

Ethics

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Abstract and Keywords

At the close of the eighteenth century, Kant attempted to anchor morality in freedom. A series of nineteenth-century thinkers, though impressed with the claim that there is an essential connection between morality and freedom, argue that Kant has misunderstood the nature of the self, agency, freedom, the individual, the social, the natural sciences, and philosophical psychology. The chapter traces the way in which several central figures rethink the connection between morality and freedom by complicating the analyses of the aforementioned notions. In particular, the chapter discusses Schiller's demand for a unified self; Hegel's attention to the socially and historically situated agent; Feuerbach's and Büchner's turn to natural science; Marx's materialism; Schopenhauer's philosophical psychology; and Nietzsche's attempt to anchor normative demands in will to power.

Keywords: morality, ethics, freedom, Schiller, Hegel, Feuerbach, Büchner, Marx, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche

24.1 Introduction

AT the close of the eighteenth century, Kant attempted to anchor morality in freedom. Subsequently, a series of nineteenth-century thinkers, though impressed with the claim that there is an essential connection between morality and freedom, argued that Kant misunderstood the nature of the self, agency, freedom, the individual, the social, the natural sciences, and philosophical psychology. I trace the way in which several central figures rethought the connection between morality and freedom by complicating the analyses of the aforementioned notions. In particular, I discuss Schiller's demand for a unified self; Hegel's attention to the socially and historically situated agent; Feuerbach's and Büchner's turn to natural science; Marx's materialism; Schopenhauer's philosophical psychology; and Nietzsche's attempt to anchor normative demands in will to power.

24.2 The Kantian Attempt to Anchor Morality in Freedom

Consider particular moral demands, such as a prohibition on theft. This prohibition can be viewed as an imperative constraining our will: do not steal. But how are we to justify such a claim? Kant offers an extremely influential argument that no external grounding for normative requirements is possible; any attempt to locate the ground of morality in the word of god, the fabric of the universe, or the dictates of nature would render morality a submission to external, alien influences.¹ Instead, these moral norms must be sourced in the self. But not just any part of the self: if the will simply does the bidding of some desire or urge, that too will count as submission to something external to the will. Instead, the will must (p. 474) view itself “as the author of its principles independently of alien influences” (G 4: 448). If we consider a normative principle—or, as Kant puts it, a “law”—that constrains the will, then the will must give itself this law:

Hence the will is not merely subject to the law, but subject to it in such a way that it must be regarded as also giving law to itself and just because of this as first subject to the law (of which it can regard itself as the author).

(G 4: 431)

Anything less would render the will heteronomous, or unfree:

If the will seeks the law that is to determine it...in the character of any of its objects—the result is always heteronomy. In that case the will does not give itself the law, but the object does so in virtue of its relation to the will.

(G 4: 441)

Thus, according to Kant, no external authority binds me to normative principles; rather, I bind myself to principles, and therein arises their claim to authority over me. Moreover, I act freely when I act on these self-imposed principles. So freedom is not mere independence from external influences or determinants; rather, freedom consists in binding myself by principles that I have imposed on myself.

Kant claims that although the authority of norms is explained by the fact that we impose them on ourselves, the *content* of these norms is not up to us: the injunction “be autonomous!” imposes determinate constraints on what can be willed. The core idea is that in order to impose norms on ourselves at all, there are certain standards to which we become inescapably committed.

The general form of Kant’s argument is familiar: we are committed to acting autonomously. Acting autonomously requires acting on a law or principle. The law cannot be hypothetical, that is, tied to the realization of some goal or the satisfaction of some inclination, because the will would then be determined to action by something external to itself (i.e. an inclination or goal). Instead, the law must be categorical; it must be unconditionally

Ethics

valid. Kant states the content of this law as follows: “act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law” (G 4: 421). He argues that this law—the Categorical Imperative—rules out certain actions, thereby yielding determinate constraints on permissible actions. So, the *formal* conception of freedom yields a *substantive* or *contentful* conception of which norms we are committed to acting upon.²

Thus, Kant summarizes his project as follows: “We simply showed by developing the generally received concept of morality that an autonomy of the will is unavoidably bound up with it, or rather its very foundation” (G 4: 445). Kant’s claim to have “simply” showed this is open to dispute: his arguments face objections at each turn. It is notoriously difficult to show how commitment to the Categorical Imperative is supposed to follow from Kant’s initial conception of agency, and even if we can do *that*, there are reasons for doubting that (p. 475) the Categorical Imperative can generate any substantive conclusions about what there is reason to do.³

Nonetheless, Kant’s methodology is extremely attractive: he locates the ground of morality within the self, and in particular within the free self. The demands of morality and the requirements for freedom coincide. While the details of Kant’s approach are widely rejected, this framework is enormously influential. Thus, to cite two early examples, Fichte accepts Kant’s claim that the source of morality must be within self-legislation: “the ethical drive demands *freedom*—for the sake of *freedom*.”⁴ Schelling famously claims that “the beginning and end of all philosophizing is freedom!”⁵

These claims are taken up in different ways by a host of later thinkers, including Schiller, Hegel, Marx, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche. Each of these thinkers in one way or another links morality to freedom. But the connection ceases to be so straightforward: Kant’s single-minded focus on individual autonomy is complicated by attention to several additional factors. These include a demand for a unified self; a claim that Kant’s individualistic approach ignores the way in which the individual is determined by and derivative of the social; an appreciation for the successes of science, which leads to a demand for materialistic explanations of topics traditionally treated by philosophy; and a deeper study of philosophical psychology. Each of these topics is investigated by philosophers subsequent to Kant, and developed in different ways. The connection between morality and freedom, while preserved in these thinkers, becomes more complex and in some cases more diffuse. Moreover, the approaches that become dominant toward the end of the nineteenth century make the project of justifying our traditional normative commitments seem increasingly unlikely. This comes to a head with Nietzsche, so I will end with him.⁶

24.3 Schiller and the Aspiration for a Unified Self

Friedrich Schiller was impressed by Kant's attempt to anchor morality in freedom: "certainly no greater words have been spoken by a mortal than these Kantian ones, which are (p. 476) at once the content of his whole philosophy: be self-determining!"⁷ Schiller accepts two key components of Kant's philosophy: his claim that an action has moral worth only if it is done for the sake of duty, and his claim that moral principles must be justified by reason alone. However, Schiller is troubled by an implication of Kant's account of freedom that I will explain in this section: namely, that freedom is compatible with inner division.

Schiller accepts a version of the Kantian distinction between reason and sensibility. The individual, Schiller tells us, has two aspects: a rational nature, manifest in judgment and self-conscious thought, and a sensible nature, manifest in sense perception and affects.⁸ These two aspects of human nature can be related in three different ways.⁹

First, the individual might be dominated by his sensible nature, merely acting on whichever inclination happens to arise. "Prey to desire," he "lets natural impulse rule him unrestrainedly" (*GD*, 280/147). Schiller terms such an individual *ochlocratic* (i.e. ruled by a mob). Schiller denounces this type of individual, claiming that he is analogous to a failed state in which citizens do not acknowledge the legitimacy of their sovereign (*GD*, 282/148).

Second, the individual might be dominated by his rational nature; Schiller takes Kant to endorse this state of the soul (*GD*, 282-5/148-50). Schiller terms such an individual *monarchic*; his rational nature rules his sensible nature with "strict surveillance" (*GD*, 281-2/148). He claims that the monarchic agent is better off than the ochlocratic agent, for his actions will be in accordance with the balance of reasons, and will have moral worth.

Although the monarchic agent is superior to the ochlocratic agent, Schiller finds something problematic about *both* of these agents: namely, the fact that one *part* of the individual dominates the other part. "This much is clear: that neither the will...nor the affect... ought to use *force*" (*GD*, 279/146). He endorses a third state: harmony between the rational and sensible parts of the soul. A harmonious individual would have affects that incline her to pursue the very same ends that rational thought inclines her to pursue. Like the monarchic agent, her actions would be in accordance with the balance of reasons. But unlike the monarchic agent, there would be no struggle, no antagonism, in the soul of this agent. Her whole being would incline her in one direction:

It is only when he gathers, so to speak, *his entire humanity* together, and his ethical way of thinking becomes the result of the united effect of both principles [e.g.,

Reason and Sensibility], when it *has become his nature*, it is then only that it is secure...(GD, 284/150)¹⁰

The human being has been set the task of promoting a sincere accord between his two natures, of always being a harmonious whole, and of acting with his whole harmonious humanity.

(GD, 289/154)

(p. 477)

Schiller calls the harmonious individual the beautiful soul. Like the monarchic agent, her actions have dignity or moral worth. Unlike the monarchic agent, though, her actions exhibit *grace* (*Anmut*): she experiences no internal division, discord, or constraint.

Thus Schiller holds that an agent is unified when the two aspects of the soul—rational nature and affective nature—are harmonious, directing the agent toward the same ends. Disunity arises when there is a conflict between the rational and the affective, which takes the form of reason being out of accord with the affects. In short: unity obtains when the agent's reflective judgments and affects incline her in the same direction.

An adequate moral philosophy would have to teach us how to achieve this state. And it is just this task that Schiller pursues in *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen* (*Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*, 1794). The arguments of this work are dense and resist any quick summary, but the core claim is easily conveyed: it is through an aesthetic education that we become unified selves or beautiful souls. Moreover, this ideal is not something that we can attain alone: we must relate not just to ourselves, but also to others and to our society, in an unconstrained and undivided manner. This requires a specific form of culture: in its ideal form, culture preserves individuality and variety while fostering community, and thereby leads individuals to participate in social life not from duty but from inclination (Letter XVII). That, then, is Schiller's vision: a community of undivided agents interacting in a way that preserves their individuality and accords with and gives expression to their whole natures.

24.4 Hegel's Socially and Historically Situated Self

Hegel, too, begins with freedom. In *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (*Philosophy of Right*, 1821), Hegel claims that the concept of freedom, when properly understood, is the ground of ethics.¹¹ He argues that ethical agency is the capacity to act on norms that arise not from some external source, but from the agent's will. Thus, "the will that wills itself," or "the free will which wills the free will" (PR, 27), is the ultimate source of normativity.

Ethics

Thus far, Hegel sounds like Kant. However, he famously criticizes Kant for operating with an excessively “formal” or “abstract” conception of autonomy, which renders the Kantian theory an “empty formalism” (*PR*, 135). Briefly, Hegel’s point is that the Categorical Imperative does not yield any determinate results. For example, Kant claims that the Categorical Imperative rules out theft as follows: if the maxim of stealing personal property were universalized, the institution of property would die out, and theft would be rendered impossible. Hegel’s objection is simple:

The absence of property contains in itself just as little contradiction as the non-existence of this or that nation, family, etc., or the death of the whole human race. But if it is already established on other grounds and presupposed that property and human life are to exist and be respected, then indeed it is a contradiction to commit theft or murder; a contradiction must be a contradiction of something, i.e. of some content presupposed from the start as a fixed principle.

(*qPR*, 135R)

Hegel agrees with Kant that if the maxim of stealing in order to enrich oneself were universalized, the institution of property would disappear. However, Hegel claims that unless we presuppose, as a fixed principle, that property *should* exist, this generates no contradiction at all.

Hegel takes this to be a perfectly general point: a merely formal principle cannot yield any determinate results unless we incorporate some substantive content (such as, in the above case, a commitment to property). For this reason, Hegel concludes that an adequate account of normativity must take existing cultural and social institutions and values as its “support and foundation” (*PR*, 141A). He terms these institutions and values *Sittlichkeit*, or “ethical life” (*PR*, 142–360).

Hegel distinguishes between *Moralität* and *Sittlichkeit*. According to *Moralität*,

ethical and moral principles shall not merely lay their claim on him as external laws and precepts of authority to be obeyed, but have their assent, recognition, or even justification in his heart, sentiment, conscience, intelligence, etc.¹²

In other words, *Moralität* attempts to justify ethical norms by appealing to the acts of individuals. Kant’s theory is a paradigm case: a norm is justified insofar as the agent can will it in accordance with the Categorical Imperative. *Sittlichkeit*, by contrast, claims that duties can be understood and justified only by the agent’s participation in and identification with concrete forms of social life. For example, consider the modern family. In an ideal case, the family is produced by the rational free choice of two individuals; the individuals seek a good, namely love; and this relationship gives rise to determinate obligations (for example, mutual respect, obligations of care, and so on). It is by participating in and identifying with such institutions that agents realize their freedom and determine their duties.

Of course, not just any form of social life will be acceptable; not just any set of social institutions and practices will enable the agent to understand and justify her duties. Rather, these institutions and practices must be structured so that they provide the agent with the conditions for realizing her own freedom. Many institutions and practices will fall short on this score. Consider a simple example: if the laws and institutions of my society condemn me to a life of slavery, I will not be able fully to realize my freedom by conforming to those laws and institutions. Thus, Hegel claims that we can ask, of any set of social institutions or practices, whether they enable all individuals to realize their freedom.¹³

(p. 479)

Moreover, the institutions and practices must be such that subjects are not only *in fact free*, but are also capable of *recognizing* their own freedom. That is, individuals must be able to view these institutions and practices as expressions of their own wills, so that participation in them is conceived as free activity.¹⁴ In *The Philosophy of Right*, Hegel argues that three modern social institutions—the family, civil society, and the liberal state—jointly fulfill these conditions.¹⁵

With this in mind, we can see that there are three important differences between Kantian *Moralität* and Hegelian *Sittlichkeit*. First, the objects of normative assessment are distinct: whereas the Kantian agent determines her duty by assessing maxims for particular actions, the Hegelian's duties are given by the actual social institutions and practices in which she is embedded—though these institutions and practices are themselves assessed in terms of their capacity to enable and make manifest agents' freedom.

Second, Kantian *Moralität* attempts to *derive* or *extract* norms from a formal procedure. For example, according to Kant I can establish a commitment to the institution of property merely by considering the concept of autonomous willing. The Hegelian is more modest: she begins with a determinate set of principles, embodied in the social institutions of her society, and asks whether these principles are realizations of freedom. So Hegel's theory uses a formal criterion (the idea of freedom) not to derive, but to *assess* norms that are embodied in the society. Accordingly, Hegel's theory has a non-foundationalist structure.

For this reason, the Hegelian ethical theory will always begin with a determinate, historically situated set of norms, principles, and duties. There is no aspiration, here, to produce a foundational normative principle, such as the Categorical Imperative, which generates the selfsame results for all rational agents. Thus, Hegel's method of justifying normative authority involves scrutinizing the social institutions and practices that we find ourselves with, and showing that they are, or at least aspire to be, realizations of freedom: we can affirm them as institutions and practices in which we realize our own freedom. Asking whether the normative claims embodied in these institutions and practices are justified does not involve showing that they can be derived from some formal criterion, such as the Categorical Imperative. These norms need not be *derived* from anything at all. Rather, justifying the norms requires showing that, although they are historically contingent, they actualize and make manifest our freedom.

This brings us to the third point: Hegel argues that freedom is possible only if one is already standing in certain kinds of social relationships and participating in certain social activities. We can actualize our autonomy only in and through concrete social institutions. We might put the most basic point this way: Hegel thinks that Kant, in focusing on the (p. 480) atomistic individual, has things backwards. Instead, we need to start with the whole and understand the individual in terms of it.¹⁶ For, as Hegel nicely summarizes his project:

The right of individuals to their subjective determination to freedom is fulfilled in so far as they belong to ethical actuality [*sittlichen Wirklichkeit*]; for their certainty of their own freedom has its truth in such objectivity, and it is in the ethical realm [*im Sittlichen*] that they actually possess their own essence and their inner universality.

(*PR*, 153)

It is this demand for non-alienated freedom achieved through determinate social institutions that most sharply distinguishes Hegel from Kant.

In developing these ideas, Hegel reiterates Schiller's demand for unity. First, human beings have sensuous inclinations and needs, so an account of morality must not require that agents be alienated from these needs (as in Kant's demand that we abstract from all of them).¹⁷ Second, human beings are situated in social and cultural institutions, such as the family, civil society, and the state; these institutions shape the agent's identity and enable the agent to recognize and fulfill his duties. This is a form of unity as reconciliation: individuals are at one with themselves and their societies, experiencing nothing as alien or estranged. Individuals realize themselves in an ethical community. Thus, although Hegel's accounts are richer and more intricate than Schiller's, these two guiding ideals are analogous.

24.5 German Materialism and the Turn to Natural Science

Hegel's aspiration for a unified, non-alienated, free self is dominant into the 1830s. However, by the 1840s the tides begin to turn: the German materialists react against the perceived excesses of Hegel and his followers. These materialists are a diverse lot, but share a common philosophical trajectory: they begin by valorizing the sciences and demanding that philosophy be empirical; they see Hegel and his followers as the paradigms of anti-empirical philosophy; and they suggest that, once the appreciation of science and the love of truth have become widespread, society can clear away religious and metaphysical illusions and enter an age of flourishing.

Feuerbach's *Das Wesen des Christentums* (*The Essence of Christianity*, 1841) is one of the earliest works in this genre.¹⁸ There, Feuerbach argues that Hegel's idealistic philosophy should be transformed into an "empirical" form; Hegel's social theory should be replaced

by an empirical study of the ways in which human beings can be emancipated; (p. 481) and religious thought should be abandoned once we see that God is merely a fiction that human beings “project.”

This work is enormously influential; it explodes in popularity, and works with similar themes soon follow. Büchner’s *Kraft und Stoff* (*Force and Matter*, 1855) went through 12 editions by 1872, and Moleschott’s writings including *Lehre der Nahrungsmittel* (*Theory of Nutrition*, 1850) made him famous. Some of the arguments that gripped the imagination now seem rather quaint: for example, Moleschott argued that the character of nations and cultures is determined by their diet; as Feuerbach famously summarizes Moleschott’s view, “Man is what he eats!” The working class, for example, could hope to improve its lot only by switching its diet from potatoes to beans, for only beans will instill revolutionary fervor.¹⁹

The claims are crude by today’s standards, but they nonetheless exerted a powerful effect on the philosophical scene. Natural science is seen as the key to resolving—or dissolving—traditional philosophical problems. By the 1860s, even a great skeptic of materialism, Friedrich Albert Lange, has so absorbed its lessons that he writes, “the nature of man is to the Materialist only a special case of universal physiology, as thought is only a special case in the chain of physical processes of life.”²⁰

What kinds of results obtain within moral philosophy when we follow these demands to model our philosophical reflections on the natural sciences? The early materialists tend to endorse a by now familiar form of secular humanism. In Feuerbach, for example, we must clear away the misconceptions of religion: our ideas of god are simply projections of the human essence; in transferring our own essence to an illusory god, we alienate ourselves from our own essence and limit our capabilities.²¹ Once we recognize this, though, we can venerate man instead of god. Our goal is simple: to realize our own capacities. “Man exists in order to think, love, and will. What is the end of Reason? Reason. Of love? Love. Of will? The freedom to will. We pursue knowledge in order to know; love in order to love; will in order to will, that is, in order to be free” (*Essence*, 3). Reason, love, and freedom are our tasks.

Feuerbach attempts to justify these demands for reason, love, and freedom by appealing to a drive toward happiness (*Glückseligkeitstrieb*). He sometimes treats this as our most basic drive, and sometimes as that which is common to all of our drives. Morality is founded on considerations of how our actions affect the happiness of others:

Good is the acceptance, bad the rejection, of the drive to happiness. Happiness, but not reduced into one single person, rather disseminated among different persons, I and (p. 482) Thou integrating, therefore not one-sided but dual-sided and all-sided, is the principle of morality.²²

Heady stuff, but the argument is rather unclear. As Engels writes in 1886, “What Feuerbach has to tell us about morals can, therefore, only be extremely meager. The urge toward happiness is innate in man, and must therefore form the basis of all morality.”²³

Büchner's arguments are a bit more developed. He argues that our ideas of good and right are merely adopted from the culture into which we have been educated; our moral concepts are not "innate," rather "relative in the highest degree" (*FM*, 169).²⁴ For our "moral notions are justly considered as the result of gradual experience" (*FM*, 171); societies adopt and instill in their members "those laws and social customs, which human society has from experience gradually found necessary to establish for its self-preservation" (*FM*, 174). However, Büchner notes, "even these precepts and customs are extremely varying, according to the conditions of external circumstances in regard to time and individual institutions" (*FM*, 174). He illustrates this with an example that still has relevance today: "the destruction of the fetus *in utero* was by no means considered an immoral act among the Romans; today it is severely punished" (*FM*, 174).

Büchner recognizes that these results might seem to threaten morality with relativism. However, he notes that the materialist need not "ignore the value of moral ideas, so far as they form the foundation of human society" (*FM*, 248). Moral claims are justified as conditions for the preservation of society. Of course, looking somewhat deeper, we can then ask what justifies our commitment to the preservation of society. Büchner's answer is simple: "refined egotism" (*FM*, 249). Society is in our long-term, enlightened self-interest. Ultimately, then, moral norms will be justified as those conventions that are in our enlightened self-interest.²⁵ We can look forward to an age in which agents openly recognize this, and clear away the discredited myths of free will, religion, and the like.

But it is, of course, Marx who gives us the most influential conception of the link between materialism and morality. Marx departs from the simple physiology of the earlier materialists. Thus, he famously writes, "The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism...is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object or of contemplation, but not as human sensuous activity, practice, not subjectively" (*Theses on Feuerbach*, 1). For Marx, the material encompasses not merely physiology, but also economic forces, social institutions, and the concrete desires and powers of human beings.

(p. 483)

Marx endorses a superficial interpretation of Hegel, according to which Hegel claims that philosophical theories drive history.²⁶ He argues that Hegel, thus understood, has things exactly backwards: the philosophical thought of an age is determined by the age's material activity:

The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men...Conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men appear at this stage as the direct efflux of their material behavior. The same applies to mental production as expressed in the language of politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics, etc., of a people.²⁷

Thus material forces determine philosophical, legal, and moral thought. These material forces are chiefly economic:

in the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general.

(*M*, 4-5)

So economic arrangements determine thought.

Why the focus on economic arrangements? Because the essential feature of human beings is that they produce their own means of subsistence, and thereby produce their own material life.²⁸ Human beings are distinguished from other animals “as soon as they begin to *produce* their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organization. By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life” (*M*, 150). So what we are depends on (or is constituted by) how we produce:

the mode of production...is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite mode of life on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with what they produce and with how they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production.

(*M*, 150)

As Marx summarizes his theory: “This sum of productive forces, capital funds and social forms of intercourse, which every individual and generation finds in existence as something given, is the real basis of what the philosophers have conceived as ‘substance’ and ‘essence of man’...” (*M*, 165). (p. 484)

At this historical stage, the material forces have shaped us in a damaging manner: capitalist economic forms alienate us from the products of our labor, from the labor itself, from our communal or “species” life, and from other individuals (*M*, 70-4).²⁹ The paradigm is the factory worker, who labors to produce products he does not own, whose labor is tightly regimented and controlled by his superiors, whose interaction with other human beings consists merely in the exhausting drudgery necessary for survival. Yet Marx—like the other materialists just mentioned—adopts an optimistic view of social progress: these problems are about to be resolved. In particular, Marx argues that we are on the verge of a communist revolution that will make possible authentic, non-alienated, free activity for all. The capitalist model is breaking down:

Modern bourgeois society with its relations of production, of exchange and property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and exchange, is like the sorcerer, who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells...

(*M*, 478)

Marx claims that this can be seen in the periodic economic crises that plague capitalism—which, he predicts, will become increasingly severe. With the collapse of capitalism will enter communism, which is “the only society in which the genuine and free development of individuals ceases to be a mere phrase” (*M*, 207). In communism, the individual achieves self-realization by working freely for the good of all.

Although these materialists are a diverse group, we can see that in all of them, materialism reduces ethics to a derivative field: values are either a mere set of psychological or physiological dispositions, or an emanation of culture and history. With Marx, in particular, the Kantian enterprise of assessing the intentions of individual agents comes to seem misguided; the real work lies elsewhere, in the analysis of social and cultural institutions.

24.6 Schopenhauer and the Demand for Philosophical Psychology

The materialists were ready to upend our thoughts about the relationship between the spiritual and the material, seeing the material as constraining or determining the spiritual. Their conceptions of the material grow increasingly complex, as we can see by contrasting Moleschott’s claim that our culture is determined by our diet with Marx’s claim that it is determined by economic forces. But, given the materialists’ focus on the causal connections between material and spiritual factors, another topic received less attention in their thought: the attempt to offer an accurate description of the spiritual, and in particular the nature of the self. This brings us to Schopenhauer.

Although Schopenhauer published the first volume of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (*The World as Will and Representation*) in 1819, and the second in 1844, it (p. 485) was his fate to be ignored until 1851.³⁰ In that year, he published a collection of essays with the unpromising title *Parerga und Paralipomena* (*Additions and Omissions*). Astonishingly, his popularity exploded. Following a favorable discussion in the *Westminster Review* (“Iconoclasm in German Philosophy,” April 1853), Schopenhauer quickly progressed from an unread figure to perhaps the most famous living philosopher: by 1857, lectures were being given on his work at dozens of universities throughout Europe. Thus, although his philosophical thought emerged prior to that of the materialists already discussed, it makes sense to treat him as occupying a later position.

Schopenhauer criticizes the “stupefying influence of Hegel’s sham wisdom” (*WWR* I, 223), accusing him of “the greatest effrontery in serving up sheer nonsense, in scrabbling together senseless and maddening webs of words, such as have been heard previously on-

ly in madhouses” (*WWR I*, 429)—charges that resonate with the materialists. However, rather than relying exclusively on the natural sciences, Schopenhauer urges a return to the “great Kant” (*WWR I*, xv). There is much that is “true and excellent” in Kant’s work, but Schopenhauer also detects some “grave errors” (*WWR I*, xv). In particular, Schopenhauer thinks Kant has badly misunderstood the nature of the self, and consequently has gone astray on the basis of morality.

Schopenhauer contends that whereas Kant and other philosophers treated the intellect as primary, they were mistaken: the will is primary. “The will, as the thing-in-itself, constitutes the inner, true, and indestructible nature of man; yet in itself it is without consciousness” (*WWR II*, 201). Thus, “the intellect is a mere *accidens* of our being...” (*WWR II*, 201). Schopenhauer claims that “the most striking figure” for the relationship of will and intellect is “that of the strong blind man carrying the sighted lame man on his shoulders” (*WWR II*, 209).

Schopenhauer argues that the Kantian attempt to extract normative demands from a notion of autonomy is doomed to fail. Indeed, the entire quest for ethical principles is misguided: “in this ethical book no precepts, no doctrine of duty are to be expected; still less will there be set forth a universal moral principle...Generally, we shall not speak of ‘ought’ at all, for we speak in this way to children and to peoples still in their infancy...” (*WWR I*, 272). After all, “it is a palpable contradiction to call the will free and yet to prescribe for it laws by which it is to will” (*WWR I*, 272).³¹

So Schopenhauer pursues a different methodology: his strategy will be, as he puts it, “immanent”—he will try to “interpret and explain man’s action, and the very different and even opposite maxims of which it is the living expression” (*WWR I*, 272). By uncovering our deepest motives, we will reach ethical conclusion.

This proceeds in two stages. First, Schopenhauer offers a characterization of what actually motivates ethical action. Rather than springing from a sense of duty, ethical action results from “intuitive knowledge” that recognizes “in another’s individuality the same inner nature as in one’s own” (*WWR I*, 368). Here we come to one of Schopenhauer’s most evocative and difficult claims: that all is one. (p. 486)

Schopenhauer encountered the Upanishads in 1814. Their effect was profound: he described them as “the most rewarding and sublime reading...that is possible in this world; it has been the consolation of my life and will be that of my death.”³² He is said to have studied them every evening. From them, he takes up two ideas. First, he adopts the concept of *Maya*, arguing that the world as we ordinarily experience it is illusory and of no genuine value. Second, he argues for the identity of each individual with the entire world: when we set aside ordinary consciousness, we see that the “principle of individuation” is part of the “veil of Maya.” In plainer language, individuality is illusory. Schopenhauer’s argument for this claim is quite simple: he argues that the “principle of individuation” is Space and Time. That is, we individuate objects in terms of their spatial and temporal locations. But Schopenhauer, following Kant, argues that space and time are aspects of phenomena rather than the noumenon. So the principle of individuation is not applicable

Ethics

to the noumenon. Schopenhauer takes this to entail that all apparently individual wills are manifestations of one will.

Schopenhauer's moral theory is based on this metaphysical picture. Recognizing that other individuals are not distinct from me, my motivation to alleviate my own suffering is directed upon the sufferings of others. At an unreflective level, this occurs as the emotion of compassion: this is a pre-reflective apprehension that the suffering of others is also my own suffering. At a more reflective level, this occurs when we see through the "principium individuationis": discovering the identity of ourselves with others, I see that the suffering of others is mine. Thus, "he perceives that the distinction between himself and others, which to the wicked man is so great a gulf, belongs only to a fleeting, deceptive phenomenon" (*WWR I*, 372).

Thus, Schopenhauer's ethic is based upon a desire to alleviate suffering. Initially, it seems that this will lead to familiar ethical injunctions: be compassionate, help others, avoid inflicting suffering. But this kind of knowledge still hasn't penetrated to the heart of things. For, looking more closely at the nature of the will and the roots of suffering, we discover something surprising: suffering is not an accident, not something that we could eliminate, but something that arises due to the nature of life.

Unless suffering is the direct and immediate object of life, our existence must entirely fail of its aim. It is absurd to look upon the enormous amount of pain that abounds everywhere in the world, and originates in needs and necessities inseparable from life itself, as serving no purpose at all and the result of mere chance. Each separate misfortune, as it comes, seems, no doubt, to be something exceptional; but misfortune in general is the rule.

(*P II*, 148)³³

Suffering is universal, happiness fleeting. Schopenhauer illustrates this with a number of powerful examples drawn from literature, world history, and natural science. One of his simplest and most memorable is this:

The pleasure in this world, it has been said, outweighs the pain; or, at any rate, there is an even balance between the two. If the reader wishes to see shortly whether this statement is (p. 487) true, let him compare the respective feelings of two animals, one of which is engaged in eating the other.

(*P II*, 149)

For Schopenhauer, the ubiquity of suffering is no accident, nothing that might be corrected or set right; suffering springs of necessity from the nature of willing. The true nature of the will is blind, ceaseless striving. Schopenhauer calls it the will to live: it aims at nothing other than its own continued manifestation. It is not responsive to judgments of value. We don't recognize that life is objectively valuable and therefore cling to it; rather,

Ethics

we have a pre-rational attachment to life.³⁴ So “the will, considered purely in itself, is devoid of knowledge, and is only a blind, irresistible urge...” (*WWR I*, 275).

What does insight into the nature of the will bring us? Schopenhauer defines goodness in terms of willing: he tells us that the concept good “is essentially relative, and denotes the *fitness or suitability of an object to any definite effort of the will*” (*WWR I*, 360). In other words, X is good if X is an object of the will. Consequently, the “highest good, *summum bonum*, signifies...a final satisfaction of the will, after which no fresh willing would occur; a last motive, the attainment of which would give the will an imperishable satisfaction” (*WWR I*, 362). The highest good would be that which completely satisfies the will.

Unfortunately, such a thing does not—indeed, cannot—exist. For Schopenhauer argues that the will cannot be satisfied. His argument is encapsulated in the following remark: “Life swings like a pendulum to and fro between pain and boredom, and these two are in fact its ultimate constituents” (*WWR I*, 312). Briefly, his point is that there are only two lasting possibilities for the will. First, the will might desire certain ends, in which case the agent will experience suffering until the ends are achieved (for “the basis of all willing...is need, lack, and hence pain” [*WWR I*, 312]). Second, the agent might lack desires for determinate ends, in which case he will experience boredom.³⁵ Meanwhile, pleasure is nothing but the inflection point of the pendulum, persisting for the briefest moment before extinction:

All satisfaction, or what is commonly called happiness, is really and essentially always *negative* only, and never positive. It is not a gratification which comes to us originally and of itself, but it must always be the satisfaction of a wish. For desire, that is to say, want, is the precedent condition of every pleasure; but with the satisfaction, the desire and therefore the pleasure cease; and so the satisfaction or gratification can never be more than deliverance from a pain, a want

(*WWR I*, 319)

So the will’s possibilities are painful desiring or painful lack of desiring; and happiness is the fleeting intermediary.

Schopenhauer considers this to be an a priori proof of the impossibility of happiness. He also offers an a posteriori proof, giving a series of examples designed to show (p. 488) that life “is essentially suffering in many forms and a tragic state in every way” (*WWR I*, 323).

Given the impossibility of a highest good, a final satisfaction of the will, there is a second-best: the abnegation of willing. As Schopenhauer puts it, we could call the highest good “the complete self-effacement and denial of the will, true will-lessness, which alone stills and silences forever the craving of the will; which alone gives the contentment that cannot be disturbed...” (*WWR I*, 362). When the will sees that the world’s inner nature is constant suffering, it “freely abolishes itself” (*WWR I*, 285). Perceiving the futility of life and the inescapability of suffering, the will withers away.

Crucially, this is non-voluntary:

we have seen that *self-suppression of the will* comes from knowledge, but knowledge and insight as such are independent of free choice, that denial of willing, that entrance into freedom, is not to be forcibly arrived at by intention or design, but comes from the innermost relation of knowing and willing in man; hence it comes suddenly, as if flying in from without.

(*WWR I*, 404)

The will does not actively destroy itself through suicide; this, Schopenhauer argues, would be an affirmation of life, for one would value life so much that one would rather end life than live a life one perceives as defective (*WWR I*, 398–401). The non-voluntary extinguishing of the will is different: one becomes utterly indifferent to the conditions of life.

Thus the best we can hope for is a non-voluntary extinguishing of the will to live. That is the true deliverance from suffering. To be sure, “what remains after the complete abolition is...assuredly nothing” (*WWR I*, 412). Yet, “when, on the one hand, we have recognized incurable suffering and endless misery as essential to the phenomenon of the will, to the world, and on the other see the world melt away with the abolished will, and retain before us only empty nothingness,” then “we then look with deep and painful yearning at that state [of abnegation of the will], beside which the miserable and desperate nature of our own appears in the clearest light by the contrast” (*WWR I*, 411).

24.7 Nietzsche and the Inescapable Aims of Life

Schopenhauer’s gloomy words bring us to the last part of our story. In the 1860s and 1870s, there is a reaction against materialism. A series of neo-Kantians, some inspired by Schopenhauer, begin attacking materialism. Many of these thinkers critique the epistemological and metaphysical commitments of the materialists; F. A. Lange’s *History of Materialism* (1866), for example, argues that materialism, properly understood, leads to a revised form of Kantianism. But the ethical thought is also an object of central concern. Though thinkers such as Lange still persist in rather halfhearted attempts to justify traditional ethical claims, many philosophers are drawn to Schopenhauer’s more pessimistic conclusions. Eduard von Hartmann, for example, argues that materialism cannot explain teleology; he rejects mechanism and urges a return to Hegel and Schopenhauer. His *Philosophie des Unbewußten* (*Philosophy of the Unconscious*, 1869) is enormously (p. 489) influential. This work defends the startling and undeniably bizarre claim that world history is an immense error, born of a diremption of representation and will; consciousness’ task is to set right this mistake by an act of self-abolition. This claim seizes the imagination; by 1890, the book has gone through ten editions.

So what we have seen, by the 1870s, is a web of interacting concerns: freedom as the source of or criterion for normative demands; the aspiration for a unified, non-alienated self; an insistence on taking account of the concrete social and historical circumstances of human beings; a demand for incorporating the successes of the natural sciences into the study of the self and ethics; and finally, with Schopenhauer, the demand for an accurate and morally unprejudiced philosophical psychology, which is ready to set at naught our moral intuitions. And, gradually growing over this time is the sense that something tremendous, something unprecedented is happening: the relatively complacent ethical views of Kant and Hegel, which with only a touch of exaggeration can be said to present the evaluative beliefs of bourgeois nineteenth-century Prussia as the height of ethical sophistication, give way to the radicalism of figures such as Schopenhauer, Marx, and Hartmann, who argue that contemporary ethical life will be upended, destroyed; that, in Schopenhauer and Hartmann, existence itself is some kind of tragic mistake.

It is into this heady atmosphere that our last thinker, Friedrich Nietzsche, emerges.³⁶ Nietzsche is best known for his critiques of traditional ethical views. He seems skeptical of each of the purported grounds for morality we have surveyed. He agrees with Hegel that there is no hope of deriving ethical norms from a formal idea of freedom: "'autonomous' and 'moral' are mutually exclusive," he tells us (*GM*, II: 2).³⁷ With respect to selfhood, Nietzsche argues that an adequate conception of the self shows that the importance of conscious choice has been greatly overestimated; our conscious thoughts are manifestations of something deeper, and our deliberations are often driven by goals of which we are ignorant. We are, in Nietzsche's evocative phrase, "strangers to ourselves" (*GM*, Preface: 1). Contra Hegel and Marx, attention to social and historical processes does not justify ethical demands or show a grand march toward some utopia: rather, it reveals our valuations to be thoroughly contingent, and to lead us toward diminution and ruin (see especially *GM* and *Der Antichrist*). And the German materialists fare no better: although Nietzsche presents empirical investigations as potentially illuminating the nature of the self and morality, he disparages the "clumsy naturalists who can hardly touch on 'the soul' without immediately losing it"; he calls for a more nuanced and sophisticated naturalism.³⁸

In light of these critiques, it is not surprising that some readers see Nietzsche as a nihilist who either rejects the very possibility of justifying ethical claims or endorses some form of brute voluntarism, according to which we commit ourselves—without justification—to some set of values. And indeed, this latter view is suggested by *The Gay Science*, (p. 490) which endorses a tempering of the valuation of truth by the artistic drives (Preface, 4).³⁹ There, Nietzsche writes, "as an aesthetic phenomenon life is still *bearable* for us, and art furnishes us with eyes and hands and above all the good conscience to be *able* to turn ourselves into such a phenomenon" (*GS*, 107; cf. *GS*, 290, 299). We should follow the ancient Greeks, who "were superficial—*out of profundity!*" (*GS*, Preface: 4). For there is really just "one thing that is needful," Nietzsche tells us: "that a human being should *attain* satisfaction with himself" (*GS*, 290). The ultimate test of this, Nietzsche suggests, would be the ability to look with delight upon the prospect of eternally reliving one's life, with nothing changed or altered (*GS*, 341). At the risk of oversimplifying a notoriously complex

text, *GS* seems to advocate a form of subjective voluntarism: whether a value or way of life is justified for an individual will depend merely upon whether it enables her to affirm her existence.

However, this subjectivist view is complicated in Nietzsche's later works. In the works after *GS*, Nietzsche explicitly presents flourishing, health, or power as the standards in light of which values should be assessed, and he conducts prolonged, incisive investigations of the ways in which contemporary values conflict with these demands.⁴⁰ To see what Nietzsche has in mind here, it helps to start with an idea that I think we can see emerging, in somewhat inarticulate ways, in Marx, Schopenhauer, and Hartmann: that normativity is grounded in a form of *inescapability*. The idea goes something like this: justified normative demands are the ones that inescapably motivate us, or that would do so once we cleared away all misunderstandings and grasped the true nature of the world and motivation. So, according to Schopenhauer, if we see into the true nature of things—if we peer through the “veil of Maya”—the will to live dissipates. Schopenhauer takes this as the ideal, so we can see that his normative ideals are those goals that we would inevitably seek once we see clearly into the nature of things. There is a trace of this in Marx as well: he denies that communism is an “ideal” to which we must aspire, arguing instead that it is an inevitable result of world history (2000, 162); his point seems to be that its normativity is vouchsafed by its inevitability.

Nietzsche's theory takes a different form: we are inescapably motivated by something that Nietzsche calls “will to power”; and this aim of power generates normative results. Thus, Nietzsche argues that the “principle of revaluation” or the “standard by which the value of moral evaluation is to be determined” is “will to power” (*KSA*, 12.2[131]).⁴¹ Or, as he elsewhere puts it: “What is good? Everything that heightens in human beings the feeling of power, the will to power, power itself” (A 2).⁴² In other words, values are justified in terms of their connection to power.

Nietzsche frequently appeals to another evaluative standard: life. To give just a few examples, he writes, “every individual may be scrutinized to see whether he represents (p. 491) the ascending or the descending line of life” (*TI*, IX: 33).⁴³ Ascending or flourishing life is healthy; degenerating life is unhealthy (*GM*, P: 6, *EH*, IV: 8). He tells us that modern morality is “hostile to life” (*GM*, III:11); it “negates life” (*CW*, Preface).⁴⁴ But what is life? Nietzsche argues that “the essence of life” is simply “its *will to power*” (*GM*, II:12). He tells us that “life itself” is a striving for “power” (A 6), and asserts that “the will to power” is “the will of life” (*BGE*, 259); “life simply is will to power” (*BGE*, 259).

So Nietzsche's basic evaluative notion, in terms of which life, health, and flourishing are defined, is will to power. But what is power? According to an increasingly influential interpretation, willing power is the activity of perpetually seeking and overcoming resistance to one's ends. As Bernard Reginster argues, “will to power, in the last analysis, is a will to *the very activity of overcoming resistance*.”⁴⁵ It is important to notice that power is not a first-order end; rather, an agent wills power in the course of pursuing some other, more determinate end, such as completing a race or finishing a game. We might express

Ethics

this point by saying that will to power is a *higher-order* aim. In order to will power, one must aim at a determinate first-order goal, such as running or painting. Will to power does not *compete with* these determinate goals; rather, it modifies the way in which these goals are pursued.

Nietzsche claims that *every* action manifests will to power.⁴⁶ Elsewhere, I have argued that the basis for this claim lies in Nietzsche's drive psychology. Put briefly, the will to power thesis is *a description of the form that all drive-motivated actions take*. For Nietzsche argues that any action that is motivated by a drive (*Trieb*) will have a higher-order aim of encountering and overcoming resistance: the drive motivates us to engage in characteristic patterns of activity, and manifesting these patterns of activity involves continual overcoming of the resistances to that activity. In Nietzsche's terminology, this is equivalent to the claim that all drive-motivated actions manifest will to power. If Nietzsche can show that all human activities are drive-motivated (obviously, no small claim), then it follows that all human actions manifest will to power.⁴⁷

Given its ubiquity, Nietzsche concludes that power has a privileged normative status—not in the sense that it is objectively valuable, but in the sense that it is an ineluctable, inescapable feature of agency. For any particular aim other than power, we can ask why we should pursue it. If I have an aim of being compassionate, or promoting egalitarianism, or achieving artistic greatness, I can ask for reasons for pursuing it. When I ask what my reasons are for pursuing these aims, I presuppose that I have the option of *not* pursuing the aim: I could do something else. However, with will to power, this kind of questioning is moot. If someone asked, “why should I will power?,” Nietzsche would not answer by (p. 492) trying to show that power is valuable, or that power serves some further goal; power is not a means to anything beyond itself. Rather, Nietzsche would respond by showing that we cannot do anything *but* will power. Power's privileged status isn't grounded in any facts about objective values; it is simply the one aim that we cannot let go.

Thus, Nietzsche grounds his account of normative authority in an incapacity. Nietzsche is not claiming that we *should* will power, or that willing power is objectively valuable, or that willing power furthers our other values or goals. Rather, he is claiming that we just *do* will power, and cannot cease to do so. Will to power is, as Nietzsche puts it, our “innermost essence” (KSA, 13.14[80]).

And yet our contemporary values and social institutions thwart this innermost essence. Thus, Nietzsche offers a fair summary of his project in the following passage:

Life itself is to my mind the instinct for growth, for continuance [*Dauer*], for accumulation of force [*Häufung von Kräften*], for *power*; where the will to power is lacking there is decline. It is my contention that all the supreme values of mankind *lack* this will—that the values that are symptomatic of decline, *nihilistic* values, are lording it under the holiest names.

(A, 6)

This is why Nietzsche presents modern morality as “the danger of dangers” (*GM*, Preface: 6).

How, exactly, does will to power bear on values? Nietzsche never attempts to *derive* values directly from the demand for power; rather, he uses will to power as a “principle of revaluation,” a criterion by means of which one can assess other values. If a value conflicts with or undermines power, it is to be rejected. The conflicts between will to power and particular values won’t always be obvious from the surface content of these values; thus, Nietzsche claims, the only real way to critique a morality is “a rigorous and courageous attempt to *live in*” it.⁴⁸ This is part of what his famous genealogies reveal: the unnoticed effects of moral systems on their participants. Thus, to put it in the simplest possible terms, the *Genealogy* shows that a system of values that initially appears power-enhancing is actually power-undermining.

This strategy interacts with another element of Nietzsche’s thought: he claims that we achieve freedom to the extent that we manifest will to power. For example, he identifies the “instinct for freedom” with the “will to power” (*GM*, II: 18), he claims that a free will is equivalent to a “strong” will, that is, a will that manifests will to power (*BGE*, 21), and, in a section entitled “my conception of freedom,” he claims that freedom is measured according to the degree of power expressed by an individual (*TI*, IX: 38). There are two ways to interpret this. First, Nietzsche might be offering a revisionary conception of freedom according to which freedom is analyzed as maximal will to power. Second, and more plausibly, Nietzsche might accept a conception of freedom as self-determination.⁴⁹ On this view, Nietzschean freedom would be attained by acting on one’s own values; a value would count as one’s own if it were critically assessed; (p. 493) and, given that values are to be critically assessed in terms of power, freedom and power would be closely connected.

24.8 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to provide an exceedingly brief overview of the development of ethical thought in the nineteenth century. I have highlighted several themes that occupied central roles: the Kantian aspiration to anchor morality in freedom; Schiller’s call for a unified self; Hegel’s analysis of the socially and historically situated agent; Feuerbach’s and Büchner’s turn to natural science; Marx’s materialism; Schopenhauer’s philosophical psychology; and Nietzsche’s attempt to anchor normative demands in will to power.

I close with a word on Nietzsche’s position in this dialectic. What is interesting about Nietzsche is that he tries to combine the best insights from this entire stretch of nineteenth-century ethical thought. The will to power is a standard set by life, and it is a standard because of its inevitability. It is also a demand for unity—not conceived as mere consistency between desire and reason, but conceived as a kind of harmony between drive and thought. And it is also historical: the will to power cannot be used to assess isolated moral judgments, but only whole ways of life. And it is also a demand for autonomy: becoming free is valuing in accord with power. And it is also a motive whose grip is confirmed by

Ethics

our best science (which is not, to be sure, the simple physiology supported by some of his contemporaries).

So in Nietzsche we have one way of reconciling all of these ideas. In tracing the path from Kant to Nietzsche, we move from a confident complacency with our current moral beliefs, to something far more skeptical, far more complex, something which employs all the help of history and science, something which aspires to unity and freedom, and leaves us only with that to which we are inescapably committed. Moral philosophy is an attempt to justify our commitments, and Nietzsche's idea is that the uncovering of inescapable commitments is thus the deepest level to which moral philosophy can go.⁵⁰

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Notes:

(1) Kant, Immanuel, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* (1785). *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 4: 448. Further references to this text will be abbreviated G, followed by Akademie volume and page number.

(2) I have reconstructed Kant's argument as beginning with a premise about autonomy and ending with a claim about morality; this is his strategy in the *Groundwork* parts II and III. Elsewhere, he pursues the opposite strategy: starting with a conception of what it is to act morally, he argues that acting morally and acting autonomously coincide. For the latter argument, see the *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* (*Critique of Practical Reason*, 1788), where Kant writes "the moral law, and with it practical reason, come in and forced this concept [freedom] upon us" (5: 30).

(3) Hegel is the *locus classicus* for this objection; see his *Philosophy of Right*, Section 135. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel puts the point this way: "It would be strange, too, if tautology, the principle of contradiction, which is admitted to be only a formal principle for the cognition of theoretical truth, i.e., something which is quite indifferent to truth and falsehood, were supposed to be more than this for the cognition of practical truth" (*Phenomenology*, Section 431).

(4) Fichte, Johann Gottlieb, *Das System der Sittenlehre nach den Principien der Wissenschaftslehre* (1798). *System of Ethics*, trans. Daniel Breazeale and Günter Zöller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 145.

(5) Schelling, F. W. J., *Vom Ich als Prinzip der Philosophie oder über das Unbedingte im menschlichen Wissen*, 1795. "Of the I as the Principle of Philosophy", in Fritz Marti (ed.

Ethics

and trans.), *The Unconditional in Human Knowledge: Four Early Essays* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1980), 65.

(6) Of necessity, then, the story that I tell here will be highly selective. I will focus on the contributions that the thinkers I mention make to the aforementioned topics. I will thus leave out aspects of their moral thought that do not bear on these topics. I will also leave out discussion of the ways in which these thinkers were influenced by French and British philosophers.

(7) Letter to Körner, 18 February 1793, in *Schillers Werke: Nationalausgabe*, XXVI, 191.

(8) Schiller claims that the human being's "purely intellectual nature is accompanied by a sensuous one" (*Über Anmut und Würde* (1793), *Nationalausgabe* XX, 284. "On Grace and Dignity," trans. Jane Curran and Christopher Fricker, in *Schiller's "On Grace and Dignity" in Its Cultural Context* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2005), 149. Further references are given as *GD* followed by page numbers from both the *Nationalausgabe* and Curran and Fricker's translation.

(9) "One can think of three ways altogether in which a human can relate to himself, that is, in which the sensuous part can relate to the rational" (*GD*, 280/147).

(10) Here I have departed from the translation in Curran and Fricker, which seems to me to obscure Schiller's point. In the next passage, I have also made some minor modifications to the translation.

(11) Hegel writes, "Within the state, rationality consists concretely—in terms of its content—in the unity of objective freedom (i.e., of universal substantial willing) and subjective freedom (i.e., of the individual human's knowing and willing, which seeks its particular ends)" (*Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. H. B. Nisbet. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), Section 258. Hereafter cited as *PR* followed by section number. In several passages from this work, Hegel emphasizes that society must enable the freedom of *all* individuals. For example, he writes that society requires the "well-being of *all*" (*PR*, 125, emphasis added), and he argues that it is necessary that "every individual's livelihood and well-being be treated and actualized as rightful" (*PR*, 230).

(12) Hegel, *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences, Part Three: Philosophy of Mind*, trans. William Wallace (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), Section 503.

(13) Hegel claims that the *Philosophy of Right's* central task is to show how "the system of right is the realm of actualized freedom" (*PR*, 4). He emphasizes this point throughout the book, writing that "ethicality is the idea of freedom as the living good that has its knowing, willing, and, through its acting, its actuality, in self-consciousness..." (*PR*, 142), and "the ethical is the system of these determinations of the idea; this is what constitutes its rationality. In this way it is freedom..." (*PR*, 145).

Ethics

(14) “The laws and powers of ethical substance are not something alien to the subject. Instead, the subject bears witness to them as to its own essence, within which it has its feelings of being a self, within which it lives as in its own element, an element it does not distinguish from itself” (*PR*, 147; cf. *PR*, 258).

(15) The full argument for these claims occupies *PR*, 157–360. See especially *PR*, 157–8, 181–8, and 257–9.

(16) Some Kantians claim that the Formula of the Kingdom of Ends introduces a social dimension to Kant’s theory. Though I lack the space to address this point, notice that even if this is correct, the individual who assesses maxims is taken as capable of doing so prior to and independently of his involvement in concrete social and historical settings.

(17) Hegel claims that self-determination requires including the “particular” aspects of the self, including “its needs, inclinations, passions, opinions, fancies, etc.” (*PR*, 123).

(18) Feuerbach, Ludwig, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. George Eliot (New York: Prometheus Books, 1989). Hereafter cited as *Essence* followed by page number.

(19) Feuerbach, *Die Naturwissenschaft und die Revolution* (1850).

(20) F. A. Lange, *Geschichte des Materialismus und Kritik seiner Bedeutung in der Gegenwart* (1865). *The History of Materialism and Criticism of its Present Importance*, trans. E. Thomas (New York: The Humanities Press, 1950), 248.

(21) A few examples: “in religion man contemplates his own latent nature. Hence it must be shown that this antithesis, this differencing of God and man, with which religion begins, is a differencing of man with his own nature” (*Essence*, 33). “Our task consists precisely in showing that the antithesis of the divine and human is illusory; that is, that it is nothing other than the antithesis between the essential being of man and his individual being, and that consequently the object and the content of the Christian religion are altogether human” (*Essence*, 14). “In order to enrich God, man must become poor; that God may be all, man must be nothing. But he also does not need to be anything for himself, because everything for himself, everything he takes from himself, is not lost, but preserved in God” (*Essence*, 25).

(22) Feuerbach, *Über Spiritualismus und Materialismus* (1866), in *Ludwig Feuerbachs Sämtliche Werke*, 10 Bände herausgegeben von Wilhelm Bolin und Friedrich Jodl (Stuttgart: 1903–10), Volume X, 62.

(23) *Ludwig Feuerbach und der Ausgang der klassischen deutschen Philosophie* (1886). *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, trans. Progress Publishers, available at <<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1886/ludwig-feuerbach/index.htm>>.

(24) Ludwig Büchner, *Kraft und Stoff. Empirisch-naturphilosophische Studien; in allgemein-verständlicher Darstellung*, 1864. *Force and Matter: Empirico-Philosophical Studies*,

Ethics

Intelligibly Rendered (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012). Hereafter cited as *FM* followed by page number.

(25) Interestingly, Büchner follows these remarks by repeatedly claiming that truth is the highest value: even if these truths about morality “should damage society at large, science and empirical philosophy can only say: truth is above things divine and human; there exist no reasons strong enough to cause us to abandon it” (*FM*, 250). Thus, Büchner’s view suffers from the problem that Nietzsche diagnoses in the *Genealogy*: it rests on an uncritical faith in the overriding value of truth.

(26) The most obvious problem with this reading of Hegel is that it relies on an assumption that Hegel would reject, namely that we can draw a clean distinction between philosophical thought and material conditions.

(27) McLellan, David (ed.), *Karl Marx: Selected Writings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 154. Hereafter cited as *M* followed by page number.

(28) There are many controversies over how continuous Marx’s thought is over the course of his career. His notion of the “economic” may have shifted over time. Here, I have focused on the view articulated in *Die Deutsche Ideologie* (*The German Ideology*, 1845).

(29) The term “species life” plays a key role in Marx’s early writings, but disappears by the time of *Kapital*.

(30) Schopenhauer, Arthur. *The World as Will and Representation*, 2 volumes, trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover Publications, 1969). Hereafter cited as *WWR* followed by volume and page number.

(31) Given that the will is primary, Schopenhauer rejects Kant’s focus on maxims: “Now if, on the other hand, as all philosophers imagine, the intellect constituted our true inner nature, and the decisions of the will were a mere result of knowledge, then precisely *that* motive alone, from which we *imagined* we acted, would necessarily be decisive for our moral worth...But then the distinction between imagined and actual motive would really be impossible” (*WWR* II, 210).

(32) Arthur Schopenhauer, *Parerga und Paralipomena* (1851), Volume II, Section 184. Hereafter cited as *P* followed by volume and page number.

(33) Schopenhauer, *Studies in Pessimism*, trans. Thomas Bailey Saunders (New York: MacMillan, 1908). The following quotation also employs the translation from this volume.

(34) The will to live cannot “have its ground in its own object, for life...is really constant suffering, or at any rate...a business that does not cover the cost. Hence that attachment can be founded only in the subject. But it is not founded in the intellect, it is no result of reflection, and generally is not a matter of choice; on the contrary, this willing of life is something we take for granted...We ourselves are the will-to-live...” (*WWR* II, 239–40).

Ethics

(35) If the will “lacks objects of willing, because it is at once deprived of them by too easy a satisfaction, a fearful emptiness and boredom come over it; in other words, its being and its existence itself become an intolerable burden for it” (WWR I, 312).

(36) Nietzsche read each of the thinkers mentioned above, with one exception: he seems to have missed Marx.

(37) Friedrich Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, 1887. *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1967). Hereafter cited as *GM* followed by part and section number.

(38) Friedrich Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, 1886, Section 12. *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1967). Hereafter cited as *BGE* followed by section number.

(39) Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, 1882/1887. *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1974). Hereafter cited as *GS* followed by section number.

(40) These ideas are implicit in earlier works, but come to the fore in the later works.

(41) Friedrich Nietzsche: *Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden*, ed. G. Colli and M. Montinari (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980). Hereafter cited as *KSA* followed by volume, notebook, and entry number.

(42) Friedrich Nietzsche, *Der Antichrist*, 1895. *The Antichrist*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, in *The Portable Nietzsche* (New York: Viking, 1968). Hereafter cited as *A* followed by section number.

(43) Friedrich Nietzsche, *Götzen-Dämmerung*, 1889. *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, in *The Portable Nietzsche* (New York: Viking, 1968). Hereafter cited as *TI* followed by part and section number.

(44) Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*, 1895. *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, in *The Portable Nietzsche* (New York: Viking, 1968).

(45) Bernard Reginster, *The Affirmation of Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 127.

(46) See especially *GS*, 349; *GM*, III; *KSA*, 13.14[121]; *KSA*, 13.14[81]; and *KSA* 13.14[174]; *KSA*, 13.11[96]; *KSA*, 12.2[88].

(47) I reconstruct this argument in Paul Katsafanas, “Deriving Ethics from Action: A Nietzschean Version of Constitutivism,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 83 (2011), 620–60.

(48) Friedrich Nietzsche, *Morgenröthe*, 1881, Section 195. *Daybreak*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

(49) Thus Nietzsche speaks of a “will to self-determination [*Selbstbestimmung*], to evaluating on one’s own account [*Selbstschätzung*], this will to free will” (*Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, Preface 3). *Human, All too Human*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

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