UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI PADOVA
DIPARTAMENTO DI FILOSOFIA, SOCIOLOGIA, PEDAGOGIA E PSICOLOGIA APPLICATA
LIVELLO DOTTORATO

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Nietzsche’s speculative pragmatism

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Abstract

This work proposes a reassessment of Nietzsche's philosophical significance through an engagement with contemporary thought and the aporias of the present. By reconstructing Nietzsche's perspectivism—situating it within his broader intellectual framework and its dialogue with the philosophical tradition (particularly critiques of Kantian idealism)—we demonstrate how this stance, more nuanced than often assumed, resists traditional misinterpretations, especially those advanced by Critical Theory. Our analysis reveals that Nietzsche's work converges with a speculative pragmatist position, a term employed by thinkers like Isabelle Stengers to describe their own theoretical approaches. This recontextualization not only clarifies Nietzsche's methodological commitments but also illuminates underappreciated affinities between his thought and contemporary debates. Finally, we trace how Nietzschean ideas resonate in current philosophy, arguing that these developments, if we are right, shed new light on the broader implications of Nietzsche's philosophical project in a broad sense.

Keywords: Nietzsche, Critical Theory, Pragmatism, Contemporary philosophy, Modern philosophy

Abstract (italiano)

Questo lavoro propone una rivalutazione del significato filosofico di Nietzsche attraverso un confronto con il pensiero contemporaneo e le aporie del presente. Ricostruendo il suo prospettivismo—collocandolo all'interno del suo quadro intellettuale più ampio e del suo dialogo con la tradizione filosofica (in particolare le critiche all'idealismo kantiano)—dimostriamo come questa posizione, più sfumata di quanto spesso si assuma, resista alle interpretazioni tradizionali, specialmente quelle avanzate dalla Teoria Critica. La nostra analisi rivela che l'opera di Nietzsche converge con una posizione pragmatista speculativa, un termine utilizzato da pensatori come Isabelle Stengers per descrivere i propri approcci teorici. Questa ricontestualizzazione non solo chiarisce gli impegni metodologici di Nietzsche, ma illumina anche affinità sottovalutate tra il suo pensiero e i dibattiti contemporanei. Infine, tracciamo come le idee nietzscheane risuonino nella filosofia attuale, sostenendo che questi sviluppi, se la nostra tesi è corretta, gettino nuova luce sulle implicazioni più ampie del progetto filosofico di Nietzsche in senso lato.

Parole chiave: Nietzsche, Teoria Critica, Pragmatismo, Filosofia contemporanea, Filosofia moderna

Abbreviations used for Nietzsche's works

NF - Posthumous fragment [*Nachgelassene Fragmente*], in Nietzsche, 1967-.

BVN - Nietzsche's Letters [*Briefe von Nietzsche*], in Nietzsche, 1967-.

KSA - *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienasugabe* (Nietzsche, 1988)

Schlechta - Compilation of Nietzsche's works by Karl Schlechta (Nietzsche, 1954-56)

BT - *The birth of tragedy*

CR - *Course on rhetoric*

OL - *On the origin of language* (essay from 1869-70)

TL - *On truth and lie in a nonmoral sense*

FTG - *Philosophy in the tragic age of the greeks*

UM II - *On the uses and disadvantages of history for life*

UM III - *Schopenhauer as educator*

HH I/II - *Human, all to human I/II*

D - *Daybreak*

GS - *The gay science*

Z - *Thus spoke Zarathustra*

GM - *On the genealogy of morals*

BGE - *Beyond good and evil*

TI - *Twilight of the idols*

EH - *Ecce homo*

AC - *The antichrist*

WP - *The will to power*

Summary

Introduction

In the introduction to his 1969 work, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, Pierre Klossowski asks himself how one can write with a clear conscience about a philosopher like Nietzsche without first reviewing everything that has been published about his work. Isn't one bound to raise outdated questions, long since left behind? With good humor, Klossowski admits to having conducted a "false" study, explaining that he wanted to make Nietzsche speak for himself and that, furthermore, the singular circumstances of his time should have raised the commentary of his own time to an unprecedented position in relation to that of his predecessors. The objection to which Klossowski was responding is certainly more pressing five decades later; his initiative, on the other hand, is more timely today than ever. We have in mind, first of all, the urgent needs of our century, in which, at least as far as scientific consensus is concerned, we have finally reached the point where there is no longer any doubt as to the unfeasibility of a way of life that entrusts all initiative for resolving the current planetary crisis to economic development and the *laisser faire* of scientific production[1]; and perhaps we can say that our work, in its essential direction, constitutes an attempt to grant this circumstance the power to make thought vulnerable and to once again pose the "problem of philosophy". Secondly, we consider that Klossowski's solution is based on the core of Nietzschean philosophy itself, according to the interpretation that we will develop in our own text. We will see the idea of a "false study" finding a properly conceptual meaning, one that does not exempt the commentary from an honest reading of Nietzsche's work. More profoundly, and as we will also argue in due course, the philological moment would not dispense with finding the right perspective, which is also the proper *affective* disposition, from which to most appropriately approach a given phenomenon, including the work of an author. If we are right, we will have been able to clarify some bad habits in the reception of Nietzsche, for example when the commentator finds himself too easily forced to "reconcile" the two apparently antagonistic tendencies of pragmatism and realism in the work of this philosopher, either by granting explanatory priority to one of them, or by referring one to the other without both referring to a critique of culture as their simultaneous determinations.

In relation to a reading of Nietzsche's work, our study should contribute to making this alternation of moments intelligible and making its consequential character visible. As for philosophical studies in general, it may be no small feat if this work can contribute to the coordination of theoretical orientations that are perhaps more distant than would be mandatory, forming the horizon for a comprehensive vision of our discipline, attentive to the effects of the present.

[1] On 21st century problems related to global warming, see, for example, Wallace-Wells, 2019.

Throughout the chapters that follow, our privileged interlocutors will be, on the one hand, Adorno, Horkheimer and Habermas – who we will see sharing, despite their differences, a common perception of what would be a reflective deficit in Nietzschean thought –, and, on the other, Barbara Stiegler, Michel Foucault and Isabelle Stengers, who seek to incorporate Nietzschean intuitions in the task of conceptualizing another possible paradigm for philosophical criticism, resistant to the assumptions of the latter authors. With the help of interpreters such as Christoph Cox (1999), Eduardo Nasser (2015) and Vinod Acharya (2014), as well as through the reading of strategic texts by Nietzsche – especially *Schopenhauer as educator*, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* and *The Antichrist* –, we will seek to solve the enigma of how Nietzsche was able to make viable a position that we will call, following Stengers' and Debaise's (2016) description of their own program, "speculative pragmatism", or, with Acharya, "meta-existentialism", characterized by the well-founded coexistence between, on the one hand, a realist orientation, opposed specifically to Kantian idealism, and, on the other, a pragmatist approach, not to the detriment of but in co-belonging to the former. Along this path, we will come across in Bergson an author closely linked to Nietzsche's realist perspectivism, whose detailed treatment of the modern impasse will serve as a supplement to our own argumentation and experimental defense of perspectivism. At the end of our journey, it will become clear, we hope, at least the fragility of the most common reproaches to the Nietzschean gesture, strategically represented in this work by the aforementioned authors of Critical Theory. This last choice is due to our seeing in this theoretical current, and especially in that first generation of authors, both a powerful and again current[2] realization about Enlightenment's eminently problematic and equivocal character, and for offering productive obstacles to speculative pragmatism, on the part of theorists who had already profited from Nietzsche's thought in their own elaborations, also centered on the problem of nihilism and industrial culture.

In the first chapter, we venture a reading of the historical period in which Nietzsche wrote, with a view to understanding the impasses of German thought compartmentalized between neo-Hegelian materialism, late idealism and neo-Kantianism, in their respective relations with a broader positivist cultural tendency. Then, in the second chapter, we will address Nietzschean "relativism", as diagnosed and criticized by Adorno, Horkheimer and Habermas, but also following its proper philosophical genesis, in a discussion about Kant's idealism of time.

In the third chapter, we will move to a discussion regarding the normative parameters perspectivism might offer for a critique of knowledge, mobilizing those already mentioned interpreters of Nietzschean work and verifying their respective interpretations with the help of Nietzsche's own texts. This will be the moment when the aforementioned dialogue with Bergson will be approached, despite the contrast between the two philosophers defended in particular by

[2] See only the most recent report on democracy by the V-Dem institute (Nord et. al., 2025). The percentage of the population living under autocratic regimes increased from 49% in 2004 to 72% in 2024.

Barbara Stiegler. This chapter ends with the attribution to Nietzsche of a speculative pragmatist or meta-existentialist solution.

In a concluding chapter, we will finally present what we understand by the continuity between Nietzsche's philosophical orientation and the works of Michel Foucault and Isabelle Stengers, respectively. This is when we will decisively shift our text towards a more offensive strategy, in the direction of reversing the burden of argument in the dispute with modern foundationalism, but also of making effective all the equivocality of Nietzschean criticism, on whose productivity for contemporary thinking we are betting here.

Chapter 1: Nietzsche and the philosophical currents of his time

With his back turned obstinately to the land
he kept his eyes fixed on the rolling, metallic surface of the sea,
whence, surely, help must soon be forthcoming.

– *Michel Tournier,* Friday or the other island

The idea that there would be a close connection between the development of reason and its opposite, irrationalist regression, has been common currency in philosophy at least since Adorno and Horkheimer published the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, in 1947. This was the moment when the two authors, then key figures at the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, definitively abandoned the conception that social domination would be exercised mainly "from outside", in the form of class struggle, and replaced it with the paradoxical affirmation of a constitutive relationship between reason and domination: "[m]yth is already enlightenment, and enlightenment reverts to mythology" (Adorno; Horkheimer, 2002, p. xviii). Unable to explain, solely through the categories of orthodox Marxism, the rise of European fascist regimes, which had the massive support of all layers of the population[1], the authors declare that the confidence in the emancipatory potential of bourgeois culture has been exhausted, and advance a dialectical refutation of the very "doubling" (*Verdoppelung*) of nature in appearance and essence (idem, p. 10) that had guided thought since the prehistory of humanity. From the systematization, in Homer, of the adventures of Ulysses in a spatially and temporally cohesive narrative to the logical positivism of the 20th century, what has always called the shots, according to the thesis of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, was man's feeling of fear in the face of unknown nature: fear of the supernatural, of the spirit, of demons (idem p. 19). The alleged neutrality of reason in its progressive reduction to its merely formal aspect, to simple calculation and the verification of facts, is, in this way, unmasked in it's origin, as as anthropocentric as the mythology from which it wanted to free itself. In both cases, the key word is the survival of the Self, at the same time as a physical body in the midst of hostile nature and as an individual detached, through rationalization, from the reckless influence of beliefs considered superstitious.

Nietzsche's influence on the project of radicalizing Marxist criticism, which takes shape in the aforementioned work, is well known. Indeed, before Adorno and Horkheimer, Nietzsche already accused, under the idea of "resentment," the constitutive complicity of the hypertrophy of logic" (TI Socrates, 4)[2] with a personal project of revenge in the face of a failed natural existence[3]. For

1 About this, cf. especially Reich's (1970) classical study.
2 For Nietzsche's works' translations, check the bibliography section at the end of this work. For the posthumous fragments, the translations are of our responsibility.
3 For a detailed study on Critical Theory's first generation's reception of Nietzsche, cf. Fernandes, 2022.

Nietzsche, it would be necessary to trace the origin of this decline to Socrates. The Socratic method consists, as we know, in the search for reasons and the presentation of arguments, the quality of which is understood as determining the authority of the position one wishes to defend. However, this apparently trivial facade of Socratism should not allow us to overlook, Nietzsche warns, the "ulterior motives" that would motivate this initiative more deeply (TI Socrates, 4). In fact, Nietzsche argues that this procedure, so natural to us, of examining as minutely as possible the reasons behind our beliefs, was fundamentally foreign to Greek temperament prior to the influence of Socrates. It would be necessary to explain it; Nietzsche does so in the form of a question:

> – Is Socratic irony an expression of revolt? Of plebeian *ressentiment*? As the member of an oppressed group, did Socrates take pleasure in the ferocity with which he could thrust his syllogistic knife? Did he avenge himself on the nobles he fascinated? (…) – What? Is dialectics just a form of *revenge* for Socrates? (TI Socrates, 7)

By this situation of "oppression" associated with the Athenian philosopher, Nietzsche has in mind Socrates' social origin, who "was descended from the lowest segment of society", as well as his supposed characteristic "ugliness" (TI II, 3). Dialectics would be capable of offering, to those who find themselves thus disadvantaged, an "infuriating" and "merciless tool", capable of rendering its opponent "helpless" and of "undermin[ing]" his intellect (TI Socrates, 7). Constrained by the imposition of having to expose each statement and decision to the "daylight of reason", that is, to an exhaustive and universally assimilable justification, the victims of dialectics would find themselves trapped in an exhaustive binary: "be destroyed or – be *absurdly rational...*" (TI Socrates, 10); rational speculation would be doomed, according to Socrates, above all to the task of "show[ing] that he is not an idiot" (TI Socrates, 7). Thus, Nietzsche reveals the affinity of reason itself (as conceived by Socrates) with resentment: flawed at its origin, it could not, without qualification, function as an unequivocal vehicle for human emancipation. Instead, it would be necessary to overcome resentment.

Now, the scientific consensus currently achieved around the anthropic nature of global warming, in its impotence to translate into action even when it is an unprecedented political achievement – given that the revolutionary potential of this consensus is manifest –, is decisive for us in confirming the problematic nature of the way in which the modern project has been conceived since its inception, a circumstance that Nietzsche and the Frankfurt School already perceived and sought to respond to theoretically. Starting, above all, from the second chapter of this work, we will show how, however, Nietzsche had been able to discern another possible path towards enlightenment, by accurately distinguishing the premises involved in a still theological paradigm of rationality from those that should guide the philosophical method in the proper sense. This chapter

shall provide the opportunity for these further investigations, based on a suggestion on how to understand the impasses of philosophy in Nietzsche's time, of which we understand ours as still heir today. In order to resist the leveling tendency present in Adorno and Horkheimer's text – which, after all, lists Nietzsche himself as one of the central characters in the modern saga of the instrumentalization of reason – we will seek to complicate the philosophical dispute as it appeared in the second half of the 19th century in Germany, identifying a fundamental dispute, based on the popularization of Kant, between an *a priori* program of Kantian origin and its opponents on two different sides, which would ultimately become complementary in Nietzsche's system. Under the slogan of a stochastic art[4], and attentive to the respective merits of each position (including Kantian dualism), we will speculate in Nietzsche's gesture a viable alternative for philosophical reproduction that is up to the challenges of the present. Although the defense of such a program and the indication of its positive content must await the next sections of this work, the general lines of the proposed solution should appear from our reading, at the end of this chapter, of the third *Untimely Meditation*, a work in which it will already be possible to project the fundamentals of the direction envisioned by Nietzsche.

Nietzsche's writing context

Far from being a novelty of the *The Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche's critical attitude towards Socratic rationality has been with him since his youth, when Socrates is indicated, in *The*

[4] Aristotle defines conjectural or stochastic art as that which, unlike the arts of method, proceeds by arguments that are merely plausible and credible. Favoring the idea of "glance," Aristotle, unlike Plato, recognizes stochastic intelligence as an integral part of prudence (*phronesis*): "what stochastic art loses in demonstrative necessity (in the timelessness of science) it gains in appropriateness of intervention in the *kairos* grasped on the wing" (Ewald; Fontana, 2005, p. 394). In the Hippocratic corpus, examples of stochastic arts are offered in the command of ships and medical care: "it seems to me that usually the same thing happens to doctors as happens to bad pilots. When the latter steer in calm weather, any mistake they make is not obvious; but if they are struck by a heavy storm and a violent, opposing wind, then everyone can see that they have lost their ship through ther inexperience and stupidity" (Hippocrates apud Ewald; Fontana, 2005, p. 394). For their part, Isabelle Stengers and Philippe Pignarre – authors whose importance for the present work will become clear as the text progresses – will risk defining their critical work by using the nautical image of "sounders of the depths" (*jeteurs de sonde*): "Sounders of the depths can be mistaken, but they know that the fact that they discern hazards accurately or not doesn't have the slightest importance if no one hears them. For them it is not a matter of being correct by themselves, or of waiting for the future to prove them right. It is this boat here that is their reason, this boat here which, in our case, gathers those who the cry 'another world is possible' has engaged, but who engage with languages that often divide them, with past histories that could destine them to sterile confrontations. Sounders of the depths should not invent words that are to be understood as beyond division, as if they were authorised by a transcendence in the presence of which everyone must kneel: that is the role of the prophet, or his substitute today, the theorist. The words to be created ought rather to serve as antidotes to what transforms divergences into oppositions, what makes us dream of a homogeneous unanimity, of a judgement that will at last confer on history the power to recognise those who had seen correctly" (Stengers; Pignarre, 2007, pp. 8-9). In this work in general, but more directly in the present chapter, we place ourselves in the wake of conjectural or stochastic art as we understand it specified by Stengers and Pignarre, and which Stengers would later define as "speculative pragmatism": "the *speculator* was the one who observes, stalks, cultivates the signs of a change in situation, becoming sensitive to that which, in a situation, may matter" (Stengers; Debaise, 2016, p. 88).

Birth of Tragedy, as the key character for the end of Greek tragic theater and the corresponding decline of Hellenic culture. Nietzsche's first published work, this work is part of a context of interest in the Greeks originally motivated by the need to think of a philosophical and cultural program for a Germany whose excessive introspection and lack of practical competence had already been, before Nietzsche, framed with poignancy by Hölderlin and formed the implicit diagnosis in studies of ancient Greece since Herder and Lessing (Silk; Stern, 1981, p. 7). One of the young Nietzsche's favorite authors, Hölderlin, in fact, understood the assimilation of Greek antiquity as an antidote to the imbalance of German culture, divided between the Christian emphasis on the separation of soul and body and the need, antagonistic to this doctrine, for a harmony between matter and spirit lost with the advent of Christianity (ibid., p. 8). It is no coincidence that, at the age of 17, Nietzsche would write a "letter to a friend" in praise of the poet, whose sensitivity is described as "the purest and most receptive"; above all, Nietzsche attributes to the author of Hyperion the merit of having addressed "bitter truths" to the "barbarism" of German culture, and of having nurtured a correct aversion "to the mere specialist, to the philistine" (Schlechta III, pp. 95-8).

Indeed, Nietzsche's decision to become a specialist in a profession was neither easy nor much early. At the age of 15, Pforta's outstanding student writes that specialization should be avoided so as to ensure that "mind and body persist side by side" (Schlechta, III, p. 51). This opinion would survive his entry into university. At 23, Nietzsche was planning an essay on Democritus whose aim would be to demonstrate that "all relevant thoughts" had been the work of "great geniuses" whose creativity was due to anything other than the achievement of philological and historical studies (BVN 1968, 559). The same perception would be expressed in a letter to his friend Carl von Gersdorff the following year, when the student reflected that concentration on a particular field of knowledge should attack the philosophical sense of someone who, unlike him (Nietzsche), no longer had "clarity about the essential problems of life" (BVN 1869, 632); in another confidence to the same friend, he would describe his existence as philologist as "increasingly anomalous" (BVN 1870, 58). Finally, in a letter to Erwin Rohde written at 26, therefore two years before the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche refers to the university as an environment in which "truth" is no longer "possible" and speculates – not without consequences – that working for oneself may be the only way to "work for the whole" (BVN 1870, 113). Here too, a parallel could be seen with the Frankfurtians, when examining letters that Horkheimer would write in the years immediately preceding his work on the *Dialectic*: "philosophical argument (…) now seems impossible to me"; "philosophy is overwhelmingly complicated, and the procedure depressingly slow" (Horkheimer apud Jay, 1973, p. 255).

Nietzsche had read Hölderlin at the age of 17; In addition to the critique of contemporary

rationalization, German romanticism was also defined by a positive impetus, promoting institutions that allowed, in the words of Safranski (2002, p. 88), "to experience mutual regard in our interpersonal encounters and to forge bonds of solidarity and trust in the rules and institutions that govern meaningful connections between people". The young Nietzsche's thought would respond to similar needs, if not because the threats became increasingly urgent in a century of "mediocrity and the cult of 'progress' (…) from which the age of Goethe had been relatively free" (Silk; Stern, 1981, p. 20)[5]. This acceleration of social fragmentation in Nietzsche's time would be expressed with privilege, as far as our theme is concerned, in the institutional destiny that would be reserved for the classical studies to which the then philologist dedicated himself. Nietzsche, in his first publication, explicitly addresses this state of the art of philological research:

> Some day (...) it may be decided in what time and in what men the German spirit has so far striven most resolutely to learn from the Greeks; and if we confidently assume that this unique praise must be accorded to the noblest intellectual efforts of Goethe, Schiller, and Winckelmann, we should certainly have to add that since their time and the more immediate consequences of their eforts, the endeavor to attain to culture and to the Greeks on the same path has grown incomprehensibly feebler and feebler. (...) [O]pinions concerning the value of the Greeks for education have been degenerating in the most alarming manner since that time. Expressions of compassionate condescension may be heard in the most varied camps of the spirit—and of lack of spirit. (…) And those very circles whose designed task it might be to draw indefatigably from the Greek reservoir for the good of German culture, the teachers of the higher educational institutions, have learned best to come to terms with the Greeks easily and in good time, often by skepticallyabandoning the Hellenic ideal and *completely perverting the true purpose of antiquarian studies*. (…) The cultural power of our higher educational institutions has perhaps never been lower or feebler than at present. The "journalist," the paper slave of the day, triumphs over the professor in all matters pertaining to culture; and nothing remains to the latter but the metamorphosis, often experienced by now, of uttering also like a cheerful cultured butterfly, with the "light elegance" peculiar to this sphere, employing the journalist's style. (BT 20)

Nietzsche, in short, refers to the irony of a situation of involution, in which the project of German cultural renewal based on the study of the classics becomes institutionalized to the point of completely detaching itself from the purpose that had motivated this interest in the first place. In fact, the development of university philology – which would make Germany the main European reference in the subject from the beginning of the 19th century – would also mark a change in the nature of German engagement with Greek culture. Ancient texts would henceforth be subjected to an unprecedented, systematic, "disinterested" critical analysis, to the point that real learning would gradually be replaced by simple research. Silk and Stern point to the figure of Friedrich Wolf as

[5] "What we [Goethe] wanted was totality; he fought against the separation of reason, sensibility, feeling, will (– preached in the most forbiddingly scholastic way by *Kant*, Goethe's antipode), he disciplined himself to wholeness, he *created* himself (…). A spirit like this who has *become free* stands in the middle of the world with a cheerful and trusting fatalism in the *belief* that only the individual is reprehensible, that everything is redeemed and affirmed in the whole – *he does not negate anymore*... But a belief like this is the highest of all possible beliefs: I have christened it with the name *Dyonisus*" (TI Skirmishes, 49). Nietzsche's distancing from Kant, which appears in passing in this excerpt, as well as his arguments against transcendental idealism, will be further explored in the next chapter.

emblematic in this regard. Under the rubric of *Altertumwissenschaft*, the then professor at the University of Halle was said to have been the first to "point to a perfect knowledge of the many-sided life of the ancient Greeks and Romans as the final goal of the modern study of the ancient world", raising this area of study "to the rank of a single somprehensive and independent science" (Sandys apud Silk; Stern, 1981, p. 12)[6]. From then on, communication between academic research and German culture would increasingly be considered an innocence belonging to the past. Even with regard to the internal organization of departments, fragmentation would be the rule: language, literature, thought, art, politics and society would become distinct territories occupied by specialists, and soon there would no longer be scholars willing to risk a comprehensive view of the whole (Silk; Stern, 1981, p. 13). Adorno and Horkheimer, for their part, would emphasize the fetishistic element of the modern concern with form, to the detriment of the content it conveys: "the gymnasts' pyramids in Sade's orgies (…) prefigures the organization, devoid of any substantial goal, which was to encompass the whole of life" (Adorno; Horkheimer, 2002, p. 69).

However, in order to do full justice to the issue, it will be necessary to relate this abandonment of the cultural pretensions of philology (and of the human sciences in general[7]) to the broader context of the conflict between social reproduction and practices of knowledge, which forms the backdrop for the circumscription of synthetic thought to the demands of social and institutional control. This investigation, properly pursued, would lead us to the Greeks; to quote a favorite of the young Nietzsche, Lange, in his monumental *History of Materialism*, begins his exposition of the historical origin of the materialist creed, which for him was contemporary with the beginnings of Greek philosophy, by recalling that not only Socrates had been condemned to drink poison, but also Aristotle, Protagoras, Anaxagoras and Diogenes of Apollonia had been persecuted by the religious orthodoxy of Athens (Lange, 1925, pp. 6-7). In fact, science and philosophy have always been forced to make concessions in relation to the institutions within which they were inserted, whether to religious authority, to moral beliefs considered necessary for life in society, or to a discipline of knowledge production that would privilege fields of knowledge more capable of conferring "scientificity" to their methods and delivering less ambiguous results, as well as less compromising to the political elites of each era. Instead of returning to Greece, however, we will be content to trace a brief history of the most recent form of the conflict, as it was presented to Nietzsche; at the end of the journey, we will be in a better position to access the reasons that would

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[6] Nevertheless, Nietzsche considered Wolf to be one of the great heroes of classical philology; in the third *Untimely meditation*, he states that he misses the Wolfian spirit among university philologists. On this subject, cf. Brobjer, 2007, pp. 165–168. This consideration is important in order to nuance an otherwise hasty conclusion about the assessment of philology entertained by the young Nietzsche. For a detailed study of Nietzsche's assessment of the figure of the expert (*Gelehrter*), cf. especially Jégoudez, 2022.

[7] As Jégoudez (2022, p. 29) observes, Nietzsche's criticism of the "hard" sciences will only emerge in the philosopher's period of maturity. The young Nietzsche's conflict with the specialist and the university was directed, above all, at the philology and philosophy departments of the German universities of his time.

make it so urgent to settle accounts with Socratic rationality, as too permissive to the idea that the "disinterested" progress of truth would immediately benefit the human race – an idea finally expressed in the institutional fragmentation that we have been discussing.

The ambiguity of philosophical rationalism

In the first lecture of *Eclipse of Reason*, a work published in the same year as the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and also marked by a collaboration with Adorno, Horkheimer narrates what would have been the progressive historical replacement of "objective" reason, devoted to metaphysical speculation and prospective deliberation of the "good in itself", by a reason that has become a mere instrument for achieving given natural ends, incapable, therefore, of disputing what is just and unjust and of exercising its ancient critical vocation. With regard to modernity, the author identifies in the dispute between the philosophical rationalism of Spinoza and Kant and the relativist tendencies of the empiricism of Locke and Hume the new guises of a conflict that would date back to the ancient polemic between Socrates and the sophists (Horkheimer, 2004, pp. 5-10). Thus, the apparently subversive character of the intended destruction of metaphysics by the empiricist tradition should not hide the *de facto* complicity of this formalization of the content of philosophy with the interest of religious authority in maintaining power:

> Objective reason [i. e., rationalist philosophy] aspires to replace traditional religion with methodical philosophical thought and insight (…). Its attack on mythology is perhaps more serious than that of subjective reason ´[i. e., of empiricism], which, abstract and formalistic as it conceives itself to be, is inclined to abandon the fight with religion by setting up two different brackets, one for science and philosophy, and one for institutionalized mythology, thus recognizing both of them. (Horkheimer, 2004, p. 9)[8]

Spinoza's example, subsequently mobilized by Horkheimer, should clarify the substantive claims of "objective reason" in rationalism, as well as its conflicting content with that of the current spiritual orthodoxy. According to the description offered, Spinoza would have maintained that the knowledge of nature is capable of determining our ethical conduct, as well as making "fears and petty passions, alien to the great love of the universe" (Horkheimer, 2004, p. 10). Kant, in parallel, would have tried to "establish the absolute validity of certain ideas *per se*", and his transcendental method is said not to be confused with the merely empirical method of philosophical currents

[8] Although the selected excerpt does not refer by name to rationalism and empiricism, Horkheimer is explicit in identifying one and the other, respectively, objective and subjective reason: Although these rationalist philosophical systems did not command as wide allegiance as religion had claimed, they were appreciated as efforts to record the meaning and exigencies of reality and to present truths that are binding for everybody (…) Their speculative reproductions of the universe, not the sensualistic epistemologies -- Giordano Bruno and not Telesio, Spinoza and not Locke -- clashed directly with traditional religion, because the intellectual aspirations of the metaphysicians were much more concerned with the doctrines of God, creation, and the meaning of life than were the theories of the empiricists." (Horkheimer, 2004, p. 11).

supposedly inspired by his, such as the pragmatism of James, Dewey and Peirce (idem, p. 29). Deleuze, describing the same contrast, explains that, while Kant defined philosophy as "the love which the reasonable being has for the supreme ends of human reason" (Kant apud Deleuze, 2009, p. 1), empiricism, on the contrary, conceived the rational capacity as "a particular way of realizing the ends shared by man and animals", being essentially a "faculty of organizing indirect, oblique means" to achieve ends determined by an affectivity external to that system (Deleuze, 2009, p. 1). However, we soon see that it is necessary to complicate Horkheimer's general picture. Indeed, the pure and simple association of rationalism with the "good" side of the binary, as well as the condemnation of empiricist naturalism on the charge of desertion from the battlefield, is incapable of capturing the complexity of the process, which becomes clear, for example, when we pay attention to the fact that it is plausibly rationalism, under Kant, that more explicitly embodies the model of compartmentalization of fields referred to by Horkheimer in the quote above.

Indeed, the process of formalization of reason, according to the terms used by the authors of the *Dialectic*, must be analyzed more deeply as a double movement, not only of liquidation of content, but also of reification of thought identified with technique as truth about the nature of thought. This means that, depending on how the empiricist understands the relationship between knowledge and truth, it may be anachronistic to attribute to him a simple replacement of one metaphysics, that of objective reason, by another, "more metaphysical than metaphysics" (Adorno; Horkheimer, 2002, p. 17). At the same time, as will be shown investigate, the terms of the historical success of Kantianism, especially in Nietzsche's time, testify to the ambiguity of a theoretical model that, although promoting the values of secularization, was equally well suited to the interests of moral control in the face of the disruptive advances of scientific naturalism. Indeed, this ambivalence of objective reason explains how Nietzsche, in the process of framing the regressive aspect of Socratic dialectics in *The Birth of Tragedy*, can mobilize precisely Kantian philosophy to contest that movement, risking an opposition that would otherwise draw attention as particularly unusual:

> While the disaster slumbering in the womb of [socratic] theoretical culture gradually begins to frighten modern man (…) great men, universally gifted, have contrived, with an incredible amount of thought, to make use of the paraphernalia of science itself, to point out the limits and the relativity of knowledge generally, and thus to deny decisively the claim of science to universal validity and universal aims. And their demonstration diagnosed for the first time the illusory notion which pretends to be able to fathom the innermost essence of things with the aid of causality. The extraordinary courage and wisdom of *Kant* and *Schopenhauer* have succeeded in gaining the most difficult victory, the victory over the optimism concealed in the essence of logic—an optimism that is the basis of our culture. (BT 18)

In what follows, we'll prepare an understanding of this Nietzschean opposition, which both testifies

to Nietzsche's continuity in relation to Kant's criticism and determines the subordination of this motive to a broader movement on the part of it's author, responsive to the cultural and existential pretensions of his thought. Indeed, if it is the case that Nietzsche – especially through Schopenhauer and Lange – would mobilize concepts whose origin is in Kant, it is equally clear that he instrumentalizes transcendental idealism for purposes extrinsic to this doctrine. Let us take the following excerpt from the same work:

> The sphere of poetry does not lie outside the world as a fantastic impossibility spawned by a poet's brain: it desires to be just the opposite, the unvarnished expression of the truth, and must precisely for that reason discard the mendacious finery of that alleged reality of the man of culture [*Culturmenschen*]. The contrast between this real truth of nature and the lie of culture that poses as if it were the only reality [*der sich als einzige Realität gebärdenden Culturlüge*] is similar to that between the eternal core of things, the thing-in-itself, and the wholeworld of appearances: just as tragedy, with its metaphysical comfort, points to the eternal life of this core of existence which abides through the perpetual destruction of appearances, the symbolism of the satyr chorus proclaims this primordial relationship between the thing-in-itself and appearance. (BT 8)

Here, the separation of the "phenomenon" and the "thing in itself," which in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* had the effect of challenging mechanistic naturalism, shall prepare the critique of Socrates' theoretical optimism that will take place in the text, in which the Athenian will be fatally identified with the "lie of culture" mentioned in this passage. More than that, however, the excerpt in question already locates the positive part of the young Nietzsche's project in the rebirth of a theater of Greek inspiration as a "metaphysical comfort," capable of expressing the "primordial" and therefore necessary relationship between Being and appearance, truth and deception, objectivity and subjectivity. Now, this ambivalent character that Nietzsche here implicitly diagnoses in Kantian critique – as an objection to Socratic optimism, but also as still lacking its own artistic transfiguration – expresses for a second time the ambiguity of rationalism, capable of opening it up to two distinct paths.

Neo-Kantianism and other philosophical currents in Nietzsche's century

Before we continue, let us once again establish what is plausibly the fundamental motive of Kantian philosophy, and which Nietzsche expressed in his own way in the excerpts we recovered above. These told us that Kant exposed "the limits and the relativity of knowledge generally"; in particular, this philosopher had the merit of having finally recognized as "illusory" the idea that the principle of causality would contain the truth about the meaning of nature (BT 18, cited above). This demonstration, which Kant made using "the paraphernalia of science itself", would be expressed in the unavoidable dualism between phenomenon and thing in itself, "lie of culture"

[*Culturlüge*] and "truth" (BT 18; BT 8). Although *The Birth of Tragedy*, as we have seen, goes beyond this doctrine by pointing to the need for its poeticization – "reifying", to put it provisionally, an epistemological dualism in the structure of Being – the general portrait it offers of Kant's theoretical philosophy, if not for its generality, is adequate enough. Copleston summarizes Kant's philosophical achievement as follows, paying attention to the problem he came to solve and the uncomfortable dualism he would leave for his idealist successors to deal with:

> [T]he development of physical science in the post-mediaeval world meant that the philosopher who wished to construct an overall interpretation had to grapple with the problem of reconciling the scientific view of the world as a mechanical system with the demands of the moral and religious consciousness. Descartes was faced with this problem. And so was Kant. But though Kant rejected the ways of dealing with this problem which were characteristic of his philosophical predecessors and offered his own original solution, it is arguable that in the long run he left us with 'a bifurcated reality'. On the one hand we have the phenomenal world, the world of Newtonian science, governed by necessary causal laws. On the other hand there is the supersensuous world of the free moral agent and of God. (Copleston, 1994, p. 6).

Indeed, the *Critique of Pure Reason*, while limiting the scope of mechanistic determinism to mere phenomena, and thus returning the individual to the public sphere as an agent subject to sanction[9], in the same stroke separated the subject of knowledge from the world known by science, isolating this subject from any *de facto* reciprocity with nature that could not be reduced to the mere benefit of the doubt, i.e., as function of a principle of modesty that postulated the "thinkability", but never the desirability of informed speculation, about the ultimate unity of the individual with the natural world. Everything that was not capable of explanation according to mechanistic logic would belong, according to Kant, to a domain completely different from that of empirical knowledge, being immune to information through experience.

Now, based on the consideration of these "two heads" of the Kantian distribution – metaphysical guarantee of sanction, at the same time (and inseparably) inaccessibility of the thing in itself – it would be possible to distinguish, by negation, what would be two "parts" of a philosophical program eventually resistant to Kant's dualism. Thus, in opposition to the idea of an autonomy of reason with respect to the natural world, we would see the need to criticize reason's own claim to judge itself, and therefore the imposition of a new reflexivity on the critical task. On the other hand, the Kantian interdict on the thing in itself would become the imperative of an empirically informed philosophical speculation on the unity of the phenomenal world conceived as the only world, prior to the distinction between phenomenon and thing in itself (noumenon). In fact, the second half of Germany's 19th century offers us the historical manifestation, so to speak, of

[9] For a critique of the idea of sanction, see Guyau's penetrating text on the topic (Guyau, 1930). Nietzsche would receive this author's ideas with enthusiasm, even though only after having already formulated his own (much similar) thoughts on the matter.

these two “anti-Kantian” moments, which would be *ideally* complementary, but which were now split into competing and even antagonistic philosophical currents. The following exposition will be organized according to this perception. Thus, and above all, we will pursue, in their virtues and aporias, these two strands of thought and philosophical self-understanding which, each in its own way reacting to the Kantian bifurcation, would populate the landscape of the German 19th century after the decline of the great idealist systems, both of them being reservoirs of authors who were decisive for Nietzschean intellectual formation. We refer to the late idealism of Trendelenburg, Lotze and Hartmann; and to the neo-Hegelianism of Feuerbach, Strauss and Bauer.

Late Idealism. Trendelenburg, Lotze and Hartmann

The great systems of post-Kantian German idealism – those of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel – had emerged from the identified need to correct Kantian doctrine, especially in what was considered an excessive assumption of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, concerning the postulate of the thing in itself as the absolute object of which the phenomena of experience would be the image (i.e., the phenomenon-noumenon dualism that we have already mentioned). Thus, for Fichte, Kant's insistence on defending the irreducibility of the dualism represented in this notion had compromised the consistency of that system: if the thing in itself were to indicate the cause of empirical phenomena, Kant would be violating his own thesis according to which the category of causality should be limited to a concept of the understanding[10]; If his defense of an external referentiality for experience were to be understood heuristically, as a regulatory notion of knowledge, this would still amount to gratuitously retaining a spiritual relic of the same dogmatism that Kantian criticism had determined to counter (Copleston, 1994, p. 3). To become a consistent idealism, Kant's philosophy would have to allow itself to go beyond consciousness and expose the unconscious process that would underpin it, leading to the affirmation of an ultimate principle that, transcending the subject-object duality, would be responsible for the constitution of this relationship in the first place. Having in mind that Schelling would take up Fichte's first steps and that Hegel, by his turn, would profit from the initial developments of idealism as led by these two authors, it is safe to say that “German idealism as a whole presupposed the critical philosophy” (idem, p. 5)[11].

To the collapse of idealism as pursued in the first half of the 19th century one can assign,

[10] Nietzsche would not fail to replicate a similar objection to Kantian dualism: “The sore spot of Kant's critical philosophy has gradually become visible even to dull eyes: Kant no longer has a right to his distinction ‘appearance’ and ‘thing-in-itself’ -- he had deprived himself of the right to go on distinguishing in this old familiar way, in so far as he rejected as impermissible making inferences from phenomena to a cause of phenomena -- in accordance with his conception of causality and its purely intra-phenomenal validity (...)” (WP 553).

[11] Gardiner (1981, p. 147) summarizes the perception of post-Kantian idealists regarding Kant's doctrine as follows: “the Kantian insight that we necessarily operate within a framework of fundamental notions that governs our overall conception of existence and informs our vision of the world was not denied. Nevertheless, it was maintained that it was not feasible to regard such a framework as being ultimate in a manner that precluded further explanation”.

with Beiser (2014a, p. 1), both theoretical and historical reasons. On the one hand, the publication of Trendelenburg's *Logical Investigations* and Lotze's *Metaphysics* expressed important criticisms of Hegel's foundationalism, whose deductive method they considered unsustainable in the face of the irreversible imposition of the naturalist approach in the sciences. Meanwhile, the replacement of the reformist movement by the conservatism of the new monarchy – following the death of Friedrich III – would entail, among other illiberal measures, the marginalization of the main Hegelian journal, the *Halle Yearbook*, transferred out of Prussia (cf. Beiser, 2005, pp. 307 ff). Hollingdale, summarizing the institutional situation of German philosophy in the period immediately after the failure of 1848's revolution, writes the following:

> Restrictions on what would now be called civil liberties and freedom of expression became general and were applied not only to political and social life but to almost every region of public activity; and among the most affected regions was philosophy. Convinced that revolutionary acts could only be a direct consequence of revolutionary ideas, and that revolutionary ideas could in turn only be a direct consequence of philosophical theories, the representatives of a reinvigorated state and church purged the philosophy departments of the universities of everything that struck them as being subversive of the existing order. (Hollingdale, 1996, p. 74)

We will return to this historical dimension of the institutional marginalization of Hegelianism in the course of this chapter. Before doing so, it will be appropriate to review the way in which idealism survived as an expressly metaphysical initiative, no less reticent regarding Kantian subjectivism.

Trendelenburg and Lotze were among the most influential philosophers of the period between Hegel's death in 1831 and Nietzsche's maturity, both holding positions at prestigious universities for several decades[12]. Although active participants in the demobilization of the rationalist idealism that dominated the first half of the century, their insistence on retaining an organic vision of the world, which saw in nature a whole greater than its parts, extended the more general idealist tradition as embodied in Leibniz and developed in the great idealist systems of the nineteenth century that we have already mentioned. To be sure, both Trendelenburg and Lotze were convinced that the idealist tradition could only be preserved if it adapted to the intellectual demands of their time. As Beiser (2013, p. 4) explains, "Trendelenburg and Lotze's reform of the idealist tradition was a matter of retaining its *content* – objective idealism and the organic worldview – but discarding its *form* – its methods and technical vocabulary". In other words, metaphysics could no longer proceed through *a priori* speculation, but would have its object in the empirical sciences, with the aim of pursuing a comprehensive systematization of its results[13]. With regard specifically to

[12] Trendelenburg was a professor in Berlin from 1833 to 1872, and Lotze in Göttingen from 1844 to 1881.

[13] Like Fichte, Trendelenburg and Lotze also disputed Kant's generalized attack on metaphysics, arguing that Kantian philosophy itself had not failed to make ontological assumptions of its own. In particular, Trendelenburg, in his major work *Logical Investigations*, raised to fame an old argument against the subjectivity of time (the famous argument of the "third possibility"), which would be reproduced by Nietzsche in a posthumous fragment (cf. NF 27[68] of 1884). The objection consists in drawing attention to the fact that the mere fact of the subjective origin of time or space cannot exclude their existence also as objective forms.

Lotze, it is revealing to recover the origin of his main work, *Microcosm*, in the context of the so-called "materialist controversy", one of the most important intellectual quarrels of the second half of that century. The controversy, which revolved around a discussion about the limits of scientific knowledge, profited from the accelerated growth that specialized sciences had been subject to in recent decades. Lotze was present at the opening lecture of the thirty-first "Meeting of German Natural Scientists and Physicians" in 1854, when Rudolph Wagner, director of the Institute of Physiology in Göttingen and responsible for the conference that evening, quoted a long passage from one of his works, co-opting the then young university professor to the side of his public anti-materialist cause. Lotze, who above all did not want to be confused with someone who, like Wagner, advocated a parallel accounting between science and biblical doctrine, would dedicate his following years to forging a middle ground between the materialist doctrine and the conservative dogmatism of that physiologist, a process that would culminate in the composition of one of the most widely read philosophical works of his time.

It would certainly be necessary to include a word about Schopenhauer in this reference to authors who, while critical of the Hegelian deductivist method, nevertheless did not go so far as to defend a complete formalization of reason, despite what the more general tendency of their time was driving them to do. However, we will reserve this treatment for the end of the chapter, due to its particular importance. For now, it will be of interest to also list – in the same Hegelian wake from the idealist side – the name of Eduard von Hartmann, a philosopher whose metaphysical model would inspire the young Nietzsche even more than Schopenhauer's[14], who in turn was an author whom Hartmann sought, perhaps unusually, to reconcile with Hegel's metaphysics.

Among the figures of late idealism, Hartmann was certainly the most decisive for Nietzsche's philosophical formation, in addition to being one of the best-known and most widely read authors in Germany in the 1870s and 1880s. It is notable, for the purposes of our discussion, the conception of one of his essays[15] as an epistolary exchange between a philosopher and a natural scientist, regarding the future of philosophy: while the scientist expressed his disillusionment with speculative idealism, considered outdated in relation to the methods of observation and experiment practiced in the sciences, the philosopher responded that there would be no reason to take the methods of that tradition as the final word on his discipline; instead, philosophy is conceived as an inquiry also based on experience, being distinct from science more in its objectives and interests than in its common disposition to be informed by the results obtained from empirical research. Hartmann had tried to rise to the challenge with his monumental *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, which Nietzsche would read for the first time when it was published in 1869. What seems to have interested the young philologist from Basel – who, incidentally, would send Hartmann a copy of

[14] This is, at least, Nasser's (2012) opinion.
[15] "Natural Research and Philosophy", from 1872. We base ourselves on Beiser's assessment (2014, pp. 45-46).

The Birth of Tragedy as soon as this work was published – was the opportunity with which the *Philosophy of the Unconscious* advanced what would be a necessary correction of the Kantian and Schopenhauerian systems, through the thesis of "panpsychism" or "primordial intellect". More specifically, Nietzsche's attention to the idea, explains Nasser (2014, p. 41), must be interpreted in the context of the discomfort caused – and attested in the well-known fragment *Zu Schopenhauer* – by a perceived paradox that would victimize Schopenhauer's theory of individuation: in his attempt to combine transcendental idealism – for which the category of causality would have its source in the intellect – and the naturalist prescription – which should refer the intellect to a historical origin through the unrestricted application of the causal law –, Schopenhauer would have fallen into contradiction by not deciding between abandoning the Kantian starting point or assuming that individuation would be independent of the intellect[16]. For the young Nietzsche, Hartmann's absolute idealism would offer a viable solution, granting time-space an intermediate reality between the subjective phenomenon and the thing in itself: "[not a] subjectively posited phenomenon, as in Kant, Fichte and Schopenhauer [but an] objectively (…) posited phenomenon, or, as Hegel expresses it (…) [a] mere phenomenon, not only for us, but in itself" (Hartmann apud Nasser, 2014, p. 43). In the context of exploring the relationship between Hartmann and Nietzsche, Nasser (2014, pp. 119-21) identifies a fruitful influence that was not limited to the philosopher's youth: more specifically, Hartmann's idealism suggested to Nietzsche a "critical realist" position, which, decoupled from the "metaphysical yearnings of Schopenhauerian flavor" still present in Hartmann, would come to summarize his contribution to epistemology. Although we must still qualify this account, referring Nietzsche's realism to the previous movement of transferring the critical task to an energetic plane, it is enough to note that German idealism, far from having abandoned the scene after Hegel's death, was still transfigured into metaphysical philosophies capable of resisting the more general skeptical tendency of the period, conceding only the essentials to epistemological criticism[17].

Left Hegelians

We've mentioned that the death of Friedrich III and the corresponding rise to the throne of his successor – Friedrich Wilhelm IV, of which Nietzsche would inherit the name and anniversary

[16] NF 57 [155] from autumn 1867/spring 1868.

[17] In a letter to Gersdorff from November 1870 (BVN 1870, 107), Nietzsche mentions that he was attending Jacob Burkhardt's "excellent" classes on Hegel's philosophy of history. Regarding the "Hegel-Nietzsche problem", compare Deleuze's (1983) inflexible position with that of Breazeale (1975), who is more permissive of rapprochement between the two philosophers. Breazeale, however, notes that the way in which each develops Kantian philosophy is radically different, since Hegel's system would depend on the possibility of overcoming the point of view of consciousness, while Nietzsche would accept the absolute character of perspectivism.

date – would guide a second front of the hegelian program, not so much concerned with the adaptation of idealism in the face of the advancement of the naturalistic method in the sciences, but reacting to the fact that history, despite of what the hegelian system had counted on, would have revealed to be able to move in the opposite direction than promised on that model. The diagnosis of this state of affairs would eventually lead, on the part of the so-called "left Hegelians", to a total loss of faith in a dialectic immanent to the historical process, which should by necessity ensure the achievement of reformist ideals (Beiser, 2005, p. 311; Toews, 1985, p. 235). Now, whatever the exact relationship between one circumstance and another, it is clear that Feuerbach, Bauer and Marx eventually minimized the current importance of philosophy, and supported the need for its replacement, whether by anthropology, history or political economy; a position that is certainly not completely alien, it is worth noting, to the disqualification of the Socratic rationality advocated by Nietzsche, or its Adorno-Horkheimerian appropriation in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Be that as it may, it remains that, just as the authors of late idealism resisted Kant's dualist solution and the corresponding neutralization of naturalism implied therein, so the neo-Hegelians radicalized by exposure to facts would vindicate, through the "terrorism of pure theory" (Bauer), the expansion of empirical arguments scope, whatever the impact on religion, morality or the State. Claiming the heritage of none other than Kant himself, and of the celebrated Transcendental Dialectic in particular[18], the vocation of philosophy in a century of specialization will now be conceived as eminently critical, aware of the perspicuity of ideology and reification in the totalizing attempts of idealist doctrines.

The young Nietzsche had not only read Feuerbach and Strauss, important philosophical influences in his process of religious disillusionment in the 1860s (Brobjer, 2008, p. 44), but would also come to refer to Niebuhr and Ranke – key figures in the development of historical methods and decisive influences for the neo-Hegelians – as "the new Columbuses of the German spirit" (NF 37[8] of June/July 1885, KSA 11.582), the (re-)reading of their works being associated with Nietzsche's break with Schopenhauer and the beginning of what is commonly agreed to be the second phase of his production[19]. "[W]hat is needed from now on is *historical philosophizing*, and with it the virtue of modesty" (HH 2). Now, if it is appropriate to identify, side by side with Nietzsche's idealist influences, the realization that his thought would also be shaped by important

[18] It is interesting to note that Kant himself would later highlight the importance of this section of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in particular, in the context of minimizing the positive part of the program as inessential to the "principal end of the system" which now concerns the simply negative purpose of showing "that the entire speculative use of our reason never reaches further than to objects of possible experience" (Kant, 2004b, p. 10). For Beiser (1987, p. 208), this inflection in Kant's appreciation of his main work was due to the pressure of the numerous criticisms received of his system.

[19] Montinari (2012, p. 39) writes: "the knowledge of the irremediable end of all myth was an achievement of Nietzsche himself, that is, from the moment he definitively freed himself from his Wagnerian and Schopenhauerian illusions (around 1875-76) and never again thought about the restoration of the Germanic myth to which he had dedicated enthusiastic pages in The Birth of Tragedy".

materialist intuitions, it becomes understandable that an author like Habermas (1987) could alternate his critique of Nietzsche between two distinct and otherwise conflicting moments, on the one hand accusing the supposed "abandonment" of modernity by an author who had made a career of ignoring his period's critical achievements, and on the other resenting the excess of historicism that would plague philosophy from Hegel to Foucault, with Nietzsche as one main episode. In this case, it would not be innocuous if we found precisely in Kantianism itself the momentum for this paradoxical Nietzschean movement, a possibility indicated at least by the fact that we already perceived post-Kantian idealism itself as a reaction to the merits and demerits of the critical system. More precisely, we will see that it is be from the very core of the (neo-)Kantianism of his time – as long as it is understood in its unheard-of consequences, as already anticipated in *The Birth of Tragedy* – that the young Nietzsche will see his perspectivist position becoming feasible for a first time.

Before we get to that, it would be appropriate to say a word about why Nietzsche's century, in the period between the 1860s and 1880s, would see a tripling of the number of courses on none other than Kant, even with the availability of alternative conceptions of philosophy that we have heard about, otherwise more obvious candidates for philosophical fortune in a theoretical context that seemed to have already settled accounts with the *Critique of Pure Reason*. In fact, the number of lectures on Kant would exceed, over the aforementioned period, the sum of presentations on all other modern philosophers, and monographs on his philosophy would multiply geometrically year after year, to the point where all the main German universities had at least one neo-Kantian professor on the staff of each philosophy program (Beiser, 2014b, p. 14). This circumstance would also help to understand the young Nietzsche's appeal to this particular intercessor.

The rise of neo-Kantianism related to the state of science

A first factor that seems to have contributed decisively to the decline of late idealism, which was expressed in the attempts at speculative unification of knowledge by Trendelenburg, Hartmann and others, was the state of development of science at the time, still confident on the mechanistic paradigm as the most adequate way of explaining natural phenomena. Thus, Trendelenburg's "organic worldview", which was supposed to be justified by the latest results of physics and physiology, would prove to be a risky strategy in the face of the emergence of a new physicalist program in Germany in the 1840s, exemplarily endorsed by scientists such as Du Bois-Reymond and Helmholtz (Beiser, 2014, pp. 21-22). Hartmann and Lotze would face similar obstacles; all of them would see their problems multiply when Darwinism entered the scene, reputedly capable of explaining the origin of natural species without harming the primacy of the mechanistic paradigm,

thus taking by storm one of the last territories claimed by metaphysics. As Prigogine and Stengers (1984a, p. 80) summarize , "the development of modern science was marked by the abandonment of vitalist inspiration and, in particular, of Aristotelian final causes"[20], so that, "Kant's influence can also be recognized in (…) the distinction between vitalism as philosophical speculation and the problem of scientific methodology" (idem, p. 110). Prigogine and Stengers see in Helmholtz the most accomplished figure of this type of scientist, dominant in the German university turned into a European center and model:

> Most physiologists from the powerful German school (Liebig, Ludwig, Müller, Du Bois-Reymond, Virchow) agree with Helmholtz in essence: the physical-chemical functioning of living beings is subject to the same laws as inanimate matter and must be studied in the same terms. They do not exclude the possibility that there is a "vital force" that justifies the development and specificity of living beings, but since this force does not intervene causally and does not participate in the economy of physical-chemical forces that science studies, it is not, and cannot be, for them, an object of science. Physiology as an objective science must study the functioning of living beings exactly as they are, as a given, without asking questions about their essence or genesis. Vitalism was thus widely accepted by scientific circles in the 19th century, but it constituted a subjective conviction associated with a perfectly reductionist objective scientific activity. (Prigogine; Stengers, 1984b, p. 72)

Scientific research, devoted to the study of mechanical correlations even when the limits of this framework are well known, thus finds its object in the phenomenon, which, unlike the thing in itself, must be capable of discursive apprehension, even if only from the point of view of subjective idealism and not from a tentative approximation to reality in the fullest sense of the word. Speculating on a "convergence" between the interests of the church, for which the world should manifest divine omnipotence, and the mathematizable universe of physicists, Prigogine and Stengers (1984b, p. 36) even risk the diagnosis according to which the Aristotelian natural world would be, for the purposes of modernity, still "a world that is too autonomous; in it, beings were excessively powerful and active, and their submission to the absolute Sovereign remained suspect and limited"[21]. In any case, the assumption of a mathematizable world, inspiring modern science

[20] On the difference between Aristotelian and modern conceptions of nature, cf. Hatab, 2014: "Modern science was a self-conscious repudiation of Aristotelian 'physics,' in part because central Aristotelian concepts of *telos* and *dunamis* eluded precise formalization and verification. As Newton put it, 'the moderns, rejecting substantial forms and occult qualities, have endeavored to subject the phenomena of nature to the laws of mathematics.' And Descartes described his *Meditations* as the foundation of his physics, which deals a mortal blow to Aristotelian physics. Consequently, in modern science, 'nature' is no longer understood in an Aristotelian manner as the field of self-manifesting phenomena that guide inquiry according to their evident formations, but as re-formed phenomena according to *a priori* constructs and principles that are not evident in immediate experience. In the Sixth Meditation, Descartes claims that corporeal things in nature exist, but their true existence cannot be ascertained as a match with our sensory grasp (as in Aristotle), because sense experience can be confused. Things in nature exist only in the manner of clear and distinct ideas, which are ultimately grounded in pure mathematics, which is the ground of mechanical physics, and which, for Descartes, is ultimately guaranteed by God" (Hatab, 2014, p. 35). For Hatab, "Nietzschean will to power can be seen as a radicalization of Aristotelian *phusis* and *dunamis*" (idem, p. 38).

[21] Copleston defends a similar idea, although he evaluates this circumstance differently, by stating that "it is a mistake to suppose that the mechanical view of the universe either was or ought logically to have been a bar to religious belief. Galileo, who considered that the application of mathematics to the world is objectively ensured, believed that it was ensured by God's creation of the world as a mathematically intelligible system. It was divine creation which guaranteed the parallelisms between mathematical deduction and the actual system of Nature. Robert Boyle also was

from an experimental point of view, would inevitably insinuate itself, through its success, as the *conclusion* of science itself, from there being able to determine the privilege of certain research directions and the relations between different regions of knowledge. Commenting on the sacrificial logic behind the scientist's refusal to listen to the "big questions" (i.e., "non-scientific" questions), Stengers (2018, pp. 32-33) would recover the well-known parable of the man who, desperately, searches for his keys at the foot of a lamppost. When a passerby asks if perhaps the keys had fallen somewhere else, the man replies: "not at all, but this is the only well-lit spot!"

To be sure, Kant's philosophy would precisely *not* confuse the naïve physicalism of positive science with knowledge about how the world really works; even so – and this is the ambiguity that shall be pointed – his pacifying proposal offered little resistance to the identification of "good" knowledge with the reductionist description to which physicalism subjected nature, as a space for the coexistence of merely passive forces related in a deterministically way. This is illustrated expressively in the fact that the neo-Kantian definition of philosophy, as espoused by several of its exponents, would completely ignore, at least during the 1860s, "practical philosophy", a fundamental part of Kant's original system, as well as in the corresponding approximation of neo-Kantian authors to the German positivist movement (Beiser, 2014, pp. 39-40). This selective tendency in relation to Kant's own project, again, is explicable through the reductionist context of the 19th century in general; In the last decades of this period, academic rivalry with psychology in particular would exert considerable pressure on philosophy's academic ambitions. Now, far from being reduced to a purely intellectual issue, this crisis in defining the object of our discipline refers to a question of employability, since very few philosophers could live solely on royalties, and depended on state sponsorship in the context of a Germany whose universities were public institutions competing for a limited budget[22]. Even so, the truth is that thought itself was already reciprocally responsible for its own formalization. The *Dialectic of Enlightenment* would poignantly locate the origin of such a gesture of submission in the author recovered by neo-Kantianism:

> Kant's concepts are ambiguous. Reason as the transcendental, supraindividual self contains the idea of a free coexistence in which human beings organize themselves to form the universal subject and resolve the conflict between pure and empirical reason in the conscious solidarity of the whole. The whole represents the idea of true universality, utopia. At the same time, however, reason is the agency of calculating thought, which arranges the

convinced of divine creation. And that Newton was a man of firm piety is well known. " (Copleston, 1993, pp. 288-89).

[22] "According to the Prussian General Code of 1794, universities and schools were state institutions that could only be established with official permission. Universities were financed and administered by the various ministers of culture. The Prussian General Code and Disciplinary Law of 1852 allowed a teacher, as a government official (ordentlicher Professor), to be prosecuted if he had, 'in both public and private life, behavior unworthy of his profession'. Admission to universities also depended on the ministers: only the ministry was responsible for creating new positions required by teaching needs, in which case it had to appoint a professor for the newly created position, the faculty handed over a triple list to the ministry, which reserved the right of choice" (Cacciola, 1991, p. 15). The last passage in quotation marks is from *The decline of German mandarins*, by Fritz Ringer.

> world for the purposes of self-preservation and recognizes no function other than that of working on the object as mere sense material in order to make it the material of subjugation. The true nature of the schematism which externally coordinates the universal and the particular, the concept and the individual case, finally turns out, in current science, to be the interest of industrial society (Adorno; Horkheimer, 2002, p. 65)

Knowledge as harmonization of the particular with the universal, that is, as simple recognition of facts in a world understood as the *locus* of an ultimate truth, is in fact incapable of offering the model for a speculative metaphysics, whose objective is to obtain a coherent vision of the whole, which precisely unifies consciousness and the world, rather than separates them by a relation of representation. As will be explored in the next chapter, the paradigm of recognition (or representation) presupposes, even if only regulatoryly, the static world of Parmenides behind its operations of equivalence; a universe eventually conceived as *becoming* would demand a completely different commitment from the theorist, in particular her attention to the fact that the very enunciation of its postulates introduces a disturbance in the flow of time and is not innocent with respect to the reality of which it claims to account in advance.

From Hegelianism to Kantianism. The Fischer problem

Lange already gave us a first clue as to the simultaneity, in the materialism of all eras, of a dogmatic aspect sided with a potential critique of dogmatism, when his complaint regarding this doctrine came almost in spite of himself, a philosopher and public man whose practical experience "g[a]ve him an understanding, not always possessed by the learned, of the operation of theories when they pass out into the market-plaec" (Russell, 1925, p. vii). But the most profitable names for our next objective will be those of two even more ambivalent authors, Kuno Fischer and Eduard Zeller, whom the young Nietzsche would read at the same time as his first contact with Lange. Perfect pairs in many ways, Fischer and Zeller were perhaps the two main figures responsible for the rise of neo-Kantianism in the 1860s. Before that, however, both authors had shared the same fate of being persecuted on charges of pantheism: Fischer had had his professorship in Heidelberg revoked by the Ministry of Education in 1853, spending the following three years under the radar, and Zeller, after subsequent refusals of his promotion by the German government, eventually migrated to teach in Switzerland, where it was necessary to guarantee him police protection. A brief exposition of the intellectual and institutional trajectories of these two authors, in addition to enriching our understanding of the context of Nietzschean writing, will also be profitable for the more general purpose, which transcends the present chapter, of framing the often circumstantial and not always unequivocal character of philosophy's commitment to Kantianism, which, however, our

own time would still be able to continue in its own way[23].

Plausibly the "strangest" figure in the Kantian recovery during Nietzsche's century (Beiser, 2014b, p. 284), Fischer had in fact been at the center of the neo-Hegelian movement, having defended Hegel's idealism from the attacks advanced by the left Hegelians. Although he agreed with Feuerbach and others that Hegel's dialectic had made it impossible to retain traditional Christian theism, Fischer would accuse this movement of having lost sight of the fact that the purpose of that system had been above all to integrate objectivity and subjectivity, matter and spirit, rather than to prioritize one or the other plane of reference (ibid., p. 289). More than that, Fischer's courses at Heidelberg would prove extremely popular with students, eager to hear about the liberal and progressive ideas behind the 1848 revolution. Indeed, this popularity would soon attract the attention of the theology department at the same university, which would denounce Fischer's "neo-Hegelian ideology" to the authorities, a process that would culminate in the revocation of his right to teach. An early part of the content of his lectures at Heidelberg had been published the previous year, in the first edition of his *History of Modern Philosophy*, a work that would be used as evidence by the accusers and that Nietzsche, for his part, would read for the first time around 1868. In effect, we see Fischer unambiguously defending the pantheist doctrine, the truth of which he argues is the conclusion of all consistent philosophy (Beiser, 2014b, p. 293). It is during this period that his ambivalent theoretical attempts begin to defy assimilation: while, in the aforementioned work, Fischer affirmed an extreme rationalism, which refused to impose any limits on knowledge, in the same year the publication of his *Logic and Metaphysics* introduces the idea that the Hegelian system "must be placed under the control of Kant" (Fischer apud Beiser, 2014b, p. 297). To complicate matters even further, Fischer would come to refer to Kantian doctrine, in the year immediately following this last text, as a form of irrationalism, due to the barriers that this doctrine would impose on thought[24]. For all these reasons, Beiser (idem, p. 284) does not hesitate to comment on this author's conversion to Kantianism as "the mystery of Kuno Fischer".

However, the truth is that a very palpable hypothesis offers itself for interpretation when we consider the strategic potential that Fischer saw in Kant's teachings, as well as the fact that this author – otherwise so important for the consolidation of neo-Kantianism – would come to reaffirm his Hegelian roots in the 1880s, in reaction to that movement taken as the final word in philosophy. In this regard, a series of three lectures given in 1860, later published under the title *The Life of Kant and the Foundations of His Doctrine*, is especially relevant. In these lectures, Fischer would

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[23] "[É] sensato afirmar que as mais importantes correntes filosóficas contemporâneas – a filosofia analítica anglo-saxã, a epistemologia, a teoria crítica de Habermas, a hermenêutica de Gadamer, o estruturalismo histórico de Foucault – renovaram a tarefa crítica definindo de novo a 'verdadeira' natureza do transcendental kantiano (natureza linguageira, social, histórica, prática, política)" (Gualandi, 2003, p. 23).

[24] In *Defense of My Doctrine*, in which Fischer defended himself against accusations related to the episode mentioned in this paragraph (cf. Beiser, 2014b, p. 297).

argue for the relevance of Kant's response to the problem of knowledge in the face of what he referred to as "*die Lebensfrage der Philosophie*" (the life-and-death question of philosophy). Beiser summarizes the situation in a scholarly manner:

> Like many philosophers in the 1850s and 1860s, Fischer felt that philosophy was going through a crisis, and that nothing less was at stake than the future of philosophy itself. The rapid growth of the empirical sciences seemed to doom philosophy to obsolescence; and philosophers like Stirner and Feuerbach saw philosophy as little more than disguised theology. Who could save philosophy from this crisis? Who could rescue it from imminent death? The answer was clear: Immanuel Kant. It was not Hegel, because he was more part of the problem than the solution. Hegel's speculative metaphysics had become increasingly disreputable and unpopular because its methodology seemed utterly at odds with the new empirical and historical sciences. While Stirner and Feuerbach would only scoff at Hegel, they would have to respect Kant, whose critical method had been their ultimate inspiration too. (Beiser, 2014b, p. 302)[25]

Now, the eminently strategic character of the choice for Kant, which Beiser fits into this description, reveals itself with some authority as soon as we pay attention to Fischer's work as a whole, from the beginning to the end incapable of unambiguously espousing that promised guarantee of Hegelianism by Kantian criticism. We saw something of this conflict when we referred to his texts from the 1850s; in 1883, his *Critique of Kantian Philosophy* would definitively turn upside down the previously maintained order of priority between the two systems. Now advancing criticisms of prominent neo-Kantians such as Hermann Cohen and Emil Arnoldt, Fischer will argue that the need for consistency should have forced Kant to abandon the initial distinction between phenomenon and noumenon, under penalty of the very project of conceiving the *a priori* conditions of experience being impracticable (Beiser, 2014b, p. 321). This is the moment when one of the most important authors for the origin of neo-Kantianism ultimately retreats from Kant's dualist prohibition, retaining instead the prospect of a unified world conception, a movement that he considers essential for the support of the critical system itself. Commenting on Fischer's defense text on the occasion of the aforementioned revocation of his position in Heidelberg, the accuser had summarized the accused's evasive position with the words: "*Carrière um jeden Preis*" [career at all costs] (Schenkel apud Beiser, 2014b, p. 295). This would at least be a plausible explanation, albeit retroactive, for his unusual attempt to reconcile Kant and Hegel, which would end up testifying instead to the insurmountable difference between the two paradigms.

[25] Following the publication of the course we mentioned, two volumes would be released – which would later be incorporated into a later edition of the *History of Modern Philosophy* – in which Fischer would once again discuss Kantian philosophy, once again with an emphasis on epistemology. This work, entitled *Immanuel Kant, History of the Development and System of Critical Philosophy*, would prove to be a key piece of literature, making Kant "cease[] to be another dead philosopher from the past and became a living thinker of vital concern to the present. (Beiser, 2014b, p. 306). In Windelband's testimony, the work deserved "the most eminent place" in the neo-Kantian bibliography, having exerted "the greatest influence" on the origin of this movement (Windelband apud Beiser, 2014b, p. 306).

The Zeller problem

Although Zeller had, unlike Fischer, given up of his original association with Hegelian philosophy unambiguously, his intellectual trajectory testifies, despite or because of this, in a much more significant way to a recognized insufficiency of Kantianism, now on the part of an author who was especially aware of Hegel's system limitations. In fact, although the young Zeller had contributed to Hegelian journals and defended Hegel in his important *Philosophy of the Greeks*, his positive assessment of this doctrine was never unrestricted, for he was apprehensive from the beggining about the dangers of imposing abstract schemes on concrete reality (Beiser, 2014b, p. 330). This author's definitive distancing from Hegelianism can be associated with his involvement with the historical criticism of the Tübingen School, which for Zeller would find its most excellent achievement in Strauss's *Life of Jesus* (idem, p. 334). His approach to Kant, despite any reservations, can be attributed to this same influence, despite Strauss's own position on the matter. In fact, the mere proximity to Strauss's circle – who was dismissed from his position in Tübingen when his book was published – would have been enough for Zeller to have refused for two times his promotion as extraordinary professor. This process would result in his choice to teach in Bern, which would not be feasible before the city government, through skillful political maneuvers, had defeated the local clergy's campaign against the new professor's appointment (Beiser, 2014b, pp. 340-341)[26]. Zeller's eventual return to Germany would be no less conflictuous. When the religious leaders of Marburg learned of his appointment to a post at that university, they did everything they could to annul the appointment, and Friedrich IV would refuse to sign the necessary documents for the contract to be validated. The former Tübingen student would not have been sworn in without a huge mobilization by the liberals, who would finally have him secured a position in the philosophy department, and not theology as originally agreed.

A little over a decade later, in 1862, Zeller would publicize his conversion to Kant from the podium of his inaugural lecture in Heidelberg; the text would be one of the landmarks of the rising neo-Kantian movement, and in many ways the complement of the aforementioned course offered by Fischer in the same period, both being emphatic about what they understood as philosophy's current state of crisis (Beiser, 2014b, p. 342-343)[27]. We mentioned above Zeller's markedly critical attitude with respect to Hegelian dialectics. His inaugural lecture, in fact, would begin by a denunciation of Hegel's logic, for its supposed confusion between the form and the contents of knowledge, its lack

[26] Strauss, on the other hand, had not been so fortunate. When he was offered a position in Zurich in 1839, the protests were so intense that the city council had no choice but to retire Strauss on half pay. Zeller would eventually write a biography of Strauss and edit his letters.

[27] "Te defining documents of the neoKantian conception of philosophy are two lectures delivered in the early 1860s, one by Kuno Fischer and the other by Eduard Zeller" (Beiser, 2014, p. 36). The class by Fischer that Beiser refers to is the second in the aforementioned series of three, entitled "The problem of knowledge as the first question of philosophy". Zeller's is titled "On the Meaning and Task of the Theory of Knowledge."

of distinction between reality and thought (idem, p. 337). This obvious deficit had become clear to Zeller from the historical studies we have already mentioned: if dialectics were to offer a universal system based on an elevation (*Aufhebung*) in relation to the partial representations of religion, the historical criticism of the Tübingers would have shown that such representations would not even be partial, but simple untruths, incapable of offering any support to the dialectical procedure (idem, p. 338). More importantly, the prospect of emptying religion of its temporal content would betray the reductivistic error of taking for granted the possibility of translating the empirical into the intellectual without loss, like a poem in prose. From this, one can well understand the impact of Kant's argument: by refusing to graft a conciliation between phenomenon and noumenon, critical philosophy would have preserved the irreducibility of the sensible with respect to the intellectual concept.

Let us conclude, however, by drawing attention to the sense in which Zeller's remarks would also affect his reception of Kant's own doctrine. Since the arguments of the 1862 lecture were still very general and not much conclusive, Zeller would offer a new opportunity for the listener to take part in his solution to the *Lebensfrage*. In 1868, Heidelberg would host a new lecture on the same topic[28]; Zeller's position, now exposed in greater detail, would once again prove to be very similar to Fischer's, now also regarding an unexpected point: just as the latter did not give up the project of uniting the subjective and objective poles of reality in a comprehensive interpretation, Zeller comes to list, among the possibilities for philosophy in a century of specialization, nothing less than the task of "connecting all sciences" into a single "total science" (*Gesamtwissenschaft*) working out the results of empirical experience (Beiser, 2014b, p. 351). This turn seems less surprising, however, if we come to consider that, for Zeller, philosophy conceived as epistemology should, from the beginning, use the experimental method of science, and proceed as a kind of empirical psychology (Beiser, 2014b, p. 352) that would hardly be compatible with *Critique of Pure Reason's* formalistic approach.

Now, the fact that Kant's formalism seemed insufficient to Zeller is what further turns intelligible that this author would undertake to find in the neoclassical ethics of self-realization the middle path between an amoral relativist hedonism and Kant's categorical imperative, accused of being incapable of discriminating between contents (Beiser, 2014b, p. 354). In fact, just as the Hegelian attempt to purge religion of its temporal content would have ended up completely nullifying its meaning, Kant himself already conceded that if the simple facts of mutual love and respect were to disappear, "then nothingness (immorality), with gaping throat, would drink up the whole kingdom of (moral) beings like a drop of water" (Kant, 1991, p. 244)[29]. This is to say that, if

[28] "On the task of philosophy and its relation to the other sciences". For this discussion, our source is still Beiser (2014b).

[29] Kant borrows the formulation from the Swiss poet and naturalist Albrecht von Haller. The passage is cited by

the transcendental inquiry regarding the conditions of experience should resort to psychological analysis rather than logic, the universality of moral principles should also, for Zeller, become the object of a speculation that finally accepts risking "the essential needs and the common laws of human nature" (Zeller apud Beiser, 2014b, p. 355)[30]. In the course of this work, we will further investigate the possibility that no theoretical model really escapes a bet of this kind, and that a verdict on the most appropriate path must always be reached on a case-by-case basis, according to the needs of each circumstance. Nietzsche's philosophy, as we will argue, would be mainly and fundamentally opposed to any philosophy that denies this, and to rationalism particularly. This would explain why Nietzsche is able, at the same time, to distance himself from Socrates unsane vigilant attitude, and to denounce – as we will see in the next section, regarding his assessment of Schopenhauer – the intellectual "laziness" of his Alexandrian contemporaries, in a double movement that is otherwise less understandable.

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If we have said already that Nietzsche's philosophy would bring together apparently conflicting intuitions from both the idealist and historicist traditions, it will be important to indicate what would give unity to this coexistence, as well as a positive unity from which these two different moments could follow by necessity. Before that, let us point out some elements that will be important for the continuation of our exposition. We've found in physicalist reductionism a major tendency for the 19th century's conception of science, which Prigogine and Stengers described, for the cases of Helmholtz, Du Bois-Reymond and others, as strategically associated with Kantianism. We can offer a first indication of what we hope to obtain from our course if we relate each of the philosophical currents referred to – late idealism, neo-Hegelianism and neo-Kantianism – to their respective conceptual relationship with this broader positivist cultural tendency, whose influence extends to our days. In the case of Kantianism, we have already seen something: although immune to the nonsense of wanting to extrapolate the principle of mechanical causality towards a metaphysics of the real, critical formalism granted the opponent the essential, that is, the monopoly over empirical knowledge, a territory that was all the more valuable for criticism the more the sphere of practical reason ended up being inevitably colonized by those categories of recognition to which it had already allowed so much[31]. Neo-Hegelianism, on the other hand, although aware of the

Adorno and Horkheimer (2002, p. 67).

[30] In his analysis, Beiser draws on the essay "On the Concept and Justification of Moral Laws," which Zeller, by then a professor in Berlin, read before the Academy of Sciences in 1882. Before him, Trendelenburg had already pursued a neoclassical position in ethics; his article significantly entitled "The Conflict between Kant and Aristotle in Ethics" from 1867 would be referred to by Zeller as a "valuable piece of writing" (Beiser; Zeller apud Beiser, 2014b, p. 354 and note). For an approximation of Nietzschean ethics to the same movement, cf. Solomon, 1987.

[31] "Kant's work transcends experience as mere operation, and for that rea?son—and in accordance with its own

limits of (transcendental or absolute) idealism, tended to liquidate, in its radical criticism, also its own content positive content, on which to support criticism; and we saw at least that Zeller had this impression in relation to his reading of Strauss[32]. Now, if historical criticism harmonized, in this particular, with physicalism's disenchantment of the world – for both were essentially engaged in accusing the mystification involved in what would still be dogmatic residues of philosophy –, the authors of late idealism, manifestly metaphysicians, would not hesitate to speculate on the Being behind appearances, all seeking a positive assesment of the whole; In doing so, however, they naturally became easy targets for the materialists or the neo-Kantians, which were quick in identifying, in the unifying pretensions of those authors, a possibly dangerous pre-critical dogmatism. Physicalism, by it's turn, also incurred in the same aseptic protocol: reducing "subjective" phenomena, such as ideas, sensations and values, to the status of epiphenomena of primordial physical-chemical interactions, it probably won't manage to completely colonize practical life, but it disallows any claimant to knowledge who is not capable of demonstrating their propositions within the limits of a maximally exiguous theoretical framework. We began our exposition by speculating late idealism and historical materialism as two ideally complementary parts of a program defined by resisting the Kantian bifurcation. Judging by appearances, one may reasonably suspect that, thus separated from each other, they came dangerously close to either naive dogmatic reification (late idealism), or full-blown relativism (neo-Hegelianism); hence also the attractiveness, now properly theoretical, of Kantianism, which at least managed to relate one problem to another, combining skepticism about the thing in itself with the affirmation of the rights of reason over its different interests, supposed to be capable of independent justification. We seek in Nietzsche the promised, finally total reversal of this Kantian program as a whole, as the only theoretically viable alternative position: refusal of the autonomy of reason, linked to the accessibility, by right if not as a fact, of the "thing in itself", or at least to the reassessment of this problem[33].

To be sure, at least up to the 19th century materialist reductionism was primarily a critical device associated with progressive causes in the midst of a fundamentally reactionary Germany. To mention just one representative example, let us consider the revolutionary chemist and journalist

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principles—is rejected as dogmatic by enlightenment today. In confirming the scientific system as the embod?iment of truth—the result arrived at by Kant—thought sets the seal on its own insignificance, because science is a technical operation, as far removed from reflection on its own objectives as is any other form of labor under the pressure of the system" (Adorno; Horkheimer, 2002, p. 66).

[32] Thus, Löwith would reproach the Young Hegelians for indulging themselves excessively in historical thinking: "to want to be oriented by history while standing in its midst would be like wanting to hold on to the waves during a shipwreck" (Löwith apud Habermas, 1987, p. 54).

[33] "We can safely restate at least this much of what Nietzsche claims to be doing: Nietzsche famously proclaimed that, by 'abolishing the true world, we have abolished the apparent.' We are, at least, not skeptics who must resign ourselves to the phenomenal, and the inaccessibility of the real amid the play of interpretations. Everything about this issue looks different when the assumptions behind the 'will to truth' have been exposed and undermined" (Pippin, 1996, p. 264).

Carl Vogt, from whose exile in Italy he would learn of Wagner's lecture we have already mentioned; at the time, in addition to the encomiastic mention of Lotze, the lecturer had cited passages from Vogt's *Letters on Physiology* in order to now attack an author who, representative of materialism, denied free will and the immortality of the soul and reduced the mind to brain activity (Beiser, 2014a, p. 59). Apart from the merits of each position, the fact remains that, while Wagner was a reactionary whose sincerest hope lay in maintaining the monarchical order, Vogt, for his part, had fought for democracy throughout his life, and his defense of materialism was associated with the broader project of discrediting those beliefs that served above all as an ideological weapon for the social control of the masses (ibid., p. 61). On the other hand, and for reasons that we will develop more fully in the course of this work, the reductionist project in general (physicalist or historicist), by reducing empirical knowledge to that which is capable of being described in terms of mechanical or historical causality, but also simply by prolonging the mythical division of the world into essence and appearance, ends up being quite advantageous to whatever ruling political interests, only too satisfied in that every discussion regarding values be assessed from a relativistic perspective. That said, let us proceed to add to the equation the missing element for the inflection that Nietzsche would operate in this framework, offered by a philosopher the young professor from Basel associated with "everything that is best and most beautiful" (BVN 1870, 58).

Schopenhauer's influence

It was Schopenhauer above all who awakened Nietzsche to philosophy, as well as to "the true and essential problems of life and thought" (BVN 1869, 632). This contact would also improve his knowledge of the history of philosophy, if we take into account, for example, that *Parerga and paralipomena* include a chapter of more than a hundred pages dedicated to a historical overview of our field. Far from being just the precursor of Nietzsche, Schopenhauer was also, as is known, one of the most widely read philosophical authors of the second half of the 19th century: although the first edition of the *World as Will and Representation* (from 1818) was a relative failure with the public, the following editions of the same work would finally obtain the recognition that was not granted to the first one, and Schopenhauer would become famous in the last years of his life. Especially significant, in the context of the exhibition we have come to offer, is the coincidence of the rising popularity of his work with an inflection in neo-kantianism's research horizon. In fact, the same 1860s in which these authors were organizing themselves as a unified movement in Germany saw Schopenhauer become the most popular philosopher in his language, a circumstance that was all the more problematic as the author of the *World* publicly claimed to be the sole true heir of Kant. Beiser (2014a, pp. 41-42) attempts to causally connect the two processes: the significant desertion

of students from courses on epistemology would testify to the general public's refusal to give up the original vocation of philosophy, of focusing on the question of the meaning and value of existence. Be that as it may, the fact is that the neo-Kantians' approach to the ethical dimension of philosophical inquiry, insignificant in the 1860s, is evident in several developments at the end of the 1870s and at the beginning of the following decade, to the point that virtually all the authors of this tradition came to write monographs dedicated to none other than Schopenhauer himself, the same man who, echoing the episode we studied, reproached Kuno Fischer for having adapted his doctrine in submission to the needs of the State. (Schopenhauer, 1991, p. 37)[34].

If the radical critique of reason, embodied in Nietzsche's negative judgment of the Socratic moment, would find an echo in Adorno and Horkheimer's thesis in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* – retroactively bringing him closer to dialectical materialism as developed by the Frankfurt School – its link with Schopenhauer's philosophy, on the other hand, accounts, at least in part, for the simultaneously neo-Kantian and metaphysical predispositions of his youthful thought, which we have already reported; that these two directions (criticism of Socrates and link with Schopenhauer) can be discerned from each other is what demonstrates the later development of Nietzsche's production, in which his position on the Athenian is recovered in *Twilight of the Idols*, as well as reaffirmed in the new 1886 preface to *The Birth of Tragedy*, while Kant and Schopenhauer become, in the middle and late periods, targets of less corrective than generalized criticism. However, despite the perhaps unparalleled emphasis of Schopenhauer's philosophy on a "search for truth" pursued regardless of all individual gain and interest, there runs through his work a tendency that is in principle antagonistic to this, which is the existential question of the "good" for the individual man. We will argue that the influence exerted by this ethical element in Schopenhauer's writings, whose most poignant expression can be found in his attacks on university philosophy, allows us both to specify the meaning of Nietzsche's attack on Socrates and to prepare the subversion of Schopenhauer's own thought, as yet another case of that *Verdoppelung* of nature in appearance and essence that we have been able to verify prodigiously in the different German philosophies of the nineteenth century[35].

For Schopenhauer, philosophy should retain its traditional metaphysical vocation, without hesitating to the task of scrutinizing the essence of the world, even if this essence only manifests

[34] Discussing the 1850s in Germany, Hollingdale writes: "every philosophical topic of interest to anyone but a professional logician or epistemologist was banished from the German universities of the 1850s — and that was the practical outcome of the political and ecclesiastical censorship — philosophy was not brought to heel or reduced to an obedient servant of state and church, as was of course the intention. What happened was that German philosophy split into two: into an academic philosophy to which no one any longer paid attention and whose reputation sank to an unprecedented low for Germany, and a freelance philosophy existing outside and independently of the university whose practitioners were able to discuss those questions, alone of interest to the nonacademic public, which the academic philosopher was inhibited from approaching. (…). The first large beneficiary of this creation of a freelance market in philosophy was Schopenhauer." (Hollingdale, 1996, p. 74).

[35] Hollingdale (1996, p. 77) hints at this when he writes: "Nietzsche is capable of revering Schopenhauer almost as greatly as Wagner had done, while first doubting, then denying, and finally ignoring his philosophy".

itself indirectly, as a phenomenon. At first glance, it may seem that this is what Nietzsche would greatly appreciate in this author: in the third Untimely Meditation, dedicated to Schopenhauer "as an educator", Nietzsche, after referring to the loss of "confidence" that would victimize academic philosophers, adds: "formerly some of them believed themselves capable of inventing new religions or of replacing old ones with their philosophical systems; nowadays they have lost all this old arrogance (…), [they are] never brave like Lucretius" (UM III, 8). Such a reconstruction could remind us of Horkheimer's provocation with which we opened this investigation, when he identified in rationalist philosophers, and only in them, some power of resistance to the bureaucratization of the modern world, on the part of philosophy. However, the emphasis that Nietzsche places on his praise of Schopenhauer, more specifically, is less on this self-positioning of the philosopher as the holder of a true system, than on his ability to "having set up before him a picture of life as a whole, in order to interpret it as a whole; while even the most astute heads cannot be dissuaded from the error" of wanting to interpret the whole from its isolated parts (UM III, 3). In fact, it will be necessary to reinsert that first statement, regarding Lucretius' courage, in the more general context of urging "men to take it seriously" Schopenhauer's attack on university philosophy, as a harmless institution not geared towards action: "the only critique of a philosophy that is possible and that proves something, namely trying to see whether one can live in accordance with it, has never been taught at universities"; "I consider evey word behind which there does not stand such a challenge to action to have been written in vain" (ibid., 8). Indeed, this work emphasizes nothing else: Nietzsche begins the text by referring to the "tendency to laziness" as the most universal and comprehensive human property, also the most appropriate object of the "great thinker"'s contempt; even the feeling of fear, otherwise perhaps a more immediate candidate for this universality, would be more deeply subordinated to comfort and indolence: "men (…) fear most of all the inconveniences with which unconditional honesty and nakedness would burden them" (UM III, 1). Thus, Nietzsche's central concern lies precisely in that normative deficit that we mentioned plagued pre-Schopenhauerian neo-Kantianism of the 1870s:

> What has become of any reflection on questions of morality – questions that have at all times engaged every more highly civilized society? There is no longer any model or any reflection of any kind; what we are in fact doing is consuming the moral capital we have inherited from our forefathers, which we are incapable of increasing but know only how to squander; in our society one either remains silent about such things or speaks of them in away that reveals an utter lack of acquaintance with or experience of them and that can only excite revulsion. Thus it has come about that our schools and teachers simply abstain from an education in morality or make do with mere formalities (…). (UM III, 2).

We were saying that one should look in the ethical dimension of Schopenhauer's writings – in his emphasis on the irreducible singularity of the individual in the face of the historical process,

much rather than in his metaphysical adventures – what Nietzsche prefers as an alternative to university formalism. In fact, just as for the artist, who reveals "the law that evey man is a unique miracle", so the best that an educator can do, Nietzsche tells us, is to be a "liberator", in charge of "the removal of all the weeds, rubble and vermin that want to attack the tender buds of the plant" (UM III, 1). What can be, however, the relationship between this negative role attributed to education with an interpretation of "life as a whole", which be not limited to "formalities", but be capable of drawing the most decisive consequences from theoretical inquiry? For Schopenhauer, the answer to this question, as we can understand it, was related to the idea that "nature is aristocratic" (Schopenhauer, 2000, p. 193), and that therefore only a select few would have the privilege of being an instrument for "progressing on the path of truth" (idem, p. 194). Could we perhaps attribute a similar solution to Nietzsche? Analyzing this issue, we see how Nietzsche enhances Schopenhauer's ethical initiative, leaving aside his metaphysical ontology. This is because, while the latter read in Kant's separation of the thing in itself and the phenomenon an absolute dualism, which however would allow us to pinpoint the true metaphysical essence of the world (since the phenomenon would be, despite all else, the expression of the thing in itself), Nietzsche, through Lange, appropriated the same duality in the opposite and more truly tragic sense, placing it as the "ultimate epitome of an opposition conditioned by our organism" (Lange apud BVN 1866, 517)[36]. Prudently deviating from a compromising metaphysics, which would be guilty of reifying the Kantian oppositional structure into truth about Being, Nietzsche is able to celebrate kantian philosophy as that which made possible the separation of knowledge (as ethical knowledge) with respect to the ancient ideal of "truth" as pursued under the direction of Socrate's system, which Schopenhauer still did[37]. In fact, we saw how Nietzsche would know how to direct this author's Kantianism, via Hartmann, towards its correction towards an objective idealism; and Beiser (2002, p. 6) argues that the Langian (and, therefore, Nietzschean) interpretation of the "thing in itself" that we have just highlighted is part of the more general history of the desubjectification of Kant's heritage mediated by romanticism[38]. From this adjustment to the still subjective or formal Kantian idealism, of which Schopenhauer was still able to take advantage in his own way, it must follow that it would hardly be

[36] As Nasser (2015, p. 35) explains, "Lange offers fruitful devices to be punctually mobilized against Schopenhauer's detractors".

[37] Deleuze will say (1983, p. 83): "By making will the essence of things of the world seen from the inside, the distinction between two worlds is denied in principle: the same world is both sensible and super-sensible. But while denying this distinction between worlds one merely replaces it with the distinction between interior and exterior -- which is just like that between essence and appearance, that is to say like the two worlds themselves. By making will the essence of the world Schopenhauer continues to understand the world as illusion, an appearance, a representation". For Jégoudez (2022, p. 26) "while Schopenhauer ultimately maintains a still Cartesian relationship with respect to truth, Nietzsche takes the issue back to its roots and develops a perspective more centered on practice".

[38] To be sure, Beiser does not mention Lange or Nietzsche by name, but points to the Marburg School – with Hermann Cohen, Paul Natorp, and Ernst Cassirer – as "the ultimate heirs" of German idealism. However, the interpretation of the "thing in itself" taken up in this school is that of Lange that we have cited, as Nasser (2015, p. 34) observes.

up to the philosopher to peer into an "essence" (metaphysics) behind the "appearance" of phenomena; and very early on Nietzsche realizes the need to adopt a sensualist position regarding knowledge, according to which "sensation cannot be explained in terms of anything else" (NF 27[37] of spring/autumn 1873, KSA 7.598); "sensation [*Empfindung*] is not the work of the sense organs, but the sense organs themselves are only for us as known sensations" (NF 27[77] of spring/autumn 1873, KSA 7.610)[39]. Thus, even though Nietzsche, in line with Schopenhauer, came to urge the direction of university education towards the production of the "genius" of culture (UM III, 3), the exact meaning of this character and of this orientation can no longer be the same, but must reflect the irreducibility of interpretation to the "true" representation of the world, whether pursued transcendentally or speculatively. Let's look at this even more closely, limiting ourselves, for now, to the discussion of Schopenhauer's influence.

Critique of Neo-Kantianism in Schopenhauer as Educator

In our presentation of left-wing Hegelianism as a school of thought eminently attentive to the materiality of the historical process, we had the opportunity to offer a first indication of the sense in which Nietzsche would also inherit this more general materialist tendency, although his youthful texts may express an attitude of condescension toward science in a broad sense. For now, it is relevant to note that the last pages of his text on Schopenhauer conceive, to the surprise of a less informed reader, a nominal praise of "history and the natural sciences" for having "gradually come so to overawe the German dream- and thought-business which was for long confused with philosophy" (UM III, 8). In fact, in his discussion on laziness, Nietzsche contrasts the attitude of "kill[ing] time" that defines the lazy person with participation in the "history [Geschichte] of the true liberation of life" (UM III, 1), which later in the text is identified with the task of "bring[ing] to light all that is false in things" (UM III, 4). Now, even Schopenhauer was not unambiguous in this regard, which is expressed in his conception of a difference of nature of philosophy in relation to other disciplines, as "a science that is first to be discovered" (Schopenhauer, 2000, p. 179). Thus, while Schopenhauer (idem, p. 164), commenting on the verbosity of the "philosophical writers" of his century, refers to their dishonest prudence in "guard[ing] against touching the earth where (…) they would run on to (…) dangerous rocks", Nietzsche will quote the British essayist Walter

[39] As Stegmaier (2013, p. 188) explains, commenting on Nietzsche's sensualism: "[w]e are still, Nietzsche seems to indicate, idealists according to theory, which has however been abandoned by praxis, and sensualists according to praxis, for which, however, no theory has yet been found, perhaps because such a theory has to be paradoxical, but perhaps also because this praxis does not need any theory". This suggestion, if we understand it, is in line with the idea, defended above, that Nietzsche would have known how to separate practical knowledge and "truth" according to the Socratic system. Stegmaier continues: "with the concept of practice, Nietzsche retreats from conceptual alternatives such as idealism and sensualism, theory and practice, and, as soon as he has formulated them, he retreats again. Practice without concept is that which first allows conceptual alternatives to emerge, and therefore subtracts them" (idem, p. 190).

Bagehot in order to contrast those who still “hoist [themselves] up to a little system of metaphysics” (UM III, 8) with the “cultivated people (…) ready to receive hints and suggestions, and [for whom] the smallest truth is ever welcome” (Bagehot apud UM III, 8). Particularly revealing, however, is the fact that Nietzsche, in this same context, accuses the then-fashionable heirs of the “Kantian doctrine” of wanting to go “on ahead of the sciences”, in the manner of “deer [] ahead of the huntsmen who are after it” (UM III, 8). Now, how can we understand this double critique of metaphysics and neo-Kantianism, when we saw Nietzsche mobilizing precisely Kant’s philosophy as a trigger for his own? And how can we explain this critique in a book praising Schopenhauer, otherwise an author hardly innocent with respect to the same accusation, in the eyes of Nietzsche himself?

In fact, the same text offers us an answer, when Nietzsche locates in the author of *World* the best example of a philosopher capable of “asses[ing] the meaning of a philosophy in the 'most sacred part' of their being” and of elevating it “to the heights of tragic contemplation” (UM III, 3). Now, what Nietzsche has in mind here is, specifically, the Kantian doctrine, as we saw in *The Birth of Tragedy*: while Kant exposed the radical fissure between Being and knowing, the Schopenhauerian interpretation would have the merit of having drawn the consequences for what concerns the individual, on the one hand separated from himself by a relationship of representation, on the other alienated from his individuality by the care of public opinion. Schopenhauer, in short, would have allowed himself to be *transformed* by knowledge, on a bodily or attitudinal level: “Kant has had a living and life-transforming influence on only a very few men”; because he knew how to extract the intimate meaning of this system, Schopenhauer would have known about “the proper task of all great thinkers to be lawgivers as to the measure, stamp and weight of things” (UM III, 3). The same circumstance also explains why Nietzsche is not concerned, at this point, with refuting Schopenhauerian metaphysics, towards which he had been reticent for many years, censoring its dogmatic stance, but also its inability to limit itself to “experiment” (NF 57[55] of autumn 1867/spring 1868, KSA 7.157)[40]. This last reproach, as all indicates, is revealing with respect to what Nietzsche most expects from philosophy, the infraction of the Kantian border being less serious, given the merely epistemological meaning of that dualism, than a philosopher's inability to translate the gains of theory into a practical transformation. This also better suits, finally, Nietzsche's attack on neo-Kantianism in the text we analyzed, side by side with a critique of metaphysics, both unable to make themselves vulnerable to advances in science (and in Kantianism

[40] Nietzsche would later explain the failure of Schopenhauerian attempts as follows: “The very word "will," which Schopenhauer transformed into the common designation for a variety of human circumstances and placed within a gap in language, was a great advantage for him, too, insofar as he was a moralist -- because it now stood open to him to speak of the "will" as Pascal had spoken of it -- in the hands of its inventor, the "will" of Schopenhauer has turned out to be a disaster for science, due to the philosophers' rage for generalization: for this will is made into a poetic metaphor if it is asserted that all things in nature have wills; and it has in the end been misused and made into a false objectification (...)” (HH II, Opinions..., 5).

itself, according to this youthful rhetoric) in the way that would be more promissing.

Indeed, if we take Nietzsche's assimilation of Lange's neo-Kantianism seriously, we could say that what science was pointing to was nothing other than the relativity of the subject-object dualism, and therefore the ruin of any kind of claim to obtain "true" knowledge, i.e., neutral with respect to values and other "subjective" projections, whether this subjectivity be transcendental or empirical: thus the "heights of tragic contemplation". This generality of Nietzsche's criticism, already in his youth, is poignantly indicated at least in the first paragraph of *On Truth and Lies*, in which the author classifies the "invent[ion]" of knowledge as "the most arrogant, mendacious minute in 'world history'", which is briefly explained by saying that "the 'thing in itself' (…) is utterly unintelligible (…) [and] designates only the relations of things to human beings" (TL 1). But, whatever the exact scope of Nietzsche's attack at this stage of his production, the task of the philosopher as "lawgiver of the weight of things" is well understood, as the one who will relate knowledge itself – otherwise the main responsible for this achievement – to the need for disambiguation with respect to its cultural meaning. For Cox (1999), this dynamic, in Nietzsche's work, composes a (virtuously) circular structure, in which the apparent relativism implicit in the liquidation of metaphysics by naturalist progress would be kept in check by this same naturalism, which will help decide on the best interpretation of phenomena. Although it is not the case to dispute this issue now, we would simply like to say, from the outset, that the adequacy of such a reading seems to us conditioned on granting Nietzsche, despite all else, a movement of radical rupture in relation to the traditional conception of knowledge as representation, to be completed always by a leap that, by right, cannot be completely reducible to argument (the limits of which is exactly what it is purported to show)[41]. In the text on Schopenhauer, this understanding of a radical difference in Nietzsche's philosophical orientation in relation to Kantian modernity is indicated when the "tragic" effect made possible by Kant's discovery is said to be conditional, not on a superior cunning of the intellect, but on the "active and noble" spirit (UM III, 3), that is, the opposite of a "lazy" character, because it is freed from fear of one's neighbor and the desire for revenge that, we can suppose, would be its extension. Therefore, Nietzschean criticism, if it must include among its moments an argumentation at the propositional level and a dialectical clash, does not go without a prospective speculation regarding the effects of any truth-claiming discourse, its superior affinity with an active form of life or, on the contrary, with an attitude of inertia and cowardice[42]. Ultimately, both scientific naturalism and metaphysics can ambiguously compose parts of a strong or decadent culture, depending on the affective dynamics underlying the way in which

[41] As Thomas Kuhn have argued, "Communication across the revolutionary divide is inevitably partial", so that the transition between competing paradigms "cannot be made a step at a time, forced by logic and neutral experience", but must occur "all at once (though not necessarily in an instant) or not at all" (Kuhn, 1970, pp. 149-150).

[42] In this sense, Nietzsche's bet on the active spirit would bring him much closer to Reich than to Freud's cultural pessimism.

each of these activities understands itself. This hypothesis will be explored more fully in the course of this work.

Energetic problematization of neo-Hegelianism

To conclude, let us first indicate how this repositioning of the critical problem and of philosophy's main task impinges on the materialist doctrine a proportional correction, in an ambiguous direction. On the one hand, the exaggerated emphasis on the historical or physicochemical determinism of thought indicates, in terms of its energetic meaning, an attempt to escape a personal interpretation of existence: “He who regards his life as no more than a point in the evolution of a race or of a state or of a science, and thus regards himself as belonging wholly to the history of becoming, has not understoon the lesson set him by existence” (UM III, 4)[43]. Indeed, as Nietzsche explains, such a generic understanding of individual life is guilty of leaving aside the meditation on the “inexplicable fact that we live precisely today, when we had all infinite time in which to come into existence, that we possess only a shortlived today in which to demonstrate why and to what end we came into existence now and at no other time” (UM III, 1). Now, dispensing with the tentative confrontation of this question can either mean the expression of a welcomed intellectual modesty, or an attitude of indolence and conformism, “arrogant self-satisfaction” (UM III, 2) whose explanation Schopenhauer (2000, p. 144) found in the fear of the professionalized intellectual of being “declared to be a 'fool on his own responsibility'”. In any case, Nietzsche sees this gregariousness of thought, capable of disguising itself as modesty, as something that “obstructs the physicians”, because it denies the “universal sickness”: the “happiness” with which scholars move is said to be “artificial” and their ability to do without reflecting on themselves is “incomprehensible” (UM III, 4). The choice of this last term is not accidental, and once again testifies to the distance that Nietzschean discourse finds itself obliged to maintain in relation to its opponent, in the context of a dispute that cannot be reduced to the strictly theoretical plane.

Secondly, it is possible to relate the reductionist tendency of historicist materialism in particular to the centrality given there to political change as the locus of a collective transmutation, in which the expectation of that reconciliation with nature that guided romantic idealism is now placed: by granting historical diagnosis the power to deny the false consciousness of the present, it retains the horizon of an objective truth to be made available in the future, when the alienated subject be reintegrated into a more authentic relationship with his environment. Now, for Beardsworth (2003, p. 84, translated from brazilian ed.), it is precisely to this hope that Nietzsche will oppose the experience of return: “Nietzsche asks himself whether the humanity of his time is

[43] “To what end the ‘world’ exists, to what end ‘mankind’ exists, ought not to concern us at all for the moment … on the other hand, do ask yourself why you, the individual, exist” (UM II, 9, my translation).

strong enough to withstand time if it does not provide it with any way out, that is, if time does not present it with any timeless horizon". According to this commentator, therefore, Nietzsche will take present time's immersion in the history of its past to an extreme, refusing, in an "ethical bet of the first order" regarding the "transformation of our affective disposition" (idem, pp. 81-82), any possibility of real individual or social emancipation in time. At this point, it is possible that Nietzsche betrays our most basic intuition, which would regard an emancipatory perspective as a condition, even if perhaps illusory, for the development of human potential, which would be wasted if one had to rely only on an "extensive today" to achieve this objective. First, it should be noted that Nietzsche does not unambiguously refuses this perspective, a fact manifested in his determination of culture's task as that of "promot[ing] the production of the philosopher, the artist and the saint within us and without us and thereby to work at the perfecting of nature" (UM III, 5), a task that in turn requires that "some generation has to commence the struggle if another is to win it" (ibid., 6). How can we reconcile the eternal return, interpreted ethically, with this imperative of human transmutation? Why, and in what sense, should the "active and noble spirit" be more in tune with a disillusioned attitude, so to speak, toward the prospect of an emancipation that depended on collective mobilization?

We have already seen a first hint at this, when the attribution of a disproportionate weight to the historical dimension had the effect of collaterally discouraging the individual's responsibility for himself, and thus fostering an attitude of intellectual lethargy that is speculated, reciprocally, at the very origin of that orientation. Additionally, however, one can identify in this settlement of the individual issue an exaggerated, and therefore excessively optimistic, simplification of the problem of alienation. Thus, Nietzsche writes:

> And there are indeed at this moment naive people in this and that corner of the earth, in Germany for instance, who are prepared to believe such a thing, and even go so far as to assert in all seriousness that the world was put to rights a couple of years ago and that those who persist in harbouring dark misgivings about the nature of existence are refuted by the 'facts'. (…) Such men have lost the last remnant not only of a philosophical but also of a religious mode of thinking, and in their place have acquired not even optimism but journalism, the spirit and spiritlessness of our day and our daily papers. Every philosophy which believes that the problem of existence is touched on, not to say solved, by a political event is a joke- and pseudo-philosophy. (…) How should a political innovation suffice to turn men once and for all into contented inhabitants of the earth? (UM III, 4)[44]

[44] "[E]verywhere people are now raving, even under scientific disguises, about coming conditions of society in which 'the exploitative aspect' will be removed – which sounds to me as if they promised to invent a way of life that would dispense with all organic functions. 'Exploitation' does not belong to a corrupt or imperfect and primitive society: it belongs to the *essence* of what lives, as a basic organic function; it is a consequence of the will to power, which is after all the will to life" (BGE 259). "[O]nly they are unfree and ridiculously superficial, above all in their basic inclination to find in the forms of the old society as it has existed só far just about the cause of *all* human misery and failure – which is a way of standing truth happily upon her head! What they would like to strive for with all their powers is the universal, green-pasture happiness of the herd, with security, lack of danger, comfort and an easier life for everyone; the two songs and doctrines which they repeat most often are 'equality of rights' and 'sympathy for all that suffers' – and suffering itself they take for something that must be *abolished*" (BGE 44). However, it is worth tempering these texts by Nietzsche by reading the timely article by Montinari (2002), which brings Nietzsche closer

Now, if we were right in indicating Nietzsche's merit in having known how to highlight the question of ethical knowledge in relation to that of knowledge by representation of a "true" world, our task would be less to decide about who is "right" regarding the existence or not of a material root for the "pessimism" referred to in this text, than paying attention to the energetic implications of each position; a kind of attention which would trigger a debate that, despite always being problematic and, by nature, susceptible to constant subversion, would know how to profit, as Bagehot said, from the "smallest truth" that presents itself again to experience. In fact, it is notable that Nietzsche already advances explicitly pragmatic considerations regarding the correctness of his position, when he speculates, under the intuition of what he calls "nature's evil principle", that "what has to be sought shall never be found" (UM III, 4); and his suspicion that "everything (…) serves the coming barbarism" (idem) very clearly anticipates the preface to the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, when Adorno and Horkheimer (2002, p. xv) warn that "[n]o terms [of everyday's conceptual language] are available which do not tend toward complicity with the prevailing intellectual trends". We saw that Nietzsche's praise of Schopenhauer consisted mainly of identifying, in this author, the ability to be practically informed by the enormous dimension of the problem of knowledge. Now, at least in this particular Schopenhauer would have been accurate, and Nietzsche quotes at length a passage from *Parerga* to conclude the following:

> 'A happy life is impossible: the highest that man can attain to is a *heroic one*. He leads it who, in whatever shape or form, struggles against great difficulties for something that is to the benefit of all and in the end is victorious, but who is will-rewarded for it or not rewarded at all (…)'. (UM III, 4).

To be sure, although the struggle regarding education and philosophy pursued by both authors reveals, in its negative image, a deeper optimism[45], related in this passage to Schopenhauer's inexorably victorious attitude – to which Nietzsche attributes, while rejecting Kant, the potential of eventually defending university philosophy if it were accused (UM III, 8) –, there is still, at this point in Nietzsche's production, something of the austere and ascetic character of this author who was so important to him in his youth, when Nietzsche is still able to affirm that the "heroism of truthfulness" would consist in perceiving the emptiness of "becoming", in which "everything is hollow, deceptive, shallow and worthy of our contempt" (UM III, 4). Be that as it may, it's still the

to the criticisms made by Marx himself.

[45] In the first chapter of *Human*, a book that marks, according to convention, the beginning of the intermediate phase of Nietzsche's production, Nietzsche reevaluates the issue of optimism/pessimism as follows: "Away with those overused words optimism and pessimism! We have had enough of them. Occasion for using them is growing less day by day; it is only idle chatterers who still have such an indispensable need of them. For why in the world should anyone want to be an optimist if he does not have to defend a God who *has* to have created the best of worlds (...)? But any occasion for a pessimistic creed is likewise lacking unless one has an interest in provoking the advocates of God, the theologians or the theologizing philosophers (...)" (HH I, 28).

case that even this particular choice of words can no longer unambiguously signify the old prescription of uncovering the true Being behind appearances, but must be linked to the more general program of a new type of criticism, less innocent regarding the unreflective reproduction of the bifurcation of reality into two halves of which one would be the metaphysical model of the other: “slavish duties” that the intellect made free must leave behind (TL II). In the next chapters, we will have all the opportunity to develop this theme, when we will be able to understand how even that passage in which Nietzsche exhorted the thought of Being, more than just compatible with our reading, is capable of representing an immanent commitment to the new orientation of criticism, duly informed by its energetic reallocation. Even so, if we were right, it remains that Nietzsche, already in the text we analyzed, was very clear about the need, theoretically supported, to reconceive the traditional ascetic image of the philosopher, not in the direction of a prolonged dispute for “truth” (pursued positively or negatively), but of translating into action the newly found emptiness of the essence/appearance distinction, as the deepest achievement of modernity. In fact, the first pages of *Human, all too human* come to outline exactly the dangers and potentials of this achievement, as we will see in the next chapter.

Chapter 2: Nietzsche's realism of time. Towards a gay science

Deep down, all the problems on this island
could be translated in terms of time...

Meditating on the worrying results obtained at the end of the first book of his *Treatise on Human Nature*, and speculating on the difficulty of the route that still remained to be completed, Hume (1960, p. 263-64) considers giving up: "I am like a man, who having struck on many shoals, and having narrowly escap'd ship-wreck (…), has yet the temerity to put out to sea in the same leaky weather-beaten vessel (…). This sudden view of my danger strikes me with melancholy".

"[I] feel like a man who, after running aground on several sandbanks, and narrowly escaping shipwreck (...), still has the temerity to put to sea in the same damaged vessel (...). The sudden vision of the danger to which I am exposed fills me with melancholy." Frightened and confused, shrouded in "doubt and ignorance", the philosopher continues: "shall we, then, establish it for a general maxim, that no refin'd or elaborate reasoning is ever to be receiv'd?". By that time he had already demonstrated it: "understanding, when it acts alone, and according to its most general principles, entirely subvers itself, and leaves not the lowest degree of evidence in any position, either in philosophy or common life" (idem, 267-68). That the acceptance of such a maxim involves a contradiction is something that only adds to the problem: for, if its necessity were determined only through the same subtle reasonings that it proposes to abandon, it remains that these still promise the ruin of the understanding; from which Hume concludes, not without consequences for the history of philosophy: "we have, therefore, no choice left but betwixt a false reason and none at all" (idem, p. 268). It is known that Kant would credit Hume with the merit of having awakened him from his "dogmatic slumber" of rationalist philosopher, when he was still excessively credulous in the simple application of the categories of reason to an external nature secretly free of any legality of its own[1]. In fact, the adherence of his own philosophical system, as disclosed above all in Reinhold's *Letters on the kantian philosophy*[2], would be due precisely to the opportunity with which it offered a way out of the Humean dilemma: for the author of the *Treatise* had "deprived [reason] of the most important vistas" (Kant, 2004, p. 8). From now on, what would justify our confidence in enlightenment would no longer be the theoretical reason of metaphysics, but the practical reason of the moral law and its universal foundations.

[1] "[S]ince the rise of metaphysics as far as the history of it reaches, no event has occurred that could have been more decisive with respect to the fate of this science than the attack made upon it by David Hume" (Kant, 2004, p. 7).

[2] As is well established, the popularization of Kantian philosophy gained significant momentum following the publication of Reinhold's work. On this point, see Beiser, 1987, pp. 226ff. It is noteworthy, however, that Reinhold would ultimately diverge from Kant's framework: "The very figure who had established the principles for elevating philosophy to the status of a rigorous science [i.e., Reinhold] would later yield—invoking those same principles—to his successor at Jena [i.e., Fichte]" (Radrizzani, 2009, p. 29).

Despite this, Kant's first critics were already able to defend Hume from the neutralization of his skeptical conclusions at the hands of transcendental philosophy, so that, to borrow Beiser's formulation (1987, p. 3), “the history of the early criticism of Kant's philosophy is indeed in large measure a tale of Hume's revenge”. Hamann, Jacobi, Wizenmann, Schulze, Platner and Maimon all confronted Kant with the Humean dilemma between a rational skepticism and an irrational dogmatic leap. The crisis of nineteenth-century rationalism, which with Kant's first critics seemed to foreshadow the definitive eclipse of philosophy's former confidence in the emancipatory potential of Enlightened reason, as early as at the “age of reason” itself, foreshadowed the problem that would prove so dear to the second half of the nineteenth century, when the loss of traction of idealist systems and the accumulated advance of experimental sciences awaited to multiply the urgency of modernity's reckoning with itself. Indeed, Kant's time will also take the credit for having inferred a brand new and philosophical meaning for the term "nihilism", which would make its mark in philosophy from then on. In the *Letter to Fichte*, published by Jacobi with the aim of publicly "defending" Fichte from the accusation of heresy, the term appears for the first time associated with the skeptical consequences of modern rationality, which is accused of disregarding all determined content to the point of not even being able to plead atheism. For Jacobi, this state of affairs was not accidental, but the necessary result of the way in which modern reason conceived of itself, in its alleged autonomy with regard to any heteronymous content, such as tradition and belief; without a *salto mortale* that would reestablish the immediate existence of God, human freedom and the external world, there would be no reason for any other expectation than that of the complete moral release of the individual and the corresponding deviation of civilization[3]. For his part, Hume still compromised, daring to recommend philosophy and the skepticism that resulted from it: “Philosophy (…) can present us only with mild and moderate sentiments” (Hume, 1960, p. 272). Radicalizing the same naturalist paradigm of the *Treatise*, Jacobi, on the other hand, takes a step forward towards a radical relativism. The Berlin *Aufklärer* should capitulate from their “Jesuitism and philosophical papism” (Jacobi apud Beiser, 1987, p. 75) still submissive to political and moral commitments and do as Lessing, whose confession of “Spinozism” Jacobi would divulge to the literate public as one of the acts of the well-known episode that would culminate in the “murder” of Mendelssohn, described by Beiser (1987, p. 75) as “a fitting metaphor for his [Jacobi's] destruction of the Aufklärung itself”[4].

Although Nietzsche would not share Jacobi's solution, it remains that attention to the

[3] “Indeed, [the *Letter to Fichte*] is not only the text in which the first known occurrence of the term 'nihilism' appears, but this term is immediately associated with a strong thesis about the essence of Western philosophy, accused of being, since its origin, a vast operation of rationalization of reality, tendentially oriented in the direction of nihilism. Nietzsche, who, in all his work, cites Jacobi only once, in a passing and second-hand way, certainly owes him a great deal” (Radrizzani, 2009, p. 13).

[4] Regarding Jacobi’s participation in the episode that culminated in Mendelssohn’s death – the immediate cause of which was, in fact, a cold –, cf. Beiser, 1987, pp. 44 ff.

problem of the "death of God" would, as is known, occupy a central place in his thought[5]. In fact, Nietzsche is acutely aware that the loss of traction in metaphysical interpretations of the world was preparing an unprecedented cultural crisis, of uncertain consequences. The first volume of *Human, all too human* will already be able to clearly articulate the decision that was imposed on the century of history:

> Has what was molten become solid, have the good, advantageous drives, the habits of the nobler disposition, grown so secure and general that there is no longer any need to lean on metaphysics and the errors of the religions, acts of severity and violence are no longer the strongest cement binding man to man and nation to nation? – There is no longer a god to aid us in answering this question: our own insight must decide here. (HH 245)

> *Probable victory of scepticism.* – Let us for once accept the validity of the sceptical point of departure: if there were no other, metaphysical world and all explanations of the only world known to us drawn from metaphysics were useless to us, in what liht would we then regard men and things? (…) For the historical probability is that one day mankind will very possibly become in general and on the whole *sceptical* in this matter; thus the question becomes: what shape will human society then assume under the influence of such an attitude of mind? (HH 21)

In *Schopenhauer as educator*, as we saw in the previous chapter, Nietzsche related the condescending attitude of academic philosophers to the diagnosis of their intellectual laziness, guilty of opportunism in the face of what would be the deepest meaning of Kantian criticism. Now, this accusation of conformism directed at institutionalized philosophy, far from having its exclusive target there, was inserted in the more general framework of an extensive criticism of the "atomistic chaos" that, for Nietzsche, summarized industrial culture, a period in which "humanity is almost in greater danger (…) than it is when they [such eras] and the chaotic turmoil they bring with them have actually arrived" (UM III, 4). Nietzsche associates this danger with the "anxiety of waiting and the greedy exploitation of every minute" (ibid.) to which civilization is subjected under the care of "those forces at present most actively engaged in promoting culture": "Education (*Bildung*) would be defined by its adherents as the insight by means of which (…) [one] acquires all the ways and means of making money as easily s possible" (ibid., 6). It is worth noting that Nietzsche will oppose this imperative of "creat[ing] as many current human beings as possible" with the idea of a society "that makes one a solitary, that proposes goals that transcend money and money-making" (ibid.); for "[w]here solitude ends, there begins the market place; and where the market place begins, there begins too the noise of the great actors and the buzzing of poisonous flies" (Z I, Flies). On the other

[5] For an approximation between Nietzsche and Jacobi, cf. Giacoia, 2023: "it is undeniable that his [Nietzsche's] philosophy is deeply implicated in the network of questions that can be designated by the name of 'dispute concerning divine things' (*Streit um die göttlichen Dinge*), of which Jacobi is one of the protagonists – since in Nietzsche's thought the opposition between Faith and Knowledge, whose relevance in our cultural tradition can hardly be exaggerated, occupies a position of extreme relevance" (p. 57).

hand, just as the worship of "security" as the "supreme divinity" had the effect of diverting humans from personal reflection on their existence, it is no less true that, conversely, this same worship would itself be the means intuited as "the best policeman" to "keep[] everyone in bounds and (…) hinder the development of reason, covetousness, desire for independence" (D 173) in an era in which civilization runs the real risk of "perishing through the means of civilization" (HH 520, translation modified). Here, finally, is a fragment in which Nietzsche poignantly summarizes the problem and indicates the object on which philosophy should focus above all:

> What I am telling is the story of the next two centuries. I describe what is coming, what can no longer happen in any other way: the advent of nihilism. This story can be told now: for necessity itself is at work here. This future already speaks in a hundred characters, this destiny announces itself everywhere; everyone's ears are already attentive to this music of the future. Our entire European culture has long been heading towards a catastrophe with a torment of tension that grows from decade to decade: restless, violent, hasty: like a stream that wants to end, that no longer remembers, that is afraid to reflect. (NF 11[411] of 1887-88, KSA 13.101)

As we were saying, Nietzsche was opposed from the outset to the pursuit of money and security, to laziness in general, and to the inability of modern man to embrace "ecumenical goals"—a consequence of the "belief [having] ceased that a God broadly directs the destinies of the world" (HH 25). He claimed to have never "tried to get honour, women, or money!" (EH Clever, 9) and dismissed "industrial culture" as "the most vulgar form of existence that has ever been" (GS 40). In fact, we saw that his youthful expectation for a new mythology capable of poetically transfiguring Kantian dualism fundamentally responded to the diagnosis according to which the "educational power of our higher educational institutions has perhaps never been lower of feebler than at present" (BT 20), in a text that framed Socrates' obsessive rationality as the root of a theoretical optimism that in *Human* would be disambiguated as inessential or even contrary to the benefit of the species: "*Fundamental insight.* – There is no pre-established harmony between the furtherance of truth and the well-being of mankind" (HH 517).

Now, all of this could give rise to the idea of attributing to Nietzsche not only the merit of having perceived, with Jacobi, a relationship between a certain path of modern science and philosophy and the promise of nihilism, but also the demerit of having merely radicalized the same positivist tendencies that he diagnosed, and ultimately resorting to an inflexible and unproductive relativist position. In fact, what unites criticisms of Nietzsche's work that are otherwise as distant as those of Adorno and Horkheimer, on the one hand, and Habermas, on the other, is related to a common accusation of relativism, regardless of whether the former see it as a consequent consummation, and the latter as a detraction, of a more general process of enlightenment. This is

because, even if Nietzsche had wanted to reject the orientation that the positivist objectivism of his century gave to culture, he would still have granted modern positivism the "monopoly of knowledge" (Habermas, 1972, p. 293) and concluded that "not only the correspondence theory of truth but also the concept of 'truth' as such is useless" (Habermas, 1999, p. 219); his effort to "replace God by the 'Overman'" would have been nothing more than a "desperate attempt to rescue the God that was dead" whose transparency as untruth Nietzsche himself, better than anyone, would have helped to expose (Adorno; Horkheimer, 2002, p. 90). It is to say that, pushing the "scientific principle to annihilating extremes" (idem, p. 74), Nietzsche would have been one of the main agents of a movement to liquidate all theoretical content capable of normatively arbitrating over thought. Identifying knowledge and positive science, it is indifferent whether he dispensed with both in favor of a subjectivist aestheticism (Habermas) or whether he surrendered to the corollaries of a still dogmatic Enlightenment (Adorno and Horkheimer), since in both cases it is the "law (…) of the stronger" (idem, p. 78) that would enjoy the blessing of philosophy.

From now on, it will be our task to settle accounts with this type of reception of Nietzsche's thought, first by indicating the philosopher's negative argument against Kantian idealism, and then by showing how perspectivism translates a competing appreciation of nature, capable of now positively highlighting time as an irreducible operator of the historical process in a broad sense. This chapter is therefore dedicated to the first of these tasks. To this end, we will begin by presenting the accusations of relativism addressed to Nietzsche's thought respectively by Adorno and Horkheimer and by Habermas, in order to punctuate more precisely the indications just offered. Next, we will show what we understand to be the two stages of his "relativist" vindication, pursued in the years immediately following the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy*: the first, which establishes the irreducible reality of becoming with respect to its mere representation, by exposing the fragility of Kant's transcendental position, should urge the submission of (all) knowledge to naturalist prescription, as Hume and Jacobi already wanted; the second, however, by drawing the consequences of the first with respect to the derived character of consciousness and knowledge, now shows the limits of this same naturalism, exposed as a joint product of instinct and forgetfulness, and therefore as a heritage to be directed according to a critique of values. Although the end point of this train of thought may in fact consecrate Nietzsche's insertion within the framework of a relativist position in a certain sense, we hope, at least, that the outcome of the chapter will be to have shown, against Habermas, the consequential character of Nietzsche's argument; and against (also) Adorno and Horkheimer, that the result of this development cannot be the unambiguous affirmation of a new "law" of nature ("law of the stronger") to which Nietzsche would invite us to passively assent, since what the thesis of the ubiquity of becoming entailed was precisely the impropriety of dogmatic naturalism, obstructing from the outset every foundationalist

and idealizing attempt, presupposed in the Adorno-Horkheimerian conclusion. Thus, we will have prepared the ground for the discussion to be carried out in the following chapters, which will bring the implications of Nietzschean thought to the contemporary debate regarding the most recommended orientation for a critique of knowledge that seeks to better prevent its own regressive tendencies.

Adorno and Horkheimer's interpretation of Nietzsche

We have already indicated, from the first chapter, the proximity of the Adorno-Horkheimerian reflection, regarding the ambivalent character of the Enlightenment, with Nietzsche's thought, in particular as instantiated in the later author's commentary on Socratic dialectic on *The Birth of Tragedy*. However, at least Habermas would later denounce what would be a fundamental divergence between one and the other initiative: while both developments would have subjected the history of philosophy to a gross leveling, insensitive to the emancipatory potential inherent in philosophical modernity, it would have been Nietzsche's exclusive privilege to "gain a foothold in myth", dismissing the dialectic of enlightenment and consummating a "total turning away from the nihilistic void of modernity" (Habermas, 1987, p. 86; p. 94)[6]. To better understand this, we will begin by summarizing, for one last time, the diagnosis that accompanies that work of dual authorship, with the aim of subsequently understanding the particular interpretation of Nietzschean thought that follows it, which we have already indicated is not so far removed from that which will be repeated by Habermas himself. This exposition should prepare the conclusion – to be reached in the course of this work – that, as Habermas wanted, the *Dialectic* in fact relies on an imperfect generalization of thought schemes whose presuppositions are quite distant. Far from being to Nietzsche's detriment, however, we will see that this disambiguation would have the power to bring him closer to Habermas, even if only in a qualified sense.

Fundamentally, the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* narrates what it identifies as a historical process of indefinite proportions, corresponding to the progressive replacement of an ostensibly metaphysical way of thinking – which granted external nature the power to normatively support our moral and cognitive practices – by a merely instrumental protocol, identified with the simple observation of facts and powerless to arbitrate as to what is just and unjust, hence its essentially relativist nature[7]. This instrumental nature of thought, far from constituting a modern novelty – referred, for example, to the scientific revolution or to empiricist philosophers – is discovered by

[6] For Habermas, the "grandeur" of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is said to become evident "by a comparison with Nietzsche", who "in place of the claim to truth, retains no more than the rhetorical claim proper to an aesthetic fragment" (Habermas, 1987, p. 120).

[7] See also Horkheimer's article "The Latest Attack on Metaphysics" and his *Eclipse of Reason*, already mentioned in the first chapter.

Adorno and Horkheimer in the very origin of Western rationality, particularly as narrated in Homer's *Odyssey*, when the theme of returning to homeland by overcoming obstacles to the integrity of the Self would already be evidence of the type of autarchic relationship with the outside world whose logic modern scientism would have only unfolded and fascism realized in its fullness. Horkheimer, as we have seen, described the process in terms of the eclipse of "objective reason" in history, that is, of metaphysical reason, understood as the faculty of determining the good in itself, supplanted by a rationality degenerated into a mere procedure of identifying the good for something already supposed good in advance: "all our ultimate decisions are made to depend upon factors other than reason", when it "surrender[s] to heteronomous contents" (Horkheimer, 2004, p. 6; p. 15); if "philosophy is always wrong and instinct and common sense always right" (Fitzhugh apud Horkheimer, 2004, p. 18), then there would be nothing left to disavow slavery and fascism and there would be no choice but to conform to their prescriptions. Relying on tradition or "unconscious memories" should not be enough, for Horkheimer: tradition only acts as truly imposing when at least its own authority is the object of a metaphysical belief; today the only function it preserves is to signal the presence of an "economically or politically powerful" consensus behind the principle that it would like to be able to affirm on its own (Horkheimer, 2004, pp. 22-23).

If *Eclipse of Reason* attributed the leading role, or at least the conceptual equivalent, of this process of instrumentalization of reason as unfolded in modernity to empiricist philosophies, the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, on the other hand, opts for an alternative approach, highlighting Kant, Nietzsche and Sade as agents of an "implacable consummation of enlightenment" (Adorno; Horkheimer, 2002, p. xviii). This approach responds to the perception that these three authors would have led, in a representative or excellent way, the process of reducing thought to a natural function, responsive rather to the human interest in managing external nature than to the imperative of communication with a reality independent of the subject and prior to knowledge. Thus, for Kant, reason would no longer be more than "the faculty of deducing the particular from the universal" (Kant apud Adorno; Horkheimer, 2002, p. 64): identifying knowledge and systematicity, the author of the *Critique of pure reason* would have allowed within philosophy the idea according to which the only truth is that delivered by a unilateral self-legislation on the part of the subject, responsive only to his own need for unity. For Adorno and Horkheimer, the Kantian movement – but also the Nietzschean movement, as we will see – would therefore consist of making knowledge, above all, the vehicle of self-preservation:

> The system which enlightenment aims for is the form of knowledge which most ably deals with the facts, most effectively assists the subject in mastering nature. The system's principles are those of self-preservation. Immaturity amounts to the inability to survive. The bourgeois in the successive forms of the slave-owner, the free entrepreneur, and the

administrator is the logical subject of enlightenment. (Adorno; Horkheimer, 2002, p. 65)

"Self-preservation" means that, for a kind of thought that has given up on conquering a material universality, external to the subject, all that is left is to erect itself as an arbiter of theory, projecting onto what will be found at the end of the process what was already given at the beginning: always the subjective need of a subject, by definition impervious to otherness in its proper sense. The anticipated consequence of Kantian philosophy is that of a humanity incapable of conceiving a substantive transformation of itself; Thus, unable to theoretically conceptualize this overcoming, it would find itself forced to simply pursue its interests as they present themselves to be in the present, ignoring its dependence on the power relations that pervade it. Thus, because he is by right incapable of accessing the injustices of his time, the Kantian theoretical subject must remain, to be coherent, indifferent to any material and collective transformation of society. The result is that conflicts of interest will be impervious to a resolution that would require transcending the ability of each party to assert their respective self-preservation, which makes any verdict a function of the mere relationship of power.

If Kant would still seek to rehabilitate the moral law despite the extremely aseptic demands of this new theoretical framework – thus refusing to pursue what would be the most consequential corollary of his system according to Adorno and Horkheimer –, the works of Sade and Nietzsche would finally attest to the "intransigent critique of practical reason" (Adorno; Horkheimer, 2002, p. 74). It is true that the balance of Nietzsche's Adorno-Horkheimerian assessment at the end of the more or less dedicated treatment dedicated to him in the book is not absolutely clear, a circumstance that is perhaps understandable if we consider its dual authorship; because the "dark writers of the bourgeoisie" (Nietzsche and Sade) are still celebrated for "not seek[ing] to avert the consequences" (idem, p. 92) of the emancipation command that arbitrated the unfolding of odyssean rationality, thus releasing "the utopia of a humanity which, itself no longer distorted, no longer needs distortion" (idem, p. 93). In any case, the position of the author of the *Genealogy of Morals* will be comfortably circumscribed under the heading of a "biological idealism" (idem, p. 76) guilty of simplifying thought towards a celebration of the powerful and harshness towards the "weak", once again limiting the pretensions of reason to the only conceivable objective of prolonging a *de facto* state of affairs. Whether empirical knowledge is defined as the subsumption of the particular to the universal, as in Kant, or, more generally, reason is identified with a natural function, as in Nietzsche, in both cases "enlightenment entangles itself more deeply in mythology": "the arid wisdom which acknowledges nothing new under the sun, because all the pieces in the meaningless game have been played out (…) merely reproduces the fantastic doctrine it rejects" (idem, p. 8).

It may be interesting to add that such a reading would not be restricted to the first half of its century. In an otherwise quite stimulating text, Eagleton (1990), even after recognizing and highlighting the well-known passage from *Beyond good and evil* in which Nietzsche mocks the Stoic pretension of wanting to live in accordance with nature[8], proceeds to state that "the very indifference of the Nietzschean universe (…) sound ironically close to some of his own most cherished values", concluding that "it is the very haughty heedlessness of Nature which would seem to mirror Nietzsche's own ethics" (Eagleton, 1990, p. 250). If this commentator still proceeded with some caution, this immediately gives way to an analysis of the will to power that decomplicates the concept, turning it simply into the abstract imperative of "liv[ing] in a changeful, experimental, self-improvisatory style", which Eagleton later shows can be "deciphered" by the historical materialist approach (Eagleton, 1990, p. 250; p. 241). In the case of Adorno and Horkheimer, it is notable that their condescending evaluation of Nietzsche's thought, it is worth pointing out, is parallel to the circumstance that they refuse – and the probity of this decision must still be investigated – to think about knowledge beyond two paths considered exhaustive: because the shaman's technical relationship with the demons to be dominated is taken as "bloody untruth" (Adorno; Horkheimer, 2002, p. 6), we're left to conceive of nature as devoid of any hidden depth, that is, if this alternative should not also be taken as false, due to its complicity with the first, in that return of the Enlightenment to myth that is this work's main thesis. In such a scenario of theoretical devastation, it is not surprising that Nietzsche also succumbs; the author of *Zarathustra* is attributed the responsibility for having identified the natural world with a simple "mass of material" whose only norm is, as for the Kantian theoretical subject, self-preservation, and the only law, the "law (…) of the stronger" (idem, p. 78). Not surprisingly, the only hope to which the *Dialectic* sees itself devoted is the restricted task of ensuring the rights of the "infinite" in the face of the "finite", of "truth" in the face of "lie" despite its necessary historical cleavage (idem, p. 17); and all this despite having themselves demystified the operation of objectivist bifurcation that was shown to be the origin of such an orientation towards truth in the first place[9]. Still in this chapter, we will see why Nietzsche's movement to refute metaphysical ontology, on the contrary, cannot mean an unambiguous liquidation of objective reason; Only in the next section will we understand how his own critique of reason is not to be confused with that of Horkheimer and Adorno.

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[8] "'According to nature' you want to live? O you noble Stoics, what deceptive words these are!" (BGE 9).

[9] "The Jewish religion brooks no word which might bring solace to the despair of all mortality. It places all hope in the prohibition on invoking falsity as God, the finite as the infi?nite, the lie as truth. The pledge of salvation lies in the rejection of any faith which claims to depict it, knowledge in the denunciation of illusion" (Adorno; Horkheimer, 2002, p. 17). Regarding the simplification introduced by Adorno and Horkheimer through their concept of Enlightenment, we echo Klapwijk's (2010, p. 90) words: "if one portrays an entire period of history or even history as a whole as an immanent unfolding and drawn-out antagonism of the enlightenment, isn't the portrayal itself also totalitarian?" For a similar critique (though, in our view, excessive), see Roberts, 2008.

Nietzsche's farewell to modernity: the Habermasian inflection

Adorno and Horkheimer (2002, p. 36) praise Nietzsche for having recognized, "like few others since Hegel, (…) the dialectic of enlightenment" and for having seen "in enlightenment (…) the universal movement of sovereign mind", its "ambivalent relationship (…) to power". In fact, such moments of concession are quite common among authors who reflexively place themselves above Nietzsche; Eagleton, in turn – but not before having carried out the aforementioned "deciphering" of Nietzsche's thought according to Marxist categories – finds himself forced to conclude that "ironically, (…) there is a sense in which for Nietzsche power is ultimately disinterested", because "if Nietzsche is able to know that all reasoning is simply the product of the will to power, then this knowledge itself shares something of reason's classical range and authority, unlocking the very essence of the real" (Eagleton, 1990, pp. 246-47). With Habermas, finally, it will be no different: Nietzsche is described as having "heighte[ned]" the "modern time-consciousness" and "sens[ing] in the historicist admiration of the 'power of history' a tendency that all too easily turns into an admiration of naked success in the style of *Realpolitik*" (Habermas, 1987, p. 87; p. 85). At the same time that, as we already know, he would highlight Nietzsche as the main character of a movement of return to myth, he will not fail to guarantee Nietzsche the advantage of a "utopian" attitude (idem, p. 87). Despite this, let us see how Habermas unfolds the portrait of a Nietzsche for whom reason would be nothing more than a "perverted will to power" (idem, p. 122). If this reading must, from the beginning, draw attention as particularly out of place, it is no less the case that it remains influential, and that its exposition contributes to exposing the anachronisms that stand in the way of a more interested reception of Nietzsche's thought, and which are not exclusive of Habermas, but relate to the very difficulty of this philosophy for contemporary thought.

In order to understand more precisely the fate reserved for Nietzsche in the *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* – the work in which Habermas dedicates his most forceful criticism to Nietzsche – it is important to understand Habermas' more general diagnosis regarding philosophical modernity. If Adorno and Horkheimer identified in the instrumentalization of thought the original sin to which each philosopher would have been subject in his own way – identification of truth with technique, reduction of the particular case to an instance of a general idea –, leaving to the same procedure of deanthropomorphizing nature the final task of also revealing its own mythical origin, Habermas shifts the origin of the problem so that it no longer refers to a continued deficit of reason with respect to its material and historical roots, but on the contrary, it will be precisely the surrender of thought to an excessive historicism – "from Hegel and Marx to Nietzsche and Heidegger, from Bataille and Lacan to Foucault and Derrida" – that we will see occupy the central place in the history of the "scantily concealed end of philosophy" (Habermas, 1987, p. 55; p. 53). Here is how

Habermas signals this orientation opposite to his own:

> The parties that have contended about the correct self-understanding of modernity since the days of the Young Hegelians all agree on one point: that a far-reaching process of self-illusion was connected with the learning processes conceptualized in the eighteenth century as "enlightenment". Agreement also exists about the fact that the authoritarian traits of a narrow-minded enlightenment are embedded in the principle of self-consciousness or of subjectivity (…). This limitation, built into the structure of the relation-to-self, remains unconscious in the process of becoming conscious. From this springs the tendency toward self-glorification and illusionment, that is, toward absolutizing a given level of reflection and emancipation. (Habermas, 1987, p. 55)

The "principle of self-consciousness", due to the influence of left-wing Hegelians, is seen, certainly not without reason, as dependent on a falsifying objectification of nature, exactly the aporia that Adorno and Horkheimer would poignantly unfold, to confirm the theoretical blockage to the struggle for emancipation as a result of this same unveiling, otherwise quite justified. We have seen that all this restricted the authors of the *Dialectic* to a vague hope associated with their inflexible refusal to take the false for the true; and Habermas can point out the paradoxical character of a project that, while it is no longer capable of "plac[ing] hope in the liberating force of enlightenment" (Habermas, 1987, p. 106), also refuses to abandon the ship – which Nietzsche alone will do. It is certainly not the intention of this work to develop Habermas' own position regarding a positive direction for philosophy, nor was it to articulate in detail the negative Adorno-Horkheimerian solution; what interests us is only to further indicate the relationship of the *content* of Habermas's solution with his now common critique of Adorno and Horkheimer and of Nietzsche, before we summarize his specific reprimands to the latter. But this is not hard to do:

> Nietzsche gains criteria for a critique of culture that unmasks science and morality as being in similar ways ideological expressions of a perverted will to power, just as *Dialectic of Enlightenment* denounces these structures as embodiments of instrumental reason. This confirms our suspicion that Horkheimer and Adorno perceive cultural modernity from a similar experiential horizon, with the same heightened sensibility, and even with the same cramped optics that render one insensible to the traces and the existing forms of communicative rationality. (Habermas, 1987, pp. 128-27)

Just as Platonic ideas are "removed from the world of appearances," the "purist intent" supposedly shared by Adorno, Horkheimer, and Nietzsche would demand that philosophy "purif[y itself from] all empirical connotations" and perform a "final unmasking"—one that tears away, "with one fell swoop, the veil covering the confusion between power and reason" (idem, pp. 129-30). For Habermas, the problem with such an orientation is failing to realize that "the two spheres of being and illusion" are "entwined", which alone would allow "break[ing] the spell of mythic thinking

without incurring a loss of the light radiating from the semantic potentials also preserved in myth" (idem, p. 130). Now, if we could consent to such a reproach as directed to Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic*, would it be fair to also position Nietzsche, as Habermas does, in the unambiguous wake of the same "discourse of modernity which we are still conducting down to our day", to which would belong "consciousness that philosophy is over"? (idem, p. 51). Our argument in the first chapter could already guarantee a first negative answer to this question; let us also see what Habermas's opposing assessment depends on.

The notion that Nietzsche adhered to a "cramped" and purist perspective—leading him to embrace an all-or-nothing logic regarding knowledge and truth—was not exclusive to this work by Habermas. Rather, it stemmed from his earlier analyses in the 1960s, which, despite being more sympathetic toward Nietzsche, had already laid the groundwork for this critique. This objection sums up well, if we are right, the main point of support of Habermas's criticism of this philosopher, and goes especially against the thesis that we have been developing up until now, for which the author of *On Truth and Lies* would have already been informed by the need for the philosopher to assume the limits of the dualism between Being and appearance. Thus, while Habermas recognized in Nietzsche, for the benefit of the latter, the full awareness that knowledge has always been (and could not but be) linked to practical intentions, it would also be the case that, in the attempt to recover contact with life in historical knowledge (in particular in the second *Untimely Meditation*), Nietzsche would have gone too far and, due to an attachment to an exclusively positivist conception of science, end up being incapable of conceiving a "form of theory that has meaning for life" (Habermas, 1972, pp. 295). In the *Philosophical Discourse*, this same tone will take advantage, not surprisingly almost exclusively, of Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*, in order to associate Nietzsche's "Dionysian principle" with the idea of an incorruptible will to power, which rejects the fictions of Being, of consciousness, etc. and to which Nietzsche would have urged us to surrender ourselves above all else. It is to say that "the distinctions between 'true' and 'false', 'good' and 'evil' [are traced] back to preferences for what serves life and for the noble" (Habermas, 1987, p. 95). Nietzsche's "cramped optics", in this case, was already in his supposed short-sightedness regarding the circumstance that the critical faculty of valuation would constitute "a moment of reason that (…) is still at least procedurally connected with objectifying knowledge" (idem, p. 96); missing this possibility, Nietzsche would have concluded that "the concept of 'truth' as such useless" (Habermas, 1999, p. 219) and guaranteed "any illusion at random" the status of knowledge, "as long as some need interprets the world through it" (Habermas, 1972, p. 299). In short: instead of making the emancipatory content of his own analyses count for the purpose of "submit[ing] subject-centered reason yet again to an immanent critique", Nietzsche would have, in the end, chosen "to give up the program entirely" (Habermas, 1987, pp. 85-86). Thus, although Habermas certainly

perceives the *sui generis* character of the Nietzschean gesture better than Adorno and Horkheimer, he still continues to see at its base the assent to a naive positivist naturalism, which would not be restricted to Nietzsche's first published works.

Thus, it will be necessary to evaluate, first of all, Habermas's perception according to which Nietzsche would have hastily extrapolated the conclusions to which he was solely authorized in his critique of metaphysical ontology. We will do this, of course, from Nietzsche's side alone, arguing for the plausibility of his position, which, contrary to what Habermas implies in his *Discourse*, actually profited from an interested engagement with the philosophical tradition, in particular from a well-known objection to Kant's transcendental *coup de force*, as well as from its translation into a thesis on the derivative character of knowledge and consciousness. Granted Nietzsche's argument, the possibility of a normative theory of knowledge, now unprotected by idealist metaphysics, certainly remains to be proved; however, any criterion will henceforth have to face the challenge of being referred to its practical implications, once exposed the impropriety of any appeal to a supposedly absolutely binding foundation for the critique of knowledge.

Nietzsche and relativism

Since the term “relativism” began to acquire increasing terminological importance in culture in general and in philosophy in particular, Nietzsche’s name is constantly referred to, and even to the point that the author of *Beyond Good and Evil* can be considered “probably the greatest figurehead for that tendency since Protagoras” (Blackburn, 2005, p. 75). In 1911, in fact, Vaihinger already noted with confidence that “Nietzsche is a relativist” (Vaihinger apud Heit, 2019, p. 38); more poignantly, Alfred Hanel, in the first major study of the relationship between Nietzsche and relativism, in 1923, writes that “all these Comte, Mach, Schiller, Laas, Spencer [i.e., nineteenth-century positivists and relativists] are surpassed by one individual alone: Friedrich Nietzsche” (ibid.). This way of describing Nietzsche would become commonplace from then on; as Gardiner (1981, p. 152) observes, Nietzsche “has frequently been constructed as having tried to press the boundaries of relativist criticism far beyond the spheres within which others were inclined to confine it”. We may finally be surprised by the following statement in a notebook by Nietzsche himself, already in 1872: “philosophy can now only emphasize the relative and anthropomorphic nature of all knowledge, as well as the power of illusion that prevails everywhere” (NF 19[37] of 1872, KSA 7.19). To what extent, however, would Nietzsche have espoused relativism as a “true” doctrine, if we may so express ourselves? Baghramian (2004, p. 61) notes that there are “strong connections between perspectivism and relativism”, but goes on to observe that this relationship remains poorly defined. For Heit (2019, p. 41), it must be placed in light of Nietzsche's more

general philosophical project of cultural liberation and transformation. As we have already indicated the source of our interest in Nietzsche in his movement to unlock criticism from its exclusively epistemic confinement – in this resisting, rather than granting assent, to the identification of knowledge with the asepsis of subjective reason –, it is important to indicate, from now on, what seems to us to be the role of relativism in the most general architecture of his system, despite Adorno and Horkheimer and Habermas' accounts.

We can start to understand this question by resuming an interrupted development from the previous chapter. When we introduced our presentation to the context of the young Nietzsche's writing, we had selected, as a way of framing in a very general way what seems to us to be the most cardinal motif of his philosophy, first the second chapter of *Twilight of the Idols*, entitled "The Problem of Socrates"; and then passages from *The Birth of Tragedy* – a text from his youth, therefore much earlier than the former –, in which Nietzsche had similarly already been able to identify in the Athenian philosopher perhaps the most representative symbol of an "Alexandrian culture" guilty of a corrupt will to truth. If those excerpts could make us reluctant to take seriously a philosophy that seeks to define itself in opposition to none other than Socrates, otherwise the most eternal advocate of the rights of reason in the face of the abuses of rhetoric, it is also the case that we had not limited ourselves to that: for we saw Nietzsche oppose Kant and the Kantian Schopenhauer to the "lie of culture" of rationalism, as those who had succeeded in exposing, against Socrates, the "limits and the relativity of knowledge generally". In the *Dictionnaire des concepts philosophiques*, Soler (2006, p. 708) defines as the first characteristic of "alethic relativism" the idea that "human knowledge and values are relative to specific factors," be it language, "norms of rationality," "the cognitive equipment of human beings," "forms of life," etc. Indeed, it was above all a conclusion like this that we saw Nietzsche draw, if not from Kant, at least from Lange, who included the subject-object distinction itself in the list of categories and, according to Nietzsche's elaboration, exposed knowledge as an audacious and ephemeral "invention," imagined by "clever animals" (TL I). But what is striking in all this, finally, is that Habermas himself, citing *On Truth and Lies* by name, referred approvingly to this episode of Nietzsche's work, for it having conceived "knowledge as such opposed to every objectivism" (Habermas, 1999, p. 215). The question is: to what, if anything, does the radicality of Nietzschean relativism go back? Restricted to the first part of the *Dictionnaire*'s definition, we still do not understand the historical prominence given to the figure of Nietzsche, whether as a "turning point" of modernity or as an "intransigent critique of practical reason."

But the answer shall meet us promptly. If, until now, we have been able to confuse what was in fact a double register of Nietzsche's critique of Socrates, as well as of the history of philosophy in

a more general way, it is now necessary to make conscious something that until now we had only alluded to. In fact, the *Twilight of the Idols* attack exploited a speculated psychophysiological circumstance (desire for revenge) that would make Socratism little more than an intellectualist facade for a previous state of degeneration, a reflection that should work as the final word on the untruthfullness of the Socratic initiative; that is to say, the mature Nietzsche already presented this critique independently of any reference to subsequent achievements of philosophy such as that which *The Birth of Tragedy* attributed to Kant, and which Nietzsche, it is worth knowing, characterized as an unfolding of Socrates' own movement. Thus, Granier (1970, p. 417) divides Nietzsche's critique of the ontological tradition into a double "speculative and genealogical" movement, the speculative consisting of an "exegetical critique" that "tends to prove that ontology" (and the epistemological dualism that accompanies it, therefore) "corresponds to an aberrant reading of the text of reality" and that "the metaphysician is a bad 'philologist'"; genealogical criticism, on the other hand, has the task of discovering the origin of metaphysical ontology in an unnatural ideology based on moral prejudices "from which the [apparently only theoretical] reasons offered draw their brilliance and effectiveness " (idem, p. 418). Thus, Nietzsche will say:

> [B]y far the greater part of conscious thinking must still be included among instinctive activities, and that goes even for philosophical thinking. most of the conscious
> thinking of a philosopher is secretly guided and forced into certain channels by his instincts. Behind all logic and its seeming sovereignty of movement, too, there stand valuations or, more clearly, physiological demands for the preservation of a certain type of life. (BGE 3)

> The will to truth requires a critique—let us thus de.ne our own task—the value of truth must for once be experimentally *called into question*. (GM III, 24)

Perhaps the genealogical moment (*Twilight of the idols*) profited from exegetical criticism in general and from Kant's idealist achievement in particular (*Birth of tragedy*); but it is also the case, as we have seen, that the demonstration, attributed to Kantianism, of the ultimate emptiness of the essence-appearance system shall raise philosophy to the height of a supreme decision, which depended above all on an affective disposition, of going backwards or forwards: "A little *more* strength, right, courage, and artistic power, and they would want to *rise*—not return!" (BGE 10). That is to say, when we focus on the liberation in relation to the asepsis of a dogmatic epistemological dualism – a liberation that Nietzsche saw as the main achievement of philosophical modernity –, the circumstance that Socrates was theoretically mistaken with respect to the transparency of truth to rational inquiry becomes secondary in relation to the observation of the compromised psychophysiology of this individual: for in the philosopher "there is nothing whatever

that is impersonal" (BGE 6). In fact, wanting to make genealogical criticism depend solely on a gain on the side of understanding would be to deprive it of all consistency, and Habermas (1972, p. 298) would be right when he accuses Nietzsche of circularity, for borrowing self-reflection "in order to make sure of the impossibility of self-reflection as such"[10]. But perhaps the alternative to this circularity – i.e., the refusal, to which consistency forces Nietzsche, to give the final word to theoretical argumentation alone – would have the effect of blocking the possibility for a discourse that would resist the illusions of reification?

The *Dictionaire* completes the definition of alethic relativism with a second clause: "to excessively question the value of knowledge, or even to deny the very possibility of authentic knowledge". In fact, relying on this description, which seems to apply only to Nietzsche, we finally understand what would consolidate him as a *sui generis* thinker, as someone who asks himself "*who* is it really that puts questions to us here? *What* in us really wants 'truth'?" (BGE 1), and for whom "good and revered things" – i. e., "the true, the truthful, the selfless" – are "maybe even one (...) in essence" with "wicked" things – "deception, selfishness and lust" (BGE 2). However, questioning the value of knowledge is not yet synonymous with refusing its possibility or concluding absolutely in favor of its liquidation as a constitutive part of an active culture; for it is possible that we should apply here what Nietzsche teaches when he states that "many [actions] called moral ought to be done and encouraged – but (…) *for other reasons than hitherto*" (D 103). To be sure, a solution of this nature – which transfers the decision about the parameters of knowledge to the sphere of values, as we have already announced – will be unsatisfactory and unacceptable, for example, for Eagleton (1990, p. 245), who is reluctant to conclude that "[t]he overman may display compassion and benevolence, but these are simply aspects of the pleasurable exercise of his powers". In this chapter, however, we must limit ourselves to problematizing the application of the predicate of "relativist" to Nietzsche, showing the line of reasoning (speculative criticism) that theoretically supports his movement of energetic reallocation of criticism. This demonstration will have a double meaning regarding the question of relativism, because we will show that, far from having been unassisted in relation to the theoretical developments of its time, Nietzschean philosophy profited, on the contrary, from a detailed reflection on identified congenital difficulties of epistemological criticism; the abandonment of this paradigm, on the other hand, will not occur without undermining

[10] In this context, Deleuze's explanation of the correct relationship between the two moments (speculative and genealogical) of Nietzschean criticism is enlightening: "Does he [Nietzsche] mean that the will to truth must be the ruin of morality in the same way that morality is the ruin of religion? The gain would be slight, the will to truth is still part of the ascetic ideal, the mode of approach is always Christian. Nietzsche requires some?thing else; a change of ideal, another ideal, 'a different way of feeling'"; "When we denounce the permanence of the ascetic ideal in the will to truth we deprive this ideal of the condition of its permanence or its final disguise. In this sense we too are 'truthfull' or 'seekers after knowledge'. (…) [W]e want (…) another way of knowing, another concept of truth, that is to say a truth which is not presupposed in a will to truth but which presupposes *a completely different will*" (Deleuze, 1983, pp. 98-99).

the reasons on which the Kantian interdict on the thing in itself was based, reopening knowledge to the possibility of critical realism, and therefore of a fully-fledged objectivity, opposed to relativism. In fact, it is this opportunity that genealogy takes advantage of: its condition of meaning could be nothing other than the observation of the merely conditional character of the injustice to which knowledge subjects the text of the world.

Kant's Idealism of Time

Introducing the "Transcendental Deduction of the Pure Concepts of the Understanding" – a study that he would describe as the "important" in determining the "rules and bounds" of the use of concepts –, Kant began by stating that the "manifold's *combination* (*coniunctio*) as such can never come to us through the senses", because, "whether or not we become conscious of such combination (...)", every combination is an "act of understanding" (Kant, 1996, p. 10; pp. 175-76); as for the extension of this universality of the concept – as well as the proportional emptying of the content guaranteed to the sensible data –, Kant is equally categorical: it is total, because "where the understanding has beforehand combined anything, there it also cannot resolve anything" (idem, p. 176). It is to say, for example – and to simplify things a little[11] –, that what we perceive as the causal action of a body A on a body B depends, in fact, on a synthetic activity of the subject, which unites in relation two bodies or events that are more profoundly independent of each other and exempt from any needs of knowledge. We've mentioned Kant's clash with Hume. Now, although Kant would disagree with Hume regarding a supposed merely psychological scope for the law of causality, it is notable that both shared the same conception about the original emptiness of that which arrives through the senses. Indeed, also for Hume "every idea, that is distinguishable, is separable by the imagination; and (…) every idea, that is separable by the imagination, may be conceivd to be separately existent (Hume, 1960, p. 54); so that "combination", to preserve the Kantian term, is always due to some "principle[] of union or cohesion among our simples ideas" (idem, p. 12). Deleuze credits Hume with the merit of having been the first to define knowledge as "going beyond" the data of experience, hence his influence on Kant (Deleuze, 1984, p. 11)[12]. Bergson, in turn, lists the problem common to Kant and Hume, as well as to modern philosophy in general, as dependent on a contradiction in the use of words, when we should, more correctly, perceive that the idea of an "absence of order" contains more, and not less, determinations than the

[11] After all, the very consistency of a body A and a body B certainly already depend on a synthetic activity of the understanding, and strictly speaking it makes no sense to say that they would exist prior to the action of this faculty. The important thing, however, is simply to note how much is attributed here to the understanding, and how little to sensible input.

[12] Beiser also highlights this continuity between Hume and Kant: "A disturbing dualism thus arose [with Hume] where the universal and necessary principles of reason stood in stark contrast to the particularity and contingency of experience. It was the mission of Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* to counter the threat of Humean skepticism and to rescue the Enlightenment faith in science" (Beiser, 1987, p. 11).

idea of order: “the presence of (…) an order which does not interest us” (Bergson, 1946, p. 75). Not without a notable Nietzschean accent[13], Bergson diagnoses the origin of this type of “abnormal and morbid” questioning in a “deficit of the will” that is also “defective [power of action]”, in the face of which the appropriate attitude – “our superiority” – would consist simply in refusing to pose the question in those terms (idem, pp. 73-74).

Now, sharing this common starting point with Hume, it is no coincidence that the eventual Kantian vindication of a spatiotemporal order to the world, however this demonstration may proceed, cannot be based on empirical experience, when this has already been denied beforehand any consistency independent of an overcoming always operated only by the subject. In this sense – and to return to Nietzsche –, it is understood that the only occurrence of the term “relativism” in the entire published work of this author is inserted in the context of a discussion on Kantianism, when, in *Schopenhauer as educator*, Kant’s philosophy was placed at the root of a foretold “gnawing and disintegrating scepticism and relativism” (UM III, 3) that Nietzsche will increasingly be willing to identify with the very essence of a “theologian success” (AC 10), “the greatest misfortune of modern philosophy” (NF 18[14] of 1888, KSA 13.18). In fact, the Kantian claim for the objective validity of the categories would depend, in particular and somewhat unusually, on the idealism of time, the core of which is to determine the reality of time as intermediary between the mere concept, on the one hand, without, on the other, attributing it to things in themselves; time would instead be a “form of sensibility”, i.e., the way in which our sensibility, in its receptivity to sensations, necessarily apprehends the sensible data. Far from lamenting the conditionality of the claim to knowledge by causes thus obtained, it will be this conditionality that will allow Kant, as stated in the preface to the second edition of the *Critique of pure reason*, to “*think* freedom”: “if we (…) restrict (…) the pure concepts of the understanding”, then “freedom contains no contradiction” (Kant, 1996, p. 29)[14].

It is true that, on the one hand, Nietzsche's youthful work is marked, as we saw in the first chapter, either by an unambiguously complimentary use of Kant – this was the case in *The Birth of Tragedy*, for which, however, idealism meant, according to Lange's hint, above all the opportunity

[13] Although Bergson, it seems, discovered Nietzsche’s work only late in life. In *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, he accuses Nietzsche of having unambiguously divided humanity into masters and slaves (Bergson, 2002), a circumstance that Barbara Stiegler (2017, p. 350) attributes to the ideological manipulations of Nietzsche’s work, which were common in the 1920s. As for the proximity between the quoted passage from Bergson and Nietzsche’s own opinion on the modern starting point, see BGE 208: “skepticism is the most spiritual expression of a certain complex physiological condition that in ordinary language is called nervous exhaustion and sickliness”; “paralysis of the will: where today does one not find this cripple sitting?”. The proximity between the views of the two philosophers will be explored in greater depth in the next chapter.

[14] Habermas, as we know, would profit from such a distribution to articulate his own deflated transcendentalism. According to Ashenden and Owen (1999, p. 2), “Habermas locates the central feature of Kant's project in its recognition of the limits of reason and its simultaneous preservation of the critical-transcendental power of reason to ground claims to truth and to normative rightness”.

for an artistic metaphysics – or else, at least, by a generous disidentification of transcendental philosophy with its more everyday contemporary exponents. However, we have also seen that, since the end of the 1860s, Nietzsche had expressed discomfort with an identified incompatibility between idealism and naturalism, which would end up making him flirt with Hartmannian objective idealism. Be that as it may, the fact is that, prior to *Human*, it must be conceded, Nietzsche's theoretical reflections on the nature of time coexist (and contrast) with "the metaphysical, aesthetic and propagandist activity of a public man that Nietzsche carried out alongside Wagner in favor of the Bayreuth cause" (D'Iorio, 1993, p. 260). This coexistence is quite explicit, for example, in *On truth and lie*, in which Nietzsche is able to narrate the origin of the human intellect "within nature", while simultaneously affirming that everything that could lead us to "distrust of idealism" – namely, the "wondrous" of nature's laws – "lies precisely and exclusively in the mathematical rigor and inviolability of the representations of space and time" (TL 1). Perhaps no text is as representative of these two directions, however, as the second *Untimely Meditation*, significantly entitled *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, in which Nietzsche writes:

> [T]he doctrines of sovereign becoming, of the fluidity of all concepts, types and species, of the lack of any cardinal distinction between man and animal -- doctrines which I consider true but deadly (...). (UM II, 9)

We have already seen how *Schopenhauer as educator* ultimately associated becoming with everything that is "worthy of our contempt"; and perhaps this work also gives us a hint about Nietzsche's parallel investigations, when Schopenhauer is praised for having used "Kantian philosophy above all as an extraordinary rhetorical instrument", that is, as just one among "countless hieroglyphs" capable of expressing the "meaning" of his deepest task (UM III, 7)[15]. In any case, there remains evidence of a major structural transformation in Nietzsche's thought, which began following the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy*, which D'Iorio (1993, p. 260) describes as a "skeptical reflection on the foundations and on the different possible forms of philosophy". Although they must wait *Human* to take shape in the published work, these elaborations are flagrant in two crucial posthumous writings from the period between the publication of his first work and the conception of the *Meditations*, in which Nietzsche appropriates each time a different argument whose effect is to undermine the foundations of Kantian idealism.

[15] Also regarding his own use of Kant (and Schopenhauer) in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche would write: "How I regret now that in those days I still lacked the courage (or immodesty?) to permit myself in every way an individual language of my own for such individual views and hazards—and that instead I tried laboriously to express by means of Schopenhauerian and Kantian formulas strange and new valuations which were basically at odds with Kant's and Schopenhauer's spirit and taste!" (BT Self-Criticism, 6).

Written in April 1873 and destined to Wagner's disapproval – who would receive the text coldly, plausibly because he could foresaw in it a future detractor of the Bayreuth cause –, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* narrates the evolution of pre-Platonic philosophy within a dialectical movement, making Anaximander's thought a response to that of Thales, Heraclitus's to that of Anaximander, etc.; more fundamentally, however, the text consists of a discussion on the rights of becoming, in which the theses of the ancients find modern exponents capable of intervening in their favor, to the final advantage of Heraclitus's doctrine of becoming. This demonstration occurs in sections 13, 14 and 15: first, Nietzsche discusses the anti-Eleatic argument attributed to Democritus and Anaxagoras, who sought to conclude, from the "indubitable succession of ideas in our thinking", the thesis that "movement is truth and not semblance" (PTG 14); then, he seeks to weaken the effectiveness of this argument, firstly considering that the atomistic vision of those philosophers would still assume, in any case, the existence of isolated and unconditioned substances; but also, and more decisively, Nietzsche will identify the availability of an opportune counter-argument to the Eleatics, to be found in a note in §7 of the "Transcendental Aesthetics", in which Kant responded to opponents of his own idealist theory. The text quoted by Nietzsche:

> "I can say, to be sure, that my ideas follow one upon the other, but all that means is that I am conscious of them in terms of succession in time, i.e., according to the form of the inward sense. But this does not make time a thing which exists in itself, nor a condition objectively adhering to things". (Kant apud PTG 15)

Therefore, it would be necessary to reinforce the anti-Eleatic argument, if one wanted to penetrate the Kantian objection as well; the rejoinder will be offered to the reader by the Russian philosopher Afrikan Spir, whose first volume of the then recently published *Thought and reality* [*Denken und Wirklichkeit*] had borrowed from the library a few months earlier. In this work, Spir (1896, p. 164) rehabilitates what he considers to be "very sensible objections to this confusion of space and time", with which Kant's contemporaries had already confronted him, and highlights the ineffectiveness of the Kantian response in the quote we cited above, which after all Nietzsche copied from his book. Before we look at Spir's transcribed argument, however, it will be interesting to see – given the centrality of this moment for the conception of the Nietzschean project – how an equivalent objection, or at least a very close one, already appeared, as Spir recalled, in Kant's own circle, and how he sought to respond to it even before the publication of the *Critique of pure reason*, although with an equally unsatisfactory response according to the Russian author. The idealist thesis was already prepared in the *Dissertation* of 1770; Mendelssohn, Lambert and Schultz – close friends of

its author and philosophers held in high regard by Kant – all shared the same concern, which "continued to bother Kant scholars down to the present day" (Falkenstein, 2006, pp. 151-152)[16].

For Falkenstein (1991), Lambert and Mendelssohn's respective objections to the idealist thesis would, in fact, be significantly different, so that only Mendelssohn would be credited with having conceived a significant – and ultimately decisive – challenge to the Kantian system. Indeed, while the Swiss mathematician, in his exchange with Kant, speaks only of changes in our representations, the German *Aufklärer* goes further and refers to changes in the very subject that represents. Here are the respective objections to Kantian temporal idealism:

> All changes are bound to time and are inconceivable without time. *If changes are real, then time is real,* whatever it may be. *If time is unreal, then no change can be real.* I think, though, that even an idealist must grant at least that changes really exist and occur in his representations, for example, their beginning and ending. Thus time cannot be regarded as something *unreal*. (Letter from Lambert to Kant of October 13, 1770, in Kant, 1967, p. 63)

> For several reasons I cannot convince myself that time is something merely subjective. Succession is after all at least a necessary condition of the representations that finite minds have. But finite minds are not only subjects; they are also objects of representations, both those of God and those of their fellows. Consequently it is necessary to regard succession as something objective. Since we have to grant the reality of succession in a representing creature and in its alterations, why not also in the sensible objects, which are the models and protoypes of representations in the world? (Letter from Mendelssohn to Kant of December 25, 1770, in Kant, 1967, p. 69)

As one can see, both Lambert and Mendelssohn – as well as Spir and Nietzsche, as we shall see – clearly claim, against Kant, the "reality" of "change" (Lambert), or else the "objectivity" of "succession" (Mendelssohn), both of which can simply be equated to the reality (or objectivity) of time, deemed capable of undermining what these authors understood as an overly subjectivist thesis of Kant's *Dissertation* (a thesis that Lambert describes in terms of the "unreal" character attributed therein to time, and Mendelssohn of its merely "subjective" value). On the other hand, Lambert supports his objection more briefly, appealing to the irreducibility of change as a property of the subject's "representations"; Mendelssohn, for his part, after having reproduced the objection in a similar formulation ("...representations that finite minds have"), intends to complete it by considering the fact that these same "finite minds" should be able to be framed not only as

[16] Although Spir does not mention Lambert and Mendelssohn by name, the fact is that, commenting on the Kantian response offered in that note to §7 of the Aesthetics (which we have retrieved above), and which in turn was addressed, as we shall see, to these contemporaries, Spir stated that Kant "did not want to touch the nerve" of "very reasonable objections" already available, in his time, against the thesis of temporal idealism. It is perhaps interesting to note, however, that Nietzsche, unlike Spir, would value the Kantian reply, if not as a definitive response to the anti-Eleatic position, at least as an effective one in relation to *some* objection – whether only that of Anaxagoras and Democritus, or also that of Lambert and Mendelssohn – to Kant's idealism of time. In any case, Nietzsche would consider fatal to Kant, at least, the objection as formulated by Spir.

"subjects" but also as "objects", whether from an absolute point of view (that of "God") or from the point of view of "their fellows". Having made this consideration, the thesis of the subjective character of change is judged to be untenable[17].

Whether these objections are substantially the same or not, the fact is that Kant – correctly or incorrectly – would treat them as one: in a letter to Marcus Herz, in which he would respond for the first time to the challenge, Kant begins by mentioning his good fortune in receiving "a single letter from Mendelssohn or Lambert" regarding possible corrections to his system; after defending spatial idealism from an objection by Johann Schultz – whom he refers to as "the best philosophical brain I know in this neighborhood" –, Kant goes on to address a "second misunderstanding" that would have affected Schultz, which otherwise wouldn't raise himself the same objection as "Mr. Lambert". Here is how Kant describes the objection (or objections) we have been discussing, and then how he reacts to it, still in the letter of 1772:

> [This] objection (...) has made me reflect considerably, because it seems to be the most serious objection that can be raised against the system, an objection that seems to occur naturally to everybody (…). It runs like this: Changes are something real (according to the testimony of inner sense). Now, they are possible only on the assumption of time; therefore time is something real that is involved in the determination of the things in themselves.
>
> There is no doubt that I must think my own state under the form of time and that therefore the form of the inner sensibility does give me the appearance of changes. I do not deny that changes are real, any more than I deny that bodies are real, even though by real I only mean that something real corresponds to the appearance. (Letter from Kant to Marcus Herz of February 21, 1772, in Kant, 1967, p. 75)

As one can see, Kant seeks, in this response, to minimize the scope of his adversaries' considerations, as if merely rectifying what would be the most appropriate conclusion of their arguments: changes are real, but only in the sense that something real corresponds to them (their unreality differs – this may be the idea, although it is difficult to guess what could count as "unreal" for Kant in this deflated scenario – from the unreality of a pink elephant that I hallucinate, or of a dream, to which, hypothetically, absolutely nothing in reality would correspond). To be sure, the question here is not that – the object of the debate between Leibniz and Newton – of whether or not time is a subsistent entity, but simply whether it is indeed appropriate, as Kant seems to think – or even whether it is even *intelligible*, we would say – to qualify, for some reason, the meaning of the predicate "real" attributed to change, something that both Leibniz and Newton did not risk. The

[17] Van Cleeve (1999, pp. 53-54), despite these considerations, disagrees with Falkenstein, and claims that Lambert's formulation is merely more concise, omitting the premise – explicit in Mendelssohn – according to which the change from one representation to another implies a real, that is, objective, change in the subject as something prior to its representative states. In this case, both objections would be the same in essence, or, in any case, equally demanding.

formulation of the letter to Herz already prefigured, finally, the same line that we will see taken up again in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (§7 of Transcendental Aesthetic):

> Against this theory, which grants that time is empirically real but disputes that it is real absolutely and transcendentally, I have heard men of insight raise quite unanimously an objection. I gather from this great unanimity that the objection must occur naturally to every reader who is not accustomed to contemplations such as these. The objection is the following. Changes are actual. (This is proved by the variation on the part of our own presentations (…)). Now changes are possible only in time. Therefore time is something actual. There is no difficulty in replying to the objection. I concede the whole argument. Time is indeed something actual, viz., the actual form of inner intuition. (...) Only absolute reality must, by the reasons adduced above, be denied to time. Time is nothing but the form of our inner intuition.[18] (Kant, 1996, pp. 90-91)

Now in a published work, Kant makes official the defense of his position as being dependent on the idea we have already seen, which consists of flexibilizing the possible use of the predicate "real" – in order to be able to say that he "concedes the argument" – so that Mendelssohn, Lambert and, by the way, Kant himself be all correct. Thus, Vaihinger will say the following about the outcome of the journey:

> Here too [i.e., in the *Critique*] the answer actually only repeats the original claim that time is subjective. First [i.e., in the letter to Herz] Kant says: changes in time are real, but this is only a phenomenon. And later [in the *Critique*]: time is real, but only as internal sense. (…). Kant offers a claim against another claim [*Behauptung gegen Behauptung*], but not a defense against an objection. (Vaihinger, 1922, p. 403) (Vaihinger, 1922, p. 403)

Although we will ultimately agree with Vaihinger, we would like to focus our attention on another part of Kant's defense, a part which seems more tangible to us and which follows the quoted paragraph from the *Critique,* giving us the opportunity for considering Kant's response without having to impute him a blunt desire to debunk realism through wishful thinking. Indeed, Kant was convinced of the *sui generis* character of transcendental idealism, which should make it somewhat incomprehensible to unaccustomed readers; these would insist on granting the data of consciousness an immediate contact with reality in itself, a requirement that they were only willing to give up in the case of external objects: thus, the argument of Lambert, Mendelssohn and others would depend on implicitly reproducing the old dogmatic opinion for which the content of the inner sense would be given in a more immediate way than that of the external, when Kant had already shown its equivalence in this respect, and therefore disallowed introspection as a means of privileged access to anything whatsoever[19]. In this case, much to the detriment of Nietzsche's reconstruction, every

[18] The note that Spir and Nietzsche copy and that we quoted above is a commentary on this last sentence.

[19] "But what causes this objection to be raised so unanimously, and raised, moreover, by those who nonetheless cannot think of any plausible objec?tion against the doctrine that space is ideal, is the following. They had no hope

objection to Kantian temporal idealism would inevitably circle back to that of Anaxagoras to Parmenides, from which, as we have seen, the Eleatic still stood victorious. For, as Nietzsche himself explained, Anaxagoras left open the possibility of distinguishing "pure thinking, which is timeless like the one being of Parmenides, and our consciousness of this thinking", which alone would be responsible for the appearance of change (PTG 15).

It remains to be seen whether Kant's response, now supplemented by the diagnosis of the opponent's error, really attacks the core of the problem. On the one hand, we have seen that, although Mendelssohn's objection is plausibly more damaging than Lambert's, Kant would treat them as equivalent every time; this circumstance, we have also said, did not go unnoticed at least by Falkenstein, for whom Kant only emerged unscathed from the dispute because he had disregarded Mendelssohn's formulation. It will not be necessary to take a position on this point; the reader who wants to compare Spir's formulation, which we will present below, with Mendelssohn's, and who is convinced of their essential equivalence, will have one more reason to believe that Kantian philosophy was definitely vulnerable to the argument, even though it had tried to respond to it in time. It is therefore necessary to address Nietzsche's preferred formulation of the objection and weigh the reasons in favor of the realist position.

Nietzsche's naturalist turn. Afrikan Spir's argument

For the author of *Thought and reality*, the reality of time is indisputable and defines the objectivity of the world of experience: "what old Heraclitus taught is therefore true, that the world of experience is comparable to a river in which new waves replace those that precede them, and where no two are entirely alike in the next instant" (Spir, 1896, p. 225). It is true that, following a neo-Kantian line more in the wake of Johann Herbart than Lange, Spir – unlike Nietzsche – will not be willing to give up the "thing in itself", seeking, in an unconditional law of thought (the principle of identity), the source of an ontological truth (Nasser, 2015, pp. 73-74); In *Human* – in what appears to be a clear allusion to the Russian philosopher – Nietzsche explicitly states that "this law, too, which is here called 'primary', evolved" (HH 18). This critique continues his earlier project from *On truth and lie*, where he challenged Spir's fundamental error: the conclusion that a timeless reality must exist, drawn from the apparent contradictions within the empirical world. This confrontation would occur through a very particular engagement of Nietzsche with reflections on the nature of language, which would play an equally important role in the changes of direction of

of establishing apodeictic ally that space is real absolutely; for they are confronted by idealism, according to which the actuality of external ob?jects is incapable of strict proof. By contrast, the actuality of the object of our inner sense118 (the actuality of myself and of my state) is directly evident through consciousness. External objects might be a mere illusion; but the object of inner sense is, in their opinion, undeniably something actual. They failed to bear in mind, however, that both of them, though their actuality as presentations is indisputable, still belong only to appearance" (Kant, 1996, p. 91).

his thought and which will be our subject in the following. The fact is that Nietzsche was engaged with Spir's work throughout his entire intellectually productive life, and it is probably unthinkable to present Nietzschean philosophy without reference to this link. In particular, and to continue where we left off, Spir's argument against Kantian temporal idealism, in addition to having been mobilized by Nietzsche at a moment in his production that would prove to be pivotal, seems to have impressed the author of *Philosophy in the tragic age* enough for him to decide to copy it in its entirety in his own work. Let us turn directly to Nietzsche's text, where he quotes Spir:

> It is probable that this [Kant's] would have been Parmenides' way out, although the counter-argument would then be the same as A. Spir's argument against Kant (...): "Now in the first place it is clear that I can know nothing of succession as such if I do not hold its successive stages simultaneously in my consciousness. *The idea of succession, in other words, is not in itself successive; consequently it is completely different from the succession of ideas.* The actual fact is that one absolutely cannot deny the reality of change. If you throw it out the window it will slip back in through the keyhole. One can say 'it merely seems to me that conditions and ideas change': but this semblance itself is something objectively given. Within it, succession indubitably has objective reality; within it something actually follows upon something else. Besides, it is necessary to note that *the entire critique of reason can have its foundation and justification only in the presupposition that our ideas appear to us as they are.* For even if they appeared to us as other than they really are, one could not make any valid assertions about them, hence produce no epistemology and no 'transcendental' examination of objective validity. (PTG 15, my emphasis)

Just as the mere appearance of pain is, in itself, something that causes distress – and therefore sufficient evidence of the effective presence of that which, hypothetically, one was trying to deny –, in the same way change, to copy Spir, "slip back in through the keyhole" as soon as it is granted the minimum right of citizenship. From this long passage transcribed by Nietzsche, of which we have suppressed part, we have highlighted two excerpts that seem to us to capture the essence of the dispute. In the second one, Spir draws attention to the undesirable precedent that Kant would set if he insisted on a rigorous defense: for, just as one would say that it is only "seemingly" that my representations change, nothing would prevent me from concluding, following the same logic, that it is also only "seemingly" that I have representations (for example), and Kant would have shot himself in the foot. The first highlighted excerpt, however, locates what seems to us to be the main argument, which consists in saying that the representation of succession is not the same as the very succession of our representations: this, in short, is what seems to us to be the essence of the objection common to all these authors, or at least its most appropriate formulation. As is known, the same realization would make its mark on Bergson, who would give it expression in increasingly easy-to-understand formulas; he writes, for example: "What the cinematograph shows us in movement on the screen is the series of immobile views of the filme; it is, of course, understood that what is projected on this screen, over and above these immobile views themselves, is the

movement within the projector" (Bergson, 1946, p. 301). That is, movement always "slip back in through the keyhole".

The irreducibility of change to mere representations of change means movement cannot be reconstructed from static elements, as our understanding might attempt. Merely organizing discrete states in sequence is insufficient—one must also generate their *passing*, whether through the motion of the eye across film frames or by delegating this movement to a projection device. This principle becomes clearer when considering the conditions of temporal becoming: as the present transforms into the past, it simultaneously actualizes what was future. Deleuze insightfully understood how this realization shaped Nietzsche's thought. Where Nietzsche observes that "if becoming could resolve itself into being or into nothingness[], then this state must have been reached" (WP 1066), Deleuze draws the crucial conclusion that the present moment cannot be "a moment of being or of present 'in the strict sense'", but must instead be "the passing moment, [which] *forces* us to think of becoming, but to think of it precisely as what could not have started, and cannot finish, becoming" (Deleuze, 1983, p. 48). In other words, for the present instant to pass, it must paradoxically *be* past even while remaining present. As Deleuze explains: "if [the present] had to wait for a new present in order to become past, the past in general would never be constituted in time (...); the moment must be simultaneously present and past, present and yet to come, in order for it to pass" (idem, p. 48). In fact, in *Philosophy in the tragic age*, Nietzsche would celebrate German language for using the word "*Wirklichkeit*" ("actuality") to designate what is material, doing due justice to the fact that everything that is real (actual) "lies simply in its acts [*Wirken*] and that for it there exist no other sort of being" (PTG 5). Unlike in cinematographic projection—where an external device advances the film frames—the world as totality admits no such external mechanism. Since we are speaking of reality in its entirety, there can be nothing outside it to produce this movement. The "film" of the world must therefore advance *from within*: it cannot be a mere composition of static frames (instants of Being), but must instead constitute itself as essential becoming.

For the purposes of our investigation, it will suffice to note that only change can be the cause of change; contrary to what Kant seemed to want, change cannot be explained by anything other than what already implies it, but it is change itself that will be the starting point for any possible valid theory. Would there still be some sense in which its reality could be attenuated, that is, prevented from being attributed to things themselves? Such a way out may seem available to someone who can demonstrate that the realism of time would engender absurd consequences; in fact, Kant makes use of an attempt of this type in another section of the *Critique* – the crucial "Antinomy of Pure Reason" –, whose main problem would later be referred to by its author himself as "what first aroused me from my dogmatic slumber and drove me to the critique of reason itself,

in order to resolve the scandal of ostensible contradiction of reason with itself" (Kant's Letter to Christian Garve, September 21, 1798; Kant, 1967, p. 252). Thus, the "first antinomy" sought to show the inconsequence of both the thesis that denies the world a beginning in time and the thesis that demands an origin for it; by confronting us with two options that he considers equally unsustainable, Kant claims to be offering an indirect proof of the unreality of time, taken as necessary to resolve the aporia. Certainly, a defense of Nietzsche's position would be incomplete without also addressing this issue, which we will not offer here. It should be noted, however, that the argument of the first antinomy is among those that have been least successful among Kant's readers, having been criticized and rejected by authors as sympathetic to this philosopher as Russell, Strawson, Guyer, Kemp Smith, Moore and others (cf. Allison, 2004, pp. 367-72)[20].

Let us finally return to Kant's defense of the idealism of time as articulated in the Aesthetics, in response to the objections we have studied. Recall that Kant appealed to the idea that his critics were simply not accustomed to transcendental idealism, and that they had tried to exploit the still Cartesian assumption that representations of the internal sense would enjoy an ontological priority in relation to those of objects in space; for it was this, according to Kant, that would have motivated the idea of appealing to a given immediacy. Would Spir have also been guilty of the same confusion, if the others were? The reader will be able to answer better, if she wishes to reread the quotation; it seems to me that the realism of time is always vindicated independently of any thesis about the symmetry or asymmetry of the internal and external senses, and in any case works well in any case. At least the Bergsonian example of the cinematograph made it clear that the question is necessarily primitive, of deciding on the *conceivability* of a thesis, rather than of deriving consequences from one theory or another; and Spir complemented the argument by showing that no philosophy is possible if it is allowed to apply the predicate "illusory" to the "illusion" itself as such, i.e., to the phenomenon itself insofar as it is change: for in that case one would no longer be saying that a thing is different from how it appears, but that the very Being of appearance is not what it appears, which is absurd or meaningless[21].

[20] Moore (1953, p. 181), for example, writes: "It is, therefore, a pure fallacy to suppose that there cannot have been an infinite series of past hours, simply because that series has an end in one direction and has come to an end now; all that we mean by calling it infinite is that it has no end in the other direction or, in other words, no beginning". For his part, Nietzsche will say: "Lately one has sought several times to find a contradiction in the concept 'temporal infinity of the world in the past' (*regressus in infinitum*): one has even found it, although at the cost of confusing the head with the tail" (WP 1066).

[21] Along the same lines, Van Cleeve (1999, p. 61) concludes that "we could try to reconstrue all of this in terms of the mere appearance of succession, but I think the results of doing so would nearly defy comprehension". As for the perception that Spir's argument for the irreducibility of change does not depend on the Cartesian point of view, it is overlooked by Nasser (2015, p. 207), who, however, realizes that Nietzsche "characterizes the certainty of representations as a fundamental certainty and not an immediate certainty". For Nasser, this circumstance "draws attention"; he explains it hypothetically, speculating – correctly, in my view – that subordinating representation to internal sense "would downgrade change, which is what is effectively proper to representations". However, this still does not prevent Nasser from characterizing the young Nietzsche's realism of becoming as dependent on a "psychological" point of view, which would only be abandoned in the 1880s. This thesis does not seem plausible to us, if only because we do not see how it could be reconciled with Nietzsche's view on the origin of metaphysical

Nietzsche's "rhetorical turn"

In the previous chapter, we anticipated the point that the Nietzschean initiative would have the merit of simultaneously doing justice to two parallel demands for adjustment in Kantianism, one of them important above all to left-wing Hegelianism – the pervasive character of historicity and, therefore, the recovery of the subject of knowledge itself within the scope of the critique of reason –, and the other espoused by the late idealism of authors such as Trendelenburg, Lotze and Hartmann – who extended metaphysical speculation by responding to the challenge of informing it by the demands of scientific naturalism. Now, if the argument for the irreducibility of change with respect to its representation fulfills the function of exposing the abuses of Kantian idealism when it would like to teach us about the existence of a supposedly timeless subjectivity, immune to the materialist description that locates it in time, Nietzsche would equally find the means to demonstrate the improbity of naturalist objectivism itself, in it claims of being able to indifferently reduce every interpretation of the world to a historical, economic or biological determinism that would falsify them at their source. However, this second movement, which we will now address, is again a critique of idealism: having, on the one hand, reinserted all knowledge into the objective time of history, it is necessary to show how this circumstance, despite (or because of) this, opens the horizon for both a genealogical critique and a critical realism, which will be the exclusive prerogative of a discourse capable of being informed by the necessarily secondary (derived) character of consciousness and of the "true world" that is its correlate. As regards Nietzsche's work, this development is found mainly in *On truth and lie*, having been prepared in earlier notes, such as in the *Lecture notes on rhetoric*. Here too, it is possible to trace the debate back to a dispute between Kant and his contemporaries, which lies at the origin of Kant's attempt – carried out in the *Critique of judgement* – to simultaneously limit and preserve the concept of "organic power" advocated by Herder, whom Kant considered one of his most talented former students and whose naturalistic explanation of the origin of language would earn this pupil the first prize of the *Akademie der Wissenschaften* in Berlin in 1769. To be sure, the priority with regard to a refutation of idealism will always be with the argument we have already seen: for from the *sui generis* character of change it follows, as a simple matter of economy of principle, the task of experimentally naturalizing consciousness and language so that, as structures that are now only relatively stable, they can be exposed in their derived originality relative to the flow of time, rather than vice versa. Because of this, we are less interested in going into the details of this second episode of Kantian reception; but it is still important to draw attention to the nature of this debate, insofar as it locates the core of the decision to be taken as that of deciding on the rights of a vitalist

dualism, formulated in texts from the same period or earlier than the one we present, leaving us with no choice but to attribute to Nietzsche a very apparent inconsistency.

position in philosophy.

Kant listed Herder's popularity in Weimar as one of the main reasons that contributed to the relative failure of the *Critique of pure reason* among the public in the first years after its publication (Beiser, 1987, p. 149). Given that his former student's philosophy was the main alternative to his own (Beck, 1969, p. 382), it is understandable that Kant took advantage of the invitation to review his adversary's latest work – made by the *Allgemeine Literatur Zeitung* – both to settle accounts with that system and to compose, in the words of Clark (1955, p. 317), a "masterpiece of personal attack veiled under an appearance of objectivity". Fundamentally, the two authors disputed where to draw the dividing line between natural and metaphysical explanation; in his prize-winning treatise, Herder defended the need for a genetic explanation of the origin of language, faithful to the naturalist principle according to which everything in nature is subject to gradual development. The radical nature of such a project, in Kant's eyes, can be understood if one considers the circumstance that language is plausibly the necessary instrument of reason, so that a naturalistic explanation regarding the emergence of the former would also signal the contingent nature of the reflective faculty itself, a fatal conclusion for critical philosophy[22]. Now, according to Herder's position in his treatise, humans develop reason and language by virtue of a survival drive, an explanation whose meaning depends on ensuring ontological prominence in this process not to reason itself, after all that whose origin is being investigated, but – as the author would develop in other works – to a unique vital power, prior to the strict dualism of the *Aufklärer*. It is clear that Kant's review would attack precisely this postulate as a dogmatic reintroduction of a hidden quality, guilty of transcending the limits of experience; whence all the importance – we must repeat – of an argument like Spir's, which brings to the discussion the fact that, although the notion of *internal* movement (i.e., irreducible to the states in which it is analyzed) escapes the grasp of the understanding – since it is not available for conscious representation – it nevertheless also points out a condition of possibility of experience, insofar as experience involves change[23]. In an article written the year after the publication of Kant's review, the renowned German naturalist Georg Forster, an admirer of Herder, continues the debate with Kant by once again defending the concept of organic power, accusing the author of the review of a "unmanly fear" in not authorizing such a simple inference;

[22] Thus, Kant did not neglect to argue, in the first section of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, that "in a being that has reason and a will, if the proper end of nature were its *preservation*, its welfare, in a word its *happiness*, then nature would have hit upon a very bad arrangement in selecting the reason of the creature to carry out this purpose. For all the actions that the creature has to perform for this purpose, and the whole rule of its conduct, would be marked out for it far more accurately by instinct, and that end would have thereby been attained much more surely than it ever can be by reason" (Kant, 1997, pp. 8-9).

[23] For Deleuze (1983, p. 67, p. 72), the "eternal return as the expression of a principle which serves as an explanation of diversity and its reproduction," fundamentally "teaches us of the existence of a becoming-active", although we only feel and know a becoming-reactive. In this sense, Herder's defense of Kant's critique of his analogical procedure is noteworthy, as reported by Beiser (1987, p. 153): "he [Herder] would say that Kant's scholastic procedure of definition and proof does not grasp life from within, according to the purposes of the agent".

Kant himself, finally, seems not to have been completely satisfied with the answer he had at that point, if one agrees with Beiser (1987, p. 155) that Forster's argument would have been the catalyst for a change of direction in the composition of the *Critique of judgment*, which should now include a treatment of the question of teleology as an integral part of the critical system, intended "not to bridge but to defend that dualism [between reason and nature]" (idem, p. 156). In the previous chapter, we were able to explore some circumstances that seem to have contributed to the historical success of the Kantian position; for Nietzsche, however, a question like the one Beiser (1987, p. 151) raises regarding the controversy we present seemed to apply: "So who is guilty of metaphysics – Kant or Herder?".

In his 1869-70 notes on the origin of language, Nietzsche explicitly invokes Herder's thesis, endorsing the view that language emerges from an "intrinsic urgency [*Drängniss*]" – a formative impulse analogous to the embryonic "urge" [*Drang*] that drives development toward birth (Herder apud OL, p. 211); unable to determine whether language's emergence stems from the individual or the collective—rejecting the former due to language's evidently complicated nature and the latter because of its striking unity—Nietzsche ultimately compares it to "organic beings" (Schelling apud OL, p. 211), as he had already described it as "product of an instinct" (OL, p. 209). This characterization positions language beyond conscious deliberation, instead requiring an "unending purposefulness of organisms and the lack of consciousness in their origin" (OL, p. 210). Now, in a manner consistent with such an appreciation of the phenomenon, Nietzsche will henceforth find himself unable to attribute to language a representative function at its origin, if it is true that at this point there is still no consciousness to represent anything whatsoever: it is, therefore, only when it forgets this natural root of language – which is encouraged by the emergence of a more complex mode of social life – that humanity will deem it appropriate to conceive of a "true" nature organized for the benefit of an auto-identical subject, who would consider himself capable of objectively mirroring an external nature conceived under the same scheme of permanence:

> What, then, is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms – in short, a sum of human relations that have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, translated, and embellished, and that after long usestrike a people as fixed, canonical, and binding. (TL I)

> [T]ransposed into nature, the impulse that compels one to be true produces the belief that the surrounding nature must also be true. The impulse to knowledge is based on this transposition. (FP 19[299] of 1872-73, KSA 7.505)

That is to say, the general idea – i.e., the concept taken as adequate to the thing – always appears too late, as a symptom of an identity of reaction of the organism or of the social body to superficially

similar stimuli: because we always call the man who returns the money "honest", "we formulate a *qualitas occulta* with the name Honesty" (TL 1). There is nothing different here in relation to the way in which Bergson – attentive to inevitable aporias in the way in which Hume and Kant posed the problem of knowledge, as we have mentioned – would describe the process of formation of general ideas: without guaranteeing the living body the capacity to respond, independently of consciousness, to the same causes with the same effects, it would never be possible to explain without circularity how a general idea could be formed in the first place – because in that case the problem of how one knew how to choose, for example, the willow and the lime tree as compatible to synthesis under the idea of tree, and not, say, the willow and the horse, would always remain unsolved. By guaranteeing priority to the instinctual body, on the other hand, the general idea simply points to an identification operated autonomously, with consciousness explaining the process by which particulars are *dissociated* rather than being impossibly burdened with having to link them together alone[24]. Now, it is precisely this idea of a continuum between the practical activity of man, aimed at ends, and communication through concepts, which justifies Nietzsche attributing to language – beyond an unconscious origin – an originally rhetorical function; the artifices commonly understood as peculiar to the art of speaking persuasively – metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche – will be discovered as essential, and not merely accidental, to human discourse and understanding, which, however, through a process of forgetting, believes itself to be truly surrounded by substances belonging to a system of true laws[25].

However, let us look in more detail at how Nietzsche sets out the argument. First, as we have seen, language originates in instinct, and therefore precedes the system of knowledge: "He [the human] desires the pleasant, life-preserving consequences of truth; to pure knowledge without consequences he is indifferent" (TL 1). In effect, the question that motivates *On truth and lie* is not: how did language, that is, true discourse about the world, arise?, but this other question: "how an honest and pure drive to truth could have arisen among men", given that, in humans, "deception, flattery, lying and cheating (…) is (...) the rule and the law" (ibid.). Nietzsche responds to this problem by uncovering, at the origin of this phenomenon, a "moral impulse pertaining to truth", when deception, in the context of the "peace treaty" required by life in society, promises the exclusion of the one who practices it:

> A moral impulse pertaining to truth is awoken out of this feeling of being obligated to

[24] Regarding the problem of empirical concept formation in Kant, cf. Schrader, 1967; regarding this problem related to the Bergsonian solution, cf. Hickmann and Rocha Pereira, 2024. This discussion will be resumed in the next chapter.

[25] Nietzsche would later describe this process in terms of the human tendency to "mummify" reality through concepts: "For thousands of years, philosophers have been using only mummified concepts; nothing real makes it through their hands alive. They kill and stuff the things they worship, these lords of concept idolatry (...)" (TI Reason, 1).

> designate one thing red, another cold, a third mute: in contrast to the liar, whom no one trusts, whom everyone shuns, man proves to himself how venerable, trustworthy, and useful truth is. As a rational being he now submits his actions to the rule of abstractions: no longer does he let himself be swept away by sudden impressions, by intuitions, he first generalizes all these impressions into paler, cooler concepts in order to hitch the wagon of his life and his action to them. Everything that distinguishes man from beast hinges on this capacity to dispel intuitive metaphors in a schema, hence to dissolve an image into a concept. (TL 1)

We must understand what it means to say that the concept has its origin in a volatilization of metaphors. Let us take, for instance, the noun "snake," which designates a substance. Nietzsche observes that the Greek term *drakon* etymologically indicates that which "has a bright gaze," while the Latin *serpens* retains the quality of crawling (R 3, my translation). Now, what happened in this case, for Nietzsche, was that we highlighted a particular property of the phenomenon in question—its snaking or its bright gaze—and made this property, which is nothing but an effect, the substrate on which to anchor all the others: "what arbitrary demarcations, what one-sided preferences for now this, now that property of a thing!" (TL 1). In other words, nouns do not directly designate things, i.e., their causes, but only their consequences; and every judgment, therefore, of the type "A is B" does not really provide any knowledge in the strong sense of the word, but always only designates relations: "the synthetic judgment describes a thing by its consequences, i.e., essence and consequence are identified, i.e., a metonymy" (NF 19[242] of 1872, KSA 7.476). In synthetic judgment, that is, we are always dealing with a rhetorical play on words, as if from an effect I could infer the agency of something different from that effect itself.

The main consequence that Nietzsche is interested in highlighting, regarding society's forgetting that no substances really correspond to the nouns we use, is the development of metaphysical dualism. This way of thinking, which has the effect of denying the absolute character of change, will be at the basis of both the belief in the freedom of the subject with respect to forces that determine him, and of the idea (apparently) contrary to this, that there would be an objective world whose knowledge would allow its bearer to anticipate its future states and demonstrate the merely secondary reality of the effective passing of time. In effect, a world schematized on the basis of the belief in self-identical substances, separated from their effects, gives rise, first of all, to every action being understood within an intentional key[26], triggering a process of searching for responsibles that will neutralize the aggressiveness inherent in the active will, by way of resentment (and it would, after all, be something like this that made change, in Kant, secondary in relation to

[26] The criticism of this expression of metaphysical ontology in the belief in the freedom of the will is later developed in the well-known example of the flash: "For just as the popular mind separates the lightning from its flash and takes the latter for an action, for the operation of a subject called lightning, so popular morality also separates strength from expressions of strength, as if there were a neutral substratum behind the strong man, which was free to express strength or not to do so. But there is no such substratum; there is no 'being' behind doing, effecting, becoming; 'the doer' is merely a ction added to the deed—the deed is everything" (GM I, 13).

permanence)[27]. As regards our analysis of Nietzsche's "rhetorical turn," however, it is particularly important to highlight the second effect that we have already pointed out: for one cannot rid the world of substances without, at the same time, refuting the notion of the world itself as substance, i.e., as an object capable of true representation or apprehension by a positivist discourse. Along these lines, Nietzsche asserts that the word "Being" – whose Latin etymology in the verb esse ("to breathe") would be based on the desire to attribute "breathing to all things" (FP 23[13] of 1872, KSA 7.534) – "designates only the most general relationship which connects all things" (PTG 11), and therefore does not refer to anything concrete that was prior to particular empirical occurrences. The "natural laws" of naturalist positivism – but also every time diagnosis ignorant of its fictional vocation – therefore depend on the forgetful hypostatization of the same original rhetorical procedure[28]:

> All natural laws are merely relations of one x to y and z. We define natural laws as relations between x, y and z: that is why everything becomes known to us again only as relations between other x, y and z. (NF 19[235] of 1872-73, KSA 7.474)

The result of Nietzsche's analysis is that "error" – which in the context of a discourse aimed at Being had a merely negative meaning, as that which prevented the universalization of intuitions – turns out to be an indispensable component even of that type of judgment to which we would like to entrust an objective expression of reality, supposedly prior to the artifices of rhetorical discourse. Kant would object to Herder that knowing the natural world through analogies is to expose oneself to the accusation of anthropomorphism; Herder would assume that he "run[s] after images, after analogies", because he does not know "any other game" for his thinking powers (Herder apud Beiser, 1987, p. 148). As Casares (2002, p. 13) notes, Nietzsche would also refuse viability "to the metaphysical claim of an epistemic saying completely disconnected from the persuasive discourse of doxa". In fact, Gustav Gerber's own text, *Language as art* [*Die Sprache als Kunst*]– the main reference for Nietzsche's reflections on the subject, as is well known – already placed such a conception of language at the service of a critique of metaphysics in general, in particular of the concept of "thing in itself", in line with Lange's thinking and sharpening Nietzsche's comprehension

[27] "[T]o create room for *his* 'moral realm' he [Kant] saw himself obliged to posit an undemonstrable world, a logical 'Beyond' -- it was for precisely that that he had need of his critique of pure reason! In other words: *he would not have had need of it* if one thing had not been more vital to him than anything else: to render the 'moral realm' unassailable, even better incomprehensible to reason -- for he felt that a moral order of things was only too assailable by reason!" (D Prologue, 3).

[28] "Scientific portrayals of reality, along with those of so-called 'common sense,' were informed by 'subjective fictions' which prove useful or expedient from a practical point of view but whose claims to ultimate truth were wholly without warrant. No fact could be established *an sich*: in the last analysis there were only 'interpretations,' each of which bore the imprint of a certain outlook and to which alternatives could always be envisaged or conceived" (Gardiner, 1981, p. 152).

on this subject, which would take finished form in the doctrine of will to power[29].

However, the unveiling of the process by which language comes to claim the generality of ideas also makes clear – if one still wants to pursue the game of knowledge – what would be needed for a more precise discourse on nature, namely, to let our knowledge be guided by the realization of the lack of foundation of our belief in a world truly governed by laws or inhabited by substances of any kind[30]. We will argue, in the course of this work, that the reasons why we may fear the consequences of formally embracing the thesis of the rhetoricity of language are based, very plausibly, on projecting the dangers of such an idea into the hands of reactionary projects, as if such an idea were thinkable independently of its transformative effect on the will, which would perhaps make it incompatible with any reaction. Be that as it may, it remains that Nietzsche's so-called "aestheticism," as demonstrated, tells a story about the origin of language and the development of consciousness that is not only coherent in itself, but that responds to the application, made imperative by methodological requirements, of the naturalist principle to the totality of phenomena. Thus, we can understand Beardsworth's (2003, pp. 42-43) formulation, for whom genealogy "wants to be even more 'rational' than reason, because it wants to explain it," despite the "ambiguities" that accompany this gesture[31].

In short, if the thesis of the realism of time made unavailable the dualism that guaranteed the possibility of a transcendental subjectivity, thus rendering mandatory the naturalization of the human subject, the thesis of rhetoricity, for its part – although made necessary precisely in the realist context – shows how mistaken all deterministic reduction is, at least insofar as it proceeds from the false idea of a self-identical nature, governed by necessary laws that would guarantee this self-identity[32].

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[29] Nietzsche's critique of metaphysical ontology as a belief in the existence of natural laws, in turn, would unfold in the idea that "[the world] has a 'necessary' and 'calculable' course, *not* because laws obtain in it, but because they are absolutely *lacking*" (BGE 22). According to Campioni: "the centrality of rhetoric is found in Nietzsche until 1875; successively the word 'metaphor' disappears from Nietzsche's vocabulary (…); instead, perspectivism remains (…), which certainly finds its origin in this essay [On Truth and Lies], and is linked to the will to power". https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=of2sAT0FaoA&

[30] "[It is] the metaphoricity inherent to all cognitive activity, including that of science, that allows us to think of a superior unfolding of it, that is, one that is not limited to satisfying the needs of vital security that techno-science is capable of providing on its own" (Casares, 2002, p. 22).

[31] One of these ambiguities – perhaps the most decisive – lies in Nietzsche's assertion of the falsity of both the doctrine of free will and of "unfree will": "Suppose someone were thus to see through the boorish simplicity of this celebrated concept of 'free will' and put it out of his head altogheter, I beg of him to carry his 'englightenment' a step further, and also put out of his head the contrary of this monstrous conception of 'free will'. I mean 'unfree will" (...)" (BGE 21). The problem of how to understand this situation will be addressed in the next chapter.

[32] "What Nietzsche criticizes in specialists is that they end up believing that science is first, when it can only be secondary to the phenomenon of the living. This is why experts, most of the time, cannot be educators, insofar as they themselves are insensitive and foreign to the power of life" (Jégoudez, 2022, p. 32-33).

Adorno and Horkheimer criticized Nietzsche's philosophy because they identified it as yet another episode of the "enlightened" liquidation of objective reason, replaced by an instrumental rationality that is even "more metaphysical than metaphysics"; according to the authors of the *Dialectic*, the refrain of this new mythology, as we have seen, is always the denunciation of the anthropomorphism of all claims to knowledge, until only self-interest remains and the ground is clear for the unimpeded development of whatever power projects are underway. Habermas, with regard to Nietzsche, reached a similar conclusion, the main difference in his approach being his refusal to attribute to this philosopher the merit of having pursued a consequent development of the modern ideal; instead, because he was bound, like later Adorno and Horkheimer, to a Platonic conception of knowledge, he would have missed the emancipatory potential preserved in that ideal, leading Nietzsche to miss the opportunity for a new immanent critique. Now, in the developments that we have pursued above, concerning the critique of the idealism of time and the secondary nature of consciousness and of the "true world" that is its correlate, we can extract a first response to the common accusation of relativism deployed in its own way by each of the two initiatives that we have discussed. In both cases, it can already be indicated that fidelity to the privilege of a material analysis of reason – i.e., of the absolute character of becoming, to use Nietzschean terms –, rather than necessarily leading to the conclusion that all claims to knowledge are equivalent (insofar as they are always determined by interest), has its most proper consequence in a solely negative conclusion, so that even the demonstration of the falsity of the idealism of time should not disqualify *a priori* any particular cognitive strategy, as long as it accepts to conceive itself as strategic only. If this situation may still seem too close to a simple assent to a "law of the stronger" it is because the question of what we should understand by "strong" and "weak" in the Nietzschean perspectivist context remains pending, a problem whose solution we have only alluded to so far. It remains, in any case, that Nietzsche does not arrive gratuitously at any of the theses we have seen, and that his affirmation of naturalism must be distinguished from vulgar positivism, which, as Adorno and Horkheimer rightly noted, victimized the Kantian theoretical subject.

Before concluding this chapter, it may be appropriate to address, even if briefly, the problem (noted by Habermas, among others) of the possible logical unsustainability of Nietzsche's theory; for if, as Eagleton realized, we can know, with Nietzsche, that all thoughts have their common denominator in interest, what can we say about this thought itself, if not that it should at least have something of "reason's classical range and authority" that a moment ago was denied could exist? Habermas, in effect, already advanced the argument that Nietzsche's critique would have failed to recognize, in its own procedure of argumentative foundation, the presence of the same reason that

will be criticized; for which reason Nietzsche's effort will be described throughout as paradoxical, "an unmasking critique of reason that sets itself outside the horizon of reason"; "a critique of the ideology that attacks its own foundations"; "paradoxical effort of a reason transcending itself" (Habermas, 1987, p. 96; p. 103). Certainly the threat to the Nietzschean position represented by this type of consideration is usually addressed by interpreters, who often fall into the habit of trying to "save the author" at the cost of simplifying the problem. As for us, we believe the following: Nietzsche's situation is no more paradoxical, for example, than that of those who believe that thinking for oneself requires instruction; or of those who recognize that the original artist has his condition in the context of a culture that produces him; or, then, that laws are necessary to guarantee freedom in a society. Perhaps Nietzschean philosophy implicitly rejects its own conclusions at the moment in which it persists in wanting to tell us something; it does not remain any less true that becoming is irreducible to its representation, and that, with modern dualism thus disqualified, it becomes imperative to attribute a natural origin to reason. And we have already referred for the first time to the insoluble problem that dualism engenders when it tries to account for the origin of empirical concepts.

Wouldn't these considerations bring Nietzsche's work closer to the text of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* than we have suggested so far? In fact, Adorno and Horkheimer (2002, p. 13), reflecting on what they understand as the inevitability of the separation between sign and image in the development of science, note, however, that this circumstance is not yet equivalent to the "heedless complacency" towards this necessity, an attitude that would be the product of forgetting the limits of this model; this is what they also express when they draw attention to the fact that "[in magic] domination is not yet disclaimed by transforming itself into a pure truth underlying the world which it enslaves" (idem, p. 6). On the other hand, this path left open by the differentiation between two possible attitudes towards knowledge – in which only one seeks to be fully objective, true regardless of its relation to a particular way of life – did not give rise to granting a greater indulgence towards a pragmatist agenda, as would seem appropriate here. In fact, as Lapoujade (2020) argues, William James' pragmatism draws its adherence from a diagnosis of nihilism "akin to that of Nietzsche", meaning that "we can no longer believe as we did before"; therefore, its central question will necessarily be pragmatic: "How can we feel faith in others, have faith in ourselves, and even have faith in the world?" (Lapoujade, 2020, pp. 5-6). For Horkheimer, however, although "the antagonism of reason and nature is in an acute and catastrophic phase (…), the idea of truth is still accessible", so that the ideal pragmatic philosopher "would be he who, as the Latin adage has it, remains silent" (Horkheimer, 2004, p. 120, p. 34). Although we still need to refine a possible answer to this question, we can say in advance that such an objection does not seem innocuous: how, after all, can we exploit the capital of meaning bequeathed by tradition, if this

same trust in tradition, in the context of the eclipse of objective reason, must necessarily lose adherence as well? Now, it is possible that the best answer to this question is, in fact, to “remain silent”, insofar as it may not really be within our command to do without that which, on the one hand already presupposing knowledge, effectively turn it again into our business:

> If it is not in our power to access the truth about our reasons, it is equally not in our power to condemn as a simple artifice that whose effectiveness at the same time presupposes and intensifies (…) the capacity to expose our reasons, to put them to the test of that from which they make abstraction. (Stengers, 2015b, p. 8)

Before returning to this, we will, in the following chapter, draw the consequences of Nietzschean realism of time considered in its own power to make us think. We will also address, however, adjustments to specialized commentary and make more clearly visible the necessary connection between Nietzschean realism and perspectivism.

Chapter 3: Nietzsche's speculative pragmatism

And it seemed that all this artificial and external assembly,
vacillating but continuous and feverishly perfected, had as its sole purpose
to protect the formation of a new man who would only later be viable...

Paris, 1784. A commission of scientists was appointed by Louis XVI to investigate the practices of the Viennese physician Franz Mesmer, whose unorthodox method of healing through the alleged manipulation of an invisible magnetic fluid had drawn the attention of the scientific community. Exposing representatives of different social strata and themselves to "animal magnetism," the commissioners designed experiments to determine whether the causality of these healing methods could in fact be attributed to properties of such a substance. Thus, some patients were unwittingly subjected to the treatment; others, on the contrary, were blindfolded while they were merely supposed to be receiving care. Although one of the investigators—the botanist Antoine de Jussieu—objected to the intended scope of these falsification procedures, the verdict of his colleagues would be fatal: there existed no such fluid; the relative efficacy of the treatment was perfectly attributable to the overly suggestible imagination of the volunteers in general and of women in particular. For Stengers, the episode is representative of a conception of scientific rationality that, although it may still be part of our common sense on the subject today, is nevertheless unusual in its own way: after all, for Louis XVI's commissioners, "*the cure proves nothing*" (Stengers; Nathan, 2018, p. 94). Reflecting on the assumptions of modern medicine, particularly beset by the not always recognized boundary between its "scientific" activity and the practices of "charlatans" of all kinds, Stengers has here the opportunity to frame in a privileged way the ambiguous nature of the Newtonian revolution, in which nature was revealed as "an automaton which, once programmed, continues to follow the rules inscribed in the program" (Stengers; Prigogine, 1984a, p. 6). Now, the case of the charlatan therapist is of special interest insofar as this character could never be disqualified once and for all: unlike the astrologer or the creationist theologian (Stengers' examples), Mesmer did not merely exploit the credulity or ignorance of his audience: he actually promoted some kind of cure. Even so, it remains that these same effects are often labeled as "irrational," as if the patient were "an accomplice in the creation of an obstacle to the rational progress of medicine" (Stengers; Nathan, 2018, p. 96):

> The expression 'rational pharmacology' is a rephrasing of this kind of hope. One day, the curing power of a chemical substance will be able to be deduced from a theoretico-experimental knowledge of the human body, and it is to this knowledge that the substance will owe its status of medicine. (Stengers; Nathan, 2018, p. 104)

The deductivist dream that defined what Latour (2016) would call the "unwritten Constitution" of modernity would see its totalitarian project fueled by the popularization of Charles Darwin's theory of natural evolution, which would find a quicker and more receptive reception in Nietzsche's Germany than in England or the United States (Beiser, 2014, p. 5). If the British naturalist's written words could have served as an obstacle to the physicalist paradigm, at this point in history already freed from its instrumental origin and celebrated as the very timeless truth about nature, the historical reception of Darwin's studies would come to thwart this opportunity. Instead of reopening the epistemological debate, the conclusions of Darwinian evolutionism would be quickly co-opted by that dominant model, satisfied with the fact that it was now possible to explain the origin of species as an entirely mechanical process, that is, free from the action of any vital principle that might be irreducible to the meager naturalism that was to define modernity[1]; at best, Darwinism would constrain science to a conciliatory skepticism in line with some form of neo-Kantianism, a prudence that, as Stengers anticipates, will always be promptly forgotten "the moment a situation arises in which their knowledge appears to be offering the 'correct', ultimately 'rational' solution to some question that has exercised the chatterers" (Stengers, 2018, p. 11). Now, as we saw in the previous chapter, such ambiguity in the unveiling of the natural origin of consciousness – and therefore of its most general categories of knowledge – would not be limited to the publication of Darwin's specific ideas, but would also haunt Nietzsche's reception, and for similar reasons. Just as the same (Darwinian) theory that exposed the eminently utilitarian character of physicalism contributed, in an unusual way, to the consolidation of this very paradigm as a privileged model of scientific explanation, in the same way Nietzschean perspectivism would be taken as a simple avatar, maybe more sophisticated, of the same mythical image of the world previously embodied in the Kantian theoretical subject: that is to say, both in the Age of Enlightenment and in that of history, the same pseudo-enlightened prejudice of seeing in nature nothing more than the necessary unfolding of the same unique, implacable destiny would have been again simply repeated. Thus, if previously we wanted to abstract from this problem, simply assuming that Nietzschean neutralization of physicalist reductivism was still compatible with an epistemic normativity of another type, from now on we must rise to the challenge imposed by the following formulation of *Beyond good and evil*:

> [The world] has a "necessary" and "calculable" course, not because laws obtain in it, but

[1] This is what Bergson expresses in a scholarly manner: "evolutionist philosophy does not hesitate to extend to the things of life the same methods of explanation which have succeeded in the case of unorganized matter. It begins by showing us in the intellect a local effect of evolution, a flame, perhaps accidental, which lights up the coming and going of living beings in the narrow passage open to their action ;and lo ! forgetting what it has just told us, it makes of this lantern glim?mering in a tunnel a Sun which can illuminate the world" (Bergson, 1944, p. xxi). Reich (1970, p. 77) reinforces the same perception when he considers that some elements of Darwin's hypothesis of natural selection "are as reactionary as his proof of the origin of species from lower organisms is revolutionary".

> because they are absolutely lacking, and every power draws its ultimate consequences at every moment. (BGM 22)

In fact, the Nietzschean idea, as expressed in this concise formula, that one could predicate of the world both a "calculable" and "necessary" character – and one should evaluate the philosopher's use of quotation marks here – and the absolute lack of laws, which apparently contradicts the first statement, can be plausibly mobilized to summarize the circumstance of the ambivalent reception of Nietzsche's thought, divided between those who see in it a blockage to a consistent foundation for philosophical criticism and those who intend to find in perspectivism the condition of possibility of true criticism. As we have seen, both Adorno and Horkheimer, as well as Habermas, although in different ways, concluded that the normative gesture of the author of *Zarathustra* did not survive his own naturalist advances, so that his "intransigent critique of practical reason" equated his own precepts with "any illusion at random" that could satisfy any given private interests. On the other hand, Prigogine and Stengers read Nietzsche as a philosopher who would have resisted the founding materialist prejudice of classical science, which alone would have allowed him to speak of the world as a stage for "spontaneous and productive activity" beyond "mere conservation or conversion" (Stengers; Prigogine, 1984a, p. 136; p. 111); although she would appreciatively refer to "the force of Marxism" in having "brought to light capitalism as the master of illusions" (Stengers; Pignarre, 2011, p. 20), Stengers would restrict to Nietzsche the merit of having diagnosed the modern impasse without having given in to the temptation of "performing an autopsy" on it, but "making perceptible the becomings that escape it" (Stengers; Debaise, 2016, p. 88). Similarly, Barbara Stiegler, exploring Nietzsche's engagement with the biology of his time, sought to show that, for the German author, "the concrete time that structures the evolutionary process is the discontinuous time of conflict, in which the multiple layers of past and present are in reciprocal tension with one another" (Stiegler, 2015, p. 419). Of course, this is not to say that we would be dealing here with two opposing types of answers to what would be the same problem, of simply knowing whether or not the Nietzschean thesis would seal the eclipse of objective reason; for the essential thing is, above all, to understand the genesis of such a movement, which alone will allow us to understand it more correctly. For now, and to repeat, it suffices to note that one can distinguish two quite distinct approaches to the Nietzschean legacy, one that sees in it the basis for a new model of critical philosophy, the other that reserves a condescending attitude towards it, as we have already seen.

What seems to attract Stengers, Prigogine and Stiegler towards Nietzsche is the opportunity with which his work would consistently problematize the supposedly clear boundary between "mere opinion" and the allegedly disinterested "knowledge" of a class of enlightened specialists; between what would be "facts" and what would be, on the contrary, merely subjective interpretations devoid

of epistemic value and ultimately related to the superstitions or ideological attachments of people still victimized by alienation and lacking the needed pedagogy for a conversion. In fact, Barbara Stiegler writes:

> For James and Dewey, as for Nietzsche, returning to the modern foundations of the scientific revolution implies counteracting [*aller à rebours*] every dualistic distribution imposed by Kant and the neo-Kantians, whose aim was to solve the problem of the crisis of values (…). By rejecting the Kantian distribution between the order of facts and that of values, Nietzsche and the pragmatists free us from the fiction of the "disinterestedness" of science and knowledge, to which they oppose the rejection of the dualism between body and spirit (…).(Stiegler, 2021, pp. 257-58)

Nietzsche's proximity with North-American pragmatism, which Stiegler attemps to defend, involves a rereading of Nietzsche's work which, although it gives him the initiative of having, like Bergson, "placed the description of effective reality at the center of his philosophy" – hence an "intimate proximity between Bergsonian realism and Nietzschean realism" (Stiegler, 2017, p. 342) –, qualifies this approach to preserve Nietzsche from having "degraded" as mere utilitarian schemes the fictions that knowledge uses in its interested confrontation with the world (idem, p. 354)[2]. Now, Stiegler will find such an attitude of condescension with respect to the needs of the living body, which she attributes to Bergson, at the origin of the contempt that American neoliberalism would confer on the supposed "backwardness" of the human species in relation to the supposedly imperative and inescapable demands of the globalized world (Stiegler, 2018). For her part, Stengers will share a similar attraction to pragmatists, as well as the perception of an underlying complicity between the dominant epistemological paradigm in modernity and the idea that "the 'liberalization' of the world was inscribed in history as inevitably as gravity in nature" (Stengers; Pignarre, 2011, p. 3). Commenting with perplexity on the circumstance that the works of William James, Whitehead and Dewey may have remained off the radar of European philosophy for almost the entire 20th century, Latour (2008, pp. 6-7) invokes the image of "certain fungi that can remain dormant indefinitely, until external situations become favorable". We wonder whether Nietzsche's philosophy – which we have seen also had to pay the price for having contradicted, in its own way, prejudices dear to the way of thinking of his time – could also figure in such a plot and enrich it, as well as whether, conversely, the new synapses to which the difficulties of the present lead thought might not also enable a more adequate reading of his work.

In the previous chapter, we presented what seem to us to be the general lines of Nietzschean

[2] Regarding this attitude of censure towards Bergson's philosophy, Prigogine and Stengers seem to be in agreement: "like the post-Kantian critics, he [Bergson] identified the science of his time with science in general. He thus attributed to science de jure limitations that were only de facto. As a consequence he tried to define once and for all a status quo for the respective domains of science and other intellectual activities. Thus the only perspective remaining open for him was to introduce a way in which antagonistic approaches could at best merely coexist" (Prigogine; Stengers, 1984a, p. 93). However, we will see that Bergson's position has its reason for being.

"relativism," first as received by his critics, and then in its very genesis, articulated with then current debates about the nature of time and consciousness, referring to objections to Kantian doctrine. On the contrary, it will now be our task to welcome readings of Nietzsche's work mobilized precisely by the intention of showing how this philosopher was able to "avoid vicious relativism and legitimize its claim to offer a platform for the critique of arguments, practices, and institutions" (Cox, 1999, p. 3). Thus, the solution suggested by Cox, for example, will consist of attributing to Nietzsche an "enlightened pragmatism" (idem, p. 50) in which naturalism would offer a criterion capable of serving as an arbitrator between good and bad interpretations of the world, provided, of course, that it is purified of all "shadows of God" to which its physicalist version is prey. Since this type of approach, however, seems to us to do little justice to Nietzsche's argument for a realism of becoming, it will be opportune to pay attention once again to the ontological reach of Nietzsche's refutation of idealism, despite reintroducing, in this movement, a scheme that is certainly dualist in some sense, contrary to what perhaps the relevance of Nietzsche's work today seemed to depend on. Finally, and since the ontological reading, however, tended to ignore the importance given by Nietzsche to the typological distinction between two irreducible and antagonistic species of will, we will conclude that a third interpretative path is preferable, attentive to implying Nietzsche in a "meta-existentialist" (Acharya, 2015) or "existential naturalism" (Hatab, 2015) type of orientation, unity between the will to truth that reveals Being as becoming and the modulation of this will by a subjective apprehension of its results, capable of reinserting them into their constitutive ambiguity in relation to individual existence and the culture of which they are a part. The outcome of this path will be to make clear in all its ambiguity the destiny that Nietzschean instruction still seems to allow for philosophical criticism; As this orientation was not without problems, it will be the task of our work's conclusion section to advance perhaps its own counterattack, then disputing on its prefered ground the scope of the objections we have studied.

Nietzsche's Naturalism. Cox's interpretation of Nietzsche

In his seminal *Nietzsche: Naturalism and Interpretation*, Christoph Cox (1999) offers a systematic interpretation of Nietzsche's mature epistemology and ontology, especially as articulated from *The Gay Science* on; this project is motivated, the author explains, by the problem of how to escape a vicious relativism, incapable of providing a platform for critique, when this would seem to be the inevitable fate of an anti-foundationalist philosophy such as the one Nietzsche would have aimed for. Cox's objective, in concrete terms, is to reconcile, on the one hand, both the genealogical method and the perspectivism recommended by this philosopher – which would amount to the rejection of the existence of a single correct conception of the world – with, on the other,

Nietzsche's doctrines of becoming and the will to power, "which seem to present just such a normative—perhaps even metaphysical—conception" of reality (Cox, 1999, p. 3). Cox's solution consists of showing that "the apparent relativism of perspectivism is held in check by Nietzsche's naturalism" (ibid.), while the supposed dogmatism of naturalist doctrines would, in turn, be mitigated by perspectivism: "naturalism demands a rejection of both the epistemological ideal of a 'God's-eye view' and the ontological ideal of a 'pre-given world', leading Nietzsche to a holistic or hermeneutic position that accepts the primacy and irreducibility of interpretation" (ibid., p. 70), or even to a "tread between relativism and dogmatism" whose virtue would be precisely not to give in to either extreme (ibid., p. 106). Alternatively, Cox further defines Nietzschean philosophy as an "anti-" or "post-metaphysical naturalism" (ibid., p. 6); "holistic empiricism" (idem, p. 43); "enlightened pragmatism" (idem, p. 50) and "anti-reductionism" (idem, p. 53).

In order to defend his thesis, Cox is quick to frame what he refers to as "Nietzsche's misleading language," which, by using the term "perspective," would elide the fundamental realization that "[t]here is nothing absolutely primary to interpret, because at bottom everything is already interpretation" (Foucault apud Cox, 1999, p. 167). In line with the importance we have already granted to Nietzsche's appropriation of Heraclitus as present in *Philosophy in the tragic age of the Greeks*, this commentator does not fail to draw attention to the fact that, "unlike Anaximander —and Kant and Schopenhauer—Nietzsche's Heraclitus is an antidualist and antimetaphysician" (idem, p. 188); that is to say, beyond being a naturalist doctrine that "foreground[s] the empirically evident ubiquity of change in the natural world", Heraclitean becoming would also constitute a thesis designed to respond to the "incessant shift of perspectives and interpretations in a world that lacks a grounding essence" (idem, p. 170). Ultimately – and as we have also argued – Cox wants to be able to conclude that the Nietzschean doctrines of becoming and perspectivism ultimately amount to the same thing:

> [The] world "becomes" not only in the sense that (...) it is subject to incessant alteration over time. It "becomes" also insofar as "essence" has been dissolved into "appearance," the "world 'in itself'" into "a world of relations." (...). Hence, any characterization of the world as a whole or any entity within it will be perpetually displaced by another. (Cox, 1999, p. 201)

By granting Nietzsche's philosophy the opposition to "*every* dualistic view that contrasts 'appearance' with something other than 'appearance'" (idem, p. 180), Cox is not intimidated by the corollary that the subject itself, otherwise the bearer of interpretation, is itself also merely the result of a previous interpretative process, "hierarchical aggregates of affects in which some dominate and others are subordinate" (idem, p. 129). That is to say, subjectivity itself – i.e., any perspective or interpretation – immediately receives a "political sense" (idem, p. 130), all arbitration between

interpretations, since the transcendental resort is unavailable, always referring to an irreducibly "complex and hypothetical" operation (idem, p. 100): "Nietzsche advocates the creation of a multiplicity of tests to determine the value of values and systems of belief" (idem, p. 62); "political considerations of ideology and power, will also figure significantly in the acceptance or rejection of interpretations"; that which "assembles, selects, organizes, and hierarchizes appearances" in the interpretation of a phenomenon is not "a private point of view but a public system of evaluation" (idem, p. 155), responsible for "mark[ing] out a field of concern on the basis of particular presuppositions, needs, desires, goals, aims, and objects of inquiry" (idem, p. 39). In short, the philosopher as a physician of culture will be responsible for distinguishing, always tentatively, which "criteria of justification prevail or hold sway in a particular discourse at a specific cultural and historical moment" (idem, p. 61), exposing the deeper reasons that make, in each interpretation, "the world appears as being such and such" (idem, p. 32). Because he himself will never be immune to dogmatism, his concept of objectivity must refer to a "competence in the many ways of worldmaking and the ability to shift skillfully and appropriately from one to another" (ibid., p. 157), which is notoriously difficult and requires "training" (ibid., p. 39). Finally, it does not seem to contradict Cox's reading the fact that Nietzsche will define the "weak will" as "*not* to see many things, *not* to be free on a single point, to be partisan through and through, to have a strict and necessary optic in ball values" (AC 54); for "the wisest man would be the one richest in contradictions" (WP 259).

Now, such a description of Nietzsche's general position allows Cox to demobilize the apparent objection represented by the well-known passage from *On the Genealogy of Morality* in which knowledge is compared to the sense of sight, when the possession of so many more angles on a visible object would seem to represent, by analogy, the ideal of objectivity to which his system would give assent:

> There is only a perspective seeing, only a perspective "knowing;" and the more affects we allow to speak about one thing, the more eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our "concept" of this thing, our "objectivity," be. (GM III, 12)

Indeed, although Nietzsche begins here by referring to the ubiquity of perspectivism – generally confirming Cox's reading –, the sequence of reasoning seems to impose a more moderate meaning to this idea, since it apparently implies that the diversity of particular interpretations of a given phenomenon could be overcome, at least ideally, by a procedure of totalization, the center of which would be constituted by the "thing" mentioned in the excerpt. However, it is not difficult to see how the aforementioned availability of a plurality of interpretations, being after all ultimately incompatible in principle, can and should work in favor of the more general task, as Cox pointed

out, of allowing philosophical criticism to be generously informed by the different claimants to truth, with a view to enriching and delimiting an adequate verdict. Thus, whatever resolution comes up in the process, its elaboration would not escape the need to participate in a subjective creation, and therefore always also partial, exactly what we saw Kant criticizing in the Herderian initiative of granting the artist a crucial role in the philosophical enterprise. Also for Nietzsche, "the naturalistic discourse par excellence would be one in which science and art were inextricably intertwined", because, "contrary to the scientific hypertrophy of the receptive faculties, art also affirms the active powers of creation and transformation" (Cox, 1999, p. 69; p. 65).

For Cox's radical perspectivist reading, Nietzsche's own theses of becoming and will to power must be vulnerable to the circumstance that they are also merely interpretations, not enjoying any special status beyond that which they confer on any other description of reality. With the unavailability of any sensible evidence or transcendental position that would corroborate perspectivism, the adherence of Nietzsche's hypothesis will depend on its capacity to, "us[ing] old interpretations as a lever," that is, "appealing to at least some of the accepted criteria", execute a "compelling transformation" of an old perspective into a new one (Cox, 1999, p. 160; p. 165); in particular—and in accordance with the reading that Cox could offer on the eye analogy—it is important that the description of the world as will to power be able to account, in its own way, for the existence and appeal of alternative interpretations of reality, which seek to apprehend existence according to extramundane categories. It is true that perspectivism itself could, satisfactorily or not, be explained from competing interpretations, as a bourgeois prejudice or as demonic temptation; true to his own criteria, however, Nietzsche could only appeal once again to naturalism, which, cleansed of its nihilistic commitments, urges each candidate to continually engage in argumentative struggle and expose himself to the challenge of accounting for phenomena reducing to the least its resort to transcendence. To the accusation of circularity, which could after all be leveled at such a position, Cox defends Nietzsche by observing that "the circle will appear vicious only to the foundationalist who assumes that there must be some way of exiting it" (ibid., p. 243). More than that, and as this author also does not fail to remember, Nietzsche himself would celebrate such a state of affairs: "[the will to power] favors neither total dissipation of power nor complete destruction of the object on which power is exercised. Such results will only negate, rather than affirm, the will of life." (Cox, 1999, p. 233)[3].

If we wished to present the reading of Nietzsche's work offered by Cox, it is because it seems to us, in general, adequate, drawing the appropriate conclusions from the theses that we have seen advanced in *Philosophy in the tragic age* and in *On truth and lie*, and serving to point out for the first time the qualities of Cox's work that make it an important precedent for our own study.

[3] On the "tyranny of the true", cf. D 507.

However, it is important not to overlook the particular difficulties in the way in which this commentator defines the status of Nietzsche's thesis, classifying it, as we have seen, together with any and all theoretical apprehensions particular to this or that domain, as equally perspectival and interpretative only. Of course, Cox at least avoid the bigger mistake which would be treating Nietzsche's most general hypotheses as merely metaphorical – simply destined to reject the theory of truth as correspondence in the stronger sense –, his psychological and historical analyses being the only true candidates for the status of true interpretations in a more proper sense. Our hesitation arises from the more general fact that it does not seem appropriate to us to modulate the naturalism of becoming by the clause that it would have only as many rights (not to say *less* rights) as Nietzsche's speculative attempts in particular fields of knowledge. As Nietzsche tells us in *The gay science*:

> [U]nconditional and honest atheism is (...) a victory of the European conscience won finally and with great difficulty; as the most fateful act of two thousand years of discipline for truth that in the end forbids itself the *lie* of faith in God ... One can see *what* it was that actually triumphed over the Christian god: Christian morality itself, the concept of truthfulness that was taken ever more rigorously; the father confessor's refinement of the Christian conscience, translated and sublimated into a scientific conscience, into intellectual cleanliness at any price. (...) [Christian morality] is over now; that has conscience against it; (...). With this severity, if with anything, we are simply good Europeans and heirs of Europe's longest and most courageous self-overcoming. (GS 357)

Leaving aside the exact meaning of Nietzsche's use of terms here – such as “honest”, “truth”, “lie”, “intellectual cleanliness”, which would serve to contest, by themselves, Cox’s radical perspectivism –, we wish to draw attention only to the description of atheism as the result of a “self-overcoming” of Christian morality, “two thousand years of discipline for truth”. Now, as much as Nietzsche will dedicate himself to framing this will to truth in its affinity with the denial of life – for which, from the beginning, we have been anticipating the merely conditional nature of this philosopher’s engagement with theoretical debate –, what this excerpt seems to tell us is that, once the imperative of being honest is accepted, “atheism” would reveal itself as the pure truth, free from interpretations. This is what the text of the *Antichrist* will tell us again, in an even more poignant way:

> *Not being free not to lie*. -- I can pick up someone who’s predestined to theology in this way. Another mark of the theologian in his *incapacity for philology*. Philology should be understood here in a very general sense, as the art of reading well, -- to be able to read facts *without* falsifying them through interpretations (...). (AC 52)

Here we reach an important and delicate point for any interpretation of Nietzsche's work. If perspectivism must indeed be the point of arrival of a process of de-divinization of nature, it is because transcendence represented not only a lie, but also immodesty, the presumption of being in

possession of a truth conquered once and for all and freed from intellectual commitment[4]. Now, when Nietzschean concepts are subjected to the same requirement, an impasse comes up: on the one hand, it would seem necessary to recognize that it is also only interpretation, as Nietzsche may seem happy to concede[5]. On the other hand, it would be difficult to understand which point of view this recognition would appeal to, other than that of an absolute place whose reintroduction would equally be incompatible with the required attitude of modesty. We will begin, from the last part of this chapter, to address what seems to us to be the appropriate solution to this problem, a solution that will require referring Nietzsche's philosophical method to his fundamental intuition. For now, it is enough to point out that Cox's book opportunely presents what should follow from Nietzschean perspectivism as a normative orientation for discourses that aim at knowledge in a broad sense, and for the Heraclitean hypothesis itself insofar as it is co-opted in practice by materially existing discourses; in a parallel way, the position of stable entities, immune to becoming, must be evaluated in context, according to the criterion of life[6]. It remains that the belief in such entities is unambiguously false, and perspectivism, a requirement coextensive with that of intellectual cleanliness.

Barbara Stiegler's "partial homage" to Nietzsche

In relation to Cox's reading, Barbara Stiegler's position, although certainly convergent with Cox's in general, is considerably more difficult to assess. On the one hand, this author seems to pursue a direction opposite to the one we have just seen, granting Nietzsche the merit of having "brought the description of effective reality to the heart of his philosophy, calling for (…), a few years before Bergson, a return to lost reality" (Stiegler, 2017, p. 342). However, when elaborating this approximation between authors – to which Stiegler believes she should direct important corrections –, it soon becomes much less clear what remains of the parallelism, and her commentary

[4] "'The truth of the matter is that the highly conscious conceit of being chosen is putting on airs of modesty here: people firmly put themselves, the 'congregation', the 'fair and the good' on one side, the side of 'truth' — and everything else, 'the world', on the other . . ." (AC 44).

[5] "Supposing that this also is only interpretation —and you will be eager enough to make this objection?—well, so much the better" (BGE 22).

[6] A very revealing passage in this sense is the following: "The desire for destruction, for change and for becoming can be the expression of an overflowing energy pregnant with the future (my term for this is, as is known, 'Dionysian'); but it can also be the hatred of the ill-constituted, deprived, and underprivileged one who destroys and must destroy because what exists, indeed all existence, all being, outrages and provokes him. To understand this feeling, take a close look at our anarchists. The will to immortalize also requires a dual interpretation. It can be prompted, first, by gratitude and love; (…). But it can also be the tyrannical will of someone who suffers deeply, (…) who as it were takes revenge on all things by forcing, imprinting, branding his image on them, the image of his torture" (GC 370). In other words, the weak and the strong will, always susceptible to transforming into each other, would be the object of a distinction that is always problematic and speculative, and never reifying or biologizing. The fact that Nietzschean texts often prefer to focus on the regressive aspect of the "will to immortalize" is explained by the eminently circumstantial and psychagogical nature of his production, as will be further explored in the conclusion to this work, but also at the end of this chapter.

seems to us, like Cox's, to go against an ontological interpretation of Nietzsche, contrary to what it initially seemed to promise. Revisiting her reading should contribute to identifying difficulties that – even in the case of commentators explicitly concerned with the impasses of contemporary criticism – insensibly hinder a more accurate presentation of the Nietzschean gesture.

The reconstruction of Nietzschean philosophy as pursued by Stiegler seems to suffer from the complications of the project – not unrelated to her aforementioned interest in American pragmatism – of, on the one hand, ensuring Nietzsche's originality with respect to his appropriation by Foucault, and, on the other, preventing this defense from descending into attributing to the German philosopher a romanticization of knowledge, as representation of a thing in itself freed from the artifices necessary for its intellectual apprehension. With regard to the first task, Stiegler will advance the thesis – which, as we have argued, seems to be correct – of granting the doctrine of the ubiquity of becoming an ontological status. Commenting on the passage in *Philosophy in the tragic age* in which Nietzsche cites Heraclitus as the philosopher who taught him about "the total lack of constancy of all reality, which never ceases to produce effects continually" (FTG 5, translation modified), Stiegler writes:

> If men "know nothing" of the reality of flux, they know very well, on the other hand, the effect that this reality has on them. (…) If this indigestible element cannot, by definition, be the object of an analytical knowledge that would assimilate it (…), it has, without ceasing and everywhere, effects (*wirken*) on us (...). (Stiegler, 2017, p. 351)

Unlike Foucault and Cox's Nietzsche – for whom "everything is already interpretation" (Foucault apud Cox, 1999, p. 167, cited above) –, Heraclitus' disciple, according to this new reconstruction, although recognizing he knows nothing about reality "in the sense of the analytical knowledge of modern science", would still be able to know it from its effects, which present themselves as "resistance to the categories of our knowledge" (Stiegler, 2017, p. 352). However, Stiegler will end up relativizing the importance of this argument, with respect to what would have been the "passage from reality as flux to reality as will to power", which would have occurred from 1883 onwards (idem, p. 357). Before this period – and notably in *The gay science* – Nietzsche would still have been seduced, like Bergson later, "to devalue, as one among so many errors or arbitrary appearances, the cuts of discontinuity" (idem, p. 360). It would only be the influence of his studies in biology – and of the work of Wilhelm Roux in particular – that would allow Nietzsche to subvert the still Cartesian starting point of modern philosophy, returning the Kantian faculty of imagination – whose function was to mediate between the sensible and the intellectual – to "its carnal and organic meaning" (Stiegler, 2003, p. 138). For Stiegler, only this movement will enable Nietzsche to definitively dispense with the notion of a subject that "would already be there before anything different from itself occurred to it", "whether by resorting to a feeling or knowledge of itself, or by

the logical function of identity A=A" (idem, p. 139); the operation of interpretation, previously referred to this subject and disqualified due to its excessive character in relation to what would be a continuum of becoming, finally becomes – as Cox wanted – coextensive with the real, granting nature all the rights of discontinuity: "a polemos, a struggle or conflict (…), which Bergson seeks to exclude from reality" (Stiegler, 2017, p. 361).

Stiegler's attribution of such importance to Nietzsche's biological sources will be useful for this author when she proceeds to contrast her own investigations into neoliberalism with those of Foucault, whom she accuses of having overlooked the sources of this movement in a particular interpretation of Darwin's theory of evolution[7]. Thus, Stiegler will dedicate a careful article to commenting on the circumstance that Nietzsche was appreciatively cited in two strategic passages in Stephen Jay Gould's introduction to his final book, *The Structure of Evolutionary Theory* (2002). Taking stock of three decades of scientific effervescence in the area of evolutionary biology, the American paleontologist defends, in the aforementioned work, the need to revise the hard adaptationist paradigm of the neo-Darwinists, who would conceive natural evolution as a linear process of economic optimization; instead, it would be necessary, with Nietzsche, to admit "a fundamental logical difference between the reasons of historical origin and those with respect to current functional utility", always subsequent to the subversions creatively operated by living beings (Gould apud Stiegler, 2015, p. 425). For Stiegler, such a conception of the body as eminently active and protagonist of the historical process, capable of being mobilized in current debates in biology, surprises a not insignificant difference between Nietzsche's way of thinking – who, like Gould, would have resisted drawing an unequivocal dividing line between human sciences and natural sciences – and that of Foucault, who, in his "partial homage" to Nietzsche, would have chosen to conceive of the body as "a passive surface of inscription, totally dominated by discourses and their rules (…) and incapable of being an active operator of history" (Stiegler, 2016, p. 200). The harm of Foucault's choice, finally, would be that this author would have abandoned concepts such as "adaptation" and "selection" to the dominant neoliberal interpretation, without imagining that "the battle should take place [in this field]": "wouldn't his interpretation of the courage of truth in the direction of an aestheticization of existence and a development of spirituality have led to turning his back on this battle, so decisive for the political conflicts to come?" (idem, p. 216).

Leaving aside the merit of such an initiative, here attributed to Nietzsche, what seems urgent to us to point out is the difficult compatibility between a philosophy that, on the one hand, "frontally contests, relying on science, every idea of an original or immediate given" (Stiegler,

[7] "By completely ignoring the evolutionary background of neoliberalism, Foucault missed a precious opportunity to give a precise biological meaning to this new era of biopolitics. By reducing, on the contrary – and paradoxically – all neoliberal biopolitics to the anti-biologism of the German way, he paved the way for the most frivolous contemporary uses of his own concept, biopolitics being often associated (…) with an evanescent conception of 'bodies' and 'life'" (Stiegler, 2016, p. 216).

2021, p. 253) – as well as "all the dualistic divisions imposed by Kant" (idem, p. 257) –; and that, on the other hand, still claims a philological realism that "opposes the deformations of the past imposed by metaphysics, Christianity and morality" (idem, p. 278). Stiegler seems to want to lead us between the Scylla of a naive dualistic realism (Bergson), criticized for not recognizing the inalienable complementarity between flux and stasis, and the Charybdes of reducing "everything to a question of fictions, interpretations or constructions" (idem, p. 282), a position that would otherwise seem presupposed in her critique of Bergson. This tension gains its full expression when Stiegler compares, in the final part of her most recent study on Nietzsche's work (Stiegler, 2021), the pragmatist legacy for a "democratic government of life" with the contributions of the German philosopher himself (idem, p. 281). Starting by ranking Nietzsche below Dewey, Stiegler depreciates – in a line that seems very similar to that of Adorno and Horkheimer, among others – the Nietzschean typological distinction between "the supporters of stasis and those of innovation" and speculates that Dewey's democratic convictions depend on the contrary thesis, that "novelty emerges spontaneously from every newborn" (idem, pp. 261-62). For Stiegler, the origin of Nietzschean typology would be in the idea of a "non-coincidence between (Dionysian) truth and the organic (Apollonian) knowledge indispensable to life", which would make Nietzsche refer to the conditional truths of the organism as "errors", while James and Dewey would consider them "truths" (idem, pp. 264-65):

> [For Nietzsche,] intelligence serves only to solidify the stases of "error," those that impose the rigid contours of (Apollonian) logic on the (Dionysian) flow of becoming, oversaturated with contradictory perspectives. (…) [O]nly exceptional individuals can risk breaking the rigid limits of intelligence and have the courage to expose themselves (…). This selection will lead him to increasingly harden the dualism between socialized intelligence, systematically associated with the masses, and tragic thought (…). This dualism will condemn him to see in democracy nothing more than a process of massification, hostile to tragic reflection (…). (Stiegler, 2021, p. 268)

However, since it is necessary to admit that Nietzsche does not dispense with a "philosophy of culture dedicated to the collective conditions of individuation," Stiegler finds herself forced to concede – despite not being able to explain such a circumstance – the influence, in this philosopher, of a "presentiment" regarding the "impasses of his own path," which would have led him to conceive of knowledge not only as a "vital function essentially directed toward the future" – as in James and Dewey –, but also as a "research on causes, freed from the grammatical logic of resentment" (Stiegler, 2021, pp. 274-75). Now, we understand that it must be something like this "research on causes" that Stiegler saw foreclosed by Bergson's oceanic continuity; Instead of making knowledge the intuition of a coming-to-be freed from conflicts of forces, "the procedure of genealogy is, instead, to reinterpret, based on the current problems posed by the present, the inactuality of the past and its conflicts, in order to choose (…) an appropriate 'remedy'" (idem, p.

278). Because Dewey would tend to burden the idea of a democratization of knowledge with the still dogmatic expectation of being able to definitively overcome the obstacle represented by resentment, in the manner of a science conceived as linear progress without losses, "it is perhaps Nietzsche, in this case, who is right" (idem, p. 279). Stiegler ends up not being able to decide between the two models, and asks herself: "how to articulate democratic experimentation [Dewey] (…) with the philological relationship with the past as a field of forces and struggles [Nietzsche], which runs the risk of making knowledge a solitary experience of individuation and interpretation?" (idem, p. 280).

"Making knowledge a solitary experience", reducing everything to a "matter of fictions": Stiegler associates such positions, insofar as they represent the abandonment of a collective deliberation on the ends of the species, if not with Nietzsche, then with neoliberalism as this author finds it conceived in the work of the American journalist Walter Lippmann, to which she dedicates a detailed study, focused on Lippmann's discussion with Dewey (Stiegler, 2018). According to Stiegler's reconstruction, all of Lippmann's political theory, having "transferred Bergson's analyses to the social, economic and political fields", would be based on the disregard for the categories of human intelligence, henceforth discredited in its capacity to speculate on a common good for all: while, for Dewey, "collective discussion and inquiry must deliberate on the substance of values, which must be collectively debated and experimentally put to the test", Lippmann, on the contrary, "refrains from imposing plans and a collective destiny on society and is content to merely regulate it" (idem, p. 184; p. 180). For Stiegler, the problem with Lippmann's position is that, despite – or precisely because – he refuses to "submit human evolution to conscious control" (Lippmann apud Stiegler, 2018, p. 168), he ends up smuggling in, through the back door, a conception of the telos of natural evolution that "absolutizes the dominant economic environment, capitalism in the process of globalization, as the sole and definitive framework to which it would be necessary to readapt the human species (…), which is to deny the reality of the evolutionary process itself" (Stiegler, 2018, p. 185). Thus, if Lippmann criticized Dewey for having supposedly wanted to "direct the course of civilization" (idem, p. 151), Stiegler could "turn Lippmann's criticism against himself":

> Lippmann's criticism can be directed against himself. His procedural democracy conceals an authoritarian determination of the destiny of the human species. Implicitly justifying the conquest of "backward" nations by more advanced ones on the path to a globalized market economy, Lippmann (…) prefers, rather than brutal forms of colonial war, that all nations enter the capitalist system of production at once. (Stiegler, 2018, p. 189)

Dewey's proposal, on the contrary – and despite Lippmann's reproach – would not be to "fix the form of things to come" in the name of a predetermined telos, but to control becoming "in the name of a theory of evolution purified of the shadow of Providence" (Stiegler, 2018, p. 151).

Stiegler's attempt to object to Lippmannian neoliberalism by resorting to an alternative interpretation of evolutionary theory – an interpretation that Stiegler, let us remember, traces not only to the pragmatists, but also to Nietzsche and Gould – brings her reception of the German philosopher closer to that of Cox, who also pointed to the secularized naturalism of the will to power as the criterion offered by Nietzsche to decide between different reconstructions of the world. Like Cox, therefore, Stiegler refuses to attribute to Nietzsche "all the dualistic divisions imposed by Kant and later by the neo-Kantians", which would tend to depoliticize knowledge (Stiegler, 2021, p. 275, cited above). However, as we have seen, this author cannot help but resent the circumstance – which could perhaps have made her distinction between Nietzschean realism and that of Bergson hesitate – that Nietzsche refers to the schemes of knowledge as "errors", while Cox, less willing to make the thesis of the will to power dependent on theoretical gains in biology or any other science, understands naturalism itself as merely a "practical-vital deception" that "increase the ability of human beings to preserve or enhance themselves as individuals, as groups, or as a species.", at a stage in history in which the theological assumptions of philosophy would have revealed themselves to be "pernicious and contemptible" lies (Cox, 1999, p. 42; p. 100). If we have argued that Cox went too far in reducing Nietzsche's objection to the theologian to matters of mere "interpretation," at least here naturalism did not immediately determine any unequivocal propositional content that would be *a priori* prohibitive with respect to particular cognitive strategies; that such a content is what Stiegler seeks in Nietzsche as a philosopher of biology—and, in the end, does not find it—is what becomes clear when this author found herself unable to appropriate Nietzsche's typology between weak and strong will, not seeing what this distinction could mean other than a biological idealism contrary to what would be the necessary presuppositions for a democratic government of the species. Although it may be correct to object to neoliberalism's false understanding of the meaning of Darwin's theory, it seems to us that, more fundamentally – and if we want to speculate a specifically Nietzschean response to the question – it would be more appropriate to frame the neoliberal still metaphysical desire to base politics on prior positive knowledge – provided, of course, that Stiegler herself did not resort to a similar expedient.

In short, it seems to us that Stiegler wants to see, at the same time, too much and too little in Nietzsche's refutation of idealism, when it is seen as related specifically to gains in biological theory. Too much, insofar as she seems to try to find there, notably, a point of support taken as normative in itself, making the (re-)working of the individual on himself something secondary. Too little, because she fails to notice the truly transfiguring meaning of the Heraclitean conquest, of revealing the constant transformation of a thing into its opposite and, with this, projecting philosophy to the height of an infinite critique of values, in which the will to truth is included. This last circumstance makes Stiegler, perhaps under the influence of the Lippmannian reception of

Bergson, see in every claim to access the real freed from the cuts of the organism – i.e., in all metaphysics – a form of regression, despite the fact that evolutionary biology ends up fulfilling, in her own reading, exactly such a role. Cox avoided seeing in the naturalism of becoming a thesis that should be prior to all interpretation, making it depend above all on its capacity to promote life. Stiegler, more consistent in this respect, speaks of a "Nietzschean realism" that is initially comparable to Bergson's, with the difference that only Nietzsche would have been able to find in things in themselves an irreconcilable struggle of interpretations, even at the inorganic level. However, what this author failed to point out, to say once again, is that the greatest problem of the still theological naturalism with which Nietzsche rivals lies less in its objective falsehood than in the shady purposes to which it is akin. If Stiegler insisted on the question of truth, it is because she also resented the fact that Bergson – but also Nietzsche – treated the stases of knowledge as "errors", assuming in this a detraction from the realism of the will to power; If truth were better represented by the pre-conceptual, as notably in Bergson, doubts would be cast on the possibility of a socialization of knowledge, delegating it to the privilege of the exceptional individual. What remains for us to investigate, however, is whether the objectivity of knowledge would not depend precisely on its connection with particular individuals and groups, "exceptional" in the sense of being exempt from having to refer to humanity in general, a notion which predetermines the subject and object of knowledge according to maximally abstract categories, but no less innocent for that. This investigation will become even more urgent after we come face to face with the full dimension of Nietzsche's "Bergsonism."

Nietzsche and the ontology of becoming

Cox's radical perspectivism, as we have argued, revealed its blind spot especially when it came to confronting passages in Nietzsche's work in which plausibly unambiguous realist commitments were asserted. Stiegler, on the other hand, brought Nietzsche's philosophy closer to Bergson's realism, making perspectivism dependent on a "return to lost reality" whose most correct description would be offered by the plural character of the world understood as will to power. Apart from this difference, perhaps more apparent than definitive, both commentators – in any case in agreement in linking Nietzsche to a pragmatist agenda – resisted associating this philosopher with any type of "dualist" position in matters of knowledge, whether at the cost of identifying his own system as only one of many possible interpretations of reality, or, then, in spite of concluding that there was a final mismatch between the Nietzschean project and the idea of a democratic socialization of knowledge, understood as preferable to the "solitary experience" of the genealogist.

Going against both of these readings, Eduardo Nasser, in *Nietzsche e a ontologia do vir-a-*

ser (2015), draws attention to several passages in Nietzschean texts in which knowledge of reality is understood under a scheme of gradations, to the effect that the world as chaos of sensations would ontologically precede all the falsifications that the "eternally popular sensualism" (BGM 14) would make us believe to be immediately given to sensory experience: "the opposite of the phenomenal world is not the 'true world', but the formless-unformulable world (*formlos-unformulirbare*) of the chaos of sensations – therefore, another type of phenomenal world, one that is unknown to us" (NF 9[106] of the autumn of 1887, KSA 12.390). What would explain the coexistence of these different types of phenomenal "worlds," in this case, would be the circumstance that the living organism, constrained by biological demands, would falsify the primitive phenomenality of the flow of becoming; however – or precisely because of this – an approximate knowledge of the real prior to interpretation would still be possible, as organisms become more complex in natural history. Thus, Nietzsche could say that man's interpretation of the world is "more in accordance with the truth" than that of the plant, and that the "gradual liberation from an overly anthropomorphic vision" makes "the image of the world become ever truer and more complete" (NF 19[158] of the summer of 1872/beginning of 1873, KSA 7.463)[8]. Although he recognizes Nietzsche's appreciative attitude towards materialist and mechanistic doctrines – which, by imposing limits on metaphysical hermeticism, fertilize scientific concepts –, as well as his critical positioning regarding the conception of science as contemplation, Nasser subordinates these moments of Nietzschean thought to a more fundamental concern, that the belief in a world governed by laws and entities, capable of satisfying the needs of the intellect, would be at the origin of ressentment, "the source of all the slanders in the world" (FP 11[72] November 1887/March 1888). In short: if Nietzsche, on the one hand, "not only inscribes the problem of truth in a pragmatist horizon, but also in another, axiological one, which liquidates the theoretical dimension of the discussion", this would not change the fact that "the reduction of truth to this [pragmatist] horizon represents only one side of the complex Nietzschean problem of truth" (Nasser, 2015, p. 163-64), more profoundly marked by a contempt for the values of conservation and survival and by the "exaltation of the danger and fragility of life" (idem, p. 133).

The path pursued by Nasser will consist of a double movement, of showing how Nietzsche, on the one hand, moves away from a dualist epistemology, represented by the physiology of the sense organs – which updated Kantian doctrine to include empirical considerations about the role of the biological body in the configuration of sensory experience –, without, for this reason, having completely abandoned dualism in his theory of sensation, still demanding causes for sensations, to

[8] "Equality and similarity gradually became, with the accentuation (*Verschärfung*) of the senses and attention, with the development and struggle of complex lives, rarer: while for the lowest beings (*Wesen*) everything seems to be "eternally equal to itself", "one", "permanent", "unconditioned", "without qualities". Gradually the "external world" diversifies" (NF 38[14] June/July 1885).

be attributed to an immaterial dimension of phenomena. The first moment would be exemplarily condensed in the important passage of *Beyond Good and Evil* in which Nietzsche, as we said, denies validity to the physiologist's project of wanting to see, in the sense organs, causes for the phenomena of experience:

> [O]ne must insist that the sense organs are *not* phenomena in the sense of idealistic philosophy; as such they could not be causes! Sensualism, therefore, at least as a regulative hypothesis, if not as a heuristic principle. What? And others even say that the external world is the work of our organs? But then our body, as a part of this external world, would be the work of our organs! But then our organs themselves would be—the work of our organs! It seems to me that this is a complete *reductio ad absurdum*, assuming that the concept of a *causa sui* is something fundamentally absurd. Consequently, the external world is not the work of our organs—? (BGM 15)

In this passage, Nietzsche anticipates an argument to which Bergson would later also give due emphasis, to conclude – in the latter's case – that consciousness cannot be located in the brain (or anywhere else): being only an artificial section of the physical universe like any other, it would not be admissible to attribute to the brain – and, for the same reason, to the sense organs, as Nietzsche says – the special capacity to generate representations, since these organs themselves are only known through sensation, and therefore secondary in relation to it[9]. As Nietzsche explained from the 1870s onwards, "sensation [*Empfindung*] is not the work of the sense organs, but the sense organs themselves are only known to us as sensations"; "our body is as external as all other things, i.e., it is known to us as sensation, just like other things" (NF 27[77] of the Spring/Autumn 1873, KSA 7.603). Now, in this context, it would not be by chance – Nasser continues – that Kleinpeter insisted on Nietzsche's philosophical affinities with Mach's sensualist monism, sending letters to the latter to testify about what he understood as a close intellectual proximity between the two authors. For Mach, in effect, "questions about the subject of representations become meaningless, given that the subject-object pair is undone, leaving us only sensations" (Nasser, 2015, p. 111).

For Nasser, although it is important to perceive an affinity between Nietzsche and Mach's thought, it would be necessary to give Nietzschean sensualism a "broader scope", given that, while Mach refused legitimacy to any type of non-sensory knowledge of sensations, Nietzsche "not only never completely got rid of dualism in his theory of sensation, but also believed it was possible to obtain some knowledge of its real causes" (Nasser, 2015, p. 112). Nasser speculates, instead, on the influence on Nietzsche of an argument that the German philosopher could have drawn from his reading of Drossbach – but which had also been put forward by Trendelenburg, among others[10] –,

[9] "The brain is part of the material world; the material world is not part of the brain. Eliminate the image which bears the name material world, and you destroy at the same time the brain and the cerebral disturbance which are parts of it" (Bergson, 1988, p. 19).

[10] For his part, Bergson will say that "Berkeley was unable to account for the success of physics" (Bergson, 1988, p. 11). We will return to this later.

according to which representations could not be entirely subsumed in thought, under penalty of it being impossible to distinguish determined representations from fanciful images, "so that, if I have determined or differentiated representations – of a man, a plant or a crystal – this is due to the affections that act on the senses" (Nasser, 2015, p. 113). Nietzsche's agreement with this kind of reasoning, in short, would have led him to correct the strict sensualism of Mach, adding to it the need to "walk the inverse path, from the senses to their causes", leading Nietzsche to conceive a "phenomenal reality of another order, identified as becoming, an outcome that can allude to a kind of sophistic plot" (ibid.)[11].

It is at this point, as Nasser realizes, that the connection between Nietzsche's thought and specifically Protagorean Heraclitism comes to the fore, in accordance with Nietzsche's conception of it, as exposed in the *Introduction to the study of Platonic dialogues*. In this work, Nietzsche separates two Heraclitean traditions, so that the thesis according to which "everything flows, therefore no knowledge (*episteme*) about being is possible in relation to sensible things" is attributed less to Heraclitus than to Cratylus and to Plato, Cratylus' heir in this respect (PD III, 4). In opposition to the skeptical conclusion of "melancholic types" who, like Cratylus, "despair completely," Protagoras, on the contrary, "believed that there was an episteme and that it was the same as aistesis and that doxa rested on it (therefore episteme = doxa = aistesis)" (ibid.); although Nietzsche limits himself to concluding, in this study, that such a position introduces the idea of a "cult of the individual, man as the measure of himself" – an alternative that Plato would have overlooked due to his "contempt for reality" whose origin was "above all moral" (ibid.)[12] –, Nasser (2015, p. 116) considers this to be merely a "preliminary" result, and that Nietzsche would come to approve the unfolding of the Protagorean doctrine in an "objective or realistic relativism", according to which the senses would offer "a vehicle of indisputable epistemological value when they confirm the truth of the realism of becoming" (Nasser, 2015, p. 116)[13]. Nietzschean sensualism, in this case, would ultimately be better understood under the light of Hartmann's "critical realism," an author whose influence on Nietzsche we have already mentioned in the first chapter: for both philosophers, although the perspective of naïve realism is unsustainable, it would still be possible to "obtain some knowledge of reality that exceeds representation" (ibid., p. 121). Something of a synthesis between dogmatism and skepticism, Nasser finds in this possible reading of Nietzschean epistemology an alternative to explain the philosopher's ambiguous positioning with respect to sense data without having to resort, as other interpreters have done, to the creation of a particular

[11] Speculating on Drossbach's influence, Nasser (2015, p. 113) indicates the proximity of Nietzsche's position in relation to Leibnizian dynamism. For Cox (1999, p. 207), Nietzschean "chaos" is well framed by Deleuze, when he classifies Nietzsche as a "post-theological Leibniz".

[12] "In the end, what divides natures like Thucydides from natures like Plato is courage in the face of reality" (TI Ancients, 2).

[13] "The sophists restored all progress to the theory of knowledge" (NF 14[116] Spring 1888).

periodization for Nietzsche's writings. In other words, the senses lie *de facto*, but not *de jure*[14]. However, because they are contaminated by unconscious projections of memory, it is still necessary to retain the idealist commitment to a theory of knowledge, which leads thought to the means for "sabotaging its logical impulse" (idem, p. 165).

The role of memory

Indeed, Nasser does not fail to emphasize that, should knowledge escape the falsification of reality by the action of the intellect, this can only occur "retroactively": it is only after a "regressive movement (…) that a real possibility of dealing with sensations in their raw state opens up", a circumstance implied, after all, by Nietzsche's attack on immediate certainties and required by critical realism (Nasser, 2015, p. 134). At this point, one can address with privileged insight the entire distance that separates such an access to Nietzsche's doctrine from that risked by Stiegler in particular, and which refers to the question of memory. We mentioned that, for Stiegler, Nietzsche's studies in biology would have offered him the tools to restore the Kantian faculty of imagination – mediator between the intellectual and the sensible – to "its carnal and organic sense" (Stiegler, 2003, p. 138, cited above). Believing that she finds in this procedure sufficient conditions for a defense of Nietzsche with respect to the Heideggerian objection – for which the interpreting "body" in Nietzsche would be nothing more than a new avatar of the Cartesian monological subject –, Stiegler identifies in memory the "inner scene in which the passive receptivity of diversity and its active organization are tied to each other"; after all, memory would be exactly "this capacity to retain within oneself the impression of the other (irritation), subjecting it at the same time to its own order (assimilation)" (idem, p. 139). Now, Nasser also did not fail to note, as we have just seen, that knowledge of reality prior to its falsification by the intellect would depend on a retroactive movement, and therefore certainly subjective in its own way; Deleuze, finally, had already highlighted an active role for this faculty in Nietzsche, as long as by "memory" we understand not the "memory of traces", a function of the past and a prerogative of the weak will, but a memory introduced by culture, only *apparently* opposed to the faculty of forgetting (Deleuze, 1983, p. 134). However, it is crucial to highlight all the ambivalence to which not only memory lends itself, but the organism in general. Now, if Nasser sees clearly that "it is through memory that faith in a 'soul' that 'reproduces itself, recognizes itself outside of time' originates, an archetypal illusion that defines for Nietzsche the fixation of the external world" (Nasser, 2015, p. 130; NF 40[29] August/September 1885, KSA 11.638), Stiegler, for her part, sought to avoid the Nietzschean

[14] "Heraclitus did not do justice to the senses either. The senses do not lie the way the Eleatics thought they did, or the way Heraclitus thought they did, — they do not lie at all. What we do with the testimony of the senses, that is where the lies begin (...)" (TI Reason, 2).

typological distinction between an affirmative and a negative will, making unavailable the difference between a memory that is a function of the past and another that is a function of the future, “an acted and almost active memory, that no longer rests on traces” (Deleuze, 2018, p. 149).

We started this chapter by referring to the “deductivist dream” of modern medicine, which, in its mission to derive all pharmacological treatment solely from an *a priori* knowledge about the human body in idea, resented the intrusion of “irrational” influences on the condition of the patient, capable of experiencing benefits despite the lack of scientific credentials for the means used with efficacy. What seems to drive a reflection like Stiegler’s, as we have already mentioned, is the notion that any command to speculate about what occurs before the “utilitarian turn of experience” would be guilty of the same negative judgment about the living body, whose biological needs would be overlooked in favor of a still Platonic conception of reality; reality, in this case, would be mistakenly conceived as prior to interpretative dispute, an ideal oceanic continuity freed of ambiguity and available to the specialist who wanted to direct the course of civilization by appealing to universally imperative “facts.” According to this perception, every type of epistemological dualism would mean the same thing: hatred of the inherently conflictual character of reality, in which subject and object interpenetrate by right; belief in the untimely character of knowledge, supposedly abstractable from its connection with the interests of the species. Revisiting Cox’s reading, we were able to see, in fact, the full scope of Nietzschean pragmatism. That said, it is now urgent to recognize, with Nasser (2015, p. 164), a “necessary continuity” between Nietzsche’s realism and the pragmatist expedient: from the doctrine of the world as becoming would follow “fictionalism, as its logical consequence” (Del Negro apud Nasser, 2015, p. 89). Thus, commenting on the eye analogy in *On The Genealogy of Morality*, Nasser notes the singular character of Nietzsche’s thesis, for which “the increase in perspectives is paradoxically concurrent with an increase in perceptive acuity” (ibid., p. 131). Let us ask ourselves, however, whether the converse proposition wouldn't also hold true, according to which the refinement of the organs would imply, rather than the abolition of perspectivism, the multiplication of perspectives. This is, at least, a bergsonian thesis; its viability would confirm the mutual correspondence between the philological paradigm, aimed at reading the world correctly, and an objective perspectivism, capable of elevating the subject of knowledge into a new disposition of the will, finally attentive to the fluid and relative character of reality. Let us see what this correspondence depends on and whether the reasoning behind it, simple enough, would not suffice to address the dispute surrounding that controversial passage from the *Genealogy*, as well as the more general coexistence between realist and relativist commitments in Nietzsche's work.

Modernity's unconditioned dualism

In the previous chapter, we referred to Bergson's solution to the problem of empirical concept acquisition, a solution dependent on the movement – which we saw carried out by Nietzsche – of naturalizing language and consciousness, projecting them beyond the strict Kantian dualism. Let us take a closer look at what causes the difficulty and what the deepest conditions are for resolving it. In the *Logic* compiled by Jäsche, Kant attempts to explain the formation of empirical concepts by appealing to the apparently unproblematic ideas of "comparison", "reflection" and "abstraction": we find similar objects; we abstract their differences; we identify common characteristics. Finally, we take them to be instantiations of the same concept or general idea, now articulated:

> To make concepts out of representations one must thus be able to compare, to reflect, and to abstract, for these three logical operations of the understanding are the essential and universal conditions for generation of every concept whatsoever. I see, e.g., a spruce, a willow, and a linden. By first comparing these objects with one another I note that they are different from one another in regard to the trunk, the branches, the leaves, etc.; but next I reflect on that which they have in common among themselves, trunk, branches, and leaves themselves, and I abstract from the quantity, the figure, etc., of these; thus I acquire a concept of a tree. (Kant, 1992, p. 592).

Now, the problem with this explanation is that, actually, one could never determine which objects are candidates for comparison in the first place, when the concept that would be necessary for this movement was exactly what one was trying to acquire. Why doesn't a fence count as a tree? – "because it has no leaves", we would like to to answer; but why should a tree have leaves? – "because, otherwise, it wouldn't be a tree"; but in this, the ready-made concept was surreptitiously introduced, and we only showed ourselves capable of using its criterion, not of explaining where or how it was possible for it to have arisen. In the words of Bergson (1988, p. 156): "to generalize, it is first of all necessary to abstract, but to abstract to any purpose we must already know how to generalize". Deleuze describes the problem left by Kant as follows:

> Kant opposes both dogmatism and empiricism which, in different ways, both affirmed a simple difference of degree [between sensation and idea](...). But then, in order to explain how passive sensibility accords with active understanding, Kant invokes the synthesis and the schematism of the imagination which is applicable *a priori* to the forms of sensibility in conformity with concepts. But in this way the problem is merely shifted: for the imagination and the understanding themselves differ in nature, and the accord between these two active faculties is no less 'mysterious'. (Deleuze, 1984, p. 22)

If Deleuze is referring here to the issue as it figures in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and not in Kant's *Logic*, the fact is that the problem is the same here and there, and always refers to the absence, in Kant – as he would already be censured by post-Kantians, as is known – of a principle

“which was not merely conditioning [i. e. external] in relation to objects but which was also truly genetic and productive (a principle of eternal difference or determination). They also condemned the survival, in Kant, of miraculous harmonies between terms that remain external to one another. (Deleuze, 1983, pp. 51-52). In other words, Kant would have limited himself to seeking the conditions of all possible experience in general, and not of real, concrete experience; This is, in fact, why Deleuze could say that Kant did not know how to conduct true criticism: knowledge is always taken as a fact, so that criticism, although it affects “all claims to knowledge and truth”, leaves “knowledge and truth themselves” unscathed (idem, p. 89).

Let us follow Deleuze’s lead a bit more, as it is important that he identifies in both Nietzsche and Bergson two philosophers who, unlike Kant, would have known how to constitute a “superior empiricism, capable of stating problems and of going beyond experience toward concrete conditions.” (Deleuze, 1988, p. 30). In fact, the same expression “superior empiricism”, which in this passage was referred to Bergson, will also be used to characterize Nietzsche’s philosophy: the will to power “constitutes a superior empiricism”, because it is an “essentially plastic principle that is no wider than what it conditions” (Deleuze, 1983, p. 50); in both cases, we would be faced with philosophers who were not content to simply think of “transcendental principles, which are simple conditions for so-called facts” (idem, p. 93). Now, how do Nietzsche and Bergson solve the problem of empirical concept acquisition, if they solve it at all? We mentioned that the solution must involve a naturalization of knowledge, which should condition Kantian dualism; in the case of Nietzsche, we refer to his proximity to Mach's monism of sensation, a circumstance that, however, did not prevent him – under penalty of making the distinction between determined representations and fanciful images inexplicable – from wanting to seek causes for sensations, and therefore from reinserting a certain dualism into his theory of sensation. Similarly, Bergson (1988, p. 212), while demarcating the distance of his system with respect to what he calls a “ordinary dualism”, will see himself obliged to commit to a position that he himself refers to as “frankly dualistic” (idem, p. 9). We are interested in knowing how this coexistence between naturalism and an enlightened type of dualism is possible, which both escapes the Kantian circular solution and still vindicates the possibility of a criticism of knowledge, without this involving a dogmatic appeal to “facts” prior to interpretation.

Bergson shares with Kant both the dualism that distinguishes, in experience, what would come “from outside” – the sensible, physical matter – and what would be the subject's contribution, as well as the concern to ground the scientific outline of reality, in which “all phenomena must succeed and condition one another according to a determined order, in which effects are strictly proportioned to causes” (Bergson, 1988, p. 226). Berkeley, although he was right to object to Descartes that the secondary qualities of matter should have as much reality as the primary ones,

would have gone too far in making matter a pure idea, becoming "unable to account for the success of physics":

> Philosophy made a great step forward on the day when Berkeley proved, as against the "mechanical philosophers," that the secondary qualities of matter have at least as much reality as the primary qualities. His mistake lay in believing that, for this, it was necessary to place matter within the mind and make it into a pure idea. Descartes, no doubt, had put matter too far from us when he made it one with geometrical extensity. But, in order to bring it nearer to us, there was no need to go to the point of making it one with our own mind. Because he did go as far as this, Berkeley was unable to account for the success of physics, and (...) he was obliged to regard the mathematical order of the universe as a mere accident. (Bergson, 1988, pp. 10-11).

From then on, Bergson will ask himself how to reconcile Berkeley's critique of mechanistic abstraction with the consideration of physics' practical success: "how can these two systems coexist, and why are the same images relatively invariable in the universe and infinitely variable in perception?" (Bergson, 1988, p. 25). Now, just as Nietzsche realized that "our apparatus of knowledge was not equipped for 'knowledge'" (FP 26[127] of the summer/autumn of 1884, KSA 11.195), the Bergsonian solution begins by establishing that the data of perception, contrary to what both realists and idealists supposed, does not amount, without further ado, to knowledge of reality, but rather "reflect its [my body's] possible action upon them." (Bergson, 1988, p. 21):

> If we now look closely at the two doctrines, we shall discover in them a common postulate, which we may formulate thus: *perception has a wholly speculative interest; it is pure knowledge*. The whole discussion turns upon the importance to be attributed to this knowledge as compared with scientific knowledge. The one doctrine starts from the order required by science, and sees in perception only a confused and provisional science. The other puts perception in the first place, erects it into an absolute, and then holds science to be a symbolic expression of the real. But, for both parties, to perceive means above all to know. (Bergson, 1988, p. 28)

It is because they take the perceptual data – in which objects increase or decrease in size according to my distance from them, etc. – as having an epistemic value that both realists and idealists were forced to choose between one and the other, either deriving the real from the ideal, like Berkeley, or the opposite, taking the ideal as reducible to more basic properties of matter, consciousness identified with cerebral movements. Now, at this point, it will no longer be enough to say, with Kant, that the sensible data constitutively depends on the action of the subject, because here too the same irreparable dichotomy is reproduced between two moments of reality supposedly logically independent: the content of sensation, evidently primitive in relation to the synthesis of understanding, and the "conscious" experience, subsequent to a process of intellectual apprehension. Thus, when Kant sought to explain the genesis of the empirical concept – that is, of the general idea, in a scenario in which generality will only be granted by understanding alone –, Bergson criticized his solution for already assuming that which it was supposed to explain, since it

already assumed an intellect equipped with the concept. The Bergsonian alternative allows itself to be guessed: sensation will be, from the beginning, already general, and what must be explained is less the progression from one moment to another (particular to general) than the simultaneous genesis of the general and the particular from a common material base. Let us see how this happens, because then we can understand why Bergson's condescension towards the categories of intelligence – often also underestimated by Nietzsche, as we have seen – does not imply the assumption of a dogmatic dualism, but can be conceived as following from the theoretical need to hold in check modernity's unconditioned dualism.

Bergsonian perspectivism as hermeneutic lens

In the previous chapter, when we introduced our study of those two anti-Kantian movements in the work of the young Nietzsche – realism of time and rhetorical turn –, we recalled the common ground between Hume and Kant regarding the starting point of their respective theories of knowledge, both faithful to the idea that knowing would always mean going beyond the data of the senses towards general formulations. Thus, Deleuze was able to confirm the influence of one author over the other, unequivocally enough:

> [E]xperience never "gives" us anything which is universal and necessary. The words "all", "always", "necessarily" or even "tomorrow" do not refer to something in experience; they do not derive from experience even if they are applicable to it. Now, when we 'know', we employ these words; we say *more* than is given to us, we *go beyond* what is given in experience.The influence of Hume on Kant has often been discussed. Hume, indeed, was the first to define knowledge in terms of such a going beyond. I do not have knowledge when I remark: "I have seen the sun rise a thousand times", but I do when I assert: "The sun will rise *tomorrow*"; "Every time water is at 100C, it *necessarily* begins to boil" (Deleuze, 1984, p. 11).

Now, we have also seen, even if only in passing, how virulently Bergson reacted to the problem that, according to him, defined modern philosophy, and which consisted in thinking that one could oppose the idea of order with that of absolute disorder, raw material for a Herculean task of the ordering mind or understanding. In this case, although one can contrast Humean psychologism with the transcendental principles discovered by Kant, the identity between the two philosophers would weigh heavily with respect to an equivalent skepticism regarding that which precedes knowledge, since, in both cases, everything that is not borrowed by the mind is marked above all by negativity. Bergson (1946, p. 73) metaphorizes the situation with the example of someone who closes a window, goes back to check if he closed it, then again, and so on: "if he is a philosopher he will transpose intellectually the hesitation of his conduct into this question: 'How can one be sure, definitively sure, that one has done what one intended to do ?'" Bergson, contrary to this, will want

to remain faithful to the notion, important at least to common sense – and to Nietzsche himself, if not to Mach, as we saw –, that the predictive success of positive science should be able to be explained, and therefore be given the predicate of "objective" in the proper sense of the word, as that which tells us something about how things are, independently of the knowledge we have about them. Kant did not do this, as Bergson would explain in the continuation of a passage already cited:

> Berkeley was unable to account for the success of physics, and (...) was obliged to regard the mathematical order of the universe as a mere accident. So the Kantian criticism became necessary, to show the reason of this mathematical order and to give back to our physics a solid foundation — a task in which, however, it succeeded only by limiting the range and value of our senses and of our understanding. The criticism of Kant, on this point at least, would have been unnecessary; the human mind, in this direction at least, would not have been led to limit its own range; metaphysics would not have been sacrificed to physics, if philosophy had been content to leave matter half way between the place to which Descartes had driven it and that to which Berkeley drew it back — to leave it, in fact, where it is seen by common sense. (Bergson, 1988, p. 11)

It is to say that Kantian dualism gave in too much to Berkeley, simply because it had correctly realized the unconsequential character of the Cartesian path; the fact is that the ever-attested continuity of the physical world tells us something positive about reality, if only because the "ordinary dualism" that rejects this conclusion finds itself incapable of bridging the gap between sensibility and concept, and is victimized by the circularity we have already seen. Let us see, finally, how the problem needs to be resolved.

In short, the role of the spirit in the formation of general ideas must be less that of synthesizing particulars under the same concept, as in Kant, and more that of hesitating in the face of operations of equivalence performed independently of itself. Indeed, the genesis of empirical concepts, for Bergson, while referring to a synthesis of representations – capable of bringing together, under a term or general law, a multiplicity of individuals –, concerns, more profoundly, a contrary process of dissociation: "Association, then, is not the primary fact: dissociation is what we begin with, and the tendency of every memory to gather to itself others must be explained by the natural return of the mind to the undivided unity of perception" (Bergson, 1988, p. 165). Thus, it is only when the spirit hesitates in the face of its original immersion in a chain of automatic bodily actions and reactions that we are able to perceive the difference between one representation and another of the same kind, which until then our body treated as equivalent. Now, if anything existed prior to such an operation, it was the generality of the body's reaction, much more than the particularity of the individual case, which we could only project to the beginning of the process under penalty of anachronism. It is on the day when I hesitate before the equation "barking and teeth → fleeing" operated unconsciously by my organism that I will be able both to group this particular with others ("it is a wolf, among others"), and to separate it from those other individuals

before whom I had always returned the same reaction, for now I have grasped the general rule that previously led me to its will. Here, the mind is no longer defined by what it lends to sensation, as in Hume and Kant, but by what it subtracts from it, namely, its coercive character; it is less responsible for the formation of the general idea than for its problematization, when generality was already given at an ontological level: "memory", as an operation of equivalence between particulars, "does not intervene as a function of which matter has no presentiment and which it does not imitate in its own way." (Bergson, 1988, p. 222):

> [F]rom the mineral to the plant, from the plant to the simplest conscious beings, from the animal to man, the progress of the operation by which things and beings seize from their surroundings that which attracts them (...): this similarity of reaction following actions superficially different is the germ which the human consciousness develops into general ideas. (Bergson, 1988, pp. 159-60)
>
> It is grass *in general* which attracts the herbivorous animal (...). (idem, pp. 158-59)

Now, let us finally ask ourselves, in this context, what the prudence of an author like Bergson towards the generalizing artifices of knowledge through concepts must mean. It is true that the cuts that intelligence operates in the sensible world, at least in its first manifestations, are almost identical to the habit of the organism and are practically limited to attesting to it with words, hence Bergson's (and Nietzsche's) insistence on accusing the artificiality of knowledge, its failure to penetrate the real and its merely utilitarian origin; would it perhaps be our duty, then, to achieve a direct apprehension of the "facts", beyond the falsifying activity of understanding? Now, this would be the case if there were anything to be falsified, that is, if the particular preexisted the general that gives it a name, a position that we have seen subverted by Bergson. It should also not be overlooked that it is precisely through this Bergsonian movement that the world apprehended in generic forms – where "human intelligence feels at home" – can finally transcend idealism and gain a foundation in reality itself, to the extent that repetition (i.e., generic being) is assumed as one of its objective tendencies (memory as a function that matter already "imitated in its own way"); the opposite tendency will be that of hesitation, the work of the spirit, no less a condition of knowledge, when it is captured in its own movement of genesis. Thus, the most exact issue identified by Bergson, we must conclude, is not that knowledge falsifies a state of affairs prior to itself, but, so to speak, that it does not falsify it sufficiently, when it remains too close to the generalities already performed by the organism well before the insurgency of the spirit in the automatism of matter. None of this changes the fact that subjectivity, if not intelligence, is here a condition for the real to appear no longer as a stage for repetition, after all just one of its real tendencies, but of qualitative multiplicity, in which Being = becoming = being insubordinate to all generalizing assimilation. Bergson is very explicit about this relationship of imbrication of subjectivity and objectivity when he says the following:

> Attentive perception is often represented as a series of processes which make their way in single file; the object exciting sensations, the sensations causing ideas to start up before them, each idea setting in motion, one in front of the other, points more and more remote of the intellectual mass. Thus there is supposed to be a rectilinear progress, by which the mind goes further and further from the object, never to return to it. *We maintain, on the contrary, that reflective perception isa circuit, in which all the elements, including the perceived object itself, hold each other in a state of mutual tension as in an electric circuit* (...) (Bergson, 2011, p. 118, added emphasis)

It is now easy to see that, in such a scenario, the adequate opposition is no longer that between fact and interpretation, subjectivity and objectivity, but between interpretations alone, on which depended both the image of nature as a mythical repetition of the general law – when knowledge was greatly constrained by the need to react urgently to the perceptive stimulus – and the apprehension of Being as becoming – a privilege of the organism that, by imposing fewer (and not more) restrictions on the work of spirit, was capable of accessing deeper layers of a reality intuited precisely as insubordination to a discourse about facts.

Let us return to Nietzsche. Let us recall the respective difficulties faced by the commentators on whom we have focused: as for Cox, it was not without difficulty that he read those realistic passages of the Antichrist, which for him were exceptional in the context of Nietzsche's work; Stiegler, in turn, resented Nietzsche's vocabulary that spoke of knowledge as "error," and felt overwhelmed by the question of how to reconcile such a choice of vocabulary with the idea of a culturally informed science, an idea that Nietzsche himself, as this same author perceived, never stopped insisting on despite everything. With Nasser, on the other hand, we were able to see the full contribution of Nietzschean realism, when knowledge is explicitly associated with the gradual liberation from the biomorphism to which the simplest organisms are initially subjected, towards a contact that is, if not immediate, at least deeper with reality through a process of refinement of the senses, in turn dependent on a feedback of the spirit on sensitivity:

> We have science these days precisely to the extent that we have decided to *accept* the testimony of the senses, -- to the extent that we have learned to sharpen them, arm them, and think them through to the end. Everything else is deformity and pre-science (...). (TI Reason, 3)

If this kind of realistic rhetoric seemed, finally, to threaten that other idea dear to Nietzsche, for which "there are no facts, only interpretations" (NF 7[60] of the end of 1886/spring of 1887, KSA 12.304), our overview of Bergsonian reasoning allowed us to at least show that, by theoretical necessity, one thing should not imply the rejection of the other: the refinement of the senses, rather than moving the subject along a line that would penetrate the object all the more the more it freed itself from subjectivity, must involve, on the contrary, a double movement in circuit, which

circulates infinitely between the two poles of interpretation; what the sensitivity thus retroacted by culture reveals, in turn, will not be facts, but precisely the collapse of every assimilatory attempt, an unstable field of becoming, in accordance with objective relativism or Protagorean realism. As for the eye metaphor of the *Genealogy*, finally: the more perspectives, the greater our objectivity; but this objectivity – that is, the testimony of the senses sharpened by culture – would reveal nothing other than an immanent play of mirrors, the spiritual character of things themselves. And Nietzsche could say that when we "sharpen, arm, think the senses to the end," a world opens up before us that "acts on our feeling (*Gefühl*) in a completely different way" (NF 34[60] April/June 1885, 11.437):

> The more refined the senses [*Je feiner die Sinne*], the more rigorous the attention, the more varied the tasks of life have become, the more difficult it has become to admit the knowledge of a thing, of a fact, as definitive, as "truth"; and finally, to the point to which methodological distrust has led us today, we no longer give ourselves the right to speak of truths in the unconditional sense – we have renounced the belief in the knowability of things as well as the belief in knowledge. The "thing" is only a fiction, the "thing in itself" is even a contradictory and forbidden fiction: but also knowledge, absolute and consequently also relative, is equally only fiction! (FP 38[14] June/July 1885, KSA 11.598)

Could Bergsonian reasoning be incorporated into an adequate treatment of the internal tensions of Nietzsche's text? The fact is that Bergson also begins with a realism of becoming, advancing an argument very close to that of Spir, and considers the origin of the empirical concept as having to be described based on this commitment, a task to which Nietzsche also dedicated himself; their positions, if not their respective paths of reasoning, are, moreover, the same in this regard, when one says that "it is grass in general that attracts the herbivorous animal" and the other draws attention to the priority of concrete situations in which someone was attributed the predicate of "honest", in relation to the subsequent reification of this practice in the fiction of a corresponding *qualitas occulta* (TL, cf. previous chapter). The result that Bergson explicitly outlined from then on is that objectivity and subjectivity, far from being opposed to each other, function in a circuit, in a theoretical landscape that now brings together the realist orientation towards a knowledge of the object in itself and the simultaneous commitment to the irreducibility of interpretation, despite what hasty readings of his work might say[15]. Incorporating Bergson is, at the very least, a way of giving meaning to Nietzsche's divergent statements, without considering them contradictory or prioritizing one over the other. It would also explain the importance that this philosopher, far from any voluntarist approach, attributes to culture as a vehicle for human emancipation[16]. This circumstance

[15] Tournier seems to share a veiled Bergsonism when he writes: "I believe that the soul only begins to have a remarkable content beyond the curtain of skin that separates the interior from the exterior, and that it becomes infinitely richer as it becomes attached to the wider circles around the ego-point. Robinson is only infinitely rich at the moment when he coincides with Speranza, all of her" (Tournier, 2001, p. 61).

[16] This conclusion also extends to Bergson. After stating, in *Creative Evolution*, that "theory of knowledge and theory of life seem to us inseparable", he goes on to say that "a philosophy of this kind will not be made in a day. Unlike the philosophical systems properly so called, (...) it will only be built up by the collective and progressive effort of many thinkers, of many observers also, completing, correcting and improving one another." (Bergson, 1944, pp.

should, in fact, serve to rectify the attribution to Nietzsche of an unequivocal distinction between the "strong" and the "weak," as seems to still circulate today even in specialized commentary. We will also see how these themes converge in what seems to us, ultimately, the most appropriate framework for Nietzsche's work.

Nietzsche's existential naturalism

In a penetrating article that reflects on the history of the French reception of Bergson in the first half of the 20th century, Hyppolite (1949) reports on what would have been the insufficiency of this author for a generation that, besieged by the cataclysm of the Second World War, would radicate itself in the idea of the insuperability of the existential perspective of the human drama in relation to any possible transcendence. Contrary to a philosophy that, despite its liberating influence on the French panorama at the beginning of the century, would not have known how to take advantage of the opportunity to make human finitude the center of its reflection, existentialist philosophies would oppose the Bergsonian system with the requirement to elevate the point of view of the individual subject as the absolute reference point of philosophical meditation; because, in its nuanced dualism, it had allowed human consciousness to extend to the entire universe, Bergson's philosophy of life would give way to a philosophy of existence more in line with the disenchanted atmosphere of an era in which the fate of the species seemed threatened as never before in its history. Hyppolite, who was able to see in this inflection a decisive "spiritual movement" of philosophical thought, finally highlights the "crisis of philosophy" represented by the demands of this new context, a crisis that seems to us to retain its full dimension today: "a philosophical system that would allow us to go beyond this existence, to refer it to something other than itself, seems impossible"; "the ultimate problem that existentialists, Marxists, and Christians face today seems to us to be the problem of the 'meaning of history'" (Hyppolite, 1949, pp. 454-55)[17].

Bergson did not write a book on the tragic, but on the comic; Nietzsche, on the other hand, in a "deeply personal" work on the birth of tragedy (BT Self-Criticism, 1), begins his philosophical journey by taking as his subject a "pessimism of strenght" (ibid.) that should be seen here precisely as a challenge to the artificial youthfulness of modern man in particular. We have already seen, moreover, what was above all at the basis of his appreciation of Schopenhauer; let us recall, instead, the preface to *Philosophy in the tragic age*, which identified in the "personal element" of each philosophical system its "irrefutable" core and the decisive reason why we "love" its authors (FTG

xxiii-xxiv).

[17] Paralelamente às críticas de Sartre a Bergson, Horkheimer escrevia, a respeito de Peirce e William James: "Both Peirce and James wrote at a period when prosperity and harmony between social groups as well as nations seemed at hand, and no major catastrophes were expected" (Horkheimer, 2004, p. 36).

Prefaces). Should we, given all this, conclude with Solomon (2003, p. 176) that Nietzsche would celebrate “individual existence to the exclusion of all sorts of abstract theories and notions in favor of the passions of life”? Vinod Acharya stands against this type of inference in *Nietzsche's meta-existentialism* (2014), which, even without considering the parallel with Bergson that his reading would grant, is careful to preserve Nietzsche from having absolutized existential reflection as the final word of philosophical reflection. We would now like to focus on this last commentary, insofar as it corresponds to the strategy that we understand best accommodates the different demands that a comprehensive reading of Nietzsche's gesture require.

To initially describe what he understands to be the general lines of Nietzschean methodology, Acharya – who does not hesitate, because of this, to include Nietzsche in the framework of existentialist authors – explores what would be the contrast between the existentialist position as conceived by Johannes Climacus, Kierkegaard's pseudonym and author of the *Postscript to philosophical crumbs*, and existentialism of a specifically Nietzschean type, whose origin will be traced to the identification and solution of an inconsistency that would have victimized Climacus' discourse in its very conception. The exact correctness or not of this comment on Kierkegaard is certainly not essential to what one wants to conclude about Nietzsche. For the purposes of exposition, however, it will be useful to have such an assessment at hand; also because, in any case, the task is due of disambiguating the meaning of this umbrella term, which is certainly still too generic and should cover both philosophers, even though it is exceptionally Nietzsche who makes the theme of the self-creation of the free individual compete for attention with, to cite just one example, discussions about the theory of evolution in the field of scientific biology. For Acharya, only Nietzsche would have known how to radically affirm, and in all its ambiguity, what will be called the “existential distinction,” defined by establishing, against all totalizing pretensions, an irreducible fissure between subjective experience and an independent “objective” world. If such an approach seems to lead us to affirm the emptiness of all supposedly disinterested initiative of knowledge, as would in fact seem necessary, Acharya asks that, as Nietzsche would have done, we take this reasoning to the end, in the direction of realizing what would be its most ultimate corollary. Fundamentally, it is argued that it would be contradictory to want to oppose the “purely objective” thought of a Hegel, supposedly negligent with respect to the existential distinction, through the construction of a pair of opposites of our own making, with which to construct this critique; more consequential would be, as even Climacus will finally seem to recognize, to consider this “pure objectivity” as also only a limiting case of subjectivity itself, thus subverting the understanding of the relationship between the two terms, henceforth assumed as entirely differential.

The basis of the Acharya's approach lies in an identified need to match Nietzsche’s

existentialist initiative with the precise content of his critique of metaphysics, as a "*faith in opposite values*" (BGM 2). That is to say, rather than equating metaphysical thought with one side of the traditional binaries of philosophy – mind/body, truth/error, Being/becoming, subjective/objective – and from there orchestrating his attack, Nietzsche would have wanted, contrary to that, to locate his target precisely in the oppositional structure that gives traction to all those sharp dichotomies in the first place. Heidegger, in particular – but not exclusively, as we have seen – would have been especially victimized by the error of understanding Nietzsche's dispute with Platonism as directed at the privilege granted therein to a "real" world to be distinguished from the apparent, so that Nietzsche would have been left to merely "invert" Platonism without, however, being able to get rid of the dualist prejudice common to the bulk of the history of philosophy. Instead, it will be the case that Nietzsche has given full attention to this detail, when, already from *Human* onwards, it will be taken for granted that quite simply "there are no opposites, except in the customary exaggeration of popular or metaphysical interpretations" (HH 1). Thus, a much more timely reading of his work would be available when we allow ourselves to understand his critical gesture as directed at the "how" of dualist metaphysics, its own eagerness to see opposites where there are only differences of degree, much more than in "which" world (real or apparent) would receive priority there, once any separate treatment has been shown to be inconsequential. The consequence to be drawn from all this is that the "setting up of a 'true' world in itself does not necessarily mean the metaphysical will to deny life" (Acharya, 2014, p. 63); this desire is coordinated, instead, with "faith in a metaphysical value, the absolute value of truth" (GM 3, 24). It also follows that Nietzsche's typological distinction between strong and weak will will be no less elusive than his critique of metaphysics, and must be appreciated alongside a parallel and deeper topological continuity between the two types.

This last point Acharya condenses into the idea, which we should perhaps still qualify, that the process of decadence of a people or individual would be based on a disturbance of the active apparatus itself, as a "conflict between the strong type's 'will to create' and its 'will to self-preservation'" (Acharya, 2014, p. 127). This ambivalence attributed to the active will would be attested in several moments of Nietzsche's text, as when Zarathustra imperceptibly transitions from a joyful disposition of spirit to a lament directed at the "poverty", "envy" and "misery" of the one who, due to his luminous nature, does not know "the happiness of receiving" (Z 2, 9)[18]. But the case discussed at greater length will be none other than that of Socrates, a character in whom, as we have seen, Nietzsche seemed to unequivocally locate the beginning of the end of Greek splendor. In order to resist this first impression, we should first keep in mind the description that Nietzsche offers of what would be a broader process of degeneration, of which Socrates would have been above all a

[18] Still on this subject, check again GS 370, cited in note 6 above.

symptom or expression, much more than its actual cause:

> The same type of degeneration was quietly gaining ground everywhere: old Athens was coming to an end. -- And Socrates understood that the world *needed* him, -- his method, his cure, his personal strategy for self-preservation... Everywhere, instincts were in anarchy; everywhere, people were five steps away from excess: the *monstrum in animo* was a universal danger. (TI Socrates, 9)

Elsewhere, in an aphorism that must be considered very significant for the question of Socrates' problem, Nietzsche allusively described the same cultural situation as a "calamitous simultaneity of spring and fall" when, after overcoming a period of "long fight with essentially constant unfavorable conditions", the resulting "severe" species of men gives way to a slackening in which, "mutually involved and entangled", there coexists the deviation towards "something higher, subtler, rarer" and "a tremendous ruin and self-ruination" that no longer knows how to " derive any limit, restraint, or consideration from their previous morality"; moments in which, in a word, "the individual dares to be individual and different" (BGE 262). The philosopher, as an individual par excellence, disturbs the unity acquired at the level of culture and art, making the "sick (…) ever sicker"; it is only desirable in the context of a healthy people, and even here, only when the latter knows how to restrain it "at the proper time" (FTG 1). Indeed, the greatness of the Greeks would lie precisely in having dared to welcome the philosopher, as an "excessive excess" (Acharya, 2014, p. 163) permitted by the health acquired at the level of culture; because exempt from all "autochthonous conceit" that would prevent them from "fruitfully learning" from their neighbors, the Greeks, instead, "engaged in philosophy, as in everything else, as civilized human beings, and with highly civilized aims", which alone would grant them the title of inventors in a "higher sense" (FTG 1). Even Socrates, finally, will be praised along these lines, for having "discovered a new type of *agon* [competition], that he was its first fencing master" (TI Socrates, 8); Already in *The birth of tragedy*, Nietzsche secretly welcomed this circumstance, because it would be "probabl[e]" that, were it not for the direction given by Socrates to the anarchy of instincts that prevailed at the time, "instinctive lust for life" would have been so weakened that suicide and "genocide motivated by pity" would perhaps have become universal customs (BT 15).

We have already seen how significant the respective first aphorisms of each Nietzschean work are. That of *The Gay Science* is especially penetrating and meets such a topological emphasis adequate, but not only, to the problem of Socrates, which is none other than that of the relationship between the continuity required by good historical conscience and the discontinuity that one wants to attribute to individual agency in the context of Nietzsche's existentialist naturalism:

> I always find them [men] engaged in a single task, each and every one of them: to do what benefits the preservation of the human race. (...) One might quickly enough, with the usual

> myopia from five steps away, divide one's neighbours into useful and harmful, good and evil; but on a large-scale assessment, upon further reflection on the whole, one grows suspicious of this tidying and separating (...): [A]ll belong to the amazing economy of the preservation of the species (...). What might have harmed the species may have become extinct many thousands of years ago (...) (GS 1)[19]

Now, we have mentioned that Nietzschean "meta-existentialism" would consist of a radicalization of the "existential distinction" in the direction of affirming the differential character of the subjective and objective poles of interpretation, hence the interested involvement of this author, and essential to this commitment, also with positive science; or with what Bergson (1988) would call the decentered "system of images" of philosophical realism. Would it therefore be a matter of assenting to the deterministic world image consummated in scientific reductionism, provided that it be informed by the awareness of its instrumental basis? Indeed, in the aphorism cited above, Nietzsche will urge that the concern with the conservation of the species be replaced by a future also for "laughter", that is, by a "laugh[ing] at oneself" that is hardly compatible with the idea of any type of free-will that is after all hardly compatible with the demand for intellectual cleanliness. This is none other than the problem with which we started the present chapter; it is therefore important to clarify – along the lines posed by the circular structure of radical existentialism – how naturalism is affected by this methodological requirement.

The difficulty of the problem arises from the fact that any prohibition on scientific continuity is immediately susceptible to the suspicion of being in the service of psychological motives that are perhaps most banal to man, such as the desire to depreciate others in order to increase one's own value, or to claim merit for a supposed intrinsic virtue of character. However, because determinism applies so precariously at least to the things of our everyday apprehension – in addition, of course, to being a hypothesis for which one cannot, in principle, offer proof – this theoretical attitude should also become suspicious to the psychologist, and both should be dispatched to the court of the "queen of the sciences", namely, "psychology (…) as morphology and the doctrine of the development of the will to power" (BGE 23). Now, the thesis of the will to power, in the commentary, is alternatively referred to Nietzsche's engagement with physics (Nasser, 2014); with biology (Stiegler, 2001, 2021; Müller-Lauter, 1978); with Greek agonism (Hatab, 2015); with the theory of language (Corbanezi, 2014); or, as seems more to the point, traced back simply to thesis of becoming (Cox, 1999; Deleuze, 1983). In line with this last strategy, Acharya (2014, p. 86) presents it as a response to the imperative implied by the existential distinction: at the same time critical of mechanism – "for its lack of qualitative and evaluative power" – and of the purely qualitative explanations offered by moral discourse – which would lack any objectivity – the

[19] A similar idea recurs, for example, in BGE 44: "We think that hardness, forcefulness, slavery, danger in the alley and the heart, life in hiding, stoicism, the art of experiment and devilry of every kind, that everything evil, terrible, tyrannical in man, everything in him that is kin to beasts of prey and serpents, serves the enhancement of the species "man" as much as its opposite does."

Nietzschean doctrine would react just as well to the need for an existential understanding of reality on the part of a subject involved therein as to the requirement to impose a brake on the reification otherwise necessitated by the fulfillment of the first clause. To the extent that the thesis of the will to power must therefore unify the conflicting intuitions of sufficient reason and the irreducibility of individual existence, the natural world gains in subjectivity as the subject of knowledge becomes de-absolutized in the direction of nature. No longer a critique of reason for its own sake, but for the sake of the body; no longer an idealistic knowledge of a world emptied of normative content, but a "divine way of thinking" (WP 15).

One can easily see that, in a hypothesis like this, the thesis of the will to power, far from endorsing a "law of the stronger" or endorsing "biological idealism", intervenes, quite the contrary, precisely to correct the materialist abuse, without harming historical thought; it names and signals the need for the subject of knowledge to learn to make his position vulnerable, vetoing the authoritarian appeal to a supposed universally binding rationality. In the same stroke, it now returns to the object of knowledge the intrinsic value and meaning of which mechanical physics, in alliance with Christian theology, had emptied nature. In no case does this Nietzschean concept, as a supposed praise of brute force, act as a positive starting point for his philosophical thought; this starting point, as we have shown, is entirely negative and merely confirms the irreducibility of change to the representation of change, which in itself already determines the existence of a circuit between subject and object in an entirely differential relationship. The result of this analysis would perhaps be epistemological skepticism, were not this skepticism parasitic on modernity's nihilistic pressupositions: "skepticism is the most spiritual expression of a certain complex physiological condition that in ordinary language is called nervous exhaustion and sickliness" (BGE 208). Instead of beginning by opposing the ideal of objectivity to an empirical subject understood as an obstacle to this ideal, "Nietzsche begins straightaway with a critical interpretation of 'objectivity'":

> Nietzsche begins straightaway with a critical interpretation of "objectivity" that is already couched in "subjective" terms (..). This process is repeated, but from the converse perspective, where "subjectivity" is interpreted anew from the "objective" stance. This entire process is repeated again and again leading to ever anew interpretations of existence. (...) [I]n meta-existentialism we have a mutual interpretation, a mutual struggle and interdependence, and a *perspectival* interplay between the subjective and the objective terms. (Acharya, 2014, p. 39)

Knowledge, therefore, is tied to an imperative of self-overcoming to be satisfied by exposure to the opposite perspective, subjective or objective, indefinitely. "Every day you must conduct your campaign also against yourself" (D 370). One suspected Nietzsche of a servile acquiescence to the great solitary genealogist, capable of bearing upon himself the entire burden of the heroic demands of knowledge. Before we move on to the conclusion of this work, it is also important to point out

why it is precisely Nietzsche who has no right to a position of this kind, when knowledge, in accordance with the rights of becoming, is essentially rooted in an existence in time incompatible with any quixotic voluntarism, as it is precisely the idea of a privileged access to truth that will be located at the origin of contemporary nihilism.

Knowledge and culture

As mentioned, the aim here is less to highlight moments of positive meditation by Nietzsche regarding the cultural demands of thought, which after all proliferate throughout his work, than to grasp the obligatory nature of the thesis of becoming with respect to considerations in this register, which only through such a commitment can find the theoretical milieu that points to them by necessity. It is true that, on the one hand, it is not immediately evident how Nietzsche's most provocative passages, his praise of the "tyranny of (...) capricious laws" (BGE 188), could coexist – and not just *de facto* – in the same theoretical ambient that also produces an apology of *laisser-aller* as is implied in that opening aphorism of *The Gay Science* that we copied above. Indeed, how far we are now from all Epicurean casualness when we are surprised by the following passage from a later text:

> Every morality is, as opposed to *laisser aller* a bit of tyranny against "nature;" also against "reason;" but this in itself is no objection (...). [A]ll there is or has been on earth of freedom, subtlety, boldness, dance, and masterly sureness (...) has developed only owing to the "tyranny of such capricious laws;" and in all seriousness, the probability is by no means small that precisely this is "nature" and "natural"—and not that *laisser aller*. (BGE 188)

Hatab (1995, p. 20) rightly points out, in a timely reflection on the form of writing in philosophy, the imprudence involved in concluding, from the thesis of the rhetoricity of language, that this or that text format (including the treatise) is more or else less suitable as the most appropriate vehicle for philosophical truth; such an "antiessentialist fetish", far from being a consequence of the Nietzschean thesis, falls precisely short of its achievement, as it ends up hypostatizing language as a trap in itself. Nevertheless, it remains that there must be something irreconcilably unsystematic not only in the style, but in the heart of a philosophy that allows itself to alternate between one conflicting point of view and another, as if nothing were more natural than this movement. This type of procedure can be justified when it is demonstrated that both moments are a function of a first, just as an "irrational" number such as π is granted all the rights of a mathematical constant when it is identified precisely as the ratio between the length of a circumference and its diameter. In the context of the Nietzschean system, this role was fulfilled by the thesis of becoming – that is, of the identity of the present and past instant, of A and non-A –, whose obligatory character atested to

the essentially differential structure of reality and made unfeasible any reconciliatory consolation in a metaphysical beyond. Deleuze (1983, p. 93) will say, in a timely assertion: “In irrationalism we are concerned only with thought, only with thinking. What is opposed to reason is thought itself”. Now, we have already referred to the general lines of Nietzsche’s explanation for the advent of this prejudice to thought in the rationalist intellectualism of his generation, and which concern above all the more or less historical occurrence of an inversion of values under the silent dictates of resentment. What will now seem most essential to us, however, is the relationship, explicitly outlined by Nietzsche, between resentment and the liquidation of the idea of culture, as an art of care in time. We will present this relationship through a commentary on the *Antichrist*, as brief as the message conveyed by this work is unambiguous and as it was already foreseen as a necessary and inaugural moment of the Nietzschean system, to which our analyses have converged up to this point.

In fact, the text of the *Antichrist* takes up the theme of the dissolving power of habit in general and of laziness in particular, which introduced Nietzsche’s presentation of the figure of the philosopher embodied in his portrait of Schopenhauer’s virtues as an educator. There, the spiritual dullness that characterized his peers was associated above all with an incomprehensible contentment with the current mediocrity at the level of culture, and contrasted with the courage of his former educator to rise to the status of “lawgiver as to the the weight of things,” rescuing the ethical question from its contemporary slumber. Now, more decisively, but without abandoning his previous analysis, Nietzsche will oppose the “habit and laziness” common to modern man with the “methods” of Greek, Roman, and Islamic cultures that, according to what would happen a second time after their survival in the Renaissance, would have been “trampled upon” by Christianity from Paul to Luther:

> [T]he methods, it should be said ten times over, *are* the essential thing, as well as the most difficult thing, as well as the thing that can be blocked by habit and laziness for a very long time. What we have won back today with unspeakable self-overcoming (since we all still have bad instincts, Christian instincts in our bodies), a free view of reality, a cautious hand, the patience and the seriousness for the smallest things, all the *integrity* of knowledge -- this had already existed! (...)[A]s body, as gesture, as instinct, -- in a word: as reality... (...) Turned overnight into just a memory! (AC 59)

This being an important issue to Nietzsche, one must be careful not to misinterpret his references to method under a Cartesian guise, in which the decision about a correct protocol for the sciences essentially concerned the search for ways to unblock what would be a natural relationship of belonging between human mind and truth[20]. Far from any pretension of abrupt break with the past,

[20] On this topic, concerning Nietzsche's distancing from Descartes, in turn concerning the insidious presence of “subjective presuppositions” in the *Meditations*, cf. the decisive third chapter of Deleuze's book, *Difference and Repetition*.

Nietzsche's apology for the pre-Socratics, as we already know, was precisely based on the realization that Anaximander and others had philosophized "as civilized human beings", saving themselves from "trying to re-invent the elements of philosophy and science." (FTG 1); whatever Nietzsche's intention in refering to the lost methods of ancient science, we should above all think of the contrast, realized since *Human*, between the "procedures of science" and their "outcome", when the latter is said to offer little defense to new advances of "superstition and folly", in the case of a misunderstanding of procedure:

> On the whole, the procedures of science are at least as important a product of inquiry as any other outcome: for the scientific spirit rests upon and insight into the procedures, and if there were lost all the other products of science together would not suffice to prevent a restoration of superstition and folly. (HH 635)

Anyone familiar with Nietzsche's work can easily anticipate that the method to which the author alludes in the aphorisms mentioned above – and which in the latter will also be simply called "spirit of science" – is linked to the adoption of a truly experimental disposition towards its object, an anticipation that will be ratified by the text of *Antichrist*, when we come across the idea of an instrumental use even of "conviction", for when the conquest of skepticism that the work advocates is finally achieved (AC 54). "Make no mistake about it: great spirits are sceptics" (ibid.). Nevertheless, what is most relevant to our analysis can already be guessed in the same aphorism of *Human*, in which "all products of science" will be said to be powerless in the face of the eclipse of the scientific *ethos* by those who confuse "possess[ing] an opinion" with "becom[ing] a fanatical adherent to it"; and Nietzsche will also be aware that this "produc[es] the evilest consequences, especially in the domain of politics" (HH 635). No less important – and to return to the inflection of the *Antichrist* – is the qualification of the scientific spirit we are trying to reconquer, in the precise sense in which it becomes "body, gesture, instinct"[21]; a possibility in relation to which our contemporary efforts at "self-overcoming" still flounder under the influence of "bad, Christian instincts" inherited from centuries of intellectual lethargy. It is not surprising that Nietzsche, accordingly, will find in Christian universalism the negation of the values of cultivation, eclipsed by the more attractive possibility of a sudden conversion to truth and virtue. If Nietzschean thought is of value for contemporary public discussion, it will be because this material vice of the Christian orientation survives as a formal residue in secular science, philosophy and politics.

Crucial in this regard, to put it finally, will be Nietzsche's discrimination between Christ's own example and its falsification by Christian tradition, in a work whose subtitle – "A curse on Christianity" – clarifies the most precise direction of his critique. This distinction, in Nietzsche's

[21] Hence Nietzsche will say: "ll good things are inherited: anything that is not inherited is imperfect, a beginning..." (CI Skirmishes, 46). It was not for nothing, therefore, that Nietzsche found Socrates' audacity in having made conscience creative, replacing instinct (BT 13).

text, will be represented by the opposition between Christ and his "antithesis", the apostle Paul, described as a "hatred-inspired counterfeiter" whose fundamental need "was power" (AC 42). Now, what will characterize Paul's position above all will be having "reduce[d] being Christian to a set of claims taken to be true", when "any sort of belief, such as taking something to be true, are (as every psychologist knows) trivial matters of fifth-rate importance" (AC 39) for someone who, like Christ, "does not care for solid things" and prevents one from "taking words literally" (32). Fundamentally, the practice of Christ, alien to all theorization, would embody "the superiority over every feeling of *ressentiment*" (AC 40), making one think of "a Buddha on a soil that was not very Indian", completely foreign to the "fanatic of aggression" that one finds in Paul (AC 31). Indeed, Nietzsche will be able to bring this practice of Christ – which, as "true, original Christianity will always be possible" (AC 39) – closer first to Buddhism, described as a religion opposed precisely to "feelings of revenge, aversion, *ressentiment*" (AC 20) reproduced in the false Christianity of that apostle, but also, in a certain sense, to the scientific spirit itself defined by modesty, "declaration of war on and victory over all old concepts of 'true' and 'untrue'" (AC 13). Despite Nietzsche's qualifying comments regarding this last approach – since Buddhism will be considered a religion adapted to the "exhaustion of civilization" (AC 22) and Jesus will be taken as a "decadent" (AC 31) –, it remains that interpreting Christ as a "teacher of morality" will only be the occasion for "mistaking the type" (ibid.), and that Buddhism, in its "primary, dietetic objective", could truly be "*beyond* good and evil" (AC 20).

We said that Paul's insidious purpose, according to Nietzsche's reconstruction, was his ambition for power: Matthew will also be accused of wanting, on a deeper level, to "send to hell" everything that gets in the way (AC 44). Nietzsche himself dwells significantly on this perception that "every type of selfishness increas[es] shamelessly to the point of infinity" (AC 43) with those evangelists – a circumstance that, when added to Nietzsche's tribute to philological realism that we saw present in the same work, also serves to weigh reifying readings of perspectivism and the will to power, to be resolved only in existential naturalism. Decisive, however, will be to inquire into the form of operation of this power that the theologian foresaw in religion (AC 24), whose effects will be the "denatur[ation]" of "natural values" (AC 25) and the "scorn for tradition and historical reality" (AC 26). In fact, Nietzsche will always reaffirm his commitment to historical thinking, which we will see emerge here, however, not only in its critical and negative side, but also, to speak like Bergson, as attention to the rights of duration as a condition of possibility of true discourse, vacinated against theological shortcuts.

The theologian operates by the "lie at any cost" (AC 47) that it would be *not* necessary to "worry about [*sich kümmern*]" reason (AC 12): by believing, in short, that "[t]here are some questions that people are *not* entitled to decide the truth of" (AC 55, a passage in which the target is

Kant's categorical imperative). Specifically, the priest will direct his interdiction, his notions of guilt and punishment, "the whole 'moral world order'" (AC 49), on the one hand, to science, as "the only thing forbidden" (AC 48), but, more significantly, to women, who at this point in the text acquire a pivotal role in Nietzsche's analysis: "'woman brings *all* troubles into the world' (...) '*Consequently* she brings *science* as well'" (ibid.). The moments in Nietzsche's work in which he pays attention to themes of sexual economy are well-known[22]: after having referred to science as the only "great danger" known to the priest (AC 48), Nietzsche will locate his own enemy, in the fourth article of the "Law against Christianity", precisely in the "contempt for sexuality" considered foundational for the Christian doctrine. Nothing should be less surprising than this evocation of the figure of women, in the context of a work attentive to the theologian's indifference to the question of the body (AC 21) and quick to frame its object in the problem about the type of humanity that we must – even if "slowly and expensively" (AC 57) – "bre[e]d [*züchten*]" (AC 3). It will be necessary precisely to concern oneself with reason, to expose it to all its equivocality, its disposition to make even Christianity "irrefutable" (AC 61, referring to Lutheranism in particular). Echoing Nietzsche, Stengers (2015a) will evoke the art of care implied by the Greek term *pharmakon*, designating a resource that, depending on the dosage and use, can be both poison and cure, and whose banishment will define a pharmacology for which "the only legitimate means for political action be those that are guaranteed to be without risk, like children's toys" (idem, p. 147). It is also understandable that Nietzsche, in the end, qualifies his criticism of the "lie" of Christianity, assuring that the mendacity of a Paul would be located less in his ignorance of a positive and rival "truth", than in the extramundane – arrogant, immodest (AC 44) – assumption of a shortcut capable of abbreviating the inconveniences of a real work in time. "In the end, it comes down to the purpose the lie is supposed to serve" (AC 56). The philosopher, once again, as lawgiver as to the measure, the stamp and the weight of things.

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We will have more opportunity to unfold this theme when, below, we tentatively indicate extensions of Nietzschean intuition in contemporary philosophy, which both contribute to providing an interested reception of his fundamental philosophical gesture, and which already unfold what we defend as the essential direction of his thought. For now, we believe we have managed to present the foundations of this position, through the organization and hierarchization of its constituent moments; first from its relation of opposition with respect to Kantian strict dualism, to then understand how thought will allow itself to "drift" from then on, always supported by Nietzsche's

[22] "Christianity gave Eros poison to drink: he did not die of it but degenerated—into a vice" (BGE 168).

perception of a historical deviation of science and philosophy in relation to their due rooting in the most general objectives of a culture.

Conclusion: Nietzsche or the limbos of thought

My own belief in my existence is opposed to that unanimous belief.
This alone, though certainly it does not kill me, suffices to remove me
to the uttermost confines of life, to a place hung between Heaven and Hell
—in a word, to Limbo.

We said that, for Nietzsche, the theologian falsified the existence of Christ, turning it into a metaphysical system foreign to the eminently practical nature of that gesture. Correspondingly, the Middle Ages will be described as a period of alcoholic intoxication in Europe[1], a privileged source of the modern educational crisis that marked the third *Untimely Meditation*:

> The difficulty, however, lies for mankind in relearning and envisaging a new goal; and it will cost an unspeakable amount of effort to exchange the fundamental idea behind our present system of education, which has its roots in the Middle Ages and the ideal of which is actually the production of the medieval scholar, for a new fundamental idea. (UM III, 6).

In fact, the theme of Middle Ages' influence on modern thought will reappear in *Human* – but now to Schopenhauer's detriment – as something from which Schopenhauer's metaphysics could still profit, when it will be associated with the "old familiar 'metaphysical need" of Christianity, much more than with the proper scientific mentality that Nietzsche prophesies as the future of Enlightenment (HH 26). After celebrating the Italian Renaissance as the "golden age of this millennium", Nietzsche finally contrasts Renaissance's emancipation of thought and contempt for authorities with the German reformist movement, led by "retarded spirits, who had by no means had enough of the world-outlook of the Middle-Ages"; for the author of *Human*, the most timely reaction to the "transformation of the religious life into something superficial and and external" caused by the Renaissance would have been joy, and not the "profound ill-humour" that, made possible by "extraordinary chance political constellation", would be at the origin of the Lutheran Reformation (HH 237, modified translation)[2]. "Enlightenment perhaps have dawned somewhat

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1 "Perhaps the modern European discontent is due to the fact that our prehistory, the entire middle ages, was given to drinking (…): the middle ages means the alcohol poisoning of Europe." (GS 134)

2 On the issue of "superficialization", Tournier's Robinson wrote in his diary: "It is a strange prejudice which sets a higher value on depth than on breadth, and which accepts 'superficial' as meaning, not 'of wide extent' but 'of little depth', whereas 'deep', on the other hand, signifies 'of great depth' and not 'of small surface'. Yet it seems to me that a feeling such as love is better measured, if it can be measured at all, by the extent of its surface than by its degree of depth. For I measure my love for a woman by the fact that I love indiscriminately her hands, her eyes, her carriage, the clothes she wears, the commonplace things she merely touches, (…). All this, it seems to me, to me, is decidedly on the surface! Whereas a lesser love aims directly—in depth—at sex, and leaves all the rest in a half? light of disregard" (Tournier, 1969, pp. 62-63.)

sooner"; Luther, the emperor and the pope "perhapes rendered the complete growing-together of the spirit of antiquity and the modern spirit impossible forever" (ibid.)[3].

If we trust at least Hadot's judgment (1995, p. 108), however, philosophy would once again experience this timely meeting of trends, embodied in the work of Nietzsche himself, Bergson and the existentialists: "Not until Nietzsche, Bergson, and existentialism does philosophy consciously return to being a concrete attitude, a way of life and of seeing the world". Echoing the same Nietzschean diagnosis, Hadot explains that medieval scholasticism, in its subordination of philosophy to theology, deprived the former of all properly attitudinal content, dedicating it only to the meager task of supplying the main science with empty abstractions; the fact that this subordination was relaxed and apparently overcome in modernity should not hide the continued impact of the old association, when now philosophy itself comes to insist on its purely theoretical character, like a victim of the Stockholm syndrome. "Contemporary historians of philosophy (…), in conformity with a tradition inherited from the Middle Ages and from the modern era, [] consider philosophy to be a purely abstract-theoretical activity" (idem, p. 107). Foucault, for his part, will insist on the relevance of such a realization for the contemporary debate: Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Baudelaire will be indicated as modern attempts to reconstruct an ethics and aesthetics of the Self after the progressive juridification of the West during the medieval period (Foucault, 2005, p. 251, p. 112). However unrealizable the task may seem today, "there is no first or final point of resistance to political power other than in the relationship one has to oneself" (idem, p. 252); "Many are those who are entirely absorbed in militant politics, in the preparation for the social revolution. Rare, very rare, are those who, in order to prepare for the revolution, wish to become worthy of it" (Friedman apud Hadot, 1995, p. 70).

In this concluding chapter, we will present advancements in contemporary philosophy that seem to us to inherit and expand on Nietzsche's fundamental intuitions, contributing to the understanding of our study in particular and of Nietzschean thought in a broader sense, as we understand it. First, with Foucault, we will address the idea, which was at stake in our work, that the imperative of access to truth would place the subject of knowledge before a task much more equivocal than one might believe at first glance, and would depend eminently on the quality of the will that manages this access. Finally, with Isabelle Stengers, we will be interested in completing and, perhaps, correcting Foucault's approach, raising Nietzsche's categories this time to a paroxysm of equivocality, where they most properly belong. With this, we will also have the opportunity to

[3] Again rescuing, as in the passage cited from the third *Untimely Meditation*, the medieval roots of the modern scholar, Nietzsche will write: "The past still lives too powerfully in their [our scholars'] muscles: (…) [they] are half wordly clerics, half the dependent tutors of the nobility, and in addition to this crippled and enervated by pedantry and antiquated procedures" (HH 250).

indicate why the Nietzschean movement seems to have something to say to us today, its power to make us vulnerable to that which might make our traditional theoretical habits hesitate.

Knowledge and desire in Foucault

Just as, for Habermas, the result of the Nietzschean conceptual economy led philosophy to the unproductive and inconsistent conclusion that "reason is nothing else than power" (Habermas, 1987, p. 56), Foucault's genealogical historiography will also be characterized as a "relativistic, cryptonormative and illusory" pseudoscience that, instead of concentrating efforts on filling the still imperfect foundationalist attempts of a Kant, Hegel or Marx, would have abandoned the modern project of justifying democratic institutions and headed towards a contextualist, relativist and nihilist position that Habermas understands as the necessary destiny of such an evasion (idem, p. 276). Taking modern criticism to its nonsensical extreme, the "anti-humanism" of Nietzschean roots and inherited by Foucault, in his self-destructive attempt to find the "blind spot" in which "regression is disguised as progress," will be said to constitute "the real challenge for the discourse of modernity" (idem, p. 57; p. 74). Habermas himself will respond to this challenge by identifying, at the basis of social life, the "central experience" of processes aimed at achieving reciprocal understanding: "Validity claims are 'always already' implicitly raised (…) [they are] set in the general structures of possible communication" (Habermas, 1979, p. 97). Modern foundationalism, that is, will be recovered by the idea of impartial participation in public debate, with a view to the "legal institutionalization of those norms of communication necessary for rational political will formation" (Habermas, n.d., p. 15). "What unites citizens (…) [of a plural society] are first of all the abstract principles of an artificial republican order, created through the medium of law" (Habermas, 1994, p. 514).

Now, it would be possible to question whether Habermas, in his presentation of Nietzsche's philosophy in the *Philosophical Discourse*, had not allowed himself to be compromised by the previous feeling that it would be necessary to confront the growing popularization and influence of "postmodern" epistemologies in the public debate since the 1960s, with Foucault's work being one of the central episodes of this new situation[4]. In fact, it is not uncommon to find authors who, like

[4] In fact, Pensky (1999, p. 266) will argue that the hasty reception of Nietzschean philosophy in the *Philosophical Discourse* – let us bear in mind the inflection that this work operates with respect to Habermasian texts from the 1960s – is due to Habermas's discomfort with the growing influence of authors like Foucault in the philosophical scene of the last decades: "Habermas insisted on the internal connection between the essentially irrationalist characteristics of the postmodern epistemologies that had won so much academic and cultural influence since the end of the 1960s, on the one hand, and the triumphant neoconservative revolution in western Europe and the United States on the other. Especially for the West German political public sphere, Habermas in 1985 was warning of the uncritical adoption of an intellectual tradition of irrationalism (with its constant if usually implied connection with the national socialist catastrophe) and of the unacknowledged political dimensions of prominently depoliticized postmodem theory. Even in Germany, Nietzsche in the 1980s had become contagious". On the other hand, Janicaud (1992) and Biebricher (2005) argue that, conversely, much of Habermas's complaints about Foucault are due to his

Bouveresse (2016), undertake to disentangle Nietzsche from the movement, attributed only to Foucault, of confusing the "true being" of a proposition with its "being taken as true", that is, of identifying truth and power despite the words "power" and "truth" being seen there, the argument goes, deprived of any substantive content. In parallel, Barbara Stiegler (2016) will accuse Foucault of a partial reading of Nietzsche's work, for only this would explain how the French author could have made of the living body a "passive surface of inscription, totally dominated by discourse and its rules (…), incapable of being an active operator of history" (p. 200). In fact, we defined Nietzsche's philosophical procedure by the coexistence, made imperative by the thesis of becoming, between an inflexible naturalism and the positive appropriation of the enlightenment obtained therein, which would know how to drive the gains of knowledge in the direction of a creative and pragmatic relationship with culture in general and with philosophical writing in particular. With Foucault, however, philosophy would seem to be imprisoned by the "scientific Nietzsche" (Biebricher, 2005), aspiring to constitute a kind of super-science that would end up not being able to live up to its own standards and being even less scientific than the adversaries it proposed to combat (Habermas, 1987).

As for Foucault's own assessment of the supposed fate of his theory in an identification between truth and power, at least for him this would not be so: "If they [knowledge and power] were identical, I would not have to study them and I would be spared a lot of fatigue as a result" (Foucault apud Raulet, 1983, p. 331)[5]. It is clear, however, that Bouveresse's reader should leave his text on Foucault with the portrait of an author particularly victimized by such apparent inconsistencies, when a direct reading of *Lectures on the Will to Know* would perhaps be capable of immunizing him against such an impression[6]; Stiegler, more permissive by her part, already perceived in the same course by Foucault – although referred to as exceptional – "[the insistence] on the active and dominating dimension of drives, describing the violence of their conflicts in the social arena of Greek thought" (Stiegler, 2016, p. 200). Although what both seek and do not find in Foucault are different things – logical consistency, the living body as active force –, one sees how these two themes are related: it would be by having multiplied to infinity the sides through which the living body allows itself to be passively affected that Foucault's subject of knowledge would be doomed only to produce discourses that are always already compromised by power, and consequently self-refuting. It would still be possible, with Biebricher (2005), to finally point out the

previous misunderstanding of Nietzsche.

5 "You must understand that is part of the destiny common to all problems once they are posed: they degenerate into slogans. Nobody has said, "Reason is power." I do not think anyone has said knowledge is a kind of power" (Foucault apud Raulet, 1983, p. 210).

6 "Truth, I should say rather, the system of truth and falsity (...)" (Foucault, 2013, p. 4). It is worth mentioning that Bouveresse, despite his reproach of Foucault's formulations, will know how to recognize in this author a "model of dissident philosopher" whose "irony (...) with respect to the behavior of the intellectual environment" would make him all the more necessary today (Bouveresse, 2016, p. 20).

supposed mistake of borrowing texts reminiscent of Foucault's archaeological phase, as if they were already representative of his genealogical relocation, openly fictional and, therefore, vaccinated against at least part of the arguments such as those of the Habermas' *Discourse*[7]; and it should be noted that, at the very least, this text by Habermas, after all written mainly before the publication of the last two volumes of Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, is only silent about Foucault's works from the 1980s, whose inflection with respect to the genealogical period suggests either a complete revision of the project (Bouveresse, 2016) or the discovery of a "new axis" absent or inhibited in previous works (Deleuze, 1988b). This will be the moment when Foucault will rediscover in Hellenistic philosophy the inseparability between true discourse and practices of subjectivation, the modern oblivion of which we saw Nietzsche accuse and which will be our subject in the following.

The issue of the dispute between Foucault and Habermas – arguably the main paradigms of contemporary political and social thought since the last century – is significant enough for Kelly (1994) to have edited a volume dedicated to compiling texts by both authors in order to reconstruct a possible dialogue, in which the central dispute would revolve around the notion of philosophical "critique." It will not be within our reach to do justice, at the end of this work, to the full complexity of this debate, which was compromised by the aforementioned circumstance of Habermas's limited treatment of Foucault's work, but also by Foucault's early death, which left the objections formulated in the *Discourse* unanswered. Certainly, what we have already said about a possible need for a decision between the neo-Kantians and Nietzsche should also apply here, since philosophical reproduction through one or the other paradigm would depend above all on the underlying affective disposition, which is no less susceptible to criticism, as long as it is an energetic and certainly always groping criticism regarding the effects and commitments of each side. This does not mean that considerations of the order of verification are indifferent to this decision, which succeed, at least, in making it undecided on which side the burden of proof lies. All this to say the following. On the one hand, even from the point of view that we call "genealogical" – criticism of the "type of life" (BGE 3) corresponding to each orientation –, one could disregard the Nietzschean approach, considering, for example with Adorno and Horkheimer (2002, p. 76), that the stoic "apathy" of the critics of compassion (among them Nietzsche, certainly) would be nothing more than the product of certain "turning points in bourgeois history, as in the history of antiquity, when the *pauci beati* become aware of their powerlessness in face of the overwhelming historical tendency."[8]. On the other hand – but precisely still faithful to an approach to the problem

[7] This author, however, seeks to supplement Habermas's argumentation based on the consideration of Habermas' specific clash with Derrida. Even here, however, Biebricher will conclude that Habermas's motives are insufficient, advancing the hypothesis that the traction of the Habermasian paradigm itself would not escape the dependence on a rhetorical appeal.

[8] "Stoicism—which is the bourgeois philosophy—makes it easier for the privileged to look what threatens them in the eye by dwelling on the suffering of others. It affirms the general by elevating private existence, as protection from it, to the sta?tus of a principle. The private sphere of the bourgeois is an upper-class cultural asset which has

that frames it at such a level of analysis – one could, conversely, expose the prejudices inherent now to rationalist universalism, in its banishment, from the field of philosophy, of the spiritual practices that still informed ancient philosophy[9].

This is what Nietzsche already did in his own manner, albeit in a very preliminary way, in his dispute, if not with Socrates, then with Paul, Luther and Christianity in general, denouncing in particular the influence of this movement on the intellectualist formation of the modern scholar, as we have seen. Here it will be interesting to note only – before we have anything to say about what was more precisely lost with this development – that Foucault (2005) will follow the same path as Nietzsche, by locating in theology, much more than in the sciences understood abstractly, the central agent of such a transformation of "knowledge of spirituality" into "knowledge of intellectual cognition", a conversion finally consummated by Descartes, Kant and the *Aufklärung*. For it was only theology, with its notion of a universal faith – its "cosmopolitanism", in Nietzsche's expression (AC 16, 17) –, that established the principle of a general knowing subject; and its correlate, knowledge conceived in relation to a proper domain of objects:

> The correspondence between an omniscient God and subjects capable of knowledge, conditional on faith of course, is undoubtedly one of the main elements that led Western thought—or its principal forms of reflection—and philosophical thought in particular, to extricate itself, to free itself, and separate itself from the conditions of spirituality that had previously accompanied it (…). (Foucault, 2005, p. 26)

For Foucault, it will finally be possible to locate the axis of the modification that took place there through an analysis of the respective meanings of the term *metanoia* in classical Greek and Hellenistic cultures and in its subsequent Christian acclimatization: while, for an Epictetus or Marcus Aurelius, the meaning of this term was always negative, designating the idea of a possible future regret that must be prevented in the present, Christian *metanoia* will be organized around "a single, sudden, both historical and metahistorical event which drastically changes and transforms the subject's mode of being at a single stroke" (Foucault, 2005, p. 211). Thus, while the process of conversion to spirituality was, for the ancients, a long and continuous movement of subjectivation, in which the strengthened subject learned to separate what depends on him from what does not, the

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come down in the world" (Adorno; Horkheimer, 2002, p. 76).

[9] As is known and as we have also seen, the realization of the vicious character of modern philosophy was not outside the radar of the authors of *Dialectic* themselves, even if, according to the passage cited in this paragraph, they were not willing to regard philosophical antiquity in its positivity. Even so, it is worth knowing that Foucault will conceive his own efforts in the wake of the Frankfurt School: "it is this form of philosophy [a critical thought that will take the form of an ontology of ourselves] that, from Hegel to the Frankfurt School, passing through Nietzsche and Max Weber, inaugurated a form of reflection in which I have sought to work" (Foucault, 1994, pp. 687-88). Besides, Foucault will also lament, in an interview, the fact that "Critical Theory was hardly known in France and the Frankfurt School was practically unheard of", because, Foucault continues, "I would not have said a number of stupid things that I did say and I would have avoided many of the detours which I made while trying to pursue my own humble path" (Foucault apud Raulet, 1983, p. 200). As for the "ontology of ourselves" referred to in the first quote, it will be received with reticence by Isabelle Stengers, as we will see below.

Christian type of conversion – although certainly also conditioned by prior preparation and effort – will depend above all on a meta-historical event, an abrupt rupture *within* the Self (and no longer *around* the Self) that, ultimately, will consist of a passage from the reign of the devil to that of god (ibid.). Stengers (2018, p. 36) will come across the same relation, when she draws an analogy between the aseptic ethos of a science "based on facts" – its rejection of considerations taken as "unscientific" – and the "phobic misogyny of the priesthood", defined by vigilance in the face of seductions that could lead to the "one way road to perdition":

> Having the right stuff, then, means having faith that what a scientific question doesn't make count, doesn't count; a faith that defines itself against doubt. He or she who has been bitten by doubt will not recover the faith that research requires. Waking up the sleepwalker kills the researcher. (Stengers, 2018, p. 36)[10]

Now, what is lost with this movement, for Foucault, is the notion that there would be a "price to be paid for access to the truth"; for the "modern age of the history of truth" would begin at the moment when "knowledge itself and knowledge alone gives access to the truth." (Foucault, 2005, p. 15, p. 17). In effect, the philosophical question of access to truth would have been, throughout Antiquity, inseparably linked to practices of subjectivation considered essential to this access; Deleuze, for his part and like Foucault, will also know how to recognize in modernity the "supposition that thought is the natural exercise of a faculty, of the presupposition that there is a natural capacity for thought endowed with a talent for truth or an affinity with the true" (Deleuze, 1994, p. 131). Enlightening in this regard, however, will be Foucault's (2005, p. 17) emphasis on Aristotle as an exception among the ancients, a circumstance whose meaning should be sought in that course that, from the very first class, announced Nietzsche as "the first to release the desire to know from the sovereignty of knowledge (*connaissance*) itself", having thus reestablished "the distance and exteriority [between desire and knowledge] that Aristotle cancelled, a cancellation that had been maintained by all philosophy" (Foucault, 2013, p. 5). The fact is that Aristotle's seminal assumption, in his *Metaphysics*, of a "'satisfaction that we take in useless sensations'", much more than being just a particular case of a desire to know that would exist throughout nature, will fulfill the central role of serving as a "still rudimentary model, the miniscule paradigm of a knowledge with no other end than itself": "Its function is to ensure that what is really knowledge coming from sensation, from the body, belongs already, by nature and according to the final cause that directs it, to the realm of contemplation and theory (idem, p. 11, p. 13). By associating knowledge with desire and pleasure, Aristotle would have excluded from philosophy both the question of "why do we

[10] "'It's unproven, it's unproven!' How many times have experts made this obscene refrain ring out? (...) The primary role of the refrain "it's unproven" is to shut up, to separate out what is reputedly objective or rational from that which will be rejected as subjective, or illusory, or as the manifestation of irrational attachment to ways of life that unfortunately progress condemns" (Stengers, 2015a, pp. 69-70).

[really] want to know?" – thus eliminating the inquiry into the material causes of this desire –, as to the consideration of the existence of a disruptive "tragic knowledge"[11], capable of frustrating the expectation of happiness promised by the supposedly useless sensation. It would be considerations like these that the philosophers of the Hellenistic period, in particular, would not allow themselves to obliterate; Nietzsche's texts should also be read "as an attempt to free the desire to know from the form and law of knowledge" (idem, p. 25).

Philosophy and care of self in Ancient Philosophy

Throughout this work, we defend the thesis that a comprehensive appreciation of Nietzsche's work should determine the reader to recognize in his thought the generous confrontation of knowledge of nature as a challenge to the self-understanding of individual freedom, ensuring that this confrontation is mediated by the at the same time existential and cultural demands of a cultivation of oneself and of humanity. In fact, Foucault will find in Hellenistic thought, especially Stoic and Epicurean, in addition to the presence of well-defined spiritual practices that are already heirs of Pythagoreanism itself – if not of Spartan education, frequently referred to by Plato –, also the imperative of "the study of nature as the effective agency that brings about the liberation of self": "Knowledge of the self and knowledge of nature are not alternatives, therefore; they are absolutely linked to each other" (Foucault, 2005, p. 273, p. 278). One could only know oneself as one should "if we have a point of view on nature, a knowledge (*connaissance*), a broad and detailed knowledge (*savoir*) that allows us to know not only its overall organization, but also its details" (idem, p. 278); such knowledge should serve the function of making us grasp "the pettiness and the false and artificial character" of what we previously considered valuable (idem, p. 277), as well as, ultimately, allowing us to finally deliberate on "whether or not we want to live": "thanks to this great view from above (...) to choose whether to live or die" (idem, p. 285). For his part, Hadot (1995, p. 94) sees in Socrates' deliberate death "*the* fundamental philosophical choice" of putting aside entertainment in the name of virtue and the demands of conscience: "philosophy is the training and apprenticeship for death". For Seneca and others (Foucault, 2005, pp. 110-11), the task will be to "place ourselves in a condition such that we live it [life] as if it is already over", "[to] live expecting nothing more from our life"; and Foucault (idem, pp. 174) will be interested in this inversion between the "cathartic and the political" which, instead of excluding the problem of the salvation of the Other, subordinates it as a necessary effect, although only a collateral one, of the

[11] Nietzsche had also said that the "tragic feeling" had been "misunderstood" by Aristotle (TI Ancients, 5).

care we must have for ourselves. “All that remains is what it is one understands by *one’s advantage*; precisely the immature, undeveloped, crude individual will understand it most crudely” (HH 95)[12].

On the other hand – and as we have seen, Nietzsche would also perceive the lack of a necessary relationship between the progress of knowledge and its existential incorporation –, the ancient philosophers did not fail to take care of the urgency of thinking up strategies so that the epistemic gains of *physiology* (Foucault, 2005, p. 238) could in fact guarantee such a transformation of the subject, hence the imperativeness of the norm by which knowledge of nature should be immediately translatable into practical prescriptions. These prescriptions or norms of conduct should be simple enough to be accessed in case of need and to offer the necessary assistance for the care of soul in a timely manner. Seneca would emphasize the practice of preparing summaries of texts, of alternating reading with writing; Epictetus will recall that listening itself was passive, for which will be encouraged the use of “tokens of attention by which the listener both communicates with the speaker and also assures himself that his attention is following the speaker’s discourse” (idem, p. 343). Above all, it will be decisive to note that, in the end, such a “creation of an equipment of true propositions for yourself” (idem, p. 358) should not dispense with the need for a teacher, because the *stultus* – that is, the individual who “blown by the wind and open to the external world” – finds himself structurally unable to “want to take care about the self”, and therefore deprived of what would be necessary to begin the process (idem, p. 131, p. 134). This teacher will certainly not be an “educator in the traditional sense of the term, someone who will teach truths”: for Epicurus, he will be the philosopher (idem, pp. 134-35). Pursuing the same idea, Epictetus will elaborate on the two great qualities of the philosopher, as knowing how to “refute the other person and turn his mind”, based on the example of Socrates (idem, p. 140 and note 33); and at least the Epicureans would know how to divide individuals into two categories, those who will not encounter difficulties, and those who, “because of a certain natural malignancy, must be forced along” (idem, p. 137)[13]. Like Epictetus, Hadot (1995, p. 108) will also celebrate the virtues of Socrates in this respect, as a philosopher who “urge their disciples to find the solutions they needed by themselves” – for which he mobilized the entire psyche of the individual and “all the psychagogical means of rhetoric” (idem, p. 23). It will not be innocuous, finally, to reinforce how Nietzsche could openly insert himself into such a conception and task for the philosopher-writer:

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[12] “All those who do not have themselves sufficiently under their own control and do not know morality as a continual self-command and self-overcoming practised in great things and in the smallest, involuntarily become glorifiers of the good, pitying, benevolent impulses, of that instinctive morality which has no head but seems to consist solely of heart and helping hands. It is, indeed, in their interest to cast suspicion on a morality of rationality and to make of that other morality the only one” (HH II Wanderer, 45).

[13] “[T]he same reasons may dictate to different persons, or to the same person at different moments, acts profoundly different, although equally reasonable. The truth is that they are not quite the same reasons, since they are not those of the same person, nor of the same moment. That is why we cannot deal with them in the abstract, from outside, as in geometry, nor solve for another the problems by which he is faced in life. Each must solve them from within, on his own account” (Bergson, 1944, p. 10).

> Today the taste of the time and the virtue of the time weakens and thins down the will; nothing is as timely as weakness of the will. In the philosopher's ideal, therefore, precisely strength of the will, hardness, and the capacity for long-range decisions must belong to the concept of "greatness"—with as much justification as the opposite doctrine and the ideal of a dumb, renunciatory, humble, selfless humanity was suitable for an opposite age, one that suffered, like the sixteenth century, from its accumulated energy of will and from the most savage floods and tidal waves of selfishness. (BGE 212)

Hadot identified in Socratic casuistry, in its ability to respond to the singularity of its interlocutor each time, what the contemporary era could still profit from an ancient tradition, if it is not a case of simply wanting to mechanically imitate stereotypical schemes. The question therefore arises: what would ultimately seem more appropriate to our time? In the last chapter of this work, we mentioned how Barbara Stiegler was able to resist Foucault's investment in Greco-Roman antiquity, which she considered to be guilty of neglecting what would be a more appropriate dispute to be fought in the field of evolutionary biology. Now, although we have wanted to demonstrate how this author missed important nuances of Nietzschean thought, one could still question the limits of such an approximation between the eminently ascetic vocation of Hellenistic philosophies -- their consummation in a final liberation that, finally capable of affirming the whole of existence, would consist of a kind of "symmetrical to suicide" (Foucault, 2005, p. 285) -- and the Nietzschean emphasis precisely on the creative power, not much of knowledge of nature than precisely of desire: "No more willing and no more esteeming and no more creating! Oh, if only this great weariness would always keep away from me!" (Z II, Islands)[14].

Phisolophizing in the ruins: Isabelle Stengers

In an article that addresses precisely the issue of Foucault's legacy for a philosophy responsive to the present time, Isabelle Stengers (2017) offers timely support for the purpose of preventing an unqualified adherence to what may still be implicit residual commitments of an "Enlightenment" persistently centered on the idea of a "we" conducting criticism: "the awesome idea that we are the ones who distribute meaning and importance, (...), the derisive muting of the experiential knowledge which makes perceptible that (...) something that is not us is impacting our

[14] In this regard, we should refer to BGE 9, already cited earlier in this work, in which Nietzsche addresses the Stoic "tyrannical" drive with the question: "imagine indifference itself as a power—how could you live according to this indifference? Living—is that not precisely wanting to be other than this nature? Is not living—estimating, preferring, being unjust, being limited, wanting to be different?" Eagleton will criticize Foucault for not having noticed the "embarrassing" circumstance that the self-government advocated in Stoicism, according to Foucault's own analysis, would have had its first origin "from the need to sustain the political authority of a slave-based society" (Eagleton, 1990, p. 393). Whatever the merits of such a reproach, it is significant that Eagleton, on this point at least, wanted to disentangle Nietzsche from Foucault: "For the moral hegemony of the epoch o f Man, as Nietzsche recognized, surely entails a kind of practice up on the self, which Nietzsche in fact much admired. (...); it is only by implicitly caricaturing it as a passive, docile receptivity to law that Foucault can effectively counterpose it to the ancient ethic he is approving" (idem, pp. 392-93.).

experience" (Stengers, 2017, p. 15). To be sure, what interests us in this commentary, much more than the elements that may be offered for an eventual objective evaluation of Foucault's work, is the framing, operated here by Stengers, of an important, more general elision that has been reproduced in the history of philosophy, related to its continued commitment to an "impatience for liberty" still complicit in an odyssean narrative of liberation and the disqualification, implicit therein, of all those subjects for whom "the 'faith in the Enlightenment' was never a possibility" (idem, p. 13). Thus, not without parallel to that Nietzschean text in which the origin of philosophy was reported to the Greek virtue of "fruitfully learning" from other peoples, Stengers will glimpse the horizon of a reversion of roles between the Western subject of discourse and "peoples who know how other-than-human beings need to be honoured – peoples some of whom are now at the forefront of reclaiming movements": for, if the current planetary crisis should give rise only to grandiloquent confessions of guilt, there is a risk that, in such a gesture, the same narcissistic self-image of a privileged group of humanity's thinking heads, as rightful protagonists of universal history, will simply be reaffirmed (idem, p. 14). "While the expression of our abysmal guilt makes them [beings other than 'ourselves'] victims, they might be able to listen as elders, commenting on our youthful recklessness, on our inability to recognize an other-than-human power" (ibid.).

It could be argued, perhaps reasonably, that such a shift in theoretical horizon, while promising on paper, also runs its own risks, even if it is assured that such a movement is not simply another avatar of the same theatrical *pathos* that one was trying to avoid. This possibility becomes all the more pressing since we have seen all the equivocality to which the boundary between the noble type and the weak will is subject, at least according to Nietzschean topology; Furthermore, the consistency of such attempts to replace Enlightenment with something preferable may never be completely clear, when this very need, once articulated, will always be suspected of betraying its own identification of essence with that "we" against which it directed its critique a moment ago[15]. That said, what we are particularly interested in highlighting in this discussion is precisely the question of the (im)pertinence of what Stengers and Debaise, following Whitehead, call our habitual "modes of abstraction": "it is necessary to refuse the right to disqualify. Experience must exercise coercion [*faire contrainte*]" (Stengers; Debaise, 2016, p. 84)[16]. Just as Foucault (1994b, p. 38) warned that "These kinds of deduction are always possible. They are simultaneously correct and

[15] "No matter which myths are invoked against it, by being used as arguments they are made to acknowledge the very principle of corrosive rationality of which enlightenment stands accused. Enlightenment is totalitarian" (Adorno; Horkheimer, 2002, pp. 3-4). However, Stengers observes that, even though "[t]he test of our present does not then seem to include a 'faith in the Enlightenment'", this should not mean a break with "the history of modes of problematization" as conceived by Foucault's version of the Enlightenment: "If, as Foucault claimed, practices which signal a mode of problematization are ethnopoietic ones, aiming at the generation of ways of living, feeling and thinking that challenge social norms and manifest the transformative power of truth, we might say that 'reclaiming' is a word for the practices that experiment with the possibility of living in the capitalist ruins" (Stengers, 2017, p. 13).

[16] See also Debaise, 2006.

false. Above all they are too glib", and as William James (2004, p. 14) drew attention to the profoundly uninstructive nature of reducing religious experience to movements of the blood, Stengers, for his part, neatly circumscribes the "laziness of thought" behind the traditional oppositions of Enlightenment, whose clearest effect is none other than to produce a "desertification of all modes of existence: reduction of psychic beings to mere representations, of fictions to imaginary realities, of values to subjective projections onto nature" (Stengers; Debaise, 2016, p. 83). Instead, we would need to become capable of producing tales and creating concepts that enable the sharing of a common (but never universal) meaning for the current arrangement of the earth's landscape; if the objection that we are dealing here with just a well-intentioned form of "make-believe" still persists, then the task of philosophy today may perhaps be "precisely to address the modes of abstraction which give us this conviction that we know better" (Stengers, 2017, p. 5).

Foucault (2013, pp. 26-27) called Kant's "trap" the idea that "[e]ither what we say about knowledge is true, but this can only be from within knowledge, or we speak outside of knowledge, but then nothing allows us to assert that what we say is true". Now, such an opposition of nature between that which can be responsibly asserted as belonging to the order of facts (within knowledge) and that which refers only to fiction (outside of knowledge) is just one of the forms taken by what Stengers and Pignarre (2011, pp. 24-25) call the production of "infernal alternatives": "that set of situations that seem to leave no other choice than resignation or a slightly hollow sounding denunciation", "the very mode of functioning of capitalism". That is to say, the traction of the productivist imperative of capitalist societies would be tributary, above all and as Foucault (1994b) already recognized, to a microphysical presence of power much more than to an ideology inoculated from the top down: for, as Stengers and Pignarre (2011, pp. 31 ff) elaborate, this traction would depend above all on the mobilization of "minions" [*petits mains*] who precisely *do not* conceive of themselves as servants of the status quo, but whose affectivity is captured by the possibility of raising themselves to the status of "responsible adults" in the face of what would be unwary children mystified by utopian illusions. It was for a reason of this order that Foucault saw in the search for truth, institutionalized according to the Kantian bifurcation, a project that does not bother anyone, but only complies with a legal understanding of power that hides its capillaries and its own logic. Instead, it would be necessary to "be brave enough to acknowledge" that what should make knowledge interesting and give it robustness is less the "proof" of its statements, the fact that they are "true", the police work that is involved there, than "the number and variety of cases that become intelligible and interesting" from a certain theoretical perspective, such as the similarities between species from the perspective of evolutionary biology (Stengers, 2018, pp; 17-18). In this case, it would be of little interest whether or not the thesis of the will to power is the theoretical manifestation of "hardly an unfamiliar life-style in the market place" (Eagleton, 1990, p. 259), or

whether William James's pragmatism would reflect the "spirit of the prevailing business culture" in the United States (Horkheimer, 2004, p. 36): the cultural sources for the emergence of a theory, in the words even of one of those orthodox Darwinists to whom Gould and Stiegler opposed Nietzschean perspectivism, "do nothing to diminish its value or threaten its objectivity", and Darwin himself might not have been able to formulate his hypothesis had it not been for "the chance of having been born into a remarkable world that had already created its Adam Smith and its Thomas Malthus" (Dennett apud Stiegler, 2015, p. 445)[17]. Finally, Foucault (1977, p. 151-52) defines interpreting exactly as "the violent or surreptitious appropriation of a system of rules, which in itself has no essential meaning, in order to impose a direction, to bend it to a new will, to force its participation in a different game"[18].

But this would mean that philosophical production would have to protect itself from exhaustive disputes over universal legitimacy; mainly, it would have to be careful not to, in the name of this same universal, raze the ground it traverses for the mere pleasure of "undermining" the intellect (TI) of a supposed adversary and of reveling in one's own imagined intellectual superiority, as one who alone would have been graced with the "right stuff" (Stengers, 2018, pp. 23 ff). We have seen how Nietzsche could accuse the incomprehensible happiness of the modern scholar, when the latter agreed to circumscribe research within narrow limits empty of all ethical substance (UM III). Bergson also solved the Cartesian, Humean and Kantian obsessive-compulsive disorder simply by refusing to participate in the game, like someone who simply remembers well enough to have closed the windows of the house before leaving; Adorno and Horkheimer, in their own way, were also able to discern an important difference between the natural separation between sign and image in the development of scientific thought and the self-satisfied and conformist attitude towards this bifurcation, which does not necessarily have to result from it. Stengers, for her part, would recover the idea of a gay science as presented in the first aphorism of that work by Nietzsche: because, in certain cases, "there isn't anything to discuss [], anything to argue about (...). Better instead to renew the virtues of laughter, rudeness, and satire":

> To call those who govern us our guardians is to affirm that we are not in their place, and that that isn't by chance. (…) There isn't anything to discuss here, anything to argue about – that would be to lend this claim some dignity, and to dignify it would be to nourish it. Better instead to renew the virtues of laughter, rudeness, and satire (Stengers, 2015a, p. 31)[19]

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[17] On this subject, see above all the aforementioned work of Thomas Kuhn (1970).

[18] "This, at least, is Foucault's version of the novelty of the Greeks (...) What the Greeks did is not to reveal Being or unfold the Open in a world-historical gesture. According to Foucault they did a great deal less, or more. They bent the outside, through a series of practical exercises (...) [T]hey invented the subject, but only as a derivative or the product of a 'subjectivation'" (Deleuze, 1988b, pp. 100-101).

[19] Kilivris (2011) explores a similar intuition to discuss Nietzsche's contribution to a critique of capitalism, directed above all at Marxism.

Discussing and arguing presupposes that we are faced with a common problem, which is not always, and perhaps rarely, the case. For Bergson (1988), sensitive perception was always already a function of questions posed to the organism by unconscious mechanisms; Deleuze and Guatarri (1994, p. 29) will unfold the same intuition to say that "Philosophy has a horror of discussions. It always has something else to do", its uncertainties "take it down other, more solitary paths". Stengers, indeed, recovers Deleuze's association of the political left with the need that people "formulate their own questions and their own demands" (Stengers, 2015a, p. 130; Deleuze, 2003, p. 127)[20]. In short, the appropriate reaction to "Kant's trap" referred to by Foucault will be what Nietzsche called the *pathos* of distance (GM) natural to those who, freed from resentment, consider the work of dominating "crude": "They do not rule because they want to, but rather because they existst" (AC 57). It will be essential to educate ourselves to inhabit this limbo between heaven and hell that Stengers (2019, p. 12) calls, borrowing Anna Tsing's expression, the "ruins of the socio-technical infrastructures that ensured our business-as-usual life". "[T]here is no afterwards, it is a matter of learning to respond now" (Stengers, 2015a, p. 57).

What makes philosophy still resist such a pragmatist approach today, and persistently position itself as the herald of a rationality that must be preserved at all costs from an ever-feared reversion into simulacrum? Certainly a rigorous answer to this question would be beyond all our possibilities, especially if it were true that, as Nietzsche said, "all belong to the amazing economy of the preservation of the species" (GS 1), but also if it was already the case of affirming the feeling of estrangement and distance as the most appropriate reaction to contact with this type of disposition. In this regard, Stengers raises a question that seems quite timely to us, and that perhaps sums up with privilege what may be at stake, more profoundly, in the problem of "how to be an inheritor of the Enlightenment":

> What finds its expression in this perplexity or discomfort can be called a fear of regression, and this fear is long-standing, even amongst those who no longer believe in progress: there are things in our heritage that must not be renounced. But it is here that one must pay attention. Is the fear to which the refusal to renounce responds the fear of being oneself tempted to renounce? Or is it the fear that others may be drawn into renouncing? That's an entirely different matter. (Stengers, 2015a, pp. 107-108)

Now, it would be time for such a question to be given the full proportion it deserves based on what we can learn from recent history. Nietzsche once wrote that his *Beyond Good and Evil* could perhaps be understood "around the year 2000," in a prophecy that we may be on the verge of confirming today, by caustic means. In any case, it does not seem without effect that those who believe in economic "progress" as the only responsible path to take in the face of current conflicts

[20] In this interview, Deleuze compares what he understands by the right wing's resistance to becoming with the resistance that Bergson can still be the target of in philosophy. See also Deleuze's *Abécédaire* (available on YouTube): "being on the left is a question of becoming, of not stopping becoming a minority" [*devenir minoritaire*].

have everything to gain from the perpetuation of the asepsis of thought that is at the core of classical Enlightenment, consummated still today by a police of language.

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This work has been dedicated to understanding Nietzsche’s orientation of thought based, above all, on his historical interlocutors and his continuity with regard to a critique of Kant’s system. We have also had the opportunity to use the gains of such a study to address influential critical receptions of his thought and to direct timely corrections to specialized commentary, when it deals with the Nietzschean system in its most general boundaries. Finally, we indicated what seem to us to be timely developments of Nietzsche's philosophical movement in contemporary philosophy, which contribute to giving traction to this system in our own historical moment.

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