Nietzsche on Time and History

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Towards Adualism:
Becoming and Nihilism in Nietzsche's Philosophy

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> More strictly: one must not allow of anything at all that has be-
> ing [*nichts Seiendes überhaupt*]—because then becoming loses its
> value and appears downright meaningless and superfluous. (Nachlaß Novem-
> ber 1887–March 1888, KSA 13, 11[72])

In this essay, I shall argue that Nietzsche held two doctrines of becoming:
one more radical, which he requires to fend off nihilism, and one much
more moderate—the ontology of relations he develops under the label 'will
to power'. Based on the latter he develops what I wish to call his 'adu-
alistic'—neither monistic nor dualistic—practice of thought, a 'simulta-
neity-thinking' (*Zugleich-Denken*) that is no longer subject to nihilism. I
shall argue further that we can only make sense of Nietzsche's oft-
criticized *radical* affirmation of becoming (*Werden*) or impermanence—
best defined *ex negativo* that there is no rational, true, benign, systematic,
permanent reality for us—if we assume that he saw nihilism not merely as
a possibility but as a *real* threat.

For his belief in the *reality* of the threat of nihilism to be intelligible,
we have to attribute to Nietzsche at least three assumptions that underpin
his entire project. The three assumptions are these:

(1) 'what there is, is becoming (and not being)', and

(2) 'most (if not all) strongly believe in being'.

(3) nihilism is a function of the belief in being.

Everything else can be seen as following directly from these assumptions.

This essay consists of six parts. In part 1, I wish to examine the above
assumptions in more detail and show that Nietzsche's move towards be-
coming is motivated by the anomaly of nihilism. Secondly, I wish to show
that Nietzsche not only believes that nihilism is already happening, but also
that it is the task of the philosopher to be a *Gegenkraft* ('counter-force'),
and this is the reason for the particularly *radical* nature of his affirmation
of becoming. In the third part, I will examine whether Nietzsche is himself

guilty of reintroducing a problematic dualism between becoming and language that renders all conceptual determinations mere falsifications. This issue will make it necessary, fourthly, to examine Nietzsche's ontology of relations. I will argue that Nietzsche's presentation of becoming as will-to-power relations can be seen as a *less* radical presentation of becoming. In the fifth part, I will show that this only partially removes a problematic dualism of becoming and language. Nietzsche struggles to find a language that captures his views on temporality and identity. Finally, I wish to show that Nietzsche, in order to avoid the above difficulties, at times suggests a non-reductive practice of thought that accounts for both the relative permanence or duration of 'persons' and 'things' and their constantly changing, temporal complexity—in short, the simultaneity of being and becoming.

1. Nihilism as the Function of the Belief in Being

Nietzsche wrestles with the problem of nihilism inherent in the valuation of being and absolute truth, namely 'that the highest values devalue themselves' (Nachlaß Autumn 1887, KSA 12, 9[35]). He perceives a problematic asymmetry between the secularized world-views people have adopted or are in the process of adopting, and their values—moral and other—which are still based on a strong belief in some kind of permanence or essence(s) or being (and are supported by a grammar and language that sustain their metaphysical picture). He is convinced that only when we have successfully erased from our thinking the categories of being that we formerly used to interpret existence—and which in Nietzsche's eyes are still used by everyone (apart from himself)—can nihilism be overcome:[1]

> Assuming we have recognized how the world may no longer be interpreted with these t h r e e categories ['unity', 'purpose', 'being', M.D.] and that upon this recognition the world begins to be without value for us: then we must ask w h e r e our belief in these three categories came from—let us see if it isn't possible to cancel our belief in t h e m. Once we have d e v a l u a t e d these three categories, demonstrating that they can't be applied to the universe c e a s e s to be a reason to devaluate the universe. (Nachlaß November 1887–March 1888, KSA 13, 11[99])

In addition, the morality of the Western tradition that continues to sustain the paradigm of being (despite the evidence for becoming delivered by

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1   As I argue elsewhere, the early Romantics anticipated this view of Nietzsche's (Dries 2007, pp. 127–162).

natural science)[2] must itself be shown to be *an effect* of becoming as will to power, rather than grounded in, or corresponding to, divine being. Only then will our attitude towards the world or 'the whole' (*das Ganze*) change. Instead of incomplete, teleological notions of becoming (such as he attributes alike to Hegel, the young Hegelians, Socialists, and scientific realists) and Schopenhauer's privileging of permanence, Nietzsche wishes—in his eyes for the first time—to do proper justice to becoming. His new 'world conception' calls for the substitution of being with becoming:

> One is necessary, one is a piece of fate, one belongs to the whole, one *is* the whole—there is nothing which could judge, measure, compare, condemn our Being, for that would mean judging, measuring, comparing, condemning the whole … But there is nothing apart from the whole!—That no one is made responsible any more, that a kind of Being cannot be traced back to a *causa prima*, that the world is no unity, either as sensorium or as 'mind', this alone is the great liberation—this alone re-establishes the innocence of becoming. (TI 'The Four Great Errors' 8)

We see here a threefold shift: towards 'the whole' (*das Ganze*), towards immanence (away from any exogenous stability or teleology), and towards becoming. This is Nietzsche's overcoming of nihilism in a nutshell: by fully embracing becoming, by deracinating the categories which devalued becoming in the name of transcendent being, nihilism can be overcome. The state that Nietzsche wishes to reach is what he calls the 'innocence of becoming' (*Unschuld des Werdens*). But this is only possible by *undoing the belief in being* by teaching that there is no such thing as unity: 'that the world is no unity, either as sensorium or as "mind"' (ibid.) is no objection to it.

In a more formalized way, Nietzsche's argument looks like this: if all there is, is becoming, and most people (if not all and excluding himself) believe in being, then nihilism is the result of the conflict that arises between the two premises—that is, the belief in (the value) being clashes with the realization that all there is, is becoming. I would argue that we need to attribute both the initial assumptions to Nietzsche in order to make sense of pronouncements such as 'nihilism is just around the corner'. If his contemporaries did not strongly believe in being, the confrontation with becoming simply would not have the nihilistic effect Nietzsche predicts.

It emerges, therefore, that for Nietzsche, the danger of nihilism is *a function of the belief in being*: the higher the valuation of being (as Truth with a capital, $\tau\acute{\epsilon}\lambda o\varsigma$, permanence, unity as oneness, and systematicity), the

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2   On the impact of the natural sciences on Nietzsche's philosophy, see Moore 2002; Stack 2005; and Emden 2005.

greater the risk and the effect of nihilism. But there is also, I believe, a third assumption which we must attribute to Nietzsche if we wish to make sense of his project, an assumption which derives from his general belief in the efficacy of forces. It can be formulated as follows: the more deeply ingrained a belief, the more radical a force is necessary to overthrow and undo that belief. Consequently, Nietzsche's radicalization of becoming has to be proportional to the *intensity* he attributes to the belief in being of his age. Given his first assumption (that all is becoming), it is not surprising that most of his philosophical project is concerned with undoing the belief in being which he attributes (second assumption) to most of his contemporaries.

2. Becoming as *Gegenkraft*

As many of his notes reveal, Nietzsche believes that the inevitable 'antagonism' between the new paradigm of becoming and the old still dominant paradigm of being is already at work and evident, resulting in a gradual *Auflösungsprozess*, 'a process of dissolution'. 'This antagonism—not esteeming what we know [becoming, M.D.] and no longer being permitted to esteem what we would like to pretend to ourselves [being, M.D.]—results in a process of dissolution' (Nachlaß Summer 1886–Autumn 1887, KSA 12, 5[71]). This insight leads him to the conclusion—problematic at best—that the nihilistic process of dissolution should also be accelerated (*beschleunigt*). Nihilism—this time induced by the philosopher who is also a 'physician'—is supposed to play a vital part in its own cure.[3] As he writes in one of his most problematic notes in Spring 1885: 'an ecstatic nihilism could under certain circumstances be unavoidable for the philosopher: as powerful pressure' (Nachlaß May–July 1885, KSA 11, 35[82]). I will return to this passage towards the end of this section.

Let us again look at the argument implied in manifesto-like statements such as the above. Convinced of the inevitability of the dissolution of the paradigm of being through his own belief in the truth of becoming, he wishes everyone else to accept his own change of paradigm. Zarathustra's conviction—that it is the task of the philosopher to 'push that which is already falling' (Z III 'Of Old and New Tables' 20)—issues directly from Nietzsche's belief that nihilism is a function of the belief in being and that it is *actually* a real threat. The task of the philosopher is therefore to accel-

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3   'To be the doctor here, to be merciless here, to guide the blade here—this is for us to do, this is our love of humanity' (A 7).

erate this process of dissolution, i.e., actively to undo the belief in being. How does he go about this?

For someone like Nietzsche who thinks in terms of forces and believes in force and counter-force, it is not surprising that he frequently announces his desire to be a counter-force (*Gegenkraft*) himself. As he says in the *Genealogy*, any constitution of *Sinn* ('meaning'), even at an organic level, he sees as the result of successful encounters or 'counteractions': 'Results of successful counteractions. The Form is fluid, but the "meaning" [*Sinn*] even more so' (GM II 12). A counter-force is therefore required to balance, control, or (and I take this to be Nietzsche's intention) overthrow another force if its 'meaning'—its current interpretation—is perceived to be a threat. Nietzsche's choice of 'therapy' is designed to match his belief in the intensity or embeddedness of belief in being. A counter-force of similar magnitude and intensity is called for, because he believes that the belief in being is still metaphysically grounded. This, I think, is the logic behind his questionable and inconsistent *radicalization* of becoming and also the argument that justifies (for Nietzsche) his radical *presentation* of becoming. His late note on the *Birth of Tragedy*, written in Spring 1888, could well be applied to his entire project: what is needed is 'a counter-force to all Nay-saying and Nay-doing, a remedy for the great fatigue' (Nachlaß Spring 1888, KSA 13, 14[15]).

Nietzsche's ambiguous views on science also hinge on this argument. According to him, science itself favours the required paradigm shift. While people may regard science merely as useful and unproblematic, they will soon discover, he thinks, that it is really 'die grosse Schmerzbringerin':

> So far it [science] may still be better known for its power to deprive man of his joys and make him colder, more statue-like, more stoic. But it might yet be found the great giver of pain! —And then its counter-force might at the same time be found: its immense capacity for letting new galaxies of joy flare up. (GS I 12)

But science proceeds slowly, by way of hypothesis, experiment, and falsifications, and only over long stretches of time will it have an impact and change a people's self-image. Also, like the senses, science both shows becoming and hides it—under the veil of objectivity—from view. And while the natural sciences might reveal enough to slowly weaken people's belief in being (which is precisely what Nietzsche believes has been the case since the Renaissance), the result is not that they have abandoned the belief in being;[4] rather, people no longer know who they are and what they

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4   While future information technology might depend on results in quantum physics (e.g., quantum cryptography), this does not require anyone to change his ontology.

should think. While this is a stage of nihilism that Nietzsche endorses (because its direction is right), he worries that people might become (or are already) stuck in this nihilistic phase in which the belief in being stands against the reality of becoming. As he realizes, a nihilist is

> the man who judges that the world, as it is, should n o t exist and of the world, as it should be, that it does not exist. Consequently, existing (acting, suffering, willing, feeling) has no meaning: the pathos of the 'in vain' is the nihilist pathos—and at the same time, as pathos, an i n c o n s i s t e n c y of the nihilist. (Nachlaß Autumn 1887, KSA 12, 9[60])

Nietzsche is impatient and—against his own convictions—he even attempts to control time. While science has the potential to be a *Schmerzbringerin* and bring about the painful paradigm shift, it simply does not do it as quickly as the situation demands. Nietzsche's project becomes that of assisting science and presenting what he thinks is based on the latest results in the natural sciences in such a radical form that it will deracinate the belief in being either immediately, or at least more quickly.[5] He accepts that this may temporarily make matters worse, for a counter-force will take some time to take effect. There will be a period in which the belief in being still applies and functions, although its control over people's world-view and self-image will weaken. If the task of the philosopher is to speed up the process, and if the belief in being is as metaphysically embedded as Nietzsche believes is the case, it follows that the counter-belief he wishes to offer as a remedy must be presented with the same metaphysical intensity. He therefore does much more than simply suggest that the basic belief in being must be denied. He insists that 'one must not allow for there to be anything permanent [*nichts Seiendes überhaupt*] at all' (Nachlaß November 1887–March 1888, KSA 13, 11[72]) and presents a quasi-metaphysical counter-doctrine, namely, a radical, eternally-recurring, infinite becoming without meaning and $\tau \acute{\epsilon} \lambda o \varsigma$:

> And do you know what 'the world' is to me? Shall I show you it in my mirror? This world: an immensity of force, without beginning, without end, a fixed brazen quantity of force which grows neither larger nor smaller, which doesn't exhaust but only transforms itself … as a play of forces and force-waves simultaneously one and 'many', accumulating here while diminishing there, an ocean of forces storming and flooding within themselves, eternally changing, eternally rushing back, with tremendous years of recurrence … as a becoming

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5 Rex Welshon recently argued that Nietzsche's view 'is nothing more than a philosophically free expression of the contemporary scientific worldview' (2004, p. 159).

that knows no satiety, no surfeit, no fatigue. (Nachlaß June–July 1885, KSA 11, 38[12])[6]

The point is not to examine the plausibility of radical flux or an eternally recurring becoming; my aim is merely to show why Nietzsche's assumptions require him to attack being in the radical way he does, 'since becoming would otherwise lose its value' (Nachlaß November 1887–March 1888, KSA 13, [11[72]]).

We can now return to the second part of the passage on the 'ecstatic nihilism' Nietzsche wishes to induce. It runs as follows:

> An ecstatic nihilism might, under certain circumstances, be unavoidable for the philosopher: as powerful a pressure and hammer which he uses to destroy and do away with degenerating and dying species, for a new order of life; or in order to instil that which is degenerating and that which wants to die with a longing for the end. (Nachlaß May–July 1885, KSA 11, 35[82])

There are many such passages in which he shows his willingness to change the belief in being of his contemporaries at the expense of those who are not able to bear what he sees as the new paradigm. This is a result of his belief that nihilism (a function of the belief in being) will sweep people off their feet, whereas a *gradual* weakening of the belief in being would simply take too long. He accordingly proposes a drastic remedy:

> Bringing joy to humanity by sustaining their illusion, their belief. **Instead my countermovement: —**Domination of humanity for the purpose of its **overcoming**. Overcoming with doctrines through which it perishes, **except those who can bear it.** (Nachlaß Spring–Summer 1883, KSA 10, 7[238])

He seems to suggest that his drastic revelation, though destructive of the weak, will only last for a relatively short period and is therefore more desirable than any protracted and lingering decadence that will ultimately lead in any case to the same, inevitable paradigm shift.

As a physician of culture, Nietzsche believes that the 'casualties' will still be fewer than are caused by leaving things as they are. His goal is a new and cheerful 'innocence of becoming'.[7] If his three assumptions are accepted, his argument is sound. Unfortunately, the same assumptions

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6   It should also be said that Nietzsche goes against the standards which he derived from his genealogy of being. He, too, employs unsinnliche ideas. Although he believes that there are instances when the senses reveal the truth of becoming—'If the senses show becoming, passing away, change, they do not lie' (TI '"Reason" in Philosophy' 2)—he insists elsewhere on the 'deception by the senses' (Nachlaß Spring 1880–Spring 1881, KSA 9, 10[E93]). We will return to this inconsistency later.

7   This, I think, is Nietzsche's eudaimonism, which I intend to discuss elsewhere.

commit him—despite his pronouncements against *Hinterwelten* (KSA 13, p. 46)—to a new complex of problems. For he also insists that radical becoming cannot be described in language. This opens the way for another 'anomalous' dualism with, as we shall see, a similar nihilistic potential.

3. Becoming versus Language

In an attempt to defend Hegel's conception of becoming, some critics argue that his critique of metaphysics is ultimately more successful than that of Nietzsche. Nietzsche's becoming denotes the absence of any real determination, and his critique of the metaphysical tradition amounts therefore to a mere *inversion* of the traditional opposition of being and becoming. For Nietzsche, one critic argues, 'becoming' denotes an ultimate reality: 'What is real for Nietzsche is "becoming"—flux, multiplicity, change. Nietzsche uses many different terms to denote this flux … But always the meaning is the same: *becoming is restless primordial indetermination*' (Houlgate 1986, p. 49; my emphasis). Nietzsche accordingly abolishes the metaphysical dualism between a true world of being and an apparent world of becoming; 'however, within his own *one* world he has preserved an opposition between what he sees as the fundamental reality and what he sees as mere appearance [within language or sense experience]' (ibid., p. 91). Thus, while he is right to criticize the abstract conception of being which disregards becoming, he is wrong in believing that 'life is becoming without logical form or identity, without "being"' (ibid.). He therefore remains tied to the problematic opposition of being and becoming:

> In criticizing being and *seiend* distinctions, Nietzsche should have gone on to criticize the dichotomy between being and life which turned both into abstractions. This he failed to do; instead of criticizing both the abstractions of being and becoming, he simply played off one against the other. (ibid., p. 95)

Hegel, on the other hand, overcomes this *exclusive disjunction* of being versus becoming ('either being or becoming'). Instead, he 'sees being (at least when it is fully determined as the Idea) as the inherent dynamic form and continuity of becoming itself, and he sees the "apparent" world of linguistic terms and concepts as revealing rather than concealing the character of the reality they describe' (ibid., p. 93).

I am not concerned here with the soundness of this defence of Hegel.[8] What I wish to examine is whether it accurately reflects Nietzsche's posi-

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8 Houlgate is unsuccessful in defending Hegel against Nietzsche for at least two reasons. He fails to give an account of Hegel's 'being as becoming' that is free

tion. More than once, Nietzsche does indeed refer to the inability of language to express *Werden*. Despite his Spinoza-inspired attacks on the Platonic-Christian two-world metaphysics,[9] he does seem to introduce a dualism between becoming and language, thereby equating language with 'error' and 'falsification'. Again we encounter one of his basic contradictions: he simultaneously maintains that 'the means of expression of language are not suitable for expressing becoming' (Nachlaß November 1887–March 1888, KSA 13, 11[73]), and also that all philosophy should do (presumably within language) is to express becoming: 'Philosophy, in the only way acceptable to me, as the most general form of history, as an attempt somehow to describe Heraclitean becoming and to abbreviate into signs (so to speak, to translate and mummify it into a kind of illusory being)' (Nachlaß June–July 1885, KSA 11, 36[27]).

This seems clear enough evidence that becoming is Nietzsche's new *Hinterwelt*—not beyond the matter and force of his new 'one' world, but certainly beyond the schematizations of our senses and language. Is he simply demanding the impossible? We seem to have here what I wish to call Nietzsche's version of the 'impossible presentation thesis': his *exclusive disjunction* entails the impossibility of presenting becoming within language, i.e., within a system of signs that 'fixes' meaning by 'expressing' it (*Feststellung*).[10] As in the case of Schopenhauer's being–becoming dichotomy, Nietzsche's own dichotomy between becoming and any kind of determinateness annuls the value of what is given within language.[11]

Attributing this position to Nietzsche, who dedicated his entire migraine-free time to becoming an 'artist of language' (Nachlaß April–June 1885, KSA 11, 34[124]), is, to say the least, problematic. His views on language are indeed more subtle than this. Aware of the double nature of language as both revealing and concealing, Nietzsche also knows that lan-

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from the kind of systematicity, rationality, and teleology that, as we saw above, Nietzsche finds so problematic. Further, he is mistaken in attributing to Nietzsche a simple inversion of the being–becoming dichotomy. As I shall shortly argue, Nietzsche also considers being and becoming as a unity, albeit not in the 'systematic' and 'continuous' way of Hegel.

9   See, e.g., A 17.

10   The early Romantic philosophers such as Novalis, Schlegel, and Schelling assumed the logical and ontological priority of an Absolute (das Unbedingte) that is never 'present' and can only be represented within reflection and language. This idea leads them to their philosophies of 'infinite approximation' (see, e.g., Frank 1997 and Bowie 2003).

11   Volker Gerhardt points to this inconsistency—thereby tacitly accepting the 'impossible presentation thesis'—when he remarks: 'Nietzsche attempts the impossible, namely, to express the fact of becoming within language' (1996, p. 296).

guage is always both *limitatio* and *conditio*. Anticipating the later Wittgen-
stein's view, he states, in a note on 'mature artworks' of Spring 1888: 'Any
mature art is based on an abundance of conventions: insofar as it is lan-
guage. Convention is the condition of great art not its prevention' (Nachlaß
Spring 1888, KSA 13, 14[119]). In this passage, he at least seems aware of
the pitfalls of metaphysical realism. And in another late note he makes it
unmistakably clear that it would be wrong to dismiss language for its al-
leged failure to present or correspond to any extant particulars or entities
(*Wesen*):

> The demand for an a d e q u a t e m o d e o f e x p r e s s i o n is n o n s e n s i c a l : it's
> of the essence of a language, of a means of expression, to express only a rela-
> tion … The concept of 'truth' is a b s u r d … the whole realm of 'true', 'false'
> refers only to relations between entities, not to the 'in-itself' … N o n s e n s e :
> there is no 'essence-in-itself', it's only relations that constitute entities, and
> neither can there be a 'knowledge-in-itself'. (Nachlaß Spring 1888, KSA 13,
> 14[122])

Here he clearly denies the *viability* of the view that language *aims* at cor-
responding entities or fundamental truths. The metaphysical realist will
always be unable to satisfy the sceptic's doubt regarding the correspond-
ence of *Denken* and *Sein*. Nietzsche is aware of the nihilistic potential of
such a metaphysical realism and, anticipating the ontology of current her-
meneutics,[12] he inverts what I shall call the 'truth-vector' of language:
essences and truths are not to be conceived as the *targets* of intentionality
or of interpretations, but should be understood as *results* of intentionality
or interpretations.[13]

But what are we to make of his contradictory insistence that there is no
'in-itself', that language *constitutes* entities, and yet, in any description,
fails to express becoming?

While Nietzsche might well have been—accidentally or deliberately—
self-contradictory (and both interpretations can be found in the secondary
literature), I think there is a strong argument, following directly from
Nietzsche's assumptions, that would eliminate the above inconsistency. In
a nutshell, it runs as follows. We know that Nietzsche endorses the radical
doctrine of becoming in the (by his own standards) necessary attack on the
belief in being. *This does not, however, mean that he himself actually sub-
scribes to any radical ontology of becoming.* In the light of our earlier dis-
cussion, we might speculate that—at least for the later Nietzsche—talk

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12   On Nietzsche's importance for philosophical hermeneutics, see Vattimo 1986.

13   On truth as the result of interpretations, see Abel 2003, pp. 4–7; also Abel 1998, p.
     326.

about all-pervasive becoming, inexpressible by language, is addressed to those who need to be awoken 'with a philosophical hammer' from what he certainly believed to be their 'dogmatic slumber'. In order to examine this issue further, we need to examine Nietzsche's most detailed description of becoming, his ontology (or phenomenology) of relations, also known by the name of will to power.

4. Becoming as Power Relations

I will try to limit my analysis of the will to power to the one question of relevance to our analysis: is Nietzsche guilty of merely inverting the be-ing–becoming dichotomy, thereby introducing a dualism between a more fundamental reality and language? This question has two parts: does will to power—as a description of becoming—rule out being altogether and de-note indeterminacy? And secondly, is will to power a metaphysical theory, or should we interpret Nietzsche as a phenomenologist who is not inter-ested in theories about ultimate reality?

I will begin with the second question. Peter Poellner has recently pro-posed that Nietzsche should be read primarily not as a metaphysician (as some critics still do)[14] but as a phenomenologist.[15] Anticipating the funda-mental reorientation of phenomenology (against philosophy in its tradi-tional orientation towards epistemology or metaphysics), Nietzsche regards the 'the first-personal investigation of how a world can manifest itself in experience, and how, in particular, it does so in human experience, as the fundamental philosophical enterprise' (Poellner 2006, p. 302). Metaphysics and epistemology in their traditional sense are 'while not rejected, at best considered derivative' (ibid.). This, of course, requires the reader to under-stand the radical nature of this phenomenological turn, and only then is it possible to see, according to Poellner, that none of Nietzsche's physiologi-

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14 Despite his explicit attacks on foundations, Nietzsche is indeed often interpreted as hypostatizing becoming and making it an ultimate reality. Stambaugh, for exam-ple, argued that the novelty of Nietzsche's position lies in his absolute denial of duration: 'The flux of time is in its own way a concealed kind of "substance", for it continuously flows on. The flux is constant, continuous. It always flows, or "is"' (1972, p. 7; see also Danto 1965, p. 96; Poellner 1995, p. 91; and Young 1992, p. 97). In his recontextualization of Nietzsche's ideas within the scientific writings of his contemporaries, Moore also concludes that becoming as will to power is a metaphysical Bildungstrieb (2002, p. 55).

15 Meaning here 'phenomena as they are perceived'. Nietzsche would, of course, reject the idea of any Cartesian 'first philosophy' or fundamental theory.

cal explanations or his accounts of the efficacy of consciousness are refer-
ring to 'what *really* is the case in an ultimate ontological sense' (ibid., p.
297). Instead, such descriptions should be interpreted as 'non-
metaphysical, practical methods of understanding and acting on the world
within the context of a dominant concern with the *phenomenology of the
human life-world*' (ibid., p. 298).[16]

What evidence do we have (other than the denial of 'essences in them-
selves' which we saw earlier) that when it comes to becoming, Nietzsche is
not trying to present a foundational metaphysics of becoming? I would like
to begin with section 370 of *The Gay Science*. Here, Nietzsche attacks not
only Schopenhauer's pessimism and Hegel's panlogism for their respective
privileging of 'rest', 'stillness', and 'calmness'; he also dismisses those
Romantics who desire 'intoxication' (*Rausch*) and try to connect with an
ineffable absolute. This passage is important because it shows that the later
Nietzsche rejects any interest in some kind of noumenal realm.[17] Dionysian
intoxication (*Rausch*) is now listed as a decadent form of 'anaesthesia', as
a problematic practice designed to shy away from the *real* contradictions of
life—'real' in a phenomenological *sense*, not as an ontological *reference*.[18]
In this passage at least, Nietzsche rules out any kind of noumenal beyond[19]
and, in the famous genealogy of truth in *Twilight of the Idols* 'How the
"True World" Finally Became a Fable. The History of an Error', he de-
mands a world-view that values this world *as* this world: 'The true world is
gone: which world is left? The illusory one, perhaps? ... But no! We got
rid of the illusory world along with the true one!' This passage

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16 'Neither his (implicit or explicit) claims concerning the efficacy of consciousness,
    nor his advocacy … of "physiological" explanation should be understood meta-
    physically as theses about what really is the case in an ultimate ontological sense.
    Rather, both of these approaches should be interpreted as mutually compatible,
    non-metaphysical, practical methods of understanding and acting on the world
    within the context of a dominant concern with the phenomenology of the human
    life-world' (2006, pp. 297–298).

17 See also GM III 5.

18 Poellner invokes Frege's distinction between sense and reference: 'the phenomen-
    ologist is only interested in the level of sense (in Husserl's broad understanding of
    Sinn, whereby all intentional contents, not merely linguistic ones, involve senses).
    She is not interested, qua phenomenologist, in the level of reference, e.g., in
    whether some apparent represented object used as a sample really exists. But this
    temporary suspension of the "natural attitude" is of course not an end in itself, but
    is engaged for a better understanding of the Sinnstruktur of our actual experiential
    world' (2006, p. 299).

19 See also Nietzsche's remark on 'secret routes to worlds beyond and false divini-
    ties' (Nachlaß November 1887–March 1888, KSA 13, 11[99]).

invites multiple readings, of course, and it does not follow (as Poellner and, for example, Clark argue)[20] that Nietzsche now steers clear of foundational metaphysics and refers to the *human lifeworld* only. We could equally read this passage as referring to his new and metaphysical world of will-to-power becoming, which would be entirely different from (and thereby 'abolish') the Platonic-Christian world formerly considered to be 'true', and also entirely different from (and thereby 'abolish') the world that was 'formerly' seen as mere appearance, namely, sense impressions, things, etc. We come back to the alternative of either phenomenology or metaphysics.

It is easier to see what Nietzsche *rules out* by emphasizing becoming. By his shift towards becoming as will to power, he deracinates the four metaphysical hypostases he regards as most problematic: substantiality, rest, causality, and agency.[21] But what is he *affirming* when he describes becoming as 'will to power'? At first sight, will to power seems like a traditional metaphysical doctrine insofar as it makes a statement about the world as a whole. In the light of our previous discussion of Nietzsche's explicit *denial* of extant particulars as referents for language, we should be cautious about assuming from the start that any description of the whole as will to power corresponds to any 'essence' of what is ontologically real. For now, I shall treat the will to power as an attempt to formulate an explanatory hypothesis, and not, as many passages would certainly allow us to do, as a transcendent principle that controls the movement of totality from outside and to which every phenomenal configuration might be reduced.[22] In one of the most famous passages, Nietzsche describes the will to power as follows:

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20 See Clark 1990.

21 As Richardson (2006, pp. 211–212) argues, becoming as will to power seems therefore to imply that change is pervasive, i.e., that there are no substrata exempt from change; that change is constant, i.e., there are no pauses in change; that change is along a continuum rather than by way of isolated causes and effects; and, finally, that change is what there is, i.e., there are no underlying beings that change.

22 In support of this interpretation of will to power, see, e.g., Müller-Lauter 1999a, 1999b. Recent scholarship on the will to power, e.g., Deleuze 1983, 1994; Richardson 1996; Figal 1998; Müller-Lauter 1999b; Smith 2000; Porter 2006, understands 'power' not as an independent state to be reached (Richardson 1996, p. 16). It also rejects the notion of power as self-preservation, because the goal of life as will to power is not the maintenance of power relations but an increase in change, even at the expense of particular forms of successful power (Smith 2000, p. 111).

> My idea is that every specific body [atoms, chemical substances, M.D.] strives
> to become master over all space and to extend its force (—its will to power:)
> and to thrust back all that resists its extension. But it continually encounters
> similar efforts on the part of other bodies and ends up arranging ('uniting')
> with those that are sufficiently related to it: —thus they then conspire
> together for power. And the process goes on. (Nachlaß Spring 1888, KSA
> 13, 14[186])[23]

A 'body' (*Körper*) cannot, however, have any numerical identity because it
is not based on parts but on relations, and the number of relations is con-
stantly changing.[24] *Körper*, as any other *Dinge* or 'objects', are themselves
best conceived, Nietzsche thinks, not as substances but as 'sums' or 'bun-
dles' (*Summen*) of will to power quanta. Yet even the term 'quanta'[25]
shows that he still retains some kind of entities which together form rela-
tions. As Nietzsche writes:

> Every thing is a sum of judgements (fears, hopes, some inspire confidence,
> others do not). Now, the better we know physics the less phantasmal this
> sum of judgements becomes ... Finally we understand: a thing is a sum of ex-
> citations within us: however, since we are nothing fixed [Festes]
> a thing is also not a fixed sum. And the more stability we attribute to
> things, – – –(Nachlaß Spring 1880–Spring 1881, KSA 9, 10[F100])

This passage seems to give support to the view that Nietzsche starts out
from the kind of phenomenological attitude Poellner suggests, by discuss-
ing intentional states such as fear, hope, and trust. But there can be no
doubt that he immediately adds weight to his phenomenological 'sum

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23 In Henry Staten's reading, this passage denotes the 'overwhelming of others'
    (1990, pp. 141–142) and Nietzsche's 'fantasy of infinite extension, as though in
    the case of some monstrous cosmic protozoan' (1990, pp. 141–142). It should be
    said that Staten omits the second half of the passage in which Nietzsche explains
    that power is not an independent state to be reached, nor is it the goal of one 'body'
    to annihilate its relational other. Instead, 'power' denotes the relation (conspirieren
    zusammen).

24 See the following note: 'And for us, even those smallest living beings which con-
    stitute our body (more correctly: for whose interaction the thing we call body is the
    best simile–) are not soul-atoms, but rather something growing, struggling, repro-
    ducing and dying off again: so that their number alters unsteadily, and our living,
    like all living, is at once an incessant dying. There are thus in man as many "con-
    sciousnesses" as—at every moment of his existence—there are beings which con-
    stitute his body' (Nachlaß June–July 1885, KSA 11, 37[4]).

25 'If we eliminate the ingredients, what remains are not things but dynamic quanta in
    a relationship of tension, whose essence consists in their relation to all other
    quanta, in their "effects" on these—the will to power not a being, not a becoming,
    but a pathos, is the most elementary fact, and becoming, effecting, is only the re-
    sult of this' (Nachlaß Spring 1888, KSA 13, 14[79]).

selves' by referring to physical theories (obviously about processes be-
tween quanta underlying—or at least coexisting with—the above phenom-
enological perspectives) that would support his view.[26]

In another example, Nietzsche again tries to argue for the *reality* of re-
lations, and proposes that even if one of his books existed only in the heads
of all the people who had previously read it (of course, at the time, hardly
anybody had actually read any of his books), this book would should still
be considered as *real*:

> Let us assume that my book existed only in the minds of people, then every-
> thing consisted, in a sense, of **their** thoughts and essences—it would be a
> 'sum of relations'. Yet is it therefore no longer anything? Parable for all
> things. Just as our 'Neighbour' [*Nächster*]. That a thing dissolves into a sum of
> relations proves nothing against its being real. (Nachlaß Autumn 1881, KSA
> 9, 13[11])

Of course, the point Nietzsche is trying to argue is that abolishing any
metaphysics of substance (the doer behind a deed, etc.) should not devalue
our phenomenological description of it. Again, this shows to what extent
many of the arguments hinge on his *belief* in belief in being: even here he
is attacking this belief in order to avert nihilism. There are other passages,
of course, that seem to imply ontological 'referents' rather than a phenom-
enological 'sense': 'The law of conservation of energy demands eternal
recurrence' (Nachlaß Summer 1886–Autumn 1887, KSA 12, 5[54]). But
then again, every *Weltconception*, as Nietzsche had earlier argued, should
not be seen as realist but justified instead as a creative act (Nachlaß Sum-
mer 1872–early 1873, KSA 7, 19[52]). Against the scientific realism of his
times he argues:

> The physicists believe in a 'true world' in their own way: a static atom-
> systematization that is the same for all entities and follows necessary motions,
> —so that for them the 'apparent world' reduces to each entity's perspective of
> universal and universally necessary being … But they are wrong here: this
> atom they arrive at according to the logic of that consciousness-perspectivism,

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26 According to Hales and Welshon (2000), Nietzsche promotes the idea of a 'bundle
    self' that implies the 'No-Self view' consistent with Buddhism. The self is seen as
    'a loosely organized confederation of functional states and dispositions' (p. 159)
    without a strong notion of diachronic identity. Manfred Frank (2007, pp. 152–170)
    among others has shown that such a theory of subjectivity has difficulties in ac-
    counting for self-consciousness—a serious deficiency in Nietzsche's philosophy of
    mind (as well as in most post-modern accounts of subjectivity) that has yet to re-
    ceive proper attention. Paul Katsafanas (2005, pp. 24–25) shows an awareness of
    the problem.

> —is then itself a subjective fiction … They forgot to make this perspective-positing force part of 'true being'. (Nachlaß Spring 1888, KSA 13, 14[186])

We could play this pseudo-Heraclitean game indefinitely. The textual evidence suggests that Nietzsche tries to write sometimes as a phenomenologist and at other times loses himself in (meta-)physical speculation—or like Lucretius, in (meta-)physical poetry—and we can safely suggest that all three modes are meant to avert the impending and *actual* threat of nihilism. Also, Nietzsche's move is, I think, characteristic of the paradigm of becoming: he shifts from an ontology of substances to an ontology of processes or relations. Becoming as will to power denotes processes involving directional forces and counter-forces, and Nietzsche conceives of such forces as engaged in a process of 'interdetermination' (reminiscent of *Wechselbestimmung*, the early Romantic term for the constitution of consciousness). 'Is will possible without these two oscillations of Yes and No?' Nietzsche asks:

> there must be oppositions, resistances, and thus, relatively, o v e r a r c h i n g
> u n i t i e s ... Localized – – –

> if A exerts an effect on B, then only as localized is A separated from B. (Nachlaß Spring 1888, KSA 13, 14[80])

Because Nietzsche's process metaphysics requires that there be not just flux, i.e., constantly changing relations between forces, but also, as he says, 'übergreifende Einheiten' ('overarching unities'), Johann Figl proposes (and I agree with him) that we should understand will to power not as radical becoming, but as the irreducible relation of *both* being *and* becoming: 'will to power is then that concept which ties together being and becoming' (1982, p. 85). This seems to provide an answer to our first question: becoming is *not* to be conceived as absolute 'indetermination', or 'structureless thereness' (Danto 1965, pp. 96–97), entirely separate or free from determination. On the contrary, the description of becoming, once untangled, seems much more moderate.

But we have yet to explain Nietzsche's contradictory statements regarding the ability of language to express this (more moderate) becoming.

5. Becoming, Language, and Time

Nietzsche believes (and says) that, on the one hand, 't h e r e i s n o w i l l: there are points of will constantly augmenting or losing their power' (Nachlaß November 1887–March 1888, KSA 13, 11[73]); and that on the other, 'the means of expression that language offers are of no use to express becoming' (ibid.). I will deal with the former proposition first.

While will to power supposedly designates the mode of being of every configuration in the phenomenal world, Nietzsche warns that 'will' or 'power' (understood as a *single* substance or principle) ultimately does not exist. Every world constitution, conscious or unconscious, is the result of multiple 'volitional' or 'intentional' processes.[27] A 'sum' of dynamic will-points always culminates in a 'power situation' between volitional activities, but as processes, they never arrive at final positions, and continually reconfigure in different relationships of power:

> Struggle of atoms, as of individuals, yet, at a certain difference of force two atoms become one, and two individuals one. And vice versa one becomes two when the internal state effects a disgregation of a centre of force. —H e n c e a g a i n s t any absolute conception of 'atom' and 'individual'. (Nachlaß Autumn 1885, KSA 11, 43[1])

And as for the supposed inadequacy of language to express becoming, Nietzsche insists that language is unable (*unbrauchbar*) to express will to power, but he then proceeds immediately to deliver a reformulated description of his (non-substantial) idea of will as 'will-points' (*Willens-Punktuationen*). Once again, his assumptions help us to clarify why he holds such a paradoxical position. The subject-object structure of language supports what he believes to be the belief of his contemporaries, namely a metaphysics of substance that carries within itself nihilism as a product of the belief in being. Because of its inherent structure, language cannot capture what he himself regards as true: namely, processes and relations without any essential agents to sustain them. As I indicated at the end of the section 2, we have to assume that he switches at times between, or tries to speak from, and for, more than one paradigm.

When addressing adherents of the paradigm of being, Nietzsche argues (in keeping with the 'impossible presentation thesis') that language *cannot* express becoming. Why is this so? Regardless of what is expressed within the subject-object structure of a language, to someone who *believes in being*, i.e., in isolated and substantive subjects and objects, language's semantic units and grammar will always confirm that structure and with it the paradigm of being itself. Therefore, when he addresses his contempo-

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27 What Nietzsche describes as 'dynamic quanta' or 'will-points' (Willens-Punktuationen) seems to have something like the following structure: centre → vector → goal; or alternatively, subject → affect → intentional object. As Welshon (2004) suggests, 'The structure of intentional psychological events: <subject→ affect → intentional object> is … an instance of a more general structure that is plausibly instantiable by non-conscious, non-animated and perhaps even non-living entities. Nietzsche is proposing that psychological events are structured in a manner isomorphic to that exemplified by all efficient causal relations' (p. 173).

raries (who, in his view, believe in being), Nietzsche must necessarily uphold the view that language cannot express becoming, thereby introducing the problematic dualism we have just noted. In short: (i) language cannot express what you [my contemporaries] think the world is essentially, namely being; (ii) fortunately, being does not exist. It is important to understand that Nietzsche's discourse is always *located* or *positioned*, addressing particular people or groups, and, to *some* extent (to make himself comprehensible to them) by using *their* language, and so his whole activity is how to get *them* from their false conception—expressed in a specific linguistic form (which he adopts when speaking to them)—to his *own* views.

But when addressing, as he often does, the future paradigm of becoming, Nietzsche thinks he can indeed express and describe becoming within language. Again, we might ask how this can be so. Will-points *also* follow a teleological structure somewhat similar to that of language ('I need beginnings and centres of motion, starting from which the will reaches out').[28] For someone who has already changed and who accepts Nietzsche's paradigm of becoming, who already believes in processes and relations rather than substances and 'doers behind deeds', etc. language *can indeed* correspond to and express becoming (as plural events between directed quanta of forces, but without any teleology that governs the whole): 'a quantum of power, a becoming, insofar as none of it has the character of "being"'(Nachlaß November 1887–March 1888, KSA 13, 11[73]).

But can the implied dualism really be avoided? The task language would have to master within a paradigm for which something like the will to power serves as its explanatory hypothesis would be to express the simultaneity of two different, yet related, levels of becoming or temporality. As Richardson (2006, p. 225) has recently argued, becoming as will to power firstly denotes a real, pre-conscious background becoming, 'by which perspectivity and meaning arise and evolve' (let this be 'background time'); and secondly, will to power also denotes an ideal, perspectival temporality *for* a perspective, i.e., 'the way time appears to the perspectives' (let this be 'conscious time'). Nietzsche frequently observes that, behind all conscious intentionality and language ('conscious time') lies also an un-

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28 Nietzsche admits of a plurality of teleological forces but he wishes to refute any outside, first cause behind such plural events. As he tries to explain in his refutation of any strong notion of causality in 1888: 'Will to power in principle. Critique of the concept of "cause". I need the starting point "will to power" as the origin of motion. Consequently, motion must not be conditioned from outside—not caused … I need beginnings and centres of motion, starting from which the will reaches out' (Nachlaß Spring 1888, KSA 13, 14[98]).

conscious intentionality ('background time'), an *unbewusste Absichtlich-keit* (Nachlaß Autumn 1885–Spring 1886, KSA 12, 1[76]). He can there-fore hold that any conscious time (e.g., the way I perceive time) must al-ways already *be* a selection, 'an interpretation that can be false; moreover a simplification and falsification etc.' (ibid.). How are we to understand 'falsification' (*Fälschung*) in this context?

I think that Nietzsche's idea may best be understood by analogy with a spotlight picking out a certain scene on a theatre stage on which many scenes are being performed simultaneously. The spotlight picks out one scene and brings it into focus, while the rest of the actions on and off stage continue, but in the dark. In order to illuminate the complexity, we should have to introduce multiple temporal and intentional 'spotlights'—originating from the point of view of each actor within the diegetic[29] time of his particular scene, thereby overlooking the temporality of his non-diegetic perspective (the person he is in 'real' life), and so forth. Of course, the 'spotlights' not only reveal pre-existing events or objects, to some ex-tent they also create and constitute them. Conceived as such, 'the whole' in Nietzsche's world-conception denotes a continuum of perspectival, inter-pretative processes, both unconscious 'background time' and 'conscious time': 'The will to power i n t e r p r e t s : the development of an organ is an interpretation; the will to power sets limits, determines degrees and differ-ences of power' (Nachlaß Autumn 1885–Autumn 1886, KSA 12, 2[148]). Viewed as such, life is seen as perspectival at all levels: a minimal inten-tionality or directedness is assumed to be already at work in non-conscious organic life-forms such as 'protoplasm': 'In truth, i n t e r p r e t a t i o n i s i t s e l f a m e a n s o f b e c o m i n g m a s t e r o f s o m e t h i n g (T h e o r-g a n i c p r o c e s s p r e s u p p o s e s c o n s t a n t **interpreting**)' (ibid.). On more complex organic levels, Nietzsche's 'sum selves' acquire their own complicated perspective, composed of inherited and selected drives, sense experiences, incorporated memories, and unconscious and conscious future projects.[30] In his description of perspectivism, Nietzsche attacks the pre-supposition underlying any subject distinct from the body and sense per-ception. Such a view of the self is implausible, since it requires a non-

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29 Pertaining to diegesis: 'the fictional time, place, characters, and events which constitute the universe of the narrative' (OED).

30 See Nachlaß May–June 1885, KSA 11, 35[58, 59]. Earlier (ibid., 26[272]), Nietz-sche insists that even the inorganic must be thought of as having a minimal direct-edness. Recently, philosophy of mind has started to seriously consider such a 'pan-psychist' theory, see, e.g., the responses to Galen Strawson's paper 'Realistic Monism. Why physicalism entails panpsychism' in the collection of essays entitled Consciousness and its Place in Nature (Freeman/Strawson, et al. 2006).

directional 'vision', 'an eye turned in no direction at all, an eye where the active and interpretive powers are to be suppressed, absent, but through which seeing becomes a seeing-something, so it is an absurdity and non-concept of eye that is demanded' (GM III 12).

The fundamental asymmetry, then, is between the 'directional'[31] way in which 'übergreifende Einheiten' view and thereby experience becoming (conscious temporality), and the multi-directional temporality of the whole (background temporality) in which they *become* by participation in what Nietzsche calls the continuum. This leads, according to Richardson, to the following asymmetrical situation: 'Life itself (the organism) views time differently than it lives it. Since becoming lies in the temporal structure of perspectives, and not in how they view time, life tends to miss its own becoming' (2006, p. 215).[32] Both temporalities are, so to speak, at work within us simultaneously. Within a 'reductive' physicalist theory of mind,[33] one might argue that conscious time supervenes on background becoming, implying that the temporality of the whole determines conscious time, even from within a conscious perspective.[34] This, I think, is not the view Nietzsche holds.[35] Rather, his 'sum selves,' from within their per-spectival temporality which limits their causal efficacy, determine the con-tinuum, just as background temporality determines the 'sum selves'. I sug-gest that this type of adualistic 'interdeterminism' is perhaps best conceived along the lines of mutual 'interruptions': at a certain conscious moment, you intend to carry out a certain action, and then, after some 'time' (which you have failed to notice) has passed, you might wonder why you ended up doing something completely different; or at other times, you 'find' yourself engaged in an action you had not been consciously aware

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31 The German word gerichtet implies both 'having a direction' as well as a valuation or judgement.

32 Richardson sees proof for Nietzsche's temporal realism in his 'naturalist allegiance to a physical reality, within which these wills have evolved'; Nietzsche therefore 'cannot avoid supposing a time that is independent of those wills—a time in which not just organisms' bodies but all matter interacts, including inorganic matter that does not support perspectival will' (2006, p. 226). Günter Abel, on the other hand, situates Nietzsche's temporal continuum within his general interpretationism, thereby defending Nietzsche's anti-realism against the charge of a new essen-tialism (2000, p. 438).

33 As opposed to non-reductive physicalist theories that also exist in the 'analytical' tradition (see Strawson et al. 2006).

34 Which leads to an over-determination.

35 I think it is necessary to go further than Leiter's illuminating but reductive readings in 2001, 2002, p. 104, and Leiter/Knobe 2007.

of, and from that 'moment' on you are 'interrupting' and 'determining' this action, thereby taking it in a different direction.[36]

We have finally arrived at a much less radical version of Nietzsche's *Werden*: he allows for instances of being with relative duration and also relative stability; his sums are indeed 'complex forms of relative life-duration [with their conscious temporality, M.D.] within the flux of becoming [within the temporality of the whole, M.D.]' (Nachlaß November 1887–March 1888, KSA 13, 11[73]). So when he states that language falsifies and 'fails' to express becoming, he could be understood as indicating that language cannot afford a God's-eye perspective, and that it falsifies when it presumes[37] to use what modal logicians today call 'rigid designators' that pretend to capture an event once and for all in all possible worlds. This would indeed efface the simultaneity of unconscious background becoming and conscious becoming as it is experienced from within a perspective. It is necessary to use language in such a way that it shows an awareness of the interrelation of both temporalities. But the argument we used earlier still applies: whether or not you understand such a language 'correctly' would depend on your paradigm.

For his descriptions to be true to his belief in becoming as will to power, Nietzsche sometimes tries to express his vision through adualistic descriptions: self-consciousness is, he thinks, better described as *Selbst-bewusst-Werden* rather than *Selbstbewusstsein*. Each 'sum self' has the status of relative being and its own perspective; yet at the same time, it is also the *result(ing)* of a long process of selection. It instantiates and is living its entire evolutionary history that it has incorporated (*einverleibt*):

> Man is not just an individual but the living-on organic totality [*das Fortlebende Gesammt-Organische*] in one particular line. That he exists proves that one species of interpretation (albeit always under further construction) has also kept existing, that the system of interpretation has not switched. 'Adaptation'. (Nachlaß End of 1886–Spring 1887, KSA 12, 7[2])

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36 This more complex interdeterminism (see also Richardson 2008) should perhaps be conceived along the lines of interruptions in both directions—the kind of interruption recently suggested by studies into the effect of testosterone levels. After exposure to images of sexual content, those with higher levels of testosterone (measurable through the length of their index fingers) show a higher level of arousal which—for a considerable amount of time—interferes with their ability to make informed decisions.

37 Something any hypothetical adherent of the paradigm of becoming would no longer think possible.

In the light of this passage, Nietzsche's intertwining of being and becoming demands not a monistic but rather an adualistic reading.[38] In his late philosophy, he delivers a theory that corroborates the intuition he had as early as 1872: 'The order in the world, the toilsome and slowest result of horrific evolutions understood as the nature of the world—Heraclitus' (Nachlaß Summer 1872–Beginning of 1873, KSA 7, 19[124]).

I now wish to leave Nietzsche's adualistic intertwining of being and becoming—*both* being *and* becoming, *neither* being *nor* becoming—behind and move from the micro-level of the will to power to the macro-level of Nietzsche's philosophy as a whole. As already indicated, Nietzsche follows two agendas. His reception shows how difficult it is to account for both.

6. Nietzsche's Simultaneity-Thinking

> The logic of our conscious thinking is only a crude and facilitated form of the thinking needed … by the particular organs of our organism. A simultaneity-thinking [*ein Zugleich-Denken*] is needed of which we have hardly an inkling. (Nachlaß April–June 1885, KSA 11, 34[124])

> Life no longer dwells in the whole … The whole no longer lives at all: it is composite, calculated, artificial, an artefact. (CW 7)

So far I have attributed to Nietzsche a certain double standard: when he addresses the adherents of the paradigm of being he presents a radical doctrine of becoming in hyperbolic terms; on the other hand, his process ontology (hypothetical or not) of will to power turns out to be much less radical, allowing for stability and duration. But this schematic separation of standards obfuscates the real problem, namely that Nietzsche tries to do both at the same time: shock the believers in being out of their nihilistic assumption *and* prepare for a non-nihilistic, new paradigm. To date, his reception shows that his strategy was successful in so far as it has certainly generated wide-ranging interest, but it also shows that it failed miserably by generating a plethora of (mis-)appropriations. As we know, he has been

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38 Abel interprets this passage as follows: 'An adualistic viewpoint is required. Nietzsche advocates such a view. He assumes a continuous spectrum of what exists or happens in one form or another, from the furthest reaches of the inorganic to mental states, consciousness, becoming-self-conscious, cognitive and other mental activities, and planned actions and their executions. The organic appears therefore as the evolutionary-historical and continuous precursor of consciousness. The world of Nietzsche is a world of such continuum-relations (Abel 2001, pp. 6–7).

both celebrated and rejected as the thinker of new values for the select few, for an aristocracy of the powerful against cultural disintegration (Nietzsche uses the term *Disgregation*) and weakness.[39] More recently, he has become the forebear of deconstructive trends in the continental tradition, the thinker of becoming, multiplicity, interpretation, masks, etc.—hailed for his non-totalizing aspects and despised for his laissez-faire relativism (*mere* interpretation). I believe reconstructing Nietzsche's assumptions helps considerably to make sense of this reception, which is puzzling at best.

In this final section, however, I also wish to move from the double standard and the consequences I have just described to a second 'double standard' of a different kind. I wish to show that, at least at times, Nietzsche thinks about unifications, also on an interpersonal and socio-political level, within an adualistic framework. Nietzsche's project of forestalling nihilism requires him to conceive a proper unity (*das Ganze*) as well as difference. As I will show, in some of his remarks on the phenomenology of love, he finds evidence for a notion of *community* for the new paradigm he envisages in his moderate moments (i.e., when he is not speaking as a strong counter-force to the belief in being). For Nietzsche's deconstructive demands exist side by side with his calls for unity,[40] and both issue from his attack on nihilism.

Like several of his predecessors, Nietzsche is very aware of a set of problems that tend to undermine the success of unifications. The three dilemmas that concerned, for example, Schiller in his reaction to Kant—I call them elsewhere the either-or dilemma, the synthesis dilemma, and the relativism dilemma (Dries 2006, pp. 53–58)—also feature prominently in some of Nietzsche's phenomenological observations on unities. He, too, realized at an early stage that most unities suffer from a confusion of unity with oneness. Thus, if the concept of a new unity is necessary in order to attain an affirmative attitude towards life after any two-world metaphysics

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39 For passages in which Nietzsche associates 'disgregation' with weakness, see TI 'The Problem of Socrates' 9 and Nachlaß Spring 1888, KSA 13, 14[83, 219]; also May–June 1888, KSA 13, 17[6]. Disgregation is, however, also associated with 'genius', the 'sublimest machine', and Nietzsche equates complexity with Zerbrechlichkeit, 'fragility' (Nachlaß Spring 1888, KSA 13, 14[133]).

40 'But there is no such substratum; there is no 'being' behind doing, effecting, becoming', he writes in GM I 13, making his liquidation (Verflüssigung) of any anthropocentric viewpoint all too apparent. And yet, he clearly has a vision of a new free and durational subject that appears to be—in Quine's terms—an 'entity with identity': 'The freer and the more stable the individual, the more demanding his love: finally it longs for the Übermensch because nothing else satisfies his love' (Nachlaß November 1882–February 1883, KSA 10, 150).

has been abandoned, then this new unity—in order to avoid relapsing into the old belief in being—must be conceived differently.

Let me begin with a note on Goethe in which Nietzsche criticizes two methods of enquiry which he finds equally problematic. Any scientific method that attempts to fuse and combine what should remain separate is seen as problematic and just as unsuccessful as any method that attempts to separate what belongs together (*das Zusammengehörige*).[41] In his evaluation of altruism in 1880, to give another example, he points out that the idea of a unified society *problematically* demands that the oppositions among individuals be reduced to a minimum. The kind of society created by such a homogenization turns out to be uninteresting and unproductive, 'to its palest hue … reduced' (Nachlaß Autumn 1880, KSA 9, 6[58]). Nietzsche also thinks that such lowest-common-denominator reductions fail, because in their attempt to bring about the desired 'sameness' (*Gleichheit*), all productivity stops and the unity *as* unity dies: 'This is euthanasia, utterly unproductive! Just like those men without deep feelings—the kind, calm and so-called happy—are, after all, also unproductive' (ibid.).

But Nietzsche does not only distrust levelling syntheses. Conversely, he also thinks that our traditional practice of oppositional thinking creates the impression that we can *always* select and choose between two sides. He disapproves of this practice of thinking in mutually exclusive, either-or alternatives: 'Just as we have separated dead and alive, logical and illogical etc. To unlearn our mutually exclusive oppositions—this is our task' (Nachlaß July–August 1882, KSA 10, 1[3]).

Aware of the dilemma of *relativism*, the early Nietzsche reminds us that only those things which are not absolutely other and separate can have any effect on each other: 'what is absolutely foreign to each other, cannot have any kind of effect on each other' (PTAG 14). Provocatively, he remarks in *Human, All Too Human* that the ability to 'kill' depends on 'distance':

> We all, indeed, lose all feeling of injustice when the difference between ourselves and other creatures is very great, and will kill a mosquito, for example, without the slightest distress of conscience. (HA I 81)

If distance increases to such an extent that a connection is no longer felt, then annihilation of the other side becomes a possibility. For a community, this means that, at the very moment when one group perceives itself as absolutely self-sufficient, it will be in danger of becoming indifferent to

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41   See Nachlaß Winter 1872–73, KSA 7, 24[2].

other groups. Unities can only be successful, according to Nietzsche, if all of the above problems are kept in view.[42]

In this context, Heraclitus emerges as an interesting model. As early as *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, Nietzsche presents and praises him for his move towards immanence, i.e., his denial of the existence of incompatible metaphysical realms: 'he denied the duality of totally diverse worlds' (PTAG 5); he also approves of his affirmative attitude towards change, so that rather than associating it with suffering, becoming is perceived with 'blissful wonder' (*beglücktes Erstaunen*) (ibid.); and, finally, he admires his adualistic epistemology—a method Nietzsche finds appealing because it lacks the reductive either-or structure and displays a different way of dealing with oppositions (such as whole and part, nature and man, object and subject). In contrast to Nietzsche's reading of Parmenides and Plato, Heraclitus understands oppositions not as mutually exclusive alternatives, and he is therefore able to adopt a different perspective on the world. What Nietzsche finds promising is Heraclitus' attitude towards the world as a whole. He no longer separates absolutely, nor does he unite absolutely; he allows neither dualistic, absolute distinctions nor monistic oneness.[43] Instead, his practice of seeing suspends such a logic of alternatives. For Heraclitus, Nietzsche emphasizes,

> the many perceivable qualities are neither eternal substances nor phantasms of our senses (Anaxagoras is later to imagine the former, Parmenides the latter); they are neither rigid autocratic being [*Sein*] nor fleeting semblance [*Schein*] flitting through human minds. (PTAG 6)

Perceptions are *neither* eternal essences *nor* mere appearances, neither static, independent being (*Sein*), nor fleeting transient illusions of the human mind (*Schein*). Whereas the metaphysical realist holds that what exists, exists in itself, independent of my naming or thinking, and the idealist holds the exact opposite, namely, that what is, is only because of my thinking it, Heraclitus undercuts such a false rigidity. There are two concomitant types of nihilism here: the idealist loses the world (Jacobi's charge against Fichte's subjectivism) and the realist loses the self (Fichte's charge against Spinoza's fatalism). Once the reductive *either-or* is discarded, Heraclitean

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42   As we saw earlier, precisely because Nietzsche feels so distant from his contemporaries (who adhere to the paradigm of being which he has left behind), he appears willing to sacrifice some of them along the way to his goal of overcoming nihilism.

43   In Twilight of the Idols, Nietzsche will give a more critical assessment of Heraclitus (TI '"Reason" in Philosophy' 2).

phenomena *erhalten sich*—con-tinue, preserved in (and not devalued by) their hovering between the poles defined by the *neither-nor*.[44]

For Nietzsche, then, Heraclitus' understanding of becoming breaks with our common practice of thinking in our inherited dualistic manner. The latter's active suspension enabled Heraclitus to think and approach the world differently: his neither-nor does not lead to any kind of absolute disintegration or to any levelling synthesis; it leads precisely to 'bliss' and 'astonishment' and a better way of seeing, negating neither the observer nor the observed.[45] To borrow a term from the phenomenologist Bernhard Waldenfels (2002, p. 193), reality becomes, as a *Widerfahrnis*, an implicat-ing 'en-counter' ('ein ein-dringliches Ereignis')—not between two already existing subjects or between an already determined subject and an object; instead, it is from the 'encounter' that both self and world emerge.

Nietzsche understands the self as such a meeting point of will-to-power relations. As we saw, as complex 'sum', it does not disappear altogether; as constant encounter, it is *not* 'redundant' (*überflüssig*) but emerges as real. Again, I think, it is crucial to distinguish between the Nietzsche who an-nounces the 'death of the subject' in his advocacy of becoming as against the belief in being; and the Nietzsche who attempts to think from within, assisting those who have made the leap towards the paradigm of becoming. Did he perhaps envisage those who agree with Quine that physical objects are myths, 'a device for working a manageable structure into the flux of experience' and that 'forces are another example … nowadays that the boundary between energy and matter is obsolete … these are myths on the same footing with physical objects and gods, neither better nor worse ex-cept for differences in the degree to which they expedite our dealings with sense experiences' (1980, p. 45)?

For those who no longer believe in being, radical gestures will no longer be necessary. Yet Nietzsche's assumptions imply that even then, new ideas will be needed in order to adjust our necessary web of beliefs in

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44 Zupančič has recently described 'the figure of the two' as Nietzsche's most radical gesture. As in Novalis' understanding of 'illness', she explains the logic of the as-cetic ideal as the irreducible doubleness of life and death as follows: 'That which, in a decadent way, turns against life (the "ascetic ideal") is itself something that springs from life … the opposition of life and death, the tension between them, be-comes the very definition of life. Life is two things: it is life and it is death; it is the living edge between them. Therefore, death, in the emphatic sense of the word, is the death of this edge, the end of this tension, the fall into one or the other … which is always the fall into One' (Zupančič 2003, pp. 18–19).

45 See also Nietzsche's passage on 'the differential [der Unterschied] as the true object of feelings' (Nachlaß Summer 1875, KSA 8, 9[1]).

such a way that life flourishes within the new paradigm. Thinking the whole, but differently, then becomes the vital task. Caught up in his violent rhetorical assaults on the belief in being, and without compassion for those in need of it, Nietzsche only rarely delivers ideas for such a new *community*.

I wish to close with a brief examination of Nietzsche's phenomenology of love. In the aphorism 'Love and Duality', Nietzsche describes love as a special type of unity that is only successful as a unity when it retains its constitutive duality:

> What is love but understanding and rejoicing at the fact that another lives, feels and acts in a way different from and opposite to ours? If love is to bridge these antitheses through joy it may not deny or seek to abolish them. —Even self-love presupposes an unblendable duality (or multiplicity) in one person. (HA II 75)

The unity between two lovers cannot last, Nietzsche observes, when they allow either the one side or the other to become dominant. Differences must be given a positive value and give rise to joy (*Freude*). A unity will only last, Nietzsche holds, if it remains in a state of 'unblendable duality' (*unvermischbare Zweiheit*)—in a state of adualistic togetherness, both together and separate. Similarly, in another passage on 'Love makes the same' (D 532), he ridicules the idea that love demands that we erase the dividing differences. In the attempt to achieve a union without otherness, both give up their idiosyncrasies for the other. Such a false synthesis is again just as problematic as the above either-or.

In his discussion of love, then, Nietzsche—like many thinkers before him, for example, the young Hegel—comes closest to a possible model for his new 'whole' as a community: any false either-or would diminish the other and with it the relation; any false synthesis would ultimately truncate the characteristics of both; and, as we saw earlier, allowing for radically independent domains leads to separation by indifference. In order for a community to be successful, the two (or multiple) parties must avoid the three dilemmas. I interpret Nietzsche's scattered phenomenological observations, informed and supported as they are by his process metaphysics, as pointing in his less aristocratic and selective moments towards a unity that would foster cohesion (*Zusammen-halt*) that would no longer be subject to the confusion of unity with oneness and would thus provide the right kind of model for the paradigm of becoming which he envisages. Once the belief in being has dissolved, Nietzsche clearly wants more than joyful affirmation that 'determines the noncenter otherwise than as loss of centre' (Derrida 1978, p. 292). He also wants new identities and centres, but for that to be a possibility (as a new paradigm of becoming for and from which

he thinks he is already speaking), he thinks our logic must first be adapted to the new paradigm (on 'unity', see Gemes 2001, pp. 350–354).

In the fragment 'The New World-Conception' of 1888, Nietzsche seems to offer a new myth; and, while incommensurable to those who believe in being, his conception would ensure what I interpret as a contentious contentment (providing some kind of *haltloser Halt*) for the new paradigm of becoming. This seems to require us to think the world as both becoming and being *and* as neither becoming nor being. Nietzsche imposes a double vision:

> The world persists; it is not something that becomes, not something that passes away. Or rather: it becomes, it passes away, but it has never begun to become and never ceased from passing away—it c o n t a i n s itself in both. (Nachlaß Spring 1888, KSA 13, 14[187])

In *Ecce Homo* 9, he seems to confirm that the task of revaluation requires many abilities, but most of all it requires an adualistic art that would combine—in a kind of alchemy of thinking[46]—*separatio* and *conjunctio*, namely, 'the art of separating without making inimical, to mix nothing, to "reconcile" nothing; a tremendous variety that is nevertheless the opposite of chaos—this was the precondition, the long secret work and artistry of my instinct' (EH 'Why I Am so Clever' 9). Again, it can be shown that this model of simultaneity he proposes in his more compassionate moments issues from his fight against what he assumed to be the real threat of nihilism. In *The Gay Science* 346, he cautions against what he calls a 'terrifying either-or' (*furchtbares Entweder-Oder*) that might come upon future generations:

> Have we not come to mistrust an opposition—an opposition between the world in which until now we were at home with our venerations—and which may have made it possible for us to e n d u r e life—and another world t h a t we ourselves are … and that could easily confront coming generations with the terrible either-or: 'Either abolish your venerations or— y o u r s e l v e s !' The latter would be nihilism; but would not the former also be—nihilism? That is o u r question mark. (GS 5 346)

For an adualistic practice of thinking to become a reality, he felt—perhaps by reflecting upon himself—that we need to work on the logic we have inherited, incorporated (in our evolutionary temporality), and accepted. As Nietzsche insists: 'a simultaneity-thinking is needed of which we have hardly an inkling' (Nachlaß April–June 1885, KSA 11, 34[124]). More precisely: the simultaneity of that which appears to be mutually exclu-

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46   The forgotten German name for alchemy is Scheidekunst.

sive.[47] If we read Nietzsche's 'simultaneity-thinking' as the double standard he considered necessary for the new paradigm of becoming to be proof against nihilism, then his two agendas have to be understood as consistent. The real inconsistency lies, I think, in the violent separation and selection he was happy to accept as part of his cure.

Conclusion

I suggested in this essay that Nietzsche's entire project is motivated by what he sees as the real threat of nihilism. I further suggested that this threat seems to depend on two assumptions we attributed to Nietzsche: firstly, that all there is, is becoming, and secondly, that the belief in being among his contemporaries is all-pervasive. From these two assumptions, we inferred that nihilism is a function of the belief in being, i.e., the stronger the latter, the higher the existential disillusionment when it is confronted with becoming. Nietzsche accordingly attacks the belief in being, since, convinced as he is that all is becoming as will to power, it is only by undoing the belief in being that we can overcome nihilism.

We saw further that, in Nietzsche's eyes, nihilism was already emerging—albeit slowly—and that he regarded it as his task as a philosopher to accelerate this process.[48] In order to undo the belief in being, he makes another assumption: a counter-force is required, and the intensity of becoming as *Gegenkraft* must be equivalent to the intensity of the belief in being. I took this to explain Nietzsche's radical doctrine of becoming. Another example would be his formulation of eternal recurrence as 'the most extreme form of nihilism' (Nachlaß Summer 1886–Autumn 1887, KSA 12, 5[71]).

We have also seen that, faced with the nihilistic implications of the 'impossible presentation thesis', Nietzsche does not himself hold any radical doctrine of flux. His conception of will to power is, when examined closely, much more moderate. But again, he is not consistent here and his tone changes frequently, depending on whether he is trying to attack the belief in being, or whether he is genuinely trying to present plausible ex-

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47 For current developments in 'transconsistent' logic, see Priest 1987 and 1995.

48 That he saw himself precisely as both annihilator and donor is clear in Ecce Homo: 'I am by far the most terrible human being there has ever been; this does not mean I shall not be the most beneficent. I know joy in destruction to a degree corresponding to my strength for destruction—in both I obey my Dionysian nature, which does not know how to separate No-doing from Yes-saying' (EH 'Why I Am a Destiny' 2).

planatory accounts of the world's constitution, both phenomenological and metaphysical, within a paradigm that has already abolished the strong belief in being.

But even in his conception of becoming as will to power, he only partially deflates the 'impossible presentation thesis'. His attempts to express within language the simultaneity of a real background temporality and a conscious perspectival temporality ultimately fail to capture and express the processes he assumes in his metaphysics of relations. This failure is not ultimately problematic, since in his theory of truth, truths are not timeless and 'out there' to be discovered, but are always the result of temporal, interpretative processes that can no longer be thought of as presupposition-less. In this respect, Nietzsche's ontology of processes supports his theory of truth: for an organism is always already an interpreting 'unity' before it somehow acquires a conscious, first-person perspective. The first-person perspective is the blind spot not only in Nietzsche's theory of self-consciousness.

Finally, we saw that Nietzsche attempts to conceive of 'the whole' beyond the logic of mutually exclusive alternatives. He tries to account for both being and becoming without privileging either the one or the other. We found additional support for this in his scattered remarks on relationships and love. Again—and this applies to his overall project—Nietzsche's adualism is ultimately motivated by the weight he attributes to the threat of nihilism.

What remains after all this is obvious. An evaluation of Nietzsche's project must depend on an evaluation of his two (or three) basic assumptions. What do we make of his belief in our belief in being? And what do we make of his belief in becoming? And if we really conclude that he had a point, then perhaps we should consider the model of 'simultaneity-thinking' (*Zugleich-Denken*) as an alternative to Nietzsche's own impatient and radical agenda.[49]

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