



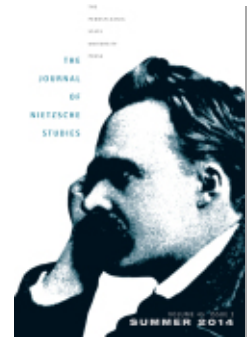
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Sublimation and Affirmation in Nietzsche's Psychology

JOSEPH SWENSON

ABSTRACT: Nietzsche sometimes offers the elusive suggestion that his psychology is not just original but inaugural: a "first" in the field of philosophy. This article argues that a clue to his inaugural ambitions is discovered in his novel use of sublimation as a concept that engages in both a genealogical critique and a therapeutic reassessment of the basic prejudices of value dualism that he claims constitute the evaluative core of the Western tradition. Genealogically, sublimation provides Nietzsche with a new structure of naturalistic narrative that explains how traditionally opposed values actually share a common natural origin. Therapeutically, Nietzsche's various sublimation narratives serve to qualify the effects of his own naturalistic critique by revealing how and why our animal bodies and drives can now be practically affirmed as a new source of human dignity.

KEYWORDS: Nietzsche, sublimation, psychology, naturalism, value, dualism

Nietzsche, Psychology, and the Claims of Philosophical Originality

Nietzsche informs his readers frequently and seemingly with great confidence that his most original contributions to philosophy are best understood in the context of his development of a radically new kind of psychology. In his most enthusiastic moments, he even suggests that the originality of his thinking reveals not just a very, very good psychologist at work in his writing but also something more like the invention or inauguration of the field of psychology itself. It is this inaugural sense of his own originality, for example, that leads Nietzsche to ask the question, "What philosopher before me was a *psychologist* instead of its opposite, a 'higher fraud?'" and then offer the bold response, "Psychology did not exist until I appeared" (*EH* "Destiny" 6).¹ Nietzsche is less outspoken and far more elusive, however, when it comes to offering his readers any specific details that might help to justify his status as the "first" psychologist in this apparently otherwise philosophically "fraudulent" field. As a result, many of his readers soon find themselves in a position of considerably less confidence than Nietzsche himself, when the task turns to assessing the original merits, perhaps even the inaugural merits, of his newly proposed "psychological" approach to the problems of philosophy.

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The elusiveness of Nietzsche's new psychology is not only due, however, to his tendency to present his claims to originality in hyperbolic language that is often more prophetic in tone than it is programmatic in explanation. It is also due to the fact that Nietzsche ends up offering us a variety of different ways of categorizing the originality of his various psychological observations and endeavors that, in turn, open up a variety of different points of entry into basic questions about what he is trying to do: that is, what sort of original goal his new psychology is trying to achieve.

To take just a few examples: Nietzsche tells us that his new psychology is committed to an unprecedented naturalism that seeks to "translate humanity [Menschen] back into nature" (*BGE* 230). But unlike other "clumsy" forms of naturalism, he also maintains that his particular translation project is original because it attempts to remain "joyful [fröhliche]" in its new orientation toward science (*Wissenschaft*).² He also provides us with an original and dynamic new social psychology that diagnoses philosophical systems, and even whole historical epochs, in terms of their relative sickness or health and introduces, among other things, a highly speculative new psychohistorical method called "genealogy" to account for the intertwined histories of our changing conceptions of human nature and value. Nietzsche also provides us with a loosely organized but distinctive brand of depth psychology that emphasizes the role that unconscious states and hidden drives play in his explanations of human behavior generally, and, particularly, in his various historical case studies of those pathological and healthy individuals who capture his curiosity. We are also informed, somewhat mysteriously, that the originality of Nietzsche's new psychology can be understood in terms of a "morphology and the *doctrine of the development of the will to power* [als Morphologie und *Entwicklungslehre des Willens zur Macht*]" and that his new philosophy intends to supplant the old royalty of traditional metaphysics with a new "queen"—psychology—that is now (but also "once again") on "the path to fundamental problems" (*BGE* 23).

For some time now, Nietzsche's basic commitments to naturalism have been the preferred point of entry into questions about the scope and originality of his psychology. But just where this point of entry leads remains highly contested and, consequently, one finds many different interpretations of Nietzsche's possible naturalistic commitments that run a spectrum ranging from a general refusal to indulge in supernatural explanation all the way to a far more circumscribed endorsement and emulation of the epistemic authority and methods of the natural sciences.³ It is unclear, however, whether any spot on this naturalistic spectrum really offers us the best point of entry into Nietzsche's purported *inaugural* ambitions for his new psychology: his claim to be a "first" in the field. A general rejection of supernatural explanation, after all, hardly serves to distinguish Nietzsche from most of his nineteenth-century

contemporaries, while a more positive and circumscribed endorsement of the methods of the natural sciences—even if correct—hardly serves to distinguish him from most of our contemporaries today.⁴

In recent years, the broadly therapeutic dimensions of Nietzsche's thought have also emerged as a possible candidate for originality in his new psychology.⁵ Basic to this loosely associated cluster of readings is the idea that Nietzsche's psychology, while committed to anti-supernaturalism in some broad sense, also aspires to perform a practical and propaedeutic function for his readers. By presenting his audience with an esoteric form of address comprised of aphorisms, figurative images, different voices and conversations, thought experiments, and affective training exercises, Nietzsche intends to help his readers work through the basic defense mechanisms and prejudices of modern life in order to set the stage for their possible conversion to a new affirmative orientation toward life.

The general therapeutic dimensions of Nietzsche's thought offer, to my mind, one of the more compelling entry points into understanding his claims to originality in psychology. What remains unclear, however, is how his therapeutic commitments might inform, or perhaps transform, our understanding of his disputed commitments to naturalism. Quite often, one finds that Nietzsche's thought is compartmentalized into two distinct kinds of theoretical and therapeutic philosophical projects: the former project aims to translate our traditional understanding of human agency, value, and belief into wholly natural terms, while the latter project aims to alter our normative commitments through rhetoric and the art of literary seduction. From the standpoint of this initial theoretical-therapeutic split, various debates then ensue over whether it is his theoretical or his practical philosophy that should be given greater priority when isolating those features of his new psychology that are held to be most original.

Against such compartmentalized readings, I want to suggest that some of Nietzsche's most interesting concepts reveal commitments to a new kind of psychology whose theoretical-therapeutic structure is far more complex than is often acknowledged. In this article, I will offer a brief sketch of how one of Nietzsche's more underappreciated concepts—Sublimation (*Sublimierung*)—is assigned both theoretical and therapeutic roles in his various attempts to diagnose and revalue the deep prejudices of value dualism that he claims constitute the evaluative ascetic core of traditional Western thought. Nietzsche's novel employment of the transformative processes of sublimation, I will argue, involves an attempt both to discredit, but also to revalue, our faith in value-dualism by offering readers a new genealogical account of the wholly natural origins of our highest values that also offers a therapeutic-vindictory story that attempts to bring a new sense of dignity back to our animal bodies and natural drives. A closer look at sublimation, therefore, helps to set the stage for thinking through at least one possible way that Nietzsche might be a "first" in the field of philosophy by revealing the basic theoretical-therapeutic ambitions of his new psychology.

Nietzsche and Sublimation

Before turning to the theoretical-therapeutic roles that sublimation plays in Nietzsche's revaluation of value dualism, it is worth noting that the concept itself has a varied history within Nietzsche scholarship. Walter Kaufmann thought enough of the concept to dedicate two whole chapters of his book to it and to cast it broadly in terms of Nietzsche's conceptual version of a Hegelian *Aufhebung* that allows for the reconciliation of Nietzsche's pluralistic observations of human behavior with his seemingly monistic commitments to the Will-to-Power.⁶ Sublimation also figures prominently into Richard Schacht's work on Nietzsche where it, along with the concept of "internalization [Verinnerlichung]" represent two basic anthropological processes through which a peculiar species of social animal becomes characteristically "human."⁷ In more recent years, Simon May and John Richardson have each accorded sublimation a more narrow and technical role in regard to the telic structure of human drives and their relation to power, life enhancement, and value creation.⁸

In comparison to many of his other "psychological" concepts, however, the role that sublimation plays in Nietzsche's own claims to originality has gone relatively unappreciated. At least one reason for this is that the concept of sublimation is still primarily understood and discussed from within the explanatory framework of psychoanalytic thought. As a result, Nietzsche's own understanding of the concept is frequently cast in terms of a series of incomplete, speculative, but presciently intuitive insights that Freud and the psychoanalytic tradition then worked out in greater theoretical and clinical detail. But in the general attempt to establish continuity between these two thinkers, many interpretations of Nietzsche as a *precursor* to Freud tend to give short shrift to the significant differences that separate them in regard to their respective projects, goals, and even their understanding of the meaning of psychology itself. It is in this context that Ken Gemes has done a great service for Nietzsche scholarship in his recent essay, "Freud and Nietzsche on Sublimation," by separating out some key differences between these two thinkers on this topic.⁹ Gemes not only argues persuasively that Nietzsche's account of sublimation avoids many of the definitional and conceptual pitfalls that its Freudian counterpart stumbles into, but also shows how the concept of sublimation figures centrally into Nietzsche's own much more ambitious normative attempt to bring a new sense of unity and integrity to the modern self.

In what follows, I will also claim that Nietzsche uses the concept of sublimation to bring a new sense of unity to the modern self, but I will do so with a more general focus than Gemes. While Gemes does create conceptual distance between Nietzsche and Freud, his account of Nietzsche's understanding of sublimation is still framed largely within the language and theoretical constraints of psychoanalytic thought. In particular, Gemes continues to frame the concept of sublimation within the confines of a specific, but difficult to

define, psychological mechanism that occurs within the intrapsychic domain of individual psychology. For purposes of this short article, I will remain agnostic about whether sublimation is best defined in terms of a discrete psychological mechanism (or whether such a mechanism even exists) and will focus rather broadly on Nietzsche's use of sublimation as a naturalistic and therapeutic narrative, a particular kind of strategic story, that he employs in the service of his general diagnosis of the genealogical and normative prejudices that constitute our traditional commitments to value dualism. And it is to those prejudices that I now turn.

Nietzsche and the Prejudices of Traditional Value Dualism

The idea that Nietzsche is a severe critic of dualisms of various kinds within the Western tradition (Being/Becoming, Reality/Appearance, Truth/Error, Spirit/Nature, Soul/Body) is hardly a controversial claim. But the reasons he offers for why humanity ever came to adhere to these traditional dualisms and why dualistic thinking, particularly in regard to our values, has been so difficult to overcome ends up moving his thought in a variety of different ontological and practical directions.

At the beginning of *BGE*, for example, Nietzsche informs his readers that, "The fundamental faith of metaphysicians is *the faith in the opposition of values [der Glaube an die Gegensätze der Werthe]*" (*BGE* 2). He then goes on to offer a sweeping psychohistorical explanation of the origins of this traditional faith that claims to discover a hidden link joining together such seemingly distinct traditions as Platonism, Judeo-Christian morality, the Kantian critical project, and even scientific realism, in regard to their shared consensus about the origin of higher human values. The consensus of these traditions, according to Nietzsche, is found not in an explicitly shared foundational doctrine or belief, but rather in the shared background of hidden assumptions and prejudices that condition how each of them have approached the basic question, "how could something originate from its opposite?" Nietzsche claims that the answer that each tradition either explicitly or implicitly presupposes is that "[s]uch origins are impossible [. . .]. Things of the highest value must have another, separate origin—they cannot be derived from this ephemeral, seductive, deceptive, lowly world, from this mad chaos of confusion and desire [. . .]. This way of judging typifies the prejudices by which metaphysicians of all ages can be recognized: this type of evaluation lies behind all their logical procedures" (*BGE* 2). Our traditional belief in a two-world metaphysics turns out, according to Nietzsche, to be conditioned by basic ontological prejudices about the pedigrees of our highest values. Namely, that our highest values could not possibly have arisen out of the "lowly" flux of the phenomenal and merely "apparent" natural world, but must instead have their origin in a separate, stable, and unchangeable realm

that has been understood historically by the Platonist, Christian, Cartesian, and Kantian in terms of “the lap of Being, the intransitory, the hidden god, the ‘thing-in-itself’” (*BGE* 2; see also *TI* “Reason” 1).

But Nietzsche also goes on to suggest that the ontological prejudices that structure our faith in the otherworldly pedigree of our highest values are just symptoms of a far more basic set of normative prejudices that *demand* a world that is capable of being practically interpreted in terms of distinctly demarcated “higher” and “lower” values in order to provide the human will with a meaningful life: a goal. In particular, the value of those desires and experiences whose pedigrees are thought to be merely “natural” are interpreted primarily in terms of a series of worldly trials and obstacles that must be overcome in order to achieve higher transcendent goals and values. Some prominent examples of this prejudice might include that one must overcome the ephemeral flux of the senses in order to achieve the stable order of Truth and Knowledge or entrance into the idealized mathematical world of the sciences; that one must overcome the pleasures of the flesh in order to achieve purity of the soul; or that one must overcome mere personal inclination in order to achieve maxims that exhibit universal or categorical moral worth.

It would appear, then, that there are two different categories of prejudice at work in Nietzsche’s diagnosis of the metaphysician’s traditional faith in value dualism. On the one hand, the *genealogical prejudices* of traditional value dualism hold that traditional values must be opposed to one another because they have distinct genealogical origins whose pedigrees can be traced back to either the “lower” natural world or a “higher” transcendent or idealized world. And on the other hand, the *normative prejudices* require that traditional values must be opposed to one another because their hierarchical relation generates the goals for a traditionally meaningful life. The “lower” natural elements of human life must be overcome in order to achieve a set of distinctly “higher” transcendent values. The binary grouping of traditional values such as good/evil, truthfulness/deception, selfishness/selflessness, and disinterested/interested contemplation are therefore held in opposition to one another not only because of their diverging pedigrees but also because their normative opposition is what generates the structure, meaning, and purpose for traditional conceptions of a well-lived life. When taken together, Nietzsche claims that this twofold prejudice results in a radical devaluation of natural life to the status of a mere vehicle for the attainment of higher values, a “bridge to the beyond,” whose only value lies in the instrumental worth of its own overcoming.

Nietzsche best articulates this global devaluation of the “natural” that emerges out of these basic prejudices in his discussion of the ascetic ideal in the third essay of *GM*, where he writes, “We can no longer conceal from ourselves what is expressed by all the willing that has taken its direction from the ascetic ideal: this hatred of the human, and even more of the animal, and more still of the material, this horror of the senses, of reason itself, this fear of happiness and

beauty, this longing to get away from all appearance, change, becoming, death, wishing, from willing [. . .] a willing against life itself" (*GM* III:28). Nietzsche famously ends this passage on an ambiguous note in regard to the question of whether there is any solution to humanity's chronic devaluation of its own natural existence. It would appear that any attempt to rehabilitate our natural self-esteem would require a reevaluation of value dualism that addresses both our traditional biases toward an otherworldly pedigree for our highest values as well as the basic normative prejudices that have traditionally structured the will's pursuit of a meaningful life. In the last sections of this article, I will turn briefly to the role that Nietzsche's novel use of the concept of sublimation might play in his diagnosis of the various genealogical and normative problems posed by our traditional commitments to value dualism.

Sublimation and Genealogy

Sublimation is a concept that admits of a long and venerable history of definitional difficulties. Perhaps because of this fact, it is also a concept that is more often asserted than explained. Nietzsche's own discussion of sublimation proves to be no exception to this fact. But it might also be the case that he has good reasons for not offering his readers a more precise definition of sublimation and the transformative processes that it intends to explain.¹⁰ As it turns out, the concept of sublimation and sublimation-like processes end up performing a variety of explanatory and strategic roles within his new psychology.

Walter Kaufmann gave Nietzsche the honor of being the first thinker to use sublimation in its modern psychological sense.¹¹ But it is worth noting that Nietzsche first employs the concept in the service of an explanatory strategy that extends far beyond the traditional domain of the psychological. In *Human, All Too Human*, for example, Nietzsche introduces the term "sublimation" in order to showcase the methods of a new "historical philosophy" that aims to overcome a variety of basic dualisms traditionally associated with "metaphysical philosophy."¹² In the opening sections of that book, under the heading of a "*Chemistry of concepts and sensations*," Nietzsche raises a similar critique of the genealogical prejudices of traditional value dualism that we have already encountered in the opening sections of *BGE*. According to Nietzsche, "Almost all of the problems of philosophy once again pose the same form of the question as they did two thousand years ago: how can something originate from its opposite [. . .]. Metaphysical philosophy has hitherto surmounted this difficulty by denying that one originates in the other and assuming for the more highly valued thing a miraculous source in the very kernel and being of the 'thing in itself'" (*HH* 1). Nietzsche then invokes the concept of sublimation in order to suggest that "[t]here exists, strictly speaking, neither an unegoistic action nor completely disinterested contemplation; both are only

sublimations [Sublimierungen], in which the basic element seems almost to have dispersed and reveals itself only under the most painstaking observation. All we require [. . .] is a *chemistry* of moral, religious, and aesthetic conceptions and sensations, likewise of all the agitations we experience within ourselves in cultural and social intercourse" (*HH* 1). Nietzsche's use of the term "sublimation" here is primarily methodological rather than psychological and anticipates, in significant ways, the explanatory role that genealogical explanations will come to play in his later thinking.¹³ In response to traditional prejudices that favor a "miraculous source" for our highest values, Nietzsche introduces a new method—sublimation—that will be figuratively applied to the "chemistry" of culture in an explanatory role that is structurally analogous to the explanatory role that sublimation already plays in the field of chemistry.¹⁴ In chemistry, sublimation is the transformational process wherein a solid passes directly into a gaseous state without passing through an intermediary liquid state. Just as chemical sublimation reveals how seemingly distinct substances are actually different phases of the same substance, Nietzsche claims, by analogy, that the explanatory structure of cultural and historical sublimation can also reveal how seemingly distinct "higher" and "lower" values are actually just different phases of a transformational process that also share the same natural substance and origin.¹⁵

Nietzsche's initial figurative application of sublimation in *HH* is probably best understood in terms of the application of what we might call an explanatory "bridge concept." Our faith in the genealogical prejudices of value dualism has created an ontological gap between our highest values and the natural world. The concept of sublimation, according to Nietzsche, exemplifies a new explanatory method that attempts to build a bridge over that gap by introducing a plausible speculative narrative that explains how the "higher" could originate out of the "lower" by revealing the hidden historical, cultural, and psychological continuities that link together pairs of values traditionally held to be distinctly and necessarily opposed to one another. Once freed from these genealogical prejudices, Nietzsche goes on to suggest that we can now begin to understand the ontological gap that once separated "higher" and "lower" ranked values in terms of a new experimental continuum of various degrees of refinements and regressions of human self-interest whose origins are all firmly rooted in the natural, historical, and all too human world.¹⁶

In his later writings, Nietzsche's scattered discussions of sublimation and sublimation-like processes begin to take on what appears to be a less figurative and far more recognizably psychological dimension.¹⁷ In particular, his account of sublimation begins to focus more narrowly on the various ways that the redirection and refinement of basic drives (particularly, sexual and aggressive drives) offers a plausible naturalistic account of the origin of our highest values—perhaps even the origin of culture itself. Nietzsche does not, however, provide much detail in regard to how a purely psychological account of

sublimation might work. But perhaps it is unfair of us to ask him to do so. At least one reason why Nietzsche's use of sublimation might eschew the need for a distinct psychological definition is that the concept still appears to serve, even in his later writings, the same basic explanatory bridge-building function that he first introduced through his initial chemical-structural analogy. That is, even in his later writings, Nietzsche's speculative accounts of various "acts" of sublimation still appear to perform the primary function of closing the ontological gaps of traditional value dualism by offering his readers a plausible, and now far more psychodynamically sophisticated, account of how the refinement of variable human drives could reveal how transcendent "higher" values can emerge out of what was thought to be their traditionally opposed state: the natural.¹⁸

It is not clear whether the narratives of sublimation that Nietzsche introduces in order to explain this general transformative process must be defined in terms of a discrete and identifiable psychological mechanism in order to perform their critical narrative function within his overall critique of the genealogical prejudices of value dualism. In fact, one might wonder whether his accounts of sublimation and sublimation-like processes have to exist in any literal sense at all in order to fulfill their basic genealogical function. A survey of Nietzsche's scattered use of sublimation-like concepts from his first thoughts in "Homer's Contest" to his last thoughts in *Twilight of the Idols* reveals an explanatory strategy that appears to rely as much on metonymy as it does on psychological mechanism in order to accomplish its primary goal. That is, the concept of sublimation often appears to function in terms of a convenient explanatory placeholder for what could actually be a wide array of various psychosocial transformations, bootstrapping mechanisms, and identifications and participations with social institutions, whose interactions collectively are simply too difficult to define with any degree of precision. Sublimation, in this more figurative sense, might be understood to stand in relation to psychological truth in much the same way that Nietzsche's broader genealogical narratives stand in relation to historical truth. In each case, a strategically condensed speculative narrative attempts to create a plausible conceptual space for the *possibility*, rather than the explicit factual provability, of a complex transformational process that could account both psychologically and historically for the natural emergence of the "higher" out of the "lower" in human life.

Sublimation and Affirmation

In addition to their conceptual bridge-building functions, however, Nietzsche's various sublimation narratives appear to take on a far more subtle and therapeutic role in his later thought. The emergence of sublimation's therapeutic role is intimately tied to a distinctive shift in Nietzsche's later work toward an

engagement with the normative rather than the genealogical prejudices that he discovers within our commitments to traditional value dualism. In the last section of this article, I want to look very briefly at one possible therapeutic role that sublimation might play within Nietzsche's later thought and how this role offers some insight into his inaugural claims to originality as a psychologist.

While both *HH* and *BGE* each employ sublimation-like transformative processes in order to answer the question of how something could originate from its opposite, it is important to note that the earlier version of Nietzsche's answer in *HH* is still partially invested in the ideal of a scientifically minded Enlightenment optimism that believes once the otherworldly pedigrees of our highest values are exposed as cognitive errors then the remainder of the philosophical problems associated with traditional metaphysics will become explanatorily superfluous to our practical needs. In Nietzsche's later writings, by contrast, we begin to find him increasingly calling into question whether the vocabulary of science and the "truthfulness" of our modern naturalistic worldview could ever meet the practical demands that the normative prejudices of value dualism have created for humanity—the need for a meaningful goal.¹⁹

To put the problem schematically: Nietzsche begins to realize that the genealogical and normative prejudices he discovered at work in value dualism make quite different demands on his own understanding of the purpose of his new philosophical psychology. As already shown, the genealogical prejudices of value dualism can be brought to an end through a speculative naturalistic counternarrative that renders our traditional belief in the origins of our highest values explanatorily superfluous. The same naturalistic solution, however, does not appear to be a viable solution for the problems posed by our practical commitments to value dualism. While the normative prejudices that constitute our commitment to ascetic ideals may be responsible for generating a "will against life," Nietzsche also acknowledges that these prejudices have saved humanity from the "*horror vacui*" by offering the will a sense of purpose—the only sense of purpose that it has so far known (*GM* III:28). To render the normative prejudices of value dualism superfluous through naturalistic critique without offering a new goal to the human will would only result in nihilism.

At least one inaugural feature of Nietzsche's later psychology is discovered in his realization that if nihilism is to be only a transitional stage for humanity and not a permanent state, then our adherence to a modern naturalistic narrative of the self should itself be only a transitional stage and must be qualified with a new evaluative vocabulary that could restore a sense of dignity to our natural existence. While the emergence of a modern naturalistic worldview has eliminated the superstitions and genealogical prejudices that once grounded belief in value dualism, it has not, on its own, generated a newfound sense of esteem for our now wholly natural selves. Rather, our understanding of the "natural" still remains without dignity, although no longer in the traditional sense of being instrumentally subordinate to a "higher" intrinsic purpose but now in a

new, possibly much worse, sense of having no value, purpose, or dignity at all. Nietzsche captures this point well when he asks, “Has the self-belittlement of man, his *will* to self-belittlement, not progressed irresistibly since Copernicus? Alas, the faith in the dignity and uniqueness of man, in his irreplaceability in the great chain of being, is a thing of the past—he has become an *animal*, literally and without reservation or qualification [. . .]” (*GM* III:25). What we need in order to combat this new modern sense of belittlement, according to Nietzsche, is a practical re-esteeming of the “natural,” the “animal,” and the “body” that neither subordinates their worth to the instrumental attainment of a transcendent realm nor eliminates their worth altogether through the value-neutral vocabularies of science.²⁰

It is in the practical context of re-esteeming that sublimation also takes on a more therapeutic role in Nietzsche’s later psychology. Many of Nietzsche’s various sublimation narratives offer readers not only a critical genealogy of the natural origins of their highest values, but also what I would loosely call a vindicatory account of the status of their natural drives and animal bodies as genuine sources of value, rather than mere obstacles to be overcome or objects of scientific inquiry to be studied from a neutral standpoint. What is perhaps most interesting about many of Nietzsche’s various accounts of sublimation (particularly, his accounts of sexual desire) is that the therapeutic and vindicatory features are not wholly separable from the critical and naturalistic features but rather often serve to qualify and re-esteem the possibly de-dignifying effects of his own genealogical critique. One possible benefit of understanding sublimation in terms of a therapeutic re-esteeming of our natural selves is that it offers a way to overcome the normative prejudice of value dualism without abandoning its basic evaluative structure of overcoming. The overcoming of natural drives is no longer understood in terms of their instrumental worth for the attainment of higher transcendent ends but rather in terms of the immanent overcoming and refinement of an already esteemed natural source of value. Sublimation, in this sense, offers a representative account of Nietzsche’s inaugural ambitions for a radically new psychology that aims both to naturalize our traditional conceptions of human spirituality and to spiritualize our modern conceptions of naturalism.

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NOTES

1. For this article I have used the following English translations of Nietzsche’s work: *Untimely Meditations*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); *Human, All Too Human*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); *On*

the Genealogy of Morality, trans. Maudemarie Clark and Alan J. Swenson (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998); *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and Other Writings*, trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

2. “Wissenschaft” refers quite broadly here to many cognitive or scholarly disciplines (history, philology, linguistics, philosophy, etc.) rather than more narrowly to just the domain of the natural sciences (“Naturwissenschaften”).

3. Brian Leiter is certainly the most prominent advocate of the latter side of this naturalistic spectrum, and I think it would be fair to say that the positive and negative reactions to his reading of Nietzsche’s methodological naturalism have largely set the tone of this debate over the past decade or so. See Brian Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality* (London: Routledge, 2002) and “Nietzsche’s Naturalism Reconsidered,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*, ed. Ken Gemes and John Richardson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 576–98. No doubt, the contested nature of Nietzsche’s naturalism is also due, in part, to the many contested meanings of the concept of “naturalism” within contemporary philosophical discourse. For a good overview of the varieties and contestations of contemporary naturalism, see *Naturalism in Question*, ed. Mario De Caro and David Macarthur (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

4. This is not intended to discount the many subtle and interesting differences that are also found in contemporary interpretations of Nietzsche’s naturalism today. For the purposes of this short article, I am just trying to highlight the general point that an appeal to Nietzsche’s naturalism alone does not seem to capture his own inaugural sense of the importance and originality of his contributions to psychology.

5. There is not, however, any unified agreement in regard to how Nietzsche’s philosophy should be understood to be “therapeutic.” Two of the most influential contemporary approaches to Nietzsche’s potential therapeutic contributions to philosophy might usefully be categorized in terms of “The Psychotherapeutic Approach” and “The Return to the Ancients Approach.” The Psychotherapeutic Approach, found in the work of Ken Gemes and Christopher Janaway, emphasizes the role that Nietzsche’s unique style of writing plays in getting beneath the defense mechanisms of modern readers in order to enact an affective change in their view of the world. See Gemes, “We Remain of Necessity Strangers to Ourselves: The Key Message of Nietzsche’s *Genealogy*,” in *Nietzsche’s On the Genealogy of Morals: Critical Essays*, ed. Christa Davis Acampora (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 191–208 and Janaway, *Beyond Selflessness: Reading Nietzsche’s “Genealogy”* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). The Return to the Ancient Approach, on the other hand, takes a Pierre Hadot–inspired reading of Nietzsche that situates his thought (particularly his middle works) in a therapeutic return to ancient practices of the care of the self (see, e.g., Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, ed. Arnold Davidson [Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1995]). For some representative examples of this interpretation of Nietzsche, see Horst Hutter, *Shaping the Future: Nietzsche New Regime of the Soul and Its Ascetic Practices* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 2005); Michael Ure, *Nietzsche’s Therapy: Self-Cultivation in the Middle Works* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 2008); and Keith Ansell-Pearson, “Beyond Compassion: On Nietzsche’s Moral Therapy in *Dawn*,” *Continental Philosophy Review* 44 (2011): 179–204.

6. Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974).

7. Richard Schacht, *Nietzsche* (New York: Routledge, 1983).

8. See John Richardson, *Nietzsche’s System* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) and Simon May, *Nietzsche’s Ethics and His War on Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

9. Ken Gemes, “Freud and Nietzsche on Sublimation,” *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 38 (2009): 38–49.

10. One significant reason why Nietzsche’s understanding of sublimation eludes any precise definition is that he uses a variety of terms other than ‘Sublimierung’ to capture what appears to be the same basic transformational processes, including ‘Vergeistigung’ (Spiritualization), ‘Aufhebung’ (Sublimation/Supersession), and ‘Selbstüberwindung’ (Self-Overcoming). At various points, all of these terms have been translated into English as “sublimation.” For the

purposes of this short article, I will refer collectively to the general transformative process that all of these terms aim to describe as “sublimation-like processes.”

11. See Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, 218–19. Alan Bloom disagrees and claims that it was actually Jean-Jacques Rousseau who first introduced the modern psychological processes of sublimation—but not the word itself—into modern thought. See Bloom, *Love and Friendship* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 61.

12. Nietzsche’s methodological application of the concept of sublimation to the problem of traditional value opposition has received little attention in the literature. For a different discussion of the possible methodological role that sublimation might play in Nietzsche’s treatment of the problem of opposites, see Steven D. Weiss’s “Nietzsche’s Denial of Opposites,” *Journal of Philosophical Research* 21 (1996): 261–305.

13. In the preface to *GM* Nietzsche explicitly ties the origins of his genealogical method to the development of the methods of “historical philosophy” in *HH* (see also *GMP* 2).

14. For an interesting account of Nietzsche’s figurative engagement with the field of chemistry, see Duncan Large’s “Nietzsche’s Conceptual Chemistry,” in *Nietzsche and Science*, ed. Gregory Moore and Thomas H. Brobjer (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 189–96.

15. It is worth emphasizing again that the origin of philosophical “sublimation” therefore results from a figurative application of the language of natural science to the problems of culture rather than the reduction of culture to the literal language of the natural sciences.

16. So, for example, altruism can now be understood in terms of a refined or sublimated form of a more basic and coarse form of egoism (see *HH* 107). The concept of sublimation is also used sporadically prior to *HH* to capture basic transformations of human interests along a continuum of coarseness and refinement. See, for example, *HL* 4 and *SE* 6.

17. Nietzsche’s later works also develop a far richer psychodynamic account of the self that ties a general concept of sublimation-like processes to the inhibition and internalization of natural drives through either the outer constraints of culture or the inner repression of one’s own drives that then allows for their redirection or refinement toward new aims and objects.

18. In this way, Nietzsche’s later accounts of sublimation-like processes appear to extend his initial thoughts on value opposites, introduced in *HH*, with a more developed account of the claim that the “refinement” of various natural drives will allow us to stop “talking about opposites where there are only degrees and multiple, subtle shades of gradation” (*BGE* 24; see also *BGE* 47). It should also be noted that an attempt to formulate a “doctrine of the derivation of all good drives from bad” and even a “doctrine of the reciprocal dependence of good and bad drives” is one of the main tasks that he assigns to his new psychology when he first introduces us to this new “queen of the sciences” in *BGE* 23.

19. Although, in fairness, Nietzsche already raises a general worry in *HH* about the practical implications of his naturalistic critique and whether such a critique is “inimical to life” and may end in “tragedy.” See *HH* 31, 33, 34.

20. It is here, I think, that Nietzsche’s later therapeutic stance toward the potentially de-dignifying effects of the history of the naturalization of humanity from Copernicus to his own naturalized “translation” project differs most significantly from Freud’s stance toward this same history of naturalization. In his 1917 *Introductory Lectures to Psychoanalysis*, Freud famously (and proudly) proclaims that science has enacted “three great blows” to humanity’s “naïve self-love” through Copernicus, Darwin, and his own psychoanalytic project (*The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 16, ed. and trans. James Strachey [London: Hogarth Press, 1961], 284–85; see also “A Difficulty in Psychoanalysis,” in Strachey, *Standard Edition*, vol. 17, 135–45). While Freud acknowledges that the loss of our naïve self-images of human dignity is potentially devastating, he also acknowledges that psychoanalysis (and the sciences generally) are not in the business of offering a new “Weltanschauung” and that he has no solution to this problem other than a fairly general Rationalist-Enlightenment recommendation to free ourselves

from our juvenile illusions of the past and to reconcile ourselves to this new reality of human life. Nietzsche's inaugural psychology, I would argue, is deeply invested in the development of a new *Weltanschauung* that aims to overcome the transitional stage of nihilism that has grown out of the disintegrating traditional evaluative worldview we have now inherited. One of the reasons that Nietzsche engages in a reevaluation of our traditional values rather than simply a reconciliation of our values with science is that he aims to construct a new experimental *Weltanschauung* that seeks to establish new evaluative vocabularies that could offer new descriptions of human dignity within the context of the natural world. If one begins with this point of comparison, it might be the case that Nietzsche and Freud share far less ground than is commonly supposed, given the radically different goals of these thinkers in their respective "naturalized" psychologies.