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### **Nietzsche's works: abbreviations**

- BGE* *Beyond Good and Evil*, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: The Modern Library, 1968)
- BT* *Birth of the Tragedy*, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: The Modern Library, 1968)
- D* *Daybreak*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997)
- GM* *On the Genealogy of Morals*, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: The Modern Library, 1968)
- GS* *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974)
- HATH* *Human, All Too Human*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)
- KGW* *Nietzsche Werke – Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1967–2006)
- SE* *Schopenhauer as Educator*, trans. James W. Hillesheim and Malcolm R. Simpson (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1965)
- TI* *Twilight of the Idols, Or, How to Philosophize With a Hammer*, trans. Duncan Large (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1998)
- UM* *Untimely Meditations*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983)
- WP* *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968)

## Introduction

Saying that Nietzsche's books are enigmatic is almost an understatement. This is shown, among other things, by all the differing ways they have been read over the years. Nietzsche has been called a fascist and a radical, a misogynist and a feminist, an analytic philosopher and a postmodernist, a metaphysical thinker and a positivist.

Is there any sense in trying to add to all these readings (and more)? I think there is. I will argue that there are good reasons for the kind of hermeneutical reading proposed in the present book. This way of reading focuses on self-knowledge and self-realisation. And my thesis deals with the question of how Nietzsche tries to communicate with the reader in order to make her care about her own self-knowledge and self-realisation.

The phrase "indirect communication" is vital for my purpose. It was coined by Kierkegaard. In his use the phrase designates a communicative strategy that aims at activating the reader in a way that goes beyond the understanding of the explicit message. Kierkegaard does not want his readers to just accept what is said in his texts; he wants them to grapple with the texts and themselves take a stand in one way or the other. In this way Nietzsche is similar to Kierkegaard.

The main contention of my thesis is that Nietzsche used indirect communicative strategies. I will present evidence to document this contention. I will also try to show in which ways indirect communication works in Nietzsche's case, and I will give examples of what kind of reading processes are possible given his texts. Finally, I will focus on the structure of Nietzsche's texts. What in them makes indirect communication possible? In due course it will emerge that a central idea here is that of *indeterminacy*.

As anyone who has taken an interest in Nietzsche knows, the literature on his thought is vast. Though it is more than a hundred years since he died, more and more Nietzsche-literature keeps pouring out all the time. Writing about Nietzsche, one has to sift through the book stream, so that finally one ends up with the books and other texts that are most relevant to one's purposes.

Two considerations have been guiding me in deciding what literature to refer to:

1) First and foremost, I am part of the English speaking discussion about Nietzsche. Therefore, I refer mostly to the English speaking Nietzsche-literature and to English translations of Nietzsche's books. Oc-

asionally, however, I quote German and French speaking Nietzsche scholars, and in a few cases my own translations of Nietzsche are used.

2) As my main theme is indirect communication in Nietzsche's texts, I refer chiefly to literature that is relevant in some way or other to this theme.

Now, to the contents of this thesis.

1. The first chapter deals with the general philosophical background to Nietzsche. This is a heavily researched area and I will just highlight a few issues that have not, to my knowledge, received the attention they deserve.

2. In chapter two I discuss two ideas that are important in Nietzsche's thought. These are the idea of the "death of God" and the idea of the (human) psyche as an energy system. Both are of course familiar themes in Nietzsche, but I think it is worth looking into them with an eye to what is to come later in this volume.

3. The third chapter is the central one and deals with indirect communication. I start out with a discussion of Kierkegaard and clear the ground for a discussion of the way Nietzsche makes use of indirect communication.

The phrase "indirect communication" has, indeed, been used (at least) once before in connection with Nietzsche, but the lead was not really followed up by the authors in question (for the reference see chapter 3). One more author, Kathleen Marie Higgins, has in effect drawn attention to the fact that Nietzsche uses such communication, however without using the phrase "indirect communication" or attending to the connection to Kierkegaard's thought. So I think that my investigations in this chapter, and especially their focus on different kinds of indirect strategies, may add something substantial to the understanding of Nietzsche.

These chapters, and especially Chapter 2–3, extend and elaborate the arguments of the four papers appended at the end of the thesis.

4. Chapter four contains summaries of these four papers. Here are some indications of their content and their relevance for my main thesis:

The idea of the psyche as an energy system is fundamental in Nietzsche's thinking on self-realisation. Therefore, this idea is an essential part of the background to the discussion in the two first papers, "Nietzsche's Hammer Again" and "A Bee's-Eye View on Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*", where some aspects of Nietzsche's thoughts on the conditions for self-realisation are dealt with. (In "A Bee's-Eye View ...", see especially part II.)

Nietzsche's metaphors figure importantly in both the papers mentioned. The use of metaphors is, in my view, a version of indirect communication, as the reader has to unpack the metaphors themselves.

In "A Bee's-Eye View ..." we also come across another aspect of indirect communication. It is my contention that Nietzsche tries to make the reader attend to herself while reading *GM*, and he does this by using indirect methods. So, obviously, there is a multiplicity of indirect strategies.

In the third paper, "Is it Enough to Read Nietzsche Genealogically?" I try to show that is not only *GM* that opens up to the kind of reading outlined in "A Bee's-Eye View ..." Also some other books of Nietzsche's can be read in similar ways.

The fourth paper is devoted to a discussion of the role of indeterminacy in drama, fictional literature and philosophical texts. Plato's, Gadamer's and Iser's views on drama and literature are compared, and Gadamer's and Iser's theories are extended to cover philosophical texts, especially those of Nietzsche. The paper also contains methodological considerations relevant for the discussion in the other three.

5. The fifth chapter consists of the Concluding Remarks. Here the focus lies on the relations between indeterminacy and indirect communication.

6. Finally, the thesis ends with the four papers mentioned above.

Thus, indirect communication is the focus of the book you hold in your hand. However, in the course of exploring this theme, I have also made (what I think are) interesting finds in relation to other issues. At times they have found their way into the present work.

## I. Some Remarks on the Philosophical Background to Nietzsche

For a thorough introduction to the philosophical background to Nietzsche, the reader may consult Thomas H. Brobjer's *Nietzsche's Philosophical Context – An Intellectual Biography*.<sup>1</sup> In the present text I will just highlight a few points that are not so prominent in Brobjer's book.

### Perspectivism versus system

One starting-point for Nietzsche is the critique of Hegel's system. In order to say something more about this, we need to start with a few words about the idea of a system.

There are two obvious ways of founding a system with claims to absolute, objective truth. One is to ground it on (what is said to be) self-evident truths. This is Descartes' strategy. The other possibility – which Hegel chooses – is to let the corollaries of the system be the basis for its presuppositions. In this sense the system is self-grounding.

In his mature thinking Nietzsche is not happy with any of these methods.<sup>2</sup> To him, the formulation of a system means lack of integrity on the part of the originator.<sup>3</sup> The world is much too complex to be embraced in its entirety by a system.

Another critique of Nietzsche's, related to the above, is the following: The finitude of the human being implies that her knowledge can never take the form of absolute, objective truths. If Nietzsche is right, the only point of view that a human being can start out from is dependent on the presuppositions inherent in her place in history. And this situatedness of the starting-point can never be totally neutralized.

To try to build a system on (allegedly) self-evident grounds, using impeccable logic, is – according to Nietzsche – an attempt to *force* people to agree. Not being able to stand that your listener/interlocutor does not agree with you is, of course, plebeian from the Nietzschean point of view, and any attempt to force people into assent must be rejected.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas H. Brobjer, *Nietzsche's Philosophical Context – An Intellectual Biography* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008),

<sup>2</sup> Concerning Descartes' strategy, see for instance *BGE*, § 34: "The faith in 'immediate certainties' is a *moral* naïveté ... this faith is a stupidity ..."

<sup>3</sup> *TI*, § 26.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *BGE*, § 43.

There is, however, one possible use of philosophical (and metaphysical) systems that Nietzsche endorses and that he does not find plebeian. I will come back to that at the end of this chapter.

Nietzsche's own alternative to a system of the Hegelian kind is perspectivism. Hegel's system contains everything. Nietzsche's alternative represents a more kaleidoscopic, partial seeing.

Nietzsche claims that the world can be considered from a host of different angles or perspectives. Different perspectives give rise to different understandings of the world. What we learn from one perspective can, in greater or lesser degree, be at variance with what another perspective reveals to us. It is also Nietzsche's view that no perspective can have claims to absolute validity.

We have to ask: What is a perspective according to Nietzsche? As Nietzsche is not the kind of philosopher who defines the terms he uses, we are obliged to reconstruct the concept from the contexts where he uses "perspective", "perspectivism" and related terms. As a result of my attempts at such a reconstruction, I would tentatively say that there are three things that together make up a perspective:

1. A perspective is guided by one or more practical interests. This or these are, according to Nietzsche, derived from – what he alternatively calls – "affects", "drives", "impulses" or "instincts." Our instinct of self-preservation and our sexuality are relevant examples. It is partly because of these that we view the world in the way we habitually do. The world has to have a structure that makes it possible for our instincts and drives to be satisfied.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the difference between food and non-food is important. We can survive only by upholding this difference. In the same way, the difference between the sexes is of vital importance for (heterosexual) love and procreation.
2. A perspective is characterized by a certain set of terms and concepts. A Christian perspective would (to simplify matters) include concepts such as *God, law, grace, salvation, sin, guilt, reconciliation* and *sanctification*.
3. To a perspective belong also certain fixed presuppositions and assumptions, for instance about justification.

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<sup>1</sup> See for instance *WP*, § 481: "It is our needs that interpret the world; our drives and their For and Against."

Let me explain the last point. In any kind of scientific perspective the following applies: In order to get my statements accepted, I must be able to justify them epistemically. I have to give reasons for them. If, on the other hand, we are talking about a typical believer in the Lutheran tradition – the tradition that Nietzsche himself was familiar with –, it seems that she takes the statement “God exists” to be a theoretical statement with claims to truth, though her belief that God exists is not necessarily based on arguments or evidence. The statement is simply central in her perspective and needs no epistemic justification.

So, this would be an example of perspectives with totally different standards as regards epistemic justification.

### **Nietzsche and Plato**

At one instance Nietzsche says: “My philosophy, *inverted Platonism*: the further away from true being, the more pure, beautiful, better it is.” (*KGW*, Band III, 7[156], Brobjer’s translation, p. 27) In one sense Nietzsche is accurate here. But as Nietzsche certainly was aware, things are often not quite as clear-cut as they may seem.

What Nietzsche turned against in Plato is the positing of a sphere of true being over and above the (changing) immanent world. In Plato’s thinking this sphere is of vital importance: For anyone who wants to get at the world of senses and understand it properly, contemplation of the Forms (the truly existing things) is necessary. Ordinary things are what they are only in relation to the Forms. It is also the case, according to Plato, that such contemplation is the true goal for a human being.

This aspect of Plato’s thinking is what Nietzsche totally repudiated. He wanted to understand the immanent world only from itself. At least at times, he simply rejected the view that there is a world left over, once we have abstracted from the one we know through our senses.

However, if we look at how Plato treats other subjects – and I am thinking principally of psychology here – it is pretty evident that Nietzsche was influenced by him. Drawing on the materials of *The Republic*, here is a quick outline of Plato’s psychology.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Plato, *Republic*, trans. R. Waterfield, (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). For a survey of Plato’s psychology see for instance Alan Silverman, “Plato: Psychology”, in *The Blackwell Guide to Ancient Philosophy*, ed. Christopher Shields (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003).



It is Plato's view that the (human) soul consists of three parts: the desirous part, passion and the rational part. Each of them has its own objects, and accordingly there are three sorts of pleasure (580d). Desire craves for food, drink and sex (580e). It feels pleasure when this craving is satisfied. Passion has power, success and fame as its objects (581a). Finally, the rational part aims at having intercourse with the Forms, the intellectual objects. When this is achieved, even the rational part experiences some sort of pleasure. If Plato is right, this is pleasure in its purest, highest and most reliable form.

Now, in a human being that has not been trained in the right way, the three parts of the soul pull in different directions – each according to its own craving. The opposite of this is a person who has been moulded the way she should. In such a person the three parts of the soul have been integrated and harmonized with each other. In this case all parts pull in the same direction. According to Plato, a person can reach such a state only after strict and long training.

One reason why it is hard to reach this goal – something that can also be called “becoming moral” – is the following. On the one hand, it presupposes that the rational part governs the rest of the soul. On the other, desire is the strongest of the three parts (442a). The ruling part therefore needs to “borrow” energy from desire, in order to fulfil its task. This is, of course very similar to sublimation in Freud's sense. I will say more about (mental) energy and sublimation later on (see for instance the part “‘The death of God’, self-realisation and psychic energy”).

Why must the rational part rule over the rest of the soul? According to Plato, this must be so because only the rational part can have contact with goodness itself, the Form of the Good. Only this part can know what is truly “moral” or “just”. (Different translations use different words here.) So, if the highest possible human goal is to be achieved, the other parts of the psyche have to be subordinated to – and integrated with – the rational part.

If nothing more, Nietzsche at least considers the possibility of formulating a psychological theory that shows striking resemblances to Plato's. His version is different from Plato's in two main aspects:

1. The soul is not said to consist of only three parts. It might be that the difference is not as pronounced as it seems. At 589b Plato likens the desirous part of the soul with a “many-headed beast.” So, there is some kind of multiplicity within the third part of the soul. One has the feeling that Plato chooses to stay with the view

that the psyche has three parts mainly in order not to ruin the analogy between the individual and the state. For Nietzsche's idea of a multiple soul, see for instance *BGE* § 12 and § 19.

2. As we have seen, Nietzsche contests that there is some such thing as "the realm of true being." Therefore, he must assign the function of the Form of the Good in this area to something else. What his solution consists in will be clear later.

In other ways there are close affinities between Plato's and Nietzsche's psychology. The idea that man in his original state is composed of impulses and drives that are disparate is central also to Nietzsche's thought. This comes out in the next quote. Nietzsche is here talking about what necessarily happens when someone moulds him- or herself according to the idea that a) reason must control the rest of the soul, and b) morality presupposes sacrifice:

Reason here gains only a hard and bloody victory within the soul, powerful counter-drives have to be subdued ... (*D*, § 221)

We find here that Nietzsche takes a human being in its original state to incorporate drives that are opposed to reason. The need to mould oneself into a harmonious whole is as pressing for Nietzsche as it is for Plato.

Now, Nietzsche's morality is certainly not one of sacrifice. *All* of our natural endowment must find its way into the eventual state that we – according to him – should aim at.<sup>1</sup>

In Plato's thinking it is the Form of the Good that gives some kind of direction to our self-forming activity. What can or should take this place according to Nietzsche? The answer is that it depends on the individual in question. If your strongest drive or impulse is ambition, then you should give yourself such a form that the other impulses and drives of your psyche support ambition in its aspirations. If your most pronounced impulse is a craving for knowledge, then you should mould yourself in such a way that the rest of the psyche contributes to your search for knowledge. It is not hard to see how, for instance, a sublimated aggressiveness can be operative in such a case.

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<sup>1</sup> There is a short discussion of this issue in my "Nietzsche's Hammer Again", in *Nietzsche-Studien*, Band 33, 2004, pp. 348–350. Some relevant references to Nietzsche's work can also be found there.

### Nietzsche's relation to Schopenhauer's and Bahnsen's systems

I am fairly sure that some Nietzsche-scholars would not agree, but I am going to claim that Nietzsche did formulate a system that, furthermore, exemplifies a kind of German metaphysical thinking. The point of departure is what was said in the last section about Nietzsche's psychology.

A very interesting result emerges if we juxtapose § 12, § 23 and § 36 of *BGE*. In the first of these Nietzsche says:

... the way is open for new versions and refinements of the soul-hypothesis; and such conceptions as ... "soul as subjective multiplicity," and "soul as social structure of the drives and affects," want henceforth to have citizens' rights in science.

In § 23 he adds:

To understand it [all psychology] as morphology and *the science of the development of the will to power*, as I do – nobody has yet come close to doing this even in thought ...<sup>1</sup>

Apparently, it is Nietzsche's view that the whole of the human psyche is a manifestation of the *will to power*. But what is *will to power*? In § 36 Nietzsche gives a further characterization:

Suppose ... that we succeeded in explaining our entire instinctive life [unser gesamtes Triebleben] as the development and ramification of *one* basic form of the will – namely, of the will to power, as *my* proposition has it; suppose all organic functions could be traced back to this will to power and one could also find in it the solution of the problem of procreation and nourishment – it is *one* problem – then one would have gained the right to determine *all* efficient force univocally as – *will to power*.

If we start out from Nietzsche's hypothesis of a multiple soul and add the derivation of drives and affects from will to power, we end up with a system that is – in several ways – similar to Schopenhauer's. The main difference is that Schopenhauer has it that on the noumenal level there is *will*

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<sup>1</sup> Translating this passage is not quite easy. In German it goes: „Dieselbe [die gesammte Psychologie] als Morphologie und *Entwicklungslehre des Willen zur Macht* zu fassen, wie ich sie fasse – daran hat noch Niemand in seinen Gedanken selbst gestreift ...“, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, § 23, in *KGW*, Band VI2 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co, 1968). The translation is my own. All italics in my quotations are the quoted author's own.

– there is no ground for discriminating between different wills. According to the system that Nietzsche has formulated every human being consists of several wills on the noumenal level.

One might object here that Nietzsche is not a metaphysical thinker. This is in a way right. But before discussing this issue, let us have a look at how the last quotation continues:

The world viewed from inside, the world defined and determined according to its “intelligible character” – it would be [sie wäre] “will to power” and nothing else.

Nietzsche uses a phrase that in Kant’s and Schopenhauer’s thinking denotes the noumenal world (“intelligible character”). So, it is not too bold to say that we are here dealing with a system anchored in the German metaphysical tradition.

From early on (at least from 1867) Nietzsche was aware of a system that in its fundamental features is identical to his own – I am talking about that of Julius Bahnsen.<sup>1</sup> Brobjer characterizes Bahnsen’s thinking like this:

Julius Bahnsen ... followed Schopenhauer closely but at the same time developed his philosophy in a more individual direction by emphasizing that the true reality is not one general will as Schopenhauer claimed but instead was many contradicting wills that constitute human beings whose inner life therefore is always in turmoil. (p. 48)

Obviously Nietzsche had not totally discarded the idea of a system of this kind when he wrote *BGE* – the book was published 1886, almost two decades after Nietzsche first read Bahnsen.

Now, does this mean that Nietzsche really is a metaphysical thinker? If – in order to be such a thinker – you have to formulate a metaphysical system with claims to truth, then Nietzsche is certainly not a thinker of this kind. In his *Nachlaß* there is an interesting passage, indicating how Nietzsche views systems like Schopenhauer’s and his own:

About Schopenhauer.  
An attempt (*Versuch*) to explain the world from out of one assumed element.  
The thing in itself takes on one of its possible forms.  
The attempt (*Versuch*) fails.

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<sup>1</sup> *Nietzsche’s Philosophical Context*, p. 48.

Schopenhauer did not regard it as an experiment (*Versuch*).<sup>1</sup>

It seems that for Nietzsche, the problem with Schopenhauer is not that he built a system. The problem is that he did not do this in an experimental mode. Nietzsche formulates a system in a *tentative* way. This is plain already from § 36 in *BGE* that was quoted above. Nietzsche uses the subjunctive mood. What he is trying to say is that *if* he were to formulate a theory about what the world is in itself, *then* this theory would be that the world in itself consists of will to power, and nothing besides.

Regarding the multiplicity of wills on the noumenal level the following can be said. We have seen that in Nietzsche's thinking there is a close interconnectedness between, on the one hand, psychology and, on the other, the metaphysics he is pondering over. One human being corresponds, on the metaphysical level, to a multiplicity of "wills". There are wills that correspond to for example thirst, hunger, sex drive and aggressiveness. Each of them is in need of a certain "interpretation" of the world, otherwise they cannot be satisfied (cf. above, p. 9). At the same time they are, each of them, will to power, which is shown – according to Nietzsche – by the fact that they aim at making their "interpretation" the ruling one.

One vital question is left open so far: Why would anyone construct a metaphysical system, if the aim is not to say something true? The answer is totally in line with Nietzsche's idea of experimental philosophy. The most interesting question, when confronted by a system, is not "Is it true?" but "What kind of life is possible, given that we believe in this system?"<sup>2</sup> As we all know, what Nietzsche wants is a richer, fuller, stronger, more vibrant life. So – in a way – his main question is what kind of system or doctrine is compatible with such a life.

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<sup>1</sup> KGW I<sub>4</sub>, 57[51], my translation.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *BGE*, Part One, § 4: "The falseness of a judgement is for us not necessarily an objection to a judgement ... The question is to what extent it is life-promoting, life-preserving, species-preserving ..."

## II. Two Central Ideas in Nietzsche's Thinking

### “The Death of God”: Preliminaries

In the present chapter I will scrutinize two ideas that are central to Nietzsche's thinking: “the death of God” and the view that the human psyche is an energy system. I intend to give an account of what Nietzsche takes to be the implications of the “death of God” and how he thinks that this (alleged) event affects the human condition. This has, of course, been done before.<sup>1</sup> If I am right, my contribution in this context can be summarized in two points: First, I show how closely the theme of “the death of God” is tied to the issue of self-realisation, and through it to the concept of mental energy, in Nietzsche's thinking. The interconnectedness between these problem areas has not, to my knowledge, received the attention it deserves. Second, in the course of laying bare the relations between the mentioned themes, I comment upon § 285 in *The Gay Science*. Certain aspects of this section are, I think, brought out here for the first time.

Nietzsche is known to have coined the expression “the death of God”. As for instance Kaufmann rightly points out this is not meant as a pronouncement on ultimate reality.<sup>2</sup> It is meant to be a piece of cultural diagnosis. As such I think it has a two-fold significance. On the one hand it says that in Western societies the influence of religion is declining. (At the time when Nietzsche uttered these words, they meant rather that the influence of religion would decline. He thought he had seen something that people generally were not aware of.) On the other hand Nietzsche, in these words, predicted the downfall of the kind of thinking that divides the world in a transcendent and an immanent sphere and that, moreover, tends to place “true being” in the former region. I shall call this *two-world thinking*.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Let me just mention two examples of this: Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche – Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), pp. 96–118, and Robert C. Solomon and Kathleen M. Higgins, *What Nietzsche Really Said* (New York: Schocken Books, 2000), pp. 84–102.

<sup>2</sup> *Nietzsche – Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, p. 100.

<sup>3</sup> Julian Young's book *The Death of God and the Meaning of Life* (London/New York: Routledge, 2003) discusses two-world thinking within the Western tradition. It also gives a survey of how philosophers have tried to meet the challenge of its decline since Nietzsche.

The first instances where Nietzsche combines the word “death” with “God” are found in *The Gay Science*.<sup>1</sup> For those having read Nietzsche’s earlier works it is evident, however, that he was aware of one aspect of “the death of God” right from the start of his career as a writer. In *The Birth of the Tragedy*<sup>2</sup> and in *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*<sup>3</sup> Nietzsche is univocal that by the application of historical research methods to religious beliefs and to the founding religious documents, their authority will be undermined.

It is only later however – approximately from *The Gay Science* – that Nietzsche’s philosophy becomes an endeavour to sort out, in a way systematically, what the consequences of “the death of God” are. To view Nietzsche’s thinking from this angle is, I find, very enlightening. In fact many of Nietzsche’s viewpoints must be regarded as direct results of his contemplation of this central idea. They are interpretations of what this alleged death means in different domains: psychology, morality, epistemology, etc.<sup>4</sup>

In Nietzsche’s thinking “the death of God” means, of course, that we have to let go of the Christian faith. It further means that the teleological understanding of nature has come to an end. In the area of morality it has the effect that Christian morality has to be replaced by a purely immanent one. For epistemology, “the death of God” means in Nietzsche’s view that the guarantor of an unhistorical or absolute truth is wiped away. The alternative Nietzsche advocates, which he calls “perspectivism”, means basically that there is no knowledge without presuppositions (see the section “Perspectivism versus system” above).

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<sup>1</sup> *GS*, § 108 and § 125.

<sup>2</sup> In *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: The Modern Library, 1968).

<sup>3</sup> In *UM*.

<sup>4</sup> This is also the view of Richard Schacht. See his *Nietzsche* (London/Boston/Melbourne/Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), p. 119, where he says: “As he [Nietzsche] observes, with regard to belief in God, so much ‘was built upon this faith, propped up by it,’ that its abandonment has consequences beyond ‘the multitude’s capacity for comprehension’ (GS 343). One could fairly characterize a good deal of his philosophizing as an attempt to draw out these consequences, for a whole range of issues: to show what positions are thereby rendered untenable, and to proceed to deal with these issues in the manner he takes to be indicated when both the very idea of God and the long ‘shadow’ cast by this idea over much of our ordinary and traditional philosophical thinking are banished.”

Besides these repercussions within the realm of thinking, Nietzsche contends that “the death of God” has other far-reaching effects on the human condition. It is to this issue that I now turn.

## Nihilism

The immediate effects of “the death of God” are according to Nietzsche, on the one hand, negative and, on the other, positive. Among the negative ones is an orientational loss. This loss is due to nihilism.

Now, nihilism has sometimes been discussed as a *doctrine* that Nietzsche does (Danto<sup>1</sup>) or does not (Schacht<sup>2</sup>) adhere to. As with so many other terms, Nietzsche uses the term “nihilism” ambiguously.<sup>3</sup> True, he sometimes uses it as the name of a philosophical doctrine, but I think that in Nietzsche’s central uses it denotes something else.

Even if this is conceded it is not absolutely clear what “nihilism” stands for. Heidegger understands by nihilism a *process* that characterizes the whole of the Western tradition. At one instance he describes the workings of this process more or less like this: The cause of nihilism is morality. Morality in this sense posits supernatural ideals of truth, goodness and beauty that are valid “in themselves”. These ideals or values show themselves to be unattainable. They will therefore turn out to be indifferent to life, and so are devalued with the effect that pessimism reigns.<sup>4</sup>

I prefer to read “nihilism” as denoting, instead, a *state* that eventuates from “the death of God”. There is support for such an understanding of the term in Nietzsche’s writings. Let me cite just a couple of instances. In *On the Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche says:

This man of the future, who will redeem us not only from the hitherto reigning ideal but also from that which was bound to grow

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur C. Danto, *Nietzsche as Philosopher* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), pp. 19–35.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Schacht, “Nietzsche and Nihilism”, in *Nietzsche: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Robert C. Solomon (New York: Anchor Books, 1973), pp. 58–82.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Robert C. Solomon, “Nietzsche, Nihilism and Morality”, in *Nietzsche: A Collection of Critical Essays*, pp. 202–225. See also Andreas Urs Sommer, “Nihilism and Skepticism in Nietzsche”, in *A Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. Keith Ansell Pearson (Oxford/Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006): “... they [Nietzsche’s pronouncements on nihilism] represent repeated new approaches that are either uncoordinated or can only be partially coordinated.” (p. 251)

<sup>4</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1987), Vol. III, p. 206.



out of it, the great nausea, the will to nothingness, nihilism [---] –  
*he must come one day.*<sup>1</sup>

Even though the account given of nihilism is not exactly the same in the next quote, it is fairly clear that nihilism is meant to be a state that follows upon “the death of God”:

The belief in ... aim- and meaninglessness, is the psychologically necessary effect once the belief in God and an essentially moral order becomes untenable. Nihilism appears at that point. ... One interpretation has collapsed; but because it was considered *the* interpretation, it now seems as if there were no meaning in existence at all ...<sup>2</sup>

To understand what the state of nihilism is, it is instructive to see how Nietzsche describes the period when there was a more or less universal belief in God and a moral world order based on his command: The immanent world is compared to the transcendent world and found wanting. The transcendent or “ideal” sphere is eternal, unchanging and perfect. In comparison to this, human life – which is characterized by decay, death and moral imperfection – is regarded as unsatisfactory and sinful. In short, the world is fallen.<sup>3</sup> As we know, it is part of Nietzsche’s view that the agent of this denigration of human life is man himself. If Nietzsche is right, a moral worldview based on two-world thinking is an expression of a kind of man who *wants* to find himself guilty.<sup>4</sup> This trait of a Christian outlook is, of course, deplored by Nietzsche. But there is more to the picture than this. The highest values, the transcendent ones, have a potentiality for bestowing meaning on life. This is important. Due to the fact that suffering is a pervasive feature of human existence, pessimism threatens, i.e. human beings are prone to judge life not worth living. The reason that the Christian religion has been so successful is that it gives a

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<sup>1</sup> *GM*, Essay II, § 24.

<sup>2</sup> *WP*, § 55.

<sup>3</sup> This echoes a thought in Hegel. He takes a sharp division between God and his sphere, on the one hand, and man and his sphere, on the other, to be one of the dualisms that mares the (European) culture of his time. Hegel thinks that the exaltation of God above man necessarily leads to a devaluation of man and his sphere. Cf. Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 127. For a discussion of this theme in Hegel see Michael N. Forster, *Hegel’s Idea of a Phenomenology of Spirit* (Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 23–26, 43–44 and 61–63.

<sup>4</sup> *GM*, Essay II, § 22.

meaning even to suffering.<sup>1</sup> Thereby it extricates man from the jaws of pessimism and makes possible a sense of meaning in life.

In a way, the state of nihilism, as described by Nietzsche, is the worst possible outcome of the downfall of the Christian religion. The fact that the highest values have been devalued leads to an orientational loss. The values that have guided people for hundreds of years, in some areas for almost two thousand years, have disintegrated. The immanent world is basically “valueless” and is felt to be a *nihil*, nothing that on a profound level can guide peoples’ lives. At the same time, there are still traces left of the denigration the immanent world has suffered in comparison to the “true” world. In *On the Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche talks about “the involvement of the *bad* conscience with the concept of god”.<sup>2</sup> This means, as far as I understand, that we do not need God to judge ourselves unworthy; now that people (in general) do not believe in the Christian God, we judge ourselves.

To avoid misunderstanding about Nietzsche’s concept of nihilism, I think one has to remember that even in this state most people keep to the kind of moral standards that were prevalent earlier. Nihilism is first and foremost a crisis regarding, on the one hand, the *foundation* of morals and, on the other, the possibility of a meaningful life.<sup>3</sup> That Nietzsche holds that there is no necessary connection between a completed atheism and a change in moral standards is, I think, clear from § 44 of *BGE*. The distinction Nietzsche makes here is one between those falsely called “free spirits” and those who (in Nietzsche’s view) deserve the name. Members of the fake species have renounced their faith in God – that is what makes them aspire to the name of free spirits or free thinkers in the first place – but this does not stop them from believing in equal rights and in a morality of pity, i.e. they endorse a basically Christian morality.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *GM*, Essay III, § 15 and 20.

<sup>2</sup> *GM*, Essay II, § 21.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. “Nihilism and Skepticism in Nietzsche”: “... nihilism does ... involve questions of ... life praxis and the loss of direction in practical living.” (p. 251)

<sup>4</sup> Bearing all this in mind, we should also consider that nihilism involves the possibility of founding new values. It seems to me that Nietzsche’s thinking in regard to this possibility is one-sided. He relies on “the philosophers of the future” to accomplish the feat of erecting new values, values that can give meaning to humanity. But this misses the social dimension of values that can be experienced as binding, as having a claim on you. Nietzsche seems to think that a “philosopher of the future” can posit new values, which are valid for him alone, and that this still can be a contribution to the meaning of human life. This seems, to say the least, doubtful.

## The human condition in the light of “the death of God”

Nietzsche thinks at least two further aspects of the change in the human condition are due to “the death of God”, one regarding the possibility of gaining knowledge and one regarding the potentiality for self-realisation. The first aspect is crucial to Nietzsche’s personal project. He views life in his own case as an experiment, a way to gain knowledge. This is unequivocal especially in *The Gay Science*.<sup>1</sup> The other aspect is equally important, as the idea of “becoming who one is” is central in Nietzsche’s philosophy.

It is Nietzsche’s view that the idea of God has worked as a hindrance for attaining knowledge.<sup>2</sup> One thing is that it has in a general way been an endpoint of inquiry, behind which no further investigation has been allowed or felt to be needed. Commenting on § 285 of *The Gay Science*, Eugen Biser discusses this matter.<sup>3</sup> The idea of God is an idea of ultimate wisdom and ultimate goodness. Before this kind of power man can rest in endless trust. The thought of standing before God has an intellectually quieting effect.<sup>4</sup> Biser goes on to say that:

... Nietzsche’s rebellion is not directed as much at the *existence* of a god as at the *reliance* incorporated in the idea of God, in which the *end of what is humanly conceivable* coincides with the *beginning of the divine wisdom* [---]. This confidence is, according to Nietzsche, not inspired by sensible grounds but, in the last analysis, only by an irrational wish for an appeasing conclusion to the train of thought; so the act in which the thought, weary of its efforts, tries to assure itself of an ultimate support in the absolute, is to his mind a *salto mortale*, as useless as it is dubious, and its object, the very idea of God, a mere intellectual quietive.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Relevant sections are § 41, § 319 and § 324. § 110 can also be considered in this context.

<sup>2</sup> Maybe it ought to be stressed that when Nietzsche is talking about knowledge, he is thinking of a perspective-dependent interpretation, one that is justified according to the norms of the perspective in question.

<sup>3</sup> Eugen Biser, *›Gott ist tot‹* (München: Kösel-Verlag, 1962), p. 59. The argument has recently been reiterated by Gianni Vattimo in his and John D. Caputo’s book *After the Death of God* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007): “This is what ultimate foundations do; they impose themselves as impervious to further questions as objects of contemplation and *amor dei intellectualis*.” (p. 93)

<sup>4</sup> Biser draws also upon thinking from the Middle Ages for this point.

<sup>5</sup> My translation.

Often, however, Nietzsche has something more specific in mind than this (alleged) function of the idea of God. The real issue is the study of morality. In this context the ideas of God and a supernatural sphere have been especially harmful, according to Nietzsche. As morality has been taken to be founded on a command of God's, empirical studies in the moral area have been hampered. To Nietzsche's mind, this has been so in a number of ways. Moral psychology has largely been ignored. Studies of the background conditions of our morality – how a specific set of living conditions has given rise to a specific morality – have been more or less wanting. Moreover, comparisons of different moral codes have largely been missing. Nietzsche would like to see studies of this kind, relating the individual code to the kind of human flourishing it enables. This latter kind of studies has, of course, a special relation to the possibility of reflecting upon alternatives to the prevalent morality, a possibility that has opened up in the wake of “the death of God” if Nietzsche is right.

Section 32 of *Daybreak* is evidence that Nietzsche really thinks that the kind of relation mentioned holds between two-world thinking and the study of morality. He calls the affirmation of a “profounder world of truth” a “brake” for a new understanding of morality:

... there is a unique consolation in affirming through one's suffering a 'profounder world of truth' than any other world is, and one would much *rather* suffer and thereby feel oneself *exalted* above reality (through consciousness of having thus approached this 'profounder world of truth') than be without suffering but also without this feeling that one is exalted. It is thus pride, and the customary manner in which pride is gratified, which stands in the way of a new *understanding* of morality. What force, therefore, will have to be employed if this brake is to be removed? More pride? A new pride?<sup>1</sup>

I think it is fair to say that five years later – in the fifth book of *The Gay Science* – there is a somewhat different tone in Nietzsche's writings on this subject. Meanwhile he has introduced the notion of “the death of God.” For those having accepted the immense event designated by this expression as a fact, the possibility of a fundamentally new understanding of morality lies open. Nietzsche writes:

Indeed, we philosophers and “free spirits” feel, when we hear the news that “the old god is dead,” as if a new dawn shone on us; our

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<sup>1</sup> *D*, § 32

heart overflows with gratitude, amazement, premonitions, expectation. At long last the horizon appears free to us again, even if it should not be bright; at long last our ships may venture out again, venture out to face any danger; all the daring of the lover of knowledge is permitted again; the sea, *our* sea, lies open again; perhaps there has never yet been such an “open sea.”<sup>1</sup>

As we can see, “the death of God” is said to have changed the situation in a fundamental way: “... all the daring of the lover of knowledge is permitted again ...” There is no doubt that Nietzsche is talking about his own activity here. He often describes what he is doing as daring.<sup>2</sup>

I also think that it is clear from the wording of the quoted section that the “free spirits” who embark on their new project of knowledge are animated by a “new pride”, a pride derived from their very project.

What the knowledge that will eventuate from this new situation will turn out to be is hard to say. It is reasonable, however, to consider the results in some of Nietzsche’s later writings as examples of what Nietzsche had in mind.<sup>3</sup>

### **“The death of God”, self-realisation and psychic energy**

I come to the next change in the human condition that, says Nietzsche, is due to “the death of God”: the increase in the potentiality for self-realisation. There are different strands in Nietzsche’s thought on this subject.

I will start with the idea that Christian morality depends on a monstrous falsification of human psychology. This is Nietzsche’s view and he gives clear expression to it in *TI*:

... All naturalism in morality, i.e. every *healthy* morality, is governed by a vital instinct ... *Anti-natural* morality, i.e. almost every morality which has hitherto been taught, revered, and preached, turns on the contrary precisely *against* the vital instincts – it is at times secret, at times loud and brazen in *condemning* these instincts. In saying ‘God looks at the heart’ it says no to the lowest

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<sup>1</sup> *GS*, § 343.

<sup>2</sup> See for instance *HATH*, Preface, § 7. The subject is “we free spirits” and Nietzsche says about them that they are “... penetrating everywhere, almost without fear ...”, as if fear would be an appropriate feeling in this case.

<sup>3</sup> See especially parts of *GM*, *BGE* and *TI*.

and highest of life's desires, and takes God to be an *enemy of life*

...<sup>1</sup>

Nietzsche's contention, to be more specific, is that impulses having to do with sexuality and aggressiveness are integral features of the human make up, and this in such a way that man cannot simply renounce them. According to Nietzsche, Christian morality condemns these impulses, the effect being for many of the individuals subject to this morality that 'a gulf' opens up between themselves and these impulses or passions.<sup>2</sup> This is to say that their sexuality and aggressiveness are not properly integrated in their personality. Why does Nietzsche think that this is grave? Because he holds these impulses to be essential motivational factors in human conduct. It is therefore a condition for self-realisation that the individual has full access to these impulses and that he or she manages to utilize the driving power inherent in them. Not to do so, will mean a life on a lower level, according to Nietzsche.

Now, it is not Nietzsche's view that the individual who wants to develop into a better person, should live out his or her sexuality and aggressiveness freely. Nietzsche prefers sublimation. He counts on the possibility of giving the power inherent in the mentioned impulses a new direction, of sublimating it into a craving for new artistic and scientific conquests; or why not – in the case of sexuality – into deeds of love?<sup>3</sup> I will say more about sublimation soon.

If Nietzsche is right, Christian morality takes the impulses we have talked about as something that man can renounce, and also tries to effect such a disavowal.<sup>4</sup> This is said, by Nietzsche, to lead to a less vital life.

As we have seen, Nietzsche does not think that if people stop believing in God, they will automatically stop upholding what Nietzsche takes to be Christian moral standards. If he is right, they will mostly go on acting and moulding themselves according to a life-abnegating morality. Disbelief in the Christian God does however mean the *possibility* of grounding new moral standards. Nietzsche holds that traditional morality is firmly secured in a whole outlook on the world that includes more than the belief

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<sup>1</sup> *TI*, "Morality as Anti-Nature", § 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, § 2.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, § 1; *HATH*, vol. II, § 95; and *BGE*, § 189.

<sup>4</sup> If this view is meant to express a general truth about Christian morality it is certainly wrong. One could for instance consult Etienne Gilson's classic *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956): "Thomistic morality is ... frankly opposed to that systematic destruction of natural tendencies which is often considered characteristic of the medieval mind." (p. 281)

in God's existence. If the individual manages to work through and reject, radically, the ways in which this Christian outlook affects his or her personal thinking and subjective view on the world, this will mean, says Nietzsche, that his or her belief in traditional morality will eventually falter. This is the kind of possibility Nietzsche reckons with, and the kind of outcome he hopes for. If it can be accomplished, new moral standards can be set up – standards that take basic facts about human psychology into consideration, standards that would be more life enhancing according to Nietzsche.

In a very interesting section in *The Gay Science* another theme, connecting “the death of God” with self-realisation, is touched upon. I am again thinking of § 285, the one that I quoted Biser commenting on (see p. 20).

Before moving on to this section, we need to say a few words about the double role of God in traditional theology. On the one hand God is said to be lawgiver and judge. On the other, he is also the giver of all good gifts. This he is in his capacity as creator. Another aspect of the giving side to God is divine grace.

As can be expected, Nietzsche regarded the notion of God as judge and punisher as contributing to the corruption of mankind. Moreover, and more interestingly, in § 285 of *The Gay Science* Nietzsche implies that also in turning to God as the giver of all good gifts and as the guarantor that there is love in what happens to us, we decrease our vitality and so jeopardize our self-realisation.

In this section Nietzsche first gives a list of positive things that the belief in God means to the believer. He goes on to say that the one who chooses renunciation has to let go of all this. Then, suddenly, there is a break in the text and Nietzsche says:

There is a lake that one day ceased to permit itself to flow off; it formed a dam where it had hitherto flown off; and ever since this lake is rising higher and higher. Perhaps this very renunciation will also lend us the strength needed to bear this renunciation; perhaps man will rise ever higher as soon as he ceases to *flow out* into a god.<sup>1</sup>

Beneath the surface of this paragraph there is a whole theory of motivation. Using a term of Freud's anachronistically, I would say that in this

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<sup>1</sup> *GS*, § 285.

section water stands for psychic energy.<sup>1</sup> The identification, on the level of imagery, of water with psychic energy seems to stem from a well-known passage in Plato's *Republic*, which undoubtedly was important to Nietzsche.

The relevant passage can be found at 485d in the *Republic*. A background to this section of Plato's text is his famous teaching of the tripartite soul. As noted earlier, Plato claims that the human soul consists of a rational part, a part he calls passion, and finally appetite. Each of these parts desires objects which are specific to itself. Plato's contention at 485d is that if someone shows a big interest in, for example, the objects of the rational part, this person will show less interest in the objects of the other parts. It is, says Plato, "... like a stream whose flow has been diverted into another channel."<sup>2</sup> What Plato says here is not necessarily – to borrow Freud's terminology a second time – that the psychic energy is conserved in an overall manner. But he does say that, at least, *in the short run* the level of psychic energy in the individual is given, so that increased activity in one direction will decrease the potentiality for other kinds of action.<sup>3</sup>

There is ample evidence that Nietzsche was influenced by this passage in Plato. Chapter 6 of *Schopenhauer as Educator* is a case in point:

Everywhere when one talks of "State culture," one sees it as faced with the task of unleashing the intellectual [geistigen] forces of a

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<sup>1</sup> Even if Nietzsche does not use this term, he definitely has a conception of a – in a way – neutral, mental energy. A relevant section is § 360 in *GS*. Cf. also Henri F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious* (New York: Basic Books, 1970), p. 273: "In the same way that physical energy can remain potential or be actualised, Nietzsche visualized how 'a quantum of dammed up (psychic) energy' could wait until it could be utilized, and how sometimes a slight precipitating cause could release a powerful discharge of psychic energy. Mental energy could also be voluntarily accumulated with a view toward later utilization on a higher level. It could also be transferred from one instinct to another."

Kathleen Marie Higgins has also commented on §285 of *GS* and identifies water with energy. See p. 37 in *Comic Relief – Nietzsche's Gay Science* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> *Republic*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). I am grateful to Håkan Gunnarsson who has helped me understand the original Greek of the passage.

<sup>3</sup> It is interesting that in this passage of Plato's there is implied a notion of sublimation close to those of Nietzsche and Freud. For a discussion of Nietzsche's concept of sublimation, see Kaufmann, chap. 7. A text that takes both Nietzsche's and Freud's views on sublimation into consideration is Reinhard Gasser, *Nietzsche und Freud* (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1997), "Theoretischer Teil", chap. 4.



generation insofar as they serve the existing institutions and are useful to these, but only so far, just as a forest stream is partially diverted by dams and channels in order to drive mills with the diminished energy – whereas its full energy would be more dangerous than useful to the mill.<sup>1</sup>

This translation needs a little commentary. “Geistig” can as an adjective mean “intellectual”. But as I see it, Nietzsche is here talking about the whole mental ability of a generation, so another translation – which is also possible – would be much better. Instead of intellectual forces Nietzsche is talking about *mental* forces.

The meaning of water comes to the fore also in *Human, All Too Human*, volume II, § 220. Another highly relevant passage can be found in the *Nachlaß*.<sup>2</sup>

In Plato’s image water represents the energy available to the individual for action. The water in § 285 of *The Gay Science* should be understood in the same way. So what Nietzsche does in this section is to reverse a central aspect of the Christian tradition. Man’s relation to God has always been looked upon as a receiving relationship. But what Nietzsche says is that in turning to God we do not receive anything. In fact, in turning to God we lose something – we lose energy. In this way the believer decreases his potentiality for self-realisation. For Nietzsche this is grave, as he considers working on one’s own perfection as man’s basic task.

It is not only that Nietzsche accepts what we said is part of Plato’s contention at *Republic* 485d, namely the idea that there is a short-term conservation of psychic energy. It seems that Nietzsche adheres to the stronger thesis according to which there is an overall conservation of energy, also in the long run. The total amount of energy available cannot be added to or reduced; it can only be dammed up or discharged in one way or other.<sup>3</sup> This is Nietzsche’s view for instance in the following section:

*An excuse for many a fault.* – The ceaseless desire to create on the part of the artist, together with his ceaseless observation of the world outside him, prevent him from becoming better and more beautiful as a person, that is to say from creating *himself* – except,

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<sup>1</sup> *SE*, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> *KGW*, Frühjahr 1888, 14 [163]. In Gasser’s book there is a discussion of the basic water image in Nietzsche and Freud (pp. 346–351). Gasser does not, however, list all the relevant passages either in Nietzsche’s or Freud’s corpus.

<sup>3</sup> This is, as is well known, Freud’s standpoint as well.

that is, if his self-respect is sufficiently great to compel him to exhibit himself before others as being as great and beautiful as his works increasingly are. In any event, he possesses only a fixed quantity of strength: that of it which he expends upon *himself* – how could he at the same time expend it on his *work*? – and the reverse.<sup>1</sup>

The significance of this section is two-fold. First, it is evidence that Nietzsche subscribes to the thesis mentioned above.<sup>2</sup> Given this, it is clear that on Nietzsche's view the alleged loss we incur on ourselves by turning to God is irremediable. Second, this section says – almost literally – that a loss in the potential for action would mean a loss specifically in the potential for working on one's own perfection.

It may seem strange to say that belief and trust in God means a loss, but here is one possible way for Nietzsche to come to this conclusion. Let us make a detour over Freud's thinking. On the first page of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*<sup>3</sup> Freud equates tension with unpleasure and lowering of tension with production of pleasure.<sup>4</sup> On the next page he says that "... unpleasure corresponds to an *increase* in the quantity of excitation and pleasure to a *diminution*." So, in fact, he says that *tension corresponds to a heightened level of energy and the lowering of tension to a diminution in the quantity of energy*. Even though Nietzsche does not say so in so many words, this way of thinking is not at all foreign to him. Now, take divine grace as an example! I think it is clear that, from a psychological point of view, the transition from an acute sense of sin to absolution should be described as a lowering of tension. Given Freud's and Nietzsche's way of thinking, this means also a loss of energy. One could reason analogously concerning, for instance, anxiety for the future and resting in trust before God.

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<sup>1</sup> *HATH*, vol. II, § 102.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. also Henri F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious*, p. 273: "Alwin Mittasch has depicted the connection between Nietzsche's psychological ideas and contemporary discoveries on physical energy. Nietzsche transposed into psychology Robert Mayer's principle of conservation and transformation of energy." In Mittasch's book, *Friedrich Nietzsche als Naturphilosoph* (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1952), see especially chapters 11–15.

<sup>3</sup> In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955), vol. XVIII.

<sup>4</sup> This is, in fact, a simplistic formulation of Freud's standpoint. For a somewhat more elaborate view on the relation between tension and pleasure/unpleasure, see for instance *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* in *The Standard Edition*, vol. VII, pp. 208-212.

We have now seen how Nietzsche thinks that belief in God decreases the potentiality for self-realisation. And it is obvious that he views a rejection of the Christian faith as a step forward in this respect.

### **Conclusion**

It is Nietzsche's view that the human condition changes in at least three major ways due to the event of "the death of God". First, we have the state of nihilism, which means an orientational loss. This loss can be remedied, but only – following Nietzsche – if we reject, fundamentally, the ways our thinking is influenced by our "Christian orientation". Only then can we understand what has been known as the "immanent world" from out of itself. Second, Nietzsche thinks that due to "the death of God" new ways of gaining knowledge of moral matters open up. Third, when "Christian" moral standards are left behind the possibility for self-realisation is widened according to Nietzsche. He also thinks – as we have seen at the end of the chapter – that our potentiality for self-realisation increases when we stop turning to God in trust.

The whole idea of the psyche as an energy system is relevant for the discussion of the conditions of self-realisation in my paper "Nietzsche's Hammer Again." It is also relevant in relation to my treatment of the "slave-syndrome" in "A Bee's-Eye View on Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*."

### III. Indirect Communication

#### Kierkegaard's idea of indirect communication

The phrase “indirect communication” (*indirect Meddelelse*) was coined by Kierkegaard. It denotes a communicative strategy he used in his books. These are – we must remember – philosophical books, and it is indirect communication in the philosophical area that the present chapter focuses on. I will soon give some examples, but let me first of all give a brief account of what the indirect communicative strategy is supposed to be.

On the most general level one could say that indirect communication is meant to induce the reader to self-activity. Self-activity here is something over and above just accepting the information that is explicit in a text. It is Kierkegaard's view that, when writing, one should not pretend to be an authority and one should not aim at having disciples.<sup>1</sup> A “disciple” is a listener/reader who accepts what is said without first relating it to her or his own existence. In the same vein he says: “... ‘Modtager’ er et aktivt Ord ...”<sup>2</sup> Translated into English this goes: “... ‘Receiver’ is an active word ...” So, what form does the indirect communicative strategy take?

#### The use of literary means

An obvious example would be the use of literary means,<sup>3</sup> for instance metaphors.<sup>4</sup> I intend the word “metaphor” – as does Lorentzen – to be taken in a broad sense, so that all sorts of imagery are included. A metaphor has to be unpacked, and only the reader herself can do that. To get the meaning of a metaphor, therefore, the reader must be active. As the person reading thus makes a contribution to the meaning of the text, it is not farfetched to think that the unpacking of the metaphor comes out a

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<sup>1</sup> See for instance: Lars Bejerholm, *Meddelelsens Dialektik* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1962), p. 202; hereafter abbreviated as *MD*.

<sup>2</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Søren Kirkegaards Papirer*, volume 8, Group B and C (Kjøbenhavn: Gyldendalske Boghandel, 1918), p. 146.

<sup>3</sup> Harry S. Broudy, “Kierkegaard on Indirect Communication,” *The Journal of Philosophy*, volume 58, no. 9 (1961), p. 231.

<sup>4</sup> Jamie Lorentzen, *Kierkegaard's Metaphors* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2001), *passim*.

little different each time. This is absolutely consonant with Kierkegaard's ideas about indirect communication.

### **Fragmentary communication**

Another kind of indirect communication presents an idea in a fragmentary way. When communicating about existential matters, one can – says Kierkegaard – never claim to be “ready”. This means both that in such a case the speaker/writer cannot appear as an authority (*MD*, p. 297), and that she or he has to communicate in a fragmentary way. It is down to the listener/reader to fill in the blanks and make something out of the pieces at hand. Kierkegaard himself lives as he teaches: He has no claim to authority; quite the opposite. Socrates is a forerunner here. He acknowledged about himself that he himself “... is never a teacher but always only a fellow learner.”<sup>1</sup> This could equally well have been Kierkegaard's words.

The idea about fragmentary communication is not unique to Kierkegaard. These are Nietzsche's words:

*The effectiveness of the incomplete.* – Just as figures in relief produce so strong an impression on the imagination because they are as it were on the point of stepping out of the wall but have suddenly been brought to a halt, so the relief-like, incomplete presentation of an idea, of a whole philosophy, is sometimes more effective than its exhaustive realization: more is left for the beholder to do, he is impelled to continue working on that which appears before him so strongly etched in light and shadow, to think it through to the end, and to overcome even that constraint which has hitherto prevented it from stepping forth fully formed.<sup>2</sup>

As we can see Nietzsche embraces the idea about the reader's self-activity that is so prominent in Kierkegaard's works. That is not the only

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<sup>1</sup> Merold Westphal, *Becoming a Self* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1996), p. 61.

<sup>2</sup> *HATH*, Volume 1, § 178. See also Louise Mabile, *Nietzsche and the Anglo-Saxon Tradition* (London and New York: Continuum, 2009). Discussing Stanley Fish's reading of Bacon's *Essays*, she says: “Fish goes as far as to describe the *Essays* as ‘unfinished’ – a very Nietzschean compliment – and likens the reading of a Baconian essay to the reading of *two* essays: the Bacon's original text, and the text that develops between the reader and the original text. Because of their richness, the promise they hold, they force the reader to become *active* in his engagement with the text.” (p. 27)

thing the quote says. We also find here further reasons for the use of a certain form of indirect communication.

### **Making the reader take a stand**

Yet another way of communicating indirectly would be to present the reader with a choice. This can be done in different ways. I will give one example of how a case of this type of Kierkegaardian communication *could* have looked. Then I will move on to a related kind of strategy: that of making a part of a text similar to an ambiguous picture. I will give an example of what this strategy actually looks like in one of Kierkegaard's books, namely in *Stages on Life's Way*.<sup>1</sup> Let us start with the imagined case.

An attempt to lead people (who are not already Christians) to a point where they are on the verge of becoming Christians would be a truly Kierkegaardian thing to do. In the thought experiment we are now conducting we must presuppose that the people the Kierkegaardian thinker addresses have a pretty adequate knowledge of what Christianity teaches. (Most, if not all, people in Kierkegaard's environment would have had such knowledge.) This means that what should be communicated is not knowledge of what Christianity stands for.

What kind of communication would fit this case? The addressee has a view already. It will not be enough just to *say* that the truth is different from what he thinks. Furthermore, from the Kierkegaardian point of view there are no (valid) proofs when it comes to religious matters. Proofs are relevant only in the realm of "objective thought."

Our Kierkegaardian thinker must go about it in another way. He must first put a constraint on the group he is addressing, and turn to those living ethically – these are the ones who are most likely to take the "leap" over to the religious stage. When we view the world ethically, we find that other human beings have justified demands on us. For the ethical, living ethically is an existential task. Such a task is never brought to an end. According to Kierkegaard nobody manages to fully live up to the claims of existence. Therefore, guilt is an inevitable part of life of the one living ethically.

I think it is fair to say that the idea that guilt is an inevitable part of life is truly Lutheran. Kierkegaard is firmly rooted in the Lutheran soil. Luther taught that no person can become righteous just by living

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<sup>1</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Stages on Life's Way*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); hereafter abbreviated *SLW*.

ethically. And this is, according to the Kierkegaardian view, what the ethical person will find.

It is here that our Kierkegaardian thinker can connect to the ethical person: The answer to guilt is divine grace. So, what can be done is to proclaim the possibility of forgiveness. This is indirect communication. The reader herself must decide: Am I – in the light of my guilt, my inability to live up to the justified demands of my fellow beings – in need of God's forgiveness, or am I not? This is a truly existential question, i.e. *no one else can decide for me, the individual reader*.

One specific point is worth mentioning: Even if the reader decides to accept the love of God, he has nothing to thank the writer for except for the incentive to self-activity (*MD*, p. 188). This is always the case with indirect communication.

### **The text as an ambiguous picture**

Continuing, the next example comes from Kierkegaard's book *Stages of Life's Way*. It is mostly one part of this book that is of interest to us, the one called "In Vino Veritas." Reading this part, we immediately come to think of Plato's *Symposium*. This is of course intended by Kierkegaard. In his text, as in Plato's, some men meet in order to drink and give speeches.

In Plato's dialogue the theme of the speeches is love (*Eros*) in a very wide sense. Ultimately it is a question of the love one can feel in relation to the objects of knowledge, and for Plato this is, in modern terms, basically sublimated homoerotic love. In Kierkegaard's text the subject is love and woman. Given Plato's cultural background, the theme of the speeches in the *Symposium* does not relate to marriage (between woman and man) to any considerable extent. Kierkegaard writes, of course, in a completely different milieu, and here the fact that the theme in the text we are considering is both love and woman makes it almost inevitable that marriage is discussed. Actually, it is my contention that "In Vino Veritas" can be read in such a way that its main theme is perceived to be marriage. But this is not the main point. I will show that the text deals with this theme in a very special way.

Now, the second and the third part of *Stages on Life's Way* are explicitly about marriage. This is of course of some significance. A clue from the second part will help us understand the first, and – as I have said – I will try to show that a reasonable reading of the first part, "In Vino Veritas", results in the view that it too is about marriage. To repeat, the important thing here is not the theme, but how Kierkegaard uses the indirect method.

The scene in the hedged-in garden is crucial for an understanding of “In Vino Veritas”, and it is to this scene I now turn.

It is morning and the drinking party is over. The participants are waiting for their carriages to be made ready. Meanwhile they go for a stroll. A footpath takes them to a hedged-in garden. In the garden there are two persons who are unaware of the party. Their behaviour is observed by the “nocturnal guests.” These recognize the two in the garden as Judge William and his wife.

The Judge’s wife prepares two cups of tea with the greatest of care. She says to her husband: “Hurry now, dear, and drink your tea while it is hot; the morning air is still somewhat cool, and the least thing I can do for you is to be a little solicitous.” The Judge answers: “The least?” His wife responds: “Well, or the most, or the only thing” (*SLW*, p. 84). I am not altogether happy with the translation here. The Danish word “omhyggelig”<sup>1</sup> is rendered “solicitous.” An older translation by Walter Lowrie is better at this point: “... the least thing I can do is to be a little careful of you.”<sup>2</sup>

Let us ponder the wife’s saying: “Well, or the most, or the only thing.” If – I say *if* – marriage was nothing more than showing care towards each other, would it then be worthwhile? It seems that William Afham, who allegedly records what the drinking party is doing, answers this question in the affirmative. He says: “To me at that moment this drink [the tea] appeared most inviting, and to me only the wife’s friendly inviting look appeared more inviting.” What he has seen from the marriage in question is enough to deem marriage a blessing.

But the opposite view is also possible: Marriage must be something over and above mutual care in order to be worthwhile.

At this point the Judge’s wife picks up a thread from the day before. She says: “It is certain and true that if you had not married you would have become much greater in the world.” From the rest of the text it is clear that the Judge does not share her view. We could speculate about why this is so, but it is better to have a look at the next part of the book, the part called “Some reflections on marriage in answer to objections” which is said to be written by the Judge himself. Among other things he says: “Marriage I regard, then, as the highest τέλος [goal] of individual life ...” (*SLW*, p. 101). The reason he does not agree with his wife is that he believes there is nothing higher than being married.

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<sup>1</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Stadier på Livets Vei* (København: Gads Forlag, 1999), p. 82. This is volume 6 of *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*.

<sup>2</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Stages on Life’s Way*, trans. Walter Lowrie, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940), p. 91.



So we have two opposing views: The Judges' wife thinks, like for instance Nietzsche, that marriage is a hindrance for doing something great. According to the other view, marriage is the highest goal man can attain.

Kierkegaard does not decide for us on this matter. What he does is to give us a portion of a text that works like an ambiguous picture: We can read it and conclude that marriage is a burden. We can read it and equally well conclude that marriage is a blessing. The important thing is that it is up to the reader to take a stand. The passage in question can be the basis for at least two *gestalten*. This is one more kind of indirect communication, one that makes a text (or a piece of a text) analogous to an ambiguous picture.

I have a few more things to say about the scene by the arbour. Eventually the peeping party members remain alone. The Judge and his wife have disappeared. One thing is important at this point: There is something that the persons who speak at the banquet have in common; they all reject marriage. Their speeches show this to be the case. This is the background to the following sentence: "So the arbor was deserted, and there was nothing more to do there; the enemy occupation troops retreated without any plunder [*Bytte*]." (*SLW*, p. 85) Take the phrase "without any plunder". What does it mean? What the enemy troops wanted to find was unambiguous evidence that marriage is a burden or a folly. But no such evidence was found. What they saw and heard was not as clear-cut as they had wished.

### **More on indirect communication in fiction**

Let us now leave Kierkegaard and, after an observation about indirect communication in fiction, move on to the question of how the idea of indirect communication has surfaced in the secondary literature on Nietzsche. Recall that I am arguing that Nietzsche definitely used communicative strategies that can be classified as versions of Kierkegaard's indirect communication. In the papers that follow I give more details as well as examples of how this strategy works in practice.

In fiction, for instance novels, indirect communication is part and parcel of the genre. To take just one example, in Hans Robert Jauß' reading of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*,<sup>1</sup> the reader is forced to make a decision. In this book Emma Bovary commits adultery. One of Jauß' central

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<sup>1</sup> Hans Robert Jauß, *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970), p. 203ff.

thoughts is that the very fact that the text leaves open whether Flaubert sides with Emma Bovary or not, calls upon the reader herself to take a stand on the moral dilemma. This is clearly a case of indirect communication. In the last of the four papers printed below, “Filling in Nietzsche: The Hermeneutical Reversal of Plato’s Indeterminacy Arguments and its Relevance for the Understanding of Philosophical Texts”, I elaborate on the theme of indirect communication in (drama and) fiction.

### **Indirect communication according to the secondary literature on Nietzsche**

The phrase “indirect communication” has been used before in connection with Nietzsche.<sup>1</sup> But Christa Davis Acampora and Keith Ansell Pearson, who use it, do not really go into any detail about this phenomenon. Let me cite the relevant passages from their book. On page 25 they say regarding the ninth part of *BGE*: “... the title question *what is noble?* is not so much answered as it is given to the *reader* to ask and explore.” Talking about § 232–239 of the same book, they say: “One task is to work out why this treatment of woman appears, in this concentrated form, at this particular point of the book.” (p. 148) A little further on it is asserted that: “What is required is that we read Nietzsche carefully or astutely, and distinguish between what he does assert and what the reader is inclined to conclude from these assertions.” (p. 167) And, finally, one more quote regarding the ninth part of the book: “To join Nietzsche might not take the form of seizing his conception of nobility or following a new program but rather practicing his form of inquiry, to join him in interrogating rather than propagating an answer to the question *What is noble?*” (p. 210)

Kathleen Marie Higgins does not use the phrase “indirect communication”, but she certainly pin-points the phenomenon in question in Nietzsche’s texts. I will just give one example here. In “Rebaptizing our Evil: On the Revaluation of All Values” (p. 405) she says:

I am convinced that Nietzsche’s authorial strategies quite often aim to prompt individual reconsiderations on the part of his readers, and

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<sup>1</sup> Christa Davis Acampora and Keith Ansell Pearson, *Nietzsche’s Beyond Good and Evil* (London and New York: Continuum, 2011), p. 58.

that these efforts at incitement are an important part of his own efforts at reevaluation.<sup>1</sup>

My claim is that Nietzsche uses a lot of different kinds of indirect communication. We have already mentioned the use of imagery. In my “Nietzsche’s Hammer Again” the focus is on Nietzsche’s uses of the hammer metaphor and the tuning-fork simile. I describe one way in which this imagery can be unpacked. In “A Bee’s-Eye View on Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*” and “Is it Enough to Read Nietzsche Genealogically?” I argue that Nietzsche tries to direct the attention of the reader to herself. In “Filling in Nietzsche: The Hermeneutical Reversal of Plato’s Indeterminacy Arguments and its Relevance for the Understanding of Philosophical Texts”, I show that indeterminacy is not only a ubiquitous aspect of drama and literary fiction, but can also be an important philosophical tool. The next chapter summarizes these arguments. After a short chapter with concluding remarks, the actual papers follow.

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<sup>1</sup> Kathleen Marie Higgins, “Rebaptizing our Evil: On the Reevaluation of All Values”, in Ansell Pearson, K. (ed.) *A Companion to Nietzsche* (Oxford and Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006).

## IV. Summaries of the Papers

### Nietzsche's Hammer Again

What is the meaning of the hammer metaphor in *Twilight of the Idols*? I find the view convincing that the hammer Nietzsche has in mind is a percussion hammer. Such hammers are used by physicians for diagnostic purposes. By listening to the sounds elicited when the hammer gently strikes some (relevant) part of the body, a doctor can reveal different sorts of sickness, for instance gas-filled intestines. This is auscultation.

The similarity between a doctor's auscultation and Nietzsche's method is that, just as the doctor reveals what is hidden below the surface of the body, Nietzsche claims to be able to listen to doctrines and moral standpoints and expose a reality beneath these that is not apparent to most people. In this way he can treat moral judgements as symptoms.

The imagery in the preface of the *Twilight of the Idols* is not exhausted by the hammer metaphor. Nietzsche also says that here idols are touched "... with the hammer as with a tuning-fork." The tuning-fork simile might seem incongruous with the hammer metaphor: The tuning-fork *produces* a sound, the hammer *elicits* it. However, you can hit a piano string with a tuning-fork, and if you do this in the right way both the string and the fork will sound. Therefore, both the sound being judged and the sound representing the "norm" are produced. In this case the tuning-fork is used also in a way that is analogous to how the percussion hammer is used.

So Nietzsche's hammer has a double function. I argue that this double function can be served only by Nietzsche's conception of what the conditions are for self-realisation.

There are two important aspects to Nietzsche's view of human perfection. One is the contention that aggressiveness and sexuality are innate in man in such a way that he cannot do away with them. Using the power in these drives is a necessary condition for human flourishing. However, these two drives should not be lived out freely, according to Nietzsche: The power inherent in them ought to be used for sublimation.

Nietzsche contrasts his view with what he takes to be the Christian view. The morality of the latter is said to be based on a gross mistake regarding human psychology. It is built on the assumption that man can get rid of his aggressiveness and sexuality. According to Nietzsche, any attempt to do so will lead to an impoverished life.

The other aspect of Nietzsche's view of the conditions for human perfection is the following: Man has to "give style" to his character. This has to do with re-arranging the inner relations between the originally disparate impulses and drives we start out from in moulding ourselves. This is done, for instance, if ambition subdues the other impulses and makes them "work" for its own goals. So, the difference between a man in his original state and the man he could become by moulding himself is said not to be one of *substance* but one of *structure*.

The hammer metaphor, with which we started, surfaces only at one point after the preface in *Twilight of the Idols*. The title of the last part of the book goes: "The Hammer Speaks." The difference between "the kitchen coal" and "the diamond" is central in this part. The difference is one of *structure*. My claim is that "the diamond" stands for the man who has perfected himself, the "kitchen coal" the man who is "weaker" – who has not managed to let his drives and impulses coalesce into a harmonious whole.

I said earlier that the hammer represents a view of what constitutes the conditions for human development. Here in the last part of *Twilight of the Idols*, if my reading is correct, different types of persons are judged against this view and come out as "diamond" and "kitchen coal" respectively. That is, they come out as perfected or decadent. Given my understanding of the hammer metaphor and the tuning-fork simile this is exactly what one would expect the hammer to speak of, when it speaks.

### **A Bee's-Eye View on Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals***

The task Nietzsche sets himself in *On the Genealogy of Morals* is, given Nietzsche's own view, complicated by a specific pedagogical obstacle. He claims to have discovered something completely new about occidental or "Christian" ethics. If he is right this kind of morality is to a considerable extent slave morality. Moreover, he claims that there is a kind of rationalisation inherent in it. It is the true motives for being moral that are said to be rationalised.

In my paper I discuss pity (as a part of slave morality) in order to get my point across. One of Nietzsche's views on this topic is that the true motive behind pity is selfishness. When we help a needy person, we feel superior – superior in power. This is exactly what we strive for, if Nietzsche is right.

The selfishness that is part of pity, on this analysis, is denounced by the prevalent morality. If we also consider the fact that we are social creatures who place part of our dignity in being morally decent, we can

see why a repression of (what Nietzsche takes to be) the real motive behind pity takes place. This creates a need for a morally satisfactory conscious motive, and the resulting common view is that pity is selflessness: In pity, all we have in mind is the good of the person we are helping.

The pedagogical problem that Nietzsche faces, then, is the following: Due to the rationalisation Nietzsche thinks is inherent in our morality, he must expect his readers to be ignorant of some of their own traits and part of their motivation for action. If he is right, the rationalisation is there *exactly to prevent us from getting to know about these things*. It must therefore be expected to work as a hindrance for the acceptance of the results of Nietzsche's investigations. Hence the need for a special strategy.

I argue that in the two first sections of *On the Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche gives us a sketch of two different kinds of intellectual work. In the first section we get to know the scientist who is so busy bringing home results that he neither has the time nor the peace necessary for getting to know himself and his experiences. In the second section, which expressly deals with Nietzsche's own thinking, it is a question of bringing something forth from oneself. This presupposes some self-knowledge.

Why does Nietzsche stress the ordinary scientist's lack of self-knowledge in the first section? I think that he does so in order to make the reader understand that for Nietzsche's activity (the one described in the second section) self-knowledge is crucial. And this goes also for the activity of reading Nietzsche's texts. The reader should read *On the Genealogy of Morals* with an eye to herself. The really interesting thing is what the reader experiences when reading the book. This is part of the special communicative strategy that we said Nietzsche is searching for: He tries to fix the reader's attention to herself and then provoke the relevant experiences.

Let us see how the three essays of *On the Genealogy of Morals* can be read along these lines.

The first essay deals with slave and master morality. Nietzsche describes slave morality in such a gloomy way that we inevitably feel the need to deny that we are slavish. In this way, the reader starts out from Nietzsche's conceptualisation, which comes from without, and defends himself against it. This is reactivity and as such part of the syndrome of slave morality. If the reader goes on paying heed to Nietzsche's call for self-observation, it might be that he recognizes his wish to deny his slavishness as a reactive strategy, and – as such – as slavish.

The second essay deals with guilt and bad consciousness. Nietzsche's point of departure is the claim that cruelty is innate in man. What has happened is that man has created a civilized society for himself. The possibility to live out one's cruelty has been severely hampered. It could still find an outlet by turning against man himself. This is, according to Nietzsche, the origin of the bad consciousness.

When Nietzsche stresses man's cruelty, we as readers start to think: "Cruelty is not part of our make-up the way Nietzsche has it. This is so at least in *my* case." The reason why we need to deny so strongly that cruelty is part of our make-up is that we have repressed it. As readers we may find that the character of the train of thought evoked in us by the text is telling. The intensity of our objection tells us that something is fishy here.

As to the third essay I think that, maybe, it is not being read in the same way today as it was read in Nietzsche's own time. I have focused on how I think it was read and would have been read by many of Nietzsche's contemporaries. In this essay Nietzsche tells us that science<sup>1</sup> is a form of the ascetic ideal. Asceticism, the way Nietzsche sees it, means the cultivation of just *one* aspect of human life.

The scientist, says Nietzsche, believes in scientific truth, which to Nietzsche is just *one* way of construing the world. By contrast, Nietzsche aims at a pluralistic paradigm. He sometimes deals with a question several times and from different angles. To view a phenomenon in a perspectivistic fashion means, on the Nietzschean view, that we get a more "objective" picture of it.

Now, I think that Nietzsche expects that the "free spirits" of his time will side with scientific truth after reading *On the Genealogy of Morals*. To Nietzsche's mind this means that they have exposed themselves as ascetics. Of course, there is no guarantee that the "free spirits" themselves accept the conclusion that they are ascetics. But given Nietzsche's exposition, it might happen that some of them start wondering whether there are not other perspectives, superior to science – at least for guiding our lives. This line of thought might eventually make the "free spirit" see his present orientation as ascetic.

### **Is it Enough to Read Nietzsche Genealogically?**

In this paper I claim that Nietzsche's texts sometimes display a twofold movement. On the one hand, a view is stated or presupposed as a basis for

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<sup>1</sup> Science in the broad sense of *Wissenschaft*.

a certain argument. On the other, there are traits in the text that relativize or question this very view or the conclusions that follow from it together with other premises.

I think there are two grounds for Nietzsche's way of going about it. One is that he upholds a relativist viewpoint. Sometimes, he feels the need to make the relativity of what has been said explicit. At other times the background to the twofold movement is the view that the structure of our thoughts is determined by our language. Because of this Nietzsche is not always happy with his own formulations. He tries to search for new and better formulations of what has been said. In this way he tends to "empty" his earlier ones of meaning.

The twofold movement might seem to hinder Nietzsche from communicating with his readers. I try to show, however, that there are ways in which Nietzsche can make his message come through that are not threatened by the twofold movement in his texts, but rather depend on it.

Genealogical thinking is central to Nietzsche and it is central in my paper as well. I use Deleuze's definition of genealogy. On this understanding, it is basically identical to "symptomatology thinking." This means that the philosopher acts like a physician. She considers phenomena as symptoms, symptoms of forces. Symptomatology is the art of charting the forces that express themselves in an act, a moral standpoint, a philosophical treatise, etc.

*En passant* I argue that Deleuze characterizes the forces in question in a way suggesting that they must be given a metaphysical status. I claim that in Nietzsche's own texts this is not univocally so.

When reading philosophical texts, Nietzsche often uses his symptomatology method. He interprets Schopenhauer's philosophy as a symptom of a life turned against itself; he interprets Socrates' last words in the *Phaedo* as a symptom of decadence. Now, if we find Nietzsche's symptomatology way of reading philosophical books enlightening and interesting, then we have a reason to apply the method to his own texts. But if we do this, the meaning of the text recedes into the background, and the focus of our reading will be how matters stand with Nietzsche.

I argue that our reading of Nietzsche cannot stop at this point. In his texts there is very much stress on the idea that the individual needs to work on his own perfection. If we take this seriously, it is hard to let the end point of the symptomatology reading be the ultimate end point of our reading. We have to take one more step. Given Nietzsche's stress on self-knowledge and the task of perfecting oneself, we must conclude that his books work as pointers to the reader and his life. In this way,



Nietzsche manages to communicate with his reader, notwithstanding the fact that the twofold movement of the texts threatens to eradicate their “meaning.”

### **Filling in Nietzsche: The Hermeneutical Reversal of Plato’s Indeterminacy Arguments and its Relevance for the Understanding of Philosophical Texts**

Plato dismisses fictional literature as a means of gaining truth. One of the central arguments for this is that drama and fiction are full of blanks. Therefore, they cannot reveal the full truth of whatever subject they deal with. Plato’s view that real knowledge is deductive is operative here. Obviously, a drama cannot be identical to a deductive system.

Gadamer reverses this argument, first of all in relation to drama. He takes the incompleteness of the drama to be part of its essence and a prerequisite for its potential to disclose truth. If there were no blanks in a drama, its meaning would turn out to be the same every time it was given. But there are blanks in plays – at different levels. When performing a play, a director or actor is free to use pauses, miming, gestures, movement, and so on. The use of means such as these influences what the meaning of the play is perceived to be. Clearly, indeterminacy is present here.

The most interesting sort of indeterminacy, however, is the indeterminacy in the general message of a play. I take it that, when watching a play, the spectator is searching for a unifying meaning. Only because of the contribution of the spectator does the play have an overall meaning. The spectator can project her pre-understanding into the gaps. In this way a play can be updated to saying something which is relevant to her and her time.

Gadamer formulates a double principle, that says that a) a play must not be differentiated from its performances and how they are experienced, and b) the subject matter of a drama should not be distinguished from the shaping of that subject matter in the performance of the drama.

Plato and Gadamer notice the same kind of indeterminacy in the overall meaning of the drama. However, they value it in totally different ways. According to Plato, indeterminacy is what prevents a drama from revealing the full truth about its subject. For Gadamer, the fact that a drama does not explicitly say everything about its theme is the reason it can say something true about us and our time.

Iser pin-points a textual indeterminacy in novels that is similar to the one Gadamer uncovers in relation to drama. In Iser’s theory the concepts

*repertoire* and *strategy* are central. The repertoire of a text consists in "... references to earlier works, or to social and historical norms, or to the whole culture from which the text has emerged ...". This list is not exhaustive. It is clear from Iser's text that what is only *a part* of the culture from which the text has emerged can also be an element in the repertoire. It could be, for instance, some view of love that prevails or has prevailed in some sub-culture.

The strategy of a text relates the elements of its repertoire to each other by allocating them to different places in the text and to different perspectives – for example, to that of the narrator or that of some character in the book. One example of a strategy in Iser's sense would be the uncommented juxtaposition of two elements in the repertoire. This works as an incitement to the reader. He or she must try to find a vantage point from which it is understandable why the two elements are placed together.

I argue in the following way: There is indeterminacy in every (normal) piece of fiction. Therefore, the reader of a novel has to make a contribution for there to be an overall meaning. Because of this we need to formulate a principle regarding novels that is analogous to the one Gadamer formulates. Furthermore, I argue that this principle is relevant also when it comes to (some sorts of) philosophical texts. Obvious examples would be the texts of the latter Wittgenstein and those of Kierkegaard.

As an illustration of my claims I outline a reading of *GM*. This is basically the same reading of Nietzsche's book that is presented in "A Bee's-Eye View on Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*."

## V. Concluding Remarks

I have tried to show that Nietzsche uses a variety of strategies that are versions of what Kierkegaard calls “indirect communication.” One example is Nietzsche’s massive use of metaphors (including imagery, analogies and similes), another one is the role of aphorisms in his texts, and a third his frequent use of incomplete formulations of ideas. He also tries to get his messages across by making the reader attend to her *own* life while reading.

A main question that remains is the following. I have been talking about indeterminacy and indirect communication. But how is the former related to the latter? Is indeterminacy a precondition for indirect communication?

Take the first of my examples, the use of metaphor. Of course, there are different sorts of metaphors. A “dead” metaphor like “the leg of the chair” or an established one like “Kierkegaard coined this phrase” does not necessarily include any indeterminacy. They have a conventional meaning. But neither do they entail indirectness of communication.

Nietzsche sometimes uses more or less established metaphors (like the one that a thinker can be “pregnant” with an idea or a theory)<sup>1</sup>, but as is well known he also comes up with brand new ones. The hammer metaphor is one example; the beehive is another. It is my view that, with new metaphors like these, the fact that they can be unpacked in different ways shows that they contain some kind of indeterminacy.<sup>2</sup> Without this indeterminacy the metaphor would not generate new meanings, but say the same thing over and over again. So in this case the possibility of indirect communication is dependent on the fact that there is indeterminacy in the text.

In “Is it Enough to Read Nietzsche Genealogically?” I say a few words about Nietzsche and aphorism. I quote Deleuze saying that “... the

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *GS*, Preface for the Second Edition, § 3: “... we [philosophers] have to give birth to our thoughts out of our pain and, like mothers, endow them with all we have ...”

<sup>2</sup> At this point the reader can compare my understanding of the hammer metaphor in “Nietzsche’s Hammer Again” with Brobjer’s understanding of it in “To Philosophize with a Hammer: an Interpretation.” The latter is published in *Nietzsche-Studien*, Band 28 (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1999). Brobjer contends that what Nietzsche has in mind when talking about the hammer is his doctrine of the eternal recurrence. On this reading, philosophizing with a hammer is philosophizing from the perspective of the eternal recurrence.

aphorism is at the same time the art of interpretation and the object of interpretation.” What Deleuze means here – and I agree – is that an aphorism is an interpretation of some aspect of reality, but it is also in itself in need of interpretation. Just as some kinds of metaphors, it does not itself determine its meaning. This is so, because there is indeterminacy in the aphorism, and only because of this is indirect communication possible. If there were no indeterminacy the reader would – so to speak – have nothing to do.

I have also dealt with the strategy that formulates an idea in a fragmentary way. Obviously there is indeterminacy in this case. One reason why Kierkegaard uses this strategy is that, if you are an existential thinker, your task is never finished; you have not got any ready “answers” to communicate. Nietzsche too uses this method, but as we have seen he motivates it in a different way. He commends the fragmentary presentation of an idea because he believes that, being presented in this way, the idea will have a greater impact on the reader.

The next strategy I will discuss is that of presenting the reader with a choice. Someone might object that there is no indeterminacy operative in facing someone with a choice. And, of course, in some instances this is so. Say that I ask a friend who is looking for something to read: “Do you want the New York Times or not?” In this case there is no indeterminacy.

The details of the choice-provoking strategy can be spelled out in two different ways. Remember the case (chapter three) in which a person on the verge of becoming Christian is presented with a statement about God’s grace. The choice that this reader faces may be quite similar to that when asked “Do you want the New York Times or not?”, namely when the description that eventuates in her conclusion that she needs to make a choice about grace is univocal – when there is no place for different interpretations of the statement itself. In a case like this the reader can do only one of three things: Accept, renounce or deny that the description that leads to the choice is valid. But even if there is no indeterminacy operative here, I would claim that this is a form of indirect communication, since the reader is active here in a way that goes beyond just accepting something that is claimed by a text.

In the other form of choice-provoking strategies indeterminacy is present. In this case the reader has a more prominent role. The blanks of the description that leads up to a situation of choice can be filled in different ways. Either the reader fills the gaps in such a way that he is prone not to accept divine grace, or he fills them in such a way that the outcome

tends to be that he accepts God's grace. Clearly, this is a case of indirect communication that is dependent on indeterminacy.

Let us move on now to the strategy that makes (a portion) of a text analogous to an ambiguous picture. Recall my example from "In Vino Veritas"! If a person, having read this part of Kierkegaard's book, says "The text functions like an ambiguous picture, like for instance the duck-rabbit", no indirect communication has taken place. If, on the other hand, someone has read the book and says either "On the basis of what the text says I have concluded that marriage is a burden" or "On the basis of what the text says I have concluded that marriage is the highest man can aspire to", this means that some kind of indirect communication has been at work here. And this could only happen given that indeterminacy was present – indeed, the very indeterminacy that the first reader noticed.

Let me now devote a few paragraphs to some further remarks about the interpretation of the *Genealogy of Morals*. It was – as I have said – Kathleen Marie Higgins who discovered that an indirect communicative strategy is used here. Part of Nietzsche's strategy is to make the reader attend to her own life while reading. One important point is that the text does not formulate the call: "Read the book with an eye to yourself!" The reader's attention is directed to herself in other ways.

I have also tried to lay bare the reason why Nietzsche needs a special communicative method here and why that method takes the form it takes. The reason is that Nietzsche takes a rationalisation – and with it, a concealing – of the real motives behind moral behaviour to be part of our morality. Therefore, given his own view, he cannot convey what these motives are in a straightforward way to the reader.<sup>1</sup>

Directing the attention of the reader to herself is both a result of other strategies and a means for letting the reader know what the theme of *GM* really is – namely, the moral orientation of the reader himself. The way that leads up to this phase of the reading process is quite interesting: Nietzsche uses both incomplete formulations and metaphors – the beehive metaphor and the tree metaphor.

The difficulty of finding a unified meaning of the text gets pronounced when Nietzsche says that the two moral "syndromes" that are the theme of the book are found in higher natures.<sup>2</sup> This does not fit well with the description in the Preface, § 1, where he says that "we men of knowledge" are "unknown to ourselves". If Nietzsche is one of the thinkers he

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<sup>1</sup> The account that follows is based on the reading of *GM* outlined in "Filling in Nietzsche: ..."

<sup>2</sup> *GM*, First Essay, § 16.

describes in § 1, he does not have any noteworthy knowledge of his “inner life”. Consequently, he will not be fit to deal with his subject.

But § 2 of the Preface is important here. In it we find a description of another kind of intellectual work – the one that makes a thinker analogous to a tree.

If we stick to Iser’s terminology, this is a case of a blank in the strategy of the text: The reader herself must find a vantage point from which it is understandable that the said two elements are both part of the book.

In my reading it is vital to realize that Nietzsche makes a joke or means to mislead us when he says “we” in the first section of *GM*. In the two first sections in *GM* he is talking about two different sorts of thinkers, and he himself is of the second sort – the one that can be compared with a tree.

The whole logic of the bee/tree metaphor is that in the one case it is a question of bringing something home and in the other of bringing something forth from oneself. Nietzsche explicitly says about the worker bees that they do not know their own experiences. He wants the reader to understand that when it comes to reading his texts one’s experiences are vital and that it is to these you should attend while reading. Once again: The end point of this reading process is that the reader comes to understand that the theme of the book is his own moral make-up. And in the process, the reader must make choices about what part of the text to hold on to and what to let go.

In “Is it Enough to Read Nietzsche Genealogically?” I argue that Nietzsche-texts, other than *GM*, can be read in a similar way. If this is correct, an over-all understanding of Nietzsche’s texts, that I take to be interesting, emerges.

Let me, finally, try to give an answer to my question at the beginning of this chapter. It seems that there is a close interconnectedness between indeterminacy and indirect communication. In most cases indeterminacy is a prerequisite for such communication. I have only found one example where it is possible without the text in question including blanks of some sort: the case of provoking a choice by means of an unequivocal statement. Probably this is a special case. It is easy to see how a complete text can lead to a choice. However, it is not easy to see how such a complete text could be the basis for other sorts of indirect communication. Therefore, I tend towards the view that only one kind of indirect communication is possible without indeterminacy. This, however, is a research hypothesis to which I hope to devote more attention in the future.

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3. Is It Enough to Read Nietzsche Genealogically? (Submitted)
4. Filling in Nietzsche: The Hermeneutical Reversal of Plato's Indeterminacy Arguments and its Relevance for the Understanding of Philosophical texts (Accepted for publication in *Internationales Jahrbuch für Hermeneutik*).