The Problem of Normative Authority in Kant, Hegel and Nietzsche

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In quite different ways, Kant and Hegel argue that normative claims are justified only if they are manifestations of freedom. That is, claims such as 'murder is wrong', 'you have reason not to lie' or 'you should take the means to your ends' have authority over us only if these claims issue from or are preconditions for autonomous agency. Beyond this point of agreement, however, the differences between Kant and Hegel may seem enormous. Kant argues that autonomous agency yields a commitment to acting on the Categorical Imperative, which in turn generates specific claims about which actions are permissible and which are forbidden. Hegel rejects this idea, arguing that claims about what there is reason to do are inextricably linked to the practices and institutions of our historical milieu and that, in order to be justified, these practices and institutions must themselves be realizations of freedom.

Proponents of each theory levy critiques at the other. Hegelians charge Kantians with relying on an excessively formal and ultimately contentless conception of autonomy, which is too attenuated to generate substantive normative conclusions. Kantians charge Hegelians with relying on an excessively substantive, concrete theory, which is so mired in the particularities of our current evaluative framework that it cannot make space for a comprehensive critique of this framework.

While Kantians and Hegelians have developed sophisticated responses to these charges, I contend that there is an element of truth in each of the critiques, and one goal of this essay is to sketch them. However, my primary goal is to demonstrate that we can overcome these difficulties by turning to an unexpected source: the work of Nietzsche. I argue that Nietzsche provides an account of normative authority[1] that incorporates seemingly incompatible elements of the

Kantian and Hegelian accounts. In so doing, his work reveals the potential structure of a fully satisfying account of normative authority. Thus, attending to the dispute between Kant and Hegel and to the solution that I argue is offered by Nietzsche enables us to make progress on a central topic in ethics: the relationship between freedom and normative authority.

The essay comprises four sections. Section 1 offers a brief review of Kant's attempt to explain normative authority in terms of autonomy. Section 2 reconstructs Hegel's critique of Kant and introduces Hegel's alternative theory. Section 3 turns to Nietzsche, arguing that Nietzsche accepts the most appealing elements of the Kantian and Hegelian accounts. Unfortunately, though, these elements seem to be incompatible with one another. Accordingly, Section 4 explains how Nietzsche's theory of normative authority resolves the tensions between these elements of the Kantian and Hegelian accounts. In particular, I will show that Nietzsche agrees with Hegel that we cannot derive a substantive ethic from the formal idea of autonomy. However, pace Hegel and with Kant, Nietzsche argues that we can extract *one* normative principle from this formal idea. This principle, which Nietzsche labels 'will to power', can then be used to critique the values and norms embodied in our social institutions and practices. Unlike Kant, however, Nietzsche denies that this principle extracted from the notion of autonomy can *by itself* generate any determinate content; on the contrary, it generates substantive normative conclusions only when brought to bear on the norms that are present in our social institutions and practices. I argue that the resultant theory overcomes both the charges that Hegelians level at Kantians and those that Kantians levy at Hegelians. In so doing, it yields a new and fruitful solution to the problem of normative authority.

1. Kant on the problem of normative authority

Normative claims invite the question of why they should hold sway over us. Kant proposed to answer this question by tying the authority of norms to our own activity: norms hold sway over us because we impose them on ourselves. Thus, Kant claims that the will must view itself 'as the author of its principles independently of alien influences' (GMS 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). (GMS 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. (GMS 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.

But how, exactly, is an appeal to self-imposition supposed to answer the normative problem? It might seem that if you impose a principle on yourself, then its authority will have been legitimated – because, after all, you impose it on yourself. However, it might equally well seem that if you impose a principle on yourself, then its authority disappears – because, after all, you can remove it as easily as you imposed it. There is thus a tension here. A normative principle is something that can constrain one's will. However, if we attempt to explain the constraining authority of principles in terms of the will's own operations, then it seems that the alleged constraint disappears: if I bind myself by a principle, then I can also *unbind* myself, in which case I was never really bound at all.

This is a point that occupied a central position in nineteenth-century discussions of value. Consider a passage from Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, in which Hegel considers the view that normative authority arises from the agent's own acts of will:

> This implies that objective goodness is merely something constructed by my conviction, sustained by me alone, and that I, as lord and master, can make it come and go. As soon as I relate myself to something objective, it ceases to exist for me, and so I am poised above an immense void, conjuring up shapes and destroying them. (PR 140A)

Hegel here argues that if normative authority arose from an agent's acts of will, then norms would not appear to the agent as objective constraints. Rather, the norms would appear as empty, ephemeral shapes – for the agent could rescind the normative principle's authority as easily as she could bestow it. The idea that we 'create' normative authority has no content, if the norms cannot constrain us.

In sum, Kant's idea seems to be that if you make a norm for yourself, then *of course* it binds you, for you are its author. But Hegel argues for the opposite conclusion: if you make a norm for yourself, then *of course* it cannot bind you, for its alleged authority is dependent on you. To the extent that norms are genuinely self-imposed, they lose any authority to constrain us; they constrain us no more than our desires and whims do. Thus, the attempt to explain normative authority

in terms of self-imposition runs the risk of collapsing the distinction between norm and whim.

Kant is, of course, aware of this potential problem and has a way of trying to solve it. He 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, i.e., 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 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' (GMS 421). He argues that this law – the Categorical Imperative – rules out certain actions, thereby yielding determinate constraints on permissible actions. So, the commitment to autonomy entails certain constraints on our actions.

This is why Kant, if his argument were successful, would have the resources to respond to the Hegelian objection. We cannot simply bind and unbind ourselves with any norms we happen to fancy; rather, although we impose norms on ourselves, these norms constrain us in a way that is not up to us – for *which* norms we impose on ourselves is not fully up to us.

2. Hegel on the problem of normative authority

2.1 Hegel's objection to Kant

Hegel claims that Kant's view operates with an exceedingly 'formal' or 'abstract' conception of autonomy, which renders the theory an 'empty formalism' (PR 135). There is some controversy over how Hegel's formalism objection should be interpreted, but on the most common interpretation, Hegel is claiming that Kant's universalization procedure does not yield any determinate conclusions.[2]

To see what Hegel has in mind, consider one of Kant's applications of the Categorical Imperative in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Kant asks us to consider a case in which I have been given some money to hold as a deposit, the

individual making the deposit has died and no record of the deposit exists. I ask myself whether I can keep this money for myself rather than reporting it to the deceased's heirs. Kant claims that we can apply the Categorical Imperative by asking whether the following principle could be willed as a universal law: 'that everyone may deny a deposit of which no one can produce a proof'. He claims that it cannot, for 'I at once become aware that such a principle, viewed as a law, would annihilate itself, because the result would be that there would be no deposits' (KpV 27–28). In other words, this maxim fails the universalization test, because if it were universalized then the institution of making deposits would disappear, and it would therefore no longer be possible to act on the maxim.

Hegel objects by arguing that

> [t]he 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. (PR 135R)

Thus Hegel agrees with Kant that if the maxim of stealing deposits – or, more generally, property – in order to enrich oneself were universalized, the institution of deposit-making would disappear. However, Hegel claims that unless we presuppose, as a fixed principle, that deposits (or, more generally, property) *should* exist, this generates no contradiction at all.

The general point is well put in the *Phenomenology*:

> 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. (PhG 431)

In other words, no one thinks that a contradiction test can tell us which *theoretical* beliefs are true. The beliefs 'it is raining here' and 'it is not raining here' are contradictory, so we know that they cannot both be true; but we cannot conclude, from the mere fact that they are contradictory, which one is true. Hegel's central point is that it is odd to think that things would be different in the practical realm. As the property case illustrates, certain maxims will generate contradictions with the institution of property; but this does not tell us whether the maxim is immoral or the institution of property is immoral. To make that judgment – to move from the idea that two propositions are contradictory to the idea

that one of them is *correct* – we need to appeal to some independent grounds for determining what is moral.[3]

2.2 Hegel's alternative to the Kantian strategy

These criticisms notwithstanding, Hegel does not think that Kantian morality should be completely abandoned. Rather, he characteristically argues that the failures of Kantian morality point us towards a more encompassing understanding of normativity – an understanding that resolves the problems to which Kantian morality succumbs.

Specifically, although Hegel agrees with Kant that normative considerations are authoritative only if they can be viewed as products of freedom, Hegel interprets this requirement in a different way than does Kant.[4] To bring out the differences between Kant and Hegel, let's focus on two questions:

1. What is the object of assessment?
2. How is the assessment conducted?

Kant's answers to the two questions are clear: the agent assesses her maxims, and the assessment consists in determining whether the maxim passes the Categorical Imperative test. For Hegel, however, the answers are considerably more complex. First, the individual does not assess maxims, but social institutions and practices. Second, the individual does not attempt to show that these institutions and practices are consistent with or derivable from some additional, external standard. Rather, she attempts to show that they are institutions or practices that make freedom possible on their own, immanent terms. Let me explain.

With regard to the first point, Hegel famously argues that the agent's freedom can be achieved only within and through certain social institutions and practices. Simply put, I realize my freedom by conforming to the ethical practices or laws of my society – or, as Hegel puts it, 'only that will which obeys the law is free' (VG 115/97). However, not just any set of institutions and practices will enable individuals to realize their freedom. 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. The institutions count as 'rational', in Hegel's terminology, or 'justified', in ours, if they meet this condition, making it possible for all individuals to realize themselves as self-determined entities.[5] 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.[6] In *The Philosophy of Right*, Hegel argues that three modern social institutions – the family, civil society and the liberal state – jointly fulfill these conditions (PR 157ff.).[7]

So, this is the first difference between Kant and Hegel: rather than assessing individual maxims, Hegel assesses our social institutions and practices, asking whether they are realizations of freedom. This brings us to the second question: how, exactly, is this Hegelian assessment to be conducted? Unlike Kant, Hegel does not offer an independent criterion (such as the Categorical Imperative) by means of which we can assess institutions and practices. Rather, he offers an *immanent* critique of the institutions and practices. Such a critique proceeds by showing that institutions or practices are inadequate not in light of some independent standard, but in light of *their own* standards. But what are these standards? As noted above, Hegel argues that the underlying standard implicit in modern social institutions is *freedom*. In assessing these social institutions, then, we ask whether they enable all individuals to realize their capacity for freedom. Hegel's idea is that many institutions and practices are internally inconsistent or unstable, to the extent that once these tensions are revealed the institutions or practices can no longer be maintained. A Hegelian critique proceeds by uncovering these tensions; it shows that there is a disparity between the current social institutions and the ideals that they strive to realize. In other words, a Hegelian critique shows that existing social institutions may be imperfect realizations of their own principles. Given Hegel's claim that the internal ideal of modern social institutions is freedom, this critique takes the form of revealing tensions between extant social institutions and freedom.[8]

This sketch of Hegel's ethical theory, although exceedingly brief, will be sufficient to bring out two important ways in which the Hegelian view differs from the Kantian view. First, there is the well-known difference in the theories' starting points: Kant begins with the isolated individual who considers whether he can universalize his maxims, whereas Hegel begins with a socially situated individual who reflects on the laws and institutions of her own society. Second, there is a difference that may be less obvious: normative assessment is carried out in strikingly distinct ways. The Kantian proposes maxims and considers whether they can be willed as universal laws. In this sense, Kantianism has a foundationalist structure: Kantians attempt to derive all particular normative claims from one formal principle, the Categorical Imperative.[9] The Hegelian does not

attempt to derive normative claims from a formal principle; rather, she begins with a determinate set of contingent principles, embodied in the social institutions of her society, and asks whether these principles are realizations of freedom. (Given Hegel's argument that modern social institutions are designed to realize freedom, the question of whether institutions realize *their own principles* and the question of whether they realize *freedom* turn out to be one and the same.) So while Kant's theory attempts to *derive* norms from a formal procedure, Hegel's theory uses a formal criterion (the idea of freedom) not to derive, but to *assess* norms that are embodied in the society. Asking whether the normative claims embodied in these institutions and practices are justified does not involve showing that they can be derived from anything at all. Rather, justifying the norms requires showing that, although they are historically contingent, they actualize our freedom. Accordingly, Hegel's theory has a non-foundationalist structure.

3. The relationship between the Nietzschean, Kantian and Hegelian theories of normative authority

With these results at hand, we can examine the relationship between the Nietzschean, Kantian and Hegelian theories of normative authority. In this section, I show that Nietzsche's theory incorporates the most appealing features of the Kantian and Hegelian accounts and also rejects certain problematic aspects of these accounts.[10] Unfortunately, Nietzsche's resultant theory seems incoherent – in trying to be both Kantian and Hegelian, it runs the risk of collapsing into unintelligibility. However, Section 4 argues that what looks like a problem is actually Nietzsche's deepest insight: we can, in fact, reconcile the most promising aspects of the Kantian and Hegelian theories, and thereby produce a satisfying account of normative authority.

3.1 Nietzsche agrees that freedom places determinate constraints on what can be willed

One of the most prominent themes in Nietzsche's work is the idea that we must critically assess our values. He famously calls for a 'revaluation of all values', writing, '[W]e need a *critique* of moral values, *for once the value of these values must itself be called into question*' (GM Preface 6, KSA 5.253). To revalue a value is

to ask whether it merits the status that we accord to it. For example, to revalue egalitarianism would be to engage in a critical assessment of the value that we place on egalitarianism. We might begin by asking whether egalitarianism is *really* valuable, or whether our valuation of egalitarianism is *justified*, or whether everyone *has reason* to value egalitarianism.

Interestingly, Nietzsche associates revaluation with the achievement of freedom. Nietzsche's account of freedom has received increased attention in the past decade. Brian Leiter (2002) and other interpreters have argued convincingly that Nietzsche rejects certain conceptions of freedom, such as the libertarian conception. However, a number of interpreters have shown that Nietzsche has another conception of freedom, as *self-determination* or *autonomy*.[11] Thus, while Nietzsche inveighs against the idea of freedom as an uncaused cause (BGE 21, KSA 5.35–6), he praises those who possess the 'power of self-determination' (GS 347, KSA 3.583), and he regularly speaks of 'evaluating on one's own', being 'sovereign' and being 'autonomous' (HH Preface 3, KSA 2.15 ff., GM II.1–2, KSA 5.291–4). He writes that the free individual 'is obliged to have recourse to his own law-giving' (BGE 262, KSA 5.216) and that free individuals enjoy a 'constraint and perfection under a law [*Gesetz*] of their own' (GS 290, KSA 3.530). In a strikingly Kantian moment, he even claims that free individuals are those who 'give themselves laws [*Sich-selber-Gesetzgebenden*]' (GS 335, KSA 3.563; cf. D 104, KSA 3.92; GS 117, KSA 3.475–6; A 54, KSA 6.236–7).[12]

As these passages indicate, Nietzsche links freedom to revaluation. In fact, Nietzsche often treats as interchangeable the 'will to self-determination', 'evaluating on one's own account' and the 'will to *free* will' (HH I Preface 3, KSA 2.17). He argues that if an agent remains under the sway of values that have not been subjected to this process of critical revaluation, then the agent is *unfree*:

> The fettered spirit takes up his position, not for reasons, but out of habit; he is a Christian, for example, not because he has knowledge of the various religions and has chosen between them [. . .] he encountered Christianity [. . .] and adopted it without reasons, as a man born in a wine-producing country becomes a wine drinker. (HH I 226, KSA 2.190)[13]

So it is clear that Nietzsche has a conception of freedom as self-determination, according to which an agent counts as self-determining or autonomous if she acts on values that have been subjected to the process of 'revaluation'.

But how exactly does Nietzsche conceive of the relationship between freedom and revaluation? Kant thought we could derive specific normative claims from the idea of freedom; Hegel argued that while we cannot do *that*, we can

use freedom to assess extant normative claims. If Nietzsche adopted a view of either kind, the link between freedom and revaluation would be clear: revaluation would consist of determining whether particular values conflict with the demands of freedom. Might Nietzsche embrace a view according to which freedom generates constraints on legitimate norms?

It is natural to think that the answer is 'no', as it is common to interpret Nietzsche as a radical subjectivist who argues that there are no constraints on our values and norms. But this interpretation does not withstand scrutiny. In a number of passages, Nietzsche directly asserts that certain values are incompatible with freedom. He quite bluntly states that autonomy is incompatible with the acceptance of traditional moral values, writing that ' "autonomous" and "moral" are mutually exclusive' (GM II 2, KSA 5.293). This idea is present even in Nietzsche's earlier works, where he claims that 'what characterizes the free spirit is [. . .] that he has liberated himself from tradition' (HH I 225, KSA 2.189). In these passages, Nietzsche makes it clear that the autonomous individual cannot accept the values of traditional morality.[14] So the demand for autonomy rules out certain values.

Aside from these textual problems with attributing subjectivism to Nietzsche, there is a deeper, philosophical problem. As I argued regarding Kant in the first section, if the demand for freedom did not impose any constraints on what could be valued, then the appeal to freedom could not explain normative authority. Rather than explaining the authority of norms, it would explain norms away: it would reduce norms to whims, for norms would constrain us no more than our whims do. This suggests that we should take Nietzsche's claim at face value: freedom requires revaluation, and revaluation does indeed place constraints on what can be valued. How can we make sense of this claim?

Nietzsche cannot be adopting Kant's strategy, for he regards the Kantian arguments linking autonomy to the Categorical Imperative as highly dubious. He condemns

> the stiff and decorous Tartuffery of the old Kant as he lures on the dialectical bypaths that lead to his 'categorical imperative' – really lead astray and seduce – this spectacle makes us smile, as we are fastidious and find it quite amusing to watch closely the subtle tricks of old moralists and preachers of morals. (BGE 5, KSA 5.19)

Here, Nietzsche openly rejects Kant's argument for the Categorical Imperative. Why is this? In several passages, Nietzsche claims that the Categorical Imperative does not generate any content, but merely reiterates the provincial moral beliefs

of Kant's day (GS 335, KSA 3.563, A 12, KSA 6.178–9). In other words, Nietzsche alleges that the CI simply enables post hoc rationalizations of existing moral beliefs (Hegel's discussion of property is a perfect example: both the necessity and the abolition of property can be justified in terms of the CI). Moreover, Nietzsche criticizes the structure of the Kantian theory, denying that any moral theory could have the kind of foundationalist structure that Kant envisions.[15] In this light, he writes that Kant and other moral philosophers 'make one laugh' with their quest for 'a rational foundation for morality'. He claims that 'seen clearly in the light of day', their theories amount to nothing more than a 'scholarly form of good faith in the dominant morality, a new way of expressing it' (BGE 186, KSA 5.105–6).

Rather than attempting to derive morality from some foundational principle, Nietzsche suggests that any substantive moral inquiry will start with a deep scrutiny of the existing values and norms embodied implicitly or explicitly in our social institutions, philosophical theories and ways of life:

> One should, in all strictness, admit *what* will be needful here for a long time to come, *what* alone is provisionally justified here: assembly of material, conceptual comprehension and arrangement of a vast domain of delicate value-feelings and value-distinctions which live, grow, beget and perish and perhaps attempts to display the more frequent and recurring forms of these living crystallizations as preparation of a *typology* of morals. To be sure: one has not been so modest hitherto. Philosophers one and all have, with a straightlaced seriousness that provokes laughter, demanded something much higher, more pretentious, more solemn of themselves as soon as they have concerned themselves with morality as a science: they wanted to furnish the *rational ground* of morality [. . .] How far from their clumsy pride was that apparently insignificant task left in dust and mildew, the task of description, although the most delicate hands and senses could hardly be delicate enough for it! (BGE 186, KSA 5.105–6)

Mocking the (Kantian) project of furnishing a 'rational ground' for morality – a foundational principle from which we can derive a correct moral system – Nietzsche claims that the first task for philosophy is the collection of information about the system of value-feelings and value-distinctions that are present in society. I take it that part of what Nietzsche means to highlight, by using the unusual terms 'value-feelings and value-distinction [*Werthgefühle und Werthunterschiede*]' rather than 'value', is that our values are not simply manifest in our reflective, conscious judgments, but are ensconced in less reflective forms of relating to the world: in our intuitive reactions, distinctions, ways of classifying or distinguishing actions, and indeed in our feelings. These unreflective

manifestations of values, Nietzsche suggests, cannot simply be read off the surface of society, or discovered in armchair reflections about what is valuable; rather, Nietzsche claims, discovering our tacit normative commitments requires 'the most delicate hands and senses'. The following sections of *Beyond Good and Evil* continue the discussion of this point and provide illustrations of it: BGE 189–90, KSA 5.110–11, for example, trace cultural norms and expectations to concealed, tacit evaluative judgments. BGE 212, KSA 5.145–7, sums up this conception of evaluative inquiry; there, Nietzsche writes that philosophers' task is to apply 'the knife vivisectionally to the chest of the very *virtues of their time*', revealing the hypocrisy, contradictions, hidden motives and defunct ideals at the heart of their society's way of life. In these passages, then, we see that Nietzschean moral inquiry takes the form of an investigation of our cultural practices, expectations and institutions, bringing to light their implicit principles, motives and ideals.

So Nietzsche rejects three core elements of the Kantian account: the argument linking autonomy to the Categorical Imperative, the claim that the Categorical Imperative generates determinate content and the foundationalist structure of Kant's theory.[16] Recall that in the second section I established that Hegel objects to precisely these three aspects of Kant's account. Is it possible, then, that Nietzsche endorses a Hegelian theory of normative authority? In the next section I argue that Nietzsche does, indeed, adopt certain elements of Hegel's account. Yet Nietzsche's theory is not fully Hegelian, since it departs from Hegel in two crucial ways.

3.2 How Hegelian could Nietzsche's theory be?

Hegel tells us that it is a mistake to think that we can *derive* a correct set of ethical norms from some formal principle, such as the Categorical Imperative. Rather, we must always begin with a historically situated set of norms. But rather than just accepting these norms as given, we must assess them to see whether they are conducive to the realization of freedom. They can fail by this criterion, and if they do, they must be modified or rejected.

Nietzsche agrees with Hegel's claim that we do not justify norms by deriving them from some formal principle. This is why he mocks the attempt to provide a 'rational ground' for morality (BGE 186, KSA 5.105). Moreover, Nietzsche's critiques of our current values and practices often look quite similar to the Hegelian process of assessing extant norms and values to see whether they live up to their aspirations. To choose a simple example, Nietzsche repeatedly argues that our practice of compassion fails to live up to its own aims: while compassion

aims to aid the object of the compassion, Nietzsche contends that attention to the psychology of compassion will reveal that it harms both the compassionate person and the object of her compassion.[17] If this were correct, then we would have reason to reconsider the value placed on compassion. Many of Nietzsche's critiques can profitably be read in this fashion, for they often proceed by bringing to light hidden contradictions and inconsistencies in our practices and our dominant values. In other words, many of Nietzsche's critiques consist in showing, as he puts it, that 'the *motives* of this morality stand opposed to its *principle*' (GS 21, KSA 3.393).

Nietzsche therefore seems to be in agreement with Hegel's two departures from Kant: namely, Hegel's claim that we assess norms embodied in social institutions and practices, and Hegel's anti-foundationalist method of critiquing norms. However, a closer examination reveals that Nietzsche and Hegel part company on the second point. Indeed, there are two important, and related, differences between them in this regard: Nietzsche and Hegel disagree on how *far-reaching* the critique of modern norms will be, and they also disagree on whether the critique appeals to some principle that is *external* to the currently dominant set of norms.[18]

Let's begin with the first difference. For Hegel, the critique is restricted to determining whether our social institutions and laws live up to their aspirations: while they aspire to be realizations of human freedom, they can fall short of that ideal, and therefore require modification. Nietzsche, however, pursues a far more radical critique: he wants to show that the very ideals to which these institutions aspire must be reassessed. As he puts it in the *Genealogy*,

> What if a symptom of regression were inherent in the 'good', likewise a danger, a seduction, a poison, a narcotic, through which the present was possibly living *at the expense of the future?* [. . .] So that precisely morality would be to blame if the *highest power and splendor* actually possible to the type man were never in fact attained? So that precisely morality were the danger of dangers? (GM Preface 6, KSA 5.253)

In his own work, Nietzsche critiques some of our most cherished values. To choose just a few examples: he complains that the effects of 'liberal institutions' are 'known well enough: they undermine the will to power' (TI Skirmishes 38, KSA 6.139); he writes, 'well-being as you understand it – that is no goal, that seems to us an *end*, a state that soon makes man ridiculous and contemptible' (BGE 225, KSA 5.161); what 'has been called morality', Nietzsche insists, will 'deprive existence of its *great* character' (EH Destiny 4, KSA 6.369); and he warns that 'our weak,

unmanly social concepts of good and evil and their tremendous ascendancy over body and soul have finally weakened all bodies and souls and snapped the self-reliant, independent, unprejudiced men, the pillars of a *strong* civilization' (D 163, KSA 3.146; cf. BGE 62, KSA 5.81–83; A 5; KSA 6.171). Thus, Nietzsche clearly believes that modern values are fundamentally misguided.

This brings us to the second difference. Hegel and Nietzsche's disagreement on how extensive the critiques of modern norms will be reflects a deeper disagreement concerning the way in which the critique is conducted. Whereas Hegel engages in immanent critiques, showing that institutions fail to realize their own ideals, Nietzsche argues that in order to carry out an adequate critique of existing norms, we need to employ some evaluative standard external to the norms themselves. As Nietzsche puts it, '"Thoughts about moral prejudices", if they are not meant to be prejudices about prejudices, presuppose a position *outside* morality' (GS 380, KSA 3.633). Unlike Hegel, Nietzsche thinks that we must do far more than simply locate the values to which our practices aspire, and assess their conformity to these values. We need to uncover a standard that can be used to evaluate the basic aspirations of these institutions.[19] This marks a profound difference between the Hegelian and Nietzschean accounts of normative authority – and it brings Nietzsche somewhat closer to the Kantian perspective.

3.3 A theory that is both Kantian and Hegelian?

Just as Kant's theory can seem too attenuated, too contentless, Hegel's can seem too concrete, too anchored in the particularities of the current social situation. Whereas Hegel wants to show that the current set of social institutions is more or less correct, and strives towards an appropriate ideal, Nietzsche wants to levy a much more radical critique: he aims to show that the basic values informing these social institutions, the basic values that these institutions strive to realize, must be reassessed.

And yet, like both Kant and Hegel, Nietzsche wants the authority of norms to be grounded in the fact that they are, in some sense, self-imposed. So Nietzsche's view seems to hover uneasily between Kant's and Hegel's, in that he endorses all of the following claims:

1. The demand for autonomy produces determinate constraints on what is to be valued.
2. However, we do not justify values by showing that they are *derived from* or *entailed by* the demand for autonomy.

3. Rather, we use autonomy to *assess* our current values.

4. Yet autonomy somehow permits, and indeed requires, a radical critique of these current values.

To recap: Kant and Hegel both endorse versions of (1). Kant denies (2), whereas Hegel accepts (2). Kant and Hegel both accept (3), but interpret the requirement in different ways. Kant and Hegel both deny (4).

Is there a way of making sense of these claims, which might appear to be in conflict with one another? The next section argues that there is, and that Nietzsche himself shows us the way to it.

4. Nietzsche's solution to the problem of normative authority

What looks like a problem is actually one of Nietzsche's deepest insights: the four claims mentioned above can be rendered consistent. The solution lies in recognizing that when Nietzsche speaks of revaluation and freedom, he often incorporates a third concept as well: 'will to power [*Wille zur Macht*]'. This is the concept that enables Nietzsche to produce a novel account of normative authority, which reconciles the seemingly incompatible elements of the Kantian and Hegelian theories.

Nietzsche draws two connections between will to power, autonomy and revaluation. First, he argues that our principle of assessment should be will to power. As he puts it, '[W]hat is good? Everything that heightens in human beings the feeling of power, the will to power, power itself' (A 2, KSA 6.170). Or again: the 'principle of revaluation' or the 'standard by which the value of moral evaluation is to be determined' is 'will to power' (NL 1885–6 2[131], KSA 12.129–32). In other words, revaluation is to be conducted in terms of will to power. Second, Nietzsche 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, KSA 5.326), he claims that a free will is equivalent to a 'strong' will, i.e., a will that manifests will to power (BGE 21, KSA 5.35–6)[20] 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.[21]

Taking these claims into account, I submit that the basic structure of Nietzsche's theory is as follows: an agent is autonomous if she acts on values that

have been 'revalued' or critically assessed; this critical assessment is conducted in terms of will to power; therefore, an agent is autonomous if she acts on values that are consistent with – but not derived from – will to power. This is what Nietzsche claims when he says that freedom should be understood in terms of will to power.

The question, of course, is what all of this *means*. What is will to power? Why must revaluation be conducted in terms of will to power? The following sections address these two questions. This will enable us to see how Nietzsche's theory manages to combine the most appealing features of the Kantian and Hegelian accounts of normative authority, while avoiding some of their potential problems.

4.1 What is will to power?

To begin, we need to understand what Nietzsche means by will to power. It is important not to be misled by the surface connotations of the term 'power [*Macht*]'. In ordinary discourse, the claim that people will power would suggest that they strive to dominate, tyrannize and subjugate others. But this is not what Nietzsche has in mind. Power is a term of art, for Nietzsche; he gives it a special sense.

Nietzsche characterizes will to power in language that seems deliberately vague; he associates power with a family of terms, such as 'giving form', 'expanding', 'imprinting', 'overcoming', 'mastering' and 'shaping'.[22] He writes that will to power is 'the will's wanting to move forward and again and again become master over that which stands in its way' (NL 1887–8 11[75], KSA 13.37–8/WLN 213). Moreover, Nietzsche does not attribute a specific end to those who will power; he claims that the will to power is manifest in activities that are directed at disparate ends. For example, Nietzsche tells us that human beings will power by engaging in activities as diverse as pursuing knowledge, creating art, participating in athletic endeavors and writing novels (cf. GM II 17–18, KSA 5.324–7, et passim).

In order to see exactly what will to power *is*, we will need to determine what these characterizations of will to power have in common. Although Nietzsche's descriptions tend to be rather elliptical, he does repeatedly and insistently emphasize two points about will to power. First, he claims that will to power can be permanently satisfied, but instead involves perpetual striving.

The wish to preserve oneself is the symptom of a condition of distress, of a limitation of the really fundamental instinct of life which aims at *the expansion of*

power, and wishing for that frequently risks and even sacrifices self-preservation. (GS 349, KSA 3.585–6)

A condition once achieved would seem to be obliged to preserve itself – Spinoza's law of 'self-preservation' ought really to put a stop to change: but this law is false, the opposite is true. It can be shown most clearly that every living thing does everything it can not to preserve itself but to become *more*. (NL 1888 14[121], KSA 13.300-1/WLN 257)

In contrasting the desire to 'preserve oneself' – that is, the desire to abide in one's current state – with the will to power, Nietzsche emphasizes that will to power involves perpetual striving.[23]

Second, will to power manifests itself as a particular form of striving: striving for resistances or obstacles. Consider the following passages:

The will to power can express itself only against resistances; therefore it seeks that which resists it. (NL 1887 9[151], KSA 12.424/WLN 165)

The will is never satisfied unless it has opponents and resistance. (NL 1887–8 11[75], KSA 13.37–8/WLN 213)

When Nietzsche refers to 'resistances', he means impediments or challenges to one's ends. The structure to which Nietzsche is drawing attention is clearest in the case of competitive or skillful endeavors, such as sports and games. Consider activities such as marathon running or chess playing. Part of the point of these activities is that they are challenging, introducing obstacles or difficulties that must be overcome. One tries to run twenty-six miles, rather than twenty-six feet, because the former is so difficult and the latter so easy; analogously, one plays chess (and other games) precisely because one wants to encounter a challenging task, which requires skill and ingenuity to complete successfully. In short, agents who choose to engage in marathon running and chess playing seem actively to seek obstacles or resistances, in order to surmount them. In the passages quoted above, Nietzsche makes it clear that willing power involves doing just this.

Of course, one does not want these challenges or resistances to serve as *permanent* impediments to one's ends; rather, one wants to *overcome* the impediments. As Nietzsche puts it, the agent seeks to 'again and again [become] master over that which stands in its way' (NL 1887–8 11[75], KSA 13.37–8/WLN 213). For example, the marathoner does not want to confront the pain and difficulty of running twenty-six miles, and find herself incapable of overcoming them, collapsing after five miles; rather, she wants to hold herself to the course of action despite the challenges involved in doing so. She wants to overcome these obstacles by completing the race. This is why the runner sets herself a goal that is

achievable, albeit only with great difficulty. She does not set herself an impossible task such as running two hundred miles, nor does she set herself a less challenging task such as running five miles; she sets herself a challenging-yet-achievable task. To return to the other example, chess players typically do the same thing: a typical chess player will seek to compete with players who are at similar or slightly superior levels of skill, rather than to play against opponents who are easily defeated or virtually undefeatable.

In sum, Nietzsche seems to identify willing power with the activity of perpetually seeking and overcoming resistance to one's ends. I therefore conclude that, as Bernard Reginster (2006: 127) puts it, 'will to power, in the last analysis, is a will to *the very activity of overcoming resistance*' (emphasis in the original).[24]

It is also 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 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 twenty-six miles or checkmating one's opponent. Will to power does not *compete with* these determinate goals; rather, it modifies the way in which these goals are pursued. As John Richardson (1996: 21) helpfully puts it, will to power is not a claim about *what* we will; it is a claim about *how* we will.

4.2 Will to power as a claim about the essential nature of willing

Now we know what will to power is. But there is another central component to Nietzsche's account, which we will need to understand in order to uncover the connection between will to power and freedom. This is Nietzsche's claim that *every action manifests will to power*. He often expresses this point by claiming that will to power is the 'essence [*Wesen, Essenz*]' of willing or of life. There are a number of passages in the published works and unpublished notebooks that make this point. For example, Nietzsche argues that 'the essence of life' is simply 'its *will to power*' (GM II 12, KSA 5.314). He tells us that 'life itself' is a striving for 'power' (A 6); 'the will to power' is 'the will of life' (BGE 259, KSA 5.207–8); 'life simply *is* will to power' (BGE 259, KSA 5.208); 'the genuinely basic drive of life [*Lebens-Grundtriebes*] [. . .] aims at *the expansion of power* [. . .] the will to power [. . .] is just the will of life [*Wille des Lebens*]' (GS 349, KSA 3.586). In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, he gives this a more imagistic expression: 'where there is life is there also will: not will to life but – thus I teach you – will to power' (Z II On Self-Overcoming, KSA 4.149). The point is even clearer in the notebooks,

where he writes: 'All "purposes", "goals", "meanings" are only modes of expression and metamorphoses of the single will that is inherent in all events: the will to power. To have purposes, aims, intentions, *willing* in general, is the same thing as willing to be stronger, willing to grow – and, in addition, willing the means to this' (NL 1887–8 11[96], KSA 13.44–5/WLN 217); 'Everything that happens out of intentions can be reduced to the *intention of increasing power*' (NL 1885–6 2[88], KSA 12.105); 'Striving is nothing other than striving after power' (NL 1888 14[81], KSA 13.260–1). In these quotations, Nietzsche suggests that every episode of willing, or every action, aims at power.

As noted in the previous section, will to power is a higher-order aim: an agent pursues power in the course of pursuing some other, more determinate end. So Nietzsche's claim that every action aims at power amounts to this: whenever a person wills an end, this episode of willing has a certain structure. It consists not only in the aim of achieving some end, but also in the aim of encountering and overcoming resistance in the pursuit of that end.[25]

The notion that we strive to encounter and overcome resistance is most plausible in relation to competitive or skillful actions, but Nietzsche argues that this striving is a feature of *all* human actions. He has several arguments for this claim, but, given their complexity, I lack the space to reconstruct them here. For present purposes, it will be sufficient to note that one of Nietzsche's arguments takes the following form. First, he argues that all human actions are motivated by a distinctive kind of psychological state, the 'drive [*Trieb*]'. Drives differ from desires in that while many desires are dispositions to realize some determinate end, drives are dispositions to engage in characteristic forms of activity. The aggressive drive, for example, does not motivate us to achieve any particular goal, but merely to engage in aggressive activity. For this reason, Nietzsche argues that any action that is motivated by a drive 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.[26] If Nietzsche is correct that all human activities are drive-motivated – obviously, no small claim – then it follows that all human actions have a higher-order aim of encountering and overcoming resistance. In Nietzsche's terminology, this is equivalent to the claim that all human actions manifest will to power.[27]

The claim that all human actions manifest will to power is initially counterintuitive. Let me mention three important qualifications, which may render the view somewhat more plausible.[28] First, Nietzsche argues that we can aim

at X without realizing that we aim at X, indeed without the possibility of aiming at X ever entering our conscious reflection. So his claim that every action aims at power is not contradicted by the obvious fact that many individuals do not understand their actions as having this aim. Second, Nietzsche contends that many actions manifest the aim of power only in a half-hearted, conflicted or distorted fashion. Third, Nietzsche is *not* claiming that will to power is our strongest aim, nor is he claiming that it is typically decisive in determining what we will do. On the contrary, will to power has only a minor influence on most of our actions. It is not, so to speak, the *strength* of this motive that renders it important; it is the motive's omnipresence, which shapes our actions in a gradual and aggregative fashion.

Even with these qualifications in place, Nietzsche's claim that every action aims at power is highly controversial. However, our task here is not to assess this aspect of Nietzsche's account, but to determine the structure of Nietzsche's theory of normative authority. Thus, for present purposes, we can grant the claim and ask whether Nietzsche can use it to generate a compelling account of normative authority.

4.3 Why does freedom require revaluation in terms of power?

Given the premise that every action aims at power, Nietzsche is able to show that revaluation must be conducted in terms of will to power. His argument can be reconstructed as follows:

i.   An agent is self-determining iff she acts on values whose authority has been critically assessed.
ii. In order to critically assess a value, one must determine whether the value minimizes conflicts with will to power. Those values that minimize these conflicts are acceptable, whereas those that do not are to be rejected.
iii. Therefore, if an agent is self-determining, then she acts on values that minimize conflict with will to power.

Premise (i) was defended in Section 3.1. Explicating and defending the crucial premise (ii) is the task of this section.

As I mentioned at the beginning of Section 4, Nietzsche's commitment to premise (ii) is clear; he repeatedly emphasizes that will to power is the 'standard by which the value of moral evaluation is to be determined' (NL 1885–6 2[131], KSA 129–32); cf. A 2, A 6, KSA 6.170, 172; NL 1887–8 11[83], KSA 13.39–40).

He suggests that any value that conflicts with will to power should be rejected, and that values that promote or maximize will to power should be affirmed. But how does Nietzsche *argue* for this claim? I submit that there are several steps.

First, Nietzsche seems to rely on the assumption that aims are reason-providing. More precisely: if you have an aim, you have a (pro tanto) reason to fulfill it.[29] This is a relatively uncontroversial claim; even the most minimal accounts of practical reason, including most variants of the Humean account, accept this claim.[30]

Second, it follows that if an aim is present in every episode of action, then whenever an agent acts she will have a pro tanto reason to fulfill this aim. So, given Nietzsche's claim that all actions aim at power, whenever a human being acts, she will have a reason to seek power.

Third, notice that these will-to-power-derived reasons will sometimes conflict with the reasons springing from our other aims and values. Take a simple example: suppose an individual values a form of complacency. This individual believes that it is valuable to be content with what one already has; one should not seek further accomplishments. This value clearly conflicts with will to power.[31] As the prior sections argued, to will power is to aim at resistances and challenges. So we have a straightforward conflict: valuing complacency involves judging that there is reason not to confront challenges, but aiming at power commits us to the claim that there is reason to confront challenges. If an agent accepts the value of complacency, then he will be committed to contradictory propositions about how to act.

What does this tell us about the value of complacency? It is clear enough that, in presenting will to power as the standard of revaluation, Nietzsche wants us to reject any value that conflicts with will to power in this way. In making this claim, Nietzsche relies on the inescapability of will to power. If he is correct in arguing that will to power is an essential feature of action, then this aim cannot be reassessed or altered; the fact that every action aims at power generates an inescapable, pro tanto reason to seek power. However, other aims and values *can* be reassessed and altered. For example, we could – and many do – regard complacency as not valuable, or even as disvaluable. So Nietzsche's point is simple: when there is a conflict between the will to power and some other value or aim, the only way in which we can alleviate the conflict is by modifying the other value or aim.[32]

Let me mention a complication, though. On Nietzsche's account *every* action aims at power. Thus, even an agent who values complacency will be aiming at power, albeit in a conflicted, distorted or half-hearted manner. Part of what it is

to become free, on Nietzsche's theory, is to render this aim of power less conflicted and distorted; to do this, one minimizes conflicts among one's aims.[33]

I submit that Nietzsche takes these points to establish (ii). Given (ii), the conclusion (iii) follows: if an agent is self-determining, then she acts on values that minimize conflict with will to power. In short: freedom requires critical assessment of one's values, and this critical assessment consists in revaluing one's values in light of power.

4.4 The structure of Nietzsche's theory

I have only been able to sketch the structure of Nietzsche's theory here. Suppose, though, that the theory is defensible. We can then ask what the consequences would be: what kind of explanation of normative authority would the theory generate?

We saw that Nietzsche's theory incorporates four central claims, which I will repeat here:

1. The demand for autonomy produces determinate constraints on what is to be valued.
2. However, we do not justify values by showing that they are *derived from* or *entailed by* the demand for autonomy.
3. Rather, we use autonomy to *assess* our current values.
4. Yet autonomy somehow permits, and indeed requires, a radical critique of these current values.

The interpretation that I have proposed does, in fact, reconcile these claims.

First, notice that the demand for autonomy entails that we must revalue our values in light of will to power. So the demand for autonomy does generate a determinate constraint on permissible values: we are to adopt those values that minimize or eliminate conflict with will to power. Thus, condition (1) is fulfilled.

Second, on Nietzsche's view, we do not justify the authority of a value by showing that it derives from or is entailed by autonomy. Nietzsche does argue that *one* normative principle can be derived from the features of autonomous willing: the claim that we have reason to will power. But it should be clear that we are not going to be able to derive much additional content from this claim. For example, there is no way of moving from the idea that we aim to encounter and overcome resistance to the idea that we should not lie, or that we should not murder. On the contrary, lying and murdering are ways – possibly quite good ways – of

willing power. Fortunately, Nietzsche's will to power doctrine is *not* meant to function as a foundational principle from which we derive all other normative claims. Rather, as the prior sections explained, will to power is intended to serve as a 'principle of revaluation'. That is, the will to power generates a standard in terms of which we are to assess all other values. So Nietzsche grounds *one* normative principle in facts about our agential nature, and uses this principle *not to derive, but to assess*, the other values that we embrace. In this respect, Nietzsche's theory looks more Hegelian than Kantian: rather than attempting to derive our values from a formal principle, we use a formal principle to assess our current, historically contingent set of values. The resultant theory does not have a foundationalist structure, of the sort that Nietzsche clearly denounces; but it does give one value a privileged status, and it uses that value as a criterion or principle of revaluation. Thus, conditions (2) and (3) are fulfilled.

Finally, the fact that power has a privileged status enables us to mount a radical critique of our current set of values and social institutions – a critique that may reveal them not merely to fall short of their own ideals, but to be deeply misguided in the ideals they strive to realize. Power's privileged status gives us, as Nietzsche puts it, 'a position *outside* morality', in terms of which we can reassess even our most basic values (GS 380, KSA 3.632–3). Thus, condition (4) is fulfilled.

So my proposed interpretation of Nietzsche's theory fulfills the four conditions. Nietzsche's theory incorporates the most appealing features of the Kantian and Hegelian views: it is a non-foundationalist ethic, which nevertheless explains normative authority through an appeal to autonomy, and allows for a radical critique of our current values. And the importance of this result extends beyond questions of Nietzsche interpretation: if the argument is correct, then we can ground normativity in an ineluctable aim, assess other norms and values for consistency with this aim and thereby generate a non-foundationalist, autonomy-based ethical theory.

Of course, in this essay I have only sketched the structure of this theory; I have not explored the particular normative results that the theory generates. Nietzsche claims that these results are far-reaching: he treats his theory as serving to indict many of our most cherished values, such as equality, democracy, compassion and the condemnation of suffering. Determining the precise ways in which these values conflict with power is no easy task; it requires subtle investigations of their cultural and psychological effects, as well as examinations of the forms of life that they foster, the ideals that they embody and the pictures of the self on which they rely. I cannot address these complex topics here. My

hope, though, is that this essay's analysis of the *structure* of Nietzsche's theory of normative authority puts us in a position to address these fascinating normative questions.[34]

5. Conclusion

I have argued that will to power is the red thread linking Nietzsche's claims about revaluation and freedom. Appreciating this point enables us to see how Nietzsche can reconcile seemingly incompatible elements of the Kantian and Hegelian accounts of normative authority.

Let me summarize the results. First, Kant, Hegel and Nietzsche share a common foundational idea: they believe that the authority of normative claims can be justified only by showing that these norms are, in some sense, self-imposed or autonomous. In other words, no *realist* construal of norms would be satisfactory; any legitimate norm must have its source in us.

However, this project gives rise to a problem: does the injunction 'be autonomous!' impose any substantive constraints on the content of norms? If not, we face the charge that Hegel levies against Kant: the injunction has no content, so nothing could count as *not* fulfilling the demand. Kant thinks he has a solution to this problem: he argues that autonomy yields commitment to the Categorical Imperative, and that the Categorical Imperative does, in fact, generate determinate normative content. Yet Hegel, and later Nietzsche, deny that Kant succeeds: they contend that the Categorical Imperative is just an empty formalism, which either merely reiterates the moral demands of Kant's society, or generates no content whatsoever.

This leads Hegel to his theory of *Sittlichkeit*, or ethical life. According to Hegel, we do not derive moral content from the formal idea of freedom. Rather, we use the idea of freedom to assess existing social institutions and practices, seeking to determine whether they are realizations of freedom. While there are many differences between Hegel and Nietzsche on this score, I have argued that Nietzsche's theory incorporates the Hegelian claim that we use the idea of freedom to assess existing moral norms.

However, unlike Hegel, Nietzsche believes that one norm can be extracted from the bare idea of freedom, independently of any facts about the particular system of values, practices and institutions that the individual inhabits. This norm is will to power. Its connection to freedom and its independence from

extant social norms gives it a position outside of our current ethical norms, making possible a radical critique of these norms.

Nietzsche's theory therefore incorporates seemingly disparate elements of the Kantian and Hegelian accounts, generating a unique and, I believe, philosophically fruitful solution to the problem of normative authority. Indeed, if one can be forgiven for expressing it in Hegelian terms, Nietzsche's larger project can be profitably viewed as an attempt to sublate the Kantian and Hegelian accounts of normative authority, showing that each is a partial and one-sided truth that finds correct expression in Nietzsche's own theory.[35]

Notes

1 I will use the phrase 'account of normative authority' to refer to an explanation of what makes normative claims legitimately binding for us. For example, 'murder is wrong' and 'eating vegetables is wrong' both purport to be claims according to which we should regulate our actions, but presumably the former is legitimate or justified in a way that the latter is not. A theory of normative authority explains why this is so.

2 Wood (1990) presents a helpful survey of several other possible readings. See also 'Hegel's Ethical Rationalism,' in Pippin (1997).

3 Kantians argue that this objection is based on a misunderstanding: the contradiction does not depend on the idea that any particular institutions or practices should exist. Rather, it arises because the agent is attempting to act on a maxim that, once universalized, would no longer be efficacious for its intended purpose. For a reply of this kind, see Korsgaard (1996) and Wood (1990).

4 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).

5 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)' (PR 258). In several passages, he 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).

6 Thus, after writing, 'only that will which obeys the law is free,' Hegel continues, 'for it obeys itself and is self-sufficient and therefore free' (VG 115/97). Elsewhere, he puts the point as follows: '[T]he 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).

7 The full argument for these claims occupies PR 157–360. See especially PR 157–8, 181–8 and 257–9. Helpful secondary literature on these points includes Houlgate (1991), Neuhouser (2000), Pinkard (2002), Pippin (2008) and Wood (1990).

8 Consider an example, which I will borrow from Frederick Neuhouser. Neuhouser (2000) asks us to consider the modern democratic system of electing political officials, wherein each citizen is given one vote. He writes, 'The practice of "one person, one vote" embodies an ideal of political equality that is imperfectly realized so long as political campaigns are financed by the "donations" of a few wealthy individuals or corporations' (258). In other words, we can see that the current practice of providing each adult citizen with one vote aspires to realize the ideal of political equality: each individual should have an equal say. However, we can also see that our social institutions do not fulfill this ideal perfectly, because wealthy individuals are able to exert more control over the political process than poor individuals. Thus, we can critique the current electoral system by showing that it is an imperfect realization of the ideal to which it aspires. This is an immanent critique, appealing not to some external standard, but to the standards internal to the practice itself.

9 The term 'foundationalist' needs clarification. Typically, foundationalism is the view that there are two types of justified beliefs: *mediately* justified beliefs, whose justification depends on their relation to other beliefs; and *immediately justified* beliefs, whose justification does not depend on any other beliefs. A parallel version of foundationalism in ethics would be the view that certain ethical claims are immediately justified. Kant certainly is not a foundationalist in that sense; rather, the clearest examples of this type of ethical foundationalism would be ethical intuitionist accounts, such as that defended by W. D. Ross. However, there is a second sense of foundationalism. A philosopher counts as an ethical foundationalist in this second sense if he maintains both that there is one or more fundamental ethical principle from which all other, more specific ethical claims are derived, and that this fundamental ethical principle is not immediately justified. Kant is a foundationalist in this sense: the Categorical Imperative is the fundamental ethical principle, and it is justified by appeal to its connection to rationality or autonomy.

(For a helpful discussion of ethical foundationalism, see Timmons (1987); my distinctions in this footnote largely follow his account.)

10 I do not aim to establish that Nietzsche self-consciously envisioned his project as reconciling Kantian and Hegelian elements. Rather, my aim is simply to show that Nietzsche's project does, in fact, reconcile these elements. However, my approach does invite a question: while it is well known that Nietzsche was deeply engaged with Kant, how thoroughly did he know Hegel's works? There is evidence that he was familiar with Hegel's work. In a letter of 1865, Nietzsche mentions that he is studying one of Hegel's texts (he does not say which one), and in 1873 he reads Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*. Nietzsche also encountered extensive treatments of Hegel through secondary sources: he attended and thought highly of Jakob Burckhardt's 1870 lectures, which discussed Hegel at length, and he studied F. A. Lange's and Schopenhauer's expositions of Hegel. Indeed, he had enough familiarity with Hegel to reject Schopenhauer's reading, chiding Schopenhauer for his 'unintelligent rage' against Hegel (BGE 204, KSA 5.130), and in later works he praises Hegel, calling him a 'genius' and listing him as one of only three philosophers who produced a 'great insight' (BGE 252, KSA 5.195–6, and GS 357, KSA 3.597 ff.). For discussions of Hegel's influence on Nietzsche, see Brobjer (2008), Houlgate (2004) and Dudley (2007). For a very helpful discussion of Kant's influence on Nietzsche, see Bailey (2013).

11 See Bailey (2003) and (2013), Gemes (2006), Guay (2002), Janaway (2006), Reginster (2003) and Richardson (2005). As Bailey (2013: 150) puts it, 'Nietzsche's account of the "sovereign individual" . . . echoes the Kantian conception of "autonomy" as an agent's treating agency, or "will", itself as the highest and unconditional value'. I address this topic in Katsafanas (2014).

12 In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche gives this an imagistic expression, claiming that the question of whether someone is free can be rephrased in the following way: 'Can you give yourself your own evil and your own good and hang your own will over yourself as a law?' (Z I On the Way of the Creator, KSA 4.80 ff.).

13 While this passage is from an early text, and therefore might be taken not to represent Nietzsche's mature view, the passages from GS, GM and BGE quoted in the previous paragraph suggest the same claim: freedom requires revaluation.

14 See also GS 335, GS 347, KSA 3.560 ff., 581 ff.; A 9, A 54, KSA 6.175–6, 236–7 and the closing sections of the *Genealogy*.

15 For a discussion of the sense in which Kant is a foundationalist, see note 9, above.

16 This list is not exhaustive; Nietzsche objects to other aspects of Kant's account as well. For example, Bailey (2013: 151) notes that Nietzsche also differs from Kant

in 'admitting different degrees of agency and therefore moral significance among agents and thus substantially modifying the egalitarianism or universality standard required by Kantian moral judgment'. And, of course, Nietzsche rejects Kant's account of agency; see Katsafanas (2014) for a discussion.

17 For a helpful discussion of this point, see Reginster (2006, 186ff.).

18 An additional and very significant difference between Hegel and Nietzsche – a difference that I lack the space to investigate here – lies in the importance, for Hegel, of mutual recognition. While this notion plays a crucial role in Hegel's account of selfhood and normativity, Nietzsche rarely mentions it. One exception is his talk of mutual recognition among restricted groups, such as the ancient nobility.

19 Thus, in BGE 211, KSA 144–5, Nietzsche claims that Kant and Hegel merely adopt the dominant values of their times, and 'identify them and reduce them to formulas'. He contrasts this with the work of 'real philosophers'. Nietzsche argues that real philosophers must do more than simply accept and codify the dominant value; they must 'apply the knife of vivisection to the virtues of their time' (BGE 212, KSA 5.145) and create new values.

20 The surrounding context makes it clear that Nietzsche's talk of strong and weak wills should be understood in terms of will to power, for the two sections following this remark discuss his notion of will to power: BGE 22, KSA 5.37, introduces the notion of will to power; BGE 23, KSA 5.38–9, claims that psychology is the 'path to the fundamental problems' and that psychology should be understood in terms of 'the doctrine of the development of the will to power'.

21 In this passage, Nietzsche claims that freedom is measured 'according to the resistance which must be overcome'. Below, I will argue that Nietzsche associates will to power with overcoming resistance; accordingly, this passage associates freedom with degree of will to power.

22 See GM II 18, KSA 5.325–7; GS 349, KSA 3.585–6; BGE 259, KSA 5.207–8; Z II On Self-Overcoming, KSA 4.1469; NL 1887–8 11[75], KSA 13.37–8.

23 Compare Alexander Nehamas's (1985: 79) claim that 'willing as an activity does not have an aim that is distinct from it; if it can be said to aim at anything at all, that can only be its own continuation. Willing is an activity that tends to perpetuate itself, and this tendency to the perpetuation of activity . . . is what Nietzsche tries to describe by the obscure and often misleading term "will to power"'. Heidegger (1979 vol. I: 37) concurs: 'will to power is will to will'.

24 Reginster (2006) argues for this characterization at length. My analysis of will to power is indebted to his work.

25 This is why Nietzsche says that 'all "purposes", "goals", "meanings" are only modes of *expression* and metamorphoses of one will that is inherent in all events: the will to power' (NL 1887–8 11[96], KSA 13.44–5/WLN 217; emphasis added). He

is not claiming that every goal is a *means* to power; rather, he is claiming that whenever we will any goal at all, we *express* will to power by also willing resistance to that goal.

26 More precisely, Nietzsche argues that what it is for something to aim at power is for it to be drive-motivated. Will to power is not an independent drive, but a description of the structure of drive-motivated actions.

27 I defend my interpretation of Nietzsche on will to power in Katsafanas (2013).

28 I discuss these qualifications at length in Katsafanas (2013).

29 A pro tanto reason is a reason that has some weight, but nonetheless may be outweighed by other reasons. For example, if I aim to get to my office within ten minutes, and if doing so requires driving at ninety miles per hour, I have a pro tanto reason to drive at this speed. Nevertheless, this reason is outweighed by reasons provided by my other aims, such as my aims of driving safely and minimizing potential harm to others.

30 There is a complication: some philosophers, reluctant to count seemingly immoral aims as generating reasons, argue that we should express the relevant normative claim differently. It is not that aims provide us with reasons; rather, if we have an aim, then we have reason *either* to fulfill the aim *or* to give up the aim. For an example of such an account, see Broome (1999). This point does not affect the argument given above, so I ignore it in what follows.

31 There is a complication, though: the complacent actions will themselves be manifestations of will to power. I address this below.

32 Above, I speak of minimizing conflicts with will to power. Why not, instead, speak of maximizing the expression of power? This is a difficult topic, which I address in chapter 7 of Katsafanas (2013). Briefly, I interpret Nietzsche as suggesting that conflicts between will to power and other values are pervasive and ineradicable; although different sets of values conflict to greater and lesser extents with the values arising from our agential nature, there is no set of values that would completely eliminate conflict. In order to manage this conflict, we ought to embrace the sets of values that conflict as little as possible with will to power.

33 There is an alternative explanation here. Drawing on ideas from Müller-Lauter (1971), we could distinguish between actions that manifest *growth or expansion* of will to power, and actions that instead only aim at a form of self-preservation. The complacent actions, though manifesting will to power, would manifest only the degenerate form of will to power that aims at self-preservation. Thus, rather than analysing the complacency case in terms of conflicting aims (as I suggest above), we could analyse it in terms of degenerate manifestations of will to power. I think these suggestions are in fact perfectly compatible, for we can understand a degenerate manifestation

of power as a manifestation that fails to fulfill the aim of power completely, or fulfills it only to a minimal degree.

34 I discuss some of the normative consequences of Nietzsche's view in chapters 7–8 of Katsafanas (2013).

35 Many thanks to Tom Bailey and João Constâncio for their insightful comments on this essay.

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VG   Hegel, G. W. F. (1994), *Vorlesung über die Philosophy des Geistes 1827–8*, ed. B. Tuschling, Felix Meiner: Hamburg.

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