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FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

Writings from the Late Notebooks

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FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

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Contents

Contents

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Rüdiger Bittner

Abbreviations

KGW	*Friedrich Nietzsche, Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. G. Colli and M. Montinari (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1967–77)
AC	*The Antichrist* (*Der Antichrist*, 1895)
BGE	*Beyond Good and Evil* (*Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, 1886)
D	*Daybreak* (*Morgenröte*, 1881) (also translated as *Dawn* and as *Dawn of Day*)
EH	*Ecce Homo* (*Ecce homo*, 1908)
GM	*On the Genealogy of Morality* (*Zur Genealogie der Moral*, 1887)
GS	*The Gay Science* (*Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, 1882)
TI	*Twilight of the Idols* (*Götzen-Dämmerung*, 1889)
Z	*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (*Also sprach Zarathustra*, 1883–85)

Introduction

Nietzsche is a writer whose work stands visibly unfinished. Others by and large completed what they had to say, but in Nietzsche's case the gap between the task he envisaged and the writing he carried out grew wider, not smaller, during his active life – and dramatically so in its last few years. Thus, the texts collected in the present volume may be taken to mark Nietzsche's frontier: this is how far he came. In what follows I will look at the history of these texts, their origin and the way they were handed down to us, as well as the way the present selection has been made. Secondly, I will indicate some of the basic lines of argumentation and some of the philosophical import of these texts.

The texts

All through his life as a writer, Nietzsche recorded his thoughts in notebooks or on sheets of paper he carried with him. In this way he could keep writing virtually anywhere, and indeed he made a point of this habit (see TI Maxims 34). While the notebooks and papers contain some material of a merely occasional nature, such as travelling plans or recipes, by far the largest part deals with substantive issues. Nietzsche normally saved these notes, using them as a basis for the manuscripts of his published works, and so a large number of them were preserved. How many are missing is hard to gauge from what we have, but it would seem that a representative portion of Nietzsche's total production has survived. With a few exceptions, all these papers are now kept in the Goethe-Schiller Archive in Weimar.

The relation between Nietzsche's handwritten notes and his publications changed over his lifetime. While the published works never exhausted the content of the notes, it was only from 1885, after the completion of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, that the disparity between what Nietzsche wrote down in his notebooks and what he brought to a definitive form for publication grew radical. In fact, Nietzsche sensed he was becoming alienated from the medium he had hitherto relied on. 'My philosophy, if that is what I am entitled to call what torments me down to the roots of my nature, is no longer communicable, at least not in print', he wrote to Franz Overbeck on 2 July 1885. Writing down ideas in his notebooks, in contrast, seemed 'less impossible'. The notebooks became the field where Nietzsche was still able if not to communicate, then at least to express, his ideas. This is why Nietzsche's unpublished manuscript material from the last years of his productive life has been deemed worth publishing by all his editors, from the very first down to the present one.

For all his doubts about communicating his thoughts in print, Nietzsche pursued publication plans in these late years rather more vigorously than he had before. *Beyond Good and Evil* was completed in the spring of 1886 and published in the summer of that year, and *On the Genealogy of Morality* followed a year later. However, *Beyond Good and Evil* was called in the subtitle 'Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future', and Nietzsche saw *On the Genealogy of Morality* as an accompaniment to the earlier book, complementing and clarifying it, as he indicated in a note following the title page in the original edition of GM. Thus *On the Genealogy of Morality* was a supplement to *Beyond Good and Evil*, which itself was a prelude – and the philosophy of the future that these writings aimed to prepare was to be presented in a major new work. As he told his readers in GM III § 27, Nietzsche at this time intended to call it 'The Will to Power. Attempt at a Re-valuation of all Values'.

'The Will to Power' is the largest and most ambitious literary project of Nietzsche's last years, indeed of his whole life; and while it is by no means the only project he considered pursuing during those years, it is the one he worked on most consistently. Thus, he did bring it to an advanced stage of preparation. In note number 12[1], dating from early 1888 (not reprinted here), he put together a list of 374 texts, in most cases deciding which of the planned work's four books they were to go into and dividing the four books into twelve chapters. Completion of the project must have seemed within his reach at this point. Nietzsche was not

really satisfied, though, with the emerging book. On 13 February 1888, telling Peter Gast that the first draft of his 'Attempt at a Re-valuation' was finished, he added: 'All in all, it was a torment. Also, I do not yet in any way have the courage for it. Ten years from now I will do it better.' He kept considering alternative ways of organising the material, until early September 1888 brought a change of plans. As shown by fragments 9[3–6], again not reprinted here, he decided to publish an extract of his philosophy that would consist of a number of finished texts previously intended for 'The Will to Power'. A major work remained on his agenda, but from now on it was always called 'Re-valuation of all Values' rather than 'The Will to Power', and was organised in a notably different way from the arrangements previously considered for 'The Will to Power'. Only a short time later, however, he divided the material into two books, one the extract proper, which eventually became *Twilight of the Idols*, and the other *The Antichrist*, which Nietzsche at the time regarded as the first book of the planned 'Re-valuation'. In other words, Nietzsche gave up his plans for a book called *The Will to Power* in the autumn of 1888.[1]

Even so, the history of the project 'The Will to Power' is important for the present purposes. For one thing, many of Nietzsche's notes from the years 1885–89 were at some time intended to form part of the book of that name. A further reason is that in 1901 Nietzsche's first editors, his sister Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche and his friend Peter Gast, published a selection of notes from his notebooks under the title *Der Wille zur Macht* ('The Will to Power'), suggesting that this book was the execution of a plan which Nietzsche had only been prevented from completing by his illness. A much larger selection followed in 1906, and especially in this version the collection was extremely successful: it became the standard source on the late Nietzsche's thought, in spite of the fact that doubts about its philological reliability had been raised quite early on. In English, Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale's 1967 translation of *Der Wille zur Macht* as *The Will to Power* acquired a similarly dominant position.

The Will to Power is a dubious text for several reasons. Firstly and most importantly, the evidence shows that Nietzsche abandoned the project 'The Will to Power' early in September 1888, so that publishing a book of

[1] The preceding is an abbreviated version of Mazzino Montinari's account, to be found in the German paperback edition of Nietzsche's collected works, an edition closely based on the KGW: *Friedrich Nietzsche, Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe*, ed. G. Colli and M. Montinari (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag / Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988), vol. 14, pp. 383–400.

this title under his name falsifies his intentions. Secondly, if we waive this objection and suppose that 'The Will to Power' remained Nietzsche's dominant concern right to the end of his writing life, it is in any case arbitrary to arrange the material, as the editors of *The Will to Power* did, in the order Nietzsche sketched in the fragment 7[64] of 1886/1887 (not reprinted here). A number of such projected tables of contents can be found in the notebooks of these years, so why choose this one in particular? It may be replied that the order sketched in 7[64] is also the basis for the list of 374 texts in fragment 12[1], mentioned above. Yet if that is the reason for using the order of 7[64], it would seem natural also to follow the detailed plan set out in 12[1], and that is not what Förster-Nietzsche and Gast did. They excluded roughly a quarter of the texts Nietzsche at that time intended to include in 'The Will to Power', some of these going instead into volumes 13 or 14 of the *Grossoktav* edition produced by the Nietzsche Archive under the direction of Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, but most being suppressed entirely; and a good proportion of the texts that were included suffered various changes at the hands of the editors, such as division into separate fragments or the omission of parts of the text.

An attempt was made in the 1930s to remedy this situation by publishing a critical edition, but the enterprise came to a halt after the first five volumes, which covered only the years from 1854 to 1869. It is only now, thanks to the new critical edition by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (the 'KGW'), that we have complete and reliable German texts of all of Nietzsche's philosophical writings. The present selection of texts is based on this new edition. It invites English-speaking readers to benefit as well from the massive improvement in the availability of the texts from Nietzsche's literary estate, or *Nachlass*, an improvement owed above all to the efforts of Mazzino Montinari.

Given that the KGW is the sole source of the texts I have included here, it may be useful to indicate how it arranges the material. The whole edition is divided into eight parts, the seventh containing the *Nachlass* material from July 1882 to autumn 1885 and the eighth that from autumn 1885 to January 1889. For the sake of convenience, let us call any notebook, single sheet of paper or collection of sheets that Nietzsche used for his notes a 'manuscript'; the KGW presents the texts from the late *Nachlass* in chronological order throughout, both as regards the sequence of entire manuscripts and the sequence of texts within each manuscript. While

manuscripts are normally easy to tell apart, fragments within a manuscript may not be. Sometimes Nietzsche numbered fragments or indicated in other ways where one fragment ends and another begins. Sometimes this emerges from such evidence as the position of text on the page, the style of the handwriting, or similar clues, but sometimes the matter really is not clear. The division of the text into fragments was made by the KGW editors, taking such evidence into account wherever it existed.

The KGW numbers manuscripts chronologically within each part and, in turn, numbers the texts within each manuscript chronologically. The present volume offers a selection of texts dating from between April 1885 and January 1889, which are taken from the latter part of the seventh and the whole of the eighth part of the KGW. Manuscripts numbered 34 and higher are taken from the seventh part, those numbered 1–18 from the eighth. The manuscript number is followed in each case by the chronological fragment number in square brackets. The reason for drawing the starting line at the seventh part, manuscript 34 is the fact that this manuscript marks the beginning of the post-*Zarathustra* phase, which differs markedly, both in substance and in style, from Nietzsche's previous writing; and as I have mentioned, it is the post-*Zarathustra* Nietzsche whose philosophical projects, no longer finding adequate expression in his published writing, have to be gathered from the notebooks.

Let me repeat that this volume offers a *selection* of texts dating from 1885 to 1889. In contrast to Förster-Nietzsche and Gast, I do not pretend that the collection presented here forms a whole, let alone a whole fulfilling Nietzsche's true intentions at any point in his life. As far as we can tell, Nietzsche had no clear, settled and detailed intentions that might be followed in forming a book out of this material. What we have are fragments, and it is of fragments that the present selection consists. It should also be noted that this is a small selection: speaking very approximately, this volume may contain something in the order of a third of Nietzsche's handwritten material from the period.

Individual fragments, in contrast, have not been used selectively. They always appear here in their entirety, with two kinds of exception. The first is that Nietzsche's own occasional numbering of his texts has been deleted throughout, to avoid confusion with the editors' numbering. The second kind of exception concerns notebook 7, of 1886–87. In this manuscript Nietzsche later, in the autumn of 1888, assembled several of his texts under chapter headings derived from the plan for 'The Will to Power' set out

in 18[17], and the editors of the KGW decided to treat as one fragment all the texts that Nietzsche placed in one chapter. Given how disparate some of those texts are, this does not seem convincing. I thus felt free to take apart these overly large 'fragments' and include separately some of the texts they contained.

The texts are given here, as in the KGW, in chronological order. The KGW's numbering of the fragments has been retained, since the literature now always refers to Nietzsche's *Nachlass* texts by these numbers. Of course, the selectivity of the present collection means that here the numbers do not form a continuous sequence, only an ordered one.

Turning now to the material considerations guiding the present selection, the chief criterion for including a text here was its philosophical import – and not its historical or, more particularly, biographical interest. My aim was not to offer information about the development of Nietzsche's thought in this period or about the changes in his plans for a major work. Instead, the present collection is intended to serve those readers wishing to know what Nietzsche has to say on a number of topics and also whether what he says is true. Their interest may focus not really on Nietzsche himself but rather on his thoughts.

Hence, none of the many title pages that Nietzsche envisaged for future books has been included. Neither have projected tables of contents, lists of aphorisms and the like. For the same reason, earlier versions of texts eventually published in Nietzsche's books of these years have not been admitted, except where it seemed that the differences between the earlier and final versions could be illuminating. Nietzsche's excerpts from other authors, filling much of manuscript 11, for example, were excluded – again, except where Nietzsche's noting a passage from another author would appear to shed special light on his own thought. To be sure, I may have violated this rule unwittingly: probably not all of Nietzsche's quotes have been identified as such (and those identified have not all been traced to their sources).

For similar reasons, Nietzsche's reflections on himself and his life, not very numerous anyway, have been left aside. Exceptions to this rule are a number of notes which, on the face of it, seem merely to deal with particulars of Nietzsche's life, but in fact also provide a glimpse of some Nietzschean concern or assumption that is philosophically revealing (the very first note in the present selection, 34[3], is a case in point).

Following the criterion of philosophical import also meant entirely neglecting a number of themes to which Nietzsche devoted some attention in his writing, like that of men and women, or of 'peoples and fatherlands', as *Beyond Good and Evil* phrases it. To the best of my understanding, Nietzsche had nothing of interest to say on either of these matters – nothing of philosophical interest, that is. His views on women and on Germans, say, suffer from reckless generalising; to be more precise they are chauvinist. As such they may yield some interest for the historian of ideas, showing how deep these prejudices go in the late nineteenth century, even in an individual of so critical a cast of mind as Nietzsche. For someone interested in the topics themselves, Nietzsche's writings offer no enlightenment.

This raises the question of which topics the late Nietzsche does have enlightening things to say about. I shall try to answer that question in the remainder of the Introduction, in broad strokes of course, indicating a number of threads running through the material collected here and showing their philosophical importance. I shall suggest, moreover, that these threads have a common starting-point and that there is a central task Nietzsche is pursuing in his late writings.

The task

The task Nietzsche sets himself is to work out a comprehensive and credible naturalism. In BGE § 230 Nietzsche declares that we, 'free, *very* free spirits', have chosen the task of 'translating man back into nature'. The metaphor bears closer attention. Translating back is what you might do if the text you have is a translation, but a bad one: you might try to retrieve the original from the distorted version in your hands. Translating back is not a kind of translating. It does not aim to preserve as much as possible of the text we have before us, as translations do, but instead to recover what that text has failed to preserve. It is an 'untranslating', by analogy, say, to 'untying'. Without the metaphor, then, Nietzsche is saying that traditional conceptions give a distorted picture of what man is, indeed a rosy and flattering one, as he goes on to suggest; and the free spirits' chosen undertaking is to bring to light what was misrepresented in those conceptions. As an Enlightenment writer, Nietzsche both intends and hopes to cast off the misconceptions we have inherited. As a critical

writer, he does not presume to do this simply on the strength of deciding to; he does not pretend to say immediately what, viewed without distortions, man is. Bringing that to light means having to take the detour through traditional misconceptions. It means untranslating them.

Looked at this way, the polemical attitude implicit in many of the texts collected here becomes intelligible. It is not that Nietzsche frequently attacks particular figures. Rather, he seems to be constantly up in arms against enemies none the less enraging for remaining unnamed. Nowhere in these pages do we find a writer at peace, which Nietzsche often pretended to be and sometimes, perhaps unwittingly, actually was. This is not because Nietzsche had a warrior nature, as he claimed in *Ecce Homo* (Why I am so wise § 7). What we know suggests that he did not, and the passage from *Ecce Homo* is embarrassing to read not because of its arrogance, but because of its blindness. The polemical character of the writings presented in this collection has less to do with Nietzsche in particular than with the situation he faces: error can no longer be traced to a specific source, for instance the fraudulent despots and hypocritical priests of the classic Enlightenment scenario, and thus can no longer be rebutted in a polemical *hors d'oeuvre* which then gives way to an unperturbed statement of the truth. Instead, error is now in the air, and any conception of ourselves we are offered is likely to be one of the high-flown interpretations that, according to BGE § 230, tradition scribbled and painted over the original text of man as nature. What we are can only be recovered by fighting those interpretations.

However, the objective of our fight can be gathered, negatively, from the promises of the seductive voices in BGE § 230 to which Nietzsche asks us to turn a deaf ear: 'You are more! You are higher! You are of a different origin!' Accordingly, the naturalisers must be telling us: you are nothing more, nothing higher, not of a different origin – which, in turn, leaves us wondering: nothing more and higher than what, of an origin no different from what? This is precisely what the naturalisation project will have to determine: the contours of natural man which, once found, will permit us to dismiss as a mere product of human vanity any richer conception of ourselves. Nietzsche's project, then, is reductive. What he envisages is a human self-understanding in radically more modest terms than those traditionally employed. 'Reduction' is to be taken here not in one of the technical meanings current in chemistry and in philosophy of science, but in the ordinary sense where people are told to reduce their

weight: naturalisers invite us to cut back to the lowest level the conceptual expenses incurred in understanding ourselves.

Nietzsche is convinced that this basic conceptual level – poor but adequate, indeed singularly illuminating, for understanding ourselves – is that of the concepts we use to describe living things. To naturalise something is to understand it in terms of life. This is one reason why his reductive stance differs from that of contemporary reductionists – differs so much, indeed, that many will baulk at hearing him called a reductionist at all. Actually, there should be no quarrel here. Reduction in the general sense was certainly his enterprise. When, in that passage from BGE § 230, he describes the task at hand as that of mastering 'the many conceited and high-flown interpretations and secondary meanings scribbled and painted to this day over the eternal basic text of man as nature', the word 'high-flown' (*schwärmerisch*) leaves no doubt that philosophers are going to see their conceptual wings clipped. Nietzsche's aim was not reduction in the stronger and more specific sense current today, reduction of the kind that eliminates mental terms in favour of physical ones or, more relevantly, concepts of life processes in favour of those of mechanical or electrical processes. He saw no reason to think that mechanical processes could account for life.

Quite the contrary, he saw reason to think that there is no such thing as a merely mechanical process. Pursuing 'the human analogy consistently to the end', he held that the concept of force needs supplementing with an inner side, and that motion is a mere symptom of inner events.[2] A mechanistic reduction was thus a case of putting the cart before the horse. There is nothing deeper for our understanding to turn to than processes of life. It would be misleading to express this by saying that Nietzsche's naturalism is biologistic. After all, he found plenty to disagree with in the biology of his day, even if the notes from his last years, especially, show him deeply indebted to the ideas of biologists. It would be better to say that Nietzsche's naturalism is the commitment to a philosophy that is, from beginning to end, a philosophy of life. ' "Being" –', he notes in 2[172], 'we have no other idea of this than "*living*".'

In this way, Nietzsche's chosen task of translating man back into nature becomes more specific, as the task of understanding some of the basic phenomena of human existence in terms of life. This task can only be

[2] See 36[31]; also 34[247], 1[28], 2[69].

completed in a responsible way on the basis of a viable understanding of life. Hence Nietzsche writes: 'here a new, more definite version of the concept "life" is needed' (2[190]).

That passage continues: 'My formula for it is: life is will to power.'[3] While in the late notes other famous notions from Nietzsche's earlier writings loom much less large than before, the will to power is their central theme. The book that Nietzsche intended to write in this period would certainly have borne the right title.

Will to power

The first difficulty that might strike readers here is the phrasing: why 'will *to* power' and not 'of' or 'for'? In fact, 'will to power' does mean 'will for power': a will to power is a will such that the thing willed is power.[4] The expression 'will to power' was presumably modelled on Schopenhauer's 'will to life', to which Nietzsche's concept was meant to be the counterpart.[5]

The term 'will to power' may have recommended itself for a less respectable reason as well. As GM III § 28, for example, shows, Nietzsche had a tendency to regard the meaning of something, in the sense used in phrases like 'the meaning of human existence', as something one would refer to in answering the question 'To what end such and such?', in this case 'To what end human existence?' The expression 'will to power', then, unlike the other expressions that would have been possible, had the advantage of seeming to banish the threat of meaninglessness: this will is not in vain, because it is a will to something, namely to power. The reasoning is doubly fallacious: meaning and purpose may or may not coincide and, above all, purpose and content are two different things. Still, it may have been this reasoning which made the phrasing attractive.

[3] Similarly, BGE § 13. The connection between the idea of translating man back into nature (BGE § 230) and the doctrine of will to power is confirmed, if somewhat laconically, by 2[131]: 'Homo natura. The "will to power".'

[4] For evidence see GM II § 12 and, in the present collection, fragments 14[79], 14[121], 14[174]. Also revealing is the earlier note IV 23[63], dating from 1876/77 and thus not included here, where Nietzsche uses 'will to power' without terminological weight. There it clearly means a person's state of willing power.

[5] Z II, Of Self-Overcoming, makes this evident. For Schopenhauer, see Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, 3rd edn (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1859), § 54.

A further question is what precisely is asserted in the doctrine of will to power, for Nietzsche puts forward different claims in different passages. One is the claim in GM II § 12:

> that all that happens in the organic world is an *overpowering*, a *becoming master*.

The natural way to read this would be as saying that however different the things happening in the organic world otherwise are, they share this character of being overpowerings. The cat's purring, my making breakfast, Michael's falling asleep, they all are overpowerings. This, however, can hardly be what Nietzsche has in mind, for two reasons. For one thing, he would in effect be applying a distinction between how things appear and how they are – precisely the distinction he attacks so forcefully in other passages. He must be applying that distinction, for there seems to be no other way to make sense of the statement that this event is a cat's purring together with the statement that this event is an overpowering, unless we add such riders as 'on the face of it', 'appears to be' on the one hand, and 'really', 'essentially' on the other.

The second reason not to follow GM II § 12's exposition here is that in this reading, the doctrine of will to power would not satisfy Nietzsche's intention in turning from a mechanistic understanding of events to one put in terms of life; and, remember, will to power was to be 'the new, more definite version of the concept "life" '. As he says in 36[31], Nietzsche turned to life, and thus to will to power, as a way of supplementing with an inner side, even 'an inner world', the 'force' spoken of by the physicists. However, what happens in the organic world does not acquire an inner side simply by virtue of being an overpowering. An overpowering is as much an outer event as the cat's purring is.

Zarathustra, in the speech on self-overcoming, propounded a different version of the doctrine of will to power:

> Where I found a living thing, there I found will to power.

However, he evidently puts it this way in order to give himself a smoother argument for his claim that even those who serve and obey are inspired by a will to power. For the larger theoretical purposes that Nietzsche pursues in other passages, this version is certainly too weak. If the will to power is

only something to be found, possibly alongside other things, in everything living, we cannot reach anything like the famous line in 38[12]:

> *This world is the will to power – and nothing besides!*

A more promising thought comes from 14[121]:

> That there is considerable enlightenment to be gained by positing power in place of the individual 'happiness' each living thing is supposed to be striving for: 'It strives for power, for an augmentation of power'.[6]

The interesting suggestion here is that will to power should be understood not, as in GM II § 12, as a uniform *character*, but as a uniform kind of *source* of whatever happens in the organic world. Aristotle taught that in all their actions, humans strive for one highest goal, which is happiness; and while he denied that non-human animals are capable of happiness, both Schopenhauer and the Utilitarians suggested that they pursue happiness as we do, though they find it in different things. Substituting in this statement 'power' or 'increase of power' for 'happiness', and extending the range of creatures who share the striving from all animals to everything that lives, we arrive at Nietzsche's doctrine of the will to power. In this reading, then, the doctrine maintains that any living thing does whatever it does for the sake of gaining power or of augmenting the power it already has.

This reading does supplement the physicists' notion of force with an inner world, as required in 36[31]. It is not that the living only do things of a certain sort. Rather, they do things – a great variety of things – with an intention of a certain sort; and if anything can be called inner, it is an intention like this. Moreover, at least some of Nietzsche's sweeping statements on the will to power become, if not derivable, at least intelligible with this reading. 'Life is will to power', we read earlier (2[190]), but this statement is certainly not true: something's being alive and its striving for more power remain two different things, and would do even if they were always found together. Still, 'life is will to power' is an understandable overstatement of the claim that, in everything they do, living things strive for more power. Finally, this reading is strongly supported by one of Nietzsche's published statements of his doctrine, BGE § 36. This passage

[6] See also 11[111].

considers the possibility that 'all organic functions can be derived from this will to power'; if they could, it continues, we would be entitled to hold that 'all effective force is nothing other than: will to power'. Like the present reading, then, BGE § 36 takes will to power to be not a shared character, but a shared kind of source, of what happens in the organic world.

It might now be asked what grounds Nietzsche believed he had for moving, within BGE § 36, from the statement that 'all organic functions' spring from the will to power to the statement that 'all effective force' does so. Similarly, in 14[121], having said that living things strive for power or for more power, he goes on to claim

> That all driving force is will to power, that there is no physical, dynamic or psychological force apart from this.

Again, in GM II § 12 the domain of the will to power is abruptly extended from 'all that happens in the organic world' to 'all that happens'. What could seem to justify these swift transitions? Nietzsche had no qualms here because, as mentioned earlier, he rejected the very idea of a merely mechanical event:

> one must understand all motion [...] as mere symptoms of inner events (36[31]).

Thus all motion, organic or not, has an inner side; and once it is established that in the organic world this inner side is will to power, it may seem a small step to claim that it is will to power in all that happens. The difference between the organic and the inorganic world is superficial, since it does not touch on the inner sources of things happening. The somewhat cavalier fashion in which Nietzsche proceeds here may be explained by the fact that in this point he is following his 'great teacher Schopenhauer' (GM Preface 5), who was quite as swift to claim that 'it is one and the same will that manifests itself both in the forces of inorganic and the forms of organic nature.'[7] As far as its scope is concerned, Nietzsche's 'will to power' simply takes over the place of Schopenhauer's 'will'.

The great defect of the present reading is that, understood this way, the doctrine of will to power has no chance of being true. Take the animals we know best, humans: there seem to be no good grounds whatsoever for

[7] Schopenhauer, *Die Welt*, vol. 1, § 27, p. 170; see also § 23, pp. 140–41.

saying that power is what they strive for in everything they do, even if it should be true to say that whenever they succeed in what they do they feel better or indeed more powerful. True, neither is it happiness they are striving for in whatever they do. Nietzsche is certainly right to say that 'Man does *not* strive for happiness' (TI Maxims 12). Our experience shows that humans do not strive for any one thing at all; instead, different people, and the same people at different times, and indeed the same people at the same time, strive for different things. To say that these different things only represent various amounts of power seems arbitrary, for why should ice-cream be, or represent, power? The reply is sometimes made that it is never the ice-cream, but one's showing oneself to be master over the ice-cream, that is sought for.[8] In fact, though, this is not our experience. What we find ourselves pursuing is the thing, not the fact of having subdued it. Nor would it be easy to explain along these lines why the demand for ice-cream tends to go up on hot days: after all, the pleasures of mastery should be independent of the temperature. Indeed, in the case of some things we strive for, it makes little sense to speak of 'mastering' them at all. If, say, relief from the constant stress in your office is what you are after, then even when you have achieved it this will not count as having subdued it; and thus neither did you strive to subdue it before you had achieved it.

While it is a defect that the present reading makes the doctrine of will to power come out false, it is not a decisive one: I see no reading intelligible in itself and reasonably true to the texts that does better. The will to power as a theory is really sunk, just as the book of that title is – and perhaps the book sank because the theory did. The theory is Nietzsche's belated attempt to be a 'philosopher' of the sort he simultaneously denounces. It is a piece of mummification, of Egypticism, to use his own terms in TI Reason 1. It is no less 'mummifying' to cut down the variety of things striven for by humans – and by living things in general – to that one thing, power, than to arrest the diversity of shapes a thing may exhibit over time, as the philosophers do. To be sure, Nietzsche's will to power is not a single thing, and is present only in the manifold willings to power; to indicate this, Nietzsche often uses phrases like 'points of will' (11[73]), 'dynamic quanta' (14[79]) or 'quanta of will' (14[82]). Still, the claim that all the willings originating change are willings for *power* displays a

[8] In 9[151] Nietzsche may be read as taking this line himself.

generalisation, a simplification, a making uniform as ruthless as any that Nietzsche criticised.

This may explain why Nietzsche, at times proclaiming the thesis that life is will to power as an established truth,[9] is curiously coy about it at other times, as in BGE § 36, where the doctrine is insistently presented as a mere hypothesis. It is quite likely that Nietzsche actually was divided about his idea, on the one hand too eagerly hoping to have found the philosophical solution to all the riddles of the world (38[12]) not to persuade himself again and again that he had indeed done so; on the other hand too critical to believe that things are really as simple as that idea makes them.

The reason Nietzsche's idea of the will to power is so philosophically significant, then, is not that it describes the world's 'intelligible character' (BGE § 36) or 'the innermost essence of being' (14[80]) – in fact it does no such thing. It is significant because it served Nietzsche as the conceptual basis, albeit a much too narrow conceptual basis, for his attempt to reinterpret human existence in terms of life. It served him as the grammar of the target language when he tried to 'translate man back into nature' (BGE § 230). That Nietzschean attempt, in turn, is philosophically significant not because it was the first or even the only one of its kind at the time, for in fact it belongs to the broad movement towards a 'philosophy of life' dominant in Continental Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is significant because of its radicality. And while 'will to power' was too narrow a translation manual, what he did in using it is not only a remarkable feat, but also philosophically illuminating. For while not 'all driving force is will to power' (14[121]), some certainly is; and more importantly, the translating back that Nietzsche did on the basis of the concept of will to power provides a model for similar attempts to be undertaken today, on a less restricted conceptual basis. This implies that the task is not yet completed, and that it remains a task for philosophy.

Coming to know

Turning now to Nietzsche's reinterpretation of basic phenomena of human existence in terms of life, I shall limit myself to two topics. One is cognition, the other religion and morality; I will leave aside such themes as art and history for reasons of space. In fact, even if Nietzsche considered

[9] Notably in Z II, Of Self-Overcoming, but also in, for instance, 14[82] and 14[121].

'will to power' the central concept in understanding living things, he did not cast all his reinterpretations of cognition, or of morality and religion, in terms of this doctrine. 'Will to power' was to be his 'philosophy', in the dubious sense of the word touched upon earlier; but he did not allow his philosophy to regiment all of his thought. In this respect he was right about himself when he claimed to mistrust and avoid system-builders (TI Maxims 26).

However, cognition is based on will to power in 2[90]:

> On the understanding of *logic::: the will to sameness is the will to power.*
>
> – the belief that something is thus and thus, the essence of *judgement*, is the consequence of a will that as far as possible it *shall* be the same.[10]

Knowledge involves judgement, for Nietzsche as for the philosophical tradition; and judgement, he tells us here, involves believing that something is thus and thus. But according to this passage, such believing is based on willing things to be such and such. Since this willing is a kind of will to power, knowledge is based on will to power.

Why, though, does Nietzsche speak of sameness here, as in fact he does quite often in this context, if what he means is inherence, that is, the relation between a property and a thing having that property? It is inherence that he means, for otherwise the inserted phrase 'the essence of judgement' would make no sense.[11] As we can use 'is' both to indicate identity and to indicate inherence, Nietzsche probably confused the two. The claim he is putting forward here is actually that *believing* things to be thus and thus rests on *willing* things as far as possible to be thus and thus. The material question now is why this should be so. Why should it not be possible simply to consider things to be such and such, with no willing involved?

Nietzsche notes in 7[54]:

> Knowledge as such impossible within becoming; so how is knowledge possible? As error about itself, as will to power, as will to deception.[12]

The verdict here 'knowledge as such impossible' is not based on the traditional epistemological scruple that we can never justify our beliefs

[10] See also 1[125]. [11] This reading is also supported by 4[8].
[12] 36[23] presents a similar line of thought.

against all reasonable doubts, but on metaphysical worries. In a world of becoming, Nietzsche says, knowledge does not find a foothold. It is not that everything changes so fast that knowledge cannot keep pace with what happens. It can: we do describe things moving, despite Zeno's paradoxes. The idea is that in a world of becoming, there are no knowables.[13] For in a world of becoming there is no being.[14] The sense in which there is no being is not that there is no reality underlying or encompassing things, but simply that things fail to be *thus and thus*. The very idea of something being thus and thus, of being some way, is inadmissible.

Given that being, in the humble predicative sense of the word, is not to be found in the world, how do we come to speak of it all the time? Nietzsche's answer is that we put it in. We 'made' the world 'to be' (9[91]); not in the sense of calling it into existence, certainly (although Nietzsche occasionally does use the vocabulary of creating), but in the sense of imprinting upon it the schema of things being some way (9[97]).

We put being into the world, and we did it 'for practical, useful, perspectival reasons' (11[73]). We need a world of this kind. We could not live in a world of sheer becoming, so we posit being, to preserve ourselves.[15] The being of things, posited rather than found, is only '*a perspectival illusion*' (9[41]), however – it is prompted only by our needs. Still, it is the illusion that provides the basis for any truth. Hence Nietzsche's intentionally shocking claim:

> *Truth is the kind of error* without which a particular kind of living creature could not live. The value for life is what ultimately decides.[16]

In accordance with the programmatic statement in BGE § 230, then, Nietzsche does understand cognition in terms of life. His argument runs as follows. Knowledge involves believing that something is thus and thus. Such believing is always false, since this is a world of becoming, and in such a world there is no being thus and thus. Hence we do not find such being, but posit it; and we do this because we could not live without it. We thus know only because we live and try to keep on living – without that, cognition would not encounter anything knowable.

[13] This, I take it, is the point Nietzsche is expressing, not very happily, when he says that 'the world is false', for example in 9[91].
[14] See 14[93] on this point.
[15] This line of reasoning also appears in 34[49], 34[247], 36[23] and 14[93].
[16] 34[253]. A similar line of thought appears in BGE § 4 and, much earlier, in the eighth paragraph of the essay 'On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense' (1873).

Several things call for comment here, of which I shall take up three. First, this understanding of cognition in terms of life does not amount to a pragmatic theory of truth, as various writers have suggested. A pragmatic theory of truth holds that a statement is true just in case it fulfils certain needs or desires; for example, just in case it enhances one's feeling of power. While there are passages that support the ascription of such a view to Nietzsche,[17] it does seem to be incompatible with other passages, for example his insistence, in 11[108], that 'the truth is ugly'. Materially speaking, Nietzsche would seem to be on the right track with the latter statement, and not with the former: perhaps *the* truth is not ugly, but certainly some truths are. The argument I outlined in the previous paragraph shows where the pragmatic interpretation goes wrong. The pragmatic line of interpretation requires any putative piece of knowledge to furnish proof of some service rendered. But in the present line of argument, it is not individual statements which earn their status by being useful. Instead, it is the form of knowability, that is, things being some way, which, once projected onto the world, satisfies a basic need we have.

For all his polemic against Kant, in this respect Nietzsche continues the tradition of transcendental philosophy. Kant's concern was to understand the objectivity of judgements in general, not to establish standards of justification for particular judgements. Similarly, when Nietzsche writes

> We are 'knowers' to the extent that we are able to satisfy our needs (34[46])

he is not suggesting that we satisfy our needs statement by statement. His point is that in general we hold the position of knowers who confront knowables because we need to do so. Just as in Kant the objectivity of judgements is partly our own doing, so in Nietzsche we ourselves posit the needed being of things. Kant and Nietzsche differ in the kind of danger that is being warded off: in Kant's view a world without the form of objectivity would be unintelligible for us, while in Nietzsche's a world without being would be unliveable for us. Nietzsche has thus granted life the position that understanding used to hold, but on the new basis transcendental conditions of knowledge are provided, just as before.

Secondly, this understanding of cognition in terms of life does not feature the will to power, even though, as we saw above, life was supposed

[17] For example 34[264] and 9[91].

to be essentially will to power. Instead, Nietzsche's argument turns on our seeking to preserve ourselves, which is a different thing.[18] He does not, then, abide by the strategy of parsimony of principles that led him (or so he claims in BGE §§ 13 and 36) to make will to power the sole moving force among living things. And there are good reasons for him to abandon it. It is not credible that by sheer exuberance of force we should have turned a world of becoming into a world of things being some way, that the 'narrower, abridged and simplified world' (9[41]) we have set up should have been born from an urge to show our strength – the urge characteristic of will to power, according to BGE § 13. The origin of a world made to be is not ecstatic overflowing (14[89]) but need.

Yet this need is life's need, just as it is life which expresses itself in ecstatic overflowing. This is to say that Nietzsche's concept of life is ambivalent, and so is the attempted interpretation of basic phenomena of human existence in terms of life. The fullness of life manifests itself in boundless unbelief and 'freedom of the mind' (9[39]), in denying anything to be this way rather than another (9[41]). On the other hand, in 9[91] 'life is founded on the presupposition of a belief in things lasting and regularly recurring', and 'logicising, rationalising, systematising' are taken 'as life's resources'.[19] Nietzsche failed to make up his mind as to which kind of life he meant,[20] thus leaving his project of reinterpretation indeterminate.

Thirdly, the central premise of Nietzsche's argument is not justified, and neither is it self-evident. This premise has it that ours is a world of becoming which 'could not, in the strict sense, be "grasped", be "known" ' (36[23]) and into which things' being some way could only be 'inserted' (11[73]). People generally assume the opposite. They suppose that snow comes as white, and that we have not had to trim things into such shapes for the sake of preserving ourselves. Now, Nietzsche knows that people think this way, and indeed his argument explains why they do so. Yet why could they not just be right, which would also explain it, and more simply?

Nietzsche never said why not. He did, though, indicate what kind of suspicion such a line of thought would prompt – that of wishful thinking.

[18] See BGE § 13, also 14[82].
[19] A similar line of thought already appears in GS § 111 and in BGE § 24.
[20] This duality of conceptions of life is related to the opposition of Dionysos and Apollo in Nietzsche's early *The Birth of Tragedy*, which is taken up in the late notes, e.g., 2[106]. In a curious way it returns in Nietzsche's self-characterisation in 7[23].

It is just too good to be true that what we encounter should be things with properties.[21] Nietzsche, in contrast, often saw himself as a sceptic, wary above all of falling for 'fat and good-natured desirabilities' (BGE § 39), and things' being some way seemed to be one of those. In this passage of *Beyond Good and Evil*, he goes on to remind us that the same holds for the negative case. Just as the desirable need not obtain, neither is the harmful and dangerous precluded from obtaining. He does not, however, go on to remind himself that the opposite statement is also true. No, the desirable is not bound to hold nor the undesirable to be absent; but neither is the undesirable bound to hold and the desirable to be absent. Desirabilities are, literally, neither here nor there. In never even entertaining the thought that this might be a world of things being some way, and thus a world ready for cognition, Nietzsche was bracing himself for an epistemological worst case scenario. Now, however, without the need for such a heroic stance, we no longer need to imagine that beyond our garden of things being some way there are tigers roaming, chaos reigning or, more philosophically, a world of sheer becoming.[22] In fact, it would seem to be in the spirit of naturalism, in the sense explained above, to reject such notions. If man as nature is the basic text we are trying to restore, it is more likely that the world is already humanly intelligible, and is not only made to be so by us. Where else but at the world's knee should we have acquired our understanding of what we encounter?

Living well

Nietzsche's project of 'translating man back into nature' required a reinterpretation of the phenomena of religion and morality. Indeed, perhaps there was nothing it required more urgently. The supernatural stands at the centre of the dominant religious tradition of the West, Christianity, and ever since Christianity acquired its dominant position, morality too has been understood as independent from, if not opposed to, the course of nature. In religion and morality Nietzsche very properly saw the chief fortress to attack under the banner of 'man as nature'. And that is what he did: to no topic, probably, did he devote more attention in his late notes

[21] That this is Nietzsche's view is suggested by passages like GS § 109; BGE §§ 2, 5, 25, 34, 39; 7[54].
[22] For the tiger see 'On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense', third paragraph; for chaos GS § 109.

than this one. Likewise, most of his published writings of the period deal, largely or exclusively, with religion and morality, as their titles show: 'Beyond Good and Evil', 'On the Genealogy of Morality', 'Twilight of the Idols', 'The Antichrist'.

In fact, given this series of works published or, in the case of *The Antichrist*, intended for publication by Nietzsche himself, one might wonder why the unpublished notes on these topics still deserve consideration: did he not exploit them to the full in the published books? The fact is that he did not. The published writings, probably for purposes of exposition, draw their lines starkly, while the notes admit of contingencies and alternatives, thereby producing a subtler and indeed more credible picture. An instance of this is relevant at this point. I have been speaking of 'religion and morality' as if these formed one topic, and the published Nietzsche often writes this way, for instance passing smoothly, in the arguments of *Genealogy* II and III, over the difference between them. It is the unpublished Nietzsche who reminds us that 'in itself, a religion has nothing to do with morality' (2[197]). Thus, the link between religion and morality, taken for granted in the published writings, is really accidental, something resulting from the peculiarity of Christianity (and Islam) in being

> *essentially* moral religions, ones that prescribe how we *ought* to live and gain a hearing for their demands with rewards and punishments. (2[197])

It would therefore be a mistake to read *Genealogy* and *The Antichrist* as presenting a philosophy of religion. In joining morality and religion as intimately as they do, they show themselves to be concerned above all with Christianity. True, the notes do not cast their net substantially wider: reflections on religion in general are rare, and Christianity is the focus throughout. Yet by distinguishing between the special case of Christianity as a moral religion and religion as such, the notes, despite their critique of Christianity, open the space for a positive conception of religion – positive, that is, with respect to life. Nietzsche never filled that space. He did, though, frequently use terms like 'God' and, especially, 'divine' without the dismissive tone one would expect in a critic of religion, often even with glowing enthusiasm.[23] Indeed, he can occasionally be found defending the truly divine against its Christian detractors.[24]

[23] See, for instance, 2[107], 14[11], 14[89]; see also GM II § 23.

[24] See 10[90], 11[95], 11[122].

A distinction similar to that between Christianity and religion also needs to be drawn in the case of Nietzsche's critique of morality, a point that does appear in the published writings, but becomes especially clear in the notes. Contrary to what many passages, published and unpublished, suggest,[25] the target of Nietzsche's critique is actually not morality, it is *a* morality. Consider 10[86]: here we have, on the one hand, 'the modest virtues' of 'little people' exalted by Jesus and Paul, and on the other 'the more valuable qualities of virtue and of man' which became discredited in the process. What Nietzsche is calling into question here is one morality, that of the little people, in contrast to another, the one with the more valuable qualities. He is evidently not calling into question morality *tout court* or 'all morality' (GM Preface 6).

On the contrary, he insists that we do need some morality.[26] His argument runs like this. A morality is an ordering of human traits and actions by the relation 'better than'. Such orderings tell people what is likely to preserve them, to make them grow or make them decline. Knowing that, however, is itself a part of your strength, less by saving you from mistakes than by giving an interpretation of yourself and the world that answers to your needs and aspirations. A morality allows you to make practical sense of the world: you know where *your* hopes and *your* dangers lie, and that consciousness makes your life a better one. Thus you need a morality, since you grow by knowing what you are and where you are heading.[27]

Actually, the need for morality is normally a social rather than an individual need:

> *Up to now a morality has been, above all, the expression of a conservative will to breed the same species.* (35[20])

As the context indicates, 'species' does not here mean a kind of animal, but a community of humans. So in the human case, breeding works with

[25] This applies notably to the title of GM, which should read *On the Genealogy of a Morality*. The title of BGE may also mislead, as Nietzsche admits by expressly insisting that 'Beyond Good and Evil' does not mean 'Beyond Good and Bad' (GM I § 17). See also passages in 5[98], 10[45], 10[192].

[26] 35[17], 10[68]; also 10[194]; perhaps 7[42] can be read this way as well.

[27] Ascribing this argument to Nietzsche is based on 35[5], 35[17], 40[69], 9[66], 9[77], 11[73]; GS §§ 268, 271, and also the splendid GS § 289.