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Die Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Philosophie, **Studia philosophica**, erscheint einmal jährlich im September und veröffentlicht wissenschaftliche Artikel, Rezensionen und Debatten auf Deutsch, Französisch, Italienisch und Englisch. Alle zwei Jahre veröffentlicht die Zeitschrift eine Auswahl der auf dem Symposium der Schweizerischen Philosophischen Gesellschaft vorgestellten Beiträge. Die Manuskripte müssen gemäss den Autorenrichtlinien der Studia ([www.sagw.ch/de/philosophie/Publikationen/studia-philosophica.html](http://www.sagw.ch/de/philosophie/Publikationen/studia-philosophica.html)) bis zum September jeden Jahres bei der Redaktion eingereicht werden. Die Auswahl der Beiträge erfolgt nach einem doppelblinden Begutachtungsverfahren (peer review).

La Revue Suisse de Philosophie, **Studia philosophica**, paraît une fois par année en septembre et publie en français, allemand, italien et anglais des articles scientifiques, des comptes rendus ainsi que des débats. Tous les deux ans sont publiés les actes du Symposium de la Société suisse de philosophie. Les propositions de contribution doivent correspondre aux directives des Studia ([www.sagw.ch/de/philosophie/Publikationen/studia-philosophica.html](http://www.sagw.ch/de/philosophie/Publikationen/studia-philosophica.html)) et sont à soumettre chaque année jusqu'à fin septembre. La sélection des contributions est effectuée par la rédaction à la suite d'un processus d'expertise par deux pairs anonymes (peer review).

La Rivista Filosofica Svizzera, **Studia philosophica**, appare una volta all'anno a settembre e pubblica articoli scientifici, recensioni e dibattiti in italiano, tedesco, francese e inglese. Ogni due anni viene pubblicata nella rivista una selezione delle relazioni presentate nel quadro del Simposio della Società filosofica svizzera. I manoscritti devono corrispondere alle direttive degli Studia ([www.sagw.ch/de/philosophie/Publikationen/studia-philosophica.html](http://www.sagw.ch/de/philosophie/Publikationen/studia-philosophica.html)) e devono essere sottomessi entro la fine dell'anno precedente. La selezione dei contributi è effettuata dalla redazione dopo un processo di valutazione a doppia anonimizzazione (peer review).

The Swiss Journal of Philosophy, **Studia philosophica**, appears in September every year. It contains academic articles, reviews and debates in German, French, Italian and English. Every second year it includes a selection of papers presented to the symposium of the Swiss Philosophical Society. The manuscripts have to be in accordance with the editorial guidelines of the Studia ([www.sagw.ch/philosophie/portrait.html](http://www.sagw.ch/philosophie/portrait.html)) and have to be submitted to the editors until September of every year. The contributions are selected on the basis of a peer review procedure.

**Bruch und Kontinuität**

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*Rupture et Continuité*



Johannes Steizinger

## Reorientations of Philosophy in the Age of History

### Nietzsche's Gesture of Radical Break and Dilthey's Traditionalism

In this paper, I examine two exemplary replies to the challenge of history that played a crucial role in the controversies on the nature and purpose of philosophy during the so-called long 19<sup>th</sup> century. Nietzsche and Dilthey developed concepts of philosophy in contrast with one another, and in particular regarding their approach to the history of philosophy. While Nietzsche advocates a radical break with the history of philosophy, Dilthey emphasizes the continuity with the philosophical tradition. I shall argue that these conceptual reorientations are linked to specific social images of the philosopher. Nietzsche, on the one hand, presents us a new version of the philosophical recluse. Dilthey, on the other hand, embraces the idea of a philosophical community, thus emphasizing the collective character of philosophical research. My examination of these connections attempts to show that the history of philosophy should also be studied as a social tradition.

#### Introduction: Philosophy in the Age of History

The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was characterized by a deep «identity crisis»<sup>1</sup> of German-speaking philosophy. Particularly, two connected developments challenged traditional concepts of philosophy and called into question both the nature and the purpose of philosophy: the rise of the empirical sciences and a new understanding of history suggested the insufficiency of the framework of speculative idealism that dominated the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Since the sciences began to cover more and more parts of the field of knowledge, philosophy seemed to lose its special subject. The growth of experimental psychology in particular promised to solve traditional philosophical problems by means of empirical research.

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1 See Herbert Schnädelbach: *Philosophy in Germany, 1833–1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) 5, 67; Frederick Beiser: *After Hegel. German Philosophy 1840–1900* (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015) 15–19.

Philosophy was also challenged by the establishment of history as a science in its own right. Since history became independent from the patronizing idealist speculations in the style of Hegel, it confronted philosophy with its own historicity.<sup>2</sup> The possibility of a thoroughgoing historical understanding of philosophy was, however, conceived as a threat by many philosophers. Confronted with contingency, change and a conflicting plurality of philosophical systems, philosophy seemed to lose its core aim: to achieve unconditional truth. This historicist challenge to philosophy was often identified with the problem of relativism and became a key issue of the many meta-philosophical approaches in the so-called long 19<sup>th</sup> century. These attempts to redefine what philosophy is not only examined its relation to science and history in general. Moreover, a proper self-understanding of philosophy had to include a plausible interpretation of its own history.<sup>3</sup>

Frederick Beiser has recently emphasized that «the identity crisis of philosophy [...] was not only a spiritual or intellectual problem but a ‘bread and butter’ issue».<sup>4</sup> This claim holds in particular for the competition between philosophy and psychology, which had an institutional context. For various reasons, psychologists moved into departments of philosophy in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and created a new social role, namely the scientific philosopher. This social development prompted different reactions from the philosophical establishment: Some philosophers adopted new psychological ideas, but, in doing this, preserved their traditional role and its distinctive set of methods. Others attempted to save a rather pure form of philosophy against the philosophical aspirations of the new psychology.<sup>5</sup>

The conflict between philosophy and history had a different social background. Herbert Schnädelbach has emphasized that German historicism was characterized by the belief in the normative force of history. Based on this understanding, the historian should not only discover bare facts. Rather, his or her research should reveal the meaning of history and thus provide an orientation for society and culture.<sup>6</sup> This self-image of 19<sup>th</sup> century historians challenged the societal

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2 Leading historians did this literally. See, e.g., Leopold von Ranke: *On the Character of Historical Science* (1831/32), in: *The Theory and Practice of History*, ed. by Georg Iggers (London, New York: Routledge, 2011) 11.

3 There is a growing awareness of the meta-philosophical significance of the divergent attempts to the history of philosophy in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. See, e.g. the collected volume: *From Hegel to Windelband: Historiography of Philosophy in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*, ed. by Valentin Pluder and Gerald Hartung (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 2015).

4 F. Beiser: *After Hegel*, op. cit., 18.

5 See Joseph Ben-David, Randall Collins: *Social Factors in the Origins of a New Science: The Case of Psychology*, in: *American Sociological Review* 31 (1966) 451–465; Martin Kusch: *Psychologism. A Case Study in the Sociology of Knowledge* (London, New York: Routledge, 1995).

6 H. Schnädelbach: *Philosophy in Germany*, op. cit., 38–41.

function of philosophy. The diagnosis of historical relativism and the philosophical efforts to overcome it were also a strategy to re-establish the cultural authority of philosophy. Most philosophers simply denied that mere historical insight can provide a normative foundation of values and suggested that pure history implies relativism.

In the following, I shall examine two exemplary philosophical replies to the multi-faceted challenge of history. The projects of Nietzsche and Dilthey belonged to the broad and diverse movement of *Lebensphilosophie* ('philosophy of life') that became the driving force of the renewal of philosophy in the so-called long 19<sup>th</sup> century. In both cases the conceptual reorientation of philosophy is closely connected with the reconsideration of the social place of the philosopher. Thus, Nietzsche and Dilthey developed not only new concepts of philosophy, but also fashioned social roles for the philosopher which should reconfirm his or her cultural authority. Although both welcomed the age of history as the end of traditional metaphysics, they explicitly attempted to re-establish the supremacy of philosophy under the new circumstances, in particular in their later works.

The late Nietzsche criticized historical scholarship and, moreover, science in general because they were placed above philosophy.<sup>7</sup> He thinks that it needs the «true philosopher»<sup>8</sup> to overcome the nihilistic values that had governed humanity so far. Hence, «philosophy's master task and authority»<sup>9</sup> have to be acknowledged, also by scholars and scientists whose significance is not rejected, but clearly restricted. However, according to Nietzsche, the kind of philosophy that is able to «dominate» has yet to be established.<sup>10</sup> Thus, he advocates a radical break with both the history of philosophy and its contemporary state. Moreover, Nietzsche describes the detachment from any institutional and social context as prerequisites of «true philosophy». He presents himself as just such a solitary philosopher and repeatedly emphasizes the «decisive experience» of his «great liberation».<sup>11</sup>

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7 For a detailed analysis see Thomas H. Brobjer: *The Late Nietzsche's Fundamental Critique of Historical Scholarship*, in: *Nietzsche on Time and History*, ed. by Manuel Dries (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 2008) 51–60.

8 Friedrich Nietzsche: *Beyond Good and Evil. Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 106 (KSA 5, 145). I will quote from the standard translations of Nietzsche's works, but provide the reference to the German original in brackets. For the German original I refer to the standard edition: F. Nietzsche: *Kritische Studienausgabe* in 15 Bänden, hg. von Giorgio Colli und Mazzino Montinari (München: DTV, de Gruyter, 1988).

9 F. Nietzsche: *Beyond*, 94 (KSA 5, 131).

10 *Ibid.*

11 F. Nietzsche: *Human, All Too Human. A Book for Free Spirits* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 6 (KSA 2, 15).

Although the late Dilthey chooses a similar path to reconfirm the cultural authority of philosophy, he arrives at a quite different solution. Take, e.g., his lecture *The Culture of Today and Philosophy* (1898) which argues that the thoroughgoing historization of human self-understanding gave rise to the problem of relativism. Dilthey claims that history cannot account for the future of human culture because of its relativistic tendencies that foster «dissolution» and «skepticism».<sup>12</sup> He calls for a new philosophy that should reveal the aim of human culture and support its progress towards it. Contrary to Nietzsche, Dilthey's reorientation of philosophy is based on the philosophical tradition: it starts with a historical understanding of philosophy and arrives at a philosophical understanding of its history. This traditionalist attitude also characterizes his understanding of the social nature of philosophy. Dilthey regards philosophy as a collective endeavour and stresses the authoritarian character of the philosophical community.

In the following, I shall focus on the contrast between Nietzsche's and Dilthey's reorientations of philosophy. I will concentrate on their later works and emphasize the motifs that show their contrasting approaches to the challenge of history. In doing this, I attempt to reveal two types of modern philosophy that are exemplary regarding their relation to the philosophical tradition (break versus continuity), and their understanding of the social nature of philosophy (individualist versus collectivist). My examinations starts with Nietzsche's gesture towards a radical break that suggests that independence is the key virtue of philosophy. Then, I will turn to Dilthey's traditionalist approach that puts forward continuity, connection and interaction as the key features of philosophy.

## Philosophy against its History: Nietzsche's Gesture of a Radical Break

The revolutionary move towards a radical break with the philosophical tradition is one of the most obvious features of Nietzsche's late philosophy. The history of philosophy is, according to Nietzsche, characterized by metaphysical approaches such as Plato's idealism, whose legacy he criticizes from the perspective of the

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12 See Wilhelm Dilthey: *Kultur der Gegenwart*, in: *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. VIII, hg. von Bernhard Groethuysen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962) 204 (my translation). If standard translations of Dilthey's works are available, I use them to quote Dilthey. Then, I also refer to the German original in brackets. It is always noted, if I translate a passage myself or change a translation. I use the German standard edition of Dilthey's works: W. Dilthey: *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. I–XXVI (Göttingen and Stuttgart: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, und B.G. Teubner, 1957–2006).



late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Take, e.g., his late treatise *Twilight of the Idols* (1889) in which Nietzsche advocates a philosophy of reality that takes into account both history and science. Moreover, he presents this empirical approach as a completely fresh start in philosophy and rejects the entire history of philosophy because of its lack of a «historical sense» and its dismissal of the «testimony of the senses». <sup>13</sup> Contrary to the metaphysical assumption of a ‘true’ world from which all change, imperfection, transience and plurality is eliminated, Nietzsche himself emphasizes that the empirical world is our only reliable source of knowledge. In taking this rather modern position he sees himself in a radical opposition to the philosophical tradition. <sup>14</sup>

The late Nietzsche not only detaches his basic worldview from traditional philosophy, but also searches for an explanation of the major prejudices of philosophers. He attempts to reveal «the *hidden* history of the philosophers» and thus presents a «psychology of its greatest names». <sup>15</sup> This psychological approach to the history of philosophy is part of Nietzsche’s broader genealogical project to clarify the origins of today’s prevailing value judgements. Nietzsche thinks that philosophical theories can be explained from a psychological point of view. He suggests that this perspective leads us to the kernel of every philosophy, namely the personality of its author. Thus, the psychological analysis of the traditional preoccupation with metaphysics shows us, first and foremost, the type of person philosophers usually were and still are. Nietzsche claims, e.g., that philosophers so far shared an «irritation and rancour against sensuality» on the one hand, and «genuine partiality and warmth [...] with regard to the whole ascetic ideal» <sup>16</sup> on the other hand. This is because of their psychological set-up: Philosophers gener-

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13 See F. Nietzsche: *Twilight of the Idols, or How to Philosophize with a Hammer*, in: *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols: And Other Writings*, ed. by Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 166–168 (KSA 6, 74–76). Nietzsche only partly excludes Heraclitus from his critique of the philosophical tradition.

14 Nietzsche embraces the concept of a «historical philosophy» that adopts the empirical method of the natural sciences already in *Human, All Too Human* (1878–1880). There are a few commentators who claim that Nietzsche’s entire mature philosophy is characterized by the scientific approach of his middle period. See, e.g., Aldo Lanfranchi: *Nietzsches historische Philosophie* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: frommann-holzboog, 2000). However, such readings do not account for the evaluative dimension of Nietzsche’s later philosophical project and hence miss the change of his overall conception. I will not consider the development of Nietzsche’s concept of philosophy and the respective relation to the history of philosophy. Thus, I shall also leave aside his early philological accounts of the «Pre-Platonic-Philosophy». For a detailed analysis of Nietzsche’s early philological approach to the history of philosophy see H. Heit: *Hegel, Zeller and Nietzsche: Alternative Approaches to Philosophical Historiography*, in: *From Hegel to Windelband*, op. cit., 117–140.

15 F. Nietzsche: *Ecce Homo*, in: *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols: And Other Writings*, op. cit., 72 (KSA 6, 259).

16 F. Nietzsche: *Genealogy*, op. cit., 76 (KSA 5, 350).

ally are, according to Nietzsche, cerebral, reflective and withdrawn persons. He suggests that their metaphysical belief in the existence of a transcendent world is nothing but the expression and promotion of their own ascetic way of life. Here, Nietzsche turns to the criticism of the philosophical tradition because of its connection with the «ascetic ideal»<sup>17</sup> and attacks the habitual self-image of philosophers. According to him, the traditional self-understanding of philosophy as an impersonal and objective pursuit of truth is both dishonest and false: When philosophers present themselves as rational, detached and impartial seekers of truth, they actually affirm their own existence which flourishes under ascetic circumstances.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, Nietzsche argues that this «ascetic mask»<sup>19</sup> was only necessary for the emergence and establishment of philosophy. He regards «the peculiarly withdrawn attitude of the philosophers, denying the world, hating life, doubting the senses, desensitized» as an «ascetic misconception»<sup>20</sup> that has to be overcome. However, this task demands a challenge to the traditional core of philosophy: Nietzsche asks us to question the belief in the unconditional value of truth. He emphasizes: «From the very moment that faith in the God of the ascetic ideal is denied, *there is a new problem as well*: that of the *value* of truth».<sup>21</sup>

Note that Nietzsche does not only criticize traditional philosophy for hosting an ascetic attitude. The last paragraphs of his *Genealogy of Morality* (1887) turn to the «most recent manifestation of the ascetic ideal»<sup>22</sup> and here Nietzsche examines in particular science and history. He claims that all scientific and scholarly endeavours share an unconditional commitment to the pursuit of truth and thus are «still based on a *metaphysical faith*», namely the «faith that truth *cannot* be assessed or criticized».<sup>23</sup> This truth-ideal calls, like in the case of traditional philosophy, for a specific psychological type. Nietzsche describes the modern scientists and scholars as truly «objective humans»<sup>24</sup> who pursue a quite pure form of knowing at the cost of the rest of their life. They are «mandarin[s]» and this type of life presupposes, according to Nietzsche, «a certain impoverishment of life, – the emotions cooled, the tempo slackened, dialectics in place of instinct,

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17 Nietzsche dedicates the third treatise of *GM* to the critique of the ascetic ideal. For a recent convincing interpretation which follows a line of thought similar to mine see Christopher Janaway: *Beyond Selflessness. Reading Nietzsche's «Genealogy»* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 229–239.

18 See F. Nietzsche: *On the Genealogy of Morality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 77–81 (KSA 5, 351–356).

19 *Ibid.*, 84 (KSA 5, 360).

20 *Ibid.*

21 *Ibid.*, 113 (KSA 5, 401).

22 *Ibid.*, 110 (KSA 5, 397).

23 *Ibid.*, 113 (KSA 5, 400).

24 F. Nietzsche: *Beyond*, op. cit., 97 (KSA 5, 135).

solemnity stamped on faces and gestures».<sup>25</sup> Although he admits that such an objective spirit has its attraction and validity, Nietzsche is very clear about its limitations: Science and other modern academic pursuits such as history or philology do not provide a counter-ideal to ascetism and thus are not alternatives to traditional philosophy. In *BGE*, Nietzsche explicitly states that the «scholars, the truly scientific people»<sup>26</sup> are no model for a philosopher. Here, the «*ideal* scholar who expresses the scientific instinct» is defined as «one of the most expensive tools» that should be in the service of philosophy, but not be «mistaken [...] for a philosopher».<sup>27</sup> Thus, Nietzsche does not only reject the philosophical tradition, but also detaches his concept of philosophy from the contemporary spirit. He criticizes «all the things this age is proud of», including the «famous ‘objectivity’», «the ‘historical sense’» and «the ‘scientific attitude’».<sup>28</sup> This critique of modern culture dates back to Nietzsche’s second *Untimely Meditation* (1874), which exemplifies the intellectual conflict between philosophy and history. The early Nietzsche attacks the scientific understanding of history radically and concedes to historical knowledge a strictly limited and only instrumental value: History has to be at the service of life, since when it is pursued for its own sake as «pure, sovereign science»,<sup>29</sup> it becomes a dangerous illness that threatens human culture. According to the early Nietzsche, it needs the «unhistorical power»<sup>30</sup> of life to guide humanity into its future.

Raymond Geuss has argued convincingly that Nietzsche’s *GM* is guided by a methodological principle that is quite similar to his early thought on history.<sup>31</sup> In the preface to *GM* Nietzsche admits that while examining the origins of morality, he «was preoccupied with something much more important».<sup>32</sup> Moreover, he claims that hypothesizing about the genealogy of moral values «concerned me only for one end, to which it is one of many means», namely the critical task to question «the value of morality».<sup>33</sup> Thus, the preface to *GM* strongly suggests that the genealogical task of discovering the origins of our current values is distinct

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25 F. Nietzsche: *Genealogy*, op. cit., 114 (KSA 5, 403).

26 F. Nietzsche: *Beyond*, op. cit., 9 (KSA 5, 20).

27 *Ibid.*, 207 (KSA 5, 136).

28 F. Nietzsche: *Ecce Homo*, in: *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols: And Other Writings*, op. cit., 135 (KSA 6, 351). For this critique see, e.g., the paragraphs 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 223 and 224 of *BGE*.

29 F. Nietzsche: *Untimely Meditations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 67 (KSA 1, 258).

30 *Ibid.*

31 See Raymond Geuss: *Nietzsche and Genealogy*, in: *Morality, Culture, and History. Essays on German Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 17–23.

32 F. Nietzsche: *Genealogy*, op. cit., 6 (KSA 5, 251).

33 *Ibid.*

from and instrumental towards the critique of *their* value. I shall leave aside the question how the genealogical and the critical task are related to each other and concentrate on Nietzsche's evaluative project: his claim for a «revaluation of all values».<sup>34</sup> Note that Nietzsche states, again in the preface to *GM*, that the insight into a «great danger to humanity»<sup>35</sup> motivated his own critical investigation of the prevailing moral values. He sees humanity on a downward path towards nihilism because of the inherited evaluative framework of the Christian tradition. This is because, as he suggests, in the Christian way of evaluating and thinking «the will has turned *against* life».<sup>36</sup> This reference to life is crucial for understanding Nietzsche's revaluative project: In the above-mentioned prefaces of 1886 Nietzsche presents himself as an «advocate of life» and suggests frequently that his «instinct turned against morality» because he sensed a «hostility to life, a furious, vengeful enmity towards life itself»<sup>37</sup> behind it. *BGE* also starts with contrasting «life» and its «fundamental conditions» to traditional philosophy and its prejudices.<sup>38</sup> Thus, what Nietzsche demands from the *true* philosopher is «a Yes or a No [...] about life and the value of life».<sup>39</sup> This judgement has to come from him- or herself and cannot be provided by modern history or science.

The late Nietzsche introduces his concept of philosophy especially in *BGE* which is characterized, in its subtitle, as a *Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*. This reference to the future not only indicates that Nietzsche regards his new philosophers as an upcoming kind. Moreover, he claims that the purpose of philosophy is generally dedicated to the future. Nietzsche defines philosophers as «*commanders and legislators*» who have to «create» the values that promote «life».<sup>40</sup> He regards this practical task as a transformative process. The «*new philosophers*» have to be «strong and original enough to give impetus to opposed

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34 There are different readings of the relation between genealogy and critique. See, e.g., R. Geuss: Nietzsche and Genealogy, op. cit., 17–23; C. Janaway: Beyond Selflessness, op. cit., 9–15; Brian Leiter: Nietzsche on Morality (London, New York: Routledge, 2011) 139–144.

35 F. Nietzsche: Genealogy, op. cit., 7 (KSA 5, 252).

36 Ibid. I slightly changed the translation because Nietzsche writes in German: «gerade hier sah ich [...] den Willen *gegen* das Leben sich wendend».

37 F. Nietzsche: The Birth of Tragedy, in: The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 9 (KSA 1, 18). Several recent commentators have emphasized the significance of the concept of life for Nietzsche's evaluative perspective. See, e.g., Richard Schacht: Nietzsche (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983) 396; R. Geuss: Nietzsche and Genealogy, op. cit., 17–23; Nadeem Hussain: The Role of Life in the *Genealogy*, in: The Cambridge Critical Guide to Nietzsche's «On the Genealogy of Morality», ed. by Simon May (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) 156.

38 F. Nietzsche: Beyond, op. cit., 4 (KSA 5, 12).

39 Ibid., 96 (KSA 5, 132).

40 Ibid., 106 (KSA 5, 145).

valuations and initiate a revaluation and reversal of 'eternal values'.<sup>41</sup> Nietzsche emphasizes frequently and in various ways the capacity for independence as a prerequisite of true philosophy. He thinks that the true philosopher must be able to detach him- or herself from prevailing views like the spirit of the age or traditional convictions. His or her insights must arise from him- or herself and thus presuppose the separation from the culture of today.

This ability to set oneself apart from others is explicitly depicted in social terms: «Solitude is a virtue for us»,<sup>42</sup> Nietzsche states on behalf of the philosophers in BGE and adds in *GM*: «Strong, independent minds withdraw and become hermits». <sup>43</sup> He claims time and again that deep thinking and, moreover, all human excellence demands solitude. It is a prerequisite of the creative activities that characterize great humans.<sup>44</sup> Thus, like «every choice human being», the true philosopher «strives instinctively for a citadel and secrecy where he is rescued from the crowds, the many, the vast majority». <sup>45</sup> He or she is an exemption, a rarity and has to affirm this destiny. The maximal positive attitude to him- or herself distinguishes, according to Nietzsche, his philosophical recluse from the traditional martyrs of truth who were «forced to become hermits». <sup>46</sup> Nietzsche advocates «a free, high-spirited, light-hearted solitude»<sup>47</sup> and contrasts this affirmative attitude to the alleged self-denial and self-hatred of the philosophical ascetics. Here, an important general feature of Nietzsche's revaluative project becomes apparent: He rejects the ascetic ideal because it demands us to negate, suppress or even sacrifice ourselves for an external value such as unconditional truth. The appraisal of self-negation, self-denial and self-sacrifice as virtues which raise us above ourselves is, according to Nietzsche, a key feature of nihilism. Nietzsche's counter-ideal is «the most high-spirited, vital, world-affirming individual, who has learned not just to accept and go along with what was and what is, but who wants it again *just as it was and is* through all eternity». <sup>48</sup>

The social character of the true philosopher is also reflected in Nietzsche's epistemology. Nietzsche suggests frequently that there are particular truths which can only be discovered and borne by the strong and independent spirits who live in solitude. This idea of a special kind of truth which is valuable because of its

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41 Ibid., 91 (KSA 5, 126).

42 Ibid., 171 (KSA 5, 232). See, e.g., also the paragraphs 25, 210 and 213 of BGE.

43 F. Nietzsche: Genealogy, op. cit., 79 (KSA 5, 352).

44 See, e.g., the paragraphs 26, 44, 188, 212 and 289 of BGE. Brian Leiter shows that solitude is one of the characteristics of the higher type of human Nietzsche admires. See B. Leiter: Nietzsche, op. cit., 93f.

45 F. Nietzsche: Beyond, op. cit., p. 27 (KSA 5, 43).

46 Ibid., 26 (KSA 5, 42).

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid., 50 (KSA 5, 75).

exclusivity is an important issue in *BGE*.<sup>49</sup> Paragraph 43 contrasts, e.g., the personal nature of the new philosophers' truths to the traditional claim to universality. Nietzsche states: «It would offend their pride, as well as their taste, if their truth were a truth for everyone [...]. 'My judgment is my judgment: other people don't have an obvious right to it too' – perhaps this is what such a philosopher of the future will say. We must do away with the bad taste of wanting to be in agreement with the majority».<sup>50</sup>

Nietzsche generally rejects universal aspirations and embraces particularity and diversity. Take, e.g., his critique of morality in which he attacks every moral system that applies one evaluative framework to all humans. The universalistic imperative «'this is the way people should be!」 is characterized as «naïve» and «ridiculous» because «reality shows us an enchanting abundance of types, a lavish profusion of forms in change and at play».<sup>51</sup> Contrary to the moralist's negation of this essential feature of life, «we immoralists», Nietzsche emphasizes, «have opened our hearts to all types of understanding, comprehension, approval».<sup>52</sup> Here, Nietzsche seems to get on the path towards relativism. However, he does not even consider whether his affirmation of the diversity of life and its different perspectives is a relativistic view. This is because, as Nadeem Hussain has recently argued, «Nietzsche does have a fundamental standard: it is the standard of life».<sup>53</sup> Hussain's account of the role of life in *GM* reveals the peculiar character of this standard, namely, what I want to call, the *normative facticity* of life. Hussain convincingly shows that, according to Nietzsche, life «essentially involves a tendency to expansion, growth, domination, power and splendour» and that we «are always under the 'subjection' of this tendency».<sup>54</sup> This «fundamental tendency» is «inescapable» because it is «essential to what it is to be a living creature».<sup>55</sup> In other words, since life is the bedrock of our existence, it can be used to assess our beliefs and values. However, such an assessment is never unconditional because we do not have access to a standpoint outside life. Nietzsche emphasizes that our evaluations are always «under the inspiration, under the optic, of life».<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless, whoever is strong enough to accept that there is ultimately just self-affirmation or the reverse and nothing beyond life, nothing oth-

49 See, e.g., *ibid.*, 37, 40–42, 53, 104–105 (KSA 5, 56f., 60–63, 142–144).

50 *Ibid.*, 40 (KSA 5, 60).

51 F. Nietzsche: *Twilight*, *op. cit.*, 175 (KSA 6, 86f.).

52 *Ibid.*

53 N. Hussain: *The Role of Life*, *op. cit.*, 156.

54 *Ibid.*, 168.

55 *Ibid.*, 169.

56 F. Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, 175 (KSA 6, 86). Geuss emphasizes that, according to Nietzsche, there are «no non-circular, non-contextual standards with reference to which [...] a value statement about life itself could vindicate itself» (R. Geuss: *Nietzsche and Genealogy*, *op. cit.*, 22–23).

erworldly or supernatural, can gain this privileged perspective. The rare insight of such strong minds into the nature of life, its normative facticity, enables them not only to accept and understand the plurality and diversity of life, but also to assess the different types by their realization of and relation to the fundamental tendency of life. In *Ecce Homo*<sup>57</sup> Nietzsche explicitly claims this kind of epistemic privilege for himself: He insists that his personal life taught him a special knowledge about life and enabled him to occupy a privileged evaluative perspective. His specific experience of life explains, according to Nietzsche, «that neutrality, that freedom from partisanship in relation to the overall problems of life, that is, perhaps, my distinction. I have a subtler sense of smell for the signs of ascent and decline than anyone has ever had, I am their teacher par excellence, – I know both of them, I am both of them».<sup>58</sup>

Nietzsche's purposed and highly stylized autobiography is also interesting from a sociological point of view because Nietzsche describes his social place as a philosopher. He presents himself as a solitary thinker whose philosophical work takes place in separation from civic life and its amenities.<sup>59</sup> Thus, Nietzsche exemplifies the idea that philosophical thinking presupposes a retreat from mundane affairs by his own life and even pictures the place of knowledge as «my own territory, my own soil, a whole silently growing and blossoming world».<sup>60</sup> It is not surprising that he tells the story of his withdrawn existence in fatalistic terms and emphasizes his affirmation of this destiny. His illness is repeatedly described as the decisive experience of his life and his retirement from his Basle professorship in 1879 as its positive turning point: In retrospect, Nietzsche characterizes his time as an academic scholar of philology as a «completely senseless abuse of extraordinary energies».<sup>61</sup> However, «at precisely the right moment», he claims, «the illness *slowly pulled me away*» from «that degrading 'selflessness'»<sup>62</sup> and,

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57 Nietzsche composed his supposed autobiography in autumn 1888, just after finishing *TI* and *The Anti-Christ*, and it was first published after his death in 1908. Although this work is generally approached with some degree of caution, it can be read, as Brian Leiter put it nicely, as one of Nietzsche's «major self-reflective moments», in particular when it comes to his self-image (B. Leiter: Nietzsche, op. cit., 115).

58 F. Nietzsche: *Ecce Homo*, op. cit., 75 (KSA 6, 264).

59 This theme occurs frequently in Nietzsche's late works, starting in particular with the new prefaces of 1886. See, e.g., F. Nietzsche: *Human*, op. cit., 5–11 (KSA 2, 13–22); *The Gay Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 3–9 (KSA 3, 345–352); *Beyond*, op. cit., 40–42, 177–180; *Genealogy*, op. cit., 3–5, 77–81 (KSA 5, 60–63, 239–243, 247–250, 351–356).

60 *Ibid.*, 5 (KSA 5, 250).

61 F. Nietzsche: *Ecce Homo*, op. cit., 88 (KSA 6, 283).

62 *Ibid.*, 118 (KSA 6, 326). The same motif can be found in the prefaces of 1886 to *Human*, *All Too Human* and to *The Gay Science*. See F. Nietzsche: *Human*, op. cit., 5–11 (KSA 2, 13–22); *Gay Science*, op. cit., 3–9 (KSA 3, 345–352).

he emphasizes, «I discovered life anew, as it were, myself included».<sup>63</sup> Moreover, he characterizes his mature philosophy as a consequence of his illness: «I created my philosophy from out of my will to health, to *life*...».<sup>64</sup> Similarly, Nietzsche wrote in a brief vita that was published by Georg Brandes in his popular essay on Nietzsche from 1890: «After all, my illness has been of the greatest use to me: it has released me, it has restored to me the courage to be myself...».<sup>65</sup>

Nietzsche's self-portrayal is clearly a case of social self-fashioning and closely connected to his concept of philosophy. His conceptual reorientation of philosophy, which includes a social characterization of the philosopher and his own social positioning, are guided by the same principle. Briefly speaking, Nietzsche puts *independence* at the core of the philosophical activity. Note that he does not adopt one of the new scientific roles in philosophy – despite his use of scientific ideas. Moreover, he regards his retirement from philology as prerequisite of both his philosophical life and thinking. It's safe to say that Nietzsche sets himself apart from the established forms of knowledge and their institutional representations. He cultivated this role as an outsider in an exemplary way and had tremendous success with his self-fashioning as a philosophical recluse.

Nietzsche himself claims that his image of the philosopher is «so remote from anything that includes even a Kant let alone academic 'ruminants' and other professors of philosophy».<sup>66</sup> However, the sociological analysis reveals a traditional foundation of his reorientation of philosophy. Nietzsche's social depiction of the philosopher is characterized by a rhetoric of solitude – despite his revaluations. His «free, very free spirits» are «still jealous friends of *solitude*» and hence a gay version of the «hermit's voice».<sup>67</sup> Nietzsche presents us and, moreover, he *is*, a modern example of the pervasive topos of the solitary philosopher that was widespread and popular in his day, also at German universities.<sup>68</sup> Western culture traditionally places the philosopher outside society, and so does Nietzsche.

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63 F. Nietzsche: *Ecce Homo*, op. cit., 76 (KSA 6, 266f.).

64 *Ibid.*

65 F. Nietzsche: To Georg Brandes. Torino, April 10, 1888, in: Georg Brandes: Nietzsche (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1915) 82. Brandes' essay was based on lectures which he held in Kopenhagen in 1888. The publication of the essay in the German magazine *Deutsche Rundschau* in 1890 shaped the public image of Nietzsche.

66 F. Nietzsche: *Ecce Homo*, op. cit., 115 (KSA 6, 320).

67 Steven Shapin: «The Mind is Its Own Place»: Science and Solitude in Seventeenth-Century England, in: *Science in Context* 4 (1990) 208.

68 Steven Shapin shows the pervasiveness of the theme of the solitary philosopher throughout Western culture (see *ibid.*).



## Philosophy in Light of its History: Dilthey's Traditionalism

In 1903, Dilthey gave a «talk» in which he summarizes his philosophical endeavours as a response to the rise of the «historical consciousness». <sup>69</sup> He claims that the 19<sup>th</sup> century was characterized by the establishment of history as a science and emphasizes the significance of this development: The verified insight into the historicity of humanity did not only create a new field of study, namely the human sciences, but also changed human self-understanding in general. According to Dilthey, the historical consciousness liberated humanity from its last chain – the belief in something transcendent, something different from and above life – and thus enabled a better understanding of life. <sup>70</sup> Stripped off any metaphysical elevations, life can be finally studied by its concrete manifestation. Dilthey thinks that «only history can tell the human what he is» <sup>71</sup> and emphasizes the consequences of this insight for traditional forms of human-self understanding such as philosophy.

Dilthey defines philosophy as a «cultural system» <sup>72</sup> which is rooted in human nature and fulfils various functions. His late philosophy turns to the study of philosophy as such a historical-anthropological fact. Dilthey develops a theory of worldviews (in German, *Weltanschauungslehre*) which should not only reveal the «essence of philosophy», <sup>73</sup> but also achieve its necessary reorientation. He thinks that philosophy always has to adapt itself to the historical conditions of the respective culture. Although this process of adaptation is a general feature of philosophy, he emphasizes the special challenge in the present situation: Today, the philosopher has to acknowledge the authority of the historical consciousness and thus, as the title of one of Dilthey's major treatises indicates, the essence of philosophy is at stake. His «philosophy of philosophy» <sup>74</sup> is a reply to this challenge. The late Dilthey examines the impact of the historical consciousness on philosophy and, in doing this, addresses the possibility of his own philosophical endeavours. <sup>75</sup> I agree with Robert Scharff who has recently claimed that Dilthey

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69 W. Dilthey: Reminiscences on Historical Studies at the University of Berlin, in: Selected Works, vol. IV, ed. by Rudolf Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) 387–389 (GS V, 7–9).

70 Ibid., 389 (GS V, 9).

71 W. Dilthey: Traum, in: Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. VIII, op. cit., 226 (my translation).

72 W. Dilthey: The Essence of Philosophy (Capel Hill: The University of Carolina Press, 1954) 37, 74 (GS V, 373, 414).

73 Ibid., 3 (GS V, 339).

74 See, e.g., W. Dilthey: Zur Philosophie der Philosophie, in: Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. VIII, op. cit., 206.

75 Note that this issue is distinct from Dilthey's best-known philosophical project: The *Introduction to the Human Sciences* (1883) attempts to develop a philosophical foundation of the

was lead to the «reflective question»: «if philosophy is, like all human practices, historical to the core – then what is it to ‘be’ philosophical?»<sup>76</sup> Scharff thinks, however, that Dilthey never explicitly addressed this issue.<sup>77</sup> Contrary to Scharff, I argue that Dilthey indeed turns the problem of history back on himself, namely in his late theory of worldviews.

Dilthey begins his late treatise *The Essence of Philosophy* with an empirical examination of its history. He argues that the search for the «the inner bond, which ties together views so dissimilar, patterns so various» has to be based on a historical analysis of «the group of phenomena called philosophy or philosophical».<sup>78</sup> Contrary to Nietzsche, Dilthey bases his concept of philosophy on the history of philosophy. He explicitly rejects Nietzsche’s attempt to find the nature of things in «solitary self-reflection»<sup>79</sup> and also criticizes his separation of the higher type of human from the cultural context.<sup>80</sup> Against Nietzsche’s call for a fresh start of philosophy Dilthey puts forward his own conviction that «we have to take the old gods with us in any new home».<sup>81</sup> Thus, Dilthey bases his own concept of philosophy on the self-understanding of past philosophers and praises their definitions of philosophy as an important prerequisite of his own account. He develops his concept of philosophy in critical conversation with the philosophical tradition. This social gesture characterizes Dilthey’s philosophy in general: Many of his systematic treatises begin with an extensive historical examination and emphasize his connection with traditional views. Moreover, Dilthey often integrates quite different approaches into his own account and attempts to establish a position that mediates between competing paradigms.

The analysis of the systems which presented themselves and were acknowledged as philosophy reveals two essential features of philosophy: Philosophy is, according to Dilthey, characterized by the claim to universal scope and the claim to universal validity.<sup>82</sup> He envisages philosophers as seekers for an ultimate solution of the great riddles of world and life. Construed like this, the metaphysical nature of philosophy is, however, in tension with its actual reality. Dilthey

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historical consciousness. An examination of the relation of Dilthey’s late philosophy of philosophy to his philosophy of the human sciences is, because of various reasons, far beyond the scope of this article.

76 Robert C. Scharff: *How History Matters to Philosophy: Reconsidering Philosophy’s Past after Positivism* (New York, London: Routledge, 2014) 252.

77 *Ibid.*, 257, 292.

78 W. Dilthey: *Essence*, op. cit., 5 (GS V, 344).

79 W. Dilthey: *Traum*, op. cit., 226 (my translation).

80 See W. Dilthey: *Kultur der Gegenwart*, op. cit., 201.

81 W. Dilthey: *Traum*, op. cit., 226 (my translation).

82 See W. Dilthey: *Essence*, op. cit., 25 (GS V, 365). In the German original, Dilthey speaks of the «Tendenz zur Universalität» and the «Forderung der Allgemeingültigkeit».

notes that there is a variety of conflicting philosophical systems which present different universal solutions to the same metaphysical problems. The historical consciousness deepens this insight into the conflicting plurality of philosophy and suggests a troubling explanation: Philosophy consists of different conflicting systems, since they arise from, and get their meaning within, an historical context. Here, the tension between the claim for universality which is essential for philosophy and the actual manifestations of philosophical systems becomes a straightforward contradiction. Dilthey emphasizes that what is dependent on historical conditions has only relative value. But every philosophical system claims to be universally valid.<sup>83</sup> Dilthey characterizes this conflict as an antinomy and emphasizes its cultural significance: Since historical comparison shows the «relativity of all metaphysical and religious doctrines», the «anarchy of thinking» reaches for «more and more solid presuppositions of our thoughts and actions»<sup>84</sup> today. It is obvious that Dilthey regards the relativistic consequences of the historical consciousness as a general problem that questions the essence of philosophy and, moreover, the normative foundation of human culture. He thinks that the search for «the means to overcome the anarchy of opinions that [...] threatens to befall us»<sup>85</sup> is the challenge of the epoch. It is, of course, philosophy which has to meet this challenge.

Dilthey develops in particular two strategies to save the essence of philosophy against the threat of relativism. Note that the concept of life is an important issue in both. The first strategy is tantamount to a change of perspective: Dilthey examines the function of philosophical thinking in life and emphasizes the communalities in the process of doing philosophy. This functional approach suggests that the conflicting plurality of the products of philosophy is contrasted by the psychological uniformity, social community and historical continuity of the philosophical activity (a). The second strategy proposes a dialectical solution to the systematic main problem: Dilthey claims that the historical consciousness itself not only shows the historical relativity of all philosophical systems, but also reveals a new objective foundation of philosophy, namely the foundation of its different forms in life. Thus, he emphasizes that philosophy «has to study its past to its deepest point» and thereby «making history which was its enemy so far, its doctor»<sup>86</sup> (b).

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83 See W. Dilthey: *Das geschichtliche Bewußtsein und die Weltanschauungen*, in: *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. VIII, op. cit., 4–7; *Die Typen der Weltanschauung und ihre Ausbildung in den metaphysischen Systemen*, in: *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. VIII, op. cit., 75–78.

84 W. Dilthey: *Kultur der Gegenwart*, op. cit., 193 (my translation).

85 W. Dilthey: *Reminiscences*, op. cit., 389 (GS V, 9).

86 W. Dilthey: *Das geschichtliche Bewußtsein*, op. cit., 11 (my translation).

(a) Dilthey claims that philosophical activity has a distinct place in the mental life of humanity. His account of this position emphasizes the inner nexus and the demarcation of philosophy from cognate human activities such as science, religion or art. This functional approach examines philosophy as psychological, social and historical manifestation. Dilthey argues that philosophy emerges naturally in the development of the human mind. On the basic level of individual psychology, philosophy fulfils certain functions that respond to general requirements of psychic life. Dilthey assumes, e.g., that the «structural nexus» (in German, *Strukturzusammenhang*) of the human mind has a «teleological character» and concludes that it is a «chief work of human life [...] to come through illusions to the knowledge of what is genuinely worth while for us». <sup>87</sup> Thus, reflexivity is defined as a basic feature of psychic life that ensures its continuous and stable development. Dilthey regards philosophy as an enhancement of this pursuit of «inner stability» <sup>88</sup> by reflection and hence as a natural continuation of life experience (in German, *Lebenserfahrung*). Note that this general psychological tendency to philosophy is identified with seeking «a fixed point, free from relativity». <sup>89</sup> This need arises from the teleological structure of the human mind, which demands the recognition of a unifying and stable goal of life. By conceiving philosophy as a psychological process, Dilthey can emphasize, within his own psychology, its regularity, necessity and universality.

Dilthey thinks that an individual is always a member of a society and emphasizes that the social perspective is important to understand philosophy. Since «society consists of structured individuals, it possesses», according to Dilthey, «the same structural regularities». <sup>90</sup> In other words, philosophy is not only a psychological function of the individual mind, but also part of the social world. It forms a cultural system that establishes different kinds of connections. Dilthey claims that philosophy is «a function rooted in the structure of society and requisite for the completeness of social life. Accordingly, philosophy is a function which occurs uniformly in many persons and unites them in a social and historical continuum». <sup>91</sup> The social bond of the philosopher is, however, comparatively weak: Although Dilthey mentions the establishment of social organizations like philosophical schools, academies or universities, he thinks that the philosopher is ultimately, like the poet, not dependent on an «institutional form [...] of life». <sup>92</sup> Here, Dilthey invokes the motif which shapes Nietzsche's image of the philo-

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87 W. Dilthey: *Essence*, op. cit., 34f. (GS V, 373f.).

88 *Ibid.*, 36 (GS V, 375).

89 *Ibid.*, 75 (GS V, 415).

90 *Ibid.*

91 *Ibid.*, 74 (GS V, 413).

92 *Ibid.*, (GS V, 414).

sopher, namely his or her independence. However, this picture changes, when we look at how Dilthey envisages the connection between the philosopher and the history of philosophy. He exemplifies this relationship by the «unity» of «the leaders of philosophy schools [...] with their pupils».<sup>93</sup> Thus, the «necessary connection»<sup>94</sup> of philosophers is based on the stable, conceptual structures which are developed by successive generations. Briefly speaking, tradition and its authority give philosophy unity and continuity. Dilthey claims that «every vital philosophical work arises in this continuity. And the philosophical past acts in each individual thinker, so that, even where he despairs of solving the great riddle, *he is determined by this past to adopt his new standpoint*».<sup>95</sup> Again, Dilthey emphasizes the connection with the philosophical tradition and refers to a certain social imagery: No philosopher stands alone, but he or she is part of a historical community which shapes his or her thought. Thus, Dilthey clearly embraces the collective nature of philosophy and gives the latter an authoritarian touch.

(b) The historicity of the manifestations of human life is also at the core of Dilthey's dialectical solution to the antinomy between the metaphysical aspirations of philosophy and the historical consciousness. He thinks that the historical consciousness is able to clarify all presuppositions of the conflicting plurality of philosophical systems. Here, the empirical analysis of the historical manifestations of philosophy evolves into its self-reflection. The historical approach to philosophy is revealed as a proper philosophy of philosophy. It consists of a theory of worldviews which suggests a typology of metaphysical worldviews as a solution to the problem of relativism. Dilthey's comparative method reduces the «anarchy of philosophical systems»<sup>96</sup> to three basic forms by which the different aspects of life can be expressed philosophically. Naturalism, idealism of freedom and objective idealism represent the utmost consequences of a specific aspect of life and, thus, correspond to the three general human attitudes to life: cognition, feeling and volition.<sup>97</sup> These types of worldviews can be understood as different perspectives: No perspective captures the whole of life, but every perspective is rooted in and represents a particular aspect of life. Hence, these perspectives are different from each other, but they do not necessarily conflict with each other. They only conflict when the part is taken for the whole, which is, according to Dilthey, the fallacy of metaphysics.

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93 Ibid., 27 (GS V, 366).

94 Ibid.

95 Ibid., 8 (GS V, 346; my emphasis).

96 W. Dilthey: *Typen der Weltanschauung*, op. cit., 76 (my translation).

97 According to Dilthey, a typical «worldview of philosophy» emerges «when a powerful philosophical personality makes one of the general attitudes toward the world dominant over the others» (W. Dilthey: *Essence*, 66 (GS V, 405)).

Even if we grant Dilthey that his typification blocks historical relativism and that his typology consists of distinctive, but not conflicting, types, his result does not seem to be a satisfying «opposition to relativism».<sup>98</sup> The types of worldviews are still relative to each other, hence their validity is not universal, and to life: a worldview can never be complete and thus does not have universal scope. Therefore, philosophy still seems to fail in meeting its own aspirations. Note, however, that the perspectivism of the metaphysical worldviews does not have the final say in philosophy. Dilthey explicitly claims that the philosopher who attempts to understand the «reflexive consciousness» by «historical comparison» has to «assume his standpoint above all»<sup>99</sup> specific worldviews. Thus, there is a perspective that can reflect all other perspectives. This superior perspective is the historical consciousness itself. Dilthey states:

So from the vast labor of the metaphysical mind the historical consciousness remains, repeating this labor in itself and thus coming to know the unfathomable depth of the world. The last word of the mind which has surveyed all these *Weltanschauungen* is not the relativity of each but the sovereignty of the mind over against every one of them, and also the positive consciousness of how in the various attitudes of the mind the one reality of the world exist for us.<sup>100</sup>

Here, the historical consciousness is defined as a self-reflection of philosophy that overcomes within itself the limitations of the particular manifestations of the metaphysical mind. Conducted as philosophy of philosophy the historical consciousness turns out to be a special form of self-consciousness: It reveals the essence of philosophy and «the historical aspect of consciousness is perfected (in German, *vollendet*)»<sup>101</sup> as well. Thus, the historical consciousness also constitutes a proper philosophical understanding of life. As philosophy of philosophy, it reflects both the manifoldness and the historicity of life, in particular by demonstrating that there is no final theory of life, but only finite manifestations of its different aspects. Nevertheless, the historical consciousness does not fall prey to the relativism of the particular worldviews, since it knows the special character of life and hence the resulting limits of the philosophical attempts to grasp it. It rather reflects the metaphysical endeavours and thus ultimately reveals that «life always shows the same aspects».<sup>102</sup>

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98 W. Dilthey: *Essence*, 66 (GS V, 406).

99 *Ibid.*, 41 (GS V, 380).

100 *Ibid.*, 66 (GS V, 406).

101 *Ibid.*, 41 (GS V, 380).

102 W. Dilthey: *Typen der Weltanschauung*, *op. cit.*, 85 (my translation).

Dilthey's historical approach to philosophy rests on the convergence between philosophical reflection and historical consciousness. Despite its empirical beginnings Dilthey finally presents a clearly philosophical history of philosophy, which has an ambivalent result regarding relativism: Although philosophy has first to accept its historical configuration which implies dependence, limitation, particularity and transience, it then regains by and within historical reflection its metaphysical features such as sovereignty, completeness, universality and infinity.<sup>103</sup> In other words, Dilthey confronts the challenge of history radically, but arrives at a surprisingly traditional concept of philosophy.<sup>104</sup> His conceptual reorientation of philosophy has a conservative tendency. Note that the historical consciousness does not only preserve the traditional features of philosophy proper, but also its particular manifestations. Although Dilthey rejects the universal aspirations of metaphysical worldviews, he accepts them as justified expressions of an aspect of life. Hence, the historical consciousness saves the conceptual unity of philosophy. Indeed, Dilthey shows the structural similarity between all worldviews and the regularity of their development. In addition, he emphasizes the affinities and connections, in particular, between the different manifestations of one type. Thus, we can understand the historical consciousness as a conceptual equivalent of the philosophical tradition that invokes the same basic images: continuity, connection and community.<sup>105</sup>

The same traditionalist attitude and social tendency characterize Dilthey's interpretation of the role of the philosopher. Dilthey was, as his pupil Georg Misch put it, a «true German professor»<sup>106</sup> who dedicated his life to academia. He used his powerful position as a full professor to propagate his understanding of philosophy and thus influenced the philosophical profession significantly. This orientation meant, first and foremost, establishing and preserving historical continuity. A look at Dilthey's professional activities reveals their strong connection to the major tendencies of his conceptual reorientation of philosophy. Dilthey dedicated not only many studies, but also a significant part of his teaching to the

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103 Gadamer already emphasizes this ambivalence, but interprets it as a consequence of Dilthey's indecision between a philosophical and a scientific foundation of his thinking. See Hans-Georg Gadamer: *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1975) 218–228.

104 Ironically, many of Dilthey's contemporaries identified his position nevertheless with the historical relativism that he attempted to overcome. See, e.g., Edmund Husserl: *Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft*, in: *Husserliana*, Bd. XXV, hg. von Thomas Nenon und Hans Rainer Sepp (Dordrecht, Boston, Lancaster: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987) 323–332.

105 See in particular: W. Dilthey: *Traum*, op. cit., 220–226. Kusch remarks that the social understanding of knowledge is as old as the recluse model. See M. Kusch: *Psychological Knowledge. A Social History and Philosophy* (London, New York: Routledge, 1999) 117f.

106 Georg Misch quoted in: Wilhelm Dilthey. *Leben und Werk in Bildern*, hg. von Guy van Kerckhoven, Hans-Ulrich Lessing und Axel Ossenkop (München, Freiburg: Karl Alber, 2008) 23.

history of philosophy.<sup>107</sup> He suggests the foundation of literary archives and engaged in editorial work to preserve the philosophical tradition.<sup>108</sup> Moreover, Dilthey's academic life was characterized by social activities. In a letter, Dilthey emphasizes his «uncontainable desire for philosophical discussion»<sup>109</sup> which was satisfied by philosophical friendships, in particular to Count Paul Yorck von Wartenburg, and regular meetings with his colleagues. There was also a circle of pupils around the old Dilthey who carried on his ideas and projects. Misch describes the intense collaboration between Dilthey and his close pupils in Berlin as a veritable «philosophical workshop».<sup>110</sup> Dilthey engaged generally in the social organisation of the discipline. He was, e.g., member of the Prussian Academy of Science and influenced successfully the appointment policy of the departments of philosophy at German universities. This brief overview already demonstrates that Dilthey adopted a quite different social role than Nietzsche, but also adapted it to his general aim: to save the identity of philosophy by the intellectual and social authority of the tradition that is imagined as a historical community.

## Conclusion

In this paper, I examined two exemplary replies to the challenge of history that played a crucial role in the controversies on the nature and purpose of philosophy in the so-called long 19<sup>th</sup> century. I claimed that Nietzsche and Dilthey developed rather different concepts of philosophy which contrasted with one another, in particular regarding their approach to the history of philosophy. While Nietzsche advocates a radical break with the history of philosophy, Dilthey emphasizes the continuity with the philosophical tradition. I also attempted to show that these conceptual reorientations of philosophy are linked to specific social images of the philosopher. Nietzsche, on the one hand, presents us a new version of the philosophical recluse. Dilthey, on the other hand, emphasizes the social character of philosophy and embraces the idea of a philosophical community.

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107 See *ibid.*, 18f., 23.

108 Dilthey suggested, e.g., the prestigious academy edition of Kant's work.

109 W. Dilthey: *An Graf Paul Yorck von Wartenburg*. Sommer 1884, in: *Briefwechsel*, Bd. II, hg. von Gudrun-Kühne Bertram und Hans-Ulrich Lessing (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015) 94 (my translation).

110 Misch quoted in: *Leben und Werk in Bildern*, *op. cit.*, 40f. To Dilthey's circle of pupils in Berlin and their academic careers see also Volker Gerhardt, Reinhardt Mehring et al: *Berliner Geist. Eine Geschichte der Berliner Universitätsphilosophie bis 1946* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1999) 153–157.



Nevertheless, these exemplary cases also share some general features: Nietzsche and Dilthey confront the challenge of history radically and use a similar conceptual framework to answer it. Both call for a historization of philosophy, but block its relativistic consequences by a reference to the concept of life. Thus, they exemplify a general tendency of *Lebensphilosophie*: Far from destroying all philosophical values, as some critics suggest even today,<sup>111</sup> most ‘philosophers of life’ attempted to mediate between modern demands and traditional philosophical claims. This conservative tendency is obvious in the case of Dilthey who finally develops a traditional concept of philosophy and fashions the role of the philosopher likewise. The sociological perspective showed, however, that also Nietzsche follows a pervasive Western tradition. His case is particularly interesting because it suggests that the social identity of the philosopher is more stable than the conceptual identity of philosophy. Thus, the history of philosophy should also to be studied as a social tradition.<sup>112</sup>

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111 The classical narratives for such a radical criticism of *Lebensphilosophie* as a downward path towards irrationalism stem from Heinrich Rickert (*Philosophie des Lebens. Darstellung und Kritik der philosophischen Modeströmungen unserer Zeit*, 1920) and Georg Lukàcs (*The Destruction of Reason*, 1954). For a recent application of this pattern see Richard Wolin: *The Seduction of Unreason: The Intellectual Romance with Fascism from Nietzsche to Postmodernism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

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