsche uses a single image, the hammer, to metaphorically express both critique and creation does not indicate their diametrical opposition, but rather their deep interrelatedness. This deep interrelatedness is crucial to the concept of interpretation that is the basis of Nietzsche’s hypothesis of the will to power. Interpretation unifies critique and creation in the sense that the creation of a new interpretation necessarily involves the transformation of an already existing interpretation.

For Nietzsche, it is the possibility of alternative interpretations of existence that makes possible a revaluation of all values; it is the threat of nihilism that makes this revaluation necessary. Nietzsche maintains that the greater part of human history has been dominated by a single interpretation of existence, i.e., the interpretation associated with traditionally conceived morality. The distinguishing characteristic of this interpretation is an unshakable faith that it alone is the sole and exclusive possessor of truth. The spirit of truthfulness cultivated by traditionally conceived morality has been fruitful. It has civilized humanity and it has instilled within human beings a drive for knowledge, a will to truth. The will to truth, however, has also led to traditionally conceived

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42 The will to power is discussed in the context of Nietzsche’s naturalism in chapter two.
morality's undoing, according to Nietzsche, because it has ruthlessly exposed the human, all too human basis of the supposedly transcendent grounds of existence. This is the dialectic of nihilism—-that "the highest values devaluate themselves." It is potentially disastrous for humanity because the collapse of this interpretation of existence, which was thought to be the only possible one, is mistakenly taken to imply the collapse of all interpretations.

The revaluation of values, made necessary by the threat of nihilism, calls for the appearance of "spirits strong and original enough to provide the stimuli for opposite valuations." The appearance of such spirits, genuine philosophers in the sense discussed above, cannot be taken for granted. The possibility of their appearance itself necessitates a revaluation of values,

... under whose new pressure and hammer a conscience would be steeled, a heart turned to bronze, in order to endure the weight of such responsibility. ...

Among Nietzsche's innumerable sketches and plans for his ultimately abandoned magnum opus, The Will to Power, there is one that includes a section entitled "Der Hammer: Lehre

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44 Ibid., no. 55, 35.

45 Beyond Good and Evil, no. 203, 307.

46 Ibid.
von der ewigen Wiederkunft." In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche makes it clear that he believes that the eternal recurrence is the hardest idea to accept; it is the greatest weight, the idea that will "change you as you are or perhaps crush you. . . ." The eternal recurrence is the idea that will crush the pretensions of those who remain committed to truth in the received, traditional sense. It symbolizes the idea that the "in vain" of their search will be eternally repeated. But the eternal recurrence also offers the possibility of change. It implicitly contains the idea that we are responsible for our interpretations of existence and must constantly re-affirm these interpretations if they are to retain any value. Thus, within the eternal recurrence we find yet another expression of the critical and creative aspects of revaluation that are metaphorically expressed in the hammer image.

**Nietzsche's Hammer and Kant's Categorical Imperative**

Can the hammer metaphor be used to guide my study of Nietzsche's relationship to Kant? I think that it can. We have seen that the hammer metaphor functions as a symbol of the critical and creative activity that characterizes the activities of the genuine philosopher. We have also seen that Nietzsche implies that his relationship to Kant can be

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47 KSA 13, no. 13[4], 215.

understood in terms of the relationship of a genuine philosopher to a philosophical laborer. This may be a questionable over-estimation on Nietzsche's part, but it does not exhaust the possibilities of the hammer as an interpretive guide.

In this study I will use the image of the hammer to provide the framework for my examination of the relationship of Nietzsche's and Kant's conceptions of autonomy and morality in general. The next two chapters focus primarily on the critical aspects of Nietzsche's relationship to Kant, while my last chapter focuses primarily on what I see as the creative aspects of this relationship as embodied in the eternal recurrence.

Chapter two initiates my exploration of the critical aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy through an examination of his naturalistic conception of morality and its opposition to "antinatural" morality. I argue that the principle of Nietzsche's naturalism is found in the will to power. The will to power supplies an immanent principle of interpretation that allows Nietzsche to reject metaphysical dualism and moral views that rest on dualistic presuppositions, such as Kant's. The will to power also provides the means for a shift from a teleological conceptual framework to a more economical framework based on a single explanatory principle. In a practical context, the will to power represents an attempt to prioritize the
legislative act of interpretation over the act of moral judgment, causing a fundamental change in the way moral values are understood. The most important aspect of this change, I argue, is a rejection of moral equality and a corresponding rejection of universal moral norms. I maintain that this is the primary source of Nietzsche's opposition to Kant's identification of autonomy with the universalizability of maxims, as formalized in the categorical imperative. Although Kant offers a morality of self-legislation, Nietzsche contends that the antinatural presuppositions of Kant's position undermine the genuinely legislative content of his philosophy.

Chapter three continues my exploration of the critical aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy through an examination of his attempt to undermine the foundations of Kant's "majestic moral structures." I argue that the basis of Nietzsche's critique lies in his opposition to Kant's adoption of the consciousness of the moral law as a fact of reason, rather than a fact of history. In short, Nietzsche provides a critique of Kantian moral rationalism from an empirico-historical perspective. Nietzsche uses a genealogical examination of the moral consciousness to reveal its non-rational origins. I discuss Nietzsche's assimilation of the categorical imperative into the antinatural framework of slave morality. I argue that this assimilation is somewhat problematic, given Kant's strong emphasis on autonomy, but
that Nietzsche's critique remains a justifiable criticism of the content of autonomy within the Kantian moral framework.

Chapter four turns to the creative aspect of Nietzsche's relationship to Kant through an examination of the relationship of the eternal recurrence to the categorical imperative. I reject both the conventional theoretical and practical interpretations of the eternal recurrence and argue that the eternal recurrence represents Nietzsche's attempt to provide a positive response to antinaturalism through a reconceptualization of autonomy within the bounds of naturalism. My interpretation of the eternal recurrence focuses primarily on Nietzsche's assertion that the eternal recurrence is "the most scientific of all possible hypotheses." I interpret this remark in three complementary senses, each of which corresponds to a different facet of antinaturalism.

I am optimistic that the cumulative result of my examination will be a new manner of understanding not only the relationship between the eternal recurrence and the categorical imperative but, more importantly, a new manner of understanding the relationship between Nietzsche and Kant. It is this new way of understanding the relationship between Nietzsche and Kant that makes this dissertation a study in revaluation.

\[49\]The Will to Power, no. 55, 36.
CHAPTER TWO

THE NATURALISTIC BASIS OF NIETZSCHE'S CRITIQUE OF KANT

Introduction

Throughout Nietzsche's writings there is a consistent rejection of all forms of moral norms and values that require a metaphysical foundation for their legitimacy. Nietzsche characterizes all forms of metaphysically based moral norms and values as "antinatural." Corresponding to this rejection of antinatural morality is a call for what Nietzsche refers to as the "naturalization" of morality.  

Naturalistic and antinaturalistic moralities are distinguished primarily by their differing estimations of the value of "life." A naturalistic morality, Nietzsche writes, "is dominated by an instinct of life. . . ." An antinatural morality, on the other hand,

that is, almost every morality which has so far been taught, revered, and preached--turns, conversely, against the instincts of life: it is condemnation of these instincts, now secret, now outspoken and impudent.  

Since antinaturalism is a feature of "almost every

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1The Will to Power, no. 462, 255: "In place of 'moral values,' purely naturalistic values. Naturalization of morality."

morality" hitherto, it does not refer exclusively to a specific moral practice or moral philosophy. Instead, antinaturalism refers to a distinctive and recurring pattern of epistemological, metaphysical, and normative presuppositions. Antinaturalism is found in epistemology in the unconditional will to truth. The unconditional will to truth is the belief that truth, in the form of an objective and definitive account of reality in-itself, is the supreme human value. This will to truth is antinatural because it denies the interpretive, perspectival, creative, and 'artistic' character of human reason. Nietzsche identifies the unconditional will to truth very closely with Platonism and Christian morality and suggests that it represents "'a will to negate life. . . .'"\(^3\)

The antinaturalism of metaphysics is a corollary of the unconditional will to truth. On the supposition that the will to truth could not originate out of the will to deception, a fictitious, transcendent realm is invented that can serve as the object of the will to truth.\(^4\) The empirical worlds of nature and history are seen as mere appearances, merely preliminary steps towards the true, i.e., metaphysical, world. The creation of a "true world" is antinatural, according to Nietzsche, because it

\(^3\)The Birth of Tragedy, "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," no. 5, 23.

\(^4\)Beyond Good and Evil, no. 2, 200.
implicitly negates or devalues "this world, our world."\(^{5}\)

Finally, antinaturalism includes the presupposition of moral equality that has dominated moral discussion and debate at least since the time of Hobbes. It is the presumption of moral equality that makes possible universal moral norms and values. Universal moral norms and values represent, on Nietzsche's view, a harmful denial of life if human beings are not morally equal. He holds that moral inequality is suggested by the fact that some people can create values while others cannot. If human beings are not morally equal, then universal moral norms and values will serve a repressive function, denying the full expression of life to those who can create new values. In *On the Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche traces this repressive function to the ressentiment of those who are incapable of creating values.

In this chapter I will argue that Nietzsche's naturalism is based upon the hypothesis of the will to power. I maintain that the will to power does not function as a metaphysical principle about reality *per se*. Rather, I argue that the will to power functions as a methodological principle of understanding or interpretation that makes possible a transition from a conceptual framework organized around superfluous metaphysical and teleological modes of explanation toward a more economical conceptual framework

\(^{5}\)The Gay Science, no. 344, 283.
organized around value of concepts for life.\textsuperscript{6}

Within a moral context, I argue that the most important implication of Nietzsche's naturalism is that it shifts the emphasis of moral deliberation from value judgment to value legislation. A naturalistic moral framework stresses the active creation of values in accordance with self-given laws rather than the reactive application of laws which we have no hand in creating. In other words, a naturalistic conception of morality is synonymous with autonomy. On Nietzsche's view, a naturalistic moral framework would contribute to the development of psychologically healthier human beings, greater unity of cultural expression, and perhaps, eventually, a universal conception of morality that is not based on arbitrary metaphysical presuppositions, but rather on actual knowledge of the conditions of life.\textsuperscript{7}

An examination of Nietzsche's naturalism is, so to speak, the natural place to begin my study of Nietzsche's critique and revaluation of Kantian morality because, for Nietzsche, Kant represents the epitome of antinaturalism.\textsuperscript{8} Therefore, if we can understand the opposition of naturalistic and antinaturalistic moralities, we will be in

\textsuperscript{6}KSA 12, no. 9[86](61), 380.


\textsuperscript{8}The Antichrist, no. 11, 578: "The instinct which errs without fail, anti-nature as instinct, German decadence as philosophy--that is Kant!"
a better position to understand Nietzsche's opposition to Kantian morality, which will be treated in the next chapter. As will become clear, Nietzsche's naturalistic prioritization of value legislation is not only crucial to understanding his critique of morality in general, it is also crucial to understanding his relationship to Kant. The idea of moral legislation, particularly in the sense of autonomy or self-legislation of directive principles of action, will serve as the common ground that will allow me to place Nietzsche and Kant into productive dialogue with each other.

Any discussion of Nietzsche's naturalism is complicated by the lack of agreement among contemporary philosophers about the meaning of Nietzsche's view. I begin this chapter with a brief survey of some prominent interpretations of Nietzsche's naturalism that indicates the range of opinions on this issue. I then distinguish Nietzsche's naturalism from what he takes to be quasi-naturalistic views, i.e., stoicism, essentialistic accounts of human nature, and Rousseau's doctrine of the state of nature. I proceed to a discussion of the antinaturalism of the unconditional will to truth, the hypothesis of the "true world," and the presupposition of moral equality. After this, I examine the hypothesis of the will to power as the basis of Nietzsche's naturalism. The implications of naturalism for morality are developed through an interpretation of a text from The Gay
Science entitled "Long Live Physics!" where Nietzsche attempts to undermine traditional conceptions of moral judgment and replace them with a conception of moral discourse in which legislative conditions predominate. I conclude this chapter by indicating the relevance of "Long Live Physics!," and related texts, for Nietzsche's conception of autonomy and for understanding the relationship of Nietzsche and Kant.

What Naturalism Might Be: Some Suggestions

Nietzsche's naturalism has been interpreted in a wide variety of ways. It would be helpful to survey briefly some prominent views in order to get a sense of this diversity and to determine which aspects of Nietzsche's position remain unclear. In this section I will discuss the interpretations of Jürgen Habermas, Hans Seigfried, Richard Schacht, Robert C. Solomon, Theodore R. Schatzki, and Michael J. Mattis.

On Habermas' view, Nietzsche fails in his attempt to merge the contradictory presuppositions of naturalism and positivism. For Habermas, Nietzsche's naturalism involves a recognition of the connection of knowledge and interests. Nietzsche's positivism is found in his rejection of metaphysics and in his restriction of legitimate knowledge to the findings of the natural sciences. Nietzsche's naturalistic connection of knowledge and interests is opposed to positivism's rigid fact-value distinction.
Habermas argues that the tension between these two positions is problematic. As a positivist, Nietzsche's devaluation of metaphysics leads to nihilism, while as a naturalist he is unable to exclude any knowledge claims as invalid. Consequently, Habermas concludes, Nietzsche's position collapses into subjectivistic skepticism.⁹

In opposition to Habermas, Seigfried emphasizes the importance of natural science for Nietzsche's naturalism. On his view, Nietzsche's attitude towards science cannot be dismissed as merely positivistic. Seigfried interprets naturalism as a "radically experimental morality" that must be sharply distinguished from traditional attempts to isolate directives of action in "the tendencies and propensities of our natural drives."¹⁰ On this view, Nietzsche uses the experimental paradigm of modern science as a model for moral reasoning. As a result, Seigfried concludes that, for Nietzsche, "insistence on naturalism in moral matters can mean only one thing, namely, that successful experimental interaction between us and nature alone can tell what good and evil and the conditions of good

⁹Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 297: "The basis of knowledge in interest affects the possibility of knowledge as such. Since this gratification of all needs is congruent with the interest in self-preservation, any illusion at random can put forth the same claim to validity, as long as some need interprets the world through it."

Schacht maintains that naturalism is a "reinterpretation of nature and humanity" in light of Nietzsche's "de-deification of nature." Schacht links this project to an "anthropological shift" in Nietzsche's philosophy. The purpose of this shift is "to arrive at an understanding and appreciation of the kind of creature we fundamentally are" in order to determine "what we may become." In other words, for Schacht, Nietzsche's naturalism is a theory of human nature that has decisive normative implications.

Solomon locates Nietzsche's naturalism in his shift away from traditional rule-governed ethics to a concern with personal style. Solomon's interpretation stresses the role of nihilism in Nietzsche's thought. He offers a positive interpretation of nihilism that emphasizes its "demand for freedom from certain values as moral commands, namely, 'other worldly values'." Other-worldly values impose "false needs and desires," while naturalistic values are

11Ibid., 429.


13Ibid., 75.

life-affirming, personal virtues arising from the individual’s needs, desires, aspirations, and interests.\(^{15}\) According to Solomon, the gratification of needs and the integration of values within a whole personality replaces the justification of actions or intentions by means of rules and principles that characterizes traditional morality.

For Schatzki, Nietzsche’s naturalism consists in "the adoption of a biologically and physiologically informed viewpoint on human life and history."\(^{16}\) The biological dimension of Nietzsche’s thought is found in his emphasis on the Darwinian notion of the struggle for existence and in his emphasis on "life." In accordance with this biological emphasis, values are seen as conditions of life that can help or hinder the human species in its struggle for existence. Schatzki locates the physiological dimension of Nietzsche’s naturalism in his materialistic emphasis on the body. This is reflected in Nietzsche’s concern with diagnosing various forms of life as either strong or weak, healthy or unhealthy.\(^{17}\) It is also reflected in his concern with the material aspects of life such as "heredity, race-mixing, diet, climate, age, emigration, and disease."\(^{18}\)

\(^{15}\)Ibid., 221.


\(^{17}\)Ibid., 148.

\(^{18}\)Ibid.
As could be expected, Nietzsche's view is not without its critics. Mattis discusses Nietzsche's position within the context of ethical naturalism. His thesis is that Nietzsche's philosophy is inherently antinaturalistic. The primary tenet of ethical naturalism, according to Mattis, is that value statements are reducible to factual statements about natural qualities such as pleasure or happiness. On this view, moral values and actions are evaluated in quantitative terms, based on whether or not they add to or subtract from the natural quality in question. Some forms of ethical naturalism also involve developmental or teleological notions of human perfectibility. Although many of Nietzsche's statements about ethics appear compatible with both of these forms of ethical naturalism, Mattis argues that the essence of Nietzsche's philosophy is contrary to ethical naturalism because of the priority Nietzsche gives to becoming. Mattis concludes that

"Nietzsche's anti-naturalism [sic], then, consists in the priority that he gives to becoming, a priority that precludes the measurement of growth, and thus the determination of value that naturalism presupposes is possible."20

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20Ibid., 175.
What Naturalism Is Not

The preceding survey sketched the spectrum of opinion concerning Nietzsche's naturalism. While all of the philosophers I have discussed agree that naturalism is a significant feature of Nietzsche's philosophy, each of them characterizes Nietzsche's naturalism in a different way. Habermas describes it as an overcoming of the fact-value distinction, Seigfried as the moral adoption of the experimental spirit of science, Schacht as an inquiry into human nature, Solomon as individualistic self-affirmation, and Schatzki as materialistic biologism. In opposition to these interpretations, Mattis argues that Nietzsche's emphasis on becoming is inherently antinaturalistic.

Given the lack of agreement about Nietzsche's naturalism it appears necessary to continue the investigation into its meaning. An appropriate way to continue this investigation is to look at texts where Nietzsche discusses philosophical views in which the concept of nature plays a significant role. This will show how Nietzsche's naturalism differs from some philosophical positions that have been considered naturalistic. In this section I discuss Nietzsche's critique of stoicism, essentialistic accounts of human nature, and Rousseau's concept of the state of nature. This will allow me to establish what Nietzsche's naturalism is not before I go on to discuss what I think is a plausible and comprehensive
account of Nietzsche's positive view of naturalism that builds upon the work of the commentators in the preceding section.

Before discussing Nietzsche's critique of stoicism I must consider the theory of truth that is presupposed by his critique. Nietzsche's early writings contain a metaphorical conception of truth that is opposed to the view that truth is the correspondence of words with reality. On Nietzsche's view, words relate us to the world through a two-step process in which perceptions are transformed into nerve stimuli and these stimuli are transformed into sound. Because sense data must pass through these disparate mediums, words bear only a metaphorical relationship to things as they are in-themselves. Therefore, truth should not be understood as the correspondence of words and objects but as an agreement within a linguistic community to use language in accordance with communally agreed upon conventions.  

Nietzsche's critique of the correspondence theory of truth is found in his essay "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense," in Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870's, ed. and trans. Daniel Breazeale (New Jersey: Humanities Paperback Library, 1979), 82-83: "It is this way with all of us concerning language: we believe that we know something about the things themselves when we speak of trees, colors, snow, and flowers; and yet we possess nothing but metaphors for things--metaphors which correspond in no way to the original entities."

Ibid., 84.
truth extends to the realistic view that scientific laws are descriptive of nature in-itself. In Beyond Good and Evil he challenges the view that physics reads-off laws that are inscribed in nature. Nietzsche cannot assert that the realist's conception of nature's conformity to law is false without tacitly presupposing some sort of privileged access to nature, which is precisely what he wants to deny. Therefore, he challenges the realist indirectly. He argues that physics is not an explanation of natural occurrences, but rather a pragmatically justified interpretation of these occurrences. He defends this claim by proposing an alternative interpretation of scientific laws which can achieve the same results as the realist's view without the realist's dogmatic assumptions.

Nietzsche contends that the realist's notion of "nature's conformity to law" is the product of an anthropomorphic interpretation of nature under the influence of the "democratic instincts of the modern soul." He does not object to this interpretation, per se, but rather to the claim that this interpretation is the only possible

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23Beyond Good and Evil, no. 14, 211: "It is perhaps just dawning on five or six minds that physics, too, is only an interpretation and exegesis of the world (to suit us, if I may say so!) and not a world explanation. . . ."

24Ibid., no. 22, 220: "'Everywhere equality before the law; nature is no different in that respect, no better off than we are'--a fine instance of ulterior motivation, in which the plebeian antagonism to everything privileged and autocratic as well as a second and more refined atheism are disguised once more."
interpretation. He points out that one could conceivably interpret nature in terms of "the tyrannically inconsiderate and relentless enforcement of claims of power" and yet reach the same conclusion as the realist:

\[\ldots \text{an interpreter} \ldots\ldots\text{might, nevertheless, end by asserting the same about this world as you do, namely, that it has a 'necessary' and 'calculable' course, not because laws obtain in it, but because they are absolutely lacking, and every power draws its ultimate consequences at every moment.} \]^{25}

On Nietzsche's view, the laws of nature cannot simply be read-off from nature. Laws of nature are not simply generalizations based on the passive observation of regularities in nature. What we learn from nature, according to Nietzsche, is a function of a transaction with nature in which we approach nature through active experimentation based on research programs that we have designed. What is crucial to recognize is that on this view it is human beings and not nature that poses the questions.\(^{26}\) This does not result in mere constructivism because the laws that are established in this way are functions of interactions between intelligent beings and nature. Laws are not "imposed," i.e., they are not merely

\(^{25}\text{Ibid.}\)

\(^{26}\text{Cf. Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, Bxiii: "\ldots a light broke upon all students of nature. They learned that reason has insight only into that which it produces after a plan of its own, and that it must not allow itself to be kept, as it were, in nature's leading-strings, but must itself show the way with principles of judgment based upon fixed laws, constraining nature to give answers to questions of reason's own determining."}\)
free-floating constructions, but neither are they "found," i.e., they are not conceiver-independent natural realities.

This brief discussion of Nietzsche's views on truth is sufficient to provide the background needed to understand his critique of the stoic conception of nature. It is important to keep in mind that Nietzsche is not attacking any specific formulation of stoicism, but rather a kind of generalized stoic position. Roughly speaking, the view that Nietzsche has in mind is that there is a rational principle operative within nature that can be known and that can be used to guide human action. If we accept this characterization of stoicism, then Nietzsche's critique can be anticipated based on the conception of truth sketched above.

If the rational principle operative in nature, i.e., nature's apparently law-like behavior, is the product of human interpretation, then attempting to conform to nature, or attempting to locate objective norms of action within the workings of nature, must be understood as fundamentally mistaken. This explains Nietzsche's hostility to stoicism, which he views as an elaborate form of self-deception:

... while you pretend rapturously to read the canon of your law in nature, you want something opposite, you strange actors and self-deceivers! Your pride wants to impose your morality, your ideal, on nature—even on nature—and incorporate them in her; you demand that she should be nature 'according to the Stoa,' and you would like all existence to exist only after your own image—as an immense eternal glorification and
Analogously, if our conception of nature is the result of a transaction between nature and our experiments, then the same must be true for human nature as well. Nietzsche discusses the concept of human nature in *Human, All Too Human* within the context of a critique of philosophical method. He refers to the lack of a sense of history, the belief in absolute facts and eternal truths, as the "family failing of philosophers." One of the consequences of this lack of historical sense is that philosophers assume that human nature is fixed and unchanging. Rejecting this view, Nietzsche maintains that a fully developed sense of history would show that philosophical analyses of human nature have been restricted to human nature as it appears within narrowly circumscribed historical contexts. Nietzsche concedes that the basic features of humanity probably have not altered much during the course of recorded history. Nevertheless, he also maintains that this does not justify the conclusions of the historically unconscious metaphysician who finds

"... 'instincts' in man as he now is and assumes that these belong to the unalterable facts of mankind and to that extent could provide a key to the understanding of the world in general: the whole of teleology is constructed by speaking of the man of the last four

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27 *Beyond Good and Evil*, no. 9, 205-206.

28 *Human, All Too Human*, no. 2, 12.

29 Ibid., 12-13.
millennia as of an eternal man towards [sic] whom all things in the world have had a natural relationship from the time he began.30

Nietzsche’s critique of Rousseau’s doctrine of the state of nature builds on his criticisms of stoicism and the idea of human nature. The idea of a state of nature originally served as a means employed by social contract theorists to explain the origin of civil society and the state. Thomas Hobbes argues in Leviathan that human equality in the state of nature leads to competition for scarce goods, resulting in a continual state of war "of every man, against every man."31 In the Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality and The Social Contract Rousseau argues, in contrast to Hobbes’ position in Leviathan, that the natural state of humanity is one of equality, peace, and goodness. In contrast to Hobbes, Rousseau maintains that it is civilization, not natural competition, that is morally corrupting.32

One of the implications of Nietzsche’s position is that a state of natural humanity such as that referred to by both Hobbes and Rousseau does not exist. On his view, Rousseau’s

30Ibid., 13.
32Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Discourse on the Origin and Foundation of Inequality, in The First and Second Discourses, trans. Roger D. and Judith R. Masters (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1964), 193: "Men are wicked; sad and continual experience spares the need for proof. However, man is naturally good; I believe I have demonstrated it."
doctrine of the state of nature is "a kind of attempt to read moral Christian 'humanity' into nature--."\textsuperscript{33}

Elsewhere,\textsuperscript{34} Nietzsche argues that Rousseau's thesis regarding the harmful effects of civilization upon morality in the \textit{Discourse on the Arts and Sciences} constitutes a revealing reversal of cause and effect. In \textit{Daybreak} he notes that it is equally likely that morality is responsible for the present state of social decline and the only way to settle the matter is by experiment.\textsuperscript{35} While Rousseau uses the notion of a state of nature as a hypothetical standpoint from which to criticize society, Nietzsche takes it as a symptom of the desire "to have a corner of the world into which man and his torments could not enter. . . ."\textsuperscript{36}

For Nietzsche, each of these purportedly naturalistic positions, i.e., stoicism, essentialistic account of human nature, and the idea of a state of nature, manifests a pattern of presuppositions that undermines their naturalistic pretensions. Appeals to the moral order of nature, the timeless essence of human nature, or to an

\textsuperscript{33}\textit{The Will to Power}, no. 340, 186.


\textsuperscript{35}Ibid., no. 163, 100: "The truth cannot possibly be on both sides: and is it on either of them? Test them and see."

\textsuperscript{36}In the next chapter I discuss Nietzsche's effort to avoid the charge that he is arguing \textit{ad hominem} in this and similar cases.
idyllic state of nature tacitly express the desire to flee from the empirical world of nature and history, thereby absolving humanity of any ultimate responsibility for its actions. In other words, a "true world" is constructed in relation to which the only accepted attitude is one of passive conformity. Nietzsche refers to this as the mentality of an antinatural morality.

Antinatural morality is the expression of an interrelated set of epistemological, metaphysical, and normative presuppositions. These antinatural components feed back into and reinforce each other, thus creating a kind of closed system. Antinatural presuppositions become reified in cultural and social institutions (especially religion and morality) which then work to support and protect them. This circularity is an important reason why Nietzsche criticizes traditional philosophical attempts to ground morality on an a priori foundation. If philosophy and reason are based on antinatural assumptions, then grounding morality upon a foundation of a priori reason reduces to an exercise in question-begging.\footnote{Beyond Good and Evil, no. 186, 288: "What philosophers called 'a rational foundation for morality' and tried to supply was, seen in the right light, merely a scholarly variation on the common faith in the prevalent morality; a new means of expression for this faith; and thus just another fact within a particular morality; indeed, in the last analysis a kind of denial that this morality might ever be considered problematic--certainly the very opposite of an examination, analysis, questioning, and vivisection of this very faith."} As a result,
the real problem of morality is left unresolved. This problem reveals itself only when many different moralities are compared on the basis of their value for life.\textsuperscript{38}

But why does Nietzsche place so much emphasis on the need for a critique of moral values from a perspective that is not implicated in antinaturalism? Nietzsche maintains that an escape from the perspective of antinaturalism might create the conditions for moral values that affirm and foster life in a psychologically cleaner and healthier sense than has been the case up until now. Nietzsche repeatedly asserts that the human beings cultivated within antinatural morality are of a degenerate, unhealthy type. Moreover, he maintains that the logic of antinaturalism is now drawing its ultimate conclusions and that the lack of any alternative value system threatens a decline into nihilism. As Nietzsche puts it in his notes, "[one] interpretation has collapsed; but because it was considered the interpretation it now seems as if there were no meaning at all in existence, as if everything were in vain."\textsuperscript{39}

\textbf{What is Antinatural?}

\textsuperscript{38}Ibid. See also \textit{On the Genealogy of Morals}, preface no. 3, 453.

\textsuperscript{39}\textit{The Will to Power}, no. 55, p. 35. These basic factors also amplify each other. For example, Nietzsche argues that the degenerate form of humanity cultivated within herd morality is unlikely to even recognize the onset of nihilism, let alone offer a positive response to it. See, e.g., \textit{Thus Spoke Zarathustra}, "Zarathustra's Prologue," no. 5, 130.
The most fundamental reason for Nietzsche's opposition to traditionally conceived morality is that it is in some sense antinatural. But what does Nietzsche mean when he says that morality is antinatural? In this section I will formulate an answer to the question 'What is Antinatural?' through an examination of its epistemological, metaphysical, and normative features.

The Antinaturalism of Epistemology

The antinaturalness of epistemology is found in the unconditional will to truth. According to Nietzsche, the basis of knowledge consists in the interaction of logical fictions, "the purely invented world of the unconditional and self-identical," with the absolute randomness of the universe, which organizes it into coherent experience. Thinking about the world in terms of these logical fictions, e.g., "thing," "substance," "body," is indispensable for human survival, but the truth value of these logical fictions cannot be measured against an ultimately correct perception of reality because we lack access to any such reality. In other words, we must come to acknowledge "untruth as a condition of life." If, as Nietzsche maintains, untruth is a condition of life, then it follows

\[40\] Beyond Good and Evil, no. 4, 202.
\[41\] The Gay Science, no. 110, 169.
\[42\] Beyond Good and Evil, no. 4, 202.
that the insistence on the unconditional value of truth must be seen as contrary to the basic interests of life.

Given the necessity of conceptual simplification and falsification, Nietzsche infers that "[the] falseness of a judgment is for us not necessarily an objection to a judgment. . . ." He proceeds to speculate that the "falsest" judgments, among which he includes Kant's synthetic a priori judgments, might be the most necessary for human survival. What matters in a judgment is not its truth, but "to what extent it is life-promoting, life-preserving, species-preserving, perhaps even species-cultivating."

The pragmatic value of conceptual falsification underlies one of the central antitheses in Nietzsche's philosophy--the antithesis of art and morality. Morality, especially Christian morality, insists on absolute truth: "it says stubbornly and inexorably, 'I am morality itself, and nothing besides is morality.'" Consequently, traditionally conceived morality, is inherently critical of

43Ibid., no. 4, 201.

44Ibid., 202: "And we are fundamentally inclined to claim that the falsest judgments (which include the synthetic judgments a priori) are the most indispensable for us. . . ."

45Ibid., 201.

46Ibid., no. 202, 306.
everything artistic, relegating art to the realm of lies.\textsuperscript{47}

In morality's hostility to art Nietzsche locates a hostility to life,

... a furious, vengeful antipathy to life itself: for all life is based on semblance, art, deception, points of view, and the necessity of perspectives and error.\textsuperscript{48}

Life, which requires perspective and error, in the form of conceptual falsification, must be in error when viewed from the absolute standards of morality. Thus, for Nietzsche, morality represents a "will to negate life," and, possibly, "the danger of dangers."\textsuperscript{49}

In contrast, art, viewed from the perspective of the artist, recognizes the importance of falsification for life. Art represents the "good will to appearance" which removes morality from the realm of being and relegates it to the realm of deception "as semblance, delusion, error, interpretation, contrivance, art."\textsuperscript{50} In other words, morality is viewed as a fiction used for the management of human affairs.

The relegation of morality to the realm of interpretation is also a consequence of the progress of science. Without the cultivation of art, and the artistic

\textsuperscript{47} The Birth of Tragedy, "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," no. 5, 23.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.
recognition of the interpretive, perspectival character of human mental life, the results of science, i.e., "the realization that delusion and error are conditions of human knowledge and sensation," would, Nietzsche maintains, "lead us to nausea and suicide."[51] Since art and not morality provides the means to counteract the nihilistic threat of science, it is art that deserves our ultimate gratitude.[52]

The Antinaturalism of Metaphysics

The antinatural will to negate life is also present in metaphysics. Metaphysics places the source of the highest values in a fictitious realm of being, a "true world," which lowers the value of this world and human life to a corresponding degree. The most directly perceivable reason for the creation of a true world is found in two erroneous assumptions which, Nietzsche maintains, underlie all metaphysical reasoning. The first is the assumption of the validity of logic that leads us to assume the existence of value oppositions such as good and evil, true and false. This is the faith that Nietzsche refers to as "the faith in

[51]The Gay Science, no. 107, 163.

[52]Ibid.: "If we had not welcomed the arts and invented this kind of cult of the untrue, then the realization of general untruth and mendaciousness that now comes to us through science--the realization that delusion and error are conditions of human knowledge and sensation--would be utterly unbearable. Honesty would lead us to nausea and suicide. But now there is a counterforce against our honesty that helps us to avoid such consequences: art as the good will to appearance."
opposite values."\textsuperscript{53} The second assumption is that something cannot originate from its opposite, e.g., good out of evil. If the positive pole of these value oppositions cannot have originated out of the negative, then a fortiori the highest values cannot have an earthly origin, but must instead have a "peculiar" source in "the lap of Being, the intransitory, the hidden god, the 'thing-in-itself'--there must be their basis, and nowhere else."\textsuperscript{54} This, in turn, necessitates the postulation of a transcendent, "true world" which can serve as the locus of the highest values. On Nietzsche's view, Plato's realm of the forms, the Christian after-life, and Kant's thing-in-itself serve as the prime examples of true worlds.

In \textit{Twilight of the Idols} Nietzsche sums up his objections to the hypothesis of the true world in four elementary propositions. These four propositions illustrate how Nietzsche vacillates between criticism of the conceptual difficulties associated with the true world and criticism of the hidden motives latent in this doctrine. Nietzsche's first proposition states that the reasons cited for distinguishing the world of appearance from reality are the same reasons that demonstrate the reality of appearance.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{53}\textit{Beyond Good and Evil}, no. 2, 200.
\textsuperscript{54}\textit{Ibid}.
\textsuperscript{55}\textit{Twilight of the Idols}, "'Reason' in Philosophy," no. 6, 484.
The hypothesis of the true world begins with the premise that there is a different type of reality than that of appearance. But Nietzsche asserts that the existence of any type of reality other than that of appearance is "absolutely indemonstrable." Therefore, the distinction between a true and an apparent world collapses.

The reasoning behind Nietzsche's first proposition is expanded in a second proposition that states that the criteria which have been used to determine the "true being" of a thing, e.g., substance and permanence, are actually the criteria of non-being in the realm of appearance. As Nietzsche puts it, "the 'true world' has been constructed out of contradiction to the actual world. . . ." This reduces the true world to the status of the apparent world "insofar as it is merely a moral-optical illusion."

The transition from the second to the third of Nietzsche's propositions marks the transition from his conceptual critique of the true world to a critique of its underlying assumptions. Nietzsche's third proposition states that "fables" about the inaccessible realm of true being are meaningless, "unless an instinct of slander, detraction, and suspicion against life has gained an upper

\[^{56}\text{Ibid.}\]
\[^{57}\text{Ibid.}\]
\[^{58}\text{Ibid.}\]
Nietzsche’s fourth proposition sums-up this line of criticism by stating that any distinction between a "true" and an "apparent" world is a sign of decadence and "a symptom of the decline of life."  

The Antinaturalism of Universal Moral Norms

The final aspect of antinaturalism that I will discuss concerns Nietzsche’s opposition to universal moral norms. Nietzsche’s association of universal moral norms with antinaturalism is clear from remarks such as one, found in The Antichrist, where he writes that the conception of the good as "impersonal and universally valid" is both a chimera and the expression of the "final exhaustion of life. . . ."  

In order to see why Nietzsche associates universal moral norms with antinaturalism it is important to recognize that any conception of universal moral norms must presuppose moral equality among agents. That is, despite obvious physical and mental differences, some morally relevant characteristic common to all agents must be assumed if moral demands are to be universalizable. In Kantian morality, for example, agents are morally equal due to their rational nature, while in John Stuart Mill’s writings it is the common human desire to attain pleasure and avoid pain that

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid.

61 The Antichrist, no. 11, 577.
makes it possible for Mill to formulate a universal standard of right and wrong action.\(^{62}\)

Nietzsche maintains that if people were, in fact, morally equal, i.e., "similar in strength and value standards," then the idea of "placing one's will on a par with that of someone else" would be a reasonable demand upon individuals.\(^{63}\) If people are not morally equal, however, then the desire to impose universal moral norms takes on an arbitrary quality that Nietzsche interprets as symptomatic of a more basic, but disguised, sentiment.

One of the distinguishing features of Nietzsche's conception of morality is his outright rejection of moral equality. In Thus Spoke Zarathustra, for example, he makes the following declaration:

... to me justice speaks thus: 'Men are not equal.' Nor shall they become equal! What would my love of the overman be if I spoke otherwise?\(^{64}\)

Elsewhere, Nietzsche remarks that the acceptance of equality as a fundamental principle of society represents "a will to the denial of life, a principle of disintegration and decay."\(^{65}\) The desire for equality is taken as symptomatic of a will to revenge on the part of those who are morally


\(^{63}\)Beyond Good and Evil, no. 259, 393.

\(^{64}\)Thus Spoke Zarathustra, "On the Tarantulas," 213.

\(^{65}\)Beyond Good and Evil, no. 259, 393.
inferior. Nietzsche refers to those who preach equality as "tarantulas," i.e., creatures who kill slowly by injecting their victims with poison. The tarantulas are morally inferior, not in the sense of being bad, but in the sense of being incapable of legislating their own values. Thus their will to revenge expresses itself as the desire to pass judgment and condemn those who are capable of legislating their own values:

Out of every one of their complaints sounds revenge; in their praise there is always a sting, and to be a judge seems bliss to them.

This secret will to revenge on the part of those who defend moral equality is not sufficient to explain why Nietzsche associates moral equality and universal moral norms with the antinatural denial of life. To understand this association it must be recognized that, for Nietzsche, life is the highest "value." All other values are to be determined only in reference to their value for life. The value of life itself, however, cannot be estimated. Consequently, "judgments of value, concerning life, for it or against it, can, in the end, never be true: they have

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66In passing I note that in the preface to Daybreak, no. 3, 3, Nietzsche remarks that Kant had been bitten by the "moral tarantula" Rousseau, who, as the spiritual father of the French Revolution, represents to Nietzsche the preacher of equality par excellence.

67Thus Spoke Zarathustra, "On the Tarantulas," 212.
Because life is the highest value, anything that elevates, enhances, or affirms it becomes valuable as a means. Conversely, "[w]hatever is not a condition of life harms it. . . ."\textsuperscript{69} Within antinaturalism, Nietzsche maintains that this evaluation of life is not recognized because there it is truth and not life that holds the highest value. Within antinaturalism, whatever is most harmful to life is thought to have the highest value and is called "true," while "whatever elevates it, enhances, affirms, justifies it, and makes it triumphant, is called 'false.'"\textsuperscript{70}

Antinaturalism assumes moral equality as a precondition of universal moral norms. To Nietzsche this represents a radical and life-denying reversal of values because life requires inequality, conflict, and obstacles to overcome.\textsuperscript{71} Why does Nietzsche think that life requires inequality? Because, as he puts it in Beyond Good and Evil: 

\ldots life is \textit{essentially} appropriation, injury, overpowering of what is alien and weaker; suppression, hardness, imposition of one's own forms, incorporation and at least, at its mildest exploitation. \ldots .\textsuperscript{72}

Focusing for the moment on the idea that life essentially

\textsuperscript{68}Twilight of the Idols, "The Problem of Socrates," no. 2, 474.

\textsuperscript{69}Ibid., no. 11, 577.

\textsuperscript{70}Ibid., no. 9, 576.

\textsuperscript{71}Thus Spoke Zarathustra, "On the Tarantulas," 213.

\textsuperscript{72}Beyond Good and Evil, no. 259, 393.
involves the "imposition of one's own forms," it immediately becomes clear why Nietzsche would be fundamentally opposed to any conception of universal moral norms. If life is understood as value-positing activity, then accepting values that are imposed from an external source must be viewed as antithetical to the essence of life. And Nietzsche equates any conception of universal moral norms as an imposition of external values.

In opposition to universal moral norms, Nietzsche maintains that virtues must be personal creations or they are harmful to life. As he says in The Antichrist, "[a] virtue must be our own invention, our most necessary self-expression and self-defense, any other kind of virtue is merely a danger." This conclusion helps us get a sense of why Nietzsche places himself in opposition to Kantian morality. On Nietzsche's view, Kant's conception of virtue is impersonal, "prompted solely by a feeling of respect for the concept of 'virtue,'" and a "sacrifice to the Moloch of abstraction." Thus, for Nietzsche, Kantian morality is not merely antinatural, it is the epitome of antinaturalism: "How could one fail to feel how Kant's categorical imperative endangered life itself!"

Thus far I have given a negative characterization of

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73 The Antichrist, no. 11, 577.

74 Ibid.

75 Ibid.
Nietzsche's naturalism as it arises out of his opposition to antinaturalism. The opposition of naturalism and antinaturalism is the opposition of two alternative conceptions of life. The naturalist interprets life as essentially value-positing activity:

When we speak of values, we speak with the inspiration, with the way of looking at things, which is part of life: life itself forces us to posit values; life itself values through us when we posit values.76

If we are to gain a positive understanding of naturalism, and what Nietzsche means by a naturalistic morality, we must reach a better understanding of this value-positing activity that he identifies with life. Fortunately, this task is not as difficult as it may at first appear because Nietzsche provides us with an important clue to understanding what he means by life. "Life," he writes in Beyond Good and Evil, "simply is will to power."77 Therefore, a positive characterization of Nietzsche's conception of naturalism cannot be separated from an account of Nietzsche's idea of the will to power.

What is Naturalism? The Will to Power as Basic Principle

The purpose of Nietzsche's naturalism is to provide the means to create an alternative conceptual framework within which to reconstruct "the laws of life and action" that is


77Beyond Good and Evil, no. 259, 393.
not implicated in antinaturalism. As we have already seen, the critique of antinaturalism is an important aspect of Nietzsche's position. But Nietzsche's naturalism also has a positive aspect that involves a determination of the conditions of life which can serve as the standard for the creation of new values, laws, and ideals.

Positively speaking, Nietzsche's naturalism is an attempt to integrate the techniques of critical analysis used in the historical disciplines with the interpretive and experimental strategies of the natural sciences into a unified philosophical method. In Human, All Too Human Nietzsche refers to his naturalistic method as "historical philosophy." 78 This name is somewhat misleading, however. Nietzsche's notion of historical philosophy should not be confused with historicism, like that which forms the basis of Dilthey's attempt to provide a conceptual foundation for the human sciences. Dilthey attempts to develop a rigorous method for the human sciences distinct from the mechanistic mode of understanding that he associates with the natural sciences. 79 In contrast to Dilthey's radical separation of the historical and natural sciences, Nietzsche maintains that historical philosophy "... can no longer be separated

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78 Human, All Too Human, vol. 1, no. 1, 12.

from natural science. . . ." What must be clarified is precisely how Nietzsche merges the conceptual strategies of historical inquiry and natural science into a coherent philosophical method. Nietzsche does this by providing a principle which creates the basis for a unified explanatory framework. The will to power serves as this unifying principle.81

The will to power is intended as a means of tempering the mechanistic mode of explanation Nietzsche associates with positivistic science and the teleological mode of explanation he associates with the historical sciences. The hypothesis of the will to power is inspired by methodological considerations that bear a strong resemblance to William of Ockham's strictures against the needless multiplication of entities. Nietzsche's methodological assumption is contained in the following statement from Beyond Good and Evil:

Not to assume several kinds of causality until the experiment of making do with a single one has been pushed to its utmost limit . . . that is a moral of method which one may not shirk today--it follows 'from

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80 Human, All Too Human, vol. 1, no. 1, 12.

81 The following operational and interpretational account of the will to power is inspired by Hans Seigfried, "Law, Regularity, and Sameness: A Nietzschean Account," Man and World 6 (1973): 372-389. My discussion of the will to power will be guided by the account found in Nietzsche's published works and focuses primarily on the formulations found in Beyond Good and Evil and On the Genealogy of Morals.
its definition,' as a mathematician would say.\textsuperscript{82}

The hypothesis of the will to power begins with the premise that the only "reality" that we have access to is the world of our desires and passions and their interaction.\textsuperscript{83} If this is the case, then Nietzsche's methodological principle dictates that the experiment be undertaken to determine whether the model of efficient interaction of forces provided by the interplay of our drives and passions is sufficient to interpret the mechanistic world of causal relations. Nietzsche maintains that if all aspects of conscious life and organic functions, such as nourishment and procreation, could be interpreted as manifestations of one fundamental form of the will, namely the will to power, then

\[ \ldots \text{one would have gained the right to determine all efficient force univocally as--will to power. The world viewed from inside, the world defined and determined according to its 'intelligible character'--it would be 'will to power' and nothing else.}\textsuperscript{84} \]

The point of Nietzsche's argument seems to be that the ideal of inquiry should be a single explanatory principle and that this principle would do nothing more (but nothing less) than make appearance intelligible. This principle is limited to making appearance intelligible, it has no pretensions of transcendent validity. In other words, the

\textsuperscript{82}Beyond Good and Evil, no. 36, 238.
\textsuperscript{83}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{84}Ibid.
will to power acts as a methodological principle of interpretation and not as a metaphysical principle. It does not describe the essence or nature of reality, but rather provides a principle by means of which we can understand appearance.

In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche refers to the will to power as a "major point of historical method" which can be used to reject the teleological mode of explanation.\(^8^5\) He illustrates this through an examination of the origin and purpose of punishment. Typically, Nietzsche argues, moral historians seek a purpose in punishment, e.g., revenge or deterrence, which is then re-interpreted as the cause of punishment's origin.\(^8^6\) Nietzsche contends, however, that this manner of investigation is based on a faulty methodological assumption. The origins of a concept or a practice are different from its actual employment, purpose, or utility at any given moment:

> ... whatever exists, having somehow come into being, is again and again reinterpreted to new ends, taken over, transformed, and redirected by some power superior to it. . . .\(^8^7\)

The same is true, Nietzsche argues, within the organic world as well. All events reflect a subduing and "becoming

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\(^8^5\) *On the Genealogy of Morals*, second essay, no. 12, 514.

\(^8^6\) Ibid., 513.

\(^8^7\) Ibid.
master," i.e., a new interpretation or adaptation overcomes a previously dominant meaning. Thus the purpose or utility presently possessed by something cannot be taken as the expression of a telos inherent in the thing, but only as a sign that "a will to power has become master of something less powerful and imposed upon it the character of a function. . . ."\textsuperscript{88} The history of the thing or concept can be understood as a "continuous sign-chain" of mutually independent interpretations which, taken as a whole, does not develop in any necessary, law-like, or logical manner.\textsuperscript{89} As Nietzsche sums up this point, "[the] form is fluid, but the 'meaning' is even more so."\textsuperscript{90}

Within this framework, progress is not the result of an increase in utility, but "in the shape of the will and a way to greater power and is always carried through at the expense of numerous smaller powers."\textsuperscript{91} It is this sense of the will to power that also opposes the mechanistic mode of scientific explanation that prioritizes the reactive concept

\textsuperscript{88}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{89}Ibid., 513-514: "The 'evolution' of a thing, a custom, an organ is thus by no means its progressus toward a goal, even less a logical progressus by the shortest route and with the smallest expenditure of force--but a succession of more or less profound, more or less mutually independent processes of subduing, plus the resistances they encounter, the attempts at transformation for the purposes of defense and reaction, and the results of successful counteractions."

\textsuperscript{90}Ibid., 514.

\textsuperscript{91}Ibid.
of adaptation and, as a result, loses the essential concept of activity. Adaptation, i.e., activity of the second rank, is placed in the foreground, rather than the form-giving interpretive activity of the will to power. 92

The will to power as an explanatory principle comes to fruition in the form of genealogy. Once again this can be illustrated by reference to the concept of punishment. The present meaning of the concept of punishment is a synthesis of numerous successive interpretations that have crystalized into a unity that resists analysis. Such concepts elude univocal definition because they compress an entire range of historically variable and mutually independent meanings. As a result, it is impossible to justify punishment because the concept itself is indefinable: "... only that which has no history is definable." 93 In order to resolve this problem, Nietzsche introduces the idea of genealogy as an inquiry into the history of origins.

Genealogy frees a conceptual horizon for normative reconstruction by penetrating beneath the accrued sedimentation of meanings contained in moral concepts and

92 Ibid., 515: "Thus the essence of life, its will to power, is ignored; one overlooks the essential priority of the spontaneous, aggressive, expansive, form-giving forces that give new interpretations and directions, although 'adaptation' follows only after this; the dominant role of the highest functionaries within the organism itself in which the will to life appears active and form-giving is denied."

93 Ibid., no. 13, 516.
calling into question their necessary validity. As we have seen, the present meaning of a concept, such as punishment, is the result of a tangled history of successive meanings:

At an earlier stage, on the contrary, this synthesis of 'meanings' can still be disentangled, as well as changed; one can still perceive how in each individual case the elements of the synthesis undergo a shift in value and rearrange themselves accordingly, so that now this, now that element comes to the fore and dominates at the expense of others; and under certain circumstances one element (the purpose of deterrence perhaps) appears to overcome all the remaining elements.\(^\text{94}\)

This passage neatly sums up the reasoning behind Nietzsche's genealogical investigation into the origin of slave morality in On the Genealogy of Morals.\(^\text{95}\) Nietzsche's intent is not to show that slave morality is false or incorrect by tracing its origins to the ressentiment of the weak against the strong. Rather, Nietzsche's intent is two-fold. On the one hand, he wants to undermine slave morality's claim to absolute validity and necessity by tracing its origin to contingent historical events. On the other hand, Nietzsche is trying to show that more than one type of morality is possible.

The genealogical study of moral concepts introduces the enormous task of tracing the origins of individual moral concepts and writing the history of their development. "Where," Nietzsche asks, "could you find a history of love, 

\(^{94}\text{Ibid.}\)

\(^{95}\text{Nietzsche's characterization of master and slave moralities is discussed extensively in chapter three, below.}\)
of avarice, of envy, of conscience, of pious respect for
tradition, or of cruelty?" Nietzsche proposes research
programs to study the moral effects of the regular division
of the day, of different foods, human co-habitation, and the
manners of scholars, artists, and businessmen. He
contends that if these and many other investigations were
carried out, then "the most insidious question of all" would
arise:

... whether science can furnish goals of action after
it has proved that it can take such goals away and
annihilate them; and then experimentation would be in
order that would allow every kind of heroism to find
satisfaction—centuries of experimentation that might
eclipse all the great projects and sacrifices of
history to date. So far, science has not yet built its
cyclopic buildings; but the time for that, too, will
come.

According to Nietzsche, we have entered a period of
moral interregnum, between an era dominated by moral
feelings and judgments and a new era whose ideals will be
based on knowledge of human life and the conditions of
culture as determined by "the sciences of physiology,
medicine, sociology, and solitude. . . ." During this
period of moral interregnum, Nietzsche contends that "the
best we can do . . . is to be as far as possible our own
reges and found little experimental states. We are

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96 The Gay Science, no. 7, 81.
97 Ibid., 81-82.
98 Ibid., 82.
99 Daybreak, no. 453, 190.
experiments: let us also want to be them!"\textsuperscript{100}

Nietzsche's rejection of traditional forms of morality has, of course, been the subject of much controversy. It has been argued that the loss of absolute moral standards has led to the rise of subjectivistic immoralism and that Nietzsche is, in some sense, responsible for this situation. Variations of this claim are found in the writings of Alasdair MacIntyre and Kurt Rudolf Fischer.

MacIntyre's interpretation of Nietzsche's philosophy in \textit{After Virtue} is found within an extensive analysis and critique of contemporary ethical discourse. According to MacIntyre, modern ethical discourse has become detached from its meaning-giving ground in a society organized around the shared presuppositions of an Aristotelian conception of ethical virtue. Without this foundation in a shared community of virtues, ethical discourse loses its objective source of legitimacy and authority. The result is an emotivistic moral environment in which the rational resolution of moral problems becomes impossible. This conclusion motivates MacIntyre's effort to reconstruct the basis of moral discourse by integrating a notion of the virtues into the structure of modern society.

Nietzsche's role in MacIntyre's discussion is pivotal,

\textsuperscript{100}Ibid., 191. See also \textit{The Gay Science}, no. 319, 253: "But we, we others who thirst after reason, are determined to scrutinize our experiences as severely as a scientific experiment--hour after hour, day after day. We ourselves wish to be our experiments and guinea pigs."
but ambiguous. On MacIntyre's view, Nietzsche's primary philosophical distinction is

. . . to understand . . . not only that what purported to be appeals to objectivity were in fact expressions of subjective will, but also the nature of the problems that this poses for moral philosophy.\(^{101}\)

But Nietzsche's prescient diagnosis of the problems within contemporary moral discourse leads to a worsening of the disease rather than a cure. Although MacIntyre believes that Nietzsche recognizes the subjectivistic/emotivistic bases of modern morality, his attempt to address this situation only exacerbates it:

The underlying structure of [Nietzsche's] argument is as follows: if there is nothing to morality but expressions of will, my morality can only be what my will creates . . . I myself must now bring into existence 'new tables of what is good.'\(^{102}\)

In short, MacIntyre concludes that Nietzsche supplants moral reason with a form of "prophetic irrationalism" that finds its most extreme expression in "that at once absurd and dangerous fantasy, the Übermensch."\(^{103}\)

Fischer argues that Nietzsche's experimental perspective is responsible for the rise of modern moral irrationalism. Fischer claims that Nietzsche's philosophy is not only inflammatory, but that it is also indirectly responsible for the rise of National Socialism in Germany.


\(^{102}\)Ibid., 107.

\(^{103}\)Ibid., 113.
Fischer maintains that Nazism is "a phenomenon of post-Nietzschean culture."\(^{104}\) He argues that the existential element of Nietzsche's notion of experimentalism, especially when taken in conjunction with his antidemocratic sentiments, paves the way for Nazism and, ultimately, for Auschwitz, by making possible a consciousness "that excluded nothing anyone might think, feel, or do, including unimaginable atrocities carried out on a gigantic order."\(^{105}\)

I believe that Kathryn Pyne Parsons provides an effective means to address Fischer's and MacIntyre's criticisms. Parsons sees a connection between Nietzsche's views and the Aristotelian notion of the "great souled man." Within the Nietzschean framework, genuine values are not the product of a pre-existing moral code. They must instead be created by the individual who overcomes the model of the self that holds sway within the dominant moral paradigm. As Parsons puts it, "In this self-overcoming, one creates himself [sic] anew, and creates values."\(^{106}\) On Parsons' view, traditional forms of moral justification by means of moral principles act as "a sort of post hoc rationalization, taking this rationalization as essential to morality."\(^{107}\)


\(^{105}\)Ibid., 116.


\(^{107}\)Ibid., 186.
Nietzsche urges a paradigm shift away from traditional morality's concern with questions of obligation, rules, and principles, and toward the character of the individual moral agent. Within the dominant moral paradigm, however, Nietzsche's moral revolution cannot be recognized as moral because within this paradigm morality is synonymous with universal moral norms. This explains why Nietzsche's moral philosophy cannot be recognized as such from the perspective of MacIntyre and Fischer.

Parsons has provided an important clue to understanding Nietzsche's position by characterizing it as a shift away from the traditional moral paradigm and the historically dominant form of moral judgment. But I believe that she has mistakenly characterized this paradigm shift as a move away from moral laws and principles per se and towards a concern with character and style on the model of Aristotelian virtue. The virtue-based conception that Parsons attempts to impose on Nietzsche appears to be at odds with Nietzsche's characterization of the change in moral reasoning he is attempting to carry out. Nietzsche does not advocate the elimination of principles, rules, and laws, but rather a radical reconceptualization of our relationship to the principles, rules, and laws with which we govern our lives.

As an indication of this reconceptualization consider

\[108\text{Ibid., 188.}\]
Nietzsche's remarks toward the end of "Long Live Physics!" from *The Gay Science*. Nietzsche urges the elimination of traditional forms of moral judgment:

Sitting in moral judgment should offend our taste. Let us leave such chatter and such bad taste to those who have nothing else to do but drag the past a few steps further through time and who never live in the present—which is to say the many, the great majority.

Moral judgment appears to have a peculiarly reactive quality because we can only pass judgments on actions that have already occurred. In contrast to the reactivity of moral judgment Nietzsche proposes a more active alternative:

We . . . want to become those we are—human beings who are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who create themselves.

In the next and concluding section of this chapter I will discuss what I take to be the meaning of Nietzsche's move away from moral value judgment and toward value legislation and indicate the relevance of this move for understanding Nietzsche's critique of Kant.

**The Consequences of Naturalism: "Long Live Physics!" and the Prioritization of Legislative Discourse**

In the context of the regulation of human conduct and action we can understand a law in the most general sense as an exceptionless rule or directive principle. A moral law is expressed in the form of a command or imperative that

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109 *The Gay Science*, no. 335, 266.

110 Ibid.

111 Ibid.
places whoever is subject to it under a binding obligation. Thus, the idea of a law implicitly contains elements of both commanding and obeying. An autonomous will is one that unites the activities of commanding and obeying by being both the source of the command and that which obeys. In other words, an autonomous will is self-legislative: it is both the author and the subject of the law.

Commanding and obeying are the psychological counterparts of the juridical functions of legislation and judgment. Commanding and obeying can be called the subjective forms of legislation and judgment. Legislation is the act of issuing commands that will serve as rules or directives and judgment is the act of subsuming an action or intention under pre-existing rules or directive principles. Legislation and judgment are both necessary features of laws of conduct. Any complete conception of autonomy as self-legislation must, therefore, contain both the creative element of legislation and the administrative aspect of judgment.

Although legislation and judgment are both necessary features of laws of conduct, it is not necessary that both elements be present to the same degree in every moral system. From a logical point of view, moral judgment presupposes some form of prior value legislation. We cannot make a moral judgment without at least some pre-existing standards or principles to direct our judgment. From a
historical point of view, however, the role of legislation in morality has been relatively minor. On Nietzsche's view, the moral tradition founded by Plato and disseminated by the spread of Christianity has prioritized judgment over legislation in characterizing the deliberation of moral agents. Legislative activity is curtailed by the presumably transcendent origin of the moral law. Within this moral tradition, the legislative power of the moral law derives from its non-natural status and purity. Nietzsche sums up his position regarding this conception of the moral law in a passage from *Daybreak*:

[Up to now] the moral law has been supposed to stand above our own likes and dislikes: one did not want actually to impose this law upon oneself, one wanted to take it from somewhere or discover it somewhere or have it commanded to one from somewhere.112

In other words, within this moral tradition, Nietzsche maintains that the dominant relationship to the moral law is one of reactive passivity that reflects a slavish attitude.

We should not conclude from the preceding discussion that Nietzsche depreciates the value of a moral framework in which judgment predominates. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, for example, he criticizes the anarchist who complains about being subject to "capricious" laws:

But the curious fact is that all there is or has been on earth of freedom, subtlety, boldness, dance, and masterly sureness, whether in thought itself or in government, or in rhetoric and persuasion, in the arts just as in ethics, has developed only owing to the

112*Daybreak*, no. 108, 63-64.
'tyranny of such capricious laws'; and in all seriousness, the probability is by no means small that precisely this is "nature" and "natural"--and not that 

laisser-aller.\textsuperscript{113}

It is not the fact of law that Nietzsche rejects. Nietzsche sees the "tyranny" of law as indispensable to the education of the human spirit.\textsuperscript{114} As the passage quoted above suggests, human nature is not a concept that is antithetical to law. Rather, human nature is the product of the laws that human beings give themselves. Nietzsche's model is that of the artist, who is most natural and inspired precisely when obeying thousandfold laws,

... laws that precisely on account of their hardness and determination defy all formulations through concepts (even the firmest concept is, compared with them, not free of fluctuation, multiplicity, and ambiguity).\textsuperscript{115}

The model of the artist is also true of morality as well, according to Nietzsche. The "moral imperative of nature" requires long obedience to laws as a means of spiritual discipline.\textsuperscript{116} This moral imperative of nature, however, is sharply distinguished from Kant's categorical imperative in that it is neither categorical nor directed to the

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\textsuperscript{113}Beyond Good and Evil, no. 188, 290. \\
\textsuperscript{114}Ibid., 291: "Slavery is, as it seems, both in the cruder and in the more subtle sense, the indispensable means of spiritual discipline and cultivation, too."
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\textsuperscript{115}Ibid., no. 188, 291.
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\textsuperscript{116}Ibid., 292.
\end{flushright}
From this we can conclude that Nietzsche does not necessarily reject moral frameworks in which judgment and obedience are present. Rather, what he objects to are moral frameworks in which considerations of judgment are given precedence over legislative considerations. On Nietzsche's view there are deep philosophical difficulties bound up with a conception of morality in which judgment is given priority. In order to see this it is necessary to consider Nietzsche's critique of moral judgment contained in "Long Live Physics!"

In "Long Live Physics!" Nietzsche attempts a reductio ad absurdum of traditional conceptions of moral judgment. The model of moral reasoning that Nietzsche discusses is contained in the following passage:

To come to the point: when a human being judges 'this is right' and then infers 'therefore it must be done,' and then proceeds to do what he has thus recognized as right and designated as necessary--then the essence of his action is moral (263).

Nietzsche's characterization of this form of moral reasoning is missing several key premises. These premisses can be supplied and the position that Nietzsche is criticizing can be reconstructed in the following manner (Nietzsche's version appears as steps four through nine of

\[\text{\textsuperscript{117}Ibid.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{118}References to this text will be given parenthetically and refer to The Gay Science, no. 335, 263-266.}\]
this reconstruction):

(1) If person P judges actions of a certain type to be morally right, and if P desires to act morally, then P must perform actions of that type.

(2) P judges actions of type X to be morally right.

(3) Therefore, P must perform actions of type X, if P desires to act morally.

(4) Action A is judged by P to be of type X.

(5) Therefore, A is morally right.

(6) Therefore, P must perform A, if P desires to act morally.

(7) P desires to act morally.

(8) P must do A.

(9) P does A.

On this model, actions are morally justified by being subsumed under a category of action type that is deemed morally correct. The proposed action then becomes the subject of a series of inferences that culminate in an action-guiding judgment. On Nietzsche's view, however, this model of moral reasoning is seriously flawed because its conception of action is unnecessarily restricted:

But my friend, you are speaking of three actions instead of one. When you judge 'this is right,' that is an action, too. Might it not be possible that one could judge in a moral and in an immoral manner? (263)

As actions, acts of judgment and inference can also be moral or immoral, according to Nietzsche. Thus, acts of judgment and inference cannot serve to justify our actions without
being justified themselves. Therefore, on Nietzsche's view, if we remain at the level of judgment and inference, then this model of moral reasoning is threatened with an infinite regress. The attempt to morally justify an action in turn necessitates actions (judgments and inferences) which themselves must be justified, and so on, ad infinitum. The question then becomes, can we bring this regress to a halt? How can we justify our acts of moral judgment and inference and thereby justify our actions?

Nietzsche turns to the claim that we can stop the regress of justification by appealing to non-cognitive grounds that are immediate and hence do not require acts of judgment. In particular, he discusses the appeal to moral conscience to justify our moral principles:

Why do you consider this, precisely this, right? 'Because this is what my conscience tells me; and the voice of conscience is never immoral, for it alone determines what is to be moral' (263).

Nietzsche objects that such intuitionistic appeals do not halt the regress of justification, but merely push it back a step. This is the case because the intuitionist's appeal to the voice of conscience to justify moral principles must itself be justified:

But why do you listen to the voice of your conscience? And what gives you the right to consider such a judgment true and infallible? (263)

On Nietzsche's view, the moral conscience is not a pure source of moral rightness; it has a "pre-history in your instincts, likes, dislikes, experiences, and lack of
experiences" (263-264). If this origin were fully understood, however, it would not provide an answer to the more fundamental question—why listen to the voice of conscience? Even if the voice of conscience exists, it must be interpreted before it can be applied in specific moral judgments. Conscience can be listened to in a variety of ways, e.g., blindly, lovingly, stupidly, and badly (264). The voice of conscience may simply be the outward form of a secret prejudice or self-interest. Thus, the firmness or decisiveness of the moral conscience may, in fact, be a sign of its immorality:

And, briefly, if you had thought more subtly, observed better, and learned more, you certainly would not go on calling this 'duty' of yours and this 'conscience' of yours duty and conscience. Your understanding of the manner in which moral judgments have originated would spoil these grand words for you. . . (264).

To sum up: Nietzsche's criticisms pose a dilemma for the moral justification of action. On the one hand, if we attempt to justify the appeal to the voice of conscience or moral intuition by means of judgment or inference we are threatened with circularity: our appeal to conscience was designed to halt the regress of justification of action in terms of judgment or inference. On the other hand, if we justify our appeal to conscience with yet another appeal to conscience, we find ourselves in yet another regress.

The difficulties raised by his critique of moral judgment prompt Nietzsche to propose an alternative mode of moral discourse in which legislative considerations
predominate. We have already seen that Nietzsche proposes that we strive to become self-legislative, self-creative beings. Nietzsche's intent is not to eliminate moral judgment, but to reverse the priority of judgment over legislation. We must come to recognize the importance of legislative considerations and take an active part in legislation by giving ourselves goals of action. Only after this is done, Nietzsche argues, would it be possible for there to be universal moral laws:

Only if mankind possessed a universally recognized goal would it be possible to propose 'thus and thus is the right course of action': for the present there exists no such goal. It is thus irrational and trivial to impose the demands of morality upon mankind. --To recommend a goal to mankind is something quite different: the goal is then thought of as something which lies in our own discretion; supposing the recommendation appealed to mankind, it could in pursuit of it also impose upon itself a moral law, likewise at its own discretion.119

As this passage makes clear, however, Nietzsche's goal is not merely a reversal of the priority of judgment over legislation. If it were, then Nietzsche's view would reduce to a constructivistic morality that would not be an advance over the metaphysically based view that he is trying to supplant. Nietzsche's point is not that legislation implies the imposition of goals of action upon human beings, but rather that legislation recommends goals of action, the adoption of which is left up to our discretion, and is subject to future revision. Unlike a mere imposition, a

119Daybreak, no. 108, 63.
recommendation is contextual; it cannot be determined in abstraction from the concrete circumstances of life. It can only be adopted in an experimental fashion. If it turns out that a particular goal is detrimental to life, then it should either be modified or abandoned in favor of another goal that furthers the interest of life.\textsuperscript{120}

The passage quoted above is also significant because it helps to clarify both the similarities and differences between Nietzsche's idea of self-legislation and Kant's conception of autonomy. In the \textit{Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals} Kant defines autonomy of the will as "the property the will has of being a law to itself."\textsuperscript{121} Many of Nietzsche's formulations of his conception of self-legislation are reminiscent of Kant's. For example, in \textit{Daybreak} Nietzsche asks us to consider the possibility of a future treatment of criminal behavior in which a wrongdoer calls himself to account and publicly dictates his own punishment, in the proud feeling that he is thus honoring the law which he himself has made, that by punishing himself he is exercising his power, the power of the lawgiver. . . .\textsuperscript{122}

Nietzsche maintains that this state of affairs presupposes a conception of lawgiving based on the idea that "'I submit only to the law which I myself have given, in great things

\textsuperscript{120}\textit{Human All Too Human}, no. 25, 25.


\textsuperscript{122}\textit{Daybreak}, no. 187, 109.
Kant's moral philosophy represents to Nietzsche a failed attempt to prioritize the self-legislative power of the will over considerations of moral judgment. In Kant's writings this prioritization has its roots in his realization that "reason has insight only into that which it produces after a plan of its own. . . ."\textsuperscript{124} In the context of Kant's theory of practical reason, the shift from judgment to legislation is clear. Things in nature act in accordance with laws, argues Kant, but only a rational being "has the power to act \textit{in accordance with his idea of laws}--that is, in accordance with principles--and only so has he a will."\textsuperscript{125} An autonomous will is one that has the power "of being a law to itself."\textsuperscript{126} Self-legislation takes on a special form in the human will because we are not completely rational beings. The human will is divided between its rational and its material sources of motivation. Such a will cannot be genuinely self-legislative, according to Kant, unless it is able to free itself from all sensuous determinations and material motivations and direct itself by a rational, \textit{a priori} principle. Thus, on Kant's view, a human will is autonomous only when the faculty of choice is

\textsuperscript{123}Ibid., 110.

\textsuperscript{124}Critique of Pure Reason, Bxiii.

\textsuperscript{125}Groundwork, 80.

\textsuperscript{126}Ibid., 108.
directed by pure practical reason. The moral law derived from pure practical reason is experienced by the ordinary moral consciousness as duty and is formalized in Kant’s supreme moral principle, the categorical imperative:

So act that the maxim of your will could always hold at the same time as a principle establishing universal law."\(^{127}\)

What makes Kant’s effort so ironical to Nietzsche is that it is carried out completely \textit{a priori}, in total isolation from all empirical considerations. In \textit{Human, All Too Human} Nietzsche remarks that Kant constructs his moral theory "as if everyone knew without further ado what mode of action would benefit the whole of mankind. . . . "\(^{128}\) In fact, on Kant’s view, separating the metaphysics of morals from empirical considerations derived from anthropology and physics is indispensable to both moral theorizing and action.\(^{129}\) For Nietzsche, in contrast, it is precisely to these sciences that we must turn in order to gather knowledge about human life and culture that can serve as a "scientific standard" for setting for ourselves ecumenical

\(^{127}\textit{Critique of Practical Reason}, 30.\\
\(^{128}\textit{Human, All Too Human}, \text{no. 25, 25.}\\
\(^{129}\textit{Groundwork}, 78: "Nevertheless such a completely isolated metaphysics of morals, mixed with no anthropology, no theology, no physics or hyperphysics, still less with occult questions (which might be called hypophysical) is not only an indispensable substratum of all theoretical and precisely defined knowledge of duties, but is at the same time a desideratum of the utmost importance for the actual execution of moral precepts."
goals. As he remarks at the end of "Long Live Physics!", all previous values and ideals "have been based on ignorance of physics or were constructed so as to contradict it."

But in order to become legislators in Nietzsche's sense, i.e., those who create values, "we must become the best learners and discoverers of everything that is lawful and necessary in the world. . . ." Therefore, Nietzsche concludes, we must become physicists.

I don't think that Nietzsche's call to us to become physicists should be taken literally. This would be plainly absurd. I think that when Nietzsche says that in order to become autonomous we must become physicists he is implying that the laws of morality need not be understood as being essentially different in kind from the laws of physics. The laws of nature determined by physics are not simply the result of an imposition of an interpretation by the physicist, but rather the product of a transaction between an experimental set-up on the one hand and nature on the other. While the laws of nature cannot be understood in isolation from the creative activity of the physicist, they cannot simply be reduced to this creativity either, without

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130 Human, All Too Human, no. 25, 25.
131 The Gay Science, no. 335, 266.
132 Ibid.
133 Ibid.: ". . . we must become physicists in order to be able to be creators in this sense. . . ."
falling into constructivism. Nietzsche contends that the same is true of moral laws as well. They cannot simply be read-off of nature (or human nature), but neither can they simply be imposed upon human beings without running the risk of disaster. Rather, moral laws must be understood as self-imposed, and therefore as autonomous, but they must also be understood from within the context of the empirical circumstances in which they are adopted as ecumenical goals, and therefore not simply as constructivistic.

From a metaphysical point of view, Nietzsche’s position entails the compatibility of freedom and causality. In other words, for Nietzsche, autonomy and the laws of physics do not exclude each other. This view is diametrically opposed to Kant’s position. According to Kant, the world of appearance is strictly determined by the laws of causality. The type of freedom required by morality is thinkable only as existing in the intelligible realm of the thing-in-itself. Thus, for Kant, the realm of physics and the realm of morality are absolutely separate.\textsuperscript{134}

This explains why Nietzsche believes that Kant remains within an antinatural moral framework despite the fact that Kant introduces legislative considerations into morality. Because Kant views freedom and causality as separate, he is required to postulate a "true world" in which freedom can be located. On Nietzsche’s view, however, Kant has exploited

\textsuperscript{134}Kant, \textit{Groundwork}, 78.
his incompatibilism as a means to regain the metaphysical realm excluded by the limitations placed on reason by the first Critique. Nietzsche's opposition to Kant is best expressed in "Long Live Physics!":

--And now don't cite the categorical imperative, my friend! This term tickles my ear and makes me laugh despite your serious presence. It makes me think of the old Kant who had obtained the "thing in itself" by stealth—another very ridiculous thing!—and was punished for this when the "categorical imperative" crept stealthily into his heart and led him astray—back to "God," "soul," "freedom," and "immortality," like a fox who loses his way and goes astray back into his cage. Yet it had been his strength and cleverness that had broken open the cage!135

Nietzsche's naturalism culminates with a radical rejection of a separation of autonomy and causality, as well as an insistence that empirical considerations cannot be eliminated from morality. This implies a fundamental opposition to Kant's grounding of morality on a metaphysical foundation and calls for a radical reconceptualization of the Kantian conception of the autonomous moral self.136 In the next chapter I will explore the implications of Nietzsche's naturalization of morality for Kant's moral theory. I will examine Nietzsche's attempt to undermine Kant's "majestic moral structures" by his attack on what he sees as the antinaturalism of Kantian morality. Various aspects of Nietzsche's critique will be discussed, but I

135The Gay Science, no. 335, 264.

will give particular attention to Nietzsche's interpretation of Kant's categorical imperative. As we will see, Nietzsche's critique of the categorical imperative centers on Kant's identification of autonomy of the will with duty, i.e., the will's ability to universalize its subjective principles of action.
CHAPTER THREE

NIETZSCHE'S CRITIQUE OF KANTIAN MORALITY

Introduction

In the transcendental dialectic of the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant states that his task is,

... to level the ground, and to render it sufficiently secure for moral edifices of ... majestic dimensions. For this ground has been honeycombed by subterranean workings ([Maulwurfsgänge]) which reason, in its confident but fruitless search for hidden treasures, has carried out in all directions, and which threaten the security of the superstructures.¹

The metaphor of levelling the ground describes the dual intent of Kant's critical project--to secure the foundations of synthetic a priori knowledge within the bounds of experience and, thereby, to make room for morality and religious faith.² In the preface to *Daybreak*, Nietzsche defines his philosophical objectives in opposition to Kant. Nietzsche refers to himself as an underground man, a subterranean creature, and a mole ([Maulwurf]), i.e., "one who tunnels and mines and undermines."³ This image captures Nietzsche's intention to burrow into the foundations of

² Ibid., B xxx.
³ *Daybreak*, preface no. 1, 1.
philosophical systems and expose the prejudices that they rest upon. It also captures the spirit of Nietzsche's aim of toppling Kant's moral edifice by undermining the foundation upon which it rests.

Nietzsche's critique of Kant's moral philosophy proceeds indirectly. Nietzsche rarely attacks Kant's arguments on the grounds of their internal or logical consistency. This is not to say that Nietzsche completely ignores this manner of criticism, but that the main focus of his critique lies elsewhere. He does not dispute Kant's account of the consciousness of duty and categorical imperative if this account is taken merely as a descriptive analysis of how the prevailing form of morality actually operates. What Nietzsche objects to is Kant's view that his account of morality reveals the *a priori* foundation of morality. In other words, Nietzsche wants to challenge the view that morality must operate this way. Nietzsche is interested in determining how the form of morality given philosophical expression by Kant came to be dominant, and in determining whether or not a different form of morality, conceived along naturalistic lines, might be possible.

Nietzsche's critique of Kant's moral philosophy takes place within the framework created by his naturalistic opposition to antinatural moralities. On Nietzsche's view, Kant's moral philosophy epitomizes the three aspects of antinaturalism discussed in the previous chapter. The
unconditional will to truth is found in Kant's effort to establish the *a priori* foundations of morality. The true world is represented by Kant's limitation of the scope of pure reason, which allows for the postulation of the necessary ideas of practical reason—God, freedom, and the immortality of the soul. The normative aspects of antinaturalism are found in Kant's identification of an autonomous will with one whose subjective principles are determined by pure reason and are therefore suitable to serve as universal laws of nature.

I will argue that Nietzsche's opposition to the categorical imperative does not ultimately rest on an incompatibility of his conception of autonomy and Kant's. As I indicated in the previous chapter, Nietzsche follows Kant in attempting to create a framework for human moral agency in which the self-legislative activity of the will is given priority over moral judgment. Nietzsche's opposition to Kant's conception of morality lies in the content of Kant's theory of autonomy. Kant links autonomy to the universalizability of an individual's subjective principles of action. Universalizability in turn presupposes the moral equality of agents. As I suggested in the previous chapter, however, Nietzsche rejects the presupposition of moral equality because he believes that it inherently gives greater emphasis to moral judgment over moral legislation. On Nietzsche's view, therefore, universalizability and moral
equality are incompatible with autonomy. In other words, from Nietzsche's naturalistic perspective, there is a deep contradiction in Kantian morality between the will's autonomy and the content of the will's autonomy, namely universalizability, that serves to undermine Kant's account of autonomy.

I begin this chapter with an examination of Nietzsche's early rejection of Kant's denial of knowledge to make room for faith. This lays the foundation for an examination of Nietzsche's attack on Kant's "moral fanaticism" and on the uncritical moral prejudices he believes are reified in Kant's conception of the moral consciousness. In the following section I contrast Kant's and Nietzsche's positions regarding the a priori foundations of ordinary moral knowledge. I then turn to an examination of Nietzsche's master-slave dialectic in On the Genealogy of Morals and apply the results of my analysis to Kant's conception of autonomy as formalized in the categorical imperative. I conclude this chapter with a brief critical discussion of Nietzsche's critique of Kantian morality.

Making Room for Art: Nietzsche's Early Opposition to Kant

In this section I examine Nietzsche's opposition to Kant's transcendental idealism. To understand Nietzsche's relationship to Kant it is crucial to recall Kant's remark in the preface to the second edition of the Critique of Pure
Reason that he has found it necessary "to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith." This can be taken as the motto of Kant's attempt to revolutionize metaphysics and transform it into a scientific discipline while at the same time making possible a metaphysical basis for morality. He does this by limiting the legitimate claims of synthetic a priori reason to objects of possible sense experience.

Kant's limitation of reason has direct practical implications. The effort of traditional metaphysics to extend the speculative principles of reason beyond the bounds of sensibility threatens to make reality identical with the sensible. But the practical employment of pure reason inevitably goes beyond the limits of sensibility, according to Kant. Therefore, if left unlimited, speculative reason actually reduces the scope of reason as a whole by eliminating the possibility of pure practical reason. In short, limiting speculative reason has a positive effect in that it finds room within reality in which to postulate the necessary objects of practical reason, i.e., God, freedom, and the immortality of the soul, without in any way extending knowledge beyond the limits of sensibility. In Kant's words, knowledge is denied to make room for faith.

4Critique of Pure Reason, B xxx.
5Ibid., B xxiv-xxv.
6Ibid., B xxv.
Nietzsche's early reception of Kant's critical philosophy is inseparable from his effort to address what he interprets as the widespread cultural fragmentation resulting from the rise of a positivistic conception of knowledge. Nietzsche's understanding of the wider implications of positivism can be summarized as follows. Positivism maintains that natural science is the only source of universally true statements (natural laws) about reality. It therefore invades the hitherto privileged domain of metaphysics and harbors pretentions to absolute knowledge. As a result of positivism's absolutism, metaphysical knowledge is left without rational support and cannot therefore serve as a ground for norms, values, and ideals. Moreover, these norms, values, and ideals themselves lose their rational support.

Science is a potential source of cultural degeneration, according to Nietzsche, because it can undermine traditional religious, moral, and aesthetic values while putting nothing in their place.7 Moreover, by assuming reality is co-extensive with the sensible world of appearance, positivistically conceived science undermines the possibility of providing its own search for knowledge with a

7See, e.g., Schopenhauer as Educator, in Untimely Meditations, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), no. 4, 148: "The sciences, pursued without any restraint and in a spirit of the blindest laissez-faire are shattering and dissolving all firmly held belief. . . ."
normative ideal or purpose. In other words, positivism implicitly contradicts its claims of priority for its form of rationality by becoming a fragmented and desperate search for knowledge without any unifying purpose or human relevance. Within this environment the critical task for philosophy, as Nietzsche conceives it, is to restore the unity of knowledge and life, to establish a unifying goal of existence in the face of the positivistic devaluation of the highest values, and, thereby, to re-establish the basis for a genuine culture. To achieve this end, Nietzsche turns in *The Birth of Tragedy* to the culture of ancient Greece in his search for an historical precedent that can, perhaps, point the way out of the crisis.

In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche locates the origin of Attic tragedy in the satyr chorus and follows its development through the golden age of Greek philosophy. Attic tragedy is the product of a peace treaty between the opposing art deities Apollo and Dionysus. Representational arts, i.e., sculpture and epic poetry, as well as the realm of dreams, belong to Apollo. Music, lyric poetry, and intoxication belong to Dionysus. Apollo is also described as the principle of individuation. The peace treaty that unites Apollo and Dionysus is disrupted by the introduction of dialectic into the tragic drama by Euripides, and by Socrates. Socrates disrupts the balance that makes the tragic experience possible--the ability of the dramatic
chorus to allow the spectator to behold in Apollinian rapture the presence of Dionysus—and thereby causes the death of tragedy.

Socrates' role in *The Birth of Tragedy* is analogous to the destructive potential of positivism in modern society. Socrates is the "prototype of the theoretical optimist" who believes that reality in-itself can be known via science. Socrates' optimism parallels the belief that Nietzsche associates with positivistic science, i.e., that reality in-itself can be completely captured in the net of logic and science. The optimistic belief in science is destructive because it rules out the possibility of other realms of experience where the values that we create could apply and make sense. But it is precisely within the optimism of positivistic science that Nietzsche locates the possibility of the re-birth of tragic culture. The scope of knowledge is constantly expanding and with every increase in knowledge the perimeter shared by the known and the unknown increases. Therefore, Nietzsche contends, the positivistic dream of absolute knowledge must continuously be frustrated. Nietzsche believes that this unending, and increasingly more desperate, search for knowledge can eventually lead to skeptical despair among the practitioners of science who

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*The Birth of Tragedy*, no. 15, 97.
might then turn to art "as a protection and remedy." Thus at the heart of scientific optimism lies the potential for tragic insight.

On Nietzsche's view, the critical philosophies of Kant and Schopenhauer provide the basis for a critique of positivistic science. As I mentioned above, Kant rejects the identification of the real with the sensible, and limits the claims of pure, a priori reason to the realm of appearance. For Kant, this limitation of theoretical knowledge has the positive effect of allowing for a realm of reality distinct from appearance in which the necessary ideas of morality and faith can be postulated, without in any way extending our knowledge to the suprasensible. In The Birth of Tragedy, the issue is not a priori reason, but rather the destruction of tragedy at the hands of scientific Socratism. Nevertheless, in the following passage Nietzsche adopts a quasi-Kantian formulation of the problem while translating it into his own idiom:

Anyone who has ever experienced the pleasure of

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9Ibid., 98: "... when they see to their horror how logic coils up at these boundaries and finally bites its own tale--suddenly the new form of insight breaks through, tragic insight which, merely to be endured, needs art as protection and remedy."

10Ibid., no. 19, 120-121: "Let us recollect ... that Kant and Schopenhauer made it possible for the spirit of German philosophy ... to destroy scientific Socratism's complacent delight in existence by establishing its [Socratism's] boundaries; how through this delimitation was introduced an infinitely profounder and more serious view of ethical problems and of art. ..."
Socratic insight and felt how, spreading in ever-widening circles, it seeks to embrace the whole world of appearances, will never again find any stimulus towards existence more violent than the craving to complete this conquest and weave the net impenetrably tight.\footnote{Ibid., no. 15, 97.}

Just as for Kant the dogmatic identification of the real and the sensible leaves no room for faith, positivism weaves the net of knowledge too tightly, leaving no room for art to flourish and reveal the tragic ground of existence. Kant circumvents his version of the problem by limiting the scope of reason, thus allowing the postulation of a metaphysical world beyond the world of appearance.

Despite the fact that Nietzsche incorporates Kant’s language into his analysis of the problems of positivistically conceived science, he does not accept Kant’s solution to the problem. Rather than simply denying knowledge in order to make room for art, thus implicitly assuming a distinction between knowledge and art, Nietzsche suggests that we look at knowledge, particularly scientific knowledge in a new way. He suggests that we "\textit{look at science in the perspective of the artist}..."\footnote{Ibid., "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," no. 2, 19.} In other words, on Nietzsche’s view, it might be possible to view knowledge, not from the passive perspective of a neutral observing spectator, but from a more active, i.e., artistic point of view. Knowledge must be transformed from the
neutral, value-free collection of facts to an active, experimental, transactional relationship with our subject matter. This view of knowledge is more active and artistic because it recognizes that our experiments are the product of research programs that we have designed. In other words, science, like religion and myth, becomes simply one of the numerous ways in which appearance can be interpreted in order to give meaning to existence. Viewed in this way it becomes possible to weave the net of knowledge "more tightly and delicately," increasing, rather than limiting its scope, without falling into the trap of traditional metaphysics.\textsuperscript{13}

Looking back on this period in his "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," added to the 1886 edition of The Birth of Tragedy, Nietzsche expresses regret at trying to incorporate his artists' metaphysics into the framework of Kantian and Schopenhauerian philosophy:

How I regret now that in those days I still lacked the courage (or immodesty?) to permit myself in every way an individual language of my own for such individual views and hazards--and that instead I tried laboriously to express by means of Schopenhauerian and Kantian formulas strange new valuations which were basically at odds with Kant's and Schopenhauer's spirit and taste!\textsuperscript{14}

As early as Schopenhauer as Educator Nietzsche's enthusiasm for Kant begins to wane. Here Nietzsche characterizes Kant's denial of knowledge as a means of "fashioning an idle

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., no. 15, 98.

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," no. 6, 24.
skepticism that will soon be of no interest to anybody."¹⁵ By the time of Beyond Good and Evil Nietzsche's opposition to Kant is already well-established. In the introduction to the first Critique Kant frames his inquiry as a means to answer the question "How are a priori synthetic judgments possible?"¹⁶ Nietzsche objects to the "Tartuffery" implicit in Kant's answer to this question:

'How are synthetic judgments a priori possible?' Kant asked himself—and what really is his answer? 'By virtue of a faculty'—but unfortunately not in five words, but so circumstantially, venerably, and with such a display of German profundity and curlicues that people simply failed to note the comical niaiserie allemande involved in such an answer.¹⁷

In order to highlight the "German foolishness" of Kant's answer, Nietzsche compares it to the answer of the doctor in Molière's Tartuffe. Nietzsche recounts how in response to the question "'How does opium induce sleep?'" the doctor replies that it possesses a sleepy faculty "'whose nature it is to put the senses to sleep.'"¹⁸ In other words, Molière's doctor begs the question by merely reformulating the question in his answer.

Nietzsche maintains that a similar kind of question-begging is apparent in Kant's denial of knowledge in order to make room for faith. According to Nietzsche, Kant's

¹⁵Schopenhauer as Educator, no. 8, 188.
¹⁶Critique of Pure Reason, B 19.
¹⁷Beyond Good and Evil, no. 11, 208.
¹⁸Ibid.
effort to establish the metaphysical bases of morality is problematic for a number of reasons. On Nietzsche's view, Kant's moral philosophy undermines the critical philosophy as a whole by implicitly returning it to the horizon of traditional metaphysics. Kant's distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves limits speculative reason to the domain of possible experience, while at the same time making it possible for reason, in its practical application, to postulate God, freedom, and immortality. By allowing practical reason to have suprasensible application, however limited, Nietzsche believes that Kant simply gives back with one hand what he had taken away with the other:

A path had been found on which one could sneak back to the old ideal. The conception of a "true world," the conception of morality as the essence of the world (those two most malignant errors of all time!), were once again, thanks to a wily and shrewd skepticism, if not provable, at least no longer refutable. Reason, the right of reason, does not extend that far. Reality had been reduced to mere "appearance," and a mendaciously fabricated world, the world of being, was honored as reality. Kant's success is merely a theologians' success. . . . 19

According to Nietzsche, this helps to explain why Kant's "discovery" of a faculty of synthetic a priori judgment was greeted with jubilation by the ensuing generation of Tübingen seminarians—who soon began to beat the bushes "all looking for 'faculties'." 20

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19 The Antichrist no. 10, 577. See also The Gay Science, no. 335, 264.

20 Beyond Good and Evil, no. 11, 208. See also The Antichrist, no. 10, 576.
Kant’s attempt to establish the metaphysical bases of morality is also problematic on Nietzsche’s view because it takes morality for granted. Kant denies knowledge to make room for faith and morality, but morality is uncritically accepted as a "fact of reason." In other words, Kant accepts morality as a fact and apparently never questions its basic soundness. Thus, in Nietzsche’s eyes, Kant’s critical philosophy reduces to an elaborate instrument the purpose of which is to provide a post hoc justification for the ordinary moral consciousness:

. . . to create room for his 'moral realm' [Kant] saw himself obliged to posit an undemonstrable world, a logical 'Beyond'--it was for precisely that that he had need of his critique of pure reason! In other words: he would not have had need of it if one thing had not been more vital to him than anything else: to render the 'moral realm' unassailable, even better incomprehensible to reason--for he felt that a moral order of things was only too assailable by reason! 22

In the next section I discuss Nietzsche’s view that Kant’s faith in morality, his "moral fanaticism," is, in part, the expression of an element of irrationalism and unrecognized moral prejudice at the heart of his moral rationalism.

Nietzsche on Kant’s "Moral Fanaticism"

Kant’s moral philosophy is rationalistic. Kant argues that if the moral law is to be a source of obligation, then it must be absolutely necessary, i.e., valid for the will of

21Critique of Practical Reason, 31.

22Daybreak, preface no. 3, 3.
all rational beings. Therefore, the moral law cannot be
based on any specific features of human nature or history,
nor on the merely contingent consequences of human actions,
but must instead be sought a priori in the concept of
rational being as such and in the idea of rational
willing.23

As Lewis White Beck has noted, "[the] 'moral judgment
of every man' is the true starting point of the Kantian
moral philosophy. . . ."24 This should not be surprising
given the general strategy of Kant's critical philosophy,
which begins with the fact of coherent experience and works
back to the a priori conditions that make experience
possible. The same is true within a moral context as well.
Kant takes the experience of obligation, consciousness of
the moral law, as a fact of reason and proceeds analytically
to its a priori basis in the concept of a rational being
with a will of its own.25

23Groundwork, 74-76. See also 79: "Since moral
laws have to hold for every rational being as such, we ought
. . . to derive our principles from the general concept of a
rational being as such. . . ."

24Lewis White Beck, A Commentary on Kant's
"Critique of Practical Reason" (Chicago: University of

25Critique of Practical Reason, 31. My account of
Kant's method relies on the analytic of ordinary moral
knowledge in the first chapter of the Groundwork. Although
incomplete from the standpoint of Kant interpretation, this
approach allows me to highlight Kant's position on the
essential soundness of ordinary practical reason that is the
focus of many of Nietzsche's criticisms.
Kant argues that mere objects act in conformity to objective laws of nature. A rational being, however, "has the power to act in accordance with his idea of laws—that is, in accordance with principles—and so has he a will."\(^{26}\) A will is absolutely good if it is impossible for it to be evil, that is, if its subjective principle ("maxim") when raised to the level of a universal law of nature "can never be in conflict with itself."\(^{27}\) If reason infallibly determines the will (as is the case with God's "holy will"), then objectively necessary actions are also subjectively necessary. In other words, for a holy will there are no imperatives—no "I ought," but only "I will."\(^{28}\) If reason does not infallibly determine the will (as is the case with the human will), then objectively necessary actions are subjectively contingent, "and the determining of such a will in accordance with objective laws is necessitation."\(^{29}\) This necessitation is experienced by the ordinary moral consciousness as duty, and it forms the basis of Kant's supreme moral principle, the categorical imperative:

So act that the maxim of your will could always hold at the same time as a principle establishing universal law.\(^{30}\)

\(^{26}\) *Groundwork*, 80.

\(^{27}\) Ibid., 104.

\(^{28}\) Ibid., 81.

\(^{29}\) Ibid., 80.

\(^{30}\) *Critique of Practical Reason*, 30.
One of the interesting features of Nietzsche's critique of the categorical imperative, and of Kantian morality as a whole, is that Nietzsche does not focus his critique on the formalistic and rationalistic elements of Kant's account of morality, as is frequently the case. Instead, Nietzsche emphasizes what he interprets as the uncritical aspects of Kant's moral philosophy. On Nietzsche's view, Kant's moral philosophy simultaneously expresses the moral enthusiasm of the eighteenth century, a peculiarly German tendency to idealize the inclination to obedience, and "a subterranean Christianity."³¹

Nietzsche's critique is guided by the principle that "moraliies are . . . merely a sign language of the affects."³² When one penetrates beneath the external logical form of a moral system one discovers that it implicitly expresses the emotive qualities of its creator. A moral system may be seen as an indication that its creator desires self-justification, self-satisfaction, humiliation, revenge, self-concealment, forgetfulness, or simply to be

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³¹The Will to Power, no. 101, 64. "Kant: inferior in his psychology and knowledge of human nature; way off when it comes to great historical values (French Revolution); a moral fanatic à la Rousseau; a subterranean Christianity in his values; a dogmatist through and through, but ponderously sick of this inclination, to such an extent that he wished to tyrannize it, but also weary right away of skepticism; not yet touched by the slightest breath of cosmopolitan taste and the beauty of antiquity—a delayer and mediator, nothing original. . . ."

³²Beyond Good and Evil, no. 187, 290.
forgotten. Kant is no exception. "Even apart from the value of such claims as 'there is a categorical imperative in us,'" Nietzsche remarks, "one can still always ask: what does such a claim tell us about the man who makes it?"  

What does Nietzsche think the categorical imperative tells us about Kant? Nietzsche believes that the categorical imperative is the expression of an implicit tendency to idealize obedience and conformity: "... some others, perhaps including Kant, suggest with their morality: 'what deserves respect in me is that I can obey--and you ought not to be different from me.'"  

Before proceeding it is important to anticipate a possible objection to this aspect of Nietzsche's critique of Kant. Is Nietzsche simply conducting an ad hominem attack on Kant's personality rather than critically addressing the substance of Kant's moral philosophy? Nietzsche often refers to Kant as a "moral fanatic" and reproaches his "innocent moral enthusiasm." If such remarks are not ad hominem, what is their philosophical justification?  

Nietzsche's principle that moralities are a sign language of the affects is a corollary of a more general hermeneutic principle that takes philosophical concepts and

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33Ibid., no. 187, 289.
34Ibid., 289-290.
systems as the involuntary autobiography of their creators. On Nietzsche’s view, every philosophical system expresses the mood and personality of its creator. Working backwards from the clue of personality one can theoretically reconstruct the spirit of an age and the possibilities for human development that existed at that time. The philosophical personality acts as a clue to its overall conceptual environment, and thus serves as a critical or diagnostic tool for the philosophical physician. Therefore, against the charge that he is arguing ad hominem Nietzsche responds:

... I never attack persons; I merely avail myself of the person as of a strong magnifying glass that allows one to make visible a general but creeping and elusive calamity.

In what sense is Kant’s moral philosophy a magnifying

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35 Ibid., no. 6, 203: "Gradually it has become clear to me what every great philosophy so far has been: namely, the personal confession of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir. . . ."

36 Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks, trans. Marianne Cowan (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1962), preface, 23-24: "Now philosophical systems are wholly true for their founders only. For all subsequent philosophers they usually represent one great mistake, for lesser minds a sum of errors and truths. . . . They always have one wholly incontrovertible point: personal mood, color. They may be used to reconstruct the philosophic image, just as one may guess at the nature of the soil in a given place by studying a plant that grows there. ‘So this has existed—once at least—and is therefore a possibility, this way of life, this way of looking at the human scene.’ The ‘system’ is a growth of this soil, or at least a part of this system. . . ."

37 Ecce Homo, in Basic Writings, "Why I am so Wise," no. 7, 688.
image of his age? According to Nietzsche, Kantian morality is representative of the moral enthusiasm of eighteenth century European culture and philosophy.\textsuperscript{38} Nietzsche interprets the eighteenth century largely in terms of a struggle between two opposing points of view. On one side are the rationalists, epitomized by Voltaire, who view the hand of Providence with a pessimistic eye and dedicate themselves to the improvement of social conditions. On the other side are the sensualists, epitomized by Rousseau—optimistic, solitary spirits who believe that "man perfects himself to the extent to which he approaches nature. . . ."

For Nietzsche, Kant’s denial of knowledge in order to make room for faith testifies to Rousseau’s victory in this struggle. Rousseau exercised a profound influence upon Kant’s attitude towards ordinary moral reason and human

\textsuperscript{38}\textit{The Will to Power}, no. 95, 59: "The eighteenth century is dominated by woman, given to enthusiasm, full of esprit, shallow, but with a spirit in the service of what is desirable, of the heart, libertine in the enjoyment of what is most spiritual, and undermines all authorities; intoxicated, cheerful, clear, humane, false before itself, much canaille au fond, sociable.---"

\textsuperscript{39}\textit{Ibid.}, no. 100, 62. For Nietzsche’s opposition of Voltaire and Rousseau see \textit{Ibid.}, nos. 98-100, 61-64. Nietzsche dedicated the first edition of \textit{Human, All Too Human} to Voltaire. For this dedication see KSA 2, \textit{Menschliches, Allzumenschliches}, I, 10. Hollingdale omits this dedication in his English translation.
moral equality. Nietzsche maintains that Kant’s acceptance of the essential soundness of moral consciousness shows that Kant has been bitten by the "moral tarantula" Rousseau.

Despite the influence of "French fanaticism" on Kant’s moral philosophy, Nietzsche also holds that as a philosopher "one could not have gone to work in a less French fashion, more thoroughly, more in a German fashion . . . than Kant did." This is true of the first Critique, but it is also true of Kant’s moral philosophy as well. Kant insists that it is not enough to simply accept the fact of moral obligation. He proceeds to demonstrate the rational basis of this sense of obligation. Nevertheless, Nietzsche maintains that Kant’s demonstration, particularly his emphasis on the centrality of duty in the moral consciousness, is strongly influenced by cultural and historical factors.

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40Kant, Handschriftlicher Nachlass, vol. 7, Kants Schriften, vol. 20, ed. Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1942) 44. This passage is quoted in Beck, Commentary on Kant’s "Critique of Practical Reason", 165: "By inclination I am an inquirer. I feel a consuming thirst for knowledge, the unrest which goes with desire to progress in it, and satisfaction in every advance in it. There was a time when I believed this constituted the honor of humanity, and I despised the people, who know nothing. Rousseau corrected me in this. This blinding prejudice disappeared and I learned to honor man."

41Daybreak, preface no. 3, 3. See also Thus Spoke Zarathustra, "On the Tarantulas," 211-214.

42Ibid.
Nietzsche holds that Kant's emphasis on duty reflects a characteristically German tendency to idealize unconditional obedience. The German attitude towards morality is, in part, the expression of the sluggishness of the German spirit, which seeks to obey whenever possible. According to Nietzsche, a German is capable of overcoming this sluggishness and acting in a manner that is "dangerous, evil, profound," but in most cases, "he is afraid of depending on himself alone, of improvising: that is why Germany uses up so many officials and so much ink." The German spirit also tends towards self-destructive superstition, faith, and emotion. Given these characteristics, asks Nietzsche, what type of morality can we expect?

The first thing it will certainly require is that in this morality its heartfelt inclination to obedience shall appear idealized. 'Man has to have something which he can obey unconditionally'—that is a German sensation, a German piece of consistency: it is to be encountered at the basis of all German moral teaching.

In contrast to the morality of antiquity, that stresses the virtue of personal distinction, German morality stresses the virtues of submission and obedience. This tendency is first expressed by Luther, whose proof of the existence of God, Nietzsche contends, rests on his belief "that there must

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43Ibid., no. 207, 127.
44Ibid., 128.
45Ibid., 129.
exist a being in which man could have unconditional trust."

This tendency to idealize unconditional obedience is inherently at odds with the spirit of moral enlightenment. Morality’s unconditional status effectively removes it from genuine critical scrutiny. The security of morality from criticism lies in its "art of enchantment," which it uses to paralyze the critical will. As Nietzsche puts it, morality is the "Circe of philosophers" which lures them to shipwreck on the rocks. Thus, in response to the question, "Why is it that from Plato onwards every philosophical architect in Europe has built in vain?", Nietzsche rejects Kant’s answer that philosophy’s lack of progress is the result of a failure to undertake a critique of reason. The correct answer, according to Nietzsche, is that all philosophical architects, including Kant, were building under the "seduction of morality." While they appear to be concerned with the foundations of reason, they are actually concerned

46Ibid.

47The Gay Science, no. 5, 80.

48Daybreak, preface no. 3, 2: "Conscience, reputation, Hell, sometimes even the police have permitted and continue to permit no impartiality; in the presence of morality, as in the face of any authority, one is not allowed to think, far less to express an opinion: here one has to obey!" This passage appears to contain a veiled reference to Kant’s "An Answer to the Question: 'What is Enlightenment?'

49Ibid.
with the construction of "majestic moral structures."^{50}

In the next section I compare and contrast Nietzsche's position with Kant's on the rational foundations of morality. Nietzsche will employ a genealogical method to challenge Kant's claims that the consciousness of the moral law is a fact of reason. On Nietzsche's view, the origin of duty and the moral law can be traced to specific developments in the history of human consciousness that do not rest on a priori grounds.

**Kant and Nietzsche on the Rational Foundations of The Moral Consciousness**

In the first chapter of the *Groundwork*, Kant employs the method he mentions briefly in the conclusion of the preface, i.e., "... we proceed analytically from common knowledge [of morality] to its supreme principle. ..."^{51} Kant's analytic of ordinary moral knowledge has three main purposes. First, it is intended to demonstrate the essential soundness of ordinary moral knowledge.\^{52} Second, it is intended to point out the limitations of ordinary moral knowledge and thereby also demonstrate the need to critically establish its rational foundations. Finally, it is intended to establish that ordinary moral knowledge, the

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^{50}Ibid., 3.

^{51}*Groundwork*, 60.

^{52}I use the phrase "ordinary moral knowledge" to translate Kant's "Gemeine sittlichen Vernunftkenntnis."
consciousness of duty, presupposes the existence of an a priori moral law, the categorical imperative, if it is not to be merely an illusion.

Kant's statement regarding his analytical approach is somewhat misleading. The term "analysis" might lead us to anticipate a survey of diverse moral practices that reduces their apparent differences to a common principle or foundation. This is not what we find in the early sections of the *Groundwork*. Kant does not derive his supreme moral principle from empirical considerations regarding moral experience, or from the observation of moral practices, but rather by means of conceptual analysis. He begins with ordinary moral experience, the consciousness of the moral law, and attempts to determine the a priori conditions that must be operative to make such a law possible.

Kant's method of beginning with ordinary moral knowledge can be illustrated by the discussion of the good will that opens the *Groundwork*. Kant begins with the following declaration:

It is impossible to conceive anything at all in the world, or even out of it, which can be taken as good without qualification except a good will.\(^{53}\)

Kant is making three distinct claims about the good will. If we stress the clause in which the good will is referred to as "good without qualification," then the good will is being characterized as good in itself, i.e., intrinsically

\(^{53}\)Groundwork, 61.
good. If we stress the preceding clause where Kant says that "it is impossible to conceive" anything besides a good will that is good without qualification, then the good will must be interpreted as necessarily good. The necessary goodness of the good will qualifies its intrinsic goodness, distinguishing it from other intrinsically good things, such as talents or qualities of temperament, which are only contingently good. Finally, Kant is claiming that only a good will is both necessarily and intrinsically good.

It is only after Kant determines the absolute goodness of the good will that he turns to experience to confirm the validity of his analysis. To confirm the special status of a good will among other intrinsic goods, Kant appeals to a hypothetical rational spectator who "can never feel approval in contemplating the uninterrupted prosperity of being graced by no touch of a pure and good will. . . ." Kant acknowledges that the idea that only a good will has moral worth may seem strange, "in spite of all the agreement it receives even from ordinary reason. . . ." Once again, it is consistency with ordinary moral knowledge that is cited as confirming a conceptual inquiry.

In The Gay Science we find Nietzsche's retort to Kant in an aphorism entitled "Kant's Joke":

Kant wanted to prove, in a way that would dumbfound the

\[54\text{Ibid.}, 61.\]
\[55\text{Ibid.}, 62.\]
common man, that the common man was right: that was the secret joke of his soul. He wrote against the scholars in support of popular prejudice, but for scholars and not for the people.⁵⁶

Kant might object to the polemical tone of this aphorism, but he would probably agree that his moral philosophy is not intended to reform or revolutionize morality, but simply to confirm it and render it more secure by revealing its ground in pure reason.

It is this aspect of Kant's philosophy that prevents Nietzsche from bestowing upon "the great Chinese of Königsberg" the designation of genuine philosopher.⁵⁷ Instead, Kant is referred to as "merely a great critic," who performs with distinction the "wonderful task" of the philosophical laborer.⁵⁸ As a philosophical laborer, Kant, in this respect like Hegel, brings order and systematic unity to the vast realm of inherited values:

⁵⁶The Gay Science, no. 193, 205-206. In a footnote to his English translation Kaufmann remarks that in this aphorism Nietzsche is referring to Kant's practical postulates and to the noumena/phenomena distinction that makes room for faith. Cf. David E. Cartwright, "Kant, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche on the Morality of Pity," Journal of the History of Ideas (Jan. 1984): 83. Cartwright points out that Nietzsche "may also have had in mind Kant's claim in the first chapter of the Grundlegung. . . ." I agree with Cartwright's general assessment that "Nietzsche's point is . . . that what Kant saw as the source of the practical principles a priori present in reason is nothing but the product of the moral prejudices of our Judeo-Christian culture: there is nothing, he argues, either a priori or reasonable about these things."

⁵⁷Beyond Good and Evil, no. 210, 325.

⁵⁸Ibid., no. 211, 326.
Those philosophical laborers after the noble model of Kant and Hegel determine and press into formulas, whether in the realm of logic or political (moral) thought or art, some great data of valuations—that is, former positings of values, creations of value which have become dominant and are for a time called 'truths.'

Although Kant formalizes previous positings of moral value, he does not interpret these values as positings, i.e., as the product of contingent human decisions and choices made in particular historical contexts, but rather takes them as indications of the rational foundation of morality. In other words, Kant assumes that the consciousness of the moral law is a fact of reason rather than a fact of history. According to Nietzsche, this lack of historical consciousness is one of the crucial flaws in Kant's moral methodology.

In contrast to Kant, Nietzsche holds that "there are altogether no moral facts." What Kant has accepted without question as a fact of reason is "merely an interpretation of certain phenomena—more precisely a misinterpretation." On Nietzsche's view, one of the jobs of the genuine philosopher—in contrast to laborers such as Kant and Hegel—is to bring these purported facts and

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59 Ibid.

60 The Will to Power, no. 101, 64.


62 Ibid.
misinterpretations to light. In Nietzsche's words, genuine philosophers are "the bad conscience of their time":

By applying the knife vivisectionally to the chest of the very virtues of their time, they . . . exposed how much hypocrisy, comfortableness, letting oneself go and letting oneself drop, how many lies lay hidden under the best honored type of their contemporary morality, how much virtue was outlived.63

Thus Nietzsche and Kant have diametrically opposed views concerning ordinary moral knowledge. Kant accepts ordinary moral knowledge as a basic datum that must be accounted for and ultimately confirmed. Nietzsche, conversely, views the virtues of his time as somehow anachronistic, i.e., "outlived," and in need of a more radical form of critique than that employed by Kant. One of Nietzsche's primary aims in vivisecting the virtues of his time is to undermine the belief that traditionally conceived morality rests on pure reason. Whereas Kant seeks the rational foundation of morality, Nietzsche tries to expose traditionally conceived morality's non-rational roots in custom, inherited tradition, and the internalization of cruelty.

Nietzsche's discussion of the non-rational origins of moral phenomena is not intended as a dogmatic refutation of traditional morality, as represented by Kant. Rather, Nietzsche's refutation is more in a skeptical mode. He attempts to cast doubt on Kant's position by explaining the

63 Beyond Good and Evil, no. 212, 327.
same set of phenomena from a diametrically opposed set of assumptions. A good statement of Nietzsche's strategy can be found in *Daybreak*. "In former times," Nietzsche writes,

one sought to prove that there is no God--today one indicates how the belief that there is a God could arise and how this belief acquired its weight and importance: a counter-proof that there is no God thereby becomes superfluous."\(^6\)

This mode of argumentation does not commit the genetic fallacy of arguing that something is false based merely on its origins. Instead, it offers an alternative explanation of moral phenomena that renders claims of *a priori* validity superfluous. In effect, this transforms morality from a necessary to a contingent feature of human existence. This is important because once morality is viewed as something contingent, then it becomes possible to consider alternative moralities that do not conform to traditionally conceived models.

Nietzsche maintains that moral phenomena, such as the consciousness of duty and the moral law, rest on custom and its social enforcement. With the passage of time, custom becomes so deeply integrated into the collective consciousness of a culture that it becomes reified into its form of practical reason *per se*. This implies that Kant's search for the rational foundation of morality involves an inversion of cause and effect. The consciousness of duty, Nietzsche maintains, is not "caused" by morality's *a priori*
foundation. Rather, the duration of the enforcement of customs has caused morality to appear as an a priori truth.

Nietzsche's chief proposition concerning the origin of morality is as follows:

... morality is nothing other (therefore no more!) than obedience to customs, of whatever kind they may be; customs, however are the traditional way of behaving and evaluating. 65

Within the morality of custom, a person is called "good" who performs customary actions without resistance, "as a result of a long inheritance, that is to say easily and gladly. . . ." 66 A person is called "evil" who resists acting in conformity with custom. Thus, within the framework of the morality of custom, the autonomous individual is considered the most evil. As Nietzsche puts this point in Daybreak, "[the] free human being is immoral because in all things he is determined to depend upon himself and not upon a tradition. . . ." 67 What is a tradition? On Nietzsche's view, a tradition is simply any higher authority that imposes commands. 68 The origin of tradition is not to be sought in reason, but in the customs that contribute to the

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65 Ibid., no. 9, 10. See also Human, All Too Human, no. 96, 51: "To be moral, to act in accordance with custom, to be ethical means to practice obedience towards a law or tradition established from of old."

66 Human, All Too Human, no. 96, 51.

67 Daybreak, no. 9, 10.

68 Ibid., 11: "What is tradition? A higher authority which one obeys, not because it commands what is useful to us, but because it commands."
preservation of the community. 69

Nietzsche appeals to tradition to explain the origin of the consciousness of the moral law. His basic premise is that a class distinction has existed throughout the history of human social life between the small number who command and the large number who obey. Because obedience has been exercised by such a large number of people for such a long period of time,

... it may fairly be assumed that the need for it is now innate in the average man, as a kind of formal conscience that commands: 'thou shalt unconditionally do something, unconditionally not do something else,' in short, 'thou shalt.' 70

In On the Genealogy of Morals Nietzsche offers an account of the origin of the moral consciousness that develops some of the themes found in this analysis of the morality of custom. Like Kant, Nietzsche begins his analysis with a common feature of moral life, i.e., the act of promising. 71 He does not, however, attempt to deduce its a priori foundations. Rather, as a genealogist of morals, Nietzsche inquires into the historical circumstances that made possible the existence of a creature "with the right to

69 Human, All Too Human, no. 96, 51: "How the tradition has arisen is here a matter of indifference, and has in any event nothing to do with good and evil or with any kind of immanent categorical imperative; it is above all directed at the preservation of a community, a people. . . ."

70 Beyond Good and Evil, no. 199, 300.

71 Cf. Groundwork, 89-90.
The right to make promises, i.e., the development of the sense of moral obligation, presupposes the development of memory. The manner in which memory was created is, therefore, a key element in the history of the development of the moral consciousness. The existence of memory requires an explanation because human beings are a necessarily forgetful species. Nietzsche maintains that the repressive function of active forgetfulness is necessary for the development of higher mental operations. Active forgetfulness makes us unconscious of our bodily processes and makes room for anticipatory functions such as foresight and premeditation.

Memory acts as a counter-faculty to active forgetfulness and is operative when promises are made. Memory is not merely a passive faculty, "but an active desire not to rid oneself, a desire for the continuance of something desired once, a real memory of the will. . . ." The memory of the will must be strong enough to function even if many obstacles are interposed between the original 'I will' and the actual carrying-out of the action.

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72 On the Genealogy of Morals, second essay, no. 1, 493: "To breed an animal with the right to make promises--is not this the paradoxical task that nature has set itself in the case of man? is it not the real problem regarding man?"

73 Ibid., no. 1, 494.

74 Ibid.
presupposes knowledge, i.e., the ability to separate necessary from accidental events, as well as the development of instrumental reason.\(^75\) Such knowledge in turn presupposes that human beings have become uniform and predictable:

> Man himself must first of all have become **calculable**, **regular**, **necessary**, even in his own image of himself, if he is to be able to stand security for his **own future**, which is what one who promises does!\(^76\)

Uniformity and predictability are the product of the forces of socialization associated with the morality of custom.\(^77\) The end result of this process of socialization is the autonomous, sovereign individual who possesses the right to make promises.\(^78\) The ability to make promises serves as the measure of value for the sovereign individual, who honors those who are also able to promise while holding

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\(^75\)Ibid.

\(^76\)Ibid.

\(^77\)Ibid., no. 2, 495: "... with the aid of the morality of mores and the social straightjacket, man was actually **made** calculable."

\(^78\)Within the morality of custom, autonomy and morality are mutually exclusive. At this stage all morality is heteronomous and based upon tradition. This helps to explain Nietzsche’s claim that a moral system in which the autonomous individual is central, such as Kant’s, presupposes the morality of custom in order to make human beings more or less uniform and equal from a moral standpoint. See KSA 11, no. 25[437], 128: "Die Moralen Kants, Schopenhauers gehen, ohne es zu merken, schon von einem moral[ischen] Kanon aus: der Gleichheit der Menschen, und dass was für den Einen Moral ist, es auch für den Anderen sein müsse. Das ist aber schon die Consequenz einer Moral, vielleicht einer sehr fragwürdigen."
in contempt those who promise without being permitted. Nietzsche maintains that it is this feeling of power over oneself and the sense of responsibility that accompanies the right to make promises that is called the "conscience." The main element in the creation of memory is pain: "'If something is to stay in the memory it must be burned in: only that which never ceases to hurt stays in the memory. . . .'" The prominence of pain as a tool of "mnemotechnics" is seen in the prevalence of sacrifice, mutilation, and cruel religious rituals. Asceticism also plays an important role here; certain ideas become fixed in order to hypnotise the nervous system, . . . and ascetic procedures and modes of life are means of freeing these ideas from the competition of all other ideas, so as to make them 'unforgettable.'

Having traced the prerequisite of the right to make promises to the creation of memory, Nietzsche now traces the development of the moral consciousness. On Nietzsche's

79 On the Genealogy of Morals, second essay, no. 2, 496.

80 Ibid., no. 2, 496: "The proud awareness of the extraordinary privilege of responsibility, the consciousness of this rare freedom, this power over oneself and over fate, has in his case penetrated to the profoundest depths and become instinct, the dominating instinct. What will he call this dominating instinct, supposing he feels the need to give it a name? The answer is beyond doubt: this sovereign man calls it his conscience."

81 Ibid., no. 3, 497.

82 Ibid.

83 Ibid.
view, the origins of the moral conceptions of guilt, bad conscience, and duty are traceable to the sphere of legal obligation. Nietzsche discounts the views of former genealogists on this issue. They have not suspected that "the major moral concept Schuld [guilt] has its origins in the very material concept Schulden [debts]." The debtor, in order to inspire trust in the promise to repay the debt, pledges something that he possesses, e.g., his body or soul, to the creditor in case of failure to repay. The creditor accepts as recompense for the injury suffered by the uncollected debt the pleasure of exercising cruelty proportionate to the debt upon the debtor.

It is Nietzsche's hypothesis that the spiritualization and deification of cruelty, as illustrated in the creditor-debtor relationship, "permeates the entire history of higher culture (and in a significant sense actually constitutes it)." This is particularly true in the sphere of culture in which morality is found. The sublimated cruelty latent within culture reveals itself in morality in the inseparable link between guilt and suffering. This is a link that is still visible in the dominant moralities of Nietzsche's time, especially Kant's:

And might one not add that, fundamentally, this world

84Ibid., no. 4, 498-499.
85Ibid., no. 5, 500-501.
86Ibid., no. 6, 502.
has never since lost a certain odor of blood and torture? (Not even in good old Kant: the categorical imperative smells of cruelty).\textsuperscript{87}

What does Nietzsche mean when he says that the categorical imperative smells of cruelty? This remark can be interpreted in a number of different ways. In terms of Nietzsche's analysis of the morality of custom it could be taken to mean that the relentless claim of duty within Kantian morality prevents it from becoming customary, habitual, or unconscious.\textsuperscript{88} This distinguishes Kantian morality from the morality of custom in which the "good" person performs customary actions naturally, without internal resistance. It also distinguishes Kant's view of morality from that of critics such as, e.g., Friedrich Schiller, who see the lack of internal resistance in moral action as the mark of a "schöne Seele."\textsuperscript{89}

Nietzsche's remark that the categorical imperative smells of cruelty can also be taken to imply that Kant's conception of duty still retains an element of cruelty that Nietzsche argues plays an essential role in the formation of the moral consciousness. This interpretation would reflect Nietzsche's tendency to interpret the categorical imperative

\textsuperscript{87}Ibid., no. 6, 501.

\textsuperscript{88}Daybreak, no. 339, 163: "To demand that duty must always be something of a burden—as Kant does—means to demand that it should never become habit and custom: in this demand there is concealed a remnant of ascetic cruelty."

in rigoristic terms. The rigoristic interpretation of the
categorical imperative imputes to Kant the view that duty
excludes all considerations of pleasure and happiness. A
rigoristic reading of Kant is implied in the following
passage from The Antichrist:

An action demanded by the instinct of life is proved to
be right by the pleasure that accompanies it; yet this
nihilist [i.e., Kant] with his Christian dogmatic
entails considered pleasure an objection. What could
destroy us more quickly than working, thinking, and
feeling without any inner necessity, without any deeply
personal choice, without pleasure—as an automaton of
'duty'?⁹⁰

Of course, a more careful reading of Kant's texts might
perhaps have indicated to Nietzsche that Kant does not
necessarily consider pleasure or happiness an objection to
moral action. As Victoria S. Wike has shown, Kant's ethics
does not require that the moral law be the sole determining
ground of the will.⁹¹ Although Kant is occasionally
inconsistent in stating his position, it seems that his view
is that the moral law is the exclusive direct determining
ground of a good will, but it is not necessarily the sole
determining ground. As Wike puts it, "[the moral law] is
not the only determining ground of the will in any absolute
sense since other determining grounds may operate

⁹⁰The Antichrist, no. 11, 577-578.

⁹¹Victoria S. Wike, "Does Kant's Ethics Require
That the Moral Law be the Sole Determining Ground of the
Therefore, other factors, such as, e.g., happiness, can be a determining ground of a good will. This does not mean that happiness can be the direct end of a categorical imperative. If happiness could be the end of a categorical imperative, then the distinction between categorical and hypothetical imperatives would collapse. But, as Wike shows, happiness still plays a large role in Kant's categorical ethics. On the one hand, she argues, "happiness may be pursued out of duty in order to facilitate the attainment of a direct end of a categorical imperative." On the other hand, practical reason, which for Kant is the source of categorical imperatives, "has happiness as one of its purposes and one of its ends."

This small point of criticism should not distract us from the main point of Nietzsche's genealogical investigation into the origin of the moral consciousness. As we have seen, Nietzsche traces the formulation of the moral consciousness to the internalization or spiritualization of the legal conventions of the creditor-debtor relationship. This conclusion has particular significance as a critique of Kant's moral methodology because it implies that we need not look to a priori grounds

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92Ibid., 88.


94Ibid.
for explaining the possibility of the sense of duty and the moral law. The sense of duty may indeed accurately characterize the ordinary moral consciousness, but both can be accounted for, Nietzsche argues, purely in conventionalistic terms. In short, by providing an alternative account of the origin of the sense of duty in the relationship of creditor and debtor and in the internalization of cruelty Nietzsche renders moot Kant's attempt to establish the a priori foundations of morality.

Nietzsche's discussion of the legal relationship underlying the genesis of the moral consciousness returns us to the juridical considerations I introduced in the previous chapter. In the previous chapter I argued that one aspect of Nietzsche's naturalistic opposition to antinatural moralities could be understood in terms of a distinction between two moral frameworks, i.e., one in which legislative considerations predominate and one in which judgmental considerations predominate. I discussed how the relative importance of judgment and legislation is not fixed, but rather changes within different moral contexts.

On Nietzsche's view, most moral frameworks have prioritized judgment over legislation. This is clearly seen in the morality of custom, in which the legislation of values is almost completely subsumed under the authority of custom and tradition. Legislation remains possible in the morality of customs, but, as Nietzsche notes in Daybreak, it
remains "a dreadful, mortally dangerous thing." By reflecting on the history of the moral consciousness Nietzsche is trying to make this prioritization of judgment evident and to reveal its sordid origins:

And, briefly, if you had thought more subtly, observed better, and learned more, you certainly would not go on calling this 'duty' of yours and this 'conscience' of yours duty and conscience. Your understanding of the manner in which moral judgments have originated would spoil these grand words for you, just as other grand words, like 'sin' and 'salvation of the soul' and 'redemption' have been spoiled for you.\(^\text{96}\)

On the Genealogy of Morals is the locus classicus of Nietzsche's attempt to get to the root of moral judgment. In the next section I will offer an analysis of Nietzsche's master-slave dialectic in terms of the distinction between legislation and judgment. This in turn will allow me to explore the relevance of Nietzsche's analysis of the origin of the moral consciousness to Kant's conception of autonomy.

Legislation Versus Judgment: Nietzsche's Master-Slave Dialectic

On the Genealogy of Morals is, ostensibly, a polemic against the empiricist methodology and conclusions of

\(^{95}\)Daybreak, no. 9, 11: "Originally, therefore, everything was custom, and whoever wanted to elevate himself above it had to become lawgiver and medicine man and a kind of demi-god: that is to say, he had to make customs—a dreadful, mortally dangerous thing!"

\(^{96}\)The Gay Science, no. 335, 264.
English moral psycho-historians. Its deeper purpose, however, is to undertake a radical critique of moral values. As Nietzsche remarks in the preface,

... the value of these values themselves must first be called into question—and for that there is needed a knowledge of the conditions and circumstances in which they grew, under which they evolved and changed.

In this task, Nietzsche places himself in direct opposition to Kant, characterizing his genealogical inquiry into moral origins as the pursuit of an "anti-Kantian, enigmatic 'categorical imperative.'"

Nietzsche's first task in On the Genealogy of Morals is to overturn the empiricist hypothesis concerning the origin of the moral judgment contained in the concept "good." The empiricist thesis, as Nietzsche recounts it, holds that the judgment "good" is originally associated with unegoistic or altruistic actions. Unegoistic actions, it is argued, were called "good" from the standpoint of the recipient who experienced the benefits of the action. In other words, goodness reduced to utility for the recipient. Such actions

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Although Nietzsche singles out "English psychologists" for special criticism, he also remarks in the preface to On the Genealogy of Morals, no. 4, 453-454, that his first impulse to publish his hypotheses about the origins of morality derive from his opposition to Paul Rée's Der Ursprung der moralischen Empfindungen, (1877). Nietzsche's remarks about Rée in On the Genealogy of Morals should be compared with his earlier, more favorable, assessment in Human, All Too Human, vol. 1, nos. 36-37, 31-33.

Ibid., preface no. 6, 456.

Ibid., 453.
were always praised, but the ground of the praise, namely utility, was slowly forgotten. Because they were habitually praised and felt to be good, unegoistic actions came to be perceived as good in-themselves.\textsuperscript{100}

Nietzsche contends that the empiricist hypothesis concerning the origin of the judgment "good" is both psychologically untenable and historically inaccurate. It is psychologically untenable because it asks us to accept that the most obvious feature of an action, namely its utility, is something that could plausibly be forgotten.\textsuperscript{101} It is historically inaccurate as well. Originally, Nietzsche maintains, the meaning of the term "good" was not determined by the recipient of the benefits of an altruistic action. Rather, the judgment "good" reflects the "pathos of distance" that divides the ruling class from the ruled, nobles from slaves:

\ldots the judgment 'good' did not originate with those to whom 'goodness' was shown! Rather it was 'the good' themselves, that is to say, the noble, powerful, high-stationed and high-minded, who felt and established themselves and their actions as good, that is, of the first rank, in contradistinction to all the low, low-minded, common and plebeian.\textsuperscript{102}

In other words, the origin of the value judgments "good" and "bad" does not rest upon a distinction between unegoistic and egoistic actions. Rather, the value distinction between

\textsuperscript{100}Ibid., first essay, no. 2, 461-462.

\textsuperscript{101}Ibid., no. 3, 463.

\textsuperscript{102}Ibid., no. 2, 461-462.
"good" and "bad" rests ultimately on the relationship of a politically superior caste to an inferior one. This political relationship in turn reflects the relationship of a superior soul to an inferior one.\(^{103}\)

Nietzsche justifies his claim by appealing to the etymological roots of the designations "good" and "bad" in a variety of different languages. In every case, Nietzsche argues, "good" designates qualities associated with the aristocratic class, i.e., "'with an aristocratic soul,' 'noble,' 'with a soul of a high order,' 'with a privileged soul'. . . ."\(^{104}\) In contrast to this, "bad" is universally associated with the low, common, and plebeian.\(^{105}\)

Nietzsche refers to this conclusion as a "fundamental insight."\(^{106}\) What is the meaning of this insight? I take it that Nietzsche is offering two related theses. First, the value judgment "good" is neither purely normative nor purely descriptive, but rather mixed. Whether the descriptive or the normative element is emphasized is a function of the general moral framework in which the value judgment "good" is made. Second, within the framework of

\(^{103}\) Ibid, no. 6, 467. Nietzsche expresses this relationship as the general rule that "a concept denoting political superiority always resolves itself into a concept denoting superiority of soul. . . ."

\(^{104}\) Ibid., no. 4, 464.

\(^{105}\) Ibid.

\(^{106}\) Ibid.
master morality, the normative content of the judgment "good" is subordinated to its descriptive content. Thus, when a noble refers to a slave as "bad" and holds the slave in contempt, a value judgment with normative content is made. But the noble does not use the judgment "bad" to morally judge or condemn, but primarily to refer to the slave. Similarly, "good" within master morality is primarily a descriptive term that refers to the qualities possessed by members of the aristocratic class. As Nietzsche puts it, originally the term "good" referred to a "typical character trait."\footnote{Ibid., no. 5, 465.}

Once we understand that within master morality the normative content of the value judgment "good" is subordinated to its descriptive content, the transition from master morality to slave morality becomes much clearer. Within slave morality the normative content of the value judgment "good" begins to dominate its descriptive content. "Good" takes on a distinctively moral sense and, as a result, value judgment takes on an increasingly moral tone.

This shift in the relative priority of the descriptive and normative components of the judgment "good" is the result of a shift in the mode of value positing. Slave morality begins when the ressentiment of those ruled by the nobles "becomes creative and gives birth to values."\footnote{Ibid., no. 10, 472.}
Nietzsche characterizes this as a kind of compensatory valuation that takes the form of disguised revenge against the noble ruling class. The noble posits values in an active way, as "a triumphant affirmation of itself." The slave, in contrast, posits values defensively, in reaction to the noble:

. . . slave morality from the outset says No to what is 'outside,' what is 'different,' what is 'not itself'; and this No is its creative deed. This inversion of the value-positing eye--this need to direct one's view outward instead of back to oneself--is of the essence of ressentiment. 

The shift from an active to a reactive mode of value positing that marks the transition from a master to a slave morality generates a two-fold shift in the meaning of the value judgment "good." The positive judgment "good" loses its priority over the opposing negative value judgment. Within the framework of master morality, "good" is the primary or fundamental value, while its negative counterpart "bad" is merely an afterthought. The noble "conceives the basic concept 'good' in advance and spontaneously out of himself and only then creates for himself an idea of 'bad'!" Within the framework of slave morality, however, the negative value judgment "evil" becomes primary, while "good" is relegated to secondary status:

109Ibid.

110Ibid., 472-473.

111Ibid., no. 11, 475-476.
picture 'the enemy' as the man of ressentiment conceives him—and here precisely is his deed, his creation: he has conceived 'the evil enemy,' 'the Evil One,' and this in fact is his basic concept, from which he then evolves, as an afterthought and pendant, a 'good one'—himself!  

Accompanying this shift in the relative priority of positive and negative values is a shift within the elements internal to these value judgments. Within the framework of slave morality the normative component implicit in the value judgment "good" comes to dominate the descriptive component. The same is true of the judgment "evil," which has almost an exclusively normative content. Within slave morality, the judgment "evil" is not used merely descriptively to refer to the noble, but to morally condemn the noble. In other words, within the framework of slave morality we discover the origin of moral value judgments.

So far I have characterized the shift from noble to slave morality in terms of three related conceptual shifts. The first is a shift from an active to a reactive mode of value positing. The second is a shift in the relative priority of positive and negative value judgments. The third is a shift in the relative balance of normative to descriptive content within value judgments.

All three transformations that mark the shift from master to slave morality can be understood in terms of a more fundamental shift from a moral framework in which

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112Ibid., no. 10, 475.
legislation is the dominant mode of valuation to one in which moral judgment is dominant. The shift from master to slave morality is not a shift from a moral framework composed exclusively of legislative considerations to one composed exclusively of judgmental considerations, but rather a shift to a moral framework in which legislation is subsumed under judgment.

The shift from the primarily legislative framework of the master to the primarily judgmental framework of the slave involves a change in the degree to which legislative considerations are allowed to enter into moral deliberation. The primary activity of the noble is legislation:

The noble type of man experiences itself as determining values; it does not need approval; it judges, 'what is harmful to me is harmful in itself'; it knows itself to be that which first accords honor to things; it is value-creating.¹¹³

Conversely, the primary activity of the slave is judgment. The slave creates values, but in a deficient manner. The slave's value creation is merely an inversion and condemnation of the existing value structure. The slave's value creation is not an original deed, but rather merely a means of self-defense against noble values, which are condemned. It does not express autonomous self-creation but rather a creation via negation.

In the judgmental framework of the slave, the normative content latent in the noble's conception of value comes to

¹¹³ *Beyond Good and Evil*, no. 260, 395.
dominate and a value judgment becomes primarily a moral value judgment. With the emphasis on normative considerations comes a concern for the universal validity of values. Genuine values are now thought of as those that can be universally affirmed. This is directly opposed to the noble mode of valuation in which values were thought of as unique creations valid only for their creator. Only within the framework of slave morality is goodness identified with universality.

This conclusion returns us to the issue of Nietzsche's relationship to Kantian morality. Given Nietzsche's emphasis on the noble's self-legislative activity in opposition to the slave's reactive value judgments, it might be argued that Nietzsche's master-slave distinction replicates Kant's autonomy-heteronomy distinction. There are more than merely superficial similarities between their views. In the *Groundwork*, Kant defines autonomy as "the property the will has of being a law to itself."\(^{114}\) In contrast, he defines heteronomy as the will's seeking its law from some object outside of itself.\(^ {115}\) There is at first glance a close parallel between Nietzsche's conception of the slave type and Kant's conception of a heteronomous will. As we have seen, Nietzsche's slave creates its conception of the good heteronomously, via negation of noble

\(^{114}\) *Groundwork*, 108.

\(^{115}\) Ibid.
values. There is also an apparent parallel between Nietzsche's portrayal of the noble type and Kant's conception of an autonomous will. Both Nietzsche and Kant associate the highest value with a will that is self-legislating. For Kant, only such a will can possess genuine moral worth, while for Nietzsche only such a will possesses the noble qualities of character.

The parallel between Nietzsche's master-slave distinction and Kant's autonomy-heteronomy distinction begins to break down, however, as we look closer at the content of their respective positions. For Nietzsche, master morality and slave morality represent two distinctive and contrasting moral frameworks that are distinguished by the relative priority given to value legislation. They are also distinguished by the fact that the former attributes the highest value to "the well-being of the few" while the latter attributes the highest value to "the well-being of the many." There is ample evidence that Nietzsche views the moral systems of his time as forms of slave morality and that he wants to return to the framework of master morality. This is consistent with Nietzsche's

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116 On the Genealogy of Morals, first essay, concluding note, 492.

117 Ibid., no. 17, 490-491: "Whoever begins at this point, like my readers, to reflect and pursue his train of thought will not soon come to the end of it--reason enough for me to come to the end, assuming it has long since been abundantly clear what my aim is, what the aim of that dangerous slogan is that is inscribed at the head of my last
naturalistic reaction against antinaturalism. In particular it is consistent with Nietzsche's rejection of universal moral norms and their presupposition of moral equality. Within the framework of the master-slave dialectic it is the slaves who, out of ressentiment against the noble, are the preachers of equality par excellence.

In contrast, Kant's distinction between autonomy and heteronomy does not represent two distinctive, independent moral frameworks. According to Kant, "autonomy of the will is the sole principle of all moral laws."¹¹⁸ Heteronomy, conversely, "is opposed to the principle of duty and to the morality of the will."¹¹⁹ In terms of content, autonomy is characterized negatively as independence from all material determinations of the will and positively by "the accompanying determination of choice by the mere form of giving universal law which a maxim must be capable of having."¹²⁰ In other words, for Kant, an autonomous will is the same as a will directed by pure, practical reason.¹²¹ Therefore, from a Kantian perspective, Nietzsche's conception of slave morality would be a contradiction in

book *Beyond Good and Evil*.—At least this does not mean 'Beyond Good and Bad'—."

¹¹⁸ *Critique of Practical Reason*, 31.


terms, i.e., it would represent an attempt to merge heteronomy and autonomy. Within the Kantian framework, autonomy and heteronomy are strictly separated. Thus, for Kant, Nietzsche's distinction of master and slave moralities would represent a complete misunderstanding of moral reasoning.

There is a definite affinity between Nietzsche and Kant because both prioritize self-legislation. But there is also a conflict in the content of their respective criterion for self-legislation. To appreciate this conflict it is crucial to recognize that Nietzsche interprets Kant's views on the will's enactment of law in terms of both universalizability and generalizability. Thus, as Nietzsche interprets it, a maxim that passes the test of Kant's categorical imperative, i.e., a maxim that can consistently be conceived to be a universal law, becomes from that moment on a possible general law governing the actions of every human being. It is precisely in these terms that Nietzsche reads Kant when he reduces Kant's norm of universalizability to the formula, "here everyone must judge as I do." If we provisionally accept Nietzsche's interpretation of universalizability it becomes easy to see why he would be inclined to view Kant's conception of the moral law

\[\text{122The Will to Power, no. 283, 161: "... the 'categorical imperative,' the essence of morality 'universal and general.'"}\]

\[\text{123The Gay Science, no. 335, 265.}\]
contained in the categorical imperative as an expression of slave morality, because it is only with the transition from master to slave morality that making universal moral judgments becomes the dominant form of moral discourse. In other words, from Nietzsche's perspective, Kant's account of universalizability of maxims inadvertently undermines autonomy and, therefore, genuine human moral agency as both Kant and Nietzsche conceive of it.

One of the main drawbacks of Kant's conception of universalizability, according to Nietzsche, is that it overlooks the difficulty of analyzing action. On Nietzsche's view, universalizability cannot be achieved, even in principle, because every action is unique. Nietzsche holds that every action past, present, and future has been or will be performed in "an altogether unique and irretrievable way."\textsuperscript{124} We can call this Nietzsche's uniqueness principle of action. Because no two actions are the same, the categorical demand that "in this case everybody would have to act like this" can never be met. Regulation and rules may provide a semblance of identity between actions, but not actual identity. All regulations and rules of action "relate only to their coarse exterior."\textsuperscript{125} This implies that the true motives of action

\textsuperscript{124}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{125}Ibid.
resist all attempts at analysis.\footnote{126} Our opinions, valuations, and tables of values play a role in action in a general sense, but in any specific instance "the law of their mechanism is indemonstrable."\footnote{127} Considerations such as these would justify Nietzsche's rejection of Kant's criterion of universalizability as both inapplicable in practice and a product of slave morality.

From a strictly Kantian perspective, it might be possible to challenge some of the fine points of Nietzsche's reading of Kant. It might be pointed out that it is one of the ironies of Nietzsche's critique is that the principle of opacity that he employs against Kant is one of the main principles underlying Kant's rejection of the attempt to ground morality on experience. Experience cannot provide a single unquestionable example of an action performed for the sake of duty. It is impossible to determine with any degree of certainty whether an action was performed for the sake of duty or from self-love because,

\begin{quote}
we can never, even by the most strenuous self-examination, get to the bottom of our secret impulsions; for when moral value is in question, we are concerned, not with the actions which we see, but with their inner principles, which we cannot see.\footnote{128}
\end{quote}

Like Nietzsche, therefore, Kant believes that the true

\footnote{126}Ibid.: "... as one contemplates or looks back upon any action at all, it is and remains impenetrable."

\footnote{127}Ibid.

\footnote{128}Groundwork, 75.
intentions of an action remain opaque to analysis. This is one important reason why Kant avoids making either actions or intentions the object of moral evaluation. As the above quoted passage clearly shows, for Kant, the issue of moral value is not a matter of action but of the principles of action. By making subjective principles, i.e., maxims, not actions, the object of moral evaluation, Kant could effectively challenge this aspect of Nietzsche's critique.

Nietzsche's critical interpretation of the categorical imperative also loses some of its impact because it insists on reading Kant in heteronomous terms. This is seen in Nietzsche's potentially misleading reading of the test imposed by the categorical imperative in terms of the generalizability of actions rather than in terms of the universalizability of maxims. The former asks whether it is in fact possible for everyone to act in a certain way, the latter asks whether or not it is conceivable that a principle could be followed without exception without resulting in a self-contradiction. On Nietzsche's reading, Kant maintains that an action passes the test of the categorical imperative when an agent can judge that "in this case everybody would have to act like this." This is a common interpretation of Kant's categorical imperative, but it is not Kant's position. On Kant's view, duty is

129 Ibid., 67-8.
130 The Gay Science, no. 335, 265.
incompatible with the notion of generalizability that Nietzsche attributes to it because duty is purely self-referential. An autonomous will gives itself the law, but does not impose commands upon others. Since Kant identifies duty with autonomy, he associates any acceptance of the law from an alien source with heteronomy. Moreover, the categorical imperative cannot be read as saying that "everybody would have to act like this" because it does not impose any positive commands. It merely provides a test to determine which maxims are permitted or forbidden if a will is to be considered as having genuine moral worth.

Such misunderstandings implicit in Nietzsche's attack on the categorical imperative cause Nietzsche to exaggerate his differences with Kant and overlook their commonalities. I began this chapter with a quote from the transcendental dialectic of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason in which Kant remarks that the purpose of the dialectic is to lay the foundations for "moral edifices of . . . majestic dimensions." It is this passage that Nietzsche seizes on in order to demonstrate that Kant, like all philosophical architects since Plato, is laboring under the seductions of morality. The apparent intention of these philosophical system builders is the pursuit of truth. In fact, however,

131 Groundwork, 108.

132 Ibid., 107: "An action which is compatible with the autonomy of the will is permitted; one which does not harmonize with it is forbidden."
Nietzsche maintains their intentions have always involved the construction of "majestic moral structures": to employ once again the innocent language of Kant. . . ."\textsuperscript{133}

What Nietzsche does not remark upon is that the entire purpose of Kant’s transcendental dialectic is to show that the kind of metaphysical knowledge required to construct the "majestic moral structures" dreamt of by the metaphysical tradition is beyond our reach. Kant’s argument in the transcendental analytic of the Critique of Pure Reason is meant to show that a priori knowledge is possible only of objects of possible experience. Therefore, transcendent knowledge of God, freedom, and the immortality of the soul is not possible for human beings, given the nature of our manner of knowing. Thus, we lack the material with which to construct any majestic moral structures and must settle for something more modest:

We have found, indeed, that although we had contemplated building a tower which should reach to the heavens, the supply of materials suffices only for a dwelling-house, just sufficiently commodious for our business on the level of experience, and just sufficiently high to allow of our overlooking it.\textsuperscript{134}

In other words, according to Kant, we should design our moral "dwelling houses" to suit the needs appropriate to the kind of being that we are. This is the task that Kant alludes to in the introduction to the transcendental

\textsuperscript{133}Daybreak, preface no. 3, 3.

\textsuperscript{134}Critique of Pure Reason, A 707/ B 735.
doctrine of method:

... we must plan our building in conformity with the material which is given to us, and which is also at the same time appropriate to our needs.\(^{135}\)

As I noted at the conclusion of the previous chapter, there is a close affinity between the spirit of Kantian autonomy and Nietzsche’s call to become those we are, "human beings who are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who create themselves."\(^{136}\) Both Kant and Nietzsche argue that autonomy is the defining feature of human moral agency. Despite this similarity, however, Nietzsche and Kant are divided over the issue of universalizability as a criterion of autonomy. As we have seen, Kant links autonomy to the universalizability of the will’s maxims. Conversely, Nietzsche identifies universalizability with slave morality and antinaturalism. The antinaturalism of Kantian morality is one of the primary motivations behind Nietzsche’s attempt to eliminate universality from the content of autonomy. In the next chapter I will argue that the final result of this effort can be found in the idea of the eternal recurrence. I will argue that the eternal recurrence can be read as an attempt to reconceptualize autonomy without the problematic aspects of universalizability that Nietzsche associates with Kant.

\(^{135}\)Ibid.

\(^{136}\)The Gay Science, no. 335, 266.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE ETERNAL RECURRENCE
AND NIETZSCHE'S NATURALIZATION OF AUTONOMY

Introduction

The eternal recurrence is perhaps the most enigmatic of all of Nietzsche's ideas. One reason for the mysteriousness of the eternal recurrence is its ambiguity. Beginning in the early 1880's the eternal recurrence appears in Nietzsche's published and unpublished writings and manifests itself in a number of different guises. The eternal recurrence is cast as a scientifically provable cosmological hypothesis; as a metaphysical truth; as a quasi-religious prophecy; as a means of cultural enhancement; as a personal mystical experience; as a rejection of teleological conceptions of history; and as an existential principle of the affirmation of life.

As I noted in my introductory chapter, one way that interpreters have tried to reduce this diversity of meanings is to interpret the eternal recurrence in either of two distinctive ways. For convenience, I refer to these two interpretations of the eternal recurrence as the "theoretical" and the "practical" interpretations, respectively.
The theoretical interpretation of the eternal recurrence emphasizes texts in which Nietzsche appears to treat the eternal recurrence as a metaphysical or cosmological thesis. This version of the eternal recurrence holds that all events within the physical world repeat themselves in unending and invariable cycles. The practical interpretation of the eternal recurrence, conversely, emphasizes texts in which Nietzsche treats it as a practical prescription or imperative. On this interpretation, the eternal recurrence is thought to assert that we ought to live our lives as if all events repeated themselves in an unending cycle. Our ability to affirm the eternal recurrence of an action is taken as a test of the action's value.¹

It has frequently been noted that some of Nietzsche's formulations of the eternal recurrence are very similar to at least some of the formulations of Kant's categorical imperative.² For example, in a note from 1881, Nietzsche

¹One important distinction between the theoretical and the practical interpretations of the eternal recurrence is that the latter, unlike the former, is not dependent upon the factual truth of recurrence. At least on some prominent practical interpretations of the eternal recurrence, as we will see in the course of this chapter, it is not necessary for the eternal recurrence to be true. It must simply be taken to be true. That is, we are urged to act as if the eternal recurrence were true.

writes:

Meine Lehre sagt: so leben, dass du wünschen musst, wieder zu leben ist die Aufgabe--du wirst es jedenfalls!³

In purely formal or syntactic terms this formulation of the eternal recurrence appears to be a hybrid of two versions of the categorical imperative, i.e.,

. . . handle nur nach derjenigen Maxime, durch die du zugleich wollen kannst, dass sie ein allgemeines Gesetz werde.

And,

. . . handle so, als ob die Maxime deiner Handlung durch deinen Willen zum allgemeinen Naturgesetze werden


³KSA 9, no. 11[163], 505.
This parallel seems to lend credence to the idea that Nietzsche intends the eternal recurrence to function in a manner similar to the categorical imperative, i.e., as a directive principle of action. A parallel reading is also suggested by the special emphasis that both philosophers place on the will's autonomy. As I indicated in the preceding chapter, both Nietzsche and Kant associate genuine moral agency with the will's autonomous self-direction. But as I also indicated in the preceding chapter, the relationship between Nietzsche and Kant is complicated by Nietzsche's critique of Kant's antinaturalism. Therefore, the relationship between the eternal recurrence and the categorical imperative cannot be characterized as an unqualified parallel. The questions that this chapter will address is the following: In what way does Nietzsche's eternal recurrence offer a genuine alternative to Kant's conception of autonomy?

The thesis that I will argue for in this chapter is that Nietzsche offers a reconceptualization of autonomy within a naturalistic framework. The eternal recurrence represents Nietzsche's attempt to use the insights of modern science, especially modern physics, to provide a naturalistic response to antinaturalism. In this sense, the

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4Kant, Grundslegung zur Metaphysic der Sitten, Werkausgabe vol. 7, ed. Wilhelm Weischedel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft, 1991), 51.
eternal recurrence completes the naturalistic revolution started by the hypothesis of the will to power. My interpretation focuses on Nietzsche's assertion that the eternal recurrence is "the most scientific of all possible hypotheses." I reject both the conventional theoretical and practical interpretations of the eternal recurrence as incompatible with Nietzsche's naturalistic framework. I interpret Nietzsche's thesis about the scientific character of the eternal recurrence in three complementary senses. Each sense corresponds to a different aspect of antinaturalism.

First, the eternal recurrence is a thesis about knowledge, and the conditions of knowledge, within the naturalistic interpretive framework of the will to power. In this sense, the eternal recurrence is a response to the antinatural epistemological assumption that truth is the correspondence of a proposition with being, or a fixed, unchanging observational given.

Second, the eternal recurrence is a response to the antinatural metaphysical assumption that the meaning of the world and human existence lies somewhere beyond the world in a metaphysical "true world" or Kantian "intelligible realm." The eternal recurrence represents the affirmation of existence, the insight that "[n]othing in existence may be

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5 The Will to Power, no. 55, 36.
subtracted, nothing is dispensable. . . ."\(^6\) Nietzsche calls this spirit of affirmation "amor fati."\(^7\)

Finally, the eternal recurrence is the idea that makes possible a reconceptualization of autonomy in light of the experience of modern physics. Nietzsche's reconceptualization of autonomy begins with a rejection of the "atomistic need" for a neutral, independent moral subject in favor of a naturalistic reconceptualization of the self as a synthetic social structure of drives and affects. The eternal recurrence then draws upon the implication of modern physics that we can find no independent laws within nature and that, consequently, we must give ourselves laws in the face of total, eternally recurring meaninglessness if we want to live. In other words, the eternal recurrence offers a response to the antinatural privileging of moral judgment over moral legislation by giving full expression to the legislative character of human existence.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the conventional theoretical interpretation of the eternal recurrence and a critical discussion of some of its problematic features. I then turn to a close reading of aphorism number 341 of The Gay Science, "The Greatest Weight," as the source of the conventional practical

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\(^6\) Ecce Homo, "The Birth of Tragedy," no. 2, 728.

\(^7\) The Gay Science, no. 276, 223.
interpretation of the eternal recurrence. This will allow me to criticize some recent attempts to separate the theoretical and the practical aspects of the eternal recurrence. I then proceed to examine Nietzsche's thesis that the eternal recurrence is the most scientific of all possible hypotheses along the lines outlined above.

The Theoretical Interpretation of the Eternal Recurrence

In *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche refers to the eternal recurrence as "the unconditional and infinitely repeated circular course of all things. . . ." This statement could be taken to indicate that Nietzsche thinks that the eternal recurrence is a scientific theory about the universe as a whole. In other words, Nietzsche's statement about the scientific character of the eternal recurrence could be taken to mean that the eternal recurrence is intended as a cosmological hypothesis. When construed mechanistically, this cosmological hypothesis postulates the circularity of time and the infinite, identical repetition of all events within time. What immediately stands out in this rendering of the eternal recurrence is its deterministic character.

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*Ecce Homo, "The Birth of Tragedy,"* no. 3, 729-730: "The doctrine of the 'eternal recurrence,' that is, of the unconditional and infinitely repeated circular course of all things. . . ." Cf. Seigfried, "Law, Regularity, and Sameness: A Nietzschean Account," 386. Seigfried argues that Nietzsche's description of the eternal recurrence in terms of the circularity of time represents a mechanistic misunderstanding of the idea of the eternal play of creation that is the true lesson of the eternal recurrence.
The spontaneity of actions and events is dissolved by the awareness that they have appeared within the same identical configuration of events an infinite number of times in the past and will reappear identically an infinite number of times in the future. All that remains unique is the totality of all events considered as a single, monolithic event.

The premisses of the theoretical interpretation of the eternal recurrence can be reconstructed as follows.9

1. Time is infinite.
2. Time is objective.
3. Space is finite.
4. The total amount of energy is limited.
5. Energy is conserved.
6. Logical principles and deductions are valid when applied to reality as a whole.10

From these premisses Nietzsche draws three related


10Jaspers, Nietzsche, 352. Jaspers points out that Nietzsche’s first three premisses are a priori and indemonstrable. Jaspers also notes that Nietzsche’s last premise, which Nietzsche implicitly assumes without argument, is at odds with Kant’s insight, "dass über das Ganze weder mit dem blossen Satz des Widerspruchs noch auf andere Weise gültige bestimmte Aussagen gemacht werden können, obgleich er [Nietzsche] deise Einsicht in anderem Zusammenhang besitzt."
conclusions. From the presupposition of the conservation of energy Nietzsche concludes that infinitely new becoming is impossible.\textsuperscript{11} Infinitely new becoming presupposes a constant, infinite increase of power. If the total amount of energy is limited, however, only two alternatives remain. Either reality is tending towards a final end state of permanent equilibrium, or reality recurs in identical cycles. Nietzsche excludes the possibility of a final end state by appealing to the premise of infinite time. Granting the infinity of past time, if a final state of equilibrium were possible, it would have already been reached.\textsuperscript{12} Therefore, if we accept Nietzsche's premisses, we appear forced to conclude that everything recurs.

From the premise that space is finite and energy is limited, Nietzsche concludes that although the total number of possible energy configurations is enormous, it remains finite. Since, \textit{ex hypothesi}, past time is infinite, every possible configuration of energy has already occurred. Therefore, every present occurrence of an event is, in fact,

\textsuperscript{11}\textit{The Gay Science}, no. 109, 167. KSA 9, no. 11[213], 525: "Das unendliche neue Werden ist ein Widerspruch, es würde eine unendlich wachsende Kraft voraussetzen. Aber \textit{wovon} sollte sie wachsen!" See also \textit{The Will to Power}, no. 1063, 547: "The law of the conservation of energy demands \textit{eternal recurrence}.

\textsuperscript{12}KSA 9, no. 11[245], 534: "Wäre ein Gleichgewicht der Kraft irgendwann einmal erreicht worden, so dauerte es noch . . . denn bis jetzt ist schon eine Unendlichkeit verflossen. Wenn das Gleichgewicht möglich wäre, so müsste es eingetreten sein." See also \textit{The Will to Power}, no. 1062, 546.
a recurrence. Pfeffer points out that Nietzsche's claim should not be interpreted in the mechanistic terms of classical atomism, as the reconfiguration of atoms in an infinite void. Nietzsche rejects atomism, she argues, in favor of a "dynamic energetic theory of explanation." What recurs, according to Pfeffer, is not the same configuration of atoms, but identical configurations of energy.

Finally, because any state of equilibrium has been ruled out by the premise of infinite time, Nietzsche also rules out the possibility of being in the superlative, metaphysical sense of enduring, unchanging substance. The world, as Nietzsche puts it in *The Will to Power*, is "'in flux,' as something in a state of becoming, as a falsehood always changing but never getting near the truth. . . ."15

13 Pfeffer, "Eternal Recurrence in Nietzsche's Philosophy," 279.

14 Ibid. See *The Will to Power*, no. 1067, 550.

15 *The Will to Power*, no. 616, 330. See also Ibid., no. 1066, 549. Nietzsche's arguments for the cosmological version of the idea of eternal recurrence are summed up in the following passage: "If the world may be thought of as a certain definite quantity of force and as a certain definite number of centers of force--and every other representation remains indefinite and therefore useless--it follows that, in the great dice game of existence, it must pass through a calculable number of combinations. In infinite time, every possible combination would at some time or another be realized; more: it would be realized an infinite number of times. And since between every combination and its next recurrence all other possible combinations would have to take place, and each of these combinations conditions the entire sequence of combinations in the same series, a circular movement of absolutely identical series is thus
Although Nietzsche refers to the eternal recurrence as a cosmological hypotheses, it has frequently been remarked that this interpretation is open to numerous objections. It is inconsistent with many of Nietzsche's other ideas. For example, the endless repetition of all events implicit in this interpretation of the eternal recurrence is inconsistent with Nietzsche's thesis in "Long Live Physics!" that "... every action that has ever been done was done in an altogether unique and irretrievable way, and ... this will be equally true of every future action. ...". Furthermore, it appears to be inconsistent with Nietzsche's frequent calls to humanity to create for itself new directives and goals of action. How can we create genuinely new goals of action if this life is merely the repetition of a previous life?

The theoretical interpretation of the eternal recurrence is also inconsistent with Nietzsche's more general views about science and scientific procedure. In The Gay Science Nietzsche rejects consideration of any hypothesis that does not allow of experimental testing.  

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16 The Gay Science, no. 335, 265.

17 Ibid, no. 51, 115: "I favor any skepsis to which I may reply: 'Let us try it!' But I no longer wish to hear anything of all those things and questions that do not permit any experiment."
The eternal recurrence, however, does not seem amenable to such testing. There is no way to escape from the current total energy configuration to compare it with previous or future energy configurations to determine if they are, in fact, the same. Furthermore, science lacks the conceptual means to confirm or reject such a general hypothesis about the totality of the world. Therefore, the possibility of an empirical validation of eternal recurrence by conventional experimental procedures is ruled out.

The theoretical interpretation of the eternal recurrence is also inconsistent with Nietzsche's views about logic. Nietzsche rejects the idea that logical principles, such as the principle of identity and the law of the excluded middle, establish substantive propositions about the world. Moreover, he has ruled out equilibrium, i.e., any fixed state of being. Therefore, to speak of a "state" and its "recurrence" appears to become meaningless if there is no way to anchor the idea of two states being the same state in a determinate conception of identity.\(^{18}\)

Finally, Simmel has objected that a counter-example to Nietzsche's hypothesis based on his own premisses can be constructed.\(^ {19}\) Simmel asks us to imagine three wheels of equal size aligned on an axis with a mark on each wheel

\(^{18}\)Pfeffer, "Eternal Recurrence in Nietzsche's Philosophy," 281.

\(^{19}\)Simmel, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, 172-173.
indicating the spot of alignment. If the wheels are set in motion at a ratio of \( n \), \( 2n \), and \( n/\pi \) the initial alignment of points will never recur.\(^{20}\) From this thought experiment Simmel concludes that "if there exists anywhere in the world three motions that are identical to the motion-relation of these three wheels, the relative positions taken by them could never return to their original relations."\(^{21}\)

Objections such as these may be taken as an indication why in his published works Nietzsche explicitly rejects the theoretical interpretation of the eternal recurrence as a trivialization of what he calls in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* "my abysmal thought."\(^{22}\) Within the context of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, we find perhaps the most literal expression of the theoretical interpretation of the eternal recurrence in the chapter entitled "The Convalescent." In this text the eternal recurrence is parroted by Zarathustra’s animals:

> Everything goes, everything comes back; eternally rolls the wheel of being. Everything dies, everything

\(^{20}\)Ibid. The configuration will never recur given the nature of \( \pi \), which precludes \( n/\pi \) being a whole number if \( n \) is a whole number greater than zero.


\(^{22}\)Thus Spoke Zarathustra, "On the Vision and the Riddle," no. 2, 269.
blossoms again; eternally runs the year of being. Everything breaks, everything is joined anew; eternally the same house of being is built. Everything parts, everything greets every other thing again; eternally the ring of being remains faithful to itself. In every Now, being begins; round every Here rolls the sphere There. The center is everywhere. Bent is the path of eternity.23

Upon hearing this, Zarathustra calls his animals "buffoons and barrel organs!"24 I agree with Jaspers' assessment that the simplicity of the theoretical interpretation of the eternal recurrence, especially as summarized in the above quoted passage, destroys its philosophical significance.25

The Practical Interpretation of the Eternal Recurrence

In light of the difficulties associated with the theoretical interpretation of the eternal recurrence, an attempt has been made in recent years to establish the thesis that the primary significance of the eternal recurrence lies in the practical, rather than the theoretical, sphere. One prominent strategy shifts the focus completely away from considerations of the truth or falsity of the eternal recurrence. On this view, the theoretical aspects of the eternal recurrence are irrelevant to the practical and psychological impact that Nietzsche


24Ibid., 330.

thinks belief in the eternal recurrence would have on human life.

There is some textual evidence that can be cited in support of this change in tactics. Nietzsche remarks in his notes, for example, that the potentially transformative effect on human life of the eternal recurrence does not necessarily require that it be true. He holds that the probability of its truth, or even the mere possibility of its truth, is sufficient to have a dramatic and transformative effect on human beings.\textsuperscript{26} In support of this he cites the effect on people that the possibility of eternal damnation has had.\textsuperscript{27}

Textual support for the separation of the practical from the theoretical interpretation of the eternal recurrence is also based on the fact that Nietzsche's literary corpus is divided into his published works and a large body of unpublished notes referred to collectively as the "Nachgelassene Fragmente." As Ivan Soll notes, Nietzsche's concern with the theoretical aspects of the eternal recurrence as a cosmological hypothesis is restricted almost exclusively to the Nachgelassene Fragmente. There we find Nietzsche's numerous efforts to

\textsuperscript{26}KSA 9, no. 11[203], 523-524: "... auch der Gedanke einer Möglichkeit kann uns erschüttern und umgestalten, nicht nur Empfindungen oder bestimmte Erwartungen!"

\textsuperscript{27}Ibid., 524.
demonstrate the truth of the eternal recurrence through arguments based on empirical generalizations and *a priori* premisses. Conversely, in Nietzsche's published works we find virtually no effort to argue for the truth of the eternal recurrence. In his published works the eternal recurrence is often presented as a hypothetical thought experiment or in an oracular fashion. On the basis of Nietzsche's apparent reluctance to publish his theoretical speculations, Soll concludes that we are justified in the belief that Nietzsche is less concerned with the theoretical truth of the theory than with "people's attitudes and reactions to this theory." In other words, Nietzsche's publishing history seems to indicate that he gives priority to the practical over the theoretical interpretation of the eternal recurrence.

A similar line of argumentation is pursued by Maudemarie Clark. She extends Soll's conclusion by arguing that the existential affirmation of the eternal recurrence does not depend upon the theoretical truth of the doctrine. Instead, she holds that affirming the eternal recurrence, "requires the willingness to live one's life again, not the belief that one will, even as a 'mere possibility.'" As

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is the case with Soll, we find in Clark’s argument an effort to separate the practical or existential relevance of the idea of recurrence from its theoretical implications. On her view, as on Soll’s, the theoretical status of the eternal recurrence is practically irrelevant.

Most practical interpretations of the eternal recurrence take as their point of departure a text from *The Gay Science* entitled "The Greatest Weight." This is a critical text for understanding the practical interpretation of the eternal recurrence. It is one of the first appearances of the eternal recurrence in Nietzsche’s published works, and it contains what I take to be one of Nietzsche’s clearest statements of the practical force of the eternal recurrence as a directive principle. For the sake of accuracy and convenience, I will first quote the entire text in full, and then undertake an analysis of it.

What, if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: 'This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence—even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned upside down again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!' Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: 'You are a god and never have I heard anything more divine.' If this thought gained possession of you, it would change you as you are or perhaps crush you. The question in each and every thing, 'Do you desire this once more and innumerable
times more would lie upon your actions as the greatest weight. Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life to crave nothing more fervently than this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal?\textsuperscript{30}

In this passage, Nietzsche poses a thought experiment. He asks us to envision our possible reaction to a hypothetical situation in which a demon confronts us with the fact of the eternal recurrence. Nietzsche himself does not present the eternal recurrence as a fact, but as an imaginary situation. There is no indication here that Nietzsche takes the eternal recurrence to be a cosmological hypothesis of any kind. Rather, it is the demon who presents the eternal recurrence as a fact, when it states "'This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more. . . .'"

Nietzsche's use of a demon to report the fact of the eternal recurrence to us is significant for a number of reasons. It calls to mind the malicious demon of the second of Descartes' Meditations on First Philosophy. Descartes' malicious demon was a posit of the methodological doubt that Descartes employs as a means of establishing an indubitable foundation for the sciences. The malicious demon possesses unlimited power to deceive us about the veracity of our perceptions. By employing a demon as the messenger of the eternal recurrence Nietzsche may be alluding to Descartes'
demon, perhaps implicitly warning us not to be taken in by what the demon is reporting. This reading finds some support in the fact that both demons share the quality of being malicious, although Descartes does not animate his demon or allow it to speak for itself. Aside from this circumstantial evidence, however, there does not appear to be any reason to identify Nietzsche's demon with Descartes'.

The choice of a demon as the messenger of the eternal recurrence can perhaps be explained better by reference to the inherently antiteleological sentiment contained in the demon's message. If all events in the universe are going to eternally recur, and have in fact occurred innumerable times in the past, then this means that history does not begin with any original event nor is it progressing towards a goal. Such an idea is at odds with a Christian understanding of history as beginning with the creation and culminating with the final judgment. Therefore, given the tacit opposition of the eternal recurrence and the Christian conception of history, a demon may in fact be the ideal choice as messenger.

Nietzsche's demon informs us of two things: the fact of the eternal recurrence and the implications of this fact. The demon tells us that our lives as we have lived them up to the present moment will be infinitely repeated. He then immediately informs us what this infinite repetition involves. On the one hand, it means the elimination of the
possibility of novel content in our lives. Our lives will eternally recur and in them "there will be nothing new... ." On the other hand, it means that, not only the content, but the succession of the content will be absolutely identical: "every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence. . . ."

The demon does not initially ask us if we could live the rest of our lives knowing that the eternal recurrence is true. Nor does the demon ask us to deliberate and make choices in light of it. Rather, the demon is gauging our reaction to the lives we have led up to the present in terms of the newly revealed fact of the eternal recurrence. It is as if we have been living in ignorance of a crucial piece of information that now changes our understanding of the meaning of our entire existence.

The eternal recurrence is announced to us in a state of unpreparedness. We have simply been pursuing the course of our lives when, suddenly, at a random moment ("some day or night") we are confronted with the eternal recurrence as a fact. Nietzsche amplifies the severity of the effect of the news by having it revealed to us when we are feeling most insignificant, in our "loneliest loneliness." The demon emphasizes our insignificance by referring to us as a speck of dust.
Our reaction to the demon's message acts as a test of our attitude towards the lives we have led up to this point. What would our reaction be to the demon's message? One possible reaction is that we would experience the eternal recurrence as the greatest weight. Imagine the case of a person who had spent an entire life miserably performing some duty for the sake of a future reward, a final, eternal rest, which, because of the fact of the eternal recurrence, is never going to be attained. How would this person react to the demon's message? Would this person be filled with regret for the things that they have done or left undone? Would they now view the life they have pursued as pointless and wasted? Would they collapse into a furious heap and "curse the demon who spoke thus?"

To experience the eternal recurrence as the greatest weight is symptomatic of a negative attitude towards life. Such a reaction would be understandable. But, on Nietzsche's view, it is not the only possible reaction. Even in the case of the person described above it is possible for that person to have experienced a "tremendous moment" such that the demon's message would be embraced as the greatest blessing rather than the greatest weight. In this case, it is possible that this person would say to the demon, "'You are a god and never have I heard anything more divine.'"

Up to this point, Nietzsche has characterized the
eternal recurrence as a test of our disposition or attitude towards our past. The thought experiment of the demon forces us to consider the lives we have lived, so to speak, under the aspect of the eternal recurrence. This experiment prepares us for Nietzsche's real objective, which is to determine whether or not we can live the rest of our lives as if they are going to eternally recur. In this sense the eternal recurrence serves as a life-directing principle. Nietzsche writes that if the eternal recurrence "gained possession" of us we would be transformed or perhaps even destroyed. Concerning every future choice we are faced with, the question we are supposed to ask ourselves is this: "'Do you desire this once more and innumerable times more...?" As in the case of our past lives, this question might be experienced as the greatest weight, one that is paralyzing. If, however, we are able to become well-disposed to ourselves and our lives, we might view the eternal recurrence as the "ultimate eternal confirmation and seal" of our life.

One problem with this test is that it is not clear how the question, "Do you desire this once more and innumerable times more?" could transform one's way of life or direct what one does. One interesting suggestion is that the

31 KSA 9, no. 11[143], 496: "Wenn du dir den Gedanken der Gedanken einverleibst, so wird er dich verwandeln. Die Frage bei allem, was du thun willst: 'ist es so, dass ich es unzählige Male thun will', ist das grösste Schwergewicht."
eternal recurrence functions as an evaluative criterion or test of value analogous to Kant's categorical imperative. The similarities between the practical interpretation of the eternal recurrence and Kant's categorical imperative have not gone unnoticed.

Simmel argues that the eternal recurrence gives weight to seemingly insignificant actions by asking us to consider the possibility of their infinite repetition. He argues that the eternal recurrence forces us to understand our responsibility for our actions in a different way. Simmel holds that this different way of understanding our responsibility amounts to a transposition of the categorical imperative's criterion of universalizability into a temporal dimension. On Simmel's view, the Kantian criterion of universalizability is simply a means to allow the true meaning of individual actions to stand out. Considering an action in terms of its suitability as universal law multiplies the action and makes its inner value more prominent. He argues that the eternal recurrence performs essentially the same function. The intrinsic character of an action is not changed by considering its possible infinite repetition, "but in light of such repetition, as

32 Simmel, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, 171.

33 One of the shortcomings of Simmel's argument is a conflation of actions and the maxims of actions. Only the latter can be considered as possible universal laws of nature, on Kant's view.
under a microscope meanings become visible that are overlooked in a fleeting world of the only-once." The main difference between the eternal recurrence and the categorical imperative, Simmel holds, lies in the fact that repetition, unlike universalizability, does not generate universal norms of action. 

Simmel's analogy between the eternal recurrence and the categorical imperative is not without controversy. In contrast to Simmel, Magnus argues that the eternal recurrence is an "existential imperative": live in such a way that you must wish to live again. Magnus sums up his existential interpretation of the eternal recurrence in the following passage:

That which possesses value is that which can be willed into eternity. With the loss of an absolute instrument for judgment of conduct, the 'that' which can be willed is no longer a single act, but a mode of being; a life. Whether or not life is worthy of infinite repetition becomes Nietzsche's principle of redemption and selection.

Magnus points out that the eternal recurrence possesses an ethical meaning when interpreted in this manner, but he sharply distinguishes it from the normative meaning of

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34Ibid.

35Ibid.: "Kant places action into the dimension of infinite repetition in the one-alongside-the-other of society, whereas Nietzsche has action repeat itself in the infinite one-after-the-other of the same person."

36Magnus, Nietzsche's Existential Imperative, preface, xiii-ix.

37Ibid., 139.
Kant's categorical imperative. On Magnus' view, an analogy between the eternal recurrence and the categorical imperative cannot be supported because, unlike the eternal recurrence, "the positive value of Kant's deontological ethics is to be found in the criterion of universalizability when applied to specific acts, without regard to their consequences."

A similar conclusion is reached by Kaufmann. Kaufmann argues that any analogy between the eternal recurrence and the categorical imperative is misleading because the eternal recurrence appeals to one's psychological reaction to the consequences of the mere thought of the infinite repetition of an action. Like Magnus, Kaufmann also stresses that Nietzsche's primary concern is not with particular actions but with "the state of being of the whole man--and those who achieve self-perfection and affirm their own being and all eternity, backward and forward, have no thought of the morrow." Like Magnus and Kaufmann assume that the eternal recurrence is intended as a test of the value of one's life.

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38 Ibid.

39 Kaufmann, Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist, 322.

40 Ibid.
as a whole, or one's mode of being. They maintain that this is opposed to the categorical imperative, which tests the moral value of specific acts. Magnus' and Kaufmann's arguments are inconclusive, however, because they fail to take into account ambiguities present in both Nietzsche's formulations of the eternal recurrence and Kant's formulations of the categorical imperative. In "The Greatest Weight" Nietzsche appears to hold that the eternal recurrence is, contrary to Magnus' and Kaufmann's assertions, a test of actions, rather than one's mode of life: "The question in each and every thing, 'Do you desire this once more and innumerable times more would lie upon your actions as the greatest weight" (my emphasis).

Therefore, a dissimilarity between the eternal recurrence and the categorical imperative could not be established on these grounds, if we take the eternal recurrence as a test of the value of actions.

Of course, there is an ambiguity in Nietzsche's practical formulations of the eternal recurrence. At times it appears to serve as a test of the value of individual actions, while at other times it appears to serve as a test of life, or of the value of one's mode of being. This latter version is especially apparent in the formulations of the eternal recurrence that most closely resemble the categorical imperative, e.g.:

Meine Lehre sagt: so leben, dass du wünschen musst, wieder zu leben ist die Aufgabe--du wirst es
Therefore, Magnus' and Kaufmann's cases for a difference between the eternal recurrence and the categorical imperative might be stronger if they were to argue that the eternal recurrence serves as a test of value of one's mode of life as a whole, while the categorical imperative serves as a test of the moral value of particular actions. Unfortunately, this strategy appears to be equally unsuccessful, but for different reasons.

The key issue is the meaning one gives to Kant's conception of a maxim. The traditional interpretation of a maxim holds that it is a simple descriptive statement of a proposed action that is tested for moral worth by being raised to the level of universal law. This interpretation attempts to convict Kant of the absurd position that statements such as, e.g., "Open doors with your left hand rather than your right!" become moral obligations.42

To the contrary, however, it has been forcefully argued that this interpretation confuses what Kant would consider a "precept" with genuine maxims. This line of argumentation

41 KSA 9, no. 11[163], 505.

42 See, e.g., William Frankena, Ethics, Second Edition (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), 32: "Is every maxim that does pass Kant's test a duty, as he sometimes seems to think? 'When alone in the dark whistle'--this seems to be a maxim one can will to be a universal law. If not, 'Tie your left shoestring first' clearly is. Yet, surely, neither of these rules can be regarded as a duty."
has been explored by Otfried Höffe and Rüdiger Bittner, among others. They argue that propositions such as "Open doors with your left hand rather than your right!" are not to be regarded as maxims, but rather as precepts, i.e., rough and ready rules of thumb without any pretence of moral obligation. Genuine maxims, in contrast, are limited to those principles of action that possess the highest level of generality. They are not simple descriptive statements of an action but rather self-given principles of life. As Höffe puts it, "Maximen beinhalten die Art und Weise, sein Leben als ganzes zu führen--bezogen auf bestimmte Grundaspekte und allgemeine Situationstypen des Leben. . . ." In Bittner's terms, maxims are "Lebensregeln" that express in general terms the kind of human being one wants to be:

Sie enthalten den Sinn meines Lebens; wenn nämlich 'Sinn' nicht als transzendente Erfüllung, sondern einfach als die Weise genommen wird, in der ich mir dies Leben als ganzes denke, 'Sinn' nicht als Ziel, sondern als Richtungssinn verstanden.

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One effect of this interpretation of Kant's concept of a maxim is that it allows the possibility of an interpretation of Kantian morality from the perspective of virtue theory. For my purposes the Höffe-Bittner line of argumentation is important because it undermines the other support upon which Magnus and Kaufmann could rest their case for a difference between the eternal recurrence and the categorical imperative. Both argue that the categorical imperative is intended as a means of testing individual actions while the eternal recurrence is intended as a means of giving direction to one's life as a whole. As Höffe and Bittner make clear, however, the object of the test imposed by the categorical imperative is not a specific act, but rather the self-given life principles that determine the character of our lives. Therefore, a difference between the categorical imperative and the eternal recurrence cannot be established on this basis.

Of course, Nietzsche's philosophical vocabulary differs radically from Kant's. He clearly does not describe the function of the eternal recurrence as a means of testing maxims or Lebensregeln for their moral value. Nevertheless, like the categorical imperative, the eternal recurrence appears to be directed at similarly general aspects of human life as a means of creating a personal ethos:

Wem das Streben das höchste Gefühl giebt, der strebe: wem Ruhe das höchste Gefühl giebt, der ruhe; wem Einordnung Folgen Gehorsam das höchste Gefühl giebt, der gehorche. Nur möge er bewusst darüber werden, was ihm das höchste Gefühl giebt, und kein Mittel scheuen! Es gilt die Ewigkeit! 47

In light of the preceding discussion, Simmel’s thesis also demands modification. As we have seen, the categorical imperative tests for moral worth by asking if an agent’s maxim or life-rule is self-consistent when considered as a universal law of nature. If the maxim cannot be a universal law without generating a self-contradiction, then, according to Kant, it has no moral worth. In a similar fashion, the eternal recurrence provides a way to give direction to an entire life by asking us to consider every choice we make as if our choice, and the life in which it is integrated, were going to recur an infinite number of times. Nietzsche maintains that if we can press the form of eternity upon our choices, then our lives will possess the highest value.

Although this interpretation lends support to Simmel’s hypothesis, the formulation of the eternal recurrence in "The Greatest Weight" still leaves many other crucial issues obscure and many questions unanswered. One question relates to an idea implicit in this passage, i.e., the idea that the value of an action is directly proportional to the degree that we can desire the action’s hypothetical repetition. The highest value is thereby accorded to the action that we

47KSA 9, no. 11[163], 505.
can desire to be infinitely repeated. And the person who is most well-disposed toward life is the person who could desire the infinite repetition of all of their actions. Unfortunately, Nietzsche gives no argument for why he takes the value of an action to be proportional to its desired repeatability, and when we look closer at this idea it is, in fact, far from obvious why he thinks this is the case.

It seems counter-intuitive to say that value is proportional to desired repeatability. Generally speaking, the value of an action seems to be relative to its rarity, its uniqueness, or its difficulty. It might be possible to imagine that numerous repetitions could increase the value of an action and that we could desire this. But could we desire the infinite repetition of an action? More importantly, is it possible to desire the infinite repetition of every action, which is precisely what Nietzsche is asking us to consider? This is problematic. If we could desire the infinite repetition of every action, this would in effect eliminate the possibility of distinguishing between everyday, mundane acts and truly important, once in a lifetime acts. Contrary to what Nietzsche seems to think, this levelling of action is at odds with his stated intention of providing a way to test our disposition toward life. The most well-disposed person is one who can desire the infinite repetition of each and every action. But if every action has infinite value,
because we can desire its infinite repetition, then no individual action is especially valuable. In other words, it becomes difficult to distinguish Nietzsche's conception of a person who is well-disposed toward life and a nihilist who believes that all actions are equally meaningless.

Ultimately, this conclusion may be close to, although not identical with, Nietzsche's belief that the eternal recurrence represents "the most extreme form of nihilism: the nothing (the 'meaningless'), eternally!" But this should not be taken as implying that significant problems do not remain with the practical interpretation of the eternal recurrence. For although it is undeniable that Nietzsche lays a great deal of emphasis on the practical effects of the idea of eternal recurrence, I believe that an interpretation that is purely practical, as well as one that is purely theoretical, is at odds with the naturalistic spirit of Nietzsche's philosophy. Both the theoretical interpretation and the practical interpretation read into Nietzsche's texts a distinction between facts and values, theory and practice, that is precisely what Nietzsche condemns in his attacks on antinaturalism. It is just this separation of theory and practice that Nietzsche identifies with Kant's critical philosophy and that he endeavors to avoid in his own philosophy:

Dangerous distinction between 'theoretical' and

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48 The Will to Power, no. 55, 36.
'practical,' e.g., in the case of Kant, but also in the case of the ancients: --they act as if pure spirituality presented them with the problems of knowledge and metaphysics; they act as if practice must be judged by its own measure, whatever the answer of theory may be. 49

On the basis of such remarks, I believe that we must reject the practical interpretation of the eternal recurrence inspired by "The Greatest Weight" as Nietzsche's definitive formulation.

"The Most Scientific of All Possible Hypotheses"

I believe that it is possible to avoid the problems inherent in the practical interpretation of the eternal recurrence by a closer examination of Nietzsche's statements that the eternal recurrence is "the most scientific of all possible hypotheses," and the Yes-saying spirit of amor fati is the idea "most strictly confirmed and born out by truth and science." 50 Most interpretations of these remarks insist on an overly narrow construal. Thus the eternal recurrence is taken to be the most scientific hypothesis in the sense of being the most general or encompassing scientific hypothesis about the universe. In effect, this shifts the idea of eternal recurrence into the domain of metaphysics. Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics is thus rendered self-defeating if the eternal recurrence can only

49 Ibid., no. 458, 251.

be understood as a metaphysical principle about reality as a whole.

Beginning from the supposition that Nietzsche's naturalism precludes a metaphysical reading of the eternal recurrence, I would like to suggest the following reconstruction of Nietzsche's assertion that the eternal recurrence is the most scientific of all possible hypotheses. I argue in this section that Nietzsche's remarks on the scientific character of the eternal recurrence must be taken in three senses, each of which corresponds to a different aspect of antinaturalism. First, the eternal recurrence is a theory about knowledge (including scientific knowledge), and the conditions of knowledge, within the interpretive framework of the will to power. Second, the eternal recurrence represents affirmative spirit of science and presents a life-affirming alternative to antinatural metaphysics. Finally, the eternal recurrence is a reconceptualization of autonomy in light of the experience of modern physics. In short, the eternal recurrence is the culmination of Nietzsche's attempt to provide a naturalistic alternative to antinaturalism.

The Naturalization of Epistemology

The eternal recurrence is a thesis about knowledge and the conditions of knowledge within the interpretive framework of the will to power. As a theory about science and knowledge, the eternal recurrence addresses the question
of how knowledge is possible if we reject the possibility of being in the sense of an enduring substrate of appearance. It has often been maintained that the degree of knowledge corresponds to the degree of being of what is known. Knowledge of appearance is of a lower quality. Only knowledge of being, i.e., of that which is fixed and eternal, is considered genuine knowledge. In the context of science, a related idea can be found in the form of the belief that a true hypothesis is one that corresponds to a fixed, independently existing observational given. The validity or truth of a hypothesis corresponds directly to its accuracy in accounting for this fixed, observational given and in its ability to allow us to make predictions about its future behavior.

In the context of my discussion of Nietzsche's critique of antinaturalism in chapter two I indicated why he rejects the identification of truth with the correspondence of a proposition with conceiver independent being. I also indicated why Nietzsche rejects as antinatural the idea that truth, in the superlative metaphysical sense, is the supreme value. On Nietzsche's view, human life requires the creation of simplifying schemas, logical fictions, which are necessary to organize experience, but are not literally true. Given that untruth is a necessary condition of life, in the sense described above, the idea that truth is the

supreme value is antilife, and therefore, antinatural.

Nietzsche maintains that the association of the highest values, such as truth, with being results in a corresponding condemnation of the realm of becoming. This does not imply that Nietzsche thinks that we should shift our attention from reality to appearance. Such a move would simply be the implicit re-affirmation of a radical opposition between a true world and the world of appearance. By rejecting the true world of being, Nietzsche makes it clear that he is rejecting the opposition of the true world and the apparent world as well:

The true world--we have abolished. What world has remained? The apparent one perhaps? But no! With the true world we have also abolished the apparent one.

Consequently, we are left with this world as a world without being, in a perpetual state of becoming. And if truth requires being, then, in a world without being, it follows that there can be no truth:

The world with which we are concerned is false, i.e., is not a fact but a fable and approximation on the basis of a meager sum of observations; it is 'in flux,' as something in a state of becoming, as falsehood always changing but never getting near the truth: for there is no 'truth.'

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52 The Will to Power, no. 617, 330: "From the values attributed to being proceed the condemnation of and discontent with becoming, after such a world of being had first been invented."


54 The Will to Power, no. 616, 330.
Therefore, it seems as though without being there can be no truth either in the superlative, metaphysical sense or as understood by the realistic conception of science.

Thus far Nietzsche's point is that without being there can be no knowledge either in the metaphysical sense or in the realistic sense. Does this imply that the quest for knowledge must be abandoned altogether? Some have reached this conclusion, Nietzsche maintains, and it is for them a source of despair. For some, the collapse of the belief that there is one definitive meaning of existence has been generalized into the belief that there is no meaning in existence at all. At this point, nihilism appears:

One interpretation has collapsed; but because it was considered the interpretation it now seems as if there were no meaning at all in existence, as if everything were in vain.  

But, on Nietzsche's view, this conclusion is premature.

If there is no truth in the superlative sense, this should not unduly disturb us, according to Nietzsche, because the value of the world does not lie in truth, but "in our interpretation." Even the truths that have been the most enduring are simply interpretations, i.e., simplifying schemas thought to have value for life. And every new interpretation and valuation must overcome a preceding interpretation. This implies that this new

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55Ibid, no. 55, 35.

56Ibid., no. 616, 330.
interpretation must be, in a sense, 'stronger' than the one it replaces, i.e., more comprehensive, more capable of opening up new perspectives and new horizons of exploration. In other words, it must represent a greater will to power:

That the value of the world lies in our interpretation (—that other interpretations than merely human ones are perhaps somewhere possible—); that previous interpretations have been perspective valuations by virtue of which we can survive in life, i.e., in the will to power, for the growth of power; that every elevation of man brings with it the overcoming of narrower interpretations; that every strengthening and increase of power opens up new perspectives and means believing in new horizons—this idea permeates my writings.  

The interpretive paradigm created by the hypothesis of the will to power bears directly on the problem of truth. If truth requires being, then there can be no truth if one denies being, as Nietzsche does. But an approximation of being can be provided by means of an interpretation that we bring to experience. Through our interpretative frameworks we can attain "truths" and "knowledge," with the proviso that the knowledge gained will never be absolute, but always perspectival, i.e., always the product of our valuations. Our truths will no longer be Truth, i.e., propositions about a fixed, conceiver-independent reality, but truths relative to the presuppositions and postulates of our

57 Ibid.

58 The following operational and interpretational account of the eternal recurrence is indebted to Hans Seigfried, "Law, Regularity, and Sameness: A Nietzschean Account."
interpretational schemes.

Interpreting the character of stability into becoming by means of logical fictions is what makes "knowledge" in a limited sense possible.\(^{59}\) Such knowledge requires a "deception" on the part of the senses and reason "to preserve a world of that which abides, which is equivalent."\(^{60}\) The relative permanence of the phenomenal world, the regularity and stability of appearance, need not be located in an enduring substrate of being. On Nietzsche's view, the stability of the phenomenal world lies in the relative stability of the simplifying schemas that we use to organize experience. In other words, the reality of the phenomenal world,

... lies in the continual recurrence of identical, familiar, related things in their logicized character, in the belief that here we are able to reckon and calculate.\(^{61}\)

From Nietzsche's fragmentary account we now have all of the parts necessary to state the first sense of the eternal recurrence as the most scientific of all possible hypotheses. The eternal recurrence represents the idea that by continually bringing simplifying schemas to the meaningless flux of becoming, we make it thinkable, and hence are able to live. The eternal recurrence must be

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\(^{59}\)Human, All Too Human, no. 1, 1.

\(^{60}\)The Will to Power, no. 617, 330.

\(^{61}\)Ibid., no. 569, 307. My emphasis.
postulated to account for identity, stability, and predictability in a naturalistic conceptual framework that has rejected being. In other words, the eternal recurrence must be assumed in order to understand Nietzsche's account of identity, stability, and predictability in terms of the will to power. As Nietzsche puts it in *The Will to Power*, "[to] impose upon becoming the character of being--that is the supreme will to power." Actual being is not created by these simplifying schemas, but rather the appearance of being, i.e., the stability and permanence of phenomena. In this sense, the eternal recurrence, together with the idea of the will to power, is the most scientific of all possible hypotheses because it is the basis of all knowledge.

The Naturalization of Metaphysics

The eternal recurrence represents a naturalistic, life-affirming alternative to antinatural metaphysics. An antinatural metaphysics, as I discussed in chapter two, is one that devalues life and the world by projecting a metaphysical "true world" as the source of the highest and most genuine values. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Nietzsche refers to those who talk of the true world and speak of otherworldly hopes as "poison-mixers" and "despisers of

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62 Ibid., no. 617, 330.
Their creation of a metaphysical world is attributed to suffering and a weariness "that wants to reach the ultimate with one leap, one fatal leap. . . ."

A naturalistic metaphysics, in contrast, would be life-affirming. Rather than attempting to locate the meaning of the world somewhere beyond nature in a true world, or Kantian intelligible realm, or beyond history, as the end or telos of history, a naturalistic metaphysics would seek the value of the world within the world itself. The eternal recurrence demands that the meaning of the world must be created by the will to power within the world. It is the extreme antidote to the extreme position of antinatural metaphysics.

Rejecting the ascetic, life-denying ideals of antinatural metaphysics, a naturalistic metaphysics contains the opposite ideal:

the ideal of the most high-spirited, alive, and world affirming human being who has not only come to terms and learned to get along with whatever was and is, but who wants to have what was and is repeated into all eternity, shouting insatiably da capo--not only to himself but to the whole play and spectacle. . . .

In Thus Spoke Zarathustra Nietzsche's ideal of a world

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63Thus Spoke Zarathustra, "Zarathustra's Prologue," no. 3, 125.

64Ibid., "On the Afterworldly," 143.

65The Will to Power, no. 55, 35: "Extreme positions are not succeeded by moderate ones but by extreme positions of the opposite kind."

66Beyond Good and Evil, no. 56, 258.
affirming human being, one who could affirm the eternal recurrence, is symbolized by the figure of the "overman." In the prologue of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Zarathustra proclaims the coming of the overman. "Man" is described as merely a transitional stage between beast and overman. The overman is symbolic of Nietzsche's attempt to naturalize metaphysics and provide humanity with an ideal that does not express contempt for the earth:

'Behold, I teach you the overman. The overman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: the overman shall be the meaning of the earth!'  

The overman embodies the Dionysian affirmation of existence that Nietzsche refers to as "amor fati"—love of fate. Nietzsche asserts that his experimental philosophy anticipates the possibility of the deepest nihilism. The negation of the true world could be seen as the most devastating blow to all ideals. But Nietzsche insists as well that it is not the intent of his philosophy to halt at negation. Rather, his philosophy attempts
to cross over to the opposite of this—to a Dionysian affirmation of the world as it is, without subtraction, exception, or selection—it wants the eternal circulation. . . .  

One aspect of amor fati is the affirmation of the necessity of the seemingly chance events of existence. Occasionally, Nietzsche expresses this as the somewhat banal

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67 *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "Zarathustra's Prologue," no. 3, 125.

68 *The Will to Power*, no. 1041, 536.
notion that "everything that happens to us turns out for the best." 69 Another aspect of amor fati is more demanding. It is a desire to affirm not merely existence, but the necessity and desirability "of those sides of existence hitherto denied. . . ." 70 Denial of the true world, and the corresponding faith in opposite values forces us to contemplate the possibility that the value of everything hitherto revered as good might lie in the fact that the good is "insidiously related, tied to, and involved with . . . wicked, seemingly opposite things. . . ." 71 In this sense, amor fati forces us to move beyond good and evil.

Amor fati is also Nietzsche's challenge "to learn more and more to see as beautiful what is necessary in things. . . ." 72 This desire to see as beautiful what is necessary explains why Nietzsche emphasizes science. According to Nietzsche, science, especially physics, can teach us how to be "the best learners and discoverers of everything that is lawful and necessary in the world." 73 By recognizing necessity, science expresses the Dionysian affirmation of existence:

This ultimate, most joyous, most wantonly extravagant

69 The Gay Science, no. 277, 224.
70 The Will to Power, no. 1041, 536.
71 Beyond Good and Evil, no. 2, 200.
72 The Gay Science, no. 276, 223.
73 Ibid., no. 335, 266.
Yes to life represents not only the highest insight but also the deepest, that which is most strictly confirmed and born out by truth and science. Nothing in existence may be subtracted, nothing is dispensable. . . .

The Naturalization of Autonomy

The Dionysian affirmation of existence contained in the spirit of science is not sufficient to explain completely Nietzsche's thesis that the eternal recurrence is the most scientific of all possible hypotheses. To understand this remark more fully we must recall Nietzsche's critique of the optimism contained in the theoretical attitude of positivistically conceived science in *The Birth of Tragedy*. The theoretical attitude holds that being can be corrected by knowledge and thus strives relentlessly to increase its store of knowledge. Eventually, however, the theoretical attitude forces its best representatives to face the insight that absolute knowledge will always remain out of their reach. In *The Will to Power* Nietzsche characterizes the "in vain" of the theoretical attitude in its most extreme form as the eternal recurrence of meaninglessness:

> Let us think this thought in its most terrible form: existence as it is, without meaning or aim, yet recurring inevitably without any finale of nothingness: 'the eternal recurrence.'

On Nietzsche's view, this insight into the meaninglessness, the "in vain" of the theoretical attitude is demanded by

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75 *The Will to Power*, no. 55, 35.
"the energy of knowledge and strength. . . ."\textsuperscript{76} It represents, as Nietzsche puts it, "the most extreme form of nihilism: the nothing (the 'meaningless'), eternally!"\textsuperscript{77}

The insight generated by the theoretical attitude of the eternal recurrence of the meaningless has important implications for Nietzsche's reconceptualization of autonomy. If we are willing to accept Nietzsche's Dionysian insight into the meaningfulness of existence, then we confront the idea that we can no longer look behind the world, to a Kantian intelligible realm, for example, for directives of human action. The lesson of the theoretical attitude, especially as contained in modern physics, is that we alone are responsible for creating the conceptual rules and laws that make experience possible and manageable, and thus empower us to continue with life.\textsuperscript{78} From this it follows that, if we are to live authentically, we must actively give ourselves laws to live by. Only by learning the lesson of modern physics can we attain the goal of becoming those we are, i.e., "human beings who are new,

\textsuperscript{76}Ibid., 36.

\textsuperscript{77}Ibid. See also Hans Seigfried, "Nietzsche's Natural Morality," \textit{Journal of Value Inquiry} 26: 426: "'What is certain,' Nietzsche claimed, is that we have not yet been able to find any such inscriptions and ready-made truths, and that the force of our past efforts suggests that we never will."

\textsuperscript{78}Hans Seigfried, \textit{Autonomy and Quantum Physics: Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Heisenberg}, \textit{Philosophy of Science} 57 (1990): 624.
unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who create themselves.\textsuperscript{79}.

Nietzsche's reconceptualization of human autonomy in light of the experience of modern physics does not stop with this insight into the source of autonomy. Nietzsche extends his conclusions to the fundamental basis of moral agency—the neutral, independent moral subject.

Within the framework of antinaturalism, moral agency is conceived in terms of a neutral, independent moral subject, or self, that is subject to universal moral norms. Nietzsche's naturalism rejects this conception of the moral subject. As a result, Nietzsche is able to reject the metaphysical conception of a free will and offer a conception of human agency constructed within the limits of naturalism.

On Nietzsche's view, the idea of a neutral, independent moral subject is a product of slave morality "prompted by an instinct of self-preservation in which every lie is

\textsuperscript{79}\textit{The Gay Science}, no. 335, 266. See also, Hans Seigfried, \textit{Autonomy and Quantum Physics}, 624: "For if there were any laws in the world of experience which were not the product of human organization to which we must submit and which limit our self-creation, then they would have to be the laws which appear to be inscribed in a fixed nature and its solid states of affairs (Sachzwänge). But, ironically, it is in the natural sciences and physics where we finally come to realize that the whole world of experience is the product of our organization. . . . It is therefore in the spirit of physics that we can 'become those we are' at last, and say about ourselves what the voice in the burning bush said to Moses ('I Am who I Am', \textit{Exodus} 3:14)."
The slave has created the concept of the moral subject in order to hold the master morally responsible for his expressions of strength. In creating the concept of the moral self, the slaves exploit a fundamental "seduction of language." The essence of this fundamental linguistic error is to assume that all effects are the product of something that can spontaneously chose to cause an effect. This cause is referred to as the neutral, independent subject.

The assumption of a neutral, independent moral subject can be understood as the product of uncritical thinking, which implicitly projects an underlying substratum behind a deed. Nietzsche uses the example of a flash of lightning. The popular mind, Nietzsche maintains, separates the deed, the flash, from an underlying substratum, the lightning--in effect doubling the deed. But, on Nietzsche's view, there is no such substratum; there is no "being" behind doing, effecting, becoming; "the doer" is merely a fiction added to the deed--the deed is everything.

In their ressentiment against the master, the slaves exploit this feature of language in order to morally condemn the master. The slave maintains that

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80 On the Genealogy of Morals, second essay, no. 13, 482.
81 Ibid., 481.
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
the strong man is free to be weak and the bird of prey to be a lamb—for thus they gain the right to make the bird of prey accountable for being a bird of prey.\textsuperscript{84}

To overcome slave morality it is necessary to overcome the notion of the neutral, independent moral subject that is intrinsic to it. Nietzsche finds the clue to overcoming the slave's conception of the neutral, independent moral subject in an unexpected source—modern physics.

Nietzsche cites the work of Boscovich as crucial for overcoming materialistic atomism in physics. By understanding atoms as centers of force, rather than as infinitely small particles, Boscovich allows us "to abjure the belief in the last part of the earth that 'stood fast'—the belief in 'substance,' in 'matter,' in the earth-residuum and particle-atom."\textsuperscript{85}

Nietzsche believes that Boscovich's achievement in physics should be extended, and used to root out the last vestiges of the metaphysical "atomistic need." Nowhere is this need more apparent than in "the soul atomism," i.e., in the neutral, independent moral subject. On Nietzsche's view, it is not necessary to eliminate "the soul," \textit{per se}. Rather, he suggests refining the soul-hypothesis. This would allow the possibility of conceiving of the soul as "subjective multiplicity" or "as social structure of drives\textsuperscript{85}

\textsuperscript{84}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{85}Beyond Good and Evil, no. 12, 210.
This latter conception of the soul as a social structure of drives and affects has dramatic implications for the traditional conception of freedom of the will and autonomy. This can be seen by comparing Nietzsche's conception of the free will with Kant's.

Recall that for Kant, autonomy requires the rational self-legislation of the will. Autonomy requires the will be free in the superlative metaphysical sense, i.e., not determined by the necessary physical laws that govern the world of appearance. This is problematic for Nietzsche for two reasons. On the one hand, it forces Kant to emphasize the role of universalizability in moral agency. On Nietzsche's view, as I discussed in the previous chapter, this effectively undermines Kant's attempt to establish a morality based on the priority of the will's self-legislation because universalizability is the primary vehicle of moral judgment.

On the other hand, by identifying an autonomous will and a free will, Kant separates morality from the empirical world of nature and history. In Daybreak Nietzsche makes his point in a polemical manner when he writes:

In the face of nature and history, in the face of the thorough immorality of nature and history, Kant was, like every good German of the old stamp, a pessimist; he believed in morality, not because it is demonstrated in nature and history, but in spite of the fact that

86Ibid.
nature and history continually contradict it.\textsuperscript{87}

Thus, according to Nietzsche, by separating the will from all empirical determinations, Kant must appeal to a metaphysical afterworld and create a conception of the autonomous will as a \textit{causa sui}. It is this picture of the will that Nietzsche has in mind in \textit{Beyond Good and Evil} when makes the following remark:

\begin{quote}
The desire for 'freedom of the will' in the superlative metaphysical sense . . . the desire to bear the entire and ultimate responsibility for one's actions oneself, and to absolve God, the world, ancestors, chance, and society involves nothing less than to be precisely this \textit{causa sui} and, with more than Münchhausen's audacity, to pull oneself up into existence by the hair, out of the swamps of nothingness.\textsuperscript{88}
\end{quote}

This notion of freedom of the will represents to Nietzsche "the best self-contradiction that has been conceived so far," and demands a reconceptualization within a naturalistic framework.\textsuperscript{89}

Nietzsche's critique of the metaphysical idea of the free will is the result of an analysis of human volitional action. The will is spoken of "as if it were the best known thing in the world, . . ." But Nietzsche counters that philosophers have oversimplified the complex structure of willing.\textsuperscript{90} This oversimplification is the result of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{87}Daybreak, preface no. 3, 3.
\item \textsuperscript{88}Beyond Good and Evil, no. 21, 218.
\item \textsuperscript{89}Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{90}Ibid., no. 21, 218. Willing is described as a complex phenomenon that is "a unit only as a word."
\end{itemize}
interpreting the act of willing in mechanistic terms as the relation of a neutral, independent subject (cause) and an action (effect). On Nietzsche’s analysis, willing is not the product of a unified subject acting as a cause, but rather a synthesis of sensitive, rational, and emotive components of the "social structure" of the self into a hierarchy.

The first component of willing is sensation. The sensitive component of willing is active on more than one level. At the first level of analysis are the states "away from which" and "towards which." This level of sensation appears to refer to what is conventionally called the object of intention. At the next level of analysis is "the sensation of this 'from' and 'towards' themselves." The sensations of "from" and "towards" appear to refer to the intentional act itself, rather than to the object of intention. The final sensitive component in willing is physiological. It consists in the muscular sensations that correspond to the sensations of "from" and "towards" but which are prior to any actual motion.

Since this muscular sensation corresponds to the sensations of "from" and "towards" and yet precedes physical movement, it appears that Nietzsche is implying that the

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91 Ibid., no. 19, 215.
92 Ibid.
93 Ibid.
various sensations that comprise the sensitive component of willing do not occur simultaneously, but rather sequentially. The introduction of a temporal element would necessitate the introduction of a causal means to connect the various sensitive elements into a unity. It is highly unlikely that this is what Nietzsche intends, however, given that he is attempting to undermine the causal efficacy of willing. Therefore, it seems best to conclude that the appearance of a sequential relationship between the various sensitive factors in willing is an illusion resulting from Nietzsche's analysis, and that the sensitive factors occur concurrently in any act of willing.

The second main component in the synthetic structure of willing is a rational component. Unfortunately, Nietzsche does not say much about this aspect of willing, except to indicate that in every act of the will there is a "ruling thought" that is indispensable: "--let us not imagine it possible to sever this thought from the 'willing' as if any will would then remain over!"94 Although Nietzsche's remarks on this rational component are sketchy, they at least indicate that he thinks that reason is a necessary component of volition. Moreover, by referring to the rational component as a "ruling" thought, Nietzsche implies that the rational component of willing in some sense governs the sensitive component.

94Ibid.
Nietzsche does not discuss the relationship between the sensitive and rational components of the will in detail. The introduction of a third main component in willing, however, gives an indication of how this relationship might be understood.

The third main component of willing is the emotive component—the "affect of command." Nietzsche indicates that the emotive component of the will is its most significant feature. In all willing there is a relation of commanding and obeying. It is accompanied by the focusing of attention on a single aim and by the "inward certainty that obedience will be rendered. . . ." In short,

A man who wills commands something within himself that renders obedience, or that he believes renders obedience.

The tendency to attribute willing to a unified, substantial ego has resulted in a misunderstanding of the causality of the will. Philosophers have come to think that "willing suffices for action." Nietzsche argues that since in a great majority of cases there is an exercise of will only when the resulting action was to be expected, "the appearance [i.e., of a necessary connection of the will as

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95 Ibid., 215.
96 Ibid., 215-216.
97 Ibid., 216.
98 Ibid., 216.
cause and the action as effect] has translated itself into
the feeling, as if there were a necessity of effect.99
Willing and action have become identified. The successful
outcome of volition comes to be identified with the will
itself as a unique form of causality.

Having interpreted the will as a synthetic social
structure of drives and affects consisting of sensitive,
rational, and emotive elements, Nietzsche draws the
implications of his analysis for the moral-metaphysical
document of the free will. If willing is not conceived as
the action of a unified, substantial ego, but rather as a
synthesis of commanding and obeying elements within the
synthetic social structure of the self, then one eliminates
the need to create a unique form of causality (i.e.,
freedom) to account for the will's ability to legislate for
itself. The conception of free will becomes unnecessary to
account for autonomy.

Does Nietzsche's rejection of the free will imply that
he is embracing determinism? This is not the case. With
the dissolution of the free will, the opposing idea of an
unfree will vanishes as well. Nietzsche argues that the
idea of the unfree will, i.e., the will completely
determined by causal necessity, is the result of a
reification of the "conventional fictions" of cause and

99Ibid.
effect. This is precisely what Kant does when he employs the appearance-thing-in-itself distinction as a means to postulate the possibility of transcendent freedom. Kant seeks to escape what he interprets as the disastrous implications for morality of universal causal necessity. On Nietzsche's view, however, Kant's reaction against the implications of causality is exaggerated:

In the 'in-itself' there is nothing of 'causal connections,' of 'necessity,' or of 'psychological non-freedom'; there the effect does not follow the cause, there is no rule of 'law.'

Nietzsche's reference to the "in-itself" should not be read in terms of Kant's thing-in-itself. Nietzsche is not referring to a transcendent, conceiver independent realm, but rather to the empirical world in the absence of an interpretation. Nietzsche's point is that our observation of causal necessity is the result of an interpretation that has been imposed upon the empirical world:

It is we alone who have devised cause, sequence, for-each-other, relativity, constraint, number, law, freedom, motive, and purpose; and when we project and mix this symbol world into things as if it existed 'in-itself,' we act once more as we have always acted—mythologically. The 'unfree will' is mythology. ..

This conclusion implies that we should abandon the identification of an autonomous will and a will that is free

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100 Ibid., 219.
101 Ibid.
102 Ibid.
in the superlative, metaphysical sense. On Nietzsche's view, the notion that autonomy requires a special form of causality, namely freedom, is simply misguided because it has uncritically presupposed a unified conception of the will. Interpreted in terms of an internal relation of commanding and obeying, autonomy can be expressed as "the affect of superiority in relation to him who must obey: 'I am free, 'he' must obey'--this consciousness is inherent in every will." This affect of superiority produces a "complex state of delight" in the person who exercises volition and interprets any overcoming of obstacles as the direct result of this volition. As a result, the opposition of a free will and an unfree will is eliminated and replaced with a distinction between strong and weak wills:

The "unfree will" is mythology; in real life it is only a matter of strong and weak wills.

Nietzsche does not conceive of an autonomous will as one that is free, but rather as one that is strong. This is interesting because, unlike freedom, strength is not a metaphysical absolute. Strength is a relative term that admits of varying degree. If autonomy is thought of as a quality possessed by a strong will, and if there are varying

\[103\] Ibid., no. 19, 216.
\[104\] Ibid.
\[105\] Ibid., no. 21, 219.
degrees of strength, then it seems reasonable to conclude that there are varying degrees of autonomy as well.

This is exactly the conclusion we should expect as a result of my earlier examination of Nietzsche's naturalistic opposition to antinatural moralities. As I argued above, the essential feature of Nietzsche's naturalism is a shift in moral discourse from a framework in which moral judgment is given priority over legislative considerations to a framework that gives priority to legislation over judgment. This shift is consistent with the idea that there can be varying degrees of autonomy depending upon the particular moral framework under consideration.

The idea of varying degrees of autonomy harmonizes well with Nietzsche's more general project of dissolving value oppositions and establishing a new order of rank among values. This project is morally relevant because it implies that moral deliberation can no longer be reduced to subsuming particular actions or intentions under one of two mutually exclusive polarized categories, such as good and evil. In other words, the dissolution of opposed moral categories forces moral discourse to move beyond moral judgment in this sense.

Conclusion

The idea that it is possible to reconstruct the eternal

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106 *Human, All Too Human*, preface nos. 6-7, 9-10.
recurrence as a coherent response and alternative to traditionally conceived, i.e., antinatural, morality, might be anathema to many who read Nietzsche. I think that such a reaction is inappropriate and wholly out of keeping with the spirit of revaluation that inspires Nietzsche's philosophy. Nowhere is this clearer than in Nietzsche's attitude towards morality. I take it that Nietzsche is not asking us to abandon morality tout court, but rather to understand morality in a different way. This is why he can write in *Daybreak*:

> It goes without saying that I do not deny--unless I am a fool--that many actions called immoral ought to be avoided and resisted, or that many called moral ought to be done and encouraged—but I think the one should be encouraged and the other avoided for other reasons than hitherto.¹⁰⁷

This dissertation has been an attempt to understand what these other reasons might be. In trying to clarify this issue I have examined three separate but related aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy. The first aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy that I examined centered around his conception of a naturalistic morality. I argued that Nietzsche's naturalism could be understood as an application of the principle of the will to power to the domain of human conduct. I attempted to show how the most important implication of the will to power was that it shifted moral discourse from a framework in which moral judgment is given

¹⁰⁷*Daybreak*, no. 103, 60.
priority over moral legislation to a framework in which moral legislation is given priority over moral judgment.

Nietzsche's attempt to prioritize moral legislation made it crucial to examine his critique of Kantian morality. I argued that both Nietzsche and Kant attempt to construct moral philosophies in which legislative discourse predominates over judgment. In contrast to Kant, however, Nietzsche rejects the premise of human moral equality. Nietzsche views Kant's conception of universalizability, as formulated in the categorical imperative, as having implications that undermine Kant's attempt to create a morality based on legislative considerations.

The last aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy that I examined was the eternal recurrence. I rejected the conventional theoretical and practical interpretations of the eternal recurrence as inconsistent with Nietzsche's naturalism. I argued that the eternal recurrence can plausibly be understood as one of the key principles, along with the will to power, of Nietzsche's naturalistic reconceptualization of autonomy.

Each aspect of this study reflects a different facet of Nietzsche's hammer metaphor. As I showed in my opening chapter, the hammer metaphor represents the diagnostic, destructive, and creative aspects of Nietzsche's thought. Nietzsche's naturalism allows him to diagnose the problems of antinaturalism. Nietzsche's critique of Kantian morality
illustrates the destructive aspects of his philosophical project. Finally, the creative aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy was illustrated by the idea of the eternal recurrence and the will to power that it requires.

I think that when taken together, these three aspects of Nietzsche's hammer metaphor reveal the revaluative character of his philosophy. It is particularly important to emphasize this aspect of Nietzsche's thought in the face of reductionistic accounts which attempt to trace each of Nietzsche's ideas to a previous philosopher. Clearly, there is a strong syncretistic element in Nietzsche's writings, but this should not be exaggerated to the point of overlooking his original contribution to philosophy.

Conversely, it is also important to emphasize the revaluative and reconstructive character of Nietzsche's philosophy against many post-modern readings which tend to exaggerate the idiosyncratic aspects of his thought at the cost of detaching him completely from his historical context. By reading Nietzsche's ideas of the will to power and the eternal recurrence against the background of Kantian autonomy, I have attempted to do justice to the concerns with both the syncretistic and idiosyncratic elements of Nietzsche's thought while at the same time remaining faithful to his texts. This has not always been easy and this study is not the last word on anything—but it may be the first word on at least a few things.
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