NIETZSCHE ON VALUE CREATION

BY

AARON M. HARPER

DISSEPTION
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy in the Graduate College of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2012

Urbana, Illinois

Doctoral Committee:
Professor Emeritus William Schroeder, Chair
Associate Professor David Sussman
Professor Emeritus Richard Schacht
Associate Professor Kirk Sanders
ABSTRACT

My dissertation examines the significance of value creation in the work of Friedrich Nietzsche. In working out Nietzsche’s view, my strategy is twofold. I begin by reconstructing Nietzsche’s metaethical commitments, offering an interpretation of Nietzsche’s conception of values that shows it to be consistent, and then I explore the nature and importance of value creation to Nietzsche’s project. I argue that value creation provides the core of Nietzsche’s response to his two most significant concerns: the failures of traditional morality and the loss of meaning in the modern world.

In Chapter 1 I examine the current literature concerning Nietzsche’s metaethics. Recently, scholars have engaged in debates over whether Nietzsche offers a version of moral realism or anti-realism. I argue that neither side of this debate adequately captures Nietzsche’s understanding of value. Moreover, by starting from these contemporary categories we cannot make sense of the importance Nietzsche places on value creation. In Chapter 2 I defend my account of Nietzsche’s conception of value by examining two features of his view: the nature of valuing and the connection between values and reasons. I argue that Nietzsche presents standards of value that are internal to the activity of valuing, and I explore the standards of health and honesty. Nietzsche’s strategy becomes clearer when we examine the connection he makes between values and tastes, and my view has the added interpretive benefit of revealing a motivation for Nietzsche’s untraditional philosophical methodology.

In Chapters 3-4 I examine the processes and functions of value creation. I begin with the historical examples of value creation Nietzsche presents, and from these I elucidate the task of value creation. I argue that Nietzsche’s aim through value creation is the development
of richer, shared sensibilities or forms of concern, which provide the foundation for a new approach to ethical reasoning and justification. Furthermore, value creation comprises Nietzsche’s principal strategy to avert nihilism. My development of value creation as both a new ethical ideal and a source of meaning results in a surprising conclusion about Nietzsche’s view of social relations. Many read Nietzsche as a radical individualist, believing his ideal of value creation must require solitude or the life of a hermit. Yet, value creation is best understood as a social activity. Despite Nietzsche’s reliance on the solitary individual, I suggest that Nietzsche’s commitments to value creation are best captured by a model of competitive collaboration, which he calls friendship.

The contribution of my project extends beyond mere Nietzsche interpretation. In Chapter 5 I argue that Nietzsche offers compelling arguments that address contemporary ethical debates. I offer a Nietzschean critique of a recent call for value creation by J. David Velleman. I conclude by suggesting that Nietzsche offers an intriguing twist on Bernard Williams’ conception of ethical confidence; creating values creates the normative concepts that provide the basis for meaningful action.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the help of many others. First, I would like to thank my dissertation supervisor Bill Schroeder, who never failed to challenge me in order to make the dissertation much stronger. I would also like to thank the rest of my committee members – David Sussman, Richard Schacht, and Kirk Sanders – for their invaluable insight and feedback. Special thanks are due to Kirk Sanders for our many additional discussions of both ancient philosophy and the philosophy profession more generally. I would also like to thank the faculty at the University of Illinois for their support and assistance. In particular, I would like to thank Shelley Weinberg and Helga Varden for enjoyable discussions and astute comments on my work.

Many thanks also go to the philosophy graduate students at Illinois. My greatest debts are to Eric Schaaf and Krista Thomason. Eric read many drafts of this project, and he always offered detailed, perceptive feedback. My understanding of Nietzsche became much clearer through our weekly conversations at Espresso Royale. However, just as important were Eric’s contributions beyond philosophy. Our countless basketball games, tennis matches, ping pong marathons, Madden games, and trips to the ARC provided enjoyable breaks while also satisfying our need for competition (along with causing a variety of injuries). Likewise, Krista has read countless drafts of this dissertation, and her suggestions were invaluable contributions to the completion of the project. I appreciate her friendship and all of the support she has provided. Many thanks also go to the members of dissertation seminar, including Ingrid Albrecht, Uwe Plebuch, Joe Swenson, Gregg Strauss, Michael Scoville, and James Jeffries, all of whom provided comments that improved my work in many ways. I
would also like to thank Brandon Polite, Eric Bottorff, Steve Calderwood, Katie Polite, and Scott Thomason for their friendship. And thanks are due to Ty Fägan and Chris Hendricksen for both philosophical conversation and strong post play on the offensive and defensive ends of the court.

From the Illinois Department of Philosophy, I would like to thank Peggy Wells and Carla Vail, who were always eager to assist in any way possible. In particular, I appreciate Peggy’s work in organizing my dissertation defense and dealing with the many requests made of her.

Finally, my greatest thanks go to family for their continual support. My parents, Terry and Jean Harper, have been especially encouraging. Fred Robertson, Amy Robertson, Angie Robertson, and James Kman have also provided tremendous support, with special thanks to Fred for providing some last-minute editing. Above all, thanks to my wife Elaine for her love and patience throughout the course of the project, especially as I spent many hours at the office or the coffee shop. I am grateful for all of her support.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: NIETZSCHE’S REALIST AND ANTI-REALIST INTERPRETERS........1
  1.1 Introduction ..............................................................................................................1
  1.2 Fictionalism .............................................................................................................10
  1.3 Leiter’s Interpretation .............................................................................................19
  1.4 Subjective Realism ..................................................................................................35
  1.5 Substantive Realism ..................................................................................................48
  1.6 Conclusions and New Directions ............................................................................55

CHAPTER 2: NIETZSCHE ON THE ACTIVITY OF VALUING ...............................61
  2.1 Values and Valuing ..................................................................................................63
  2.2 Standards and Limits of Valuing .............................................................................85
  2.3 Values and Tastes ..................................................................................................107

CHAPTER 3: VALUE CREATION AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR NIETZSCHE’S
ETHICS .............................................................................................................................132
  3.1 Interpretations of Value Creation ............................................................................133
  3.2 The Priests .............................................................................................................141
  3.3 Forms of Value Creation .......................................................................................150
  3.4 Nietzsche’s Vision of Value Creation .......................................................................168
  3.5 Value Creation in Nietzsche’s Works .....................................................................178
  3.6 Conclusion .............................................................................................................187

CHAPTER 4: VALUE CREATION IN NIETZSCHE’S RESPONSES TO NIHILISM AND
AUTONOMY ....................................................................................................................189
  4.1 Nihilism ..................................................................................................................190
  4.2 Self-Appropriation and Value Creation ..................................................................205
  4.3 Solitude and Social Relations .................................................................................218

CHAPTER 5: INTELLIGIBILITY, ORIGINALITY, AND THE PROJECT OF VALUE
CREATION .........................................................................................................................247
  5.1 Velleman’s Constitutivism .......................................................................................249
  5.2 “Have I Been Understood?” ..................................................................................254
  5.3 Dynamic Tension ..................................................................................................264
  5.4 Concluding Thoughts on Value Creation ..............................................................275

BIBLIOGRAPHY .............................................................................................................282
CHAPTER 1

NIETZSCHE’S REALIST AND ANTI-REALIST INTERPRETERS

1.1 INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 Interpreting Nietzsche

Nietzsche’s ethical views are probably best known for the challenges they make to traditional morality. Nietzsche is also known as a thinker with a unique, even erratic style whose positions are, when decipherable, in apparent tension with each other. Most interpreters of Nietzsche’s work assume that it admits of a basic consistency and coherence. Yet Nietzsche’s distinct perspective and unique style provide grounds for a wide array of interpretations. When it comes to making sense of Nietzsche’s value theory, interpretations run the gamut from a universal, objective standard of value to the denial of any moral values whatsoever. For instance, Brian Leiter describes Nietzsche as one who belongs “in the company of naturalists like Hume and Freud – that is, among, broadly speaking, philosophers of human nature…Nietzsche develops a naturalistic account of morality in the service of a very particular normative goal, namely to force us to reconsider the value of morality.”¹ According to Alexander Nehamas, Nietzsche describes a distinct approach to self-creation, while at the same time “he does not believe that there exists a single proper kind of life or person.”² Meanwhile, Robert Solomon finds in Nietzsche’s work an attempt at philosophical therapy, remarking, “Nietzsche writes not just to ‘the few’ but to the many, now millions of

students and others who would learn something of what he has to say, not just for their intellectual enjoyment but in order to learn how to live a better life.” Some commentators see Nietzsche as nothing more than a destroyer of contemporary ideals. Others believe he wants each person to create her own life and values as she desires. With such a variety of interpretations, it is often difficult to maintain a dialogue between them, since they rely on such radically different assumptions.

To make sense of Nietzsche’s view, we must understand Nietzsche’s overarching goals and their relationship to the most distinctive elements of his philosophy. In this project I will argue that Nietzsche’s goals are twofold: to develop the components of a new kind of ethical life, and to respond to the burgeoning crisis of nihilism he sees present in modernity. In response to both worries, Nietzsche places considerable weight on what he calls value creation. In the realm of ethics, we should “limit ourselves to the purification of our opinions and value judgments and to the creation of tables of what is good that are new and all our own” (GS 335). In response to the despair of nihilism, value creation allows the possibility for a “great health,” or new human greatness. Despite the importance Nietzsche places upon value creation, its treatments in the secondary literature have failed to grasp either the nature of value creation or the significance Nietzsche places upon it. While the creative element has been emphasized, there has been no consensus on which aspects of Nietzsche’s work are themselves most creative, what it is to create value, or how we might evaluate values that have been created. Instead, much recent work on Nietzsche’s conception of value has centered

---

4 Nietzsche describes to the great health, acquired continually, in GS 382 and EH Z: 2. He describes of the future forging the path to a new human greatness in BGE 212.
on the potential of elucidating Nietzsche’s metaethical commitments in order to determine what exactly Nietzsche countenances as ‘values.’

That many now accept Nietzsche as having a coherent metaethical position is a marked change from how he was viewed for the majority of the 20th century. For much of this time, Nietzsche’s positive ethical views were of little interest, and many doubted that Nietzsche’s work contained the resources for any systematic reconstruction. We can roughly sketch three interpretive moves that underscored Nietzsche’s apparent resistance to moral value or metaethical commitments, which I will call Nietzsche as destroyer, anti-essentialist, and skeptic.

Those who see Nietzsche as a destroyer find his main interest to be knocking down societal mores and the Western philosophical tradition. To these interpreters, Nietzsche was the foremost critic of modern morality who rejected classical ideas such as truth and value. Evidence for this reading may be found in Nietzsche’s description of his own work. He writes, “The last thing I would promise would be to ‘improve’ humanity. I won’t be setting up any new idols; let the old ones learn what it means to have feet of clay. Knocking over idols (my word for ‘ideals’) – that is more my style” (EH P: 2). Many of these interpreters considered Nietzsche a dangerous prophet of relativism, egoism, and a thirst for power. Yet, even as philosophers sought to dispel obvious misreadings, Nietzsche scholars, until recently, generally agreed that Nietzsche offered little in the way of traditional theory or systematic work. Many philosophical schools have had wariness of Nietzsche’s work, believing his main interest was to attack others. We find a distinct view of Nietzsche the destroyer among continental interpreters. The continental tradition has a long history of philosophers allocating
Nietzsche’s work as precursor to their own, particularly when it comes to dismantling longstanding philosophical positions. Nietzsche’s insights into the psychology of ideologies are seen as potentially consistent with attempts at deconstruction or other strategies to reveal the flawed assumptions of these opposing views.

Nietzsche’s anti-essentialism is, for many, connected to his position as arch-enemy of tradition and destroyer of ideals. Strands of postmodernism, post-structuralism, and psychoanalysis have adopted what they consider to be Nietzsche’s anti-essentialism and criticisms of truth and value in order to attack the heart of traditional philosophy. Heidegger famously claimed that Nietzsche completed the history of metaphysics by emphasizing the subjectivity of the will. Foucault’s reading has been especially influential, holding that Nietzsche was the first to try to dissolve the concept of man. Other interpretations appeal to some account of Nietzsche’s perspectivism as further justification of his anti-essentialism, suggested in his claim that “There is only a perspective seeing, only a perspective ‘knowing’” (GM III: 12). If interpretations are relative to the individual, this would undercut the possibility of finding shared or objective truths. If so, moral theory proves an implausible ideal for humanity.

It is not just the continental tradition that holds doubt concerning the possibility of a positive Nietzschean ethics. In the Anglo-American tradition, a related but slightly different set of doubts has taken hold for many interpreters. The dominant themes of these works tend to be skepticism and nihilism. In particular, Arthur Danto argued for reading Nietzsche as a

---

thoroughgoing nihilist.\textsuperscript{6} The metaphysical nihilism Danto located in Nietzsche’s work precluded any coherent sense of value.\textsuperscript{7} Applying values is senseless because we cannot find anything in the world which could possibly have value. In addition to nihilism, others have argued that Nietzsche reduces objectivity to expressions of the subjective will.\textsuperscript{8} According to Alasdair MacIntyre, for instance, Nietzsche proposes that each individual must create her own table of goods. MacIntyre thus finds Nietzsche a great challenger to morality, posing a question philosophers must answer: can an Aristotelian-inspired ethic be salvaged, or are we left to create values for ourselves however we wish?

These arguments against a coherent and positive account of Nietzsche’s ethics all face recent opposition. Despite Nietzsche’s insistence that he intends only to knock down ideals, it is evident that Nietzsche frequently proposes values and virtues that he prefers. Though many argue about the details, clearly notions such as vitality, gift-giving, honesty, and health are goals to be sought, Nietzsche redefines these concepts and remakes them in new ways. Moreover, though Nietzsche often says the real work will be done by those coming in the future, such as Zarathustra’s children and the philosophers of the future, arguably Nietzsche is engaged in the very tasks he gives these future groups. Nietzsche’s work aims at the same independence and riskiness that he lauds in those who are to come. Nietzsche does not offer a complete view, and his task was certainly not finished, but the new ideas he describes provide reason to doubt his denial of being a creative philosopher. And while themes of disunity and anti-essentialism are prevalent in Nietzsche’s work, Nietzsche repeatedly proclaims certain

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{6} See Danto (2005).
\item \textsuperscript{7} Schacht (1995) provides an insightful analysis of Danto’s work in the essay “Nietzsche and Nihilism: Nietzsche and Danto’s Nietzsche.”
\item \textsuperscript{8} MacIntyre (1984): 113.
\end{itemize}
ends and goals worth achieving. The anti-essentialist interpreters have overstated the scope of Nietzsche’s critique. For instance, Nietzsche’s attack on the self need not be understood as an attempt to entirely dissolve the concept. Rather the attack seems to be targeted at something like a transcendental ego. We may still rely on the self as practical construct, even if the self is a much more complicated entity than can be represented. Whatever the makeup of the self, Nietzsche is committed to something that can value, promise, and love, which he finds to be defining human capacities.

Against the skepticism found most among analytic interpreters, we should to turn our attention not to grand theories or systems but particular insights that can move us forward. Nietzsche suggests numerous topics that can, and should, be investigated by philosophers. Included among these is the development of new conceptions of truth. Bernard Williams shows one way we can better contextualize Nietzsche’s skepticism. Nietzsche’s work resists the ability to be systematized or to provide a source of theories. Williams contends, “His writing achieves this partly by its choice of subject matter, partly by its manner and the attitudes it expresses.” Nevertheless, Williams finds much use in drawing on Nietzsche, and the lack of a well-worked out Nietzschean theory does not itself prevent us from being Nietzschean in a larger sense. Those who doubt that Nietzsche offers a positive view are, in my view, limited in their philosophical imagination. Nietzsche may not present theories in a textbook manner, but in looking at his underlying commitments, we find that many of his

---

9 Gemes (2001) analyzes a number of such interpretations, and he convincingly shows many have overstated their cases. Most notably, Gemes argues that they misunderstand Nietzsche’s attacks on dogmatism, which need not lead to a world characterized by disunity.  
10 Gardner (2009) makes a similar argument in favor of understanding the self as a practical construct that Nietzsche depends on.  
arguments fit together. Nietzsche can provide a rich source of theory, both those antecedent in his work and those extrapolated, by implication, from what he says. Therefore, in this project I intend to both reconstruct Nietzsche’s work and extrapolate from it. I am interested both in what Nietzsche said and what his view is committed to, even where Nietzsche was not explicit about the relevant commitments.

1.1.2 Contemporary Scholarship and Nietzsche’s Metaethics

While Nietzsche’s attacks on traditional philosophy and skeptical methodology remain important features of any interpretation, recent interpreters have reexamined Nietzsche’s views of metaphysics, science, and morality, with most concluding Nietzsche’s work does show consistency and coherence. Despite this general agreement, there is still tremendous disagreement over the details of these theories. These disagreements concern big picture differences in how to understand Nietzsche’s approach to basic philosophical issues such as truth and value. Many have recently turned to considering Nietzsche’s metaethical commitments, and in particular examining his work to determine if these commitments result in a realist or anti-realist conception of value. By determining the status Nietzsche affords to values, we may be able to solve a number of puzzles, including the nature of his value criticism and the authority with which he promotes his preferred values.

The project of working out Nietzsche’s conception of value is of the utmost importance. Nevertheless, the approaches commonly employed in the existing literature are problematic. Applications of realist and anti-realist categories to Nietzsche’s work provide a

\[\text{\textsuperscript{12}}\text{There is much debate about the precise meanings of these terms as well as which views count as realist or anti-realist. For many, a realist account holds that what makes a moral claim true is independent (or mind-independent) of the individual. Anti-realism refutes realism, or it claims that moral truths are entirely dependent on subjective facts about individuals.}\]
unique set of problems. One concern is of historical anachronism; by using contemporary categories and debates to make sense of Nietzsche’s claims, we force his views into foreign categories. While contemporary terminology may, at times, elucidate Nietzsche’s view, interpreting him as taking sides in current debates risks obscuring Nietzsche’s interests. While contemporary terminology may, at times, elucidate Nietzsche’s view, interpreting him as taking sides in current debates risks obscuring Nietzsche’s interests. Certainly Nietzsche’s anxiety about nihilism, for example, is idiosyncratic and distinct from the complexities that drive present-day metaethics.

Additionally, much of the recent literature on Nietzsche, with its focus on metaethics, has lost sight of some distinct Nietzschean views. Of these, the most significant is value creation, and I will argue this feature most differentiates him from the kinds of value theory often used to make sense of his position. At the same time, I will suggest that Nietzsche’s account of value creation is what should make his view most appealing to contemporary metaethics. I will argue that realist and anti-realist interpretations are forced to minimize the role of value creation in order to make Nietzsche’s view fit with other commitments they attribute to him. In other words, many interpreters elect to compromise value creation in order to make Nietzsche’s view more palatable to modern readers who expect certain moves and attitudes in light of recent ethical and metaethical worries.

The problem lies in the choice to start with the intention of understanding Nietzsche’s metaethics. Value creation has been miscast primarily because it is dependent on Nietzsche’s value theory. Whatever we think constitute values for Nietzsche will determine what kinds of value creation are possible. This is not itself a problem; it is simply a fact that we must know what values are in order to figure out how they can be created. But for contemporary theories,

---

13 Pippin (2010), among others, raises this worry. Robertson (2009) outlines some general worries with these categories, while at the same time arguing forcefully that Nietzsche needs some metaethical position.
the idea that values can be created in any number of ways is itself out of place. Most realist and anti-realist interpreters have as their goal showing how a Nietzschean moral theory is in contact with contemporary positions and provides authority for his claims. Since it is difficult to make sense of value creation on many contemporary views, it is perhaps unsurprising that it is often marginalized or otherwise misunderstood.

In contrast to these approaches, I will examine Nietzsche’s value theory by making value creation the central concern. I will argue that Nietzsche’s view occupies the ground between many contemporary metaethical positions, including the space between realists and anti-realists and that between Humeans and Kantians. While I agree that Nietzsche does offer a coherent and consistent view, I think it is also important to embrace the tensions obvious in Nietzsche’s work. Value creation entails the possibility of creating something most take to be eternal. Nietzsche insists that values are subjective and personal, but he also demands an evaluation of values. And he claims that values are closely tied to the individual’s drives and desires, but he builds from these the possibility that values reflect a course of action rather than a goal or ideal.

Understanding how Nietzsche employs these tensions is critical to grasping the significance of value creation. Reading Nietzsche through the lens of realism or anti-realism commits one to eliminating such tensions whenever possible, forcing Nietzsche to come down on one side or the other of many issues, when his distinct conception of value creation reveals that his view lies somewhere in between with commitments that reflect aspects of both current

---

14 Robertson concludes: “Arguably, he needs some positive metaethical view so as to respond to a worry, recently dubbed the ‘authority problem,’ which threatens the structural coherence of his whole revaluative project” (2009: 67).
positions. We see most clearly with value creation and its applications. For the rest of this chapter, I will explore some recent interpretations of Nietzsche’s moral philosophy, with the hope of making my general argument clear: while these scholars do much to highlight important issues in Nietzsche’s work, their approaches to value theory render an unsatisfying account of value creation. I will, in the course of this project, make many comparisons to contemporary moral philosophers, both to help elucidate Nietzsche’s view and to show Nietzsche’s contemporary importance. I will try to do so, however, without obliterating the tensions and contradictions that are the heart of value creation.

1.2 FICTIONALISM

1.2.1 Hussain’s Fictionalism

Many scholars argue that Nietzsche’s metaethical commitments make him an error theorist. Error theory holds that the beliefs expressed in moral judgments must be false, because there are no corresponding moral facts. That is, there are no facts about morality, so judgments of right and wrong can never be true. However, attributing an error theory to Nietzsche encounters an obvious problem, since Nietzsche spends much time writing about values, and valuing seems central to Nietzsche’s project. Error theory will need to fit with Nietzsche’s other claims about valuing. Nadeem Hussain has recently offered an influential account that joins Nietzsche’s error theory with fictionalism, and I will begin by examining his work. An initial glance at some of Nietzsche’s passages error theory a plausible reading.

For example:

You have heard me call for philosophers to place themselves beyond good and evil, – to rise above the illusion of moral judgment. This call is the result of an insight that I was the first
to formulate: there are absolutely no moral facts. What moral and religious judgments have in common is the belief in things that are not real. Morality is just an interpretation of certain phenomena or (more accurately) a misinterpretation. Moral judgments, like religious ones, presuppose a level of ignorance in which even the concept of reality is missing and there is no distinction between the real and the imaginary; a level where “truth” is the name for the very things that we now call “illusions” (*Einbildungen*)\(^{15}\) (TI VII: 1; emphasis in original).

We might have expected Nietzsche would find something in the world that is valuable, perhaps power or strength. Nevertheless, Hussain finds this and other similar passages sufficient evidence to conclude that Nietzsche thinks nothing in the world has value in itself. Hussain insists numerous other passages show that humans consistently project value onto the world, and that this is the only source of valuation.\(^{16}\) For Hussain, these passages amount to an acceptance of theoretical nihilism, which Hussain defines as an overarching belief in “valuelessness or goallessness.”\(^{17}\) Hussain concludes that Nietzsche means to cast doubt upon all human evaluations.\(^{18}\) Though things appear to us as valuable, we are entirely the source of value. Consequently, he thinks Nietzsche’s overarching view is that “all claims of the form ‘X is valuable’ are false.”\(^{19}\) Though things in the world appear to have real value, these appearances are actually generated by us.

The problem for error theory, as I suggested above, is how to account for the many passages where Nietzsche does suggest the importance of valuing and value creation. If

\(^{15}\) Hussain (2007) and Shaw (2007) prefer to translate *Einbildungen* as “imaginings” to capture the active component of the illusions, as opposed to other terms that Nietzsche uses such as “Illusion” or “Wahn.” See Shaw (2007): 90.

\(^{16}\) Hussain (2007) also cites HAH I: 4, D 3, GS 115, 299, 301, BGE P, 107, Z I: “On the Thousand and One Goals,” “On the Afterworldly,” WP 428, and WP 972. I do not believe that GS 301 or “On the Thousand and One Goals” offer clear support for anti-realist interpretations of value. I will address many of these passages in what is to follow.

\(^{17}\) Ibid.: 161.

\(^{18}\) In support Hussain cites HAH P: 6 and I: 32.

\(^{19}\) Ibid.: 159.
Nietzsche’s belief is that no real values exist in the world, his emphasis on valuing seems out of place. Even the creation of values is puzzling for error theory. On the one hand, we can easily understand creation as generation, that we have created appearances of value where there are no real values. On the other hand, Nietzsche often describes value creation as a forward-looking project, such as when he describes it as an ideal to achieve or a task for the philosophers of the future. This raises the important question of why Nietzsche would prescribe the creation of values if values themselves rest on a mistake. On Hussain’s view, the forward-looking aspect of value creation means values must be invented by the agent. The problem becomes sharper upon the addition of another component of Hussain’s reading – free spirits conceive of reality “as it is.”\textsuperscript{20} So, as Hussain understands him, Nietzsche’s free spirits must invent values while at the same recognizing that values are projections made onto an otherwise valueless world.

To make these two aspects of Nietzsche’s view coherent, Hussain proposes that what Nietzsche calls valuing is really a “fictionalist simulacrum of valuing.”\textsuperscript{21} Even though something is recognized as having no real value, the free spirit is still able to regard it as valuable. Hussain finds an analogous claim in Nietzsche’s attitude towards art. When we look at a work of art, we know that it is nothing more than materials organized in a certain manner. Yet we are able to take seriously the images, representations, and meanings found in art. We know how the object is created, and that there is nothing more than artistic technique, but we can also put these aside when considering the work of art. Hussain thinks it is plausible for us to do this with other kinds of valuations. One worry about this proposal is that it looks like

\textsuperscript{20} Hussain (2007): 158.  
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
Hussain is suggesting that the free spirit must be forgetful or self-deceived, somehow missing that she is the source of value, but Hussain resists self-deception or forgetfulness. The issue “is not quite self-deception but rather an issue of the centrality of certain thoughts to one’s conscious life.” Instead the attitude involved is more like pretense or make-believe. Through fiction the free spirit can set aside questions of metaphysical reality in order to live life.

1.2.2 Problems for Fictionalism

Despite Hussain’s attempt to show that “forgetfulness” the absence of value in the world is not the same as active or willful self-deception, I do not accept his account. I do not find it psychologically plausible, and more importantly I do not believe it captures Nietzsche’s conception of value. Clearly Nietzsche believes morality is in some way mistaken. The question is what kind of mistake morality makes. The evidence that Nietzsche denies all value is much weaker than Hussain contends. I will begin by considering TI VII: 1, cited above, which Hussain takes as important evidence of Nietzsche’s commitment to error theory. First, we should note that the emphasis in the passage is on the moral, and it behooves us to consider what Nietzsche means by that term. By ‘morality’ Nietzsche intends certain kinds of traditional moral theories as interpretations, or ways of making sense of the world. The most significant line of the passage is neither the claim that there are no moral facts nor the suggestion that morality is an interpretation. Our focus should be on the description of morality as a misinterpretation. If Nietzsche can describe something as a misinterpretation, this suggests there must be some criterion of what makes something a good interpretation or

---

22 Ibid.: 168.
23 Recently some commentators have offered analysis of Hussain’s view. Among the most notable responses are Anderson (2005), Richardson (2004), Reginster (2006), and Shaw (2007).
why that interpretation admits of being better or worse than other interpretations. We also
must keep in mind that Nietzsche, with his training in classical philology, likely conceives of
interpreting as a science in the sense of the German *Wissenschaft*. Philological interpretations
are based on a close reading of a text, and it makes perfect sense to speak of better or worse
interpretations of a text. Here I agree with Richard Schacht, who provides a more detailed
account of Nietzsche’s sense of interpretation. Schacht characterizes interpretation as “a
matter of engaging in the complementary activities of critically examining received or
proposed interpretations and developing (and making cases for) others that might improve
upon them.”24 When Nietzsche speaks of moral misinterpretations, the implication is that
valuing needs a more adequate interpretation, not that there are no values at all.

Hussain’s interpretation amounts to the view that values are fictions free spirits must
create to provide an illusion of valuing. However, while there is a limited sense in which
values are fiction, for Nietzsche something being fictional does not necessarily mean it is not
real. I will return to this matter in Chapter 2. Here I want to focus on the valuing attitude
Hussain posits and the kind of meaning that comes from it. Part of the problem might stem
from the comparisons Hussain draws upon. In calling the valuing attitude one of make-believe
or pretense, it sounds as though Nietzsche’s ideal person goes around pretending, ignoring the
way things really are. Now, Hussain does not mean that such illusions are easy to attain, and
perhaps the comparison to pretending is misleading. Nevertheless, for Husain valuing is an
“as if” mentality. The free spirit acts “as if” something has value, setting aside completely the

fact that it does not. Pretense and imaginative play can then provide “the appropriate intensity of emotion and motivation” because they offer a goal for the individual’s life.  

A fictionalist valuing attitude is unable to do the work Nietzsche requires of it. Nietzsche employs value creation in his two most significant projects: the development of a new ethical position and the construction of a response to nihilism. Typically nihilism is understood as something like despair concerning the apparent meaningless nature of human existence, or sometimes it is a response to the absurdity of the human condition. What most commentators have missed is that, for Nietzsche, nihilism is a personal problem. His concern is that individuals may no longer find their own lives worth living, that their own lives disgust them and make them weary. That nihilism constitutes a grave threat is the result of a number of complicated features of life, including the decreasing importance of religion along with traditional values that encourage misanthropy. With the failure of attempts to define an objectively meaningful life, Nietzsche suggests we must reconsider what it is about human life that can make it seem worthwhile from the first-person perspective. His alternative is that humans can make life meaningful through the creation of value.

In offering value creation as a response to nihilism, Nietzsche does not suggest we need merely an illusion to get by. Instead, we need a solution that prevents the disgust and boredom characteristic of the modern individual. Fictionalism cannot provide this kind of solution. The “as if” or make-believe attitude provides at best a temporary response to nihilism. But the free spirits who understand the world “as it is” will see their solution is inadequate. In response to this worry, we might posit that the fictionalist attitude can create a

---

meaningful life through emotional attachments. Bernard Reginster defends fictionalism on this point, arguing that “imagining in a belief-like way” can inspire emotion and motivation. He contends empirical evidence supports this aspect of fictionalism. Still, the scope of nihilism as it stems from weariness and self-hatred requires a more substantive meaning than can be found with illusion. In the creation of value, Nietzsche aims for a substantive way to live life without nihilism entering as a concern. Yet for the fictionalist nihilism always lurks right around the corner, appearing whenever the illusion is pierced.

In addition to providing only a stopgap to nihilism, Hussain offers what I consider an impoverished view of the meaning and value that arise from activities like art and play, which he uses to help explain the fictionalist attitude. From art, Hussain says we should learn how to “regard something as valuable in itself when we know that it is not valuable in itself.” But for Nietzsche the artist provides much more than this. The artist shares with the audience her perspective by representing objects and ideas in different ways. The artist reveals to others what matters to her or what she takes to be significant. The artist can, in some cases, illuminate values and ideals that had been heretofore unknown or unacknowledged. More commonly, though, the artist provokes the observer to reevaluate herself or her world. Even if we accept Hussain’s terminology and consider art an illusion, we are mistaken if we do not appreciate the real significance and meaning the artist provides.

In forms of play like games Hussain also underestimates the different ways these accrue value. In describing play as a form of make-believe, the suggestion is that, upon reflection, we recognize what we are doing is irrelevant. Children make up games that from

---

26 Reginster (2006): 93. Despite defending fictionalism to a degree, Reginster concludes that fictionalism offers no solution to nihilism of despair, and on this I am in agreement.
the outside appear trivial or even nonsensical, and many hold a similar view of more
advanced games like sports. If asked, most sports fans would likely acknowledge that sports
do not matter in the big picture despite devoting significant time to participating in sporting
events as either players or fans. Nevertheless, we cannot deny that sports have taken a central
role in society with cultural and political significance. We are remiss to overlook the extent to
which sports provide collective identity and unite groups into a single cause. The team brings
together and represents the community of which it is a part. Though the outcome of any
particular game may not have great importance, the experience of sport does have tremendous
emotional and political significance. Furthermore, participation in games and sports requires
that the participant treat the activity with seriousness. An athlete who does not care about
winning the game is, in a sense, not a real participant in the game. The game must have
stakes; it must matter to those involved even to be considered a game.

The upshot is that forms of play make meaning in at least two ways: they make the
participants interested in the outcome, and they provide a forum that brings together
individuals in a common cause. Perhaps these meanings are not what many expect as part of a
meaningful life, but Nietzsche demands that we reconsider what such a life is like in the first
place. For Nietzsche the kinds of meanings that come from play are significant, which is why
he defines maturity as “rediscovering the seriousness we had towards play when we were
children” (BGE 94). Taking play seriously may actually provide a more sustainable response
to nihilism than Hussain imagines possible.

Hussain’s interpretation also seems to misunderstand the relationship between values
and care. Fictionalism demands the free spirit continually step back to see the world “as it is”
and then immediately reenter the world of illusion. Throughout the essay, Hussain equates value with worth. Valuing in a fictionalist sense involves an assumption that something has worth even when it does not. Nietzsche’s use of value should not conjure up the idea of worth, since Nietzsche is not interested in determining what has objective worth. Instead, his interest is in what each individual considers worthwhile to her. Valuing is more complex than Hussain allows. Valuing something involves caring about it or finding it significant in light of some other concerns. When a person values, what she does is commit to various courses of action in light of this valuing, or she becomes willing to act on its behalf. Hussain’s fictionalism, however, demands that we sever caring from our valuing attitude. Rather than actually caring, we find a simulacrum of care, where in fact nothing really matters to the valuer.

The distinction between value and care is reminiscent of a condition Michael Stocker calls “moral schizophrenia.” Stocker criticizes modern ethical theories for not taking human motivation into account when developing their theories. The good life, he thinks, requires a certain harmony between one’s motives and one’s reasons or values. Nietzsche’s worry is not that a good life requires motives and actions to be in harmony but that in valuing we should develop a real attachment and concern. Nietzsche sometimes describes the desired valuing attitude as one where the individual loves her values and finds them invigorating. The idea that humans can value without really caring about the objects of value, or value in a disinterested manner, is symptomatic not of Nietzsche’s preferred view but of the modernity he opposes. In Book III of GM Nietzsche describes the modern individual living life mechanically, going through the motions without being excited by what life has to offer. In

---

27 Stocker (1976).
response, Nietzsche argues that we once again must “learn to love” (GS 334). If we act for what we care strongly about, our values then open a new world of what matters to us. Without this aspect of the valuing attitude, fictionalist valuing would only recreate the problems Nietzsche seeks to solve.28

1.3 LEITER’S INTERPRETATION

1.3.1 Leiter’s General Reading of Nietzsche

Instead of fictionalism, many have read Nietzsche as a naturalist, with a number of interpretations connecting his naturalism to anti-realism. Brian Leiter offers an influential reading of this sort.29 Leiter insists that Nietzsche offers specific arguments in favor of anti-realism, including what he calls the “best explanation” argument. Leiter distinguishes Nietzsche’s moral skepticism from his epistemological and metaphysical skepticism. According to Leiter, Nietzsche’s aim is to free higher humans from the type of morality that hinders their flourishing, which Leiter terms morality in the pejorative sense. The problem with morality in the pejorative sense is not that it is universal, harmful to life, or “anti-nature,” as many hold. Rather higher humans are harmed by morality because it both fails to

---

28 Many problems I find with Hussain’s interpretation may boil down to a disagreement about the nature and role of honesty in Nietzsche’s work. Hussain argues it is the illusions themselves which are “honest” in the sense that we can treat them as if they are not illusions at all. I believe honesty is not a description of a certain kind of illusion but rather a limit on the kinds of values consistent with human life. Understanding honesty this way rules out another possible anti-realist approach. If one rejects Hussain’s premise that the free spirit must be aware of the valuelessness of the world, it might be possible to create any set of values and find meaning through them. Alexander Nehamas seems to hold a view of this sort. But if our self-conception must be honest about ourselves, it seems Nietzsche thinks certain kinds of self-conceptions will follow from that, while others will appear less appropriate.

29 Leiter (2002) claims that Nietzsche’s work is modeled on science and it must be continuous with the results of science. But, in some important sense, science can never preclude the work of the philosopher. Cf. Chp. 1.
contribute to their flourishing and it devalues the essential components of their flourishing. These higher types must realize their potential lies outside the usual constraints of morality.³⁰

Leiter insists the distinction between higher and lower humans results in a “doctrine of types” that defines a person’s life trajectory. Leiter finds a strong connection between type-facts and Nietzsche’s determinism. Type-facts are physiological facts or facts about a person’s drives and affects. These type-facts are largely immutable.³¹ Each individual’s character is basically fixed from the start by facts concerning the individual’s psycho-physical constitution; all other facts about the person can be explained by type-facts. Individual choices are really determined by one’s nature, providing the impetus for Nietzsche’s critique of free will.³² This is not to say that every aspect of life is determined by type-facts. Other factors may play a role in determining the specific future of the individual, but these can only make changes within the trajectories determined by the natural facts.³³ So, for example, when Nietzsche says in Ecce Homo that he acted as he did because he could not have done otherwise, Leiter thinks he is describing his unique psychological type. Leiter’s account reveals a distinctive skepticism about the nature of value. On Leiter’s reading, Nietzsche’s project is to show the higher types that their life trajectory is distinctive, not that it is objectively higher. Since an individual’s values are determined by type-facts, there are no

³⁰ Leiter (1997) distinguishes Nietzsche’s critique of morality from those who criticize morality as being opposed to the “good life” for humans. These traditional “morality critics” including Michael Slote, Bernard Williams, Susan Wolf, and Michael Stocker, among others, would be interested in a revised moral theory, so long as the moral life does not preclude the good life. On Leiter’s view, Nietzsche has no interest in the mundane life of ordinary individuals, but only in the “extraordinary life.” Nietzsche’s concern, he argues, is not moral theory but the culture of morality. See (1997): 270-275.
independent, universal moral values.\textsuperscript{34} The difficulty Leiter faces, however, is to explain how Nietzsche can talk about the flourishing of higher types while at the same time rejecting good and bad simpliciter.

1.3.2 The Best Explanation Argument from Moral Disagreement

Leiter provides two arguments to support his claim that Nietzsche is an anti-realist with regard to moral values. First, Leiter argues that while morality is appropriate for lower types and detrimental to higher types, we cannot conclude that morality itself is bad.\textsuperscript{35} Second, Leiter attributes to Nietzsche the “best explanation argument” from moral disagreement, the basic premise being that Nietzsche seeks to redescribe human experiences in ways that do not depend on positing unnecessary or overly-complicated phenomena. Consequently, moral life is best described in terms of psychological facts about humans without appeal to independent moral properties. Any attempt to locate moral facts in the world makes a projective error. Leiter contends Nietzsche’s argument entails a unique appeal to disagreement. While many philosophers have considered cultural variances the most interesting examples of moral disagreement, Nietzsche’s interest lies in disagreements among philosophers. Historically, philosophers have disagreed about the most basic and foundational questions of morality, with each tailoring the moral facts to fit her own purposes. These disagreements have been persistent and intractable. The best explanation of these incompatible moral philosophies reveals there are no moral facts to be found.

\textsuperscript{34} Leiter concludes that the target of Nietzsche’s skepticism must be various forms of value Platonism, and then Nietzsche himself denies universal good and bad. See Leiter (2010).

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.: 106-107.
I am not convinced that Nietzsche’s comments on philosophers are best understood as an investigation of moral disagreement. To see why, we need to consider the context of these passages. Much of the support for Leiter’s interpretation comes from *Beyond Good and Evil*, especially sections 5, 6, 186, and 187. These passages do say something about the character of philosophers, but I believe Nietzsche is making a different point about the relationship between philosophers and their values. Previous philosophers labeled their own prejudices “truth,” in part to affirm their own importance and relevance. Philosophers have indeed failed to find moral truths, but they were not trying to locate moral truths at all. Philosophers “used knowledge (and mis-knowledge) as a tool” (BGE 6). Philosophy has been a “confession of faith” and a memoir, through which philosophers have tried to solidify their beliefs and status. There is nothing about the disagreement itself that is particularly interesting. What Nietzsche emphasizes is that recent philosophers have not even been doing philosophy. The psychology of the philosopher is complicated, but at its heart is self-interest. Philosophers use concepts like truth to carve out a special niche for themselves, creating the world they desire. To Nietzsche, Plato is the best exemplar of the philosopher type. Plato developed a detailed conception of the state to legitimize his preferred form of aristocratic government.36

Nowhere does Nietzsche critique the possibility or significance of philosophy. On his view it is simply a fact that philosophy is a memoir, since a person’s valuations “reveal something about the structure of her soul and what the soul sees as its conditions of life, its genuine needs” (BGE 268). Hence, the problem with previous philosophers is not their method but rather their intellectual creativity. Most philosophers accepted the ideas they

36 See BGE 191.
found already present in society, hoping to legitimize themselves by providing a justification for common viewpoints (BGE 186). In contrast, Nietzsche wants to develop new philosophers more than philosophy. Philosophy should be a reflection or memoir of those who are creative and strong. So disagreement among philosophers tells us more about the character of philosophers than it does about moral values. Elsewhere Nietzsche does examine a more traditional argument from disagreement, suggesting that standards of morality depend on culture. At the same time, Nietzsche cautions us not to reach conclusions about the status of moral values from disagreement alone. Historians of morality should not “see that among different peoples moral valuations are necessarily different and infer from this that no morality is binding” (GS 345). The challenge for Leiter and others is to show how Nietzsche’s complaints about philosophers and traditional morality entail the rejection of all moral values.

Leiter claims that Nietzsche rejects all moral values while accepting the objectivity of prudential values. Prudential value is relational, depending on the nature of the specific individual. Prudential goods may be good for some individuals and bad for others. This provides relational goods with a kind of objectivity because their goodness is independent of whether they are thought to be good. However, I find no evidence that Nietzsche adheres to any distinction between prudential goods and moral goods. Leiter believes a relational conception of prudential goods appeals to Nietzsche because a similar notion can be found in Nietzsche’s favorite ancient philosophers. Leiter points to Heraclitus as well as many

---

37 For example HAH I: 42 and BGE 194.
38 Prudential value is that which is non-morally valuable or good for an agent. Cf. Leiter (2000): 282.
Sophists, such as Protagoras, who may have held relational theories of prudential good. And Leiter is not alone in claiming Nietzsche understands moral values as a distinct type of value. For instance, Harold Langsam claims that Nietzsche opposes moral values, which are objective, in favor of what he calls aesthetic values that avoid the problematic universality of traditional moral values.

I believe a distinction in types of value misconstrues Nietzsche’s target. Moral values are not a distinct kind of entity with easily-recognized, unique content. A value, I argue, is a kind of commitment that reflects various goals and interests of the individual. In other words, all values share a connection to an individual’s concerns and ideals. Leiter is correct that Nietzsche opposes a distinct kind of morality, but Nietzsche’s criticism is that traditional morality is not a rich enough characterization of moral life. We should remember that for many other Greek schools, such as the Peripatetics and Epicureans, virtue and prudential goods are both components of the moral life, with the Epicureans even reducing virtue to prudential values. Nietzsche’s thoughts on value are in many ways more similar to these later ethicists than to the Sophists. With them, Nietzsche treats prudential goods and values as important components of a healthy human life. His concern with moral values is largely a worry about the scope and justification these values are thought to have. Values are not universal, and the thought that we could ground them objectively makes them unique and, to borrow a phrase from J. L. Mackie, queer.

40 Recently some have questioned the idea that Nietzsche was interested or favorably-inclined towards the Sophists. Brobjær (2001) argues that Nietzsche showed little interest in the Sophists prior to 1888, with his late, positive comments inspired in part by books he had read. During most of his earlier career, Nietzsche says little about the Sophists, and he never indicates they played a role of importance for him.

41 Nietzsche’s complex relationship to Epicurus best exemplifies his admiration of these later Greek philosophers. He admires Epicurus for promoting life and opposing Plato, while at the same time acknowledging Epicureanism as embedded within an era of decadence. Nietzsche finds himself closely connected to the Hellenistic period, and he embeds himself in their debates.
1.3.3 Nietzsche’s Doctrine of Types

Leiter’s best explanation argument asserts that a lack of moral facts results in no explanatory loss for explaining moral experience, a view he attributes to Nietzsche. This only follows if we grant two additional points: first, Nietzsche determines belief by the criterion of best explanation, and second, all human values are determined by type-facts. The first of these stands on solid ground. Nietzsche clearly believes moral explanations are overly complicated.\textsuperscript{42} Even so, we are not free to immediately reject moral values even if they do not provide the best explanation of the world. As Leiter recognizes, even moral realists need not think moral values play a robust explanatory role; they may instead supervene upon other facts, like color.\textsuperscript{43} Nothing here obviously commits Nietzsche to any particular metaethical position.

I am more concerned by Leiter’s argument that an individual’s life and values are explained by type-facts about her. I do not believe Nietzsche presents these facts as largely unchangeable or immutable, and I find ample evidence that Nietzsche denies the relative permanence of type-facts.\textsuperscript{44} Nietzsche even insists that philosophers go astray when they look at instincts and assume “that these belong to the unalterable facts of mankind” (HAH I: 2).\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{42} Williams (1994) offers compelling support for this claim. As he puts it, Nietzsche’s view is that morality should add little to our ideas of nature, and in providing explanations we should not appeal to special moral capacities.
\textsuperscript{43} Leiter (2001a): 91-92.
\textsuperscript{44} Gemes and Janaway (2005) point out some other potential problems for Leiter’s type-facts. Most notably they note that the psycho-physical elements at play may not even be reduced to a single individual, but also include drives and rationalizations in other people. Leiter may want to incorporate these into environmental factors that place limitations on the individual, but it still calls into question the nature of Nietzsche’s essentialism.
\textsuperscript{45} A further issue is that the determinism Leiter attributes to Nietzsche commits him to a problematic kind of causation. Owen and Ridley argue that in BGE 21, a key passage for Leiter, Nietzsche rejects causal determination of the “unfree will” (2003: 73). On their reading, Nietzsche not only rejects the possibility of freedom but also implores the reader to move beyond determinism, which stems from a “misuse” of cause and
In Nietzsche’s work we find two sources of mutability for type-facts. The first source is culturally-directed change. Nietzsche follows many scientists of his day in thinking that some instincts may be culturally acquired. He wants individuals to take advantage of this by striving to assimilate knowledge and make it part of their instincts (GS 11). Cultural conditions also provoke the redirection of drives. With the rise of modern culture and morality, Nietzsche thinks instincts were directed inward, resulting in the development of a different kind of human being, like a tamed animal or caged beast (GM II: 17). Through this internalization humans became a “fantastic” animal capable of finding purpose in life (GS 1).

Such evolutionary stories are at the heart of Nietzsche’s genealogical method. He strives to understand how human beings became the kind of creature they are. For Nietzsche, such understanding should promote the creation of improved or healthier people: “Men are capable of consciously resolving to evolve themselves to a new culture, whereas formerly they did so unconsciously and fortuitously: they can now create for the propagation of men and for their nutrition, education and instruction, manage the earth economically as a whole, balance and employ the powers of men in general” (HAH I: 24). These ideals lead Nietzsche to laud the “cultural physician” who attends to the health of the people by concerning herself with directing change in culture (GS P: 2). Changes in culture, for better or worse, significantly alter the possible paths of a person’s life by making her into someone different.

---

effect. Leiter’s primary response is that their argument assumes a neo-Kantian skepticism, which he thinks Nietzsche later abandons. I still find Owen and Ridley’s take compelling. But even if the specific argument here does not work, Nietzsche remains hesitant to accept the “unfree will.” In BGE 18, where Nietzsche points out the many philosophers who have resolved the free will problem as a show of strength. I believe Nietzsche intends to show his strength by overcoming the problem rather than refuting it. In this way, Nietzsche rejects both terms in an attempt to completely transform our understanding of it. Nietzsche repudiates the idea of psychological necessity and any determinism that relies on these kinds of set facts about it. See also Schacht (1983) Chapter 5.
The second source of type-fact mutability is the individual herself. An individual can change herself by initiating the redirection of her own drives and instincts. Nietzsche indicates that the redirection of instincts occurs both consciously and unconsciously, but the latter has been most common. Nietzsche laments the suppression of passions that many have sought in order to reduce the pain and suffering of their lives. We should no longer “admire dentists who pluck out people’s teeth just to get rid of the pain” (TI V: 1). Christianity never realized the full extent to which it could have facilitated the redirection of passions because it was too busy trying to destroy them. It was not interested in asking “how a desire can be spiritualized, beautified, deified?” In contrast Nietzsche suggests that when the individual is “forced to give himself laws” the result will be a new kind of redemption (BGE 159). In the same way, humanity will be redeemed when people come to realize their ability to alter facts about themselves in accord with these laws.

In response to these two apparent sources of mutability, Leiter maintains changes only occur within the scope of natural facts, relying upon Nietzsche’s claim that each person contains many facts that are “settled in him” (BGE 231). Against this, it seems both the redirection and destruction of instincts change natural facts. Nietzsche envisions a world where humans actively try to better themselves at the physiological and psychological level. I will term this possibility the considered redirection of drives.46 Considered redirection, to be

46 Recently others have made similar arguments about drives, using terms like “reflective control” (Shaw) and “self-selection” (Richardson). I agree with many aspects of Shaw’s discussion of this topic, but I hesitate to use her terminology of reflection and critical reasoning, since these terms carry the baggage of certain kinds of reasoning about which Nietzsche is skeptical. I find Richardson’s term self selection misleading because the individual is only really selecting her values, with the effects on biology and physiology derivative of that. “Considered redirection” best captures the individual’s control in the process without leading the reader to think any specific type of reasoning must be involved. I owe this suggestion to Krista Thomason.
effective, requires a basic knowledge of the process along with self-understanding. HAH: WS 37 offers a good example:

Through a neglect of the small facts, through lack of self-observation and observation of those who are to be brought up, it is you yourselves who first allowed the passions to develop into such monsters that you are overcome by fear at the word “passion”! It was up to you, and it is up to us, to take from the passions their terrible character and thus prevent their becoming devastating torrents. – One should not inflate one’s oversights into eternal fatalities; let us rather work honestly together on the task of transforming the passions of mankind one and all into joys.

Leiter insists that passages like this actually point to the importance of higher humans recognizing that morality does not promote their interests. But even if Nietzsche wants to free higher humans so they can flourish, it is puzzling that Nietzsche spends so much time advocating self-understanding and honesty. These virtues make more sense if they play a role in how we develop drives and instincts in tasks like self-creation and value creation. The implicit suggestion is that self-understanding and honesty can help make the difference between effective and inadequate creation. Such ideals provide information about how to make evaluations, and we will “not get tired of ‘perfecting’ ourselves in our virtue” (BGE 227). These virtues also seem to commit Nietzsche to some standard of better and worse creation, contra Leiter’s anti-realism.

The possibility of remaking type-facts necessitates a reexamination of the evidence that Nietzsche denies the reality of all moral values. Passages like GS 301, GS 335, and Z I: “On a Thousand and One Goals” all reveal the active role humans play in the development of values. Leiter, like many others, uses these passages to defend widespread anti-realism. For example, in GS 301, Nietzsche exclaims, “Whatever has value in the present world has it not
in itself, according to its nature – nature is always value-less – but has rather been given, granted value, and we were the givers and granters! Only we have created the world that concerns human beings!” Many commentators believe this passage shows values to be a projective error, that values are part of a mistaken interpretation of the world. On Leiter’s reading, the upshot of the passage is that recognizing the falsity of values undermines faith in morality. However, the rest of the passage suggests a different interpretation. Humans call themselves “contemplative” to obscure their active role in value creation. Nietzsche concludes “precisely this knowledge we lack, and when we catch it for a moment we have forgotten it the next: we misjudge our best power and underestimate ourselves just a bit, we contemplative ones. We are neither as proud nor as happy as we could be.” By connecting our ability to create values to our happiness, Nietzsche implies that we should embrace the process of value creation to examine how we may create our world better. Importantly, GS 301 delineates higher humans as being more perceptive and thoughtful – they have a sensitivity to value that is rare.

In GS 335 we find a similar point concerning successful value creation. Leiter emphasizes the part of the passage where Nietzsche calls on humanity to create “new tables of what is good that are new and all our own.” But Nietzsche does not suggest that the creation should be completely up to the individual. To be effective creators, humans must become “physicists” (Physiker). I take physics here to entail a general knowledge about humanity and the natural world.47 Again, we find physics connected to “our honesty,” while others have been ignorant about the nature of values. Leiter believes Nietzsche’s maxim “that one become

47 In a footnote to his translation, Walter Kaufmann argues that we cannot translate physics in the usual scientific sense. Physics, concerning the discovery of lawfulness and necessity, is this context the study of nature, being opposed to metaphysics. See also Langer (2010): 202-203.
what one is” involves a fatalism where one has no choice but to do so. In GS 335, where we encounter this phrase for one of the first times, Nietzsche describes becoming what one is as requiring people to “create themselves.” Leiter insists self-creation is only possible within a narrowly-defined space. With Nietzsche bringing together self-creation with self-knowledge, it looks like self-creation plays a much greater role than Leiter imagines. Becoming what one is requires a great deal of work by the individual. Current values have been built on ignorance because they are assumed to have universal application, which the active role of humanity belies.

Nietzsche’s claims from *The Gay Science* find their culmination in *Zarathustra’s “On a Thousand and One Goals”*, which reads in part:

Indeed, humans gave themselves all of their good and evil. Indeed, they did not take it, they did not find it, it did not fall to them as a voice from heaven. Humans first placed values into things, in order to preserve themselves – they first created meaning for things, a human meaning! That is why they call themselves “human,” that is: the esteemer. Esteeming is creating: hear me, you creators! Esteeming itself is the treasure and jewel of all esteemed things. Only through esteeming is there value, and without esteeming the nut of existence would be hollow.

This first thing to note about this selection is the distinction between “good and evil” valuation. For Nietzsche, “good and evil” is a technical term that refers to the universality of the moralities he opposes. Claims about the legitimacy of traditional morality say nothing about the status of values; they only show the mistake made by those who developed the universal morality of good and evil. The rest of the passage suggests a more positive role for values. Valuing is the defining human activity, since humans cannot help but evaluate and make meaning through their interests and actions. As Nietzsche asks in the passage, “If
humanity still lacks a goal, does it not also lack – humanity itself?” The pertinent question is whether Nietzsche thinks valuations should be guided by other considerations. On Leiter’s view, these valuations can only be expressions of type-facts. If we accept that type-facts are at least more mutable than Leiter allows, we may ask a new question of ourselves: are we esteeming well? Nietzsche poses this same question to philosophers in BGE 5-6, which he answers negatively on their behalf. A human cannot help but value, yet a person may come to value differently than she does now.

These three passages all show, in agreement with anti-realist interpreters, that values cannot be universal. They are instead creations that depend on humanity. But the interpretations of these passages that Leiter and others adduce admit of a basic confusion. By showing values depend on humanity, Nietzsche argues against a certain conception of eternal or universal values. However, it is a mistake to think that simply because values arise from humans that this means they cannot be evaluated. That values are, to some degree, inventions does not completely undermine their legitimacy. Instead, the remaining importance of values needs further exploration.

1.3.4 Back to Leiter’s General Reading

Beyond Leiter’s “best explanation” argument there are other passages that appear to support a Nietzschean anti-realism. I have already argued that three passages commonly used to support such readings, GS 301, 335, and Z I: “On a Thousand and One Goals” only show that values have the origin with humanity, not that moral values are projections or mistakes. I have similar reservations about two more passages that Leiter appeals to: Daybreak 3 and Human, All Too Human I: 4. For Leiter and others, these passages show that humans project
values onto nature, which is itself devoid of value. Leiter’s interpretation is that moral values entail a projective error and are nothing more than our invention, but we mistakenly confer “ethical significance” upon nature.48

These passages do describe a mistake, but the mistake is not specific to moral values. In *Daybreak* 3, Nietzsche compares morality to the way many languages assign the masculine and feminine, writing, “In the same way man has ascribed to all that exists a connection with morality and laid an ethical significance on the world’s back. One day this will have as much value, and no more, as the belief in the masculinity or femininity of the sun has today.” Yet, in *D 3* and its surrounding passages, Nietzsche criticizes those who think they have achieved a breakthrough in understanding morality that goes far beyond that of any previous generation. It is also telling that in *D 2* Nietzsche connects the error of projection directly to those who know “good and evil.” Nietzsche’s point is that the moralists project their theories completely into nature as a means to justify their importance. The passage does not suggest values cannot be related to nature, but that we are confused if we think we can appeal entirely to nature. For Nietzsche the mere fact of indifference does not show that valuation cannot make reference to nature.49 In fact, any adequate conception of value must recognize that humans are valuing creatures that live in a particular environment. The depictions of nature as barren and meaningless serve to highlight the active role humans play in valuing, as valuing arises in the

---

48 Nietzsche elsewhere notes nature’s lack of value, including D 17, D 142, D 423, GS 357, and GS 301.
49 One example of this occurs in Nietzsche’s famous repudiation of Stoicism in BGE 9. Nietzsche begins this passage with the claim that the Stoics ridiculously tried to adhere to an indifferent nature. If this were his main criticism, we would expect him to stop here. But he goes on to give another argument against the Stoics, one that is reaffirmed in BGE 188 and 198. The problem the Stoics run into is that their ethical theories projected the wrong kinds of values onto nature. Better knowledge would lead to an improved way to ground an ethic in nature.
interplay between natural creatures. This valuing will be guided by a “redeemed” understanding of nature that understands humans as natural beings (GS 109).

Concerning HAH I: 4, Leiter contends that here Nietzsche connects moral arguments to the disreputable arguments of astrologers, who believe facts about humans supervene on facts about the stars.50

Astrology and what is related to it. – It is probable that the objects of the religious, moral and aesthetic sensations belong only to the surface of things, while man likes to believe that here at least he is in touch with the world’s heart; the reason he deludes himself is that these things produce in him such profound happiness and unhappiness, and thus he exhibits here the same pride as in the case of astrology. For astrology believes the starry firmament revolves around the fate of man; the moral man, however, supposes that what he has essentially at heart must also constitute the essence and heart of things.

Contra Leiter, Nietzsche’s aim is to make a point about Kant’s morality, with clear reference to his Second Critique. In the conclusion of the Second Critique, Kant famously expresses his reverence for “the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me.”51 Kant reveres these because the starry heavens reveal his place in the universe, while the moral law reveals the nature of humans as independent from mere animality. Kant believes astrology went wrong because it took an insight into the heavens and reached the wrong conclusions, as is prone to happen when reason and science are not taken seriously. Kant thinks his morality better captures the role and power of reason, thus avoiding the errors which have befallen astrology and moralities of “superstition.” Nietzsche responds that Kant, believing he has indeed found his connection to the universe, is himself mistaken. Though Kant’s moral man is supposed to avoid the pitfalls of astrology because it is no “crude

51 Kant (1996): 269.
attempt” to use reason, Nietzsche finds Kant’s morality to be just such a mistake, with human reason and freedom grounding the moral law. Instead of comparing morality to astrology, Nietzsche is using Kant’s own metaphor to show a mistake in his position.

Elsewhere Nietzsche does connect morality to astrology, but the picture is not what many expect. In BGE 32 Nietzsche writes, “We believe that morality in the sense it has had up to now (the morality of intentions) was a prejudice, a precipitousness, perhaps a preliminary, a thing on about the same level as astrology and alchemy, but in any case something that must be overcome.” The importance here lies in the fact that astrology was “overcome” rather than disregarded. Nietzsche indicates that astrology was replaced by astronomy, which was an improved attempt to meet similar goals. In other words, astronomy was a better interpretation to meet certain aims. Similarly, traditional morality is not the best interpretation of our ethical lives. We need to replace morality with an improved understanding of value. Morality may be a misunderstanding of human experience, but value and ethical meaning are not empty categories or mistaken targets of consideration.

Leiter has provided a forceful account of Nietzsche’s naturalism, holding values to depend on facts about individuals. He insists that morality proves harmful for those higher types, and that Nietzsche’s focus is on the “extraordinary life” rather than the lives of ordinary human beings.52 Against Leiter, I have argued that Nietzsche does allow for change in these basic type-facts, including considered redirection. I have also argued that many passages appearing to support anti-realism and the falsity of moral values make no such case. These passages show that values depend in some way on human beings and are not universal, but

they do not reveal a complete skepticism or repudiation of moral values. My conclusion is that Leiter’s position leaves us unable to make sense of the importance Nietzsche gives to valuing and the creation of value. Leiter understands value creation as the alteration of the causal chains involved in an individual’s. Since various factors, including environment, play a role in determining an individual’s life-trajectory, values are created through participation in environmental change. But Nietzsche describes a process whereby humans create or invent something new, involving much more than the alteration of some environmental features. Leiter’s reading seems to undermine the creativity that Nietzsche holds dear. Perhaps the difficulty here is again found in Leiter’s attempt to distinguish moral values from other kinds of values. Values may play a more active role in our lives than Leiter allows. To see this, we must further investigate what role values play in human action. John Richardson takes up these topics in his work, to which I will now turn.

1.4 SUBJECTIVE REALISM

1.4.1 Richardson’s Subjective Realism

Hussain and Leiter offered Nietzschean versions of fairly standard anti-realist positions. These views had limitations in how to conceive of and evaluate values. Moving away from these, John Richardson believes Nietzsche’s science provides grounding for Nietzsche’s ethical position. Richardson reads Nietzsche as a neo-Darwinist who distinguishes different kinds of values through their selective origin. The puzzle Richardson seeks to answer is how to reconcile the individual nature of Nietzsche’s values with his

---

ranking of values that “so clearly purports to some privileged status.” Richardson believes that, for Nietzsche, most values are unique to the individual. Nevertheless, he concludes the value of freedom has a privileged status in Nietzsche’s ethical framework, and freedom provides a kind of standard for other values. The value of freedom does not have the kind of metaphysical status that compels others to accept it. Rather, Nietzsche offers arguments to convince others they should, or perhaps already do, share his idea of freedom.

In the first chapter of Nietzsche’s New Darwinism, Richardson aims to naturalize Nietzsche’s teleology and to show Nietzsche’s reliance on Darwinian principles. Richardson argues that Nietzsche’s metaethics also relies on a framework of Darwinian natural selection. Importantly, Richardson points out that Nietzsche’s interests lie with both values and the activity of valuing. Values are always “for” a valuing. According to Richardson, Nietzsche conceives of three kinds of values, which are differentiated by their kind of selection. However, these values all share a basic definition – values are the goals of human responsive behavior. This does not mean we always must be aware of our values, only that values are what behavior aims at. This means there are objective facts about values, such as facts about “perspectival stances, about what valuing attitudes there are, and what they value.” At the same time, values are personal because they are always values for a particular subject. The implication is that we are often in the dark about our values. Values are not ideals but the actual goals of behavior. The ideals individuals laud often are not matched by actions.

Animal values are the most basic type of values Richardson identifies in Nietzsche’s work, and these values pertain to drives that have been naturally selected through

---

54 Richardson (2004): 68.
55 Ibid.: 73.
evolutionary processes. Drives are one of Nietzsche’s primary explanatory mechanisms. Richardson defines drives as dispositions to behavior.\textsuperscript{56} The goal of each individual drive constitutes a value, so each drive is an instance of valuing. When describing a person’s valuing, this refers to the synthesis of that person’s drives. These animal values are transmitted to others genetically. Since all living creatures have drives and other similar biological functions, other creatures also engage in valuing. Nevertheless, Richardson locates in Nietzsche’s work a second type of value unique to humanity. Human values result from epistemic powers like memory, language, and consciousness that humanity acquired through natural selection. These powers allow humans to remember and to copy practices from others in the social group. This replicating behavior results in new kinds of human action including customs, practices, and habits. Habits and practices are selected for their likeliness to be copied by others, and thus they function more like memes.\textsuperscript{57} Social selection occurs over long periods of time and is an aggregate process. Given that values are the goals of responsive behavior, in order to understand their meaning we must determine these goals. Consequently, we can use genealogy to determine the meaning of animal and human values, since their meaning only becomes clear once we grasp their developmental history.

Animal and human values create a conflict within human beings because they aim at different ends. Animal values, having been selected through processes pertaining to survival and fitness, promote the preservation of the individual. In contrast, human values, selected

\textsuperscript{56} Richardson (2004) gives a detailed account of the development of drives in the first chapter. Drives, he thinks, are more than just plastic dispositions that tend to have certain results. He points out that drives for Nietzsche are “to” something, and the result explains why the behaviors occur. Richardson is careful to point out that on his reading drives do not have foresight. Instead, the drive was selected for its outcome. Genealogy is the only way to determine how these drives were selected or to understand the “meaning” of the drive.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.: 82.
socially, have a tendency to “herd” individuals. These are selected for the health of the social group. Richardson suggests this tension in values is the source of the “sickness” Nietzsche finds present in humanity. Social values oppose the body and its drives, undermining the individual’s health in favor of the community. To overcome this sickness and inner conflict, Richardson contends Nietzsche posits a third type of value selection. Humans have the capability of using their epistemic powers to select new values for themselves. The self selection of values, which Richardson terms freedom, allows each individual to incorporate the means of selection to create new goals for herself. Upon adopting new goals, the individual creates new habits for herself and sublimates, or redirects, her drives to resolve any conflict between drives and habits. A commitment to this kind of selection can provide a standard by which we can evaluate the health of other values. The result is value pluralism. The acceptance of freedom as the highest value naturally leads to other value commitments, such as hardness and selfishness instead of pity and altruism, while ruling out conflicting values. So long as a person chooses the value of freedom, an individual can create a wide variety of values for herself.

According to Richardson Nietzsche wants others to adopt the value of self selection and his method for remaking values, which afford freedom a privileged status. Nietzsche tries to convince others to adopt the value of self selection in two ways: he argues that we already value freedom and he tries to induce others to accept freedom. The possibility of

58 Ibid.: 136.
59 Richardson struggles with the proper way to characterize the status of freedom compared to other values. He at times calls it the “principal value” (106) and the “ur-value” (115). The claim appears to be that Nietzsche is most convinced others should value freedom. Other values may be related to freedom, but Nietzsche is apparently less convinced of their importance or necessity, since no other values directly resolve the conflict of animal and human values. He also thinks some values can be idiosyncratic, and these need little to no justification (115). Given his earlier claims about the nature of values, it is reasonable to assume that all of these values are real, subjective, and have objective facts about them.
selecting values becomes manifest through genealogy. Yet, by presenting genealogy as a set of facts, Richardson believes we are led to Nietzsche’s conclusions without realizing it. The strategy may not convince everyone, but it shows why Nietzsche placed so much importance on freedom. An individual’s other values only have worth as means to or results of freedom. Since these values should be selected by the individual based on her own constitution, the values stemming from freedom are not universal. We should not expect all possible values to speak to us.

1.4.2 Problems for Richardson: Valuing and Value Creation

I find many aspects of Richardson’s interpretation interesting and compelling. In addition to the important distinction he makes between values and valuing, Richardson’s work is significant because he recognizes human sickness not only in the herd instinct but also in conflicting needs for both individuality and social relations. By faulting both the tendency of our values to normalize and their tendency to promote individualism at the expense of all social relationships, Richardson describes a sickness that is much more complex than commonly understood. Moreover, Richardson’s idea that values can be both real and at the same dependent on the individual is a key insight.

---

60 Richardson emphasizes the need for honesty in genealogy because we must be very careful when disclosing the history of values. Often the process causes great pain, and it becomes very tempting to use genealogy as justification rather than as a means for understanding. Richardson believes the mistake Nietzsche finds with Darwinists is that they were not sufficiently honest about the source of our values. Many, especially among the Social Darwinists, sought to justify our current values by interpreting evolution as a mechanism of progress.

61 Ibid.: 126.

62 Some have criticized how Richardson understands Nietzsche’s Darwinism. The most forceful criticism against Richardson’s connection between Nietzsche and Darwin is Forber (2007). Forber’s primary argument is that Richardson fails to clearly distinguish relative fitness from absolute fitness. This also calls into question Richardson’s etiological interpretation of functions. The analysis of these criticisms may be essential for
My concerns about Richardson’s view center around his definition of value and the nature of self selection with respect to value creation. On Richardson’s account a value is a goal of responsive behavior. Nietzsche defines values with different terminology, which may suggest we need to revise Richardson’s definition. Though Nietzsche never offers a concise definition, he comes close on two occasions. In BGE 3 Nietzsche argues that previous philosophers have been driven by instinct, as their values are “physiological requirements for the preservation of a particular type of life.” Many of these ideas are unclear, such as what counts as a physiological requirement and what constitutes a type of life. Nietzsche later clarifies this definition of values, albeit in his notebooks, to show that though values developed along with instincts the individual is more than a collection of competing values: “The standpoint of ‘value’ is the standpoint of conditions of preservation and enhancement for complex forms of relative life-duration within the flux of becoming” (WP 715).

Simon May makes two helpful points regarding this expanded definition. First, the “demand” or “condition” denotes that values have an objective nature; there is something factual about their existence. Second, Nietzsche describes value as a standpoint (Gesichtspunkt). Standpoint, I suggest, means something like the way values structure how an individual interprets the world. Nietzsche does not commonly use the term standpoint, but often in his work we find a related term, Optik, which he uses to make a similar point. For example, in AC 9 he writes, “This universally faulty optic is made into a morality, a virtue, a

---

63 I will offer further analysis of this passage and the idea of standpoint or Optik in section 2.1.2.
65 As in BT “An Attempt at Self-Criticism” 5, BGE 11, AC 9, 54, EH “Wise” 1, and CW “Epilogue.”
holiness, seeing-wrong is now given a good conscience, - other types of optics are not allowed to have value any more now that this one has been sanctified with names like ‘God’, ‘redemption’, and ‘eternity’.” By an Optik, Nietzsche describes the kind of framework through which a person makes evaluations. This framework is defined in part by psychological and physiological facts, helping determine what it is that an individual believes would meet her needs or interests. In other words, when we find Nietzsche defining value as a standpoint, he is referring to an Optik or, elsewhere, perspective. And while these depend on facts, the perspective cannot be reduced to facts. Consequently, I think we best capture what Nietzsche means by value if we think of it as a lens through which the individual highlights certain features and downplays what is less important. Each value is satisfied in unique ways, and objects take on significance from that valuing standpoint. And a person’s values, on the whole, consist of the interplay between these different standpoints.

In merely defining values as standpoints, I have said nothing to deny Richardson’s definition. We can think of the dispositions to certain behaviors as a kind of standpoint. Nietzsche’s view still allows that animals have a kind of perspective or standpoint. An animal’s needs and drives determine how the animal interacts with its environment and the other creatures it encounters. Having interests in survival, they are disposed, through drives, to seek certain kinds of behaviors. While it makes sense to describe animals as valuing from a certain kind of standpoint, I think it important we consider what is supposed to be distinct about human valuing on Nietzsche’s view. These differences reveal problems with Richardson’s account.
Richardson makes a problematic assumption that humans and animals have essentially the same kind of valuing standpoint. Human values differ from animal values only in terms of their selective origins. Human values are selected through social processes and are unique to humans because they depend on human psychological capacities and social life. Though we may become more aware of our goals, the act of valuing is still in the responsive behavior guided by habits and drives. These values can even be internalized, making them biological in the same way as animal values. Through appeal to drives, the idea is that animals act by being drawn to or repelled from various objects in their environment. The picture here is a mechanistic one, where animal behavior can be reduced to basic physiology: “Fitness explains outcome explains behavior.”

Human values complicate the picture, since action is motivated not only by drives selected through biological processes but also from the habits and customs of social life. However, the basic picture still provides a mechanistic account of how we move from drives and desires to action, and it is the mechanism that I do not find in Nietzsche’s account of valuing.

In many passages Nietzsche suggests that valuing is unique to humans, or at least that humans value in a unique way. In GS 346 Nietzsche tells us man is a venerating (verehrendes) animal. These venerations and values make humanity “interesting” (GM I: 6), but they also make humans the “sick” animal (GM III: 13). I believe values play a different role in the human reasoning process. Nietzsche describes a different sense in which humans are drawn to act. We find the evidence for this difference at various locations throughout Nietzsche’s work, including Z I: 15. In this passage, Nietzsche’s Zarathustra explains,

66 Richardson (2004): 76.
“Humans first placed value into things, in order to preserve themselves – they first created meaning for things, a human meaning! That is why they call themselves ‘human,’ that is: the esteemer (der Schätzende).” Here we find that humans were the first to place value into things, suggesting humans not only value in a distinct manner, but that human valuing, as esteeming, also involves objects and activities taking on meaning. The implication is that human valuing is a qualitatively different activity for humanity. Moreover, we will need to rethink our definition of value, as it does not seem valuing is limited to behavioral goals.

Richardson’s view may be able to accommodate meaning in human valuing through habit, custom, and memory. Through culture, different experiences take on significance, and habit and memory allow these activities to develop in a regulated, consistent manner where meaning is developed over time. These actions become meaningful through replication and remembering in a way distinct from behavioral dispositions. Still, I find the motivational aspect of this account oddly mechanistic. With animal values the story is clear; an action can be traced back to drives and understood through genealogy. Human values are less clear. Though human values do not have a similar reductive path, the idea seems to be that humans are compelled through various unconscious means towards their goals. Instead, I think the role of meaning Nietzsche offers necessitates a different view of motivation. If values entail estimations, this indicates the values themselves are involved in the deliberative process. Connecting this to the earlier definition of values as standpoints, we find that human values must be a different kind of standpoint. Rather than functioning as goals, values provide a standpoint by demarcating interests and filtering information to help define what goals will be sought in the first place.
The difference between my position and Richardson’s is subtle. For Richardson, human values comprise a standpoint because the drives and habits determine how a person will behave in terms of how needs will be satisfied. On the view I will defend, the standpoint is not limited to things like drives and habits but also entails things like concerns and interests, which are related to but not reducible to more basic physiological features like drives. Values thus play a more active role in deliberation, not as goals but as forms of care that color how an individual views the world. Objects take on significance and meaning in light of other interests a person has. Consequently, rather than being standpoints values function as what I will term commitments. When valuing something, a person both sets a goal and commits to a certain course of action and accepts the burdens that come with it. Initially this may sound like Richardson’s self selection of values, but they are actually quite different. What Nietzsche has done in connecting value to both standpoints and commitments is redefine what counts as a reason.

A further problem with Richardson’s view also pertains to the unique character of human valuing. Richardson thinks of value as essentially a kind of dispositional knowledge. Even at the stage of self selection, values entail remaking the individual’s dispositions and behaviors. Yet it is clear that values, for Nietzsche, involve a kind of knowledge distinct from dispositional knowledge. R. Jay Wallace has tried to capture the kind of knowledge values provide by calling it an “evaluative scheme.” An evaluative scheme is essentially an orientation to the world, including a person’s physiological makeup and emotional response to the world. What we miss when we think of values as goals is that values provide the resources

---

67 See Wallace (2007).
and means to evaluate and determine courses of action. We can see this is related to the kind of deliberative qualities of values I described above. But a second aspect of values is that they provide the resources to justify a variety of actions. Rather than evaluative scheme, I think a more accurate description of this is ethical knowledge. For this reason, Nietzsche considers the development of values as akin to finding new ways to feel, taste, and love (BGE 224). Conceiving of values as goals ignores the kind of ethical knowledge values contain.

Ethical knowledge must be shared socially, since it provides reasons that can only be learned within some community where the value is ubiquitous. Without a reservoir of knowledge packed into each value and virtue, ethical behavior loses coherence and meaning. Nietzsche, of course, opposes the herd mentality, which he believes makes the population homogenous and uninteresting. However, in demanding the creation of new values, Nietzsche is suggesting the development of a new kind of social knowledge. Thus, I believe Nietzsche must be committed to some kind of beneficial social relations. I am not sure Richardson can accommodate these given his account of human sickness. For Richardson, social relations “bind us into society” and “undermine our lives and their natural ‘healthy selfishness.’”

Values created through self selection are necessarily individualistic because they pertain to self-creation. They provide a new goal, but not a new evaluative scheme or ethical knowledge, since values need a context in which to arise. For all of Nietzsche’s talk about the benefits of solitude, others prove necessary for the development of new values and projects.

Aside from these two concerns about the kind of standpoint values comprise, I find a third issue related to self selection and value creation. The problem here is whether

---

68 Richardson (2004): 120.
Richardson captures the goals Nietzsche sets out to address. Richardson sees Nietzsche’s work mainly as an attempt to naturalize human life within a Darwinian framework. Nietzsche’s value theory is primarily a way to resolve the conflict between different kinds of values we see present in humanity. However, Richardson does not consider another of Nietzsche’s central concerns – the threat of nihilism. Richardson considers nihilism equivalent to a condition of “valuelessness.”\(^6^9\) But I argued earlier that the nihilist has “grown tired of \textit{man}” (GM I: 12). Regardless of whether others are engaged in valuing, the nihilist is disgusted or bored with her own life and does not find it worth continuing. In Nietzsche’s view the nihilism is best exemplified by the Christian who Nietzsche believes “wants to \textit{escape} from himself” (CW “Epilogue”). Modernity faces a crisis of nihilism because the values characteristic of the time foster misanthropy and self-hatred.

Richardson’s self selection is not by itself a sufficient response to the problem of nihilism. According to Richardson, self selection involves the development of new dispositions and habits in terms of some unifying project. The result is that the individual develop new goals and new “meanings” as these new behaviors become incorporated into the creation of a new self.\(^7^0\) Yet these meanings need only be consistent with freedom. I fear that Richardson has conflated freedom and self-creation with the kinds of values that are engaging and reflect an attitude of excitement and care. What is needed is not just a unifying project but an invigorating project that inspires a love for life. In other words, one failure of modernity is that its values do not invigorate life. While selecting new values may provide a means to solve

\(^{6^9}\) Ibid.: 124.

\(^{7^0}\) Ibid.: 102
this, modifying an individual’s drives to aim at something else may still fail to provide inspiring goals.

Complicating the matter in his work is that he describes value creation in varying ways. At one point, he describes value creation as the process of positing new goals and redirecting dispositions.\(^{71}\) Later, he characterizes the philosophers’ value creation as other-directed. The process is designed to “beautify” others and society as a whole.\(^{72}\) I hold that value creation should be a social endeavor because values are created with others in some context. The meaning we get from values also must be a social meaning in order for it to be intelligible. It need not be the case that everyone shares the same values. However, these values at least should be intelligible to others. If a value is not intelligible in this way, it fails to be a candidate for something that anyone could act on. Instead, Richardson goes too far in wanting each person to develop a unifying project that makes coherent all her values. Nietzsche lauds the importance of a dynamic or “magnificent tension of spirit” (BGE Preface). While this tension has many facets, one is that the rational person need not experience unity of all values. A standpoint contains many particular interests and needs which must be in some conflict concerning the relative importance of its goals. Though Richardson is right that a deep conflict is problematic, the creation of new values should not eliminate distinctions between different kinds of values.

\(^{71}\) Ibid.: 112-114.
\(^{72}\) Ibid.: 262-263.
1.5 SUBSTANTIVE REALISM

I have argued that contemporary anti-realist interpretations of Nietzsche face a number of difficulties that raise doubts about their plausibility. However, this should not lead us to simply conclude Nietzsche must be a moral realist. Such interpretations saddle Nietzsche with value standards and claims to objectivity that are inconsistent with the larger themes of his work. Nevertheless, there are many compelling reasons to consider Nietzsche’s relationship to moral realism. And while I do not think realism best characterizes all of Nietzsche’s work, a look at Nietzsche’s purported realist moves further reveals the complexity of Nietzsche’s value theory. Arguments in favor of a Nietzschean moral realism need look no further than Nietzsche’s value criticism. Nietzsche spends much time attacking opposing ethical views, and the overall tenor of his work is one of judgment.

Despite his claims in favor of a multiplicity of perspectives, the thorough criticisms he levels against other views show he suggest he recognizes some standards of right and wrong, or at least better and worse. Of course, some of Nietzsche’s criticisms function as internal critiques, where he points out how traditional values do not match their purported aims. Nevertheless, many of Nietzsche’s criticisms go beyond internal critique and appear to employ external value standards. We find both strategies at work in Nietzsche’s attack on pity. As an internal critique, Nietzsche holds that pity is ineffective at achieving its goals. Rather than providing comfort, pity increases the amount of suffering in the world, and it leads people to feel increased shame for their actions (Z IV: “The Ugliest Man”). At the same time, Nietzsche provides other reasons to oppose pity that do not depend on the intentions behind pity. For instance, he opposes the attitude with which individuals tend to show pity. In

his estimation, it entails contempt, and this negativity is easily shared with others. The result
is an opposition to life that Nietzsche considers unhealthy. Clearly Nietzsche believes pity
fails on some external standard. In addition to the kinds of criticisms Nietzsche uses in
making his evaluations, the scope of his arguments also supports realist interpretations. Given
how Nietzsche emphasizes the personal nature of values and the human role in creating them,
we might have expected him to describe his values as opinions or preferences. But many of
Nietzsche’s judgments and proposed values have a wide application. Character traits like
strength and creativity are certainly not limited to some group. And Nietzsche’s ideal of life
affirmation sounds like a goal for all humans, even if it turns out that not all are able to
achieve it. In the end, it appears Nietzsche’s goal is to replace society’s current values with
some preferred values he has discovered.

The proposed accounts of Nietzschean moral realism are diverse. Historically, many
commentators have offered a monistic reading of Nietzsche, finding one value standard that
Nietzsche uses to justify all other values. The most common monistic standard proposed is
power, which appears in this role in many works from a variety of commentators.74 Other
prominent, proposed value standards include life75 and freedom.76 The prominence of will to
power in the secondary literature makes it the most obvious candidate for a value standard.
The nature of the will to power and its role in psychology, metaphysics, or cosmology has
been a serious point of contention. I do not here want to enter into debates regarding its
application. Assuming we can make coherent the variety of uses Nietzsche suggests for
power, in making it our value standard we face a number of immediate issues. Namely,

74 Including Kaufmann, Richardson (1996, 2009), and Wilcox (1974).
75 Including Schacht (1983) and Geuss (1997).
76 As in Richardson (2005).
Nietzsche describes a variety of positive values that are not easily reduced to power. Strength and fortitude have something to do with power, as does self-mastery, and perhaps even creativity. But these all seem to rely on different senses of power rather than a single standard or concept. Moreover, Nietzsche himself appears unable to determine the exact nature of power. Its appearance in the published works, especially *Beyond Good and Evil* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, offers quite different depictions of it, and in his notebooks we get significantly more comments on power that only serve to complicate the matter by adding more interpretations.\(^77\)

Power, I believe, best describes Nietzsche’s attempt at biology, since it provides a description or defining feature of living beings. This should prove relevant to valuing but not a standard of it. Paul Katsafanas has recently offered a more compelling picture of how the will to power might be connected to value standards.\(^78\) He argues that power is the constitutive aim of human action. Thus it can be used to evaluate whether actions achieve this aim. The difficulty with this view lies in the move from claiming that power is a defining feature of living things to claiming that every action aims at power. Simply because power is characteristic of living creatures does not entail everything about living creatures is also about power. Nietzsche, as I read him, does not offer any constitutive aim of action. Still, Katsafanas raises an important issue, which I will return to in Chapter 2. I will later distinguish Nietzsche from constitutivist views more generally in Chapter 5.

---

\(^{77}\) For further skepticism of the will to power, see Leiter (2002): 136-146. On the general use of the will to power see Magnus (1988).

\(^{78}\) Katsafanas (2011).
Other interpreters look to life as Nietzsche’s strategy, which is plausible since Nietzsche often argues for or against value systems based on whether they enhance life. According to Nietzsche “every healthy morality – is governed by an instinct of life” (TI V: 4). However, taking life to be the central feature of Nietzsche’s ethics quickly runs into difficulty. The enhancement of life itself requires a separate standard to determine exactly what counts as enhancement. So the affirmation of life depends on a number of other standards to make any evaluations. The use of life is further complicated by the conception of life Nietzsche provides. Nietzsche views life as a struggle. Not only do living beings struggle with each other for the resources that make life possible, but they also face internal struggle. Life is defined by conflicts in desires, forces, and goals. These components are “oligarchic,” competing to dominate for their own interests (GM II: 1). Regardless of how literal we make Nietzsche’s descriptions of drives and desires, living creatures do not admit of internal harmony. It is far from clear what it means to enhance something that is made up of elements that must be in competition with each other.

When we seek a dominant value standard in Nietzsche’s work, we find other values cropping up. Nietzsche’s rich and complex depiction of the ethical life indicates a pluralist conception of value might better capture his view. Unsurprisingly, interpreters have begun to move in this direction. Of course, there are countless ways one might locate a preferred set of values in Nietzsche’s thought, and examining all varieties would not be a fruitful task. It is worth, however, considering one comprehensive recent interpretation. Tamsin Shaw offers one of the strongest recent interpretations of a Nietzschean realism in *Nietzsche’s Political*

---

Skepticism. Shaw takes note of the scope and tenor of Nietzsche’s value criticism and concludes that Nietzsche’s critique of values must be “universalist in scope and realist in its basic orientation.”\textsuperscript{80} She recognizes the difficulties of reconciling Nietzsche’s proposed values with the elitism that many commentators find in the form of human types. For Shaw, the underlying commitment of Nietzsche’s work is to the improvement and “overcoming” of humanity. Though Nietzsche may be skeptical about the ability of most to accept his project, Nietzsche cannot coherently limit his project to certain individuals. Instead, the advancements he seeks are open, in principle, to everyone. We find in his work an order of rank that against suggests a universal standard for all morality, and his genealogies purport to assess the real value of morality.

Shaw takes Nietzsche’s interest in humanity to be one of flourishing. Though Nietzsche does accept human sub-types, he considers all humans valuing creatures, so humans share a basic kind of flourishing. We can determine what counts as human flourishing, and consequently these facts are what ground Nietzsche’s assessment of values. Shaw even suggests that Nietzsche’s passages on humanity reveal a presupposition to the intrinsic value of humanity. Human greatness, for instance, has significance regardless of whether it is recognized or understood.\textsuperscript{81} On Shaw’s reading, it is the facts about human flourishing, both for all humans and for sub-types of humanity, that lend Nietzsche’s view its pluralistic character. To see how these different values are related, Shaw suggests that Nietzsche’s view is akin to T. M. Scanlon’s parametric universalism.\textsuperscript{82} There are some overarching value standards that admit of context-dependence. In other words, the basic moral

\begin{small}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{80} Shaw (2007): 109.
\item \textsuperscript{81} Ibid.: 121.
\item \textsuperscript{82} Ibid.: 110, 117.
\end{itemize}
\end{small}
principles will take into account the needs of specific individuals and sub-types. Values will be defined and developed in different ways to account for the differences of those involved. This allows Shaw to place Nietzsche’s particularism within a framework of overarching human values.

While Shaw holds that these universal value judgments are valid for anyone, Nietzsche does not expect rational convergence on these ethical norms. On her reading, moral capacities are not evenly distributed, and some people are incapable of understanding new values or achieving autonomy. Additionally, Shaw finds that realism best makes sense of Nietzsche’s commitment to freedom. Freedom, on her reading, is not unrestrained action but actions guided by inner necessity. A person is free when she obeys laws that are recognized as having the force of necessity. Arriving at the correct answer is difficult, since there is no single method of doing so. Still, freedom allows that those seeking should seek to arrive at the same conclusion. Consequently, free spirits aim at a kind of “rational autonomy,” albeit one not available to all persons. The result is that the individual is compelled to act not by external authority but through internal necessity.

The emphasis on rationalism and truth-seeking bring significant trouble for Shaw’s interpretation. The aim of value criticism, on her reading, is to find the correct values for everyone. Of course, there has been much debate about the sense of truth Nietzsche is after, another debate I cannot enter into here other than to say I think it is plausible that Nietzsche employs a different sense of truth in the realm of morality than he does elsewhere. This view of morality and truth has gained more traction since Nietzsche’s time. See, for example, Wiggins (1991b). See also section 2.2.3.

83 Ibid.: 125.
84 This view of morality and truth has gained more traction since Nietzsche’s time. See, for example, Wiggins (1991b). See also section 2.2.3.
often lauds the importance of fictions for getting through everyday life; the falsity of something is not necessarily a mark against it. When it comes to evaluating morality, Nietzsche appeals to a distinct kind of honesty, resembling sincerity more than ordinary notions of truth. And given the personal character Nietzsche ascribes to morality, it would be surprising if morality actually amounts to nothing more than using our standards to find the correct values. Though Shaw provides a role for context and value divergence, the kinds of universal standards she describes result in a rigid account of human flourishing. Yet Nietzsche’s descriptions of great individuals, from Heraclitus to Thucydides to Goethe indicate that flourishing can be pursued in numerous ways. Nietzsche insists on “innumerable healths of the body” that include not only objective facts about physical condition but also a dependence upon “your goal, your horizon, your powers, your mistakes and above all on the ideals and phantasms of your soul” (GS 120). These conditions appear subjective and lack the universal character Shaw seeks. And while Shaw may be right that there are some facts about these individuals, it is not clear how she means to ground these universal standards. While Nietzsche is concerned for all humanity, his evaluations, I will argue, depend on what it is to value, not facts about human flourishing.

Where Shaw’s view is most successful, in my estimation, is in sketching the general character of Nietzsche’s value theory. She is right to emphasize value pluralism over a single value standard, since Nietzsche lauds a variety of values and attitudes, including vitality and life affirmation. She rightly makes central Nietzsche’s concern for the condition of all individuals, and she legitimates his value criticism as making appeals that can be in some way justified. Perhaps if we remove her overly-rationalist picture of humanity and her broad
account of human flourishing, we can move towards a realist interpretation that better
captures Nietzsche’s complicated stance towards morality. Nevertheless, I still believe realist
accounts of Nietzsche provide him with a conception of value inconsistent with his
overarching views. Most of all realists are unable to offer a satisfying account of the nature
and role of value creation. Shaw’s view, even if we disregard its more rationalist elements,
facing this problem acutely, holding that what she calls the “value-creation views” (like
fictionalism) are too open-ended.

I agree that some positions, including many anti-realist accounts, make value creation
too easy or arbitrary. Still, Nietzsche’s insistence that values are human inventions is one of
his most unique claims. On realist views it is difficult to see how values can be created in any
meaningful sense. Values are discovered when they meet value standards and promote the
enhancement of humanity. Yet, humans play little or no active role in developing these
values. At most people seek new values and then test them to see if they are allowed. Even if
the realist allows that great individuals act as visionaries or see values others have not
previously recognized, I find it a stretch to call this the heart of value creation. It may be a
part of the creative process, but I find it hard to think that values, for Nietzsche, are not
created in a more robust sense. If we read Nietzsche as a realist, I fear we lose what is
distinctive about Nietzsche’s ethics, that values are our values and must be created by us.

1.6 CONCLUSIONS AND NEW DIRECTIONS

In examining a number of prominent anti-realist and realist interpretations of
Nietzsche, we have seen that both approaches face significant problems. On many anti-realist
readings, it is difficult to grasp the seriousness Nietzsche affords to value creation. For the determinist or fictionalist, values are mistakes or projections, making their creation an odd task to emphasize. For other anti-realists, values are nothing but creations, which seems to limit the constraints we can put on value creation. While values do have some connection to drives and desires, they are not fictions of an “as if” sort. For Nietzsche, values mark concerns and commitments that matter, making valuing a serious activity. Then again, the realist has difficulty capturing the creativity of values and their unique connection to the individual. I conclude much of the problem in understanding Nietzsche’s values and their creative origin is in the realist/anti-realist dichotomy we encounter throughout the secondary literature. Richardson’s account, in contrast, began to offer something that fit into neither of these categories, and this is the approach I will pursue for the rest of the project.

Nietzsche makes it clear that values do not exist externally or admit of objective grounding. Nietzsche does assess values, but he does not offer a value standard like those we find in modern moral theories. By evaluating Nietzsche’s metaethics in terms of contemporary categories, we are forced to fit Nietzsche’s work into boxes that do not apply. We must make attributions and assumptions not found in the texts that obscure as much as they clarify. However, the more important concern is that accepting the realist/anti-realist dichotomy leads us to compromise some of what is central to Nietzsche’s view – namely his conception of valuing and a robust account of value creation. Whatever Nietzsche’s view is, it is a complex marriage of value creation and value assessment. To make sense of it, we need to take value creation as its defining feature of valuing while exploring the ground between realism and anti-realism.
In the next three chapters, I develop Nietzsche’s conceptions of values and value creation in order to address the concerns raised here. In Chapter 2 I sketch some key components of Nietzsche’s value theory. In doing so, I respond to a central puzzle in Nietzsche’s work: he says all values have been created, seemingly making them subjective, yet he offers extensive value criticism. I begin by addressing the relationship between values and drives. I argue that values cannot be reduced to drives. Rather, they are a complex projection of drives and desire. This, in a limited sense, makes values a kind of fiction in that nothing has value in itself. Nevertheless, I argue that values play a complicated role in motivating action, and that Nietzsche’s position amounts to a version of reasons internalism. These features of Nietzsche’s view, I argue, allow us to understand how Nietzsche means to assess values despite having denied the existence of any universal value standards. I hold that Nietzsche’s strategy of assessment is a form of internal analysis reminiscent of Alasdair MacIntyre in *After Virtue*. Nietzsche’s strategy is to evaluate the activity of valuing and determine the conditions that comprise such an activity. Consistent with Nietzsche’s pluralist approach, there may be many such limiting conditions, of which I focus on two: health and honesty. Through health, Nietzsche considers what kinds of values are consistent with the continuation of the activity of valuing. By honesty, Nietzsche tries to capture that attitude a valuer should have.

To further explore the unique space in which Nietzsche places values, I continue by considering the similarity with which Nietzsche describes values and tastes. Rather than assuming Nietzsche’s understanding of value must fall in line with realist or anti-realist views, I defend an interpretation that shows both values and tastes exist between the
traditional categories of the subjective and objective. On his view, values are more subjective than traditionally thought, but at the same time tastes are more objective, admitting of debate and criticism. The similarities between the two reemphasize Nietzsche’s strategy of internal assessment. Moreover, they remind us that Nietzsche offers a unique view of values without distinguishing moral values as a special kind of entity. Finally, I conclude the chapter with some comments on Nietzsche’s authority. Despite not offering a traditional value standard, he appeals to his own experiences to justify his evaluation of values.

In Chapter 3 I turn my attention to value creation, examining the nature of value creation and its role in Nietzsche’s work from the ground up rather than trying to fit value creation within some other set of moral commitments. I begin Chapter 3 by exploring the value creation of the priests in the *Genealogy*. However, this is not Nietzsche’s only model of value creation. Other forms of value creation suggest the process is more common than typically believed. From these kinds of creation, I argue that the values Nietzsche envisions are more along the lines of concepts, reasons, and ethical knowledge than the goals and ideals many in the secondary literature would have us believe. In contrast to the more ordinary instances of value creation, we can distinguish a distinct Nietzschean task of value creation that is more philosophically complex. While Nietzsche often describes value creation as an individual task, I argue that group creation best captures the overall picture of value creation we find in Nietzsche’s work. Values arise from interplay with others as they require a context in which they are applicable.

In Chapter 4 I return to the crisis of nihilism ever present in Nietzsche’s work. I examine the nature of the problem, and I defend the view that for Nietzsche nihilism is
primarily a first-person experience. We have seen in this chapter where some commentators have gone wrong in understanding Nietzsche’s response to nihilism. I argue that value creation is central to our avoidance of nihilism as part of a project I call self-appropriation. In making this argument, I again examine the social implications of Nietzsche’s view. The standard reading of Nietzsche is that his ideal individuals and value creators are solitary, isolated figures. I argue that this cannot be the case, and Nietzsche’s project of value creation must occur with others. Though Nietzsche’s view may in fact amount to a kind of authenticity or autonomy, the importance of others reveals that these concepts cannot stand as traditionally understood.

Having described the various process of value creation, and having placed value creation as both the heart of Nietzsche’s positive ethics and his response to nihilism, in Chapter 5 I return to the idea that value creation is a relatively common process but also a complex task performed by few. To deal with this tension I compare Nietzsche’s depiction of value creation to that of J. David Velleman. According to Velleman, humans continually create values to make sense of themselves and to interact with others. Much of this seems consistent with Nietzsche’s position, and perhaps such an account could fill in some of the details we do not find in Nietzsche’s work. Nevertheless, I add to this a kind of value creation that is philosophically informed. The position described in Chapters 2-5 suggests that value creation may be done better if attention is paid to it. The process, as Nietzsche understands it, demands a tension in valuing. Where most want to make values consistent with each other, whether by some value standard or narrative, Nietzsche finds certain disagreements within one’s valuing standpoint a sign of health. With such varying concerns, interests, and
commitments in life it makes little sense to think these can all be organized in a single framework. Instead, Nietzsche advocates a pluralism that promotes creativity rather than undermining the legitimacy of all morality.
CHAPTER 2
NIETZSCHE ON THE ACTIVITY OF VALUING

In Chapter 1, I considered some common and influential interpretations of Nietzsche that analyze his work with an eye to his purported ethical realism or anti-realism. I argued that these categories have not adequately captured Nietzsche’s concept of value. Further attempts to understand Nietzsche’s metaethics through contemporary realism and antirealism are unlikely to succeed because they do not provide space for Nietzsche’s view of value creation. Additionally, there are a number of other common interpretive strategies that, while making some important points, obscure important parts of Nietzsche’s view. Many of these views I consider broadly neo-Humean in character, and though I share with the neo-Humeans some core interpretive claims, I hold that Nietzsche is no neo-Humean. In this chapter, I will sketch my view of Nietzsche’s conception of value, defending the view that Nietzsche’s interest is in valuing as an activity of commitment pertaining to that which a person cares about.

In working through Nietzsche’s conception of value, I obviously cannot deal with all components of the theory. In this chapter I emphasize two aspects pertinent to value creation. First, I argue that values are complex projections of drives and desires. Second, I defend that Nietzsche holds an internalist view of reasons, where values play an important role in defining what counts as a reason. From these two features of Nietzsche’s view, we encounter a problem. If values are individual commitments, and values admit of no external necessity, it looks as if values are subjective, with no means of value assessment. At the same time, Nietzsche evaluates many values, and in doing so he seems to appeal to standards of assessment. On what grounds is Nietzsche justified in making such assessments? I argue that
Nietzsche’s strategy is to devise standards out of the activity of valuing itself. These standards are not constitutive of valuing, meaning they are not necessary for a person qua valuer or qua rational agent. Rather, they arise out of our taking part in the activity. I propose two different kinds of limiting conditions for Nietzsche – health and honesty. Health is a formal analysis of valuing which aims to rule out inconsistent values. Honesty, on the other hand, examines the conditions of how a person engages in the activity of valuing. It is a constraint on the individual more than the values.

To further elucidate these arguments, I argue that we can better understand Nietzsche’s view through his connection of values to tastes. Though values cannot be reduced to tastes, they overlap in many ways. Tastes are also a form of projection, and they provide a kind of reason for action. While we typically treat tastes as subjective, and therefore beyond debate, Nietzsche does not share this view. Both values and tastes are personal, yet they remain proper objects of contention. Moreover, even though they have a personal element, we still experience them as making demands upon us. Sorting through these complex similarities will show how Nietzsche walks a fine line in evaluating that which is unique to each individual.

Before moving on, I should add one note of caution. Developing what is essentially a metaethical view out of Nietzsche’s work requires two distinct components. First, it needs an account of the nature of value and valuing. Second, the values must be filled in with positive content. Most scholars have worked on the latter, considering what Nietzsche’s positive theory amounts to. Here, I am concerned with the former, trying to determine what constitutes valuing. Accordingly, I will set aside for now, as much as is possible, discussion of particular
values Nietzsche might hold. Adding to the difficulty in developing and reconstructing Nietzsche’s view is a concern of anachronism, since much metaethical terminology would have been foreign to Nietzsche and other philosophers of his time. Translating Nietzsche’s view into more contemporary language could be risky if doing so introduces worries Nietzsche did not have. While acknowledging the unique nature of Nietzsche’s project, I will use some contemporary concepts to elucidate his conception of value. I aim to show that Nietzsche’s position resembles some more familiar views, providing new resources we can employ in current debates. Thus, despite my worries about using categories like realism and anti-realism to capture Nietzsche’s commitments, I will appeal to some contemporary work and terminology to elucidate some of Nietzsche’s concerns as I reconstruct a Nietzschean conception of value.  

2.1 VALUES AND VALUING

2.1.1 The Neo-Humean Reading

Despite the importance Nietzsche affords to values, he never offers a concise definition of value. Often his use of the term describes the value something has rather than what value is itself. Nietzsche commonly associates values with the needs of an individual. Sometimes the individual is depicted as a member of a type or “type of life.” The obvious question here is what constitutes a type of life. For many interpreters the type of life is defined by physiological components like drives and desires. The implication is thus that Nietzsche promotes a natural foundation for ethics in which values are rooted in drives and desires.

---

85 I am most interested in what I take to be Nietzsche’s mature view, recognizing various stages of development along the way. While I doubt Nietzsche ever reached a consistent, unchanging view, I think his later works show great consistency and can be distinguished philosophically from earlier works.

86 For instance, we find such a connection described in BGE 201 and 268.
Accordingly, we find a variety of interpretations in the secondary literature which I will broadly classify as “neo-Humean.” Jesse Prinz concisely describes the neo-Humean project of morality, writing, “Morality is a human construction that issues from our passions.” The neo-Humean claims there is a natural basis for moral judgments, which is found in human emotional life, not reason. By neo-Humean interpretations of Nietzsche, I mean the view that he denies the existence of moral values, and instead drives and desires are the primary features used to explain the appearance and development of morality. Consequently, values play no active role in human life or practical reason.

I considered one such neo-Humean interpretation, Leiter’s determinism, in Chapter 1. According to Leiter, an individual’s values are determined entirely by type-facts about her, with the result being a form of causal determinism. Moving away from causal determinism, we find many non-cognitivist readings of Nietzsche popular, including versions of emotivism. Alasdair MacIntyre, for example, cites Nietzsche as an ancestor to emotivism and other non-cognitive approaches that reduce ethical claims to the expression of an individual’s desires or emotions. More recently, Maudemarie Clark and David Dudrick have developed a more complex form of Nietzschean non-cognitivism. On their view, beginning with The Gay Science Nietzsche understands value as expressing something like an emotion rather than a belief. Values are thus “projections of passions and feelings,” and when we talk about what has value we are really describing our reactions to objects. On these non-cognitivist views, values have no truth content, but are simply explained as the result of some other attitude or feeling. Finally, some interpreters take the basic neo-Humean assumptions in a cognitivist

---

89 Clark and Dudrick (2007).
direction, proposing that Nietzsche offers a form of error theory. We saw one such reading in Chapter 1 with Hussain’s fictionalist interpretation. On error theoretic interpretations, values are not mere expressions of feelings or attitudes. Instead all claims about values are false, since there are no real values. So these neo-Humean interpretations of Nietzsche all share the view that there are no values to correspond to any real moral properties or facts.

The neo-Humeans get many things right about Nietzsche, and their interpretations are compelling in many respects. The main problem with the neo-Humean trend in the literature is that it makes valuing too simplistic and reductionist.⁹⁰ On these neo-Humean interpretations, values are essentially explained away through a reduction to desires, emotions, or mistaken perceptions. However, while Nietzsche connects drives and desires to values in some way, values should not be reduced to these more basic components. Valuing, on Nietzsche’s picture, has some complex internal structure. Moreover, the neo-Humeans err by introducing values as the end point of some causal chain. On all of these interpretations, values represent the end point of the process. Rather than playing any active role, values are simply the result of some other explanatory story. Against the neo-Humeans, I believe that values for Nietzsche are not simply the product of a causal process but also have a role to play in that causal process. That is, values play an active role in practical reason. This brings to light a further problem with neo-Humean interpretations. They suggest Nietzsche holds a mechanistic picture of human behavior, where actions are causally determined as responses to other phenomena. However, a close look at value shows the picture to be more complicated than the neo-Humeans allow. In the end, if we should be as skeptical of values as the neo-

---
⁹⁰ As far as Nietzsche’s relationship to Hume, there is little reason to think that Nietzsche was actively engaged with Hume’s work. Nietzsche’s interest in Hume, according to Brobjer (2008), was primarily in Hume’s importance to Kant. Nietzsche rarely engaged with Hume on his own terms.
Humean approach suggests, we cannot make sense of why Nietzsche spends so much time discussing values and demanding both the revaluation and creation of values.

Of course, all of this is not to say that we should move in a radically cognitivist, realist, or even Kantian direction. Though Nietzsche does supply an ideal of self-mastery, it is clear he is not interested in objective values and moral agency. Thus, Nietzsche’s conception of value appears to occupy a space between the neo-Humeans and Kantians, where values are connected to drives, desires, and emotions without being reducible to them. Nietzsche’s primary interest, I will argue, is valuing as an activity of caring, or coming to care, for ideas and objects. To make sense of how Nietzsche can so often be in the middle of what we today take to be the two main sides of the debate, we will need to begin by getting clearer on how Nietzsche understands the concept of value.

2.1.2 The Activity of Valuing

The closest Nietzsche comes to providing a definition of value in his published works is in BGE 3, where he writes that values are “physiological requirements for the preservation of a particular type of life.” Nietzsche expands on this definition of value in his notebooks, in doing so connecting values to ways of perceiving: “The standpoint of ‘value’ is the standpoint of conditions of preservation and enhancement for complex forms of relative life-duration within the flux of becoming” (WP 715). What is most telling here is that a value is a

---

91 Though I am generally skeptical of putting serious weight on passages from the notebooks, I think it is justifiable to do so here. WP 715 comes from Nov. 1887-Mar. 1888 notebooks, well after the publication of *Beyond Good and Evil*. It is striking that Nietzsche goes back to BGE 3 and uses some of the same language to describe values. In the published passage, Nietzsche is criticizing the values of philosophers. But WP 715 shows the more general understanding that underlies the claim. Nietzsche expands on these same ideas in BGE 268, but that need not be addressed here.
standpoint (Gesichtspunkt). By standpoint, Nietzsche has in mind the way values structure how an individual interprets the world, which in his terminology constitutes a perspective.\(^92\) In other passages we find Nietzsche using similar terminology to get at this idea. A favorite of his is Optik, which he occasionally uses to describe a framework through which an individual deliberates.\(^93\) Bringing together this idea with BGE 3 and WP 715, we can see that Nietzsche conceives of each value as an Optik or standpoint. But to fully understand what it means for values to function in this way, we must examine the relationship between values, drives, and desires.

The neo-Humeans are certainly correct that values bear some significant relationship to drives and desires, since these components define the “physiological requirements” outlined in BGE 3.\(^94\) By drives, I mean dispositions that move a person to act. By desires, I mean urges, which Nietzsche portrays sometimes as pushes or pulls in different directions.\(^95\) Many passages appear to make neo-Humean projectivism the obvious interpretation. For instance, in D119 Nietzsche describes an individual as a “totality of drives.” He suggests our experiences are created by what satisfies drives, and he claims that moral judgments and evaluations are based on deeper physiological processes. Drives and desires delineate a horizon of possible actions for that individual in terms of what she needs and wants. We might even say she is committed to acting for these core concerns and interests. As Clark and

\(^{92}\) See also May (1999): 9.
\(^{93}\) As in BT “An Attempt at Self-Criticism” 5, BGE 11, AC 9, 54, EH “Wise” 1, and CW “Epilogue.”
\(^{94}\) Precisely how Nietzsche means to distinguish drives from desires is unclear. Furthermore, Nietzsche describes “affects” and “instincts” in ways that seem to overlap with drives, as many including Schacht (1983), Leiter (2002), and Janaway (2007) seem to suggest. But affects and instincts could also encompass desires. I will use drives and desires to represent Nietzsche’s basic psychological and physiological components.
\(^{95}\) For example, see GS 79 and 363.
Dudrick put it, value claims are expressions of commitments because they are expressions “of dispositions to act and react which one regards as justified.”

Drives and desires do not account for all possible actions. Their needs merely explain how it is that humans came to be committed to courses of action in the first place. This process, according to Nietzsche, provides only the “prehistory” of values (GS 335), whereas the neo-Humean holds that values are nothing more than projections. But values are not merely whatever satisfies an individual’s drives and desires. Instead, drives and desires express (or project) not values, as the neo-Humean suggests, but demands. Each drive or desire makes a demand that can be satisfied by some action. In other words, each drive and desire defines a particular set of concerns related to what satisfies these basic urges. The story here is basically the same for animals as it is for humans. Where human values differ from the experiences of other creatures is that the horizon of concern defined by drives and desires allows for different interests and kinds of commitment to develop.

The desire for pleasure provides an example. Commitments that stem from the desire for pleasure demarcate potential actions that would satisfy this desire. However, we cannot explain all pleasure-seeking acts directly by appeal to this basic desire. Perhaps I consistently find pleasure in baseball. I make further commitments in this direction, maybe devoting myself to a certain team and becoming an avid fan. The result is the development of new attachments, or new concerns, which derive not from the initial desires but from previous commitments. Over time, these commitments can go in different directions, no longer

---

constrained by the initial desires. We can see how developments are related to these more basic desires, but there is no relationship of necessity by which a particular object of care inevitably arose from the physiological components. The initial commitment, in this case the commitment to satisfy the desire for pleasure, in turn provides the ground for further concerns to develop. From this, any number of interests may develop.

While values are causally connected to drives, the explanation is not exhausted by drives. We find this distinction in D 119, which is a passage that, at first glance, seems to support the neo-Humean reading. The significance an event has for a person, Nietzsche tells us, depends on which drives happen to be strongest in that person at that moment as well as the “kind of person we are” (der Art Mensch). The implication of this is that the kind (or type) of person one is not be explained by drives alone. The totality of the person consists of drives, desires, and other interests and commitments that cannot be explained by drives alone. Instead, Nietzsche tells us that values are a “sign-language” (Zeichensprache) of the affects, a claim to which I will return shortly (BGE 187).

The complexity of a value is not just in that it has a longer developmental story. The primary way a value differs from these initial drives and desires is that it functions as a different kind of commitment. There is a sense in which drives and desires determine courses of action a person is committed to. Values, however, reflect a more robust commitment as they involve caring in a way that drives and desires do not. We have seen that a person’s interests are tied to that person’s drives and desires. That which a person values reflects what

---

97 Over time, these new commitments can take directions nearly unrecognizable to the initial desire. As a Kansas City Royals fan, my interest in baseball may seem to have little to do with pleasure. The Royals continually cause their fans to feel heartache, anger, and even embarrassment. Rarely does their play bring me meaningful pleasure.
she cares about and what courses of action she is willing to undertake. We must be careful not to import too much with the idea of commitment. For contemporary readers, the idea of commitment brings with it allusions to more realist or cognitivist positions. In contrast, the sense of commitment I have in mind is a kind of attachment or interest. For this reason Nietzsche often associates valuing with caring and feelings of love. He implores us to learn to love differently, which I take to mean indicate a new form of valuing (GS 334). Morality should be about what a person strives to do again and again because through valuing a person finds a life she will pursue (GS 304).

To understand this kind of care involved in valuing we might benefit from drawing on recent work by Harry Frankfurt.\(^\text{98}\) Frankfurt defines caring about something as being invested in it. Frankfurt argues that valuing entails a kind of identification because the individual becomes “vulnerable to losses and susceptible to benefits” when objects of care are diminished or enhanced.\(^\text{99}\) Caring is not the same as liking or wanting because care is prospective and can only occur over an extended period of time. Similarly, we can see that for Nietzsche valuing is distinct from desiring because values take on a distinct kind of significance. Valuing, on his view, entails that something matters to the individual or has taken on significance in that person’s evaluative framework. But this care cannot be reduced to any one explanation. According to Frankfurt, caring is constituted by a complex set of cognitive, affective, and volitional dispositions.\(^\text{100}\) Likewise, Nietzsche’s conception of valuing involves physiological components along with a kind of self-consciousness and the

---

\(^\text{99}\) Ibid.: 83.
\(^\text{100}\) Ibid.: 85.
development of interests that go beyond the necessity of drives and desires. That is, values are related to needs and desires, but they include forms of concern that go beyond physiology.

The importance of care and investment in valuing introduce a new kind of commitment characteristic of values but not of drives and desires. Nietzsche does not fully spell out this new kind of commitment, but he provides an account of promising that gives insight into the phenomenon of value more generally. According to Nietzsche, humans acquired the “right to make a promise” by becoming “predictable” (GM II: 2). Nietzsche associates the capacity of promising with the sovereign individual because the ability to promise requires distinct cognitive capacities and a distinct kind of responsibility. A promise signals that two individuals have a relationship in which one can be held accountable to the other by committing to a specified course of action. Valuing is analogous to promising in that it is an achievement involving both cognitive capacities and the development of a kind of accountability. Values comprise commitments because they reflect not what a person needs to survive but what she cares about and is willing to act for. Values are still expressions of needs, although these change for different individuals and communities and diverge in many directions (GS 116). A value is something a person can be held accountable for because, essentially, she wants to be held accountable for it. Perhaps the biggest difference between valuing and promising, it turns out, is the direction in which the commitment is made. A promise is a commitment made to another person, as if a contract comes to existence between them. A value, however, is a commitment made to oneself, where the individual is accountable to oneself rather than another.
In characterizing values as commitments, it may appear a value is nothing more than a choice. However, Nietzsche is no existentialist about the nature of value. Values are not accepted in the same way as promises. Where promises are typically made upon reflection, values most often exist below the surface and are not easily identified. The process of becoming committed to values is typically a non-cognitive or subconscious task. Nietzsche’s genealogies show us that most people are unaware of many commitments they already hold. So Nietzsche does not think that by uncovering the nature of current values we can immediately choose a new commitment. Rather, showing the complex development of our values emphasizes the possibility of changing them. If values were nothing more than what satisfies our drives and desires, the possibilities of revaluation and value creation would be limited. In suggesting that values are commitments we are accountable for, we may find ways to remake these values in new directions. Consequently, the development of new values is a process of continual becoming and overcoming.

Now that we have a better sense of how values are a kind of achievement that humanity has earned over time, we can tie this back to the initial definition of values as a standpoint or Optik. Each individual value is a lens that provides a way of evaluating the world and categorizing what matters to that person in light of a particular way of valuing. I am not alone in suggesting that value function as a lens. Most recently, Clark and Dudrick have argued that values, like passions, “color existence” and are related to non-cognitive reactions. However, Clark and Dudrick argue that values are projections of passions. The view I have outlined suggests that the significance of these optical metaphors is not limited to

---

101 Schatzki introduces a metaphor of “spectacles” to explain how people see things through a set of values. He takes this idea of values be a biological claim, informed by Nietzsche’s naturalism. Schatzki does not spend any more time in his essay working out values as spectacles. See (1994): 146-167.
feelings, attitudes, and preferences. Instead it is a person’s values that color the entirety of life (GS 289). With each value certain ideas or objects are highlighted and others downplayed depending on what is relevant to its central concern. In many cases, our values generally match up with the goals set by our physiological components. In other cases, values posit new goals and concerns, which are satisfied not by demands but commitments to a specified course of action. Therefore, central to Nietzsche’s conception of value is that valuing is, first and foremost, an activity. Valuing is the process of becoming committed to various concerns and acting in ways that satisfy these commitments. Only these commitments are captured by the term value, and not the more basic needs and urges.

Values are not direct expressions of drives and desires, but we may still call them projections of these physiological components. Valuing is a process through which we come to make commitments, and these develop beyond the demands expressed by drives and desires. It is possible to trace these complex values to their basic components; we could construct a genealogy on any particular value to see its development and relationship to other values. It might prove impractical to do so, but that kind of explanation is in principle available (GS 7). This possibility is at the heart of Nietzsche’s naturalism. I see naturalism reflecting not a strategy of reduction but of deflation. Values have their origin with us but cannot be reduced to any particular facts. The recognition that values develop from the expressions of drives and desires need not commit Nietzsche to the view that values are

---

102 Clark and Dudrick also note Nietzsche’s attention to the activity of valuing. However, they associate valuing with a positing or assessment of value. This undersells the course of action characteristic of valuing.

103 GS 7: “To observe how differently the human drives have grown and still could grow depending on the moral climate – that alone involves too much work for even the most industrious; it would require whole generations, and generations of scholars who would collaborate systematically, to exhaust the points of view and the material.”

104 A point also made recently in Pippin (2010).
nothing more than that. They cannot be reduced to these initial components. Valuing is a very involved process, which we overlook if we define values as simple projections as opposed to the complex development that distinguishes values from other kinds of commitments.

2.1.3 Fictionalism and Quasi-Realism

I have argued that values are not the direct expressions of drives and desires but are rather a more complicated kind of commitment that emerges from physiological components. Still, the connection between these allows us to accurately describe valuing as a form of projection. Though values are not determined fully by drives and desires, the achievement of valuing depends on these more basic demands. Notably, Nietzsche denies that values correspond to any fact or property in the world. Instead, valuing is a shorthand way to describe a complex process of the way we become committed to various concerns and courses of action. Values are, in essence, constructions that emerge out of drives and desires as new interests and concerns become integrated into a person’s life. The term value stands in to represent the way an individual’s perspective is actually comprised of a complex relationship between commitments and demands.

On the interpretation of Nietzsche I have provided, valuing is a complicated achievement humanity has earned over time. In this there remains an important sense in which valuing is a form of fiction or pretense. Moral evaluations are “images and fantasies” that emerge from, or are constructed out of, more basic physiological components (D 119). What gives values their fictional character is that they do not bear the kind of objectivity or necessity values are typically thought to have. In describing a person’s values, what we actually portray are the means of satisfying various interests and demands that have
developed. And, as noted above, these can be traced back to the physiological components from which they emerged. So the way the term value is used is quite different from the process that valuing actually reflects.

On occasion, Nietzsche slides from the view that values are fictions to the idea that the world of value is itself an appearance. We find this most clearly in GS 54, a passage aptly titled “The consciousness of appearance,” where Nietzsche describes his valuing akin to dreaming:

How wonderful and new and yet how fearful and ironic my new insight makes me feel towards all of existence! I have discovered for myself that the ancient humanity and animality, indeed the whole prehistory and past of all sentient being, continues within me to fabulate, to love, to hate, and to infer – I suddenly awoke in the middle of this dream, but only to the consciousness that I am dreaming and that I must go on dreaming lest I perish – as the sleepwalker has to go on dreaming in order to avoid falling down.

GS 54 provides the clearest explanation of how he envisions valuing as an activity of pretense. But what is perhaps most surprising about this passage is the last sentence quoted above. Despite his recognition that valuing is a form of pretense, it is one Nietzsche remains committed to. Since most people have the wrong idea about values, thinking them to be universal or objective, Nietzsche could have introduced new terminology to better capture what he is after. Yet, rather than denying the significance of values and examining more directly the various demands and commitments that comprise ethical life, Nietzsche embraces the language of value. This is even more noteworthy when we consider Nietzsche’s attitude towards other fictions. Nietzsche criticizes Christianity’s development of a false world with
fictional ideas that are fundamentally dishonest. In contrast, with valuing he chooses to (or must) “go on dreaming.” Whereas other projectivists have proposed the development of a new language to replace that of value, Nietzsche goes on to use the language of valuing to describe his own projects of revaluation and value creation.

Even though the activity of valuing stands in for a more complex system of demands and commitments, values still tell us something about the person. The importance of value judgments is that they are “symptoms” disclosing the kinds of commitments an individual is inclined to make (TI II: 2). We can also use values to surmise the needs and desires of others, helping to determine those who are “sick” with some failure of constitution (GS 268). Thus, Nietzsche indicates that while values are projections, as a distinct kind of commitment they stand apart and deserve their own analysis. He makes his strategy clearest in BGE 32, where he famously compares morality to astrology and alchemy. Astrology and alchemy have been replaced by modern science, and with these antiquated views we have largely thrown out the language along with the ideas. With morality, Nietzsche does not suggest we throw out the language of value; instead we need a “reversal and displacement” of our current values. Value theory is unlike astrology, alchemy, or even modern error theory because while the content is flawed the idea of value directs us towards the significance of a distinct kind of commitment, even though our usual use of the term oversimplifies its target.

Values, if misleading in the way they are typically understood, are important for evaluating and implementing change. Hence, Nietzsche’s practical philosophy amounts to a

---

105 See, for example, AC 15 and 23.
sort of naïve realism.\textsuperscript{106} Though values do not refer to any property in the world, they signify a significant human achievement and form of accountability. In this the kind of fiction I am proposing for Nietzsche’s value theory differs from how other interpreters have tried to capture it. Most notably, Nadeem Hussain has offered a well-known fictionalist interpretation of Nietzsche.\textsuperscript{107} Hussain denies that we can make real assertions of value, and he insists that any assertion that something has value is false. On his fictionalist reading, claims of value are really “as if” statements where we act as if something has value while recognizing that it does not. The result is that we cannot take our assertions seriously.\textsuperscript{108} When we appear to value something, Hussain’s understanding is that we are actually engaged in a simulacrum of valuing along the lines of make-believe.

Values, for Nietzsche, cannot be as Hussain describes, because valuing is inconsistent with the “as if” attitude he associates with fictionalism. Valuing cannot be akin to make believe because they reflect deeply rooted commitments. That is, values represent that which a person cares about, thus providing real significance and not a simulacrum of concern. For Nietzsche, we can make assertions that are serious attempts to describe our attitudes, and we can make prescriptions.\textsuperscript{109} Or to use the language of GS 54, the sleepwalker cannot wake up

\textsuperscript{106} Blackburn (2007) outlines two different sorts of fictionalism. “Practically conservative” fictionalism allows everyday practice to remain the same. “Practically revisionary” fictionalism alters everyday practice. Nietzsche’s view, as I have sketched it, is somewhere in between, but closer to the revisionary model. It is a conservative fictionalism because most significant changes will occur in the content of values, not the practice of valuing. Still, Nietzsche’s view should have implications for how we understand ourselves, our commitments, and our means our persuasion. Moreover, rejecting the traditional view of objectivity will undercut some everyday beliefs and practices.

\textsuperscript{107} Hussain (2007).

\textsuperscript{108} See Lewis (2005).

\textsuperscript{109} On this, I think Nietzsche would agree with Simon Blackburn’s insistence that quasi-realism is not a form of fictionalism, or at least not a fictionalism as David Lewis outlines. However, I am suggesting that quasi-realism constitutes a different sort of fictionalism, one that is not so tied to make-believe and the “as if.” See Blackburn (2005).
because at the point the dreamer is no longer dreaming. Valuing cannot be an act of make-believe because values reflect that which a person is willing to act for. Therefore, the fictionalism I am proposing resembles neither neo-Humean projectivism nor the pretense of Hussain’s version of fictionalism, as Nietzsche holds that values are projections while still reflecting serious commitments.

Nietzsche’s conception of value combines a form of naturalism with a distinct kind of fiction, with the result that valuing is best understood as the activity of becoming committed to various concerns. This position, along with Nietzsche’s acceptance of traditional ethical discourse, makes his view similar in some important respects to the contemporary quasi-realism of Simon Blackburn. Blackburn accepts a broadly Humean picture of value, holding that claims reflect an individual’s attitude. Yet, opposed to other projectivists and error theorists, Blackburn does not believe the errors of morality are embodied in our language. Moreover, he does not believe a new expressivist language must be developed. On his view anti-realists can come to adopt or “mimic” the language of moral realism. Blackburn holds that ethical language can be beneficial, but the use of it should constitute an achievement. By this, he means we must distinguish the moral “ingredients” we start with from the finished product.110

We have seen that for Nietzsche ethics also requires a kind of achievement. The right to value is something that also must be earned. The achievement Nietzsche considers is one of a species rather an individual, denoting a kind of accountability not present with drives and desires. Of course, one worry about my proposed connection between Nietzsche and

Blackburn is Nietzsche’s insistence that the world of valuing is, to some extent, a world of appearance and fiction. Blackburn opposes characterizing quasi-realism as fictionalism. Fictionalism, as he understands it, involves taking an “as if” attitude. However, Nietzsche also rejects this kind of pretense. Nietzsche insists values constitute a fiction or pretense because we use them to describe beliefs, commitments, and demands even though values are nothing more than commitments arising as complicated projections. Our values can be traced back to their basic components, yet we sometimes use values to refer to the whole system of commitments, concerns, drives, and desires.

It is not only the acceptance of moral language, though, that suggests Nietzsche’s view resembles quasi-realism. Nietzsche’s practical employment of values as a sort of pretense also brings him closer to Blackburn. Surprisingly, Blackburn does not see Nietzsche as a precursor to his view. In fact, Blackburn argues that Nietzsche is not properly viewed as an ancestor to his quasi-realism. He believes that the fictions Nietzsche employs aim to falsify, which Blackburn believes is not a meaningful strategy and provides little, if any, practical benefit. However, I have suggested that Nietzsche’s use of fiction does not have this falsifying effect. Rather Nietzsche finds the term value misleading since it obscures the complex development of values as projections and commitments. In contrast to other fictions where Nietzsche finds reason to reject the view, values are significant because they reflect a kind of commitment that is of great concern to the individual. Nietzsche embraces the language of value because the development of new commitments is more manageable than reformulating drives and

---

111 Blackburn (2005): 323.
112 He does hold that Nietzsche accepts the need for evaluative discourse, which Nietzsche then shares with fast-track quasi-realists. See Blackburn (1993): 184-186.
113 Blackburn (2007).
desires. In any case, I am not arguing Nietzsche’s understanding of projections and expressions is exactly as Blackburn describes.\textsuperscript{114} Importantly, I see Nietzsche moving further from the neo-Humean model that Blackburn accepts. Nevertheless, Nietzsche’s view that values can be a kind of appearance we should embrace, along with his naturalist interpretations of value and acceptance of ethical language, suggest he works in the same moral space as Blackburn.

2.1.4 Internal Reasons

Neo-Humeans may object to the interpretation I have provided for relying on too complicated a picture of practical reason, since they typically read Nietzsche as a reasons internalist. While many have accepted that Nietzsche is a sort of internalist, neo-Humean interpreters have developed a narrow view of what counts as a reason.\textsuperscript{115} I find their view of reasons too limiting and the overall picture too mechanistic to account for Nietzsche’s stance. For the current task, I am interested in two related concerns: what kinds of constraints are put on reasons and how these features play a role in bringing about a particular action. I will argue that values must play an important role in Nietzsche’s picture of practical reason.

The possibility that Nietzsche’s metaethics entails reasons internalism has received increased focus of late, first with Bernard Reginster and then further in recent work by Simon Robertson.\textsuperscript{116} This is a promising development, and Robertson in particular provides good evidence in favor of Nietzsche’s internalism. Though reasons internalism has come to have a

\textsuperscript{114} Blackburn notes the distinction between construction and fiction, arguing that constructions matter in a way that fictions, or falsehoods, do not. As I have argued, fictions as I mean them are not the falsities that Blackburn suggests. Thus, perhaps on Blackburn’s view construction better captures what I mean by value, since values are constructed out of more basic ingredients.

\textsuperscript{115} See Robertson (2009).

\textsuperscript{116} Reginster (2006); Robertson (2011).
variety of interpretations, the essential idea is what a person has reason to do depends on her motives. The normative facts regarding what a person ought to do are constrained by that person’s motives. Internalists generally accept Bernard Williams’ formulation as the standard account. In the simplest terms, “A has a reason to φ iff A has some desire the satisfaction of which will be served by his φ-ing.”

To describe the constraints on what we can reasonably say a person ought to do, Williams introduces the idea of a “motivational set.” This set includes all a person’s possible motivations. For a person A to have reason to φ, the internalist believes that either she is currently motivated to φ or she could be brought to be motivated to φ by a rational form of thought. The act and the reason for acting are thus connected by what Williams calls a “sound deliberative route” from the motivational set to the conclusion of φ-ing.

On neo-Humean interpretations of Nietzsche, the motivational set appears to include only the individual’s drives and desires. These accounts end up being similar to a view Williams calls “sub-Humean,” on which desires are the only component of a motivational set. The resulting sound deliberative route is mechanistic – the presence of a particular drive or desire explains the value that person seeks, and valuing amounts to a tendency or disposition to respond to stimuli in a certain way. A person is then moved to act in this direction. Nietzsche occasionally describes drives and desires as the basic components of action, as in BGE 36 where he begins with the assumption that “our world of desires and passions is the only thing ‘given’ as real.” However, if we take this as his sole means of explanation, significant problems arise. In particular, the neo-Humean has difficulty

---

118 See Williams (1981): 104.
explaining why one drive was acted upon instead of some other drive. The neo-Humean interpreter could appeal to Nietzsche’s claims that drives are in competition with each other, or that some drives are stronger and more dominant. However, all this does is push the problem back; it is unclear what makes some drives stronger than others.

The neo-Humean story does not provide a compelling story of why reasons should be limited to drives and desires, and Robertson adds a further problem in limiting Nietzsche’s motivational set to these components. Nietzsche describes many other aspects of psychology that could contribute to a person’s motives, including affects, instincts, passions, feelings, and tastes.  

Reginster seems to recognize the same problem, and in his account he introduces a role for what he calls perspective. Reginster does not use Williams’ language to describe the picture, but it appears he means perspective to play a role akin to the motivational set. According to Reginster, a perspective is constituted by the individual’s desires, needs, affects, and patterns of responses, all of which are psychological facts that depend on the individual.  

For Reginster this perspective is the source of evaluation and action. Affects and desires reflect an individual’s physiological condition, and together they form the standpoint from which an individual deliberates. Consequently, the possible reasons any individual has depend on these physiological facts.  

What Reginster has done, it seems, is to expand the

---

121 Reginster tries to show that value plays an active role in defining the perspective, but I find it difficult to reconcile this move with his overall view. He indicates that values help to define perspective, and they shape it as much as desires and affects. See Ibid.: 81-82, 84, and 158. It is possible that he means something like my earlier argument about how valuing becomes complex, in turn altering the basic physiological components of life. However, this seems unlikely, since Reginster is content to define values as interpretations done from the standpoint of affects or desires (98). Given his emphasis on the physiological, I believe this is the safer interpretation.
motivational set to include a wider array of physiological features while keeping the basic mechanistic picture intact.

Reginster is right to associate perspective with something like a motivational set. Nevertheless, I believe his view, like both the neo-Humean view and Robertson’s interpretation, fails to adequately locate the role of value in Nietzsche’s work. For instance, Robertson associates valuing with goal-setting rather than seeing it as an activity of commitment. But in opposition to this, Nietzsche conceives of values, as forms of care, playing an independent role in practical reason. To see how this is possible we will need to move beyond the mechanistic picture of how we move from motive to action. Perspectives, for Nietzsche, are not just defined by psychological facts. Recall that a perspective is always a valuing perspective, or an Optik from which a person makes evaluations. Values are rooted in what the individual sees as her needs and interests. A value, in comprising a commitment or set of concerns, delineates a way that things can matter to an individual, thus providing another kind of potential motive. An individual’s values illuminate possibilities in different ways, and the concluding judgment is defined by how a person’s values fit together at a given time. That what an individual cares about provides a horizon of possible reasons, but these cannot be reduced to facts about that person.

We see this role of values evident in love. Valuing and love are closely related because they both involve deep care or attachment, so Nietzsche provides love as an example of how value judgments color the world. Love, he argues, “brings to light the high and the
hidden qualities of the lover – what is rare and exceptional about him” (BGE 163). Loving someone allows other aspects of the world to become meaningful in relation to that person. Values entail something similar, because the relevant features that appeal to someone’s concerns leap out, and possible actions are recognized only in relation to that person’s values. In other words, the individual’s commitments and concerns constitute a significant part of a motivational set because they constrain the kinds of reasons that can be accepted along with the actions that are possible for that person. Though these concerns are, in a sense, projected from the more basic physiological concerns, we have seen that valuing is not limited to these. Nietzsche’s presentation of a motivational set allows that what a person values plays a defining role in what reasons a person can and should have.

I have claimed Nietzsche denies a mechanistic picture of action, or at least the neo-Humean claim that presents a direct causal route from the motivational set to the action. Williams similarly denies the simple, mechanistic picture of action that he associates with Humeans. On Williams’ view, the motivational set can be quite expansive. It may include “dispositions of evaluation, patterns of emotional reaction, personal loyalties, and various projects.” If I am right, then Nietzsche’s version of the motivational set differs from Williams by including values as a kind of reason. At this point, we might wonder what Nietzsche’s alternative explanation is to the overly-mechanistic Humean picture. Williams

\[\text{\textsuperscript{122} Nietzsche concludes this passage by noting “to this extent, love easily misleads about his ordinary traits.” Though Nietzsche is offering a pointed criticism about how love sometimes lacks honesty, I do not think this undermines the basic point I am making here regarding value.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{123} Williams (1981): 105.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{124} Williams’ debt to Nietzsche is well-known. In addition to Williams’ own work, see Clark (2001).} \]

Nevertheless, I am not sure that even Williams recognized the similarity between his account of internalism and Nietzsche’s conception of value. In Williams (1994), he does reveal Nietzsche’s skepticism of causation in a way similar to his own criticisms of the Humean’s causal account of practical reason. However, Williams begins the essay with a caution that Nietzsche is not a source of theories. Nietzsche’s primary aim, according to Williams, is to eliminate the excesses of moral psychology, reducing it down only to what is needed.
suggests that the recognition of having a reason $\varphi$ is sufficient to explain an instance of $\varphi$-ing. Though the agent herself may not recognize the sound deliberative route or how it is she is motivated by the presence of a motivating reason, the motivation is rooted in what it is to have a reason. In other words, the agent is motivated to act through her perception of the situation. Nietzsche seems to agree that to value something is to care about it in a way that elicits certain responses to it. A person is drawn to and repulsed from certain possible actions without an appeal to more basic drives and desires. However, we can do little more at this point than speculate on Nietzsche’s behalf. In the end, it may be best to simply characterize the alternative as less mechanistic than the neo-Humean, since it remains unclear precisely how a non-mechanistic alternative could function for either Nietzsche or Williams.

2.2 STANDARDS AND LIMITS OF VALUING

2.2.1 A Puzzle for Nietzsche and Williams

I have argued that Nietzsche’s primary concern is for valuing as activity. Valuing standpoints are complicated projections of drives and desires that cannot be reduced to their physiological origins. I have also argued that a person’s values define her potentially motivating reasons. Individuals’ normative judgments about what others ought to do are constrained by the possible motivations they have. If I am right about the metaethical status of values and their role in practical reason, Nietzsche’s position turns out to look a fair a bit like that of Bernard Williams, who defends his own version of reasons internalism and denies traditional standards of value. The benefit of understanding Nietzsche as I have is that, as Robertson points out, accepting some sort of metaethical framework helps us resolve a difficulty concerning Nietzsche’s authority. As an internalist, he can deny the normative
Yet, Robertson ignores a further puzzle, one familiar to readers of Williams. Williams claims that what an individual has reason to do depends on that individual’s subjective constitution. If a person does not have reason to act in such a way, we would appear unable to make claims about what that person ought to do, since "ought" would indicate a person should have reason to do it. Williams insists that he is still able to make judgments about what others ought to do. He may not be able to determine what is ultimately good or right, but he intends to make claims to what is better or more appropriate. How exactly Williams can justify this move is the matter of our present concern.

Let us consider an example from Williams in order to better understand the problem. Imagine a man who is inattentive to his wife. Naturally, he is told by others that he ought to be nicer to her, but these attempts fail. For this man, the problem is not that he is acting on some motivation other than being nice to his wife. Rather, for this man there is nothing in his motivational set that provides a reason to be more attentive to his wife. It would seem that Williams should not be able to characterize the man’s inattentiveness as a moral failing, since we are unable to say the man ought to have been nicer. Williams disagrees. He insists that he may say the man is ungrateful, inconsiderate, selfish, sexist, or any number of things, all of which are meant to express that it would be better if this man were more attentive to his wife. Here, “better” does not mean that the man would become closer to realizing some objective

---

126 Katsafanas (2011) also points out that internalism has difficulty explaining the non-optional character of moral claims. He believes that a constitutive account best avoids the problems of both internalism and externalism. While I agree there is a tension in internalism, I believe Nietzsche was an internalist, and I will spend the rest of the chapter arguing that Nietzsche can explain both value assessment and the non-optional character of values.
good. Williams means “better” as a form of moral judgment that does not entail objective
goodness. Williams’ suggestion is that we can get around the apparent relativism of reasons
internalism by developing a new sort of evaluative claim. The problem we face with
Williams, though, is that he neither gives a clear account of how this aims at something
distinct nor provides adequate justification of how he makes evaluative claims.

If Nietzsche, like Williams, wants to describe the inattentive husband as deficient, this
would appear to undercut his conception of reasons. T. M. Scanlon points out that deficiency
looks like another way to say that he ought to have had reason to be nicer to his wife.\textsuperscript{128} While
Williams maintains he can find grounds to make judgments about better and worse, the ways
he might go about doing so should be closed off to him. This brings us back to a basic
difficulty with Nietzsche. He insists on making judgments about values, but his critique seems
to have eliminated such grounds for evaluation. Nietzsche accepts that the reasons a person
has depend on her values, yet Nietzsche’s major projects like the revaluation of values require
means of assessment. While some of his criticisms of values might comprise an internal
critique, many other criticisms appeal to some external standard, and it is not clear how these
are consistent with his internalism.\textsuperscript{129}

I believe Nietzsche’s position can address this concern while justifying claims that
values can be better or worse. In his exchange with John McDowell, Williams claims the

\textsuperscript{128} For this criticism of Williams, see the Scanlon (1998) Appendix.
\textsuperscript{129} Nietzsche also shares Williams’ concern that traditional moral judgments are sometimes used as tools of
persuasion, and those who view the situation differently are charged with irrationality. See Williams (1981):
Nietzsche, it is truth that has been universalized and used to force everyone to play a certain kind of moral game
(BGE 5, TII IX: 42). One important difference between Williams and Nietzsche appears to be that Nietzsche
provides an important role to non-rational persuasion. Williams wants to distinguish rational and non-rational
persuasion, and he favors only the rational. In contrast Nietzsche often employs non-rational persuasion in an
attempt to persuade or convert others.
internalist can still impose constraints on what counts as “correct deliberation.” These constraints, he argues, cannot be formal or fully determinate. Still, they can show that processes count as correct deliberation from the motivational set to $\phi$-ing.\footnote{Williams (1995b).} Regrettably, Williams does little to flesh out what these constraints might be. But we can look at Nietzsche’s work as a way of building on Williams’ suggestion. Nietzsche, on my view, develops constraints along these very lines. Nietzsche’s concern is not as much on the processes of deliberation as it is on the processes of valuing. Valuing, an inescapable activity for human beings, could itself furnish criteria for better or worse valuing.

In suggesting that the standard of value is internal to human valuing, it might sound as though I am suggesting Nietzsche is some sort of constitutivist. I do not believe this is the case, but it is worth explaining where my view differs from the constitutivist. Paul Katsafanas has provided the most compelling constitutivist reading of Nietzsche.\footnote{Katsafanas (2011).} Constitutivism holds that actions have a constitutive aim or structural feature that determines what constitutes an action. In defining an action, the constitutive aim also comprises a standard of evaluation. That is, an action, in virtue of being an action, brings with it a criterion of assessment. On Katsafanas’ reading of Nietzsche, the constitutive aim of action is found in the will to power. Following Reginster, Katsafanas understands the will to power as actively seeking resistances to overcome.\footnote{Ibid.: 13 (online version).} All actions have the constitutive aim of overcoming resistance, which means all agents are committed to valuing power. Overcoming resistance is simply what it is to act or to be motivated by drives. Power is not the only value Katsafanas recognizes, but it is the only inescapable one, meaning other values must be consistent with it. Values that generate

\footnotesize{130 Williams (1995b).  
131 Katsafanas (2011).  
132 Ibid.: 13 (online version).}
conflicts with power are unacceptable.\textsuperscript{133} For example, complacency conflicts with power because since it tries to avoid challenges. Therefore, complacency cannot be a value on Nietzsche’s system.

The strategy I am proposing for Nietzsche depends on neither any particular understanding of agency nor determining a constitutive aim of action. Rather, I hold that Nietzsche’s aim is to locate a means of evaluation, and accordingly a number of potential standards, internal to the activity of valuing. I will treat these standards as limiting conditions, ruling out actions and values that conflict with how Nietzsche understands successful valuing. Where the constitutive reading must determine what counts as an action, I argue that Nietzsche’s standard has a more basic foundation. Valuing is an activity that characterizes human nature.\textsuperscript{134} I earlier argued that valuing is a defining human achievement. In addition to this specific use of value, Nietzsche finds human action involves esteeming, judging, and evaluating. In other words, human beings are creatures that care about things and make commitments. Without such evaluations, human action would not be possible, and “the nut of existence would be hollow” (Z I: “On a Thousand and One Goals”).\textsuperscript{135} Yet, what matters for Nietzsche is the activity, not any feature or requirement of agency.

If value standards are not constitutive, the question remains what aspects of human valuing the standards pertain to. Schacht has argued that values are engendered by forms of life.\textsuperscript{136} Forms of life are socio-cultural developments of practices and institutions that give

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{133} Ibid.: 30 (online version)
  \item \textsuperscript{134} Schacht describes this argument as valuing being “the only game in town.” See (1983): 394-398.
  \item \textsuperscript{135} As Horstmann puts it, human life is fundamentally value-oriented, and it would be basically impossible without a set of values. See (2002): xvi-xvii.
  \item \textsuperscript{136} Schacht (2001).
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
context to human behavior and interactions. While Schacht is right to focus on these institutions, I propose we must look at a more basic understanding of a practice to find value standards. The move Nietzsche makes to develop a standard, or strategy of assessment, internal to the activity of valuing bears some similarity to the approach we find in Alasdair MacIntyre’s *After Virtue*. MacIntyre analyzes the nature of practice in human life. A practice, according to MacIntyre, is an activity established through cooperative social behavior. Standards of excellence are developed, and these can be achieved only through the activity; these goals also help to define the activity. The activity contains internal goods that can only be achieved by participating in the activity. For example, chess entails certain internal goods and standards, including skills particular to the game and victory that can be determined only in accord with certain rules. A player who violates the rules, written or unwritten, cannot attain the goods internal to the activity, and she is judged unsuccessful according to the standards of chess playing. Valuing, of course, is not a practice. While it is a common human activity, it is not shared in the same way as practices. Its internal goods and standards of excellence do not develop over time in a cooperative manner. But what is significant about MacIntyre’s approach, which Nietzsche also insists on, is that standards can be created without relying solely on the nature of agency or action. The standards of a practice

---

137 MacIntyre (1984). MacIntyre does not see this connection to Nietzsche, since he has a very different reading of Nietzsche’s project. See esp. Chapter 9. According to MacIntyre, Nietzsche espoused a “prophetic irrationalism.” He saw the failures of modern moral theories, and in response he proposed we create new values through a heroic act of will. This is a misunderstanding of the role value creation plays, and it does not capture Nietzsche’s conception of value. While Nietzsche does not accept the more unified account of human nature that MacIntyre relies on, he is interested in examining value within the context of human valuing, precisely to show that creation must be something more than subjective willing.

138 Macintyre’s complete definition is that a practice is a “coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative behavior through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence, which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended.” See MacIntyre (1984): 187.
apply to individuals qua participants, not qua human beings. In the same way, Nietzsche’s analysis of valuing develops criteria of excellence by considering human engagement in the activity, not human nature or aims constitutive of action.

2.2.2 Health as a Limiting Condition

I have argued that Nietzsche’s strategy of evaluation is to locate standards internal to the activity of valuing. I now want to consider how these assessments work in practice. The first such standard, or limiting condition, I will examine is health. With health, Nietzsche’s focus is the relationship between valuing and human life. Nietzsche’s understanding of health is difficult to pin down because he uses health in a number of different senses. Complicating matters is his apparent denial of health as a standard. He insists “there is no health as such,” and instead there are “innumerable healths of the body” (GS 120). Against the traditional conception of health, he proposes that the virtue and health of one person could “look in one person like the opposite of health in another.” Nevertheless, it is clear that Nietzsche understands some individuals and ideologies as sick, and to Nietzsche “sick people are parasites on society” who should not be allowed to continue on in this condition (TI IX: 36). To make sense of these competing views of health, we must turn our attention to how Nietzsche understands the living creatures to which health applies.

I propose that Nietzsche’s understanding of living creatures depends on his employment of life as a logical category.\(^{139}\) By this, I mean that life is not defined by biology

\(^{139}\) In seeking a logical category, we might see a broad similarity between Nietzsche’s interest in health and Michael Thompson’s (1995) consideration of life as a logical or metaphysical category. Thompson’s effort points out the circularity behind a number of common definitions of life, including vital organization, stimulus/response, and self-movement. Thompson ultimately settles on the life-form as an Aristotelian category,
or physiology but rather a category that captures what it means for something to be alive. In this case, treating life as a logical category leads Nietzsche to examine organisms in order to discern the distinctive features of being alive. It is important to see that Nietzsche’s interest is not in what constitutes a flourishing life but what tendencies are present in life. Living creatures, he argues, are marked by growth and development (AC 6). But such features alone are not unique to life. The distinctive organization of living organisms is found in the will to power – “life is precisely the will to power” (BGE 259). Power is not a psychological state but the processes that characterize something that is alive. Life is a process of “appropriating, injuring, overpowering the alien and the weaker, oppressing, being harsh, imposing your own form, incorporating, and at least, at very least, exploiting” (BGE 259). In other words, living creatures interact with the world, make use of it, and aim to continue their form of life. In this context power is the ability for something to act in such ways that allow for the furthering of vital processes. In general, a living thing is corrupted or decaying when it fails to exemplify the various aspects of power that Nietzsche has described. But power does not entail domination over others. When Nietzsche describes life as exploiting, he means any living thing only survives at the expense of something else. A lion exploits an antelope for food, or a redwood exploits sunlight and water as it grows taller. Life logically entails that a living thing must appropriate means for sustenance and improvement, and it must overcome obstacles in order to survive.

where each form of life has a natural-historical story. Similarly, Nietzsche understands each species through its genealogical development.

140 We also find this claim in WP 254, and in WP 692 he describes life as “a special case of the will to power.”

141 Hussain offers a similar account of the will to power. See (2011): 153-154. According to Hussain, the will to power denotes what is essential to life, which resembles my approach of evaluating life as a logical category.
The tendency in the secondary literature is to employ life as Nietzsche’s standard of value. For example, Hussain describes Nietzsche’s fundamental question as “whether in individuals or cultures there are instincts that are undermining life, turning against it, leading to lives that are less powerful, or whether there is an affirmation and rejoicing of life” where revaluing is done “for the sake of life.” The problem with using life as a standard is that even types of life Nietzsche wants to rule out express the tendencies of life. That is, even a creature that is sick, so long as it is alive, will bear the essential characteristics of life. If valuing is an inescapable component of human life, in order to understand the role of life we need a separate standard of evaluation to place life into context. For Nietzsche, this standard is health, with his assessments revealing a distinct kind of contradiction. Health is a successful condition of living organisms. The condition is not one of permanent stability, but more like what Aristotle calls a state (hexis). Such a state is an active condition, resulting in a disposition or way of responding to the world.

We have already seen that Nietzsche denies health can apply in the same way to all organisms. At times, he suggests that health applies only to individuals. He defends this by pointing out that what is healthy for one individual can make another sick (HAH I: 286, GS 120). However, elsewhere Nietzsche indicates that the species of humanity is an appropriate category for examination, and this fits more readily with his treatment of life. For instance, he argues in GS 1 that previous ethical systems have been contrary to the nature of humanity, suggesting human nature is the appropriate scope of health. Moreover, the nature of Nietzsche’s genealogies suggests that the development of the human organism is of the

---

143 See Aristotle’s Metaphysics: 5.1022b and Nicomachean Ethics: 2.1103b.
utmost importance for understanding valuing. Consequently, Schacht is correct to argue that Nietzsche’s concern for human life entails analysis of the process of life, where human beings are an illuminating and complicated, but not unique, form. Health and sickness, accordingly, are species-specific terms that denote a corruption of the life process: “I call an animal, a species, an individual corrupt when it loses its instincts, when it chooses, when it prefers things that will harm it” (AC 6). Thus, Nietzsche understands unhealthiness as a kind of contradiction of the life-form itself; the unhealthy organism is in a condition that undermines the very conditions of its health.

Since human beings are a distinct life form, and valuing is the characteristic feature of humanity, the corresponding notions of human health and sickness must be connected to valuing. Not only is valuing unique to human life, but the development of this life-form has become tied to valuing, and the result is that “man is the sick animal” (GM III: 13). “Life itself forces us to posit values,” making humans are valuing creatures (TI V: 5). The possibility of assessment comes into play because, as Nietzsche puts it, “Life itself evaluates through us, when we posit values.” Since health, for any species, is the expression of its power, health for human beings entails valuing in ways consistent with human strength and growth. That is, healthy values are those that promote power and the continuation of valuing. The commitments made should provide grounds for future commitments.

Health is specific only to a domain of a species or other form of life. However, the concern of health is usually particular to an individual member of the species. Hence, many of

our assessments occur at the level of the individual.\footnote{Again, the suggestion here is similar to Thompson (1995). Thompson argues that concerns like sickness are matters at the level of the species, but he rightly points out that the first application of normative concepts such as good, bad, or defect are at the level of the individual. For Nietzsche, despite his general worry about the sickness and decadence of humanity, when he actually gets into the particulars we find his analysis at the level of the individual’s values and instincts. Nietzsche finds the human species sick because the majority of individuals are sick and becoming sicker.} A healthy human organism is an individual whose values provide new opportunities, interests, and a desire to continue developing values and interests. Commitments should provide fertile ground for new growth. Healthy humans may have a variety of different values that need not even be consistent with each other, so long as they are consistent with his basic conception of a healthy human organism. To develop health into a limiting condition, Nietzsche takes health as understood at the level of the species and applies it to particular values and contexts. He is then able to determine whether these values are consistent with the activity of valuing, which indicates health, or whether these values reveal corruption and contradiction. Nietzsche’s evaluations thus depend on whether values allow the activity of valuing to succeed or whether they instead, if adopted, undermine the ability to develop concerns and commitments. With this standard, we can evaluate health in terms of both the entire human species and also particular members of the species.

The sickness of humanity that Nietzsche diagnoses in many individuals is a disdain, nausea, or boredom – the issue is one of human vitality. Self-undermining values threaten to corrupt humanity by making it impossible to continue the activity of valuing itself. Nietzsche traces these self-undermining values, at least in the western tradition, to Socrates, who exemplified “melancholy” and “exhaustion” (TI II: 1). But Nietzsche finds more self-undermining values since the time of Socrates. Nietzsche identifies decaying societies in
Europe, marked as such by the loss of organization and the increased subordination of individuals (TI IX: 37). In particular, Christianity is based on an instinct “against the healthy” (AC 51). Christianity is hostile to life because it attacks the passions. He considers passions the “root of life” because they are exemplified in healthy valuing (TI V: 1). Through the attack on the passions, the valuing attitude is itself undermined. Nietzsche associates health and growth with joy and exuberance. When passion is lost, the urge is no longer towards growth but decline. The end result of accepting unhealthy values is what Nietzsche calls nihilism, where “the sight of man now makes us tired” (GM I: 12).

The sickest humanity can become is to adopt not only specific unhealthy values but complete resentment towards life. This condition is embodied by the ascetic. An ascetic individual seeks power not to grow as an organism but to stultify her own growth in favor of pain and self-sacrifice (GM III: 11). The existence of ascetic values is a paradox, as the valuing individual aims to value nothing at all. To understand how health allows us to evaluate specific values, we can look to one of Nietzsche’s examples. Nietzsche argues that most forms of pity are unhealthy. A particular concern is that pity is unhealthy due to the contradiction it brings to life. One aim of pity is to reduce suffering, providing comfort to those who are suffering. Yet pity often incorporates contempt. The pitier experiencing a feeling of superiority over the pitied since the pitier occupies a position above or beyond the sufferer (D 135-136). Moreover, the pitier loses herself in the concerns of others, and she loses sight of what is significant for herself (GS 338). Pity is therefore a sign of weakness, a distraction from the growth and energy that exemplify a healthy creature. By either pitying or needing pity, the individual who values pity sees herself in a negative light. The emphasis on
suffering shows life to be filled with suffering, and it makes the individual feel that what she
does has no real benefit. Thus, Nietzsche concludes, regarding pity, that “supposing it was
dominant for even for a single day, mankind would immediately perish of it” (D 134). It
seems any unhealthy value should result in a similar hypothetical rejection.

One objection to the account I have given is that the demand to continue living and
growing seems at odds with some of Nietzsche’s comments on death. Notably, his Zarathustra
speaks of the importance of dying at the right time rather than dying too late. Zarathustra
notes, “Everyone regards dying as important; but death is not yet a festival” (Z I: “On Free
Death”). However, this demand only follows from the fact that we cannot go on living
forever. If eternal life were possible, there would be no necessary reason to die at any point.
But Nietzsche realizes that all creatures, no matter how healthy, reach a point where they can
no longer exhibit the vitality characteristic of living creatures. The recognition of this
condition involves “dying proudly when it is no longer feasible to live proudly” (TI IX: 36).
The difference between this person and most sick individuals is that the sick usually still have
the possibility of becoming healthy. Only when health is no longer possible does it become
appropriate to die.

2.2.3 Honesty as a Limiting Condition

Health provides a limit on values by determining whether they are consistent with the
valuing as an activity of living creatures. A second kind of limiting condition considers the
disposition with which an individual values. Nietzsche calls one such limiting condition
honesty (Redlichkeit). Honesty might seem an odd concern for Nietzsche, given his well-
known criticisms of truth and objectivity. However, much of Nietzsche’s work aims to root
out errors and misunderstandings that can become embedded in life or provide the basis of
value. For instance, he criticizes Christianity for being “completely out of touch with reality”
(AC 15). Williams helpfully captures this apparent tension in Nietzsche’s work by marking a
distinction between truth and truthfulness. Nietzsche, he argues, has a “pervasive suspicion”
regarding truth but at the same time holds “an intense commitment to truthfulness” or an
“eagerness to see through appearances to the real structures and motives that lie behind
them.”

Williams believes truthfulness is consistent with interpreting truth in its historical
and perspectival contexts. Williams’ suggestions that we recognize a Nietzschean goal of
truthfulness have merit, but I want to look at truthfulness as Nietzsche describes it in relation
to valuing. It is the truthfulness of valuing, I believe, that Nietzsche tries to capture in many of
his depictions of honesty. By honesty, Nietzsche seeks a kind of proper rigor in our
interpretations and deliberations, to which he adds the importance of confrontation.

Nietzsche’s concern about truthfulness amounts to a worry about sincerity in valuing.
However, the question is what sincerity would look like in this domain. One possibility is to
think of it interpersonally, like being sincere to others. Williams defends this as a significant
component of truthfulness. He argues that sincerity has a fundamental connection with trust,
making truthfulness closely related to the virtue of trustworthiness. The connection has to
do in part with communication, since we must communicate with others, requiring trust in
others to obtain information. However, the honesty we find in Nietzsche’s work does not
involve communication or interpersonal relationships. Honesty, in this context, is a self-

147 Williams (2002): 87-93.
directed concern regarding self-deception in one’s own values. So what is it to be sincere to oneself when valuing? One possibility found in Nietzsche’s writings is that values must reflect one’s “true self.” Insincere valuing would occur when values fail to reflect one’s deepest desires, needs, or goals. For example, Nietzsche implies that it is dishonest to go with the crowd and leave behind one’s own tastes (GS 368). Thus, honesty might entail determining one’s core interests and making sure all values align with them. However, it is not clear what kind of true self Nietzsche could have in mind. His picture is that humans are comprised of competing, even conflicting, drives and desires (D 109, GM II: 1). There is no one condition or unification that can be easily identified as the essence of any individual. If honesty involves simply a demand to find one’s core interests or concerns, this is too limited a role for honesty. Given the importance Nietzsche seems to place on honesty, the role it plays must be more than a demand to eliminate foreign considerations.\footnote{Furthermore, I will argue in Chapter 4 that we should not confuse Nietzsche’s calls for solitude and isolation with a repudiation of all things heteronomous. It is not practical on Nietzsche’s view to completely separate oneself from the influence of others.}

Nietzsche characterizes honesty, in the form of being sincere to oneself, as a virtue (BGE 227). We have to be careful, though, because there is a trivial sense in which valuing must be sincere. Values reflect concerns and commitments. Consequently, whatever values one has will reflect what that person cares most about. In other words, all valuing, by definition, is an activity of making sincere commitments. Nietzsche is after a more robust conception of sincerity than this, since he thinks that most people value insincerely even though their values reflect personal interests and concerns. Honesty of this sort is not distinctive of any valuing but of what it is to value well. In developing a limiting condition on
Valuing, Nietzsche is convinced that something is wrong with the way people value that is not explained solely by the content of their values.

Valuing well requires that values are developed in view of all relevant facts. If pertinent information is ignored or misunderstood, then the corresponding values cannot be considered honest. Nietzsche offers a number of examples where valuing has neglected or misunderstood important facts. The Eleatics, he argues, relied on an implausible picture of human intuition and impulse, which led them to believe humans were completely free (GS 110). Christianity, he thinks, relies on misconceptions of human nature, especially with regard to drives, emotions, and explanations of action (GS 335). The result is that Christian values often try to deny the physical elements that Nietzsche believes best define humanity. A more honest religion would be one whose founders have more adequate approaches to interpreting their own experiences (GS 319). And philosophers have lacked honesty because they have relied on prejudices and a faulty conception of universal truth, leading them to develop values and truths based on these confusions (BGE 5). The resulting values contain errors in how they purport to respond to their context; hence, on Nietzsche’s formal account these are poorly-conceived values despite functioning in the same way as honest values. The errors indicate the corresponding values and commitments do not reflect what the valuing agents believe they do.

To articulate the more honest form of valuing, Nietzsche insists that valuing must take into account and respond to all relevant details about an individual’s life experiences. To understand the virtue of honesty, we can begin with his famous passage GS 341 “The Greatest
In this passage Nietzsche presents his ideal of life affirmation in terms of the eternal recurrence. However, honesty bears some similarity to the description of affirmation we find in GS 341. Affirmation requires an individual affirm all elements of his life down to the smallest detail. Honesty is a more general concept that does not entail an affirmative attitude. The target of honesty is thus broader than affirmation. Affirmation is a specific kind of attitude that Nietzsche finds ideal. Honesty does not itself require that everything be affirmed; rather, it provides a more general constraint on valuing. Honesty targets the disposition and rigor with which values are formed rather. Still, honesty, like affirmation in 341, requires the inclusion of all details and facts. For instance, to affirm life, we must affirm even the spider and the moonlight. To value honestly, we must take note of the minor details; nothing can be ignored or avoided, and all elements of one’s life must be encompassed in valuing. Of course, defining honesty in terms of minor details and relevant facts still faces a significant problem, which Lanier Anderson describes: “The raw facts of my life may well admit of different descriptions, under which they would assume different meanings. It is important to be honest no less about what the facts of my life mean than about what they are, and the potential range (and variation) of meanings complicates the task.” Even if the honest person considers all the relevant facts that underlie her values, there is no one interpretation that must be the correct one. We are left to grapple with what honesty could look like once we abandon the idea that one interpretation is best. My suggestion is that we

---

149 GS 341 begins: “What if some day or night a demon were to steal into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: ‘This life as you now live it and have lived it you will have to live once again and innumerable times again; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unspeakably small or great in your life must return to you, all in the same succession and sequence – even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned over again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!’”

150 Anderson (2005): 207.
can better flesh out what Nietzsche is after by connecting honesty to confrontation. The honest person confronts all relevant facts and possible interpretations. While open to different interpretive routes, confrontation makes it possible to have values that respond to and overcome the difficulties faced in life. Dishonest valuing, on the other hand, is failing to confront the difficult facts about one’s situation, as in the above examples where values do not reflect the complexities of human existence.

Throughout his career, Nietzsche pursued an idea of confrontation with roots in his early work on tragedy. At its most basic level, confrontation involves coming to terms with that which is most difficult to accept or to overcome. The tendency Nietzsche finds in most people is to avoid or ignore the more difficult and troubling aspects of life, and recent research appears to support Nietzsche’s claim.\(^{151}\) In his early work, Nietzsche thought that only by being forced to confront and accept unwanted features of life could one get around this human tendency. In *The Birth of Tragedy* he held that tragedy provides the means of confronting life. The origin of tragedy was in Dionysian music that revealed the true nature of existence, especially the cruelty and horrors of human life (BT 2). Tragedy helped the Greeks by not only revealing the condition of life but also providing a resolution that made life livable. Without tragedy, humanity was largely in ignorance of its contingent, meaningless existence. To make these conditions palatable, tragedy came to include other theatrical elements. Tragedy aimed to seduce the audience into accepting life despite also revealing the terrible nature of human existence. In this way, tragedy was an early attempt to understand how life affirmation was possible. More importantly for our purposes, tragedy was honest in

\(^{151}\)Political scientists have found that misinformed people, when exposed to correct facts, often become more stubborn in their initial beliefs. See Nyhan and Reifler (2010).
that it revealed the nature of the world, and it forced the audience to see things, more or less, as they were. In providing a story of human mistakes in an indifferent world, the Greeks could see that even heroes could be foiled by existence. If even heroes die in cruel and ironic fashion, the fate of average humans must be even worse. Without tragedy providing a means for this realization, Greek values would apparently not have been able to adequately take into account the fundamental human condition. The condition would have been ignored, and Greek valuing would have built on an unstable foundation.

Tragedy and the Dionysian revealed the human condition to Greek society on the whole, but Nietzsche also recognized the personal transformation that confrontation with reality can bring. The confrontational element of the tragic should, ideally, lead each person to reflect on her own existence. Nietzsche makes his case for reflection in his comments on tragic myth. The myth provides an image of the hero, and the audience might be tempted to think the scene is mere fiction. Upon closer examination, the events in the myth reveal to the audience something deeper. It says to the audience, “Take a look! Take a close look! This is your life! This is the hour-hand on the clock of your existence!” (BT 24). The demand of honesty by myth is a key element of tragedy. As Nietzsche’s career progressed, and he developed a more thorough account of life affirmation, he left behind much of the machinery from his earlier works. He continued to push some version of the Dionysian, but he no longer emphasized the dialectic of tragedy, believing the approached he used in *The Birth of Tragedy* “smells offensively Hegelian” (EH “BT”: 1). Yet, Nietzsche retained the confrontational element of the tragic, which we see on display in his later works, especially *The Gay Science*. As I argued above, we see a similar formulation in the affirmation of GS 341. However, the
connection between honesty and the tragic is most evident in GS 107, where Nietzsche defines honesty as “insight into delusion and error as a condition of cognitive and sensate existence.” Nietzsche still holds that art and honesty are involved in affirmation, since art is needed to temper the “nausea and suicide” honesty can induce. But honesty also comes to function as a more basic criterion of valuing. Still, Nietzsche does not shy away from his earlier connection of honesty to the tragic, and on occasion he reminds the reader of the origin of his version of honesty. Immediately following The Greatest Weight, Nietzsche presents a look at the life of an honest valuer, Zarathustra. As a depiction of honesty in practice, the story takes the form of tragedy – *Incipit tragoedia*.

In separating the confrontational element of the tragic and turning it into honesty, Nietzsche also changes its orientation. In tragedy, the work of art revealed to humanity the condition of human life. As Nietzsche’s view develops, honesty is not found in art; rather it is a virtue the individual exhibits. It is a disposition evident in valuing and practical reasoning, delineating what makes these activities count as successful. When coming to value, honesty should be the approach that is taken, meaning successful valuing confronts opposing facts. Nietzsche no longer sees tragedy as necessary because each person should confront the world honestly. Each must recognize the nature of the situation before responding to it, and the implication of commitments should be fully understood. Zarathustra represents just such an honest valuer. Zarathustra considers “nothing more precious and rare than honesty” (Z IV: “On the Higher Man” 8). And Zarathustra is recognized by others as “genuine, proper, simple, 

---

152 Ackermann also notes the significance of Zarathustra as an updated version of the Greek tragedy. Ackermann argues that the aim of the work is to make the “Dionysian process” bearable to the Germans. See (1990): 43. I think this misses the development in Nietzsche’s view regarding the importance of honesty and tragedy for human life.
unequivocal, a human being of all honesty, a vessel of wisdom, a saint of knowledge, a great human being!” (Z IV: “The Magician” 2). Zarathustra’s honesty is revealed through an array of confrontations. Nevertheless, the clearest depiction of Zarathustra’s honesty is in the treatment of the “Great Noon.” At noon, when the sun is at its highest point, shadows are gone and we have the clearest vision of the world. Zarathustra describes the great noon as a time of judgment (Z III: “On the Three Evils” 2). If we treat the great noon as a moment that will arrive and show us the way things are, then it would seem to function like tragedy, an event that forces us to see things honestly. But for Zarathustra honesty is the “youngest of virtues” (Z I: “On the Hinterworldly”). Instead of waiting for the great noon, Zarathustra’s honesty comes from being sun-like himself. Zarathustra begins his prologue by comparing himself to the sun. Later he differentiates himself from the sublime individuals who are not themselves suns, claiming, “And only when he turns away from himself will he leap over his own shadow – and truly! into his own sun” (Z II: “On the Sublime Ones”). The suggestion is that the honest individual is able to bring the great noon to his own experiences, having as a disposition the ability to see the world clearly. For the honest Zarathustra it is always noon; there are no shadows or illusions, but only clarity concerning the way things are.

We are now in position to return to Anderson’s puzzle, namely, that there may be a number of interpretations supported by a given set of facts. Nietzsche aims to provide some constraint by holding that the individual must confront the world in valuing. Dishonest

---

153 One example is the honesty Zarathustra brings to traditional religious beliefs and practice. Zarathustra sees that religious belief inevitably encounters doubts and skepticism, and it cannot withstand further examination. Zarathustra believes the time for doubting has come and gone, and we now must make do in a godless world. As Lampert puts it, it is the “historic consequence of the Christian truthfulness that draws one inference after another against itself, destroying Christian dogma, Christian morality, and, finally, in its most striking inference, questioning the will to truth itself.” (Lampert 1986: 187).
valuing is still valuing, but for the activity to be successful it must acknowledge the context in which it takes place. Thus, honesty rules out some interpretations while still allowing a plurality of views. As a limiting condition, honesty is not as stringent as the requirements of life affirmation. Honesty does not necessarily entail a love of life, as Nietzsche suggests should be the outcome of the eternal recurrence. However, honesty shares with affirmation the ideal that all of life must be confronted and accepted in order to provide an adequate foundation for valuing. A person can still value based on incorrect information, but the results will be inadequate for Nietzsche’s ideal and the development of new values.

Health and honesty are not the only limiting conditions available to Nietzsche; they are simply two common assessments of value we find in his work. The larger point is that Nietzsche is justified in making certain kinds of evaluations of values despite his conception of values being quasi-real and his version of internal reasons. By appealing to our engagement in the activity of valuing, we see that a number of standards serve to define the activity. Health provides an example of how Nietzsche provides a formal analysis of valuing as an activity of living organisms. Honesty shows how the approach or disposition involved in valuing can provide limitations on the activity. Through this approach Nietzsche is able to rule out a number of possible values, but it does not lead him to adopt any specific values. Nietzsche has carved out a space of acceptable values. This might seem in tension with a theme we find throughout Nietzsche’s work, that rather than settling for the minimum we should always strive for excellence. Nevertheless, the subjectivity Nietzsche affords to values simply does not justify a clear account of human flourishing. Nietzsche paints with broad strokes in order to give individuals the freedom to create themselves in unique ways. An
individual must work for continual creation and self-overcoming, but she may do so in many ways. Values can be created and shared with others, but there is no guarantee that others ought to accept them.

2.3 VALUES AND TASTES

2.3.1 The Similar Structures of Values and Tastes

I have argued that valuing is an activity of commitment arising from projections of one’s more basic physiological constitution, and values play an important role in giving reasons and motivating action. Despite their subjective nature, though, Nietzsche does not abandon any attempt to assess values. A number of limiting conditions remain possible when understood as internal to the activity of valuing. Still, a number of significant questions remain. Most notably, we usually recognize values as making some kind of demand, and we experience them as non-optional; appreciation of them is demanded in virtue of what they are. Nietzsche denies that anything could have such a quality that demands universal appreciation. At the same time, Nietzsche wants to retain a sense in which values are non-optional. In other words, while I have sketched Nietzsche’s conception of value, I still need to explain why we experience values as playing this important role.

In addition to the aspects of Nietzsche’s view I have described so far, I believe we gain a better understanding of value by looking to Nietzsche’s association of values with tastes. For Nietzsche, the structure and role of taste parallels those of value. Like values, tastes have personal elements while retaining some force over actions. Debates about values, he insists, resemble debates about tastes. Nonetheless, one might wonder how an appeal to taste resolves the worry about Nietzsche’s consistency, since tastes are commonly thought to be
indisputable personal preferences. When he associates tastes with desires, we might find evidence for a Nietzschean subjectivism. If tastes are personal preferences, any connection between values and tastes would seem to undermine his ability to evaluate them. However, I argue against subjectivist interpretations, arguing that Nietzsche offers unique accounts of both values and tastes, and in doing so he carves out room for making assessments. Many of the arguments Nietzsche makes about taste parallel those of values, and by looking at the overlap between values and tastes we can see why these concepts play such similar roles for Nietzsche.

We typically experience values as external demands that compel us to act in some specified manner. However, we have seen that Nietzsche denies the existence of properties or objects capable of making such demands. His view is that we misrepresent our experiences of value to creation the illusion of necessity. We experience values as having some force over our actions, and we mistakenly conclude from this that values exist apart from us and make normative demands. Nietzsche does not deny that values evoke a feeling of necessity. We experience values as having some power over us, or we find them necessary to satisfy. Yet, if values come from us and do not make external demands, it is not clear what kind of power or force they can have. Nietzsche suggests that values have a form of necessity that appears only in light of the particular commitments and concerns they engender for an individual. But what kind of necessity is this? And where does it come from?

---

154 Sartre makes a similar claim in *Being and Nothingness*. He argues that the way we experience values convinces us that they must have an origin outside of us, leading us to think of them as external demands. See Part Two Chapter One: 143-146.
We can better understand this necessity by looking at taste. For Nietzsche tastes and values have a similar configuration. We can therefore gain insight into how values might entail necessity by considering the necessity of tastes. Tastes, on his view, create a sense of urgency without demanding universal appreciation. To see how this works, we will first need to understand the relationship between tastes and values. Nietzsche is frustratingly vague when it comes to defining taste. What we translate into English as “taste” Nietzsche usually has as some form of *Geschmack*. Variations of *Geschmack* appear nearly 200 times in Nietzsche’s published works, with numerous additional occurrences in his notebooks. Nietzsche uses the term to capture a wide range of phenomena. Just as taste has a variety of meanings in English, *Geschmack* assumes many meanings in the German. In English, we commonly speak of taste as a descriptive quality of an object, such as a tasty ice cream cone. Other times, taste encompasses an evaluation, as in finding someone’s behavior in bad taste. A taste for something, such as science-fiction books, amounts to tendencies to a certain behavior. Meanwhile, actually tasting something involves a singular event rather than a tendency. We use taste to refer to physiology when it comes to the taste of food, but we also use taste to refer to aesthetic preference, which is not entirely physiological, at least not in the same way that a lemon tastes sour.

---

155 Interpretations of taste in the secondary literature are similarly vague. For example, May writes, “‘Taste’ here denotes, roughly, the kinds of projects, people, manners, and the like that someone of a given ethical and aesthetic orientation is collectively attracted to or repelled by” (1999: 40 n. 28). May, as we will see, is basically right that taste involves an attraction or repulsion, but to see the significance of taste and its corresponding judgments, we must investigate the structure of taste.

156 In a handful of passages, Nietzsche uses *schmecken* as a verb for taste, including HAH I: 221, HAH II: 279, GM P: 2, AC 45, and EH “Wise” 2. These passages usually indicate a gustatory sense of tasting. In a few instances, Nietzsche uses forms of *kosten* or *betasten*, which in these passages tend to have a metaphorical meaning of either trying something or having an urge for something.
Nietzsche utilizes many these same ambiguities in his account of taste. Nietzsche uses taste to refer to the physiological processes of gustatory and olfactory sense (D 188, GS 379) as well as the aesthetic (UM “History” 2, HAH I: 170). He employs taste to describe individual preferences, but he also uses taste to capture the spirit or culture of a people. On a few occasions, taste is a descriptive property. More often, though, taste comprises an evaluation. Tastes, rather than being reflective judgments, are immediate perceptual appraisals, which are often visceral in nature, with the result something like disgust or pleasure. What seems to connect these disparate comments on taste is that they are all judgments or immediate responses that reveal different aspects of the metaphorical “soul.” He tells us, for example, that we can understand the German soul by looking at German tastes, and others’ “spirits” are also defined by their tastes (BGE 244). But my primary interest is how tastes, like values, reveal the “structure of the soul” for the individual (BGE 268). Tastes and values are distinct expressions of drives and desires.

Since tastes satisfy the needs of drives and desires, a natural response is to think that any particular taste is the result of some identifiable drive or desire. This could relegate tastes to nothing more than the outcome of a person’s drives and desires, where tastes are feelings a person experiences in response to some impression. This would make tastes, arguably, subjective and beyond reproach. It is true that for Nietzsche tastes can reflect fundamental

---

157 While there has been much debate about the development of Nietzsche’s philosophy during his career, his references to taste remain surprisingly consistent. Throughout we find him bringing together the literal and metaphorical uses of taste as reflecting an individual’s judgments. Just as Nietzsche criticizes David Strauss as “tasteless” in UM, he likewise finds Wagner’s tastes decadent and corrupted in CW. I suggest that Nietzsche remained relatively sure of the role of taste throughout his career. It was the theoretical and ethical ideas that developed as he sought to work out the relationship between taste and the other critical aspects of his work, including values, drives, and instincts. This is borne out as references to taste become more common in BGE, when he became more convinced that values and tastes reflect the same structure of valuation.

158 See, for example, HAH WS: 44, D 531, 560, BGE 2, and GM II: 24.
instincts and urges, but he does not limit tastes to these. He allows that tastes can develop beyond their initial attachment to drives and desires, since these instincts are the “lowest stage” of taste.\(^\text{159}\) New tastes develop through new experiences and interests, and tastes can become more complicated and discriminating. Nietzsche explains, “To have refined senses and a refined taste; to be accustomed to the exquisite and most excellent things of the spirit as one is to the proper and most usual food; to enjoy a strong, bold, audacious soul” are aspects of life with more complicated tastes (GS 302).

To see how tastes might become more complex, consider an example of taste in music. An individual’s unreflective taste in music may lead her to prefer a certain genre. As she gains further appreciation for this genre, her tastes may develop a greater sensitivity towards the relevant features of it. These same tastes in music might also result in new tastes in related fields, such as art or fashion. These new tastes go in many different directions, and they grow out of previous musical tastes, not particular drives or desires.\(^\text{160}\) Over time, the connection between the initial tastes and individual’s current tastes may be practically unrecognizable. Still, these complex tastes remain projections of the basic drives and desires since they can ultimately be connected back to their physiological origins. Refined tastes become more complex than the initial, visceral judgments because they are more discriminating and involve different human faculties.\(^\text{161}\)

\(^{159}\) (KSA 11[164]), as cited in Richardson (2004): 102.

\(^{160}\) Nietzsche provides a similar example concerning art in HAH II: 119. Initially, taste in art was a pleasure gained from understanding what another means. The artistic taste then moved to an appreciation of what art represents. Art then became ordered, evoking a regularity of life. Finally, Nietzsche says that the artistic taste began to appreciate art that broke through the orderly and symmetrical.

\(^{161}\) Even so, tastes retain a component of the visceral, the feeling that they are associated with. And, as Richardson points out, the visceral component of taste is a significant component of Nietzsche’s critiques. See (2004): 173.
Recall that Nietzsche denies the way a person sees the world is completely defined by drives and desires, and he does not conceive of actions as merely responses to external stimuli. Tastes play a role in defining a person’s perspective, shaping her concerns and interests, even though these interests are not directly reducible to tastes. Confusion may arise here because Nietzsche often exaggerates the physiological origin of taste in order to draw out the broad connection. For example, he suggests that a person’s diet can be either a symptom of corruption or a prescription for improving tastes (D 553, TI IX: 47). With these claims, Nietzsche indicates only that complex tastes still reveal something about a person’s constitution. Nietzsche’s claim is not that a person’s sweet tooth, for instance, reveals corruption of character. Rather, he means that a person’s general preferences and interests manifest themselves in behavior.

All of this helps us understand valuing because, on my reading of Nietzsche, values are also projections of drives and desires that become more complex over time. Initially, drives and desires express themselves in the form of demands. The demands that arise from basic instincts and urges comprise “commitments,” but these commitments are simply the delineation of concerns relevant to the satisfaction of the drive or desire in question. The individual is committed to these concerns in the sense that they provide the horizon of possible actions. But as we saw earlier, Nietzsche describes these processes as merely the “prehistory” of values (GS 335). The initial commitment in turn provides the ground for further concerns to develop.

I argued earlier that values entail a kind of accountability akin to what we find in promising. Here we see where the commitments of value are most distinct from tastes.
Valuing involves recognizing that the commitment is one’s own, or that the individual will hold herself accountable for the courses of action he is committed to. Like promising, valuing is an ability we earn. Complex tastes seem to comprise a similar kind of commitment; therefore, the difference between values and tastes cannot be simply a matter of degree. However, the category of taste also includes more basic urges and visceral reactions that direct expressions of drives and desires. That is, tastes include both the simple and complex tastes, whereas values are limited only to the complex and do not include the more basic expressions. Where complex tastes and values overlap, they can refer to the same commitment. Love, we will soon see, may be such an experience.

By showing how values overlap with tastes, Nietzsche makes taste a legitimate source of justification. As he puts it, tastes “count as an argument” (HAH II: 183). Tastes spur action through attraction and repulsion, or love and disgust (GS 39). Nietzsche believes values motivate through these same experiences. Values are the commitments that allow us to feel joy or repugnance in response to our interactions with the world. Without these evaluations, we would have no reason to choose one direction over any other. The motivating forces of tastes and values provide the basis of human action. And through the force of responses like disgust, we can begin to see the kind of force that Nietzsche thinks we experience with tastes.

Tastes are felt with urgency because each taste makes a demand to be satisfied. Even though the individual is not compelled by anything outside herself, tastes create the feeling

---

163 Sleinis (1994) argues that attraction and repulsion are central to Nietzsche’s conception of value, and Geuss (1997) says the same of admiration and disgust. However, neither develops the relationship between these valuations as tastes.
that a person needs to respond. For example, while at a restaurant, I rely on my tastes in choosing what to order. When the waiter asks if I am interested in dessert, though I may be, I may also know I should decline. Yet my taste for dessert expresses itself by making a demand upon me, seemingly insisting that I should order dessert. Should I succeed in overcoming this taste, I may still feel as if I have transgressed. Of course some tastes are stronger than others, and in many cases it is possible to overcome some taste through strength of will or the appeal to some other, conflicting taste. Nevertheless, tastes often evoke the feeling that they cannot be easily overcome. They seem as if they must be satisfied despite their not being universally shared. Though my behavior is optional, my choices nevertheless appear limited, with pressure appearing in favor of or opposed to certain options.

For Nietzsche, values give rise to the same kind of internal necessity or urgency. In fact, his connection of the necessity of value to the experience of taste lies at the heart of his criticism of philosophers like Kant who distinguish moral judgments from tastes.\textsuperscript{164} The urgency of tastes and values cannot be described in physiological terminology.\textsuperscript{165} The needs of values and complex tastes provide a form of compulsion distinct from that of basic human needs. Nietzsche distinguishes these kinds of necessity most clearly in his notebooks:

164 Kant is in agreement with Nietzsche in denying that taste is pure preference. Kant thinks debate about tastes is reasonable, even though we debate taste without need for proof (5:339). However, Kant makes it clear that moral judgments, unlike tastes, result in commands or imperatives reflecting the moral law. He writes, “The analogy between the pure judgment of taste, which, without depending on any source of interest, allows a pleasure to be felt and at the same time to be represented \textit{a priori} as proper for mankind in general, and the moral judgment, which does the same thing on the basis of concepts, leads to an equally immediate interest in the object of the former as in that of the latter – only the former is a free interest, the latter one grounded on objective laws.” 5:301.

165 Interpreters like Foot (1973) and Langsam (1997) distinguish aesthetic and moral values. It should be clear that I am suggesting Nietzsche thinks all values share this structure, not that moral values are somehow different from aesthetic values. We find Nietzsche directly connecting taste to moral values in GS 39: “The reason why these individuals sense and ‘taste’ differently is usually found in a peculiarity of their lifestyle, nutrition, digestion, maybe a deficit or excess of inorganic salts in their blood and brains – in short, in their \textit{physis}: they have the courage to own up to their \textit{physis} and to heed its demands down to its subtlest tones. Their aesthetic and moral judgments are the ‘subtlest tones’ of the \textit{physis}.”
We need food, but the needs of our taste are different: first compulsion, then habit, then a pleasure that wishes to be repeated (need). It is the same as with the moral sense, which is as differentiated as taste but the purpose it serves is almost identical (the preservation of man by means of, and against, men). The moral sense is a taste with definite needs and aversions. The original causes of each need are forgotten, and the moral sense operates as a taste, not as a reason. Taste is a specific and selective hunger. Morality likewise. (A hunger that wants to be satisfied in a certain way, not chemically. - ). Thus, by virtue of the moral sense, we do not want to preserve ourselves by means of, and against, men in every possible way.\footnote{KSA (42[15]), as cited in \textit{Writings from the Late Notebooks} (2003).}

Tastes tend to represent our most basic form of attachment while retaining a robust feeling of urgency. Through tastes we can also experience deep, meaningful attachments that we feel we must act on. For example, on Nietzsche’s view my love for my spouse can be considered a kind of taste; there is no fact of the matter that determines how I love my spouse, and I imagine that my experience is distinctive. I do not expect others to love their spouses in exactly the same way, using precisely the same evaluations. Yet, love is not a taste that reflects mere preference. I do not experience it as optional, or as something I may give up at any moment. It reflects a real need – a volitional necessity – and I am compelled to act in certain ways in virtue of it.\footnote{Frankfurt names this kind of need volitional necessity. Though this necessity is in some sense self-imposed, we still lack the power to overcome it. See (1988): 85-91.}

Of course, not all tastes have the same urgency as love. But other tastes are typically experienced with some force of necessity; they are not just easily ignored possibilities. I experience a taste as something I should attend to, or that it demands satisfaction, even though I recognize the origin of my tastes is within me. In other words, while we can recognize that some tastes are trivial, the feeling we have is that they ought to be satisfied. It is this internal
significance that Nietzsche wants to associate with values. Any value defines a set of concerns that the individual must pay attention to, even if their necessity ultimately derives from that person’s concerns. Values, for Nietzsche, should be inspiring, and they should be attachments made out of affection, not demand, reflecting an appreciation for the object of value. And with values, like tastes, we feel self-transgression when we fail to comply with them.

The kind of necessity Nietzsche gives to values and tastes is meant to overcome a phenomenological confusion. We take the force of our values to entail objectivity, and we conclude they must exist in the world apart from us. Yet, there is also a suggestion implicit in Nietzsche’s work our confusions about values and tastes have corrupted our moral lives. No matter their source, tastes are typically described as personal judgments. Values, on the other hand, are usually associated with objective beliefs. By showing how values and tastes admit of similar kinds of necessity, Nietzsche undermines the common views about both and proposes a new way of understanding their relationship. For Nietzsche, our values, like tastes, give rise to a feeling of “passion” and urgency that motivates action, even if this passion is recognized as “idiosyncratic” and unshared (GS 3).

2.3.2 Good Taste

Nietzsche’s use of taste brings back a previously explored tension in his work.

Nietzsche’s emphasis on the personal nature of valuing and his apparent commitment to reasons internalism seem to undermine the legitimacy of critique and evaluation. The problem

---

168 Pippin (2010) makes a similar claim using the language of *eros* from Plato’s *Symposium*. According to Pippin, we need to make erotic attachments, not attachments rooted in simple desires. Without *eros* the possibility of making any attachments or commitments is called into question.

169 Schacht (2001) describes a similar force of morals. They are action-guiding through a kind of identification, or an internalized self-legislation.
as we face it in this context is that we typically think of tastes as beyond evaluation or criticism, yet Nietzsche still wants to make claims about which tastes and values are better or worse. He appeals to notions like “good taste” and decadence to justify his evaluations. If values and tastes depend on individuals, it is unclear precisely how Nietzsche can recognize any standards for evaluating taste. Moreover, if tastes are expressions of an individual’s drives and desires, there would seem to be no quality or property by which we can distinguish good taste. It looks as if Nietzsche is in no position to make claims about the kinds of tastes others ought to have.

One response to this puzzle may be to think of taste as intuition, where taste involves some “perception” of what is desirable. At times, Nietzsche writes this way, claiming certain things just “strike” him in some way. Similarly Zarathustra “finds” priests distasteful (Z II: “On Priests”). But to justify these evaluations, people would need to intuit objective goodness, a possibility that Nietzsche denies. Instead, taste is best understood as a kind of sensitivity to a set of concerns. I will suggest that Nietzsche seeks means of evaluation that occur within certain parameters determined by the context. To illustrate Nietzsche’s point, consider two examples. Imagine we are discussing literature as great works of art. You argue that Shakespeare is the greatest playwright in history, and I hold that Aeschylus was superior. Depending on how the argument goes, there are different ways I may try to convince you of the merits of my view. I might try to give reasons related to traditional standards of playwriting, concerning the organization of the plays or the quality of the dialogue. Doing so,

---

170 Contrary to the ordinary view, Nietzsche insists that we can, and should, cultivate our tastes. He compares this task to the gardener who cultivates his plants (D 560). The tastes of the gardener allow her to root out certain growths in favor of others. Nietzsche’s talk of cultivation makes little sense if we think of tastes as preference. Other passages that suggest the possibility of changing tastes include HAH I: 201, II: 183, D 171, D 531, and TI VIII: 6.

171 See, for example, BGE 48 and 261.
however, presupposes we already agree on a set of standards by which we might make evaluations and comparisons. Without such agreed-upon standards, I might offer more general arguments to promote good will towards Aeschylus. I might provide evidence about the historical import of his plays, or I may point out his brilliant commentaries on human and political development in ancient Greece. Despite my many attempts, I am unable to persuade you. Later, at dinner, we disagree about what toppings to put on our pizza. You insist that pineapple is the best pizza topping, and I disagree. You try to persuade me by offering prudential reasons, such as how pineapple is healthier than many pizza toppings. Perhaps you offer an argument based on compatibility, that pineapple enhances the taste of pepperoni, which we have already agreed to put on our pizza. Despite your insistence, I do not budge in my opposition to pineapple.

In both cases, though we are disagreeing about a matter of taste, we do not act as if these are immune to examination and deliberation. We are able to debate and persuade without appeal to any universal claims about what must the case. To evaluate our options, we seek standards that are internal to the activity or taste in question. The possibility of developing such standards differs wildly depending on the tastes in question. Earlier I argued that Alasdair MacIntyre’s description of a practice can help us understand how Nietzsche approaches valuing as an activity. Here, MacIntyre can again be of use. Playwriting resembles a practice since it has a long history relatively clear set of standards that define what is good, even though we can always specify those most relevant to our debate. The choice of pizza toppings, on the other hand, is not an identifiable practice. The choice of pizza toppings is not a form of cooperative activity with identifiable internal goods and standards. Even among
pizza aficionados there is little agreement about what would constitute the best pizza.\(^{172}\)

Therefore, it is not surprising that debates about pizza toppings often exhibit greater variance than debates about playwriting. Without a clear framework, the parameters are more open to interpretation.

Internal standards open the possibility of delineating better and worse, along with defining answers that are out of bounds. For example, in the earlier argument regarding Shakespeare and Aeschylus, we might think a reasonable person could consider either one the greatest playwright. However, if someone else comes along who insists that the plays of Shakespeare are no match for the movies directed by Michael Bay, barring some incredible explanation, we would likely respond that this view is mistaken, or otherwise not a real option in our debate. This new interlocutor violates the standards of our debate in two ways. First, she extends the debate to include movies, which might have a different set of standards. Second, her answer is someone who appears to be an obviously an inferior writer and director. Clearly the person who makes this suggestion is not playing by the same rules.

The possibility of finding grounds to dispute taste provides only a way to rule out extreme answers, and it does not immediately explain what constitutes good taste. It does, however, provide insight into how Nietzsche finds grounds to assess values. Valuing is an activity for Nietzsche because it is a process of becoming and remaining committed to certain set of cares and concerns. Just as humans are always engaged in valuing, they also always taste. According to Zarathustra, “All life is disputing of taste and tasting! Taste: that is simultaneously weight and scale and weigher, and woe to all that would live without disputing

\(^{172}\) For instance, there is a long-standing ongoing debate between New York and Chicago styles of pizza. Such intractable debates reveal the impossibility that pizza-making, as we know it, could be considered a practice.
weight and scale and weighers!” (Z II: “On the Sublime Ones”). Though everyone is always engaged in valuing, it cannot rightly be considered a practice. Like the choice of pizza toppings, valuing is not a cooperative, social activity. There are no shared internal goods that we can say valuing must aim at. Yet valuing does admit of certain requirements. Just like deciding on pizza toppings requires we accept some definition of what counts as a pizza, valuing requires similar constraints. Nietzsche’s view is that many of the rules of the valuing game are still up for grabs, while a few constitute requirements beyond questioning.\textsuperscript{173} That is, there are some basic features of the activity that are required for the possibility of that activity, and these provide ways to distinguish good values from bad ones.

We can now extend his analysis back to taste. My proposal is that Nietzsche understands good taste in the same terms as the limiting conditions he places on valuing. Good tastes are those consistent with furthering the activity of valuing, and the presence of good tastes implies good valuing.\textsuperscript{174} Flawed tastes and values are evidence of the same problem, that the individual has a corrupted sensitivity to the world. Such a person holds values and tastes that undermine the possibility of making commitments and developing new interests and concerns, reminiscent of the earlier discussion of health. This is not to say that individuals with bad tastes do not value. Rather, Nietzsche’s view is that these tastes, over time, weaken desire. If adopted by everyone, these tastes undercut the creativity and strength, or “spirit,” of a people.\textsuperscript{175} As we learned earlier, this kind of standard, like health, is not the only one available to Nietzsche, but it seems to best capture the pitfalls of bad taste. By praising good tastes and noble values, Nietzsche praises those who see the world in a

\textsuperscript{173} Schacht (1983, 1995) has used the rules of the game analogy to describe aspects of Nietzsche’s view, including the creation of new values. In this context I think the analogy is apt.

\textsuperscript{174} Nietzsche makes this clearest in PTA 3 and HAH II: 170. He also makes this point in GS 3 and TI IX: 47.

\textsuperscript{175} Nietzsche connects taste to the spirit of a people in many passages, including HAH II: 302 and BGE 254.
distinctive manner reflective of certain forms of commitment. He honors “choosy tongues and
stomachs,” since to have no discrimination is a quality of swine (Z III: “On the Spirit of
Gravity” 2). Thus, when Nietzsche appeals to good taste, this concept does have content. We
simply need to understand Nietzsche’s value theory and limiting conditions to shed light on
its role.

Given that Nietzsche thinks values and tastes both offer ways to describe an
individual’s concerns and sensitivities, we can see why Nietzsche attributes refined tastes to
his ideal philosophers and creators of value (BGE 2). Likewise, Zarathustra, who repeatedly
speaks of values that offend his taste, is praised for his tastes (Z IV: “The Shadow”). In some
cases, we may even hold someone accountable whose tastes seem too extreme or to go against
some other important value. For example, a person with a taste for causing pain in others is
roundly criticized as being mistaken. For Nietzsche, this person is wrong not because she is
outside our standards but because she assaults their very existence. Such a person attacks the
activity of valuing. With taste we again find that Nietzsche’s position is better suited for
ruling out bad tastes than promoting any particular tastes. Nonetheless, this seems consistent
with Nietzsche emphasis on the development of a unique, personal style.

On the view I have presented, taste and value share a projective structure, both
functioning as expressions of drives and desires. Both emerge from commitments rooted in
basic physiological components, and both admit of assessment through internal standards. My
interpretation, it may appear, shows that values and tastes are identical. We should resist this
 conclusion. I argued earlier that tastes include forms of commitment that values do not. The
best way to understand the relationship between values and tastes is that they overlap. Tastes
are a broad category, including complex tastes and more basic tastes pertaining directly to particular drives and desires. In contrast, values do not encompass instincts and urges. Valuing refers to an achievement akin to promising, denoting only commitments that entail responsibility and are developments of previous concerns. We only lose sight of this because we often find ourselves in the midst of commitments without having fully understood their development or assented to what they entail.

Given their similar structures, we might wonder why Nietzsche only mentions sparingly the possibility of refining tastes while making the related idea of value creation a central task for philosophers. Nietzsche’s implicit claim is that the development of new tastes may spur the creation of values through indirect means, but we should focus more directly on changing and creating values than tastes; we have more to gain by addressing these complicated commitments that comprise values. Why might he think this? Two reasons come to mind. First, values might be easier to change. If tastes are often expressions of basic physiological components, these will prove the most stubborn and resistant to alteration. It is easier to think of changing our commitments than it would be change our basic drives and desires, even though changing behaviors should, over time, lead to alteration of the underlying physiological components. Second, while tastes may reflect a corruption or decay of the instincts, the corruption of values poses a more pressing problem given their societal influence. Values become embodied in social movements and institutions, which may attract new members. Organizations that adopt certain values may bring new people into the fold, expanding their power. Since tastes are perceived by many to be individual features, a set of

\[[176] For some of Nietzsche’s comments on refining taste see D 171, 453, GS 39, and BGE 216.\]
tastes will prove less attractive to others. Thus, the political and practical considerations leads Nietzsche to believe new values and forms of commitment are needed more urgently than new tastes.

2.3.3 Value, Conversion, and Seduction

We can look to Nietzsche’s comments on taste to better understand the structure of values and his strategy of assessment. Considering the significance of taste has an additional benefit, as it helps us understand Nietzsche’s approach to philosophy. Nietzsche’s style has long attracted and infuriated readers. He often eschews straightforward arguments in favor of metaphors, aphorisms, or outlandish claims. Though there is much disagreement about Nietzsche’s overarching aims, I think we can agree that among his objectives is inducing some change in modern values, for which he tries to persuade others of certain value claims. To grasp Nietzsche’s approach we need to consider how he understands persuasion, and this is tied to taste. For Nietzsche, persuasion is not limited to winning someone over through rational arguments. Instead, persuasion often involves bringing another person to see something in a different way in light of new concerns. Nietzsche’s attempts to persuade often amount to attempts at conversion, by which I mean two people coming to share a deliberative framework. What other interpreters have missed, I argue, is that for Nietzsche, debates about values more resemble debates over aesthetic matters than they do debates over something like scientific matters. Thus, the kinds of persuasion Nietzsche uses are most familiar to the realm of taste, and they allow Nietzsche to use different strategies to address different audiences.

There is little agreement among interpreters regarding the audience Nietzsche targets. Some believe Nietzsche speaks to all of humanity, while others contend he is concerned only
with some elite group. Regardless, it is clear Nietzsche doubts many people will understand the ideals he champions, with the implication that he concludes rational arguments have limited effectiveness. Nietzsche justifies this view with both theoretical and practical explanations. Nietzsche’s theoretical skepticism of rational persuasion stems from his view on perspective and value. A perspective, we saw previously, is a standpoint defined by one’s values. Opposing perspectives offer competing frameworks with incongruent interpretations of what is meaningful. To others Nietzsche thinks “our highest insights must – and should! – sound like stupidities” (BGE 30). Even values that appear to be similar may not be fully comprehensible if the core commitments do not overlap. Of course, humans must share some components of perspective, such as those related to basic biological and physiological facts. Without this background of agreement, even basic communication would be difficult. Still, the implication is that radically new views will not be immediately recognizable by many, and persuasion has no easy path from one set of values to another.

Nietzsche’s practical explanation is rooted in the disagreements about taste we have been examining, as tastes vary widely. He notes, “It is hard to be understood, particularly…among people who think and live differently” (BGE 27). In many situations, we disagree with another, yet we say we understand why our interlocutor holds this view. But what do we mean when we say we understand it? It is tempting to think that on Nietzsche’s view we cannot really understand the view without sharing the relevant concerns and commitments. However, while Nietzsche often points to his own work in support of this

177 I cannot here fully address the question of Nietzsche’s audience, regarding whether Nietzsche speaks to all individuals or only some subset of “higher” humans. However, even if his main target is only an elite group, I do not think his comments are limited to this context. As I will argue, part of what Nietzsche wants to do is to bring people to his way of seeing the world. Though Nietzsche does not anticipate success in most cases, he does not rule out the possibility of conversion for most.
difficulty, he also hints that he has overplayed his hand. In BGE 27, he goes on to ask, as a parenthetical statement, "am I doing everything I can to be hard to understand myself?"

Practical disagreements are not insurmountable. Nevertheless, Nietzsche has a unique definition of understanding. When we say we understand another even when we disagree, I suggest that what we really mean is that it is intelligible how that person’s commitments and concerns have led to this particular conclusion. This is evident in the debate about playwrights. I might recognize that your preference for Shakespeare as acceptable or expected, given what I know about you.

Nietzsche repeatedly raises worries about comprehension, even ending *Ecce Homo* by repeatedly asking "Have I been understood?" Nietzsche wavers on the extent to which others can or will support him, insisting that complete acceptance of his project will come later, and for this reason he will only be understood "posthumously." Nietzsche’s challenge, given these theoretical and practical difficulties, is that to be meaningful his view must be intelligible to most people while remaining unique. This problem leads him to explore other means of persuasion. I am not arguing that Nietzsche regards rational arguments as completely useless. His work contains numerous philosophical arguments and interpretations. Rather, Nietzsche is pessimistic that rational arguments alone will bring about the changes he seeks. When we debate issues, often rational arguments do not actually aim to persuade at that moment; they are instead future-directed. By continuing to lay the groundwork, perhaps at some later point you will be more open to the merits of my alternative. The aim in these

---

178 See AC P: 1, TI I: 15, and EH “Books”: 1.
debates is thus shifting grounds to some new standard to replace the differing assumptions.\(^{179}\)

Reasoned arguments, we have seen, are more effective within defined standards. But rational arguments alone will rarely provoke change in the more basic concerns or commitments.

Therefore, Nietzsche accepts the conversion involved in taste as a legitimate way to promote his conception of valuing.

Along with traditional arguments, Nietzsche intends to “wage war” on opposing tastes and values (CW “Second Postscript”). He insists, “We have to learn to think differently – in order at last, perhaps very late on, to attain even more: to feel differently” (D 103). Though others have recently considered Nietzsche’s strategies, rhetorical and otherwise, the relationship between values and tastes makes my view distinct.\(^{180}\) It is not just that morality is connected to emotional responses or, as some suggest, that more experiences and feelings lead to better understanding of these feelings.\(^{181}\) Nietzsche thinks that values and tastes provide a deliberative framework, and he addresses the more basic concerns. Within Nietzsche’s rhetoric we can identify a number of tactics aimed at conversion. Nietzsche’s emotions show through the text. His anger, frustration, and confusion about the direction of humanity indicate that we should take his work seriously. He mixes humor and seriousness to make light of his subject matter. His aphoristic style lends itself to memorable quotations and points without getting bogged down in the kinds of arguments that he thinks confuse the matter. We might also consider Nietzsche’s use of parables, from short, independent passages to entire works.

---

\(^{179}\) McDowell offers a similar suggestion regarding conversion. For McDowell, deliberation to having certain reasons often requires something other than a rational procedure, even if deliberation itself does require reason. However, though Nietzsche might agree with the picture of conversion McDowell offers, I believe that Nietzsche, unlike McDowell, is an internalist concerning reasons. See (1998): 102-107

\(^{180}\) For example, see Gemes (2006), Janaway (2007), and Owen (2007).

like *Zarathustra*, as a distinct philosophical methodology derived from taste. David Owen suggests that parables like madman are meant to reorient the readers’ relationships to themselves. By examining problems with their existing ways of life, they may begin to question their values.\(^{182}\) Nietzsche’s use of parables, though, goes far beyond this. We can read many of Nietzsche’s major principles as parables rather than doctrines. *Zarathustra* presents one such major concept after another, from the Übemensch to the eternal recurrence. Nietzsche uses these to offer possible or plausible ways to think about one’s own life. These show the possibility of alternative ethical, metaphysical, or cosmological positions, and they remind the reader of the contingency of traditional views.

Beyond Nietzsche’s rhetoric he presents values in ways that reveal his proposed revaluation of them, while keeping the target initially hidden. Ken Gemes calls this a strategy of misdirection, though I think seduction might better capture what Nietzsche is after.\(^ {183}\) By luring people to share his perspective, he is a “spoiler of tastes” who leads others to realize the flaws in their ideas (GS 172). Seduction works by provoking in the reader an emotional response to a value. Nietzsche’s clearest and most thorough use of philosophical seduction is reflected in *On the Genealogy of Morality*. Nietzsche conceives of these varying genealogies as “fishhooks” he dangles to catch those who might be tempted by what he has to say (EH “BGE”: 1). Nietzsche hopes to reel in the susceptible fish to share his concerns about value and adopt the kinds of commitments he proposes.

---

\(^{183}\) Gemes (2006). We might also think of Nietzsche as part of the long tradition of philosophical ironists, best exemplified by Socrates and Kierkegaard.
In the *Genealogy* Nietzsche provides historical narratives depicting developments of human nature and society. Nietzsche develops a speculative origin of various beliefs and values, and he provides portrayals of the main characters, such as priests and slaves, which are meant to elicit a negative reaction in the reader. One such concept Nietzsche explores is *ressentiment*. Nietzsche presents a version of the development of values over time, where the desire for revenge over spurred a revolution in valuing. Nietzsche describes the feeling of *ressentiment* as a kind of poison. Nevertheless, this hatred was creative, and those experiencing *ressentiment* developed new values. This process of value creation is supposed to be one that we repudiate, finding it abhorrent. In the climax of the scene, Nietzsche takes us into the depths of the workshop where values are developed. Here, new values like humility and patience are assembled, manufactured out of weakness and servitude. The reader recognizes these new values as the ones common in society today while being forced to question whether they are actually valuable in the first place. By the end of this visit to the factory of ideals, the character representing the reader has had enough. He realizes that the values he holds are not what they appear to be; rather than objective goodness they are defined by revenge and cruelty. Through this genealogy, the values the reader comes to despise are supposed to be those she previously held most dearly.

It may seem as though Nietzsche’s authority depends on the historical accuracy of the story. If the genealogies are incorrect, then his works serve no purpose. However, the authority the story derives from historical accuracy is only one component of this genealogy’s effectiveness. In the negative feelings that we experience, we come to recognize the contingency of value, regardless of their origin. In particular, Nietzsche hopes the reader is
appalled by the “slave” values and their seedy history. Nietzsche provokes the feeling he
needs to get his foot in the door, which he follows with more direct arguments concerning the
pitfalls of modern values. Thus, Nietzsche’s ultimate aim is the feeling or stance towards
values, and the historicity of the narrative falls to the side. This is not to say that the claims
made within the narrative have no relationship to actual events. The stories must be plausible,
and Nietzsche means for his genealogical stories to have some connection to actual historical
facts. In the end, the effectiveness of the seduction depends most on Nietzsche’s ability to
lead the audience to some affective response. It is clear that this approach bears little
resemblance to traditional philosophical arguments. Yet it looks very much like everyday
disputes about taste, where these strategies are legitimate and effective ways to persuade
others about pizza and playwrights.

All of this raises an important question - why should we accept Nietzsche’s attempts at
conversion but resist others? Nietzsche acknowledges some may fear this he is trying to
manipulate, or that his Zarathustra is a “seducer” out for his own gain (EH P: 4). And there
may be no formal difference between manipulation and Nietzsche’s seduction, other than
Nietzsche’s belief that his is therapeutic rather than insidious. But to this Nietzsche adds a
second justification. He claims he is particularly well-suited to analyze different forms of
commitment. Nietzsche contends that he has in fact lived with these opposed values, having

---

184 White (1997) argues that many performative aspects of Nietzsche’s work result from his belief that language
cannot directly communicate what he wants to say. I agree with White that language may hinder the
development of Nietzsche’s new ideas. At the same, Nietzsche’s wonderful use of language throughout his work
shows he is quite adept at saying what he wants.

185 Owen (2007) defends the necessity of historical and psychological realism. In the same way, he argues the
reader must also employ Nietzsche’s historical spirit, rigor, and philosophical acumen in considering whether or
not to accept the Genealogy. I think Nietzsche’s psychological claims are more important than the depictions of
historical events, but the necessity of realism applies to both aspects of the narrative.
experienced decadence and sickness.\textsuperscript{186} Given the earlier argument that incongruent perspectives are unintelligible, Nietzsche’s claim that he understands the opposing view is quite striking. In \textit{Ecce Homo} he explains, “To be able to look out from the optic of sickness towards \textit{healthier} concepts and values, and again the other way around, to look down from the fullness and self-assurance of the \textit{rich} life into the secret work of the instinct of decadence – that was my longest training, my genuine experience…” (EH “Wise”: 1).\textsuperscript{187} In order to compare perspectives, their values and concerns must be adopted and lived.\textsuperscript{188} Nietzsche insists that he has been “sick” with bad values, so he is able to compare their merits. He is not claiming to have switched perspectives so much as that he has gained insight into how different perspectives operate, especially in terms of what others care about and what attracts or repels them.\textsuperscript{189} From his experience, he concludes that a change in values and tastes is necessary. And Nietzsche believes he is just the world-historical figure to respond by provoking value (and taste) creation.

These are only some brief comments on how the connection between values and tastes affects Nietzsche’s style. I hope to have at least shown that while Nietzsche’s philosophical methodology is unusual in the realm of values, it is less out of place in other disputes common to human life. If we do not recognize the connection Nietzsche draws between values and

\textsuperscript{186} I owe this suggestion in part to Eric Schaaf. Richardson (1996) makes a comparable point, holding that Nietzsche seeks to inhabit different perspectives in order to understand them as such, not simply to gain data about the beliefs of others. Inhabitation is a helpful way to understand Nietzsche’s claims of insight into other perspectives.

\textsuperscript{187} Nietzsche claims in HAH II: 356 that those who have been sickliest better grasp the “philosophy of psychical health and recover” along with its teachers better than those who are healthy. In GM III: 15 he suggests that only the sick or those very near to them can truly understand sickness.

\textsuperscript{188} Nietzsche makes this claim in many places, including HAH II: 356, D 114, GM III: 15, 24.

\textsuperscript{189} Clark and Dudrick (2007) argue that the inhabiting of opposed perspectives is actually a precondition for value creation. I disagree that this is a precondition for any value creation, since values can emerge out of a variety of relationships and contexts. Nevertheless, they are right that Nietzsche thinks that this process can provide a certain insight and authority regarding valuing.
tastes, we fail to see a principle motivation behind his methods. Tastes, like values, are expressions of desires and drives. For Nietzsche, values and tastes entail a sense of urgency without appealing to objective necessity. Nietzsche finds grounds for internal assessment of tastes, and he proposes a parallel approach for values. Therefore, while many seek to place Nietzsche on one side or the other in contemporary metaethical debates, we can see how Nietzsche’s position dissolves the distinctions. While Nietzsche’s claims may give rise to puzzles about subjectivity, objectivity, and universality, Nietzsche appears to carve out a space where he can deny the objective without losing all sense of evaluation. Nietzsche’s move may be novel, but when we see how he connects values to tastes, his intentions become clearer.
CHAPTER 3
VALUE CREATION AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR NIETZSCHE’S ETHICS

In the previous chapter, I described Nietzsche’s conception of value, with specific focus on the relationship between values and drives as well as the role values play in practical reason. I argued that Nietzsche’s primary interest is in the activity of valuing, which involves the commitments an individual makes with respect to what she considers significant. Even though Nietzsche believes values are human creations, this does not undermine his ability to offer legitimate value assessment. Keeping these ideas in the background, I will now turn to a central component of Nietzsche’s conception of value – value creation.

Nietzsche’s comments on value creation raise a number of questions. The most significant of these concerns what value creation is and whether it is a task open to everyone or only to a select few. Furthermore, intending to create a new value seems a bizarre, and perhaps impractical, task. I will consider the different historical processes of value creation present in Nietzsche’s work in order to shed light on the task of value creation that Nietzsche envisions for the future. In doing so, I suggest that some forms of value creation are more common than many commentators believe, while other forms are quite rare. Nietzsche’s ideal value creation, I argue, resembles these common occurrences of value creation in some important ways, but it retains significant differences, leaving it a rare philosophical achievement, albeit one that still has an analog in our everyday lives.

Value creation is central to Nietzsche’s ethical view. The creation of value amounts to a push for new ethical concepts or ethical knowledge that provide new reasons and
justifications for behavior. I begin by examining how value creation has been treated by other scholars. I argue that current debates in the secondary literature have obscured pertinent features of value creation. To get a better understanding on the process, I consider the value creation of the slave revolt, though I conclude that the slave revolt does not provide a model for most forms of value creation. From there, I examine the processes of different forms of value creation, comparing and contrasting these to the slave revolt. I conclude that value creation results in ethical knowledge, not merely particular values. The future-oriented project of value creation that Nietzsche envisions resembles the historical forms of value creation much more than the slave revolt. To fully understand the processes, though, we need to recognize that values tend to be created by groups rather than individuals. After working through the processes of value creation and the task of creation Nietzsche sets forth, I defend the view that Nietzsche and his Zarathustra are both engaged in the activity of value creation.

3.1 INTERPRETATIONS OF VALUE CREATION

3.1.1 Value Creation in the Literature

The significance and centrality of value creation to Nietzsche’s project are indisputable. In Beyond Good and Evil, Nietzsche says value creation is the task of the philosophers of the future. The “true philosophers” are called to create values (BGE 211). Their task is to develop “a new, untraveled path to human greatness” (BGE 212). Nietzsche, though, does not appear to limit value creation to the philosophers of the future. Zarathustra describes the ability to create values as the greatest attainment possible for an individual. In the second stage of self-transformation, the lion stage, the individual can create freedom, which Zarathustra calls “sacred.” However, even the lion cannot create values because for this
task “a sacred yes-saying is required,” which can be achieved only at the final stage of the child (Z I: 1). Throughout his travels, Zarathustra speaks of the inventors of values, lauding the creators who will eventually “write new values on new tablets” (Z P: 9).

Despite the essential role value creation plays in Nietzsche’s positive ethics, it has not received much direct focus in the secondary literature. Interpretations of Nietzsche have often found other Nietzschean themes of greater interest. Countless interpreters have devoted extensive work to the will to power, the eternal recurrence, and the revaluation of values, just to name a few. While attention in Nietzsche studies has recently turned towards Nietzsche’s value theory, few scholars have placed the unique role of value creation front and center. One reason for this may be that Nietzsche’s comments on value creation are often both vague and perplexing. He does little to tell us how values are created. More importantly, understanding what Nietzsche means by “new values” depends on how Nietzsche conceives of value more generally. This is an unavoidable constraint. Furthermore, Nietzsche’s comments on value creation result in an apparent contradiction. On the one hand, Nietzsche insists nature is itself valueless and indifferent (BGE 9). Values in nature are human inventions – “We were the givers and granters” of them (GS 301). On the other hand, we seem to draw values from nature just as much as we give them to nature. Every healthy morality, Nietzsche insists, “Is governed by an instinct of life” (TI V: 4). Our aim should be to understand human beings as natural creatures and “translate humanity back into nature” (BGE 23). The difficulty, then, is to how to make sense of Nietzsche’s naturalist tendencies given his demand for genuine creation.¹⁹⁰ Or, as Daniel Breazeale puts it, the puzzle is that “man is not only instructed to

draw his meaning from the earth, he is at the same time urged to provide the earth with a new, human meaning.”

Such difficulties in interpreting Nietzsche have given rise to a number of overlapping debates among scholars. The problem, I will argue, is that no one side in these debates is in position to offer an adequate account of value creation. On these interpretations, value creation is often made derivative of or secondary to other ethical concepts. The biggest of these debates, following Breazeale’s suggestion, is between naturalism and existentialism. Naturalism aims to ground values in certain natural facts. Some variants of naturalism reduce values to psychological or physiological claims about human beings. On these views, values are basically determined by a person’s constitution. For example, on Leiter’s reading, an individual’s values can be explained by type-facts about that individual. That is, a person’s values are explained by her psychology and physiology, making values the outcome of other natural processes. Consequently, on Leiter’s reading values cannot be created, at least not in any active sense. Instead, he argues that value creation amounts to participating in the creation of the environment, which ultimately changes a person’s life trajectory.

Leiter represents only one variety of naturalist interpretation. For other naturalist interpreters, what it is to be a good human being depends on some conception of human life as well as a view of what constitutes a good life. There are many different interpretations of this sort, ranging from Robert Pippin, who argues that Nietzsche is a psychologist who sees

191 Gooding-Williams (2001) argues against Breazeale’s claim. He holds that there is no tension between naturalism and existentialism in Zarathustra. I agree with Gooding-Williams that we can read value creation as including both, but this does not mean there is no tension in Nietzsche’s works. Even if Nietzsche can offer a coherent position that incorporates both tendencies, we often see him switching between various positions. In any case, whether there actually is a tension in Zarathustra is irrelevant to my more general point that many commentators have chosen one side or the other in this perceived debate.

192 See Leiter (2001b, 2002).
himself following the tradition of the French moralists, to views that emphasize virtue ethics or roughly follow the Aristotelian tradition. Naturalist accounts have obvious interpretive benefits. First, their naturalism provides a context in which we may place Nietzsche’s ethical concerns, including the revaluation of values. In particular, forms of naturalism that eschew Leiter’s determinism would seem able to provide criteria for the assessment of values, thus legitimating Nietzsche’s claims that there exist superior values to those we currently hold. This provides an effective response to the worry that Nietzsche does not allow any justification for his preferred values. Second, naturalism can help make sense of Nietzsche’s comments on nature. Nietzsche often criticizes ideologies or values as going against nature in some sense, as when he insists that the priest “devalues nature, he desecrates it” (AC 26). Nietzsche also criticizes the practices of the church for being “hostile to life” (TI V: 1). If values are to be grounded in nature, Nietzsche can locate a standard by which he may delineate that which is anti-nature.

Existentialist readings, on the other hand, emphasize the individual’s ability to create meaning and identity. Robert Solomon characterizes existentialist readings as those that make Nietzsche’s ideal “the individual who ‘makes himself’ by exploring and disciplining his particular talents and distinguishes himself from ‘the herd’ and the conformist influences of other people.” The aim is an authentic life that becomes valuable through the agent’s willing it so. There are many varieties of existentialist readings of Nietzsche. Many such views we might categorize as Sartrean, emphasizing the creation of value and meaning.

---


194 This problem is often known as Nietzsche’s “authority problem.” See Leiter (2000, 2002), Ridley (2005), and Robertson (2009).

through essentially arbitrary willing, but we could also include in this same category interpretations that emphasize self-creation. One such distinct reading is that of Alexander Nehamas. He contends that the creator is like an artist: she creates her life as she creates a work of art or a character. Accordingly, Nehamas argues that interpretations and reinterpretations are the primary means for creating values. Offering a new interpretation provides a completely new meaning. The goal is for each person to style her character, which Nietzsche calls “a great and rare art” (GS 290). Nehamas concludes that for Nietzsche an individual is nothing more than the totality of her experiences and actions. The best an individual can do is to create herself into the kind of person she wants others to see. And in creating herself, an individual effectively gives meaning to her own existence, since no meaning is to be found elsewhere.

Understanding Nietzsche’s value creation on either naturalist or existentalist readings is problematic. The naturalist either reduces values to some other fact, making that the object of creation rather than values, or provides a standard to which values must adhere. In this case, it is not clear how a value could be freely created at all. Such creation may entail discovering values that others have not recognized. Value discovery may be interesting and important for Nietzsche, but it would be surprising if the creation of values turned out to be little more than finding values that meet an independent moral standard. On the existentalist account, creation is, in a sense, too free. The creation is subjective, seemingly allowing for absolutely any value to be created. This does not fit with Nietzsche desire for an order of rank between values. Clearly Nietzsche does not think all values are equally good. It is difficult to

197 Ibid.: 154.
square existentialism with either Nietzsche’s criticisms of particular values or proposals for new values.

One might think that consideration of Nietzsche’s metaethical commitments could shed light on the issues brought out in the naturalism/existentialism debate. But ethical realism and anti-realism, which constitutes another prevalent debate in the literature, are similarly inadequate for making sense of Nietzsche’s value creation. The anti-realist position holds that for Nietzsche nothing is of real value, or at least there are no moral real moral values. On the anti-realist side of the debate, as I argued in Chapter 2, there is a strong neo-Humean strain, which aims to reduce values to projections of more basic physiological components, such as desires or drives. Still other anti-realists regard Nietzsche as an error theorist who holds that all values rest on mistaken assumptions. Realist interpreters, in contrast, regard Nietzsche has proposing some standard of what is truly valuable.

In looking at the two sides of this metaethical debate, it is even more difficult to see how value creation could fit in. For anti-realists, we again find a difficulty seeing how any limitations on creation could exist. Moreover, it is puzzling why an anti-realist Nietzsche would even be interested in the task of value creation. If nothing has real value, it is difficult to see what motivation could exist for creating values, where the result of creation is something false. At best, values might be created as ideals for a particular individual, but again we might wonder why Nietzsche would put such emphasis on creating value if he only means an individual should set personal goals. For realists, it seems the aim should be to

---

199 Some argue that Nietzsche does accept real prudential value. For example, see Leiter (2002): 106-107.
200 In response to this worry, we have seen Hussain takes a fictionalist route in his reading of Nietzsche. His suggestion is that the free spirits must create values and then “forget” that they are origin of these values. My criticisms of Hussain’s interpretation are found in sections 1.2 and 2.1.3.
locate what actually has value rather than creating anything new, again suggesting value
discovery. Creating values seems antithetical to the realist project. Thus, by taking
Nietzsche’s metaethics as our primary focus, evaluating Nietzsche through contemporary
approaches, we face a dilemma. Either creation is something free and unbridled without any
constraints, yet also surprising given that we are to create something false, or value creation is
reduced to something along the lines of value discovery.

In response to the troubles these other approaches encounter, I propose we follow
Nietzsche’s lead in making value creation central. Taking value creation as a starting point
will help us avoid the trouble found in explaining the nature and role of value creation.
Obviously, the interpretations I have sketched here contain many more complexities, but I
think the basic problem remains even when the specifics are elucidated further. The
difficulties arise, I believe, in taking these metaethical concerns as the starting point for
interpreting Nietzsche, where value creation is then defined after other issues are worked
through. In this chapter, I will examine the forms of value creation Nietzsche provides in his
work. By elucidating the means and strategies of value creation, we will gain further insight
into Nietzsche’s value theory, and we can better place the significance and role of value
creation in his work.

3.1.2 Two Initial Comments

There are a number of issues any account of value creation must address, from the
nature of value creation and its role to questions of who creates values and where this is done.
I believe an interpretation of Nietzsche’s value creation must answer four questions: 1) What
is it to create values? 2) Who creates values? 3) Do Nietzsche or his Zarathustra create values? 4) What is the aim of value creation, including whom are values created for? In this chapter, my focus is on the first two of these questions, which I will address together. At the end of this chapter, I will address the third question, showing that both Nietzsche and Zarathustra engage in value creation. Finally, in answering the fourth question I will maintain that an individual creates values for both herself and others, as Nietzsche’s ideal creation is best understood as a distinct kind of collaboration. I will offer in this chapter only a partial defense of this point, which will also be the focus of the next chapter.

It is impossible to address value creation without saying something more generally about what it means to create anything at all. I have suggested that “genuine” creation is distinct from discovering. Yet, I do not believe Nietzsche’s vision is that we must develop brand new values unrelated to anything else. The creative person may create by bringing together disparate ideas or even in recognizing a new application of something. The integration of new values into a perspective or movement also seems an important part of value creation. One aspect of value creation nearly all interpreters agree upon is that it cannot occur ex nihilo. Nietzschean value creation, whatever it turns out to be, must involve the materials that are already present. Even in developing a seemingly brand new way of living, the individual must be responding to something already present. The value creator must use what she is given and her context, though she can also seek to change the conditions themselves.

I take genuine creation to mean the outcomes must be something uniquely “new.” The converse of this need not be true – not all new things must reflect true instances of creation.
For instance, revaluation results in new values, but we would be hard pressed to describe revaluation and value creation as the same project. Something new, I take it, means something novel, something that makes a clear break with the past and is not reducible to any one tradition. Nietzsche does not think value creation involves the development of new values without regard to existing values and their social context. In other words, I reject the view that, for Nietzsche, value creation is no more than reinterpretation or revaluation. This view has gained traction over the years.\textsuperscript{201} In its defense, Zarathustra does seem to tell us that creation is nothing more than esteeming (Z I: “On a Thousand and One Goals”). If values are created by esteeming something as different, it is plausible that we could explain all creation of values as reinterpretation.\textsuperscript{202} However, while Nietzsche’s ideal of value creation can involve reinterpretation, value creation is a task that goes well beyond reinterpretation and revaluation.

3.2 THE PRIESTS

Despite the importance Nietzsche affords to the project of value creation, his descriptions of it are vague and his examples limited. My interest here is in uncovering both the processes and aims of value creation, and much of this involves drawing together Nietzsche’s comments and constructing what a more complete view of value creation might look like. However, we should take as a starting point the one relatively complete account of value creation Nietzsche provides – the slave revolt described in the *Genealogy*. Even here we

\textsuperscript{201} Two of the most prominent are Kaufmann (1974) and Solomon (2003). According to Solomon, value creation is a return to the values of antiquity. In creation, values from the past are reconfigured to meet the needs of the current context. Nietzsche’s insistence on creation, Solomon argues, is meant to urge people on during desperate times.

\textsuperscript{202} Zarathustra seems to offer the best evidence for someone arguing for this view, especially in, Z I: “On a Thousand and One Goals” and Z II: “On Self-Overcoming.”
lack many of the important details about the process through which creation occurred, but this event allows us to see one type of value creation with some detail. Taking the slave revolt as an example of Nietzsche’s value creation presents one major problem: it is primarily a negative process. It was predicated on hatred and a desire for revenge, where creation occurred in the act of saying “no” (GM I: 10). Nevertheless, being the most involved example provides an entry-point into Nietzsche’s conception of value creation.

Nietzsche considers the slave revolt a defining event in human history, and through it a new set of values took hold for society. According to Nietzsche, earlier cultures, particularly those of the Greeks and Romans, were marked by what he calls a noble form of valuation. The noble form is defined by seeing what is good in the individual without comparison to others. The nobles take their interests and strengths to be good, and they consider that which is opposed to the good to be bad. The slaves were those with little standing or power in society. The slave revolt amounted to a shift in values. On the one hand, he describes the process as one of revaluation, where previously bad values become good, and those that had been lauded suddenly were marked as evil. On the other hand, Nietzsche makes it clear that the reversal included value creation. The process “created ideals and changed values” (GM I: 8). The outcome was that it “gives birth to values” (GM I: 10).

The slave revolt was the result of a deep hatred “the like of which has never been seen on earth” (GM I: 8). The creation was spurred by the act of saying “no” to the current system of values, which was the defining moment of reversal. From this negation new values were

---

203 Nietzsche also describes a “factory of ideals” where ideals and character traits previously looked down upon are remade into positive attributes (GM I: 14). The idea of the factory further suggests the role of creation. However, this factory seems to only repackaging previous goods. And while this may be an element of creation, we will see that we should not limit value creation to this kind of revaluation.
created that opposed and undermined those of the status quo. This reversal was the outcome of a plot of revenge that was both “deliberate” and “calculating” (GM I: 7, 8). The creation of these values entailed more than just replacing current values with their opposition. Instead it was the result of ressentiment, as the revolt in morality occurred when “ressentiment itself turns creative” (GM I: 10). Creative ressentiment did not simply turn upside-down or displace old values to create new ones. Nietzsche indicates that the creative ressentiment also led to the creation of what R. Jay Wallace calls an evaluative framework, which is similar to what I termed a standpoint or Optik in Chapter 2. Wallace defines such a framework as leading one to “prefer some things to others, shaping one’s deliberations about actions, and providing a basis for criticizing social institutions and individual behavior.”

The thrust of the story, and in particular GM I: 10, is that value creation entails a new form of valuing. Still, an appeal to creative ressentiment does not explain the process of value creation. How exactly were these values created? And how did this instance of value creation result in a dominant set of values? A common answer among scholars is that the ressentiment of the slaves produced new values, a view Wallace calls the strategic interpretation. On this view the slaves experienced a hatred of the nobles that led them to seek revenge. Their chosen method was to redefine the values of the nobles in terms of evil, thus replacing noble values with their own. This raises the question of why the slaves’ ressentiment was sufficient for creation, and how their situation differed from other instances of ressentiment that did not result in the birth of new values. To explain this, Aaron Ridley makes a distinction between creative and non-creative forms of ressentiment. Even though the nobles had some bad conscience, resulting in

---

204 See Wallace (2007): 114
a minimal amount of internalization, Ridley argues that the nobles were not overcome by *ressentiment* because they were not significantly repressed. Non-creative *ressentiment* is thus a precondition of creative *ressentiment*, which became creative in the slave revolt given the extent of the slave’s repression. The slaves found that the external world defined their fate, so they turned their attention to reshaping it.\(^{205}\) Ridley concludes, “The most striking thing he [the slave] has gained is a share in the noble right to ‘create values and coin names for values.’” In doing so, the slave began to express power.\(^{206}\)

I find neither the strategic interpretation nor Ridley’s modification concerning *ressentiment* compelling. Unlike the nobles that Nietzsche portrays as generally unreflective with regard to the source of their values, the slaves do have a degree of “cleverness” that has developed under the pressures of repression. Yet, it would be surprising to think that the planned replacement of values could have been seen by them as a promising approach to alter their situation. Moreover, Wallace points out that the idea to create new values seems to depend on these values already taking root. The evaluative scheme is implemented by value creation, but it also seems necessary for the creation of value. And no matter how clever the slaves might have been, it is difficult to reconcile the purposeful and calculating nature of this instance of value creation with *ressentiment*. These interpretations suggest that *ressentiment* is the motivation for value creation, while the actual value creation is never anything more than a tactic to legitimate the slaves over the nobles. This occurrence of value creation involves more than redefining values; it also creates a kind of knowledge or approach to the world such as is not present in the actions of the slaves.

\(^{206}\) Ibid.: 37.
Wallace makes an observation that should redirect our study of value creation. Wallace remarks, “It is striking that Nietzsche’s strategic descriptions of the slave revolt apply primarily to the activities of the priestly aristocracy.” While some ressentiment was clearly experienced by the slaves, the priests are a better candidate for the actual value creators. The priests not only directed the revolt but were primarily responsible for the creative elements of it. The priests play a distinctive role in the slave revolt because they are the only ones who recognized the possibility that values could be created, let alone how this could be a means to power. Nietzsche attributes their recognition of value creation to their intelligence, writing, “The greatest haters in world history, and the most intelligent, have always been priests” (GM I: 7). Their intelligence is in part a feature of the ressentiment they feel: “A race of such men of ressentiment will inevitably end up cleverer than any noble race” (GM I: 10). Presumably this is because they will be plotting and calculating, devising and revising strategies against their opponents. The priests had a need for revenge, and they determined value creation would be their best means to this end.

Precisely how aware the priests were of their creation is unclear. Nietzsche calls their method “intelligent” (geistreichsten), which we might translate instead as “ingenious.” At the same time his characterizations of it as “deliberate” (geistigsten) leave the matter ambiguous as to whether we should understand their intentionality as intellectual or spiritual. Nevertheless, the strategic awareness the priests’ possess becomes clear when contrasted to the other groups. The nobles also created values, but they did so simply by affirming

---

208 Thus, I disagree with Risse, who argues that the priests’ intelligence was due to their being of noble stock, unlike the slaves. My argument is that the nobility of the priests may explain the specifics of their ressentiment and creation but not their intelligence. See Risse (2003): 149.
themselves; they had no deeper grasp on the project. The slaves, feeling repressed and impotent under noble valuation, joined with the priests to overthrow the balance of power. But the slaves had little recognition of their own power. Moreover, the slaves viewed values as eternal ideals and could not conceive of values being created by humanity. The priests had at least some realization that values could be created, which allowed the process to achieve its aims.

The priests felt a particular slight at the hands of the nobles because they were also of noble stock yet did not have the respect and power afforded to the others. The priests shared characteristics of both the nobles and the slaves. The priestly way of valuing “split off” from the other nobles, which eventually led the priests to take up a new set of values (GM I: 7). Their reversal was the result of their being overshadowed by the warrior or aristocratic aspects of the other nobles. Despite their significant roles as religious leaders, society looked up to “powerful physicality” and the aspects of society associated with such manliness. The priests thus came to feel “powerless” in comparison to these nobles, with the particular grievance that their position should be considered just as worthy as the aristocrats and warriors. This powerlessness and ressentiment also reveals the slavish aspect of the priests. The priests could become leaders of the slave revolt only if they could appeal to the interests and experiences of the slaves. As Nietzsche describes it:

He must be sick himself, he must really be a close relative of the sick and the destitute in order to understand them, - in order to come to an understanding with them; but he has to be strong, too, more master of himself than of others, actually unscathed in his will to power, so that he has the trust and fear of the sick and can be their support, defence, prop, compulsion, disciplinarian, tyrant, God. (GM III: 15)
The priests were repressed in a more personal way than the slaves, since they felt they should be accorded the same status as the other nobles. They recognized that the nobles were the source of society’s values, even while the other nobles did not realize this. Upon this realization the priests employed value creation to their own ends. Both priests and slaves were frustrated with the social hierarchy, but only the priests could develop a strategy of value inversion. The priests engaged in a war of ideas as a means to power. If they replaced the dominant ideas, values, and concerns in society, it would legitimate a new class of leaders in line with these new values, in turn bringing about a new power structure. While Nietzsche calls this a “radical revaluation,” I think it is clear the process created both new values and a new valuing framework. Some values were made by valuing something previously considered base. But other values, such as charity, entailed completely new understanding and significance.

This still leaves us with the question of how the priests’ value creation took over society. If the nobles created their own values with little regard for others, there is no obvious reason as to why the nobles would adopt new values and see themselves in this negative light. Here I accept Mark Migotti’s interpretation. Migotti holds that the nobles felt unable to justify their way of life. The nobles initially did not feel a need to justify their own

---

209 On this I agree with Ridley, who argues, “Unlike the noble, who feels and affirms his own efficacy, the slave’s experience of agency is minimal and derivative, a mere reflection of his own impotence in the face of those larger forces by which he is surrounded and repressed” (Ridley 1998: 24).

210 Risse (2003) claims that ressentiment affected the priests and slaves in different ways due to the differences inherent to their types. Ressentiment drove the priests to act through a “hateful creativity.” Meanwhile, the ressentiment of the slaves made them amenable to the priests’ teachings. This account meshes well with my interpretation of the priests’ value creation.


212 As Migotti points out, the nobles were more than mere brutes, as they showed “resourcefulness in consideration, self-control, delicacy, loyalty, pride and friendship” towards each other (GM I: 11). They were dismissive only to those who were not nobles. See Migotti (1998): 755.
existences and values. The priests were able to legitimize their own work with rational arguments. The nobles, believing themselves completely superior to the priests, encountered a game they could not win. The way in which the nobles came to feel inadequate with respect to the priests is similar to Nietzsche’s story of how Socratic rationalism came to dominate ancient Greece. Socrates overthrew the power structure of Athens by introducing a distinct argumentative strategy to promote what Nietzsche considers the values of the “rabble” (BGE 190). Migotti explains:

Socrates was able to radicalize the practice of defending oneself with reasons in two ways: he demanded that his interlocutors justify themselves to Socrates, a plebeian, and he demanded that they justify the fundamental principles according to which they lived rather than simply justifying particular, local matters against the background of an unquestioned code of noble conduct.213

Upon recognizing that they could not satisfy the demands of the Socratic approach, the nobles were thus forced to concede the justification of life to the priests who could give such reasons. The obvious question here is why the nobles accepted the need for justification in the first place. Nietzsche’s explanation appears to be that the nobles were impressed or impelled by the arguments given, or otherwise felt ashamed at their inability to defend their way of life. Therefore, they carved out a space for the priests. The priests convinced the nobles that they offered a superior set of values by appealing to forms of justification their values were best suited to meet. Yet in giving justification of values over to the priests, the nobles unwittingly abdicated the moral grounding of their society. To create values, the priests succeeded in changing the game from one of noble self-expression to one of rationalism.

213 Ibid.: 759.
What is noteworthy about this instance of value creation is that the outcome was not simply a revaluation of particular values. That is, the result was not just that individuals now had new goals or ideals, or even that individuals develop unique perspectives. The priestly creation also offered a new, shared way of valuing, or a new approach to what aspects of life should be taken as meaningful. The particular values that came out of the slave revolt developed only because they made sense within the larger scheme of values that the priests and slaves accepted. If we focus only on the individual values that were revalued, we miss the extent to which the priests redefined what could be taken as significant. This new valuing framework entailed a new orientation towards life. The noble way of valuing affirmed life, saying yes to itself “thankfully and exultantly” (GM I: 10). In contrast, the priests’ values considered life a sickness, and the goods of earthly life were derided. What we find is a new ethical language that emphasized universal principles over joy and particularity. Accordingly, the slave revolt in morality gave rise to what we might call a kind of ethical knowledge, where values represented ethical concepts, not goals. Values entail reasons that understood within a given context. When someone values justice or humbleness, these explain not only the aim but the reason behind the action, provided the agent and observer share a context in which these concepts apply. For the revaluation to succeed, the priests needed to change these basic ethical terms that individuals draw upon when explaining what they have done or intend to do.

The kinds of justification provided by this ethical knowledge are different from those employed by the priests to justify the importance of their values. That values entail reasons and explanations for action is inherent to any robust valuing framework. The rational
justifications encouraged by the priests reflect a distinct way of valuing. Their emphasis on reason-giving, justification, and impartiality serve to highlight the distinct priestly values. Since these values emerged from hatred and desire for revenge, I agree with Wallace that the new values and forms of ethical knowledge are best understood as expressions of *ressentiment* insofar as they were fueled by it. The priests lived resentful, secretive lives with “squinting” souls, so their values did not attract a new following (GM I: 10). In the end, the priests overcame the unattractive nature of their values by inducing others to embody them. Once these values were adopted by the slaves, they quickly spread, and even the other nobles accepted them. Only then did *ressentiment* truly become creative for society.

3.3 FORMS OF VALUE CREATION

3.3.1 Articulate Value Creation

From the story of the slave revolt, we get an intellectualist picture of value creation, where the priests devised new values as a means to their goals and then put these values into practice. The priests appear fully aware of their ability to create values, while the slaves who adopt these new values seem to have had no such cognitive awareness. The nobles who created the previous value framework appear similarly unaware of their creative capacities. These aspects of the slave revolt raise two important issues about value creation. First, the

---

214 See Wallace (2007): 119. Thus far, I have accepted Wallace’s rejection of the strategic interpretation and his suggestion that the new ethical scheme that came out of the slave revolt was the expression of *ressentiment*. My biggest disagreement with Wallace is with his treatment of the priests. He claims the priests recognized that the slaves would be susceptible to their tactic. They advocated these new values, but largely without accepting the values. My argument is that the priests must have experienced *ressentiment* too, even if they did so for a slightly different reason. Nietzsche tells us that the priests were sick (GM III: 15) and came to hold values opposite the other nobles (GM I: 7).

215 Conway makes a similar point, writing, “The slave revolt in morality was successful only because these newborn values eventually came to be embodied in the slaves who espoused them” (2008: 39).
priests’ awareness of creation could signify that value creation is the task of only a few, elite individuals. We might conclude that the ideal of value creation Nietzsche puts forth is limited to the philosophers of the future. However, that the other nobles and slaves experienced their own value creation leaves open the possibility that value creation is a broader process to be performed in a variety of ways. Second, the priests’ awareness of value creation as a strategy makes creation appear to be a cognitive process, but the creation by the slaves and nobles suggests it need not be. In what follows, I will address both of these matters in order to determine what lessons we can learn from the slave revolt as well as where the slave revolt offers a misleading account of value creation.

The priestly form of value creation resulted from an intention to create new ethical concepts by developing and describing the conditions of new, particular values. An important component of the work was the development and explanation of values that could then be adopted by others. I will call this aspect of the project “articulate” value creation, which involves the expression and communication of values that have not been previously recognized or understood. Articulating a value involves seeing it and naming: “To see something that still has no name; that still cannot be named even though it is lying right before everyone’s eyes. The way people usually are, it takes a name to make something visible at all. – Those with originality have usually been the name-givers” (GS 261).

Articulate value creation, including the specification of new values is likely what many think of when reading Nietzsche’s demands for value creation.

Articulate value creation is, at first glance, easy enough to comprehend. But upon further examination it becomes increasingly difficult to explain how this is even possible as a
task – does anyone ever just come up with a completely new value? And can a person succeed in a purposeful attempt to articulate a new value? Nietzsche’s answer to these questions, given his descriptions of priests and philosophers, seems to be a qualified yes. It may be easy to point to historical examples of articulate value creation; we can trace the source of some value or ideal to its origin. How this is to function as a practical goal is more complicated. The most basic example of articulate value creation occurs when someone names and defines something that others have not succeeded in communicating. This may include seeing a value in a new light or revealing a new importance that yet to be grasped, which is a characteristic Nietzsche calls originality (HAH II: 200). Nietzsche’s examples of higher individuals, such as Goethe, often are marked by this ability. But this sort of value creation, as a task, becomes problematic. If creation is about having an insight or intuition, how can a person go around intending to create?217

Intuiting or glimpsing a value others have not is a possibility that Nietzsche acknowledges, but articulating something involves a description or more thorough understanding, which Nietzsche calls name-giving: “Only as creators can we destroy! – But let us also not forget that in the long run it is enough to create new names and valuations and appearances of truth in order to create new ‘things’” (GS 58). Naming includes not only seeing something new and pointing it out, but also renaming or configuring some current value to highlight a particular, perhaps underdeveloped, aspect of it. In this way, name-giving

216 HAH II: 200: “Originality. – Not that a man sees something new as the first one to do so, but that he sees something old, familiar, seen but overlooked by everyone, as though it were new, is what distinguishes true originality. The first discoverer is usually that quite commonplace and mindless fantasist – chance.”
217 Sawyer (2007) calls this view the “spark of insight” view of creation. Sawyer denies this view of creation, arguing it does not match the actual experience of creation. Nietzsche allows for sparks of insight, but they encompass only rare cases of creation.
alters the significance of the value, showing different qualities or its application to different situations. Additionally, a value may be overlooked if it is misunderstood or applied in an inadequate context.

Naming takes on further importance beyond making concrete some vague idea. Naming also serves to publicize or suppress values. We can find analogous cases in the world of politics, where names and titles can be of particular importance. For example, the recent move to refer to the “Democrat Party” has been seen as an attempt to dissociate the party from ideals of democracy. By doing so, their opponents may be able to dissociate the Democrats, rightly or wrongly, from appealing ideas. When it comes to values, Nietzsche identifies a similar problem with names. He finds values such as compassion problematic given the Christian context in which they gained importance. But Nietzsche thinks a new form of compassion, in another setting, might serve an important role (GS 338). Similarly, the philosopher may create by recognizing other values that are misunderstood or misapplied. Nietzsche’s hope is that giving new names and context to these values will make them more successful. Name-giving also helps to reveal problematic components of human existence. Nietzsche himself named the phenomenon of ressentiment and showed how it manifested itself through history. We can pick out ressentiment and understand its harmful effects thanks to the context Nietzsche gave it.

Identification and name-giving play significant roles as they define the scope of a value or some implications of adopting that value, but neither of these is sufficient for

---

218 Take for example Hendrick Hertzberg’s 2006 piece in The New Yorker entitled “The ‘IC’ Factor.” He argues that “Democrat Party” is intended as a slur. He claims that it is meant to call into question whether Democrats are in fact democratic, and he thinks the name itself is not aesthetically pleasing.
articulation. To completely articulate a value requires fully spelling out the details of a value and the extent of its commitments. Nietzsche often offers critiques of values that he thinks have not been articulated or the scope of which is not understood, such as pity. Pity, he insists, often is a means for the pitier to display contempt and dominance over another (D 135-136). Additionally, pity typically obscures the personal nature of suffering, at the same time distracting a person from her own interests (GS 338). In contrast, Nietzsche articulates the value of “joying-with,” where individuals share joy or fellow-feeling rather than pity. He calls this value a hallmark of friendship and the highest privilege, and he finds it connected to gaiety, bravery, and other important character traits.219

The articulate nature of value creation is not limited to the development of isolated values; as with the priestly value creation, it also involves the creation of new ethical concepts. That Nietzsche wants values function as forms of ethical knowledge is evident in tables or tablets of goods that value creation produces (GS 335, Z I: 15). According to Zarathustra “fellow creators the creative one seeks, who will write new values on new tablets” (Z P: 9). The tables of goods are taken by some interpreters to be sets of laws or rules that are created by philosophers for others to follow.220 However, these tables should not be considered laws, and value creation does not entail legislation for others. Instead, Nietzsche envisions individuals developing such tables for themselves, where codification signifies not permanence but significance. Nietzsche uses these tablets to contrast his project of value creation to something like the Ten Commandments, inescapable laws given to the people

220 The most forceful proponent of this view is Lampert. He argues that creation cannot be self-legislation, since he believes Nietzsche rejects the kind of autonomy that allows for self-creation. Instead, he envisions the philosopher as a commander or legislator in the mold of Plato’s philosopher kings (2001: 196-201).
from above. New values are created as experiments, not written in stone as eternal truths. And though we experience their demands as inescapable, their content can always be reexamined. Value creation thus involves the development of values as concepts that provide grounds for ethical action.

Articulation, including creation of tables of goods and values, seems to capture many of Nietzsche’s comments on value creation, including his descriptions of the priests. Nevertheless, the priests’ creation is unique in that it did not draw its values from lived experience. Nietzsche’s other comments on articulation indicate that the process is often used to make more definite current values or ideals that are not fully grasped by society. Consequently, the priestly method of articulation makes the process more cognitive than necessary. It is not often the case that new ethical concepts can be thought up and legislated. Values typically take root if they occur within some tradition or valuing framework. When values are articulated from lived experience, they emerge more organically with less forethought. In naming and spelling out a value, we gain a better understanding of how that value works. Rarely will a foreign value be defined and implemented into some valuing framework. This makes the articulation of a value a rare, but not a task only for the elite. Few are likely to recognize a previous unarticulated value, but there seems no obvious barrier that would keep any class of individuals from undertaking this form of value creation.

3.3.2 Common Forms of Value Creation

The articulation of values captures much of the priestly form of value creation. However, there are at least two other kinds of value creation involved in the slave revolt that
are of a different sort. If we accept the views common in the literature, such as that of naturalists or that of existentialists, it is more difficult to make sense of where these other forms fit into Nietzsche’s work. We better see the importance of value creation to Nietzsche’s project by making it central. The change in values did not succeed until the slaves adopted the new values. This shows the importance of integrating values into a perspective as a part of value creation. The slaves integrated these values despite being unable to grasp the significance of these values for society in the same way as the priests. Additionally, Nietzsche mentions, but does not discuss in detail, the value creation of the other nobles. These nobles were responsible for creating the values the priests opposed. Unlike the reactionary creation of the slave revolt, the nobles created values by affirming their own lives, interests, and traits (GM I: 10). Noble value creation was not calculating or deliberate; it was the result of unreflective self-expression. An individual of noble stock creates values because “he feels he determines value, he does not need anyone’s approval” (BGE 260). Neither the slaves nor the nobles articulated any values, but these are clearly instances of value creation. From these we may surmise the processes of value creation are manifold and complex.

It is not just in the slaves and preceding nobles that we find Nietzsche describing a more common, less cognitive value creation. In numerous passages Nietzsche says humans of many different groups, not just the elite, have created their own values. Zarathustra tells us that it used to be groups of people who created values. These groups “once hung a tablet of the good over themselves” (Z I: “On a Thousand and One Goals”). The problem now is that these groups have become fragmented – the larger contexts have been lost and individuals must act without these frameworks. In GS 301 Nietzsche contends that everything that has

---

221 Such passages include GS 143 and AC 11.
value was given value by human beings. Some read this passage as arguing that only higher humans can create values, since Nietzsche indicates the “contemplative ones” understand the process of creation. I will return to this passage later, defending the view that humans in general have given value to nature, not that some particular group has determined values. Similarly, Nietzsche indicates humans have created “ever new tables of goods” that were mistakenly thought to contain eternal values (GS 115). These and other passages reveal that in the past every society has created values; all values have their origin with humanity.

Humanity has not noticed its role in this creation, and it has avoided taking responsibility for the resulting values. These values do not seem to have been created with any awareness or intention, instead arising out of ordinary behavior. To better understand the task of value creation Nietzsche proposes for the future, I now want to turn my attention to this historical, but more common value creation in order to consider it in more detail.

When it comes to how values have emerged from lived experience, Nietzsche gives us little to go on aside from making clear that the process has typically occurred without direct awareness of it. In BGE 253 Nietzsche notes, “The chasm between knowing something and being able to do it is perhaps even greater and more uncanny than it is generally thought to be: people who can do things in the grand style, the creators, might need to be ignorant.” We are also reminded that these values are not created in the abstract – recall that values are expressions of an individual’s drives and desires. Creators “have more to do than just to know – they have to be something new, and present new values!” Creating a value requires implementing the value into a practical context and embodying it, where the value is fully understood only after examining it in this context. Creation is thus experimental, whether or
not those involved recognize the project they are engaged in. Nietzsche often describes experimentation as a method for the elite, as when he describes the philosophers of the future as “those who attempt” (BGE 42). Nevertheless, even less guided value creation involves experimentation in valuing.

Additionally, adopting new interests, or affording old interests a new importance, brings to light numerous new concerns and values. These may not be the “bold and painful experiments” of the philosophers of the future (BGE 210), but living requires repeatedly exploring and adjusting commitments. Nietzsche does not provide examples, but it is clear that such actions performed all the time. If I become interested in some activity that I have not previously been interested in, such as soccer, a number of other considerations will change. I may turn my attention to attending soccer matches, or even playing the game myself. I may come to value different skill sets, such as good footwork or dribbling. My evaluations and concern for a number of activities is thus changed by the introduction of a new object of value. Value creation considers not only the novelty of the commitment but also its integration and the ripples it has elsewhere in life. These may be simple, such as when I find my schedule now booked with soccer practices or wake up each day with sore legs. To maintain an interest in soccer I will have to accept these complications.

The development of these new concerns may not sound much like the creation of values. The central idea is that there is experimentation throughout the course of life, even if it is not usually as rigorous as Nietzsche would like. It is successful, though, in elucidating the concerns and cares that exist below the surface. Harry Frankfurt helps describe the process: “Whether the person is aware of it or not, he has other intentions, intentions incompatible with
the one the decision established and to which he is also committed. This may become evident when the chips are down and the person acts in a way ostensibly precluded by the intention on which he thought he had settled." Moreover, through this process new insights and paths may become evident that were previously unrecognized. We can find an example of such experimentation and clarification in the Beat movement of the 1950’s and 60’s. The major figures of the movement were engaged in something new, and they realized this. But the results of their movement only became apparent later on. The movement did not even have a title or a major focus until the publication of On the Road, which occurred after many the primary events of the Beat movement had taken place. And certainly the numerous artistic outcomes of the movement in literature, poetry, and other spheres could not have been foreseen. So experiments push humanity further is to see the world in different ways, to find new meaning, and to create new objects of concern.

New relationships and activities require responses and improvisation that help also create new values. Over time, many responses and interactions become habitual, coming to be standard expectations for how a person will act in a given situation. Improvisation can lead to a distinct kind of value integration. By introducing new values and responding to different situations, these new values have a ripple effect throughout that individual’s perspective. Sometimes a new value will take precedence over previous values. For example, a new interest in the welfare of animals may take precedence over my desire to eat meat produced in certain ways, requiring that I change my behavior. In this way, accepting new values leads to

223 Velleman (2009) explores improvisation as a kind of value creation. I will consider his view in Chapter 5.
224 A more extreme example would involve a very important value that gives all other values a radically different significance. Nietzsche describes this more radical value integration in GS 289.
the development of a new perspective. Again we find that this is an activity performed throughout human life. Each day we learn things that cause us to reconsider the nature and scope of our values, and we accept new commitments that require changes in our standpoint. Over time, these changes in perspective can amount to a social or political movement.

Romanticism redefined the relationship between humans and nature. The movement then manifested itself in specific realms like music, literature, and art. At first, the same basic objects were valued, but they were approached in a radically new way. Eventually, new content and objects of value were created. In this case, the introduction of a number of new particular values led to a revolution throughout society, where the very basis on individuals encounter the world was reformed.

Integration leads to a perspective where previous concerns are modified, as different values take on greater or lesser importance. All the same, Nietzsche does not believe complete harmony should be the goal. Nietzsche often lauds inconsistency and tension, even remarking that “everybody knows now that being able to stand contradiction is a high sign of culture” (GS 297). Values need not complement each other in every way. The advantage of a perspective is that it provides numerous different evaluations that take into account various features of what is at issue. Problems arise only when these tensions become too great, which results in what Nietzsche calls contradictions: “Biologically, modern people represent a contradiction of values, they fall between two stools, they say yes and no in the same breath” (CW “Epilogue). Contradictions between values make action impossible or incoherent, since

---

225 Dries makes a similar point, noting, “The acceptance of contradictions allows for a variety of responses. Modifying one’s view and making it consistent is certainly one response, but it is by no means the only rationally acceptable position” (2010: 38-39). I believe Nietzsche’s view resembles that of Marino (2011), which I will address in section 5.3.1.
a person continually shifts between radically different points of view. But through competing and variant evaluations, we gain the benefit of being able to evaluate the significance of something in different ways, avoiding the possibility of dogmatism.

While the results of creating values through embodiment and experimentation are ultimately new perspectives, we should not discount that such creation does lead to new particular values. Particular value creation involves creating and defining a singular value, even if this value has a number of complexities. A person can also take interest in cultivating one aspect of life. Nietzsche portrays Thucydides in this way, claiming that Thucydides investigated realism in both his work and his attitude towards life. In doing so he gained distinct kinds of courage and self-control with which he faced reality (TI X: 2). For another example, consider Mother Teresa, who arguably embodies compassion above all other values. She creates many nuances related to compassion, initially unrecognized by others. Mother Teresa took interest in something specific, working to elucidate compassion through both embodiment and articulation. She began with some previously acknowledged value and through investigation, refined it.

Value creation is not limited to such refinement, and the starting point need not be a value others already accept. Otherwise creation would be limited to exploring values that are already held. Particular value creation can also occur within some specified domain, with examples in fields such as logic, politics, or art (BGE 211). In these, value creation defines the social backdrop. An artist may create some new value relevant for art that may not have a noticeable effect beyond that sphere. A limited artistic movement might develop and reflect some value without seeking to change the discipline or create a larger movement. The Hudson
River School provides an example of this narrow focus. The members of the Hudson River School examined the expansion and settlement of the 19th Century. A dominant theme was to contrast serene human settings with the harsh wilderness, which was itself admired for its beauty and ruggedness. The Hudson School, together with contemporary Transcendentalist writers, sought to explore and display the beauty and divinity of nature, reimagining the place and role of humanity in nature. Though this led to no widespread revolution, this view of nature developed a new respect for undeveloped land. Eventually, valuing of nature resulted in a change in land policy and the national park system, among other things. The Hudson River School had a large affect on how nature was viewed, but it did so despite its more limited aims.

Our ordinary interactions with others and responses to situations create both particular, individual values and new perspectives. Over time, these can become movements that share their values and perspectives with others. The significance of these common occurrences of historical value creation, regardless of the specifics, is that they reveal where the priestly creation is misleading as a paradigm. Few have created values deliberately for any particular goal. Typically values are created without the realization that this is happening. Therefore, when Nietzsche tells us that philosophy “creates the world in its own image,” he is actually describing any philosophy, ideology, or tradition (BGE 9). Most value creation, occurring through articulation and lived experience, occurs without planning or direction, which will affect how we understand Nietzsche’s proposed task of value creation.
3.3.3 Ethical Knowledge

The results of more ordinary occurrences of value creation are varied, including both particular values and perspectives. These processes make clear that the calculating value creation of the priests is an outlier, and value creation is, or at least has been, generally undirected. But like the slave revolt, it is clear value creation gives rise to an ethical framework for some group or tradition. In claiming humans are the source of values, Nietzsche describes the emergence of ethical traditions. More common forms of value creation, including both the articulation of values and the outcomes of more common value creation, are not relics of the past; humans continually develop new ways of valuing, or ways “to feel, to taste again and love again” (BGE 224). The outcome of all forms of value creation consists of values that function as ethical concepts and ideals, constituting ethical knowledge.

I use ethical knowledge in a way similar to Bernard Williams in *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*. By ethical knowledge I mean the ability to understand and apply practical judgments within a given context. Values entail reasons, justifications, or other ethical considerations that cannot be fully systematized, because their employment is context-dependent. That is, by appealing to values, a person communicates a reason or explanation to others who share an understanding of the value. When I insist that I have performed a certain action because it is just, this entails a number of other considerations for a person who speaks the same ethical language. Without unpacking what I mean by “just,” we share an understanding of what the value involves. At the heart of ethical knowledge we find ethical concepts that provide knowledge or reasons as the basis for action.

---

226 Williams (1985).
In creating new forms of knowledge, it is clear that simply naming, describing, and presenting new values is insufficient, since these values typically emerge from a tradition and are not imposed upon one. Nietzsche is not suggesting that we need a new ethical theory. Not only does Nietzsche reject the universalist assumptions of such theories, but he finds such theories inappropriate for the realm of ethical considerations, proclaiming, “That what is right for someone absolutely cannot be right for someone else; that the requirement that there be a single morality for everyone else is harmful precisely to the higher men” (BGE 228). His point is that we need a new set of possible commitments that we can draw upon when evaluating a situation and deciding on a course of action. Each can serve as a new “philosophical justification” for life (GS 289). These values bring about a new ethical language, making different kinds of actions possible. Values, though not beholden to any truth about the world, are rooted in their relationship to other such values, drawing on shared knowledge as justification.

In saying that value creation fundamentally involves providing new reasons for action, it may sound as though I am simply agreeing with the position defended by Clark and Dudrick. I do not share their view. Clark and Dudrick hold that value creation admits of descriptive and normative aspects. Descriptive value creation entails philosophers inducing people to feel certain ways and to respond to certain values. Normative value creation, on the other hand, involves a practice of reason-giving. The capacity to give and accept reasons makes a number of new behaviors possible. Only when reasons can be given for actions do they think that normative properties such as good and bad or right and wrong can be applied.

---

227 Clark and Dudrick (2007).
Normative properties are created because they depend on what reasons there are to act or feel in certain ways. I agree with Clark and Dudrick that Nietzsche wants us to recognize the human capacity that allows for acting on reasons. What I dispute is that either aspect of what Clark and Dudrick call value creation matches Nietzsche’s description of it. Instead, I will argue that a different kind of ethical knowledge results from value creation.

An additional problem with their view is that they limit value creation solely to Nietzsche’s “contemplatives.” They argue that these contemplatives are the teachers who induce others to act and establish the practice of reason-giving. Normative value creation connects the idea of creating a value to acting for a new reason. Yet, the ability to give reasons, which makes normativity possible, is a condition that humanity has already achieved. Creating values goes beyond being able to appreciate reasons to the development of new reasons or ethical knowledge. However, the higher humans Nietzsche calls contemplatives are not the same as the elite individuals Nietzsche describes elsewhere:

It is we, the thinking-sensing ones, who really and continually make something that is not yet there: the whole perpetually growing world of valuations, colours, weights, perspectives, scales, affirmations, and negations. This poem that we have invented is constantly internalized, drilled, translated into flesh and reality, indeed into the commonplace, by the so-called practical human beings (our actors). Whatever has value in the present world has it not in itself according to its nature – nature is always value-less – but has rather been given, granted value, and we were the givers and granters! Only we have created the world that concerns human beings! But precisely this knowledge we lack, and we catch it for a moment we have forgotten it the next: we misjudge our best power and underestimate ourselves just a bit, we contemplative ones. We are neither as proud nor as happy as we could be (GS 301).
The mistake most people make is that they create their own lives and values but deny doing so, instead portraying themselves as spectators. Humans are continually creating values yet abdicating their responsibility for the task, acting as if values already exist in the world. The contemplatives are not defined by their ability to create values. The ability to create is a human characteristic, and a person who recognizes this “grows into the height of humanity.” There is no indication that only a few perform this creation. When Nietzsche says “it is this knowledge we lack,” he means the knowledge that we make the world valuable to us. This fits well with the idea that many forms of value creation are quite ordinary. Those who recognize these processes are in position to become prouder and happier individuals who take charge of their value creation. Rather than limiting value creation to only a few, Nietzsche merely differentiates his preferred form of value creation from its more common instantiations.

Rather than providing a space of reasons, value creation involves creation of rich ethical concepts. Since Nietzsche treats values as pieces of knowledge, I believe the kind of reason giving involved most resembles Williams’ notion of thick ethical concepts. Thick concepts, according to Williams, bring together facts and values, loaded with information that can only be ascertained by those within the tradition. Examples include treachery, promise, brutality, and courage. Thick ethical concepts, on Williams’ view, arise out of a cultural or social tradition, where the members of the tradition understand how to apply these terms and when they are appropriate to the situation. There is no underlying truth for these concepts, and there is no one system of ethical knowledge to be gained. Nietzsche surely agrees with these claims. Further, Nietzsche criticizes the “thin” values of modernity which are orphaned from the tradition they grew out of. The values and virtues we have today are inherited from the

228 Williams (1985): 129.
past (BGE 214). Many of them no longer apply, or they make sense only with an ideal we no longer accept. Instead of attaining certainty about ethics, Williams suggests an ideal of ethical confidence, which reflects the relative health of a tradition. Confidence indicates that the individual has a wealth of concepts to rely upon, and that she is able to decide for herself the best course of action in line with her various commitments. Since value creation results in new evaluative frameworks, it makes sense that thick concepts or confidence should be the product.

I have now posited a distinction between the creation of specific values and the creation of a valuing scheme. So what is the connection between these ordinary processes of value creation and Nietzsche’s claims that humans have been the source of all values? To put the problem another way, it may appear I have not connected values to value creation. In Chapter 2, I argued that values are complex expressions of an individual’s drives and desires. But when it comes to value creation, my view is that Nietzsche does not limit creation to the development of these personal values. Value creation is a process culminating in forms of valuing, or ethical knowledge, rather than individual values. Consequently, there is a gap between the individual responses that occur in everyday value creation and the forms of value that have resulted over time and have given rise to valuing frameworks and traditions.

One connection between particular values and value frameworks is that individual values gain traction through interactions and interplay with others. While values may start out as courses of action for an individual, these commitments become recognizable to others, allowing them to function as shared commitments. I will return to the role of interpersonal relations in value creation later in this chapter. Another way these frameworks develop from
individual values is through attraction. The embodiment of values exemplifies ways of living that can then be recognized and evaluated by others. An individual with distinct values will attract the attention of others, and in this context she can model suggested values for others. For Nietzsche this is characteristic of exemplary figures like Goethe. By looking to great figures, others can recognize the values they embody and perhaps be motivated to reconfigure these values for themselves. In some cases these new values actually attract others to them. The attraction of others to some value is, on Nietzsche’s view, a non-rational process; the attraction and proliferation of values does not require rational explication of value. Something about the value is compelling, and this is what spurs its transmission to others. Nietzsche does not suggest that values should be adopted uncritically, but failing to consider values as we encounter them in the world would close off an important means of discovering and sharing new ways of valuing.

3.4 NIETZSCHE’S VISION OF VALUE CREATION

3.4.1 The Task of Value Creation

We have now seen that value creation, whether intentional or haphazard, calculating or accidental, results in not only particular values but new ethical concepts, amounting to new ethical knowledge. These concepts provide a “philosophical justification of one’s way of

Sleinis (1994) considers a similar approach to value creation. According to Sleinis, Nietzsche destroys current values, and then he must replace them with some new set of values. One possible solution is what Sleinis calls the “attraction model,” in which the übermensch attracts people who then adopt her belief system. I agree with much of Sleinis’ description of how attraction might work as a non-rational process, but I disagree with him on at least two accounts. First, on my view it is not only the übermensch who creates value. Many may create values, and in doing so their values may attract others. Sleinis worries that there is no clear path to becoming the übermensch, but such a path is unnecessary for value creation. Second, the embodiment of values is itself not unique to creation. All values should be embraced in this way. Values reflect how an individual interacts with the world. The creator of values may be in presenting a way of living that has been heretofore unrecognized.
living and thinking” that defines her outlook on the world (GS 289). The final challenge in understanding Nietzsche’s view is to take these depictions of how value creation has occurred and translate them into the future-oriented task that Nietzsche proposes. The task of value creation is central to Nietzsche’s new ethical vision because we have “the power to create for ourselves our own new eyes and ever again new eyes that are ever more our own” (GS 143). These “new eyes” reflect the new ethical knowledge that arises through value creation. The process of creation is one Nietzsche himself outlines most clearly in his 1885 notebooks:

Philosophers…have trusted in concepts as completely as they have mistrusted the senses: they have not stopped to consider that concepts and words are our inheritance from ages in which thinking was very modest and unclear. What dawns on philosophers last of all: they must no longer accept concepts as gifts, nor merely purify and polish them, but first make and create them, present them and make them convincing. Hitherto one has generally trusted one’s concepts as if they were a wonderful dowry from some sort of wonderland: but they are, after all, the inheritance from our most remote, most foolish as well as most intelligent ancestors. This piety towards what we find in us is perhaps part of the moral element in knowledge. What is needed above all is an absolute skepticism toward all inherited concepts (of the kind that one philosopher perhaps possessed – Plato, of course – for he taught the reverse). (WP 409)

The need for new concepts explains why Nietzsche insists that “the preparatory labor of many generations is needed for a philosopher to come about; each of his virtues needs to have been individually acquired, cared for, passed down, and incorporated” (BGE 213). Creating any particular value may not require generations, but the development of a tradition or body of knowledge cannot be the result of mere choice or subjective willing. It requires work over an extended period of time during which the set of values is created and modified.
To develop a new set of ethical concepts that can be appealed to in the course of life takes
time, and understanding and evaluating these values requires even more.

Nonetheless, in Nietzsche’s demand that we make value creation a future-oriented
task, we encounter a significant complication. Aside from the priests, most value creation has
occurred without the intention to create values. Even the most directed occurrences Nietzsche
describes are more fleshing out an insight than a calculating project. Which of these does
Nietzsche’s proposed value creation most resemble? We might think Nietzsche conceives of
value creation as calculating, making philosophers of the future like the priests. However, the
value creation Nietzsche proposes is less cognitive. If we expect to introduce ethical
knowledge, not particular values, we should expect that these values cannot be created
independent of the valuing framework. I believe Nietzsche’s ideal value creation occupies a
space where value creation can be intentional but not overtly intellectual. The distinction I
have in mind is similar to one we find with Nietzsche’s demand that we give style to our
character. We cannot help but give style to ourselves through all our actions and choices.
Nietzsche’s suggestion is that by considering the possibility self-creation we can more
effectively create our own style. Similarly, by paying attention to the values we embody, we
can more effectively create values and new courses of action.

A more philosophical task of value creation is less calculating than we find in the
slave revolt, and our position is more like the “contemplatives” in GS 301 than that of the
priests. This task differs from more common instances of value creation because the
experimentation and improvisation will admit of some planning. In this proposed
experimentation Nietzsche wants us to “be our own experiments and guinea-pigs” (GS 319).
The process will be improved by recognizing it. In being aware that values are created through experiments and interactions, more effort can be put into the conditions that give these the best chance to succeed. Determining likely candidates for new values and interacting with other people engaged in the process make it more likely that useful ethical concepts will emerge. There is a tension here in that value creation seems to require leaping into some new way of living, where too much forethought could constrain the possibilities the individual will explore. Yet, to be most effective, a person cannot simply try anything that comes to mind. Creation ideally involves some sense of what is trying to be achieved, but the endeavor is risky because the outcome is unknown.  

One aspect of Nietzsche’s proposed value creation is a distinct kind of value integration, which Nietzsche characterizes as “assimilating knowledge and making it instinctive” (GS 11). Instinctive behavior means that we do not even need to develop a rich set of reasons for action, and that we can harmonize our commitments without needing to be fully aware of our reasons for action at that time. According to Nehamas, this passage also indicates Nietzsche’s goal is self-mastery with a harmony of desires, beliefs, and values, resulting in a single course of action. Reasons, on his interpretation, are irrelevant if such harmony is achieved among these other elements. However, Nehamas goes a step too far in arguing for both internal harmony and the irrelevance of reasons. Nietzsche’s emphasis on the “unconscious” serves to remind us that much about humanity has been misunderstood, and often there are deeper forces at work. Giving style does not require bringing all instincts under the guidance of one particular goal. In doing so, we would lose the variance and conflict.

---

230 In support of Nietzsche’s view, a study has shown that placing broad limits on a project does not hinder the creativity of individuals, but it does direct the focus of those involved. See Sawyer (2007): 62-63.
Nietzsche deems important. It is important that some tension remains along with different modes of valuation. Nietzsche does not envision one guiding value or project to which all other commitments are connected. Rather, each individual should have a plurality of interests and values, all of which work together to elucidate different aspects of the world. Against traditional conceptions of rationality, the idea seems to be that an individual can have many interests that color the situation differently. Nietzsche even credits his ability to adopt different viewpoints as a reason he has such insight into values (EH “Wise” 2).

The value creator may also create by experimenting with different perspectives, moving back and forth between different ways of viewing the world, as Nietzsche himself claims to do (EH “Wise” 1). In engaging with different perspectives, the range of possible ways being expands. Fiona Hughes provides a useful discussion of how new possibilities arise from experimentation.\(^{232}\) Hughes emphasizes the “Janus Perceptions” she finds central to Nietzsche’s work, and she develops it into a kind of constructivism.\(^{233}\) She argues that we can only understand the value a perspective has by living with the perspective and then considering whether it has accrued a positive or negative value for life. These paradigms allow the individual to look both backward and forward. They gain their meaning through experience, but at the same time they open new possibilities within life. Hughes is right to hold that experimenting with ways of living is inevitable. The value creator is an individual who recognizes this and responds by adopting different perspectives to see how each defines reality.

\(^{232}\) Hughes (2002).
\(^{233}\) I understand her term “paradigm” akin to what I have defined as perspective.
Nietzsche’s proposed task of value creation holds high the ability to articulate values, but the values articulated are recognized through lived experience. Nietzsche’s value creators do not impose new ethical concepts on others; they take an active role in the interactions that allow these concepts to emerge from a group or tradition, which supplies the context in which these values apply. These interactions and conditions provide the “preparatory labor” underlying the development of these new values. Without allowing values to emerge organically, the new concepts will fail to provide new reasons and justifications for actions. Value creation does not provide a single way of life, and it does not harmonize all matters of importance. But it shows how paying attention to values allows for the development of new values and a new ethical language that emphasizes new possibilities. Again, I see no reason to rule out the possibility that many individuals, not just a few elites, could pay attention to the processes of value creation with more philosophical engagement. Of course, being a philosopher in Nietzsche’s sense is no easy project because it involves the ability to take on different perspectives and to continually reconsider values. As a practical matter few may be able to do this, making the achievement rare; nonetheless, the processes of value creation Nietzsche describes seem open to many, and in fact it would seem to work better when many take on the task.

3.4.2 Group Creation

As we can see, most value creation has occurred when valuing frameworks emerge from some tradition; as a forward-looking project Nietzsche similarly envisions the development of new forms of ethical knowledge in addition to the creation of particular values and perspectives. This may be surprising, given that Nietzsche often characterizes
creation as the task for lone individuals. To be a self is “to estimate oneself according to one’s own measures and weight” (GS 117). The creator is “the most solitary” and “most hidden” kind of person (BGE 212). Nietzsche’s ambivalence about creating a kind of shared knowledge is twofold. First, he worries that knowledge shared by a community tends towards mediocrity. Appealing to a group might undercut the radical changes he believes creation promotes. Second, Nietzsche does not see many who are currently prepared to take on such a challenge. Nietzsche recognizes that his most willing audience will be those who stand apart from the crowd and see themselves as engaged in something distinct from others.

Nevertheless, the development of richer values and thick ethical concepts is most recognizably a project done in conjunction with others, in the same way that ethical traditions have previously developed in cultures. For his part, Williams, while acknowledging that ethical confidence can be a characteristic of individuals, argues that it is primarily a social ideal. The development and support for individuals’ values and attitudes typically depends on social confirmation.\(^{234}\) Values also develop through public discourse and interactions with others, resulting in shared ways of life. Likewise, we see Zarathustra continually looking for fellow creators to engage with.\(^ {235}\) While lauding solitude, Zarathustra paradoxically suggests, “It is better to live among hermits and goatherds” than to live in society, finding these solitary individuals proper company for value creation (Z IV: “Conversation with the Kings” 1). And we see Zarathustra looking to a shared ethical knowledge in the final section of TSZ when he looks ahead to the coming of his children (Z IV: “The Sign”). Zarathustra and his companions have begun the development of new values, but the project must be taken up by future


\(^{235}\) Z P: 9: “Companions the creative one seeks and not corpses, nor herds and believers. Fellow creators the creative one seeks, who will write new values on new tablets.”
generations to be fully successful in providing new sources of action. Therefore, Nietzsche’s work taken as a whole suggests the goals Nietzsche attributes to value creation are not best suited to independent individuals. The creation of ethical knowledge or concepts requires a context in which these values apply. This would seem a task that makes sense most for a group, with the possibility of creating an identity, tradition, or culture. Despite Nietzsche’s focus on single individuals, we should recognize the social aspects of creation present in Nietzsche’s work.

Not only is Nietzsche’s ideal consistent with creation by groups rather than individuals, but group creation provides a better model for the kinds of value creation Nietzsche describes. Nietzsche’s examples of creation, I believe, have primarily served to mislead his readers into imagining a number of great individuals when in fact new values and modified ethical concepts are more like to arise from a group. Nietzsche’s focus on the individual, and his apparent resistance to group creation, are rooted in a concern about group think. Members of a group, he believes, are afraid to go against the group and are instead content to adopt ideas from others (GS 50). Moreover, Nietzsche doubts that many are able to create values as he proposes, which further emphasizes the individualist model. If individuals are likely to be corrupted by others, prudence suggests avoiding others and working alone. A further problem in modern valuing is that the values have become disconnected from the context in which they made sense. Nietzsche clearly does not think we should go back to some previous time and adopt that way of valuing, since he prescribes value creation as a way
to create a new, more promising future.\textsuperscript{236} However, our challenge is to imagine what conditions are most conducive to the processes and goals of value creation we find in Nietzsche’s work.

The kinds of experiments and integration we find in Nietzsche’s value creation are best captured by a collaborative model. Creation requires ideas be taken up with the attitude that they can be modified, changed, or reformed to meet other needs. Values gain traction as they are shared, adopted, and integrated into others’ perspectives. The context that emerges provides a shared knowledge along the lines of the thick concepts described by Williams. Accordingly, the value creation process is much more a collaborative endeavor than it first appears. To explore how this might work, we will need to look beyond Nietzsche to find other applicable models of collaboration. One such approach is from Keith Sawyer, who has recently argued that all creativity is the result of collaboration.\textsuperscript{237} Rather than waiting for a moment of insight, Sawyer’s idea is that creativity is really the culmination of a number of different sparks and experiences. An individual is always drawing upon her own experiences and the ideas of others, and even when alone a person draws on previous collaborative experiences. Sawyer suggests that collaboration allows for better creativity because it provides new and unexpected concepts, and it typically results in the best concepts being selected for further work. Consequently, collaboration leads to not only new insights, but it is the best model to promote innovation.\textsuperscript{238}

\textsuperscript{236} A related misinterpretation of Nietzsche is that he seeks a return to the master or noble way of valuing described in \textit{On the Genealogy of Morality}. Schacht calls this the “Blond Beast Blunder,” and he refutes it. See Schacht (2001): 153.
\textsuperscript{237} Sawyer (2007).
\textsuperscript{238} Ibid.: 124.
Sawyer uses the invention of the mountain bike to help explain his view. The mountain bike was developed in small steps by a number of individuals aiming to overcome the challenges of riding bicycles on difficult terrain. Over time, individuals developed and tested tires, frames, gears, and other important mechanical changes to make the bikes better able to withstand the terrain. Eventually, some owners of modified mountain bikes traveled to other areas, where their ideas were adopted and modified to meet the needs of other locations. The invention of the mountain bike compares favorably to some aspects of Nietzsche’s value creation. In the same way, Nietzsche seems to think that values and commitments emerge from the needs and experiences of different individuals as they interact with each other. These shared values should prove applicable at both the particular and perspectival levels, where narrow or wide-ranging forms of valuing prove attractive to others.

Of course, Nietzsche would not accept ordinary collaboration as part of value creation. Interactions would need to be with others who are similarly experimental and interested in the development of new values. Moreover, Nietzsche describes relationships with others as having a fundamentally agonistic component, which is not present in ordinary collaboration. Typically collaboration involves people working together to achieve some specified project. For Nietzsche, the overarching goal is to create new values, but the process requires some opposition from other perspectives. Valuing emerges from interplay between individuals. In encountering new views and ideas, the individual responds to these, and these responses are often the basis of new values. The processes of value creation do not result in a single, unified

---

239 Ibid.: 5-7.
tradition. Rather Nietzsche’s account of experimentation suggests a plurality of values, where many values are created and understood, though not all values are shared by everyone.

To better understand the creation of value through competitive collaboration, we will need to know more about these relationships with others, so I will return to this topic in the next chapter. The thrust of my argument here is that if we look closely at the various kinds of value creation present in Nietzsche’s work, we find that group creation through collaboration is the best model for how the process should function. Accordingly, in reconstructing Nietzsche’s view, we are best to think of it as a collaborative process, either when on one’s own or when creating with others. However, to the extent that Nietzsche does not see this present in his own work, my suggestion constitutes a partial revision to Nietzsche’s view. That Nietzsche gets caught up in his ideal of the great individual does an injustice to the social goals of value creation. Group creation is the logical extension of his view, but Nietzsche ignores the possibilities of collaboration, instead finding groups problematic most of the time. Nietzsche’s view should entail the rejection, or at least the downplay, what Sawyer calls the “myth of the lone genius” in favor of more collaborative endeavors.

3.5 VALUE CREATION IN NIETZSCHE’S WORKS

3.5.1 Nietzsche’s Value Creation

I have described the processes and ethical aims of value creation in Nietzsche’s work. These raise the question of whether such value creation is present in Nietzsche’s work, or if his task is one of clearing ground before new values can be created. Using the forms of value creation I have described, I will argue that both Nietzsche and his character Zarathustra
engage in value creation, despite Nietzsche’s claims to the contrary. The first-personal aspect of his work suggests that something more is being done than mere analysis or description of value creation, and a number of new values emerge in these works. Those who insist we find no value creation in Nietzsche’s work use too narrow a conception of value creation.

Nietzsche is famous for making radical suggestions and proposals, so it may surprise some readers that there is even a question of whether Nietzsche creates new values. However, Nietzsche himself is adamant throughout *Ecce Homo* that he offers no new values or ideals: “The last thing I would promise would be to ‘improve’ humanity. I won’t be setting up any new idols…*Knocking over idols* (my word for ‘ideals’) – that is more my style” (EH P: 2).\textsuperscript{240} Here and elsewhere Nietzsche portrays himself as nothing more than an opponent of traditional morality. He works to open up new possibilities, heralding the beginning of a new age. In doing so, he insists those who will take on his tasks like value creation are yet to come. Hence, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* ends with Zarathustra claiming his children are near but not yet present (Z IV: 20). In the future, new institutions and values will be needed, but these comments imply they cannot yet be created. It may be that Nietzsche must first clear the ground for such values and institutions.

Many scholars accept these statements by Nietzsche as the final word against his value creation. For example, Manuel Dries writes, “Notwithstanding my earlier insistence that the transvaluation project requires a change in values…Nietzsche himself insists frequently that he should not be regarded as the giver of new values.”\textsuperscript{241} Walter Kaufmann was persuaded by Nietzsche’s claims in *Ecce Homo*. Against those who find new values or virtues in

\textsuperscript{240} For similar claims see EH “Books”: 1 and EH “Destiny”: 1.
\textsuperscript{241} Dries (2010): 35.
Nietzsche’s work, Kaufmann accuses them of relying “on their imagination to produce Nietzsche’s ‘new’ virtues.”\textsuperscript{242} We also find a connection between Nietzsche’s claims about himself in \textit{Ecce Homo} and his description of the philosophers of the future in \textit{Beyond Good and Evil}. Nietzsche foretells the coming of the new philosophers who will create value.\textsuperscript{243} Before these new philosophers come about, though, the conditions for their coming must be provided (BGE 203). This will take the “preparatory labor of many generations” (BGE 213). Humanity has been chained, denied its instincts, and fallen into decadence, which does not provide fertile ground for creation. While some individuals, like Nietzsche, might see beyond these limitations, perhaps the possibility of genuine value creation requires further societal changes.

If we thought all value creation resembled the priestly version of it, then we might have reason to deny Nietzsche’s value creation. But we have seen most value creation is unlike that of the priests. We can use the other forms of value creation to make sense of Nietzsche’s insistence that he does not make a radical change in valuing. Nietzsche’s criticisms of others are quite pointed, but his own values are more hidden. In the sense that Nietzsche has not created a new “table of values,” he has failed to articulate a new form of valuing. Nevertheless, we do find new values in Nietzsche’s work, even if the descriptions leave the reader wanting to know more details. For instance, Nietzsche’s vision of the passionate life, in terms of abundance and overflowing, offers a new vision of the relationship between an individual and her passions. Nietzsche goes beyond traditional views of the passions to make them a central focus. The noble individual, he concludes, should lead his life

\textsuperscript{242} Kaufmann (1974): 110. 
\textsuperscript{243} See BGE 2, 42, 44, and 203.
at the behest of a singular passion, which appears like madness to others (GS 55). In this he thinks he has discovered something distinctive in this passionate way of living that should be accepted by others.

Many of Nietzsche’s values are present in his actions and experiences but not explicitly named. Other commentators have recognized Nietzsche’s distinctive style, but many have not connected this to value creation. Consequently, Nietzsche’s distinct approach fits uneasily into many theories. Kaufmann, who did not think that Nietzsche engaged in value creation nevertheless acknowledged that Nietzsche presented new values: “In that sense it may be said in the end that he did offer new values – if only implicitly, after the manner of great artists and creators, ‘away from the market place.’ There is a sense in which every great individual is an embodiment of new norms, an incarnate value-legislation, and a promise and challenge to posterity.”

Nonetheless, Kaufmann’s reading does not do justice to the new attitudes that Nietzsche presents in his work, including the kind of laughter and dancing that Nietzsche associates with life affirmation. Further, Robert Solomon makes a helpful distinction that elucidates Nietzsche’s own values. He separates the virtues Nietzsche has as an author, such as his style, boldness, and enthusiasm, from those he celebrates in his work. Solomon finds this important because many authors do not live up to their ideals. With Nietzsche, we might offer a different conclusion: since Nietzsche is focused on both himself and others, his project often changes directions. Moreover, Nietzsche presents values for his reader, and he also develops values from his own experiences, giving his work added complexity.

---

Nietzsche obviously does not embody all of the values he discusses, but he draws on his experiences in order to determine what possible commitments and perspectives might be fruitful.\textsuperscript{246} In suggesting new attitudes and approaches to valuing, Nietzsche begins to develop a new way to live. Unlike the ideal task of value creation, Nietzsche has a smaller community engaged in the project, limiting the thickness of the ethical concepts created. And recall that value creation is not typically completed by a single individual in the course of a lifetime. Nietzsche’s work is not preparatory, though it remains incomplete. Creating and defining ethical concepts is clearly an aim of Nietzsche’s, and we do a disservice to the complicated work of value creation to ignore Nietzsche’s contributions to it.

3.5.2 Zarathustra’s Value Creation

In \textit{Thus Spoke Zarathustra} Nietzsche discusses creation more than in any other work. We might assume that the work in general and the character of Zarathustra both exemplify value creation. However, many interpretations of \textit{Zarathustra} have the main character engaged in preparatory tasks rather than actual value creation. On these readings, Zarathustra provides some doctrines of Nietzschean philosophy and explains what value creation might be like, but he does not partake in the creation of value. Robert Gooding-Williams offers the most thorough extant analysis of Zarathustra and value creation, and he holds something like the view just described. He considers exploring the possibility of value creation a central theme of the work.\textsuperscript{247} Gooding-Williams argues that Zarathustra is on the path to becoming a

\textsuperscript{246} In \textit{Ecce Homo} Nietzsche repeatedly credits his various experiences for his insight into what is healthy and unhealthy. For example, he says through his sickness “I discovered life anew, as it were, myself included, I tasted all good and even small things in ways that other people cannot easily do, - I created my philosophy from out of my will to health, to \textit{life}” (EH “Wise”: 2).

\textsuperscript{247} Gooding-Williams (2001): 4-5.
value creator. His path offers us one path for becoming a transformative figure. Zarathustra is able to become a creator despite his skepticism, self-estrangement, and difficult social conditions. Zarathustra remains focused and defiant as he works towards developing new values while also engaging the moral tradition. The result is that Zarathustra provides a set of sufficient, but not necessary, conditions for value creation.\textsuperscript{248}

According to Gooding-Williams, Zarathustra devotes himself to two aspects of value creation. First, Zarathustra wants to inspire others to create values. Second, he wants to become a creator himself, which is a task that takes the entirety of the book. Only as the book closes does Zarathustra succeed in making this transformation.\textsuperscript{249} Despite these desires, Gooding-Williams does not think Zarathustra succeeds in creating values in the text, and much of reason for this is found in his interpretation of the three metamorphoses. The three metamorphoses are a transformation the individual undertakes from camel to lion to child. On Gooding-Williams’ interpretation, both the lion and child stages reflect types of Dionysian experience, while the child stage reflects the capacity for a new beginning exemplified in value creation. Despite Zarathustra’s desire to reach this stage, Gooding-Williams believes he spends most of the book in the lion stage of development, which exemplifies defiance. A person in the lion state aims to be the only master, since she does not need a master herself. The lion stage is not creative, since the individual has dissociated herself from others. She no longer is receptive to the world and can be moved by anything. She is guided by the will to truth, and the search for knowledge precludes her from loving life.

\begin{flushright}
\textit{Ibid.}: 16. \\
\textit{Ibid.}: 23.
\end{flushright}
On Gooding-Williams’ reading, creating values involves revaluing the passions. To
become a creator, Zarathustra must give up his view of the self and embrace a passionate
existence, which is exemplified in the text as Zarathustra’s “going-under.”\textsuperscript{250} To create a
value is to be affected and moved by one’s passions and then to direct these in a new way.
Through esteeming, a passion is rendered “good” and made effective to some purpose or
functional capacity.\textsuperscript{251} In the lion-stage, an individual is unreceptive to anyone or anything,
and she cannot experience her passions in appropriate manner.\textsuperscript{252} Only upon transforming into
the child does the individual become able to transform passions into values. Consequently,
Zarathustra does not become a value creator within the scope of the text. Value creation will
be the task of those Zarathustra calls his children, and their presence will indicate that he has
succeeded in transforming himself and leading others to create. When the story ends, his
children have not yet arrived. We are told they are near, but the ending of the book is “marked
by the \textit{absence} of his children.”\textsuperscript{253} This is reminiscent of the many passages in BGE where we
are told the new philosophers are approaching but are not yet present.

Gooding-Williams provides a compelling account of value creation from Zarathustra’s
travels and speeches. Still, I find unsatisfying the view that Zarathustra does nothing more
than show a route a future-creator might take through the three metamorphoses. One
particular point of disagreement concerns Gooding-Williams’ conception of value. He is right
to emphasize the embodiment values, connecting a change in values to self-change. He also
relates values to virtues, noting that the values of an individual or a people are foremost

\textsuperscript{250} Ibid.: 165.
\textsuperscript{251} Ibid.: 121.
\textsuperscript{252} Ibid.: 163.
\textsuperscript{253} Ibid.: 303.
identified with their virtues. While I do not think values and virtues are exactly the same, the characteristic actions of a person or group should reflect that which they find significant. However, a value is not merely an esteemed passion. As I have argued, we ought to understand a value as that which a person is committed to, and while these have physiological origins, we cannot reduce all values to physiology. Additionally, the various approaches to value creation that I described earlier reveal the limitations of Gooding-Williams’ view. If we treat value creation as a cognitive process involving the transformation of an individual’s passions, we miss the obvious value creation in which Zarathustra engages. Zarathustra exemplifies experimentation, displaying many values for himself, the other characters, and the reader. Zarathustra presents a serious approach to self-transformation, requiring him to develop new values for himself while he encounters mainly decadent people. Zarathustra’s effect on the reader is obvious. We cannot treat Zarathustra merely within the confines of the text. He presents values to us along with showing how values can be developed and integrated into one’s perspective.

Gooding-Williams’ interpretation also fails to provide an adequate account of the new value Zarathustra depicts. Most noticeably, he does recognize gift-giving as a new value. According to Gooding-Williams, the gift-giving virtue is the transformation of the will to power into a virtue.\(^\text{254}\) I agree that we should associate gift-giving with power, but to make sense out of it we must consider it a new value, or a new commitment, that Zarathustra imparts. Gift-giving is tied to abundance and overflowing, where an individual’s energy is boundless and seeks external targets. Zarathustra’s project of teaching is motivated, I contend,

\(^{254}\) Ibid.: 125-126.
by his exemplification of gift-giving. When Zarathustra comes down from the mountain, he does so because he is overflowing with energy and he is compelled to share his creation with others (Z P: 1).255 His creation, his power, requires an audience. In the second section of the preface Zarathustra suggested he came to give gifts. But only at the end of Part 1 does Zarathustra name the value of gift-giving and give an account of its qualities (Z I: 22). Here, Zarathustra is not describing a virtue from afar; he is naming the virtue that he has shown through the entire first part of the book.

Though Zarathustra does not name any other values as he does gift-giving, he embodies other recognizably new values. Zarathustra presents laughter and joy as critical aspects of human life. Zarathustra uses laughter to express a love of life, and he also recognizes laughter as reflecting an attitude towards one’s own life, that seriousness and love do not exclude each other. Upon hearing the higher men laugh at themselves, Zarathustra concludes they are pouring themselves out as he did and becoming grateful. To Zarathustra, this laughter is associated with convalescence (Z IV: 17.1). The laugh of the higher men is distinct from ordinary people who laugh at those they find different. The higher men reveal that laughter and joy must be present with their serious approach to life. In this value, Zarathustra brings together two Nietzschean ideas that seem opposed – honesty (or seriousness) and laughter. The structure of the book as a whole also reveals this value of laughter. The work ends with the seemingly-absurd ass festival, where Zarathustra compares himself to an ass. He then proposes that the higher men celebrate the ass festival in the future for their own sake, but they should do so in remembrance of Zarathustra (Z IV: 18). That

255 For further discussion of gift-giving see section 4.3.3.
Zarathustra finds joy in the absurd shows his attitude of revelry, supporting the view Part IV functions as a Satyr play to Nietzsche’s tripartite tragedy.\textsuperscript{256}

3.6 CONCLUSION

I have argued that Nietzsche presents value creation as a project that constitutes a distinct kind of philosophical achievement. However, this task little resembles the value creation of the priests. Though value creators must be aware of the task, it is not a primarily cognitive or intellectualist endeavor. The project resembles more the common forms of value creation that have occurred, but unlike these this project remains relatively rare. Value creation is one way humans come to care about things and develop new objects of concern. It functions as the core of Nietzsche positive ethics. Instead of developing a new ethical theory, Nietzsche proposes new forms of valuing, remaking our ethical concepts and ethical knowledge, providing the basis, or confidence, for a variety of new and different behaviors. While Nietzsche typically describes this creation as a project of elite individuals, we should not limit it to any particular group, and I have argued we can best make sense of value creation as a matter of group creation. While values may be created by those who are intending to create, it is more likely that values emerge from relationships, where interplay between individuals provokes new feelings, responses, commitments, and ultimately traditions.

Using the distinctions I have made, we can see that value creation is more than just a task Nietzsche imagines for future philosophers. It is something that he is actively engaged

\textsuperscript{256} Many others have discussed the Satyr-play characterization of Part 4 of \textit{Thus Spoke Zarathustra}, including Conway (1997), and Lampert (2001). Higgins (1987) also offers an intriguing analysis of the satire of Part 4.
with in his works, as is his predominant character Zarathustra. Nietzsche both aims to create values and to spur his audience to recognize the possibility of value creation. By focusing on the processes of value creation, we have also come to see more clearly some aspects of Nietzsche’s view that are obscured by a focus on metaethics. Above all, looking at the aims and outcomes of value creation showed Nietzsche’s interest in value creation to go beyond values to forms of valuing and ethical concepts. The values, and tables of values, Nietzsche describes provide reasons and justifications for actions, which only make sense in a particular context. Consequently, value creation results not only in new values but in new perspectives and new relationships. In this way, value creation reveals Nietzsche’s strategy of reimagining ethical life beyond contemporary metaethical debates.
CHAPTER 4
VALUE CREATION IN NIETZSCHE’S RESPONSES TO NIHILISM AND AUTONOMY

Value creation provides the core of Nietzsche’s positive ethical view, resulting in new values and the development of ethical knowledge. However, Nietzsche’s practical program goes beyond ethics and metaethics. Nietzsche’s foremost concern is whether human life can be deemed meaningful in light of what he considers the crisis of nihilism.257 Many other scholars, including, most recently, Bernard Reginster and Robert Pippin, have argued that Nietzsche’s primary aim was to stave off nihilism.258 Many argue that Nietzsche aims to overcome nihilism through the process of revaluation. I argue here that revaluation is, by itself, insufficient to perform this task. Value creation adds a necessary dimension the development of a meaningful existence. In particular, value creation allows each individual to give her own life a purpose in spite of the suffering prevalent in human life more generally. Value creation rekindles humanity’s engagement with life by emphasizing the human origin of value and meaning.

I begin this chapter by examining the conditions from which nihilism has emerged. The human desire for meaning has been transformed into a need for a purposeful life, which is challenged by the presence of gratuitous suffering. On Nietzsche’s view, most responses are

257 Though I am discussing separately Nietzsche’s interest in ethics and life’s meaning, there is not such a clear space between them. As we will see, the investigation of meaning and nihilism relies on a number of important ethical concepts. For Nietzsche, the questions are not independent, as he seems to agree with the view defended more recently by Wiggins, who suggests “the question of truth and the question of life’s meaning are among the most fundamental questions of moral philosophy” (1991a: 125-126).
unable to resolve the complex difficulties created by suffering and the need for purpose. Against these, Nietzsche proposes not only revaluation but also what I call self-appropriation, at the heart of which is value creation. The role of value creation in creating a purposeful life brings us back to an earlier question concerning the nature and scope of value creation. The standard view is that the creator is a solitary individual who creates values only for herself. In response, I argue, however, that the creator is not a solitary individual. Nietzsche’s depictions of value and gift-giving amount to an ideal I call competitive collaboration. In the end, Nietzsche proposes a radical reinterpretation of autonomy and rejects individualist approaches to creation and the authentic life.

4.1 NIHILISM

4.1.1 Meaning, Purpose, and Nihilism

A central component of Nietzsche’s project is to understand and avert nihilism. The nihilism we face results from a complicated set of historical processes. What counts as a meaningful life for human beings has proceeded through a number of different manifestations. Today, some think a meaningful life depends on a connection to something greater than the individual, such as a group, movement, or higher being. For others, meaningfulness requires some measurable effect on society, either today or in the future. Still others envision meaningfulness as attaining some goal or exemplifying some value that has been determined to be itself worthwhile. Bernard Reginster offers a helpful distinction to understand meaningfulness, differentiating strategies that find meaning in a particular life from those that
understand meaningfulness as a more general evaluative property.\textsuperscript{259} Particular meaning provides a unique meaning to each individual life. A person may determine if her own life has meaning regardless of whether others find their lives meaningful. Reginster suggests that typically such strategies of particular meaningfulness are usually relational, holding that life has meaning in relation to something else that is meaningful. Generic meaning, on the other hand, is an approach that considers whether human life on the whole is meaningful. Generic meaning is a formal concept; whether life is worth living will depend on whether individuals are able to attain or experience their highest goals and values.

The aspiration to find meaning in life is a basic desire Nietzsche attributes to humanity.\textsuperscript{260} In ancient times, the desire for meaning manifested itself as a longing for explanation and understanding.\textsuperscript{261} Nietzsche appears to accept a fairly simplistic picture of how mythology filled the void, at least in the Greek world. Mythology was able to provide explanations for many aspects of life, even though these explanations were neither metaphysically thorough nor fully understood by the populace (D 85). Nevertheless, mythology offered a basic level of explanation for various phenomena. For most people, attributing actions to the gods proved a sufficient explanation. Hence, that Zeus had done something counted as an explanation, even if Zeus’ reasoning was not understood. Mythological explanations in ancient Greece rarely explained the experiences of a particular

\textsuperscript{259} Reginster (2006): 21-25.
\textsuperscript{260} Hatab argues that Nietzsche employs the human desire for meaning to undermine Schopenhauer’s pessimism. The fact that it is impossible to live without some sense of meaning, and that we are compelled to find some meaning in suffering, should make Schopenhauer’s claims that suffering and life are meaningless an impossible thought. See (2008): 89-91, 119-121.
\textsuperscript{261} The view of the Greeks’ response to suffering present in Nietzsche’s middle and later writings clearly differs from the picture we find in BT. Tragedy served as his “point of departure” (TI X: 5). Later he comes to hold a much different view of the role suffering and the problems it causes for human existence. My focus will be on this later position.
person, and Greek religion was not a matter of personal communication or expression. The events of mythology instead offered explanations for a city, a people, or a culture rather than an individual. Therefore, mythology offered a form of generic meaning. For the few individuals who were not satisfied with mythology, philosophy arose and sought to provide secular accounts of nature.

Generic meaning was sufficient for most Greeks because the ancient conception of the self downplayed individuality. To be a self, or “to estimate oneself according to one’s own measure and weight,” was not a need of human life (GS 117). Moreover, fate and luck were accepted as aspects of life outside of the individual’s control. The world was considered to be full of both divine necessity and arbitrary misfortune, which were taken as facts requiring no particular response or redress. The average Greek would not expect the gods to be looking out for her directly, so the need for meaning could be satisfied by finding a place or a role within a general account of the world. Through tragedy the Greeks confronted the terrors of life in a way that made them palatable; knowing the gods experienced the same travails meant human life must also be worth living. The gods provided no account of why life must include such struggle, but their actions were enough to show that difficulties did not warrant a repudiation of life itself.

Regardless of whether Nietzsche’s view of the ancient Greeks is correct, what is most important is how he believes humanity moved away from the ancient view. The

---

262 Parker (1988) argues that Greek religion was primarily a matter of orthopraxy. While some might experience strong loyalty or affection for some God, the relationship is best thought of as one of respect. On the whole, Greek culture discouraged individual or unique meaning and expression.

263 PPP: 10-22.

transformation began with those Nietzsche calls the “teachers of the purpose of existence” (GS 1). These teachers rejected the adequacy of explanations appealing to mythology, fate, or chance. Instead, they demanded a different kind of explanation consistent with complex reasoning and calculation. People could look behind the explanations they had previously accepted to understand the deeper forces at work. Nietzsche does not believe any human purpose can actually be uncovered this way (TI VI: 8). Nevertheless, the teachers promoted the idea that “what happens necessarily and always, by itself and without a purpose, shall henceforth seem to be done for a purpose and strike man as reason and an ultimate commandment” (GS 1). The explanations previously in vogue offered no purposes, leaving them unable to satisfy this new need. At this point it became necessary to develop new explanations to show the reason or purpose behind an event.

So who were these teachers of the purpose existence, and why would they induce such changes? The only hint we get in GS 1 is that they were “ethical teachers.” It appears that in this category Nietzsche includes both philosophers like Socrates and Plato and the priests of the slave revolt. Both of these groups use reason and argument to subvert the values of their time. Socrates provides the clearest example, being “the clown who made himself be taken seriously” (TI II: 5). His introduction of rationalism created a new type of justification. He asked questions that no one in society, including those taken to be authoritative, could answer. His takedowns of others made him appear superior – nobody else could play his game as well as he could. The priests of the Genealogy used the same strategy to claim authority over others.265 The changes brought about included both the ability to find new reasons and to act

---

265 Migotti (1998). For further discussion see section 3.2.
The ability to act on reasons played an important role in making the individual significant independent from the group. For the teachers “an individual is always an individual” (GS 1). Thus, the question of meaning became personal. The question was no longer whether human life in general could be explained and justified, but rather whether the individual life was worth living. This need required a purpose because now “man must from time to time believe he knows why he exists.” The change from needing an explanation to finding a purpose made human life into a puzzle, since its purpose needed to be figured out. It set the bar higher for what kind of answer would suffice. If no such purpose or achievement could be articulated, the challenge of meaning could not be met.

The shift from explanation to purpose also made suffering into a significant problem. With the shift to purpose, there was an implicit assumption that if life is to be worth living the purpose of human life must be good. Suffering threatened to show human life has no desirable purpose. Whereas suffering had been thought of as an uncomfortable feature of life in the ancient world, it became “senseless suffering” that aroused indignation (GM II: 7). Needing a purpose, each “sufferer instinctively looks for a cause of his distress; more exactly for a culprit” (GM III: 15). Religion was the dominant strategy taken to reconcile a purposeful life with suffering. Nietzsche insists that suffering was behind the development of most religious and philosophical views, writing, “To suffer from reality means that you are a piece

---

266 GS 1: “With names all these Oughts and Because have been given and may yet be given in the future! The ethical teacher makes his appearance as the teacher of the purpose of existence in order that what happens necessarily and always, by itself and without a purpose, shall henceforth seem to be done for a purpose and strike man as reason and an ultimate commandment.”

267 Hatab offers a similar description of the difference between Greek and modern religions on the problem of evil. In Greek religion, the problem would not arise because human happiness is not the baseline of evaluation. Christianity, in offering a binary account of good and bad with human happiness central, makes evil a significant concern. See (2008): 191-198.
of reality that has *gone wrong*... The preponderance of feelings of displeasure over feelings of pleasure is the *cause* of that fictitious morality and religion” (AC 15).

Other ideologies sought to make sense of suffering, but Christianity became dominant because it most effectively appealed to the masses and converted others. Nietzsche’s presentation of Christianity suggests it was unique in its two-pronged approach to the problem, providing both theoretical and practical methods to mitigate the problem of suffering.\(^{268}\) Purportedly it spreads “sunshine over such eternally tormented people and makes them bearable even to themselves” (BGE 61). Christianity’s theoretical strategy justified suffering by tying it to the will of God. The purpose of suffering may be unknown to us, but we can be confident that God’s design was well-planned. Suffering encountered in the natural world will be made up for in the next.\(^{269}\) Furthermore, Christianity sanctifies certain experiences of suffering, making them essential to a distinctly Christian life. Suffering as a Christian imitates the suffering that Christ endured.\(^{270}\) Paul even finds it necessary to boast of his Christ-like suffering to support his Christian credentials.\(^{271}\)

Nietzsche’s interpretation of Christian suffering is made clear through his character Mr. Nosy Daredevil, who explains, “They tell me their misery means they are God’s chosen and select, after all, people beat the dogs they love best; perhaps this misery is just a

---

\(^{268}\) In WP 4 Nietzsche uses similar language to make a somewhat different claim. There, he concludes that Christian morality was an antidote to theoretical and practical nihilism. Yet, in the passage he outlines what I am calling the theoretical and practical responses to the problem of suffering. Despite Nietzsche’s introduction of the theoretical and practical in WP 4, I mean the terms to capture Nietzsche’s larger discussion of how Christianity responds to suffering, rather than the narrower assertion in the notebooks concerning nihilism.

\(^{269}\) Paul writes in Romans 8: 18: “I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us” (*New Revised Standard Version*).

\(^{270}\) 1 Peter 4: 1, 4: 8: “Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same intention (for whoever has suffered in the flesh has finished with sin...Yet if any of you suffers as a Christian, do not consider it a disgrace, but glorify God because you bear this name.” See also 2 Cor. 1: 5-7.

\(^{271}\) For example, see 2 Cor. 11: 16-33 and 2 Tim. 1: 11-12.
preparation, a test, a training, it might be even more than that – something which will one day be balanced up and paid back with enormous interest in gold, no! in happiness. They call that ‘bliss’” (GM I: 14). For any further suffering beyond what has been accounted for, Christianity leads us to point the finger back at ourselves rather than blaming others. We are all the cause of suffering through sin, and we are guilty for our condition. A person “should understand his suffering itself as a condition of punishment,” making suffering consistent with the possibility of redemption (GM III: 20).

In addition to its theoretical justification of suffering, Christianity also employs a practical program to numb or anesthetize the pain and suffering. The practical program arises from “the protective and healing instincts of a degenerating life” (GM III: 13). Rather than giving suffering a purpose, the practical responses minimize the threat suffering poses by trying to abolish it (BGE 44-45). Christianity, like Stoicism, holds that much suffering results from engagement with the physical world. Among its practical tactics are those meant to sever the person from these sources of pain. Christianity attacks the passions, and from Nietzsche’s perspective the aim is to “cure” the individual through a form of self-mutilation or emotional castration (BGE 46, TI V: 1). It also prescribes ascetic practices such as solitude, fasting, and abstinence (BGE 47). Moreover, the church provides a community of support, and it promotes virtues that bring people together for “consolation” (GM III: 17). Notable among these virtues is compassion (Mitleid). Nietzsche argues that compassion actually increases the amount of suffering that exists (D 134). Nonetheless, shared suffering is not felt as sharply, so it poses less of a threat.
The theoretical and practical Christian strategies, if not inconsistent, are at least in tension with each other. Christianity defuses the problem of suffering by explaining it away and diminishing any remaining anguish. Though its theoretical and practical responses to suffering are quite broad, Christianity offers its adherents a personal form of redemption (AC 43). A relationship with God provides everyone with a connection to the absolute (WP 4). The salvation of the particular person is a constant theme in Christianity, first appearing in Paul’s letters, but further developing in later thinkers like Augustine and Luther. The result is that the meaningful life now has two requirements. Human life in general must be justified, but now each person must also find purpose in her own life. The Christian interpretation sets a much higher standard of what can make human life worthwhile.

Having come to accept the need for a particular purpose, the growth of Christianity has essentially ruled out all alternatives – it “cannot be replaced” (WP 1). The result is that “it is in one particular interpretation, the Christian-moral one, that nihilism is rooted” (WP 1). This is not to say that all nihilism is somehow dependent on Christianity, but that the crisis we face is tied to particular historical developments. The reason nihilism becomes a problem with Christianity derives from the manner in which Christianity precludes other ways in which life could be redeemed. Moreover, Christian values bring with them a distinct form of nihilism rooted in the destruction of the self. Much of the threat is predicated upon the failure of the Christian responses to suffering. If Christianity succeeds in providing a purpose and neutralizing suffering, then there is no problem in need of a response. However, Nietzsche holds that the meaning Christianity gives to suffering, both through its theoretical purpose and practical prescriptions, will undoubtedly fail.
Nietzsche offers at least four reasons why Christianity will fail to satisfy humanity, which undergird his famous claim that God is dead. These reasons do not comprise Nietzsche’s entire critique of Christianity but only reveal its inadequacy in eradicating suffering as a problem, given the type of purpose needed. First, Nietzsche believes Christianity’s main doctrines have been or will be refuted. The soul is something “people used to believe in” (BGE 54). The same will prove true for free will. Nietzsche’s argument is primarily forward-looking. With science developing the tools to explore and to understand nature, he thinks Christianity’s time must be limited – at some point the evidence will stand overwhelmingly against it. What is perhaps most surprising about this argument is Nietzsche’s apparent reliance on reason and science. In Chapter 2 we saw Nietzsche dismiss the significance of rational arguments. Nietzsche’s point here seems to be that Christianity must provide explanations that can at least plausibly explain human experiences. We find the same theme in Nietzsche’s second argument. He believes Christianity relies on a misrepresentation of human experience and even willful falsification. He writes, “One type of honesty has been alien to all religious founders and such: they have not made their experiences a matter of conscience for their knowledge” (GS 319). Moreover, their attitude towards some elements of suffering is “exaggerated” and fantasy (GS 326). In Nietzsche’s estimation hostility underlies many Christian goals, with lies and falsehoods proving effective at achieving these aims (AC 27, 58). In his view, Christianity developed as a means to power, and many of its claims are designed to legitimate its social significance rather than to accurately characterize human experience. Revealing these claims to be confabulations should undercut their authority.
The remaining points take aim at Christianity’s practical responses to suffering. Christianity tries to eliminate experiences of suffering in order to suppress the tension between a purposeful life and a suffering life. Nietzsche finds this achievement impossible. Even if an individual can set aside physical pain, psychological suffering is still inevitable, as plans go awry, relationships fail, and people die. At these moments individuals will find the Christian response unsatisfactory. The strong, or honest, person “digests his meals, even when he has hard lumps to swallow. If he ‘cannot cope’ with an experience, this sort of indigestion is as much physiological as any other” (GM III: 16). Perhaps the problem can be largely avoided for some time, but the goal of abolishing suffering is just another form of dishonesty that will be uncovered. Finally, Nietzsche believes Christianity actually increases the suffering experienced in the world. It attempts to cure what it perceives as sickness, but “these instantaneous alleviations often had to be paid for with a general and profound worsening of the complaint” (D 52). Notably, Christianity blames the individual for suffering, and the resulting guilt entails a more intense, self-directed suffering (GM III: 20, 28). Continual feelings of torment and dissatisfaction still manifest themselves at a subterranean level. Similarly, ascetic practices attack life itself, painting life negatively and making the experience feel worse. “The Christian decision to find the world ugly and bad,” Nietzsche writes, “has made the world ugly and bad” (GS 130).

Christianity, it turns out, has played an important role in suffering becoming a significant problem. Not only does it provide an inadequate response to the problem, but it has created a need that proves impossible to meet. Suffering, in Nietzsche’s view, is an inescapable component of human life that cannot be explained away or fully justified. The
development of the need for a purpose has come to include a personal component along with the justification of suffering. Alternative explanations will not satisfy the kind of need Christianity has created through its theology, and for Nietzsche this makes possible the advent of nihilism.

4.1.2 Two Paths to Nihilism

Some commentators have held that Nietzsche’s nihilism consists in skepticism about the existence of objective values. However, treating nihilism as a theoretical or academic concern does not explain the emotional aspect of nihilism. For Nietzsche nihilism is a feeling or a response – it threatens to overwhelm or undo us in some way. Further, as Pippin points out, treating nihilism as a failure of knowledge makes it difficult to appreciate the imagery of death, decay, and illness Nietzsche associates with nihilism. To better capture the role of nihilism in Nietzsche’s work, Reginster contends that nihilism is our response to the subjectivity of value. He explains nihilism in terms of the realizability of values, which depends on both the nature of the world and the particular values in question. Nihilism, on his reading, is a disorientation that we feel in coming to grips with moral anti-realism. It leads to despair because our need and desire for meaning are frustrated by the lack of objective values in the world.

---

272 Langsam (1997) and Hussain (2007) provide two versions of this reading. Reginster (2006) suggests this line of interpretation is influenced by speculation that Nietzsche borrowed the idea from Russian literature. See (2006): 274 n. 7.
275 Gemes (2008) makes an important addition to this picture of nihilism. Gemes fears that Reginster’s account is too cognitive, noting that nihilism, and its associated despair, should be thought of as affective rather than cognitive disorders. I think the best interpretation of Nietzsche’s nihilism includes both components. Despair can be related to something cognitive, but deep down it is the affective despair that best characterizes nihilism.
While Reginster’s account is an improvement, it still obscures the historical context from which the crisis of nihilism arises. Nihilism is a response to the death of God and the failure of Christianity. Much of Reginster’s argument concerning nihilism comes from the first part of *The Will to Power*. Yet, in WP 1 before Nietzsche addresses the relationship of nihilism to that which is meaningless, he connects the “end of Christianity” to the point where nihilism “stands at the door.”

The discussion of nihilism here explores what it means for God to be dead. The purported effects of nihilism are illustrated by the madman in GS 125. The madman first points out that the world in fact does not rely on God. After proclaiming the death of God, the madman describes a number of outlandish events that have not occurred—the Earth has not become unchained from the sun, it is not continually dark and cold, and we are not falling through an infinite nothingness. The death of God did not tear apart the fabric of existence. Instead, individual lives become unmoored when the absence of God destroys their valuing frameworks.

By itself, this conclusion may seem underwhelming. It is obvious that losing any significant individual or belief will cause distress and disorientation. The distinctive Christian origin of nihilism is best seen in the effect it has on human life. Nietzsche describes nihilism as not only unmooring but also leading to boredom or disgust with life itself, characterized by “growing tired of man” (GM I: 12) or having “great nausea at man” (GM III: 14). Since no other accounts of a purposeful life will satisfy the need that has developed, life itself becomes an impediment to finding purpose. Furthermore, when Christianity made suffering into a

---

276 Along the same line, Schacht (1983: 345) argues that nihilism is an insight particularly concerning the untenability of the Christian interpretation of existence. The disorientation of nihilism, in principle, could result from the untenability of any dominant interpretation, not just Christianity. But the crisis that Nietzsche thinks we currently face has been brought about by the development and ultimate failure of Christianity. The problem is particularly acute because Christianity makes many possible alternatives impractical.
problem, it also defined human life in terms of suffering. The disorientation and despair of nihilism thus reach their culmination in indifference and repugnance. Pippin calls this condition the “failure of desire” marked by the loss of any possible erotic attachment.\(^{277}\)

However, failure of desire captures only part of the story. Not only has desire failed, but there is nothing available to serve as a new orienting commitment. Just as the need for a purpose gave meaning a personal component, the disorientation resulting from its failure has a significant personal component. The disgust felt is directed towards the individual’s own life, not merely human life in the abstract.

Nietzsche finds two distinct manifestations of this nihilism that pertain to different responses to the death of God. In GS 346 Nietzsche writes, “Either abolish your venerations or – yourselves!” The latter would be nihilism; but would not the former also be – nihilism? That is our question mark.” These two paths to nihilism coexist historically. I believe these diverging routes explain Nietzsche’s depiction of modernity and the need for value creation. The most common road to nihilism is in the “abolish your venerations” part of the equation. Nietzsche believes most people will eventually “outgrow” Christianity (GS 377). Its doctrines will prove unable to provide a realistic account of the world while also satisfying the need for meaning. Some may immediately conclude that without God life can have no meaning at all. Nietzsche attributes such a “hasty” and “youthful” response to Schopenhauer (GS 357). However, the natural response to Godlessness is not immediate despair. With humanity now needing a purpose, and Christianity unable to provide one, Nietzsche suggests many will seek out alternative frameworks. One initially plausible candidate is science; a scientific account of

---

\(^{277}\) Pippin (2000, 2010).
the world could provide some explanation of what role humans play in the big picture. Yet, Nietzsche insists that whatever explanations science makes cannot give purpose to life. Science provides “an essentially meaningless world” (GS 373). Giving this role to science would be to “sacrifice God for nothingness” (BGE 55). Science is more like mythology than religion. It offers explanations, but it will not prove a long-term replacement to Christianity.278

Other alternatives to Christianity will face limitations similar to science, failing to provide a shared history or context in the way religion has for many cultures. Modernity, after the death of God, is marked by a fragmentation of value. Our institutions, political and cultural, have lost their meaning, since we no longer accept the values they were built upon (TI IX: 39). We have only remnants of morality that are too disjointed and confused to work with (BGE 214). The result is decline and atrophy with mere “fragments of humanity” (TI VIII: 3). The result of this fragmentation, as Nietzsche sees it, is that valuing will become essentially impossible. With no coherent set of values and no standard by which to determine what matters, the outcome is disorientation and indifference.

The death of God underlies much of the nihilism threat Nietzsche concerns himself with, but recall that in GS 346 he provided another half of the disjunct; nihilism also arises from abolishing “yourselves.” The commitment to Christianity itself results in a kind of nihilism. This might seem in tension with the earlier claim that the death of God is inevitable.

278 Moreover, Nietzsche worries that much of science has been simply a manifestation of the ascetic ideal, as was Christianity. Nietzsche’s critique in GM III is intended not for all forms of science, only for certain forms of positivism Nietzsche encountered in the 19th Century. Nietzsche thinks science plays an important role for understanding the world and refuting misinterpretations, such as those found in religion, but science and other forms of knowledge are not sufficient to explain why human life is worth living.
Yet Nietzsche is simply acknowledging the basic irrationality of human nature. For some people, the need for faith has become so strong that other considerations are irrelevant. Nietzsche calls such individuals “fanatics” with “pathologically conditioned optics” (AC 54). Fanatics “would rather see gestures than listen to reasons.”\(^{279}\) Despite a general shift away from religion, some will refuse to accept the death of God.

Christianity abolishes the self and causes nihilism because it assails passions and emotions, which Nietzsche considers essential features of humanity. An attack on the passions essentially constitutes an attack on life itself. Christianity, Nietzsche insists, “Combats the passions by cutting them off in every sense: its technique, its ‘cure’, is castration” (TI V: 1). A life without passion is one where nothing matters to the individual. Upon labeling the passions evil, Christianity seeks to extirpate the passions to prevent experiences of suffering, with the result that people stop caring about things. The Christian needs to escape this world, and most of all the individual “wants to escape from himself” (CW “Epilogue”). The nihilism of Christianity is typically not recognized because it is cloaked in language that disguises its implications. Christianity claims love as one of its highest ideals, with passion a defining feature of faith. Nietzsche finds Christian love and passion hollow because the focus is on developing a personal attachment to a non-physical, abstract God, which is a “contradiction” and “aversion” to life. He insists this is “God as the deification of nothingness, the canonization of the will to nothingness!” (AC 19). Christianity changes love from something particular to abstract, causing a “self-mutilation” that undermines the emotional core of humanity (BGE 46).

\(^{279}\) Nietzsche makes similar arguments in AC 23 and 38.
Christianity also weakens the self by promoting a herd mentality placing the needs of
the group over those of the individual.\(^{280}\) In promoting the group and denying the legitimacy
of individual emotions, Christian morality amounts to a condition of mediocrity and
homogenization (BGE 62). Nietzsche fears that the dominance of the herd and denial of the
individual precludes a person from developing her own commitments; she can only live as a
cog in a machine. The loss of individual purpose leads to the nausea and boredom of nihilism.
The Christian fanatic is left with no way to instill life with excitement. She has lost the
internal “chaos” and tension that denote a valuing individual, and her lack of passion renders
her unable to experience real happiness. The boredom and homogenization Nietzsche traces to
Christianity may seem to contradict the earlier claim that the death of God gives modernity a
fragmentary makeup. But the schema I have provided shows how Nietzsche can claim both
homogenization and fragmentation characterize modernity. For those who remain attached to
Christianity, their values are rooted in what is best for the herd. Conversely, for those who
reject Christianity, they encounter an array of conflicting values instead of one dominant
tradition. Thus, we face either a homogenized mediocrity bereft of individuality or a
fragmentary existence where life has no purpose. Either way, the result is a form of nihilism.

4.2 SELF-APPROPRIATION AND VALUE CREATION

So far, I have sought to characterize the crisis of nihilism Nietzsche anticipates. The
basic human desire to find meaning in life was transformed into the need for a purpose, which
made suffering into a problem. While many world views have responded to the problem,
Christianity has proven the most successful. To address the problem, Christianity built up a

\(^{280}\) Nietzsche suggests this in a number of passages, including D 132 and BGE 62.
complex set of theoretical and practical responses. Christianity itself threatens human life through its self-undermining values, but the failure of Christianity is no better. The stakes have been raised such that no alternative seems capable of meeting the need created by Christianity. Nevertheless, while Nietzsche portrays the coming nihilism as inevitable, he allows that the crisis can be averted.

It is clear that Nietzsche believes humanity needs a radically new understanding of the role suffering plays in life. According to many interpreters, Nietzsche’s proposed new attitude is in fact the recognition that suffering requires no unique response. Danto, for instance, argues that the meaninglessness of suffering is Nietzsche’s key teaching. On Danto’s reading, we ought to recognize that life is meaningless and treat this as a liberating revelation. However, the need for purpose imposed by the teachers of the purpose of existence shows where this kind of interpretation fails. If we accept Nietzsche’s version of history in which nihilism depends on the need for a particular human purpose, the suggestion that suffering can suddenly be ignored is implausible. The need for purpose has become embedded in humanity, and we have seen that we cannot strip away all of the Christian machinery or “edifice” that has been built up (GS 358). The conclusion that suffering is irrelevant is not a viable alternative for most people.

Suffering cannot be ignored or pushed aside, so it requires some kind of response or contextualization. It is tempting to think that this response must provide a kind of justification for suffering. If suffering could be shown beneficial in some way, it would no longer conflict with the project of developing a human purpose. In other words, it might be that suffering can

---

281 Danto (1994).
be revalued, thus revealing it as deserving of appreciation rather than despair. Reginster defends such an interpretation of Nietzsche. Whereas current values regard suffering as something negative that counts against life, revaluation aims to show that suffering does not require a negation of life. Reginster contends suffering is a necessary part of creativity. Reginster’s view is not that the goods of creativity compensate for suffering. Rather he argues that suffering is “an essential ingredient of creative activity.” He grounds this argument in his conception of the will to power. Reginster believes the will to power is a second-order desire that seeks to overcome resistance. Human happiness, consequently, is found not in resignation but in confronting resistance and overcoming it. Suffering is an essential component of a happy and meaningful life because resistance requires pain and suffering. Reginster is careful to note that suffering is not good in itself; it is good only as an ingredient of creativity and happiness, which should be sufficient to show that suffering need not lead to nihilism or the negation of life.

Revaluation diminishes the threat of suffering, but it fails to fully meet the need for purpose. Recall that the purpose humanity seeks, as an outgrowth of Christianity, has both particular and generic elements. Christianity provides a conception of purpose that applies to everyone, adding to this a personal component of salvation. An alternative must respond in some way to both of these needs, lest it will appear incomplete by comparison. Revaluation, however, only provides generic meaning – it merely shows that life can be meaningful despite prevalent suffering. Nihilism is a “psychological state” of the individual (WP 12). Knowing human life can be salvaged does not necessarily resolve the personal disgust of nihilism.

Many individuals despair about their own condition while recognizing that others have found a sense of purpose in their own lives. The need for particular meaning requires an additional response. Even if revaluation succeeds in redeeming human life more generally, to avoid nihilism Nietzsche’s approach must also contain a strategy responsive to the personal nature of the problem.

Not only is revaluation insufficient on its own, I also do not believe Nietzsche seeks to justify suffering in the way Reginster suggests. Though Nietzsche acknowledges experiences of suffering are matters of fact in human life, he does not make suffering a constitutive component of a good life. Admittedly, Nietzsche offers many passages that support something like Reginster’s view. For instance, Nietzsche tells us the enhancements of life have been brought about by suffering (BGE 225). Nevertheless, the overall arc of Nietzsche’s work shows him moving towards the conclusion that suffering cannot be justified as constitutive for something good. Simon May notes an important shift in Nietzsche’s thinking on this matter.283 Early on, Nietzsche sought to justify the existence of suffering. As his career progressed, he moved away from theodicy. While sometimes ambivalent, Nietzsche appears to argue later on that we should not attempt to fully justify suffering. As we see in his writings on amor fati and the eternal recurrence, we need some way to accept suffering without claiming it is good. Instead, life should be accepted or affirmed as it is without trying to remove its difficulties (GS 276). There may be other kinds of justification for suffering possible, where suffering is revalued simply by showing that it can prove useful. In Ecce Homo Nietzsche indicates that appropriate justification for suffering is retrospective. In the

course of life, suffering always plays an important role. Looking back, some benefits of suffering and struggle may appear. Yet we should conclude from this only that suffering is part of life, not that it is part of the good.

Nietzsche’s position exists somewhere in the space between the approaches to suffering represented by Danto and Reginster. Suffering requires some kind of response, but the needed response is not a theodicy or a complete justification of suffering. Moreover, the additional component of Nietzsche’s project must address the individual need for purpose. Following the terminology of Richard White, I will call this project self-appropriation.\textsuperscript{284} White defines self-appropriation as “the ability to maintain oneself as a separate and self-determining individual who can resist those ‘external’ forces and principles that would otherwise condition the will.”\textsuperscript{285} White is wrong to associate self-appropriation with autonomy, and I will argue in the next section that Nietzsche actually favors sociality over solitude and isolation. Instead, self-appropriation involves making sense of one’s own existence despite the homogenizing forces and fragmented values characteristic of modernity. It entails a new attitude towards that which cannot be changed and the introduction of a new

\textsuperscript{284} See White (1997). White concludes, as I do, that revaluation and self-appropriation are both necessary, complementary aspects of Nietzsche’s project. But I should note two important disagreements I have with White regarding self-appropriation. First, White does not treat value creation as a significant aspect of self-appropriation, whereas I will argue that value creation is the heart of self-appropriation. Second, White argues that self-appropriation became central to Nietzsche’s work in \textit{Ecce Homo}. I have argued that value creation is a consistent theme throughout Nietzsche’s mature works. Furthermore, we see glimpses of self-appropriation in Nietzsche’s development of his new conception of value, which includes the appropriation of taste in addition to value. In other words, while \textit{Ecce Homo} is Nietzsche’s clearest attempt at his own self-appropriation, we can find it playing a central role from \textit{Daybreak} forward, if not sooner. Of course, White traces Nietzsche’s concern with sovereignty throughout Nietzsche’s works. The aims of what he calls sovereignty and my broader use of self-appropriation likely means my final position is not far from that of White.

\textsuperscript{285} Ibid.: 20.
meaning for life.\textsuperscript{286} Through self-appropriation the individual develops a purpose applicable to her own life, making meaning that is particular rather than generic.

Nietzsche illustrates the broader aims of self-appropriation through a comparison to redemption. For the Christian, redemption is granted to an individual. Though there are disputes within Christianity concerning the individual’s role in bringing about or becoming worthy of redemption, at the very least it involves a significant external component. That is, redemption depends in part upon forces outside the individual’s control. As a means to self-appropriation, Nietzsche offers the alternative of self-redemption (Selbsterlösung), where the person is sufficiently able to give her own life meaning. Self-redemption thus overcomes and replaces the kind of redemption provided by Christianity: “Perhaps to a distant age the whole of religion will appear as an exercise and prelude. Perhaps religion could have been the strange means of making it possible one day for a few individuals to enjoy the whole self-sufficiency of a god and all his power of self-redemption” (GS 300). Zarathustra identifies creation as the primary means for this new redemption, since creation “is the great redemption from suffering, and life’s becoming light (Z II: “On the Blessed Isles”). The implication is that nihilism can be overcome, and life given a purpose, through some individual act of creation.

The revolutionary aspect of self-appropriation is the claim that meaning and purpose arise from the individual herself, not from the individual’s relationship to someone or

---

\textsuperscript{286} Z I: “On the Hinterworldly”: “My ego taught me a new pride, I teach it to mankind: no longer bury your head in the sand of heavenly things, but bear it freely instead, an earthly head that creates a meaning for earth! I teach mankind a new will: to want the path that human beings have traveled blindly, to pronounce it good and no longer sneak to the side of it like the sick and the dying-out.”
something else. Nietzsche believes most people currently have a passive conception of meaning, where meaning flows from a spiritual entity or larger group down to the individual. In contrast, self-appropriation involves the creation of meaning by people, since “only we have created the world that concerns human beings!” (GS 301). Value creation comprises the heart of Nietzsche’s self-appropriation. His central defense of this is showing humans are a legitimate source of value. For those seeking universal or divine values, humanity will likely appear an inadequate source of meaning. However, as I argued in Chapters 2 and 3, Nietzsche believes all values are of human origin. Recognition of this makes possible a new form of valuing and a self-created purpose. In other words, the realization that humans create values is thus a precondition for self-appropriation.

Self-appropriation succeeds where others fail because it meets the problem of suffering head on without attempting to avoid or justify suffering. Self-appropriation deprives suffering of the power it holds over an individual. Recall that the initial problem arose because suffering conflicts with the need for a good human purpose. Self-appropriation makes the purpose itself particular such that suffering no longer plays the same complicating role. Values and virtues must “be our own personal invention, our own most personal need and self-defence,” and they are felt with an “inner need” (AC 11). By creating values, the individual invests herself in the world. In this way, creating value is creating meaning. Those who “posit themselves as a goal,” have a conviction of strength and passion (AC 54). The

---

287 This claim is perhaps less revolutionary today, even if it remains relatively rare. For instance, we find Wiggins moving in Nietzsche’s direction, writing, “Inasmuch as invention and discovery are distinguishable, and in so far as either of these ideas properly belongs here, life’s having a point may depend as much upon something contributed by the person whose life it is as it depends on something discovered. Or it may depend upon what the owner of the life brings to the world in order to see the world in such a way as to discover meaning” (Wiggins 1991a: 163).
individual comes to see the world, or at least parts of it, as meaningful to her. She cares about these things and wants them regardless of suffering; that suffering exists does not make the individual’s values less meaningful.

By reversing the direction of meaning, Nietzsche responds to the personal nature of nihilism. The individual creation of purpose is meant to thwart feelings disgust and boredom from developing towards that person’s own existence. Whereas Christianity cannot reconcile suffering with the goodness required of God, Nietzsche places this very power in the hands of humans. Through value creation the individual makes some part of the world matter, and the suffering prevalent elsewhere does not negate or undermine the significance of what she has posited as worthwhile. Value creation does not make suffering go away, and it does not even make suffering irrelevant. It shows that individual value and meaning are not themselves threatened by the existence of suffering; suffering need not dominate life when the individuals sees herself as a source of meaning. If Nietzsche succeeds in defending this claim, then he does not need to radically reorient attitudes towards suffering, since the purpose that flows from the individual is already a response to the suffering and struggle of that person’s life.

One instance of self-appropriation through value creation can be seen when two people achieve similar goals in different ways. The unique difficulties and resistances faced give different values to success (GS 38). A task that is more difficult for one person might prove more meaningful to her given what the achievement required.288 For instance, my struggle to climb a mountain that I have failed to ascend many times before may make the final achievement more meaningful to me than to a professional climber who had little trouble

---

288 I will return to the importance of resistance and struggle in section 5.3.2.
reaching the peak on her first attempt. In this way, struggles can actually motivate a person to overcome them and strive for something greater. Of course, there is no obvious way to determine beforehand which obstacles will prove inspiring and which detrimental. Obstacles that cannot be overcome risk the return of melancholy and self-loathing. Nevertheless, this shows that value creation can create meaning that exists in conjunction with suffering; a person can find suffering useful without trying to offer a prospective justification for the necessity of suffering. This use, however, is not a necessary response to suffering, since the creation of new values is Nietzsche’s primary response to the disorientation and disgust of nihilism.

Of course, not every instance of value creation is an instance of self-appropriation. Nietzsche gives many examples of value creation that did not provide life with a particular purpose. In Chapter 3, I distinguished Nietzsche’s proposed task of value creation from more common occurrences of creation. The task of value creation is supposed to infuse life with purpose. By developing new values, people can create a life that includes suffering yet is worth pursuing, where things are “not bad enough for us” that we should think otherwise (GS 326). However, this is not the only aspect of value creation that can reinvigorate life for the individual. Nietzsche’s project of value creation also aims to create values with a character opposite those of modernity. Most traditional values, we have seen, have a tendency to undermine the desire and passion of life. If individuals create values with an attitude of strength and vigor, this may itself foster attachment and concern. That is, such individuals will create a world they can love, not simply one they can accept. While there is no guarantee these values will emerge, Nietzsche hopes they will result when individuals take charge of
their values. I will have more to say about the role of abundant and overflowing energy in value creation in the next section. Regardless, self-appropriation need not require continual joy and passion, even if this would be ideal, since the creation of individual purpose should itself be enough to deny the threat of suffering and to stave off nihilism. In comparison to the meaning an individual creates, suffering loses its significance.

In presenting value creation as a source of purpose, Nietzsche holds that we can take seriously values while knowing the significance afforded them comes from us. Still, the idea that humans can create meaning in such a way may appear strange. The activity will seem less bizarre if we recognize similarities in common experiences of play, where meaning is created through the decision to play. Nietzsche also notices the connection, writing, “Human maturity: this means rediscovering the seriousness we had towards play when we were children” (BGE 94). Earlier I criticized Hussain’s fictionalism, in which he compares valuing to make believe. The relationship between value and play is rather different. Play is often defined as a realm distinct from mundane concerns of life. For instance, Kenneth Schmitz defines play as a suspension of the ordinary, a sphere a person enters into upon deciding to play.\(^{289}\) On Schmitz’s view, play provides a finite realm where an individual can have new experiences and recognize new possibilities. Play removes many traditional barriers, allowing a person to experiment with interests, abilities, and relationships that are not possible or desirable under ordinary constraints. Value creation, we have seen, depends on many of the same kinds of experiments. New ideas and commitments are explored, and new relationships

\(^{289}\) Schmitz (1979).
between valuing agents develop. Likewise, through play individuals interact in ways that create new ideas, responses, and commitments that can be acted upon.

How play functions as a response to nihilism is most evident in its characteristic attitudes. Play is voluntary, and the individual’s decision to play is a constitutive component of it. Nevertheless, we cannot play if we do not take it seriously. If we are not earnest about the constraints, or if we do not care about winning, then we are not really playing the game.²⁹⁰ The resulting tension is present in all forms of play, from children’s make believe to complex games, but it is most evident in sports. By most metrics, sports are considered unimportant in the grand scheme of things. They are often described as diversions or recreation. Still, we are not surprised when participants and fans come to place great importance upon them, and more importantly we criticize those who do not fully immerse themselves into the spirit of the game. When I play tennis, the outcome is of great importance to me. I am excited when I win, and I am incensed when I lose. Perhaps, to observers, I go overboard when I throw my racquet in disgust upon hitting the ball into the net, but my investment in both the activity and its outcome is a requirement of real play. The activity becomes significant to me and my opponent even though the overarching benefits of the activity are limited.

Value creation admits of a similar tension similar to that of play and sport. While the purpose of these values comes from us, it should not be mysterious how these come to have great significance. Valuing is an activity where individuals impart significance to their

²⁹⁰ Feezell points out the inadequacy of two popular attitudes towards play. Both the idea that winning is the only thing and the claim that winning does not matter, but only “how you play the game” misunderstand the seriousness with which we must take play. To care only about winning threatens to undermine the sphere of play and the freedom with which a person enters it. At the same time, indifference to winning takes a person out of the game, making the activity akin to frolic rather than game playing. See 2004: 46-57.
experiences. In value creation as with play something new comes to matter that did not have such meaning beforehand. The values created have no deeper grounding, but they matter to the individuals involved, thus providing a deeper meaning to them. Again, embracing the significance activities undermines the threat of suffering elsewhere, as it reveals the possibility of coming to care about activities in the course of life that provide individual purpose. Through play we also see how meaning emerges from groups as well as individuals. Those who take part in play activities become part of a play community, in which real-world bonds are formed through playful interactions. Connections are formed that give a weekly basketball game, for instance, significance to the members of the group. When members of the play community are encountered outside of play, a new realm of significance is created. So activities that initially mattered only within play spill over, developing new significance in other areas of life.

Often, when engaged in an activity, the participant becomes fully immersed in the moment. We might worry that such activities are actually providing an escape from suffering rather than a response. Nietzsche himself describes a view that does just that: “Another training is tried to combat the condition of depression, which at all events is easier: mechanical activity. It is beyond doubt that with this, an existence of suffering is alleviated to a not inconsiderable extent: today people call this fact, rather dishonestly, ‘the blessing of work’” (GM III: 18). Surely play can be used to avoid suffering. But the play Nietzsche describes, like value creation, confronts suffering more than it diverts it away. Mechanical

291 We find further support for the idea that creating values in the real world takes on the same form as it does in play in the appendix to GS: “In flight I saw my limitation, - / now juices flow for new creation, / for life renewed and dawn of play…” (GS Appendix: “In the South”).
activity avoids suffering by creating a dispassionate routine. Play, in contrast, is marked by the investment of the players. Play creates meaning, where mechanical activity sacrifices meaning for structure. When the individual loses herself in play, she does not avoid suffering but instead overwhelms it by providing experiences of investment and delight. These experiences are rare, and Nietzsche does not require such complete investment and enchantment at all times. More often, the lusory attitude of play itself, most evident in the decision to play, reflects the kind of attitude in value creation that also comprises Nietzsche’s response to nihilism.²⁹²

If Nietzsche is right about the common forms and social nature of value creation, then for Nietzsche play cannot be a suspension of the ordinary; it is the ordinary. Creating values and giving life purpose takes on the form of play because through both we can come to care deeply about something despite recognizing the finite constraints on the activity. Play is defined in part by the decision to play, and while we cannot decide to be creators of value, we can recognize and embrace it. Once again, one might worry that the position I have sketched sounds too cognitive or too existentialist. The similarity to play emphasizes that self-appropriation is not overly-intellectualist. Playing begins with a choice, but the meaning that emerges in play and play-interactions with others does not occur simply through choice. Rather things come to matter over the course of the activity. Likewise, meaning is created through actions and interactions, but there need not be direct focus on the creation itself. Just as with ethical concepts, the meaning that emerges from value creation will prove more the result of collaborative activity than individual choice. By positing value and purpose as

²⁹² Suits defines the lusory attitude as “the acceptance of constitutive rules just so the activity made possible by such acceptance can occur.” In other words, the lusory attitude is one where the individual accepts the arbitrary rules of play in order to make possible the experience of play. See (2005): 54-55.
individual creations, the individual creates a life meaningful to her, reconciling the need for purpose with the prevalence of suffering.

4.3 SOLITUDE AND SOCIAL RELATIONS

4.3.1 Solitude and Gift-Giving

Value creation provides the core of Nietzsche’s response to nihilism. Through what I have called self-appropriation, the individual creates values and reclaims her identity. Since Nietzsche often lauds the importance of solitude, it is tempting to conclude that value creation should be a solitary and isolated task involving the avoidance or removal of heteronomous influences. Jay Bernstein spells out the connection most clearly, claiming, “Attaining autonomy has meant either isolating the will…or reclaiming for the will what originally belonged to it.” Against these isolationist readings, I argue that Nietzsche’s projects, especially the creation of new values, entail a distinct kind of social relations. One reason these social relations are often missed, I propose, is that Nietzsche’s emphatic depictions of solitude have led his work to be assimilated to other philosophical outlooks. One way we may understand Nietzsche’s self-appropriation is that it involves an individual leading an authentic life by choosing her own path. Thus, many have understood Nietzsche as a kind of proto-existentialist whose response to an absurd world is to insist each person can create her own reality through an act of willing. Such a reading fails to do justice to the complexity of value creation.

Nietzsche’s concerns regarding the nature of valuing and the achievement of individuality bring Nietzsche’s project closer to that of Kant. This is evident as we consider

Nietzsche’s interest in autonomy. In a recent essay, Ken Gemes notes an apparent tension in Nietzsche’s comments on free will. Nietzsche rejects free will as a matter of desert or responsibility. At the same time, Nietzsche is interested in an aspect of free will related to agency. The question here is what constitutes an action as opposed to merely doing something. Nietzsche’s clearest investigation of this question appears in his discussion of the sovereign individual from the second essay of the *Genealogy*. According to Nietzsche, the sovereign individual is “the ripest fruit on the tree, like only to itself, having freed itself from the morality of custom, an autonomous, supra-ethical individual (because ‘autonomous’ and ‘ethical’ are mutually exclusive), in short, we find a man with his own, independent, durable will who has the right to make a promise” (GM II: 2). It appears that Nietzsche, as with Kant, endorses a form of free will that depends on achieving some kind of agency, and the sovereign individual may turn out to bear a number of features of Kant’s ideal individual.

Of course, Nietzsche regards Kantian autonomy as a kind of perversion of valuing that imposes unnatural constraints on our cares and desires. And what should we make of his claim that the autonomous and ethical are mutually exclusive? One problem is the assumption we make that for Nietzsche individuality and solitude preclude the importance of others. This competing view is best encapsulated by Richard White, who writes, “For Zarathustra, at least, the achievement of personal autonomy must be in total opposition to any kind of involvement

295 I am sympathetic to a line of interpretation that holds the sovereign individual is not to be confused with Nietzsche’s ideal. Nietzsche can still respect the achievements of the sovereign individual while seeking something beyond this state. Though I do not fully agree with either of them, Hatab (1995, 2008) and Acampora (2006) do make the case for rethinking the sovereign individual.
with others that would only take us away from ourselves.” Against these readings, I argue that Nietzsche offers something new between Kant and existentialism. In working out the significance of solitude and its opposing virtue of gift-giving, we will see that for Nietzsche both solitude and social life are necessary for the process of value creation. Without solitude, there will be no new values, but without others, these new values risk corruption.

4.3.2 Solitude

A quick glance through any of Nietzsche’s writings quickly reveals that solitude plays a significant role. Nietzsche’s ideal individuals, such as the philosophers of the future and creators of value, are continually described as solitary figures. Such individuals are, in Nietzsche’s words, “born, sworn, jealous friends of solitude” who are like night owls even in daylight (BGE 44). His character Zarathustra tells us that the creators of values have “lived all along” in solitude (Z I: “On the Flies of the Market Place”). In other passages, Nietzsche invokes the character of the hermit. He even refers to himself as “Mr. Hermit,” and he associates himself and his higher men with marmots to connote an isolated life in the mountains apart from society (GS 383). Zarathustra insists it is “better, truly, to live among hermits and goatherds than live with our gilded, fake, make-up wearing rabble” (Z IV: “Conversation with the Kings” 1). The common appearance of such statements on solitude, isolation, and hermits would seem to indicate that solitariness is a defining character trait for

---

298 Nietzsche’s metaphors of the hermit are common, including GS 364, 365, Z IV: “The Shadow,” and BGE 289. Just as with solitude, the hermit is a more complicated ideal than it first appears. The hermit, in addition to reflecting the new philosophers, can also be isolated figure, who acts out of loneliness or vengeance, as Nietzsche points out in BGE 25.
Nietzsche, and he must want a person to free herself from the masses and to create a unique lifestyle.

In determining the significance of solitude, we immediately face an interpretive difficulty: it is not clear what Nietzsche means by solitude. Nietzsche often associates solitude with space, distance, or physical location, and in his notebooks he writes that the philosopher needs an “external, spatial solitude” (WP 985). Yet Nietzsche also describes solitude as a virtue and as a quality or characteristic (BGE 284, D 524). The spatial interpretation, that Nietzsche demands a “worldless” solitude where the individual is set apart completely from others, has ample textual support. The difficulty with this reading is that it makes Nietzsche’s ideal person an implausible, if not impossible, achievement. We can modify the view to instead promote time in remote locations or otherwise in isolation. This less demanding spatial solitude seems to be the default interpretation among scholars, and may passages suggest this might be the best interpretation of solitude. Notably, Nietzsche’s Zarathustra remarks, “Where 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: “On the Flies of the Market Place”). Consequently, we might conclude that the city is a reflection of the herd and its values. In order to avoid the poisonous flies, perhaps real distance between the creator and society is needed.

300 It also seems significant that Nietzsche, who arguably viewed himself as a higher type of individual, did not seek this extreme solitude, and at times he even lamented his lonely existence. Though Nietzsche spent much time in remote areas, nothing indicates he desired to be completely alone.
301 For example, Leiter argues that the higher human is solitary and consumed by his work, which leads her to deal with others instrumentally (2002: 116-117). According to Nussbaum (1994) Nietzsche suggests a “bourgeois” form of solitude, one that is devoid of basic vulnerability, yet includes the difficulties of loneliness and boredom. External goods, she argues, are not part of his view of happiness, and the consideration of that which is external to the individual draws her away from this pursuit of her own good. Lampert argues that Nietzsche conceives of solitude as part of his reaction to Socrates. The philosopher’s solitude prevents the corruption of his doctrines. See (2001): 63-66, 278-282.
Despite the plausibility of the spatial reading, I find problematic any definition that distinguishes solitude from its opposite in terms of physical location or distance from others. After all, one can live like a member of the group even when alone. At the same time, it is possible to live in a solitary manner, or perform solitary actions, within the buzzing city. An example of this is running with a club or team. For many, it is easier to run with other people, but during the run the focus is on oneself. The issue of solitude seems to be instead how a person is influenced or affected by others. Therefore, it is more fruitful to understand solitude not in terms of physical location or proximity to others, but in terms of one’s orientation towards others. By orientation, I mean a way of being or attitude rooted in one’s values. According to Nietzsche, life in “the herd” represents an orientation because it reflects a negative view of life, involving fear and hatred of others. An individual can still be susceptible to these tendencies even when she is alone. Whereas being alone requires no real accomplishment, solitude is supposed to be an achievement, a kind of independence involving the ability to consider oneself while avoiding the concerns of others, which Nietzsche calls “selfishness.” In contrast, the marketplace is defined by the loss of the self. There a person tends to lose sight of her own concerns as they get tied up with those of others.

We can distinguish two kinds of reasons Nietzsche gives for the importance of solitude in his task of value creation, which I will call prudential and essential reasons. Prudential reasons provide evidence that solitude might be helpful, but is not required, for

---

302 Since Nietzsche’s time, Heidegger has made a similar point even more strongly, arguing that people typically act with reference to others. Actions can still be oriented towards others when alone as the solitary individual can still be “with” others in Heidegger’s sense. Heidegger most famously makes this point in Part of 4 Being and Time with his discussion of das Man.

303 Solomon (2003): 165. Additionally, Nietzsche wants each person to improve herself and give meaning to her situation, and this would seem to require that each can recognize her unique concerns. See D 177, GS “Prelude”: 33, and EH “Wise”: 4.

304 See also GS 338.
value creation. Essential reasons would show that solitude is required for value creation. Nietzsche provides arguments of both sorts, though I believe many prudential arguments have been mistakenly treated as essential in the literature, making solitude appear more important than it actually is.\footnote{Hussain (2011) makes a similar suggestion. He notes that solitariness is something that may result from other features of Nietzsche’s higher or creative individuals rather than being an essential feature. I share Hussain’s sentiment, and the prudential arguments for solitude I will provide meet this characterization. But I will outline one aspect of solitude that I believe is essential for value creation, if not Nietzsche’s higher individuals.} I will begin with those reasons I classify as prudential. Solitude is prudential when it provides assistance in dealing with the practical challenges of value creation. Many of these challenges arise because the creator lives in an atmosphere where she and her project are misunderstood by the masses. Most people, Nietzsche insists, are filled with hatred and the desire for revenge. He writes, “The whole air is continually whizzing with the arrows of their malice, so that the sun and sky of life are darkened by them” (D 323). Nietzsche’s claim is that that the public resents those individuals they consider threats to the order of society. Consequently, solitude provides a way to avoid the attacks from others that might restrain the creation of new values.

Favoring solitude for prudential reasons is rooted in the common sense view that a person might be more productive alone. The creator encounters difficulty working within the din of the public. Even if she is able to somehow avoid or ignore the hatred directed towards her, she may find it easier to work in solitude to avoid distractions, just as I found it easier to write this paper in my office or a quiet coffee shop rather than at the mall. Solitude allows the creator to separate her own concerns from those of others. However, that Nietzsche raises this worry at all poses a significant puzzle. Nietzsche apparently believes the public can disrupt the creator of values. But on many occasions Nietzsche contends a higher individual should
have moved beyond the worries of the herd, and her new concerns make her unintelligible to the majority of the population.\textsuperscript{306} If this is the case, why does Nietzsche think the creator needs solitude to avoid distraction and annoyance? Why does the strong person fear “a cold look or sneer” that others give her (GS 50)?

While I find no obvious answer to this puzzle, a partial response lies in Nietzsche’s metaphors of cleanliness, which we often encounter in his passages on solitude.\textsuperscript{307} The city, or the public, is dirty and unhealthy. Solitude, meanwhile, is clean or cleansing.\textsuperscript{308} Nietzsche compares interactions with others to drinking out of a shared cistern, the insinuation being that all will come down with the same sickness (D 491). Nietzsche’s reliance on cleanliness indicates how an individual who is supposed to live beyond the concerns of others can still be corrupted. An individual’s presence in a dirty atmosphere, even if she is not bothered by it, will still leave her covered in filth. In this case, the filth consists of the values and concerns of society. A failure to isolate oneself, spatially or in terms of orientation, risks the influence of others seeping in.\textsuperscript{309} Still, Nietzsche’s appeal to cleanliness does not provide an essential justification for solitude. He has not shown that contact with others necessarily corrupts. Rather, it is out of prudence that the creator should avoid undue time in the midst of others, or else corruption is possible.

\textsuperscript{306} These are common claims for Nietzsche. We find various versions of them D 566, GS 50, BGE 212, and WP 985.
\textsuperscript{307} Another potential solution is that Nietzsche envisions different stages of development. At the first stage, a higher individual is still susceptible to the herd. At higher stages, she can no longer be affected by them. I am not convinced that this is the right model of development, but I do not think that becoming a higher individual is just a matter of conversion. Self-improvement must be a process, so the possibility of different stages is not implausible.
\textsuperscript{308} For instance, see BGE 284 and EH “Wise”: 8.
\textsuperscript{309} This seems consistent with the third essay of the \textit{Genealogy}, where Nietzsche worries that sickness will spread from sick individuals to the rest of humanity.
Prudential justifications of solitude are common in Nietzsche’s work, but their implication is only that solitude may be desirable or useful depending on the individual. Nietzsche does offer a reason that solitude is an essential component of the value creation process, and this argument has been generally overlooked. Solitude is essential for Nietzsche’s project of value creation because it provides a means of recovery or replenishment for the creator. Recovery is needed because creation makes a person weary and cannot occur continuously (D 491). Creation is a draining process, requiring great energy. It is not possible to create and remain active at all times. If the creator is always giving, she leaves no time or energy for herself, regardless of whether or not she works in a favorable atmosphere. Solitude allows the creator to recover, to “grow good again,” by allowing her to focus on herself without worrying about the condition of others.

We must take care not to think of solitude as merely allowing the creator to recharge her batteries. Creating values is not a cognitive act; value creation involves developing new cares and attachments and integrating them into life. After creating, the individual must once again consider her values in order to evaluate the values and determine whether she wants to continue to live by them. Here selfishness is essential. We would be more accurate in

---

310 This was a concern in Nietzsche’s own life, which is reflected in his letters. In considering an upcoming project, he wrote he was facing “a task that does not allow me to think of myself very much…This task has made me ill, and will make me healthy once again—not only healthy, but also more humanitarian and everything that entails.” See Safranski (2002): 284-285.

311 Within Nietzsche’s depiction of recovery in solitude, he occasionally hints that solitude contributes to the self-knowledge the creator needs, as in D 485. Also, he claims, in solitude, “My self-seduction lets me see – my features” (GS “Prelude”: 33). Yet, he never gives a straightforward explanation of how this is supposed to work. His point, I gather, is that in solitude a person gains a clearer perspective of herself and others. Presumably through such reflection the process of creation would avoid corruption from others. We should be careful, though, not to read too much into the relationship between solitude and knowledge. It is tempting to think that solitude allows for objective, disinterested knowledge, a kind of knowledge that Nietzsche famously denies. In the end, this self-knowledge may be a process of coming to better understand one’s core values and commitments. Recognizing one’s commitments allows for evaluation, criticism, and eventually the development of new concerns and commitments.
describing the process as one not of recovery but as self-restabilization.\footnote{I owe this suggestion to Uwe Plebuch.} Nietzsche often reminds us that an individual cannot be a calm entity – different drives and needs should be in competition (GM II: 1). At the same time, it is also important that the individual come to see what values are distinctive of her and orient herself accordingly (EH “Clever”: 9). A person in complete disarray will not be successful in the creation of value. Restabilization brings the creator back to a position where can again give herself to her creations effectively and is no longer weary or out of sorts. For many, this may require actual, spatial solitude, but again this depends on the individual. Still, it is clear that Nietzsche believes such focus for recovery and self-restabilization requires a solitary orientation.

One reason that the necessity of solitude might be so central in the literature is that we often find the prudential and essential reasons for solitude exemplified in the same person, obscuring the reason solitude is necessary. One well-known case of this sort is Thomas Jefferson when he wrote the Declaration of Independence. Jefferson faced quite difficult conditions in writing this document, given the fractured state of politics in the colonies.\footnote{In particular, many delegates were cool to the idea of declaring independence, and the declaration needed to forcefully lay out the problems with England while at the same time not scaring away the moderates who were as yet undecided.} His first draft of the declaration was torn apart, and many of the sections Jefferson cared most about were omitted. Jefferson was humiliated and frustrated, feeling he had been personally attacked.\footnote{Randall (1993): 272-280.} His response was to isolate himself further. Yet, even in this solitude, he was not really alone with his own thoughts. He was deeply concerned with how his work would be perceived.\footnote{Ibid.: 280-281.} He became incensed with rumors spread about him, and he spent much energy
writing and responding to various charges. Only after the writing process did Jefferson seek solitude for the essential reason of recovery. As often was the case throughout his career, he went home to Monticello. Jefferson associated his home with solitude, and there he could pursue his private interests before returning to the public eye.

Jefferson’s escape from the public exhibits how recovery and self-concern are essential parts of the creative process. After creating, he needed to take stock of himself and his creations. Jefferson took solitude more literally than is necessary, finding what he needed at home. For the purpose of recovery, though, only a solitary orientation is needed, since what matters in principle is the ability to be selfish, not a solitary location. Since solitude is essential only for occasional respite, not the actual creation, it seems Nietzsche’s view is that the creator should alternate solitary existence with social life, recovering and then reengaging with others. With temporary solitude, an individual avoids both the weariness of creative process and the weariness of dealing with an oppositional public. But solitude is not the permanent or primary state of Nietzsche’s higher individual. The creator is distinct from most individuals in that she requires solitude and can make a positive use out of it. Her greater need for solitude only makes her appear a hermit to those who do not appreciate any benefits of solitude.

4.3.3 Good and Bad Solitude

In BGE 25 Nietzsche implores us to choose “the good solitude.” This claim would have been puzzling if we focused only on Nietzsche’s comments praising isolation and

---

hermits, since there solitude is portrayed as an ideal. Now that we have distinguished the prudential and essential arguments for solitude, we can understand when solitude is bad. Good solitude must be sought only for the purpose of rest and recovery. Upon overcoming weariness, this individual leaves solitude and returns to society. Bad solitude is sought not for recovery but for extended isolation. Someone using solitude this way does so in order to avoid all further interactions with others, using it as escape, not respite. Bad solitude can generate misanthropy because the primary objects of consideration are the individual’s own ideas and emotions; there are no others to provide competing observations or viewpoints. In solitude an individual dwells upon resentment and comes to despise humanity. These demons, largely of the individual’s own creation, grow into a disdain that colors all that person’s values.

The distinction between good and bad solitude is best exemplified in Zarathustra’s encounter with the saint (Z P: 2). When we first meet Zarathustra he has been in solitude atop his mountain for ten years. He sought solitude for recovery, and he is ready to be with others again because he is motivated by his “love for human beings.” On his way down the mountain, Zarathustra meets the saint, who is himself seeking solitude. The saint is weary of humanity and has lost hope in it, assuming he ever had any hope at all. He is tired of living with other humans, and he desires an existence alone with God. When told Zarathustra is bringing gifts to humanity, the saint laughs, remarking, “They are mistrustful of hermits and do not believe we come to give gifts.” The saint’s cynicism reflects a misanthropy that has grown deeper over time and will only flourish in solitude. Zarathustra is defined by a very

---

317 A related concern, which Robert Solomon pointed out, is that solitude can further the illusion that someone is improving herself when this is not the case. Solomon worries that Nietzsche’s emphasis on solitude lends itself to “adolescent interpretations” that demand rebellion against tradition, which he considers a herd-like behavior. Without others around, it becomes more difficult to make evaluations, since there are fewer means of comparison. Rather than becoming a better person, solitude brings with it the danger that someone may become “no one at all.” See Solomon (2003): 165-166. See also Langer (2010): 151.
different sort of weariness. He is weary not of humanity but of creating and bestowing. He recognizes the proper relationship between solitude and sociality, and he seeks only temporary solitude rather than permanent isolation.

Good and bad solitude are thus distinguished by whether or not solitude provides the necessary rest and recovery for that person. In other words, whether solitude is good depends on the individual and her use of it, not on the nature of the solitude itself. We find further support for this in Zarathustra’s speech on chastity, which immediately follows his discussion of solitude and the marketplace. Nietzsche does not have in mind the traditional Christian conception of chastity, and his main point here is not even about sex. Rather he poses chastity as the opposite of complete sensuality. In this speech, Zarathustra explains, “In some people chastity is a virtue, but in many it is almost a vice…Those for whom chastity is difficult should be advised against it, or else it could become their road to hell – that is, the mud and heat of the soul” (Z I: “On Chastity”). His description of chastity shows that it can be beneficial to avoid certain detrimental interactions with others, but only if the person must be prepared to take on chastity as a project.\(^{318}\) Similarly, a person must be prepared to make use of solitude for it to function as a virtue. Solitude is essential for those who want to create value. For others, it may prove an impediment to self-improvement. While offering benefits, it is equally likely to cause them problems, and its prudential benefits may be outweighed by its potential harms.

\(^{318}\) On this point I basically agree with Lampert. He also claims that for Nietzsche a person must be “inwardly chaste” to be worthy or capable of true chastity (1986: 57). This is an unfortunate choice of words. It is not clear to me what precisely what constitutes inward chasteness, and if the suggestion is along the lines of purity of the soul, I am skeptical we can really get much of Nietzsche’s view out of the metaphor.
The speech on chastity also serves a further purpose in delineating the role of solitude. Chastity for Nietzsche is not a repudiation of sensuality but a moderation of it. The body requires attention, and Nietzsche wants to correct what he considers centuries of neglect for the body and passions, yet this should not be overdone. Likewise, solitude is essential for the creator, requiring great sacrifice and introspection. Avoiding solitude can be a means of evading the self and the difficulties of confronting the challenges of one’s life. Yet excessive solitude risks cutting the creator off from humanity. Solitude, ideally, should provide a check against the demands of the public without denying the social nature of humanity, just as Zarathustra’s chastity denies both abstinence and complete sensuality.

4.3.4 Gift-Giving

The conclusion reached thus far is that solitude is essential to value creation only for recovery, which requires only temporary solitude. Building on this, I will argue for two additional and more complex forms of sociality. Value creation, in Nietzsche’s view, should involve the creator seeking out others to be with, and the process works best when creation is collaborative. Collaboration requires a kind of relationship to others that Nietzsche considers a rare achievement. I will begin with the motivation that underlies Nietzsche’s creative project. As we have seen, Nietzsche associates valuing and value creation with love. To capture the motive behind it he often puts this love in terms of abundant or overflowing energy. The creation of new values should arise out of a vigor that Nietzsche relates to attraction and power. When Nietzsche writes of this abundance or overflowing, he does not

---

319 Langer (2010: 151-152) also makes this point.
320 Some scholars have picked up on these themes of love and the erotic in Nietzsche’s value theory. In particular Pippin (2000, 2010) has emphasized the role of desire and erotic attachment in Nietzsche’s work. We will find this also plays an important role in the social aspect of Nietzsche’s theory.
have in mind some strange metaphysics of power. Rather his interest is the attitude with which a person values and the experience of necessity each person finds in her values. The overflowing individual is one who always seeks to do more, to put herself to the test, and to see what she is capable of doing.

The appeal to abundant energy functions as a description of the strong individual. Strength is not measured by power over others; it constitutes an ability to show resolve in the course of life. Strength and abundance provide a reservoir of fortitude and good will, allowing that person to maintain a cheerful, positive approach to life, also allowing the individual to seek and overcome challenges, all of which is part of Nietzsche’s ideal of life affirmation. Accordingly, she is able to keep negative attitudes, such as resentment, under control.\[321\] The abundant individual is unique because she is able not only to destroy but also to create, and the overflowing energy is the source of her creative talents.\[322\] This is not to say that abundance is a necessary condition of any creation. Instead, Nietzsche hopes to connect creating value to being invigorated by one’s own life. The overflowing attitude is more likely to foster the creation of inspiring values that are attractive and desirable. While providing the resolve to overcome life’s challenges, abundance manifests itself best through creative expression. Such boundless energy makes one “pregnant with the future” (GS 370).\[323\] Nietzsche calls the urge to create that flows from this the “love of humanity,” which is the opposite of solitude’s misanthropy.\[324\] Weariness and creation may lead to hatred of others, but Nietzsche offers an alternative picture where the creator is a source of energy, like a spring, whose efforts always flow outward.

\[321\] And this control, Nietzsche says, is “almost the proof of richness.” EH “Wise”: 6
\[322\] As in GS 17, 382, BGE 212, and TI IX: 37.
\[323\] See also TI IX: 49.
\[324\] See Z P: 2 and AC 2.
The vigor Nietzsche describes leaves an individual bursting with ideas and goals, and she wants to create beyond herself. Nietzsche encapsulates this abundant energy in the virtue of gift-giving (schenkenden).\(^{325}\) Schenken does not simply mean to give – it is giving in the sense of bestowing or presenting a gift. In choosing this particular term Nietzsche makes it clear he is after a distinct kind of giving, with the implication that there must be others to whom these gifts are presented; gift-giving entails gift-receiving. Obviously giving a gift does not require that the other accept the gift. Gifts cannot be forced upon others. But in creating a gift, others are considered in the gift-giving process, making it a fundamentally social project.

We can arguably find a similar social dimension in artistic creation. Rarely does an artist create art without considering her audience. Though some artists may create only for themselves, most take others’ responses into account in order to best determine how to get the point of view across. Nietzsche’s position, I am suggesting, is that value creation should have, at the very least, this kind of social awareness. Others are intimately involved in the creative process. Of course, this is not the only way to describe artistic creation. We can also envision the work erupting from the artist, making not only the audience but also the artist incidental.\(^{326}\) With value creation, though, the creator’s own experiences and interactions with others will come to play a more important role.

The most complete form of gift-giving, Nietzsche says, involves a person turning herself into a gift for others (Z I: “On the Bestowing Virtue” 1). Having the ability to do so is

---

\(^{325}\) We can also see how this creation gets turned into gift-giving by looking at its opposite, which Nietzsche considers the virtues of modernity. These modern virtues suppress energy and respond to difficulties by numbing rather than dealing with it. For Nietzsche, the aim was “sleep without dreams: they knew no better meaning of life” (Z I: “On the Teachers of Virtue”).

\(^{326}\) Artists do share with value creators a compulsion to create. According to Nietzsche, in artists, “necessity and ‘freedom of the will’ have become one” (BGÈ 213). But here Nietzsche does not directly analyze the consideration the artist might have for her audience.
the fullest extent of value creation, by which I take Nietzsche to mean such an individual continually creates out of abundance. Nietzsche’s best explanation of how this works is in his depiction of Zarathustra throughout the Prologue and Part 1 of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Zarathustra does not present the virtue of gift-giving until the final section of Part 1. However, he exemplifies the virtue in what he calls his “going-under.” Going-under is the process by which Zarathustra leaves the solitude on top of his mountain and comes down to interact with others. As he goes down the mountain Zarathustra states his intention to bring humanity a gift (*Z P*: 2). Zarathustra is compelled to do so due to his abundance, which he explains through a number of analogies: he is a like bee who has gathered too much honey, an overflowing cup, or the sun, radiating light and warmth. The bee that has made too much honey, Nietzsche tells us, desires others with whom to share it. The cup that is filled to the brim cannot overflow, he says, unless others are there to receive the surplus. And the sun, he insists, would have no happiness without others to shine for.

What is noteworthy about all of these analogies is that while conceptually they do not require the presence of others, Zarathustra suggests in each he would not be complete if he simply disowned his excess. We might think it would be nice if a cup overflowed into something, but certainly this is not the condition that allows for overflowing. Yet in the analogy, receivers are necessary for the abundance to have any real meaning. He needs “hands that reach out” in order to create. The kind of need Zarathustra experiences is internal or volitional, a self-imposed necessity that he feels he must act upon. Nietzsche claims, “A hero pours out, pours over, consumes himself, does not spare himself, - fatalistically, disastrously, involuntarily, as a river is involuntary when it overflows its banks” (TI IX: 44).
The internal need or desire to create, when flowing from this abundant energy, results in Nietzsche’s gift-giving virtue. Just as with the above analogies, the conclusion we are to draw for Zarathustra is that he needs gift-receivers for his creations to make him complete. Energy can itself be used up by the individual, but much of it is wasted. Value creation is most meaningful with others to receive these creations. Zarathustra again illustrates this point; in solitude, Zarathustra was brimming with energy and vigor yet had no sufficient outlet.

4.3.5 The Necessity of Social Existence

Gift-giving provides a motivation for the creator to leave her solitude and to seek out others to receive the “overflow.” The implication of this is that we should consider Nietzsche’s creator a social being rather than a solitary one. Yet, one might object to the view presented so far that it is consistent with others being necessary only as an audience to receive creations. In other words, though gift-giving might provide an interesting defense of the necessity of some social interaction, the point made so far might seem underwhelming. Countless philosophers from Aristotle to Hegel to Heidegger have argued for a basic level of necessary social interaction. Surely the role of social relations for Nietzsche cannot be so banal.

In fact, Nietzsche offers a much more compelling account of sociality. He argues not only for importance of social relations, contra those who find in him only a call for solitude, but Nietzsche also suggests that value creation requires the achievement of a certain kind of social relations. We again see this most clearly with Zarathustra, who is continually frustrated throughout Prologue because he cannot find others worth interacting with. He states, “It dawned on me: I need companions, and living ones – not dead companions and corpses that I
carry with me wherever I want” (Z P: 9). Only when he develops relationships with others, in his case with his animals, does he feel complete. To create value, we need more than the presence of others; we need relationships with them that promote and provoke new forms of valuing. One reason for this is due to the development of ethical knowledge through value creation. Companions provide the context in which values can emerge. But these social relations are also important because Nietzsche’s focus is on valuing as an activity. Our significant encounters are not with objects of value but with other valuers who hold different perspectives. Nietzsche downplays typical interactions with others, finding most interlocutors not worth our time. Yet, sometimes we interact with others who intrigue us, who grab our attention and demand a response. Therefore, Nietzsche concludes, “All company (Umgang) is bad company except with your equals” (BGE 26). But who are these peers that are needed for value creation, and where do we find them in Nietzsche’s work?

To understand these peers we must return to the idea that the creator is motivated by the love of humanity. The contrast Nietzsche poses to is the love of the neighbor, an obvious appeal to the New Testament and what Nietzsche considers traditional morality. Nietzsche’s alternative, the love of humanity, surprisingly is not meant to be universal or

---

327 It is striking that Zarathustra’s companions are animals rather than human beings. Lemm argues that the animal is a central component of Nietzsche’s work, as Nietzsche embraces the animality of humanity. Thus, gift-giving opens the world to new kinds of relationships predicated on more basic experiences of the animal nature of others. For her, gift-giving can only occur “on the basis of a friendship between humans and animals.” See (2009): 74-75. In contrast, my suggestion is that Nietzsche’s animal companions highlight the difficulty of developing such relationships with others, especially when, as Nietzsche thinks, modern society is on a path towards nihilism. Zarathustra’s animals reflect those who are actually not part of the “herd” of society. In this regard, perhaps Nietzsche is simply following Aristotle’s claim from the Politics that anyone who can survive outside a community must be a beast or a god. In fact, Nietzsche himself later writes, “To live alone, you need to be either an animal or a god – says Aristotle. But he left out the third case: you can be both – a philosopher…” (TI I: 3).

328 Nietzsche finds the altruism of neighborly love problematic for a number of reasons, including that in altruism one’s own concerns take a backseat to the needs of others (GS 338). As we saw earlier, Nietzsche finds selfishness or self-concern essential.
altruistic. Its aim is particular – the love of humanity is a love for concrete others. These others are not just the beloved; they are active counterparts with whom we share many different kinds of relationships. Within the idea of love, Nietzsche is drawn especially to the importance of the erotic. Valuing involves attraction and repulsion, not simply rational evaluation, and our actions flow out of these attachments. In matters of love and erotic attachment, the other is not just incidental or irrelevant. The person who serves as the object of these must be someone who is considered on her own terms and demands to be taken into account. That is, to be a real other, she must be in some sense unpredictable and a fellow-valuer to be reckoned with, not someone who serves an instrumental purpose. In such relationships, new forms of valuing are created through interplay. In trying to promote their own concerns, people impress their values upon each other. They maintain a tension of the sort found in a number of different kinds of relationships – such as the erotic, playful, or agonistic – where the individuals come to share many features but never blend into one. At the same time, they seek the same goals but are opposed to each other, engaged in a larger task but competing in the moment.

To provoke such a response, the other must have a certain standing, or she must be able to play the part of the opponent. This is not to say that Nietzsche has simply refashioned the Hegelian model of recognition. The other must be someone whose valuing offers a challenge or perspective that demands to be taken seriously. It provides a threat or points to a deficiency calling for a response. Rather than being equals in some specific capacity, Nietzsche thinks of these others as peers who have a different kind of relationship to each

329 Pippin (2010: 15-16) helpfully describes this as a person being defined by what “grips” her.
other. Perhaps Homeric antagonism would provide a worthy model, but instead Nietzsche gives this important peer group a name that may sound surprising – friendship.\(^{330}\) In contrast to the neighbor, Zarathustra insists, “The friend shall be your festival of the earth and an anticipation of the overman. I teach you the friend and his overflowing heart. But one must understand how to be a sponge, if one wants to be loved by overflowing hearts. I teach you the friend in whom the world stands complete, a bowl of goodness – the creating friend who always has a complete world to bestow” (Z I: “On Love of the Neighbor”).

If we view the role of others as only providing an audience, keeping solitary creation the central kind of creation, we likely could not make sense of how these others are considered friends. On my interpretation we can see why Nietzsche would invoke friendship as an appropriate title. In friendship, Nietzsche does not have in mind the Aristotelian conception of virtue-friendship; the friend is not meant be a mirror of the self. For Nietzsche, the friend has a different perspective, which spurs the friends to challenge and make demands upon each other. The friend is not defined by similarity but instead by the resistance she offers. At the same time, in their interactions, whether playful, antagonistic, or erotic, friends develop a feeling of solidarity.\(^{331}\) A friend need not be physically here – my friend could be

\(^{330}\) Lemm also recognizes the equality at the heart of friendship. As she puts it, friends “stimulate each other to develop their own virtue.” See (2009): 61-63, 71-75.

\(^{331}\) Nietzsche describes two kinds of friends – ladder and circle (HAH I: 368). Ladder friends are present at each stage of development, but these friends are left behind. Circle friends are united and remain together. Coker (1993) suggests that these two kinds of friendships can be put together in an ideal of the “upward-spiral-friend.” Such friends remain together as they ascend and improve. This seems consistent with Nietzsche’s descriptions of friends that challenge each other to bring out their best. Friends can push each other towards improvement, but these friends still need not be permanent companions.
across the world. But if the others cannot provide real challenge and interaction, they do not provide the resistance that promotes value creation.\(^3\)

Nietzsche could have captured the importance of resistance by describing merely an enemy or opponent. He makes the figure a friend because she provides resistance through interactions and interplay, where valuing emerges in the response to the other’s challenge. Friends do not work together to achieve their aims, but they need each other as they seek the same goals, since they have a “shared thirst for an ideal above them” (GS 14). We see this kind of friendship on display between great athletes, where competing against each other brings each to work harder to become better. For example, Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal are both great tennis players in their own right, but their matches in major tournaments seem to bring out the best in each. No doubt, their desire to defeat the other drives both of them to practice harder and prepare more thoroughly than they would if no such rival existed. The competition between the two raises the overall quality of their work. And though they want nothing more than to defeat the opponent, in the process they develop respect for each other, which Nietzsche describes as a kind of intimacy that grows between them (HAH II: 241).

Creativity and new forms of valuing are supposed to emerge from these same kinds of challenges and resistance that others provide. However, unlike the tennis example, value creation does not occur at a specified place and time. The development of new interests,

---

3\(^3\) There is an important question about what kind of interactions these friends must have, and whether the deceased can be properly considered friends. In some sense, Nietzsche seems to consider figures like Schopenhauer and Socrates his companions and collaborators. And Nietzsche seems to think much of his work is speaking to those who live well into the future. See TI I: 15 and EH “Books”: 1. The matter is only complicated by Zarathustra, who expresses a need for living companions but then continually encounters and responds to individuals who are primarily embodiments of values and ideas. I am inclined to think that the physical presence of the friend is preferable, but when there are few able to offer such a challenge, friendship is not limited in this way.
objects of concern, and forms of valuing are the results of our everyday interactions and relationships of the sort Nietzsche describes. Without the impetus of resistance, or without something that requires response, boredom and mediocrity rule. The existence of others provides both the challenge and the seduction that makes social life the workshop for value creation. The interaction between the creator and the other leaves a lasting imprint on each; the individual, it turns out, cannot consider herself in isolation from others. The result is that the interplay with others and dependence on each other results in valuing that is always informed by others. The others have become an intricate part of the creator’s idea of herself. The need to be with others changes the creator’s self-conception. Not only does the individual respond to others, but she also has the joy of others in mind, giving values their particular application. Nietzsche worries that universally-applicable values are too abstract and cannot take into account the context in which they apply. By suggesting values should be created for the friend, Nietzsche seeks to show how values apply beyond the individual while retaining their particularity. These values are supposed to have some import for others, as they are more than just responses or recommendations.333

Unfortunately, Nietzsche does not spell out the details of how shared value creation emerges from these relationships. I argued in Chapter 3 that group creation better captures Nietzsche’s interest in ethical knowledge. Now that we have examined the role of friends as challengers and seducers, we can fill in some details of group value creation. Keith Sawyer argues that all creativity is the result of collaboration, not what he calls the “myth of the lone

333 Richardson (2004) provides a defense of the competing view. He argues that each person can select values for herself and then recommend these values to others. I think the basic idea is right, and ultimately the receivers need not adopt the values they are presented. But the force of value creation is that these new values have some connection to the other. They are not recommended solely because one person preferred them.
Rather than waiting for a moment of insight, Sawyer’s idea is that creativity is the culmination of a number of different “sparks” and experiences. An individual is always drawing upon her own experiences and the ideas of others, and even when alone a person draws on previous collaborations. My suggestion is that just as Sawyer rethinks creativity in terms of collaboration, Nietzsche understands valuing and the creation of value as distinct kinds of collaborative endeavor. For Nietzsche, the previous experiences drawn upon are encounters with friends that demand a response. When the friend raises an issue worth exploring, it can provide a spark to develop some new approach that takes into account or responds to the concern. That is, the friend can point out where the other’s view is lacking or where it will encounter opposition, provoking the development of something new.

Group creation, according to Sawyer, is most effective when it involves improvisation or collaboration. The feedback others provide can spur the entire group forward, and it allows a space for possibilities to go in a number of different directions. Collaboration “connects together the small sparks of individual minds, even when those sparks sometimes happen to a solitary creator.” Creation by groups also allows the group to innovate to the benefit of everyone. Sawyer provides an example of pick-up basketball. Such games involve individuals from a variety of backgrounds who come together to achieve a single goal – winning the game so they can keep the court and play again. A game featuring players who do not know each other can become sloppy, a collection of disparate individuals who cannot work together. But on some occasions, a team will be in sync, with members feeding off each other and responding to the opponent with a kind of rhythm or flow. Where Nietzsche

334 Sawyer (2007).
335 Ibid.: 110.
complicates Sawyer’s picture is by redefining the relationship between these collaborators. For Sawyer, the different perspectives of the collaborators provide different sparks of insight, and collaboration does not require the individuals to all be aiming at the same goal. Nevertheless, his ideal does seem to entail significant agreement between the individuals on both larger goals and the manner in which these goals should be achieved.

Nietzsche’s view suggests that collaboration can be a competitive activity. In the context of meaningful relationship, even one rooted in playfulness or erotic attachment, a fundamental component is conflict in values and desire to convert the other to share some viewpoint. Shared outcomes need not entail complete agreement between the group members. If anything, Nietzsche’s worry is that the kind of “flow” Sawyer is after is inimical to creation. When group members no longer challenge each other, Nietzsche is convinced they will lose the drive to move forward, and they will become satisfied with the status quo. Antagonistic friendship is necessary for effective value creation since valuing brings people into conflict with others. New forms of valuing arise from responses to perspectives that resist assimilation, as healthy degrees of tension and competition spur new ideas and responses without overwhelming the group through enmity and discord.

Obviously Nietzsche’s kind of collaboration does not capture all instances of creation. Sawyer’s claim that a basketball team works better when they are working towards the same goal makes sense, and there are plenty of examples where a basketball team fails because each player is out for her own interest. Yet competitive collaboration does seem a sound model when we consider Nietzsche’s project of creating forms of valuing and ethical concepts. These must be shared, since they require a context to have any applicability. Their
creation requires interplay with others, and different relationships prod creative outlets in new
directions. The difficulty of finding individuals with whom one can develop such interplay
reiterates the rarity of the achievement. These relations are difficult to maintain for any period
of time, but if Nietzsche is right, the achievement of such friendships is critical for real
collaboration.

4.3.6 Redefining Autonomy

I have argued that solitude is necessary to Nietzsche’s understanding of value creation,
but only insofar as solitude is critical to self-restabilization. Beyond this, we should not think
of Nietzsche’s task of value creation as a solitary endeavor. The role of abundance and gift-
giving show that the creator should feel compelled to leave her solitude behind in favor of
social life. Mere sociality, however, is insufficient. It turns out that a particular kind of
relationship with other valuers, who provide resistance, erotic or passionate attachment, and
friendship, is a component of effective value creation. Values arise from the interplay of these
individuals and their responses to each other, resulting in social concepts, not lists of goals or
ideals. Still, creation cannot occur without pause. Zarathustra exclaims, “My happiness in
bestowing died in bestowing, my virtue wearied of itself in its superabundance! For one who
always bestows, the danger is loss of shame; whoever dispenses always has calloused hands
and heart from sheer dispensing” (Z II: “The Night Song”). Furthermore, continual creation
denies the creator’s ability to consider herself, undermining her ability to create at all (Z III:
“On the Three Evils” 2). These limits on creation bring us back to the need to alternate social
life with solitude. Even Zarathustra must return occasionally to his mountaintop in order to
create more in the future. Although social life and collaboration are important for the
development of new values and shared ethical concepts, solitude can never be too far away.\footnote{Langer proposes a “harmony” where time in the cave is balanced with life in the sunshine, avoiding the harms of spending too long in either location. Langer argues that this harmony is symbolized by Nietzsche’s emphasis on the dance. See (2010): 151-153.}

We are now in position to see how Nietzsche holds on to solitude while
simultaneously opposing existentialist individualism and Kantian autonomy. Unlike an
existentialist account of authenticity, Nietzsche does not suggest that the individual can isolate
instances of her own willing from those of others. Though the influence of others cannot be
denied, each person can still put her own stamp on her cares and concerns, valuing in a way
irreducible to the perspectives of others. Through interplay with others, we create new forms
of meaning that combat the meaningless experienced in human life. Nietzsche’s relationship
with the Kantian view is more complicated. We have seen that Nietzsche rejects solitude on
the grounds that it generates or fosters misanthropy and fantasy. In solitude, there is no
corrective for anger, confusion, or misguided beliefs. Other perspectives are needed to ground
the individual. Nietzsche’s account of friendship reveals that not just any others will do the
job. Zarathustra insists, “For the hermit the friend is always a third: the third is the cork that
prevents the conversation of the two from sinking into the depths” (Z I: “On the Friend”).
Bernard Williams makes a similar claim in \textit{Shame and Necessity}. He insists that if we do not
listen to others, with regard to some one person “there is nothing to show whether he is a
solitary bearer of true justice or a deluded crank.”\footnote{Williams (1993): 99.} The need to take others into account, for
Williams, shows that others have genuine weight. Without them, we could not even
distinguish autonomous action from other individualistic behavior. If we accept Williams’
reading of Kant, it seems Kantian autonomy embraces precisely the features of solitude that
Nietzsche opposes.

Williams’ reading of Kant, though, misses the mark. Williams suggests any influence
of others is an instance of heteronomy. But Kantian autonomy does not deny social relations,
and it even has important social elements. Kant’s kingdom of ends builds others into the
universal law, and it also requires thinking about what laws other self-legislators might
accept. Thinking from the standpoint of others seems just as important as thinking from the
individual’s own standpoint. Furthermore, in the *Doctrine of Virtue* he also espouses the
virtues of friendship. In what he calls a moral friendship, the individual can reveal herself and
her concern to particular others who share the same outlook on life. Since one friend is
usually insufficient, Kant believes a few friends are necessary for a healthy life. Nevertheless,
Nietzsche’s account still makes an important critique of Kantian autonomy. The question is
not, as Williams argued, whether other voices are allowed at all. Rather, the question is what
role the other plays. From the Nietzschean perspective, Kant still fails to make sense of this
role. For Kant, autonomy is always moralized, as the autonomous person binds herself by the
moral law. The conception of the self and others as moral agents is a precondition of these
social relations. Ultimately, the awareness of the self as having a rational will is an inner-
directed process. The result is that the person acting autonomously must always recognize the
moral law as the reason for acting, as to accept that the authoritative principles are merely

---

339 Aside from the moral law, Kant’s other works also indicate he accepts an important role for sociality. In the
*Anthropology*, Kant says sociability itself is a virtue, becoming a problem only when the focus shifts to luxurious
living (277-278). In the *Doctrine of Virtue* from the *Metaphysics of Morals*, he even claims that “it is a duty to
oneself as well as to others not to *isolate* oneself but to use one’s moral perfections in social intercourse”
(6:473).
hypothetical would result in heteronomy.\textsuperscript{340} Even though Kant accepts the importance of social relations, there are always mediated through respect for the moral law, since acting out of duty keeps others at a distance for the initial acceptance of the moral law.

In contrast, I have argued that Nietzsche allows others in on the ground floor. On Nietzsche’s view values emerge from social relations, and the relations themselves are the achievement, not some prior conception of self. We can see this clearly as we examine the rivalry between Federer and Nadal. The recognition of the other as a meaningful rival came only once they had played each other. Often in sports commentators try to create a rivalry when none exists. In competition, such rivalries occur organically, as the competitors encounter the other as a worthy opponent. Such self-awareness thus comes out of social relations, as Nietzsche would have it. Moreover, Nietzschean autonomy, unlike its Kantian counterpart, is not moralized from the beginning. For this reason the “‘autonomous’ and ‘ethical’ are mutually exclusive” (GM II: 1). Thus, even if Kantian autonomy does not demand solitude, it still keeps others, even friends, at a certain distance. The Kantian individual must be able to pull back from others, whereas for Nietzsche values must emerge from these very relationships. For this reason, Nietzsche proposes that competitive collaboration, with those he considers friends, actually provides a corrective to traditional accounts of autonomy and individuality. These relationships, with both the assistance and resistance they provide, insure that our new values are responsive to a particular context and the struggles of everyday human existence.

\textsuperscript{340} Hill (1992): 110-111.
An implication of Nietzsche’s concerns about autonomy and solitude is that
Nietzsche’s account calls into question the usefulness of political metaphors in the realm of
ethics. Kant provides a turning point in the history of ethics in developing autonomy and self-
legislation into ethical ideals, to which Nietzsche offers his response.\textsuperscript{341} Nietzsche is happy to
provide his own political metaphors, such as sovereignty. However, Nietzsche complicates
this by adding distinctly non-political metaphors such as gift-giving and friendship. Nietzsche,
despite finding solitude necessary for the creation of value, insists that to create is to live with
others. The autonomous individual, at least in the traditional sense of autonomy, is actually
the solitary individual, and for Nietzsche this is the person we should fear. In contrast, we
should seek those who both attract and provoke us, as for Nietzsche these are the individuals
who provide the impetus to create something new and better. All of this is not to say that on
my reading Nietzsche has no use for autonomy. Rather, the implication is that Nietzsche
raises doubts about an implausibly-isolated depiction of autonomy. Since, for Nietzsche,
autonomy does not involve a distance between the self and others, he provokes us to consider
what a satisfactory account of social autonomy would require. His proposal entails a unique
vision of social relation that constitutes a real achievement for any person.

\textsuperscript{341} In pointing this out, Nietzsche shares the basic view defended at length in Schneewind (1998). According to
Schneewind, Kant invented a new concept of autonomy by arguing that we are each under the moral law by an
act of our own will. Nietzsche similarly sees autonomy as a creation of modernity that has taken political ideals
and applied them inappropriately to matters of ethics.
CHAPTER 5

INTELLIGIBILITY, ORIGINALITY, AND THE PROJECT OF VALUE CREATION

My primary goals in this project have been to understand both Nietzsche’s conception of value creation and the role he provides to value creation. I have argued that value creation is central to Nietzsche’s ethical view, it provides a response to nihilism, and it uncovers his distinctive form of social relations. Throughout I have shown where Nietzsche anticipates modern debates while providing a perspective often missing from these. In this chapter I want to show further significance of Nietzsche’s work to contemporary discussion. To do so, I will return to a distinction first made in Chapter 3 between two aspects of value creation. The process of value creation is more common than typically believed, and it is actually something we must do continually. At the same time, Nietzsche describes a kind of value creation that shows it to be a significant achievement, not just something ordinary. It is this more philosophically robust value creation I have emphasized in this project. I will defend Nietzsche’s suggestion that nobody can avoid creating values, though few actually do so well, and the result can remake our ethical lives.

My starting point for Nietzsche’s contemporary relevance will be J. David Velleman, who gives a central role to value creation in his work, especially his recent book How We Get Along. Velleman, like Nietzsche, is skeptical of morality’s grounding, arguing that whatever grounding morality has is found in agency. His view is not simply the Kantian claim that the practical point of view determines moral action. Rather he argues that all agential

---

342 Velleman (2009). Velleman’s three-part essay “Persons in Prospect” (2008) also develops a number of these themes. As Velleman notes in the preface of How We Get Along, many aspects of the recent work are new presentations and connections of older ideas. I will mainly deal with the more recent presentations of his work.
action aims at what he calls intelligibility, and intelligibility provides the only criterion of correct action. Nietzsche offers some concerns about whether all actions aim at intelligibility, but these worries only mask a deeper set of concerns – intelligible actions may still prove uninteresting or meaningless. Valuing, according to Nietzsche, is more complicated than merely aiming at an intelligible conception of the self. Valuing also ought to bring together a number of commitments, embracing a certain kind of tension between them and allowing for creativity.

I begin this chapter by describing Velleman’s view of practical reason and intelligibility, with focus on his view that intelligibility is the constitutive aim of action. I evaluate Velleman’s argument that morality emerged from the pressure to be intelligible. Velleman is himself encouraged by this development, but Nietzsche casts doubt upon this model. Nietzsche argues instead that being unintelligible is a worthwhile goal. However, Nietzsche’s commitments elsewhere reveal that this cannot be his considered view. The Nietzschean conclusion is that intelligibility provides an insufficient criterion for valuing. As a result, I explore further Nietzsche’s value creation project, and I argue that dynamic tension is an important additional criterion. Valuing can occur without such tension, but to value well requires the attainment of a tension of oppositions. This tension provides the originality and invigoration Nietzsche seeks in valuing. I conclude by arguing that even though values can be created in the ways Velleman suggests, Nietzsche develops more complex forms of value creation that constitute a real achievement for humanity. The development of new commitments and concerns ultimately functions as a development of ethical knowledge and confidence along the lines of that proposed by Bernard Williams.
5.1 VELLEMAN’S CONSTITUTIVISM

Velleman’s aim in *How We Get Along* is to develop a constitutivist conception of value providing a distinct kind of objectivity for morality. The kind of objectivity typically ascribed to morality involves external demands rooted in true claims about the world. This is not the only possible kind of objectivity, and Bernard Williams outlines how a Kantian position can make moral considerations inescapable without weaving them into “the fabric of the world.” Accordingly, Velleman seeks to develop the requirements of action by determining the constitutive aims of it. Where Velleman differs from Kant is that he is interested not in the requirements of reason but in agential action. Velleman argues that intelligibility is the constitutive aim of all action. As the constitutive aim, intelligibility provides the criterion of whether an action is apt or correct. To understand intelligibility as a criterion, we will first need to explore Velleman’s views of practical reason and value.

Practical reason, according to Velleman, entails choosing an action based on a rationale, and the rationale for the action is what is intelligible or makes sense. By intelligibility, Velleman means a coherence or consistency with an individual’s first-order dispositions. An individual’s attributes, emotions, and other traits provide constraints on what possible reasons an individual can act on because only certain actions will make sense for that person. To further explicate this sense of coherence or consistency, Velleman introduces an analogy to improvisational acting. In improvisational theater, the action is unscripted, with

---

343 Williams (1998) is referring to John Mackie, who held that objectivity required being woven into the fabric of the universe. The talk of fabric is of course metaphorical, the point being that if something is woven into the fabric of the world or universe, a claim is made true or false by appeal to some corresponding fact. Williams’ proposed alternative is that a constitutive view weaves morality into agency, or the practical point of view. Ultimately, constitutivism is a claim about whether demands or moral considerations can be avoided. If something is objective in this way, then it is an inescapable consideration.

344 We must keep in mind that action is a special class of behavior, not just any bodily movement. An action that reflects agency is one that is propelled by an emotion but shaped by the individual. See Velleman (2009): 11.
characters developed on stage. The actor’s aim is to make her character intelligible. To do so, she must understand the character’s attributes and potential motivations. If the character fails to act on recognizable motives, she has failed to intelligibly enact the character. Velleman wants us to think of ourselves as enacting a character in the same unscripted manner.\textsuperscript{345} An agent acts out of underlying motives, and these motives are those that are plausible or provide reasons to guide action.

The improvisational model portrays the person as a project. Self-development is a process of enacting what makes sense. An individual develops a character, and future actions depend on what attitudes and traits the character is taken to have. An action that flows naturally from these characteristics is one that makes sense. An unintelligible action is one that seems disjointed or has no clear connection to what has come before. Thus, practical reason is not a process of weighing pros and cons or determining what is right or wrong. It involves evaluating a situation to see what considerations are relevant to that individual and understanding how she sees the situation.\textsuperscript{346} Practical reason gives insight into how people are inclined, and Velleman’s depiction of agential action, or practical reason, also provides his account of value. Values are guided responses based on sensibilities.\textsuperscript{347} Valuing is being responsive to a specified set of concerns. Importantly, for Velleman these concerns are largely subjective. There is no external criterion of goodness or other determination of what values a person ought to have. An individual’s values depend on that person’s attributes and self-understanding, since values essentially comprise motives a person can act on. Whatever determinations exist concerning apt valuing are thus tied to the domain of that particular value

\textsuperscript{345} Ibid.: 14.
\textsuperscript{346} Ibid.: 18-22.
and what makes it appropriate for that individual. Many values are idiosyncratic, since one
person’s sensibilities and corresponding values likely differ from another’s.\textsuperscript{348} This is not to
say that what makes sense for an individual will be completely idiosyncratic; commonalities
in human nature constrain values. Where all humans share some reaction or sensibility, they
will share values. Still, many, if not most, values depend on individual sensibilities and
attributes.

Velleman’s picture, at first glance, appears overly cognitive and reflective. It would
seem actions are chosen for reasons, and a person must know the possible motivations and
reasons in order to choose a course of action that makes sense. Yet, despite the cognitive
depiction of intelligible actions, it would be implausible to think that each possible action
must be reflected upon prior to its enactment. Intelligibility is a constitutive aim of action
because it comprises the concerns that are taken to be action-guiding.\textsuperscript{349} For something to
count as an action or an instance of practical reason, it must aim at intelligibility, and this
includes all actions done for reasons.\textsuperscript{350} Upon reflection, the process of practical reasoning
that led to, or will lead to, any particular action can be articulated. Nonetheless, this kind of
articulation is not needed prior to all actions, just as the improvisational actor does not have to
reflectively consider each possible response. The agent need not consider the “mechanics” of

\textsuperscript{348} Velleman (2009): 44.
\textsuperscript{349} Similarly, intelligibility is constitutive of value, since it can be described independently of any given value.
Thus Velleman finds intelligibility an appropriate criterion of aptness. Ibid.: 57.
\textsuperscript{350} To better see how Velleman understands intelligibility as a constitutive aim, we can look to an analogous
discussion of belief. Velleman (1992) argues that truth is the constitutive aim of belief. By this, he means to
distinguish belief from other attitudes. To believe something is to aim at getting something right, and this means
truth also serves as the criterion for success. In forming a belief, one is guided by concerns of truth, and an
attitude without this constitutive aim must be a different attitude, such as desire.
practical reason since each has a tacit awareness of her actions. A reflective explanation can be given, even if making sense is not directly attended to most of the time.  

Although Velleman calls intelligibility the constitutive aim of action, he describes different models of intelligibility. His primary conception of intelligibility involves being intelligible to oneself, which he compares to an actor playing herself. An individual tries to make sense to herself by developing a coherent sense of self. But this also hints at the social nature of intelligibility, since intelligibility to oneself is still connected to how one is perceived. The individual essentially serves as her own audience, and she can reflect upon her success or failure to make sense. At the same time, the individual aims to be intelligible to others, improvising jointly and sharing a stage with them. In acting with others, she develops shared scenarios and common knowledge. In other words, a person learns how to act with others in the kinds of situations that are commonly encountered. Again, no individual directly attempts to converge on this shared knowledge. Still, the kind of coherence or intelligibility a person seeks for herself is pressured by the need to get along with others. In interpersonal interactions people try to understand each other, and doing so requires recognizing how others understand themselves.

Since intelligibility is the constitutive aim of action, Velleman finds it the only possible criterion to determine which actions are considered apt, good, or correct for any individual. This constitutive standard provides a kind of grounding that resists relativism, and Velleman argues further that the implicit pressure to be intelligible leads to the kinds of moral

---

352 Ibid.: 15.
353 Ibid.: 17.
354 Ibid.: 62.
concerns we have developed. In other words, practical reason pushes us towards the general shape morality has taken, emphasizing transparency, universality, and mutuality.\textsuperscript{355} Velleman’s picture gives self-development a notably experimental character – an individual continually enacts what seems to make sense, and what makes sense can change based on new interpretations and understandings of the self. Consequently, Velleman has articulated an account of value creation. Whether an action or course of life makes sense can only be determined by investigation. Values are created through lived experience because the individual cannot know \textit{a priori} what actions she can authentically enact. Moreover, inaccurate interpretations of oneself and one’s values can actually be made true through habituation. Self-attributions become self-fulfilling and are made to be intelligible.\textsuperscript{356} New values and reasons are created through reinterpretation, habituation, and experimentation.

Velleman, in my view, is right to take value creation as a central means for self-development and self-improvement. Where Nietzsche sometimes says value creation is a task for philosophers, Velleman suggests value creation is one of the most common actions humans perform. However, I worry that his notion of intelligibility cannot do the work he asks of it. I want to push against his view while suggesting that movement in Nietzsche’s direction, and also towards Williams, provides a number of advantages. Rather than dealing with the constitutivism more generally, I will develop a response to Velleman that grows out of Nietzsche’s position. Intelligibility is itself worrisome in that it is an insufficient standard relying on too simplistic a picture of valuing. Value creation should deal not only with

\textsuperscript{355} Ibid.: 151.
\textsuperscript{356} Ibid.: 39, 91-92.
making sense but also with the threats such as finding life dull or meaningless. To achieve this we will need more than intelligibility to guide the creation of new values.

5.2 “HAVE I BEEN UNDERSTOOD?”

5.2.1 Intelligibility

Velleman’s argument for constitutivism depends on intelligibility being achievable and inescapable. However, there are some examples that threaten to show the view rests on a basic misunderstanding. Many actions do not appear to aim at intelligibility for the actor or audience. Allan Hazlett makes this point with an example of eating a bagel, writing, “I’m hungry, and so I pick it up and take a bite. My eating the bagel, to be sure, makes folk psychological sense. But in eating it I am not trying to do something that makes folk psychological sense! I simply want to eat the bagel, I know how to eat it, and straightaway I eat it.”

One question this raises concerns the attentiveness one must show to intelligibility. Adding more detail to Hazlett’s example would seem to make the explanation too cognitive, or simply more complicated than our experiences suggest. But if Hazlett’s kind of action is possible, then Velleman is mistaken in saying all actions aim at intelligibility. However, I want to set this issue aside to address a more general concern about intelligibility. It is obvious that we do face pressure to make sense to others, and Nietzsche’s work proposes a critique of intelligibility’s social nature that threatens to show Velleman’s standard provides an insufficient limit on action.

357 Hazlett (2009).
358 Hazlett points out that the possibility of such behavior may not necessarily cause problems for Velleman’s attempt to develop a criterion for correct action based on intelligibility. However, since intelligibility is supposed to be the criterion of action because it is constitutive of agency, I think this will cause some problems at the metaethical level. The view does seem require intelligibility to be an inescapable component of every action. See Velleman (2009): 136-137.
Velleman holds that our need to get along with others has been a driving force behind a number of dominant institutions and practices, providing what is essentially a genealogy of morality. Insofar as there is pressure to conform and likely punishment for non-conformity, it is unsurprising that morality has come to bear the features of universality and transparency. Over time, getting along with others encourages shared values and comprehension. Such pressure also pushes against unnecessary distinctions and minimizes occasions for deception, since we have reason to converge on action types and practices. In this way, the processes of practical reason are “pro-moral,” pushing towards morality without guaranteeing that it will develop. Morality is beneficial, on his view, because it provides a context for shared behavior and supports our ability to work with others.

In addition to the broader aims of practical reason, Velleman believes pressure to be intelligible to others led to developments like shared vocabulary and common patterns of behavior.\(^{359}\) Shared language and forms of consciousness are mediums for interacting with others and understanding ourselves. To effectively get along with others, we need to converge on patterns of behavior, or scenarios, that everyone can understand and follow. Hazlett uncovers in this argument a form of inauthenticity characteristic of rational action.\(^{360}\) On Velleman’s picture, our interactions with others are a kind of performance, and our dealings with others are always mediated by our own self-conception. Additionally, I would add that rational actions are also mediated by the social concepts Velleman describes, such as language. Nietzsche points out that attempts to understand oneself are done from external means; the knowledge one has about oneself is interpreted and viewed in the same way one

\(^{359}\) Velleman (2009): 73, 80.

\(^{360}\) Hazlett (2009).
views others. Language forces us to understand ourselves using the same terms and concepts as others, blurring what is distinctive about an individual and her values. The result is that even though an individual’s values are created and discovered in an experimental manner, the creation of a unique identity or autonomy is an implausible goal. Moreover, people have little privileged knowledge about themselves (GS 335). This makes social relations necessary for personal identity. Relations with others, in particular friendships, are necessary for an agent’s development. Friends help comprise one’s self-conception, and an individual can never be fully isolated from others.\textsuperscript{361}

Nietzsche presents a deeper worry beyond the inauthentic nature of rational action. Nietzsche writes, “…Our thoughts themselves are continually as it were outvoted and translated back into the herd perspective. At bottom, all our actions are incomparably and utterly personal, unique, and boundlessly individual, there is no doubt; but as soon as we translate them into consciousness, they no longer seem to be” (GS 354).\textsuperscript{362} Rational action forces us to adopt an external, shared perspective and requires convergence with others. Rather than forging our own identity and authentic life, we should think of ourselves as exploring our shared identity with others. However, most often this convergence amounts to an individual joining the herd, which for Nietzsche represents mediocrity and decadence. It is difficult to see where creativity or individuality could enter if the standard of action includes

\textsuperscript{361} See section 4.3.4.
\textsuperscript{362} If so inclined, we might also take Nietzsche’s point as an entry into the hermeneutics of ontology, foreshadowing Heidegger’s basic moves regarding (self-) interpretation and language. For Heidegger, our interpretations of ourselves occur only with a background of embeddedness that conditions interpretation. We cannot understand ourselves without this context, and we cannot understand the world without reference to ourselves, a situation known as the hermeneutic circle. Moreover, since we are always within language, our understanding, in particular regarding being, is concealed by our names the historical nature of our concepts. See esp. Heidegger (1971).
being intelligible to others. Some forms of creativity could be intelligible, but truly revolutionary behaviors seem to be ruled out.

Both Nietzsche and Velleman suggest human life is fueled by the need to get along with others. Velleman holds that agency and practical reason aim at being intelligible because it is in the individual’s self-interest. However, Nietzsche claims intelligibility is a demand of social existence that undermines the individual by limiting her creativity. Since rational action has a necessary social component, Nietzsche’s worry is not of inauthenticity but of undue influence from external sources in developing one’s own values and cares. The concern is not that Velleman is wrong in his improvisational account of rational action. The concern is that he mischaracterizes the inescapability of social pressure. Social convergence may be a process of manipulation and coercion, where certain kinds of values are thrust upon others. While Velleman is quite satisfied in the approximation of morality that arises from these pressures, the Nietzschean suggestion is that intelligibility brings with it some potentially harmful effects. If so, then intelligibility cannot be a sufficient standard of apt action.

5.2.2 Originality

Nietzsche believes that desire to be part of group has been the driving force behind morality: “How much or how little danger there is to the community or to equality in an opinion, in a condition or affect, in a will, in a talent, this is now the moral perspective: and fear is once again the mother of morality” (BGE 201). The resulting herd morality is, in his

---

365 I argue in Chapter 4 that Nietzsche does not accept a traditional conception of autonomy. Nietzsche emphasizes what I call self-appropriation, the attempt to distinguish oneself and affirm one’s own life. These pressures may seem in tension, but Nietzsche aims to separate the necessarily social aspects of human life from those pressures that lead to leveling and mediocrity that he associates with herd morality.
view, detrimental to life. Against Velleman’s picture, Nietzsche seems to offer a grand defense of unintelligibility. Nietzsche routinely claims an individual might have insights beyond the herd such that others will look upon her with confusion, hatred, or envy. New ideas and values, he argues, will seem inexpedient, even incredible, to the public (GS 3). Nietzsche’s “higher humans” live among ordinary people as one would live in a foreign land. Additionally, Nietzsche believes that when a person aspires for great heights, few will be able to understand or share the experience (Z I: “On the Tree on the Mountain”). Solitariness is a characteristic of true philosophy, since others exist primarily as impediments (BGE 273). These comments would appear to deny the very need to get along with others that Velleman finds central.

Nietzsche also embraces his own unintelligibility. His new insights lead him to insist that his writings will make sense only in the distant future (EH “Books”: 1). These various claims in Nietzsche’s work suggest his position is, at the very least, that we should be indifferent to whether others understand us. We may even conclude that unintelligibility itself is a virtue. Against this interpretation, I will argue that Nietzsche must reject both of these views in favor of unintelligibility. In Nietzsche’s work we find a distinct kind of intelligibility that proves central to his larger projects. Velleman defined intelligibility as an action “making sense” for that person in a given situation. For Nietzsche, intelligibility instead has to do with whether values and ideals are recognizable to others, as is evident in his claims that higher humans and creators of values should be beyond the concerns of the herd.

Nietzsche’s insistence on the virtue of being misunderstood is dubious. That Nietzsche so often makes this point should raise a red flag to his readers. Specifically, we should
question whether Nietzsche’s reasons for embracing obscurity stem from the fact that his work was not popular during his lifetime. Despite his hope that “perhaps there will be endowed chairs dedicated to Zarathustra interpretation,” his works failed to have the immediate influence he had anticipated. His reaction to others not grasping his supposedly brilliant work is likely behind a number of his comments on intelligibility. For instance, he writes, “It is by no means an objection to a book when anyone finds it incomprehensible: perhaps that was part of the author’s intention – he didn’t want to be understood by just ‘anybody’” (GS 381). Put this way, Nietzsche’s worries about intelligibility seems more like adolescent concerns. When others do not recognize his brilliance or accept his critiques, the fault must lie with audience. Furthermore, a desire for idiosyncrasy does not itself provide reason to oppose intelligibility. If this shallow conception of individuality is indeed at the heart of Nietzsche’s insistence on unintelligibility, then perhaps his position does not contribute much to contemporary ethics and metaethics.

The virtues Nietzsche attributes to isolation and his own unintelligibility are clear overreactions. The more interesting concerns present in his work highlight a troubling degree of conformity. Certainly Velleman is correct that we often find ourselves in scenarios where we rely on common knowledge and roles. To use Velleman’s language, the social pressure of intelligibility threatens to replace improvisational acting with a script. If an individual plays the role too easily or impersonally, then she is only trying to be what others expect of her. Sartre provides a famous example of this kind of bad faith with his waiter in the café. The waiter plays his role by acting in the manner society expects a waiter to act. The man is much

---

364 For example, in 1885, despite having written books for many years, only about five hundred copies had been sold. See Safranski (2002): 283-284.
more than just a waiter, but he plays his role as if the role fully defines him. By occupying this social role, he obscures the fact that he chooses his role each day. If we are all supposed to be like actors playing roles, it is easy to slip into bad faith like the waiter, confusing the role with identity.

Nietzsche makes a similar point about conformity and lack of individual responsibility in traditional morality. Nietzsche objects precisely to the universalizing tendency of morality Velleman favors. Where Velleman thought the need to get along pushed us towards something broadly moral, for Nietzsche the pressure is to conform to others’ values regardless of their applicability or desirability. A defining feature of moral theories, as he understands them, is the presence of universal moral judgments that obligate everyone in the same way and employ blame accordingly. Nietzsche insists that “what is essential about every morality is that it is a long compulsion” (BGE 188). On Nietzsche’s view, valuing is an activity of developing personal commitments, so claims of what one ought to do or what reasons one ought to act on do not apply to everyone in the same way (BGE 228). Nietzsche’s insistence on unintelligibility is thus a red herring that distracts from a substantive metaethical disagreement. Nietzsche’s point is not that values should be incomprehensible; it is that morality should not treat everyone the same. The arguments Nietzsche makes against intelligibility are similar those Nietzsche makes elsewhere against traditional values. In his

---

366 In this respect he agrees with the description of morality that we find in Williams. As Williams puts it, “Moral obligation is inescapable…once I am under the obligation, there is no escaping it, and the fact that a given agent would prefer not to be in this system or bound by its rules will not excuse him; nor will blaming him be based on a misunderstanding. Blame is the characteristic reaction of the morality system” (1985: 177).
view, they “level” and stultify humanity, undermining what he considers a healthy human life (GM I: 12).  

I propose that Nietzsche’s arguments against intelligibility combine two separate ideas. First, his descriptions of unintelligibility serve to remind the reader of the difficulty of both self-knowledge and knowledge of others. Second, he opposes the content of values and their tendency to herd individuals. He does not give a complete defense of unintelligibility, and unintelligibility is inconsistent with many of Nietzsche’s larger projects. First and foremost, Nietzsche’s writings are meant to persuade at least some readers to agree with him. There has been much debate regarding whether Nietzsche’s work is directed at all humans or some specific sub-group. But there is no doubt Nietzsche means to convince some people to agree with him, which requires that they understand him.

Intelligibility is also critical for Nietzsche’s response to nihilism. Nihilism, we have seen, includes viewing life as undesirable or uninteresting. The nihilist has become nauseated or bored with life and is unable to care about anything at all – nothing matters to her. Consequently, to avoid nihilism, Nietzsche must do more than redeem the possibility of a meaningful human life. He must show how each person can make meaning in her own life. That is, avoiding nihilism entails the creation of new values that the individual accepts as meaningful. These new values must be intelligible by having some connection to that person’s interests and experiences because these values must make sense to her. Values that have no connection to that person are not likely to be seen as plausible responses to the problem of

---

367 Even getting along with others, which Velleman takes to be a central concern, Nietzsche worries tends to cause an appeal to the lowest common denominator. The end result is mediocrity rather than individual greatness (BGE 197, 201).
nihilism. At a basic level, that something makes sense is a necessary condition of something mattering. Accepting unintelligibility embraces a fragmentation of value that is characteristic of nihilism; it would make human life completely arbitrary, with no one direction proving better than any other.

It turns out that in Nietzsche’s work we find attacks on both simplistic intelligibility and radical unintelligibility. Intelligibility as an independent standard is uninteresting and stultifying, but unintelligibility can be just as simplistic. Consider Charlie Sheen as an example of the latter. In 2011, Sheen went through an extended period of bizarre behavior, and he made a number of outlandish statements. Aside from keeping him in the headlines, these actions had little coherence. Sheen’s actions show it is relatively easy to be unique by simply acting strangely or making peculiar statements. But not just any unique behavior is sufficient, and it is unlikely that Sheen’s actions provide the meaning Nietzsche considers an adequate means to overcome nihilism.\(^{368}\)

Instead of unintelligibility, we should take from Nietzsche’s work an ideal of originality, which can supplement intelligibility. By originality, Nietzsche means the ability to determine a course of life without the undue influence of others through recognizing and accepting individual values. The original person need not differ significantly from others. Rather the original person sees her commitments and concerns as arising from herself rather than others. Originality reinforces the idea that what matters not simply making sense but performing meaningful actions. Against Velleman’s position, it does not appear all actions

\(^{368}\) One might argue that Charlie Sheen’s actions do make sense to him, in that he has responded to his critics and kept himself in the news. However, I am not convinced there is any plan behind much of what he has said and done.
must be intelligible. Nevertheless, there is reason to think that values ought to meet some minimal constraint of intelligibility in order to be meaningful. We should place a premium on standing out from the crowd as a sign that a person has not fallen prey to the tendencies of the herd. Originality, as a real achievement, must be recognizable and intelligible originality. There is no reason to think originality demands unintelligibility. If anything, the opposite seems true. If we are unable to comprehend another’s actions, it is not clear that she is doing anything meaningful at all.369

By looking to Nietzsche’s work, we find that making sense is not the main issue for intelligibility. Whether or not something makes sense is not a significant determination for whether that action or way of life is valuable or meaningful. There are plenty of uninteresting, superficial, or bizarre ways to be intelligible which are just as meaningless as the actions of an incoherent individual. When Nietzsche asks three times at the end of Ecce Homo “Have I been understood?” he is being earnest, not ironic.370 In asking this question, he wants to know whether he has offered a picture of originality that is applicable to others. To return to Velleman, we can now see he was correct in differentiating both individual and social aspects of intelligibility. But social pressure to conform can be problematic, and we need additional constraints on values. In the next section, I will further consider what this originality requires

369 Nietzsche also offers examples that show how originality can refashion current ideals into something successful without needing creation ex nihilo. Earlier, I raised the worry that social roles may provide an impetus to conformity. But the individual may find in them the opportunity to reinvigorate the role in some new way. Nietzsche provides numerous examples, suggesting new ways a person can fill roles like artist (GS P: 4, 87), politician (BGE 208), and saint (EH “Books”: 1, “Zarathustra”: 2). What all of this shows is that making sense is not Nietzsche’s greatest concern, even though it must play some role in his view.
370 EH “Destiny”: 7-9. Additionally, Nietzsche speaks highly of close friendships in which the friends understand each others’ aims and values. Such privileged relationships would seem to require the kind of intelligibility Velleman defends.
by exploring the importance of tension, which proves dynamic and a necessary component of value creation.

5.3 DYNAMIC TENSION

5.3.1 Internal Tension

Intelligibility is an insufficient standard of action or value. The position seems to be that anything that makes sense to a person counts as intelligibility, and we can easily make sense out of nearly any action by simply positing a narrative with a plot twist. Something that appears to be a radical transformation could be the start of a new intelligible story arc. Any set of actions, from boring to psychotic, would be intelligible, making the term vacuous. Looking to Nietzsche’s work, we find a suggestion for an inner complexity that goes beyond mere intelligibility and provides ground for originality in valuing. At least one source of complexity is what Nietzsche describes as dynamic tension. To see where dynamic tension plays a significant role in valuing, I will look to the process of value creation.

On Velleman’s account, getting along with others requires the continual creation of value. Practical reason is an experimental process through which an individual comes to see what reasons and interests she has. Consequently, values are created through lived experience because the individual cannot know *a priori* what actions she can authentically enact. Though she might surmise what actions would be intelligible in particular situations, a way of life cannot be determined so easily. Even if a person is relatively satisfied with things as they are, she cannot remain stable without acting. In the course of life, she must continually develop a way of life that begins with the current conditions. Yet, with Nietzsche we find a more
complicated account of value creation. Nietzsche describes it as the task of philosophers, but as I have argued a more robust form of value creation is not limited to only a few individuals.

Velleman finds inspiration for his everyday value creation in the work of John Stuart Mill. Mill’s “experiments in living” hold that an individual must create herself and her interests by trying out different possibilities. Exploring new options can allow a new form of life to develop, and then it can be evaluated as to whether it makes sense for that individual. In Nietzsche we find a more compelling picture of the everyday value creation Velleman proposes. The more common forms of value creation present in Nietzsche’s work are significant, though often generally overlooked. Nevertheless, by describing value creation as a philosophical task, he indicates it is something that can be done more effectively if we pay attention to it. Nietzsche finds too often that people want to abdicate responsibility and deny their role in the creative process. The result is that “we are neither as proud nor as happy as we could be” (GS 301). This considered, more philosophical value creation is where we find the presence of standards beyond intelligibility. The task of value creation involves a deeper sense of valuing in concert with the complexities of the human spirit. Of these many complexities, I want to pick up in particular on the idea of tension Robert Pippin has emphasized in his work on Nietzsche.

Pippin has long emphasized Nietzsche’s interest in eros and erotic attachment. On his interpretation, attachments are not typically the products of deliberation or normative evaluation, but rather these attachments represent what grips the individual. Valuing, Pippin recognizes, is an odd process of developing commitments and then overcoming these same

---

372 Pippin (2010).
commitments by altering them and developing new concerns. Commitments and values are both achievements, but they are at the same time only temporary, waiting to be redefined in some new way. For Pippin, these conflicts regarding commitment and creation are part of the tension of the spirit. The kind of tension Pippin has in mind is an internal tension providing the source of attachment; it is a spiritual pregnancy that gives birth to real creation (EH “Clever”: 3). Tension is related to desire and the experience of necessity that comes from within. Nietzsche presents the importance of dynamic tension with his well-known metaphor of the bow and arrow. When the bow is taut, it is at its greatest potential to create: “With such a tension in our bow we can now shoot at the furthest goals” (BGE Preface). 373

While the creative tension Nietzsche describes seems internal to a single individual, we must keep in mind that it is tension of the spirit. It transcends the individual, making relationships with others an important part of the creative process. Accordingly, while Pippin directs us to one aspect of creative tension, there are at least three distinct kinds of dynamic tension, or different senses of attachment and eros, at work in Nietzsche’s value creation project. None of these kinds of tension are necessary for value creation because values are created continually through the course of life in generally the manner Velleman describes. These dynamic tensions instead reveal more complicated and productive kinds of value creation.

Following Pippin’s suggestion, one dynamic tension in Nietzsche’s work is internal to the individual. Values are created as new commitments arising out of these particular concerns. The creation is not a particular value its practical application and related concerns.

373 See also GM I: 12.
that create an *Optik* for understanding significance. Tension plays an important role in value creation as new forms of valuing are unlikely to fit in neatly with previous commitments. Nietzsche’s picture is not that in creating a value the individual simply fills in logical gaps around present values. New commitments must be grappled with and incorporated. Each value and its corresponding commitments have effects that ripple throughout the whole of one’s values. Value creation results in particular values and ethical concepts, both of which provide ways of organizing the world by means of what is important. The individual’s perspective then brings together individual values into a more unified collection of interests.

Many find in Nietzsche ideal authenticity that promotes self-mastery, with the focus on core passions or values. The internal tension Nietzsche relies on shows this cannot be the correct interpretation. Varying commitments typically do not fully complement each other, since different ways of presenting what is important will clash when it comes to specific evaluations. For example, I may be deeply concerned about the environment and avoiding pollution. But I need to drive my car to get to work every day. It may turn out in some cases that commitments are completely inconsistent with each other, but these commitments typically can be integrated – a perspective with radical disagreements between values would fail to produce intelligible actions. Ideally, tension should remain, but no longer in a destructive manner with complete internal strife.\(^{374}\) Extreme incoherence could result in an irresolvable conflict, or actions that sway dramatically from one goal to another, leaving little

\(^{374}\) Marino (2011) argues against the view that inconsistent values would prevent action. She claims that inconsistent values affect action in the same way as other conflicts we run into when making decisions. If every conflict resulted in paralysis, nothing would get done. She goes on to argue that even if actions do seem to undo the effects of previous actions, this may be more like compromise than inconsistency. I believe the position I am attributing to Nietzsche is in line with Marino’s arguments. The destructive disunity I am talking about here concerns those who do not endorse their values or who are in complete discord. Nietzsche thus accepts a productive tension while finding complete disunity and incoherence a dishonest way to live.
accomplished. Luckily these cases of extreme discord are rare, and true paralysis is unlikely. As I continue to work through the manner in which I care for these concerns of work and the environment, I may even develop new ways of approaching these matters that are more effective in the end. In this way, tension is simply part of the process of self-overcoming.

The necessity of internal tension becomes clearer if we consider the individual whose values are completely consistent and admit of no tension. The concern with this person is that the commitments do not go deep, and the individual has little attachment to them. Very little is truly significant for this person. Such a perspective lacks tension because nothing of significance is being incorporated. Nietzsche’s project of value creation is supposed to result in new values and ethical concepts interacting in ways that reveal new concerns and relationships. Through integration the resulting viewpoint is coherent insofar as the individual comes to have a perspective, not many perspectives. That is, the various lenses through which we interpret work together to form a general outlook on the world (BGE 163, WP 260).\textsuperscript{375} However, the result is not a unified perspective in which differences between individual values are smoothed over. Despite values being integrated into a perspective, we still need the nuances of different values in order to fully interpret our experiences.\textsuperscript{376} An individual’s interests and concerns can come to take precedence at different time, which explains his self-attributed ability for “switching perspectives” (EH “Wise”: 1).

\textsuperscript{375} See also sections and 1.4.2 and 2.1.2.
\textsuperscript{376} Schacht offers support for this position in a slightly different way, contending, “Our constitutions are thus bound up with the world in which we find ourselves in ways that set up specific sorts of relationships, in and through, which things that may make a difference to us can register, while those that do not are screened out. ‘Perspectives’ thus are engendered, on this fundamental functional level, corresponding to and varying with different human constitutions and situations.” Schacht (1995): 246.
To some extent, the process of creating tension is one common to human life. Most individuals display tension to varying degrees. But for most this tension is unrecognized or thought detrimental. Moreover, most individuals attempt to resolve the tension in simple ways, rather than embracing the benefits tension and multiple perspectives. Nietzsche’s position on unification has much in common with Patricia Marino’s recent argument that ambivalence and inconsistency in valuing are desirable. Against those who claim inconsistency undermines the possibility of action, or at least autonomous action, Marino contends that deep inconsistencies in valuing are in practice no different from contingent inconsistencies where the world frustrates a person’s attempt to achieve two values. Moreover, Marino sees no problem in endorsing conflicting values – this might actually be healthier, since often we are conflicted in the choices we have to make, and we should not expect that all considerations line up on the same side of complex matters. To this, Nietzsche adds that in viewing things in light of diverse concerns and commitments, different loci of significance are revealed. Ideally, a perspective admits of some broad coherence, but the differences between particular values and the incorporation of new concerns are important for the development of new forms of valuing.

While I have thus far described the tension of perspective as internal to the individual, it may be easier to see it as internal to society, such as with social movements. If we consider the environmental movement in the United States, in particular as it developed in the 1960’s and 1970’s, we can locate some new ways of valuing. Many values found in this environmental movement were not new ideas; instead these values found a new prominence.
or application. We find this aspect of value creation in the approach of Rachel Carson’s influential work *Silent Spring*, in which we do not discover new information previously unavailable or unrecognized. Rather Carson provides a number of new applications of data available from a number of fields. Carson gathers and presents a position reflecting a different approach regarding how humans should interact with their environment. This perspective brings together opposing views without eliminating distinctions, or in Nietzsche’s terms, it overcomes the tension without obliterating it. The movement provides a new framework for understanding our relationship to our environment, recognizing that humans are of nature while keeping in mind the distinct features of human life.

5.3.2 External Tension

External tensions typically take the form of obstacles and resistance. Struggle and strife often provides the motivation to create. When there is no resistance and objects of concern, then the status quo will suffice. In the BGE preface, Nietzsche notes that societal movements like democracy have sought to undo productive tension by promoting equality, mediocrity, and traditional values. But Nietzsche often directs his worry towards the lack of tension in the individual, perhaps as a result of accepting the values of a flawed movement or culture. The greatest achievements are often born of struggle.\(^{378}\) By undermining difficulty, struggle, and resistance, we lose the obstacles that provide opportunities for the development of new values.

---

\(^{378}\) Tl IX: 44: “If the tension has reached too high a level, the most accidental stimulus will be enough to bring a ‘genius’, a ‘deed’, a great destiny into the world.”
We face an obvious problem in trying to pin down the importance of challenge and resistance. Many obstacles can provide motivation, and overcoming them proves exhilarating. But other obstacles are debilitating, resulting in frustration rather than creative responses.

Bernard Reginster connects the creativity spurred by resistance to the will to power, which he characterizes as the will to overcome resistance. I argued in Chapter 4 that Reginster is wrong to make resistance constitutive of value. However, he provides a useful distinction for understanding the relationship between resistance and value. Intrinsinc resistance is essential to the activity. Any individual engaged in this pursuit would encounter the same difficulty. Extrinsic resistance is not essential to the activity. Reginster further divides extrinsic resistance into those resistances that are pertinent and those that are not. Extrinsic and pertinent resistance is not something everyone engaged in the pursuit would encounter, but it is still relevant to the particular end. For instance, Beethoven’s deafness is not a difficulty faced by all composers, but it does create a special complication for musical composition. Extrinsic and impertinent resistance does relate directly to the particular end. For example, monetary hardship may create difficulties for a wide range of pursuits.

Reginster uses these kinds of resistance to distinguish great individuals and great achievements. My interest, however, is in the creative elements of these varying obstacles. Regrettably, there is no single characteristic that determines which obstacles will invigorate and which will destroy; the result comes from the combination of the possibility of achieving the goal and the individual’s resources and resolve. The intrinsic and extrinsic resistances highlight two different ways values are created through struggle. Intrinsic resistance shows

that the effective creation of values depends in part on the individual’s approach. She can make something of a situation depending on how she takes it on, and the results include new values and new relationships. Extrinsic resistance shows how something ordinary comes to have unique value to an individual. The particular challenges a person faces give different achievements greater or less importance. What constitutes a significant obstacle for one person may prove little trouble to another. Consequently, what a person considers meaningful or worth pursuing depends in part upon the struggle to achieve it. And these particular obstacles provide grounds for the creativity that lies at root of new values and perspectives. In the end, external resistance provides both a spur to creativity and an explanation of how humans create not only new commitments but also meaning.

I have argued that values emerge from both an internal tension of the soul and an external tension that manifests itself in obstacles and resistance. Values are also created from a third kind of dynamic tension that overlaps with both the internal and external, and this tension is found in social relationships. Velleman showed we need to get along with others, and through our improvisation we develop new ways of acting and responding. But in addition to this basic type of interaction we have with everyone we encounter, certain relationships reveal a kind of interplay that offers a unique source of value. I described this process of collaborative behavior in Chapters 3 and 4. Where these creative relationships differ from Velleman’s improvisational picture is that not just any two individuals can develop such a relationship. The interplay here is between what Nietzsche calls friends. By friend, Nietzsche has in mind a peer who is as much a challenger as accomplice. He writes, “A good friendship originates when one party has a great respect for the other, more indeed
than for himself, when one party likewise loves the other, though not so much as he does himself” (HAH II: 241). The friend offers a compelling way of living or set of values that draws in the other and challenges her own values.

The creative tension of relationships offers external resistance because the other provides a kind of obstacle. The friend challenges the other’s viewpoint and pushes her when the tendency is to relax. For the reason Zarathustra explains that “in one’s friend one should have one’s best enemy. You should be closest to him in heart when you resist him” (Z I: “On the Friend”). When the other challenges a viewpoint, it provides the opportunity for a creative response to overcome the resistance. The tension of friendships contains a sort of internal tension as well, and the relationship between them is not merely oppositional. The friend is also a seducer whose values are attractive and compelling. Often, rather than resisting and overcoming other values, other values are adopted and incorporate. The value may be modified in the process, but doing so connects the individuals as the value is shared and adopted, providing a new grounding for the relationship.

We best see how dynamic tension leads to value creation through a process of interplay. Values emerge from the complex interactions we have with others. This should remind us that despite the descriptions of values resulting from the integration of new perspectives and the creative responses to obstacles, value creation is rarely an overtly cognitive task. Tension provides the conditions in which new and complex values may emerge, but there is rarely a need to pay direct attention to the value creation in the moment. In fact, that would seem counterproductive, as to reflect on values or intend to create them takes the individual out of the situation, abstracting from the conditions of value. Thus, when
Nietzsche tells us that the task of value creation and legislation falls to philosophers, he does not expect individuals will simply sit down and come up with new ideas. But Nietzsche’s project of value creation differs from more common versions in two ways. First, the development of certain kinds of tension responds to the worry that intelligibility is too simplistic a standard. Values emerging from preferred forms of tension contain an inner complexity that gestures towards the kinds of valuing Nietzsche finds important. Second, in describing the complex process of creation and integration, Nietzsche indicates that we should pay attention to value creation. By recognizing we play an active in it way can make both the process and the conditions more conducive to effective value creation.

The tension involved in value creation reflects the tension inherent in living creatures. Living things impose on and incorporate their environment to meet their own needs, such as to grow and to reproduce. Without these conflicts, there would be nothing driving it forward, no motivation to respond differently, and really no impetus to act at all. Without tension, nothing would be alive, or at least not alive in any interesting sense. When it comes to valuing, intelligibility without dynamic tension is similarly stultified or uninteresting. Nietzsche points out the distinction in GM I: 12, arguing that those without tension are stunted and evidence of decline. The lack of tension is best exemplified in what Nietzsche calls the last human beings. The last human beings have no goals, no interests, and no real happiness. Their apathy and boredom prevents them from creating and from pursuing interests (Z P: 5). Tension is thus related to the inwardness that humanity has developed over time. As Nietzsche tells the story, only with such tension and complexity did humans finally become an “interesting animal” (GM I: 6). Of course, if the tension becomes too great, the human
animal essentially destroys itself. The kind of tension Nietzsche is after is a double-edged sword. It is necessary to supplement mere intelligibility, but too much undermines the process as a whole. As we have seen, complete incoherence within a perspective and debilitating external obstacles can cause destructive tension. Nevertheless, some tension is needed to make life exciting and valuable. A life lacking commitment and tension of the spirit hardly resembles life at all. Such an organism, as Nietzsche looks at it, is organically alive but spiritually dead.\footnote{I owe this particularly apt turn of phrase to David Sussman.}

5.4 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ON VALUE CREATION

Velleman develops many important aspects of value creation. Velleman rightly sees value creation as an experimental, improvisational process that occurs both by oneself and in relationships with others. This kind of experimental process is common in Nietzsche’s work, but where Nietzsche distinguishes a task of value creation from more common occurrences, Velleman argues that it is something we do all along. Nietzsche’s claim that humans must be the source of value lines up with this same picture. Yet Nietzsche’s work gives a direction to value creation that helps overcome the limits of intelligibility. Values are not simply created in light of what makes sense for that individual. The tensions that underlie valuing and value creation allow for the originality and complexity Nietzsche demands. The unique obstacles and psychological features of the individual lead to values that arise out of the particular context, making that individual’s life meaningful in a distinct manner. And healthy valuing depends on external and internal resistance, where values become connected to commitments and meaningful activities.
We should note that while Nietzsche describes these kinds of value creation as being more philosophical or “contemplative,” he does not limit them to a certain group of individuals. Value creation and the development of value in response to external obstacles are everyday activities, just like improvisation. We cannot help but create values in these common acts. The question that emerges from Nietzsche’s work is not just whether and how values are created. Rather it is how value creation can be something common and continual while remaining complicated and philosophically interesting. And we can turn the question around for Velleman’s account – how can value creation be occurring all the time without the very idea of creating value becoming vacuous and uninteresting?

Nietzsche’s answer to these questions is that there is a difference between creating values and creating values well, which is a distinction we do not find present in Velleman. In addition to pointing out the inherent tensions that characterize healthy valuing, Nietzsche indicates that we can improve the process simply by paying attention to what we care about. I have argued in this project is that Nietzsche wants us to take a more active role in our own valuing. Valuing well does not mean that we must accept certain, particular values. Instead, our values reflect our concerns and commitments, and when these prove unsatisfying it is possible to work towards developing new commitments and a new self-conception. Of course, we should not confuse improvisation with the entirety of value creation. But as we continually develop new interests and commitments, we can better integrate values and reformulate those we already have.

If we can recognize that we are continually creating values, this opens the possibility of working at it, creating values in more complicated ways. But, lamentably, it is “precisely
this knowledge we lack, and when we catch it for a moment we have forgotten it the next: we
misjudge our best power and underestimate ourselves just a bit, we contemplative ones” (GS
301). We should understand the “contemplative ones” as those willing to confront the fact that
we must examine our commitments and accept responsibility value creation.\(^{381}\) Everyone can
and does create values in any number of ways. The philosophical individual is simply one
who recognizes the situation, which explains why he “feels that he determines values” (BGE
260). Actually doing so will require the kind of effort that Nietzsche believes most want to
avoid, which is why value creation is typically ordinary, unavoidable yet uninteresting.\(^{382}\)
This is not to say that anyone can, at any moment, adopt a new set of values. But if a person
comes to see her values as unattractive, it can have the same effect as being drawn in by the
values of another. Such a reaction motivates the need to develop new concerns and calls into
question the status of current values.

As is hopefully evident by now, that we should pay attention to value creation and
give it direction does not mean creating is simply a cognitive endeavor. Values emerge from
integration, obstacles, and interplay with others; values are not created on demand, and they

\(^{381}\) Clark and Dudrick (2007) argue that “we contemplative ones” must refer to higher human beings, not
humanity in general. They note that the passage begins with a discussion of the higher human beings, and it is
first the higher human that calls his own life contemplative and sees herself as a poet. Clark and Dudrick are
certainly right that in the passage the higher humans are primarily associated with the “contemplative.”
However, I resist their conclusion that only the higher humans are creating values. To see this, we must look
back two passages to GS 299, where Nietzsche argues that we must learn from the poets how to create our own
lives. He insists, “We, however, want to be poets of our lives, starting with the smallest and most commonplace
details.” In this passage, the “we” could again be limited to higher humans, but this passage and many like it
suggest that all humans want to be poets of this sort. It may be that some are not able to do so, or are not ready to
accept Nietzsche’s call to action, which may distinguish them from higher humans. But I am hard pressed to
think that Nietzsche categorically rules out the kinds of creation I have described from a significant portion of
the population.

\(^{382}\) All of this is not to say that Velleman limits himself to a simple or uninteresting view of value creation. As
Velleman describes it, the outcome of experimentation should be a more coherent self-understanding. My point
is that keeping intelligibility as the only criterion for action does not encourage anything more, and it is unclear
what would motivate anyone to work at the more difficult aspects of value creation.
typically emerge from interactions rather than intentional activity. Often values are created by accident or by processes working at a deeper level of consciousness. We should remember that something being an aim or project does not indicate it must be the sole, or even primary, focus at any given time. Velleman makes a similar point in explaining how intelligibility can be the constitutive aim of action. The awareness of the project can be tacit, and practical reasoning incorporates the aims of value creation where they are recognized upon reflection, which does require it to be the only consideration in action. The alternative would be implausible, since most actions we perform are in response to a number of considerations.

The point is not that the proposal of a more philosophical value creation is the result of philosophical reasoning. The suggestion is that we can guide the conditions of value creation as well as provide evaluations that lead us to new directions.

I have argued that Nietzsche’s interest is not in developing particular values or objects of concern so much as the development of new cares and commitments, with a distinction between caring and caring well or appropriately. The implication is that value creation is about the creation of forms of knowledge. Values provide reasons and justifications for actions. In other words, values are a kind of ethical knowledge that we appeal to, and they provide a shared context for interacting with others. Again, Velleman has the right picture of how this commonly occurs. But if I am right in following Nietzsche, the problematic values we encounter show the importance of developing new forms of ethical knowledge. And here I think Nietzsche not only anticipates but also articulates a suggestion made by Bernard Williams in a way that Williams himself does not see. For Williams, values and facts come

---

together in what he calls thick ethical concepts. Our applications of concepts like good or courageous are determined in part by the world, but we also experience them as prescriptive, making demands upon us. However, to understand these demands we must have knowledge of the context in which the concept can be used. Terms like good or courageous do not pick out truths in the world. Rather each develops in relation to other concepts and values within some tradition. Williams calls the ability to deliberate with the use of such thick concepts ethical confidence.

Williams, in *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, suggests that modernity has lost the shared meaning that gives rise to thick concepts, instead leaving us with shallower, or thin, concepts that are rather broad and uninspiring. But how exactly we are to develop new, thick ethical concepts is unclear. In looking to Nietzsche’s creative project, we find one approach to supplement Williams’ view. The kinds of values created through everyday improvisation and experimentation create a shared context in which we must act. But to create thick concepts we need invigorating values with the kinds of tension and attention Nietzsche proposes. We need to provide the conditions in which new, meaningful values can arise. Thus, where Velleman seeks a position between Williams and Kant, we should place ourselves on Williams’ side of the debate. Ethical qualities and concepts need not be woven into any fabric.\(^\text{384}\) Intelligibility, even if it proves a necessary condition of valuing, is an essentially meaningless standard if we do not also examine the inescapable role valuing plays in human life – valuing is part of what it is to be a human being. Just like life requires tension, human life requires valuing in response to those tensions.

\(^{384}\) According to Williams, ethical qualities are affective characteristics such as good, admirable, and contemptible. I am not necessarily arguing here in favor of precisely Williams’ conception of ethical qualities, but I think these judgments are available using the criterion I have proposed. See (1998): 174-177.
action, we have some control over the quality of these values, and their complexity reveals the
importance of working hard at the creative process.

From this connection of value to reasons and knowledge, we also come to understand
the importance Nietzsche places on remaking culture, and why in addition to the creators of
value Nietzsche looks for physicians of culture. Both ideals share an interest in health and in
developing “a new happiness” (GS P: 3). Whereas our culture is all-encompassing, providing
the grounds for our interactions, the idea that culture can be unhealthy indicates the need to
remake it. We can only remake culture from the inside, examining its components and
pushing in new directions. So it is not surprising that we make may look at values in the same
way. Working towards healthy valuing is no easy task, and no single individual can perform it
for us. Yet in principle anyone who pays significant attention can work to remake values in a
new direction, just as with culture. For Nietzsche the individual’s values are always tied up
with others, putting a premium on ideal forms of collaboration that invigorate rather than
debilitate.

In the end, Nietzsche shows us that there are common forms of value creation, like
improvisation, and then there are better ways to go about it, working to create invigorating
new values, a task that requires much more than mere intelligibility. The importance of
tension, both internal and external, reminds us that values are not universal demands. These
pieces of ethical knowledge can be brought into a larger tradition, but never fully unified into
something that must be accepted in one particular way. Creating values provides the
individual with a kind of ethical confidence, where a rich ethical vocabulary allows for a
variety of meaningful actions. Value creation is a shared phenomenon where values are
created for others, not just the creator herself. However, at its core value creation arises from
the recognition that the kinds of commitments most currently hold are shallow, uninteresting,
and uninspiring. In making value creation a central task, Nietzsche shows that through hard
work, new kinds of value creation can come into play. We have no choice but to value. But
values created in these ways invigorate the individual and provide new possibilities, new
objects of concern, and new forms of commitment. In coming to create new values and to
commit ourselves to them, we can create new concepts to guide action in ways that both
Williams and Nietzsche think are lacking today.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

List of Abbreviations:

I cite Nietzsche’s texts using an abbreviation and section number. Full publication detail is found in the works cited.

AC  The Antichrist
BGE  Beyond Good and Evil
BT   The Birth of Tragedy
CW   The Case of Wagner
D    Daybreak
EH   Ecce Homo
GM   On the Genealogy of Morality
GS   The Gay Science
HAH  Human, All Too Human
PPP  The Pre-Platonic Philosophers
PTA  Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks
TI   Twilight of the Idols
UM   Untimely Meditations
WP   The Will to Power
Z    Thus Spoke Zarathustra

Works Cited:


