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Nietzsche and The Birth of Tragedy by Paul Raimond Daniels
(review)

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But this solution prompts a concern about Pippin's attempt to avoid philosophical theory. For even if one were to accept his reading of the passage, the position he is really repudiating looks like causalism, the view that actions are caused by antecedent mental states—a view neither necessitated by, nor exclusive to, naturalism. If this is correct, then it surely stretches plausibility to insist that this is psychology without theory in the sense that Pippin wants—or to claim that this is not the sort of thing we find in the work of, say, Donald Davidson.

Pippin thus presents us with three possible relationships between Nietzsche and the *moralistes*: (1) they are models for him in their honesty; (2) they are models for him in their writing style; or (3) they provide models for him in either the method or content of their psychology, a psychology that falls outside the traditional moral variety. The first two of these, I want to suggest, are probably true, but not of great use in understanding Nietzsche's psychology. The third claim, while certainly more substantial, seems to me a questionable one. It is unclear whether content or method can be given to a distinctly *moraliste* psychology that distinguishes it from traditional philosophical psychology; and if it can, whether this content ascribes to Nietzsche a position that can make good sense of some of his central ideas and interests.

Nevertheless, readers interested in Pippin's Nietzsche would be advised to consult both *NPPF* and *Interanimations*. The books dovetail well, and much of what we find in the latter complements the earlier work. *Interanimations* itself succeeds, on a number of occasions, in demonstrating nicely the value of historical scholarship to contemporary debate. Neither book, however, convinced this reader of the significance of *les moralistes* to understanding Nietzsche's psychology.

Paul Raimond Daniels, *Nietzsche and The Birth of Tragedy*.

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Paul Raimond Daniels's *Nietzsche and The Birth of Tragedy* is an engaging, instructive, and clearly written study of Nietzsche's first book. It is a particularly fine achievement given the difficulties, in terms of both style

and content, that Nietzsche's text presents to the reader. Daniels's aim is to present *BT* as an ideal introduction to Nietzsche's philosophy, and, in light of its problematizing of the relation between art and truth, to argue that *BT* is crucial for evaluating the aims, successes, and shortcomings of Nietzsche's later philosophy (ix, 2). Furthermore, Daniels presents an "affirmative" interpretation, arguing that *BT* champions a life-affirming worldview that finds its highest expression in ancient Greek artistic culture and tragedy. So a persistent concern of Daniels's book is to defend *BT* against a Schopenhauerian reading.

The book is divided into six chapters. The first chapter examines the various influences on *BT*, and the last chapter delivers an appraisal of *BT* and Nietzsche's later philosophy, assuming, as Daniels does, that Nietzsche's fundamental task in his later writings remains essentially the same as in *BT*. The middle four chapters follow the progression of *BT*, offering interpretations of Nietzsche's account of the birth and death of ancient Greek tragedy, and his hope for the rebirth of tragedy in modernity. Daniels's discussion is interspersed with informative commentaries on Greek gods and myths, individual artists, historians, and writers, and particular works of Greek tragedy and comedy that Nietzsche refers to, is influenced by, or the knowledge of which he presupposes in his reader. This feature of Daniels's text is especially beneficial for a newcomer to ancient Greek culture or to Nietzsche's philosophy in general, since it provides the context for the argument of *BT* and helps concretize some of its more esoteric claims.

Daniels traces Nietzsche's overcoming of Schopenhauer in *BT* to the way Nietzsche interprets *Anschauung*, or the intuitive apprehension of the world. This is a particularly innovative aspect of Daniels's argument, since according to some recent scholars it is precisely the emphasis on *Anschauung* that marks the similarity between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche (see Anthony Jensen, "The Centrality and Development of *Anschauung* in Nietzsche's Epistemology," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 43.2 [2012]: 326–41, and Béatrice Han-Pile, "Nietzsche's Metaphysics in *The Birth of Tragedy*," *European Journal of Philosophy* 14.3 [2007]: 373–404). I agree with Daniels's position on this issue. He argues that Schopenhauer's philosophy, despite emphasizing the primacy of the subject's preconceptual, intuitive understanding of the world, ultimately attempts to bring this intuitive interaction to the level of conceptual articulation and abstract knowledge (62). Nietzsche, in contrast, affirms the primacy of *Anschauung* by seeking an aesthetic or poetic expression of intuitive insights, whether he is presenting

the mythological figures of Apollo and Dionysus, their mutual struggle, or the intuition of tragic wisdom (63, 162, 186).

What does this difference really amount to? And why insist on an aesthetic expression? Daniels's interpretation of "On Truth and Lies in an Extra-moral Sense" (156–66) clarifies these issues and also helps to demystify Nietzsche's approach to *Anschauung* in *BT*. It establishes the following points: the intuitive experience of the world is of a metaphorical (aesthetic) nature, and is more fundamental than conceptual thought and language; concepts are worn-out metaphors, rigidified due to their repeated use, and therefore mostly stripped of the sensuous force that intuitions retain; and intuition is always of *this* world, not of the "Platonic Idea" of the object beyond the phenomenal world, as Schopenhauer thinks. (Daniels is not explicit about this last point, but it is implied by his valuable discussion of Jakob Burckhardt as historicizing and temporalizing the metaphysical primacy of *Anschauung* in Schopenhauer in anticipation of Nietzsche's views [22–29, 119–20].)

Given all this, intuition must be valued more than concepts, not primarily because it is "metaphorically closer to the original thing-in-itself" (as this criterion still presupposes the idea of truth as closeness to the thing-in-itself), but because of its "aesthetic richness" (160–61). The only appropriate commentary on the fundamentally intuitive-aesthetic experience of the world is therefore an aesthetic one, because, unlike conceptual representation, an aesthetic commentary does not pretend to be "true," but instead poetically edifies this experience, re-creating it anew (65, 161). By thus insisting on an aesthetic expression of *Anschauung*, one wonders whether the early Nietzsche has already taken a vital step toward questioning the distinction between thing-in-itself and appearance, which Schopenhauer still subscribes to in subjecting *Anschauung* to conceptual formulation. Regrettably, Daniels does not dwell on this question explicitly. But had he done so, it could have given his other main thesis—that the aesthetic confirmation of the primacy of *Anschauung* is essential for life-affirmation—a more substantial grounding. For arguably it is by explicitly rejecting the Kantian distinction in his later philosophy (from *GS* onward) that Nietzsche announces his philosophy of life-affirmation.

Nevertheless, Daniels draws a sharp distinction between intuition or aesthetic presentation and concepts based on their respective suitability for life-affirmation. The fundamental message of *BT* is that "for life to be affirmed it must be intuited in its entirety," and because this intuition is

aesthetic, not metaphysical, “*only* an aesthetic representation of life and experience” is capable of achieving life-affirmation (163). Only intuition allows the world to be apprehended as a (aesthetic) whole, while conceptual thought signifies opposition and division, whether between truth and illusion, as in Socratism, or between thing-in-itself and appearance or will and representation, as in Kant and Schopenhauer (157, 163–65). The latter two dichotomies are “degenerated skeletons” stripped of the “flesh of existence and experience” conveyed by the original symbiotic relationship between Apollo and Dionysus, which, although in mutual conflict, make up a unified aesthetic whole (163). For Daniels’s Nietzsche, then, Schopenhauer is the culmination of the Socratic tradition because his philosophy demonstrates the limitations of the conceptual from within. For although he celebrates aesthetic experience, he can do so only at the expense of renouncing life and willing, as he interprets this experience as the path to the will-less contemplation of the Platonic Idea of the object. Schopenhauer’s philosophy is thus ultimately a “conceptual formulation” of tragic wisdom (101–2, 157). Whether pessimism is expressed conceptually or aesthetically makes all the difference between a life-denying and a life-affirming attitude.

I agree with Daniels that the distinction between aesthetic presentation and conceptual representation is vital for understanding Nietzsche’s break with Schopenhauer. However, Daniels’s treatment of this distinction suggests an oppositional relationship that I believe is not found in Nietzsche. This is particularly problematic since Daniels uses his analysis to evaluate the success or failure not just of *BT*, but the entirety of Nietzsche’s philosophy. If Nietzsche’s goal in *BT* is to initiate a rebirth of tragedy in modernity, Daniels argues that it would succeed only if it “impart[s] an intuitive encounter with the Apolline and the Dionysiac drives as they manifest in art” (182). This requires that *BT* incorporate “an integrated relationship with art,” if it is not a work of art itself (182). For Daniels, *BT* fails in this task since it sketches only the “possibility of [the] aesthetic phenomenon” (182), and therefore presents its solution conceptually, not aesthetically. Indeed, it presents it in a Hegelian-dialectical fashion, insisting on the *necessity* of the rebirth of tragedy, through the self-negation of Socratic optimism and therewith the affirmation of the aesthetic ground of the conceptual (180–84). Thus, Nietzsche goes beyond Schopenhauer in the content of his philosophy, by retrieving a life-affirming function for the aesthetic, but, just like his mentor, he falls short when it comes to style and presentation (192). Furthermore, Daniels maintains that the task of Nietzsche’s later philosophy

is essentially the same as that of *BT*—namely, the aesthetic intuition of the whole and life-affirmation—and that it fails for similar reasons, since by engaging art “intellectually and hence not aesthetically or intuitively” it “does not reach past the limits of conceptual thinking” (197–98). Nietzsche’s notion of eternal recurrence “fails to bring to light tragic affirmation as the Greeks experienced it” (195), and his notion of the will to power remains “connected to the very metaphysics he is attempting to reject” (196). Daniels concludes that it is Rainer Maria Rilke’s poetry and occasionally Nietzsche’s own poems (particularly in *Z*) that meet the aesthetic challenge of *BT*, free from the “failings of modernity” and engaging the individual with the “aesthetic beauty becoming of a renewed Dionysiac existence” (198–200).

Daniels’s critique of Nietzsche’s later philosophy is brief and too simplistic, and it does not really engage with relevant secondary literature, although the claims he establishes here are important for the thesis of his book. In particular, Daniels does not consider that Nietzsche, beginning with his middle works, explicitly rethinks the significance of science and knowledge, both historically and in terms of his goal for the creation of new values, such that in *BGE* he can claim that genuine philosophers’ “knowing’ is *creating*, their creation is a legislation” (*BGE* 211). Simultaneously, Nietzsche undertakes a reappraisal of art (including music) and its will to deception from the perspective of the knower. Certainly, he continues to be critical of science, its will to truth, and its complicity with modern nihilism, and he continues to view art as essential for the creation of new values. But this only points to a more intricate relationship between conceptual thought (philosophy or science) and art than the simple oppositional one that Daniels suggests (180, 189). Furthermore, even at the time of *BT*’s publication, Nietzsche had already anticipated a more complicated relationship between philosophy, science, and art, as is evident from his unpublished notes. For instance, he defines philosophy as a “selective knowledge drive” (*KSA* 7:19[22]), and views its task as “mastering” knowledge so that it is in the “service of the best life” (*KSA* 7:19[5]). Therefore, there is no “appropriate category for philosophy”: like science, it employs “conceptual representation,” but it is also a form of “artistic invention” (*KSA* 7:19[62]) that is needed to master science (*KSA* 7:19[36]). In his early lectures and unpublished essays, Nietzsche employs this vision of philosophy to interpret the significance of both scientific thinking and artistic intuition for the life-justifying wisdom of the pre-Platonic “tragic” philosophers. The argument of “On Truth and Lies in an Extra-moral Sense” is consistent with

these views, or at least it does not contradict them. For, as Daniels rightly observes, that argument shows that both concepts and intuitions have an aesthetic foundation (160, 180). That foundation could allow conceptual thinking to be reclaimed as a means to the goal of life-affirmation, instead of remaining in binary opposition to intuition. Indeed, I believe that this is what Nietzsche does.

In *BT* itself, however, it appears that Nietzsche does oppose aesthetic intuitions to concepts. This is betrayed in his claim that it is *inevitable* that there will be a birth of a new tragic age with the self-refutation of Socratism, that is, with the uncovering of the “truth” that the belief that human reason can comprehend the true essence of things is a delusion. This way of theorizing about history presupposes that Socratism, in the context of late modernity, could not be sustained by other kinds of delusions than the purely metaphysical one—for instance, by a belief in social, political, or technological progress and the betterment of humanity—for the sake of which science may be employed as a means. But Socratism could be sustained in this way precisely *because* it is fueled by an aesthetic foundation. And, in any case, the claim that conceptual thought has an aesthetic basis does not by itself necessitate *BT*’s cyclical interpretation of history. Although Daniels recognizes that interpretation as problematic, the fault he finds is in Nietzsche’s inability to present his insights on Apollo, Dionysus, and the Socratic in an aesthetically appropriate manner (183, 192). Thus, Daniels makes it appear as if Nietzsche got the “content” right in *BT*, but failed only stylistically, and that to succeed in the latter is the ultimate challenge for his later philosophy. But Nietzsche got the content wrong as well. Hence, in his later writings, he radically revises the content (in addition to his style), particularly with respect to the relation between science, art, and philosophy, but also in relation to his interpretation of history.

Daniels acknowledges some of these transformations, including Nietzsche’s move away from a Hegelian-dialectical sense of history to a genealogical one, informed by his recognition that modernity is much more entrenched in the Socratic than he had previously supposed (192–94). Accordingly, the tragic must now be created and affirmed through the individual, rather than in the collective form it took in ancient Greece, leading Nietzsche to stop seeking a culturally universal image of affirmation (195–96, 200). To succeed in this, Daniels argues, one must “conjure an aesthetic image” of the individual and her world (200)—as Rilke’s and, occasionally, Nietzsche’s poetry does—instead of relying on the reader to have

already overcome the history of metaphysics and the limits of conceptual thought (197). I am not convinced, however, that the mature Nietzsche entirely abandons the cultural project, intending to engage the reader only personally and artistically. His genealogical and cultural critiques of modernity are vital aspects of the project of creating new values, and they do not have the merely “negative” or “destructive” function that Daniels suggests (194). Daniels’s purely “aesthetic” solution would make Nietzsche’s engagement with history and his philosophy in general (despite Daniels’s recognition of its valuable contributions [198, 206–8]), if not redundant, at least removed from the poetic practice of affirmation. So one is left wondering: why even bother with genealogical and philosophical critique? Why not simply write tragic poetry? Is Rilke’s poetry informed by or does it presuppose Nietzsche’s critique of history and modernity? What is it about Rilke’s poetry that addresses specifically the *modern* subject and the subject’s world? Daniels’s responses to such questions, insofar as he offers any, are not wholly convincing.

Despite these reservations, I highly recommend Daniels’s book. It gets the general argument of *BT* right (Nietzsche’s anti-Schopenhauerian aim to justify and affirm life), provides an innovative interpretation of *Anschauung* and the difference between aesthetic intuitions and concepts, and raises important and complex questions about the relationship between *BT* and Nietzsche’s later philosophy.

Matthew Tones, *Nietzsche, Tension, and the Tragic Disposition*.

New York: Lexington, 2014. xvii + 159 pp. ISBN: 978-0-7391-8771-7.

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In *Nietzsche, Tension, and the Tragic Disposition*, Matthew Tones undertakes an ambitious journey through Nietzsche’s writings, dealing with, among other things, Nietzsche’s notion of tragedy, his relation to ancient Greek thought, his naturalism, and the concept of nobility developed in *GM* and *BGE*. Tones thus gives a detailed and insightful reconstruction of Nietzsche’s philosophy. But this strength of the book is unfortunately also its limit. Tones highlights the complexities of the problems he discusses,