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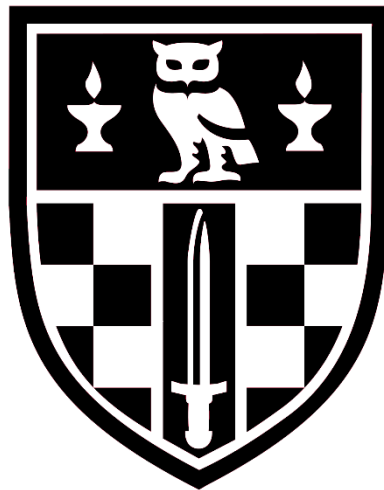
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PRODUCTIVE OMISSIONS IN NIETZSCHE'S PHILOSOPHICAL PSYCHOLOGY

Richard J. Elliott



A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
PHILOSOPHY AT BIRKBECK COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF
LONDON IN CANDIDACY OF THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY

March 2022

DECLARATION

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Abstract:

“Productive Omissions in Nietzsche’s Philosophical Psychology”

Nietzsche’s mature philosophy expresses a persistent concern with psychological self-cultivation.

This thesis will discuss various kinds of ‘productive omission’, as Nietzsche sees them, in his philosophical psychology, and how they might be employed in his model of self-cultivation. While this term is not one that itself appears in Nietzsche’s texts, I use this broad term to denote the various ways Nietzsche thinks it possible to omit some elements of mental content. Nietzsche argues that such omissions count as active and deliberate, even if apparently not always intentionally or consciously done – indeed, such omissions seem to be distinctly non-conscious. I wish to offer descriptive accounts of such omissions, for Nietzsche. Further, in referring to these omissions as being ‘productive’, it is my contention that there is for Nietzsche a prescriptive function to the processes accounted for. In this sense, I aim to attribute their capability of being ‘productive’ in the context of their positive role in Nietzschean psychology.

Since the germination of a robust Anglophone Nietzsche scholarship 35 years ago, there has been an emphasis on unity, harmony and inclusion when discussing what Nietzsche thinks of as an ideal model of a ‘healthy’ individual psychology. This trend has got something right to some extent about Nietzsche’s model, and it has duly attracted attention. However, the predominance of these themes has skewed the picture of what Nietzsche’s fuller psychological model (and any promise it holds) actually looks like. The intention of my thesis is to show that these various means of omission need to be accounted for within any account of Nietzsche’s philosophical psychology. The Nietzschean ideal is, I argue, just as much a product of productive omission as it is of inclusion and integration.

For my family

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PREFACE & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I first acquired a hand-me-down copy of Nietzsche's *Beyond Good & Evil* as a teenager, from the older sister of a girlfriend. She gave me the book, informing me that her charming but traditional French mother held deep reservations about its moral character, and the perceived bad influence it might be having on one of her daughters. In both respects, I suspected I had something in common with this pre-owned paperback. I read its first few chapters on a return trip from the south of France, without understanding much of what Nietzsche was saying. If the past 12 years are much to go by, hopefully I've got to a point where I can claim to understand a little more than I did on that trip.

My first more thorough engagement with Nietzsche was a year-long focus on that same text for my A levels. I received a 'C', or 'Pass', for my exam on Nietzsche – hardly a promising start for a future specialist academic career. But his style, what I then took to be his safety-pin-through-the-nose attitude to subverting orthodox philosophical argumentation, along with his emphasis on the individual's creative power to facilitate human flourishing, seemed very appealing and, dare I admit, personally empowering. Nietzsche also came across as a bit of a bastard: his words felt bombastic and dangerous. But just as the way those described by David Hume as the 'rough heroes' in literature and film can demand your intellectual and affective sympathies, I felt something like this towards Nietzsche. Part of this was because, scratching the surface of the bombastic claims celebrating power and strength and railing against compassion and duty, one could at the same time feel a desperately personal project, motivated to probe both subversively and constructively in equal parts about the conditions of a 'good' life. In contrast with the so-called 'improvers of humanity', those the object of one of Nietzsche's myriad critiques, here was someone whose inquiry seemed to take proper stock of human needs, drives, and their socio-historical situation. These early formulations ring true still today in my goal here, in discussing aspects of Nietzsche's philosophical psychology.

Apart from just two weeks of a social philosophy undergraduate course, I avoided serious study of Nietzsche for four years after this. But in line with Nietzsche's metaphor about our mental economy resembling a stomach (more on this in Chapter 2...), I returned to my long-digesting thoughts about Nietzsche on an intercollegiate MA module at Birkbeck. Many walks in the forest with my much-missed Patterdale/Jack Russell cross, Katie, were spent mulling over issues stimulated by Nietzsche's difficult yet richly rewarding texts, while studying this module. This undertaking concretized my plan to write doctoral studies on Nietzsche, quickly working out that it was Nietzsche's philosophical psychology I was most interested in. Attempting to produce a doctoral thesis beckoned the daunting prospect of breaking new ground in a field well-tilled in recent years. But not only do I find this field

a stubbornly fertile one. In a roundabout way, I've found that many of my earliest intuitions about Nietzsche brought at least new ways of approaching certain scholarly issues.

I shall save the specifics for the Introduction. For now, invoking a remark attributed to Bismarck about laws being a bit like sausages, I will extend the comparison to doctoral theses: however gratifying the end product might be, it is usually best to remain ignorant of how they were made. In my own case, I am thankful that the customary anxieties that come with the territory of producing a piece of work of this size and of (hopefully) some quality have been minimized, thanks to a wide net of support from others.

My greatest debt for their assistance in the production of this thesis must be expressed to my doctoral supervisors, Ken Gemes and Andrew Huddleston.

When I first approached Ken about pursuing doctoral study in the summer of 2016, he said while he would welcome the prospect of taking me on at Birkbeck the following year, he put a premium on where he thought would have been best for me to undertake my studies. He cared "about individuals, not institutions" he said in his office that day, and nothing in my experiences with him since has led me to in any way doubt this. He has fought my corner in numerous ways, and provided constant encouragement, even when that has meant offering suggestions for how to strengthen my arguments against his own interpretive positions on Nietzsche. Ken's influence runs between the lines all over this thesis, even (perhaps especially) in the places which express direct interpretive disagreement with him. A remarkable discovery was made around two years into my doctorate, where Ken hadn't actually realized he was officially one of my supervisors. It is testament to his generous spirit that he had done more for me than many supervisors do for their students that they are aware they are officially responsible for.

My gratitude to Andrew will I hope also be evident from my work: the influence he has had on it is as great as Ken's. Andrew has been invaluable in patiently facilitating my doctoral research. The many drafts of chapters I have sent him were always returned with constructive and encouraging comments throughout the process. It is no exaggeration to say there would not be a working thesis, had it not been for his commitment to helping me improve and clarify my ideas, including those formulated in the many early drafts of chapters that I now cannot re-read without feeling embarrassed. He's been incredibly helpful in many ways, from devising strategies for defending my arguments at conferences, to early career discussions, to supporting me in professional difficulties, to facilitating a much-needed 'monastic sojourn' during a certain international pandemic, to the occasional cocktail or good lunch to wind down after gruelling academic workshops. In the spirit of what he wrote in his own doctoral

thesis about his own supervisor, Andrew's work on Nietzsche demonstrates that one can be engaged in thorough scholarly interpretation while also in the service of the wider humanistic ideal which most philosophy can (and I think should) strive to promote.

Taken together, I could not have asked for a better pair of supervisors. London has in all likelihood more quality Nietzsche scholars per square mile than anywhere else on Earth. Through their organization of the London Nietzsche seminars, Andrew and Ken have cultivated a marvellous setting for exploring Nietzsche's philosophy, both in the stimulating environment of the seminar room and at the convivial dinners that usually follow them (not to mention continuing the discussion over cigars and digestifs – again with that 'mind as a stomach' theme...). Now that Andrew has accepted a much-deserved Professorial Chair at Warwick, I count myself exceptionally lucky to have been in the right place at the right time for such a fecund environment for any budding Nietzsche scholar.

My notable thanks also go to Chris Sykes, for great discussions about Nietzsche over hearty Friday lunches, and the pints of beer in Soho that would frequently follow them; Gudrun von Tevenar, whose thoughtful commentary on my work has always been illuminating and humane; and Hallvard Lillehammer, a constant provider of useful advice and encouragement in both his professional and personal capacity.

Were it not for the provision by Birkbeck College, University of London of an SSHP Research Scholarship for full funding for three and a half years, I would not have been able to undertake a PhD. The Department of Philosophy has also gone above and beyond in offering me the opportunity to teach on various modules. On this front, I thank Ken and Andrew again, Robert Northcott, Hallvard Lillehammer again, Cristian Constantinescu, James Nguyen, and especially Stacie Friend. Some of the ideas conveyed in this thesis (especially those in Chapter Four) came from teaching preparation. Chapter Five was redrafted significantly while preparing a lecture on Nietzsche's eternal recurrence. I am grateful to have benefited from interactions with a great number of talented students on these modules.

The material in this thesis has been improved by questions, discussions, criticisms and comments from audiences at the International Society for Nietzsche Studies 2019 workshop at Brown University, the International Nietzsche Congress in 2018 and 2019 at the Nietzsche Documentation Centre in Naumburg-Saale, the North American Nietzsche Society 2018 Conference at Stanford University, the Friedrich Nietzsche Society of Great Britain and Ireland conferences in 2018 at Newcastle University and in 2019 at Tilburg University, numerous Postgraduate Research Seminars

and a London Nietzsche Seminar at Birkbeck College, University of London, and at presentations or lectures at the Universities of Essex, Manchester, Oxford, and Warsaw.

A shorter version of Chapter One appears in *Nietzsche on Memory and History*, eds. Anthony K. Jensen and Carlotta Santini, De Gruyter, 2021 (see Elliott 2021). A slightly shorter version of Chapter Three appears in Vol. 63.1, the Proceedings for the International Society of Nietzsche Studies, of *Inquiry*, 2020 (see Elliott 2020).

Notwithstanding the flaws which no doubt remain, this thesis has received encouragement, comments and constructive criticism from (aside from the aforementioned) Mark Alfano, Glen Baier, Rebecca Bamford, Jessica Berry, Stephen Bonnell, Carlo Chiurco, Maudemarie Clark, Daniel Conway, John Cottingham, Kaitlyn Creasy, Rachel Cristy, Hugo Drochon, Giorgio Durante, Guy Elgat, Fiona Ellis, Marcello Garribo, Tom Hanauer, Susan James, Chris Janaway, Anthony Jensen, Paul Katsafanas, Michael Lacewing, Laura Langone, Brian Leiter, Paul S. Loeb, Christine Lopes, Nick Martin, Simon May, Allison Merrick, James Mollison, Sybilla Pereira, Rory Phillips, Alex Prescott-Couch, Justin Remhof, Mattia Riccardi, Martin Ruehl, the late Sir Roger Scruton, Rachel Silverbloom, Mikołaj Ślawkowski-Rode, Andreas Urs Sommer, Emma Syea, Ralph Weir, Jane White, Rhys Woodward, Gabriella Wyer, Jason Yonover, and Gabriel Zamosc.

I owe a great and specifically non-academic debt of gratitude to four others: Chris Hall, companion on many adventures, on or off two wheels; Lewis Bolland, with whom the only thing I have in common is exactly the same sense of humour; Richard Willats, fellow woodland fish walker and my oldest friend; and Jasmine Majeed, the Swaggiest legend who always had faith.

Above all, I must thank my family, for their apparently endless supply of love and support.

To my father Dr Michael James Elliott, who has learned to enjoy the journey; to my brother Andrew James Elliott, globe-trotting adventurer who gives life an extra squeeze; to my mother Tina Theresa Elliott, the other half of a long-running night-time phone correspondence.

Richard James Elliott

London

March 2022

Introduction

Nietzsche's mature philosophy expresses a persistent concern with psychological self-cultivation. This thesis will discuss various kinds of 'productive omission', as Nietzsche sees them, in his philosophical psychology, and how they might be employed in his model of self-cultivation. While this term is not one that itself appears in Nietzsche's texts, I use this broad term to denote the various ways Nietzsche thinks it possible to omit some elements of mental content. Nietzsche argues that such omissions count as active and deliberate, even if apparently not always intentionally or consciously done – indeed, such omissions seem to be distinctly non-conscious. I wish to offer descriptive accounts of such omissions, for Nietzsche. Further, in referring to these omissions as being 'productive', it is my contention that there is for Nietzsche a prescriptive function to the processes accounted for. In this sense, I aim to attribute their capability of being 'productive' in the context of their positive role in Nietzschean psychology.

Since the germination of a robust Anglophone Nietzsche scholarship 35 years ago, there has been an emphasis on unity, harmony and inclusion when discussing what Nietzsche thinks of as an ideal model of a 'healthy' individual psychology. This trend has got something right to some extent about Nietzsche's model, and it has duly attracted attention. However, the predominance of these themes has skewed the picture of what Nietzsche's fuller psychological model (and any promise it holds) actually looks like. The intention of my thesis is to show that these various means of omission need to be accounted for within any account of Nietzsche's philosophical psychology. The Nietzschean ideal is, I argue, just as much a product of productive omission as it is of inclusion and integration.

With my thesis I hope to contribute to the most productive discipline at present within Nietzsche scholarship, namely exploring the dynamics (and indeed the possibility) of a distinctly Nietzschean contribution to philosophical psychology. What I hope makes my thesis significant in this regard is that so far, the themes I shall attempt to address, or the manner in which they apply to debates within the relevant scholarship, have been understated, even sometimes wholly overlooked. Each chapter aims to make an original contribution, by postulating a series of argumentative reconstructions that I take to be faithful to Nietzsche's texts.

Active forgetting is a process Nietzsche discusses in a number of significant passages in *On the Genealogy of Morality*. The aim of Chapter One is to explain what Nietzsche means by active forgetting in these contexts. I will rely primarily on his detailed description of forgetting as an active force at *GM* II 1, arguing that Nietzsche wishes to promote a philosophically significant reconception of the role of some forms of forgetting in the individual's psychological life. However, his remarks are often *prima facie* puzzling, particularly in light of the metaphorical language he relies upon to explain this capacity. I will attempt to offer a more concrete definition of what Nietzsche means by this kind of forgetting. I will argue that Nietzsche identifies the active force of forgetting, characterized as a "doorkeeper to consciousness", as an unconscious faculty within human psychology, one that has a structural relation to both conscious and unconscious parts of the mental economy. I will argue that this faculty is active in the sense that it prevents certain kinds of experiential content from becoming conscious, as well as drawing strongly supported inferences from Nietzsche's texts about the faculty's capacity to render such content psychologically inefficacious. The role of active forgetting is an under-treated area in Anglophone Nietzsche

scholarship, with only rare instances of secondary literature giving even selective treatments of it. I wish to address the status of this faculty as deserving of far more prominence than has hitherto been given. If I am correct in reading into Nietzsche's references to forgetting an instance of what he takes to be an important psychological faculty, then this is important for understanding how Nietzsche conceives of how humans interpret, value and consequently privilege, retain or discard certain kinds of experiential content.

Building upon the claims of the first chapter, in Chapter Two I ascertain the kind of psychological content that Nietzsche thinks can be actively forgotten, as well as whether it can be the case that such content can be totally forgotten. I first argue that Nietzsche tacitly employs and indeed relies on a tiered system of forgetting, with the capacity for total forgetting from the unconscious, too. With regards to the former question, I will argue that Nietzsche's focus is more towards, perhaps exclusively towards, affective content. I will develop this by exploring numerous passages in the mature texts, where Nietzsche discusses the strength required by the modern individual to forget certain kinds of affective content that cause *ressentiment*. In this respect, as well as providing an exegesis of the slaves' and nobles' capacity or incapacity to actively forget in *GM* I 10, and given the claim that active forgetting is a residual facet of the modern individual's psychological landscape, I will discuss how Nietzsche thinks such a capacity has a bearing on conceiving the mental economy of the would-be exemplary modern individual. In light of this, I will also show how the description of active forgetting in the context of an individual's capacity to process the content of experiences relates to claims Nietzsche makes about psychological health. In the third section of this chapter, I will offer a comparative treatment of Nietzsche and Freud on their respective conceptions of motivated forgetting, and its psychological implications. Discussed will be Freud's topographical model of mind, the status of motivated forgetting in the context

of constituting cases of repressions, and the similarities between the two thinkers in their use of metaphors like the ‘door-keeper’. But there are also crucial divergences to discuss, and these are important. Too often, Nietzsche’s insights into depth psychology are mischaracterized by being retroactively given a Freudian gloss. Parsing out some of the areas of comparison and deep structural contrast are important to remedy this.

In Chapter Three I call into question the reasonably commonplace assumption in Anglophone Nietzsche scholarship, notably argued for by Kaufmann (1974) and Gemes (2009) that psychological self-cultivation comes about by means of a process of sublimated unification alone. While the psychological integration of one’s drives and instincts plays a crucial role in promoting what Nietzsche considers a higher self, I argue that some degree of removal, elimination, and deadening of particular drives and instincts might be, or perhaps necessarily is, involved. Yet I will suggest, pace a recent paper by Pearson (2018), that we should not think of these cases as repressions, as they are traditionally understood.

I seek to offer a better characterization of the positive instances of removal and elimination of drives in Nietzsche’s texts, and consider how they fit in his model of self-cultivation.

Nietzsche’s texts demonstrate a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which certain removals and eliminations of drives can possess positive effects for the would-be exemplary individual—an understanding which it would be a disservice to characterize with the inappropriate term ‘repression’. The distinction I draw between the two here aids in strengthening the objection to Gemes’s and Kaufmann’s respective sublimation readings, because it helps better understand the instances in the texts where Nietzsche discusses positive cases of the psychological removal of drives. This compliments the analysis in previous chapters that distinguishes Nietzsche from Freud on this matter.

In Chapter Four I challenge a pervasive interpretation in the scholarship about some of the conclusions drawn from the Second Essay of Nietzsche's *Genealogy*. The structure of the Second Essay is commonly taken to offer a genealogical description of the inception and eventual psychological predominance of internalized guilt, or moralized 'bad conscience'. This I take to be correct. However, one conclusion usually drawn from this is that by providing this exercise in genealogy, Nietzsche gives certain of his readers the prescriptive tools for casting off, or doing away with all forms of guilt. The common claim held by nearly every other Anglophone Nietzsche scholar writing on this issue is that Nietzsche views guilt as being a contingent reactive attitude. As such, it is concluded that for Nietzsche, guilt can be dispensed with (possible), and that it should be dispensed with (desirable). It is my contention that this conclusion in the secondary literature is erroneous. A close reading of the Second Essay of *GM*, particularly its final sections which discuss the ramifications of bad conscience, I argue, shows why this is the case. Not only does Nietzsche view the disposition to experience guilt-involving feelings as being to some extent psycho-physiologically indelible, resulting from the mnemonic internalization of the demands of Christian morality upon individuals; but he also speculatively offers positive claims about the possibility and desirability of a transfigured kind of personal guilt.

The fifth and final chapter of this thesis aims to illustrate a deep tension within Nietzsche's positive project, centred around the idea that affirming the eternal recurrence involves falsifying remembrance of past events from one's own life. The focus of Chapter Five, as such, will be on this particular problem as it appears in the 'On Redemption' passage in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Analysing this passage, I will discuss a pervasive shortcoming of the secondary scholarship to adequately account for Nietzsche's claim that to redeem one's past

is to reimagine oneself as having willed the events of one's life in its entirety, even at the time of their occurrence. Offering a more textually faithful reading of this passage, I argue that Nietzsche's presentation of life-affirmation there is one that risks indulging in deep falsifications, to such an extent that the Nietzschean affirmer of life operates in a state of self-deception. I then argue that attempts to reframe this demand as a redemptive illusion akin to an artistic intervention (as argued by Anderson 2005) are unsuccessful in getting Nietzsche off the hook. I then look at other aspects of Nietzsche's mature texts, including some of those discussed so far in Chapters 1 to 4 of this thesis, as to whether they can assist Nietzsche against the charge that his account of life-affirmation recommends necessarily falsifying aspects of one's life. I claim that none of these are ultimately successful, and outline a range of potential conclusions we might draw from this.

Chapter One:

What is ‘Active’ Forgetting in Nietzsche’s *Genealogy II*, 1?

Introduction:

Forgetting is a process Nietzsche discusses in a number of significant passages in *On the Genealogy of Morality*. The aim of this chapter is to explain what Nietzsche means by forgetting as being an ‘active’ capacity. I will primarily discuss his most systematic description of active forgetting at *GM II 1*, arguing that Nietzsche wishes to promote a reconception of the role of a particular kind of forgetting in the individual’s psychological life, which is significant for his broader philosophical claims about individual values, interpretation, and memory. However, his remarks are often *prima facie* puzzling, particularly in light of the metaphorical language Nietzsche relies upon to explain this capacity. I will attempt to offer a more concrete account, faithful to how Nietzsche conceives this capacity. I will argue that Nietzsche identifies active forgetting, characterized as a “‘doorkeeper’ to consciousness” (*GM II 1*), as an unconscious faculty within human psychology, one that has a structural relation to both conscious and unconscious parts of the mental economy. I will argue that this faculty is active in the sense that it prevents the content of particular experiences from becoming conscious, while unconscious processes of evaluation interpret, with the option to eventually render the contents of such phenomena psychologically inefficacious.¹

The role of forgetting is an under-treated topic in Anglophone Nietzsche scholarship, even

¹ Inversely, this faculty also renders the agreeable contents of particular phenomena efficacious, or at least to allow such phenomena to become conscious. In Chapter Two I will argue for the further inference that due to this lack of efficacy, the prevented content can come to be totally expunged from the mental economy – total forgetting.

within book-length treatments of the *Genealogy*. The relatively few instances of secondary literature that attempt more substantive treatments of the phenomenon of forgetting largely seem to miss the crux of its philosophical character and significance for Nietzsche in *GM II* and elsewhere.² This is striking, since Nietzsche's description of this phenomenon as a primitive and integral endowment of human psychology is featured in the prominent position of the very first section of the Second Essay of the *Genealogy*. In this regard I wish to argue that this passage deserves much more attention than it has hitherto been largely given. If I am correct in arguing for Nietzsche's references to forgetting as describing what he takes to be an integral psychological faculty, then this is important for understanding how Nietzsche

² Many treatments of the *Genealogy* offer impressive and sophisticated commentaries on many aspects of the Second Essay, but near-totally overlook something I will argue Nietzsche takes to be an important and default faculty of a healthy, well-functioning human psychology: namely, the faculty for active forgetfulness. To list a few of the most prominent examples in the Anglophone scholarship: Brian Leiter (2002, p. 228) barely discusses forgetting apart from utilising a selective quote of Nietzsche's from *GM II* 1, without further clarification. In perhaps the best book-length treatment of the *Genealogy*, Christopher Janaway (2007, esp. pp. 124 - 142) as far as I can see doesn't even mention this passage. As Janaway himself points out (Janaway, *ibid.*), the otherwise excellent introduction by Maudemarie Clark to the Clark and Swensen edition of the *Genealogy* (Hackett, 1998) dedicates just a single paragraph to the entirety of the Second Essay, compared to the substantive treatments of the First and Third Essays she provides. David Owen (2007, pp. 91 – 111) similarly fails to mention the passage on forgetting in his treatment of the Second Essay. Bernard Reginster briefly describes the central exegetical claim of this chapter that for Nietzsche, forgetting is a psychological facet that humans are naturally endowed with (2011, p. 58). Exceptions that give varying degrees of treatment to the phenomenon of active forgetting are Gilles Deleuze (1962/1983), Randall Havas (1995), Richard Schacht (2013), Keith Ansell-Pearson (2006, 2013), Paul S. Loeb (2006), Christa Davis Acampora (2006, 2008), Lawrence Hatab (2008), Stephen Mulhall (2011), Mark Migotti (2013), Herman Siemens (2017) and Rebecca Bamford (2019). Hatab's brief but welcome contribution (2008) to this issue in his treatment of the *Genealogy* is closely aligned with the reading presented here. Agreeing with Hatab's commentary on this specific matter in what follows, I attempt to offer a more detailed exposition than Hatab does (which he concedes constitutes just a "brief digression" from his wider analysis of the Second Essay of the *Genealogy* – Hatab 2008, pp. 71 – 80). See Chapter Two, Section One for further agreement with Hatab in relation to the ability to actively forget for the nobles and slaves of *GM I*. Points of agreement and disagreement with these other respective authors will be discussed across the first two chapters of this thesis, Section Three of this chapter in particular. More recently, I have discovered two theses recently produced (coincidentally) from graduate students at other University of London colleges, which focus on active forgetting: Tim Short's 2013 MPhil thesis at University College London, and an exemplary contribution in chapter two of Emma Syea's 2018 doctoral thesis at King's College London (who also notes the neglect of this topic in Nietzsche scholarship – Syea 2018, p. 63). Dialogue with each of these will be present in footnotes throughout this chapter. My claims here agree more with those of Syea's, even if some differences remain.

conceives of how humans interpret, value and consequently privilege, retain or discard the content of experiences. This includes its persisting role within the context of the psychological constitution of socialized, ‘modern’ humans, with their inheritance of distinctly moralized memories that reside in opposition to the faculty of forgetting, as Nietzsche discusses in *GM II* more broadly. My reading opposes the claim that active forgetting exclusively amounts to a relic from an antiquated or solely animalistic psychological disposition, which I will discuss in Section Three.

Section One: The Function of Active Forgetting

Although active forgetting is referred to in passages throughout the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche provides the most sustained discussion of it at *GM II*, 1, where he offers a general account of the phenomenon.³

Received wisdom usually considers forgetfulness to be a tendency, rather than an active capacity. A common understanding of forgetting is to view it as an inability to retain a particular memory, or set of memories. This understanding sets forgetting in a fundamentally passive stance in relation to memory. Traditionally, memory is thought to be the active retention of the contents of an experience, while forgetting is the (passive) inability to retain the content of an experience. Think of a supposedly trivial example: imagine one forgets the name of a fellow academic from a previous year’s conference. These examples as they play out in life could be very unhelpful in various ways; one might later be perceived to be rude by

³ See also *GM I* 10, *GM II* 1-3, *GM III* 4, III 18, III 22. Independently of the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche’s works demonstrate a preoccupation with discussing forms of the claims made here about forgetting. In 1874’s *UM II* 1 he writes, “it is possible to live almost without memory, and to live happily moreover, as the animal demonstrates; but it is altogether impossible to *live* at all without forgetting”. This passage demonstrates that Nietzsche’s concern for the activity involved in forgetting far precedes the later work of the *Genealogy*. Cf. also *HH* 12 and 92, *D* 126, 278, 312 and 393, *GS* 2P 4, *BGE* 40, 68, 138 and 217, and *EH* ‘Wise’ 2 and 6. Many of these passages will be discussed further in Chapter Two.

the academic for forgetting their name, for example. It might be assumed that these examples tend not to be *prima facie* beneficial to the individual, and this would straightforwardly be the case if forgetting is understood as always being a passive tendency.

Nietzsche rejects such an absolute characterization of forgetting as a “mere *vis inertiae*”, i.e. as a psychologically inert force. He offers the position of a kind of forgetting that is something fundamentally active, and claims that the traditional way of always thinking about forgetting, as sketched above, is underlined by a superficial conception of it.⁴ Rather, Nietzsche claims that forgetting can be an active force, and he identifies it in this way as a “positive faculty of suppression” (*GM*, II, 1).

There are important questions about how pervasive Nietzsche takes this faculty of active forgetting to be. On purely exegetical grounds in the passage at *GM* II 1 alone, it appears initially ambiguous. Nietzsche utilises numerous metaphors of digestion, “inanimation” and ‘nourishment’ in quick succession, to further muddy the waters. An important interpretive question is whether Nietzsche views active forgetting as some permanent state of psychological activity, or whether it only occurs or becomes an ‘active’ force when certain kinds of content require interpretive assessment. Nietzsche claims that this kind of forgetting

⁴ The idea at *GM* II 1-3 that the prevailing conceptions of forgetting and what Nietzsche will later place it in opposition to, namely the internalization of certain forms of moral memory, are misconceived is supported by an unpublished note in the *Nachlass*. Nietzsche writes that a revision of our prevailing ideas about memory is required. The common tendency to think of memory as being an inactive phenomenon just as much as forgetting stems, Nietzsche claims, from the prejudice of assuming an atemporal and consciously transparent ‘soul’. This prejudice bears upon our conception of the function and efficacy of memory, to the effect that the repetition of recalling particular experiences is thought to be an inactive process. Nietzsche writes here that it is assumed in line with this prejudice that “the will is inactive in this case, as in the coming of any thought” (*KSA* 11:40[29]). This prejudice he claims to identify in this *Nachlass* passage is along the lines of the similar claim at *BGE* 17, where Nietzsche writes that “a thought comes when ‘it’ wants to, and not when ‘I’ want it to”, offering a similar critique of prevailing conceptions of cognition more broadly (rather than the narrower application to memory and/or forgetting).

ensures ‘inanimation’ in conscious life while this assessment, whatever it amounts to, is taking place.

There are two senses of potentially interpreting the pervasiveness of active forgetting:

(1) temporal pervasiveness

Forgetfulness is *temporally* pervasive if it is permanently active, as opposed to only active on some occasions;

or

(2) functional pervasiveness

Forgetfulness is *functionally* pervasive if it possesses the capacity to sometimes suppress from consciousness, so as to allow unconscious evaluation of certain forms of phenomenal content associated with many different types of experiences, though not necessarily working on all contents all the time.

It appears Nietzsche contends that it is only during certain moments when prospective evaluation is required that the “suppression” caused by forgetting in its active sense occurs. This lends credence to the idea that it is functionally pervasive, rather than being temporally pervasive. However, we might still consider there to be a textual ambiguity here. To push for the arguably stronger reading, one might ask why we shouldn’t view Nietzsche’s conception of active forgetting as being temporally pervasive (a.k.a. permanently active) in the sense that humans are constantly exposed to new varieties of mental content, that require some degree of ongoing evaluation. This reading also might fit better with Nietzsche’s emphasis on flux, as broadly characterized in the motif of ‘Becoming’ over ‘Being’. However, the text at *GM II* 1 offers reasons to hedge our reading on the weaker version, wherein forgetting is functionally rather than temporally pervasive. The weaker version claims that such forgetting

becomes active only in particular instances of certain kinds of experiences and their associated content. Crucially, Nietzsche speaks of the “windows and doors” of consciousness being “temporarily” closed off, via the “suppression apparatus” of forgetfulness. Not only does this weaker option seem to better fit the text of *GM II 1*, it also has the advantage of being far more philosophically plausible by virtue of the extremity of its alternative, namely the notion of a temporally pervasive active forgetting.⁵

On this more plausible reading, Nietzsche identifies a rather specific psychological faculty in his discussion of active forgetting. While he doesn’t clearly demarcate in such a way when he chastises those who he claims superficially conceive of forgetting, it would be bizarre to imagine that this characterization of forgetting applies for *all* instances of forgetting. The inability to retain particular memories and to passively forget should still be considered possible, even in line with Nietzsche’s sometimes strong rhetoric towards this kind of characterization. If these cases were not still considered possible, this would amount to Nietzsche taking the extreme position that all forgetting is always active (i.e. it can never be passive).⁶ It would be hard to imagine a convincing argument for the inexistence of genuine cases of weakness of memory. The more sensible reading is to view Nietzsche as arguing that forgetting often can be active (i.e. that it is not always passive), contrary to treating it always as a passive faculty, as the ‘superficial’ view assumes.⁷ The cases in which forgetting can be

⁵ I am indebted to Tom Hanauer for offering these useful terms of temporal and functional pervasiveness to better illustrate the interpretive claim.

⁶ As will be developed in more detail in Chapter Two, however, this more extreme position appears to be occupied by Freud with regards to motivated forgetting, and that this is a point of contrast with Nietzsche.

⁷ A notable and welcome recent example discussing active forgetting is Bamford (2019). The central interpretative question for her paper is that viewing forgetting as a cardinal Nietzschean virtue seems to jar with the notion that curiosity and experimentation are also cardinal Nietzsche virtues, operating on the premise that “the purest form of such curiosity arises in the investigation of nauseating facts about ourselves”. I cannot address this particular tension here. For the purposes of this chapter, it is enough to remark that Bamford’s characterization seems to overstretch and consider all acts of forgetting to be active, including ones where the inability to retain the true origins of certain human

an active phenomenon for Nietzsche are when the individual has to process the psychological content from new, particular kinds of experiences, of the kind that don't accord with that individual's pre-existing evaluative orientation.

Forgetting is active in these cases in so far as it unconsciously either

i) allows for new experiences to be processed before they are psychologically incorporated within the remit of that individual's evaluative orientation,

or

ii) suppresses that experiential content from passing into consciousness, while it is assessed and potentially barred from wider incorporation.

Both of these possibilities, Nietzsche writes, involve the attempt to keep the content of these experiences initially from consciousness. Since Nietzsche thinks that unconscious mental processes perform the vast majority of the legwork in processing ("digesting") experiential content, it is at this level that assessments of particular experiences are conducted about whether or not they fit well with an individual's pre-existing evaluative orientation towards the world. Included in this could also be associative content that would cause pain or impede action were one to become conscious of it, or were one to recall it in a particular manner.

affects is deemed active. For reasons already given, this seems too strong, even if many of her textual examples do identify references to this stronger conception of forgetting. Nietzsche often employs the language of forgetting in a manner closer to how it is used in common parlance, and it would be a mistake to over-characterize these examples as active in the same manner as the psychological process identified at *GM II 1*. For example, when Nietzsche critically appraises of the work of the 'English psychologists' in the opening passages of *GM*, he explicitly identifies their own forgetfulness about the origins of moral sentiments as a *vis inertiae*, the very phrase he explicitly uses to *contrast* the kind of forgetfulness he describes at *GM II 1* with. Some instances of forgetting, including many of the moral tenets now taken to be absolute by the Christian-moral imperative, are passive: hence his task to uncover and expose them. The specific case of Mirabeau, and how it counts for Nietzsche as a case of active forgetting, will be discussed throughout this chapter and Chapter Two.

Forgetting as a faculty becomes active when it needs to be, in the context of the appearance of new experiences that initially challenge the predisposition through which the individual interprets the world. So this faculty of forgetting instantiates a degree of regulative control over what content comes to consciousness. If such content is evaluated as not fitting well, then since the active faculty for forgetting has suppressed it from coming to consciousness, it comes to be denied further efficacy within the wider psychological economy.

So active forgetting is the faculty that partially shapes what the individual is consciously aware of, and so too their attendant behaviour as a result of the contents of their conscious awareness, by what it allows ‘in’ and ‘out’ of consciousness. This is reinforced by Nietzsche’s characterization of forgetting as a metaphorical “doorkeeper to consciousness”, and of its being able to “temporarily close the doors and windows of consciousness” (Ibid.). In this regard, forgetting is the faculty which engenders the unconscious evaluative assessments of certain phenomenal content, without conscious awareness of it taking place.

Herman Siemens (2017) discusses this aspect of active forgetting as the regulation of conscious experience (p. 118).⁸ Siemens claims that forgetting acts within particular punctuated moments when such a mechanism is required. This is initially a convincing reading of *GM II 1*. However, for Siemens, these punctuated moments when forgetting is required are those that “allow pure practical reason to determine the will without interference” (Ibid.). This comes as part of a largely unconvincing attempt to synthesize Kantian motives for moral actions with Nietzsche’s socio-physiologically informed naturalistic account in *GM II*. The kind of powers of predetermination involved in individual value-interpretation in *GM II 1*’s discussion of forgetting seems wholly alien to the Kantian

⁸ Herman Siemens, ‘Kant’s “Respect for the Law” as the “Feeling of Power”’, in *Nietzsche’s Engagements with Kant and the Kantian Legacy, Volume II: Nietzsche and Kantian Ethics*, eds. Joao Constancio and Tom Bailey, London: Bloomsbury Academic (2017), pp. 109 – 137

enterprise. Not only would Nietzsche reject that the mechanism of forgetting informs the motives for *moral* actions from the outset, but he no doubt would also wholesale reject this Kantian terminology of the interpretive puzzle Siemens seeks to solve by implementing Nietzsche in this context.

It might be the case that Siemens's attempted link has in mind Nietzsche's claim in *GM* II 1, as in *UM* II, that some degree of forgetfulness is necessary for action. This is acceptable on its own. However, Siemens also writes that this positive faculty for suppression amounts to a "moment of 'presence' or presence of mind to take in the condition under which we must act" (Siemens, *Ibid.*). But this appears to run contrary to the important caveat that Nietzsche provides in *GM* II 1 that consciousness remains "shut off" from this content as it is assessed, then incorporated into or rejected from the individual's mental economy. Curiously, Siemens quotes this passage of Nietzsche's at length immediately after this claim, but seems to avoid discussing how this caveat of Nietzsche's about remaining shut off from consciousness could still amount to a state or "moment of presence".⁹ It is difficult, then, to see how active forgetting constitutes any affinity with Kantian determinations via pure practical reason.¹⁰

⁹ More promising is Siemens' claim that integral to Nietzsche's notion of the "long chain of the will" which constitutes the formation of certain kinds of memory is the active repetition of an original event (Siemens 2017, p. 120). Rather than a particular link between two events of different character based on intentions to act, the redemption of a promise is not an 'act' as such but rather the repetition of the original instance of willing that event to happen. This fits neatly with the Freudian resonances of the claim by Reginster (2018, p. 15) about the mnemonics of memory being of a particular moralized character.

¹⁰ Bamford (2019) utilizes a reading of *D* 278 for a version of this claim, invoking the 'obliging memory' Nietzsche discusses there for drawing a particular line for the sake of prudence. While this passage in *Daybreak* may well be evidence of Nietzsche's view about the capacity of memory to 'oblige' to forget in order to proffer a stronger individual self-interpretation (as Bamford argues), it would be misguided to consider this a prudential intervention at the level of consciousness. Bamford claims that an obliging memory avoids certain lapses in positive self-interpretation by means of consideration and focus (*Ibid.*). But these are seemingly facets of conscious reflection, the kind of

Individual humans operate in line with how they evaluatively orient themselves towards the world. New experiences are assessed in line with that individual's standards of value – either they support them, or they are irrelevant to them, or they have the potential to disrupt them. The continual development and interpretive process of these standards of value is what Nietzsche refers to when he speaks in this passage of the more 'noble' functions of a human psychology in relation to the scrutiny it provides, aspects such as "ruling, foreseeing, predetermining (*for our organism is set up oligarchically*)" (Ibid., my italics).¹¹ Nietzsche discusses the faculty of forgetting as giving the space for the priority of these unconscious evaluative functions. In other words, active forgetting operates in line with the individual in question's predetermined evaluative orientation, an orientation which interprets the world in a certain way. Such an orientation expects the relevant prospective experiences to support that standard of interpretation. If such experiences are assessed as unsupportive, attempts are made to permanently inhibit their entry into consciousness. Active forgetting either

a) relays information to consciousness after it has been judged by these interpretative processes to support *or* not disrupt the individual's functional evaluative orientation, or

which Nietzsche explicitly denies active forgetfulness is in the business of operating within at *GM* II 1.

¹¹ Nietzsche writes in a similar vein elsewhere that "Our moral judgments and evaluations...are only images and fantasies based on a physiological process unknown to us" (*D* 119). However, he also claims that there are particular "laws of nutriment" that could in principle be learned to provide some degree of knowledge about the drives. This achieved knowledge should be contextualized within Nietzsche's wider attempt to critique the presumption of unbounded introspection by many Western philosophers, Descartes and Kant being the two most obvious cases of this.

b) tries to prevent information deemed either irrelevant or potentially disruptive from being incorporated.¹²

There is then, we can infer, a further and permanent barring of such content from getting a place hold within the individual's evaluative orientation – this inference will be discussed more fully in Chapter Two. In such cases, it seems what is suppressed while the unconscious evaluative functions deem some piece of mental content to be potentially disruptive to the individual, is forgotten more permanently. Nietzsche claims that the operation of this faculty for forgetting in this active sense is part of strong individual psychological health (Ibid.).

More specificity is required in regards to two fronts: the kind of content Nietzsche thinks can be actively forgotten, and whether forgetting leads to the total omission of such content from the unconscious, too. These two fronts are intertwined in an important sense, and as mentioned, will be the focus of Chapter Two. But first it is necessary to set up the status of the unconscious for Nietzsche in the context of active forgetting.

¹² There is an additional question here about whether forgetfulness represents the agent's values as a whole, that is, the entire holistic structure of the drives as one embodied outlet, or whether it represents only some of the agent's particular values, understood by Nietzsche as responding to particular expressions of particular drives. In other words, if it is the latter, the possibility might arise of certain values competing for control over when to employ the faculty of forgetfulness. The issue arises here whether there might be cases where this suppressive faculty might operate on the whim of a particular drive, to the detriment of the wider mental economy. Nietzsche appears to utilize forgetting as functionally representative in a more holistic sense, rather than acting on the whim of individuated drives. I thank Tom Hanauer for raising this issue. See the doctoral thesis by Syea (2018, p. 68 – 74) for a more detailed commentary on why forgetting doesn't fit the criteria for being a drive, while also interacting with them.

Section Two: Forgetting, the Unconscious, and Evaluative Incorporation

Nietzsche claims that active forgetfulness is “responsible for the fact that whatever we experience, learn, or take into ourselves enters just as little into our consciousness during the condition of digestion [...] as does the entire thousand-fold process through which the nourishing of our body, so called ‘incorporation’, runs its course” (*GM II*, 1). So Nietzsche identifies forgetfulness in such cases as an active psychological faculty that is involved in inhibiting certain experiential content from arising in the individual’s consciousness. A notable caveat here that Nietzsche provides is that consciousness remains “shut off” from the contents of this experience, as it comes to be incorporated into or (inferably) rejected from the individual’s wider mental economy. In this regard, forgetting does not have an interpretive or evaluative role in itself. Rather, it is the constituent mechanism within the context of a wider process of human interpretation, that decides what is suppressed, i.e. remains non-conscious, during the incorporation or ‘digestion’ this process undertakes.

Thus, active forgetting for Nietzsche is one part of the process of mental evaluation. For Nietzsche, evaluative assessment is largely conducted at the unconscious level. Since active forgetting is responsible for “shutting the windows and doors of consciousness” (*Ibid.*), it functions to bar certain experiential content entry (or re-entry) to consciousness. Since it is kept off of the level of consciousness, Nietzsche claims, this allows for this content to be evaluated as useful and nourishing, or useless, or painful to the individual. As such, active forgetting helps to engender unconscious evaluative assessment of content the individual receives.

Undergirding this claim of Nietzsche's about active forgetting is a further claim about the constancy of unconscious activity. Nietzsche claims in this passage at *GM II 1* that the fluctuating struggle of unconscious instincts or drives, which he metaphorically characterizes as "our underworld of subservient organs [working] for and against each other", provides the psychological background to mental activity, of which conscious awareness is the far less efficacious frontispiece. In relation to this constant unconscious activity, Nietzsche describes in *GM II 1* the process that occurs to foster and establish the relations between the individual's multitude of drives, with its capacity to determine an individual's evaluative orientation: the task we have seen him describe as the job for 'nobler' functions of mental activity. In this respect, Nietzsche considers the faculty of forgetting not just to enforce the regulation of which particular content enters into or remains outside of consciousness, but also to be involved in keeping the individual from being consciously aware of this constant flux of unconscious psychological activity itself. This is not to say that this constant activity amounts to active forgetting as being temporally pervasive, as discussed above, though. This is because Nietzsche describes active forgetting as functioning in cases where *new* kinds of content need to be unconsciously evaluated.

The allusion at *GM II 1* that the majority of psychological evaluative activity is unconscious for Nietzsche is supported by a myriad of textual examples, one of the most commonly cited of which is *Gay Science* 354: "The problem of consciousness (or rather, of becoming conscious of something) first confronts us when we begin to realize how much we can do without it". He writes here of how "[w]e could think, feel, will, and remember, and we could also 'act' in every sense of that word, and yet none of this would have to 'enter our consciousness' (as one says figuratively)". This demonstrates that for Nietzsche, unconscious activity possesses the capacity to conceptually articulate and evaluate all manner of

experiential content, directing motives for action by reference to the individual's predetermined and unconsciously formed values.¹³ It also demonstrates his sensitivity to the perhaps unavoidable recourse to spatial metaphors (by his speaking of 'entry') to articulate the relation between conscious and unconscious thought. This is also worth bearing in mind in relation to Nietzsche's use of the image of the 'doorkeeper' to consciousness in *GM* II 1.¹⁴

Nietzsche's contention is that cases of active forgetting occur on experiences which the individual cannot easily fit into their evaluative orientation. It gives space for unconscious evaluation of the experience's associative content, about whether to incorporate it into the individual's mental economy, and if so, in what form. While it might appear on the surface that a mere inability to retain some information has occurred, Nietzsche's claim is that, so understood as a case of active forgetting,

- i) A piece of experience with which the individual has had insufficient acquaintance has to be assessed in some form, outside of the remit of consciousness, by the unconscious interpretive functions;

¹³ Christopher Fowles (2019) has argued that for Nietzsche, inferences are drawn within conscious thought about the nature of these unconscious thought processes, which distort the representation of how we conceive of these thought processes to really function. Conscious thinking is playing with fictions to some extent about the nature of how thoughts genuinely come to be operative (C. Fowles 2019 p. 3, Cf. *eKGWB*: 1885, 38, 2; cf. also *eKGWB*: 1885, 34, [249]). Nietzsche writes that the "events which are *actually* linked" that "play out beneath our consciousness" are not themselves articulable at the level of consciousness (*eKGWB*: 1885, 1, [61]), even if whatever conscious articulations that might be formulated may have causal efficacy back at the level of unconscious thought processes (as Fowles ultimately argues).

¹⁴ The comparisons with Freud, both in terms of the use of spatial metaphors for illustrative purposes, and more specifically for the use of the particular metaphor of the 'doorkeeper', or 'censor' as Freud more commonly frames it (though he does employ both these metaphors), will be further discussed in Chapter Two.

- ii) Some determination about the content of that experience occurs, deciding whether it would be beneficial for that content to be incorporated.
- iii) If it is deemed to be beneficial, it is incorporated. If it is deemed not to be, it is kept from consciousness, and is ultimately discarded from the mental economy.¹⁵

If we take Nietzsche seriously on this line of thinking about forgetting, it would appear that certain instances where an individual forgets things are much more significant than otherwise presumed. In such cases, the gear shifts from it being the contention that the lack of remembrance constitutes a passive inability to retain that information. Rather, the mental economy of the individual unconsciously judged that information not useful or beneficial to incorporate into the individual's psychological life, after it was blocked from entering consciousness by the faculty of active forgetting. Nietzsche's reformulation for how we think about forgetting means that this often *really* means that even some seemingly superficial instances of forgetting can demonstrate particular insights into the values of the individual and the interpretive schemes they unconsciously possess.

These evaluative standards, which Nietzsche identifies as being produced by the "ruling, seeing [and] predetermining" unconscious (*GM II 1*), are relative to the individual in question. They are relative in terms of the content, of the values they embody, and the strength to which the individual commits to the evaluations drawn from that content. To utilize an example to highlight this relative application, consider a case of apparently passive, run of the mill forgetting: a senior academic forgetting a fellow (though more junior) academic's name at a conference. We would treat it as remarkable for someone to remember

¹⁵ In Chapter Two I will substantiate the claim that for Nietzsche, this amounts to such content being discarded from the unconscious, too.

all names of those they have learned in ordinary conditions: imagine the junior academic presented an ‘okay’ paper, one amongst many other ‘okay’ papers at a grueling four-day conference. Indeed, unless the senior academic possesses some deep-seated commitment to valuing highly the remembrance of the name of every fellow academic they come into contact with in ordinary conditions, such remembrance doesn’t seem plausible. As a rule, the junior academic will deem it far more significant for themselves to meet the more influential senior academic, and so will find it easier to remember, or perhaps we could say, harder to forget. This is content from an experience that the junior academic doesn’t have to hold in their mind at all times, but that is easy to recollect for them. It is an experience which has associative content prominent in relation to their key dominant values – i.e. the value of being an academic, say a Nietzsche scholar, to use a close to home example. Relative to the senior academic, meeting one more junior academic among many others under ordinary conditions is no highlight, and so the senior academic is likely to (passively) forget the junior.

However, consider a more extraordinary encounter. Imagine the conditions are changed, so this junior academic delivers a paper that is perceived as directly hostile (perhaps polemically so) to the personal research of the senior academic. This is far more likely to impress itself upon the senior academic, as in the latter case it disrupts their standards of value to the extent that it will be more abruptly invasive of their interpretive scheme – i.e., their status as a fellow Nietzsche scholar, something they too hold in some relative sense as a dominant value, has been questioned.¹⁶ It makes an impact in terms of their desires, hopes, needs, and what they consider to be good for them (i.e. in the case of the senior academic, their professional standing within the discipline, the truth of the claims resulting from their research, etc.). It is

¹⁶ This is in the context of Nietzsche’s claim that to a large degree, individual values originate in or are determined by the drives.

also Nietzsche's contention that their capacity or incapacity to respond through action to such an encounter too has psychological ramifications. For example, if they are able to defend their own position against the perceived hostility, it might allow them to excrete certain negative content associated with such an experience. Likewise, it might allow them to incorporate parts of that content in such a way as to render the experience no longer negative to them. So values and psychic health affect what might be forgotten and what kind of content becomes incorporated into the individual's overall economy, in such a way that different individuals may generate different associative memories in response to having the same or similar sorts of experience.

In order for forgetting of this active kind to function as a 'doorkeeper' to consciousness, it must to some degree exist separately from consciousness to have such a relational bearing to it.¹⁷ By Nietzsche's definition, what makes this capacity for forgetting active is that it possesses an operative relation with consciousness. This is since it has a regulative hand in keeping the content of experiences out of consciousness during the process of the individual's

¹⁷ There is an important question to ask about whether Nietzsche's implementation of the function of the 'doorkeeper' as part of the individual's psychic structure calls into question the purported divide in Nietzsche's conception of human mental life, as argued for by Katsafanas (2016, pp. 23 - 47), between consciousness/conceptual content on the one hand, and unconsciousness/nonconceptual content on the other. Nietzsche writes of the 'doorkeeper' and the faculty of forgetting as an exposition of a mental faculty that exists not as a component of consciousness. Yet it is evident from the text that Nietzsche considers unconscious mental processes to be able to articulate conceptual content, to the extent that they can assess the qualitative nature of the contents of particular experiences and 'incorporate' or potentially fully suppress them. It is thanks to active forgetfulness that the individual does not become in any way conscious of these processes or of the content which it is dealing with, should it be 'turned away' by the 'doorkeeper'. If this is the case, then at the very least, one aspect to Nietzsche's conception of human mental activity (albeit what appears to be a very prominent one) defies Katsafanas's characterization of it, in both unconscious evaluation and the mechanism which Nietzsche argues creates the conditions for such evaluation, and consequently acts as a result of those processes of evaluation.

unconsciously determining what passes through to be incorporated into mental activity and what is rejected from it.

Nietzsche claims that particular conditions that sustain life would be rendered impossible without this capacity for active forgetfulness. It facilitates conditions such as happiness, cheerfulness, hope, pride, and indeed the ability to situate one's attitudes within the present tense (which Nietzsche emphasizes), i.e. to deal and act with present relations within the world in a manner that coheres with their evaluative orientation. These conditions engendered by active forgetting ensure that an attempt is made to withhold particular content associated with certain experiences from having impacts that might be taken by the individual to be deleterious, were they allowed to disrupt conscious life. This ensures what Nietzsche describes as "psychic order, of rest, of etiquette", avoiding any form of conscious 'dyspepsia' (*GM II 1*) with respect to some such responses becoming efficacious in the individual's mental life, before they are unconsciously processed.

Section Three: Forgetting as Residual in Modern Humans

A description of the faculty of active forgetting in *GM II 1* has been argued to be significant, and many have overlooked its importance. As mentioned in the Introduction of this chapter, discussions of active forgetting are largely absent or downplayed in commentaries on the *Genealogy*. However, when addressed at all, the role of active forgetting is often severely misconstrued. This is no doubt in part because its exposition by Nietzsche can sometimes leave the reader of *GM* wondering whether he is documenting an antiquarian function of the nobles, or whether it is residual in the psychic life of modern humans. I will argue here that active forgetting in its wider context goes beyond being a mere antiquarian curiosity for the

static historian. Nietzsche, as genealogical psychologist, probes the possibility of how modern individuals might utilize the residual capacity to actively forget, as an inherited facet of their mental economy.

3) a) Forgetting and Human Animality

One such misconstrual is to identify active forgetting as a faculty belonging solely to pre-social “animals”. The capacity to actively forget, so the tenor of these readings goes, delineates a pre-human psychological state. By means of socialization and the psychological internalization of certain forms of moral memory, the common reading assumes, these actively forgetful animals became fully human. Havas (1995) is one instance of this tendency to identify the mechanism of forgetting with a condition of pre-humanity, interchangeably characterized as animality. His emphasis for this claim stems from a particularly literalist reading of what Nietzsche means when he refers to the breeding of an animal that is permitted to promise, which sets the discussion at *GM II 1* for his (Nietzsche’s) description of active forgetting. Some *prima facie* support is given by Nietzsche to this reading, by describing pre-social humans as “half-animal” later in the Second Essay (*GM II 16*).

This construal is not exclusive to Havas. In an essay on the capacity for promising in Nietzsche, Stephen Mulhall echoes this reading of *GM II*, that humans, before the cultivation of their capacity to make promises, are not truly human (Mulhall 2011, p. 255). Mulhall maintains by this reading that the endowment of the capacity for active forgetting refers to animality. Mulhall collapses any distinction between social accountability and being “humanly accountable”. He writes that the ability to make promises “is our accession to humanity, the becoming human of the human” (Mulhall, p. 254). The suggestion here is again that prior to the mnemonic process that eventually engenders the right to make promises, the

discerning capacity of those whom Nietzsche conceives of as ‘sovereign’ individuals, the psychology endowed with the capacity for active forgetting constitutes something non-human. Likewise, Schacht (2013) appears to suggest that the process of active forgetting is Nietzsche referring to “our proto-human ancestors” (335), suggesting that forgetting itself is a non- or proto-human phenomenon.

The inference drawn by all three is that the mechanism of forgetting thus described no longer resides in or functions in any efficacious manner for modern humans within the confines of societies. This claim lends itself to a faulty construal of the mechanism of forgetting as “govern[ing] only our prehuman – he says prehistorical- or merely animal state” (Havas 1995, p. 201). An immediate challenge to make here is to point out that to link pre-human with pre-historical is an unwarranted liberalization of Nietzsche’s text. Nietzsche doesn’t define pre-historic or pre-social as pre-human. The textual evidence for conflating the claims that forgetting is pre-historical (which Nietzsche *does* say in *GM II 2*) with the claim that forgetting is pre-human (which Nietzsche does *not* say in *GM II 2*) is lacking. Havas argues that “Our forgetfulness, on the other hand, opposes itself to the acquisition of the kind of memory Nietzsche believes is necessary for the right to make promises. Such forgetfulness stands in the way of our humanity”.¹⁸ But there is ample reason to think that with regards to forgetting, the exact opposite of Havas’ contention is the better reading. By describing humans as “forgetting in the flesh” (*GM II 3*), Nietzsche demonstrates that the description of active forgetting at the beginning of the Second Essay should be considered a natural and ongoing endowment of human individuals, one that is retained even after the internalization of certain forms of moral memory (which will be discussed in Chapter Four). Active

¹⁸ Randall Havas, *Nietzsche’s Genealogy: Nihilism and the Will to Knowledge*, Cornell University Press, 1995, p. 200

forgetting for Nietzsche is a constituent, functional part of how humans process experience in accordance with their respective value-interpretations.

This line of interpretation by Havas, Mulhall and Schacht respectively also goes against Nietzsche's explicit claim that this mechanism of forgetting appears strongly (and healthily, Nietzsche thinks) in the self-regulation of exemplary cases of modern individuals, as in Nietzsche's somewhat curious example, of Mirabeau (*GM I 10*).¹⁹ To give an instance of the same mechanism with an example of a figure from modern Western history runs counter to the claims that the phenomenon of forgetting should be restricted solely to the psychology of pre-social or pre-historical humans. This identification is a curious one by Nietzsche, as it is unclear on what grounds he valorizes Mirabeau for this excess of capacity.²⁰ Nevertheless, it provides a powerful impetus for rejecting the idea that active forgetting amounts to a fossil of an antiquated animalistic psychology, bereft of efficacy in modern humans. Nietzsche provides clear textual evidence that active forgetting is residual, even after the process of the mnemonic internalization of particular moral memories. It is never implied by him that Mirabeau constitutes a one-off freak re-occurrence of this capacity arriving on the scene again after two millennia of internalization. Indeed, the nobles whom Nietzsche loosely refers to were in an obvious sense socialized, themselves.

Getting clear about Nietzsche's references to humans as animals better illustrates the terrain. Ansell-Pearson (2013) makes the claim, with Derridean resonances, that active forgetting constitutes a component of human animality (243). In a straightforward sense this is

¹⁹ I adopt the phrase 'self-regulation' in this context from Syea (2018, p. 74).

²⁰ Cf. also *Gay Science* 95, where Nietzsche describes Mirabeau as belonging "to an altogether different order of greatness than even the foremost statesmen of yesterday and today".

undoubtedly true for Nietzsche: we are physiological entities, and he sees traditional metaphysics as having over-privileged the human to the detriment of its more primal aspects. References to the animality of humans appear in Nietzsche's works often as a loaded trope to pump our intuitions and rethink our prejudices of conceiving of humanity as a species separate from nature. For example, Christianity makes man a "sick animal" and "a beast" (*Twilight*, 'Morality as Anti-Nature', 2). In this description, Nietzsche is discussing humans after the fact of their being moralized and socialized, putting it at odds with the wish to ascribe animality exclusively to Nietzsche's references like the claims about active forgetting in *GM* II 1. It is unclear why we should take Nietzsche's references to the 'animal man' as anything other than a rhetorical instance of his general commitment to reconceiving human nature along naturalistic lines. As such, it is dubious that we should conceive of active forgetting to being a mechanism of just pre- or proto-humanity on such grounds.

These claims about animality in Nietzsche are methodologically similar to claims made on this matter by David Hume. Hume writes in Section IX of his *Enquiry*, titled 'Of the Reason of Animals', that

"the anatomical observations, formed upon one animal, are, by this species of reasoning, extended to all animals; and it is certain, that when the circulation of the blood, for instance, is clearly proved to have place in one creature, as a frog, or fish, it forms a strong presumption, that that the same principle has place in all. These analogical observations may be carried farther, even to this science, of which we are now treating; and any theory, by which we explain the operations of the understanding, or the origin and connexion of the passions in man, will require additional authority, if we find, that the same theory is requisite to explain the same

phenomena in all other animals”

(*Enquiry*, IX.82)

Nietzsche seems consonant on this point, that any accurate philosophical psychology should, as a point of methodological principle, examine humans from the starting point of their animality.²¹

Nietzsche’s description of forgetting at *GM* II 1 is not referring to a past tense phenomenon that has been rendered wholly inefficacious as a result of the ‘breeding’ of certain forms of memory. Rather, it is Nietzsche’s claim at *GM* II 1 that forgetting is a capacity that still actively resides within the mental economy of humans, in such a way that it comes to be situated in *opposition* to these specific kinds of memory. For instance, when he describes the historical development of moral memories in humans in *GM* II 3, Nietzsche doesn’t speak of active forgetting as a capacity dropping out of the psychological picture; rather, memory is added to the picture. Nietzsche’s discussion of memory here refers narrowly to a particular mnemonic process of psychic internalization. In such cases, the ‘memories’ in question are specific in what they refer to. Particular moral standards are forcibly engrained into the mental economy of the increasingly socialized individual. This is done in only fixed cases

²¹ Kail (2009) draws a link between Hume’s theory of human nature and Nietzsche’s attempt to ‘translate humanity back into nature’ (*BGE* 230) as both instances of methodological naturalism. He points out that Nietzsche identifies one of the ‘four errors’ of *Gay Science* 115 as the placement of humans ‘in a false rank order with animals and the rest of nature’, and that this error might be intimated by a false sense of pride, as Nietzsche claims in *Daybreak* 31. Kail importantly writes that this is “not to be conflated with the idea that there are no genuine differences between humans and other animals. For Nietzsche, humans, as well as being ‘diseased’ (*GM* II:7) animals, have also become ‘interesting’ ones (*GM* I:6) and are still full of potential. For Hume there are great differences between humans and animals, differences that are enhanced through the formation of culture and convention. But what seemed to others to call for differences in *kind* – a Cartesian soul in the *bête machine* or a contracausal noumenal self – are explicable by appeal to more tractable animal material” (Kail 2009, p. 7).

(such imperatives amount to “five, six ‘I will nots’”, Nietzsche claims – *GM* II 3), the wider psychological backdrop of which retains active forgetting as an active capacity.^{22 23}

3) b) Active Forgetting as a Constitutive Psychic Mechanism

In a different vein, Loeb (2006) and Acampora (2006) both respectively interpret forgetting as an arbitrary psychological mechanism, one that can be gotten rid of from human psychology, rather than understanding forgetting as something constitutive, as a psychological element with varying strength operating for all humans. Loeb (2006) writes that Nietzsche “warn[s] about the costs of countering” forgetting (Loeb 2006, p. 164). But when Nietzsche talks of the “human being in whom this suppression apparatus is damaged and stops functioning” as being “comparable to a dyspeptic (and not just comparable)” and not being able to “‘process’ anything” (*GM* II 1), he isn’t making a claim about the wholesale getting *rid* of forgetting, in the sense that it either disappears or becomes permanently inefficacious in the mental activity of humans. Rather, it is a central claim of Nietzsche’s in *GM* II that under certain conditions, such moral memories can overpower or veto forgetting in certain cases.

²² In an interesting MPhilStud thesis awarded by University College London, Timothy Short claims that active forgetfulness is “subsumed” by “active memory”, and exists as just one aspect of active memory (Short 2013, p. 22). But active forgetting is better thought of in relation, sometimes a tensional relation, to the structure of such memories, rather than operative within this structure. See T. Short, ‘Nietzsche on Memory’, link accessed most recently 10th February 2022 http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/1421265/1/Tim_Short_MPhil_final.pdf

²³ Cf. Reginster (2018) for the claim that the “motivational framework of bad conscience” (p. 15), is a specifically moralizing phenomenon. In Chapter Four I discuss bad conscience, its link to the inception of new frameworks of individual evaluation and their possible productive uses.

A similar contention to Loeb's comes in Acampora's claim that from *GM II*, "[t]he message is: the acquisition of the kind of willing that is had in promise-making came with a price – the diminution of forgetting, and we allow it to wither only at our peril" (Acampora 2006, p. 149). Likewise, in the same article, Acampora claims that a "withering of forgetting" is a requisite for the arrival of the 'sovereign individual' (Ibid.). The problem here is that Nietzsche does not employ any such language of withering at *GM II* 1- 3. It is misguided to think that Nietzsche considers it possible for active forgetting to wholly *wither*, despite viewing it as a pivotal function of human interpretation, no matter how deeply overridden it might be by certain forms of memory.²⁴ Nietzsche sees the development of moral memory as arising in tension with forgetting, and can in certain cases "achieve victory over" active forgetting (*GM II* 3). But nowhere does Nietzsche say that forgetting can wither, i.e. die off as a psychological mechanism. Acampora writes that "forgetting plays a role in the regulatory process that permits us to appropriate our experience such that we take from it what is necessary and rid ourselves of what is not" (p. 149). This appears correct. It is a similar sentiment to my exposition in this chapter. So unless Acampora thinks that Nietzsche thinks this regulatory process of forgetting could be wholly abolished, which it would be unwise to do considering the lack of textual evidence that commits Nietzsche to this reading, it is difficult to see how any claims about the origins of responsibility via memory *could* abolish this regulatory process, rather than forgetting simply residing along with certain cases of moral memory.²⁵

Arguments that deny the mechanism of active forgetting as a constitutive feature within

²⁴ It is worth noting that Nietzsche does however talk about the possibility and in some cases the desirability of allowing certain drives to 'wither'. See Chapter Three of this thesis.

²⁵ Migotti (2013, p. 521) makes a similar claim as this, also in response to Acampora.

human mental activity appear both misguided and textually unwarranted. Rather, it remains operative as a distinctive human capacity, by Nietzsche's lights. This contextualizes what follows in *GM II*'s discussion of the ways in which certain mnemonic processes internalizing various moral and social norms have been 'victorious'. In emphasizing these, Nietzsche sets up a structural opposition, rather than a wholesale replacement of one by the other.

Conclusion:

The goals of this chapter have been to address what I take to be an under-examined aspect of a crucial section in Nietzsche's *Genealogy*. Its central aim has been to establish the significance of the phenomenon of active forgetting in the places where Nietzsche discusses it most expansively. In light of this, I also contend that the apparatus provided by this reconception of forgetting as an active force is integral to how Nietzsche conceives of the successful incorporation of experiential content into a healthy individual's value-interpretation. This more normatively inspired set of concerns is a matter for part of the next chapter. It has been enough here to examine the textual evidence arguing for the importance that the faculty of forgetting has, as a faculty in the psychic lives of individuals.

Chapter Two:

Nietzsche and Freud on Active Forgetting:

Affects, Deep Forgetting, and the Unconscious

Introduction:

In Chapter One I analysed the function of active forgetting. Yet questions remain about its status. What is the psychological content that Nietzsche thinks can be actively forgotten? And can it be the case for him that such content can be totally forgotten from the mental economy? Building on how Nietzsche answers these questions, there are also important discussions to be had about how this function constitutes a condition of health, as he describes it at *GM II 1*. In this respect, I will argue in section one that, first, Nietzsche tacitly employs and indeed relies on a tiered system of forgetting, with the capacity for total forgetting from the unconscious, too. With regards to the former question, I will argue that Nietzsche's focus is more towards, perhaps exclusively towards, affective content. I will develop this by exploring numerous passages in the mature texts, where Nietzsche discusses the strength required by the modern individual to forget certain kinds of affective content that causes *ressentiment*. In this respect, as well as providing an exegesis of the slaves' and nobles' capacity or incapacity to actively forget in *GM I*, and given the claim that active forgetting is a residual facet of the modern individual's psychological landscape, I will discuss in section two how Nietzsche thinks the cultivation of such a capacity has a bearing on our conceiving the mental economy of the would-be exemplary modern individual.

In the third section of this chapter, I will offer a comparative treatment of Nietzsche and Freud on their respective conceptions of motivated forgetting, and their psychological implications. Discussed will be Freud's topographical model of mind, the status of motivated

forgetting in the context of how they constitute cases of repression, and the similarities between the two thinkers in their use of metaphors like the ‘door-keeper’ to describe these conceptions. But there are also crucial divergences to discuss, and these are important. Too often, Nietzsche’s insights into depth psychology are mischaracterized by being retroactively given a Freudian gloss. Parsing out some of the areas of comparison and deep structural contrast are important to remedy this.

Section One: What Kind of Content can be Actively Forgotten, and to what extent

1) a) Nietzsche on Total Unconscious Forgetting

Nietzsche identifies active forgetting as a “positive faculty of suppression” (*GM*, II, 1), partially shaping what psychological content the individual is consciously aware of. This affects the behaviour that attends what is allowed ‘in’ and ‘out’ of consciousness. This is reinforced by Nietzsche’s characterization of forgetting as a “doorkeeper to consciousness”, and of its being able to “temporarily close the doors and windows of consciousness” (*Ibid.*). In this regard, forgetting is the faculty which engenders the unconscious evaluative assessment of certain phenomenal content, without being consciously aware of it.²⁶

Nietzsche discusses active forgetting as giving the space for these unconscious evaluative functions. In other words, forgetting operates in line with the individual in question’s predetermined evaluative orientation, an orientation which interprets the world in a certain way. Such an orientation expects the relevant prospective experiences to either support that

²⁶ This notion of ‘faculty’ should be one distinct from the kinds of metaphysical faculties that Nietzsche identifies in *BGE* 11 and treats with suspicion. My thanks to Emma Syea for raising this point.

standard of interpretation, or assess them as unsupportive, and attempt to permanently inhibit their entry into the mental economy. Active forgetting either

a) relays information to consciousness after it has been judged by these interpretative processes to support *or* not disrupt the individual's evaluative orientation,

or

b) tries to prevent the information deemed either irrelevant to the individual's evaluative orientation, or potentially disruptive to it, from being incorporated.

Now we have briefly established the role and involvement of the unconscious in relation to this function. But there is a question about whether actively forgotten content remains in the unconscious once it has been barred from consciousness, or whether Nietzsche conceives it as possible in such cases to *totally* forget such content from all facets of the mental economy.

Nietzsche in *GM II 1* only explicitly discusses the function of active forgetting in the context of content being suppressed from consciousness. What is left less clear is whether this function consequently also stops such content being residual or efficacious unconsciously, within an individual's evaluative orientation.

The text here provides no explicit answer to this question. This is hardly surprising, in some respects: it would be uncharacteristic of Nietzsche's general philosophical approach to have provided one. However, places in the *Genealogy*, in the passage at *GM II 1* and elsewhere, as well as other texts of Nietzsche's, provide strong inferential reasons to see Nietzsche operating with a *tiered system* of forgetting, that allows for and perhaps relies on total forgetting from the unconscious.

The first tier so conceived sees active forgetting as the barring of certain content from consciousness. Nietzsche straightforwardly offers this tier in *GM II 1*. But Nietzsche also alludes to forgetting in this passage as an ability to get rid of certain kinds of unconscious

content, should it be deemed ‘unnourishing’. Nietzsche describes the process of evaluative incorporating such content as akin to a kind of ‘digestion’, referring to a psychic regulation of certain experiences, which spans conscious and unconscious divides within the mental economy.

This description at *GM* II 1 strongly resembles a long passage at *BGE* 230. Here mental activity (qua ‘spirit’ or ‘will’) is described as “incorporat[ing] new experiences, to fit new things into old orders – to grow, then; and more specifically, to *feel* growth, to feel an increase in strength”, while also being “served by an apparently opposite instinct of the spirit [...] a closing of the shutters, inwardly saying No to this thing or that, a refusal to let things draw near, a kind of defensive posture against much potential knowledge...”. Nietzsche claims that both apparently opposing forms of mental activity are “necessary according to the degree of the spirit’s appropriating energy, its digestive energy, to keep to the same metaphor – and indeed the ‘spirit’ really resembles nothing so much as a stomach” (*BGE* 230).²⁷

Anyone drawing a serious comparison between mental activity and the digestive processes of the stomach would have to recognize the role of excretion as well as nourishing incorporation. This recognition would no doubt have been acute for Nietzsche, who undertook radically divergent diets in the hope of curing his perpetual stomach problems.²⁸

²⁷ Cf. *GM* III 16. Cf. also *TSZ* ‘Of Old and New Tables’, 16; “For a ruined stomach is their spirit: IT persuades them to death! For truly, my brethren, the spirit is a stomach!” and ‘The Spirit of Gravity’; “I honour the refractory, fastidious tongues and stomachs, which have learned to say ‘I’ and ‘Yea’ and ‘Nay’. But chewing and digesting *everything* – that is truly the swine’s style! To always say yee-haw – only the ass learned that, and whoever is of its spirit! -”.

²⁸ Nietzsche’s sister Elisabeth commented on her brother’s gigantic intake of fruit, alongside a diet of rusks, peasant vegetable soups designated for invalids, and cold meats during the late 1870s to early ‘80s, as a wish to emulate Diogenes (Förster-Nietzsche 1915, pp. 57 – 9; seen in J. Young 2010, p. 276). Later, in 1881, Julian Young documents a total dietary reversal, wherein Nietzsche “appears to have eaten absolutely no fruit or vegetables during this summer, which must have had an appalling effect on his always suspect digestion” (Young 2010, p. 316). Later still, Curtis Cates’ biography of Nietzsche reports a routine daily lunch during the mid to late 1880’s, “consisting of a beefsteak and an ‘unbelievable’ quantity of fruit, which was, [the manager of the Hotel Alpenrose] was persuaded, the chief cause of his frequent stomach upsets” (Cate, 2005, Chapter 33, ‘Knights and Ladies of the *Gaya*

The plausible inference to draw from Nietzsche's attachment to the metaphor is that even unconscious content can be 'excreted', totally forgotten from the mental economy, leaving no unconscious traces. As such, Nietzsche conceives not only the ability to suppress certain kinds of content from consciousness, but also that individuals operate with the deeper capacity to totally forget at the level of unconsciousness, too.

Nietzsche tacitly relies on there being this deeper tier elsewhere in the *Genealogy*. This further tier is the only way to make sense of how those of the 'noble' disposition in *GM I* forget content that initially causes them personal *ressentiment*. While *GM II 1* is the most considered exposition of active forgetting offered by Nietzsche's mature texts, it is not, confusingly, the first time this capacity is employed in the *Genealogy*. An instantiation of active forgetting appears earlier in this work, in Nietzsche's description of the psychologies of the nobles and slaves at *GM I 10*. In other words, *GM II 1* retroactively describes a phenomenon already instantiated in the description of the nobles and slaves in *GM I 10*.²⁹ It is illustrative to see how Nietzsche discusses a successful case of functional deep forgetting as practically operative in this earlier passage at *GM I 10*.

Nietzsche offers an account concerning how those of a noble disposition functionally deal with content that initially engender in them episodes of *ressentiment*. Nietzsche claims that the nobles' reaction is one grounded in action. This has an exhaustive, cathartic effect,

Scienza'). Nietzsche apparently once opined, "If only I were master of my stomach once!". I have been so far unable to find a robust citation for it, though would be surprised if it *weren't* true that he said this.

²⁹ Deleuze (1962/1983) and Lawrence Hatab (2008) offer welcome contributions to this issue in their treatments of the *Genealogy*. Hatab also makes the link between this role of forgetting with Nietzsche's "genealogical critique of slave morality" (Hatab 2008, p. 70), explicitly linking *GM I 10* with *GM II 1*, as I shall attempt to do. As Deleuze similarly writes, "the man of *ressentiment* does not [actively] 'react': his reaction is endless, it is felt instead of being acted" (Deleuze 1962/1983, p. 115). Bamford (2019) also draws a link between *GM I 10* and *GM II 1* in a similar manner (pp. 28 - 9).

immediately discharging the content associated with whatever caused the *ressentiment* in the first place. This discharge from the mental economy is what Nietzsche describes as “an excess of plastic, reconstructive, healing power that also makes one forget” (*GM* I 10). This ensures that such events are not “taken seriously” by the one endowed with this abundance of *plastische kraft*, Nietzsche claims.³⁰ This involves the forgetting of specific, potentially deleterious content of an experience, before it assumes any degree of psychological efficacy in their mental activity.³¹ It is exhausted “in an immediate reaction”, before it can assume a deeper, more efficacious and more evaluatively disruptive status within the individual. *Ressentiment* fails to “poison” because its deleterious content is exhausted.³²

In the same section, Nietzsche also offers a more modern instantiation of this psychological mechanism of the noble, in the case of Mirabeau. When it comes to perceived base deeds and slights against him, Mirabeau functionally deals with this experiential content in such a way that he cannot even react to them qua perceived slights. Rather than remember the experience as a slight, Mirabeau cannot forgive it, because he forgot the associations which led him to

³⁰ *UM* II 1 also uses the expression “plastic power” when discussing incorporation, forgetting, and the healing of past psychological wounds. *UM* II opens by Nietzsche drawing a comparison between the forgetting of events by cows, and how humans can actively forget, both individually, and within an historical-cultural context. This, however, is no reason to think that Nietzsche sees the forgetting of humans and of cows as of a piece – indeed, it is used as much as a contrast as it is a comparison. My thanks to Rachel Cristy for discussions on this point.

³¹ See *GM* III 16 also in this context where Nietzsche writes, “[a] strong and well-formed human digests his experiences (deeds, misdeeds included) as he digests his meals, even when he has hard bites to swallow”. The ‘hard bites’ might very plausibly be characterized as such cases of episodic bouts of *ressentiment*.

³² Although Syea (2018) is right to emphasize the importance of incorporation in relation to active forgetting (2018, p. 92), this should not be to discount the role of suppression of such content by this faculty, given Nietzsche’s explicit description of it as suppressing certain content from consciousness. Exclusion and exhaustion are part of the story here, too – incorporate what nourishes, get rid of what doesn’t.

feel it to be a genuine slight.³³ By virtue of being unable to react towards it as a slight, the inference is that the content associated with the experience that constituted it as a slight has been expunged.³⁴ This is illustrative in conceiving to what extent Nietzsche thinks forgetting applies in the context of forgetting from the unconscious, too.

As well as these inferences drawn from practical instantiations of active forgetting, Nietzsche also relies on this deeper tier to frame a contrast. What separates the noble from the slave is the latter's inability to deeply forget such content. Active forgetting is described as a mode of health when functional within the mental economy (*GM II 1*). Nietzsche sets up the dichotomy of slave against noble partly by the difference in how they respond to experiential content that engenders *ressentiment* (*GM I 10*). The slave does indeed become consciously unaware of such content. But since Nietzsche claims that evaluative activity is largely unconscious, it is not enough to be no longer consciously aware of such content to consider it inefficacious in the mental economy. This isn't enough to insure the "psychic order" facilitated by active forgetting (*GM II 1*), since Nietzsche considers such content to still be disruptive at the unconscious level. Indeed, in *GM I 10*, Nietzsche claims that the slaves are not conscious of the hatred which is still efficacious for them. This hatred is so efficacious that it alters their evaluative orientation, all the while being operative only unconsciously.

Structurally, the slaves do in some sense 'forget' the content from their conscious life. So, were Nietzsche only operating with this first tier in how he conceives the function of active

³³ Nietzsche offers a rather speculative precursor to *GM II 1* in *Daybreak*. There he comments about whether there really is such a thing as forgetfulness so understood as a failure of memory (*D 126*) which later concretizes in him identifying forgetfulness itself as an active faculty in *GM II 1*. Later at *D 393* he claims that the one who "forgets nothing, but forgives everything" shall be doubly detested for his memory and magnanimity.

³⁴ Whether this counts as total forgetting of the affective associations, or other kinds of content too, will be discussed shortly below.

forgetting, then it wouldn't make sense to see this as a constituent aspect of psychological health, as he describes it as at *GM II 1*. Nietzsche aids us in making this inference, however, by claiming that the slaves are specifically "not forgetting" of such content (*GM I 10*). While the slave isn't conscious of such content, it remains residual and efficacious for them at the level of the unconscious. The slaves' "prodigious memory" (*GM II 2*) means that despite their conscious avowal to forgiveness, the latent motivations for this avowal are self-deceptively grounded in vengefulness. Indeed, the tale Nietzsche tells of the evaluative orientation behind the 'slave revolt in morals' tracks the unconscious efficacy of such residual content in the mental economy.

The slave consciously forgets that content, but it is still residual in the unconscious, as a latent form of hatred (*GM I 13*). So evidently the forgetting of the noble disposition is not on a structural par with cases like this, which constitute a *repression* of mental content (more on this later). Giving further credence to the metaphor of incorporation as a mode of digestion, Nietzsche describes the inability to actively forget such content as a kind of mental 'dyspepsia' (*GM II 1*). Because the slave cannot instantiate the active forgetting to provide the space for unconsciously processing the content of such experiences, this causes the slave to repress that content, and this repression still performs a constitutive role in re-aligning the slaves' values. As this repression comes to assume potency and fester, it develops an increasingly definitive role in their value-interpretation - hence Nietzsche's description of the slaves as "creatures of *ressentiment*" (*GM I 10*).

By way of contrast to this slavish dyspepsia, the inference to draw from the text is that active forgetting as functional in the noble leads to the total exhaustion of such content, from the unconscious too. That content is deemed evaluatively anathema, thereby preserving one's

psychic economy in a manner accordant with overall psychological health.³⁵ While forgetting for Nietzsche is the faculty that allows or disallows the inclusion or reception of particular experiential content at the conscious level, the further inference is that the content of a new experience is scrutinized before exhausting it, if deemed potentially disruptive in that way. This initial “suppression apparatus” creates the conditions required for unconscious evaluation. This evaluation comes before the possible total forgetting.

1) b) What Kind of Content Can Be Actively Forgotten

A further question concerns the *kind* of psychological content Nietzsche thinks can be actively forgotten. Various forms of phenomenal content could come to be associated with one’s self-representation of an experience, such as affective, perceptual, propositional, conceptual or non-conceptual, imaginative, and others. So what is the remit here of the kind of content Nietzsche thinks can be actively forgotten? Further, is it just content associated with an experience that can be actively forgotten, or can it be experiences themselves?

While the text isn’t specific what exactly the remit is, what is clear is that Nietzsche’s focus is more towards, and likely exclusively towards, affective content. For example, when Nietzsche discusses the nobles’ active forgetting at *GM I 10*, the passage is framed around two distinctive responses to *ressentiment*, the affect of impotent hatred and vengeance.³⁶ In

³⁵ Note that although the slave too preserves their psychic economy by means of repressing the content, such content is not rendered evaluatively anathema, nor is it considered by Nietzsche to be a condition of psychological health. More on the slave and their inability to actively forget in Section Two. My thanks to Christopher Janaway for pressing me to clarify this point.

³⁶ I have assumed a definition of *ressentiment* construed as impotent hatred for the sake of brevity. Nietzsche offers a difference in ‘nature’ when “distinguishing *ressentiment* and aggression” (Deleuze 1962/1983, p. 121). For debate around the precise definition of affective *ressentiment*, see Bittner 1994, Deleuze 1962/1983, Reginster 1997, Wallace 2007, Jenkins 2018, and Huddleston 2021.

success cases, a certain psychological process is undertaken to discharge the manifestation of this affect. Nietzsche directly frames this process as a power to forget. This doesn't necessarily preclude the discharge of other forms of associative phenomenal content, of the kind which might allow the noble to recall the experience in a manner free from the *ressentiment* the experience initially caused. But Nietzsche gives the affects an integral role in the structuring of evaluative orientation, more generally. As such, if one could recall the experience and other forms of phenomenal content (e.g. perceptual or imaginative) with no associated negative affects still attached, then the recollection doesn't affectively influence their value-orientation.³⁷

Where the text of *GM I 10* becomes more ambiguous comes in Nietzsche's discussion of Mirabeau, as a modern example of this power to actively forget. It is notable that Mirabeau is described as a modern instantiation of the same capacity present in the nobles of antiquity. Since it was framed in terms of affective forgetting in the noble, the inference is to apply the same structural claim to Mirabeau, too. But Nietzsche writes that Mirabeau

“had no memory for insults and base deeds committed against him and who was only unable to forgive because he – forgot. Such a human is simply able to shake off with a single shrug a collection of worms that in others would dig itself in...”

(*GM I 10*)

With the nobles, it is the negative affect that is driven from consciousness, and exhausted

³⁷ Giving credence to the interpretive point that affect content is what can be actively forgotten, *EH* 'Wise' 6 is very direct about vengeful *feelings* being overcome – *ressentiment* is framed there as a kind of “memory”, which acts as “a festering wound”.

from the unconscious. Thus, the noble might arguably remember the insult without retaining any of the affect at either the conscious or the unconscious level. The ambiguity arrives in the inference that Nietzsche might be suggesting that for Mirabeau, it is not just the affect that is gone, but that he doesn't remember the event in any shape or form. It might seem to be that Mirabeau has no recollection of the experience itself, nor any associative phenomenal content.

The claim at play here involves unpicking how we should interpret the manner in which Mirabeau forgets 'insults and base deeds'. It isn't that an insult or base deed is so by its essence. Rather, even if it is intended to be, it's that such things are perceived so that accords them such status. Someone could do or say something with an intent to cause insult, but it only succeeds in doing so if it is taken to be insulting by the one it is directed at. Some acceptance by the party receiving it is required, that makes it a slight – otherwise, it fails to be so. The question then, is whether forgetting facilitates some reconstructive psychological process that reinterprets that experience, such that it is no longer registered as being an insult or base deed; or, whether it is some process that discharges the experience *itself* and all its phenomenal content from the mental economy. But need we assume that just because some event is no longer perceived by one to constitute an insult or base deed, that the event itself is impossible to recall? When an event or thing said is something which insults me, then this is a kind of affective reaction I have to it. I feel insulted, thought it might have been otherwise. So if some sort of process reinterprets it in such a way that the affect is removed from one's representation, perhaps this is all Mirabeau needs to be unable to forgive, because he forgot.

This interpretation would allow us to reconcile the structural claims made about the noble with their modern example, Mirabeau. We could also concede that while the above may be the best reading of active forgetting in its application to Mirabeau, from it we needn't rule out that events can become themselves forgotten, in the passive, more commonplace sense. This is particularly possible if the negative affects are no longer residual. While active forgetting is best thought of with reference to phenomenal content associated with an experience, rather than an experience itself, presumably an experience can in principle be (passively) forgotten in certain circumstances, too. To flesh out the model here with regards to Mirabeau, perhaps by virtue of active forgetting operating on affective content, it can allow for more commonplace passive forgetting to occur towards the experiences themselves. Facilitating the forgetting of some psychological content from an experience that one could in principle recall is active, whereas a consequent failure to recall an experience (resulting from its affective associated content being exhausted) is passive. So while it is easier to interpret the active forgetting of nobles purely in terms of affective content, a kind of double sense to forgetting perhaps is required for making the best interpretive sense of its application to Mirabeau. The affective associations for certain experiences are removed. And perhaps, the inference goes, is that he consequently (passively) forgets the entire experience, as a result. But this is only rendered possible due to actively forgetting the associated affective content first.³⁸

Section 2: Exploring Active Forgetting as a Condition of Health

This has helped clarify active forgetting's function and status within the mental economy. But what sense is to be made of Nietzsche's claim that it constitutes a condition of health? In

³⁸ Syea makes the useful distinction between recalling and re-living in this sense, to distinguish between a memory of the event, and the affects that motivate my attitudes towards that event and the world more broadly (Syea 2018, p. 87).

answer I will refer to passages across Nietzsche's later texts, but I will first frame it by looking again at the machinations of the nobles and slaves at *GM* I 10. The justification that this analysis applies beyond antiquity to modern humans too will be provided with how it fits claims Nietzsche makes in other texts, which will be discussed later in this section.

2) a) The Noble's Forgetting as 'Active' in *GM* I, 10

Nietzsche at *GM* II, 3 describes humans as "forgetting in the flesh". His description of active forgetting makes a claim about how humans interpret, and the relative strength that different individuals or type of individuals possess to support their own value-interpretations.

Nietzsche identifies a predetermined 'manner of valuation' under which all experiences are considered and evaluated. These means of evaluating experiences are individual-specific (or perhaps type-specific) in relation to the 'strength' which an individual is able to commit to or support such a means of evaluation.³⁹ As was argued in Section One, in the passage of *GM* I 10, Nietzsche discusses what separates the nobles from the slaves, claiming that the nobles possess a particular excess of a power that allows them to forget the affective content of experiences that invoke *ressentiment* in them. This speaks to wider claims Nietzsche makes about how different human types interpret the world they inhabit. Nietzsche claims that when the nobles experience content with which they have as of yet had 'insufficient acquaintance', they are able to interpret it to fit their own evaluative orientation. So a form of evaluative

³⁹ It is well known that Nietzsche assigns some degree of psycho-physiological determination of different 'types'. There is a deeper interpretive question here about the degree of determinism for Nietzsche here. Some, such as Leiter (2002, 2nd ed. 2015), consider Nietzsche positing a rigid unchangeability of an individual's type facts; others, such as Nehamas (1985, 2018a), posit a more robust conception of 'self-creation' that sees Nietzsche as giving far more space for the possibility for to some extent changing type facts. In Chapter 3, I commit myself to arguing for the possibility of the removal or elimination of certain drives for Nietzsche, aligning myself to some degree with Nehamas.

assessment is made by powers of unconscious determination about the content.

This strong evaluative stance offers provision for the noble to practically orient themselves in the world. To start with, because things considered ‘bad’ to the noble assume the status of an “after-birth, a pale contrast image”, less things possess the potency to initially engender *ressentiment* – this is the message of the early part of *GM I 10*. This particular evaluative confidence and strength functions so that the experiences of things taken to cut against one’s values arise in a particular secondary or diminished relation.

When new experiential content appears that *does* initially cause *ressentiment* for the noble, Nietzsche claims that this is when the “suppression apparatus” of forgetting is instantiated, as a capacity that leads to the exhaustion of that content, which Nietzsche describes with the metaphor of shrugging it off, like worms. As was argued, it is not that the event itself is forgotten, but rather that the noble, or the exemplary modern, has cast off certain affective associations of that event that are deemed to have negative evaluative valence. An event was experienced which initially frustrated the individual’s immediate representation of that experience. The nature of a ‘slight’ against one’s character or embodied values is then augmented by the noble’s power of evaluation. In other words, it is the affective particularities of that event, which initially had the potential to foster efficacious *ressentiment*, that are forgotten and exhausted. This diminishes this content’s significance, in terms of inhibiting its ability to be potent in one’s wider evaluative orientation. The process Nietzsche describes seeks to suppress and augment that content, in order to defensively recapitulate and protect (or ‘heal’) that orientation.

Not only does Nietzsche place narrower limits upon the number of potential experiences that could cause the nobles to initially experience *ressentiment*, but he also claims that this excess of power they possess allows them to overcome such cases. Later in the aphorism, when Nietzsche discusses those experiences which *do* initially engender *ressentiment*, he describes the nobles' ability to immediately exhaust or discharge that *ressentiment* by recourse to action. It is this which Nietzsche claims is the insurance against that *ressentiment* becoming rancorous and potent for the noble. He extends this excess of power to certain exemplary moderns, outlining the case of Mirabeau in this instance. Nietzsche's emphasis on this *excess* of a power, rather than the possession of a power itself, is what makes noble types and certain exemplary moderns able to forget experiences that create *ressentiment* where Nietzsche claims the slave cannot. The stronger this power, the more it allows for greater efficacy in (the 'doorkeeper') keeping the content of experiences judged to be negative out of consciousness.

Nietzsche claims that the insults and base deeds levelled against Mirabeau are treated as things to forget – and he does forget them. Valuation involves unconscious judgements about what is conducive for the individual. In the case of the nobles, and exemplary moderns such as Mirabeau, insults and base deeds that would grievously disrupt and fester in some (i.e. the slaves) are relegated to insignificance, through action. This can manifest in many ways. A well-placed shrug of one's shoulders could be just as good, if done authentically, as a good verbal riposte, or a sufficient physical reaction to an insult – each are conceivably demonstrations of the kind of psychological strength Nietzsche sees as prerequisite for forgetting the affect of *ressentiment*. This, along with Nietzsche's invocation of Mirabeau as a positive case of this capacity, demonstrates it is not a power best understood in terms of

brute physicality. The nobles might possess physical attributes of this kind in other ways. But this formative power itself is a condition of ‘strength’ understood in a more nuanced way than being synonymous with the muscle and sinew of the unreflective ‘blond beast’ imagery. What motivates Nietzsche’s description of this strength and power in this context is a sense of being able to navigate the world by means of an individual’s robust psychological and hence practical orientation.

Nietzsche uses the discussion of this excess of power and what it enables (for the nobles and exemplary modern figures like Mirabeau) to again draw a contrast with the case of the slave. In the same situations, the slave is unable to forget and exhaust the content of experiences which engender *ressentiment*. For certain individuals, the capacity to deal with that content that could potentially disrupt one’s conscious life is weaker than it need be for others. This power which enables the capacity to actively forget varies in strength, relative to the human or type of human in question. The slaves’ inability to forget in this passage is consonant with the claim that the dyspeptic is unable to process, resulting in the stable features of a healthy human disposition (such as happiness, cheerfulness, hope, pride, and immediacy for action) being impeded (*GM II 1*). This is the case for the slave. The slaves are unable to process or forget, for lack of this excess of the power to form and transfigure and heal. They suffer more psychologically efficaciously from the increasingly *ressentiment*-invoking content of an experience.

So the disruption this experience causes in these cases overcomes the ‘doorkeeper’ of consciousness in each slave. The best the slave can do in such instances where they perceive to have suffered injustice of the sort that invokes *ressentiment* is to, so to speak, put it to the back of one’s mind. They can try and ignore it, in the hope that it goes away. But this is not

the same as forgetting in the active sense, since Nietzsche contends in *GM I 10* that the slave *cannot* forget such content. They are unable to process their experience of the difficulties and slights against them, so that it might be forgotten. Instead they must resort to certain kinds of self-deception to deal with the repressions that occur as a consequence.⁴⁰ In this respect the slaves come to possess a “prodigious memory”, Nietzsche claims. This unconsciously formative *ressentiment* manifest in the slave becomes creative, and ultimately sets conditions for either the development or adoption of new standards of value in reaction to the noble.⁴¹ Nietzsche claims that the slave builds their “basic concept...as reaction and counterpart” in relation to the potency of this *ressentiment*, manifesting itself as a response from the slave’s experience of the perceived injustices they suffer at the hands of the nobles (*GM I 10*).⁴²

The affective ‘memory’ and the ‘inability to forget’ of the slave is, as will be discussed more fully shortly, best considered as a form of content repression. The slave becomes unaware of the rancorous, efficacious content of their experiences. But the latent content of these phenomena they possess manifests itself unconsciously. They have consciously forgotten, but unconsciously they remember, in a sense. While it is possible for the noble to suffer episodic bouts of *ressentiment*, the slave is determined in a constitutive way by their *ressentiment*: they are ‘creatures’ of it. The reaction-formation of the slaves leads to the adoption of an

⁴⁰ Nietzsche describes this resort by the slaves as the “counterfeiting and self-deception of powerlessness” (*GM I*, 13).

⁴¹ This ‘prodigious memory’ accounts for the evaluative commitments the slaves either develop (Loeb 2018a) or adopt at the behest of the priests (Wallace 2007) to framing the notion that their lives are ‘preparations’ and ‘tests’ for which they shall one day (i.e. in the afterlife) receive retribution (*GM I 14*).

⁴² Syea argues that it is the holding on to past moments which builds up feelings of *ressentiment* (Syea 2018, p. 79). Rather, it is the other way around: the pronounced affect of *ressentiment* leads to the negative appraisal which means the event is not forgotten. This is in line with the case of Mirabeau, who rids himself of the affect, and so forgets.

entirely new standard of valuation, the Judeo-Christian one, as evinced in their professions of love, meekness and forgiveness. Further, Nietzsche thinks that this repression is in principle observable through behaviour to the keen investigator. The proto-psychoanalytic figure of “Mr Wanton-Curiosity and Daredevil”, as an example of this in *GM* I, observes the ‘sweating’ that the slaves behaviourally perform when they vocalize their conscious avowal to love their enemies, which is really a latent, deep-seated reactive hate which governs them. This demonstrates the irresolvable discord between the values motivating the slaves’ conscious avowals, and the unrecognized unconscious values which genuinely motivate them, which can manifest themselves behaviourally without their conscious intention to have done so (*GM*, I 14).

An important textual clarification Nietzsche offers that appears to track the difference between healthy kinds of suppression to deal with mental content, and negative kinds of *repression* stemming from an inability to deal with such content, comes in the ‘Four Great Errors’ chapter of *Twilight of the Idols*. After discussing the kind of ‘error’ involved in the postulation of ‘imaginary causes’ at *TI* ‘Errors’ 4, he offers an explanation for the persistence of this error in *TI* ‘Errors’ 5. In an incredibly prescient, equally proto-psychoanalytic passage, Nietzsche writes (to quote at length):

“*Psychological explanation for this.* – Familiarizing something unfamiliar is comforting, reassuring, satisfying, and produces a feeling of power as well.

Unfamiliar things are dangerous, anxiety-provoking, upsetting,- the primary instinct is to *get rid* of these painful states. First principle: any explanation is better than none.

Since it is basically a matter of wanting to get rid of unpleasant thoughts, *people are not exactly particular about how to do it* [my emphasis]: the first idea that can

familiarize the unfamiliar feels good enough to be ‘considered true’. Proof of *pleasure* (‘strength’) as the criterion for truth [...] The first consequence of this need is that causation get attributed to something we are already *familiar* with, something we have already encountered and registered in memory. This forecloses the possibility that anything novel, alien, or previously unencountered can be a cause. – So we are not looking for just any type of explanatory cause, we are looking for a chosen, *preferred* type of explanation, one that will most quickly and reliably get rid of the feeling of unfamiliarity and novelty, the feeling that we are dealing with something we have never encountered before, - the *most common* explanation. [...]”

-*Twilight*, ‘Errors’, 5

There are a number of affinities with the discussion so far. Nietzsche makes the claim that all familiarizing with causes is of great instrumental utility to humans, as a general explanatory schema. But the manner in which it is done might amount to some degree of falsification in some cases and by some types, since “unfamiliar things are dangerous, anxiety-provoking, upsetting” to the individual who experiences them. He then claims that the primary impetus is to rid ourselves of these painful states, but goes on to say that “people are not exactly particular about how to” get rid of them. This is important because it offers no guarantee of success for the different means of trying to get rid of these kinds of states.

To illustrate this, the discussion of the nobles and slaves (again at *GM I 10*) provides all the conceptual apparatus to make sense of this claim. The nobles usually familiarize in a manner that renders some true assessment of the world. Nietzsche writes that the degree to which the noble disposition falsifies the world to cohere with its values extends only to those things with which they are insufficiently acquainted. In other words, they bend new and unfamiliar things to align with their strong, plastic interpretive capacity, as one means of ‘getting rid of

the unfamiliar'. For Nietzsche, the nobles make the world evaluatively cohere with their own practical orientation, and as such get rid of the unfamiliar by superficializing it. By contrast, in the case of the slave, the slave also wants to get rid of these unfamiliarities, but from the outset makes recourse to less successful means for doing so. At the level of unconscious valuation, the slave hasn't truly 'gotten rid of' the psychic pain that attends these unfamiliarities. Although this might have instrumental prudence as a coping mechanism, neither is it based on as truthful as possible an appraisal of the world, nor is it emblematic of a healthy psychological disposition.⁴³

2) b) The Motivational Status of Active Forgetting for Nietzsche

In the Clark and Swensen's translation of the *Genealogy*, two senses of the term "suppression" are used, to delineate two markedly divergent notions. Nietzsche is translated as attributing a "suppressed hate" to the revenge-seeking slaves, with their inability to forget in *GM I 10*, while also translating active forgetting as a "positive faculty of suppression" in *GM II 1*. These are clearly distinct notions, since it is the slaves whom Nietzsche claims are *unable* to forget in *GM I 10*. This inability is crucial for the story of the slave revolt in so far as it contributes to why they foster the conditions for developing their reactive attitudes towards the nobles. Active forgetting as a "faculty of suppression" at *GM II 1* contrasts with the "suppressed hate" at *GM I 10*.⁴⁴ These differences are nuanced but important. While the capacity of forgetting at *GM II 1* stems from the activity of the nobles, Nietzsche speaks at *GM I 10* of something wholly different, employing accusations of deep and deceptive

⁴³ My thanks to Alex Prescott-Couch for discussions of this point.

⁴⁴ The Carol Diethe Cambridge University Press translation of *GM I 10* has "entrenched hatred" rather than "suppressed hate" as it is translated in the Clark and Swensen. Diethe translates "Hemmungsvermögen" at *GM II 1* as "faculty of suppression", as do Clark and Swensen.

falsities. Nietzsche describes the slaves' only capacity for interpretive action as a repressive reaction-formation. The 'repression' of the slaves in *GM I 10* demonstrates something residual, conserved and corrosive in the mental economy. So rather than a form of suppression of the kind discussed at *GM II 1*, the psychic activity the slaves are engaged in is best considered as a form of *repression*.⁴⁵ This might seem like hair-splitting, but this passage shows Nietzsche's tacit but important reliance on a conceptual distinction between the two. Active forgetting suppresses content from consciousness in order to evaluate. Repressions occur because such evaluations cannot take place.⁴⁶

What the slaves repress is their true affective reaction towards the perceived injustices against them by life. This content fosters an evaluation grounded in hate, which they attempt to consciously avow as love. Nietzsche contends that this conversion is not wholly convincing, both in the third-person (they "talk of 'love of one's enemies' – and sweat while doing so" – *GM I 14*) and the first-person, since they are unable to forget these perceived injustices, viewing their suffering as "a preparation, a test" for which, Nietzsche says, they believe "there will one day be retribution" (*Ibid.*). The slaves employ a reactive coping strategy to compensate for their inability to actively process (by means of active forgetting) the contents of the phenomena that they suffer from.⁴⁷

It is evident that the repressive redirection of instincts as discussed in *GM I 10 - 14* doesn't

⁴⁵ My thanks go to Gudrun von Tevenar for discussions on this point.

⁴⁶ Notable is that Nietzsche does not use *Verdrängung*, the term first used by J.F. Herbart for 'repression', in either instance. Nietzsche mentions Herbart rarely in the *Nachlass*, and never in this context.

⁴⁷ Cf. *GM III 15*: "...one *tries* to forget, that is to say, one cures oneself of pain by infecting the wound" (my emphasis).

track the ideal psychic economy Nietzsche wants to promote. Repression of this kind might sometimes be indispensable for preserving an individual or community's life by being instrumental to the adoption of new standards of meaning and value. But this is a far cry from a full-blooded endorsement as a condition of health by Nietzsche.

We have already seen good textual reasons that Nietzsche sees the capacity of active forgetting as a prerequisite for a modern condition of health. While he focuses on a particular example of a psychologically healthy modern (Mirabeau) in this regard, other texts show that he considers the capacity of forgetting to remain a component feature of mental activity in all modern humans. In this respect, it is important to consider how active forgetting might be utilised for Nietzsche's normative concerns for (certain strong) modern Europeans at an axiological crisis point. A key takeaway from the *Genealogy* is an acknowledgement that modern European humans have inherited much of their instinctual make-up from the various psychological types analysed within its Three Essays. Modern Europeans are, for example, both 'slavish' and 'noble' to some extent, a thought Nietzsche introduces at *BGE* 260. Active forgetting was associated with a noble disposition, and the inception of moralized affective memory on the part of the slaves. Yet it is the development of a kind of autonomous memory that eventuates in the sovereign individual as a self-legislating exemplar (*GM* II 2). These two aspects of the mental economy offer a way of fleshing out this claim of Nietzsche's at *BGE* 260, and give an indication of how each aspect contributes to thinking about the 'great' psychic health that might come to be made available to modern humans. On the basis of properly acknowledging the inheritance of both facets, Nietzsche's conception of the strong

future individual retains the possibility to reinstate their psychic health, perhaps even achieve a ‘great’ health.⁴⁸

Nietzsche extends his claims about forgetting for overcoming the affect of *ressentiment* in a passage in *Ecce Homo*. Nietzsche identifies one of the constitutive features of a “richness of spirit” as the ability to conquer *ressentiment* (*EH* ‘Wise’ 6). He claims that his own sickness provided him with the ‘lucidity’ to ascertain the conditions for becoming and remaining free from *ressentiment*. However, a corollary of the ultimately beneficial effect of such sickness, he writes, is that the states of sickness and weakness “wear down the true instinct for *healing*, which is the human instinct for weapons and war. *You do not know how to get rid of anything, you do not know how to get over anything, you do not know how to push anything back, - everything hurts*” (my emphasis). The specifics of Nietzsche’s own case in this section are orthogonal to the argument here, save for how he sets it up in the context of his own experience with sickness. What is important is this instinct of healing he identifies, which involves the battle “against lingering and vengeful feelings” (*Ibid.*).⁴⁹ What makes this passage interesting in the current context is that Nietzsche identifies “memory” as a “festering wound” of the affective landscape.⁵⁰ Memory here is obviously framed around residual negative affects. This gives further credence to the idea that Nietzsche sees the possibility of framing active forgetting as a means of overcoming certain forms of affective content. Identifying his own period of sickness as a case of individual episodic decadence, he

⁴⁸ In an underexplored series of allusive passages, Nietzsche speculates at *GM* II 20 – 25 about bad conscience offering another dimension to how something initially ‘sickness’ inducing in human psychology might later contribute to achieving this great health. See Chapter 4 of this thesis.

⁴⁹ “...anyone aware of this will understand why I am calling attention to my own behaviour, my *sureness of instinct* in practice” (*Ibid.*).

⁵⁰ Deleuze (1962/1983, p. 116) and Syea (2018, p. 78) rightly make the connection with this passage, too.

makes an important claim about the prohibition of deleterious feelings. He writes, “When I was a decadent, I *prohibited* these feelings as being harmful to me; as soon as my life became right and proud enough again, I prohibited these feelings as being *beneath* me” (Ibid., Nietzsche’s emphasis).

3) Nietzsche contra Freud on ‘Motivated’ Forgetting

A slightly earlier textual example that tracks the ability to forget in relation to the affects comes at *BGE* 68;

“ ‘I did this’, says my Memory.

‘I cannot have done this’, says my Pride and remains inexorable.

In the end – Memory yields.”

Here Nietzsche offers pride as the affective state which speaks from the individual’s evaluative orientation. In this instance, it provides the impetus for the individual to instantiate an apparent case of active forgetting, to maintain that orientation.

Freud quotes this aphorism in full, in one of his suspiciously few explicit acknowledgements of Nietzsche’s precursory importance to the insights of psychoanalysis. In a footnote added in 1910 to the second edition of his 1901 work, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, Freud writes,

“A. Pick (1905) has recently brought together a number of quotations from authors who appreciate the influence of affective factors on the memory and who – more or less clearly – recognize the contribution towards forgetting made by the endeavour to fend off unpleasure. But none of us has been able to portray the phenomenon and its

psychological basis so exhaustively and at the same time so impressively as Nietzsche in one of his aphorisms [...] (*Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, 68)

(Freud, 1901/second edition 1910, *SE* 6, p. 146).

Freud takes this passage of Nietzsche's to be a precursor to his own notion of repression.⁵¹ The status of *BGE* 68 is in itself ambivalent on this front, whether it constitutes a case of exhausted and genuinely forgotten content, or whether it constitutes a case of affect-repression. This passage on its own is inconclusive – it is why I haven't mentioned it in the analysis so far. However, important for us here, Freud treats Nietzsche's notion of motivated forgetting as being in consonance with his own claims that forgetting is a form of deep memory, and that *all* acts of the forgetting of any cathected psychological content constitute repressions. This claim of Freud's and its accuracy will be explored further throughout this section.⁵²

Freud, like Nietzsche, claimed not only an unconscious mental aspect, that constitutes the

⁵¹ Cf. p. 5 of Lorin Anderson, "Freud, Nietzsche", in *Salmagundi*, No. 47/48 (Winter-Spring 1980), pp. 3 – 29. I will not predominantly be concerned with the wider issue of whether Freud read Nietzsche, and if so, what he read and took seriously, and topics related to this issue – such as why he seems to have lied when he said he had not done so. However, some unavoidable biographical remarks on this front will be provided in the footnotes of this section.

⁵² It should be noted that I am not offering a conclusive comparison between Nietzsche and Freud here: rather, I am only attempting to illuminate their similarities and structural differences on several interrelated issues relevant to the topics of this chapter. In this I hope to buck the trend rightly identified by Sebastian Gardner (2015, p. 367) that the differences between Nietzsche and Freud are far less well treated than their similarities. It is notable, however, that Paul-Laurent Assoun's book-length treatment, *Freud and Nietzsche*, barely mentions forgetting, let alone offers a comparative analysis. Assoun does describe *ressentiment* (awkwardly translated as "ill will") as an "overdevelopment of memory", however, which appears correct regarding the slaves (Assoun 1980/2006, p. 139).

vast majority of human mental life. On the back of these claims, Freud identifies a pivotal form of psychic defence called ‘motivated forgetting’ (e.g. *SE* 6, p. 147), employed as a reactive means of repressing uncomfortable associations. The main discussion of *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* is the way in which unpleasant emotional states, which are actively pressed out of consciousness at their time of their occurrence, lie behind slips of the tongue and seemingly everyday instances of forgetting.

The mechanism of forgetting (since Freud defines it as a mechanism) and so too the notion of there being a “doorkeeper” to consciousness are prominent in Freud’s early topographical model of mind. I will refrain from offering an exhaustive developmental picture of Freud’s conception of the mind, including his later implementation of a model of mind based on the id/ego/superego complex. What is important here are the similarities in pivotal aspects of his earlier model of mind with remarks by Nietzsche. However, Freud makes no textual references in his works to Nietzsche’s hitherto unprecedented discussion of forgetting at *Genealogy* II 1. This is curious, since not only do both figures provide prominent discussions of active forgetting, but both employ the image of the ‘door-keeper’ as an integral explanatory metaphor involved in this phenomenon.⁵³

⁵³ Cybulska (2015) compiles cases of overlap of themes between Nietzsche and Freud. Though discussion of each is brief, she includes the use of the ‘doorkeeper’ motif by both figures (p. 5).

Though the specific invocation of the ‘doorkeeper’ is found in the 19th of Freud’s 1917 lectures, collected as the work *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (SE 16), the identification of an inner psychic force of censorship had by this point already been well established. Most prominently in *the Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), Freud makes over 120 references to psychic censorship. More specifically, Freud writes in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, “in the censorship between Ucs and Pcs, which the dream

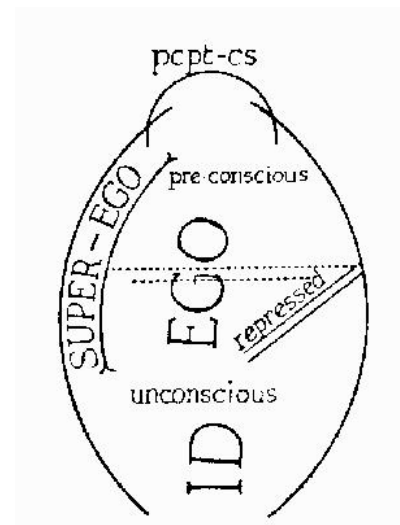


Diagram of Freud’s topographical model of mind (SE 16, p. 72)

forces us to assume, we must recognize and respect *the guardian of our psychic health*” (my italics), predating the doorkeeper imagery of the *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* lectures by 17 years.⁵⁴

Freud’s description of the censor comes in the lecture when he employs a spatial conception of these respective topographical mental systems. He writes:

‘The crudest conception of these systems is the one we shall find most convenient, a spatial one. The unconscious system may therefore be compared to a large ante-room, in which the various mental excitations are crowding upon one another, like individual beings. Adjoining this is a second, smaller apartment, a sort of reception-room, in which consciousness resides. But on the threshold between the two *there*

⁵⁴ Freud 1900, SE 5, p. 567 Note the near likeness with Nietzsche’s claim at *GM II 1* about the suppressive faculty of forgetting as being akin to a “door-keeper or a guardian of mental order’. Freud substitutes ‘order’ for ‘health’, but Nietzsche also says in *GM II 1* that forgetting represents a force of strong health. Cf. also *HATH 92* for Nietzsche’s claim that “A poet could say that God has stationed forgetfulness as a guardian at the door to the temple of human dignity”.

stands a personage with the office of door-keeper, who examines the various mental excitations, censors them, and denies them admittance to the reception room when he disapproves of them'.

(*SE 16*, p. 295, italics mine)

The first thing to point out is that Freud himself acknowledges the crudity and yet the convenience of the spatial conception of this model of mind. While he concedes that it is in some ways clearly 'incorrect', it at the same time "must indicate an extensive approximation to the actual reality" of the mental economy (*SE 16*, Ibid.). Second, the 'door-keeper' which conducts the role of censor only denies entrance to consciousness when he 'disapproves of' various mental excitations. This implies that Freud considers this disapproval to be responsive to cases of particular experiential content that could be considered injurious for the individual to be conscious of them. He writes that unconscious ideas are "excluded from consciousness by living forces which oppose themselves to [their] reception" (Freud *SE 12*, p. 264). This is the causal explanation for cases of repression, Freud argues. This notion is pre-empted in *Studies on Hysteria*, where Freud discusses the potential for "one aspect of mental activity render[ing] another inadmissible to consciousness" (*SE 2*, p. 222). Similar such events are described with a medley of terms: Freud around this time refers to the inhibition, suppression (*SE 3*, p. 127), fending off (*SE 2*, p. 157) of mental content, and "decid[ing] to forget about it...pushing the thing away...not thinking about it" (*SE 3*, p. 47). In the case of Lucy R, there was a "deliberate and intentional act of repudiation" as a result of which an "incompatible idea [was] repressed into the unconscious" and "isolate[d]

psychically” (*SE* 2, p. 122 – 3).⁵⁵ Of all these terms, it is repression that Freud uses to underpin all of these in his theoretical expositions. As such, it is this wider catch-all of repression that Freud considers motivated forgetting to fall under.

Tying in with the process of disallowing such sources from consciousness, Freud postulates a phenomenon which he termed defence (*SE* 2, p. 286). Defence for Freud is the name for the process of inhibiting particular instinctual goals from being attained by means of repression. Such defences push content immediately out of the remit of consciousness, and as such ensure the individual remains consciously unaware of them.⁵⁶ It was in fact this work Freud conducts into exploring the formation of defences responding to instances of emotional distress which led him to postulate his dynamic model of the mind. It was these retained experiences considered repressed that inspired Freud’s notion of an unconscious intelligence, namely, a form of representational mental life that existed distinctly from consciousness.⁵⁷

All mental content that is refused entry by the doorkeeper is *repressed*, for Freud. Repression constitutes a case of psychological ‘amnesia’, wherein the psyche defends itself against intolerably painful or anxiety-inducing knowledge. The inability to consciously cope with memories of such events means they are refused entry - via unconscious controls –into a

⁵⁵ Cf. ed. Edwards and Jacobs 2003, p. 29 for a more comprehensive discussion of these examples in relation to Freud.

⁵⁶ Indeed, there is evidence to believe that as Freud developed his views about psychic defence, his scepticism increased about the possibility of instances of conscious retention without any component of unconscious defence as a causal counterpart. Cf. Freud, *SE* 12, p. 264: “Unconsciousness is a regular and inevitable phase in the processes constituting our psychical activity; every psychical act begins as an unconscious one, and it may either remain so or go on developing into consciousness, according as it meets with resistance or not.”

⁵⁷ Freud and Breuer, *SE* 2, p. 275.

person's conscious awareness. Yet, despite the 'burial' of such content in the unconscious, Freud, reminiscent of Nietzsche at *GM I 14*, argued that these repressed incidents could still exert influence on behaviour and symptomology in adulthood (i.e. through anxiety, unexplainable suspicions, dislike or fear of certain places, physical ailments, depression or cases of forgetting as in *parapraxes*). Inspired by his early work on hysteria, Freud thought that treatment involved bringing such painful experiences to the surface, recollected or 'recovered' from the recesses of the unconscious and re-lived, in order for complete integration to occur. Because Freud's patients often began to recollect childhood traumas by such means, the recollection of apparently repressed memories led him to conclude that emotions and affects have the power to block memory.⁵⁸

This brings up two independent but related points of significant contrast between Nietzsche and Freud.

a) **The first** is that for Nietzsche, motivated forgetting in its role as a residual endowment of humans acts in a regulatory capacity to promote psychological health. In Freud, motivated forgetting constitutes an instantiation of repression and is typically pathological. While for Freud, this kind of reaction-formation might amount to coping in a minimal sense with anxiety-inducing experiential content, at the more significant level of the unconscious, that associated content is retained, and is very liable to reappear negatively and behaviourally.

⁵⁸ The concept of repression developed later in Freud's works. The later Freud differentiates between 'primal repression', when the ideational representative (e.g. the object) of an instinct is denied entrance into the individual's conscious life, and 'repression proper', when memories, initially conscious, are later expelled from consciousness. Cf. E. Cybulska (2015), p. 6; Cf. also Edwards and Jacobs (2003), p. 32.

Nowhere in his works does Nietzsche fully satisfactorily explain his own distinctive theory of repression in the manner Freud does.⁵⁹ It is likely because of this that the post-Freudian reading of Nietzsche views the two as of a piece on what does or doesn't constitute a repression.⁶⁰ Nietzsche clearly pre-empts Freud in conceiving how humans might repress certain experiential content. But on the matter of motivated forgetting, and the capacity to fully exhaust certain experiential content, Nietzsche tacitly offers a delineation between an exhaustive mode of active forgetting in his own favourable sense of the term, and the kinds of repressions as residual in e.g. the slaves, which contributes to both self-deceived tension between their conscious avowals and unconscious motivations, and also the possibility that their repressions can become behaviourally efficacious.

Nietzsche's psychological model frames active forgetting as enabling individual psychological health. *GM II 1* claims that particular emotional structures considered stable features of health in the individual's psychological life, such as happiness, cheerfulness, hope, pride, and indeed the ability to form immediate practical attitudes would be rendered impossible without this capacity for forgetfulness.⁶¹ Freud can offer no such qualification.

⁵⁹ Cf. Gardner 2015 (p. 375) who argues more generally that Nietzsche's philosophy is absent of an "explicit metapsychology".

⁶⁰ For example, Paul Loeb (2018b) makes the claim that for Nietzsche, "nearly everything I experience is immediately and actively repressed and forgotten in my mind's unconscious depths", and that the beginning of *GM II* demonstrates why the "self-preserving and life-preserving instincts have to repress" (Loeb p. 442). All the text Loeb offers on this front are examples where unconscious drives 'speak to' the conscious mind in some form, or texts where Nietzsche demonstrates the efficacy of unconscious mental states. None of these texts commit Nietzsche to the claim that Loeb assigns to him, with regards to the magnitude of things to repress and conserve, à la Freud. I have hoped in these two chapters to have shown why his reliance on the early passages of *GM II* discussing forgetting on this front is misconstrued. Syea (2018) notes the difference between Nietzsche's 'incorporation' and metaphors of metabolism when it comes to active forgetting, rather than Freudian motivated forgetting as temporary repression (Syea 2018, p. 65).

⁶¹ It is worth noting Nietzsche's own idiosyncratic use of these terms. To use just one example, Nietzsche elsewhere investigates reasons for a refined sense of happiness and cheerfulness in the

His analysis of motivated forgetting conceives it a mode of repression. For Freud, repressions remain within the individual's psychological economy. They risk returning, with the possibility of their 'flaring up' to poison individual conscious life, foster the conditions for pathological tendencies, and scupper the potential for achieving the conditions for a flourishing life. Freud's model cannot avoid characterizing motivated forgetting as causing psychic 'dyspepsia' of the kind that Nietzsche thinks his conception of active forgetting explicitly counteracts.

b) This leads on to the **second point** of contrast, this time with respect to a structural difference between Nietzsche's and Freud's models of mind. For Freud, total forgetting is impossible because he is operating with a conservationist model of mind. On this model, all experiential content and all affects the individuals associates with that content are always retained.

At one level, it appears that Freud has a version of this kind of exhaustion of affective content in a similar manner to Nietzsche, as discussed in Section 1. Although it isn't some faculty of psychological health, Freud and Breuer introduce the theoretical phenomenon of abreaction, that can be achieved in praxis through cathartic release, achieved through analysis and therapeutic treatment. Abreaction is the release or discharge of energetic content, achieved by bringing an affect associated with an experience to consciousness. When this occurs, Freud and Breuer claim, the energetic content that maintains that symptom ceases to operate, leading that symptom to disappear. Psychological 'excitations' of a hysterical nature can be

wake of God's death (*GS* 343) in a manner obviously distinct from, for example, what he considers to be to the 'green-pasture happiness of the herd' (Cf. also *BGE* 198 – 200, *BGE* 225 – 228). In this manner, Nietzsche avoids falling into valorizing forgetting for its promotion or security of individual hedonic satisfaction. This is one more structural difference that separates Nietzsche from Freud, the latter of whom more like Schopenhauer views pain, pleasure, satisfaction or the suffering from being unsatisfied as the only markers for human flourishing.

treated by abreacting the affects that support the traumatic experience which caused the excitations in the first place.⁶² Some ambivalence remains on this point whether Freud thinks abreactions also apply to passive forgetting à la the fading of memories “which we call ‘forgetting’, and which wears away those ideas in particular that are no longer affectively operative” (*SE* 2, p. 9). What is important here, though, is that by repeatedly using the phrase ‘wearing away’, Freud suggests a total discharge of the affect, or “affective value” (*SE* 2, p. 213) from the mental economy. Indeed, in the case of Frau Emmy Von N., Freud writes that when it comes to therapeutic success through abreaction, “only those symptoms of which I carried out a psychical analysis were really *permanently removed*” (*SE* 2, p. 101, my emphasis).

Up to here, it would seem Freud and Nietzsche are of a piece. There can be the total omission of affective content for both, apparently. Freud and Breuer also have the conceptual space for diversity in how abreaction can occur: language can substitute for action, for example (*SE* 2, p. 8). However, this seems to clash with a more fundamental aspect to Freud’s claims about the mind, which is the conservationism applied to all things cathected, i.e. ideational content which causes an affect by virtue of producing energetic content.

Echoing the language of permanent removal of symptoms, Freud later wrote of Frau Emmy Von N.’s symptoms having recurred, "On one occasion a severe condition in a woman, which I had *entirely got rid of* by a short hypnotic treatment, returned unchanged after the patient had, through no action on my part, got annoyed with me; after a reconciliation, I *removed the*

⁶² Just as Ken Gemes has pointed out that Freud offers no robust criterion for what constitutes a genuine sublimation (Gemes 2009, pp. 42 - 4), so too Freud seems to have trouble offering a robust distinction similarly for abreaction to what is or isn’t a genuine hysterical process (see Freud’s Case of Elisabeth Von R., in *Studies in Hysteria*, *SE* 3, p. 164).

trouble again and far more thoroughly; yet it returned once more after she had fallen foul of me a second time." (SE 16, 'Analytic Therapy', my emphasis). So, there is a looseness to Freud's language here. Evidently it wasn't permanently removed or entirely got rid of, if the severe condition returned unchanged in the unconscious, and returned on multiple occasions.

This gets to the heart of the important tension with reference to the central Freudian notion of the 'memory-trace', and its residual status within the mental economy. The memory-trace or 'mnemic trace' was elaborated by Freud based on his theorizing about trauma and seduction in hysteria, as residual in the memory of the unconscious. Rather than being representational content about the external world, the mnemic trace results from constructions of predominantly affects from those representations.⁶³

This component of Freudian theory is used in several texts to show that these affective states remain conserved within the mental economy. Indeed, as well as claiming such states remain residual in the unconscious of a specific individual, Freud is committed to the trans-generationality of this conservation. In 1913's *Totem and Taboo* and later 1939's *Moses and Monotheism*, central to Freud's account is the (on its own rather implausible) claim that particular affectively characterizable mnemic traces are heritable, and are transmitted phylogenetically.⁶⁴

In his discussion of forgetting and the memory-trace in *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud, after offering the metaphor of the mind as being akin to the city of Rome, claims that

⁶³ Deleuze connects the *ressentiment* of the slaves in *GM I* 10 with the invasion of conscious life by mnemic traces (Deleuze 1962/1983, p. 124).

⁶⁴ Nietzsche is not totally off the hook on this specific issue, however, as he arguably demonstrates Lamarckian commitments of his own in *GM II*. See Chapter 4 for more on this.

“in mental life nothing which has been formed can perish – that everything is somehow preserved and that in suitable circumstance (when, for instance, regression goes back far enough) it can once more be brought to light” (*SE* 21, p. 16). After later expressing some reservations about using this pictorial metaphor, this is not to diverge from the central claim about all things remaining conserved in the mental economy, pointing out that even when it comes to phylogenetically inherited mnemic traces, “[...] it is rather the rule than the exception for the past to be preserved in mental life” (*SE* 21, p. 72).⁶⁵

How does all this square with the claim that abreaction is efficacious for weakening the affective value of particular mental content? Now, perhaps one could be charitable, and say that what Freud meant in these examples is that some residual ideational content remains, without any of the affective content residual in what is retained; nor indeed in what may be passed on. But a look at the context in which he makes these claims suggests otherwise. In the latter example of *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud is referring to the repressed affects that bubble under the surface of social and religious consciousness. In *Totem and Taboo*, it is the affect of horror (at incest); in *Moses and Monotheism*, it is guilt (from the murder of Moses).⁶⁶

⁶⁵ For Freud, it is rather because “demolitions and replacement of buildings occur in the course of the most peaceful development of a city. A city is thus *a priori* unsuited for a comparison of this sort with a mental organism” (*SE* 21, p. 71).

⁶⁶ Even the notion that affective content remains unconsciously residual is suggested by an ambivalence in Freud’s discussions of abreaction. On pages 205 – 6 of *Studies in Hysteria*, he suggests that the weakening by abreaction in therapy means that the affect “emerges minimally, perhaps not at all” – but this suggests it remains within the mental economy, just without present behavioural emergence.

Freud operates with different versions of this rather extreme conservationist model of mind throughout his writings.⁶⁷ More specifically, Freud demonstrates his continued commitment to such a model in the context of framing his discussions of motivated forgetting. For example, in the early essay ‘The Psychological Mechanism of Forgetfulness’ (1898), Freud discusses the forgetting of a name as the individual repressing that name due to its being invoked in a conversation about sexual proclivities. The argument of Freud’s essay here is hard to follow, but the crux is that all instances of motivated forgetting are repressions that the individual retains. Much later, in ‘A Note on the Mystical Writing-Pad’ (1925), Freud offers a metaphor for his conservationist model of the relations between conscious and unconscious domains of the mind. The mind is likened to a writing pad, where the mnemonic trace of experiential content is ‘imprinted’ on the ‘wax’ of the unconscious, which is receptive to and retentive of affects of things which were consciously forgotten. This metaphor of the ‘mystical writing pad’ employed by Freud represents the manner in which various parts of the mind, operating independently of each other, respectively serve to omit received affective content from the conscious surface, and yet unconsciously preserve that content for all experiences. Experiential content is thus always unconsciously retained after the experience disappears from consciousness.⁶⁸ This demonstrates Freud’s continued commitment to psychological conservationism and the capacity for unconscious affective recollection throughout his works. Freud thinks that all instances of the forgetting of any

⁶⁷ James Strachey comments in an editorial note that “The unconscious is quite timeless” for Freud, writing; “The most important as well as the strangest characteristic of psychical fixation is that all impressions are preserved, not only in the same form in which they were first received, but also in all the forms which they have adopted in their further developments [...] *Theoretically every earlier state of the mnemonic content could thus be restored to memory again*, even if its elements have long ago exchanged all their original connections for more recent ones” (Strachey at SE 6, FN 2, pp. 274 – 5, my emphasis).

⁶⁸ This also why, for Freud, unconsciously preserved experiential content can generate new associated meanings, because of the independence of the conscious from the unconscious.

cathected content, any content which the individual has bestowed any degree of emotional energy to, are repressed. A specific kind of recollection is in principle possible for unearthing all repressions, in line with this (arguably highly problematic) conservationist account of mind, by means of abreaction. But despite the wearing away of the affect from behavioural symptoms, abreaction doesn't lead to the deeper and unconscious 'forgetting' of that affect.⁶⁹

There is nothing in any of Nietzsche's later published works which commits him to conservationism, of a kind akin to the Freudian model. Indeed, Nietzsche tacitly but importantly operates with a distinction between repressions and cases of genuine active forgetting. Freud also has a far more expansive view about forgetting being active, to the extent that it is questionable if Freud *ever* considers the forgetting of any psychically cathected content to be passive.

Repression is where the psyche defends itself against intolerably painful knowledge. Memory of a traumatic psychological event is not permitted into a person's conscious awareness via unconscious controls. Despite the 'burying' of all experiential content, in particular in cases of trauma, in the unconscious, these repressed incidents could still exert influence on behaviour and symptomology in adulthood.⁷⁰ Because of the far wider net Freud

⁶⁹ Cf. Syea (2018, p. 81) for the distinction between forgetfulness qua metabolization of an experience, versus the Freudian repressive forgetfulness. It is unclear, however, whether on Syea's analysis of active forgetting and incorporation, any psychological content has the option to be 'excreted' or removed completely from the mental economy.

⁷⁰ The language of 'digestion' of experiential content as Nietzsche uses it in *GM* II and III bears similarity to how it is used by some relational psychoanalysts. For example, Margot Waddell discusses the ability for care-givers to foster the conditions that allow infants to 'digest', that is, to make sense of, difficult experiences (Waddell, *Inside Lives* pp.30 - 1). Likewise, Judy Shuttleworth discusses the fostering of a "degree of tolerance of, and openness to, experience" to engender greater flourishing through development (Shuttleworth, 'Psychoanalytic Theory and Infant Development', pp. 36 - 7). While obviously Nietzsche frames the ability for digestion arounds the strength of individual spirit rather than conditions of care, it is still worth drawing upon the similarity. Following the

casts about the cases of forgetting that count as repressions, it follows that for Freud, every such piece of experiential content is retained and can return to conscious life. Indeed, this constitutes the crux of analysis, that repressions can be lifted by means of returning them to consciousness and confronting them in a sufficient manner: pathological misery can become ordinary unhappiness.⁷¹ But to successfully abreact is to skim some affect off the top, to stop its symptoms manifesting in behaviour, not to get rid of it entirely.

The Freudian therapeutic model of the lifting of repressions possesses deep affinities with a much older model of the mind that Nietzsche was likely very aware of, found in the Platonic conception of anamnesis. The *Meno* claims that all human knowledge is rooted in recollection, and that all learning was retrieving what was already known, even if subliminally (*Meno* 380 BC/1997. 81d 4, 86 b).⁷² In the *Theaetetus*, Plato likens the function of memory to the imprint of a wax seal, in a very similar fashion to Freud's 'mystical typing pad' image (*Theaetetus* 325, 191d). In the *Phaedo* (100c 5f.), the soul is identified as the bearer of all such knowledge, and anamnesis is offered as a means of regaining the soul's eternal knowledge (66b – d, 100c 5 f). As one way of explaining how the human body doesn't retain the soul's eternal knowledge, Plato in the 'Myth of Er' passages at the end of *The Republic* claims that all souls drink from the River Lethe, or 'River of Forgetfulness', after leaving their mortal bodies, which causes them to forget such knowledge.

imagery here, the crucial difference between Nietzsche and Freud is that Freudian lifting of repressions might count as a transformational digestion. But the 'excretion' option available to Nietzsche is unavailable to Freud.

⁷¹ Freud was far more conservative or modest in scope than Nietzsche with regards to instating a post-moral model for human authenticity: see Harcourt (2015, pp. 511 - 2) for more on this.

⁷² Syea (2018, p. 75) also contrasts Nietzschean forgetting with Platonic recollection.

Nietzsche likely had the Platonic heritage in mind when discussing the River Lethe in a passage in *Human All Too Human*. He writes;

“Recipe for the Sufferer. You find the burden of life too heavy? Then you must increase the burden of your life. When the sufferer finally thirsts after and seeks the river of Lethe, then he must become a hero to be certain of finding it.”

(*Human All Too Human*, 401)

In effect, Nietzsche is rendering the Platonic appropriation of forgetfulness, by means of the motif of the River Lethe, to denigrate it to be the refuge of those who view life as a burden. In essence, the Platonic narrative about forgetfulness is symptomatic of a life-denying disposition. Nietzsche’s own appropriation of forgetfulness was likely intended in some form to contrast this, as an attempt at framing its relevance for a life-affirming disposition.⁷³ As such it is unclear why Nietzsche’s model of mind, including his claims about active forgetting, should be identified in a similar fashion to the Platonic heritage, construed as a structural precursor to the Freudian model.

Conclusion:

Nietzsche’s *GM II* offers the attentive reader a series of psycho-social claims about the complicated relationship between the healthy faculty for active forgetfulness, and the imposition of certain forms of affective memory. One way in which he views this relationship bears upon certain cases where kinds of memory are able to override the function of

⁷³ My thanks to Andreas Urs Sommer for correspondence about Nietzsche’s criticism of Platonic anamnesis. It is also notable that in the *Birth of Tragedy* 7, Nietzsche writes that the “Dionysian stage with its annihilation of the ordinary bounds and limits of existence contains, while it lasts, a *lethargic* element in which all personal experiences of the past become immersed” (emphasis mine). Nietzsche clearly intends the association of a form of forgetting with lethargy, invoking the Platonic metaphor again.

forgetfulness. In his analysis, these kinds of memory involve the internalization of aspects of the dominant ('slave') morality, which put a premium on social prudence and moral guilt. Nietzsche describes the "disconnect" of the faculty of active forgetting in particular cases, by which he means the cases where certain kinds of memory have overpowered the natural endowment to forget. However, by describing humans as "forgetfulness in the flesh" (*GM II 3*), he makes the claim that the faculty for active forgetting remains an important residual component in the psychological life of humans, even after undergoing these processes of moralization and socialization. In describing it as an indication of strong psychological health, Nietzsche describes the development of certain affective memory as constituting those cases of the disconnection of the still-present and oppositional force of forgetting (*GM II 1*).

This chapter has attempted to chart how active forgetting might aid in this promotion of greater psychic health, particularly at the level of its relation to the affects. This coupled with Nietzsche's non-conservationist model of mind is what doubly separates him from the position occupied by Freud's own conception of motivated forgetting. But in an extension of this non-conservationist model, as well as the capacity for actively forgetting certain forms of affective content, Nietzsche suggests in other prominent places that even certain human drives and instincts can be removed and eliminated. This will be the topic of the next chapter.

Chapter 3:

The Role of Removal and Elimination in Nietzsche's Model of Self-Cultivation

Introduction :

It is a commonplace assumption in Anglophone Nietzsche scholarship that Nietzsche's ideal of self-cultivation necessarily involves the total psychological integration of all of one's drives and instincts.⁷⁴ Kaufmann (1974) and Gemes (2009) have respectively advocated a sublimation reading of the Nietzschean model of self-cultivation: on their readings, an ideal case of self-cultivation must involve the sublimation of *all* drives to truly constitute a higher self, or else it fails to be an ideal case of integration. I will object to this all-or-nothing approach to the sublimation of the drives as it is advocated by Kaufmann and Gemes, by pointing to numerous textual instances where Nietzsche advocates the removal or elimination of particular drives and instincts.

The question that follows this objection is, how are such cases of psychological removal to be understood? A recent paper by Pearson (2018) has also argued that the sublimation reading by Gemes and Kaufmann is mistaken in its all-or-nothing approach to Nietzsche's views about integrating the drives. I agree with Pearson's criticism in part. The total sublimation of all drives isn't necessarily Nietzsche's ideal, and that he thinks that some drives impossible or undesirable to sublimates should be removed or eliminated. However, I will argue that Pearson mischaracterizes these kinds of removal as constituting repressions. Repression is a distinctive psychological phenomenon and one (unlike the cases described) with a decidedly

⁷⁴ As a point of methodology, I will follow the general practice of regarding drive (*Trieb*) and instinct (*Instinkt*) as terminological variants describing the same psychological unit, and will employ both as such, as Nietzsche appears to. I will operate throughout with the working definition of drives provided by Paul Katsafanas as "embodied dispositions" which "generate an evaluative orientation" (Katsafanas 2013, 744 -5), in a manner that gives rise to certain forms of behaviour as a result.

negative valence. As such, Pearson's characterization of the removal of drives and instincts as constituting repressions is misleading, since that term is one Nietzsche reserves to describe something else.

I will seek to offer a better characterization of the instances of productive removal and elimination in Nietzsche's texts, and consider how they fit in his model of self-cultivation. Nietzsche's texts demonstrate a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which certain kinds of removal and elimination can lead to greater integration for the would-be exemplary individual. The line of interpretation I draw here aids in making better sense of the instances in the texts where Nietzsche valorises the removal of particular drives and instincts.

Section One: Against the All-Or-Nothing Sublimation Reading

When valorising exemplary individuals such as Goethe, Nietzsche will describe them as 'disciplin[ing themselves] into wholeness' (*TI* 'Skirmishes', 49). Certain influential readings of Nietzsche's model of self-cultivation build on remarks of this sort, arguing that for Nietzsche, like Freud, the mark of psychological health is the successful sublimation of all of an individual's drives. The two most prominent examples of this reading in Anglophone Nietzsche scholarship are Kaufmann (1974) and Gemes (2009).⁷⁵ While there are marked differences in other areas of their respective arguments, both of these examples offer a version of what I shall call the 'All-or-Nothing' sublimation reading of Nietzsche's ideal of self-cultivation.

⁷⁵ Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1974), 211 – 256; Ken Gemes, 'Freud and Nietzsche on Sublimation', *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 38 (Autumn 2009): 38 – 59.

This reading argues that for Nietzsche, an ideal case of self-cultivation succeeds in the sublimation of all psychological instincts. Both of these readings argue that the attempted elimination of particular instincts or indeed the inability to fully sublimate all instincts would constitute a failure of self-cultivation, or ‘splitting’, a piece of psychoanalytic terminology to denote the disintegration of one’s self (Gemes 2009, 46 -8). For instance, Kaufmann writes that while repression and repudiation might be employed in the service of ‘bringing some order’ to the chaos of the individual’s instincts, such mechanisms weaken ‘the whole organism’, resulting in an individual misaligned from their instincts, not constituting an ideal case of psychic integration (Kaufmann 1974, 227). As such, Kaufmann argues for the organization of the chaos of instincts by means of sublimation: *all* drives should be sublimated in the service of the individual’s higher goals, and that this is what constitutes an ideal model of psychic integration (Kaufmann, Ibid.). Kaufmann cites one of the key pieces of textual evidence from an unpublished note, where Nietzsche discusses the negative consequences of the ‘weakening and destruction’ of particular aspects of one’s psychological landscape, advocating instead ‘putting them into service’ by means of a protracted psychological ‘tyranny’, through which the instincts come to be ‘granted freedom again’, to ‘love us as good servants and go voluntarily wherever our best interests lie’ (KSA 1[22] 12.39).

In a similar vein, Ken Gemes’ argument is that, for Nietzsche, repressions and ‘repudiations’ of drives constitute disintegrations of the self, whereas sublimations necessarily engender greater integration. He employs this same unpublished note as Kaufmann from KSA 1[22] 12.39. Yet whereas Kaufmann advocates that reason (the psychological faculty) is the means for providing this psychological organization, putting instincts into service, Gemes instead argues for a more sophisticated account of self-cultivation via sublimation at the level of

drives. He claims that all weaker drives can be pressed into service so as ‘to allow their expression in a higher aim’ by means of a master drive, which assumes the role of the organizing element amongst the drives (Gemes 2009, 47 – 51).⁷⁶ Sublimations provide the apparatus for psychological integration and unity, Gemes argues, as opposed to instances of repressions or eliminations, which would lead to the ‘splitting off or disintegration’ of aspects of the individual’s mental economy (Gemes 2009, 48).

On Gemes’ reading, the central difference between sublimations and repressions is that in cases of successful sublimations, a stronger drive co-opts a weaker drive as a serviceable ally, which allows expression to the weaker drive within the context of the agent’s (achieved) unified mental economy. This is the case since the weaker but serviceable drive possesses an expressive outlet for its force (energetic content), despite a degree of deviation from the expression of its original aim (ideational content) under the conditions of the sublimation. In cases of repressions, a stronger drive stifles the expression of weaker drives in both their aims *and* their force from receiving an outlet. As such, Gemes posits a dichotomy between all forms of splitting versus achieved unity of all drives on Nietzsche’s model: all drives must be sublimated simpliciter, or it cannot constitute an ideal case of Nietzschean psychological integration. This is inferred from Gemes’ remark that ‘[t]o affirm all of one’s life, to overcome *ressentiment*, would be to affirm *all* of one’s drives – life, for Nietzsche, being nothing but a collection of drives’.⁷⁷

The All-or-Nothing sublimation reading, while getting something correct about the positive serviceability of the drives, doesn’t account for all that Nietzsche says about self-cultivation.

⁷⁶ See also John Richardson, *Nietzsche’s System* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 33. Gemes acknowledges his debt of influence on this front to Richardson in his footnotes (Gemes. ‘Freud and Nietzsche’, 48ff.)

⁷⁷ Gemes, ‘Freud and Nietzsche’, 49, my emphasis.

If some drives remain repressed or remain resistant to successful co-option, then this doesn't count as an instance of ideal integration for Nietzsche, Gemes argues. Granting that this is correct, it still leaves open the question of whether the total sublimation of *all* drives is always the best course of action when it comes to the sort of self-cultivation Nietzsche considers to be ideal. Gemes and Kaufmann argue for this. But the textual evidence speaks against this line of interpretation. At many points in Nietzsche's texts, he claims that it is possible in certain cases to remove or eliminate certain drives or instincts, and advocates doing so as a means of achieving greater overall psychological unity.

Several passages from *Daybreak* and the passage at *The Gay Science* 290 are respectively key instances of this. In *Daybreak* 109, Nietzsche speaks of the 'deadening' and 'weakening' of particular drives in the context of achieving 'self-mastery and moderation', i.e. the establishment of psychic integration amongst the drives.⁷⁸ In the context of self-mastery, Nietzsche describes long periods of 'non-gratification' or engaging in certain forms of habitual praxis to go about achieving this task of the deadening of a drive. Deadening of a drive appears to be used in this context in the same way as, for example, diabetes deadens nerve endings in the legs, or a lack of food and water deadens my pet parrot. There is a question of terminology, as to whether 'deadening' in this context means to greatly reduce, or to outright eliminate. The interpretive inference that Nietzsche means outright elimination here is supported by a similar sentiment provided at *D* 119, where Nietzsche speaks of the possibility of some drives being 'starved to death' and their being stunted ('*das Verhungern*

⁷⁸ Nietzsche's remark about 'moderation' here stems from an emphasis on the normative worth of measure, balance and control that is common in the works of his so-called middle period. This emphasis drops out by the later works where he favours instead overcoming, a more pronounced conception of agonistic struggle, and overabundance. However, this shift away from moderation and measure as features of self-mastery, common traits of the Epicurean ideal, does nothing to discount the continuation from 1881 onwards that Nietzsche attributes to the role of elimination, removal or weakening of particular drives in the service of individual self-cultivation, or 'self-mastery'.

und Verkümmern'), and some drives growing while others being allowed to 'wither away', like a plant after some months without rain. So, drives can be figuratively starved to death or allowed to wither away, supporting the reading that such drives can be removed or eliminated by means of non-gratification. It might be argued by some that 'withering' might not, strictly speaking, indicate the elimination of a drive in some contexts. However in the manner in which the simile is employed, like the plant that would die after some months without rain, so too could certain drives. As such it seems an unsatisfactory reading of this passage to deny the full emphasis of Nietzsche's likening drives to plants.⁷⁹ Likewise, in *D* 560, Nietzsche speaks of the ability to proactively 'dispose of one's drives like a gardener', comparing the pruning of instincts to pruning in horticulture – more on this below.

In the famous passage at *The Gay Science* 290, Nietzsche characterizes the quasi-aesthetic demand of giving style to one's character by referring to an honest surveying of all of an individual's instinctual strengths and weaknesses

that their nature has to offer and fitting them into an artistic plan until each appears as art and reason and even weaknesses delight the eye. *Here a great mass of second nature has been added; there a piece of first nature removed* – both times through long practice and daily work at it'
(*GS* 290, my emphasis)

⁷⁹ I thank Paul Katsafanas, among others, for pressing me to clarify and substantiate this point. Cf. also Christopher Janaway, 'Nietzsche on Morality, Drives and Human Greatness' (2012), 186 -192 for a similar defence of this reading of *D* 119, also against objections from Katsafanas.

In the text, Nietzsche claims that individuals possess a ‘first nature’, the psychophysiological apparatus that they are naturally endowed with (in line with the claims about the individual’s ‘granite of spiritual fate’ at *BGE* 231). However, through the cultivation of particular habits and particular repetitions in consonance with those habits, parts of that ‘first nature’ can be removed from the mental economy of certain individuals, to be replaced by new parts, of a ‘second nature’. The impetus for the removal of certain first nature aspects is to make way for the adoption of other instincts which better align with the remainder of the individual’s ‘first nature’, that form the instinctual bulk of the possibility for an individual’s prospects for self-cultivation. This is part of the process Nietzsche describes as the means to cultivate, shape or (in some sense) ‘create’ a self, in line with the quasi-aesthetic trope he employs in this passage.⁸⁰ Identifying Nietzsche’s discussion of first and second natures with the removal and addition of instincts has a precedent: in an earlier text, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, he speaks of combatting ‘our inborn heritage’ with ‘a new habit, a new instinct, a second nature, so that our first nature withers away’ (*HL* 3). Here as in *D* 119, the instinct is not reduced or diminished: it withers *away*. This passage also justifies the identification of ‘long practice and daily work’ at *GS* 290 being identified as the fostering of particular new habits, which work to introduce and consolidate these second nature instincts.

Gemes and Kaufmann argue that the total sublimation of all drives amounts to a greater form of integration, for Nietzsche. On the all-or-nothing reading, ideal cases are when all drives are sublimated: the quantity of drives is what counts. However, this is not the only model of thinking about what would constitute a ‘greater’ degree of integration. The sublimation of outlying drives, or drives deeply resistant to incorporation, might arguably result in less

⁸⁰ Andrew Huddleston, ‘Nietzsche on the Health of the Soul’, *Inquiry* 60, no. 1-2 (2017), 157 – 160 discusses the significance of *GS* 290 and *Daybreak* 109 in a similar capacity.

overall cohesiveness, as understood in terms of *qualitatively* greater integration. While Gemes and Kaufmann conceive of ideal integration in terms of sublimating all present drives, it is more plausible that Nietzsche conceives of a model wherein the removal of certain outlying and difficult to integrate drives offers more overall cohesiveness and arrives at a more productive kind of integration.

Gemes has argued along similar lines elsewhere that Nietzsche's account of perspectivism supports the all-or-nothing reading. Offering a reading of *GM* III 12 to support this claim, Gemes argues that the 'pro's' and 'cons' which Nietzsche describes as the shifting through of different perspectives should be understood not as an epistemic claim, but as a claim about psycho-biological health, servicing the eventual promotion of all drives (Gemes, 2013). This would support his claim about quantity of drives being what counts as the ideal case of psychological integration. But Gemes' claim rests on this passage from *GM* III 12 being about the drives, rather than assuming different perspectives. It isn't clear that Nietzsche views perspectives in a broad sense as being the whims of individuated drives, be they cognitive, affective or otherwise, towards the attainment of 'knowledge' in some sense. Despite Nietzsche not referring to the drives in this passage, one of Gemes' arguments against the more conventional position within the scholarship that perspectivism is a claim about accumulating kinds of knowledge and the affects associated with diverse value schemas⁸¹ is motivated by the worry that to accept this more conventional position makes Nietzsche's claim tame, "rather banal", "fairly trivial" and in line with what many other philosophers have said (Gemes 2013, p. 558). A problem with this is that wanting every remark of Nietzsche's to be wholly radical and innovative isn't good grounds for interpreting it to be so. It is also reasonable to consider the rejection of perspective-free absolutism about

⁸¹ As argued for in Leiter (2002 pp. 264 - 279), and Janaway (2007 pp. 202 - 223) among others.

truth, in the way that motivates Nietzsche's claims about the cultivation of perspectives as constituting knowledge, to have been in itself rather novel and radical in its time *anyway*.

While some modern philosophical theories of truth are often more congruent with Nietzsche's claims than perhaps the prevailing ones of his own time, it doesn't mean it wasn't novel in 1887 to posit such a claim about human relations to truth and the means of cultivating further perspectives towards any such truth.

Gemes writes that in Nietzsche's discussions of perspectives at *GM* III 12, there are "few direct mentions of truth and none of facts" (p. 557), which he claims should lead us to doubt such an association. But Nietzsche does mention knowledge and objectivity in the passage. In fact, he puts the latter in 'square quotes' to demonstrate his awareness that the term itself is a loaded one that has been associated with certain presuppositions which he wishes to unpick. The best argument offered by Gemes is the passage's proximate relation to those around it in the *Genealogy*. None directly discuss truth or objectivity, and as Gemes rightly points out, there is instead a focus on issues of Nietzsche's conception of the health of the individual soul (2013, p. 567). But I think this can be answered by showing how an accumulation of perspectives leading to greater 'objectivity' as an expansion of knowledge can be a sign of health on its own terms. A useful passage from another work to support this contention in reply to Gemes is *BGE* 210 and 211. The 'true philosopher' can analyse both "the range of human values and *value-feelings*" as a precondition for the creation of values. Contrasting with those who only believe in truths that are pleasurable to them (*BGE* 210), a true philosopher must arrive at a standpoint "where he can traverse the range [...] and be able to look with many kinds of eyes and consciences from the heights into every distance" (Ibid.) as

a precondition of creating values.⁸² The accumulation of perspectives directed at exploring the epistemic status of human values is part-and-parcel of the task of cultivating the affects associated with the evaluative claims associated with each perspective. So, by making this accumulation a precondition of the true philosopher's task, this demonstrates a normative imperative that moving closer to epistemic 'objectivity' is associated with greater individual strength and health. Such a reading supported by *BGE* 210-1 puts *GM* III 12 more in line with its surrounding aphorisms, without the need to interpret Nietzsche as talking about the cultivation of a greater number of individuated drives.

Section Two: The Status of Removals and Eliminations

A recently published paper by James Pearson has also taken issue with the reading offered in Kaufmann and Gemes.⁸³ Pearson writes that Nietzsche 'entreats his readers to adopt a more excisionary practical attitude towards their impulses' (Pearson 2018, 3), and that 'in his later writings he persistently valorises the eliminative processes of repression, eradication, exclusion and excretion as necessary preconditions of incorporation and unification' (Ibid., 22). Pearson argues that for Nietzsche, both sublimations and eliminations constitute

⁸² It is important to note, that in both *GM* III 12 and in *BGE* 211, Nietzsche doesn't say "all" perspectives. He wants the would-be true philosopher to experience "nearly all things" by means of different perspectives, not all things. Likewise, in *GM* III 12, the more affects allowed to speak, the better – but not all affects, if they remain rigid and thereby prevent the development of more flourishing schemas. This doesn't preclude certain kinds of inhibition of some perspectives, particularly if the adoption of those perspectives might lead to the refusal to inhabit other perspectives. For example, a particularly rigid Christian perspective might totally refuse to give way for the genuinely truth-seeking 'Nietzschean' free spirit perspective.

⁸³ James Pearson, 'Nietzsche on the Necessity of Repression', *Inquiry*, forthcoming (published online October 2018), 1 -31 , DOI: 10.1080/0020174X.2018.1529618 (accessed most recently 8^h August 2019)

preconditions for achieving psychological unity, and the employment of either sublimations or eliminations (in his frequent terms, repressions) is context dependent, that is, upon a given situation for the given individual, depending “whether or not the impulse in question can be put to use within the overall economy of our drives”. The context depends on whether the drives in question can be considered “serviceable”, in which case they can be sublimated; or, whether they are considered unserviceable ergo detrimental, in which case they should be eliminated. Pearson refers to this as the ‘necessary repression’ of unserviceable drives, describing such cases of elimination or removal of drives as a necessary preconditional component to the process of self-creation.

The critical aspect of Pearson’s central claim, namely that solely the sublimation of all drives cannot account for Nietzsche’s model of psychological self-cultivation, appears correct. In contrast to the All-or-Nothing reading, there are good textual reasons to think that some eliminatory approach towards particular drives could or must be involved in certain circumstances. However, issue must be taken with the more positive aspect of Pearson’s argument, which arises from his description of all such eliminatory capacities as constituting ‘repressions’. Pearson characterizes the elimination or inhibition of certain instincts by speaking of the ‘necessity of repression’. Yet ‘repression’ is a notoriously woolly and loaded term. On the Freudian model, a repression occurs when the force and energy of a particular drive is denied expression, while at the same time remaining part of the individual’s mental economy, risking not just the possibility for exerting unconscious behavioural influences upon the individual’s actions, but also continually risking a ‘return’ to conscious life and the causing of psychic pain.

In the case of Nietzsche, however, his frequent talk of the removal and elimination of certain instincts appears to be one potential prerequisite for a healthy self, not just in terms of the process of wholly removing potentially deleterious instincts, but also in a manner that

structurally distinguishes such processes from those cases of repressions that he views as corrosive or life-denying. If we were to accept Pearson's characterization of all cases of eliminations of drives Nietzsche as describes them with the term 'repression', we would be left with no conceptual apparatus to delineate between cases of removal that are prerequisite conditions of healthy psychological integration, and the myriad cases of repressions which Nietzsche evidently criticizes as deleterious to the prospects of a flourishing human existence.⁸⁴ The interpretive problem here, then, is that if we use the notion of repression too loosely, we risk collapsing things that should be distinguished. We need a way of delineating the ability to eliminate certain instincts as a condition of psychological health, and repressions, the distinct mental operation which Nietzsche views as damaging to individual psychological health. We should reserve the term 'repression' just for the latter.

There are important differences between Nietzsche and Freud. For Freud, all content is always conserved within the subject's mental economy. It is very questionable whether Nietzsche himself agrees with this strong claim. This distinction between the two figures frees Nietzsche's model of self-cultivation from the worry inherited from the Freudian picture, namely that no drive can ever actually be removed: if a drive is not expressed, it must either be re-purposed or repressed. That may have been Freud's view, but it is doubtful that it is Nietzsche's.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ It should be noted that the Freudian monopoly on the term 'repression' skews to some degree its historical connotation. For example, we find in figures such as Herbart (whom Nietzsche was familiar with via his reading of F.A. Lange) a process of "repression" more akin to Nietzsche's model of eliminating certain instincts than to Freud's model of repression. However, repression appears to be framed by Pearson in dialogue with the more familiar Freudian notion, that is, within a wholly conservationist model of mind. See Graham Parkes, *Composing the Soul: Reaches of Nietzsche's Psychology* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996), 267 – 269 for a discussion of the Herbartian conception of repression of drives in relation to influencing Nietzsche.

⁸⁵ There is only example of Nietzsche's texts that I've come across that appears contrary to the idea that certain drives can be outright eliminated from the healthy individual's psychological life. In one unpublished note, Nietzsche writes that "[t]here is no struggle for existence between ideas and

Projecting this commitment back on to Nietzsche has lent undue plausibility to the idea that sublimation or repression are the only real alternatives. This hydraulic picture might be true of *some* drives for Nietzsche (and perhaps essential to some of the psychological stories he wants to tell), but it is not true of all drives, since he clearly allows for the possibility of the elimination of some of them. The prospects for the outright removal of a drive might operate with a difference in kind or gradual degree between deeply rooted biologically inherited drives, and sometimes more generic, sometimes socially acquired, ‘unnatural’ drives.

Nietzsche operates with a far wider scope than Freud for what could constitute a human drive than just these deeply rooted biological drives, of which it would seem impossible to remove

perceptions, but a struggle for domination: the idea that is overcome is not annihilated, only driven back or subordinated. *There is no annihilation in the sphere of spirit-*” (KSA 7[53] 12.312/WTP 588, emphasis mine). This last line is the problematic one, encapsulating a terse but contrary claim to my contention that Nietzsche postulated the possibility of eliminating certain mental content, including certain drives. There are a couple of responses I wish to make that might undermine this passage’s contrary claim (against my qualification between genuine removals and modes of repression) here. The most obvious is that unpublished notes which have no further textual support from published works should be treated as just that; notes, sketches, flirtations with ideas considered not good enough to publish. This will convince many (myself included), but not all Nietzsche scholars, given the divergence of opinion on the status we should accord Nietzsche’s unpublished notes. So, for the purposes of dissuading those who give equal or greater importance to unpublished notes, some reference to the wider context of this note is important. The immediately striking thing about the wider unpublished note that this quote comes from is just how *messy* it is. In its full context, the note discusses values, certainty, being and appearance, being-in-itself, the possibility of reality and the psychological considerations of it, how interests relate to appearances, before even the aforementioned quote passage. All this is covered in just two sentences! This must be a candidate for one of the sloppiest, jargon-heavy notes Nietzsche sketched out in his mature period, riddled with unqualified jargon as it is, which gives a good indication why he might not have published it. None of these other themes and topics directly relate to the part of the unpublished passage about the inability to wholly remove drives, so it is unclear what Nietzsche meant by lumping these themes together. He never provides clarity on this, as there is not a single published aphorism that supports this strong reading. In the footnotes of the Kaufmann edition of *The Will to Power*, Kaufmann has written that with regards this final sentence, Nietzsche’s claim that “There is no annihilation in the sphere of spirit” (Ibid.) “might have been written by Hegel –or by Freud” (W. Kaufmann ed., p. 323). This is a prescient insight by Kaufmann; and if this note was symptomatic of the Nietzsche of the published works, the suggested affinities with Hegel and, more particularly, Freud would be far closer. There are important differences on this front between Nietzsche and Freud. That Nietzsche does not share Freud’s conservatism in the mental economy is enough to stop the buck of similarity here.

(i.e. the drive to sexual activity, or the hunger drive)⁸⁶, but that is no reason to think that removal is impossible for other constituted drives from the vast variety of them that Nietzsche offers.

As such, distinctions are required between those proactive psychological processes of removal and elimination, and those processes which constitute repressions, for Nietzsche. Any robust qualification should distinguish between processes which lead to the outright elimination of drives and instincts, versus the cases of retention characterized as repressions of drives (as more traditionally conceived along Freudian lines), which Nietzsche evidently attributes in many places. Those Nietzschean cases of repression look more amenable to a proto-Freudian treatment, since there is the mental retention of the repressed content. But other, more valorised cases are arguably not like this. The differences between cases of removals and repressions will be fleshed out, but one immediate and central difference to mark will be by reference to how these two capacities cohere or not with the individual's overall economy of instincts.⁸⁷ From this I will differentiate between aiming at the elimination of certain instincts so as to promote the holistic health of an individual, and forms

⁸⁶ One reason for Nietzsche's attack on Christianity is for its attempt to excise some of these deeply rooted biological instincts, which he considers impossible to remove: more on this below.

⁸⁷ Alexander Nehamas (2018a, p. 688 ff 10) discusses how the 'constraint of a single taste', which Nietzsche claims in *GS* 290 is what governs and forms 'everything large and small' in the mental economy, can involve processes of removal and concealment. The passage from this standpoint is ambivalent whether these processes are good or bad in themselves: 'whether this taste is good or bad is less important than one might suppose, if only it was a single taste!', Nietzsche writes. So this both acknowledges that removals are not equivalent to concealments, and furthers the idea that while both may be involved, concealments qua repressions need not be considered good just because they contribute to the governance of a single taste. A case in point is Socrates, who does possess such a single taste (the 'taste' for the primacy of rationality), while at the same time Nietzsche criticizes Socrates for the *kind* of single taste he manifests.

of repression as more traditionally understood, where the repressed drive continues to (or threatens to) make itself felt in various subterranean ways.

Section Three: Characterizing Cases of Proactive Removal as distinct from Cases of Repressions

Instances of the repressions of instincts abound in Nietzsche's texts. I will list three examples of such repressions as illustrations. The first example is that which transforms the *ressentiment* of the slaves of *GM I*. When nobles are in a state of *ressentiment*, it is actively forgotten or discharged. In the case of the slave and the 'priestly people', it is their inability to conduct this exclusionary act of discharge that renders cases of *ressentiment* transformative within their psychological life. It makes their values susceptible to alteration: this is how *ressentiment* 'becomes creative'. This is the case, Nietzsche claims, because whereas the nobles successfully rid themselves of the potent content associated with *ressentiment*, the slaves have no option but to repress their instinctual reactions to such events and occurrences. As such, in *GM I* 10 Nietzsche describes the redirection of the slaves' psychic economy as involving a 'falsification of repressed hate, a revenge of powerlessness, [which] lays its hand on its opponent – in effigy, of course' (*GM I*, 10).⁸⁸ There are still instances where such repressions manifest themselves behaviourally, Nietzsche contends, as in the slaves' adherence to 'loving one's enemies', but 'sweating' while doing so (*GM I* 14). This suggests, à la Freud, that repressions can often manifest themselves in behaviour without it being the agent's intention to have done so, perhaps even without awareness that they have done it.

⁸⁸ I have mildly amended the translation of the Clark and Swensen edition here.

The second case is the violent mnemonic internalization enacted upon healthy subjects capable of active forgetting (*GM II 1-3*). Particular moral mores force the retention of mental contents that it would otherwise have been a demonstration of psychic health to actively forget. Instead, such moral memories cause repressions by coming into opposition with and thereby undermining the natural inclinations and instincts of particular (would-be healthy) individuals. *GM II* describes the repression of instincts that occurs when individuals (particularly strong and psychologically healthy individuals) are placed irretrievably under the sway of first the demands of society, then under its ‘most terrible and most sublime pinnacle’, moralized bad conscience (*GM II 19*). Though the Second Essay of the *Genealogy* does conclude with a speculation about the possibility that some of the outcomes of this internalization might be used by a potential future higher ideal (*GM II 24 – 25*; see Chapter Four of this thesis), it is demonstrable that *GM II* describes a phenomenon that, in its Christian-moralized form, Nietzsche considers deleterious for individual psychic health. Given the values imposed and reinforced on the individual by the mores of moralized bad conscience, certain drives can find no acceptable outlet for direct expression and must be repressed. The drives appear as ‘demons whom one fights’, as Nietzsche describes it in a similar vein elsewhere (*KSA 8[4]12.334/WTP 376*). While these impositions might be socially prudential, the cost of these preservative benefits is the repression of a great number of instincts in a great number of individuals. It is fair to say Nietzsche is more concerned with lifting repressions within those individuals possessed of what would otherwise constitute strong, healthy psychologies.

The third case comes in an aspect of the charge he brings against Christianity, for what he takes to be its assault upon the natural psychology of would-be strong types. He describes this assault as a ‘castration’ of both the passions (*TI, ‘Morality’ 1*), and a combatting of sensuality

(WS 83). However, Nietzsche also chastises the Christian whose instincts and sensuality have been assaulted as self-deceived, if they believe that these deeply and biologically rooted sensual instincts have been truly excised in the manner the Christian imperative claims to have done. He writes, ‘the Christian who follows that advice and believes he has killed his sensuality is deceiving himself: it lives on in an uncanny vampire form and torments him in repulsive disguises’ (WS 83). It is the ‘advice’ given here which demonstrates something suspect about the Christian-moral method for removing sensual instincts, that makes it insufficient or proper to constitute genuine removal. Instead, the attempt to ‘kill’ sensuality in this way amounts to a repression of the instincts. It is the means of attempting to moralize such instincts away, rather than in any sense adequately dealing with them, that leads to their being repressed. As it was in the case of the repressed slaves of *GM* I 10, these ‘repulsive disguises’ are manifestations of those still-present repressed instincts coming to cause harm against the overall psychological health of the victim (as Nietzsche sees them) of Christian morality.

One common attribute that each of these cases of repressions share for Nietzsche is that they all feature versions of the forceful imposition of a foreign aggregate of (absolute) values upon an individual’s psychology.⁸⁹ This provides some intimation as to how Nietzsche views the distinction between the healthy removal or elimination of instincts, and the attempt to ‘castrate’ instincts in the manner he takes to constitute repressions. The passage at *TI* ‘Morality’ 1 demonstrates this kind of difference for Nietzsche: here he attacks the Christian church for their fight upon the instincts ‘with excision in every sense: its practice, its “cure” is castratism. It never asks: “How can one spiritualize, beautify, deify a craving?” It has at all

⁸⁹ In the case of the slaves, despite their lack of the resources to act out an adequate expression of retaliation in response to an episode of *ressentiment*, the vengefulness that motivates the wish to commit such an act is the instinct that is repressed in this instance. The aspect of Judeo-Christian morality that imposes itself in this case is the demand to unconditionally forgive, rather than seek vengeance.

times laid the stress of discipline on *extirpation* (of sensuality, of pride, of the lust to rule, of avarice, of vengefulness)' (*TI*, 'Morality' 1). Once again it is the moral apparatus which demands attempting this excision, rather than adequately discerning whether such instincts might have productive uses. While the language of extirpation appears to echo that of *D* 109, 119 and 560 and *GS* 290 in some respects, Nietzsche's critique here tracks a self-mutilating kind of phenomenon that is detrimental to the individual's psychology, contrary to the proactive eliminatory processes he valorises elsewhere. Some form of differentiation between the two must be established.

In the context of this passage, when Nietzsche refers to a 'castratism' of instincts, a drive or number of drives exist and continue to reside within the individual, but their aims and force are blunted and denied expression by some foreign aggregate of power, i.e. in a familiar example for Nietzsche, the demand to forgive instead of take vengeance as promoted by the Christian value system. As in the case of a literal forced castration, the drive persists, but its attempts at forceful extirpation by a foreign aggregate of power (a power alien to the individuated needs of the possessor of that instinct) denies it the possibility of adequate expression. In an important sense, the values motivating the avowal of forgiveness in this case are still pregnant with the latent instinct for vengefulness.

Nietzsche claims that by the imposed value standards of Christianity, excision is mandated "in every sense", with the question never asked whether an instinct could be better suited in the service of a wider and healthy mental aggregate within a particular individual. It is not that extirpation per se is the target of Nietzsche's critique, but rather the recourse to extirpation without any proper discernment about what might be good for the individual possessing such an instinct. In the case of his critique of the Christian church, Nietzsche's target is the notion of a foreign set of absolute values deciding for you what it is best to extirpate, with no sensitivity to individual circumstance, i.e. Christianity displays no

acknowledgement of, or concern for, differing types of people and what will be psychically best for them. In this instance, no adequate procedure of discernment has been undertaken by the individual in relation to what to extirpate and ‘blunt’ in the service of their own psychic health, as well as which instincts it is possible to extirpate. Instead, the ‘cure’ on the Christian model of values is by means of an ill-suited instrument: ‘castratism’ in all cases, without considering which instincts could be potentially serviceable to a particular individual.

Another yardstick by which to compare and contrast the processes developed in these passages comes in the language of ‘nature’ and the natural in *GS* 290. While recommending the removal of what Nietzsche calls aspects of a ‘first nature’, he also advocates its replacement by aspects of a ‘second nature’. Here Nietzsche is tracking two different sets of sometimes complimentary, sometimes deleteriously antagonistic instincts. Once again, there is a question of the scope of which of the ‘first nature’ instincts which reside by default in the individual can be removed. But by means of the process of self-shaping, involving the cultivation and pruning of the instincts, Nietzsche claims that it is possible to remove some of these ‘first nature’ instincts so as to, for example, resolve the potential for deleterious antagonisms between the drives that would come about by implementing and reinforcing these ‘second nature’ instincts.⁹⁰ Nietzsche in one sense wishes to promote certain forms of struggle between the drives. But this is for the purposes of productive tension, as opposed to other kinds of antagonisms between instincts that would be deleterious or repressive for the individual. The productive removal of ‘first nature’ aspects should be understood as the removal of default but ultimately unserviceable components from that same individual’s mental economy.

⁹⁰ Although there are certainly passages that might support a stronger reading of the unchangeability of human nature (for example, the ‘granite of spiritual fate’ passage at *BGE* 231), I am aligned with Nehamas (2018a, pp. 687 and 697 ff’s 5& 6) in arguing against the fatalistic reading on the grounds that by means of habits and repetition, this ‘first nature’ can to some extent be changed.

How exactly we are to distinguish between modes of productive tension from a more deleterious ‘anarchy’ between the drives by Nietzsche’s lights is difficult, since he gives no explicit criteria for making such a distinction. However, one way to begin understanding how such a distinction might be drawn comes in *BGE* 200. In a rather uncomfortable to read passage, Nietzsche identifies certain races with certain kinds of instincts, and argues that generally, mixed races means muddled instincts, and that this in general lends itself to overall instinctual weakness: ‘the war that he *embodies* [is desired to] come to an end’. However if such tensions between the instincts are treated as an ‘incitement to life’, and a ‘cunning in waging war with himself’ is developed, this can be seen as a kind of elusiveness, unfathomability, destining such characters ‘for victory and seduction’: he valorises Alcibiades, Caesar, Frederick II and (perhaps) Leonardo da Vinci as such instances. Despite ‘arising from the same causes’ as those weak ones and both types in some sense ‘belonging to one another’ (a token of Nietzsche’s anti-Manicheism about absolute opposites), something about how one’s nature *qua* tension of instincts is experienced demonstrates whether such a tension is viewed nihilistically (wanting the psychological war to ‘come to an end’) or as a stimulant and incitement to greatness. Likewise, Nietzsche relies on a distinction between the kind of ‘anarchy of instincts’ which leads to Socrates’ repressive reaction-formation of giving psychological primacy to ‘rationality at all costs’, and the kind of stimulating warfare between instincts in the agonal fashion as alluded to in figures like Alcibiades. This makes some progress in how we might understand how Nietzsche conceives of productive tension as distinct from the negatively valenced ‘anarchy of instincts’. If one’s disposition towards the warfare between their instincts encompasses a stimulant and incitement (itself a rare achievement), then one’s mental economy will be better placed to discern which drives

should be removed, so as to better promote the overall agonal ‘war’ between the more fully expressed remaining drives.⁹¹

Nietzsche contends that any dominant (master) drive within a holistic healthy economy of drives might not always be so; that other drives do not relent in their own attempts to dominate and assert themselves over the other elements of the agent’s psychological aggregate (Cf. *KSA* 12:7 [60]). But this ongoing struggle takes place between constituent aspects of a healthy whole in a manner that stimulates ideal cases of would-be great individuals, rather than making concessions to the continued existence of repressed drives with the potential to reappear and undermine the overall health of that whole. The idea that all drives wish to be master, that their perspective could triumph (albeit potentially impermanently), is not the same as making the assumption, unwarranted by the published texts, that wholly removed drives risk returning, ergo unravelling the cultivation of a hitherto unified agency. The retention of repressed drives in ideal cases (or perhaps even second-best, ‘good’ cases by Nietzsche’s standards) of self-cultivation would undermine the distinct and productive kind of tension Nietzsche wishes to promote between different drives.

This notion of productive removals of certain drives making way for the cultivation of newer or more serviceable, compatible instincts stands in stark contrast to the foreign aggregates of values that impose moralized codes upon individuals, to their instinctual detriment. The title of the section from which the passage from *Twilight* concerning the ‘castratism of the instincts’ comes proclaims morality and all the systems that reinforce its pervasiveness as being ‘anti-nature’. In *TI* ‘Morality’ 1 Nietzsche identifies sensuality, pride, lust to rule, avarice, and vengefulness as things the Church attempts to extirpate, without any attempt on its part to discern potential uses such instincts might (and in many cases straightforwardly do)

⁹¹ I thank Jessica Berry for pressing my need to make this point, and to both her and Maudemarie Clark for recommending that I give more attention to this passage at *BGE* 200.

possess for individuals. Nietzsche claims elsewhere that all life essentially involves a degree of appropriation, injury, overpowering and the like (*BGE* 259). Christianity, according to Nietzsche, disregards the central and potentially positive role of such instincts. The imperative of the Christian church is to deny what even the most biologically rooted drives themselves are naturally inclined to do, and to oppose the expression of such drives. Through this process of ‘castratism,’ the Church attempts to establish more passive aggregates of drives in all humans, in accordance with the promotion of its absolutist moral message.⁹² The ‘castratism’ motif tracks a denial of the inherent tendencies of how drives express themselves. In contrast, the forms of eliminatory processes Nietzsche valorises describes a potential precondition for allowing strong individuals fuller expression of more of their drives.

In ideal cases, as many instincts as possible are put into service, while the individual retains the strength under some circumstances to employ certain capacities to eliminate certain rogue or outright deleterious instincts. By contrast, instances of repressions in Nietzsche’s texts appear to cut off instincts in a manifestly specific manner. They refuse them both expression and aim, yet their attempts to eliminate such instincts are unsuccessful, resulting in ‘castrations’ of instincts that are in the round deleterious to the individual’s wider psychological life. The aggressive drives of the slaves, or the sexual life of the Christian ascetic, for example, are repressed but are still behaviourally efficacious. By contrast, in cases where Nietzsche advocates the elimination of drives, there is the *total* removal of particular unserviceable instincts. This works to benefit the whole in a manner that better befits the task of individual psychological cultivation, whereas in cases of repressions the

⁹² Of course, some humans will possess inbuilt (‘natural’) capacities de facto more passive than others, so the extent to which Christianity castrates the instincts of these individuals will be of less significance than those strong psychological types Nietzsche wishes to promote, to whom it is evident his critique is addressed and whom he seeks to engender by means of issuing it.

instincts undergo a botched and imposed burial into the unconscious, to the detriment of the individual's wider psychology, but usually at the behest of some dominant external system of moral values.

There are other important textual examples to support the distinction drawn here. In, *BGE* 36, Nietzsche characterizes what he takes to be instinctual 'givens' within the individual human's psychological life. Later in the aphorism, he lists "self-regulation, "adaptation, alimentation, *elimination*, metabolism" as elements of the "organic process" which "holds everything in a powerful unity" (*Ibid.*, my emphasis). This is important, since he discusses here not just kinds of cooptive processes (as characterized by 'adaption' and 'metabolism'), but he also explicitly mentions 'elimination' as one constitutive element of physiological organic functioning.

As had been widely remarked in the scholarship, this passage at *BGE* 36 is not a straightforward one, and care should be taken to distinguish between what Nietzsche thinks are necessary to all organic functioning and how this relates to the "instinctual givens" of a drive psychology. Loeb (2015) argues against the dominant reading of *BGE* 36, as argued for in Clark (2000), by claiming that Nietzsche in this passage "simply takes for granted the truth of universal will to power as having been established through the application of his naturalistic methodology in the preceding *BGE* passages", and that as such Nietzsche "designs *BGE* 36 as a counterfactual thought experiment whereby readers can curtail their falsifying anthropocentric projections and expand their imagination to envision what is actually a radically inhuman cosmos of inexorable power" (Loeb 2015, 59).

It is not necessary to subscribe to Loeb's argument to point out that such a conclusion still offers a distinctive parallel between the psychological economy (a.k.a. drives) and cosmology (including Nietzsche's remarks on physiological organic functions). As Loeb emphasizes, the

processes of organic functions necessarily involve “elimination”, under the auspices of a synthetic unity, on Nietzsche’s model of universal will to power. With this comes Nietzsche’s “associated claim that the inorganic world becomes softer and weaker as it branches out and diversifies itself into the organic process... [and as such becomes] even softer and weaker as it branches out further [...] into the psychological processes of human beings” (Loeb 2015, 77). In this sense, Loeb argues, “Human beings, [...] also consist of this will to power, but in drastically weakened form compared to cosmological will to power” (84). However, assuming that human psychology operates in harmony with the machinations of this fundamental cosmology, but in some weaker and diversified sense, it still does nothing to preclude the potential for the involvement of eliminations in psychological life. Indeed, Loeb’s emphasis on weakening the strength of these organic functions gives further explanatory apparatus for why eliminations are possible, rather than necessary, aspects of a strong holistic economy of drives. The necessity of elimination is weakened to the claim that will to power qua psychology can possibly involve eliminations at the level of drives. If so, then conceiving will to power qua drives as in some cases eliminable can be reconciled with Loeb’s claim about will to power qua cosmology.

Aspects of *GM* II 12 give additional support to this reading. Sandwiched in between two discussions of the ‘form-giving’ quality of will to power, Nietzsche discusses how the behaviour of the wider natural order is fundamentally the same when exemplified “even in the individual organism”. He describes how “with each essential growth of the whole the ‘meaning’ of the individual organ shifts as well, - *in some cases their partial destruction, their reduction in number* [...] can be a sign of growing strength and perfection”. Nietzsche claims that “the partial loss of *utility*, atrophying and degenerating [...] in short *death*, belongs to the conditions of true *progressus*...” (*GM* II 12; italics mine)

The contrast between Nietzsche's language about cases of repressions and the positive rhetoric encompassing his views about psychological removal is well established in two metaphors. The first of these, as utilized in the aforementioned passage at WS 83, is that of the dentist: Nietzsche argues that while the dentist removing a tooth succeeds in their goal, namely "the cessation of pain in his patient", the Christian attempts to destroy a particular aspect of instinctual life, namely sensuality, in "so clumsy a way, to be sure, as to be ludicrous". The means for attacking these deeply inherited biological drives for sensuality amounts to their being repressed in consequence: it is this repression which allows it to live on within the individual's unconscious life, in what Nietzsche describes as an "uncanny vampire form", causing psychic pain "in repulsive disguises" (WS 83).

Contrast this with the second metaphor, that of the gardener (GS 290, D 560, TI 'Skirmishes' 41).⁹³ In the context of the individual's 'garden' of instincts, it is the priest that does the pruning, and does a bad job of it, as opposed to the gardener herself, with some degree of (achieved) instinctual knowledge of their own spiritual horticulture. In other words, the wholesale attempt to excise would-be serviceable instincts is promoted by the Christian moral imperative, ultimately unsuccessfully, instead of the removal of particular instincts that comes about by the individual's genuine discernment of which instincts are serviceable in the promotion of an overall flourishing mental economy. There are also questions of degree here: it could be intimated that Nietzsche promotes the removal of certain instincts only in appropriate cases, and that as a general principle he wishes to retain as many instincts as possible should they be serviceable as part of the aggregate of drives. By contrast, he charges the Judeo-Christian moral system and its promoters with attempting a deeper and more

⁹³ Aaron Ridley, 'Nietzsche, Nature, Nurture', *European Journal of Philosophy* 25, no. 1 (March 2017), 129-143 provides a thorough and sophisticated analysis of the significance of Nietzsche's use of gardening metaphors in relation to human nature and the prospects of self-cultivation.

wholesale extirpation of instincts, denying expression to far more drives and as such repressing to a greater degree the instinctual life of an individual.⁹⁴ Falling back onto the metaphor of the garden again to illustrate, the gardener prunes and cuts back, and in some cases potentially removes completely where decay cannot be treated and indeed might spread to other plants; whereas the priest tries to cut down many instinctual buds and blossoms at root without a fuller knowledge of what (by Nietzsche's lights) genuinely constitutes decay or flourishing (greater integration) for that particular individual.

The 'pruning' cases involve the elimination of particular instincts in the promotion of a healthier hedgerow. It nourishes the good aspects of the plant, and creates the conditions for this nourishment by cutting back the deleterious elements of the shrub in order to cultivate a healthier overall plant (in these cases, elimination as a precondition of the successful integration of competing instincts). By contrast, the 'castratism' cases involve the unsuccessful attempts to excise entire instincts that would otherwise have strengthened the plant and allowed it to flourish. To Nietzsche, the Christian value system attempts to kill many of the most important roots of the plants. Those roots are deficient in some fundamental sense, on the Christian account. The plants remain, but in a mutilated form, and to the detriment of the entire garden.

This distinction allows us to make better sense of how Nietzsche thinks exemplary individuals such as Goethe can "create" themselves, by disciplining themselves to wholeness (*TI*, 'Skirmishes' 49). Even Goethe wasn't naturally a Goethe – he had to undergo this disciplining of self to, in Nietzsche's cryptic sense, become what he was. Rather than focusing on the unchangeability and quantitative fixedness of all drives, these Nietzschean

⁹⁴ Huddleston ('Health'), 148 describes this as "radical excision", a branding of parts of oneself in moralistic terms and 'turn[ing] against or set upon themselves'. In line with my argument here, attempting this kind of radical excision is ultimately unsuccessful, constituting repressions, but as a result causing overall deleterious effects for the individual's instinctual landscape as a result.

motifs of ‘totality’ and ‘wholeness’ are better understood in the context of a more qualitative sense of integration, the achievement of which may have involved the removal or elimination of certain drives and instincts. This in turn might direct us to one manner in which Nietzsche does not fall foul of what he himself describes in an aforementioned aphorism as the “prejudice” of the “doctrine of the unchangeability of character” (*D* 560). Character, or at least aspects of character qua drives and instincts, is changeable, but, ironically, only to those with the prerequisite psychological strength to make such changes.⁹⁵

Conclusion:

This chapter has called into question the common position that the Nietzschean self-cultivated exemplary individual comes about solely by means of the sublimation of all drives. I have argued that in some cases, Nietzsche thinks that some degree of removal and elimination of instincts should be involved. By making the distinction I have here in this chapter, I have attempted to make sense of why the removal or elimination of particular instincts that are life-denying in the context of an otherwise healthy and productive psychic economy are both distinct from repressions, and how they are or can be part of the ideal of self-cultivation, by Nietzsche's lights. If we conflate these two things, we misunderstand Nietzsche's views on self-cultivation and the role that such eliminations can play in such self-cultivation.

⁹⁵ As Julian Young has similarly put it, all that Nietzsche's commitment to determinism “entails is that whether or not I am going to be the gardening type of person and what kind of gardening person I might be is already determined” (Young 2010, 306). There are obviously attendant questions raised here about how Nietzsche thinks it could be possible to unlock this predetermined yet dormant strength, but I cannot address these more fully here.

Chapter Four

‘Bad Conscience is a Sickness as Pregnancy is a Sickness’:

Nietzsche and a Positive Role for Guilt

Introduction:

In this chapter I will challenge an interpretation, pervasive in the scholarship, about some of the conclusions drawn from the Second Essay of Nietzsche’s *Genealogy*. The structure of the Second Essay is commonly taken to offer a genealogical description of the inception and eventual psychological predominance of internalized guilt, or moralized ‘bad conscience’. This I take to be correct. However, one conclusion usually drawn from this is that by providing this exercise in genealogy, Nietzsche gives certain of his readers the prescriptive tools for doing away with all forms of guilt.

The secondary literature on the *Genealogy* is near-unanimous in maintaining that Nietzsche is against all forms of guilt. To take a recent example, Brian Leiter claims that because Nietzsche associates moral responsibility with providing moral legitimacy to punishment, and because free will (which underpins these) is illusory, all ascriptions of guilt are false.⁹⁶ Leiter also counters any response that might draw upon Nietzsche’s claim that falsehoods can possess life-preserving value. He argues that Nietzsche takes the adoption and sustainment of guilt in human psychology to be undesirable, independent of the truth or falsity of the beliefs that ground guilt.⁹⁷

⁹⁶Leiter (2019), p. 70-1

⁹⁷ Ibid., pp. 80-3. There are some further assumptions in-built to Leiter’s position motivating his claim about guilt which I take to be questionable, but I overlook these for the sake of focusing on the claim about guilt.

Similarly, in his influential paper on Nietzsche, Bernard Williams is dismissive of what he terms bare constructions of moral punishment, including guilt and any conception of blame elicited as a specifically moral response against individuals. Williams views this as stemming from “morality’s idea of an authoritative but sanctionless law, of a judgement that carries no power save that judgement itself”.⁹⁸ Williams, along with Nietzsche as Williams interprets him, reject this idea.

Versions of this claim are offered in some form by nearly every other Anglophone Nietzsche scholar writing on this issue. With just one notable exception which has unfairly received little to no serious treatment so far in the scholarship,⁹⁹ these two examples are representative of the overwhelming tenor of the significant secondary literature on Nietzsche and guilt.¹⁰⁰ The common claim is that Nietzsche views guilt as being a contingent reactive attitude. The conclusion drawn from this is that it is possible to dispense with guilt. The common claim continues that given its contingency, it would as such be desirable to dispense with it.

It is my contention that this conclusion drawn in the secondary literature is erroneous. A close reading of the Second Essay of *GM*, particularly its final sections which discuss the ramifications of bad conscience shows why this is the case. Not only does Nietzsche view the affective disposition to experience guilt-involving feelings as being to some extent psychologically indelible, resulting from the mnemonic internalization at the hands of Christian morality. It is also that he speculatively offers positive claims about a transfigured kind of personal guilt, as a criterion of exemplary individuality.

⁹⁸ Williams (1993a), pp. 11 – 2

⁹⁹ See Zamosc (2011)

¹⁰⁰ Versions of this assumption can be found in Williams (1993a), Foot (1994), May (1999), Clark (2001), Leiter (2002, 2015, 2019), Owen (2007), and Reginster (2011, 2018), Blackman (2019) and Chappell (2019) among others. See Zamosc (2011, p. 134) for a more extensive literature review on this issue in his footnotes.

First, I will outline the elements of Nietzsche's account of the initial development of guilt that are significant for my argument.

1) Nietzsche on the Development of Guilt

It is one of Nietzsche's contentions that humans possess a natural drive to cruelty. In the pre-social origins of humankind, expressions of this drive occurred in primitive and sudden acts of cruelty, inflicted against others. *Bad conscience* in its origins is Nietzsche's characterization of an inward turn of this primitive expression of cruelty. Such expressions of cruelty are psychologically internalized, and consequently inflict a degree of suffering on the individual wishing to express it. As Nietzsche writes at *GM* II 16, "All instincts that do not discharge themselves outwardly turn themselves inwards". This turn is initially caused by the demands of socialization - humans entering or being forced to enter the confines of socio-political arrangements. The blocking of these direct discharges of cruelty and their redirection involve a degree of internalization. This results in a demand upon the individual possessing it, to operate with a calculating evaluative awareness of whether its expression is socially permissible or not. When a direct discharge might manifest in a socially unacceptable manner, efforts are made to inhibit its release.

Nietzsche illustrates the mechanism of internalization with the genesis of the notion of indebtedness within pre-Judeo-Christian societies. This genesis stems, he claims, from the relationships developed around creditors and debtors, broadly construed. In such relations, the instincts of vengeance and retribution, as they might be possessed by an out-of-pocket creditor, find no immediate discharge in a manner that would be socially prudent. So they are internalized, with the aim of their eventual redirection. Under such conditions, an external

discharge of a kind is still eventually secured in another form. For the creditor, this comes by the cruelty observed through the medium of punishment (*GM II 5*). This socially permissible medium compensates for their lack of immediate external expression of their drive to cruelty, by virtue of its redirection. However, the demand motivating this internalization ultimately bring about the structural conditions for developing a personal capacity for evaluative reflection. On the other side of such relationships, debtors who reneged on their repayments come to recognize as legitimated the socially sanctioned punishments that will result from these reneged debts. In a similar fashion, a process of internal evaluation leads the debtor to accept the need for justice against them. They receive punishment, on account of being causally responsible for the harm they have caused by the breaking of social customs. Nietzsche might view this internalization as painful and a form of cruelty towards one's immediate self-expression. But ultimately he describes the satisfaction at the debtor's punishment as constituting an eventual redirection and fulfilment of the impulse (*GM II 5*).

Yet, as Gabriel Zamosc has agreeably written, the apparatus of evaluation at this stage of internalization, involving approval and disapproval, culpability and responsibility here is "not moral in nature; at least not until the bad conscience transforms into the guilty conscience" (Zamosc 2011, p. 115). There is, Nietzsche contends, a distinctive phenomenological shift between what he describes as the pre-moral and moralized modes of bad conscience.¹⁰¹ This phenomenological shift occurs with the advent of Judeo-Christian morality. It is only when this moral system secures ethical hegemony that what Nietzsche calls the 'moralization' of such instincts happens. A result of this is that the specific affective disposition of guilt is

¹⁰¹ Cf. also Risse (2001, 2005) for similar claims, which are further discussed at Footnote 108 below.

introduced. It is this specific disposition which comes to determine the evaluative space motivating actions, in response to desires for instinctual gratification.

With ‘moralization’, the notion of ‘debt’ receives a new conceptual and affective dimension, in becoming irrevocably linked to ‘guilt’.¹⁰² In contrast to the vicarious satisfaction of one’s instincts under the older model of bad conscience, Nietzsche claims that it is the “morbid softening and moralization through which the animal ‘man’ finally learns to be ashamed of all his instincts” (*GM* II 7). On the prior, pre-moral mode of bad conscience, the expression of instincts was often inhibited in line with evaluating the prudence or imprudence of such expression. When bad conscience becomes inherently morality-involving, the evaluative target shifts to the very possession of that instinct of cruelty. Bad conscience in its more socially oriented mode demanded the prudential suppression of natural instincts, without involving claims about the human nature endowed with them. In line with the new ethical standard, of Judeo-Christian morality, deeply rooted human instincts become things one should feel guilty about. The end of *GM* II 21 shows how Nietzsche claims bad conscience was utilised in this developed moralized form, to “cause more pain” qua *guilt* in the face of God.¹⁰³

Nietzsche writes that the advent of Judeo-Christian morality means that bad conscience “take[s] over the religious presupposition in order to drive [man’s] self-torture to its more gruesome severity and sharpness” (*GM* II 22). Nietzsche describes the character of this

¹⁰² Nietzsche’s commentary on the ambiguity in the German word *Schuld* facilitating the initial shift from ‘debt’ to ‘guilt’ is a central feature of *GM* II.

¹⁰³ Morrisson (2018, p. 975) describes the consciousness of guilt as “a developed form of what Nietzsche calls ‘animal bad conscience’ (*GM* III 20)”.

further development as possessing “that will to self-torment, that repressed cruelty” (Ibid.). Note that humans now possess a ‘will’ to self-cruelty, rather than experiencing a prudential, momentary episode of it. This is partly what separates the pre-moral and moral modes of bad conscience. With this form of moralization, the drive which is inhibited is itself taken to be a reprehensible facet of one’s nature, which one should feel guilty for possessing. Only with Judeo-Christian morality does this inwardly vented self-cruelty become deemed permanently and ethically legitimated when directed against oneself. This newly adopted moral narrative sees such self-cruelty as always justified, because of the very existence of those embodied instincts.

The shift from pre-moral to moralized bad conscience has two additional facets. One concerns the move from the publicly fostered spectatorial affect of shame, to the personally interiorized affect of guilt, as a new evaluative scheme for punishment. The other facet concerns the move from being able to acknowledge one’s being causally responsible for an action understood to be a misdeed, to a specifically moral sense of responsibility for such actions. I will claim that both of these dovetailing facets have structural ramifications for the conception of subjectivity that Nietzsche thinks they support. But first, I will explore each of them.

Nietzsche is committed to the thesis that the affective disposition towards guilt arises as a consequence of a specifically Judeo-Christian moral phenomenon. By way of contrast: a look at the classic texts of Ancient Greece finds them replete with discussions of shame. In the *Protagoras* dialogue, Socrates’ eponymous interlocutor claims that to ensure humans could live together, Zeus bestowed two gifts, the virtue of civic right (*dike*), and shame (*aidos*). Aristotle’s conception of courage as a virtue in the *Nichomachean Ethics* relies upon an

innate sense of shame as one of its preconditions (though shame does not itself constitute a virtue). Indeed, the primacy of shame in Greek culture serves to amplify the apparent total absence of discussions of personally cultivated, specifically moral guilt. The trained classical philologist Nietzsche brought this insight to bear upon how he conceives of the relations individuals once had towards punishment and reward, to highlight the differences that these relations now have. The public nature of shame brings one disgrace, whereas the private nature of guilt requires no such publicly observable or interpersonal consequence.

The pre-moral, more socially oriented model of bad conscience as it operated for the Greeks suggests that recognition of oneself as being legitimately punished for a transgression required no intrinsically moral element to it. On this model, one might recognize that a specific punishment is justified for a failure to pay one's debt, without one feeling *guilty* about it. Instead of motivation by any moral element, it could be motivation by prudence, or calculation of an instrumental kind (*GM II 2*), or an acknowledgement of merely causal responsibility (*GM II 15*). Abdications of responsibility were framed as failures of adhering to custom, be it to the gods, a king or queen, the polis, or the family. In this respect, much hinges on how we frame the notions of legitimacy at work when referring to discussing what it means to transgress one's obligations.

The attribution of responsibility and blame on the pre-moral model assumes a specifically causal character. To use an example surely not far from Nietzsche's mind, in the *Odyssey*, Telemachus feels ashamed of himself for his failure to prevent the suitors from arming themselves against himself and Odysseus. His actions have counted as a failure, for which he is causally responsible.¹⁰⁴ But on such pre-moral commitments, when an actor's behaviour

¹⁰⁴ Bernard Williams also uses this example in his *Shame and Necessity* lectures. Telemachus expects blame for unintentionally leaving the weapons store open, allowing the suitors he and Odysseus oppose to re-arm themselves in order to fight them. But the blame is only coherent in relation to the shame he experiences by being held to account by others, in this instance, Odysseus (Williams 1993b,

ought to be punished, any normative weight behind that ‘ought’ is by reference to having consequences which cause harm to others.¹⁰⁵ This specifically avoids the attribution of any specifically moral justification. Greeks such as Telemachus could be held accountable for causing things to happen that are judged foolish or a misdeed. Telemachus experiences shame for his mistake, as a causal error which he is responsible for. Indeed, in certain extreme cases, Nietzsche claims, the Greeks went further, and blamed perceived ‘misdeeds’ on delusions fostered at the hands of the gods, which Nietzsche describes as a “typical expedient” of reasons-giving within Greek culture (*GM* II 23). In such cases, the Greeks had a specific explanatory apparatus for these errors, which established blame not amongst human parties at all, but rather directed it back at the gods. For example, when Ajax slaughters the cattle in the *Iliad*, causal blame was directed at the gods to explain the human error, in judgement and in action. They set Ajax on the path to his grievous error. Nietzsche argues for a qualitative difference between how the Greeks saw shame due to transgressions or violations, and those guilt-involving conceptions of responsibility later introduced by Christianity. An offence committed involves no ascriptions of specifically *moral* personal responsibility on the pre-moral model of bad conscience. Rather, it constitutes an admission of a kind of personal error, that led to the committing of an offence. Nietzsche claims that a Greek’s explanation of a transgression to themselves and others is to say “something has gone unexpectedly wrong” (*GM* II 15), which as Iain Morrisson has pointed out, is not even the same as saying “*I* went wrong” (Morrisson 2018, p. 980). In other words, a specifically moral, personal sense is not

pp. 50 – 3). Telemachus’ actions have ‘gone wrong’, to use the language of *GM* II 15. Though sharing some crucial affinities, Williams offers a different account about guilt to that of Nietzsche, which for brevity’s sake I cannot further explore here. Williams’ account is similar to the interpretation of Nietzsche on guilt offered by Ridley (2005): see my disagreement with Ridley at footnote 108.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. *BGE* 32

operative in the reasons-giving for why such offences are committed, on this earlier model of bad conscience.¹⁰⁶

On textual grounds, all of Nietzsche's allusions to guilt-involving evaluations of human actions in *GM II* occur after documenting the shift to moralized bad conscience. Before this shift, it isn't at all clear that he thinks individuals who internalize expressions of their instincts saw themselves as being specifically a *morally* transgressive party. Rather they appear only as someone owed, owing, or recognizing the need for punishment, in accordance with customs and social mores. In the case of the one owed, they cannot adequately express their impulse to receive recompense in some form. In the case of the debtor, as Christopher Janaway puts it, "something Nietzsche does not explicitly provide for in his analysis – but which must be there nevertheless for guilt to occur- is the conception of oneself as a transgressor in one's own eyes" (Janaway 2007, p. 136). But this is not obviously the case for

¹⁰⁶ One might also point out that what is very likely the first attempt at attributing moral responsibility in any literary work is in the *Iliad*, in the form of my personal favourite figure from antiquity, Thersites, who judges the folly of the kings. It is important to consider, however, that not only is he wholly ignored for trying to attribute such moral responsibility in his rebuke against King Agamemnon, but he is beaten by Odysseus for doing so. Homer's motivations for including Thersites are a matter of great interpretive debate – whether he thought Odysseus justified, or whether Thersites' physical disfigurement is a way of masking him as a subliminal moral agent within the *Iliad*. Hegel, Marx and I.F. Stone in his book on Socrates all respectively thought the latter. All that matters for my purposes here is that the kind of responsibility given voice by Thersites is not one Homer considers as pervasive in Greek society. Perhaps, as Homer documents the Greek soldiers laughing at Thersites while he is being beaten, the moral claim he makes against Agamemnon was not one even intelligible to them. Nietzsche mentions Thersites twice. He says of Xenophanes that he represents an early advocacy of a version of the freedom of the individual, but does so in a manner different from "the quarrelling and scourged Thersites" (*PHG* §10: 05/04/1873, my translation). More importantly, he writes in a fragment in 1875, "From Socrates on, the individual considered himself too seriously. A plague was added to Athens [...] Socrates is the revenge of Thersites: the glorious Achilles killed the ugly commoner Thersites due to his anger at his words about Pentesileas' death; the ugly commoner Socrates struck dead glorious myth's authority in Ancient Greece" (*NF*-6[13]: 1875, my translation). Is Thersites, described by Homer as "the ugliest man who came to Troy", along with Socrates, an inspiration for the 'ugliest man' in *Zarathustra*?

those demanding socially acceptable forms of punishment as recompense. Nor is it obvious that debtors to whom such punishment is to be inflicted view those demands as anything further than that this punishment was in a sense justified, in the context of transgressing customary or social obligations. We can separate recognizing a punishment as legitimate from the development of the moral claims motivating the phenomenology of guilt. It is also worth noting, too, that guilt fulfils the role of being a form of punishment in itself, interiorized as it is without spectacle.

The consequences of the idea that the affective disposition towards guilt was only introduced by Judeo-Christian morality appear extreme. Arguably it is Nietzsche's view, however.¹⁰⁷ Despite Nietzsche's sometimes ambiguous exposition of this matter, it is not his contention that some precursory form of specifically guilt-involving feelings existed which could be relied upon to assist in the moralization of bad conscience. Rather, it was that the phenomenological involvement of guilt itself originated with moralization.¹⁰⁸

Nietzsche paints a developmental picture, wherein the moralization of bad conscience is described as the "terrible and most sublime pinnacle" of internalization (*GM* II 19). The

¹⁰⁷ Indeed, it is unclear why the apparent extremity of Nietzsche's position would count against it being the accurate way to read him on this issue. Even on the extremity charge, Nietzsche was not the only 19th century German philosopher who held this opinion. Hegel claims in his lectures on the philosophy of history that the pre-Socratic Greeks had no conscience. He says; "they [were] unable to give an account; [they had] no conscience, no conviction – [their affirmative stance was] unmediated by reasons" (*PR*, para 147). It is in this context that Hegel makes claims about Socrates and Antigone being world-historical actors who prompt a shift in *Geist* from the objective universal (e.g. morality by means of tradition and/or social custom) to the subjective universal (what might be the right thing for the subject to do, even when it contravenes against tradition and/or social custom). This affinity between Nietzsche and Hegel has quite clear limits, of course. But it demonstrates a conclusive rebuttal to the charge that Nietzsche's position is some isolated extremity.

¹⁰⁸ In this regard I agree with Risse (2001, 2005) that for Nietzsche, the particular phenomenology of guilt arrives only when bad conscience becomes 'moralized' by the Judeo-Christian scheme. Ridley (2005), and to some extent Janaway (2007) take the opposing view, that some version of guilt must have been present, not only owing to what they take to be the implausibility of a newly cultivated affect being introduced in such a way, but also to explain how the adoption of the Christian-moral outlook, including the specific way of experiencing guilt, was facilitated.

notion that bad conscience “finally” arrives at a point where no external discharge is possible seems inapplicable to the model of pre-moral bad conscience, where the redirection of impulses was still possible.¹⁰⁹ Soon after this passage, in the last two lines of *GM II 19*, Nietzsche discusses concluding the “whole development of guilt consciousness”, suggesting structural divergence across the multiple stages of bad conscience, rather than applying a single monolithic model.

The point here is that for Nietzsche, the model of bad conscience as generated by the demands of social prudence “brought about”, i.e. created some of the structural conditions that facilitate the moralized repression of the instincts. The Christian-moral conceptual scheme then enmeshes notions of moral guilt with feelings of indebtedness (*GM II 6*). Nietzsche explicitly mentions the idea of the concepts of debt and duty (which he introduces in scare quotes, as if wishing to not concretize the concepts at play with these words) and how they became pushed back into conscience, describing it “more precisely [as] the entanglement [*der Verwicklung*] of bad conscience with the concept of god” (*GM II 21*). On this model, the individual evaluates themselves as a specifically moral failure, as one perpetually indebted to a God whose ideals they can never live up to, repay, or check off the balance sheet for. As such, not all stages of bad conscience involve moralization, since Nietzsche identifies a particular point where bad conscience becomes enmeshed with moral concepts. It is this point at which those concepts ultimately become inseparable.

Explaining how this enmeshing or entanglement occurs, at *GM III 20*, Nietzsche writes,

¹⁰⁹ At *GM II 17*, Nietzsche describes the “instinct of freedom”, here manifested in the free expression of cruelty, becoming “forced back, repressed, incarcerated within itself and *finally* able to discharge and unleash itself only against itself: that, and that alone, is bad conscience in its beginnings” (*italics mine*). The ‘finally’ here delineates the final inability to discharge, once bad conscience becomes moralized.

“it was only in the hands of the priest, *that artist in guilty feelings*, that [the feeling of guilt] achieved form – oh, such a form! ‘Sin’ – for this is the priestly title for the animal’s ‘bad conscience’ [...] has been the greatest event thus far in the history of the sickness of soul; we possess in it the most dangerous and fateful artifice of religious interpretation” (my italics).

The motivation to seek answers for why the individual suffers from bad conscience is given an answer by the priest: humanity’s irredeemable guilt. The sinfulness imported into the mindset of the ‘slavish’ Christians characterizes them as “guilty and reprehensible to a degree that can never be atoned for” (*GM II 22*).

The Judeo-Christian reinterpretation conveys bad conscience in terms of the fixed moralized concept of guilt and sin. In this sense, there is significant conceptual space between internalization via the demands of creditor-debtor arrangements in social custom, and the affective disposition of guilt via the demands of moralization. Nietzsche’s claim that these phenomena are conceptually distinguishable aids in understanding what he takes to be the origin of the affective disposition towards guilt.

2) Nietzsche on the Indelibility of Guilt

It is on the back of this shift in modes of bad conscience, in introducing affective guilt, that Nietzsche claims the conditions are created for the indelibility of this new disposition. The term indelible is most appropriate, as Nietzsche sees this as a specifically mnemonic process.

New psychological facets are in some sense physiologically imprinted as a form of memory upon the subjective landscape of humans.

Nietzsche's account of the instincts and their ability or inability to be gratified tacitly operates on a kind of hydraulic conception of the mental economy. This is evident throughout *GM II*. When no outward gratification is possible, a drive will discharge inward, 'internally', back against the individual possessing it. Imagine a stick of dynamite when something is put on top of it to muzzle its blast. Instead of the explosion taking out what is above and around it, the blast mostly goes downward, forming a crater. This is a helpful analogy for thinking about how Nietzsche views the structural effects of internalization. One might have philosophical reservations about the accuracy or coherence of such a hydraulic model.¹¹⁰ So too might we have concerns about the psycho-physiological picture Nietzsche paints. But for him, that force which would otherwise be discharged externally, when internalized, somehow mines out a structural 'crater'. On this model, the inability to discharge one's instincts led to the facilitation of an internal evaluative space, through which individuals came to begin reflectively processing such instincts. Then, the shift to the moralization of concepts exploits the space already created by this ability to internally evaluate, in accordance with prudence and custom, as was demanded by pre-moral bad conscience. It is Nietzsche's contention that the shift between modes of bad conscience gives a specifically moral character to this means of evaluation.

In a strange metaphor, Nietzsche claims that antiquated human psychology used to be "thin,

¹¹⁰ See, for example, Solomon (2008), 'Myth Three: The Hydraulic Model' for the claim that while such a model might often be useful, it relies on a mechanistic account of the emotions which fails to capture the essence of what makes emotions so qualitatively specific. Though his main charge against the hydraulic model in itself might be interesting, Solomon's main argument that the model fails to do so because it doesn't recognize the environmentally contextualized and desire-driven nature of emotional responses seems to be a rather flat claim.

as if inserted between two skins” (*GM* II 16). This picture of a lack of physical depth suggests transparency, or at most translucency. The inference Nietzsche intends is that there was not yet a significant psychological structure to facilitate reflective deliberation for action, or evaluating the correct course to guide such deliberations. One’s deliberations would occur not far from the surface, with nothing much hidden from view, on the ‘thin’ psychology.¹¹¹ Now, the inception of bad conscience has somehow ‘burrowed out’ this evaluative space. Nietzsche will later on describe the process of internalization in physiological terms, as something which “spreads out, and grows like a polyp” (*GM* II 21), adding credence to the notion of a space being physiologically carved out. The space between the two skins gets thicker.

His contention is that this internal space initially operated with evaluations based upon caution, prudence, custom. These evaluations befit the mores of the societies which humans entered into. But the development of ‘moralization’, which Nietzsche sees as occurring with the adoption of Judeo-Christian morality, gives a manifestly moral sense to this evaluative space, involving guilt, praise, blame and responsibility. The caveat here, however, is that the Christian sense of guilt this framework promoted was extended towards all biologically rooted instincts. Since Nietzsche claims all humans possess such instincts, guilt in line with this framework constituted a denial of something natural. For Nietzsche, this is to deny life.

This developmental picture Nietzsche offers, along with his virulently anti-Christian views, has led many to the widely held yet erroneous position that Nietzsche is against all forms of guilt. Humans felt no manifestly personal guilt before Judeo-Christian morality. So, since Nietzsche opposes Judeo-Christian morality, it would make sense at one level for him to be

¹¹¹ Clark and Dudrick (2015), *Nietzsche on Ethics and Politics*, p. 281 ff. ‘Nietzsche’s Philosophical Psychology: Will to Power as Theory of the Soul’ draw a similar inference about the meaning of this weird passage. If it helps to visualize how thin ‘two skins’ might be (and drawing upon my days as a line cook), imagine a translucent piece of sausage skin before the meat is pumped into it. As I said in the Preface, it isn’t always pretty how sausages are made...

opposed to manifestly personal guilt, so the reading goes.

Now, it is certainly correct to think that Nietzsche was against what he took to be the characteristically Christian conception of guilt, directed in the way it is against the instincts, and for Judeo-Christian reasons behind it. And since guilt came from the Judeo-Christian moral framework, the *prima facie* reasonable inference which many interpreters make is to claim that Nietzsche would reject guilt *tout court*. He thinks the claims and motivations of Christianity are expressions of life-denial; so why shouldn't we just reject guilt, as one facet of a life-denying moral hangover we can get rid of? These concepts of indebtedness and moral guilt have been 'entangled' or 'enmeshed': this interpretation claims for Nietzsche the desire to simply go back and 'untangle' them, thereby undoing this link between indebtedness and manifestations of guilt.

The immediate response to cast doubt on this interpretation is to note that, at one level, Nietzsche thinks bad conscience has engendered an indelible internal evaluative space within human psychology. However, it might be asked, why not accept that we retain the structural effects of bad conscience in so far as we possess the evaluative space for calculating reasons for action and their prudential import, without the moralized version of this evaluative space that came about via Judeo-Christianity? Why think we retain a specifically 'moralized' version of bad conscience, for Nietzsche?

That Nietzsche sees specifically moral guilt as part of what is made indelible is demonstrable more by what he initially *rejects* in the closing passages of *GM* II than what he affirms. At the end of *GM* II 20, he offers a nuanced insight on this. He claims that the Christian moralization of bad conscience has brought to a peak the maximal degree of guilt possible

within the affective structures that influence human evaluation. But operating on the assumption that humans have begun to be increasingly less in thrall to the claims of Christian metaphysics, Nietzsche writes:

“one might with no little probability deduce from the unstoppable decline of faith in the Christian god that there would already be a considerable decline in human consciousness of guilt as well; indeed the prospect cannot be dismissed that the perfect and final victory of atheism might free humanity from this entire feeling of having debts to its beginnings [...] Atheism and a kind of *second innocence* belong together.”

(*GM* II 20, Nietzsche’s italics; my underlining)

This might sound like, were Nietzsche fully endorsing this deduction, he would be attempting to do away with guilt-involving bad conscience, with its influence upon the structure of human evaluation. This ‘second innocence’, such an endorsement might go, would strip bad conscience back to (at least as far back as) its guilt-free mode. Yet in the opening of the next section at *GM* II 21, Nietzsche says that this deduction would only be the correct one to make *if one ignored the structural impact of moralization* in the development of bad conscience. Such a second innocence would only be possible, if there had been no such process of moralization. This is something, then, Nietzsche explicitly denies the possibility of. He writes that such a deduction rests on the assumption that the concepts of ‘guilt’ and ‘duty’ had not become irretractably connected to specifically “religious presuppositions”, namely what Nietzsche describes as the moralization of such concepts. The hypothetical deduction he offers at the end of *GM* II 20 was floated “as if there were no such moralization, consequently, as if those concepts were now necessarily coming to an end now that their

presupposition, the faith in a ‘creditor’, in God, has fallen” (*GM* II 21). In contrast to this hypothesis, Nietzsche claims that the “facts of the case diverge from this in a terrible manner” (*Ibid.*). Moralization’s effects on human psychology, at the hands of Judeo-Christian morality, have left an irrevocable impact. A such, moralization by Nietzsche’s lights precludes the possibility for this kind of ‘second innocence’.^{112 113}

3) How to Understand the Structural Impact of Moralization

This raises the important question of how he understands the effects of moralization upon human psychology. An assumption undergirding the common readings of Nietzsche and the status of guilt is that because the inception and dominance of Christian morality is purely of a socio-cultural nature, it is possible for guilt to be overcome and discarded. However, the language used by Nietzsche to describe his claims about the indelibility of guilt have a strong affinity with Lamarckian theories of evolution, namely that acquired or nurtured characteristics are or can be heritable. Just as for Lamarck, crudely, a giraffe trains its neck to be longer and then passes on the acquisition as a genetic trait for a long neck to its offspring, it appears the case that for Nietzsche, the structural developments to individual psychology are acquired through being imposed, and likewise become a heritable characteristic.

¹¹² Zamosc understates the strength of this passage. He writes that “the appearance of the moral concept of guilt threatens the possibility of redemption promised by atheism” (2011, p. 117), but it threatens it only in so far as this redemption is understood as the elimination of personal guilt. This is strange, since Zamosc’s argument is one of the only pieces of secondary literature that acknowledges the central claim of this chapter, namely the positive role Nietzsche allows for guilt in *GM* II.

¹¹³ See footnote 119 for a discussion of the only other time Nietzsche uses the phrase ‘second innocence’ in his published works, and its ramifications for supporting the central claims of this chapter.

This leads one to suspect that this is a deeply rooted physiological change in Nietzsche's eyes. Were it the case that humans have inherited just some cultural capacity for the disposition towards guilt, it would be easy for Nietzsche to be read as seeing guilt as something we can remove from our culture and lives, and that we perhaps ought to endeavour to do so. However his constant physiological language in *GM II* gives little reason to see that he employs it as metaphors for socio-culturally engrained conceptions of subjectivity. Nor does Nietzsche think that this acquisition to our affective landscape is something merely enculturated, ergo something we might be able to enculturate ourselves out of, again. Nietzsche offers a stronger physiological account of this development and its structural ramifications, rather than documenting something merely enculturated. This might put Nietzsche's account into some trouble, owing to the now-obvious fact that the cruder aspects of Lamarckian theory underpinning his position have been long discredited. To use an obvious example prescient to the development of bad conscience in *GM II* (contrary to the Lamarckian) the Ancient Greeks are the same species of human, with no more or less psychological capacities, as the 19th century Europeans whom Nietzsche claims have inherited these psychological characteristics.

There might independently be much more plausibility to an account that offers a socio-cultural understanding of this indelibility. Such an account would get Nietzsche off the hook for sheer bad evolutionary theorizing, at least by modern standards. The problem with this, though, is the physiological language Nietzsche uses to describe this process throughout *GM II*. Its use strongly implies that the indelibility resulting from this process too is one he thinks of as a physiological one. The socio-cultural interpretation of Nietzsche's claims in *GM II* is weaker, as it is more difficult for it to explain how guilt of this kind can be structurally

indelible, without certain deeper psychological ramifications underpinning it.¹¹⁴ Further than this, it appears Nietzsche endorses another problematic assertion, that changes at the social and/or species level can engender physiological changes within all individuals in that respective socio-cultural setting. Nevertheless, even if it problematizes major motivating assertions within his developmental story, these endorsements do appear the right way to interpret Nietzsche on this topic.

4) In Sickness and In Health

This leaves Nietzsche in a *prima facie* difficult position. As shown, it is his contention that humans are stuck with the indelible affective disposition to some form of guilt. Yet he has spent the entirety of the Second Essay casting it as an initially negative psychological phenomenon. It is negative not just because of its Judeo-Christian origins. Rather, it is because as a consequence of its inception, it sustains and buttresses the pervasive affective demands of Judeo-Christian morality. It is also Nietzsche's contention that the internalization of guilt structurally opposes and often vetoes facets of individual psychological regulation. Examples of this from *GM II* include the capacity for active forgetting, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. But more specific to this chapter, it disrupts the ability to gratify one's individuated instincts by means of discharging them, as well as fostering negative affective reactions to the instincts themselves. These naturally endowed facets which it disrupts are

¹¹⁴ With regards to the specific arguments that Nietzsche offers a version of Lamarckianism, see Schacht (2013, which gives emphasis to passages from *GM* to support his claim); opposing this, see Clark (2013). However, see also Clark and Dudrick (2015; pp. 277- 282) for claims about how internalization contributes to the development of the 'soul' in humans, a claim which perhaps tacitly expresses the Lamarckian line that Clark 2013 resisted.

characterized by Nietzsche as facets of individual psychic health. In apparent contrast to this, bad conscience is characterized as a mode of sickness.

Bad conscience makes humans initially sick because it obstructs and denies the “unconscious”, “regulating drives” their most natural and direct means of expression (*GM* II 16). In the process of its development, bad conscience goes on to assume a moralized form, which imputes a specifically personalized sense of guilt. As a consequence of this Judeo-Christian demand, this sense of guilt is directed towards the possession of instincts in themselves. Nietzsche sees this as an amplification of the sickness, describing this development as the “most terrible and most sublime pinnacle” of bad conscience. It is this that Nietzsche describes as “that will to self-torment, that repressed cruelty of the animal-human [...] a kind of madness of the will in psychic cruelty that has absolutely no equal” (*GM* II 22).

But Nietzsche’s *Genealogy* not only describes how various moral concepts came into being and enmeshed amongst themselves into new moral and psychological formations. After providing descriptions to explain the current psychological constitution of modern European humans, Nietzsche speculates in various ways how to answer the prescriptively loaded question ‘so now what?’ for those (or at least some of those) modern European humans.

In contrast to the dominant line of interpretation, the purpose of Nietzsche’s genealogy is not to totally undo the impact of these dominant yet erroneous moral concepts. Rather, *GM* aims in part to examine these pungent concepts and the way in which the Christian-moral demands upon social and psychological life have impacted upon human subjectivity. In light of these distortive effects, Nietzsche’s conclusions demonstrate that our inherited self-relation needs to be reconsidered and transfigured in response to some of these irrevocable effects. Indeed, it is Nietzsche’s claim that some of these distortions have provided the structural impetus to

establish greater individual health than was possible (for certain humans) before these moral concepts were forced onto them. It is by means of this claim that Nietzsche associates the advent of social internalization and the later development of Christian moral guilt with the possibility for future great boons.¹¹⁵ Whether it would have been better by Nietzsche's lights to revert back to a pre-guilt psychology is prescriptively doubtful, as we shall see Nietzsche develop what exactly this 'greater health' might look like. But it is also a purely hypothetical speculation, since Nietzsche thinks that the process of moralization has developed so as to become an indelible facet of human psychology (*GM* II 20 - 21).

Nietzsche couches bad conscience as a phenomenon which makes humans spiritually sick. This applies also to the earlier, social model of bad conscience. But Nietzsche further claims that the development to moralized guilt is the "sublime and terrible pinnacle" of the sickness of bad conscience (*GM* II 19). However, there are passages where Nietzsche claims that certain structural effects resulting from moralized bad conscience might later turn out to be instrumentally beneficial for the production of certain great future individuals. Upon close examination, Nietzsche doesn't commit to arguing for the intrinsic goods of moralized bad conscience in itself – its inception and development constitutes a 'sickness', after all. However, a crucial caveat should be made, acknowledging that for Nietzsche, bad conscience may very likely turn out to have certain instrumentally beneficial effects, in the right hands. Some attempt is made below in Section 5 about what kinds of effects these might be.

¹¹⁵ Christopher Janaway acknowledges the possibility for such "spectacularly good consequences of internalization" (Janaway 2007, p. 141).

It is notable that the possibility for something which initially disadvantages humans being turned into a great boon echoes a case in the First Essay of the *Genealogy*. Nietzsche offers as a consequence of the slave's self-deceived adherence to a revolt in moral judgments a point wherein human subjectivity becomes deeper and more interesting as a result of this revolt (*GM* I 7).¹¹⁶ In an analogous vein, Nietzsche offers such potential consequences from the developmental story of bad conscience. The internalized guilt that such a phenomenon fortifies under its moralized auspices leads Nietzsche to speculate about whether particular avenues of human flourishing might open up to us. Bad conscience is speculatively framed as causally facilitating these avenues.

This caveat of Nietzsche's involves making a distinction between guilt's inception and persistence, and what a psychological consequence of the development of the affective sensibility to feel guilt might be in a long-term, structural sense. When considered in the context of an individual labouring under such feelings as determined by a specifically Christian outlook, Nietzsche claims that attitudes of guilt straightforwardly possess a negative valence. Yet there remains in an important sense the potential for instrumental beneficial effects arising as a consequence of the adoption of the affective structure facilitating these feelings. This potential is alluded to in Nietzsche's use of the metaphor of pregnancy. This metaphor appears the section immediately before his claims about the indelibility of the moralization of evaluative concepts at *GM* II 20. Here, Nietzsche talks about bad conscience so described as a sickness in the same way "as pregnancy is a sickness" (*GM* II 19). Nietzsche's credentials in midwifery aside, it is worth inquiring what explanatory power this metaphor possesses.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Huddleston (2019), p. 60 - 2

The thrust of Nietzsche's claim is that the sicknesses he sees as involved in a pregnancy, or even the sickness that Nietzsche identifies as *being* the pregnancy (i.e. the diminished overall state of health the pregnant woman is in), can still be considered instrumentally good if they lead to a particular outcome. This consequential outcome of the diminished state, namely the childbirth that hopefully follows a term of pregnancy, means that the sickness receives instrumental justification as a part of a causal story. However, ascriptions of sickness are not considered by Nietzsche as goods in themselves. These sicknesses are not considered to possess positive worth unless they are part of the causal story leading to the consequence of birthing a child. Without the causal story wherein the outcome of the sickness produces something good, the positive worth does not obtain. A diminished overall state is only considered instrumentally positive in the context of the outcomes it leads to. In Nietzsche's metaphor of the sickness of pregnancy, the things that might be taken to possess negative worth in isolation lead to something good coming about as a consequence. Indeed, it arguably brings about something greater in consequence than before the sickness began. The symptoms of sickness are part and parcel of the causal story of the pregnancy. However, the emphasis here is that while this may offer instrumental benefits in the context of its effects for the wider causal story of the pregnancy, this doesn't mean that any aspects of the sickness, when isolated from that story, can be considered intrinsically good.

This metaphor has an important bearing upon how we should understand Nietzsche's claims about the potential instrumentally positive outcomes of bad conscience. Something analogous underpins and motivates Nietzsche's claim that bad conscience has the possibility of engendering some future great benefits. What this claim amounts to will be treated in the next section. In relation to the present analogy, taken as an isolated phenomenon, Nietzsche

considers the internalization of moral guilt and the content at which such guilt is directed in its Christian form to lead to a state of diminished psychological health. Nietzsche describes modern humans, inheritors of the Christian evaluative orientation, as “sick animals” (*GM* III 13). At the same time, Nietzsche speculates about future prospects for an instrumentally positive outcome from the adoption of this personalized and specifically morally oriented form of evaluative apparatus, an apparatus which initially led to these still-enduring states of diminished psychological health.¹¹⁷ It is in this context that Nietzsche likens the ‘sickness’ of bad conscience to a pregnancy.^{118 119}

¹¹⁷ The passage at *GM* III 13 mentions ascetic ideals specifically in this passage. I have already demonstrated that Nietzsche offers a nuanced perspective on the ‘sickness’ caused by the slave revolt above. In line with the wider argument being made here about the sickness of bad conscience offering certain benefits greater than before its inception, it would repay close study to consider whether something similar might be the case for Nietzsche in regards to ascetic ideals, also.

¹¹⁸ Neuhouser (2014) is one of the few contributions to Anglophone Nietzsche studies to pay serious attention to this metaphor. While the tone of his paper is a rather vitalist-sounding reading of Nietzsche, Neuhouser’s paper is commendable for its detailed exposition of the relation between illness or sickness and health in *GM* II. In places, Neuhouser offers similar argumentation to aspects of my chapter here. I, however, attempt to more substantially explain what the structure and form of this health out of sickness might look like for Nietzsche, in respect of his analysis of guilt.

¹¹⁹ The only other time Nietzsche uses the expression of a ‘second innocence’ supports this reading of the metaphor of pregnancy. Nietzsche added a second Preface to *The Gay Science* in 1887, the same year as the publication of the *Genealogy*. This second Preface is framed around health and sickness, more specifically, the “gratitude of a convalescent – for *convalescence* was unexpected” (*GS* P2, 1). Nietzsche speaks of the ‘surrender to sickness’ that new philosophers must commit (*Ibid.*, 2), before profiting from this sickness, returning “like mothers” who “transfo[rm] all that we are into light and flame”, viewing sickness as a necessary condition for the liberation of the spirit (*Ibid.*, 3). After this set-up, Nietzsche writes, “from such severe sickness [...] one returns *newborn* [...] with a more delicate taste for joy [...] with a second dangerous innocence in joy, more child-like and yet a hundred times subtler than one has ever been before” (*Ibid.*, 4).

Nietzsche uses the term ‘second dangerous innocence’ in a positive sense in the second Preface. But its usage here as a mode of refined joy is a far cry from the ‘second innocence’ at *GM* II 20, should it be conceived as trying to reverse the sickness of bad conscience, which Nietzsche denies the possibility of. Reversal is not only impossible, but wouldn’t be desirable. Like the ‘motherhood’ of the new philosopher as employed here, and in his metaphor of pregnancy, Nietzsche would rather his exemplary individuals go through and overcome severe sickness, to attain even greater health. Pregnancy while temporary as a specific state of sickness ‘gives birth’ to something which wasn’t there before. Bad conscience is transfigured and incorporated into a condition of greater health. In this sense, the “second innocence” of *GS* P 2 gives a positive appraisal of “giving birth” to the free spirit of the future. In Elliott (forthcoming 2022b), I discuss Nietzsche’s refined conception of joy and its link to affirming eternal recurrence, as a consequence of undergoing a developmental process through

Bad conscience has had a historical hand in augmenting the scope and structure of modern human subjectivity. But through genealogical praxis and the correct responses to the findings of this praxis, Nietzsche's claim is that such augmentations can be transfigured for future productive ends, rather than their merely being undone.¹²⁰

Nietzsche identifies one major result of the internalization of bad conscience: the development of the 'soul' in humans (*GM* II 16). He talks of the internalization occurring in humans as a form of stimulation: "thus first grows in man that which he later calls his 'soul'". This might *prima facie* be considered to be Nietzsche poking fun at the 'soul' as an atomistic fiction presupposed by Christian morality (cf. *BGE* 12). However, I think Nietzsche's claim here goes deeper than just this. He discusses the broadening of the mental capacities and inner life of humans as a result of internalization, suggesting that the development of a 'soul' in some sense possesses the potential for new and instrumentally beneficial psychological depth.

In much the same way, Nietzsche in this passage claims that with the self-hostility and self-cruelty caused by internalization and exacerbated by its moral development comes the creation within such individuals of "an adventure, a place of torture, an uncertain and dangerous wilderness [...]" (*GM* II 16). While 'war' has been declared upon the natural

the stages of nihilism.

¹²⁰ As Aaron Ridley presciently points out, "the modality of crypto-Christian guilt feelings may well be different from Christian guilt feelings..." (Ridley 2005, p. 43). It is notable that Ridley takes this insight to apply just as much to the past mode of bad conscience, as part of his argument that pre-Christian bad conscience must have involved some kind of personal guilt to facilitate specifically Christian guilt. As will be discussed shortly, Nietzsche only directs the possibility of detaching the affective disposition for guilt away from Christianity in the future, making no such claim about past modes of bad conscience. So although Ridley rightly says that "Once the news of the death of God has finally sunk in, life [...] is up for rehabilitation", citing *GM* II 24 as textual evidence for this (Ridley, *ibid.*), this doesn't entail that guilt itself wasn't a specific affect brought about by the Judeo-Christian outlook to explain indebtedness (see *GM* III 20, cited above, for Nietzsche's claims about the priests being "the artists in guilty feelings" who give it a form by introducing guilt and sin).

instincts by bad conscience, he claims, “[l]et us immediately add that, on the other hand, with the appearance on earth of an animal soul turned against itself, taking sides against itself, something so new, deep, unheard of, enigmatic, contradictory, and *full of future* has come into being...” (Ibid.). In support of this, in *GM II 18* Nietzsche identifies one potential productive use of what he calls “active” bad conscience when utilised in the service of developmentally “giving oneself [...] a form” (*GM II 18*).¹²¹ Again, the physiological language of growth out of physical pressures (such as self-directed pains resulting from an inability to discharge certain instincts) suggests that this is to be understood as a psycho-physiological development, rather than merely a socio-cultural one. The claim here is that changes at the social and/or species level engender physiological changes within individuals in that respective socio-cultural setting.

The appearance of the potential for great instrumental benefit out of this development of the soul, it is worth emphasizing, is obviously taken by Nietzsche to be largely unintentional. Nietzsche describes it as being “too paradoxical” to be considered an intended consequence, dubbing it a “most unexpected and exciting lucky throw” (*GM II 16*; cf. *GM II 2*). This is one way that the metaphor of pregnancy doesn’t hold up as a smooth parallel. In the case of the pregnancy, intentions are involved in the endurance of the sickness, by reference to

¹²¹ This image at *GM II 18* draws important similarities to Nietzsche’s claims at *BGE 227 – 230* about modes of self-cruelty, and how they might be useful in the task of self-cultivation. Clark and Dudrick (2015, pp. 277 - 282) make use of this passage for similar purposes, by arguing that there is a structural parallel between the formation of the state, and the formation of the machinations of the ordering of the human soul. Invoking the Platonic analogy between the polis and individual psychology, they claim that Nietzsche does something similar to Plato, in postulating his own version of this analogy. They claim that the way in which the ‘blond beast’ figures who fashion the first states “is basically the same force that here—inwardly, on a smaller, pettier scale, in a backwards direction, in the ‘labyrinth of the breast,’ to use Goethe’s words—creates for itself the bad conscience and builds negative ideals: namely that instinct for freedom (speaking in my language: the will to power)” (*GM II 18*). Simon May (1999) draws similar conclusions, with more emphasis on *GM II 16*, that bad conscience might possess some positive ramifications (May, p. 62, ff5).

knowledge of the assumed desired outcome. Despite this lack of intention for the story of bad conscience, however, it is indeed the Christian moralized mode of bad conscience that Nietzsche claims makes possible certain conditions for the productive outcomes he identifies for it (*GM* II 19). Hegel might have thought history instantiates the cunning of reason, but for Nietzsche, genealogy tracks the often-ironic conflicts that form the human soul.

5. How to Transfigure Indelible Guilt

Nietzsche thinks that bad conscience has caused certain physiological alterations to the structure of human subjectivity, which cannot be expunged or undone. But at the end of Nietzsche's developmental story about the conditions created by bad conscience, he concludes *GM* II with a speculation almost completely overlooked in the secondary scholarship. This speculation revolves around the task of the modern would-be exemplary individual to transfigure their inherited subjectivity in the service of a more psychologically complex mode of life-affirmation. This transfiguration would make use of the structural form of bad conscience, while detaching it from the content at which it has so far been used to support - Christian morality.¹²² Nietzsche's exposition of what he takes to be the nihilistic character of Christian morality is not tantamount to a claim that it is either possible or desirable to undo all of the structural effects he thinks it has had on human psychology.

¹²² The only two exceptions I have found that address Nietzsche employing the pregnancy motif in relation to this act of re-interpretive transfiguration are Schacht (2006) and Rynhold and Harris (2018), though neither are in my view sufficiently developed. See footnotes 123 and 136 of this chapter. Ansell-Pearson and Bamford (2020, p. 62) make good observations about the first use of the metaphor of pregnancy in *Dawn* as a means of acknowledging new possible approaches to the ethical. Arguably they fail to note that by later uses of the same metaphor in *GM* (II 19) and *TI* ('Ancients' 4), the contention of Nietzsche's in *D* 552 that "the child must emerge from the mildest and best of conditions" drops out of the frame. Indeed, *GM* II suggests that a consequence of bad conscience, the 'child' that follows the 'pregnancy', is the unexpected new ideal developed out of the harshest conditions. See Elliott (forthcoming 2022a) for a critical review of *Dawn*'s place in Nietzsche's philosophy, with a focus on Ansell-Pearson and Bamford's volume.

Rather, it is to take an initially detrimental psychological phenomenon and attempt to transfigure its structural effects. This widening of subjectivity and fostering of psychological depth can be put in the service of productive ends.¹²³

That some certain phenomena had erroneous origins, and that it had and continues to have negative valence for the majority of humans, doesn't rule out that there might come positive developments, as a result.¹²⁴ Rather, Nietzsche's *Genealogy* is in the business of documenting the interesting and often ironic developments of such phenomena. In the context of the morphology of guilt in *GM II*, out of the imposition of specifically moral responsibility develops the possibility for authentic personal responsibility. As Nietzsche himself claims, something with an erroneous origin, or which had or has a negative impact upon human psychology, retains the possibility of being "redirected to a new purpose by a power superior to it" (*GM II* 12). Nietzsche considers this an exercise in 'form-giving', linking this possibility to the conditions for soul-formation or self-cultivation as discussed at *GM II* 16 and 18. It is my contention here that this frames the possibilities Nietzsche open-endedly alludes to about moralized bad conscience at the end of *GM II*.¹²⁵

¹²³ Schacht alludes both the pregnancy metaphor to demonstrate that Nietzsche sees bad conscience as not an entirely negative phenomenon, but offers the "possibility associated with our emergent humanity, and thus the higher humanity that human reality now has it in it to attain" (Schacht 2006, p. 127).

¹²⁴ It should be noted that Nietzsche, the ethical elitist, is more than happy to let the 'values of the herd rule in the herd' – that is, for the majority of humans, falling far short of the status of exemplary individual, to continue being in thrall to Christian morality. No doubt this would include the specifically Christian affective disposition to experiencing guilt.

¹²⁵ Nietzsche often talks of certain over-inflated psychological conceptions of subjectivity as being convenient fictions. However, his remarks about the indelibility of a moralized conception of guilt and its structural potential seems to be an exception to this claim, as something irrevocable and (as will be discussed below) as something serviceable, a distinct and positive claim about human subjectivity. My thanks to Hallvard Lillehammer for raising this issue.

These possibilities have two facets. One concerns the facilitation of a deeper, more advanced formal structure of psychological motivation. The other concerns the means of life-affirmation which Nietzsche thinks this structure should be in the service of promoting. These both offer textual support for the claim that Nietzsche thinks guilt of some kind can come to be beneficial. Below I sketch how Nietzsche thinks i) guilt instrumentally leads to this psychic depth, but also ii) guilt can itself become a serviceable affect in the promotion of more complex and interesting forms of life-affirmation.¹²⁶

i) Guilt as Facilitating a More Refined Human Motivational Structure

Nietzsche's philosophical psychology puts a premium on the positive serviceability of irrevocable or indelible facets of the human mental economy. As was discussed in the case of active forgetting in Chapters 1 and 2, and with drives in Chapter 3, Nietzsche only recommends the removal of aspects of the mental economy when it is possible and desirable to do so, and when they have no possibility of offering greater psychic integration or incorporation. As we've seen, the specific affective disposition to feel personal guilt was introduced on the Christian model of bad conscience. It is the only kind of guilt which (European, Judeo-Christian) humans have so far known, by Nietzsche's lights. Owing to its direction of those affective dispositions towards feeling guilty about the very possession of all too human instincts, Nietzsche views the specifically Christian conception of guilt as being of negative psychological valence to humans. However, Nietzsche believes that humans are necessarily stuck with an affective capacity for feeling guilt. Again referring to

¹²⁶ Neuhouser rightly offers a version of the argument that bad conscience is instrumental in developing more complex forms of subjectivity (2014, pp. 306-7). But he doesn't extend to the second of these claims, regarding the development of new specific forms of life-affirmation, aside from noting that self-transparency can't be understood as valuable purely in instrumental, life-preserving terms for Nietzsche.

GM II 21 about the irrevocability of the moralization at play in human self-evaluation, an outcome of the acquisition of this developed psychic depth is that we are stuck with guilt in some form. Specifically Christian guilt itself hasn't been good on this model, for reasons that it causes the sustained repressions of human instincts. But in another sense, the process has been an unforeseeable boon to developing such depth.

One key way this capacity for newly developed depth manifests itself is as an internal means of self-evaluation. The antiquated figures of the pagan nobles, discussed predominantly in the First Essay of *GM* but alluded to throughout the work, offer a nice point of contrast on this front. It is Nietzsche's contention that the noble psychological type was fundamentally non-reflective. This type instantiated no reflective justification for the values they expressed, resorting instead to sheer direct expression of their instincts through action (*GM* I 10 – 3). This expression of their instincts gratified their life-affirming but primitive individuated values. Bad conscience has facilitated a move where suppressing the gratification of individual instincts has intimately developed a more sophisticated model of evaluative calculation.¹²⁷ More precisely, it has facilitated a specific means of deliberation over action or inaction towards our motivations and desires. This deliberation manifests a kind of reflective process, based on something more complex than just gratifying some particular instinct.

While this initially concerns evaluations based upon prudence or custom, the advent of the Judeo-Christian outlook reconfigures these evaluations so that they are based upon what is taken to be morally good. As Clark and Dudrick put it, “[i]t is only now, that is, that human

¹²⁷ Neuhouser (2014) describes this evaluative apparatus as having been “hook[ed] onto” the bare disposition of the internalization of cruelty (p. 301). This couches the moralization of bad conscience in a way reminiscent of a series of meta-affects. However, the argumentation Neuhouser employs suggests that these ‘hooks’ run deep into that pre-existing disposition, suggesting that any such meta-affects become relevant to how the disposition comes to possess evaluative efficacy.

beings become capable of performing actions not because doing so will satisfy some antecedent desire, but because they take doing so to be good” (Clark and Dudrick 2015, p. 284-5). To the adherent of the Judeo-Christian evaluative framework, what is taken to be good would amount to directing this guilt towards or against the very possession of the instincts, those that reinforce the human’s view of themselves as inherently sinful. As will be discussed in Section 5) ii), however, Nietzsche thinks that with this structure comes the consequent capacity for giving supra-moral reasons concerning what an individual might take to be good. In this context, an individual with such a capacity can entertain reasons and employ their affects for why they ought not to pursue specifically life-denying values. But for now, I will flesh out more of what this model entails for Nietzsche.

Bad conscience facilitates the ‘soul’s’ capacity for evaluation, resulting from the pressures of internalization. Then, the more specific affective disposition towards guilt, as developed by moralized bad conscience, delineates a personal ethical relation to the framing of evaluative concepts. It is that ethical framing which Nietzsche claims remains as a crucial residual component of human evaluation. In other words, while it was bad conscience’s earlier form that created these internal conditions, Nietzsche’s contention is that this process of moralization irrevocably distorts bad conscience to involve a specifically ethical sense. This includes the creation of new affective dispositions, such as guilt. But it also offers a new qualitative character to pre-existing dispositions, such as responsibility, blame, praise and culpability – a personalized sense of ‘conscience’. Again, being attentive to Nietzsche’s use of physiological terms, although moralization occurs at the social/species level, it impresses itself in such a way as to engender physiological changes upon individual psychologies.

This new specifically ethical sense has manifested itself only in Judeo-Christian forms so far. Nietzsche's contention, however, is that the structure supporting this new evaluative sense can be brought to better express a self-legislating motivational structure. This is because this new sense is the first time that a human agent can see themselves as responsible in a *specifically moral* sense. It was Christian morality which facilitated this, by the demands placed upon humans to weigh their intentions and actions through the prism of guilt about their instincts.

The development of a revalued personal sense of guilt is consonant with the wider claims about the development of autonomous self-legislation in *GM II*. The second essay begins with the reformulation of "conscience as a motivational structure", to use Reginster's apt phrase for it (Reginster 2018, p. 4), as encapsulated in the coming of the figure of the so-called 'sovereign individual'. Nietzsche offers the end product of a developmental story up front (*GM II 2*), then spends the rest of the Second Essay explaining how such a supra-moral form of autonomy and freedom was achieved, or will perhaps soon be achieved.¹²⁸ In this respect, the development of sovereign individuality comes as an eventual consequence of the morality of custom, the first stage which kick-starts the genealogy of guilt that Nietzsche offers. Reginster makes this agreeable claim. However, what Reginster draws from this is that because this figure of Nietzsche's is irrevocably couched in the context of guilt, such a figure cannot count as a genuine, Nietzschean 'free spirit' ideal. Non-conforming experimentalists like the so-called free spirits aren't hung up on feeling guilty about not keeping promises, so the argument runs. As such, these figures of sovereign individuals should not be counted as

¹²⁸ Note that Nietzsche in *GM II 2* makes no claims that there are yet any 'sovereign individuals', describing them only as the end of the process. *GM II 2* assumes a more concrete tone than the speculative remarks at *GM II 24-5*, but they both in their own ways point to the outcome of the same process.

positive Nietzschean exemplars, for Reginster (Ibid., p. 5). The problem with the conclusion Reginster draws here is that the notion of guilt and responsibility as exemplified in the sovereign individual seems qualitatively distinct from the kind identified with the human who labours under the ‘social straitjacket’ (*GM* II 16), or the Christian-moralized form it develops into (*GM* II 6, II 19). The failure to recognize this leads Reginster to take the sovereign self-legislator to be a “negative ideal” (Ibid., p. 14).¹²⁹ But taking seriously the claim that guilt plays a role in developing a self-legislating motivational structure based on autonomy and responsibility (*GM* II 2) doesn’t preclude that the ethos of ‘free-spirited’ experimentation is ruled out. On the model offered, a positive consequence of this internalization means the development of a refined sense of personal guilt, as part of a wider capacity for self-legislating responsibility.¹³⁰

In relation to individual sovereignty, this personal guilt might, for example, be stimulated by a failure to see through on one’s own (supra-moral) commitments. In turn, the apparatus of personal guilt might offer a new motivational component in human psychology, giving impetus to ‘experiment’ in a self-legislating fashion. The sovereign individual, it is supposed, keeps promises regardless of the threat of external punishment. This is because there is the genuine threat of internal, authentically personal punishment and guilt that the sovereign individual is equipped with as insurance to keep to their promises and commitments (to themselves, as much as to other relevant parties – their ‘peers’ [*BGE* 260]). There might be some structural parallels with the old social and moral psychological models of bad

¹²⁹ Reginster 2018, p. 14: “The new ideal is ‘negative’ because having power over his own motivational psychology often requires that the agent deny gratification to his impulses... In this light, sovereignty may plausibly be seen as such a new (negative) ideal.”

¹³⁰ Cf. *TI* ‘Skirmishes’ 38 for freedom defined as the remit of “one who has the will to assume responsibility for oneself”. Cf. also *TI* ‘Skirmishes’ 49, ‘Errors’ 7 – 8, *A* 54, *BGE* 46 and *GS* 347.

conscience. But the feelings of obligation developed be a positive revaluation of bad conscience are qualitatively distinct as well as having gained independence from such models. In the context of commitments and responsibilities, Nietzsche offers a qualitative difference in the sovereign individual passage at *GM II 2*. There is guilt prompted by a failure to live up to the (impossible) demands of Christianity on the one hand. On the other, there is a sense of guilt prompted by a failure to live up to one's own self-legislated expectations. While guilt more broadly might have been implemented first by Judeo-Christian morality, for Nietzsche it remains part and parcel of an autonomous self-legislating conscience, too, albeit in a rarefied and transfigured form.¹³¹

Likewise, when it comes to the 'right' to punish for moral transgression, Nietzsche claims that such a right was developed out of an erroneous moral system, namely Christianity. He also claims that this development has had negative psychological consequences for humans on the whole, thus far. But while guilt defined exclusively in terms of external legitimacy might be a negative, Nietzsche identifies a positive conception of self-legislated 'rights' as itself a development of this self-directed punishment at the beginning of *GM II*. The "sovereign individual", so it goes, cultivates their own personal sense of legitimacy, standing at the end of the developmental process of socialization and its moralized culmination. The sovereign individual is the recipient of a transfigured capacity for self-legitimacy, that is removed from the constraints of evaluating by reference to social custom or to the morality

¹³¹ Neuhouser is also in this respect prescient and correct to claim that "clearly this form of conscience, a part of the higher spirituality Nietzsche sees as a possibility for us moderns, has some genealogical relation to the *bad* conscience and hence to spiritual illness" (Neuhouser 2014, p. 309). Zamosc is in agreement on this point too (2011, p. 108), and it guides his largely agreeable contribution to this topic. However, Zamosc claims that Nietzsche's positive notion of sovereignty is identified as "having a conscience [...] in the ordinary sense in which that word is understood today" (p. 123). If this is the case, then who are the 'feeble dogs' or 'windbags' whom Nietzsche specifically contrasts the possessor of this sovereignty with (*GM II 2*)? And assuming this sovereignty is what Nietzsche alludes to as the potential positive outcome of bad conscience, why is this sovereignty a 'fruit' which Nietzsche sees the conditions set for, but is located with Zarathustra and those futural ones (*GM II 25*)?

that fostered its structural conditions. Nietzsche might think that the justification of punishments and ascriptions of responsibility rooted in the previous senses of social or moral guilt might be misplaced, by reference to the kind of values motivating such justifications and ascriptions. But this is not to say that guilt needn't have a role as a serviceable component of a refined structure of human motivation.¹³² The idea that responsibility and punishment have a specifically moral character might have been developed by an erroneous value system. But it is Nietzsche's contention that modern humans have to live with the presence of guilt, as an indelible fixture of their affective landscape. This is why Nietzsche discusses the apparatus of moralized bad conscience and the transfiguration of this apparatus, so as to put it to productive use in the instinctual lives of his anticipated exemplary individuals. One option for how Nietzsche speculates about such productive use will be discussed in the next section.

As has already been alluded to, the possibility of positive unintended consequences arising from the development and reinterpretation of a thing's initially negative origins is a common theme to the *Genealogy*.¹³³ The reader has already been exposed to Nietzsche's emphasis on ironic and unintended positive consequences coming from things that might have initially possessed negative value. Likewise, the 'late fruit' of the sovereign individual introduced early in the Second Essay is characterized as becoming possible at a late stage as a

¹³² In an analogous manner, and drawing on Nietzsche's similar model to that of the Stoics and Spinoza, Rutherford (2011) contends that Nietzsche offers a positive sense of freedom, one that is based upon a state obtained by virtue of possessing the strength to develop and assume responsibility for oneself (Rutherford, p. 524). It is my contention that guilt acts as a motivational facet of this kind of responsibility. As Rutherford puts it, invoking Spinozistic language, "Full autonomy requires [...] that one identify in oneself a positive principle of action that is expressive of one's power" (Rutherford, p. 531). Nietzschean autonomy is a structure reliant on an individual's capacity for self-legislation. One important motivational force for self-legislating and enacting the whims of that legislation comes in the form of this Nietzschean sense of guilt.

¹³³ This is still something overlooked in much Nietzsche scholarship, but it is an insight recognized and made central by Foucault in his discussions of Nietzsche, and in applying Nietzschean themes to his own work (Foucault 1994).

consequence of the development of moralized bad conscience. The sovereign individual is ‘unexpected’ (*GM II 2*).¹³⁴ Nietzsche writes, “for a longer time one could see nothing of such a fruit, - *no one could have promised it*, however certainly everything on the tree was prepared and in the process of growing towards it!” (*GM II 3*, my italics). The consequent ‘sovereign individual’ type was not an intentional outcome in-built to the causal story of bad conscience, despite that story implicitly fostering the conditions for such a type to appear.

From his suggestion that the notion of personal conscience can free itself from Judeo-Christian morality, Nietzsche floats the possibility for some superlative individuals to prescriptively revalue their indelible affective disposition to experience guilt in a manifestly *anti-Christian* way. Namely, guilt can be employed towards and against the very evaluative judgements which engendered and initially fostered it. Guilt can be part of the structural apparatus of a self-legislating, positive ideal. But this can only happen if one can detach both its roots in Christian cosmology, and, more importantly, the content of the normative commitments that engendered and hitherto have exclusively directed it.

I will shortly turn to how Nietzsche speculates about the possibility and desirability of doing this. But before this, a nuance should here be explicated, regarding the kinds of guilt that Nietzsche definitely does want to reject. My analysis so far jars with the argument made by

¹³⁴ From the discussion here, my colours have been nailed to a particular mast in scholarly discussions on the ‘sovereign individual’. Other examples of those who identify the sovereign individual as an exemplary Nietzschean figure are Keith Ansell-Pearson (1991, p. 277), Ken Gemes and Christopher Janaway (2006, p. 37), Christopher Janaway (2007), Peter Poellner (2009, p. 152), Thomas Miles (2007, p. 6) and John Richardson (2009, p. 128). The most notable critic of the prevailing interpretation of the sovereign individual has been Brian Leiter (2011). Other critics include Christa Davis Acampora (2006), Lawrence Hatab (1995, pp. 36- 39), Bernard Reginster (2011, 2018), and (curiously, given the former of the two’s earlier interpretation) Ansell-Pearson and Bamford (2020). See Mark Migotti (2013) for a helpful critical review of the literature in Nietzsche studies addressing both sides of the argument regarding the status of the figure of the sovereign individual.

Leiter (2019), that for Nietzsche, the motif of the “innocence of Becoming” is tantamount to a rejection of all forms of guilt. Were this the case, it would clash with my developmental reading of *GM II* offering a positive sense of guilt. Leiter’s primary text for his claim comes from the ‘Four Great Errors’ section in *Twilight of the Idols*. Nietzsche writes (to quote at large);

Wherever responsibilities are sought, it is usually the instinct of wanting to punish and pass judgment which is at work. Becoming has been deprived of its innocence when any being-such-and-such is traced back to will, to purposes, to acts of responsibility: the doctrine of the will has been invented essentially for the purpose of punishment, that is, because one wanted to impute guilt. The entire old psychology, the psychology of the will, was conditioned by the fact that its originators, the priests at the head of ancient communities, wanted to create for themselves the right to punish—or wanted to create this right for God. Men were considered “free” so that they might be judged and punished—so that they might become guilty: consequently, every act had to be considered as willed, and the origin of every act had to be considered as lying within the consciousness (and thus the most fundamental counterfeit *in psychologicis* was made the principle of psychology itself). Today, as we have entered into the reverse movement and we immoralists are trying with all our strength to take the concept of guilt and the concept of punishment out of the world again, and to cleanse psychology, history, nature and social institutions and sanctions of them, there is in our eyes no more radical opposition than that of the theologians, who continue with the concept of a “moral world-order,” to infect the innocence of becoming by means of “punishment” and “guilt.” Christianity is a metaphysics of the hangman. (*Twilight*, ‘Errors’ 7)

From this, Leiter takes Nietzsche to reject all forms of guilt (along with free will; cf. Leiter 2011). But nothing in this passage warrants the inference that Nietzsche is extending beyond a precise critical claim about the *usual* ascriptions of responsibility and guilt, along with a narrow doctrine of the will common to the philosophical tradition. The particular kind of guilt discussed comes from value judgements made by the priests, which Nietzsche views as misplaced, since the claim is that such judgements derive from God for their efficacy and authority. It is the way in which guilt is imputed that Nietzsche rejects in this passage. The tenor of the passage is more a criticism of the pervasive idea that guilt is something in-built into the world. In essence, Nietzsche is rejecting a kind of metaphysical purposivity or intentionality, and its widespread adoption in the methodologies of learned disciplines, and social praxis. It is this kind of idea he suggests should be ‘cleansed’ away. When he speaks of taking “the concept of guilt and the concept of punishment out of the world again”, and of cleansing ‘psychology, history, nature and social institutions and sanctions of them’, Nietzsche is talking here about how such disciplines are ‘infected’ by their methodological or practical adherences to a “moral world-order”. The world itself, of persistent change and decay, is innocent. But this claim of Nietzsche’s is a far cry from denying the individualized achievement of the form of conscience developed in *GM* II, of which a refined sense of guilt is a constituent aspect. Being held responsible by others for bad metaphysical reasons is starkly different from being responsible for oneself, on Nietzsche’s watch.

ii) What Nietzsche Thinks Guilt Should be Directed Against

We have seen how there has been an intimate connection between guilt and the development of certain features of subjectivity. It is Nietzsche’s contention that these features might be used in a positive fashion if something about them is reconfigured. This prompts two

questions. What exactly does this reconfiguration constitute? And what is the point of such a reconfiguration, for Nietzsche? In this section I attempt to offer answers to these, with reference to the final two aphorisms of *GM II*. Such an answer goes beyond the structural claim, made above, concerning the refinement and deepening of human motivation. Rather, it concerns how the affective disposition to feel guilt, as a part of this structure, might be implemented in the service of promoting or embodying life-affirmation.

The work still to do is to establish in what sense any form of guilt might be beneficial. Nietzsche's remarks about what an instrumentally positive outcome of moralized bad conscience might look like are tantalizingly vague. This vagueness about what such an outcome might consist of comes in *GM II* 24 and 25. While the great masses of humanity pay a cost for the repressive internalization by moralized bad conscience, Nietzsche offers the erection of a potential ideal that comes as a consequence of this cost. He writes at *GM II* 24;

“‘Is an ideal set up or destroyed here?’ you might ask me [. . .]

If a shrine is to be set up, a shrine has to be destroyed: that is the law – show me an example where this does not apply! . . . We moderns are the heirs of millennia of conscience-vivisection and animal-torture inflicted on ourselves: we have had most practice in it, are perhaps artists in the field, in any case it is our over-refinement and the indulgence of our taste.”

Being an ‘heir’ precludes claims to being responsible for such an inheritance. It could be argued each member of humanity has sustained this psychological structure themselves. But it has been based on ideals imposed on them, rather than sought out and actively adopted as their own. This is crucial for thinking about the difference between a mere inheritance, and subverting or overcoming aspects of an inherited structure, by proffering the potential to *redirect* the faculty of bad conscience itself. Nietzsche at the same time credits moralized bad

conscience with developing new attributes of “artistry”, and an ‘over-refinement’ of taste, as a new structure engendering these attributes.¹³⁵ Humans possess qualitatively greater psychological depth as a result of this inheritance.

In light of this, Nietzsche goes on to write,

"For too long, man has viewed his natural inclinations with an ‘evil eye’, so that they finally came to be intertwined with ‘bad conscience’ in him. A reverse experiment should be possible in principle – but who has sufficient strength? – by this, *I mean an intertwining of perverse inclinations*, all those other-worldly aspirations, alien to the senses, the instincts, to nature, to animals, in short all the ideals which up to now have been hostile to life and have defamed the world, *with the bad conscience*. To whom should we turn with such hopes and claims today? [...]

For that purpose, we would need another sort of spirit than those we are likely to encounter in this age: spirits who are strengthened by wars and victories, for whom conquest, adventure, danger and even pain have actually become a necessity [...]"
(*GM II 24*, my italics)

Here Nietzsche speculates that some future humans might find a way to detach the Christian evaluative perspective of guilt about their “natural inclinations”, and *reverse* for themselves the evaluation that these instincts are evil. This would constitute an instrumentally positive consequence of moralized bad conscience, albeit one narrowly applicable and difficult to

¹³⁵ At *BGE* 230, Nietzsche valorizes excessive honesty as an attribute derived from a kind of self-cruelty. He describes this as "a kind of cruelty of intellectual conscience and aesthetic taste" as a proclivity of "every courageous thinking [recognizing it] in himself".

achieve.¹³⁶ Questions remain about what this ‘reversal’ would amount to. There are two interpretive options here.

1) it would involve detaching the affective disposition of guilt (i.e. the capacity for self-punishment, feeling badly for a perceived wrong, self-recrimination) from the content it has been directed at by Judeo-Christian morality, while retaining personal guilt in human psychology;

or

2) Nietzsche is referring to a return to the more primitive, pre-moral mode of bad conscience without guilt as a component of human evaluation.

The former option has far greater interpretive plausibility. Nietzsche claims in this passage that the ‘reversal’ of what has been wedded to bad conscience applies to the content of the ideals it tracks. At the same time he utilises the same structure (which previously wedded these Christian ideals to moralized bad conscience) as that which performs this reversal.

It is not only that Nietzsche already offered us good textual reasons for assuming an indelible psychological shift resulting from moralization. He also frames *GM* II 24 in such a way that bad conscience becomes redirected towards life-denying, unnatural inclinations. Personal evaluation now occurs with reference to ethical standards, in some sense. But the affective disposition itself can be directed towards or away from specific content, i.e. feeling guilt towards a non-Christian impulse. The reversal of bad conscience Nietzsche speculates about

¹³⁶ Rynhold and Harris note that bad conscience might in principle be deployed in the opposite direction “to that which it is usually directed”, also citing *GM* II 24 (2018, p. 192), though develop this thought no further.

in this passage is a process of *detachment* of this affective disposition from the content of Christian ideals.

This mode of guilt is revalued as a part of a broader capacity for self-evaluation, provided it comes to be detached from the Christian-moral normative scheme which initially introduced it. Taken with Nietzsche's emphasis on redirecting it against what he calls 'unnatural' or 'perverse' inclinations, the substantive claim is that the affective disposition towards guilt can be utilised more broadly *against* the kinds of desires and urges that made the Judeo-Christian moral outlook appealing and acceptable in the first place. Candidates for these kinds of desires and urges are, for example, an appeal to the other-worldly at the expense of the immanent, a denial of nature as propitiation to a nihilistic standard of meaning, and the like.¹³⁷ A reversal to this transfigured version of bad conscience offers a psychological instrument that can be utilised in the overcoming of Christian morality. It can be used for affectively strengthening one's personal commitment to the more Nietzschean ethical values of embracing the natural and absconding from the temptations of transcendental outlooks.

Nietzsche couches the idea of a new ideal being built on the back of "how dearly the erection of *every* ideal on earth has exacted its payment" (Ibid.). Guilt arrived as part of a whole package of Christian psychological self-evaluation. But the content of that package is not the only means by which personal guilt might now manifest itself. That outlook may have engendered it. But in turn, the new sensitivity of self-evaluation it engendered might in turn be useful for exposing the deficiencies of the Christian moral sense. Nietzsche's claims offer

¹³⁷ A corollary of this is that there is nothing wrong per se with averting away from or refusing certain of one's own desires. Judeo-Christian ethics demands this, too, in some sense. What separates Nietzsche from Christian morality is to posit that one might broadly agree with the Christian about there being certain desires it is appropriate to turn against, but that only a self-legislating individual can adjudicate over such appropriateness, rather than having Christian morality impose it upon them.

a means of utilising the inclusion of guilt for self-evaluation, in the service of casting off the Christian character it initially had. Personal guilt can be revalued as an endowment of greater renewed psychological health, even in the sense that it comes to be directed against the ‘sickness’ inducing content which engendered it in the first place.

Some might argue that it would have been neater for Nietzsche to offer a new model of motivational structure, one that could neatly cut ties with Christianity by abolishing the affective disposition to guilt. But for Nietzsche there is also something important about the phenomenon of being able to feel guilty, which itself can facilitate in casting off Christianity. Nietzsche takes cognitive reasons for resisting Christian morality to be important, and sometimes relies on these cognitive reasons being acceptable and persuasive. But he puts a deeper premium on the arguably more challenging task of developing *affective* aversions to the demands of Christian morality. Feeling differently is deeper than thinking differently about our motivations for action (*D* 103). In this respect, guilt could be employed to avoid or overcome affective dispositions of a manifestly Christian character.

There remains the question of whether Nietzsche thinks guilt is necessary for the attainment of those pursuits or objects of pursuit which he takes to be valuable: whether we can get those goods without guilt. While it might be logically possible to attain such goods without them, this seems to miss the thrust of Nietzsche’s point about the genealogical outcome he documents, in offering a possible positive use for guilt. The self-recrimination felt as a result of failing to live up to certain life-affirming ideals, or to feel guilty for being enticed by life-denying ones (perhaps even feeling guilty for having felt Christian guilt!), can be responsible for promoting further goods, or strengthening the commitment to pursue further goods.

In the case of inclinations which by Nietzsche's lights deny life, personal guilt provides a further tool in this fight. This tool comes as a consequence of transfiguring guilt from a Christian-moral to a personal, and authentic affect. Such a sense of guilt evaluates what we've done in the past (or how we feel about what has happened in the past), and involves recrimination. But it is this qualitatively distinct kind of recrimination can itself be motivating to do better, by Nietzschean standards, in the future.

One might be tempted to offer a presumptive reply on this front that humans do not need that kind of self-recrimination for ethical conduct. All the motivation we need, such a reply might go, can be gained from recognizing the goods to be achieved; maybe the instances of badness that should be avoided in the future. As such, one might conclude, guilt is a reactive attitude which ought to be dispensed with, since all we need in its place is the commitment to do better in the future.¹³⁸ There are two Nietzschean responses to this. First, as shown in sections

¹³⁸ Ethicists such as Gilbert Harman in his famous essay, 'Guilt-Free Morality' (2009), have attempted to argue that ethical actions broadly construed can wholly do without guilt – it is both possible and desirable to do so. I have opposed this, showing that the capacity for guilt as a reactive attitude can provide powerful motivational impetus for ethical betterment. This opposition is here construed along narrower, Nietzschean lines. It is likely opposable in a broader philosophical sense, too.

There are limits how acceptable Harman might find the kind of developmental story Nietzsche tells in the context of thinking about guilt. Indeed, Harman specifically cites Nietzschean exemplars as well as Aristotle's fully virtuous person approvingly as postulating moral principles without guilt – so much for agreement on my interpretation! Nietzsche, I take it, would also agree with Harman that guilt feelings are not definitive of or essential to all ethical outlooks, if only for the reasons that for Nietzsche there is a breadth of moralities in an anthropological sense across cultures, climates and histories. But where they would disagree, in line with the above claims about guilt's indelibility, is that it is possible to remove guilt *tout courts* from the ethical landscape.

The argument boils down to whether guilt is important or necessary for certain kinds of ethical motivation. Harman offers a machine gun fire-style of argument – throwing out brief, apparently knock-down claims for why guilt isn't necessary or desirable, with varying degrees of success. Harman couches guilt as a negative experience. He writes, "It might be worth paying this price if susceptibility to guilt made people act better. But there is no evidence that susceptibility to [guilt] is needed to make people act morally" (Harman 2009, p. 211 -2). It is possible and better not to need guilt for morality, he claims. Harman seems to suggest that if it is possible for people to behave morally without feeling guilt, then it can be dispensed with. If person A who experiences no guilt feelings can commit moral act *x* in just the same way as person B who does experience such feelings can commit moral act *x*, Harman takes this as knockdown case for the dispensability of guilt. Note that it is logically possible for a psychopath to also commit act *x* without any moral sensitivities at all,

2 and 3, he thinks that guilt as a moralized affect is indelibly imprinted on modern human psychology, which we cannot just dispense with. Secondly, on the back of this claim, for the ‘right people’ and used in the right way, this reactive attitude can have an important and serviceable role in strengthening one’s commitment to the pursuit of ethical self-betterment. Framed for more Nietzschean purposes, rumination on those past bads and the recrimination arising from them can give further determination to pursue those further goods in an affectively specific way.

There are limits to who is able to utilise this potential, however. In Nietzsche’s pronouncements at the end of *GM* II refer to the rare few futural individuals, who could be able to engender the positive consequences possible from these inherited structural effects of bad conscience. Nietzsche thinks that to some degree, all modern Europeans suffer from its sickness-inducing effects. However, as we’ve seen, Nietzsche claims that such a reversal would demand a great degree of strength from the rare, futural individual who could instantiate it. It would require the total revaluation of how bad conscience would instead delineate guilt towards what Nietzsche considers *unnatural* inclinations. This would be distinguished from how Christian morality identifies the individual’s natural endowment of instincts as the proper objects of guilt. This is the question Nietzsche poses of whether it is

but it is unlikely Harman would agree that this means a moral sense itself isn’t necessary for moral action. So, Harman’s account isn’t very strong on the grounds of logical possibility alone. But the question motivating the more interesting thrust of Harman’s critique is whether we could get all the same goods without guilt. If we were just agents who held themselves responsible for things, for which we should do better in the future, could we do without self-recrimination? One can recognize one’s own failing, and commit to do better in the future. Harman claims that guilt’s self-directed recriminatory character is backwards looking, and as such a commitment to do better but without guilt would be desirous while still being sufficient for moral action. I hope to have shown why Nietzsche would reject that guilt is something that it is possible to do away with. I hope to have shown in my argument here that Nietzsche also rejects the claim that guilt can have no positive role for his exemplary individuals (as he conceives them in his own idiosyncratic fashion).

possible to use the bad conscience in a way that reevaluates that capacity *against* the moral evaluative content it was initially introduced into human psychology to instil in the first place (*GM II 24*).¹³⁹ He writes that it is this “human of the future who will redeem us from the previous ideal as much as from that *which had to grow out of it*, the great disgust, from the will to nothingness” (*Ibid.*, Nietzsche’s italics). This further shows that the link of affective guilt to the life-denying ideology of Christianity is one that can be subverted. However, the subversion of this previous ideal stems from a facet that itself developed as a consequence of that ideal.

Nietzsche considers this redirection of the normative commitments of one’s personal employment of *bad* conscience to require a great amount of individual psychological strength, beyond the reach of most individuals. In this context, the instrumentally beneficial value possible from the ‘sickness’ of moralized bad conscience only has ramifications for a narrow number of future exemplars. This highlights a slight lack of fit in Nietzsche’s use of the pregnancy metaphor, since he qualifies a much narrower scope of those that will ‘give birth’ as a result of bad conscience. Indeed, Nietzsche discusses the improbability of an individual even existing at present who could possess enough creative and redemptive strength to undertake this reversal, one who turns the sickness of Christian bad conscience into a component of “this *great health*” (*GM II 24*, Nietzsche’s italics). All the while Nietzsche, with characteristic bombast, optimistically locates such redemptive individuals in the future, with Zarathustra and those “more future one[s]” (*GM II 25*).

¹³⁹ Cf. *BGE* 200 for a similar claim that only rare cases of individuals will be able to harness and affirm the “contradictory standards and instincts” that display a positive disposition towards what Nietzsche describes as “the heritage of his multifarious origins” (*Ibid.*).

In his own idiosyncratic way, Nietzsche does see transfigured, personal guilt as being important. He sees this kind of guilt as having become a necessary feature of the affective landscape of modern humans. Given this, he speculates about the means by which this feature could potentially motivate ethical betterment. This includes certain kinds of goods, or at least certain reasons for pursuing kinds of goods, which weren't open to humans before the inception and moralization of bad conscience. While it mightn't have been logically *necessary* for all moral action, this revalued bad conscience provides a specific dimension to aid in evaluating our judgements and inclinations to the right (Nietzschean) ethical standard. Indeed, given Nietzsche's claims about the primacy of affects and instincts over reasons, perhaps it is the case that certain goods can only be wholly accepted by means of affective responses in favour of them, responses involving guilt included. Nietzsche was allusive and speculative about what these goods might be. But if in principle we can say that for him the securement of certain goods is inseparable from a psychological framework that includes guilt, then we can ascertain that Nietzsche offers his own idiosyncratic positive role for guilt.

Chapter Five:

Eternal Recurrence, 'On Redemption' and the Risk of Self-Deception

Introduction:

The eternal recurrence is commonly framed as a measure for the total affirmation of a life as it is in every detail, without omissions. Part of the point here is that to add or omit is to render what is affirmed as something other than this life exactly as it is, warts and all. However, there arises a particular problem related to the demand to abjure falsifications in the context of Nietzsche's presentations of affirmation, and the related notion of redemption. This particular problem as it appears in the 'On Redemption' passage in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* will be the focus of this final chapter.

I will first analyse the 'On Redemption' passage, and its textual demonstration of how one's redemption of a life involves the evaluation of past events. In light of this, I will discuss a pervasive shortcoming of the secondary scholarship to adequately account for Nietzsche's claim that to redeem one's past is to reimagine oneself as having willed the events of one's life in its entirety, even at the time of their occurrence. Offering a more textually faithful reading of this passage, I argue that Nietzsche's presentation of life-affirmation there is one that risks indulging in deep falsifications, to such an extent that the Nietzschean affirmer of life operates in a state of self-deception. I then argue that attempts to reframe this demand as a redemptive illusion akin to an artistic intervention (as argued by Anderson 2005) are unsuccessful in getting Nietzsche off the hook. I then look at other aspects of Nietzsche's mature texts, as to whether they can assist Nietzsche against the charge that his account of life-affirmation recommends necessarily falsifying aspects of one's life. I claim that none of

these are ultimately successful, and outline a range of potential conclusions we might draw from this.

Section One: Analysis of the ‘On Redemption’ Passage

The passage called ‘On Redemption’ occupies an important place in Book Two of *Zarathustra*. It opens with Zarathustra addressing a group of cripples. Their existence and the possibility of redeeming these physiological ‘accidents’ and ‘riddles’ raises by extension for Zarathustra the question of whether it would be possible to redeem ‘accidents’ in one’s life, specifically in one’s own past.¹⁴⁰ Zarathustra’s proclamations that follow are double entendres: though outwardly he addresses the crowd (whom he refers to as ‘accidents’), and the prospect of redeeming them, he is inwardly wrestling with the prospect of redeeming all past events, including past ‘accidents’, that have occurred within his own life. Zarathustra proclaims, “... how could I bear to be a human being if mankind were not also creator, and solver of riddles, and redeemer of accident?”. To this Zarathustra answers, “To redeem those

¹⁴⁰ I limit my discussion of the eternal recurrence here to concern the affirmation of one’s own life. Nietzsche often talks about the possibility of willing *all* things eternally, which seems to me susceptible to a number of deep objections. One such objection is whether Nietzsche can account for the obvious difference in tenability between what might be called ‘proximate willing’ of events close to one’s life (e.g. the success that follows turning down one job to secure another, or the pursuit of some personal objective) versus ‘distant willing’, things which we have a hard time making any connection at all with my life (e.g. the extinction or flourishing of a bug in some far-flung ecosystem, whose existence I know nothing of). Sometimes he intimates that since all things are necessarily interconnected, there is no real distinction between these (Z, ‘The Drunken Song’). There is also an objection stemming from the issue of claiming one ‘wills’ things over which I have zero control, e.g. I can’t plausibly *will* getting rained on, or the design and colour of my colleague’s tie more locally, or more globally, the overarching socio-cultural, economic and historical context I was born into. These present difficult issues for Nietzsche, ones which I cannot explore further here. In any event, here I follow the convention in thinking that eternal recurrence’s great import comes in virtue of framing the events of one’s own life, and whether they are affirmable or can be made affirmable, or not.

who are the past and to recreate all ‘it was’ into ‘thus I willed it!’ – only that would I call redemption!”. Zarathustra describes this as a way in which the will would be liberated.¹⁴¹

Zarathustra contrasts two different dispositional responses to the past, the ‘It was’ against the ‘thus I willed it’. The former keeps the individual’s will in a form of bondage (Z ‘On Redemption’), for which the past constitutes a burdensome problem. Nietzsche frames this problem squarely with what it would mean to affirm the eternal recurrence. He utilises the same rhetoric to describe the ‘it was’ response here as he does to describe the negative pole of the reaction to the hypothesis of eternal recurrence, as first offered as a positive injunction at *The Gay Science* 341. Zarathustra describes the ‘it was’ as “the will’s gnashing of teeth and most solitary misery” (“einsamste Trübsal”: Z, ‘On Redemption’), just as the one who is negatively disposed to the thought of eternal recurrence in *GS* 341 throws themselves down and gnashes their teeth, cursing the one who spoke it to them in their “most solitary solitude” (“einsamste Einsamkeit”).

The ‘it was’ response to the past is emblematic of a vengeful disposition, directing itself “on everything that is capable of suffering” (Ibid.).¹⁴² The latter, the ‘thus I willed it’, is

¹⁴¹ To reinforce that this proclamation is meant to be read as having a double meaning, at the end of the section, Nietzsche has a figure from among the cripples, the ‘hunchback’, question whether Zarathustra was really in dialogue with his ‘pupils’ the disciples, or the assortment of cripples, or whether he was giving voice to an internal dialogue with himself, about his own fragments and accidents. Indeed, as Loeb (2010, p. 180) points out, Zarathustra seems to have forgotten that his disciples are present, listening to his speech, unprepared as they are for the ‘abysmal’ thought of eternal recurrence.

¹⁴² Nietzsche claims that this response of the ‘it was’ induces a fabulous form of ‘madness’, summarized in the maxim, “Everything passes away, therefore everything deserves to pass away” (Ibid.). This I take it gives credence to opposing the recent claim by Jenkins (2020) that Nietzsche is primarily concerned with resisting or overcoming transience itself, rather than one’s attitude towards specific past events. Jenkins sets in opposition to affirming eternal recurrence a vengeful “orientation within time, and in particular, towards the past” (Jenkins p. 26), and an “aversion to transience” (Jenkins, p. 27). But it is not that the events themselves have passed away which is the disposition that Nietzsche criticizes, but rather, a life-denying perspective that it was *right* and proper that they should

emblematic of the capacity for the will to be creative. By being able to wholly affirm past events, the will is liberated and redeemed. The section ends with Zarathustra considering how this achievement of believing ‘thus I willed it’ could be made possible, asking, “Who would teach [the will] to also will backward?”. The passive spectator to the past couldn’t will backward, because their will has had its emancipatory potential fettered. Zarathustra proclaims that ‘something higher than all reconciliation’, namely the will to power, has the ability to will backwards. Significantly, Zarathustra claims that the teaching of this ability would constitute “unharnessing [the will] from its own folly”, so as to “unlearn” the ‘it was’. This would thereby achieve the affirmative psychological disposition demanded by Nietzsche for overcoming life-denying and resentful assessments of the past of one’s own life.

The substantive psychological claim in this passage involves a task of significant transfiguration. Zarathustra frames redemption in terms of bringing one’s attitude towards all of one’s own past, particularly *all* things considered failures, to be viewed as events that were actively willed to have been so. Zarathustra’s challenge is to foster a present disposition that allows the individual to reframe these past instances in this manner.

This passage has been frequently discussed in the context of analyses of eternal recurrence in the secondary scholarship. But my claim is that interpreters of this passage have near-universally missed a crucial and problematic dimension of this demand of how to redeem the past.¹⁴³ In the next section, I outline important interpretations that are representative of this

have passed away, because everything deserves to. It is not transience per se, but the vengeful disposition towards the fact of transience, characterized in the ‘it was’. See Loeb (2010, p. 174) for more on Zarathustra’s apparent valorization of transitoriness, albeit with the strong cosmological baggage associated with Loeb’s interpretive stance (which will be discussed further in Section 5) b) of this chapter).

¹⁴³ Two exceptions here are Beatrice Han-Pile in an essay on *amor fati* (2011) and Paul S. Loeb (2010), though the specific problems they raise with the passage differ from the one here. Both of these and my divergences from them will be discussed in footnote 150 and section 5) b) of this

failure to account for this dimension to the passage.

Section Two: The ‘Justificatory Approach’ Reading of this Passage

The imperative of the eternal recurrence is not just a commitment to the prospective view, that the events yet to come of my life should be affirmed as if they were to indefinitely recur. It is also the retroactive commitment to what has already been, just as it is, recurring indefinitely many times.¹⁴⁴ The ‘On Redemption’ passage has commonly been framed as promoting a certain kind of reconception, such that an individual would become able to affirm past events that were unacceptable at the time of their occurrence. The interpretive consensus around this issue conforms with the seminal accounts of eternal recurrence offered by Alexander Nehamas (1985) and Maudemarie Clark (1990). These accounts have in common a central interpretive position towards how to redeem past events of a life, which I shall call the ‘justificatory approach’.

Nehamas discusses the fixed nature of past events, particularly those past events which we would never want to repeat, and asks, “How can we now accept these unacceptable parts of our past?”¹⁴⁵ Nehamas claims that what Nietzsche means by the ‘willing backwards’ required for affirming the past is to recognize that there is no one sense of *the* past. Rather, Nehamas argues,

“[t]he events of the past are necessarily located through and *within a narrative*, and different narratives can generate quite different events... [Nietzsche] is thinking of his

chapter.

¹⁴⁴ Reginster emphasizes this retroactive dimension to eternal recurrence (2006, p. 211).

¹⁴⁵ Nehamas emphasizes the eternal recurrence of a life “would have to recur exactly as it had already occurred down to its most minute, its most detestable and most horrible details” (1985, p. 157).

view that every one of my past actions is a necessary condition for my being what I am today. How I see my present self affects crucially the very nature of my past.”

(Nehamas 1985, p. 160)

In other words, it is one’s present self and its promise for the future which justifies the past, by Nehamas’s lights. By creating an “acceptable future, we justify and redeem everything that made this future possible” (Ibid.). On this view, certain past events are deemed necessary evils on the individual’s path towards present and future life-affirmation. We still view these events as regrettable or terrible, on this account. But they are consequently justified as one constituent element in the context of a wider, affirmable narrative. Evaluating a past event is dependent on “its eventual implications for the whole” of one’s self-narrative. Nehamas’s justificatory approach is one of establishing reconciliation with one’s past. It claims that “[t]his reconciliation cannot be accomplished without realizing that the significance of the past depends on its importance for the future”. By referring to the individual’s present relation and their future’s affirmable prospects, we are “willing to accept responsibility” for past events (Nehamas 1985, p. 161).¹⁴⁶

Maudemarie Clark also advocates the justificatory approach to this passage in her treatment of the same topic. Clark argues that because we cannot change the events of the past, this does not mean that this should entail us feeling “powerless or in need of revenge...[i]f we would now be willing to go through all over again whatever we did not like when it happened (and would not like, were we were going through it again), we should no longer be reduced to melancholy or depression by our inability to change our particular past” (Clark 1990, p. 260).

¹⁴⁶ Similar claims can be found in Jenkins (2020): the “maximally creative and futural person would will the eternal recurrence of all particulars” (Jenkins 2020, p. 11). Later, Jenkins claims that “what was once an assortment of accidents has been unified, and all things are now necessary as parts of the whole produced by Zarathustra’s creative activity” (Ibid., p. 16).

For Clark, we are able to deny willing certain events of one's past "unconditionally" or "for their own sake", while claiming that "Nietzsche's ideal is to love the whole process enough that one is willing to relive eternally even those parts of it that *one does not and cannot love*" (Clark, Ibid.; italics mine). We can deny love to unaffirmable particular events, while loving the process as a whole, to justify a life. Redemption of this sort is framed as the ability to "accept or affirm a past that was unacceptable at the time it occurred" (Clark 1990, p. 260 Footnote).

The justificatory approach in its various guises cannot be the whole story.¹⁴⁷ They miss out something crucial about how the eternal recurrence applies to past events, as it is formulated in 'On Redemption'. If Nietzsche had framed this passage to fit the justificatory approach, as to make it a present tense justification of the past, the Nietzschean redemption of past events would run something like this;

A particular number of events which occurred in the past appeared bad to me at the time at which they occurred. However, now that I am positively disposed towards life in its present form, I should consider those past occurrences (bad as they were) as necessary for a wider narrative which I can affirm. It is this narrative which consequently justifies them. In other words, from the vantage point of this narrative, 'thus I would will it again'.

Now, it is uncontroversial to agree with Nehamas and Clark that Nietzschean affirmation of a life involves projecting a 'Yes-saying' disposition towards the future. But in the case of the

¹⁴⁷ Similarly, Julian Young in *The Death of God and the Meaning of Life* views the aesthetic character to Nietzschean self-creation as something that "makes sense of, and makes up for, the sufferings and imperfections that have preceded it" (Young 2003, p. 90). Simon May also claims that Nietzsche's new sense of redemption is "one that makes all those events that we find loathsome affirmable as integral to a whole lived life", citing the 'On Redemption' passage to illustrate this (May 2011, pp. 98 – 9).

kind of retroactive affirmation being discussed here, Nietzsche frames Zarathustra as assuming that it is possible for one to convince themselves into holding a series of beliefs that one genuinely affirmed those negative past events, despite the truth of the matter that one veritably did *not* at the time of those events occurring. The ‘On Redemption’ passage proclaims a past tense statement of having willed those actions at the time they occurred (“thus I willed it”), not just a present tense justification for past actions as having occurred in the past (“thus I would now will it”). If Nietzsche had employed just the latter, Nehamas and Clark’s interpretation would be correct in claiming that Nietzsche is reconciling us to negative past events in light of what came after them. Were it the latter, one’s present and future disposition towards events could justify past events, as constituent parts of an affirmable totality. But Nietzsche doesn’t write “thus I would now will it”; he writes “*thus I willed it*”,¹⁴⁸ evincing an extreme, arguably far more psychologically tenuous demand in how to redeem one’s life’s past events. Nietzsche’s rhetoric makes a far stronger claim than that attributed to him by proponents of the justificatory approach. Fostering an affirmative disposition rests on believing that I willed certain terrible events for myself in the past, at the time of their occurrence.

This is a curiously overlooked dimension of the passage. Despite it demanding deliberate falsifications of the contents of those experiences i.e. that those events were patently *not* willed at the times they occurred, Zarathustra nevertheless wants to cultivate the disposition wherein the individual convinces themselves that they in fact did. The versions of the justificatory approach pervasive in the secondary literature appear unable to account for

¹⁴⁸ The German: “Die Vergangnen zu erlösen und alles „Es war“ umzuschaffen in ein „So wollte ich es!“ — das hiesse mir erst Erlösung!”

Nietzsche's stronger demand of affirming the past as demonstrated in the 'On Redemption' passage.

In Nietzsche's discussion of the possibility of the creative will applying backwards (or retroactively), the deliberate mixing-up of past and present tenses in this passage leads the diligent reader to conclude that a successful case of backwards willing appears to involve a severe degree of falsification towards past events. If this is the case, then the Nietzschean account of how to redeem a human life indulges in a mode of self-deception.^{149 150}

The question that might naturally follow for some is, what's the problem with this? It is

¹⁴⁹ Nehamas hints at the central claim of this chapter in passing, before advancing his narrativist approach to solving this interpretive problem. He writes, "Unless, by a stroke of unbelievable luck, we have never done anything we regret, or, by means of self-deception, we can convince ourselves we have not, the affirmation Nietzsche envisages seems to be impossible. The past forces us to repudiate whatever future it leads into" (Nehamas 1985, p. 159). It is unclear what is meant by the last sentence of this passage; but what Nehamas rules out here as impossible is the total affirmation of the kind discussed in the passage, unless one either regrets nothing of their past, or engages in an act of 'self-deception'. However, as I have already argued, there are reasons to call Nehamas's approach at solving the problem into question, when it comes to the specific text of the 'On Redemption' passage.

¹⁵⁰ Han-Pile (2011) also notes problems with this imperative to backwards-willing. The key difference between my account and Han-Pile's is hers describes an entire life-affirming disposition: mine obviously bears strong ties to that, but I here focus on a more specific epistemic problem for Nietzschean affirmation. The dispositions focused on are also different ones, however. Han-Pile claims that the kind of "autonomous form of redemption" that could will backwards to proclaim 'thus I willed it' would have to be a "super-human redemption [that] is not open to us and that, like the Overman itself, it is presented both as an imperative [...] and an open-ended question" (Han-Pile 2011, p. 251). Han-Pile's reasons for claiming this is that it supplants the creativity of God and the redemptive capacity of Christ the Son. Zarathustra's employment of biblical motifs throughout suggest that Nietzsche is offering a "secularized version of grace" unachievable by humans, she says. As such, Han-Pile suggests that *amor fati* is an *alternative* to this kind of redemption outlined by the creative willing backwards in this passage. Han-Pile then issues the charge that *amor fati* risks its own kind of self-deception, by virtue of convincing oneself that they love their fate, rather than convincing oneself that they willed the past events that comprise one's fate, which is my emphasis here. I do not take it that Zarathustra's use of biblical motifs in 'On Redemption' means the imperative contained there should be best thought the remit of the superhuman. Further, Nietzsche's claim here that the will to power should attain something beyond mere reconciliation echoes *BGE* 56, which refers to the affirmer of eternal recurrence as the most high-spirited, most lively, and most world-affirming human being who has been successful in passing through the developmental process of nihilism, rather than some *übermenschlich* figure. Loeb (2010, pp. 160 – 2) also makes claims that affirming eternal recurrence and the consequent ability to backwards-will is emblematic of the superhuman: a detailed engagement with Loeb's account of the 'On Redemption' passage is offered in Section 5) b) below.

worth noting that perhaps not all readers of Nietzsche will see this as a problem. Some in a postmodern vein, for example, see Nietzsche as being a global sceptic about truth or illusion in the first place. These positions often suffer from irreconcilable internal contradictions. In reply to this reading of Nietzsche, however, one might point to Nietzsche's explicit statement that there are truths to be ascertained about the world, be they historical, psychological, socio-cultural, or otherwise (*GM I 1*).

A more nuanced way of pressing this point would be to acknowledge that while Nietzsche does believe in truth, he views values as having more importance than truth in many contexts. He sometimes pushes back on the idea that a worldview or a belief derives its value from its truth content (*BGE 2*). He also views an unconditional 'will to truth' as being potentially pathological (*GM III*). But these are illuminating contentions made amidst a wider philosophy that *does* see truthfulness and honesty as being 'cardinal' virtues. It is not only that Nietzsche presupposes and relies upon the truth content of many of his claims for them to be critically efficacious. He frequently and explicitly valorizes the ability to seek and uncover truths. An instance of this comes in *BGE 39*, when he claims that the strength of a spirit is measured by the degree of truth it can handle.¹⁵¹ In many places from the middle works on, Nietzsche refers to honesty as our youngest virtue that he counts as among the most important.¹⁵² In this respect, eternal recurrence and the claim that it involves a great degree of

¹⁵¹ For further textual support to this claim, part of *GS 276* emphasizes this ideal: *EH* Preface 3 frames the "measure of value" by the ability one is able to tolerate truths: and perhaps most poignantly, *EH* 'Clever' 10, where Nietzsche relates the disposition of *amor fati* with wanting nothing to be different - a proclamation of apparently global honesty about the world and feeling satisfaction with that - cf. also *GS 290*. See also *GM III 16, 19 and 20*. See Jenkins (2016) for an account of how Nietzschean truthfulness might be reconciled with his concept of *amor fati* in the context of a singular notion of human greatness.

¹⁵² Harper (2015), Bamford (2019) and Page (2019) all offer accounts of Nietzschean honesty. Bamford and Page seek to square this virtue with other apparent virtues of his account, particularly curiosity. Harper and Page in particular seek to frame honesty as akin to a kind of self-confrontation, which appears right, but does little to help with the problem of self-deception as raised here (though

honesty about one's life seems to practically amplify the value Nietzsche ascribes to truth and honesty. The stronger the commitment to seek and bear truth, including when directed at events of one's life, the better.

As well as Nietzsche's positive valorization of the norms of truth and honesty, he also negatively appraises many figures or 'types' of figure on the grounds that they engage in self-deceptions. They count as among the most important of Nietzsche's targets. This charge is levelled against Socrates (*BGE* 191, *TI* 'Problem of Socrates'), Spinoza (*GS* 37, *BGE* 13), the original communities of Christians (*GM* I 10, *GM* I 13), and modern adherents to Christian morality (*A* 59 - 62).¹⁵³ This criticism sees all such dispositions as ultimately rooted in a vengeful outlook, as evinced in his description of those who try "to falsify life's image (as if taking protracted revenge against it)" (*BGE* 59).

If Nietzsche's imperative for redeeming one's past involves a recourse to engaging in self-deception, then this deeply jars with these commitments of his. The worry is whether in recommending being able to say "Thus I willed it!" towards past events, Nietzsche violates his own distinction between the overarching capacity to bear truths and engage in truth-seeking, and the kind of self-deception he criticizes in others for their inability to face the world honestly.

Section Three: The Problem with the 'Artistic Intervention' Reading

In a paper sensitive to some of these themes, Lanier Anderson explores to what extent

see Page 2019, pp. 353 – 355 for the claim that a mode of Nietzschean honesty is primarily concerned with ridding certain forms of self-deception).

¹⁵³ Cf. Gemes, forthcoming for an illuminating account of how the 'Christians' who are the target of Nietzsche's critique are best thought of as modern adherents to versions of Christian morality, even if not Christianity's metaphysical claims.

Nietzschean redemption of a life might involve evasion, semblance and falsification.

Anderson attempts to frame what he calls “artistic intervention” to this end, which he contrasts with “outright fictionalism” as having productive value (Anderson 2005, p. 209).

Anderson echoes the Nehamasian sentiment of justifying one’s past through the creation of a narrative. Eternal recurrence “provides a practical recommendation for taking arms against our troubles”, he writes, by means of “the construction of a unifying, redemptive story rendering the life meaningful and affirmable” (p. 202). Specific to the interests of this chapter, Anderson claims this new “story” will alter the character of what a past event means to the agent who is adopting this story (Ibid.). An affirmative narrative creates the possibility to adopt positive attitudes toward initially negative events, which redeems them by changing their import in the wider context of the whole life. A past event which is by itself regrettable may be affirmed nonetheless, Anderson says.

In this context, Anderson reads the ‘On Redemption’ passage as Zarathustra offering a means of redeeming oneself by means of “creating and willing” oneself into a wholeness. Those fragmentary, accidental, “puzzling or regrettable aspects of a person’s life or character can be redeemed by being brought into a whole that the person can affirm” (Anderson, p. 200). This is because a truly redemptive narrative incorporates each of the specific events in a life. Thus, rather than leaving one mired in vengefulness due to the negative character of certain events, it bestows them with an affirmable significance (p. 203). Anderson uses the example of Jimmy Carter’s crushing electoral defeat in his 1980 presidential campaign to illustrate this. Carter needed a way of turning “a debilitating setback into something that *could be accepted – even willed*” (201, italics mine). Carter’s later work as an elder statesman in some sense redeems the failure of the 1980 election. Anderson claims, “to wish for such an ex-Presidency is also to *wish for the defeat*, and precisely the fact that allows the later success to redeem the

earlier failure” (Ibid.). The event becomes affirmable relative to the narrative that the individual adopts, through which they can interpret the event anew, Anderson claims. In the case of Carter, his ex-Presidential actions and achievements changed the value of the regrettable event (his defeat in 1980) within the narrative of his life.

So far this sounds akin to the justificatory approach exemplified by Nehamas and Clark. But what makes Anderson’s argument distinctive for the purposes under discussion here is his claim that this example marks the difference between “compensation” (which strikes one as similar to reconciliation or mere justification) and “genuine redemption” for Nietzsche’s account (p. 203). But this distinction offered by Anderson doesn’t seem to fulfil what full-blooded redemption would require, in so far as it is framed in the ability to express the statement, “thus I willed it” towards such events. What complicates things, however, is that Anderson frames examples like the one of Jimmy Carter as being cases of successful redemptive illusions. It was, he claims, a “psychological requirement” of the defeated Carter to “identify with his new project, find it worthwhile, and carry it off, that he *not* think of himself under the description that was then true of him” (p. 209). He claims that the alteration of “central self-regarding beliefs” (p. 209) occurs in an “*essentially prospective*” fashion (p. 210, Anderson’s italics). Anderson claims that “[r]edemption demands ‘living in the future perfect’ – believing that after my success (*if* I have it) I *will have been* a certain kind of person, even though right now I am not. If I were, then of course I would not need redeeming.” Confusingly, though, assuming a fiction alone is not enough: “pious, self-deceived hopes that real redemption is available through *mere* faith, *mere* belief in a fiction” are misplaced. Genuine activity is required to solidify this self-interpretation, to be in some sense “entitled to the new self-understanding” (p. 210). The adoption of this kind of successfully redemptive illusion is supposed to function, Anderson says, eventually as “a

ladder kicked away” (p. 212).

Anderson’s approach to interpreting Nietzschean redemption could be characterized by the mantra of ‘fake it ‘til you make it’. But in his claim that the redemptive illusion is “essentially prospective” (p. 210), Anderson doesn’t account for the past-directed nature of the creative will being emphasized in the ‘On Redemption’ passage. In line with the imperative of being able to express ‘thus I willed it’, that event must be willed in and of itself, at the time it occurs. When you ‘make it’ after ‘faking it’, so to speak, to say “Thus I willed it!”, the demand is such that these past events must remain implausibly re-described. Anderson’s Carter example would only be salient to the substance of ‘On Redemption’ if Jimmy Carter maintained that he now believes he *wanted* to lose the presidential campaign at the time of losing it. This claim seems deeply implausible, not only by appeal to third-personal facts of the matter, but also to one’s first-personal internal reasoning for the justification of past events. Since Nietzsche is not in the business of mere justification or reconciliation, but rather emphasizes with brio the more demanding task of redemption, it seems fair to see Nietzsche as committed to a more implausible demand than Anderson’s reading concedes to him.

The ‘ladder’ is in some sense not ‘kicked away’, if the once-prospective illusion remains part of the narrative, as a retroactive evaluation of a past event. This straightforwardly constitutes a residual self-deception. If the would-be life-affirmer looks back and proclaims, ‘thus I willed it’ towards some such past event, this still amounts to an indulgence to falsify one’s evaluation of how things were at the time they occurred. Contrary to the claims by Anderson, rather than a prospective ‘illusion’ that one’s self-interpretation can be futurally justified, the imperative of creatively willing backwards in ‘On Redemption’ ensures that the ladder of retroactive falsification is still very much required, and threatens to buckle under scrutiny, from the weight of the self-deception. This calls into question the supposition Anderson

shares with Nehamas, Clark and the scholarly consensus, that affirming eternal recurrence essentially involves an honest or truthful assessment of the events of one's life.

Section Four: Potential Internal Ways of Overcoming the Difficulty

In this section I will discuss whether certain aspects of Nietzsche's later works might provide the apparatus to account for the problematic claim that the redemptive transfiguration of one's past necessarily indulges in self-deceiving falsifications.

4) a) Active Forgetting

In many places across his works, Nietzsche postulates a faculty of active forgetting in many prominent places throughout his works. Nietzsche claims that the 'use' of active forgetfulness for our psychology concerns "the degree to which there could be no happiness, no cheerfulness, no hope, no pride, *no present* without forgetfulness" (*GM* II 1). As I argued in Chapters 1 and 2, Nietzsche also views it as a natural endowment of psychological health. Might this faculty help solve the 'thus I willed it' problem?

One immediate objection is that the redemption of past events inherently involves *an act of recollection*. An event can only be retroactively affirmed by virtue of its being recalled, even if falsely. Nietzsche talks about actively forgetting the affectively resonant content of certain events, such that one stands in no evaluative relation at all to them after the fact of their being forgotten. In the case of backwards-willing and retroactive affirmation, one recalls an event, and proclaims it as not just affirmable in the round, but affirmed at the time it took place.

This puts it in a deep conflict with the idea that active forgetting could be utilised as a way of explaining this demand of Nietzsche's.

4) b) The Removal of Drives

In Chapter 3 I argued that Nietzsche thinks it possible to wholly remove certain drives and instincts, in pursuit of ideal cases of psychological integration. The ability to remove certain drives amounts to the removal of certain embodied dispositions which generate particular evaluative orientations. But this doesn't provide much more help, though, when it comes to the radical transfiguration of beliefs built into affirming the propositional statement, 'thus I willed it'. In the passage there occurs an attempted redescription of certain facts about how things happened, irrespective of one's economy of embodied drives. As such, this is fundamentally different from altering the propositional content which was generated about a past event by that embodied economy of drives at the time it occurred. As such this capacity for productive omission at the level of drives is similarly ill-equipped to deal with the problematic claim at the heart of the 'thus I willed it' passage.

4) c) A Nietzschean Falsification Thesis and Self-Deception

Passages about the role that falsifications might have in human life are a reasonably consistent feature of Nietzsche's mature published texts. Those who have written on this issue argue for a variety of interpretive claims about the nature of what they think a 'falsification' actually amounts to, and their scope. Some scholars have suggested a move to 'go global' with falsifications, in Nietzsche. Aligning Nietzsche with the tradition of Neo-Kantian phenomenism, and largely inspired by a strong reading of perspectivism, the Nietzschean 'falsification thesis' has been proposed that all human experiences are necessarily phenomenological falsifications of reality. In a vein originating in Hans Vaihinger's appropriation of Nietzsche for his fictionalist cause in his *The Philosophy of As*

If, the falsification thesis sees the very possibility of experiential representations as resting upon simplification and falsification, as necessary conditions upon knowledge. As such, it goes, each perspective is de facto a falsifying one.¹⁵⁴

There are reasons to be hesitant in assigning this thesis to Nietzsche. When for example he writes of delusion and error being conditions upon human knowledge (*GS* 107), there is no reason to think, as Nehamas has elsewhere rightly argued, that these are necessary conditions upon knowledge. Nor are their status as possible conditions among others grounds for assuming that they are operative on all representations (Nehamas 2017, p. 325). The more moderate contention that delusion and error *can* be conditions of life that Nehamas argues for, rather than them being necessary conditions, is the much more plausible reading. There seems no reason to conflate Nietzsche's claims that all truths are in principle unknowable independent of a perspective, with the claim that all experiential representations are necessarily falsified from one's subjective conditions of possibility.

A more modest account might contend that a Nietzschean exemplary individual can engage with the world in as truthful a way as possible, while retaining the possibility to indulge in some minimal falsification where required, when interpreting the world.¹⁵⁵ But does even this

¹⁵⁴ Hussain 2004a, 2004b, 2007; Anderson 1998, 2002, 2005. Curiously, a very distinct claim to the falsification thesis is *also* argued for by both Hussain and Anderson, that Nietzschean free spirits *experience reality as it is*, while offering a fictionalist pretense or falsified simulacrum of values adopted in response to that reality. It is difficult how exactly such accounts can acknowledge the existence of reality as it is as being available from human experience, while also subscribing to the falsification thesis. Since all evaluative activity would also count as falsification on this reading, too, it does no good in assisting the proponent of the falsification thesis here, either.

¹⁵⁵ Evidence for this more modest reading comes at *GS* 276, *GS* 299, and *BGE* 230. From these passages, the inference is that whatever falsifications individuals might engage in about the world in the weaker sense, it remains that the broad positive imperative involves an evaluation of the world that is grounded in as much truth and honesty as possible. In this vein, Nietzsche writes "the ultimate question about the conditions of life has been posed here [...] To what extent can truth endure incorporation? That is the question; that is the experiment" (*GS* 110). Indeed, as Nehamas points out,

more modest reading of Nietzsche's permissibility of falsifications of any assistance with the problematic aspects involved in the "Thus I willed it" claim? Ultimately, no. Even given a background assumption that falsifications might account for the structuring of some experiences, this does little to solve the issue at hand. The creative will's willing-backward posits an *additional, internal falsification*, within the context of the individual's set of experiences. Whatever kind of phenomenological falsifications of experience one might or mightn't undertake, the redescription of a past experience is not alleviated by reference to these claims about falsification. Nor does it account for the idea that such a redescription escapes the charge of being a mode of self-deception. It is difficult to see how a falsification in this sense, qua propositional reappraisal of a *past* experience, could be a falsification of this more modest and localized kind.¹⁵⁶

5 – Potential Conclusions

This appears to leave a deep structural problem with Nietzsche's positive commitment to redeeming a human life's past, as if it would eternally recur. Given the unsatisfactory attempts to solve this issue using various apparatus from Nietzsche's works, I suggest several potential conclusions we might draw from this.

5) a) We opt to Downplay the claims in the 'On Redemption' passage

a1) We might want to attribute this choice of phrasing of the 'thus I willed it' claim as a poetic or rhetorical flourish of Nietzsche's, in a work that might be construed as full of

if Nietzsche was a genuine proponent of the more hard-line Falsification Thesis, this question couldn't come up for him in the first place (see Nehamas 2017, p. 332; cf. Nehamas 2018b).

¹⁵⁶ Thanks to Justin Remhof and James Mollison in particular for discussions on the material in this section.

them. If so, perhaps on this line of reading, we need not assign the ‘On Redemption’ passage such weight, in the context of causing this structural problem for willing eternal recurrence.

Or;

a2) Zarathustra’s suboptimal audience might give us reason to think that the ‘thus I willed it’ proclamation is not an injunction for redeeming the life of an exemplary individual. The fact that Nietzsche has Zarathustra addressing a group of ‘cripples’ might be a way of construing the passage as him offering a ‘teaching’ of how ‘cripples’ and fragmentary individuals might make the best of their own suboptimal self-interpretations. Those with a ‘diseased will’ mightn’t be able to affirm in the manner the exemplary individual does. As such, perhaps Zarathustra is recommending a kind of optimized self-deception that these cripples should undergo, to be able to affirm their lives to any degree. In this sense, the reading goes, Zarathustra is offering an esoteric reading of how one might more modestly affirm a life, to those who are incapable of genuine (Nietzschean) redemption.¹⁵⁷

Or;

a3) ‘On Redemption’ comes at a stage of the work before Zarathustra directly confronts the eternal recurrence thought. The text of *Zarathustra* acts as a bildungsroman of sorts. Perhaps, it could be argued, Zarathustra by this stage of personal development in ‘On Redemption’ is still not yet ready to redeem all life, since it is only with the choking of the snake, symbolic of a full exposure to the thought of eternal recurrence in ‘On the Vision and the Riddle’, where he finds himself genuinely transfigured and able to posit a genuinely redemptive stance towards life. In other words, though he believed it so at the time, Zarathustra’s

¹⁵⁷ I am grateful to Daniel Conway to whom I owe the phrase ‘optimized self-deception’ in this context.

proclamation in the ‘thus I willed it’ passage is *not* Zarathustra’s considered, final position on how to genuinely redeem a life.

Replies to these conclusions:

There are problems with each of these three options. In reply to 5) a1), it is indubitable is that *Zarathustra* is a prose work intentionally framed so as to convey philosophical claims.

Within other of his mature works, Nietzsche frames myriad of the philosophical claims that he considers his most important in passages that express the same substantive points as these points made in *Zarathustra*. This is the case of ‘On Redemption’, which shares important motifs and mode of presentation with passages featuring the eternal recurrence elsewhere.

In his preparatory notes, Nietzsche makes explicit that the imagery of Zarathustra’s affirmation of eternal recurrence in ‘On the Vision and the Riddle’ is inherently bound up with the teaching of backward-willing, that facilitates the ability to say ‘thus I willed it’. He writes, “Redemption! I spat out the head of the serpent! Redemption! I taught the will backward-willing” (KSA 10:18[45]). This shows that backward-willing is integrally linked with an affirmation of eternal recurrence. This is also pertinent for exposing problems with 5) a3), that rather than the substantive claim of ‘On Redemption’ being some failed alternative to eternal recurrence, proclaiming ‘thus I willed it’ is part and parcel of being able to affirm it.

The motifs and tenor of ‘On Redemption’ share great affinity with other eternal recurrence-central passages. One such passage is *BGE* 56, which, like ‘On Redemption’, speaks of the one who surpasses the disposition merely to accept or be reconciled with one’s life, to a wilful desire to repeat it all, including one’s (and perhaps all things of the) past. Take also the paradigmatic presentation of eternal recurrence in *GS* 341. As mentioned above in Section One, Nietzsche employs the same biblical motif of the gnashing of teeth in each. In the Bible,

the motif denotes the lament of the one who falls outside of God's grace, by means of being denied entry to His kingdom.¹⁵⁸ Nietzsche uses it at both of these passages to designate a negative response to the proposed means of affirming one's life. In *GS* 341, this is a negative response to the thought of the eternal recurrence simpliciter. In 'On Redemption', the gnashing of teeth occurs by the one whose will is unshakably passive towards their past.¹⁵⁹ Even the 'On Redemption' passage itself offers good reason to think that the creative willing backwards is an important part of redeeming a life. When Zarathustra speaks of this thought and is resigned to silence, the hunchback speaks up, expressing uncertainty as to why he is addressing the cripples rather than his own disciples. Going one further, the hunchback then expresses a deeper uncertainty whether such a message would be fitting even for the disciples, saying Zarathustra is really conversing with himself over these thoughts, rather than his audience of cripples and disciples, when ruminating about the path to redemption. It appears that Zarathustra has forgotten that his dialogue is one addressed even to his disciples, rather than to himself.

In this respect, as regards the charge at 5) a2), that Zarathustra offers a suboptimal account of how to more modestly redeem a life on account of the audience he addresses, one might also point out the suboptimality of practically *all* of the audiences whom Zarathustra's teachings are addressed to throughout the work. Many of these other teachings we rightly take to be

¹⁵⁸ See, for example, Luke 13:28, Matthew 8:12, Matthew 13:42, and Matthew 25:30. My thanks to Chris Sykes for originally making this point in conversation.

¹⁵⁹ Although it is less textually conclusive than *BGE* 56 and *GS* 341, see *GS* 338, located just three aphorisms before Nietzsche's presentation of eternal recurrence at *GS* 341. There he speaks of the necessity of misfortune and distress for cultivating the "entire economy of my soul". In order for this to occur, we require the process of convalescence, through which "new springs and needs break open, the way in which old wounds are healing, the *repudiation* [or 'shedding'] *of entire periods of the past*" ("*das Abstoßen ganzer Vergangenheiten*": *GS* 338, emphasis mine). An important concern of two of the four *Untimely Meditations* is seeing the past as a 'problem'. The last lines of *Wagner in Bayreuth*, for example, demonstrate Nietzsche's longstanding grappling with this issue. He valorizes Wagner for being "not the seer of a future, but the interpreter and transfigurer of the past".

instantiations of considered positive claims made by Nietzsche elsewhere.¹⁶⁰ For example, the central presentation of Zarathustra's confrontation with eternal recurrence is a vision presented as a riddle, presented to a crew of sailors (Z, 'On the Vision and the Riddle'). The justification Zarathustra gives for speaking of it to them is his admiration for those who "make distant journeys and do not like to live without danger", describing them as "tempters" and "attempters", *Versuchern*, the same word used to describe his philosophers of the future (BGE 42). But he doesn't consider them disciples, because although he admires them for these traits, "where [they] can *guess*, there [they] hate to *deduce*", postulating a difference between the sailors and the philosophers of the future. And yet, Zarathustra's suboptimal audience here is 'taught' the central presentation of eternal recurrence.

Other examples of this suboptimality of Zarathustra's audiences for candidates for crucial Nietzschean tenets in the text might be the vague yet widely discussed trope of the *Übermensch* of the Prologue, the claims about self-overcoming and the will to power in 'On Self-Overcoming', and the critique of the notion of perspective-free knowledge in 'Of Immaculate Perception', among others. As such, it is difficult to think that Zarathustra's audience means that he offers anything less than the considered Nietzschean path to a life's redemption in the 'On Redemption' passage. As a consequence, our original problem remains.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ Isn't it so that Nietzsche's own audience remains (presently) suboptimal?

¹⁶¹ I thank Daniel Conway and Justin Remhof specifically, for pressing these specific potential options for solving the problem identified in this chapter.

5 b) Can a Cosmological Eternal Recurrence Solve the Problem?

The second conclusion we might draw is to put our stock in a cosmological reading of eternal recurrence, as intimated through the fiction of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and as such apply this reading to all discussions of eternal recurrence in Nietzsche's subsequent works. In short, this option suggests, we should accept a literal, cosmological reading of the eternal recurrence as the best means of accounting for this passage. The most prominent advocate in Anglophone Nietzsche scholarship to proffer this view against the scholarly consensus is Paul Loeb, who is also as far as I can tell the only other in the secondary literature to identify a version of the problematic falsification presented in the proclamation of 'thus I willed it' in 'On Redemption'.¹⁶² However, Loeb takes this apparent indulgence in falsification as one piece of evidence why eternal recurrence is best read as a strong cosmological thesis.

Loeb claims that eternal recurrence as Nietzsche's cosmological reality would have the interpretative benefit of being able to explain the 'thus I willed it' passage in a way that avoids the charge of self-deception. If eternal recurrence is cosmologically true, then initially,

¹⁶² I have already discussed in footnote 150 Han-Pile's claims that *amor fati* runs the risk of self-deception, specifically distinguishing it from what she perceives to be the superhuman redemption unattainable by humans as discussed in 'On Redemption' (Han-Pile 2011). Paul Loeb writes that seeing the present as the fruits of the past and redescribing the past as such "does not mean that my redescription is true or that it is supported by any evidence. In fact, given my wish to affirm what I am today as a high point, and to see what I am today as the inevitable goal of my past, it is much more likely that my redescription of my past is falsification and wishful thinking" (Loeb, 'Suicide, Meaning, and Redemption', 2008, p. 178; cf. also Loeb 2010, p. 188). Loeb aims his critique at the notion that past states had present (or future) states as their intentional goal, and this is what counts as wishful thinking. Strictly speaking, this is a different critique to the one I've discussed so far. Aside from this, however, Loeb deflates the 'On Redemption' passage in a manner similar to his 'rivals', who happen to be the proponents of the justificatory approach I discuss in Section Two. He does this when he frames the problem as being that "I would not be able to will in this way unless I had successfully redescribed my past as directed inevitably towards my present state". But this actually appears like a rather straightforward thing to do. Even without Nietzsche's sometime extravagant claims about the interconnectedness of all things, it seems a rather plausible outlook to view one's past as having inevitably led to one's present. But this is not the main problem with the 'On Redemption' passage. As I have demonstrated, the central problem is really with the indulgence of falsification built into the belief, 'thus I willed it' about *prima facie* negative past events. In this respect, both the proponents of the justificatory approach and Loeb erroneously frame the problem.

it seems I could will my past because I can will eternal future cycles, where that past will literally recur as a cosmological reality. Even if we concede that it might be possible to affirm a prospective event in a future cycle (with the relevant constraints on it being really in one's past) this is still not the same as a retroactive affirmation of something within the same life-cycle. If this were all the cosmological interpretation Loeb offers amounts to, it would just mean that the self-deception involved in pronouncing "Thus I willed it" just gets repeated eternally, in each life cycle. However, to explain the willing of one's past by reference to willing one's future, Loeb postulates an elaborate claim about backwards-willing becoming a *literal ability over time*. The inference drawn from Nietzsche's narrative structuring of *Zarathustra* is that although Zarathustra doesn't claim his redemption until after his confrontation with eternal recurrence, this redemption amounts to an ability to backwards-will through time.¹⁶³ Since time is a "closed circle" (Loeb 2010, p. 180), Zarathustra's future is also his past, and as such Zarathustra has in a sense already learned backwards-willing. As such, future willing has a literal influence from one's present to one's past. Although unable to change undesirable aspects of his past, Zarathustra is now able to view his past as partially resulting from his present and future willing, Loeb claims (p. 186).

To explain this ability to influence one's past by means of having a bearing upon future cycles, Loeb claims that eternal recurrence affords Zarathustra the ability of developing a new kind of 'memory of the will' that extends backwards into one's past, a 'mnemonic willing' that is subconsciously hidden from Zarathustra's younger self, given only through intimations in dreams and pre-visions. Backward willing involves an interaction between Zarathustra's older and younger will. The younger has a prevision which passes on the necessary knowledge in this interaction. As such, the older Zarathustra is able to affirm

¹⁶³ "Hence Zarathustra's suspicion, at the time of his redemption-speech, that someone has already taught backward-willing, together with his confusion as to who this might be." (Loeb 2010, p. 180)

eternal recurrence, that which is necessary to redeem life, because he was commanded or enabled to do so by the pre-visionary will of his younger self (Loeb 2010, p. 183). Owing to an achieved 'mnemonic' awareness that persists through circular time, one's younger self can have a prevision towards their future *by means of recollection*. These mnemonic recollections-cum-previsions for one's future will are what allows Zarathustra to will into being the very past which enables him to become who he is, the first prelude to the superhuman by means of eternal recurrence (Loeb 2010, p. 189).

The most plausible reconstruction is that Loeb thinks that backwards-willing means to change the past such that whatever apparent negative event occurs, we are able to perceive it as willed, because it was willed by our future selves. So, although our present self doesn't will it, because our future self *was* able to change events and left alone/did not change the occurrence of that negative event, it must mean that, within that context, it *was* willed by (a future version of) our self. Technically, it remains the case that our present self is not engaged in self-deception regarding a false belief about a past event, on its own terms, because Zarathustra's present self has received subconscious intimations of their future self's will, Loeb contends.

The initial broad response to make is that such a position is deeply questionable in terms of whether Nietzsche's fundamentally naturalistic methodology and his deep criticisms of cosmology could support anything remotely like a strong cosmological reading of eternal recurrence. A consequence of accepting such a reading would have Nietzsche positing perhaps the most fabulous metaphysics in the post-Platonic tradition. Loeb claims a plethora of textual support for his cosmological reading, which fails to convince many, myself

included.¹⁶⁴ A sustained critical engagement with the full range of Loeb's thorough and detailed claims is beyond the scope of this chapter. All that can be said here is that there is no reason to read any more into the cosmological trappings Nietzsche employs in the fiction of *Zarathustra* than as serving a function: to promote a deeper affective resonance towards whether one could be committed to a full-blooded affirmation of one's life. The cosmological reading Loeb argues for is, I would contend, an even less savoury ramification drawn from this passage than the self-deceived attitude I have argued that it seems to problematically promote. Not only is there little reason to think that Nietzsche did offer this cosmological thesis about eternal recurrence, but if he genuinely did, then he's in even more trouble than I thought.

Even taking Loeb's account on its own terms, it seems liable to several objections. There is actually very little substance about how we should understand this ability to literally backward-will as a consequence of eternal recurrence, in the sense of how changing one's past through future cycles, to actually work. Now, maybe it's not possible for me to understand an ability afforded to a superhuman, since, despite punctuated episodes of narcissism, I am quite sure I am not one. But textually it isn't clear that this ability is what constitutes a heralding achievement of a genuinely post-human superhuman. A look again at Zarathustra's contrast in 'On Redemption' between the 'fragments' and 'accidents', and the "genuine human beings" who could achieve backwards-willing, understood less ambitiously as a merely redemptive psychological relation to their own past, is ample evidence for this. Even assuming this could all be accounted for, it would be charitable and beneficial to hone in on Loeb's line that this new power over time itself is required so as to *literally*

¹⁶⁴ See versions of this claim made in Loeb 2008, 2010, 2013, 2018 and 2021.

retroactively shape a life so as to make it affirmable, and consequently be able to will its eternal recurrence. Now at one level, this gives a shallow answer to how Nietzsche's imperative to want nothing different in one's fate might go. But this also seems to clash with the far more plausible construal of how we might want nothing different in one's fate as an affirmation of the unchangeable, and seems to wholly violate the injunction contained in that suggested construal. Loeb wants a Nietzsche who presupposes temporal flux and can affirm this flux without any omission (Loeb 2010, p. 175) – but only after the ideal affirmer has the metaphysical power to have omitted enough events from their life-cycle to be able to do so.

How exactly can we take it that the Nietzschean affirmer is affirming an unchangeable past, if this past *has literally been changed*? Loeb wants to reject the Heideggerian reading that Zarathustra's proposed self-redemption is a form of revenge anew. But in the pursuit of curing oneself of the spirit of revenge, is Loeb's interpretation not maximizing the problem he perceives with Heideggerian influenced readings of eternal recurrence, that having to literally change one's past shows a vengefulness to it, *amplified eternally*?¹⁶⁵ If Loeb is correct, it is no longer the initial problem that I only lie to myself about what I willed in my past – arguably, a self-deceived belief enacted by a creature motivated by residual *ressentiment*. Even if the literal backward-willing on Loeb's account is possible, that one can only affirm life by literally changing its eternal trajectory – is this not evidence of a (admittedly powerful) spirit of *eternal* revenge?

5 c) An Idiosyncrasy to Nietzsche's Positive Account of Affirmation?

The third option for what to conclude from this problem is to bite the bullet, and accept a

¹⁶⁵ See Heidegger, 'Who is Nietzsche's Zarathustra?', trans. Bernd Magnus, in *The New Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation*, ed. David Allison, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1977 (pp. 64 – 79). Loeb attacks this conception on Loeb 2010, pp. 173 – 5.

deep idiosyncrasy in Nietzsche's positive account of affirmation. This idiosyncrasy would mean that although Nietzsche criticizes others and their philosophical and moral systems for promoting or reinforcing self-deceptions, it is okay for him to advocate a particular kind of self-deception, simply because it is his and not theirs. The 'thus I willed it' passage demonstrates a deep self-deception, but, as it were, 'my self-deception is better [for me] than your self-deception [for me]'.

This leaves us with another kind of problem, however, not least because Nietzsche would leave us with no substantial criteria for why *his* form of redeeming a human life is any better than the Christian or other attempts at doing so. Some anti-realist readers of Nietzsche might be comfortable with this conclusion, that ultimately Nietzsche's attempt to affirm human life remains just as lacking in objectivity as other attempts which he criticizes. Yet if this were the correct reading, questions would remain for why exactly Nietzsche would a) criticize other attempts on the grounds of their not being the genuine way to value a life, or b) why he would recommend exemplary individuals redeem their lives by engaging in such a strong form of self-deception, particularly when he claims that facing reality as it is should be the desirable disposition for such individuals.¹⁶⁶

Conclusion

I hope that others are able to think of a more palatable option to help solve this quandary in an internally coherent manner. There might be some fourth option for a more savoury

¹⁶⁶ As noted in Section 4) c) of this chapter, this claim is (perhaps unstably) adopted even by the prominent advocates of the reading that Nietzsche's metaethics collapses into idiosyncrasy (cf. Hussain 2007, p. 161). Harper (2015) discusses Nietzschean honesty while being sensitive to the problem of meta-ethical authority in Nietzsche (pp. 371 – 2).

conclusion to draw here, or perhaps some other aspect of Nietzsche's works which provides another way of salvaging this passage. I cannot think of a candidate for either, but I hope there is. Without one, I think an integral aspect of Nietzsche's positive account for redeeming a human life runs into a problematic rut. This particular problem would need to be overcome by any endorsement of what Nietzsche takes the eternal recurrence to offer. To fail to adequately explain it risks either a skewed understanding of the thought of eternal recurrence, or condemning it to retaining an irresolvable problem. Might there be a way of saving the thought which the mature Nietzsche explicitly proclaimed to be his most fundamental?

Even if it may be that there is no internal coherence to Nietzsche's possibility for a singular positive ideal, what might affirmation through eternal recurrence teach us? Perhaps we can learn from Nietzsche by lowering our bar, in jettisoning our demand for total internal coherence.

It may be that two components of the Nietzschean ideal, that of living as truthfully as possible and of living as free of *ressentiment* as possible, are ultimately irreconcilable. Perhaps this is unsurprising. If an integral demand of eternal recurrence involves self-deception, it consequently violates the former in pursuit of the latter. Perhaps the takeaway is to pursue these as two distinct ideals, to the extent it is possible to, either stopping at the point at which they might clash, or accepting such clashes as unavoidable. Living totally truthfully, and living totally free of *ressentiment*, might be impossible, even without this irreconcilability. But an ideal is something to aspire to, even in the face of the apparent impossibility of its total adoption or embodiment. Whatever internal flaws might remain, perhaps this is ultimately Nietzsche's gift to us.

Thesis Conclusion

This thesis has identified and analyzed a number of forms of productive omission, as they appear in Nietzsche's philosophical psychology. It has given attention to the places these omissions prominently feature in his mature works, to provide a fuller and clearer conception of important aspects of Nietzsche's broader psychological model. Such omissions have been shown to be operative, in an active and deliberate fashion, towards different kinds of psychological content. Nietzsche views each of these forms of omission as efficacious within the mental economy. By identifying these forms of omission, the thesis has also fulfilled a more prescriptive consideration, of how they respectively feature within Nietzsche's ideal of great psychological health. In this sense, I have aimed to demonstrate the possibility of their each being 'productive' in the context of their positive role in Nietzschean psychology.

In the first two chapters, I analyzed Nietzschean active forgetting, in particular how he postulates it as a faculty that acts to omit certain forms of affective content. As well as providing an analysis of active forgetting's self-regulatory, preservative function, I discussed why Nietzsche views such forgetting as a mark of psychological health. These first two chapters sought to fulfil three interpretive aims; first, how to make sense of the psychological capacities of the nobles and slaves in *GM I* and how it bears upon their capacity for action and valuation; second, how Nietzsche tacitly employs and practically relies upon a deeper tier of forgetting, through which a full, cathartic exhaustion of affective content can occur; thirdly and finally, how this contrasts with Freud's account of motivated forgetting as a species of repression, by which the affective content is conserved with the potential to reappear and become pathological. These chapters act to remedy the extant Anglophone Nietzsche

scholarship's insufficient treatment of this conception of active forgetting, as it appears in important places in Nietzsche's works.

Developing the thesis, the third chapter identified places in the texts where Nietzsche thinks that the removal of drives is possible. This brought another kind of productive omission under discussion, one that applies to another form of mental content than that identified with active forgetting. By identifying these places and giving them due analysis, this sought to give an account of the psychological capacity for removing drives, and the potential prescriptive significance for Nietzsche's model of self-cultivation.

In chapter four, Nietzsche's convoluted but fascinating genealogy of guilt as it appears in *GM II* was explored. This dimension sought to identify a more local species of productive omission, within the context of Nietzsche's claim that some personal sense of guilt is now psychologically indelible. This more local species concerned the means by which one might detach the specifically Christian content of one's affective disposition to feel guilt. Such a detachment could allow for reconfiguring this disposition, so as to pursue greater and more complex forms of life-affirmation than those possible before the imposition of that content. The argument made in this chapter showed how Nietzsche doesn't adopt an eliminative posture towards guilt tout court (a claim that pervades the secondary literature on this topic). Instead, it demonstrated a productive use to which Nietzsche's ideal might re-apply a now-indelible structure for feeling guilt.

Chapter five discussed how Nietzsche's ultimate ideal of life-affirmation might employ one omission too far. In framing the eternal recurrence as a form of total honesty about the events of one's life and how one was and is disposed towards them, Nietzsche appears to promote

abjuring falsifications in the pursuit of this ideal. However, the ‘On Redemption’ chapter of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, one commonly and rightly interpreted as reflecting an important dimension to eternal recurrence, is shown to intractably involve the falsification of one’s disposition towards past events. This was done by the promotion of being able to say ‘thus I willed it’, namely, to now take oneself to have willed negative past events even at the time of their occurrence. Nietzsche talks of this amounting to an ‘unlearning’ and ‘unharnessing’ in this context. It is apposite to think of this as promoting another species of psychological omission; this time, towards the belief-content one holds about an event itself. What is promoted is the ‘unlearning’ of the belief-content that otherwise made negative past events un-willable. This is problematic, I claimed. After framing this problem in relation to other forms of productive omission discussed in earlier chapters, and also with a consideration of forms of the ‘falsification thesis’ offered by some secondary scholarship, the chapter showed that no easy resolution to this problem presents itself. Although more aporetic in its findings than previous chapters, the fifth chapter is conclusive by virtue of showing why one ought to view this matter as a problem. No internal resolution is forthcoming from Nietzsche’s own works – and this is concerning. Perhaps this demand to falsify the events of one’s life is the best means to affirm it as far as possible, even if that should instigate a clash between the demand for total affirmation and Nietzsche’s promotion of truth about one’s own life in the pursuit of that affirmation.

Taken as a whole, this thesis offers a corrective to the extant literature’s failure to treat and properly contextualize these important facets of Nietzsche’s philosophical psychology. In providing a fuller treatment, it also serves to highlight the prescriptive aims which Nietzsche thinks these facets ought to serve.

Several fascinating areas of research couldn't be further pursued in this thesis, owing to constraints on time. In future work, I intend to do so. One aspect of research going forward will be to further address whether all of these species of productive omission are best thought of as subsumed under the general faculty of active forgetting. I have given some reason (particularly in chapter three) to be hesitant about this, given that Nietzsche does not discuss the removal of drives in a manner best thought of as active forgetting. Indeed, as argued in chapters one and two, active forgetting appears to best apply to affective content, likely exclusively so.

Another such consideration for future research will be to consider the role of habituation as one means of securing the success of such productive omissions. Nietzsche's texts are replete with talk of habit as a means of cultivating the self (*GS* 21 – 2, *GS* 29, *GS* 366; *GM* I 1 – 2, *GM* II 8). In what is likely a heavily related topic, any comprehensive account of Nietzschean self-cultivation will also need to discuss the possible role of self-consciousness in that self-cultivation. It might be that for Nietzsche, some degree of self-conscious activity is required, perhaps necessarily, in the pursuit of that cultivation. This would be contrary to those who interpret Nietzsche as thinking consciousness is psychologically inefficacious. Although Nietzsche is clear about the greater efficacy of unconsciousness compared to consciousness, it might be that the latter is inevitably also involved in transforming one's psychological disposition.

A final project for future research that I will mention here is perhaps the most important one

of those not featured in this thesis. While the First and Second Essays of the *Genealogy* are treated with great focus throughout the thesis (particularly in chapters one, two and four), the Third Essay of the *Genealogy* is far less treated. It appears mostly in a supporting role to the claims made about its preceding Essays from that same work. The role of ascetic ideals in Nietzsche's philosophy, their positive and negative worth, and perhaps any positive conception of intellectual conscience that may arise out of *GM III*, is important to the wider model. Indeed, I have reason to think that such a treatment of *GM III* will neatly supplement the claims I have made about *GM II*, concerning the broad structure of self-evaluation to which a positive affective disposition towards guilt might belong. This will give a further dimension to the claim that the pursuit of truth can enjoy a privileged status as a cardinal Nietzschean value, provided it secures a status not reliant on a "moral ground", as he describes it at *GS 344*. In this respect, a form of intellectual conscience as a self-legislating mode of psychological health would serve to support and promote my reading of Nietzsche's philosophical psychology. Owing to constraints of time and priority, this thesis does not treat this topic, though it is one which I intend to consider in future.

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