Nietzsche on Time and History

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Nietzsche's Critique of Staticism
Introduction to Nietzsche on Time and History

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> Motion must first disappear, i.e. lead to a static effect before it appears to our feeling. Feeling is the sign of a motion that has been made statically perceptible, i.e. a contained and annihilated motion. (Nachlaß Summer 1875, KSA 8, 9[1])

> Every thing is a sum of judgements (fears, hopes, some inspire confidence, others do not). Now, the better we know physics the less phantasmal this sum of judgements becomes ... Finally we understand: a thing is a sum of excitations within us: however, since we are nothing fixed [*Festes*] a thing is also not a fixed sum. And the more stability we attribute to things, – – – (Nachlaß Spring 1880–Spring 1881, KSA 9, 10[F100])

> If there is no goal in the whole of history of man's lot, then we must put one in: assuming, on the one hand, that we have *need* of a goal, and on the other that we've come to see through the illusion of an immanent goal and purpose. (Nachlaß Summer 1886–Spring 1887, KSA 12, 6[9])

Why are we still intrigued by Nietzsche? One might think of a number of answers to this question: the variety of his interests, his entertaining and accessible style, perhaps his aphoristic ambiguity that leaves so much more work to the interpreter. I am not convinced that this suffices to explain the sustained interest in Nietzsche's philosophy. What I will argue in this introduction is that this sustained interest stems from Nietzsche's challenge to what I will call the 'staticism' inherent in our ordinary experience. By 'staticism' I mean, roughly speaking and in general, the view that the world is a collection of enduring, re-identifiable objects that change only very gradually and according to determinate laws. The claim I wish to make is simple: as long as human beings subscribe to the 'staticist picture' Nietzsche will remain of interest. Why is this so? In short: because ordinary experience is 'what is the case' (for most of us) and it is also quite clearly not the case. Should it turn out that staticism is a kind of anthropological constant that each generation of philosophers eventually has to face critically then Nietzsche will remain of interest at least until someone else provides a more comprehensive examination and critique of it.

What do I mean more precisely by the term 'staticism'? The staticism Nietzsche is already suspicious of very early on in writings such as *On*

Becoming in History, and then questions almost obsessively in his later works and notebooks, is usually a variant of the complex view comprised of the conjunction of the following three propositions:

> (i) The world is best conceived as a world of relatively easily distinguishable, property-instantiating objects that remain sufficiently identical over time to be named, referred to and remembered.
>
> (ii) The collection of objects called 'the world' is governed by laws that are sufficiently determinate to prevent chaos from ensuing, and to allow humans, objects with special properties, to make some predictions about what will happen in the future.
>
> (iii) The existence of this deterministic world of objects is somehow compatible with the possibility of actual choice and voluntary action.

I will call this the staticist worldview. Nietzsche's emphasis on time and history is usually both a critique of the staticist worldview and, less often so, his attempt to develop an alternative worldview, an alternative that is, however, not simply a negation of the staticist worldview. It is for this reason that I wish to preface *Nietzsche on Time and History* with a few remarks on Nietzsche's critique of staticism.

I will first discuss Nietzsche's rejection of the remnants of staticism in Hegel and Schopenhauer (both of whom, he holds, remain fundamentally opposed to the very existence of time and history *proper*). I will then briefly outline why Nietzsche deems the belief in any variant of the staticist picture as problematic. Finally, I will examine what I believe is Nietzsche's adualistic-dialetheic stance towards the staticist worldview. In the final section, I will comment on the different ways these issues are addressed in *Nietzsche on Time and History*.

Nietzsche's Predecessors: Schopenhauer and Hegel

Nietzsche believed most if not all *homines mensurae* to be in thrall to the staticist, ordinary standpoint. It is the way the world first seems or appears to them. After a relatively short period of discipleship, Nietzsche realized that Schopenhauer's philosophy remained, despite its subversive metaphysical and critical aspects, firmly embedded within a philosophical tradition that hypostatizes the atemporal, thereby tacitly supporting the staticist picture. Schopenhauer distinguishes between a reality as it is in and for itself, a metaphysical will that is *not* (still a common misconception) the thing in itself but nevertheless 'the nearest and clearest *phenomenon* of the

thing-in-itself' (WWR II 18), and an illusory actuality of becoming that has the ontological status of a problematic, *mere* appearance (*Schein*). Commitment to a number of Kantian dualisms leads Schopenhauer to attack in *The World as Will and Representation* any philosophy focussed on time and history. Philosophy, he writes in 'On history'

> should not consider ... that which is always becoming and never is … On the contrary, it should keep in view that which always is, and never becomes and passes away ... The true philosophy of history consists in the insight that, in spite of all these endless changes and their chaos and confusion, we yet always have before us the same, identical, unchangeable essence, acting in the same way today as it did yesterday and always. (Schopenhauer 1969, vol. 2, p. 444)

For Schopenhauer, then, accepting temporality, and its appearance for human beings *as* history, as essential is fundamentally misguided. Nietzsche realized that such privileging of ideas devoid of change ultimately leads to a non-Christian but equally world-negating pessimism: if philosophy is supposed to contemplate that which is permanent and unchanging, then the confrontation with impermanence poses a real problem. If that which is permanent has added value, and binary thinking demands a necessary choice or exclusive disjunction, it follows that the value of becoming approaches zero. As Schopenhauer puts it in his 'Additional Remarks on the Doctrine of the Vanity of Existence':

> This vanity [of existence] finds its expression ... in constant becoming without being; in constant desire without satisfaction ... *Time* is that by virtue whereof at every moment all things in our hands come to naught and thereby lose all true value. (Schopenhauer 1974, vol. 2, p. 283)

Nietzsche would ultimately reject Schopenhauer's 'chronophobic' evaluation of existence but primarily because it thereby tacitly supports the staticist worldview.

The same holds, in Nietzsche's evaluation, for Hegel. Hegel had drawn attention to the *concept* of becoming (cf. GS 357) but did so within a macro-teleological, systematic philosophy. 'Becoming' denotes not only the original, restless-creative oscillation between determination and indeterminacy—being and nothing—that gets the micro-teleological dialectical becoming under way, but more importantly the macro-teleological, necessary *autopoesis* of a mind-like absolute substance. Nietzsche's Hegel is the optimistic (cf. DS 6, KSA 1, p. 191; also KSA 8, p. 56) panlogicist (UM II 8, KSA 1, p. 309) who imbues 'the whole' with meaning only by attributing to it an organic, macro-teleological, rational and thereby stable composition. In *Untimely Meditation II* Nietzsche cautions against such an uncritical view of becoming since it still contains all the attributes of necessary *Sein*, 'being'—the staticist concept *par excellence* for Nietzsche:

> If every success is in itself a rational necessity, if every event is the victory of
> the logical or the 'idea' — then quickly down on your knees and hold in rever-
> ence the entire stepladder of 'successes'. (UM II 8, KSA 1, p. 309)

The Hegelian system both presupposes and culminates in the *unsinnige*
absolute Idea that 'alone has *Being*, imperishable life, *truth known to itself*,
and is *all truth* ... since its essence is, the highest, the concept' (Hegel
1969, vol 2., p. 549). Nietzsche therefore sees in Hegel's philosophy the
'bridge of lies back to old ideals' and rejects Hegel's problematic practice
of 'mediating' and 'fusing' (D Preface 4, KSA 3, p. 16). Hegel like Par-
menides desired to know the absolute by means of reflection, '"to grasp the
absolute within consciousness"'(PTAG 11, KSA 1, p. 847), and such at-
tempts, Nietzsche is convinced, expose the tacit continuation of the staticist
worldview (cf. KSA 15, p. 77).

Nietzsche is convinced that his philosophical predecessors, and also
the natural sciences, had merely changed the appearance of the dominant
staticist paradigm of being. Yet behind the macro-teleological idea of be-
coming, the idea of will as quasi thing-in-itself, and the positivism and
objectivity of science, the belief in permanence as highest value remained
unquestioned.

From whence this *chronophobia* and hysterical overvaluation of being?
Nietzsche's writings are littered with attempts to provide ever new explan-
ations of this phenomenon. Unfortunately, this part of Nietzsche's work is
not often discussed in the exisiting literature. I believe, however, that it is
of great importance because it allows us to see that Nietzsche holds a kind
of error theory about staticism.

Against the Rejection of Time: Nietzsche's Error Theory

In note 9[60] of autumn 1887 Nietzsche presents a mini-genealogy of the
idea of being that can be seen as paradigmatic for his belief in the primacy
of becoming; at the same time this genealogy explains why humans cling
so desperately to the idea of unchanging being. He wishes to subject to a
genealogical critique both the concept of reality and the positive valuation
of being. This genealogy *in nuce* starts with an instruction important for his
overall idea of the genealogical method, that of *Selbstbesinnung*:

> 'Uncanny **self-reflection/auto-sensitization** [*Selbstbesinnung*]**:** not as indi-
> vidual but becoming conscious of oneself as human species. L e t u s c o m e
> to o u r s e n s e s [*besinnen*], let us think backward: let us walk the
> short and the long paths' (Nachlaß Autumn 1887, KSA 12, 9[60])

Genealogy as a method or tool is not only a *(sich) besinnen* in the sense of
'contemplating' or 'reflecting upon', for example, the historicity of a value,

but also always a *(sich) besinnen* in the literal sense, i.e., a 'returning to the senses', and thereby a returning and coming 'to one's senses'. It is worth quoting this genealogy of being in full:

> Man is searching for 'the truth': a world that does not contradict itself, does not deceive, does not change, a t r u e world — a world, in which one does not suffer: contradiction, illusion, transistoriness — causes of suffering! He does not doubt, that such a world, as it ought to be, exists; he wants to find his way to it. …
>
> Whence does man take the concept of r e a l i t y ? —
>
> Why is it that man deduces s u f f e r i n g precisely from change, illusion, contradiction? And why not more so his happiness? ... —
>
> The contempt, the hatred of all that passes away, changes, transforms: — whence this valuation of the permanent?
>
> What is obvious here is the will to truth, just the desire for a w o r l d o f p e r - m a n e n c e .
>
> The senses deceive, rationality corrects the errors: c o n s e q u e n t l y , one in- ferred, that reason is the path to the permanent; the most n o n - s e n s o r y [*unsinnlichsten*] ideas must be closest to the 'true world'. — Most misfortunes come from the senses — they are fraudsters, beguilers, annihilators:
>
> H a p p i n e s s is only warranted in what has being [*im Seienden*]: change and happiness are mutually exclusive. The greatest desire aims at a becoming one with being. This is the s t r a n g e path to the highest form of happiness.
>
> In sum: the world, as it o u g h t to be, exists; this world, the one we live in, is only error, — this our world ought n o t to exist.
>
> The belief in being turns out to be just <as> a consequence: the real primum mobile is the unbelief in becoming, the mistrust against becoming, the contempt for all becoming… (Nachlaß Autumn 1887, KSA 12, 9[60])

Nietzsche questions how human beings arrived at their belief in being and came to understand suffering as the consequence of 'change', 'illusion' and 'contradiction'. Why not equate change with happiness? At the core of this equation lies what I wish to call Nietzsche's error theory regarding stati- cism. It can be summarized as follows:

(i)   ordinary human discourse is ineliminably committed to the staticist worldview (semantic thesis);

(ii)   there are no relatively easily distinguishable, property- instantiating entities and objects (ontological thesis);

(iii)   it follows that our ordinary natural attitude is false.

In addition to what can be called the semantic thesis (i) and the ontological thesis (ii) Nietzsche also offers an explanatory thesis:

(iv)   human beings hold the staticist worldview because it allows them to reduce uncertainty, thereby alleviating suffering.

The explanatory step can be unpacked as follows: perceiving something *as* something involves a transformation that is error-prone. Since humans use their rational capacities to correct some of these initial errors, rationality seems the one and only remedy against the ills and contradictions of the senses. In our attempts to overcome the impractical unreliability of sense-impressions once and for all, 'non-sensory' ideas—for Nietzsche, entirely non-sensory (*unsinnlich*) amounts to nonsense (*Unsinn*)—are gradually regarded as closest to what is simple, true, and predictable, thereby creating a less painful environment. It is here that becoming and happiness can no longer coexist, so that they have become *einverleibt* or 'incorporated' (GS 1, KSA 3, p. 370) as mutually exclusive spheres, and static being comes to be the highest value (and Nietzsche really means incorporated: our species has adapted most successfully by organizing its world, thereby keeping uncertainty and pain at a minimum).

Note 9[60] shows that for Nietzsche this turn against the senses has two consequences that amount to two 'incorporated' commitments—one ontological, one ethical: the tacit *ontological commitment* entails that the world as it ought to exist, the staticist world, really exists ('die Welt, wie sie sein sollte, existiert'); and tacit *ethical commitment*, in turn, entails that the world of becoming therefore *ought not* to exist ('diese unsere Welt sollte nicht existieren').

This positive valuation of being leads to the strong belief in the existence of being and to the search for truth in a rational, abstract, measuring manner. Nietzsche concludes note 9[60] by restating this argument: the valuation of being arises as a consequence of the initial 'disdain for becoming' (ibid.).

Read as a genealogy *in nuce* this line of argument is therefore at the same time a reflection on the valuation of being, a rehabilitation of the senses, and thereby a sobering experience of 'coming to one's senses'. It is this argument that underpins Nietzsche's basic assumptions and accounts for both his own biased *ontological* commitment (that which really exists is better understood as *Werden*) and his concomitant *ethical* commitment: the world of any permanent *Sein* should therefore *not* exist—at least not within the same logical exclusive-disjunctive relation to becoming. But why is staticism so vicious?

Staticism and Nihilism

First, Nietzsche acknowledges that staticism and the Judeo-Christian morality it underpins has had real benefits as a successful defence against the earliest form of nihilism induced by fear and uncertainty. Nevertheless, he is adamant that 'the fear became less' (Nachlaß Spring–Autumn 1881, KSA 9, 11[26]) and that 'life is no longer so uncertain, accidental, chaotic in our Europe' (Nachlaß Summer 1886–Autumn 1887, KSA 12, 5[71]) and the level of strength which human beings have attained 'allows for a lowering of the means of taming' contingency. '"God"' or stable being as the ultimate guarantor of staticism 'is now a hypothesis much too extreme' (Nachlaß Summer 1886–Autumn 1887, KSA 12, 5[71]). And staticism, if not also 'lowered' and adapted to the current, lower level of uncertainty will now lead to a new type of nihilism. Why? It supports not just one peculiar valuation and meta-belief but rather an entire system of related valuations, lower-level beliefs—a two-world metaphysics (both a false ontology of what-there-is and a questionable epistemology of what we can know) within which permanence is valued highest. With such a web of beliefs in place, any value of the non-permanent is merely due to a kind of 'retension' of or 'protension' to some permanent state or realm, be that ontological or theoretic-epistemological, or ethical. The staticist viewpoint demands a revision (Nietzsche's early idea of a time-atom theory can be seen as an early attempt. Eternal recurrence is his late conception).

More correctly: the value of the non-static needs to be changed and for the first time taken seriously. Since logic and ontology in Nietzsche's view sprang from and subsequently confirmed and upheld the staticist error, traditional logic—and Nietzsche's attack on logic is always only an attack on traditional Aristotelian logic—can no longer be the tool to deliver reliable guidance. New frameworks and methodologies are needed within which philosophy can continue its interpretive-descriptive enterprise and avoid the trappings of the previous, nihilistic framework. If logic had been the science that derives certain and reliable truths from timeless laws, then a philosophy that wishes to undercut the staticist picture can no longer rely on it in the same way. It is here that history as genealogy becomes one of the new 'chronophile' investigative methods:

> Philosophy in the only way I still allow it to stand, as the most general form of history, as an attempt somehow to describe Heraclitean becoming and to abbreviate it into signs (so to speak, to *translate* and mummify it into a kind of illusory being) (Nachlaß June–July 1885, KSA 11, 36[27])

But history, too, can be practised as—and is in danger of being—an *ancilla metaphysica,* in thrall to staticism, describing the same hyperstable world as that projected in traditional metaphysics. Philosophy *as* history *proper*

that takes the temporal disposition of the whole with its several simulta-
neous temporal-perspectival dimensions seriously must then create a very
different, revised historical-philosophical approach, self-reflexively aware
of the staticist fallacy. It, too, must incorporate an awareness of the latter.
The contributions in *Nietzsche on Time and History* deal with the impact
and importance of history for philosophy and the need gradually to unlearn
the natural staticist standpoint.

However, and this is crucial and complicates matters considerably,
Nietzsche's advice is not simply to do away with the staticist pictures.

The Staticist Picture: Nietzsche's Staticist Fictionalism?

In addition to Nietzsche's 'argument from anxiety' he repeatedly argues
that the staticist picture stems from our Cartesian failure to conceive of
ourselves as some kind of distinct, metaphysical, underlying substances or
'soul atoms' (Nachlaß June–July 1885, KSA 11, 37[4]) and that everything
else, our world of subjects, objects, and causal relations, then simply fol-
low:

> What separates me most deeply from metaphysicians is: I don't concede that
> the 'I' is what thinks. Instead, I take the I itself to be a construction of
> thinking, of the same rank as 'matter', 'thing', 'substance', 'individual',
> 'purpose', 'number': in other words to be only a regulative fiction with
> the help of which a kind of constancy and 'knowability' is inserted into, in-
> vented into, a world of becoming. (Nachlaß May–June 1885, KSA 11,
> 35[35])

Most of the so-called Continental interpretations of Nietzsche have fo-
cused—too much, in my view—on this critique of the self. Why too much?
The well-known fragment contains an important qualification, a second
premise if you will (provided we interpret Nietzsche's texts as arguments
consisting of a number of explicit and implicit premises and assumptions).
Nietzsche clearly insists at the end of 35[35] that the staticist picture and
the self, though false, cannot be abandoned:

> However habituated and indispensable this fiction may now be, that in no way
> disproves its having been invented: something can be a condition of life and
> nevertheless be false. (Nachlaß Autumn 1884–Autumn 1885, KSA 11,
> 35[35])

It is here that we encounter a seemingly contradictory inconsistency that
has been vexing commentators. Nietzsche's texts are littered with polemic
reversals, on the one hand, and reversals of those reversals, on the other:
the static picture is false (assuming that it contains belief in x, y, z,); and
the static picture is an anthropological constant, a necessary condition of

life. Any interpretation that is not in hermeneutic denial needs to account for both. If we, then, allow for the further assumption—and there is plenty of textual evidence that we should—that 'life' (in the above passage) is for Nietzsche a phenomenon of very high value, and if the static picture is a necessary condition of 'life'; and 'life' is of high, if not the highest, value, it follows that the staticist picture cannot simply be false per se.

One might argue then that Nietzsche is really a fictionalist about staticism: according to which staticism is false and yet human beings are committed to it for adaptive-pragmatic purposes. I do not believe that Nietzsche's analysis ends here; he demands something more than a quasi-staticism. Nietzsche is always aware of the dangers of such pragmatic-adaptive acceptance. The danger is that too much remains in place, too much remains acceptable, and that new variants of nihilism come in through the back door. Therefore, Nietzsche's critique of staticism as well as its rehabilitation (as necessary for life) needs to be re-situated rather than replaced. In European philosophy, there has been a tendency to negate logic too quickly without realizing that it is the very same logic of mutually exclusive alternatives which is still tacitly at work in its own abolition. There are good grounds for a different logical framework. For want of better terms I will call this Nietzsche's adualistic-dialetheic framework. Dialetheism, from Greek 'diplo-aletheia' or two-way truth, allows for true contradictions and can therefore cope better with 'transition states', borderline cases, and vague predicates.

The Dialetheic Status of Staticism

We are left in a state of tension: staticism is the case and is not the case. Immediately, most will argue that this is only superficially so: staticism might be, for example, false from a third-person, scientific point of view, and yet psychologically true from a first-person perspective. Think of *Human, All Too Human* where Nietzsche argues that although water has certain chemical properties, this is hardly what concerns the sailor in distress (HA I 9). Again others might say that staticism is indeed false *tout court*, that there are only fields composed of whatever 'ultimates' are assumed by our best scientific theories, and that the world as it is to us is merely epiphenomenal and in theory reducible to the best description our physics has to offer. But Nietzsche is clear that both worlds are (1) the same world, and (2) of equal importance; they are to be taken seriously *both* together *and* in opposition to each other. Neither ought to assume exclusively priority. A mutually exclusive opposition 'is after all only the contradiction [*Gegen-*

satz] typical for human beings' (Nachlaß Spring–Autumn 1881, KSA 9, 11[281]).

It is exactly this Heraclitean, deconstructive (if properly understood, see, e.g., Wheeler III 2000; Nancy 2000; Gemes 2001; Waldenfels 2002), adualistic-dialetheic tension that requires a rationality that can do more than simply either abandon staticism or subscribe to it fully in a quasi-staticist way. As is well-known, Graham Priest has, for example, argued for a logic opposed to the law of non-contradiction (see Priest 1995). In order to get into a different (logical) 'frame of mind', in order to arrange one's beliefs in a different, appropriate logical field (something which is *not always* appropriate), Nietzsche sometimes uses a certain dialetheic technique which allows him to express, I wish to argue, perspectival asymmetries as well as perspectival simultaneity of the above kind, be-tween a first person 'experiential' perspective and third person 'descrip-tive' perspective. Both valid and necessary: any attempt to reduce the mat-ter at hand to either the one or the other or to a mediating third term is conceived as unacceptably reductive. Brian Leiter's enlightening work on Nietzsche's critique of free will (Knobe/Leiter 2007; Leiter 2007) credits Nietzsche with the polemic reversal of the Cartesian error of granting abso-lute priority to the first-person perspective. Like most work that has been done on (not only Nietzsche's) philosophy of mind, Leiter shies away from trying to provide the more complex theoretical framework needed for an interpretation of consciousness and agency (not only in Nietzsche). Such a framework is already emerging within contemporary philosophy of mind though perhaps not yet in cognitive science and empirical psychology (see, e.g., McGinn 2004, Gray 2004, Abel 2004, Rockwell 2005, Free-man/Strawson 2006, Thompson 2007, and Cosmelli et al. 2007). Nietz-sche's tensional asymmetries are by no means trivial. They cannot be done away with, Nietzsche held, precisely because reality is not simple but is perspectival, *con*stituted by these oppositions (see, e.g., Hatab 2008, p. 149; Reginster 2007).

Let us return to the explanatory step (4) one more time: it is certainly true that at times Nietzsche argues from an evolutionary point of view. The application of the law of non-contradiction, for example as an incorporated regulative rule, had a certain adaptive value. Existence demanded a com-plex matrix of choices within an environment that is itself not simply 'given' (as we know today also from Sellars and Quine) but also in part constituted and altered by practical and theoretical choices. Had the evolv-ing organism failed to make a great number of either-or choices, it might simply have vanished. Whereas every regulative, seemingly constant 'fic-tion' or, better, 'practical belief' has its history (to be studied genealogi-cally) and its time (when it is first selected), subject to changing condi-

tions, some regulative fictions and 'habituated practices' might no longer stand the test of time. This 'test of time' will have to be properly examined and will amount to a test based on criteria such as practice or belief x is or is no longer necessary if it is either 'for' or 'against' life. And we might indeed be able to abandon some beliefs and replace them with ones better suited to our current form of life and its requirements.

I don't see any textual evidence that Nietzsche ever envisaged human beings as fit to abandon the staticist worldview. Again, as an analogy one might think again of the concept 'mental state' as it figures (i) within neuroscience and (ii) as a first-person, qualitative experience, i.e. the description of the C-fibres firing in the brain and the pain I am experiencing. We do not believe that all that is going on is the *quale*; rather we believe that there is a wealth of neurobiological, unconscious processes that we can even make visible. Despite all this, it will remain necessary to retain the qualitative, first-person state. We need, for example, a 'nondualist' (Rockwell 2005) or 'equal-status fundamental-duality monistic' framework (Strawson 2006, p. 241) that allows us to acknowledge that both descriptions somehow refer to, aim to describe the same 'mind-brain-world state' from a different perspective. Nietzsche believes, and I think he is right, that bringing such perspectives or interpretations or language games together within an adualistic-dialetheic framework does not leave things simply as they are (not in matters of the mind, knowledge, (meta)physics or politics). These perspectives enter into a relationship that will from now on change reality. We have good grounds to assume that consciousness as a qualitative, experiential state *is* also a neurobiological event, and yet the neurobiological event must account for much more than C-fibres in a state of electric excitation, namely their phenomenological 'experiential' features. The adualistic-dialetheic framework allows one to describe the necessary tension opened up in a field structured around combining the unity-asserting *both-and* and the difference-preserving *neither-nor*. Staticism might both 'be the case' (from and for a first person perspective) and 'not be the case' (from and for a third person perspective) and, yet, is reducible to neither one or the other. This has all been said before, in both anglo-analytic and continental traditions, but whenever something goes against beliefs held deeply or practices carried out mainly unconsciously, it is necessary to repeat it, rephrasing it continually until it finally sinks in.

This may perhaps be seen as a step too far. Staticism is false, as we saw following Nietzsche's argument, as it leads to nihilism. Nietzsche was much better at criticizing false views than at constructing theories. His focus on history and his rehabilitation of time is first and foremost concerned—and so are the fourteen essays of *Nietzsche on Time and History*—with the proof that staticism about persons, objects, entities such as

nations, the law, truth, or the linear future of time and history itself is false. And yet, most contributions reach a point when a different conception is called for. Rather than summarizing the essays of *Nietzsche on Time and History* I will simply point towards these points of transition.

Nietzsche on Time and History

Nietzsche on Time and History falls in five parts: 'Time, History, Method'; 'Genealogy, Time, Becoming'; 'Eternal Recurrence, Meaning, Agency'; 'Nietzsche's Contemporaries'; and 'Tragic and Musical Time'.

Part one opens with an essay by Andrea Orsucci on 'Nietzsche's Cultural Criticism and his Historical Methodology'. Orsucci examines Nietzsche's treatments of ancient Greek civilization and primitive Christianity and traces Nietzsche's claims to his readings of, and critical engagements with, contemporary texts. It is the historical phenomena themselves that, according to Orsucci, Nietzsche's methods reveal as consisting of a complex simultaneity of temporal and historical layers, 'consistently concerned to identify and theorize the coexistence and mixing of very different traditions, cultures, and ways of thinking in any particular historical phenomenon' (Orsucci 2008, p. 12).

In 'Thucydides, Nietzsche, and Williams', Raymond Geuss analyses Nietzsche's preference for Thucydides over Plato. The reasons for Nietzsche's non-traditional preference are, first, that Thucydides portrayed human beings and their motivations in a non-moralizing way, and second, that he was opposed to the rationalistic, Platonic optimism symptomatic of two millennia of systematic philosophy. Between poetry on the one hand, and philosophy on the other, the bi-partite structure Nietzssche follows in the *Birth of Tragedy*, Thucydidean *Wissenschaftlichkeit* [scientific-mindedness]—'radically non-mythic, non-theological, and non-literary'—appears as a third possibility that informs Nietzsche's own interests not in the past per se but in dissecting 'those forms of collective human behaviour that are recurrent and thus comprehensible' (Geuss 2008, p. 43). In the late 1870s and early 1880s Nietzsche's notebooks indicate the importance he attributed to the 'strand of realist and empiricist thinking that Thucydides represents, and of seeing the demise of tragedy and of Thucydidean "enquiry" synoptically' (ibid., p. 46). It is the rejection of both optimism and pessimism, against the mutually exclusive alternatives 'to think either that these items [rationality, individual happiness, natural human development, socially desirable action] are set up so as to cohere, or that they are 'by nature' ineluctably fated to conflict in an unresolvable way—the refusal to be either an old-style philosophical optimist or a dogmatic pessimist'—that

Geuss finds at the heart of Nietzsche's fascination with Thucydides and Nietzsche's idea of the music-making Socrates: 'when Nietzsche wrote that "the Hellene was neither an optimist nor a pessimist" (Nachlaß Winter 1869/70–Spring 1870, KSA 7, 3[62]), this is what I assume he meant, and no Hellene could illustrate this more exactly than Thucydides' (ibid., p. 48).

Thomas Brobjer's 'The Late Nietzsche's Fundamental Critique of Historical Scholarship' focuses on the third essay of the *Genealogy* in which Nietzsche explicitly attacks the value of purely historical scholarship. Brobjer argues that the late Nietzsche's main objection to history as a science was not methodological but rather 'that history was placed above philosophy—that history and historical scholarship were seen as a goal or an end in itself rather than as a means' (Brobjer 2008, p. 52). Only once historical scholarship lives up to the demand for the philosophical creation of values does it find its proper justification.

Part twp of *Nietzsche on Time and History* opens with Tinneke Beeckman's essay on 'Nietzsche's Timely Genealogy: An Exercise in Anti-Reductionist Naturalism'. Beeckman revisits the link between Nietzsche's genealogical method and his Lamarck and Darwin inspired naturalism. The reactive, associated by Beeckman with Nietzsche's Darwin, and the active, associated with Lamarck, need to be considered side by side in order to appreciate Nietzsche's non-reductive naturalism: 'Adaptation is not active, but reactive. Nietzsche emphasizes Spencer's fatal mistake: to see life itself as an inner adaptation to external circumstances' (Beeckman 2008, p. 72).

According to Kevin Hill's 'From Kantian Temporality to Nietzschen Naturalism' it is central to any understanding of Nietzsche's view of time that Nietzsche struggled precisely with the idea that 'space and time … are mind-dependent in the sense that Kant and Schopenhauer intended, while also maintaining that the mind is itself something that occurs within nature, as Schopenhauer had maintained' (Hill 2008, p. 75). While the early Nietzsche had tried to resolve this matter by attributing time and space to a primordial intellect that 'produces space and time and by that produces the brain' (ibid., p. 76), the later Nietzsche arrives at a notion of naturalism that 'reinterprets things as complexes of power relations in which observers are always involved; he does not reduce things to sums of episodes within subjects' (ibid., p. 84).

John Richardson's examination of 'Nietzsche's Problem of the Past' sets itself the task of resolving the tension that lies in the fact that for Nietzsche the past is far too important to be ignored, but attention to it turns out to be harmful. The past is important for the simple reason that 'what one *is*' is what one has been selected (in an evolutionary sense) to

be. The past 'has a kind of "presence" in us, constituting us now as who we are, determining the meaning of what we now do' (Richardson 2008, p. 91). Central to our understanding of the presence of the past in the present is Richardson's understanding of power wills that have been selected and structure us who 'express the aims of these wills, which carry their intentions ahead into us' (ibid., p. 91). Nietzsche's genealogical method is therefore a technique to become aware of the proto-intentional 'wills', to expose the social formation of values, and in a retrospective stance to bring into view 'the forces that really aimed the rules and values to which I commit myself' (ibid., p. 107). By 'cutting-into' our lives of desiring, willing, valuing etc. we are always in danger of falling into an alienating form of nihilism, and yet, Richardson argues that genealogy enables us to 'judge those designed-in purposes of our ways of thinking and acting—and decide whether we favour those purposes' (ibid., p. 108).

In the final paper of part two, 'Towards Adualism: Becoming and Nihilism in Nietzsche's Philosophy', I examine the relationship that holds between the concepts of 'being' and 'becoming' in Nietzsche's philosophy. I argue that Nietzsche's emphasis on 'becoming' is motivated by the anomaly of nihilism that is best explained as 'a function of the belief in being' (Dries 2008, p. 114). Nietzsche's philosophical agenda, his attempt to provide a 'counter-force' to nihilism, should be regarded as the reason for the initial, seemingly *radical* nature of his affirmation of becoming, which at first sight reintroduces a dualism between becoming and language, recapitulating the nihilism it had aimed to circumvent (ibid., p. 120). I argue that Nietzsche's ontology of becoming as will-to-power relations should be seen instead as a *less* radical presentation of becoming. Aiming at a non-reductive, adualistic practice of thought, he accounts for both the relative permanence of 'relations', 'entities' and 'objects' and their constantly changing, temporal complexity.

Part three of *Nietzsche on Time and History* is concerned with Nietzsche's attempt to describe the temporal disposition of the world as eternal recurrence and what this demands of the human being.

In 'Shocking Time: Reading Eternal Recurrence Literally' Lawrence Hatab argues that although Nietzsche did not present eternal recurrence as a cosmological theory or a scientific fact, it nevertheless must be taken literally, that 'a certain extra-psychological literality would better fit the world-disclosive and "revelatory" spirit of Nietzsche's accounts of eternal recurrence' (Hatab 2008, p. 148). In order to deal with the question of meaning that has hitherto blocked, in Nietzsche's view, the possibility of affirming life in its finite, temporal disposition as will to power, eternal recurrence emerges as 'Nietzsche's formula for "redemption" of time and becoming' (ibid., p. 150). Against nihilistic alternative models of time—

Hatab identifies six: *positivistic, salvational, teleological, cyclical, pessimistic,* and *novelistic*— 'eternal recurrence comes forth as the only conceivable temporal model that does not fall prey to a fugitive gaze *away* from life as lived' (ibid., p. 154).

Paul S. Loeb approaches Nietzsche's eternal recurrence through an examination of Camus's Sisyphus and suicide. According to Loeb, standard readings of eternal recurrence, Nietzsche's counter-ideal to the ascetic ideal, tend to emphasize the doctrine's supposed ability to bring about a reversal from the ascetic to the affirmative. Loeb argues that standard interpretations (such as Nehamas) overlook that on Nietzsche's own premises, affirmation, for example by reinterpreting one's past in view of one's present state, turns out to be impossible as it, in Loeb's view, leads to a falsification of the past. 'But the thought of eternal recurrence closes off all such escape and condemns the human animal to eternal meaninglessness' (Loeb 2008, p. 179). Nietzsche offers therefore a disconcerting counter ideal that will force 'the decadents *give in* to their dominant suicidal instincts' (ibid., p. 176), and only by 'overcoming' themselves come closest to affirming life. Eternal recurrence 'must *oppose* the ascetic ideal's ability to *block* the suicidal nihilism of degenerating life' (ibid.). It might be asked if Loeb relies on a notion of selfhood more static than is warranted. Based on an exclusive disjunction between affirmation and asceticism that demands, in Loeb's view, the voluntary suicide of the decadent, he argues that true life affirmation requires a cosmological understanding of eternal recurrence, a truly superhuman 'backward willing'. The latter ideas rely on Loeb's previous writings (see ibid., p. 182) to which I cannot do justice in this introduction.

The last contribution of part three, Herman W. Siemens' 'Nietzsche and the Temporality of (Self-)Legislation' deals with a fundamental problem: how does one reconcile the need for a stable legislation that stands 'in radical contradiction with the pluralism and dynamism of life-as-becoming' (Siemens 2008, p. 189). Siemens interprets first Nietzsche's conception of self-legislation in 'Schopenhauer as Educator' as a specific form of moral particularism coupled with an Emersonian notion of moral perfectionism. Schopenhauer's metaphysical solution is perceived as inadequate by Nietzsche as is Wagner's attempted artistic unification. Both Schopenhauer and Wagner, Siemens argues, fail 'the test of pluralism required for a life-affirming form of legislation' (ibid., p. 201). Siemens sets out to show that a different, agonistic and pluralistic and yet communal conception of self-legislation is to be found in the unpublished notes of the Zarathustra period. Here, the law should not only be understood as always only provisional and yet 'responsive to diversity, a law *for* many, not a law that subjects the many to One' (ibid., p. 202), it also requires us to combine

an individual morality that 'cannot … be achieved in isolation' with a morality which is 'inseparable from the task of founding the kind of ethical community that makes it possible' (ibid., p. 207).

The essays of Anthony K. Jensen and Martin A. Ruehl provide a detailed account of Nietzsche's relationship with contemporary philology, on the one hand, and with Walter Burkhardt and the Renaissance on the other.

Jensen's '*Geschichte* or *Historie*? Nietzsche's Second *Untimely Meditation* in the Context of Nineteenth-Century Philological Studies' examines the polarization in classical studies or *Altertumswissenschaft* into '*Wort-Philologie*', 'approaching antiquity with the tools of textual emendation, codices, and literary criticism', and 'Sach-Philologie', often labelled as '"hermeneutical", "antiquarian", or "humanistic"' philology (Jensen 2008, p. 213). At first a follower of Ritchl who had tried to bridge both camps, Nietzsche would 'reject both traditions on the way to positing a third way of his own' (ibid., p. 216). Jensen's analysis enables him to throw new light on Wilamowitz's rejection of *The Birth of Tragedy.* Nietzsche aims to reveal the opposition between both 'scholastic factions' and life, depicts them 'as psychological types' rather than as scholars with different methodological preferences (ibid., p. 219). Nietzsche's own, monumental historical approach is modelled not on contemporary classicists but instead, among others, on Goethe whose character combines 'the healthiest aspects of antiquity for the sake of reinvigorating culture' (ibid., p. 224).

In 'An Uncanny Re-Awakening': Nietzsche's Renascence of the Renaissance out of the Spirit of Jacob Burckhardt' Martin A. Ruehl argues that with the exception of Greek antiquity no historical epoch fascinated Nietzsche more than the Italian Renaissance. In the 1870s, his study of the Renaissance, 'as a historical reference point and cultural ideal … allowed him to question a set of values and notions that had determined his early thought' and 'became a crystallization point, especially in the 1880s, for Nietzsche's most radically anti-humanist, anti-liberal ideas about tyranny and individuality, war and culture, violence and health' (Ruehl 2008, p. 229). Ruehl first discusses Burckhardt's portrayal of the *Civilization of the Renaissance* before tracing the various other sources of Nietzsche's 'Renaissancebild' and his selective appropriation of these sources against Wagner and Luther. It was the culture of the quattrocento, Ruehl argues, that furnished Nietzsche with an answer to Schopenhauer's pessimistic 'philosophical deconstruction of the *principium individuationis* and led him to rethink the significance of individual agency in history' (ibid., pp. 243–244) and ultimately led to Nietzsche's belief that only a few select superior human beings could bring about a cultural renewal. According to Ruehl's reading, in contrast to Burckhardt, Nietzsche focuses exclusively on the aristocratic elements of the Renaissance. Burckhardt had 'allowed

for the growth of "individuality" and cultural productivity' (ibid., pp. 250–251), a republican alternative Nietzsche chose to ignore. Nietzsche's Renaissance-inspired individualism stands of course side by side with his ideal of an agonistic community.

The final two essays take a close look at Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* and the importance of music for Nietzsche's views on time. Against influential interpretations of the *Birth of Tragedy* by among others Nehamas, de Man and Porter, Katherine Harloe argues for 'the positive character of its appropriation of Schopenhauer and Wagner', challenging the idea that it should be read primarily as a contribution to the major debate of post-Kantian German philosophy, namely 'that of the possibility of metaphysics' (Harloe 2008, p. 271). Harloe revisits the, in her view, simplified reading that Nietzsche's Dionysus–Apollo distinction mirrored Schopenhauer's own metaphysical distinctions and argues that it 'rests upon an oversimplification of what "Schopenhauer" could have represented for Nietzsche at the time' (ibid., p. 272). In fact, Nietzsche uses and relies heavily on Schopenhauer in his attack on Socratic optimism. Key passages often cited as a radical critique of Schopenhauer stem in fact from Schopenhauer himself. This, Harloe remarks, 'raises the possibility that *The Birth of Tragedy* deploys Schopenhauer not in parodic fashion … to shatter all such illusions, but rather as a means of developing them in a new and superior form' (ibid., p. 281). Nietzsche can be shown to construct a historical narrative of the crisis of science and 'casts Schopenhauer in a leading role' (ibid., p. 282)

Finally, Jonathan R. Cohen analyses the importance of music for 'Nietzsche's Musical Conception of Time'. In a close reading of Nietzsche's critique of Wagnerian endless melody Cohen shows that Nietzsche promotes both loss of an essential notion of the self and yet maintains that 'structure is necessary for a flourishing and creative life' (Cohen 2008, p. 291). Hollingdale's translation obfuscates that Nietzsche's critique of Wagner is not based on Wagner's choice of irregular time measures but that Nietzsche asks about its *effect* and '*makes* endless melody be about rhythm, and thus by the same token about *time*' (ibid., p. 292). He criticizes that Wagner's melodies '"overflow" their measures' (ibid., p. 296) and that this leads to the loss of structure on the part of the listener and 'overrides the listener's own internal sense of structure' (ibid., p. 297). A larger issue emerges with regard to Nietzsche's conception of time: in the same way that Nietzsche rejects the idea of a thing-in-itself in favour of the world as it is experienced, he takes not the external metronome but rather 'takes the perspective of *the listener*' (ibid.) as the final measure of musical time. Cohen concludes that Nietzsche's emphasis on time as it is experienced corresponds to Nietzsche's insistence that each subject has its

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own internal rhythm and temporality, derived from, among other things, 'our internal physiological rhythms' (ibid., p. 299). The criterion for evaluating music then becomes its effect on us: 'it can help structure our internal rate of time—either directly or by providing a contrasting rhythm to serve as a beneficial tonic—or it can harm it … And with no time-in-itself to fall back on, such undermining can be utterly destructive. It requires great strength to resist it and maintain one's own tempo' (ibid., p. 300).

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