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Source: *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (Summer 2016), pp. 256-274

Published by: Penn State University Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/jnietstud.47.2.0256>

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Feeling, Not Freedom

Nietzsche Against Agency

DONOVAN MIYASAKI

ABSTRACT: This paper argues that although Nietzsche's rejection of free will leaves no room for a morally substantial, compatibilist conception of freedom of agency, freedom nevertheless plays an important role in his positive moral philosophy, since Nietzsche's higher human types are characterized by a heightened feeling of freedom—a qualitative affect without deeper substance. Moreover, because the feeling of freedom is increased by resistance, it requires a limitation of practical freedom—a relative constraint of ability, strength, and activity rather than their absolute promotion. Nietzsche's higher types are, if anything, less free than others. Consequently, his criterion for human enhancement cannot be that of quantitatively greater freedom, power, or agency. Rather, it is measured according to the intensity of an individual's feelings of freedom, agency and power, and of the love of fate that the illusory feeling of freedom promotes.

KEYWORDS: freedom, agency, autonomy, free will, compatibilism, action

Despite his rejection of the metaphysical conception of freedom of the will, Nietzsche frequently makes positive use of the language of freedom, autonomy, self-mastery, self-overcoming, and creativity when describing his normative project of enhancing humanity through the promotion of its highest types. A number of interpreters have been misled by such language to conclude that Nietzsche accepts some version of compatibilism, holding a theory of natural causality that excludes metaphysical or "libertarian" freedom of the will, while endorsing morally substantial alternative conceptions of freedom, autonomy, and responsibility.

I argue to the contrary that although Nietzsche's rejection of metaphysical freedom of the will does not leave room for a morally substantial compatibilist conception of freedom, the phenomenology of freedom and agency nonetheless plays a crucial role in his positive moral project. Nietzsche's normative ideal of a higher, more valuable human type consists of the only kind of agency he believes to be possible: the mere *feeling* of freedom—the qualitative feeling alone, without deeper substance. Not only does the feeling of agency not imply

any strong, morally significant freedom of agency, it requires a limitation of practical freedom—the constraint of ability, strength, and activity rather than their promotion. Nietzsche’s ideal higher types are, if anything, less free than others. Consequently, the criterion by which Nietzsche measures human “enhancement” (Erhöhung)¹ cannot be that of greater freedom or more authentic agency. Instead, Nietzsche’s alternative ideal is measured qualitatively and subjectively, by feeling—specifically, by an individual’s love of her self as a product of fate, her well-disposedness toward existence as such—and not quantitatively and objectively by fact—by greater agency, strength, or ability.

Once we have recognized that Nietzsche rejects any morally significant conception of freedom, yet still endorses as part of his normative ideal the enhancement of the mere feeling of freedom, we can resolve a central puzzle in Nietzsche’s moral philosophy, which wavers between two distinct ideals. On one hand, there is Nietzsche’s quantitative, naturalistic ideal of animal health: a strong hierarchy of drives conducive to strong will, efficient action, and the expansion of strength, growth, and power—in contrast to the condition of decadence, an anarchy of drives that exhausts and weakens the subject. On the other hand, there is Nietzsche’s celebration of a type that is “as manifold as whole [ebenso vielfach als ganz],” characterized by a qualitative tension of the soul due to a diversity of drives in relations of resistance to one another—an ideal with surprising similarities to the decadent type that Nietzsche disparages, and likely, due to its internal tensions, to be relatively weaker and less free in some respects than those who exhibit a less complex and more homogenous hierarchy of the drives (*BGE* 212).²

If, as I argue, Nietzsche’s ideal is not the real increase of freedom, but merely the enhancement of the *feeling* of freedom, then his preference for the ideal of the manifold soul is consistent, while the promotion of animal health as the integration of the drives—as a condition of the manifold type—is clarified. Animal health, a strong hierarchy of drives calibrated to the conditions of life and existence, is not a normative end in itself, but rather the basis for a distinctly human form of higher existence: the qualitatively heightened or intensified feeling of freedom experienced not by any real increase of freedom, but through the intensification of the feeling of power experienced in resistance.

An Incompatibilist Interpretation of Nietzsche’s Argument Against “Unfree Will”

My position is twofold: (1) Nietzsche is a determinist incompatibilist about freedom, but (2) the concept of freedom nevertheless plays a crucial role in the articulation of his ideal of higher types—although only in the form of the *feeling* of freedom, not its reality.³ When I call Nietzsche an incompatibilist, I mean

that his fatalistic view of human nature leaves no room for a *morally substantial* concept of freedom. We might, as Nietzsche himself often does, choose to call his account of agency a conception of “freedom,” but the important question is whether this notion of freedom has significant consequences for his moral philosophy. For example, if Nietzsche measures human enhancement according to greater degrees of freedom, then freedom would be a morally substantial concept, since a normative evaluation would then depend on the meaningfulness of the distinction between free and unfree, or more and less free.

My view that Nietzsche lacks any such morally substantial concept of freedom includes the rejection of compatibilist interpretations of the many freedom-connoting concepts that Nietzsche uses, such as autonomy, self-mastery, self-creation, and responsibility. However, my focus is on the concept of agency, since that is the form of freedom most often attributed to Nietzsche. Ken Gemes, for example, has argued that Nietzsche rejects only “deserts free will,” which concerns “whether determinism precludes free will” and “whether having done such and such one could have done otherwise,” but accepts “agency free will,” which concerns the question “what constitutes an action as opposed to a mere doing?”⁴ If Nietzsche accepts agency free will, then he believes that some individuals are freer than others, because they are truly agents rather than mere doers. They are properly considered the cause of their character and actions, because their character and actions are the products of a strong, integrated self that has been individually attained through acts of self-determination. As Gemes describes it, “Unity, soul, personhood are not pre-given existences but rare achievements to be gained by hard effort.”⁵

The evidence for the compatibilist reading generally and the freedom of agency reading specifically is quite slim. It relies primarily on Nietzsche’s use of freedom-connoting language, rather than any direct assertion or defense by Nietzsche of a morally substantial, alternative concept of freedom. His most direct endorsement of compatibilism is not direct at all: a critique of the language of determinism, a critique of the notion of *unfreedom* rather than an endorsement of a strong alternative conception.

In *Beyond Good and Evil*, after rejecting the concept of free will, Nietzsche then asks that we also reject “unfree will” since, as he claims, cause and effect are merely “conventional fictions for the purpose of description and communication, *not* explanation” (BGE 21). Consequently, the relation of cause to effect that we interpret as a constraint incompatible with freedom does not really exist: “in the ‘in-itself’ there is nothing like ‘causal connection’ [Verbänden], ‘necessity,’ or ‘psychological unfreedom.’ There, the ‘effect’ does *not* follow ‘from the cause,’ there no ‘law’ governs [regiert kein ‘Gesetz’]” (BGE 21).

The language of cause and effect invites us to imagine causality as the coercion of one individual or causal agent by another, in which one agency as cause imposes a change on another as effect, so that every causal event entails the

“unfreedom” of the affected individual or substance. The individual that is causally affected is “unfree” in the sense that it undergoes an *externally* imposed change. If, on the contrary, we follow Nietzsche’s advice and do not take the language of cause and effect literally, we may then doubt whether causal process are really relations of compulsion, imposition, or force between individuals—whether causal relations are relations of externally imposed changes.

Some interpreters of Nietzsche argue that this passage supports a compatibilist reading of his view of freedom.⁶ However, his claim that there are no causal connections is not a denial of strong determinism or necessity since, as he suggests in the very next passage, one might argue that the world “follows a ‘necessary’ and ‘calculable’ course, although *not* because laws govern it, but rather because laws are absolutely *lacking*, and every power draws its final consequences at every moment” (*BGE* 22). The implied argument seems to be that in the absence of any causal laws whatsoever, there is no possible origin of contingent events. If every power draws its final consequences at every moment, without the possibility of the constraint of its power by an overruling causal law, then there is only one possible way in which its power can and will be manifested.

The resulting view is very strange, indeed: there may be something like “causal necessity,” but no causal “laws” and no real “causes” and “effects.” Necessity, on this view, originates *internally* rather than in *external* relations. Each power can do nothing but draw its final consequences—presumably, this means it can do nothing but act in whatever way and to whatever degree its circumstances allow it most fully to manifest its power—which produces its relation to other powers rather than being determined (made “unfree”) by them. And since every other power can also do nothing but draw its final consequences at any moment, there is no sense in which one power has causal priority over the other, no sense in which one can be counted as “the cause” and another as “the effect.” To be sure, this is an obscure and perhaps implausible position, but the compatibilist must admit that Nietzsche clearly prefers it to the more commonsense causal picture that he has dismissed as a misleading “conventional fiction.”

Of course, he also admits that this view may be “only interpretation.” This might be evidence of an inconsistent regression to Kantian dualism: real causality is unknowable, so metaphysical freedom remains a possibility. But it is also compatible with his later, resolutely anti-metaphysical position. If, as he declares in *TI*, “with the real world we have also abolished the apparent world” (*TI* “Real World” 6), then the proper conclusion is that there is no real causality to be known, only different ways of describing the necessity of events, none of which identify the “real” explanatory causal relationships. But instead, Nietzsche misleadingly concludes, “The ‘unfree will’ is mythology; in real life it is only a matter of strong and weak wills.” This is a truly puzzling claim, since it implies that the relation of strong to weak wills is a real causal connection of the kind he has declared fictional. However, that cannot be his view. For if it were, he

would be contradicting every other claim in the passage: there would, in fact, be causes and effects “in the ‘in-itself’”; it would not, after all, be true that “there the ‘effect’ does *not* follow ‘from the cause,’ there no ‘law’ governs.”

Most importantly, it would not be true that there are neither free nor unfree wills. If “in real life” there were truly strong and weak wills—that is, wills whose strength does not depend on their relation to other wills as a relative, variable quality—then strong wills would be truly free, and weak wills would be truly unfree. For what might it mean to say that “in reality” there are only strong and weak wills, or that wills are in some sense “really” either strong or weak? A truly strong will is strong not merely in relation to a weaker will, but in some way *intrinsically strong*. If reality consists of strong and weak wills, a strong will must always be part of causal relations in which it is free, while a weak will must always be part of causal relations in which it is unfree. However, we can save the passage from self-contradiction by taking Nietzsche at his word: just as his explanation of necessity as the absence of causal laws is “mere interpretation,” his description of reality as consisting of strong and weak wills is one more “conventional fiction for the purpose of description and communication, *not* explanation,” and so it does not identify real causal agencies and relationships. Just as wills are not really free or unfree, they are not really strong or weak.

The merely “interpretative” status of strong and weak wills becomes more explicit in *TI*, where Nietzsche rejects freedom of the will not primarily because it requires the existence of freedom, but because it requires the existence of *individuals*: “One is necessary, one is a piece of fate, one belongs to the whole, one is in the whole [. . .] *nothing exists apart from [es giebt Nichts ausser] the whole!*” (*TI* “Errors” 8). In the “in itself,” there are no strong or weak wills, because there are no individual “wills” or individuals at all; there is only the whole.

In other words, Nietzsche rejects freedom not simply because he rejects freedom of “the will” understood as metaphysical agency, but because he rejects the existence of individual agencies altogether. Stronger and weaker wills are merely “pieces” of the fatality of the whole. Hence, no piece is truly stronger or freer than any other: both the strong will’s apparent freedom and the weak will’s apparent unfreedom are illusions produced by carving up events into relations of causal priority, into causes and effects, abstracting these fictional agencies from the continuous causal whole of which they are a part. Only in relation to each other can one agent appear causally more primary than another, one appearing as cause and another as effect. In reality, every individual is causally secondary, the effect of the whole.⁷

But what Nietzsche really thinks about causality is ultimately beside the point. In the end, this particular passage is not primarily about the “in itself” or reality at all. Nietzsche’s primary concern in the passage is not the reality of freedom, but its phenomenology: the qualitative *feelings* of agency, freedom, and strength: “It is almost always a symptom of what is lacking in a thinker when he *senses*

some compulsion, need, having-to-follow, pressure, unfreedom in every ‘causal connection’ and ‘psychological necessity.’ It is very telling to *feel* this way—the person betrays himself” (BGE 21, my emphasis).

The question of freedom has decisively shifted registers: Nietzsche is not asking whether there is freedom or agency, but what causes the feeling of agency, which human types *feel* free. He does not conclude that strong-willed individuals are truly free; instead, he draws a conclusion about our motivations in affirming or denying free will. The strong-willed show they are “vain” by refusing to give up the “right to their own merit,” while the weak-willed betray their longing “to *shift the blame* for themselves to something else” (BGE 21). The intended lesson is clearly not that either belief is true or false, but that each believes according to her interest. Strong and weak wills are not free and unfree wills, but ways of experiencing willing—interpretations and descriptions of qualitative feelings, not their explanation.

What is most striking about the passage is that it underlines Nietzsche’s ultimate indifference to the debate over whether agents are really free and his overriding interest in the *feeling, experience, and interpretation* of freedom. This indifference is due not to openness on the question, but to his resolute denial that there is any such question: in the “in-itself” there is neither freedom nor unfreedom; the language of freedom is meaningful only on the phenomenological level. Let us call this *the importance of the illusion of freedom thesis*: Nietzsche accepts no morally significant sense of freedom, agency, or selfhood except the qualitative feelings that give rise to the belief in freedom, agency, and selfhood, yet he still places great importance on whether and how we experience such qualitative feelings. As we will see, every major account of freedom in Nietzsche’s works will hold strictly to a phenomenological description of the qualitative experience of an illusory freedom. Consequently, if Nietzsche’s moral ideal of human enhancement includes a conception of freedom, it is a purely phenomenological one: the heightening of the *feelings* of freedom and agency. Higher individuals do not possess greater freedom, but they do experience themselves as more free than others.

The Sovereign Individual’s Right to Make Promises as Prediction, Not Agency

If evidence for the compatibilist reading is to be found anywhere, it must surely be in the account of the “sovereign individual” in *GM*.⁸ However, even here, Nietzsche restricts his claims about the sovereign individual to phenomenological claims about how such individuals experience their choices and actions. He does not assert that there is a substantial ground for their feelings of agency, and he repeatedly emphasizes the determination of their

actions and character by social training and drives in a way that undercuts the possibility of authentic agency.

The sovereign individual is the product of the internalization of conventional morality or the “morality of mores [Sittlichkeit der Sitte]” (*GM II:2*). From the beginning, Nietzsche stacks the deck against the compatibilist reading: the higher type is not an agent but an outcome, not self-created but the product of the agency of society, not the possessor of a distinctly human form of selfhood, but merely a type of “animal” developed through a process of “breeding” (*GM II:1*).⁹

The principle criterion of “sovereign individuality” is the modest ability and “right” or “permission” to make promises.¹⁰ This ability, in turn, depends on what Nietzsche describes as “*the will’s memory*”: “an active desire not to let go, a desire to keep on desiring what has been, on some occasion, desired” (*GM II:1*). We are entitled to make promises provided we can be relied upon to fulfill them, and we can fulfill them only by continually desiring the promised action despite intervening obstacles and contravening desires—by having a “strong will” in the sense of a desire stronger than competing desires. Again, Nietzsche resists a strong conception of agency, rooting the sovereign individual’s independence from society in its determination by and subordination to its desires.

The compatibilist will likely argue that an “active desire not to let go” of the desire that motivated the promise is a form of higher agency: by preserving a desire that would otherwise have been modified by new incentives, the fulfilled promise is properly caused by the individual, not by her desires or environment. And so the promise is properly an action, the work of a true agent. Desire does not cause it, since the will to keep the promise is an “active desire,” an intentional, higher-order desire made by the agent against her own lower-order desires. Nor is it environmentally determined, since the promise is fulfilled against circumstantial disincentives.¹¹

However, this cannot be Nietzsche’s view, since it does not resolve the central paradox in his account of the sovereign individual’s origin: how does a process that makes humans “calculable [berechenbar], regular, necessary” (*GM II:1*) and “like among like [gleich unter Gleichen]” produce as its “ripest fruit” the exact opposite—an individual “autonomous and supramoral [übersittliche]” who is “like only to himself”? (*GM II:2*). How can a breeding process that transforms animals into “calculable, regular, necessary” *machines* (in other words, that moves us to a state even *further away* from “freedom” as we ordinarily understand it!) culminate in a distinctively human kind of agency?

My own solution is simple: it cannot; it only *appears* to do so. Sovereign individuals are not in any way freer than the animals they are bred from—indeed, in all practical respects, they are less free. They are distinctive only because they *feel* more unique, autonomous, and independent of morality and fate. They simply experience the illusion of freedom to a higher degree, differing from others in the intensity of that feeling, not in kind. This interpretation makes

the best sense of Nietzsche's claim that the ability to keep promises requires making people "calculable" or *predictable* (berechenbar), which is possible only by making their actions "necessary" (nothwendig) and "regular" or rule-moderated (regelmäßig). The morality of mores makes behavior necessary by training individuals to internalize rules through incentives and disincentives of praise, blame, punishment, and reward. It makes them not simply *obey* a rule, but also *desire* the rule—"desire not to let go" of the original, externally motivated desire to obey (*GM II:1*).

But this is precisely no longer strictly to obey but to be *constituted by* a rule, to fully incorporate it into the hierarchy or social structure of drives that constitutes one's character. The training succeeds precisely to the degree that the aim of the rule is now one's own internalized desire rather than an order imposed from without. Consequently, sovereign individuals really are "like only to" themselves, "autonomous and supramoral." They are self-legislating, because they are constituted by the law rather than acting in subordination to it, determined by their own desires rather than subservient to external norms—just as a robot in fact obeys its programming, not its programmer. (In this respect, the sovereign individual might be seen not only as a parody of Kant's moral philosophy, but as a parody of Kant's personality—of compulsive regularity parading itself as autonomy.) Most importantly, the internalization of morality also makes individuals' actions "necessary." For the conformity of their actions to the rule no longer depends on the contingencies of punishment or reward. And, as necessary, their behavior becomes predictable: individuals are conditioned to desire to act consistently, allowing anyone to predict accurately what they will and will not do.

Consequently, the internalization of morality also allows individuals to predict their *own* behavior accurately, and this is the basis for the illusion of freedom of agency. Fulfilling promises becomes possible when the individual becomes calculable, regular, and necessary "even in his *own self-image*" (*GM II:1*, my emphasis). The right to make promises is the ability to predict accurately when we will fulfill our promises, and to refrain from promises that we can predict we will fail to fulfill.¹² It is in this sense that a sovereign individual is "answerable for his own future." Such individuals do not have a special kind of agency that, through higher-order, intentional effort, brings a promised future about. They have, instead, more certain *foreknowledge* of how they will act—regardless of what they promise, intend, or desire. Higher types differ not in greater control of their fate, but in a greater ability to foresee it.

Compatibilist interpreters will of course insist that Nietzsche's positive use of the language of freedom and agency does not support this interpretation. Nietzsche explicitly and repeatedly claims, they will argue, that sovereign individuals possess greater control of their actions, not merely an ability to predict them accurately. But this neglects the fact that Nietzsche describes sovereign

individuals phenomenologically; he describes their experiences and feelings from *their own perspective*, not his. He describes not how they are, but how they see themselves. The sovereign individual has a “power- and freedom-*awareness* [ein eigentliches Macht- und Freiheits-Bewusstsein]” and a “*feeling* of the completion of mankind [ein Vollendungs-Gefühl des Menschen überhaupt]” (*GM* II:2, my emphasis). The sovereign individual’s superiority is presented from his own point of view and as a question rather than an assertion: “How could he not know [wie sollte er es nicht wissen] of his superiority over those who are not permitted to make promises?”

Although Nietzsche says here that this individual believes in both moral desert (“how much trust, fear, and reverence [Ehrfurcht] he arouses—he ‘*merits*’ all three”) and freedom (“the ‘*free*’ man, the possessor of an enduring, unbreakable will”; my emphasis), he immediately distances himself from both views by putting them in scare quotes. The implication is clear: the sovereign individual *falsely* believes in the metaphysical kind of freedom that Nietzsche rejects. The suggestion that this type has “mastery over himself [. . .] over circumstances, over nature and over all creatures with a less enduring and reliable will” is likewise presented as a question posed from the sovereign individual’s point of view, part of the same sentence that begins, “How could he not know [. . .]?”

Again and again, Nietzsche characterizes sovereign individuality not as a kind of agency but a kind of outlook, a set of attitudes and beliefs, a “proud” consciousness based on an inflated self-image rather than reality: “*looking out* upon others from himself [von sich aus nach den Andern hinblickend], he honors or despises”; he “*knows* he is strong enough [er sich stark genug Weiss]” to keep his promises (when, as we have seen, in reality he is merely *predictable* enough); he possesses a “*proud knowledge* of the extraordinary privilege of responsibility, the *consciousness* of this rare freedom, this power over himself and over fate [das Geschick]” (*GM* II:2, my emphasis). From this passage we can conclude only that it is characteristic of sovereign individuals to *impute to themselves* a distinctive form of agency; it is far from evident that Nietzsche shares their belief.

In fact, he has gone out of his way to present their self-image as exaggerated, deluded by metaphysical conceptions of free will (“the master of a free will,” “mastery over circumstances, over nature”) and moral responsibility (“he ‘*merits*’ all three”). So, the principal texts usually marshaled as evidence do not support the compatibilist interpretation. Nietzsche’s discussions of freedom always remain on the phenomenological level of the feelings of agency, autonomy, and responsibility, indicating that higher individuals are not in fact freer than others. What truly distinguishes them from others is the intensity of their feeling of freedom.

Self-Creation as Artifice: The Art of Appearing to Oneself as an Agent

It might be argued that even if the sovereign individual does not demonstrate true agency, Nietzsche commits himself to a compatibilist view of freedom elsewhere. What, after all, are we to make of Nietzsche's frequent descriptions of higher types as creators and artists of the self, characterized by self-mastery, self-formation, and self-overcoming? Surely this suggests a degree of self-determination, a freedom of agency that distinguishes higher types.

On the contrary, Nietzsche's tendency toward aestheticism—the artist as moral ideal and creativity as a primary value—supports my claim that for Nietzsche freedom is illusory, entirely reducible to feeling; for his sense of “art” in this context concerns the shaping of *appearances* rather than reality. Consider his claim that “one thing is needful—to ‘give style’ to one’s character” (*GS* 290).¹³ From the first line, Nietzsche qualifies his language, indicating with scare quotes that we must be careful when we interpret the notion of “giving style.” If the compatibilist reading were correct, we might expect it to mean shaping one’s personality, giving it distinctiveness or beauty through the imposition of new form. This would tie creativity to agency: to make oneself distinctive requires self-determination, an independence from external influence and a strong, causally effective self.

However, it turns out that Nietzsche uses “giving style” in a more mundane sense: to superficially change an appearance, rather than substantially alter reality. True, he initially tempts us toward the strong agency reading, describing individuals who “survey [übersieht] all the strengths and weaknesses that their nature has to offer and then fit them into an artistic plan [einem künstlerischen Plane].” But rather than creating a new character, what the individual creates is a way of seeing, a “survey” or “overview” that artistically represents rather than practically transforms the given, in order to make it appear as though it had been created according to “a plan.” An “artistic plan” is needed precisely because one’s agency was *not* planned. To give style is merely to create a frame of interpretation through which everything “*appears* as art and reason and even the weaknesses *enchant* [entzückt] the eye” (my emphasis). Weaknesses are not removed but recontextualized; character is not redesigned but given place in a larger artistic design that gives weaknesses meaning and value, causing them to *appear* as strengths: “here the ugly that could not be removed is concealed; there it is reinterpreted into sublimity.” He adds, “Much that is vague and resisted shaping has been saved and employed *for distant views*,” again emphasizing that this is a question of appearance not reality, of producing the appearance of style after the fact, rather than freely imposing style.

This, Nietzsche underlines, is the “great art” at issue: an art of “views,” of *interpretation and seeing*, not of creation. True, there are less superficial changes here and there, but only of degree, not kind: the original character remains. More importantly, Nietzsche presents these changes in the passive tense: “Here a great mass of second nature *has been* added [ist (. . .) hinzugetragen worden], there a piece of first nature *has been* worn away [abgetragen].” It is not the work of the individual but of “the force of a single taste that ruled and shaped everything,” an impersonal force, distinct from the conscious self that surveys its character as part of an artistic plan: “It will be the strong and domineering natures who experience their most exquisite pleasure under such coercion [Zwange], in such bondage and perfection [in einer solchen Gebundenheit und Vollendung] under their own law.”

Although it is one’s “own law,” the law of one’s deep character, the law of taste is experienced as coercion and bondage, an activity external to the individual that she experiences not as the artist but passively, as the stone does the sculptor. Nietzsche even suggests that it is *only the strong* who experience taste in this passive, coerced and bound, way! “Strength,” then, indicates not the artist’s freedom to impose a new order on the self, but the strength to affirm changes that one passively undergoes, an internal law that is experienced as compulsion. One’s character shapes and develops itself independently of the choices or intentions of the conscious subject, but the strongest subjects consciously interpret this process as their own perfection, seeing in it a larger pattern and unity—a plan or “style.”

But, our compatibilist may now object, if we passively undergo change to our character, then who is the causal agent of that change? What is this “taste” that supposedly has the ability to act upon and transform our character independently of our conscious choices and will? Nietzsche is quite explicit on this point: the self is not an agent but an outcome, a “social structure [Gesellschaftsbau]” (BGE 19) produced by many drives, passions, or “under-souls”: “The will to overcome an affect is, in the end, itself only the will of another, or several other, affects” (BGE 117).

Against the compatibilist who treats higher-order, intentional desires as properly one’s own in contrast to passively possessed desires, Nietzsche denies that conscious or intentional desires play any causal role in the determination of choices: “It thinks: but to say the ‘it’ is just that famous old ‘I’—well that is just an assumption or opinion, to put it mildly” (BGE 17). The experience of agency is produced after the drives have already determined a choice; we identify after the fact with one drive over another, making agency an outcome rather than a cause: “‘Freedom of the will’—that is the word for the multi-faceted *state of pleasure* [Lust-Zustand] of one who commands and, at the same time, *identifies* himself with the accomplished act of willing [. . .]. *L’effet c’est moi*” (BGE 19, emphases added). Once again, we find that freedom is an art of interpretation

(“identifies”) rather than of creation, and a feeling (“a state of pleasure”) rather than a reality.

Admittedly, the individual “enjoys the triumph over resistances” and “thinks to himself that it was his will alone that truly overcame the resistance,” but, as in the passage on the sovereign individual, Nietzsche is describing the phenomenology of an illusion—of what the subject falsely believes, what he merely “thinks to himself.” On the contrary, for Nietzsche, conscious, intentional, or “second-order” desires are not more properly one’s own, nor are they any more free or effective: “The greatest part of conscious thought must still be attributed to instinctive activity [. . .] behind all logic and its seeming self-mastery of movement [Selbstherrlichkeit der Bewegung] stand valuations or, stated more clearly, physiological requirements for the preservation of a particular type of life” (*BGE* 3).

For Nietzsche, it is the drives that determine and produce the self, not the reverse. For example, he tells us that Wagner’s artistic development began “when his ruling passion became aware of itself and took his nature in its charge” (*UM* IV:2). *It* took charge *over* Wagner. This is, after all, how Nietzsche describes all artistic creation, as obedience not agency: “Every artist knows how far removed this feeling of letting go is from his ‘most natural’ state, the free ordering, placing, disposing and shaping in the moment of ‘inspiration’—he knows how strictly and subtly he obeys thousands of laws at this very moment” (*BGE* 188). He even describes his own work in this way:¹⁴

[C]onsciousness *is* a surface [. . .]. In the mean time, the organizing, governing ‘idea’ keeps growing deep inside,—it starts commanding [. . .] it slowly leads *back* from out of the side roads and wrong turns, it gets the *individual* qualities and virtues ready [. . .] it develops all the *servile* faculties before giving any clue as to the domineering task, the ‘goal,’ the ‘purpose,’ the ‘meaning.’” (*EH* “Clever” 9)

Just as *it* thinks, not I, *it* creates the self, not I: “One is merely incarnation, merely mouthpiece, merely a medium of overpowering forces. [. . .] You listen, you do not look for anything, you take, you do not ask who gives. [. . .] I never had any choice” (*EH* “Zarathustra” 3). For Nietzsche, the feeling of freedom paradoxically coincides with the disappearance of agency; freedom is felt precisely as necessity, a loss of individuality and one’s reduction to part of a greater causal whole: “All of this is involuntary to the highest degree, but takes place as if in a storm of feelings of freedom, of absoluteness, of power, of divinity” (*EH* “Zarathustra” 3).

So, the agent of self-creation is the drives, not the self, and self-creation is merely cosmetic, a matter of interpretation, style, and artifice. In any case, deep transformation is unnecessary, since the content of one’s character is not the issue at all: “whether the taste was good or bad means less than one may think;

it's enough that it was one taste!" (GS 290) Moreover, this unity of taste is merely a means to a more important end: "For one thing is needful," he repeats at the end of the passage (recasting, arguably retracting, the claim that "giving style" is the one thing needful), "namely, that a human being should *attain to satisfaction* with himself—be it through this or that *poetry or art*" (GS 290, my emphasis). Nietzsche's highest value is not, then, creativity, self-determination, or true agency, but *self-affirmation*, even if achieved only through poetry and art—through the illusion of freedom.

Consider the case of Nietzsche's comments on Goethe, which are often used to defend a compatibilist interpretation of freedom as authentic self-creation: "What he aspired to was *totality* [. . .] he disciplined himself to a whole, he *created* himself" (TI "Expeditions" 49).¹⁵ This might lead us to think, as Christopher Janaway notes, that "he brought about, by will, a synthesis within himself" and that this suggests authentic agency: "it would at least appear to be something one does, as an agent, some kind of action."¹⁶ R. Lanier Anderson agrees, arguing that for Nietzsche Goethe's greatness lies not simply in the possession of a "greater integration among the drives and affects," but in being the causal agent, the creator, of that integration: "what makes such unity count as *one's own* is precisely its having been *self-generated*."¹⁷

However, does this passage really tell us that Goethe's greatness is self-generated? Nietzsche describes Goethe in the same passage as a "self-overcoming on the part of that century" who "bore within him its strongest instincts"—as a social product, as an outcome rather than a cause (TI "Skirmishes" 49). And Goethe accomplishes this feat of supposed discipline and self-creation though the artifice of style-giving reinterpretation: "He *said yes* to everything which was related to him" and "*conceived* of a strong, highly cultured human being [. . .] who is strong enough for this freedom" (my emphasis). Janaway argues that Nietzsche's choice of words is evidence of agency: "'Saying Yes,' 'conceiving,' and 'allowing oneself' are agency words."¹⁸ But this is a very attenuated, qualified kind of "agency." As the passage emphasizes, Goethe's creative act is interpretative, not transformative. He merely "aspired to" rather than achieved totality; he "strove against the separation of reason, sensuality, feeling, will," precisely to the degree that he failed to unify them. In context, then, "saying yes" does not imply fully achieving yes. Rather, to say yes is to affirm oneself as given rather than to change oneself into something one can affirm. Merely "conceiving" of a stronger, freer type does not imply *being* or directly *making* oneself that type; it is a tacit admission of self-idealization and a failure to fully instantiate that ideal. As we saw in the discussion of "giving style," the way one "says yes," the way to "attain satisfaction with oneself," is through the "poetry and art" of a way of seeing: interpreting what one has *become* (in contrast to what one has *made oneself*) under the "coercion" and "bondage" of a largely

unconscious “force of taste” *as if* it were part of an artistic plan—a plan that one fits to the facts too late for agency, *after* having undergone change.

Nietzsche does not, as Janaway claims, tell us “this whole exercise is . . . one of ‘freedom.’” On the contrary, he says that Goethe only “conceived” of a human being “who is strong enough for this freedom.” Goethe did not produce his character but accepted it, and not by becoming stronger, but by *imagining* himself so. Freedom was not “exercised” but was the *object* of this artistic *exercise of imagination*. Goethe transformed his character not in content but in form—in idea, meaning, and value—and, in so doing, affirmed the character to which he had been fated. Consequently, he affirmed precisely his *lack* of agency and freedom, for he “became free” not through agency but through the rejection of the illusion of agency: “A spirit thus *emancipated* stands in the midst of the universe with a joyful and trusting fatalism, in the *faith* that only what is individual is reprehensible [verwerflich], that in the whole everything is redeemed [erlöst] and affirmed [bejaht].”¹⁹

Self-creation is not, then, the achievement of a higher form of agency, but rather the creative acceptance of one’s fundamental lack of agency.²⁰ Nietzsche calls Goethe “a spirit that has become free [Ein solcher freigewordner Geist]” not, as the compatibilist claims,²¹ to emphasize his agency, but precisely to underscore that he has not *made himself* free, to underscore his lack of agency, the “innocence of becoming” that is affirmed when we “reject responsibility” and acknowledge what Nietzsche calls “what alone can our teaching be”: “That no one *gives* a human being his qualities, not God, not society, not his parents or ancestors, not *he himself*” (*TI* “Errors” 8).

Nietzsche’s higher individuals have “become free” precisely from the illusion of freedom, seeking only its “artifice” in order to affirm, to say “yes” to, their own character as a fundamentally unchangeable fate. Nietzsche tellingly names this fatalism “redemption” or “salvation” to contrast his notion of freedom—emancipation from the illusion of freedom—to that of the Christian moral tradition:

One is necessary, one is a piece of fate, one belongs to the whole, one *is* in the whole [. . .] *nothing exists apart from the whole!* That no one is any longer made responsible [verantwortlich], that the kind of being manifested cannot be traced back to a *causa prima* [. . .] this alone is the great emancipation [Befreiung]—thus alone is the *innocence* of becoming restored . . . in denying God, we deny responsibility: only by doing *that* do we redeem [erlösen] the world. (*TI* “Errors” 8)

Because his principle objection to Christianity is freedom, his alternative is *amor fati*: “the fight against [. . .] the doctrine of ‘free will’—the fight against Christianity is just one instance of this. [. . .] To accept yourself as a fate, to not want to be otherwise [nicht sich “anders” wollen]—in situations like, that is *reason par excellence*” (*EH* “Wise” 6).

The Feeling of Freedom in Resistance and the Affirmation of Practical Unfreedom

Consequently, freedom is not a criterion in Nietzsche's normative project of enhancing humanity through the promotion of higher types. Higher individuals are not higher in virtue of a distinct form of agency, self-mastery, or responsibility. Instead, they are distinguished by having overcome two illusions: (1) the illusion of individuality, the belief that the self exists independently from the causal whole, and (2) the illusion of agency, belief in the ability of those individuals to change independently of that whole.

This suggests that in the late works Nietzsche's normative ideal has moved substantially beyond the category of "the sovereign individual" found in *GM*. The sovereign type was characterized by confidence in its own agency; it was thoroughly mired in the illusion of freedom. The ripest fruit of the history of morality is not, then, the sovereign individual, but rather the fate-loving, yes-saying individual.

Nevertheless, the fate-affirming higher type maintains an important continuity with the sovereign individual. For overcoming the belief in freedom "enhances" (erhöhen), makes humans "higher" (höher), by paradoxically heightening their capacity for the *feeling* of freedom. Higher individuals experience a higher feeling of freedom, precisely because they have given up a belief that is at odds with the basic conditions of freedom's phenomenology. For the fundamental condition for the feeling of freedom is the experience of resistance: "'Freedom of the will' is essentially the affect of superiority with respect to something that must obey [. . .] as the obedient one we are familiar with the feelings of compulsion, force, pressure, resistance, and motion that generally start right after the act of willing" (*BGE* 19). Experiencing resistance is, then, integral to any feeling of freedom.²² That is why Nietzsche claims, "One would have to seek the highest type of free man where the greatest resistance is constantly being overcome: five steps from tyranny, near the threshold of the danger of servitude" (*TI* "Expeditions" 38). For we heighten the feeling of resistance only by risking unfreedom—indeed, by tolerating a degree of unfreedom, for without some practical unfreedom there can be no resistance.

Such a view is, of course, incomprehensible on the agency freedom reading. If freedom is measured by agency, by the degree to which actions are caused by oneself, then the closer one is to the "threshold of the danger of servitude," the less free one must be. The belief in agency freedom thus implies that resistance is a hindrance to freedom, a constraint upon independence and a threat to agency. Consequently, the belief in agency freedom motivates individuals to avoid resistance, to flee the very condition of the feeling of freedom. In contrast, because higher individuals affirm fate, they are free to seek out resistance, to find their happiness in obstacles to, rather than the achievement of, agency.

They risk practical freedom for the enhanced feeling of freedom found in worthy opponents and challenges: “One way of *measuring* the strength of an attacker is by looking at the sort of opponents he needs; you can always tell when something is growing because it will go looking for powerful adversaries—or problems. [. . .] The task is *not* to conquer all obstacles in general but instead to conquer the ones where you can apply your whole strength, suppleness, and skill with weapons—to conquer opponents that are your *equals*” (EH “Wise” 7).

Because the feeling of freedom is determined not by the ability to overcome an obstacle, but by the worthiness of a challenge measured by its relative *equality* to us, Nietzsche identifies the “greatest freedom” with the “greatest resistance.” Consequently, we can conclude that higher individuals are not distinguished by greater agency, self-determination, or self-creation. Indeed, they will often be less free in practice, since they intentionally seek potentially insurmountable challenges. The highest types are those who, by giving up the pursuit of illusory agency, have become free for a higher art (and artifice) of freedom: the heightened intensity of power found in struggles with equal resistances, a state of fatality not agency, of feeling not freedom.

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NOTES

1. For examples of Nietzsche’s use of the language of enhancement or “heightening” (Erhöhung)—often as part of phrases such as “enhancement of human types [Erhöhung des Typus “Mensch”]” and “higher types [höherer Typus],” as in *GS* 377, *BGE* 62 and 257, and *A* 4 and 57—see *BGE* 44, 225, 239, 257, 262; and *A* 4, 7, 43, 49.

2. When citing Nietzsche’s work, I have used the following translations, with occasional changes for clarity and accuracy: *Untimely Meditations*, ed. Daniel Breazeale, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); *The Gay Science*, ed. Bernard Williams, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); *Beyond Good and Evil*, ed. Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman, trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); *On the Genealogy of Morality*, ed. Keith-Ansell Pearson, trans. Carol Diethel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); *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 *Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 2003).

3. In this respect, I depart from Brian Leiter, whose extensive—and to my mind decisive—critique of the compatibilist interpretation of Nietzsche does not examine the positive role that the *feeling* of freedom plays in his ideal of higher types (*Nietzsche on Morality* [London: Routledge, 2002], 81–101). Although my principal aim is to make a case for this positive account of the feeling of freedom, along the way I will add new support for Leiter’s case against the compatibilists.

4. Ken Gemes, “Nietzsche on Free Will, Autonomy, and the Sovereign Individual,” in *Nietzsche on Freedom and Autonomy*, ed. Ken Gemes and Simon May (Oxford: Oxford University

Press, 2009), 33–49. One might, of course, object that “agency free will” is not a “morally substantial conception of freedom” as I have defined it, but then the distinction of agency and deserts free will would be a trivial one. Other recent compatibilist readings include R. Lanier Anderson, “What Is a Nietzschean Self?,” and Christopher Janaway, “Nietzsche on Morality, Drives, and Human Greatness,” both in *Nietzsche, Naturalism, and Normativity*, ed. Christopher Janaway and Simon Robertson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 202–35 and 183–201; Christopher Janaway, “Autonomy, Affect, and the Self in Nietzsche’s Project of Genealogy,” in Gemes and May, *Nietzsche on Freedom and Autonomy*, 51–68; and Manuel Dries, “Freedom, Resistance, Agency,” and Paul Katsafanas, “Value, Affect, Drive,” both in *Nietzsche on Mind and Nature*, ed. Manuel Dries and P.J.E. Kail (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 142–62 and 163–88.

5. Gemes, “Nietzsche on Free Will,” 44.

6. However, compatibilist interpreters often cite only his conclusion that we should reject “unfree will.” They rarely examine closely Nietzsche’s stated *reason* for that conclusion, the claim that “in the ‘in-itself’ there is nothing like ‘causal connection’ [. . .] there no law governs.” See, for example, Gemes, “Nietzsche on Free Will,” 41, and Dries, “Freedom, Resistance, Agency,” 144. Janaway’s discussion of the full argument is the exception, in “Autonomy, Affect, and the Self,” 63.

7. For this reason, we should doubt Leiter’s claim that Nietzsche’s fatalism is best characterized as “causal essentialism,” the view that any individual substance “has ‘essential’ properties that are causally primary with respect to the future history of that substance” (*Nietzsche on Morality*, 82–83). Nietzsche’s claim that “the fatality of his nature cannot be disentangled from the fatality of all that has been and will be” (*TI* “Errors” 8) emphasizes not solely the determining causal factors that are internal to individuals, but those both internal and external, with an emphasis on causal relationships that defy attribution to any individual at all: “no one *gives* a human being his qualities, not God, not society, not his parents or ancestors, not *he himself*.” No one person or thing determines the future history of a substance, precisely because it is the entire causal whole, not any part, that determines the history of every individual substance.

8. See, for example, Anderson, “What Is a Nietzschean Self?,” 230: “Here, clearly, individuality . . . is a rare and high achievement attained by a few. . . . Nietzsche tightly ties the normative conception of selfhood, or individuality, to the value of autonomy.” For other recent compatibilist interpretations of the sovereign individual, see also Gemes, “Nietzsche on Free Will,” and Janaway, “Autonomy, Affect, and the Self.” For an argument against the compatibilist reading, see Brian Leiter’s critical review of Christopher Janaway’s *Beyond Selflessness: Reading Nietzsche’s Genealogy* (<https://ndpr.nd.edu/news/23543-beyond-selflessness-reading-nietzsche-s-genealogy/>). While I agree with Leiter that the passage on the sovereign individual does not commit Nietzsche to compatibilism, I disagree that it is “wholly ironic and mocking” since, as I will suggest, the sovereign individual’s intensified feeling of freedom, while illusory, is indeed characteristic of Nietzsche’s higher types.

9. Nietzsche says that the task is “to breed an animal with the prerogative to promise [Ein Thier heranzüchten, das versprechen darf].” Notice that he does not say that the sovereign individual is bred *from* an animal, making it clear that even at the end of this historical process, the sovereign individual remains an animal type.

10. There has been surprisingly little discussion of Nietzsche’s use of the verb *dürfen* in passages where it is usually translated as a “right” or “prerogative” to make promises. Both translations misleadingly favor the compatibilist reading, suggesting a right that the sovereign individual is free to choose to exercise or not, in contrast to weaker individuals who, while they remain free to make and keep promises, are from a moral point of view unworthy of the right, since they often fail to keep them. The language of “permission,” in contrast, immediately raises the question: permitted by whom or what? On an incompatibilist reading, the answer is that the sovereign individual is permitted by fate to make and keep promises, permitted by the psychological

necessity of her hierarchically unified system of drives. Nietzsche's choice of "permission" should perhaps be taken ironically, since we could equally aptly say that sovereign individuals are *obliged* by their very nature to make and keep promises.

11. For recent higher-order readings of Nietzsche on free agency, see Dries, "Freedom, Resistance, Agency"; Anderson, "What Is a Nietzschean Self?"; and Janaway, "Autonomy, Affect, and the Self." Even if such readings were correct, they have the disadvantage of making Nietzsche's accounts of agency and freedom entirely vulnerable to the usual objections to second-order accounts of freedom, such as Galen Strawson's objection that displacing the problem of freedom onto the level of second-order volitions leads to an infinite regress ("The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility," *Philosophical Studies* 75 [1994]: 5–24, 18). For a discussion of this and other objections to Frankfurt-style interpretations of Nietzschean agency, see Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, 88–101.

12. This should not be mistaken for the view that the sovereign individual's illusion of freedom is based not on deep character differences, but rather on a tendency to "play it safe" and not make promises she is unsure she can keep. (Compare Aaron Ridley's qualified criticism of the view that "the sovereign individual is just very, very prudent"; "Nietzsche's Intentions: What the Sovereign Individual Promises," in Gemes and May, *Nietzsche on Freedom*, 181–95, 185.) The sovereign individual's strength of character is what gives her the rare ability to make such predictions accurately. Because her character is strongly hierarchical in its priorities and ends, she is constitutionally better able to "play it safe" when promising, since she will more often be able to keep her promises. In contrast, weaker individuals do not possess a capability for prudence, since their behavior is not predictable enough to know which is the more prudent course.

13. Until otherwise noted in the text, citations are to *GS* 290.

14. For an exhaustive account of the fatalistic aspects of Nietzsche's self-description in *EH*, see Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, 83–86.

15. For compatibilist interpretations of this passage, see Janaway, "Nietzsche on Morality, Drives, and Human Greatness," 193: "Goethe's wholeness is said to be something he wanted or willed (*wollte*) and something he did or made." This reading neglects to address the central problem of any compatibilist reading of Nietzsche, namely, that whether the individual wants, wills, or makes effort is not the question. Rather, the question is whether Nietzsche gives us any reason to believe that such second-order willing, the choice to "create" or re-create or shape oneself, is any more "free" than first-order desires and character traits. See also Gemes, "Nietzsche on Free Will," 45; Anderson, "What Is a Nietzschean Self?," 230; and Dries, "Freedom, Resistance, Agency," 155.

16. Janaway, "Nietzsche on Morality, Drives, and Human Greatness," 193. Although Janaway strikes a cautious note here, admitting that a great individual might be either a product of chance, whose "'self-mastery' occurred outside of his own conscious activity," or a product of agency, attained "by action and hard work," he ultimately favors the agency reading, suggesting that "our attitudes of self-affirmation or self-negation might in addition *cause* alteration to our drives and their relations to one another in such a way as to move them nearer to a state in which they satisfy the internal conditions for human greatness" (194–95). It is unclear, however, how this picture of agency as self-creation through self-affirmation escapes the problems of the Frankfurt-style interpretation of freedom, again just displacing the problem of freedom onto the level of the choice of affirming or negating.

17. Anderson, "What Is a Nietzschean Self?," 231.

18. Janaway, "Nietzsche on Morality, Drives, and Human Greatness," 193.

19. "Bejaht" can also be read as "yea-sayed." We should note that in both fatalism and *amor fati* Nietzsche emphasizes the individual's *self-minimization* rather than *self-glorification*. As Leiter rightly notes, *EH* demonstrates this twist perfectly, announcing itself as a self-congratulatory lesson in how Nietzsche became so wise, so clever, such a good writer, and so

on, even though “there is nothing, in fact, self-congratulatory about the answer,” since the answer is “one becomes what one is necessarily” (*Nietzsche on Morality*, 84–86). Just as Nietzschean fatalism consists precisely in the recognition that “one belongs to the whole, one *is* in the whole” and that “*nothing exists apart from the whole!*” (TI “Errors” 8), so in *amor fati* this reduction of the individual to an aspect of the whole is the real objection of affirmation or love, the faith that “what is separate and individual may be rejected [verwerflich]” but “in the whole everything is redeemed.” In other words, in *amor fati* the primary object of affirmation is not oneself or one’s existence but the world as such, the causal whole. For this reason we should be wary of Sebastian Gardner’s claim that “Nietzsche’s ultimate philosophical purpose lies in forging individuals who set value on (affirm) themselves,” which he in turn takes as evidence that Nietzsche attributes “reality to the I” (“Nietzsche, the Self, and the Disunity of Philosophical Reason,” in Gemes and May, *Nietzsche on Freedom*, 1–31, 9).

20. Contrast Gemes’s view that Nietzsche’s account of Goethe demonstrates his “aim to replace a passive stance and engender a genuinely active creative engagement of the world” (“Nietzsche on Free Will,” 45). On the contrary, Goethe’s depicted attitude affirms a certain kind of passivity in the face of fate, since it sees past the illusion of “genuine” self-formation and reduces creativity to the art of giving style understood as interpretation, as seeing the fatality of one’s own character and existence in its relation to the whole. He “becomes what he is” in the same way Nietzsche does in *EH*: “I never had any choice” (*EH* “Zarathustra” 3). Contrast, too, Janaway: “One becomes free in accepting and affirming oneself in the whole, and rather than seeing the necessity or fatedness of one’s character as an inhibition or obstacle to action, one sees it as the condition of and opportunity for true self-expression” (“Autonomy, Affect, and the Self,” 62). Janaway describes the agent of such “true self-expression” as someone who “affirms and embraces him- or herself,” “values his or her actions because . . . they are in character,” and “welcomes the limitations” her character and circumstances place on action. But it is not clear why these mere attitudes should be called “free will . . . attained, or regained.” Nor is there any acknowledgment that Nietzsche’s view of the self as a social structure of drives implies that our *attitudes* are every bit as fated as our actions.

21. See Anderson, “What Is a Nietzschean Self?,” 230: “by creating himself, Goethe emerges from self-creation as ‘a spirit who has *become free*.’”

22. Dries has helpfully emphasized the importance of feeling in Nietzsche’s discussion of freedom, as well as its basis in relations of resistance: “The self-system feels free, feels itself an efficacious agent, when it is engaged in relationships with which it can cope” (“Freedom, Resistance, Agency,” 148). However, he ultimately favors a compatibilist reading according to which we not only pursue the feeling of freedom through efficacious action, but have the freedom to develop and improve that feeling through more efficacious strategies of willing (156–60). I argue, to the contrary, that Nietzsche’s account of freedom is entirely reducible to mere feeling.