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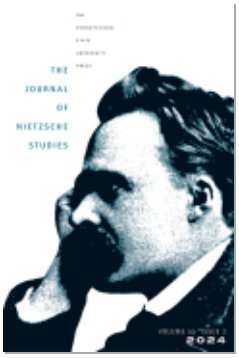

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Nietzschean Decadence as Psychic Disunity

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Abstract: This article offers an account of Nietzschean decadence as a psycho-physiological condition characterized by a failure of psychic integration—a failure Nietzsche thinks precludes genuine agency, since the psychic integration the decadent fails to achieve is necessary for agency. As part of this account, this article develops an interpretation of an underexplored but crucial form of decadence: repressed decadence. Exploring this variety of Nietzschean decadence both enables us to make sense of the case of Wagner's alleged decadence and adds nuance to predominance models of Nietzschean unity. After developing this account, the article argues that Nietzsche finds decadence especially problematic when it disempowers (or obstructs the empowerment of) the individual who suffers from it, even if only in the long run. The article concludes by demonstrating that in (rare) cases in which decadence facilitates individual empowerment, Nietzsche evaluates it positively, finding such a condition worthy of affirmation.

Keywords: Nietzsche, agency, unity, repression, sublimation

In this article, I offer an account of Nietzschean decadence as a psycho-physiological condition characterized by a failure of psychic integration—a failure Nietzsche thinks precludes genuine agency, since the psychic integration the decadent fails to achieve is necessary for agency. As part of this account, I develop an interpretation of an underexplored but crucial form of decadence: *repressed* decadence. Exploring this variety of Nietzschean decadence enables us to make sense of Wagner's alleged decadence—a case about which Nietzsche offers varied, seemingly conflicting remarks—and adds nuance to predominance models of Nietzschean unity. It also lays bare the extreme demandingness of Nietzsche's standard for psychic unity (and, in turn, his standard for agency).

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Though a handful of scholars offer interpretations of individual decadence in Nietzsche—typically as part of a larger project—a more sustained and nuanced treatment of the topic is still needed.[1] Given Nietzsche's unclear and extremely varied uses of the term "decadence" (*décadence*), as well as his wholly unsystematic treatment of the decadence concept and the condition it designates, this gap in the literature is hardly surprising. Sometimes, Nietzsche seems simply to deploy the term as an insult, attaching the term to whatever or whomever he dislikes at the moment; other times, it can seem that "everybody is decadent" on Nietzsche's view.[2] Given the central role this condition plays in his late thought, however—Nietzsche suggests *both* that various life-denying moralities express an objectionable psycho-physiological decadence *and* that such moralities produce this objectionable condition—it behooves us to get clear, if we can, on what Nietzsche thinks individual decadence is.[3]

Perhaps the most sustained and thoughtful treatment of individual decadence is offered by Jacqueline Scott. Scott treats "decadence" as a "technical term" denoting a physiological condition involving problems of organization at the level of one's instinctive life.[4] On Scott's view, individual decadence is a condition of "bad health" involving the "decay of the instincts that lead to growth and power,"[5] an "unhealthy organization of [an individual's] drives and impulses"[6] that is inescapable.[7] Importantly for Scott's interpretation, the significance of this condition for Nietzsche is its status as the "physiological underpinning of the philosophical issue of nihilism."[8] In particular, Scott frames the "problem of decadence" in Nietzsche as a problem of "value decay" occurring at the level of the instincts that inevitably disposes individuals to "the suicidal tendencies of nihilism."[9] Although "we must create values to hold off [the] suicidal despair [toward which our decadent physiology disposes us] . . . any values we create will decay," leading us back into decadence.[10]

While there is much to appreciate in Scott's analysis, my account diverges from hers in several key respects. First, Scott's claim that the "problem of decadence" is one of "value decay" construes decadence too narrowly. Nietzsche's designation of fanatics as decadents (*A* 50, 51, 52) helps bring this into view.[11] Fanatical decadents are individuals "uncompromisingly . . . devoted to some end, cause, or ideal" who are able to "strive for incredibly difficult ends and continuously grow in [their] capacity to realize [those ends]."[12] As is true for all individuals on Nietzsche's view, fanatics typically engage in a variety of strategies for staving off value decay. But crucially, Nietzsche thinks fanatical strategies are often highly successful: fanatics

are often able to stave off value decay by remaining in the iron grip of the particular value or set of values they hold. This results in part because the fanatic's attachment is highly motivated: it is only through remaining steadfastly committed to a particular ideal that the fanatic—whose attachment is borne of an "instinct of weakness" (*GS* 347)—is able to experience the "delight of willing" (*GS* 347). Despite quite successfully managing to stave off value decay, however, fanatics are still decadents. Scott's view of decadence fails to explain why Nietzsche thinks this is so.

Nietzsche's characterization of fanatics as decadents problematizes another feature of Scott's view: her claim that decadence necessarily involves a "decay of the instincts that lead to growth and power."[13] Recall that fanatics will often experience growth in their form of life: Nietzsche thinks they will often successfully grow in power, at least in the short term. Such a possibility suggests that Scott makes disempowerment too central to her construal of decadence.[14] While decadence and disempowerment are not unrelated—as I explain below, Nietzsche thinks decadence *tends* to disempower in the long run—Nietzsche thinks not just that decadents can grow in power, but that suffering from psycho-physiological decadence can facilitate an individual's empowerment.

So, we need a broader, more nuanced account of individual decadence than Scott offers. Below, I provide such an account, distilling Nietzsche's many and varied descriptions of individual decadence into a single formulation that not only operates in the background whenever Nietzsche treats decadence as an individual condition but also fits nicely with some of the best treatments of the topic in the secondary literature (most notably those on offer from Andrew Huddleston[15] and Thomas Stern,[16] though my account also nicely incorporates certain of Scott's key insights). This task is far from straightforward, and it is made even less so by differences in the alleged "recipes" (*EH* "Books"; *D* 2) and "formulas" (*A* 15; *TI* "Socrates" 11, "Skirmishes" 35) Nietzsche provides for decadence, which often diverge. But I contend that we can assemble an account of individual decadence that, while capacious, still makes clear the distinctive significance of this condition for Nietzsche.[17]

Psycho-Physiological Decadence as Psychic Disunity

Nietzsche's understanding of decadence as an individual condition is informed by the concepts of social decadence and physiological degeneration circulating in mid- to late nineteenth-century Europe. A full

elucidation of nineteenth-century theories of social decadence and physiological degeneration is beyond the scope of this article. But highlighting a few key points of influence helps deepen our understanding of Nietzschean decadence as a psycho-physiological phenomenon.[18]

One important point of influence is Paul Bourget's work on social decadence, which Nietzsche read closely. According to Bourget, the flourishing and proper functioning of society, which he calls the "social organism,"[19] requires its organization in accordance with a "central organizing principle" that productively incorporates or assimilates a wide variety of social forces into the whole.[20] When this integration fails, social decadence follows. While Bourget intends here to present a social theory, we will see that the individual decadent as Nietzsche conceives him shares structural similarities with Bourget's failed social organism.

Another crucial influence for the account of decadence Nietzsche develops is the mid- to late nineteenth-century concept of "degeneration" (*dégénérescence*), a highly medicalized concept often intended to designate the physiological decline of individual organisms or "races" (then erroneously understood as biological categories), as well as the resulting psychological and moral decline.[21] Particularly influential for Nietzsche's thoughts on individual decadence was Charles Féré, who equated the degeneration of the individual with weakness of the will.[22] As characterized by Féré, the "degenerate is produced in an unhealthy social and physical environment that overstimulates him, leads him to a state of neuropathic exhaustion, and lowers the resistance of his will."[23] As will become clear, Nietzsche's understanding of individual decadence as a disease of the will borrows from this view.

With these theoretical influences as background, we can begin to develop an account of individual decadence in Nietzsche's thought. Put simply, individual decadence (or psycho-physiological decadence) is a disease of the will consisting in psychic disunity *qua* the fragmentation of an individual's drive-life, a failure of psychic integration that prevents the decadent from expressing genuine agency on Nietzsche's view.[24]

In his work, Nietzsche persistently frames decadence as an illness consisting in psychic fragmentation or disunity. In *TI*, for example, he claims that the "chaos and anarchy of [Socrates'] instincts" are indicative of decadence (*TI* "Socrates" 4) and describes the increasing degeneration of the Athenian psyche as "instincts in anarchy [everywhere]." In that same text, he calls decadence a "disaggregation of the will [Disgregation des Willens]" (*TI* "Errors" 2)—a breakdown or division of the will—associated with

physiological degeneration. Decadence is a "disaggregation of the instincts" (*TI* "Skirmishes" 35), a form of "declining life" involving "the loss of all the forces of organization, which is to say separation, division, subordination, and domination" (*TI* "Skirmishes" 37). Later in the text, Nietzsche remarks that the decadent's instincts "contradict, disturb, destroy each other"; the decadent is a "physiological self-contradiction" (*TI* "Skirmishes" 41). In *CW*, he describes decadence as "always" involving "an anarchy of the atom, disintegration of the will" (7) and insists that in decadent structures, "the whole does not live anymore" (*CW* 7). In several places, Nietzsche describes this failure of assimilation as involving a "loss of a center of gravity" (*A* 20; *EH* "Books" *D; EH* "Destiny" 7). In others, Nietzsche claims simply that the decadent experiences a "decline in all organizing power" (*CW* "Postscript"): that is, she lacks an ideal physiological and psychological organizing force.

While the lack of an ideal organizing force at the level of one's drives—that is, a force that integrates one's psychic life—characterizes all decadents, this structural failure manifests in various forms. First, a decadent might possess uncoordinated (that is, chaotic or anarchic) drives (*BGE* 224; *TI* "Socrates" 4, 9). Decadents with this configuration of instincts tend to suffer from indecisiveness and superficiality; they lack seriousness and have an unwillingness to engage with any degree of risk. Nietzsche's last man—a passive, noncommittal figure without higher values, batted about by various of his whims—comes to mind here. And indeed, in *EH*, Nietzsche designates the last man a "decadent type of person [eine décadence-Art Mensch]" ("Destiny" 4–5). Due to his "poor and exhausted" psyche, the last man "no longer [launches] the arrow of his longing beyond humanity," rather, every activity he pursues is mere "pastime" (*Z* I "Prologue" 5). Here, we might be reminded of Nietzsche's characterization of modern humanity in *TI*, where he remarks that "Cesare Borgia's contemporaries would [. . .] laugh themselves to death at the comic spectacle of us moderns, with our thickly padded humanity, going to any length to avoid bumping into a pebble," describing this modern tendency as "a consequence of decline" (*TI* "Skirmishes" 37).

Most frequently, however, Nietzsche associates decadence with drive-based conflict: an individual's possession of opposing drives or instincts.[25] In *TI*, he describes Athens as a place where psycho-physiological decadence prevails due to "the instincts [turning] against one another ("Socrates" 9); two sections later he calls "[having] to fight the instincts [. . .] the formula for decadence" ("Socrates" 11). Resisting one's instincts as a form of

psycho-physiological decadence appears again in *EH*, in Nietzsche's analysis of moralities of selflessness ("Destiny" 2). We also find this defective configuration of the drives in *BGE*, where Nietzsche describes decadence as involving "opposite, and often not merely opposite, drives and value standards that fight each other and rarely permit each other any rest" (*BGE* 200). Finally, in an unpublished note from 1888, he describes physiological decadence as "the conflict of passions, the two-ness, three-ness, multiplicity of 'souls in one breast'" (*KSA* 13:14[157]). On his view, such conflict is "very unhealthy, inner ruin, dissolution, betrays and intensifies antagonism [Zwiespalt] and anarchism [. . .] unless a passion finally becomes master" (*KSA* 13:14[157]). Psycho-physiological decadence as drive-based conflict typically disrupts the efficacy of the individual's will, manifesting as "paralysis, distress, and numbness" (*CW* 7). Decadents with conflictual drives find themselves impelled toward mutually opposed courses of action; as a result, they will typically find themselves vacillating between conflicting courses of action or unable to act altogether.

In certain cases, however, decadents suffering from conflictual drives will attach to something that brings their drives into a semblance of psychic unity, an arrangement that gives the impression of agency insofar as it facilitates the effectiveness of the decadent's will and even growth in certain of their capacities. This occurs when a decadent's drive-life becomes dominated by a tyrannical drive, one that functions by repressing certain of an individual's drives rather than incorporating those drives' ends into its own (or eliminating those drives altogether) (*TI* "Morality" 1, 2; *KSA* 12:1[122]).[26] In cases like these, the repressed drives are both (1) "denied" their aims and (2) "split off from other drives in the sense that [their] aims are not integrated with the aims of other drives."[27] As a result, the repressed drives' perspectives or points of view are suppressed *without* being wholly eliminated.[28] Repressed drives thus become "wild dogs in [the] cellar" of the individual's psyche (*Z* I: "Passions" 5).

In this form of decadence as drive-based conflict—the case of the repressed decadent—there is often effectiveness of will and a semblance of unity. But any "unity" remains a mere semblance. After all, genuine unity on Nietzsche's view requires a lack of internal incoherence, and repression entrenches internal incoherence. Otherwise put, Nietzschean unity requires not only the coordination of an individual's drives under a dominant drive or set of drives, but the integration or incorporation of the subordinated

drives into a coherent whole *without* conflictual-ambivalent remainder.[29] Repression always leaves such a remainder. Thus, the repressed decadent is disunified. What's more, he is constantly threatened by motivational disintegration.

We find examples of repressed decadents in the figures of the fanatic, Socrates, and Wagner. (Indeed, it is worth noting that Nietzsche associates both Socrates [*TI* "Socrates" 10] and Wagner [*NCW* "Belongs"] with fanaticism.)[30] The fanatic, a "weak and insecure" individual (*GS* 347) with a "desperate soul in a state of exhaustion" (*BGE* 10), is tyrannized by a dominant drive or set of drives that represses conflicting drives. This allows the fanatic to continue "cling[ing]" to certain of their drive-based commitments (*GS* 347).[31] In this way, the fanatic develops an effective single-mindedness. But this seeming unity belies a deeper psychic disunity, a failure of psychic integration preserved by the repressive mechanism that makes such single-mindedness possible and threatens the fanatic's enterprise at every moment—hence the psychic fragility of the fanatic.[32] In the case of Socrates, a tyrannical drive to knowledge represses his bodily instincts and urges, disallowing their expression without fully extirpating them. Riven by drive-based conflict and in a "state of emergency," Socrates becomes "absurdly rational," coming to deploy "rationality against instinct" (*TI* "Socrates" 10; *EH* "Books" *BT* 1). In his case, reason becomes "an even stronger counter-tyrant" to the bodily drives he initially experienced as tyrannical (*EH* "Books" *BT* 1). Nietzsche characterizes this psychological development as "a form of violence that undermines life" (*EH* "Books" *BT* 1).

Finally, Nietzsche thinks it is through the mechanism of repression that Wagner enjoys efficacy of will and becomes "complete" (*CW* "Epilogue," "Second Postscript")—though he is not thereby psychically unified (and therefore, is not a genuine agent). In the case of Wagner, unlike Socrates, Nietzsche does not clearly identify a single tyrannical drive or set of drives. By looking closely, however, we can see that Nietzsche most frequently characterizes Wagner as tyrannized by something akin to a drive to vanity (*GS* 370; *KSA* 13:16[89]), a drive Nietzsche interestingly frames as bound up with Wagner's "deeply rooted self-contempt" (*KSA* 13:16[89]).[33] It is this drive to vanity that Nietzsche calls the "*will to immortalize*," a drive that in Wagner's case expresses an "impoverishment of life" (*GS* 370). In Wagner's case, this drive expresses

> the tyrannical will of someone who suffers deeply, who struggles, is tortured, and would like to stamp as a binding law and compulsion *what is most personal, singular, narrow, the real idiosyncrasy of his suffering*, and who as it were takes revenge on all things by *forcing, imprinting, branding his image on them, the image of his torture*. (*GS* 370, emphasis mine)

As a result of Wagner's tyrannical drive to vanity (which drives him to create works of art), he seems to achieve psychic unity.

On Nietzsche's view, however, it would be a mistake to attribute such unity to Wagner, since the effectiveness of his will and superficial "completeness" are made possible only through the fragmenting mechanism of repression—in particular, the repression of Wagner's sensuality. Since the tyrannical dominion of Wagner's drive to vanity involves the repression of his sensuality—a repression Nietzsche describes as a "precarious balancing act between 'animal and angel'" (*GM* III:2; *NCW* "Apostle" 2)—Wagner remains disunified despite the superficial "completeness" established by his dominant drive. Any "completeness" is fundamentally unstable and motivational disintegration is a constant threat. And indeed, it is this threat of disintegration Nietzsche thinks becomes reality when Wagner, "a decaying, despairing decadent, suddenly [sinks] down helpless and shattered before the Christian cross" around the time of *Parsifal* (*NCW* "Broke" 1).

We find more evidence for this interpretation of Wagner's psychophysiological constitution when we analyze Nietzsche's account of (1) Wagner's need for self-expression and (2) the manifestation of Wagner's psyche in his works. As a result of his tyrannical drive to vanity, Nietzsche thinks Wagner is compelled to express himself: he is a "fanatic of expression" (*NCW* "Belongs"). Given Wagner's repressed sensuality, however—his "incredibly pathological sexuality, which was the curse of his life" (*KSA* 13:23[2])[34]—the self-expression Wagner attempts in his works results in Wagner's lying to himself and "leaving [himself] at home" (*NCW* "Objections"). So it is that Nietzsche claims his "very art becomes for him a constant attempt to escape, a means of self-oblivion, of self-narcosis" (*KSA* 13:23[2]).[35] Indeed, Nietzsche claims that "Wagner might be the greatest example of self-violation in the history of art" (*CW* 11). The deep-seated, conflictual ambivalence from which Wagner suffers thus expresses itself in his work, which not only is ambiguous but lacks coherence, expressing "thirst" for both "ecstatic sensuality and asceticism" (*NCW* "Music").

Of course, Nietzsche thinks this is most obvious in *Parsifal,* a work that Nietzsche describes as involving both "self-aimed disemboweling" and "sensuous appeal" (*BGE* 256; *NCW* "Apostle" 1). In *Parsifal*, Nietzsche thinks that we can recognize "actual self-denial, self-annulment on the part of an artist who hitherto wanted the opposite with all the force of his will" (*NCW* "Apostle" 3).

Due to Wagner's tyrannical drive to vanity and repressed sensuality, then, Nietzsche characterizes him as a repressed decadent. Yet importantly, things *could* have been otherwise. Indeed, as Nietzsche notes, "there is not necessarily an antithesis between chastity and sensuality" (*NCW* "Apostle" 2).[36] Had Wagner not been *tyrannized* by his drive to vanity, had his sensuality been *sublimated* rather than repressed, Wagner could have avoided psycho-physiological decadence and achieved that psychic integration requisite for genuinely unified agency.

On Nietzsche's view, sublimation occurs when a dominant drive harnesses or appropriates another drive, recruiting that drive for the achievement of its own aim in a way that allows for the dominated drive's continued expression. The sublimation of a less dominant drive (drive B) by a more dominant one (drive A) involves "drive A . . . [turning] B toward A's own end, so that B now participates in A's distinctive activity."[37] In sublimation, the less dominant drive "comes to be telically contained" within the end and activity of the more dominant drive.[38] Importantly, however, sublimated drives "keep their own characters," adding "their own telic patterns and viewpoints to [the] fabric" of the sublimating drive's activity.[39] This enriches and makes more complex the dominant drive's pursuit of its characteristic activity and the way in which the dominant drive expresses itself, thereby facilitating the dominant drive's growth.

Otherwise put, in cases of sublimation, the dominant drive "integrates the distinctive pursuits and activities of the dominated drives, and therefore their distinctive points of view, in the pursuit of its own specific end."[40] The dominant drive thus "expands not just quantitatively . . . but qualitatively" by incorporating "still-foreign" elements of the dominated drives.[41] Rather than the dominated drives being "suppressed or shackled" as they are in instances of repression, in cases of sublimation the dominated drives continue to express their characteristic forms of activity, though importantly "in a manner consonant with the master drive."[42]

Unlike repression (a process in which drives are stifled or disallowed expression), sublimation (a process resulting in the sublimated drive's

continued expression, where that requires preservation of the drive's characteristic aim) is a sophisticated form of drive redirection (a process in which a drive is directed toward new objects). It is, moreover, a form of drive redirection that makes possible or enhances psychic unity and thus agency, on Nietzsche's view.[43] Notice that although Nietzsche thinks a period of drive suppression may precede (indeed, often will precede) a process of sublimation (*KSA* 12:1[122]), sublimation is not successfully accomplished until the dominated drive is allowed expression.[44]

Nietzsche's claim that "the force that one expends in artistic conception is the same as that expended in the sexual act" (*KSA* 13:23[2]) clearly suggests the possibility of sublimating one's sensuality as an alternative to Wagner's repressed, decadent condition.[45] That one can successfully navigate the "antithesis between chastity and sensuality" by employing a mechanism of sublimation rather than repression—thereby facilitating psychic unity rather than impeding it—also appears in Nietzsche's reflections early in the Third Essay of *GM*, where he remarks that "well-constituted, joyful mortals [. . .] are far from regarding their unstable equilibrium between 'animal and angel' as necessarily an argument against existence—the subtlest and brightest among them have even found in it, like Goethe and Hafiz, one more stimulus to life" (*GM* III:2).[46]

Before I go on to explore various consequences of the decadent's disunity, let me say a bit more about Nietzsche's distinctive account of repression and sublimation. Specifically, let me say more about why these mechanisms *as they appear in Nietzsche* require him neither (1) to posit an entity standing apart from and governing the drives nor (2) to attribute agential properties (such as consciousness) to the drives themselves. For Nietzsche, both repression and sublimation are processes that take place in the course of (and as a result of) a dominant drive's pursuit of power, understood as growth in its characteristic form of activity.[47] Otherwise put, repression and sublimation are both results of an organism's dominant drive willing power. Note here that Nietzsche understands the will to power not as a discrete drive, but as a structural feature of drive-life.[48] I take it that this is what Nietzsche intends to capture in *BGE* 36, where he remarks that "our entire life of drives [is] the organization and outgrowth of one basic form of will (namely, of the will to power)." The will to power is not one drive among others, but the *Grundform* of the will (*BGE* 36).

Let me describe one way in which the picture I sketch directly above can help us make sense of drive repression and sublimation without positing a

substantial ego or attributing agential properties to drives. Keep in mind that drives are constituents of embodied organisms, holistic beings who not only possess a multiplicity of drives but inhabit (in any given moment) a distinct perspective on the world, a perspective that is shaped by drive dynamics and includes a variety of affects (and affective potential).[49] Of course, Nietzsche thinks an individual's dominant drive plays a large part in generating the organism's experience, by presenting the world to the organism in a distinctive, value-laden way (that is, in a way that better facilitates its own aim). Through thus generating experience—through generating the organism's present perspective, including its affective quality—an organism's dominant drive may (1) "persuade" or recruit non-dominant drives (thus sublimating them) or (2) provoke the suppression or inhibition of non-dominant drives (thus repressing them). It is this that Nietzsche arguably attempts to capture when he claims that "[e]very drive is a kind of lust to rule" in possession of a "perspective that it would like to compel all the other drives to accept as a norm" (*KSA* 12:7[60]).

Let me put this another way. Human beings—as embodied, drive-based organisms—experience the world from within a holistic perspective, inhabiting apparently unified orientations toward their environments. From within these holistic perspectives, certain objects will seem appealing and others unappealing, certain pursuits more attractive and others less so. It is in part through shaping what seems appealing or attractive to the organism—as well as through shaping behavior—that an individual's dominant drive can repress and sublimate other drives without any activity beyond the pursuit of power on their part (that is, without agential activity).

To bring together the above reflections in a concrete example, take Socrates, a repressed decadent whose dominant drive is his knowledge drive (or will to truth).[50] Let's suppose this drive wills power by aiming to grow in its capacity to know—or perhaps better, to grow in its capacity to engage in rigorous truth-seeking—and to overcome any resistance encountered in the course of pursuing growth in this activity. In virtue of his dominant knowledge drive, Socrates is highly driven to engage in rigorous truth-seeking (or pursuits of knowledge), to grow in his ability to seek truth, and to overcome any resistance he encounters to truth-seeking activity. For Socrates's knowledge drive to repress his sex drive is for it to inhibit the expression of his sex drive: as part of its own pursuit of growth in rigorous truth-seeking, his tyrannical knowledge drive quashes or inhibits Socrates's sex drive, yet fails to eliminate it fully.

Failing to be fully extirpated, however, repressed drives continue to dispose the individual to various affective orientations, (conscious and unconscious) thoughts, and behaviors. So too with Socrates. Even under repression by his knowledge drive, his sex drive will continue to dispose him to experience sexual urges or feelings, to engage in sexualized activity, and so on. Given the continued inhibition of his sex drive by his knowledge drive, however, his sexual urges will cause him pain and his impulsion toward sexualized activity will produce feelings of frustration. In other words, due to the repression of Socrates's sex drive, these dispositions will tend to produce will-weakening psychological distress.[51] What's more, repression of the sex drive will not entirely eradicate its point of view.[52] This point of view may break into the organism's perspective at any moment. And importantly, even if it does *not* break into his conscious awareness, the point of view of the repressed -but-remaining sex drive will tend to provoke disorienting, destabilizing forms of cognitive dissonance.[53] As a result of his repressed condition, then, Socrates is torn. In addition, he is psychically and motivationally unstable.

Notice, however, that there's nothing about Socrates's knowledge drive or its strength that necessitates the repression of his sex drive—or any other drive with a different aim than rigorous truth-seeking, for that matter. His knowledge drive could have sublimated his sex drive: the aim of his sex drive could have been incorporated into his pursuit of knowledge or truth. But his knowledge drive could have also taken a different object than its preferred one. Indeed, that Socrates's *particular* knowledge drive becomes repressive seems to be (at least in part) a result of that drive's fixation on a particular object: truth as something that can be apprehended only objectively (or knowledge as disinterested knowledge).[54] Because it is not only aimed at growth in its characteristic activity (rigorous truth-seeking) but is also fixated on the determinate object of *disinterested* truth (or objective knowledge), the valuations and perspectives that dominate Socrates's mental life (due to the strength of his knowledge drive) are especially likely to repress his sex drive. This helps us see (at least in part) why Socrates's decadent disunity takes the form of "'reason' versus instinct" (*EH* "Books" *BT* 1).

Of course, the picture I sketch above, on which repression and sublimation occur through the shaping of an individual's perspective by a dominant drive, may not suffice to explain all forms of repression and sublimation or their effects.[55] Nonetheless, it is suggestive: it shows us how these psychic mechanisms can function through the shaping of an individual's perspective or experience rather than through a distinct agency or agent-like

drives. In addition, it's plausible that the forms of repression and sublimation of interest to Nietzsche that cannot be explained in terms of the picture I sketch above *can* be explained, though perhaps not easily or simply, solely with reference to (1) the dominated drive's repression or sublimation by a dominating drive pursuing power and (2) the complex power dynamics unfolding at the level of an individual's drive-life.

Decadent Failures of Agency and the Ubiquity of Decadence

Psycho-physiological decadence is a failure of psychic integration that Nietzsche characterizes as a disease of the will, a condition that most basically involves psychic disunity *qua* a lack of coherence at the level of an individual's drive-life. In his work, however, Nietzsche is also keen to outline various consequences of this disunity. First, the decadent experiences a "[loss of] instinctive certainty" that Nietzsche calls "almost a definition of what it means to be bad" (*TI* "Morality" 2).[56] That a loss of instinctive certainty results from psycho-physiological decadence as disunity makes sense. After all, it seems clear that a lack of instinctive certainty—a lack of decisiveness or resolve in acting instinctively—will follow if one experiences ambivalence at the level of her drives, whether due to chaotic or conflictual drives. And indeed, Nietzsche suggests this in his notes, where he remarks that "[the] multiplicity and disintegration of the drives, the lack of systematic coordination among them results in a 'weak will' [. . . due to] the oscillation and lack of weightiness [Schwergewicht]" (*KSA* 13:14[219]).

Likely due to these various defects of the instincts, Nietzsche claims that decadent individuals tend to be unable to find their advantage (*TI* "Skirmishes" 35), drawn away from what is advantageous to them, or—in the most troubling cases—drawn toward what is harmful to them. In *TI*, for example, he calls choosing "instinctively what is harmful to yourself [. . .] practically the formula for decadence" ("Skirmishes" 35). Notice that these dispositions can occur in the same person, either simultaneously or successively. Notice also that there's a continuum of harmfulness in these dispositions: it is less damaging to be unable to find your advantage—after all, you might simply happen into finding it—and more damaging to be drawn toward or choose what is harmful for you, as Nietzsche suggests is true of "complete decadents [who] always choose the means that hurt themselves" (*EH* "Wise" 2).

Importantly, Nietzsche also associates decadent disunity with a lack of self-control and self-mastery. In short, the decadent is unfree. We see this in *TI*, where Nietzsche describes Thucydides as the anti-decadent in part because he has "self-control" ("Ancients" 2) and indicates that the decadent's "yielding" to his instincts does not constitute genuine freedom ("Skirmishes" 41). That Nietzsche associates decadence with unfreedom should be unsurprising. After all, agency is necessary for genuine freedom on Nietzsche's view, and Nietzsche denies that the decadent manifests genuine agency.[57] Indeed, characteristic of the decadent is that he does not *act* but is instead *acted upon*. The decadent has an "inability to resist a stimulus—[he] has to react, [he] follows every impulse" (*TI* "Germans" 6). In other words, he behaves under "compulsion" (*TI* "Germans" 6), whether by external forces or tyrannical inner ones (*TI* "Morality" 2, "Ancients" 2).[58]

Notice that although Nietzsche characterizes decadence as a disease of the will (*TI* "Morality" 2; *CW* 7) and insists that the decadent does not genuinely act, this does not mean that the decadent's will completely fails to function or that (at least in some sense) acting is not happening. On Nietzsche's view, all living beings are constantly willing power: various of our drives constantly express themselves via the things we do. Importantly, however, while certain individuals count as genuine progenitors of their actions, most individuals do not on Nietzsche's view. Nietzsche's decadents do not command themselves. They do things—we might say they behave in certain ways—but they do not *act*. In claiming that it is characteristic of the decadent that he does not *act*, but is instead acted upon, I employ a Nietzschean sense of action as an *achievement*.

Let me say a bit more. According to Nietzsche, psychological unity is (at least) necessary for genuine agency. Specifically, for an individual to count as active in the production of his action requires that he—or better, the "subject-multiplicity" that he is (*BGE* 12)—be unified by a dominant drive or set of drives without conflictual-ambivalent remainder.[59] In this sense, the genuine agent is an individual whose "whole being is behind the action."[60] Given this characterization of the form of unity required for agency, we can see why both forms of decadence preclude genuine agency on Nietzsche's view. In cases of uncoordinated decadence, the drives are not sufficiently integrated. And repressed decadence *by its very mechanism* guarantees psychological disharmony: it guarantees that the agent's whole being will not be behind his action.

So, Nietzsche thinks decadents fail to achieve the status of genuine agents. But this is not to say, of course, that decadents are always

inefficacious. Nietzsche emphasizes this in a late note, where he remarks that "history contains the horrifying fact that the exhausted have always been confused with the fullest"—and that this "confusion [becomes] possible [. . . when] the exhausted person appears with the gesture of the highest activity and energy: when [his] degeneration causes an excess of mental or nervous discharge" (*KSA* 13:14[68]). Otherwise put, a high level of activity or efficacy does not a Nietzschean agent make.

Take again the examples of Socrates and Wagner, both of whom certainly act in *some* sense. Socrates not only goes about his day doing plenty of things—walking in the countryside, engaging with interlocuters—but also "[makes] himself be taken seriously" (*TI* "Socrates" 5). In doing so, he has a profound influence on his culture. Wagner, too, exerts a strong influence on his culture via the works he composes. Even so, neither Socrates nor Wagner achieves the status of genuine agent on Nietzsche's view. Take the case of Socrates. On Nietzsche's view, Socrates's activities result from his being compelled by a tyrannical rational instinct—developed in him as a way of coping with his conflicted instincts—that rejects the passions and represses various of his drives (*TI* "Socrates"). In fact, Nietzsche says that "neither Socrates nor his 'patients' had any choice about being rational,—it was *de rigueur*, it was their last resort" (*TI* "Socrates" 10). Rather than saying that Socrates genuinely acts, then, we might say that his hypertrophic rational instinct acts upon and through him, compelling him to certain behaviors (relentless dialectical inquiry, taking the hemlock, and so on).[61] So too Wagner and his tyrannical drive to vanity.

Finally, Nietzsche describes individual decadence as a condition that is virtually ubiquitous in modernity: nowadays, "everyone is sick to some extent" (*TI* "Skirmishes" 37). What's more, it seems that Nietzsche understands individual decadence as a typical state in most ages, at least after human beings form societies and are "forced into the oppressive narrowness and conformity of custom" (*GM* II:16).

Decadence and Degeneration

We now have Nietzsche's characterization of decadence and its consequences in clear view. To add more nuance to his view, however, it will be helpful to explore the relationship between Nietzsche's use of the concept "decadence" (*décadence*) and his use of the concept "degeneration" (*Entartung, dégénérescence*). As seen above, Nietzsche tends to use these

terms interchangeably.[62] But there is one noteworthy place where these concepts come apart in his work: in *EH*, where Nietzsche claims both that he has experienced bouts of decadence and that he has never experienced "any local degeneration" ("Wise" 1, 2). How can we make sense of this claim, especially given that Nietzsche often uses these terms interchangeably?

The first thing to point out is that the notion of degeneration (a concept Nietzsche discusses using both the German term *Entartung* and the French term *dégénérescence*) implies a temporally extended process, the worsening of a particular condition over time. A doctor who tells her patient that his eyesight has degenerated indicates to that patient that his eyesight is worse than it was previously, that it has gotten worse over time. Similarly, Nietzsche's use of the term "degeneration" in its psycho-physiological sense is meant to indicate a temporally extended process involving something's getting progressively worse: specifically, it indicates the deterioration of the will. The degenerate individual is one whose capacity to will has worsened over time, and the process of decadent degeneration is the process of the will's degeneration, the weakening of the will.[63] Decadence (*décadence*), on the other hand, largely functions as a synchronic diagnosis for Nietzsche, one that indicates something about an individual's psycho-physiological status as observed in a particular point in time: that the individual is psychically disunified, that he presently lacks coherence at the level of his drive-life.

So, one can be a decadent without having experienced degeneration. While all individuals suffering from psycho-physiological degeneration—longer-term unresolved conflict among their drives that weakens their wills—also suffer from decadence, not all individuals suffering from decadence will experience (or will have experienced) degeneration. One can, for example, experience short-term decadence that resolves relatively quickly, thereby failing to result in degeneration. And indeed, this seems to be how Nietzsche understands his own experiences of decadence: he notes both that he has "always instinctively chosen the right means against wretched states" and that "as *summa summarum*, [he] was healthy" ("Wise" 2). Notice that the capacious definition of psycho-physiological decadence I develop here allows for such a distinction: one can experience bouts of psychic disintegration (including those that impact one's ability to will) without experiencing that degeneration resulting from longer-term psycho-physiological conflict (and without one's capacity to will being impacted in the long term, in cases where that capacity is impacted).

Crucially, however, the majority of decadents Nietzsche problematizes are "degenerate" decadents: individuals who become less psychically unified over time, eventually experiencing the degradation of their capacity to will.[64] This includes Nietzsche's prime examples of decadence: Socrates and Wagner. In *TI*, Nietzsche remarks that "the same kind of degeneration" manifest in Socrates's initially "idiosyncratic" case came to dominate Athens ("Socrates" 9). Though Socrates's degeneration was ongoing, Nietzsche thinks its results are most apparent at the end of Socrates's life. As a result of this degeneration, Nietzsche claims, Socrates comes to judge life worthless ("Socrates" 1). Indeed, Socrates not only took this "negative stance toward life" but "*had* to take it" ("Socrates" 2). By the time of his trial, "Socrates had had enough" ("Socrates" 1): he "*wanted* to die: not Athens, but *he* gave himself the poison cup, he forced Athens to give him the poison cup" ("Socrates" 12). At the end of his life, Socrates's tyrannical drive to reason—which compels the ongoing repression of his passions and leaves him exhausted—drives him to drink the hemlock. And in fact, drinking the hemlock enables him to both remain consistent with his professed principles and permanently quiet his passions and bodily instincts—which, of course, was what his tyrannical rational drive compelled him to do all along.[65]

Nietzsche tells a similar story about Wagner. In two letters to his sister, he refers to the "disgusting" and "monstrous degeneration" of Wagner in his "last six years," citing *Parsifal*'s Christian overtones as evidence of this degeneration.[66] By the time of *Parsifal,* though Wagner is still composing operas, he is in a state of physiological emergency (*KSA* 13:16[75]). While his tyrannical drive to vanity drives him to action, his "critical physiological condition" of long-term psychic conflict, produced by repression, leaves him weak and exhausted. This will-weakness prevents growth in his capacities; in other words, it precludes his empowerment. This is why *Parsifal*, the last opera Wagner composes, is a pale shadow of his other works. On Nietzsche's view, it is a clear regression, the death rattle of Wagner's degenerate, decadent constitution.

Decadence and Disempowerment

Now that our view of Nietzschean decadence is sufficiently nuanced, we are well positioned to appreciate his assessment of this condition. As

should be obvious to all readers of his late works, Nietzsche mainly characterizes psycho-physiological decadence as an objectionable condition: in the main, he views decadence as a problem. Yet there are selections of text in which he seems more ambivalent. In *CW*, he indicates that gratitude can be an appropriate reaction to decadence (5). And as Scott notes, he also suggests that we ought to affirm decadence in certain cases.[67] Understanding Nietzsche's evaluation of psycho-physiological decadence thus requires us to get clear on both (1) what leads him to negatively evaluate most cases of decadence and (2) what allows him to find a positive role for this condition in certain cases.

When it comes to Nietzsche's typically negative evaluation of decadence, there is both a fairly straightforward story to tell and a more complex one. The simple story is this: psychic unity is an important Nietzschean ideal. Since decadence *qua* psychic disunity is a falling away from that ideal, decadence is objectionable in itself.[68] But of course, Nietzsche presents unity as an ideal in part (or perhaps even mainly) because of what it makes possible. On his view, psychic unity is required for genuine agency, freedom, and—crucially, given the special normative status power possesses for Nietzsche—long-term individual empowerment (*qua* empowerment of the human organism, understood holistically).[69] With this in mind, I contend that Nietzsche assesses decadence as problematic when it disempowers, or obstructs the empowerment of, the individual organism who suffers from it (*A* 2), even if only in the long run. Since he thinks this is how decadence tends to function in the individual, he usually evaluates decadence negatively. Importantly, however, individual disempowerment or the obstruction of an individual's empowerment are only *tended* results of decadence. In rare cases, Nietzsche also thinks that decadence can facilitate individual empowerment. When it does, Nietzsche evaluates it positively, finding such a condition worthy of affirmation.

To better understand Nietzsche's ambivalence about decadence, let's begin by exploring psycho-physiological decadence as a problem for personal empowerment, understood as growth in an individual's form of life (given the hierarchical complex of drives and affects that he is).[70] Again, insofar as decadence disempowers the individual or impedes his empowerment, Nietzsche finds it especially problematic. But there are multiple dimensions to this claim. Some—indeed, most—decadents suffer from persistent disempowerment (or the enduring obstruction of their empowerment) as a result of their condition. Such decadents fail ever to will power successfully *qua* organism (that is, *qua* an embodied complex of drives and

affects), where this involves overcoming resistance to the activities at which they aim and growing in their abilities to engage in those activities over time.[71] To be sure, Nietzsche finds these cases of decadence objectionable. Significantly, however, Nietzsche also finds psycho-physiological decadence objectionable just in case the form an individual's decadence takes makes his future disempowerment (or the obstruction of his empowerment) exceptionally likely. Otherwise put, *even if* a decadent individual is presently willing power successfully—even if he is presently growing in certain of his capacities and activities—if the form his decadent disunity takes makes it exceedingly likely that he will fail to will power successfully *qua* organism in the future, Nietzsche finds his decadence problematic.

The latter cases are obviously less straightforward than the former. Yet getting a grip on such cases is crucial, for that allows us to understand why Nietzsche finds the decadence of Socrates and Wagner—as well as fanatics generally—objectionable. Remember that these repressed decadents will power successfully only as a result of their being tyrannized by a dominant drive that represses (rather than sublimates or eliminates) conflictual drives. Fanatics, tyrannized by a dominant drive or set of drives, maintain their commitments only by repressing a host of other drives. Socrates's tyrannical reason represses his bodily instincts and urges (*TI* "Socrates"); Wagner's tyrannical drive to vanity does the same. In cases like these, the individual's ability to grow in his form of life and overcome various resistances depends on the continued dominance of his tyrannical drive, its forcing repressed drives into perpetual submission. But Nietzsche thinks that the individual who grows through tyranny and repression will always be a self dangerously divided: his repressed drives will continue to "roil beneath the surface . . . like a mob of outcasts demonized by the government and ready to riot on the slightest provocation in order to make their voices heard."[72] In short, the same psychic conditions that facilitate the repressed decadent's (temporary) empowerment make it exceptionally likely that he will become disempowered in the longer term. For this reason, Nietzsche finds this form of decadence objectionable.

In sum, Nietzsche thinks that decadence tends to either obstruct individual empowerment or disempower the individual in the long run. We see this not only in the above examples, but in his frequent association of decadence with decline in an individual's will to power (*A* 6, 50). Notice, furthermore, that this is not just a tendency possessed by decadents suffering from conflictual drives. In cases of decadents whose instincts are

uncoordinated, empowerment also tends to be impeded. After all, an individual whose drives are not coordinated will not be able to reliably overcome the various resistances required for growth in his form of life.

Still, there are certain rare cases—indeed, Nietzsche's own case (*EH* "Wise" 2)—in which an individual's contending with and overcoming decadence facilitates growth in his form of life. In *CW*, where Nietzsche affirms his former decadence, he does so on account of what his decadence (and the "self-discipline" it encouraged) made possible: personal or individual empowerment (5). Otherwise put, Nietzsche positively evaluates his past decadence because he sees it as having provided an invaluable opportunity for him to struggle against (internal) resistance, one that ultimately facilitated growth in his form of life. His affirmative attitude toward his own former decadence is crucially contingent on the positive outcome that this decadence made possible: again, empowerment. And not only this. In fact, Nietzsche understands his bouts of decadence—like Goethe's (*GM* III:2; *TI* "Skirmishes" 49)—as facilitating his development of an *especially rich and complex* psychic unity, a psychological configuration he associates with greatness (*BGE* 212; *TI* "Morality" 3, "Skirmishes" 49). His decadence not only facilitated his empowerment, then; it also facilitated greatness of soul.

Another way to put the idea developed here is the following. While Nietzsche thinks decadence can be instrumentally valuable—valuable as a potential means to empowerment—it also makes the outcome in virtue of which it becomes valuable less likely. Unless an individual's decadent condition resolves into an enhanced psychic unity that facilitates his empowerment, Nietzsche finds this condition problematic. Accordingly, it is only in cases where an individual's former decadence ends up contributing to his empowerment that Nietzsche thinks we should positively assess his formerly decadent condition.[73]

Putting the point this way helps us to attend to the fact that the future of the decadent is never fixed. Nietzsche never claims that an individual's affliction with psycho-physiological decadence precludes his future empowerment. He thinks only that it will make such empowerment less likely. Here, it helps to again recall Nietzsche's characterization of his own case: "granting that I am a decadent, I am the opposite as well" (*EH* "Wise" 2).[74] Though he experienced bouts of decadence, he claims that he was "strong enough" to use the conflict characteristic of that condition for his own empowerment.[75] We can imagine the same might be true for other decadents.

Conclusion

In this article, I offer a novel account of Nietzschean decadence as an individual, psycho-physiological phenomenon, one that pays special attention to the relationship between Nietzsche's notion of individual decadence and his conception of agency. Indeed, I argue that Nietzsche conceives of psycho-physiological decadence as a disease of the will consisting in psychic disunity, a failure of psychic integration that precludes genuine agency. This condition tends to disempower (or obstruct the empowerment of) individuals who experience it, even if only in the long run. But it does not do so necessarily. In rare cases, Nietzsche contends that decadence can facilitate an individual's empowerment. Whereas other accounts of individual decadence fail to capture important elements of Nietzsche's analysis—whom he counts as decadents, for example—and lack sufficient detail and nuance, the account developed here is both capacious enough to capture Nietzsche's extremely varied characterizations of individual decadence and specific enough to genuinely deepen our understanding of this important Nietzschean concept.

There is, of course, much more to say about the role Nietzsche's analysis of psycho-physiological decadence plays in his late work: for example, the role it plays in his late critique of life-denying moralities and the relationship he establishes between (1) certain cultural formations or norms and (2) decadence as an individual phenomenon. The account I provide here is intended as a starting point, one that enables us to explore the significance of psycho-physiological decadence in Nietzsche's work more fully. After all, it is only after getting clear on what exactly Nietzsche means by individual decadence that we can get clear on its importance for his thought.

NOTES

1. For interpretations focused specifically on individual decadence, see Jacqueline Scott, "Nietzsche and Decadence: The Revaluation of Morality," *Continental Philosophy Review* (formerly *Man and World*) 31 (1998): 59–78; Scott, "Racial Nihilism as Racial Courage: The Potential for Healthier Racial Identities," *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 35.1–2 (2014): 1–34; Scott, "'The Great Seriousness Begins': Nietzsche's Tragic Philosophy and Philosophy's Role in Creating Healthier Racialised Identities," in *Nietzsche's Metaphilosophy: The Nature, Method, and Aims of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Loeb and Matthew Meyer (Cambridge: Cambridge

University Press, 2019), 247–64; Scott, "Decadent Philosophy's Misunderstanding of the Body and the Artistic Flourishing of Culture: Comments on *Nietzsche on the Decadence and Flourishing of Culture*," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 5.2 (2020): 221–30. For interpretations of individual decadence included as part of a larger project, see Daniel Conway, *Nietzsche's Dangerous Game: Philosophy in the* Twilight of the Idols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) and Conway, "The Politics of Decadence," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 37 (1999): 19–33; Gregory Moore, *Nietzsche, Biology, and Metaphor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Thomas Stern, "Nietzsche, Freedom, and Writing Lives," *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* 17.1 (2009): 85–110; and Andrew Huddleston, *Nietzsche on the Decadence and Flourishing of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019). I use "psycho-physiological decadence" and "individual decadence" interchangeably throughout the article, to refer to the same phenomenon.

2. Stern, "Nietzsche, Freedom, and Writing Lives," 91. In fact, there may be something important to this claim. But more on that later.

3. When referring to this condition, Nietzsche typically uses the French term *décadence*. His usage of the term varies, however: at times, he refers to decadence as a feature of societies, while at others, he refers to decadence as a feature of individuals (including individual nonhuman organisms).

4. Scott, "'Great Seriousness Begins,'" 249.

5. Scott, "Racial Nihilism as Racial Courage," 7.

6. Scott, "'Great Seriousness Begins,'" 250.

7. Scott, "Racial Nihilism as Racial Courage," 6–8. Scott's analysis of decadence as crucially involving a failure of the will to power as growth precedes David Hurrell's analysis along the same lines ("An Analysis of Nietzsche's Concept of Decadence" [PhD diss., Open University, 2019]).

8. Scott, "'Great Seriousness Begins,'" 252.

9. Scott, "Racial Nihilism as Racial Courage," 6.

10. Scott, "'Great Seriousness Begins,'" 250. On Scott's picture, decadence is inescapable because the sole treatments available for this disease—value adoption or creation—function merely as "short-term palliative[s]" ("Racial Nihilism as Racial Courage," 8). The inevitable "decay" of the values we adopt or create as coping mechanisms means that we are always led back into a physiological state involving unhealthily organized instincts and a suicidal disposition ("'Great Seriousness Begins,'" 250). Notice that Daniel Conway also contends that individual decadence is "inescapable and ineluctable" ("Politics of Decadence," 24); on his view, Nietzsche thinks that "[a]ll that we are free to do in late modernity is to enact our ineluctable historical destiny as decadent epigones" (28). While he suggestively wonders whether "decadence turned against itself might yield productive consequences" and function as a "stimulus to life" (30), he does not say more about this possibility. Ultimately, Conway chalks such suggestions up to Nietzsche's having been gripped by "delusions of grandeur . . . which are telltale symptoms of [Nietzsche's] own decadence" (30)—an interpretation with which, as will become clear, I disagree.

11. In citing Nietzsche's work I use the following translations: *Untimely Meditations*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); *Daybreak*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1974); *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); *On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. Carol Diethe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, ed. Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman, trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); and *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage, 1968). Unless otherwise indicated, translations of Nietzsche's unpublished notes and letters are my own.

12. Paul Katsafanas, "The Fanatic and the Last Man," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 53.2 (2022): 137–62, 147, 153. Katsafanas characterizes fanatics as "wholeheartedly" devoted to such an end, cause, or ideal. As will become clear later in the article, I argue that Nietzsche would not characterize their devotion as wholehearted insofar as it involves residual ambivalence.

13. Scott, "Racial Nihilism as Racial Courage," 7.

14. This is also the primary failing of Hurrell's view ("Analysis of Nietzsche's Concept of Decadence").

15. See Huddleston, *Nietzsche on the Decadence and Flourishing of Culture.*

16. See Stern, "Nietzsche, Freedom, and Writing Lives."

17. The analysis I provide looks mainly to Nietzsche's published works from 1888, in which Nietzsche uses the French term *décadence* with exceptional frequency, often to describe an individual condition. Additionally, however, my analysis incorporates insights from texts as early as *BGE* (1886) and *GM* (1887), in which Nietzsche describes a psycho-physiological condition very similar or identical to that which he later designates "decadence," as well as a few key unpublished notes from 1888. By getting clear on what "decadence" designates in the late works, we can see that while Nietzsche's use of the term *décadence* does not proliferate until his 1888 works, "the use of the term . . . develop[s] a longstanding motif in his work" (Moore, *Nietzsche, Biology, and Metaphor*, 121).

18. For more on nineteenth-century theories of degeneration, see Moore, *Nietzsche, Biology, and Metaphor*, and Ken Gemes, "The Biology of Evil: Nietzsche on Degeneration (*Entartung*) and Jewification (*Verjüdung*)," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 52.1 (2021): 1–25. For situating Nietzsche's concept of decadence historically, Moore's book is an especially excellent resource.

19. Paul Bourget, *Essais de psychologie contemporaine* (Paris: A. Lemerre, 1883), 25.

20. Moore, *Nietzsche, Biology, and Metaphor*, 121.

21. Bénédict Morel, widely regarded as the father of degeneration theory, understood nineteenth-century human beings as a "morbid deviation from an original type" of physiologically superior human beings (*Traité des dégénérescences physiques, intellectuelles, et morales de l'espéce humaine* [Paris: Bailliére, 1857], 5).

22. Charles Féré, *Dégénérescence et criminalité: essai physiologique* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1888). For more on Féré's influence on Nietzsche, see Bettina Wahrig-Schmidt, "Irgendwie, jedenfalls physiologisch. Friedrich Nietzsche, Alexandre Herzen (fils) und Charles Féré 1888," *Nietzsche-Studien* 17 (1988): 434–64. For more on differences between Nietzsche's understanding of physiological degeneration and that of nineteenth-century degeneration theorists, see Gemes, "Biology of Evil."

23. Moore, *Nietzsche, Biology, and Metaphor*, 127.

24. Though David Hurrell frames Nietzschean decadence as a problem of agency, his connection of the will to power with decadence—it is, on his view, a "lack" of the "will to power" ("Analysis of Nietzsche's Concept of Decadence," 90)—results in a different interpretation from the one offered here.

25. I use "drives" and "instincts" interchangeably throughout the article.

26. For work arguing that the tyranny of a dominant drive involves repression, see Bernard Reginster, "What Is a Free Spirit? Nietzsche on Fanaticism," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 85.1 (2003): 51–85, 77. For more on the relationship between drive repression and unity in Nietzsche, see Ken Gemes, "Freud and Nietzsche on Sublimation," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 38 (2009): 38–59; and Mattia Riccardi, *Nietzsche's Philosophical Psychology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021). For work on the elimination of drives, see Richard Elliott, "The Role of Removal and Elimination in Nietzsche's Model of Self-Cultivation," *Inquiry* 63.1 (2019): 65–84.

27. Gemes, "Freud and Nietzsche on Sublimation," 48.

28. That the point of view or perspective of a repressed drive is not entirely eliminated (*pace* Reginster, "What Is a Free Spirit?," 76) helps us make sense of repression as generating psychic disunity. Reginster's claim that repressed drive's perspective is eliminated seems to follow from his characterization of repressed drives as "divert[ed] . . . from the pursuit of their own specific ends" (76). I disagree with this characterization; repressed drives retain their aims. See more in the discussion on sublimation below.

29. On my view, following Elliott ("Role of Removal and Elimination"') and *pace* Ken Gemes ("Freud and Nietzsche on Sublimation"), such integration or incorporation need not happen through sublimation alone; it can also involve the elimination or extirpation of certain of one's drives.

30. Nietzsche calls Socrates "the fanatical dialectician [des fanatischen Dialektikers]" (*KSA* 7:1[25]) in a very early unpublished note.

31. Like Reginster ("What Is a Free Spirit?"), Riccardi argues that fanaticism involves repression (*Nietzsche's Philosophical Psychology*, 214–15, 218).

32. Reginster, "What Is a Free Spirit?," 77. Note that this point about psychic fragility differs from Katsafanas's claim that the fanatic has a fragile *sense* of self ("Fanatic and the Last Man").

33. Nietzsche does not make explicit reference to Wagner in this note, but the similarities between Nietzsche's characterization here and his characterization of Wagner in *CW* make it clear that Wagner exemplifies the "artist-type."

34. Translated as *The Will to Power* §815, Appendix (suppressed), 555.

35. Translated as *The Will to Power* §815, Appendix (suppressed), 555.

36. While all that is required to produce repressed decadence on Nietzsche's view is the repression of certain of one's drives, it is worth noticing that the cases of repressed decadence on which Nietzsche focuses—including Socrates and Wagner, as I argue below—involve the repression of drives that, in addition to being universal (or near-universal) in human beings regardless of socialization, are extremely tenacious. These are drives Nietzsche characterizes as constituting part of our "naturalness [Natürlichkeit]" (*TI* "Skirmishes" 49), drives related to our "corporeality [Leiblichkeit]" or physicality (*TI* "Skirmishes" 49; *GM* II:22) that he characterizes as "life-instincts [die Instinkte des Lebens]" (*TI* "Morality" 4) or "animal instincts [Thier-Instinkten]" (*GM* II:22). These instincts include the sex drive and the aggressive drives (*TI* "Morality" 1–5).

37. John Richardson, *Nietzsche's System* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 33.

38. Richardson, *Nietzsche's System*, 34.

39. Richardson, *Nietzsche's System*, 34.

40. Reginster, "What Is a Free Spirit?," 76. Both Richardson (*Nietzsche's System*) and Reginster ("What Is a Free Spirit?") describe this mechanism in their work, though neither calls it "sublimation." It is Gemes ("Freud and Nietzsche on Sublimation") who recognizes that this process is a (Nietzschean) variety of drive sublimation. (Indeed, he cites the same selection from Richardson above in "Freud and Nietzsche on Sublimation.") There are few issues, however, with Gemes's framing. First, Gemes claims that Nietzschean sublimation involves the sublimated drive's "expression in service to a *higher* aim" ("Freud and Nietzsche on Sublimation," 48, my emphasis). As long as the reference to a "higher" aim refers to the aim of a more dominant drive, I think this is correct. But the language of "higher" here invites confusion and risks importing something like a (late) Freudian ego into Nietzsche's drive psychology. Indeed, Gemes is aware of this issue and addresses it toward the end of his article. It's better, however, to leave out the designation "higher." Second, Gemes argues that sublimation involves the "substitution" of the sublimated drive's "primary aim . . . by a secondary aim that allows for expression of [that] drive in a manner consonant with the master drive" ("Freud and Nietzsche on Sublimation," 48). With Luke Phillips ("Sublimation and the Übermensch," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 46.3 [2015]: 349–66), however, I think that this language is too strong. A case of successful sublimation in Nietzsche will involve not *deflection* of the sublimated drive from its aim but *incorporation* of the sublimated drive's aim into the aim of the dominant, sublimating drive. While Nietzsche thinks drives often change the *objects* at which they aim, he does not think their aims can change. Indeed, since Nietzsche individuates drives by their aims, for a drive's aim to change would just be for that drive to become a different drive altogether.

41. Richardson, *Nietzsche's System*, 34.

42. Gemes, "Freud and Nietzsche on Sublimation," 48. Reginster's example of "the sophisticated seducer" (whose sex drive is dominant) illustrates the mechanism of sublimation nicely: "[The sophisticated seducer's sex drive] might enroll, in its activity of seduction, the collaboration of the drive to knowledge, or of the artistic drive. The dominated drives retain their distinctive character: it is as a drive to *knowledge*, or to the *creation of beauty*, that each is enrolled. The seducer wants to acquire knowledge about the object of his seduction, and he wants to create an attractive appearance for her. As a result, the activity of seduction becomes richer, more complex. Indeed, although the dominant end remains seduction, it might eventually become no longer seduction *tout court*, but seduction through knowledge and the creation of beauty. And a seduction achieved without a significant contribution from these other drives might come to strike the sophisticated seducer himself as objectionably crude and ultimately disappointing" ("What Is a Free Spirit?," 76).

43. While sublimation is a variety of redirection that facilitates unity, other forms of redirection engender psychic disunity. For example, an individual's drives quite regularly take new objects as occasions for their expression, and there are clear cases—especially involving the redirection of certain drives (e.g., aggressive drives) toward aspects of the self—wherein this produces disunity. The clearest example of this is the human being's drive to cruelty. Seeking out a new object on which to vent itself after being preventing from expressing itself on others (after societies are formed), the drive to cruelty eventually vents itself on the individual (or features of the individual) himself (*GM* II:16). This turns the human being against himself (*GM* II:16), creating the bad conscience and provoking disunity.

44. This is what Nietzsche describes in *KSA* 12:1[122]. See also: "In times like ours, yielding to one's instincts is just another disaster. These instincts contradict and interfere with each other, mutually destroy each other; I already defined modernity as a physiological self-contradiction. Rationality in education would demand that at least one of these systems of instinct be paralyzed, pinned under an iron pressure, in order to allow a different one to gain its forces, to become strong, to become master. Today, one would have to make individuals possible by paring them down: possible, that is, whole" (*TI* "Skirmishes" 41).

45. Translated as *The Will to Power* §815.

46. It is worth noticing that he also mentions these two artists in contrast to Wagner in *GS* 370, as artists whose "will to immortalize" springs from "gratitude and love."

47. See Richardson, *Nietzsche's System*; Katsafanas, "Fanatic and the Last Man"; Ian Dunkle, "On the Normativity of Nietzsche's Will to Power," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 51.2 (2020): 188–211; Kaitlyn Creasy, "Morality and Feeling Powerful," *Inquiry* (2023): 1–21. Note that the mechanisms of repression and sublimation as they appear in Nietzsche do not involve positing anything like Freud's most familiar concept of the ego (*das Ich*): an agency over and above an individual's unconscious drives that performs various controlling functions (including repression and

sublimation). (These are oversimplifications of both the ego and the id [*das Es*], the instinctual realm of the psyche governed by primary process in the service of the pleasure principle, but they suffice for my purposes here.) What's more, it is crucial that the mechanisms of repression and sublimation as they appear in Nietzsche *not* require the existence of such an agency, given Nietzsche's denial that individuals possess anything like a self over and above their drives. When comparing Nietzsche's and Freud's drive psychologies, however, it is interesting to note (1) that Freud's early conception of the ego shared similarities with Nietzsche's dynamic, "subject-multiplicity" model of the drives and (2) that Freud's first formulations of repression did not posit the ego as a psychic entity distinct from (and exerting control over) the individual's instinctual life. In Freud and Breuer's *Studies on Hysteria*—written decades before Freud developed the *Es-Ich-Über-Ich* model of the psyche—they appeal to a psychic mechanism designated "repression" to explain the psychic fragmentation characteristic of hysteria (*Studies on Hysteria* [1893–95], in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. James Strachey [London: Hogarth Press, 1956–74], 2:1–306). There, repression appears as a fragmenting psychic defense that occurs when "the dominant mass of ideas constituting the ego" forces certain ideas from the individual's conscious awareness (2:116). Although Freud and Breuer refer to "the ego" here, it is not a distinct agency, and they describe the "basis for repression" as "a feeling of unpleasure, the incompatibility between the single idea that is to be repressed and the dominant mass of ideas constituting the ego" (2:116). In a lesser-known work from 1910 (Sigmund Freud, *The Psycho-Analytic View of Psychogenic Disturbance of Vision* [1910], in *Standard Edition*, 11:209–18), Freud deploys a similar, but somewhat more developed notion of the ego. There, he calls the ego a "collective concept" that designates a "compound [of instincts] which is made up variously at different times" (11:213). Repression occurs when "ideas come into opposition to other, more powerful ones" (11:213). Elsewhere in that text, he claims that "the origin of this opposition, which makes for repression, between the ego and various groups of ideas" lies in the fact that while "every instinct tries to make itself effective by activating ideas that are in keeping with its aims," the instincts' "interests often come into conflict. Opposition between ideas is only an expression of struggles between the various instincts" (11:213–14). This should sound familiar to Nietzsche scholars, I think. And Simon Boag's gloss on Freud's account of the ego from 1910 makes it sound even more so ("Ego, Drives, and the Dynamics of Internal Objects," *Frontiers in Psychology* 5.666 [2014]: 1–13). As Boag notes, during this time period, Freud understands the ego as "composed of a dominating set of instinctual drives of which membership is fluid . . . what distinguishes the repressed instinctual drives from the instinctual drives composing the ego is that they remain isolated and incapable of synthesis into the collective forming the ego" (2). Lest we be tempted to assimilate Freud's 1910–15 view entirely into a view like the one I develop in this article, however, we should note an important difference (indeed, one of several): Freud's account of repression in *The Psycho-Analytic View of Psychogenic Disturbance of*

Vision relies on the existence of self-preservative instincts (or "ego-instincts"), which are opposed in aim to libidinal ones.

48. See John Richardson, *Nietzsche's System* and *Nietzsche's Values* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), as well as Paul Katsafanas, *Agency and the Foundations of Ethics: Nietzschean Constitutivism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013) and *The Nietzschean Self* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

49. See Katsafanas, *Nietzschean Self*, 98.

50. I will use these terms interchangeably. It may be that they come apart in Nietzsche, though I doubt it. Whether they do is not important for my purposes.

51. This pain might be the pain of mere tension. But it might also involve negative affects induced by the knowledge drive in its attempts to grow in power.

52. A drive's "point of view" is its distinctive evaluative perspective. Richardson captures this nicely in his characterization of the sex drive's point of view: "Each drive's end-directed activity already 'polarizes' the world toward it, giving everything a significance relative to it. So, for example, the sex drive views the world as inspiring or requiring a sexual response, the world appears with erotic potential as its meaning or sense" (*Nietzsche's System*, 36).

53. I take it that Nietzsche's characterization of Socrates as "amorous [verliebte]" (*GS* 340) evinces the continued presence of a sex drive that shapes his experience and motivational life. Notice that, while the sex drive can in principle come apart from the aggressive drives in human beings—the latter of which makes Socrates a "great erotic" and leads him to "discover a new type of *agon*" in dialectics (*TI* "Socrates" 8)—Nietzsche will often claim that they are closely connected (*TI* "Skirmishes" 23).

54. Katsafanas is clearly right that Nietzsche's drive psychology requires the aim/object distinction, also found in Freud (*Nietzschean Self*, 101). Nietzschean drives are individuated by their aims: their characteristic goals. Drives, when active, motivate individuals to realize those aims, while the objects that drives select (objects that allow them to express their aims) will often vary widely. Given Nietzsche's descriptions of the operations of drives, it must also be the case that the object a drive selects and pursues will often be a mere "chance occasion[] for expression" (106) of that drive's aim, something sought out as a mere means for that drive's expression. Importantly, however, Nietzsche discusses plenty of cases in which drives seem to "stick" to certain objects, and not just objects upon which they would "most naturally be expressed" (101). A key example of this is his account of the modern will to truth (or knowledge drive) and its attachment to the object of disinterested truth (or objective knowledge). Put differently, Nietzsche seems to think that in modernity, objective truth (or disinterested knowledge) has become a "sticky object" for the knowledge drive. My sense is that there is an important Nietzschean story to tell about why certain objects become "sticky" in this way, and that it is a story having to do with the sociohistorical development of human feelings and attachments, especially the shaping of our affective lives by the emotion concepts and narratives we encounter. For more on this shaping, see Kaitlyn Creasy, "Nietzsche on the Sociality

of Emotional Experience," *European Journal of Philosophy* 31.3 (2023): 748–68. A fuller story must be left for another project. One interesting thing to note, however, is that the story Nietzsche tells about objective truth's "stickiness" often begins with Socrates, whose knowledge drive tends to seek not just knowledge but *objective* knowledge, not just truth but *disinterested* truth. Note that Sara Ahmed deploys the term "sticky object" (*The Cultural Politics of Emotion* [Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004], 91) to designate objects (both abstract and concrete) that have "become saturated with affects as sites of personal and social tension" (*The Promise of Happiness* [Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010], 44), typically as a result of socially and culturally circulated emotion. While Ahmed's account is suggestive, I am not here proposing that her sense of this term maps neatly onto the phenomenon I am interested in exploring in Nietzsche.

55. E.g., the suppression of certain thoughts and the inhibition of various possibilities for action (in repression) or the redirection of psychic energy and complication of possibilities for action (in sublimation).

56. In *EH*, Nietzsche also presents "perfect, instinctive certainty" as indicative of non-decadence (*EH* "Wise" 2).

57. To head off potential confusion, let me explain how I take the concepts of psychic unity and agency to be related in Nietzsche, as well as how they crop up in Nietzsche's treatment of psycho-physiological decadence. Like other scholars (Ken Gemes, "Nietzsche on Free Will, Autonomy, and the Sovereign Individual," in *Nietzsche on Freedom and Autonomy*, ed. Ken Gemes and Simon May [New York: Oxford University Press, 2009], 33–50; and Katsafanas, *Nietzschean Self*), I take it that unity is at least necessary for agency on Nietzsche's view. (It may be sufficient, but I do not take a stance on this here.) Otherwise put, in order for an individual (a "subject-multiplicity" or "social structure of the drives and affects" [*BGE* 12]) to count as a genuine agent, she must be unified in the right kind of way. On my view, the kind of unity necessary for agency on my view is *psychic* unity: the integration of one's drive-life into a harmonious whole (or the harmonious integration of one's drive-life). See also Richardson, *Nietzsche's System*, and "Nietzsche's Freedoms," in Gemes and May, *Nietzsche on Freedom and Autonomy*, 127–50; Reginster, "What Is a Free Spirit?"; Gemes, "Nietzsche on Free Will, Autonomy, and the Sovereign Individual"; Riccardi, *Nietzsche's Philosophical Psychology*; Leslie Paul Thiele, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990); Matthias Risse, "Nietzschean 'Animal Psychology' versus Kantian Ethics," in *Nietzsche and Morality*, ed. Brian Leiter and Neil Sinhababu (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 57–82; and Kaitlyn Creasy, *The Problem of Affective Nihilism in Nietzsche* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020). This integration facilitates a sense of self-satisfaction (*GS* 290). In the absence of such integration, feelings of self-dissatisfaction and self-alienation threaten. Given that other scholars think psychic unity of the sort I describe here suffices for free agency (Thiele, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul*; Reginster, "What Is a Free Spirit?"; Risse, "Nietzschean 'Animal Psychology' versus Kantian Ethics"; Gemes, "Nietzsche

on Free Will, Autonomy, and the Sovereign Individual"), however, I want to be clear: while unity is *necessary* for free agency on my view, it is not *sufficient* (Creasy, *Problem of Affective Nihilism*, 74–75). With others (Katsafanas, *Nietzschean Self*; Scott Jenkins, "Morality, Agency, and Freedom in Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morals," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 20.1 [2003]: 61–80), I contend that agency and free agency come apart in Nietzsche's thought.

58. See also *EH* "Wise" 6, "Clever" 8; *KSA* 13:14[209], 14[113], 17[6].

59. It's worth flagging that how we individuate actions will matter here.

60. Katsafanas, *Nietzschean Self*, 195. I bring in the language Katsafanas uses because I think it is helpfully evocative. But note that Katsafanas's account of agency differs markedly from the view I advance here. While I argue that the unity necessary for agency is a feature of one's drive-life (psychic unity), Katsafanas argues instead that the unity necessary for agency is a feature of the relationship between the "reflective and unreflective parts" of an agent (*Nietzschean Self*, 193).

61. A similar picture emerges in *D* 120, which I suggest can be read productively alongside *BGE* 208.

62. Passages not already mentioned in which Nietzsche uses these concepts interchangeably include *TI* "Skirmishes" 41, 43, and *KSB* 8:1131.

63. This is borne out by the analysis above. But it is also evident both in Nietzsche's frequent association of degeneration *specifically* with will-weakness and in his claim that "weakness of the will [. . .] is itself just another form of degeneration [eine andre Form der Degenerescenz]" (*TI* "Morality" 2).

64. We see this in Nietzsche's frequent description of decadents having undergone processes involving "loss" or decline (*CW* "Postscript"; *TI* "Skirmishes" 37; *A* 20; *EH* "Books" *D; EH* "Destiny" 7).

65. Relevant, perhaps, to the case of Socrates is Nietzsche's connection of decadent degeneration to self-consciousness, *especially* one's becoming reflectively aware of one's own internal conflict. Although one need not become aware of one's inner conflict in order to count as a degenerate decadent, Nietzsche suggests that becoming aware of the conflict (i.e., the conflict's coming to reflective awareness) tends to exacerbate this conflict, furthering psychic disunity and degeneration. For example, in an 1887 note, Nietzsche suggests that morality tends to result in the "degeneration [Entartung] and self-destruction of the 'higher natures' *because it is precisely in them that the conflict becomes conscious*" (*KSA* 12:8[4]). In another note from this year, Nietzsche suggests that "the most mediocre" individuals (whose drives are in conflict but who "do not feel that conflict at all") thrive in comparison to "higher" individuals who suffer degeneration. This is due, the note implies, to higher individuals' *feeling* the conflict in a way mediocre individuals do not (*KSA* 12:9[162]). In an 1888 note, Nietzsche calls "self-observation" a "degeneration of psychological genius [. . .] a question mark on the instinct of the psychologist" (*KSA* 13:14[28]). Nietzsche here does not say overtly that awareness of conflict exacerbates that conflict, but it is certainly suggested. A good psychologist knows not to observe

herself too closely, we might think, because of her awareness of the negative psychological consequences this observation can provoke.

66. *KSB* 8:968, 981. In *CW*, Nietzsche also designates the "transformation of art as a whole into histrionics" (which Wagner inaugurates) "a sign of physiological degeneration (or, more precisely, a form of hysteria)" (7).

67. Scott, "Racial Nihilism as Racial Courage," 8.

68. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pressing me on this point.

69. For an extended argument on power's "privileged normative status," see Katsafanas, *Agency and the Foundations of Ethics*, chap. 6.

70. For an extended argument for this conception of the will to power as growth, see Dunkle, "On the Normativity of Nietzsche's Will to Power." For a recent endorsement of this interpretation, see Katsafanas, "Fanatic and the Last Man."

71. Passages in which Nietzsche suggests that the decadent fails to (lastingly) will power successfully include *A* 6, 17; *TI* "Socrates" 11, "Ancients" 3; and *CW* "Epilogue." Passages in which Nietzsche suggests that willing power successfully involves overcoming resistance and growth include *GS* 349; *GM* III:7; *A* 2; and *KSA* 13:11[96], 14[174].

72. Huddleston, *Nietzsche on the Decadence and Flourishing of Culture*, 87.

73. Notice that it is only after decadence has resolved that we can positively assess it.

74. As should be clear from the above analysis, I take it that Nietzsche is not here insisting on his present decadence, but instead referring to previous bouts of decadence. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer of this article for pressing me on this.

75. As an anonymous reviewer of this article pointed out, given Nietzsche's characterization of decadence, we should be suspicious of his claim that he was "strong enough" to overcome that condition even while in its throes. It is perhaps likelier that Nietzsche's recovery from his bouts of decadence was a matter of chance or luck. And in fact, parts of the aphorism in which he characterizes himself as "strong enough" to overcome his own decadence seem to suggest as much. There, his recovery sometimes seems to be a matter of his having been situated in the right circumstances (*EH* "Wise" 2). But, of course, Nietzsche does not chalk this up to luck, instead attributing it to his "instinctive certainty" (*EH* "Wise" 2). This tension in Nietzsche's remarks on decadence is not easily resolved, and I do not attempt to resolve it here. I wonder, however, whether Nietzsche thinks one's ability to overcome bouts of decadence is ultimately a matter of *temperament* (especially an individual's possession of an especially resilient psyche). This line of thought will have to be left for a future project—not least because making sense of psychic resilience using the resources provided by Nietzsche's drive psychology is a tall order.