Continuity, constellation, and unworking: an exploration of language in Nietzsche

Alicen L. Beheler
DePaul University, abehler@depaul.edu

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CONTINUITY, CONSTELLATION, AND UNWORKING: AN EXPLORATION OF LANGUAGE IN NIETZSCHE

A Dissertation

Presented in

Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

June, 2014

BY

Ali Beheler

Department of Philosophy

College of Liberal Arts ad Social Sciences

DePaul University

Chicago, IL
For my mom
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Abbreviations


Translations of the German refer to: eKGW, Published Works, Die Geburt der Tragödie: http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/GT


Translations of the German refer to: eKGW, Posthumous Fragments, NF 1871, Gruppe 12: http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1871,12[Gruppe]


Translations of the German refer to: eKGW, Posthumous Writings, Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen:
http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/PHG


Citations of Nietzsche’s German are in reference to:

eKGW Digitale Kritische Gesamtausgabe Werke und Briefe [based on the critical text by G. Colli and M. Montinari, Berlin: de Gruyter 1967 ff.]
http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB
More specific locations for each text are listed in the above.
Introduction

The Question of the Relation Between Nietzsche’s Early and Late Work on Language

Background to the Project

This project explores elements of Nietzsche’s work on and with language. The particular form that this exploration takes must be prefaced by noting two elements: the interest from which the project emerges and the status of language in Nietzsche’s oeuvre.

The interest is one in writing, specifically, in the relation between writing and the self in Nietzsche’s later work, most notably his last published work, *Ecce Homo*, and the Prefaces to his works written in 1886. In these texts we seem to be faced with writing in two senses: in its gerundive sense, as the written text, constitutive of a work; and in its participial sense, as the act, performative of a certain work, which regards the self. The duality of the work of writing is called into relief here: it is that which is written, but also that which is performed in the implied act of writing. This participial sense, calling attention to the performance of a work in writing, is emphasized in Nietzsche’s relentless focus on the first person, or the narrative voice, and on the direct project of articulating the self, in these texts.

Nowhere are both features of the duality of writing so apparent as in these certain sections of the later texts of which ‘self-narrativizing’ seems to be an apt description, namely, in *Ecce Homo*, in which the titular work is both a work and a performance of a working in it, as the text comprises the narrator’s performance of
telling, through writing, himself, as well as the work or product that is thereby produced, and in the Prefaces in which we find the same features. We confront, in such texts, not only a resultant work but also the performance of a working through it.

But in my project, the issue of this work of writing in relation to the self does not obtain explicit attention until the final, fourth chapter, which is preceded by two chapters that take up the issue of language in Nietzsche’s oeuvre as a whole. Let me now explain the original logic of this structure.

The general significance of language to Nietzsche’s work is oft noted, and, as Alan Schrift points out, both Samuel IJssel and Michel Foucault suggest that Nietzsche engages in a “radical reflection” on language.\(^1\) What is this radical reflection on language that both thinkers suggest comprises Nietzsche’s work? In which texts is it found, and what clues do we use to locate it?

If we take up these questions regarding the import of language in Nietzsche’s work, and of how to recognize the signs whereby Nietzsche’s radical reflection on language is indicated, and hence ask in which texts we are to find those signs and this reflection, and we let them guide us in our entry into Nietzsche’s oeuvre, quite soon we come upon what I will call a surface curiosity. At least superficially, language seems to be one of those themes with regard to which there is a shift in Nietzsche’s corpus, a

\(^{1}\) Alan D. Schrift, “Language, Metaphor, Rhetoric: Nietzsche’s Deconstruction of Epistemology,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 23, no. 3 (July 1985): 371. Samuel IJssel claims that although language has never been one object among others in philosophy, Nietzsche is the first to connect his “radical reflection with a radical reflection on language” (Samuel IJssel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Conflict: An Historical Survey*, translated by Paul Dunphy [The Hague; Martinus Nijhoff, 1976], 106.) Echoing this sentiment, Foucault remarks that Nietzsche’s “radical reflection upon language” in part returns language to the field of thought in the modern age (Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* [New York; Random House, 1970], 305.)
possible disjuncture in its unity. Certainly, language is significant, and frequently emerges, across the Nietzschean texts. However, the early and late texts have striking differences as regards the treatment of language as a theme within them.

A number of texts from the 1870s, published texts as well as notes and other unpublished writings, treat language in a way that seems absent in the later work. These early texts consider language as an explicit philosophical issue, sometimes asking the question of what it is; often place language in developmental (what I will call “genetic”) schemas that attempt to describe the nature of reality or knowledge, whereby spoken language derives from or translates something else (physiological material, music, or a primal unity), and treat rhetorical figures of language, especially metaphor, as transcendent of merely linguistic status, as the basic form of all perception. In most cases in these early works, what seems emphasized is the derivative status of language, its separation from an implied origin that it copies or translates.

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2 Citations of the early works and notes of Friedrich Nietzsche that will be addressed in this Introduction, and in Part I, are from the following sources. Further information on the history of these works and notes can be found in notes 1 and 2 of the Introduction to Part I.


The Birth of Tragedy, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York; Random House, 1967);

The Philosopher, in Philosophy and Truth: Selections From Nietzsche’s Notebooks of the Early 1870’s, edited and translated by Daniel Breazeale (Amherst; Prometheus Books, 1979);


“On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense,” in Philosophy and Truth: Selections From Nietzsche’s Notebooks of the Early 1870’s, edited and translated by Daniel Breazeale (Amherst; Prometheus Books, 1979);


3 “Genetic” is simply meant to indicate the fact that these schemas trace the development from an origin. When referring to some of these passages, Schrift also uses this term. For such uses, see Schrift, “Language, Metaphor, Rhetoric: Nietzsche’s Deconstruction of Epistemology.”
While language is certainly mentioned in works and notes of the 1880s, and plays a role in the critiques of the period, the very term “language” seems to be accorded a less central status: it is less frequently explicitly thematized; gone are those genetic schemas in which it is depicted as one link in a chain that leads back to an origin; and gone is the explicitness of metaphor as a theme. When language is addressed explicitly, it is so most often in terms of claims regarding the various seductions of grammar and words attached to the critique of the Subject.

But IJsseling and Foucault’s similar suggestions about Nietzsche’s radical reflection on language raise a question when held together with this surface curiosity: If the whole of Nietzsche’s work represents a radical reflection on language, what is the significance of these differences in the treatment of language to the constitution of that reflection? Does the reflection on language that Nietzsche’s work is, in fact, split into distinct phases? In what sense is it “a” reflection?

It is, given these differences that I have just referred to as constituting a surface curiosity, no surprise that many readers of Nietzsche who address language in his work end up dealing with the very question of the relation between the treatment of language in the early and the late work. This was not always the case. As Schrift contends, for a long time, these differences seem not to have raised much sustained questioning, and it seems to have been standard to read the differences between the early and late work on language as a mere expression of Nietzsche’s turn away from philology.\(^4\) There was not really a pressing question here, not much curiosity raised, it

\(^4\) Ibid, 371.
seems, until later in the twentieth century. In the 1970s, perhaps in the wake of new publications and translations of early notes in addition to published texts, this question of how to figure the relationship between Nietzsche’s early and late work on language gained emphasis.\(^5\) Attributing the differences in the treatment of language to a break in Nietzsche’s identification with philology eventually became unsatisfying, and at the same time, a consideration of possible continuities despite surface differences emerged.\(^6\)

Notice, though, that whether or not the difference in the treatment of language across the work—this surface curiosity—is treated as easily explained by Nietzsche’s own turn away from explicitly philological interests, we nevertheless have the basic form of a certain question at work. Allowing this curiosity of the differences between the early and late work to give rise to a question, we find such a question oriented around terms connoting unity, specifically, those of “continuity” versus “break” in the Nietzschean corpus; and in many ways, this orientation seems to be a necessity.\(^7\)

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\(^5\) An important publication along these lines was a 1971 issue of *Poétique*, which contained the first translation into French of certain notes and course fragments from 1872-1875, including the first seven sections of Nietzsche’s 1874 lecture notes to a course on rhetoric, as well as Derrida’s “White Mythology” and Lacoue-Labarthe’s “The Detour,” the latter also published in that author’s *The Subject of Philosophy*. This was followed in 1983 by the first translation into English of those sections of the rhetoric course notes, and, in 1989, by the first publication in German of the last nine sections of that course. My mentioning of these sources is not meant to underplay the force of other publications at this time that impacted the reading of Nietzsche; my selection of texts here regards those dealing specifically with the issue of language and Nietzsche’s writings on language.

\(^6\) It should be noted that writing as late as 1985, Alan D. Schrift claims that “few [save Breazeale] have related Nietzsche’s early insights into the nature of language to the work of his so-called ‘mature’ period” (Schrift, “Language, Metaphor, Rhetoric: Nietzsche’s Deconstruction of Epistemology,” 371).

\(^7\) It might be that in writing this phrase, “Nietzsche’s treatment of language,” already, we raise the spectre of an actually fragmented body, one which casts the shadow of an autobiographical concern and reading over such a project. Perhaps the onus is on the use of the notion of a “corpus,” or of a “Nietzsche.” I am primarily interested neither in Nietzsche’s autobiography, nor in the question of phases of Nietzsche’s development. But rather than interrogate the assumptions invoked here, I follow them into the ensuing questions.
have been a number of readers of Nietzsche in the last few decades, interested in some element of his work on language, who have taken up precisely this form of the question: is the early and late work continuous or discontinuous with regard to language?

Although this question may seem to threaten to embroil us in a merely pedantic question of oeuvre or historical scholarship, as if the only issue were whether the oeuvre is continuous or discontinuous as regards one concept or theme, I think the stakes revealed in asking the question provoked here can be higher. I suggest that a consideration of this question can give rise to a new prospect, one which favors the image of the constellation when discussing Nietzsche’s work on language.

Figuring Language

I. From Continuity to Constellation

The very question of the relation between any two texts already sets an interpretive horizon, and impacts the readings that are made possible of those texts. An answered question as to their relation, if it is foregrounded, does much the same. We are forced to notice that, as it has been laid out above, even posing the question of potential continuity, and hence of potential discontinuity, between Nietzsche’s early and late works on language already impacts the way that we read, as the early work then forms part of the frame of reference within which we situate our reading of the later, and vice versa. So it seems that, no matter how this question of continuity might eventually be answered, there will already be an approach to Nietzsche’s texts that is
opened up by simply asking it. This approach consists in allowing for a view of language as a constellation, rather than a concept, which I will explain below.\(^8\)

As we have found above, one of the issues facing us regards how we are to proceed with language in Nietzsche’s work once we notice the alteration in the treatment of language across the work. If we are limited to looking for that which is signified by the one signifier, “language,” we seem only able to articulate discontinuities and differences between the early and late work. That is, unless we are to think of language in a different way, as other to a unitary concept marked by one signifier.

So much depends upon those concepts and phenomena that are regarded as related to language and that are thus brought into the discussion, for it is in observing consistency or alteration in the depiction or treatment of these concepts and phenomena related to “language” that a continuity or discontinuity can even be framed or established. In other words, the above question regarding unity of the oeuvre, captured in the terminology of “continuity” versus “discontinuity,” will prove to be a bit misleading, if not reductive, given that Nietzsche’s view of language is never in isolation from certain related concepts and phenomena that themselves might be better markers of transitions and continuities in his thought. It is an attention to these related concepts and phenomena that allows a second approach to language to be built, one in which we view language less as a discrete concept and more as a field or network of multiple concepts and phenomena, the discussion of which provides the content for

\(^8\) Adorno, borrowing from Benjamin, uses the term “constellation” in a few senses. I take up only one, described succinctly by Martin Jay as that of “a juxtaposed rather than integrated cluster of changing elements that resist reduction to a common denominator, essential core, or generative first principle” (Martin Jay, *Adorno*. [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984], 14-15). This sense is, in fact, suggested by the image of a constellation of stars.
interpretations of continuities and discontinuities in Nietzsche’s work. In this sense, language can be said to be constellational.

This term, the constellation, invokes Adorno’s many usages of the term. One of these, though not the only one, plays upon the image of networked stars. It is mainly this that I take from Adorno’s sense, and my usage of this term is not meant to invoke much beyond this image of an astronomical constellation. What we mean by ‘the constellation’ in the heavens is nothing other than the particular luminous stars, and, these stars seen as in an arrangement whose contours are set by the human perceiver (at least, the one who named the constellation and thus fixed the arrangement into a convention). This arrangement of luminous stars, or this seeing of these particular stars and of these stars in a network with the others, is what a constellation is: a grouping or arrangement of stars. We might give it a name, “Orion.” In saying “Orion,” we mean both aspects: the stars, and, their arrangement. “Orion” is neither the origin, nor the unity to which the arranged stars reduce. They, in their luminous standing out, constitute, or bring to appear, “Orion.”

This is the basic sense, or guiding image, with which we might approach language in Nietzsche. Language is not merely a unitary concept (though it certainly is this), but is also, as a matter of thought, that which is articulated through an arrangement of nodal points, illuminative points, yoked into a network, the network of which articulates what is meant by the name “language.” A nodal point would be an illuminating point—a theme, concept, or phenomenon whose own articulation serves to
articulate, in part, the constellational whole. I mean simply that “language” is a term used for a configuration of nodal points in which none is the determining center, but in which each taken, yoked, together, as that yoking, articulates the whole. What I mean to emphasize in using this image of the constellation is the possible alternating or shifting of the constitutive nodal points. Using this image of a constellation, we can then consider language as the *matter* that becomes articulated, in part, through how “language,” the specific signifier, is refracted by and through the interrelation of a set of nodal points. These nodal points involved in the refraction, articulation, of language constitute the constellation of language at a given time, and thus, the constitution of the constellation can change as the nodal points alter, displace, and replace one another within the whole.

But notice that this means that the signified of “language” is itself continually altering. It remains the same, even as its constitution changes over time, like the time of the year, in relation to which different astronomical elements emerge and disappear from view—there is the summer and winter Orion, the southern and northern hemispherical Orion. These nodal points involved in the refraction of language constitute the constellation of language at a given time, but they alternate, displace, and hide, and thus the constellation itself changes over Nietzsche’s career, given the alteration, displacement, and replacement of these nodal points.

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9 Of course, even these nodal points might reveal their own constitutive constellations—that is the thing about concepts, and our perceptions of what we name “stars,” their analysis can reveal comprising multiplicities.
10 We might equally use a spatial metaphor, that of shifting terrain within a region of thought.
So my claim here is twofold. Language should be understood as that which is articulated by a number of concepts and phenomena, and not simply that which is described in ahistorical immediacy by the signifier “language.” Second, these constitutive concepts and phenomena alter and displace one another over time, such that there is no unitary or unchanging constellation itself. The constellation is its own unworking. Language is then a unity of relations which are themselves unworked.

Approaching Secondary Readings Through the Question of Continuity: A Summary of Trends

I have suggested above that we are able to espy a different way of framing the question of what language itself is, considering language as a constellation rather than a concept, because language is always addressed within the context of an articulation of other concepts and phenomena, be these origin, truth, physiology, the Subject, or the self. Language is thus always stretched out into a network of interrelated concepts and phenomena. Thus, if we are to ask about language itself, we will need not only to look for the isolated signifier “language,” but to look for these connections, for these concepts and phenomena that are related to and associated with that signifier, for their disappearance and alteration over time. If language is the constellation, then the task becomes tracing the constellation through which language appears at given junctures, as well as tracing the shifts in the constellation over time.

In the remainder of the Introduction, I will, first, summarize the dominant trends in the secondary literature, as I see them, in answering that question of continuity versus break in Nietzsche’s treatment of language. Then, I want to show how these
readings actually provide us reason and means to revise the very prejudice that gave rise to this motivating question—the prejudice that language is a unitary concept, and treated as the same unity across the corpus. This exercise will thus serve two goals: provision of a summary of trends in the secondary literature, and, demonstration of the emergence of my desire to treat language otherwise than as a unitary concept in Nietzsche’s work.

I do not intend this treatment of the secondary sources to be exhaustive, only enough to trace the outlines of what I have called above “dominant trends.” We focus on readers who provide possible answers to the question of the relation between the early and later work on language, even if this is not the explicit frame of their discussion. In attending to how readers address this question of the relation between the treatment of language in the early and later works, we will find another possible view of language emerging, one made possible by attending to the related phenomena that help to illuminate what is at stake in language for Nietzsche. Noting them helps us to more extensively figure what language is for Nietzsche, and hence, in what this radical reflection consists. My suggestion is that in surveying this literature, we can already see the issue of “continuity” being altered into a problematic best articulated in terms of constellation.

So, first, we will follow this question of whether the early and late works are continuous or discontinuous in their treatment of language. In those sources that explicitly address this question of the relation between the early and later work on language, there seem to be three major tendencies toward answering this question: 1)
reading the later work as a rejection and correction of the treatment of language in the earlier work, hence a reading of discontinuity (exemplified by Clark in Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy); 2) reading a kind of ‘mitigated’ discontinuity through the corpus on language (exemplified by both Kofman in Nietzsche and Metaphor, and Lacoue-Labarthe in The Subject of Philosophy); 3) reading a strong continuity throughout (exemplified by Schrift in Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation, and Klein in Nietzsche and the Promise of Philosophy). After we do this work of attending to the readings of the question of continuity, highlighting the concepts and themes that are involved in making arguments for these readings, we will be able to circle back and build up elements of a constellation of language that has been implied throughout.

1) Discontinuity

The first tendency is to read the later work as a rejection and correction of the earlier work on language, hence, as discontinuous with it. This tendency is perhaps best represented by Maudemarie Clark in Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy.\(^{11}\)

Clark’s theme is Nietzsche’s view of truth, not language, but the treatment of language plays a significant role here. Her text is oriented around a dispute in the scholarship on how to treat Nietzsche’s apparently contradictory position on truth, shown in the fact that Nietzsche denies truth while also making assertions, including those regarding the will to power, eternal recurrence, the ascetic ideal, and other elements of his critiques, that seem to require some admission of truth for their

acceptance. Clark argues that the diminished relative explicit attention given to 
language in the later work indicates Nietzsche’s rejection of his early view of language, 
based on its connection to a version of truth he would later revise.

Situating her position between that of Heidegger, who is said to hold that 
Nietzsche is contradictory on this count due to his continuation of a metaphysical 
position, and the ‘new Nietzscheans,’ who are said to claim that there is no 
contradiction given that the features of ‘doctrine’ mentioned above are meant not as 
‘truths’ but as interpretations, she argues that a reconciliation of the sides of the 
contradiction requires acknowledging a development in Nietzsche’s work and a denial of 
his earlier view of truth in the later work. She claims that the early Nietzsche held a 
metaphysical view that also depended on a representational theory of knowing, while 
the later Nietzsche rejects both elements from his thinking. The absence of denials of 
truth in the later Nietzsche demonstrates that he in fact rejected the denial of truth by 
the time of the later work, as such denials actually grow out of the ascetic ideal and 
imply a correspondence view of truth. She suggests that the later emphasis on 
affirmation, and perspectivism, does not require a denial of truth, and demonstrates 
that Nietzsche can deny metaphysical views of truth while also affirming the existence 
of truth.

While the argument, and text, focuses on truth, language is an intimate part of 
the discussion. Clark’s main chapter on Nietzsche’s early views of truth deals almost 
exclusively with OTL and passages in which his discussion of the impossibility of, or 
illusory nature of, truth includes reference to language. Clark’s main argument here is
that Nietzsche does not derive his early critique of truth from an observation about language, as some thinkers claim, but rather from an observation about perception. His position here is that because human perception is always of representations created by human imagination out of nerve stimuli, and not of ‘extra-mental’ entities, it is not possible to access such entities as they are in themselves, apart from this work of translation. Language, creating further signs by which to refer to those representations, is a further development out of this originary physiological situation. Hence Nietzsche here implicitly considers truth to be correspondence between representations and things-in-themselves, which is impossible, given the representational nature of all perception. Thus there is a metaphysical presumption at the heart of his critique: that reality is independent of human beings given this representational nature of perception, and, language is only a second-level mirroring of the situation of perception, ever out of contact with things-in-themselves. OTL’s denial of truth thus depends upon a metaphysical correspondence theory of truth.

Clark argues that this metaphysical presumption is in tension with Nietzsche’s later project of revaluation, which requires some workable notion of truth to ground its own reading of the ‘falsity’ of the ascetic ideal as true. Hence, the early work involving language, tied as it is to the claim that truth is an impossibility, is abandoned to make way for true claims in the later critiques. We note this abandonment after BGE, when perspectivism, which makes justification contextual rather than dependent upon reference to decontextualized foundational knowledge of an object, provides Nietzsche an alternative to a representational model of knowing. Such an alternative allows him to
deny metaphysical truth while affirming the existence of a pragmatic notion of truth that builds on his later “respect for facts, the senses, and science.”\textsuperscript{12} This development is critical for Nietzsche’s critique of Christian morality to gain traction, and to resist the contradiction in which the earlier view of language would land it: that of asserting as true a view of Christian morality and the ascetic ideal that cannot in fact be true.

In her view, then, the view of language in the early work is later abandoned, making this early work not incredibly significant to the mature Nietzsche’s views. So, this first tendency holds the corpus to be 	extit{discontinuous} as regards the treatment of language.

2) \textit{Mitigated Discontinuity}

The second tendency is to read what could be called a mitigated discontinuity through the corpus. Here Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Sarah Kofman seem exemplary.

\textbf{Lacoue-Labarthe}

Lacoue-Labarthe is classed as a figure of mitigated discontinuity because he suggests that there is a major change in the corpus as regards language, but one which occurs within this 1870s work itself, namely, in Nietzsche’s turn to rhetoric after \textit{The Birth of Tragedy}.

In the second chapter of \textit{The Subject of Philosophy}, titled “The Detour,” Lacoue-Labarthe considers Nietzsche’s early interest in language in the 1870s after \textit{BT}.\textsuperscript{13} He

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 105.

calls this an interest in rhetoric, and he gives it the name of a ‘detour,’ suggesting that Nietzsche’s treatment of language passes from an early focus on music through a rhetorical ‘detour’ that changed the theory of language and of tragedy that he had already employed in BT.\textsuperscript{14} The encounter with rhetoric, which he calls ‘accidental’ and ‘a discovery,’ changed the theory of language and of tragedy that he already had in BT, which the romantic tradition informed.\textsuperscript{15}

What comprises the detour? It is really a detachment from origins. Lacoue-Labarthe claims that the depiction of music in BT had maintained a focus on origins, as herein music was said to be the expression of an originary Dionysian vision, and an expression which language itself would go on to copy. The priority of music to language was thereby maintained, and “language was always conceived on the basis of its musical essence and the analysis of music was always governed by the dream of, by the desire and the nostalgia for, proximity, immediacy, and presence—even the divine. . .”\textsuperscript{16}

Rhetoric eradicated the possibility of retrieving an origin anterior to the transpositions involved in language, as rhetoric introduced the sense that the turning or transposing of

\textsuperscript{14} Lacoue-Labarthe believes that readers have not always noted this great interruption that a rhetorical view of language introduces into the previous view of language as derived from music, right here in the early 1870s, and that usually they have thought that The Philosopher is a reprisal of BT, with an added interest in rhetoric that is treated mostly as a terminological change.

\textsuperscript{15} The detour allegedly emerged from Nietzsche’s reading of Volkmann’s \textit{Systematic Exposition of Greek and Roman Rhetoric} and Gerber’s \textit{Language as Art}; Lacoue-Labarthe claims that before this Nietzsche had not been “particularly aware of rhetoric as such,” and that Nietzsche’s reading of Gerber began to reorient the claims Nietzsche had already made about language in BT (Lacoue-Labarthe, “The Detour,” 16).

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 27.
language could not be experienced as the repetition of an original, but as always already implicated in any giving of appearances. This usurpation of music’s position occurs because rhetoric makes everything tropological, a turn behind which there is no “origin,” whereas music had been considered the “copy” of the will, hence a link to the origin. Thus any attempt to suggest an original to the rhetorical turn would itself be implicated in the rhetorical turn of all language, with the turn having always already usurped its own origin in its very appearance. It seems that the introduction of rhetoric reveals the very notion of an origin of music as itself a rhetorical myth. Thus, the BT depiction of language is subverted: the theory of language put forth therein falls apart when rhetoric enters the scene, because “it tends to eliminate music and take its place.”  

Lacoue-Labarthe suggests that we might be inclined to read the musical view of language in BT as prefatory to the later rhetorical view, if not for a certain ambiguity in the terms used to describe music, specifically, that of symbol. Even when Nietzsche presents the idea of an insurmountable and originary representation, the idea of a possible reduction of symbolic distance continues to dominate all his analyses of language: “... [I]n all the work carried out on tragedy, that is, on music, this ambiguity was never dispelled.” 18 But with rhetoric, it was no longer possible to turn an originarity (either music or myth) back against philosophy.

17 Ibid.
18 Ibid., 29.
Kofman

In *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, Sarah Kofman focuses her claim regarding the disjuncture between the early and late work in Nietzsche on the specific theme of metaphor, noting the disappearance of its explicit treatment as a philosophical issue in the later work.\(^{19}\) Her view is that there is a disjuncture in Nietzsche’s work regarding the approach to metaphor, and that Nietzsche’s work moves from early direct theoretical thematization of metaphor to heightened incorporation of metaphor as a means of strategy, use, and style in the later work. She claims that Nietzsche takes this second approach to metaphor because metaphor as a concept reinstates a metaphysical view that Nietzsche was trying to counter. This metaphysical view within which the concept of metaphor works can be seen in noting that the traditional conceptions of metaphor as figure, as transfer, renders it always as distanced from the proper, or the origin, because it implies the view that there is a ground already undergirding metaphor’s movement away *from* it. Metaphor as an explicit conceptual theme can never escape these metaphysical vestiges of the origin.\(^{20}\)

Thus, Kofman argues that Nietzsche abandons the earlier explicit treatment of metaphor as a philosophical theme, but does not abandon metaphor itself; an interest in metaphor is retained, but one of the order of *use* rather than explicit investigation or *content*. While the early work treats metaphor as a philosophical theme and employs it


as a model for conceptual analysis, the later work takes it up as a rhetorical tool utilized in the construction of the written form of the work. Later Nietzsche, rather than take up metaphor directly, instead intensifies a strategic use of metaphor, as a matter of style. In Kofmans’ view, this difference may lend the appearance of a devaluation of metaphor to the later work, but it should be noted that the devaluation is only as regards its treatment as a theme, not as regards its utilization in philosophical work.

Other readers of mitigated discontinuity: Crawford

While The Beginnings of Nietzsche’s Theory of Language is a detailed, genealogical reading of Nietzsche’s earliest work on language and its sources, Claudia Crawford’s Preface provides an overview of Nietzsche’s theory of language across his career. 21 Her overview here helps contribute to the constellation view of language in that she identifies six areas of Nietzsche’s theory of language, which largely follow a temporal trajectory. Crawford’s view is that the early theory of language sets many of the terms of all of Nietzsche’s philosophy, though his approach to language receives depth and new insights and directions across his career.

While the essay OTL is often cited as a point of departure for Nietzsche’s theory of language, Crawford believes that this text represents ideas that had occupied Nietzsche’s thought for years, given the influence of Schopenhauer, Lange, Hartmann, Gerber, and Kant. Major ideas of Gerber’s Die Sprache als Kunst are taken over in OTL and the rhetoric course notes, but her research shows that the influence of Gerber was

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in providing a new means of expressing ideas Nietzsche had already been developing through the influence of Kant, Schopenhauer, Lange, and Hartmann. She believes that this period in which Nietzsche thinks about language in terms of rhetoric is not the beginning but moreso the midpoint of this theory of language.\textsuperscript{22}

In Crawford’s view, OTL shows a view of the unconscious and instinctual origin of language that makes community possible. The essay demonstrates that the origins and process of language do not “reside in community,” but that conscious use of language is itself based on “unconscious instinctual activities of individual human beings.”\textsuperscript{23} OTL’s schema\textsuperscript{24} shows an unconscious physiological origin of language, out of which then grow “consciousness, community, the pathos of truth, and science” as “weakened processes.”\textsuperscript{25} Conscious language provides only the metaphor of a metaphor, an idea found also in Gerber, while the individual has a unique language of his or her own in images, and it is these which the conscious language of the community uses. This is what we find in the beginning theory of language, the “artistic nature of the unconscious metaphorical production of language.”\textsuperscript{26}

Crawford also suggests, in regard to music, that music becomes a ‘paradigm’ against which to measure language, in 1870. Nietzsche explores the distinctions between various unconscious and conscious languages in “On Music and Words,”

\textsuperscript{22} “Gerber offered Nietzsche a new metaphor, that of rhetoric, for a body of ideas concerning language which Nietzsche already had in place by 1871” (Crawford, The Beginnings of Nietzsche’s Theory of Language, x). We might wonder whether this claim is really plausible.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{24} To be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, by this “schema” I mean to refer to the fourth through sixth paragraphs of OTL in which Nietzsche depicts the series of metaphors resulting in concepts.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.
among other texts from this time. The language of thoughts and concepts consists in
unconscious feeling transferred into conscious representations. Music is privileged
throughout Nietzsche, and Crawford finds a ranking of languages that remains constant:
“music first, then gesture, and finally the word and conceptuality.” 27

*GM* introduces another phase of Nietzsche’s thinking of language, one in which
genealogy plays a central role and language is depicted in the context of force: “Thus,
Nietzsche’s thinking about language turns from an interest in its origins and manner of
unconscious production to a concern with the effects of language change upon humans
and cultures.” 28 The works of Nietzsche’s last productive year introduce yet another
phase in which Nietzsche is interested in the conscious willing and use of the
unconscious forces of language. More stress is laid on the power of each instance of
language use as “an instance of value and action,” and “language becomes a dynamic
instance of interpretation and valuing,” not in the sense of an individual subject who
performs the interpreting, but “in a creative sense where the speaking and writing itself
is the new value force embodied.” 29 Language no longer names, but creates. The
critique of grammar depends on this distinction between “language as the reportage of
a ‘subject’ and language as actually creating being.” 30

3) **Strong Continuity**

There is a third tendency, which might be obvious from the foregoing: it might
be called strong continuity. Readers who find strong continuity explicitly position

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27 Ibid., xii.
28 Ibid., xiii.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
themselves as reading against the assumption that the early unpublished work on
language is abandoned by Nietzsche or by the later work, or that the later work
represents a significant departure in Nietzsche’s thinking of language. These readers
claim that attention to these early texts can in fact provide important insights into
Nietzsche’s later work, and that, more important than appearances of surface
discontinuities, there are consistent underlying conceptual interests demonstrated by
Nietzsche’s treatment of language throughout all of his works. While some details of
how Nietzsche figures or frames language might change, the conceptual interests to
which language is wedded do not; and in fact, understanding of later conceptual
interests can be seriously, often requisitely, deepened by noting their connection with
and provenance in the early work on language. Notable here are Wayne Klein and Alan
Schrift.

Schrift

Alan D. Schrift, in *Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation*, calls into
question the presumption of the ‘disappearance’ of language in Nietzsche’s later work.31
While in the later work, Nietzsche may no longer refer to the various translations of
consciousness as metaphorical, there is a continuity in the corpus regarding not only the
treatment of language but also the presence of the theme of language.

What Schrift finds uniting the early and later work is a view that critiques of
previous philosophy ought to concentrate on ‘grammatical blunders,’ or the positions to

which philosophers are committed because of certain views of language, as we see in Nietzsche’s claim that philosophical articles of faith are often derived from a linguistic situation. As well, some of the themes that dominate all of Nietzsche’s work—such as a rejection of traditional epistemology and a correspondence theory of truth, an attention to the process of becoming—focus on the phenomenon of language all the way through the work. While Nietzsche abandons a ‘strictly rhetorical’ epistemology—one primarily referencing rhetorical figures like metaphor and trope—he yet continues to focus on words and grammar and their contribution to epistemological views and illusions. Thus, he is ever “linguistically dismantl[ing]” various illusory philosophical constructions, an inextricable part of the later task of transvaluation.\(^{32}\)

\(^{32}\) We should note a few ways in which Schrift’s reading of language in Nietzsche is in conflict with Clark’s reading of discontinuity. In Schrift’s reading of OTL, he claims that the schema involving language in the text is a critique of the representational nature of language and the correspondence theory of truth on which the former depends. This is in direct contrast to Clark’s assertion that the view of language in OTL comprises an expression of agreement with such views. Contra Clark here, Schrift claims that it is not the case that Nietzsche must implicitly assume a correspondence theory of knowing in order to create the argument in the essay, but rather, that the essay presents a critique of such a view on its own terms: if truth is taken to mean correspondence, then it is not possible on the very terms of that position, given what the analysis asserts. Schrift is not committed, then, to the idea that this was a view Nietzsche also shared, as Clark is.

Further, Schrift, unlike Clark, reads OTL with the rhetoric course in mind, a connection that makes an amount of difference. By making this connection, he is able to read OTL as presenting the tropological view of language described in the course. Further, he notices the role of tropes in describing perception in “The Philosopher.” And because he links these three early works, it seems that he escapes Clark’s claim that language is only secondary in this essay. The linguistic trope of metaphor is shown to actually extend beyond language, to constitute a form of creation that humans employ even in perception. This essay shows that perception is metaphorical and rhetorical, too, and that we cannot escape from those nets.

For Schrift, then, the project in OTL is one of critique. Nietzsche is not lamenting the impossibility of correspondence, but showing its impossibility as that which must be acknowledged. This kind of ‘demystification’ of pretensions forms a link with all of Nietzsche’s work, in Schrift’s view. Schrift also disagrees with Clark that later Nietzsche claims a kind of truth, and thus must deny his earlier claims. He refers to passages in which will to power, eternal recurrence, and Übermensch are called interpretations or metaphors, and finds such moments to be reaffirmations of points made in that early text. It seems that by bringing three of these early texts together—the rhetoric course, OTL, and “The Philosopher”—Schrift is able to find a continuity from the early to late work, rather than a discontinuity.
Klein argues that Nietzsche’s early unpublished work on rhetoric and language in the 1870s is in continuity with much of Nietzsche’s later work, and that noting this underscores that language is an important concern in the entire corpus and is a key to approaching issues in Nietzsche interpretation.  

The heart of Klein’s argument is attention to the sections in *OTL* and the rhetoric course notes that deal with the tropological nature of language. He reads together the passages in the essay detailing the transfers from nerve stimulus to image to word to concept and the course notes section dealing with the three major tropes. Klein’s argument is that Nietzsche does not, in these sections of *OTL*, merely demonstrate the impossibility of achievement of the ideal of a correspondence theory of truth—he is not simply claiming that our access to things as they are in themselves is made impossible. Rather, Klein argues, in agreement with Schrift, that Nietzsche herein questions the very correspondence notion of truth. Nietzsche’s attention to the tropological nature of sensation, language, conceptuality, and causation in general, has the effect of calling into question the very possibility of something like correspondence, as tropes call into question the possibility of a retrievable origin.

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Again, as with Schrift’s reading, we can see in Klein’s not only an implicit contrast with Clark’s reading, but an explicit one. Klein suggests that much scholarship has agreed with Clark’s view that the earlier work is misguided and adds little to our understanding of Nietzsche’s later work, citing Nehamas and Rorty here as two who agree (212). He contends that the 1870s work on language is consistent with the later work, and that the way to see this is to engage the notion of truth from within a broader perspective than that from within which Clark, Nehamas, and Rorty approach it. He believes that the central problematic in these early texts is the relation of language to truth, which Clark also noted, but Klein claims that there is actually a radical reinterpretation of truth already at work here. He attempts to bear this out with a reading of *OTL* and notes from the rhetoric course.
But this is not to deny the possibility of truth. Rather, this opens the door to reconceiving truth itself. The new conception of truth is that of ‘shining truth,’ or truth contained in appearance, where appearance is not thought of as the opposite of reality. This is the crux of Klein’s argument against readings such as Clark’s, for he insists that in continuing to pose appearance as the oppositional other to reality, we remain trapped in that metaphysical belief in opposites. Appearance should not be thought of as the opposite of reality. Thus all those moments in which Nietzsche claims that artists give appearance ‘again’ do not suggest an appearance that is oppositional to reality, but one which constitutes it. Klein’s notion of Nietzsche’s reinterpretation of truth as ‘shining truth’ captures this sense of appearance as shine (building on the German Schein).

Klein argues that this is a reinterpretation of truth that started all the way back in the 1870s, when Nietzsche questioned the possibility of correspondence with the real in OTL, and emphasized the materiality of language in the rhetoric course. There is no alteration in his view of language and truth, then, in the later work, but rather the same working with a reinterpreted truth as appearance.

Other readers of strong continuity: Gilman et al.

While the bulk of Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language is translations of early notes, the brief introduction provides an explicit discussion of the treatment of language within them.34

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34 Sander L. Gilman, Carole Blair, and David J. Parent, Introduction to Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language, (New York: Oxford, 1989), ix-xxvii. As the editors explain herein, this 1989 text presented for the first time the complete lecture course notes on rhetoric in both German and English, based on the manuscript in the Goethe-Schiller Archive. The first seven sections of these course notes had been
First, they argue that both the third section of the rhetoric course notes and OTL present an early version of perspectivism, given the significance of partiality in both. Both describe the presentation of partial views, and the course notes suggest that the partiality expressed in rhetoric is based on that already in language, which is based on that already in consciousness. The content of consciousness, itself imperfect copies of things, is already a kind of language, in the form of partial images that are signs, not things themselves. These images represent the impulses grasped by consciousness, and natural language is an extension of these images. Rhetoric, then, is a refinement of this quality already existing in natural language. From Nietzsche’s claim that language is the material of perception and experience, the editors suggest that the partial perceptions of consciousness, found in impulses, are already language, even before the kind of language that is “the result of audible rhetorical arts.” The editors imply that there is a language prior to the use of words, that human language in the “full blown” sense is simply the translation into a partial view that signifies the language of consciousness.

Language’s perspectival nature is demonstrated in a further way, though, as the editor’s find when they seem to import the specific point made in this third section of the rhetoric course back into the view expressed in OTL. This is the point that all words and signs are tropes, their tropic nature making them not only partial, but transferable and reversible. This allows words and signs to ‘turn,’ to be transferred synecdochally,

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published in German in the Kroner (1912) and Musarion (1922) editions of Nietzsche’s work, and translated into French by Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe and into English by Blair. In addition to the complete series of rhetoric course notes, this text also includes the following shorter unpublished essays which had never appeared before in English and which were translated from the Musarion edition of German works: “On the Origin of Language,” “On the Poet,” and “On Rhythm.”

metonymically, and metaphorically, away from the nature of things. These uses
become part of the conventions of language use, and because of this, the knowledge
they present is further made imperfect. The authors suggest that this view of language
connects to the later work

This view of language anchors the ethical and epistemological
perspectivism advocated by Nietzsche, as well as its connection to the
will to power. Because our ethics and knowledge are grounded in
language use, they always are partial; there are no absolute truths, for
our experience and knowledge are linguistically based.36

After establishing that perspectives are linguistically based interpretations, the
editors connect this to will to power, which they argue is a straightforward connection.
Rhetoric plays a mediating role, and is the way that will to power gains mastery over a
thing by interpreting it (building on the WTP 643 claim that to interpret a thing is to gain
mastery over it). Thus, in advancing his perspectival interpretation of language,
Nietzsche achieves mastery over language. The use of rhetoric, then, while not allowing
more truth, nevertheless allows for “a higher degree of power or mastery over
concepts.”37

The editors express the hesitation that their reading of continuity from the
perspectival nature of language indicated in the rhetoric course and OTL to
interpretation and will to power in the later work deserves more inquiry: “Whether or
not Nietzsche’s early and late works can be so intimately intertextualized is certainly an
issue that qualifies these speculations and one that deserves more inquiry than is

36 Ibid., xiv.
37 Ibid., xvi.
possible here.”\textsuperscript{38} But they argue that the early concentration on language and rhetoric makes us more attentive to those concepts as they appear in the later writing.

\textbf{Working Constellationality from the Question of Continuity}

Even from a cursory glance over the summaries of these sources, it is clear that these readings show us not merely several ways of answering the question of whether Nietzsche’s work on language is continuous or discontinuous. They also serve to call our attention to, in the overlap of the concepts and phenomena that are repeated between them in discussing language, something like a constellational view of language, wherein we are attentive to these related concepts and phenomena and their alteration over time. Let me then, very cursorily, sketch out the several potential nodes comprising the constellation of language at any given time that the above readings call to our attention.

\textbf{Truth}

In a number of the secondary readings considered above, the explicit argument about the continuity versus discontinuity of language in the corpus is related to an argument about Nietzsche’s thinking of truth. For Clark, in fact, the major discontinuity traced is that of Nietzsche’s view of truth: in the early work, Nietzsche employs a correspondence view, while in the later, a pragmatic view. For Klein, Nietzsche’s work with language is always involved in his reinterpretation of truth from a standard correspondence view, of which he claims Nietzsche was always critical, to what he calls ‘shining’ truth, a non-metaphysical view that aligns truth with a non-representational

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
notion of appearance. The opposed views that these two thinkers take on Nietzsche’s approach to language—Clark holding that the early view was abandoned, Klein holding that the early view remains throughout the corpus—rely significantly on the arguments these thinkers make about Nietzsche’s conception of truth.

**Origin**

The discussions of rhetoric, truth, and origins are mutually implicative. For example, in describing Nietzsche’s rhetorical detour, Lacoue-Labarthe notes that the detour makes the obtainment of origins impossible. In her claim that Nietzsche abandons investigation into metaphor for stylistic use of metaphor, Kofman links the impetus of this abandonment to Nietzsche’s disavowal of the metaphysical tinges of origin, and ground, implied in traditional views of metaphor as *trans-fer* or *trans-lation*.

**Physiology and Perception**

Klein, Schrift, and Gilman, et al., not only note an emphasis on physiology shared by both the early and late work, but also connect the treatments of physiology to issues related to language.

**Interpretation and Perspectivism**

Crawford suggests that later Nietzsche uses a new thinking of language as interpretation, and Kofman suggests that metaphor, throughout the corpus, is a model of interpretation. Schrift claims that in the later work interpretation and will to power reassert points in the early work arguing against a correspondence version of truth. Gilman, et al. and IJsseling find perspectivism and interpretation to be closely
interrelated concepts that, while explicitly mentioned more in the later work, are yet central concerns in the early work as well, and closely related to Nietzsche’s treatment of language. The close connection between interpretation and perspectivism to will to power shows for all these thinkers the continuity between Nietzsche’s early work on language and his later work on these concepts.

The Work of Critique

Schrift’s reading finds a commonality across the corpus in that though Nietzsche abandons explicit treatment of figures of language, he yet focuses on words and grammar in the later work, indicating their contributions to epistemological illusions, a focus also found in the epistemology critique one can read in the early essay OTL.

The Use of Language

Kofman’s reading calls our attention to the distinction between direct claims and performance, through her focus on Nietzsche’s transition from work on to use of metaphor, the ways that Nietzsche may be using, rather than directly analyzing, language.

II. Unworking Unities

To say that language is constellational is to already open the door to unworking. By “unworking,” I mean only the most general sense that this term has, as a contrast to Aufhebung, resolution into a higher unity without remainder; I mean it as a disruption
that prevents resolution into a unity.\textsuperscript{39} The constellational view on language is already on the path to unworking in that this view displaces the unity of language onto a number of points that themselves change over time, that are not reducible to one another.\textsuperscript{40}

Interestingly, what we find is that Nietzsche’s discussions and uses of the concepts in the constellations of language, regardless of which ones they are, are involved in the unworking of a presumed unity, showing it not to be a unity—the elements within the constellation of language are so frequently employed to unwork not simply language itself, but other presumed unities. Thus, language is not only constellational, but the site of unworking. I will point out in the course of my readings that, even in the midst of finding the constellation of language at a given juncture, we can also find the nodes of the constellation involved in the unworking of some presumed unity.

**Outline of the Project**

Emerging from this background, let me give a brief summary of the structure of the project.

\textsuperscript{39} The use of the term “unworking” can have a much more nuanced and rich set of meanings, as, for example, when used as a translation of Blanchot’s notion of “désœuvrement.” As an example, see Simon Critchley, *Very Little, Almost Nothing: Death, Philosophy, Literature* (London: Routledge, 1997), Lecture 2. My usage here does not pretend to engage all of the complexities that are possible.

\textsuperscript{40} This notion of unworking, in fact, can be seen as a certain extension to the limit of the constellational nature of language—of the fact that the constellation of language is changing across the Nietzschean corpus. Is that not, in fact, the demonstration of the unworking of the presumed unity of “language,” whereby the unity of language is unworked in its refraction across the various nodal points, throughout the corpus?
Part I, comprising Chapters 1 and 2, works within the finding that in Nietzsche’s early work—texts and notes from the early 1870s—there is not a unified depiction of language, but there appear to be two kinds of account of language proffered. I will frame my treatment of language in Nietzsche’s early work around this basic distinction between two accounts of language, genetic accounts and expressive accounts. Chapter 1 treats the former; Chapter 2 treats the latter.41

In Part II, comprising Chapters 3 and 4, the issue of the changing constellation of language meets up with another issue that at first seems largely relegated to the later work, the relation between the critique of the Subject and the narrative self in the later texts.42

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41 A more extensive introduction to Part I is found in the following section.
42 A more extensive introduction to Part II is found prior to Chapter 3.
Part I
Introduction to Part I

Language in the Early Work

In the first two chapters, I want to work from the ground up in a certain way, to approach the texts looking for what they offer in terms of thinking about language for Nietzsche. Already, as indicated in the previous chapter, this approach presupposes both the question of whether there is reason to find a unitary approach to language within this early work, and the sense that part of answering that question will involve unearthing the concepts and themes that serve as part of the constellation of language.

So we begin, noting that, in Nietzsche’s early work, language is not infrequently an explicit theme, whether this be language in general, words in particular, or uses of language ranging from the lyrical to the rhetorical to the figurative.

Now, the above might seem a somewhat controversial claim. The popularity of *OTL* as a reference point for Nietzsche’s early work on language is clearly demonstrated in the secondary literature, given its presentation of a genealogy of sorts of words. Because *BT* is, foremost it would seem, a work on tragedy, or, according to 1886’s Preface, a work on scientific culture through the vantagepoint of art, it might seem strange to treat *BT* primarily in terms of the view of language that it expresses.

It is, further, easy to get the impression that *OTL* represents a turning away from *BT*, turning away from the priority given to music and the metaphysical overtones therein, such that the focus on language in *OTL* seems even further a mark of distinction from the latter text. This is supported by appeal to those unpublished notes written
around the time of OTL’s composition for an undelivered course on Ancient rhetoric. This course makes the claim that all language is rhetorical, which seems to shore up the claim in OTL that words are metaphors, and concepts metaphors of metaphors.

Yet, BT does contain a discussion of language, as words, as the Apollinian translation of a Dionysian exposure, especially in its account of the lyric poet. When we read BT with the unpublished notes written just prior to the composition of BT, we find therein that the unitary phenomenon of Dionysus-Apollo is maintained by the unitary phenomenon of music-words. Despite the surface differences, there is reason, then, to read BT for a view of language, and, to ask the question of whether and how that view is different from that of OTL.

It seems that we could say, then, that Nietzsche has two distinct accounts of language in the early work, that the later one in OTL is a rhetorical account of language, and that the earlier one in BT, if there even is one, is dominated by the depiction of music and the metaphysical conception within which music itself seems to be articulated.

I will frame my treatment of language in Nietzsche’s early work around this basic distinction between two accounts of language that I find therein, which I will call genetic accounts and expressive accounts. Chapter 1 will treat the former, Chapter 2 will treat the latter.

The Initial Grouping: Genetic and Expressive Accounts

The genetic accounts are found in the texts “On Truth and Lies in an Nonmoral Sense,” in notes of 1872 posthumously published as The Philosopher, and in lecture
notes from a course on rhetoric in 1874. The genetic accounts initially seem to dispel a view oriented around an origin, as they place all aspects of human experience within a series of translations outside of which access to an original is denied. These discussions of language involve genetic schemas of development, thusly named because they depict the emergence of language, or of words, from within the context of a developmental process that comprises various stages of human experience, extending from physiological stimulation, to mental images involved in perception, to spoken words as names for perceptions, to concept formation. In these accounts, words emerge as one stage in this process. Further, the logic of development between all stages is not necessary, but is based on a contingent relation that Nietzsche calls “metaphor”: the connection between the stages of development is itself a translation, metaphor, or general representation of the material of experience which has already undergone prior translations beginning at the physiological level. Thus it is suggested that there is already a kind of language prior to the emergence of spoken language: spoken language translates, creatively re-presents in an arbitrary rather than necessary fashion, but never for the first time, always following prior translative work that has occurred,

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1 A few words regarding these texts and their sources: As Daniel Breazeale explains in *Philosophy and Truth: Selections From Nietzsche’s Notebooks of the Early 1870’s*, *The Philosopher* refers to unpublished notes from summer, fall, and winter 1872, intended as the “theoretical” companion to *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* in Nietzsche’s planned but abandoned *The Philosopher’s Book*. “On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense,” composed in 1873, was begun as the introduction to *The Philosopher’s Book*, and while it was unpublished in Nietzsche’s lifetime, a clean copy was prepared. This and further information on these two texts can be found in *Philosophy and Truth: Selections From Nietzsche’s Notebooks of the Early 1870’s*, edited and translated by Daniel Breazeale (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1979). The lecture notes for a course on rhetoric come likely from a proposed but undelivered 1874 course at Basel on Ancient Rhetoric. For more on the history of these notes, see Carole Blair, “Nietzsche’s Lecture Notes on Rhetoric: A Translation,” in *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 16, no. 2 (1983). References to these texts of Nietzsche’s, unless otherwise indicated, come from the sources cited in this footnote.
unconsciously, at the physiological level, and that is followed by further works of translation that result in abstraction or conceptualization.

The **expressive accounts**, such as those found in *The Birth of Tragedy*, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, and notes later published as “On Music and Words,” describe language in terms of its origin in what Nietzsche will later call an aesthetics of existence. The expressive accounts of language do not take their grounding from a figure of language itself—that of translation or metaphor—but take their grounding from a posited “original,” this original being the tragic vision, which is referred to sometimes as “Urgrund” and sometimes as “Ur-eine,” that is said to be at the heart of Greek tragic culture and to be that out of which language is developed. This background aesthetics utilizes the figure of the Dionysian and of tragic knowledge that Nietzsche contends was available to the ancient Greeks, and is one in which music is privileged as an expression of the Dionysian. Language is described in these accounts in its relation to music, and hence, in its relation to tragic knowledge. Thus the expressive accounts invoke the trope of origin:copy, by privileging an origin—the *Urgrund*, tragic vision, or

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music—out of which language is a development, on the order of a copy in relation to its original.³

The Issues to Be Pursued in Reading these Accounts

Reading the texts in which we find these two accounts, and asking the question of continuity, provides an understanding of Nietzsche’s work on language that may suggest the constellationality of language, but that also suggests the significance of unworking. In asking whether and how the two accounts are continuous, we end up isolating themes and phenomena that might form part of the constellation of language. It may be the case that we find the very initial grouping into two ‘separate’ accounts overturning itself, or, there may be reason to retain this grouping. We can lay out some initial questions that will emerge.

The first has to do with the rhetoric of translation, art, and the central trope of metaphor used in the genetic accounts. Does this announce a turn away from the chronologically earlier expressive accounts, as a reader such as Lacoue-Labarthe suggests?⁴ Because the genetic process described by these accounts is one guided by “translations” or alterations, they interrupt the connection at all levels of human experience to something like “untranslated” truth and knowing of that which is “outside” the human. Hence these accounts are part of the general critique of the related epistemological concepts of essence, truth, and knowledge, engaging Nietzsche’s critique of Western epistemology and notions of scientific and philosophical

³ In one way, the differences between these two accounts of language may beg the question of continuity even here within the early work. In asking whether and how the two accounts are continuous, we end up isolating themes and phenomena (or, nodes) that might form part of the constellation of language.
⁴ See Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, “The Detour.”
truth by depicting language as an aesthetic creation rather than what such epistemology understands language to be, an innocent and transparent technical apparatus for the delivery of what is.

Yet, the critique of epistemology found in these accounts of language owes itself to what we might call an aestheticization, a hermeneuticization, and a rhetoricization of all levels of experience. This occurs when figures of language—translation and metaphor—are taken not as symbols but as names for the work involved in various levels of mediated human experience. Language itself consists in such a translation or metaphorization of the elements of apperception: all language is figurative, all language involves Übertragungen, carryings over, translations, but so is all physiological experience, all apperception, and all conceptualization, because they all involve this very work of translation.

This means that all language, and physiological experience, and conceptualization, is constituted by developments not symbolized by but of the very character of the ‘linguistic’ phenomena of translation and metaphor. Thus we find in these accounts not only the view that language as a particular development of humans is artful translation, but the view that the specific, artful work of language—the figures of translation and metaphor—is the appropriate representation of the products of the power expressing itself through all stages of human development, whether we are
dealing with physiology, apperception/self-awareness, language proper, or conceptuality, and by extension, science.\(^5\)

Now, in what ways is this aesthetics of existence continuous with the aesthetics of existence expressed in the earlier expressive accounts? The initial elements of those expressive accounts that seem to provide ground for a discontinuity here are the role of music and metaphysics. Nietzsche repeatedly calls what he sets out in the first few sections of *BT* an aesthetical or artist’s metaphysics. Not only this, his account, as he later notes in the 1886 *Attempt at a Self-Criticism*, is populated by references to the metaphysics of Schopenhauer. And the language of “primal ground,” “primal unity,” “heart of the world,” and “world will” [*Urgrund and Ur-eine*] traverses the depiction of music and language herein. The centrality of music in these “expressive” accounts, and the metaphysical implications of their descriptions, raise the question of how such stark differences in the context of accounting for the same phenomenon, language, can be squared even in what we call the early work. Are they in tension or agreement in their accounts of language? What do these very different contexts tell us about Nietzsche’s early view of language?

\(^5\) Nietzsche herein implies that it is out of a failure to acknowledge this aesthetic constitution, the ever-translated and translating work of physiology, language, and concept-formation at the heart of the scientific view, that is the force of the critique here. Modern, scientific culture is blind to, and must be blind to, the myth, the aesthetic vision, that enables it. Nietzsche’s depiction of language in “On the Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense” is one way of expressing that critique. Thus, the genetic accounts of language present Nietzsche’s early critique of modern scientific culture *in nuce*. This means that what these genetic accounts of language amount to is a demonstration of the persistence of the aesthetic at the root or heart of the scientific culture of modernity. And in this sense, these accounts of language mirror Nietzsche’s early criticism of modernity in *BT*, for the scientific culture, birthed by Socrates, spelled the death of myth for that culture on the face of it. But this departure of myth only seemed to be the case, for scientific culture remained blind to the very myth, and thus the aesthetic view, on which it was based—the myth of truth itself.
On the other hand, is it the case that placing language within a process that begins with a Dionysian vision consists in critiquing language itself for the failure to achieve what the genetic accounts also mark, through use of translation and metaphor: presentation of its ground, without remainder or difference? In such a process, language fails to present directly the Dionysian visions that were the fount of myth in tragic culture. This failure to achieve a self-grounding seems to be an element of both accounts: a failure to capture truth or what is, in the genetic accounts; or to capture Urgrund, in the expressive accounts. Is there a difference in the relation of the author to those failures? While Nietzsche seems to work with this criticism in the genetic accounts, he seems worried about it in the latter.

This gets us closer to a third issue, namely, that both accounts rely on a valence of language that neither one seems to acknowledge: in both, there is a rhetorical and performative valence that seems not to be mined by Nietzsche, or at least, not accounted for. Thus I will suggest that what links both accounts, despite their differences, is an attachment to origin that can sometimes cause the view of language to carry a sense of lamentation; and, an unaccounted rhetorical and performative dimension of the works themselves.

Finally, following from the last point, and as mentioned in the Introduction, I will also be pointing out those moments of “unworking,” cases in which we seem to be faced with a demonstration of the failure, irresolution, or ambiguity as regards a presumed unity.
Chapter 1


Introduction

In the unpublished writings of the 1870s, many sections discussing language involve what can be called the genetic schema, which locates the development of language, or of words, within a process that extends from physiological stimulation to concept formation, and within which the means of procedure is given the name of “metaphor.” Such a schema that combines the physiological/perceptual and the rhetorical in a discussion of language is found in OTL, and in notes composed around the same time for a course on Ancient Rhetoric from 1872/74. In these schemas, language is depicted as emerging within the context of perception. Yet, in OTL, we find that this genetic schema, locating language’s emergence from out of perception, is already itself plaited with rhetoric and linguistic form, as metaphor [Übertragung and Metapher] is the name given to the means whereby this developmental process takes place. The Rhetoric Course’s section on the tropological nature of all language seems especially relevant given this plaiting, and thus the notes on rhetoric deepen the sense of what is at stake in this valence of rhetoric in OTL. Further, other unpublished notes from around the same period use the notion of metaphor and translation to describe physiological

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1 Alan D. Schrift also refers to the “genetic” nature of such presentations. See Schrift, “Language, Metaphor, Rhetoric.”
2 As Carol Blair indicates, most scholars hold the date of composition of these notes to be 1874, following the Kroner and Musarion editors, though Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy suggest 1872. See RC, 94.
processes. In echoing the view from *OTL* that words are metaphors of physiological occurrences, these notes promise to shed light on the relationship between physiology and rhetoric implied in these schemas. Because the notes for the rhetoric course serve to foreground most of these issues, I will begin there.

**Ancient Rhetoric Course**

In my reading of the 1872/1874 notes for a course on ancient rhetoric, I want to draw out Nietzsche’s unworking of a series of oppositions regarding language—persuasive versus true language, artful versus natural language—which centers on a genetic depiction of language which itself unworks the applicability of the opposition of origin and copy.

The third section of these notes, titled “The Relation of the Rhetorical to Language,” is of particular interest for this question of Nietzsche’s early view of language. This is the section of these course notes that is most often discussed in literature, for it contains Nietzsche’s own claims about language, namely, the view that all language is rhetorical. But in order to gather the full force of what is meant by such a claim, Nietzsche has to clarify what he means by rhetorical, and this is done in part by returning to ancient conceptions of rhetoric. In the first two sections of these notes, Nietzsche provides a recapitulative overview of ancient views of rhetoric. In the third section, the reinvigorated ancient view of rhetoric becomes a tool for re-conceiving all language, in a genetic account, as rhetorical. This reconception offers an extension of the epistemology critique that we will find at work in *OTL.*
Because the work Nietzsche performs in the third section is informed by his findings in the first two, I will begin by recapitulating only those elements in the first two sections that provide the force and context for Nietzsche’s claim in the third that all language is rhetorical. The important points gathered from the first two sections regard the ancient view of rhetoric as a power of persuasion, and the binary opposition of persuasion versus truth in language, within which rhetoric is classified as persuasion, starting with Plato.

**The Historical Priority of the Value of Persuasion Over That of Truth**

Taking us back to the ancient view of rhetoric, Nietzsche tells us that while rhetoric is held in some disrepute in modern times, it is frequently held in high regard in ancient Greek and Roman societies, in which “it is the highest spiritual activity of the well-educated political man” whose education culminates in this art. Nietzsche suggests that this difference is due to the fact that, in ancient Western societies, there was a “need of men for forensic eloquence,” due to a political structure in which “one must be accustomed to tolerating the most unusual opinions and points of view and even to take a certain pleasure in their counterplay.” In even the earliest sources Nietzsche cites here, rhetoric is considered a skill in, power of, or craft of persuasion (*peithein*). *(RC, 97)*

The development of this art in ancient societies as the means of public competition of viewpoints by either various parties, as in Greece, or party leaders, as in Rome, testifies not only to the need of those societies and their political structures for public eloquence, but also indicates their lack of another need central to modern Western culture, the need for truth: “Generally speaking, the feeling for what is true in
itself is much more developed [in modern times]: rhetoric arises among a people who still live in mythic images and who have not yet experienced the unqualified need of historical accuracy: they would rather be persuaded than instructed.\(^3\) Thus, given the need for public eloquence in the presentation of issues and positions, and in the absence of the need for historical accuracy that is concomitant with a valuing of the “true in itself,” Nietzsche indicates that this valuing of rhetoric as the power to persuade to a view, without the sense that it involves untruth, is historically prior to the valuing of truth and the placement of rhetoric in binary opposition to truth. (RC, 97)

The opposition between rhetoric and truth emerges out of this historical context, and we see it in philosophy’s self-articulation beginning with Plato. Nietzsche notes that Plato already makes the distinction between two arts of speaking, distinguishing true speaking from deceptive speaking. The art of speaking that contains deception is said to be rhetorical and mythical, aiming toward inspiring an opinion: “The mythic component in the dialogues is the rhetorical: the myth has the probable for its content, and therefore not the aim of instruction, but one of inspiring a doxa [opinion] in one’s audience, thus to peithein [persuade]. . . .” As such, it is a matter of “outward grace,” subordinated to flattery. The art of speaking that contains truth and is a matter of knowledge and teaching cannot take written or rhetorical form, because “. . . truth

\(^3\) Nietzsche references Kant’s writing on rhetoric and poetry from the *Critique of Judgment*, when the former writes that “[r]hetoric is the art of transacting a serious business of the understanding as if it were a free play of the imagination . . . the orator announces a serious business, and for the purpose of entertaining his audience conducts it as if it were a mere play with ideas . . .” Nietzsche summarizes that this characterizes “what is unique to Hellenistic life . . . to perceive all matters of the intellect, of life’s seriousness, of necessities, even of danger, as play” (RC, 97). In the sense that free play of the imagination indicates the engagement of mind as if it were moving toward a concept, without actually culminating in the grasp of a concept, rhetoric engages the mind as does art. It conducts matters of the understanding as if they were matters of art, or, it conducts matters of the understanding in the way that art does.
can be articulated neither in a written nor in a rhetorical form.” But writing and rhetorical language might be used as tools, like a ladder kicked away after climbed, for Plato ultimately “holds rhetoric to be legitimate when it rests upon philosophical education, and provided it is used for good aims, i.e., those of philosophy.” Myth and rhetoric are thus forms of deceptive speaking that are justified by philosophical ends only when used by a person of philosophical training. With Plato, rhetoric’s persuasive power is now considered a matter of persuasion toward a doxa, which is, in contrast to truth, always partial; and linked to a concern for the external appearance of the speaking. Hence rhetoric gains a veneer of deception. (RC, 99-100)

Aristotle continues the distinction between rhetoric and knowledge, claiming that rhetoric is neither episteme nor techne, but a power or ability of persuasion, and adds that this power regards “all available means” of persuasion.4 In Nietzsche’s view, we find that in Aristotle the rhetorical still regards that notion of viewpoint or opinion, but in full opposition to truth—Aristotle’s account makes a distinction between philosophy, on one hand, which treats matters with regard to truth, and dialectic and rhetoric, on the other, both of which “can be comprehended as the art of being victorious in discourse and conversation,” treating matters with regard to the opinion of the interlocutor.5 After having touched on Plato and Aristotle, Nietzsche leads into

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4 Rhetoric, for Aristotle, “… is the power (faculty, ability), about each thing to observe all possible means of persuasion … thus it is neither episteme … nor techne … but dunamis, which, however, could be elevated to a techne” (RC, 100). This power is the ability tou theoresei, to observe/contemplate, and in this sense see or calculate, all available means of persuasion about each thing.

5 We see this distinction between philosophy and rhetoric emerge in other ways that Nietzsche traces. Knowing the means of persuasion is sufficient for seeing the means of persuasion. Nietzsche says that this means the speaking is not essential to this dunamis, but rather, the focus shifts to this seeing/calculation: one knows and thus sees, in the sense of inventing, what is persuasive in a given case, and it is
further developments with the claim that “[n]ow come centuries of embittered struggles in the schools of the rhetoricians and philosophers.” (RC, 100-101)

While there is much more to be said about the ancients in relation to rhetoric, I want only to emphasize the parts of the ancient view that Nietzsche will work with or against in the next section when he attempts to claim that all language is rhetorical. In what we have considered above, Nietzsche has emphasized that in emergent conceptions of and surrounding rhetoric in both non-Platonic and Platonic characterizations, we find that peithein, the persuasive, is central: it is at least considered the goal of the art or craft or knowledge constituting rhetoric—it is a craft, art, or knowledge of persuading. But, what is the sense of this “persuading”? Nietzsche has, perhaps unfortunately, not provided any description of what persuasion itself consists in, but we can build this out in considering his references. In those prior to any distinction to truth, rhetoric was a standard part of a political sphere involving the communication of competing views; with Plato, as truth emerges as a contrast, rhetoric involves the communication of doxa, again with the connotation of view. It seems that the sense of persuasion here involves a sense of the force of movement toward a view on something. In the absence of a strong social imperative toward the true, the goal of

“contained” Nietzsche says, or implied, that what is thus seen is seen through the lens of its being to be presented. Nietzsche says of this here that “Aristotle . . . views the rhetorical as one finds it in books”: elements of “delivery” are not essential, including speaking. While Aristotle attended only to invention in his definition of rhetoric (in the tou theoresai), the Stoics after him attempt to find a place for eloquence, culminating perhaps in Quintilian’s definition that “[r]hetoric is the science of correct conception, arrangement and utterance, coupled with a retentive memory and a dignified delivery” (RC, 102). Added to this is the limitation of the matters to political affairs, “so as to exclude philosophical investigations as well as those of the special branches of learning” and instead to regard “those concepts, found in all human beings, which are concerned with what is good, right, and beautiful, and for which special instruction is not necessary... common knowledge as opposed to a special study or skill” (RC, 102).
speaking is in this sense of moving toward the view presented in one’s speaking. Persuading is speaking so as to present and move the hearer toward a position that mirrors the point of view being presented, compelling, through one’s presentation, to the view presented, and Plato’s doxa repeats that notion of point of view, given doxa’s connotations of how things appear to one. What is historically prior is the value of this peithein, the compelling or moving; the power to be good at this agon is distinguished, starting with Plato, from either seeing, grasping, or instructing about the true, and thus, from true speech.

It is also noteworthy that, for Plato, with the emergence of the value of truth, non-truth speaking—rhetoric and myth—is compatible with writing, while truth-speaking is not. Thus, on the side of the pithanon, persuasion, compulsion, we have rhetoric, writing, doxa. This is the side of the one among many, the agon between the many sides, the attempt to pull over to one doxa, a way of appearing. On the contrary side is truth, knowledge (episteme), ideas, and essence, with their connotations of unity and subsumption of the manifold of appearances within the unitary forms.

The Entry of Language: Section III—The Relation of the Rhetorical to Language

Drawing from the Ancients, in the first two sections of the course notes considered thus far, Nietzsche has highlighted two elements: first, the originary sense of rhetoric as peithein/pithanon, persuasion in the sense of moving toward a view; second, the later ancient distinction between rhetoric/persuasion and truth.

In the third section of the course, “The Relation of the Rhetorical to Language,” we find the first appearance of “language” (Sprache), and Nietzsche’s main claim of his
own, that all language is rhetorical. But part of what is required here is to understand just what Nietzsche means by rhetorical, and we see that this section continues to lay out the sense of rhetoric by drawing on the earlier points.

This general claim that all language is rhetorical is demonstrated through the three organizing points of the remainder of this third section of the course notes: 1) All language conveys doxa rather than knowledge (*episteme*); 2) All words are tropes; 3) All language is figurative (there is no proper vs. improper, or literal vs. figurative, distinction in language).

**The First Organizing Point: All Language Conveys [Übertragung]**

*Doxa Rather than Episteme*

This first should immediately call to mind Plato’s view of rhetoric as conveying *doxa* rather than the *episteme* conveyed by its other, truthful language. Nietzsche is thus collapsing the distinction between rhetoric and “other” language, by placing all language on one side of this binary opposition: all language is rhetoric, on Plato’s own terms, because all language conveys *doxa* rather than *episteme*. There is a denial implied here—that language could convey *episteme*, could be “truthful” in that Platonic sense—as well as an assertion, that what all language does convey is *doxa*. How does Nietzsche set about demonstrating this reworking of Plato’s opposition?

He begins, interestingly enough, by introducing yet another binary opposition within which rhetoric is opposed to an “other” kind of language—the binary opposition favored by modern thinkers. In modern Western culture, the distinction taken to characterize rhetoric is no longer persuasion versus truth, but artifice/unnaturalness
versus naturalness of language. While Plato introduced the binary opposition of rhetoric and truth, the moderns introduce the binary opposition of rhetoric versus nature. In this section, Nietzsche will claim that the possibility of the second element in both oppositions, either natural language or truthful language, is an impossibility, or rather, simply the other element in the opposition masquerading as other to itself.

Nietzsche thus begins this section laying out the new opposition within which the moderns place rhetoric: artful versus natural language. He goes on to critique this modern distinction by showing that the natural is actually conventional, and that the presumed ‘natural’ form of language—writing—is actually unnatural.

The Artful-Natural Opposition and its Deconstruction

Nietzsche contends that we moderns use the term “rhetorical” about written texts, or their styles or authors, to criticize their conscious use of artistic as opposed to natural language: “We call an author, a book, or a style ‘rhetorical’ when we observe a conscious application of artistic means (Kunstmittel) of speaking; it always implies a gentle reproof. We consider it to be not natural (naturlich), and as producing the impression of being done purposefully.” The contrast between true speech and persuasive speech has been replaced with the contrast between natural speech and unnatural, artful speech; the contrast between philosophy and rhetoric has been superseded by the contrast between language as an outgrowth of nature and language as artifice.⁶ (RC, 106)

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⁶ This gets at Nietzsche’s claim herein that moderns see the ancients as rhetorical in the sense of artificial because they are “unrefined speech empiricists,” meaning, they assume a correspondence between
Nietzsche critiques this modern view, however, first, because this conception of the “rhetorical” uses the concept of the natural to obscure the element of culture involved in the establishment of linguistic conventions. Because “very much depends on the taste of the one who passes judgment and upon what he prefers to call ‘natural’,” it is the perception or lack of perception of what strikes one as natural in an author, book, or style, that is at work in determining whether something is or is not deemed rhetorical. But how do we get such determinations of what is natural or unnatural? Nietzsche indicates that our sense of what is natural in language is itself only a matter of convention, of social habitus in the reception of literature.

The example used to illustrate this view is that of the modern opinion that ancient literature is rhetorical. Ancient prose was, for reasons discussed above, modeled on public speech, as “an echo of public speech and built upon its laws,” and hence perceived through the ear. Modern prose, due to the advent of publication and the widespread dispersal of its productions, is tied to the written form, perceived through the act of reading, not hearing. This difference in habituation with regard to prose form matters because “[h]e who reads, and the one who hears, desire wholly different presentational form, and this is the reason that ancient literature seems ‘rhetorical’ to us; viz., it appeals chiefly to the ear, in order to bribe it.” Ancient prose is not unnatural, only culturally different, of a culture of the public speech rather than a culture of the book. The public speaking model for prose strikes us as artificial, as departing from the proper form of perception through reading; we can only experience the style of that words and things, such that a deviation from conventional linguistic form appears as a deviation from nature.
which appeals to the ear as improper because we have been habituated to desire a form
that appeals to the reader; we thus feel that in ancient style there is an impropriety,
that the ear is paid off in order to circumvent the official gaze of read perception.
Because the issue is one of habituation, and the shaping of expectations and desires
based on historical and cultural modifications, then, the artful versus natural distinction
is itself inappropriate—our habituation underwrites and makes possible any
determination we might have of what “appears to us” as either natural or artful. (RC,
106, emphasis added)

Having shown that the artful-natural distinction rests on cultural differences in
convention and habituation, Nietzsche now circles back to the very modern relation to
the written text that seems to define our different habituation to language. Again
focusing on the sense of the natural, his claim here will be that writing is less natural
than speech. Now this seems curious given that Nietzsche has just questioned the very
use of the category of the natural. My reading is that Nietzsche is hereby marking his
own critique as decidedly modern—even he is at the mercy of this predilection for the
natural/artificial distinction.

This criticism of our valuation of written form over spoken form, at least in
poetry, hinges on Nietzsche’s use of two terms conceptually related to the notion of
naturalness: wirkliche (real) and blasser (more pale). He suggests that the modern
relation to poetry in written form represents a loss of “reality” in relation to the
anceints. When speaking of poetry here, Nietzsche refers to the book as “mediator,”
and he calls Greek poetry that lacks such mediation “real [wirkliche] poetry.” He claims
that our current preference for “literary” poets, who write what will be read, renders us “more pale and abstract” than the Greeks who listened to “real poetry” in spoken form. (RC, 106)

As regards the first of these terms, Nietzsche suggests that writing performs a work of de-realization, abstraction, or loss, through the mediating process; writing is a mediation of speech that loses some of its fullness, or reality. Only by viewing the text as a mediation of spoken poetry can Nietzsche assert that spoken poetry is real poetry without mediation, and call written poetry less real, and connected to the senses of paleness and abstraction. Nietzsche thus asserts the primacy of speech over writing. The book, and the culture of writing and reading, is the culprit, imposing the habituation that undergirds our incorrect use of “artful” versus “natural” terminology.

The second term, *blasser*, is rendered in Blair’s translation as “more pale,” and its connotations are related to sickness. The sense of nature here is from the perspective of life, or of health. If one considers health to be the fulfillment of a natural condition, then this term *blasser* is in conflict with the sense of “nature,” the term which informs our understanding of the judgment of “rhetorical” as unnatural—it connotes unnatural in the sense of sickly, deviating from health. Nietzsche implies here that the ancient literature that we judge as “rhetorical” because it is not mediated through the book, has actually not lost the lustre and color of the spoken form, and thus is the more healthy, and in that sense, the more natural form of poetry. Thus, our modern predilection for writing is a mark of our misjudgment of the natural, and thus not only of the conventionality undergirding this misjudgment, but of a sickness undergirding it—
for it is “we” moderns who become more pale and abstract through this relation to poetry that privileges its written form. This complicates the purported modern sense of what is natural, then, since real poetry, poetry not mediated through the book, thus not tending toward paleness and abstraction, strikes us as “artificial and rhetorical,” as not natural.

Our preference for the written-read form of speaking, at least with poetry, represents a loss of the fullness of poetic language, and renders us “pale and abstract.” Yet, because this predilection determines our habit-based desire as “natural,” we estimate prose oriented to its spoken form as artificial, and we call this “rhetorical.” The orientation to the written form thus impacts our understanding of “rhetorical” itself. In using this preference for writing to guide our application of this term, we understand rhetoric only as conscious application of art to language, in opposition to natural uses of language—ancient spoken literature strikes us as artificial/unnatural because departing from the written form.

We should notice three important implications of Nietzsche’s reading of the modern preference for writing thus far. First, Nietzsche gives a priority to speech when the relevant category is to be nature—we see this in his linking writing with less reality, with more abstraction, with growing paleness. Second, in weighing in on the ancient versus modern valuation of form here, and expressing speech as having natural priority, Nietzsche is also marking himself as modern, as having a preference for the category of the natural. Third, there is an implied irony in this modern preference for the category of naturalness in characterizing rhetoric.
Regarding this third point, the resuscitation of the ancient sense of rhetoric as opposed to truth makes this irony clear. Modern Western culture is the culture that is constitutionally concerned with truth, in which, as Nietzsche noted at the start of these notes, “the feeling for what is true in itself is much more developed,” and in contrast to which the ancients desire persuasion rather than instruction. But in failing to contrast “rhetoric” primarily with “truth” rather than “nature,” the latter of which is undergirded by habituation, we obscure the actual impossibility of truth in all language, and the history of language’s always having been thus characterized. And it was in fact the ancients, who valued “the true in itself” much less, who were on to this sense of rhetoric as oppositional to truth, rather than to nature.

In these comments on the modern view of rhetoric, Nietzsche has thus far called the modern preference for naturalness as regards language, and specifically written language, into question because purported naturalness is undergirded by convention and habituation. What about the other term in this oppositional pair, the “artful”? In modern parlance, recall, the term “rhetorical” is used to mark the “conscious application of artistic means of speaking,” or, given the modern focus described above, means of writing. Rhetorical uses of language are thus understood as those that involve the conscious application of artfulness to the use of language, in contrast to which we imply that uses of language that do not involve this conscious use of artful means are “natural” uses of language.

Nietzsche’s claim is a rejection of the opposition between artful and natural as regards language:
it is not difficult to prove that what is called ‘rhetorical,’ as a means of conscious art, had been active as a means of unconscious art in language [Sprache] and its development [Werden], indeed, that the rhetorical [Rhetorik] is a further development, guided by the clear light of the understanding, of the artistic means which are already found in language.\(^7\)

So all language is artful, and there is no such thing as a natural, non-artful language. This involves changing the way we view the other-to-artful uses of language: this other is not “natural” language, but is un-consciously artful language. The appropriate opposition here for characterizing the subset of language that moderns name “rhetorical” is that between two types of artfulness, conscious versus unconscious. All language is artful, employing artistic means, it is simply the case that we are conscious of only some of this, and that of much of it we are unconscious. That the artfulness in what we consider “non-rhetorical” uses of language is unconscious marks the having been forgotten of this fact by us, and means that the art in language goes deeper than what we attend to when we customarily deem language “rhetorical”: the rhetorical seems artificial to us because we dwell in a forgetting that all language is artificial in the same way. In fact, the conscious use of art in language, what we call “rhetorical,” is epiphenomenal, only a further, more surface-dwelling development of the artfulness of all language.\(^8\) “There is obviously no unrhetorical ‘naturalness’ of language to which one could appeal; the language itself is the result of audible (lauter, also meaning ‘unsophisticated’) rhetorical arts.” Indeed, the specification of rhetoric or rhetorical drops out here—instead of a dichotomy, there is a unity, that of all language.

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\(^7\) RC, 106.

\(^8\) To say that we are speech empiricists is to point out this ignorance of language’s artfulness. And these artful means themselves, unnoticed by us in our use of language, are at the heart of all language, are what language itself is.
as the employment of artful means. When we speak of rhetoric or the rhetorical, we are speaking of that which characterizes all language, and hence, eradicating the specification of rhetorical. Hence the claim that “what is called ‘rhetorical’ . . . is a further development . . . of the artistic means which are already found in language.” And so the focus of our interest is not really “the rhetorical,” but ‘the artistic means in all language.’ Indeed, the remainder of this section is meant to remind us, or bring to our view, or compel us to the view, of the artfulness in all uses of language that we have forgetfully consigned to only one subset of language. (RC, 106)

So rhetoric is an extension of the artistic means in all language, and there’s no “naturalness” of language that doesn’t have this art. An implication here is that the opposition between artful and natural is eradicated.

If all language employs artful means, then we can infer from the consciously artful means, rhetoric, to all language. Following the ancient conception, rhetoric is the power to persuade, and after Aristotle, with regard to each thing. If one can persuade with regard to each thing, one can, in Nietzsche’s terms, “make operative that which works and impresses.” This is not only the essence of rhetoric, but the essence of all language, for “[language] is based just as little as rhetoric is upon that which is true, upon the essence of things . . . [and] desires to convey to others a subjective impulse and its acceptance.” Here, we have entered the territory of that ancient opposition, persuasive-truthful, in which truth and episteme are aligned, and rhetoric, doxa, and persuasion aligned in opposition as non-truth speaking. Nietzsche’s point here: All language is rhetorical in this sense of counter to truth. (RC, 107)
The Persuasion-Truth Opposition and its Deconstruction

Here Nietzsche appeals to those early ancient senses of rhetoric as persuasion toward a view, in the absence of a contrast with truth. Language is rhetorical because it is persuasive in the pre-Platonic sense: “[language] is based just as little as rhetoric is upon that which is true, upon the essence of things. Language does not desire to instruct, but to convey [Übertragung] to others a subjective impulse and its acceptance.” Nietzsche highlights the connotations of “work[ing] and impress[ing]” in persuasion. Notice that Nietzsche does not reject the category of truth. Rather, just as with the previous opposition, he takes up the opposition between persuasion and truth, and claims that the side to which rhetoric belongs is also the side to which all language belongs. There is no “true” language. This is not so much a dismantling of the oppositional element of truth, as the claim that the opposition between persuasion and truth cannot describe language, because language could never be categorized as true. (RC, 107)

To demonstrate this, Nietzsche appeals to a genetic schematization: he presents a developmental and progressive process uniting various levels of human experience, starting with our sensory contact, moving through our apperception, finally to language, and sometimes, in the end, to conceptuality. This genetic account of language dislocates language from a connection to truth, and thus, rejects the binary opposition between persuasion and truth as applying to language.
The Genetic Schema

Because this genetic schema involves a depiction of sensory processes, and utilizes the central image of “copying” in constructing the demonstration of all language as rhetoric, we might lay out some basic features of Platonic and Aristotelian views that seem to be held in relief in these of Nietzsche’s remarks, before proceeding further with Nietzsche’s account.

Interlude: Plato and Aristotle

Plato: The Origin: Copy Trope, and the Sad Aspect of the Painter

The linking together of the various progressive elements of experience detailed in this genetic schema is achieved through exploiting a Platonic trope, that of the original:image or original:copy. Nietzsche uses these terms, which play such pivotal roles in Plato’s description of knowledge’s priority over art, and of ideas over their empirical likenesses, in such a way as to overturn the very opposition between original and image.

If we look at Plato’s description of art in Republic Book X, Socrates suggests that the painter of a thing presents a likeness (the painted thing) of a likeness (the manifest thing, which, as manifest, is only like, but is not itself, the idea of that thing which is the cause of the manifest thing). But those first-mentioned elements—what it is that is painted by the painter—are “phantoms” or “aspects,” with the connotation of a point of view. Not merely likeness of a likeness, what the painter paints is a copy of her point of view on a thing. This is denigrated by Plato at this point because of its paltry relation to what knowledge of the object would be, and this is because of what accrues to points of

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9 All references are to Plato, Republic, translated G.M.A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992).
view—partiality, determination by how one stands in relation to the object, incompletion. Such a presentation could not present the essence, the whole of the what it is to be a thing found in the idea, and in this sense, pales in comparison to the complete view provided by knowledge, not to mention paling in comparison even to the likeness of which it is one aspect.

Language, both in the Rhetoric course notes and, will occupy the structural status of painting in this section of The Republic, for it is copy of a copy, or as Nietzsche will have it in the latter text, metaphor of a metaphor, with that connotation that what is at issue is one aspect, already in a derivative relation to a likeness, rather than the whole.

Before we go on to remark the ways in which Nietzsche exploits this Platonic reference for his own purposes, we will do the same laying out of Aristotelian points.

*Aristotle in* De Interpretatione

The concern with truth structures the very organization of *De Interpretatione.* Upon arriving at the nature of the sentence as a unit of meaning, Aristotle specifies that there are three kinds of sentence: propositional, rhetorical, and poetic. The text goes on to treat only propositions, those sentences which “have in them truth or falsity,” meaning that they make either an affirmation or a denial, a single proposition “indicat[ing] a single fact.” Propositions can be either true or false, according to whether they correctly affirm or deny what is the case, was the case, or will be the case. In other

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10 All references are to Aristotle, *De Interpretatione*, in *Aristotle*, translated by Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), hereafter referred to as *DI*. 

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words, propositions are true when they represent facts or what is the case. This correspondence of propositions to facts is underscored in the complexity of considerations of propositions regarding future events, that which will or will not be the case. With these propositions, our ability to say whether they are true or false requires our ability to judge whether they do or do not accord with facts: hence, we must admit our inability to judge certain propositions regarding the future. So rhetorical sentences and propositions are not even in the same category of sentence, as rhetoric is not a matter of truth or falsity. (Di, 16b26-17a8)

Further, Aristotle opens the text with the claim that “spoken words are symbols of mental experience and written words are the symbols of spoken words.” The notion of writing deriving from speaking will, as we will see, not be a point of contention for Nietzsche in these texts. However, Aristotle further claims that “[j]ust as all men have not the same writing, so all men have not the same speech sounds, but the mental experiences, which these directly symbolize, are the same for all, as also are those things of which our experiences are the images.”11 Notice that here, Aristotle has linked idiosyncrasy with writing and speech sounds, but not with that which both are said to symbolize, mental experiences and the ‘things’ imaged in those mental experiences. The mental images are the same for all, as are the things of which they are images. Hence, the aesthetic aspect of experience image-s—universally, non-idiosyncratically—the elements of experience. Convention enters when the force of the symbol enters, and for

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11 Di, 16a3-8, emphasis added.
Aristotle, this begins with naming, followed by propositions, followed by symbolizing the former in written form.

Truth, Likeness, and Time in Aristotle’s Aisthesis

There are clear resonances between the depiction of perception in the above schematic description and Aristotle’s general view of aisthesis. We might recall that in *De Anima* II Aristotle claims that all perception involves a being acted upon by something which is both unlike and like to us.\(^{12}\) Perception is thus a passivity (*paschein*), being acted upon, and an activity, in which, in being acted upon, we become like the thing we perceive in terms of what we are perceiving about it: “perceiving is a way of being acted upon, in which what acts makes another thing, which is potentially such as it is, be of that attribute that the former has actively.” So in the state that results from perception, the perceiver has become likened to what is acting upon it. The fact of perception indicates this likeness or this having been likened. (DI, 424a 1-2)

Regarding this likeness, when we perceive—for example, when something is heard—there is a mirroring not of the entire being that is sounding, but only of its sounding, its being-at-work sounding; the one hearing is acted upon and made like the sounding. The likening here regards the form, or better, the active condition, of the thing sounding, but not its materiality: each sense “is receptive of the forms of perceptible things without their material, as wax is receptive of the design of a ring

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\(^{12}\) References are to Aristotle, *De Anima*, edited and translated by Sir David Ross (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1961).
without the iron or gold, and takes up the golden or bronze design, but not as gold or bronze...” (Di, 424a18-21).

As a result, perception is a twofold unity, in which the perceived activity and the perception of the activity are the same: “the being-at-work (energein) of the perceptible thing and of the sense that perceives it are one and the same, though the being of them is not the same... when the thing capable of hearing is at work and the thing capable of making a sound is sounding, then the hearing in its being-at-work and the sound in its being-at-work come into being together, and one might call the former the hearing activity and the latter the sounding-activity.”13 This activity comes to be in the one perceiving.14 Finally, there is a truthfulness in perceiving, as “sense perception when directed at its proper objects is always truthful,” while only with thinking, and speech, comes the possibility of not being right.15

There seems to be a direct connection between the way that likeness functions here and truth. The perceiver becomes like what they perceive, but also, the very fact of perceiving thus proves, or enstates, a likeness: if perceiving occurs, there is a likeness between the act and the perception of it. This likeness consists in the fact that the activity has come to be in the perceiver, even if not the entire being of the acting thing: it is the form that is impressed upon the perceiver—the activity—not the entire being engaging it. There is an affinity of form between the perceiver and the perceived, an affinity that is attested to by the perceiving act itself. Hence, perception cannot be

13 Ibid., 425b28-426a1.
14 Ibid., 426a12.
15 Ibid., 427b12.
untrue, because it either occurs or does not occur. When it occurs, there is an
“impressing,” an immediate repetition of the form of the active thing in the perceiver
such that the sense of “repetition” collapses: the occurrence of the active sounding is
the same as the occurrence of the perception of the sounding. The moment of
perceiving is the moment of activity of the activity perceived; to this extent, the being as
perceiving and the being as in-activity inextricably comprise the one content of aisthesis.
Aisthesis is thus always true.16

Nietzsche’s Genetic Schema: Language Copies the Rhetoric of Physiology

Our formation of language, by which we express our experience, rides on the
back of the complex work of impulse and sensation, described by Nietzsche thus:

Man, who forms language, does not perceive things or procedures, but
impulses (Reize): he does not apprehend (auflassen) sensations, but
merely copies of sensations. The sensation, evoked through a nerve
impulse, does not take in (aufnehmen—absorb, assimilate) the thing
itself: this sensation is presented externally through an image.17

First, the nerve receptors, say those of the skin, experience an increase in the force of
excitation. This excitation, to yield a sensation on our part, must be translated. As the
similar genetic schema depicted in OTL will indicate, this suggests the transmission of
nerve stimulation to the brain, and the brain’s transmission of the nerve’s message into
something of a different nature, a mental image, comprising the feeling or sensation,

16 So, for Aristotle, perception is always true, because the content of perception is a direct impression of the
activity perceived; thinking and speech are not. Propositions can be true [when they mirror that which
they are ‘of’]; rhetoric is never possibly true. For Plato: Perception is never fully true, because truth is
found in the ideas, and the manifestations we perceive are always mixed with some untruth [that which is
not of the nature of ideas—matter, activities, temporal beings (logos is a special case that yet belongs
here)]. Propositions are never fully true for the same reason, mixed with temporal manifestations (breath,
linear relation of words in statements.

17 RC, 107. In OTL, Nietzsche describes this movement in fewer steps, with the same basic result, that: “To
begin with, a nerve stimulus (Nervenreiz) is transferred (Übertrag-) into an image: first metaphor” (82).
projected onto the area of the body that received the initial force. This means that our
sensory awareness, which seems to be immediate, is made possible by processing of
nerve information that is always, once apperceived, already having been transmitted to
the brain and re-rendered as a sensation of what occurred. So our apperception literally
occurs as mental images of what has happened at various parts of our body.

Because there is a process of re-rendering or re-working, we are not dealing with
direct assimilation of externalities, but with the internally worked images that are then
projected as externalities. The mental image in being an externally projected image,
marks its distinction from anything like a ‘thing in itself’ that is taken to be its cause.

If our bodily apperception is always a translation into a form different from the
nature of the initial nerve stimulation at a particular location on our body, the key is that
there is a transfer from one form to another.\textsuperscript{18} There is an image, copy, which becomes
our own initial, conscious experience, which is in fact itself a conveyance or carrying
over \textit{[Übertragung]} of the stimulus into the form of the image. Our awareness of the
occurrences at the level of our body—all of our sensations—are thus translations,
copies, re-renderings in a different form, which do not capture and take in the “things
themselves” that may be said to be involved in these stimulations of our nerve
receptors, nor do we even apperceive the nature of the nerve stimulation itself. We can
only go as deep as the \textit{depiction} of a sensation or feeling caused as by the stimulation—
the \textit{image}. Our ‘brute’ physical experience is already a translation into such images. We
do not perceive “things or procedures, but impulses,” which is to say, we perceive

\textsuperscript{18} Or as Nietzsche says in \textit{OTL} from one “sphere” to another (82).
always within the context of what has happened to the body as redepicted it in these images.

But this is just the first step in our experience. If our very physiological experience is in this way always already a translation into another form, once we have become aware of it, what of our attempt to think of or speak of this experience? This requires a second translation:

. . . [T]he question of how an act of the soul [the ‘image’ of step one, the apperception of a sensation] can be presented through a sound image must be asked. If completely accurate representation is to take place, should the material in which it is to be represented, above all, not be the same as that in which the soul works? However, since it is something alien—the sound—, how then can something come forth more accurately as an image?19

Just as impulses are re-rendered into mental images that constitute our sensation, speech is another re-rendering of this already rendered material. What follows for language is that it can never depict anything like external causes of our impulses, but it is set to depicting the image that we have already rendered of that experience. The limitation imposed by our embodiment, the fact that all of our experiences of things must come to us through the initial translation into nervous excitation, is copied into new forms at the progressive levels of mental images, words, concepts.

This genetic schema is, first, a demonstration regarding the impossibility of episteme, in which our mind is made equal to the whatness of things. Language emerges out of this epistemic impossibility; as neither sensation nor language can achieve that as

19 RC, 107. The same point is expressed in OTL: “The image [the first metaphor: from stimulus into image], in turn, is imitated in a sound: second metaphor. And each time there is a complete overleaping of one sphere, right into the middle of an entirely new and different one” (82).
which we understand *episteme*, neither renders the “true.” Now, if the relevant other in this binary opposition is *doxa*, in what sense are sensation and language here shown to be doxological? *Doxa*, that which is linked to rhetoric, in the Greek sense has the connotation not simply of opining, but of how something appears to us. *Doxa* regards idiosyncrasy and partiality, in the sense of how something appears to one. This schema emphasizes both. Sensation is comprised of an idiosyncratic depiction to the mind, projected externally—it is how something appears in the mind of this one. What Nietzsche describes at the level of physiology, and as translation into nerve impulses of all sensory contact with externality, is how things appear to us, how they strike us. Nietzsche will actually call this “the first aspect [*Gesichtspunkt]*,” connoting angle or point of view, as well as *Merkmal*, an attribute or feature. Both of these terms connote the way that something is in our sight, only ever partially, and determined by how we stand in relation to it.

This should call to mind Plato’s reference to the aspect that the painter recreates in the painting. In fact, this is just what words go on to do with these ‘aspects’ as which we perceive our experience: it “conveys” them [*Übertragung*], and here Nietzsche ties this directly to *doxa*, for language “desires to convey only *doxa* [opinion], not an *episteme* [knowledge].” Language conveys *doxa* because it expresses the appearance to this human, bodily frame of reference, to which there is no larger, grounding frame of reference we could gain access.  

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20 *Doxa* comes from a Greek root that connotes appearing and seeming. Not only does our sensation translate things into a human form (first impulse, then image, then sound), it also does so in an incomplete way, taking in only “the manner in which we stand toward them.” There is both obfuscation
This first aspect/view on the proof of language’s rhetoricity is based on articulating this aspect-character of language, the demonstration that language presents features of things that strike the speaker, rather than the things themselves. This, an affirmation of that on the basis of which Plato denigrated painting in *Republic X*, is its ‘aspect’ character.

**A Summary of the Unworking in the First Organizing Point**

The subjectivity, or what I have called above, doxological nature, of language is indicated here in two senses: not only does language represent an individual process of translation, through which experience is translated in the individual through physiological, mental, and finally oral processes; what remains untranslated in the process is the standpoint-nature of the individual. There is always a standpoint, and hence, what is taken in, what is translated, is one aspect alone, never the wholeness of anything we might be said to experience. This is what is necessarily denied by the very nature of language’s conventionality in the forms of semiotics and semantics, and by the development of concepts out of words. The general point here is about the subjectivity of language considered in the sense of discourse, speaking about something to someone, rather than in the sense of structures of semiotics and semantics: “language does not desire to instruct, but to convey to others a subjective impulse and its acceptance.”

caused by translation, and partiality caused by standpoint of contact. Not only does our perception of things translate the form of those things, (impulse, image, sound), it does so in a limited fashion because of this standpoint nature of our contact with things. And the result is that “[instead] of the thing, the sensation takes in only a sign.” This gets at the “*Merkmal,*” how in words we represent only one view or one aspect of something, which is the one view that has come to us in our sensory perception. (*RC, 107*)
Hence, both our apperceptions and our “utterances” emerging from them engage in this process of becoming more and more worked by us, as if being siphoned through a funnel growing ever more narrow before the word is churned out. What we see here is the doxological or idiosyncratic nature of this process: all perception is always an appearing to one. The result of this process is expressed in OTL as “metaphors of metaphors,” copies of copies, which gets us back to the Platonic criticism of painters. To use language is to be the Platonic painter, presenting an idiosyncratic, one-sided view of a likeness, of only one feature, of only one-side.

This first point, that all language is rhetoric, falling on the side of doxa rather than truth, troubles a particular conception of truth and its oppositional relationship in the tradition to doxa, how things appear to one, or what is often called ‘opinion.’ Truth is said to be opposed to opinion, and hence, with regard to language, persuasion is on the side of opinion, while instruction and truth-telling are on the side of truth. Finding what works and impresses the view to which we want to win others is associated with persuasion, distinguished from truth, and carries connotations of force and pressure. When Nietzsche claims that the essence of language is in fact what characterizes rhetoric, seeking what “works and impresses,” the implication is that this distinction between true language and rhetorical language cannot hold, because what we call true language or truth-telling language reduces to the very same thing as rhetoric, on this genetic model of experience: “The power to discover and to make operative that which works and impresses with respect to each thing, a power which Aristotle calls rhetoric,
is, at the same time, the essence of language: the latter is based just as little as rhetoric is upon that which is true, upon the essence of things’’ (RC, 106-107).

Now, to hold that there is truth-telling language as opposed to opinion-conveying language, means holding that there is truth to be revealed through this language. And for Plato, connected to that hierarchy in Republic Book X, both nous and ideas involve the sense of vision: they are mentally sighted, and following the description in the Republic, we are led to that noetic vision of the ideas—the truth of things—by following the logos. The logos is not the same as the truth of what is, but can be followed in order to obtain a vision of the idea of each thing, until we get completely beyond logos, propelled to a noetic vision of the full essence, the what it is to be of each thing, which is how a thing shows itself when it stands in truth, just as real things show themselves as what they are when they stand in the full light. Truth is the provision of this view of what it is to be of each thing.\textsuperscript{21}

Against this conception of truth, part of what Nietzsche does in this section is demonstrate how any access to this kind of truth is impossible. If truth is used in its traditional sense, as essence, as the what it is to be of each thing, it cannot ever be accessed by our language because it cannot even be accessed by any level of experience that we might apperceive. Any kind of knowing contact with things in themselves, what they are in essence, is made impossible by the way that we know, which starts in the body, moves to language, and ends in concepts.

\textsuperscript{21} My reading of these passages in the Republic owes much to John Sallis’ reading of the Republic in John Sallis, \textit{Being and Logos: Reading the Platonic Dialogues} (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).
That great Platonic trope corresponding to this notion of truth, the trope of the original and the copy, is used by Nietzsche here to dismantle the very opposition it is said to uphold—the opposition between truth and appearance. While in Platonism, the copy or the appearance is such as its dehiscence from the fullness of how it would show itself in truth, Nietzsche employs the trope of the copy here in such a way as to suggest the impossibility of access to any original—the original is undercut by the copy which brings it into the only kind of being we can access. The genetic description of the development of language, here and in *OTL*, demonstrates this undercutting. Nietzsche takes that trope of original-copy, and demonstrates language as a copying, but rejects the possibility of access to the original, because it is a copy that gives to experience for the first time. He takes that sense of *doxa* as appearance and demonstrates language as appearance, but rejects the possibility of access to the true being of something beyond this appearance.

The genetic description interrupts that notion of natural belonging between words and things by use of the trope of copy, in the sense of creative copy or metaphor: words are metaphors, copies, and Nietzsche emphasizes the break, the “leap into an entirely different sphere” here. The copies and metaphors occurring at each level of movement in the genetic description is an “Übertragung,” a carrying over, and it is in the sense of translation. Not only are words found deep within this process, and not only are concepts last to be created, but the physiology of the body is emphasized as our initial and least translated/corrupted contact with experience, though even it is
impossibly translated, linguistic experience and conceptual experience being the most “worked-over.”

Given that at the most basic level of physiological experience, we are never outside of ourselves but can only apperceive that which our body has already copied, worked over, into sensory excitation that fits the body’s horizons, our most brute contact with the world is itself already copy. Given that language is ever pointing to experience, ever pointing to a world that we experience primarily or firstly in a physiological way, language is ever copy. To say that language is rhetoric in this first sense is thus to acknowledge our situatedness: that all of our use of language cannot eradicate our being embodied, and the emergence of all of our use of language out of that horizon; and that prior to any use of language, there is already a realm of our being worked and impressed by an encounter with all that impacts us sensorily.

But there is another feature to consider here: language is copy in the sense of its emerging from an experience that we are compelled to express.

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22 Yet, we might wonder how language is being figured here in terms of the interior and the exterior. It is hard not to read this entire process as one of ever growing interiority. It is as if, from the “nerve-impulse,” we move, through these layers of translation, ever further inside an interior physiological process. The difficulty here is that Nietzsche has claimed, above, that in sense perception there is no internalizing of the thing itself—we do not hereby assimilate the thing. Rather, the sensation is presented externally—by which I take it, presented both as if external, and, presented in distinction to the thing, in an image. Hence even our relation to this mental image involves a translation, as if what is depicted in that image is an external being. But this translation as if external is a projection, and this indicates interpretation. As we get further in Nietzsche, I will argue that interpretation is a form of assimilation, for conscious beings. In fact, in OTL, Nietzsche will clarify that this translation is actually a form of appropriation. I think that this means that at this point, Nietzsche is marking that due to the contours of the interior work that gives rise to language, notably language which purports ‘externalities,’ language can be an interiorizing-exteriorizing, a process of taking inward and moving inward within which part of the work is to project the form of exteriority. This doesn’t mean there is not already exteriority to this internality, only that whatever we know of it is already covered in a layer of—copy, translation, projection, ultimately, interpretation.
Recall that it is the second member of these pairs, both naturalness and truth, that Nietzsche calls into question. This is why the recuperation of the earlier ancient sense of rhetoric as persuasion becomes important. What the earlier ancient view of rhetoric has going for it is a view of rhetoric as a use of language oriented toward persuasion. Originally, it was not counter to truth, because, this notion of truth required a later articulation, which Nietzsche locates in Plato. The implication is that the traction that truth was able to gain, historically, after the first ancient view, could only come about because the language of truth was able to win the *agon* against the language of persuasion by masquerading in the first place as other to persuasion, as non-persuasion. Nietzsche’s return to the earlier ancient view of rhetoric even preceding the advent of its opposition to truth thus brings this addition from his historical vantagepoint: that the creeping agonistic partner, the language of truth, is just the language of persuasion dressed in other garb.

As we move further into this third section of the course, we find that Nietzsche ultimately rejects both of the second elements of the binaries as possible, the later ancient and the modern, that is taken to be the preferred *other* kind of language in opposition to rhetoric: he has rejected naturalness (natural language), and will go on to reject truth (true language) as possible, and thus, as oppositions to rhetoric. Nietzsche retains the first element of both pairs, artfulness (artful language) and persuasion (persuasive language). In rejecting the second element of these binaries, he thus rejects an *other* language to rhetoric—rhetoric is all language, all language is rhetoric—the oppositions reduce to the first elements of both, artfulness and persuasion. All
language/rhetoric is characterized by both artfulness and persuasion. This is the main point of this section: that all language is artful, with an artfulness that comprises the whole of language, and because of which naturalness and truth, the terms moderns and ancients (starting with Plato) proposed as oppositional to rhetoric, are not only not possible for any part of language, the very construction of their possibility rests on an artfulness and persuasion that denies itself as such, and wears the mask of an other language.

**The Second Organizing Point: All Words are Tropes**

There are the particular figures of language that we have come to name tropes, and there is trope as the common name for all, by its derivation connoting a turn, which involves a consequent alteration of vantagepoint and position. This second aspect of proof that “the rhetorical is a further development . . . of the artistic means which are already found in language” builds on elements in the first, but is focused on troubling a different opposition: the proper and the improper. Nietzsche’s claim here is that though we single out certain uses of language as obviously perspectival—as obvious deviations from the standard or full meaning—not just some but all language consists in this tropic **turning**. If all language is constituted by this turning, then there is no possibility for language to fully accord with that of which it speaks; it is always at the remove of a turn as soon as it emerges.

This point is found by consulting the tropes, in their three major forms: synecdoche, metaphor, and metonymy. Tropes are considered “the most artistic means” of language, and to be improper (uneigentlich), usually rendered as “non-literal”
in English, language. The opposition Nietzsche uses here is that of improper versus proper language, a distinction that can be traced back to Aristotle’s distinction between words in current use and metaphors, which are alien uses of names.\(^{23}\) The central notion in such a view is that there is proper usage of terms, terms in their “current” usage, and improper usage. Tropes name usages of terms that make them depart from their standard or “current” meaning, that “twist” them out of that standard use, and hence are not-proper. In the history of rhetoric, then, tropes are improper, as opposed to proper, uses of words from which they derive as a turning away. The opposition implied here builds both on the artful versus natural characterization of rhetoric, and the original:copy trope.

Nietzsche’s claim here is that “the tropes are not just occasionally added to words but constitute their most proper nature.” The exemplary improper use—the tropes—are actually the basis of all words, and hence, of their proper use. Hence, there cannot be a proper within language; there is no proper-improper distinction, but rather, an underlying unity: every word is what the tropic use of a word is, what we have come to call improper. The distinction between proper and improper is a distinction established to cover the lack of distinction. Hence, the opposition proper use-improper use is dismantled, as are artful versus natural uses of language. And this requires our looking anew at what those terms were said to speak for. (RC, 108)

In describing how all words are tropes, Nietzsche works through the three tropic forms. Synecdoche is an improper use of words in the sense that it deviates from the

\(^{23}\) This takes up Aristotle’s reading of tropes as deviations from common usage of terms. See Aristotle’s Rhetoric III.2.
standard use of words by substituting a word indicating a part of the standard word that is meant, or substituting a word indicating a whole of which the standard word used in this place can be considered a part. Nietzsche here considers synecdoche involving substitution of parts for wholes. Hence he builds on the point just made in the first section, that of the limitation of human perception and all that comes after it, including words and conceptuality. All words express only a part for a whole—an aspect, just like the Platonic painter—or, that which is expressible by so many more aspects. For example, we might illustrate the trope of synecdoche with the use of the term “sail” when we mean “ship,” thus actually expressing a part when our meaning is the whole to which the sail belongs. But language is always caught in this expression of parts instead of wholes: “language never expresses something completely but displays only a characteristic which appears to be prominent to it.” Here Nietzsche points to words whose derivations are clearly tied to a perceived aspect of things, such as the derivation of serpent from serpens, that which crawls, which is only one aspect of a snake, and further, which can’t at all be said to express what makes snake unique to all other things, hence cannot be its essence, because crawling could just as easily render what we call “snail” or anything else that appears to crawl. (RC, 107)

Metaphor is the trope of deviant naming, whereby a word in standard use is given a new meaning by its being used in a non-standard context. The prime example of this would be describing a mountain as having “feet” or “veins,” or rivers having mouths

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24 Nietzsche makes similar claims in OTL, such as the claim that adjectives express how something appears to us, not what something really is, these subjective experiences only erroneously attributed to things (82).
or “lips.” Metonymy, the substitution of a word with another closely associated with it, as Nietzsche cites here particularly substituting causes and effects, examples being using “tongue” when we mean “language,” substituting the cause of speaking, the tongue, for the effect of speaking, the language; and the use of adjectives, substituting the effect had on us by something—the perception of greenness in looking at grass—for the cause, the greenness of the grass. (RC, 107-108)

Thus, language, the instituted use of words such that usages become common or standard, is of the order of the nature of rhetoric as working or impressing, compelling us toward one aspect of things, that picked out by the term of standard use. In language, “[a] partial (einsichtige, one-sided) perception takes the place of the entire and complete intuition (Anschauung, view or outlook).” This is a critique of the view of the connection of language to essence, for the partiality and human character of these aspects or views on things expressed by the words conflicts with that sense of the fullness of what it is to be something as distinct from other somethings that is the traditional understanding of essence. (RC, 107)

There is no proper versus improper meaning of words, a belief which has shored up the very definition of these terms as tropes, because if we understand the tropes as “improper” in the sense of “turning” from one view to another by “carrying over” (Übertragen) a new use, all language does this, and focuses on one view of things by carrying over that view by use of the word. All words involve a carrying over of one view from one “sphere” to another, an imposing of one frame of reference onto our experience. Every description of a mountain involves a word that picks out one aspect of
the mountain experience to emphasize, and every description of grass involves imposing the effect on us of that grass experience—the effect of having a perception of green—onto that of which we claim to be speaking.  

The Third Organizing Point: All Language is Figurative

Finally, this means that our literal-figurative distinction, which we use most often to characterize the proper/standard-improper/non-standard use of language, cannot stand either. This distinction seems to rest on convention, by the fact that “the taste of the many makes choices.” Nietzsche begins this point by building on the last, saying, “[t]here is just as little distinction between actual (eigentlichen, proper) words and tropes as there is between straightforward speech (Rede) and (so-called) rhetorical figures. What is usually called language (Rede) is actually (eigentlich) all figuration” (RC, 108). But this figurative background of language becomes obscured by the force of convention over time. Everyday usage, the usage embraced by the taste of the many, is what operates to deem a given schemata (figure) a “guide for the many.” Once it becomes a guide for the many, it is accepted as “straightforward speech,” literal

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25 In this text, Nietzsche’s claim is that all words are tropes, and in OTL, it will seem that metaphor becomes the privileged trope. A few clarifications should be added. First, every trope mentioned in the course notes is at least discussed, though not implicitly named, in OTL, wherein Nietzsche discusses an example of synecdoche and metonymy through examples, the winding of the snake and the hardness of the stone (82). Further, more importantly, Nietzsche’s use of metaphor [Metapher] in OTL makes clear that by metaphor there he means more than a figure of linguistic use, but in the near synonymous use of Übertragung and Metapher, what he has in mind there is an extension of this very point of the tropic nature of language that allows him to read the physiological genetic schema as the work of a sense metaphor in which physiological processes and linguistic processes are of a piece, part of the more general work that by the later work we will have reason to call interpretation. Further linking of this tropic character of all language to the tropic character of all physiology will be found when we consider OTL and “The Philosopher” in the next section.

26 Further, all speaking involves figuration: “the forms of enallage [substituting equivalent expressions], hypallage [interchange of two elements], pleonasm [use of more words than needed for sense] are already active in the development of language and the proposition; the whole grammar is the product of this so-called figurae semonis” (RC, 109).
language that does not deviate through the figure, which does not use language in a non-straightforward way, which uses it to figure rather than indicate. But every means by which someone deviates from standard usage, “straightforward speech,” is the means whereby those elements of standard speech were themselves developed. The difference is in the conventionality and its force of forgetting of the origins of its development. (RC, 108)

_Recapitulation of the Rhetoric Course Notes_

We began with the conventionality that indicates to the modern mind that rhetoric is artful as opposed to natural language. What this view hides is the conventional nature of this conception of the natural—that it is subtended by a habit/convention determined by a historical exigency, that of knowledge’s eclipsing of persuasion as the ideal of speech, and that of the written form eclipsing the spoken form in value. We have proceeded to the conventionality that indicates that language transmits knowledge, rather than _doxa_—again, we have found this subtended by the ability of a correspondence view of language, the handmaiden of epistemology, to cover over the physiological processes at the root of words. We have gone on to the conventionality that indicates that only some words are tropes, turning away from the original proper uses, to find that the sense of ‘proper’ here is undergirded by the same forgettings as listed above—the ‘proper’ is itself established by convention, and, if words name, they must name idiosyncratically, as the very experience of what they are taken to name is not “the same for all.” In fact, language, as convention, allows physiological idiosyncrasy to hide itself.
With these points in the foreground, we will move on and find many of them repeated and extended in the following two works.

“On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense” and “The Philosopher”

The account in “On the Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense” (OTL) utilizes the language of image (Bild), translation (Übertragen), and metaphor (Metapher) to express the alterations resulting in our concepts, words, and apperception of all sensations, mirroring that schema of development also presented in the rhetoric course notes, in which the argument that rhetoric is at work in all language is at issue.  

Reflecting much the same schema as presented in the notes, as every bodily nerve stimulus yields a translation into the form of excitation required by the body for its processing, we are constitutionally prevented from untranslated access to any cause of that stimulation by the body’s requirement that even the most primitive experience must be the result of a prior translation into a form it can process. What we have first is the bodily excitation that is already a translation, from which is derived our apperception of what may have occurred to our body, in the form of a mental image, which is then translated into a word if we wish to speak of it, and, later, into a concept if we wish to think it, abstracted from the experience. If we were to speak of the “real” that impacts us in experience (the answer to the question of what is the real ‘x’, the question of essence), we could speak only of this outer limit, and hence only of the “mysterious ‘x,’” but not of anything like its true nature. All we have access to are the images and translations that we ourselves produce, a claim which allows Nietzsche to...

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27 See Abbreviations list for citation information.
call those great columbaria constructed by science and language human artistic creations, presenting not that of which we have knowledge, but our creative, aesthetic work. (OTL, 83)\(^{28}\)

This text makes many of the same points as the rhetoric course notes, but with some differences of terminology. What the texts share is the claim that this process is an aesthetic one, an artful process; that sensory experience is composed of the images we project, rather than absorption of things, hence creation rather than representation; the claim, contra Aristotle, that the projected mental images are marked by the idiosyncrasy of the event, rather than a universality; and the claim that words are initially the attempt to name those projected, hence external, images. What distinguishes this text from the course notes is the entry of Kantian language, as the impossibility of our access to anything beyond the physiological stimulation of our own bodies is marked with the “mysterious ‘x,’” indicating the fact that we will never encounter the essence of ‘things’ involved in our experiences.\(^{29}\) Another difference is the addition of a consideration of how this schema impacts the formation of concepts, enabling the critique to extend to scientism; and the use of metaphor [Metapher and Übertragung] as the term to describe this process.

\(^{28}\) It should be noted that this illustration renders knowledge of the essence of even ourselves impossible for the same reasons—the processes of our body are represented to us as mental images, and further, the concepts that we would use to render knowledge of ourselves are at the latter end of this process, themselves effects of layers of translation and, hence, loss of something like an “original.”

\(^{29}\) In general, this is a variation on a basic Kantian premise. While, unlike Kant, Nietzsche feels that going so far as to posit a “thing-in-itself” is an abuse of the principle of sufficient reason, the aspect of Kantianism that Nietzsche repeats here is the basic position that all knowledge of experience is irrevocably always already mediated through that which fulfills the human conditions for experience. While for Kant, there is great specificity in the conceptual content of this mediation, namely space, time, and the twelve categories, for Nietzsche, there is the same general structure, the same claim that human experience is already shaped into a human form and we are irrevocably severed from direct knowledge of the essence of things, but this occurs even behind the back of concepts.
We might ask, then, what this use of metaphor as, not simply one rhetorical figure, but as a more general synonym for translation, and as the name for a procedure that begins in physiology and prior to any considerations of language as speaking and writing, achieves.

Metaphor and Physiology

Nietzsche’s rendering of all of the “translations” at every stage of experience in *OTL* as “metaphors,” of which language is only one example, and an example that follows more preliminary physiological “metaphors,” is given further explanation in selections from his early notebooks, later published as “The Philosopher” (*P*). It is important to read these sections together with the essay, because here Nietzsche renders metaphor a basic physiological process as opposed to a specific work of language, such that linguistic metaphors become epiphenomenal repetitions of this physiological work. When the two works are read together, one is left with the sense that Übertragung is used not simply to name a linguistic trope, enabling Nietzsche to describe the physiological level of experience in another register. It is rather the kind of work comprising all sensation, and it is linguistic tropes themselves that merely repeat this physiological phenomenon.

The metaphor of causality seems to be a grounding metaphor of sorts, the one by means of which most experience is processed. In calling causality a metaphor rather than a concept, Nietzsche is interrupting the Kantian depiction of the derivation of experience from intuitions and concepts. There seem to be two sources of the metaphor of causality. One is the connection between will and act: “The only causal
relation of which we are conscious is the one between willing and acting. We transfer this onto all things and explain to ourselves the relationship between two alterations that are always found together. The intention or willing yields the *nomina*; the acting, the *verba.*

This calls to mind Nietzsche’s claims about the attachment of *doers* and *deeds* in later work, an attachment that shores up our belief in the subject. Nietzsche’s indication here is that the relation of will-act is transferred onto other experiences as a means of explaining them; it becomes a foundational metaphor or schema.

Yet there is also what Nietzsche calls “causal sensation,” which is when “a stimulus is felt as an activity,” such as when the stimulus felt in the eye is referred to the eye as the eye’s activity of “seeing.” What is given is only stimulation: “In itself all that is given is a stimulus; it is a causal inference to feel this stimulus as an activity of the eye and to call it ‘seeing.’” Nietzsche claims that “we ourselves continually experience alterations of this sort,” whereby “[t]he inner connection of stimulus and activity is transferred to all things.” So, there is an inner connection for us, given by the particular as structure of our sensing, “when something passive is sensed as something active.”

Nietzsche says that the referring of passive stimulation to a source of action is a “primal phenomenon,” and that “the first sensation already generates the causal sensation.” We tend to sense, then, also in that form of the doer-deed structure. The suggestion is that this causal perspective comes along with the way that sensation is processed: “[w]e explain the world to ourselves in terms of our sensory functions” (*P*, 47, emphasis added).

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30 *P*, 46, emphasis added.
31 See *BGE* §16, §17, §19; *GM* 1 §13.
Perceptions “produce” these imitations: “[s]timulus perceived; now repeated in many metaphors. . . . A stimulus is felt; transmitted to related nerves; and there, in translation (Übertragung), repeated, etc.” Nietzsche claims that “[o]ur sense perceptions are based, not upon unconscious inferences, but upon tropes. The primal procedure is to seek out some likeness between one thing and another, to identify like with like.” Nietzsche indicates that metaphors are imitations whereby we are able to “appropriat[e] an unfamiliar impression.” Causality is thus something like a primal metaphor, a primal translation, with two roots, both the transfer of our conscious experience of the seeming connection between willing and acting, and the transfer of the seeming/felt activity of sensation on what seems to be sensed, a transfer which occurs behind the back of consciousness. (P, 49-50)

Thus metaphor, thought to be one of the fundamental tropes of language, is depicted as a primary physiological process. The transfer here is not first a transfer of a linguistic structure. Sensation itself engages in this turning, imitating in the form of another structure, rather than a capturing: “. . . there is no ‘real’ expression and no real knowing apart from metaphor. But deception on this point remains, i.e. the belief in a truth of sense impressions. The most accustomed metaphors, the usual ones, now pass for truths and as standards for measuring the rarer ones.”

We should note that, though in the rhetoric course notes Nietzsche clarified that sensory processing does not involve assimilation or appropriation of “the thing itself,” he here calls this metaphorical processing a means of appropriating the unfamiliar. The

32 P, 50.
first point made in the course notes indicates that there is no literal ingestion or taking in of an external materiality, echoing Aristotle, and he followed this claim with the point that there is rather an external projection in the form of an image, the mental image as which we apperceive sensation. Notice that, here, we get the same denial of a material ingestion, and same dislocation from any “thing in itself,” but Nietzsche clarifies that this kind of transfer is actually a form of appropriation. We “take in” no copy of the form, but only by first translating the new into the form of the familiar. Thus we have a projection into a familiar form, a creative production that reworks the new into a form already prior for us. This element of creation seems to be the main way that an Aristotelian view of aisthesis is critiqued, by Nietzsche’s version of aesthetic translation. The aesthetic translation projects so that the experience can be given at all.

This procedure is also described as a means of the knowledge drive, and hence Nietzsche is here depicting knowledge as a development out of this more primordial physiological process of metaphorical transference. Knowledge operates by “mirroring” and “measuring,” and metaphor is a means of this mirroring, measuring, making the world human that we call knowing: “In the philosopher, activities are carried out by means of metaphor. The striving for uniform control. Each thing gravitates towards a condition of immeasurability.” Metaphor halts that gravitation toward immeasurability, as the very providing of a measure: it serves as a means of appropriation through translation of the unfamiliar to the familiar. We see the exemplary instance of this in the connection between willing and action, which Nietzsche depicts as the originary metaphor of sorts, continued in a chain of interactions within which the imitative basis
of sensation is explained as the force of the power of “appropriation of an unfamiliar impression” by the means of metaphor. This impulse to subdue the manifold is at the heart of sense perceptions, based on the trope of “like” or the similar. This is thus not merely a “linguistic” trope, it is a kind of grounding physiological tropic work.\(^{33}\) (P 34, 148, 144).

Knowledge requires not only this metaphorical work, but its very concealment. As Nietzsche describes in \textit{OTL} as well, conceptual knowing emerges from a denial of the transference involved here:

The impression is petrified for this purpose; it is captured and stamped by means of concepts. Then it is killed, skinned, mummified, and preserved as a concept. But there is no ‘real’ expression and no real knowing apart from metaphor. But deception on this point remains, i.e. the belief in a truth of sense impressions. The most accustomed metaphors, the usual ones, now pass for truths and as standards for measuring the rarer ones. . . . Knowing is nothing but working with the favorite metaphors, an imitating which is no longer felt to be an imitation.\(^{34}\)

This genesis of metaphor in physiology allows metaphor to become the focus of a critique of epistemology. In other words, Nietzsche is grounding what is thought of as a “linguistic” formation in a physiological formation; the work of language that

\(^{33}\) All of this means that metaphor—from the initial transference of the will-act ‘connection’ to sense perception that seems to happen behind the back of consciousness—allows the world to become a mirror of the human, and here it seems significant that Nietzsche has used the metaphor of mirroring to describe knowledge throughout “The Philosopher,” a metaphor for appropriation, a model of making the unfamiliar familiar, of expressing the other on the surface of itself.

Yet, in “The Pathos of Truth,” Nietzsche suggests that when a “heartless spirit,” as if seeing the mirror as mirror, comes to take “truth” as a metaphor, he might claim the opening paragraphs of what would later be published as \textit{OTL} that the animals who invented knowledge, in discovering the metaphorical nature on the back of which such “truth” rode, could only curse the truth—if indeed they were “nothing but a knowing animal” (65). The philosopher’s reaction to the possibility that man’s condition is as if hanging in dreams on the back of a tiger is to shout “Wake him up! . . . in the pathos of truth” (65), as art cries “Let him hang!” The rejection of the deception within consciousness and the relation to the body plunges the philosopher into deeper deception, a sort of second sleep into which the pathos of truth leads, as if into the reflections within a mirror itself inside a mirror. As opposed to this soporific, the artist finds a stimulus to life in lies.

\(^{34}\) \textit{P}, 50.
metaphor consists in is thus an extension of a typical human physiological kind of work.\textsuperscript{35}

\textbf{Conclusion: Tying the Texts Together}

First, there is the issue of how all of these texts are to be taken together. If one were only to read \textit{OTL}, Nietzsche seems to just be marking the limit of knowledge, through use of the “mysterious ‘X’,” which cannot be gotten behind. The claim seems to be only that we cannot reach the “true” cause of our projections, as if we are left only with the surface of a mirror, without the access to, or ability to make claims about necessary relations to, the “original” of our projections.

Yet, if one also reads the notebook sections in which Nietzsche discusses metaphor further, there does seem to be invocation of a different \textit{kind} of “copying” that attempts to unwork that implied positing of a true cause. The original is not what \textit{OTL}

\textsuperscript{35} While Nietzsche here locates metaphor beyond consciousness, prior to reason and language, nevertheless, it is its very nature as “transference” and “imitation” that might seem to render it the same \textit{falling away from the proper} that metaphor has been since Aristotle. Kofman reads this early Nietzsche on metaphor as operating within the “metaphysical” tradition. She suggests that the connection of “metaphor” to such a tradition, given its understanding as “transference,” spelled the end to Nietzsche’s thematization of metaphor, and that the later Nietzsche, rather than take up metaphor directly, instead intensified a strategic use of metaphor, a use of metaphor as a matter of style. The metaphor of the mirror might be appropriate for figuring the change in viewpoint on metaphor that Kofman attributes to Nietzsche, in the sense that while the mirror shows the other in the form of itself, it shows their difference as well, that the reflection is “of” the mirror in two senses, not just one, that it is in the form made available by the mirror (on its surface) as well as in another sense “showing” nothing but the mirroring nature of the mirror, in a surface form that cannot be gotten behind. The mirror indicates its mysterious negativity, or not being there, as long as it is related to in its mirroring act, as the “imaginary commentary” that is “all our so-called consciousness” on “an unconscious and perhaps unknowable, though felt, text” (25, reference to \textit{The Dawn}). In the sense that “the real mystery concerns that surface upon which forms are sketched,” though Nietzsche uses that phrase to describe the surface for sensation. But this makes the image seem more apt, as a mirror appears as a surface that is not one: the surface that the mirror is, in the act of mirroring, is mysteriously unavailable, though, with the transference to seeing the mirror as “a mirror” \textit{behind} the mirroring, understanding it as composed of tain and glass, the mystery is gone, its surface can be known as the workings of the tain and glass. That very transference is \textit{like} the activity of the metaphor of causality.
might lead us to believe, an entity that takes the place of “the mysterious ‘x.’” It is what Nietzsche calls “stimulus.” And this is important because stimulus doesn’t seem to imply a cause. But part of his point here is that humans can never have only stimulus, or bare stimulus, for the experience of stimulus gives rise to that primordial procedure of imitation, the first of which actually invokes causality, as all stimulus experience is always already experienced as an activity of “our” sense organs, or, as the effect of a cause.

“The Philosopher” goes further than OTL here, because while the latter essay locates the “first metaphor” at the level of apperception, “The Philosopher” locates the first metaphorical activity within the reception of stimulus itself.36 We receive, feel, stimulation as caused, and caused by an external object. The metaphorical work by means of which we have experience generates the supposition that there is an element of experience that we cannot have: the cause. This is more than saying we cannot get to the true cause; it is saying that the notion of the true cause is an outgrowth of the perspective generated by our physiology and its particular kind of work.

If this is correct, then I seem to be disagreeing with Kofman’s (and Derrida’s) claims that Nietzsche’s very use of “metaphor,” and its sense of transference, to describe this process necessarily invokes the spectre of the original. Their position seems to imply the view that Nietzsche’s use of “metaphor” undercuts his very claim that causality is a metaphor, because their view is that metaphor is a trope that only works because it suggests and works within a causality actually undergirding it: that

36 Indeed, I believe this is implied, but not stated, in OTL. We have three metaphors, not two, as Nietzsche states.
something is there to be transferred, the transference always implying what it transfers as an original cause. The question is whether Nietzsche succeeds in these early sections in dislocating metaphor from a claim about the “originals” of our experience. Their position would imply that Nietzsche’s attempt to make causality a species of metaphor does not work, and metaphor always ends up presupposing a kind of causality it alone cannot account for. It seems that Nietzsche is trying not to do that in “The Philosopher.”

What we have found in these accounts of language just considered is Nietzsche’s critique of the pretensions of Western epistemology, achieved through depictions of language as emerging within physiological processes of translation. Language extends the work of translation already begun at the physiological level, and “feeds” its products to the further translation of words into abstractions or concepts. And this process is often read as one of loss and narrowing. The possibility of contact with or recapitulation of things as they are, prior to engagement in the experience of humans, is the unacknowledged myth of Western philosophy post-Plato, given the lie by this genealogy of translation. It is really the artful process of translating creation that undergirds the functioning of the very conceptualization of experience à la Plato. The human is thus artful through and through. Language is just one instance of this process, which can be turned toward certain ends, those of philosophy, to cover over and re-create the image of its origins. This might be the special work of language in a scientific age, to generate a myth of itself as a tool of consciousness, which disavows its own physiological and artful origins, the son creating the myth of a brighter, more shining parentage. A scientific
language is the disavowing child of the body’s art. This upsets the priority of abstraction and conceptuality, substituting art and physiology in its rightful place.

Is it improper to add, as a final note, that what Nietzsche himself does not explicitly acknowledge in these critiques is their own provenance within language. In his own privileging of a use of language, that of metaphor or translation, as the figure that erases its own figural quality in serving as the mere description of the genetic process he describes? It is on this metaphor of carrying over that the destruction of epistemological hubris and the resuscitation of artfulness rides. Does this mean that Nietzsche operates here, in the nets of language, without acknowledgment?

It would seem, rather, that in this way Nietzsche enacts the rhetoricity of language, in that sense of rhetoric he resuscitates, the use of language in prodding readers toward one particular view, contesting the power of his use of language against Western epistemology. This performance with and of language opens an alternative view of that epistemology, such that the point is not merely the substitution of a counter-epistemology, but the very possibility of doing this other thing with words. Would the appropriation of this counter-epistemology be merely a deconstruction of one and substitution of another? Or the enactment of a transfiguring power residing in language, one that this account of language has not even begun to account for? This, it seems, is the account of language provided in the other early accounts, an account situated within the opposition of Apollo and Dionysus, in which language, exemplified by the lyric poet, is a creative production that is in the family of the affirmative power of myth.
Summary of the Relevant Nodal Points: Perception and Rhetoric

One thing we have clearly gathered: Nietzsche’s interest in language in all of the above texts cannot be said to simply be an interest in language as such. The work on language only comes up in the context of Nietzsche’s treatment of a set of interrelated themes. Within the repeated genetic schemas, language takes its place within a critique of truth and knowledge, within which physiology plays a central role. Nietzsche’s discussion of language is always within the context of his critique of truth and knowledge, within which physiology is ever represented as the basis of the latter.

Language is depicted in its capacity of repeating a process that has already begun in physiology, and is thus derivative of these more primary processes that truth and knowledge further extend. Language translates, and language metaphorizes, following upon the translation and metaphorization that is already at work in constituting physiological experience. Translation and metaphor are not, primarily, processes emerging within language proper.

But, translation and metaphor, as terms and concepts, are recognized by us in their belonging to language proper, first and foremost. And this raises an interesting consideration, that what is demonstrated throughout all of this is the ubiquity of language, but language in a sense that is other to the very demarcation that Nietzsche seems to apply to it in these texts. Notice that Nietzsche so often renders language as speech, as sound, as words in their naming function, or as the conventional unity of words at a given time. But what he has enacted is also an extension of elements that are conventionally isolated to this kind of closed system of language—translation and
metaphor—the province of speech, words in their naming function, and conventional languages. To say that language is a further refinement of the basic physiological drive to form metaphors is not only to depict language proper as an extension of bodily work; it is at the same time to view bodily work as *already* language. The implication is that physiology itself operates as a language, as a work with metaphors and a work of translation. From this, we achieve sensation, then the more limited purview of language proper, and finally ideas. The suggestion is that there is something in error about the very demarcation that Nietzsche follows here, of language as speech, as conventional unity of common usages of words at a given time, of the nominal function of language, of language’s mimetic function of re-presenting experience. If the overarching point throughout all of this is that experience, from the ground up, can never represent its ground, because it is an always already having been *rendered*, is it not significant that Nietzsche’s only means of addressing this rendered nature is in terms of language, translation and metaphor?

So we might return to the first of those binary oppositions that Nietzsche has troubled herein: artful versus natural, persuasive/doxological versus true/epistemological. We have seen Nietzsche reduce the latter of both oppositions to the former. All language is artful, all language is persuasive/doxological. But Nietzsche presents this as if it simply follows from the fact, and is determined by the fact, revealed in his genetic schemas, that all experience begins in the body, and all bodily experience is artful, and is persuasive/doxological. Language is depicted as if it follows suit, and repeats a process begun in the body. But why is this so? Is language being reduced to
physiology, or is physiology being reduced to linguistic forms? After all, this physiological process involves what can only be expressed in borrowing from language the images of translation and metaphor, the rendering of one form in terms of another. Doesn’t this suggest that, as thinkers, as Nietzsche is here, as he will claim ten years later, we are so caught in the nets of language that we cannot think outside of it?37 Doesn’t this cause us, not because of what he has said of language here but because of what he has performed with the forms of language here, to notice the extension of language that Nietzsche carries out here beyond every limit into which he has circumscribed it?

37 WTP §522.
Chapter 2

Expressive Accounts: Language in *The Birth of Tragedy*, “On Music and Words,” and *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*

Introduction

In his first book, *The Birth of Tragedy*, published in January 1872, Nietzsche suggests that the goal of the investigation is to understand the “Dionysian-Apollinian genius and its art product,” tragedy. The aesthetical metaphysics set out in the first four sections of the text, and the description of the unitary phenomenon of lyric poetry as the “germ” of the union of these two drives, together provide the context within which tragedy as an art product is explained. For our purposes, focusing on language rather than tragedy, the figure of the lyric poet obtains a certain pride of place, for the view of language communicated in this text, and others around the same time, centers on the description of the lyric poet and the relations between music and words, and the role of vicarious metaphor, articulated in Nietzsche’s attention to this figure.

The texts covered in this chapter are selected because of similarities in their treatment of language. *BT* provides the extensive version of the account of language in which we are interested, yet points only contained in unpublished or posthumously published material from roughly the same time period serves to amplify, extend, or contextualize certain of its aspects, so we avail ourselves of both published and unpublished material here, supplementing the published text with notes or posthumous publications. It is within the context of the discussion of the lyric poet in sections 5 and 6...
of *BT* that Nietzsche, for the first time in this text, gives a characterization of language, but this discussion of the lyric poem and poet extends and modifies the discussion of the relation of music and words which we find in notes written around the same time, composed in 1871 and posthumously translated and published as “On Music and Words” (*OMW*). The posthumously published *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* (*PTzG*), completed in 1873, provides passages that extend Nietzsche’s references in *BT* to vicarious metaphor, an important element in the description of the lyric poet’s relation to language.¹

I want to demonstrate, by the end of this chapter, that through the discussion of the lyric poet, we see emerge an articulation of a valence of language that I would call proto-performative, involving both working and unworking. The lyric poet shows us a version of language that performs work, which, Nietzsche clarifies, involves a *becoming* through uses of language. It is language as a performance that consists in the delivery of experience to the poet as a result of its being performed. Though the lyric poet is said to be already disposed in a Dionysian sense, that experience is only delivered to the poet through the performance of lyric language. There is thus no simple “recasting,” but a provision for the first time, and thus this depiction of language as a mode of experience serves to undercut the very surface description in these sections whereby language seems cast as only a repetition. Thus, what I also want to point out is that this very discussion, surrounding this figure of the lyric poet, which seems strangely oblique to

¹ A brief description of the history of these early works can be found in Breazeale’s *Philosophy and Truth: Selections From Nietzsche’s Notebooks of the Early 1870’s*, edited and translated by Daniel Breazeale (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1979), xiii-lxi.
the dominant thread of the text regarding tragedy, consists in an unworking of a certain reading of the aesthetical metaphysics at the beginning of the text. The complexity of the experience of the lyric poet gives us reason to question a certain reading of this “aesthetical metaphysics” as metaphysical in the traditional sense.

This chapter will work up to this figure of the lyric poet and this view of language as interpretation and, perhaps, a proto-performativity, that is laid out in reading BT and OMW together as regards the lyric poet, and in reading the BT description of metaphor as vicarious image together with sections on metaphor in PTzG.

**Beginning with the Supplement: From OMW to BT**

While both OMW and BT involve a discussion of lyric poetry, there are differences in the context of this discussion. Yet the very inclusion of lyric poetry in notes from the period helps to underscore the sense we have in reading BT, that something very important is happening around this figure, that there is a way in which the lyric poet is a center of BT. OMW contains general comments about music in relation to words that I believe are implied, but not rearticulated, in BT. On the other hand, while OMW merely gestures to a discussion of the Apollinian and Dionysian art impulses, Nietzsche’s BT discussion of the lyric poet, and of the relation of music and language exemplified therein, is prefaced by an aesthetical metaphysics in which the Apollinian and Dionysian impulses become the frame for the entire discussion not only of lyric poetry but of tragedy. While OMW introduces metaphysical considerations through the language of Urgrund and Wille, and privileges the opposition of tone and gesture, BT displaces these themes onto the grounding framework of the Apollinian and
Dionysian art impulses. These central terms of *OMW* are all replaced by this register of the Dionysian and Apollinian. In noticing these connections, we can thus see that Dionysus and Apollo become not only the articulation of the duality at work in language, but of the relationship of *Wille* and *Urgrund* to phenomenality. We can thus infer that the unified displacement was preferred by Nietzsche, and that many of the questions that are raised in response to the use of *Wille* and *Urgrund* in the notes are in fact reconfigured into the aesthetical metaphysics that Nietzsche presents in *BT*, thus that the metaphysical questions are moved into the valence of the Dionysian and Apollinian impulses that serve at the same time as the articulation of the duality at work in language.

I also want to consider three other key points that might, at the outset, help us to situate what is at stake in reading these texts with this focus, and the possible relation of them to those other accounts of language already considered, the genetic accounts.

1) The description of the creative process of the lyric poet depicts a *new use of language*: Nietzsche claims that a use of language begins with Archilocus, and it is one of two main currents in the history of the language of the Greek people, one in which language *imitates not phenomena but music*. We might wonder if this distinction itself should be taken to explain the relation between the expressive accounts of language and the genetic accounts already discussed—do the two accounts simply articulate the two currents of language?
2) Throughout the description, no less than in the rest of BT, we are confronted with the question of whether Nietzsche’s aesthetic depiction of existence is metaphysical—a question which we carry over from OMW. For Nietzsche himself uses metaphysical terminology, specifically that of Schopenhauer, and even refers to his aesthetics as “metaphysical.” Not only is this issue important for understanding how we are to read the early Nietzsche in relation to the later, anti-metaphysical Nietzsche. The very question of the metaphysicality of this account impacts how we read whatever account of language Nietzsche is depicting here.

3) It also seems that the Dionysus-Apollo frame of this text brings with it an emphasis on Schein [appearance, mere appearance, illusion] that was not included in OMW. For the very unitary phenomenon of Dionysus-Apollo is that of an ecstatic dissolution which is copied in music and then repeated in appearance [Schein], by which Nietzsche means the images of myth and poetic language, and this dissolution-recasting-imaging in appearance of the dissolution achieves two ends: the ability of the observer to contemplate/recognize their own being as dissolution, and, the redemption of this dissolution in the pleasure accruing to Schein [mere appearance]. It is this giving to the poet that seems to initiate an unworking of the presumed preexistence and priority placed on music.

It does not seem to me that the above three considerations stand or fall with one another. As I will try to show, the metaphysicality of the claims in BT, specifically regarding Urgrund, can be mitigated if we consider the Dionysian state as a
psychological state of dissolution.\textsuperscript{2} But the role of \textit{Schein} in this text does not seem to imply a metaphysical view.

Further, more importantly, there is a way in which, even though language is said to be the copy of a copy (the recasting of music in images), and, hence, there is an apparent priority of music over language repeated in this text, as in \textit{OMW}, at the same time there is a potency to the \textit{Schein} that language is which is required for a certain potency regarding music and the Dionysian exposure to come to fruition: the poet’s identification with what music itself is said to represent. In one way, Nietzsche calls this the poet’s ability to interpret music for himself—this requires \textit{Schein}. The Dionysian exposure is not enough in itself, and its recasting in music already generates “image sparks,” already calls for its copying in images, and it is only through these images that the poet, already delivered to a state of dissolution, can come to see, contemplate, and recognize this very delivery—the dissolution is, in a sense, delivered to the poet through language. Now, the later self-critical Nietzsche will criticize the romanticism involved in the insistence on redemption initially attached to the reception of this delivery. But, does this mean that he remains equally self critical of any delivery made possible \textit{through} language? My view is that we can note the criticism of the redemptive power of \textit{Schein}, and hence, of language, but that the work of language as the delivery of the

\textsuperscript{2} As David B. Allison does in \textit{Reading the New Nietzsche} (Lanham; Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), discussed below.
opportunity for interpretation actually enters here with the lyric poet, and it is not necessary that it be tainted with the romantic notion of redemption.³

Finally, a question that might be taken up at the end. We will note that though Schein has such an important role in the very Dionysian-Apollinian background of the appearance of language in this text, this terminology is absent in the genetic accounts covered in the previous chapter. We will need to wonder whether, in line with 1) above, this simply indicates two distinct uses of language, or whether this represents a turning away from the view of language in BT by the time OTL was composed.

“On Music and Words”

A Rhetorical Beginning

As stated above, this set of notes introduces many of the elements significant to BT’s discussion of music and language; indeed, this text essentially begins within the context of lyrical poetry, with the question of the relationship between music and words.

It includes, like BT, a relative hierarchization of music over the texts that might accompany it: contemporarily, opera; historically prior, lyric poems set to music. Both BT and OMW assert that such texts are external to and derivative of the music, and can only analogically, metaphorically, or symbolically represent the music, and, in the case of the lyric poet, provide a means whereby the poet interprets the music to himself. It is this implied prioritization of music in relation to words that needs to be interrogated, for

³ This repeats that ambivalence regarding the apparent hierarchy of music to words in OMW, a hierarchy undercut by the fact that music itself is said to be an extension of one part of the duality of language, as will be discussed further below.
the complexity contained within the description can at times seem to subvert the very hierarchy itself. What I will concentrate on in the diversion to *OMW* is that element of complexity within the description of the relation between music and words that troubles the assertion of the priority of music. It is this basic troubling of the asserted hierarchy that we will find repeated in the figure of the lyric poet in *BT*.

It is immediately striking that, in order to present this hierarchical depiction of the relation between music and words, Nietzsche uses the claim that music is a further development of *the essence of language*, and of an aspect of words themselves. This is a curious beginning, for it asserts that the essence of words precedes, and provides a model for, music. This trouble cannot be accidental. Nietzsche is very clear here: though we may call lyricism the expression of music, music itself is the extension of one part of language. The discussion of music indicates that while music further develops one aspect of words, that aspect, tone, also represents the essence of music that is prior to language proper. In short, in saying that an element of language, in fact, the essence of language, is the basis of what we call music, the distinction between language and music on which the text depends is troubled, for music becomes an extension of language; and language, as the lyrical element that accompanies music, becomes a supplement that always already grounds that music of which it is said to be the supplement. Whatever is meant by language here, it is both the genre within which music is included, as its extension; and the supplement of music, extending music as an example extends a concept.
This is an appropriate start to this set of notes, for, throughout them, this contrast remains—that between music with its power to express without images, and gesture symbolisms, of which language is said to be one, which express what is internal to music through image and externality—and this slippage between foundation and founded remains, this ambivalence as to whether the clarification of language is meant to serve an understanding of music or whether the description of music is meant to serve an understanding of the role of linguistic products like drama and opera. The priority and the order of derivation seems always to be turning back on itself. This wavering sense of beginning, of the difficulty of untangling the claims of relationality and derivation to find where music and language are being said to begin, and where they begin to differ, is echoed, or perhaps propelled, by the performance of the text. Despite the imageless expression that music is said to be, the characterization of music and gesture symbolisms is utterly dependent on analogies, analogies whose use raises the same questions about priority.

**Key Points Regarding the Relation of Music to Language and Words**

We might consider here at the outset the fact that in *BT* Nietzsche counters the popular view that a text can be the source of music. The first distinction in *OMW* is that between music and body symbolism, which includes mime, drama, and, he finally suggests, language *[Sprache]*.\(^4\) When compared to “the eternal significance” *[Bedeutsamkeit]* of music, such gesture symbolisms are said to be “merely a [likeness, 

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\(^4\) *OMW*, 106. In the following, citations of the German refer to e*KGW*, *NF 1871, Gruppe 12*: [http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1871,12[Gruppe]](http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1871,12[Gruppe])
analogy (Gleichnis) that expresses the innermost mystery (Geheimniß) of the music only very externally.” Whatever music itself expresses, such body symbolism does so in a more external fashion. But, historically, music and language, in the form of lyricism or “primeval lyrical poetry,” appear together as a dual form. The ubiquitous association of music and lyricism, which can be seen in “all people[s]” and which undergoes long stages of development before music is found in separation from lyricism, suggests the accuracy of Schopenhauer’s claims about their relationship, that the lyrical element seeks to express the music in images that serve as illustrative examples. Music and lyricism thus initially belong together in a duality that we are given to understand analogically as like the relation between example, or schema, to general idea, in which the lyricism expresses the music as if it were so many examples expressing a concept. Thus the historical fact of music and lyricism’s initial contemporaneity is explained by considering both as forms of expression, such that what is expressed in music “in a general and imageless language” is to be re-expressed, analogically, in the lyric. (OMW, 106-107)

Nietzsche asserts that this Urlyrik, the primeval duality of music and lyricism, can be understood “as an imitation of artfully-modelling nature [als eine Nachahmung der künstlerisch vorbildenden Natur],” and thus that the “original model [Ursprünglich Vorbild]” of this “association of music and lyrical poetry [is found] in the duality that

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5 Nietzsche calls this initial form, the duality of music and lyricism, Urlyrik.
6 Schopenhauer had claimed that the addition of words to music provides “a visual image, a schema, as it were, something comparable to an example that supports a general concept,” (Schopenhauer, Parerga, vol. II, “On the Metaphysics of the Beautiful and Aesthetics,” §224; cited in OMW, 106-107). Thus Nietzsche claims that “Schopenhauer was absolutely right when he characterized the drama and its relation to music as a schema, as an example versus a general concept . . . [that] will heighten the impression made by the music” (OMW, 107).
nature has built into the essence of language [Wesen der Sprache].” It is in fact the
artistry of nature that is mimicked by the duality of music and lyric, and we might hear
here implication of the Dionysian and Apollinian, BT’s expression of the dual art
impulses of nature. Nature, an artistic prefigurer or modelmaker, has built the model for
the duality of music-lyric “into the essence of language” itself, and that means that the
initial duality invoked in the text has turned slightly on itself: In the opening statement,
Nietzsche claimed that language [Sprache] is an external likeness [Gleichnis] of music’s
inner secret; here, he claims that the dual relation of music-lyric copies another duality
figured in the “essence of language.” (OMW, 107)

But we cannot penetrate to that duality in the essence of language until we
“penetrate more deeply” into the relation of music and image [Bild], and here Nietzsche
makes a claim that he will repeat two years later in OTL, that “the multiplicity of
languages immediately reveals the fact that word and thing do not completely and
necessarily coincide and that words are symbols.”7 In fact, the main features of the
genetic account of language are already presaged here: the claim is a rejection of the
view that words adequate to external entities, and an assertion that they signify, or
“symbolize,” mental presentations [Vorstellungen], “whether these should be conscious
or for the most part unconscious.” (OMW, 107)

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7 OMW, 107. And again, the multiplicity of languages is invoked to support the point. The claim in OTL is
as follows: “The various languages placed side by side show that with words it is never a question of truth,
ever a question of adequate expression; otherwise, there would not be so many languages” (82).
**Non-correspondence: Vorstellung versus Übertragen and Metapher**

Nietzsche goes on:

But what do words symbolize? Surely, only representations [Vorstellungen], whether these should be conscious or for the most part unconscious. For how could a word-symbol correspond to that inmost essence whose images we ourselves are along with the world? *It is only through representations that we know this kernel; we are familiar only with its expression in images; [otherwise, moreover (ausserdem)] there is no bridge anywhere that might lead us to the kernel itself.*

As we have seen, in the previous chapter, the genetic accounts emphasize the necessary difference between our representations and the essence of things. In *OTL*, the emphasis is placed on our experience as comprised of a series of alterations, each stage in that alteration process referred to as *Übertragung*, or *Metapher*, indicating a primary separation—an unnecessary leap into “an entirely new sphere”—in our access to what is called “the mysterious ‘x’,” that of which our translations are metaphors. This depiction regards that which we do not have access to given the constitution of human experience, with the addendum that all that we do have access to are human creations.

Nietzsche’s emphasis in *OMW* is slightly different: here, the issue is access, not to, as in *OTL*, “the mysterious ‘x,’” or to what things really are, or simply essence, but to what Nietzsche here and elsewhere in the text uses metaphysically-loaded language to signify: *Urgrund*, kernel, heart of the world. At the same time, in this text, Nietzsche prioritizes the terminology of *Vorstellungen*, rather than *Übertragen*, and *Metapher*.

What is the force of this difference? *Vorstellung* rather than *Übertragen* seems to place the emphasis not so much on the work of alteration and hence disjunction performed in

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8 Ibid., 107.
the myriad translations ranging from our physiology to our conceptuality, but on the
suggestion of a remaining connection: it seems as if Nietzsche here emphasizes not the
difference between an Übertragung and what it is of—that which it is carried over—but
the expressive power of a Vorstellung, for Nietzsche does not say that we do not know
this kernel at all, but that we know it only as Vorstellung.\textsuperscript{9} There is not merely a limit
marked here; the emphasis is placed on what we can know, that we can know the
inmost kernel of things but only through images or representations, and that what
appears to us, whether it be ourselves or what we generally call the world of
appearance, is itself image and representation of what is otherwise impenetrable to us,
otherwise than as representation.

But, there is an ambiguity here. The translation of ausserdem is crucial here, as it
could mean both “otherwise” and “moreover,” so in the passage under consideration,
Nietzsche could be saying either that our only access to Urgrund is through
representations, otherwise, we have no bridge at all, implying that representations are a
bridge to the Urgrund; or, he could be saying that our access to Urgrund through
representations is still not a bridge to Urgrund, reading ausserdem as “moreover.” John
Sallis reads this as “moreover,” and thus, as a passage that claims against Schopenhauer
that we have no access to Urgrund.\textsuperscript{10} Reading ausserdem as “moreover,” is the use of
Vorstellung only making the same point regarding lack of access as in the genetic
accounts?

\textsuperscript{9} “Although we must bow to rigid necessity and can never get beyond representations, we can
nevertheless distinguish between two major species in the realm of representations” (108).
67.
It is by making a point about the nature of Vorstellungen themselves that Nietzsche introduces the discussion of music and language, in which the issue of the connection to “will” and Urgrund takes center stage: it is just this terminology of the kernel of the world, and of “will,” which will follow on its heels, that sets the context for Nietzsche’s discussion of music and language.

**Two Species of Representation**

Nietzsche follows his claim that we “can never get beyond representations [Vorstellungen]” with the claim there are in fact two species of representation. The first kind of representation “reveals itself as sensations of pleasure and displeasure that accompany all other representations as a never-failing figured bass.” These will be given the name “will” by Nietzsche. The second kind are those “other” representations, ranging from sensory excitation, to our mental perception of our bodily states, to our mental perception of “the world” or “ourselves,” to representations of these things in language or concepts. We should note that what falls under this second species of representation seems to be precisely all of the “translations,” “metaphors,” and “images” mentioned in the genetic accounts of language covered in Chapter 1. So along with all these “other,” or commonly understood, representations, there is an accompanying sensation of pleasure or displeasure that is itself a Vorstellung.¹¹ (OMW, 108)

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¹¹ It is clear that this bifurcation follows Schopenhauer’s, with the first kind of representation corresponding to Schopenhauer’s “will,” and the second to “representation.”
Yet it is important to note that Nietzsche is not merely repeating Schopenhauer here. Nietzsche calls these sensations of pleasure and displeasure that accompany all other representations “this most general manifestation [most universal form of appearance].” This kind of representation is that “from which and in which alone we understand all Becoming and all Willing.” Nietzsche says he will call “this,” the general form of manifestation which is sensations of pleasure and displeasure in the face of other representations, “will.” But he notes how this is different from Schopenhauer’s notion of will: what Schopenhauer called “will” was actually itself “representation,” for “Schopenhauer’s ‘will’ is nothing but the most general manifestation [allgemeinste Erscheinungsform] of something that is otherwise totally indecipherable for us.” Thus Nietzsche claims that even ourselves, our drives and feelings, are known to us “only as representation and not according to [their] essence.” Nietzsche is, then, placing “will” squarely on the side of representation. (OMW, 108)

But this raises the question of what the will is representation of, and this is what Nietzsche here calls Urgrund: “All pleasure and displeasure are expressions of (Ausserungen) . . . one primeval ground . . . [that] is the same in all human beings.” Hence what we are calling “will” is itself a manifestation or form of appearance of the Urgrund, which itself we cannot see through to. So, our sensations of pleasure and

12 Allgemeinste Erscheinungsform, the most universal or general form of appearance/manifestation.
13 Diese allgemeinste Erscheinungsform, aus der und unter der wir alles Werden und alles Wollen einzig verstehen und für die wir den Namen „Wille“ festhalten wollen, . . .—This most universal/general form of manifesting, out of which and in which we alone understand all Becoming and all Willing and for which we will adhere to the name “Will”...
displeasure are the basic form of appearance that expresses an Urgrund in that form, which we access only in this form of appearing as “will.”\textsuperscript{14} (OMW, 108)

\textbf{The Two Kinds of Representation and the Dual Aspect of Words}

In this text, the duality of Vorstellungen develops into a duality of the nature of words. Since there are two kinds of representation, there are also two ways of symbolizing those representations within language. In other words, the two kinds of representation find their symbolic expression in the dual constituency of words.

Nietzsche claims that “all degrees of pleasure and displeasure—expressions of one primeval ground [Urgrund] that we cannot see through—find symbolic expression in the tone of the speaker, while all other representations are designated by the gesture symbolism of the speaker.” So “will,” itself an expression of this primeval ground, is symbolically depicted as tone. This is the musical element of language, the aspect of language that receives its fuller development in music.\textsuperscript{15} This means that when Nietzsche speaks of music alone, he speaks of an extension of the tonal element of language. (OMW, 108)

\textsuperscript{14} Nietzsche also speaks in these notes of “a power that in the form of “will” generates a visionary world” (111).
\textsuperscript{15} At the same time, tone is also said to echo these sensations of pleasure and displeasure. Hence, tone seems to have the structural status that words, in the OTL account, have in general—it repeats, like a copy of a copy—it repeats the sensations of pleasure and displeasure that express Urgrund. But words have been split in two, the sensations of pleasure and displeasure are echoed or repeated in tone without going through the aspect of image or gesture. Hence it is important that Nietzsche calls this an echo rather than translation.
Words thus contain two symbolic powers, which symbolize the two kinds of representation, and the *relationship* of music to lyricism is the extension of the development of those two powers. Thus Nietzsche claims that:

This primordial manifestation, the ‘will’ with its scale of sensations of pleasure and displeasure, gains an ever more adequate symbolical expression in the development of music, and this historical process is accompanied by the perpetual striving of lyrical poetry to circumscribe music in images. This dual phenomenon can be found performed in language from its first beginnings, as has just been shown.\(^{16}\)

Notice what this means: music itself is figured as a detour. Before anything like a supposed “rhetorical” detour, Nietzsche is describing a musical detour, a detour of language through music, for the duality of language becomes separated into music and language proper as a development out of its ubiquitous unity—music is the further development of the tonal aspect of language.

**Summary: Implications of Depicting the Essence of Language According to the Tone-Gesture Duality**

Here it is important to note that, in the *OTL* account of language, words perform the same work as all other elements of human representation of experience—translation or metaphorization. Language, as words in their initially nominal function, is shown to begin as a translation of a mental image of a nerve impulse, rendering it into a “sound image,” which is then agreed upon for common use. Word is metaphor or translation of a prior *Vorstellung*, which is itself a translation of a prior sensory excitation. But this second kind of *Vorstellung* mentioned here, which accompanies those words, like music, “as a never-failing figured bass,” the other element of the

\(^{16}\) *OMW*, 109.
duality music-language, does not have a clear corollary in the genetic account of language.\textsuperscript{17} There is no dual nature of language depicted in those accounts—there is no symbolic sphere of will in the genetic accounts of language, and words are not addressed in their tonal aspect. But what exactly is this second kind of Vorstellung achieving in the present account of language?

Words symbolize only Vorstellungen, and this seems to be the same claim made in OTL. But there are two types of Vorstellungen here. When Nietzsche says in this text that “[i]t is only through [Vorstellungen] that we know this kernel,” the heart of the world whose images we are, this is not the same as the claim in OTL that we cannot access the thing-in-itself except through the series of translations, one of which are words. For Nietzsche here asks the question of how “word-symbols” could correspond to the “kernel/inmost essence,” whose images we are, and also [along with] the world. (OMW, 107)

What he is talking about here is our own mysterious internality, that which subtends and precedes our self-possession. From the position of self-possession, we are only a representation of ourselves to ourselves. That which Nietzsche gestures to in these notes as the “becoming and willing” to which will is our only clue, will be rendered as the Dionysian in BT. Notice, already, that as this “kernel” is that which is said to subtend and yet be knowable only as the representation (will) that is its expression, it is difficult not to read the structure of future anteriority into this reading of ourselves: the “kernel,” the Urgrund, is only what we will have been after the Vorstellung of the will

\textsuperscript{17} OMW, 108.
has made it available to us as represented. The will seems to consist in a representation of the self to the self—is this how the will is, and how we are in becoming? Does not will, qua being, unwork itself here?

What, then, are the implications of Nietzsche’s use of the duality of words in this set of notes? For if all Nietzsche wanted to do was articulate music’s priority over language, it seems that he might have depicted language as fully gesture, as fully translation or metaphor, as he does in other texts covered in Chapter 1. Why does he depict the essence of language itself as half tone—as half of what is only further developed in music, thus suggesting that music is only a further development of the essence of language itself, of its tonal half, thus making music develop out of the essence of language?

Consider Nietzsche’s claim in BT that, with the lyric poet, we get a second strain in language, a use of language that mirrors not phenomena, but music. And this text gives us to consider that language mirrors music, which means it mirrors will. But only regarding one half of its duality: the other half of its duality is the basis extended into music, tone.

We need to note that the characterization of lyrical language as gesture that expresses music’s tone is interrupted by the depiction of the duality of words in this text. Language, as word, is partly tone and thus expresses Urgrund, just as does music. But it is not only tone, which music develops, because of what the body does to tone. This splitting of language from a position of founding the tone element of music—as a word—to a position of gesturing the content of music—as lyrical language, or language
in its gestural sense—is already inseparable from the bodily valence of words themselves. Words are always embodied, even as one of their elements, their ‘fundamental’ element, is tone. This is the other element in the duality that words are.

This shows us another implication of the dualization of words: the suggestion of two ways of relating to language. In the first, following tone, we consider language as the “outpouring,” the expression of will. But music becomes the privileged site for this expression, because human language never could have been solely tone. If this vantagepoint on language interprets the tone of words as cry, as primal sounding of emotion, as expressing a hidden internality, there is no suggestion that this ever could come without its accompaniment, the gestural element, which alters tone by forming it into segments. If words split up into a musical element, that which is the fundament of music, tone, and into a gestural element that copies tone, then music can be presented as hierarchical to drama in the sense of original-copy, because drama becomes mired in gesture symbolism and its use of image, analogy, and externality. So, while, on one hand, we can say that this text consists in setting up a hierarchy between music and language, arguing for the foundationality of music to the other arts, on the other, it does this in such a way that music as a separate art is derivative of one aspect of language, the tonal element of words. In this sense, music and language express will; the hierarchy collapses.¹⁸

¹⁸ There is a problem, it seems—the problem that allows music to take on its hierarchical relation to lyrical language. Human language is always dual, irreducibly tone and gesture. The two are separable only analytically, for human language must always contend with the requirements of breath, and with its being imparted through bodily organs that impose a shape on tone. That tonal element, that expression of affect, is only “pure” in music. In language, it is always accompanied by the gestural element, the breaking of tone into particular sound-units, on which their signifying (rather than expressive) capacity depends.
But, when Nietzsche describes the lyric poet, who expresses music, he is not describing someone who relegates himself or herself to the tonal aspect of language. He is describing someone who uses the duality of language, its tonal and gestural elements, to “interpret for himself” music. If human language is going to be used to recapitulate the expression of will in music, it cannot do so by reverting to the pure tone of language, because, as spoken, it could never thus be pure. But, then, how does the lyric poet use language in this second way, in this way that expresses music rather than phenomena, if not by reverting to a pure use of tone?  

What we find in these notes, beyond the entrance of questions of will, of how Nietzsche is thinking of will and whether it is in a metaphysical sense, is also the suggestion of an expressive power of language, that is an extension of tone/music, that is not about recapitulating phenomena, but is about expressing music in the form of images, in the form that language can impart to music and hence will. And thus it becomes interesting that, in BT and PTZG, he describes this process as interpretation, as the poet wanting to interpret music for himself.

There is another implied way to view language in this analysis, one that privileges the other side of the duality—language as gesture, as indicating what is not itself through itself. This is the side out of which signification develops. In the gestural element of words, the body is used as substrate to express, cutting tone into segments.

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19 Here suggestions Nietzsche makes regarding “singing” become instructive, statements about how singing is a being caught up in language without thinking about it calculatively, conceptually. And note that he will claim, in BT, that the lyric poet is inspired by a Dionysian, or musical, mood. It is as if the lyric poet uses language, but in a mood that makes it possible for him/her to be accessing the language in the mode of singing, in a mode that is without calculation, as if that musical mood allows for a way of relating to language that uses the gestural aspect (it cannot not) but is unconcerned with it. It is concerned only with the affective element of words, with the singing of them.
by altering the position of its lingual organs. When this happens, words are no more fully tone, the sounded echoes of an internal representation. There is a kind of fundamental splitting in the language function that comes with this bodily splitting of tone into segments through positioning the lingual organs and the requirements of breath—even the “first” word would have suffered this. For these segments into which tone is cut—has to be cut in order to come out of human mouths—develop a representing rather than expressing or echoing power—words take on the materiality that their gestural element imparts to them. They become entities, no longer expressing the affective apperception of the speaker but pointing to what is now seen as external to them. The word is now a gesture—a name for what is other to itself—and later, a gestural symbol, an indication of what is outside of itself.\textsuperscript{20}

The implications seem to pull in two directions here. On one hand, as suggested above, the tone element of words can only be separated analytically; given the constraints of embodiment, human tone always emerges with a gestural element, even if it is as minor as the breaking of tone into segments due to the necessity of breath. In this sense, music would seem to retain a priority over words. But on the other hand, Nietzsche seems to suggest that the tone element of words has priority, in being prior. These questions are of priority and originarity, and indicate the role that the

\textsuperscript{20} We can read here, though Nietzsche does not venture this far in these notes, the criticism of writing as a further extension of this privileging of one side of the essence of language, to the detriment of the other. As he states in the Rhetoric course, the spoken language of the ancient poets is more “real” than the written poetry of modernity’s book.
original:copy trope occupies in this entire discussion. Which gets us to a third implication.

This regards the role of figures of language throughout the discussion—what we might call rhetorical features. Everything in the text is propped up by likeness, by analogy, by a function of language beyond individual words. It is only by way of likeness that Nietzsche is able to connect music to will, through the central image of words “welling up” within a person, through taking this as an analogy for the relation of music and will. There is no content given to Urgrund in these notes, the ground of everything is only implied by the suggestion of this image: that, for any welling up, there must be a source. Yes, this analogy plays on the trope of original:copy, source and effulgence.

In BT, the published text written around this same time, two features become striking, given this background. First, all reference to music’s own provenance from a power expressed in the tone of words is absent. Nietzsche does not refer to nature’s artistic provision of a duality in the essence of language that models the duality of music-lyricism; rather, the artistic duality of nature is figured by the Dionysian and Apollinian art impulses.\(^{21}\) Second, more depth is given to the discussion of Urgrund.

This is particularly interesting for a number of reasons, but we might consider Lacoue-Labarthe’s claim that, after BT, Nietzsche embarks on an interruptive, accidental rhetorical detour that changes his view of language by allowing rhetoric to usurp the position of music, a usurpation that spells the end to the ultimate ability to find an

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\(^{21}\) This splitting of language into these two senses, thus, disappears, as well as the dependence of all of this on a complex net of analogies. Hence, the analogy of words “welling up” from a source is absent as well.
origin of language. While this reading is certainly correct in noting that the analysis of language within the context of music disappears after BT, it does not seem possible to claim that the central role given to rhetoric comes after this text. It is difficult to read OMW in isolation from the rhetorical techniques invested in the structure of the analysis, as detailed above. The question of whether Nietzsche was “aware” of this seems to be a secondary consideration. It at least seems much more appropriate to say that we see in these early notes a variety of conceptions of language, pulling against one another perhaps, or even, that we see an ultimately rhetorical view of language silently propping up the central role given to music, in which the distinction between music and language, through tone, threaten to dissolve. Does the eradication of these elements in BT suggest that Nietzsche already sensed this tension, and already attempted a musical detour as an escape?22

Finally, music expresses will as its subject, but not its origin, which has been said to “lie beyond all individuation,” and “in the lap of the power that in the form of the ‘will’ generates a visionary world,” with reference to a discussion of the Dionysian that does not take place in this text.

One thing we will find, extending from this discussion, as we enter BT, is Nietzsche’s claim that the lyric poet introduces the second of two currents of language that were part of the Greek history of language. And this introduced use is a use of

22 Again, the psychological question would be secondary. My point is simply that it seems difficult not to see in a later interest in rhetoric not a new development, but an extension of elements that are already here.
language that mirrors music rather than mirroring appearances. And this is just what we’ve seen happening, already, in OMW.

We want to now enter the text of BT, taking with us the questions that have emerged from our foray into OMW. The major characterization that we garnered from the latter is that Nietzsche called music, and the tonal aspect of words, both the symbolizing and the echo of “will,” and he called will the “primordial form of manifestation” that itself expresses Urgrund. One major question that emerges with this description is what this Urgrund is, and whether it commits Nietzsche to a metaphysical claim with regard to music and the tonal element of language. We left aside that question of Urgrund especially for this next text.

The Birth of Tragedy

Background of the Aesthetical Metaphysics

In this section I will provide an initial gloss of the aesthetical metaphysics in the background as a way of setting up Nietzsche’s discussion of the lyric poet.

The later self-critical Nietzsche, like the earlier Nietzsche composing the text, refers to the presence of “an artist’s metaphysics in the background” of the reading of tragedy. The artistic drives that Nietzsche takes himself to be describing in the opening sections of the text can be thought, according to John Sallis, as both drives, or impulses. They are most easily reachable by us through figuration, both through the figures of the gods Dionysus and Apollo, and through the analogies of physiological

23 BT, 18.
24 See John Sallis, Crossings: Nietzsche and the Space of Tragedy, 17.
experience—dream and intoxication—by means of which we can make those drives clearer to ourselves.\textsuperscript{25} We are initially given to understand the Apollinian drive—or better, the artistic drive of nature that is figured by the god Apollo and can be made clearer to us by the analogy to the physiological experience of dreaming—as the drive toward Schein, or appearance. This is the drive of “measured restraint” and individuation.\textsuperscript{26} The Dionysian drive—or better, the artistic drive of nature that is figured by the Greek god of Dionysus, and which can be made clearer to us through the analogy to the physiological experience of intoxication—is nature’s force toward the destruction of measure and of individuation.

On one hand, Nietzsche demonstrates the oppositional character of these drives historically, by choosing an example within Greek history, the traditional understanding of which stands in stark contrast to Nietzsche’s proposition that the oppositionality of these drives gives birth to art. This first historical example of the drives in their oppositional nature is the Homeric Greeks, traditionally held to be those “cheerful” Greeks who naively mirrored a beauty that nature immediately shone all around them. But their very Olympian gods, and characteristic epic poetry, Nietzsche claims, can be understood not as based on innocent contact with and mirroring of a pleasant nature,

\textsuperscript{25} So this entire discussion, from the start, is imbued with a cover of figuration, and this implies that Nietzsche’s reading of tragedy can only be reached through the figuration provided by these layers of analogy—though Nietzsche does not thematize this as an issue in the text. We will return to this point later. But note how this is similar to the construction of OMW, wherein it is only through the analogy with words that we could approach the relation of will to corporeality. If we did not have this image of words as welling up within the body and emerging through the mouth, the ability to express will in its fundamental relation to corporeality would never have gotten off the ground.

\textsuperscript{26} BT, 35.
but only as a response to a vision of the horrors of individual existence. The early Greeks were already exposed to what Nietzsche calls the “wisdom of Silenus,” a very real Greek folk wisdom, reflecting an awareness of the misery, suffering, and continual threat of nullification of individual existence, that “what is best of all is utterly beyond your reach: not to be born, no to be, to be nothing.” It was this awareness that is reflected in the Titan gods who preceded the Olympians. It is the contrast between this folk wisdom and the Olympian gods of the Homeric Greeks that is key here, as it reveals that those Greeks had to “first overthrow an empire of Titans and slay monsters, . . . must have triumphed over an abysmal and terrifying view of the world and the keenest susceptibility to suffering through recourse to the most forceful and pleasurable illusions.” That awareness of the misery in individual existence “was again and again overcome by the Greeks with the aid of the Olympian middle world of art; or at an rate it was veiled and withdrawn from sight.” *(BT, 42-43)*

Thus the images of the Olympian gods themselves rest upon a Dionysian awareness to which they emerge in response, as a means of covering its fearfulness with the “halo” of these new gods. The emergence of the Olympian gods thus depicts the sense in which the Apollinian impulse is toward the saving power of illusion, toward appearance as covering through a redeeming illusion, masking the terror and “seducing one to a continuation of life” by re-depicting that life as glorious, in the figures of the gods. Hence the beauty of the Apollinian vision, represented by the generation of the Olympian gods, is the beauty of transfigured existence, of existence mirrored in a vision
that imparts to it both a seductive and glorifying power.\textsuperscript{27} That we consider Homeric art
to present the, assumed, directly accessible beauty of nature shows that we miss the
underside of beauty, that suffering is the obverse of beauty, which itself emerges as a
response to that suffering, as nature’s means of seducing us to stay in existence. (BT, 43)

To the artistic talent for mirroring lived reality in a more glorious vision, there is
the “artistically correlative talent for suffering and for the wisdom of suffering.” The
Homeric Greeks must be understood as an Apollinian response to this Dionysian
wisdom. And these two impulses incite “new births ever following and augmenting one
another,” as the beauty created by the Apollinian impulse’s projection out of suffering
can continually be interrupted by its destruction, a realization of which will incite a new
projection to emerge.\textsuperscript{28} Nietzsche suggests that this relationship is the case for all
existence, which he calls his “metaphysical assumption”:

\begin{quote}
[T]he more clearly I perceive in nature those omnipotent art impulses,
and in them an ardent longing for illusion, or redemption through
illusion, the more I feel myself impelled to the metaphysical assumption
that the truly existent primal unity, eternally suffering and contradictory,
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{27} “How else could this people, so sensitive, so vehement in its desires, so singularly capable of suffering,
have endured existence, if it had not been revealed to them in their gods, surrounded with a higher
 glory?” (43)

\textsuperscript{28} I have emphasized Nietzsche’s claim that an art form that seems impelled by only one art drive, the
Apollinian, is yet a response to a vision that is of the character of the other drive. This speaks to John
Sallis’ claim that we can view the art impulses as both drives and states. We might speak of the drives as
impulsions toward a certain way of encountering, or “viewing,” existence (Sallis, Crossings, 14). Allison
notes that the real difference between the two is in the role of individuation: the Apollinian drive is
toward illusions that cover the dissolution of individuation that is both part of the nature of life’s
possibilities of assault and threat to individuals, and is part of the genetic story of the development of the
individual through acculturation out of non-individuated states; while the Dionysian drive is toward the
dissolution of individuation, a dissolution upon which all forms of individuation rest (Allison, Reading the
New Nietzsche, 39-40).
also needs the rapturous vision, the pleasurable illusion, for its continuous redemption.”

Hence, the necessity of suffering: “... how necessary is the entire world of suffering, that by means of it the individual may be impelled to realize the redeeming vision, and then, sunk in contemplation of it, sit quietly in his tossing bark, amid the waves.” (BT, 44-46)

**Incipit Lyric Poet**

With these aspects of the aesthetical metaphysics having been given an initial gloss, we turn to the treatment of the lyric poet.

The lyric poem is the first historical example that Nietzsche discusses in this text of an artwork or art form that emerges from both Apollinian and Dionysian tendencies. Its composition is unlike that of epic poetry, which consists in an absorption in images, and thus is composed in the Apollinian spirit alone. Thus the lyric poem is significant historically in Nietzsche’s view because it represents the “germ” of the dramatic dithyramb and, hence, of tragedy. Nietzsche describes the entire creation of the lyric poem as consisting of a two-stage process, exemplifying the involvement of both art impulses.

I want to consider in full the passage in which Nietzsche describes the composition of the entire lyric poem. This passage is particularly resonant with our interest in finding Nietzsche’s early accounts of language, for it sets out important

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29 *BT*, 44. Further, “the perpetually attained goal of the primal unity [is] its redemption through mere appearance” (45).

30 One is reminded here of the dual nature of those earlier forms mentioned in *OMW*, the duality of words (tone-gesture), and the duality of music-lyric in *Urlyrik*.
details regarding how the development of music gives way to a development of language, and how Nietzsche construes their relation, and whether that relation is metaphysical. Here we cite the passage in full:

In the first place, as a Dionysian artist he has identified himself with the primal unity, its pain and contradiction. Assuming that music has been correctly termed a repetition and a recast of the world, we may say that he produces a copy (Abbild) of this primal unity as music. Now, however, under the Apollinian dream inspiration, this music reveals itself to him again as a symbolic (Gleichniss-artigen) dream image. The [image- and conceptless] reflection (bild- und begrifflose Wiederschein) of the primordial pain in music, with its redemption in mere appearance, now produces a second mirroring as a specific symbol (Gleichniss) or example. The artist has already surrendered his subjectivity in the Dionysian process. The image that now shows him his identity with the heart of the world is a dream scene that embodies the primordial contradiction and primordial pain, together with the primordial pleasure, of mere appearance. The “I” of the lyrist therefore sounds from the depth of his being: its ‘subjectivity,’ in the sense of modern aestheticians is a fiction.\(^{31}\)

We might begin by considering the second sentence, for it discusses the constitution of music, and thus can be held against similar claims made in OMW. Here Nietzsche uses the term Ureine, rather than Urgrund, both connoting a primal oneness, and claims that music is “a repetition and a recast of the world,” or a “copy (Abbild) of this primal unity.” Thus Nietzsche here uses Welt and Ureine interchangeably.

In OMW, the “will” was at issue as well, for music, and tone, were the symbolic expression of “will,” but will itself, that primary manifestation in the form of degrees of pleasure and displeasure, was said to be expression of “one primeval ground that we cannot see through,” as the “most general manifestation of something that is otherwise

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\(^{31}\) BT, 49. Citations of the German refer to eKGW, Published Works, GT-5: http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/GT-5
totally indecipherable for us.”\footnote{OMW, 108.} Thus, we find here again this claim that music is an expression of this primal oneness, and Nietzsche adds the specification here that it is a copy, while we might wonder the role that “will” will play in this text, as it is not mentioned in this passage.

With regard to what Nietzsche means by the “primal oneness,” a question that we carried away from \textit{OMW}, the first sentence of this passage gives some insight, for the language of the Dionysian brings some clarity to that question. Here we are told that it is the Dionysian impulse that has allowed for an identification with the primal oneness. What are we to make of the description that the artist, as Dionysian, has identified [ganzlich . . . eins geworden, completely become one] with the primal unity [\textit{Ur-Einen}]? Here, as in \textit{OMW}, we are forced into the metaphysical question: this entire aesthetic depiction of existence is haunted by this question, for this language of \textit{Ur-Eine} seems to suggest a primordial oneness at the ground of all individuation. Yet this oneness contains contradiction, rather than a unification. Because it is said to be through the Dionysian, or as Dionysian, that the artist obtains identification with the primal unity, we should mine Nietzsche’s discussion of the Dionysian.

Along these lines of following the characterization of the Dionysian to answer the question of what the primal unity is, Allison contends that we can actually read this primal oneness against the grain of metaphysics. On the basis of the discussion of the aesthetic drives, in this \textit{becoming one with} the \textit{Ur-Eine}, we should think the loss of individuation as the basic movement of the Dionysian process. Indeed, just a few lines
later Nietzsche clarifies that the Dionysian process entails the loss of subjectivity. To say that the artist is one with the primal unity is to say that he is without, or having lost, the measure of the principle of individuation, in what Nietzsche will also call a “state of mystical self-abnegation and oneness.” As Allison puts it:

In the Dionysian state, one is dispossessed of all that renders the individual a singular and distinctive subject in the first place: the specific concatenation of character, personality, tastes, fears, expectations, reflection, and values. The Apollinian begins here, with the ordering, selection, and elevation of certain dispositions, with the idealization of particular values and judgments, and casts these forth as unified and exemplary images for the purpose of defining and preserving the individual as a discrete individual. . . . The Dionysian state, aptly described as “intoxication,” would thus correspond to a suspension, a ‘decodification’ of these individually and socially sanctioned codes.33

Why the continual use of “primal” terminology, though, in these descriptions, if they are not meant as metaphysical claims about ultimate or underlying reality? “Dionysian priority . . . is an analytic priority: it testifies to the always present instinctual sources of human behavior which, in the absence of particular, individual, and categorical determination, can but weakly be termed polymorphous, undirected, and nonspecific.” In short, “. . . Nietzsche claimed that the Dionysian state is more primal because it underlies or subtends personal individuation.”34

As far as what is made available within the state rendered by the Dionysian impulse, “[t]he ‘truth’ of the Dionysian . . . is a world unbounded by moderation, direction, purpose, or the hope of redemption. It is a truth whose object is existence in general: namely, the world in its fullest extension . . . in its greatest intensity,” that

33 Allison, Reading the New Nietzsche, 40.
34 Ibid., 41.
“undiminished state of existence upon which forms are enacted, codes imposed, and specific goals wrought.”

Thus, in Allison’s reading, the Dionysian constitutes one of the “instinctual component[s]” of empirical reality, as it does not emerge from beyond empirical experience—though, as we will discuss below, it emerges, metaphorically, from “beyond” the subjectivity of the individual—and what it reveals is a view of empirical reality, not another reality that grounds or underlies it—though we may metaphorically say it “underlies” the everyday approach to reality.

It is in this state that music is produced. And this means that this state of identification with the Ur-Eine—the Dionysian state—also expresses the way in which music is produced as a coming to the artist from beyond the subjective self and the control exercised over those capacities maintained in an everyday self-possession; the music Nietzsche is describing cannot be produced when one is situated within an awareness of one’s subjectivity, thinking conceptually or remembering his/her own personal experience. It is described as an expression through the artist.

After the musical composition, the lyrical composition is described as a ‘second mirroring’ that reveals something to the artist. For the artist, in the production of music, was in an ecstatic state. Returning to the relevant passage:

Now, however, under the Apollinian dream inspiration, this music reveals itself to him again as a symbolic (Gleichnis-artigen) dream image. The [image- and conceptless] reflection (bild- und begrifflose Wiederschein) of the primordial pain in music, with its redemption in mere appearance, now produces a second mirroring as a specific symbol (Gleichnis) or example. The image that now shows him his identity with the heart of the

35 Ibid., 44, 41.
world is a dream scene that embodies the primordial contradiction and 
primordial pain, together with the primordial pleasure, of mere 
appearance.\textsuperscript{36}

Now, one of the distinctions implied herein is that between music’s provenance, and, 
that which music reveals.\textsuperscript{37} We have already been told here that music emerges from a 
Dionysian experience, that of loss of subjectivity through identification with a oneness 
that is beyond the bounds of the individual. Music thus has a Dionysian provenance, and 
itself emerges as a repetition and second-casting of the \textit{Ur-Eine}, a copy of this 
oneness—this loss of individuation—that the non-subjective being has identified with, 
become. Music is thus the manifestation of that to which one is exposed—the loss to 
which one is exposed—in the Dionysian experience. The \textit{Ur-Eine} comes to mere 
appearance in music, an appearance that is an image- and concept-less reflection of this 
loss.

But because this occurs in a state of self-dispossession, it is not fully experienced. 
The artist is the through which but not the to whom of this experience. It is relevant, 
here, that music itself “compels” or generates “image sparks.” It calls for a further 
depiction of this experience of loss in the fullness of images, which occurs by the artist’s 
Apollinian impulse. Under its inspiration, the reflection of \textit{Ur-Eine} in music creates a 
second-mirroring, one that makes use of images, in the form of a specific symbol. The 
specific symbol is a dream-image that sensualizes the \textit{Schein}, mere appearance, of 
music—\textit{embodies} it. This is expressed in this passage as we are told that, after the 

\textsuperscript{36} BT, 49. 
\textsuperscript{37} Recall the same distinction in \textit{OMW}, when Nietzsche indicated the difference in the subject of music, 
“will,” and the origin of music: will was said to be the subject but not the origin of music.
emergence of music, the Apollinian impulse leads to the revealing to the poet, of that Dionysian experience, that “ident[ification] with the heart of the world.” While music was the expression through the artist, its symbolic mirroring is a revelation to the artist, for it “now shows him his identity with the heart of the world” in a scene that embodies the movement from primordial contradiction to appearance. (BT, 50, 49)

Recapitulating this process, Nietzsche elsewhere claims that “Dionysian art therefore is wont to exercise two kinds of influence on the Apollinian art faculty: music incites to the symbolic intuition of Dionysian universality, and music allows the symbolic image to emerge in its highest significance.”38 The first part of the sentence suggests music’s revealing power, that it in fact mediates a Dionysian experience and incites the intuition of this to proceed to a symbolic level, which is achieved in expressing music in images through poetic creation. When symbolic intuition of this Dionysian experience is itself experienced, it has a higher significance than does the mere reception of images, because the images express beyond their image content—they are symbols, expressing what does not appear in their appearance.

This raises the question of why the artist is “compelled . . . to figurative speech,” of why there is an imitation of music in images at all, for music remains for the artist even without its expression in images: “Our whole discussion insists that lyric poetry is dependent on the spirit of music just as music itself in its absolute sovereignty does not need the image and the concept, but merely endures them as accompaniments.” Nietzsche indicates that it is this second-mirroring, the dream-image, which shows the

38 Ibid., 103.
artist his oneness with the heart of the world—or, in Allison’s language, that shows the artist his loss of the markers of individuation. The emphasis here is on this “showing” to the artist of that which was the very occurrence of the Dionysian process.\textsuperscript{39} It is thus a repetition, to the artist, of the Dionysian experience. \textit{(BT, 55)}

In the showing to the poet of this Dionysian experience, what exactly is it that is shown? In some places in this text, Nietzsche will call what is revealed by music “will”: “If, therefore, we may regard lyric poetry as the imitative fulguration of music in images and concepts, we should now ask: ‘As what does music appear in the mirror of images and concepts?’ It appears as will, . . . the opposite of the aesthetic, purely contemplative, and passive frame of mind [\textit{Stimmung}].”\textsuperscript{40}

The difference remarked here is that between the origin and subject of music, or between how it emerges and what it reveals; or, between its essence and appearance: music appears as will, but is not will.\textsuperscript{41} Because the Dionysian process trespasses the bounds of will, music’s emergence into its imageless appearance is “prior to” subjective will. Music is the imageless coming into appearance of what is beyond appearance. But, Nietzsche implies, we cannot interpret this for ourselves without the metaphor of subjective will: he claims that “[the poet’s] own willing, longing, moaning, rejoicing, are to him symbols by which he interprets music” and again “he interprets music through the image of will.” Will is the metaphor for the interpretation of music. \textit{(BT, 55)}

\textsuperscript{39} As we will see, in \textit{PTZG}, both philosopher and poet attempt to petrify or transmit their intuition. In \textit{BT}, Nietzsche says “[poetry] desires to be . . . the unvarnished expression of the truth” (61).

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 55.

\textsuperscript{41} This mirrors the claim in \textit{OMW} that will is the subject but not the origin of music (110).
This should call to mind much the same point in *OMW*, but in which Nietzsche had not so explicitly thematized will as interpretation. There Nietzsche had claimed that “The ‘will’ as the most original manifestation is the subject of music,” but that the origin of music “cannot by any means be the ‘will’ but must lie in the lap of the power that in the form of the ‘will’ generates a visionary world: the origin of music lies beyond all individuation, and after our discussion of the Dionysian this principle is self-evident.” 42

Nietzsche has repeated here in *BT* the provenance of music beyond the individual, in a Dionysian experience, but in this text, aligns “will” with the interpretation of that very experience to the poet.

Recall that Nietzsche has said that in the lyric poet we have the birth of a second kind of language, one that mirrors not phenomena but music. The language of the poet here gives music an appearance as a phenomenon. 43 In the lyric poet’s lyrical composition, s/he interprets to her/himself music as will. But music is not only a content—not only a content mirrored in lyric—but an expression—of the heart of things, *Urgrund*, or *Ur-Eine*—or, of the loss of individuation. Thus, if we interpret music as will, we already experience it as preceding that interpretation, as calling for an interpretation. Which is to say, in that lyrical creation the poet experiences his/her ‘will’ as the attempt to configure that which—already gave rise to it.

In the final sentence in this passage, Nietzsche claims that in projecting this Dionysian vision in lyric, the “I” “is not the same as that of the waking, empirically real man, but the only truly existent and eternal self resting at the basis of things, through

42 OMW, 111.
43 This sounds very close to the claim that language is performative.
whose images the lyric genius sees this very basis.” The “I” of the poetic lyric becomes the symbol by which the “world-symphony” is reprojected: “For, as a matter of fact, Archilocus, the passionately inflamed, loving, and hating man, is but a vision of the genius, who by this time is no longer merely Archilocus, but a world-genius expressing his primordial pain symbolically in the symbol of the man Archilocus.”44 In this state, the artist has already been released from his individual will, and has become, as it were, the medium through which the one truly existent subject celebrates his release in appearance. . . . Only insofar as the genius in the act of artistic creation coalesces with this primordial artist of the world, does he know anything of the eternal essence of art; for in this state he is, in a marvelous manner . . . at once subject and object.45

Against Schopenhauer’s insistence on installing the subject-object opposition in the description of the lyrists’ creation, Nietzsche contends that the lyrist obtains a Dionysian release from individual subjectivity, and it is in that state of release that the song, in both its musical and lyric elements, are composed. Hence the characterization herein involves a complication of the subject-object distinction. (BT, 50)

Music has been said to be the repetition of the loss of individuation. It is regathered for the individual in the image of the lyric, but not subjectively. The “I” is the individualized site of coming into appearance of primal suffering as an embodiment of suffering and the redemption of coming into appearance. Lyric poetry, then, justifies the suffering it portrays. Through the images the lyrist sees the basis, the unity that music

44 Something of the distance between the lyrical I and the personal I can be seen in the distance between the narrative voice and the personal voice of Nietzsche in the later works.
45 BT, 52.
expresses; he sees his subjective being as exceeded by its appearance—he is connected to this excess through what seems to be a musical mood.

In BT and OMW, music is related to will, and will is distinguished from Urgrund, or what is called the primary unity or primary ground of the world, and of life. Music, in both texts, is an expression of Urgrund, or the primal unity. And language is a symbolization, or a recapitulation in the form of images, of music. At the same time, in OMW, Nietzsche says that music is that through which and as which we understand anything at all of “willing and becoming.” Relatedly, he says in BT that willing is the image by which we interpret music, the symbol by which music appears. And in OMW, he calls music the Erscheinungsform, the general form of appearance.

Though the primal oneness sometimes has the sense of itself being an undergirding subject, that does not seem necessary here. Pursued negatively, the suggestion is simply that the composition of music is a door into being outside the confines of the subjectivity we take to characterize it. And language, when it is written out of a vantagepoint that is determined by that musical experience, rather than grounded in the subject’s conceptual forethought, unworks the unity and solidity of the subject for the one writing. This language of “redemption” that creeps up in these moments will be replaced in the later work. And when the draw into appearance, and into the unified subjectivity of the everyday, is no longer expressed as redemptive, what new idiom will Nietzsche use to express the force behind that draw? Whatever it may
be, we at least see here that Nietzsche’s depiction of language is wrapped up in an unworking of the Subject.\footnote{One implication of these passages seems to be that it is the symbolical approach to images—approaching them as expressions of something other to their image-content—that is necessary here. If we experience the language of subjective willing as a symbol of what music expresses, put into a form that we are able to contemplate, then we come to see our subjective states as underwritten by that which they express. And it seems that we could turn that view to music itself, and understand its appearance-character—while non-visual, imagistic, or conceptual—as also the expression of something that underwrites it. It seems that it is only the power we are shown to have in what the structure takes as epiphenomenal—only the power to experience our subjective will, and indeed myth, as symbolic—in seeing it as expression of something else—that situates the entire structure by which Urgrund is finally revealed to the poet, and revealed obliquely. But the something else is not otherwise than as projected in the language that finally reveals it to the poet.}

\textit{Metaphor: Interpretation, Work, and Becoming versus Rhetoric}

I want to now lead us into the distinction that Nietzsche makes between metaphor as \textit{vicarious image} versus metaphor as \textit{rhetorical figure}. It is the former that the lyric poet, in the creation of the lyric out of the musical mood, employs and through which s/he becomes. This treatment of metaphor as vicarious image is one of the reasons for finding in the discussion of language surrounding the lyric poet important features of deep connection with, and perhaps early iteration of, elements to be explored in Nietzsche’s later works: 1) the sense of language as performative; 2) a critique of the Subject; 3) a troubling, an unworking even, of the seeming priority that the constative claims of this text grant to music over language.\footnote{The critique of the Subject in Nietzsche’s mid-to-late notebooks and texts is taken up in Chapter 3; the treatment of constative versus performative language is taken up in Chapter 4.}

To recapitulate: as Nietzsche presents it, in lyric poetry, the musical aspect emerges from the poet, “as a Dionysian artist,” already “identifying himself with” the pain and contradiction of the primal unity, thus surrendering his subjectivity. Music emerges as the “recasting” of this primal unity into mere appearance without images. In
the linguistic aspect of the lyric poem, growing out of music, this recasting itself is recast: there is a “second mirroring.” It is as if, after the lyric poet is in a Dionysian state, “Apollo approaches and touches him with the laurel. . . . [and then] the Dionysian musical enchantment of the sleeper seems to emit image sparks, lyrical poems, which in their highest development are called tragedies and dramatic dithyrambs.” Music transmits the Dionysian state that the poet then recasts into specific images, such that the images are more than surfaces, and more than emergent subjectivity. The lyric poem can appear to be the spontaneous work of an individual subject, but if it emerges from the spirit of music, then it is already in the mode of recasting the experience undergone, but not identified, within that spirit. This specific imagery of the lyrical recasting finally “shows him [the poet] his identity with the heart of the world.” In this mode, the lyrical “I” and the lyrical projections of the “I” do not regard the individual subject—Archilocus—but the “I” of the speaker itself becomes the symbol, translating into images, including the image of the speaking poet himself, the “eternal self resting at the basis of things,” and the lyric poet sees, or, encounters for the first time for reflection, this in his images. (BT, 49-50)

Lyric poetry is thus always figurative, but not merely at the level of rhetoric, for the experience of the poet is itself a figure of music: “his own willing, longing, moaning, rejoicing, are to him symbols by which he interprets music.” The lyrical poetic person, the “I,” is thus symbol of that which first appeared, without images, in music.

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48 What the lyric poet says also shows us the god—we “see” Dionysus (i.e. regard the Dionysian exposure) in the images the poet projects, which are made specific to the poet’s own affective states.
49 BT, 55.
This means that the criticism that Nietzsche soon levels at the language of the poet is meant to underscore that the symbolic valence in lyric poetry is not the language itself—the mere words—but is the coming to language, or the longing for expression, that happens through the poet out of the wordless, imageless experience of music: “Language can never adequately render the cosmic symbolism of music, because music stands in symbolic relation to the primordial contradiction and primordial pain in the heart of the primal unity, and therefore symbolizes a sphere which is beyond and prior to all phenomena.” What comes first is the symbol-character of music, and language, later, translates the symbol-character into phenomenal appearance. Hence, the language is the phenomenal translation of that which has only a symbol-character—music. “Hence language, as the organ and symbol of phenomena, can never by any means disclose the innermost heart of music; language, in its attempt to imitate it, can only be in superficial contact with music; while all the eloquence of lyric poetry cannot bring the deepest significance of the latter one step nearer to us.” (BT, 55)

This apparent criticism of language could seem to denigrate lyricism for its indirection, its character of recasting. But I believe that it also suggests that the translation provided by the lyric poet is not merely encapsulated in the language or eloquence of the poem, for it is the language and eloquence that do not get us closer to the primal unity. But language and eloquence are not all that are at issue in the poetizing of the lyricist. For Archilocus himself is able to access that unity in becoming himself, as poet, the symbol of the primal unity; bringing to expression in the affect of the poet, only touched in his words, that which does not appear. The words do not
contain the primal unity, for the issue is not containment; yet, in a certain performance of them, the poet becomes, and reflects to him/herself that becoming. The lyric poet is one who performs, and becomes in that performing of, words. The meaning of the words, their signification, is not the issue, as Nietzsche makes clear; it is that which is delivered to the performer of these words through the performing of them. The words become thick like images, dense as the image of the one performing them; it is as if the performer turns on the words and grasps them as their performance, as their emergence, and sees from whence they seem to emerge—to where their signification intends? No matter.

As we have seen in the above, much of the discussion of lyric poetry finds Nietzsche trying to complicate the depiction of lyric poetry as merely subjective, expressing the passions of a particular subjective experience, or as expressing, as Schopenhauer sees it, the emergence of poetry out of the conflict between subjective willing and objective knowing.

As Nietzsche recalls, Schopenhauer suggests that the lyric presents the tension and alternation between subjectivity and objectivity: between the poet being caught up in his desires, hence his limited subjectivity, and being pulled out of that by “the sight of surrounding nature” whereby he experiences himself as “subject of a pure and will-less knowing.” Nietzsche’s criticism here is that “the whole opposition between the subjective and objective . . . is irrelevant in aesthetics” because it presents the struggle as occurring within the self of the poet; on the contrary, Nietzsche sees “the subject, the willing individual that furthers his own egoistic ends” as the “antagonist” rather than
origin of art, and that from which the artist becomes “released” so that he becomes “the medium through which the one truly existent subject celebrates his release in appearance.” (BT, 51-52)

This suggests that the lyric poet accesses, in the experience of coming to/bringing to images, the original unity that is carried by the symbolism of music. The lyric poet sees the primal unity of things “through” the “images” in his poems, when the poet is taken to be himself “symbol” of a deeper reality, rather than a mere “ego.”\(^{50}\) But he accesses the primordial unity in a \textit{sublimated} fashion, for he accesses it through the valence of his own becoming-symbol, and thus he obliquely glances, as in relief, that which pre-exists the symbol—it is the becoming symbol, and the hint of that which pre-exists symbolization, that is his means of access to that which pre-exists all appearances:

Insofar as the subject is artist, however, he has already been released from his individual will, and has become, as it were, the medium through which the only truly existent subject celebrates his release in appearance. . . . On the contrary, we may assume that we are merely images and artistic projections of the true author, and that we have our highest dignity in our significance as works of art—for it is only as aesthetic phenomena that existence and the world are eternally justified. . . .\(^{51}\)

Music, as the first, non-imagistic recasting of the primal unity, is the power to transmit the primal unity through symbols. “[T]he word, the image, the concept here seeks an expression analogous to music and now feels in itself the power of music.”\(^{52}\) Music is thus an “analogue” for the poet because it is symbol—it is an analogy for the poet, then, in that it shows that the revealing power of all symbolization is not in the

\(^{50}\) Ibid., 51.

\(^{51}\) Ibid. But this is all manifest—like the point in \textit{OMW}, that will is the \textit{Allgemeinste Erscheinungsform} means it is manifest.

\(^{52}\) Ibid., 54.
phenomenal images produced but in the becoming the site of the “release” into appearances, in the sense that music was also a site of this kind of release. Archilocus cannot get directly at music, but mirrors it through the symbols of the subjective affects presented by himself, as of the poet, in the lyric:

Thus all our knowledge of art is basically quite illusory, because as knowing beings we are not one and identical with that being which [is] the sole author and spectator of this comedy of art. . . . Only insofar as the genius in the act of artistic creation coalesces with this primordial artist of the world does he know anything of the eternal essence of art; for in this state he . . . can turn [his] eyes at will and behold [himself]; he is at once subject and object, at once poet, actor, and spectator.”

Lyric poetry is one of the germs of the tragic chorus, and it might be called a germ because what happens for the lyric poet comes to happen on a larger scale for the audience in tragedy. For Nietzsche reads the tragic chorus, that which is the origin of tragedy, as having a similar structure to that of the lyric poet in relation to music and the primordial unity described above.

Given that the process of the lyric poet presents the “germ” of the dramatic dithyramb and of tragedy, it is possible for us to look ahead to some things Nietzsche says about tragedy, and apply them to the germ, to illuminate this relation between music and language. But as we do so, it is important to keep this in mind: when discussing the lyric poet, the relationship at issue is that between music and language. When Nietzsche later discusses tragedy, the relationship at issue is that between music and the tragic myth. Both relationships figure that between music and an expression, or symbolization, of music in an image-laden form.

53 Ibid., 52.
Nietzsche describes the satyr chorus as composing a “fictitious natural state” comprised of “fictitious natural beings.” These beings are not experienced as purely imaginative: the onlooker can be taken up into the position of the satyr chorus in that the satyr’s position is taken as symbolic of a relation between appearance and reality with which the Greeks were familiar. The satyr occupies a position that is felt as the natural position of man were he, unnaturally, to be without the trappings of culture: “the gulfs between man and man give way to an overwhelming feeling of unity leading back to the very heart of nature.” The chorus is felt to “represent existence more truthfully.” It is not that the chorus shows reality, but that it, like music for the lyric poet, symbolizes a relation between reality and appearance: “the symbolism of the satyr chorus proclaims this primordial relationship between the thing-in-itself and appearance.” (BT, 58, 59, 61, 62)

Nietzsche agrees with Schiller’s view that the tragic chorus sets up a “living wall” to “close itself off from reality and to preserve its ideal domain,” and goes on to describe the way in which this closing off and preservation aids in a translation and transformation of reality that bears a similar structure to the work achieved through the lyric poet in relation to music, described above. There is a transformation enabled by this walling up at the heart of his description. When he claims, in relation to those who overlook the significance of this feature of the “wall,” that “it is not sufficient that one merely tolerates as poetic license what is actually the essence of all poetry,” he emphasizes that the transformation of reality that occurs is not a device and is not extraneous to the work. (BT, 58)
It is the visible symbolizing that, reinterpreting Schiller, “is a living wall against the assaults of reality because it—the satyr chorus—represents existence more truthfully, really, and completely than the man of culture does who ordinarily considers himself as the only reality.” The satyr is a projection of what man is behind the appearances of culture, and as such, this what man is, as unified with all other men, cannot be grasped except through such a projection out of the site of culture in which man always already finds himself. Because in the satyr’s appearance this is related to as the appearance of that which, in all cultured appearances of man, never shows itself, the symbolic power of the satyr also depicts the relationship between appearances and the truth of those appearances which itself does not appear in them, or as Nietzsche calls it here, between the world of appearances and “the eternal core of things, the thing-in-itself”: “just as tragedy, with its metaphysical comfort, points to the eternal life of this core of existence which abides through the perpetual destruction of appearances, the symbolism of the satyr chorus proclaims this primordial relationship between the thing-in-itself and appearance.” (BT, 61-62)

The satyr chorus is thus a middle ground, an appearing of what does not appear. This middle-character is essential to its achievement of the Dionysian and Apollinian together. The chorus is an appearance of the destructiveness of all individual existence implicit to Dionysian reality, in its embodiment of such literal destruction of individuals. At the same time, because the destruction takes place as an appearance that is the setting of the destruction, there is an embodiment of “the eternal life of this core of existence which abides through the perpetual destruction of appearances.” The
appearing of the destructiveness in the form of the tragic drama is what gives the
metaphysical comfort, and the saving power, to the contact with this destructiveness. It
is mediated through the redeeming character of appearance. Hence, “we may call the
chorus in its primitive form, in proto-tragedy, the mirror image in which the Dionysian
man contemplates himself.” (*BT*, 61, 63)

Nietzsche takes up the question of the derivation of tragedy from the chorus,
and it is his artist’s metaphysics, as well as the general structure of the lyric poet’s
process, that aids him in explaining how the chorus can be thought as tragedy *in nuce*.
Nietzsche proposes that the satyr, “as the Dionysian chorist,” “the fictitious natural
being, bears the same relation to the man of culture that Dionysian music bears to
civilization.” The man of culture is to the satyr as civilization is to Dionysian music. This
latter relation between civilization and Dionysian music is expressed with an image
borrowed from Wagner, that the relation of civilization to music is like lamplight
subjected to the light of day. Lamplight is *aufgehoben* by the light of day. The lamp’s
light, shining, is taken into the shining of the daylight—it is not destroyed, but rather,
the drawing its contour, its difference from the day’s light, has no means of appearing.
The difference of the lamp’s light from the day’s light is what disappears, for all around
is only one light. “Similarly, I believe, the Greek man of culture felt himself [*aufgehoben*]
in the presence of the satiric chorus; and this is the most immediate effect of the
Dionysian tragedy, that the state and society and, quite generally, the gulfs between
man and man give way to an overwhelming feeling of unity leading back to the very
heart of nature.” This is a description of that Dionysian process of the loss of the measure of separable subjectivity:

The metaphysical comfort—with which, I am suggesting even now, every true tragedy leaves us—that life is at the bottom of things, despite all the changes of appearances, indestructibly powerful and pleasurable—this comfort appears in incarnate clarity in the chorus of satyrs. . . . With this chorus the profound Hellene, uniquely susceptible to the tenderest and deepest suffering, comforts himself, having looked boldly right into the terrible destructiveness of so-called world history as well as the cruelty of nature, and being in danger of longing for a Buddhistic negation of the will. Art saves him, and through art—life.54

Thus, the tragic myth, presented in the drama, is said to be the presentation of Dionysian states, the very presentation of which redeems an existence characterized by the Dionysian: “. . . the essence of tragedy . . . can be interpreted only as a manifestation and projection into images of Dionysian states, as the visible symbolizing of music, as the dream-world of a Dionysian intoxication.” The chorus gives the Dionysian vision and, as an art product, performs the redeeming of Apollo. (BT, 59, 92)

On one hand, the chorus presents the audience with a Dionysian vision: to the extent that onlookers “permit themselves to be represented by such satyrs,” they can “imagine that [they themselves are] chorist[s].”55

54 Ibid., 59. Nietzsche articulates the saving power that the chorus, as an appearance, has for the one who has been exposed to this Dionysian aspect of existence. This thought is repeated as we are told how “the Dionysian man resembles Hamlet,” as “an insight into the horrible truth... outweighs any motive for action.” This negation of will that accompanies the Dionysian vision is a danger, and “[here] where the danger to his will is greatest, art approaches as a saving sorceress, expert at healing. . . . The satyr chorus of the dithyramb is the saving deed of Greek art; faced with the intermediary world of these Dionysian companions, the feelings described here exhausted themselves” (60).

55 The Dionysian element of loss of individuation is not fully detached from an Apollinian element of the construction of difference through appearance, which is to say, there is an ineradicable sense of figure or symbolization to the chorus, just as the movement to images in the lyric grew out of the poet’s experience of music. This is a development of that sense of dream as full immediacy which is yet still undergirded by that which it does not fully represent—that which is the source of pleasure in the dream—and this is what Nietzsche seems to call the “saving power of Greek art,” which is linked to the
The Entrance of Metaphor as Transformation

It is here that Nietzsche suggests that the satyr chorus is a metaphor: “For a genuine poet, metaphor is not a rhetorical figure but a vicarious image that he actually beholds in place of a concept.” He follows this sentence by describing the difference between two ways of constructing a character, one way being that of “vicarious image”: “A character is for [a genuine poet] not a whole he has composed out of particular traits, picked up here and there, but an obtrusively alive person before his very eyes.” (BT, 63)

The satyr chorus, then, is a vicarious image, not only for the poet, but for the audience: “The Dionysian excitement is capable of communicating this artistic gift to a multitude.” The distinction between the composition of the metaphor and the experience of the metaphor is eradicated because the vicarious image of the satyr chorus describes not only the way it is composed, but the way in which it functions as an experience for the audience: the satyr chorus is experienced as a metaphor, a vicarious image in the place of a concept: “[t]he satyr chorus is, first of all, a vision of the Dionysian mass of spectators, just as the world of the stage, in turn, is a vision of this satyr chorus.” (BT, 63)

Nietzsche describes this process of taking on the metaphor as a transformation. This “magic transformation” is distinct from the painter’s relation to his images, which is one that retains the subject-object split, in which there is no fusion with the images, but

fact that the chorus is intermediary, emphasizing that the spectator is not completely taken into the chorus. Rather, “we may call the chorus in its primitive form, in proto-tragedy, the mirror image in which the Dionysian man contemplates himself” (BT, 63).
in which the images are held as “objects of contemplation.” In this phenomenon of the dramatic dithyramb, the image—of the satyr chorus—becomes that as which one sees oneself. It is vicarious, an image that one lives through. And because of this, another vision is afforded, the vision of that living as a satyr as itself revelatory of the Dionysian aspect of existence: “In this magic transformation the Dionysian reveler sees himself as a satyr, and as a satyr, in turn, he sees the god, which means that in his metamorphosis he beholds another vision outside himself, as the Apollinian complement of his own state. With this new vision the drama is complete.” (BT, 64)

What is interesting about this section for my purposes is that Nietzsche uses *Metapher* as the term to describe the distinction of this experience from mere figuration. This extension of metaphor beyond its being a linguistic figure is shared by both accounts of language. Here, there is a lived transformation that the Dionysian reveler undergoes, as he comes to see himself as a satyr. This seeing himself as a satyr is more than figuration because it implies a transformation rather than just a translation. Because of that transformation, he is able to see differently, to have another vision, that of seeing the god, which is, seeing the Dionysian truth that is depicted in the satyr’s experience. Metaphor is thus chosen as the means of naming this experiencing differently, in the place of a concept, that allows for an additional element of seeing to emerge. The difference between the rhetoricity of figure and the vicariousness of the image here is that provision of an additional view. The metaphors of this poet are seen in and through, they are not the figural translation of something extraneous to this seeing. This means that they create a vision that mediates that which they are of—for
they create the vision of the god, the Dionysian vision—they recreate the experience, through the satyr, of the Dionysian exposure that has been had, but has not been contemplated or recognized. What happens here is both performance and interpretation in the mode of the future anterior—this is what, finally, is recognized as what will have already occurred.

Recapitulation of the Lyric Poet

Nietzsche writes in OMW that the lyric poet is

the artistic human being who must interpret the music for himself by means of the symbolism of images and emotions but who has nothing to communicate to the listener. Indeed, in his transport he simply forgets who is standing close to him, listening greedily. And as the lyric poet sings his hymn, the people sing their folksong for themselves, prompted by an inner need, not caring whether the words are understood by those who do not sing.56

These notes also claim that music is will coming to expression—its subject is will. It is the unimagistic expression of the most basic form of appearance. If, as we are told here, the lyric poet interprets music for himself, he interprets the unimagistic coming to appear, the expression of will—not directly, as does music, but indirectly, by means of the symbolism of images and emotions. He uses images and emotions to indicate what does not appear in images as coming into appearance in images. These images and emotions are reflections of what the music indicates or expresses—what it echoes directly in sound.

Again, what music expresses directly, lyric poetry expresses through the detour of an image—a vicarious image, an interpretive schema, that which gives to be

56 OMW, 115, emphasis added. This reminds one of the attempt at a self-criticism.
interpreted: “The worst music, as opposed to the best poetry, can still signify the basic Dionysian world ground; and the worst poetry, as opposed to the best music, can still be a mirror, an image, a reflection of this basic ground.” The words, as experienced in lyric poetic performance, deliver reflections of music, symbolizing what it expresses. The images and emotions in which they consist, then, are the means to showing what music expresses—what it is to have already expressed. Music, because it is a bringing to expression, cannot be such a means: “Music never can become a means, however one may push, thumbscrew, or torture it: as sound, as a drum roll, in its crudest and simplest stages it still overcomes poetry and reduces it to its reflection.” (OMW, 116)

Lyric poetry is singing, an attempting to reach music, a tending toward music, a being its reflection; it thus uses a power of language that is other than gesturing or signifying. It sings rather than signifies through the words. It expresses the totality of words as symbols, not as signs.

To sing is to be the vessel or site of this outpouring. And to move from tone to tone in singing is a being directed not by conceptuality or images, not calculating/planning the next step or forming equivalences. The tone of words is the tone of music, the tone of words is the half of the essence of language that is music, this outpouring. Singing is a use of words that tries to forget its other half.

Nietzsche’s very use of the term Metapher marks this “transformative power” as a power of language, of the dramatist’s use of language. This is a power of language about which I have two claims. First, it seems to be immune to the criticism of language occurring earlier in the text, the criticism of the images of the lyric poet, which
attempted to present music but which could only symbolize it, and thus did not “bring the deepest significance [of music] one step nearer to us.” So we are going to have to ask about the relationship of this metaphorical use of images in the dramatic dithyramb to the use of language that the lyric poet introduced, and which we discussed in the previous section. Second, this description of metaphor is unique in Nietzsche’s early work, because it eschews the linking of metaphor with translation and figure for the linking of metaphor with transformation of vision. This is a working, performing language through which _being/what is_ is _not_ delivered, but rather, through which becoming is enacted. This is especially interesting given that much twentieth century metaphor theory follows precisely this development, moving away from the relegation of metaphor to a category of rhetoric and repetition, and toward metaphor as a figure of disclosure. Metaphor becomes not an isolated rhetorical figure that can be translated back into literal language after the detour through the figural, but it becomes a hermeneutical tool, a means of meaning creation.

**Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks**

*Philosopher and Poet*

The process of the lyric poet has a corollary in another text, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks (PTzG)*, wherein Nietzsche claims that both the poet and the philosopher undergo a similar process, that of having an “intuition” [Ahnung] which

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57 _BT_, 56.
58 Kant had already presaged something of the sort with his discussion of aesthetic ideas in the absence of a concept. See Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, on aesthetic ideas.
they seek to re-express or expose [herausstellen], the poet in verse, the philosopher in concepts.

The dialectical philosopher is one who “seeks to hear within himself the echoes of the total sound of the world [Gesammtklang der Welt] and to re-project them in the form of concepts,” concepts which are for this philosopher what verse is for a poet.59 In fact, both poet and philosopher desire to express this world-sounding that echoes within themselves: “What verse is for the poet, dialectical thinking is for the philosopher. He grasps for it in order to get hold of his own enchantment, in order to perpetuate it.”60 Words and verse, for the poet, and the expression through dialectic, for the philosopher, are the means needed to communicate “what he has seen and lived [lebte und schaute].”61 The sameness in the poet and the dialectical philosopher is that they have their means—for the poet, verse, for the philosopher, dialectical thinking—by which they attempt to express and perpetuate their enchantment (spell), or “what they have seen.”62

What the philosopher’s intuition is of, then, bears a striking resemblance to the Dionysian element of dissolution, the loss of individuation, what OMW called Urgrund, and which BT described as that which is brought to Schein by the imagistic lyrical element of the lyrical poet. It is BT’s discussion of music in this context that will be seen to give more body to this description. We should recall that Archilocus’ use of language emerges from a musical “mood” or Stimmung. And that music does not truck in images,

59 PTzG, 44.
60 Ibid., 44.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
but rather expression or “echoing”—hence it was called a direct expression of the
Dionysian state, and not its symbolizing in the form of an image. Language, though,
trucks in images, language is an imaging. What is revealed, in the musical mood, is then
expressed in images, using language. Lyric poetry is the unity of this entire process, the
revelation through the musical mood, and the expression of that in images.

Nietzsche says nearly the same thing in the third section of PTzG. He claims that
Thales has an “intuition,” and that he expresses that image, or rather attempts to petrify
it for himself, in images, through using dialectic philosophy. Recall that the lyric poet is
one who has already experienced the Dionysian ecstasy, composed music in that state,
and who then casts the music in the form of language. What Nietzsche here suggests
about the dialectical philosopher is that there has also been a Dionysian ecstasy, and the
attempt to image this in the form of dialectical concepts, but, the music here is no
longer music as such. Music is rather the world-symphony, and this gives us reason to
recall OMW. In that the subject of music is will, the world-symphony that the
philosopher has heard is not the sound of music as such, but, since music is to will as
intonation is to tone, what the philosopher has experienced is something like—the
coming into appearance of appearances.

It must be kept in mind that philosophy is depicted in this dual fashion, as a
conviction or doctrine that emerges from an intuition for which an expression is
sought.63 This dual nature is the philosopher’s being the site of a sounding and a re-

63 In speaking of Thales as exemplary here, Nietzsche claims that his generalization that “all is water” was
not empirical observation, but that “[w]hat drove him to it was a metaphysical conviction that had its
origin in a mystic intuition” (PTzG, 39, emph. added). Nietzsche claims that all philosophy is characterized
projection, seeking to let echo in himself the full sounds of the world and then to project that out of himself in a concept. He will claim that poetic and philosophical expression are the same in their being, for different kinds of men, the means of communicating and perpetuating a personal transformation that he calls this “seeing” of the unity of all things.

This duality is important because it means that intuition and expression are included, together, in what is labeled philosophy or philosophical thinking, just like the duality of the lyric poem, just like the duality that has been sketched out, throughout these early works, of music and words.

Sean D. Kirkland’s interpretation of “personal attunement” in PTzG is actually helpful for interpreting this common description of the philosopher and poet, those “striv[ing] to let the whole sounding of the world echo in himself and to project it out of himself in concepts.” Kirkland suggests that we read Stimmung not as “mood,” but, in the Heideggerian tradition, as attunement:

Heidegger insists here that Stimmung announces itself, contrary to our term ‘mood,’ as a Gestimmtsein, a ‘being affected by, determined by, or attuned to.’ That is, it is essentially not a merely subjective or internal occurrence, which may or may not have a connection to the world, to ‘what is.’ Rather, it originally entails a relation to its intentional object, a prior, pre-cognitive being determined or affected by one’s world.

by such intuition—of the unity of all things—wedded to the “ever-renewed attempts at a more suitable expression” of it (39). So the content of philosophy is the expression of the metaphysical conviction that arises from the mystic intuition that all things are one. The intuition that all things are one remains “religious” or “superstitious” unless it is also paired with a certain attempt at expression. Philosophy is not the mystic intuition that all things are one, but the intuition along with the attempt to express this.

65 Ibid., 426.
Reading *Stimmung* in this way, Kirkland calls it “that moment of always prior contact with the world,” which is the sense of being determined by “the world’s always initial phenomena, i.e. appearances or modes of self-presentation. . . .” So, in Kirkland’s reading, personal attunement is the expression of the always having already appeared of the world, in the form of a being determined by this already sounding, appearing. Importantly, there is no getting behind the attunement, no sense of speaking of the human who preexists that appearing/sounding, or of that which appears/sounds to the human, for what is separated analytically in language here are co-constitutive of a unitary phenomenon that might be called the “sounding” of the world.

The philosopher’s intuition can only be expressed through dialectic and scientific reflection, just as the poet’s intuition can only be expressed through verse. But, verse and dialectical thought are translations, Nietzsche claims here. Both poet’s and philosopher’s means are like “alien tongues.” They are all that can be grasped for, but they cannot fulfill the desired directness. They are thus called “sad means,” because the only means, and means unequal to the hope of the power behind it.

*The Sad/Miserable Means*

Just as, for the poet, word and verse are stammering the intuition and enchantment of the poet into an “alien tongue” that is needed to tell what has been seen and lived, so is every philosophic intuition expressed through dialectic. “Thales had seen,” or had intuited, “the unity of all that is” but, there is only a sad means, so “when he went to communicate it, he found himself talking about water!” He did not choose

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66 Ibid., 427.
water as an allegory for the vision—he wanted to communicate the vision itself. Here, Thales is in the position of both poet and philosopher, having had an intuition, expressing it, but having only a miserable means in which to do so. And that means of expression is called miserable because it is “[fundamentally] a metaphoric and entirely unfaithful translation into a totally different sphere and [language].” (PTzG, 44, 45)

My reading of BT and OMW has held that although language is presented as in a hierarchy below music, in that music is a direct expression while language is only a copy of music, it seems, nevertheless, that there is a power that language affords. This is language in its ability to provoke the interpretation of what it makes visible. Lyrical language, and the language of myth, seem to have this character of providing an insight, making it visible, such that an interpretation becomes possible. Although it is clear that language is derivative of music, this is not the end of the story, for its very derivation as a form of expression allows for a mediation whereby the content of that expression can become interpreted. But here there is a clear criticism of language. It is significant that Nietzsche has used the terms from the genetic account, those of Metapher and Übertragung.

There is a fallenness of expression from primordial intuition. The suggestion is that the expression of intuition—by which philosophy is constituted—will always be fallen, whether it takes place in poetic verse or in dialectical thought. When Nietzsche invokes “metaphor” at last here, it is in the sense of “mere metaphor,” and reading metaphor as a kind of analogy. It is the mark of a failure of directness in expression. There can be no directness; this is the requirement of expression in language.
Metaphor, as a kind of analogy, is made primordial expression, however, because it is said to undergird both the coming to expression of poetry and of concepts. But it is still the site of the loss of the proper, that primordial intuition.

Early in this section, he claims that imagination, and finding resemblance and similarity, is essential to the uniqueness and the power of philosophical thinking, to its fruitfulness. And by extension, as Thales was the first to venture toward conceptual thinking, he suggests that it is imagination that is responsible for that emergence of abstraction and the transition into a new way of thinking, beyond empiricism on one hand, and beyond myth and allegory on the other. Yet, when it comes to discussing the philosopher who uses dialectical thinking, and the poet who uses verse, Nietzsche is back to the criticism of the “metaphorical” quality of language, in its failure to be a direct presentation, in its being a translation. And he classifies Thales here as a dialectical philosopher, or as a poet, for Thales is said to suffer the same limitation of means that those two do.

When Nietzsche shifts into the language of the “sad” metaphor at the end, then, he speaks from the viewpoint of dialectical philosophy itself, the viewpoint that prizes the content rather than the experience of the drive to expression within the intuition/transformation. Being carried along by the power of the drive to expression, that of creative imagination, is joyous and light—judging any given expression for its success in transmission will always find a failure at its feet. Nietzsche slides between both positions, and ends up in the latter. Metaphor is sad, then, from the vantagepoint
of dialectical philosophy, whose goal is transmission of the given, the original. If the goal is to transmit this, poetry and dialectical philosophy can only be a sad means.

And this is what Nietzsche does when he expresses metaphor, in the end, as sad. Metaphor is a sad means because there is something in dialectical philosophy of the pathos of truth.

Everything depends upon what we want language to do and whether we experience illusion as joyful. There can be a joy in language’s failure to achieve direct expression, if illusion is still that which inspires one with joy. The sense in *BT* is that the *Schein* of myth and lyric poetry is not approached with the question of whether it is a direct presentation. In *PTZG*, we have a different motivation behind the use of words, one which desires to “transmit” and “perpetuate” intuition. This is the perspective of the scientific man, described in the last few passages of *OTL*. In short, metaphor is a sad means if we expect correspondence, and expect that as an absence of illusion.

This could be a reason why there seems to be no trace of lamentation in *OTL*’s mapping of metaphor across the layers of experience. This text presents the metaphorical aspect of language within the terms a scientific culture would recognize, and within the perspective of language in its capacity to treat phenomena.67

**Conclusion**

In this chapter we have explored texts and unpublished notes from the early 1870s composed just prior to, and sometimes overlapping with, the texts grouped in

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Chapter 1. This grouping followed the sense that these texts that seem to present an expressive view of language, one that depicts language in relation to music, depicts music as itself emergent from and expressive of an origin, and seems to depict language as the “recasting” of the origin-expression which music itself is said to be. On the surface, then, these texts are distinguished from the genetic accounts because they depict language not as a creative, aesthetic leap into a new sphere, but as the copy or recasting of music, which is itself the provision into appearance of an originary insight into being, that of either the Dionysian origin of all experience, or an insight into the primal ground of all experience. Thus it seems on the surface that language in these texts is depicted as derivative, as the copy of the copy which music is.

What I tried to show in explicating these sections, however, is the troubling of this notion of language as copy of the copy—as copy of music’s copy of the origin of phenomenality—by concentrating on two key elements: the “duality of language” and the figure of the lyric poet. Neither of these elements are tangential to the discussion of language; both are central. The first, the duality of language, described in the notes translated as “On Music and Words” (OMW), unworks the surface appearance of priority given to music in such texts, for music is herein said to itself develop out of the dual essence of language as tone and gesture—music is a further development of the tonal aspect of language. The result of this stated derivation is to unwork the very priority of music over language. While language, as poetic text, may emerge from the spirit of music, music itself is said to be the extension of one part of the essence of language, its tonal half. Once again, as in the above genetic accounts, we are presented
with the ambiguity of origin, for the result of this description is both to cast music as
language, the further development of part of language’s essence, and to cast
language—poetic, dramatic, or even operatic language—as the recasting of music. This
ambiguity is not merely implied; it is directly stated.

The second key element of these accounts is the figure of the lyric poet. The
figure of the lyric poet seems placed between more constatively dominant textual
elements—the artistic metaphysics of the first few sections, the discussion of tragedy—but this figure is significant for a number of reasons. It interrupts what appears to be an overtly claimed linear progression from origin to music to lyrical language—the overt casting of language as the copy of music’s copy of the origin—because the lyric poet
does more than simply copy what is already there in music. The lyric poet provides the
delivery of the encounter with the Dionysian/the originary exposure, which music
expresses, to the one who has been thus exposed for the first time, and in such a way
that this exposure can be interpreted. Though it is accessed in the production of music,
the Dionysian exposure is yet not recognized or interpreted until this exposure is
rendered in the form of language, specifically, of lyrical language. This means that even
though lyrical language is presented as derivative of musical experience, it yet subverts
the priority of music, because lyrical language marks the delivery of that experience. It is
difficult not to read here the structure of future anteriority, for we are given a duality of
the experience of Dionysian exposure: its experience as music, of which we are the
vessel through which this exposure moves into expression; its experience as language,
through which we see ourselves as the vessel that was, before we could recognize it.
An interesting addendum is presented in *PTzG*, in which two significant extensions of *BT* occur. First, the claim that not only is it the work of the lyric poet to deliver this Dionysian experience to interpretive possibilities, but that this is equally the work of the philosopher—the philosopher and the poet do the same work. Second, in this text, in distinction to *BT*, that very delivery of the prior exposure to the “sounding of the whole world,” which lyric poetry and philosophy are said to be, is given a cast of, what I call, lamentation—both are called “sad,” marked as failures, for they fail to achieve the *direct* presentation of the exposure that propels them. It seems to be the element of language that prevents their success—language imposes a spacing, it cannot disappear into the view that it presents, it introduces an irreducible spacing and density.\(^{68}\) It is significant, to my reading, with a significance far more important than that to which my attention has done justice, that the figure of the lyric poet in *BT*, itself the germ of the dramatist and tragedian, obtains nothing of this cast of lamentation. Here, the “vicarious metaphor” seems to militate against this sense of loss. The language of the lyric poet, and of the dramatist, is said to be the living mirror, the vicarious, lived through, similitude, which achieves the delivery to the poet of the prior exposure. The copying, metaphorical nature of this presentation seems, thus, rather than the mark of a falling away, the mark of a *sine qua non* of direct experience at all. So we see here, in this apparently unified treatment of language as “expressive,” two very different vantagepoints on its content. Thus my claim is that the difference regards the

\(^{68}\) We are reminded here of the relation between *logos* and *noesis* in Plato: that which is, and is to be sighted by the soul, cannot be transferred through *logos*, though *logos* may lead us up to the requisite precipice of this sighting. We are, thus, also reminded of Derrida’s notion of *différance*. 
vantagepoint being figured within the given text: within *PTzG*, the vantagepoint of the philosopher prevails, finding language a failure at recapturing what is valued in philosophy, the origin; within *BT*, language is no failure, because it gives the prospect of a becoming enabled through the language. Thus, is it the case that what we find in these texts is language splitting into various functions, language as re-presentation of *what is*, and language as valence of work, performance, and becoming?
Part II
Introduction to Part II

In the later work, writing becomes a site of provocation, the site in which the relation between the narrative voice of the text and the self depicted within that text becomes one of the more interesting questions. Notice that this is divorced from a primarily autobiographical interest, for the narrative voice of a text is not necessarily the direct voice of the author, of Nietzsche the person. My view here is that writing becomes a privileged site or stage for the later work, and that one of the issues being staged here is that of the relation of the self to the self. This interrelation of writing and the self is most striking in those places in the later work in which it seems as if there is a certain work on the self being carried out in the narrative project of the writing, especially, in the Prefaces of 1886 (to BT, GM, BGE, HTH, Dawn) and in Ecce Homo (though this latter work is also foregrounded in the third Untimely Meditation, Schopenhauer as Educator).

The initial question that such passages and such suggested interrelations provoke might be posed in this way: what is performed in this work of self-narrativizing?

This is an especially important question to answer because this view that writing is depicted as the site of a work on/of the self seems on the face of it to be in tension with other central interests of the later work, namely, the critique of the Subject. To privilege a question regarding the self, to see this as central to the later work, thus raises the question, how does this valence of the texts relate to the critique of the Subject, the apparent denial of the Subject, that we find also in the later works and notes? Doesn’t the critique of the Subject undercut the attempt to privilege the self?
We can see this tension if we focus on the notion of unification. The critique of the Subject emphasizes dispersal, or the impossibility of unification of the Subject. The force of the critique of the Subject seems oriented toward unworking the illusion of unification implied by our view of the Subject. Yet, it seems as if part of what is at issue in *amor fati* and in the retrospective retrievals figured in narrative in all those textual sites mentioned above (*Ecce Homo, Schopenhauer as Educator, the Prefaces*) is precisely a work that appears to be of the order of unification, in the sense of creating and uniting a previously dispersed self and its history into an at least narrativized whole.

So, reading these two valences of the works together, wondering how the self-narratives and the critique of the Subject are to be reconciled, we might press certain questions against that apparent unification in these passages of self-narrative: is there actually a unification of the self figured here, or is part of the work of this writing to unwork the apparent unity? And, is the apparent unification to be read as merely the illusory hope of a particular narrative voice, one who, in this hope, reveals his own implication in cultural tendencies toward unification that Nietzsche is critiquing? In other words, are these unifications being critiqued and unworked, as part of Nietzsche’s critique of modernity? Is this a unification that might be squared with the critique of the Subject, one which acknowledges an impossibility of full assimilation?¹

Running throughout the reading of these two issues, and the attempt to read them together, is that constellation of language, and it might even seem that the constellation of language in the later work is oriented around these nodes of the self,

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¹ This would seem to put it closer to a hermeneutic view of interpretation.
narrative, and writing. My approach is to believe that if we focus on narrativizing the self as it takes place in Nietzsche’s later work, we find something like the center of the later constellation of language, and, a sense of how that constellation is involved in, and is central to unpacking, his mature philosophical project.

In my view, the surface tension between these two strands, the Subject and the self, and the question of how to reconcile them, is a promising surface conundrum in Nietzsche’s work. And this view obviously takes something for granted at the outset: that there is an important relationship between what are vaguely here termed the Subject and the self, and thus that these two strands need to be thought together. This is obviously a prejudice informing my work, and I am allowing it to do so in the hope that letting vagueness pave the way might actually lead to some clarification about what Nietzsche means both by the Subject and by the self, if only obliquely. Regardless of the labels that might be given to these two strands, and the uses to which they might be put, I believe we might start with the question: can they be reconciled, and what happens in the attempt? Thus we begin with the Subject.
Chapter 3
Who is Speaking—Language and the Subject

Introduction

The Critique of the Subject

If we consider the critique of the Subject in all its myriad forms, it is very hard not to meet up with the following questions, somewhere along the way: What is to become of the notion of the Subject? Is it to be replaced by a mitigated version, a differently construed subject or subjectivity? Or, is it to be eschewed completely? Does the critique of the subject lead us to reject this category altogether, and, if so, what exactly does this involve? Or does the critique of the Subject lead us to revise the constitution of Subject and subjectivity, and what exactly would comprise this revision, and could it escape the vicious circle of a constant, retrospectively realized failure? These questions ask, in essence, whether the Subject and subjectivity is to be rejected or reconceived.¹

¹ There are a number of ways that the emergence of this questioning within philosophy might be genealogized, and while this is not my interest or intention here, mentioning a few historical references might help to at least draw its outlines: Freud’s positing of the unconscious; Althusser’s “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” which describes a Subject which in no sense is pre-existing to but is rather created through the interpellation of various state institutional forms; Foucault’s highly influential analyses, such as that in Discipline and Punish, which depict the Subject as, again, not pre-existing to but the effect of power as it works through the networks of socially-arranged discourses and knowledges; feminist work on the non-essentiality of “woman,” building off of Simone de Beauvoir’s claim, in The Second Sex, that “one is not born but rather becomes a woman.” Critiques such as these and others have given rise to work which has become attentive to the ways that the Subject, or subjectivity, is formed through processes that are importantly historical, political, and social—a vantagepoint on what Foucault calls “subjectivation”—rather than as a pre-given essential ground through which we orient ourselves within these valences. Some of the widely regarded key insights that have emerged from work that responds to or is influenced in some way by these discourses includes the insight that the very vision of
It is often claimed that Nietzsche’s view of the Subject amounts to a denial of the Subject—after all, the text says as much in some places: some of the more often cited claims regarding the Subject, such as, that there is “no doer behind the deed,” or that the Subject is a fiction, may yield the impression that Nietzsche’s view is only of the order of denial. It seems in the end more apt to say that what we are dealing with is a denial of certain features often associated with the Subject. It is a certain way of conceiving the Subject, and uses to which the concept of the Subject is often put, that are the focus of this critique.

what universal subjectivity comprises has always been a work of power whereby some positions or roles (regarding class, gender, or sexuality) reflect themselves into the presumed vision of universality, and are thereby valued, normalized, and hence further empowered, while other positions not thus described are either ignored or disempowered. In other words, the power to claim to objectively describe the universal subject has largely fallen to those in positions of power through advent of gender, sexuality, or class, which power simply reinscribes itself in such a seemingly objective description. Hence, the view of universal subjectivity poses an epistemological and political problem, neither of which is fully extricable from the other: as subjectivity is formed through political relations available at a given historical vantage, it is never able to extricate itself from the contingency of that situatedness to speak to anything that is supposedly “outside” of such a situatedness. Thus a universal subjectivity could never be thematized. What I am calling Nietzsche’s critique of the Subject is found spread throughout a variety of passages from mid-to-late works containing such statements about the status of the Subject, treated below.

Ricoeur’s analysis of the Subject as treated by both Descartes and Nietzsche in the Introduction to Oneself as Another seems on point in many ways. Ricoeur claims that Nietzsche’s attack on the Subject of the cogito is primarily a linguistic and deconstructive claim: that in demonstrating the tropological nature of the language at work in “I think,” which is taken as Nietzsche’s primary method here, one that builds on his earlier claim in the Rhetoric course that all language is tropological, he shows that doubt is possible even at this stage of the derivation of the cogito, a doubt made possible by the ‘lying,’ illusory character of all language, and that Nietzsche’s intent should be considered as that of showing that he can doubt better than Descartes, precisely by noting this character of language. Ricoeur thus takes Nietzsche’s response to Descartes as deconstructive only. I think Ricoeur is admirably clear, and correct, in his emphasis on the tropology at work in the cogito. Where I hesitate is in the claim that Nietzsche’s work here is only deconstructive, only to doubt further. Ricoeur claims that even Nietzsche’s claim as to his “hypothesis: the subject as multiplicity” should be taken with the recognition that all language suffers from tropology, and hence, that Nietzsche cannot be taken to be “reconstructing” a Subject, as that reconstruction would suffer from the same tropological deconstruction, a point which Nietzsche must surely have recognized. Ricoeur is right about the carefulness Nietzsche had with regard to any such reconstruction, as I think we see in his claim that reading interpretation as interpretation is itself an interpretation, and “so much the better!” and in his claim about the multiple Subject as a “hypothesis.” However, it seems that Ricoeur, following a strong tradition, assumes that Nietzsche’s critique of truth, achieved through the tropological finding about language, relegates all of Nietzsche’s claims to the mode of deconstruction (of which irony would be a part, in my view). But, if interpretation itself has a power that is not of the valence of truth
Because Nietzsche’s claims regarding the Subject often respond explicitly to Descartes’ claims, and hence can be thought as a response to the Cartesian Subject, I will begin with a brief overview of this Subject.

**The Subject of Descartes’ Cogito**

According to Heidegger, but echoed elsewhere, since Descartes, modern philosophy has had an orientation toward the Subject, which determines the philosophical tradition. This orientation is based on the opinion that the ego is the first certainty given to the knower, that “the subject is accessible immediately and with absolute certainty,” whereas other objects require mediation to be known.

This orientation toward the Subject is comprised of certain beliefs about the Subject, and about objects, as this concern with the Subject brings the distinction between subject and object, or *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, to the center of view. This versus appearance as “falsity”—the power to make a possibility visible or inhabitable (and this is precisely one of the claims of Ricoeur’s hermeneutics)—then does this not mean that there can be a reconstruction of the Subject, only one which maintains itself within this view of interpretation, rather than only within the view of truth versus falsity? In other words, could there not be a reconstruction of the Subject that aims not at asserting the being of this Subject, but at making another self-relation possible? It does seem to be through implying a differently constituted Subject that Nietzsche is able to critique Descartes’ view—but does the fact that this is only an interpretation mean we are left only with a deconstruction?

Secondly, I also hesitate at Ricoeur’s suggestion that it is the tropological nature of language that carries Nietzsche’s critique of the Cartesian Subject. This, in my view, fails to account for the claims that Nietzsche makes about sensation, affect, and the body, generally speaking, in related passages. Both of my above hesitations will become apparent in the following. (See Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992], 1-26.)

4 Although the term ‘cogito’ derives from Descartes’ statement in the Principles “cogito, ergo sum,” itself a translation of the claim in *Discourse on Method* that “je pense, donc je suis,” it is used here, following standard practice, to refer to the basic finding expressed in the phrase, a finding that is also demonstrated in Meditation 2 of *Meditations on First Philosophy*—all of these phrases indicate the finding that the thinking and the being of “I” are co-implicative.

5 This section consists in an overview of the historical reading provided by Martin Heidegger in his *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, translated by Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975), 122-137. This source is hereafter referred to as *BPP*.

6 *BPP*, 123.
is because, in his articulation of the Subject, Descartes posited two kinds of substance, *res extensa* (extended substance) and *res cogitans* (thinking substance). Thinking substance pertains to the I or ego, and is thus the essence of the Subject. This splitting of substance into two kinds, thinking and extended, that pertaining to subjects and objects, becomes determinative. Heidegger claims that we see this basic structure taken up by Kant, for whom “... the I, the ego, is ... as it was for Descartes, *res cogitans*, *res*, *something*, that thinks, namely, something that represents, perceives, judges, agrees, disagrees, but also loves, hates, strives, and the like.” Further, from this structure, Kant articulates the ego as transcendental, holding that thoughts are what the ego has, predicates to a subject, and that they are *had* as a knowing of them. This distinctive having of all its thoughts and comportments brings the Subject’s knowing of the Subject along with any act of knowing. The ego is the ground, or the unifying, of all its determinations, all its predicates, such that it apperceives itself in any of its activities, which Kant articulated as the ‘original synthetic unity of apperception.’ (*BPP*, 125-127)

What Heidegger articulates here seems to be a kind of centrifuge around the ego. We see this if we consider that Aristotle’s term *hypoikeimenon* is translated into the Latin as *subjectum*, and was understood as that which underlies all actual beings, as that which has predicates but is not itself a predicate, and was roughly the meaning of substance. *Hypoikeimenon* was thus not something pertaining only to human beings but
to each existing or actual being. But, because in modern philosophy the ego is the 
*subjectum*—that which has predicates—true substance becomes the ego as *subjectum*.⁷

Continuing in Heidegger’s reading, one of the questions that arises for Descartes, 
that arises from the separation of two distinct kinds of substance and the privileging of 
one as the ground of the Subject, is how thinking substance can interface with extended 
substance. Faced with the two kinds of substance, thinking and extended, Descartes, 
thinking, begins from within thinking substance, and must proceed from some feature 
of this kind of substance, and these are the mathematical ideas. The Subject can engage 
extended substance in terms of its ability to appear in a form that is taken to give 
expression to mathematical ideas—*measurable* extension. What is true of extended 
substance is then only that in it which is mathematically renderable.

Kant follows this basic structure, and, in the building up of the transcendental 
ego, what happens to all other actuality, what are from here understood as objects (*res 
extensa*), is that in fact, their being is determined by the conditions of their appearing to 
the ego (for Kant retains the belief that being=appearing). The ego in its grounding 
character, as not *another* perceived object but that which is apperceived in all 
perception, the ground of all perception, thus grounds the perception through which all 
appearances become manifest. Thus the constraints of perception, or the categories 
defining how the ego can combine into perceived unities, because they set the context 
of all appearing to the ego, determine the being of all other beings insofar as

⁷ Ibid., 127. Heidegger claims that Hegel is the first to state this explicitly, though it builds on Kant, Descartes, and Leibniz.
appearing=being. The ego is transcendental insofar as it thus determines the conditions for any appearing. (*BPP*, 128)

Hegel continues with this structure laid out by the separation of subject and object, first, in the agreement that experience of objects presupposes forms of subjective understanding, in other words, that the Subject sets the conditions for appearance. However, history comes to play a role here, as history is the unfolding of consciousness coming to discovery of its own implicit conditions of knowing. The Kantian attempt to lay out the conditions of knowing, based on the constraints of the knowing subject, becomes a historical process for Hegel. But there is still this same form of grounding subjectivity, this same case that with each increase of nuance in the knowing of objects there is an increase in apperception, or, in a Hegelian register, a becoming explicit of implicit conditions of the Subject.

Yet another element that we see throughout this history is the limning in of being in accord with knowing, figured by the correspondence between being and knowing, which is another way to express the grounding character of the knowing subject. Descartes’ cogito presents an exemplary instance of the correspondence between knowledge and being, as it is a moment in which an object of thinking, the *thought* ‘I exist,’ is shown to be a necessary object of knowledge, as the thought immediately proves *an* existence that must *be* as long as there is thinking. The thought ‘I exist’ is the fundamental knowledge statement, for its necessary correspondence with being ensures that it must be true. Likewise, the unity of apperception that grounds the Subject for Kant is a moment of the perfect confluence of knowing and being. For Hegel,
with materiality and history being the development of Spirit, absolute knowing represents the confluence of knowing and being.

We also see here in Descartes’ cogito the attempt to unify the Subject through illuminating it. Descartes begins in thinking, and his project in *The Meditations*, while beginning with the question of what can be known with certainty, ends in the clarification of what the Subject is and how, through knowing what the Subject is, anything else can be known, and of that, only that which accords with the Subject’s mental perception of ‘clarity and distinctness’ can be. Likewise, Kant’s critical project is in many ways the attempt to articulate the extension and limits of the Subject, also thus deriving the point that only what the Subject can know can be said to be true. For Hegel, materiality itself, and history, is the immanence of consciousness, and all knowing is thus spirit becoming explicit to itself.

*Nietzsche’s Critique*

We will find in Nietzsche’s critique of this Subject a rejection of some of the features mentioned in the previous section, namely, the presumed correspondence between knowledge and being, specifically in the case of the who that presumes to know and the being of that who; the presumption that the ‘I’ of narration could know, as an object of immediate perception, what ‘I’ is. This rejection is achieved through the depiction of “thinking” as the extension of physiological processes, unworking the distinction between thinking and the body, indicating the inability of thinking to reach into its own origins, and hence, showing the Subject to be dispersed beyond its ability to articulate its own limits and thus unify itself.
Yet another word should be said, regarding the historical aspect of this critique of the Subject. We know that Nietzsche is attentive to historical context, and that his critiques always mark themselves with this attention in some way. I will try to indicate in the passages we consider how we can think this historical context, but a few things can be said at the outset. First, in passages in which Nietzsche speaks of the Subject and explicitly mentions elements, even terms, associated with Descartes’ cogito, we have grounds for assuming that the Subject under discussion therein is the modern Subject, that characterized in accord with the preceding section. But what about passages, namely, those in GM surrounding the slave revolt in morality, in which Nietzsche makes claims about a belief in the Subject that is, historically speaking, operative in the days contemporaneous with the life and death of Jesus Christ? We would seem to have two interpretive options here. Either we have in this instance a case of a modern mind, one already shaped by belief in the Subject, reading that belief anachronistically back into the history that is being constructed, the genealogy, thus calling attention to the projection, or infection, of the narrator of and by this belief; or, we read this not as a projection but rather the suggestion that there is a belief in the Subject bearing similarities to the modern Subject prior to modernity, hence calling into question that the sources of the belief are specifically modern. This will be a question that, once noted here, I will try to attend to at each stage of the following reading.

Finally, in the course of the ensuing retrieval of Nietzsche’s claims about the Subject, language will be a ubiquitous theme, and will often take over in emphasis. It is impossible to separate Nietzsche’s claims about the Subject from related claims about
language, because of the role of language in shoring up and reinstating the problematic aspects of the Subject that he wishes to call into question. This means that what we deal with here is equally a critique of language as it is a critique of the Subject. In fact, the aspects of the Subject that Nietzsche is interested in revising are those aspects that are able to be installed as schemas of certain uses of language—words and grammar—which installation leads to nefarious effects.

It may be easiest to lay out Nietzsche’s critique of the Subject by beginning with those passages that seem most to indicate a denial of the Subject, and to ask what it is that is being specifically denied. This will provide a means of setting up the terms of the critique.

**The Subject, Words, and Grammar**

*BGE §16 and §17*

In *BGE* §16 and §17, Nietzsche points out the multiplicity obviated by the claim “I think.” The belief that ‘I think’ contains an immediate certainty—either that that ‘I’ must be, or even that there is “an I” [ein ‘Ich’]—is linked to the “seduction of words,” which obfuscates the myriad “truly searching questions” that remain to be asked about ‘I’ and about ‘thinking.’ (*BGE*, 23-24)

Behind “I think,” which poses as immediate in its expression of what is the case—it is a statement taken to be a naked presentation of its object, hence something that can be immediately recognized as true—are a series of questions that remain covered by taking this statement as an immediate certainty. Exposing this series of
questions means exposing what are in fact a number of complex processes undergirding our very use of the words ‘I’ and “think” in an attempt to name those processes, let alone the complexity of their interrelation as immediate. In place of these complexities, covered by words, we find no definitive answers, a situation marked by Nietzsche’s listing of questions. What we find, here and elsewhere, is the prior reduction of complexity to unity under the schema of Subjects as agents; this reduction is being unworked. (BGE, 23-24)

The seduction is to take ‘I’ and ‘thinking’ as indicating realities that are as unitary and immediate as is our recognition of them as linguistic entities, as words. It is important that this ‘I think’ is put in quotation marks. What we assume of ‘I think’ is that it is what we call an ‘immediate certainty,’ a statement of a thought that “g[ets] hold of its object purely and nakedly . . . without any falsification on the part of the Subject or object.” In fact, the seduction of words here—both the words “immediate certainty” as well as the words ‘I think’—is just this: it is the seduction to believe that there is a whatness or reality shown by words which is fully captured by them, which is as immediate as the presence of the words seems to be. But the problem here is with the immediacy, and the completeness and unity connoted by certainty: the belief that there is no mediation involved between the statement ‘I think’ and the state of affairs to which it is applied, and the belief that this statement is a complete expression of the state of affairs. (BGE, 23)

In Nietzsche’s view, the statement ‘I think’ cannot be an immediate certainty because almost every function served by the statement is either a mediation, or,
contains a question or feature that is not completely known. We find a number of assumptions contained within the statement, and these assumptions are precisely those that have to do with the features of the Subject under contention here. We have the assumption that thinking must be undertaken by an acting subject as its cause, that ‘I’ names this subject, that there is an entity matching the name ‘I,’ that what occurs now is properly named ‘thinking’ rather than ‘willing’ or “feeling,” and that it is known what constitutes these states. The statement “I think,” considered as a name of a corresponding reality, covers over these questions. These views of immediacy and completeness are precisely what are owed to “the seduction of words.” This means that words give the impression of a reality that they themselves constitute.  

Further, this seduction involves an interpretation projected onto experience, one based on “inference according to the grammatical habit” of attaching agents to actions, or doers to deeds; specifically, of thinking that every activity belongs to “a one [Einer]” that is acting. In BGE §17 Nietzsche indicates the specific grammatical habit of attaching an agent to every activity, a subject for every verb. This is called a ‘schema’ that is the basis of the interpretation that there is an entity engaged in thinking in the case of ‘I think.’ This is, in fact, not an immediate certainty, but an interpretation mediated by this schema of the grammatical subject-verb habit. And Nietzsche calls this projected belonging a “schema” that also informs the scientific positing of atoms. Descartes fell under its spell, as do atomists. (BGE, 23-24)
In these passages from BGE, we are given reason to notice how words as singular units lead to the seduction to think that there are corresponding entities or realities that mirror that unity in both the sense of oneness and of immediate presence. We also see how the duality of words in subject-verb pairings leads to the seduction of thinking, along the same lines, that there are subject entities related to verb effects as their causes. Notice the suggestion that a seduction of words is to hypostatize from them entities or realities that mirror their unity and immediacy. All of this can be summarized by noting that what Nietzsche calls into question here is the immediacy of the cogito, or the immediacy of a relation between its two parts, the ‘I think’ and the ‘I am.’

This adds a further element to be considered. If the provision of the ‘I’ in ‘I think’ or ‘I doubt’ or ‘I exist’ comes from a grammatical habit, as both passages suggest, then what we find here is nothing about the found ‘I,’ but something about the seeking ‘I’: that it is subject to precisely this kind of habit. And this means that what Descartes does in the Meditations is not to discover the Subject, but actually to reveal the preexistence of the habit already at work in his thinking.9

Now, what are we to make of the historical question? It seems in many ways that this is pushed off onto the question of language, of those habits that Descartes exemplifies. Clearly, it took modernity for these seductions to become philosophically determinative. Is Nietzsche implying that a particular seduction toward the implications

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9 We might say that Descartes skips the question of the ‘who,’ and of the possible equation of two ‘whos’, and moves from the cogito immediately to the question of ‘what’ the found ‘I’ is. However, what we say about this found ‘I’ cannot be the case of this meditating, narrating ‘I,’ but only of the latter’s projections and forms of meditation. The found ‘I’ has to be considered from the fact of its emergence from an engagement of looking for—it—an engagement that can turn on its own contents, and that can thus deny itself under the banner of seeking itself. In doing so, it denies the possibility of finding the ‘I’ that set this seeking in motion, which it covers over by asserting that it is the same as what is found.
of words, which themselves pre-exist modernity by far, becomes more trenchant or tempting in modernity? It does not seem so, for the same “seductions” of grammar are indicated as tempting also for the pre-moderns in the passage we consider next. Because this next passage mentions not only the temptations but the needs to which they spoke, Nietzsche allows us to consider the way that needs give rise to beliefs that can, in another historical context, become philosophically determinative. Just as we moderns are the heirs to the conscience vivisection of millennia, which can combine with contemporary exigencies to produce new forms of vivisection, we modern Subjects are heirs to the same needs that gave rise to beliefs that predate their modern form.

_in this passage, the narrator returns to the slave revolt in morality, and he claims to present his solution to the “other origin of the ‘good’ . . . as conceived by the man of ressentiment.” While not all of the details in the genealogy of ‘good’ in the perspective of ressentiment are relevant to our discussion, some elements are useful in contextualizing the emergence of the Subject and the meaning of its denial, in this passage.

At this point in _GM I_, we recall that the oppressed and exhausted Israelite slaves find themselves in emergency conditions, and they are prompted by “an instinct for self-preservation” to the exploitation of a certain belief, the belief in the available conception of the Subject, for “their own ends.” Inasmuch as the slave revolt in morality consists in a reversal of the usage and meaning of particular words, namely the words ‘good,’ ‘bad,’ and the creation of ‘evil,’ what we find in this passage is the indication that
this transformation required a particular pre-existing conception of the Subject. By taking advantage of this pre-existing conception, the slave revolt is able to transform the meaning of those other words in a language. The transformation in the meaning of those words then goes on to reinscribe this moral vision into the original conception of the Subject, adding yet another layer to it. In this way, the Subject first enables a transformation in meaning that then renders the Subject into a moral subject, the Subject of ressentiment morality. This is, in broad outlines, the process Nietzsche describes in this portion of the essay.\(^\text{10}\) (GM, 44-46)

Here we find a claim that might be taken to indicate that we owe the Subject to a misreading of action provided by language and its ‘seduction’:

A quantum of force is equivalent to a quantum of drive, will, effect—more, it is nothing other than precisely this very driving, willing, effecting, and only owing to the seduction of language (and of the fundamental errors of reason that are petrified in it) which conceives and misconceives all effects as conditioned by something that causes effects, by a ‘subject,’ can it appear otherwise.\(^\text{11}\)

However, this tendency is also said to be part of the ‘popular mind’ and how it ‘sees’ events:

there is no “being” behind doing, effecting, becoming; ‘the doer’ is merely a fiction added to the deed—the deed is everything. The popular mind in fact doubles the deed: when it sees the lightning flash, it is the

\(^{10}\) As this is one of those passages in the *Genealogy* in which the narrator describes a non-teleological view of development, in which pre-existing forms are taken over, reinterpreted and redirected to new ends, it bears out the claim that “the cause of the origin of a thing and its eventual utility, its actual employment and place in a system of purposes, lie worlds apart; whatever exists, having somehow come into being, is again and again reinterpreted to new ends, taken over, transformed, and redirected by some power superior to it; all events in the organic world are a subduing, a becoming master, and all subduing and becoming master involves a fresh interpretation, an adaptation through which any previous ‘meaning’ and ‘purpose’ are necessarily obscured or even obliterated” (GM 2 §12, emphasis added).

\(^{11}\) *GM*, 45, emphasis added.
deed of a deed: it posits the same event first as cause and then a second time as its effect.\textsuperscript{12}

What there is is an event or a happening that is doubled into the perception of a doer and a deed. But it can seem that this tendency is also being said to have its source in language, as “scientists do no better when they say ‘force moves,’ ‘force causes,’ and the like . . . our entire science still lies under the misleading influence of language and has not disposed of that little changeling, the ‘subject’ (the atom, for example, is such a changeling, as is the Kantian ‘thing in itself’). . . .”\textsuperscript{13}

What we owe to the slave revolt in morality is not the Subject, but rather, a moral valence applied to the Subject. The Subject is for the slave revolt in morality a pre-existing form that the transformation of the slave revolt took over and reinterpreted in moral terms: “just as the popular mind separates the lightning from its flash and takes the latter for action, for the operation of a subject called lightning, so popular morality also separates strength from expressions of strength, as if there were a neutral substratum behind the strong man, which was free to express strength or not to do so.”\textsuperscript{14} We are told that the weak ‘needed’ this belief in “a neutral, independent ‘subject’” to prop up their “interpret[ation of] weakness as freedom, and their being thus-and-thus as a merit.”\textsuperscript{15} Thus, the oppressed took advantage of this pre-existing conception of the Subject in order to achieve the further transformation whereby their physiological characteristics of weakness and inaction might be reinterpreted as voluntary and virtuous characteristics:

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., emphasis added.  
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
This type of man *needs* to believe in a neutral, independent ‘subject’ . . . 

[1]he subject (or, to use a more popular expression, the *soul*) has perhaps been believed in hitherto more firmly than anything else on earth because it makes possible to the majority of mortals, the weak and oppressed of every kind, the sublime self-deception that *interprets* weakness as freedom, and their being thus-and-thus as a *merit*.16

In the context of this genealogy, it is the *new* end to which the Subject is put that is the real culprit of the analysis. This new end is the moral transformation, within which the Subject, once it is believed in, provides a ground in which to locate the causation of characteristics, imposing the interpretation that characteristics such as weakness and inaction are actually *choices* to be meek and humble, are voluntary traits of character that manifest themselves in chosen actions, on the basis of which one can be judged as ‘good’ or ‘evil.’

Hence the Subject is called the ‘little changeling,’ for it can be dressed up in new garb and made to support a variety of other beliefs: in this case, the belief in the moral constitution of the Subject, but also, as we will see, it is the basis for the belief in causality and mechanical theory, hence it is the basis of both the belief in freedom of will and, on the other hand, the determinism of nature; and, it is the basis of the belief in god. At the heart of the conceptual transformation wielded by ressentiment is the opportunity provided by this “little changeling, ‘the subject.’” It was already there—where did it come from? (*GM*, 45)

The question that is not the locus of analysis in this passage, but which I am asking here, is whether the Subject is being said to have its origin in language, or if

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16 Ibid., emphasis added.
language reinforces a belief that has other sources. Some of the above quotations in this passage indicate the former view. Nietzsche claims that it is owed to the errors of reason that are left petrified in language, and which are then extended through grammatical habits. But all that language provides in this case is a schema for this doubling, for reading events as effects of causes, and for reading causes as the subjects of our grammar. But what if we ask the further question, how is language’s ability to provide the schema of doer-deed able to gain traction in the first place? In other words, why is such language able to be seductive in this way? What makes us able to be thusly seduced? Just as the moral interpretation of the Subject emerged from a need of a certain kind of life, might the prior subject, which it utilized, already emerge from a need of a certain kind of life? This directly relates to the historical question, for even though we began considering a particularly modern form of the Subject, the question of its sources pulls us beyond this period.

We should take stock of what has been denied in this passage, given that it was approached as a denial of the Subject. Nietzsche has said that the deed is everything, and that there is no doer behind it. Popular morality creates the appearance of a distinction between a person and their actions, based on the distinction already contained in the conception of a subject as a cause of actions that are taken to be its effects.

The Subject as that which pre-exists and causes actions is in fact retrospectively imposed onto the experience of events. This sense of a pre-existence to actions as the

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17 I do not mean to deny that the subject might not ultimately be overdetermined, or that the various means of its constitution are not themselves only termina of processes that we couldn’t fully penetrate.
substrate that causes them, an entity whose characteristics pre-exist the happening of events—this is what Nietzsche denies here. As we will see in ensuing passages, the attribution of “cause” is always a retrospective projection. In this sense, what we have are effects, or better put, events. To retrospectively project a cause as if it were prior to the event is the problem here, and it is language’s provision. But it remains possible that, if the Subject is not a cause, there is some way that the Subject is more on the model of effect, of the same order as the events that we call deeds. If the deed is everything, behind which there is no doer, then the deed may also be the doer, or be the Subject, meaning, there is an interpellation implied here, not an erasure. If the deed is everything, and there is no doer behind it, this does not amount to the claim that there is nothing, or no future entity, involved in the happening of events. Rather, the correction regards the temporality of the involvement, and the relation of the constitution of the entity to that involvement.\(^{18}\)

I intend by this only some guiding suggestions rather than any conclusions yet. Treating this passage only as a guiding line, it serves to introduce a number of related strands which will be taken up in the following, summarized below.

First is the demonstration of the connection between Nietzsche’s critique of the Subject and a certain critique of language. Even as Essay 1 of the Genealogy is involved in a critique of a transformation in linguistic use around the words ‘good,’ ‘bad,’ and ‘evil,’ the passage we have considered shows us that the possibility of this linguistic transformation is undergirded by another valence of language which is already involved

\(^{18}\text{We find this temporality of the future anterior at work in the next chapter, in the narrativizing of the self.}\)
in the concept of the Subject, namely in grammatical schemas that reinforce the subject/cause/doer-effect/deed means of perception. We have further asked whether language creates this belief in the Subject as cause, or whether it emerges elsewhere and is reinforced through language. This pushes the analysis of language beyond the consideration of words and their meanings, to a consideration of language as providing primary interpretive schemes, or schemas, out of which the meaning of terms of reason and morality might grow, the kind of conceptions that could undergird further transformations of language. Language contains these interpretive schemes that are also objects of belief. This valence of language is, as we already see here, connected to grammar, to habituation, and to a certain seduction or temptation, appealing to our needs, all of which we might want to try to get a further grip on.

Second is the highlighting of a particular feature of the Subject that Nietzsche denies: the Subject as causal substrate of action. This passage invokes this element of the concept of the Subject, though it does not aim to explain its provenance.

The Subject Beyond Words and Grammar

In *WP* §485, Nietzsche claims that the term ‘the Subject’ names “our belief in a unity underlying all the different impulses of the highest feeling of reality” and that it is “the fiction that many similar states in us are the effect of one substratum.”¹⁹ The Subject relates to a variety of feelings and states: it is that which we believe both to underlie and to cause them. We see here an emphasis on the supposed unity and causal nature of the Subject that we have already found presaged in the passages above.

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¹⁹ Emphasis added.
But is this belief in the Subject the result of language, of yielding to language’s seductions, as certain passages seem to indicate? The “metaphysics of language . . . sees doers and deeds all over: it believes that will has causal efficacy: it believes in the ‘I’, in the I as being, in the I as substance, and it projects this belief in the I-substance onto all things—this is how it creates the concept of ‘thing’ in the first place. . . .”

This passage seems to repeat the above claims, that there is a belief in a Subject as a unified being, and, that this Subject has a causally effective will. But what it claims is that this belief is first regarding the ‘I,’ and then projected into all things, and hence, doers and deeds are found all over, as a result of the projection of the ‘I.’ ‘Projection’ is a term Nietzsche uses to describe the act of interpretation. So the belief in the Subject as willing and causally effective is an interpretation that is applied through language to all other things beyond ‘I.’ The suggestion is that there is a more primary belief, the belief in the ‘I’.

Where does this belief come from? It is in fact not to these seductions of language that we owe belief in the ‘I’; rather, to those seductions we owe the intensification of, and reapplication of, the belief. The Subject, ‘I,’ is itself a certain temptation to which we are subject on the basis of our human perspective, through the constitution of our sensory and psychological capacities; but temptations and habits of language, and from them philosophical ideas and claims such as Descartes’, serve to shore up this basic temptation, and allow it to masquerade as what is simply the case, and to be applied to more extensive uses.  

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20 *TI*, 169.
21 If this is correct, what this would mean in relation to Descartes’ derivation of the *cogito* is that while Descartes fell prey to the seduction of language to believe that ‘I’ is a unity on the model of the unity of
Interlude: The Schemas of Grammar and Words

Something I have been suggesting thus far is that, though Nietzsche seems to suggest in places that the belief in the Subject originates in language, this is not entirely accurate. Part of what Nietzsche implies is a distinction between two senses of language. On one hand, there is language as a momentarily static, though historically altering, set of functions enabling discourse: words and their meanings, rules of grammar for creating units of meaning. There is another sense of language that we will start to see when we turn to considerations of biology, and this is language as a function of life: interpretation. Though language in the second sense is more extensive and pertains even to non-speaking and non-writing life, its function of assimilation can take over and make use of language in the first sense. We see this when we note that language in the first sense is a provision of schemas for interpretation that are comprised by the structure of grammar and words.

My claim is that the belief in the Subject is reinforced by language in the first sense, extended beyond ‘I’ through the aid of language as grammar and words, but the belief in the Subject is first a belief in “ourselves” as Subjects, and this actually comes from certain tendencies of sensation, from feelings, from a psychological prejudice, the word ‘I,’ he did not derive the very belief in the ‘I’ from the language of ‘I.’ This goes back to my claims in the opening section: Descartes slides easily from the ‘I’ that engages in the meditation, to the ‘I’ that is found. But this ‘I’ meditating was there from the beginning, and remains, and seems to be slid into the ‘I’ that is found. This suggests that what is built up regarding the found ‘I’ is able to define the subject only by masquerading as the same subject of the meditations. This would be an example of language taking over a pre-existing belief and utilizing it in new directions, much as the second section discussed. All this means, for the time being, is that the seductive power of language seems to be presaged by a desire for such seduction that is not tied only to language, considered as words and grammar, but rather, which uses language in this sense. Is there a deeper sense of language, then?
from a subjective conviction which will be discussed in the ensuing pages, and this regards language in the second sense, language as interpretation.

I want to take a moment to lay out those schemas of language in the first sense, schemas that Nietzsche links to grammar and words, to what he calls their seduction and metaphysics.

**Doer-Deed and ‘I’**

Nietzsche often mentions our “grammatical custom that adds a doer to every deed.”\(^{22}\) He claims that this grammatical custom in Indo-European language ensures that every deed, indicated by an active verb, is attached to a subject, either by the verb’s being related to a nominal subject, or, its containing a differential ending attached to the root verb. For example, in the single words *chante* versus *chantent*, the difference in the endings attached to the root verb create a dual indication within the single word of both the action, ‘deed,’ and the Subject, ‘doer.’ This might otherwise be indicated by the attachment of a separate word to indicate subject, as in ‘nous chantons’ or ‘I sing.’ Whether expressed in one word or two, all spoken or written indications in these languages of a given action within a grammatical structure must consider the number, and often the gender, of the Subject who is believed to be performing that action. This grammatical custom is thus the very attachment of a doer, or causal agent, to every deed, or action. What I want to emphasize is that this requires a pre-existing belief that Subjects are the kinds of beings who can be causes of actions through their will.

\(^{22}\) *WP* §484.
The ‘I’ might be said to derive from the grammatical custom of attaching doers to deeds, as a specification of the most general doer, ‘it.’ This is suggested in *BGE* §17, where Nietzsche considers Descartes’ phrase ‘I think.’ While he will make many points regarding this “I think,” the point here is that, were we to replace ‘I’ with the more general ‘it,’ eradicating the leap to the specificity that it is ‘I’ thinking, we are still left with an *inference* based on the basic “. . . grammatical habit: ‘Thinking is an activity; every activity requires an agent; consequently—’.”23 This passage suggests that phrases with ‘I’ in the Subject position are in one sense just more specific examples of the basic grammatical custom of attaching a subject to an active verb, the doer-deed schema, as mentioned above.

But notice that, as claimed above, the doer-deed schema rests on a pre-existing notion of what a doer is: the kind of being who is causally related to actions in the first place. There must already be a belief, on the order of cause and effect—there must already even be the belief in cause and effect—for the doer-deed schema to be applicable and salient.

There is thus something special about the role of the ‘I’ that is not merely *reducible* to the doer-deed schema. In fact, the ‘I’ grounds it. Consider a passage already cited: “The metaphysics of language . . . believes in the ‘I’, in the I as being, in the I as substance, and it *projects this belief* in the I-substance onto all things—this is how it creates the concept of ‘thing’ in the first place. . . . [T]he concept of ‘being’ is only

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23 *BGE*, 24.
derived from the concept of ‘I’.”

Here, I would emphasize that Nietzsche suggests that the concept of ‘I’ is the source of the concepts of substance and being. This is echoed in his claim that reason depends upon “. . . our belief in the ‘ego’ as a substance, as the sole reality from which we ascribe reality to things in general.”

It might seem curious that, in WP §484, Nietzsche suggests that substance is derived from the grammatical subject-verb relation, not the specific subject ‘I’:

There is thinking: therefore there is something that thinks’; this is the upshot of all Descartes’ argumentation. But that means positing as ‘true a priori’ our belief in the concept of substance—that when there is thought there has to be something ‘that thinks’ is simply a formulation of our grammatical custom that adds a doer to every deed.

Here, the concept of substance is said to be derived from the doer-deed schema, not from the specific subject ‘I’.

So, does this mean that ‘I’ is only a special case of the doer-deed schema? And if so, why would Nietzsche have suggested, in the former of the above cited passages, that it is from ‘I’ that being and substance are derived?

A possible answer here seems to be supplied by the fact that ‘I’ has a provenance outside of grammar. While ‘I’ is in some senses the specific nomination of a doer—it names a particular doer, and hence it appears to utilize the doer-deed schema, projecting ‘I’ as a particular doer—it is yet a doer whose deeds have a relation to the one who says or thinks it unlike all others. This is because the doer-deed schema is in fact based on a pre-existing experience that ‘I’ is taken to name. The doer-deed schema

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24 TI, 169, emphasis added.
25 WP §487, emphasis added.
26 Emphasis added.
is actually a projection of the ‘I,’ which occurs when we think of all doers on the model of ‘I.’ With ‘I,’ then, we have a repetition of that same model provided in GM I §13, discussed above: that of a form that is ripe for the taking and the application toward different ends. The basic schemas of grammar actually involve the exploitation of one schema in particular, that of the ‘I,’ and its investment in the other, that of ‘doer and deed.’ And this should leave us asking, as we would of any investment, as we learned to ask from GM I §13, what is the return—and what is the kind of being who would be motivated by such a return, by a return, at all?

Before we move on to asking those questions about the return on this investment, we should look at how Nietzsche indicates that the belief in the ‘I’ is not simply derived from grammar and words, but is rather a prior experience to which ‘I’ is applied as a name, on the basis of which this name becomes ripe as a schema for application to other experiences.

BGE §19

We see this special relationship between ‘I’ and the deeds purported to it in passages in which Nietzsche seems to suggest that ‘I’-claims have something working in their favor that other claims about doers would not: the “appeal to intuitive perception,” the belief in ‘immediate certainty’ of such claims. This should call to mind the ‘I think’ claim of which Nietzsche has made much in what we have discussed above, and indeed, in WP §483, Nietzsche suggests that there is a kind of priority to the ‘I

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think’: he suggests that in ‘I think’ there is a belief that “this ‘I’ was the given *cause of thought from which by analogy we understood all other causal relationships.*”\(^{28}\)

This special relationship between ‘I’ and its purported deeds is said to be the source of the idea of causation, and this notion of causation—that deeds are the *effects* of the doer as *cause*—is an important constituent of what we mean by being and substance. In fact, the very grammatical custom of ‘I’ as subject in such formations is projected into all other ‘doer-deed’ schemas.\(^{29}\)

The key here is that ‘I think’ is not only, from the one vantagepoint already discussed, a more specific case of ‘it thinks,’ a substitution of a general term of nomination for a more specific term; from another vantagepoint, ‘I think’ is a more specific case of ‘I will.’ It is actually from the experience of will, or from our *misunderstanding* of the experience of will, that the content of ‘I’ is constituted, and then further projected into the ‘doer-deed’ schema as its basis. Thus there is something about our experience of what we call willing that fleshes out what we hold the ‘I’ to be.\(^{30}\)

This is clarified by considering some statements Nietzsche makes in notes from as early as the 1870s. In §139 of *The Philosopher*, we find these claims: “The only causal relation of which we are conscious is the one between willing and acting. We transfer [Übertragen] this onto all things and explain to ourselves the relationship between two

\(^{28}\) *WP* §483, emphasis added.

\(^{29}\) Clearly, Nietzsche is here discussing a phenomenon that cannot hold for the Ancients, for whom the notion of substance was not derived from the subject.

\(^{30}\) This is also indicated in passages we will consider later, *WP* §550-552, in which the claim is that all causal explanations are based on the conception of the intention and willing of ‘I’ and the apparent relationship of this to actions. The experience of willing as “effective” becomes part of the constitution of what we mean by ‘I.’
alterations that are always found together. The intention or willing yields the *nomina*; the acting, the *verba.*"³¹

When we consider what willing is believed to be, or the experience of it that we affirm through our belief, we see that what we face here is not so much, or merely, the ‘I’ as specific doer, but this ‘I’ as a relation of unification to deeds. The relation of ‘I’ to its deeds forms the *analogy* for causation, which is thereafter free for attachment to all other apparent entities on the basis of the doer-deed schema. But this apparent relationship between the ‘I’ and its deeds is mired in obfuscation and misunderstanding.

Section 19 of *BGE* demonstrates this misunderstanding of willing at the heart of the belief in the ‘I’ as cause. Nietzsche begins this section by claiming that ‘the will’ is spoken of by philosophers “as if it were the best-known thing in the world.” But he goes on to analyze ‘willing’ against the grain of this presupposition, foregrounding the analysis with the claim that “[w]illing seems to me to be above all something complicated, something that is a unit *only as a word*—and it is precisely in this one word that the popular prejudice lurks. . . .”³² In analyzing the experience named ‘willing,’ he finds, rather than a unit, a multiplicity of many ‘ingredients’ that are usually obscured: sensations, thoughts, and affects. The temptation that the word provides is that toward a hypostatization that would obscure this multiplicity and present it as a unity. It is the temptation to view the experience that we name by the one word ‘willing’ as the same kind of immediacy and presence that the word seems to be. This seems to be the popular prejudice, toward the unity that words are able to present. *But the very reason*

³¹ *P*, 46.
³² *BGE* 25, emphasis added.
that this obfuscation by the word can occur is because it is undergirded by a prior obfuscation that occurs due to the limitation of the capacities and perspective from which we interpret those very events of which we are a part, and, the desire for this obfuscation. In other words, the word reflects the prejudice that is already an inclination of our constitution and its concomitant needs. (BGE, 25)

These myriad sensations that are obscured not only by the word ‘willing’ but also by our perspective on the experience include the state of being away from something or toward something, the sensations of “this ‘from’ and ‘towards’ themselves,” and various muscular sensations. For example, if we spot a rattler crossing our path on the sidewalk and then run in the opposite direction for shelter, a standard description would have it that we saw the snake and then ran. If pressed to include willing in this description, standard thinking, holding that “willing suffices for action,” might expand thus: we saw the snake, willed to run, and then ran. But Nietzsche asks, what is this “willing to,” in this case, run? Phenomenologically, in the example I’ve proposed, it includes our sensation of positionality in relation to what we identify as a snake, to the street on which we walk, and a sensation of being in the mode of away from the snake, away from this spot of pavement, and toward the horizon that we see, or the front door at the end of the street, as well as the sensations of awayness and towardness themselves. And of course there are the muscular occurrences, from the tightening of the diaphragm as we gasp one last deep breath, to the tensing of the muscles of our falling leg and the flaccidity of the one rising, which now moves backward to form a pivot-point for the change in direction. There is also thinking, “a ruling thought” in this experience, the
thought that we need to run back toward home to escape the dangerous snake. And there is affect, “specifically the affect of the command.” This affect of command is that of superiority in relation to that which must obey, a consciousness that is “inherent in every will” that “this and nothing else is necessary now,” and “obedience will be rendered.” In other words, we feel a commandingness over the action in the situation. The thought and the affect tend to bury the complexities of the body, or rather, to synthesize them with the thought and the affect. (BGE, 25)

We see this tyranny of thought and the conscious affect of command over the body if we consider that what is “strangest” about the will is precisely the relation of command and obedience in the one who wills: “[a] man who wills commands something within himself that renders obedience, or that he believes renders obedience” (emphasis added); “we are at the same time the commanding and the obeying parties. . . .”

However, we tend to cover over the sensations accruing to the obedient element—sensations of passivity, restraint, pressure, impulsion—“by means of the synthetic concept ‘I’. . . .” Following from this, we draw “erroneous conclusions” of the will, such that “he who wills believes sincerely that willing suffices for action,” that “will and action are somehow one.”

It is important here that Nietzsche has called out the “synthetic” nature of the concept ‘I,’ claimed that it obscures the passivity in action, and has attributed to it the view that willing alone is sufficient for action. Synthesis indicates a uniting, and

33 Ibid., 26.
34 Ibid.
specifically a uniting of that which is not analytically but experientially united. The synthesis of the ‘I’ is apparent in that both action, including all the “muscular sensations” accompanying the above ingredients of willing, and willing, as the intention to act and the thought of the act, are united as one, and they are united as one insofar as they are the will and act of the ‘I.’ In other words, we believe that the running five seconds later is the effect caused by our willing to do it, and that our willing to do it is one with the action in the sense that the action is merely the temporal outgrowth or expression of that willing, and that ‘I’ am one who caused the will and the act. We associate willing with the commanding element alone, while the obeying element is displaced as the resultant “action,” relegating the passive elements to the “action” that we can be said to have commanded. Willing is then depicted as a commanding, active experience only, and the “action” that occurs is attributed to the willing of it, as its “necessary effect.” In a sense, what happens is that the passive elements are retained only in such a way that they can be explained as effects of the active will, and in this way, the ‘I’ remains in command of itself.

This belief is only conceivable due to the obfuscations of the process of action leading to this terminus. This privileging of the commanding elements of the experience of willing is accompanied by a privileging of the thought elements of the experience. And here it becomes important that in discussing the “ruling thought” of willing, Nietzsche adds almost tangentially “let us not imagine it possible to sever this thought from the ‘willing,’ as if any will would then remain over!”35

35 Ibid., emphasis added.
A key to the error of this interpretation and the provenance of the error from beyond words is found in the following passage:

Since in the great majority of cases there has been exercise of will only when the effect of the command—that is, obedience; that is, the action—was to be expected, the appearance has translated itself into the feeling, as if there were a necessity of effect. In short, he who wills believes with a fair amount of certainty that will and action are somehow one; he ascribes the success, the carrying out of the willing, to the will itself, and thereby enjoys an increase of the sensation of power which accompanies all success.  

In other words, what we call willing is actually composed of a passive reception of expectation that is not accounted for by this whole conceived relation between the ‘I’, its will and the effects of its will, for willing masquerades as cause of what was expected. Will is our interposition into this process in which the action was already underway. When the expectation is borne out, we thus are able to attach it as consequence to us, to our will; the action is hereafter read as necessary, not merely expected. This interposition, at the very least, renders one more than an automaton.

Through use of the concept ‘I,’ we “deceive ourselves” about the presence of the passive elements. The ‘I’ that is a duality of activity and passivity, expels its command aspects into the faculty of ‘willing,’ and its passive aspects into the ‘action.’ ‘I’ becomes the projected substratum from which willing and acting proceed, when in fact that which is here said to be the effect—the action—was actually under way prior to its conscious recognition as the expected. It is on the projected unity of ‘I’ that the prejudice contained in the unity of the word ‘willing’ actually rides. Will is thus a fetish; invested with the commanding elements and perceived power over the obedient

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36 Ibid., 26, emphasis added.
elements that are all really contained in the duality of the ‘I.’ But then, the ‘I’ is a fetish as well, invested with the multifarious commanding and obeying deeds as their unified source.

Thus, we experience as if it is our intention that is the origin of action. Nietzsche will elsewhere call this a “subjective conviction,” which yields a psychological vantagepoint on the origin of ‘cause.’ The conviction is that all motion and change come about from an intention that works through this motion or change. Hence belief in the Subject, the attributive subject of will, is “belief in the living and thinking as the only effective force—in will, in intention—it is belief that every event is a deed, that every deed presupposes a doer. . .”\(^{37}\)

Thus we can see why Nietzsche calls the “oldest habit” of ours that of understanding events as the result of intentions, for it follows the model of our experience of ourselves as the attributive source of actions. This is an “interpretatio[n] based on [our]selves,” and it is in fact on this habit and projected self-interpretation that science as we know it depends.

This is what Nietzsche will call a “subjective conviction.”\(^{38}\) It is indicated in WP §488 as well: “The concept ‘reality,’ ‘being,’ is taken from our feeling of the subject.’ ‘The subject’” interpreted from within ourselves, so that the ego counts as a substance, as the cause of all deeds, as a doer.” This feeling of the Subject, when it is believed to be the cause of deeds, obtains the feeling of power, and this power indicates, in a sense, the impetus for the continuation of the grammatical custom, its ability to take on a life

\(^{37}\) WP §550, emphasis added.

\(^{38}\) Ibid.
beyond mere grammar. It increases our feeling of power if there is a center that can be viewed in this way. But the root here is not an entity or a being but rather a feeling.

First, throughout these sections there is, I take it, the implicit avowal that what is being described herein is an historically conditioned phenomenon. We must already feel and believe ourselves to be an ego if this feeling is then able to be the basis of an ensuing understanding of reality. Thinking of oneself as an ego, thinking of oneself as over and against objects/reality, and the conception of will as unifiable as a faculty of an ego, are not conceptions the Ancients would have shared, though they used the language of “I.”

Second, this gets us to the point that investments have their returns, and Nietzsche indicates this return in the final phrase of the above passage from BGE §19, as “an increase in the sensation of power which accompanies all success.” In fetishizing the multiplicity of activity and passivity into a unified ‘I’ that “wills” and ensuingly “acts,” we have multiplied the effects of the occurrence of this entire multiplicity—well, we have turned it toward a profit at all. And part of the reason we are able to obtain this feeling of power is through the force of ‘I’ as centralizing. ‘I’ directs the feeling of power that we gain precisely by engaging in these interpretation of ‘I’ as substrate of various actions as their ground; hence Nietzsche indicates that what has happened is something like the thought “L’effet c’est moi.” Here is the equation that Descartes could not account for: that the being implied by thinking is the being of a one, an “I.” Consciousness is able to take for itself the credit for the entire, multiple process, to read only itself as cause there.
In *BGE* §19, then, we see both the obfuscation provided by words, as well as the misunderstanding we engage that does not rely on words and grammar but is extended through them. ‘Willing’ exists as a word, and only as a word is it in fact a unity. However, the process that occurs in cases that we take to be named by this one word, ‘willing,’ demonstrates a multiplicity to whose origin it seems we will never be able to penetrate. It is not the word ‘willing’ that first leads to this obfuscation, but our own misunderstanding of the process of actions, our own misunderstanding of the event in which we are involved, the sources and contents; our own misunderstanding of the nature of willing and intent. That ‘willing’ is one word, however, becomes important only in the case that we already misunderstand ourselves in the above ways such that the application of the unified word goes unnoticed as the imposition that it is; it also, in going unnoticed, in being this imposition, serves an implicit need we have in the midst of, as, that multiplicity.

Here, we are better able to understand how the grammatical custom of the attachment of a subject to an action is able to gain such traction, because of the results that accrue to the feeling of power when this subject is, in particular, ‘I.’ Recall that, in *WP* §484, we are reminded of how Descartes proceeds from ‘thinking’ to the ‘I,’ supposedly through the light of nature which reveals that, given thinking, an I must exist to be engaging in the deed. But Nietzsche’s critique here is that this procession does not derive, but presupposes, the Subject. And this custom gains such traction because it aids our feeling of power.
Our use of ‘I’ thus claims unity (there is one substrate) and claims causality (actions emanate from this substrate) and claims reducibility (that thinking, willing, feeling, anything conceivable as an action, are the same inasmuch as they are the emanations of this one cause). This ‘I’ as substrate to which many processes are attached as their ground: this word, this ‘I,’ is actually the experience of ourselves as ground and cause of action. We can say this is a word, but it is more to Nietzsche’s point to say that it implies an interpretation of experience toward the greatest experience of power that is then invested in a word.

So it appears that ‘I’ is actually the result of an experience from within our current perspective that yields the provision of an opportunity: it provides a kind of economically beneficial analogical structure whereby we can translate externalities to ourselves. We have taken advantage of this grammatical custom, but here Nietzsche adds depth beyond a merely Humean claim of habit: precisely by engaging this habit, we enable our ability to assimilate our experiences toward the greatest feeling of power, which is achieved by assimilating them to a center, and, we enable our ability to obtain fresh feelings of power, precisely in such assimilation.

Thus, Nietzsche has not simply found a grammatical form which is repeated in our thinking and feeling, the work of locating similitude, but he has attempted an explanation as to why the very repetition of this form, this form of ‘I’ as cause of deeds which include such actions as thinking, feeling, willing, is such a draw, and this explanation is ultimately economical and biological: because it enables us to assimilate,
because it allows us to attribute the strength of assimilation to the one being in particular that we feel ourselves to be, which is a joy, a feeling of power.

Part of Nietzsche’s critique of the Subject thus focuses on the enabling power that language yields to a Cartesian view. As has been suggested by our stage-setting passages, above, this enabling power is found in the way that words, and grammatical functions, utilize schemas that amount to interpretations that are projected onto experience. Nietzsche will often refer to these schemas when he mentions the “seductions” of language, as ‘faith’ or ‘belief’ in grammar or words, as ‘habits’ of grammar, as ‘deceptions’ of grammar, and as ‘metaphysics’ of language. He suggests that the yield of these habits, seductions, deceptions, are certain familiar schemas with the aid of which we interpret our experience, and that, in general, these schemas are nothing other than the basic categories of reason, many of which are also the basic characteristics of our thinking of the Subject. Language yields reason in this sense, because it is the source of the schemas whereby reason is constituted, and thus, as the light of nature is for Descartes that power, often called reason, whereby what is true or false becomes immediately clear, Nietzsche shows that this power is actually mediated by certain words and grammatical structures.

But part of Nietzsche’s point is that these uses of language, this mediation, even further obscures the physiological processes that themselves actually mediate experience, covering them over such that we remain oblivious to there being a cover at all. Language serves to deny the myriad mediations pre-existing its emergence on the scene. It mediates an experience—of things, subjects, causation—that it projects as
immediate. Reason, as an outgrowth of this habit of language, is thus an operation of consciousness in the oblivion to its actual constitution.

My next step will seem to be a step back, then. I want to consider the biological perspective within which Nietzsche places this process of misunderstanding and our projection out of it into the context of another process, assimilation. After this, it will be possible to come back to the schemas of language laid out above to suggest that ‘I’ is a form of assimilation, and, as a word, the provision of an interpretation that allows the ‘doer-deed’ schema to also function as an assimilation, extending the range of this power.

The Biological Roots of the Subject: Assimilation

_BGE_ §19 has put us in mind of features which run counter to those of the Subject as a conscious unity that subtends its actions as a causal ground, in indicating not only the multiplicity of ingredients to the experience we name ‘willing,’ but also the passive reception of an expectation that operates behind the back of consciousness.

Part of the view of the conscious and willing subject is that its primary, determinative engagements with the world of which it is a part are conscious, or possibly conscious, mental engagements that are a combination of thinking and exercise of the will. In Descartes’ view, sensory perceptions are to be subjected to conscious, rational analysis if we are to find truth regarding them. Nietzsche, however, suggests that all conscious activities are outgrowths of more preliminary biological engagements, just as in the above passage he suggested that willed action is the outgrowth of muscular sensations that were likely already underway. The terms he uses for these
primary biological processes are assimilation [Anähnlichung and Einverleibung] and equalization [Gleichsetzung].

Assimilation describes the process of growth through incorporation, whereby organic life is comprised of the results of a rendering of the new and foreign into a repetition of form that creates a being that is an inseparable combination of old and new. This turning of the new into the old is a tropic work, a kind of turning that subtends all speaking and writing.

My guiding interest here will be to suggest that this kind of biological tropic engagement which preexists consciousness is repeated in consciousness, first in the form of our belief in the Subject, then in the process of language as provision of interpretive schemes based on that belief in the Subject, whereby incorporation of the new occurs through its translation into the form of the old; and that the activity to which we give the name interpretation—the projection of pre-existing schemas—is thus a form of assimilation.

The historical question emerges at this point again, however: is it the case that in Nietzsche’s comments that give us reason to read the Subject as a means of assimilation through interpretation, an assimilation that also characterizes language, there is a transhistorical claim about the nature of human being? First, we might note that Nietzsche’s claims about assimilation make use of analogy with a certain form, idioplasme, which was part of the contemporary scientific attempt to explain the heredity of characteristics as a development from internal causes. This particular view seems to already reflect the dominance of thinking of beings on the model of
inside/internality-outside/externality, and hence to reflect that partitioning of subject and object. The effect of Nietzsche’s use of the idioplasm as an analogy is, on one hand, a criticism of the reign of the Subject in subverting the priority of thinking substance over extended substance, i.e. that of the human over other beings, for assimilation at least describes a process shared across organic life, placing the human as one among these organic beings. However, the analogy is clearly taken from the scientific thought of Nietzsche’s day. It would seem that rather than attempting to give a transhistorical explanation of assimilation, Nietzsche is rather only interrupting the priority given to the thinking Subject here.

For such a reading as an interruption, we might note *BGE* §22, in which Nietzsche describes the will to power, and a clear version of eternal recurrence, as possibly being an interpretation put forward “so vividly that almost every word, even the word ‘tyranny’ itself, would eventually seem unsuitable, or a weakening and attenuating metaphor—being too human. . . . Supposing that this also is only interpretation . . . well, so much the better.”

In other words, we might imagine this whole series of claims to be an interpretation, supposing that what is happening in the use of the Subject is the same work that we believe to be happening in our current understanding of organic beings. This might be an interpretation that is only available for one already shaped by modern Subjectivity, but its point is not to present a corrective on the order of truth, but to provide an interruption to some elements of this Subjectivity from out of its own resources. In other words, thinking of ourselves, in our uses of language, and in our
belief in ourselves as Cartesian Subjects, as thereby employing activities that are also employed by non-conscious beings allows us to see or imagine a continuity between res extensa/objects and res cogitans/the Subject that, because it is figured as more primary, subverts the vision in which everything about the Subject is grounded in thinking.

So, in what I cite below, I believe that what we see at work in Nietzsche’s claims about the seductions and habits of grammar and language are nothing other than depicting these habits as refracted continuations of this basic process of incorporation through assimilation, rendering the old in the form of the new so that it can be made use of. In fact, the tropological nature of language is based on the tropological nature of this biological process, a claim that goes back to early in Nietzsche’s career. This biological perspective in the critique of the Subject is also a critique of language, an indication that language itself is more than a static conglomeration of words and grammatical structures existing at a given time, but is a kind of function or praxis that is also the way of being of the kind of Subjects we are discussing. In other words, the Subjects that we believe ourselves to be can be thought of as propped up by a function that precedes them and which is continued in language. Language, in its more narrow sense as a techne used by us, is in a broader sense the process whereby conscious beings come to be. What may have appeared to be merely grammatical or linguistic habits or seductions are given a continuity with the processes that constitute kinds of entities. And as there is a kind of falsification involved in this process, language’s purported falsity is of a piece with the falsity that is a condition of our kind of existence.

39 See OTL, and Chapter 1 herein.
This will allow us to read the “seductions of language” and “habits of grammar” in relation to the suggestion in *BGE* §19, that what is at issue is the incorporation of new experience in such a way that it might increase the power of the organism at issue. Because the schemas of language also involve a hiding of this very nature, what this biological vantagepoint exposes is the obfuscation of the multiplicity characterizing our experience by the application of the above-mentioned “schemas” provided by language. This obfuscation covers over the continuum nature of the Subject, the way that the appearance of the Subject rides on so many layers of assimilation. But this is precisely what the conception of the Subject is supposed to do, because this is what assimilation, in this biological sense, *always* does—and, perhaps, what this very reading of assimilation continues to do.40

*Equalization and Assimilation*

In certain passages in *WP*, we find the notion of subject as a substantial unity undergirding sensing and thinking processes subverted by the notion of subject as a misnomer for what is actually a continuum of biological processes. The terms equalization and assimilation help to make this clear, as Nietzsche renders processes that we think of as thinking, sensing, speaking, etc., in terms of these biological processes, which, when thought in relation to the claims regarding language, look to bear a striking resemblance to a preliminary process of interpretation; or, rather, make interpretation resemble a continuation of the process of assimilation.

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40 Hence language “loves error, because being alive, it loves life” (*BGE* §24).
A glimpse into the continuum nature of the Subject, as opposed to its unity, can be found if we consider the idioplasm\textsuperscript{41}, protoplasm, amoeba, and crystal. All are forms of composition that allow us to consider “assimilation” \textit{in nuce}, an overpowering of the new and rendering it into a repetition of prior forms. Nietzsche mentions these in a number of passages in § 4 and 5 of Book 3 of \textit{The Will to Power}.

The “primitive conditions (pre-organic)” of thinking “is the crystallization of forms, as in the case of crystal. – In our thought, the essential feature is fitting new material into old schemas . . . making \textit{equal} what is new.”\textsuperscript{42} The crystal is not an analogy for thinking; it engages a process that is repeated in what we call thinking; it is a form which composes itself in a process of incorporating new material and rendering it into repetitions of the present form of the crystal, as each new branch of the crystal comes about through this repetition of its basic structure in reworked, new material.

Sense perception is said to work in the same way as the idioplasm: “The same equalizing and ordering force that rules in the idioplasma, rules also in the incorporation of the outer world: our sense perceptions are already the result of this assimilation and equalization in regard to \textit{all} the past in us; they do not follow directly upon the ‘impression’—.”\textsuperscript{43}

The amoeba also engages this process: “All thought, judgment, perception, considered as comparison, has as its precondition a \textit{positing} of equality,’ and earlier still

\textsuperscript{41} Refers to Naegeli’s theory of the idioplasm as a theory of heredity of characteristics; the idioplasm, like the germ-plasm, is the locus of continuous development in a definite direction from internal causes. From http://www.freefictionbooks.org/books/e/13387-evolution-in-modern-thought?start=80, accessed 7/11/2013.
\textsuperscript{42} \textit{WP} §499.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., §500.
a ‘making equal.’ This process of making equal is the same as the process of incorporation of appropriated material in the amoeba.”

All of the above inorganic and organic forms engage a process of assimilation, an “equalizing and ordering force” by which what is new is made equal to the form of the entity to enable incorporation. The crystal at each stage of growth repeats the prior forms; the organic forms constitute the same incorporation, as each cell of a multicellular organism grows by the ingestion of material that is rendered into the form of new cells that repeat the protoplasm already within them.

The same process of ingestion through equalization can be observed in our sense, thinking, and linguistic processes—indeed, the distinction is misleading, as the picture we get is one of a continuum of this process of incorporation through assimilation and equalization. This is a kind of biological language or, as we see below, interpretation.

**Assimilation and Interpretation**

We might turn here to a passage on language as translation into familiar terms, to notice the shared traits between this process of assimilation and the process of language as translation and the related notion of interpretation: “Inner experience enters our consciousness only after it has found a language the individual understands—

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44 Ibid., §501. So does the protoplasm: “The fundamental inclination to posit as equal, to see things as equal, is modified, held in check, by consideration of usefulness and harmfulness, by considerations of success: it adapts itself to a milder degree in which it can be satisfied without at the same time denying and endangering life. This whole process corresponds exactly to that external, mechanical process (which is its symbol) by which protoplasm makes what it appropriates equal to itself and fits it into its own forms and files” (WP §510).
45 Ibid., §500.
i.e. a translation of a condition into conditions familiar to him—; ‘to understand’ means merely: to be able to express something new in the language of something old and familiar.”

Nietzsche calls this rendering of inner experience into a language that we understand interpretation. This interpretation is said to be “interposed” between the “text” and our experience of it. It is a “lack of philology,” for the suggestion is that there is a “text” that might somehow be read “as a text” but for our projection of an interpretation on the text. The suggestion is that the projective nature of interpretation sets the terms that allow for assimilation.

Our depiction not only of outer but also of inner experience rides on the back of these interpretations:

I maintain the phenomenality of the inner world, too: everything of which we become conscious is arranged, simplified, schematized, interpreted through and through—the actual process of inner ‘perception,’ the causal connection between thoughts, feelings, desires, between subject and object, are absolutely hidden from us—and are perhaps purely imaginary. The ‘apparent inner world’ is governed by just the same forms and procedures as the ‘outer world’.

Thus incorporation through equalization is used to describe the experiences of sensation, of inner experience, of knowledge, of linguistic use, of memory, and even that whereby the Subject becomes aware of itself.

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46 Ibid., §479.
47 Ibid. This is one of those frequent places where a negative connotation is attached to interpretation as a projection.
48 Ibid., §477.
Consciousness and Assimilation

This basic drive to make equal, to assimilate and hence incorporate, is also employed by sense processes and consciousness, but it seems accurate to say that sense processes and consciousness are something like extensions or repetitions of this basic process of equalizing in order to incorporate.

Consciousness is first a “becoming-conscious” of perceptions “which [were] useful and essential to us and to the entire organic process. . . . Consciousness is present only to the extent that consciousness is useful.” Consciousness’ particular form of making equal often goes by the name of ‘knowledge,’ but this is just an expression for the means whereby consciousness services a need of the growing organism, the “need for security, for quick understanding on the basis of signs and sounds, for means of abbreviation. . . .” (WP §504, 513)

The logical construction of the world is based on a “compulsion to construct concepts, species, forms, purposes, laws” which Nietzsche calls constructing “‘a world of identical cases’.” These identical cases allow it to appear that “‘the same form is attained,’” but “what appears is always something new, and it is only we, who are always comparing, who include the new, to the extent that it is similar to the old, in the unity of the ‘form.’” This inclusion creates a world that is thus “calculable, simplified, comprehensible, etc., for us.” (WP §521)

This compulsion to construct a world of identical cases, thus rendering it calculable, is found also in our sense processes: “[t]his same compulsion exists in the sense activities that support reason—by simplification, coarsening, emphasizing, and
elaborating, upon which all ‘recognition,’ all ability to make oneself intelligible rests. Our needs have made our senses so precise that the ‘same apparent world’ always reappears and has thus acquired the semblance of reality.”49 Sensory capacities are depicted not as mere receptivities, but as sources of projection as well as reception.

Within this discussion of sensory processes, we find another claim about the origin of the Subject. Nietzsche suggests that the Subject comes from two kinds of prejudice: that of the sensory capacities and their kind of ‘language’, and that of the psyche.

Regarding the senses, the suggestion is that our sensory capacities are themselves the source of the doer-deed schema: “Psychological history of the concept “subject.” The body, the thing, the ‘whole’ construed by the eye, awaken the distinction between a deed and a doer; the doer, the cause of the deed, conceived ever more subtly, finally left behind the ‘subject’.”50

In another passage, he suggests that ‘subject’, ‘object’, ‘doer’, ‘deed’, are a result of translation into man’s ‘sense language’:

[motion] always carries the idea that something is moved—this always supposes, whether as the fiction of a little clump of atom or even as the abstraction of this, the dynamic atom, a thing that produces effects. . . . Subject, object, a doer added to the doing, the doing separated from that which it does: let us not forget that this is mere semiotics and nothing real. Mechanistic theory as a theory of motion is already a translation into the sense language of man.51

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49 Ibid., §521.
50 Ibid., §547.
51 Ibid., §634, emphasis added.
Yet it seems that this sense prejudice also relies on a psychological prejudice:

“We have borrowed the concept of unity from our ‘ego’ concept—our oldest article of faith. If we did not hold ourselves to be unities, we would never have formed the concept ‘thing.’” This is called a part of ‘our psychical ‘experience,’ a ‘psychological prejudice’ which joins with sense prejudice in creating the mechanistic theory of the world, which “employ[s] two fictions: the concept of motion (taken from our sense language) and the concept of the atom (=unity, deriving from our psychical ‘experience’) . . . [thus presupposing] a sense prejudice and a psychological prejudice.” Using these prejudices, “[m]echanistic theory formulates consecutive appearances, and it does so semeotically, in terms of the senses and of psychology (that all effect is motion; that where there is motion something is moved); it does not touch upon the causal force.”

(WP §635, emphasis added)

Thus, we have a number of interrelated experiences. The first is ignorance. We cannot see into every event, we are superficial, and everything is new. However, we crave the familiar, and at those places beyond which we cannot see or sense, we install the familiar. The creation of identicalities in sense rides on this desire to render the new as the old. Thus, out of this desire, we not only err, but we repeat the same error, over and over again. From our ignorance comes a rendering of the cases of our ignorance into identicalities, on the basis of which we can apply familiar schemas. What is important is that we be able to schematize.

It just so happens that our experience is the basis of these familiarities. Feelings, sensations, subjective experiences. The ability to use feelings, sensations, and subjective
experiences as the basis for re-rendering observations comes from our desire for the familiar. And this is there, at the root of language. For we must have the ability to see as the same in order to apply words, for words are first names of images. But language serves a double function, for it not only re-renders, repeating the drive for familiarity that sensation already accomplished, but it renders, it creates. At a certain point of development, the availability of a language is a shortcut to identicality. Language takes over that more preliminary desire and capacity, the desire to make familiar as the old, the same; the capability to make the old, the same. This is what Nietzsche will call the equalization required for assimilation, and we see that it has its roots in a process that exists for organic as well as inorganic entities.

Thus, this biological process of assimilation appears to be repeated in the means of increasing power that we observe in the schemas provided by particular words and linguistic structures:

The meaning of ‘knowledge’: here . . . the concept is to be regarded in a strict and narrow anthropocentric and biological sense. In order for a particular species to maintain itself and increase its power, its conception of reality must comprehend enough of the calculable and constant for it to base a scheme of behavior on it. . . . In other words: the measure of the desire for knowledge depends upon the measure to which the will to power grows in a species: a species grasps a certain amount of reality in order to become master of it, in order to press it into service.52

Indeed, the biological process looks to be no different from the process of interpretation:

Not ‘to know’ but to schematize—to impose upon chaos as much regularity and form as our practical needs require. In the formation of reason, logic, the categories, it was need that was authoritative: the

52 Ibid., §480.
need, not to ‘know,’ but to subsume, to schematize, for the purpose of
intelligibility and calculation—(The development of reason is adjustment,
invention, with the aim of making similar, equal—the same process that
every sense impression goes through!)\textsuperscript{53}

\textit{The Subject, an Interpretation}

It is thus significant that the Subject is called an interpretation, in \textit{WP} \S 481.

Based on the description of \textit{WP} \S 479, considered in the above interlude, we understand this to indicate its projective nature. ‘The subject’ is an element of language not only as a word, but as this kind of translating and projecting capacity. For, as a word, it is like the others, inasmuch as “[w]e set up a word at the point at which our ignorance begins, at which we can see no further, e.g., the word ‘I,’ the word ‘do,’ the word ‘suffer,’”—these are perhaps the horizon of our knowledge, but not ‘truths’.” As regards its translating capacity, that which makes it interpretation: “The ‘subject’ is not something given, it is something added and invented and projected behind what there is.” (\textit{WP} \S 482, 481)

What Nietzsche is critiquing here, by ‘the subject’ is both, on one hand, a word or a set of interchangeable words, such as ‘I’ or ‘ego’; but it is also the work that such words achieve for beings like us, which is the provision of a means of interpretation. This is always an interposition, a projection, such that the new can be rendered into the familiar.

If we return to his earlier claim that “‘to understand’ means merely: to be able to \textit{express something new in the language of something old and familiar},” Nietzsche adds in \textit{WP} \S 481 that though this renders knowability, “the world is . . . \textit{interpretable}

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., \S 515.
otherwise.” This is because “it is our needs that interpret the world; our drives and their
For and Against. 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 the norm.” Interpretations are
thus perspectives from the vantagepoint that is advantageous to a given drive that
desires to rule the others. ‘The subject’ thus can refer to a set of means of
interpretation whereby a drive rules the others through projection of its vantagepoint.

We will consider this notion of a multiplicity of drives, within which one can gain
the power to rule or to appear to rule, as we get further. For now, I want to focus on
language in its interpretive capacity.

The above claim about language as translation into the familiar is significant for
two reasons. First, it indicates that language, considered in its mimetic potential as a
means of representing the new in already familiar terms, is itself a part of the
constitution of the becoming conscious of anything, thus adding an element that
Descartes did not explicitly thematize. Consciousness seems to be characterized less by
immediacy, and rather at least by the temporality required for re-expressing, translating
into familiar conditions. Imposing this language into the previous section’s findings, we
might be tempted to say: the found ‘I’ represents an interpretation. Second, the claim
implies that, since the Subject in Descartes’ terms has as its content that of itself of
which it has become conscious, the very language used to render this consciousness is
itself part of the constitution of consciousness. We thus have reason to consider the
language of consciousness in both senses this phrase implies: in the sense of the
particular elements of language that are used or implicated in a Cartesian view of
consciousness; and in the sense in which consciousness itself functions as a kind of language, or as a kind of language-ing, a kind of projecting and interpreting. This latter sense is part of Nietzsche’s innovation here, part of the view of the Subject that he is actually building up in contrast to Descartes’. In Nietzsche’s comments on the Subject, language is both that which supports and continually reinscribes the Cartesian view of the Subject, but it is also that of which a consideration enables a deconstruction and reconstituted view of the Subject. What forms the link here, enabling language to perform both functions? It seems to have to do with thinking about language in two senses: as a means, as a structure composed of kinds of entities (words, sentences, etc.) and as a function that those means bring to bear (interpretation). In the latter sense, language is a means of provision of perspective by which one drive is able to rule or appear to rule the others. Language is like a capacity that can be used, or put to use, in this sense. *When we look at particular linguistic elements, in the next section, we consider not only those elements in particular, but the way in which they are put to use, and the drive by which they are put to use, toward an interpretation.*

What Nietzsche has done in these passages is to make consciousness an extension of a process that preexists the Subject of consciousness. If consciousness is an extension of the basic activity of assimilation through equalization, then the ‘I’ posited by consciousness is such an instance of assimilation through equalization. What is at the root of this supposed immediacy is a mediation. Further, because it is an extension of the mediation that gives rise to consciousness itself, there can be no immediacy here: we cannot get before or behind the mediation, for we, as beings of consciousness, are
of it. The consciousness that gives rise to self-consciousness is already a process of assimilation. ‘Who’ assimilated that which pre-exists the assimilated subject?

There is another issue to be pursued more fully here: how this biological process is one among many, i.e., is part of a multiplicity of such processes of assimilation. The section below considers how this biological turn interrupts the unity of the Subject.

**Subject as Assimilating Multiplicity**

The above consideration of consciousness and sensation allows us to approach the Subject in its capacity as an interpretation that serves the aim of assimilation of a multiplicity. Specifically, Nietzsche’s claim that what goes for ‘outer’ experience goes also for ‘inner’ experience is important here. For we have noted that consciousness is a becoming-conscious of certain perceptions useful for preservation of a kind of life, which is at the same time a not becoming conscious of others. Consciousness is partial, a fact which the term ‘self-consciousness’ might serve to obfuscate. When we note this fact that consciousness is partial, “that a higher court rules over these things [unconscious bodily processes] cannot be doubted—a kind of directing committee on which the various chief desires make their votes and power felt.”

In *WP* §490, Nietzsche claims “*My hypotheses*: the subject as multiplicity.” While Nietzsche does not claim here that the Subject is certainly a multiplicity, only hypothesizes it, this notion of the Subject as multiplicity makes sense as an hypothesis if we consider the work of consciousness as on a continuum with the body and biological processes of assimilation. In fact, this is what *BGE* §19 goes on to indicate when it turns

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54 *WP* §524.
to the language of “commonwealth.” Nietzsche uses this language of the commonwealth to describe the way that various centers of power operate within an entire organism. One center usurps the power of the others.

Here, consciousness is expressed not as the outgrowth of the unity underlying actions effected through the body—which is the understanding of subject as substrate, substance—but as one class comprising the many classes within this bodily commonwealth. Consciousness is not the director of the commonwealth, as ‘I’ purports, but the class that likes to take credit for, and hence to erase and claim for itself, the actions of all the subservient classes. Consciousness is no less subservient, except that it has the ability to hypostatize itself, to puff itself up, to create an image of itself—as the center and director of all, which it achieves through the ‘I,’ in its saying “L’effet c’est moi.” It is in this way not unlike the CEO with no connection to the actual conditions or activities on the company factory floors, who does not know how many employees are employed by the corporation, or all that they achieve on a daily basis, but who claims, at the end of the quarter, that due to his/her directives, “I made that.”

In WP §492, we get a perhaps even stronger demonstration of how physiological experience obviates the pretensions of ‘I’ as causal substrate, and, one which shows us that the problem in this case is not with the notion of a Subject as such but with the notions of unity and causation as substrate of all actions that are attached to our thinking of the ‘I.’ Here Nietzsche begins with the statement

the body and physiology 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.

This repeats the sense in BGE §19 of the myriad sensations, thoughts, and affects comprising, as “ingredients,” the apparent ‘willing’ of an ‘action.’ The subject-unity is not a conscious commander of isolated actions, but a regent kept in “relative ignorance . . . concerning individual activities and even disturbances within the communality [that is] among the conditions under which rule can be exercised.”

Consciousness is not the regent, for “[i]t is not the directing agent, but an organ of the directing agent.” But it gives the semblance of rule, or perhaps usurps the ruling position, in the sense that it directs toward a certain perspective interpretation, precisely the perspective interpretation that it rules. This follows the sense in which Nietzsche claims, in these sections, that “a belief can be a condition of life and nonetheless be false,” or, “that a belief, however necessary it may be for the preservation of a species, has nothing to do with truth,” and that “it could be useful and important for one’s activity to interpret oneself falsely.” For “our belief in the ego as substance,” is a condition of life, for if we “let it go means: being no longer able to think.”

We have found that the schemas that come along with the belief in the Subject of consciousness provide for certain needs of this kind of life. As WP §488-489 indicate, these include stability through change, and an ability to organize relations with other organisms (as things that we can act on). Consciousness is, as we have found above, a

55 WP §524.
56 WP §483, 487, 492.
57 WP §487.
development out of the need to assimilate. Hence, “[n]ot ‘to know’ but to schematize—to impose upon chaos as much regularity and form as our practical needs require. In the formation of reason, logic, the categories, it was need that was authoritative: the need, not ‘to know,’ but to subsume, to schematize, for the purpose of intelligibility and calculation.”58

So the conscious subject, who feels itself to be the commander of this entity we are through its being the substrate of causation through willing, does not rule, but provides a familiar interpretation, the interpretation through which we assimilate and obtain fresh feelings of power, and make more likely our success at certain assimilations in the future. However, what we take as the highest power within us has itself developed as a means, and as a means, it cannot be self-justifying, but justified only by the role it plays and need that it fills. This need that it fills is that of “the interests of social intercourse,” and in fact it is developed out of that very intercourse itself (WP §524).59

Language and Assimilation as ‘Making Similar’: Composing Subjects

Language is not only the name for the process of interpretation that is a repetition of assimilation that seems to occur at the level of individual organisms. Consciousness in its service of the need for social intercourse here opens onto language as convention, as the shared familiar. For language is also said to develop out of the need to service a kind of shared life. Because it develops out of the need to make a

58 WP §515.
59 “. . . [U]sually, one takes consciousness itself as the general sensorium and supreme court; nonetheless, it is only a means of communication: it is evolved through social intercourse and with a view to the interests of social intercourse” (WP §524).
certain kind of life possible and continuable—the need for quick assessment, for a process of abbreviation that can be convention, habit, familiar—language is the sine qua non for the usurpation of the position of rule by consciousness for not only one life, but a kind of life which is shared. In this sense, it has a second life beyond the assimilation we have already considered: it not only assimilates (makes equal, incorporable) phenomena, it assimilates (makes equal, similar) the kind of life characterized by consciousness. This assimilation relates to the way that a spoken and written language is shared.

Sharing a Language: Language and the Origin of Ideas

We have already seen Nietzsche implicate philosophy in a seduction by grammar, a reliance on the schemas it provides for thinking of subjects as causal substrates. This is why language has been said to hold prejudices of reason. This view seems to be deepened in a few passages in BGE in which Nietzsche suggests that the structure of language is determinative of the conceptual structure of peoples who share a language.

Here he claims “that individual philosophical concepts are not anything capricious or autonomously evolving, but grow up in connection and relationship with each other . . . [and] belong just as much to a system as all the members of the fauna of a continent . . . is betrayed in the end also by the fact that the most diverse philosophers keep filling in a definite fundamental scheme of possible philosophies.”60 They operate “under an invisible spell,” for, however different their projects, “something within leads

60 BGE §20, emphasis added.
them, something impels them in a definite order . . . to wit, the innate systematic structure and relationship of their concepts.” In this way “their thinking is, in fact, far less a discovery than a recognition, a remembering, a return and a homecoming to a remote, primordial, and inclusive household of the soul, out of which those concepts grew originally,” such that “philosophizing is . . . a kind of atavism of the highest order.” (BGE §20, emphasis added)

What can be the source here, which is sought over and over?

The strange family resemblance of all Indian, Greek, and German philosophizing is explained easily enough. Where there is affinity of languages, it cannot fail, owing to the common philosophy of grammar—I mean, owing to the unconscious domination and guidance by similar grammatical functions—that everything is prepared at the outset for a similar development and sequence of philosophical systems; just as the way seems barred against certain other possibilities of world-interpretation.61

And it seems probable that philosophers at home in languages in which “the concept of the Subject is least developed . . . look otherwise ‘into the world,’ and will be found on paths of thought different from those of the Indo-Germanic peoples and the Muslims. . . .”62

Sharing a Language: Language and Inner States

WP §503 claims that knowledge “is an apparatus for abstraction and simplification—directed not at knowledge but at taking possession of things.” What constitutes this abstraction and simplification directed to ‘things’?

61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
In earlier texts we have considered in part I, the main point regarding language was a negative one, the point being that, whatever those ‘things’ are, our words, and even moreso our concepts, could not be said to grasp or represent them faithfully. But in a number of the later texts there is a valence of language, specifically in consideration of words and concepts, that amounts to the sense in which language is not just a sign language that purports ‘things,’ however unfaithfully, but that signifies affect, or what are often called “inner states.” Language does more than simply signify these inner states, however; it plays a role in the creation and recreation of similar inner states within a people who share a language.

We might begin by considering the suggestion that perceptions contain value judgments:

. . . the sum of all those perceptions the becoming-conscious of which was useful and essential to us and to the entire organic process—therefore not all perceptions in general. . . . [W]e have senses for only a selection of perceptions—those with which we have to concern ourselves in order to preserve ourselves. Consciousness is present only to the extent that consciousness is useful. It cannot be doubted that all sense perceptions are permeated with value judgments (useful and harmful, consequently, pleasant or unpleasant).”

This seems to suggest that consciousness of perceptions increases as the value judgment that those perceptions are useful grows. Becoming conscious of perceptions or a type of perception involves, then, a kind of affirmation of that type of perception.

*WP* §506 suggests that the weak inner sensations, or emotions, called up by words are actually the basis of concepts: “First *images*—to explain how images arise in

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63 Ibid., 503. This seems to bear a relation to the claim in *OMW* that there are two types of representation, sensory, mental, linguistic, on one hand, and those that accompany all of these, in the form of pleasure and pain. This tone underground seems now to be expressed as the force of value/valuation inherent in perception.
the spirit. Then words, applied to images. Finally, concepts, possible only when there are words—the collecting together of many images in something nonvisible but audible (word).” This much might put us in mind of his earlier schema involving sensations, words, and concepts in OTL. Yet, he goes on: “The tiny amount of emotion to which the ‘word’ gives rise, as we contemplate similar images for which one word exists—this weak emotion is the common element, the basis of the concept. That weak sensations are regarded as alike, sensed as being the same, is the fundamental fact.” While in OTL, the concept was said to have its basis in a metaphor or aesthetic leap from words into an entirely new sphere, Nietzsche here supplies a point of continuity between the word and the concept, as the concept is, in at least one sense, born from the collection of the ‘emotion’ compounded by all the similar ‘images’ to which a word is attached. It is as if we envision the images that come to mind when we hear a word, and what forms the basis of the concept is not what looks or appears similar in those images, as if they were purely visual, but that what is similar is the emotion in us that we sense when imagining what the word represents.

This means, first, that words are harbingers of emotion. That they imply an emotive response in us means that they are the sorts of things to which values are attached. And if our emotive response to words is the basis of the concepts that they form, then the concept contains a valence of evaluation. This analysis also suggests that, since words and concepts are conventional, the evaluative valence must also be shared by those who use a language in common.
These suggestions are echoed more clearly in *BGE* §268, where words are said to correspond to inner states. “Words are acoustical signs for concepts; concepts, however, are more or less definite image signs for often recurring and associated sensations, for groups of sensations.” The passage goes on to indicate that words are associated with certain inner experiences or sensations, such that to understand someone’s words is to have the same inner experiences associated with the same words: “To understand one another, it is not enough that one use the same words; one also has to use the same words for the same species of inner experiences; in the end one has to have one’s experience in common.” The inner states associated with words might be “feelings, intentions, nuances, desires, and fears. . . .”

Within what we might call “a people,” those who “have long lived together under similar conditions (of climate, soil, danger, needs and work),” the same words become associated with the same inner states: “in all souls an equal number of often recurring experiences has come to be predominant over experiences that come more rarely: on the basis of the former one understands the other, quickly and ever more quickly.” (*BGE* §268)

Hence, “the history of language is the history of a process of abbreviation,” whereby people are able to understand one another more and more quickly, because the same words serve as abbreviations of the same inner states, sensations, and needs. And this history traces a “*progressus in simile*,” as man continually develops “toward the similar, ordinary, average.” (*BGE* §268)
We might consider these points, first, in distinction to the earlier treatment of words and concepts in *OTL*. In the schema depicted therein, we moved from sensation, to mental image, to words applied to those mental images. Words were there considered in their naming function, as names for the mental images. Words became concepts as they transcended their function of naming mental images, and instead were considered to name different sorts of entities, the concept. The concept was a collapsing, an attempt to make each use of the word, as a name, equivalent. Since the word named mental images, it was a collapsing of each mental image thus named into only what was the same, and exclusion of whatever was particular to one or another. The concept was then an artificial conglomeration of everything that each instance of application of the name to a mental image shared, and nothing they did not.

There are similarities between the above passages on words and concepts and this earlier depiction. This earlier schema in *OTL* can also be said to involve a kind of inner state, inasmuch as the mental images might be called inner states. And certainly, in both, words and concepts perform a kind of narrowing function, whereby the understanding that is built up through our use of language and concepts tends to obscure the inner states at their basis.

But what seems to be unique to these later passages is that the inner states are not that which are named by words, but that which are “associated with” or “given rise to” by words. There seems to be something non-mimetic here.64 If we look at *WP* §506, that passage that seemed at first to recapitulate the earlier schema, we see that words

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64 This mimetic framework was marked by Nietzsche’s appending the “mysterious X” to this schema, in relation to which the initial sensation, itself translated into a mental image, was unequal.
name images. But the emotion that Nietzsche refers to here as the basis of the concept is not the image that is named by the word, but rather “[t]he tiny amount of emotion to which the ‘word’ gives rise, as we contemplate similar images for which one word exists . . .” (emphasis added). The contemplation of what the words are said to name is what gives rise to the emotion: in this sense, the emotion at issue is said to be “associated” with the word, but not “named” by the word. This is a valence of words that was not included in the earlier depiction. It is our inability to make distinctions among these associated emotions that allows the concept: “That weak sensations are regarded as alike, sensed as being the same, is the fundamental fact.” *WP* §511 links this “regarding as alike” to conditions of life: what we are dealing with here is the equalization of what is not equal, in order to assimilate it.

We have just seen that language is the process of abbreviation of inner states, sensations, and needs, and that the development of language describes the development of communities toward a similar structure of soul. Nietzsche elaborates elsewhere that

> Which group of sensations is aroused, expresses itself, and issues commands in a soul most quickly, is decisive for the whole order of rank of its values and ultimately determines its table of goods. *The values of a human being betray something of the structure of his soul and where it finds its conditions of life, its true need.*

If we consider both kinds of passages, Nietzsche seems to suggest that not only do values betray the structure of soul, but language seems to be a means whereby that structure is composed and reiterated. This suggests that language not only provides

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65 *BGE* §268, emphasis added.
schemas and habits for interpretation, but that it plays a role in composing the soul that goes on to engage that kind of interpretation.

Consciousness represents the first ‘usurpation’ of rule. Its tool is language. The tool has a ramifying power: it shapes ‘the soul,’ the system of valuation. We can only get out of this from within this: changing language, but we cannot throw it off:

Now we read disharmonies and problems into things because we think only in the form of language—and thus believe in the ‘eternal truth’ of ‘reason’. . . . 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.”

Conclusions

The Subject, as all unities, is an interpretation. Interpretation is a function of a kind of life. So, there is a kind of life that lives by interpretation. Who we are is, at least in one way, to appear to ourselves as the Subjects of our interpretations—the retrospectively created subjects of the interpretations that consciousness cannot live/grow/amass power/assimilate without, as interpretation is a form of assimilation, enacted in our case not only through language proper—‘grammar and words’—but the languages with which the body is inflected. When engaged by a being characterized also by consciousness, these assimilations create the illusion of a pre-existing center, the Subject as the illusory unitary center of force. But, then, beings that we are live by this illusion, and its constitution is testament to how we are, for we are through it, which is

\[\text{66 WP §522.}\]
why this critique of the Subject is not simply a denial of the Subject, as through the
critique we gain a perspective on how we are as what we are not.67

It seems in many ways that the category of interpretation is the larger context
within which language is placed in these texts and notes. Interpretation is neither a
merely linguistic nor conscious nor rational phenomenon; in fact, the process that might
be named ‘interpretation’ gives rise to our very ability to posit categories or name
‘interpretation’ at all. Interpretation on one hand is that process of assimilation that
describes the means whereby all forms of life, from inorganic to organic, incorporate
others as they become. As it is at its basis a projecting of a schema whereby that which
is external to the organism becomes internal to the organism by becoming ‘rendered’
into familiar terms (the function of ‘identical’ cases), all beings in any process of
development interpret. Nietzsche remarks that even this positing of the process is itself
interpretation, for he is not at liberty to throw off the schema whereby his kind of life
lives. The difference between the crystal and the human, from the perspective of the
human, is that the crystal does not posit its own activity in another form, as a word or a
concept, as we do. Likewise, when we observe the body, we find many instances of
interpretation, but were it not for the perspective of consciousness, all these processes
might still go on as they do now, save for the process of naming the others as
‘interpretation.’ But this is just where the special power of interpretation, in the form of
language, comes in, for as language, interpretation can alter itself of its own designs.

67 Which Nietzsche will claim is itself an interpretation, as which, “so much the better!”
Language becomes a kind of prison, or a kind of imprisonment, for particular forms of consciousness become embedded (‘petrified’) in language, and language in one sense is this embeddedness, such that when we think only in the form of language, language becomes a means whereby a certain interpretation becomes solidified and unsurpassable, and is the form beyond which an alternative is usually not imagined. Language is such a means that allows the interpretations of consciousness to become solidified, to gain an impressing power that continually reasserts itself.

Yet, this power can turn on itself. It can turn on itself because, analytically considered, interpretation is not equivalent to any of its schemas: because interpretation is not equivalent to a given linguistic expression. It is the power of schematizing, not reducible to any one schema. Because there is a force of life that runs through interpretation, the particularities of any given interpretation can be seen as the evaluations necessitated by that form of life. Which raises the spectre of others.

It seems as if the problem identified with language, throughout, is not one with language as such. Language is not lamentable because of that power which it could never have, the power to represent the in-itself faithfully. Language is lamentable only as a particular formation of language, when a particular schema, expressed in language, takes on the appearance of reality, masquerading as what it is not. In fact, it seems as if there is a saving power here, and that the saving power is also this character of language, new uses of language. Language is not the source of any given interpretation, but is rather both the means whereby any one is enabled, as well as the means whereby any one is solidified.
This raises the question: How can one schema of interpretation be displaced by another?

I noted in an early footnote that Ricoeur views Nietzsche’s Nachlass passages as offering only a deconstruction of Descartes’ view of the Subject. But this doesn’t seem right, because of the prospect that Nietzsche holds out: when the affective power, given expression through schematizing in general, turns away from one form of schematization. We might think here of Kant speaking of the hidden art in the soul, and naming it schematism. Nietzsche links this with ‘inner states,’ which we might want to call affect.

There is a schematization that has been enabled by language that we have considered here, the use of language to shore up a particular view of the Subject. However, this view of the Subject is also broken by an alternative use of language. This is the prospect Nietzsche holds out to us, in indicating that language is connected to inner states, and that these inner states might gain the power to subvert those very uses of language. Language is the reserve of a power, not an entity. The prospect of self-overcoming is presaged in the power of language.

The Subject does not come from language, but rather from a variety of inclinations, those tended to by sensory processes, by prejudices. It is reinstalled in language, which can tend toward petrification. But the suggestion is that language also allows an ability for us to take on a different relation to those sensory and psychological tendencies. In fact, Nietzsche’s reading is what allows us to take on this different relation to our sensory and psychological tendencies. The standard view of the Subject is
undercut by this view, that the Subject is the assimilative work of a being that supersedes this assimilation only because—it is the result, rather than the cause, of the assimilation.

The Subject is a fiction, but this does not mean it is not; just as words are fictions. The Subject is a trope, just as words are tropes. The tropes: metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche. The Subject is all of these: a translation into alternative terms; a substitution of effect for cause; a substitution of part for the whole. What Nietzsche points out about the Subject is not its not being, for it is for us and for our thinking, but rather its tropic status, which means its not being what we believe it to be, a pre-existent ground.

The Subject is a creation of language, but this is not the same as the claim that the Subject is created by grammar and words. The Subject pertains to the work that language is and that it does.

I said above that language can be a prison. Particular uses of language are prisons, and here they are just like beliefs, and Nietzsche’s critique shows the way that habits of language shore up beliefs. Beliefs can be prisons, in the view of The Antichrist, when we cease to be suspicious of them, when they have become too familiar. The Subject, as a creation of language in the sense above, and as a belief, is also such a prison, and this is the source of the question: Can we escape this prison that we have made? If we are suspicious of it? By using words differently? Nietzsche suggests this

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68 As synecdoche, the Subject is in part what we are, only not the whole, though it masquerades as such. As synecdoche, the Subject pertains to the conscious part of ourselves that inserts itself as the whole, as the commander of the commonwealth. As metonymy, the Subject is the cause that we feel ourselves to be over our actions, even though this is a retrospective projection into what is only a series of effects. As metaphor, the Subject is that into which we translate our experiences.
when he tells us that language shapes the soul of those who use it in common, but that uncommon uses of language indicate differently disposed souls. Does this not indicate one method of changing those who have come to think of themselves as certain kinds of Subjects? By being suspicious of this term, by using it differently. If the word is put to a different use, and shores up a different interpretation through this use, do we not make possible an alternate becoming?
Chapter 4

Who is Reading, Who is Writing—The Writing of the Self

Introduction

This chapter deals with writing, performativity, and the self. It focuses on *Ecce Homo*. It is, however, nothing like an exhaustive reading of this text, but one that remains focused on elements of its surface. The source of this focus is this view: that what Nietzsche’s narrative voice in *Ecce Homo* claims to be doing—saying who the self is through the present work of writing, itself composed of re-reading prior writings signed by this self and re-depicting the self who wrote them—in a very important way, does not, strictly speaking, occur.¹ Rather, what occurs in this text is the unworking of the presumed unity of that self, even as the narrator claims to be retrieving and re-depicting it. Thus, we have this difference between what the narrator claims to do and what the text in fact does. In other words, the constatively claimed work carried out in the text is unworked by the performative valence of the text. What is thus demonstrated in the text is the impossibility of the unity, oneness, and immediacy of the self, along with the desperate insistence on the part of the narrator that this *not* be impossible.²

¹ I try to refer throughout to the speaker’s voice in *Ecce Homo* as the narrator or narrative voice, in order mark the difference between the signature, Friedrich Nietzsche, and the perspective from which *Ecce Homo* proceeds. My sense is that if we conflate the historical person Nietzsche with the narrative voice, we could foreclose the elements of staging involved in the text, and that the perspective expressed through the narrative voice is one of the features of the text that is being performed, and in need of interrogation. It is my view that many of the later Prefaces operate as such stagings, to indicate that the narrative voice of each text comes from a particular perspective that is not necessarily, or not only, to be conflated with Nietzsche’s, and which is meant to be interrogated.

² I use “constative” and “performative” rather broadly, but drawing from the general sense given to the terms by speech act theory, as it develops from J.L. Austin’s initial claims in *How to Do Things With Words*. 
The Text, the Texts

There are a number of later works of Nietzsche’s in which the constative issue of the text is the self (the writer himself, Nietzsche himself), but within which the non-constative issue at play, that which is demonstrated or performed rather than claimed within the text, is the disruption of the constatively purported self. Here, the texts present the unworking of the self, and this is curious because this unworking is enacted in texts that take their very issue to be none other than the identification and presentation of a self. Which are these texts in which we find this performance? Though I cannot do justice to them fully here, they are the Prefaces of 1886, and, the entirety of Ecce Homo. What is shared in these texts? The staged act of reading one’s own texts, and the enactment of a written commentary on those texts that offers a re-presentation of the real self who, in fact, wrote those texts. The narrative voice of these texts seems to say: Here’s what I really meant; here’s what I was really doing; here’s what I didn’t see or say then, when I wrote that, but which I see now, as I’m writing this. This general kind of act could be read as an obsession over authorship, the determination to

Constative utterances are those involving description or reportage of a state of affairs, and which can be true or false. Performative utterances are those in which the saying of the statement constitutes the doing of an action. I use these terms to refer to different valences of the written text: by “constative” I simply mean the written text considered at the level of the discursive claims within it—what is overtly claimed. With “performative,” in contrast, I mean the meanings that are suggested not by direct discursive claims but by what is done but not directly stated in the text. The performative valence of the text is thus that wherein structural or rhetorical techniques constitute meaning. See J.L. Austin, How to do Things with Words, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).

In 1886 Prefaces are created, for old writings, for writings coming out: EH, GM, HTH, GS. In these last three, what is provided is a narrative of the development of the narrative voice. For GM, this narrative stretches back to the narrator’s childhood; for HTH and GS, the narrative begins in medias res, in the middle of life of illness and recovery. But in all it is clear, it is a particular voice that is being foregrounded here. Yet there are echoes of this performance in other texts of the late period. Essay 3 of GM is a case in point, and, I might argue elsewhere, Antichrist.

And, perhaps—Trust me?
continue having the last (and last, and last) word, holding so tightly to the self at the
time that one never lets go saying “that isn’t what I meant/that isn’t what I meant at
all.”

But my view is that to read this act as correction, as improved retrieval and
representation, is taking the narrator at his word, and not taking the text at its deed;
this textual deed is to highlight, and call into question, the very desire to thus name and
represent the one, the one who I “am,” who is purportedly the same one who meant
something by those words that were from this same one. The one who continues to
desire the alignment of the writing self and the written—which one is this?

**The Self and Language**

The larger issue of my project is language, so how is this chapter related to
language? We have seen language, in the previous chapter, as grammar and words,
form part of the critique of the Subject. My claim is that we find language performing
some of this same work—this work of being the reserve of habits toward unification
that we saw in the critique of the Subject. But there is another valence of language,
found in these staged, non-constative, or performative elements of the written work.
Language is freed from its constative and mimetic overtones, and it is shown to be
performative in these later texts, in two senses. That it is performative is staged by the
narrative voice, who attempts a work regarding the self: to *tell* himself to himself,
through the writing. But, that very work of telling, and all its work with reading,
memory, and narrativizing, is itself a performance within this text, something that the
text also *stages* for us to *read*. It becomes that which says something through what it
tries to do, and our observation of that attempt. This double performativity is significant in my reading, which we might focus generally on the issues of: future anteriority, ambiguity, and catachresis. *Ecce Homo* is a performative text, which consists in the resultant view that the self is performative. *Ecce Homo* is a text of the future anterior; of irreducible ambiguity; and of catachresis, suggesting that “self” operates in all of these ways, covering over a lack, an absence which is not simply linguistic.\(^5\)

There is something that all of these notions are getting at—performativity, future anteriority, catachresis. *Catachresis* is the use of a term from another ‘domain’ to fill a lexical gap—when a ‘literal’ term is not available. Which is to say, there is a space here, and the term allows us to begin filling it in. What if this is a space where there is nothing, where we have nothing pre-existing, and the introduction of the term “self” allows it to become thinkable that there is a something, and projects it as already having been? This is what gender, ego, and sovereignty do, in Butler and Derrida’s analyses—they fill in for more than a lexical gap, they fill in for a gap in conceivability. These terms bring something to appear. Future anteriority then speaks to our need to have this gap filled.

In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche is treating the self in the same way, though he doesn’t announce it—he performs it, through the text, through what it enacts, not through its constative language. The account here is undercutting the covering of the space of nothing provided by the “self.” What is interesting is that “Nietzsche” directly contests  

\(^5\) We have that question, of why the telling of his life to himself in *Ecce Homo* occurs by way of writing in a double sense: of writing in the sense that the retelling is written, the words we are reading; of writing in the sense that the retelling is, for the most part, a retelling on the basis of returning to previous writings. What has been written, what is being written—these issues of writing are intricately bound up in the questions that *Ecce Homo* presents us with regarding who the self is.
this covering of nothing in the critiques of the Subject. But here, in his “text” on the self, there is no direct critique. It is in fact a performative critique, in which not only is the whatness of the self revealed to be a nothing but another version of the self is suggested in its place, one that would look an awful lot like this: performativity without the future anteriority, without the disavowal of the nothing ‘from which’ it emerges.

A Scruple

A readerly scruple lurking in the background, whose outlines you will have already traced: it is particularly fruitful to resist reducing “Nietzsche” not only to Nietzsche the historical person but to Nietzsche as a group of texts. We can never fully resist the violation of this scruple; we can sometimes hold off for a bit of time. But resistance is fruitful because (yielding to the very reduction I am trying to resist, yet cannot) Nietzsche’s texts so often involve a staging of the constative elements—what is said is staged, and that staging is part of what is said, non-constatively. This staging is often in part achieved through the implied distance between the narrative voice and the author of the narrative voice, the one who is writing. In simplest terms, these texts I have named above, and Ecce Homo in particular, resist our habitual attempt to reduce the narrative voice that speaks constatively in the text, and the apparent perspective of that voice, to the voice and perspective of—who else is there?—the one writing that voice. Doesn’t this resistance only help reveal that the who of that voice is not one?6

6 How is this distance between the narrative voice and the author signaled, performed, if it is not directly stated? In the way in which the narrative voices of Nietzsche’s texts might undercut their constative claims; the narrative voice reveals some tendency or characteristic that is meant for us to raise questions in regard to.
Clarification of “Performativity”

Not all possible structural or rhetorical techniques are being considered here; I focus on those that have to do with the performance of the self. What I mean by this is that I focus on the fact that, in these texts, what is staged is the narrator’s reading of

For example, *GM* presents a history that is generated through the deployment of reinterpretation of a standard, current history of morality. The story of descent that is told in this genealogy is a particular reinterpretation of that standard history of morality. Yet, part of the character of this genealogy is its inseparability from the Preface, and from the idiosyncrasies recounted there of the particular perspective from which that genealogy originates: it is the genealogy of—presented and traced by—a particular individual that the Preface describes. By calling attention to the narrative voice of the genealogy—by individualizing that voice in the Preface, and giving it a history and needs and desires—the text at the same time as it presents a counter-history enacts, rather than states, the embeddedness of this counter-history within the context of a singular life. Thus the text, widened out to include the Preface, becomes not only the new story told by the “content” of the genealogy—the “counter-history” if you will—but a story of that story told. In fact, what it marks is that even the counter-history of genealogy has such a story, which is to say, that it is through and through perspectival. The Preface’s attention to the narrative particularity of the genealogy makes of the presented genealogy a demonstration of the emergence of reinterpretation out of the very needs and desires of a life.

On one hand is the general structural point—that the genealogy here is not a simple reversal of a history, not a substitution of one objective history for another, but that genealogy operates in the acknowledgment of its emergence out of particularity. On the other hand would be the specific point—that the content of the particularity of this narrative voice, whether in terms of its self-understanding or of what is shown of it beyond its purported self-understanding, has a role to play in marking this genealogy as merely perspectival. In this sense, the fact of the Preface, which is just to say the fact that the narrative voice is an individual who is not necessarily Nietzsche, enacts a point about the very nature of this genealogy and all of its points of content that represent a counter-history, and something that cannot or at least is not made in the language of that counter-history—that the story of descent has its own descent.

Something of this same interpretive structure can be imposed on *Ecce Homo*. The idiosyncrasy of the genealogist is parallel to the idiosyncrasy of the narrator, in that calling attention to both allows to be demonstrated what cannot be said at the same level as the literal text without risk of its falling prey to the suspicion that is informing the reinterpretation contained within the literal text in the first place—the suspicion against dogmatism, the judgment that science, history of morality, and Christian morality all claim a position that should be adopted by all. The dogmatism of interpretations is prevented by refusing the self-delusion of faith in the possibility of a transcendent perspective that could be recommended for one and all. By calling attention to the idiosyncrasy of the narrative voice, Nietzsche enacts rather than directly states an obfuscation for any attempt to read the ensuing content as claims that purport to be better statements of the truth of the things they describe.

But, how do we assess that this resistance is a valuable hermeneutic principle? Isn’t it only thanks to this reduction that we can’t help but yield to, by the experience with many of the texts that share the one signature of Nietzsche? In other words, isn’t it that habit, of reducing the narrator’s voice to that of the author, that is called finally into relief only because we try to do it, meet resistance, the tension between the one and the many, and thus notice ourselves doing it? That, for instance, the *resentment*-filled voice in *The Antichrist* can’t be the same one who recounts his genealogy, and his inborn scruples, in the Preface to *On the Genealogy of Morality*? There is too much difference to be the kind of unity we expect in one. We only find the difference because the attempt to unify is unworked by other texts; we only see the difference because we *try* to unify the voices.
himself. The narrator claims to read previously written works in order to, in the present act of writing, re-present the self that is contained therein; but what is actually performed by the work of these writings—their being acts of renewed reading and writing—is the creation of a self that is projected in the mode of the future anterior. In these works, the narrator claims to tell us what already was the case about himself, but the narrator performs, despite himself, the infinitely renewable projection of what will have been the case, in an act of reading and writing, acts which can be infinitely renewed, because they can be taken up/read/written about again. This projection masquerading as retrieval rides on the ambiguity of writing—writing as the written (inscribed, monument of a past), and writing as the infinitely renewable object of reading and re-writing. What is performed is the projection of a self, which is read as being the same across these multiple acts of reading and writing. This means that “self” functions catachrestically—we interpret “self” as the unity between the temporal dimensions represented by the first writing, the rereading, and the second writing, despite the openness of the writing as such—the fact that it can be infinitely read and written about.

This performative de-constitution of a self, one which seems to be constatively represented in the direct claims about the narrator’s self, is particularly illuminating inasmuch as it consists in an auto-criticality. What I mean by this is that in order to perform this de-constitution, the writer (“Nietzsche,” loosely) demonstrates his essential ambivalence, in the most literal sense: ambivalence connotes a being in two directions at the same time. The writer announces his attachment to the constative
level of claims—attachment to being the kind of self constatively claimed in the preexisting writing (this is who I am, because it is what I already was, and what I read now, again, for you)—and, his attachment to the performed level of claims—attachment to eradicating that very notion of preexisting self in the fact that it has to be constituted as a temporally distant act of reading and new writing about what is read. This is the ambivalence of “Nietzsche” regarding which his later writing practice never leaves us without testimony: for everything that this signatory, Nietzsche, critiques, there is an attachment to that which is being critiqued, and a critique of that attachment.

Butler on Performativity, the Subject, and Future Anteriority

Still other aspects of the sense of performativity that I have in mind are articulated by Judith Butler in her view that gender is performative. While Butler articulates performativity in a number of texts, most notably 1990’s Gender Trouble, I will refer to the brief articulation found in the 1988 essay “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory.”

The claim that gender is performative is not quite the same as the claim that gender is performed. The notion of performativity draws, first, from the distinctions made within speech act theory, as noted above. Performative speech acts, in fact, are themselves kinds of constitutive acts, those the very doing of which consists in a making, or a constituting, of something in addition to the mere performance of the act. A speech

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8 Butler refers specifically to John Searle, rather than Austin, in this essay.
act is both an act of speaking and also the act of making, or constituting, something through that speaking which is not reducible to the mere spoken words. The exemplary instance here, within Searle’s articulation, is the marriage vow. In the speaking of “I do (promise to . . . ),” not only does the speaker articulate these words, but the very speaking of these words also constitutes the promise at issue. In other words, one does something besides “simply” speak in a speech act.⁹ Speech acts are thus, in the use to which Butler turns them here, themselves exemplary of the feature of constitutive acts: a doing can also be a making.¹⁰

Butler’s claim that gender is performative is illuminated by this first point: in the acts that we read as “acting out” or “displaying” one’s gender, one is actually making or constituting one’s gender.

Butler’s notion of performativity draws, secondly, from the dislocation of “being” from the temporality of presence, which we might hastily denominate “existentialist.” Such a dislocation we might find, exemplarily, in Sartre’s notion that existence precedes essence, which is to say that what constitutes my being is never “all at once,” and hence also never “beforehand” in relation to any of my actions, but is always temporally extended into the open horizon of what I have yet to do. This existentialist framework would seem to read every action as constitutive, not just some—constitutive of my

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⁹ What Butler here calls a “speech” act can be understood as “performative utterance” as described above based on Austin. See note 2 above.

¹⁰ What Butler draws from speech act theory is this view on constitutive acts: some human actions “do” in an irreducibly dual sense, they do and they make in that doing. The possibility of “doing” speaking bleeds into the realm of the possibility of “doing” promising, and it bleeds because the act whereby speaking can be enacted is also, sometimes, an act whereby promising can be enacted. With some acts of speaking words we are also, in that act, making something besides the words (here, a promise). This is the notion of constitutedness or constitution in acts, the dual character of the act itself.
being, for which reason, my being must be stretched across all possible actions for me, which means, stretching into the performance of those actions that have yet to be.

Notice that this view rides on the same notion of the constitutiveness of action, but put in terms of an impossibly whole temporal vantagepoint: because in whatever I do, I also constitute, or make, myself, this necessitates that what I am is never fully available at any one time, as long as I continue to exist and hence am held in the reserve of the future, inasmuch as what I will do is held in reserve from what I have done and what I am doing. This suggests I am not a what at all. Butler’s claim that gender is performative is illuminated by this point: my gender is constituted not merely by the sum of acts in which I have engaged thus far, but is ongoing and repeatedly renewed in the acts I now undertake and have yet to undertake.

Thus we can see that Butler’s notion of performativity draws from the significance of the future anterior to constitutive acts in the sense of the effects of those acts. Butler articulates a projective quality of the effects of an action which is not limited to the “not yet” of the future, but, importantly, is directed to our sense of “already was” of the past. The constitutive act that gender acts are not only make our gender, and not only make our gender as that which is continually renewed as ongoing and never all at once, but make our gender as that which we interpret in the mode of “already was,” that which we interpret as arising from or effected by a pre-existing state of our being. This is to say, one of the possibilities opened up by performative acts (and maybe this is all that matters in the end) is our interpretation of what that act means, shows, or entails. That performative acts result in the interpretation of them, that they are not
creations, but that they are rather expressions of what preexists them, says something only about our very ineptitude with the first two valences enumerated above: that we do not actually know how to interpret a gender act as making, rather than expressing; that we have not as yet tended to interpret a gender act as incomplete within itself, or being as continually renewed.

Gender is something that we have gotten into the—habit?—of interpreting as always already true about ourselves. Butler’s notion of gender as performative interrupts this thinking, exploding the possibility of finding “gender” in anything preexistently the case about oneself, by the three features articulated above: gender is constituted by action; it is constituted never once and for all, but in an ongoing fashion by actions that are continually to be taken up and thus remain yet to be done; yet, its constitution is interpreted in the mode of “already was.”

Within Butler’s notion of gender as performative, then, we find both an analysis and a critique. Butler claims that gender performance comprises all of the above three aspects, but notice something special about the third—it depends on a notion of what the human being is that the first two features actually call into question. This third aspect—that of how gender is interpreted, as preexistent and true about its performers—would be subverted if the first two features gained traction, if the habit of the third did not cover them over. In fact, the third feature is really only a statement of
how gender performance is interpreted by the performers of gender in a society in which those first two features are not recognized.  

**Regathering the Threads**

Let me return to my opening claim, given body by these intervening sections. There are certain texts later in Nietzsche’s oeuvre in which we find, counter to the constative claims, a performative valence that unworks a version of the self to which the narrative voice constantly signals his own desperate attachment and service for the sake of. Both aspects of this duality need to be held together. If we emphasize only the constative element of these texts, as tempting as that may be, we emphasize only the Nietzsche showing us how to create a certain kind of self, a preferable kind of self, of a kind that we, too, might try to create, as an act of retrieval. But we should take care not to think that the unworking of these claims renders only the denial of a self at all. If we hold both the constative and performative elements together we find a position of a self, that is filled with nothing save this tiny sliver, very little, almost nothing—a drive to create, which works and unworks in the same act of re-reading/writing, a drive limned in by the need that there be a self, but whose action unworks the object of this need.

And what then is that self? To state it baldly: the self is that which *is* only as created in a renewed act of writing upon the occasion of reading the previous writing, but whose materials of creation, because they project the possibility of ever-renewed re-reading and re-writing, contain its unworking. Those materials are the words as what is written,  

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11 Interestingly, performativity and interactive metaphor have in common an irreducibility to a preexisting essence or ground (what it *is* is not simply that which is there and which needs to be recuperated—as is the case with substitution views of metaphor).
but the who of what is written is not contained in them, and is only in that temporality of the future anterior as which the act of reading and renewed writing completes that which was formerly written—but, on the surface, claims only to be representing what was already there. The unworking is in the ambiguity of the words and in the implied need for the words to be read in order to fulfill their presentation. The self is not in the words, though the constative claims of the renewed reading-writing suggest as much. In each renewed reading-writing act, that which is attempted to be read out of the words, as if preexisting, in this infinitely renewable act of reading and writing anew what seems to be read—the words become what they were not, but only now are, but which we cannot hold fast, because they become letters postmarked to a future reader. Just as, throughout the Nietzschean corpus, the human is ever mistaking itself and attributing the force of its powers to an other, the characteristic mistake that Nietzsche has his narrative voices perform in these texts is that of treating the self as that which is retrieved, read out, found in a prior presentation, when it is the case that the self exists nowhere but in the projection of the renewed effort of reading-writing which mistakes itself for a retrieval. This non-containment, and hence lack of unification, is carried out in the performative element, which consists in the continued renewal of the project of saying who one is by reading who one is and projecting it into writing, but calling it a representation or retrieval. This self thus is never once and for all, because it continually returns in the form of the need to be read, and written, again—this is what is performed in the writing that contains an ever-renewed reading of the self. It is a continual
enactment of the fact that who cannot be, despite our act of writing as a protestation to the contrary, a what.\textsuperscript{12}

As I now turn to the text, concentrating on its surfaces, I will attend to the ways that ambiguity, future anteriority, catachresis, and performativity, generally, disrupt the unity of the narrator’s self.

\textbf{Titular Elements and their Ambiguities}

The title page announces the title and the subtitle:

\textit{Ecce Homo}

\textit{How One Becomes, What One Is}

There is an explosion of ‘who’s, the question of ‘who’, within these elements. A battery follows:

On the title page of \textit{Ecce Homo}. Who is the “man” referred to with the words ‘\textit{Ecce Homo}\?’ Is it the same one who \textit{writes} these words? Is it the one presented in these words? Who is the \textit{other} who is to behold him?

Moving down to the subtitle: who is the one, das \textit{Man}, who becomes what he is? Is it the one who writes, the one who is recounted? And is there another one for whom the “how” announces a demonstration, through what has been done by another?

Moving on to the first sentence: who is the “\textit{I}” in whose voice, or hand, the first sentence is said, or written?

Who is the “\textit{I}” of the final sentence of the Preface, who tells his life to himself?

\textsuperscript{12} Thus, the narrative voice’s claims that he is not read could be interpreted as desire creating a temptation toward reading, the self ironically depending on this error of readers, of all readers; it lives on this error.
Are they all (or some, or none) who we find having signed the Preface “Friedrich Nietzsche”?

There are more questions here than just the question of the signature, it seems; the sheer number of possible who’s hide themselves behind so many turns of phrase and page before the text proper has even begun. There is no way around them into the text.

From the battery above, there is from the outset what strikes one as so counter to the reading of philosophy, and even of that exemplary philosophical text of self-discovery, that narrative, Descartes’ Meditations on First Philosophy. Philosophers tend to be univocal, or to be read as such; the exception, the polyglot Plato, who spoke only in the voice of others, who always, save once, gave their names; and even then, gave a stand-in—the “stranger.”

The Meditations might be an appropriate foil here, if we recall that the narrative “I,” in its initially, only apparently, selfless search for certainty, takes no pause before the assumption that the “I” first found in the thinking attributed to himself—is himself. Narrating “I” slides easily into thought “I” who slides easily into the “I” that is performed there. There is no hesitation, no checkpoint; I know who I am, I am that “I am.” Thus our author, Descartes, who is also supposed to be the narrator, who is also supposed to stand for me and you and every one we know who might undertake this meditation, proceeds. The unity of “I” as a word makes short shrift of all these potential differences.\(^\text{13}\)

\(^{13}\) We learned this from the critique of the Subject.
The seduction of words cuts both ways, though. We are seduced if we think every “I” is the same; but we are seduced if we forget how every “I” is the same; the first seduction elides the difference between words and experiences; the second obscures the similarity of perception required by and reinscribed by the communicative function of language.

And all of this raises a question here: is *Ecce Homo* a book for all, few, or one? Is it an idiosyncratic record of one hermetically enclosed exercise, or a manual, or a performance, even for a few?

*The Title, Ecce Homo*

When Pilate beheld Jesus, he found no fault with him, contrary to the hostile crowd. He yet had his soldiers scourge him and crown him with thorns. Wanting the crowd to see how badly Jesus had been treated, yet also to know that he found no fault in him, he *both* presented Jesus to be beheld in this condition and clarified that he found no fault. As he presented Jesus to the crowd, he said “*Idou ho anthropos,*” or the Vulgate’s “*Ecce Homo,*” or “behold the man!”

In its signification, the title announces the provision of a view, and one of *a* man; in its Latinate, rather than German, form, it might be a reference to the Vulgate translation of Pilate’s words when presenting Jesus to the crowd. In this sense, it carries the ambiguity of beholding, the incalculability of perspective; for Pilate, “behold the man” carried the sense that Jesus had been treated far worse than Pilate felt he

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14 Echoing the question raised by *Zarathustra’s* subtitle, “A Book for All and None.”
15 Recall that *idios* is the root found both in the Greek expression from which “Ecce Homo” derives—*idou ho anthropos*—the “homo” renders an “*idios*”—and in “idiot,” the term Nietzsche uses for Jesus the evangel, the Anti-Paul, in *The Antichrist.*
deserved; for the crowd, “behold the man” presented the opportunity to mark only how much further they would like to go—he deserved far worse in their view. So there is this residue of the question of appropriate recognition, of the contention surrounding who a certain one is in the eyes of others. It is further informed by the danger of a mistake: if we mistake Jesus, and he is who he says he is, his lack of death would prove our foible, for which we would be guilty of not knowing ourselves, our place, in putting him to death, and, for this, subject to powers mightier than ourselves; if we mistake Jesus, and he is not who he says he is, we would suffer otherwise . . .

But what if we emphasize, not the historical connotations based on a remembered narrative, but the imperativity of the phrase? Behold. Look and see. Who or what are we to look at? As a title, in its function of naming the text that follows, we are thus told to look at the text, with the suggestion that there we will find this man.16

Consider the figure of catachresis. It involves a repetition, in fact it is a capitalizing on repetition. “Ecce Homo,” as a title, is a repetition, repeating a phrase whose linguistic content is inseparable from the scene to which it has grown attached in the West’s memory, at least the memory of John 8:5. Already, even there, Pontius Pilate’s speaking of this phrase is overdetermined. He was not completely serious.

With this title, there is an enactment of a comparison between this scene and that, the one of John 8:5. Already, we have the comparison between Jesus—a scourged Jesus about to die, in all seriousness, for man’s sins—and, whoever this one is. We are

16 Nietzsche says at “Why I am a Destiny” 1, “I am not a human being, I am dynamite.”
on the lookout, comparing Jesus and this one. Maybe this one is like Jesus, maybe not.\footnote{If the latter, then the one who chose that title is either an idiot (having his own hermetically enclosed meaning), or a buffoon. On the connection of buffoonery to Ecce Homo, see Christine Battersby, “Behold the Buffoon’: Dada, Nietzsche’s Ecce Homo and the Sublime” in Nigel Llewellyn and Christine Riding (eds.), The Art of the Sublime, January 2013, http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/the-sublime/christine-battersby-behold-the-buffoon-dada-nietzsches-ecce-homo-and-the-sublime-r1136833, accessed 03 April 2014.}

It all depends on who this one is—and we don’t yet know.

It is this silent, or subtle, question—does Nietzsche know how to read himself?—at any instance of reading himself, and presenting that reading to his readers in his writing—for this is what he does continually, in his new Prefaces of 1886, and finally in 1888 in Ecce Homo (and never again), that is part of what is being staged. The renewed effort to read oneself, that in each renewed reading both unworks the previous whatness that one appeared to be resolved into within the text, and yet installs a new whatness that is not a whatness simply because of the continual renewal of writing what one reads oneself to be. It is the ongoingness, or the inexhaustibility, of readings of oneself, the continual revision of one’s prior reading of oneself, that is the space of \textit{becoming} here—which is separated from the whatness that one takes oneself to be within any particular reading—only the \textit{renewed attempt} to read announces that the self is not a what, because it wasn’t captured in the previous reading. Each attempt unworks the last, and lays the ground for its own unworking because it takes place as that which is \textit{to be read, taken up} again. In this sense, all writing sows the seeds of the unworking of all of its claims, because it is \textit{to be read}—writing lays fragments of a future, dispersing rather than containing, because it calls for a future act of reading.
Finally, we might also recall that other use of “ecce homo!” from Nietzsche’s texts, that in TI in which the claim is made that the heart of moralism is the use of oneself as a model on the basis of which to judge, universally, others; it is as if moralists scrawl an image of themselves on a wall and proclaim “ecce homo,” this homo being an aspirational model for all people as such. This practice is denigrated by Nietzsche there, because what each ought to be can neither be dictated by others, nor be based on a universal image, nor—known ahead of time. In relation to this criticized use of “ecce homo,” it would seem that, if what follows in this text is as a scrawling of an image on a wall, we might hesitate before the presumption that this is meant to be normative, or at least, take great care in drawing conclusions about for whom it is meant to be so. Back to that question: for whom is this an image, a provided view to behold? What if there is no one?

So we have these two senses from the title: that the text in one sense is a presentation of a man, in the situation of a contention as regards who he is; and that in another sense, it is a counter to that universalizing tendency of morality, that uses one man only as a model for all.

*The Subtitle: How One Becomes, What One Is*

Everything hinges on the comma. Not merely because the comma is the mark of a hinging (a mark by which two phrases are jointed such that the extension of meaning

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18 TI, 175.
19 Perhaps this final sense is, in *Ecce Homo*, most salient, and we will return to it when we consider fate and necessity in relation to the self, below.
of the latter is tied to the former), and one whose shape mimics a hinge, but because
the comma literally, graphically, inserts an ambiguity.

Now, the ambiguity of and from the comma is a result of language’s silent
grammatical signage—what appears and does not speak—what seems to be external to
language proper, and yet which language employs—here, in the German, to be precise.
In the German, it is unclear whether this hinge is something or is nothing in terms of
meaning. Depending on how we decide to treat the comma, the subtitle could mean
equally “how one becomes what one is” or “how one becomes, what one is,” the force
of the comma’s presence in the latter being something like the insertion of an “and,”
the making of a distinction, suggesting an irreducible duality in the phrase. Are we
dealing with a unity, with an uninterrupted phrase “How One Becomes What One Is”? Or are we dealing with a duality, with two irreducible phrases, neither determining the
other “How One Becomes, What One Is”? What the comma performs is the posing of
this very question: Is this phrase a unity? Is this phrase a multiplicity? And what the
phrase performs, in the way of an answer, is that this is ambiguous, from the start.

What hinges on the decision we might make here? First, a decision about what
the text is and who it is that is writing it. This is because the comma suggests both, or,
either/or: 1) (without the comma) that the text is explanatory, showing how one
becomes what one is (which raises the further question of who this one is, and whether
it is only one, or all, or a few); 2) (with the comma) a distinction between two issues,
those being “how one becomes” and “what one is,” hence disjoining becoming from
being.
Everything hinges on this ambiguity; I mean, everything hinges on this moment of indecision that precedes the choice of one or the other because this very ambiguity performed by the comma—the ambiguity between an explanation that consists in the creation of a unity, and the continual disruption of the difference between who and what—is a staging of what will be performed in the text.

All of this is figured in the graphical representation of the subtitle.

The subtitle is literally under the title—the title under the title. We might be tempted to think that the “sub” here implies such an order of priority. This might be a habit, to read the subtitle as the title insufficient unto itself, the title that couldn’t stand on its own, that depends upon the real title, the essential one, from which it seems to draw its strength. But “sub-” is also ambiguously connotative, as it also, like the Greek “hypo-,” that which underwrites, is the basis for, the title we initially read—that being “under,” hypo-, is not in the sense of being less important, but in the sense of being a ground. Hypo- is not lesser in importance, but is under in that it underwrites—writing the figure here of justification, of grounding—the “under” is the space in which we expect to find a ground. In this sense the subtitle is such because it is supposed, not to draw its strength from the title, but to provide the title’s justification, its reason.

Well, if this is the case, the ambiguity here regards the question of ground: which is the ground of which? The question that the graphical placement of the conventionally named “subtitle,” with its own internally ambiguous, ungrounding hinge, forces us to ask is: what happens when the space that we have come to think of as occupied by a ground is—ambiguous? Undecidable? Ungrounding of itself? It announces that the
ground is not already there, not already provided, not preexisting our decision, but that only an interpretation of this ambiguity can supply the presumption of a ground—before this, there is only a vicious circularity between the two choices. And if an interpretation that chooses one hierarchical relation between the two “titles” disavows this ambiguity, then—but wait. Can an interpretation ever not disavow this fundamental ambiguity?²⁰

I have belabored the point of this comma/hinge to call this into relief: what we find staged here in the subtitle is a fundamental ambiguity regarding the sense of being in this subtitle. We have, on the one hand, becoming resolved into being: one becomes what one is—one has been becoming, in all that is now past, what one now, in the present, is; and on the other hand, becoming and being are irreducible—becoming is one thing, a thing about which there can be a “how,” and on the other hand is the whatness of being, but with no clear indication as to how these are related.

From this ambiguous beginning, what the text goes on to stage is this ambiguity. Either choice, either one, is possible. Is the ensuing text showing us “how one becomes” a whatness, the whatness of essence, the whatness of what one is, which is to say, what one always was becoming but couldn’t see until this miraculous now?²¹ Or is the text

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²⁰ How tempting it is to think along the lines of Ricoeur’s reference to the Majorca storytellers, that the ambiguous split reference, the claim “is and is not” at the same time, is the specific work of fiction, the domain of this ontological ambiguity. But what we have here is an ambiguity that arises even before the determination of genre can be made. And what if we decide that this text is not fiction? No one, to my reading, has risked precisely this reading—Ecce Homo is autobiography, or some strange amalgamation of genres under the master heading of philosophy. This ambiguity, the is and is not, remains, even if we resist the classification of fiction. This text already tells us that it engages this ontological ambiguity regarding is and is not, as recounted above. (See Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor* [Toronto; University of Toronto, 1975] 224.)

²¹ This is a reading offered by Richard Rorty—a tempting, affirming, and romantic one—in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
showing us the distinction between becoming and whatness, between being in the mode of becoming and being in the mode of the whatness of essence? If this latter is what is shown in this text, then there must be an undercutting of whatness—there must be a critique of the former reading built into this latter reading. In other words, the text must be staging the reading of “becoming what one is” only in order to provide clues for its subversion, for its critique. In this way, both sides of the ambiguity are in play. There is no choice of one.

To try to unify the above: the comma has been belabored. Why? The constative content of the subtitle is interrupted, you might say, by the way that the comma seems to perform the entrance of a possible question. And it is this that I am interested in—what is performed in the texts, the performance that the texts enact, beyond the constative content? What is said in the texts is more than what is said as constative, what is said is also performed. The comma is a kind of mark of performance—it is silent, but leaves its mark, and the decision it forces us to regarding what is said.
Becoming What One Is

Echoes of the subtitle, as represented by the words of the above heading, appear in GS §335. In this section, there are two main things claimed in relation to this phrase “becom[ing] those we are.” We might foreground this recollection with the statement that comes at the end of the section: to “become those we are—human beings who are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who create

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22 As Hugh Lloyd-Jones clarifies, Nietzsche’s phrase “become what you are/becoming what one is” is sometimes regarded as deriving from the controversial final section (68ff) of Pindar’s Second Pythian Ode, specifically, from lines 72-73, which themselves are controversial (Hugh Lloyd-Jones, “Modern Interpretation of Pindar: The Second Pythian and Seventh Nemean Odes,” Journal of Hellenic Studies 93, [1973]; 109-137). Some treatment of the Ode might give a possible perspective on this phrase; for this treatment, below, I refer to Lloyd-Jones’ reading.

In the Ode, as a lyric, Pindar speaks in the first person, and addresses Heiron, in celebration of the latter’s victory in a chariot race; though the precise victory is not indicated in the poem, Heiron is known to have won two chariot race victories (118). In the poem Pindar not only praises Heiron, but urges him against both envy and believing slander against him: “[e]nvoy is the force against which the poet who would praise his patron has to struggle, and in order to assure his patron’s fame, the poet must do battle against his detractors” (126).

Of the entire final section (68 ff), Lloyd-Jones claims “the whole concluding passage of this poem, it seems to me, is fully understandable if we suppose that Pindar is dilating on a common theme of encomiastic poetry, that of the duty of men, and particularly poets, to give great men proper credit for their benefits to others and to abstain from envy” (125).

Lines 72-73 begin as Pindar has bid farewell to Heiron, bringing the poem to a close, and then asks Heiron to “give a gracious reception to [my] poem or poems,” indicating that this poem, as he writes it, will be sent to Heiron. Then comes the line, “‘Be such as you are according to my words.’” The controversy surrounding these lines regards whether the implication is that Pindar’s words in the poem allow Heiron to know himself, such that, upon receiving the text, now he can be such as he is, particularly in contrast to the slanders about him; or whether Heiron can be assumed to already know his character, with Pindar’s words being only a description that Heiron might follow with action, but not implying that they are necessary for his self-knowledge (124).

This much at least can be noted: Pindar suggests three valences of the Heiron at issue. There is what Heiron is, the “such as you are.” There is the question of being or not being in accord with this—Heiron might or might not “be” such as he is, otherwise, the remonstrance would not occur. Third, there are the words about what he is in the poem itself, and the question of whether it is the words that enable Heiron to know who he is, the “such as you are,” so that he can thus “be.” Is the poem merely a description, a reflection? Or does everything, Heiron’s self-knowledge and ability to be himself, turn on the encounter with the written words?

Adding yet more context, Lloyd-Jones suggests that the religion of Pindar and his audience would have it that “Mortal men, even those favoured by the gods, are granted only certain moments of true happiness; these quickly pass, and will be followed by misfortune, and in the end death. . . . That makes it highly desirable for the favoured mortal to ensure that his brief hours of happiness and glory attain a kind of immortality; this can only be achieved through the action of a poet, who through the gifts of Zeus’ son Apollo and his daughters the Muses can preserve human achievements from oblivion” (126).
themselves,” we have to first “become the best learners and discoverers of everything that is lawful and necessary in the world; we must become physicists in order to be able to be creators in this sense.”

So in GS §335 there is some content given to the who of who we are, and, some indication as to how we thus become so. Who we are is a certain kind of human being, who is “new, unique, incomparable,” autonomous and self-creating. In order to become so, to become these self-creators, we must become physicists. What is meant by “physicists” here are those who “become the best learners and discoverers of everything that is lawful and necessary in the world.” Of course this is a physicist of an atypical sort.

All previous “valuations and ideals have been based on ignorance of physics or were constructed so as to contradict it.” This “physics” at issue in GS §335 is contrasted with the reference to physicists in BGE §14, wherein physicists are called out for their lack of intellectual conscience in the sense that they believe in their interpretations as truth. When Nietzsche claims in GS §319 that “founders of religions and their kind” have failed to make their experiences “a matter of conscience for knowledge,” we get a sense that what is at issue here is intellectual conscience, as they were without intellectual conscience, without an ability to question their valuations. Those others, “we,” who “thirst after reason, are determined to scrutinize our experiences as severely as a scientific experiment . . . to be our experiments and guinea pigs.” To be a physicist in this sense is to employ a conscience against our previous articles of faith—to employ an intellectual conscience, which questions our previously unquestioned faiths, “limit[ing]
ourselves to the purification of our opinions and valuations.” Nietzsche suggests that we do this by seeking what is lawful and necessary. So this questioning does not happen by mere creation ex nihilo. (GS §319)

The one of intellectual conscience, like a physicist, seeks the lawful and necessary. In this section, this is connected with conscience as regards experience—the one of intellectual conscience scrutinizes “our experiences,” meaning one’s experiences. As the scientific experiment is a search for that which is lawful and necessary, Nietzsche implies that the work of intellectual conscience is to seek that which is lawful and necessary within one’s experiences. Those who scrutinize their experiences in this way “thirst for reason.”23 (GS §319)

My point is that this use of the phrase “becoming who we are” indicates that this is not everyone, it is only those who are autonomous and self-creating. Becoming such requires a search for law and necessity in everything. Hence, necessity bears a lot of the weight here of explaining who we are.

When we return to Ecce Homo’s subtitle, then, finding “how one becomes what one is,” we might understand this possible demonstrative, this “how,” to be importantly related to necessity.24 For in GS §335, the how was implied to require a certain

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23 In GS §345 Nietzsche speaks of the imagination of scientific experiment, the “refined experimental imagination of psychologists and historians that readily anticipates a problem and catches it in flight without quite knowing what it has caught.”

24 Further, regarding the “how,” we have already seen in the preceding chapter on the Subject that part of the reason why the Subject is critiqued by Nietzsche is because of its pretensions to immediacy, to being. Whatever we are, it is not a being that is; we become. So the subtitle raises this question: is the writer suggesting, in “how,” that there is an end to becoming, and that one arrives at being? But there’s a problem here, for the being is of what one is, not who one is. Or, is the force of the “how” extensive, suggesting that everything included in these pages is part of that process of becoming, which doesn’t actually reach the what that it is, only the how of it? And if the issue is the how, what is the how? Is it the how of the narrator, the one who writes, and recounts? Or is it the how that is written, that is
schooling in necessity. The implication here is that the ensuing text of *Ecce Homo*, if it is a demonstration, is in part a demonstration of *necessity*, of finding the kind of necessity that characterized these other physicists who could become self-creators in the earlier passage.

We can thus already read out of the brief subtitle a suggestion that what is at work in the text is related to that notion of necessity and its prefatory relation to self-creation. What is this necessity, that which is clearly not the necessity of causation and other laws of nature which those other physicists of the past may have sought? If finding this necessity allows us to become self-creators, does the text show us both, necessity as/and self-creation?

**Prefatory Elements and their Ambiguities**

Now we are three lines in. The structure of the ensuing prefatory elements stage the same ambiguity introduced by the titular repetition and subtitular comma.

**Preface Section 1**

When, as recounted in Exodus 3, God gave Moses his world-historical task of taking the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan, Moses doubted his selection for the task, asking “Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?”25 To counter this doubt, God speaks not of Moses, but...
of himself, “I will be with you” and “I have sent you.” But Moses wonders how to tell the
Israelites who this “I” is. God answers, in a formation taken as one of his names: Ehyeh
asher ehyeh—most often translated into English as “I am that I am,” “I will be what I will
be,” or “I will be who I will be.”

As if enacting the principle of reason here, in the first section of the Preface
[Vorwort], the narrator twice tells us a possible “why” for this text, beginning by
suggesting that what compels the text is the desire to clarify who he is—to “say who I
am.” But why this need to clarify who he is? “In the expectation that soon I will have to
confront humanity with the most difficult demand it has ever faced . . .”—the task,
described throughout the later works, of the revaluation of values. Because he will soon
confront humanity with its most difficult task—we infer, the revaluation of values—it
seems [scheint] imperative to this confrontation that humanity know the who, the one,
from whom the task is issued. Though such a “testimony” has been left—as we will see,
in “Nietzsche’s” writings—no one has really looked and beheld him. So he will try again,
saying: “I am the one who I am [I am, that and who]!”26 Above all, do not mistake me
[especially].”27 (EH, 71)

What is especially wrong with being mistaken? In this section, Nietzsche will
indicate that he does not want to be mistaken as holy: “I have a real fear that someday
people will consider me holy: you will guess why I am publishing this book beforehand;

26 “Hört mich! denn ich bin der und der.” /"Listen to me! I am, that and who . . .” (i.e. I am that I am and I
am who I am).
27 To be compared with the claim in “Why I Write Such Good Books” that “I am one thing, my writings are
another.” These are not necessarily conflicting claims, though they could be. The issue regardless, in both,
is the difficulty of finding Nietzsche. In the former statements it is suggested that at least some testimony
is left regarding who he is, in his books (this does not mean he is his books). In the second statement,
quoted here, the emphasis is on distinguishing who he is from his books.
it is supposed to stop any nonsense as far as I am concerned.”  

It is implied that understanding the revaluation of values requires understanding from whom it is coming, from whom it is not coming, because it too easily can take on the appearance of a religious or doctrinal imperative—its provenance can be mistaken.

So this saying who I am is, in one sense, to distinguish the one from whom the task comes, to distinguish him from all others, just as God gave to Moses a name, whereby the Israelites could distinguish the one from whom Moses’ task, within which they were all implicated, had come.

The remainder of the Preface consists in the narrator distinguishing who he is from whom he might be supposed to be, but is not. Now, note that doing this requires that he not be who he is in a sense, for this announcement of who he is goes against his habits and the “pride of his instincts.” But he must go against them and say: “Listen to me! I am the one who I am! Above all, do not mistake me for anyone else!” (EH, 71)

So this first section of the Preface ends with this proclamation of the goal of clearly expressing his own identity, which is one, and which is distinct from all others.

But very quickly, in Preface section four, the clarification of who he is becomes a clarification of how to read his texts—here, Zarathustra. While in Preface section two he claims that “… I am the opposite of the type of person who has been traditionally admired as virtuous,” by Preface section four, the clarification regards how to interpret the words spoken by Zarathustra, these words being “[t]he exact opposite of what a

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28 Ibid., 144. Compare to the claim elsewhere that “[e]very profound thinker is more afraid of being understood than of being misunderstood. The latter may hurt his vanity, but the former his heart, his sympathy, which always says: ‘Alas, why do you want to have as hard a time as I did?’” (BGE 290).
‘wise man’, ‘saint’, ‘world redeemer’, or other decadent would say in this situation. . . .

*He* does not just talk differently, he *is* different. . . .” (73, some emphasis added).

The words quoted here, spoken/written by Zarathustra/Nietzsche relate to this issue of identity, calling into relief the importance of knowing who *oneself* is:

"Leave me now and guard yourselves against Zarathustra! . . . You say you believe in Zarathustra? But who cares about Zarathustra! You are my believers, but who cares about believers? You have not looked for yourselves yet: and you found me. That is what all believers are like; that is why belief means so little. Now I call upon you to lose me and find yourselves; and only after you have all denied me will I want to return to you . . ." 29

This quoted section of *Zarathustra* adds an element of ambiguity through its placement in this text, for it both reiterates and undercuts what has already been said by the narrator. Here Zarathustra speaks against discipleship and a concern for the one whom one follows.30 What should be sought is the self; one should seek oneself first.

Now, the narrator has already suggested that we, those who will be presented with the task of revaluation, need to know who *he* is first. Thus, the reference to Zarathustra seems to provide an internal critique of the overt claims of the narrator, and the expectation that has been set up thus far—are we reading to find who “Nietzsche,” the narrator, is? This would be an approach out of the spirit of discipleship.

Thus there is a new ambiguity introduced by the end of the Preface: is this a text about the self of “Nietzsche”? Or is this a text about the self that we ourselves are to be seeking?

29 Ibid., 73.
30 As those fishermen whom Jesus is said to have called in Matthew 4 immediately drop their fishing nets, for they are fishermen, and follow Jesus to become what he will make them, fishers of men.
As if in answer to this ambiguity, the exergue follows with another statement of the relation of the text to the self, and, another statement of why this text is written.

**Exergue**

The Preface of four sections is followed by a brief paragraph. This paragraph is set off from the prior parts of the Preface, but from the beginning of the body of the main text as well, it seems to float between. What are we to do with it? Is it Preface, or text? The term that suggests itself here is *exergue*, a term always catachrestically applied from the domain of coinage to the domain of texts, exergue being the line below the design on a coin noting the date and location of its provenance. “Exergue” will do—this brief paragraph is a remark about the day of the telling of the text, indicating its provenance, that from which it arose. But the point I want to make here is that such a provenance is also suggested in the earlier parts of the Preface, and that between both suggestions we find irresolution.

First, in the exergue paragraph, the narrator tells us that “thus” [*Und so*] he will tell his life to himself, which he proceeds to do, not in the form of a recitation to which we have no access, but in the text before us—after this claim, the text proper of *Ecce Homo* begins.

If this “*Und so*” is a consequential, we have to look back to what comes before to explain the consequentiality of the ensuing telling. What is before is the rhetorical question “How could I not be grateful to my whole life?” which itself follows from noting that all the living qualities of the last year have been rescued and immortalized in his
texts, which are called “gifts” of the last year.\textsuperscript{31} Nietzsche’s recounting of his life to himself thus might be the consequence of gratitude, as he looks back on the last year and its gifts, asking “How could I not be grateful to my whole life?” This gratitude to the whole life mirrors a prior gratitude to a deity, projected as the source of a people’s power and gifts, in Antichrist:

A people that still believes in itself will still have its own god. In the figure of this god, a people will worship the conditions that have brought it to the fore, its virtues—it projects the pleasure it takes in itself, its feeling of power, into a being that it can thank for all of this . . . On this supposition, religion is a form of gratitude. People are grateful for themselves: and this is why they need a god.\textsuperscript{32}

The suggestion is that this satisfaction with oneself owes its gratitude, not to an external being, but to “one’s whole life.” This telling of one’s whole life is thus like the invocation of the name of the god, identifying to whom one owes ones gratefulness for who one is.\textsuperscript{33} Out of this affirmative gratefulness to his whole life for the gifts of the last year, he will tell/narrate [Erzählen] his life, that to which he is grateful, to himself [mir, to me/to myself]. This seems idiosyncratic, hermetically personal, closed in on the one recounting. This suggests that what we have in the ensuing text, at the constative level, is not Nietzsche’s self for us, or ourselves for ourselves, but Nietzsche’s self for Nietzsche—or more precisely, Nietzsche for Nietzsche’s self, this text being fully contained within the “space” of the narrator’s own self-relationship/self-articulation.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{31} It is important that the grapes are said to be turning brown at this moment, for even full grapes, for Nietzsche, indicate the beginning of decline, and thus this comment that “not only” the grapes are actually brown indicates a sense of his own being past his prime/in decay/in decadence—which is itself met with affirmation, it seems.

\textsuperscript{32} A, 13, emphases added.

\textsuperscript{33} Invocation—instantiating in the saying—the names of god.

\textsuperscript{34} The use of “space” here is meant to connect up with my claims, above, about catachresis.
We should notice though, that there is another possible sense of the “Und so,”
that of the sense of how—in this way—echoing the “how” of the subtitle—that he will
articulate how his life has come to be.35

Summary of Prefatory Elements

All of these prefatory elements give rise to a series of questions that seem
unending. They end, at least on the page, with the claim that the narrator will now
proceed with this task: to tell his life to himself. From the title, and all of its
connotations, this is a description of a person, a homo; from the subtitle, this is a
description not of one’s static qualities, but of one’s becoming, and perhaps, an
articulation of how a “one” differs from a subject; from the beginning of the Preface,
this is a distinction of the narrator from common misperceptions about him, which
might interrupt the recognition of a task that he gives voice to; from the end of the
Preface, the exergue, this is the story of a self, of a disposition to oneself and to life,
whereby the gratefulness for oneself is attributed not to god, but to life, one’s life, and
that life is what is to thank for the self’s becoming.

But when this narrator turns to give his story, to where does he turn? Presaged
in his claim that “all its [the past year’s] living qualities have been rescued, they are
immortal” and live on in the texts that were written that year, the telling of the life to
oneself will occur through returning to those vestiges of life, those writings, in which all
that is living has been made immortal. The self is depicted as retrieved from the texts,

35 It becomes possible to think that it is precisely this idiosyncratic relation that is the “how,” that the
following text is not only a self-recounting, but a demonstration of how one becomes who one is. But the
question still remains: is it a demonstration, for us, of how a certain one becomes what that certain one
is? Is it a model?
from reading what has been written and saying, in a new act of writing, what has been said there.

But there are two intervening sections that prevent this reading, two intervening sections in which this telling of one’s life to oneself does not return to one’s writings, at least not before accounting for something else, and rather returns to one’s memory regarding heredity, nutrition, location, and climate. In the text proper, following the exergue, Nietzsche spends two sections on this autobiographical narrative before turning to his writings, a turn which is finally opened with the claim “I am [the one], my writings are the other.” These matters, they are so intimately related to one’s disposition, so idiosyncratic; regarding one’s ability to treat oneself non-universally, idiosyncratically. Why do they appear here, before the work of reading the texts has even begun?

**Interlude 1: Writing as Re-Reading the Self: An Exemplary Preface of 1886**

In most of the Prefaces of 1886 we find this structure: Nietzsche reads Nietzsche, and reads Nietzsche better than that prior Nietzsche, having written the text to which the preface is appended, read Nietzsche. Nietzsche appears to read who the old Nietzsche, having written an older text, is.

Notice, then, that *Ecce Homo*’s inclusion of this autobiography as read through texts is not the only place in which this happens. It seems that, after 1886, this reading and re-writing of the self is being continually staged in Nietzsche’s texts. What is remarkable about *Ecce Homo* is, then, that this very work of reading forms the core,
rather than the Preface, of the text—yet, indeed, this work has a Preface appended in which the same self-reading occurs!

Let me here say a bit about those other Prefaces.

In the Preface to *Daybreak*, written in 1886, Nietzsche says what we are [*was wir sind*]. He tells us, in the closing section of the Preface, that he has just recounted *was wir sind*, what we are. This might be helpful, then, in trying to think what this “what” indicates. Based on this Preface, what is it to say *what* someone is?

Starting in the first section of the Preface, Nietzsche tells us, of the one whose work we read in this text, that he is a “subterrestrial,” and an “apparent Trophonius,” indicating that he labors below ground in the dark, and will “return” to the surface. Not only is this a play on the trope of return, this particular iteration emphasizes interpretation. The way in which interpretation is emphasized by choosing the Trophonian oracle as the figure of return also distinguishes the writer of this text from other figures of return: Socrates or the messiah, for example. This metaphorical reference to Trophonius introduces a network of relations whereby the issue being emphasized is the interpretation, or translation, of what is communicated in the ensuing work.

Sean D. Kirkland emphasizes the significance of the structure of the petitioner’s experience with this oracle, and I believe it is this structure that is also emphasized here. Drawing from a variety of sources, Kirkland describes it thus:

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36 Thirteen years earlier, in *PTzG*, Nietzsche had referred to the emergence of the pre-Platonic philosopher as if “walking, as it were, out of the Cave of Trophonius” (1).
As opposed to the oracle at Delphi, petitioners at the Cave of Trophonius communed with divinity directly, without the mediation of a Pythia or priests. After days of elaborate ritual preparations, including fasting, scourging, purification, dance, and sacrifices, the petitioner would enter the cave—a consultation that was referred to as a *katabasis* or a ‘descent’ and that, with its ritual of drinking a “water of Lēthē” before entering and a “water of Mnémosyne” upon exiting, seems intended to evoke a journey to the underworld. The petitioner would place himself at the very small mouth of the cave and would eventually be violently and inexplicably drawn inside. Utterly alone and in a state of more or less complete sensory deprivation, the petitioner would find himself on his back, holding honeyed barley-cakes in both hands as offerings to the serpents associated with the god. In this posture, he would be visited by Trophonius himself, who would provide him with visual or auditory phenomena somehow in response to his question. Pausanias tells us, from first-hand experience, that after a *katabasis* the petitioner would be ejected from the mouth of the cave, as inexplicably as he had been drawn in, and then interrogated by the priests as to what he had experienced, the entire process leaving him “paralyzed with terror and unconscious both of himself and of his surroundings.” The experiences undergone would then be interpreted and the petitioner would leave with an oracular response to his question.37

What I would emphasize here is the approach to the words of the petitioner upon emerging from the cave. Upon his exit, the petitioner appears mad, and seems to rave. The words he emits are related to as ravings whose meaning must be interpreted, this interpretation provided by the priests of the shrine. When Nietzsche thus claims in this first section of the Preface that what has been sought in the depths “he himself will tell you . . .” upon his return, the reference to Trophonius calls up the relations of madness and interpretation.

In the remainder of the Preface, he reads himself, the one writing this text (in 1881), in what is a sort of self-criticism. Now, this appears to be Nietzsche reading

Nietzsche: Nietzsche reading the Nietzsche who had just “emerged” from his underground work, from the cave of Trophonius. That emergent speaker presents a contradiction that it seems he did not avow: for he criticized morality, but in fact out of the same spirit of morality in which he himself had been raised (so German, all-too-German). In other words, this later Nietzsche reads this earlier Nietzsche as a man of conscience, thus, not yet having escaped morality, but as one who (like the one suggested in the closing passages of GM §2, one who would turn the bad conscience against itself) uses morality to overcome morality, executing, like the German precursors, “a pessimistic will,” with the difference that it “is not afraid to deny [Verneinen—negate/deny] itself, because it denies itself with joy! In us is consummated, if you desire a formula—the autosuppression [Selbstaufhebung] of morals.”

In the final section of the Preface, the issue is learning to read Nietzsche [mich] well, and this is done slowly—hence, the Preface took 6 years to appear, which is not a problem, the work is simply slow. He seems to indicate here that reading involves reading what, one reads what someone is—and one can read well, or one can read poorly, hurriedly, thus mistaking what someone is.

### Into the Text: Physiology, Fate

The first two sections beginning the text proper regard an idiosyncratic, physiologically derived morality as opposed to a universal one for all. In these sections, Nietzsche turns against metaphor, understood in the sense it has had since Aristotle, as meta-phor, as transfer, as a turn, a translation, a movement across, a leap into an entirely new sphere.
While earlier Nietzsche had remarked, in *OTL*, that all words are metaphors, much of the discussion of physiology in *Ecce Homo* seems to consist in an unworking of the metaphorical/literal distinction, at least in the case of the relation between body and mind. One of the functions of the narrative in these sections is to invoke physiology in contexts that initially seem striking, in such a way as to unwork the dichotomy between physiology and its supposed “other,” *Geist*, spirit, mind. What initially seems metaphorical, use of expressions regarding the physical to express something about the ideal, unwork such a separation of realms. When the spirit is called a stomach, memory indigestion, recognition smell, this is more than a metaphor—it appears as a metaphor, but unworks itself as such, because, in fact, these ‘spheres’ are continuous, and the processes of spirit are not being described through a transfer into bodily terms that thus retain a tension with their new use; in fact, this tension is eradicated because Nietzsche means that the supposedly ideal is an extension of the physiological.

Hence we see a connection with the critique of the Subject, which also involved this turning against the distinction between body and mind. The process of assimilation was the key there, as it allowed an image, which may have first seemed metaphorical, that of assimilation, to introduce the continuity between the body and the mind. *Ecce Homo*, tracing philosophical ideas back to physiology and instincts and particularities that express themselves in physiological comportment to situations, does much the

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38 It is not that physiology and spirit are “alike,” such that the physical can be the source of metaphors for the ideal, but rather that these “realms” are continuous. The notion of there being similitude between physical and ideal preys on the presumed distinction between the body and mind; it soon becomes clear that the demonstrated relation between physiology and ideas, philosophy, aspects typically attributed to *Geist*, is not merely of the order of similitude—one which requires a crossing between spheres, and thus which asserts its character as both being and not being the case—but is in fact one of continuity.
same work here as the connection of the prejudice regarding the Subject back to assimilation, and interpretation back to assimilation. But in this text, there is another layer: not only is the narrative content an apparent physiological description of himself, the text, explicitly called out as a work in relation to the self in the Preface, is an enactment of assimilation as interpretation.

Physiology as More than Metaphor

Cleverness is the difference between being “just a piece of chance” and “necessity.” Those who are just pieces of chance, rather than necessity, are not “governed by an instinct for self-preservation that is most clearly expressed as an instinct for self-defence,” an instinct which also goes by the name of taste. (EH, 95)

First, we might consider how the distinction between becoming chance and becoming necessity is expressed in terms of physiology.

Nietzsche expresses his position in relation to Christianity in terms of his “instinct for attack,” and his psychological acuity, in part, to his “instinct for cleanliness.” His antipathy to ideas such as “God’, ‘immortality of the soul’, ‘redemption’, ‘beyond’ are explained in terms of a taste or preference; he simply has never, even when a child, been inclined to them. (EH, 82)

These idiosyncrasies may seem to be nothing but, just the tracing of one’s idiosyncrasies; but they are related to the issue of nutrition in that nutrition first enters in what seems to be a metaphorical sense; as one’s nutritional intake impacts the growth, health, and becoming of the body, it seems that one’s intake of ideas also impacts one’s spiritual health: these seem to be similitudes, and hence the body as a
metaphor. However, Nietzsche’s description elides the spheres of body and spirit, so that their distinction is difficult to maintain.

The spiritual diet that he initially had led him to misunderstand, in fact, the way that his physiological idiosyncrasies indicated the constitution of reason. His ‘idealistic’ German education taught him to “lose sight of reality.” It taught him to “eat badly ...--in moral terms, ‘impersonally’, ‘selflessly’, ‘altruistically’, for the sake of cooks and other fellow Christians...between Leipzig cuisine and my first studies of Schopenhauer (1865), I effected a very serious denial of my ‘will to life.’ How to ruin your stomach for the sake of inadequate nutrition—the afore mentioned cuisine seemed like the perfect solution to this problem.”³⁹

It could seem here that this is merely a metaphor, that eating food dictated by cooks, regardless of its impacts on one, out of deference to the cook, a little selflessness for their sake, is like taking on ideas dictated by philosophers, without a mind to their effects on one.

When Nietzsche attends to his dietary idiosyncrasies, judging his intake on the basis of its effect on his own feeling of health, he creates his own “morality,” his own valuation of food and drink from the perspective of his life. These evaluations, pros and contras, even change across time. His valuation of nutrition is neither universal, nor even without variation in his own case, as only in middle age did water become his main drink, and liquor become forbidden entirely, as it was at odds with his physiology.

³⁹ EH 86, emphasis added.
“Everyone has their own standards here, sometimes between the narrowest and most delicate boundaries.”

This calls to mind his claim that moralists want to project themselves as the model that everyone ought to follow; in contrast, what he here calls his “morality” is the eventual finding that the value of nutritional products, and his ‘for’ and ‘against’ them, are matters that must be self-imposed on the basis of their effects on one.

This is not merely a matter of nutrition, though. Spiritual and physiological value are the same because physiology disposes one in matters of the spirit; or, the other way to state this, matters of the spirit are continuations of the state of the body: “[T]he origin of German spirit” is “from depressive intestines . . . German spirit is indigestion, it is never through with anything,” and further, “[a]ll prejudices come from the intestines.”

What we have here is not simply a metaphor, but an interpretation that the spirit expresses the body’s disposition. If German spirit is from the intestines, from indigestion, not simply like them, then we must consider the perspective from which Nietzsche has evaluated digestion. This is the perspective of what he calls the will to life, or previously, the will to health. Gustatory intake has an impact on whether there ensues an ascent or a decline. As the formula for decadence is practically choosing that which is harmful to one, gustatory choices that are harmful to one announce, in their harm, the illogic of their selection. Reason is this attention to the reality that one is, as one who becomes on the basis of gustatory selection, as capable of ascent and decline.
on the basis of such selections and their interaction, at the physiological level, with one’s idiosyncrasies. Some choices will lead to a state of physiological decline, others to ascent. Out of this reality, spirit will be a continuation, in the sense that the development of spirit follows upon it. Having gotten oneself into a state of indigestion, a philosophy of indigestion ensues. There is no transfer or leap into an entirely different sphere here, there is a direct continuity from the digestive into the spiritual.

But, there seems to be something more than just continuity between physiology and spirit, physiology and philosophy, demonstrated here. A person who does not attend to their own digestive processes and their idiosyncrasies, who does not take the standard of health, which can only be established by the person considering their own idiosyncratic responses, will likely have two ensuing features: 1) they will follow the digestive practices available to them by habituation and example, with no sense for how their needs may differ; 2) as a result, in not being able to have the insight that their dietary needs may differ from others when measured against the standard of decline and ascent, they will also not be afforded the insight into the connection of the spirit with the body in this way. They will not be afforded the insight into reason as an assessment of value on the basis of its relation to one’s own decline and ascent. And this is precisely the insight into reason that marks the difference between Nietzsche’s thought and that “idealism” that came before. This insight into the products of thought as continuations of the physiological states of thinkers—states shared by entire swaths of people similarly educated to take on the habitus of nutrition and thinking—is an insight that Nietzsche, in his discussion of nutrition, traces to his ability—his fatedness,
his idiosyncratic destiny—to see nutritional choices as necessarily idiosyncratic. Because this idiosyncratic, physiological insight allowed him to see the role of idiosyncrasy in determining the most appropriate evaluation of nutritional choices, he was able to approach the spirit with the same insight. This is why it seems that what we have here is neither simply a metaphor, for there is more than just a similarity of structure proposed here between nutrition and spirit; and it is also not a claim of the order of a universal dictum, that all people should eat x in order to become y.

Rather, with all of the physiological issues considered in the two opening sections of the text—nutrition, location and climate—what we are faced with are choices, but choices “governed by an instinct for self-preservation that is most clearly expressed as an instinct for self-defence,” or, taste. The difference is that between being a matter of chance versus necessity. Those who are matters of chance do not have this instinct for self-defense. When one is a matter of chance, one is caught up in the work of taking in, saying yes, in habitual ways, without any idiosyncratic drawing of boundaries, setting of limits that can cut down on the onslaught. To be a matter of necessity, one needs not only not to say yes in these habitual ways, but also to say no as little as possible; “warding off,” “saying no,” is a depletion of energy. In other words, to be a matter of chance is to allow oneself to be determined by anything which comes one’s way, in relation to which one will need to invoke a response at each moment. The difference between necessity and chance is an attunement to that which already calls up one’s own yes: an attunement to idiosyncrasy, an ability to steer away from that

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42 Ibid., 95.
which would call up one’s “no” in advance. Self-defence, the requisite of necessity, requires that one already set one’s horizon around that which pertains to them, and thus, implies some kind of familiarity with oneself already; when this is done, energy does not need to be wasted taking on each onslaught.

However, there is something oblique about this. Nietzsche tells us that “the answer to the question of how you become what you are” leads to a selfishness that is unordinary and entirely contrary to “catching sight of yourself with this task.” If you catch sight of yourself with this task, then you will attempt to preclude mistakes based on your current understanding of what you are. But cleverness involves a kind of not looking too closely, and “[b]ecoming what you are presupposes that you do not have the slightest idea what you are. If you look at it this way, even life’s mistakes have their own meaning and value, the occasional side roads and wrong turns, the delays, the ‘modesties’, the seriousness wasted on tasks that lie beyond the task” (96). There is an incorporation into a whole that is prepared in advance, but which cannot occur if the whole is presaged ahead of time.

The Physiological Basis of Fate

As in the focus on nutrition, throughout “Why I am so Wise,” Nietzsche expresses a number of other major themes in relation to his physiological characteristics, a central one being his presentation of himself as the duality of decadence and its opposite. The opposition to decadence is in what he calls his “will to
health, to life,” an instinctive ability to, in the midst of bodily decadence, select the appropriate methods for remedy and recovery, which implies the desire for health.\textsuperscript{43}

The body is meant here literally, though it often appears as a metaphor. Bodily states are not merely being used as analogies for spiritual states, but rather, spiritual states are said to be expressions of bodily states. Uses of the term “decadence,” with its provenance in a description of the physiological state of decline, and in its use in describing tastes, ideas, or proclivities that are understood as the outgrowths of such a state, can be traced back to that origin in physiological decadence only by reading them as its symptoms.\textsuperscript{44}

Notice, then, how this contrast between decadence and life, symbolized in the image of conjoined deceased father and living mother, is treated in these early sections as the reason for many of Nietzsche’s key insights.\textsuperscript{45} One of these, that philosophy heretofore has been decadent, based on reading philosophy as a symptom of physiological decadence, owes itself to Nietzsche’s own physiological duality described above, his decadence coupled with his will to health. This was an insight he could only gather after a certain experience, it seems, that of being able to look back and read the qualities of his productions, his books, in relation to his physiological states—he saw then the connection between physiological states and philosophical productions. The

\textsuperscript{43} This is a kind of instinct, which, by taking on a relation to the body, creates—and here the right word is difficult—in his case, it created a “well-turned-out person.” What matters is the relation taken by this instinct to the bodily states.

\textsuperscript{44} So when the narrator claims that “I created my philosophy from out of my will to health, to life” this will to life was that which took up a relation of overcoming in relation to the body’s inclinations toward decline. The body’s inclinations toward decline provide a sort of principle of selection for the will to health.

\textsuperscript{45} His literal father’s actual early death is the expression “in the form of a riddle” of Nietzsche’s tendency toward decline, the father’s demise the symbol of his decadent instincts.
difference in the relation between his states and his thinking, and the state and thinking of most philosophers, is that for his there is a contrast: while he experienced “the deepest physiological weakness [and] an excess of painful feelings,” he produced a work of “perfect lightness and cheerfulness” in Daybreak. His very ability to note this contrast is traced to his long experience both in states of decay, and, in the vacillation between decay and recovery.  

Given that his relationship to his own decadence was that will to health and life which seeks to remedy decadence, a certain possibility was made available to him: rather than the ressentiment, which is a continuation of physiological decadence absent the counterforce of the will to health, he had the option of fatalism. Initially, this is a physiological response to the very physiology of decadence, a sort of triage in emergency conditions: when one is in a state of decadence, ressentiment is harmful, as it is a formula for compounding decadence, which is choosing precisely that which is harmful for one: “born from weakness, ressentiment is most harmful to the weak themselves.” Decadence is susceptibility, and an inability to rein reaction in; decadence is expressed in ressentiment, which is decadence rebounding off its own lack of resources of resistance. These resources can be built up through fatalism, through hibernation, as non-response allows a being at the near end of its rope to tie the rope

46 Bouts of sickness produced the finger for nuances, but only because the will to health could note the value of these nuances, these slight differences that might make the difference between sickness and health; and the vacillation between states of sickness and health produced the eye for the oblique, for what is “around the corner,” for what is not seen but otherwise indicated, and the ability to change perspectives, given these changes. “I have a hand for switching perspectives: the first reason why a revaluation of values’ is even possible, perhaps for me alone” (76).
47 “. . . [T]he sick person has only one great remedy for this [growing of sickness into ressentiment]—I call it Russian fatalism” (EH, 81).
48 Ibid., 81.
and start an accumulation, as if the energy of response is saved up. Russian fatalism is, at least, the refusal of that which is harmful to one in one’s most vulnerable state: the privation of the response that would continue the decadence, and hence it involves a decadent being turning on its own decadence and preventing the reaction. Fatalism is presented as a strategy for the decadent, in the emergency of lacking the strength for “weapons and war,” which is to say, for resistance, as well as for even the internalization of ressentiment. It is in this context that Nietzsche claims “To accept yourself as a fate, not to want to ‘change’ yourself—in situations like this, that is reason par excellence.” The situation here is, precisely, decadence—in such a condition, fatalism is wise.

We have seen that Nietzsche characterizes himself as decadent. And here fatalism is presented as a certain response from within decadence. If we recall that European culture is regarded by Nietzsche as largely decadent, of the oft-noted decadence of both contemporary culture and philosophy itself, then if fatalism is being presented here as a normative proposal, it is not so for man as such, but for decadent humanity, as a strategy that allows for a recuperation of energy—it is the greatest reason “in such situations.” It is temporary, as its enactment overcomes the needs that lead to it, allowing for the transformation of decadence and the relation to

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49 As it is for the Russian soldier, already tired, already weak, already freezing, who lies down in the cold snow that seems the opposite of what is needful. But the logic here is that this lack of everything needful for the waking state, namely the intense cold, has the physiological effect of slowing down physiological need itself; in hibernation, energy is conserved, and lack can be endured that could not be otherwise, as both metabolism and temperature decrease.

50 Ibid., 82.
ressentiment: through fatalism one grows too strong for ressentiment, it becomes not simply harmful but “beneath” one.

Fatalism was a strategy, demonstrating his duality between decadence and will to life, that Nietzsche claims he employed in relation to his “situations, places, lodgings, company” for years. Again the physiological experience of hibernation might seem to be a metaphor but also is a description of what is ultimately a physiological situation; just as the hibernating soldier stops fighting, immerses himself in the snowy situation without trying to resist or change it, so Nietzsche accepted the above list of existential situations without trying to change them.\(^{51}\)

**Interlude 2: Amor Fati, the Dionysian, and Dis/unity**

In *BGE* §231, fate is that which remains deep down unteachable in us. But we only discover how fate is “settled in us”—the temporality of this discovery is future anterior, what we *discover* is how fate *was already* settled in us.\(^{52}\) And in *NCW*, he speaks of how, as a result of “taking sides” against himself, “[I] found my way to that courageous pessimism that is . . . as it seems to me today, the way to myself,—to my task. That concealed and imperious something for which we for long have no name until it finally proves to be our task. . . .”\(^{53}\)

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\(^{51}\) Nietzsche calls accepting these situations “accepting oneself [sich selbst]” as a fate, not wanting oneself to be different.

\(^{52}\) “At times, we find certain solutions to problems that inspire strong faith in us . . . Later—we see them only as steps to self-knowledge, signposts to the problem we *are*—rather to the great stupidity we are, to our spiritual fatum, to what is unteachable very ‘deep down’.”

\(^{53}\) *NCW*, 277. In *Ecce Homo*, as well, Nietzsche links “myself” with “my task.” Becoming what one is is in some ways this future anterior discovery of one’s task. And the practices of selfishness that he describes in the first two sections are the *sine qua non* of finding one’s task. This suggestion that what one is is one’s task—and we know there are those who can fail to find this.
In *Ecce Homo*, and just before the claim that “I am one, my books are another,” *amor fati* comes up: “My formula for human greatness is *amor fati*: that you do not want anything to be different, not forwards, not backwards, not for all eternity. Not just to tolerate necessity, still less to conceal it—all idealism is hypocrisy towards necessity—, but to love it. . . .”54

Elsewhere, after Book IV of *The Gay Science* has been dedicated to Saint January, Nietzsche remarks on the wish that he has for the new year: “I want to learn more and more to see as beautiful what is necessary in things; then I shall be one of those who make things beautiful. *Amor fati*: let that be my love henceforth!” This seeing the necessary, depending on first finding the necessary, is a *making beautiful* of those things.55

This sense of necessity is echoed in *GS* §377, wherein Nietzsche describes a “high point in life” that is characterized by great freedom in which we have “faced up to the beautiful chaos of existence and denied it all providential reason and goodness,” in which we are able to see by “the evidence of our own eyes . . . how palpably always everything that happens to us turns out for the best.” Nietzsche calls this vision that of “personal providence,” in which “life” and the everyday events we experience “see[m] to have no other wish than to prove this proposition again and again,” the proposition that all things that happen to us turn out for the best, because “either immediately or

54 Ibid., 99.
55 Clearly, tragic affirmation, of which Dionysus is exemplar, does not require that what is affirmed be beautiful, for the Dionysian “says yes to the very things that are questionable and terrible . . .” (TI, 170).
very soon after [they] prov[e] to be something that ‘must not be missing,’ it has a profound significance and use precisely for us.”

This kind of personal providence involves chance, in the sense that in the unfolding of what comes to be seen as necessary for us, we do not see it before the fact as necessary. The necessity is in fact retrospective.57 Chance is here contrasted with the providence of a deity, to whom all things are known beforehand, one “who is full of care and personally knows every little hair on our head. . . .”58

In the final section of Book VI of BGE, we are in the language of learning again. It is hard to learn what a philosopher is, we are told, because it cannot be taught but rather must be “know[n] . . . from experience.” But learning, as in learning to love, involves figuring or figuration. Nietzsche picks up the strands linking love with learning to see in GS §334, describing “how we have learned to love all things that we now love” by the initial strangeness shedding its veil and “turn[ing] out to be a new and indescribable beauty.” This process of learning to love happens to us as a progression of stages exemplified by the way of relating to music by those who learn to love it: “First

56 It becomes tempting here to lose the personal freedom that has been won, and to attribute the power of this “providence” to a deity. This is precisely what Nietzsche does not do, marked in the final lines of the preface, when he indicates it is to his life that he gives thanks and is grateful—just the sort of gratefulness for gifts out of which attribution of external deities once arose. Rather, Nietzsche suggests that we make another interpretive supposition, “that our own practical and theoretical skill in interpreting and arranging events has now reached its high point.” This high point of freedom is one, firstly, in which everything appears oriented to a unified point, that of the providence of the one seeing, to whom all appears as what must not be missing. And this high point of freedom and providence is to be interpreted as the high point of “our own practical and theoretical skill in interpreting and arranging events.” This sense of arrangement and interpreting events—which Nietzsche undertakes in Ecce Homo, in his retelling of his life—it is more than a recollection.

57 See Ricoeur, Oneself as Another, Study 6, for the narrative relation to chance as a retrospective creation of necessity.

58 That chance is involved in this kind of providential harmony is related back to the initial strangeness of music, indeed the providential “harmony” that we find is a kind of music in which chance means we do not know before the fact what is being sounded: it is sometimes the case that chance “guides our hand” in the playing of “beautiful music” that “our foolish hand produces.”
Learning is giving figure to what one has experienced, and giving figure or shape involves a certain relation to necessity, once again.

Necessity is a category of figuration that artists are skilled in and that scholars fumble with, because to the latter, necessity is confused with need, in the sense of compulsion. Necessity is pictured as following the lead of a compelling external force. In this sense, what is necessary gets its character or direction from what compels it and what it must follow, it is “picture[d] . . . as a painstaking having-to-follow and being-compelled.” Necessity is different for artists because of how they experience necessity. Artists “kno[w] only too well that precisely when they no longer do anything ‘voluntarily’ but do everything of necessity, their feeling of freedom, subtlety, full power, of creative placing, disposing, and forming reaches its peak—in short, that necessity and ‘freedom of the will’ then become one in them.” This indication harkens back to the seeing of what “must not be missing” which is the high point of freedom.

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59 Here Nietzsche diagnoses a dual nature in a philosopher, “a bold and exuberant spirituality that runs presto and a dialectical severity and necessity that takes no false step.” This combination of exuberant running ahead and the severe demand that each step be necessary is not “experienced” by most scholars because of their misrepresentation to themselves of the force of necessity.
mentioned in the GS passage, and adds to it the language of necessity, implicit in that sense of what must not be missing. The great clue that we are given here is that this necessity of the artist’s creative act is inextricably bound with the freedom felt by them to be revealed in figuring and ordering, and that the necessity and this freedom are “one.” (BGE, 213)

Those who believe that the direction of becoming can be laid out beforehand, imposed as an imperative by them for others—moralists—believe, in fact, that people should be “different from the way they are,” and that they would become what they ought to be by following the pattern of the moralist, who actually uses himself as the model. This is insanity, Nietzsche claims.60 There is a Dionysian power that such men lack, which is the ability to affirm, to “say yes to the very things that are questionable and terrible” (TI, 170). This can be viewed as an economy, which follows “that economy in the law of life that can take advantage of even the disgusting species of idiot, the priests, the virtuous . . .” in the sense of turning them to an advantage. The advantage is “we ourselves, we immoralists.”61

There are a number of strands within what later Nietzsche calls the Dionysian, and the apparent tension between these strands poses difficulties for coming to a resolution regarding Nietzsche’s view of the self.

60 “An individual is a piece of fate, from the front and from the back; an individual is one more law, one more necessity imposed on everything that is coming and going to be. To say to an individual: ‘change yourself’ means demanding that everything change, even retroactively. . . . And in fact there have been consistent moralists who wanted people to be different, namely virtuous, who wanted to have people in their own image, which is that of an idiot: and to this end they negated the world!” (TI, 175).
61 TI, 176.
Dionysus: Unification and Unworking of Unities

I want now to just call attention to the ambivalence in the relation of the figure of Dionysus in later Nietzsche to unification.

In *TI* IX §49 Goethe is called one who “created himself.” He is called an “event” and a type of “self-overcoming.” This description of Goethe prizes unification and totality: “What he wanted was totality; he fought against the separation of reason, sensibility, feeling, will ... he disciplined himself to wholeness, he created himself ... In the middle of an age inclined to unreality, Goethe was a convinced realist: he said yes to everything related to him.”

This is also called a kind of becoming free:

A spirit like this who has become free stands in the middle of the world with a cheerful and trusting fatalism in the belief that only the individual is reprehensible, that everything is redeemed and affirmed in the whole—he does not negate any more . . . But a belief like this is the highest of all possible beliefs: I have christened it with the name Dionysus.—

We should notice two senses of wholeness at work here. First is the wholeness that characterizes Goethe “himself.” This wholeness is a lack of separation of “reason, sensibility, feeling, will,” and, this wholeness is the result of “discipline,” for he disciplined himself “into” wholeness. This disciplining into wholeness is called “creat[ing]” of himself. And the wholeness he had become through discipline into totality is also called a “becoming free.”

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62 *TI*, 222-223, emphasis added.
63 Ibid.
So this example of one who has “created himself” and thus become free is expressed in terms of unification, totality, wholeness. However, we should return to Goethe, for is there another sense of wholeness at work here, wholeness as the all or everything, whose reference is decidedly not contained within the individual. Precisely in creating himself into a whole, becoming free, Goethe was able to create another relation to a whole: to stand in the middle of “im All,” in the all/everything, and take on a cheerful and trusting fatalism that is called Dionysian, the belief that only the individual [das Einzelne] is reprehensible and that as a whole or in the whole itself [im Ganzen sich] everything [Alles] is redeemed and affirmed.

It seems that there are a few ways to take this Dionysian belief. It could suggest that the separation of individual parts out of the context of a whole makes them reprehensible, and that those parts become redeemed when they are incorporated into a whole, part of a whole. This could describe Goethe: one in whom everything is united into a whole, the individual being that whole. On the other hand, this passage could suggest a supra-individual wholeness within which the individual is part of that whole: if Nietzsche means by “das Einzelne” the individual person, not simply the individual part. This second sense would claim that even the individual person is reprehensible if viewed out of the context of a whole. In other words, is Goethe’s making of himself a whole precisely the way that the redemption and affirmation is achieved?

Yet another question we are faced with is the role of totality and wholeness in relation to self-creation. For there is another sense of the Dionysian that seems to pull

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64 This is echoed in the passage on the grand style in GS §290, evidence of “a single taste,” in terms that recall unification.
against this suggestion of wholeness as unification. It is the sense of the Dionysian in relation to intoxication and the aesthetic state.

**Overflowing: Dionysian Intoxication and art**

It might be that what Nietzsche is describing here as the Dionysian state is a state of intoxication, an aesthetic state that *allows for* the type of vision described above. In *TI* IX, 10 Nietzsche describes the Dionysian “state” as one in which “the entire system of affects is excited and intensified: so that it discharges all its modes of expression at once, releasing the force of presentation, imitation, transfiguration, transformation, and all types of mimicry and play acting, all at the same time. The essential thing is the ease of metamorphosis, the inability not to react.” As a result of this state, “[h]e enters into any skin, into any affect: he constantly transforms himself.” This should call to mind the description of intoxication, the indispensible precondition for art, that “intensif[ies] the excitability of the whole machine,” as “the feeling of fullness and increasing strength. This feeling makes us release ourselves onto things. . .”

Someone in this state, this Dionysian state of intoxication, “has enough fullness to enrich everything... transforms things until they reflect his own power—until they are the reflexes of his perfection. This need to make perfect is —art.” It is called

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65 *TI* IX §8. This should call to mind those other “explosions,” those “great human being[s],” of whom it is said in *TI* IX §44 that “the overwhelming pressure of the out-flowing forces does not allow for any sort of oversight or caution,” as this person “pours out, pours over, consumes himself, does not spare himself—fatalistically, disastrously, *involuntarily*, as a river is involuntary when it overflows its banks’” (emphasis added).
“idealization,” but not in that traditional or philosophical sense of conceptualizing, not a siphoning, a weeding down of things. It “exaggerates, distorts.”

There are two other states of intoxication Nietzsche describes here in *TI*. Given how central the Dionysian is to later Nietzsche, it would seem that this sort of intoxication would bear an important relation to how he uses the term “Dionysian.” And what we find in this state is a kind of overwhelming; there is involuntarity, lack of restraint of reaction, overflowing of bounds, overflowing into “other skins”; one in this state is not the unified whole that Goethe was described to be, and is not a figuring of self-discipline, but is rather in a constant self-transformation.

Eternal return, *amor fati*, the Dionysian, all of these thoughts (Ansell-Pearson and Conway call them “teachings” or “doctrines”) are ways of articulating varying perspectives on one another.

**Who: Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, the Current Reader/Writer?**

In the large middle section of *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche engages in this reading of his writings, and I’ve suggested that this amounts not only to the provision of interpretations of the texts, but that it amounts to a retrospective performance that is related to that sense of becoming what one is. *Schopenhauer as Educator (SE)*, the third

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66. In *TI* §1, Nietzsche talks about his style. He claims that he tried to adopt a Roman style in his works. This sense of style was aroused by Sallust, and Horace. His description of Horace’s style brings to mind his description of Dionysian intoxication: they gave him an “artistic delight,” “this mosaic of words, where the force of every word flows out as a sound, a place, a concept, to the right and the left and all over the whole, a minimal range and minimal number of signs achieving a maximal semiotic energy” (emphasis added). In comparison, other poetry is “just a prattle of feelings.” To this poetry Nietzsche claims he owes the rousing of his sense of style. This suggestion that there could be a maximal outpouring of energy from the composition of the text calls to mind the Dionysian state.

67. Regarding the question of whether one is the more determinative, see the following section.
of Nietzsche’s *Untimely Meditations* published in 1874, is treated, and it is interesting for our purposes because of the destruction of the preexisting unities—of Schopenhauer, of the younger self of Nietzsche—are demonstrated in the current act of reading/writing in *Ecce Homo*.

*SE* contains in its first few pages an image of what Nietzsche calls “finding oneself again,” and there are a few reasons why it calls for consideration given the themes at issue here. First is the retrospective temporality of this process involving the self and a relation to oneself. Second is the resonance of the themes of becoming and fate within this process. Third is the fact that *Ecce Homo* provides a reading of this text. So we might ask: what is this “finding oneself again” and can it justifiably be related to the notion, in much later texts, of becoming what one is? And given the central role of love in its description, can it also justifiably be related to that later important form of love, *amor fati*? Does making these connections shed light on the performance that Nietzsche engages in *Ecce Homo*, if only by way of contrast?

In the first section below, I will discuss the image of “finding oneself again,” and I will ask how Nietzsche’s ensuing recollection of the Schopenhauer he claimed to have loved relates to that opening image as a possible performance. In the second section, I turn to a consideration of *Ecce Homo*, which provides a potential commentary on *SE*’s treatment of “finding oneself again.”

**Finding Oneself Again, and the Educator as Beloved**

The first section of *SE* opens with a description of an experience that is elsewhere thematized by Nietzsche, what goes by the name of the “great liberation” in
the 1886 Preface to *HTH*. It is that of young person in the midst of an experience that Nietzsche claims occurs to “every youthful soul,” that of feeling that one’s true nature is distinct from, and has been buried under, the social conventions of the culture in which one has been raised, which seem to have only made of one *what one is not*, and merely provided a “painted bag of clothes” equipped with “artificial limbs,” “glasses of wax” and “plastic nose.” And so the question for such a person becomes, “How can one *find oneself again*?” (*SE*, 129)

To *find oneself again*, Nietzsche tells us, this person should be encouraged *not* to dig down—as if one’s true nature were pre-existing and waiting to be uncovered—but rather to “look back” over her life in order to *recollect her loves*. The passage is worth quoting in full:

> Let the youthful soul look back on life with the question: what have you truly loved up to now, what has drawn your soul aloft, what has mastered it and at the same time blessed it? Set up these revered objects (Gegenstande) before you and perhaps their nature and their sequence will give you a law, the fundamental law of your own true self. Compare these objects one with another, see how one completes, expands, surpasses, transfigures another, how they constitute a stepladder upon which you have clambered up to yourself as you are now; for your true nature lies, not concealed deep within you, but immeasurably high above you, or at least above that which you usually take yourself to be.\(^68\)

*Finding oneself again* is thus a retrospective retrieval of all that one has loved, coupled with a re-reading of the progressive interrelation of those loves—as if they had formed a necessary series of steps leading to what one is now.

The educator factors into this process precisely in his or her being the recollected love: Nietzsche closes this section with the claim that he knows of no better

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\(^68\) *SE*, 129-130.
way to find oneself “than to recollect one’s true educators. And so today I shall recall one of the teachers and taskmasters of whom I can boast, Arthur Schopenhauer.” The only recollection in this text is of an educator, suggesting that educators are the loves we recollect in finding ourselves again.

The educator is not only an object of love, but the provision of a liberation. Nietzsche claims that educators can only be our liberators, because they reveal “that the true, original meaning and basic stuff of your nature is something completely incapable of being educated or formed and is in any case something difficult of access, bound and paralysed.”

What is the liberation provided by true educators? To answer these questions, a few features of Nietzsche’s recollection of Schopenhauer seem important to note.

Nietzsche tells us that a philosopher is only of use to him inasmuch as he can be an example, and this example must be provided by his “outward life and not merely his books.” He laments that he only knew Schopenhauer through his books. But the content of those books, what Schopenhauer claims and writes, barely figure into this recollection at all: there is only one direct quotation, and only four brief references to his texts, in 80 pages. This is not a recollection engaged through the encounter with texts.

References are rather to the kind of person he is said to have been and the example that he was. What is strangest about this is that Nietzsche writes that he never met Schopenhauer, the man. So, what exactly is being recollected here?
After listing the first set of Schopenhauer’s traits—cheerfulness, honesty, and steadfastness—Nietzsche ends their account by noting that what came first for him was simply an intense physiological response upon encountering Schopenhauer in his texts, which only later yielded to analysis this list of traits: “I am describing nothing but the first, as it were physiological, impression Schopenhauer produced upon me, that magical outpouring of the inner strength of one natural creature on to another that follows the first and most fleeting encounter” (emphasis added). This description uses terms Nietzsche uses to describe one in a Dionysian state, one who is overfull; but it also calls to mind that a result of this Dionysian state, connected with the psychology of the orgiastic, that one invests in all that one sees one’s own abundance; it could then be that what appears as an outpouring of strength from one creature to another, to a creature in a Dionysian state, is in fact his own outpouring, investment, striving to perfect, whereby he is able to see as beautiful. It is this seeing as beautiful that is called in later texts amor fati. Nietzsche’s recollection of Schopenhauer in the early text thus indicates an amount of just the sort of projection that in the later work is linked both to the Dionysian state and to love.

What can be the point of this idiosyncratic view of an educator, with its overtones of falling in love, projection, and overvaluation?

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69 GS §276.

70 The remainder of Schopenhauer’s qualities regard what he is said to be an example of, which is the ability to withstand such dangers as: dependence on university and state; isolation; despair over truth in the wake of Kant; and despair at the recognition of one’s own limitations, in the face of which one still longs for and strives for a continual improvement of his talents. Readers of Nietzsche might recognize these as Nietzsche’s dangers, not infrequently noted in other texts as matters of his own struggle: for instance, his claim that for want of companions he had to create them, in HTH, his frequent later references to his lack of readers or need to create them.
Nietzsche offers a few comments whereby we might glean a general understanding of the way that Nietzsche views love functioning in this process of finding oneself again. After he describes Schopenhauer’s example, he asks if this view of Schopenhauer is only an “intoxicating vision,” or if it can “educate,” and he elaborates that that education would be the ability of an ideal to be attached to practical actions whereby we might realize the ideal. So education seems to be the process of altering oneself away from what one now is toward an ideal with the aim of making it flesh. Love is a prerequisite for this process, and it seems that love is what attaches us to an ideal in the first place. Nietzsche will tell us later in the text that the love of a great man provides a longing for a better version of oneself, because love allows two things to happen at the same time: a perception of one’s failings, and, an aspiration to redeem them by becoming better. Nietzsche claims that “it is love alone that can bestow on the soul not only a clear, discriminating and self-contemptuous view of itself, but also the desire to look beyond itself and to seek with all its might for a higher self as yet still concealed from it,” and that only a person who has “attached his heart to some great man” receives the ability to be “ashamed of oneself” in this way (emphases added).

Now, we can make sense of why Nietzsche claimed that our educators are not only our loves, but that they can only liberate us. The liberation, in this encounter, is provided by the sense of deficiency, and longing for what is shown to be possible. The encounter with the loved philosopher can generate a feeling of longing or dissatisfaction: what one now is is shown to be distant from what it is possible to be, and what it is possible to be is sighted through the example that the other is taken to
embody. The longing that traverses this distance, the sense that one might be otherwise, that one as one now is is deficient, seems to be a precondition for an ascension to the espied possibility. And this is the model of love gleaned from Diotima’s speech in *The Symposium*: love is the in-between that draws us from what we now are to what we in fact long for, without recognizing what we in fact longed for all along until *after* the fact of its discovery.

Thus, our true educators are our loves and through the power of that love on the self, they are our liberators, liberating us by pointing out the space of difference between what we now are, and what we might become, through providing an example that we read in them, which enables us to despise our current position and long to be otherwise, though a key is that, in the moment, we are unable to see them as just a projection of our inner longing to be otherwise.

If education is, as Nietzsche earlier described it, the alteration of oneself away from a current state toward an ideal, it seems that his suggestion is that love is essential here in attaching us to the ideal in the first place, and then, providing the means whereby the change in the self takes place—the work of shame and aspiration in consort.71

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71 This effect of love, the aspiration to a better self, is repeated, when one reads the situation of all of mankind out of this one—when one “employs his own wrestling and longing . . . as a means by which he can now read off the aspiration of mankind as a whole,” finding that all mankind is also striving for a higher production, a higher kind of man, the genius (*SE*, 163). Nietzsche will later claim that the goal of culture is precisely the production of the genius.

Thus, we can come to understand the central goal of culture, production of the genius, that combination of artist, philosopher, and saint, in that all have an aspirational quality, for they are related to as pieces of an ideal, that which is not yet, but which we are aiming toward. What Nietzsche has suggested is that, love for the educator establishes a relation of longing that becomes a prototype for understanding humanity, as also longing to be otherwise: just as we aim for a better self viewed only
Circling back to the opening image which suggested that educators are our liberators, and that educators are our loves, we might now fit these elements together.

The love of a great man allows us to see him as an ideal, exemplifying a possibility of being. In our love of him, we attach ourselves to the ideal that he seems to exemplify, and we gain self-knowledge. This makes possible a self-dissatisfaction and a longing for what seems to be the position that they uniquely occupy. We might initially think that we strive to become like them, when we follow their example. Yet, the real object of our love is the possible self that is sighted from our position of self-dissatisfaction.72

This might allow us to address those idiosyncrasies in Nietzsche’s description of Schopenhauer: could it be that what he was describing, in the name of Schopenhauer, was really the “better possible self” that love for Schopenhauer allowed him to produce a vision of? If so, is this the work of Schopenhauer, or of Nietzsche?

To Ecce Homo through this Lens

Ecce Homo seems to speak directly to SE, not merely in the sections in which the earlier text is its explicit subject. Ecce Homo could be said to be centrally concerned with finding oneself again, for in the work Nietzsche is recollecting his life and reading it as a through the effects of the love of a great man, so all humanity aims for production of the better form, the genius.

72 The child produced from this union is called culture, the longing to produce a better human. Just as desire is a state of being in-between, this first child of love soon enough shows itself to be desire not for the educator, but for the higher self it allowed us to see, and then, for the higher human. So through following love, the object of desire has changed: the new object of desire is no longer the great loved man, but the higher self that our encounter with him allowed to be seen. Just as love proceeds, for Diotima, from love of one beautiful body to love of all beautiful bodies, love here proceeds from love of one great man, to love of all possible great men, including the great possible self. What started out as love of the educator has become love of a future self, and then, love of a future humanity.
progression to what he now is, suggested by both the subtitle, how one becomes what one is, and the work of retrospection as which the text constitutes itself, as Nietzsche closes the Preface with the claim that he will now re-tell his life to himself.

Even limiting ourselves to Ecce Homo, it is clear that Nietzsche’s view on Schopenhauer has altered and become more nuanced; it is tempting to claim that what has changed is simply Nietzsche’s view of Schopenhauer. But is the relationship between the earlier text and Ecce Homo exhausted only by the difference of the perspectives within which the two texts consider Schopenhauer? It does not seem to be—something else has changed. Rather, it seems that part of what changes in the later text is the relationship to love and to the objects of one’s love, objects including educators in general. I would suggest that the alteration in the role of love and the object of love, by the time of this later text, helps to explain how Ecce Homo represents a progression beyond the earlier text’s enactment of finding oneself again.

But before moving into Ecce Homo, we should note that this change in the view of love is foregrounded in the 1886 Preface to HTH. This Preface also regards SE’s opening situation of a young person sensing the tension between his or her own nature and the tradition-bound culture that has up to this point been the context of their formation. In HTH, Nietzsche claims that this youth is on the brink of undertaking a “great separation” or “great liberation,” a wandering away from all that has characterized his Bildung thus far. So the two texts seem to be of a piece in locating this moment of crisis. And this is the point at which the earlier Nietzsche had urged that the youth undertake “finding himself again,” starting with recollection of past loves.
But in *HTH*, Nietzsche adds a claim that critically references the role of love put forth in *SE*: he says about young people at this point of crisis that “their supreme moments themselves will fetter them the fastest, lay upon them the most enduring obligation. The liberation comes suddenly for those who are *fettered in this way*” after which, he claims, one “lives no longer in *the fetters of love and hatred*.”\(^{73}\)

At this moment as it is described in *SE*, the recommendation for the young person was to look back and recover his great loves. Nietzsche’s ensuing account of Schopenhauer had emphasized what a supreme moment his first encounter with Schopenhauer had been—recall his intense first physiological impression. And it had been suggested in that text that precisely love enabled the liberation at issue. Here, twelve years later, Nietzsche calls *love*, and one’s own *supreme moments*, the very kind of fetters from which liberation is required. There is an implicit criticism of his earlier inability to fully unfetter himself from an obligation to a supreme moment, the initial encounter with his love, Schopenhauer, and the suggestion that the very love of the object which seemed to drive the work of liberation in the earlier text *might itself be a fetter* from which a liberation is needed. Love is classed with just those sorts of binding forces, like the binding forces of conventional culture, from which one should free oneself. And because the response to this moment in the earlier text was the start of the process of “finding oneself again,” the suggestion here is that “finding oneself again” requires an unfettering of one *from* one’s loves.

\(^{73}\) *HTH*, 8, emphasis added.
Keeping in mind this change in the view of love in that intervening text, I will turn now to *Ecce Homo*.

We know that this work is also a recollection. Whereas the earlier text recollected Schopenhauer, a love, as part of a process of finding oneself again, which consists in recollecting all of one’s loves as a necessary progression to the current self, what is recollected in *Ecce Homo* is *mein Leben*, the life of the narrator, and it is recalled in the form of a self-telling, telling to oneself one’s whole life. One of the points we noted about the recollection in *SE* is that Nietzsche had there recollected only one of his loves, even though finding oneself again requires recounting all of them as part of a necessary progression. Cryptically, he closed that first section with the misleading comment that after recollecting Schopenhauer, he would “later on … recall others.” But we never got beyond Schopenhauer. Until now . . .

In the section of *Ecce Homo* titled “The Untimely Ones,” Nietzsche says of the third and fourth of the *Untimely Meditations*, of which *Schopenhauer as Educator* is the third, that they “use two images of the harshest *selfishness, self-discipline* to point to a *higher* concept of culture, to reestablish the concept of ‘culture’—these are images of untimely types *par excellence* . . . Schopenhauer and Wagner or, in a word, *Nietzsche*.”

He says here, looking back, that he had taken hold of Schopenhauer “the way you take hold of an opportunity, in order to express something, in order to have another couple of formulas, signs, means of expression,” much like Plato used Socrates “as a semiotic for Plato.” Further, he claims that looking back from a distance “I would not

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74 *SE*, 112, emphasis added.
want to deny that [the text] is basically only talking about me,” and “the piece gives an invaluable lesson here, if we admit that what [basically takes the floor to speak here is] not ‘Schopenhauer as Educator’ but instead its opposite, ‘Nietzsche as Educator’” (emphasis added, translation emended).

Nietzsche here suggests not simply a substitution of names, but of position. For Schopenhauer is not Nietzsche, just as Socrates is not Plato. Socrates is, as this text would have it, a means Plato employs. So the Schopenhauer of the earlier text is the means Nietzsche employed. Nietzsche is not claiming Schopenhauer as his educator but as his proxy, or perhaps his mask.

What this emphasizes is the work that he was doing, the fact that the very expression of Schopenhauer as an exemplar was part of the work, the work of reading, the work of an investment of one’s own longing, that that earlier Nietzsche had been performing, cunningly, perhaps behind his own back. Ecce Homo’s author realizes the means that Schopenhauer had been, and that how Schopenhauer appeared was as a result of the reading and investment Nietzsche had granted him.

Hence, if the title “Schopenhauer as Educator” corresponds to the literal presentation of Schopenhauer as such, the title “Nietzsche as Educator,” its true title, corresponds to the Nietzsche thus employing Schopenhauer, creating an ideal by investing it with the longing and desire to overcome and surpass what he, at the time, was, but which he, at the time, could not realize.

The title ‘Schopenhauer as Educator’ says Schopenhauer embodies the ideal to be striven for, or provides the ideal through his example. The title ‘Nietzsche as
Educator’ identifies the educated and the educator by recognizing two things: 1) we create the ideals by “reading” our loves, and the very selection of an ideal implies a reading, which becomes explicit in recollection, where we finally see our contribution to it—our projection, that term for interpretation; 2) as education is the process of embodying an ideal, it is our longing for the ideal, our love for the self as a better self, that fuels the process. The ideal or exemplary figure owes itself to the longing and striving of the educated, which is shown in the way they see or read the ideal. This means, education as the process of striving to embody an ideal in ourselves obtains its power not by the person being recollected, for even how they appear to us is our contribution, but owes itself to the longing for a better self.

The suggestion, to my mind, is that Nietzsche had previously emphasized the educator, had seen the educator as beloved, and emphasized the position of the beloved, rather than emphasizing his own position as lover, as one through which love leads always beyond the initial object of love. In leading beyond the initial object of love, we find that the goal of the entire process had always been the self. But this can only be retrospectively realized—once one has freed oneself from the shadow of the educator.75

75 What comes to mind, when considering Ecce Homo’s view of the earlier text, is the figure of Alcibiades. Alcibiades the tormented, whose tragic mistake was to see Socrates as his beloved, the object of his love. He conflated the philosopher—the one who desires and thus lacks the virtues—with the virtues themselves, and believed that Socrates was those things: the Socrates he calls “wise,” and calls virtuous, instead of seeing that wisdom and virtue are what Socrates, too, longs for, and thus, lacks. He could not recognize the difference between what his great loved man, Socrates, sought but did not possess, and Socrates himself. Hence, Socrates was the apex of love’s ascent, for Alcibiades, and hence his failure to win Socrates was felt as the loss of the ultimate object of love.

Diotima’s speech in praise of love provides a critique of Alcibiades’ praise of Socrates, for in her speech, love is called “the leader,” leading us in the ascension beyond all particular objects to love’s ultimate aim, which is, becoming something ourselves—through the encounter with the idea of Beauty,
Interlude 3:

The Unification Involved in Reading: Heidegger, Eternal Return, and Ecce Homo

Heidegger does not presume to read *Ecce Homo* without a grounding in the thought of eternal return, given that this latter is said to be Nietzsche’s fundamental thought. Heidegger presents an interpretation of eternal return as the fundamental thought of Nietzsche’s philosophy, a thought regarding being as a whole, and a thought determining the autobiographical elements of *Ecce Homo*. Why do I not begin here in my own reading?

becoming wise and virtuous ourselves. At that highest point, there is a self-transformation, as the idea of Beauty and the soul coincide, and the soul becomes able to reproduce true Beauty. Though love manifests itself in a series of objects to which the lover is drawn, the central point that love is being a lover, not the beloved, should have the result that love is understood as “in-between,” is never one of its objects, but is rather a power that moves through, and draws us beyond, every particular object.

It seems possible that the Nietzsche of *Ecce Homo* is suggesting that his younger self erred in a similar way as Alcibiades, that of mistaking Schopenhauer for educator, conflating him with the ideal that was itself the product of Nietzsche’s longing and projection, and could not have been captured by one particular object. And hence, he mistook the ultimate aim of his love, thinking it was Schopenhauer, not seeing that Schopenhauer was a rung that had to be left behind, not seeing that it was really a self that had become able to produce all that was attributed solely to the production of the object.

In saying this, I am suggesting that *Ecce Homo* carries out the very image of finding oneself that preaced the earlier text. The author of *Ecce Homo* has at least climbed to the rung of Schopenhauer, and realized that what he was, at an earlier time, becoming through love was a possibility that he then believed was made visible by Schopenhauer, but which he now believes was not held fast in him as a person.

The narrator of *SE* simply doesn’t go so far, in that text, as to turn back and ask how he might have actually moved beyond Schopenhauer. He experiences the transition of object, from educator to possible self, but simply doesn’t make that explicit to himself. The author of *Ecce Homo* goes further, turns and reflects on this affective liberation through Schopenhauer, and simply makes explicit that it was a self-longing generating the process. Finding oneself thus names that ongoing possibility of reflecting on one’s ongoing education, one’s ongoing aspirations made apparent through love, and the ability to critically turn back on love.

76 See Nietzsche. Vol. I: The Will to Power as Art, translated by David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1961). Herein, Heidegger presents an interpretation of eternal return as the fundamental thought of Nietzsche’s metaphysics, and the fundamental doctrine in his philosophy, claiming that “bereft of this teaching as its ground, Nietzsche’s philosophy is like a tree without roots” and that “the major components of Nietzsche’s entire philosophy have in that doctrine [eternal return] their ground and their very domain” (6-7). Thus only by attending to this doctrine do we attain “a vantage-point on Nietzsche’s philosophy as a whole.” Heidegger’s interpretation of *Ecce Homo* is thus framed by the context of this interpretation of eternal return.
In Heidegger’s reading, that part of *Ecce Homo* in which, in the narrator’s telling of his life to himself, he recollects a day in 1881 in which the thought of eternal return came to him is read as a bequeathal from Nietzsche to “us” of “his” account of the genesis of the thought of eternal return.\(^{77}\) *It strikes me that there is, at the root of this reading, an elision of the narrative voice and the authorial voice.*

Suppose one had, not even a principle, but an inclination (based on noting suspicions often expressed in Nietzsche’s texts) to question a few things here: the idea that Nietzsche’s philosophy has a ground, or has one ground? The idea that, if there were one, it would be found in an autobiographical testimony, given the relation cultivated in readers toward suspicion of philosopher’s own statements about themselves? Or, simply, that the narrative voice is to be trusted? One of the reasons for these inclinations is my interest in the way that the narrator’s voice in Nietzsche’s texts cannot be assumed to be the voice of the signatory, “Nietzsche,” and that the irreducibility of these two is often part of what is performatively in play in many later texts. It thus becomes difficult to locate the authority that would indicate anything like a fundamental thought for Nietzsche.\(^{78}\)

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\(^{77}\) As eternal return is the fundamental thought of Nietzsche’s philosophy, this recounting of the life, connected as it is with the task of this thought, is a recounting providing the palpability of this thought as action. Eternal return becomes palpable as action in the life recounted, a life which is said to show the sufficiency of thought for action. What does this give us for a reading of *Ecce Homo*? “Nietzsche’s retrospective and circumspective glances at his life are never anything else than prospective glances into his task” (Ibid., 10). In Heidegger’s view, that task comes to be understood as the thinking of and teaching of eternal return.

\(^{78}\) This does not mean that I think readers can not generate interpretations that suggest what the fundamental thoughts might be. But in the spirit of Nietzsche, that claim would be understood as an interpretation, not deriving from the authority of “Nietzsche,” and hence, not requisite. Which is just to say, there would be many possibilities for interpreting the texts, it seems.
Along these lines, Conway’s comments on the thought of eternal return demonstrate the difficulty for some readers of using it as the interpretive frame:

Any interpretation (and a fortiori any critique) of . . . eternal recurrence thus rests on two basic presuppositions: first, that [Nietzsche] has successfully conveyed a sense of this teaching to some of his readers, perhaps in spite of his limitations; and second, that some of his readers have successfully received this teaching from him, despite his reliance on masks, personae, analogies, allegories, and other forms of indirection.  

Conway suggests that this is a ‘teaching’ left quite empty, that it is unlikely that either Nietzsche or modern readers would be equal to it (given Nietzsche’s statements about his readers), and that “[i]f we take seriously Nietzsche’s decadence, then we should expect him neither to understand nor to enact the untimely teaching he has been called to disseminate. He may stand as far removed from the teaching of eternal recurrence as his enervated readers stand from Zarathustra.”

I want to be very clear about my reservations here. What I have said above is that we have reason to be suspicious of the eliding of the narrative voice and the voice of “Nietzsche.” We thus have reason to be suspicious of using claims made in the narrator’s voice to provide the authoritative grounds by which we limit our interpretations—if only in the sense that this might blind us to the performative

80 In a related vein, I am hesitant to say that “Nietzsche” has “a philosophy,” that it is of the sort that has a “ground” and grows into a “whole” from this ground. For Heidegger, the thought of eternal return is a view of “being as a whole.” Heidegger notes in closing the “Summary Presentation of the Thought” that we proceed in this way “presupposing, of course, that we wish to proceed in the way that is prescribed by the inner lawfulness of the guiding question of philosophy, the question of being as such.” It is true that such a statement ‘being as a whole’ is not found in the corpus, and that Nietzsche’s statements about ‘being’ would seem to suggest some hesitation regarding this reading. However, Heidegger notes this, and his view is that when Nietzsche uses the term “existence” [Dasein] with regard to the question of whether it has meaning, this use “roughly parallels what we mean by ‘being as a whole’—though with some reservations” (26).
81 Without doubt, I have, herein, failed to consistently employ this suspicion myself—this failure is a habit.
unworking of the desire for origins enacted by the text. However, if eternal return is offered as an interpretive valence through which this text can be read, then my hesitation disappears, because of the difference between claiming a ground and claiming a possible interpretation. The danger on the surface of Heidegger’s reading, on my view, is that it can seem to come quite close to implying that readings of Nietzsche that do not take eternal return as the key to Nietzsche’s thought are not legitimate, are not proper readings. If one does not think that eternal return is the ground of Nietzsche’s thought, because one is not looking for such a “ground”—meaning, not that one disagrees with this, but simply reads differently—can one then not read “Nietzsche”? This gets us back to the recurring issue, who is this “Nietzsche” we are reading, what establishes the authority of the readings?

**Whose/Who’s Nietzsche?**

It is a commonplace that everyone has his or her own Nietzsche. We have also seen the temptation to identify the concepts or concerns most central to Nietzsche, to call him the thinker of x, y, or z. It is as if there is the temptation of unification of Nietzsche’s thought under the guiding line of one or two concepts or doctrines, on one hand; and the resistance to this temptation by emphasizing tensions, conflicts, a less-frequently appearing term, on the other. The works under Nietzsche’s name easily can be said to support both procedures; we might note, on one hand, the frequent claims made in his works, by his narrative voices, as to his “fundamental insight,” central work,

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82 My, admittedly cursory, reading of Heidegger here is that he tries to have it both ways, claiming sometimes that he is working up an interpretation, but claiming, through the use of the language of grounding thoughts (see above), otherwise.
or the reappearance of certain arguments across multiple works; on the other, we might note the slight rhetorical or formal differences of each text, the undercutting of previous claims within one text, the self-implication of the ‘author’ of texts in certain phenomena held under derision within them.

Nietzsche is perhaps no better expressed than as the name over the doorway to a system that reveals itself as a labyrinth, keeping in mind that a labyrinth is both what is made and what is traversed, that we might focus on either the guiding line that we followed to however far we travelled, or, the sense that there might be an equally suitable alternate guiding line, which might have got us further, or into the nooks we weren’t able to reach. Reading Nietzsche makes of Nietzsche, makes us understand of Nietzsche, at the same time Daedelus, constructing the labyrinth, and Ariadne, feeding us clues to its traversal. But sometimes Nietzsche is Theseus too, and maybe as Theseus, he gives us a vision of both Daedelus, and Ariadne.

All this is to say, it seems so equally unavoidable to unify Nietzsche, and also to trouble that unity as Nietzsche does; it seems undecidable whether Nietzsche resolves to a unity, let alone to the unity of Daedelus (creator/constructor), Ariadne (way-finder, clue-giver), or Theseus (blind, impassioned, seeker of a way through that which he cannot see as whole). “He” is all three, his work is all three, and this forms the interruption of system: we believe there is a system, a unity with a way in and out; we cannot see it, but must follow in fits and starts the line we’ve picked up; while this line might be an illusion, or another way to say this, might reveal more about ourselves than the ‘one’ we ‘read.’ And the part of us that follows, any way we follow, is, perhaps, the
lover, the one in love, who has risked all, depending on their love; or, the one who is
only following themselves. But, perhaps this suggests, regarding the labyrinth, that I lost
my way in myself, in that I desired a way out to a vision of the whole, perhaps my
idiosyncrasies found the line that they created. ‘Nietzsche’ turned out to be for me, just
as Ecce Homo tells us ‘Schopenhauer’ turned out to be for Nietzsche, only Nietzsche,
only me, in the end. But how could I ever decide who is reading, who is being read?

**Toward a Conclusion**

As part of Part II of this project, this chapter was framed in its relation to the
previous one. The previous chapter covered the critique of the Subject, and the present
chapter dealt with texts that seem, on the surface, to pull against that critique, for these
texts seem to consist in an interest in the self, in reconstructing a self that, it is implied,
is retrieved from within the texts signed by “Nietzsche.” As laid out in introductory
comments, the question immediately raised by the presence of both views in the later
work is that of how this interest in the self, found in many later works but namely in
Ecce Homo, is to be related to a critique which consists in the unworking of a unified
Subject.

In this chapter I have attempted to raise some questions regarding the narrator’s
constative claims about the self based on the performance achieved in the same texts.
Rather than an exhaustive reading of Ecce Homo, I have merely read some of the ways
in which the structure, the surface, of this text announces a performance that
challenges the constative claims of its narrator. And it is the performative level of the
text—the meaning indicated by the structure of elements as surface-dwelling as the
title, the subtitle, the Preface, the exergue—all those elements supposedly *prefatory* to the matter of the text—that signal the unworking of the apparent achievements of the narrator herein.

There is thus introduced a distance between the direct claims of the narrator, and the revelatory power of the text. We are not wrong in finding here a repetition of the basic structure of the lyric poet, covered in Chapter 2—for there we found that the signification of the words of the lyric poet were not the matter at issue, but rather that the engagement of the words, that from whence the words emerged, became projected, through the uttering, performing, of the words, to the one who was speaking. The words meant more than what they said—when taking the lyric poet’s words as vicarious metaphor. What we find here, in Nietzsche’s last work, is another vicariousness, another such oblique revelation, though through a writing, not a speaking. It is a twofold revelation, of both the desire on the part of one—an exemplar, perhaps, of the modern obsession with the uniqueness of the self, the desire to present the self in its uniqueness, its singularity, its unity at any given time—and of the impossibility of achieving this desire. The impossibility of this achievement is not signaled through the constative claims of the narrator, but rather through the structure of the text, which unworks the desired unified presentation of the self in a number of ways. First, in all of the ambiguities and undecidables invoked by the titular and prefatory elements themselves. But secondly, in the very structure as which the narrator lays out his task in the text: that of returning to previous writings in order to re-read them and, on that basis, re-write the self that, it is implied, already was there. This
structure enacts, or performs, future anteriority, saying now what will have been the case. The narrator, of course, seems immune to the recognition of this temporality, speaking in the mode of retrieving. But the text structures the performance of this reading, now, what will have been the case.

Thus, what is revealed about the “self” is the ambiguity of that to which the term is applied; the temporality of future anteriority involved in its application; and the catachrestic character of its application, that it covers over pre-existing absence while denying that absence. The demonstration of the emergence of the application of “self” thus unworks the basic elements associated with the self, elements which deny the performativity that its application demonstrates.

What we thus find, in such later works, is the performative unworking of the very unity that the application of the term “self,” “I,” is meant to name. And what does this mean regarding language? Not only that language is the reserve of names—names such as “self” that may be applied to apparent phenomena—but that language as “name,” “nomina,” is epiphenomenal to another valence of language: that valence captured in the bringing to appear as which every act of reading is—for it is to such acts, to interpretations, that this later Nietzsche turns in order to “name” himself in the first place.
Conclusion

As stated in the Introduction, the beginning of this project was ambiguous, informed by two valences. The first was my abiding curiosity regarding Nietzsche’s late works and Prefaces, in which the question of the “work” performed in texts, in the writing of them and the interpretation of them, looms large. This interest in writing and reading gave rise to noting the surface curiosity that what seems the broader category, language, is treated differently in the early and later works. From this observation, the second valence was born, that regarding the question of how the early and later treatments of language might relate. This second valence thus gave shape to the first part of my project, that described in the Introduction and first two chapters, and to the larger framework of the whole; the first valence installed itself in the fourth chapter, and gave rise to, as a bridge and preface, the third.

In the first chapter, I considered three texts, comprising published works and unpublished notes of the early-to-mid 1870s, in which Nietzsche deals directly with language, and which we might be inclined to classify as focusing on physiology and rhetoric. The common thread in these texts, prompting me to group them together, is their inclusion of, or of elements of, what I have called a genetic account of language—an account that seems to articulate language as emerging as one part of a more extensive process of the translativ work involved in the rendering of experience. Such accounts of language, though they present language in its emergence as part of a process that precedes and exceeds words, have a few commonalities: a denial of a
recuperable origin preceding this process; a description of the movement from one “stage” to another within this process as a leap or translation; a significance attached to rhetoric and/or physiology. I tried to draw attention to what I see as the achievement or the thematic focus of such accounts: the way in which such articulations consist in unworking, and serve to unwork either a number of oppositions significant to the history of philosophy, or, dominant, presumed unities found within philosophy.

Approaching rhetoric directly, in the rhetoric course notes, Nietzsche’s overt claims about language consist in unworking the binary oppositions that have defined rhetoric in its Ancient and modern forms: the oppositions of persuasive versus truthful, and of artful versus natural, language. Nietzsche takes those ways that rhetoric has been classified, as a subset of language—either as persuasive, or as artful—and extends that classification to cover all language. This extension dismantles, or unworks, the specific oppositions, but it also dismantles the opposition between rhetoric and language itself.

While, if we then were to read only the text favored by the secondary literature here, OTL, we might be led to the view that the emphasis on translation and metaphor within this kind of account demonstrates a dependence on the opposition of origin and copy, I suggest that we supplement this reading with a consideration from notebooks published as “The Philosopher.” Doing so, we find that translation and metaphor are not treated as primarily linguistic figures by Nietzsche, but describe the more general, thoroughgoing work of physiology, before they become detached as specific elements of language. Following this suggestion has two results. First, another opposition is dismantled—that of the distinction between physiology and language—is physiology
linguistic? Is language an extension of physiological processes? In fact, it appears, we cannot say. But rather than being left in an undecidable position, what the ambiguity here reiterates is the unworking of the opposition of origin to copy. The ambiguity demonstrates the impossibility of delimiting the origin from the copy. And this is because the specific work that is done—by, be it called physiology, be it called language—is the work of projecting the form or the structure of origin: copy onto that which appears as given, as experienced. The origin is not that which is preexistent to, and the copy is not that which is the effect of, experience; but rather, experience consists in, or requires, the projection that there is an origin of which there is the copy or re-rendering. Language consists in this working up of an origin, but when we read it as continuous with physiology, or continuous with rhetoric, we unwork the origin, and see it is a projection. What is the site from which the projection springs? Even that would be an origin. But when Nietzsche speaks, in OTL, for example (the text focused on by secondary sources), it is possible to read his voice as lamenting the failure of language to become equal to its origin, or, at least, marking the origin (the “mysterious ‘x’”) as out of our reach, impossibly achieved. When we add the texts on rhetoric and physiology, we see the origin as the turn, that regarding which there is no behind, but only a projection from which. This is why Platonism seemed to denigrate the aspect of the painter—it projects an idiosyncratic vantagepoint of the one painting, but does not get “behind” what is seen to the being of what is seen. Nietzsche might seem to have it both ways here—to articulate language as not being able to get behind itself, but to articulate physiology as that which projects what is behind itself (the projection of the
grounding metaphor of cause). To operate within the nets of language, as these accounts depict it, is to be physiological (projective), rhetorical (projective of one’s vantagepoint), and, with language, to project that this is not a projection.

In the second chapter, I explored texts and unpublished notes that present what initially seems to be the alternate “early” view of language that can be mined from within Nietzsche’s texts of the early 1870s, those composed just prior to, and sometimes overlapping with, the texts grouped in Chapter 1. These texts were grouped together because they seem to present a view of language that we might call expressive as opposed to genetic. This view of language depicts language in relation to music, depicts music as itself emergent from and expressive of an origin, and seems to depict language as the “recasting” of the origin-expression which music itself is said to be. On the surface, then, the view of language in these early texts is distinguished from that in the genetic accounts, as they depict language not as a creative, aesthetic leap into a new sphere, but as the recasting of music, which is itself the provision into appearance of an originary insight into being, that of either the Dionysian origin of all experience, or an insight into the primal ground of all experience. In these texts, language seems to be depicted as derivative, as the copy of the copy which music is.

However, by concentrating on two key elements in these texts, the duality of language and the figure of the lyric poet, I tried to show that Nietzsche in fact problematizes the very depiction of language as “copy of a copy” as which he seems to present it. The duality of language is presented in *OMW*, and is that view of words as comprised of a tonal and gestural half, out of the former of which music itself develops.
This derivation disrupts the apparent priority of music to language—disrupts it, leaving the question of priority ambiguous and irresolvable. Language is derivative of music in its gestural sense, but music is derivative of language in its tonal aspect. That music is language, as the further development of part of language’s tonal essence, and, that language is the recasting of music—we again have an ambiguous origin.

When one reads BT, one finds the overt treatment of the lyric poet almost buried, couched between the more textually dominant “artistic metaphysics” and the discussion of tragedy. But the lyric poet presents, to my reading, a dismantling of the metaphysical overtones of that artistic metaphysics in BT, and, is the necessary prototype of the generation of tragedy. The lyric poet, again, introduces an ambiguity regarding origin, regarding the apparent priority of music over language, a hierarchy within which it seems to be placed, for it interrupts an overtly claimed linear progression from origin to music to lyrical language—the overt casting of language as the copy of music’s copy of the origin. This interruption occurs because the lyric poet, as described in BT, does more than simply copy what is already there in music. For even as the lyric poet is said to create “out of” the spirit of music, and is said not to penetrate to the depth of the expression of music itself, the lyric poet nonetheless provides the delivery of the encounter with the Dionysian/the originary exposure, which music expresses, to the one who has been thus exposed for the first time, and in such a way that this exposure can be interpreted. In other words, the implication seems to be that the Dionysian exposure, though it is accessed in the production of music, is yet not recognized or interpreted until this exposure is rendered in the form of language,
specifically, of lyrical language. So even though this lyrical language is depicted, on the surface, as the derivative of the musical experience, it is also said to be the first delivery of that musical experience for interpretation. It provides the view, for the first time, and in this sense, has interpretive priority. No matter what has occurred with regard to the sounding of the primary exposure, this cannot be consciously experienced and interpreted until it is delivered through lyrical language. This means that even though lyrical language is presented as derivative of musical experience, it yet subverts the priority of music, because lyrical language marks the delivery of that experience as experienced.

In PTzG this work of delivery of the Dionysian experience to interpretation is said to be the work of both philosopher and poet. Yet, in this text, in distinction to BT, that very delivery of the prior exposure to the “sounding of the whole world,” which lyric poetry and philosophy are here said to be, is said to occur through a “sad” means—the very language through which the delivery occurs is lamented as merely metaphorical, as failing in the possibility of a direct presentation, for it cannot become equivalent to, or disappear into, the view that it presents. It is notable, then, as I remarked in the conclusion to this chapter, that the lyric poet’s language is not lamented, in BT, in this way. This language is said to be the living mirror, the vicarious, lived-through, similitude, which achieves the delivery to the poet of the prior exposure. The interpretation of this experience requires the copying, metaphorical nature of the presentation, for which it is not lamented. What we thus seem to find in these texts is language splitting into various
functions, language as re-presentation of what is, and language as valence of work, performance, and becoming, already, at this early stage.

In Part II, comprising Chapters 3 and 4, I reoriented the consideration of language around a more specific focus, that regarding the relation of language to the Subject and the self, considering language as it is depicted throughout the coverage of these two themes so central to the later work. In a sense, we might say that one can understand the treatment of language in the later work in terms of how it is refracted through these themes: the critique of the Subject, wherein it is a critique of language that empowers the unworking of the unity of the Subject, and the narrativized “reconstruction” of the self, wherein language, as the enactment of performances of re-reading and writing, performs work on/of the self. But we should notice the similarity with the early work even here: language remains the site of unworking of preexistent unities, as already seen in the earlier chapter. This is clearly the case with the critique of the Subject. Is it also for the narrativization of the self? Chapters 3 and 4 thus form a whole in their consideration of the question of the relation between the critique of the Subject in Nietzsche’s later work and Nietzsche’s projects of self-narrativizing in Ecce Homo and late Prefaces. The significance given to the figure of the self in these later works raises the question of how they are to be squared with the critique of the Subject. How can we reconcile the denial of the Subject with the emphasis on narrativizing a self that looks, on the surface, to comprise an attempt at the kind of unification denied by the Subject critique?
Given this framing, in Chapter 3, I consider the first of these elements, largely recapitulating Nietzsche’s critique of the Subject. We see that Nietzsche critiques the unity and immediacy of the “I.” Initially, it seems as if Nietzsche’s main claim is that the unity and immediacy of the “I” is owed only to seductions of words, habits of grammar, and that language, as words and grammar, is hence charged with the creation of the deception of the unified, grounding Subject. However, I try to point out that the genealogy Nietzsche traces here is more complicated, perhaps overdetermined. For he extends the sense of language, beyond words and grammar, to the biological/physiological process of assimilation. This is first figured by his discussion of will, arising from a dominating “feeling” of ourselves whereby activity overwrites passivity, this dominating feeling subtending the “I” as the “one” who wills. With this domination in place, habits of grammar, the doer-deed attachment of a subject to verb, can then shore up and intensify that habit of interpretation. This shoring up and reinstatement of the dominating feeling allows a deception whereby there is a projected substrate of all our action—but this projection is an interpretation; it is a fetish that transfers the work of the multiple and disunified elements of physiology, which are not “one,” to a “oneness” that operates as a conscious explanation of all experience, thought, action. “I” is then said to be the cause of willing, when in fact it is the dominating feeling, given the name of will, that is its source. Science, thinking, and grammar in fact depend on this “interpretation based on ourselves.” But what is the genealogy of this feeling and this tendency obviated by the coming to dominance of this feeling over other phenomenal elements? This interpretation of ourselves is in fact
traced back into the reaches of the elemental work of physiology: it is depicted as a
continuation of the tropic process of assimilation whereby the new is incorporated and
appropriated—the conscious “I” is then epiphenomenon of a preconscious physiological
process.

Thus, we have moved from language as grammar and words, back to feeling and
willing, back to physiological processes of all organic life—this genealogy of the Subject
unworks its unity and disperses it into a number of interworking processes, but
language is found throughout. The epiphenomenal interpretation of ourselves as
Subjects is a continuation of the process of interpretation at work in all life. When
Nietzsche, here, unworks the Subject in its predominating character as the pre-existent,
immediate, and unified ground of thought and will, at the same time, there is in this
very reading a projection, an alternate interpretation, enacted.

In the fourth chapter, I turn from the critique of the Subject to writings from late
in Nietzsche’s career that deal with the self, specifically, to texts in which we find
Nietzsche claiming to present himself on the basis of an apparent retrieval of himself
through the act of re-reading works previously written by himself, and writing anew a
depiction of that self. While this structure of retrieval through re-reading and re-writing
describes a number of later texts, namely both *Ecce Homo* and the Prefaces written in
1886, I concentrate only on *Ecce Homo*. The reason why, proceeding from the surface,
this issue of the self would seem to follow on the heels of the previous chapter is
because the apparent interest in constructing the self in this way seems to be in tension
with all that has been called into question in the critique of the Subject. As the critique
of the Subject consists in unworking the unity of the Subject, showing it to be dispersed, lacking an isolatable origin, is it not then curious that some later texts demonstrate what seems to be a desire to claim and reproject a clear and distinct self from which the texts of “Nietzsche” have proceeded?

My claim in this chapter is that we find a way out of this surface tension if we note the difference between the constative and performative valence of such texts. This notation enables us to see that the performative dimension of these texts engaged in “self-narrativizing” unwork the constative claims to retrieval and presentation of the self: what we find performed is the unworking of the unity, immediacy, and pre-existence of the self that the narrator seems obsessed with finding. We find them unworked because of features about the work within which they are presented as occurring. Re-reading, re-writing what is read: the temporality of this procedure is future anterior, for the writing is a projection that says what will have been the case; but which, when figured as a rediscovery, covers over this temporality, allowing it to masquerade as a recuperation of what already was.

I believe that Butler’s articulation of performativity, laid out in early sections of Chapter 4, helps us to read this procedure clearly. The self is a concept that allows us to disavow the actual constitution of becoming. The self is that which is performed, and that as such, has its being in the mode of action, of making and becoming, hence it is not already but is always the to be of our doing, but the interpretation of which reads that becoming as an expression of what already was. If nothing else, I have simply shown that Butler’s articulation helps us to read Nietzsche’s performance. Despite his claims to
show us finally who he is, and his chidings of those bad readers who have been immune to the testimony thereof, his very engagement of re-reading/re-writing shows he himself, as narrator, to be a bad reader of himself—or, an unfaithful disclaimer, in seeming to claim a presentation once and for all. While on the surface, those who are chided are those who have not already been able to have read who Nietzsche already is out of his writings, I suggest that what is demonstrated in the text is the dominating insistence that selves be finally articulable, unified, and pre-existing. Nietzsche the writer, but not the narrator, in these last of the later texts, calls this illusion of such a self into question, even as he, as narrator, draws us in to its acceptance.

From the vantage point of the concluding moment, looking back and saying what will have been the case, I have a slightly different take on this project than that depicted in the Introduction and in the way the structure of the project has been borne out. From here, I see that the real struggle of this dissertation was to find an organizing conception with which to approach language, a concept on which to displace language. I had thought at a certain point that this concept should be constellation, which I had so belabored in the Introduction, but in late stages, looking back, re-reading what I had written, I realized that the real organizing concept here is that of work, or more rightly, unworking. This sense came quite late into the project. But I started to see that when Nietzsche discusses language, he is involved in an unworking, an unworking of unities that it may even seem, on the surface, he is busy lamenting the loss of and hence trying to reconstruct.
It does seem in the end that dealing with language in Nietzsche will always require one to address the seeming departure that occurs after *BT* and corresponding notes composed in the period. The tendency in the scholarship has been to address this in a few ways. One, to claim that the content of Nietzsche’s claims changes over time—this is Clark’s claim (I called it discontinuity). Another, to claim that Nietzsche becomes after this period interested in the use of language—this is the claim of Lacoue-Labarthe and Kofman (I called it mitigated continuity). The other is to claim that the content of the work never alters (I called it strong continuity). But one position not provided in these approaches is that of a continuity of use—a continuity in the performance of Nietzsche’s language. This is what I think I have suggested: that Nietzsche does not take a rhetorical *detour*, but that the concern with rhetoric is found in all the texts, a focus on the performance enabled by language that is there, in the *BT* period, even when Nietzsche seems to be lamenting the failures of language. We see this when we focus on the figure of the lyric poet, and the figuration involved in the opening gestures of the aesthetical metaphysics.

Yet, why does the question of oeuvre matter? My insistence at certain points that I am not interested in a reading of the historical Nietzsche and his intentions can seem to be in tension with the very organizing focus in this dissertation on the entirety of the oeuvre, which depends on an interest in the signified of the proper name, does it not?

I say this also as a foreground to my feeling that the real heart of this dissertation is in the final chapter, already indicated by my claims in the Introduction as
to where this dissertation began. It began in the fourth chapter. Why did I not simply begin there?

Were I to begin again, my focus in this project would be on unworking—it would be on the tension between what the text performs, as clearly beyond the stated intention of the narrative voice, and what it sets itself up to achieve. Clues to this approach are found throughout, but are just not called into relief as clearly as I would like. I would also deal more carefully with the philosophical tradition of treating this term as a technical term, which I barely signal here.

Were I to have more time here, things I would want to point out: that the spectre that haunts the texts of Chapter 1—those texts consisting in the “genetic” account of language—is the origin. Even as the narrative voice of this text is busy disclaiming, with enthusiasm and aplomb, any possible access to the origin of experience, the narrator yet chooses, to mark that impossibility, the very structure of genetic schema that imply an origin. He thus marks his own obsession with origins, for what is the name of “the mysterious x” marking if not the space of an origin? I would then point out, in Chapter 2, how despite the overt claims of BT to find the origin of tragedy, the very origin of the text seems to mark such a retrieval as impossible, for it begins quite literally inside the mediation of figuration, wherein we are to “get back to” the Greek conception only by way of the “figures” as which the Greek gods are for us. This entry through figuration—the figures of the gods, and, the figures of the states through which we can figure their import—performatively marks, as above, the impossibility of the design of the narrative voice. Chapter 3, then, is just a recapitulation
of this basic structure, the impossibility of the relevant origin, but what element of the
narrative voice is being called into question? I am not sure. Finally, Chapter 4 easily fits
into this structure, for we have the desire of the narrative voice, to recapitulate the self,
met with the text’s making that impossible. So what Nietzsche will have always been
about, if I had my druthers here, is a performative unworking of the claims of the
narrative voice. The narrative voice wants to present itself as sovereign, but the text has
its way in the end, even when the text has been constructed, or seems to have been, by
that narrative voice.
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**Translations Consulted:**


