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“No one has yet determined what the body can do” : the turn to the body in Spinoza and Nietzsche

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Nietzsche's Turn to the Body

In order to understand why and how Nietzsche turns to the body, we need to tackle three sub-questions. 1) What is Nietzsche responding to by turning to the body? The answer to this question will help us situate the turn to the body within the context of Nietzsche's philosophical project of overcoming nihilism and *décadence* and re-evaluating all values. This will allow us to identify the key elements that motivate Nietzsche's project of naturalization and, consequently, his turn to the body: his critique of Christian-Platonic values and their deleterious effects. 2) What is the nature of Nietzsche's turn to the body? In order to answer this question we need to clarify what the functions of Nietzsche's turn to the body are. I will argue that Nietzsche's philosophical physiology has three functions: descriptive, diagnostic and normative. We also need to outline the conceptual vocabulary of Nietzsche's philosophical physiology and, finally, explore some of the key domains to which Nietzsche applies the method of philosophical physiology. 3) Does the turn to the body imply abandoning philosophy for science? After outlining the accusation of biologism that can be brought against Nietzsche, I will argue that this charge is not justified. In order to understand why this is so, we need to come to grips with Nietzsche's critique of science and to better understand the philosophical value of Nietzsche's turn to the body, i.e. his philosophical physiology. This chapter will serve as a platform for discussing a further question, which will be addressed in the comparative section: What role does the turn to the body play in the normative component (the ethics and politics) of Nietzsche's philosophy? In order to set out the basis for this discussion, it is important to highlight a number of key notions that inform Nietzsche's normative project: the undermining of transcendent values and their translation onto the plane of immanence, his power ontology, uncovering the multiplicity behind apparent unities and the focus on the notions of enhancement and affirmation of life.

I. The context of Nietzsche's turn to the body

In order to understand the context in which Nietzsche turns to the body and clarify the problems he is reacting to, it is important to identify some of the main concerns and impulses in his thought. My focus in this thesis is on Nietzsche's work from 1880 onwards, the period when the turn to the body becomes a project central to Nietzsche's philosophy. The period between 1880 and the moment of Nietzsche's collapse in 1889 is marked by his concern with the problems of nihilism (*Nihilismus*)¹⁹³ and *décadence* (*Entartung*, *Dekadenz* or *Décadence*) (Hermens, cat.2), together with an increasing focus on the critique and transvaluation of all values in the context of an attempt to develop an ontology of becoming against the metaphysics of being. Nietzsche's understanding of the notion of *décadence* is informed by his extensive readings in medicine and the life sciences¹⁹⁴ (Brobjer 2004, p. 21) and comes to be closely related to the physiological notion of degeneration (Hermens, cat. 2). While I will argue in greater depth in section III that this should not be seen as the abandonment of philosophy for science, it is important now to highlight the fact that both Nietzsche's understanding of nihilism and *décadence* and the decline of transcendent values provide an impetus to his project of naturalization. This section will therefore proceed by asking the following three questions: 1) How should the project of naturalization be understood? 2) How does Nietzsche's discussion of nihilism and *décadence* relate to naturalization and, more specifically, to his turn to the body? and 3) What are the nihilistic, life-denying values Nietzsche criticizes?

1. The project of naturalization

Nietzsche's project of naturalization is encapsulated in the following passage from *Beyond Good and Evil*:

To translate the human back into nature; to gain control of the many vain and fanciful interpretations and incidental meanings that have been

193 The first occurrences of the word "*Nihilism*" date from 1881, more precisely from the letter to Heinrich Köselitz on 13.03.1881 (*Nihilismus*; KGB III/1, 88) and 12[57] 9.586 (*Nihilism*).

194 Moore traces Nietzsche's understanding of *décadence* as degeneration to his reading of Charles Féré's 1888 work *Dégénérescence et criminalité* (Moore 2002, p. 127).

scribbled and drawn over that eternal basic text of *homo natura* so far; to make sure that, from now on, the human being will stand before the human being, just as he already stands before the *rest* of nature today, hardened by the discipline of science, – with courageous Oedipus eyes and sealed up Odysseus ears, deaf to the lures of the old metaphysical bird catchers who have been whistling to him for far too long: “You are more! You are higher! You have a different origin!” – This may be a strange and insane task, but it is a *task* – who would deny it! Why do we choose it, this insane task?¹⁹⁵ (modified translation; JGB 230 5.169)

How we should understand the “many vain and fanciful interpretations and incidental meanings” that have been “drawn over the eternal basic text of *homo natura*”? How can we conceive of the connection between the naturalised understanding of humans as *homo natura* and values? Finally, what is the nature of the science (*Wissenschaft*) that hardens us and that Nietzsche believes enables us to see human beings as we see the rest of nature. All of the inquiries formulated above must be situated within the framework provided by our answer to the essential question of how to understand the project of translating “the human back into nature”. Understanding this task, a project to which sections I and II of this chapter will be dedicated, will provide us with clues to how the translation of the human back into nature can help us “gain control” over the “vain and fanciful interpretations” projected onto humanity. This will provide the basis for the discussion of Nietzsche’s normative thought in the comparative section.

The project of translating the human back into nature is a constant throughout Nietzsche’s works and is twofold in nature. On the one hand it involves the attempt to translate moral, but also artistic, religious or political terms back into

195 “Den Menschen nämlich zurückübersetzen in die Natur; über die vielen eitlen und schwärmerischen Deutungen und Nebensinne Herr werden, welche bisher über jenen ewigen Grundtext *homo natura* gekritzelt und gemalt wurden; machen, dass der Mensch fürderhin vor dem Menschen steht, wie er heute schon, hart geworden in der Zucht der Wissenschaft, vor der anderen Natur steht, mit unerschrocknen Oedipus-Augen und verklebten Odysseus-Ohren, taub gegen die Lockweisen alter metaphysischer Vogelfänger, welche ihm allzulange zugeflötet haben: „du bist mehr! Du bist höher! du bist anderer Herkunft!“ – das mag eine seltsame und tolle Aufgabe sein, aber es ist eine Aufgabe – wer wollte das leugnen! Warum wir sie wählten, diese tolle Aufgabe?”.

the body, using the vocabulary of drives and focusing on our individual and collective *Lebensbedingungen*. Through naturalization, Nietzsche aims to reject the autonomy of moral, artistic or religious spheres and rethink them as radically immanent features of nature: “My task is to translate the apparently emancipated moral values that have become nature-less back into their nature”¹⁹⁶ (9[86] 12.380). On the other hand, it involves a rethinking of practical or normative questions in terms that affirm and enhance life (Siemens [Unpublished manuscript], pp. 2-3).

According to Schacht, Nietzsche’s naturalism is best understood as the “Guiding Idea” that “everything that goes on and comes to be in this world is the outcome of developments occurring within it that are owing entirely to its internal dynamics” (Schacht 2012, p. 170). Nietzsche’s naturalism should not be seen as a doctrine, but rather considered in view of the fact that he “was an avowedly experimental thinker and writer” (Schacht 2012, p. 169) who placed great emphasis on the value of having a multiplicity of perspectives (GM III 12 5.364f). Not all perspectives are of equal value, of course, and Nietzsche takes great care to distinguish qualitatively between the various perspectives available¹⁹⁷. Naturalism is the only platform for reinterpreting and revaluating values in a non-metaphysical (JGB 230 5.169) and de-deified¹⁹⁸ manner. Both the descriptive and the normative components of Nietzsche’s naturalism must be understood in the context of his rejection of the notions of immaterial soul, free will, self-transparent pure intellect, and of the stress he places on the body, drives, instincts and affects (Janaway 2007, p. 34).

Leiter distinguishes between Substantive Naturalism (S-Naturalism) and Methodological Naturalism (M-Naturalism). S-Naturalism is either the view that “the only things that exist are natural (or perhaps simply *physical*) things” or that philosophy should show how any concept is “amenable to empirical inquiry” (Leiter 2002, p. 5). While Nietzsche does argue that super-natural or transcendent causes should play no role in our accounts of the world, this is not the kind of naturalism

196 “Meine Aufgabe ist, die scheinbar emancipirten und naturlos gewordenen Moralwerthe in ihre Natur zurückzuübersetzen”.

197 More on this in the subsequent analysis of philosophical physiology.

198 “Wann werden uns alle diese Schatten Gottes nicht mehr verdunkeln? Wann werden wir die Natur ganz entgöttlicht haben! Wann werden wir anfangen dürfen, uns Menschen mit der reinen, neu gefundenen, neu erlösten Natur zu vernatürlichen!” (FW 109 3.468f).

most important to Nietzsche¹⁹⁹. Leiter argues for methodological naturalism as Nietzsche’s view: “a ‘speculative’ theory of human nature – modelled on the most influential paradigm of the day” (Leiter 2002, p. 4), a theory continuous with the sciences, dependent on their results and trying to emulate²⁰⁰ the distinctively scientific ways of looking at things, i.e. especially determinism (Leiter 2002, p. 5). This concept of naturalisation is problematic because it is too narrow (Lopes 2012, p. 116): it emphasizes the notions of determinism and cause and effect of which Nietzsche is very critical²⁰¹ (Schacht 2012, p. 171; Lopes 2012, p. 113); it reconstructs Nietzsche’s way of thinking as based on just another metaphysical “wahre Welt”²⁰² (Schacht 2012, p. 173)²⁰³; and it makes it unclear how Nietzsche’s descriptive naturalism can be made compatible with his normative program, insofar as the revaluation of values cannot be generated by a descriptive account of the deterministic laws of nature (Brusotti 2012a, pp. 107-9)²⁰⁴.

Two of Nietzsche’s key concerns in the 1880’s, in the context of his commitment to naturalism, are the problems of *décadence* and nihilism.

199 Here Leiter is in agreement with a number of other scholars, including Schacht (2012, p.165).

200 My arguments in section III will be directed against such a view.

201 More on this in section III of this chapter.

202 The world of natural or physical things, that are “*really* real” (Schacht 2012, p. 173).

203 Even if we were to consider exclusively the “continuities” between Nietzsche’s naturalism and his interest in science, it would be misleading to focus solely on natural sciences. The German term *Wissenschaft* is much broader (Higgins 2006, p. 406).

204 For the purposes of this thesis it is worth mentioning that Leiter references Spinoza as a representative of M-naturalism. Leiter quotes EIIIpref “the way of understanding the nature of anything, of whatever kind, must also be the same, viz. through the universal laws and rules of nature”. This is problematic on three counts: 1) by the universal laws and rules of nature Spinoza understands the “virtue and power of acting” of nature, as he writes in the same preface. As we have seen in chapter I, Spinoza considered the scientific method of his time inadequate for an account of nature and its power to act, and hence needed to develop a new way of doing philosophy in order to understand nature 2) Spinoza did not see philosophy and science as necessarily going hand in hand: he believed the philosophy he developed in the *Ethics* was accurate, while never claiming he or anyone else had yet developed a proper scientific understanding of nature and 3) EIIIpref ends with Spinoza’s explanation of what he understands by adequate method: to “consider human actions and desires in exactly the same manner, as though I were concerned with lines, planes and solids”. Spinoza’s method here is geometrical and it is a contentious claim to argue that this makes his method scientific in any way.

2. Naturalization, *décadence* and nihilism

We can distinguish at least two main meanings of the concept of nihilism: 1) The constellation of life-denying values and ideals grounded in the metaphysics of being and transcendence; 2) The process by which these values necessarily undermine themselves. The history of European nihilism can be summarised in three stages: “(in an inverted chronological order) (3) the corrosion of (2) the protective structure that was built to hide (1) the absurdity of life and world” (van Tongeren 2015, p. 1). Referring to the Lenzer Heide Note (5[71] 12.211), Van Tongeren argues that “Greek Pessimism” is the starting point for Nietzsche’s understanding of nihilism. This “Pessimism” consists in seeing “the absurdity of life and world”²⁰⁵.

Nihilism arises when “we”²⁰⁶ look for a meaning or purpose to life. Failure to find one, either because we cannot find any moral world order or harmony in life or because we cannot identify any unity or systematicity in the world, creates a psychological state of anxiety, of “shame before oneself”, that inclines one to posit a “true world” beyond the world of appearances which matches the desire for meaning and order. This form of nihilism means:

205 “Der Nihilismus als psychologischer Zustand wird eintreten müssen erstens wenn wir einen „Sinn“ in allem Geschehen gesucht haben, der nicht darin ist: so daß der Sucher endlich den Muth verliert. *Nihilismus* ist da das Bewußtwerden der langen Vergeudung von Kraft, die Qual des „Umsonst“, die Unsicherheit, der Mangel an Gelegenheit, sich irgendwie zu erholen, irgendworüber noch zu beruhigen – die Scham vor sich selbst, als habe man sich allzulange betrogen ... Jener Sinn könnte gewesen sein: die „Erfüllung“ eines sittlichen höchsten Kanons in allem Geschehen, die sittliche Weltordnung; oder die Zunahme der Liebe und Harmonie im Verkehr der Wesen; oder die Annäherung an einen allgemeinen Glücks-Zustand; oder selbst das Losgehnen auf einen allgemeinen Nichts-Zustand – ein Ziel ist immer noch ein Sinn. [...]) Der Nihilismus als psychologischer Zustand tritt zweitens ein, wenn man eine Ganzheit, eine Systematisierung, selbst eine Organisierung in allem Geschehn und unter allem Geschehn angesetzt hat. (11[99] 13.46)”.

206 What does Nietzsche mean by “we”? Perhaps we can take our cue from the *Vorrede* to the *Genealogy*: “We are unknown to ourselves, we knowers” (“Wir sind uns unbekannt, wir Erkennenden”). Nietzsche refers to those who strive to understand themselves even if they fail to do so (GM *Vorrede* 1 5.247), maybe the “philosophers and scholars” (“Philosophen und Gelehrten”) of the third essay (GM III 1 5.339).

to denounce this entire world of becoming as illusion and to contrive a world, which lies beyond it, as a true world.²⁰⁷ (11[99] 13.47)

This stage corresponds to the second historical phase identified above. “We” need truth and a “true” world because we cannot live without meaning, and so we postulate a world defined by being, not becoming. The metaphysics of being, together with the associated life-denying values, will be discussed in section of I.3 this chapter.

The third historical stage of European nihilism, sometimes labelled as “the death of God” (van Tongeren 2015, p. 1) consists in the process of corrosion or self-undermining of the transcendent values referred to in the second stage. The third essay of the *Genealogy* contains Nietzsche’s analysis of the “ascetic ideal” (*das asketische Ideal*) and its “remnant” (*Rest*), or rather “kernel” (*Kern*) and “last phase of development” (*letzten Entwicklungsphase*), the “will to truth” (*Wille zur Wahrheit*) (GM III 27 5.409). Given that “all great things bring about their own demise through an act of self-sublimation”²⁰⁸ “Christianity as a morality”²⁰⁹ is no exception. It “perishes” (*zu Grunde gehn*) because of the will to truth which is able to see through the illusory world that has been postulated by Christian-Platonic morality as the “true” one (GM III 27 5.410). The offshoot is that this process may lead to “the ‘last will’ of man, his will to nothingness, nihilism”²¹⁰ (GM III 14 5.368). Without dwelling on the nature of the ‘will to truth’ which is beyond the scope of this section, we must notice that the development of European culture leading to nihilism is characterised by Nietzsche as mankind “looking back wearily, turning its will *against* life, and the onset of the final sickness”²¹¹ (GM Vorrede 5 5.252). This indicates that in order to better understand nihilism Nietzsche believes we need to give a physiological diagnosis of the phenomenon

207 “diese ganze Welt des Werdens als Täuschung zu verurtheilen und eine Welt zu erfinden, welche jenseits derselben liegt, als wahre Welt”.

208 “Alle grossen Dinge gehen durch sich selbst zu Grunde, durch einen Akt der Selbstaufhebung”.

209 “das Christenthum als Moral”

210 “der „letzte Wille“ des Menschen, sein Wille zum Nichts, der Nihilismus”.

211 “die zurückblickende Müdigkeit, den Willen gegen das Leben sich wendend, die letzte [...] ankündigend”

of a form of existence turning against itself, against life.

In a note “On the history of *nihilism*”²¹² (17[6] 12.527) Nietzsche analyses the “*most common types of décadence*”²¹³: 1) the choice of a remedy, such as faith, that accelerates exhaustion; 2) the incapacity to resist stimuli; 3) not understanding *décadence* physiologically; 4) the desire for a state in which one no longer suffers. All these various manifestation of *décadence*, a phenomenon inherent in nihilism, will be discussed in this thesis, but we must first try to elucidate the meaning of the core notion of *décadence*. This will be done, for the purposes of this thesis, with particular emphasis on its connection to physiology.

In order to understand the notion of *décadence*, I will take my cue from the following text:

The preponderance of feelings of displeasure over feelings of pleasure is the *cause* of that fictitious morality and religion: but such preponderance provides the *formula* for *décadence* ...²¹⁴ (AC 15 6.182)

We can immediately detect the importance of physiology and affects for Nietzsche’s notion of *décadence*. Nevertheless, this does not explain how we should understand these feelings and why they are detrimental. This physiological analysis refers not merely to the existence of feelings of displeasure, but to the incapacity to react to the suffering caused by feelings of displeasure without postulating a “fictitious morality and religion”. *Décadence*, diagnosed physiologically, is a condition that leads to or expresses the “hatred of the natural (– of reality!)” and the creation of a “*fictitious world*” that “falsifies, devalues, and negates reality”. This fictitious world consists in “imaginary *causes* (“God”, “soul”, “I”, “spirit”, “free will” – or even an ‘unfree’ one)”, “imaginary *effects* (‘sin’, ‘redemption’ ‘grace’, ‘punishment’, ‘forgiveness of sins’)”, “imaginary *natural science* (anthropocentric)”, “imaginary *psychology*” and “imaginary *teleology*

212 “Zur Geschichte des Nihilismus”.

213 “Allgemeinste Typen der décadence”.

214 “Das Übergewicht der Unlustgefühle über die Lustgefühle ist die Ursache jener fiktiven Moral und Religion: ein solches Übergewicht giebt aber die Formel ab für *décadence* ...”.

(‘the kingdom of God, ‘the Last Judgment’, ‘eternal life’)”²¹⁵.

More light is thrown on the notion of *décadence* from the perspective of physiology, i.e. as degeneration, in the following text:

We know today how to think moral degeneration as no longer separate from the physiological [degeneration]: it is merely a symptom-complex of the latter; <one> is necessarily bad, as one is necessarily sick ... bad: the word expresses here certain *incapacities* that are connected physiologically to the degenerate type. ²¹⁶ (14[113] 13.290)

How are we to understand the connection between moral degeneration and physiological degeneration? In other words, what does it mean to say that a moral phenomenon is a “symptom” of a physiological process? In order to give this question its sharpest possible formulation, we must add that besides morality, Nietzsche connects a number of other phenomena to physiological processes: Christianity (14[13] 13.223), the ascetic ideal (GM III 13 5.365) and art (WA 7 6.26f). The difficult connection between physiological processes and cultural phenomena appears less problematic if we situate it in the context of the 19th Century, in which the distinction between the biological and the cultural was less sharp than it is today (Schank 2000, pp. 29-30). Nevertheless, this does not

215 The complete text is: “Lauter imaginäre Ursachen (‘Gott’, ‘Seele’, ‘Ich’, ‘Geist’, ‘der freie Wille’ – oder auch ‘der unfreie’); lauter imaginäre Wirkungen (‘Sünde’, ‘Erlösung’, ‘Gnade’, ‘Strafe’, ‘Vergebung der Sünde’). Ein Verkehr zwischen imaginären Wesen (‘Gott’, ‘Geister’, ‘Seelen’); eine imaginäre Naturwissenschaft (anthropocentrisch; völliger Mangel des Begriffs der natürlichen Ursachen) eine imaginäre Psychologie (lauter Selbst-Missverständnisse, Interpretationen angenehmer oder unangenehmer Allgemeingefühle, zum Beispiel der Zustände des nervus sympathicus mit Hilfe der Zeichensprache religiös-moralischer Idiosynkrasie, – ‘Reue’ ‘Gewissensbiss’, ‘Versuchung des Teufels’, ‘die Nähe Gottes’); eine imaginäre Teleologie (‘das Reich Gottes’, ‘das jüngste Gericht’, ‘das ewige Leben’). – Diese reine Fiktions-Welt unterscheidet sich dadurch sehr zu ihren Ungunsten von der Traumwelt, dass letztere die Wirklichkeit wiederspiegelt, während sie die Wirklichkeit fälscht, entwerthet, verneint. Nachdem erst der Begriff ‘Natur als Gegenbegriff zu ‘Gott’ erfunden war, musste ‘natürlich’ das Wort sein für ‘verwerflich’, – jene ganze Fiktions-Welt hat ihre Wurzel im Hass gegen das gegen das Natürliche (– die Wirklichkeit! –), sie ist der Ausdruck eines tiefen Missbehagens am Wirklichen” (AC 15 6.181f).

216 “Wir wissen heute die moralische Degenerescenz nicht mehr abgetrennt von der physiologischen zu denken: sie ist ein bloßer Symptom-Complex der letzteren; <man> ist nothwendig schlecht, wie man nothwendig krank ist... Schlecht: das Wort drückt hier gewisse Unvermögen aus, die physiologisch mit dem Typus der Degenerescenz verbunden sind”.

elucidate what Nietzsche understood by physiology and what it means for moral or artistic phenomena to be the “symptom”, “sign” or even “cause”²¹⁷ of physiological processes. What must be highlighted at this point in the argumentation is that Nietzsche strives to understand a variety of cultural phenomena that fall under the rubric of nihilism or *décadence* in naturalistic terms, and that he uses physiology and the turn to the body to do so.

Nietzsche’s assessment is that nihilism is a manifestation of drives turning against their own expression (Gemes 2008, p. 461). Physiological degeneration is the ground (*Boden*) of nihilism:

What does it mean now to “have turned out badly”? Above all physiologically: no longer politically. The *unhealthiest* kind of human in Europe (in all classes) is the ground of nihilism²¹⁸ (5[71] 12.216)

Closely related to this is the fact that on many occasions Nietzsche advocates a medical²¹⁹ remedy for the *décadence* (*Niedergang*) characteristic of modernity (Müller-Lauter 1999a, p. 16). Whether or not Nietzsche is successful in finding the cure he is looking for, it is clear that he thinks nihilism and moral or cultural *décadence* have their ground or source in, and sometimes cause, physiological degeneration and that, in order to better understand his thesis, we must turn to the question of how Nietzsche understands degeneration in physiological terms.

2.1. Nihilism as an expression of degeneration

In GD Sokrates 9 (6.71) Nietzsche writes that degeneration (*Degenerescenz*) consists in anarchy among the instincts or drives²²⁰. To be more precise, degeneration describes people who “stopped being masters of themselves” and whose “instincts turned against each other”²²¹. If we are to answer the main question of this section

217 The meaning of these terms will be discussed in section II.

218 “Was heißt jetzt „schlechtweggekommen“? Vor Allem physiologisch: nicht mehr politisch. Die ungesundeste Art Mensch in Europa (in allen Ständen) ist der Boden dieses Nihilismus”

219 How we should understand the term “medical” on the scale between biological and cultural practices can become clearer only in the course of section III.

220 Writing about Athens in the time of Socrates, Nietzsche writes that “Überall waren die Instinkte in Anarchie [...] ‘Die Triebe wollen den Tyrannen machen’” (GD Sokrates 9 6.71).

221 “dass Niemand mehr über sich Herr war, dass die Instinkte sich gegen einander wendeten”.

we must first understand what instincts or drives are and then gain an adequate understanding of what Nietzsche understands by anarchy of instincts or drives²²².

JGB 200 (5.120) reads: “the human being [...] has the legacy of multiple lineages in his body, which means opposing (and often not merely opposing) drives and value standards”²²³. I will postpone the question of how we should understand the opposition between drives and focus now on the nature of drives themselves. The text quoted shows us that drives are inherited, according to Nietzsche, and so form relatively enduring elements. According to JGB 36 (5.54) the only reality we can conceive of is the ‘reality’ of our drives²²⁴. Drives are not under the full rational or conscious control of the agent possessing the drives (Janaway 2012, p. 187) and they structure our thinking. When drives are strong, they can “subdue not only our reason but our conscience as well”²²⁵ (JGB 158 5.100). Drives interpret the world and have an evaluative function²²⁶ i.e drives explain “the particular manner in which an organism’s perceptions are partial and evaluatively loaded” (Katsafanas 2012, p. 9). Nietzsche speaks of a great number of drives, some of which are innate or basic (Janaway 2012, p. 191). Drives are found in heterogeneous bundless teeming with diversity, and are held together by conflict, but not blended together (Assoun 2000, p. 54). Drives are “indefinitely multiple and deeply interconnected” (Katsafanas 2012, p. 8) However, the constitution and nature of drives is not immutable, and Janaway has suggested that drives

222 Assoun believes that we can distinguish between “Instinct” (*Instinkt*): a deep, calm, continuous force or fundamental energy, and “drive” (*Triebe*): a dynamic eruption while Katsafanas believes Nietzsche treats them “merely as terminological variants” (Katsafanas 2012, note 7). Deciding the issue goes beyond the ambit of this section, and I will treat the two notions as equivalent insofar as they refer to constitutive elements of the self.

223 “Der Mensch [...] die Erbschaft einer vielfältigen Herkunft im Leibe hat, das heisst gegensätzliche und oft nicht einmal nur gegensätzliche Triebe und Werthmaasse”.

224 “Gesetzt, dass nichts Anderes als real ‘gegeben’ ist als unsre Welt der Begierden und Leidenschaften, dass wir zu keiner anderen „Realität“ hinab oder hinauf können als gerade zur Realität unsrer Triebe – denn Denken ist nur ein Verhalten dieser Triebe zu einander –“.

225 “Unserm stärksten Triebe, dem Tyrannen in uns, unterwirft sich nicht nur unsre Vernunft, sondern auch unser Gewissen”.

226 “Ich glaube demgemäss nicht, dass ein ‘Trieb zur Erkenntniss’ der Vater der Philosophie ist, sondern dass sich ein anderer Trieb, hier wie sonst, der Erkenntniss (und der Verkenntniss!) nur wie eines Werkzeugs bedient hat.” (JGB 6 5.20) or “Unsre Bedürfnisse sind es, die die Welt auslegen: unsre Triebe und deren Für und Wider. Jeder Trieb ist eine Art Herrschsucht, jeder hat seine Perspektive, welche er als Norm allen übrigen Trieben aufzwingen möchte.” (7[60] 12.315).

may come into existence and wither away, or perhaps die completely (Janaway 2012, p. 190). While the temporal processes that drives undergo are no doubt very important to Nietzsche, there is another dimension of the drives' mutable nature that it is crucial to emphasize here. This dimension is brought out well by the following issue raised by Lanier Anderson. Nietzsche, it is universally agreed, rejects an atomistic understanding of the self, viewing it instead as an irreducible multiplicity. However, when arguing that drives constitute the self, does Nietzsche reinstate the atomistic metaphysical illusion, only on a different level (Lanier Anderson 2012, p. 215)? Lanier Anderson's answer is that drives are not fundamental entities. The idea of a multiplicity of drives is useful to Nietzsche in his project to present a perspective that is not subject to the illusions of being, but not as a dogmatic assertion about the nature of reality. If this understanding of drives as concepts standing for irreducible but not fundamental multiplicities is correct, then we must ask, in the comparative section, how this relates to Spinoza's appeal to the concept of multiplicity in understanding our bodies.

When considering Nietzsche's take on the organization of drives that constitute the self, two crucial elements need to be considered: the number or variety of drives and the kind of organization they display. With regard to the first point, it is important to emphasize that a feature of the modern human, in Nietzsche's opinion, is the possession of a great number of drives. Nietzsche explicitly mentions 50 drives (M 422 3.527), but Katsafanas has counted over one hundred (Katsafanas 2012, p. 8). This multiplicity, however, is not sufficient by itself to explain the differences Nietzsche speaks of between various human beings or types. As Ciano Aydin has argued, we need to consider the nature and quality of the organization of drives. Nietzsche ranks human types according to the coherence or unity (inclusive of conflict) of their drives. This unity should not be confused with a pre-existing, essential unity. Nietzsche conceives the self as the sum of a great number of drives whose order is fluid. The difference between humans does not stem from a pre-established metaphysical order, but from the contingency according to which drives organize themselves. In the comparative section, I will ask how we should understand Nietzsche's claims about the quality of the organisation of drives and how it relates to his claim that a great human

being is capable of displaying a coherent organization of drives that incorporates the greatest amount of struggle possible. In order to set the stage for this inquiry, we must understand the concepts of inner struggle and hierarchy (the subject of section II, where I will consider Nietzsche’s reading of Roux), as well as formulate Nietzsche’s account of *décadence* or degeneration in terms of drives (the topic of the following sub-sections). The organization of drives, according to Nietzsche, can be disempowering and therefore decadent in two cases: either it is too loose and there is no organizing force, or the hierarchy is too rigid and there is one drive that tyrannizes the pulsional economy in such a way that it inhibits the expression of other drives (Aydin 2008, p. 39). In the next section we will consider the *umgekehrte Krüppel* (inverse cripple) in *Von der Erlösung* (Z II Erlösung) in order to understand these two physiological conditions as forms of degeneration.

Tyrannical hierarchy

Our best clue is given by Zarathustra’s description of the “inverse cripple” (*umgekehrte Krüppel*). Zarathustra argues that, contrary to cripples who are characterized by the lack of something, an inverse cripple is someone who has too much of one thing and too little of everything else. Zarathustra then goes on to describe this element that the inverse cripple has in abundance using physiological metaphors: a giant eye, a giant mouth or a giant belly. We can gain a better insight into what Nietzsche means by these metaphors if we look at an unpublished fragment from 1884, in which Nietzsche describes what he means by “inverse cripple” – the isolation or separation of a force (*Vereinzelung einer Kraft*):

Multiplicity of properties and their connection – *my* point of view. The double-twin-forces, e.g. for Wagner poetry and music, for the French poetry and painting, for Plato poetry and dialectics, etc. The isolation of one force is a *barbarism* – “inverse cripple”²²⁷ (25[196] 11.66)

227 “Vielheit der Eigenschaften und deren Band – mein Gesichtspunkt. Die Doppel-Zwillings-Kräfte z.B. bei Wagner Poesie und Musik; bei den Franzosen Poesie und Malerei; bei Plato Poesie und Dialektik usw. Die Vereinzelung einer Kraft ist eine Barbarei – ‘umgekehrte Krüppel’”.

The inverse cripple suffers from a chronic lack of dynamic balance between the forces or drives that animate it. The dominating force has managed to establish its dominance to such an extent that no flexibility or change in the hierarchy is possible. The inverse cripple has “too little of everything and too much of one thing”²²⁸ (Z II Erlösung 4.178). But why does Nietzsche claim that there is something wrong with this organisation of drives? First, we must emphasize that Nietzsche is adamant that this structure of drives is problematic: in the fragment quoted above he calls the physiological structure of the inverse cripple barbaric (*eine Barbarei*). Zarathustra describes the inverse cripple as “hideous” (*Abscheuliches*). Behind the apparently aesthetic judgement of the pulsional economy manifest in the inverse cripple, there is arguably a deeper point about the inhibition of human flourishing that the inverse cripple displays. The great multiplicity of drives that compose the individual does not find expression and the potential present in an inverse cripple is lost. The inverse cripples represent an impoverished form of unity, the result of the incapacity of the multiplicity to organise itself into a whole. The unity or completeness that the inverse cripples display is not a rich unity, the expression of plurality that has been united in a flexible structure. The point Zarathustra makes here goes beyond a critique of the pulsional organization and also touches on the deleterious influence that these supposed great men have on the people. In a note from 1883 Nietzsche writes: “I would rather live among cripples than among these supposed whole [complete] beings”²²⁹. The inverse cripples present themselves as great men or geniuses and the people treat them as such, even if they are not. This raises the question of how the inverse cripples manage to persuade the people that they are great and why they harm others. The issue of the disempowering effects of degeneration, and the connections with Spinoza’s critique of theologians, will be discussed in greater detail in chapter III, sections III.2 and IV.2.d²³⁰.

228 “an Allem zu wenig und an Einem zu viel habe”.

229 Und leben will ich noch unter Krüppeln lieber als unter diesen vermeintlichen Ganzen.” (13[19] 10.467)

230 Together with some of Nietzsche’s later pronouncements on this issue.

Disorganization of drives

The speech from *Von der Erlösung* that contains the diagnosis considered above is addressed by Zarathustra to the inverse cripples. In the second section of the chapter Zarathustra addresses his disciples. His speech contains a number of complex arguments, but my focus in this section will be on Zarathustra’s claim that he lives among human beings as among fragments and limbs, and that he has yet to meet a complete human being²³¹. This complaint complements his critique of the inverse cripples that we have looked at above. There is nevertheless a change of emphasis: instead of the focus being on the “inverse cripple” who has too much of one thing, the emphasis here is on the lack of unity in humans. The words used by Nietzsche (*Bruchstücken, Gliedmaassen*) make the lack of cohesion in humans stand out. Even a perfunctory look through the *Nachlass* of the time shows that “Menschen-Bruchstücke” is consistently contrasted with “vollständige” or “ganze Menschen” and the “Menschen-Bruchstücke” are labelled slaves (7[45] 10.257; 35[74] 11.542; 25[242] 11.75). The lack of unity displayed by humans is disempowering. The existence of unity, in Nietzsche’s sense, presupposes the capacity for self-organisation in the struggle and interplay of drives (2[87] 12.104, cf. Aydin 2008, p. 30). The continuous process of self-organisation is characterised by relations of command and obedience between drives. The weak are a multiplicity no longer capable of organizing themselves through struggle. The drives, instead of being integrated in this dynamic, self-organizing structure, detach themselves from the whole (Aydin 2008, p. 40). The danger is particularly great in the case of the modern human, because the great multiplicity of drives it contains implies the need for greater struggle, and so a greater chance of failure in the task of self-organisation (Aydin 2008, p. 41). If the capacity for self-organisation is lacking, then the self will be nothing but an anarchic collection of weak drives or instincts. This, Nietzsche believes, is characteristic of modernity, a symptom of physiological exhaustion that manifests itself in the preference for equality, understood as sameness²³². Nietzsche interprets this preference for

231 “Bruchstücke und Gliedmaassen und grause Zufälle – aber keine Menschen!” (ZA II Erlösung 4.179).

232 The question of how the ontological categories of struggle, equality and inequality surface in Nietzsche’s normative thought and how they relate to Spinoza will be considered in the

equality and equality of rights as a sign of degeneration, i.e. disorganization of instincts, and exhaustion (GT Vorrede 1 1.12; GM III 25 5.403). In order to better understand the reasons for Nietzsche's critique of degeneration, we must now ask how degeneration manifests itself in the domain of culture through the intermediary of nihilistic values.

3. Nietzsche's Critique of Nihilistic Values

Nietzsche identifies a number of key values as conducive to nihilism. These values have shaped metaphysics, epistemology, morality or politics and their pervasive, long-lasting influence prompts Nietzsche to characterize them, in the Preface to *GD*, as "eternal idols" (*ewige Götzen*) (GD Vorrede 6.58). Discussing these decadent values has the added benefit of uncovering important analogies between Spinoza and Nietzsche, to be discussed in chapter III. This is hardly surprising, since Nietzsche himself classed teleology, free will, the moral world order, the existence of altruism and evil as errors they both argue against (KGB III/1, 135). As is the case with Spinoza, Nietzsche's critique of these errors is best understood in the context of his engagement with the concept of substance. In Nietzsche, this is part of his critique of being in the name of becoming. Contrary to Spinoza, Nietzsche does not wish to offer a new understanding of substance, but to criticize and think against it²³³ from the standpoint of becoming and to diagnose its underlying assumptions as life-negating. This does not mean that the illusions of substance cannot be useful to life, but that they come at a cost and they have important detrimental consequences.

Nietzsche's critique of substance

Developing a convincing account of change and becoming is a matter of vital interest to Nietzsche. Traditionally, change has been explained against the background of something that changes. Substance is that which persists, always remains the same and its quantum can neither be increased nor diminished. It is the substratum, or immutable subject, of all change and all temporal appearances

comparative chapter.

233 Even if we cannot think without the concept of substance (Aydin 2003, p. 107).

can be determined only in relation to it (KrV A181 / B225). Substance ontology, which strives to explain reality and change starting from a fixed order of being, defines substance using three fundamental categories: identity (over time), unity and independence or self-causation (Aydin 2003, p. 47). The salient feature of substance, according to Aristotle, is its independence (Categories al2-2al7; Metaphysics 1017b). Substance is a substratum in which properties or accidents inhere and its “independence is cashed out in terms of predication [...] A is a (primary) substance *iff* it is a subject of predication and it is not predicated of anything else” (Melamed 2009, p. 28). Descartes adds a further dimension to Aristotle’s discussion by stipulating that substances must also be causally independent (Melamed 2009, p. 29), an idea best summarised by Spinoza’s understanding of substance as *causa sui* (Russell 1996, p. 48). Leibniz argues that the logical relation of subject and predicate is more fundamental to an adequate understanding of substance than the claim to independent existence (Russell 1996, p. 50).

For reasons that will be discussed below, Nietzsche does not find the postulation of substances to be theoretically sound, nor does he believe that substance ontology possesses sufficient explanatory power to account for the dynamic character of reality. Given its emphasis on stability, substance ontology denies the primacy of becoming, multiplicity and change, but seeks to derive them from being (Aydin 2003, p. 52). Nietzsche positions himself against this tradition, and argues that the “true world” of being is an obsolete, superfluous idea, which has no use (GD Fabel 5 6.81)²³⁴.

Nietzsche’s analysis of the concept of substance is best summarized in an unpublished note from 1885:

In a world of becoming, in which all is conditioned, the exception of the unconditioned, of *substance*, of being, of a thing, etc., can only be an error.

²³⁴ Nietzsche also argues that, if we do away with the true world, then the concept of apparent world no longer serves any purpose and must also be abandoned (GD Fabel 6). Becoming should therefore not be conflated with the concept of „illusory world” or appearance.

But how is error possible?”²³⁵ (35[51] 11.536)

Nietzsche understands substance to be an “originary ancient error, committed by everything organic”²³⁶ (MA 18 2.40). It is conceived as something identical with itself, always the same and unchanging. Nietzsche strives to understand reality outside the horizon of being and of the notion of substance, since he believes that nothing real corresponds to the concept of substance (FW 111 3.472). Nietzsche’s emphasis on “becoming” should not be seen as a commitment to a different type of metaphysical doctrine; it is a negative result of his critique of substance that aims to offer a better understanding of change, motion and dynamism by not deriving them from the metaphysics of being and moral errors and without claiming adequate knowledge of reality. Arguably the most interesting aspect of Nietzsche’s critique of substance, however, is his attempt to expose the sources of this error. Throughout his writings we can distinguish at least four different, but compatible, attempts to do so.

1. In MA 18 Nietzsche argues that the ground for the belief in substances (belief in identical things) is something humans have inherited from “the period of the lower organisms”. The belief in substance is therefore not optional or arbitrary (Aydin 2003, p. 93). All that matters to organic life, Nietzsche argues here, are the sensations of pleasure and pain. Lower, or rather simpler organisms do not distinguish between various sensations of pleasure or unpleasure and therefore believe there is only “one and unmoving” thing or substance in the world, responsible for producing those sensations. As the capacity for sensation develops, animals start distinguishing between various kinds of sensations and therefore the hypothesis of multiple substances develops. Nietzsche argues that only highly developed knowledge can go beyond the hypothesis of identical things, and therefore consider reality beyond the sensations they cause in the knowing subject (MA 18 2.39f).

235 “In einer Welt des Werdens, in der Alles bedingt ist, kann die Annahme des Unbedingten, der *Substanz*, des Seins, eines Dinges usw. nur ein Irrthum sein. Aber wie ist Irrthum möglich?”

236 “ein ursprünglicher, ebenso alter Irrthum alles Organischen.”

2. A second argument of Nietzsche’s is that the concept of substance plays an indispensable role in our survival (FW 111 3.471). Those who did not perceive everything in flux and who could abstract from the changing nature of things have had a better chance to survive than those “who saw everything ‘in flux’”²³⁷. The capacities to abstract and simplify, characteristic of logic, are only a useful tool for humankind.

3. Another approach to the generation and perpetuation of the erroneous concept of substance is to trace it back to language (GD Vernunft 5 6.77). We are deceived by language into believing that the grammatical categories of subject and predicate reflect the structure of the world, consisting of doers and deeds. We employ the language of substance, permanence, unity or identity and project these categories into the world.

4. A fourth type of argument is that we project what we consider the primary unity of the I or of our will onto the world and so invent the concept of substance (10[19] 12.465). Notions like ‘thing’ or ‘atom’ are a consequence of the concept of subject (1[32] 12.18). Nietzsche argues that this projection only tells us something about our constitution and not about the world as it is (MA 15 2.35f). Furthermore, Nietzsche believes that the unity of the subject is only an appearance (Aydin 2003, p. 82)²³⁸. Nietzsche’s critique of the belief in isolated, self-subsisting, and unchanging entities of any kind is crucial to his overall project of the affirmation of life. Many of the values constitutive of the denial of life are based on the belief in substance (as we shall see below) and so exposing these false assumptions is key to the task of transvaluating all values²³⁹. This does not entail that Nietzsche denies the existence of relatively stable structures or unities, only that they need to be thought as dynamic and derived unities.

This critique of the origins and nature of the erroneous belief in substance raises a number of questions germane to a comparison with Spinoza. We need to ask, in

237 “welche Alles ‘im Flusse’ sahen”.

238 There is a multiplicity of drives and affects behind the apparent unity of the I.

239 In FW 109 3.468f Nietzsche writes that the concept of substance is a way to deify nature and that his project is to redeem it and to naturalise humanity.

section III of the comparative chapter, to what extent and why they share the belief that there are no self-identical things, and, consequently, what the similarities and differences are in the various accounts they offer of the origin of this error.

Nietzsche's critique of the concept of "subject" is closely linked to his critique of substance and shows clearly the nature and importance of Nietzsche's turn to the body. In the context of 19th Century German philosophy, the notion of the subject plays an important role, shaped by Kant's critical philosophy. For Kant substance is a category²⁴⁰, and has its ground in the transcendental unity of the subject. Kant argues against the belief that the subject is a soul, i.e. an immortal substance. Instead, he speaks of the 'transcendental unity of apperception' (in his theoretical philosophy) and of an autonomous moral subject (in his practical philosophy). The transcendental ego, or subject, understood as "I think", is the basic condition of knowing, the "condition of the possibility of categories in general" and of their combination by the understanding (Heidegger 1988, pp. 128-9). The subject is the ground of all its determinations, of its unity in the multiplicity of its compartments, "the ground of the selfsameness of its own self" and accompanies all its representations (Heidegger 1988, p. 127). The notion of subject as the "determinant ego of apperception" is consequently fundamental to Fichte in his *Wissenschaftlehre* (Heidegger 1988, p. 130) and to Hegel, who argues that the true substance is the subject (Heidegger 1988, p. 127). In his practical philosophy Kant completes his description of the person as a moral subject. Next to the theoretical characterisation of the subject as self-consciousness, Kant now envisages the subject as a feeling and acting being (Heidegger 1988, pp. 131-2). In subjecting itself to itself as pure reason, the subject discloses itself as a "free, self-determining being" (Heidegger 1988, p. 135), an "individual factual ego" who acts (Heidegger 1988, p. 137).

What these Kantian incarnations of the notion of subject share is the assumption that the subject is a primary, non-derivative ground of unity. The subject or self,

240 Nietzsche wants to offer a naturalised understanding of what Kant called the transcendental conditions for the possibility of experience. He strives to offer a genetic account of our way of thinking. This is why he argues that the concept of substance has been developed (pre-)historically: because it proved useful (Aydin 2003, p. 49).

in Kant’s moral philosophy, is capable of standing back from its inclinations and choosing on the basis of reason alone (Lanier Anderson 2012, p. 204). Nietzsche takes issue with the assumptions of unity and autonomy, as well as with the belief that consciousness is the most important (or indeed the only) element composing the subject, and that the agent can act freely, in the sense of possessing free will (more on this in the section on free will below). Nietzsche’s understanding of the subject is not substance-oriented, but is instead focused on the plurality of pre-conscious drives and affects that constitute the self as a plurality²⁴¹. We must now consider the nihilistic values or “eternal idols” Nietzsche criticizes in order to open up the question of how we should understand the points of contact with Spinoza’s philosophy.

Teleology

For Nietzsche’s critical engagement with the notion of purposiveness, we can look at his arguments in GD Irrthümer 8 6.96:

Nobody is responsible for himself existing in the first place, that he is so and so conditioned, that he exists under these circumstances, in this environment. The fatality of his being cannot be extricated from the fatality of everything that was and will be. He is *not* the product of some special design, will, or purpose, he does not represent an attempt to achieve an ‘ideal of humanity’, ‘ideal of happiness’, or ‘ideal of morality’, – it is absurd to want to *devolve* his being onto some purpose or another. *We* have invented the concept of ‘purpose’: there *are no* purposes in reality ...²⁴² (modified translation)

241 For an account of various possible readings of the notion of subject in Nietzsche, see Lanier Anderson (2012).

242 “*Niemand* ist dafür verantwortlich, dass er überhaupt da ist, dass er so und so beschaffen ist, dass er unter diesen Umständen, in dieser Umgebung ist. Die Fatalität seines Wesens ist nicht herauszulösen aus der Fatalität alles dessen, was war und was sein wird. Er ist *nicht* die Folge einer eignen Absicht, eines Willens, eines Zwecks, mit ihm wird *nicht* der Versuch gemacht, ein „Ideal von Mensch“ oder ein „Ideal von Glück“ oder ein „Ideal von Moralität“ zu erreichen, – es ist absurd, sein Wesen in irgend einen Zweck hin *abwälzen* zu wollen. *Wir* haben den Begriff ‘Zweck’ *erfunden*: in der Realität *fehlt* der Zweck ...”.

1) What clues can we get for unpacking how Nietzsche understands teleology?
 2) What are the deleterious effects of the belief in purposiveness? and 3) How should we understand the notion of fatality (*Fatalität*), which Nietzsche opposes to design?

1) In this text purposiveness consists in the belief that human existence is the product of some special design and that people are designed in order to achieve a given ideal. This resonates with a Platonic, rather than an Aristotelian idea of final causes. Aristotle's understanding of teleology²⁴³ does not require an intelligent creator or a purpose outside nature (Physics 199b27-32). Instead, his emphasis is on principles of change internal to living beings, principles that are distinct from those that originate in thought (Physics 198a2-5). Still, Nietzsche's philosophy is opposed to Aristotle's on this point because Nietzsche is not committed to any pre-existing (metaphysical) nature or substance that determines what a living being can do. To understand²⁴⁴ living beings starting from a given goal contained within a (primary) substance impoverishes or simplifies our knowledge of the complex capacity to act of (living) bodies. The engagement with and critique of the Platonic understanding of teleology prompts the question of who could be responsible for design. The pronoun "nobody" (*Niemand*) seems to imply that teleology is based on the belief in some form of person or agent directing human existence. Nevertheless, Nietzsche includes under this rubric not only God, but also "society, parents or ancestors, not even *himself*"²⁴⁵ (GD Irrthümer 8 6.96). This formulation of teleology also implies the belief that human existence is somehow different from the rest of nature. As part of his project of naturalisation,

243 Aristotle speaks of three kinds of final causes: "a) completed natural substances or artifacts as the end results of processes of generation; b) functions performed by (parts of) natural substances, artifacts, or tools; and c) objects of desire as the aims of (deliberative) actions" (Leunissen 2010, p. 12).

244 It is important to situate this discussion in an epistemological context: final causes function as answers to the question "why?" (Leunissen 2010, p. 12).

245 "noch die Gesellschaft, noch seine Eltern und Vorfahren, noch *er selbst*". We may perhaps go further and say that Nietzsche's claim that humans are not the products of "a will" (*eines Willens*) can be read as the rejection of the notion of teleology characteristic of Schopenhauer's metaphysics: the world has no purpose, but the world as representation is given meaning by the fact that it is an expression of a single, unified underlying reality, the Will (Aydin 2003, p. 134). Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics can only lead to a dismissal of such a possibility.

Nietzsche is careful to emphasize that we must think human existence under the same category as the rest of nature, that of “fatality” (*Fatalität*). Since the notion of “purpose” cannot be applied to nature – “there *are* no purposes in reality”²⁴⁶— there is no reason to apply it to human existence either. A further question is why the notion of purpose has been invented. In FW 1 3.372 Nietzsche argues that the invention of *telois* stems from an acquired need to believe that there is a reason or meaning of existence²⁴⁷. We fail to see the illusory nature of purposes because we need illusions in order to give meaning to our existence and thus fail to understand adequately the nature of humans and their place in the world (MA 2 2.15).

2) Nietzsche criticizes not only the idea that we are designed in view of a moral purpose, but also the nature of that ideal. While the nature of this moral ideal will be considered more fully in section II, we must notice here that Nietzsche argues that it has detrimental effects on our self-understanding. To think human existence teleologically is to impoverish our understanding of it. Life is a far richer phenomenon than a teleological outlook can describe and an appeal to transcendent values such as “God” or “purpose” is the “biggest objection to existence so far”²⁴⁸ and an attack on the “*innocence* of becoming”²⁴⁹. The thesis that Nietzsche develops is that the absence of a creator also implies the absence of moral responsibility and therefore of blame, “immeasurable punishment and guilt”²⁵⁰ (GM II 22 5.332). We see here how Nietzsche’s critique of teleology is not aimed solely at exposing the fallacy of certain doctrines, but also at affirming existence: “this is how we begin to redeem the world”²⁵¹ (GD *Irrthümer* 8 6.97).

3) The opposition between “fatality” and teleology can be understood starting from Nietzsche’s claim about how we should understand people and nature: “A person is necessary, a person is a piece of fate, a person belongs to the whole, a

246 Perhaps a critique of the way the theory of evolution had been interpreted by some scientists, who claimed that changes in nature were driven by an immanent law of progress (more on this in section III).

247 A claim central to Nietzsche’s take on nihilism.

248 “der grösste Einwand gegen das Dasein”.

249 “die Unschuld des Werdens”.

250 “Unausmessbarkeit von Strafe und von Schuld”.

251 “damit erst erlösen wir die Welt”.

person only *is* in the whole” (GD Irrthümer 8 6.96)²⁵². This claim indicates that for Nietzsche we can understand human beings only if we consider them as a part of nature, and not as *causa sui*, or, in Spinoza’s words, “as a dominion within a dominion” (*imperium in imperio* EIIIpref II/137). It does not however show how Nietzsche understands necessity, other than that it is not the necessity of a final cause. According to FW 112 3.472f Nietzsche does not understand necessity as causal determinism either. His argument is that “cause” and “effect” give a description of the world, but do not explain it²⁵³. The question of how we should understand the concept of necessity will be explored in chapter III.

This critique also raises a number of questions with regard to the comparison with Spinoza. We must ask if the concepts of teleology they employ are similar and whether the harmful effects of this doctrine, as they see them, are the same. Both claim that teleology is an illusion and that we should understand the world as necessary. However we must ask whether the notions of “necessity” they use are identical or not.

Free will

The critique of the doctrine of free will²⁵⁴ is a constant throughout Nietzsche’s writings. He calls it a fundamental error (*Grundirrtum* - WS 12 2.547), an illusion (*Illusion* - MA 106 2.103) or a lie (*Lüge* - AC 38 6.210). Nietzsche employs at least two strategies in his critique of free will: the first is to show that the concept of free will itself is an absurdity and that it rests on faulty assumptions, while the second is to expose the origins of the concept, together with the purpose for which it is used, and to argue that this shows the notion of free will to be a life-negating value, i.e. a vengeful feeling (*Rach-gefühl* – EH weise 6 6.273).

252 “Man ist nothwendig, man ist ein Stück Verhängniss, man gehört zum Ganzen, man ist im Ganzen”

253 Regardless of Nietzsche’s critique of mechanism, which will be investigated in section III, he believes it is nonetheless an improvement on a teleological world-view.

254 Contra Schopenhauer, Nietzsche argues that the belief in a will that is simple, immediately given, underivable and intelligible is already an illusion: FW127 3.482f. See also Aydin 2003, pp. 131-3.

The first strategy can be exemplified by two lines of argumentation. First, Nietzsche argues that the notion of free will rests on the assumption of the existence of an independent agent, possessing the absolute freedom to do good or evil. He associates this understanding of free will with Kant’s and Schopenhauer’s notions of intelligible freedom (MA 39 2.62ff). Nietzsche’s point is that there is no independent, isolated agent disconnected from the world (MA 18 2.40; GM I 13 5.279), that there is no doer behind and distinct from the deed. This goes back to his critique of substance and the denial of the existence of a substantial subject as well as of subject-predicate grammar as an adequate explanation of reality. It also leads us to Nietzsche’s second line of argumentation, in which he stresses the necessity governing the world. There can be no free will or free actions because everything is necessary and things could not have happened otherwise (MA 39 2.63). Because humans are a part of nature, it is an error to distinguish between nature, acting out of necessity, and humans, acting out of a supposed free will (MA 102 2.99). The manner in which Nietzsche understands necessity can be said to vary throughout his writings²⁵⁵, but the one thing that is clear is that he believes freedom of the will to be an illusion.

The second strategy employed by Nietzsche in his attack on free will is to expose its origins and to argue that free will is a doctrine harmful to life. Nietzsche’s sustained denial of free will confronts him with the task of explaining why human beings believe they possess it. He argues that we are deceived by language into believing we are free, independent agents. The “philosophical mythology” of isolated substantial agents that grounds the doctrine of free will is a lie concealed within language. Through our mistaken assumption that “through words we grasp the true in things” we are misled into thinking that things are simpler than they are and that they are independent of the context that conditions them. Nietzsche writes that “Belief in freedom of will [...] has in language its constant evangelist

255 In MA 18 Nietzsche argues that we think we have free will because we do not accept the idea that things have causes. In *JGB* he is still committed to the notion of necessity but warns us not to objectify cause and effect: they are concepts used in order to describe reality, not in order to explain it. In *GD Irrthümer* 8 6.96f he writes that free will is nonsense because everything is fatality. For a full grasp of these arguments and why they differ, it is of course important to understand the targets of Nietzsche’s attacks in each of these works.

and advocate”²⁵⁶ (WS 11 2.547). This belief becomes detrimental when it is used by the priest in order to make humans sick, to bring about the “physiological ruin of humanity”²⁵⁷ (EH M 2 6.331). The priests develop the notions of blame and responsibility, used by powerless agents against the strong. Actions are no longer innocent, but are judged to be morally bad. Nietzsche argues that in doing so the priest strips becoming of its innocence (GD Irrthümer 7 6.95). Free will stands for a lingering vengeful feeling directed against life (EH weise 6 6.273).

We will examine in chapter III the question of how this relates to Spinoza’s critique of free will. In addressing this relation, we have to deal with two fundamental questions. 1) What are the consequences of this critique for the notions of subject and agency? and 2) How do they understand freedom, a notion they both still use, given that it cannot consist in the exercise of the faculty of free will?

The moral world order

Nietzsche understands the concept of a moral world order²⁵⁸ to be the belief in the existence of an eternal and immutable will (belonging to God) which decrees that every human act must be rewarded or punished according to the degree to which it has obeyed the divine commandments (M 563 3.328; FW 357 3.597ff; GM III 27 408ff or AC 25 and 26 6.193ff). To believe in a moral world order is to look “at nature as if it were proof of the goodness and care of a god”²⁵⁹ and to interpret history as the unfolding of “some divine reason”²⁶⁰ aiming at the realization of “ultimate moral purposes”²⁶¹ (FW 357 3.600). The concept of a moral world order is a delusion, since there is no eternal necessity which decrees that every guilt will be atoned or paid for (M 563 3.328). Moral categories are an interpretation of the world (in the Christian case a particularly deleterious interpretation), and it is absurd to believe that they are embedded in the structure of reality.

256 “Der Glaube an die Freiheit des Willens [...] hat in der Sprache seinen beständigen Evangelisten und Anwalt”.

257 “die Menschheit physiologisch zu ruinieren”.

258 “eine sittliche Weltordnung”.

259 “Die Natur ansehen, als ob sie ein Beweis für die Güte und Obhut eines Gottes sei”.

260 “einer göttlichen Vernunft”.

261 “sittlicher Schlussabsichten”.

The problems Nietzsche considers to be associated with the notion of moral world order, closely related to Spinoza’s worries in Elapp, are threefold: it is demonstrably false, it is a deliberate attempt to undermine a naturalistic understanding of the world, and it promotes the negation of life.

This doctrine is problematic not only because the concepts it employs are questionable, but also because, as Nietzsche argues, “the history of the world is the experimental refutation of the principle of the so-called moral world order”²⁶² (EH Schicksal 3 6.367). The fact that the doctrine of the moral world order can be criticized by reason or experience is what led Kant, in Nietzsche’s estimation, to posit an indemonstrable world, beyond the possibility of criticism, in which morality rules. Kant believed in morality *in spite of* the fact that nature and history contradict it (M Vorrede 3 3.14). The concept of a moral world order is contrary to naturalism because it attempts to undermine an accurate understanding of cause and effect through the introduction of spurious causes it presents as effective. The notion of sin, presented as an efficient cause, is used to explain events that have purely natural causes (AC 25 6.194; AC 49 6.228). The priest argues for the necessity of a saviour instead of a doctor for those who are sick²⁶³, hereby misunderstanding the nature of sickness and making it impossible to diagnose and overcome it. The doctrine of a moral world order is therefore employed at the expense of the healthy developments of life (AC 26 6.195), it is aimed at devaluing nature and natural values (AC 38 6.210) and at contaminating becoming with the notions of punishment or guilt (GD Irrtümer 7 7.95). The disempowering effects of the belief in a moral world order, and of other nihilistic values, will be discussed further in the comparative section.

In relation to Spinoza, we must ask whether their respective critiques of the moral world order and of divine providence contribute to the formulation of similar accounts of reality and how these critiques promote the process of empowerment.

262 “die ganze Geschichte ist ja die Experimental-Widerlegung vom Satz der sogenannten „sittlichen Weltordnung“ .

263 For how Nietzsche understands sickness, see section II.

Altruism

Nietzsche's critique of altruism, coupled with his frequent positive discussions of egoism, can appear surprising in light of his critique of the concept of an enduring subject. If there is no immutable essence of living beings (humans included) then who or what is being egoistic or selfish? Nietzsche's answer is the self, i.e. a dynamic multiplicity of drives and affects, an entity that can be understood only in the context of its synchronic and diachronic relations to its environment. Nietzsche does not deny the unity or existence of the self, but strives to re-shape our understanding of the processes through which the self is constituted. This constellation of drives seeks growth and acquisition, but is oftentimes misled as to how growth and empowerment can be pursued.

What are altruism and egoism? In 1881, Nietzsche argues that we have so far been misled in our understanding of these concepts. We have so far been oriented towards the well-being of society, not of ourselves as specific individuals, and so we have failed to see how best to cultivate ourselves given our specific nature and body. A similar critique of altruism and egoism is present later in Nietzsche, but it is now conducted in the context of his diagnosis of humans as the "sick animal"²⁶⁴. Nietzsche argues in *GM* and *GD* that, while egoism and altruism might seem opposed superficially, they are only different manifestations of the same desire for power. Nietzsche's analysis of morality aims to unmask the will to power hidden behind the apparently innocuous claims to self-sacrifice and love for our neighbour characteristic of altruism (Richardson 1996, p. 152). The priest uses altruism because he seeks to obtain mastery over the strong, but cannot obtain it through direct means. The priest must therefore enfeeble the strong (by making the strong less capable of pursuing and expressing their power, i.e. making them sick and driving them to hate "the drive for life"²⁶⁵, and by imposing his own values on them: domesticating them (*Zähmung*), making them ill (*Krankmachen*) (*GD* Verbesserer 2 6.99). Altruism is the expression of a "merely physiological valuation"²⁶⁶ characterized by "the feeling of impotence, the lack of the great

264 Both accounts will be considered in more detail in chapter III, section IV.II.d.

265 "die Antriebe zum Leben".

266 "ein bloß physiologisches Werthurtheil".

affirming feelings of power”²⁶⁷ (14[29] 13.231)²⁶⁸.

Nietzsche’s assessment of altruism is twofold: he criticizes it as an inadequate interpretation of a phenomenon that consists in the striving for power rather than self-sacrifice; and, perhaps most importantly, he criticizes this inadequate interpretation as disempowering, either directly causing enfeeblement or by masking the existing state of *décadence*. Spinoza²⁶⁹ and Nietzsche argue that both altruism and a naïve understanding of egoism must be replaced by “thoughtful egoism”. The question of how we should understand this important point of contact will be investigated further in chapter III.

Evil

Evil is last of the values I will consider. In MA 96 2.92f Nietzsche argues that evil is whatever goes against custom, whatever is not in accordance with it. Later, in JGB 201 5.121ff, he argues that people perceive as evil what is exceptional, whatever raises the individual above the herd and frightens the neighbours. In both cases, evil characterizes the actions of a person who is stronger, and also more profound (*stärker, tiefer* - JGB 295 5.239) than those around her. Nietzsche argues that not only is evil a sign of strength, but that it is either just as useful for the enhancement of humanity as what we consider good (JGB 44 5.61), or indeed has an even higher value than the good for the enhancement of all life (JGB 2 5.16). Given that evil is a manifestation of strength, Nietzsche asks why we have come to consider it morally reprehensible. Nietzsche’s answer to this question of the genealogy of moral values is the well-known “slave revolt in morality” (JGB 195 5.116f).

267 “das Gefühl der Ohnmacht, der Mangel der großen bejahenden Gefühle der Macht”.

268 The full passage reads: “Das Übergewicht einer altruistischen Werthungsweise ist die Folge eines Instinktes für Mißrathen-sein. Das Werthurtheil auf unterstem Grunde sagt hier: ‘ich bin nicht viel werth’: ein bloß physiologisches Werthurtheil, noch deutlicher: das Gefühl der Ohnmacht, der Mangel der großen bejahenden Gefühle der Macht (in Muskeln, Nerven, Bewegungscentren). Dies Werthurtheil übersetzt sich, je nach der Cultur dieser Schichten, in ein moralisches oder religiöses Urtheil”.

269 Nietzsche’s claim that Spinoza fails to formulate an adequate account of “thoughtful egoism” will be discussed in chapter III.

Nietzsche's investigation into the origins of the notion of evil is guided by the principle that the source for values should not be looked for beyond this world (GM Vorrede 3 5.249). The question of origins needs to be answered by giving the conditions under which the concept of evil was invented. Even if philosophers have placed more value on good than on evil (GM Vorrede 6 5.253), Nietzsche believes the two are not opposed in nature, they do not stand for an essential, irreconcilable duality (JGB 2 5.16). In *JGB* and later in *GM*, Nietzsche argues that good and evil are values produced by the ascetic priest, values born out of and suited to weakness and exhaustion (JGB 260 5.211). The good/evil opposition is contrasted to the good/bad values of master morality. Master morality is self-affirmative, it is not bound up with the doctrine of free will, and good is the primary value, while bad is defined only in relation to the good. Good refers to "elevated, proud states of soul"²⁷⁰ and to the "noble type of person"²⁷¹ who "creates values"²⁷² while bad means "despicable" (*verächtlich*) and refers to "people who are cowardly, apprehensive, and petty"²⁷³. Slave morality, centred on the concepts of good and evil, is reactive. In this type of morality, predicated on the notion of free will and responsibility, the concept of evil comes first, while the good is secondary. This morality is "a morality of utility" (*Nützlichkeits-Moral*) and evil designates what "is perceived as something powerful and dangerous"²⁷⁴ while good refers to people who display "pity, the obliging, helpful hand, the warm heart, patience, industriousness, humility and friendliness"²⁷⁵. The weak need the concept of evil in order to take imaginary revenge on the strong (Geuss 2011, p. 20). In order to call an action, and derivatively the doer, evil, one must assume both that there is a doer behind the deed and that the doer possesses free will (GM I 13 5.279), i.e. that she could have done otherwise. We have already seen that Nietzsche rejects both of these assumptions. He argues that evil is a value stemming from a

270 "die erhobenen stolzen Zustände der Seele" (JGB 260 5.209).

271 "Die vornehme Art Mensch" (JGB 260 5.209).

272 "ist wertheschaffend" (JGB 260 5.209).

273 "Der Feige, der Ängstliche, der Kleinliche" (JGB 260 5.209).

274 "die Macht und Gefährlichkeit hinein empfunden" (JGB 260 5.211).

275 "das Mitleiden, die gefällige hülfbereite Hand, das warme Herz, die Geduld, der Fleiss, die Demuth, die Freundlichkeit" (JGB 260 5.211).

mistaken interpretation of reality²⁷⁶ and that it is fundamentally an expression of physiological weakness. Evil is not a substance, or a thing existing in the world, but an imaginary characterization used by the weak in order to devalue or deform the actions of the strong (Geuss 2011, p. 23). In the comparative section we must ask how Nietzsche’s valuation of moral values compares to Spinoza’s, as well as how their understanding of the origin of these values differs.

After this discussion of decadent values, we can identify three major questions that run through Nietzsche’s analyses and that can help us crystallise the points of convergence and divergence with Spinoza: 1) What are the origins of these values and why have they been perpetuated? 2) Why are these values intrinsically flawed? and 3) Why do these values have a disempowering effect?

In the next section, I will tackle the question of what the nature of the turn to the body is for Nietzsche, a turn understood as a response to the diagnosis of degeneration. The importance of turn to the body is twofold. First, it plays a crucial role in Nietzsche’s project of describing and diagnosing the cause or ground of *décadence*. Second, it provides the means for the development of a philosophical discourse that avoids the pitfalls of metaphysical illusions and forms the basis for the formulation of an account of empowerment and life-affirmation that is conducive to overcoming or resisting nihilism.

II. The nature of Nietzsche’s turn to the body

In order to gain a deeper appreciation of the complexity of Nietzsche’s turn to the body and why it constitutes a philosophical physiology, our inquiry will be structured under three major headings. First, we need to uncover the richness of the conceptual structure of Nietzsche’s philosophical physiology. This task requires a better understanding of what he understands by ‘body’, by ‘physiology’, and then to inquire into how the body expresses itself and what the structure of Nietzsche’s

²⁷⁶ Value created by those who “for the first time coined an insult out of the word ‘world’” (JGB 195 5.117). Evil, sin and guilt are not mere misunderstandings, they are deeply rooted in us and correspond to somatic realities (Geuss 2011, p. 18).

philosophical physiology, its key concepts and its limits are. Second, we must distinguish between, and investigate the philosophical functions of physiology which, according to my reading, are the following: interpretative, diagnostic and normative. Third, we can gain a better awareness of the nature of philosophical physiology by considering its application in three key fields of interest for Nietzsche: art, morality and conscious thought.

1. The conceptual structure of the turn to the body.

1.a. The concept of “body”

In order to understand the conceptual structure of Nietzsche’s turn to the body it is imperative to begin by focusing on the notion of body (*Leib*). My thesis is that there are three ways in which Nietzsche uses the concept of body: interpretative (descriptive), diagnostic and normative. In order to substantiate this claim, I will focus on two chapters from *Thus spoke Zarathustra: On the Hinterworldly (Von der Hinterweltern)* and *On the Despisers of the Body (Von den Verächtern des Leibes)*.

We can identify the first, descriptive function in the argument leveled against those who claim that the essence of the human individual, of the subject, is not the body but the soul or the spirit:

Body am I through and through, and nothing besides; and soul is just a word for something of the body.

The body is a great reason, a multiplicity with one sense, a war and a peace, one herd and one shepherd.

Your small reason, what you call “spirit” is also a tool of your body, my brother, a small work- and plaything of your great reason.²⁷⁷ (Z I Verächtern 4.39)

277 “Leib bin ich ganz und gar, und Nichts ausserdem; und Seele ist nur ein Wort für ein Etwas am Leibe. / Der Leib ist eine grosse Vernunft, eine Vielheit mit Einem Sinne, ein Krieg und ein Frieden, eine Heerde und ein Hirt. / Werkzeug deines Leibes ist auch deine kleine Vernunft, mein Bruder, die du ‘Geist’ nennst, ein kleines Werk- und Spielzeug deiner grossen Vernunft.”

Nietzsche draws a distinction between the body (*Leib*), or “great reason” (*grosse Vernunft*), which he will later in this chapter also refer to as the self (*das Selbst*), and the “spirit” (*Geist*) or “small reason” (*kleine Vernunft*). This relation is asymmetrical, since Nietzsche argues that the spirit is only an instrument of the body, which he understands as a creative multiplicity with one sense. It follows that, if we wish to have a better understanding of ourselves, we must strive to know the body rather than the superficial phenomenon we call the spirit²⁷⁸. With reference to the decadent values considered in section I, Nietzsche argues that we must understand their creation starting from the body. “It was the body that despaired of the body”²⁷⁹ (Z I Hinterweltern 4.36) and created “the other world”²⁸⁰ (Z I Hinterweltern 4.36) together with the associated life-denying values. So what kind of body has created these life-denying values? This brings us to the second, diagnostic function the body plays in Nietzsche’s thinking.

It was suffering and incapacity that created all ‘hinterworlds’, and that brief madness of happiness that only the most suffering person experiences

Weariness that wants its ultimate with one great leap, with a death leap; a poor unknowing weariness that no longer even wants to will: that created all gods and hinterworlds.²⁸¹ (Z I Hinterweltern 4.36)

Building on the interpretative usage of the concept body, Nietzsche argues that various ideals should be diagnosed in terms of the circumstances and

278 The fact that the concept of body plays a pivotal role in Nietzsche’s philosophy has been acknowledged by many commentators. An example of the privileged role this notion plays in the economy of Nietzsche’s thinking can be found in Heidegger’s study. Heidegger argues that Nietzsche’s philosophy can be understood in the wake of Descartes’ reformulation of metaphysics as metaphysics of the subject, i.e. the substance or underlying support of being. Whereas Descartes understands the subject as the spiritual ego, Nietzsche sees the subject as body. According to Heidegger, Nietzsche “fashions for the subject an absolute power to enjoy what is true and what is false” (Heidegger 1961, II, 199). This means that the subject, as body, is, according to Heidegger in a position of dominance over other beings.

279 “Der Leib war’s, der am Leibe verzweifelte”.

280 “jene Welt”.

281 “Leiden war’s und Unvermögen – das schuf alle Hinterwelten; und jener kurze Wahnsinn des Glücks, den nur der Leidendste erfährt. / Müdigkeit, die mit Einem Sprunge zum Letzten will, mit einem Todessprunge, eine arme unwissende Müdigkeit, die nicht einmal mehr wollen will: die schuf alle Götter und Hinterwelten.”.

Lebensbedingungen that generate them, of the needs they satisfy, and on whether they are symptoms of ascending or declining life. In the creation of decadent values and the contempt for the body, Nietzsche detects a paradoxical process: the body turns against itself and creates values that inhibit its power of acting, its power to create. The key concepts here are “suffering”, “incapacity” and “weariness”: they indicate the incapacity of the body to express itself, its own power. The sick body is separated from its power to act and creates values that might give it some degree of comfort, but do nothing to alleviate the sickness and might even deepen its suffering²⁸². Nevertheless, the descriptive and diagnostic roles played by the concept of “body” also offer Nietzsche a manner of thinking the process of self-overcoming, of thinking the body not only as sick, but also as potentially healthy.

Hear my brothers, hear the voice of the healthy body: a more honest and purer voice is this. More honestly and more purely speaks the healthy body, the perfect and right-angled body, and it speaks of the meaning of the earth.²⁸³ (Z I Hinterweltern 4.38)

What does “a more honest and purer voice” mean for Nietzsche, and why it is characteristic of the “healthy body”? What is a “healthy body” and how does it relate to Nietzsche’s understanding of sickness and degeneration?

The main thrust of Nietzsche’s arguments in the texts discussed here is to show that metaphysical “other-worldly” notions and values are a fiction, and that a more adequate manner of understanding ourselves is through philosophical physiology, the topic of the following sub-sections. However, the way we understand ourselves and therefore our choice of philosophical vocabulary, whether metaphysical or not, is not the result of an arbitrary decision. It is the symptom of ascending or declining life. A “more honest and purer voice” cannot be obtained unless there is a change or transition in the physiological ground that makes possible the creation of life-affirming values.

282 Possibility discussed in chapter III in relation to *GM*.

283 “Hört mir lieber, meine Brüder, auf die Stimme des gesunden Leibes: eine redlichere und reinere Stimme ist diess. / Redlicher redet und reiner der gesunde Leib, der vollkommne und rechtwinklige: und er redet vom Sinn der Erde”.

This shows the importance of creating for ourselves a “healthy body”, and also warns us against understanding the distinction between healthy and sick as an opposition between two states. We need to be sensitive to Nietzsche’s uses of the comparative form of the adjectives “honest” (*redlichere*) and “pure” (*reinere*). The notion of health (possessing itself various meanings) is, in many cases, not opposed to, but rather incorporates “sickness” or “degeneration”. The difference between health and sickness is one of degree. Nietzsche’s emphasis is on the process of overcoming degeneration, the transition from sickness to health best characterised by the notion of “convalescence” (*Genesen*; cf. Z I Hinterweltern 4.36). In the comparative section we must ask to what extent this is a process similar to the transition from inadequate to adequate knowledge described by Spinoza. This is a transition which is never completed, but rather indicative of a process characterised by ineradicable and fundamental openness and incompleteness.

Nietzsche does not simply condemn or reject sickness:

Zarathustra is gentle to the sick. Indeed, he is not angered by their ways of comfort and ingratitude. May they become convalescents and overcomers and create for themselves a higher body!²⁸⁴ (Z I Hinterweltern 4.37)

What is the connection between the “healthy body” and “higher body”? Important clues for this are given in Z I Von Kind und Ehe 4.90: “You should build over and beyond yourself. But first I want you to build yourselves, square in body and soul”²⁸⁵. When Nietzsche speaks of building oneself, “square in body and soul”²⁸⁶, he uses the same word (*rechtwinklig*) as when he speaks of the “healthy body”: “the healthy body, the perfect and right-angled body”²⁸⁷ (Z I Hinterweltern 4.37). If this is indeed an indication that in Z I Von Kind und Ehe Nietzsche has in mind the “healthy body”, then we can ask whether we should understand the distinction

284 “Milde ist Zarathustra den Kranken. Wahrlich, er zürnt nicht ihren Arten des Trostes und Undanks. Mögen sie Genesende werden und Überwindende und einen höheren Leib sich schaffen!”.

285 “Über dich sollst du hinausbauen. Aber erst musst du mir selber gebaut sein, rechtwinklig an Leib und Seele.”

286 “rechtwinklig an Leib und Seele”.

287 “der gesunde Leib, der vollkommne und rechtwinklige”.

between the “healthy” and the “higher” body as the distinction between “building yourselves” and building “over and beyond yourself”. I submit that this holds only if we understand these two “building” activities as two complementary descriptions of the “body”. In other words, the “higher body” must be understood as a capacity to continually (re-create) oneself: “You should create a higher body, a first movement, a wheel rolling out of itself – a creator you should create”²⁸⁸ (Z I Von Kind und Ehe 4.90) and the capacity to create values that go beyond oneself, the capacity to shape more than one’s own person²⁸⁹. This double ability to create is a consequence of the power of the “healthy body” to incorporate sickness and degeneration. This conclusion is supported by Zarathustra’s claim that he is “gentle” (*Milde*) to the sick and hopes that they may “become convalescents and overcomers and create for themselves a higher body!”²⁹⁰ (Z I Hinterweltern 4.37).

This thesis is problematized by Zarathustra’s claim that the despisers of the body are “no longer capable of creating beyond” themselves²⁹¹ (Z I Verächtern 4.41). The fact that people have become despisers of the body is symptomatic of a physiological condition in which the body strives for its own disempowerment and destruction²⁹². The difference between this text and the ones considered above is that now Nietzsche describes a different attitude towards degeneration. The despisers of the body are no longer capable of overcoming themselves and must go-under (*Untergehen*). The tension between these two perspectives on *décadence* is intrinsic to Nietzsche’s normative thinking and will be further investigated in the comparative section. This must be situated within the broader question of what role (conscious) thinking about the body can have in a normative account aimed at uncovering the possibility of life-affirmation and enhancement.

In order to tackle the question of how Nietzsche understands the body it is helpful to look at the way Schopenhauer understood the body, given the latter’s

288 “Einen höheren Leib sollst du schaffen, eine erste Bewegung, ein aus sich rollendes Rad, – einen Schaffenden sollst du schaffen”.

289 A key element if Nietzsche’s turn to the body is to have consequences for his politics.

290 “Genesende werden und Überwindende und einen höheren Leib sich schaffen!”.

291 “Denn nicht mehr vermögt ihr über euch hinaus zu schaffen”.

292 “Untergehn will euer Selbst, und darum wurdet ihr zu Verächtern des Leibes!” (Z I Verächtern 4.40f).

considerable influence on Nietzsche. We find in Schopenhauer’s philosophy three ways of understanding the body: a) as the starting point for everybody’s intuition of the world and as the object of the senses: the everyday perception of our body among many other bodies or objects in the world (WWV I 5 and 22); b) as the object of scientific study; and c) as “my” body (WWV I 119-120): a collection of sensations and affects which I grasp as specific to me, as my own²⁹³. This last point plays a central role in Schopenhauer’s arguments, in Book II, volume I of *WWV*, in support of his metaphysics. There, he claims that our first-person feelings and emotions point to a fundamental reality, i.e. the will, beyond the grasp of conscious rational thought. All these three views play a role in Nietzsche’s take on the body, even if Nietzsche is highly critical of Schopenhauer. Nietzsche claims that our everyday perception of our body (just like any other perception) is a simplified interpretation of reality because our perception is geared towards our practical goals. Our perception of our bodies is a simplification because it is a product of our language and of our conscious thought. Schopenhauer shares Nietzsche’s distrust of the knowledge provided by language and reason²⁹⁴, and, due to his metaphysics, is committed to the view that any understanding of our body as representation is incomplete and therefore insufficient. Both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche are critical of the way the body is portrayed in science. While they are aware of the advances in the life sciences of their periods and are greatly interested in them, they are also sceptical of a number of scientific claims and of the scientific attitude as a whole²⁹⁵. Schopenhauer and Nietzsche are interested in going beyond a simplified view of the body, but the way they formulate the overcoming of this view is where they differ fundamentally. Schopenhauer argues that “my” body points to a single underlying metaphysical reality, the will, which is the same in all existing things. He is committed to two theses: 1) an epistemological thesis: we have unproblematic and privileged access to our body and 2) a metaphysical

293 The first two meanings make the body the key to understanding the world as representation, while the last makes it key to understanding the world as will (Dörpinghaus 2000, p. 17).

294 See the section on conscious thought for more on this topic.

295 “Wie kalt und fremd sind uns bisher die Welten, welche die Wissenschaft entdeckte! Wie verschieden ist z.B. der Leib, wie wir ihn empfinden, sehen, fühlen, fürchten, bewundern und der ‘Leib’ wie ihn der Anatom uns lehrt!” (14[2] 9.625) or “Wie tief-fremd ist uns die durch die Wissenschaft entdeckte Welt!” (12[24] 9.580).

thesis: the access to our body gives us access to the metaphysical essence of the world. Nietzsche denies that we have privileged access to our bodies and is highly critical of Schopenhauer's metaphysics of will. Nietzsche holds that our bodies are epistemologically opaque to us and yet that they drive our actions and our conscious thinking. Why, then, if we have no (or very limited) knowledge of the body, does Nietzsche claim that the body plays such an important role and how does he know this? In other words, why does the body have methodological priority if it is epistemologically opaque? Because he rejects metaphysics, Nietzsche cannot argue that the body has methodological priority due to its privileged ontological or metaphysical status, as Schopenhauer did. My thesis, following Deleuze, is that we should understand the turn to the body as the result of Nietzsche's critique and dissatisfaction with conscious thought (Deleuze 1981, p. 28). Our thought, structured according to the metaphysical illusions considered in section I, offers an insufficient, impoverished and superficial account of reality, of the richness and multiplicity of becoming (FW 354 3.593)²⁹⁶. Nietzsche strives to discover new, and more adequate, ways of thinking about change and becoming. His turn to the body is not driven by a strong epistemological thesis about the nature of the world or of the body. It is not a claim to explain the fabric of reality, but rather an attempt to think through and outside the traditional metaphysical discourse in a way that is sensitive to the context in which conscious thought arises. In order to formulate a new, life-affirming perspective, we need to understand conscious thought as an organ of the body. This means we need to view it as a sign or a symptom of unknown, pre-conscious processes. Nietzsche's claim is that we are aware only of a small part of the processes that structure our thinking (see M 119 3.113).

The turn to the body has two dimensions: it exposes the limits of the traditional, metaphysical discourse and serves as an imperative to develop a new philosophical discourse free of nihilistic values. It is important to highlight that in order for the concept of the body to do the philosophical work Nietzsche needs it to do, it must be formulated using the key notion of power, understood as the capacity to produce effects. This helps explain the shift Nietzsche announces in his thinking

296 "eine grosse gründliche Verderbniss, Fälschung, Veroberflächlichung und Generalisation".

on the body: “It [the body] does not say I, but *does P*”²⁹⁷ (Z Verächtern 4.39 – my italics). He is dissatisfied with the accounts of power, spontaneity, dynamism and, more broadly, of becoming given by substance metaphysics. His focus on activity and the endogenous power of the body to act, together with an emphasis on the importance of uncovering the specific nature and power to act of each body, is similar to Spinoza’s and must be investigated in the comparative section. This claim also raises the question, considered in this section, of how we should understand “activity” within Nietzsche’s thought.

Before ending this section, we must note that Nietzsche does not use the concept of body in order to describe only the individual body of human beings. A society or a culture can just as well be analysed as a multiplicity of drives or instincts that can be life-enhancing or -denying. Nietzsche therefore applies physiological language and interpretations to supra-individual phenomena: the social organism, Christianity, Buddhism, Antiquity, to name just a few²⁹⁸.

1.b. Philosophical physiology and its limits

Müller-Lauter has argued that we should understand the concept of physiology in Nietzsche in three manners: a) the meaning it has in the sciences of Nietzsche’s time; b) the somatic: the organic functions, bodily sensations and affects that shape humans, even if they are not conscious of them; and c) a way of understanding physiological processes as the struggles between wills to power that interpret one another²⁹⁹ (Müller-Lauter 1999a, p. 13; Aydin 2011, p. 108). This reading is supported by passages such as:

Psychology (doctrine of affects) as morphology of the will to power (not “happiness” as motive) / Reduction of metaphysical values. / Physiology of the will to power³⁰⁰ (13[2] 13.214)

297 “die sagt nicht Ich, aber thut Ich”.

298 See 11[85] 9.473; 34[84] 11.447; 24[1] 13.615.

299 This last meaning has also been the focus of Rehberg’s article: “will to power and physiology belong together as virtual synonyms for each other” (Rehberg 2002, p. 39).

300 “Psychologie (Affektenlehre) als Morphologie des Willens zur Macht. (Nicht „Glück“ als Motiv) / Die metaphysischen Werthe reduzirt. / Physiologie des Willens zur Macht”.

On the self-overcoming of nihilism. / 7. Will to Power: psychological consideration. / 8. Will to power: physiological consideration. / 9. Will to power: historical-sociological consideration”³⁰¹ (13[4] 13.215).

If this interpretation holds, it has the advantage that it can serve as the starting point for showing how Nietzsche’s physiology is philosophical, incorporating the notions of will to power and activity so important to his thought. Our task in this section is to further unpack Nietzsche’s complex notion of philosophical physiology, together with the limits of this perspective.

A fundamental role of physiology is to demystify our understanding of various phenomena³⁰². Nietzsche argues that metaphysical illusions have caused us to misunderstand phenomena by projecting moral and metaphysical ideals onto them³⁰³, and that behind various phenomena there are physiological conditions or facts (*Tatsachen / Zustände*) that have shaped both individuals and cultures. In order to describe these physiological conditions, Nietzsche speaks of processes (*Vorgänge*), thus emphasizing the dynamic character behind apparently static realities. These processes must be considered in the context of “complex economies of forces and values, or multiplicities” (Rehberg 2002, p. 39) that Nietzsche attempts to put into philosophical discourse using the vocabulary of drives and instincts.

301 “*Von der Selbstüberwindung des Nihilismus.*/ 7. Der Wille zur Macht: psychologische Betrachtung. / 8. Der Wille zur Macht: physiologische Betrachtung. / 9. Der Wille zur Macht: historisch-sociologische Betrachtung”.

302 The list of phenomena whose physiological nature Nietzsche aims to uncover is substantial and includes art (7[2] 7.137; 19[79] 7.446), affects (16[42] 7.408; 7[87] 10.272 or 25[185] 11.64), thought (6[433] 9.309; 7[94] 10.274; 34[124] 11.462), democratic taste (GT Vorrede 1.15f), morality (6[445] 9.313; 7[125] 10.284; 7[5] 12.279), society and individuals (11[85] 9.473; 34[84] 11.447), language (34[124] 11.462), philosophy (GD Sokrates 2 6.67) or genius (M 263 3.210). In EH, Nietzsche also refers to his own physiological constitution (EH klug 1 6.278; EH klug 2 6.281).

303 “Was ist Moralität! Ein Mensch, ein Volk hat eine physiologische Veränderung erlitten, empfindet diese im Gemeingefühl und deutet sie sich in der Sprache seiner Affekte und nach dem Grade seiner Kenntnisse aus, ohne zu merken, daß der Sitz der Veränderung in der Physis ist. Wie als ob einer Hunger hat und meint, mit Begriffen und Gebräuchen, mit Lob und Tadel ihn zu beschwichtigen!” (11[103] 9.478).

The reference to physiological processes as what is essential (*wesentliche*) in things³⁰⁴ begs the question of whether Nietzsche does not, through his use of physiology, reintroduce metaphysics into his philosophy. This interpretation would not, however, do justice to the context in which Nietzsche makes this claim:

Also in a passion, a drive, we understand only the intellectual process – not the physiological, essential, but the small sensation therein.³⁰⁵ (11[75] 9.470).

Nietzsche’s emphasis in this text is not on the positive content of physiological knowledge which may reveal to us the essence of things, but rather on the contrast between physiology (a more empowering and life-affirming perspective, as I will argue in chapter III) and the conscious, rational understanding of our affective life. While there is an ineluctable anthropomorphic remainder in physiology, seen as an organisational (organic or organismic) model of will to power, Nietzsche’s use of physiology is defined by its striving to overcome antropomorphism through emphasizing our knowledge of the relation to the unknown (to reality), rather than metaphysical knowledge of reality.

Considerations regarding the use of physiology as a form of knowledge or interpretation must situate the physiological approach in relation to the targets of Nietzsche’s critiques: metaphysics and morality. Then, it must proceed by outlining the advantages of physiology over other interpretations of reality. Physiology is supposed to lead to a perspective different from that of metaphysics and morality. This is a fundamental tenet of Nietzsche’s philosophy, present throughout his works:

Here is the end of that naïve metaphysics: and the physiology of plants

304 “Auch an einer Leidenschaft, einem Triebe begreifen wir nur den intellektuellen Vorgang daran – nicht das physiologische, wesentliche, sondern das Bischen Empfindung dabei. Alles zu Willen aufzulösen – sehr naive Verdrehung! – da freilich wäre alles verständlicher! Das war aber immer die Tendenz, alles in einen intellektuellen oder empfindenden Vorgang zu reduzieren – z.B. auf Zwecke usw.”(11[75] 9.470.).

305 “Auch an einer Leidenschaft, einem Triebe begreifen wir nur den intellektuellen Vorgang daran – nicht das physiologische, wesentliche, sondern das Bischen Empfindung dabei.”.

and animals, geology, unorganic chemistry lead their disciples to a wholly different view of nature.³⁰⁶ (BA IV 1.712)

“Enmity will not bring an end to enmity, friendship brings an end to enmity”: this is how the Buddha’s teaching begins – this is *not* the voice of morality, this is the voice of physiology.³⁰⁷ (EH weise 6 6.272; see also 3[10] 9.50; M 453 3.274; 7[5] 12.279 or JGB 15 5.29).

The relation between physiological and moral or metaphysical perspectives is one of conflict. The moral perspective, which is exclusive and tyrannical (van Tongeren 1984, p. 71), does not accept the physiological interpretation of events³⁰⁸. Nietzsche’s reaction is to argue that physiological point of view is meant to replace³⁰⁹ moral, political or aesthetic interpretations of events:

Wagner has become impossible to me from beginning to end, because he cannot walk, let alone dance. / But these are physiological judgments, not aesthetic: now – I no longer have any aesthetics!³¹⁰ (7[7] 12.285)

What does it mean today to “turn out badly”? First of all physiologically: no longer politically.³¹¹ (5[71] 12.216)

The replacement of metaphysical and moral perspectives with a physiological interpretation is encouraged by Nietzsche only to the extent to which physiology

306 “Hier ist es mit jener naiven Metaphysik zu Ende: und die Physiologie der Pflanzen und Thiere, die Geologie, die unorganische Chemie zwingt ihre Jünger zu einer ganz veränderten Betrachtung der Natur.”

307 “‘Nicht durch Feindschaft kommt Feindschaft zu Ende, durch Freundschaft kommt Feindschaft zu Ende’: das steht am Anfang der Lehre Buddha’s – so redet nicht die Moral, so redet die Physiologie.”

308 “Da macht man die Ohren zu gegen alle Physiologie und decretirt für sich insgeheim ‘ich will davon, dass der Mensch noch etwas Anderes ist, ausser Seele und Form, Nichts hören!’ ‘Der Mensch unter der Haut’ ist allen Liebenden ein Greuel und Ungedanke, eine Gottes- und Liebeslästerung.” (FW 59 3.423).

309 Replacing does not mean rejection or denial; otherwise physiology would replicate the exclusionary, life-denying effects of morality.

310 “Wagner vom Anfang bis zum Ende ist mir unmöglich geworden, weil er nicht gehen kann, geschweige denn tanzen. / Aber das sind physiologische Urtheile, keine aesthetische: nur – habe ich keine Aesthetik mehr!”

311 “Was heißt jetzt ‘schlechtweggekommen’? Vor Allem physiologisch: nicht mehr politisch.”

is able to provide a perspective that does justice to the dynamic character of becoming and does not subordinate it to the illusions of substance ontology. Understanding the body as an originary multiplicity, Nietzsche hopes, avoids this danger and may lead to the affirmation and enhancement of life³¹² by giving us a better chance to describe dynamic processes.

Nietzsche is aware of the difficulties of speaking about physiological processes. In M 119 3.113 he raises the issue of whether physiological processes are unknown to us:

[...] but do I have to add [...] that our moral judgments and evaluations too are only images and fantasies based on a physiological process unknown to us, a kind of acquired language for designating certain nervous stimuli?³¹³

and in 11[128] 9.487³¹⁴ he suggests that what we think we know about physiology is in fact only a form of inescapable antropomorphism. We need to consider how Nietzsche strives to develop the language of philosophical physiology³¹⁵ in spite of these difficulties. What can Nietzsche hope for from his project of naturalization, i.e. translating the human back into nature, if our understanding of nature is already anthropomorphised?

We have already considered in this sub-section a number of texts in which Nietzsche doubts the prospects of philosophical physiology providing us with adequate knowledge. The following text is representative of this line of thinking:

312 The same set of concerns will arise in Nietzsche’s contrast between scientific (mechanistic) and philosophical physiologies.

313 “[...] muss ich aber ausführen [...] dass auch unsere moralischen Urtheile und Werthschätzungen nur Bilder und Phantasien über einen uns unbekanntem physiologischen Vorgang sind, eine Art angewöhnter Sprache, gewisse Nervenreize zu bezeichnen?”

314 “Jetzt hat man den Kampf überall wieder entdeckt und redet vom Kampfe der Zellen, Gewebe, Organe, Organismen. Aber man kann sämtliche uns bewußte Affekte in ihnen wiederfinden – zuletzt, wenn dies geschehen ist, drehen wir die Sache um und sagen: das was wirklich vor sich geht bei der Regsamkeit unserer menschlichen Affekte sind jene physiologischen Bewegungen, und die Affekte (Kämpfe usw.) sind nur intellektuelle Ausdeutungen, dort wo der Intellekt gar nichts weiß, aber doch alles zu wissen meint.”

315 Nietzsche believes that all philosophers suffer from the lack of knowledge of physiology: “Was fehlte den Philosophen a) historischer Sinn b) Kenntniß der Physiologie” (26[100] 11.176).

The human as a multiplicity: physiology gives only an indication of a wonderful commerce between this multiplicity and the sub- and co-ordination of parts into a whole.³¹⁶ (27[8] 11.276)

The key question is how we should understand the indication (*Andeutung*) physiology offers? First, we must emphasize that physiology should not be understood to offer an approximation of the nature of reality, of the essence (*das wesentliche*) of things (11[75] 9.470). Due to Nietzsche's critique of the metaphysics of substance, he cannot aim to provide us with an adequate explanation of things as they are in themselves, nor can he claim that there are such things. These epistemological and ontological limits constitute, arguably, the fundamental difference with Spinoza, and we will address this in the comparative section. The question we must then raise is why does Nietzsche claim that physiology is the best available language for describing organic processes, if it cannot give us an explanation of reality and if it is in danger of replicating the anthropomorphic illusions characteristic of metaphysics? My thesis is that Nietzsche thinks that the main advantage of the turn to the body lies in the capacity of physiological discourse to continuously re-shape itself, which means 1) to overcome the recurring metaphysical and teleological illusions that are the product of historical processes and 2) to continuously reformulate its conceptual language in order to provide a "purer" and "more honest"³¹⁷ understanding of the body: physiology is the best language we have to describe the dynamic multiplicity and its becoming that characterise life. My argument is that this is the best way to understand Nietzsche's use of the comparative form of adjectives and adverbs, not only when he writes that "more honestly and more purely speaks the healthy body" (Z I Hinterweltern 4.38)³¹⁸, but also when he speaks of a "higher body" that must both be created, and, in turn create³¹⁹. Nietzsche's emphasis is on the process of constantly overcoming the illusions of conscious thought and on creating or building for oneself a higher body, which must be understood as a

316 "Der Mensch als Vielheit: die Physiologie giebt nur die Andeutung eines wunderbaren Verkehrs zwischen dieser Vielheit und Unter- und Einordnung der Theile zu einem Ganzen."

317 "eine redlichere und reinere Stimme ist diess" (Z I Hinterweltern 4.38).

318 "Redlicher redet und reiner der gesunde Leib".

319 "Einen höheren Leib sollst du schaffen [...] einen Schaffenden sollst du schaffen".

multiplicity of dynamic processes. Physiological discourse de-moralises and de-antropomorphizes our knowledge of the world through a re-description of moral, religious and aesthetic accounts in an a-moral manner, starting from the notion of endogenous relational power.

We can observe in Nietzsche’s appeal to philosophical physiology throughout his oeuvre a number of shifts in language. We will have the opportunity to observe these shifts on various occasions, whether in Nietzsche’s study of art, of morality, or in his critique of Roux. In spite of important differences between these contexts, we can identify a common impulse that animates these researches, namely the desire to understand the physiological structure of certain phenomena. The difference with Spinoza is that the primacy of philosophical physiology in this endeavour does not guarantee the procurement of adequate knowledge that escapes antropomorphizing illusions completely. Nietzsche’s project is a critical one, in which the turn to the body helps him uncover and overcome various moral and metaphysical illusions without the promise of an adequate discourse on the body. While the tendency towards antropomorphization in knowledge cannot be escaped, philosophical physiology can be refined and made aware of its own prejudices.

1.c. The expressions of the body

How does the body express itself in the various phenomena that Nietzsche studies? Nietzsche believes that our actions and our values are shaped by our physiological constitution³²⁰ and that behind morality and logic there are certain valuations necessary for the preservation of specific forms of life. Moralities and conscious thought are “physiological requirements for the preservation of a particular type of life” (JGB 3 5.17)³²¹. Moralities can have positive or negative effects, depending on whether they multiply the range of human possibilities and allow for their

320 “ein wohlgerathener Mensch, ein ‘Glücklicher’, muss gewisse Handlungen thun und scheut sich instinktiv vor anderen Handlungen, er trägt die Ordnung, die er physiologisch darstellt, in seine Beziehungen zu Menschen und Dingen hinein” (GD Irrthümer 2 6.89), “Der corrupte und gemischte Zustand der Werthe entspricht dem physiologischen Zustand der jetzigen Menschen: Theorie der Modernität” (14[139] 13.323).

321 “physiologische Forderungen zur Erhaltung einer bestimmten Art von Leben”.

expression, or they reduce and inhibit the expression of these possibilities. Our task in this sub-section is to clarify the manner in which physiological processes and conditions express themselves through moral phenomena. In the context of raising the problem of the value of values (especially of the morality of compassion), Nietzsche writes:

we need to know about the conditions and circumstances under which the values grew, developed and changed (morality as result, as symptom, as mask, as tartuffery, as sickness, as misunderstanding, but also morality as cause, remedy, stimulant, inhibition, poison)³²² (GM Vorrede 6 5.253)

This text offers us an important indication that we can distinguish between two main types of connections between the body and morality. The first kind is one in which the functions of interpretation and diagnosis play the central role: morality is seen as “as result, as symptom, as mask, as tartuffery, as sickness, as misunderstanding”. Nietzsche often speaks of morality (especially), art, politics or ideas as the symptoms (*Symptome*) or signs (*Zeichensprachen*) of physiological processes or states³²³. Part of Nietzsche’s genealogical method, next to his psychological or etymological investigations, is his attempt to decipher the physiological meaning of various phenomena (van Tongeren 1984, pp. 50-51)³²⁴. This endeavour is made difficult by the fact that various moral or metaphysical notions have covered up their physiological background and have led to a misinterpretation of the body:

The unconscious disguise of physiological needs under the cloaks of the objective, ideal, purely spiritual goes frighteningly far, – and I have asked myself often enough whether, on a grand scale, philosophy has been no

322 “dazu thut eine Kenntniss der Bedingungen und Umstände noth, aus denen sie gewachsen, unter denen sie sich entwickelt und verschoben haben (Moral als Folge, als Symptom, als Maske, als Tartüfferie, als Krankheit, als Missverständniss; aber auch Moral als Ursache, als Heilmittel, als Stimulans, als Hemmung, als Gift)”.

323 (7[87] 10.272; 7[125] 10.284; GT Vorrede 4 1.15; FW Vorrede 2 3.347; 2[165] 12.149; 14[13] 13.223; 16[86] 13.515; etc.).

324 “Mein Versuch, die moralischen Urtheile als Symptome und Zeichensprachen zu verstehen, in denen sich Vorgänge des physiologischen Gedeihens oder Mißrathens, ebenso das Bewußtsein von Erhaltungs- und Wachstumsbedingungen verrathen: eine Interpretation’s-Weise vom Werthe der Astrologie” (2[165] 12.147).

more than an interpretation of the body and a *misunderstanding of the body*³²⁵ (FW Vorrede 2 3.348)

Nietzsche’s investigation of morality as a symptom is an attempt to expose what moralities do not wish to say and keep hidden (Blondel 1986, p. 255). Blondel’s reading of the body in Nietzsche is focused on understanding the body as a metaphor that lends itself to interpretation. This is Blondel’s answer to the problem of how we should understand the epistemological puzzles prompted by Nietzsche’s recourse to physiology. Given Nietzsche’s rejection of the possibility of perfectly adequate knowledge of reality, Blondel argues that we can only make sense of physiology as a hermeneutic device, a key that allows us to interpret the world as a set of signs or symbols. While this view no doubt captures the dominant aspect of Nietzsche’s turn to the body, it fails to do justice to the texts in which the body is considered as part of a causal nexus.

Blondel argues that Nietzsche wants to avoid the metaphysical value of words like cause (*Ursache*) (Blondel 1986, p. 235), but this argument is an attempt to dismiss rather than come to terms with some of Nietzsche’s texts. We must fully acknowledge the existence of the second kind of connection that Nietzsche envisages between the body and morality when he speaks of “morality as cause, remedy, stimulant, inhibition, poison” (GM Vorrede 6 5.253). Morality has a direct, causal and detrimental influence on the body: The growth of physiological and moral degeneration in humankind is presented as the consequence of a sick and unnatural morality (15[41] 13.433)³²⁶, while in GM III 15 Nietzsche speaks of the “actual physiological causation of resentment, revenge and their ilk”³²⁷ (GM III 15 5.374). This should not be read as an endorsement on Nietzsche’s part of causal determinism³²⁸, but rather as a new attempt to understand the difficult relation

325 “Die unbewusste Verkleidung physiologischer Bedürfnisse unter die Mäntel des Objektiven, Ideellen, Rein-Geistigen geht bis zum Erschrecken weit, – und oft genug habe ich mich gefragt, ob nicht, im Grossen gerechnet, Philosophie bisher überhaupt nur eine Auslegung des Leibes und ein Missverständniss des Leibes gewesen ist”.

326 “das Wachstum der physiologischen und moralischen Übel im menschlichen Geschlecht ist umgekehrt die Folge einer krankhaften und unnatürlichen Moral”.

327 “die wirkliche physiologische Ursächlichkeit des Ressentiment, der Rache und ihrer Verwandten”.

328 Nietzsche speaks of the hypothesis of a “causality of the will” (*Willens-Causalität*; JGB

between the physiological and the moral, a relation that cannot be exhaustively interpreted as symptomatology. It is important to note that Nietzsche presents certain moralities as poison. If we can understand morality's harmful effects on our physiology as the breaking of the coherence of our pulsional economy, then this is an important point of contact with Spinoza. Spinoza understands disempowerment according to the model of a poison that alters the specific ratio of motion and rest characteristic of a body (TTP 4; letter XIX to Blyenbergh; cf. Deleuze 1981, p. 75).

1.d. Structure in Nietzsche's philosophical physiology

There are a great number of concepts closely associated with Nietzsche's turn to the body and that play a role in his physiological investigations. Some of them ("Leib", "Trieb", "Symptom", "Gesundheit/Krankheit" or "Degeneration") have already been discussed independently. The list continues with notions such as: "Rasse", "Reize", "Gefühl", "Blut", "Nervensystem", "Organ", "Gehirn", "Bedürfniss", "Organisches Funktionen", inter alia. I will focus, in the following section, on a selection of key concepts: "Typus", "Kraft", "Aktivität", "Rangordnung" and "Affekt". The prominent role these play is apparent both in the number of occurrences, but also, I will argue, in the importance they have in the economy of Nietzsche's philosophy.

Type (*Typus*)

The concept of "type" plays an essential role in 19th Century life sciences in the attempt to explain the nature of animal species, particularly in Germany. This prominent role is to a large degree the result of the activity of Karl Ernst von Baer, whose work, especially in embryology, shaped much of the scientific environment in Europe (Lenoir 1982, pp. X-XI, 84). His influence extended outside the purely scientific domain, and Nietzsche refers to him as "the great naturalist von Baer"³²⁹ (MA 265 2.219). For von Baer the "type" is the most essential aspect of the animal, because it determines the manner of its development. The type is already present

36 5.55); a point to be discussed in the last section of this chapter in the context of Nietzsche's critique of science.

329 "Der grosse Naturforscher von Baer".

in the embryo, and development is the emergence of specialised and individual characters out of the more general characteristics of the embryo (Lenoir 1982, pp. 83-5). The type itself is the “certain arrangement of a particular number of ‘fundamental organs’, out of which individual organs are formed through histological and morphological differentiation” (Lenoir 1982, p. 88). The type is best understood as “a scheme that can never be realised in all cases” (Lenoir 1982, p. 98). Von Baer’s understanding of development is teleological in orientation, given that the yet unactualised type guides the present processes of specialisation and individuation of organs. The development of an organism is guided by the teleological striving to approximate the type, and so is not a blind mechanical unfolding of the type in space and time (Lenoir 1982, p. 97). Nevertheless, this, together with von Baer’s use of expressions like ‘Idea’ to refer to types, should not lead us to believe that he is an idealist *Naturphilosoph*. The regulative principles of development do not exist outside, or independently of, organised matter, nor are the “Ideas” imposed on blind matter from without (Lenoir 1982, pp. 85-6). The type is not realised in all cases of animal growth because development is dependent on two sets of factors: internal and external. The external factors decide which types are viable as real animals (Lenoir 1982, pp. 96-7).

Using this analysis we are in a better position to understand why Nietzsche should not be accused of resorting to the “old Idealist concept of ‘type’”, as Moore (2002, p. 33) does. The concept of type Nietzsche refers to is not that of the *Naturphilosophen*, nor is it the Schopenhauerian “Platonic Idea” as a metaphysical expression of the Will. The concept of type is used as a heuristic principle guiding Nietzsche’s physiological investigations, and it has a number of salient features that undoubtedly appealed to him: the emphasis on the internal structure of the organism and the claim that more is needed in order to explain life-forms than just blind mechanical processes. It is nevertheless important to emphasize that Nietzsche rejected the teleological aspect of von Baer’s understanding of types.

In 14[133] 13.315ff Nietzsche speaks of types as constant or immutable³³⁰, but this should be understood in the context of an argument against civilisation seen as a process of domestication and radical change. He takes a position similar to von Baer's when he writes that "Each type has its limits: there is no development beyond these" (14[133] 13.316)³³¹. His point is that the pasticity of types is limited, not that types correspond to immutable essences. The appeal of the turn to physiology is precisely the possibility to describe an organism as a dynamic and relatively stable structure within a world of flux, without having to derive its unity from a metaphysical essence. In the course of the same text, Nietzsche speaks of the fragility of higher types, always threatened with reversal to the unchanging norm. Nietzsche's account of the species includes a discussion of the variety of types that constitutes it. The problem he tackles is the situation in which one type (the herd animal) is dominant and limits the possibility of expression of other types.

The notion of type is used by Nietzsche for diagnostic purposes, whether the object of investigation is the structure of society (AC 57 6.241), exceptional individuals like Schopenhauer and Wagner (14[222] 13.395) or artistic creations (WA 5 6.22). The emphasis is on the inner constitution of the objects of inquiry and whether they display the following symptoms: lack of coordination of inner desires as a consequence of decline in organising force (14[117] 13.293)³³².

Force (*Kraft*)

Starting in the beginning of the 1880's, Nietzsche was influenced by the principles of conservation and discharge of energy (*Kraftauslösung*) elaborated by J.R. Mayer (Abel 2010, p. 369). Peter Gast sent Nietzsche a copy of Mayer's *Mechanik der Wärme* in April 1881 (Bauer 1984, p. 218). Nietzsche also read Mayer's *Die organische Bewegung in ihrem Zusammenhang mit dem Stoffwechsel* in 1881 (Müller-Lauter 1999a, p. 163). Mayer formalised the hitherto unclear concept of

330 "Der Typus bleibt constant: man kann nicht „dénaturer la nature“." (14 [133] 13.315).

331 "Jeder Typus hat seine Grenze: über diese hinaus giebt es keine Entwicklung".

332 "Die Häßlichkeit bedeutet décadence eines Typus, Widerspruch und mangelnde Coordination der inneren Begehungen / bedeutet einen Niedergang an organisirender Kraft, / an „Willen“ physiologisch geredet...".

Kraft and described it as indestructible, immaterial and transformable and thus stated the principle of conservation of force (Caneva 1993, p. 25). It is important to remember that Nietzsche’s interest in the concept of force comes in the context of his attempt to provide a relational understanding of reality, as a plurality of forces or centers of force. This relational concept of force is a means to formulate an account of reality without appealing to substance metaphysics³³³. As Mittasch has shown, the notion of *Kraftauslösung* was of great influence in Nietzsche’s philosophy (Mittasch 1952, pp. 110, 127). It means that there is no necessary quantitative correlation between cause and effect. A small cause, such as a spark, may have an effect of an immeasurably greater magnitude i.e. an explosion³³⁴ (Lindsay 1970, p. 14). This insight was used by Mayer to argue that the nervous system of animals can, by directly controlling a small amount of energy, release a much larger amount (Lindsay 1970, p. 41). This means that organic force can be stored up and remain latent until it is discharged. The idea that the organism is best explained using the notion of *Kraft* and that accumulation and discharge are essential to understanding the organism, is crucial for Nietzsche (Abel 2010, pp. 370-1). The emphasis on increase and growth rather than on self-preservation plays a central role in Nietzsche’s polemic both with 1) Darwinists who claimed self-preservation to be the fundamental drive and 2) with Spinoza, whose notion of conatus Nietzsche reads as a teleological precursor of the notion of a drive for self-preservation.

There is, nevertheless, an aspect of Mayer’s theory of *Kraft* which Nietzsche did not accept. Mayer defined *Kraft* as immaterial and set up matter as the second, but equally important, explanatory principle of the universe (Gori 2009, p. 137). Nietzsche, however, on a number of occasions, claims that there is no matter, only force. He sometimes criticizes what he calls the mechanistic atomic world-view, which he describes as attached to the notions of: atoms, cause and effect, laws

333 For a number of accounts that focus on the plurality of forces as instances of appropriation, domination and exploitation that, as activity, can only be overpowering in relation to other forces, see Abel 1984, pp. 6-27; Deleuze 1962, pp. 3-6; Mittasch 1952, pp. 102-113.

334 It would be interesting to investigate to what extent the disparity in magnitude between motive and action, the fourth manifestation of the principle of sufficient reason according to Schopenhauer, influenced Nietzsche’s reception of Mayer’s arguments.

of nature and entropy. To this he opposes the dynamic world-view he finds in Boscovich (Aydin 2003, p. 146) and replaces the notion of atoms with centres of force (Whitlock 2010, p. 204).

Action (*Aktivität*) and Reaction (*Reaktivität*)

In the course of developing an argument against *misarchism*, which is the “democratic idiosyncrasy of being against everything that dominates and wants to dominate”³³⁵ (GM II 12 5.315), and its harmful effects on the sciences, Nietzsche claims that the “basic concept” (*Grundbegriff*) of the sciences is that of “actual activity” (*eigentlichen Aktivität*). The concept of activity is essential to understanding Nietzsche’s notion of power in the *Genealogy of Morality* (Brusotti 2012b, p. 105)³³⁶ together with his account of motion and change. In order to better understand the notion of “activity”, we can start from the following text:

But this is to misunderstand the essence of life, its *will to power*, we overlook the prime importance that the spontaneous, aggressive, expansive, re-interpreting, re-directing and formative forces have, which “adaptation” follows only when they have had their effect.³³⁷ (GM II 12 5.316)

Power has two fundamental traits: 1) it is primarily an active process of expenditure and growth (Patton 1993, p. 152) and 2) it must not be understood reactively, that is, according to what it lacks, a *telos* (Patton 1993, p. 153). Patton argues that this constitutes a break with philosophical thinking on the notion of power. In order to illustrate the traditional view, he uses the example of Hobbes, who understands power as the power to resist others, i.e. to react to the threat of external powers, and as the power to pursue the goals of self-preservation and the attainment of the objects of desire (Patton 1993, pp. 146-8). To this we can add that power is understood by Hobbes in the context of the radical lack of a future good, i.e. of

335 “Die demokratische Idiosynkrasie gegen Alles, was herrscht und herrschen will”.

336 The concept of “activity” and the opposition between active and reactive forces is of paramount importance in Deleuze’s reading of Nietzsche, even though this opposition does not explicitly occur in Nietzsche.

337 “Damit ist aber das Wesen des Lebens verkannt, sein Wille zur Macht; damit ist der principielle Vorrang übersehn, den die spontanen, angreifenden, übergreifenden, neu-auslegenden, neu-richtenden und gestaltenden Kräfte haben, auf deren Wirkung erst die ‘Anpassung’ folgt”.

security, and that it is always exercised from a position of weakness (Siemens 2013, p. 96). Nietzsche’s formulation of power “is not bound to a static telos of self-preservation” and so does not “presuppose any pre-determined constraints on the forms” it can take. This leads to an understanding of struggle with other centers of power not as a threat, but as a stimulant, conducive to “qualitative self-transformation” (Siemens 2013, p. 96). In the context of this thesis, this raises three questions: 1) How does Nietzsche’s formulation of power as activity relate to Spinoza’s notion of power? 2) What consequence does this have for Nietzsche’s normative thinking, in the context of Nietzsche’s striving to elaborate a thoughtful egoism that allows for the best expression of our power to act? (both these questions will be considered in the comparative section); 3) How should we understand the disappearance of the explicit use the notion of “activity” from Nietzsche’s works after the *Genealogy* (Brusotti 2012b, p. 105)?

The fact that Nietzsche does not use the vocabulary of “activity”, or “acting” any longer does not mean he now has a reactive understanding of power. In GD Streifzüge 44 6.145 and 15[105] 13.468, Nietzsche criticizes *milieu-theory* because it explains genius starting from the “environment, the age, the ‘Zeitgeist’, ‘public opinion’”³³⁸, rather than as the “accumulation of enormous force”³³⁹ (GD Streifzüge 44 6.145). This indicates, as we have seen in the discussion of Mayer, a new focus on formulating the notion of power in terms of excess and the explosion (*Explosion*) of accumulated immense and “out-flowing forces” (*ausströmenden Kräfte*) (GD Streifzüge 44 6.146), rather than as activity (Brusotti 2012b, p. 126). This plays a crucial role in Nietzsche’s ethics, and allows him to argue that the strong are characterised by the capacity to accumulate force and not react or react slowly³⁴⁰ to stimuli, while the weak cannot but respond to stimuli and react immediately³⁴¹, thus consuming and weakening themselves. This marks an important shift from the position taken by Nietzsche in the *GM*, where he argues that “when resentment does occur in the noble human itself, it is consumed and

338 “Umgebung, an Zeitalter, an ‘Zeitgeist’, an ‘öffentlicher Meinung’”.

339 “ungeheure Kraft aufgehäuft ist”.

340 “nicht/schwer/langsam/spat reagieren” (Brusotti 2012b, p. 107).

341 “(unmittelbar, ungehemmt) reagieren” (Brusotti 2012b, p. 107).

exhausted in an immediate reaction, and therefore it does not *poison*”³⁴² (modified translation; GM I 10 5.273).

Hierarchy (*Rangordnung*) and struggle (*Kampf*)

Nietzsche’s understanding of hierarchy and struggle was shaped to a large degree by his reading of Roux’s *Der Kampf der Theile im Organismus* in 1881 and again in 1883 (Müller-Lauter 1999b, p. 101). Roux’s book is an attempt to apply evolutionary thinking to the inner structure of the organism. The emergence of a number of disciplines within the life sciences, especially cytology, had revealed the rich multiplicity that constitutes any organism. Roux’s thesis is that the constitution and inner harmony (*innere Harmonie*) displayed by organisms is the result of struggle between its composing parts (Roux 1881, p. 237). In other words, his claim is that “all that is beneficial can only come from struggle”³⁴³ (Roux 1881, p. 64). The composing parts Roux considers are: molecules, cells, tissues and organs, and they are all involved in a struggle for space and nutrition. The struggle is of two kinds: 1) struggle for annihilation: the organic elements that lose out in the fight for resources die out. This describes the struggle between molecules or between cells and, because it is a fight between homogenous parts, it leads to the “selection of the better”³⁴⁴, i.e. the parts that are better in acquiring space and nutrition (Roux 1881, p. 96); 2) struggle that results in equilibrium (*Gleichgewicht*): the tissues and organs that are defeated in the struggle for resources are not necessarily eliminated, but may instead survive in a (temporary) weakened and diminished state. The resulting equilibrium can be interpreted as a hierarchy (even though Roux does not use the term *Rangordnung*) that is flexible: the subordinate part does not completely lose its power to defend itself and fend off its competitors (Roux 1881, pp. 98, 104-5), and it may be the case that the subordinated, i.e. weakened, elements manage to obtain the upper hand and reverse the order of the hierarchy. The struggle resulting in annihilation occurs at the level of molecules and cells without any harmful effects for the organism as

342 “Das Ressentiment des vornehmen Menschen selbst, wenn es an ihm auftritt, vollzieht und erschöpft sich nämlich in einer sofortigen Reaktion, es vergiftet darum nicht”.

343 “alles Gute nur aus dem Kampfe entspringt”.

344 “Auslese des Besseren”.

a whole, but if it occurs at the level of organs and tissues then it can be fatal for the organism (Roux 1881, p. 98). Roux writes that the struggle between organs leads, through “self-elimination” (*Selbstelimination*), to the preservation of the quality of organs that make equilibrium in the organism possible (Roux 1881, p. 109). While this seems to contradict the account given above, Roux qualifies this statement (1881, p. 98) when he writes that “the harmonic *unity of the entire organism* is bred through the self-elimination of the anomalous”³⁴⁵. While this may raise, for a study dedicated to Roux, the question of what we should understand by “anomalous”, it does not contradict the claim that the equilibrium without which the organism would “very quickly” die is established between heterogeneous parts diverging in strength³⁴⁶. The organism can only survive if equilibrium is established between its tissues and organs. This balance is the result of purely mechanistic processes and not the outcome of any teleological developments³⁴⁷.

Roux’s account is best understood in the context of a 19th Century debate in the scientific community between two models for understanding the structure of the organism. This debate was focused on the organisation of cells, which is not surprising, given the huge importance of cytology in this period. The two main actors were Virchow and Haeckel, who proposed diametrically opposed models for understanding the organism as a society of cells (Moore 2002, pp. 35-6). Virchow suggested a democratic model in which cells are seen as autonomous individuals in an egalitarian society. Haeckel saw the organisation as an aristocratic, hierarchical plurality. Roux, as a student of Haeckel’s, situated himself on his side of the debate. Nevertheless, there were points of disagreement between the two. Haeckel could not accept the existence of conflict entirely without purpose and believed that all organic structures, down to the cell, are endowed with spirit (Moore 2002, pp. 40-1).

345 “eine Harmonische Einheit des ganzen Organismus durch Selbstelimination des Abweichenden gezüchtet werden”.

346 “Da Mangel des Gleichgewichts zwischen den verschiedenen Geweben sehr rasch zum Tode der Individuen und somit zur Elimination derselben und ihrer nachteiligen Qualität aus des Reihe des Lebenden führt” (Roux 1881, p. 98).

347 See also Ioan (2014, 392-3).

This creative force that permeates the universe, the *Bildungstrieb*, is a major factor in evolution as well. Haeckel saw evolution as an artistic process in which he downplayed the role of conflict and emphasized progress towards beautiful organic forms (Moore 2002, p. 27). Roux, however, tried to offer an explanation for organic phenomena in mechanistic terms which minimizes the importance of the idea of progress, of directed growth in evolution.

Nietzsche is influenced both by Roux's attempt to explain the nature of organisms without teleological principles and by the possible reading of the concept equilibrium as a flexible hierarchy that can incorporate a number of competing elements without losing its coherence and being destroyed. He did, however, depart from Roux on two major points. The first, as will be discussed in section III, is Nietzsche's critique of mechanism. While it is superior to an explanation based on teleological principles, mechanism fails to account for the dynamic character of life, which Nietzsche very often describes in terms of wills to power. Rather than blind mechanistic processes, Nietzsche wants to interpret nature as a multiplicity of wills to power that command and obey. The second point is that Nietzsche believes that Roux has not managed to free his account completely from hidden teleological assumptions. In Roux, the components of the organism engage in struggle because they strive to assimilate as many resources as possible: this is what Roux calls overcompensation (*Uebercompensation*). Roux's claim is that an organism that assimilates less or only as much as it uses is vulnerable to any change in the environment and will inevitably be destroyed (Roux 1881, p. 217). Nietzsche criticizes Roux's understanding of overcompensation because he reads it as the striving for "overabundant replacement" (*überreichlicher Ersatz*) and argues that understanding self-regulation (*Selbstrregulierung*) as "overabundant replacement" is the remnant of a teleological way of thinking (Müller-Lauter 1999b, pp. 118-9). The key text here is:

In organic process / 1) overabundant replacement – false expression and coloured teleologically / self-regulation, that is the ability to rule over a given community presupposed, but that means the further development of the organic is not tied up with diet, but to commanding and the capacity to

rule: diet is only a result.³⁴⁸ (26[272] 11.221)³⁴⁹

The motor behind organic phenomena is not the striving for self-preservation qua telos through the replacement and assimilation of resources, but rather the self-regulating and self-organizing processes of commanding and obeying that structure the community of organs and drives (Müller-Lauter 1999b, pp. 120-1). In a note from 1888, Nietzsche argues that if we understand life as will to power, then organisms strive for “an increase of power” (*ein plus von Macht*). Hunger or self-preservation are only consequences (*Folge*) of the will to power dynamics, not the “primum mobile” (14[174] 13.360f). Nietzsche opposes his understanding of life and power as expansion to the reactive notion of power as lack, a notion that is at the basis of mechanism. This raises the following question, which will be considered in section III: What is Nietzsche’s description of organic processes that manages to avoid both teleological and mechanistic errors, while being able to account for the apparent purposiveness (*Zweckmässigkeit*) of organisms³⁵⁰?

Affect (*Affekt*)

For the purposes of this thesis, I will focus my discussion of affects in Nietzsche on two main topics. I will investigate the way affects or passions feature in his philosophical physiology and then I will consider some key features relevant to a comparison with Spinoza’s understanding of affects.

I will use as my starting point the following text from *MA* (1878), which sets the foundation for much of what Nietzsche will have to say about passions or affects:

348 “Im organischen Prozeß / 1) überreichlicher Ersatz – falscher Ausdruck und teleologisch gefärbt / 2) Selbst-Regulierung, also die Fähigkeit der Herrschaft über ein Gemeinwesen vorausgesetzt d.h. aber, die Fortentwicklung des Organischen ist nicht an die Ernährung angeknüpft, sondern an das Befehlen und Beherrschen-können: ein Resultat nur ist Ernährung.”

349 This is written in 1884. Earlier, in 1881, Nietzsche accepts the principles of assimilation and overcompensation as primary: “Wenn wir die Eigenschaften des niedersten belebten Wesens in unsere „Vernunft“ übersetzen, so werden moralische Triebe daraus. Ein solches Wesen assimiliert sich das Nächste, verwandelt es in sein Eigenthum (Eigenthum ist zuerst Nahrung und Aufspeicherung von Nahrung), es sucht möglichst viel sich einzuverleiben, nicht nur den Verlust zu compensiren – es ist habsüchtig.” (11[134] 9.490f).

350 This mirrors Roux’s attempt to explain the purposiveness of organisms without teleology and invoking only internal processes of self-regulation (Müller-Lauter 1999b, p. 110).

[...] a much simpler life, and more purified of affects, could arise, than the present life is: so that, though the old motives of violent desire produced by inherited habit would still possess their strength, they would gradually grow weaker under the influence of purifying knowledge. In the end one would live among humans and with oneself as in *nature*, without praising, blaming, contending, gazing contentedly, as though at a spectacle, upon many things for which one formerly felt only fear³⁵¹ (modified translation; MA 34 2.54)

In this period Nietzsche “idealizes a free spirit”, whose freedom is given by knowledge rather than freedom of action, and who realizes that “all is nature and nothing more than nature” (Ansell-Pearson and Ure 2013, p. 1). But what does it mean to “live among men and with oneself as in *nature*”? What are the consequences of Nietzsche’s project of naturalisation for his discussion of affects? The first consequence of Nietzsche’s commitment to naturalism and immanence is the possibility of understanding the dynamics of affects. Knowledge is “purifying” first and foremost because it can grasp the nature and origins of affects without any appeal to transcendence. Second, we find Nietzsche intimating that knowledge, because it has an effect on affects, is itself deeply intertwined with them. The affective force invested in knowledge is what allows it to be transformative and overcome “violent desires” and “inherited habit”. Third, affects produced by knowledge are conducive to a life of knowledge because they are reduced in strength. Knowledge can moderate or weaken violent desires. In a description reminiscent of Spinoza’s imperative “not to deride, bewail, or execrate human actions, but to understand them” (TP I 4), Nietzsche advocates a life “without praising, blaming, contending”. The life of knowledge is not without affects, since it is characterised by the joy that refers to the “liberation from the primeval affects we have inherited” or to the reduction of the “raptures and convulsions”

351 “[...] ein viel einfacheres, von Affecten reineres Leben entstünde, als das jetzige ist: so dass zuerst zwar die alten Motive des heftigeren Begehrens noch Kraft hätten, aus alter vererbter Gewöhnung her, allmählich aber unter dem Einflusse der reinigenden Erkenntniss schwächer würden. Man lebte zuletzt unter den Menschen und mit sich wie in der Natur, ohne Lob, Vorwürfe, Ereiferung, an Vielem sich wie an einem Schauspiel weidend, vor dem man sich bisher nur zu fürchten hatte.”

of passions to their “minimum articulation” (Ansell-Pearson and Ure 2013, p. 2).

If knowledge can moderate passions through the affective force invested in it, then how can the affects produced by knowledge, which are reduced in strength, weaken violent desires? The recognition of the spinozistic maxim that only an affect can overcome another affect (EIVp37s2 II/238) problematizes the method of weakening affects as a recipe for empowerment: we would need an affect that is at least as strong as the desires we wish to subdue if we are to be successful. In later works, the thesis of the deep interconnection between knowledge and affects is developed by Nietzsche in the direction of seeking to combat the attempt to cool down the passions. Furthermore, the thesis that knowledge is driven by passions and is itself a passion grows in importance for Nietzsche up to 1889³⁵² (Ansell-Pearson and Ure 2013, p. 2). Given the usefulness of passions, Nietzsche’s concern here is no longer with reducing their power, which he takes to be a sign of weakness, but on reshaping affective economy (Ansell-Pearson and Ure 2013, p. 2) with a view to the enhancement of joy and empowerment. This means that Nietzsche no longer strives for detachment from passions (e.g. fear), but on integrating their full force into our affective economy.

Much of what Nietzsche writes about passions is compatible with Spinoza’s thinking. If we allow for the differences in terminology stemming from Spinoza’s technical use of the notions of active or passive (passions) affects, we can observe their shared tendency towards the enhancement of the joy that follows from an increase in knowledge. Another key ingredient in Nietzsche’s discussion of affects, and one that has important parallels with Spinoza, is the constitutive role affects play within communities. This, together with the physiological dimension of affects in Nietzsche, is well brought out by Faulkner in her study of “disgust” (*Ekel*). Together with Conway, Faulkner argues that Nietzsche’s theory of perspectivism is predicated on seeing truth in an embodied context and that affects colour each possible perspective (Faulkner 2013, p. 52; Conway 1991, pp. 105-6). Nietzsche criticizes Christian, reactive virtues, especially pity, as disempowering

352 Nietzsche speaks of the “passion for knowledge” (“Leidenschaft der Erkenntniss”; FW107 3.464).

affects that, by shaping the connections that make society possible, have generated the state of sickness characteristic of modernity (Faulkner 2013, pp. 53, 56-8). His alternative, Faulkner suggests, is “disgust”, an affect with a double nature: it provides “the distance that constitutes social rank”, but is also “suggestive of a dangerous proximity and proneness to contamination” (Faulkner 2013, p. 58). Without going into the details of this argument, we must observe that Faulkner argues that the best moments of Nietzsche’s analysis of society consist in his affirmation of the ambivalence of disgust (Faulkner 2013, p. 64) rather than in attempts to flee others and not sustain a relationship with them (FW 279 3.523f; cf. Bachelard 1988, p. 136; Faulkner 2013, p. 60). This shows how the striving for affirmation must not only be mindful of the particularism of each body and its affective economy, but also that Nietzsche’s philosophy involves the affirmation of the radical openness of each life-form towards its environment, an openness which inevitably leads to vulnerability in the face of the other. These are concerns Nietzsche and Spinoza share, regardless of the opposition between the advocacy of democracy in Spinoza and the focus on “rank” in Nietzsche.

In spite of these numerous similarities, we have yet to address the fundamental question for a comparison: Is the notion of affect for Nietzsche the bedrock of a mixed, psycho-physiological discourse, as is the case with Spinoza? In order to understand affects, for Nietzsche, we need to uncover their physiological basis:

All inclination, friendship, love together something physiological. We all do not know, how deep and high physis reaches. (16[42] 7.408)³⁵³

We must see beyond the illusions of language or conscious thought:

Courage, shame, anger have nothing to do in themselves with concepts / physiological facts, whose name and mental concept is only a symbol³⁵⁴

353 “Alle Neigung, Freundschaft, Liebe zugleich etwas Physiologisches. Wir wissen alle nicht, wie tief und hoch die Physis reicht.”. See also: “Affekte als Gegenstück zu physiologischen Gruppen, die eine Art von Einheit des Werdens, einen periodischen Verlauf haben.” (25[185] 11.64).

354 “Muth, Scham, Zorn haben nichts an sich mit Begriffen zu thun / physiologische That-sachen, deren Name und seelischer Begriff nur Symbol ist”.

(7[87] 10.272, see also 11[128] 9.487³⁵⁵)

For affects to play the same role as in Spinoza, they would have to be, at least in principle, intelligible, and provide the same fundamental and adequate type of knowledge that philosophical physiology does. In Nietzsche’s view, however, the primacy of physiology is not only a question of strategy, of the more convenient description of certain situations, as is the case with Spinoza. A physiological account of affects³⁵⁶ is more revealing for Nietzsche than what Spinoza would call a description of affects under the attribute of thought. The mental description is problematized in Nietzsche in a way it is not in Spinoza.

Nevertheless, even an attempt at a physiological account of affects cannot provide fully adequate knowledge. We are in a position of ignorance because we are dependent on the impoverished perceptual and intellectual apparatus we possess:

Also in a passion, a drive we understand only the intellectual process therein – not the physiological, essential, but the small sensation with it.³⁵⁷
(11[75] 9.470)

Our best attempt is to try and elucidate the physiological nature of reality. While a discourse focused on affects falls short of providing us with an adequate account of human beings comparable to Spinoza’s, we can identify in the preceding text a hint towards better approximating the ideal of a mixed discourse. In the third chapter, I will turn to analysing Nietzsche’s reference to a “physio-psychological discourse” and argue that the notion of drive (*Trieb*) is the closest he comes to Spinoza’s mixed discourse.

355 “das was wirklich vor sich geht bei der Regsamkeit unserer menschlichen Affekte sind jene physiologischen Bewegungen, und die Affekte (Kämpfe usw.) sind nur intellektuelle Ausdeutungen, dort wo der Intellekt gar nichts weiß, aber doch alles zu wissen meint”.

356 It is also by no means clear that affects, in Nietzsche, stand for transitions to greater or lesser power, as is the case in Spinoza.

357 “Auch an einer Leidenschaft, einem Triebe begreifen wir nur den intellektuellen Vorgang daran – nicht das physiologische, wesentliche, sondern das Bischen Empfindung dabei.”.

2. The functions of Nietzsche's physiology

Taking our cue from Nietzsche's notion of body, we can distinguish three distinct, but complementary uses of the perspective of physiology in Nietzsche's work: interpretative, diagnostic and normative. In this section I will focus on the first two, while the third will be explored in the comparative chapter. In the diagnostic function performed by physiology, Nietzsche's focus is on outlining and criticizing a number of deeply rooted errors that cannot be addressed through traditional philosophical discourse. Müller-Lauter has argued that there are three kinds of errors Nietzsche discusses: 1) errors that can be eliminated through philosophical argument, 2) errors that are anchored in us and from which we must become dehabituated and 3) the *Gründirrhümer* that are most deeply rooted in us. An example from this last category is Schopenhauer's notion of immutable character, which Nietzsche opposes on a number of occasions (Müller-Lauter 1999a, p. 35). The radical nature of Nietzsche's project lies in his determination to criticize the most fundamental errors³⁵⁸, and he believes physiology is in a privileged position to allow us to expose these errors and undermine them. The attempt to tackle our most deeply rooted errors explains the attention Nietzsche pays to the concept of breeding (*Züchtung*), since they are not responsive to traditional philosophical argumentation. This method has been used by the priest in order to make individuals sick (GD *Verbesserer* 2 6.99), but it is also the method by which it is possible to promote empowerment and life-affirmation (EH GT 4 6.313). Breeding has a moral and social meaning in Nietzsche, not just a biological one: it is used by Nietzsche to refer to the creation of the strong type (Schank 2000, p. 340). "You first need to persuade the *body*"³⁵⁹ (GD *Streifzüge* 47 6.149), i.e. shape the drives and the pre-conscious in accordance with the insights of philosophical physiology and with a view to empowerment and affirmation. This informs Nietzsche's project to "create a higher body" and will be analysed in more detail in the section dedicated to his normative thought.

358 These are the errors that are inscribed in the structure of our thought and that, by falsifying reality, have a disempowering effect. We have considered a number of these errors in section I.

359 "man muss den Leib zuerst überreden".

Nietzsche’s applications of philosophical physiology are numerous, and they range from inquiries into the nature of our affects to the religious and political convictions we display. It is nevertheless possible to group Nietzsche’s physiological reflections around three foci: art, morality and conscious thought. These three attract much of Nietzsche’s philosophical interest and best allow us to observe the inner workings of the physiological perspective.

2.a. Physiology of art

In order to understand the relation between the domain of art and Nietzsche’s turn to the body we need to pay particular attention to the chronological development of Nietzsche’s views on art. Physiological investigations into art constitute only a small part of Nietzsche’s engagement with art in his early writings (*GT* and associated *Nachlass*). They return to Nietzsche’s writings after 1885, and with particular vigour in 1888, when the physiology of art lies at the centre of Nietzsche’s concerns, as a countermovement (*Gegenbewegung*) to nihilism. Art is understood as “essentially an affirmation, benediction, and deification of existence”³⁶⁰ (14[47] 13.241).

It is important to consider Nietzsche’s philosophy of art in his early writings in the context of the problem of the justification of existence³⁶¹ (Gerhardt 1984, p. 376). Nietzsche’s thesis is that art, and particularly tragedy, tells us something horrible about existence and yet, in doing so, makes it bearable and enlivening (Ridley 2007, p. 9). Nietzsche’s explanation for this phenomenon, strongly influenced by Schopenhauer’s metaphysics and by Wagner, is that art is the means to affirm existence³⁶². Schopenhauer argues that art should be understood as a disinterested, disembodied, purely intellectual contemplation, capable of temporarily negating the will and therefore releasing us from suffering. For him aesthetic pleasure requires the “liberation of cognition from service to the will”, the intuition by a “will-less, timeless subject” (WWVI 234) of “things freed from their relation to the

360 “Kunst ist wesentlich Bejahung, Segnung, Vergöttlichung des Daseins...”.

361 Why is it not the case that “The very best thing is utterly beyond your reach: not to have been born, not to *be*, to be *nothing*. However, the second best thing for you is: to die soon.”? (GT 3 1.35).

362 A detailed investigation of this important theme is beyond the scope of the present thesis.

will” (WWV I 231). Nietzsche rejects this quietive, life-denying interpretation of aesthetic experience, and strives to understand it as an embodied phenomenon: he raises the question of the bodily foundations of artistic processes and experiences (Gerhardt 1984, p. 389)³⁶³. An illustration is Nietzsche’s problematization of the analgesic effect associated by Schopenhauer with art:

The Will as highest pain generates out of itself rapture, which is identical with pure contemplation and the production of the art-work. What is the physiological process? Painlessness must be generated somewhere --- but how? ³⁶⁴ (7[117] 7.166)

Rather than trace painlessness to a purely intellectual, disembodied contemplation, as Schopenhauer does, Nietzsche is interested in uncovering the physiological processes responsible for this state of painlessness. There seems to be little hesitation on Nietzsche’s part in claiming that artistic processes must have a physiological basis: “The artistic process is, physiologically, absolutely conditioned and necessary”³⁶⁵ (19[79] 7.445) or “To understand *an artistic process without the brain* is a strong antropopathie”³⁶⁶ (19[79] 7.445). It must be noted, however, that at this stage there is no reason to believe that Nietzsche thought he possessed all the conceptual tools necessary to provide a physiological understanding of art. Nietzsche’s attempts should rather be read as an appeal to investigate the hypothesis of physiological explanations of art further.

This imperative provides us with a clue to grasping the context of Nietzsche’s subsequent³⁶⁷ discussions of art, namely an attempt to understand it in a more

³⁶³ The question of the corporeal aspect of aesthetic experience had been raised before Nietzsche. We can find previous formulations of this question in, for instance, Edmund Burke (Moore 2002, p. 86). Dufour points to a number of Nietzsche’s predecessors (including Kant) who tried to understand music, and especially rhythm, physiologically (Dufour 2001, p. 223).

³⁶⁴ “Der Wille als höchster Schmerz erzeugt aus sich eine Verzückung, die identisch ist mit dem reinen Anschauen und dem Produzieren des Kunstwerks. Der physiologische Prozeß ist welcher? Eine Schmerzlosigkeit muß irgendwo erzeugt werden – aber wie?”

³⁶⁵ “Der künstlerische Prozeß ist physiologisch absolut bestimmt und nothwendig”.

³⁶⁶ “Einen künstlerischen Vorgang ohne Gehirn zu denken ist eine starke Anthropopathie”. The word “antropopathie” refers to the propensity to describe phenomena and their origins (in this case art) without grasping the physiological background.

³⁶⁷ particularly post-*Zarathustra*.

sober, positivist manner (Gerhardt 1984, p. 381)³⁶⁸. Nietzsche writes about the “physiology of art” (*Physiologie der Kunst*) as a chapter of his future great work (WA 7 6[26]; 6[26] 12.246 or 7[7] 12.284). The importance of “physiology of art” for Nietzsche must be understood in the context of the change of emphasis in his thinking from the justification of existence to “the vivisection of the will to power” as a counter-movement to nihilism (Lypp 1984, p. 356; Gerhardt 1984, p. 388). Nietzsche wants to understand the artistic phenomenon, with the help of physiology, as the most affirmative manifestation of will to power. The objects that physiology studies are: 1) the artist, and Wagner in particular (FW V 368 3.617f; WA 5 6.21ff; 7[7] 12.284; 4[90] 3.267); 2) artistic creations, e.g. music or Wagner’s characters (11[323] 13.136; 15[99] 13[465]); and 3) the impact the work of art has on the spectator (15[12] 13.411; 16[75] 13.510). The physiological effects produced by aesthetic experience include not only deleterious consequences, but also the key state of “rapture”.

Arguably the most important notion for Nietzsche’s physiology of art is “intoxication” or “rapture” (*Rausch*) and it is central to Heidegger’s interpretation of art as a configuration of wills to power. Art is seen as countermovement to nihilism and considered in a physiological key (Heidegger 1961, p. 92).

One physiological precondition is indispensable for there to be art or any sort of aesthetic action or vision: *intoxication*. Without intoxication to intensify the excitability of the whole machine, there can be no art. There are many types of intoxication conditioned by a variety of factors, but they are all strong enough for the job. [...] The essential thing about intoxication is the feeling of fullness and increasing strength.³⁶⁹ (GD Streifzüge 8 6.116)

368 Nietzsche is now more focused on the values of critical thinking and scientific method (Gerhardt 1984, p. 382).

369 “Damit es Kunst giebt, damit es irgend ein ästhetisches Thun und Schauen giebt, dazu ist eine Physiologische Vorbedingung unumgänglich: der Rausch. Der Rausch muss erst die Erregbarkeit der ganzen Maschine gesteigert haben: eher kommt es zu keiner Kunst. Alle noch so verschieden bedingten Arten des Rausches”.

“Rausch” is the basic aesthetic state, while the Apollonian and the Dionysian are presented in *GD* as two kinds of rapture (Heidegger 1961, pp. 97-8)³⁷⁰. Rapture is understood by Nietzsche as a “feeling of enhancement and plenitude” and as the precondition of art (Heidegger 1961, p. 98). Enhancement does not refer to an objective increase in force, but to a mood, a feeling of being “caught up in elation”, while plenitude suggests a state of excess and openness to the world and of readiness “to tackle anything”. They refer to enthusiasm and the appetite for risk and point to a third aspect of rapture: the interpenetration “of all enhancements of every ability to do and see, apprehend and address, communicate and achieve release” (Heidegger 1961, p. 100). For this thesis, the phenomenon of rapture, seen as a fundamental mood, has the advantage that it highlights two important aspects of Nietzsche’s turn to the body: 1) we do not have a body, we are not burdened by a body, but we are a body (Heidegger 1961, pp. 98-9); and 2) the essence of rapture is ascent beyond oneself and so rapture, as a state, undermines our understanding of ourselves as a discrete subject (Heidegger 1961, pp. 116, 123). It therefore allows us to think subjectivity within the horizon of radical and immanent openness to the world, beyond traditional categories.

Aesthetic appreciation for Nietzsche always involves more than only aesthetic categories. Early on, metaphysics added a further dimension to Nietzsche’s evaluation of art, whereas later physiological considerations play this role (Dufour 2001, p. 233). Nietzsche uses physiology most often in order to diagnose both the art work as well as its effects on the spectator. Art is an expression of either ascending or declining vital forces (Dufour 2001, p. 234) and of the flux of becoming (Pfofenauer 1984, p. 403). As a consequence, it can in certain cases have a physiologically debilitating effect on its audience (15[12] 13.411; 16[75] 13.510.). Nietzsche’s point is that this new perspective on art, that of physiology, is part of the project of detecting and overcoming a nihilistic metaphysics and its deleterious effects (Lypp 1984, p. 357), such as the disgust for life (Gerhardt 1984,

370 I use the translation “rapture” for “Rausch”, following Krell’s translation of Heidegger’s commentary on Nietzsche.

p. 389), because it offers a way to understand art and its potentially life-affirming effects without appealing to pure, disembodied contemplation. Nietzsche’s claim is that even if the objects of artistic depictions are ugly (*häßlich*), depicting them produces pleasure (*Lust*) (14[47] 13.241)³⁷¹ and this pleasure is best understood physiologically. It follows that uncovering the hidden physiological effects of decadent art can enable the creation of life-intensifying art (14[23], 13.228; cf. Dufour, 2001, p. 234)³⁷². Aesthetic experience also serves as a stimulus to activity, to procreation (GD Streifzüge 22 6.126), and must not be understood, together with Kant and Schopenhauer, as a type of passivity (Ridley 2007, pp. 120-1).

2.b. Physiology of morality

One of the key tenets of Nietzsche’s analysis of morality throughout his works is the denial of its supposedly supernatural origin³⁷³. Therefore, the various types of morality (most famously master and slave moralities) that Nietzsche subjects to philosophical scrutiny have a natural foundation and a history, and can therefore be investigated using a number of methods, which include, among others, genealogy, psychology, sociology and, of course, physiology. The goal of this section is not to offer an account of Nietzsche’s approach to morality, an enormous task in itself, but to focus on how the analysis of morality is conducted physiologically³⁷⁴. We must start by emphasizing that the science of morality, as Nietzsche sees it, is still in its infancy, and therefore still naïve (JGB 186 5.105ff). With regard to physiology, this state of affairs has two causes. The first cause is the ignorance of physiology characteristic of philosophers and investigators of morality. The second cause is the difficulty of the subject matter itself. The

371 Nietzsche’s views on ugliness are of course more complex. In GD Streifzüge 20 6.124, for instance, what is “ugly” is disempowering, it “weakens and depresses people” (*Physiologisch nachgerechnet, schwächt und betrübt alles Hässliche den Menschen*).

372 “Das Wesentliche an dieser Conception ist der Begriff der Kunst im Verhältniß zum Leben: sie wird, ebenso psychologisch als physiologisch, als das große Stimulans aufgefaßt, als das, was ewig zum Leben, zum ewigen Leben drängt...”.

373 JGB 3 5.17 puts the matter bluntly: behind our conscious valuations there are “physiologische Forderungen zur Erhaltung einer bestimmten Art von Leben”. The task is to investigate value naturalistically.

374 An explicitly physiological analysis of morality is developed first in the *Nachlass* of 1880 (3[10] 9.50) and in *M* (1881), although it is anticipated in *MA*.

task of the philosopher is to interpret moral valuations or judgements as signs, symbols or causes (see GM Vorrede 6 5.253 and earlier analyses in this chapter) of physiological processes:

My attempt, to understand moral judgments as symptoms and sign-languages, in which processes of physiological thriving or turning out badly, and equally awareness of the conditions for preservation and growth, are betrayed.³⁷⁵ (2[165] 12.149)

The moral valuation is an interpretation, a way to interpret. The interpretation itself is a symptom of certain physiological states, as well as of a certain spiritual level of dominating judgments. Who interprets? – Our affects³⁷⁶ (2[190] 12.161)

This already complicated task is rendered even more difficult by the fact that morality covers up, misinterprets physiological situations. Using the illusions of metaphysical concepts, morality has falsified nature and misunderstood the body:

The unconscious disguise of physiological needs under the cloaks of the objective, ideal, purely spiritual goes frighteningly far – and I have asked myself often enough whether, on a great scale, philosophy has been no more than an interpretation of the body and a *misunderstanding of the body*.³⁷⁷ (FW Vorrede 2 3.348)

Nietzsche is very clear about his desire to shift the focus of the research into morality from metaphysical considerations to a naturalised, philosophical inquiry. This shift is emphasized by Nietzsche's physiological analysis not only of morality

375 “Mein Versuch, die moralischen Urtheile als Symptome und Zeichensprachen zu verstehen, in denen sich Vorgänge des physiologischen Gedeihens oder Mißrathens, ebenso das Bewußtsein von Erhaltungs- und Wachstumsbedingungen verrathen”.

376 “das moralische Werthschätzen ist eine Auslegung, eine Art zu interpretiren. Die Auslegung selbst ist ein Symptom bestimmter physiologischer Zustände, ebenso eines bestimmten geistigen Niveaus von herrschenden Urtheilen. Wer legt aus? – Unsere Affekte”.

377 “Die unbewusste Verkleidung physiologischer Bedürfnisse unter die Mäntel des Objektiven, Ideellen, Rein-Geistigen geht bis zum Erschrecken weit, – und oft genug habe ich mich gefragt, ob nicht, im Grossen gerechnet, Philosophie bisher überhaupt nur eine Auslegung des Leibes und ein Missverständniss des Leibes gewesen ist”.

as a whole, but of notions that are part of the conceptual sphere of morality, for instance virtue (24[31] 10.662), the ascetic ideal (8[3] 12.330), egoism (11[8] 9.443) or criminality (M 202 3.176).

The descriptive task of physiology considered above is complemented by the diagnostic function Nietzsche employs it for. The attempt to understand “the human being under the skin”³⁷⁸ (FW 59 3.423) is aimed not only at dispelling moral or metaphysical illusion, but also at uncovering the physiological states that underlie various practices and beliefs. Nietzsche’s claim is that specific values stand in complex relations to specific forms of life and that a physiological diagnosis is needed in order to diagnose the value of these values. Nietzsche’s interest lies in a physiological reading of morality and so his goal is not to do away with any and all moral notions and actions (M 103 3.91f). His aim is rather to think differently about morality and undermine the tyrannical tendency of a certain kind of morality, which Nietzsche criticizes for its one-sidedness, the exclusion of the multiplicity of possible moral perspectives, and its damaging effects on human existence (van Tongeren 1984, p. 71; van Tongeren 2006, pp. 393-5). This is a step towards the future re-evaluation of these beliefs, as will be discussed in the normative section, but this time from the point of view of physiology, not theology or morality (9[165] 12.433). I now turn to the last field of physiological inquiry to be considered here, that of conscious thought.

2.c. Conscious thought

In his book on Nietzsche, Klossowski has argued that Nietzsche describes a struggle between the body, understood as the place of active forces, or anatomically as the nervous system, and the brain, the place of thinking and consciousness. Klossowski’s argument is that Nietzsche is highly critical of the role taken on by the brain, and consciousness, considering it the most fragile organ in the body and yet the one that has come to dominate the body and select the forces and impulses that help preserve it (Klossowski 1997, pp. 22-27). Klossowski argues that Nietzsche’s philosophy is aimed at the liberation of forces and the recreation of the self (Klossowski 1997, p. 32). Conscious thought is a late development

378 “Der Mensch unter der Haut”.

of human nature and its main function has been to generate errors that have had the advantage of proving to be useful for the preservation of (social) life. The human, “the most endangered animal, *needed* help and protection, needed his equals”³⁷⁹ in order to survive, and so “*consciousness in general has developed only under the pressure of the need to communicate*”³⁸⁰. Consciousness, the “*ability to communicate*”³⁸¹ and connect one person with another, is related to the “*need to communicate*”³⁸² (FW 354 3.590f; see also JGB 268 5.221f). The errors produced by conscious thought stem from a deeply rooted difficulty: the problem of using language developed by consciousness in order to understand what is outside consciousness is that the act of conscious thinking “corresponds to a passivity” which is “grounded in *the fixity of the signs of language*” (Klossowski 1997, p. 43). Nietzsche employs physiology in order to expose the fixity inherent in language and recover within philosophical discourse the dynamism that characterizes becoming.

The relation between physiology and conscious thought³⁸³ is twofold: on the one hand conscious thinking defines our understanding of physiology (Gerhardt 2006, p. 278) and, on the other hand, our physiological organisation grounds and informs the manner of our thinking, since reason inheres in the body (Gerhardt 2006, pp. 274-5). Before these two aspects can be elucidated, it is important to clarify what Nietzsche means by conscious thought.

Conscious thought has developed the illusions of substance, autonomy, identity and free will and it has generated a simplified outlook on reality. Our conscious perspective on the world has been geared towards finding the most practical course of action, rather than towards an understanding of nature in its full richness

379 “er brauchte, als das gefährdetste Thier, Hülfe, Schutz, er brauchte Seines-Gleichen”.

380 “Bewusstsein überhaupt sich nur unter dem Druck des Mittheilungs-Bedürfnisses entwickelt hat”.

381 “Mittheilungs-Fähigkeit”.

382 “Mittheilungs-Bedürftigkeit”.

383 The concern with a physiological interpretation of conscious thought starts with the first uses of the word ‘physiologie’ by Nietzsche (19[107] 7.454).

(Aydin 2003, p. 103)³⁸⁴. Consciousness is an organ of the body³⁸⁵, its “work- and plaything” (*Werk- und Spielzeug*; Z I Verächtern 4.39) and has been developed in order to address the needs of the body in its social dimension: the importance of communication for survival in social groups. The simplified, abstract perspective we have developed is the result of evolution that has selected the individual best suited for survival, rather than knowledge. We can identify a disjunction here between the usefulness of a perspective and its truth: the survival of a feature of conscious thought does not entail that that feature gives us adequate understanding of reality. Given this diagnosis of our thinking, it follows that Nietzsche is highly sceptical about our ability to understand physiology outside the narrow interests of our survival.

The second aspect of this relation is the influence of our body on our thinking. Given that the subject is a multiplicity of drives and affects (40[21] 11.638), the intellect is the object of the struggle between the drives:

As cells stand next to cells physiologically, so do drives next to drives. The most general image of our being is *a socialisation of drives*, with continual rivalry and particular alliances among them. The intellect object of competition. ³⁸⁶(7[94] 10.274)

If we are to strive for self-knowledge, we must, according to Nietzsche, take the body as our guide and philosophize *am Leitfaden des Leibes* (36[35] 11.565; 37[4] 11.578). This translates into the imperative to place our conscious thought in its physiological context as an organ or a function of the organism, rather than viewing it as an autonomous self-determining entity.

The same physiological reading is applied by Nietzsche to phenomena associated

384 “Die Logik unseres bewußten Denkens ist nur eine grobe und erleichterte Form jenes Denkens, welches unser Organismus, ja die einzelnen Organe desselben, nöthig hat.” (34[124] 11.462).

385 Reason and understanding are not locally something in the body, but they express the body’s power to act (Gerhardt 2006, p. 288).

386 “Wie Zelle neben Zelle physiologisch steht, so Trieb neben Trieb. Das allgemeinste Bild unseres Wesens ist eine Vergesellschaftung von Trieben, mit fortwährender Rivalität und Einzelbündnissen unter einander. Der Intellekt Objekt des Wettbewerbes.”.

with thinking: memory (19[179] 7.475; 1[115] 9.30), consciousness (FW 354 3.592), scepticism (34[67] 11.440), language (34[124] 11.462) and philosophy (GD Sokrates 2 6.67).

Nietzsche's critique of reason echoes an important tradition in German philosophy, inaugurated by Kant, who engaged in the project of a self-critique of reason, and Schopenhauer, who emphasized the limits of reason from the point of view of his metaphysics of will. For Schopenhauer, all cognition is representation, which means it is subject to the object / subject distinction (WWV I 3). Because representation is based on this duality, it misses the meaning of the world, which for Schopenhauer is nothing but its essence, i.e. the will (WWV I, 118). Next to this difference on the issue of metaphysics, Nietzsche and Schopenhauer diverge because Schopenhauer does not accept an evolutionary explanation³⁸⁷ for why representation has come to have a certain structure. The nature of representation is fixed, as the expression of the will. The similarities between the two, however, become more pronounced when we look at Schopenhauer's views on reason. These should be regarded in light of the distinction Schopenhauer makes between intuitive and non-intuitive or abstract knowledge³⁸⁸ (WWV I 7). Intuitive knowledge, the domain of the understanding, gives certain, immediate and clear knowledge of things themselves (*die Sache selbst*; WWV I 41-2). Understanding, whether in animals or in humans, is nothing other than cognition of causality (WWV I 24)³⁸⁹. Reason is non-intuitive knowledge, and only mirrors what is given in intuition (WWV I 43). Its function is to create concepts (WWV I 46) which are abstract. Schopenhauer writes that it is with reason that doubt and error came into the world, while in the practical sphere it has generated care and remorse (WWV I 42). The knowledge reason can give is only abstract and discursive, can never be fully evident and has instrumental value. This becomes apparent in the products of reason: language (whose sole purpose is communication), science and planned action (WWV I 47). It is possible to identify here a number of themes that

387 Schopenhauer knew only the Lamarckian view of evolution, which he calls "an error of genius" (WN 44).

388 "Der Hauptunterschied zwischen allen unsern Vorstellungen ist der des Intuitiven und Abstrakten".

389 Nietzsche does not share this high praise of intuitive knowledge.

re-surface in Nietzsche: 1) the abstract or impoverished nature of the knowledge accessible through reason, 2) a critique of language and conceptual thinking as aimed solely at communication, not at uncovering truth, 3) the limited nature of scientific knowledge, and 4) the association between rational thought and the feelings of care and remorse. This discussion of Nietzsche’s critique of reason and of conscious thought serves as the platform for analysing, in chapter III, the contrast between Nietzsche’s view and Spinoza’s confidence in the power of reason to provide adequate knowledge and promote the ethical goal of empowerment.

III. Philosophical Physiology and Science

We are now in a position to address the question of the status of science in Nietzsche’s turn to physiology. Does Nietzsche’s turn to the body imply abandoning philosophy for physiology understood as a natural science? What use are descriptions of bodily processes for tackling the task of creating a new order of value and meaning that would overcome nihilism? My thesis is that Nietzsche’s physiology must be understood as a philosophical physiology and that the accusation that he abandons philosophy for natural science through his use of physiology does not hold. I will use as my starting point Heidegger’s discussion of ‘biologism’ and his claim that Nietzsche grounds his insights into life metaphysically, not biologically. I will argue that we do not have to understand Nietzsche’s philosophy as metaphysics in order to extricate him from the charge of biologism. What we need is to understand well the nature of philosophical physiology and its differences to natural science. In order to do this we need to consider Nietzsche’s critique of science, and ask why and how philosophical physiology is different.

What do “nervous states”, “processes in the nerve cells” or “gastric juices” tell us about values and their creation (Heidegger 1961, pp. 92-3)? How can descriptions of physiological processes help us evaluate values and formulate new values that could overcome nihilism? This issue was tackled by Heidegger in the context of his critique of a number of readings that associated Nietzsche, more or less

crudely, with the biologism expounded by National Socialism (Bernasconi 2012, p. 159). We can distinguish between two formulations of biologism in Heidegger's work on Nietzsche. The first one, from 1939, defines biologism as the transfer of prevailing views about living beings from biology to other realms, such as art, history or philosophy (Bernasconi 2012, p. 170). Later on, Heidegger changes his formulation of biologism to the claim that Nietzsche would be "guilty of biologism if he had adopted certain concepts and key propositions from biology without realizing that they already implied certain metaphysical decisions (Bernasconi 2012, p. 170). In other words Nietzsche can be accused of biologism if he misunderstood the metaphysical ground that circumscribes the field of possible application of biological notions (Heidegger pp. 524-5). Heidegger's defence of Nietzsche against the accusation of biologism depends on the reference to metaphysics (Bernasconi 2012, p. 170). Heidegger's argument is that, while apparent biologism is impossible to ignore in Nietzsche's work, focusing on it can be an obstacle in grasping Nietzsche's thinking and that Nietzsche uses biological language in order to "make his account of the aesthetic state accessible to his contemporaries" (Bernasconi 2012, p. 171). According to Heidegger, Nietzsche presents his metaphysics as a biological interpretation of being (*Leben*=being; cf. Heidegger 1961, p. 518). Heidegger argues that it is true that Nietzsche couches his project of the re-evaluation of all values in biological terms, but in reality he grounds his insights into life metaphysically, not biologically. Nietzsche moves in the biological domain only superficially, while reaching the metaphysical level in his philosophical thought (Heidegger 1961, p. 599). The goal of this section is not to discuss the details of Heidegger's defence of Nietzsche against biologism through an appeal to metaphysics, but to argue that we need not consider the role of metaphysics in Nietzsche's philosophy in order to extricate him from this accusation³⁹⁰. The alternative suggested here is that it is possible to undermine the

390 Abel has argued that Nietzsche's philosophy is not a form of biologism because 1) the path to the body is not through only one discipline, but rather through reflection on consciousness and opening it up to its pre-cognitive conditions; 2) philosophy, Nietzsche's included, asks how we should think about the fact that relations between the body and consciousness are reciprocal: philosophy does not perform a scientific inquiry of these relations, but asks about its presuppositions; and 3) Nietzsche's analysis of *Leiblichkeit* is phenomenological. That means it does not look for the building blocks of the body but for an interpretation of it as a collection of multifarious, intelligent processes (Abel 2009, min. 47-53). I agree with and build on these claims, but

accusation of biologism through a careful investigation of the differences between Nietzsche’s philosophical physiology and natural science, without an appeal to any potential metaphysical foundation.

1. Nietzsche’s Critique of Science

Nietzsche dismisses any claims to knowledge of an “unconditioned truth” (*unbedingten Wahrheit*) (MA 630 2.356). On Nietzsche’s reading the success that natural science has is not the result of uncovering the hidden fabric of reality, but of its usefulness. Science is an expression of human needs and interests, and does not have a metaphysical mandate (Babich 1994, p. 48). If we are trying to understand the nature of science we must look at its ground and assumptions, rather than at science’s claims about reality. The insight into the antropomorphization fundamental to scientific inquiry is something that Nietzsche takes from Schopenhauer, but that he goes beyond (Babich 1994, p. 58). It is important to note that Schopenhauer’s critique of science is a consequence of what he claimed was a lack of metaphysical knowledge on the part of the researchers. They did not understand that natural phenomena could not be fully explained by scientific³⁹¹ means, but only by an appeal to the will. Nietzsche’s critique of science is based on the claim that there is too much metaphysics, and implicitly morality (JGB 22 5.37), in scientific inquiry, rather than too little. Nietzsche is critical of sciences, and of life sciences in particular, because he believes they are grounded in substance metaphysics and so fail to do justice to the dynamic character of reality (GM II 12 5.315f).

An important reason for Nietzsche’s attraction to science is his attempt to look for an alternative to the metaphysical manner of thinking that uses the notions of “final causes”, “freedom of the will” and “causa sui” (JGB 21 5.35f). This explains his interest in the scientific concept of mechanism. Mechanism is the attempt to explain all phenomena using quantitative realities: mass and force. The

my approach is to start from Nietzsche’s critique of science and show how it cannot live up to the demands of philosophical activity.

391 Science can describe regularities, but not explain why cause and effect relations, for instance, occur as they do. In order to do that we need to understand the notion of natural force, and, for Schopenhauer, a force is the expression of the will in nature (WWV I 96).

mechanistic interpretation of reality “views organization as the result of accidental concatenations of processes obeying physical laws” (Lenoir 1982, p. 7). It is these laws that determine the way mass behaves under the action of natural forces.

Mechanism can be useful as a method, a kind of ideal that allows us to make the world calculable (43[2] 11.701) and, by focusing on efficient causation, avoids the illusions of free will and finalism. This however is also the source of its weakness. Mechanism permits “counting, calculating, weighing, seeing, grasping”³⁹² (FW 373 3.625), but in doing so it anthropomorphizes³⁹³ the world. Scientists err when they fail to see that the concepts they operate with (cause and effect, atoms, numbers, laws) are only conventional fictions. Nietzsche argues that mechanism masks the fundamental concept of his power ontology, namely activity (this error is especially harmful in the case of physiology and biology GM II.12 5.315f). Mechanism presents a senseless picture of events, in which there is no meaning (FW 373 3.626). According to mechanism there are no strong and weak wills, but only accidents. This is the “English-mechanistic world-stupidification”³⁹⁴ Nietzsche argues against (JGB 252 5.195).

Nietzsche’s claim is that mechanism does not allow us to see the world “from inside” (*von innen*; cf. Mittasch 1952, p. 86), in terms of endogenous activity, and that, in order to do this, we need to use the hypothesis of the “will to power” (*Wille zur Macht*). This provides us with the means to “render the so-called mechanical (and thus material) world comprehensible”³⁹⁵ (JGB 36 5.54). Nietzsche seeks to offer an understanding of phenomena, of change and motion, that does not rely on exogenous factors, as does mechanism, but that interprets the world starting from an endogenous source of activity. Nietzsche interprets “wills to power” as

392 “Zählen, Rechnen, Wägen, Sehn und Greifen”.

393 Science, due to the “democratic instincts of the modern soul” (*demokratischen Instinkten der modernen Seele*) upholds the tenet of “conformity of nature to law” (*Gesetzmässigkeit der Natur*) and claims that “nature is no different and no better off than we are” (*die Natur hat es darin nicht anders und nicht besser als wir*). These “bad tricks of interpretation” (*schlechte Interpretations-Künste den Finger*) are a “naïve humanitarian correction and a distortion of meaning” (*eine naiv-humanitäre Zurechtmachung und Sinnverdrehung*) used in the scientific understanding of nature. (JGB 22 5.37).

394 “englisch-mechanistischen Welt-Vertölpelung”.

395 “die sogenannte mechanistische (oder ‘materielle’) Welt zu verstehen”.

dynamic quanta, whose essence is nothing but their effect (*Wirkung*), and which can be understood only in the context of relations to other force-centers or “wills to power”. They are fundamentally a will to overpowering (*Vergewaltigung*; cf. Müller-Lauter 1999b, p. 147). The opposition Nietzsche sets up is between an interpretation of nature using the concept of endogenous activity, and a relational account of power (between force-centers) and the mechanistic “explanation” grounded in substance metaphysics and the belief in causality. To sum up, mechanism, according to Nietzsche, is based on an illusion because it is based on two convictions: that all action is motion (while Nietzsche claims activity consists in relation of commanding and obeying of “wills to power”) and that whenever there is motion, there is something that moves (the illusion of substance as the subject of change) (Müller-Lauter 1999b, p. 147)

Nietzsche’s critique of the scientific perspective, more specifically mechanism, is complemented by his critique of a number of key scientific notions of his time: causal determinism, atomism and progress.

Causal determinism

Together with the rejection of the doctrine of free will, Nietzsche accepts the “strict necessity of human actions”³⁹⁶ (VM 33 2.395) and of the world (Müller-Lauter 1999b, p. 32). This, however, should not be confused with the hypothesis of causal determinism governing the world. Causal determinism implies the belief in an identifiable duality in nature, that between cause and effect, as well as the belief in a law governing reality. Nietzsche rejects both these assumptions, while exposing the roots of our belief in them. In FW 112 3.472f he argues that the duality of cause and effect is an arbitrary division that we project onto the world when we attempt to humanize it. Reality is a continuum and, when we pick out cause and effect, we isolate a number of processes out of the infinite number of processes that elude us. We manage to isolate events by projecting onto reality our picture of the world, made up of things that do not really exist: lines, surfaces, bodies, atoms etc. In other words, we believe in causality, but have not proven it (26[12] 11.152f). We look for causes and imagine them after the event, rather

396 “die strenge Nothwendigkeit der menschlichen Handlungen”.

than find them there (Müller-Lauter 1999b, p. 64). For Nietzsche, causality is a description of the world rather than an explanation, and our concepts of cause and effect are a poor, simplifying description of reality³⁹⁷. Nietzsche dismisses the hypothesis that things in nature act according to a law not only because we cannot properly speak of “things”, but also because it is unwarranted to believe that events happen regularly by virtue of some rule that they obey (14[79] 13.257). Each thing discharges the entire force that it is capable of at every moment. We can properly understand relations only if we conceive them as relations of tension between dynamic quanta, not between entities governed by laws of nature (Müller-Lauter, 1999, p. 147).

Nietzsche traces our belief in causality back to our belief in free will as cause (an older illusion, cf. MA 18 2.39f). In FW 127 3.482 Nietzsche argues that humans assume there are causes and effects because every person “is convinced that it is *he* who is striking and that he did the striking because he *wanted* to strike”³⁹⁸. It is the feeling of will that misleads humans into believing that causality exists and that they understand it³⁹⁹. This feeling was first manifested in the belief in forces of nature that work by magic, but has later been invested in the belief in causes and effects. We confuse the feeling of power we have when we do something with knowledge of a force that causes the event (Müller-Lauter 1999b, p. 64).

397 Müller-Lauter traces this critique of causality to Schopenhauer, who argued that causality cannot be explained as things simply acting on things, but rather as states of affairs following necessarily from other states of affairs (Müller-Lauter 1999b, p. 114). This account can be corrected in two ways: 1) Schopenhauer does not say that causality cannot be properly understood as things acting on things, but, more strongly, that it is “completely false” to believe that things act on things (FR 35): the connection between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche is closer than Müller-Lauter seems to suggest; and 2) Schopenhauer writes that we pick out certain changes or alterations (usually the final alteration, which we see as decisive, we call cause) and label them cause and effect, whereas we should see that all changes that have preceded an event form its necessary conditions. The chain of causality is without beginning (FR 34-5). We can see that Schopenhauer, just like Nietzsche, emphasizes the conventional and simplifying way in which we use the concepts of cause and effect.

398 “Er ist überzeugt [...] er sei es, der da schlage, und er habe geschlagen, weil er schlagen wollte.”

399 Here Nietzsche is in direct contradiction to Schopenhauer, who writes that “motivation is causality seen from within” and therefore rendered accessible to human understanding (FR 145). The idea that the way our will operates is the model on which we can understand causality in nature is considered by Schopenhauer “the cornerstone of my whole Metaphysics” (FR 145).

Atomism

We have already considered in section I Nietzsche’s critique of substance and how he argues that the belief in immutable entities originates in the idea that there is a doer behind the deed, a subject that may or may not act. We project this simplifying view onto our perception of the world and believe that there are isolated and indivisible agents and that there are facts in nature that are identical. In the realm of science the belief in identical facts leads to atomism (atoms are things that do not exist; cf. FW 112 3.472) and to the belief in “a graduated order of classes of facts which corresponds to a graduated world order”⁴⁰⁰ (WS 11A 2.547). We think that reality is composed out of atoms, fundamental and indivisible building blocks of reality, because we do not understand that all our doing and knowing is a “continuous, homogenous, undivided, indivisible flowing” (WS 11 2.547). The same view is present much later in GD Vernunft 5 6.78 where Nietzsche presents the atom as the result of the seduction of the Eleatic concept of being, or in GD Irrthümer 3 6.91 where the atom is described as the reflex of the belief in the I as cause, and thus as only an illusion. Every action or event is determined by a constellation of factors and we fail to grasp the context they are in (Müller-Lauter 1999b, pp. 49-50). In order to do justice to the dynamic character of reality we need to think beyond the prejudices of atoms as original unities and of substance ontology and conceive the fabric of reality as relations between wills to power that command and obey and that are in constant flux. In JGB 12 5.26 Nietzsche is optimistic about the current state of science and argues that Boscovich and others have shown the illusory nature of materialistic atomism. Nevertheless, the need for atomism persists⁴⁰¹ and we must detect its influence, particularly in the case of the Christian belief in the atomism of the soul.

In the domain of the life sciences, Nietzsche’s argument against the existence of isolated classes of facts and a graduated world-order must be understood in the

400 “eine abgestufte Ordnung von Gattungen der Facten [...], welcher eine abgestufte Werthordnung entspreche”.

401 Nietzsche associates it with a “metaphysical need” (*metaphysischen Bedürfnisse*; cf. JGB 12 5.26, possibly a reference to Schopenhauer’s section on *Ueber das metaphysische Bedürfniß des Menschen* in WWV II).

context of one of the most important debates of his time, namely the debate on the problem of the transmutation of species. By the second half of the 19th Century it was generally accepted that species can evolve into new species. One of the bones of contention was whether all animals had one common ancestor, as Darwin argued, or whether species evolved from a number of original archetypes, which would imply that every class or family would have its own primordial ancestor (an opinion held by von Baer, for instance; cf. Lenoir 1982, pp. 253-4). The latter position was starting to lose ground, but the hypothesis of a common ancestor had its own share of difficulties. If there is no essential distinction between species based on their origin, then how do we classify and delineate different species? As the discovery of fossils, together with geographical discoveries, created a more nuanced understanding of biology, scientists started arguing that the distinctions we make can be artificial and that it is much more useful to speak of populations sharing similar traits, rather than species sharing the same essence (Bowler 1989, pp. 172, 212). Nietzsche's anti-essentialist (i.e. anti-atomistic) arguments fall in line with this new way of conceiving distinctions in the field of biology. A second problem, and a more difficult one to solve, was how to explain the evolution of species and the preservation of new traits if breeding inevitably leads to the blending of traits⁴⁰². Galton argued that breeding, in the long run, would lead to the levelling of the population and the elimination of any outstanding features of organisms. Only the environment, given its constant effects, could shape a population in one direction or another (Bowler 1989, pp. 209-11, 254). Nietzsche rejects this biological explanation, by arguing that milieu-theory does not fully explain either degeneration or the appearance of the strong type. This raises two questions that must be addressed in the section on Nietzsche's normative thought. First, we must ask how Nietzsche's account of empowerment is formulated in terms of an endogenous source of activity. Second, we must ask what, if any, are the empowering effects of the strong individual on other human beings.

402 Nobody at this time understood genetics and so inheritance of traits was thought to occur through the mixing of the parents' traits.

Teleology and progress

In section I we considered Nietzsche’s critique of finalism and, in this section, I have argued that Nietzsche’s positive appraisals of mechanism must be read in the context of his attempt to formulate a non-teleological account of becoming. In the present context, we must ask what the teleological principles Nietzsche identifies and criticizes in science are. The answer to this question is twofold: with regard to individual forms of life, the drive for self-preservation is a mistaken assumption, while with regard to the phenomenon of life as a whole, it is wrong to confuse the phenomenon of evolution or transmutation of species with progress or improvement. In conjunction with his reading of the English biologist William Rolph⁴⁰³ Nietzsche develops an understanding of life based on the principle that life is fundamentally growth: the “really fundamental instinct of life aims at the expansion of power”⁴⁰⁴ (FW 349 3.585). The striving for self-preservation is only a particular case of the drive for expansion, for more power, and it appears only in conditions of crisis, hunger or distress (FW 349 3.585; GD Streifzüge 14 6.120). This must be understood as Nietzsche’s reaction not only to 19th Century biology, but also to his understanding of Spinoza’s conatus and Schopenhauer’s will to life (Moore 2002, p. 46). The second teleological principle Nietzsche attacks is the belief of biologists in the 19th Century in a gradual and seemingly inevitable advance towards moral, social and intellectual improvement (Moore 2002, p. 29). The idea that evolution is in fact a manifestation of the Law of Progress could be found among German scientists, but also in the work of Herbert Spencer, whom Nietzsche explicitly criticizes (11[98] 9.476; FW 373 3.625). Nietzsche reads this evolutionary optimism as the symptom of the still persisting belief in divine providence and perfection (2[131] 12.130; 9[163] 12.431; 10[7] 12.457). Nietzsche’s critique of teleology in its scientific expressions must be understood as a particular case of his objections against the idea of purposiveness: it presupposes a preexisting unity that is thought to pre-determine the paths of development organisms can take, and so robs us of the capacity to understand the complex

403 Nietzsche acquired his book *Biological Problems* in 1884 (Moore 2002, p. 47).

404 “des eigentlichen Lebens-Grundtriebes, der auf Machterweiterung hinausgeht”-

power to act of each body. This is another instance of how change and becoming are derived from and predicated on being.

After this excursus into the nature of Nietzsche's reflections on the limits and errors of science, we must return to the guiding question of this section and ask where Nietzsche's physiology fits in the context of the distinction between philosophy and natural science. My thesis is that we must understand Nietzsche's physiology as a philosophical physiology for two reasons. First, physiology allows Nietzsche to describe and diagnose moral and metaphysical life-denying illusions without falling back into the same anthropomorphic perspective. In other words, philosophical physiology serves the function of liberating philosophical discourse from metaphysical errors by formulating a perspective that strives to describe becoming without placing it in a subordinate role to being. Physiology is able to offer this perspective because it employs a philosophical vocabulary focused on processes, activity, endogenous power, struggle, originary multiplicity and, fundamentally for Nietzsche, will to power. Second, this diagnostic function of physiology is complemented by its part in what Nietzsche describes as the distinctive role played by the philosopher as legislator: the creation or begetting of new, life-promoting, values. Philosophical physiology, as will be discussed next and in the section on Nietzsche's normative thought, enables the philosopher to adopt an immanent, normative standpoint that is empowering and serves the purpose of affirming and enhancing life. The creation of life-enhancing values can only be accomplished if we think "under the guidance of the body"⁴⁰⁵ (26[432] 11,266; 2[91] 12.106) and strive to find the best way to open up, rather than undermine, the endogenous power to act characteristic of the body.

2. The difference between philosophical and scientific physiology

Compared to a genius, which is to say: compared to a being that either *begets* or *gives birth* (taking both words in their widest scope), the scholar, the average man of science, is somewhat like an old maid. Like her, he has

405 "am Leitfaden des Leibes".

no expertise in the two most valuable acts performed by humanity.⁴⁰⁶ (JGB 206 5.133)

In order to better understand this text, we must ask what Nietzsche means by “genius” and its ability to “beget” and “give birth”, what the “average man of science” is and why he lacks the abilities of the genius, and how this inability of the “man of science” is expressed in science.

The concept of “genius” must be understood in connection with the concept of “*true philosophers*”⁴⁰⁷ Nietzsche writes about in JGB 211 5.144f. They are characterised as “*commanders and legislators*”⁴⁰⁸, in other words their activity is to create values, and say “that is how it *ought* to be”⁴⁰⁹. The creative activity, which consists in begetting values, has as its precondition the ability to “run though the range of human values and value feelings and *be able* to gaze with many eyes and consciences from the heights into every distance”⁴¹⁰ (JGB 211 5.144). The creative capacity of the genius is correlated with a number of other intrinsic qualities consistently affirmed of genius throughout Nietzsche’s writings: 1) the genius is a squanderer of surplus energy 2) has the strength of will to “coordinate, bind and channel its energy in creative acts” and 3) embodies and “co-ordinates a maximal range of perspectives, conflicting value-schemes and impulses” (Siemens 2002, pp. 86-7).

b) The richness, strength and creativity of the philosopher as legislator is contrasted to the “average” character of the man of science. The latter is characterised by a number of “virtues” (*Tugenden*) characteristic of the “ignoble type”⁴¹¹. This type:

406 “Im Verhältnisse zu einem Genie, das heisst zu einem Wesen, welches entweder zeugt oder gebirt, beide Worte in ihrem höchsten Umfange genommen –, hat der Gelehrte, der wissenschaftliche Durchschnittsmensch immer etwas von der alten Jungfer: denn er versteht sich gleich dieser nicht auf die zwei werthvollsten Verrichtungen des Menschen.”

407 “eigentlichen Philosophen”.

408 “Befehlende und Gesetzgeber”.

409 “so soll es sein!”.

410 “um den Umkreis menschlicher Werthe und Werth-Gefühle zu durchlaufen und mit vielerlei Augen und Gewissen, von der Höhe in jede Ferne”.

411 “eine unvornehme Art Mensch”. “das Problem der Wissenschaft kann nicht auf dem Boden der Wissenschaft erkannt werden” (GT Versuch 2 1.13). Science and the scientific man must be studied as symptoms of certain type of life, in this case the ignoble type.

1) is not dominant or authoritative, 2) is “industrious and moderate in his abilities and needs” 3) is “full of petty jealousies”⁴¹²; and 4) most dangerously, “instinctively works towards the annihilation of the exceptional man”⁴¹³ (JGB 206 5.133f). The activity of annihilation is expressed in what Nietzsche calls the “inappropriate and harmful shift in the rank order [...] between science and philosophy”⁴¹⁴. This reversal consists in the “scientific man’s declaration of independence, his emancipation from philosophy”⁴¹⁵ and in his desire to “play at being ‘master’ [...] play at being *philosopher*”⁴¹⁶ (JGB 204 5.129f).

c) The problems with this reversal are that the man of science lacks the creative power of the genius, cannot create values and be “master”, and that he inhibits the power of the philosopher to affirm itself and legislate:

[...] it is precisely the best science that will best know how to keep us in this *simplified*, utterly artificial, well-invented, well-falsified world⁴¹⁷ (JGB 24 5.41f).

The re-evaluation of values is not the responsibility of the man of science, who lacks the necessary qualities for this task. The creation of values is the province of the philosopher who, from the naturalistic standpoint of immanence – of which philosophical physiology is an integral part – can strive to formulate new, life-affirming perspectives⁴¹⁸. A well-informed pursuit of science must depend on the commitment to immanence and naturalism that philosophical physiology can provide.

Philosophical physiology is a perspective and offers an interpretation, not an explanation as scientific physiology claims to do. In order to further emphasize

412 “reich am kleinen Neide”.

413 “an der Vernichtung des ungewöhnlichen Menschen instinktiv arbeitet”.

414 “einer ungebührlichen und schädlichen Rangverschiebung [...] zwischen Wissenschaft und Philosophie”.

415 “Die Unabhängigkeits-Erklärung des wissenschaftlichen Menschen, seine Emancipation von der Philosophie”.

416 “den ‘Herrn’ [...] den Philosophen zu spielen”.

417 “[...] die beste Wissenschaft uns am besten in dieser vereinfachten, durch und durch künstlichen, zurecht gedichteten, zurecht gefälschten Welt festhalten will”.

418 More on this task in chapter III.

and elaborate on the the role of philosophical physiology as one among many (albeit privileged) philosophical perspectives, it is useful to argue against the charge that Nietzsche is a reductionist and that he collapses aesthetic, moral or political problems into physiological questions.

What is reductionism?

Reductionism is the explanation of one theory or discipline (A) in terms of another (B) (Nagel 1979, p. 338; Wilson and Lumsden 1991, p. 404). The absorption or reduction of one theory into another has the following prerequisites: 1) the laws, axioms, principles, etc. of both disciplines must be explicitly formulated (ideal requirement) (Nagel 1979, p. 345); 2) the terms in discipline A must be connected to and derived from terms in discipline B (Nagel 1979, p. 353)⁴¹⁹. The connections between the terms of the two disciplines can be analytical, conventional or synthetical: the links are material and independent observations are required in order to establish them (Nagel 1979, pp. 354-5). The question of reductionism is not whether a set of properties or facts about the object of study can be deduced from another set of properties or facts, because properties and facts about things are not directly observable. It should rather be framed as the question of whether a set of statements in one discipline can be deduced from a set of statements in a different discipline (Nagel 1979, p. 364). Nagel argues that the motivation behind the operation of reductionism should be the answer to the question: What do (especially the secondary) disciplines stand to gain from it? (Nagel 1979, p. 362)⁴²⁰ The question of the usefulness of reductionism should not mask the belief of many scientists that the reduction of a “higher” to a “lower”⁴²¹ science results in a closer and closer approximation of truth, by reducing diverse, narrow and inaccurate theories to a unified, broad and accurate one (Rosenbeg 1985, p. 70).

419 Nagel argues that terms in the secondary science must be logically derived from the primary science, while Wilson and Lumsden argue that the connections also involve interpretation: the laws in the two disciplines can be isomoprhc (Wilson and Lumsden 1991, p. 404).

420 To take an example in which the answer to this question is not very encouraging, Rosenbeg argues that reducing Mendelian genetics to molecular genetics would give rise to such unwieldy statements that they would not do any work for the advancement of either molecular or Mendelian genetics (Rosenbeg 1985, p. 107).

421 For instance the reduction of biology or chemistry to physics, a more “universal” or “general” science.

The operation of reductionism raises the question of the existence of any residue in the secondary discipline that cannot be explained in terms of the primary discipline. The position of hard holism implies the belief in processes that are not obedient to the theoretical constructs of any primary discipline (ontological independence). Soft holism holds that full descriptions of higher or secondary level must not only incorporate the theoretical apparatus of the lower level but also considerations that apply to the higher level alone, but are not in principle ontologically independent (Wilson and Lumsden 1991, p. 405)⁴²².

Is reductionism present in Nietzsche's philosophy?

The conceptual apparatus of physiology, as we have seen in section II, is marked by Nietzsche's use of the notions of symptom and sign in the description of the relation between morality or art and physiology. The claim that various types of morality are symptoms of physiological states or processes implies that we can gain a better understanding of morality by considering the physiological conditions that shape it, and not that the conceptual vocabulary of morality should be abandoned. If Nietzsche were a reductionist, he would have to hold that the set of statements we can make in morality or art can be deduced from a set of statements in physiology. While physiological description and diagnosis do offer important advantages, Nietzsche's claim, as we have seen so far, is not that aesthetic or moral vocabulary can or should be dissolved into physiological formulations. The language of morality is useful, and Nietzsche makes full use of it in, for instance, his description of the sovereign individual who has the "prerogative to promise"⁴²³, is "master of the *free* will"⁴²⁴ (GM II 2 5.293) and has the "proud knowledge of the extraordinary privilege of *responsibility*"⁴²⁵ (GM II 2 5.294)⁴²⁶.

422 Wilson and Lumsden estimate that most biologists are reductionists and soft holists (1991, p. 406).

423 "der versprechen darf".

424 "Herr des freien Willens".

425 "Das stolze Wissen um das ausserordentliche Privilegium der Verantwortlichkeit".

426 Schank has convincingly argued that we should not understand Nietzsche's description of the strong type of human as a purely biological account (Schank 2000, p. 354).

Nevertheless, in this subsection I would like to consider a small number of texts that may incline the reader towards seeing Nietzsche as, sometimes, a reductionist. The first passages I will consider are:

My objections to Wagner’s music are physiological objections: why disguise them with aesthetic formulas? After all, aesthetics is nothing but applied physiology.”⁴²⁷ (NW Einwände 6.418)⁴²⁸

And

Wagner has become impossible to me from beginning to end, because he cannot walk, let alone dance / But these are physiological judgments, not aesthetic: now – I no longer have any aesthetics⁴²⁹ (7[7] 12.285)

My question is how we should understand Nietzsche’s claim that he no longer has aesthetics and that aesthetic formulas are only a disguise. If the reading of Nietzsche as a reductionist is to hold water, he must show how aesthetic formulae can be traced back, or translated into, physiological language. If this operation is successful, it would be possible to hold that aesthetics is no longer needed. Unfortunately for the reductionist reading, Nietzsche’s account of the tracing back of aesthetic phenomena to the physiological does not warrant a strong eliminationist thesis: “Wagner’s principles and practices are all reducible to physiological needs: they are their expression (‘hysteria’ as music)”⁴³⁰ (16[75] 13.510). If we ask, in light of this text, what it means to ‘reduce’ or ‘trace back’ (*zurückführen*) music to the physiological, Nietzsche’s answer is that it means to consider the artistic as the expression of a physiological state (*Hysterismus*). Here the operation of tracing back or reducing does not imply, as the reductionist would like, the elimination of the vocabulary of art or aesthetics or the claim that

427 “Meine Einwände gegen die Musik Wagner’s sind physiologische Einwände: wozu dieselben erst noch unter ästhetische Formeln verkleiden? Ästhetik ist ja nichts als eine angewandte Physiologie.”

428 This is an adaptation of FW 368 3.616.

429 “Wagner vom Anfang bis zum Ende ist mir unmöglich geworden, weil er nicht gehen kann, geschweige denn tanzen. / Aber das sind physiologische Urtheile, keine aesthetische: nur – habe ich keine Aesthetik mehr!”

430 “die Principien und Praktiken Wagner’s sind allesamt zurückführbar auf physiologische Nothstände: sie sind deren Ausdruck (‘Hysterismus’ als Musik)”.

the language of aesthetics is superfluous⁴³¹. Nietzsche's goal is to undermine the illusion that various artistic or moral phenomena are unconditioned or autonomous, and to place them in a naturalistic, immanent context. His task is to show the continuity between physiological and artistic or moral processes and to uncover in what sense we can speak of art or moralities as derivative of physiology. Perhaps the best description of Nietzsche's position, according to the schema presented in the previous sub-section, is that of a soft holist: there is nothing in principle ontologically independent about aesthetics or morality, but a number theoretical considerations and vocabularies apply to these levels alone and there is nothing to be gained from attempting to fully doing away with them. A key text for further exploring the use of the concept of "tracing back" by Nietzsche is JGB 36 5.55.

Assuming, finally, that we succeeded in explaining our entire life of drives as the organization and outgrowth of one basic form of will (namely, of the will to power, which is *my* claim); assuming we could trace all organic functions back to this will to power and find that it even solved the problem of procreation and nutrition (which is a single problem); then we will have earned the right to clearly designate *all* efficacious force as: *will to power*.⁴³²

In this aphorism, Nietzsche presents his hypothesis of the "will to power" as the best way of "clarifying our entire life of drives". Nietzsche's attempt to "trace all organic functions back to this will to power" obeys the methodological principle of parsimony (*Sparsamkeit*; cf. JGB 13 5.28), i.e. using single hypothesis. The purpose is to "render the so-called mechanistic (and thus material) world

431 As we can see in the following text: "man kann fast alle Prozeduren eines Philosophen auf Charakterfehler *zurückführen*" (my italics; 25[501] 11.145), the notion of "tracing back" is used by Nietzsche in a decidedly non-reductionist manner.

432 "Gesetzt endlich, dass es gelänge, unser gesamtes Triebleben als die Ausgestaltung und Verzweigung einer Grundform des Willens zu erklären – nämlich des Willens zur Macht, wie es mein Satz ist –; gesetzt, dass man alle organischen Funktionen auf diesen Willen zur Macht zurückführen könnte und in ihm auch die Lösung des Problems der Zeugung und Ernährung – es ist Ein Problem – fände, so hätte man damit sich das Recht verschafft, alle wirkende Kraft eindeutig zu bestimmen als: Wille zur Macht."

comprehensible”⁴³³, and not “comprehensible as a deception, a ‘mere appearance’”⁴³⁴ (JGB 36 5.54). The goal is to gain a better understanding of mechanism by complementing it, rather than through elimination. In light of this discussions, we could not find sufficient evidence to claim that Nietzsche strives to eliminate or collapse aesthetic (or other kinds of) descriptions into physiological accounts.

433 “die sogenannte mechanistische (oder ‘materielle’) Welt zu verstehen”.

434 “nicht als eine Täuschung, einen ‘Schein’”.