

**The Breaking of the World:
Reclaiming Karl Jaspers' Existential-Experimental Reading of
Friedrich Nietzsche**

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A thesis submitted in total fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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March 2020

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Abstract

When Walter Kaufmann wrote his highly influential *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (1950) in early post-war America, he was sure to respectfully acknowledge the work of his interpretive predecessor, the German philosopher and Nietzsche scholar Karl Jaspers, describing Jaspers' *Nietzsche: An Introduction to the Understanding of his Philosophical Activity* published in 1936 as "one of the best books yet written" on the topic (74). But this praise belies Kaufmann's fundamental rejection of Jaspers' approach, with his criticism marking a decisive about-turn in Nietzsche scholarship. Although he takes up Jaspers' hermeneutic vision of Nietzsche as an 'existential-experimentalist,' Kaufmann borrows this framework to reject Jaspers' view that Nietzsche's work is deeply contradictory. Today, Kaufmann's consistency model has become widespread, along with the belief that Jaspers' contradictory model provides little understanding of Nietzsche's philosophy.

This thesis calls for a return to Jaspers' existential-experimental interpretation of Nietzsche by demonstrating the importance of Jaspers' now largely forgotten insights into Nietzsche's work. After arguing that Kaufmann's consistency reading relies on an illegitimate scientisation through suggestion, I show that Jaspers' own *Existenzphilosophie*—which uses limit-situations (*Grenzsituationen*) to dissolve a stable and unified conception of reality into the modes of the Encompassing (*das Umgreifende*)—provides a strong conceptual model for understanding Nietzsche's unique method of philosophising. Through complementary studies of Nietzsche's process and theories of truth, I present Nietzsche's philosophy as an experimentation with conflicting worldviews yielding *informative contradictions*. In further support of this approach, I apply Jaspers' framework to deal with the self-reference paradox and to bring out the meta-modal dimensions of Nietzsche's thought, before using Jaspers' hermeneutic map to navigate between analytic and postmodernist readings. Building on the Jasperian model, I present Nietzsche as an existential-experimental artist who practises philosophy through receptive, fluid, diaristic thinking, and who affirms life through a theory-induced aesthetic engagement with the everyday.

Statement of Authorship

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma. No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis. This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

This work was supported by a La Trobe University Postgraduate Research Scholarship.

Julia Ely

31 March 2020

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisors Dr Yuri Cath and Dr Jake Chandler who have supported me through this process. It is always a gift, I think, to work with people who come from different philosophical backgrounds, and I have benefited greatly from their skills and perspectives. I would also like to thank Assoc. Prof. James Leibold for his general advice and assistance with administrative issues, and I am very grateful for the stimulating discussions I have had with fellow postgraduates at La Trobe. I consider myself incredibly lucky to have received the support of Dr Michael Ure from Monash, who somehow found time to provide detailed feedback on my drafts. Additionally, I would like to thank Dr Dilber Thwaites for her abundance of good wishes, Richard Thwaites for proofreading this work, and Reinhild Hofmann for her help with translations.

My writing is always dedicated to my family: to my parents, Margaret and Brian Ely, who have been so incredibly generous and patient throughout this process; to my brother Michael whose memory reminds me of what is most important in life; and to my brother Jon and his family who give me the release of laughter. I also want to express my gratitude to Rachael Lahiff for her kind friendship and support. Finally, though it goes without saying, I am endlessly grateful to my partner Adam—without his help, and his integrity and intelligence as my compass points, I would not have made it through this journey.

Abbreviations

Works by Friedrich Nietzsche

I have used the following editions of Nietzsche's works and refer to them using the abbreviations provided below. Where I have preferred to use a different translation, this is acknowledged in the footnote, with the relevant citation details provided in the bibliography. Given the academic controversy around *The Will to Power*, notes from this work are used sparingly and with caution. The corresponding reference to each note as it appears in Colli and Montinari's *German Kritische Gesamtausgabe* is provided in the relevant footnote citation.

- BT *The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music*. Edited by Michael Tanner. Translated by Shaun Whiteside. London: Penguin Books, (1872) 1993.
- OTL “On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense.” In *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870's*, edited and translated by Daniel Breazeale. New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1979.
- SE “Schopenhauer as Educator.” In *Untimely Meditations*, edited by Daniel Breazeale, translated by R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, (1874) 1997.
- HH *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*. Vol. 1. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, (1878) 1996.
- AOM “Assorted Opinions and Maxims.” In Vol. 2 of *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, translated by R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, (1879) 1996.
- WS “The Wanderer and His Shadow.” In Vol. 2 of *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, translated by R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, (1880) 1996.

- D *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*. Edited by Maudmarie Clark and Brian Leiter. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, (1881) 1997.
- GS *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*. Edited by Bernard Williams. Translated by Josefine Nauckhoff. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, (1882) 2001.
- TSZ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for Everyone and No One*. Translated with an introduction by R. J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin Books, (1885) 1969.
- BGE *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*. Edited by Rolf-Peter Horstmann. Translated by Judith Norman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, (1886) 2002.
- GM *On the Genealogy of Morality*. Edited by Keith Ansell-Pearson. Translated by Carol Diethe. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, (1887) 2006.
- CW “The Case of Wagner.” In *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*, translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, (1888) 1967.
- TI “Twilight of the Idols.” In *Twilight of the Idols/The Anti-Christ*, translated by R. J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin Books, (1889) 1990.
- A “The Anti-Christ.” In *Twilight of the Idols/The Anti-Christ*, translated by R. J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin Books, (1894) 1990.
- EH *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is*. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. Edinburgh and London: Penguin Books, (1908) 1992.
- WP *The Will to Power*. Edited by Walter Kaufmann. Translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage Books, (1901) 1967.
- eKGWB *Digitale Kritische Gesamtausgabe Werke und Briefe*. Edited by Paolo D’Iorio, based on the critical text by G. Colli and M. Montinari. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1967.

Central Works by Karl Jaspers and Walter Kaufmann

The main works of Nietzsche interpretation by Karl Jaspers and Walter Kaufmann will be abbreviated as follows in the text. Other works by these authors will be treated as general texts with details provided in the bibliography.

NIUPA Jaspers, Karl. *Nietzsche: An Introduction to the Understanding of His Philosophical Activity*. Translated by Charles F. Wallraff and Frederick J. Schmitz. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, (1936) 1965.

PPA Kaufmann, Walter. *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*. 4th ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, (1950) 2013.

Introduction

In the first few decades after his death, Nietzsche was largely regarded as a literary figure rather than a philosopher as such: a genius who created provocative works of art; a writer who produced a great forest of aphorisms through which one can wander, gathering inspiration from the scattered leaves of his thought. What Nietzsche valued—and what others valued in Nietzsche—was not the force of his argumentation, but the poetry of his creative expression through which he offered up insightful and informative thought-impressions to the reader. During the 1930s, however, Nietzsche would increasingly come to be interpreted as a philosophical thinker.¹ This is due, in large part, to the extraordinary scholarship of Karl Jaspers, who, along with Karl Löwith and Martin Heidegger,² distinguished Nietzsche from the famous aphorists of the past, with Jaspers warning in his *Nietzsche: An Introduction to the Understanding of His Philosophical Activity (NIUPA)* that “it [is] a mistake to admire Nietzsche as a poet and writer at the cost of not taking him seriously as a philosopher.”³

But in this reorientation, Jaspers is careful to maintain that Nietzsche’s work is distinct from traditional philosophy, and cannot be assimilated into a conventional framework. Just as it was a mistake to regard Nietzsche as a literary figure, “[a]gain it was a mistake to regard him as simply a philosopher like one of the earlier philosophers and to measure him by their measure.”⁴ While his writing is not “*aphoristic* in the manner of the famous aphorists” it is not “*systematic* in the sense of constituting a deliberately planned philosophical system”; “[i]n contrast to the

¹ Ernst Behler, “Nietzsche in the Twentieth Century,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, eds. Bernd Magnus and Kathleen Higgins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 282–83. This claim serves the purpose of providing an impressionistic overview of the large-scale shifts and movements in Nietzsche reception. Of course, focusing in on the detail, we find a more complicated account. In the early decades of the twentieth century, along with novelists, poets, and playwrights such as Stefan George, André Gide, Thomas Mann, W. B. Yeats, and George Bernard Shaw, we find more explicitly philosophical (though often still highly literary) studies by thinkers like Georg Simmel (*Schopenhauer und Nietzsche: Ein Vortragszyklus* [Leipzig: Duncker and Humblot, 1907], Ernst Bertram (*Nietzsche: Versuch einer Mythologie* [Berlin: G. Bondi, 1918]), and, in the United States, H. L. Mencken (*The Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche* [London: T.F. Unwin, 1908]), and William Salter (*Nietzsche the Thinker: A Study* [New York: H. Holt, 1917]). A thorough overview of early Nietzsche reception in Germany can be found in Steven E. Aschheim’s *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany: 1890–1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). See especially Chapters 2 and 3. For an overview of early Nietzsche reception in the English-speaking world, see Peter R. Sedgwick, “Nietzsche as Literature / Nietzsche as ‘German’ Literature,” *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, no. 13, (Spring 1997): 53–71; and Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen, *American Nietzsche: A History of an Icon and His Ideas* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 35–45. Behler’s “Nietzsche in the Twentieth Century,” 281–322, provides a thorough but manageable overview of Nietzsche reception globally.

² Bernd Magnus, foreword to *Nietzsche’s Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, by Karl Löwith, trans. J. Harvey Lomax (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), xiii–xiv.

³ Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche: An Introduction to the Understanding of His Philosophical Activity*, trans. Charles F. Wallraff and Frederick J. Schmitz (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, [1936] 1965), 6. The work will be abbreviated as *NIUPA* hereafter.

⁴ *NIUPA*, 6.

systematists, he did not build a complete logical structure” in his work.⁵ Indeed, Jaspers goes so far as to argue that Nietzsche’s immense philosophical import lay in this distinction, in the anti-systematic, deeply contradictory, self-antagonistic nature of his thinking and writing. “*Self-contradiction*,” he famously proclaimed, “is the fundamental ingredient in Nietzsche’s thought.”⁶

To convey the enigmatic complexity of Nietzsche’s anti-systematic approach, Jaspers utilises the deeply affecting metaphor and Romantic trope of the ruin. Reading Nietzsche, he tells us, is like walking through the crumbling remains of a collapsed building where “a vast multiplicity of fragments” lie scattered about us.⁷ But unlike Romantic depictions of such scenes, the mood here is not solemn but chaotic; the walls have not decayed but exploded; and there is no remembered whole, but a strange totality which endlessly broke apart as Nietzsche tried to construct it.

An oeuvre characterised as such requires a special procedure on the part of the interpreter: “The task seems to demand a search throughout the ruins for the building, even though the latter will not reveal itself to anybody as a complete, single, and unambiguous whole.”⁸ Here, to quote Bernd Magnus, the focus must be on the activity of philosophising rather than any “congealed body of theses or doctrines.”⁹ In Jaspers own words, it is the job of the interpreter to explore “the dissonances, boundaries, and abysses” which run throughout Nietzsche’s thinking.¹⁰

Walter Kaufmann is highly critical of this contradiction-seeking hermeneutics and sets about in his 1950 publication *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*¹¹ to establish a *hermeneutics of coherence* where one looks beyond the surface ambiguity of Nietzsche’s writing to reveal a deep-systematicity hidden below. He acknowledges that “grave difficulties are encountered when one tries seriously to follow Nietzsche’s thought,” writing that when “one attempts to penetrate beyond the clever epigrams and well-turned insults to grasp their consequences and to coordinate them, one is troubled.”¹² Indeed, he tells us, Nietzsche’s work shines like a dazzling mosaic, creating a ‘pluralistic universe’ made up of thousands of self-contained aphorisms that throw light upon one another, forming tensions, contradictions, and inconsistencies in a chaotic cross-relation.¹³ But this ‘monadological effect,’ as Kaufmann calls it, is just that—an effect.¹⁴ Ideas which appear to be isolated and contradictory are in fact linked

⁵ NIUPA, 6, emphasis in original.

⁶ NIUPA, 10, emphasis in original.

⁷ NIUPA, 4.

⁸ NIUPA, 4.

⁹ Magnus, foreword to *Nietzsche’s Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, xiv.

¹⁰ NIUPA, 17.

¹¹ Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 4th ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013). PPA will be used to refer to the work hereafter.

¹² PPA, 72.

¹³ PPA, 75.

¹⁴ PPA, 75.

together through a deep implicit reasoning and intention. These implicit connections are difficult to find, for while “[o]ther thinkers generally accomplish this coordination [of ideas] for us,” Nietzsche leaves this work to the interpreter who must use a specially developed hermeneutics to uncover the devilishly complex but consistent theory lying beneath the surface chaos.¹⁵ Nietzsche, Kaufmann assures us, does not express multiple, conflicting philosophical arguments and positions; he has a set message and system and it is the interpreter’s duty to find and re-present his systematic thought.

Observing, then, that in a very deep sense the stylistic and interpretive views of Nietzsche held by Jaspers and Kaufmann are utterly opposed, it is fascinating to notice that Kaufmann justifies his coherence reading by adopting the conceptual language of Jaspers’ existential hermeneutics. Under the Jaspersian schema, Nietzsche is viewed as a philosopher of life whose existential-experimental approach is productive of his deeply contradictory and fragmented philosophy. Borrowing from this framework, Kaufmann also presents Nietzsche as an ‘existentialist’ and philosophical ‘experimenter,’ but, here, rather than leading to conceptual breakup, the ‘existential-experimental’ methodology results in deep systematicity and coherence.¹⁶ For both interpreters, ‘life’ plays a central role in unifying Nietzsche’s writings. But while in the Jaspersian schema, the life-unity principle draws conflicting statements together into irresolvable but educative tensions (giving us the strange, ever-splintering philosophical structure described above), for Kaufmann, the idea of ‘unity in life’ is one of pure cohesion, synthesising Nietzsche’s disparate thoughts together into a rational, coherent whole.

In this thesis, I will argue that the interpretive framework of existentialism has been fundamentally misappropriated by Kaufmann in his effort to present Nietzsche as a coherent philosopher, and should be reunderstood in its original Jaspersian sense, which takes self-

¹⁵ PPA, 72.

¹⁶ It is largely based on this self-characterisation that scholars have categorised Kaufmann’s interpretation as an ‘existential’ one. See, for example, R. Kevin Hill, *Nietzsche’s Critiques: The Kantian Foundation of his Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 2; and Ashley Woodward, *Understanding Nietzscheanism* (Durham: Acumen, 2011), 28, 53–56. It is also common to hold that Kaufmann’s reading was ‘existential’ due to its focus on self-creation and self-direction in a Godless world. However, to make a point that could be developed in much greater detail, if calling for one to cultivate and order one’s competing drives is enough to make one an existentialist, we are working with a very weak—almost meaningless—account of this philosophical movement. Indeed, this is not unrelated to the fact that some have applied the existential epithet disparagingly to Kaufmann, tying his alleged ‘whitewashing’ of Nietzsche’s complex and sometimes troubling views on politics and morality to his reading of Nietzsche as an ‘existential’ humanist (see, for example, Walter Sokel, “Political Uses and Abuses of Nietzsche in Walter Kaufmann’s Image of Nietzsche,” *Nietzsche-Studien* 12 [1983]: 436–42). It should be noted—as Woodward has done—that in his later years, against the evidence of his own publications, Kaufmann denies that ‘existentialising’ Nietzsche was ever his intention (*Understanding Nietzscheanism*, 54; see Kaufmann’s *Existentialism, Religion and Death: Thirteen Essays* [New York: New American Library, 1976], 101). For a detailed account of Kaufmann’s ‘existentially’ themed commentaries, see Stanley Corngold, *Walter Kaufmann: Philosopher, Humanist, Heretic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

contradiction to be “the fundamental ingredient in Nietzsche’s thought.”¹⁷ Through a close examination of Kaufmann’s hermeneutic model outlined in *PPA*, I will demonstrate that his methodological defence of the existential-experimental model fails to establish deep systematicity and coherence in Nietzsche’s work, and, instead, uses the veneer of existentialism to construct an analytic and scientised account of Nietzsche. Against this, it will be shown that the Jasperian reading is best able to capture the vertiginous landscape of Nietzsche’s works, and that without this approach, we risk falling into the comfortable interpretive practice of self-validation and self-falsification. Challenging Kaufmann’s claim that Jaspers appropriates Nietzsche, we will see that Nietzsche’s philosophy exhibits the same existential format evident in Jaspers’ philosophising—an observation that not only problematises the common interpretive view of Nietzsche as a happy naturaliser, but also renews our access to some of Nietzsche’s most perplexing claims. In justifying Jaspers’ existential reading, I offer a reconstruction of Nietzsche’s philosophical process as that of the existential-artist, demonstrating that Nietzsche utilised the unique functional aspects of receptivity, fluidity, and diaristic self-exploration, and I suggest that the existential state identifiable in Jaspers’ existentialism opens up a new understanding of Nietzsche’s aestheticisation of life, with ‘life as art’ presented as a (post)modernist affirmation of the everyday.

The Forgetting of Jaspers’ Nietzsche

It is hard to underestimate the influence Kaufmann has had on Anglophone Nietzsche scholarship.¹⁸ While the details of his arguments have faded from view, his conclusions have been thoroughly entrenched in the field, forming the solid parameters within which many contemporary interpreters practice.¹⁹ Indeed, Kaufmann’s views are so firmly set into the scholarly landscape that we are barely aware of them as underlying protocols and rarely think to question them. At the same time, and with the same sense of general acceptance, Jaspers’

¹⁷ *NIUPA*, 10.

¹⁸ Kaufmann’s dominance over the field is reported in a positive light by Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen: “From 1950 to 1974 Kaufmann’s *Nietzsche* went through four editions, and it is still in print today. Many regard it as the single most important—certainly the most popular—study of the German philosopher ever written in any language. Throughout his career Kaufmann presided over the English-language Nietzsche industry, advocating or recommending against the publication of new Nietzsche studies, and reviewing new scholarship in the field” (“‘Dionysian Enlightenment’: Walter Kaufmann’s Nietzsche in Historical Perspective,” *Modern Intellectual History* 3, no. 2 [2006]: 239–42). Critical of this intellectual monopoly, Tracy B. Strong writes that “the power of Kaufmann’s book ... effectively gave him and his supporters control over Nietzsche studies in America. ... It was not that Kaufmann sought to prevent other writing from coming to publication but that as he was for a long time almost the only writer of distinction in the field, his was the only opinion that would always be sought” (*Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988], 313).

¹⁹ Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 5–6.

hermeneutic blueprint has been put aside as a strange, if not somewhat intriguing, experiment—his approach now commonly seen as having little relevance for the (factually oriented, if not analytic) Anglophone scholar of today who wants to get at what Nietzsche thought and said. Again, it is known with such certainty that this contradictory model is inappropriate and outdated that interpreters do not need to know why the contradictory model is inappropriate and outdated. Despite overwhelming indications of contradiction in Nietzsche's work, it is a given for most that Jaspers' contradictory model is of little scholarly use.²⁰

To appreciate this collective academic mindset, a behind-the-scenes knowledge of the personal dynamic between Kaufmann and Jaspers is illuminating, for it was largely through Kaufmann's criticisms that Jaspers' interpretation fell into this state of disrepute.

Having briefly characterised Jaspers' approach as a "carv[ing] out" of "looked-for contradictions" in his 1950 publication of *PPA*,²¹ Kaufmann followed this up in 1952 with his article, "Jaspers' Relation to Nietzsche," which focused exclusively on discrediting Jaspers' Nietzsche interpretation.²² Throughout this essay, Kaufmann attempts to justify his claim that, as an interpreter, Jaspers does not present Nietzsche's philosophy as Nietzsche originally intended it, but uses Nietzsche's ideas as a vehicle for his own philosophical views, treating Nietzsche "as a steppingstone towards his own existentialism,"²³ projecting a love of the "whirling rapids" of contradiction and antinomy onto Nietzsche's unambivalent thought.²⁴

²⁰ This is, of course, a generalisation, and exceptions here must be acknowledged. Certainly, we have Anglophone Nietzsche scholars who work outside of the analytic mould (one thinks here of more continentally oriented writers such as Babette Babich (with, for example, her Derridean account of an aesthetic logic in "The Metaphor of Woman as Truth in Nietzsche: The Dogmatist's Reverse Logic or Rückschluß," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 12 [Autumn 1996]: 27–39); and Geoff Waite (with, for example, his insightfully chaotic "Nietzsche—Rhetoric—Nihilism: 'Every Name in History,' 'Every Style,'—'Everything permitted?'" [A Political Philology of the Last Letter], in *Nietzsche, Nihilism and the Philosophy of the Future*, ed. Jeffrey Metzger [London: Continuum, 2009], 54–78). So, too, are there scholars in the Anglosphere who—while they might not neatly or consistently fit into the postmodernist box—acknowledge a deep contradictoriness in Nietzsche's work, though they are in the minority. For a period of time in his career, Bernd Magnus qualified as one such thinker. For a brief, though fascinating, account of his ambivalence on the issue of consistency in Nietzsche's writings, see "Asceticism and Eternal Recurrence: A Bridge Too Far," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 37, Supplement (1999): 93. Taking on an uncharacteristically postmodern temper in "Who is the Übermensch? Time, Truth, and Woman in Nietzsche," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 53, no. 2 (April–June, 1992), Keith Ansell-Pearson writes of the need to illuminate the "contradictions and paradoxes" in Nietzsche's thought through an understanding of "the way in which Nietzsche's text deconstruct their own claims to authority" (312). Indeed, a Jasperian intonation can come through in the work of such writers. We hear this, for example, in Fiona Jenkins' assertion that "all [of Nietzsche's] evaluative standards give the impression of being subject to violent confrontations and extreme reversals," thus requiring us to "be surprised at ourselves as well as open to surprise" ("Rhetoric, Judgement, and the Art of Surprise in Nietzsche's Genealogy," in *Nietzsche and Antiquity: His Reaction and Response to the Classical Tradition*, ed. Paul Bishop [Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2004], 295–96). The important difference between the Jasperian and postmodernist account of contradiction in Nietzsche's work will be discussed in Chapter 4.

²¹ *PPA*, 75.

²² Walter Kaufmann, "Jaspers' Relation to Nietzsche," in *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, ed. Paul Schilpp (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1957), 407–36.

²³ Kaufmann, "Jaspers Relation to Nietzsche," 408.

²⁴ Kaufmann, 434.

Using this disreputable method of contradiction hunting, Kaufmann tells us, Jaspers is able to “reduce” Nietzsche’s work “to a doormat for the edifice of Kantianism” and to impose his own brand of Christian existentialism onto Nietzsche’s thoroughly atheistic philosophy.²⁵ Rejecting Jaspers’ Kantian Christianising in a few swift moves, Kaufmann concludes that Jaspers’ reading fails to engage with the “psychological” aspect of Nietzsche’s work, “empties [Nietzsche’s] vivid conceptions of their empirical content,” and manifests imaginary contradictions and absurdities through a “vacuity [which] is a function of Jaspers’ approach.”

In 1957, Kaufmann’s article was published as one of the contributions to *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*—a collection of essays aimed at the elucidation and exploration of Jaspers’ philosophy.²⁶ As part of the Schilpp Library of Living Philosophers series, the format of the book allows the featured philosopher to respond to the various contributions on their thought.²⁷ In reply to Kaufmann’s article, Jaspers does not engage with the specifics of Kaufmann’s criticisms, but responds more generally, noting, among other things, that Kaufmann’s contribution “completely falls outside the tone of the other essays,” and misunderstands his method.²⁸ In *From Shakespeare to Existentialism*, Kaufmann offers a blunt response: Jaspers did not engage with this criticism because he could not.²⁹

Though Jaspers’ reticence was understandable on the grounds he provided, with Kaufmann’s dominance over Nietzsche Studies in the Anglosphere, his decision not to respond appeared to give a default confirmation of Kaufmann’s reproach. Despite the publication of *NIUPA* in English translation in 1965, and perhaps because of *NIUPA*’s influence on the ‘New Nietzscheans,’³⁰ Kaufmann’s criticism would remain unchallenged, with two subsequent commentaries helping Kaufmann’s negative assessment to gain further traction.³¹ The first of these was Richard Lowell Howey’s *Heidegger and Jaspers on Nietzsche* (1973).³² Here, in a

²⁵ Kaufmann, 409, 420–25.

²⁶ Paul Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers* (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1957).

²⁷ Karl Jaspers, “Reply to My Critics,” in *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, 748–869.

²⁸ Jaspers, “Reply to My Critics,” 857. Jaspers also claims that Kaufmann “conceals the quotations” he cites, and ignores the evidence he provided in support of his thesis, pointing out (as we will in Chapters Two and Four) that the very extensive Book Two of his *NIUPA* “contains this material and sets the task for the movements of thought” (“Reply to My Critics,” 858).

²⁹ Walter Kaufmann, *From Shakespeare to Existentialism: Studies in Poetry, Religion, and Philosophy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), 288–89.

³⁰ See David B. Allison, ed., *The New Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1977).

³¹ We do find some exceptions here, including praise for Jaspers in Wilcox’s *Truth and Value in Nietzsche: A Study of his Metaethics and Epistemology* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1974), 8. Despite expressing an openness to contradiction, however, Wilcox’s book is thoroughly opposed to Jaspers’ work in terms of its own methodology and content (see Chapter 5, footnote 66 of this thesis). It should also be noted that Jaspers’ “Man as His Own Creator (Morality)” from *NIUPA* is included in Robert C. Solomon ed., *Nietzsche: A Collection of Critical Essays* (New York: Anchor Books, 1973), 131–55, with this work reappearing in Daniel W. Conway and Peter S. Groff eds., *Nietzsche: Critical Assessments*, vol. 3 (London: Routledge, 1998), 95–114.

³² Richard Lowell Howey, *Heidegger and Jaspers on Nietzsche: A Critical Examination of Heidegger’s and Jaspers’ Interpretations of Nietzsche* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973).

drawn-out format, we find the very same complaints and conclusions given to us by Kaufmann: “Jaspers reads his own philosophy into Nietzsche’s,” writes Howey, transforming Nietzsche into an irrationalist, since, “in terms of [Jaspers’] own philosophy, [he] not only regards ambiguity as necessary, [but] comes to regard it as a virtue.”³³ Through his ‘dialectic of contradiction,’ Jaspers “places much more importance on the process of Nietzsche’s philosophising than on Nietzsche’s doctrines,”³⁴ trivialising Nietzsche’s concepts.³⁵ And again, like Kaufmann, Howey repeats the line that “judging from his ... silence,” Jaspers “does not take ... possible criticisms very seriously” and “regard[s] these criticisms as self-refuting.”³⁶ More recently, David Pickus—one of Kaufmann’s strongest contemporary supporters—has repeated these messages, writing that it is because of the strength of Kaufmann’s arguments that Jaspers relies on “general assertion[s]” rather than “tak[ing] up ... the power to refute.”³⁷ Thus, Pickus concludes, Kaufmann successfully demonstrates that “Jaspers was amalgamating Nietzsche to an intellectual tradition that is fundamentally uncongenial to him” instead of “listening to what Nietzsche had to say.”³⁸

Aided by Pickus’ analysis and the space left by Jaspers’ silence, Kaufmann’s claim that Jaspers’ Nietzsche interpretation is an illegitimate appropriation is now repeated as a truism. Harvey Lomax, for instance, writes that Jaspers “intrude[s] [himself] ‘creatively’ into [his] portrayals of Nietzsche.”³⁹ Advocating for Kaufmann’s interpretation in her “‘Dionysian Enlightenment’: Walter Kaufmann’s Nietzsche in Historical Perspective,” Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen presumably includes Jaspers in “the traffic of misinterpretations” that Kaufmann directs us away from as he moves us towards ‘the real Nietzsche.’⁴⁰ Though commending Jaspers’ *NIUPA* as “the quintessential presentation of Nietzsche as an existentialist,” Ashley Woodward tempers his praise with the assertion “that it is really an introduction to his own philosophy,”⁴¹ and, more worryingly, leaves Jaspers out altogether from his *Interpreting Nietzsche*—a book, he tells us, that is aimed at “provid[ing] an introductory survey of landmark readings of Nietzsche throughout the twentieth century.”⁴² While Christopher Macann writes

³³ Howey, *Heidegger and Jaspers on Nietzsche*, 178.

³⁴ Howey, 173.

³⁵ Howey, 175.

³⁶ Howey, 172.

³⁷ David Pickus, “Wishes of the Heart: Walter Kaufmann, Karl Jaspers, and Disposition in Nietzsche Scholarship,” *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 33, (Spring 2007): 14.

³⁸ Pickus, “Wishes of the Heart,” 17. Stanley Corngold affirms this assessment in his work on Kaufmann, writing that “Pickus produces good and honorable grounds for Kaufmann’s criticism of Jaspers” (*Walter Kaufmann*, 45).

³⁹ Harvey Lomax, trans., translator’s introduction to *Nietzsche’s Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, by Karl Löwith (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), xxiii.

⁴⁰ Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen, “Dionysian Enlightenment,” 249.

⁴¹ Ashley Woodward, *Understanding Nietzscheanism*, 37.

⁴² Ashley Woodward, “Whose Nietzsche?” in *Interpreting Nietzsche: Reception and Influence*, ed. Ashley Woodward (London: Continuum, 2011), 1.

that “[t]here is a great deal of valuable material to be found” in Jaspers’ *Reason and Existenz*, this is with the understanding that Jaspers “uses Kierkegaard and Nietzsche as a way to get at [his] own existential position.”⁴³ And while Welfing, who communicates Jaspers’ interpretation with unusual sensitivity and detail, holds the general opinion that all Nietzsche interpretations are a reflection of the interpreter, he still ends up describing Jaspers’ reading as an “ideological stance.”⁴⁴ Bracing against this tide is Keith Ansell-Pearson. But Ansell-Pearson is alone in taking this position, and, in his use of Jaspers, he only offers us a small (paragraph-sized) contribution.⁴⁵ All in all, the collective sentiment is summed up by Hugo Drochon when he states that while *NIUPA* “remains a great source of inspiration,” it is a “*parti pris* for Jaspers’ own *Existenzphilosophie*.”⁴⁶

Chapter Outline

The purpose of this thesis, then, is to challenge the widely held assumption that in reading Nietzsche’s work as a ‘whirl’ of contradictions, Jaspers is appropriating Nietzsche’s thought by imposing his own delight in ambiguity and inconsistency onto Nietzsche’s writings. I want to show not only that Jaspers’ antinomical model gives us a more accurate hermeneutics for accessing and presenting Nietzsche’s works, but that it affords us the opportunity for a more meaningful engagement with these texts.

To carry out this project, I will start by demonstrating the argumentative weakness of Kaufmann’s ‘existential-experimental’ hermeneutics in Chapter One. Through close analysis, we will see that Kaufmann offers no legitimate evidence or argumentation in support of his claim that Nietzsche’s ‘existential-experimental’ method results in a deeply consistent philosophy. It will be shown instead that Kaufmann forms his argument through indirect means, using the Jasperian language of existentialism to covertly present an (unlikely and unargued) picture of Nietzsche as an anti-existential, analytic-friendly thinker who utilises an orderly scientific method of investigation producing a systematisable body of thought.

⁴³ Christopher Macann, “Existentialism, Authenticity, and the Self,” in *The Continuum Companion to Existentialism*, eds. Felicity Joseph, Jack Reynolds, and Ashley Woodward (London: Continuum, 2011), 209. See *Reason and Existenz: Five Lectures*, trans. William Earle (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1956).

⁴⁴ Johannes Frederik Welfing, “Nietzschean Configurations,” (PhD diss., University of Alberta, 1999), 32. Tyler Roberts similarly comments on Jaspers while failing to follow the strains of Jaspers’ interpretation that intertwine with his own vision of Nietzsche’s philosophy (*Contesting Spirit: Nietzsche, Affirmation, Religion* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998], 4).

⁴⁵ Keith Ansell-Pearson, “Recent Developments in Scholarship on Key Existentialists: Nietzsche,” in *The Continuum Companion to Existentialism*, 293–94. Jaspers is also briefly mentioned in Ansell-Pearson’s *Nietzsche’s Search for Philosophy: On the Middle Writings* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 4–5, 6, 142.

⁴⁶ Hugo Drochon, *Nietzsche’s Great Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 22.

Given the notorious opacity of Jaspers' writing (which may have contributed to Kaufmann's original misunderstanding of Jaspers' work, and helped this misunderstanding to persist in the readings of Howey and Pickus), we must take time to acquaint ourselves with Jaspers' own *Existenzphilosophie* so that we may better comprehend his dense hermeneutics, providing ourselves with the depth of understanding needed to illuminate Jaspers' immensely powerful and penetrating interpretation of Nietzsche as an existential-experimentalist. To facilitate this understanding, Chapter Two will provide an extensive overview of some of Jaspers' key concepts, focusing on a strong three-part movement in Jaspers' existential philosophy where thinking through limit-situations (*Grenzsituationen*) alerts us to the way we live through fundamental modes (such as 'consciousness in general,' 'spirit,' 'Existenz') that form together as the Encompassing (*das Umgreifende*), provoking a *transfigured existential apprehension* of self and world. With this conceptual background in place, we will navigate our way through Jaspers' reading of Nietzsche, filling in the contours of this forgotten interpretation to present Nietzsche as a thinker who explores our (incongruous) lived commitments to science, spirit, and philosophy as perspective-forming frameworks.

With a clearer understanding of the existential-experimental models offered by Kaufmann and Jaspers, I will take the Kaufmannian template that brings out consistency (presented in Chapter One), and the Jasperian template that allows for contradiction (presented in Chapter Two), and assess these in terms of their ability to accurately capture Nietzsche's thought. To determine their interpretive fidelity, I will look at how well these accounts fit with the evidence we have of Nietzsche's applied philosophical process in Chapters Three and Four. Through these studies, I will show that Nietzsche's philosophy involves a deeply committed experimentation with contradictory frameworks. In the course of these analyses, attention will be drawn to a number of interpretive malpractices that are commonly found in Nietzsche scholarship resulting from an (unphilosophical) discomfort with contradiction, including an over-reliance on 'theory' and the problem of (what I will call) 'over-indication.' In order to diagnose and treat these problems, I draw a distinction between 'contentual' material (roughly, the content of Nietzsche's philosophical writings) and 'extra-contentual' material (roughly, biographical information about Nietzsche), and I reconstruct Nietzsche's philosophical *process* from these distinct but related angles. Confirming the strength of the Jasperian approach, my extra-contentual (i.e., roughly biographical) study of Nietzsche's methodology in Chapter Three will show Nietzsche to be an unconventional thinker who combined theoretical argumentation with the distinctive processes of *receptivity* (as an openness to challenging ideas presented by others), *fluidity* (as a means for organic, uninterrupted thought transcription), and, finally, *diaristic self-excavation* (as an honest exploration of conflicting, unconscious and uncomfortable aspects of self). Moving to a contentual analysis (i.e., an analysis of the content of Nietzsche's writings) in Chapter Four, it will be demonstrated that Jaspers' account of

Nietzsche on truth avoids the selectivity of the Kaufmannian-analytic and postmodernist readings. Having established the incorporative strength of the Jaspersian approach, I will then demonstrate that the pattern of existential philosophising isolated in Jaspers' philosophy—viz. the movement from limit-situation thinking to the Encompassing and the heightened existential state—also runs through Nietzsche's work. By tracking this existential progression, we see passageways of understanding open up in Nietzsche's writing which we will explore in the remainder of the thesis. Thus, in closing out our study of truth in Chapter Four, I will show how Jaspers' existential model helps us to approach Nietzsche's version of the self-reference paradox without our conditioned intellectual trepidation.

Taking us through more of these interpretive opportunities in Chapter Five, I will demonstrate that Nietzsche exercises his own self-reflective awareness of the Encompassing through his observation that as humans, we *necessarily* must shift between and balance out the different background modal frameworks of scientific cognition, spirit, existence, and Existenz. I will argue that listening to this meta-modal awareness in Nietzsche allows us to hear Nietzsche's calls for laughter, dance and play as deeper echoes of death and silence, and also helps us to appreciate the modal dimensions of Nietzsche's controversial assertion from *Beyond Good and Evil* that 'error is required for life.'⁴⁷ Addressing the problem of whether we should read Nietzsche as a conventional philosopher focused on theoretical discourse or a life-oriented thinker who performs philosophy as a practical-therapeutic means to self-creation, I will extend my vision of Nietzsche as an existential-artist as initially laid out in Chapter Three. Cultivating my reading from the fertile soil of Jaspers' existential analysis, I will use the model of the heightened existential state to present Nietzsche's affirmation of life as a meditative, artistic viewing of the everyday, where—stimulated by philosophical questioning—he is temporarily struck by the beautiful ugliness of existence. Finally, drawing attention to its broader utility, I will argue that Jaspers' Nietzsche interpretation helps us to identify and navigate away from the dangerous, unphilosophical currents hidden within the analytic and postmodernist interpretive domains.

Methodology

Finally, a few notes must be made here about my general methodology. Primarily, my aim here is to recover a lost interpretive work from the past. Such a project stands in contrast to norms in Nietzsche studies where there is an emphasis on creating one's own, new, personalised reading. However, given the current situation—the chronic neglect of Jaspers' work outlined

⁴⁷ BGE §24.

above—I think a ‘conservative’ thesis that primarily aims at exposition rather than creation is needed. In any case, while recovery is my primary aim, I will be building upon this exposition with my own insights, both in my analysis of Nietzsche on truth and method (Chapter Four) and in my investigation of Nietzsche’s existential-artistic process (Chapters Three and Five).

In regards to my use of texts, it should be noted that alongside Nietzsche’s published works, I have included references from Nietzsche’s unpublished notes. To give a simplified, though I think adequate, response to the controversy around the use of the *Nachlass*, I believe that—as is the case for all research—our projects are enhanced through the use of diverse sources including unpublished notes, letters, etc., so long as we use them responsibly, which means bringing together different materials to gain a holistic vision of the author whilst appreciating their important (functional, motivational, stylistic, etc.) differences. In the case of Nietzsche specifically, I think that such an approach is more than justified. If the reading I present here is correct (if Nietzsche philosophises as an existential-experimental artist), then—experimental notebook thinker that he is—the line between notes and published works are blurred, and, thus, the pool of unpublished notes form a crucial resource for gaining additional insight into, and understanding of, his thought.

In terms of my own writing, I would like to prepare the reader for the fact that I have used different styles throughout the thesis (with my analysis of Kaufmann’s argument in Chapter One utilising a more analytic approach, my discussion of Jaspers in Chapters Two written in a more expressive continental voice, and the remaining chapters on Nietzsche using a combination of both). While the work is thus something of a chimera, it is my hope that (like all good chimeras) its diversity of parts might strengthen it, allowing it to perform different but equally necessary tasks and functions, in order that (like all good philosophical writing) it can most effectively make its way towards truth and understanding.

Kaufmann's Reading of Nietzsche as Existential- Experimentalist: The Search for Hidden Consistency

Introduction

Kaufmann's view that there is deep systematicity and coherence in Nietzsche's work has had an immense impact on Nietzsche scholarship.¹ Yet, the 'existential-experimental' argument justifying his hermeneutic position is not well known.² The aim of this first chapter, then, is to take a close look at Kaufmann's presentation of Nietzsche's 'existential-experimental' methodology, in order to critically assess Kaufmann's hermeneutical assertion that an understanding of Nietzsche as an existentialist reveals to us the deeply coherent nature of his work. Through this analysis, we will see, ironically, that Kaufmann's discussion is made via a number of winding, discursive paths, with this structural complexity serving to hide an argument that is full of logical potholes and conceptual flaws, so much so that anyone who is in favour of the 'deep-system' approach to Nietzsche could only serve to problematise their general stance by showing the weakness of one of its original—and certainly, most influential—articulations.

Given the great weight Kaufmann's argument carries in Nietzsche studies on the one hand, and its stylistic unruliness and surprising argumentative paucity on the other, I would like to take extra precautions in the presentation of my analysis to assure the reader that I have represented Kaufmann accurately and have not been selective in my discussion. With this in mind, I will begin with a summary mapping that surveys, in abridged form, the essential points and pathways that make up Kaufmann's discussion on Nietzsche's methodology as he presents it in Chapter Two of *PPA*. Once we have walked through the argument and gained a sense of the terrain using our summary map, we will move on to a close analysis of Kaufmann's position, where we will carefully explore and critically assess the various paths of argument charted in our initial survey. Here we will track the three main arterial routes that guide us to the conclusion that Nietzsche's work is deeply systematic. While these lines of thought cross over and run into each other at different points, in rough chronological order they are: (i) the

¹ Pickus, "The Walter Kaufmann Myth," 226; Ratner-Rosenhagen, "'Dionysian Enlightenment,'" 239–42.

² It appears that there are no detailed analyses of this methodological defence which Kaufmann presents in Chapter Two of *PPA*, 72–95.

definitional-cum-explicative discussion on ‘experimental existentialism,’ (ii) the anti-foundational reading of Nietzsche’s rejection of systems, and (iii) the ‘life unifies work’ argument. Exploring these three argumentative tracks, we will find that Kaufmann does not make his way to his hermeneutic conclusion using legitimate paths of reasoning, but through trivial logical shortcuts and, importantly, the tactic of ‘including.’ Indeed, our close logical analysis will reveal that no matter which road one chooses to take through Kaufmann’s extensive multi-pronged argument, there is no legitimate route that leads from an existential-experimentalist reading to the conclusion that Nietzsche’s work is conceptually systematic and consistent. Most importantly, we will have taken our first step towards an appreciation of the way that the idea of Nietzsche as an *existential* philosopher has been radically, but surreptitiously, recast to suit a contemporary, analytically inclined readership.

Kaufmann’s Reading of Nietzsche as Existential-Experimentalist: Summary

What I present here is the core of Kaufmann’s argument in Chapter Two of *PPA*, which occurs in section IV, pages 89–93. In this slice of discussion we find representative expressions of all the main points Kaufmann makes throughout the entire chapter. In my analysis that follows this initial mapping, I will on occasion include quotes or passages that occur elsewhere in the chapter to further illustrate my points. The mapping provided here is primarily comprised of direct quotations from Kaufmann, and I have endeavoured to limit my own voice, with my input serving as a neutral guide through Kaufmann’s various lines of thought. The direct quotations have been organised into numbered sections, with each section acting as a summary marker for one of Kaufmann’s arguments. Page and paragraph numbers are provided for the original text so that Kaufmann’s arguments can be read in full. Let us, then, begin by reading through this overview in order to get a general sense of Kaufmann’s argument for consistency before moving on to the analysis that follows.

Figure 1. Summary Map of Kaufmann’s Argument for Consistency in *PPA*, Chapter Two, “Nietzsche’s Method,” Section IV, PP. 89–93.

[1] PP. 89–90, para. 1	To begin his argument, Kaufmann tells us that Nietzsche takes an experimental approach to philosophy. It is emphasised that this experimental approach has an ‘existential’ quality in the sense that, for Nietzsche, experimenting means ‘testing in life’: “Questions permitting of experiment are, to Nietzsche’s mind, those questions to which he can reply: ‘ <i>Versuchen wir’s!</i> ’ Let us try it! ³ Experimenting involves testing an answer by trying to live according to it.” Kaufmann then conveys to
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³ GS §51.

	us this existential weightiness of ‘lived’ experimentation: for Nietzsche, philosophical “problem[s] [are] experienced deeply, and only problems that are experienced so deeply are given consideration. Only problems that present themselves so forcefully that they threaten the thinker’s present mode of life lead to philosophic inquiries.”
[2] P. 90, para. 2–3	<p>This claim that Nietzsche’s experimental philosophy must be experienced or ‘lived’ is given textual support. Kaufmann begins by drawing on excerpts from Nietzsche’s writing on the German education system in <i>Daybreak</i>. Interspersing his voice with quotations directly from the source, Kaufmann writes:</p> <p>“A scanty knowledge of the Greeks and Romans” is forced down the students’ throats “in defiance of the supreme principle of ... education: that one should give food only to him who has a hunger for it!” Only in the “despair of ignorance” can we come to realize that “we need mathematical and mechanical knowledge.” Our “small daily life,” the common events of the workshop, of nature, and of society, must be seen to give rise to “thousands of problems—painful, abashing, exasperating problems.”⁴</p> <p>Kaufmann continues with his textual demonstration of the importance that lived philosophy has for Nietzsche by elaborating on a quote from Nietzsche’s notebooks:</p> <p>[S]cience is for Nietzsche not a finished and impersonal system, but a passionate quest for knowledge, an unceasing series of courageous experiments—small experiments, lacking in glamour and apparent grandeur, yet so serious that we cannot dodge them without betraying the scientific spirit of inquiry. Science and life are no longer wholly separate; science and philosophy are a way of life: “All truths are for me soaked in blood.”⁵</p>
[3] P. 90, para. 4	Reiterating the theme that experimental philosophy is existential or ‘lived,’ we are told once more that ‘experimenting’ or ‘questioning’ means “experiencing fully with an open mind and without reservations.”
[4] PP. 90–91, para. 5	<p>But not only is Nietzsche’s experimental philosophy ‘lived,’ Kaufmann now makes the additional claim that his experimental philosophy is <i>made coherent</i> by virtue of this lived, existential quality:</p> <p>More important is another implication of Nietzsche’s “existentialism”: it obviates the hopeless incoherence to which his experimentalism might otherwise lead. His experiments do not constitute a discrete series, and a new experiment is not a capricious affair or a matter of being bored with, or forgetful of, something begun previously. The coherence is organic.</p> <p>Adding that the idea of ‘organic coherence’ “may seem hazy,” Kaufmann informs the reader that “a brief reconsideration of Nietzsche’s critique of systems may show clearly what is meant” by the term.</p>
[5] P. 91, para. 6	Kaufmann now appears to give the main argument for the claim that Nietzsche’s existential, or ‘lived,’ approach to philosophy establishes a hidden coherence in his work. Nietzsche’s existential-experimentalism,

⁴ D §195.

⁵ PPA, 90. The line Kaufmann references here is a notebook fragment written in the Summer of 1880: “Darf ich doch mitreden! Alle die Wahrheiten sind für mich blutige Wahrheiten,—man sehe meine früheren Schriften an” (eKGWB/NF-1880,4[271]). See also TSZ I “Of Reading and Writing.”

	<p>he explains, is an attempt to achieve rigorous truthfulness by avoiding the corrupt and unexamined premises of traditional systems. Nietzsche is not against systematicity per se, he explains, but against the closed systems of foundationalism.</p> <p>Nietzsche objects to the solution <i>en passant</i> of important problems; he would not deduce answers from a system. If the system's premises were truly beyond question, one need not object to the deduction of new answers. Only because there always are premises that ought to have been questioned and would have been found wanting if questioned, is it an unnecessary vitiation of new answers—and objectionable methodologically—if systematic consistency is allowed to dictate new solutions.</p>
[6] P. 91, para. 7	<p>Kaufmann then inserts a procedural premise into the argument, adding that Nietzsche's experiments can correct and cancel out each other.</p> <p>By constant experimenting, Nietzsche hopes to escape such vitiation as far as possible. The ideal is to consider each problem on its own merits. Intellectual integrity in the consideration of each separate problem seems not only the best way to particular truths, but it makes each investigation a possible corrective for any inadvertent previous mistakes. No break, discontinuity, or inconsistency occurs unless either there has been a previous error or there is an error now. Such inconsistencies, however which should be the exception rather than the rule—should not go unnoticed but should ever become the occasion for revision.</p>
[7] P. 91, para. 8	<p>Kaufmann then restates his central claim that the existential quality of Nietzsche's work establishes and demonstrates its underlying unity and coherence, insisting that it should now be clear that "[b]y 'living through' each problem, Nietzsche ... prevents his aphorisms from being no more than a glittering mosaic of independent monads."</p> <p>The "anarchy of atoms" is more apparent than real; and while the word frequently "becomes sovereign and leaps out of the sentence" and "the sentence reaches out and obscures the meaning of the page," we cannot say in justice that "life no longer resides in the whole."⁶ Life does indeed reside in the whole of Nietzsche's thinking and writing, and there is a unity which is obscured, but not obliterated, by the apparent discontinuity in his experimentalism.</p>
[8] PP. 91–93, para. 9–11	<p>Kaufmann offers a final argument, stating that "the point" that life forms a hidden unity in Nietzsche's work can be "illustrated by a reference to the variety of styles that distinguishes Nietzsche's literary output." While Nietzsche experiments with different forms of writing throughout his career (essay, aphorism, 'aphoristic essay,' polemic, etc.), the perceptive interpreter or 'characterologist' recognises that which is distinctly Nietzschean in each:</p> <p>Involuntarily almost, Nietzsche is driven from style to style in his ceaseless striving for an adequate medium of expression. Each style is characteristically his own, but soon found inadequate, and then drives him on to another newer one. Yet all the experiments cohere because they are not capricious. Their unity one might call 'existential.'</p>

⁶ CW §7.

Kaufmann's Reading of Nietzsche as Existential-Experimentalist: Analysis

This, then, is Kaufmann's 'existential-experimental' argument for coherence. It is quite a trek around the winding paths of Kaufmann's discussion; along the way we encounter many different assertions and points of fact that seem to support his thesis (textual evidence, the anti-foundationalist argument, and the logical coda asserting that Nietzsche's writings are unified through his style, etc.). Indeed, it is easy to come away from this reading convinced that if we could only understand Nietzsche's 'existential-experimental' methodology, we would see the deep coherence under the chaotic surface of his thought. If we follow Kaufmann's logic closely, however, we find that it is not sound argumentation, but the powers of suggestion that lead us to this end point.

Let us walk carefully through the argument again. To begin with, we must note that there is no important argumentative leg-work taking place in the early sections of the discussion. Sections [1]–[3] only set out the initial premise that Nietzsche's work is experimental, and, more specifically, that it is experimental in an 'existential' kind of way, (merely *stating that*—but not *explaining how*—"experimenting involves testing an answer by trying to live according to it"). To be sure, Kaufmann does provide us with textual evidence for this claim, taking us directly to Nietzsche's words, to the 'life' of the workshop and the 'blood' of the existentialist: "*Versuchen wir's*" (Let us try it!),⁷ his Nietzsche cries out, "[a]ll truths are for me soaked in blood."⁸ While the quotations Kaufmann presents here will turn out to be problematic through their misuse, on the surface, at this point, there is no issue here—it is fair to say that Nietzsche does indeed characterise his work as experimental and existential.

So far, then, in sections [1]–[3] we have been presented with the vague but very plausible-sounding claim that Nietzsche employs (or sees himself as employing) an 'existential-experimental' methodology, and Kaufmann has provided minimal (but, given the uncontroversial nature of the claim, not necessarily insufficient) textual evidence in support of this (sect. [2]). Up to this point, then, it seems that Kaufmann has not achieved very much. If the reader is keen to progress to the argument proper, they are relieved to hear Kaufmann's assurance at the start of [4] that we are ready to move on to a "more important ... implication of Nietzsche's 'existentialism.'"⁹ If we pause here for a moment, however, Kaufmann's wording might strike us as odd: the fact that we are heading to a "more important implication" seems to suggest that we must have already encountered one, yet, as we have just discussed, the work so far has been (or has appeared to be) a general statement of his yet-to-be-argued-for position. While we cannot appreciate its significance yet, this strange comparative phrase gives

⁷ PPA, 89 (GS §51).

⁸ PPA, 90 (eKGWB/NF-1880,4[271]). See also TSZ I "Of Reading and Writing."

⁹ PPA, 90.

us a clue that perhaps something else has been going on behind the scenes of Kaufmann's official argument.

In any case, with hopes of venturing into Kaufmann's main argument, we are taken from the uncontroversial assertion that Nietzsche's work is experimental and existential (sect. [1]–[3]) to Kaufmann's key premise: the claim that 'existentialism establishes coherence' (sect. [4]). Here is the passage in full:

More important is another implication of Nietzsche's "existentialism": it obviates the hopeless incoherence to which his experimentalism might otherwise lead. His experiments do not constitute a discrete series, and a new experiment is not a capricious affair or a matter of being bored with, or forgetful of, something begun previously.¹⁰

Kaufmann's odd phrasing at the start of section [4] has already made us suspicious that there may be more going on in the argument than we at first realise, and caution may be warranted here too. Indeed, on the one hand, we could read the entire passage as we have read the claims in sections [1]–[3], as a general statement of his hypothesis, viz., as an extended *declaration* of the claim that "existentialism obviates incoherence." Thus, when Kaufmann says, "experiments do not constitute a discrete series, and a new experiment is not a capricious affair,"¹¹ he is merely reiterating the point that by appreciating the 'existential' or 'lived' quality of Nietzsche's work, we will somehow, later on, *when the argument is made*, come to see that his aphorisms—his little experiments—are not capricious and contradictory but coherent and systematic. On the other hand, though, this can be taken as a surreptitious move by Kaufmann to insert an unofficial argument beneath the skin of his general discussion. Here, rather than merely stating that 'existentialism obviates incoherence' (i.e., that understanding existentialism *will*—somehow, when we are told—reveal the systematic, or, at least, non-capricious, nature of his experiments), he is, at this very moment, explaining to us *how it is* that existentialism obviates incoherence. And 'how it is that existentialism obviates incoherence' is by the very fact that Nietzsche's experimentations "do not constitute a discrete series" and "[are] not ... capricious affair[s]," etc.¹² But this is absurd—an empty circularity where we are told that existentialism obviates incoherence in experimentation because the existential approach is systematically experimental. While at this point it may seem an unlikely move, such question-begging circularities become a recurring pattern in Kaufmann's discussion.

So far, then, we have seen a statement of Kaufmann's main argument made up of the (uncontroversial, and minimally defined) premise that Nietzsche's work is existentially experimental ([1]–[3]), and the (controversial and distinctly Kaufmann-esque) premise that it is this existential-experimental style or methodology that makes Nietzsche's work coherent [4];

¹⁰ PPA, 90–91.

¹¹ PPA, 90–91.

¹² PPA, 90.

we have been given textual evidence for the first claim, but not the second; we have picked up an adjectival clue in [3] suggesting activity underneath the general claim that Nietzsche works existentially; and we have considered the rather unrewarding choice between reading [4] as a general premise-stating passage (in which case we have no argument as of yet), or as an actual attempt to introduce an argument for the premise, in which case the argument is absurd.

Kaufmann now takes us to a (re)statement of (what we can loosely call) Nietzsche's methodological anti-foundationalism. This is the closest we come to a substantive argument, so we will stop here for a while to carefully investigate the claim. Drawing parallels with Plato, Hegel, Husserl, and William James, Kaufmann claims that Nietzsche's work is inconsistent, not out of a lack of concern for order and coherence, but because of his concern that systems are, in fact, compromised. Like these respectable (though, given the structure of their works, extremely unlikely) anti-systematisers, Nietzsche distrusts systems because they necessarily rest on unquestioned (unquestionable), and thus, suspect premises. "The systematic thinker starts with a number of primary assumptions from which he draws a net of inferences and thus deduces his system," Kaufmann writes, "but he cannot, from within his system, establish the truth of his premises."¹³ Thus, thinking along the lines of his phenomenological and pragmatist counterparts, Nietzsche hopes to avoid such "vitiation" by "consider[ing] each problem on its own merits," adopting a localised approach of direct engagement with, and investigation of, 'the things themselves' to achieve methodological-epistemological purity.¹⁴ Far from rejecting systematicity, "[w]hat Nietzsche objects to is the failure to question one's own assumptions."¹⁵ Here, then, at this point in Kaufmann's argument, Nietzsche's method of 'working from life' means the attempted avoidance of the dogmatism of closed-system metaphysics.

We must note that this anti-foundationalist argument gives Kaufmann the room he needs to explain the strange 'monadological effect' that makes Nietzsche's writings seem contradictory and inconsistent on the surface, while they are, in fact, deeply consistent.¹⁶ On the one hand, the works *appear* to the reader to lack coherence and systematicity because Nietzsche is not using a traditional, foundationalist form of philosophical thinking and composition. On the other hand, it is plausible that Nietzsche can still affect deep systematicity beneath this surface appearance because, rather than being opposed to consistency and coherence per se, he has an aversion to the narrow, prejudicial thinking of closed metaphysical systems that cannot update and evolve through the good evidence of rational and empirical thought.

¹³ *PPA*, 79. Here I am quoting from an earlier section of Kaufmann's chapter on method which falls outside of (but, in substance, is represented by) the pages quoted in our argument mapping.

¹⁴ *PPA*, 91.

¹⁵ *PPA*, 80.

¹⁶ Nietzsche states this himself in *AOM* §128: "*Against the shortsighted.*—Do you think this work must be fragmentary because I give it to you (and have to give it to you) in fragments?" As we will see in Chapter Four, however, we cannot take this as a reliable indicator of Nietzsche's actual method.

Surely, then, we have in front of us a clear, substantial, and, indeed, convincing argument for Kaufmann's claim that Nietzsche's existential-experimental methodology establishes logical-conceptual consistency at the heart of Nietzsche's writings. Nietzsche does indeed come across as a strong anti-foundationalist, railing against the systems of traditional philosophy with their prejudices and fixed modes of thought.¹⁷ One would indeed be a poor interpreter not to see this as a major concern motivating his move from the other-worldly metaphysics of *The Birth of Tragedy* to the life-bound, existentially oriented philosophy of his middle period.¹⁸ As far as truths go in Nietzsche studies, his stated aversion to metaphysics and incorrigible first philosophy would be perhaps one of the least contestable. Although I think this is something of a simplification, let us say that this is the case.

But so much more is going on in the argument than we have affirmed and are aware of. Indeed, it is only through this 'so much more' that Kaufmann can lead us from the idea that Nietzsche works as an existentialist to his conclusion that Nietzsche's philosophy is deeply coherent and non-contradictory. To appreciate this, we must realise that we cannot positively deduce what Nietzsche wants to do (let alone what Nietzsche does, in fact, do) from this negative assertion about what Nietzsche does not want to do. Affirming that Nietzsche does not want to work in the form of traditional metaphysics only *makes it possible* that he adopts a mode of writing that is coherent and systematisable, but the conclusion that Nietzsche does indeed write in this manner by no means follows from the premise—here a whole raft of methodological options remain possible (including, most notably, the disruptively unsystematic literary methods used by the postmodernists).

Why then are we so ready to accept the conclusion that existentialism or 'working from life' as the avoidance of systematic metaphysics leads to a methodology aimed at coherence? Because we have been primed to do so throughout the course of Kaufmann's argument, with a surreptitious transition taking place that moves us from a *traditional existential* understanding of lived philosophy to a *scientific-empirical* understanding of 'lived' philosophy. If all we had been presented with at this point was an acceptance of Nietzsche's dedication to an existential philosophy of 'working from life,' then we would not follow Kaufmann from the claim that Nietzsche is an anti-foundationalist to the conclusion that he thinks methodically with an open, unsystematised but systematisable, system. But 'working from life' has already been set up for us to mean the employment of an orderly executed, empirical scientific

¹⁷ See *PPA*, 80. Kaufmann points, of course, to Nietzsche's famous proclamation in *TI* "Maxims and Arrows" §26: "I mistrust all systematisers and avoid them. The will to a system is a lack of integrity." Similar remarks occur throughout Nietzsche's writings. In *Daybreak*, for example, he warns us to "[b]eware of systematisers," since they "practice a kind of play-acting: in as much as they want to fill out a system and round off its horizon" (§318). See also, for example, *GS* §1, §345, §347; *D* §39, §86; and, from his notes, eKGWB/NF-1884,25[135] and NF-1886,5[17].

¹⁸ See Ansell-Pearson, *Nietzsche's Search for Philosophy*, 7.

methodology in the first part of his discussion ([1]–[4]), so when he makes his anti-foundationalist argument in [5], we happily fill in the missing premise without conscious awareness, moving from the plausible explicit anti-foundationalist claim to Kaufmann’s conclusion that Nietzsche’s work is deeply consistent and systematisable.

We must become aware, then, of a set of implicit premises that are hidden within the explicit claims of the argument. While putting forward the reasonable assertion that Nietzsche reorients his philosophy away from far-flung metaphysics towards experiential immanence, Kaufmann also assumes (and has us assume) that this reorientation means (i) working in a scientific fashion, drawing from (ii) an empirically stable life-ground. In regards to the first assumption, we are led to believe that Nietzsche works with notebook in hand, proposing verifiable hypotheses which he then empirically tests by ‘living them through’—logically and methodically recording, categorising, and formulising his results, all the time accounting for the claims he has previously made and adjudicating between contradictions and conflicts that arise.¹⁹ This implausible picture of Nietzsche will be rejected in Chapter Three, but even if Nietzsche worked logically and methodically in the manner of a scientist, this would not guarantee the kind of conceptual consistency that Kaufmann wants. For this, he (and we) would also have to accept (ii) which takes ‘life’ to be a stable ground for Nietzsche’s philosophy in much the same way that the physical world forms a stable (external and independent) ground for the natural sciences.²⁰ This assumption will be analysed and challenged in Chapter Two.²¹

¹⁹ While Nietzsche’s method will be examined in detail in Chapter Three, I would like to quickly make a rather uncontroversial objection to Kaufmann’s reading—one that seems so obvious it barely needs mentioning. We cannot take seriously the claim that Nietzsche’s work is ‘existential’ (or ‘existential-experimental’) in that it is a record of hypotheses (or an orderly line of hypotheses) which Nietzsche has tested (or will test) by living them out, as Nietzsche (hyperbolically) asserts in *GS* §51. While ‘staying true’ to one’s philosophical commitments by enacting them in one’s life does feature as an important aspect of being involved in one’s existential philosophising, this literal ‘testing out’ proposal is far too restrictive and obviously does not apply to large swathes of Nietzsche’s philosophical writing. Tonally, Nietzsche’s work is incredibly varied. Utilising his “manifold art of style” (*EH* “Why I Write Such Good Books” §4), it is made up of imperatives and injunctions, provocations, expressions of desires (some fulfillable, some not), expressions of praise (of metaphysics, art, science, materialism, contemporary society, etc.), of distain (of metaphysics, art, science, materialism, contemporary society, etc.); he gives us historical accounts which churn together fact with fantastical mytho-poetry and (often wild) speculation; he offers psycho-social observations, poetic reflections and dialogues, meditations and plays of logic that stand like Japanese koans, diagnoses of ill-health and strategies for convalescence, etc. Of course, stated like this, one cannot imagine that Kaufmann would have rejected this (incomplete) catalogue as an appropriate characterisation of Nietzsche’s work. Thus, to make a point that I will justify further in the course of the chapter, Kaufmann’s statement should not be taken as representative of his overall and explicit position on the tonal and stylistic variability and complexity of Nietzsche’s work, but rather as a symptom of his double-reading, and his (profoundly strong) desire to straighten out and systematise Nietzsche—perhaps for himself, perhaps for his audience.

²⁰ When I speak of a ‘ground,’ I mean all that Nietzsche wishes to explain, come to terms with, account for, etc.

²¹ Basically, at the back of the scientist’s mind is the (reasonable-sounding) assumption that the world is as it is, that there is a truth about how it is, and that it is therefore the job of the truth-seeker to use hypothesis-confirming experimentation and theory development to give a true account of how things are. It is particularly difficult to deny the ‘life-ground’ assumption, for it seems reasonable to assume that a thinker who is working honestly and successfully from ‘life’ will end up with a systematic account of

Now, let us come back to the odd phrasing we noted in section [4] which made us suspect that, in early sections of his discussion, Kaufmann had actually been making some kind of argument for his main thesis that ‘existentialism obviates incoherence.’ Here, on close inspection, it turns out that in speaking of a previous (‘less important’) argument, what Kaufmann was unintentionally referring to was a form of hidden sub-textual argumentation that had been operating beneath the legitimate existentialist propositions he was presenting in the discussion. Indeed, throughout these opening sections, we find a kind of ‘including’ at work, where a background image of Nietzsche is subtly suggested to the reader in place of clear and direct argumentation.²² Retracing our steps, then, if we look more carefully at section [2] from our summary map, we find that the tableaux Kaufmann has laid out for us here present themselves very differently once we have become aware of this tactic. In terms of the formal argument, this is Kaufmann establishing the premise that Nietzsche is an existential-experimental philosopher through textual supports: using the aphorism from *Daybreak* and the *Nachlass* note, we are apparently learning about Nietzsche’s view on education (that education should be in the service of life), and that philosophy is for Nietzsche a way of life (“All truths are for me soaked in blood”). But, in strange tonal tension with this visceral existential knowing, Kaufmann has also set up the imagery of Nietzsche the scientist. Thus, what we are actually seeing, as Kaufmann presents Nietzsche the existentialist, is Nietzsche toiling away in his workshop, humbly honouring “the scientific spirit of inquiry,” using his “mathematic and mechanical knowledge” to carry out a “series of ... small experiments”²³ in his quest for a ‘strict science’ and ‘scientific knowledge.’²⁴

Indeed, on close inspection, it becomes evident that Kaufmann uses Nietzsche’s words from *Daybreak* §195 to implicitly suggest that, in matters of pedagogy, Nietzsche advocates in favour of science and against the classics (which are “forced down students’ throats”).²⁵ But these

that life, representing or recreating—as such an account would—the smooth continuity, logicity, and completeness of that ground. But, as I hope to show in Chapter 3, this should not be taken for granted, for the idea that reality cannot be adequately captured and understood by science (or a naturalised philosophy) forms a central characteristic of existentialism (John Macquarrie, *Existentialism: An Introduction, Guide, and Assessment* [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973], 14–15; Steven Crowell, “Existentialism and Its Legacy,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Existentialism*, ed. Steven Crowell [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012], 15). As I will show in Chapter Three, this is especially true of Jaspers’ existentialism.

²² “Including”—a term coined by fiction writer Jo Walton—refers to the fiction writing technique of indirect exposition, where instead of direct and explicit disclosure, information is subtly and indirectly conveyed through the lines of the story. See Jo Walton, “4th April 2003: Mode,” *Jo Walton*, April 9, 2017, <http://www.jowaltonbooks.com/4th-april-2003-mode/>.

²³ *PPA*, 92.

²⁴ *PPA*, 90.

²⁵ Of course, if placed in explicit terms, Kaufmann would not disagree that Nietzsche embraced the classics. Indeed, Kaufmann discusses Nietzsche’s deep connection with the literary canon throughout *PPA*, from his opening chapter on Nietzsche’s life (22), through to his closing comments in the epilogue (416). But, just as Kaufmann was led to an untenable view on the tonal variation of Nietzsche’s writings

quotations have been warped in extraction from their original context. It is easy enough to see how this distortion could come about: Nietzsche does lament the fact that rather than being “taught to *revere* the sciences ... [w]hat we felt instead was the breath of a certain disdain for the actual sciences in favour of ... ‘the classics’!” Similarly, he talks of a “squandering of youth when our educators failed to employ those eager, hot and thirsty years to lead us toward *knowledge* of things but used them for a so-called ‘classical education.’” But ‘*so-called*’ is the operative word here: the ‘classical education’ he refers to is *badly taught* ‘classics.’ Indeed, the opposition he is setting up is not between science (which is good) on the one hand, and the classics (which is bad) on the other, but between good education on the one hand (which means for him, as it would for the twentieth century educational constructivist, authentic engaged learning that connects education to one’s own experience), and poor education (where learning is dry and abstracted) on the other. Indeed, just as he complains that he had “knowledge of the Greeks and Romans and their languages drummed into [him],” he complains equally that he had “mathematics and physics forced upon” him; and just as he advocates for a pedagogy that fosters a “delight in science,” he believes equally that the classics must be taught in such a way that students “hunger for it.” In fact, reading the entirety of his discussion here, one finds that he spends much of the second half of the aphorism laying out his vision for a thoroughly immersive classics curriculum, albeit using a typically negative rhetoric.²⁶

Clearly, what Kaufmann presents to us here is a misleading account of Nietzsche’s thought. But more than just looking at the details of this misappropriation, we need to appreciate how—in the absence of proper argumentation—it is this unargued, unsubstantiated, and, indeed, unacknowledged representation of Nietzsche as methodical scientific thinker that is doing all the work to convince us that Nietzsche’s ‘existentialism’ is consistent and coherent.

In fact, this very same form of suggestive argumentation, or ‘including,’ also appears in an earlier part of the chapter (which falls outside of our formal map),²⁷ where Kaufmann introduces the idea of Nietzsche’s anti-foundationalism. Acknowledging that Nietzsche is a ‘literary’ philosopher (by stating that he is ‘*more than* a literary figure’), Kaufmann starts setting up Nietzsche the scientist for us:

Viewed in this light, Nietzsche’s aphoristic style appears as an interesting attempt to transcend the maze of concepts and opinions in order to get at the objects themselves ... The key terms that Nietzsche uses time and again are now *Experiment* and now *Versuch*; but it is well to keep in mind that *Versuch*, too, need not mean merely “attempt” but can have the characteristic

(see footnote 19 of this chapter), we find that in tacking towards a more acceptable analytic interpretation, he unintentionally takes on a position that he would not typically or overtly assent to.

²⁶ Thus, Nietzsche asks: “Did we learn anything of that which these same ancients taught their young people? Did we learn to speak or write as they did? Did we practise unceasingly the fencing-art of conversation, dialectics? Did we learn to move as beautifully and proudly as they did, to wrestle, to throw, to box as they did?” (*D* §195).

²⁷ *PPA*, 85.

scientific sense of “experiment”: it is quite proper in German to speak of a scientist as making a *Versuch*.²⁸

A few lines down, he inserts the figure of the scientist again:

Nietzsche insists that the philosopher must be willing to make ever new experiments; he must retain an open mind and be prepared if necessary, “boldly at any time to declare himself against his previous opinion”—just as he would expect a scientist to revise his theories in the light of new experiments.²⁹

Again, Kaufmann needs very much to push the (illegitimate) move from ‘anti-systematiser’ to ‘scientific investigator’ (this comes through, for example, in his forceful question and response: “for what reason or purpose did Nietzsche reject systems and prefer to write aphorisms? The answer to this question will reveal his ‘method’”³⁰). But here, too, he cannot overplay the point: he acknowledges that his characterisation of Nietzsche’s rejection of systems is just “one of Nietzsche’s objections” and is not the way Nietzsche “put the point ... himself,”³¹ and he ends this part of the chapter by admitting that “[e]xperiment is for Nietzsche not quite what it is for most other philosophers or scientists.”³²

Now aware of the including tactic in section [2] and elsewhere in Kaufmann’s chapter (outside of our formal mapping), we can see it in operation as Kaufmann continues his discussion into section [6]. Here again we can consent to Kaufmann’s purported thesis: “By constant experimenting [in a non-metaphysical, existential style], Nietzsche hopes to escape such vitiation [of truth through rigid and prejudicial foundation-based philosophising] as far as possible.”³³ On the momentum of this truth, we are quickly and quietly guided on towards Kaufmann’s implicit view of Nietzsche. In experimenting, he continues,

[t]he ideal is to consider each problem on its own merits. Intellectual integrity in the consideration of each separate problem seems not only the best way to particular truths, but it makes each investigation a possible corrective for any inadvertent previous mistakes. No break, discontinuity, or inconsistency occurs unless either there has been a previous error or there is an error now. Such inconsistencies, however—which should be the exception rather than the rule—should not go unnoticed but should ever become the occasion for revision.³⁴

In front of us again is the scene of Nietzsche the scientist: a thinker who works systematically and methodically, carefully integrating each of his newly confirmed hypotheses with his previous findings, correcting any errors, smoothing out his (unsystematised but systematisable) position so that “[n]o break, discontinuity, or inconsistency” occurs.

²⁸ *PPA*, 85.

²⁹ *PPA*, 85 (*GS* §296).

³⁰ *PPA*, 79.

³¹ *PPA*, 79.

³² *PPA*, 89.

³³ *PPA*, 91.

³⁴ *PPA*, 91.

When explicated at this level of detail, this move to present Nietzsche as scientist seems glaringly obvious. In Kaufmann's defence, one might want to suggest that it is so obvious because it is not a hidden subtext, but rather a central argument made by Kaufmann out in the open. This, however, is difficult to believe. In the first place, one would think that Kaufmann's interpreters would have isolated the argument and presented it as such for us, which has not happened—indeed, for the most part, Kaufmann's 'scientific Nietzsche' is given no mention.³⁵ We do, however, find it commented upon by David Pickus—one of Kaufmann's strongest contemporary advocates—who draws our attention to Kaufmann's quote above that asserts that Nietzsche works like "a scientist ... revis[ing] his theories in the light of new experiments."³⁶ Pickus, however, is sure that Kaufmann does not mean what he says, adding that the "reference to scientific method might cause eyes to roll if he is understood to be giving a quite obvious sermon about using evidence."³⁷ On the belief that Kaufmann should not be taken literally, Pickus constructs a whole new interpretation of these words: when Kaufmann says 'science' he really means '*Bildung*': "the main point is not a new epistemology that gives philosophy a more solid foundation, but a morality of *Bildung*"³⁸ where, to quote Goethe, the artist "penetrat[e] the depths of objects as well as the depths of his own character, so that he can bring forth in his work ... something spiritual-organic."³⁹ That Nietzsche is working with a 'Goethean' rather than 'scientistic' process is far more plausible on its own merits, but in complete disregard of the clues and cues and overall direction taken by Kaufmann in his discussion on Nietzsche's methodology—indeed, it would take some creative academic refashioning to make Pickus' *Bildung* interpretation work as a crucial premise establishing Kaufmann's broader argument that Nietzsche's 'lived' existential methodology yields a deeply consistent philosophy.

That this scientised vision of Nietzsche is part of Kaufmann's explicit argument is just as unlikely when one considers it from Kaufmann's own perspective. If it were to function as a premise, it leads us nowhere, serving only as a rather elaborately staged exercise in circular

³⁵ We can include David Rathbone and Stanley Corngold here. See Rathbone's "Kaufmann's Nietzsche," in *Interpreting Nietzsche: Reception and Influence*, ed. Ashley Woodward (London: Continuum, 2011); and Corngold's *Walter Kaufmann*. In her discussion on Kaufmann's Nietzsche, Ratner-Rosenhagen mentions that while Kaufmann brought out Nietzsche's existential temperament, he also draws attention to Nietzsche's "positivistic streak" and "affinity with analytic philosophers." She adds a strong qualification to this, however, stating that "Kaufmann clearly placed much more emphasis on the continental rather than the analytic dimensions of Nietzsche's thought"—a claim that fits with her overall assessment of Kaufmann's reading as an 'existential' one. Lending weight to my suggestion that Kaufmann's scientisation of Nietzsche is carried out implicitly, Ratner-Rosenhagen observes that insofar as Kaufmann makes "claims for Nietzsche's relevance for analytic philosophers," these "are largely gestured, not demonstrated" ("Dionysian Enlightenment," 254).

³⁶ David Pickus, "The Walter Kaufmann Myth: A Study in Academic Judgement," *Nietzsche-Studien* 32, no. 1 (2003): 240.

³⁷ Pickus, "The Walter Kaufmann Myth," 240.

³⁸ Pickus, 240.

³⁹ Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Ästhetische Schriften 1771–1805: Sämtliche Werke, Briefe, Tagebücher und Gespräche*, ed. von Friedmar Apel, vol. 18 (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1998), 461, translated by Pickus in *The Walter Kaufmann Myth*, 241.

reasoning: Why should we take Nietzsche's writings to contain deep consistency? Because of the 'existential' nature of his work (i.e., because he 'works from life'). How does the existential nature of his work imply hidden conceptual consistency? By the fact that it is methodical, empirically systematic, and scientifically ordered. Of course, if it were adequately shown that Nietzsche did indeed use such a methodology, then the claim would have purpose. But substance here is completely absent: it is as though Kaufmann—with his expert understanding and intuitive feel for Nietzsche on the one hand, and his desire for a book that would appeal to his sensible, analytically inclined American readership on the other—could not consciously bring himself to state the argument, but brought it forth indirectly through subtext and suggestion.

This surreptitious importation of 'Nietzsche the Scientist' contributes to the strange, paradoxical sense of moving inertia one experiences as one progresses (without ever really progressing) through Kaufmann's argument. By the time we arrive at section [7] of the chapter, we know we are approaching the end of Kaufmann's discussion on Nietzsche's methodology, and we feel that some kind of argument must have been made to justify the claim that existentiality yields consistency. Yet, while we might generally affirm the argument due to the including we have been exposed to, if we try to follow the explicit logic closely, we cannot quite see how it all adds up. Indeed, Kaufmann himself must, on some level, have been aware of the inadequacy of the argument, for just as he rounds up all of his previous efforts by confidently announcing that the connection between existential-experimentation and logical coherence has been successfully established,⁴⁰ he immediately embarks on a new line of reasoning to convince the reader of their relationship.

However, while it is clear that Kaufmann wants to present further evidence for his theory in these final sections ([7]–[8]), it is not at all clear what Kaufmann actually wants to say. Under close analysis, three possible arguments seem to emerge. In each, the idea that Nietzsche's works are 'unified by his life' is asserted in a very literal sense. As we will see, this literalism plays a role in a pseudo-argument that is utterly unconvincing.

The first argument Kaufmann might be trying to make is the most absurd and the least explicit of the three, and thus—to be generous—we can say it is the least likely option. But even if we play it safe and exclude it as an argument in itself, it forms the base logic of the second argument, so we will take a moment now to explore it. We can access this first argument by paying attention to a (possible) structural ambiguity in section [7]. On the one hand, the section can be read (as we did in our original mapping) as an exclamation mark—a mere

⁴⁰ Thus, he states in section [7] that "[b]y 'living through' each problem, Nietzsche is apt to realize implications that other, non-existential, thinkers who merely pose these problems histrionically have overlooked. His 'existentialism' prevents his aphorisms from being no more than a glittering mosaic of independent monads" (*PPA*, 91).

proclamation; an announcement that “[b]y ‘living through’ each problem, Nietzsche ... prevents his aphorisms from being no more than a glittering mosaic of independent monads.”⁴¹ On the other hand, though, when Kaufmann states that “[l]ife ... reside[s] in the whole,” he may, in fact, be *offering us an actual argument*, attempting to convince us that Nietzsche’s ‘life’ which “reside[s] in the whole of Nietzsche’s thinking” establishes a basic coherence to his work, providing “a unity which is obscured, but not obliterated, by the apparent discontinuity in his experimentalism.”

Such an argument would run thus: regardless of how contradictory Nietzsche’s claims might be on the page (from line to line, aphorism to aphorism, or book to book), they are, each individually, a record or mark of the thoughts (conscious or unconscious, masking or sincere, original or derivative, confused or logical) of the author who authored them. If we imagine the author’s (biographical) life as a long temporal line with nothing excluded, and we freeze this line and chop it up into temporal chunks, and then pick out the temporal chunks that correspond with all the moments when the author wrote, there would be—in the barest sense of the word—always a logic, a sense, a reason, an impulse, etc., motivating whatever it is he or she writes at that moment in time (which is just to say there is a logic, a sense, a reason or impulse, etc., from which each instance of their writing originates). If a madman believes (or pretends) he is a chicken at one moment, and a king at the next, in a banal biographical sense, there is no conflict: the man’s life is the consistent connector that gives a unity to the potentially conflicting thoughts—each is underwritten by the guarantee that ‘this thought is what he thought’ (for whatever good or bad reason). Appreciating this, we can move to the argument in its full form, which runs as follows: If Nietzsche says/thinks/implies (etc.) *x* at time T1, and not-*x* at time T2, then there must be some biographically recognisable occurrence that shifts his thinking—there is an explanation (a life-link, if you will) that establishes coherence between the two. Thus, the argument goes, it follows that there are no contradictions in Nietzsche’s work. Through the magic of biography, all logical contradictions dissolve.

If one accepts the principle of sufficient reason,⁴² then one cannot but find the premise to be true. One would, however, be badly confused if one tried to use the trivial fact of the premise (that there is some reason or motivation behind each thought) to move to the conclusion that this somehow establishes a logical consistency between the claims on the level of *the claims themselves*. To do so would be much like arguing that all the flowers on a hill must be of the same sort since they grow out of the same ground. The argument, of course, is not valid, but if we wanted further confirmation of its broken logic, we need only reflect on the fact that if we accept the argument, we commit ourselves to saying that *no* works can be deemed to be more

⁴¹ PPA, 91.

⁴² In very simple terms, this is just the claim that for anything that happens or is the case, there is some reason why it happens or is the case (regardless of whether we are aware of this reason or not).

or less logically consistent (for if writing motivated by an author is necessarily consistent, and all writing is written by an author, then all writing is equally consistent!).

While it is possible that Kaufmann is trying to play this game to some extent, we will put this aside and move to the second and third (possible) lines of thought that Kaufmann might be using to establish his existential-coherency hypothesis. The arguments are both contained in the following passage that falls under section (8) on our map.

Nietzsche's ceaseless experimenting with different styles seems to conform to the Zeitgeist which was generally marked by a growing dissatisfaction with traditional modes of expression. Wagner, the Impressionists and the Expressionists, Picasso and the Surrealists, Joyce, Pound, and Eliot all show a similar tendency. Nietzsche's experiments, however, are remarkable for the lack of any deliberateness even in the face of their extreme diversity. Thus Ludwig Klages ... can speak of "the almost peerless uniformity of Nietzsche's style." What is perhaps really peerless is the concomitance of uniformity and diversity. Nietzsche is not trying now this and now that style, but each experiment is so essentially Nietzschean in its strengths and weaknesses that the characterologist experiences no trouble in recognizing the author anywhere. Involuntarily almost, Nietzsche is driven from style to style in his ceaseless striving for an adequate medium of expression. Each style is characteristically his own, but soon found inadequate, and then drives him on to another newer one. Yet all the experiments cohere because they are not capricious. Their unity one might call "existential."⁴³

In terms of our second possible line of argument, then, Kaufmann could be trying to argue that Nietzsche's claims are consistent ('his experiments cohere') because all of Nietzsche's texts are recognisably written by Nietzsche, in *Nietzsche's own style*. This, of course, is just a more sophisticated (or, at least, a more specific) variant of the argument outlined above, and it fails for the same reason: we cannot move from the trivial fact that Nietzsche's writings are recognisably 'Nietzschean' to the claim that his writings are logically consistent (from sentence to sentence, aphorism to aphorism, and work to work). Applying our check mentioned above, we would then have to say that the content of the writings of any writer (say the Dadaist writings of Tristan Tzara, for example) are—if stylistically recognisable as works of that writer—equally logical and consistent.

Finally, as a third option, Kaufmann may be applying the same logic at an even more specific level by arguing that unity is formed not just in virtue of a recognisable 'Nietzschean' style, but a (recognisable) style that exclusively employs *the method of experimentation*. We must be careful here too, for this interpretation of the argument can again be broken down and understood in different ways. On the one hand, the underlying logic may be that (i) all of Nietzsche's writings are (little or large) experiments, (ii) experiments are the same kind of thing, thus (iii) Nietzsche's work is consistent and unified. Taken this way, the argument appears obviously false (relying, as it does, on the illegitimate substitution of the valid conclusion that Nietzsche's writing are *stylistically* consistent with the invalid conclusion that his works must therefore be *conceptually* consistent). On the other hand, however, we might

⁴³ PPA, 92–93.

feel that there is something more to the claim; that unlike other insignificant factors such as the language used (i.e., German) or timespan of composition (i.e., 1872–1888), there is something about the nature of these experiments that legitimately leads to conceptual unity. This ‘something,’ of course, is the same vague, unargued assertion that Nietzsche’s ‘experimentation’ is an orderly, scientific form of experimentation, as insinuated (in various ways) throughout the chapter. We must observe, of course, that without this unfounded premise, the argument collapses into an empty *petitio principii* that runs as follows: Experimentalism brings unity to Nietzsche’s work. Why? Because the method of experimentation (which remains to be established) is such that it unifies. Again, it may be the case that experimental methodologies do indeed lead to conceptual consistency (certainly this seems true in the case of scientific experimentation), but, without an open discussion establishing that the kind of experimentation Nietzsche is in fact using is the kind that yields conceptual consistency, we are just travelling in circles. Indeed, exhausted by his own argument, Kaufmann seems to openly admit the fact, finishing his discussion with a glorious *petitio* summing up his position: “All the experiments cohere because they are not capricious,” he writes. “Their unity one might call ‘existential.’”⁴⁴

Conclusion

In justifying his claim that Nietzsche’s existential-experimental method results in a consistent philosophising, Kaufmann walks us down three different argumentative paths—none of which take us to his conclusion. Down the first path, we find what looks to be a plain-old statement of his position that Nietzsche’s existentialism yields coherence. On closer inspection, however, it turns out that this innocuous sign-posting is serving as an argument, not through any legitimate research and reasoning, but through a suggestive presentation of Nietzsche as a scientific worker. Down the second path, we are presented with Kaufmann’s antifoundationalism-to-coherence argument. But there is a massive gap in this thinking here, and we cannot cross from premise to conclusion using the logical bridge that Kaufmann sets up for us: while the (oversimplified) characterisation of Nietzsche as an anti-foundationalist stands as an explanation as to why Nietzsche’s work might look contradictory while it is not, it by no means transports us to the conclusion that his work is in fact consistent. Again, what moves us to this view is the illegitimate argument technique of including which suggests that Nietzsche utilised an orderly scientific methodology. In his final attempt to lead us from Nietzsche’s existentiality to logical consistency, Kaufmann ushers us through the life-unity argument. Here

⁴⁴ PPA, 93.

we explored a number of different potential tracks, all of which wound about in a logic that takes us nowhere.

All in all, then, no matter where we go in Kaufmann's argument, our well-established assumption that Nietzsche philosophised with an orderly scientific methodology is based on misdirection. Throughout Kaufmann's discussion, it is merely the staged presentation of Nietzsche as scientist covered over by the superficial language of existentialism that leads us this way. But while we can now safely say that there is nothing to Kaufmann's pseudo existential-scientistic argument, this does not mean that we have established that Nietzsche was not a logically-minded scientist-philosopher working in a consistent, orderly manner. We did, indeed, find that Kaufmann's 'antifoundationalism-to-empirical-openness' account—which at least explains the appearance of contradictions in Nietzsche's writings—could stand as a *possible* model of the way Nietzsche worked, and might be especially suitable for his middle period writings. It will thus be incumbent upon us to establish the appropriateness or inappropriateness of this model in the forthcoming chapters. Before we carry out this assessment, however, we must first take a close look at the competing view of Nietzsche's existential-experimentalism offered by Jaspers.

Jaspers' Reading of Nietzsche as Existential-Experimentalist: Unity in Life and the Proliferation of Contradictions

Introduction

For all the inadequacies of Kaufmann's argument, we can at least understand his desire to try to find and reassemble some authorial system behind the maze of conceptual contradictions in Nietzsche's work. Indeed, there is something strange and unsettling about the rival view of Nietzsche presented by Jaspers in *NIUPA*, communicated, as it is, through the uncanny imagery of the broken structure that never was structured, with fragments that lie about "as though a substance which could no longer control itself had broken forth ... pressing toward a totality in which nothing would be lost or forgotten, without ever being or becoming this totality."¹ Through this scene both soft and blistering, romantic and modern, Jaspers' hermeneutics threatens us with the prospect of an activated nothing (or a very peculiar something) that lies behind the surface, and a fragmented "totality" that never forms a whole.

Indeed, Jaspers' hermeneutics is not for the philosophically faint-hearted. Trying to understand the technical details of Jaspers' hermeneutical approach to Nietzsche as outlined in *NIUPA*, one continues to come up against this recurring tension, specifically as it manifests in the problem that while, on the one hand, Jaspers impresses upon us the deeply fractured and contradictory nature of Nietzsche's philosophy, he almost simultaneously insists, on the other, that Nietzsche's writings unite into a comprehensive totality. In various reiterations, we are told that while "[i]n contrast to the aphorists, [Nietzsche's work] is an integral whole," "[i]n contrast to the systematists, he did not build a complete logical structure of thought,"² and that "[w]hile in the end everything does indeed belong together, it falls back into the temporal extension of a veritable skein of ways of thinking that is by no means systematic."³ Such claims are then formulated into conflicting hermeneutical directives: "Nietzsche's thoughts demand an investigation of their systematic interrelations," yet this unity "can only be the guiding idea, for Nietzsche's thinking will always elude all attempts at a well-ordered presentation."⁴

¹ *NIUPA*, 4.

² *NIUPA*, 3.

³ *NIUPA*, 13.

⁴ *NIUPA*, 13.

In the previous chapter, we analysed Kaufmann's idea that Nietzsche's work holds an underlying coherence by virtue of its connection to 'life.' Like Kaufmann, Jaspers also believes that we must look to Nietzsche's 'life' to understand how the fragmented pieces of his thinking form a unity. As unconvincing as Kaufmann's version of the life argument was shown to be, in the Jaspersian context, it seems even more unlikely. At least in Kaufmann's case, one can understand the motivating logic (viz., that the existential life-glue binds Nietzsche's work together so we can find conceptual consistency). In the Jaspersian schema, however, we need to explain the very peculiar fact that somehow 'the existential' brings unity to Nietzsche's writings whilst also necessitating its deep conceptual inconsistency.

In this chapter, I will try to shed light on Jaspers' enigmatic hermeneutics by asking, firstly, what it means in Jaspersian terms to say that Nietzsche's work is 'unified by life,' and, secondly, how this existentiality explains Jaspers' queer assertion that Nietzsche's work holds together whilst remaining deeply contradictory. By immersing ourselves in these questions, a more authentic understanding of Nietzsche as an 'existential-experimentalist' will come into focus. Contrary to Kaufmann's interpretation, we will see that 'existential-experimentalism' is not a procedure that results in empirically-based coherence as 'anti-foundationalism,' but is an exploratory method of philosophising that works with, and is productive of, contradictions. By reunderstanding Nietzsche as an existential-experimentalist in the original Jaspersian sense, we not only find the existential reading to be far more fitting in terms of the material itself, but we also find an approach to Nietzsche that yields a philosophy saturated with meaning and relevance for our own lives. Here we need not make the decision between what is true and what is life affirming: by recovering a more sensitive and appropriate hermeneutics of life, we find an interpretive process that is both more accurate, and more philosophically nourishing.

The task, then, has been laid out for us. However, while *NIUPA* is Jaspers' key hermeneutic text on Nietzsche, we will struggle to understand his existential approach if we rely on this work alone. Indeed, reading *NIUPA* is like wandering through a thick fog: searching for answers, one finds oneself engulfed in vague, mystical-sounding suggestions urging us to "enter into [Nietzsche's authentic] movement," and to "partake of the real impetus," in order to "arrive at the primal source of [his] thought."⁵ But there is a logic behind these nebulous directives, and it takes form if we retrace Jaspers' existential thinking more generally, as it is expressed in works published before and after *NIUPA*. To understand Jaspers' interpretation of Nietzsche, then, we will start by surveying Jaspers' general existentialist theory. Here, I would like to draw out three important components in Jaspers' philosophical thinking which work in a dynamic interrelation: (i) the theoretical aspect of thinking through limit-situations, which (ii) stimulates a state of heightened existential self-world engagement, and (iii) opens up an awareness of the

⁵ *NIUPA*, 8–9.

way we live through multi-modal frames of existence (i.e., the Encompassing). With this schema in place, we will return to our central questions: How is Nietzsche's work 'unified in life'? And how does this unity-in-life produce a contradictory philosophy? Offering an initial answer to these questions, I will start to show how Jaspers' existential schema organically maps onto Nietzsche's philosophy, and I will attempt to bring this into focus by looking at Jaspers' reading of Nietzsche on the question 'What is man?'

Jaspers' Philosophical Schema: Limit-Situations at the Edge of Science

Starting our exploration of Jaspers' philosophy, the first of the three aspects we will survey is the intellectual limit-situation. Featuring heavily in Jaspers' existential schema, limit-situations (*Grenzsituationen*)⁶ are stunning realisations or reflections about our intractably painful and problematic existence. They are, as Jaspers explains, "[s]ituations like the following: that I am always in situations; that I cannot live without struggling and suffering; that I cannot avoid guilt; that I must die."⁷ Given this characterisation, limit-situations are often taken to be static reflections on the existential struggles of life (e.g., the inevitability of death and suffering). Yet, they also come in a dynamic intellectual form, where they function as radical thought-experiments that alert us to the deep inconsistency and fracturing of human reality.⁸ It is these kinds of limit-situations that we will be examining in detail.

To begin our study, then, we need to turn to the opening pages of Jaspers' magnum opus, *Philosophy*. Here, Jaspers prepares his reader for his existential exploration through limit-situation thinking by drawing attention to the very basic fact of subject-object splitting that we experience and assume (in a folk-psychological kind of way) as an incontrovertible dynamic of all our conscious engagement with the world. "Among my changing situations," he writes, "one remains invariable: I am with other being," the "not I," that which "is *outwardly other* than I"—both "the *alien being of matter*" and the "*kindred being of another I*."⁹ Because of its intrinsicity¹⁰ and the strange subtlety of this perforation of life between the I and the not-I, we

⁶ This is the terminology used by Ehrlich, Ehrlich and Pepper in their translation of *Karl Jaspers: Basic Philosophical Writings*. *Grenzsituationen* is also translated as 'ultimate situations' (see, for example, Wallraff, 141–66) and 'boundary situations,' which is the way E. B. Ashton has presented the term in his translation of Jaspers' *Philosophy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969).

⁷ Karl Jaspers, *Philosophy*, trans. E. B. Ashton, vol. 2 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 178. Published in 1932, the work precedes Jaspers' *NIUPA* by only a few years.

⁸ For an overview of this form of the limit-situation, see Wallraff's discussion on "Historical Determinacy" (143–50), "The Questionableness of All Existence" (158–62), and "Reactions to Antinomies" (162–66) in his *Karl Jaspers*.

⁹ Karl Jaspers, *Philosophy*, trans. E. B. Ashton, vol. 1 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969), 99.

¹⁰ To speak of the intrinsicity of the subject-object polarity is simply to express (again, in a folk-psychological kind of a way) that this polarity seems to be a basic structure of conscious experience. In

tend to take the subject-object polarity for granted, experiencing it (or experiencing through it) with indifference. Yet, in this basic fact we find the core instability that drives towards existential awakening. Through self-reflective awareness of the divide, we realise that we possess the basic dialectical map that will guide us to existential understanding.

Jaspers begins his exploration of the subject-object polarity by following the development of cognition from a subject-oriented perspective to a universally valid, objective-scientific mode of thought. To begin with, in both a historical and a-temporal sense,¹¹ Jaspers hypothesises a preliminary mode of cognition where humans relate to the world through the pre- or semi-reflective ‘state of existence.’ Here I am close to the world: I know it through participation, I navigate it through personal experience (subjectively) and received tradition (subjectively-historically). The world is *as it is to me*, and I question, explore, and understand it from this perspective, taking myself as its central point of view.

But knowledge always pushes outwards. It wants a firmer grasp of the world, and through critical questioning it shows up the “phantasms” and “prejudgments” that pervade my understanding from this naïve perspective. “I now learn to distinguish what is real from what is delusive and merely seems to be real in certain situations.”¹² This is the ‘*critical turn to original curiosity*,’ and it is momentous—the maturation of thought to objective world cognition.¹³

Questioning is the crisis, the act that detaches me from an experience in which I knew my world as a matter of course, without reflecting upon it. Questioning awakens me from merely living in a world to the *cognitive existence of seeking an imaginary point outside the world*, a point from which all there is might be faced as a world that can be known in generally valid fashion.¹⁴

Through objective world cognition, we become sure-footed, finding immense epistemological power in science as we draw our knowledge from the bedrock of empirical reality. Spurred on by the triumphs and successes of science in understanding the natural world, we hope to extend the scope of this method to achieve full understanding of everything in reality (or ‘Being’—to use Jaspers’ terminology). The objectively known world revealed by science is now the solid ground upon which we stake our claim to complete understanding, or ‘the One, which is all’

rough phenomenological terms, our experiencing seems to involve a subjective pole (in the sense of a basic experiencer—an ‘experiencing out of,’ we might say) and an objective pole (as ‘an experiencing of,’ as the content of our basic intentional states). One may, of course, raise objections here, such as the Heideggerian observation that, operating the ready-to-hand, we lose the subjective sense of self as we get absorbed in an activity. Such states, however, could certainly be accommodated—and, indeed, I think, promoted—in Jaspers’ overall philosophical schema.

¹¹ For Jaspers, ‘existence’ as a way of experiencing and being in the world can be looked at as a general historical stage of human development, yet it also is a state of world engagement that we (moderns) are often in and can appreciate for ourselves.

¹² Jaspers, *Philosophy*, 108–9.

¹³ Jaspers, 108–9.

¹⁴ Jaspers, 108–9, emphasis in original.

(i.e., life, world, and our own existence).¹⁵ In pursuit of this goal of unification, the empirical-rationalist approach is tasked with making human being fully explicable in cognition. So, too, is it expected that science will provide us with an absolute grounding in a metaphysical sense: through a scientised philosophy, we will move from piecemeal theories explaining disparate phenomena to a unified science, and we will tie up the questions traditionally asked by religion and philosophy (questions about the origins of the universe, about the way the world really is at its foundations, etc.), finally achieving an explanation of the cosmos “as an interrelated whole.”¹⁶

But according to Jaspers, objective world cognition does not unify reality, it breaks it; and the compulsion to unite, to ever expand our knowledge, to understand completely—that same impulse that moved us to objective knowledge in the first place—now shows up splits and fissures in our thinking. Attempting to “round out” everything in terms of “a self-sufficient and self-explanatory natural world,” we “show in detail how the limits of scientific knowledge make such an intention forever untenable.”¹⁷ Much of Jaspers’ philosophy serves to document these limit-situation breakings, where thought hits a wall and, *by necessity*, can go no further. As though we were watching a building collapse from multiple vantage points, he replays these intellectual implosions over and over from different philosophical angles. Here we will provide a brief survey of just some of these world-destructive events by looking at (i) the objective-theoretical against subjective-phenomenological world-split; (ii) science’s inability to comprehend human being; and (iii) the antinomical limitations of science in considering the universe’s end. In each of these examples, we find the subjective side of the subject-object polarity stretching holes in our world, breaking up our smooth, complete conception of reality, resisting a fully scientised understanding of ‘what is.’

(I) The Splitting of the World: Theoretical versus Phenomenal

Placing these limit-situations in no particular order, I will start with Jaspers’ concern that as we develop our natural sciences, aiming to get closer to the world through increasingly accurate

¹⁵ Jaspers, 114.

¹⁶ Jaspers, 115.

¹⁷ Wallraff, *Karl Jaspers*, 46. The extraordinarily close parallel between Jaspers and Thomas Nagel on this point (and many others) deserves a study in itself. Like Jaspers, for Nagel, the split between subjectivity and objectivity forms a central division through which the dilemmas of philosophy are generated. Broaching the problem of subjectivity’s intractableness as we strive for objective knowledge in *The View from Nowhere* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), Nagel writes (with a deeply Jaspersian sensibility) that “[a]dvances may take us to a new conception of reality that leaves the personal or merely human perspective further and further behind. But if what we want is to understand the whole world, we can’t forget about those subjective starting points indefinitely; we and our personal perspectives belong to the world” (6). Thus, the question of “how to combine the perspective of a particular person inside the world with an objective view of that same world, the person and his viewpoint included ... is a problem that faces every creature with the impulse and the capacity to transcend its particular point of view and to conceive of the world as a whole” (3).

theoretical accounts, an inexplicable gulf opens up between the world we are trying to describe (the sensible-experiential world) and the world as it is understood through our scientific descriptions (the abstract-theoretical world). To understand this split, Jaspers asks us to consider how we experienced and conceived of the ‘world’ back in that pre-modern, pre-scientific era (or ‘state of existence’) mentioned above. In this form of apprehending, he tells us, we primarily understand the world *from our own viewpoint*—from what he calls “the space-enclosing shell of a living existence.”¹⁸ Through this form of awareness, we take the world to be that which we experience around us: both in a spatial sense, with the world as a sphere that radiates out from me (my home, my society, etc.) as its centre-point; and in a phenomenological sense, with the world seen to be comprised of that which is tangibly and experientially present to me—all the colourful, animated objects that I take in through my senses, which may be available for me to utilise and manipulate.

As we extend out our thinking, however, and develop objective science, we create a framework that does away with both of these aspects: thus, in locational terms, we move from a particularised view issuing from one’s own vantagepoint to a generalised and de-centralised conception of the world; and in terms of tangibility, we strip away the phenomenologically rich world of colourful object-things as we take up the abstractly formatted reality given to us through the refined natural sciences. Jaspers documents the various stages of this splitting of the world for us in his *Philosophy*: in the first stage of loss, when we move from existence to early scientific frameworks (Newtonian, Copernican, etc.), the centreless and generalised world theoretically diverges from our particularised, situational, phenomenologically known world (that “space-enclosing shell of a living existence”). With the move from the Newtonian framework to modern physics, the gap between the experiential world and the scientific world widens as the remnants of the experiential world are swallowed up, “dissolved ... into an unvisual, abstractly known reality.”¹⁹

Modern physics submerges even the infinite, centreless, three-dimensional world with its absolute space and time, those remnants of visibility, in a generally valid but unvisual knowledge. Stripped of visibility, the world becomes unreal; if I try to grasp it like that, by knowing abstract relations of quantitative data, I lose the ground under my feet.²⁰

Here, however, Jaspers provides a crucial reminder, adding that although the scientific view usurps the view from existence, we can never, in a fundamentally lived sense, replace or shake-off the original form of world-cognition that issues from ourselves. Similarly, for Jaspers, this indissolubility of subjectivity does not mean an undermining of science or a questioning of its truth. The account of (our best) modern physics does indeed describe (or does a good job at

¹⁸ Jaspers, *Philosophy*, 105.

¹⁹ Jaspers, 105.

²⁰ Jaspers, 105.

describing) how the world is, *and yet*, in pursuing this truth we simultaneously seem to set up an alternative picture of the world (the view we theoretically consent to) that fundamentally differs from our original, phenomenological, subject-centred view (a view we cannot shake off since it is the view we—in experiential terms—actually live through). Thus, rather than understanding the world via a single objective or subjective framework, we experience or orient ourselves dualistically, through these strangely paralleled, but irreconcilably different, spheres.

There are a number of ways we can become philosophically aware of this issue. For example, it is precisely this split we are considering when we intuit the difference between phenomenal red and red as an electromagnetic wavelength in the Mary's Room thought experiment:²¹ on the one hand, we accept that the latter explains (or 'causes,' or 'is') the former, yet on the other, we cannot fathom (and we know that we cannot fathom) the theory-red to phenomenal-red translation (which is to say that like Mary in her black and white room, we cannot learn that red has a wavelength of 700 nanometers and translate this for ourselves in such a way that we could give a phenomenological identification of red). In Chapter Five, we will see the way this 'theory-versus-phenomenality' limit-situation is expressed in Nietzsche's work. For now, however, we can move on to our second set of limit-situation examples.

(II) The Splitting of the World: Human Being Falls Out of Objectivity

In the above example, we looked at the subjective-phenomenal resistance that occurs when we develop objective science as a means of understanding *the world*. In the next set of limit-situations, we will look at the fissures that arise when we turn objective science *on ourselves* in an attempt to study the human being. The following discussions on what I have called (i) 'the psychiatrist's dilemma,' and (ii) the 'problem of the standpoint' give us just a small sample of Jaspers' extensive work on this matter. In each case, Jaspers demonstrates how one who fastidiously follows truth continues to come up against the problem that science is unable to fully account for what we are and what we value. Attempts to understand human beings through objective scientific means will always be inadequate, he tells us. "Whatever I am existentially I cease to be when I make it an object of knowledge. As soon as my existence becomes a

²¹ In simplified form, the Mary's Room thought experiment runs thus: Mary—a scientist—lives her whole existence within a room where everything contained in that room (herself included) is coloured black and white. Gaining a comprehensive knowledge of the physics of colour (colour as wavelengths of light on the electromagnetic spectrum, etc.) and human neurophysiology, we intuit that she is still missing that crucial phenomenological 'knowledge' or appreciation of red which would only be attained through the actual seeing of the colour itself. For the full example and original presentation of the argument, see Frank Jackson, "Epiphenomenal Qualia," *Philosophical Quarterly* 32 (1982), 127–36. Interestingly, Jackson—who proposed the Mary's Room form of the thought experiment (J.W. Dunne proposes a similar idea in 1927)—is no longer a "tub-thumping" advocate for the supposed intuition that Mary cannot 'know' red ("Mind and Illusion," *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 53 [September 2003]: 262. This reflects a fascinating string of arguments in the analytic literature that follow a semantic focus leading away from the original question. An analysis of these responses that can return us to the original issue is, I think, badly needed.

research object, as the entirety of existence, I myself slip through the meshes of the cognitive net.”²²

Let us start, then, with the psychiatrist’s dilemma. As a trained and practising psychiatrist himself, Jaspers was particularly interested in the radically different frameworks through which the therapist can understand and treat their patient. On the one hand, they may regard the patient as a mere object—a brain materiality to be operated on and medicated with predictable effect. On the other hand, however, Jaspers felt that—in their pursuit of the best treatment for their patient—the practitioner is often required to switch modes, seeing before them not a mechanism to be causally manipulated and directed, but an entity like themselves, a person to be respected and aided through communication and mutual regard.²³ “At this point,” to quote Wallraff, “something which eludes scientific psychiatry is touched upon, viz., that which in the language of tradition is called the ‘soul,’ and which is now often known as ‘Existenz.’ This is the innermost self which, being a subject, can never be an object, and which, being free, and, consequently, a shaper of its own destiny, accepts responsibility for its acts and refuses to yield to the control of the psychiatrist.”²⁴ When dealing with the patient on this level—as “two wayfarers on the path of life who exchange confidences and try to enlighten and encourage each other”²⁵—issues arise that cannot be addressed by science: questions about what is ultimately (i.e., metaphysically) real, about what is good and meaningful in one’s life, about the obligations we have to others. For this there is no definite knowledge, no scientific manual, and the psychiatrist, sensitive to the limitations of objective science, must draw from their own experience and from the obscure wells of philosophy and religion.

The second example of limit-reaching through objective self-study that I would like to discuss is *the problem of the standpoint*. In his philosophical investigations, Jaspers was fascinated by the fact that as one attempts to understand one’s self objectively, through context relativity, one reveals to one’s self the absolute impossibility of ever escaping these perspectival bounds. The Jasperian version of this now familiar argument runs as follows: in attempting to understand the self through various scientific frameworks (e.g., the studies of biology, history, psychology, sociology), I come to understand how ‘the world’—as I know it—is a product of the contingencies of my particular existence: my bodily mechanisms and belief formations, my local environment in which I am practically immersed, and my cultural-social surrounds. As I drive towards a unified, ‘one world’ comprehension through these studies, I come to view my existence relatively, as just one particular form of existence in amongst many others. “By way

²² Jaspers, *Philosophy*, 119.

²³ Attempting to communicate the simple gravitas of this difference, Jaspers writes that “[n]ature does not answer; it does not speak to me as *Existenz*; it is mindless ... The mind holds me in the human world. It is through the mind that I communicate my possible beliefs to other believers” (*Philosophy*, 206).

²⁴ Wallraff, *Karl Jaspers*, 90.

²⁵ Wallraff, 90.

of research,” Jaspers reflects, “I try to free myself from *my* world so as to find *the* world.”²⁶ As a biologist, for example, “[w]hat I want to know is not the specific perceptive world of my own biological existence, but that one universal world of which mine is a case”,²⁷ as a sociologist, “instead of yielding to the peculiarity of my historical situation ... I seek the one true form of human existence, the form of which the historical worlds are mere particular realizations.”²⁸ But as I strive for impartiality by working through this process of self-representation and relativisation, I become aware of the fact that I can never achieve clean objectivity: while aiming for a ‘standpoint outside,’²⁹ I realise I am always perspective-driven and context-bound.³⁰ Despite my best efforts at perspective neutralisation and relativisation, my objective theorising will issue from a standpoint I can neither wholly see nor fully escape.³¹

Man is indeed capable of self-detachment from any particular world, of entering into other possibilities. He moves to all climes and to all zones; he can train himself in strange uses of technology and adjust to alien ways and customs. But this mobility is not absolute. He remains tied to his finite existence and to his past habit and usage. Beyond those, he may possibly put himself into another’s place and thus—though always questionably—understand the other’s thought by generalising everything, his own existence which he left behind as well as the new and strange one he means to enter. But never to be replaced is *the wholly innate which originally came with his existence*: this native landscape, these implements, this quite definite way of living together, these specific people and tasks.³²

From this ‘wholly innate’ context-framing, multiple ruptures open up across our objective world account. In the first place, it means that I can never quite see the whole of myself (as object). Necessarily, as I present myself to myself, I do so through a framing. If I then turn back to represent this framing, I cannot help but do so through another framing which must be assumed from my present context, creating a kind of Droste effect. Secondly, as well as obscuring myself, it also means that I cannot see the world, for it taints my purported objectivity: “Though meant to be the one universally valid reality which is the same for every consciousness at large, it will always be *verified only in the real situation of each individual existence*.”³³ Those studying in the social sciences are well aware of this effect: one must strive

²⁶ Jaspers, *Philosophy*, 104, emphasis in original.

²⁷ Jaspers, 104.

²⁸ Jaspers, 105.

²⁹ Jaspers, 105.

³⁰ Wallraff provides us with a poetically apt description of the historical dimension of this context framing when he writes that “our thoughts come to us as a series of exegeses on unknown texts provided by our ancestors” (*Karl Jaspers*, 145).

³¹ This concern over historical context and relativity had, of course, been percolating in Germany throughout the nineteenth century, with Nietzsche playing a major role in communicating the problem (see Chapter 4). For a fascinating study of the development of this idea, see Georg G. Iggers, “Historicism: The History and Meaning of the Term,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56, no. 1 (January 1995): 129–52. Nagel’s *The View from Above* offers an extensive analytic treatment of this issue. See, in particular, Chapter IV “The Objective Self,” 54–66, and V “Knowledge,” 67–89.

³² Jaspers, *Philosophy*, 106, emphasis in original.

³³ Jaspers, 112, emphasis in original.

for objectivity by relativising and stepping out of one's own point of view, yet one remains aware of the fact that one can never (perfectly) do so.³⁴

Along with these concerns, Jaspers is making another subtler point, closely related to the first two. It is not just that my context-framing disrupts the objectivity of my study, more than this, I realise that the singularity of 'my world as it is to me' and 'myself-as-siphoning-this-context-to-perspective' has an ineluctable importance despite all its relative arbitrariness.³⁵

I try to understand the social world conditions themselves, in their roots and in their consequences, and to regard them as entirety of existence. Of necessity, however, I keep going back to my own existence even if it strikes me as trivial and insignificant; for I do not exist otherwise than as an individual. Sociological world orientation tells me not only what can be purposely done in society. It also shows me the absolute difference between, first, the world's existence as an object of cognition from relative points of view and, second, the existence of my own world, which makes me feel that there is always more than cognoscibility underneath the first world existence.³⁶

This significance we feel about our own existence, the uniqueness of our situatedness³⁷ and the astonishing phenomenon of our active 'consciencing'³⁸—all this strains (as a *sense*, as *feeling*) against the objective worldview, tearing through the fabric of Being. As the objective world breaks up, we are guided through this felt-significance to an understanding of what is—back to existence, through the objective, to *Existenz*.

(III) *The Splitting of the World: Reality in its Relation to Endlessness*

We have seen, then, that the subject-pole in its resistance to objectification causes fissures in our scientific accounting of reality. But it is not just the problem of human existence that "slip[s] through the ... cognitive net."³⁹ Even if we put aside all the uncapturable aspects of human being (our phenomenal experiencing; our self as a non-determined non-materiality, etc.) and try to come to an understanding of the world independent of the human being, the subject-object

³⁴ For a radical expression of this concern, see Frank R. Ankersmit, "The Origins of Postmodernist Historiography," in *Historiography Between Modernism and Postmodernism: Contributions to the Methodology of the Historical Research*, ed. Jerzy Topolski (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994), 87–118.

³⁵ If we have trouble accessing this thought, we can think of it thus: It is completely arbitrary and unimportant that I exist, and that I exist in the way I exist. Yet, against this, I feel that my existence, and the singularity of my existence (how I happen to be, and how my experience, in any moment, happens to be) is at the same time, in a fundamental sense, of the utmost importance to me.

³⁶ Jaspers, 111–12.

³⁷ In Nietzsche's words, this is the deep sense one has (or *can* have) that one "is in this world just once, as something unique, and that no accident, however strange, will throw together a second time into a unity such a curious and diffuse plurality" (*SE*, §1). I have used Kaufmann's translation of the passage in *Existentialism: From Dostoevsky to Sartre*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann, rev. and expanded edition (New York: Plume, 1975): 122.

³⁸ This wonderful term has been taken from E. B. McGilvary. I use the participle here to convey the simple phenomenal *activity* of being conscious. See Robert Morris Ogden, review of "The Stream of Consciousness," by E. B. McGilvary, *Psychological Bulletin* 5, no. 10 (October 1908): 334.

³⁹ Jaspers, *Philosophy*, 119.

polarity guarantees that we will fail in every attempt at a *complete* comprehension, leaving us stranded on a ground that ultimately cannot support itself.

Reissuing Kant's great transcendental philosophy, Jaspers shows that science, which always operates through a formal conceptual cognitive apparatus, is by its very nature always limited in what it can tell us. Under a Kantian framework, our experiencing of the world takes place through a contributive process whereby the mind, using the conceptual formatting of the *a priori* intuitions of space and time and the pure concepts of the understanding, maps onto the raw data we take in through our senses—an epistemological state of affairs Kant sums up with the slogan “thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind.”⁴⁰ But the unifying action of mind, with its “inner teleology” as “a constant disposition towards the establishment of the ‘highest unity’ of knowledge,”⁴¹ compels us to seek knowledge beyond the limits of the empirical. Thus, we want to know not just how the world is contingently, as science spreads it out around us, forging explanatory links, “swamping” us with endlessness,⁴² but how things are absolutely, ultimately, and with finality: “We cannot help asking whether reality consists of smallest particles or in endless divisibility, whether the world is closed or endless, whether or not there is such a thing as ‘the smallest’ or ‘the largest,’ and so forth.”⁴³ These questions strike us as meaningful and legitimate. They *should* have an answer; we should *in theory* be able to conclusively map or ‘round out’ our objective, law-governed surrounds. But since our cognition is necessarily receptive (its conceptual structures are such that they must project *onto the world*), when we apply concepts of the understanding beyond the sphere of sense-experience, our thinking collapses. If we ask, for example, whether the world is finite or infinite, we end up in the void of the antinomy where it must be one, but it cannot be either (we cannot accept a world that rolls out infinitely; nor can we accept a world that drops out at some point where ‘is-ness’ comes to an end). The question—despite all its necessity—terminates in the unthinkable. By foundering on these antinomies, the deeper truth of our existence appears to us: The same rational, objective thinking that is compelled to know in completeness is bounded against this knowing, for through it “we can conceive and explore only closed, finite systems.”⁴⁴ While we must ask, we cannot answer:

Understandably, our thinking is a ceaseless search for instances of that conclusiveness without which nothing can become objective and cognoscible for us. We would like to see the world as a whole become another such instance; this would be a triumph of cognition, its penetration to the bottom of things. Just as understandably, however, the philosophical impulse makes us think along those lines only so that our thought will more and more deeply founder on the rock of

⁴⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. and trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 193–94 (A51/B75).

⁴¹ Chris Thornhill, *Karl Jaspers: Politics and Metaphysics* (London: Routledge, 2002), 34.

⁴² Jaspers, *Philosophy*, 128.

⁴³ Jaspers, 134.

⁴⁴ Jaspers, 127–28.

endlessness, and so that the instability of the phenomenal world will be more and more substantially experienced.⁴⁵

Scientific thinking is like a ground that forms around us as we walk in our investigations, wherever we walk and as far as we can see and project, but it is never able to stretch out, to overreach itself, to form a complete foundation, a comprehensive floor of objective existence. “Inspired by a belief in progress, it presses constantly onward, and, as a result, is and must always remain unfinished. On the one hand it enjoys the boundlessness of its domain; on the other, it is burdened by the infinite distance and inaccessibility of its end.”⁴⁶

Jaspers’ Philosophical Schema: The Existential State and the Encompassing

In the Jasperian schema above, we observed that as we extend our objective, scientific thinking out, attempting to cognise all that there is in our experience of life and world, we find the subject-object distinction driving through existence like a dynamic root, breaking up the foundation upon which we unquestioningly stand. On the one hand, it ensures a lateral break-up: in scientific study we both lose ourselves, and can never be rid of ourselves. On the other hand, it shows up an antinomical horizon, an uncrossable boundary point beyond which our rational thinking is useless and can find no logical ground. Having followed these limit-situations through to the splitting of reality, we can now look at the effect these radical thought-experiments have on the thinker, focusing on the way they stimulate the (indefinitely defined) *heightened existential state*, on the one hand, and an awareness of the modally composite *Encompassing*, on the other.

To begin with, we can observe that by thinking through these limit-situation problems, we experience an intellectual breach that profoundly affects us. When we think through thoughts that leave us stranded on an ever-splintering core-world, suspended haplessly in the endless/unendless ‘what-could-not,’ we start to experience life, self and world differently. Through such reflections, we reach a new level of understanding, not through any new theory or positive knowledge, but in the form of quiet astonishment for the strangeness and fragility of existence. Looking around, the world shifts; it is out of place: “Although [it] tells us nothing specific and sanctions no creeds,” writes Charles Wallraff, “it causes old things to pass away and all things to become new. In one sense, it makes no difference, for it leaves everything the same; in another it makes all the difference, for it alters our entire consciousness of being.”⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Jaspers, 128.

⁴⁶ Wallraff, *Karl Jaspers*, 44.

⁴⁷ Wallraff, 192.

One has now become the existential explorer. Appreciating the fractured nature of existence, mundane reality begins to shudder and buzz with antinomical energy as our self-world understanding loosens itself from its habitual framing and opens up. This is the heightened existential state, and it is communicated in expressive literary forms by a number of philosophical writers. It is evoked by David B. Allison, for example, in his introduction to *Reading the New Nietzsche* when he speaks of “things tak[ing] on a richer patina” and a “sensuous immediacy.”⁴⁸ And it is the view through the eyes of the lonely narrator in *Star Maker* by the philosopher and science-fiction writer Olaf Stapledon:

In a strange vertigo, I looked for reassurance at the little glowing windows of our home. There they still were; and the whole suburb, and the hills. But stars shone through all. It was as though all terrestrial things were made of glass, or of some more limpid, more ethereal vitreosity. Faintly, the church clock chimed for midnight.⁴⁹

Acknowledging this heightened state of world apprehension, this kind of engagement with the world now shows up as a specific framework (viz., as an *existential* one) in amongst the other multiple forms of world-viewing that—through limit-situation thinking—we considered in the first part of our discussion (e.g., ‘existence,’ ‘objective science,’ etc.). Continuing his work in *Philosophy*, Jaspers takes it upon himself to bring these multiple frameworks together by mapping out this indefinite, fractured whole through a “tentative schema”⁵⁰ he calls ‘the Encompassing’ (*das Umgreifende*). Not a theory per se, the term signifies Jaspers’ attempt to merely depict, record, and explore the deep fragmentation of our reality and account for ‘what is’ without trying to smooth it out and cognitively fix it.⁵¹ The concept of the Encompassing,

⁴⁸ David B. Allison, *Reading the New Nietzsche: The Birth of Tragedy, The Gay Science, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, and On the Genealogy of Morals* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2001), vii.

⁴⁹ Olaf Stapledon, *Star Maker*, ed. Patrick A. McCarthy (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), 12. If one listens for it, one hears many accounts of this experience—each with its own personalised context, experience, and articulation. Indeed, it is possibly experienced quite widely (though is possibly not so widely reflected and reported upon), and is perhaps accessible to all. Thus, for example, this experience of existentially heightened phenomenal world-engagement is similarly recorded by Sartre through the figure of Antoine Roquentin in *Nausea* as he sits contemplating the existence of the root of a chestnut tree. For Sartre, the phenomenal experience is not of a star-lit translucency but a slimy opaqueness—a saturation and spilling over of Being, as the things of phenomenal world ooze out of their assumed integrity: “That root ... existed in so far that I could not explain it ... it fascinated me, filled my eyes, repeatedly brought me back to its own existence ... Each of its qualities escaped from it a little, flowed out of it, half-solidified, almost became a thing; each one was *superfluous* in the root, and the whole stump now gave me the impression of rolling a little outside itself, denying itself, losing itself in a strange excess” (*Nausea*, trans. Robert Baldick [London: Penguin Books, 1965], 185–86). Philosopher and artist Barbara Bolt communicates a similar experience in the process of making art: “The ‘work’ (as verb) took on its own momentum, its own rhythm and intensity ... The painting takes on a life of its own. It breathes, vibrates, pulsates, shimmers and generally runs away from me. The painting no longer merely represents or illustrates reading. Instead, it performs. In the performativity of imaging, life gets into the image” (*Art Beyond Representation: The Performative Power of the Image* [London: I.B Tauris, 2004], 1).

⁵⁰ Wallraff, *Karl Jaspers*, 197.

⁵¹ It is interesting to observe that Nagel works with a loosely defined, modally plural worldview that is very close to Jaspers’ Encompassing. Although he retains a more explicit orientation around the dualistic subject-object divide than Jaspers, he states that while the combining of our subjective perspective with

then, takes us away from the idea of reality as a stable, continuous land mass, and instead, searches for human existence in the fractured landscape of modes which we might picture as distinct but connected plains, or expansive peninsulas that both stretch out as opposing worldviews and criss-cross into one another like Escherian stairs.

Out of the disparateness of Being, Jaspers (tentatively) posits the following categories of the Encompassing, many of which have already been encountered in our study of his *Philosophy*. The first is the base level mode of *Dasein*: this is very much like the original state of ‘existence,’ which we have already discussed. It refers to our basic mode of world relation as sentience and practical engagement; it involves a kind of humanly sophisticated animal-existence that acts to gain for the self and satisfy desires; and it accounts for pragmatic, pre-scientifically universalised ways of understanding.⁵² Corresponding with objective world orientation, Jaspers recognises the modes of ‘Consciousness in General’ (*Bewusstsein überhaupt*)⁵³ and ‘World’ (*Welt*), which roughly point to the rationalising-universalising and naturalising tendencies of science.⁵⁴ “The truth that is essential to us,” that which is distinctly human and “begins where consciousness in general leave[s] off” is codified as ‘Spirit’ (*Geist*).⁵⁵ This mode of Being encompasses value and religion, creative activities and culture; it is interested in the humanities (*Geisteswissenschaften*) and it “view[s] the motives, lived experiences, and attitudes of human beings *ab intra*,” through an active *participating-in*.⁵⁶ ‘Existenz,’ of course, is the point of refuge towards which we head when we are philosophising (and which I have brought out in the form of the heightened existential state). While it resists definition and takes no set, definite form, we might characterise it as a state of philosophical reflection where the tensions of Being (e.g., the world-splitting dilemmas explored above) bring us closer to truthful understanding and appreciation of ourselves in our living-in-predicament. It aims for authenticity through

our objective world view “is a single problem,” it branches out into “many aspects.” Elaborating on this thesis, he writes that

[t]he difficulty of reconciling the two standpoints arises in the conduct of life as well as in thought. It is the most fundamental issue about morality, knowledge, freedom, the self, and the relation of mind to the physical world. Our response or lack of response to it will substantially determine our conception of the world and of ourselves, and our attitude toward our lives, our actions, and our relation with others ... If one could say how the internal and external standpoints are related, how each of them can be developed and modified in order to take the other into account, and how in conjunction they are to govern the thought and action of each person, it would amount to a world view. What I have to say about these questions is not unified enough to deserve that title. (*The View from Nowhere*, 3)

⁵² Wallraff, *Karl Jaspers*, 176, 194–95, 199–201.

⁵³ This is the way Charles Wallraff has translated *Bewusstsein überhaupt* in *Karl Jaspers*. It is also rendered as ‘consciousness at large’ by E. B. Ashton in his translation of Jaspers’ *Philosophy*.

⁵⁴ For an overview of ‘Consciousness in General,’ and ‘World’ see Wallraff, *Karl Jaspers*, 201–3 and 41–47 respectively.

⁵⁵ This is Wallraff’s translation of Jaspers’ *Von der Wahrheit* (Munich: R. Piper, 1948), 605 in *Karl Jaspers*, 203.

⁵⁶ Wallraff, *Karl Jaspers*, 205.

truthful-creative communication.⁵⁷ Finally, there is ‘Transcendence’ (*Transzendenz*) which stands as an important pillar of Jaspers’ philosophy, signifying theism and absolute otherness;⁵⁸ and ‘Reason’ (*Vernunft*) which—much like the Transcendentalists’ ‘understanding’—is the active form of thinking and sensibility which scans, comprehends, adjudicates and synthesises these other modes of experiencing and apprehending.⁵⁹

As we live our lives, we are invariably involved in multiple modes of Being, shifting between implicit modal frameworks that sit behind our commitments, beliefs, attitudes, and experiences (in various configurations and to various degrees). These modalities are usually not experienced or expressed in the philosophically explicit form we have used above (we do not say, for instance, ‘now I am animal ... now I am spirit’), but in a multitude of subtler, more particularised, real-life manifestations about which we are usually not even aware. For example, while at one moment scoffing at organised religion, I might automatically switch modes (to *Spirit*), feeling obliged to act with decorum to respect the dead (during a moment of silence, at a funeral, passing through a cemetery, etc.), or by holding on to a physical token of a loved one in remembrance. We tend, however, not to register these conflicts, and prefer to hide this inconsistency from ourselves, for we experience an extreme vertigo if we move with cognisance across these strangely suspended platforms. Indeed, our mind rebels against the thought of a reality that does not add up and an existence that *cannot* make sense. To avoid an ‘is-ness’ that is split, we may resort to a cognitive narrowing: closing off from ourselves and our situation in its fractured multiplicity, we fervently insist that everything should be viewed through a particular mode of thought, and that everything, so viewed, will lock together to form a great totality and comprehensibility. Blind to reality, we become stuck in an “‘insulated, systematized, and dishonest world-[view]”⁶⁰ as this metaphysical world-holder forms a ‘shell’ or objectivised ‘cage’ (*Gehäuse*) around us.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Wallraff, 207–12.

⁵⁸ Wallraff, 194.

⁵⁹ Wallraff, 194–95, 212–14.

⁶⁰ Wallraff, 196. It is out of this same concern that Nagel describes “scientism” as “form of idealism,” objecting that “it puts one type of human understanding in charge of the universe and what can be said about it” (*The View from Nowhere*, 9).

⁶¹ These modalities display a peculiar quality in their manifestations. On the hand, they are not arbitrary; they seem to be (to Jaspers) deeply embedded in how things actually are. Situations reveal or confront us in such a way that they seem to issue out of a certain mode, and/or (in balance with various considerations) should be viewed through a certain mode. On the other hand, we will remember that these frameworks are ultimately ungrounded in the sense that we cannot (even hope to) arrive at a final, intellectually decisive, metaphysical justification for our particular modal selection. Thus, as no ultimate (rational) proof will settle the modal option, the modality suggested by a situation can be taken up or ignored by each according to the way they navigate the moment. For Jaspers, however, the management of these modal frames is critical; we can select modal viewpoints or attitudes inappropriately and to dangerous effect when we are motivated not by genuine understanding, but by fear, convenience, or ignorance. A timely example here, perhaps, is the way many of us have responded (or, rather, not responded) to warnings about climate change. While (to use a generalisation) we take advice from a doctor about our health very seriously, and would take a majority view given by experts in this field to

Thus, Jaspers offers us an instructive alternative conception of dogmatism and metaphysical foundationalism. On this conception, dogmatism and metaphysicalism occur when, through a desire to adhere to a particular framework, we ignore and distort the evidence of *how we actually live, experience and understand our selves/world*. What is important here is actual, honest self-observation (or, as we will discuss, self-anthropology). To give an example of this dogmatism, we could think of those philosophers who insist that they can intellectually explain meaningful human relations such as familial love in the context of evolution.⁶² For all our attempts and intellectual reductions, through simple self-observation we tap into the Moorean realisation that our loving commitment to our spouse, our parents, or our child resists being adequately reduced to such explanations (an idea we appreciate by asking ourselves whether we would feel adequately loved if we honestly conceived of the love given to us by another as a matter of reproduction and gene-passing). Carrying out a *lived* philosophical thought-experiment on the matter, if we think of our own most intimate, meaningful, heart-warming moments shared with others, it is difficult to imagine that one would not feel existentially dismayed by the sudden (non-intellectually superficial) belief that these did not have the innate, unconditional meaningfulness we *felt them to have for us in the moment*. Crucially, following Kant and Kierkegaard, Jaspers' anti-foundationalism means that he brackets out any kind of intellectual decision about whether it is our felt commitment to the reality of familial/romantic love or the reductionist evolutionary account that is the ultimately true picture of how things are. Respecting Kant's transcendental deduction, he holds that we will not (through any legitimate rational means) find an intellectual proof establishing one mode as the definitive modal option. Thus, as a responsible anti-metaphysician, he believes that it is more honest and philosophically valuable to register our actual commitments and experiences (contradictory as they are), rather than forcing a dogmatic intellectual extension that artificially (and, ultimately, illogically and erroneously) plasters over what is really the case (for us).⁶³ Thus, for Jaspers, dogmatism occurs when

be a strong indicator of what is the case and what we should do (thus assuming a commitment to the scientific framework), when the science tells us to act in a certain way to avoid catastrophic global warming for future generations, we might conveniently switch to a sceptical mode ('scientific consensus can be wrong, you know'). In this case—to speak for Jaspers—we cannot know with certainty that the scientific or sceptical mode *is* the correct position in the circumstance (indeed, scientific consensus can be wrong!), but we can observe the fact that we apply a different standard when what is at stake is not our own health but rather the health of others, and we can use this observation to understand and regulate our modal commitments with integrity, to try to make the best decision we can (e.g., when the health of others is at stake, that is not the time to try out my epistemic scepticism).

⁶² Richard Dawkins makes such an attempt (with difficulty) in his popular publications *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) and *The God Delusion* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2006). See also, for example, the work of Eliot Sober and David Sloan Wilson, including their co-authored book *Unto Others: The Evolution and Psychology of Unselfish Behavior* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

⁶³ Indeed, we can add—in a Nietzschean vein—that, technically for Jaspers, it is not even off the cards that one might reflect on one's own experience and, weighing it up with one's belief in the theory of

[t]he One is grasped mistakenly in an objectified Being (in everything we call materialisation and naturalisation), in fixed antitheses (of the One over against the not-One), in emptiness (in all that is merely abstract, incorporeal, other-worldly). We lose our openness for the One when we either, erroneously, take in at a glance the One as a whole, as an enduring logical system, or we look at it as the one, familiar, necessary movement. In no way can we see it from the outside, nor can we grasp it as the whole based on its beginning and end.⁶⁴

The existentialist, however, compelled equally by a love of Being and a desire for honesty, ranges over this precipitous land, broken up, as it is, by the base opposition of the subject-object polarity and the tectonic shifting of the modes of the Encompassing. In the first place, they want to view themselves and others through honest study and reflection on the human experience. Like botanists, they trace out the briers of contradictions, paradoxes, and conflicts that grow from this fissured earth, piercing the illusion of continuity in our everyday lives; as existential anthropologists, they map out the tensions we experience, express and repress. Through an always imperfect study of human being, the existentialist seeks to understand and open up their thinking and behaviour, asking ‘Where do I hide from myself?’ ‘Where do I avoid confrontations with the broken world?’ Having looked for and lost (the possibility of) a stable unified grounding of perspective, they use “a room-making, dialectically daring, never-fixating kind of thinking” to loosen themselves from rigid forms of thought that limit and distort their worldview.⁶⁵ They play contradictory opinions and tendencies off against each other and throw themselves into endless vertigos by seeking out—and by wanting to see through—conflicting modal perspectives including worldviews and consequences that seem foreign, incorrect, or abhorrent. They renew themselves in their lived precariousness and uncertainty by repeatedly facing up to and falling through limit-situations that are chronically destabilising.

Thus, to list just a few examples of the kinds of dialectical tensions that the existentialist might explore: I can consider experience in its flowing temporality and impermanence, and play this off against my vague but deep-seated sense of (or hope for) eternity.⁶⁶ Reflecting upon

evolution, might decide that the evolutionary view is the ultimate truth. What Jaspers (and, as we will see, Nietzsche) ask, though, is that we are honest about the consequences of such a view, admitting to ourselves that there is now a whole list of humanistic phenomena that we cannot emotionally and existentially hold on to. The central message of Jaspers’ philosophy is that this is a decision we must make for ourselves. Through the activity of philosophising and philosophical writing, Jaspers chooses (for himself) to make the leap, and breaks the world to find space for freedom and love.

⁶⁴ Jaspers, *Karl Jaspers: Basic Philosophical Writings*, 271–72.

⁶⁵ Karl Jaspers, “Reply to My Critics,” 859.

⁶⁶ This philosophical theme—the need we have to seize time and halt transitoriness (and our inability to achieve this metaphysical feat)—is explored in various works of literature. It can be heard, for example, in Shelley’s “Ozymandias” (*Percy Bysshe Shelley: Poems Selected by Fiona Sampson* [London: Faber and Faber, 2011], 15):

“My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings
Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!”
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

the interdependency of all things, I hope (and am told to hope) for the co-existence of all (people or sentient beings) in harmonious support, but thrust into real life, I often find the cannibalism of a fractured will that “feasts upon itself.”⁶⁷ Considering the impossibility of not imposing on other Beings, I know that I am always guilty, but I also know that I could not get around in existence shouldering the burden of this guilt. In thinking about myself in my present situation as the contemporary realisation of my relevant history, I can see all I do as intractably determined by the temporal and situational conditions that bind me; alternatively, as a condition of *meaningful* action, I take myself to have the capacity to freely choose an unfolding of the future (in which case, my choices strike me as meaningful), and I can, with a sense of reverence, also regard the past retrospectively as a path forged through (some of) my own freely directed unfoldings.⁶⁸

This brings our tour of Jaspers’ philosophy to a close. In the course of our discussion, we have sketched out a three-part dynamic that runs through Jaspers’ thought. We began with a study of Jasperian limit-situations which function as radical thought-experiments, alerting us to the fragmentary nature of reality. We then saw the way these limit-reaching thoughts bring about a heightened state of world engagement in the thinker and an awareness of existence as a multi-modal construct which Jaspers calls the Encompassing. With this schematic in place, we found that Jaspers’ focus on contradiction is not an arbitrary ‘delight,’ but rather a responsible anti-foundationalism that seeks to transcribe the incongruity of human beings who cannot help but live (inconsistently, hypocritically) through multiple modes or frameworks of Being. As we continue our study, this understanding of Jaspers’ philosophy will put us in a good position to start to decode his opaque writings in *NIUPA*.

The same philosophical tension is explored in a future-running direction in Isaac Asimov’s short story “The Last Question,” *Science Fiction Quarterly* 12, no. 4 (November 1956): 6–16.

⁶⁷ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E.F.J. Payne, vol. 1 (New York: Dover Publications, 1969), 147.

⁶⁸ The large, small, and micro observations we could make here are endless. To add to the list, we could study the way we mentally and emotionally segregate (though constantly move between) the clean social self on the one hand, and the base animal self on the other (ashamed by the bodily, we clean and cover ourselves)—a conflict explored, for example, by Bataille and other transgressive artists through their work with the profane; or we might reflect on the way we are often akratically pulled to act (and put out of sorts) by (unwanted) unconscious impulses and drives (sexual, dominating, etc.); or we could observe the fact that while one can conceive of sex as a raw animalistic act, one can also conceive of it as a beautiful and meaningful act of physical-emotional communion; in the ethical/moral domain we could notice the tendency we have to hold others responsible as free agents for their wrong-doings while letting ourselves off the hook by viewing our actions as determined, etc.

Jaspers' Reading of Nietzsche as Existential-Experimentalist

Having put in place the philosophical backdrop of the groundless, fragmentary, dissolving world, we are now able to bring into view Jaspers' 'existential-experimental' reading of Nietzsche. To recapture the idea of 'existential-experimentalism' in its original Jasperian sense, we must look again at the questions we posed but left in suspension at the beginning of this chapter: namely, what does Jaspers mean when he claims that Nietzsche's work is unified by life (through the "real impetus" of some "primal source")? and how does this (non-trivial) life-unity also yield radical contradictions? By answering these questions we will find that we are brought back to an existential understanding of Nietzsche that is not only more faithful to the original text, but also more philosophically edifying for us.

Nietzsche as Existential-Experimentalist: Unity in Life

Let us begin, then, by trying to come to terms with Jaspers' ambiguous claim that Nietzsche's work is 'unified in life.'⁶⁹ We will remember from our analysis in Chapter One that Kaufmann offered us (with much equivocation) two general ways of understanding this existential claim: firstly, he implies that Nietzsche's work is 'unified by life' in the sense that Nietzsche systematically life-tested all his philosophical propositions. Never explicitly committing to this dubious claim (which I endeavoured to debunk), he then tries out the idea that Nietzsche's work is unified in life by virtue of the *trivial* fact that Nietzsche's writings issue from Nietzsche himself. When we turn to look at this 'unity in life' claim in the original Jasperian context in *NIUPA*, it may seem, rather disappointingly, that Jaspers is also communicating nothing more than these two uninteresting meanings. But while both interpretations seem quite close on initial inspection, through a deeper reading of Jaspers, we find the crucial points of difference that transform the unfeasible interpretations offered by Kaufmann into a profound and revealing existential hermeneutics.

In the first place, we should make the general observation that while Jaspers believes that the unity of Nietzsche's philosophy results from its connection with the life of its author, this is certainly not in the sense used by Kaufmann (it is no empty appeal to the fact that Nietzsche's philosophy necessarily issues from the person of Nietzsche). For Jaspers, rather, Nietzsche's work is unified by his life in the sense that his philosophical writings—in all their thematic, propositional, and stylistic diversity—issue from a single *attitudinal approach*. The emphasis here is on the *activity* of philosophising; what is important is the way Nietzsche philosophised and the drive that generated his overarching philosophical project. We may not yet be aware of the philosophical significance of this attitudinal focus, but we can at this point acknowledge the

⁶⁹ *NIUPA*, 13.

fact that the Jasperian meaning of ‘life-unity’ is not necessarily trivial as is Kaufmann’s understanding of the claim—a fact we can gauge by noticing that in its Jasperian formulation, the ‘unity in life’ criterion *might not* apply to all works of philosophy. This will depend, however, on what this attitudinal approach turns out to be. Using a close reading of *NIUPA* and our background understanding of Jaspers’ existentialism, we will now try to analyse and explain in detail what this attitude is, and how it differs quite radically from a conventional philosophical approach.

If we return to some of the tentative suggestions made at the beginning of this chapter, we can take as a starting point the idea that, for Jaspers, this distinctive Nietzschean attitudinal approach and activity is a *passionate existential searching*. This much can be extracted from passages like the following:

This whole is not a concept, a world-view, or a system; it is the passion of the quest for being, together with its constant overcoming through relentless criticism, as it rises to the level of genuine truth. While we are engaged in discovering statements which, when taken together, provide the necessary foundation for a proper understanding of something further, we must keep in mind the essential difference between the systematic wholeness of mere doctrines, which are themselves only functions of an encompassing whole, and the existential encompassing itself which is a basic incentive, but not a basic doctrine.⁷⁰

To try to achieve more detail here, it is not just that Nietzsche approached his philosophy with a fervency and passion for his work that continued through his whole life (as many writers or researchers might). More specifically and crucially, he proceeds with the fervent understanding of his philosophy as intimately connected with, and expressive of, his *life*. Here again we might feel as though we are sinking into Kaufmann’s ‘life-testing’ definition where Nietzsche’s existential approach means that his claims are unified because they issue from his life. Of course, as we have previously discussed, the suggestion is quite unserviceable. Thus, when Nietzsche says his work is bounded to life, we must look for a less literal (but more meaningful and accurate) understanding of the claim.

Though difficult to capture in its entirety and in any kind of universal and essential form, this passionate philosophising from life that Jaspers witnesses in Nietzsche involves, I believe, two concurrent, interrelated tendencies: (i) honesty (*Redlichkeit*) as a kind of drive to self-exploration (which we might call a self-anthropology) coupled with (ii) a kind of extra-intellectual sensitivity and ability to grasp the personal weightiness and significance of the philosophical ideas he is considering.⁷¹

⁷⁰ *NIUPA*, 11.

⁷¹ Rather than reporting on the concept or theory of ‘passion’ in Nietzsche’s work, I believe that this claim of Jaspers’ is about how Nietzsche, in a very simple and direct sense, *felt* in relation to his practice of philosophising. What Jaspers is describing is the ‘passion’ that is there in Nietzsche that compels him to philosophise with commitment and honesty throughout his life (in his more obviously passionate or fiery writings, and his ‘milder’ works [Ansell-Pearson, *Nietzsche’s Search for Philosophy*, 63]), thus producing theories, claims and discussions, some of which are on ‘passions,’ many of which are not. An easy way to appreciate that Nietzsche’s reflection on passion is *distinct* from his own passion for

I would now like to explore each of these aspects, looking at the way they function in the Jasperian reading of Nietzsche. By tuning in to the aspect of honest self-anthropology, we will see how the Encompassing, which we identified as a key component in Jaspers' own philosophising, operates in Nietzsche's work and helps us to explain how—through Jaspers' eyes—Nietzsche's thinking, unified as it is in life, produces contradictions. Next, by tuning in to the aspect of passionate philosophising as extra-intellectual engagement, we will start to understand how the Jasperian component of dynamic existential self-world appreciation stimulated by philosophical limit-thinking also naturally applies to Nietzsche's writing.

Let us start our exploration of Jaspers' existential-experimental reading by sketching out Nietzsche's self-anthropology. In a Jasperian account of Nietzsche's philosophising, Nietzsche's interest in understanding human being 'as it really is' is (very often) based upon the *observation of human beings as they really are*. In a general sense, as human beings, we like to think that we are consistent (and that we could—if we had time—explain human existence through a single modal framework, thus achieving a foundational, metaphysical account of Being). However, by thinking through limit-situations, we reveal the impossibility of smooth metaphysical accounting and disclosure, thus alerting ourselves to the (inevitable) fact that we are deeply contradictory (hypocritical, inconsistent, etc.) in the way we navigate our way through the world, moving, as we do, between multiple, fundamentally opposed frameworks as we go about our lives. Simply put, in order to access our/others' lived contradictions, we can experiment with a framework by honestly thinking through the limit-implications of this perspective, revealing its inevitable inability to fully account for our existence, thus compelling us to give attention to these (very human) inconsistencies as they play out in our *actual self-world understanding, behaviour and emotional/intellectual commitments*. Thus, rather than trying to draw Nietzsche's philosophy together as though the whole point of his project was to consistently argue for a foundational base of existence (i.e., to do metaphysics—to explain to us, for example, that everything is force [*will to power*], or

philosophy, we can note the fact that one could have (and philosophers have had) a great passion for philosophy without writing anything specifically on 'passion' in their philosophy. When analysing Nietzsche's theoretical discussions on 'passions,' some of these will be relevant as personal indicators of Nietzsche's own 'passion' for philosophy, but some will not—particularly when they take a generalised (we might even say metaphysical) form. For example, when Nietzsche makes the claim that 'passion' is a drive underpinning all intellectual processes, this will not help us in terms of trying to describe, assess and communicate Nietzsche's own methodology (viz., whether he is a passionate philosopher or not) since we would have to say that he is equally as 'passionate' as any other thinker (since all intellect is a product of the affect of passion). We certainly have a great deal to gain from an analysis of Nietzsche's theoretical comments on 'passion,' but we must distinguish this from, and be able to turn our attention to, Nietzsche's lived passion. This, I believe, is what Jaspers requests from us in the quote above when he writes that Nietzsche's existential searching cannot be understood as "a concept, a world-view, or a system" but as "the passion of the quest," and when he reminds us that Nietzsche's existentiality is "a basic incentive, but not a basic doctrine" (*NIUPA*, 11). Academically, this may seem like a simple and unrewarding step, but, as I hope to show in forthcoming discussions (particularly in Chapter 5), substantial benefits can be gained from taking this approach.

chaos [*becoming*], or matter [*body*], etc.), Jaspers focuses on the ways in which Nietzsche uses his work to carry out an honest self-anthropology, to examine the actual ways of thinking that we and others engage in, and to explore the ways of thinking that are potentially open to us, and possibly latent in us. If, for example, I am committed to viewing the world through a religious framework, an honest anthropology will reveal the ways that I quite regularly fail to uphold this commitment; and if, as discussed above, I am generally committed to a scientific framework, an honest self-study will show the way I sustain myself through unexplainable and ungroundable humanistic assumptions (e.g., ‘I am loved,’ ‘my existence is meaningful,’ ‘the world should be just,’ etc.).

Before discussing this self-anthropology further, we must note that Jaspers does not see Nietzsche as necessarily treading along the logical roads that lead up to the impasses where reason and the self-world break.⁷² In Jaspers’ assessment, the process is haphazard and organic: “Nietzsche’s experience with contradictoriness,” he writes, utilises “no conscious method ... He does not develop the multi-dimensional logic of opposition and contradiction. He becomes clear-sighted by fits and starts as it were, and fails to clarify further what he sees.”⁷³ Despite this, Nietzsche is able to move through these paths semi-intuitively, waking up to find himself already working within the logic of these breaks and contradictions. Thus, Jaspers writes, “Nietzsche, without conscious mastery over the possibilities presented by the realms of thought and being, still manages to take the necessary routes through these realms.”⁷⁴

Indeed, Jaspers explains this uncanny intuitive-logical ability Nietzsche possesses in teleological terms—viz., in terms of a Hegelian-like historical dialectic, as though Nietzsche had internalised, without full conscious understanding, the rational challenges against the totalising intellectualism of the Enlightenment which had come before him (the “counter-movements” of Pascal, Vico, and Bayle).⁷⁵ In this entropic schema, Nietzsche—along with Kierkegaard—“created a new atmosphere” of thought.⁷⁶

They passed beyond all of the limits then regarded as obvious. It is as if they no longer shrank back from anything in thought. Everything permanent was as if consumed in a dizzying suction ... Both questioned reason from the depths of Existenz. Never on such a high level of thought had there been such a thorough-going and radical opposition to mere reason. This questioning is never simply hostility to reason; rather both sought to appropriate limitlessly all modes of rationality. It was no philosophy of feeling, for both pushed unremittingly toward the concept for expression. It is certainly not dogmatic scepticism; rather their whole thought strove toward the genuine truth.⁷⁷

⁷² *NIUPA* 121, 123, 397, 402.

⁷³ *NIUPA*, 397.

⁷⁴ *NIUPA*, 11.

⁷⁵ Jaspers, *Reason and Existenz*, 22.

⁷⁶ Jaspers, 24.

⁷⁷ Jaspers, 24–25.

Compelled by an intractably complicated mix of conscious-logical (though often haphazard) reasoning on the one hand, and intentional, intuitive or unconscious violations of logic and reason on the other, Nietzsche sets out to explore life's splits, contradictions, and multiplicities, sometimes stumbling, sometimes striding, up to the Jasperian precipices of ungrounded self-discovery. As the knight of Dürer's 'Knight, Death and the Devil,'⁷⁸ he is not afraid to venture along different paths, riding out to the extremes of conflicting peninsulas. Throwing himself into duelling conflict with himself, "he wishes his experience to be a 'voluntary reliving of all the evaluative standpoints ... and of their opposites as well.'"⁷⁹ Experimenting with "a new total intellectual attitude ... of infinite reflection,"⁸⁰ "Nietzsche destroys confining horizons and offers unlimited space; he teaches us to raise critical questions, but his criticism, unlike that of Kant, does not set bounds to our inquiry; he presents a plethora of possibilities and awakens the powers that animate our innermost selves."⁸¹

In the two hundred and fifty odd pages that make up Book Two of *NIUPA*, Jaspers takes on the painstaking task of pulling apart the tangled vines of contradiction that run—in extraordinary organic complexity—throughout Nietzsche's works. The following are just some of the many sets of contradictions Jaspers assiduously documents in this compendium-like section of the book. We find, for example, Nietzsche expressing the Stoic view of man as an insignificant drop in the vast becoming of space and time on the one hand,⁸² and man (in his past, present, and future) as a singularly important world-historical event on the other.⁸³ He considers man as animal ("with a shudder" man discovers that he "is the foremost beast of prey"),⁸⁴ and man as distinct from animal (indicated by our "shuddering"), and he draws these together (unsystematically) as the state of reflexive animality (reflecting upon myself, I know I must be animal, but in doing so I demonstrate that I cannot be animal).⁸⁵ He considers various positivisms and their consequences in between visions and expressions of an ensouled world and explorations of philosophical mysticism. He alternates, both implicitly and explicitly,

⁷⁸ In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche lauds (and self-identifies with) Schopenhauer as "a Dürer knight ... [who] lacked all hope, but ... sought the truth" (*BT* §20). In his *Untimely Meditations*, Nietzsche reinforces this ideal, proclaiming that "[t]he Schopenhauerean man voluntarily takes upon himself the suffering involved in being truthful" (*SE* §4).

⁷⁹ *NIUPA*, 35.

⁸⁰ Jaspers, *Reason and Existenz*, 25.

⁸¹ *NIUPA*, 123. One is reminded here of the proclamation Nietzsche makes at the start of *The Gay Science*: "to stand in the midst of this *rerum concordia discors* and of this whole marvellous uncertainty and interpretive multiplicity [*Vieldeutigkeit*] of existence *and not question*, not tremble with the craving and the rapture of such questioning ... that is what I feel to be *contemptible*" (*GS* §2). I have used Christopher Cox's translation of this passage in *Nietzsche: Naturalism and Interpretation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 51, where he brings out the meaning of *Vieldeutigkeit* as "polysemy" (i.e., "interpretive multiplicity") as opposed to just "ambiguity" which we find in Nauckhoff's translation.

⁸² *NIUPA*, 128.

⁸³ *NIUPA*, 126–27, 135, 149, 162–68.

⁸⁴ *NIUPA*, 129 (*TSZ* III "Of Old and New Law-Tables" §22 and *SE* §5).

⁸⁵ *NIUPA*, 129.

between an attitude of realism (where “it is possible to know what reality is and also to know that this reality exists in such a way that I can deal with it as something simply given”) and full-blown relativism (where “*all reality is itself only interpretation*—a kind of exegetical construction beyond whose limitless variation nothing else exists”).⁸⁶ He “warns us against *all* notions of the whole” only to “[offer] his own new exegesis of the world in its entirety as a statement about what actually exists” (as Will to Power, expressed as/through ‘becoming’, ‘life’ and ‘nature’).⁸⁷ In the treacherous terrain of ethics, “[w]e hear that ‘it is not possible to live outside of morality,’ as well as the contrary, that ‘one can live only with an absolutely immoral way of thinking’; or again, that morality ‘is the only interpretive scheme with which man can endure,’ and that ‘the world, morally interpreted, is unbearable.’”⁸⁸ Expressing a terrible dualism he celebrates and mourns the death of God, ecstatically proclaiming the great noontide while he watches us fall “through an infinite nothing.”⁸⁹

What makes these investigations by Nietzsche so valuable to us is that they help us to identify the myriad of conflicting commitments we hold in our lives: thus, for example, if I believe myself to be a wonderfully caring person, perfectly adhering to an ethical doctrine (e.g., Christianity, secular liberalism, radical leftism, etc.), I might be more honest (and ultimately more successful in working towards an ethical, caring state of being) by accepting and trying to identify the (many) times when I fail to operate through this framework, when I am indifferent to others’ suffering, when I care about myself over others, etc. To answer our question, then, about how Jaspers can use the idea of life-unity to assert that there is radical (though valuable) contradictoriness in Nietzsche’s work, we can now appreciate that under the Jasperian reading, Nietzsche’s ‘unified-in-life’ philosophising yields contradictions because Nietzsche was exploring the fascinating (actual/possible) inconsistencies and hypocrisies (our ‘lived anti-foundationalism’) that made him who he is, and make us who we are.

Operating alongside this inquisitive self-anthropology is the second aspect of Nietzsche’s passionate lived philosophising: his extra-intellectual engagement. This subtly profound aspect comes through in Jaspers’ claim “that the source of philosophical knowledge” in Nietzsche’s writings “is not to be found in thinking about mere objects or in investigating mere facts but rather in the unity of thought and life, so that thinking grows out of the provocation and agitation

⁸⁶ *NIUPA*, 144.

⁸⁷ *NIUPA*, 293.

⁸⁸ *NIUPA*, 148 (eKGWB/NF-1880,7[154], NF-1884,25[101], NF-1887,10[121], and NF-1885,2[114]).

⁸⁹ *NIUPA*, 242. References to ‘the noontide’ (*Mittag*) are particularly common in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, which has a section dedicated to the theme (IV “At Noontide”) and closes out with the aspirational cry “[t]his is my morning, my day begins: *rise up now, rise up, great noontide!*” (IV “The Sign”). See also, for example, *GS* §125, “Appendix: Songs of Prince Vogelfrei” ‘Toward New Seas,’ and ‘Sils-Maria’; *TSZ* I “Of the Bestowing Virtue” §3, II “Of the Rabble,” III “Of the Virtue that Makes Small” §3, IV “The Honey Offering,” “Of the Higher Man” §2, “The Intoxicated Song” §10; *BGE* “From High Mountains: Epode”; *TI* “How the ‘Real World’ at last Became a Myth”; and *EH* “Why I am So Wise” §8, “The Birth of Tragedy” §4, “Daybreak” §2.

of the whole man.”⁹⁰ By speaking of a “thinking [that] grows out of the provocation and agitation of the whole man,” Jaspers is guiding us towards an appreciation of lived philosophy as a state we might describe as ‘thinking-affection.’ Though rather difficult to isolate and communicate, this is something like an extreme sensitivity towards, and imaginative appreciation of, the ideas, thoughts, and expressions one encounters in one’s philosophising *as they connect with and bear upon the self and our state of being*—in Jaspers own words, “the profundity of the question” as it affects “man’s being.”⁹¹ Essentially, Nietzsche’s ‘lived’ experiential approach to philosophy must be understood as a pressing, intra-personal state of concern: a ceaseless astonishment with the fact of being (of one’s own being, of one’s situation, of the being of the world) that compels one to always question to the philosophical limits and wonder about one’s self-world existence, and never to regard the findings of these questions (which work up to a limit-forming unanswerability) as having anything less than a shocking significance for oneself. Indeed, Nietzsche self-reflexively describes the “passionate knowledge seeker” as one “who lives in the thunderclouds of the highest problems,” and one who “is by no means an observer, outside, indifferent, secure, objective.”⁹² While lived experiences bear heavily on existential thought, the relevant contrast determining an existentialist is not whether the thinker has, in any practical sense, lived through their propositions or not.⁹³ The distinction, rather, is between a thinker who is intimately engaged with, and appreciative of, the ideas they study as they bear upon their state of human being, as opposed to the thinker who performs their philosophical work disinterestedly and with detachment, “freez[ing] their subject under the wintry light of the understanding,” to use the words of Emerson.⁹⁴ A wonderful reminder of this is provided by the English translators of *NIUPA*, Wallraff and Schmitz, in their introductory note to the text:

Finally, it should be emphasised that neither Jaspers nor Nietzsche takes any interest in the sort of academic philosophy that preserves an inane correctness by avoiding the serious problems that confront existing individuals and by refusing to acknowledge an obligation to live in accordance with one’s own philosophy. Philosophy, as they see it, is not an accomplishment to be worked up by students faced with examinations, or practiced by professors who prefer this way of making a living while their real interests lie elsewhere. It is not as though life and a set of facts and meanings were already given, needing only to be accepted at face value and dealt with *ad libitum*.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ *NIUPA*, 386.

⁹¹ *NIUPA*, 66.

⁹² *GS* §351.

⁹³ See footnote 19, Chapter 1.

⁹⁴ Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Nature,” in *The American Tradition in Literature*, eds. George Perkins and Barbara Perkins, 8th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994), 490. We find this Emersonian sentiment echoed in Nietzsche’s *The Gay Science* §345: “It makes the most telling difference whether a thinker has a personal relationship to his problems and finds in them his destiny, his distress, and his greatest happiness, or an ‘impersonal’ one, meaning he is only able to touch and grasp them with the antennae of cold, curious thought.” See also *GS* Preface §3, §351.

⁹⁵ Charles F. Wallraff and Frederick J. Schmitz, translators’ introduction to *NIUPA*, vi. On the crucially important issue of Nietzsche’s “animadversions” against modern institutional philosophising (or

Above, we looked at the way that intellectual limit-situations and the Encompassing, which feature in Jaspers' own existential schema, are identifiable in Nietzsche's work. Now, in discussing extra-intellectual engagement as a central component of Nietzsche's philosophical practice, we can bring out that most ambiguous feature of Jaspers' existential schema—the *existential state*—which is seen by Jaspers to also operate in Nietzsche's writings. From our overview of Jaspers' philosophy provided earlier in the chapter, we gave a general characterisation of the existential state as a quiet astonishment for existence that casts a kind of sheen over what is, so that while everything is left the same, all things are made anew. As a personal experience of a kind of qualitative awareness, it is indefinite and variable in form, and thus can only be communicated through oblique, approximate, expressive language rather than through rigid, literal formulations. For Jaspers, it is the way that—in philosophising—we can reflectively tap into those humanistic aspects (love, freedom, self) that slip out from calculative and scientific thought. Crucially, we must note that this extra-intellectual engagement is needed to ignite intellectual enquiry such that our thoughts produce the heightened existential state in us. Without this imaginative engagement, our philosophical reflections remain dry and uninspiring intellectualisms; but when we philosophise with emotional sensitivity and personal involvement, our thoughts are lit up like kindling, bringing a glow to the world, sparking our altered state of self-world awareness.

Nietzsche as Existential-Experimentalist: Nietzsche on 'What is Man?'

To get a better sense of how the Jasperian interpretation of Nietzsche bears out, particularly the way the movement we just studied (*from limit-situation—through extra-intellectual engagement—to existential state*) maps onto Nietzsche's work, we will now take a closer, more detailed look at the cluster of contradictions that make up Jaspers' analysis of Nietzsche's engagement with the question 'What is man?' Here we will observe how, for Jaspers, Nietzsche's attempt at knowing through objective understanding hits limit-situations and breaks down, providing both anthropological awareness of multiple lived-frameworks of the

'scholasticising,' we might say) see Michael Ure's criticism of Alexander Nehamas in his Hadotian-inspired *Nietzsche's Therapy: Self-Cultivation in the Middle Works* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008), 25–33. Similarly, Lawrence Hatab reflects that "[a]s philosophers and teachers ... we have had to decode, modify, explicate, excavate, reconstruct, deconstruct, analyse, synthesize, push, pull and drag out the 'argument,' the sense of it all. We have done this. But why didn't Nietzsche do what we do? ... Nietzsche's manner of writing was not an accident; it was very much a part of his message. Therein lies our own peculiar 'tragic' dilemma: When we 'translate' Nietzsche into our professional philosophical agenda, we do what must be done, but in so doing, we bring to ruin something special and vital, something equally necessary, equally 'true.' It seems we must 'murder to dissect'" ("Laughter in Nietzsche's Thought: A Philosophical Tragicomedy," *International Studies in Philosophy* 20, no. 2 [1988]: 67–79).

Encompassing and, in its foundering, a heightened existential state of awareness, where creation, freedom, and self emerge.

Orienting us into the study, Jaspers begins with a pre-emption of his conclusion to stimulate an initial opening.

What is man? This question does not relate to a clearly demarcated and fully determinate object, but to the encompassing that we are. Still, to answer it, I must seize upon something determinate.⁹⁶

What does Nietzsche seize upon? Given his exacting desire for the truth, his philosophical conscience pushes him to approach this question through the scientific insights of his day. Responding to the radical, new evolutionary model of man, Nietzsche shows us what we look like when we turn around to look at ourselves through this framework. Presenting some representative examples of Nietzsche's many quotes on this unsettling self-perspective, Jaspers is able to capture the complex tonality that comes through in Nietzsche's portrayal of human being as the dressed-up animal, both vicious and ridiculous:

"Man is the foremost beast of prey," and when "this mad melancholy beast known as man ... is to some degree prevented from being bestial in his acts, at once the bestiality of his ideas breaks out." "Man is the most cruel animal"; what is more, he is "the most courageous animal," and, "when he thinks, he is an animal that judges."⁹⁷

So, too, does Nietzsche experiment by viewing the human being through the burgeoning field of psychology. Perhaps, what makes us human—what marks our human distinction—is our advanced psychological capacities. Thus, Jaspers presents Nietzsche's observations of our reflexive behaviour: e.g., our capacity to evaluate ourselves;⁹⁸ our capacity to deceive ourselves;⁹⁹ and our capacity to mould ourselves through cultivation of the drives, and habituated self-control over the "small things" and, through this practice, larger "matters of importance."¹⁰⁰

Whichever way one goes, Jaspers writes, when attempting to answer the question 'what am I?', one "must seize upon something determinate" and conceive of oneself through positive frameworks.¹⁰¹ In doing so, however, one feels their inadequacy: conceived as animality, we experience resistance against this characterisation ("What is decisive is the source of his fright ... the essential difference ... is due to the capacity of man's *self-consciousness* to distinguish itself");¹⁰² and although "in the absence of [psychological reduction] man remains bewildered

⁹⁶ NIUPA, 127.

⁹⁷ NIUPA, 129 (TSZ III "Of Old and New Law-Tables" §22; GM II §22; TSZ III "The Convalescent" §2, and "Of the Vision and the Riddle" §1).

⁹⁸ NIUPA, 132.

⁹⁹ NIUPA, 133.

¹⁰⁰ NIUPA, 134.

¹⁰¹ NIUPA, 127.

¹⁰² NIUPA, 129 (GM I §11).

and unclear, he does not become free as a result of it, but rather founders by simply surrendering himself to his psychological cognizability”¹⁰³). But as these answers break and disintegrate, the *thinker* (Nietzsche) finds something else: “While seeming to speak objectively about an existence that distinguishes man from the animals, he touches upon just that boundary of existence (*Daseinsgrenze*) that belongs only to man as such.”¹⁰⁴ In these negative silhouettes, in these dark portraiture of what one is not, in the indeterminate resistance which can only be suggested or momentarily glimpsed but never positively captured and defined, one comes (or one is brought), negatively, to what one is—to the indominable space of freedom that issues from this state of personal (thinking-feeling) resistance:

I may thus investigate man psychologically or interpretatively, but I never stand apart from him as though he were observably alien to myself in the sense in which a mere thing within the world is alien. On the contrary, I am what I investigate, either actually or potentially. Hence the knowledge of the existence of man, of his place in the world, and of his boundless variability involves, explicitly or implicitly, a relation to possibilities of my own behaviour. Thinking is no longer simply a search for knowledge: it becomes an *appeal to my freedom*. The question of the nature of man relates to a number of further questions: What does man *will* to make of himself, and what *can* he make of himself? What *purpose* is his transformation to serve? Consequently man has two profoundly different attitudes toward himself: He can *observe and investigate himself* as an existence that simply is of such and such a nature and that undergoes alterations in accordance with discoverable laws, and he can also submit to criteria and *impose upon himself demands* which must honestly be acknowledged if he is to insure his own regeneration.¹⁰⁵

Occurring here is the hinging that takes place as the thinker moves from cogitative reflection to an altered state of *existential realisation*. Now “[t]he lightning flash of truth has struck.”¹⁰⁶ As one goes through one’s rational-intellectual deliberations, one finds oneself “sustained by an impulse that immediately transforms the realm of the knowable into the realm of freedom and changes psychological observation into an inner activity.”¹⁰⁷ With this subtle but profound shift—this poignant moment, the gloaming of the self (left the same but made anew)—one approaches *Existenz*, one approaches authentic being:

Nietzsche’s *demands* cannot be of the sort that set up definite prescriptions and proscriptions which could guide the purposeful will. He starts much deeper because he wishes to reach the possible *Existenz* of man through indirect illumination of those *modes of existential actualization* which he envisages.¹⁰⁸

While this sense of what one is (and what one can become) cannot be captured in our rational-intellectual theorising, it can, however, find a less direct means of disclosure and realisation through the creative-imaginative dimension involved in the experiences and expressive-poetic process of philosophical thought and writing. In Jaspers’ reading, Nietzsche captures and

¹⁰³ NIUPA, 139.

¹⁰⁴ NIUPA, 139.

¹⁰⁵ NIUPA, 127, emphasis in original.

¹⁰⁶ NIUPA, 148 (EH “Why I am Destiny” §8).

¹⁰⁷ NIUPA, 139.

¹⁰⁸ NIUPA, 149, emphasis in original.

conveys this philosophical realisation through the necessarily under-formulated indication or “cipher” of ‘creation.’ Assembling Nietzsche’s disparate quotes on this signum, Jaspers’ writes:

In creation authentic being is attained. “Freedom appears only in creation.” “Our only happiness consists in creating.” “As a creator you transcend yourself—you cease to be your own contemporary.” The high value of the creator is unconditional for Nietzsche: “Even the most trivial creative act is better than talking about what has been created” ... “the only way to know a thing truly is to attempt to make it.”¹⁰⁹

This existential account of human being—where the sparkling gems of freedom and creation can only be seen against the dark backdrop of scientific objectification—can be taken in many different directions, opening up precious, unexplored insights into Nietzsche’s work. In Chapter Five, I will follow just one of these veins, tracing out the experiential aspect of creation in philosophising through to a new, unexplored interpretation of aesthetic affirmation.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have endeavoured to present Jaspers’ view of Nietzsche as a contradictory ‘existential-experimental’ thinker. With an understanding of Jaspers’ own philosophy, his claim that Nietzsche’s writing is fragmentary yet unified in life takes shape. Comprehension of this paradoxical view begins with the idea that in claiming that Nietzsche works from life, Jaspers is referring to Nietzsche’s ‘passionate existential searching’ as an honest self-exploration and extra-intellectual sensitivity. Through this passionate commitment to philosophical enquiry, Nietzsche is seen to engage in uncomfortable philosophical questioning that challenges foundational views of reality. Rather than comprehending world and self through a single totalising framework, Jaspers’ Nietzsche wants to understand human beings in a lived sense. Thus, we find that—as a documentation of human being—Nietzsche’s work is contradictory because we are contradictory. Contrary to our clean picture of ourselves, we are not consistent, but (implicitly) commit ourselves to different modal frameworks. Finally, through this honest appreciation of the strangeness of being (made up, as it is, by the contradictory modal frames of the Encompassing), we saw that Nietzsche’s philosophical enquiry is not so much a *theory of the existential*, but a means for Nietzsche to *experience a heightened state of existential awareness* through limit-situation questioning, where self and world are brought to light through a subtle but profound extra-intellectual illumination.

¹⁰⁹ NIUPA, 152 (eKGWB/NF-1883,12[19]; NF-1882,4[76]; NF-1882,5[1]; NF-1875,7[5]; NF-1875,5 [167]).

Study One: An ‘Extra-Contentual’ Analysis of Nietzsche’s Methodology (Nietzsche as Existential-Artist)

Introduction

From the work carried out in the previous chapters, two models of Nietzsche’s philosophical practice are now in place. Firstly, I have set up Kaufmann’s model, where Nietzsche is seen to work in an orderly, logical fashion, recording and refining his findings as an empirical scientist would. Against this, I have presented Jaspers’ model, where Nietzsche—rent open by the consideration of world-breaking limit-situations—is held to be carrying out a perspectival study of the contradictions inherent in human being by experimenting with oppositional frameworks.

I have already argued that Kaufmann’s discussion on method in *PPA* does nothing to justify his view that Nietzsche’s methodology aimed at, and produced, deep consistency in his philosophising. Still, this does not discount the possibility that this is, in fact, the way that Nietzsche worked. Indeed, the sheer prevalence of this form of interpretation suggests that while Kaufmann may have struggled to argue his case, his hermeneutics of coherence is not wrong. It is my aim, then, in this chapter and the next, to take these competing hermeneutic models and weigh them up through two diversiform but complementary studies of Nietzsche.

Carrying out such an assessment, we will be tempted to rush to Nietzsche’s writings to look at what he himself has said in his theories about philosophical method. But this raises a variant of the hermeneutic circle: to establish how Nietzsche worked, we will read his theories, but how we read these theories will already be set by our presumptions about how Nietzsche worked. I will go into the mechanics of this interpretive circularity in more detail in Chapter Four, but on a more general level, in order to mitigate this ever-present problem, we must in our evaluations of method take a multi-angled approach. Along with a study of Nietzsche’s writings (that is, a study of ‘what Nietzsche said’—broadly, what we can call his ‘contentual’ matter),¹ we need

¹ I prefer to use ‘contentual’ in place of ‘theoretical’ as the latter is too restrictive and problematic in its connotations, with so much of Nietzsche’s philosophical writings falling outside of that which we would traditionally describe as ‘theory.’ To speak of Nietzsche’s ‘contentual’ matter, then, I am referring to the content of Nietzsche’s philosophical writing, i.e., what it is Nietzsche says in his published and unpublished philosophical works and notes. We may think of this as his philosophical ‘theories,’ if we do so very loosely.

to look more directly at Nietzsche's method by investigating the biographical—or, more generally, 'extra-contentual'²—evidence we have of Nietzsche's applied philosophical process.

It is my aim, then, in this chapter to carry out this biographical reconstruction. I will do so by taking us through three distinctive features of Nietzsche's philosophical process: his receptivity in research, his fluidity in thinking and note-taking, and his pre-psychoanalytic practice of diaristic self-excavation. Taking the time to observe Nietzsche at work, we will see from this study that Nietzsche does not experiment as a systematic philosophical scientist, but with the graceful disorderliness of an existential-artist, thus giving us our first indication that we should take Jaspers' interpretive approach of assuming and looking out for meaningful, self-disclosing contradictions in Nietzsche's writings.

Aspect One: Nietzsche's Method as Formed Through Receptivity

Beginning with the quality of *receptivity*, I would like to draw attention to the incredible diversity of influences that fed into Nietzsche's philosophy. Rivalling thinkers like Francis Bacon and Victor Cousin, Nietzsche was a naturally inquisitive and eclectic reader.³ With a mind capacious and sponge-like, he soaked up different theories and thoughts, exercising a global interest that considered philosophical, literary and scientific works from three continents, and a historical interest that stretched back to the pre-Socratics through to the contemporary thinkers of his time. To give a non-exhaustive list of his influences: as a philologist, he had a deep knowledge of the Ancient Greek mind, writing on poets and playwrights (Homer and

² I use 'extra-contentual' to refer to the evidence we can find about Nietzsche's methodology that is not taken from his contentual matter (from the content of his published/unpublished philosophy). Here the evidence is biographically focused, and is largely derived from biographical accounts of Nietzsche's actual philosophical process (i.e., how he wrote his philosophy). While in many (complex) ways, they are deeply related, it is important, I think, to make the distinction between these two types of information so that we do not neglect one but consider both in the pursuit of a more comprehensive picture of Nietzsche's method. The problems with working exclusively from Nietzsche's unstable and often misleading contentual matter will be explored in Chapter Four. That said, given the often highly biographical nature of Nietzsche's writings, particularly the semi-autobiographical work of *Ecce Homo*, we do, of course, find a frequent blending of the two, such that the content of Nietzsche's writings can be seen to reflect (without much controversy) Nietzsche's actual philosophical process. Thus, occasionally, when the content of Nietzsche's philosophy is quite straightforwardly biographical (when what Nietzsche says about philosophising can reasonably be taken as a good indication of what Nietzsche was actively doing in his own philosophising), I have made use of it to back up the extra-contentual information that I present in the chapter.

³ Thomas H. Brobjer, *Nietzsche's Philosophical Context: An Intellectual Biography* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 3; Brian C. Valentyn, "Modernism after Nietzsche: Art, Ethics, and the Forms of the Everyday" (PhD thesis, Duke University, 2012), 37–38. For an extensive overview of Nietzsche's (conventional not literary) philosophical reading see Brobjer's *Nietzsche's Philosophical Context*; and for an extensive overview of Nietzsche's scientific reading, see Robin Small's *Nietzsche in Context* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001). Andreas Urs Sommer's "What Nietzsche Did and Did Not Read," in *The New Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. Tom Stern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 25–48, provides a concise account of Nietzsche's general reading.

Hesiod, Theognis and Simonides, Aeschylus and Sophocles), and he pored over the works of the historians Thucydides and Diogenes Laertius—through these learning about the pre-Socratics, Plato and Aristotle, and the Hellenistic schools.⁴ Despite this formal specialisation, he did not restrict his philosophical studies to Greek thought, but made forays into early modern and Enlightenment philosophy (Descartes, Spinoza, the British Empiricists, Montaigne, Pascal, Kant, Voltaire and Rousseau), along with more contemporary German thinkers (Schopenhauer, Eduard von Hartmann, F.A. Lange, Afrikan Spir, and Paul Rée), and the utilitarians Mill and Spencer.⁵ Inspired by poets and novelists, he was moved by the Romantics (Friedrich Hölderlin, Giacomo Leopardi, and Byron),⁶ and had a particular fondness for Goethe and French writers such as La Rochefoucauld, Chamfort and Stendhal.⁷ Avoiding geographical “shortsightedness” (*Kurzsichtigkeit*)⁸ he read works from across the Atlantic (Emerson, Poe, and Twain), and looked to the East, taking up the writings of Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy (with excitement and scathing critique, respectively) and studied Orientalist accounts of Middle Eastern and Asian thought.⁹ Remedying his self-perceived deficiency in the sciences, he educated himself on

⁴ See Anthony K. Jensen and Helmut Heit, eds., *Nietzsche as a Scholar of Antiquity* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

⁵ Nietzsche’s reading of these figures is surveyed by Brobjer in *Nietzsche’s Philosophical Context*. A more specific overview of Nietzsche’s reading of the British Empiricists and Utilitarians can be found in Brobjer’s *Nietzsche and the “English”: The Influence of British and American Thinking on His Philosophy* (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2008), Chapters 2 and 9 respectively. Published in the 1950s, W. D. Williams’ *Nietzsche and the French: A Study of the Influence of Nietzsche’s French Reading on his Thought and Writing* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1952) is an early but still relevant survey of Nietzsche’s reading of Francophone philosophy. For an updated account, see the first section of *Nietzsche und Frankreich*, eds. Clemens Porschlegel and Martin Stingelin (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), including a chapter in English by Thomas Brobjer, “Nietzsche, Voltaire and French Philosophy,” 13–32. On Nietzsche’s Kantian heritage, see Brobjer, *Nietzsche’s Philosophical Context*, 36–40; and Hill, *Nietzsche’s Critiques*.

⁶ See Angela Matilde Capodivacca, “Nietzsche’s *Zukunftsphilologie*: Leopardi, Philology, History,” *California Italian Studies* 2, no. 1. (2011); and Adrian Del Caro, “Nietzsche and Romanticism: Goethe, Hölderlin, and Wagner,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*, ed. John Richardson and Ken Gemes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 108–33.

⁷ See Williams’ *Nietzsche and the French*, and Brendan Donnellan’s *Nietzsche and the French Moralists* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1982).

⁸ WS §189.

⁹ Nietzsche’s relation to Emerson is discussed at length in the work of Stanley Cavell. See, for example, “Aversive Thinking: Emersonian Representations in Heidegger and Nietzsche,” *New Literary History* 22, no.1 (Winter 1991): 129–60, and “Old and New in Emerson and Nietzsche,” *International Studies in Philosophy* 35, no. 3 (2003): 53–62. Harold Bloom also explores the relation in many of his publications including *The Ringers in the Tower: Studies in Romantic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971) 291–321, and *A Map of Misreading* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 160–76. See too George Stack, “Emerson and Nietzsche’s Beyond-Man,” *Diálogos* 25, no. 56 (1990): 87–101, and *Nietzsche and Emerson: An Elective Affinity* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1992); Graham Parkes, *Composing the Soul: Reaches of Nietzsche’s Psychology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 35–48; David Mikics, *The Romance of Individualism in Emerson and Nietzsche* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2003); Benedetta Zavatta, *Individuality and Beyond: Nietzsche Reads Emerson*, trans. Alexander Reynolds (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), and “Historical Sense as Vice and Virtue in Nietzsche’s Reading of Emerson,” *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 44, no. 3 (Autumn 2013): 372–97; and Mason Golden, “Emerson-Exemplar: Friedrich Nietzsche’s Emerson Marginalia: Introduction,” *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 44, no.3 (Autumn 2013): 400. On Nietzsche’s study of Middle Eastern

evolutionary theory, positivism, and debates around time and the second law of thermodynamics.¹⁰

However, it is not just that, in his experimentation, Nietzsche was open to many different sources of ideas. What is even more important to his philosophical activity is that, as a true eclectic, he was open to theories that were utterly opposed. Unlike other philosophers who are widely read, but will settle on a thesis and stake it into the ground as the measure by which the theories of others will be assessed (we could think of Bacon with his inductive method, for example), Nietzsche—in his experimental openness—was prepared to tether himself to views that would dislocate and tear apart his thought as they pulled in different directions.¹¹ Though passionately devout in his childhood, for example, he precipitated his own personal religious crisis by reading Feuerbach, Strauss, and Hettner,¹² while immersed in Dühring's positivism, he found himself drawn back into the metaphysical vortex through Meysenbug's *Memoiren einer Idealistin*.¹³

That the importance of this receptivity in Nietzsche's process is routinely underappreciated can be seen in our widespread overestimation of his originality. Concerned over our lack of historical contextualisation, classicist William Calder asks rhetorically, "how many know that the laughing Zarathustra is Herodotean?"¹⁴ Noting Nietzsche's failure to pay his intellectual debts, Michael Ure writes that "when Nietzsche 'discovered' the ideas of eternal recurrence and *amor fati*," he took these thoughts "directly from ... [the] cosmic version of Stoicism."¹⁵ Jaspers himself informs us that Nietzsche's slur *Bildungsphilister* ('cultural philistine') is borrowed from Haym, while the terms 'perspectivism' and 'decadence' are both lifted from Bourget.¹⁶ To give just one more example, we can note that the iconic Nietzschean figure, the *Übermensch*, is modelled on Goethe's Faust and Emerson's post-Christian 'Beyond-man' among other things.¹⁷

thought, see Ian Almond's "Nietzsche's Peace with Islam: My Enemy's Enemy is my Friend," *German Life and Letters* 56, no.1 (January 2003): 43–55.

¹⁰ See Robin Small's *Nietzsche in Context*, and Brobjer's *Nietzsche's Philosophical Context*.

¹¹ Reflecting on Lou Salomé's psychological analysis of Nietzsche, Siegfried Mandel writes that "Nietzsche perennially craved stimuli, challenges, and threatening fatalities that would immerse and expose him to new experiences and test his ideas and emotions. Gorged with the experience and revolted by what he called sickness, he would slough it off like a snake's hardened skin." Thus, for example, in relation to Schopenhauer and Wagner, they "were eventually to be overcome during Nietzsche's periodic self-conquests, but the after-effect was a bitter-tinged nostalgia" (introduction to *Nietzsche*, by Lou Salomé [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001], xxi).

¹² Brobjer, *Nietzsche's Philosophical Context*, 44.

¹³ Brobjer, 66–70.

¹⁴ William M. Calder, "How Did Ulrich Von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff Read a Text?," *The Classical Journal* 86, no. 4 (April–May 1991): 344.

¹⁵ Michael Ure, "Nietzsche's Free Spirit Trilogy and Stoic Therapy," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 38 (Fall 2009): 73.

¹⁶ Jaspers, *Nietzsche*, 32.

¹⁷ The forgetting of Nietzsche's philosophical debt to Emerson has been repeatedly noted by Stanley Cavell: "no matter how often this connection of Nietzsche to Emerson is stated, no matter how obvious

To highlight Nietzsche's receptivity is not, of course, to diminish his originality. While we can appropriately apply the postmodern methodological descriptor 'bricolage' to Nietzsche's work, it is more than bricolage in a number of senses. Firstly, while he draws heavily from others, his writings contain many, many pools of original thought (indeed, I do not agree with Volker Gerhardt's exaggerated claim that in Nietzsche's oeuvre, there is "not one insight which cannot be found somewhere else"¹⁸). Thus, we should say that Nietzsche's work is rich in the ideas of others and rich in his own thought. Furthermore, since so much of Nietzsche comes through in his appropriation and (sometimes haphazard) development of these ideas, it would be wiser to think of these as 'openings' which Nietzsche, the 'all-too-human' human, climbs through, "enter[ing] them," to borrow a phrase from Whitman, "to an area of [his] dwelling."¹⁹ Finally, Nietzsche also 'comes through' in the *making* of his work; he speaks through his style. So even if we must admit that Nietzsche takes liberally from others, we can also observe that there is originality in the way he presents this work. In terms of our own hermeneutic practice, then, while Nietzsche's receptivity gives special importance to a painstaking historical reconstruction and contextualisation, this will be just one aspect that will enrich our philosophical understanding of this original thinker.

Aspect Two: Nietzsche's Method as Formed Through Fluidity

If Nietzsche is this capacious sponge soaking up the thoughts and influences around him, or to put it less absurdly, an artist who has at his disposal a palette of many paints (of thoughts of others mixed with thoughts of his own), then the next question to ask is how Nietzsche-as-artist utilises his medium: how does he bring these paints to the canvas and what sort of painting are we looking at when we read his words? This brings us to the second aspect of Nietzsche's philosophising that needs to be considered: *fluidity*. Reconstructing Nietzsche's method by means of biography, we see that his productive process begins with a superfluity of ideas. Famously a peripatetic thinker, he would often philosophise on daily walks, letting his legs and

to anyone who cares to verify it, it stays incredible." We should note that Cavell makes this point as he bores down into the problems of institutionalised philosophy and its phobic reaction against existential thought ("Aversive Thinking," 138). See also Cavell's *Philosophical Passages: Wittgenstein, Emerson, Austin, Derrida* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 95; and George J. Stack, "Emerson and Nietzsche's Beyond-Man," *Diálogos* 25, no. 56 (1990): 87–101. This issue is also discussed by Michael Lopez in "Emerson and Nietzsche: An Introduction," *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 43 (1997): 1–35; and Benedetta Zavatta in *Individuality and Beyond*, 1.

¹⁸ Volker Gerhardt, "Philosophizing Against Philosophy: Nietzsche's Provocation of the Philosophical tradition," (Research Forum), *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, accessed July 19, 2018, <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/jns/research/philosophizing-against-philosophy-nietzsche2019s-provocation-of-the-philosophical-tradition/>.

¹⁹ Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself," in *The American Tradition in Literature*, eds. George Perkins and Barbara Perkins, 8th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill College, 1994), line 492.

mind wander.²⁰ Whether writing desk-bound in his humble lodgings or thinking out of doors, in his productive phases, he would find himself overcome with ideas which he would hastily jot down in his notebook—capturing these ephemeral fruits in sketches as they momentarily ripened. When considering this fluidity, one’s mind immediately turns to the composition of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, with much of the work scribbled out in bursts of frenzied writing. Nietzsche’s sister, Elizabeth Förster, relays his account of this inspired compositional process:

He often used to speak of the ecstatic mood in which he wrote “Zarathustra”; how in his walks over hill and dale the ideas would crowd into his mind, and how he would note them down hastily in a note-book from which he would transcribe them on his return, sometimes working till midnight. He says in a letter to me: “You can have no idea of the vehemence of such composition.”²¹

Providing his own first-hand account of this experience in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche describes the compositional event as a ‘revelation’ where, convulsed “to the depths ... a thought suddenly flashes up like lightning.”²²

We should note, though, that this flowing forth of ideas was not just a radical technique utilised for his experimental prose-poem, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, but was commonly applied in the composition of his other philosophical works. On the composition of *Human, All Too Human*, for example, Nietzsche biographer Curtis Cate states that “[i]t was ... the product of a man whose imaginative faculties, abetted by an extraordinarily retentive memory, never stopped churning out new ideas.”²³ In support of this, Cate includes the anecdote of the *Gedankenbaum*. “In Sorrento,” he writes, Nietzsche’s mental fecundity

had become a source of amusement for [his friends] Malwida von Meysenbug, Paul Rée and Albert Brenner: in the garden near their villa there was a certain tree under whose leafy foliage Fritz liked to tarry; it soon came to be known as the *Gedankenbaum* (thought-tree) because every time he stood under it for a minute or two Nietzsche was visited by a new, illuminating inspiration.²⁴

Similarly, in drafting *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, which would become the final instalment of the three-volume work, Cate writes that Nietzsche “was unable to stem the torrent of thoughts, arguments, and aphorisms” which spilled forth.²⁵ “Before he knew it, he had filled

²⁰ The following is Julian Young’s depiction of ‘a day in the life’ of Nietzsche in Sils Maria during 1881 as he wrote *The Gay Science*: “It was here that, every day at five, Nietzsche would rise, wash his entire body in cold water, and think for an hour, before breakfasting.” Then “three or more hours of—weather and health permitting—walking and thinking were followed by lunch ... Following [this] another three or four hours walking ... In the evenings, as had been his practice in Genoa, he sat quietly in the dark from seven to nine, conserving, so he believed, his ‘spiritual powers.’ And so to bed” (*Friedrich Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010], 316–17).

²¹ Elizabeth Förster, introduction to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, by Friedrich Nietzsche, trans. Thomas Common (Frankfurt am Main: Outlook Verlag, 2018), 9.

²² *EH* “Thus Spoke Zarathustra” §3.

²³ Curtis Cate, *Friedrich Nietzsche* (London: Hutchinson, 2002), 253.

²⁴ Cate, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, 253.

²⁵ Cate, 282.

six small notebooks and run out of pencils.”²⁶ Reflecting on the composition of *Dawn*, Nietzsche himself tells us that “[a]lmost every sentence in the book was thought out, or rather *caught*, among that medley of rocks ... [near] Genoa, where I lived quite alone, and exchanged secrets with the ocean.”²⁷

While this practice of finding inspiration in nature and harvesting inspired thoughts through copious note-taking is not exactly conventional, it is the way these notes are handled and put together in the next stage of Nietzsche’s process that forms the crucial difference between his philosophising and our standardised approach. To give a general account of the way most trained philosophers work, while we might make notes, and may experiment with different ideas, we use these as a starting point from which we formulate a logically coherent argument and cohesive plan (to which the notes then become subordinated), and with cohesive plan and notes in hand, we set out to do the real work of formulating our philosophy. But if we ask the few people who have concerned themselves with Nietzsche’s practical process (they are generally not found in philosophy, but in literature departments), this is not the way Nietzsche worked: “Nietzsche does not primarily write books,” Christian Benne tells us, he “edits them from a huge reservoir of different ... notebooks.”²⁸ To use Hummel’s metaphor, while “[t]he measuring-rod belongs to Kant and Schopenhauer; the sieve is the instrument of Emerson and Nietzsche.”²⁹

This is not to deny, of course, that there is a loose ‘order’ and ‘logic’ to Nietzsche’s thinking in its pre-distilled note form; nor is it to suggest that Nietzsche’s editing (his distilling) process did not involve a large amount of ordering and efforts at systematisation. But what we see is that, to a large extent, given his eclecticism and inspired note-taking, his unrefined material resists intellectual man-handling. While this open, flowing forth of ideas was for Nietzsche either a sign of health, or a remedy for ill-health (“My consolation[s] are my thoughts and

²⁶ Cate, 282.

²⁷ Emphasis mine. I am using Anthony Ludovici’s translation of *Ecce Homo* “The Dawn of Day” §3, from *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche: The First Complete and Authorised English Translation*, ed. Oscar Levy (London: T. N. Foulis, 1909–1913). One may argue here that while the aphoristic works are ordered in a loose thematic arrangement, Nietzsche also wrote in essayistic and quasi-essayistic formats. But even in these essay-style works we find fluidity straining against, or spilling over, rigid form. Take for example *The Birth of Tragedy*, which—we should remember—was written by Nietzsche as a professional philologist (though a revolutionary and philosophically inspired one). In his introductory analysis of the work, Michael Tanner characterises it as “febrile and impressionistic,” writing that while “it would be impossible, in the terms of the book itself, to call it Dionysiac, its momentum and general drift have a quality which brings it as close to that as a discursive work could come. Summary of it is defeating ... it has a ferocity of conviction and exhilarating energy which put it in that small class of books in which the medium appears to dictate the message, or even to replace it” (introduction to *The Birth of Tragedy: Out of the Spirit of Music*, by Friedrich Nietzsche, trans. Shaun Whiteside [London: Penguin Books, 1993], xxvi–xxvii).

²⁸ Christian Benne, “The Philosophy of Prosopopoeia,” *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 47, no. 2 (Summer 2016): 275.

²⁹ Hermann Hummel, “Emerson and Nietzsche,” *The New England Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (March 1946): 82.

perspectives,” he writes to his doctor³⁰), by various accounts, the next stage of his process—that of systematising his thoughts—could, at times, cause him an inordinate amount of strain, exacerbating his chronic illnesses. Thus, after receiving his flood of thoughts for *Human, All Too Human*, Cate tells us of “the excruciating efforts [Nietzsche] later had to make to develop these sudden illuminations into intelligible arguments and aphorisms: efforts which regularly brought on blinding headaches and nervous fits.”³¹ And the grand task of sketching out a systematic masterpiece, *The Will to Power*, was, in Nietzsche’s own words, “all in all, a torture,”³²—with the project, despite repeated efforts, ending up “down the plug hole.”³³ Indeed, in terms of searching for extra-contentual evidence to establish whether Nietzsche was a fluid, aphoristic, non-systematic writer or not, the wonderfully monumental failure of *The Will to Power* project shows that Nietzsche—who was not a trained philosopher,³⁴ and whose working process was much closer to that of the “impressionistic thinkers” like Emerson³⁵ and Thoreau—could not produce a large-scale, logically tight philosophical construction.

I must note that a direct challenge to my reading can actually be found in Julian Young’s biography of Nietzsche. “Why ... did Nietzsche abandon *The Will to Power*?” Young asks.³⁶ The answer, he tells us in a Kaufmannian tone, lies in the fact that, while motivated by his ego to create a systematic masterwork, Nietzsche was ideologically opposed to straight-ahead

³⁰ I have used Cate’s translation of this line, taken from a letter Nietzsche wrote to his doctor Otto Eiser in January 1880 (eKGWB/BVN-1880,1). For partial translation and analysis of the letter, see Cate, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, 296–97, and Young, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, 277–81. The importance of sickness and health as a theme developed out of Nietzsche’s own experience is explored by David Farrell Krell in *Infectious Nietzsche* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996). See also Sarah Mann-O’Donnell, “From Hypochondria to Convalescence: Health as Chronic Critique in Nietzsche, Deleuze and Guattari,” *Deleuze Studies* 4, no. 2 (2010): 161–82; and Melanie Shepherd, “‘Let Us Return to Herr Nietzsche’: On Health and Revaluation,” *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 50, no. 1 (Spring 2019): 125–48. For insightful discussions on Nietzsche’s renewed conception of philosophy as therapy more generally, see Michael Ure’s numerous publications on the theme: *Nietzsche’s Therapy: Self-Cultivation in the Middle Works* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008); “Nietzsche’s Free Spirit Trilogy and Stoic Therapy,” 60–84; “Senecan Moods: Foucault and Nietzsche on the Art of the Self,” *Foucault Studies* 4, (February 2007): 19–52; and Thomas Ryan and Ure, “Nietzsche’s Post-Classical Therapy,” *Pli: The Warwick Journal of Philosophy* 25, (2014): 91–110. See also, Talia Welsh, “Many Healths: Nietzsche and Phenomenologies of Illness,” *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 3, no. 11 (2016): 338–57; and Andrew Huddleston, “Nietzsche on the Health of the Soul,” *Inquiry* 60, no. 1–2 (2017): 135–64. A Jasperian development of this work could be valuable here, helping us build up an incorporative approach that can synthesise this critical aspect of Nietzsche’s method and thinking with a broader analysis.

³¹ Cate, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, 282.

³² So Nietzsche wrote to his confidant Peter Gast in February, 1888 (eKGWB/BVN-1888,991). See Young, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, 541.

³³ This is Young’s translation of ‘*ins Wasser gefallen*,’ from Nietzsche’s correspondence with Meta von Salis in August 1888 (eKGWB/BVN-1888,1094). *Friedrich Nietzsche*, 541.

³⁴ Brobjer, *Nietzsche’s Philosophical Context*, 22; Small, *Friedrich Nietzsche: Reconciling Knowledge and Life* (London: Springer, 2016), 67; Richard Schacht, introduction to *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, by Friedrich Nietzsche, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), x.

³⁵ George Stack, “Emerson and Nietzsche’s Beyond-Man,” 88.

³⁶ Young, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, 542.

systems, thus, his own ‘intellectual integrity’ would not permit him to construct one.³⁷ While there might be some truth to Young’s speculation about Nietzsche’s motive for attempting the work, in regards to its failure, his ‘conscience-over-ego’ conjecture seems very unlikely compared to what we might (unkindly) call the ‘inability-over-ego’ argument that I have offered. Indeed, the very picture Young forms of Nietzsche in the rest of his biography indicates that the problem Nietzsche had in writing the work was a technical one. In light of his lack of traditional philosophical training, limitations caused by ill-health, his outdoors philosophising, and his writing in states of inspiration, the fact that he published in an aphoristic style under a loose topical ordering was in all likelihood “a virtue out of necessity” (to use Young’s own repeated assessment), rather than an ideological choice.³⁸

Instead of feeling that we must explain away evidence that suggests that Nietzsche used a less-than-systematic approach, I would like to propose that we *allow* the possibility that, generally, Nietzsche utilised a less restrictive, fluid methodology that resulted in a more open, organic, free-form philosophy. Rather than assuming that he worked as many academic philosophers work, with a careful logic and organisation of thoughts, we would do better to think of his approach as much more akin to the drip painting method of Jackson Pollock. This is certainly not to say that Nietzsche is careless in composition. For Nietzsche and Pollock both, an incredible amount of attention is given to the arrangement of their works.³⁹ But just as we can rightly hold that Pollock worked with care and control without attributing to him the kind of intention and deliberation generally applied by a figurative artist, we can acknowledge that, in Nietzsche, along with (forms of) detailed attention and planning, there is also a flamboyancy in his writing—a fluidity which is frozen and set into his work, which resists the strict, tight-

³⁷ Young, 543.

³⁸ Young, 297 and 155. Alternatively, one might try out Arthur Danto’s view that Nietzsche was working his way to a structured approach over time, with “systematic structures” emerging in the late works (*Nietzsche as Philosopher*, exp. ed. [New York: Columbia University Press, 2005], 247). But the ‘system’ Danto offers is a flimsy construction. As Kurt Fischer writes, “how Danto’s [systematic] Nietzsche could influence anyone, let alone an analytical philosopher, remains puzzling to the end. On page after page Nietzsche is shown to have been badly mistaken, confused, overdramatic, and trivial” (review of *Nietzsche as Philosopher: An Original Study*, by Arthur C. Danto, *The Journal of Philosophy* 64, no. 18 [September 1967]: 564). Indeed, as will become apparent in the next chapter, if one accepts the level of consistency Danto is willing to pass as ‘having a system,’ then, in terms of his substantive analysis, Jaspers’ reading is far less system-rejecting than typically believed, and, by these relaxed standards, he should be counted as having attributed to Nietzsche a kind of loosely bound, ‘negative dialectical,’ unresolving system.

³⁹ Indeed, Nietzsche, mentoring Lou Salomé, writes that “[o]ne must learn to feel everything—the length and retarding of sentences, inter-punctuations, the choice of words, the pausing, the sequence of arguments—like gestures” (Lou Salomé, *Nietzsche*, trans. and ed. Siegfried Mandel [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001], 77; [eKGWB/BVN-1882,288]). And along with this, too, there is an inter-aphoristic care, logic and precision. Thus, Kathleen Mellow reminds us that it would be hermeneutic folly not to treat Nietzsche’s works as “complex, many-layered constructions that demand of the reader the patient, philological work of reconstructing and decoding the manifold of intertextual and intratextual allusions operative within them” (Kathleen Mellow, “‘The Meaning of Every Style’: Nietzsche, Demosthenes, Rhetoric,” *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 21, no. 4 [Autumn 2003]: 287).

fitting logic and conceptual consistency of traditional and conventional contemporary philosophising, even though this fluidity might be shaped, framed, and curated in the process of editing his writing.

Aspect Three: Nietzsche's Method as Formed Through Diaristic Exploration

The final aspect of Nietzsche's methodology I would like to bring out is diaristic self-excavation. That Nietzsche employed philosophy to 'uncover the self' is a tricky point to make; against this claim can be thrown a barrage of quotes where Nietzsche rejects the idea that there is any semblance of a 'self' to be uncovered in the first place.⁴⁰ Yet, as unequivocal as these statements may sound—and as important as the anti-self-essentialising message has been politically and ethically in progressing our society—a strong psychoanalytic concern is also discernible in Nietzsche's writings. Channelling Schopenhauer and La Rochefoucauld, Nietzsche was absorbed by the thought that we are opaque to ourselves, that we are disconnected from our real motives, that we live in a suspended state of self-deception (the existentialist's bad faith [*mauvaise foi*]). "Man ... is a thing dark and veiled," he famously proclaims in the third essay from the *Untimely Meditations*,⁴¹ and from *Beyond Good and Evil*: "every opinion is also a hiding place, every word ... a mask."⁴² With tidal energy, psychoanalytic themes recur again and again in his writings. We see it in the Dionysian-Apollonian division from *The Birth of Tragedy*, the analysis of drives in the middle period works, the story of animal-man bound and disfigured within the confines of peace and society from *On the Genealogy of Morality*, and the critique of selflessness and Christianity that builds to a crescendo in the late stage of his oeuvre. In all of these Nietzsche anticipates Freud's bifurcated model of the psyche, where the conscious mind covers over the deep chaos of the instinct-driven, primitive unconscious.

Our interest here, though, is in the fact that, holding this view of the split self, Nietzsche actually prefigures psychoanalytic and (psychoanalytically informed) modernist techniques for tapping into and exploring these hidden psychic reservoirs *in the way he carries out* his own life-transcribed philosophising.

⁴⁰ Nietzsche speaks, for example, in *Beyond Good and Evil* of "putting an end to the superstition that until now has grown around the idea of the soul" (§12), and states that the "famous old 'I' ... is just an assumption or opinion" (§17). See also *BGE* §19, §54; *TI* "'Reason' in Philosophy" §5, and "The Four Great Errors" §3. An informative overview of the literature on Nietzsche's commitment to the existential self is provided in Ansell-Pearson's "Recent Developments in Scholarship on Key Existentialists: Nietzsche," 290–99.

⁴¹ *SE* §1. *On the Genealogy of Morality* opens with a similar concern: "We are unknown to ourselves, we knowers: and with good reason. We have never looked for ourselves,—so how are we ever supposed to *find* ourselves?"

⁴² *BGE* §289. See also *D* §109, *GS* §333, *BGE* §23.

To appreciate Nietzsche's active pre-emption of psychoanalytic practice, we need to briefly visit Freud and the development of psychoanalytic therapy. In Freud's model of the dynamic unconscious, a process takes place whereby the ego, feeling threatened by traumatic or uncomfortable memories, thoughts, or feelings, will repress this psychical content, forcing it from the conscious into the unconscious mind. Relegated to this subterranean sewer level beyond the reach of consciousness, this content can act with impunity, having a strong negative influence on our health and behaviour, manifesting in various dissociative or somatic disorders. In order to treat these psychopathologies, Freud wanted a way to get at this subliminal psychical content. What he found, however, was that the conscious mind of the patient would run interference, so to speak, so that these unpalatable thoughts would not emerge.

I have noticed in my psycho-analytical work that the whole frame of mind of a man who is reflecting is totally different from that of a man who is observing his own psychical processes ... In both cases attention must be concentrated, but the man who is reflecting is also exercising his critical faculty; this leads him to reject some of the ideas that occur to him after perceiving them, to cut short others without following the trains of thought which they would open up to him, and to behave in such a way towards still others that they never become conscious at all and are accordingly suppressed before being perceived.⁴³

Similarly, Freud records that Schiller had observed this phenomenon of unwitting self-censorship in terms of the stifling effect the rational mind can have on artistic creativity. Advising his friend on overcoming an artist's block, Schiller writes that

The ground for your complaint seems to me to lie in the constraint imposed by your reason upon your imagination. I will make my idea more concrete by a simile. It seems a bad thing and detrimental to the creative work of the mind if Reason makes too close an examination of the ideas as they come pouring in—at the very gateway, as it were ... On the other hand, where there is a creative mind, Reason—so it seems to me—relaxes its watch upon the gates, and the ideas rush in pell-mell, and only then does it look them through and examine them in a mass.⁴⁴

Taking up Schiller's metaphor and method, Freud likens the critical mind to a kind of sentinel restricting the passage of these unwanted thoughts through to conscious awareness and thus he develops the psychoanalytic techniques of free association and dream-interpretation as a means for patient and therapist to bypass its watch. Having his patient relax upon a couch with eyes closed, they are encouraged to "[adopt] ... an attitude of uncritical self-observation," letting their thoughts flow without adjudication and ordering (essentially censorship) from the rational, critical mind.⁴⁵ "If he succeeds in doing that, innumerable ideas come into his consciousness of which he could otherwise never have got hold," and the patient can "attentively [follow] the involuntary thoughts which now emerge."⁴⁶ Along with, and through, this technique of free

⁴³ Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1954), 101–2.

⁴⁴ Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 103.

⁴⁵ Freud, 103.

⁴⁶ Freud, 102.

association, Freud also found dream interpretation to be especially important. Since “[i]n waking life the suppressed material in the mind is prevented from finding expression and is cut off from internal perception owing to the fact that the contradictions present in it are eliminated,” Freud surmises that “during the night, under the sway of an impetus towards the construction of compromises, this suppressed material finds methods and means of forcing its way into consciousness,” with the dream serving as a special channel (a kind of portal or ‘*via regia*’) for accessing the patient’s repressed psychical material.⁴⁷ Thus, letting their ideas flow through free association, the patient would be encouraged to recall these unmediated, though consciously accessible, dream thoughts.

While scholars have spoken of the way that Nietzsche’s philosophical ideas pre-empt these psychoanalytic techniques and Surrealist practices,⁴⁸ what is less common—indeed barely audible in Anglophone writing on Nietzsche—is the idea that Nietzsche influenced these modernist techniques of tapping the unconscious not just through his theory (i.e., through the content of what he said), but through his method (i.e., *in the way he actually wrote* his philosophy). But if we enhance our view of Nietzsche through a holistic accounting that takes in biographical along with textual supports, we see that Nietzsche did not just hypothesise about the connection between dreams and self-knowledge, or state, matter-of-factly, that deeper levels of self work their way into one’s philosophy, but actually carried out a pioneering form of sustained self-analysis utilising these pre-psychoanalytic techniques.

Throughout his life, Nietzsche was drawn to the surreal self-projected mindscape of his own dreams. Feeling that there were treasure chests of truths and significances to be recovered by exploring these unconscious productions, he would record and reflect on his dreams in notebooks and diaries, performing what we would think of now as dream-journaling.⁴⁹ Taking up this practice of self-analysis early, as a youth he would hold on to and reflects on dreams which struck him as having had a certain kind of (existential-spiritual) significance, including a haunting premonitory dream about the death of his younger brother.⁵⁰ And the practice stayed with him: “Nietzsche appears to have kept in close touch with the dream world over long periods of his life,” Parkes tells us, often writing about his dreams in letters and discussing them

⁴⁷ Freud, 608.

⁴⁸ See, for example, Siobhan Lyons, “Nietzsche’s Dawn of Dissent: Morgenröte and the Modernist Impulse,” and Tim Themi, “Nietzsche’s Relation with Psychoanalysis: From Freud to Surrealist Modernism, Bataille, and Lacan,” in *Understanding Nietzsche, Understanding Modernism*, eds. Brian Pines and Douglas Burnham (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019), 34–46, and 189–207. One of the few exceptions here is Graham Parkes’ insightful book-length study of Nietzsche’s depth psychology, *Composing the Soul*, which takes a mixed biographical-theoretical approach. Along with themes of dream interpretation and self-revelation through altered psychic states, Parkes draws attention to Nietzsche’s view of art as a conduit for the drives which involves “a mysterious streaming forth,” and as self-evocation through repeated metaphors and Jungian-like psychical imagery (55).

⁴⁹ Parkes, *Composing the Soul*, 328, n. 14.

⁵⁰ Young, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, 10.

with his friends.⁵¹ Giving lived context to Nietzsche's poetically enigmatic question "to whom do you tell your night thoughts?"⁵² Cate recounts Resa von Schirnhofer's visit with Nietzsche in Nice during the Spring of 1884, where—on various walks around the countryside—Schirnhofer

was surprised by the keen interest Nietzsche displayed in her dreams and obsessions, which he urged her to record. Many of one's strangest and most original thoughts occurred at night, and Nietzsche found that if he didn't write them down immediately on a notebook by his bed, by the next morning they had flown away—for ever!⁵³

Along with his 'night thoughts,' Nietzsche also recorded altered-states of consciousness from his waking life, most often raptures invoked by music, but also elevated states inspired by the natural environment.⁵⁴ Blending formal philosophical theorising with the personal emotional event, these journal sketches of dreams and visions are allowed to run into Nietzsche's philosophising and are identifiable, in faint traces or more substantial form, in his published work (the most famous of these, of course, being the vision of the eternal return inspired by the Surlej rock on the shore of lake Silvaplana.⁵⁵)

Along with these dreams, visions and raptures, Nietzsche practised a more constant form of diaristic self-discovery in his philosophical work. Every great philosophy is an "involuntary and unself-conscious memoir" of its author—this pronouncement of Nietzsche's is well-known.⁵⁶ Thankfully, Lou Salomé—who shared this insight with Nietzsche⁵⁷—understood the

⁵¹ Parkes, *Composing the Soul*, 328, n. 14.

⁵² This is Siobhan Lyons' translation of 'Aber wem erzählst du da deine Nachtgedanken?' taken from a note Nietzsche made in 1886 ("Nietzsche's Dawn of Dissent," 42, eKGWB/NF-1886,4[5]). In *HHI* §13, Nietzsche offers (a kind of) psychoanalytical dream theory, attributing dream content to our underlying drives.

⁵³ Cate, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, 446.

⁵⁴ Upon hearing Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, Nietzsche writes to Erwin Rohde in October 1868 that "every fibre, every nerve twitched; for a long time I haven't had such a long-lasting feeling of rapture [*Entrücktheit*]" (eKGWB/BVN-1868, 596). I have used Kocku von Stuckrad's translation of this line from "Utopian Landscapes and Ecstatic Journeys: Friedrich Nietzsche, Herman Hesse, and Mircea Eliade on the Terror of Modernity," *Numen* 57, no. 1 (2010): 84. Years later, in a letter to his sister, Nietzsche writes: "I cannot think of [the Prelude to *Parsifal*] without feeling violently shaken, so elevated was I by it, so deeply moved" (Ernest Newman, *The Life of Richard Wagner*, vol. 4 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976], 544). Recounting the experience to Peter Gast, he describes "an extraordinary sublimity of feeling, something experienced in the very depths of music" (eKGWB/BVN-1887,793). In an insightful and biographically rich account of Nietzsche's deep connection with nature, Graham Parkes observes that even during Nietzsche's "coolly scientific phase," he experienced a close communion with "the alpine landscapes of the Upper Engadin" which is expressed in a "distinctly mystical tone" in his writings ("Staying Loyal to the Earth: Nietzsche as an Ecological Thinker," in *Nietzsche's Futures*, ed. John Lippitt [Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999], 169). See, also, Martina Kolb's stunning account of Nietzsche's relation to Liguria in "Copious Dawns, High Noons, Blessed Isles: Nietzsche's Liguria," from *Nietzsche, Freud, Benn, and the Azure Spell of Liguria* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 105–27.

⁵⁵ *EH* "Thus Spoke Zarathustra" §1.

⁵⁶ *BGE* §6. See also *BGE* §5, §9, §23.

⁵⁷ In letter from Nietzsche to Salomé (presented in place of a preface in Salomé's *Nietzsche*), Nietzsche writes: "My Dear Lou, Your idea of reducing philosophical systems to the personal records of their originators is truly an idea arising from a 'brother-sister' brain" (3).

less well-considered fact that this universalised predicate applies especially well in Nietzsche's case. "If the task of the biographer is to explicate the thinker through his person, it applies in an unusual degree to Nietzsche because external intellectual work and a picture of his inner life coalesce completely."⁵⁸ As a 'sister-brain' to Nietzsche,⁵⁹ we should listen to Salomé's first-hand account of Nietzsche's method of philosophising: "'MIHI IPSI SCRIPSI' is a recurrent cry in Nietzsche's letters after the completion of a work," she tells us, "it signifies that he basically thought and wrote for himself because he describes only himself and transposes his own self into thoughts."⁶⁰ Pursuing "an ideal image of the free spirit," "he had wished to construct a series of aphoristic collections ... wherein the freely inquiring spirit of his thoughts would explore all areas of life and knowledge and, even more freely, *the fullness of his own experiences*."⁶¹

That philosophical knowledge involves not just a horizontal surveying of the external world, but a vertical descent into one's deeper psycho-emotional self is something Nietzsche would share with Salomé as a kind of intimate disclosure:

I recall something that Nietzsche told me which very appropriately expresses the joy that the seeker of knowledge takes in the vast breadth and depth of his nature; from it springs the desire to regard his life henceforth as "an experiment of the seeker of knowledge" (GS, 324). He said, "I resemble an old, weather-proof fortress which contains many hidden cellars and deeper hiding places; in my dark journeys, I have not yet crawled down into my subterranean chambers. Don't they form the foundation for everything? Should I not climb up from my depths to all the surfaces of the earth? After every journey, should one not return to oneself?"⁶²

"Basically," she writes, "his probings as a thinker were nothing less than intensive probings into the human psyche for its undiscovered world and for 'its still unfinished possibilities.'"⁶³ With her psychoanalytic eye, Salomé observes that Nietzsche facilitates this self-excavation using a fluid, diaristic openness that listens to and records a kind of reflective (theory-informed) stream-of-consciousness without a censoring and ordering of the cross-wired frequencies of his spontaneous and inspired thoughts.

On the surface it would seem that his headaches and eye problems certainly had forced him to work with purely aphoristic means rather than detailed research, but more and more his intellectual peculiarity refused to fashion a continuously linked chain of thoughts, as in systematic writing; instead, one listens to a dialogue of thought that breaks off and then picks up specific strands. With 'ears attuned to the extraordinary' ('Prologue,' Z, 9), he captured silent words as if they were spoken.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Salomé, 4.

⁵⁹ Salomé, 3.

⁶⁰ Salomé, 4.

⁶¹ Salomé, 75–6, emphasis in original.

⁶² Salomé, 22.

⁶³ Salomé, 10 (*BGE* §45).

⁶⁴ Salomé, 80.

Thus, providing the reader with a valuable reminder, she writes that “[i]t is essential that one visualizes Nietzsche during his quiet and solitary peregrinations as carrying with him a number of aphorisms which have resulted from long, mute monologues rather than from writing with pen in hand and bent over a desk.”⁶⁵ Continuing with a valuable warning, she writes that

[r]eaders wishing to discern the significance of Nietzsche as a theoretician (as perhaps the academic philosophers do) will turn away disappointed ... For the value of his thoughts does not lie in their originality of theory, nor does it lie in that which can be established or refuted dialectically. What is of value is the intimate force which speaks through one personality to another personality; ‘systems’ can well be disproved, as Nietzsche said, but their originators cannot be ‘killed.’⁶⁶

Looking to her alternative ‘brother brain’ Paul Rée as a model of the theoretical mind, Salomé makes the Freudian observation that while the theoretician’s strength lies in a “cold, undeviating, lucid logic of scientific thought ... [i]ts danger lay in a one-sided and closed circuit of thinking” that bars entry to the deeper levels of self.⁶⁷ But as the logician marches back and forth at the gates of reason, Nietzsche’s “genius sprang from the exuberant fire” that ignited his philosophical writings.⁶⁸ “[L]ogic alone could not have brought on his illuminations,” she tells us—his “[t]hought[s] and sentiments were fused” together.⁶⁹ In Rée’s work, the human being might be observed from the outside, but it is with Nietzsche that the “echoes of inner events” emerge.⁷⁰

Conclusion

At this point, we can now see the way that the three aspects of Nietzsche’s process which I have presented—receptivity, fluidity, and diaristic self-excavation—work together to form Nietzsche’s methodological dynamic. With a willingness to take in diverse and conflicting sources and theories (*receptivity*), he is able to let these ideas and theories steep in his unconscious and re-emerge through a process of open, non-restrictive reflection and writing (a thinking and note-taking with *fluidity*). Through the dual challenge of remaining open to the opposing views of others and of bypassing the censorship of his own consciousness, he performs philosophy as a self-investigation (as a *diaristic* exploration and excavation), thus infusing this theory with deeply personal content. When philosophical theories are processed and regenerated through semi-intuitive reflection, they become a sub-intellectual resource, embedded with patterns and signs that are revealing of the writer. Thus, when philosophising

⁶⁵ Salomé, 79.

⁶⁶ Salomé, 5.

⁶⁷ Salomé, 74.

⁶⁸ Salomé, 74.

⁶⁹ Salomé, 74.

⁷⁰ Salomé, 76.

is performed in this fluid, diaristic manner, we can read the text material (the personally treated theories) much like a therapist reads the free associations of their patient, looking for moments—subtle indications in the arrangement and expression of thoughts—when the unconscious inclinations of the philosopher/patient are able to break through. As we will see in the next chapter, with Nietzsche we often find that as he takes on new positions through his experimental openness, the ideas that he has jettisoned will—through his loose, experimental compositional process—find new ways to re-emerge.

Having undergone this biographical reconstruction and presented Nietzsche as an existential-artist utilising the practices of receptivity, fluidity and diaristic excavation, we can now conclude by looking at how well this picture fits with the conflicting hermeneutical accounts of Nietzsche as ‘existential-experimentalist’ presented by Kaufmann and Jaspers. In Kaufmann’s case, the accounts do not align, and there is no way to move the pieces about to make the biographical evidence—which shows Nietzsche as an eclectic and reflectively loose philosophical experimenter—fit with Kaufmann’s (implicit) image of Nietzsche as a consistent, scientific thinker, working to build up a yet-to-be-formalised philosophical system. To be sure, in certain ways throughout his book, Kaufmann acknowledges both Nietzsche’s receptivity (his openness to different influences) and the psychological aspect of his work. Thus, for example, in regards to Nietzsche’s receptivity, Kaufmann’s opening chapter, which functions as a general biography, lists the diverse influences that impacted Nietzsche’s thinking,⁷¹ and, in his epilogue, he writes that “Nietzsche was not a member of, and cannot be claimed by, any school or movement. He offered fascinating ideas and theories, but he also taught ‘the courage for an attack on one’s convictions.’”⁷² But this biographical information is not imported (in any significant sense) from these chapters into Kaufmann’s consideration of Nietzsche’s methodology. Certainly, it does not lead Kaufmann to wonder whether openness and self-antagonism feature in Nietzsche’s philosophical speculations.⁷³

In regards to the diaristic aspect of Nietzsche’s philosophising, Kaufmann’s supporters will no doubt point to his discussions on the ‘psychological’ nature of Nietzsche’s work (Kaufmann’s book is, after all, entitled *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*). But for Kaufmann, Nietzsche is ‘psychological’ in the sense that he gives us psychological theories, and comfortable ones at that (and when they are not comfortable, they are aimed at others).

⁷¹ PPA, 21–71.

⁷² PPA, 423 (eKGWB/NF-1888,14[159]).

⁷³ While these aspects of Nietzsche’s work are not considered in such a way that they complicate and deepen Kaufmann’s analysis, they are utilised to support simplistic accounts of the development of Nietzsche’s thinking. The idea of receptivity is used, for example, to present a two-part narrative about Nietzsche’s relation with Wagner. On Kaufmann’s reading, while in his early period Nietzsche was closely associated with Wagner (and his irrationalism, and his metaphysicalism, and his anti-Semitism, etc.), he then *cleanly* and *unproblematically* broke from this father figure. While it is important to track Nietzsche’s strong and vitriolic rejection of Wagner, we develop a more sophisticated reading by noticing subtle re-emergences of repudiated thoughts.

Thus, for Kaufmann, Nietzsche is not using his philosophy to carry out challenging explorations of different/hidden/potential ways of thinking in himself. Rather, Nietzsche's work is psychological in the sense that Nietzsche "thought of the will to power as a psychological drive,"⁷⁴ one which can be positively utilised through sublimation⁷⁵ (i.e., through the "process of the overcoming [or ordering] ... the impulses" to form a higher, more cultivated self—as, presumably, Nietzsche had done).⁷⁶ In so far as the will to power is a psychological force that is not 'artistically' moderated, it manifests negatively as *ressentiment* in the religious believer.⁷⁷

In contrast to this, the biographical picture offered here of Nietzsche as a free-thinking, self-excavating artist fits exceedingly well with Jaspers' account. For Jaspers, we will remember, Nietzsche's philosophising involves an exploration of different lines of thought that arise from, or fit with, different modal frameworks (e.g., scientific, spiritual, philosophical, etc.). Here, the focus is on realistic, lived accounts that give exposure to the contradictory ways we think and experience the world determined by our commitments to conflicting background modes. It is, thus, very much a self-anthropology—one that looks at the way people actually are, and one that is open to, and fascinated by, the deep contradictoriness in human beings, viewing this as a meaningful complexity. The account of Nietzsche's (fluid, receptive, diaristic) method I have presented here fits in nicely with this interpretation. Indeed, more or less implicit in Jaspers' reading is the view that Nietzsche carries out this experimentation with, and unearthing of, his/our contradictory viewpoints through a *fluid*, often less than rigidly logical, approach that allows him to explore different attitudes, positions and thoughts, including thoughts that he unconsciously holds, or could potentially hold (or, indeed, that we consciously/unconsciously/potentially hold). For Jaspers, there is, of course, enough logicality in Nietzsche's approach to allow him a somewhat haphazard logical, linear thinking through of limit-situations. But along with this, there is an intuitive and logical letting-go that allows a deep-diving, *diaristic self-exploration* to take place—thus it is a semi-intuitive, semi-logical thinking that moves him through "the necessary routes" to the dramatic, conflicting positions he explores and communicates.⁷⁸ Finally, in setting up such a view, Jaspers' reading also assumes the kind of radical *receptive* openness that we have discussed: for him, Nietzsche is a kind of vortex—a consciousness that, with "a dizzying suction," has pulled in and re-expressed the conflicting commitments of schizophrenic modernity with its strong historical awareness.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ PPA, 185

⁷⁵ Thus, Kaufmann states that "Nietzsche's sublimation is a psychological notion" (PPA, 237).

⁷⁶ PPA, 218.

⁷⁷ Kaufmann gives us a clear indication of this externally oriented direction of the enquiry when he writes that "[t]he enterprise [of critical psychological uncovering] requires a probing intellect that shrinks from no discovery; it consists in an examination of the psychological motivation of religious beliefs, metaphysical doctrines, and morality; and Nietzsche feels inspired by a relentless determination to make this motivation a matter of conscience" (PPA, 114).

⁷⁸ NIUPA, 11.

⁷⁹ Jaspers, *Reason and Existenz*, 24–25.

Thus, in excavating the contradictions of human being, Nietzsche expresses not only himself but also his time with its elongated consciousness. Modernity is a chaos, and there is no formulaic relief that can be found in ordering the drives and working to self-cultivate.

Study Two: A ‘Contentual’ Analysis of Nietzsche’s Methodology (Nietzsche on Truth and Method)

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we looked at Nietzsche’s existential-experimental methodology by focusing on biographical evidence to determine his process of philosophising. Piecing this evidence together, we have started to bring into view a picture of Nietzsche as an unconventional thinker who composed his work as an existential-artist through receptivity, fluidity, and diaristic exploration. Assessing Nietzsche’s method from this indirect biographical viewpoint, the overall impression we receive is one that fits with Jaspers’ version of existential-experimentalism, where Nietzsche manifests contradictions by looking at the world through fundamentally opposed (and ultimately undecidable and unreconcilable) philosophical frameworks.

What does not fit here is Kaufmann’s view. But from where, then, one must ask, does Kaufmann get his inspiration for Nietzsche as scientific whitecoat and methodical thinker? As the critical analysis in Chapter One has shown, it does not come from any rigorous insights into Nietzsche’s method as an existential-experimentalist. But Kaufmann’s view becomes more explicable (though, certainly, not more convincing) once we move from an *extra-contentual* account (roughly, indirect biographical information) to look at the *contentual* evidence we have for determining his method (i.e., what Nietzsche actually says in his philosophical writings) which—in the hope of providing a holistic assessment of Nietzsche’s method—I would now like to do.

Pivoting, then, to look at what Nietzsche wrote, we need to make a further division in order to appreciate the different ways that we can use his texts in order to reverse-engineer his process and inform our judgement about the level of consistency in his philosophical writings. Most obviously, we will listen to *what he says about philosophical method*. Along with this, though, we will also listen to *what he says about truth*. This is necessary because once we start to really dig to uncover Kaufmann’s view of Nietzsche, we see that—as well as failing to adequately distinguish between ‘what Nietzsche does’ and ‘what Nietzsche says he does’—Kaufmann has largely relied upon comments Nietzsche has made about the nature of truth to come up with his account of Nietzsche’s applied philosophical method, melding these together into an ill-defined hermeneutics. There is, of course, an important relation between Nietzsche’s views on truth and

how he himself performed his own philosophising, but we need to understand that these are distinct hermeneutic considerations, and we should not present one as though it were a definitive indicator of the other. By treating these separately, we are able to bring them together into a more honest, holistic interpretation.¹ Finally, and most importantly, as we listen to what Nietzsche has to say on truth and method, we must inform our interpretation by *weighing up this theoretical content as a whole* to gauge whether Nietzsche's writings on this particular topic are consistent or contradictory. As we proceed to look at Nietzsche's commentary here, we will see a pattern of alternation and contradiction start to emerge which nullifies the force of his convictions, alerting us to the problem of selectivity and self-confirmation that arises from Kaufmann's closed interpretive model—a problem which can only be avoided through the kind of openness to contradiction that we find in Jaspers' forgotten hermeneutics.

This study, then, will begin by laying out evidence in support of Kaufmann's naturalised reading, looking at what Nietzsche has to say on philosophical method and the nature of truth. Exposing the pitfalls of Kaufmann's closed hermeneutic approach, I will then map out the streams of thought in Nietzsche's work that run against Kaufmann's interpretation, drawing attention to the way Nietzsche's irrationalistic views of method and truth function as Jaspersian limit-situations, breaking up what seems like a solid naturalistic foundation. As I chart out Kaufmann's pro-scientistic reading and its irrationalist counter reading, I will relate these respectively to the two dominant forms of Nietzsche interpretation today: the analytic and poststructuralist/postmodernist approaches, preparing us for a critique of contemporary forms of Nietzsche interpretation in the final chapter. Having guided us through the pro-scientistic (Kaufmannian/analytic) and anti-scientistic (postmodernist) readings, I will present Jaspers' account of Nietzsche on truth and method, demonstrating its ability to give us a more comprehensive topographical overview of Nietzsche's angular intellectual landscape. After arguing that the Jaspersian model gives us fuller immersion into Nietzsche's contradictions than the postmodernist account, I will show how this deeper immersion allows us to appreciate the paradox of self-reference as an existential stimulus.

¹ I would like to make a general note here about my separation of contentual and extra-contentual information. I must state clearly that I am in no way critical of analyses that weave these together organically. Such blending is used to great effect in many informative and complex interpretations. What I object to, and what I hope to counteract through the (artificial) separation I have used here, is the assumption that contentual information (and, indeed, contentual information about Nietzsche's thoughts on truth) can—without any broader hermeneutical reflection—be read as a definitive (or even good) indication of Nietzsche's actual method of philosophising. That this should not happen is obvious from the fact that a philosopher might—in terms of the content of the assertions they present—*state* the importance of using rigorous logic in philosophising whilst not in fact *being* rigorously logical in the way they carry out their own philosophising. Indeed, a philosopher can *say* they are very logical, and a good interpreter would factor this in to their overall assessment of the logicity of a work, but we are in trouble if we take such statements as proof that the work is *in fact* logical and coherent. This consideration, of course, applies for all philosophical interpretations, but—as I hope to show in this chapter—there are reasons why we should be especially mindful of this issue when we are reporting on Nietzsche.

Nietzsche as Advocate for Truth and Scientised Philosophy

We should start by admitting that Nietzsche has made very clear statements supporting Kaufmann's implicit assumption that Nietzsche philosophised in the manner of an orderly, logically rigorous scientist. Of course, these statements in favour of a scientifically inclined methodology are most easily harvested from the middle period writings, commonly described as Nietzsche's 'positivist' works.² In *Human, All Too Human*, which marks Nietzsche's turn away from the *Artisten-Metaphysik* of the early period and presents, on the whole, as a sustained (though not unproblematic and unambivalent) naturalistic critique of metaphysics, he writes repeatedly of the need for "unpretentious truths"—those "modest, simple, sober" truths "discovered by means of rigorous method."³ In *Daybreak*, he speaks fondly of "that little bit of human reason" which "constitutes our pride" and warns against those who "lack the strict conscience for what is true and actual,"⁴ impelling us in *The Gay Science* "to face our experiences as sternly as we would a scientific experiment."⁵

So, too, do we find this demand for intellectual rigour running beyond the positivist period all the way through to Nietzsche's late and final period writings. In "On the Origin of Scholars," for example, from book five of *The Gay Science* (added in 1887), Nietzsche hopes that the "lamentably *dérisonnable*" Germans will learn "cleanlier intellectual habits," and "[compel] agreement by force of reason," by "mak[ing] finer distinctions" and "writ[ing] more clearly and cleanly."⁶ Later, we find Nietzsche identifying with the "knowers" [*wir Erkennenden*] in the *Genealogy*,⁷ and using hard-headed scientific truthfulness as a foil for the contemptible faith of Christianity in the final period polemic *The Antichrist*, where, in the service of cognitive "integrity," he tells us to "fight" for truth "every step of the way" whilst remaining "stern" against "fine feelings."⁸

It is statements like these—these little flags proclaiming Nietzsche's rigour and strict conscience for truth dotted throughout Nietzsche's oeuvre—that are taken by Kaufmann as good preliminary indicators of Nietzsche's method. But, reading between the lines of *PPA*, one sees that for Kaufmann, the main indication that Nietzsche strives for consistency comes from Nietzsche's *theory* of truth.⁹ Drawing Nietzsche's disparate claims and inferences together, essentially, we are told in *PPA* that Nietzsche held (and used his work to strongly advocate for)

² Ruth Abbey, *Nietzsche's Middle Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 7–10.

³ *HH* "Of First and Last Things" §3; See also, for example, *AOM* §128.

⁴ *D* §18 and §270.

⁵ *GS* §319. See also, for example, *GS* §2, §7, §293, §335.

⁶ *GS* §348.

⁷ *GM* III §24. See also *GM* III §25; *A* §12, §50.

⁸ *A* §50. See also *A* §47, §52.

⁹ Kaufmann does not offer a specific chapter on Nietzsche's view(s) of truth. Kaufmann's main ideas on the topic can be cobbled together from the following pages in *PPA*: 15–16, 21, 82–84, 86, 88–89, 106–8, 116–17, 203–7, 350–61, 386, 395–96.

a common sense, naturalised, correspondence theory of truth, which (following Maudemarie Clark) we can call the ‘traditional empiricist’ interpretation.¹⁰ On this reading, Nietzsche believed that we *can* arrive at the truth of things, and we do so by using rational-empirical investigations (science or scientised-philosophy) to correctly report on the state of the stable, fixed world around us. Of course, this epistemology neatly parallels—and, in Kaufmann’s mind, essentially sets up—his (explicitly argued) understanding of Nietzsche’s anti-foundationalism as touched upon in Chapter One: just as Nietzsche’s rejection of ‘systems’ amounted to a rejection of *metaphysics* (based, as it is, on untestable foundational premises), if Nietzsche makes claims that sound like rejections of ‘truth,’ these—Kaufmann assures us—are nothing more than a rejection of extravagant *metaphysical* theories that attempt to locate some ultimate (untestable) truth beyond or behind the empirical world.

Again, we must be forthright in admitting that many passages in Nietzsche’s published writings fit perfectly with this hypothesis. Going back to the pages of *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche directs us to use ‘colder,’ scientific forms of study such as history and physiology as natural correctives to traditional metaphysics so that “our interest in the purely theoretical problem of the ‘thing in itself’ and ‘appearance’” melt away.¹¹ Numerous passages from the late period works indicate the same. “We possess scientific knowledge today to precisely the extent that we have decided to accept the evidence of the senses ... The rest is abortion and not-yet-science: which is to say metaphysics, [and] theology,” he writes in *Twilight of the Idols*;¹² and, from *The Anti-Christ*: “Christianity ... has its roots in hatred of the natural (actuality!), it is the expression of a profound discontent with the actual.”¹³

Though the extent of Kaufmann’s inheritance is often underappreciated or underplayed, this view of Nietzsche’s method and theory of truth has set the kind of basic attitude for what Christopher Cox has called the Anglo-American Nietzsche renaissance.¹⁴ Growing exponentially, Kaufmann’s scientised naturalisation of Nietzsche has now spawned a whole movement of analytic interpreters who are keen to attribute to Nietzsche a respectable commitment to truth and scientific method.¹⁵ With a general air of legitimisation and

¹⁰ Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 5–6.

¹¹ *HH* “Of First and Last Things” §1 and §10. See also *HH* “Of First and Last Things” §3; and *GS* §109.

¹² *TI* “‘Reason’ in Philosophy” §3.

¹³ *AC* §15.

¹⁴ Christopher Cox, *Nietzsche: Naturalism and Interpretation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). For a detailed analysis of Kaufmann’s influence, see *Ratner-Rosenhagen*, “Dionysian Enlightenment.”

¹⁵ As Ansell-Pearson reports, “[t]he dominant trend in recent scholarship is to interpret Nietzsche as a naturalist” (“Recent Developments in Scholarship on Key Existentialists: Nietzsche,” 292). See too Leiter, “Nietzsche and the Morality Critics,” *Ethics* 107, no. 2. (January 1997): 250. Key figures in the movement include Arthur C. Danto, (*Nietzsche as Philosopher*, expanded ed. [New York: Columbia University Press, 2005]); Richard Schacht (*Nietzsche* [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983], and *Making Sense of Nietzsche* [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995]); Maudemarie Clark (*Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990]); John Richardson

normalisation now circulating around Nietzsche, these interpreters often just assume—or, like Kaufmann, infer from their scientised pro-truth readings—that, despite appearances, Nietzsche worked in a traditional philosophical manner, i.e., striving for (and, in the main, achieving) consistency and ongoing coherence. Carrying on Kaufmann’s empirical view, these interpreters present Nietzsche’s ‘perspectivism’ as the very reasonable observation that if we have multiple views (in Nietzsche’s language, “eyes”) on the same object or event, these different angles will naturally fit together and complement each other, adding up to a “more complete ... ‘concept’ of the thing” under investigation.¹⁶

All this seems very conclusive. But we need to be mindful of a crucial irony that arises from the possibility that Nietzsche’s philosophy may be contradictory. Conditionally speaking, *if* Nietzsche’s philosophy is contradictory, then we would expect (or, at least, we would not be surprised) to find in his discussions statements indicating that he is not contradictory, i.e., that he works scientistically, logically, consistently, etc., and that he holds a conventional correspondence view of rationality and truth, where truth is determined through empirically based, rationally mediated cognition of the physical world around us. So, if it is the case that Nietzsche is contradictory (and—as Kaufmann admits—there is *prima facie* evidence that this is the case),¹⁷ then positive presentations of ‘things he has said’ will not be enough to determine his position. Indeed, if we do not follow Jaspers’ advice and hunt around for the contradictions (not for the sake of seeking contradictions, but for the sake of accurate representation), then we risk engaging in the very same “excerpt lifting” and selectivity that Kaufmann identifies in the National Socialists’ readings where “lines [are] picked from different contexts and put together in a manner that suggests a semblance of continuity.”¹⁸ This draws our attention to the problem

(*Nietzsche’s System* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1996]); and Brian Leiter (*Nietzsche on Morality* [London: Routledge, 2002]; “Nietzsche’s Naturalism Reconsidered,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*, eds. John Richardson and Ken Gemes [Oxford University Press, 2013]). The works of Danto, Schacht, Leiter, and Clark will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

¹⁶ *GM* III §12. Generally, commentators in the analytic camp such as Richard Schacht and Brian Leiter will use this small section of the *Genealogy* to construct their commonsensical account of perspectivism, focusing on Nietzsche’s famous assertion that “the more ... eyes we are able to use for the same thing, the more complete will be our ‘concept’ of the thing.” See, also, *GS* §7 where Nietzsche envisions a form of comprehensive study that could “exhaust [all] points of view and ... material.” To visualise this form of commonsensical perspectivism, we might imagine a circle of people standing around a large, multicoloured beach ball suspended at eye-level. Reporting on what they see, each person will give a partial account of what the ball looks like from their particular angle. Taken together, these accounts will provide a more complete picture (or understanding) of the ball. See Schacht, *Marking Sense of Nietzsche*, 14–15, 88–89, 92; Brian Leiter, “Knowledge and Affect: Perspectivism Revisited” (July 2017), <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3011074>; and Maudemarie Clark, “Perspectivism and Falsification Revisited: Nietzsche, Nehamas, and Me,” *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 49, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 3–30.

¹⁷ See *PPA*, 75, where Kaufmann discusses the “elusive quality of [Nietzsche’s] style” (i.e., the ‘monadological’ effect).

¹⁸ Kaufmann, *PPA*, 291. See also 94–95. Interestingly, Kaufmann condones the Jasperian method in its ability to counteract the National Socialists’ reading of Nietzsche, writing that “it was the surpassing merit of Karl Jaspers’ *Nietzsche* that he counseled Nietzsche’s readers never to rest content until they had also found passages contradicting those found first” (*PPA*, xv).

I call ‘over-indication,’ where, working with a potentially contradiction-prone text, assertions (that may be expressed unequivocally) are assumed to apply consistently throughout Nietzsche’s works (or throughout a significant block of works) and are taken by the interpreter as an adequate representation (or indication) of the author’s position.¹⁹ Continuing with this study, I will now demonstrate the importance of remaining open to contradiction in order to avoid this form of one-sidedness, so that—as interpreters—we can capture the expansiveness of Nietzsche’s thinking.

Nietzsche as Radical Critic of Truth and Scientific Method

Indeed, if we remain open in our reading, we can trace the many streams of thought that run as countercurrents against Nietzsche’s pro-scientific stance. We can, of course, find this anti-rationalistic current in the dialectic swirl of the Dionysian and Apollonian from *The Birth of Tragedy*, where Nietzsche entreats us to “perceive not merely by logical inference, but with the immediate certainty of intuition.”²⁰ This sentiment, however, is not just confined to his early Wagnerian-Schopenhauerian work, but spills out across his entire oeuvre—these counter-narratives flowing like little rivulets around, and even out of, his praise for the scientific method. Alongside his call for “rigorous method” over metaphysical “intoxication” in his naturalistically oriented *Human, All Too Human*, he speaks—almost in the same breath and with quiet fervour—of “our sense[s growing] more spiritual” as “the realm of inner, spiritual beauty” opens up.²¹ Having entreated us in *Daybreak* to exercise a “strict conscience for what is true and actual,”²² he then boldly proclaims that “[t]here are no scientific methods which alone lead to knowledge!”²³ A year later in *The Gay Science*, he goes on to spruik the ‘cult of the untrue,’ insisting upon the need for a “counterforce” to science in the form of an “all exuberant, floating,

¹⁹ Whereas selectivity suggests a (perhaps wilful) picking-out of material, the term over-indication is used to convey the problem of (perhaps more naïvely) assuming that aphorisms and claims that one comes across more locally in Nietzsche’s writing will apply to (and give a good indication of) Nietzsche’s work more generally. While I think a more wilful selectivity is, perhaps, at play in Kaufmann’s reading, it is beneficial to focus on over-indication here, not only due to considerations of charity, but because it is, I think, a widespread problem in contemporary Nietzsche interpretation (one that in many ways stems from Kaufmann’s one-sided presentation of Nietzsche’s thought).

²⁰ *BT* §1. Here I am using Clifton Fadiman’s translation (“Selections from *The Birth of Tragedy*,” in *Philosophies of Art and Beauty: Selected Readings in Aesthetics from Plato to Heidegger*, eds. Albert Hofstadter and Richard Kuhns [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976], 498).

²¹ *HH* “Of First and Last Things” §1 and §3.

²² *D* §270.

²³ As philosophers, he informs us, “[w]e have to tackle things experimentally, now angry with them and now kind, and be successively just, passionate and cold with them,” approaching them not as just “as a policeman” but “as an inquisitive wanderer” (*D* §432). Similar advice is given to the historian: under the heading ‘Supplemental Rationality,’ he tells us that “the good historian ... constantly contradict[s]” (*D* §1).

dancing, mocking, childish, and blissful art.”²⁴ Here, too, in the later publication of book five, he makes his famous rebuke, describing the “scientific interpretation” as “one of the *stupidest* of all possible interpretations of the world.”²⁵ Continuing to make the analytic naturaliser uncomfortable in the late period work *Beyond Good and Evil*, he describes the scientific viewpoint as “bad ‘philology’” and a “perversion of meaning,”²⁶ while the philosopher’s work is “light, divine, and closely related to dance and high spirits”²⁷—their “knowing” a “*creating*.”²⁸

Such claims bubble up from a number of deeper counter-narratives on truth and metaphysics that run against Kaufmann’s traditional empiricist account. Reading through Nietzsche’s oeuvre, we come across multiple whirlpools of deeply nihilistic thought, where Nietzsche’s rejection of metaphysics is not just a rejection of other-worldly thinking, as Kaufmann has it, but a more extreme rejection of our commonsense, earthbound notions of truth and knowledge. In numerous passages, Nietzsche explains to us that what determines a mode of thinking as ‘metaphysical’ is whether it conforms to a certain pattern of judgement, where stabilising forms are artificially imposed over the flux of becoming which, he believes, constitutes the natural state of the world. Thus, as the traditional empirical reader likes to point out, the religious thinker clings to stabilising beliefs such as heaven (which provides, for example, a teleological stabiliser that helps us cope with our own transitoriness and contingency), and the Godhead (which provides, for example, an ultimate point of mediation to determine right/wrong, true/false, etc.).²⁹ Responding to the same anxiety in intellectualising terms, the metaphysician lays out some ultimate posit upon which to construct a stable, timeless, all-encompassing account of the whole.³⁰

As post-metaphysical, secular moderns, this is all very easy for us. More radically, though, Nietzsche also identifies this same pattern of metaphysical falsification at work in *the basic structures of consciousness and the processes of the rational mind*. Working as experimenter and hypothesiser rather than consistent theory-builder, Nietzsche examines this modern metaphysical propensity from a number of related, but not neatly congruous, angles—many of which take a kind of historicising form. Rather than trying to cover the many different critiques Nietzsche offers us in this form, I would like to analyse just the opening paragraph of “On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense.” By taking the microscope to this single (and highly influential)

²⁴ GS §107.

²⁵ GS §373.

²⁶ BGE §22. I have used Kaufmann’s descriptive translation here from *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. and ed. Walter Kaufmann, (New York: The Modern Library, 2000), 220.

²⁷ BGE §213.

²⁸ BGE §211.

²⁹ Nietzsche expresses this critical view time and again throughout his work, particularly in the middle and late period writings. See, for example, D §464, §501; GS §1, §109; and A §15.

³⁰ See, for example, HH “Of First and Last Things” §8, §9, §20; GS §54, §151, §109, §355; BGE §2, §12; TI “‘Reason’ in Philosophy” and “How the ‘Real World’ at Last Became a Myth”; and A §10, §17.

passage, we will be able to see just how mercurial and densely intermixed with different lines of thought Nietzsche's writings are.

Sitting us down to watch the surreal time-lapse picture show of the development of man in the historical unfurling of the universe, Nietzsche writes:

Once upon a time, in some out of the way corner of that universe which is dispersed into numberless twinkling solar systems, there was a star upon which clever beasts invented knowing. That was the most arrogant and mendacious minute of "world history," but nevertheless, it was only a minute. After nature had drawn a few breaths, the star cooled and congealed, and the clever beasts had to die.—One might invent such a fable, and yet he still would not have adequately illustrated how miserable, how shadowy and transient, how aimless and arbitrary the human intellect looks within nature. There were eternities during which it did not exist. And when it is all over with the human intellect, nothing will have happened. For this intellect has no additional mission which would lead it beyond human life. Rather, it is human, and only its possessor and begetter takes it so solemnly—as though the world's axis turned within it. But if we could communicate with the gnat, we would learn that he likewise flies through the air with the same solemnity, that he feels the flying center of the universe within himself.³¹

What Nietzsche aims to show us through this moving cinematic description is that when we watch ourselves from this temporalised long view, we take a perspective that critically undermines our (unwittingly metaphysical) faith in the inherent truth-attaining power of our rational cognition. When we study ourselves historically—standing back to look at our own rationality from a historical perspective—the logical conceptualisations we use (those logical laws which, from our modern viewpoint, seem so utterly unconditional and indubitable when we apply them) lose their lustre of assumed unconditionality. Breaking this down into historical-temporal and historical-biological strands, we will see how closely these arguments resemble Jaspers' limit-situation of the standpoint.

In the first place, of course, Nietzsche sets up the *basic pragmatism* that will be developed in his essay and runs (in fits and starts) throughout the rest of his works.³² Having the 'clever

³¹ OTL §79.

³² For a general overview of Nietzsche and pragmatism see Bernd Magnus, "Postmodern Pragmatism: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida, and Rorty," in *Pragmatism: From Progressivism to Postmodernism*, eds. Robert Hollinger and David Depew (Westport: Praeger, 1995), 261–67; Rossella Fabbrichesi, "Nietzsche and James: A Pragmatist Hermeneutics," *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* [Online] 1, (2009), <http://journals.openedition.org/ejpap/962>. Richard Rorty makes recurrent forays into Nietzsche's work in his discussions of pragmatism and the history of philosophy. For Rorty's analysis, see (amongst others): *Consequences of Pragmatism: Essays: 1972–1980* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 148–59; *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 21–34, 60–62; and *Essays on Heidegger and Others: Philosophical Papers*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 2–5, 28, 30–31, 87, 95–96. A handy overview of pragmatic themes in Nietzsche's work can be found in George Stack, "Nietzsche's Influence on Pragmatic Humanism," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 20, no. 4 (1982): 369–406. Nietzsche's pragmatism in the late works is analysed by Pietro Gori in *Nietzsche's Pragmatism: A Study on Perspectival Thought*, trans. Sarah de Sanctis (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019). Josiah Royce's "The Problem of Truth in the Light of Recent Discussion," in *Royce's Logical Essays: Collected Logical Essays of Josiah Royce*, ed. Daniel S. Robinson (Dubuque: W.M.C. Brown, 1951), 63–97, provides a wonderful contextualisation of the sceptical turn that took hold during the last decades of the nineteenth century leading to "the storm and stress of a re-examination of ... truth" in the early twentieth century.

beasts’ ‘invent’ rather than ‘discover’ knowing, Nietzsche communicates the Jamesian view that our rational understanding is not a faculty for getting at some deep essential structure of the world, but rather an effective, though otherwise arbitrary, cognitive schema for getting around. Of course, this historicising-pragmatist view feeds into Nietzsche’s more specific logico-linguistic critique of truth, where—wending his way through a number of related sceptical hypotheses in “On Truth and Lies”—Nietzsche arrives at the position that “every concept arises from the equation of unequal things.”³³ Envisaging the external world as a flood of sense-data, Nietzsche argues that as an evolutionary strategy we have learnt to (artificially) control this experiential torrent by fixing individual things under general linguistic designations. Unable “to wage the battle for existence with horns or with the sharp teeth of beasts of prey,” the human being is able to “preserve themselves” through this intellectual indexing.³⁴ But just as we cannot step into the same river twice, nothing we experience is wholly equal to any other thing, thus—to use Nietzsche’s infamous example—while what we actually experience are individual leaf-like things, we collapse these differences down under the linguistic-conceptual abstraction ‘leaf.’³⁵ “What then is truth?” he asks. Through the scientific-historical worldview, we are led to the conclusion that “truths are ... metaphors that have become worn out.”³⁶

Much has been said about this pragmatic/logico-linguistic critique in the literature,³⁷ so I would like to work now to bring out some subtler historically framed argument forms embedded in this passage. To begin with, we can note that accompanying the pragmatic argument, Nietzsche also effects a kind of temporal relativity, where, by telling the ‘fable’ of our coming-to-be and—“after nature had drawn a few breaths”—our passing away, he depicts us as a momentary blip on the grand timeline of the universe. From this temporalised, ‘looking-on-at-ourselves’ perspective, our cognitive way of doing things becomes de-essentialised: just as taking the Stoics’ ‘view from above’ diminishes the importance of our own personal problems, viewing human knowledge as “a minute of ‘world history’” shows us how insignificant—“how shadowy and transient, how aimless and arbitrary”—our knowledge is in the grand, temporal scheme of things.³⁸

³³ OTL §83.

³⁴ OTL §80.

³⁵ OTL §83. See also GS §111.

³⁶ OTL §84. See also GS §58; WP §522 (eKGWB/NF-1886,5[22]).

³⁷ See, for example, the various essays in David B. Allison ed., *The New Nietzsche*, where this aspect of Nietzsche’s work is often either discussed explicitly (with a particular focus on the role of metaphor), or runs as an underlying ideological background behind the authors’ various philosophical discussions.

³⁸ For a discussion on this Stoic practice see Chapter 9 of Pierre Hadot’s *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson, trans. Michael Chase (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 238–50. Nietzsche’s application of this technique is examined in detail by Michael Ure in his chapter “Nietzsche’s View from Above,” from *Nietzsche’s Therapeutic Teaching: For Individuals and Culture*, eds. Horst Hutter and Eli Friedland (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 117–40. Unlike the therapeutic application of this technique as explored by Ure, in the ‘ontological’

Also in relation to his general pragmatism, there might be for Nietzsche a realisation of the de-essentialising effect that occurs when we *naturalise* knowledge by pinning the intellect to the physical body. When we think of ourselves in evolutionary terms (with the whole package of the human being—consciousness and all—unfurling over time out of nature), we come to regard our logical laws and processes of reasoning as a product of our physiology—as a result of the physical mechanism of the brain fed by the apparatus of the senses. But here we hit the limit-situation of this framework, realising that this naturalisation compromises the essential quality of these laws, for rather than being indubitably necessary, true, and valid, we instead now hold that our cognitive findings are determined by the *contingent*, and very much *non-essential* physical make-up of our bodies. And since differences in bodily composition might very well produce differences in cognitive outcomes, unless we posit some floating quasi-mystical standard that exists outside of the physical realm, we have nothing by which to assess the legitimacy of these various possible outcomes. To put it crudely, logical and conceptual structures are generated by our brains, but there is nothing necessary about the configuration of this physical lump of matter, so there is nothing necessary about the laws we are generating. In short, under the naturalised, evolutionary framework, the way we understand things is determined by the contingencies of our physiology, not by some actual insight into how things are. To tweak a quote from Sedgwick, when we take a historical, biological view, our rationality appears “bound to the [inessential] domain in which it rose.”³⁹

Finally, I would like to add that all of these truth-compromising viewpoints (the basic pragmatic, temporal, and naturalisation arguments) are heightened by Nietzsche’s animalisation of the human—a literary technique which transforms a dry theoretical

perspective-taking identified here, we do not mitigate the concern we have about existence, but rather problematise it—realising, as we do this, the nihilistic drift and insignificance of human being (and, indeed, Being in general).

³⁹ Peter Sedgwick, *Nietzsche: The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2009), 74. What I am presenting here is, in a very basic form, the same conclusion that was seen to arise from—and fundamentally work against—psychologism (roughly, the idea that logical laws can be understood in terms of human psychology). In the late nineteenth century, the ‘psychologism feud’ (*Psychologismus-Streit*) was coming to a head in Germany, with Frege and Husserl both providing arguments against those who claimed that the burgeoning field of psychology could adequately account for the laws and objects of mathematics and logic. Both thinkers argued from the concern that when we reduce such laws to our minds (whether we do so in terms of mental or physical processes/configurations), we lose the kind of eternal, objective quality that adheres to such laws. As Frege states: “If being true is ... independent of being acknowledged by somebody or other, then the laws of truth are not psychological laws: they are boundary stones set in an eternal foundation, which our thought can overflow but never displace” (*The Basic Laws of Arithmetic: Exposition of the System*, trans. and ed. Montgomery Furth [Berkeley: University of California Press, (1893) 1964], 13, [xvi]). See Martin Kusch, *Psychologism: A Case Study in the Sociology of Philosophical Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1995), 28–119. For Nietzsche though—experimenting as he is with the radical consequences of the scientific framework—the problem of losing the objective and essential qualities of the laws is not a reason to reject the reduction of these laws to human psychology, but rather a reason to question the rigid objectivity and indubitability of the laws themselves. He carries out a similar line of reasoning in the form of a radicalised Kantianism which is perhaps most strongly suggested in the opening pages of *Beyond Good and Evil*, particularly in §11.

observation into a personal confrontation. By applying to us the descriptive designation of the ‘clever beast,’ and comparing us in Kafkaesque fashion with the gnat who feels he is “the flying center of the universe,” Nietzsche’s zoomorphisms confront us with the fact that there is no divine separation between us and the animal upon which we should assume a fundamental distinction between our rational intelligence as a means of accessing some deep essential structure of the world, on the one hand, and animal sensory-cognition as a functional navigational schema, on the other. Just as we find it laughable to think that whatever fuzzy insect-perception the gnat experiences as it buzzes about is an accurate representation of how the world is, in much the same way, when we temporally relativise and naturalise ourselves, it strikes us as absurd to believe that our cognitive-sensory perception—which is determined by our natural physiology, and which is one amongst an infinite many—is providing us with a mirrored account of the actual world. Here, Nietzsche demonstrates a strong (though implicit) *awareness* of human modality, i.e., an awareness—like Jaspers—that as humans, we unattentively alternate between different modal framings (scientific/naturalised, spirited/cultured, etc.) in our everyday lives.⁴⁰ This is evident here in the way Nietzsche plays with the naturalistic modal view, heightening the strain of this particular self-framing through his uniquely descriptive (almost cartoonish) form of writing. By using Surrealist imagery to confronts us with the uncanniness of thinking of oneself as animal (a modal option many of us will theoretically accept, but will not assume, embody or enact much of the time in our everyday lives),⁴¹ Nietzsche’s figurative expressions force us to truly consider the startling implications of viewing ourselves through the frameworks of (historical and biological) science.

Hopefully, as we have read through this discussion, we have also noticed how these historical-framework arguments simulate Jaspers’ standpoint problem. As we saw in Chapter Two, the general idea of Jaspers’ (more detailed and developed) experiments in this domain is that, as I embark upon an objective, scientific study of myself (as a specific individual or human being generally), I come to see my experiences and cognition as a product of a particular historical development and physiology. In doing so, I thus find that my way of experiencing and cognitively processing the world is relativised—for now my perspective is just one form of world engagement and understanding among many.⁴² Though a somewhat crude articulation of the argument, it is precisely this pattern of logic that functions to create the relativising effect in Nietzsche’s temporalisation argument: Seeking objective understanding through studies of evolutionary biology and cosmology, we become aware that the sheer stretch of time from the

⁴⁰ I cover this in Chapter Two, “Jaspers’ Philosophical Schema: The Encompassing,” 43–47.

⁴¹ Generally, as an educated, secular modern, if I am asked ‘what is a human being?’ I will say ‘a human being is an animal,’ thus committing myself, in that moment, to a scientific modal framework. Yet, often, in my behaviour and inner self-regard, I assume a sharp distinction between humans and animals—thus, in those moments, I take on a non-scientific modal frame.

⁴² Jaspers, *Philosophy*, 104–5.

past and into the future facilitates an infinite number of alternative forms of world navigation, thus relativising our own form of world cognition, shrinking it into insignificance. Thus, in our investigations, we undermine the very apparatus through which we carry out these (purportedly objective) historical-scientific studies. Similarly, when Nietzsche is compelled by the evolutionary account of man to reflect on the mechanisms that generate his own thinking, he realises that these very thoughts are a product of his own contingently configured physiology, thus relativising his own (seemingly objective) faculty of cognition.

Loosening up the tight rigidity of our rationally-deduced conceptual schema, Nietzsche's picture of the world takes on a dream-like logic: "[T]ruths are illusions,"⁴³ science is a "prejudice,"⁴⁴ and "facts [are] precisely what there is not."⁴⁵ "Unity" and "identity,"⁴⁶ "bodies, lines, planes, causes and effects, motion and rest, form and content,"⁴⁷ all "falsify" the world and "[compel] us" into "error."⁴⁸ Along with "spirit" and "soul," he reflects in his notebooks, "there exists neither ... reason, nor thinking."⁴⁹ Like 'God,' he writes in *Twilight of the Idols*, "truth" is "the last smoke of evaporating reality."⁵⁰

Through thought-experiments such as ones explored above, (and the many other arguments and micro-variations Nietzsche attempts throughout his work), truth washes over itself and pulls itself under, with this anti-rationalistic undercurrent fascinating a whole lineage of writers and intellectuals (roughly beginning with the Surrealists, running through to the New Nietzscheans and current postmodernists) as they follow its self-consuming logic into their own interpretations and writings.⁵¹ For interpreters working in this vein, Nietzsche is no scientific triumphalist, but a radical critic of truth and rationality, who extends his critique of metaphysics all the way through to the logical-linguistic structuring processes of the mind, teaching that there are no formal oppositions, no fixed essences or 'facts,' and no stable reality or Being to be mapped out and represented through conscious, calculative thought.⁵² Under this interpretive

⁴³ *OTL* §84.

⁴⁴ *TI* "'Reason' in Philosophy" §5.

⁴⁵ *WP* §481 (eKGWB/NF-1886,7[60]).

⁴⁶ *TI* "'Reason' in Philosophy" §5 and *GS* §110.

⁴⁷ *GS* §121.

⁴⁸ *TI* "'Reason' in Philosophy" §5. See also *HH* "Man Alone with Himself" §515, §519; *TI* "'Reason' in Philosophy" §2.

⁴⁹ *WP* §480 (eKGWB/NF-1888,14[122]).

⁵⁰ *TI* "'Reason' in Philosophy" §4. I have used Kaufmann's translation here from *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin, 1976), 481. To be sure, the pragmatist account is not the only line of thinking that leads Nietzsche to these thoughts. See, for example, my comment on Nietzsche's radical Kantian-esque psychologism in footnote 39 of this chapter.

⁵¹ Alan D. Schrift looks at the way Nietzsche's ideas have been "used and abused" by central French thinkers in *Nietzsche's French Legacy: A Genealogy of Poststructuralism* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

⁵² Here, of course, we can include the heady interpretations of Derrida (see, for example, *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*, trans. Barbara Harlow [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978]; and "Otobiographies: The Teaching of Nietzsche and the Politics of the Proper Name," in *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation*, trans. Avital Ronell [New York: Schocken Books, 1985], 3–38); Sarah Kofman (*Nietzsche and Metaphor*, trans. Duncan Large [London: Athlone, (1972)

regime, Nietzsche's perspectivism is not assimilative but disjunctive. Instead of accruing different but complementary angles that add up to a congruous account of the same object, the focus here is on perspectives as the different contextual framings which condition our perceptions, potentially producing radically incongruous apprehensions of (what we take to be) the same thing, with there being no stable ground or ultimate truth upon which to logically arbitrate our different interpretations.⁵³ Facing the problem of how such a deep incision into thinking cuts at Nietzsche's own philosophical claims and positions, in severe postmodernist readings, Nietzsche's texts tend to be treated as an extended ironic demonstration of not-saying, with Nietzsche taken to anticipate the decentring, disruptive techniques of postmodern deconstruction. In response to such de-theorisation, the interpreter is urged to view Nietzsche's text as an artwork that does not didactically inform, but rather inspires their own anti-authorial-truth-getting interpretation.⁵⁴

Against these readings—and, indeed, against the analysis I have offered above—it is often claimed that this radical nihilism is only heard in “On Truth and Lies,” and thus only reflects the views of early Nietzsche. However, I will put this aside for now, as this issue will be responded to in Chapter Five when we discuss the interpretive disadvantages of the analytic approach.

Jaspers' Reading of Nietzsche on Truth and Method: An Incorporative Approach

Having observed both Nietzsche's pro-truth and anti-truth commitments (and the way they are taken up by the analytic and postmodernist camps respectively), we will now see how Jaspers' existential hermeneutic approach in *NIUPA* not only maps out these contrasting vistas, but shows us the sublimity of this conflict-ridden view. Acknowledging that “Nietzsche's various reflections as he seeks to discover what it means to be true can scarcely be brought into a single

1993]); and Luce Irigaray (*Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*, trans. Gillian C. Gill [New York: Columbia University Press, (1980) 1991]). At the edge of this list we can place Foucault and Deleuze (who, for different reasons, sit closer to the poststructuralist side of the poststructuralist/postmodernist divide)—though as I will argue later, there are no pure, uncompromised postmodernists. For a survey of writings in the New Nietzsche movement, see David B. Allison's *The New Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), and Alan Schrift's *Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation: Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction* (New York: Routledge, 1990), Chapters 3 and 4.

⁵³ While analytic interpreters generally use *GM* III §12 to set up their form of perspectivism, the postmodernists derive their radical interpretation from quotes like the following: “There are many kinds of eyes ... and consequently there are many kinds of ‘truths,’ and consequently there is no truth” (*WP* §540 [eKGWB/NF-1885,34(230)]). See also, for example, *GS* §374 and *WP* §606 (eKGWB/NF-1885,2[174]).

⁵⁴ As Allison writes in his compelling introduction to *The New Nietzsche*, for the interpreter, “the Nietzschean text becomes something to be ingested, digested, transformed, and transfigured” (xxiv).

systematic order,”⁵⁵ Jaspers traces out a rough, semi-chronological narrative map of Nietzsche’s thoughts on truth, thus producing an impressionistic, heuristic account that is flexible and unrestrictive, though more systematic and contentful than Kaufmann and others have credited him for.

Like Kaufmann, Jaspers conveys, with full force, Nietzsche’s (at times) unequivocal commitment to *scientific method*. Nietzsche promotes “certainty rather than persuasion,” he writes, and “the cogency of well-founded truth.”⁵⁶ Providing a spread of quotations from the early to late works, he tells us of Nietzsche’s stated regard for “the tedious, sure, and enduring truths,”⁵⁷ of his love of reason and “intellectual conscience,”⁵⁸ and of his proclaimed devotion to method as an “unbiased approach to reality.”⁵⁹ Jaspers also presents here the *traditional empiricist* thesis put forward by Kaufmann, where Nietzsche is shown to advocate for a piecemeal, empirically grounded approach as an alternative to metaphysics. Speaking on Nietzsche’s behalf (but also reflecting his own commitments), Jaspers writes that science “does not lose itself in absolute knowledge,” and instead “destroys every kind of absolute knowledge in order to replace it by the unchallenged possession of a determinate knowledge of particulars with which it can accomplish something within the world.”⁶⁰

Remaining sensitive to Nietzsche’s multifarious philosophical thought, however, Jaspers does not close down the interpretation here, as the Kaufmann-analytic programme does, but follows the countercurrents that run against this scientific stream—avoiding, in this way, the warping effect of over-indication. Thus, on the Jasperian tour of Nietzsche’s theory (or theories) of truth, we see that while Nietzsche “decisively takes his stand on scientific ground”—a ground that seems “sufficiently firm to satisfy the passion for truth”—he will, with the same “passion for truth,” follow sceptical lines of enquiry which send fault lines ripping through this bedrock, breaking up this stable foundation.⁶¹ While Nietzsche’s “struggle for the truth constantly presupposes truth as something self-evident,” “time and again he allows [truth] to reach a precipice” and cascade over itself to form deep speculative pools of anti-truth.⁶²

Not just looking across the pro-/anti-truth divide, the openness of Jaspers’ interpretive approach also grants him the ability to survey the diversity of experimental hypotheses contained within the sceptical side of Nietzsche’s thought. While interpreters generally want to present *the* argument motivating Nietzsche’s anti-truth position, Jaspers—sensitive as he is to Nietzsche’s experimental and multi-linear ‘streams of thought’—can present Nietzsche’s

⁵⁵ NIUPA, 171.

⁵⁶ NIUPA, 172.

⁵⁷ NIUPA, 172 (HH “Of First and Last Things” §3).

⁵⁸ NIUPA, 215 (GS §2).

⁵⁹ NIUPA, 174 (A §54).

⁶⁰ NIUPA, 172.

⁶¹ NIUPA, 172.

⁶² NIUPA, 201.

manifold critiques of truth, treating each with hermeneutic impartiality, i.e., treating one as equally attributable to Nietzsche as another.

Thus, in Jaspers' detailed mapping, we are presented with Nietzsche's Kantian-inspired anxiety that science cannot get at how things really are—i.e., that “thought, following the threads of causality,” fails to “[reach] into the most profound depths of being.”⁶³ So, too, are we taken on an exploration of Nietzsche's intertwining forms of pragmatism, where, whether through a historicising of truth, a reduction of truth to body/society/environment, or an analysis of language, etc., he arrives at the view that “all categories of thought are illusions necessary for life.”⁶⁴ In a related line of thought, Jaspers escorts us through Nietzsche's complex mytho-genealogy which traces the will to truth back to Christian-ascetic morality,⁶⁵ and also picks up on Nietzsche's concern from the *Genealogy* that science is subordinate to philosophy—a view that, if we feel it is not adequately explicated by Nietzsche's various iterations of the idea, we can back up through Jaspers' Kantian critique of science from Chapter Two, where, since rational enquiry is restricted to the empirical realm, scientific enquiry necessarily cannot find for itself a non-contingent, all-encompassing, self-illuminating ground.⁶⁶ Throughout the study, Jaspers also isolates three (not altogether concordant) variants of perspectivism: (i) a bare-basics form, where the consideration that “there are many kinds of eyes ... and hence many kinds of ‘truths’” leads to an immediate cliff-jump into the thought “that there is no truth”;⁶⁷ (ii) a communal-pragmatist version, where, like Jaspers' modal category of *Dasein* (or existence), “[t]ruth is that which our conventional social code accepts as effective in promoting the purposes of the group”;⁶⁸ and (iii) an existentially crucial philosophical form, where, as preliminary preparation for existential knowing, “[t]he philosopher must, at one time or another, have traversed every stage, have risked every attitude and experience, have occupied every standpoint, and have availed himself of every expression.”⁶⁹

⁶³ *NIUPA*, 176 (*BT* §15).

⁶⁴ *NIUPA*, 211. We should note that—with a caution necessitated by the politics of his time—Jaspers is hesitant to carry this pragmatism through to Nietzsche's will to power conclusion, lessening Nietzsche's equation of truth with power to a softer relation of ‘involvement,’ where “[w]ithin the objective world, [truth] is dependent upon an established and authoritative power that permits or hinders its communication; within the subjectivity of the individual, it relies upon the provocative will to power of the thinker” (*NIUPA*, 194).

⁶⁵ *NIUPA*, 209–11, 214. Strictly speaking, one may argue that this claim is not necessarily terminal for truth. However, in its atemporal form—as the assertion that science is a metaphysical (i.e., religious) faith—it is more obviously undermining.

⁶⁶ *NIUPA*, 176–77.

⁶⁷ *NIUPA* 186, quoting *WP* §540 (eKGWB/NF-1885,34[230]).

⁶⁸ *NIUPA*, 187.

⁶⁹ *NIUPA*, 182. This echoes Nietzsche's words in *BGE* §211: “Perhaps the philosopher has had to be a critic and a skeptic and a dogmatist and historian and, moreover, a poet and collector and traveler and guesser of riddles and moralist and seer and ‘free spirit’ and practically everything, in order to run through the range of human values and value feelings and *be able* to gaze with many eyes and consciences from the heights into every distance, from the depths up to every height, from the corner onto every expanse” (emphasis in original).

We should pause to note a crucial difference here between the Jasperian and postmodernists' understanding of Nietzsche's contradictoriness. On the one hand, from Jaspers' view, Nietzsche is contradictory in a content-applied sense: he is contradictory on a topic (here, the topic of truth) in that he states (at different times) *both* a *genuine commitment to truth* (and rationality, and scientific method, etc.) and a *genuine commitment against truth* (and rationality, and scientific method, etc.). On the other hand, for the postmodernist, Nietzsche is contradictory in a one-sided, 'set position' sense: here he is presented as *only following truth-rejecting lines of thought*, as *only genuinely holding anti-truth* (anti-rationality, anti-science) positions, as *only celebrating the contradictoriness of becoming* and the deconstructive power of asserted oppositions, etc. Thus, we should observe that Jaspers' reading does not just result in a more open surveying of Nietzsche's thoughts in comparison to the account offered by the sceptically oriented postmodernist, but it actually attributes a deeper, more contradictory contradictoriness to Nietzsche: On the Jasperian view, it is accepted that Nietzsche flips between *genuine* truth-accepting and *genuine* truth-rejecting positions. For the postmodernist, however, if these pro-truth, pro-science statements are reported at all, they are treated as ironic (surface) demonstrations used by Nietzsche to establish the deeper *consistent* theoretical position of anti-truthism (and celebration of contradiction, etc.) that he continually holds.⁷⁰

Just as we saw in our multiple analyses of Nietzsche's rejections of truth above, for Jaspers, Nietzsche finds that when we look at our cognitive faculty through the naturalised scientific framework, a blunting of reason occurs, leaving us with the devastating thought that if "*truth has its being within life*" (i.e., if it is reduced), then it loses its inherent indubitableness and presents as illusion.⁷¹ Thus, Jaspers writes, "[t]he passionate will to truth understood itself, but

⁷⁰ To help understand the distinction I am making here, we can think of the difference that holds between the following two people. On the one hand, we have Person 1, who on Monday genuinely believes and expresses the following views: 'I believe in truth,' 'I think we should be rational and logical, not irrational and illogical,' 'I respect and apply the principle of non-contradiction'; and on Tuesday, genuinely believes and expresses the following views: 'I do not believe in truth,' 'I think we should not be rational and logical, but irrational and illogical,' 'I do not respect and apply the principle of non-contradiction.' On the other hand, in contrast to this, we have Person 2 who says the following on Monday and *on every day*: 'I do not believe in truth,' 'I think we should be not be rational and logical, but irrational and illogical,' 'the principle of non-contradiction does not hold,' etc. Both people can be associated with contradictoriness: Person 1 is contradictory in the sense that, while at one time, they *genuinely* assert 'I believe in truth,' 'I apply the principle of non-contradiction,' etc., at another time, they *genuinely* assert the opposite ('I do not believe in truth,' 'I do not apply the principle of non-contradiction,' etc.). Person 2, however, is contradictory in the sense that, *at all times*, they *genuinely* assert that they do not believe in truth and do not apply the principle of non-contradiction. Essentially, Jaspers sees Nietzsche to be contradictory in the way Person 1 is contradictory, while the postmodern interpreter takes Nietzsche to be like Person 2 who holds a *consistent commitment* to contradiction and the irrational. To take the example further, for the postmodernist, Person 2 is actually heard to say 'I do apply the principle of non-contradiction,' but rather than hearing this statement as a genuine expression of Person 2's oscillating views on contradiction (as per Person 1), the postmodernist then takes this pro-rational assertion as a *non-genuine*, ironic statement made by Person 2 to demonstrate their genuine, *consistently held commitment to contradictoriness and irrationalism*.

⁷¹ NIUPA, 219.

in such a way that it constantly had to see itself disappear into something alien to truth.”⁷² As the “[p]assionate demand for unlimited truth ... turns on itself and calls itself into question,” “that in which truthfulness consists becomes a threat to the truth,”⁷³ leaving Nietzsche with the startling view that ‘truth is error.’

Looking into this abyss of contradictions, staring back at Nietzsche is the problem of self-reference, where, to quote Maudemarie Clark, “[i]f it is supposed to be true that there is no truth, then there is apparently a truth after all; and if it is not supposed to be true, it seems that we have no reason to take it seriously, that is, accept it or its alleged implications.”⁷⁴ Unlike contemporary analytic interpreters who view this absurdity as evidence of philosophical negligence and try to avoid the conclusion at all costs,⁷⁵ Jaspers is able to listen here, tuning in to *Beyond Good and Evil* §22 where Nietzsche writes: “Granted, this is only an interpretation too—and you will be eager enough to make this objection?—well then, so much the better.”⁷⁶ Indeed, instead of turning away to avoid the contradiction, Jaspers dives into the thought, providing us with a complex and deeply insightful analysis: “When knowledge undertakes to know knowledge”⁷⁷ and we lose the “subsisting realm of truth,”⁷⁸ the paradox arises that “even what we are now saying about what is true must itself be dubious,” and we get trapped in the circle of self-reference (where if it is true that ‘truth is false,’ then this claim that ‘truth is false’ is false, in which case truth is true, in which case the claim that ‘truth is false’ is true, in which case truth is false, in which case this claim that ‘truth is false’ is false, etc.).⁷⁹ Flung around and around in this thinking, we can try to find our feet by either dismissing the whole thought on account of its untenability, or somehow accepting it by finding some truthfulness in the paradoxical affair. Thus, Jaspers writes, on the one hand, we “may proceed to ask whether the consequences of this insightful self-overcoming of truth must mean the end of the search” so that the “search ... for truth is to be put completely out of mind as though it had never occurred”⁸⁰ (i.e., we do not think about it), in which case “the self-overcoming is final and the truth founders”;⁸¹ or we gravitate towards the truth-attaining aspect of the thought—not in the “vacu[ous]” and “lifeless” sense of a “rationalistic formalism” that grabs hold of “a newly gained indubitably fixed point” upon which to “[establish] a new system of truth,” but in a

⁷² NIUPA, 219.

⁷³ NIUPA, 201.

⁷⁴ Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 3.

⁷⁵ See, for example, Clark, 3–4; and Anderson, “Nietzsche’s Views on Truth and the Kantian Background of his Epistemology,” in *Nietzsche, Epistemology, and Philosophy of Science: Nietzsche and the Sciences II*, ed. Babette E. Babich (Dordrecht: Springer, 1999): 47–48.

⁷⁶ See also *D* §553; *BGE* §188 and §296.

⁷⁷ NIUPA, 189.

⁷⁸ NIUPA, 185.

⁷⁹ NIUPA, 189.

⁸⁰ NIUPA, 189–90.

⁸¹ NIUPA, 189.

gentler sense, yielding to the paradox through a personal appreciation of our situation⁸²—in this case, through a glimpsing of the fundamental, antinomical impossibility of thought that grounds all of our thinking. It is this sensitive awareness of (truthful but incomprehensible) breakdown that Jaspers is alluding to when he speaks of *transcendence* and *existential* awareness:

[Nietzsche's] thoughts about truth, since they deny what is required for their formulation, must run into incessant contradictions. Such thoughts would be nothing more than a nonsensical confusion, did they not enable us to experience limits that can be revealed only indirectly. When the concepts which his theory of truth generates attain these limits, we experience the fulfillment of the kind of thinking that unavoidably uses even contradictions as indirect indicators. His theory is not a theory about a given state of affairs; it is a philosophical means of expressing first the existential appeal to the essential truth born by essential life and, second, the possibility of a life-transcending intimate awareness of being.⁸³

Appreciating the unique, *intellectual-emotional* quality of the existential thought is paramount. Although it starts as a neutral intellectual knowing such-and-such, it becomes a thought that is meaningful and personally moving; a thought that touches us through the reflective self-awareness of our strange incapacitation; a thought that stirs in us an emotional appreciation of the strangeness of our being. Here the contradiction we hit is not resolvable, but—as an honest, humbling Socratic understanding of our not understanding—it is valuable.

Conclusion

Bringing this chapter to a close, I would like to gather up the important advantages of Jaspers' existential-experimental approach that we have observed over the course of this chapter. Following the Jasperian method, we are given a means to travel with Nietzsche through conflicting modal portals, allowing us to cross into and explore unfamiliar and uncomfortable philosophical territory. Far from an appropriation, we have seen multiple examples of the way Nietzsche's critical inquiries into truth function as Jasperian limit-situations, revealing the deep fissures that run across our modern naturalistic landscape. In setting out with a preparedness for the contradictoriness and complexity of Nietzsche's writings, the Jasperian method avoids the problem of over-indication and comfortable narrative-laying that we find in Kaufmann's approach. Attention needs to be paid to this hermeneutic practice, for—as we will see in more detail in the next chapter—it is a practice that is commonly applied in contemporary analytic work. So, too, does Jaspers' approach help us to avoid the superficial theory-based reading of contradiction offered by the postmodernists. Again, this is an issue we will explore in the next chapter, for it alerts us to a doctrinal tendency rife in this form of contemporary Nietzsche interpretation. Finally, by honestly charting out Nietzsche's antinomical positions and

⁸² NIUPA, 190.

⁸³ NIUPA, 190.

“enter[ing] into [their] movement,”⁸⁴ Jaspers gently guides us into the contradiction that charges the paradox of self-reference, allowing us to experience, with Nietzsche, the rejection of truth as an existential event and an invaluable (negative) disclosure of self.

⁸⁴ *NIUPA*, 8.

Additional Advantages of the Jasperian Approach: Modality, Existential Artistry, and the Dangers of Contemporary Interpretation

Introduction

If we are to judge our competing Kaufmannian and Jasperian interpretations on a basic hermeneutic level, i.e., in terms of their ability to survey and accurately present *what it is that Nietzsche said* to the reader, then it is clear that we should favour Jaspers' approach. But as well as providing us with this basic standard of accurate reporting, there are additional advantages to Jaspers' reading which, in this final chapter, I would like to discuss. To begin with, I will suggest that like Jaspers, Nietzsche (intermittently) took a meta-reflective view of reality as a modal construction, and that—in appreciating this—we can find a deeper understanding of Nietzsche's characterisation of philosophy as an act of laughter and play, and can bring into focus his perplexing claim that “science loves error because being alive—it loves life!” Following this, I will show how the existential movement we observed in Jaspers' philosophical schema can be traced out in Nietzsche's work, guiding us towards a new reading of *aestheticisation as affirmation*. Finally, I would like to gather up our findings from this study and bring them to bear on contemporary hermeneutic practice, demonstrating the way we can use the strengths of Jaspers' method to counter certain pernicious tendencies that have settled into contemporary analytic and postmodernist interpretations.

Additional Advantages: Modality in Nietzsche's Thought

From our study of Nietzsche on truth in the previous chapter, we saw that Nietzsche philosophises by thinking through oppositional frameworks. But Jaspers' analysis shows us that Nietzsche did not just take up contradictory positions in his philosophical investigations, but seems—at least in moments—to express a meta-view of reality that is very much like Jaspers' modal Encompassing outlined in Chapter Two. To recapitulate, in Jaspers' vision, we engage with the world (both implicitly and explicitly) through different, fundamental frameworks (i.e., modalities) that together make up our experience of reality. Thus we might, for example, consider ourselves in one moment as a physical organism, at another as a rationally and/or

spiritually endowed person; we might regard our/another's behaviour as causally compelled or the mindfully driven acts of a self-responsible being; looking at the natural world, we might see it as inanimate stuff, as mere material to be harvested for our consumption, or if we stand back to see its majesty, it might move us and seem full of meaning. Although we consciously or unconsciously flip between these frameworks (and can—if we are wise—consciously or intuitively gauge their appropriateness), ultimately, they are undecidable: there is no way we could ever intellectually establish any one of these frameworks as *the* correct view of the world. Indeed, to try to live through and insist upon a single modal outlook will falsify and degrade our actual experience: if one insists that the only legitimate framework for viewing the world is the naturalised, deterministic framework of science or the spiritualised-ethicalised framework of religion, then one is not only a poor observer of one's actual way of being, but—in trying to artificially live up to this unattainable and oftentimes dehumanising standard—one will vitiate the quality of one's life.

There are moments in Nietzsche's work when he seems to express a similar view. Prefiguring the Jasperian categories of Consciousness in General (rational-logical objective thinking) and Spirit in *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche speaks to his Romantically inclined generation of the need to employ the oppositional framework of science in order to relax their sentimental overwroughtness: while “[w]e have Christianity, the philosophers, poets, musicians to thank for an abundance of profound sensations,” he writes, “we must conjure up the spirit of science, which on the whole makes one somewhat colder and more sceptical and in especial cools down the fiery stream of belief.” Indeed, the deployment of the scientific framework is a means to avoid the “universal danger” of shell-like thinking that takes place when this culture of the profound is overly indulged and dogmatically takes over.¹

Jaspers comments on this passage, and, understanding the scope and volatility of Nietzsche's writings, he sees this as a contrapuntal move: “If Nietzsche ... insists that to prevent these experiences from proliferating too wildly ‘we must invoke the scientific spirit ... still he will never renounce this ground of all knowledge.’”² Indeed, it is not hard to confirm this hypothesis—as we have seen in the previous chapter, we find it implicitly in Nietzsche's questioning of the value of science that repeats throughout his work. But we can find it more *explicitly* in the pages of Nietzsche's next publication, *The Gay Science*, where the modern is now told to apply the artistic view as the counterbalance to science.

Our ultimate gratitude to art.—Had we not approved of the arts and invented this type of cult of the untrue, the insight into general untruth and mendacity that is now given to us by science ...

¹ *HH* “Tokens of Higher and Lower Culture” §244. See also *HH* “On the History of the Moral Sensations” §38.

² *NIUPA*, 196.

would be utterly unbearable. *Honesty* would lead to nausea and suicide. But now our honesty has a counterforce that helps us avoid such consequences: art, as the *good* will to appearance.³

Moving through to book five of this work, we find a particularly pronounced expression of this modal consciousness in aphorism 373, which we briefly commented on in Chapter Four. Nauseating is “the faith” of the “materialistic natural scientist”; “deserving of contempt” is their belief “in a world ... that can be grasped entirely with the help of our four-cornered little human reason.”⁴ “[A]n essentially mechanistic world would be an essentially meaningless world!” he writes. “Suppose one judged the value of a piece of music according to how much of it could be counted, calculated, and expressed in formulas—how absurd such a ‘scientific’ evaluation of music would be! What would one have comprehended, understood, recognised? Nothing, really nothing of what is ‘music’ in it!”

Here we have an especially close articulation of the Jaspersian view of modal reality. Although we want to reduce reality to a single framework, and, indeed, we feel that it *should be entirely understandable* through the successful framework of natural science, we find that a qualitative layer (aspect, dimension, etc.) of the world cannot be captured and understood in this schema, and, regardless of our efforts, continues to skip out of view. Here we have the Nietzschean version of the Mary’s Room thought experiment which we briefly discussed in relation to Jaspers’ limit-situations in Chapter Two.⁵ Just as we ask what Mary will know about ‘red’ if it is described in scientific terms (as a number on a spectrum, as electromagnetic waves, etc.), so does Nietzsche ask “what would one have comprehended, understood, recognised” of music if it is “counted” and “calculated” and “expressed in formulas.” And just as we intuit that Mary will lack that all-essential phenomenal appreciation of the colour red, we similarly conclude along with Nietzsche that, in the case of a scientific description of music, one would have comprehended “nothing of what is music in it.”

As well as registering the modal tension between science and art, Nietzsche also demonstrates an awareness of the oppositional frameworks of *scientific enquiry*, on the one hand, and *existential* (or *philosophical*) thought, on the other. To appreciate this, we can think back through Jaspers’ loose dialectical account of Nietzsche’s theories of truth in the study from our previous chapter. In the first place, Nietzsche is seen to endorse our scientific, truth-seeking, rational-logical thought. Nietzsche then takes this rational-scientific form of thinking, lays it out in front of himself, and starts reflecting on the nature of this thinking, challenging its truthfulness and its production of facts. In doing so, he has switched to a philosophical mode of thought, and what he (and we) find is that when we look through the philosophical modal

³ GS §107.

⁴ There is, in fact, another set of modal options considered by Nietzsche in this aphorism: the optimistic Spencerian perspective that hopes to reconcile egoism and altruism (i.e., establish the existence of altruism), and the naturalised, de-moralised position that Nietzsche (inconsistently) takes.

⁵ Jackson, “Epiphenomenal Qualia,” 127–36.

framework, the truth and logicity we are studying collapse in on themselves, losing their inherent sense of indubitableness, now appearing as though they must be errors. In this anxiety-provoking limit-situation, we cannot just rest (happily or unhappily enough) with the conclusion that ‘truths are errors,’ for if we think about this thought, we get sucked down into that paradoxical, self-referential whirlpool where ‘if truth is error, then the claim that truth is error is false, which means truths are not errors,’ etc. Here Jaspers takes our hand and guides us through the choppy and chaotic waters of Nietzsche’s writings to one of the most valuable understandings we can have about Nietzsche’s work. What Jaspers wants to communicate to us, I believe, is that by going through the process of foundering upon the rocks of limit-situations (i.e., philosophising), Nietzsche realises that the ‘truths’ which result from philosophical reflection on truth (“[t]ruth[s] in the form of insight into the illusoriness of all truth”) have a negative force, and are utterly *annihilating and paralysing*.⁶ In other words, philosophical thinking—in its meta-reflective form—leads to the end of thought. Thus, as Jaspers writes, “[t]he nature of philosophic insight into the truth itself ... is not meant to spring from life itself, for it is a philosophic suspension over life. What from this elevation is seen to be true is not the truth of life, and what is true in this life is, from this point of view, illusion.”⁷

The first point we—as post-postmoderns—must take from Jaspers’ insight here is that it is *in this mood of reflective philosophical paralysis and despair* that Nietzsche makes his claims about the need for laughter, play, and dancing in philosophical reflection. Hearing that Zarathustra “laughed with ... creative lightning”⁸ and that the ideal philosopher-spirit “plays naively” and “dances,”⁹ interpreters have taken Nietzsche to advocate for breezy light-heartedness and a playful disregard for logic as the starting-point attitudes for philosophical enquiry. But following Jaspers’ schema, we see that these are reactive states: Nietzsche does not sit down to his philosophy with the easy pre-set view that he can say whatever he wants because philosophy is a light-hearted dance and play of truth, but he ends up acknowledging and enacting truth’s play and dance having earnestly (though, not at all times that logically and systematically) worked through truth-seeking philosophical questioning that inevitably breaks down.¹⁰ Similarly, the ‘laughter’ referred to in his work is not an empty (and decadent) jocularly but an ironic end-point, functioning as an “expression of this truth that cannot be communicated,”¹¹ conveying the speechless silence we fall into when, through truthful questioning, we reach our paradoxical rejection of truth, arriving at that “boundless truth within

⁶ NIUPA, 221.

⁷ NIUPA, 198.

⁸ TSZ III “The Seven Seals” §3.

⁹ GS §381, §382.

¹⁰ NIUPA, 220–27.

¹¹ NIUPA, 220.

which everything seems reduced to nothing.”¹² Validating this tragic-comic reading, Jaspers points out some of the symbolic codifications of these ironic indications embedded in Nietzsche’s work: e.g., the playful representation of philosophical knowledge as a descent into death and darkness in the labyrinth (““We have a *peculiar curiosity about the Labyrinth*, and we are taking pains to make the acquaintance of Mr. Minotaur””),¹³ the cryptic dialogue between the old man and Pyrrho, where Pyrrho reasons his way to the position that it is through silence and laughter that he can best carry out his philosophising;¹⁴ and, of course, the vertiginous metaphorical journeyings of Zarathustra, whose manic laughter is the expression of one “transfigured” and “transformed.”¹⁵

Importantly, too, Jaspers can use this appreciation of the utter untenability of philosophical reflection to provide a contextualisation for Nietzsche’s ambivalent concession that ‘error is required for life’ delivered in the cryptic passage from *Beyond Good and Evil* below:

Until now, science could arise only on this solidified, granite foundation of ignorance, the will to know rising up on the foundation of a much more powerful will, the will not to know, to uncertainty, to untruth! ... [N]ow and then we still realize what is happening, and laugh about how it is precisely the best science that will best know how to keep us in this simplified, utterly artificial, well-invented, well-falsified world, how unwillingly willing science loves error because, being alive,—it loves life!¹⁶

Read as an expression of modal meta-awareness, this passage comes into focus. While we generally accept ‘truths’ as they inherently seem to us (i.e., as indubitable, inviolable), we are reminded (“now and then”) through *philosophical reflection* that they are not as we take them to be, that science “*can only arise*” on a “foundation of ignorance” and “the powerful will to untruth.” Along with this, however, in stating that “science loves error *because it loves life*,”¹⁷ Nietzsche also indicates an ironic appreciation of the fact that this philosophical truth (viz., the truth that reveals truth to be error) is itself paradoxical and fundamentally untenable, pushing us back to the errorful “truths of life” which give us positive intellectual traction in the world. As Jaspers puts it, “Nietzsche holds that a known world is a condition of life.”¹⁸ Thus, two states

¹² *NIUPA*, 219–20.

¹³ *NIUPA*, 226. “We are Hyperboreans” from Nietzsche’s late notebooks (eKGBW/NF-1888,23[3]), emphasis in original.

¹⁴ *WS* §213.

¹⁵ *NIUPA*, 220. See *TSZ* III “On the Vision and the Riddle” §2. Variations of these pairings recur with frequency throughout Nietzsche’s work: See, for example, *GS* §107 (“laughing and crying at ourselves”); *TSZ* II “The Child with the Mirror” (“my happiness has wounded me”); *BGE* §224 (“We are only in our bliss when we are in the greatest *danger*”). This dynamic is strongly emphasised in Salomé’s analysis: in her assessment, the “seriousness of life” (*BT*, “Preface to Richard Wagner”) intensifies into symphonic destruction as Nietzsche searches for philosophical self-understanding. Always for Nietzsche, she writes, “health was gained by means of sickness, true worship by means of illusion; and, self-assertion and uplifting by means of self-wounding” (*Nietzsche*, 24). For an alternative reading of the way a consciousness of limits forms a connection between tragedy and comedy in Nietzsche’s writings, see Hatab, “Laughter in Nietzsche’s Thought,” 67–79.

¹⁶ *BGE* §24. See also *BGE* §4; *WP* §609 (eKGBW/NF-1884,26[294]).

¹⁷ Emphasis mine.

¹⁸ *NIUPA*, 191.

are open to us: On the one hand, we cannot help but find ourselves operating much of the time via a framework that utilises rational thought and the laws of logic, unreflectively assuming that they are as they seem to us when we apply them—i.e., self-evidently, indubitably true. On the other hand, just as rationally and legitimately, we are able to look through a philosophical framework, where the truths of life appear to us as errors, and the reasoning mind, unable to validate itself, temporarily short-circuits. While we can actively think through to this paralysing scepticism, however, it is not sustainable: though we have revealed to ourselves (and can remind ourselves) that truths are errors, we are compelled through cognitive necessity (in Nietzsche's poetics—our 'love of life') to return to our state of active rational truth acceptance and application.¹⁹

To really grasp the modal nature of Nietzsche's thinking here, we must pay attention to the temporal and tonal indications in the passage. In terms of temporality, we should note that it is only "now and then" that "we ... realize what is happening," implying that most of the time we go about in our fallen everyday state where we apply our logical-rational truth structures with happy unreflective acceptance, only pulling ourselves out to see this as a "falsified," "artificial" construction in the exceptional state of philosophical questioning. Providing us with a tonal indication that validates our previous point, Nietzsche writes that when we come to this realisation, we laugh, which is to say that we knowingly laugh at this paradoxical stalemate and at the recognition of our own modal switching: we laugh when we see that to be a living, cognising (and indeed philosophising) human being, we are just as unable to do without truth, reason and rationality as we are unable to find a secure, self-validating base upon which to ground them; we laugh at the thought that in our truthfulness, we are pulled towards the dissolution of truth, and in our dissolution of truth, we are pulled back toward truthfulness; and we laugh at the absurdity of the fact that if we are to think and speak with any assertive force, it must be with a commitment to the logical, rational, conceptual forms which, in a very different, philosophically reflective mode, we can paradoxically, and temporarily, turn in on themselves, so that they (just as reasonably) appear disbanded.

¹⁹ This self-reflexive recognition of modality is expressed by Nietzsche through other subtle indications. It can be heard, for example, in his rejection of reason in *Twilight of the Idols*: "the prejudice of reason forces us to posit unity, identity, permanence, substance, cause, thinghood, being, [thus] *we see ourselves somehow caught in error, compelled into error*. So certain are we, on the basis of rigorous examination, that this is where the error lies" ("Reason in Philosophy" §5, emphasis mine). Here, the indefinite "somehow" in the claim "we see ourselves somehow caught in error" conveys a meta-reflective incredulosity at the view we reach through the questioning philosophical perspective (i.e., 'it must be rejected, but it cannot be rejected!'). Similarly, the ineluctability of reason is expressed by Nietzsche in his well-known comment that "rational thought is interpretation according to a scheme that we cannot throw off" (WP §522 [eKGWB/NF-1886,5(22)]).

Additional Advantages: Nietzsche's Existential Artistry and Affirmation

If philosophical reflection on truth leads only to a dead-end in one's thinking, yielding an untenable, unsustainable view of truth (if the nullifying effect of these "lifeless but true ideas" push us back to "truth in the limited form that it always assumes within *actual life*"), then we might believe that such thinking cannot possibly have any value.²⁰ But here the Jaspersian path to existentialism which we laid out in Chapter Two comes into play, helping us to understand that it is precisely this reflective-state-ending-in-cognitive-impasse that has extraordinary emotional-intellectual value for us.

For Jaspers, as we saw, given our transcendental limitation, certain rational trains of thought (thoughts of the philosophically integrative kind where we strive for a complete, comprehensive understanding) are guaranteed to end in antinomic stalemates or paradoxical loops ('limit-situations'). But this failure is informative of who we are: realising our limits is a moment of intimate self-disclosure. The activity provides (moments of) existential awakening, when we become aware of the human predicament and the unfathomableness of our situation. Through such awareness, our philosophical reflections enliven us. Having had such thoughts, a hinging takes place where we lose the 'taken-for-grantedness' of being alive in the world, and what was previously experienced as flat and one-dimensional is now imbued with (or emits) a significance.

Once we explicate this movement in Jaspers' thought, we can see the way this same movement unfurls in Nietzsche's writings on truth, providing a beautiful integrity to his work, helping us elucidate his ambiguous notion of 'life as art.'²¹ If upon reflection, Nietzsche finds that "being is simply the illusory," and he is unable to go anywhere with this thought except to circle down into the paradox of self-reference, "still," Jaspers tells us, "the fact that, at the boundary, [truth's] illusoriness is apparent, *transforms [his] entire consciousness of being*."²² While these thoughts do not successfully formulate into a base for positive theory-building, they do fundamentally alter his experience of the world. Just like our existential explorer in

²⁰ NIUPA, 199, emphasis mine.

²¹ References to, and calls for, the aestheticization of life are scattered throughout Nietzsche's work. They occur, of course, in *The Birth of Tragedy* where he writes, for example, that we need a "new art of metaphysical consolation" (§18) and that "existence and the world seem justified only as an aesthetic phenomenon" (§24; see also §5 and "Attempt at a Self Criticism" §5). So, too, is the idea strewn across the middle period works. Thus, to give examples from *The Gay Science*, he writes that "we want to be the poets of our lives" (§299); that "one thing is needful ... a human being should attain satisfaction with himself—be it through this or that poetry or art" (§290); and that it is "[a]s an aesthetic phenomenon [that] existence is still *bearable* for us," with "art furnish[ing] us with the eye and hand and above all the good conscience to be able to make such a phenomenon of ourselves" (§107). Such quotes appear with frequency in the late period writings, too, including his notes from *The Will to Power*: e.g., "the grand style [is] no longer mere art but ... reality, truth, *life*" (A §59), and "the world [is] a work of art that gives birth to itself" (WP §796, NF-1885,2[114]).

²² NIUPA, 199, emphasis in original.

Chapter Two—who, having philosophised, experienced the world with a new textuality and dimensionality—we find this same form of world engagement communicated in Nietzsche’s writings. In the preface to the second edition of *The Gay Science*, for example, we find Nietzsche attempting to come to terms with the impossibility of metaphysically grounded truth not by asking us to carry out a dry empirical-rational accounting of the world (as Kaufmann and the analytics suggest), but rather by adopting the ‘profound superficiality’ of the Greeks, (re)appreciating the world through a voluptuous aestheticisation of one’s immediate surrounds.

We can no longer believe that the truth continues to be the truth when the veil is removed ... One should have more respect for the modest way in which nature has hidden herself behind riddles and multi-coloured uncertainties ... Oh these Greeks! They knew how to live accordingly: to do so, it was necessary to stop courageously at the surface, the draping, the skin and to worship appearance ... The Greeks were superficial—because profound.²³

Again, in aphorism 45, Nietzsche’s suffering (presumably both from physical illness and from “illnesses of severe suspicion” as specified in the preface²⁴) produces a kind of happiness that “cannot get enough of seeing the surface and [the] colourful, tender, quivering skin” of existence. Similarly, this poetic experiencing and ‘making palpable’ needs to be appreciated in Nietzsche’s call for the “nearest things.” Again, as Nietzsche turns his attention to the small things out of a need for intellectual humility, the world comes to life with an increased vibrancy. Stimulated by philosophical reflection, the things around him—the things of the mundane world which we barely see and usually take for granted—glow with a new significance; and he looks at them as though they were new and exotic museum items:

The insignificance of the source grows apace with insight into it. But the nearest things that are around us and in us gradually begin to show colour and splendour, mystery and richness of meaning beyond anything dreamed of in the past.²⁵

I believe, then, that it is often this theory-induced existential state of *heightened world engagement* that Nietzsche is describing when he speaks of—or offers discussions suggestive of—the aestheticization of life. Here, I think, we see a great interpretive opportunity open up. I began this study of truth and method by presenting Nietzsche as an existential-artist who utilises receptivity, fluidity and diaristic exploration as crucial aspects of his philosophical process (Chapter Three). I would like now to add one more procedural aspect to this view of Nietzsche as philosophical artist.

Applying the Jasperian existential template, what we can illuminate is an awareness of Nietzsche as someone who *looks at the world (and himself)* with the eye of the (post)modern visual artist.²⁶ I would like to emphasise that although we can, and should, go to Nietzsche’s

²³ *GS* Preface §4; *NIUPA*, 200.

²⁴ *GS* Preface §4.

²⁵ *D* §44; *NIUPA*, 200.

²⁶ The aestheticization of the everyday as a kind of enlivening runs through both the modernist and postmodernist movements. See Liesl Olson, *Modernism and the Ordinary* (Oxford: Oxford University

works to find *theories* that prefigure the postmodern (e.g., his anti-metaphysicalism and his critiques of rationality, which we have covered),²⁷ the prefiguring I am suggesting here is of a phenomenological kind: it is about the way Nietzsche—on a very basic level—*experienced* the world. What I want us to consider is that this aestheticising state which Nietzsche experiences and communicates to us (which we have identified through Jaspers’ analysis as the *existential state*) is very much like the experience of the (post)modernist who moves away from traditional idealisations, and sees the world of *the everyday*—of their immediate surrounds—as their art. When Nietzsche describes the “nearest things” of the mundane object-world shining out at him, he is looking at the physical world in front of him the way that Duchamp looks at a readymade, Andy Warhol looks at a Brillo box, or Tracey Emin looks at her unmade bed. Just as the artist explores the materiality of their surrounds through collage, assemblage, and even minimalist production, etc., Nietzsche—philosophically shaken out of complacent utility-gear world engagement—is drawn to the aesthetic ‘surface.’ Just as the (post)modernist transforms and transcends the gallery space, setting up installations and stepping outdoors to create natural earthworks and performance art, Nietzsche is captivated by natural and social environments. And just as modern and contemporary artists incorporate (their own or others’) organic acts, engagements, responses, emotions and bodies into their work, Nietzsche turns his attention to himself to artistically apprehend his own experiences and character.²⁸ Thus, it is as an open and endlessly curious artist that he both places himself before, and involves himself in, “the great visual and acoustic play that is life.”²⁹

This, of course, pushes us towards a more literal reading of Nietzsche’s enigmatic assertion that life should be treated as an artwork.³⁰ Although I want to be cautious not to apply this to all of Nietzsche’s discussions on this topic, I think this lived experiential dimension (as a

Press, 2009), 1–7; and Mike Featherstone, *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2007), 64–80. I use the terms ‘(post)modernist’ and ‘modernistic’ to indicate this crossover.

²⁷ See, for example, David Kornhaber, “‘The Art of Putting Oneself on Stage before Oneself’: Theatre, Selfhood, and Nietzsche’s Epistemology of the Actor,” *Theatre Research International* 36, no. 3 (2011): 240–53; Kirsten Voigt, “The Great Reason of the Body: Friedrich Nietzsche, Joseph Beuys and the Art of Giving Meaning to Matter and Earth,” *Tate Papers*, no. 32 (Autumn 2019), accessed 8 January, 2020, <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/32/nietzsche-beuys-giving-meaning-matter-earth>; and Julian Jason Haladyn, “On ‘The Creative Act,’” *Tout-Fait: The Marcel Duchamp Studies Online Journal of Duchamp*, <https://www.toutfait.com/on-the-creative-act/>.

²⁸ We can think here of movements that attempt to dissolve the line between art and artist, and between artist and audience, including the Dadaists, the Situationists, performance artists such as Allan Kaprow, and the Fluxus group. I want to stress that this is not about setting up a theoretical lineage between Nietzsche and (post)modern art (though we can, of course, carry out such studies). What I am trying to convey here is the idea that (sometimes) Nietzsche’s vague discussions that fall under the trope of ‘life as art’ are very much about an *experience* that Nietzsche (sometimes) had, with this experience being a way he—as a human being in the world—took in, or (quite literally) looked at, the world and himself at moments in his life.

²⁹ GS §301.

³⁰ See, for example, BT §5, §17, §18; D §191, §433; GS §3, §15, §59, §87, §107, §234, §276, §290, §301; TSZ III “Before Sunrise,” and “On the Mount of Olives”; GM III; and A §59.

breakdown of thought stimulating a qualitative shift in perception) lies behind many of Nietzsche's references to life as art.³¹

On the face of it, we may be tempted to think of this modernistic eye-casting model as the 'visual-art' equivalent of Nehamas' (Kaufmann-inspired) 'life as literature' reading, where instead of reading life and the world as a text, as Nehamas has it, we look at life and the world as an artwork.³² Indeed, on the surface, Nehamas' interpretation is very attractive for the creative, artistically inclined interpreter of Nietzsche—there being a certain romance to his ideas of a 'philology of the world' and the 'self as an artwork,' etc.³³ But I do not want to follow Nehamas here, for the way he has related Nietzsche's aesthetics to Nietzsche's general philosophical theories drains 'art' away from the interpretation. Indeed, as it turns out on close examination, Nehamas' project essentially involves explaining (logically sorting out) Nietzsche's various philosophical theories in terms of more theories, albeit *literary-themed* theories (i.e., "ideas and principles that apply ... to the literary situation").³⁴ Regrettably, I do not have the space to go into detail here, but to give a quick example, if Nietzsche's aestheticism functions to explain Nietzsche's theory of perspectivism (if the view that we can give the world different interpretations is taken to be fundamentally inspired by the fact that we can—and often do—give different readings of literary texts), then the 'art' in 'art of life' is deflated, with 'artistry' consisting of the fact that one merely interprets or experiences a certain thing differently from someone else. It is not wrong to point out this connection,³⁵ but if we do not find, along with this, a more buoyant meaning of Nietzsche's aestheticism, then we end up watching Nietzsche's art dissolve into mere theorising.

³¹ It is important to note this qualification I am making here, for I want to stress that this does not account for all of Nietzsche's discussions on the aestheticization of life. While it fits particularly well with certain of Nietzsche's discussions (e.g., *BT* §5; *GS* §107, and *WP* §818 [eKGWB/NF-1887,11(3)]), there are—as I will discuss—other ways that Nietzsche takes this thought, including the idea that aestheticization means 'creating ourselves' through a gardening of our drives (e.g., *GS* §290); or viewing bad aspects of life as necessary for the appreciation or experience of something better (e.g., *GS* §276); or as a social/cultural/political law-giving (e.g., *BGE* §211); or, indeed, as a basic cognitive ordering of the world (*GS* §109). I do not think, however, that this admission weakens my claim—rather, this qualification lends it credibility. Were this an analysis of a more conventional thinker, then we would be justified in looking for a relatively standardised definition. With Nietzsche, however, the fluidity of his philosophising means that we rarely find just a single thought contained under a set conceptual heading. Indeed, as I will show in the discussion that follows, we find a morphing of these ideas within the aphorisms themselves, so that even if they generally present as another form of aestheticization, they can sometimes blend into the form of 'life as art' that I am presenting.

³² Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985). In a fascinating tension with his scientific truth-seeking Nietzsche, Kaufmann's work also models Nietzsche as styler of self/world, influencing readings like Nehamas'. For Kaufmann, Nietzsche's ideal of the *Übermensch* was realised in Goethean-man. Representing the late-stage form of the Dionysian, Kaufmann tells us, Goethe was able to sublimate base animalistic drives into a productive artistic energy, "giv[ing] 'style' to himself" by "organiz[ing] the chaos of his passion" (*PPA*, 253).

³³ Nehamas, *Life as Literature*, 3.

³⁴ Nehamas, 3.

³⁵ This is, to be sure, *one of the ways* Nietzsche uses the idea of 'aestheticisation.' See, for example, *GS* §109.

Indeed, the way Nietzsche's sporadic endorsement of life as art is meant to reconcile with Nietzsche's work as a philosophical theoretician has been a major problem in Nietzsche studies more generally, rendering another major split in interpretive approaches (one related to, but often not aligned with, the division we have already explored between pro-truth and anti-truth camps). In this case, we find, on the one hand, interpreters who feel that what is important about Nietzsche's philosophy is not, primarily, his thinking through of conventional theoretical puzzles and problems, but rather his call for—and advice about—the use of philosophy as a means for artistic self-creation (often understood as the positive shaping of one's life through techniques of self-cultivation).³⁶ On the other hand, we find those who focus on the more conventional theoretical 'discourses' in Nietzsche's philosophy, often ignoring or downplaying these 'art as life' proclamations that recur throughout Nietzsche's writings.³⁷ With the understanding of 'life as art' I am proposing here, both 'philosophy as art' and 'philosophy as hard theoretical discourse' can be embraced and taken to share a deep relation without being conflated as Nehamas has done. On this reading, Nietzsche's aestheticisation is deeply connected to theory in the sense that the (existential) state of artistic world appreciation is *provoked or inspired by* the thinking through of different philosophical theories and positions. It is via rational, logical philosophical reflection in and of itself (as Nietzsche was haphazardly applying) on questions about religion and God, culture, science, truth, time, psychology, history, ethics, etc., that Nietzsche is organically stimulated to experience the world and life as

³⁶ Figures in this camp include: Nehamas (*Life as Literature*; "Nietzsche, Modernity, Aestheticism" in *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, 223-51; and "How One Becomes What One Is," *The Philosophical Review* 92, no. 3 [July 1983]: 385-417); and Kaufmann (insofar as he presents central themes like the will to power and the *Übermensch* in terms of a self-cultivation of drives [see footnote 32 of this chapter]); Pierre Hadot (*Philosophy as a Way of Life* and to some extent *The Veil of Isis: An Essay on the History of the Idea of Nature*, trans. Michael Chase [Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2006], 284-93); Michel Foucault, (*The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France 1981-1982*, trans. Graham Burchell [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005], 28, 251; Michael Ure ("Senecan Moods: Foucault and Nietzsche on the Art of the Self"; *Nietzsche's Therapy*; and "Nietzsche's Free Spirit Trilogy and Stoic Therapy"); Keith Ansell-Pearson ("Heroic-Idyllic Philosophizing: Nietzsche and the Epicurean Tradition," *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 74 [2014]: 237-63; "Naturalism as a Joyful Science: Nietzsche, Deleuze, and the Art of Life," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 47, no. 1 [Spring 2016]: 119-40; *Nietzsche's Search for Philosophy*); and Horst Hutter (*Shaping the Future: Nietzsche's New Regime of the Soul and its Ascetic Practices* [Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006]).

³⁷As Hutter states, the difference lies between "a non-propositional conception of philosophy" where philosophy is conceived as a striving for wisdom and as a practice of conscious living," on the one hand, "and the discourses of philosophers," on the other. Of course, 'theories' are used in therapeutic philosophies (in both ancient and modern forms), and creative or 'lived' aspects can be discussed (sometimes with questionable effect) by those who focus on Nietzsche's theories. What I am pointing to here is a difference in *focus*. Thus, there is a clear divide between those who concentrate on the artistic (or 'art of life,' or 'therapeutic,' etc.) aspects of Nietzsche's work such as Ure, Ansell-Pearson and Hutter, on the one side, and those who are primarily interested in Nietzsche's work as a set of 'theories' or theoretical 'discourses' such as Leiter and Clark.

art: to see it as uncanny, as striking, as alive; to see it radiate with an indefinable significance. It is through ‘[l]ife as a means to knowledge’ that one “also live[s] gaily and laugh[s].”³⁸

This (post)modernist ‘life as art’ reading can also help us make sense of the connection Nietzsche draws between the aestheticized life and *affirmation*. Bearing in mind that affirmation is for Nietzsche a process of not only accepting but celebrating all aspects of life, including (or especially) its ugliness and suffering,³⁹ scholars have struggled to explain how ‘life as art’ (which they often take to mean self-stylisation⁴⁰), can provide this affirmative acceptance without the life as art solution seeming unconvincingly shallow or callous, or without slipping in their own ethicalised reading where, through a “bland and ethical dialectic,” the ‘artist’ will, in creating themselves, (somehow) choose to regulate their bad (ethical) characteristic with their good ones.⁴¹ The (post)modernist reading I propose not only fits well with the all-embracing scope of Nietzsche’s affirmative vision, allowing the artist to celebrate all aspects of reality, both the dark and the light, but—in its existential modality—makes this celebration both a more realistic and humanistic project whilst avoiding this ethicalisation.

If we take up, again, the biographical approach we used in Chapter Two, we find the modern artistic desire to take in the light and dark aspects of existence as a recurrent trait throughout Nietzsche’s life. From a young age, despite a “conventionally sunny” outlook, a “gothic undertone” can be heard in his thoughts,⁴² and in his adolescence he experiments with social transgression, writing the beginning of a Byronesque novel, *Euphorion* (where, to let Young

³⁸ GS §324. The very important work that Pierre Hadot has done to reorient philosophy away from an academicised form of thinking towards a therapeutic philosophy of life is relevant here. However, while there is a desperate need to follow Hadot in addressing the deep-seated and widespread problem of detached theoretical philosophising in the academic institution, there is—in the way Hadot unfolds his argument, and in the way we take on Hadot’s criticism—potential for a skewing of the argument into something that is less productive. By stating, for example, in *Philosophy as a Way of Life* that with “Wolff, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel,” we have the appearance of “modern university philosophy” where “philosophy is obviously no longer a way of life or form of life” (264–75), we risk taking philosophy of the institution and highly technical philosophical works (produced in the institution) as inherently bad or unhealthy philosophies, whilst overemphasising the benefits of ‘practical/therapeutic’ philosophy, where our discussions are consciously focused on self-transformation, or practices of mental consolation, etc. It should be noted, however, that the importance of theory *for* therapy is recognised in some of the therapy-oriented literature (thus, for example, Ure points out that for Hadot, “the connection between self-cultivation and the exercise of reason was integral” to the Hellenistic schools (“Senecan Moods,” 34, n. 59). Given the incredibly complex relationship between the two (which wrap together in different ways, sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse), I think there is a need for vigilance in this area through further analysis and discussion.

³⁹ As Nietzsche specifies in *The Gay Science*, affirmation includes “every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh” (§341).

⁴⁰ According to Alexander Nehamas, Nietzsche’s art of life as it applies to the self involves the self-directed formation of an “admirable” person “whose thoughts, desires and actions are not haphazard but are instead connected to one another in the intimate way that indicates in all cases the presence of style.” “[A]n admirable self,” he writes, “consists of a large number of powerful and conflicting tendencies that are controlled and harmonized.” In short, he tells us, “style, which is what Nietzsche requires and admires, involves controlled multiplicity and resolved conflict” (*Nietzsche*, 7).

⁴¹ Stephen N. Dunning, review of *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, by Alexander Nehamas, *Poetics Today* 7, no. 2 (1986): 390.

⁴² Young, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, 11.

tell the story, “the eponymous hero impregnates a man who then marries her brother”),⁴³ and composes the poem “Vor dem Kruzifix” where “a drunk hurls a bottle of schnapps at the crucified Christ.”⁴⁴ This may, of course, be written off as just a phase of inconsequential juvenile rebelliousness,⁴⁵ but Nietzsche retains this sentiment into his adult life, though rearticulating the aesthetic with more maturity. Take, for example, the humorous anecdote relayed by his friend Emily Flynn. Friendly with Flynn’s daughter, who painted floral still lifes as a hobby, Nietzsche advised her “to paint something ugly in addition, in order to heighten, even more, the beauty of her flowers”—comically bringing home his point one day by presenting “a live, hopping toad” for her to use as a model.⁴⁶ And, of course, this modernist aesthetic of difference⁴⁷ finds expression in Nietzsche’s philosophical thinking, with Nietzsche recording thoughts like the following: “I have asked myself what has been until now most hated, feared, despised by humanity:—and out of that I’ve made my ‘gold’”;⁴⁸ “In man *creature* and *creator* are united: in man reside not only matter, fragments, superfluity, clay, excrement, folly, and chaos but also a creator, sculptor, a hammer-hardness, a spectator-divinity and a seventh day of rest.”⁴⁹

Indeed, it is out of this persistent modernist desire to capture the real dimensions of life—the excrement, the dirt—that Nietzsche formulates his personalised philosophical idea (or ideal) of *amor fati*:

I want to learn more and more how to see what is necessary in things as what is beautiful in them—thus I will be one of those who makes things beautiful. *Amor fati*: let that be my love from now on! I do not want to wage war against ugliness.⁵⁰

We should emphasise the active appreciation and valuing (the ‘making beautiful’) of the (so-called) ugly things *in and of themselves*, for it is easy to read affirmation in a consequentialist, theodic vein, where the negative aspects of life (the ugly, the mundane, the painful, etc.) are valued *only as necessary foils for, or means to*, the positive aspects of life as the Flynn anecdote

⁴³ Young, 30.

⁴⁴ Young, 30.

⁴⁵ For R. J. Hollingdale, the *Euphorion* fragment was “a hotch-potch of ‘satanic’ absurdity,” and Nietzsche’s interest in Byron is dismissed as “an aspect of his growing restlessness under the influence of maturing sexuality” (*Nietzsche: The Man and His Philosophy* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999], 24).

⁴⁶ Young, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, 397.

⁴⁷ I refer here to Yuri Lotman’s category of the ‘aesthetic of opposition’ which indicates the use of unexpected dissonances to differentiate an artwork from conventional productions that conform to expectations. In Lotman’s words: it is “the [effort] of an author ... to destroy a system of familiar rules” (*The Structure of Artistic Text*, trans. Gail Lenhoff and Ronald Vroon [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1977], 292).

⁴⁸ This translation is taken from Young, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, 410 (eKGWB/BVN-1888.1036).

⁴⁹ *BGE* §225. I am using Siegfried Mandel’s translation of the aphorism in Salomé’s *Nietzsche*, 25. We find this sentiment expressed, too, by Zarathustra: “Am I speaking of dirty things? That does not seem to me the worst I could do / Not when truth is dirty, but when it is shallow, does the enlightened man dislike to wade into its waters” (*TSZ I* “Of Chastity”).

⁵⁰ *GS* §276.

suggests. The fact that Nietzsche often presents affirmation in a temporalised, teleological form makes this especially tempting. Take the following passage from *The Gay Science*, where affirmation is described as a form of personal (in place of religious) providence:

No matter how much we have confronted the beautiful chaos of existence and denied it all providential reason and goodness, we still have to pass our hardest test. For it is only now that the thought of a personal providence confronts us ... now that we so palpably see how everything that befalls us continually *turns out for the best*. Every day and every hour life seems to want nothing else than to prove this proposition again and again; be it what it may—bad weather or good weather, the loss of a friend, a sickness, slander, the absence of a letter, the spraining of an ankle, a glance into a shop, a counter-argument, the opening of a book, a dream, fraud—it shows itself immediately or very soon to be something that ‘was not allowed to be lacking’—it is full of deep meaning and use precisely *for us*!⁵¹

Although Nietzsche talks about those typically negative (mundane, ugly, painful) features of the world as necessary and unavoidable aspects that must be present as teleological stepping stones towards the positive (elevating, beautiful, joyful, etc.) aspects and events of life, the passage shifts somewhat such that the negative experiences in Nietzsche’s itinerary seem to take on a kind of inherent (but inexplicable) value, filling up with ‘deep meaning’ in and of themselves. Indeed, the second half of the passage runs in uncanny parallel with an affirmative inventory-taking carried out by Nietzsche’s modernist inheritor Georges Bataille. Instead of “a sickness, slander, the absence of a letter,” (etc.) as items “full of deep meaning,” Bataille lists “[a]n abandoned shoe, a rotten tooth, a snub nose, the cook spitting in the soup of his masters” which are “to love what a battle flag is to nationality.”⁵² He continues:

An umbrella, a sexagenarian, a seminarian, the smell of rotten eggs, the hollow eyes of the judges are the roots that nourish love.

A dog devouring the stomach of a goose, a drunken vomiting woman, a sobbing accountant, a jar of mustard represent the confusion that serves as the vehicle of love.⁵³

Superimposed with the quote from Nietzsche, Bataille’s passage helps to bring out that deeper, more satisfying form of modernistic affirmation from what otherwise looks to be a rather disappointing presentation of affirmation-as-providence.⁵⁴ Not just viewing these items of experience as a *means to* the ‘good’ (or typically ‘positive’) stuff of life (which would amount to a very weak form of affirmation), Nietzsche comes to view them with a direct affection. To

⁵¹ GS §277, emphasis in original.

⁵² Georges Bataille, “The Solar Anus,” in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927–1939*, ed. Allan Stoekl, trans. Allan Stoekl, Carl R Lovett, and Donald M. Leslie (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 6.

⁵³ Bataille, “The Solar Anus,” 6.

⁵⁴ Nietzsche writes fervently against such teleological models in his works, not only in the context of religion (e.g., A §15 and §50) but also in naturalised forms, criticising, for example, the teleological assumption built into (what he takes to be) the form of evolutionary thinking of Darwin and other contemporaries (e.g., *TI* “The Four Great Errors” §8 and “Expeditions of an Untimely Man” §14). As a more personal reflection, in a letter to Lou Salomé, Nietzsche describes the view “that everything must turn out the best” (which he self-reflexively acknowledges as an attitude he sometimes entertains for himself) as a “fatalistic ‘devotion to God’” (“*fatalistische ‘Gott-Ergebenheit’*”) (eKGWB/BVN-1882,243).

explain this subtle transitioning from affirmation-as-providence to modernistic Bataillean acceptance, we can imagine the following: while the events in Nietzsche's list are initially condoned on the basis of the 'positive' consequences they condition, when he steps back, looking out over life to give it its teleological justification, these negative features take on a sheen of direct experiential value as his artistic eye is cast over them. By the end of the passage, the items are considered 'full of deep meaning and use' in the Bataillean vein, as inherently valued by the artist, as valued items in the itinerary of life surveyed by the artist out of love.

Finally, I would like to justify my (post)modernist reading of affirmation as a humanistic one. I am cautious, though, not to sanitise Nietzsche here, so let us be clear about what it is the affirmative spirit is affirming: the list of affirmative aspects must include whatever it is you find to be the most ethically abominable aspects of human existence—rape, torture, genocide, paedophilia. Find your most painful experiences (the death of your loved ones, your deep personal humiliations, your experiences of rejection and failure, etc.): if we run these through the ultimate test of affirmation, the eternal return, we must want to relive these again and again without end and without mitigation.⁵⁵ The artist's view of the everyday is one of the few readings which makes such an existential feat possible and, at the same time, conscionable.⁵⁶

Modality, here, is crucial. The artistic-affirmative state I am proposing, we will remember, is essentially the existential state found in Jaspers' philosophising. As part of Jaspers' multi-modal schema, the existential state is one of the ways that we can view reality—it is an elevated and altered state, a kind of meditative apprehension of the self and world. In this state, the love we experience is an abstract and distanced love: it involves a passive standing back as we take in how things are; it is the view from the cliff, the serenity we feel as we look out over the churning sea; it is the calm we feel as we gaze upon the surface-movement of existence. But such a state is difficult to achieve: inspired through a certain felt-thought sensitivity, it is

⁵⁵ Nietzsche articulates the thought in *The Gay Science* thus:

What if, some day or night, a demon were to steal into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: This life, as you now live it and have lived it you will have to live once again and innumerable times again; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unspeakably small or great in your life must return to you, all in the same succession and sequence—even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned over and over again, and you with it, speck of dust! (341)

See also *TSZ* III "Of the Vision and the Riddle" and "The Convalescent."

⁵⁶ The torment of affirmation is streaked through *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, particularly in Part III as the work crescendoes with the 'abysmal thought' of eternal return (e.g., "I must first descend deeper than I have ever descended / —deeper into pain than I have ever descended, down to its blackest stream!" (III "The Wanderer"), and "My longing for the laughter consumes me: oh how do I endure still to live! And how could I endure to die now!" (III "Of the Vision and the Riddle"). On the immense difficulty of affirming life, see Philip J. Kain, "Nietzsche, Virtue and the Horror of Existence," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 17, no. 1 (2009): 153–67; and Brian Domino, "Nietzsche's Use of *Amor Fati* in *Ecce Homo*," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 43, no.2 (Autumn, 2012): 283–303.

momentary and fleeting and cannot in active, realistic terms, be sustained. All too soon we are sucked back into life; we dive into the water—into our aversions and negative reactions, into our concerns and cares, into a direct, immediate, participatory form of love that wants and needs for ourselves, and feels for others. In this active (non-artistically meditative) state, we cannot accept this or that hardship or injustice, and we are thus motivated to respond, to act. Jaspers' existentialism teaches us that affirmation is not sustainable: if we are lucky enough to experience the world through the existential frame, inevitably, we will (and we should) rebound back from this state of distanced (but loving) artistic affection to direct and unmitigated involvement. Through the Jasperian-inspired view, we are reminded (quite sensibly) that to affirm is to be inhuman, both in the sense that *sustained* affirmation is not humanly possible (it is always momentary and/or imperfectly attained, and thus something we recurrently strive for); and in an ethical sense—in the sense that while it *can be valuable* for us to take this view as a temporary meditative suspension over life, to sustain such a view as we make our way through life would be cruel and fundamentally alienating.

Finally, then, Jaspers moves us to the thought that affirmation, as the loving acceptance of cruelty, ugliness and violence, is the prerogative of the artist. The artist's loving observations of 'evil' and suffering come from a deeply humanistic need to understand, viz., to see what is—and what we are—without censor. It is this humanism that compels a writer such as Tennessee Williams to depict the emotional, physical and sexual violence of Stanley Kowalski in *A Street Car Named Desire*, or Kurt Vonnegut to write of "ugly places," mental illness, isolation and suicide.⁵⁷ Meta-reflecting in/on his novel *Breakfast of Champions*, Vonnegut writes:

Why were so many Americans treated by their government as though their lives were as disposable as paper facial tissues? Because that was the way authors customarily treated bit-part players in their made-up tales ... Once I understood what was making America such a dangerous, unhappy nation of people who had nothing to do with real life, I resolved to shun storytelling. I would write about life. Every person would be exactly as important as any other. All facts would also be given equal weightiness. Nothing would be left out. Let others bring order to chaos. I would bring chaos to order, instead, which I think I have done.⁵⁸

So it is, too, for Nietzsche: we need to see who we are to have real love, and it is this real love that drives the need for knowledge.

⁵⁷ In *Breakfast of Champions*, for example, Vonnegut casually depicts the "ugly" scene of "a fourteen-year-old white boy lay[ing] unconscious in the doorway of a pornography store" (71), and writes explicitly of isolation ("Mary was as alone on the planet ... There were no friends or relatives to watch her die" [63]), and of suicide ("by eating Drano ... Celia became a small volcano" [65]). Including a Nietzschean phrase that begs for comparative analysis, Vonnegut writes that "[t]here was only one way for the Earth to be, he thought: the way it was. Everything was necessary. He saw an old white woman fishing through a garbage can. That was necessary. He saw a bathtub toy, a little rubber duck, lying on its side on the grating over a storm sewer. It had to be there" ([London: Vintage, 2000], 103).

⁵⁸ Vonnegut, 210.

Additional Advantages: Avoiding the Problems of Analytic and Postmodernist Interpretation

Along with the cartographical and interpretive advantages explored above, I would like to end by briefly suggesting the ways in which the Jasperian approach can be used to bring out and counteract (what we should take to be) the damaging interpretive tendencies that have now settled into the analytic and poststructuralist movements (both in terms of their approach to Nietzsche interpretation, and as interpretive movements more generally), grounded as they are in their extreme and unsustainable commitments to ‘truth’ and ‘untruth.’

On the analytic side, as this particular approach to Nietzsche interpretation becomes increasingly common, there has been an amplification of Kaufmann’s view that Nietzsche’s work must be brought in line with the methods and findings of science or scientised philosophy. At the same time, however, it has become increasingly difficult for interpreters to ignore—as Kaufmann did—Nietzsche’s numerous statements against empirical-rational scientific truth and method.⁵⁹ As a result, the core project for most analytic interpreters has been to find new tactics for somehow getting rid of these claims—with such strategies implemented at a high interpretive cost, distorting or diminishing Nietzsche’s work. In what is only a slightly advanced version of Kaufmann’s one-sided method of reading, for example, a careful pseudo-dialectical ordering is applied, with comments against truth initially brought out then quickly nullified by Nietzsche’s claims in favour of truth, reason, logic, systematisation, etc., and by the fact that Nietzsche seems to make assertions which he takes to be true.⁶⁰ A more sophisticated approach is the ‘developmental proposal’ taken by Maudemarie Clark.⁶¹ Here, negative statements against scientific truth and method are acknowledged right up until the final works, where Nietzsche realises—just in time—that he cannot reject truth after all.⁶² But not only does this teleological redemption model severely truncate Nietzsche’s oeuvre, those in the analytic camp have themselves admitted that Nietzsche’s denial of truth continues from “On Truth and Lies”

⁵⁹ Maudemarie Clark writes that since “in many passages Nietzsche clearly rejects much more than metaphysical truth or the thing-in-itself,” and seems to put forward metaphysical doctrines himself, “Kaufmann’s interpretation does not therefore seem consistent with the Nietzschean texts” (*Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 6).

⁶⁰ Richard Schacht uses both of these techniques repeatedly, along with a number of other strategies, in his *Making Sense of Nietzsche*, especially in section 2 of Chapter 2, “Nietzsche and Nihilism,” 41–49. Leiter begins his rejection of ‘the Skeptical Reading’ by applying the first technique, arguing that Nietzsche could not be read as such since “he repeatedly and regularly employs ... *epistemic value* terms [e.g., ‘true’/‘false,’ ‘real’/‘unreal,’ ‘justified’/‘unjustified’] in attacking competing views and promoting his own” (*Nietzsche on Morality*, 13).

⁶¹ This is R. Lanier Anderson’s description of Clark’s argument in his critical analysis “Overcoming Charity: The Case of Maudemarie Clark’s *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*,” *Nietzsche-Studien* 25 (1996): 316.

⁶² The developmental argument is also utilised by both Schacht in *Making Sense of Nietzsche*, 35–61 and 81–101, and Leiter in *Nietzsche on Morality*, 14–20.

all the way through to the *Twilight of the Idols*.⁶³ Other tactics include the equally undesirable rhetorical ('Nietzsche did not mean it') defence, and attributions of hidden semantic variation, where Nietzsche is taken to have intentionally and consistently utilised different meanings for the same term.⁶⁴

A suggestion I would like to make here is that perhaps these illegitimate interpretive strategies manifest because there is no other option for these analytic interpreters: under this oppressive framework, one must find some way to show that Nietzsche is not contradictory, or else Nietzsche is deemed a pseudo-philosopher whose writings lack worth. Though hard to prove, there are indications that these tactics and the resultant skewing of Nietzsche's thought are symptomatic of an underlying and unexamined commitment these interpreters have to their own, very particular method of philosophising and notions of intellectual decency: if Nietzsche did not work as the contemporary analytic philosopher works, aiming to take a particular stance, wanting to convey a single message without contradiction, or at least somehow producing a work which serves only to present a single, consistent message on this or that topic, then he is bad philosopher; if his philosophy exhibits deep, multiple, unresolvable contradictions, then it is a bad philosophy with nothing to say. Time and again, we hear this view throughout the analytic literature. To give just one representative example, Clark writes that "considerable hope exists, and much conviction, that Nietzsche has something important to say about truth," but "the problem that confronts anyone with such hopes [is] that Nietzsche's claims about truth seem hopelessly ... contradictory."⁶⁵

With such dogmatic sentiments, this form of interpretation tends to amount to a self-confirmation programme where we try to show, in every and any way possible (regardless of what we might miss out on, and regardless of the detrimental effect it might have in terms of

⁶³ See, for example, *TI* "'Reason' in Philosophy" §2. Anderson provides an exceptional criticism of Clark's developmental reading in "Overcoming Charity," 314–22, and he restates this position decisively in his essay "Nietzsche's Views on Truth and the Kantian Background of his Epistemology," 47–48.

⁶⁴ Anderson inventively combines the two in his attempt to overcome "the widespread and obtrusively paradoxical character of Nietzsche's comments about truth" ("Nietzsche's Views on Truth," 48). For Anderson's argument in full, see pages 47–59. Anderson is a fascinating player in this game. Despite recognising the problem of analytic interpreters "imposing" their own beliefs and standards onto works from the past, he stays committed to the mission of fixing up Nietzsche by getting rid of the contradictions in his writing. See "Overcoming Charity," particularly 336–41.

⁶⁵ Clark states further that "Nietzsche's mature philosophy seems to make claims to metaphysical truth while at the same time rejecting all such claims. The obvious conclusion to draw is that there is *something seriously wrong with Nietzsche's philosophy*" (4, emphasis mine). Continuing this theme, she writes that "[t]o attribute a reasonable position to Nietzsche, we must ... follow Danto's suggestion that Nietzsche rejects a particular theory of truth and does not deny the truth of all beliefs. But the theory of truth Nietzsche accepts cannot contradict the equivalence principle. We therefore need an alternative to the crude pragmatic theory Danto apparently attributes to him" (*Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 34). Indeed, Danto is unequivocal on the matter, writing that in order to give Nietzsche "philosophical credibility," he must be shown to be "a philosopher in the received sense," and brought in line with "the leading figures in the major departments in which the discipline is taught to aspiring professionals" (*Nietzsche as Philosopher*, xvi). An important rebuttal against this academic insularity is given by Cavell in "Aversive Thinking," 138.

accurately understanding and communicating Nietzsche's work), that Nietzsche had one message after all, that that message was coherent, and—as it often seems to turn out—that that message just happens to endorse the fundamental views and assumptions that the analytic scholar also happens to hold.⁶⁶

Against this, Jaspers demonstrates a healthier interpretive approach. In the first place, he shows us that we need not cling to the idea that if Nietzsche's ideas conflict, this diminishes his work, or that one or both of the ideas need to be discarded. Indeed, Jaspers shows us that under the experimental reading, these contradictions can function productively and can be of intense philosophical value. More than this, though, by studying Jaspers' form of interpretation in contrast to our typical approach, we can gain perspective on the analytic method (as it is commonly applied in Nietzsche studies), showing up the troubling hubris, complacency, and lack of self-awareness prevalent in the discipline more generally, both in terms of method (as a lack of awareness that there are other methods of philosophising and that there might be limitations in one's own method and strengths in others'), and in terms of theoretical content (as a lack of willingness to [genuinely] explore positions that go against one's own pre-existing views and to challenge what one wants to be true). Rather than trying to prove that 'Nietzsche thought as we think' (because 'what we think is right'), by remaining open to contradictions in Nietzsche's writings, the Jaspersian experimental approach encourages us to critically reflect on our methods as we try to understand other modes of philosophising, and to engage with thoughts that stand against us—to use these thoughts, as Nietzsche does, to confront, challenge, and explore ourselves through reflective and engaged philosophical experimentation. Taking up this challenge, our truth-seeking approach would involve an open, inquisitive desire to understand different methodologies and an interest in thinking through to uncomfortable thoughts, such as the possibility that science cannot make existence fundamentally unmysterious. Quoting Nietzsche, Jaspers writes: "The assertion that the truth is simply there is one of the most seductive doctrines that there is. When this is believed, the will to test, investigate, exercise

⁶⁶ One might be tempted to list as an exception Wilcox's *Truth and Value in Nietzsche: A Study of his Metaethics and Epistemology* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1974). But although he praises Jaspers in his introduction (8) and states that any "attempt to force [Nietzsche's] thought into a pattern runs the grave danger that it will ignore or distort much of what he has to say" (6), he ends up with an interpretation that does just that. Indeed, Wilcox's commitment to the eradication of contradictions can be seen in the fact that it actually serves as a primary consideration determining his interpretive conclusions. Thus, he is happy to present reasonings such as the following: "There are antinomies in [Nietzsche's] thought; but I think that one should try as long as possible to find consistent interpretations of his writings and accept a contradiction only as a last resort. So I think we should resist that interpretation of this passage, and say instead that Nietzsche makes two points easily conflated" (161, emphasis mine). Indeed, what Wilcox is legitimising here is the use of the forced semantic variation strategy mentioned in our list of questionable techniques above. As it turns out, by applying such techniques and by ending with the conclusion that 'Nietzsche left us problems to be solved in the future' (201), Wilcox avoids having to rely on that 'last resort' of contradiction at all.

foresight, and perform experiments is paralyzed ... Here the feeling of laziness pleads the cause of truth,” for “it is more comfortable to conform than to test.”⁶⁷

On the other side of the debate, severe interpretive problems arise from the postmodernist approach. In our analysis above, we have seen that if we want to acknowledge Nietzsche's comments against truth and scientific method, two readings are available to us. On the one hand, we can take the Jasperian view and treat these anti-truth expressions as temporary modal experiments—as comments made in amongst contradictory commitments to truth and reason. On the other hand, we can take the postmodernist's view, where these statements against truth and rational philosophising are taken doctrinally, as Nietzsche's permanent and exclusive assessment of how things really are—as a position consistently held by Nietzsche throughout his philosophical thinking. To restate the radical effects this has on postmodernist interpretation (as mentioned in Chapter Four), if strictly adhered to, this approach means the utter decimation of Nietzsche's thought, with the doctrinal interpretation forcing us to ignore or reject the *prima facie* meaning of almost all of Nietzsche's claims—not only his explicit pro-truth statements, and his big, metaphysical-sounding theories like the will to power and the eternal return, but really any of his pronouncements which, by their truth-stating tone, seem to imply some basic commitment to truth. In short, Nietzsche's positive theories and assertions cannot be read as substantive reports of thoughts he actually wanted to communicate to us. As far as interpretation goes, then, the interpreter—looking out over the sea of statements that comprise Nietzsche's oeuvre—is urged to treat the entirety of Nietzsche's thoughts as a complex of ironic, sub-textual contradictions, metaphors, and paradoxes that serve only to demonstrate the impossibility of truth and the need to avoid the metaphysical practice of philosophising. Under this repressive anti-truth regime, the interpreter is forbidden from putting forward positive theories that try to represent Nietzsche's authorial intent (i.e., ‘what Nietzsche really meant’), lest they commit the metaphysical crime of essentialising. Instead, (so the programme goes) his philosophising is to be used as a creative stimulus for one's own original thought-productions.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ NIUPA, 191 (WP §452 [eKGBW/NF-1888,15(46)]).

⁶⁸ Ruminating on “what kind of access can we claim” to have when interpreting Nietzsche's work (xi), Allison writes in *The New Nietzsche* that “the greatest danger ... belongs to the person *to whom* the text is addressed.” “Such a person,” he continues, “will no longer be taken up in the rational-moral-theological world of the previous epoch,” and “will attain an entirely new form of thought.” Under this new interpretive model, Nietzsche's text is “no longer constrained to a foundation of univocal meaning” but “becomes something to be ingested, digested, transformed, and transfigured” (xxiv). Using a strong, imperative tone, Allison registers those who achieve such feats as the “few who are capable of understanding” Nietzsche (xxii). Along with this, he also expresses a (Barthesian) dislike of biographical works, writing that “Nietzsche's biography is uninspiring, to say the least. Nonetheless, this subject appears to have been the principal source of inspiration for the tiresome array of books that has followed him” (ix). Such sentiments are common in the postmodernist group. We find it, for example, in the work of Sarah Kofman. Upholding the same division between elevated ironist and plebeian realist (“the common” [114]), Kofman writes that “the best paradigm of the new philosopher” is to “multipl[y] and displac[e] his perspectives, without referring to any absolute and definitive centre” (111). Thus, it is only those who “[give] birth to a different text” as “an artistic effect” who have the distinction of apprehending

Of course, there is no way one can actually live up to these standards, which brings us to the damaging tendency of the postmodernists, viz., the opportunism and hypocrisy that often takes place with this form of interpretation. In reality, we find that even quite radically postmodern interpretations inhabit a swampy in-between, where patches of the reading form a more conventional approach that attempts to understand and communicate what it is they take Nietzsche to mean on his own terms, whilst in other places, Nietzsche is used more organically as creative, non-linear inspiration for the author's own reflections.

Even more insidiously, in the same way that truth obstinately remains in the assertion 'there is no truth' (thus producing the self-referential paradox), truth is unavoidably embedded as a background commitment in the postmodernist's interpretation. Even if one looks at Nietzsche's work, and does not say a single thing about it, but regards it as a non-fact-asserting piece of art that can inspire one's own non-fact-asserting creation, such an act has as its motivating force the judgement that this is the correct way to respond to Nietzsche given his correct statements or sub-textual indications against truth. In other words, it is implied that 'this is how you should interpret Nietzsche, because he *correctly asserts/implies/argues* that there is no truth.'

With Jaspers' Nietzsche interpretation, we find a way out of this heavy, unphilosophical fog. In the first place, while Jaspers is able to hear Nietzsche's arguments against truth and take such arguments seriously, his modal approach also enables us to take in Nietzsche's sublime philosophical landscape as a whole, allowing us to (attempt to) understand what Nietzsche has to say about the eternal recurrence or the will to power, etc., without having to somehow recast these thoughts as non-metaphysical posits, and allowing us to carry out sure-footed explorations of Nietzsche's social, moral, and psychological observations.

Secondly, whilst acknowledging Nietzsche's critique of truth, Jaspers' modal approach helps us to understand, and avoid slipping into, the unhealthy dogmatism of postmodernist

the truth of Nietzsche's work (through their appreciation of the fact that there is no truth of Nietzsche's work) (*Nietzsche and Metaphor*, 116). Expressing a similar distaste for exposition, Jean-Michel Rey writes that rather than "a commentary, whose economy would be the effacement of such a proceeding," the "new 'philosophical' writing" involves "the multiple play of a scene that raises itself in the space of *the after-the-fact*" (*L'enjeu des signes, lecture de Nietzsche* [Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1971], quoted in Schrift, *Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation*, 84). To give a more recent example, in her otherwise inspiring work, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Science*, Babich asserts (or, perhaps, 'asserts') this same totalising view, writing, for example, that "[t]here is no other way" (31), "the style of reading suited to the style of Nietzsche's writing/thinking is not discursive but rather a 'digestive,' appropriative, or incorporative style" (27–28). Comparing Nietzsche's self-displacing style with "the industrial chemical technique of vacuum filtration" (26), she explains that "Nietzsche's postmodern, parodic style" works "against the wrong, insensitive, and impotent reader," with the text functioning as "[a]n active filter" that "draws and then evades the possibilities of reactive understanding," sucking in "the reader with 'ears to hear'—that is, the reader who can *think*—by means of the mutable allure of a shifting text" ([Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994], 27). On the relationship between poststructuralist/postmodernist readings and Nietzsche's 'fish-hook' philosophising which works to catch the right readers (those with 'ears to hear') see Alan D. Schrift, "Foucault and Derrida on Nietzsche and the End(s) of 'Man,'" in *Exceedingly Nietzsche: Aspects of Contemporary Nietzsche-Interpretation*, ed. David Farrell Krell and David Wood, vol. 4 (London: Routledge, 2010), 88–100.

interpretation. For Jaspers, truthful rejections of truth are moments of existential realisation: they occur through a process which is brought about when one, guided by a rigorous truthfulness and application of logic, follows a certain path of thinking down to the startling, paradoxical, and existentially profound conclusion that there is no truth. It is, thus, something that one *works through to*; it is something that *holds its truth temporarily*, in the philosophical moment of the thought being thought, and it is something that, even in this moment, *gestures at its own impossibility* (when we pay self-reflective attention to the paradoxical impossibility of actually achieving a pure rejection). To take this rejection of truth not as a stunning, personal, temporary and paradoxically shaped conclusion, but as *the correct method of philosophical understanding*, as the new pre-packaged doctrine about *the real state of the world* that one now just permanently knows, and insists upon, and applies wholesale in one's interpretation is not only disingenuous, but cheapens and commodifies the anti-truth conclusion into a new philosophical dogma.⁶⁹

I am—and, in a conditional sense, I think Jaspers would be—sympathetic to a creative, Nietzsche-inspired approach to Nietzsche interpretation, reflecting, as it does, the pre-Barthesian subversion of origins⁷⁰ which is clearly present in (some of) Nietzsche's thought. But if an interpreter then—instead of reflecting on their own interpretation which will vacillate between truth-assertion and inspired-creation, let alone their own unavoidable application of conceptualising truth-forms in their general life—dogmatically asserts that Nietzsche interpretation *should not* try to get at what Nietzsche meant (or, indeed, that interpretation in general should not try to get at what the author meant), one feels that they have not really appreciated and understood what it is they are enforcing.

⁶⁹ A similar argument is made by Douglas Kellner in "Postmodernism as Social Theory: Some Challenges and Problems," *Theory, Culture and Society* 5, no 2–3 (June 1988), 252–53. Kathleen Higgins makes use of Kellner's argument in "Nietzsche and Postmodern Subjectivity," which is her contribution to *Nietzsche as Postmodernist: Essays Pro and Contra*, ed. Clayton Koelb (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 207. On a general level, other themes in the essay such as 'aesthetic immediacy' (206) and 'the possibility of rich and meaningful subjective experience' (191) resonate with the (Jasperian) reading I have offered here.

⁷⁰ See Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fotana, 1977).

Conclusion

Contemporary philosophical scholarship on Nietzsche tends to follow a standardised template; with report-like language and form, and a set repertoire of arguments, it exemplifies a whole way of thinking that is, for the most part, at odds with Nietzsche's philosophising. We can, of course, write about Nietzsche in (what is now) a conventional academic manner, and have him say (with minor variation) what we believe it is right for him to say. Given the contradictory nature of Nietzsche's work, such self-confirmation projects are feasible, and are produced in abundance, but are they the most valuable use of Nietzsche's writings?

Instead of using Nietzsche to validate our current thinking and methodologies, I hope to have provoked the thought that we might instead look at the rather striking and hard to ignore ways in which Nietzsche's writings are not like those of the contemporary academic, and to use such observations to gain a critical perspective on ourselves as interpreters. Though I am critical of much of David Pickus' commentary on Nietzsche interpretation, I am in whole-hearted agreement with him when he says that Nietzsche should be used "to become more wakeful, [and] cognizant of the possibilities gained and lost in scholarship."¹

Going back to the interpretations of Nietzsche offered by Karl Jaspers and Walter Kaufmann has been my attempt to at least make a start at this process of critical examination. In pursuit of this self-reflective perspective-taking, my central aim in this thesis has been to properly assess the opposing accounts of Nietzsche's 'existential-experimental' method as advocated by these two interpreters. Against the general scholarly consensus, I have found that it is not Kaufmann's consistency model, but the contradiction-embracing hermeneutics offered by Jaspers that gives us access to the valuable and profound existential dimensions of Nietzsche's thought. Since Kaufmann's model has now become a general hermeneutical standard, and since Jaspers offers us a radical alternative to this standardised approach, I have suggested that we can focus and refine our contemporary interpretative practices by looking closely at these two readings.

What does looking back at Kaufmann tell us, then, about ourselves as contemporary Nietzsche scholars? In the first place, it has struck me as indicative of our hermeneutic complacency that given the enormous influence Kaufmann's *PPA* has had on contemporary Nietzsche studies—essentially setting the underlying attitudes and assumptions that determine our approach—we have not been concerned to go back to critically examine and understand the source of our unquestioned assumption that Nietzsche writes systematically, producing (in the end) a stable and consistent thesis on this or that topic. It has been convenient, perhaps, not to do so, for analysis of the argument carried out in Chapter One shows that the invisible yet

¹ Pickus, "Wishes of the Heart," 22.

strongly held guidelines we use to generate our commentaries on Nietzsche originate in an argument that should convince no-one. Upon inspection, Kaufmann's claim that Nietzsche's 'existentialist approach' means working with consistency is shown to be constructed around an argumentative façade set up through poor logic and misreadings. Surrounded by this suggestive scenery, Kaufmann's most substantial claim, the anti-foundationalist argument, which asserts that Nietzsche's methodological consistency can be established by the fact that Nietzsche wanted to avoid metaphysical biases, initially seems convincing. But not only does the premise not lead (unless we are otherwise led) to Kaufmann's conclusion, the argument itself underscores two chronic flaws in Kaufmann's interpretation: an overreliance on contentual information (i.e., 'what Nietzsche said' in his various theories and speculations) and a lack of concern for Nietzsche's applied process (Chapter Three); and the problem of over-indication enabling one-sidedness (Chapter Four).

By shining our investigative torch on these interpretive issues in Kaufmann's work, we find ourselves looking at the contemporary commentator, for with the development of the analytic 'Nietzsche industry,'² it is now common not only to apply, but to develop and intensify these practices. Today, we rarely take the time to look at biographical evidence to establish process as I have done in Chapter Three—so far removed are we from even considering the possibility that Nietzsche might have employed a methodology different from the contemporary academic mainstream, and from entertaining the idea that in order to understand Nietzsche's philosophical theory, we need to look beyond it. Furthermore, as I have argued in Chapter Five, analytic interpreters have not only taken on Kaufmann's selective one-sidedness but developed it into more sophisticated forms, thus allowing the interpreter to avoid uncomfortable but crucial aspects of Nietzsche's thought.

And what do we learn about ourselves as interpreters (and, indeed, as academic philosophers) by looking back at Jaspers? Insights here come, I think, from addressing two questions: firstly, from asking what we have lost in disregarding this interpretation, and, secondly, from asking ourselves why this interpretation has been so easily forgotten. I hope that in presenting this thesis, answers to the first question have become clear—indeed, to communicate the value of Jaspers' existential hermeneutics has been one of the primary goals of this project. Throughout these pages, I have tried to show that Jaspers offers an alternative to the comfortable interpretation of Nietzsche, leaving us an existential reading as beautiful as it is confronting. What we have in Jaspers' interpretation, I argue, is not a fatuous play with contradiction as is commonly thought, but a profound understanding of the deep contradictions that run through

² Dana Villa, review of *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Religion*, by Julian Young; *The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism*, by Bernard Reginster; and *Friedrich Nietzsche on the Philosophy of Right and the State*, by Nikos Kazantzakis, trans. Odysseus Makridis, *Political Theory* 35, no. 4 (August 2007): 508.

human being. Instead of Nietzsche the clinical thinker, Jaspers presents us with Nietzsche the explorer—the philosophical adventurer who immerses himself in the rich landscape of existence, who wants to capture the vibrant complexity and conflict of human life (Chapter Two). Instead of the self-confirming idea that Nietzsche's rejection of religious-metaphysical modes of understanding led him to an easy, workable alternative in science and naturalised philosophy, Jaspers takes Nietzsche's enquiries into truth and scientific method to function like limit-situations, where honest reflection on these forms of thought show existence to be intractably un-understandable and problematic (Chapter Four).

By deciphering Jaspers' existential limit-situation reading, we find that we have in our possession an exquisitely detailed topographical map, tracing out the routes to some of the most valuable treasures embedded in Nietzsche's work. It is a reading that takes us to the understanding that, with a semi-theoretical, semi-intuitive grasp of modal world-viewing, Nietzsche is not content to view his own existence through a single framework, but, rather, uses his philosophy to record multiple, complex, contradictory theoretical and emotional self-explorations. This diversity of conflicting modal views is precisely what we saw in our analysis of Nietzsche's writings on truth and method (Chapter Four), with Nietzsche demonstrating alternating commitments to truth and untruth in his philosophical investigations. Not only does Nietzsche's work exhibit this modal diversity, I have argued that subtly, within Nietzsche's texts, we find indications that he experienced and entertained—in an unsustained and unsystematic manner—a meta-philosophical awareness of the modal state of reality similar to the Encompassing (Chapter Five). Finally, in one of the most important interpretive gifts Jaspers has to offer, we see from Jaspers' analysis that cognitive impasses like the problem of self-reference are invaluable disclosures of human existence, and are not to be ignored or dismissed as indications of bad philosophising (Chapter Four), or de-experientialised into a new dogma of relativism (Chapter Five).

My hope, then, is that by returning to Jaspers, we can learn about the deep inconsistencies and complexities that lie within our nature and existence, including our own strong capacity to misrepresent this complexity and contradictoriness of ourselves to ourselves, and to block out our precarious ungroundedness. Here, I think, we have an answer to our second question: why was Kaufmann's unfounded attack on Jaspers enough to end interest in such an illuminating interpretation? To be sure, we should recognise that part of the reason why Jaspers' interpretation has been so widely neglected is because, despite all our learnedness and efforts at independent thinking, philosophical libel spreads like wildfire. But Nietzsche himself offers us a sociological observation in *Daybreak* that suggests that it may be more than this, writing that “in the midst of an age of ‘work,’ that is to say, of hurry, of indecent and perspiring haste”

we no longer have the time “to go aside ... to become still, to become slow.”³ Like Nietzsche’s own writing, Jaspers’ philosophy requires us to take time to look at ourselves, to face uncomfortable realities, to reflect on our existential lot.

It is my belief that through retrospective studies like the ones I have performed here on Jaspers and Kaufmann, we can find the means to refocus our own treatment of Nietzsche such that his philosophy of life can be looked at as teaching material that helps us to become honest practitioners of self-reflection in our own lives. My own presentation of Nietzsche here has attempted to show Nietzsche in this light—as an educator of the self. Thus I have compiled (the beginnings of) an account of Nietzsche’s process as that of the existential-artist, confirming that Nietzsche does not work as a contemporary academic philosopher but instead carries out philosophical questioning through the interrelated processes of receptivity, fluidity, and diaristic excavation, producing uniquely patterned, self-exploratory, contradiction-prone texts (Chapter Three). In an attempt to show the way existential self-investment functions in Nietzsche’s method, I have traced out the Jaspersian existential template (where philosophical questioning hits limit-situations, inducing existential awareness) to identify modernistic eye-casting as a central form of affirmation (Chapter Five). Applying Jaspers’ model to establish the non-reductive relation between the theoretical and the artistic in Nietzsche’s work, I have argued that it is not detached rational-theoretical philosophising that Nietzsche participates in, but rather a deep, personally involved rational-theoretical philosophical questioning that stimulates awareness of human precarity, thus leading to heightened moments of world engagement. Aestheticisation in this light—as a temporarily inspired, lovingly distanced involvement with the objects, textures and happenings of the everyday—gives us a more feasible model for affirmation: an affirmation of suffering-filled life that Nietzsche the human (not the superhuman) experienced, and an affirmation of that same suffering-filled life that we might also, through our own philosophical reflections, come to embrace.

There are, of course, many other Nietzschean terrains and vistas of the self that a Jaspersian interpretation opens up. Indeed, with restrictions on space, the project of recovering Jaspers’ interpretation that I have attempted here is only half complete, for as well as “doing violence” to Nietzsche by throwing his philosophy into ‘the whirl,’ Jaspers is charged (by Kaufmann et al.) with Christianising and Kantianising Nietzsche’s work. But rather than distorting our view of Nietzsche, if I have been correct in my presentation of Nietzsche’s existential method as one of repression and re-emergence, there is good reason to believe that the Christian and Kantian elements Jaspers identifies in Nietzsche’s (early to late) writings might in fact be shown to issue from a sophisticated depth-psychological reading of Nietzsche’s philosophising. Indeed, it would be especially beneficial in further research to extend this Jaspersian method of ‘reading

³ D Preface §5. See also Nietzsche’s discussion on the loss of the ‘*vita contemplative*’ in GS §329.

the contradictions' to Nietzsche's complex Christian/post-Christian ethics—which, understandably, in the 1930s Jaspers' was reluctant to do.⁴ Here, the tensions between the rejection and (often subliminal) affirmation of Christianity and Christian morality wait to be opened up; and here too we might find an area of profound disagreement between Jaspers and Nietzsche.

Logic, reason, science, clarity: these are integral to philosophy. In giving an experimental treatment of truth and method, however, Nietzsche brings us to an awareness that in our contemporary forms of interpretation, 'logic,' 'reason,' 'science,' and 'clarity' might be applied not in the service of honest (*redlich*) philosophising, but to veer away from what is uncomfortably true. A long time ago, Walter Kaufmann walked this road, and now many feet continue along this path. I have suggested that we look in a different direction, to Karl Jaspers—a solitary thinker on a different journey, where honest thought and communication leads to honest self-confrontation.

⁴ See Chapter 4, footnote 64.

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