

years old, that Christian faith which was also the faith of Plato [and likewise of Spinoza, he might well have added], that God is the truth, that truth is divine" (GS 344).

But this recognition does not prompt Nietzsche to renounce the "will to truth" and the search for "knowledge." On the contrary, he affirms them anew, taking them to admit of affirmation as expressions of the "will to power," and championing them against those others of its expressions that run counter to it. Spinoza had sought to point the way to a reordering of our affective lives that would permit the love of knowledge to emerge above our other passions and become the supreme disposition within us. And Nietzsche likewise seeks to show how knowledge and its pursuit might be made a real and dominating feature of our affective constitution, establishing the human possibility of "philosophers of the future," and of an enhanced form of human life characterized by "knowledge as the most powerful affect."

It is helpful in the interpretation of Spinoza to see him as a precursor of Nietzsche, whose thought tended in the direction of Nietzsche's despite his very un-Nietzschean idiom, manner, and rationalism. But it is also helpful in the interpretation of Nietzsche to see him as a successor of Spinoza—not only in the basic tendency of his thought, but also in his determination to make provision for knowledge as a paramount human possibility, and indeed to make its refined pursuit a cardinal virtue and salient feature of the higher humanity we have it in us to attain. There may be more than this to Nietzsche's conception of such a higher humanity and the enhancement of life; for the Romantic Revolution left its mark upon him, prompting him to celebrate the creativity associated paradigmatically with art, as well as the knowledge that we are capable of pursuing and attaining as philosophers of the kind he envisioned and sought to be. But he did not abandon the latter for the former; and to that extent at least he remained true to the spirit of the Spinoza he so admired. And it is my deep conviction that we today will do well to do likewise.

## CHAPTER TEN

R. S. Shackel

### How to Naturalize Cheerfully: Nietzsche's *Fröhliche Wissenschaft*

When will all these shadows of God cease to darken our minds? When will we complete our de-deification of nature? When may we begin to "naturalize" humanity in terms of a pure, newly discovered, newly redeemed nature? (GS 109)

For one interested in Nietzsche as philosopher, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (*The Gay Science*) is without question one of his finest, most illuminating, and most important published works. In the four "books" in which this work originally consisted, and the fifth added five years later, continuing the project begun in the first four, we have much more than the disjointed collection of reflections and aphorisms that it may at first glance appear to be. In this work Nietzsche the philosopher emerges with greater clarity than in any of his previous works, revealing a great deal about the issues in which he was interested; and how and what he thought about them. In style and format it is similar to the series of volumes of such collections preceding it, to which he stated in the original edition that it belongs.<sup>1</sup> Yet it goes well beyond the other volumes in this series, in both coherence and content. Indeed, I shall argue that it constitutes a sustained attempt to sketch the outlines of the kind of reinterpretation of nature and humanity he calls for in the passage cited above, and to indicate how they are to be filled in.

*The Gay Science* is Nietzsche's first and perhaps his most complete attempt to take seriously the proposition "God is dead" and to reckon with its many consequences: "And we—we still have to vanquish his shadow, too" (GS 108). The "death of God"—the demise of the God-hypothesis (in any of its guises) as an idea worthy of acceptance—is the theme with which he explicitly begins both the third and the fifth books of the volume, and that hovers over the others. It implicitly sets the

context of the opening of the first book, and again the fourth, and it animates the second, as well as the rhymes and songs with which the volume is framed. The pathos of the "madman" section (GS 125) is a pathos Nietzsche may have experienced; but it is one that—like the "militistic rebound" he suggests elsewhere is "pathologically" linked to it (WP 13)—he himself has overcome and left behind.

In tone and in content, the volume deserves its title. After having struggled through a period of some years of intellectual crisis, its author has attained a new philosophical and spiritual health, of the sort he describes at the fifth book's end (GS 382). He has become profoundly and joyfully affirmative of life and the world and has discovered that "all the daring of the lover of knowledge is permitted again" (GS 343). He is in love with knowledge and with life and the world, and with the humanity emerging out of them; for, having earlier become hard and disillusioned by them, he has now become newly appreciative of them. Thus he cheerfully and confidently sets out to explore them as they stand revealed in the "new dawn" that has broken in the aftermath of "the news that 'the old god is dead'" (GS 343). While he recognizes that there is more to life and living than knowledge and its pursuit, he goes so far as to say that with the idea of "*life as a means to knowledge*" in one's heart, "one can live not only boldly but even gaily, and laugh gaily, too" (GS 324). He is intent upon attaining a new and better knowledge of our world and ourselves, and he also is fascinated by the human and philosophical problem he calls "*incorporating knowledge and making it instinctive*" (GS 11). What he calls "the ultimate question about the conditions of life" has come to have a new and great interest for him: "To what extent can truth endure incorporation? That is the question; that is the experiment" (GS 110).

To be sure, the truth and knowledge of which Nietzsche here speaks—the possibility of which he evidently is persuaded—must be squared with his contention that "How far the perspective character of existence extends or indeed whether existence has any other character than this" is a question that "cannot be decided," and that we therefore "cannot reject the possibility" that the world may admit of "infinite interpretations," or limitless "possibilities of interpretation" (GS 374). The force of the entire volume, however, is that this reflection does not doom the "lover of knowledge" to despair, but rather should serve to redirect his or her quest: away from the impossible dream of absolute knowledge and toward the comprehension of our own human reality and possibility in the world with which we find ourselves confronted.

Here, as so often elsewhere, Nietzsche deals with many large problems and issues in succession, usually relatively briefly. Near the end of

the fifth book, he confronts and rejects the idea that his brevity is ill-suited to the treatment of such problems in an insightful way:

For I approach deep problems like cold baths: quickly into them and quickly out again. That one does not get to the depths that way, not deep enough down, is the superstition of those afraid of the water, enemies of cold water. . . .

Does a matter necessarily remain ununderstood and unfathomed merely because it has been touched only in flight, glanced at, at a flash? . . . At least there are truths that are singularly shy and ticklish and cannot be caught except suddenly—that must be surprised or left alone. (GS 381)

It is Nietzsche's clear aim in the five books of this volume to touch upon, surprise, fathom, and understand many of the matters that require being considered anew in the aftermath of the collapse of the "God-hypothesis" and associated modes of interpretation. To cover as much ground as he attempts to cover, brevity was in any event a necessity; and his manner of covering it also has the advantage of enabling one to discern more readily the general shape of the comprehensive interpretation he is working out, and the connections between its various particular features.

Nietzsche moreover is far from being altogether unfaithful to the association of the term *Wissenschaft* he employs in his title with the idea of a systematic cognitive endeavor. The surface disorderliness of the volume only lightly masks the rather remarkable thoroughness of his reexamination of the philosophical and intellectual landscape, and the fundamental coherence of his treatment of its various features. This coherence is all the more noteworthy in view of the passage of the time between the publication of the first four books (in 1882) and the addition of the fifth (in the "new edition" of 1887).

The continuation of the task begun in the first four books in the fifth also entitles one to considerable confidence in taking them to be indicative of the contours of Nietzsche's thought during the period they span, and in all likelihood beyond it into the final year of his productive life. It therefore is something of a mystery why this volume does not receive more attention and figure more centrally in interpretations of his philosophical concerns and thought. If there is any one of his published works in which "the essential philosophical Nietzsche" is to be found, it would seem to me to be this one. And Nietzsche the philosopher is nowhere more accessible, persuasive, and impressive in any single thing he wrote, in my opinion, than he is in the fifth book in particular (the date of which further warrants regarding it as an expression of his mature thought).

Indeed, I would suggest that the cause of understanding and appreciating Nietzsche's philosophical thought would be markedly advanced if the rest of his writings were read in relation to it, and construed in the light of what he does and says in it.

## 2

Very broadly speaking, what Nietzsche undertakes to do in *The Gay Science* is to show how he proposes to carry out the task of "naturalizing" our conception of humanity and redirecting our thinking about human possibility. This is held to involve first reading humanity back into a post-Christian and postmetaphysical, "newly discovered and newly redeemed" nature—and then reading it out again, as something no longer *merely* natural in consequence of its transformation. Through a variety of sorts of reflections, all of which shed light on these matters in different but important complementary ways, he seeks to arrive at an understanding and appreciation of the kind of creature we fundamentally are, the basic features of our existence, our all-too-human tendencies and the kinds of development of which they admit, and the ways in which human life may be enhanced.

One of Nietzsche's main themes here is thus what we are; and another, equally important to him, is what we may become. These twin themes—of the generally human, naturalistically reconsidered, and of the genuinely or more-than-merely human, reconceived accordingly—are the point and counterpoint that give the volume its underlying structure and unity, with the "death of God" as pedal-tone. Along the way, Nietzsche finds it needful and appropriate to say something about nearly every major domain of philosophical inquiry, in order both to shed further light upon our nature and possibilities and to suggest what light his emerging view of the latter sheds upon the former. His concern with what we are and may become, however, is accorded centrality in relation to his thinking with respect to other philosophical and related matters, at once drawing upon them and providing inquiry into them with a new organizational and interpretive orientation.

Rather like Marx, but (it seems to me) with greater sophistication and power, Nietzsche thus advocates and exemplifies what might be called an anthropological shift in philosophy. By this I mean a general reorientation of philosophical thinking, involving the attainment of what might be called an anthropological optic whereby to carry out the program of a de-dedication and reinterpretation of ourselves and our world. It thus in effect involves the replacement of epistemology and metaphysics by a kind of philosophical anthropology as the fundamental and central philo-

sophical endeavor. Philosophy for Nietzsche does not reduce to philosophical anthropology in *The Gay Science*; but it revolves around and finds its way by means of the project of comprehending our nature and possibilities.

His "gay science," as this volume shows, is a comprehensive philosophical enterprise that extends to the consideration of truth and knowledge, science and logic, religion and art, social and cultural phenomena, morality and value, and even life and the world more generally. Its point of departure and constant return, however, is human life and possibility. To come to know ourselves—our fundamental nature, what we have become, and what we may have it in us to be—is for the author of this volume something at once difficult and possible, and of the greatest importance. And he is further convinced that in the course of coming to do so a great many other matters with which philosophers have long concerned themselves may be better comprehended and more appropriately dealt with as well.

These, for Nietzsche, are philosophical tasks, even if the kind of thinking required to pursue them departs in various ways from those favored by most philosophers before and since. He calls it "gay science" as well as "philosophy," as he understands and practices it; and its manner reflects what he takes to be the basic requirements of pursuing these tasks as unproblematically and successfully as is humanly possible. It is avowedly experimental, multiperspectival, and interpretive; but it also is without question cognitive in intent. It has the attainment of sound and penetrating comprehension as a central aim (even if not its only one); and it has as its primary focus a domain in which Nietzsche considers this attainment to be a genuine possibility—both because there is something there to be known, and because it is within our power to come to know it.

That domain, once again, is the domain of the human. Nietzsche does reject the notion of "man" as a being possessed of some sort of immutable metaphysical essence; but he is very differently disposed toward the notion of "man" reconceived along the lines of the "naturalized" humanity to which he seeks to direct our attention in *The Gay Science*. It is his main topic in this work; and the elaboration of a philosophical anthropology, in the sense of a comprehensive understanding of the nature and prospects of this remarkable and peculiar creature that is at once animal and no longer merely animal, is his general task. Indeed, with this volume Nietzsche may be said to have launched the project of such a philosophical anthropology, the importance of which has yet to be adequately appreciated, and the example of which has all too rarely been followed.

This lamentable situation may at long last be changing; and I venture to hope that it will soon come to have the high place on the agenda of

philosophical inquiry it deserves. I doubt, however, that we are likely to see anyone surpass Nietzsche's wealth of contributions to it. Wrong or unsatisfactory though some of his conjectures and analyses may have been, the richness and suggestiveness of his reflections along these lines in *The Gay Science* and subsequent writings render them an invaluable and virtually inexhaustible source and stimulus for anyone who chooses to work in this area. And anyone who does so should come to terms with him.

## 3

While I shall for the most part focus on the fifth book of the volume, the structure and content of the first four books warrant some comment. The point and counterpoint mentioned above are sounded at the very outset, in the opening sections of the first book. In the first section we are immediately confronted with an example of how Nietzsche would have us go about reading man back into nature, and thinking about man as a piece of nature in whom fundamental natural principles are powerfully at work, even in dispositions that might seem to be of a loftier nature. In the next two sections he shifts his attention abruptly to a consideration of certain marks of a higher humanity that set some human beings above and apart from the common run of humankind. Then, in the fourth, he just as abruptly returns to another reflection of the former sort.

This point and counterpoint continues throughout the first book, with many variations. Nietzsche considers a wide variety of human phenomena, reflecting upon basic human traits and their common manifestations, and also upon the more uncommon and exceptional transformations and developments of which they admit. He is at pains both to show how the latter are linked to the former and to stress how they differ from them, thereby to counter our tendency to become so preoccupied with the one that we lose sight of the other, and thus fail to attain a due appreciation of each. It is through such reflections, he appears to think, and only through many of them, that one can make significant headway with the project he describes in the passage from the beginning of the third book cited at the outset (in which he has been engaged all along, and continues to pursue throughout the volume). Our affects, morality, science, knowledge more generally, art, and religion are among the many matters that come under consideration in the first book, and to which he subsequently returns—at greatest length in the third book, and again in the fifth. And the controlling perspective in which they are examined, interpreted, and assessed is what he elsewhere calls “the perspective of life” (BT P.2).

In the second book, and again toward the end of the third, one

encounters a large number of reflections and aphorisms of several kinds that at first glance seem to have little relevance to this general project. Upon further consideration, however, they may be seen to have a good deal to do with it, and to be very instructive with respect to the way in which Nietzsche conceives of it and seeks to carry it out. Some are psychological and social-psychological, and their fundamental significance, beyond the astuteness and interest of the particular insights they often express, lies in their collective indication of how he proposes to understand the kinds of tendencies that inform most of what goes on in ordinary human life. In this way he seeks to take account of the commonplace surface features of our lives, in a manner enabling him to tie them in with the broader “naturalized” interpretation of our humanity he is developing, while at the same time attending to their fine texture and so demonstrating that his interpretation is not simplistically and objectionably oblivious to them.

Other sections in these books have a very different focus but serve the same general purpose. In them he deals with a broad range of social, cultural, artistic, and intellectual phenomena. On one level they can be taken and appreciated simply as the penetrating and often barbed observations of a critic of this scene. On another, however, they too serve at once to marshal further evidence for the “naturalizing” account of human life he is advancing, and to show that such phenomena do not count against it, by revealing them to admit of inclusion in it. Remarkable though these phenomena may be, it is as remarkably wrought transformations and expressions of very human dispositions and fundamental human capacities that they are so. On the other hand, Nietzsche would be the first to insist that the transmutation of our human animality into a spirituality that takes such forms is one of the most interesting and important features of our humanity, which is all the more deserving of appreciation once man has been translated back into nature.

With this observation, however, we are brought back to the counterpoint of Nietzsche's concern with the possibility of a higher humanity, repeatedly touched upon in the first books of the volume, heralded with considerable fanfare at the conclusion of the third, and made the main topic of the fourth. If, as Nietzsche announced in the original edition, his volume “marks the conclusion of a series . . . whose common goal is to erect a new image and ideal of the free spirit,”<sup>2</sup> this final book of the series is certainly the culmination of that endeavor. And in it he shows very clearly how concerned he is to counter the nihilistic tendency to devalue our humanity, which he fears may all too readily be prompted by its “naturalization” and the broader “de-dedication” of our thinking about ourselves and the world.

In one sense his efforts along these lines may be regarded as supplementary to his "naturalized" interpretation of our human nature. His investigation into our general human nature serves to prepare the ground for the development of a new approach to the question of human worth, constituting the centerpiece of a naturalistic theory of value complementing his philosophical anthropology. In another sense, however, what Nietzsche has to say along these lines may be understood as belonging importantly to his anthropology, which he would regard as incomplete without account being thus taken of the possibility of the sort of higher humanity he has in mind and of the significance of the enhancement of life it represents. Its exploration too is part of his "gay science"; for he considers it to require being extended in this way if justice is to be done to our human nature, the developmental potential of which is no less important to its comprehension and assessment than its basic character and commonplace manifestations.

Disillusioned inquiry into our fundamental nature and what we have come to be, for Nietzsche, must be accompanied by a consideration of what we have it in us further to become. Otherwise our understanding of our humanity will be incomplete and perhaps fatally short-sighted, leading to an underestimation of ourselves that may have lamentable consequences. Our human animality and past, and the varieties of the all-too-human and the general features of human life, may easily absorb the attention of philosophers who have made "de-dification" and "naturalization" their first orders of business. A preoccupation with them, however, is likely to result in an impoverished picture of ourselves, which leaves out something Nietzsche regards as essential. In his notion of "becoming those we are," which is one of his main themes in this fourth book, he underscores the point that *what we are* embraces not only what we *have* become but also what we *have it in us* to become. In this way, he seeks to establish a basis for deriving a kind of normative force from his philosophical anthropology, privileging the attainment of the higher humanity to which he directs attention in relation to more commonplace forms of human life.

To summarize my discussion to this point: the concerns and issues to which Nietzsche addresses himself in *The Gay Science*, and his manner of doing so, are indicative of the nature and tasks of the sort of thing philosophy is for him, which he considers it appropriate to characterize as *fähliche Wissenschaft*. His philosophical *Wissenschaft* aims at a comprehensive reinterpretation of a broad range of matters centering upon our nature and possibilities in the aftermath of the "death of God." Its intent is both cognitive and evocative; for it is animated by a hard-won confidence that it may at once issue in an enhancement of understanding, and

also point the way to an enhancement of human life. And its point of departure for Nietzsche is "completing our de-dification of nature" and proceeding "to 'naturalize' humanity" accordingly.

## 4

I now shall turn to the fifth book of this volume. I consider it to be of particular significance because it confirms and continues the general project begun considerably earlier in the first four books; because it shows what kinds of questions and issues the mature Nietzsche took to require being dealt with in the course of carrying it out; and because it provides further indications of how he proposes to deal with them and what he is prepared to say about them. He is much more straightforward about these matters here than he frequently is in other writings. This fifth book thus is also of considerable value as a guide to the interpretation of what he elsewhere does and says. More specifically, I would suggest that it is of particular value to the task of deciding what to make of the contents of his notebooks from the crucial period spanned by the writing and publication of the first and last books of the volume. Material from the notebooks that is consonant with things he shows himself here to be prepared to say may be taken with some confidence to likewise reflect his thinking with respect to the matters discussed.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, one feature of the fifth book, which virtually impels one to look at Nietzsche's notebooks as well as to other things he published, is that for the most part he here simply says what he thinks, stating his views on various issues without indicating at all clearly and completely what considerations may have led him to hold them. He sketches the outlines and main features of a rather comprehensive reinterpretation of human life and related matters; but he does relatively little in his book to elaborate his case for it. Here and there lines of argument and supporting considerations are suggested. On the whole, however, he is content merely to present it in quick and vivid strokes, as though concerned to ensure that the forest will not be lost sight of for the trees.

Consider now the structure and content of this remarkable set of forty sections and an epilogue. It begins (GS 343) by "cheerfully" sounding the theme of the "death of God" and its consequences, and stressing the resulting liberation of "the lover of knowledge" for new ventures. It ends (GS 382) with a celebration of the conception of a new "great health" and of a higher humanity, contrasting markedly with those of "present-day man," and superseding the transitional stage on the way to them described a few sections earlier (GS 377). Immediately preceding this

conclusion there is a retrospective section (GS 381), noted above, in which Nietzsche remarks that he considers his reflections to be compromised neither by his style and brevity nor by the admitted limitations of his own knowledge of many matters with which scientists concern themselves. Thus, in the latter connection, he observes that "we need more, we also need less" than scientific inquiry, in dealing with "such questions as concern me."

The nature, limits, and value of science and scientific knowledge are among the issues with which he deals, beginning with his critical consideration of the "will to truth" in scientific inquiry in the second section (GS 344), and continuing in a number of later sections.<sup>4</sup> In a related series of reflections he discusses the limitations of the kind of thinking characteristic of "scholarly" types;<sup>5</sup> and in others he extends his analysis and critique to the ways of thinking associated with religion.<sup>6</sup> As might be expected, he likewise subjects morality to scrutiny,<sup>7</sup> and art as well.<sup>8</sup>

The context in which he examines and assesses these various human types and phenomena, and in which these reflections take on their larger significance, is further set by what Nietzsche has to say in a number of other very important sections, in which he indicates his general view of the kind of world this is (GS 346), the basic character of life (GS 349), and certain salient features of our human nature (GS 354-61). Our humanity—as it has come to be and as it may become—is Nietzsche's fundamental concern, here as in the four earlier books; and his way of bringing it into focus is by alternating between these complementary kinds of analysis, each of which is intended to illuminate the other.<sup>9</sup>

It is of no little importance to the understanding of Nietzsche's chosen task and thinking, at least as they are here to be seen, that his remarks about "the perspective character of existence" and "the possibility that it may contain infinite interpretations" (GS 374) are offered as unanswerable questions, rather than as propositions he is prepared to assert. They certainly would not seem to be considerations he supposes to be fatal to the kind of knowledge he concedes to science. And he likewise does not appear to take them to preclude the more penetrating comprehension of ourselves and the world to which he suggests philosophical "lovers of knowledge" may newly aspire. He has a number of things to say about "the way of this world," for example, in one of the early sections of the fifth book that sets the stage for what follows; and they are said confidently, with no suggestion that they are subject to qualification along these lines. "We know it well," he says; "the world in which we live is ungodly, immoral, inhuman; we have interpreted it far too long in a false and mendacious way . . . according to our needs" (GS 346).

As these remarks suggest, Nietzsche supposes himself to be doing

otherwise, and to be doing so more truthfully—notwithstanding the fact that, in the preceding section, he has cautioned against supposing the "will to truth" to be unproblematical with respect to both its underlying motivation and its value for life (GS 345). A few sections later he further ventures to state what he takes "the really fundamental instinct of life" to be, saying that it "aims at the *expansion of power*" and asserting against the popular version of Darwinism: "The struggle for existence is only an *exception*, a temporary restriction of the will to life. The great and small struggle always revolves around superiority, around growth and expansion, around power—in accordance with the will to power which is the will of life" (GS 349).

This is not the manner of speaking of one who believes that our comprehension can extend no further than a recognition of the structure and contents of the world as we have arranged it for ourselves in a perspective determined by our needs. And even in the remainder of his discussion, most of which has to do with our human existence rather than with life and the world more generally, our existence is discussed from a standpoint Nietzsche considers himself to have attained that transcends ordinary human perspectives, and enables him to arrive at a more adequate and insightful interpretation and assessment of it. The attainment of such a standpoint, he grants, in a section near the end in which he is speaking specifically of morality, is difficult and cannot be supposed to yield knowledge that is absolute; but it is clear that he takes it to be possible. He writes:

"Thoughts about moral prejudices," if they are not meant to be prejudices about prejudices, presuppose a position *outside* morality, some point beyond good and evil to which one has to rise, climb or fly. . . . That one *wants* to go precisely out there, up there, may be a minor madness, a peculiar and unreasonable "you must"—for we seekers for knowledge also have our idiosyncracies of "unfree will"—the question is whether one really *can* get up there.

This may depend on manifold conditions. In the main the question is how light or heavy we are. . . . One has to be *very light* to drive one's will to knowledge into such a distance and, as it were, beyond one's time, to create for oneself eyes to survey millennia and, moreover, clear skies in those eyes. (GS 380)

This is something Nietzsche seeks to do not only in the case of morality, but with respect to the other human phenomena with which he specifically deals in the course of the book and to the broader contours of our humanity more generally. In his treatment of these matters too, he conceives of himself and proceeds as a "seeker for knowledge," impelled—



perhaps "peculiarly and unreasonably" but nonetheless strongly—to "drive" his "will to knowledge" far enough to enable him to bring them into focus and achieve a just comprehension and assessment of them. So, for example, beyond what he has to say about the basic character of life and the world, he offers several sustained discussions relating directly and importantly to the understanding of human thought and action generally, and so to the comprehension of what he elsewhere frequently refers to as "the type 'man' [*Mensch*]." In one such section (GS 354) he develops a general account of the fundamental relation between our consciousness (conscious thought and self-consciousness), language, and the need for communication associated with our social manner of existence. In another, he sketches what he takes to be one of his "most essential steps and advances" along these lines: learning "to distinguish the cause of acting"—which he characterizes as "a quantum of dammed-up energy that is waiting to be used up somehow"—"from the cause of acting in a particular way, in a particular direction, with a particular goal" (GS 360).

Moreover, in many of the sections in which he directs his attention to such phenomena as art or morality, Nietzsche is concerned to draw upon his observations concerning them to shed light upon our nature, as well as to make particular points about them; for he considers them among the richest sources of insight into our nature.<sup>10</sup> In this respect Nietzsche shows himself to be an heir of Hegel, for whom "*Wesen ist was gewesen ist*," and the "phenomenology of spirit" is the path to the comprehension of our fundamental and attained spiritual nature (in which connection such phenomena are taken to be particularly revealing). And one may even discern an echo of Kant here, for whom reflection upon the nature and conditions of the possibility of certain types of our experience can afford us otherwise unattainable insight into our fundamental mental constitution; although profound changes accompanied Nietzsche's naturalized and historicized revision of Kant's understanding of what we are.

Thus Nietzsche's strategy of looking at various forms of human experience and activity "in the perspective of life," while in some respects importantly different from that of Kant as well as Hegel, in another is interestingly similar. It is intended both to enhance our understanding of these phenomena by bringing out their relation to our fundamental nature and its modifications and to shed light upon the latter by reflecting upon what they reveal about the kind of creature capable of them and disposed to them. In some cases Nietzsche interprets such phenomena as expressing and revealing something characteristic of particular types of human beings. In others he takes them to be indicative of something more comprehensive—sometimes about "present-day man," and sometimes about our humanity more generally.

All of this, of course, is "interpretation," rather than argument of a rigor that would yield conclusions of such certainty and finality that they would preclude the possibility of error or improvement. Moreover, the object of investigation is no fixed and immutable substance and has no timeless essence, but rather is a form of life that has come to be what it is, exhibits considerable diversity, and may be supposed to be capable of further transformation. Thus the kind of knowledge of which this object of inquiry admits must be recognized to be nothing absolute for yet other reasons. But neither of these considerations serves to deter Nietzsche. The fact that he did not complete his project, and indeed that it cannot ever be completed, likewise does not tell against it. One can get somewhere with it, just as one may go astray, and even though one's attained understanding may always admit of being improved upon.

Nietzsche is prepared to allow, and indeed to insist, that the *value* of the knowledge of ourselves that may thereby be attainable is problematical. He also holds that in any event there is more to the enhanced sort of life he associates with the higher humanity he envisions than the pursuit and attainment of such knowledge. Nonetheless, his conviction of its possibility and his own commitment to its attainment are clear. As he wrote in *Beyond Good and Evil*, a year earlier:

To translate man back into nature; to become master over the many vain and overly enthusiastic interpretations and connotations that have so far been scrawled and painted over that eternal basic text of *homo natura*; to see to it that man henceforth stands before man even as today, hardened in the discipline of science, he stands before the *rest* of nature, with intrepid Oedipus eyes and sealed Odysseus ears . . . —that may be a strange and insane task, but it is a task — who would deny that? (BGE 230)

It is also significant that he goes on here to observe that, while one may well ask "Why did we choose this insane task?" this question, "put differently," is the question "Why have knowledge at all?" For this implies that, whatever the answer to these questions may turn out to be (and even if the last question should turn out to have no answer at all, or an answer cast ultimately in terms of the "will to power" rather than in terms of the intrinsic value of truth), Nietzsche is nonetheless persuaded that something deserving of the name of knowledge is possible and attainable here. It is to be distinguished from interpretations of the sort to which he refers, as the outcome of persisting in the "task" of which he speaks. And our nature is its central object.

In this connection, I would stress a point that comes through nicely and clearly in the fifth book of *The Gay Science*, as it also does in the

earlier books, and elsewhere as well. The common view of Nietzsche's general conception of our nature, seemingly supported by passages of this sort, imputes to him strongly reductionist and biologicistic tendencies. This view, however, is importantly distorted and misguided, misrepresenting his actual approach to it and understanding of it quite seriously. He may suggest, as he has Zarathustra say, that "the soul is only a word for something about the body" (Z I:4), and that "perhaps the entire evolution of the spirit is a question of the body," as "the history of the development of a higher body that emerges into our sensibility" (WP 676). But he also considers human life to have been fundamentally, pervasively, and fatefully transformed—or rather, to have become human life in the first place—with the advent of *society*.

Nietzsche contends that this development "sundered" mankind from its "animal past." It is held to have established "new surroundings and conditions of existence" for the human animal, which resulted in its becoming "something so new, profound, unheard of, contradictory, and pregnant with a future that the aspect of the earth was essentially altered" (GM II:16). And the greater part of his philosophical-anthropological investigations—which in effect began in *The Birth of Tragedy*, and continued to the end of his productive life—proceed by way of reflections upon phenomena associated with human social and cultural life. As has been observed, he does insist upon the importance of bearing in mind that "the entire evolution of the spirit" along these lines is ultimately to be referred back to "the body" and our physiological constitution and interpreted accordingly. However, he considers it equally important to be instructed with respect to the way in which human life has come to be reconstituted and shaped in the course of its development by attending to the social and cultural phenomena in which its emergent nature is manifested, and through which the conditions of the possibility of its further enhancement have been established.

In his reflections upon these matters, therefore, far from setting his philosophical-anthropological concerns aside, Nietzsche actually pursues them in the manner he considers to be most illuminating and fruitful and indeed to be called for by the sort of thing our humanity has become. A kind of "higher body" our spirituality may fundamentally be; but it must be approached with eyes attentive to its attained features and subtleties if it is to afford us insight into the kind of creature we are, and if neither our emergent nature nor our potential higher humanity is to be too simplistically conceived and so misunderstood.

Nietzsche was ultimately more interested in what we as human beings have it in us to become—that "future" with which he says we are "pregnant"—than he is in what we already are. He was hard-headed

enough to recognize, however, that any "new image and ideal" of a higher humanity that might be "erected," to be more than idle speculation and fantasy, must be grounded in and derived from a sober and clear-sighted assessment of our humanity as it is, taking account of both the general rule and exceptions to it. Moreover, he was astute enough to recognize that, to investigate and do anything approaching justice to something so complex, one must learn "how to employ a variety of perspectives" upon it "in the service of knowledge." For, as he goes on to observe, "the more eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete our 'concept' of this thing, our 'objectivity,' will be" (GM III:12). And what this means and implies for him, in the case of our own reality, is that one must approach it by attending to the many different phenomena that have emerged in the course of human events, in ways that are appropriate and sensitive to their emergent features as well as that lend themselves to a more comprehensive integration and interpretation.

In this light, good and important sense can be made of Nietzsche's excursion through many forms of human cultural and social life in the course of the fifth book of *The Gay Science*. It constitutes a kind of reckoning up of what humanity has made of itself in the course of its development to this point of a nature and "higher body" that is spiritual and transformational of the "basic text of *homo natura*" have placed at its disposal, to be drawn upon in effecting its further enhancement. So, when he in conclusion evokes "the ideal of a spirit" that, "from overflowing power and abundance," is able to "play" freely with "all that was hitherto called holy, good, untouchable, divine" (GS 382), he has in mind a higher humanity that is heir to all that he has surveyed, while also overcoming the all-too-human limitations and defects upon which he remarks in doing so. These phenomena together flesh out the portrait of the sort of creature we have come to be, and in doing so also enable one to discern what we have to work with and build upon in becoming what we have it in us to be. Their examination is essential to the assembling of the materials required to elaborate the sort of philosophical anthropology Nietzsche has in mind and seeks to inaugurate, in this and subsequent works.

*The Gay Science* is thus a very revealing work. It exemplifies Nietzsche's philosophical "gay science," revealing both his conception of its main tasks and problems and his manner of approaching and dealing with



them that he considers such inquiry to call for and involve. If one has some preconceived idea of what a philosophical anthropology would be and what it means to talk about human nature, it might well turn out that it would be inappropriate to characterize his concerns in such terms. But one may instead choose—as I do—to allow oneself to be instructed by what he does and says in this and related works in speaking of “man” and our “humanity” (as he so often does), and thus of the sort of nature he takes it to be appropriate to ascribe to ourselves. And one may further choose (as I do) to take what he does and says along these lines as constituting his version of a philosophical anthropology, conceived as philosophical inquiry into these matters.

There can be no doubt that Nietzsche does inquire into our nature so conceived, very extensively, here and elsewhere; and that his interest in it underlies and motivates many of his reflections on diverse particular human social, cultural, and psychological phenomena. It may seem that little is gained by calling all of this his version of a philosophical anthropology. My reason for doing so, however, is that I find it a very helpful way of bringing much of his discussion into focus. And I would further suggest that, when his efforts are viewed in this light, good and important sense can be made of them, not only piecemeal, but as a whole.

Nietzsche may have linked his proclamation of the “death of God” with an attack upon the “soul-hypothesis”; but he did not proceed to an announcement of what Foucault has called “the death of man”<sup>11</sup> as well, contrary to the efforts of Foucault and his kindred spirits to make Nietzsche out to be the herald of this sequel they themselves proclaim.<sup>12</sup> If one attends at all closely to what he says and undertakes to do in *The Gay Science* and subsequent writings, it should be clear that he instead supposes the “death of God” and the demise of the clutch of metaphysical hypotheses associated with the God-hypothesis (in particular the soul- and being-hypotheses) to serve rather to prepare the way for what might be called “the birth of man” as a newly significant philosophical notion.

Nietzsche did indeed repudiate the notion of “man” as a kind of “eternal truth,” very early on (HH I:2). But it is of no little significance that he did so very early—and that, having made this point, he then went on to recast this notion, devoting a great deal of effort to the investigation of our nature thus reconceived. He evidently was convinced that this notion can and should be rehabilitated—liberated from metaphysical and theological interpretations, and also from its status (made much of by Foucault<sup>13</sup>) as a conceptual correlate of certain disciplines originating earlier in his century—and made the focus of enlightened philosophical inquiry of the sort he commended to his “new philosophers” and sought himself to undertake.

### How to Naturalize Cheerfully

For Nietzsche, such inquiry should serve not (as Foucault would have it) to bring to an end the “anthropological sleep” of the nineteenth century,<sup>14</sup> but rather to bring about what might be contrastingly termed a more sophisticated “anthropological awakening.” Far from thinking that the end of metaphysics and the critique of the disciplines Foucault scrutinizes preclude anything like a philosophical anthropology,<sup>15</sup> Nietzsche writes as though they open the way for such inquiry to assume stage front and center in philosophy—along with the revaluation of values and the development of a new theory of value, the genealogy of morals, and the naturalization of morality.

Nietzsche did not think that the only questions that can meaningfully be asked and answered about our human nature are best handed over to the life sciences, and that beyond that level of discourse human nature dissolves into myriad forms of social and cultural life best left to cultural anthropologists, sociologists, and historians. He also did not think that conceptual, linguistic, and phenomenological analyses are the only available and proper alternatives to human-scientific inquiry to which a philosopher has recourse. And he did not suppose that the end of metaphysics spells the end of philosophy. He called for “new philosophers,” convinced that philosophy has a future—and not merely as the handmaiden, either of the sciences or of the literati. And the kind of philosophy he advocated and practiced had a reconsideration of our nature as one of its main items of business; for he was persuaded that it makes good and important sense to talk about “the type ‘man,’” and believed that the kind of thinking and inquiry in which he understood genuine philosophizing to consist has a crucial role to play in doing so.

In styling himself a psychologist, and in saying that from now on the other disciplines are to serve psychology, which is the path to the resolution of the most fundamental problems (BGE 23), Nietzsche is giving expression to these convictions and this program—meaning a *philosophical psychology* and psychologically sensitive philosophy, rather than the particular behavioral-scientific discipline psychology has become in this century. So also when he calls for translating men back into nature—and then complements this call by directing attention to what our “dis-animalization” has involved and accomplished—our “genealogy.” And when he seeks to develop a “theory of affects,” and reflects upon language, consciousness and self-consciousness, reason and knowledge as matters of our manner of existence.

It is thus no objection or fatal obstacle to the enterprise of a philosophical anthropology, for Nietzsche, that our humanity has a history and a genealogy, and that it remains capable of further transformation. In both cases, the moral he draws is not that the concept of humanity and notion

of "the type 'man'" are ruled out, or that they are matters with which philosophy is incapable of dealing. Rather, it is that philosophy must and can adjust to the character of these objects of inquiry, in aspiration and method, as it proceeds to deal with them.

Why is this of interest? It is not merely because this is part of Nietzsche's thought, which has come to be of interest to growing numbers of us recently. More important, it is of interest because it should be instructive to us as philosophers, and relevant to a number of ongoing debates (about human nature and about philosophy itself, among others). It has significant implications for the setting of an agenda for philosophy today and tomorrow—the posing and framing of questions and issues with which we would do well to concern ourselves, and the decisions to be made about how we are to deal with them. And to my mind, it is further of interest because what Nietzsche had to say along these lines, when he got down to cases, warrants serious consideration, and richly rewards it.<sup>16</sup>

## Notes

1. Not in the text itself, but on the back cover of this edition (see GS 30).
2. Again, not in the text itself, but on the back cover of this edition (see GS 30).
3. In interpreting Nietzsche, it is undeniable that interpretive priority should be given to what he actually published over the *Nachlass*. One should also be prepared to grant, however, that use of material from the *Nachlass* may be warranted by the appearance of comparable lines of thought in his published work. See chapter 6.
  4. For example, GS 355 and 373.
  5. For example, GS 348, 349, 366.
  6. For example, GS 347, 350, 351, 353, 358.
  7. For example, GS 345, 352, 359, 380.
  8. For example, GS 367, 368, 370.
  9. Nietzsche thus anticipates Sartre's advocacy and practice of what Sartre calls the "progressive-regressive method" in his *Search for a Method* (New York: Vintage, 1968), in which he too is concerned to work out a way of arriving at an appropriate and fruitful way of conceiving and comprehending human existence and possibility.
  10. In doing so, Nietzsche proceeds in a manner not unlike that of his near-contemporary Wilhelm Dilthey (with whose *Lebensphilosophie* his own enterprise is often associated). For Dilthey too took the key to the comprehension of human life to be its various expressions in the form of such social and cultural phenomena. See H. P. Rickman, ed., *Meaning in History: Dilthey's Thought on History and Society* (New York: Harper, 1962).
  11. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: Vintage, 1973), 342.
  12. *Ibid.*, 385.

13. *Ibid.*, chap. 10.
14. *Ibid.*, 340–43.
15. As Foucault argues in chap. 10 of *The Order of Things* and indeed throughout the book.
16. For a more extended discussion of Nietzsche's thinking with respect to human nature and related matters, see my *Nietzsche* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), chap. 5.