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The Many and the One: The Ontological Multiplicity and Functional Unity of the Person in the Later Nietzsche

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IN HIS MASSIVE STUDY OF Nietzsche's psychological theory and anthropology, Graham Parkes argues that sufficient attention has not been paid to Nietzsche's theory of the drives and affects (444)—though he admits Pierre Klossowski, Richard Schacht, and John Richardson as notable exceptions. It is perhaps difficult to understand this claim, especially in light of the work on the “new Nietzsche,” but it might make more sense if considered in the context of a scholarly tradition in which Nietzsche's comments on will to power are understood as voluntaristic, existential—even personalistic?—statements of heroic human individuals forging their own identities or personal narratives in face of the tragic experience of the world, a common enough way of interpreting Nietzsche in the wake of Walter Kaufmann, Alexander Nehamas, and Richard Rorty. However, there are numerous other accounts of an anti-personalist Nietzsche that understand his emphasis on the drives as that which is of genuinely fundamental importance in his thought. Indeed, this sort of reading has perhaps been formative for the entire twentieth century psychoanalytic tradition, if David Allison is correct in arguing that Freud was far more familiar with Nietzsche's writings than he would willingly admit.

In any case, for Parkes, Leslie Paul Thiele, Andrea Rehberg, and others, it is clear that we must begin with physiology, with our drives and affects, if we are to understand the phenomenon of the (apparent) unity of the human person or subject. Rehberg quotes *The Will to Power* to this effect: “The phenomenon of the *body* is the richer, more distinct, more graspable phenomenon: to be methodologically privileged without deciding anything about its ultimate significance” (41, quoting *Will to Power* par. 489; my emphasis).¹ The objective in this case is to expose the unitary “phenomenon” of the self as “an immense *multiplicity* . . . it is methodologically permitted to use the more easily studied, *richer* phenomenon [the body as multiplicity of drives]

as the guiding thread for the understanding of the poorer [the self as unity]" (Rehberg 41, citing *Will to Power* par. 518; emphasis Rehberg's)² without necessarily committing ourselves to a strong metaphysical position on the underlying reality of the drives. These sentiments are echoed in *The Will to Power* (without the proviso), where Nietzsche claims that

The body and physiology [are] the starting point: why?—We gain the correct idea of the nature of our subject-unity, namely as regents at the head of a communality (not as "souls" or "life forces"), also of the dependence of these regents upon the ruled and of an order of rank and division of labor as the conditions that make possible the whole and its parts. In the same way, how living unities continually arise and die and how the "subject" is not eternal; in the same way, that the struggle expresses itself in obeying and commanding, and that a fluctuating assessment of the limits of power is part of life. (par. 492)

As Parkes notes, "it is a main trait of the genealogical method [*viz.*, in *On the Genealogy of Morals*] to take what appears to be a unitary phenomenon and disclose its multiple origins, showing it to be generated by a plurality of drives" (277), and this is precisely what Nietzsche is doing here. As Foucault learned from Nietzsche, all the hallmarks of the unitary subject, "conscience, responsibility, and free will must be seen to have a history and a genealogy" (Ansell-Pearson 20).

The section of *Beyond Good and Evil* in which Nietzsche first proposes that the world, as "viewed from the inside, the world defined and determined according to its 'intelligible character'—it would be 'will to power' and nothing else,"³ begins by asking us to "suppose nothing else were 'given' as real except our world of desires and passions, and we could not get down, or up, to any other 'reality' besides the reality of our drives—for thinking is merely a relation of these drives to each other" (par. 36).

I believe, given this crucial passage, that the most productive way to understand Nietzsche's mature account of the self is in the form of a quasi-phenomenology, where we begin with what of ourselves is most "given" to us and then construct our anthropology on that basis. (From there, we might make a methodological attempt to explain all our drives as manifestations of a single, overarching kind of impulse—will to power—but the irreducibility of the drives themselves would remain.) Now, what is most primordially given, for Nietzsche, is not the objective presence of the being (as with Aquinas or Husserl), nor is it our instrumental relationships with things ready-to-hand as tools (Heidegger), nor is it even the face of the Other (Levinas). Rather,

it is our own body in its drives and instinctual urges. This is, of course, not to say that the “givenness” or “reality” of our drives is unproblematic, as the heavy scare-quotes within Nietzsche’s own text attest. He is not, at least in the published texts, saying anything about some kind of “ultimate reality” or *Ding-an-sich-heit* of these drives; they are merely the deepest level of our selves to which we have any conscious access. As Thiele notes,

A general pattern, albeit one never strictly maintained, may be observed within the confusing array of terms Nietzsche employed to describe the workings of the soul. Drives, instincts, or affects constituted an irreducible substratum (which is only to say that by definition we are incapable of discerning their probable components). Feelings or emotions form the next level . . . Thoughts form the third tier. (55)

Though we may not be able to see right to the core of ourselves (in a noumenal or even a purely phenomenological sense⁴), we can at least observe, or justifiably infer, certain features of our drives. And this is as far as we can go. Nietzsche’s argument is this: if we are intellectually honest with ourselves, we will realize that the only thing given about the multiplicity of our drives is precisely their multiple character, not their inherence in the substance of a unitary person or self. The latter is an inference, not an immediate certainty of consciousness.

Although this position is partially traceable to Nietzsche’s earlier works,⁵ the clearest and most sustained treatment of the multiplicity of the self in the published works is to be found in the first part of *Beyond Good and Evil*, titled “On the Prejudices of Philosophers” (particularly pars. 16–20). There, in remarkably Humean fashion, Nietzsche dispenses first with substance, then with subject. He notes that physics is just beginning to reach the point where it can conceive of the universe as centers of power, or force, and not as atomistic, substantial unities *in re* (*Good and Evil* pars. 12, 14, 17). Then, he quickly goes on to claim that we philosophers, too, ought to dispense with our own atomistic fancy: the soul-substance.⁶ Instead, we ought to begin from below, with what is most fundamentally given for us (our *drives*), and attempt to formulate a new notion of selfhood from that foundation. In doing this, Nietzsche is also (interestingly) anticipating Merleau-Ponty’s strategy, in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, of reconstituting phenomenology from the ground up (the body and its intentionality) rather than the top down (Husserlian or Sartrean philosophy of consciousness).

Nietzsche argues that the assertions “I think” (Descartes) or “I will” (Schopenhauer) do not and cannot give us any immediate access to a unitary

reality of the “I.” Rather, the phenomenon of our drives, as we experience it, is a multiplicity; and the supposed “unity” of thinking (*Good and Evil* par. 16) and of willing (par. 19) are also given to us as complex, if we seriously examine them. Only “a whole series of daring assertions that would be difficult, perhaps impossible, to prove; for example, that it is *I* who think, that there must be something that thinks, that thinking is an activity and operation on the part of a being who is thought of as a cause, that there is an ‘ego’” (Nietzsche, *Good and Evil* par. 16) leads us to believe that the self is some sort of foundational unity underlying this multiplicity. Nietzsche’s account of selfhood (and even more so his accounts of thinking and willing) will thus be premised on a plurality of drives: any unity the person or self may (seem to) exhibit will be at the least an achievement and at most a falsification of the facts, rather than a presupposition.

What leads us, then, to make this sort of “rational” supposition about the self? Nietzsche adduces two factors here.⁷ The first of these is what he will call the superstition of logicians: the relation of agent causality to a substance metaphysics. He tells us that he never tires of pointing out one simple fact:

A thought comes when “it” wishes, and not when “I” wish, so that it is a falsification of the facts of the case to say that the subject “I” is the condition of the predicate “think.” *It* thinks; but that this “it” is precisely the famous old “ego” is, to put it mildly, only a supposition, an assertion, and assuredly not an “immediate certainty.” After all, one has even gone too far with this “it thinks”—even the “it” contains an *interpretation* of the process, and does not belong to the process itself. (*Good and Evil* par. 17; emphasis in original)

For Nietzsche, when we move from the thought (or the drive, affect, etc.) to the thinker who stands behind it as its cause or source, we are making an illegitimate logical move based upon the Aristotelian-scholastic-Cartesian “superstition” that all accidents must inhere in a subject that lends them their substance or reality. We have inferred from the notions of substance and efficient causality a substantial, unitary agent which effects that causality and which unifies its thoughts, drives, and acts of will in one person or self. In fact, though, the “logical” necessity for us to suppose that there is a unitary subject standing behind all of these drives and uniting them is only a contingent one—that is, it is a “necessity” based only on the contingent fact that our logic stands on the ground of an Aristotelian metaphysics of substance-accidents.⁸

The second factor Nietzsche adduces, to which the first is (possibly) ultimately reducible, is the seduction of language. For Nietzsche, the clas-

sical formula in which language follows thought and thought follows being is reversed. A stable world of “being” only appears as a falsification of the world’s own presentation of its ever-changing aspects to our “reason” (as Jean Granier does a particularly good job of showing in “Nietzsche’s Conception of Chaos”). Indeed, it is thought that follows language here and “being” (or rather, phenomenal appearance) that follows thought: “individual philosophical concepts are not anything capricious or autonomously evolving, but grow up in connection and relationship with each other . . . [they] belong just as much to a system as all the members of the fauna of a continent” (Nietzsche, *Good and Evil* par. 20), and this system is ultimately linguistic. That is to say, we have been deceived by certain structures of language into believing that the world must indeed be composed of individual, atomic substances (such as unitary souls or selves) with attributes (such as thinking, willing, desiring). This is “the unconscious domination and guidance by similar grammatical functions . . . everything is prepared at the outset for a similar development and sequence of philosophical systems [by language]” (Nietzsche, *Good and Evil* par. 20). But just because languages dictate a subject position does not mean that there must really be things or “substances” like “subjects” in the world. As Nietzsche protests, “I shall repeat a hundred times; we really ought to free ourselves from the seduction of words!” (*Good and Evil* par. 16).⁹ Nietzsche notes that cause and effect should be used only “as conventional fictions for the purpose of designation and communication—not for explanation” (*Good and Evil* par. 21); the same could be said of the “subject.” He does, however, retain the hope that we might even “some day . . . accustom ourselves, including the logicians, to get along without the little ‘it’ (which is all that remains of the honest little old ego)” (*Good and Evil* par. 17).

We have, then (in the first instance), a “self” that has been “freed” from the category of unity and dissolved into the multiplicity of drives or centers of force: “The assumption of one single subject is perhaps unnecessary; perhaps it is just as permissible to assume a multiplicity of subjects, whose interaction and struggle is the basis of our thought and our consciousness in general? . . . *My hypothesis*: The subject as multiplicity” (Nietzsche, *Will to Power* par. 490). This is echoed in his comment that “our body is but a social structure composed of many souls” (*Good and Evil* par. 19). But we are nowhere near the end of the process at this point, for, as Nietzsche adds in *Beyond Good and Evil*:

All there is or has been on earth of freedom, subtlety, boldness, dance, and masterly sureness, whether in thought itself or in government, or in rhetoric and persuasion, in the arts just as in ethics, has developed only

owing to the “tyranny of such capricious laws”; . . . Every artist knows how far from any feeling of letting himself go his “most natural” state is—the free ordering, placing, disposing, giving form in the moment of “inspiration”—and how strictly and subtly he obeys the thousandfold laws precisely then, laws that precisely on account of their hardness and determination defy all formulation through concepts (even the firmest concept is, compared with them, not free of fluctuation, multiplicity, and ambiguity). (par. 188)

Although many postmodern readers—over-reliant on the *Nachlass*—have claimed otherwise,¹⁰ there is in Nietzsche (at least after *The Birth of Tragedy*) no sense that the chaotic ontological multiplicity that one is should simply be left that way, with a host of different desires all pulling the “subject” in competing directions. That would be a kind of Dionysian laissez faire that would, in the end, accomplish nothing great or meaningful. As Thiele notes, “frequent regime changes [in the soul, just as with societies] should not be invitations to anarchy. Struggle begets strength, but anarchy, in the soul and society, signifies powerlessness, a regression to barbarism. A tensioned order is the goal, and to this end leadership is found indispensable” (63). He quotes Nietzsche to this effect: “To become master of the chaos one is; to compel one’s chaos to become form: to become logical, simple, unambiguous, mathematics, *law*—that is the grand ambition here” (Thiele 63, citing *Will to Power* par. 842). Nietzsche is clearly indicating that for there to be any real greatness there must be an Apollinian structuring, a giving of order to bind the chaos that one is. Graham Parkes compares the Nietzschean chaotic multiplicity to Hegel’s bad infinity: “The phenomenon of multiplicity . . . cannot be taken simply as ‘a good thing’: it can issue, depending on the circumstances and on how it is handled, more easily in degeneracy than in fulfillment” (445). Ken Gemes also gives a particularly compelling argument against the (Deleuzean) Nietzsche who is a pure affirmer of multiplicity.

At the most basic level, as Alexander Nehamas notes, the unity of the self is maintained by the unity of the body (181). But this is not in itself sufficient for the deeper kind of unity that “selfhood” usually implies, for the body is made up of the competing drives and desires we have just described. While we have emphasized Nietzsche’s sociopolitical rhetoric, suggesting the need for an aristocratic polis of the drives and affects, others have noted that Nietzsche also describes this form-giving in broadly aesthetic and architectural terms as well. Both Heidegger and Nehamas emphasize the relationship to “classicism”—that is, the classical ideal of the work of art—inherent in this description of the self (Nehamas 221; Heidegger 125). The greatest works of art,

on this view, are those which bring together the most contradictory, chaotic aspects in such a way as to make of them a unity. These “combinations of drives that are conflicting and controlled” Nietzsche finds not only in works of art but in artists and composers themselves, as well as in philosophers (Nehamas 228).

Perhaps the single most quoted source in the literature on unifying one’s multiple self occurs in Nietzsche’s *The Gay Science*: “*One thing is needful.*—To ‘give style’ to one’s character—a great and rare art! It is practiced by those who survey the strengths and weaknesses of their nature and then fit them into an artistic plan until every one of them appears as art and reason and even weakness delights the eye” (par. 290). Here Nietzsche describes how “the constraint of a single taste” shapes every piece of one’s nature in such a way that the end result is a work of art; even “whether this taste was good or bad is less important than one might suppose, if only it was a single taste!” (*The Gay Science* par. 290). Conversely, all those who do not have any power over themselves are described as haters of “the constraint of style,” who would rather “interpret their environment as *free* nature: wild, arbitrary, fantastic, disorderly, and surprising” (*The Gay Science* par. 290). On the aesthetic description, then, the greatest individuals possess “*all* the strong, seemingly contradictory gifts and desires—but in such a way that they go together under a yoke” (Nietzsche, *Will to Power* par. 848; cited incorrectly at Nehamas 221 as *Will to Power* par. 847).

Ken Gemes invokes an architectural line of argument from the earlier Nietzsche: arguing largely from the issue of “true” culture as a kind of unity in the third of the *Untimely Meditations*, his point is that real buildings are not carted together but rather constructed according to some kind of unifying plan. Otherwise, they are merely a chaotic field, filled with ruins (348). But a field of ruins—or, by analogy, the self as a field of blind forces engaged in a completely disordered play—is lacking in that organized, synthetic unity of a genuine building. If Nietzsche is a proponent of the chaotic multiplicity of the drives, it is certainly not evident in passages like these. On a sociopolitical, an artistic, or even an architectural reading, then, the point is the same: the self as a functional unity is a constructed phenomenon, an order brought out of chaos.

We have even established a normative order of rank here: as Nehamas notes, the most interesting of these selves comes about when we have “the most powerfully conflicting instincts under control . . . to be beyond good and evil is to combine all of one’s features and qualities, whatever their traditional moral value, into a controlled and coherent whole” (227). For Nehamas,

this is what “giving style” to one’s character means. The greatest souls are those that combine the most contradictory elements, desires, cravings, and aspirations all into a unitary whole by yoking them together in a rigorously controlled, artistic way, just as in a “well-constructed and happy commonwealth, . . . [where] the governing class identifies itself with the successes of the commonwealth” (Nietzsche, *Good and Evil* par. 19). On the other hand, we must also recognize Ken Gemes’ argument (340, 343–344) that, based on this kind of criterion, very few of us will actually become “persons” with “selves” in the most rigorous sense.

The “self” qua atomic substratum of faculties and desires is both a philosophical and “common-sense” fiction, Nietzsche argues, from which it would be better to rid ourselves: “There exists neither ‘spirit,’ nor reason, nor thinking, nor consciousness, nor soul, nor will, nor truth: all are fictions that are of no use” (*Will to Power* par. 480). However, the unitary self to which we may *aspire* via the yoking of our multiple desires and goals to one preeminent, tyrannical yearning or aspiration is something quite different, something which Nietzsche does *not* advocate leaving behind. *Zarathustra* is emblematic for us here: “A thousand goals have there been so far, for there have been a thousand peoples. Only the yoke for the thousand necks is still lacking: the one goal is lacking. Humanity still has no goal. But tell me, my brothers, if humanity still lacks a goal—is humanity itself not still lacking too?” (Nietzsche, *Zarathustra* I, “Of the Thousand and One Goals”). Insofar as each individual is also made up of a thousand goals (her competing drives), the philosophical point holds here, as well. The individual, too, requires a single overarching goal or desire that will give an aristocratic or classically artistic form to the rest of her drives. Otherwise, she would be a chaotic jumble capable of accomplishing nothing. Therefore, in order to remedy this lack, we must turn our gaze to the question of how the drives and affects can come to enter into the kind of social structure we have just described. How does this “yoking” come about? Is there anything like a unified, conscious “will” that can pull together all our various desires and give them form and order? And if not, in what sense are we to understand this yoking?

To import Marxist language here, we have a superstructure/base problem: if consciousness, thought, and language were originally “evolved” (as Nietzsche elsewhere argues) merely to serve the needs of the instincts, do they now have any effective power of their own apart from those instincts? Is subjectivity merely a superstructure founded upon a base it has no power to change, or is there a dialectical interactivity here? Nietzsche’s position leans both ways. He believes, as we have already noted, that even with the genesis of this new realm of subjectivity, most of what occurs in consciousness is

still “forced into certain channels by [the] instincts” (*Good and Evil* par. 3). Consciousness remains chiefly a terminal phenomenon, and most of what we become aware of is merely the tip of the iceberg—at least insofar as the processes of our organism are concerned, even with regard to “organization and systematization.” (The most extreme position occurs in *The Will to Power*, e.g., around pars. 478 and 526, where Nietzsche claims that consciousness has *absolutely no* efficacy of its own and is always merely a terminal phenomenon; he hedges just a bit more in the published comments of *Beyond Good and Evil*.) On the other hand, it seems patently absurd to deny that our drives and affects are shaped and altered by what occurs outside us precisely via our conscious awareness of the world. This is not a pure causal mechanism, some interpreters’ readings to the contrary. (Cf. e.g., Brian Leiter in this regard.) Rather, there is a dialectical interaction of drives and world here.¹¹

However, the Nietzschean hermeneutics of suspicion does posit that even when we believe we are *consciously* reacting to those external influences with logical, reasoned deliberation, it is actually still our instincts and drives—only a very few of which we may ever become explicitly aware of—which are directing our organism. Nietzsche’s interpretive gesture, here, is a kind of phenomenological inference: we are aware of the operations of some of our drives, and there is compelling evidence (e.g., of the kind Freud will later adduce as the “psychopathology of everyday life”) that suggests the same instincts, and others like them, are constantly at work underneath any conscious registering of them. To avoid a kind of psychic dissonance, we must simply “persuade reason to assist [these drives] with good reasons” (Nietzsche, *Good and Evil* par. 191). All deliberation thus becomes, on this quasi-Humean view, simply rationalization: “reason is merely an instrument” (Nietzsche, *Good and Evil* par. 191).

If all this is the case, though, and consciousness has very little, if any, effective power of its own, then why is Nietzsche always talking about “the will” and “willing”? It certainly seems that willing is an activity of consciousness, and, at least from *The Gay Science* and *Zarathustra* onwards, Nietzsche talks constantly about the need for a “will” to a new ideal. Zarathustra himself proclaims: “Let your will say: the overman *shall be* the meaning of the earth!” (Nietzsche, *Zarathustra* I, prologue par. 3). And elsewhere Zarathustra says more pointedly: “thus my creative will, my destiny, wills it. Or, to say it more honestly: this very destiny—my will wills. Whatever in me has feeling, suffers and is in prison; but my will always comes to me as my liberator and joy-bringer. Willing liberates: that is the true teaching of will and liberty—thus Zarathustra teaches it” (Nietzsche, *Zarathustra* II, “Upon the Blessed Isles”).

In fact, though, we face a problem when looking at Nietzsche’s post-1885 works, because there it becomes clear that what he means by “willing” is

quite different from, say, a Kierkegaardian or early Heideggerian or Sartrean commitment. "Willing" is, for the later Nietzsche, just as complicated and just as little an "immediate certainty" as is "thinking." There is, in any act of willing, a multiplicity of sensations, thoughts, and affects. There is

the sensation of the state "*away from which*," the sensation of the state "*towards which*," the sensations of this "*from*" and "*towards*" themselves, and then also an accompanying muscular sensation, which, even without our putting into motion "arms and legs," begins its actions by force of habit as soon as we "will" anything . . . Secondly . . . in every act of the will there is a ruling thought—let us not imagine it possible to sever this thought from the "willing" . . . Third, the will is . . . above all an *affect*, and specifically the affect of command. (Nietzsche, *Good and Evil* par. 19; emphasis in original)

The multiplicity of the self that we explored in the first section of this essay is manifest here, as is the subordination of consciousness to the instinctual drives. Willing, on this explanation, is a complex combination of a plurality of affects, which folk psychology glosses over with the notion of a unitary conscious self that is issuing orders. What is really happening, though, on Nietzsche's reading, is that our (conscious) affect of command becomes attached to that drive or desire that wins out in the struggle for supremacy within our organism. In so doing, "I" ignore the fact that at the same time, other parts of my organism—other cells, other drives—are being forced to submit to that mastering drive; "I" identify only with the affect of command—and the feeling of power that comes along with it.

It is not of course out of the question that the affect of command could become attached to the "losing" instinctual drive; here we would have Nietzsche's explanation of the sense of "being overcome" by a particular passion—Aristotelian *akrasia* or the Pauline conflict of the heart. Precisely how the affect of command "becomes attached" to the particular drive that wins or loses out, however, is a different question, one we are not now in a position to answer. I believe Nietzsche would argue here, however, that it has something to do with the self-evisceration to which man subjects himself (and which finds its highest pitch of severity in the notion of sin as guilt before God) in order to fulfill his lust for cruelty, a lust that is stymied externally when primitive man first enters society (*Genealogy*, essay II pars. 16, 22; *Good and Evil* par. 76).

Thus, despite the rhetoric of "willing" that is virtually omnipresent in the earlier works, consciousness has become the terminal phenomenon here in the later works, not the controlling one: "The will no longer moves anything . . . it merely accompanies events; it can also be absent. The so-called *motive*: another

error. Merely a surface phenomenon of consciousness, something alongside the deed that is more likely to cover up the antecedents of the deeds than to represent them . . . There are no mental causes at all” (Nietzsche, *Twilight*, “The Four Great Errors” par. 3). Elsewhere Nietzsche writes, “Today we have taken [man’s] will away altogether, in the sense that we no longer admit the will as a faculty. The old word ‘will’ now serves only to denote a resultant, a kind of individual reaction, which follows necessarily upon a number of partly contradictory, partly harmonious stimuli: the will no longer ‘acts’ or ‘moves’” (*Antichrist* par. 14).¹²

Thus, even when we think that we, as conscious, willing beings, have overcome certain drives or affects, we are misinterpreting the situation. But if it is not the dominance of consciousness or some kind of existential subjectivity controlling or yoking together our desires, or drives, what is it? Nietzsche’s answer, as we have already hinted, is that our drives (or, to fall back on the overtly physiological language that he will occasionally use—as for instance at *Will to Power* par. 526—our very nervous system) *regulate themselves* through their competitive agon: “The will to overcome an affect is ultimately only the will of another, or of several other, affects” (Nietzsche, *Good and Evil* par. 117). In this political system, the more powerful drives command and the weaker drives obey: this is “a kind of aristocracy of ‘cells,’ in which dominion resides. To be sure, an aristocracy of equals, used to ruling jointly and understanding how to command” (Nietzsche, *Will to Power* par. 490). Ultimately, what we see in the case of the truly interesting individuals (for not everyone will, on this account, be a “person” in the rigorous sense), is that the “interaction and struggle” of these thousand “souls” or “cells” must yield, through this aristocratic agon, to a *single* dominating drive.

Bruce Detwiler provides a helpful gloss on this notion: “Order emerges out of instinctual anarchy only through this turbulent process of struggle, domination and subordination . . . self-overcoming is comprehensible either as hierarchy replacing instinctual anarchy or, perhaps, as a new hierarchy among the drives replacing an old one due to changing subliminal power relations” (47). He helpfully adds that it is only the exceptions who are able to accomplish this kind of self-creation: “When no ascendant hierarchy of drives is capable of ruling him from within, herd morality or some other guiding power must rule from without if one is to escape the chaos and turmoil of unrelenting instinctual anarchy” (47). Gemes, I think, would also concur with this analysis.

Now, we do not have to suppose that this happens entirely unconsciously: Nicholas Davey, for instance, has argued that instinctual processes can, in

fact, be organized at least partially *in* and *through* the interpretive work of consciousness, though not *by* consciousness ("Hermeneutic Theory" 275). What follows is one way to understand that claim.

Though the instincts may follow their own intentional or telic structures (cf. Gemes and Solomon on this point) for the most part under the radar of the conscious self, I see no reason why the unitary self cannot be effected, at least in part, through the medium *of* consciousness. Nietzsche argues that "the will to power is the primitive form of affect, [and] all other affects are only developments of it" (*Will to Power* par. 688, qtd. in Schacht 318). Consequently, all our drives and desires, as developments of will to power, are constantly struggling to increase their force, their power, their extension, at the cost of all others, but this does not imply a mere mechanism for him. Indeed, Nietzsche argues (in a Ricoeurian or Sartrean critique of psychoanalytic mechanism *avant le lettre*) that we cannot separate the energy of our drives from their intentionality: that would be "the misunderstanding of passion and reason, as if the latter were an independent entity and not rather a system of relations between various passions and desires; and *as if every passion did not possess its quantum of reason*" (Nietzsche, *Will to Power* par. 387; my emphasis). Consciousness, then, is a battleground for the drives just as much as the unconscious. We must simply avoid the mistake, Nietzsche argues, of claiming that consciousness has some kind of agency of its own (voluntaristic, willing) that enables it to incline toward one side or the other. The instincts drive everything, but we misunderstand them if we conceive of them merely as blind forces pushing against each other.

Finally, although Nietzsche's interpretation of life as "*essentially* appropriation, injury, overpowering of what is alien and weaker; suppression, hardness, imposition of one's own forms, incorporation and at least, at its mildest, exploitation" (*Beyond Good and Evil* par. 259) is open to question based on Nietzsche's own principle of perspectivism,¹³ it does have the advantage of self-referentially incorporating perspectivism within its own account, as well. Thus, inasmuch as life *is* corporeal will to power, it will always occupy only a particular embodied perspective, not an atemporal, universal one. Perspective is "the basic condition of all life" (Nietzsche, *Good and Evil*, preface). So, in the end, the conscious perspectives one takes, no less than the actions one performs, will (on this view) be nothing more than a function of the social ordering of the drives that are currently dominating one's organism: "Every drive is a kind of lust to rule; each one has its perspective that it would like to compel all the other drives to accept as a norm" (Nietzsche, *Will to Power* par. 481).¹⁴ The unity of our very intellectual and moral perspective on the

world, too, is therefore an order constructed from the warring of our multiple drives. This, I think, is the deeper meaning behind the notorious aphorism in par. 158 of *Beyond Good and Evil*: “To our strongest drive, the tyrant in us, not only our reason bows but also our conscience.”¹⁵

NOTES

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1. Cf. Nietzsche, *Will to Power* pars. 481–492, passim—much of which recurs in only slightly altered form in *Beyond Good and Evil*, particularly pars. 16–20—for a fuller accounting of the self as multiplicity. I should also stipulate at this point that I believe the only fair way to read *The Will to Power* is as a collection of hypotheticals or thought experiments, some of which (e.g., the cosmological version of the eternal recurrence) Nietzsche would abandon in the published works. Its importance lies chiefly, I think, in how it can be used to fill out our understanding of issues already present in works that (a) Nietzsche published or (b) he prepared for publication himself. In this instance, these notes clearly establish the methodology of the first section of *Beyond Good and Evil*, and thus can, I believe, be taken as at least a reasonable approximation of Nietzsche’s considered position on the subject.

2. I believe Rehberg is also correct in taking this as a methodological hypothesis rather than as a metaphysically unquestioned ground.

3. Nietzsche is not always hyperbolic. It is perfectly clear from this passage (as it is not in *The Will to Power*, where Nietzsche operates much less cautiously, as most of us are wont to do in our notebooks) that understanding the entire world as will to power is a carefully constructed hypothetical gesture: “Not to assume several kinds of causality until the experiment of making do with a single one has been pushed to its utmost limit (to the point of nonsense, if I may say so).” This hypothesis itself is based on Nietzsche’s assertion in *Beyond Good and Evil* par. 13 that “method . . . must be essentially economy of principles.”

The power of Heidegger’s claim that Nietzsche is the last of the metaphysicians—due to the ontologically foundational character of will to power—is thus problematized severely by Nietzsche’s own awareness that his methodologically achieved metanarrative can only be arrived at by pushing his empirical hypothesis “to the point of nonsense.” Panos Alexakos, following Deleuze and Nehamas, claims that we ought to understand the will to power as a “formal” rather than a “metaphysical” principle because it is “designed to subvert metaphysical interrogation as a whole” (115–116n16). It does not, he claims, “adduce a unifying structure to things that can only be known a priori; it does not postulate the existence of an immaterial (or material) essence, telos, or nature to things that can be known only by a spectral gaze” (104). We might, in Derridean fashion, describe the methodologically extended version of will to power of this reading as “quasi-metaphysical.”

4. Parkes quotes Nietzsche to this effect, claiming that “we are not aware of the drives directly, but only mediately, through ideas, images, and concepts” (275).

5. Parkes finds a full discourse of the drives at least as far back as *Daybreak* and other unpublished notes of 1881. I do not think he adequately establishes Nietzsche’s full reliance

on it prior to that point, and it is at least questionable to what extent Nietzsche effaces conscious agency even then (or later). Cf. Parkes chapter 8, 272–318, esp. 289–299.

6. Hume argues, in his *Treatise*, that we can have no notion of “substance” from or through the senses. Thus far, he is merely following Descartes’ rationalism (what we most truly know about the piece of wax—that it is a substance with certain properties—we know only through the mind). However, the empiricist in Hume forces him then to say that, since we cannot justify this concept with relation to our senses, we ought to dispense with it entirely. And since we do not know what “substance” might mean, apart from any idea derived from the senses, we a fortiori cannot know what an “incorporeal” or “mental” substance or *res cogitans* might be. So we ought to get rid of this chimera, too—or at least admit that it is, at most, a (somewhat) useful fiction. Thus the mirror of the two moves Nietzsche makes: dispense with the notion of substance, then dispense with the notion of self as soul-substance. Cf. Hume’s *Treatise*, I.4. 5, “Of the Immateriality of the Soul,” esp. paragraphs 1–10. Though I do not agree with many of his arguments, derived as they are almost solely from *The Will to Power*—specifically the logical indifference of Nietzsche’s *Willenspunktationen* and Leibniz’s monadology, Nicholas Davey does point out several of the similarities in Nietzsche’s position and Hume’s (“Nietzsche and Hume”).

7. There is a third factor as well, which I will designate the “moral” factor. Briefly, the argument is that, in order to posit free will, we have to have a unitary subject, not a multiple one. The subject is thus an effect of the psychological power play explored in *On The Genealogy of Morals*.

8. Cf. Husserl’s recognition in his *Logical Investigations* that there was only a logical (and hence, for him, not absolute), not a phenomenological, necessity in positing a unitary subject-pole behind its conscious acts. Elsewhere, Nietzsche goes even further than this. We have seen him deduce the “reason” for the ego in Aristotelian metaphysics. However, in other texts—e.g., in *Will to Power* par. 485 or, in a more sustained way, *Twilight*, “The Four Great Errors” par. 3, for example—he reverses the order of the deduction and finds that our concept of substance in general proceeds from that of the subject. In *Will to Power* par. 516, he claims that “*our belief in things* is the precondition of our belief in logic.”

9. This is an interesting point, as Nietzsche seems *prima facie* to be suggesting that we can have access to a prelinguistic stratum of experience if only we can free ourselves from the seductions of grammar. I believe a better way to understand this point, however, is to view this merely as an invitation to treat any and all language as suspect; a passage from around the same date in *The Will to Power* is helpful in clarifying here: “*We cease to think when we refuse to do so under the constraint of language*; we barely reach the doubt that sees this limitation as a limitation. *Rational thought is interpretation according to a scheme that we cannot throw off*” (Nietzsche, *Will to Power* par. 522; emphasis in original). On this reading, although we cannot get out of language altogether, we would at least have something like a metacritical awareness that any access we have to “reality” is always already mediated by the structures of language, and we would not therefore be tempted to view any given natural language as offering more than limited, perspectival access to things-in-themselves. Although this reading is closer to a hermeneutic account of reality, it does bear at least one interesting difficulty. If the methodological principle of treating the drives simply as “given” is to hold in anything more than a hypothetical way, we must accept either that they are not meaningful—that is, that they operate beneath the level of (language-informed) thought and meaning—or that they are not *purely* “given” (because mediated through language and thought).

10. Cf., for example, Miller's article which, though quite illuminating on Nietzsche's deconstruction of the self, suffers from this extreme over-reliance on the *Nachlass*, to the detriment of Nietzsche's claims in the published works. (Miller cites only *The Will to Power* and "On Truth and Lie" in this essay.) This leads to a simple valorization of the self as multiplicity, which is clearly contrary to the thrust of Nietzsche's writing, where a sense of achieved unity is recaptured after this deconstruction. These types of readings tend also to maintain a more metaphysical discourse of forces rather than the psychophysiological one of instincts, desires, drives, and affects on which Nietzsche relied in his published work. Indicative of this trend are comments such as this: "Will as force (the will to power) is the product of difference, of the differentiation of energies, as an electric current flows only if there is a difference of potential between two poles" (Miller 225). Though this is a fantastic gloss of Deleuze's *Nietzsche* (that is, more Deleuze than Nietzsche), it does leave something to be desired as a reading of Nietzsche.

11. I believe we ought to think here of what the early Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology might look like if we started with the multiplicity of the drives and affects, each one with the potential to access the motility of the entire body, rather than with the singularity of an organism's intentional arc.

12. This passage occupies an interesting position between Nietzsche's earlier works on selfhood, where he did occasionally seem to affirm the will as a faculty; his latter ones (1886–1888), where the will becomes this "resultant"; and *Ecce Homo*, where Nietzsche will suggest that we can somehow achieve a state of pure will-less-ness. I will explore this notion of will-less subjectivity further in a forthcoming essay on *Ecce Homo*.

13. He of course recognizes this. In discussing will to power, the very heart of his philosophy, he raises the objection to himself: "Supposing that this also is only interpretation—and you will be eager enough to make this objection?—well, so much the better" (Nietzsche, *Good and Evil* par. 22).

14. Cf. also *Will to Power* pars. 556 and 643, cited in Deleuze 53. In par. 643 we find this: "The will to power interprets." Cf. also *Will to Power* par. 677, where various world views (artistic, scientific, religious, moral) are all analyzed as "symptoms of a ruling drive" and *Genealogy*, essay II, pars. 12–15 on punishment.

15. The social structure that Nietzsche hints at here is described in much greater detail in *The Antichrist* (cf. particularly par. 57), Nietzsche's answer—in psychical as well as political terms, I would contend—to Plato's *Republic*. Socrates, as described in *The Birth of Tragedy*, is the most perfect example of an individual whose single dominating drive becomes reason itself, or "the system."

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