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The Incorporation of Truth: Towards the Overhuman

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Has not the philosophy that aims primarily for *certainty* already passed over *all fundamental truths*, and opened out into the inconsequentiality of a “wholly secure” knowledge? To put the question still more radically: is not regress to secure and apodictically certain truths an *avoidance* of the real problems, a *flight* from the insecurity and *eeriness* of unsettled human existence?

(Fink 1995: 46)

We, however, *want to become those who we are* – the ones who are new, unique, incomparable, self-legislating, self-creating.

(GS 335)

In this essay I provide a treatment of unfamiliar (and remarkable) material from Nietzsche’s unpublished writings, alongside published material that is often not given the attention it merits, in an effort to secure some new and fresh insights into his figuration of the overhuman (*Übermensch*). The overhuman is often taken to be a projection of Nietzsche’s personal ideal of human excellence and flourishing. For many readers and commentators it is an utterly fantastical one. I would argue, however, that this “projection” is, in fact, intimately bound up with the tasks and experiments Nietzsche outlines in his “free-spirit trilogy” of 1878–82 (the books *Human, All Too Human*, *Daybreak*, and *The Gay Science*). We find them outlined as a set in his very first sketch of the thought of the eternal return from August 1881 in which Nietzsche presents himself as the teacher of “the weightiest knowledge.” If Nietzsche has a conception of the perfectibility of the human this cannot be thought independently of our recognizing the complexity and difficulty of our now being human. The declaration made in the prologue to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* that the overhuman “shall now be the meaning [*Sinn*] of the earth” should not be understood in abstraction from the tasks of the free spirit. This is not to say that the notion is *not* a fantastical projection on Nietzsche’s part. The task is to understand the nature of the so-called fantasy at work in Nietzsche’s thinking.

Operative throughout Nietzsche’s writings, from his early reflections on the pathos of truth (1872) to his later call for a critique of the will to truth (1887), is what we might call a certain “care” of truth, even where this involves posing strange and novel questions of it and calling our will to it into question. In 1881/2 Nietzsche’s specific question about truth concerns its incorporation. My claim is that when Nietzsche

inquires after the incorporation of truth, he is in essence asking after the possibility of our becoming overhuman (conceived as a condition of maturity), and showing that this denotes a site of difficulty and complexity.¹

The essay is divided into three parts. In the first section I discuss Nietzsche's first sketch of the eternal return. This sketch is of great interest on account of Nietzsche's stress on the "incorporation of truth and knowledge" as a principal task now confronting human beings. In the second section I turn my attention to the presentation of the incorporation of truth we encounter in GS 110 and explore the kind of truth Nietzsche has in mind. In the third and final section I highlight some of the core aspects of Nietzsche's thinking on knowledge and self-knowledge. My overriding aim in the essay is to cast some light on the deeply enigmatic character of Nietzsche's thinking and to begin the task of opening up the riddles he presents his readers with.

The Weightiest Knowledge

In Nietzsche's first sketch of the doctrine of the eternal return of the same the thought is invoked in the context of his attempt to highlight the fundamental issues that concern the fate of the human being.² The sketch takes the form of a plan for a book in five parts and appears in the notebook "M III, 1." Part 1 will be on the incorporation of the fundamental errors; part 2 will be on the incorporation of the passions; part 3 will cover the incorporation of knowledge and of renunciatory knowledge (Nietzsche calls this the "passion of knowledge"); part 4 will be on "the innocent one" and "the individual as experiment" (Nietzsche refers to "the alleviation of life, abasement, enfeeblement," and speaks of a point of transition (*Übergang*)); part 5 will be on "the heavy new *burden* [*Schwergewicht*]: *the eternal return of the same*." The task, Nietzsche says, is to demonstrate the "infinite importance of our knowing, erring, habits, ways of living for all that is to come." The question is then asked: "What shall we do with the *rest* of our lives – we who have spent the majority of our lives in the most profound ignorance? We shall *teach the teaching* – it is the most powerful means of *incorporating* [*einzuverleiben*] it in ourselves. Our kind of blessedness [*Seligkeit*], as teachers of the greatest teaching." There then follows the sublime signature, "Early August 1881 in Sils-Maria, 6,000 feet above sea level and much higher above all human things!"

In the sketch only part 4 of the projected book is given an extended treatment by Nietzsche, and this forms the bulk of the rest of the sketch. It is worth citing in full:

On 4) Philosophy of Indifference [*Gleichgültigkeit*]. What used to be the strongest stimulus now has a quite different effect: it is seen as just a *game* and accepted (the passions and labors), rejected on principle as a life of untruth, but aesthetically enjoyed and cultivated as form and stimulus; we adopt a child's attitude towards what used to constitute the *seriousness of existence*. The seriousness of our striving, though, is to understand everything as becoming, to deny ourselves as individuals, to look into the world through as *many* eyes as possible, to *live in* drives and activities **so as** to create eyes for ourselves, *temporarily* abandoning ourselves to life so as to rest our eye on it temporarily afterwards: to *maintain* the drives as the foundation of all knowing, but to know at what point they

become the enemies of knowing; in sum, to **wait and see** how far *knowledge* [Wissen] and *truth* can be **incorporated** – and to what extent a transformation of man occurs when he finally lives only *so as to know* [erkennen]. – This is a consequence of the passion of knowledge [Erkenntniss]; there is *no way of ensuring its existence* except by preserving as well the sources and powers of knowledge, the errors and passions; from the *conflict* between them it draws its sustaining strength. – What will this life look like from the point of view of its sum total of well-being? *A children's game* under the gaze of the wise man, with power over *the latter and the former* conditions – and over death, if such a thing is not possible. – But now comes the weightiest knowledge [Erkenntniss], one which prompts the terrible reconsideration of all forms of life: an absolute surplus of pleasure **must** be demonstrable, or else we must choose to destroy ourselves with regard to humanity as a means of destroying humanity. Just this: we have to put the past – our past and that of all humanity – on the scales and *also* outweigh it – no! this piece of human history *will* and must repeat [wiederholen] itself eternally; we can leave *that* out of account, we have no influence over it: even if it afflicts our fellow-feeling and biases us against life in general. If we are not to be overwhelmed by it, our compassion must not be great. Indifference needs to have worked away deep inside us, and enjoyment in contemplation, too. Even the misery of future humanity must *not* concern us. But the question is whether we still *want to live*: and how!³

Incorporation is clearly the key word at work in the first sketch, and it is the incorporation of truth and knowledge that I want to focus on in my interpretation. First, however, let me attempt to open up some of the other intriguing motifs at work in the sketch, including the passion of knowledge, the principle of indifference, and the thought of innocence (*Unschuld*).

In a note from 1881 Nietzsche writes on Spinoza and his own project as follows: “Spinoza says: We are only determined in our actions by desires and affects. Knowledge must be affect in order to be a motive. I say: it must be a *passion* to be a motive” (KSA 9, 11[193]). Nietzsche first writes of the “passion of knowledge” (*Leidenschaft der Erkenntniss*) in *Daybreak* (1881) and it is referred to earlier in the notebook prior to its appearance in the sketch on the eternal return (see KSA 9 11[69]). In D 429 Nietzsche notes that the drive to knowledge has become so strongly rooted in us that we cannot now want happiness without knowledge. Knowledge has become a deep-rooted passion that shrinks at no sacrifice. Indeed, such is now our passion for knowledge that even the prospect of humanity perishing from this passion does not exert any real influence on us.

Part 4 of the planned book on “the philosophy of indifference,” and the appeal to a principle of “indifference” as that which must have worked its way deeply into us, refer us back to the decision Nietzsche had made in the opening chapter of *Human, All Too Human* with respect to the first and last things. Nietzsche provides the clearest account of his post-metaphysical position in aphorism 16 of *The Wanderer and his Shadow* entitled “where indifference is needed” (*Worin Gleichgültigkeit noth thut*). Here he states that the impulse to want certainties in the domain of the first and last things is a “*religious* after-shoot” and is to be approached as “a hidden and only apparently skeptical species of the ‘metaphysical need’.” He insists that a “full and excellent human life” can be led without these certainties. What is needed is knowledge of the origin of the “calamitous weightiness” mankind has for so long accorded to these

things. A history of ethical and religious sensations and concepts, such as guilt and punishment, will provide us with the knowledge we now require. The new “lovers of knowledge” will practice indifference against the claims of both faith and knowledge in the domain of the last things (what is the purpose of man? What is his fate after death? how can he be reconciled with God?, and so on). In a note in M III, 1 that is prior to the sketch on eternal return, Nietzsche presents indifference as a specifically modern phenomenon and proposes that it can serve as a basis for the scientific spirit. He argues that the quantity of things that do not concern us and that we can think what we like about is increasing: “the world has become ever more indifferent to us, therefore this neutral knowledge is also on the increase. It gradually becomes a *taste* and finally a passion” (11[110]).

In the 1881 sketch Nietzsche is making use of indifference as a means of enabling the decision that is required of our singularity: what is it now that we are to be indifferent towards and what is to be our utmost concern? Eternal return is the thought that seeks to establish a center of gravity with respect to this unique task. In number 220 of this notebook from 1881 Nietzsche writes that “the most powerful thought” uses the energy that has hitherto been at the command of other goals (*Zielen*). It thus has a “transforming effect” not through the creation of any new energy but simply by creating “new laws of movement for energy.” It is in this sense that it holds “the possibility of determining and ordering individual human beings and their affects differently.”

Part 4 of the plan contains a cryptic reference to the innocent man. We know that the thought of innocence runs deep in Nietzsche; his most fundamental anti-metaphysical doctrine is that of the “innocence of becoming.” As Heidegger notes, with the death of the moral God notions of sin and guilt “vanish from being as a whole” (Heidegger 1961: 333, 1984: 77). Nietzsche posits himself as a “halcyonian” who will work with all his might, and utilize the energy of knowledge, to purify psychology, the study of history, social institutions, and sanctions of the concepts of guilt and punishment, that is, of the entire metaphysics of morality (KSA 13, 15[30]; WP 765), including the “cloddish simplicity” of the notion of free will which involves the self yearning to construe itself as a metaphysical *causa sui* (a miraculous self-causing substance) (BGE 22; see also TI, “The Four Great Errors,” 8).⁴ There will necessarily be different psychological reactions to the new conditions of human existence. Some will experience a sense of liberation, some a sense of abasement, and others will feel enfeebled. The situation is similar to how Nietzsche will portray the advent of nihilism in later notebooks of the 1880s, where he construes nihilism as the “ultimate logical conclusion of our great values and ideals” (WP, preface, 4), and speaks of active and passive modes of nihilism that reflect either an increased power or a diminished power of the spirit (WP 22). Part 5 of the sketch follows the point of transition (*Übergang*) with the new teaching presented as the new burden: the eternal return of the same. Contained in the thoughts for part 5 is what we might call Nietzsche’s unique Spinozism. We know that the thought of eternal return comes to Nietzsche only a few days after his discovery of Spinoza. In a letter to his friend Franz Overbeck postmarked July 30, 1881, Nietzsche enumerates the points of doctrine he shares with Spinoza, such as the denial of free will, of a moral world order, and of evil, and also mentions the task of “making knowledge the most *powerful passion*” (Middleton 1996: 177). In the sketch

of 1881 Nietzsche conceives the movement beyond previous ignorance in terms of a new practice of knowledge and suggests that the new knowers will find their blessedness or beatitude in being the teachers of the doctrine of eternal return.⁵ This can be understood as a kind of ultimate or decisive knowledge with respect to our looking at life from out of a concern with, and an awareness of, its overall well-being. Let's suppose we discover that we do indeed wish to live; we then face the difficult question of *how* we will live.

In the final part of the passage concerning the "weightiest knowledge" the essential movement of thought at work in the sketch discloses itself. It appears to be twofold: a stress is placed on the incorporation of truth and knowledge as the distinctive task of modern humanity, as that which will mark it out, and the disclosure that this singular experiment will repeat itself and do so eternally. The disclosure of the eternal return of the same places a specific burden on us: we are to experience the "infinite importance" of our knowing, erring, habits and ways of life for all that is now to come (the thought seems to concern our futural present and to do so at its deepest level), *and* we are not to feel overwhelmed by this insight. Modern human beings can learn to practice indifference with respect to the first and last things of traditional metaphysics. In the 1881 sketch indifference is aimed not at these first and last things but at the eternal repetition of the different ages or epochs of human history, including our own. The possible future misery of humanity – that it may regress, that it may be wiped out or suffer in some way we cannot foretell – is not our concern. Our concern is with ourselves (we idealists of knowledge and godless anti-metaphysicians, as Nietzsche defines us in the *Genealogy*), and with whether we godless moderns, who exist largely in order to know, wish to live, and how.

In number 144 of the notebook Nietzsche stresses the innocent character of his thought; it is one that neither apportions blame to those who are overwhelmed by it nor merit to those who are not. He advises that whilst we can lament the incorporated errors of previous humankind we cannot attribute any "evil." We find ourselves being milder towards our ancestors than they could be to themselves. He then speaks of "the most powerful knowledge" and acknowledges the transformative character of incorporated errors (they provide us with new drives), and concludes with an appeal to "the play of life." This is in accord with what we encounter in the long sketch 141: we are to adopt an attitude of play and innocence with respect to the past. Nietzsche envisages the project of the gay or joyful science being practiced in this manner. It refers to the "ideal of a spirit who plays naively – that is, not deliberately, but from overflowing powers and abundance – with all that has hitherto been called good, untouchable, divine . . . the ideal of a human, superhuman well-being and benevolence that will often appear *inhuman* – for example, when it confronts all earthly seriousness so far" (GS 382). Nietzsche stresses that although an incarnate and involuntary parody is operative in such a well-being and generosity of life, "the real question mark is posed for the first time," "the destiny of the soul changes," and "the tragedy *begins*."

The first sketch shows that at the center of Nietzsche's thinking is the issue of the incorporation of truth and knowledge. But how does Nietzsche conceive incorporation? And what exactly does he have in mind when he speaks of the incorporation of truth? What is the "truth" he is appealing to and naming? To these topics I now turn.

Truth and its Incorporation

Although incorporation is a crucial term in Nietzsche's philosophical vocabulary, it is rarely subjected to investigation.⁶ David Farrell Krell has argued that the emergence of incorporation in Nietzsche's thinking in 1881 is the direct result of his reading work in the natural sciences, notably physiology, and especially Wilhelm Roux's text of 1881 *The Struggle of Parts in the Organism*.⁷ However, while Nietzsche did indeed read Roux at this time, and then several times again in the 1880s, the notion of incorporation is one that figures in Nietzsche from his earliest published writings. It plays an important role, for example, in his thinking on the uses and disadvantages of history for life. In the opening section of this meditation Nietzsche situates incorporation in the same context of problems that come to inform his first sketch of eternal return in 1881, including the regulation of knowledge, the importance of forgetting, and determining the time of memory and of forgetting within the economy of the living (Nietzsche speaks of being able to forget and to remember at the right time). He writes: "this is a universal law: a living thing can be healthy, strong and fruitful only when bounded by a horizon" (*UM II*, 1). The living power of a human being, a people, and a culture is a plastic power, which is a power formed through processes of assimilation and incorporation. Nietzsche writes: "I mean by plastic power [*die plastische Kraft*] the capacity to develop out of oneself in one's one way, to transform [*umzubilden*] and incorporate [*einzuverleiben*] into oneself what is past and foreign, to heal wounds, to replace what has been lost, to recreate broken moulds" (*UM II*, 1).

Like the English word incorporation, *Einverleibung* means literally a taking into the body, and on the level of human existence it denotes a complex practice of spiritual ingestion. The complexity of "spirit" is perhaps most fully addressed by Nietzsche in his meditation on its "fundamental will" (*Grundwillen*) in *BGE* 230. Here Nietzsche calls for the human to be translated (*übersetzen*) back into nature and for a skillful mastery over the numerous vain and fanciful interpretations and secondary meanings that have been scrawled over "the eternal basic text, *homo natura*." In this way man will stand before himself as he now stands, "hardened by the discipline of *Wissenschaft* [science]," before the rest of nature, "deaf to the siren songs of old metaphysical bird-catchers" who for aeons have piped to him that he is something higher and of a different origin. The spirit of the human being is a complicated one, expressing, on the one hand, a will to appearance, to semblance, to simplification, and to the mask, and, on the other, a will to knowledge that assumes a profound and many-sided view of things, practicing a "cruelty of the intellectual conscience." What Nietzsche calls "spirit" denotes a will to mastery; it is a "will to go from multiplicity to simplicity, a will that binds together, subdues, a tyrannical and truly masterful will" (*BGE* 230). Nietzsche then states that the needs and capacities of spirit can be likened to the same ones that physiology claims for that which lives, grows, and reproduces. The energy of spirit consists in appropriating the foreign, and its fundamental tendency is to make the new resemble the old and to simplify the multiplicity it encounters.⁸ In short, incorporation proceeds in terms of a logic of identity and similitude. For Nietzsche the highest functions of spirit are to be understood as sublimated organic functions, such as assimilation, discrimination,

and secretion. Modern human beings are the inheritors and practitioners of these various tendencies of the spirit.

In *The Gay Science* Nietzsche makes significant usage of incorporation in a long aphorism devoted to truth and knowledge (GS 110, entitled “Ursprung der Erkenntniss”). This aphorism helps to clarify what Nietzsche has in mind with regard to the incorporation of truth and knowledge (see also GS 11). However, as we shall see, Nietzsche leaves it to his readers to work out his meaning and to negotiate the most difficult questions.

Although we exist today in a situation where knowledge itself has now become a part of life, a preoccupation with truth actually appeared late in the evolution of human life and was for a long time held to be “the weakest form of knowledge” on account of the fact that humans found it hard to endure it as a practice of living. In the story Nietzsche is telling in this aphorism, this was owing to the fact that for the greater part of its evolutionary history the human animal has survived, prospered even, by incorporating a set of “basic errors” which became for it a set of “erroneous articles of faith,” such as that there are equal things, enduring things, indeed that there are things such as substances and bodies, that things are what we immediately take them to be, that the will is free, and so on. All the higher functions of our organism, including sense perception, have worked with these basic errors and incorporated them. Moreover, these propositions concerning self and world established themselves as the norm according to which “true” and “untrue” could be determined. Truth, then, at least initially and during this highly formative period of human evolution, operates in the context of the incorporated errors. In the section that immediately comes after GS 110 he presents a quasi-Darwinian account of the origins and development of our basic ways of thinking. For example, to be able to think all the time in terms of identity proves helpful in the struggle for survival since it means things in the environment can be recognized and acted upon with speed and quickness. To see only a perpetual becoming everywhere would be disastrous for the evolution of a species of animal. As Nietzsche points out, “the beings who did not see exactly had a head start over those who saw everything ‘in a flux’” (GS 111). What has so far determined the strength or power of knowledge is not its degree of truth, as we might suppose, but rather its “character as a condition of life” (the conditions of life include error). Wherever life and knowledge came into conflict, denial and doubt were taken to be expressions of madness. Where a more truthful humanity has sought to come into being – Nietzsche mentions the school of the Eleatics (Parmenides and his disciples, such as Zeno) – it has arrived at “truth” only by deceiving itself about its own states, for example positing a fictitious impersonality and an unchanging duration. In the process it misunderstood the nature of the knower and lived in denial of the impulses that inform knowledge. Although these human beings cultivated honesty and skepticism, it was these which led to their downfall since their ways of living and judging were seen to be also dependent on the primeval impulses and basic errors of sentient existence.

A subtle kind of skepticism comes into being when two opposing propositions about the world appeared to be applicable to life, simply because both proved compatible with the basic errors and an argument could be put forward about the degrees of utility for life. The same was true, Nietzsche notes, where new propositions came into

being that were neither useful nor harmful to life. Such a situation creates room for the expression of an intellectual play impulse. Gradually the human brain becomes full of antinomical judgments and convictions – contradictory propositions that have a rightful claim to validity – to the point where a “lust for power” manifests itself in this tangle of knowledge. It is in this context that knowledge and a striving for truth come to inform what we take to be our innermost needs and desires: “all ‘evil’ instincts were subordinated to knowledge, employed in her service, and acquired the splendor of what is permitted, honored, and useful” (GS 110). With this stage in our evolution we find ourselves in a new situation in which the quest for knowledge and the striving for the true have taken their rightful place among others as being considered among the most fundamental needs, to the point where we now have techniques and disciplines of scrutiny, of denial, and of suspicion. Nietzsche brings the aphorism to a close by saying that the thinker today is “the being in whom the drive to truth and those life-preserving errors are fighting their first battle.” Such a battle is now taking place because the striving for the true has also shown itself to be a life-preserving and life-enhancing power. In order to make further progress with truth it is necessary to conduct an experiment. Nietzsche’s question is: “to what extent can truth stand [*verträgt*] incorporation?”

The precise meaning of Nietzsche’s questioning is not self-evident. He appears to leave open the result of the experiment that is to be conducted, as well as the precise nature of the fundamental question he has posed. As Heidegger (2004: 28) asked, what kind of “truth” is it that stands outside incorporation and that now challenges us in the manner of incorporation? What is the precise nature and status of this “truth”? Although we can say that the truth Nietzsche has in mind is neither the articles of faith of primeval humanity nor the knowledge sought by refined truth-seekers such as the Eleatics, it is very difficult to determine exactly what he does have in mind. We could suggest that what Nietzsche has in mind is truth conceived as a set of *practices* of truthfulness that is now part and parcel of our passion of knowledge, such as doubt, suspicion, critical distance, subjecting all things to scrutiny, and so on. Here we might want to phrase the question of incorporation in the following terms: can there be a diet of knowledge? How will our commitment to truth work itself out in the context of an appreciation of the general economy of life, including our recognition of the need to will illusion, appearance, and semblance?

In number 162 of the 1881 notebook (M III, 1) Nietzsche states that the organs of a living system work in favor of error, and therefore the “ultimate truth” (*die letzte Wahrheit*) of the flux of things cannot stand incorporation. Is this then perhaps the sort of truth Nietzsche is inviting us to conduct an experiment over in GS 110? If it is, we could construe Nietzsche as asking whether humanity is now able to incorporate something it has hitherto been unable to. (Nietzsche is claiming that the human animal’s inability to incorporate a reality of continuing change and perpetual becoming has facilitated its evolution; see GS 111.) What is the nature and status of the “ultimate truth” Nietzsche invokes? Surely he cannot be appealing to a metaphysical reality that we can have no relation to and cannot care about? Does he not state (HH 16) that the idea of a thing-in-itself is worthy of Homeric laughter? A number of commentators have read Nietzsche’s positing of a reality characterized by becoming and perpetual flux as resulting in a reformulated thing-in-itself, conceived as an unconceptualizable

otherness. However, Nietzsche himself points out that the positing of a metaphysical world – conceived as that which lies beyond what is knowable as a kind of “inaccessible and incomprehensible being-other” – can only be done in terms of a negative ontology, which would be fruitless (*HH* 9). Admittedly, Nietzsche does say that knowledge and becoming exclude one another (*WP* 517), and that a world in a state of becoming could not, strictly speaking, be comprehended or known (*WP* 520). However, he has to be read carefully on this issue. As one commentator has noted, if we assume that our existence and activity are a piece with life and the world – and what else ultimately could they be part of? – “this means that we are not in principle debarred from ever achieving any comprehension of the character of the reality they and we comprise” (Schacht 1983: 105). However, we need to grasp the precise manner in which Nietzsche ascribes positive tasks to knowledge and the expectations he has of it. Nietzsche could be arguing that knowledge of becoming is not possible owing to the “errors” contained in our evolved habits of representation and modes of knowing, to say nothing of the moral prejudices that have hitherto constituted the horizon of truth and knowledge. But it is the “old morality,” including the morality of knowledge, which Nietzsche holds we are now moving beyond: “What was formerly despised as unholy, forbidden, contemptible, fateful – all these flowers grow today along the lovely paths of truth” (*WP* 459). Much, if not everything, depends on how we understand Nietzsche’s figuration of the *incorporation* of truth and knowledge.

It is clear, I think, that for Nietzsche a *new* mode of incorporation is now to take place. We would be mistaken, however, if we supposed that this entailed a direct and immediate incorporation of the “ultimate truth.” Rather, his idea is that we, along with everything else that lives, are implicated in the perpetual flux, and the challenge we are now confronted with is one of developing a more refined knowledge of ourselves and the world in the light of this truth. This is not a truth we can possess, neither is it a truth that is simply to be “found” by us. Nietzsche rejects this kind of conception of what truth is “because it cuts off the forces that work toward enlightenment and knowledge,” and is thus “more fateful than error and ignorance” (*WP* 452). He insists that “truth” is not simply “something there, that might be found or discovered.” Rather, we do better when we approach it as something “that gives a name to a process,” as “a will to overcome that has itself no end,” and as an “active determining” and not “a becoming-conscious of something that is in itself firm and determined” (*WP* 552). His “ultimate” truth is such in perhaps more than the one sense: first, as that which exceeds the measuring capacities of the human being, and so puts the measure of man to the test, and, second, as that which will provide human beings with new and decisive knowledge about their future “evolution.” To date, human beings have incorporated the basic or fundamental errors, and this has aided their evolution. There was a clear incentive informing this incorporation, that of evolutionary advantage. Now, however, the new incorporation of truth and knowledge demands that we go beyond what is prescribed within evolution, and it is on these grounds, at least in part, that Nietzsche is compelled to appeal to our becoming *overhuman*. As he puts it in the 1881 sketch on the eternal return, we must now wait and see “how far” truth and knowledge can be incorporated. The experiment is by definition an open-ended and ongoing one, bound up with the kind of creatures we are, and are in the process of becoming. We moderns, understood as those who are caught up in the “passion” of

knowledge, are in the process of complicating our evolutionary conditions of existence. In one sense we are becoming “more” human; in another sense we are becoming “more than” human. The *Sinn* (sense, meaning, direction) of our newfound conditions of existence is necessarily unclear, but it is this lack of clearness that Nietzsche is inviting us to affirm as a constitutive feature of our practice of knowledge and incorporation of truth. Let’s now see how he finesses the idea of a new incorporation.

Humanity has cultivated itself on the basis of a set of fundamental errors, and this has involved the development of certain kinds of sensation and perception in which the changes in things go unperceived and all kinds of influences are not felt. In addition, a certain mode of judging and valuing has been cultivated, one that affirms rather than suspends judgment, that errs and fabricates things rather than *waits*, and that passes judgment rather than strives to be just (GS 111). Nietzsche argues that our knowledge amounts to a humanization of things; we perfect an image of becoming for ourselves but do not see beyond or behind this image. We have done this, for example, by diagramming reality in a specific manner, such as through “lines, planes, bodies, atoms, divisible time spans, divisible spaces” (GS 112). In GS 121 he writes: “We have arranged for ourselves a world in which we are able to live – by positing bodies, lines, planes, causes and effects, motion and rest, form and content; without these articles of faith no one could endure living! But that does not prove them.” Our fundamental schemas of thought and habits of representation are imprecise and make us reliant on perceptions that are too coarse. For example, we have developed the habit of positing identical facts and isolated facts, which shows that we are committed to a fundamental atomism in the domain of our willing and knowing (WS 11).

In his first sketch of the eternal return Nietzsche speaks of “the seriousness of our striving” as one of understanding everything as implicated in becoming and denying ourselves as individuals. The challenge he presents is that of learning “to live in drives,” as that through which we come to see, and to uphold this mode of living as a foundation of all our knowing; but then to cultivate at the same time the superior knowledge that will enable us to discern at what point the drives become the enemies of knowing. Our drive to knowledge has its presuppositions in the conditions of life and these conditions include error (KSA 9, 11[162]). The fundamental errors of humanity – the error of the judgment that there are identical things, enduring and unconditioned substances, a free will, and so on – have their basis in organic life (see *HH* 18). Nietzsche writes: “There would be no suffering [*Leiden*] if there were nothing organic; that is, without belief in *the same* [*Gleiches*], that is, without *this error*, *there would be no pain in the world!*” (KSA 9, 11[254]). Where does all this leave truth, however?

Several notes from the M III, 1 notebook provide insight into the kind of things that are at stake for Nietzsche. In 156, for example, he indicates that a fundamental rethinking of the individual is required, and away from the coarse “error” of the species; the individual struggles for its existence, for its new taste, and for its relative singular position in relation to all things. It despises the general taste and wants to rule supreme. But the notion of the individual also has its error, a more refined one to be sure, and its nature must be intensified: it discovers that it itself is something wandering and has a taste that changes; in the smallest moment it is something other than in the next and its conditions of existence are that of a host of individuals. Nietzsche declares: “the *infinitely small moment* is the highest reality and truth, a lightning-image that

emerges from the eternal river [*ein Blitzbild aus dem ewigen Flusse*]” (KSA 9, 11[156]). Nietzsche concludes this note by reflecting on what we learn from this and argues that all pleasure-taking knowledge (*geniessende Erkenntniss*) rests on the coarse error of the species, the finer error of the individual, and the finest error of the creative moment. In 162 Nietzsche argues that “life is the condition of knowing” and “error is the condition of the living” at its deepest level. It is thus necessary to love and cultivate error as it is the womb (*Mutterschoß*) of our knowing. It is for this reason that art can be prized as the activity that cultivates illusions (compare GS 107 on our ultimate gratitude to art). We are to advance life for the sake of knowledge and promote illusion for the sake of life (compare Kofman 1993: 130–2). Nietzsche then states that the “fundamental condition” of the whole passion of knowledge is to grant existence an “aesthetic meaning,” that is, to “increase our taste for it.” What we discover in this play of life is a night and a day, the ebb and flow of our desiring knowledge and our desiring error. Ruled absolutely by one of these desires, the human and its capacities would perish. In note number 229 Nietzsche states that only by adapting to the living errors can the “initially **dead** truth” be brought to life. This adaptation (*Anpassung*) is necessarily an essential ingredient in our incorporation of truth and knowledge. In note 325 he spells out what is to be the task of science (*Wissenschaft*): “Not to ask the question how error is possible, but how a kind of truth is at all possible in spite of the fundamental untruth in knowing.”

With a few exceptions Nietzsche’s question about the incorporation of truth has not been considered by his commentators (see Schacht 1983: 97; Kofman 1993: 130ff.; Williams 2004: 15ff.; in an instructive essay on Nietzsche and truth Gemes [2001] does not even consider it and makes no reference to GS 110). Although Bernard Williams rightly stresses that Nietzsche’s criticisms and exposures of the idols and self-deceptions of his age are motivated by a spirit of truthfulness, he lacks a genuine knowledge of the actual details and character of Nietzsche’s thinking, with the result that his claims about Nietzsche’s commitment to truth and truthfulness do not adequately center on the issues that occupy Nietzsche’s attention, such as the ones that I have sought to highlight. Kofman insists that although truth is put into operation by Nietzsche it is never construed by him as functioning outside of the interpretation and evaluation that are the constitutive elements of “life” (there is no text-in-itself, she insists, that is, no “absolute text” to which we can refer our interpretations in order to judge their truth: “A text without interpretation is no longer a text”: Kofman 1993: 140). This means, she argues, that for Nietzsche it is never a question of unveiling Being in its truth or of rendering existence naked and bare, simply because we can never remove ourselves from a horizon of interpretation and evaluation. To do so would mean we step outside life and its conditions, but this is impossible. If these conditions include error, as Nietzsche claims, then truth is of necessity always bound up with error, which, in fact, constitutes its basis. For Kofman the virtue of truthfulness operates in Nietzsche as a commitment to multiplying perspectives and hierarchizing drives (for her this is what it means to employ “life as a means to knowledge”), and enables us to see a spirit of justice at work in Nietzsche’s new philology of interpretation (see also Schacht 1983: 99). I differ from Kofman in holding to the view that Nietzsche does think that a transformation in our knowledge is taking place and that this new mode and practice of knowledge will inform our interpretations

and evaluations and provide us with a new spirit of truth and truthfulness. The passion of knowledge has taken hold of us, according to Nietzsche, and his critical question is focused on our incorporation of it.

Knowledge and Self-Knowledge

Nietzsche's "gay science" makes certain demands upon knowledge and its future development. In GS 354 he writes of "phenomenalism" and "perspectivism" as he understands them, arguing that the world of which we become conscious is only a "surface- and sign-world" that, strictly speaking, belongs to our herd-animal existence and the species, and in which "becoming conscious" rests on a falsification, generalization, and reduction to superficiality. He then notes that what concerns him in advancing this critique are not the distinctions made by epistemologists between subject and object and between the thing-in-itself and appearance – he states, with more than a touch of wit and irony, that we don't "know" enough to be entitled to this latter distinction – but rather the fact that we "lack any organ for knowledge, for 'truth'"; rather, we "know" what proves to be useful for our interests as a species and this knowledge may simply be belief or imagination, and we then confuse "truth" with them. In the next aphorism, Nietzsche makes it clear that he is taking "knowledge" (*Erkenntniss*) in this context to be an evolved social practice that aims to reduce something strange to the familiar. The knowledge that philosophy hitherto has sought is the kind that will provide the species with a sense of security and make it feel at home in the world. We approach the entire riddle of the world with some rule in which we are stuck and in terms of *accustomed* perspectives. This explains philosophy's preference for starting with the "inner world," with so-called "facts of consciousness." Nietzsche pronounces this to be the "Error of errors!" (GS 355). He then argues that that which we are used to is what is most difficult to know, simply because we lack the distance that would enable us to see it as a problem and as something strange. He concludes by noting, first, that the natural sciences acquire their certainty (*Sicherheit*) by taking as the object of their inquiries what is strange and unfamiliar and, second, that for common sense it is contradictory to want to take the non-strange as an object of inquiry. The "gay science" has a major investment in the development of new techniques and sciences of knowing and inquiry: "We ourselves wish to be our experiments and guinea pigs" (GS 319). Proving equal to the task of "incorporating" truth and knowledge constitutes an essential dimension of what it means for us to become the overhuman ones that we, paradoxically, are.

For Nietzsche the incorporation of truth and knowledge will also now inform the art of living well, which for him takes the form of self-creation and self-legislation. In GS 335 Nietzsche declares that "we want to become the ones that we are," conceived as the new, the unique, and the incomparable. He also speaks of new human beings "who are bent on seeking in all things for what in them must be *overcome*" (GS 283). At the very end of this aphorism he makes the following appeal to knowledge: "At long last the search for knowledge [*Erkenntniss*] will reach out for its due; it will want to *rule* and *possess*, and you with it!" In another aphorism from this part of *The Gay Science* Nietzsche writes of the need to make "conscience [*Gewissen*] an object of science

[Wissen]" (GS 309). It is this kind of thinking about the self that informs his presentation of the demonically inspired thought of the eternal return in GS 341 with its question "in each and every thing": "Do you desire this once more and innumerable times more?" How are we to go about answering this question? Nietzsche's response is to offer a new center of gravity that will enable us to discover the "law" and power of our desire.

In GS 335, entitled "Long Live Physics!," Nietzsche addresses the issue of self-knowledge and writes of our now learning to impose a new limit upon ourselves, namely, limiting ourselves to the "purification" (*Reinigung*) of our values and to "*the creation of our new tables of what is good.*" We need to appreciate that every action in the past has been done, and every action in the future will be done, "in an altogether unique and irretrievable way." Nietzsche's hope is that if we take proper cognizance of this insight then we will stop brooding over the moral value of our actions and regard the moral chatter of some about others as something distasteful. Nietzsche writes in praise of "physics" by appealing to the supra-moral virtue that compels (*zwingt*) us to it, namely, probity (*Redlichkeit*), and which gains its voice from the superior form of conscience that he names the "intellectual conscience." It is superior to the moral conscience simply because it acknowledges that we do not have an adequate knowledge of our actions and valuations; rather, "all regulations about actions relate only to their coarse exterior." The "physics" Nietzsche has in mind concerns the experimental knowledge that will reveal to us what is "lawful and necessary" in the world and as it affects the task of our becoming the ones that we are. At the same time, however, he stresses that in any particular case the law of the mechanism of our actions cannot, in fact, be demonstrated. This means that "law" and "necessity" are not simply discoverable by us as brute facts, but rather will disclose themselves through testing and experimentation, for which we will need to draw on the resources of refined self-observation. When Nietzsche conceives the eternal return itself working as an incorporating thought, and on the level of the care of the self, he does so precisely in terms of an experimental self-knowledge and testing: "Thought and belief are a weight pressing down on me as much as and even more than any other weight. You say that food, a location, air, society transform and condition you: well your opinions do so even more, since it is they that determine your choice of food, dwelling, air, society. If you incorporate this thought within you, amongst your other thoughts, it will transform you. The question in everything that you will: 'am I certain I want to do to an infinite number of times?' will become for you the heaviest weight" (KSA 9, 11[143]).

On my interpretation the truth that Nietzsche is inviting us to subject to an experiment is the kind that is bound up with the new knowledge sought by the gay science, the goal of which is to develop a more refined appreciation of our actions and identities. In *The Gay Science* itself Nietzsche writes of our now seeking to become better known to ourselves with the aid of better descriptions (GS 112). We also need to come up with new evaluations based on new modes of perception and judgment. We will do this, for example, by cultivating the new tools (organs) and norms offered by the developing sciences of physiology and psychology, constantly refining their insights, and by the "spiritual perception" that is unique to philosophy (BGE 252). These norms concern our conceptions of life and the living, revolving around questions of health and sickness (decadence), the natural and anti-natural, growth and decay, preservation

and enhancement, and so on. Running throughout Nietzsche we find ongoing treatments of human pathologies, including the “bold insanities of metaphysics” (GS, preface, 2), ascetic ideals (GM III as a whole), and nihilism (said by him to be a “pathological transitional stage”; what is pathological is the inference that there is no “meaning” [Sinn] at all, WP 13). Nietzsche follows the French physiologist Claude Bernard (1813–78) in regarding the normal and the pathological to be different degrees of the same condition and not distinct entities (see KSA 13, 14[65]; for further insight see Canguilhem 1991 and Moore 2002). Nietzsche’s concern is with how much of the pathological we are able to take on and render healthy.

In the *Genealogy of Morality* he writes of a new discipline of the intellect that will prepare it for its future “objectivity,” in which the intellect will make use of the difference in perspectives and affective interpretations for the sake of knowledge: “the more affects we allow to speak about a thing, the *more* eyes, various eyes we are able to use for the same thing, the more complete will be our ‘concept’ of the thing” (GM III, 12). Nietzsche ridicules the positing of what he regards as contradictory notions, such as “pure reason,” disinterested knowledge, and a “pure, will-less, painless, timeless subject of knowledge” (Schopenhauer, *WWR*, vol. 1, sect. 34), and insists that to “see” is to see something come into existence and under some point of view. In short, an “eye” has a direction and involves active and interpretive forces or powers. However, although we are at liberty to practice and experiment with them, Nietzsche’s celebrated “perspectivism” does not invite us to grant equal value and validity to any and all perspectives; rather, we are to employ the difference in perspectives and interpretations on the basis of the new incorporation of truth and knowledge now called for (the stress that we find placed on new ways of seeing and looking into the world in the 1881 sketch clearly anticipates the perspectivism that is put to work in the Third Essay of the *Genealogy*). Nietzsche speaks, for example, of “engaging” and “disengaging” perspectives. As one commentator has noted, there is a critical and undermining aspect to Nietzsche’s “perspectivity,” which is frequently overlooked in accounts of it (see Richardson 2001: 21; see also Schacht 1983: 96ff.). There is, in fact, a principal “perspective” at work in Nietzsche’s thinking, which is that of “life.” He stresses that whenever we address values and speak under their inspiration we are always doing so from the perspective of life: “life itself forces us to establish values; life itself evaluates through us *when we posit values*” (TI, “Morality as Anti-Nature,” 5). If the problem of the “value of life” cannot be touched upon by us – since to do so would require situating ourselves *outside* life – then one of the tasks of thinking is to develop a treatment of different forms and types of life (ascending and descending modes, for example), in which we become attentive to the signs of life. Nietzsche stresses that morality is an *interpretation* of phenomena. The genealogist of morals is at the same time a semiologist of morals, one who appreciates that morality is a sign language and symptomatology, and understands just what is going on in moral judgment, to the extent that the philosopher who places himself “beyond good and evil” has the “illusion of moral judgment” *beneath* him (TI, “The ‘Improvers’ of Humanity,” 1). Nietzsche diagnoses moral judgment as, like religious judgment, lacking in knowledge precisely because it lacks the important distinction “between the real and the imaginary,” to the point where “truth” on this level designates nothing but “illusions”: “Morality and religion belong entirely under the *psychology of error*: in every single case cause and effect are confused;

or truth is confused with the effect of what is *believed* to be true; or a state of consciousness is confused with the causality of this state" (TI, "The Four Great Errors," 6).

The new and difficult challenge facing us moderns is that of turning the growth of "neutral" and "indifferent" knowledge into a passion, that is, something we embody, experiment with, and practice as an art and science of living. Nietzsche posits a joining of artistic energies and practical wisdom with scientific thinking that will lead to the formation of a "higher organic system" (GS 113). In place of the aim or goal of denial he wishes "to make asceticism natural again." He envisages new ascetic practices involving a "gymnastics of the will" and tests of sovereign individuality (WP 915). Even the "stupid psychological fact" of death is to be transformed into a moral necessity in which one will want to die at the right time (WP 916).

Nietzsche's thinking on truth and knowledge reaches a position of maturity in 1886–7 as he begins to unravel the "no-saying" part of his task, notably the revaluation of values and all it entails. Any engagement with his stress on the need to incorporate truth and knowledge has to take this development into account. Nietzsche calls for a "philosophical physician" who will be able "to pursue the problem of the total health of a people, time, race or humanity" and push to its limits the suspicion that in all philosophizing to date what has been at stake is not so much "truth," but rather "health, future, growth, power, life" (GS, preface, 2). He also describes our desire for truth at any price, "the will to truth," as amounting to bad taste; there is a "youthful madness in the love of truth" (GS, preface, 4; see also BGE preface). Nietzsche makes it clear that the will to knowledge can only establish itself on the basis of the will to the uncertain (*das Ungewisse*) and the untrue. For him there is no opposition at work here – which would be metaphysical – but rather a refinement of the one will by the other. We need to be cheerful about the fact that the *best* science (*Wissenschaft*) "loves error" because, "being alive," it loves life (BGE 24). It is not a question for Nietzsche of philosophy ever being proved right (he notes that to date no philosophy has been proved right). Moreover, the little question marks that the conscientious philosopher places at the end of his mottoes and doctrines – a feature that characterizes Nietzsche's presentation of all his key doctrines – have more value for truth than all the "dignified gestures" he might display before plaintiffs and courts of law (BGE 25). The new lovers of knowledge (the gay scientists), therefore, will not become martyrs for the cause of truth; they will not parade themselves as sublime self-torturers who suffer for the sake of it. This is because what guides their love of truth and knowledge is the love of life, especially the superior life, and this life exists, of necessity, outside the social order and the public gaze. This is what the popular "will to truth" fails to appreciate. All the moral prejudices about truth, which abound for Nietzsche in the realm of popular philosophy, need to be overcome (BGE 34):

The indignant man and whoever else uses his own teeth to mutilate and dismember himself (or God or society in place of himself) may stand higher than the laughing and self-satisfied satyr in moral terms, but in every other sense he represents the more common, more inconsequential, more un instructive case. And only the indignant tell so many lies. (BGE 26)

By contrast, the exceptional human being seeks out his secrecy – his truth – only "where he is *delivered* from the crowd, the multitude, the majority," and where he is

able “to forget the rule of ‘humanity’” (BGE 26). It is clear, I think, that what Nietzsche is proposing is a fundamental reform of truth in an effort to entice the coming philosophers (the ones of the future). Part of the free-spirited task of questioning the will to truth involves posing a set of strange questions about it and about our desire for the truth. Nietzsche insists that certain independent questions need to be posed, such as: *Who* is asking the questions in any given context? *What* is it in us that wants to “‘get at the truth’” (BGE 1)?

In the *Genealogy of Morality* Nietzsche continues this questioning of truth, and argues that it be permitted to be taken as a “problem” (GM III. 24). But how do we square this with the fact that so much of his genealogical inquiry is unequivocally informed by a profound will to truth, one that shows us that effective truth is necessarily something ugly and frightening, and something that cannot be avoided now that the conscience of truth and the passion of knowledge have taken such deep root in our life-practices? His preferred intellectual habitat is that of a state of cheerfulness (*Heiterkeit*) among “hard truths” (EH, “Why I Write Such Good Books,” 3). Nietzsche opens the First Essay of the *Genealogy* by paying homage to the “English psychologists” whom he then devotes a significant portion of the book to criticizing (along with English biologists). This motley group of pioneering researchers has held a microscope to the soul and, in the process, come up with a new set of truths: “plain, bitter, ugly, foul, unchristian, immoral . . .” (GM I. 1). Although Nietzsche goes on to criticize these psychologists for bungling their moral genealogy and for not carrying out “real” history, it is clear that he feels a deep affinity with their commitment to unchristian and immoral truth. Indeed, he explicitly states that, in contrast to other interpreters, he does not view them as “old, cold, boring frogs” that crawl around men and inhabit a “swamp,” but rather as “brave, generous, and proud animals.” And throughout the *Genealogy* Nietzsche adds to the unchristian and immoral truths of these psychologists a whole set of his own (the work of these psychologists has its basis in the work of Locke, and in Hume’s new approach to the mind which shows that so-called complex, intellectual activity emerges out of processes that are, in truth, “stupid,” such as the *vis inertiae* of habit and the random coupling or association of ideas).

So why does Nietzsche take to task the will to truth in the Third Essay of the *Genealogy*? He makes a number of contentions: that modern knowers and free spirits remain “idealists of knowledge”; that these spirits represent the most intellectualized product of the only ideal that has flourished on earth to date, the ascetic ideal; and that our modern faith in science is a *metaphysical* faith. In calling, *tentatively*, for a “critique” of the will to truth Nietzsche is not proposing a negative task but a limiting and refining one. His critical attention is focused on the *unconditional* character of our modern will to truth and on our belief in the *divine* nature of truth. We moderns overestimate truth; such is our faith in truth we take it to be something that cannot be assessed or criticized (GM III. 25). In the claim that our commitment to truth supposes a “metaphysical” valuation Nietzsche has in mind such things as the paralogical ideal of knowledge free of presuppositions, a knowledge without a direction, a meaning, and a limit, and a knowledge that renounces interpretation and everything that is essential to it (GM III. 24). However, it is clear that the ascetic truth-practices which Nietzsche calls into question prove to be indispensable for his own historical inquiries, including a deep mistrust and skepticism (in GM III. 9 Nietzsche lists the drives peculiar to the

philosopher and mentions the drives to doubt, to deny, to dare, and to research). The difference between Nietzsche and the free spirits who remain “idealists of knowledge” is that for him *belief* in truth is not sufficient; rather, truth has to be an affair of incorporation.⁹ It is here that the “play of life” asserts itself and involves our continued, and necessary, reliance on perspectivist assessments and appearances (*BGE* 34). For Nietzsche it is a question of developing the selection of affects and drives in the direction of a perpetual enhancement of the human being and within the framework provided by the *task* of incorporating truth and knowledge. In other words, the practice of truth and knowledge is to be placed in the service of a new legislation of the human and its future development. Nietzsche envisages a program of cultural engineering which will bring about a new, sovereign species of human that is both intellectually strong and ethically independent. This is what he has in mind when he ascribes to philosophy a “spiritual perception” (*BGE* 252). He criticizes British empiricism for failing to make use of truth in this way; in its timidity with regard to the tasks of cultural discipline and breeding it displays its “plebeian ambition” (*BGE* 213) and allows truth to further the ends only of the transformation of man into a perfect herd-animal.

As early as 1872, in the notebook known as the “Philosophers’ Book,” Nietzsche defines philosophy as the “selective knowledge drive.” He continues to uphold this conception of philosophy in the works of his late period with the difference that philosophy’s tasks are no longer conceived on the basis of a disappointment over the end of metaphysics and a turn to the consoling powers of art, as typifies the early work, but on the basis of mature genealogical insights into human evolution and future possibilities. In the *Genealogy* Nietzsche writes of the will to truth becoming conscious of itself, a process that will destroy “morality” (as commonly conceived, that is) and result in a drama that will be terrible and questionable, but also rich in hope (*GM* III. 27; this drama refers to the possible new twist and outcome in the wider “Dionysian drama on the fate of the soul” heralded in the book’s preface). We should note something important here: if we are now the beings in whom the will to truth has become aware of itself as a problem, then this is because it is the question of the *value* of truth that now constitutes the most important aspect of intellectual inventiveness. This is not so much to call truth as a virtue into question, but rather to demand that it be made the subject of a practice of incorporation. Why do we *wish* to incorporate truth and knowledge? Nietzsche’s answer is because we want to become the ones that we are and because there is a new goal and task, namely, the development of a superior humanity. It is the new incorporation, therefore, that provides truth with the meaning (*Sinn*) it would otherwise lack. To paraphrase Nietzsche from a draft he composed of the discourse on “Self-Overcoming” for *Zarathustra*, if truth does not allow us to build a new world, then what is its value? (See *KSA* 14, p. 302.) The overhuman is the true vision and riddle of Nietzsche’s *superior* (noble) empiricism:

There it was too that I picked up the word “*Übermensch*” and that the human is something that is to be overcome, the human is a bridge and not a goal; counting itself happy for its noontides and evenings, as a way to new dawns. (*Z* III, “Of Old and New Law-Tables,” 3)

Is there not grandeur in this view of life?

See also 6 “Nietzsche’s ‘Gay’ Science”; 9 “The Naturalisms of *Beyond Good and Evil*”; 17 “Naturalism and Nietzsche’s Moral Psychology”; 21 “Nietzsche and Ethics”; 26 “Nietzsche on Geophilosophy and Geoaesthetics”

Notes

- 1 The need for us to practice the incorporation of truth and knowledge as an art and science of living – one that endeavors to remain “true to the earth” – is at the center of Nietzsche’s narration of the drama of Zarathustra’s down-going and over-going in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. For further insight see Ansell Pearson 2005.
- 2 Nietzsche uses two terms, sometimes interchangeably, for his teaching: *die ewige Wiederkunft* (from the verb *kommen*, to come) and *die ewige Wiederkehr* (from the verb *kehren*, to turn). In the first 1881 sketch Nietzsche presents the teaching as one of *Wiederkunft*; in the “Lenzer Heide” notebook on European nihilism of 1887 it is given first as one of *Wiederkehr* and then as *Wiederkunft* (see the translation forthcoming in Ansell Pearson and Large 2006). The difference also operates in the presentation in *TI*, “What I Owe the Ancients,” sections 4 and 5. In his translation of *TI* Duncan Large follows Walter Kaufmann and translates the two expressions as “eternal return” and “eternal recurrence” respectively (R. J. Hollingdale’s translation of the text translates both as “eternal recurrence”). There appears to be no consensus on this issue, however, amongst translators. Joan Stambaugh, for example, translates *Wiederkunft* as *return* and *Wiederkehr* as *recurrence*, and conceives the difference as follows: where “return” stresses a going back and a completion of movement, “recurrence” stresses another occurrence and the beginning of a movement, with recurrence being closer in meaning to repetition than return. She makes the further contentious claim that when he is addressing the nihilistic form of the thought Nietzsche uses the term *Wiederkehr* (which she translates as “recurrence”) and that he reserves *Wiederkunft* (which she translates as “return”) for its more positive form. Although I am not convinced that this is what is at play in the doubling of *Wiederkehr* and *Wiederkunft* we encounter in Nietzsche, it is an issue well worth chewing over. It can be noted, however, that in *Ecce Homo*, where Nietzsche names eternal return as the highest formula of affirmation attainable, he uses the word *Wiederkunft* for his thought. When Zarathustra’s animals declare that Zarathustra’s destiny (*Schicksal*) is to be and to become the teacher of the teaching the term used in the text is *ewige Wiederkunft* (Z, “The Convalescent,” 2). In a private communication Andreas Sommer has pointed out to me that whereas *Wiederkehr* is a possible equivalent for *Rückkehr* (return), *Wiederkunft* is not such a synonym but rather a word from Christian eschatology (it is the word used in German when speaking of the “Second Coming” of Christ, as Nietzsche is well aware, see *The Anti-Christ*, 41). In this essay I have chosen to refer to Nietzsche’s thought as “eternal return” for the most part. For Stambaugh’s argument see Stambaugh (1972: 30ff., 2004: 335–42).
- 3 KSA 9 11[141], pp. 494–5. The first complete translation of this sketch will appear in Ansell Pearson and Large (2006). David Krell translates several parts of the sketch without providing a complete translation in his highly instructive reading of notebook M III 1. See Heidegger (1961: 330–1, 1984: 74–5) and Krell (1996: 158–77, esp. pp. 162–4).
- 4 Nietzsche’s own doctrine of freedom centers on viewing what one is as “a piece of fate” in which, “the fatality of one’s being cannot be disentangled from the fatality of all that was and will be” (*TI*, “The Four Great Errors,” 8). On Nietzsche’s request that his readers hear the “halcyon tone” of his wisdom, see *EH*, foreword, 4.
- 5 According to the commentary found in KSA 14 on this note Nietzsche’s citations of Spinoza in it are taken from a volume in Kuno Fischer’s history of modern philosophy.

- 6 An exception is the study by Blondel (1991); see esp. ch. 9 (pp. 201–39).
- 7 See his editor's note to Heidegger 1984 (p. 75), and the editors' note in KSA 14, p. 645.
- 8 In the 1880s incorporation becomes increasingly thought of in terms of the will to power, conceived as a "will" to grow through the extension of power and the assimilation of alien forces (KSA 13, 14[192]; WP 728; cf. BGE 259).
- 9 One major recent intellectual figure for whom the incorporation of truth became an increasingly important issue was Michel Foucault. He turns to it in his late work, principally his lecture course at the Collège de France of 1981–2 on the hermeneutics of the subject (see Foucault 2005).

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