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## Nietzsche's intuitions

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### ABSTRACT

This essay examines a particular rhetorical strategy Nietzsche uses to supply *prima facie* epistemic justification: appeals to intuition. I first investigate what Nietzsche thinks intuitions are, given that he never uses the term 'intuition' as we do in contemporary philosophy. I then examine how Nietzsche can simultaneously endorse naturalism and intuitive appeals. I finish by looking at why and how Nietzsche uses appeals to intuition to further his philosophical agenda. Answering these questions should provide a new and deeper understanding of how Nietzsche does philosophy.

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This article explores a new way of understanding how Nietzsche does philosophy: he appeals to the intuitions of his readers. At first glance, this view might seem strange. After all, much of Nietzsche's work aims to undermine the legitimacy of positions that philosophers have long thought to be intuitive.<sup>1</sup> But I argue that Nietzsche embraces appeals to intuition. Such appeals are meant to give readers reason to accept positions that he believes are true. Thus, perhaps much to the surprise of many readers, I hold that Nietzsche thinks intuitions can have justificatory force.

My view falls between two very different readings of Nietzsche's methodology that have recently dominated the literature. One approach focuses on Nietzsche's philosophical naturalism, the view that philosophical positions should be, in some sense, continuous with the sciences.<sup>2</sup> On this account, one of Nietzsche's primary goals is justifying positions by appeal to what can be supported by the sciences, broadly conceived.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>With respect to moral philosophy, for example, see Katsafanas (2016, 26–28, 35); Owen (2007, 5, 146).

<sup>2</sup>For various accounts of Nietzsche's naturalism, see Leiter (2002, 2013); Schacht (2012); Acampora (2006, 2013); Clark and Dudrick (2006, 2012).

<sup>3</sup>For instance, Leiter writes, 'Any method that reliably produces knowledge of what is true is a *Wissenschaft* [viz, a science, broadly construed to include the humanities]' (Leiter 2019a, 93, my brackets). A different

The other approach to Nietzsche's methodology stresses his use of rhetorical devices like metaphor, hyperbole, humor, sarcasm, and parable – devices meant to provoke affective reactions like shock, awe, and admiration, which effectively bypass 'rational judgment' (Janaway 2009, 252).<sup>4</sup> The two approaches are globally incompatible, but locally compatible. If there were clearly demarcated domains within which Nietzsche justifies his claims naturalistically which could be separated from domains in which justification is beside the point, then Nietzsche could employ the method that best fits the subject matter. But he offers no such demarcation.<sup>5</sup> And commentators see no problem with this, since both approaches to Nietzsche's methodology agree about which method provides *epistemic justification*, that is, justification conducive to delivering truth and avoiding error. The naturalist approach holds that naturalism supplies justification, and the rhetorical approach holds that rhetoric is simply not in the game of providing justification. As a result, the two camps agree that Nietzsche's rhetorical style does not provide warrant. I disagree – I contend that there are instances where Nietzsche's rhetorical strategies supply justification.<sup>6</sup>

One such strategy, I suggest, involves appealing to the intuitions of his readers.<sup>7</sup> Roughly, intuitions involve something *seeming true*, such as the claim that there are no round squares, or that torturing a puppy is wrong. Both historically and today some of the most challenging objections to philosophical naturalism come from appeals to intuition. Whereas scientists test their theories against the findings of observation and experiment, it is not uncommon to find philosophers offering justification by pointing to intuition. We should expect that Nietzsche's preference for naturalism would then lead him to reject appeals to intuition.

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view is offered by Clark and Dudrick (2006, 2012). They hold that for Nietzsche justification occurs with the realm of human behavior, or the 'space of reasons', rather than the realm of merely empirical phenomena, or the 'space of causes', which is studied by the sciences. My account differs from Clark and Dudrick's in that they do not discuss how Nietzsche's rhetorical strategies might supply justification in the space of reasons.

<sup>4</sup>Janaway (2009) and Gemes (2006) offer influential accounts of this approach.

<sup>5</sup>It might be desirable if the two approaches could be shown to be globally compatible, despite first appearances, since this demarcation strategy raises many obvious problems. For instance, we might wonder how to draw the boundaries, how to explain why justification is or is not pertinent, and why the non-justificatory domain is still philosophically important.

<sup>6</sup>In what follows, I use 'justification', 'warrant', and 'reason to believe' interchangeably, and I count 'S has reason to believe X' and 'S has reason not to believe X' both as instances of providing genuine justification.

<sup>7</sup>This paper concerns philosophical appeals to intuition in general, rather than Nietzsche's technical use of the term 'intuition' [Anschauung], which he contrasts with 'intellect' [Intellekt] in 'On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense'. For discussion of Nietzsche's specific use term 'intuition', see Church (2015, 88). Appeals to intuition have been around in philosophy for a long time, though of course not in name, and my aim here is to understand why and how Nietzsche appeals to what we now understand as appeals to intuition.

And to some extent, we see below, this is true. But at the same time, although Nietzsche never uses the term ‘intuition’ as we do in contemporary philosophy, his writing style often leads readers intuitively to prefer some position over another, and such intuitive appeal seems to rationalize philosophical positions he believes are correct. Thus, it appears that intuitions occupy some important middle-ground between naturalistic and rhetorical approaches to Nietzsche’s methodology.

We are then faced with three important questions, none of which have been addressed in the literature. First, what might Nietzsche think intuitions are? When he invites readers to favor something intuitively, for instance, does he appeal to beliefs, emotional states, *sui generis* propositional attitudes, some combination of these, or what? Second, how might Nietzsche simultaneously endorse naturalism and appeals to intuition, especially if naturalism has a monopoly on justification? Third, how are Nietzsche’s appeals to intuition meant to further his philosophical agenda? This paper aims to make headway on these questions in order to better understand how Nietzsche does philosophy.

### Intuitions as presentational states

When Nietzsche appeals to intuition, I propose, he appeals to what contemporary thinkers refer to as *presentational* mental states, and he believes that such states are typically manifest in affective responses.<sup>8</sup> In this section, I describe some key features of presentational states. In the following sections, I show how these features come alive in Nietzsche’s texts.

Presentational states, which can be identified with intuitive states in general, but need not be, are a particular kind of representational state.<sup>9</sup> Representational states represent the world as being a certain way if their content were true. Such states are also presentational if they do not simply represent the world as being a certain way, but also *present* the world as being that way. For example, consider a visual experience. When we look at an orange on a table, we have the visual representational state that the world is such a way where it is true that there is an orange on

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<sup>8</sup>For Nietzsche, affective states can be conscious or unconscious, but in what follows I only discuss conscious affective states. Although appeals to intuition could certainly affect us unconsciously, having an intuition – for example, the intuition that God’s death is frighteningly disorienting – is often a conscious experience. I also focus on intuitions that *actually* manifest in affective reactions, despite the fact that Nietzsche does not seem to believe that intuitions necessarily manifest affectively. This will help us understand the relation between drives and intuitions.

<sup>9</sup>What follows is indebted to Bengson (2015). One major difference between Nietzsche and Bengson’s accounts is that Bengson, but not Nietzsche, believes presentational states can provide sufficient justification, specifically justification that does not require justification in turn – akin to something ‘given’. Nietzsche would reject this rationalist view.

the table. But, in having this experience, we do not merely represent to ourselves that particular state of affairs, as someone who might stand back and look upon their own mental states. Instead, we have the *immediate impression* that there is an orange on the table, in the sense that we seem directly influenced by the orange's presence. The orange impresses itself on our visual experience. Presentational states, whether perceptual or involving propositional attitudes, involve some way in which the world is immediately presented to us.

Importantly, although intuitions are sometimes regarded as beliefs,<sup>10</sup> beliefs and presentational states are not identical. When believing something, the content of the belief is often endorsed, or accepted as true. To believe that it is raining outside is to accept that it is true that it is raining outside. But to be presented something is merely to have the impression that it is true. I believe the Earth is spinning approximately 1,000 MPH, for instance, but I have no impression of this. When viewing the Müller-Lyer illusion, I have the impression that the two lines have different lengths, but I do not believe it.

Beliefs also often have explicit propositional content. Typically, the content of a belief can be articulated fully, or formulated explicitly, despite the fact that some beliefs might be quite simple and others more complicated. The propositional contents of a belief can often be stated clearly and openly – the content is fully available to the subject holding the belief. In contrast, while the propositional content of presentational states *can* be explicit, such content is oftentimes implicit. That is, one might have an impression about something without being able to explicitly formulate the propositional content of that impression. The content might not yet be clear to the subject having the impression, or not yet consciously available.<sup>11</sup> This does not imply that implicit content is nonconceptual, of course. Nothing about the implicit nature of propositional content implies that such content only involves concepts, specifically concepts one possesses to represent the world. Implicit content is simply content that is not fully articulated, unlike the typical content of beliefs.

On Nietzsche's account, I argue below, intuitive states are typically presentational states, specifically states manifest in *affective reactions*.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>See, e.g. Lewis (1983, x); Gopnik and Schwitzgebel (1998); Devitt (2006, 491); Kornblith (1998).

<sup>11</sup>For further explanation, see Bengson (2015, section 4). Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pushing me to be clear about these ideas.

<sup>12</sup>This appears unique to Nietzsche. Intuitions are often thought to be beliefs, dispositions to believe, or *sui generis* propositional attitudes, none of which typically involve affective states. For a helpful discussion of these competing ways to understand intuitions, see Pust (2017, section 1).

Broadly, affective reactions are psychological states involving feelings, like shock or awe. Just as presentations and beliefs come apart, so too with presentations and affective responses. Presentational states need not manifest affectively. For instance, the impression that not both  $p$  and not- $p$  can be true need not involve anything affective. And, arguably, affective states need not immediately present the world as being some way or another. Sometimes feelings of severe depression, for example, can be extremely overwhelming and do not necessarily appear to involve anything identifiably representational. And even if affective states involve representational states, psychologists and philosophers of emotion commonly hold that feelings involve beliefs, and we have seen that presentational states and beliefs should be differentiated. So, presentational states are not simply beliefs with affective flare.

As I see things, Nietzsche thinks that appeals to intuition can do some serious philosophical work, especially because intuitions have this affective component. To show that this is the case, however, we first need to carve out a space for such work to get off the ground. This brings us to the relation between naturalism and intuition.

### Intuition, science, and drives

Intuitions are sometimes thought to justify philosophical positions. But, as we saw above, commentators commonly think that for Nietzsche justification is supplied by naturalistic accounts of the world. So, does Nietzsche's naturalism eclipse the justificatory work that appeals to intuitions might do?

To begin, there is good reason to believe that Nietzsche endorses naturalism. He asks, 'When will all these shadows of god no longer darken us? When will we have completely de-deified nature? When may we begin to *naturalize* humanity with a pure, newly discovered, newly redeemed nature?' (GS 109). A naturalistic justification is one that, at least in part, can be confirmed in experience, and science is in the business of providing such justification. For Nietzsche science is the 'wisdom of the world' (A 47). But this praise comes with an important qualification. Nietzsche holds that 'there is no science "without presuppositions"' (GS 344). Science 'first needs an ideal of value, a value-creating power, in the *service* of which it could *believe* in itself' (GM III: 25). The specific presupposition or ideal of value that Nietzsche believes that science accepts or should accept does not concern us here. What is significant is that for Nietzsche science does not offer *theory-independent* justification.

A theory-independent justification is one not assumed by virtue of prior or continuing commitments to any substantive philosophical theory. Theory-independent reasons do not merely reinforce previous or ongoing philosophical commitments. For Nietzsche commitment to science requires making certain assumptions about the nature of scientific practice, from the aims to the methods of inquiry, which inform naturalistic justification. This does not lead Nietzsche to reject naturalism, of course. He simply thinks that naturalistic justification is not theory-independent.

Nietzsche's praise of naturalism together with his rejection of theory-independent warrant suggests that, as a general rule, he believes that if something constitutes a suitable justification then it will somehow be theory-dependent. So, if intuitions can supply warrant then it will not be due to their theory-independent character. The problem is that intuitions are often thought to be *exactly that*. Many philosophers, especially those affiliated with the rationalist tradition, believe that intuitions supply reason to support positions regardless of antecedent normative commitments. Perhaps this is for good reason. For instance, it seems intuitively true that nothing can be all red and all green simultaneously. Intuitions like these appear to supply direct evidence on purely rational grounds, with no need to appeal to anything derived from any experience outside what is required to grasp the relevant concepts in play. For this reason, philosophers have taken intuitions to provide *a priori* warrant, which is classically considered to be theory-independent.<sup>13</sup>

Nietzsche rejects theory-independent justification, *a priori* or otherwise. Consider the attack he launches on moral philosophers in BGE 186:<sup>14</sup>

all our philosophers demanded something far more exalted, presumptuous, and solemn from themselves as soon as they approached the study of morality: they wanted to supply a *rational foundation* for morality [...] What the philosophers called "a rational foundation for morality" and tried to supply was, seen in the right light, merely a scholarly variation of the common *faith* in the prevalent morality; a new means of *expression* for this faith; and thus just another fact within a particular morality.

According to Nietzsche, moral philosophers like Kant and Schopenhauer have attempted to supply a '*rational foundation* for morality'. Such justification, which includes *a priori* warrant, is supposed to stand apart from

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<sup>13</sup>For discussion, see BonJour (2011).

<sup>14</sup>I use BGE 186, which concerns moral philosophy, as just one example of the way in which Nietzsche rejects theory-independent justification, but there is good reason to think that rejecting views on these grounds extends to other domains of philosophy. For defense of this view, see Katsafanas (forthcoming).

contingent contextual factors that might influence philosophers to embrace some theory or another, including, Nietzsche writes, ‘their environment, their class, their church, the spirit of their time, [and] their climate and part of the world’ (BGE 186). It is then reasonable to suppose that a rational justification is theory-independent. A predominant source of such justification in moral philosophy comes from intuitive data. It is common to test the plausibility of moral theories by appeal to intuition, and moral theories often gain justification by being intuitively plausible.<sup>15</sup> In BGE 186, Nietzsche suggests that such appeals to intuition merely provide support for views philosophers already embrace, and therefore do no genuine justificatory work.<sup>16</sup>

On Nietzsche’s view, then, those who embrace strategies like intuitive appeals presume to know the truth and have no desire to call that truth into question. Those who offer intuitive justification for their preferred moral theories merely offer a ‘scholarly variation of the common *faith* in the prevalent morality’ (BGE 186). Intuition, therefore, far from providing theory-independent warrant, amounts to what Nietzsche calls ‘*conviction*’, or ‘the belief that on some particular point of knowledge one is in possession of the unqualified truth’ (HH I: 630). Nietzsche rejects conviction on the grounds that those who fix belief by way of conviction close themselves off to questions, experiments, and alternative positions, all of which are conducive to the pursuit of truth. As a result, ‘convictions are more dangerous enemies of truth than lies’ (HH I: 483)

Nietzsche appeals to science in order to challenge conviction. He says that in science ‘convictions have no rights of citizenship’ (GS 344, see also HH I: 630). Nietzsche primarily champions science for its *method*, rather than its particular results: ‘the scientific spirit rests upon an insight into methods, and if those methods were lost, then all the results of science could not prevent a restoration of superstition and nonsense’ (HH I: 635, my translation, cf. A 59). In addition to offering ‘rigorous procedures of inquiry’ (HH I: 633), which involves creating and testing hypotheses, Nietzsche believes the scientific method involves a critical attitudinal stance characterized by exhibiting ‘*cautious reserve*’ (HH I:

<sup>15</sup>Indeed, in the preface to the *Groundwork* Kant famously claims that his moral theory will be supported by ‘common cognition’, or our ordinary, intuitive judgments concerning morality.

<sup>16</sup>Owen is right to say that, on Nietzsche’s account, our ‘moral intuitions’ are ‘the product of the particular contingent course of European history’ (Owen 2007, 5; see also Katsafanas 2016, 26–28). Owen later claims that this contingency ‘encourages a degree of scepticism towards forms of argument based on any straightforward appeal to our intuitions’ (Owen 2007, 146). But, as I argue below, Nietzsche repeatedly appeals to intuition in GM, though of course nothing ‘straightforwardly’ turns such appeals. Owen dedicates a section of his book on GM to understanding Nietzsche’s rhetoric and, unfortunately, does not mention Nietzsche’s strategy of appealing to intuition.



631, cf. A 59), ‘wise moderation’ (HH I: 631), and ‘instinctive mistrust of devious thinking’ (HH I: 635, see also 633; A 13; GS 344). Fixing belief by way of the scientific method opposes conviction because those who embrace the scientific method exhibit the desire to question, experiment, and consider alternative positions.<sup>17</sup> The scientific method is better suited to delivering truth and avoiding error. To be sure, Nietzsche does argue that certain convictions are often operative in scientific work, such as the conviction that truth is more valuable than other modes of evaluation (see, e.g., GM III: 24; GS 344; BGE 1). Nietzsche therefore suggests that we should experimentally call the value of truth into question, a project which is perfectly consistent with the method of questioning, experimentation, and exploring alternative positions.

Since Nietzsche contrasts science with conviction and suggests that appeals to intuition merely amount to convictions, we should expect him to dismiss appeals to intuition as being unscientific. And that seems to be exactly what is going on in BGE 186. ‘What the philosophers called “a rational foundation for morality”’, he says, was ‘certainly the very opposite of an examination, analysis, questioning, and vivisection of this very faith [in prevalent forms of morality]’. Finding a theory-independent justification for morality, perhaps through intuitive warrant, runs counter to the scientific method. Nietzsche seems to be pitting appeals to intuition against the scientific method and clearly siding with science.

This is not the end of the matter, however. If we remember that Nietzsche simultaneously praises science and rejects theory-independent justification by scientific means, we see that there is ample room for him to embrace a positive conception of intuition, and even for appeals to intuition to provide some kind of justification. As I see things, Nietzsche endorses a view of intuition that falls between *thin* and *thick* conceptions of intuition.

A *thin* conception of intuition holds that intuitions are theory-independent because they are *a priori*. Nietzsche’s commitment to naturalism strongly indicates that he rejects *a priori* justification. But intuitions need not be *a priori*. For instance, many of our intuitions, say, about moral cases, are derived from a familiarity with various theories culled from experience together with an understanding of the consequences of implementing those theories in real-world scenarios. Our intuitions often bring

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<sup>17</sup>Nietzsche’s understanding of the scientific method, and his preference for the scientific method over conviction, is very similar to Peirce’s position in his influential essay ‘The Fixation of Belief’. See Peirce (1982, 61–78).

empirical information to bear on test cases. And, I contend, appeals to intuition can be considered theory-independent without being so independent of philosophical theories that they are thought to provide a *a priori* warrant. Such appeals rely on antecedent information derived from experience but remain open to revision given new experience.

A *thick* conception of intuition holds that intuitions are theory-dependent in that they merely reinforce prior or ongoing philosophical commitments. This conception of intuition also need not be true. For instance, appeals to intuition based on our experience of the world can be used to question the plausibility of previously held beliefs, such as, for example, the longstanding view that knowledge is true justified belief. Intuitions can provide *prima facie* reason to consider positions that differ from those that might have once been well-received. In response to Gettier cases, for instance, we find an entire literature proposing new accounts of what constitutes knowledge – reliabilist theories, causal theories, and so on. This suggests that intuitions can be considered theory-dependent without being so dependent on theories that they are thought not to provide independent sources of warrant.

The conceptual space for Nietzsche to embrace a positive view of intuition now emerges. Insofar as appeals to intuition can provide *prima facie* support for some position without merely indicating antecedent commitment to that position, and insofar as that *prima facie* support is not *a priori* but is instead dependent on prior experience and revisable upon future experience, it seems that appeals to intuition are perfectly consistent with Nietzsche's emphasis on fixing belief by way of the scientific method. This renders intuitive appeals consistent with his naturalism. Below I give examples of how these kinds of appeals are very much present in Nietzsche's texts, and how such appeals have important justificatory roles to play in Nietzsche's philosophy. But first let me turn to an important objection.

There is reason to believe that Nietzsche thinks intuitions are *hopelessly thick*. Intuitions cannot provide theory-independent support, one might argue, because they are irrevocably intertwined with substantive philosophical theories. In BGE 6, for example, Nietzsche writes, 'every great philosophy so far has been [...] the personal confession of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir'. Philosophies are 'confessions' of the philosopher because they reflect the philosopher's 'basic drives' (BGE 6). On Nietzsche's account, human beings are constituted by a particular rank order of drives, which, very generally, ground dispositions to think, feel, and act. Rank order is determined by dominant and

subordinate relations between drives, and the strongest drives have the greatest influence on how we think, feel, and act. The point of BGE 6 seems to be that dominant drives are ultimately responsible for our philosophical commitments. If so, then it appears that any use of intuition would ultimately only support one's prior or continuing philosophical commitments. Not only does this seem to wipe out any possibility that appeals to intuition can be theory-independent, it also seems to undermine the justificatory work of appeals to intuition in general, on the grounds that intuitions cannot warrant positions while genuinely remaining open to challenge from conflicting viewpoints.

Nonetheless, I think Nietzsche can embrace the theory-dependent nature of intuitions and still claim that intuitions have important *prima facie* justificatory work to do. The fact that intuitions are ultimately grounded in our drives does not entail that intuitions cannot provide independent support for some view over another while also remaining open to challenge from without. When we have certain intuitions, Nietzsche thinks, we can to some extent become aware of the drives which dispose us to have those intuitions, and we can utilize that awareness to assess the credibility of what we are driven to find intuitive. This process can push us to examine, analyze, and question what we find intuitive, which can in turn motivate us to find independent support for some position over another, that is, justification not presupposed in initially finding some position intuitive. Here it is crucial to remember that for Nietzsche intuitive appeals are affectively loaded, since affective reactions can help reveal the nature of our drives. As Katsafanas writes, 'drives manifest themselves by generating affective orientations' (2016, 104). Affective reactions that manifest with presentational states, which, on my reading, can provide *prima facie* reason to accept some claim as true or false, can also give us reason to interrogate what we are initially driven to find intuitive. We can see how this works by turning to Nietzsche's account of the death of God.

### **Intuition, the death of god, and nobility**

To illustrate Nietzsche's view of intuitions as presentational states, and to see how he construes the relation between intuitions and drives, consider an excerpt from the famous 'God is dead' passage:

"Where is God?" [the Madman] cried, "I'll tell you! *We have killed him*—you and I! We are all his murderers. But how did we do this? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were

we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Where is it moving to now? Where are we moving to? Away from all suns? Are we not continually falling? And backwards, sideways, forwards, in all directions? Is there still an up and a down? Aren't we straying as though through an infinite nothing? Isn't empty space breathing at us? Hasn't it gotten colder? Isn't night and more night coming again and again?" (GS 125)

And Nietzsche continues – in fact, he asks sixteen consecutive questions! Notice that questions do not contain explicit – specifically, *assertive* – propositional content. Nietzsche does not tell readers what to believe, or what is true or false. Instead, readers are invited to have certain *impressions* about the loss of God manifest in affective reactions to his barrage of questions. Nietzsche invites readers to have a *disorienting* affective reaction to his many questions.<sup>18</sup> Unchaining the earth from the sun, moving away from all suns, falling without direction – these all express states of disorientation. Such disorientation is supposed to be terrifying. God's death brings about the feeling of moving through an infinite nothingness, being consumed by empty space, adrift in cold darkness. This gripping feeling involves implicit propositional content, namely, that when God becomes unbelievable, life loses direction. Importantly, Nietzsche never fully articulates this reason to readers. The content is meant to be implicitly transmitted through feelings of disorientation. The affective impression of disorientation then involves a terrifying loss of direction and contains an implicit reason for that loss. This presents a nice example of how Nietzsche appeals to intuition.<sup>19</sup>

This passage also shows that appeals to intuition can reveal the nature of our drives and lead us to secure justification for positions we are not originally driven to believe. GS 125 addresses modern atheists. Atheists are of course driven not to believe in the existence of God. Nietzsche thinks they are also typically driven by commitments to traditional moral principles, such as the principle that all people are morally equal, or the principle that moral actions are selfless actions. To the modern atheist, these principles are justified independently of the belief that God exists. But Nietzsche holds that such principles are actually grounded in the Judeo-Christian worldview. Since capacities and abilities are vastly unequal across people and groups of people, it seems that only God

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<sup>18</sup>This terminology comes from Reginster (2006, 26–27).

<sup>19</sup>One might argue that for Nietzsche the propositional content of our intuitions must be explicit rather than implicit, since conscious content is necessarily conceptualized, and conceptualized content is fully articulated. But, as we see here in GS 125, Nietzsche does not necessarily link conceptual content with fully articulated content. Conceptual content can be implicit.

can ensure that we are morally equal,<sup>20</sup> and selflessness arguably becomes a value only after people begin to rally behind giving themselves fully to God. Nietzsche ultimately wants to encourage modern atheists to reject these implicit endorsements of theism.

To achieve this aim, I suggest, Nietzsche appeals to intuition. He looks to provoke certain impressions about the loss of God in order to motivate atheists to inquire about the justification of their commitments that might depend on God, specifically their commitment to traditional moral principles. Here is how this might work. GS 125 is meant to shock atheists into having a certain presentational state about God's death, an impression that their drives typically blind them from having. The impression involves terrifying disorientation with the implicit content that belief in God actually provides direction for their lives. But at the close of the passage, Nietzsche suggests that atheists do not explicitly grasp this idea: 'This deed [the death of God] is still more remote to them than the remotest stars – *and yet they have done it themselves!*' Nietzsche wants to remove this remoteness by motivating atheists to seek out possible reasons for why they have the intuition that God gives their lives direction. Upon having certain intuitions about the God's death, for instance, atheists might explore their reactions and come to understand that their drive to embrace traditional moral principles involves hidden commitments to theism. The impression that God's death is disorienting, together with the revelatory justification that God actually guides the lives of atheists, should motivate self-proclaimed atheists to purge their lives of theism. To be sure, it need not go this way. For instance, certain atheists might be motivated simply to ignore the feeling of disorientation and avoid attempting to fully articulate and assess the implicit content associated with that feeling. But Nietzsche clearly attempts to use intuition in order to get modern atheists to overcome these difficulties.<sup>21</sup>

If Nietzsche's use of intuition in GS 125 is successful, atheists should be moved to examine, analyze, and question a select set of their drives after having *prima facie* reason to accept that belief in God continues to provide

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<sup>20</sup>For a detailed discussion of this point, see Leiter (2019b).

<sup>21</sup>One might argue that Nietzsche's account fails to distinguish practical from theoretical reason, such that what we have reason to do should be separated from what we should believe. It might be further argued that practical reason does not provide genuine justification. More specifically, what we should believe, all things considered, could be considered more important than our reasons for being pushed merely to act in some way or another. In response, Nietzsche does not follow those who like Aristotle who separate practical from theoretical reason and prefer the latter, and, on my account, he believes practical reason can provide *prima facie* justification to seek out the best theoretical reasons for embracing some position or another.

them with direction. This provides atheists with reason to seek out independent justification for their commitments after scrutinizing what they are driven to find intuitive. For example, they might be motivated to seek out warrant for egalitarianism that in no way relies on God. GS 125 therefore illustrates how Nietzsche appeals to the intuitions of certain groups of people in order to help them understand the nature of their drives and invite them to critically analyze what they are driven to believe.

We can now see that the fact that intuitions are grounded in our drives does not provide a good reason for supposing that appeals to intuition cannot be helpful for coming to fix belief. In fact, the view that intuitions are grounded in our drives provides fodder for Nietzsche to appeal to intuitions that run against what we are driven to believe. This is crucial for pushing people to change their beliefs. Nietzsche is not merely interested in providing *prima facie* support for some position over another – he wants to harness that support to *elicit change*. The attempt to change peoples' beliefs, I suggest, is the primary reason Nietzsche appeals to intuition, and providing *prima facie* justification is meant to jumpstart that change. To further explore this idea, let us look at another place in Nietzsche's corpus where he utilizes the strategy of appealing to the intuitions of his readers.

One of Nietzsche's most striking and sustained appeals to intuition comes in the first essay of GM. It is commonly held that the first essay of GM is meant to change the beliefs of modern atheists, specifically those who are unaware that their commitments concerning morality are actually grounded in the Judeo-Christian worldview. One way that Nietzsche attempts to achieve this aim is by providing contemporary atheist readers with reason for finding the noble mode of valuation attractive. And Nietzsche attempts to accomplish this goal, at least in part, by employing strategies that provoke the intuitions such atheists.

Since I cannot provide a thorough examination of Nietzsche's complex description of nobility in the first essay of GM, consider just a few colorful passages from GM I: 10. Nietzsche writes that 'every noble morality develops from a triumphant affirmation of itself'. 'The noble mode of valuation', he proclaims, 'acts and grows spontaneously, it seeks its opposite only so as to affirm itself more gratefully and triumphantly'. Nobility is 'filled with life and passion through and through – "we noble ones, we good, beautiful, happy ones!"' He writes, 'The noble man lives in trust and openness with himself'. And the nobles have 'strong, full natures' with 'an excess of the power to form, to mold, to recuperate and to forget'. No reader can easily brush off the attractiveness of nobility that Nietzsche presents here.

The strongest pushback to finding nobility attractive occurs in GM I: 11,<sup>22</sup> where Nietzsche describes the horrific acts of the nobles when they remove themselves from social constraints between themselves and engage with those outside the group. He writes that ‘once they go outside, where the strange, the *stranger* is found, they are not much better than uncaged beasts of prey’. The nobles enact a ‘disgusting procession of murder, arson, rape, and torture’. It seems that contemporary atheists, who typically embrace traditional morality, should find these actions, at the very least, significantly unappealing. So, how does Nietzsche make such ‘monsters’ attractive to us?

A closer look at GM I: 11 is revealing: Nietzsche’s phrasing, framing, and presentation style consistently advance the appeal of nobility.<sup>23</sup> He opens the discussion by saying that ‘in their relations with one another’ nobles ‘show themselves so resourceful in consideration, self-control, delicacy, loyalty, pride, and friendship’. The nobles exhibit ‘mores, respect, custom, gratitude’ [Sitte, Verehrung, Brauch, Dankbarkeit] (my translation). Returning to the slave class expresses ‘freedom’ from ‘tension engendered by protracted confinement and enclosure’ in society. The seemingly horrific acts of the nobles show an ‘innocent conscience’. And the nobles emerge from their recess ‘exhilarated and undisturbed of soul’. At the close of the discussion the nobles are even described as ‘triumphant’ and ‘splendid’ beasts, those who are ‘avidly in search of spoil and victory’. The seemingly negative actions Nietzsche attributes to nobility, then, are regularly contextualized, qualified, and flanked by positive descriptors, and the discussion is even framed to open and close with positives. These details, I think, speak volumes: the nobles never truly lose their appeal.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>There might be another way to push back. Nietzsche seems to respect the intelligence of the slaves and dismiss the nobles as unintelligent. This is a standard reading. For just a few clear examples, see Ridley (1998, 127–134); Welshon (2014, 20–22); Hatab (2011, 207–213). Nietzsche writes, ‘A race of such men of *ressentiment* is bound to become eventually *cleverer* than any noble race; it will also honor cleverness to a far greater degree: namely, as a condition of existence of the first importance’ (GM I: 10). I am not convinced that this undermines the intuitive appeal of nobility. First, the passage continues by describing nobility in strongly positive terms. Second, Nietzsche holds that the slave’s cleverness develops from dishonesty, and he praises the honesty of nobility. Third, Nietzsche thinks the cleverness of the slaves plunges humanity into nihilism (see GM I: 12). As I see things, then, cleverness does not render the slave class appealing.

<sup>23</sup>For a similar reading – and one that provides much more depth than my description here – see Migotti (unpublished manuscript).

<sup>24</sup>I therefore disagree with White’s claim that ‘Nietzsche deliberately *destroys* the possibility of identification with [the noble master], by stressing his most horrible aspects as a murderous “beast of prey”’ (White 1994, 66), and Janaway’s claim that ‘Readers will be indignant about the nobles as Nietzsche describes them’ (Janaway 2009, 100). Hatab (2008, 48–49) suggests that the negative remarks directed at nobility in GM I: 11 come from the perspective of the slave, rather than Nietzsche’s own perspective. If so, this supports my reading of Nietzsche’s positive depiction of the nobles, since the positive

Moreover – and perhaps to put the final nail in the coffin – Nietzsche ends GM I: 11 by saying that while one may be warranted in being afraid of the nobles, such fear is *much more attractive* than embracing the slave mode of existence:

One may be quite justified in continuing to fear the blond beast at the core of all noble races and in being on one's guard against it: but who would not a hundred times sooner fear where one can also admire than *not* fear but be permanently condemned to the repellent sight of the ill-constituted, dwarfed, atrophied, and poised?

The rhetoric clearly supports the nobles. The nobles are presented as *admirable*, whereas the sickly features of the slave class exemplify 'the regression of mankind'. Nietzsche finishes the passage by unabashedly denouncing the slaves, a move which simultaneously invites praise of nobility. For example, he uses scare-quotes when referring to the slaves as men – dismissing their humanity – and attacks them as 'insipid' and 'maggots'. There should be no doubt that Nietzsche wants readers to have the impression that nobility is appealing.<sup>25</sup>

Notice that none of these passages explicitly argue for, or endorse, the superiority of nobility. The attractiveness of the noble mode of valuation cannot be derived by appeal to traditional argument. And although Nietzsche's descriptions are affectively-loaded, they are not merely rhetorical – they seem to reflect what he holds true. Nietzsche invites readers to have certain positive impressions about nobility manifest in affective reactions like *attraction* which provide *prima facie* reason to accept the view that the noble mode of valuation should be preferred over slave mode

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descriptions are clear in other passages. But it is hard to reconcile Hatab's reading with the wealth of positive descriptions used for nobility in GM I: 11, since these are descriptions that the slaves would clearly not bother making. One might also argue that contemporary readers cannot genuinely grasp the appeal of nobility because we are far removed from those cultures in which nobility flourished – we cannot 'go back', and of course Nietzsche never advocates for a return to the noble way of life. But, as Migotti writes, Nietzsche never suggests that the perspective of nobility is '*epistemically unavailable*' (Migotti 2006, 111). Migotti continues: 'Noble values are not so bizarre as to render it doubtful that we can understand what it might have been like to live in accordance with them' (Migotti 2006, 111). This understanding certainly informs the appeal of nobility for current readers.

<sup>25</sup> Commentators tend to significantly underestimate the intuitive appeal of the nobles. Here are just a few examples. Ridley writes, 'Nietzsche is much nicer about the nobles in the first essay than he is about the slaves' (Ridley 1998, 128; cf. Ridley 2011, 315; see also Conway 2008, 42–43). Swanton claims that Nietzsche 'appears' to 'valorize' nobility, but 'he valorizes it by comparison with slave morality which for him is clearly much more dangerous in its tendencies to undermine the development of "higher man"' (Swanton 2011, 292). Janaway says, 'So someone who winces at the description of the nobles in GM I might also be someone whose reaction is *tinged* with a kind of admiration or awe' (Janaway 2009, 101, emphasis added). Janaway is on much better ground when he claims that Nietzsche wants to elicit 'an affective inclination in favor of the nobles, to show that one has also inherited from earlier value systems an excitement and attraction for heroism, prowess, and the exercise of power with aristocratic disdain' (Janaway 2009, 105; cf. Owen 2007, 86). For an informative discussion about some of the key positive features of nobility, see Migotti (2006, 110–113).



of valuation. The propositional content that informs this justification, which is never openly expressed, concerns the fact that modern atheism is somehow severely problematic – otherwise the noble mode of valuation, which runs counter to modern atheism, would not be so alarmingly eye-catching. The nobles of antiquity seem powerfully and perhaps even mysteriously enticing. This should contribute to changing the beliefs of modern atheists. In the following, final section, I want to explore this issue of belief change in more depth.

### Intuition, belief change, and naturalism

There are two rhetorical features of presentational states that help Nietzsche effect changes of belief, both of which are clearly present in the first essay of GM.<sup>26</sup> First, presentational states are *non-voluntary*. While we often actively make decisions or judgments, a presentational state is passive – it simply overtakes us. For instance, we cannot help reading descriptors like ‘triumphant’, ‘powerful’, ‘passionate’, ‘self-affirmative’, and ‘high-minded’, which Nietzsche uses to describe the nobles, with a positive valence.

Presentational states are also *non-neutral* in the sense that they are *compelling*. By immediately presenting the world to us as being a certain way, they tend to dispose us to believe the world is that way. Readers of GM are disposed to believe that nobility is attractive because nobility is presented as being attractive. Presentational states function to rationalize assent to their contents, though of course sufficient rationalization is a further matter. Finding nobility intuitively appealing impresses on readers the view that there is reason to believe that nobility is appealing. Consequently, presentational states move us to embrace certain beliefs – in this context, beliefs that Nietzsche wants us to accept.

The intuitive appeal of nobility provides the groundwork for modern atheists to change their beliefs. The non-voluntary, non-neutral provocations Nietzsche unfurls supply initial reason to find nobility appealing, which in turn works to undercut allegiance to traditional morality. In this regard, the strategic employment of presentational states can have powerfully subversive effects.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>These features, along with others, are explored in greater detail in Bengson (2015).

<sup>27</sup>The methodological strategy of appealing to intuition also helps make sense of Nietzsche’s aim described in the seemingly enigmatic first section of the Preface of GM. Nietzsche says, ‘We are unknown to ourselves, we men of knowledge – and with good reason. We have never sought ourselves – how could it happen that we should ever *find* ourselves?’ (GM P: 1). Atheists must be pushed to know themselves – they must be pressed into understanding what it means fully to embrace atheism – and

Interestingly, Nietzsche's use of intuition to change the beliefs of his readers leads him to adopt certain ways of appealing to intuition which have actually been used to challenge the use of intuitions in contemporary philosophy. Experimental philosophers have argued that intuitions can vary widely between different people, groups of people, people at particular times, and people in different contexts.<sup>28</sup> Such widespread disagreement seems to erode the reliability of intuition. If intuition reports differ widely, we might have good reason to suppose that such reports do not supply tenseless and timeless justification, but are instead heavily sensitive to factors irrelevant to the beliefs that they are employed to justify. Variance is therefore seen as a significant problem for the use of intuitions.

Nietzsche is perfectly aware that intuition reports vary across different groups of people, and his knowledge of such variance is *exactly* the reason he uses intuition when pursuing his philosophical agenda. For example, we have seen that he often targets a certain demographic – modern atheists – who have a particular drive set. The impressions that Nietzsche hopes to provoke in atheists are meant to manipulate them into changing their beliefs. Nietzsche is not searching to provide tenseless and timeless warrant for philosophical positions, like the way intuitions about Gettier cases have often been used to undermine knowledge as true justified belief. Nietzsche looks to provide initial warrant for particular philosophical positions in order to get particular groups of people to change their minds. The fact that intuitions vary widely does not sap their justificatory force, but in fact contributes to helping Nietzsche achieve his philosophical aims.<sup>29</sup>

I have suggested that Nietzsche uses appeals to intuition in order to supply *prima facie* justification in order to effect changes in belief. One might argue that philosophical naturalism plays the same role, however, and does so much better than intuition. After all, naturalistic explanations seem to be doing all the heavy lifting when it comes to justification. Why think a mental state which merely *presents* the world to be a certain way

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Nietzsche's appeals to intuition ground this project of discovery. Nietzsche writes, 'we sometimes rub our ears *afterward* and ask, utterly surprised and disconcerted, "what really was that which we have just experienced?" and moreover: "who *are* we really?" (GM P: 1). Given that the noble mode of valuation runs against our modern mode, it is obviously disconcerting to have the impression that nobility is attractive. Nietzsche suggests that atheists should reflect on their affective impressions and seek out who they really are – they are, in fact, still theist in many crucial ways. This seeking is grounded in the presentational states Nietzsche stirs up.

<sup>28</sup>See Weinberg, Nichols, and Stich (2001); Knobe and Nichols (2008); Weinberg (2017).

<sup>29</sup>Gemes (2006, 199–201) gives a nice example of Nietzsche's use of this strategy in GM. Nietzsche's presentation of the triumph of slave morality suggests that nineteenth-century Germans are actually quite Jewish, which, given the cultural climate in Germany at the time, is certainly aimed to unsettle them.

can do important justificatory work when we could appeal to a wealth of sensory information that actually *shows* the world to be that way? Nietzsche writes, 'All credibility, all good conscience, all evidence of truth come only from the senses' (BGE 134). It appears that justification comes entirely from sense experience, and thus any effective changes in belief will essentially turn on naturalistic explanation.

It is important to remember, however, that empirical information plays a substantial role in what we find intuitive.<sup>30</sup> For instance, the intuition that pleasure is not the only good, which might be derived from reading Nozick's thought experiment concerning an experience machine, involves empirical information regarding what pleasure is, what experiences without pleasure are like, and so on. For Nietzsche, our intuitions involve all sorts of empirical data, from the ways in which we are driven to think, feel, and act, to the ways in which the external world influences how we think, feel, and act. Intuitions are not divorced from empirical information, and so they should not be regarded as irrelevant to justification. At the same time, Nietzsche thinks intuitions do not provide sufficient justification. Presentational states only supply initial reactions and often contain only implicit content. Given that such states are non-voluntary and function to rationalize assent to their contents, however, intuitions can be pivotal for motivating changes in belief, which is undoubtedly what Nietzsche wants.

As I see things, Nietzsche is not some arch-naturalist who thinks intuitions should be banned in philosophy. Rather, he believes that intuitions should be supplemented and reinforced with the resources the sciences offer. The propositional content of presentational states, for example, is open to naturalistic scrutiny. When reading the first essay of GM, for instance, one should have the impression that slave morality is problematic. Nietzsche justifies this naturalistically using a variety of approaches. One approach involves providing causal explanations that destabilize the appeal of slave morality by highlighting its negative physiological impact on humanity. Nietzsche writes that slave morality teaches people to 'despise' the 'instincts of life' (EH 'Destiny' 7, see also A 5, cf. GM II: 24). Embracing slave morality has devastating consequences for the development of the species. Slave morality functions by way of 'oppressive instincts that thirst for reprisal' (GM I: 11). Such desire for revenge concerns *ressentiment*, the causal source of the slave mode of valuation, and thus

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<sup>30</sup>Kornblith (2017, 157) also makes this point, and, importantly, he does so when arguing for a naturalistic philosophical methodology.

the origin of modern morality. *Ressentiment* emerges as ‘submerged hatred, the vengefulness of the impotent’ (GM I: 10). Nietzsche contrasts this negativity with the noble mode of valuation: ‘Ressentiment itself, if it should appear in the noble man [...] does not *poison*’ (GM I: 10). Nietzsche even exclaims, ‘How much reverence has a noble man for his enemies! – and such reverence is a bridge to love’ (GM I: 10). Nietzsche’s methodological strategy in the first essay of GM involves providing naturalistic explanations of the development and application of certain psychological mechanisms, and these explanations work to provide a defense of the impressions about slave morality and nobility one receives when reading GM.

Naturalistic explanations can therefore complement Nietzsche’s appeals to intuition by providing substantive justification for views that gain initial plausibility by way of intuition. For Nietzsche, I have argued, intuitive states have rhetorical force, but they are not strictly non-rational. Indeed, as we have just seen, they contain propositional content which offers *prima facie* warrant which can be analyzed by rational means. Presentational states and affective orientations implicitly present the world to us as being a certain way, and whether the world is the way it is presented can be, at least in principle, examined naturalistically. This distinctive way of using intuition therefore services both the naturalistic Nietzsche and the rhetorical Nietzsche.

## Summary and conclusion

I have argued that appeals to intuition are consistent with Nietzsche’s philosophical naturalism, specifically fixing belief by way of scientific method, insofar as intuitions do not merely reinforce previously endorsed beliefs, but instead simply provide initial evidence for positions that could be either overturned or fortified with future investigation. Moreover, although Nietzsche suggests that intuitions should be rejected because they provide no independent support for positions philosophers are driven to accept, I have argued that the affective reactions manifest in presentational states can reveal the nature of some of our key drives, which can provide reason for us to question, reject, reinforce, or modify what we are driven to believe. In fact, altering what we are typically driven to believe is the reason Nietzsche uses intuition – after all, he thinks that what we typically believe is problematic. Appeals to intuition can provide *prima facie* epistemic justification for views that he believes are correct, and the fact that presentational states are typically affectively-loaded,

immediate, non-neutral, and contain content which is open to naturalistic scrutiny renders them well-suited to ground the formation of new beliefs. This way of understanding intuition provides a helpful new way of understanding how Nietzsche does philosophy.

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