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**Towards a Comparative Process Thought: From Nietzsche to  
Ancient Chinese Philosophy**

Thesis presented by

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Doctor of Philosophy

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## **Abstract**

The objective of this research project is to develop a preliminary examination of an heuristic process ontology derived from an east-west comparative methodology. It attempts to trace the similarities and discontinuities of an ontological perspective in Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy and several different strands of thought in Warring States era Chinese philosophical thought, focusing on Daoism in particular. The project traces the conclusions of these comparisons from a basic theoretical ontology to a socio-practical consideration. It concludes that in theorizing process both perspectives do not rely on traditional dichotomies that are seen in Western philosophical thought, they see the world as non-deterministic and utilize correlative thinking. The research traces further considerations in the areas of epistemology and evaluation based on these points and concludes that there is no separation between epistemology-evaluation and the underlying ontology, they are direct continuations of ontology. As a last question of theory, this research examines the consequences of comparative process ontology for language, claiming that it allows us to undermine a subjective/objective dichotomy by naturalizing language. Lastly, the theoretical groundwork of this project is applied to a number of extant philosophical issues. It attempts to resolve the dichotomy of reality and appearance as a metaphysical issue, and offers an account of how socio-political and economic issues can be theorized according to such an ontology.

## Contents

Introduction.....	5
Chapter 1 – Change as Ontology/Cosmology: Heraclitus, Nietzsche and Chinese Cosmology .....	25
1.1 Heraclitus and Nietzsche.....	27
1.2 – Theorising Process in Nietzsche’s Philosophy .....	38
1.3 – Theorising Process in Early Chinese Cultural Thought .....	46
Chapter 2 – Epistemology-Evaluation in Comparative Process Thought.....	61
2.1 Epistemological Perspectivism – Critique of Perspectivism as Epistemology .....	66
2.2 Epistemological Perspectivism - Perspectivism and Truth.....	71
2.3 Psycho-biological Perspectivism: A Critique .....	78
2.4 Ontological Perspectivism (or Perspectival Ontology).....	80
2.5 Theories of Will to Power.....	85
2.6 Will to Power: Epistemological-Valuational Perspectivism.....	88
2.7 – Epistemologic-Evaluation and Ontology in Early Chinese Philosophy.....	98
Chapter 3: Re-Thinking Language through Comparative Process Thought.....	107
3.1 - The Problem of Language: Semiotics and Representation.....	108
3.2 – Language in <i>On Truth and Lies</i> .....	114
3.3 – Language in <i>On the Genealogy of Morals</i> .....	124
3.4 - Language Through Perspectivism and Will to Power .....	128
3.5 - Conceptions of Language in Warring States Chinese Thought.....	136
Chapter 4 – Case Study 1 (Metaphysics), Case Study 2 (Socio-Economic overview).....	142
4.1 - Case Study 1 (Metaphysics) - Appearance and reality: The <i>Zhuangzi</i> .....	144
4.3 – Case Study 1 (Metaphysics) - Nietzsche on Appearance and Reality .....	145
4.4 Case Study 1 (Metaphysics) - Simulated Reality.....	147
4.5 Case Study 2 (Socio-Economic Overview) - Economics, Politics and Technology in Nietzsche’s Philosophy.....	158
4.6 Case Study 2 (Socio-Economic Overview) - Politico-Economic Thought and Process in Chinese Legalism.....	179
Chapter 5: Socio-Political Praxis in Comparative Process Ontology .....	184
5.1 Socio-Political Praxis in Comparative Process Ontology - East/West Models of Efficacy .....	185
5.2 Socio-Political Praxis in Comparative Process Ontology – Legalism: A Subversion of Chinese Efficacy? .....	189
5.3 Socio-Political Praxis in Comparative Process Ontology – Nietzsche and Efficacy: Fate, Fatalism and Comparison.....	194
5.4 Socio-Political Praxis in Comparative Process Ontology – Emerging Problems: The Feminine as inadequacy in Comparative Process Ontology .....	210

Conclusion .....	218
Bibliography .....	223
Works Cited .....	231

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work, and has not been submitted for another degree, at University College Cork, or elsewhere.

Signed: R u u d    B u r k e

Ruud Burke

## Introduction

This thesis is an attempt to set the ground for work in what I call ‘comparative process ontology’, and I will begin by explaining what each of these terms mean. Starting with the last term, ‘ontology’, what is meant is the very broad sense of the term as the study of what there is, or the general features of what there is. This is a contentious term to use in a project dealing with ancient Chinese philosophy (Daoism specifically), and as such I must qualify it further. In all cases, unless stated otherwise, I mean the term ‘ontology’ to be convey elements of the terms ‘world-view’ and ‘cosmology’. The reason that I have refrained from substituting in ‘world-view’ alone for ontology is that it fails to capture the specific focus of ontology on the fundamental features of the world, and it is too general. Likewise, ‘cosmology’ would have been much more applicable in the case of ancient Chinese philosophy (and I do refer to cosmology as such in some relevant sections). Again, however, cosmology fails to perfectly mesh with the concerns of ontology. Cosmology is typically understood as the study of the physical universe and has in the past 100 years been more and more considered co-terminus with physics and astronomy. Hence, for lack of a more suitable term, I will use ‘ontology’ for the duration of this thesis with the caveat that it does not refer to a strict discipline, it rather refers to those general, fundamental features that underlie a world-view, which may sometimes, and other times may not, be co-terminus with physics and astronomy<sup>1</sup>. This thesis thus deals with explicating the general, fundamental features of a world-view (namely, that contained within Nietzsche’s philosophy and supplemented with elements of process thought in Daoism).

What are these features, and in what way will they be explicated? This is a thesis that is couched in the methodology of process philosophy. Process philosophy is based on the premise that the nature of the world is change, and that such a dynamic nature of being should be the primary focus of any comprehensive philosophical account of reality. Process philosophy opposes substance metaphysics, which is the dominant research paradigm in the history of western philosophy since

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<sup>1</sup> Even so, it might be claimed that usage of the term ‘ontology’, with its own history and cultural basis, is a fundamentally Western term that is erroneously applied in this instance. I would hold that the term as I use it is general enough to be used, and I further address the Western basis of this work in a following section.

Aristotle. The substance-metaphysical view of the world is that the basic, primary units reality should be thought of as simple and unchangeable “substances”. In contrast, process philosophers analyse processes and the way they occur as the basic units of reality. Why conduct this thesis through process philosophy? The primary aim of this work is to highlight process thought in Nietzsche’s philosophy and to address or elucidate some of its shortcomings with elements of Chinese Daoist thought. This is done in such a way as to pose a host of new approaches (or add insight to existing ones) to traditional philosophical problems of both theory and practice (specifically, metaphysics and socio-political theory). The main concepts I draw from in my comparison are, among others, the form of correlative thinking exemplified in the *Yijing* as a means of elaborating how process thought might be understood in tandem with Nietzsche’s ontology. I also draw on the notion of all-under-heaven, a formative idea in Chinese thought, as a means of showing how epistemology is linked in process thought to direct socio-political pragmatism. As a means of evaluating the appearance-reality distinction, I contrast the ‘butterfly dream’ story of the *Zhuangzi* with Nietzsche’s observations on the distinction in *TI*. I also look at socio-political efficacy, *shi*, construed mainly in Legalism (focusing on its Daoist roots) compared with efficacious actors in Nietzsche’s philosophy. In the area of theory, I conclude that we can describe Nietzsche’s process thought as a means of thinking in which the traditional dichotomies of objective/subjective, external/internal are undermined, with a tendency towards non-determinism and correlative thinking. In the area of epistemology and evaluation, I conclude on the basis of process philosophical thinking that Nietzsche offers us a power-pragmatic means of understanding what knowledge is. Likewise, I conclude that the conflict between his perspectivism and will to power doctrine may be addressed through considering the notion of pervasiveness. In the area of language I interpret semiotics and meaning as expressions of will to power, offering a conception of meaning that attempts to bridge the gap between nomenclaturism and subjectivism. I also offer practical conclusions in the latter chapters, where I establish a means of addressing the distinction between reality and appearance as a difference of degrees of power through Nietzsche’s power pragmatism, underlined and explained by a process ontology. Likewise, I trace the influence of process thinking through to Nietzsche’s considerations on socio-politics, which I argue to be pragmatically oriented, and by this I hope to facilitate new ground for re-thinking Nietzsche’s position. In order to

do this I focus the majority of work on establishing Nietzsche as a process philosopher and aiming to draw out the conclusions of understanding his philosophy through process thought. The process-philosophical tradition of thinking has a variety of well-recognized thinkers (including, Whitehead, Pierce, Bergson and Deleuze) at its disposal for the development of a comparative ontology. Why then use Nietzsche's philosophy? I have chosen Nietzsche because he is strikingly under-represented as a process philosopher in relevant literature. Nicholas Rescher's introductory text *Process Metaphysics: an Introduction to Process Philosophy* (1996) in addition to the above surveys such thinkers as Dewey and Heraclitus (Hegel is also recognized in process thought) but no extended consideration is given to Nietzsche. This is to some degree understandable: Nietzsche seldom explicitly addresses at length the issues of process or change and its metaphysics. Nonetheless, that Nietzsche has not been afforded the same study as other key figures in process thought is a striking lacuna. I aim to show that this deserves to be addressed by establishing how some of the most significant doctrines and concepts within Nietzsche's philosophy trace their development to an insight derived from process-style thought. It is thus worthwhile to draw on Nietzsche rather than conventional process thinkers because he offers a new perspective through which to address conventional issues in process philosophy. Although the focus of my writing is thus on Nietzsche's philosophy, I fundamentally arrive at the main conclusions for practice and theory by means of comparing elements of Nietzsche's process thought and selected parts of ancient Chinese process thought in Daoism. These conclusions I hold to be a possible basis for the further development of comparative process ontology. It must be made clear, however, that while these conclusions are arrived at in a comparative frame, the general approach of the thesis is to work within a Western philosophical standpoint, explicating the process ontology primarily through establishing Nietzsche as a philosopher of process. It will not try to establish an equal reading of both sides (which is not to say I give a diminished reading). Where I introduce material from the Chinese tradition of thought, it is selective and certainly not comprehensive. Instead, when I draw on concepts from Chinese thought and Daoism it is for the purposes of clarification, or providing an external perspective from which compare a particular issue that is dealt with. What thus remains is to further explain my usage of the term 'comparative' in delineating a comparative process ontology. This area requires extended consideration of the



general issues of commensurability and conceptualizing comparison, and I have devoted a section to establishing this work's comparative stance.

### **Comparative Philosophy, Nietzsche, and Commensurability**

A project based in both comparative philosophy and Nietzsche's philosophy faces a double issue of commensurability when it comes to drawing on traditions and philosophies alien to those from one's own background. Where commensurability in comparative philosophy is concerned, there are apparent issues of whether it is ultimately possible to draw on an intercultural philosophy without fundamentally re-interpreting it in one's own tradition; whether great differences in languages, and the fundamental differences in thought derived from them, can be translated without those most unique or characteristic elements being lost in the translation. Similarly, where comparative philosophers raise the issue of commensurability on an intercultural level, Nietzsche's thought similarly lends itself to the question of whether perspectives in general could ever truly be commensurable. Such a project as this, then, must address issues of commensurability on both the intercultural level and the constitutional, bodily level. In this brief section, I'll now describe how the project deals with the first of these issues in comparative philosophy, as an issue of comparative methodology proper, whereas my treatment of the latter will be evident in the later chapter on Nietzsche's perspectivism. In order to do so, it will be necessary, first of all, to outline and defend the thesis's operative understanding of comparative philosophy as one of intercultural comparison. Following from this, I evaluate the possibility for comparative philosophy in Nietzsche's work, and I lastly detail and justify the dialogical-comparative methodology that I will use for discussing Nietzsche's philosophy and aspects of Chinese Daoist philosophy.

This thesis will proceed on an understanding of comparative philosophy as intercultural comparison. Such an understanding is certainly not without its criticisms. Perhaps the most fundamental criticism is whether what is being compared on one side (typically the non-Western one) can even be considered philosophy 'proper'. Chris Goto-Jones summarises the dilemma involved in this particular debate neatly: 'if comparative philosophy really is philosophy (and we need not take this for granted), then philosophy itself should already be inclusive of

the kinds of texts with which it concerns itself. So, either comparative philosophy is not about philosophy at all, or it is the richest and fullest expression of the philosophical endeavour, which means that we must revisit what it means to be a professional philosopher' (Goto-Jones 2013, pp. 135-136). Addressing Chinese thought, for example, as non-philosophy engenders a long discussion about adequate principles of exclusion from the discipline, while addressing it as philosophy proper engenders an equally long discussion about the status of professional philosophy as a discipline. Both avenues are simply too extensive to be dealt with sufficiently in this work, although they present core methodological questions. Regarding the question as to whether one side (the Chinese side) of the comparison made in this thesis is philosophical, I cannot address it to a satisfactory length in the present work. Instead, I will humbly admit that I may have, unbeknownst to myself, written a dissertation on Nietzsche's philosophy and aspects of Chinese 'cultural theory' rather than philosophy proper, and nonetheless hope that, in spite of such a mislabelling, it proves a significant contribution to the field.

A more immediate criticism, and one certainly worth some present consideration (since this dissertation claims to be a comparative project), is the criticism that what is unique to 'comparative' philosophy as a specific sub-discipline within philosophy is unclear. One can quite easily claim that much of philosophy involves comparison by default, whether in comparing different philosophers within the same tradition or different traditions within the same culture, and so on. The problem, as Ralph Weber neatly summarises, is that '[t]he missing piece of information in the notion of comparative philosophy [...] is some reference to the claim that there is a boundary between the philosophies of different cultures that is *ex ante* considered qualitatively importantly different from what separates philosophies of writers, schools or traditions within one and the same culture.' (Weber 2013, pp. 596-597). Likewise, establishing a sufficient intercultural boundary that accurately reflects the unique preoccupations of comparative philosophy is equally difficult. For example, it can be claimed with some degree of justification that a comparison of German philosophy with its Anglo-American equivalent might be well considered intercultural. Likewise, the same might be said for any comparisons of Chinese, Korean or Japanese philosophies with each other. However, most comparative philosophers are not understood to be concerned with

exclusively Western comparisons, and so the concern is to delineate the pertinent form of East-West comparison that many do deal with.

This thesis assumes that the relevant boundaries specific to comparative philosophy (as being concerned with intercultural comparison) can be ostensibly maintained if one admits the following points: that these boundaries are not constituted by or reducible to a set of essential properties (to say that an intercultural comparison *just is* [x, y, and z]), but are relative and historically contingent. They are, so to speak, not rigid boundaries, but permeable ones. What may constitute enough of a difference to be ‘intercultural’ to a theorist from one cultural background may not be so for another, and what may constitute an ‘intercultural’ comparison at one point in history may cease to be so at another point.<sup>2</sup> Given these unstable-seeming foundations, how can comparative philosophy be a coherent and stable sub-discipline? The fundamental basis of comparative philosophy functions in both respects on the back of a persistence of a series of contingent, relative family resemblances in features rather than any unchanging, essential characteristics. There may not be wholesale agreement on the entirety of features within that family resemblance, but the functioning of the resemblance does not depend on such an agreement, it simply depends on the persistence, communicability and exchange of enough features in language to be recognizable to a sufficient degree. Equally important is the consideration of the context, the framing and the considered ends of the comparative project that is undertaken, in order to categorise it properly. For example, a non-Western perspective might frame the comparison between something like Anglo-American and Continental philosophy as a comparative, intercultural project where Western commentators would be reluctant to do so. It seems to me that such a project can be admitted as comparative and intercultural with no significant issue insofar as one need not think that comparative philosophy need be done from a unified standpoint, that comparative philosophy can instead be pluralistic in the sense that there may be no one method characterising comparative works, there may even be methods that are at odds with each other. A response on this basis can thereby be formed against criticisms citing the need for a precise and essential understanding of where the boundaries of intercultural comparison lie, as such criticisms presuppose a) a reductive view of the basis of intercultural comparison, b)

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<sup>2</sup> I am here extensively drawing on Wittgenstein’s notion of language games as discussed in *Philosophical Investigations* 74 - 75

a unified view of a single type of comparative philosophy, when other forms may just as well be supposed.

Weber also raises another important point: ‘the different works [of comparative philosophy] all mirror mainstream (and often “Western”) philosophical predilections of their authors, which means that the eventually favored method or the framing of the meta-methodological discussion itself are indebted to one or another philosophical approach beyond comparative philosophy that is itself not open to debate’ (ibid. p. 597). If a theorist persists in doing intercultural comparison he will necessarily be doing so from a theoretical position that is not itself intercultural, he will be drawing on a method from within his own culture. This complaint only seems valid insofar as one insists that the basis of intercultural comparison must itself be ‘intercultural’, but one can just as easily claim that one need not start from an intercultural basis in order to provide intercultural conclusions. One can begin from a theoretical perspective that is from a singular culture, and yet produce intercultural findings. One’s methodology may be, for example, fundamentally Western in origin (deconstructionist, phenomenologist, analytic, and so forth), but the intercultural comparison (by drawing on Daoist or Confucian thought) and the conclusions one makes using that methodology combined with those of other cultures may not be reducible only to these Western aspects. Likewise, it can also be said that these different methodologies are open to debate in the sense that their suitability and application in particular cases of intercultural comparison can be questioned through critical debate. It seems entirely possible to question the validity of, for example, Phenomenology, Deconstructionism, or Analytic philosophy to Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and so on, and the introduction of intercultural comparison may in fact derive new issues or problems for those methods. If Weber’s misgiving is that the favoured methodology of much intercultural comparison is typically a Western one, he has a significant point: there is an unfortunate monopoly of Western theoretical perspectives in the sub-discipline, where one would hope that a more egalitarian distribution of theoretical perspectives would flourish. This is a complaint against the distribution of perspectives in intercultural comparison, however, not against the possibility of intercultural comparison. Weber’s cited implication that ‘methodology in comparative philosophy would indeed coincide with methodology in philosophy – were it not for the emphasis on cultures and the potential

methodological consequences of this emphasis' (ibid. p. 597) reflects a socio-political, empirical issue with the one-sided monopoly of theoretical perspectives (namely, Western ones), rather than a significant strike against comparative philosophy understood as intercultural comparison in general. Further remarks by Weber and Goto-Jones along these lines also seem insufficient as concrete arguments against taking comparative philosophy as inter-cultural comparison. Weber warns, for example, that '[i]f reliance on cultures comes to be the only or the dominant way of doing comparative philosophy, then one runs the risk of turning a blind eye to the historical and ideological reasons that have made talk of cultures popular in the first place' (Weber 2013, p. 601). Goto-Jones similarly writes that 'a rather fundamental tension is established between [comparative political thought] as political thought and CPT as a genus of area studies, where area studies tends toward the elucidation of spatial and cultural categories. In the case of the former, we are envisioning CPT as a new way of defining more inclusive contours of the field of political thought itself; in the case of the latter, we approach a vision of CPT as a field of battle (or mediation) between myriad cultural identities. The former may be accused of abstraction and the latter of activism' (Goto-Jones 2011, p. 90)

We can infer to some degree that Goto-Jones's sentiments about comparative political thought may be applied to comparative thought in general, and he claims that it 'must be abstract in [the above] sense, lest its content and concerns become contingent upon times of diversity qua conflict, which risks intellectual complacency on the one hand and reactionism on the other' (ibid.). In both authors, it appears that the prevalence of comparative philosophy as intercultural comparison carries with it a number of ideological risks. I would infer that the underlying problem that both authors highlight is a Western-centric dominance of comparative philosophy. It is possible to claim that, here, the problem need not necessarily be that intercultural comparison is a poor fit for the notion of comparative philosophy as much as the problem may again be one of a socio-political one-sidedness in favour of Western academia. Addressing this one-sidedness, however, involves the sort of activism that Goto-Jones forgoes in favour of abstraction: it requires concrete changes in socio-political and economic circumstances, and these factors cannot be addressed alone by the theoretical abstraction that Goto-Jones favours. The criticisms of Weber and Goto-Jones in this regard seem not so much to rule out the notion of comparative

philosophy as intercultural as much as to simply show the degree of awareness of contingent political factors that can influence the discourse. This should not come as a surprise however, because (according to how I have argued for intercultural comparison to be understood above) the nature of the discipline itself is strongly contingent upon cultural and socio-political factors.

Weber (2013) has delineated four general and non-exclusive approaches to how contemporary comparative philosophy is carried out. Firstly, he cites the method that ‘does as much as possible to de-emphasize the role of the comparer while emphasizing all comparata as emancipated objects to be studied in their respective historical contexts’ (Weber 2013, p. 4), taking Geoffrey Lloyd’s work as exemplifying this approach. Lloyd writes that ‘On the one hand are the risks of distortion if we use the conceptual tools familiar to us. [...] On the other hand, if the reaction [...] is to insist that we use the conceptual framework of our ancient subjects, how is that possible?’ (Lloyd 2004, p. 2). Lloyd recognizes the inescapability of one’s own interpretive perspective yet still argues for comparison as fundamentally productive and possible, claiming that ‘is essentially no different from the processes of learning that we have constantly been engaged in, since childhood, in our own society, in all its diversity, acquiring and using our own natural languages. Even if we have no algorithm for this, there is much to be said for reflecting on where all of our own experience of learning begins, to make the most of what those reflections suggest, as we confront the more arcane problems of understanding the exotic’ (ibid. p. 9). The second general approach, which Weber attributes to scholars like David Hall and Roger Ames, is ‘[e]mphasizing the comparer as well as the one comparatum that is somehow considered not to be “one’s own”’ (Weber 2013, p. 4). Ames and Hall’s approach is ‘transcultural in intent since it seeks to promote that sort of dialogue which may eventually result in a mutual recognition of both commonalities and differences as a means of addressing important issues of theoretical and practical concern’ (Ames and Hall 1987, p. 6). However, their approach is not self-effacing in the sense that they claim ‘we cannot presume to stand above disputes that define the character of our culture or the relations between cultures’ (Weber 2013, p. 8). A third method, attributed to François Jullien, is one that ‘emphasizes again the comparer but this time together with the one comparatum that is somehow considered to be “one’s own”’ (ibid.). This

position is reflected in Jullien's recent claim that 'we can no longer limit ourselves, in Europe, to the horizon of European thought. We must leave home and shake off our philosophic atavism—go "to see" elsewhere, which was already the first meaning of "theory" for the Greeks, let us remember, before theory became dully speculative' (Jullien 2016, p. 3). Lastly, the fourth approach 'de-emphasizes all comparata, but emphasizes perhaps more greatly than any of the other approaches the comparer, i.e. at least in a specific sense' (ibid.), and Weber suggests that Bo Mou's writing serves as an example of this type. In addressing the comparative issue, Bo Mou emphasizes the 'constructive engagement' strategy: The Constructive engagement strategy concerns 'philosophical-issue-engagement that aims at how thinkers' ideas and texts under comparative examination can make a joint contribution to a series of issues, themes or topics of philosophical significance that can be commonly or jointly concerned through appropriate philosophical interpretation' (Mou 2010, p. 4).

Insofar as the seeds of any sort of comparative position along the lines of this spectrum can be made out in Nietzsche's philosophy, I would suspect that they align most closely with the third approach, that of Jullien's. Nietzsche's attitude towards non-European cultures and traditions, at least in his published works, is instrumentally focused, as Weber takes Jullien's to be (albeit certainly in different ways): 'Jullien's interest in decoding China is instrumental only, that China functions as a heterotopic image in a (pseudo-) Foucauldian way and that the main emphasis in the approach is put on that for which China is the other' (Weber 2013, p. 5). Although Nietzsche stresses the self-consciousness and inescapability of one's own cultural and philosophical perspective (while also stressing the possibility for expanding that perspective), his philosophical project is hardly ever explicitly concerned with attempting to appreciate non-European cultures in a way that draws fullest from the grounds of those cultures themselves. His use of them is fundamentally instrumental in the sense that they are enlisted foremost as case studies or data to be interpreted through his own philosophical perspective. Consider GS 145, as an example, which holds that '[a] diet that consists predominantly of rice leads to the use of opium and narcotics, just as a diet that consists predominantly of potatoes leads to the use of liquor'. Nietzsche's interest here lies not so much in anthropological analysis specific to the different regions as much as it does in framing and understanding a sociological problem through the insights of his

philosophical theory, through the naturalistic approach of his philosophy. In this strong instrumental sense then, Nietzsche's philosophy might not be considered to hold a viable basis for a comparative project, as it seems as though data from differing cultures risks being reduced to having the status of a reified 'vessel' through which Nietzsche's philosophy and fundamentally Western perspective elaborates itself. There are misgivings within comparative philosophy over the instrumentality of Jullien's approach and whether it turns China into an 'other' through which Western philosophy can better understand itself<sup>3</sup>. At first blush these complaints would seem only to be amplified in Nietzsche's case because he was writing in a period where colonialism and imperialism were underlying the reception of foreign perspectives.

If there is indeed a case to be made that Nietzsche's philosophy can be a basis for comparative thinking, as I think there is, it will be through his perspectivism. That is, through an emphasis on rigorous interpretation and the 'art of reading' (*HAH* 270), as with Nietzsche's heritage in philology, that is nonetheless admittedly bound up with an instrumental focus. I will argue that for Nietzsche perspectives are 'invested': they are guided by the will to power, to express force, and so the claim that there can be an interpretive perspective without any instrumental influence may be dubious. While comparative interpretation may be instrumental in the way that Jullien or Nietzsche exhibit, one can still claim that a comparative approach that fails to appreciate the different cultural and historical specificities of the comparatum (the thing compared) is one that likely proffers a diminished interpretation (a reason why we tend to reject approaches that reify different cultural phenomena). In this sense these threaten to be perspectives that instrumentally contribute less to one's overall holistic perspective (one's overall understanding of the world) than they might have, given a more adequate interpretation, or, in the agonistic sense of competing perspectives that Nietzsche is concerned with, a "level playing field". Given my use of Nietzsche's philosophy as the primary component of Western comparison, I think that fruitful comparison is nonetheless possible in Nietzsche's philosophy when it is admitted that a) its methodological aim will be fundamentally instrumental (it is a means through which

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<sup>3</sup> See Ralph Weber's article 'What about the Billeter-Jullien Debate? And What Was It about? A Response to Thorsten Botz-Bornstein' (2014) for a summary over the debate that Jullien has instrumentalized Chinese Philosophy.



the self-conscious comparer develops and extends his own historically and culturally situated holistic perspective, as an expression of will to power), and b) the sufficiently differing perspectives (the comparata) are interpreted in such a way that they can offer more than simply a restatement or re-interpretation of the interpreter's perspective, which would be a “mirroring” of his position (which, in order to do so, will involve more than a superficial appreciation of the cultural context of the comparata, and demand a significant level of emphasis on the comparatum). It is admittedly difficult to consistently find this second aspect in Nietzsche's published work, but it is an aspect that both his perspectival writing and his emphasis on interpretation would commit him to, and an aspect that he may have pursued more rigorously had he had access to the wealth of more adequately parsed intercultural data now available.

Having established the conditions under which a comparative project based in Nietzsche's philosophy can be feasible, it will be necessary to situate the methodology of the project more generally. This dissertation, as a comparative project, will proceed according to the following points. Returning to Weber's typology, it will not attempt comparative philosophy foremost in the sense of either Lloyd's approach (de-emphasizing the role of the comparer), nor will it be comparative in the manner of Ames and Hall, in which the comparer's position is self-conscious yet the compared philosophy is nonetheless to be taken on “its own terms”. It will share the most similarities with Jullien's approach insofar as the manner of comparison will be (consciously) instrumental, treating aspects of Chinese philosophy as a means of extending and deepening its own position. As such, the majority of writing in this project will focus on explicating Nietzsche's philosophy, as it is the operative side of comparison. Given the disparity between the time given to one side over another, it is necessary to give a justification. The most basic reason is simply the scope of the project: this is a heuristic work towards a comparative process ontology proper, it is not a comprehensive account. In order to be fully comprehensive, it would require a systematic detailing of the tradition of process thought in the West (including figures like Hegel, Peirce, Whitehead, Bergson), along with a more concrete, historical detailing of the development of process thought through the history of Chinese philosophy. It would also require an extended consideration of substance-style ontologies, and their deficiencies and strengths contrasted with process ontology. These are outside the scope of this project. This

project aims to put forward a heuristic example of how a fuller comparative process ontology may be developed, and in doing so establish the advantages of pursuing such an ontology and the problems facing any such attempts. A less basic reason directly relates to the previous discussion of comparative methodology. This is a Western-centric research project: it is developed from a distinctly European cultural perspective and draws on outside perspectives as supplementation. Hence, it does not pretend to be comparative in the sense that each side of comparison is given equal treatment and that its critical perspective is one that attempts to distance itself from either side. It is comparative in the sense that it arrives at conclusions or insights that were not capable of being achieved within one side of the comparison alone. Such an understanding of comparison quite reasonably faces that charge that by focusing on one side it risks neglecting or mis-representing the other. As such, while there is an evident focus on one side of the comparison, the comparative aspects will be pursued in a manner that resists a superficial, reifying treatment of those aspects as reducible to an “other” or a “mirror” through which the comparing perspective simply elaborates its own position. This does not require a distanced, meta-theoretical position outside of the comparison to justify: such a pitfall can be prevented within the comparison by a strong commitment to Nietzsche's perspectivism. This general perspectivism provides the basis for his own holistic perspective, will to power; and a necessary prerequisite of developing a greater, more holistic perspective is the capacity to interpret and incorporate other competing perspectives in a productive and synthetic manner.

More specifically, the manner by which a holistic perspective interprets another (and thereby extends and re-interprets itself in a fundamentally more sophisticated manner) can be best methodologically embodied, I hold, in terms of a dialogue between perspectives. It is a dialogue in the sense that Nietzsche describes it, as an exchange in which ‘everything one of the parties says acquires its particular colour, its sound, its accompanying gestures *strictly with reference to the other* to whom he is speaking, and thus resembles a correspondence in which the forms of expression vary according to whom the correspondent is writing to’ (HAH 374). The dialogue is thus not so much about how much or how little one side or the other says (it has to be equitable to some extent for it to be a dialogue in the first place), but

rather about the different characteristics that may emerge from its relation to another text outside the culture. This project therefore proceeds by dialogically interpreting key principles of change in Daoist philosophy with Nietzsche's philosophy of becoming. An important assumption in doing so, and one that facilitates a dialogical exchange in this manner, is that the interpretation involved in comparative philosophy need not primarily be one of interpreting an essential meaning in language or text, or the pursuit of a single “authentic” interpretation. Instead, this project adopts many aspects of the position laid out in Ma and van Brakel’s 2013 paper ‘On the Conditions of Possibility for Comparative and Intercultural Philosophy’. The main point of this paper is to advocate “de-essentialization” across the board’ (Ma and van Brakel, 2013, p. 297) in comparative philosophy, which is contrasted with a perceived presupposition that much of intercultural, comparative philosophy has implicit methodological tendencies towards either universalism or strict relativism: ‘[t]he universalist assumes that there eventually has to be one ideal language in which intercultural philosophical dialogue can be carried out and the results of comparative philosophy can be best expressed. The relativist assumes that, for each philosopher or philosophical tradition, there is one ideal language. Hence, different traditions are incommensurable’ (ibid. 310). Incommensurability presents itself as one of the key methodological issues in doing comparative philosophy, because incommensurability between traditions undermines any basis on which different traditions may be contrasted or compared. What is suggested in the paper is that such an incommensurability can be traced, on the one hand, from an implicit universalism where there needs to be an ideal, mediatory language hypothesised to bridge the gap between traditions. On the other hand, such an incommensurability may be derived from an implicit relativism; an ideal language is also assumed in this instance, but against the mediatory nature of the universalist variety, the relativist assumes that different traditions have only their own ideal means of interpretation that must be grasped by the comparer. Against this conclusion, Van Brakel and Lin instead present the process of textual interpretation, in the specific field of comparative philosophy, as an open-ended and dialogical process: ‘Using the hermeneuticians’ advice to model the interpretation of a text in terms of having a dialogue with the text, the same model can be applied to interpreting text X [...]. Usually a large number of Y would be involved in the project of interpreting X. Some may focus more on reconstruction of the text; others on its interpretation.

Some would claim to have access to the “original meaning” of X and claim to speak as a representative of (the author of) X. Other Y may aim for an interpretation that is relevant to and directed at a particular audience’ (ibid. 306). Such a construal of the interpretive aspect of doing comparative philosophy (once de-essentialization is assumed) provides a broad, yet sophisticated basis for appreciating a multitude of different interpretive approaches or agendas. Ultimately, according to van Brakel and Lin, comparative philosophy in the vein of this process of interpretation is fundamentally one of real and imaginary dialogue: an imaginary dialogue between two interpreters in a tradition (who themselves are or were in real dialogue with that tradition), and the comparer, who is himself engaged in a real dialogue with both of those interpreters. A dialogical approach in this manner further suits this project because it recalls the style of Nietzsche’s own philosophical writings. Nietzsche typically presents alternating perspectives through a form of (admittedly often one-sided) dialogue, where he neither attempts to explicate or situate his own position entirely outside of a tradition or context, nor does he do so for the positions of his interlocutors. We instead see that Nietzsche’s consciousness (or lack of it, in some cases) of his own position emerges through his dialogue with other traditions.

However, starting from such a dialogical position that is *in media res* carries with it certain potential methodological disadvantages. There is the risk of the theorist under-developing the core ideas that emerge through dialogue: Nietzsche’s writing, for instance, is notoriously resistant when it comes to the extraction of a coherent, consistent interpretation (although perhaps he would take this as a strength concerning his own writing). Likewise, a dialogical basis lends itself to an implicit (rather than explicit) rendering of the positions of the interlocutors: instead of being laid out in an abstract manner they emerge through dialogue. A potential issue that may arise is that some fundamental assumptions on either side of the exchange remain implicit and unquestioned in such an approach, where the critical distance of an explicit discussion of such issues might engender them. Another concern of key importance for this dissertation is whether such an approach may limit its holistic findings in terms of explanatory breadth. The purpose of this dissertation is to provide a comparative ontology of change, and it therefore involves a certain degree of abstraction that is at odds with a dialogical approach. In order to address these problems, I will adopt a synthetic approach that draws on both dialogical and

comparative philosophical methods. Dialogue will be the *prima facie* manner in which I will proceed in discussing East and West traditions and philosophers throughout the thesis. At decisive points, however, I will abstract from the dialogical form in order to outline and explicate elements of an emerging holistic theory. Hence, there may be portions of the text in which Chinese thought is interspersed with Nietzsche's philosophy and vice-versa, but there will also be portions in which both are separated and compared with each other. This will allow me to develop the work in a way that draws from the advantages of both traditions. Proceeding dialogically ensures that the theoretical background of the work is never effaced in dealing with either sides of the comparative divide, while also emphasizing the historical and contextual backgrounds of either side. On the other hand, drawing on the theoretical abstraction of the comparative method at key points will allow me to formulate my findings with a greater explanatory depth and breadth. To summarise, I would claim the difference between the two methods might be thus seen as one of theory and practice: comparative methodology favours theoretical consideration (and abstraction), and the strength of theory is that it provides numerous *schemata* through which to understand phenomena and to be applied to practice. Its disadvantage is the degree of abstraction involved in doing so: the more theoretical and abstracted from immediate experience one's interpretive perspective becomes, the more the validity of one's perspective risks coming into question (there is no disinterested perspective, as Nietzsche reminds us). On the other hand, while a theory without practice or application has diminished value, practice without theory is blind: a dialogical, account (in which the interpretive perspective is interwoven with the comparison) risks being limited in its applicability without an underlying elaboration of the *schemata* on which it functions. One could likewise consider the difference between comparison and dialogue in this sense as one of degrees of abstraction: comparison involves a greater degree of abstraction in the sense that the comparer abstracts both cultural texts from each other and the comparer from the texts, whereas there is little abstraction from the comparer, and the texts from each other, in dialogue. The answer, in order to resolve these methodological drawbacks, is to draw on both theoretical comparison and dialogical involvement as inextricable from each other, using dialogical exposition and comparative theorization. This is a significant point lending itself to ontologies of change that I hope to demonstrate

throughout this thesis: ontology is inextricable from praxis, and both Nietzsche's philosophy and Chinese cosmology are consummate examples of this.

Given the elaboration of my methodology, one can still legitimately ask whether the comparative ontology to be outlined in this dissertation is truly comparative in its most important sense. As I have attempted to show, the answer to this question ultimately lies with how one conceives the end of comparative philosophy, a subject too broad to be fully dealt with in the present context. As was discussed, there are a number of different approaches to comparative philosophy present in academia, as well as a number of different motivations for comparative projects: not all share the assumption, for example, that a project can only be truly comparative when it is undertaken in such a way that the comparer evenly lays out two different traditions to be compared, conscious of their own position or not, and proceeds to derive conclusions on the basis of the comparison between the two. Likewise, not all adhere to an ideal associated with the end of comparative philosophy, the foundation of a basis for a "world" philosophy of a synthetic East-West basis. According to Nietzsche's philosophy, such an ideal should not be undertaken unquestioningly, due to its universalist implications. Nietzsche thinks it is not even desirable to attempt something as systematic as a "world" philosophy<sup>4</sup>, as different types of human beings require different ways of living bound up with different modes of thought. The function of a comparative project, at least when conducted in the spirit of Nietzsche's philosophy, is not one of aiming for a world philosophy, but one that aims for a philosophy of the future among other philosophies.

## **Thesis Summary**

Having established the meaning of each of the key terms involved in comparative process ontology, I will now summarise the different chapters of this work. Chapter one sets out the basis of process thinking in both Nietzsche's philosophy and Chinese Daoist philosophy. In this chapter I want to establish how

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<sup>4</sup> He writes of the will to a systematic philosophy, for example, that 'I mistrust all systematizers and avoid them. The will to a system is a lack of integrity' (*TI* "Maxims and Arrows" § 1.26)

both philosophies most basically understand change in virtue of their world-views. In order to do this for Nietzsche, I begin with one of his major influences, Heraclitus, who is also recognized as a major influence in process philosophy. I spend some time detailing the manner in which Heraclitus has been received as a process philosopher and then examine some potentials way in which he differs from Nietzsche on the subject of change. The most significant difference attested will be that Heraclitus may be argued to perceive change as transcendent, beyond explanation or language, while Nietzsche fails to recognize this. In response, I examine interpretations of Nietzsche work that stress his conception of change as immanent: available to the senses and capable of being understood. These interpretations take us only so far in establishing a satisfactory conception of change, it is through examining the vocabulary available in ancient Chinese cosmology (specifically the *Yijing* text) that a satisfactory basic understanding of change may be established. I conclude the chapter by establishing how the general features perceived between both accounts lay the ground for an ontological basis of change.

In the second chapter I want to explore the shift from ontology to evaluation and epistemology. The core aim is to show how in a comparative process ontology such as the one I outline, the shift from basic ontology to human epistemology and evaluation is one that is continuous, it does not require positing a gap between reality and subject. In this regard I detail process-informed interpretations of Nietzsche's two key ideas, perspectivism and will to power. I want to claim that perspectivism is reducible to becoming, while will to power is Nietzsche's own evaluative perspective within becoming. I attempt to resolve the problem that emerges of how he can claim to have a hierarchy of perspectives in a perspectival ontology by examining the notion of 'pervasiveness' of perspectives (a feature that emerges from the interaction of perspectives but not any singular perspective) as what is determinative of hierarchy. I emphasize to a certain extent a disinclination towards traditional epistemological issues in my account of Nietzsche's perspectivism and will to power, and a favouring of pragmatism (particularly in conceiving of truth). In this regard I draw similarities between such conceptions and epistemology-evaluation within the ancient Chinese tradition, further drawing out the contrasts in the evaluative pre-occupations of Chinese and Greek originary thought. As demonstrative of the continuity between evaluation and ontology in a comparative

process philosophy, I discuss the cosmological relation in Chinese cultural thought between humans and the totality of relations making up the world, and how that relationship directly impacts upon the highest political ideals within Chinese thought. In addition, I examine the ways in which the perspectivism found in the ancient Daoist text of the *Zhuangzi* serves as a foil for any totalising perspective, but understood outside of the epistemological debate over realism and subjectivism.

The third chapter covers the last general area that a heuristic comparative process ontology needs to account for: language. Language remains one of the key areas in which traditional philosophical view-points prevail, and I aim to provide an account of language that undermines its traditional dichotomies by looking at both Nietzsche's philosophy and ancient Chinese pre-occupations with language. I provide a detailed analysis of Nietzsche's views of language as they develop in the early and late periods of his writing, and I conclude that will to provide a process-philosophical perspective which sidesteps the metaphysical realist/idealist debate that has influenced traditional views of language. In order to more fully develop how a comparative process ontology might elaborate a conception of language, I briefly examine the pre-occupations of the School of Names ancient Chinese philosophical school. Here I focus on the claim that compared with Western philosophical development of ontology, ancient Chinese thinkers developed a mereology (a contentious claim that I further examine), and how this mereology influences the conception of language and argumentation. Again, the influences of an underlying process worldview are shown to establish a pragmatic focus that in turn influences the manner in which language is conceived.

The focus of the thesis shifts from theory to application in the fourth chapter. There I examine two case studies: the first being a classical philosophical problem of metaphysics (appearance and reality), the second being a broad practical application of process thinking to technology and economy. With regard to the first case study, my aim is to draw what new insights the conception of a comparative process ontology has for an old philosophical problem. To this end I take Robert Nozick's 'experience machine' thought experiment and parse it through the ontologies/cosmologies I have elaborated in previous chapters. Appearance and reality is a useful case study for comparative process ontology because it highlights a distinction that I show is undermined and yet necessary in some regard. I argue that



both Nietzsche and Daoist texts provide answers to this issue that do not require the re-instantiation of hard ontological distinctions between reality and appearance. For Nietzsche, it will be the agonistic positing of different degrees of power as differentiating reality from appearance: what is real has more power than what is not. With the daoists (Zhuangzi) one can arrive at a therapeutic answer: one does not require differentiation between reality and appearance so much as one requires the ability to act consummately according to the situation one finds oneself in. The second case study is a broad survey of economic, political, and technological issues as envisioned in comparative process ontology. Again, I focus on detailing a hypothetical approach situated within Nietzsche's philosophy to the issue of technology, and I examine a debate over whether the issues of transhumanism align with Nietzsche's philosophy. Drawing on a process thought basis, I argue that Nietzsche's response might have been pragmatic in the sense that the benefit or detriment of advanced technology depends on the will of the type that uses it. In addition, I try to formulate a hypothetical position from Nietzsche's philosophy in the area of politics and economics, again through a process basis. I argue that within Nietzsche's philosophy we see a preference for dynamic and adaptive political and economic institutions that prevent social stagnation. These are exhibited in the tendency towards lesser state intervention and lesser market control. I compare the conclusions drawn in this respect to the political and economic writings of the Chinese Legalist school of the Warring States period (focusing on some of its Daoist tendencies) that derives similar conclusions on the basis of a process-oriented thinking.

The last chapter is directly concerned with conceiving socio-political efficacy in comparative process ontology. I examine the ways in which an underlying view of the world as process shapes derivative notions of how the individual socio-political agent can act effectively in the world. To begin with, I elaborate the idea that Western conceptions of efficacy have often relied on a determinate/indeterminate dichotomy for understanding efficacy, derived from seeing praxis as a matter of fitting a practical reality to an ideal model: this is contrasted with Chinese notions of efficacy in which there is no such pre-established external model. I focus in on two operative notions within the respective philosophies: I trace the notion of *virtu* through Machiavelli's philosophy to its similarities with Nietzsche's view of

effective political agents (Napoleon and Cesare Borgia), while I examine the notion of *shi* as efficacious disposition in the ancient Chinese strategic text of the *Sunzi* along with later Daoist and Legalist conceptions. I then examine a core element of efficacy, conceptions of fate in both Nietzsche's philosophy and the Daoist text of the *Zhuangzi*. There, I elaborate the differences between what I term Nietzsche's fatalism and necessitarianism, arguing that both can be understood on a processual basis as non-determinative. Likewise, the *Zhuangzi* characterises fate as response to inevitable change (in non-deterministic terms) and utilizes its own conception of efficacious action (*wu-wei*) as a response. Lastly, I detail some issues with this conception and their implications for conceiving efficacy in comparative process ontology. The last section of this chapter is one which focuses on examining a significant manner in which process-thought in the socio-political context falls short of its potential in both philosophies. I take to issue the conception of the feminine in both Nietzsche's philosophy and the Han period Chinese philosopher Dong Zhongshu's state philosophy, arguing that in both cases the holistic perspective afforded by process thinking is undermined by a focus on the immediate political context. This raises a compelling issue for comparative process thought in the practical context: to what extent can a process-based holistic worldview be maintained without introducing differentiations that, while necessary for political and social functioning, undermine that very holism? As such, while the thesis establishes a basis for development of further work in the area of a comparative process thought and ontology, it also introduces several key critical issues for further consideration.

## **Chapter 1 – Change as Ontology/Cosmology: Heraclitus, Nietzsche and Chinese Cosmology**

This first chapter will lay the foundations proper for a comparative theory of process by discussing the ways in which both Nietzsche and Chinese thought of the Warring states period conceives of change as a worldview. In doing so, I will engage with some of the potential problems of conceiving change in these ways. Having worked through these issues, there should be a clear picture of what the basis and

core features of a process ontology are, comparatively considered. There are three sections in this chapter, the first two concerning Nietzsche and the latter concerning Chinese cosmological thought, specifically the *Yijing*. In the former two I trace the notion of becoming as it develops in key areas of Nietzsche's work, focusing on Nietzsche's philosophical relationship to Heraclitus. In the course of doing so I examine Artur Przybyslawski's argument that Nietzsche in effect fails to retain the notion of becoming that Heraclitus has. I argue against some elements of his account, claiming that Przybyslawski draws on a transcendent understanding of becoming (an understanding that is above and beyond human perception), and that there are alternate means of understanding becoming as immanent (available to perception). Focusing on the latter, I look at how the vocabulary of becoming is explicated by commentators like Christoph Cox and John Richardson. While going a great distance to elaborate Nietzsche's view of becoming in coherent ways, I find their accounts ultimately unsatisfying: they re-instantiate problematic dichotomies and draw on substance-based language. In response I turn to Chinese thought and its vocabulary for process as a means of better elaborating becoming as an ontology. In particular, I elaborate the notion of change as it appears in the classic Chinese cosmological text of the *Yijing*, a text often used for divination in the ancient period and held as a consummate example of correlative thinking in Chinese thought.

In order to detail and apply a comparative process ontology, its basis must be explicated in a clear way. A comparative process ontology is a world-view of change influenced by philosophies from different cultures, and hence the first point of explanation must be: what is change? In the context of this thesis, such a question is put more accurately as "what is change for Nietzsche and ancient Chinese thought?" A process ontology is an alternative to substance ontology, which holds that the world may be viewed fundamentally in terms of substances, discrete entities that must be what they are at any point in time. The notion of substance is criticized in Nietzsche's philosophy (*WTP* 45), while it is more-so latent in Chinese thought of the period I am generally concerned with (the Warring States period)<sup>5</sup>. Instead, both philosophies favour at the highest level an operative role for change in the description of the world. Before we can begin to appreciate what these respective

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<sup>5</sup> In this chapter I do briefly consider substance-style interpretations of features within Chinese cosmology, and I am certainly not claiming that the notion of substance is entirely absent from Chinese thought.

conceptions have to offer as an alternative to mainstream ontological thought and socio-political application, we must be able to understand the conceptions themselves and their implications for process thinking. We will begin by looking at the conception of change, or becoming, as it is present in Nietzsche's philosophy, in particular with its Heraclitean influence.

## 1.1 Heraclitus and Nietzsche

A significant re-evaluation of the conceptual differences and similarities between Nietzsche's and Heraclitus' teaching of becoming can address a paradox that emerges in trying to explicate change in static terms or a language of being. There has traditionally been seen to be a strong overlap between the two philosophers on this subject, but this must be rigorously examined. Artur Przybyslawski, in a move away from typical views on the relationship, writes that 'Nietzsche is faithful not to Heraclitus himself but to his interpretation of Heraclitus from *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*' (Nietzsche 1998, p. 88). More so, according to Przybyslawski Nietzsche diverges in *PTAG* from an authentically Heraclitean account of becoming in his inability to extricate himself from the limitations of grammar and elements of Schopenhauer's (and thus Kant's) philosophical influence. One of Przybyslawski's chief criticisms of Nietzsche's later unpublished characterisations of becoming as will to power (*WTP* 1067) emphasizes the same problem of grammar. Przybyslawski highlights that '[t]he useful term "becoming" cannot be found in Heraclitus's text. It has been created by the commentators, but Heraclitus himself could not use it' (Przybyslawski 2002, p. 93).

Heraclitus gestures towards becoming through the use of contradiction, rather than fixed terminology. 'The only thing Heraclitus does is multiply contradictions as examples of flux to avoid using the same term that indicates something constant in the background of every contradiction' (ibid.). Projecting constancy or stability through into the flux will falsify it, and attempting to conceptualise flux through a language of being merges the contradictions and opposites that, through their opposed tension, Heraclitus uses to signify becoming. '[T]he term "becoming" levels two opposites of the contradiction and levels every contradiction that is unique and

irreducible to another contradiction. The concept of becoming petrifies nature.’ (ibid. 94). Pryzbyslawski argues that the same may be said for becoming as will to power, used to designate the host of Heraclitean metaphors, often put in terms of streams or rivers, which Nietzsche uses to describe becoming. If we are to understand in what way process can be found to underlie the core principles of Nietzsche’s philosophy, we have to consider one of his most important philosophical influences: the ancient pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus. I now want to survey in what ways Heraclitus has been claimed to be part of the tradition of process philosophy, doing so will thereby elucidate the ways in which Nietzsche adheres to such a tradition and the ways in which he departs from it. Firstly, what sort of process philosopher Heraclitus is, if he truly can be considered to be one, remains to be established. In his survey of process philosophers throughout the history of philosophy, Nicholas Rescher provides a general interpretation of Heraclitus as process philosopher at first blush:

‘[Heraclitus] depicted the world as a manifold of opposed forces joined in mutual rivalry, interlocked in constant strife and conflict. Fire is the most changeable and ephemeral of these elemental forces [...] The fundamental "stuff" of the world is not a material substance of some sort but a natural process, namely, "fire," and all things are products of its workings (*puros tropai*). The variation of different states and conditions of fire that most process manifesting of the four traditional Greek elements engenders all natural change’ (Rescher 1996, p. 9).

How well does this process-philosophical interpretation fit with classical scholarly readings of Heraclitus? It will be most efficient to understand the necessary comparisons and contrasts according to some of the central ideas in Heraclitus’s writing: Flux, the doctrine of Co-Present Opposites, Monism, and lastly, the *logos*. Process-philosophical readings, of course, focus on the notion of flux in Heraclitus’s writing. Regarding flux, the most commonly cited example in Heraclitus work representing this notion is fragment *LI*: ‘One cannot step twice into the same river, nor can one grasp any mortal substance in a stable condition, but it scatters and again gathers; it forms and dissolves, and approaches and departs’ (Kahn 1979, p. 53). A common misunderstanding of this saying, one that can be traced to Plato<sup>6</sup>, is the view that every single thing changes at every moment, hence you cannot step twice in the same river. As many commentators point out, this ‘radical flux’ interpretation

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Cratylus* 402a4-b4.

neglects the point that the river in which the waters perpetually change and flow through itself remains the same. Many commentators instead take the river example as an elaboration of a deeper, stable structure beneath a constantly changing flow. Kahn, for example, holds that it represents ‘the preservation of structure within a process of flux, where a unitary form is maintained while its material embodiment or ‘filling’ is constantly lost and replaced’ (Kahn, 1979, p. 168). Although he appears to interpret the example in the same way, Rescher’s process philosophical survey puts forward a similar addendum: ‘Heraclitus was only half right: We indeed do not step twice into the same *waters*, but we can certainly step twice into the same *river*. The unity of a particular that defines what it *is* consists in what it *does*. Process metaphysics accordingly stresses the need to regard physical things, material objects, as being no more than stability-waves in a sea of process.’ (Rescher 1996, p. 53). The fundamental principle of flux in *LI*, then, is that change on an ontological level permits talk of stability and objects on a more developed level without necessary contradiction.

The doctrine of Co-Present Opposites (alternatively known as the doctrine of Unity of Opposites) is also a contentious idea in Heraclitus’s philosophy, and has been argued for in a number of forms. One prevalent reading is Jonathan Barnes’s logical re-formulation which states that ‘every pair of contraries is somewhere coinstantiated; and every object coinstantiates at least one pair of contraries’ (Barnes, 1982, p. 53). As such, the doctrine of Unity of Opposites appears to break the law of non-contradiction. As Guthrie highlights (1978, p. 437) this reading traces its history back to Aristotle. A number of interpreters attempt to make sense of the doctrine without recourse to logical principles. Kahn, for example, reads the doctrine as principle of understanding utilised in better grasping the fundamental structure of the world, the *logos*: ‘the doctrine of opposites is, among other things, an attempt to attain a larger vision by recognizing the life-enhancing function of the negative term, and hence comprehending the positive value of the antithesis itself’ (Kahn 1979, p. 189). Guthrie also presents a different interpretation which holds that the key point of the doctrine is not that literal opposites exist, but that the strife born from opposites in a permanent feature of the world: ‘Heraclitus [...] asserted that any harmony between contrasting elements necessarily and always involved a tension or strife between the opposites of which it was composed. The tension is never

resolved. Peace and war do not succeed each other in turn: always in the world there is both peace and war. Cessation of struggle would mean the disintegration of the cosmos' (Guthrie 1978, p. 437). Guthrie goes further, and claims that according to Heraclitus (fragment 67) opposites are identical. Here Guthrie presents four non-literal senses of identity he supposes that Heraclitus draws on: (a) reciprocal succession and change, (b) Relativity to the experiencing subject, (c) in terms of value, that opposites are only appreciated in relation to their opposites, and (d) there are the opposites which are "identical" because only they different aspects of the same thing (ibid. p. 446). Reciprocal succession and change represents a form of identity insofar as it concerns two qualities which are taken to be on contrasting sides of the same spectrum; day succeeding into night and vice-versa. Relativity to the experiencing subject refers to the identity of qualities in terms of their relativity to a subject: 'there is no *essential* difference between pleasant and unpleasant' (Guthrie 1978, p. 445, my emphasis). The identity of qualitative states in this instance seems to be that they all are identical in sharing the feature of depending on a relative perspective, hence that there is no qualitative state that is essentially pleasant or unpleasant (for example) apart from perspectives. Regarding (c), we may say that the sense of identity between qualities is reflected in their inextricable complementarity, sickness is intelligible only through a complementary relation with health, hunger with satiety, and so forth. We can again say that this essential complementarity of properties is what contributes to the sense of identity that Guthrie interprets in Heraclitus's writing. Lastly, concerning (d), opposites are considered identical in the sense that they are 'only different aspects of the same thing, the point at which Heraclitus gets nearest to the later distinction between permanent substratum and mutable characteristic' (ibid.). Hence, one example for consideration is in writing; straight and slanted may be opposite qualities, but a single line of writing may exemplify both at the same time by being both straight at one segment of the line and slanted at another segment of the line.

As Emlyn-Jones points out, two major questions emerge from the way in which Guthrie describes the identity of these different aspects: 'Firstly, in what sense are these, or any opposites, "the same thing"? Secondly, how can an apparent statement of identity refer to opposites whose relationship appears to be something else?' (Emlyn-Jones 1976, p. 94) Because Guthrie attempts to explicate and

reconcile these four aspects in terms of identity he is ultimately drawn to conclude that Heraclitus's contribution to thought along these lines is to have pushed the rigour of logical thinking forward by posing contradictory challenges of interpretation and paradox: 'What was for him an exciting discovery was only possible at a stage of thought when many logical distinctions, now obvious, had not yet become apparent. By baldly stating the absurd consequences of neglecting them, he unintentionally paved the way for their recognition' (Guthrie, *ibid.* p. 443). Instead of attempting to resolve paradox through interpreting his writing in different senses, Emlyn-Jones argues that, taking Heraclitus's paradoxical utterances seriously, 'the identity of opposites and the consequent paradox are not primarily the result of reflection upon the various ways in which opposites are related [for Heraclitus]. If anything, the relationship is the other way round - the explanations are of facts which have already been grasped intuitively. The identity of opposites is presented as a mystery which has objective existence outside men and controls their lives [...]' (Emlyn-Jones 1976, p. 113). As such, the relevant fragments resist textual interpretation and logical resolution. Insofar as this present work is concerned, it is obvious that a fixed interpretive stance must be taken on Heraclitus's writings regarding the textual issues just discussed. As this work is not an extended study of Heraclitus or the Presocratics, it can only adopt a particular interpretation within scholarship, not argue extensively for it. This work will assume an interpretation that attempts to resolve the paradoxes Heraclitus poses for us, insofar as it remains a plausible contender among others in contemporary commentaries. Although it may not be proven to be the most accurate one, it may however reveal similarities between Heraclitus and Nietzsche, similarities not recognizable if adopting a more specific interpretation.

That being said, the interpretation that this work holds to is Daniel Graham's explicit reading of Heraclitus as a process philosopher (2012). Graham initially raises a core issues that must be resolved regarding Heraclitus's world-view; how does Heraclitus's seeming monism (that all things are one "stuff", which Heraclitus apparently renders as fire) square against his other prevailing view of flux? As Graham writes, 'On the one hand, Flux says [...] that all things are changing in some respect, or (in an unrestricted version) that all things are changing in all respects. On the other hand, Monism, that is, material monism, says that ultimately all things are



one stuff, namely, for Heraclitus, fire. But if all things are one stuff, and there is one subject for every change, then all changes are basically non-substantial changes' (Graham 2012, p. 2). If changes are ultimately non-substantial and actually only accidental, then it turns out that '[w]hat is really real is not process, but substantiality, that of the underlying reality that is the subject of all change' (ibid). This would then point to Heraclitus being a substantial monist because he does not ultimately allow for fundamental change in substances. Retrieving Heraclitus from this position seems to hang on how we are to understand the basic "stuff" he considers as constituting the world, fire. If we understand 'fire' in a looser, less substantial sense, as Kahn for example does<sup>7</sup>, we can claim instead that Heraclitus does not subscribe to monism in such a sense, he instead posits constant change as the nature of reality. Graham finds either option initially unpalatable, writing that '[t]o the degree we take material monism seriously, we trivialize flux as a mere local variation of an all-pervasive static reality. To the extent that we take Flux seriously, we find ourselves compelled to sweep Monism under the rug.' (ibid). Taking either option thus seriously diminishes the scope of the accompanying doctrine, and this is problematic insofar as both doctrines appear to have considerable scope. Graham ultimately privileges flux over monism. He firstly defends the idea that flux is fundamental, but not itself a substance, by claiming that Heraclitus allows for changes in his basic ontology that are not merely local variations or accidents. Graham examines the manner in which there is a number of transformations of the stuff of Heraclitus's cosmology: earth becomes water and water becomes fire, and fire then becomes water, which then becomes earth. According to Graham, the use of terms like birth and death in fragment B36 indicates no underlying persistence of substance: 'What the terminology implies is a radical change from stuff to stuff such that there is no transmission of identity from one elemental body to another. When one stuff is born, another dies. Heraclitus envisages then a radical change with accompanying loss of identity, not a mere alteration of an on-going reality. There is a set sequence and order of changes, but no continuing substratum' (ibid. 3). In particular, with regard to fire and its cosmological prevalence, Graham points out

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<sup>7</sup> Kahn writes that Heraclitus' use of fire elicits a 'radical shift in perspective' (1979: 23); rather than the element of fire merely serving as a replacement cosmology, 'it signifies both a power of destruction and death — as in a burning city or a funeral pyre — and also a principle of superhuman vitality' (ibid). What fire thus signifies is useful for grasping the structure of reality, by contemplating fire one can 'perceive the hidden harmony that unifies opposing principles not only within the cosmic order but also in the destiny of the human psyche' (ibid).

that it serves as not as a predominant ontological “stuff” or substance through which every material change occurs, it is rather a standard of exchange: ‘[Heraclitus] does not say that fire is all things, but that it is a standard of value against which all things can be measured’ (4). This initially seems somewhat vague, but when appreciated in accompaniment with Kahn’s commentary (that fire represents both a principle of death and degeneration, and of vitality and growth), the emphasis on fire for its symbolic implications further cements the notion that fire can be considered as a measure rather than itself a grounding ontology. Having established that substantial monism appears to be out of the question for Heraclitus<sup>8</sup>, Graham sets about examining the relationship between *logos*, the intelligent structure of the cosmos, and flux. Does the *logos* precede constant change as Heraclitus’s ultimate cosmological foundation? Graham argues that ‘the law of change [Graham’s reading of *logos*] is manifest only in the processes themselves. It has no being apart from the processes that exemplify it. Heraclitus, for his part, does not present the *logos* as a transcendent principle’ (ibid. 5).

In rough summary, then, the view of Heraclitus I have sketched out from preceding commentaries is as a process philosopher that presents a philosophical worldview in which the cosmos has an intelligible structure (the *logos*), the activity of this structure is constantly changing (the notion of flux) although out of such change are derived stable structures. Appreciation of such an holistic *logos* is achieved through the grasping of key principles like the doctrine of opposites, where there is a unity of opposite properties at play within flux, all of which are basically motivated by an understanding of the processual nature of reality. This is the Heraclitus that I want to show is closest in philosophical relation to Nietzsche. How does Nietzsche’s own philosophy stack up against this reading of Heraclitean cosmology? I will now analyze the parallels and disjoints in either philosopher’s work, with the hope that elucidating both the similarities and dissimilarities will provide key insights in determining how Nietzsche himself is more or less of a process philosopher. In order to do so, I will firstly discuss Nietzsche’s own reception of Heraclitus and his view of his philosophy as an heir, in some respects,

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<sup>8</sup> This is not to say that Flux as described cannot be considered a monism of some form, it is simply that its substantial monist form seems to be an inadequate explanation.

of Heraclitus's philosophy. I will then look at the broader literature on the relationship between Heraclitus and Nietzsche.

A sufficient focal point for this analysis is *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, an unpublished early work which contains an extended consideration of Heraclitus by Nietzsche. *PTAG* serves as a compelling work not primarily because of Nietzsche's philological treatment of the pre-Socratic philosophers, but because of how his characterisation of these philosophers reflects his own thought. Most relevant is his rendition of Heraclitus, and it is important to immediately point that Nietzsche is not attempting to represent a clear and factual account of Heraclitean philosophy. As Nietzsche himself emphasizes in both of his prefaces to *PTAG*, the aim is to 'emphasize only that point of each of their systems which constitutes a slice of *personality* and hence belongs to that incontrovertible, non-debatable evidence which it is the task of history to preserve' (*PTAG* 'early preface', p. 24). From the beginning of his treatment of Heraclitus it is clear that Nietzsche recognizes in him the same pre-occupation with deriving stability and regularity from an ontological flux:

"Becoming is what I contemplate," [Heraclitus] exclaims, "and no one else has watched so attentively this everlasting wavebeat and rhythm of things. And what did I see? Lawful order, unfailing certainties, ever-like orbits of lawfulness, *Erinnyes* sitting in judgment on all transgressions against lawful order, the whole world the spectacle of sovereign justice and of the demonically ever-present natural forces that serve it (*PTAG* 5, p. 51)

One significant point that Nietzsche sees in Heraclitus is his rejection of 'the duality of totally diverse world' (ibid.) namely the duality of physical and metaphysical worlds. This is surely a point in which Nietzsche has contributed some of his own contemporary pre-occupations, but there are also a few key insights that appear reflective of Heraclitean process philosophy proper. When claiming that Heraclitus sees nothing other than becoming, the important basis of process philosophy is established: a rejection of substance as the basic paradigm in favour of process. Nietzsche also points out another feature of process philosophy, the

tendency to conceptualize properties relationally<sup>9</sup> rather than substantially. For Nietzsche, Heraclitus's doctrine of co-present opposites is 'an observation regarding the actual process of all coming-to-be and passing away. [Heraclitus] conceived it under the form of polarity, as being the diverging of a force into two qualitatively different opposed activities that seek to re-unite. Everlastingly, a given quality contends against itself and separates into opposites; everlastingly these opposites seek to re-unite' (*PTAG* 5, p. 54). Nietzsche's appreciation of the doctrine aligns in many ways with the reading offered by Guthrie above, in which the irresolvable tension between underlying contrasting elements produces the ontological stability we are faced with empirically. Nietzsche, however, adds that this stability is achieved through the reversible 'momentary ascendancy of one partner' (*ibid.* 55), emphasizing an agonistic character to these forces. To summarize, in *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* Nietzsche does provide an interpretation that corresponds to the process philosophical reading of Heraclitus in a number of important ways: he correctly recognizes that process is paradigmatic for Heraclitus while also recognizing that for Heraclitus, represented through the doctrine of co-present opposites, process ontology is relational: properties have their identity in virtue of their relation with their opposites.

Complemented by his early treatment of Heraclitus, Nietzsche returns to the philosopher again at the opposite end of his philosophical career in *Ecce Homo*. There he describes Heraclitus in friendly terms and re-affirms the positions earlier sketched in *PTAG*: the relational aspects of process thought are reflected in the 'affirmation of passing away *and destroying*' (*EH* 3) and a paradigmatic commitment to '*becoming*, along with a radical repudiation of the very concept of *being*' (*ibid.*). Similar to the manner in which Nietzsche draws on Schopenhauer to discuss Heraclitean philosophy, thus helping to break away from a conventional interpretation of his work, Nietzsche interprets Heraclitean philosophy in his own mold in *EH*. He claims, for example, that the affirmation of passing away and destroying is itself a feature of Dionysian philosophy. It is this particular tragic

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<sup>9</sup> For a further explanation of this tendency, see Rescher (2000:7): 'Traditional metaphysics sees processes (such as the rod's snapping under the strain when bent sufficiently) as the manifestation of dispositions (fragility), which must themselves be rooted in the stable properties of things. Process metaphysics involves an inversion of this perspective. It takes the line that the categorical properties of things are simply stable clusters of process-engendering dispositions.'

affirmation that also sets Nietzsche's understanding of relationality in process ontology apart from Heraclitus. Likewise, he also draws a significant comparison between his own important concept of eternal recurrence and Heraclitus's philosophy, claiming that 'The doctrine of the "eternal recurrence that is, of the unconditional and infinitely repeated circular course of things-this doctrine of Zarathustra *might* in the end have been taught already by Heraclitus' (ibid.). Why is it that Nietzsche claims this? Some clues are apparent in Nietzsche's early unpublished writing *On the Pathos of Truth*. There Nietzsche establishes the Heraclitean world-view as 'the play of the great world-child, Zeus, and the eternal game of world destruction and origination' (Breazeale 1993, p. 64). If Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal recurrence is understood as a claim about reality (namely, that the world will repeat itself forever) then some affinity is visible: Heraclitus also posits that the world is a process, and as a process of constant change it has no beginning or end. Those further qualitative insights that Nietzsche draws upon in his description of the eternal recurrence in *TSZ* are bound up with the idea of 'willing' the eternal return, of joyously affirming all the processes of the world as necessary. Likewise, Heraclitus affirms that his process ontology is itself the only constitutive form of justice in the world<sup>10</sup>. Nietzsche describes this aspect of Heraclitus's ontology, characterizing it in an unpublished note at one point as 'the moral-legal character of the whole world of becoming' (*WTP* 412). As Simon Gillham has pointed out, the idea of justice at work can best be described as cosmodicy, which is a term that Nietzsche himself borrows from Erwin Rohde. Cosmodicy is understood as a self-justification of cosmic processes, wherein 'the arising and perishing of things with properties *expresses* the true nature of justice, rather than as serving as a punishment' (Gillham 2004, p. 146). According to Gillham, however, drawing from material in the *Pre-Platonic Philosophers* lectures, Nietzsche arrives at a view of Heraclitean ontology as non-telic and fundamentally aesthetic, 'a non-teleologically determined cosmos which can be known or, rather, experienced, only by the artist or by the child at play' (*PP* 147).

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<sup>10</sup> See Kahn's commentary to the *Fragments*: 'A precursor of the Enlightenment in other respects, Heraclitus is in this regard a conservative. For him there is no split in principle between *nomos* and nature. As an institution, law is neither man-made nor conventional: it is the expression in social terms of the cosmic order for which another name is Justice (*Dike*)' (15)

To return to Przybyslawski's claims that Nietzsche is faithful foremost to his own way of interpreting Heraclitus rather than to Heraclitus himself: it would be difficult to contest this. Nietzsche very often interprets Heraclitus in a manner in which he contributes elements of his own doctrines or concepts into his readings. At the same time, however, he often does so candidly. In *PTAG* Przybyslawski highlights that Nietzsche at this point is strongly influenced by Schopenhauer's philosophy, and this problematizes his treatment of Heraclitus. When Nietzsche writes that 'the whole nature of reality [*Wirklichkeit*] lies simply in its acts [*Wirken*] and that for it there exists no other sort of being' (*PTAG* 5) Przybyslawski raises the point that 'If Heraclitus rejected being altogether, the word "being" should not appear in this description of becoming, because no other word expresses firmness more emphatically' (90). The main problem, Przybyslawski goes on to explain, is that Nietzsche (under the influence of Schopenhauer's philosophy) is attempting to discuss Heraclitus' view of becoming by reference to concepts that themselves are fixed, and he draws on the problematic conceptions of Schopenhauer to do so. Regarding Schopenhauer, for Przybyslawski the problem is as follows:

'What is important is that Schopenhauer needs something solid, fixed, and unchanging to think about or to explain change, which is therefore reduced to permanent substance. Therefore change is not thought of as a change in itself. What is paradoxical is the grasp of change as something secondary, a derivation from something that does not change at all. This is an Aristotelian way of thinking, not a Heraclitean one.' (91)<sup>11</sup>

Thus for Przybyslawski the problem conceiving becoming for Nietzsche is one of conceptualization and language. Thought requires a self-identical object, whether empirically or conceptually, and so the concept of change is not reflective of change itself because change is not self-identical: 'Change is grasped as something else in order to appropriate the escaping change within reflection, to subject it to thought, to make the change the object of thinking. Nevertheless, change is not an object.' (ibid.) If we agree with the problem of describing becoming as Przybyslawski frames it, Nietzsche never overcomes this issue, even in his later philosophy. His description

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<sup>11</sup> Przybyslawski is here referring to Schopenhauer's writing in *The World as Will and Representation* (Book I, 29).

of becoming in terms of metaphors of streams in *TSZ*<sup>12</sup> and his grand description of will to power in *WTP* 1067 as ‘a sea of forces flowing and rushing together, eternally changing’ are inadequate descriptions of becoming for Przybyslawski because ‘the whole argument is not sound just because he uses his definite term “will to power” (93). The use of the definite term or concept is again stated by Przybyslawski as a formative issue, and it is also the point of separation between Heraclitus and Nietzsche in describing becoming. Przybyslawski writes that Heraclitus never directly commits the mistake Nietzsche makes because he refrains from drawing on a singular term to describe becoming, instead he ‘[multiplies] contradictions as examples of flux to avoid using the same term that indicates something constant in the background of every contradiction’ (93). The doctrine of co-present presents would accordingly be a gesturing by Heraclitus towards becoming by pointing towards something through which both opposites could be said to be simultaneously manifest. Describing these contradictions under one fixed concept or name will, Przybyslawski thinks (94), nullify those contradictions: ‘In our case, the term “becoming” levels two opposites of the contradiction and levels every contradiction that is unique and irreducible to another contradiction. The concept of becoming petrifies nature’ (94). The ideas of becoming and will to power as Nietzsche describes them throughout all of his philosophical periods of thought are thus subject to Przybyslawski’s arguments.

## 1.2 – Theorising Process in Nietzsche’s Philosophy

At this point, having looked over the general arguments, it may be helpful to ask whether Przybyslawski’s characterization of flux is acceptable. The main issue that can be contended in Przybyslawski’s critique is his conception of becoming. Evidently for Nietzsche, at least in his later philosophy when he departs from the Kantian elements of his earlier work, becoming is not clearly conceptualized as a noumenon: the world is not presented as radical flux in-itself. Yet this type of conception of becoming is the one that Przybyslawski criticises at length compared with his own conception, which is not noumenal. To what extent, however, is Przybyslawski’s account of becoming different from becoming as noumenon? For

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<sup>12</sup> CF. *TSZ* ‘On Self-Overcoming’

Przybyslawski likewise becoming is not a noumenon, it is not a singular concept in language, or a thing-in-itself, because this would nullify the differences and continuity inherent in becoming<sup>13</sup>. If for Przybyslawski becoming is not noumenal, nor is it capturable in a singular object or linguistic concept, it would appear that becoming is transcendent (in the sense that understanding becoming is beyond the scope of perception and conceptualization)<sup>14</sup>. The important difference between becoming conceived as noumenon and as transcendental is that a noumenal becoming would commit Nietzsche to dualism (in claiming there is a world of appearances and the noumenal world of flux), which he is at pains to reject by the time of *TI*, whereas a *transcendent* becoming as suggested by Przybyslawski does not necessarily imply dualism. While there is nothing *prima facie* unacceptable about considering becoming as transcendent, there are other ways of conceiving becoming, specifically as immanent. In addition, commentators have attempted to formulate a grasp of becoming in Nietzsche that is non-noumenal yet also non-transcendental (often as a response to conceiving Nietzsche as a post-Kantian), that it so say, immanent. Conceiving becoming as immanent is to claim that becoming is amenable to the understanding and perception, neither transcendental nor transcendent. One such prominent theorist of immanent becoming along these lines is Christoph Cox, who writes that

‘[Nietzsche] begins by reversing our common linguistic and philosophical habits, arguing that what is primary are actions, deeds, accidents, and becomings rather than subjects, doers, substances, or beings. [...]Nietzsche's initial premise is that the natural world in which we are situated and that we observe is, first and foremost, a world of becoming, that is, a world of myriad actions, happenings, effects, and appearances.’ (Cox 1999, p. 125-126).

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<sup>13</sup> For Przybyslawski it appears necessary that we avoid an approach in which “change, war, conflict” is thought with something that is made unchanging by the language itself” (94)

<sup>14</sup> To put this point in more systematic terms, I am abiding by Ames’ and Hall’s definition of what is transcendent by whether it requires an appeal to a being or principle that conditions the world but is not in turn conditioned by it. The Judeo-Christian God is an example of a transcendent being because he exists outside of the world and yet influences it in turn. CF. Ames, Hall, *Thinking from the Han* (1998, p. 198). I would argue that the understanding of ‘transcendent’ here bears some important overlap with the Kantian equivalent of ‘transcendental’, in the sense that it is concerned with what goes beyond the possible knowledge of human beings. The core difference is that the notion ‘transcendent’ does not necessarily imply a noumenal/phenomenal distinction, whereas what is ‘transcendental’ is strongly linked to such a distinction.



If we begin from the basis of becoming as primary rather than our categories of subjects and substances, and so on, how do we arrive at the point whereby we can distinguish and categorise the world in a way that is not equivalent to the noumenal/phenomenal distinction? Cox introduces the notion of affects in relation to becoming in order to explain this element further. These ‘affects’ are described as ‘interior states’ (127) which help explain and predict actions, appearances and becomings. They are therefore to some extent a replacement for the language of subject-atoms, entities and unities. Cox then goes on to state that these affects are to a large extent un-isolatable from each other, and directly links this ontology of affects into perspectivism by saying that ‘While each affect is or has an interpretation in a rudimentary sense, Nietzsche tends to think of interpretations and perspectives as hierarchical aggregates of affects in which some dominate and others are subordinate’ (129).

As Matthew Meyer points out in his reading of Cox’s commentary, affects so understood may be equivalent in ontological terms to force, that they are effectively two descriptions of the same reality (Meyer 2014, p. 47). At the same time, Meyer argues that it is questionable whether Cox’s characterisation escapes the charge of dualism, for the simple reason that there now appears to be ‘on the one hand, a true world of dynamic relations of force that can also be described from a first-person point of view as a chaos of sensations or affects and, on the other hand, an apparent world of conscious subjects and ordinary, everyday, middle-sized objects’ (ibid. 48). The main point of issue, then, is that we are confronted with two apparently conflicting views of the world in which we perceive stability, stasis, unified entities and substances, but also changing processes. Przybyslawski’s conception of becoming avoids this very issue by claiming that change, truly understood, is simply beyond our perceptual and conceptual grasp as transcendental, whereas Cox risks re-instantiating a noumenal/phenomenal dichotomy in so many other terms. John Richardson also offers an alternative understanding of becoming in elaborating a will to power ontology in Nietzsche’s philosophy, although only in the course of rejecting it for an alternative. Richardson proposes the view that being and becoming should not be seen as conflicting opposites, but rather than being is better expressed through the notion of becoming. This being-centric understanding of becoming Richardson terms ‘being replacement’ (Richardson 1996, p. 80) and claims that we

should understand change or becoming as a matter of individual beings or entities being in a constant state of replacement by other beings/entities. So, for example, the green color of an apple doesn't persist but is rather changed into red, or the apple itself does not last and is changed into its digested or decomposed products.

Richardson claims that such an interpretation has the benefit of resolving the difficulties in Nietzsche's rejection of thinghood, fixed and unchanging entities, with flux and the apparent stability of experience. On the one hand, Richardson claims that Nietzsche rejects thinghood in the sense that there are no timeless entities that are not themselves replaced by other entities (pp. 80-82). To begin with, then, Nietzsche would be said to reject thinghood because strictly speaking, given that the world is in a constant state of change there are no truly persisting objects, only those that are instantaneously being replaced: existence would be simultaneous with replacement.

If the world is truly changing in such a way, then how does Richardson reconcile this fundamental change with our experience of stability and persistence? There are two potentially helpful ways in which we can think of how Richardson's theory applies to flux and stability of experience. Firstly, Richardson suggests we consider changes between objects in terms of a part-whole relationship. As Meyer succinctly points out: 'Thinking in these terms emphasizes constant change because it can be said that a thing changes when any of its parts change, even if those parts cannot be detected by the naked eye' (Meyer 2014, p. 52). Very similar to this is an alternative understanding that stresses that the tension between parts is what constitutes the stability of the whole, just as in Heraclitus's image of the tensed bow. Indeed, this view shares some affinities with Daniel Graham's above interpretation of Heraclitus as a process philosopher. Hence, to summarize, what appears stable and persisting to our eyes is in fact changing interminably on a part-whole basis. The problem with this view, as both Meyer and Richardson highlight, is that '[a]ccording to this reading, becoming not only does not undermine the existence of beings, it multiplies the number of beings in the universe infinitely' (Meyer 2014, p. 52-53). So, returning to the Heraclitean metaphor of the stream what we find according to this understanding a series of streams and their contents which perpetually replace

each other. This turns out not to square with Nietzsche's rejection of thinghood<sup>15</sup> as a lie adequately because, as Meyer highlights, it multiplies the number of entities in the world infinitely (52).

If Richardson points out the problems with becoming understood as 'being replacement', what sort of theory does he offer in contrast to the above views? Richardson's key point is that the sort of becoming that Nietzsche is describing is fundamentally temporal. Przybyslawski's above criticism of Nietzsche is that despite his use of metaphorical language or conceptualization through will to power he cannot ultimately grasp change, the use of either fixes a phenomenon that is by its nature constantly changing, and this constant change is beyond either our perceptual or intellectual faculties. Richardson, however, claims that we ought to conceptualize change as process(es) that require a temporal context: 'we can never understand a being or thing "in the moment" ; it must always be grasped in a temporal context, as having been this and as about to be that' (Richardson 1996, p. 102). We should then not speak of the change in the colour of an apple as from the state of green to red, we should be describing it in terms of a process. Because the identity of any particular state depends on the sort of temporal relation Richardson describes, he points out that what is primary is the process of change rather than beginning from the notion of a state-to-state change. This appears to be an important point that Przybyslawski does not address: as Richardson points out, what we call real beings are extended in time, and thus any change they are subject to is temporal. It is difficult to see what the notion of a pure process of change separated from anything extended through time would be. Hence such an idea offers little explanatory value when it comes to elaborating an adequate conception of process. There is still an issue of whether Richardson's interpretation is faithful to Nietzsche's denial of thinghood. As Richardson writes, 'In the terminology I've adopted (but not explained), its point is only to redescribe beings, by insisting that temporal stretch is essential to them: they're processes' (Richardson 1996, p. 104). On first glance it appears to face problems in this regard, because Richardson admits that the notion of being is still at play, but that the beings now refer to 'process points', temporal points we delineate within a process. Richardson concludes that it may be as inadequate to describe

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. *TI* '"Reason" in Philosophy', 2

processes in these terms as we once again arrive at a being-centric ontology. Richardson's 'process point' account of becoming is in many respects similar to the 'monad'-type reading of will to power that exists in many critical commentaries, described as quanta of power. Hales and Welshon, for example, describe such quanta as 'primitive units of force that form their own (unique, non-standard ontological category)' (Hales and Welshon 2000, p. 69). On the basis of this Richardson goes further to suggest that there may be issues in the way the ontology is conceived: we might do better to consider it also in terms of genealogy in order to once more grasp the temporal aspect of becoming, compared to the self-sufficiency of each momentary being. Lastly, one further point that Richardson makes with regard to Nietzsche's ontology is that becoming, so understood, is contextual. In addition to having a temporal character, the processes constituting becoming are contextual or relational: they are what they are in virtue of their relation to other processes (1996, p. 101).

Ultimately Richardson concludes that the process-point language, and description of the project as ontology, is still fundamentally viable given that these terms have been effectively "emptied out" of their substance-type terminology:

'If Nietzsche's replacement of beings with becomings is still part of a theory of reality, isn't it still part of a theory of "being", too, once we've purged that term of its usual presumption of self-sufficient moments? To be sure, this purging reaches deeper into the notion than our earlier ejection of the Parmenidean-Platonic accretions to being: unchangingness and eternity. But I think there remains an evident core, which justifies treating Nietzsche's project of description as still generically the same as the traditional one, still a theory of "what's there", an ontology' (ibid)

Other commentators have also dealt sufficiently with the problems looming behind substance terminology as they relate to 'monad'-type will to power ontologies, and they do so in ways strongly similar to those used in the ontological descriptions of process philosophy. Hales and Welshon emphasize that we should consider quanta of power less in terms of substances than as events (2000, p. 69), and indeed there is a significant resource available in process philosophy that might be used to address the issue of terminology in Nietzsche's relational ontology as Richardson describes it.

Mourelatos suggests a process-based vocabulary in his influential paper ‘events, processes, and states’ (1978) which denotes the differences between the terms discussed in the title. For Mourelatos process, like stuff, is homogeneous and indirectly countable, while events are heterogeneous and directly countable. The benefit of having available a vocabulary like Mourelatos’s is that it allows us to describe and categorize a relational process ontology like Nietzsche’s without facing the problems of being-based ontology that Richardson is describing. In order to properly be a viable alternative to transcendental becoming, we must also be able to explain the leap from disorganized affects or processes (what we might term ‘pure flux’) to the organized, stable world we perceive. Cox’s affect-based conception of becoming did not appear to give us an immediate answer. How, then, does Richardson’s conception fare? It is especially with claiming that the processes of becoming are contextual/relational that we go some ways towards addressing the gap between flux and experience in a satisfactory manner. If we are to maintain a non-dualistic (yet not substantial-monist) conception of becoming we must be able to say that both the world of a ‘chaos of sensations or affects’ (Meyer 2014, p. 48) and the world of ‘conscious subjects and ordinary, everyday, middle-sized objects’ (ibid) are real. Both worlds are real because the processes that make up both are one and the same. However, they are also relational, and so they may be both a disorganized chaos apart from a human perspective and the objects of everyday experience without contradiction or, importantly, without one being more or less ontologically real than the other. Does this mean that the relational ontology of becoming is idealist? No, because what constitutes the identity of a process is partly our experience of it, but not wholly. This is an ontological issue we will return to in the coming chapters. For now, there are two points to consider: 1) we can immediately see how there will be a strong link between ontological becoming or process in Nietzsche’s philosophy and his perspectivism, 2) the relational ontology serves to highlight similar ontological features as the doctrine of co-present opposites in Heraclitus’s philosophy. I will explore the links in the former point in the coming chapter on perspectivism, so it is now worthwhile to linger on the similarities with the doctrine in the second point.

Putting aside the addressed problem of transcendental becoming, we can now return to the evaluation of Nietzsche as a process philosopher by comparison with

his predecessor. As I have explored them, commentaries on Heraclitus as a process philosopher (such as Daniel Graham's) highlight that Heraclitus offers a broad conception of change or process that functions in a similar manner to the relational ontology outlined above. As Graham writes, within Heraclitus's view of change it is structure and order that emerges from flux rather than being separate from it or imposed upon it: 'If we return to the river fragment, we see that for Heraclitus stability may emerge from a process of constant exchange and replacement of material contents. To put it in a philosophical way, form supervenes on flux. As long as some sort of equilibrium state is achieved, we may find a long-lasting structure which is characterized by constant material change' (Graham 2012, p. 5). Of course, there is no perspectival or ontological issue at hand as there is in Nietzsche's philosophy, but debates over the status of the role of the *logos* in Heraclitus's writing seem to take on a similar function. As noted earlier, the *logos* (the structure of the world) can be seen not a transcendent principle, it is rather an immanent principle at work in process, accessible to (yet at the same time constitutive of) human understanding. In a similar vein, relational ontology is wholly immanent (we can perceive and understand process).

To summarize thus far: it is an open question to ask whether Nietzsche is a process philosopher. I argue that it is acceptable to do so, and the most immediate way to verify this is to consider the philosophical affinities that Nietzsche has with his Heraclitus, a widely known rudimentary process philosopher. Along the way, a significant issue arose: the way in which both philosophers discuss becoming is evidently different, with Nietzsche struggling with a neo-Kantian conception of noumenal flux. This is the criticism of Przybylski, who appears to be theorising about becoming as transcendent, which is to say that it is beyond conceptualization or perception. Considering this, I examined other ways in which commentators have attempted to understand becoming as immanent: Cox provides a variant in which becoming is immanent as affects, but the same issues of noumenal and transcendental becoming are present. Namely: the world as affect-becoming does not comfortably bridge the gap between disorganized flux and our immediate, stable experience. We have looked at alternative attempts to bridge this gap with a different vocabulary, namely John Richardson's process-point vocabulary. We have seen that Richardson runs aground with this vocabulary in the sense that it seems to require

bringing in the notion of substance at some point or other in order to be understandable. This raises a question: can we address this through reference to other traditions, such as process philosophy? Regarding this, I briefly examined the process-philosophical vocabulary of events, processes and states. What may further aid an attempt to re-think the vocabulary of process at this point is an examination of a vocabulary and cosmological viewpoint in ancient Chinese philosophy. Such an approach may provide further resources to properly ground a comparative process ontology in its own vocabulary. I have chosen this period in ancient Chinese philosophy because it contains some of the formative cosmological notions that I hold may be insightful for an account of comparative process ontology. A significant portion of later Chinese philosophy from the Han period onwards turns towards an increasing concern with syncretism and aligning state with cosmos. This is reflected, for example, with the ‘Unification of the Three Teachings’ (三教) ideology. I have refrained from drawing on philosophical work of this nature because of the danger that it may introduce derivative concepts that may make it more difficult to get at the cosmological assumptions that lie at the basis of such ideologies. That is not to say that such periods and movements have nothing to offer for conceiving process thought, but they fall outside the scope of a heuristic work such as this to be integrated. I have likewise refrained from drawing on Buddhist thought (Chan, for example) for the same reason: the concern with avoiding the introduction of further metaphysical or conceptual schemata that problematize a clear and direct grasp of the underlying process-based principles.<sup>16</sup>

### **1.3 – Theorising Process in Early Chinese Cultural Thought**

Besides the vocabulary provided for conceiving becoming that we have examined in the Western tradition of process philosophy, there are also ample resources available from the altogether different perspective of pre-Warring States period Chinese thought. We have already seen at length that the debate over

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<sup>16</sup> The same justification applies to the Western side of the comparison. I have chosen Nietzsche’s philosophy as a basis precisely because his work resists the imposition of metaphysical schemata. While there is the use of conceptual schema in Nietzsche’s philosophy (such as will to power, perspectives, drives) Nietzsche often appears to draw on scientific terminology (such as the language of drives), and we could speculate that such conceptual schemes be ‘swapped out’ for various equivalent scientific notions.

conceiving becoming has to a large extent focused on how the leap from an undifferentiated chaos of process to human cognition, regularity and stability, and the perception of things, is possible. This is resolved to a degree, as we have seen, with the interpretive work of commentators like Richardson and Cox, who attempt to show how the transformation from so-called pure process to our everyday perception is immanent. Nonetheless this project is tinged from the outset by a metaphysical history of substance thought in the West, and we have arrived at what appeared to be a terminal point in our theorising of becoming: we can resolve the perceptual gap but we are still faced with a vocabulary that is tinged with substance metaphysics. Hence, we must either reject Richardson's reading of becoming in Nietzsche's work or concede it at the cost of saying that it partly arrives at the same theoretical point as a theory of being, that we are effectively describing being in other terms.

Chinese thought in the work I am concerned with (the *Yijing*) offers a perspective in which the notion of metaphysical substance as it appears in ancient Greek philosophy has far less operative role and instead 'concerns relations and changes much more than Western philosophy' (Mou 2009, p. 504). As such, a consideration of its relevant vocabulary may therefore enlighten our own conception. It may be helpful to initially begin with accounts of how Chinese philosophy is so separate from Greek philosophy. Much of the discussion on how Chinese thought differs from Western thought centers on the debate over whether or not Chinese thought undergoes the shift of transcendental thinking and dualism. In more specific terms, the debate can be seen to be over whether Chinese entered what Karl Jaspers denotes the 'Axial Period', the period in which mankind 'experiences absoluteness in the depths of selfhood and in the lucidity of transcendence' (Jaspers 2009, p2). The influential sinologist Benjamin Schwartz adopted and elaborated the notion of transcendence as it appears in relation to the axial period:

'To the extent that the word "rationalism" refers to the primacy of the idea of order, we can already speak here of the emergence of a kind of Chinese rationalism. It is, however, a rationalism that is radically different from many varieties of rationalism in ancient Greece. What we have is an image of an all-embracing and inclusive order which neither negates nor reduces to some one



ultimate principle that which is presumed to exist. Like the rationalism of bureaucracy, it classifies and subsumes the existent reality. It is a synthetic rather than an analytic conception of order.’ (Schwartz 1975, p. 53).

This sort of transcendence differs from the form of transcendental thinking that we have associated with Western thought. Here, transcendence is taken to still be within an immanentistic cosmology, the key point is simply that a form of rationalism emerges in Chinese thought that is somehow comparable (according Jasper’s thesis of the axial period) to Western rationalism in a universalistic sense. It is with this latter element of universality, or the sense in which Chinese thought is taken to evolve in a particular direction reflective of a general progression in thought, that many commentators are at odds with. Joseph Needham for example emphasizes the role of Chinese cosmology as a cyclical process in being the bedrock of Chinese thinking, rather than the mechanistic or atomistic thinking that has guided Western rationality:

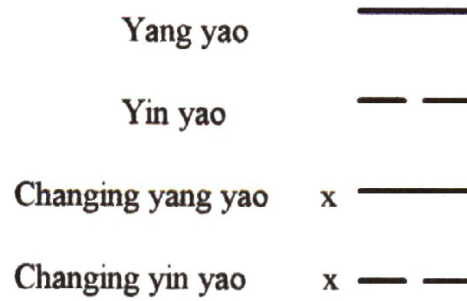
‘Things behaved in particular ways not necessarily because of prior actions or impulses of other things, but because their position in the ever-moving cyclical universe was such that they were endowed with intrinsic natures which made that behaviour inevitable for them [...] They were thus parts in existential dependence upon the whole world-organism. And they reacted upon one another not so much by mechanistic impulsion or causation as by a kind of mysterious resonance’ (Needham 1956, p. 281)

In addition to this, what emerges in the West more specifically is the dualistic tendency between Democritean atomistic thought on the one hand, which sees its development into Cartesian and ultimately mechanistic thinking, and on the other a separated, spiritualistic and theological form of thinking that finds its roots in Platonism. It is especially this latter element that distinguishes Chinese thought out from Western tendencies: it has been argued that there is no demiurge or *logos*, or external will that participates in the creation or shaping of the cosmos in Chinese thinking. Chinese mythological figures and creators embody and participate in the same world in which humans and animals do. Others have more strongly criticised the notion of transcendence in Chinese thought, such as Ames and Hall. Such commentators go so far as to radically downplay the role of rationality in any

familiar form being operative in ancient Chinese thought and instead point to the role of correlative thinking as an alternative bedrock: 'If comparative philosophy has anything to say about Chinese culture during the so-called Axial Age, it is certainly this: notions of 'absoluteness: 'transcendence: and 'subjectivity' were of doubtful significance' (Ames and Hall 1995, p. xiii). Ames and Hall compare the dominant mode of thinking in Chinese culture to that of Western thought, contrasting its reliance on 'analogical or correlative thinking' (ibid.) with 'causal thinking' (ibid.). The former differs from the latter in that it assumes process as dominant over stasis, and draws on correlations in order to explain phenomena rather than invoking agencies or external principles.

Having examined some of the fundamental background behind Chinese thought (we will explore this aspect in further chapters), we can now look at its development in concrete terms. Chinese philosophy is dominated by a process paradigm because it stipulates that the fundamental principle of reality is change (*bian*). The primacy of this basis as such is most directly perceived in the writing of the ancient cosmological text of the *Yijing*. The *Yijing*, or Book of Changes, is an ancient example of correlative thinking and cosmology. We will consider the *Yijing* primarily in terms of its use in correlative thinking because it represents the aim, as Schwartz writes, of 'that of finding in the homologies between human and natural phenomena a means of controlling human civilization as well as individual human life by "aligning" them with the cycles, rhythms and patterns of the natural realm' (Schwartz 2009, p. 355). The *Yijing* was originally used to provide a structure for divination. This structure was composed of 64 hexagram figures (*gua*) themselves combinations of 3-line figures. Such hexagrams were built up line by line with information for each line corresponding to a structure conceived in order to organise the phenomena they are used to interpret. More specifically, the lines composing a hexagram structure describe the patterns, directions, and the principle of change:

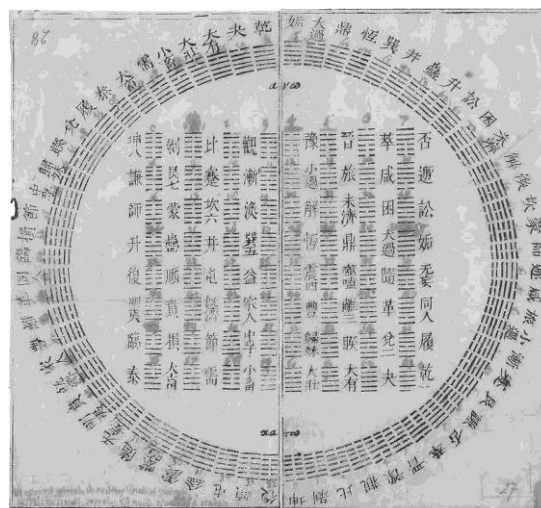
**Fig 1: (Individual lines, yao)**



**Fig 2: (Hexagrams, gua)**



**Fig. 3: (Full structure)**



The movement from the bottom line (*yao*) up to the top line of the hexagram (*gua*) symbolizes the process of change in general terms of a particular situation. The bottom line will generally serve as the foundational stage of change. The second line represents a progression of movement of change in which there is a proper formation of change within the foundation, while the third line represents a stage in which that change has become concrete and enacted. The fourth line signifies a period of strong growth of change, while the fifth indicates the high point of change in which there is relative flourishing or abundance of that process. The sixth and final line represents the apex of change, which then also implies another transformation into another cycle of change. Lastly, two fundamental notions are used in interpreting the structure: *yin* and *yang*. Originally the notions of *yin* and *yang* appear to have a perceptual and experiential basis as day turning to night, as indicated by Bo Mou:

‘As we take the shining and shading experience as the primitive experience of change, we can see that change consists in the shining becoming the shading of the light or the shading becoming the shining of the light. But we also see that shining and shading may coexist for a period of time before there is complete shading or complete shining as clouds may move one way or another. We also come to see that this kind of change occurs naturally and constitutes a natural course of events in the world. We further notice that changes of this sort take place against a background sky and space which may contain other things but which may appear not changing against the moving clouds and the events of shining and shading. But this is not to say that they may not change from one state to another. What we come to see for the moment is that there is change marked by shining which we may call the *yang* (literally, sunshine on the hill) and there is also the change marked by shading which we may call the *yin* (literally, shadows over the hill)’ (Mou 2008, p. 82)

Thus the two formative notions of *yin* and *yang*, which evolve in what might be understood to be a metaphysical direction, are derived from a change and appearance-based intuition of the world. These two notions come to be developed in terms of abstract properties that we will later analyse. To return a final time to the *Yijing* (having elaborated some of the principles through which it is interpreted), while it is often associated with divination or fortune-telling, the *Yijing* may be understood structurally as a compilation of symbols and imagery through which to

parse any particular experience or expectation. Most importantly, parsing such experiences with the *Yijing* invites the interpreter to consider them in terms of the field of changing circumstances. In his introduction to the text, Li Yan clarifies this:

‘Understanding and conforming to nature and society in their changes, the philosophy in the *Book of Changes* does not define absolute favorableness or unfavorableness. Good or ill luck, smoothness or adversity are all relative and transformable. As long as you can grasp the proper time, position and direction, you can obtain relative freedom even under absolutely restricted circumstances. On the other hand, if you proceed from a stiff and one-sided view, you may end up in a situation which is unfavourable and dangerous to you even if the other circumstances are favorable.’ (Li Yan 1997, p. ix)

Such an activity is made possible through the correlative thinking at the basis of the text: As Schwartz explains (2009, p. 355), our thinking is composed of words drawn from the vocabulary of our language. In speaking we combine our words from larger groups or sets, and then combine them in sentences or phrases. In doing so we draw on a stock of thought patterns that have pre-existing associations. Some examples of these associations would be: day-night, light-darkness, good-bad. We already use these in cliché forms: ‘in the light of day/the darkness of ignorance’, etc. More importantly, we sometimes metaphorically substitute these relations in phrases as well, when they are similar: ‘king’ is to ‘men’ what ‘lion’ is to ‘beasts’, ‘king’ is to ‘throne’ what ‘chairman’ is to ‘chair’. Thus, before thinking in concrete sentences, then, we are linguistically and socially predisposed to pattern our experiences in terms of these chains of oppositions. We associate that night comes after day, and that the daylight is safer while the night is more dangerous. This represents the non-causal manner in which Chinese thought proceeds, and the *Yijing* is a structure that draws on it<sup>17</sup>.

The *Xici* commentary to the *Yijing* also provides further vocabulary that shows a development in Chinese understanding of process. As Bo Mou points out: ‘There is a unity

of the initial change and the completing action, which is intended by the term *yi-jian*, literally, the completed action of change. [...] the point of using *yi-jian* or

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<sup>17</sup> For an extended analysis of correlative thinking in Chinese thought, see A. C. Graham’s *Yin-Yang and the Nature of Correlative Thinking* (1986)

*jian-yi* to refer to the principle of change is that it indicates evolution to a more advanced stage of development of culture and knowledge through the inventive power of the human mind. To be simple and easy (as the term *jian-yi* suggests semantically) is to go beyond a given form of experience to a higher form of experience which integrates the earlier forms in a new form of experience with greater scope and greater unity and hence greater simplicity. This new form of experience requires intelligent use of the mind for organization, interrelation and comprehensive integration. In this sense the idea of *yi-jian* or *jian-yi* is one of rational ordering and ontological rooting' (Mou, 2009, p. 82-83). From the outset of Chinese cultural thought, then, some features reminiscent of process thought as we have covered it are apparent; the idea that change is consistent with structure and regularity yet not mechanistically determined, as evidenced by the text of the *Yijing* as an example of correlative thinking derived from a process stand-point. As we have also seen, there is a clear emphasis on relationality derived from process. As a text concerned with efficacy (the ability to act effectively), the *Yijing* elaborates an interpretive structure where patterns of change constantly shift in their directionality and transform into each other, processes are patterned and regular yet also transformative and reversible. Additional vocabulary is also present in Chinese thought of this period in describing the workings of change. Also operative in thought of this period are three central concepts of *yin* and *yang* (which we will explore further in Chapter 5), two qualitative concepts that combine to form features of the underlying "stuff" of the world, *qi*, which is often understood in commentaries as vital force.

If there is any resemblance to the Western notion of thing-hood or substance it may be found in the idea of *xingzhi* (which Robin Wang translates as substance), an alternative way of understanding the functioning of *yin* and *yang*. According to the *xingzhi* interpretation both *yin* and *yang* have more direct correlations: *yin*, for example, is directly correlated with the moon, while *yang* is directly correlated with the sun. As Robin Wang writes, the *xingzhi* interpretation is more intrinsically hierarchical: 'In contrast with the *qi* interpretation [it] tends to objectify the ideas of *yin* and *yang*. *Yin* and *yang* are converted into things one can see and feel; they have substance to them' (Wang 2005, p. 212). However, it must be borne in mind that *xingzhi* is still not an equivalent to substance metaphysics as it is understood in the

West. This is because the substance of *xingzhi* does not refer to some ultimately unchanging particular; it is rather simply another way of conceptualizing process. Processes according to *xingzhi* are understood through objectified *yin* and *yang*, which under this schema become directly sensible: *yin* and *yang* become things we can see or feel, and thus classify in the manner above. This is directly practical yet at the same time may be dangerous in the manner of its classification, a point we will return to more fully in the final chapter. In any case, both *qi* and *xingzhi* are both schemata for interpreting the basic, fundamental processes of the world. The main difference appears to be in praxis: the *qi* interpretation lends itself to theoretical, holistic and correlative consideration while the *xingzhi* interpretation is, as Robin Wang points out, ‘an empirical perception of *yin* and *yang*, one that could foster a conceptual transition from dynamic to static and eventually dualistic and hierarchical categories’ (ibid.).

So much for having established some basic features of process thought in Chinese process thought— how are things conceived of in such a tradition? We have already seen that thing-hood in the West is strongly intertwined with the notions of substance and being, to the point where it has been difficult for commentators to formulate a theory of becoming in Nietzsche’s philosophy without falling back on terminology infused with the former notions. As I have written, process thinking offers a potential solution with an alternative vocabulary. Chinese philosophy also offers a theoretical background that is both similar in the direction of its vocabulary yet completely different in its origin. The ancient Chinese tradition of thought emphasizes thing-hood in both processual terms and an inter-relation with human beings. Gong Hua’nan and Liu Liangjian examine thing-hood at length in their article ‘*How Is the Arrival of Things Possible? — On Things and Their Arrival in Ancient Chinese Thought*’ (2008). Taking as a fundamental basis the idea that within the Chinese tradition things were predominantly conceived in terms of events, that ‘Chinese thought was more interested in things as events than in things independent of human beings, so many thinkers directly claimed that things are events ‘ (394). They go on to point out that there has been an inextricable element of practicality and inter-relation in the Chinese conception of things throughout its various schools of thinking. In Confucian thought, for example, human beings have a central role in the process of growth and achievement of things as phenomena, ‘When a human

being doesn't act as a human being, a thing will fail to realize its proper characterization' (391). Part of what constitutes a consummate human being according to Confucianism thus involves a human's involvement with the things in his environment, but this must be considered carefully: what this relation involves is not a detached, external environment that the Confucian human simply participates in and molds. There is no such bifurcation: 'Confucianism holds that a thing is an element innate in a net woven by Heaven, Earth, human beings, and things' (ibid.). To be sure, within this net humans have a more emphasized position according to Confucian doctrine (this comes to a head in the philosophy of Xunzi<sup>18</sup>).

Daoism likewise maintains the interwovenness of human beings and things as inter-related processes, but it shifts the emphasis from human action as a means for the cultivation and achievement of things to withholding purposive interference in order to allow for the self-cultivation of things (*ziran*). The *Daodejing* clearly enunciates these principles, as both commentators point out: 'In effect, for Laozi<sup>19</sup>, we can produce a thing only when we do not take possession of it, we can act properly only when we do not rely on our own ability, and we can support a thing in its nature only when we do not take any action' (393). Again, however, it should be noted that by not taking action it is not implied that things are by themselves, a separate world external and isolated from human beings. By virtue of being processes of nature like all else, things are already implicated with humans, and Daoism points out that there is already a natural totality of all processes that steer things toward self-completion (*Dao*), within which human purposive intervention is unnecessary.

At this point that we can consider some potential criticisms of the cosmology and conception of thing-hood laid out according to Chinese thought. A natural and immediate question is whether there is anthropocentrism involved in these conceptions. It could be argued that anthropocentrism assumes an epistemological external/internal or subjective/objective worldview. Unreflectively applied to

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<sup>18</sup> Xunzi is known in Chinese philosophy for claiming both that human nature tends towards selfishness, and that resources are scarce. Hence, the manipulation of environment and the importance of economics are clear: 'Xunzi argues that human desires always outstrip the material resources available for their satisfaction: Distributing and allocating these goods in ways that achieve maximum satisfaction requires deliberate creative social policy. He argues that Confucian training, in particular, not only brings about order, but deals practically with the distribution of scarce economic resources' (Hansen 1992, p. 314)

<sup>19</sup> The typically supposed author of the *Daodejing*.



Chinese cultural thought of the time, this is erroneous given that such dichotomies are not as clearly formulated in the works covered. Nonetheless, within Chinese tradition there are philosophers who do criticise schools of thought on the basis of a particular form of anthropocentrism. It will be important to qualify in what sense there is anthropocentrism, because it is not the form evident in Western philosophy (namely, the debate over subjective and objective, or realism and idealism). The *Zhuangzi* is one of the most informative examples of criticisms of anthropocentrism within the Chinese tradition and it will therefore be fruitful to consider some of its criticisms as a means of better understanding its differences with Western philosophy. As a methodologically Daoist text, the *Zhuangzi* offers a response to the various disputes of the schools during the Warring States period. These disputes predominantly revolved around the notion of names (*ming*) and the various guiding discourses (*dao*<sup>20</sup>) advocated by the different schools. The stories of the *Zhuangzi* work to undermine the idea that there could be any one guiding discourse that is ultimately the case, and it does this by 1) proffering a kind of perspectivism in which the value judgements from one perspective are seen not to hold from another, and 2) showing that the distinctions from within any particular guiding discourse are relative and reversible. The former can be seen in stories like the ‘happy fish’, known among many things, as Graham points out (1989, p. 123), for being the only instance of disputation of Zhuangzi with the famous logician-philosopher Hui Shi:

Chuang Tzu and Hui Shih were strolling on the bridge above the Hao river. “Out swim the minnows, so free and easy,” said Chuang Tzu. “That’s how fish are happy.” “You are not a fish. Whence do you know that the fish are happy?” “You aren’t me, whence do you know that I don’t know the fish are happy?” “We’ll grant that not being you I don’t know about you. You’ll grant that you are not a fish, and that completes the case that you don’t know the fish are happy.” “Let’s go back to where we started. When you said ‘Whence do you know that the fish are happy?’, you asked me the question already knowing that I knew. I knew it from up above the Hao.” (ibid.)

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<sup>20</sup> The notion of *dao* here differs from *Dao*, with the former referring to multiple guiding discourses proffered by the schools (for example, there was a Confucian guiding discourse, a Daoist guiding discourse, etc), and the latter totality of processes that make up the world, the singular *Dao* of Daoism. I draw on this notion of a guiding discourse from Chad Hansen’s *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought* (1992).

Although variously interpreted, the ‘happy fish’ exchange has been read both as a perspectivist critique and as a deflationary attack on argumentative logic<sup>21</sup>. Likewise, the ‘sorting which evens things out’ (trans. Graham) or *Qiwulun* serves as an excellent textual example of the second point, showing how distinctions from any particular *dao* may be reversible and relative: ‘[N]o thing is not “other”, no thing is not “it”. [...] Hence it is said “”Other” comes out from “it”, “it” likewise goes by “other”” [...] If going by circumstance that’s it then going by circumstance that’s not, if going by circumstance that’s not then going by circumstance that’s it.’ (ibid. p. 52). The *Zhuangzi* is a consummately daoist text in this regard, and shares the same tendency towards reversibility and relativization that the *daodejing* enunciates:

‘As soon as everyone in the world knows that the beautiful are beautiful,  
There is already ugliness.  
As soon as everyone knows the able,  
There is ineptness.  
Determinacy (*you*) and indeterminacy (*wu*) give rise to each other,  
Difficult and easy complement each other,  
Long and short set each other off,  
High and low complete each other,’ (Laozi 2003, p. 176)

Although he is a *xuanxue* scholar and thus outside the scope of this thesis, the neo-daoist Wang Bi recognizes in his commentary this sense of essential Daoist complementarity that ‘[e]njoying and getting angry [thus] have the same root, agreeing and rejecting [thus] come out of the same door; therefore it is not possible to take up [only one of them] unilaterally’ (quoted in Wagner, Rudolf G. 2003, p. 126). Attacking an anthropocentrism that has its roots in the idea that there could be any one guiding discourse from which to make non-relative, timeless discriminations, the *Zhuangzi* points out that ‘Gibbons are sought by baboons as mates, elaphures like the company of deer, loaches play with fish. Mao-ch’iang and Lady Li were beautiful in the eyes of men; but when the fish saw them they plunged deep, when the birds saw them they broke into a run. Which of these four knows

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<sup>21</sup> See the recent publication *Zhuangzi and the Happy Fish* (eds. Ames, Roger T.; Nakajima, Takahiro, 2015) for a selection of different readings of the passage.

what is truly beautiful in the world?’ (*Zhuangzi*, ‘the sorting which evens things out’, Graham 2001, p. 58). When presented with a perspectival account such as this, it is imperative for the Western interpreter not to make sense of the passage in terms of the subjective/objective dichotomy previously described. It is not that the *Zhuangzi* is rejecting any sort of objective standard of beauty, as there is no such notion of objectivity present in the work. Likewise, the passage is not an expression of scepticism over beauty: each animal has something that is attractive and what is attractive to one species may be repulsive to another. As such, the text does not denigrate any form of attraction. Instead, the point of the passage lies towards its end, where there is a clear concern with *shi/fei* (‘that’s it/that’s not it’) disputation: ‘Which of these four knows what is truly beautiful in this world? In my judgement the principles of Goodwill and Duty, the paths of “That’s it, that’s not”, are inextricably confused; how could I know how to discriminate between them?’ (ibid.). Beside the perspectival point, there is also the important Daoist point that there is no ultimate guiding discourse (*dao*) from which to deem things so or not so, and thus any evaluation may be ‘confused’: it can be reversible and relative, and there are no ultimate grounds for discriminating between them.

Anthropocentrism is thus recognized in Daoism as a criticism of guiding discourses that attempt to impose themselves as lasting and holding for all (the first lines of the *Daodejing* famously state ‘[way]-making that can be put into words is not really way-making, [a]nd naming that can assign fixed reference to things is not really naming’<sup>22</sup> (*Daodejing* Ch. 1, trans. Ames and Hall) but not in a manner that accords with Western debates over objectivity and subjectivity. There is no question as to whether a particular guiding discourse is part of the world; it is rather that there is a recognition in Daoism that none are encompassing, none are equivalent to the entirety of processes represented by Dao: ‘[w]ay-making being empty, [y]ou make use of it but do not fill it up. So abysmally deep—[i]t seems the predecessor of everything that is happening’ (ibid. Ch. 2). David Ames and Roger Hall have

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<sup>22</sup> I adhere to a generally non-metaphysical interpretation of the *Daodejing* (one that does not speculate a metaphysical or ineffable totality beyond the totality of processes in the world, a Great *Dao*. This research follows Hansen in claiming that ‘We could, in principle, take as interpretive hypotheses that the subject was a *dao* or any *dao*, or simply *Daos*’ (Hansen 1992, p. 215). This would appear to fit with a *Daodejing* and a *Zhuangzi* conceived as responses to the guiding discourses (*dao*) of previous schools rather than focusing on the introduction of a metaphysical entity. It may be the case that interpretively speaking, the truth may lie somewhere between both readings, but those sceptical elements are those of relevance to this research.

previously attempted to elaborate Daoist philosophy in a process-philosophical terminology and ‘follow A. N. Whitehead in questioning the appropriateness of using “creativity” in the familiar creatio ex nihilo model that we associate with Judeo-Christian cosmogony. Whitehead argues that any robust sense of creativity requires that creativity itself is more primordial than God’ (Ames and Hall 2003, p. 29). In particular, in describing Chinese cosmology (although they are reluctant to use such a term) they draw on the notion of focus and field, with a focus representing any particular process within an ‘endless stream of always novel yet still continuous situations’ (ibid. 25), the field. According to this account, this leads to a worldview in which there is ‘ontological parity among the things and events that constitute our lives’ (ibid.). As we have already noted, a process-based view of the world emphasizes an appreciation of the inter-dependency of the various processes that make up the whole. In particular, chapter 10 of the *Daodejing* asks whether the efficacious individual at hand can adopt the disposition of a newborn baby (ibid. Ch. 10). That is to say, it asks whether the individual can maintain a perspective that, like the newborn baby, is empty of all super-conscious inclinations and instead is open to the flow of ever-changing experience. The *Zhuangzi* likewise reinforces this sentiment through its critical treatment of argumentative discrimination: ‘[t]he Way [Dao] has never had borders, saying has never had norms. It is by a ‘That’s it’ [discrimination] which deems that a boundary is marked. [...] What is outside the cosmos the sage locates as there but does not sort out. What is within the cosmos the sage sorts out but does not assess’ (Graham 1989, p. 57). Ames and Hall emphasize this characteristic in their rendering of Chinese cosmological thought:

‘The field of experience is always construed from one perspective or another. There is no view from nowhere, no external perspective, no decontextualized vantage point. We are all in the soup. The intrinsic, constitutive relations that obtain among things make them reflexive and mutually implicating, residing together within the flux and flow. This mutuality does not in any way negate the uniqueness of the particular perspective. [...] A corollary to this radical perspectivism is that each particular element in our experience is holographic in the sense that it has implicated within it the entire field of experience. This single flower has leaves and roots that take their nourishment from the environing soil and air. And the soil contains the distilled nutrients of past growth and decay that constitute the living ecological system in which all of its participants are

organically interdependent. [...] By the time we have “cashed out” the complex of conditions that conspire to produce and conserve this particular flower, one ripple after another in an ever-extending series of radial circles, we have implicated the entire cosmos within it without remainder.’ (ibid. 31)

In this way the Daoist stance on anthropocentrism presents a similar response to the issue of interpreting process or becoming. The fundamental point that I have attempted to argue is evident within both traditions of process thought is that there is no discontinuity between human experience and flux: they are both intertwined, yet flux is not necessarily reducible to human experience. Nietzsche struggles to adequately express this in his philosophy because of the influence of substance metaphysics within the Western tradition. We have seen that even in attempts to reconcile Nietzsche’s account of becoming as purely immanent one encounters problems of substance vocabulary. However, as evidenced in Chinese texts such as the *Yijing* (as discussed in chapter one), *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi*, we are presented with an alternative interpretation that is free from this sort of influence, and allows us to “see around our own corner”. Chinese process thought also raises remarkable methodological similarities with accounts of process we have encountered in esteemed process philosophers such as Heraclitus: process is compatible with the structure and regularity of human experience. Throughout this latter section I have attempted to elucidate the vocabulary through which early Chinese thinking conceives of change. Some of this vocabulary and its underlying structure is dramatically different to the way in which I have charted attempts to discuss change in the former section (Richardson’s and Cox’s attempts to extricate the language of becoming from the noumenal/phenomenal dichotomy, and Richardson’s ‘process-point’ terminology which risks re-instantiating the notion of substance on a different level). Some of the reasons for this difference I have attempted to show: the role of correlative thinking in developing this vocabulary through the *Yijing*. But just as important is the absence of the familiar distinctions and dichotomies Western commentators struggle with. I hope to have shown through this latter analysis that an engagement with these dichotomies is not strictly necessary, there are alternate vocabularies and structures of thought through which to pursue the same end. It is reasonable to ask: why not draw on such vocabularies to resolve the problems faced in discussing change in Nietzschean philosophy rather than attempting to work through such familiar problems with Western

methodologies? Such a question may not be capable of being answered, because it relies itself on a hypothetical question as to how Nietzsche would have developed his philosophy had he access to such alternative modes of thought. Nonetheless, such modes of thought do provide further solid ground for the development of a comparative process ontology, and its basic features should be clear: comparative process ontology sees the world in terms of change, it eschews traditional dichotomies of Western philosophical thought (external/internal, noumenal/phenomenal, subjective/objective), it is non-deterministic and favours correlative thinking, and its vocabulary favours an events-based language over a substance-based vocabulary. This is by no means the fullest, most comprehensive explication of such features, but it may suffice for a heuristic basis on which to proceed further.

## **Chapter 2 – Epistemology-Evaluation in Comparative Process Thought**

In this chapter, I will devote the majority of my time to unravelling the relationship between Nietzsche's perspectivism, becoming, and the doctrine of will to power. In the context of comparative process ontology, I do this as a necessary part of showing one of the core features of comparative process ontology: there is a clear and direct interconnection between ontology and evaluation in comparative process ontology. I will now argue for a reading of Nietzsche's perspectivism that is continuous with both his view of reality as becoming and his doctrine of will to power. This reading will attempt to address two significant problems raised by scholarship regarding perspectivism: 1) How should we interpret Nietzsche's perspectivism, is it a psycho-biological, ontological or epistemological doctrine? 2) If evaluative judgements in Nietzsche's philosophy are merely perspectival, how can they have any motivational force behind them for other perspectives. That is to say: how is inter-perspectival critique possible, and if so, on what grounds does it proceed?

In order to address these issues, I'll put forward a reading of perspectivism that claims it consists of two components: an ontological component, and an epistemological-valuational aspect, which turns out to be an extension of the first

component. The ontological component of perspectivism concerns the ontological status of what the stated perspectives of perspectivism are, and what sort of an ontology perspectivism proposes if it is indeed ontological. Here I claim that Nietzsche's ontological perspectivism implies that the world consists solely of a multiplicity of perspectives reducible to flux, flux itself characterised as ever-changing force. The epistemological-valuational aspect of perspectivism is concerned with Nietzsche's pre-occupation with the rank or hierarchy of the multiplicity of perspectives constituting the world<sup>23</sup>. The manner in which he ranks perspectives is through his own doctrine of will to power, his own philosophical perspective, which considers all perspectives to be in a constant struggle amongst each other, from the lowest (what I take to be something like inert matter) to the highest (which Nietzsche seems to think are the grand, holistic perspectives of the most influential philosophers<sup>24</sup>), according to the pervasiveness of different perspectives so organized.

What is meant by construing will to power as an evaluative standpoint, or a valuational aspect of perspectivism? It will be necessary to provide an overview of will to power as Nietzsche discusses it in his works. Will to power is never cohesively or systematically discussed by Nietzsche, a point which has given rise to various interpretations of will to power, some of the more influential readings of which are discussed below. In some passages, particularly in *Beyond Good and Evil* he describes will to power as a principle of life, ~~to an uncertain degree~~: 'life itself as such is will to power' (*BGE* 13), 'Granted finally that one succeeded in explaining our entire instinctual life as the development and ramification of one basic form of will – as will to power, as is my theory' (*BGE* 36), "'Exploitation" does not pertain to a corrupt or imperfect or primitive society: it pertains to the essence of the living thing as a fundamental organic function, it is a consequence of the intrinsic will to power which is precisely the will of life' (*BGE* 259). Likewise in *OGM* Nietzsche briefly mentions will to power in his account of punishment, particularly in addressing the idea that punishment was devised for punishing, where he claims on the contrary that 'purposes and utilities are only signs that a will to power has

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. *BGE* 263, 260, and *WTP* 287.

<sup>24</sup> In an unpublished note dated 1883-1885, Nietzsche writes that '[t]o impose upon becoming the character of being-that is the supreme will to power' (*WTP* 617). I claim that it is philosophers who often exhibit what Nietzsche claims to be the grandest perspectives because they are those who have historically theorised Being the most, and indeed, Being has been the general pre-occupation of Western philosophy.

become master of something less powerful and imposed upon it the character of a function' (*OGM* II 12). In *TSZ* Nietzsche also mentions will to power, in the context of representing values: 'A tablet of things held to be good hangs over every people. Behold, it is the tablet of its overcomings; behold, it is the voice of its will to power.' (*TSZ* I 15). Nietzsche's published writings, ~~then~~, give a family resemblance of features to contemplate when trying to understand what will to power is as a concept, but no definitive, comprehensive account is given ~~of it~~. At times he appears to posit it as a concept that relates to organic life, at other times it appears to be a psychological principle, and in unpublished notes such as in *WTP* 1067 it appears as an ontological principle: 'This world is the will to power-and nothing besides!' For now, it will be helpful to sketch some general features I attribute to will to power as a concept. Firstly, I take it as an evaluative standpoint. That is to say, I ~~will~~ claim that will to power is concerned with evaluating things and the world, it facilitates the description of order of rank. This sets it apart from perspectivism, which simply recognises a multiplicity of perspectives. As a more specific example, what separates a reactive and resentful individual from an active and affirmative type is the degree to which a will to power is expressed through both. Later in this chapter, I ~~will~~ examine the different ways in which interpreters have come to grips with the concept, before settling on the view that will to power represents Nietzsche's evaluative philosophy, his manner of ordering phenomena according to his perspective. This is 'evaluative' because it involves perspectival judgement: Nietzsche affirms some phenomena over others, and describes the workings of other perspectival judgements as their "wills to power". How should we understand power in this instance? Given that I have already argued that for Nietzsche what is fundamental is a flux of changing perspectives describable in terms of force, power itself is reducible to force. To explain Nietzsche's perspectival evaluations, or any other perspectival evaluations simply as manifestations, however, is explanatorily reductive, and puts us back in the area of describing process ontology rather than describing the world from a particular perspective within the multiplicity. To sum up, ~~then~~ will to power, I claim, is Nietzsche's evaluative perspective, how he ranks phenomena as higher or lower, value-wise, and 'will' in this instance is the very process (conscious or unconscious) of ranking phenomena, whereas 'power' is simply reducible to the expression of force.



To return to ranking perspectives according to how pervasive they are, construing perspectivism according to pervasiveness also makes the rank order of perspectives an empirical issue: whether a perspective is 'higher' than another can be judged by how pervasive it is throughout history and human culture<sup>25</sup>. In this sense, epistemological-valuational perspectivism escapes the complaint that it is "just" a perspective among others, for every perspective by nature has this empirical basis. Nietzsche's perspectivism therefore presents itself both as an evaluation of the multiplicity of perspectives and as the greatest competitor yet, given its depth and breadth of holism; as such Nietzsche estimates that his philosophy, in being the best perspective yet, will become the most pervasive as a "philosophy of the future".

To begin with, it will be important to consider contemporary interpretations of Nietzsche's perspectivism in order to better understand whether there are interpretive shortcomings to be accounted for. In a recent work Ken Gemes has surveyed a variety of interpretations on what sort of doctrine perspectivism is (taking Nietzsche's writings on the subject as a whole). He presents three different understandings: a *semantic* reading of perspectivism, an *epistemological* reading, and a *psychobiological* interpretation, the last of which he favours. *Semantic* perspectivism, which Gemes understands as the claim that '[t]here are no facts/no truths, only interpretations' (Gemes 2013, p. 554), presents the problem typically posed of Nietzsche's perspectivism: how can such a claim itself be true if there are no truths or facts? This theoretical incoherence is countered with another interpretation, the *epistemological* reading of perspectivism. Perhaps the most ambitious interpretation along these lines is the variety summarized by Gemes holding that perspectivism explores how '[b]eliefs are not justified through a comparison with a mind independent reality or by reference to some indisputable foundational truths' (Oxford handbook, same section). This interpretation is particularly engaging for the sort of wide-ranging consequences its adoption would bring in interpreting Nietzsche's philosophy, and so it will be necessary to consider the position to a significant degree. I will look at two contemporary interpretations that fall along this line, both Tsarina Doyle's (2009) and Katrina Mitcheson's

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<sup>25</sup> This raises the question of whether wholly pervasive perspectives like the ascetic ideal are higher in terms of order of rank. I address this issue later in this chapter when I discuss Nietzsche's conception of truth as power.

(2013). In looking at these perspectives, I want to focus on three aspects of the interpretations: the role of comparison with a mind-independent reality, the role assigned to epistemology in perspectivism (focusing on Doyle's reading for these former two), and the operative conception of truth that epistemological readings have (focusing on Mitcheson's for the latter). An examination of these three core aspects will capture the most insightful features and consequences of Nietzsche's perspectivism. In order to proceed, it will now be helpful to indicate some basic points motivating perspectivism at the outset: it seems evident enough that Nietzsche rejects traditional metaphysical realism (or at least attempts to), the notion that there is a mind-independent reality (most immediately, things-in-themselves) apart from human subjectivity, accessible to them or not. Hence, the requirement that 1) truth, and 2) knowledge principally conform to a mind-independent reality above and beyond all perspectives (human or otherwise) appears unintelligible within such a framework because there is no such thing to conform to. In lieu of either radical relativism or idealism, then, how are claims to knowledge and truth substantiated within perspectivism?

## 2.1 Epistemological Perspectivism – Critique of Perspectivism as Epistemology

A strong recourse to solving these problems has been the epistemological interpretation of perspectivism, and the attempt to understand the consequences of perspectivism on epistemological grounds. One such interpretation of Nietzsche's perspectivism is Tsarina Doyle's (2009), which highlights both Kant's influence on Nietzsche and perspectivism's purported epistemological basis as a theory. Framing perspectivism as a response to a Kantian problematic, Doyle writes that 'Nietzsche's project entails not a rejection of Kant but rather a modification of him' (35). Where Kant had argued that human subjectivity constitutively structured our experience of the world, leading to an epistemic gap between the world as it was in itself and our experience of it, Doyle argues that Nietzsche (recognising the unintelligibility of the notion of a perspective-less noumenal reality) instead claims that those features of human experience that Kant saw as *constitutive* (the categories) were in fact *regulative*: 'although all our knowledge is directed by our points of view, they do not constitute objects. Objects knowable by us, according to [Nietzsche], are neither reducible to nor determined by our point of view' (39). Doyle thereby sets out a fundamental point about perspectivism: human experience isn't fundamentally separate from reality taken as a whole, nor, however, is reality reducible only to human experience. This means that perspectivism ought not to reduce to a form of scepticism or naïve anthropocentrism. Doyle elaborates this crucial point throughout her work. Likewise, she addresses another important, basic problem in the relation between becoming and perspectivism by pointing out that becoming, according to Nietzsche, should not be understood as a radical flux, because this simply re-instantiates the Kantian world of thing-in-themselves by positing a flux-in-itself, a becoming that is above and beyond the forms of human knowledge and perception incapable of grasping it. Instead, she claims that

'[...] Nietzsche's conception of Becoming applies to *both* our manner of knowing the world and the character of the world. Nietzsche suggests that the knowing self is immersed in the process of Becoming and consequently that our knowledge is not to be understood independently of this process. He thereby removes the epistemic gap that was opened up by Kant's constitutive account of knowledge. According to Nietzsche, the forms of our knowledge do not stand over and above

a world of Becoming constituting it from without, but rather are provisional maxims subject to revision and enclosed within the world' (43).

This in turn resolves another core question: what is the relation between becoming in Nietzsche's philosophy and his doctrine of perspectivism? Doyle's answer is that becoming is interwoven with the perspectival character of our experience and knowledge, and also the character of the world at large, and therefore there is no fundamental conflict with either doctrine. Having looked at how Doyle addresses the core difficulties in interpreting a holistic perspectivism, it is now appropriate to examine what Doyle sees in the practical and theoretical implications of Nietzsche's perspectival reality. For Doyle the implications of perspectivism are most readily apparent in our epistemology: she bears out Nietzsche's dismantling of correspondence-style approaches to truth and knowledge by claiming that Nietzsche's perspectivism instead offers us a form of contextualism, '[b]y adopting a form of contextualism, Nietzsche aims to replace the metaphysical realist view *from nowhere* with the perspectivist view *from somewhere*' (61). This is a contextualism, Doyle holds, because our perspectival standards and (descriptive) evaluations 'must undergo a process of justification in the context in which they are entertained' (62) and can still therefore be considered objective. Likewise, perspectival truth is defended against the epistemological possibility of our knowledge being massively at error by being subject to the same justification: 'By emphasising that the acquisition of such new information must enter the justificatory arena Nietzsche rules out the possibility of such acquisitions casting our beliefs into massive error' (64). Justification itself is made possible according to Doyle by drawing on the distinction between cognitive capacities and cognitive interests. Truth must not depend on our cognitive capacities (which would threaten to relegate truth to anthropocentric realism, and also, as Doyle shows, would not 'allow for the real possibility of increased observational abilities and discovery' (ibid.) which we seem to have), it must instead depend on our cognitive interests, because as Nietzsche points out, all truth is perspectivally grounded, and as Doyle writes, the formerly-mentioned discoveries we make must be 'justified and intelligible to us' (ibid.). This form of justification, Doyle highlights, appears to ensure a secure enough degree of certainty in our knowledge because what is presented for justification will never be unintelligible to us, or radically different, it will be intelligible to the extent that it reflects our cognitive interests (and to the extent that it reflects our cognitive

interests, it cannot be radically false). Of course, there are a range of cognitive interests, and not all will be properly epistemological, so Doyle further clarifies how some will be more conducive and reliable as epistemological standards than others: 'By emphasising the importance of justification and the giving of reasons, Nietzsche distinguishes between an interest that has entered the arena of justifying its epistemic credentials as opposed to any interest that we may have whatever. An interest is cognitive when it seeks to support its view with reasons for and against in a particular context' (65).

In piecing together a coherent epistemological position from Nietzsche's perspectivism, Doyle captures some of its most fundamental features, particularly the rejection of a reality-appearance problematic and its equivalent in the area of knowledge, and also clearly positions perspectivism, within an epistemological tradition in highlighting Kant's influence, and this research agrees with the above key points. Given the nature of Nietzsche's fragmented and aphoristic style of writing, it is necessary for any contemporary commentator who addresses Nietzsche's writing in a consistent and comprehensive manner to either construct or situate that work in a theoretical position with an accompanying terminology. In doing so, commentators run the risk of being anachronistic, of interpreting the work in terms that were inapplicable at the time of the philosopher. Nevertheless, an anachronistic reading may be helpful, and may be justified, insofar as it captures the spirit of the idea being put forward by the text, albeit in contemporary terminology. It may even be enlightening in the sense that the original author may not have had the language now available with which to better express the idea. One concern with Doyle's reading of Nietzsche's perspectivism is that it may be anachronistic in the sense that it interprets Nietzsche's writings and remarks pertaining to perspectivism in a contemporary analytic framework. For example, she describes Nietzsche's position as 'adopting a contextualist argument claiming that our practices of justification determine truth' (61). Doyle's reading of perspectivism and the consequences it has for truth, knowledge and the appearance/reality distinction emphasizes the doctrine as having an epistemological nature. She writes, for example, that 'Perspectivism thus aims to induce a form of epistemological modesty by claiming that we cannot acquire extra-perspectival knowledge' (66), likewise that 'Nietzsche's main contention with metaphysical realism thus centres on the issue of

the dissociation of truth and justification' (58), thereby foregrounding a preoccupation with the concerns of epistemology. There is no significant issue insofar as the terminology Doyle uses to interpret Nietzsche's writings is insightful and leads to a better understanding of the core ideas involved. It is, however, an open question in scholarly debate whether the sort of epistemological project that Doyle describes is present in Nietzsche's work.

In contrast, this thesis holds that the project of finding a stable basis for knowledge appears to be among those ends of philosophy, along with the need (in a certain form) that motivates such projects, that Nietzsche hopes to have given later philosophers further resources to overcome with doctrines like perspectivism, understood ontologically. In an 1887 note Nietzsche appears to briefly outline the 'fundamental innovations' he foresees for the future of philosophy. They prove to be insightful regarding the role of epistemology, classically construed with the justification of knowledge: 'In place of "epistemology," a perspective theory of affects (to which belongs a hierarchy of the affects; the affects transfigured; their superior order, their "spirituality" (*WTP* 462). Likewise, Nietzsche also expresses distrust towards the classical epistemological project in another earlier note of 1885-1886: 'Deeply mistrustful of the dogmas of epistemology, I loved to look now out of this window, now out of that; I guarded against settling down with any of these dogmas, considered them harmful -and finally: is it likely that a tool is able to criticize its own fitness?- What I noticed was rather that no epistemological scepticism or dogmatism had ever arisen free from ulterior motives -that it acquires a value of the second rank as soon as one has considered what it was that *compelled* the adoption of this point of view' (*WTP* 410). What compels the adoption of this perspective, as far as Nietzsche sees it in Kant, Hegel, and Schopenhauer, is a moral origin (*ibid.*). There are further notes in which Nietzsche appears to denigrate the traditional epistemological concern over knowledge: an 1887 note claiming that '[t]he measure of positive knowledge is quite subsidiary or a matter of indifference: as witness the development of India' (*WTP* 580). Given such writing, this research would rather examine the ways in which Nietzsche might be considered to be overcoming the project of epistemology, as he is concerned with overcoming conventional morality. One way to understand what overcoming the traditional project of epistemology means is to fundamentally turn away from considering knowledge as a problem of justification to considering knowledge in purely

practical, efficacious terms, as ‘know-how’ and ‘knowing to’. Thus, as Schacht writes,

“‘Knowing that’ is thus a function of ‘knowing how,’ which relates to the attainment of practical objectives in our dealings with the world and each other, and in which efficacy takes precedence over all other considerations. ‘Knowledge works as a tool of power,’ not merely in the superficial sense that theoretical insight often can be turned to practical advantage, but also in a more fundamental sense. For the character of ‘knowing’ reflects both a ‘will to power’ and the contingencies of our constitution on the one hand, and on the other the sorts of possibilities presented to us by the world.’ (Schacht 1983, p. 87)

A shift in terms of practicality is implied to a certain extent with Doyle’s treatment of perspectival knowing, as she highlights in writing how, for Nietzsche, ‘cognitive interests represent our best standards of rational acceptability (our best reasons for holding a theory to be true’ (Doyle, 2009:65). Indeed, philosophical reflection on our cognitive interests and their practical use in the role of knowing seems to be well advocated by Nietzsche, and an entirely compatible fit with Nietzsche’s renewed understanding of knowledge explicated by Schacht. Schacht’s reading of a renewed conception of knowledge in Nietzsche philosophy, however, still represents a philosophical endeavour sizeably different to one in which the core aim is motivated by justified, verifiable access to a reality. By undermining the distinction between human perspective and mind-independent reality, and revealing its genealogical history in philosophy, Nietzsche shows that the traditional concern in epistemology is an unintelligible demand, and can thus be dispensed with. Doyle appears to recognize that Nietzsche works in part towards a conclusion like this, but maintains that Nietzsche foremost works toward establishing a basis on which we can reasonably assure ourselves that we are not in complete error in our beliefs, that we have access to mind-independent reality in a particular form. These are projects part of a traditional epistemological conception. This work would instead hold that the aim and importance of Nietzsche’s perspectivism is not to provide a stable basis for human knowledge and to ensure justifiable access to reality, it is to show that the demand for either can be dispensed with, and that epistemology as a whole, traditionally understood, is a project that can be dispensed with by Nietzsche’s future philosophers.

In the following sections, I aim to show that Nietzsche's underlying process ontology (understood in terms of expression of force) and the overlying will to power doctrine makes the notion of fundamental epistemological error trivial: strictly speaking there are no beliefs that are in error, because beliefs have no significant semantic content when considered as being as being reducible to expressions of power. There can be epistemological errors in Nietzsche's power ontology only in the sense that one perspective 'runs up against', is subsumed or contradicted by a more powerful, broader perspective. Likewise, a belief cannot be justified in anything but the trivial sense stated above because Nietzsche's power ontology shows that a process of justification is nothing more than an expression of power that demonstrates the growth, subsumption, and health of whomever holds the belief. Such a position appears to dangerously resemble a more simplistic 'might makes right' position: I hold that this, to a significant extent, may be true of Nietzsche's epistemology, with the substitution of the term 'power' for 'might'. And that a form of power-pragmatism would be more accurate in the description of Nietzsche's position in this regard. In order to more satisfyingly explain why this is the case, I want to finally draw on the key notion of truth in Nietzsche's philosophy, and its relation to perspectivism. I will argue for a reading of truth as equivalent to power in Nietzsche's philosophy, because such a reading shows how perspectivism and will to power can be continuous with each other. In order to bring such a reading out further, I also consider and address criticisms from another proponent of the epistemological reading, Katrina Mitcheson.

## **2.2 Epistemological Perspectivism - Perspectivism and Truth**

If Nietzsche rejects the framing of correspondence-type epistemologies and truth, and the implications of perspectivism make it unnecessary for him to adopt the contextualist position that Doyle suggests, then how does he propose distinguishing between what we want to call real and illusory (ontologically speaking) or true and false (epistemologically speaking)? What appears to be the most effective candidate in Nietzsche's philosophy is power, or degrees of power. Given that power (equivalent to expression of force) constitutes perspectives, it will soon become clear why power is the standard according to which claims about ontology and truth



should be evaluated. A number of commentators, such as Ruediger Grimm and Wolfgang Müller-Lauter, have already suggested similar theories<sup>26</sup>. I will now examine the core points of this position, and consider a recent criticism and opposing thesis by Katrina Mitcheson.

In what follows I will mainly draw on Grimm, who argues that Nietzsche's understanding of truth is an outgrowth of the will to power. Grimm summarises his position succinctly: 'Nietzsche's criterion for truth is not concerned at all with the logical content of the proposition. The content, in fact, is largely irrelevant. Its truth or falsity lies in *the degree of efficacy, in the degree of power increase or decrease*, with which the proposition functions when I employ it in my behavior.' (Grimm 1977, p. 19, my emphasis). Truth and falsity, according to Grimm, is equivalent to efficacy. The more efficacy something has, the truer it is. The same can be said for ontological questions about reality and appearance: 'An object is "real" (or a "true" object) because it resists me, because it does not conform to my every whim. I know that the wall is real because I cannot walk through it: it resists my passage. Something which offers no resistance has no objective reality'<sup>27</sup> (20). Such a conception of truth, of course, has to be strongly qualified. However, most immediately, Grimm draws on the notion of resistance as a means of differentiating greater or lesser truths and reality from appearance. A truer idea, according to Grimm, is one that requires 'straining my intellect, pushing it beyond its previous limits, overcoming resistance and thereby growing in (intellectual) power' (ibid.). Likewise, in terms of reality, whether an object is real or not depends on the amount of resistance it offers against another expression of force, a notion which strongly resembles the Eleatic principle.

Such a radical understanding of truth prompts a number of difficult issues which I will soon address. Before I do so, I would like to consider Katrina Mitcheson's recent argument against this interpretation of truth as a means of addressing some core misunderstandings. Although Mitcheson focuses on Grimm's and Müller-Lauter's readings, I will draw only on Grimm's because Grimm's

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<sup>26</sup> See Grimm, Ruediger Hermann, *Nietzsche's Theory of Knowledge*. Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1977, and Müller-Lauter, Wolfgang. *Nietzsche: his Philosophy of Contradictions and the Contradictions of his Philosophy*. Translated by David J. Parent. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999.

<sup>27</sup> Such a conception may go some ways towards explaining claims like WTP 534: 'The criterion of truth resides in the enhancement of the feeling of power'

account presents an extended treatment of the issue. Mitcheson writes of these arguments that they ‘confuse Nietzsche’s analysis of what has often been taken to be true, which is that which has maximised power for a particular perspective, or provided the only outlet of the expression of power for a weak perspective, with his own criterion for truth’ (Mitcheson 2013, p. 49). Expanding her argument, Mitcheson highlights how Nietzsche, through his critical methodology, reveals as ‘illusions’ those ideas that have provided humans with ‘enhanced power’, doctrines as pervasive as the ascetic ideal, and fundamental features of human thought like the notion of identity. She goes on to point out that these illusions are ‘contrasted to the truths that emerge from a new truth practice. These truths include the analysis of why these illusions have been taken as truths in terms of the wills to power, or perspectives, they serve’ (ibid. 49). What enhances power, therefore, cannot necessarily be equivalent to what is true, because we seem to be aware of cases where an apparent enhancement of power (the ascetic ideal, the notion of identity) is seen to be illusory or false. Mitcheson also briefly offers another reason why power cannot be considered equivalent to truth: ‘although Nietzsche remains committed to the value of truth, he does not value truth in itself. It is a mistake, therefore, to equate what he ultimately takes as true with the evaluative standard of what maximises power or, to put it another way, with what enhances life’ (ibid. 49).

By proceeding in a manner that persists in holding that Nietzsche’s methodology as revealing the traditional epistemic falseness or ‘illusoriness’ of doctrines like the ascetic ideal, Mitcheson seems to neglect a central point that Grimm emphasizes about understanding truth as a function of power. Grimm devotes a portion of the writing in his chapter on truth to what is called the ‘Revaluation of the Disjunction True-False’ (1977, p. 21). In it, Grimm very clearly points out that with such a conception ‘the traditional concept of truth and falsity scarcely applies anymore to this context of resistance and power differences’ (ibid.). We can see that it scarcely applies anymore because, strictly speaking, the conception effectively implies that there are no actual illusions or falsities in the world (which is a power-flux ontology shaped by Nietzsche’s will to power doctrine). Although Nietzsche often uses the terminology of illusion or falseness conventionally, his power ontology allows us to reduce talk of illusions or falseness to a basic way of describing contrasting perspectives of greater or lesser power. Such

reducibility may be partly reflected in claims by Nietzsche that ‘the will to power is the primitive form of affect, that all other affects are only developments of it’ (*WTP* 688).

It might be objected that Nietzsche rarely uses the true/false terminology in a way that suggests their direct reducibility to will to power. This can be readily admitted, and it makes sense to say that in attacking other perspectives as false, dishonest or illusory Nietzsche not simply trying to expose a perspective as that of greater or lesser power. In drawing on the language of truth and falsity, Nietzsche’s critique of perspectives has a transformative aspect. In exposing the will to truth as influenced by the ascetic ideal, for example, we have the capacity to transform our practices in the areas of knowledge and life. As Mitcheson points out, ‘a change in a drive, habit or practice, themselves wills to power, can effect a change in the unity of wills to power which make up an individual’ (Mitcheson 2013, p. 128), and such changes may apply to communities and societies in the long run. Nietzsche’s use of terms such as honesty and dishonesty in the intellectual sense reflect a constructive aspect, and this aspect may not be directly appreciated we only talk in terms of power. What Nietzsche’s power ontology nonetheless showcases is that these processes of transformation are essentially processes of power: a change in the practice of truth for the better or worse is a growth or diminishment of power.

To continue along these lines, one might say that according to this understanding of truth, there is no falsity, there are only greater or lesser degrees of truth<sup>28</sup>. Consider briefly the case of hallucinations: we conventionally assume that when we experience a hallucination, auditory or visual, we are seeing or hearing something in the world that doesn’t actually exist; it isn’t “real”. Properly speaking, however, the hallucination is entirely real, but only as an activity in the brain, we have simply misinterpreted that activity as something that is an existing object in the world. Grimm’s interpretation holds something similar about all phenomena relating to the true/false distinction; there are no real non-existent objects like hallucinations, for example, only misinterpretations of existing ones (that is to say, less powerful interpretations positing a false object contrasted more powerful ones drawing on

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<sup>28</sup> The same might be said of Nietzsche’s evaluative philosophy ultimately: there are no true negations, only veiled affirmations. Such a dictum is partially reflected in Nietzsche’s observation that humans would rather will nothing than not will at all (*OGM* III, 1)

psychology<sup>29</sup>). According to this conception, then, when Nietzsche reveals doctrines like the ascetic ideal as “illusory” he is essentially showing that they are misinterpretations of power differences, or less efficacious interpretations than his own, more life-affirming one. This is why genealogy as an investigative methodology is so important in Nietzsche’s mature philosophy: it provides a concrete means of demonstrating how a thing is ‘illusory’ or ‘false’, in efficacious terms, after one abandons conventional standards of truth and reality as correspondence, by evaluating the power differences between ways and doctrines of living.

With this clarification in mind, it seems as though Mitcheson, in her criticisms, is assuming a conception of truth that Grimm’s interpretation is calling into question in the first place. When understood with the renewed conception, Mitcheson highlighting that ‘[w]hat has enhanced power [...] and what has been useful [...] are often shown by Nietzsche’s methodology to be illusions’ (Mitcheson 2013, p. :49) simply means that the degree of truth involved in the prior interpretation of phenomena like the ascetic ideal is inferior to Nietzsche’s genealogical interpretation, and when truth is understood as a function of power this means that the former interpretation is less powerful, less “true” than the latter. Hence, the ascetic ideal and other doctrines may be useful and enhance the power of those who adopt them, but they are only illusory in the sense that they are not as powerful as instinctually healthy ways of life of higher types, or the life-affirming philosophical doctrines that Nietzsche prescribes<sup>30</sup>. Nietzsche does not expressly draw on this viewpoint in criticising other perspectives, he rather uses the conventional language of falsity and dishonesty. However, if we take his power ontology seriously then we are committed to viewing these perspectives as ontologically real, existing in the world as expressions of force with some degree of power. In such instances the only way of describing such perspectives in terms of falsity is through a relational comparison of power.

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<sup>29</sup> The power disparity between interpretations could be understood in direct terms of efficacy: treating a hallucination as a real-life object limits ones’ capacity to act in many cases, whereas the psychological interpretation reducing the hallucination to brain activity is a means of understanding and potentially curing the ailment, which increases the capacity to acts.

<sup>30</sup> This partly reflects Nietzsche’s view in *BGE* 30 that ‘What helps feed or nourish the higher type of man must be almost poisonous to a very different and lesser type. The virtues of a base man could indicate vices and weaknesses in a philosopher. [...]. There are books that have inverse values for soul and for health, depending on whether they are used by the lower souls and lowlier life-forces, or by the higher and more powerful ones’.

If the world is power, and truth is power, how should Nietzsche's questioning of the value of truth be understood? When Nietzsche critiques truth in such instances, it appears that he is critiquing truth in its classical correspondence form, or a 'truth in itself' the will to truth as a will to comprehend a world apart from appearances and perspectives, and at any cost<sup>31</sup>. *BGE* 2, for example, conveys the impression that Nietzsche critiques the value of truth residing in 'the lap of being, the everlasting, the hidden God, the "thing-in-itself"' and opposes his future philosophers as ones who reverse these values. There is also a key part of this aphorism in which Nietzsche questions '[t]he fundamental belief of metaphysicians is the belief in oppositions of values' (ibid). In this aphorism Nietzsche evidently directs his criticism towards truth as it is metaphysically construed, as being the thing-in-itself or world-in-itself. One particular point stands out from Nietzsche's critiques: truth is often portrayed as something that is sometimes good for life and sometimes not. How do we reconcile this if truth is power, and power is intrinsically valuable in an ontological sense? The key point to note is that there is no single 'life', there are various forms of life, various perspectives that make up the whole. Hence, to say that truth can be good and bad for life is effectively to say that it can be good for some forms of life, bad for others. Likewise, the classical desire to know absolute truth writ large is incoherent within Nietzsche's power ontology, because the world is not describable in terms of a single perspective, hence it is not describe in terms of absolute truth. A perspective will always be limited. Comprehending the world as a whole as will to power will aid higher types and allow them to act in a more empowered manner, whereas such a comprehension would be detrimental for a lower type and hence be a check or diminishment of their power.

Mitcheson's critique raises a second point worthy of extended consideration. She writes that 'although Nietzsche remains committed to the value of truth, he does not value truth in itself. It is a mistake, therefore, to equate what he ultimately takes as true with the evaluative standard of what maximises power or, to put it another

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<sup>31</sup> One thinks of sections in which truth is rendered as a quasi-metaphysical or theological concept, as in *GS* 344, where truth is 'a metaphysical faith upon which our faith in science rests - that even we knowers of today, we godless antimetaphysicians still take our fire, too, from the flame lit by the thousand-year old faith, the Christian faith which was also Plato's faith, that God is truth; that truth is divine'.

way, with what enhances life. Rather, truth is valuable for Nietzsche if its pursuit and our commitment to it are found to be life-enhancing' (ibid.). In order to address this point, we have to consider very carefully the relationship between truth and power if they are taken as equivalent, firstly, and then the relationship between power and life-enhancement. If there are clear discordances in either, then we have reason to reject the equivalence of truth to power. It appears that Nietzsche doesn't value truth in itself as far we understand truth according to the conventional, epistemic conception. What does this mean, however, in terms of the renewed conception of truth as power? It is important to note that with this renewed conception, there is nothing like an abstract "power-in-itself"; power is understood as expression of force, and is therefore embodied in everything from activities to beings. With power understood as such, it seems fairly clear that this is indeed what Nietzsche does value in itself, as power is both the means and the end<sup>32</sup>. Now, Mitcheson writes that 'truth is valuable for Nietzsche if its pursuit and our commitment to it are found to be life-enhancing' (ibid); with what has already been said about power, it seems clear that an enhancement of life is essentially an enhancement of power, a greater degree of power. Following from the renewed conception, it is therefore a greater degree of truth. Contrary to what Mitcheson would claim, then, truth is not independent of its value.

It's clear that there are some interpretive issues with the reading offered here. Nietzsche does not make a direct equivalence between power, truth, and value. There is some evidence of a considered relationship, as in *WTP* 534 where Nietzsche claims that the 'criterion of truth resides in the enhancement of the feeling of power'. Likewise, Nietzsche hints at a relationship between truth and the feeling of power in *GS* 13: 'Whether benefiting or hurting others involves sacrifices for us does not affect the- ultimate value of our actions. Even if we offer our lives, as martyrs do for their church, this is a sacrifice that is offered for our desire for power or for the purpose of preserving our feeling of power. Those who feel "I possess Truth"-how many possessions would they not abandon I order to save this feeling!'.

In *AC* 2 Nietzsche seems to link power with value in asking: 'What is good? - Everything that enhances people's feeling of power, will to power, power itself'. Hence, there are several different references through parts of Nietzsche's work

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<sup>32</sup> John Richardson's article 'Nietzsche's Value Monism: Saying Yes To Everything' (Nietzsche on mind and nature) is an extended reading of Nietzsche's philosophy in similar terms.

suggesting various relations between these concepts, but no direct instances of equivalence. Rather than attempting to argue that this may have been Nietzsche's definitive view, I would rather claim that it is a fruitful avenue of thought to develop an equivalence on the basis of these relations. Nietzsche's remarks invite us to consider an equivalence but they do not themselves establish one. Thus, reading truth as equivalent to power may lack direct textual evidence, and may not ultimately reflect Nietzsche's textual view. However, I hope to have shown foremost that truth can be rendered as equivalent to power coherently within Nietzsche's philosophy, and doing so offers us further means of cohering ontology with epistemology within such a philosophy. This would then be a strength of such a reading.

### **2.3 Psycho-biological Perspectivism: A Critique**

Having examined various facets of epistemological perspectivism, it appears that such a reading seems to underestimate key practical elements that run against the concerns of traditional epistemology: namely, Nietzsche's pre-occupation with radically re-understanding epistemology as a concern with efficacy, 'know-how', along with the relationship between truth and power, as described above. This strong link between power and truth brings us to alternative readings of perspectivism that appear to link the doctrine to psychology, biology, and even ontology. One promising and prominent reading of perspectivism is that of it functioning as a psychobiological principle. Ken Gemes has recently suggested that perspectivism be considered a psychobiological claim with two components, one that is 'overt descriptive' and another that is 'hidden normative' (Gemes 2013, p. 564). Gemes describes the descriptive component as such: 'Each drive has its own perspective/interpretation of the world and seeks to express that interpretation of the world, often at the expense of other drives' (ibid.), while the normative aspect is the claim 'that a healthy life involves the maximal expression of the richest set of drives' (ibid. 572). The advantages over the epistemological reading are claimed to be: 1) that it fits with Nietzsche's writing about how organic life is perspectival<sup>33</sup>, 2) it shows how perspectivism links with Nietzsche's evaluative philosophy of power by linking it to

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<sup>33</sup> 'There would be no life at all if not on the basis of perspectival evaluations and appearances'. (*BGE* 34)

organic life and how life extends itself, and 3) it neatly links in with what Nietzsche writes about perspectivism in *GM III*<sup>34</sup>. There remain a number of questions, however, that Gemes's suggested reading does not address. Most importantly, if (according to this reading) Nietzsche thinks that each drive interprets the world and expresses its interpretation at the cost of others, and if humans are totalities of such drives (these drives being the relevant perspectives in question) then is Nietzsche's psycho-biological description itself a perspectival interpretation by the drives? If so, the further questions implied by the status of such a view lead the dispute back into epistemological-ontological territory.

To some extent, these questions are addressed through Gemes' alignment with the position outlined by John Richardson, of equating drives with the will to power: 'drives are 'will to power' in that they essentially pursue the continual enhancement of their distinctive activities, enhancement that consists in their mastery of others. So the level of a drive's activity, its strength, is measured by 'how much' it rules over others. (Richardson, 1996: 33)'. According to Richardson's understanding, 'Nietzsche takes his power ontology to generate a 'perspectivism' (35) and the 'perspectives' this teaching speaks of are those of drives or wills to power' (ibid.) The most important aspect of how Richardson thus understands perspectives is an intentional aspect that he expands upon: 'as will to power, a drive aims at ongoing growth in its distinctive activity. Nietzsche's perspectivism begins in the thought that this telic directedness goes together with an intentional one, with being a perspective, 'at' or 'on' some intentional content. Just by virtue of striving in the way it does, every drive involves, is partly, a particular "view": a view of its purpose or end and of the surroundings as helps or hindrances to that end' (ibid). Unlike Gemes, who seems reluctant to admit any significant role that a preceding ontology might have in understanding perspectivism, Richardson seems to more explicitly recognise its importance, and even if he resists completely equating power ontology with perspectivism, he comes very close to doing so on occasion: 'Nietzsche's thought includes both a metaphysics and a perspectivism, once these are more complexly grasped. But I argue that the metaphysics is basic: it's an ontology of perspectives' (1996, p. 12). I will return to Richardson's reading later, when I examine its treatment of will to power compared to perspectivism.

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<sup>34</sup> 'All happening in the organic world is an overpowering, a becoming-lord-over ; and . . . in turn, all overpowering and becoming-lord-over is a new interpreting . . . ' (*OGM II*, 12)



Even if taken as the psychobiological doctrine suggested by Gemes, perspectivism still requires elements from an underlying ontology to be properly understood. Gemes draws on Richardson's conception in order to explain what perspectives actually are, but it seems clear that Richardson implicates power ontology with perspectivism at a number of points. Nonetheless, strong links between the two philosophical ideas may not be sufficient to equate the two in a fundamental sense, and my claim will be that indeed power ontology is perspectivism, and vice-versa, and as such, that perspectivism is foremost an ontological principle. The psycho-biological interpretation of Gemes may be insufficient, to conclude, because it still leaves us with questions about whether a fundamental distinction between psychobiological types of phenomena and all other types can be fundamentally maintained. Troublingly, it seems that psychobiological phenomena are reducible to more basic expressions of force best understood in ontological terms. The reason that perspectivism cannot only be understood wholly in psychobiological terms is that the fundamental notion of 'drives' that interpreters draw on cannot be understood only on fundamentally psychobiological terms. This is because drives can be explained in more fundamental terms as power quanta, and power quanta include phenomena not limited only to the psycho-biological realm; that is, phenomena that we don't consider to be only life, organic or psychological in nature. Indeed, Nietzsche sometimes seems to cloud the distinction between both on the basis of his power or force terminology<sup>35</sup>, and so it will be necessary to examine a last variety of perspectivism that treats it as fundamentally ontological, and that inter-relates it with the doctrine of will to power.

## **2.4 Ontological Perspectivism (or Perspectival Ontology)**

This brings us to the final influential interpretation of Nietzsche's perspectivism, which claims that perspectivism extends to a characterisation of the world itself, that the world is perspectival in structure. Hales and Welshon have previously advanced a strong example of this interpretation, which also implements

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. *WTP* 655: 'The drive to approach-and the drive to thrust something back are the bond, in both' the inorganic and the organic world. The entire distinction is a prejudice. The will to power in every combination of forces, defending itself against the stronger, lunging at the weaker, is more correct.'

Nietzsche's doctrine of will to power. As a basis they draw on Nietzsche's claim that the world 'is composed of quanta of power that organize into sets of increasingly complex structures' (Hales and Welshon 2000, p. 62). As I have previously discussed, this is a common feature in commentaries on becoming and will to power, in which the world is characterised as atomic or monadic units of force. Hales and Welshon qualify their reading by making clear that these quanta are not concrete substances but rather 'events of power' (63), terminology reminiscent of process philosophical vocabulary. Nietzsche's doctrine of will to power figures into perspectival ontology according to Hales and Welshon in the sense that it is the manner in which quanta of power organize themselves into 'structure bundles or alliances of power, each such alliance concerned with extending its power' (64), it is this latter point concerning extension of power in particular that characterizes the doctrine. Having established the groundwork, Hales and Welshon claim that this ontology is comparable to bundle-theory type descriptions in Philosophy by figures such as Berkeley, Hume and Russell (66).

It is with this bundle-theory conceptualization of things in the world that there lies a significant question concerning Hales' and Welshon's reading. If quanta of power are grouped together in various bundles that we might ascribe thing-hood to then we must ask whether this is a process that goes on without external interpretation (that bundles are somehow intrinsically so-formed), or whether bundles require a 'bundler': a perspective in virtue of which quanta are grouped. Just as important, we must ask whether (if things are constituted as bundles of power quanta) any part of a bundle could change without the bundle itself going out of existence. That things do appear to change and yet remain stable as things is taken as a point against bundle theory. Likewise, how is bundle individuation conducted? What makes more or less of an aggregate of power quanta a thing-- for example, what is it that makes my hand a distinct thing and not 'my hand, the table, and the laptop' all a single thing?

Hales and Welshon outline three different responses for this question that can be seen in Nietzsche's writing: *conjunctivism*, *constellationism*, and *organizationism*. Under conjunctivism, every bundle or organization of power quanta is simultaneously a thing: this means that the number of things in the world is equivalent to the number of all combinations of power quanta. According to this

view the world is ‘pre-furnished’, already maximally populated with objects mapped to bundles (so, ‘my hand’ is a thing, ‘table’ is a thing, ‘laptop’ is a thing, and ‘my hand-plus-table-plus-laptop’ is also a thing) , what changes is not the objects in the world but our capacity to perceive and appreciate a different number of these objects: ‘finite human perspectives cannot incorporate all combinations of power quanta, so we focus instead on certain subsets of them [...] Such redirections may be construed as some kind of change in the external world, but, given that the world is impacted, it is in fact only an epistemic change in view’ (73). The second option is *constellationism*: constellationism allows for change in bundles on the basis that it is perspectives which form, modify and individuate those bundles. Under this reading, things come into and go out of existence, and change, on the basis of perspectives. Hales and Welshon point out that there a number of questions concerning constellationism: ‘introducing interpreters as the individuator of bundles leaves mysterious just how interpreters are capable of forming bundles. Just what power do these interpreters have? How is it used?’ (71). Likewise, a fundamental issue raised for *constellationism* is Peter Poellner’s argument that generates problems for any such anti-essentialist stance by showing that if all quanta are mutually dependent on each other for existence through interpretation, then there must be some intrinsic property that is generative, itself independently outside this circle of relationality (thus refuting anti-essentialism) or quanta are ultimately not truly separate from each, giving way to monism<sup>36</sup>. Compared with these two readings, both commentators agree that Nietzsche holds closest to a form of ‘organizationism’ about bundles, the view that bundles are individuated intrinsically without external interpretation. Organizationism avoids the issue of changing bundles ceasing to be things, and both commentators write that Nietzsche ‘is happy to agree that things do not change, or, viewed another way, there is change only and no continuing things that undergo change’ (72) (one might be inclined to think of this claim as a type of monism). Hales and Welshon also draw on this form of organizationalism to respond to Poellner’s criticisms of anti-essentialism: they claim that there may be some relational properties that are also essential properties, giving as an example the relation one has to one’s parents, as on the one hand you would not be who you are without them (or if one had different ones), making them essential, while at the same

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<sup>36</sup> See Peter Poellner, *Nietzsche and Metaphysics* (1995, pp. 108-110) for an extended discussion of this problem in more analytical terms.

time they are two distinct entities and therefore partly relational. Having essential, relational properties thus fits nicely with Hales' and Welshon's organisationalism because such properties may come about and coalesce into a bundle according to an internal principle of organization rather than depending on a particular perspective. Organizationism is also significant in that it is compatible with another core doctrine in Nietzsche's philosophy: *amor fati*. The idea that every part is essential to power bundles to make them what they are and cannot be changed without fundamentally changing the bundle is one that resonates with the necessary sense of *amor fati*. If bundles are individuated intrinsically without external interpretation, what is left for Hales and Welshon is to show how they can be so and yet also perspectival at the same time. Hales and Welshon put forward the view that for each quantum of power there is a corresponding perspective mapped onto it, that 'perspectives can be mapped to both discrete quanta of power as well as more complex bundles of power' (74). So, for every quantum of power there will be a perspective, at all levels of complexity. There are still other questions concerning organizationism that deserve to be explored: primarily, what is it in virtue of which bundles of power quanta are organized. This is a point both commentators recognise, admitting that 'organizationism leaves unexplained what is that in virtue of which the quanta form these agreements' (72).

Hales and Welshon make a powerful argument for perspectival ontology, and it is surprising how convincing their basis in a relational, essentialist and pseudo-monistic ontology is. These features do blanch with his writings on various issues, however, often as much as the other positions they outline do<sup>37</sup>. There also some outstanding issues: what is the organizing principle that makes quanta of power group in the ways that they do? Furthermore, there appear to be some questions worth asking about the interaction between the distinctly perspectivist elements and the ontology these commentators put forward. According to Hales and Welshon, perspectives are generated by the will to power, 'a locus of will to power generates a perspective' (21). Adopting a perspective by a locus of power (such as a human being) affords a degree of change in that locus according to both commentators:

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<sup>37</sup> The 'bundle' conception of power quanta may be taken to read something like an atomistic conception, which Nietzsche criticises as a linguistic prejudice in *OGM*, prologue, § 13: 'Natural scientists are no better when they say "Force moves, force causes," and so on—our entire scientific knowledge, for all its coolness, its freedom from feelings, still remains exposed to the seductions of language and has not gotten rid of the changelings foisted on it, the "Subjects" (the atom, for example, is such a changeling, like the Kantian "thing-in-itself")'.

‘Adopting a perspective is then a way of mastering one’s experiences, of coming to grips with them’ (ibid.). However, Hales and Welshon seem to de-emphasize the causal power of perspectives when they adopt organizationism and claim that things do not change. According to their reading, perspectives ‘can be mapped to both discrete quanta of power as well as more complex bundles of power’ (74) but it is unclear what need there is for them, ontologically speaking, if they do not have any causal influence. This does, however, seem at odds with Nietzsche’s writing because that a perspective interprets means that it has some causal effect on the world: to say that adopting a perspective is a way of mastering one’s experiences must be cashed in through causal terms, otherwise it is effectively superfluous. To allow that the interpretive work of perspectives is causal (that is to say, efficient) and can affect other perspectives would seem to undermine organizationism, however. How do Hales and Welshon respond to this issue? They claim that, following from their point that every power quantum has a distinct, mapped perspective, that causality must also be ‘a species of the genus interpretation-perspective’ (108) and therefore for every power quantum there will simply be ‘a distinct causal interpretation-perspective’ (ibid.). Causality, then, is reduced to the form of interpretation of perspective, and is thus thoroughly perspectival on every level, and this would resolve any sort of issues of extra-perspectival causality.

However, this point should also be considered in terms of the previous debate between organizationism and constellationism. According to organizationism, perspectives do not affect each other: things cannot change, there is only an infinity of perspectival interpretations for each variety and instance of thing. This then amounts to claim that on the one hand there is a brute ontology of unchanging things (or simply change itself) along with perspectives, and among these perspectives is causality, causality as efficient force is thus assimilated to perspectives. One problem that can be seen, however, is whether causality has any meaningful function within this organizationalist ontology. There is no causal interaction between quantum bundles on a basic ontological level, there is no causal interaction between perspectives, and there is no causal interaction between causal interpretations—because there is no causal interaction going on, what is it in the first place that makes interpretations causal? This account of causality and its underlying ontology is, as Hales and Welshon recognize, ‘strikingly similar traditional views of substance, with power quanta serving as the fundamental nuggets out of which intrinsically

individuated objects are composed' (110). Nietzsche, however, criticizes the notion of substance at length, and it seems unlikely that his writings were aimed at establishing another variety of a substance-type ontology. This highlights a potential lacuna in both commentator's account: they spend hardly any time discussing in their chapters on causality and ontology what role becoming has in Nietzsche's metaphysical thinking, and as we have already seen in earlier chapters, becoming is a fundamental part of Nietzsche's thought. It would be strange, then, that his ontological insights reflect a position in contradistinction with that part. As we have seen, both Hales and Welshon claim that Will to Power is intertwined with perspectivism in the sense that perspectives are generated by will to power. Will to power is effectively equivalent to an ontology of force, in which particular individuations of such force is driven to growth and overcoming, and through this drive tend to form groups or bundles of force. For every individuation or group of force there is an equivalent interpretation or perspective, and this is perspectivism.

## **2.5 Theories of Will to Power**

We have already briefly examined various points made about will to power, but before finally putting forward an interpretation that attempts to resolve perspectivism and will to power simultaneously, it is necessary to examine other preceding interpretations of will to power in order to establish how to proceed. As with perspectivism, there are a variety of different interpretations of will to power, which themselves range from ontological (Richardson 1996, Sorgner 2007) to biological-psychological (Clark 1990, Reginster 2006). I will not attempt to fully detail each branch, but it will be necessary to discuss ontological readings as a basis for my own interpretation. Furthermore, instead of attempting to analyse every particular theory within the ontological branch, I want to draw out the general features I see operative in them and evaluate those features as to how well they mesh with perspectivism. A common tendency with ontological theories of will to power is the attempt to render will to power sensible in terms of distinct quanta. We saw this already with Hales and Welshon: monadic or atomic language appears to be necessary at times to describe will to power working ontologically. Will to power is equivalent to force, and we can describe that force in terms of singular quanta (a

quantum of power) or grouped quanta (constellations). There are greater and lesser degree to which theorists engage in this practice, and different ways in which they do so: Richardson ascribes an *autotelic* sense to the drives that make up his version of the will to power ontology. According to Richardson drives have an internal directedness: 'Nietzsche, despite his repeated attacks on (what he calls) "teleology", really has such a theory himself: the beings or units in his world are crucially end-directed, and to understand them properly is to grasp how they're directed or aimed. Above all, it's to grasp how they're aimed at power, an end somehow essential to them' (Richardson 1996, p. 21). Power, however, does not exist abstracted from other phenomena, nor is it separate from all the drives: 'Power [isn't] definitionally separable from some (or other) "drive", some pre-existing pattern of effort, with its own internal ends; power isn't an independent state, that could be described without supposing some such effort as given.' (Richardson 1996, p. 23). For Richardson the importance and place of power, as the ontological equivalent of will to power, consists in the growth in activity of a drive. Drives don't merely aim to discharge themselves, the telic aspects of drives is their tendency towards a growth complexity and richness: 'power is a movement of growth or enhancement rather than a persisting state (or repeated event). As will to power, a drive's essential end is that it wants to be more than it is; a drive's essential aim isn't even to arrive at some better state.' (Richardson 1996, pp. 24-25). The core language used in Richardson's account of will to power is thus activity growth: we can understand a phenomenon by considering it in terms of the drives that constitute it and the activities that grew out of those drives.

Stefan Lorenz Sorgner also suggests an ontological reading of will to power. How does Sorgner conceive of individuation within ontological will to power? Sorgner, arguing for Nietzsche, claims that will to power is 'a continuum (like most of the traditional metaphysical systems), though, in his case it was modified around certain centres which are in a permanent struggle with each other' (Sorgner 2007, p. 48) So far, these ideas align with the interpretations of will to power we have previously covered. Sorgner goes on to give an account of the functioning of these 'centers' in the will to power, writing that 'centers' work together or against each other, in accordance with their relative superiority or inferiority, having 'fairly clearly defined' (48) radii and a 'certain area at the outer end of the radius, where the interaction with the other power-quantum takes place' (48). Describing the

interaction of power-quanta, Sorgner claims that '[i]f a power-quantum works together with surrounding power-quanta, if it is far superior to them, or if they are indifferent to it, then its borders will (in most cases) be fairly stable, because then the struggle between the power-quanta is at a minimum. However, if there are two hostile power-quanta fighting with each other, both being equally strong, then their borders will usually be less clear' (Sorgner 2007, p. 48). Sorgner also draws a distinction between 'internal' power and 'external' power. For Sorgner, external power is the 'relation a power-quantum has with its environment' (ibid. 53). Someone born into a powerful family has a great degree of external power, as this familial authority seems not to rely on anything directly bodily in the individual. In contrast, internal power 'depends upon the abilities of the respective power-quantum' (ibid. 53). Internal power instead identifies the capacities one has derived from one's bodily condition and attributes. These distinctions of will to power are in place, one can assume, in order to individuate development and progression of power in will to power more easily, to give us a framework based in will to power with which to evaluate phenomena.

We can now come to a central question that must be asked of ontological readings of will to power: how can one individuate phenomena within the will to power in such a way that Richardson and Sorgner without rendering will to power incompatible with perspectivism? Discussion of activity growth when it comes to drives immediately highlights the perspectival nature of our terminology: it is from a human perspective that we describe the activity of drives and their growth. Likewise, when we attempt a geography of will to power in the manner that Sorgner suggests, differentiating between internal and external will to power, we already describe an ontology that is infused with an anthropocentric perceptual basis. We can, however, hypothesize that there would be different ways in which to individuate will to power depending on the system of cognition and thought of the theorizer. Describing will to power with such language thus commits us to an anthropocentric ontology that is at odds with perspectivism. We must therefore be able to describe will to power as a theory in a manner that is compatible with perspectivism or clearly explain how one depends on or is subordinate to the other.



## 2.6 Will to Power: Epistemological-Valuational Perspectivism

Having examined the view, through Hales and Welshon, that Nietzsche's basic ontology is that of perspectivism, I want to propose an alternative theory that attempts to reconcile both will to power and perspectivism, although I will argue for a constellationist basis. This means to say that the world essentially consists in a multiplicity of expressions of force considered as perspectives, and that perspectives interact with each other. It is important to consider the evaluational issues arising from will to power, as these would appear to be those elements most in conflict with perspectivism. We've already seen that perspectivism addresses some of the fundamental epistemological problems in traditional western Philosophy, but we have yet to see how Nietzsche's perspectivism accommodates his evaluational philosophy without contradiction. What I am referring to when I describe Nietzsche's 'evaluational philosophy' are those aspects of his thought that imply significant forms of value judgements, particularly his estimation of ways of life and values in terms of will to power<sup>38</sup> (which is the focus of psycho-biological interpretations). Nietzsche has an evident interest in ordering these various phenomena in terms of order of rank<sup>39</sup>. Indeed, he fundamentally sees the world as a whole in terms of different hierarchies (heavily drawing on the master/slave distinction in *OGM* (referring to his distinction between master and slave in the first essay), along with the accompanying estimation of ways of life in terms of affirmation and resentment) which, taken as a whole, I claim to be his 'will to power' evaluative philosophy. Such an evaluational philosophy, of course, immediately seems at odds with a perspectival ontology, because it appears to posit itself as a 'true' perspective among all others.

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<sup>38</sup> There are numerous places where Nietzsche appears to evaluate or link life in terms of power and will to power. These are notably *AC* 2, 6 ('I consider life itself to be an instinct for growth, for endurance, for the accumulation of force, for power: when there is no will to power, there is decline. My claim is that none of humanity's highest values have had this will'), *BGE* 13 ('life itself is will to power'), *BGE* 23, *BGE* 259.

<sup>39</sup> Nietzsche distinguishes an order of rank of human beings at various times in his writing. Note, for example, *AC* 57, in which Nietzsche writes that order of rank 'is just a formula for the supreme law of life itself, splitting off into three types is necessary for the preservation of society, to make the higher and highest types possible'. Nietzsche mentions order of rank in *BGE* also, notably in *BGE* 30, and especially in 228 claiming that 'what is right for someone absolutely cannot be right for someone else; that the requirement that there be a single morality for everyone is harmful precisely to the higher men; in short, that there is an order of rank between people, and between moralities as well.'

It is worthwhile to briefly consider some suggested responses by commentators to this problem. I've already discussed how Richardson argues that drives (perspectives, that is) have an intentional aspect; this consists in activity growth. From this point, Richardson elaborates that such drives can be understood hierarchically on the basis of how much one drive, or a collective, can grow and dominate over others. He raises a number of initial points meant to show the means of hierarchy Nietzsche draws on, that (for example) 'growth involves an advance in internal complexity; a will that is now complex, is so because of successful power willing in the past, by itself or others' (49-50). Given a basic level of consensus, the principles of rank Richardson sketches are quite helpful and sufficient, but they are too fundamentally anthropocentric to have any motivating force on the level of a truly holistic perspectivism. Can humans, for example, conceive of what complexity would be for other organisms? There are a wide number of non-anthropocentric factors humans can conceive of that may not be bound in the least by the distinctly human forms of differentiation Richardson specifies. To be clear: the issue is not that hierarchical ranking according to Richardson is a merely subjective, human perspective, to be contrasted to things in themselves. Nietzsche shows, and Richardson recognizes, that this would be a Kantian criticism that relies on a transcendental reality. Instead, the issue is that there are conceivable perspectives, vastly different to our own, capable of esteeming phenomena in vastly different ways, and we have not yet established why the manner of ranking that Nietzsche often uses in his texts (as referenced above) should be any more truthful on a fundamental level than others. That is to say, why should we believe that there are 'higher men' in the way he describes in the first essay of *OGM* (i.e. in section 11)? Likewise, why should we believe that there are traits that designate humans of lower rank, describing those who suffer from resentment (again described in the first essay, section 10)? Why not accept the opposite perspective, that slave values are higher and master values are lower? This points to the possibility that the fundamental problem of perspectivism (how Nietzsche evaluative statements and hierarchies can have any motivating force) cannot be addressed on a conventional level, it has to be taken seriously in its most radical form and defended against the most radical perspectivists.

One potentially more promising approach is what I refer to as the 'concession'-based response. Nietzsche sometimes acknowledges that his

evaluational philosophy is only constituted by his own perspective, and some commentators indeed resolve the tension between a perspectival ontology and Nietzsche's philosophical critiques and evaluations by highlighting that they are themselves essentially only perspectival critiques and evaluations<sup>40</sup>. Understood in such a way, it is reasonable to say that Nietzsche does not posit his own evaluational perspective as a universal or extra-perspectival perspective. The problem with resolving the tension in this way, however, is that much of Nietzsche's critical insights and his evaluational philosophy lose a great deal of their motivational force. If Nietzsche's evaluational philosophy is just a perspective among any number of others, again, what would motivate me to adopt it over those other perspectives? I cannot appeal to other parts of Nietzsche's philosophy (such as an appeal to higher and lower types) for that motivation because it is again perspectival, there is only motivation from within the perspective. Part of Nietzsche's own response to this question is to remind us that his is not a general or universal philosophy, his writing is to be appreciated and practiced by a relatively select few who he deems to be similar 'types', particularly his philosophers of the future. In that case, what might motivate me to adopt Nietzsche's perspective is that it may be beneficial to me if I am the sort of person it is aimed for. This is partially what sets Nietzsche, as a philosopher, apart from the majority of his predecessors, who prescribe their philosophies for others on a wholesale level. Nietzsche does not pretend to give an evaluative philosophy for all beings, only similar ones. Such an admission, however, does not mean that Nietzsche did not see himself as one of many thinkers essentially engaged in a tradition of thought that encompassed a grand scale, he intends his philosophy as holistic thought that explains the most phenomena with the greatest depth, as most of his predecessors do, but he does not claim that all can appreciate or practice his philosophy in the same way, or at all. Such a view is strongly influenced by Nietzsche's understanding of human beings as different 'types'<sup>41</sup>, as being constituted essentially differently by their physical characteristics and environment such that they interpret and respond to events differently to those who are differently constituted. This is again where the problem of inter-perspectival critique comes into play; given that these types have different perspectives, different interpretations of

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<sup>40</sup> See Danto (1980: 77),

<sup>41</sup> Note again AC 57: 'In every healthy society, three mutually conditioning physiological types separate out and gravitate in different directions, each one having its own hygiene, its own area of work, its own feelings of perfection and field of mastery'.

phenomena, and that (what ultimately then follows) different philosophies constitute different perspectives, how can Nietzsche critique one perspective from another with any significant force? If there is no fundamental commensurability or outside perspective (we might say ‘objective reality’ in this instance) to appeal to, how do Nietzsche’s criticisms or analyses of other perspectives have any motivating force?

Returning to the ‘concession’-based approach, one could say at this point that Nietzsche is really doing nothing more than elaborating his own perspective and the perspectives equivalent to his own when he critiques fundamentally different perspectives. Hence, when he critiques the features of other perspectives of lower ‘types’ (those that largely suffer from resentment, for example), he is essentially elaborating the features abhorrent to or unhealthy for his own perspective, just as much as when, in elaborating on features like *amor fati*, he is elaborating on features inconceivable by those lower types, that may likewise be entirely abhorrent for those perspectives (many may be too resentful to will the necessity of everything that happens to them, a core requirement of *amor fati*). This view has a certain amount of appeal to it. When Nietzsche castigates other perspectives, or praises his own, his aim is not to show the ‘rightness’ or ‘wrongness’ of those perspectives with regard to an objective reality, because there is no such thing beyond different perspectives. Oftentimes his philosophical point is to highlight the indissoluble differences in perspectives that make certain features of experience or certain ways of thinking incomprehensible to each other.

However, many elements of Nietzsche’s philosophy, such as his conception of truth and the affirmation or enhancement of life, are concepts whose proper understanding involves an appreciation of both higher and lower perspectives. Commentators have often described how it appears that Nietzsche advocated that his higher, more fruitful types have a capacity to inhabit and project themselves into a variety of different perspectives: as Richardson points out, ‘Other persons and points of view are far from inaccessible, far from being “closed books,” Nietzsche chiefly thinks them accessible in his power ontology’s terms : by a person’s bearing these other interested viewpoints as occasional or adoptable attitudes of his own; by his being able to inhabit or occupy these viewpoints’ (Richardson 1996, p. 264). With regard to the ‘concession’ approach I have elaborated, how is it possible for Nietzsche to claim, on the one hand, that he is effectively only elaborating his own

perspective, while on the other simultaneously being able to appreciate those of others?

Properly understanding the ontological implications of perspectivism allows us to address this issue. Because the world is constituted by a multiplicity of perspectives, the criterion for ranking or comparing perspectives cannot be a world in itself above and beyond these perspectives; hence Nietzsche's perspective cannot be a better or worse perspective because it corresponds to a true world. The biggest fear at this point would be that perspectivism seems to be nothing more than the most radical version of relativism: nothing can be established about the world beyond that it is perspectival. Thus, contrasted with how Nietzsche orders the world according to one perspective (his 'will to power'), another might order it an opposite manner, with, in the absence of any interstitial world-in-itself, there being no reason to adopt one over the other. Again we are faced with the issue that neither appears more or less right or wrong, just that there are two different perspectives at play with different relational interests, and that because of this there is no fundamental reason to choose Nietzsche's perspective over the other. If Nietzsche's perspective is to have any motivational force beyond that of appeal to similar perspectives, there has to be a response to the above radical relativism, one that shows how perspectives can be of greater or lesser rank without simply appealing to a circular perspective.

The response is to point out that perspectives are always situated and relational in perspectivism, and therefore that the relativist's criticisms are also situated and relational. What I mean in saying this is that these criticisms are themselves part of a perspective among other perspectives, with no privileged epistemic status. Taken conventionally, the radical relativist makes claims that appear to be meta-epistemological: Nietzsche's perspectivism is itself a perspective (I will address this criticism further at a later point, particularly in relation to truth). If Nietzsche's perspectivism is assented to, this claim is not meta-epistemological because claiming that perspectivism is only a perspective (contrasted to e.g., realism) is itself a concrete perspectival claim, and one that might be said to further prove the truth of perspectivism; it is thus merely an 'expression of the inevitable perspectivity of a perspectivist ontology' (Hales and Welshon 2000, p. 80).

If this addresses the issue that perspectivism is claimed to be itself just a perspective, then it is still unclear how we can address incommensurability between

perspectives. That perspectives are always relational and situated hints at a more fundamental point about perspectives. Perspectives are not atomically self-contained epistemological units, instead we find that the key insight behind Nietzsche's will to power doctrine is an agonistic view of ontology in which he posits that its basic elements, perspectives, are in contest among each other, that 'Every center of force adopts a perspective toward the entire remainder, i.e., its own particular valuation, mode of action, and mode of resistance' (*WTP* 567). Perspectives can thus be understood in the constellationist sense as described because these valuations, modes of actions and modes of resistances can themselves be understood to be a matter of interaction with each other. Nietzsche understands these different forms of interactions in terms of the will to power, as each drive aims at an expansion of power. It is at this point that the inter-relation between perspectivism and the doctrine of will to power becomes most tenuous: we can reasonably freely describe the different perspectives as different modes of interactions without running the risk of anthropocentrism (what we might call the closest to "pure" ontological perspectivism), but we risk missing those qualitative and evaluative components that are characteristic of Nietzsche's philosophy. If we describe those aspects as inherent in these modes of interaction at this point, however, we do risk anthropocentrism. The evaluations inherent in the doctrine of will to power must therefore be admitted to be a perspective within perspectivism: this will resolve the issue of anthropocentrism by admitting that the features of will to power are not themselves an ultimate reality (this instead being perspectival flux. If will to power is not a strictly ontological doctrine and yet considered by Nietzsche to be his theory of the world, how can it be defended as a greater perspective among others (as Nietzsche seems to think it is)?

This thesis holds that one effective means of establishing an organic order of rank of perspectives as Nietzsche describes it (with will to power seeming to be at the top) is to say that some perspectives are more or less pervasive than others. It is already evident that there is no pre-established hierarchy or objective reality beyond perspectives, so such a hierarchy must come from the structure of and inter-relation of perspectives themselves because they are what constitute the world. If we try to discuss the contest of perspectives in a more derivative way (i.e. if we try to describe a hierarchy from a particular perspective), we fall victim to the previous criticism of

perspectival anthropocentrism. Perspectival pervasiveness is sufficient to provide motivating force beyond perspectival similarity because it makes commensurability between perspectives irrelevant while maintaining elements of the ‘concession’ approach: we can concede that perspectival critique applies only to like perspectives, but pervasiveness is ultimately what determines the motivating force of whether a perspective is adopted or not. While all other features of a perspective might be relative to perspectives (and some incommensurable), pervasiveness is not. This is because pervasiveness is not a feature of any particular perspective, it is a feature that is shared between perspectives and arises from their interaction. In concrete terms, we might “cash in” pervasiveness in terms of the degree of causal influence any perspective (or a multiplicity of similar perspectives) has. Plato’s philosophical perspective, for example, is pervasive in its causal influence throughout Western history and civilization, whereas any mundane, singular individual’s is not<sup>42</sup>. This then, is a fundamental ontological feature of perspectivism: some perspectives are more or less pervasive than others, and this provides a response to the radical relativist criticism that Nietzsche’s perspective lacks motivational force above and beyond appeal to similar perspectives. Highlighting the pervasiveness of perspectives shows that motivational force is fundamentally not a matter of voluntary adoption of perspectives, but rather how far a perspective has extended itself through the net of perspectival relations that constitutes the whole. It’s not that I am motivated to adopt a particular perspective or set of values, it is that a multiplicity of perspectives is so pervasive that I have unconsciously adopted them, through cultural upbringing and biological physiology. One immediate concern is the possibility that pervasiveness itself could be a relative feature of perspectives like any other, that what we might see as pervasive according to our own perspective might be seen to be oppositely non-pervasive according to another. Firstly, it is certainly true that when one attempts to appreciate perspectivism on a holistic level, on a level beyond human existence, it is difficult to use the language of a pervasiveness of perspectives in this way when we extrapolate to organic and non-organic form of existence. However, insofar as we are concerned with human existence or anything that resembles human existence, we can intelligibly talk about the pervasiveness of different perspectives. Secondly, attempting to show that

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<sup>42</sup> Nietzsche makes this point about philosophers in general, that they are the most spiritual wills to power (*BGE* 9) and the most pervasive perspectives in human history

pervasiveness is relative to perspective encounters further difficulties because it is not a relative feature of perspectives in an important way that other features are. In contrast to more concretely relative features of a perspective, such as color or sound, the pervasiveness of a perspective is not reducible to any one individual, group, or collective perspective(s), it is an emergent aspect whose greater appreciation ultimately itself depends on a holistic perspective. We are ourselves only in a position to appreciate the pervasiveness of any particular perspective when we have an increasingly wide and deep grasp of the whole multiplicity of perspectives: the history of western philosophy may not be pervasive to a secluded castaway from that castaway's perspective, but this is only reliably indicative of the limitedness of the castaway's perspective and that castaway's own lack of causal influence on the world.

Returning to an earlier point about the situatedness and relationality of perspectives, something to keep in mind is that insofar as a perspective exists it is by nature caught up in this relation of pervasiveness, just as it is caught in in the relation of being a perspective. A perspective that makes the claim "what seems pervasive to perspective(s) [x] is not pervasive to perspective(s) [z]" is itself either a more or less pervasive perspective. Again, the claim of the castaway that the western philosophical perspective is not pervasive regarding the castaway's own perspective is itself not a claim that can be evaluated on its own terms, as perspectives are once again inter-related. That said, it is still important to recognize that pervasiveness is still relative in an ultimate sense, because no individual perspective could conceivably appreciate it on a universal scale. Hence, we might concede that the radical relativist is right, and that, for example, the relevant perspective [x] may not be altogether the most pervasive in the world, because it's entirely conceivable there are beings on the other side of it with an opposite notion of pervasiveness. We can still say that this is not a major problem with pervasiveness as the means of ordering perspectives, because Nietzsche is mostly concerned with our most familiar perspectives, life on earth, and all known inorganic material. When it comes to these perspectives it seems fairly conceivable that we are capable of ordering the rank of different perspectives within this group according to their influence on the whole. The manner in which Nietzsche does this is encapsulated in his will to power evaluative philosophy. Will to power therefore presents itself both as Nietzsche's



own evaluative interpretation of the multiplicity of perspectives, and as the greatest competitor in the field of philosophical perspectives yet (those that Nietzsche thinks are the most pervasive, most powerful perspectives in human life), given its own depth and breadth of holism. As such Nietzsche estimates that his evaluative philosophy, in being the broadest and deepest perspective yet, will become the most pervasive as a "philosophy of the future". It's important to clarify in what sense Nietzsche thinks his philosophy will become the most pervasive: above all, he is not claiming that all human beings will explicitly adopt teachings contained in his philosophy. Nietzsche's philosophy is a description, rather than a prescription, of conditions under which the greatest affirmation of life can occur. Nietzschean philosophy will be the most pervasive philosophy of the future insofar as the conditions which prevail reflect, and influence, those that Nietzsche foresees in his evaluative philosophy. Another issue that has to be clarified further is the relation between Nietzsche's ontological perspectivism and his own 'will to power' epistemological-evaluational perspective. What has to be made clear is that there is no fundamental gulf between perspectivism as an ontology, and Nietzsche's own perspectival interpretation within that ontology. As has already been discussed, process ontology, flux or becoming, is not to be understood in terms of a 'becoming-in-itself' behind perspectives that impose their interpretation on that flux; this would simply be a reiteration of the Kantian noumenal/phenomenal distinction. As was explored earlier, becoming and perspectivism must be understood to be continuous with each other, because perspectives are reducible to the very expressions of force, constantly changing, that constitute becoming as a whole. Among these expressions of force is Nietzsche's own philosophical perspective. Hence, there is a direct continuity between becoming, perspectivism, and will to power.

To conclude, I hope to have illustrated a number of important points regarding perspectivism and its relation to Nietzsche's overall philosophy. To begin with, I considered the epistemological reading of Nietzsche's perspectivism, taking Tsarina Doyle's recent reading as an adequate representative. I acknowledged that Doyle's interpretation foregrounds a crucial point about perspectivism that is a strength of epistemological readings in general: the rejection of the real-apparent distinction in ontology. Likewise, her focus on Kant's influence on Nietzsche serves as an important historical grounding for understanding perspectivism and its role in

the tradition of epistemology. However, I argued that Nietzsche's perspectivism, understood as a rejection of the real-apparent ontological distinction, and especially coupled with renewed understanding of knowledge informed by Nietzsche's power ontology, abandons the traditional concerns of epistemology (establishing access to mind-independent reality, guaranteeing our beliefs aren't in vast error). I instead claimed that Nietzsche treats epistemology as a matter of power and degrees of efficacy, and his means of establishing greater or lesser perspectival validity is through the notion of power. Considering Katrina Mitcheson's criticisms of such a view, I further explored this by arguing for a conception of truth as equivalent to power in Nietzsche's philosophy; in lieu of a world apart from all other perspectives to compare their veracity with, the 'truest' perspective would be that which is the most powerful, the world as a whole with everything in it being that which has the most truth. Lastly, I looked at ontological interpretations of perspectivism in an effort to link perspectivism to flux and will to power. Hales and Welshon offer a significant reading along these lines, but face some difficulties regarding the manner in which they "map" perspectives to a power ontology, raising concern over whether (causal) efficacy has a meaningful role in Nietzsche's ontology so understood. Likewise, I examined potential difficulties in describing will to power similarly from the point of view of structures of power quanta, raising the question of how it is possible to speculate will to power as an ontology if done so through language that is anthropocentric. In order to resolve this tension I suggested that will to power can be considered Nietzsche's evaluative perspective within a power-flux ontology. Addressing the concern over how Nietzsche's will to power, as one perspective among many, can have any motivating force to be adopted, I claim that a hierarchy of perspectives according to will to power is possible in virtue of a feature of ontological perspectivism: pervasiveness. Pervasiveness provides an organic hierarchy of perspectives according to the will to power because it exists not in virtue of any one perspective but out of the interrelation between perspectives. Perspectives do not establish hierarchies, the relation between them does. It might be instructive to think about pervasiveness as described here similarly along the lines of intersubjectivity: rules are a good example in this sense because rules do not exist independently of agents, but they are likewise not reducible to any single agent. They are constituted intersubjectively through shared meanings and norms. The key difference of course, is that one may consciously break from the rules, whereas one

cannot break from the influence of pervasiveness, which precedes perspectives and in a sense is imposed upon them.

The last section of this chapter concerns the generalities that can be drawn from the process-power ontology I have previously discussed, along with its relation to evaluative philosophy (truth, ranking of perspectives). What general features can be extrapolated from this account for the purposes of constructing a comparative process ontology? I now want to describe those features, along with providing a comparative account of such features that can be found in strands of ancient Chinese thought. From our study of Nietzsche's philosophy, the link between process-flux, perspectivism, and will to power has raised the core point that there is a continuity between ontology and evaluation. What motivates this continuity from the Western perspective is a rejection of the noumenal/phenomenal distinction: the world is constituted by a variety of perspectives understood as force, and there is no world apart from those perspectives.

## **2.7 – Epistemologic-Evaluation and Ontology in Early Chinese Philosophy**

Compared with the totality of process-flux perspectives that make up the process ontology we have so far seen on the Western side of this comparison, the concrete process ontology of ancient Chinese thought places less emphasis on the perspectivism of processes. Namely, there is a trifold structure of humans (which encompasses culture and society, and extends to language, literature, all forms of knowledge, and social, emotional distinctions), earth (animals, natural objects, the geographic environment) and Heaven (traditionally understood as the celestial field: the sky, sun, moon and stars, but the also the cosmos and world more generally) which constitute the totality (although classical interpretation of ancient Daoism holds that there is a further, ineffable totality beyond heaven that is the Dao). The notion of Heaven in Chinese thought is worth extended consideration in particular as it features prominently as a core consideration in Chinese cosmological and political thinking. In terms of comparative process ontology, we previously established some fundamental principles regarding the conceptualization of change. With this present chapter we have concerned ourselves with epistemology and evaluation, in the context of a totality. Heaven serves the role of such a totality in the texts I have

covered in ancient Chinese philosophy, although there are other means of conceiving the totality (the Daoist reading of the great Dao of emptiness, for example). Heaven was originally derived from the notion of a 'High Lord' a mythical-ancestral god figure in Chinese culture in the Shang period (c.1600-1046 BC). The notion of High Lord developed onwards through the Zhou dynasty (1046-256 BC) but was supplemented by the ruling dynasty with the idea of a 'mandate of heaven' (*tianming*) for regime justification. The mandate of Heaven figures as a central notion in Chinese philosophy and is concerned with whether a ruler (or a ruling dynasty) is acting in accordance with Heaven, which is concretized after the Zhou period as 'as a constant order of cosmos, governing both nature and human' (Weimin 2012, p. 139). Although Heaven begins to recede as a dominant ideological motivation with the onset of Confucian philosophy, it remains a key notion through Chinese thought, either as an element of cosmology that required harmonisation with or as one that was fatally indifferent to humans<sup>43</sup>. In one way or the other, the cosmos as Heaven becomes fundamentally bound into Chinese cultural and political thought. As Nathan Sivin specifies: '[i]n the third century B.C., as the process of invention got under way, intellectuals bound the structure of heaven and earth, and that of the human body, to that of the state. This was not unprecedented in China, but now the links were made systematic and tight. In every instance their creators were preoccupied with political authority and its effective use. As a result, macrocosm and microcosms became a single manifold, a set of mutually resonant systems of which the emperor was indispensable mediator. The structure between humans, heaven and earth is one of inter-relation, all three spheres are connected, mutually dependent, and mutually affecting each other' (Sivin 1995, p. 7). What is most important to remember for the project of a comparative process ontology is that the development of such a structure reflects a direct link from ontology as cosmos to evaluation in the political and human spheres: 'The link [between heaven, humans and earth] was a great deal more than a simple causal relationship. Cosmology was not a mere reflection of politics. Cosmos, body, and state were shaped in a single process, as a result of changing circumstances that the new ideas in turn shaped' (ibid. 7).

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<sup>43</sup> The mandate of heaven can be seen to function in Chinese thought in contemporary times through commentaries on the Chinese Communist Party's regime legitimacy in China, where the 'the Chinese government does not accept "legalized opposition" which is a common phenomenon in modern democracies. It is really more concerned about popular protest and violent uprising from society, as that could represent the *Tianming* challenge which will destroy the existing political and legal framework' (Zhu 2011, p. 130)

Perhaps what crowns the series of notions I have just described, from the trifold structure of Heaven, humans and earth, and its political continuity in the form of a mandate of rulership that may be gained or lost in accordance with appropriate action towards Heaven, is the fundamental political idea in Chinese thought of *tianxia* or ‘All-under-Heaven’. This is the Chinese political idea of an ideal empire, or world governance. All-under-Heaven retains the direct relationship between humans and the cosmos in the sense that it draws together two meanings: as Tingyang Zhao explains, ‘[i]t is almost equivalent to ‘the universe’ or ‘the world’ in western languages. Its second meaning is the ‘hearts of all peoples’, or the ‘general will of the people’. [...] All-under-Heaven therefore consists of both the earth and the people.’ (Tingyang 2006, p. 30). It is this sense of political holism as world governance that is emphasized with the notion:

‘Chinese political philosophy defines a political order in which the world is primary, whereas the nation/state is primary in western philosophy. Certainly, westerners do think about the world, but the western imaginations of the world are nothing higher and greater than international alliances or unions of nation/states, not going beyond the framework of nation/states. Such projects have essential difficulties in reaching the real integrality of the world for they are limited by the perspectives of nation/states, due to the lack of a vision of world-ness. To see the world from its world-ness is different from seeing it from part of it.’ (ibid. 31)

The account of the Western perspective given here may be subject to some criticism in the sense that it is just as easy to suggest that what is proffered by the notion of ‘All-Under-Heaven’ is merely a form of exceptionalism or imperialism among many other historical examples<sup>44</sup>. However, I think a consideration of the basis of this idea from a process-ontological perspective will provide a number of significant points. What separates a comparative process ontology from traditional theory is the prospect of a transition from ontology to evaluation that is continuous, that is one in which there is no un-bridged leap from an objective reality to a subjective reality (which brings with such issues as the naturalistic fallacy). ‘All-Under-Heaven’ is an example of such a continuous transition in ontology to evaluation (in this case political evaluation), and it reflects perhaps a grand theory of politics similar to the

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<sup>44</sup> A key point to note about both the mandate of Heaven and All-under-Heaven is that the mandate for rulership and empire does not necessarily stipulate specifically Chinese cultural rulership.

manner in which we have seen that Nietzsche pursues a grand perspective in philosophy. What is it that is conducive within a process ontology or cosmology that facilitates the notion of 'All-under-Heaven' on comparison to a substance-style conventional ontology? It is argued that the Chinese emphasis on relations rather than things and individuals is what makes such a political viewpoint more tenable:

'The Chinese system of families, states and All-under-Heaven, which differs fundamentally from the western system of individuals, nations and internationals, is often criticised for its neglect of the individual as well as individual rights, but this is a misunderstanding of Chinese philosophy and a poor understanding of political society. There is no Chinese denial of the value of the individual, but rather a denial of the individual to be a political foundation or starting point, because the political makes sense only when it deals with 'relations' rather than 'individuals', and the political is meant to speak for co-existence rather than a single existence. In a very Chinese way, politics aims at a good society of peaceful 'order', which is the first condition for any possible happiness of each and all, and at keeping a society from the 'disorder' that destroys all possibilities of individual happiness. This political conception could find a strong argument in Chinese ontology, the *ontology of relations*, instead of the western *ontology of things*' (ibid. 33)

Thus, in the course of this brief examination of political notions we have seen that an ontology of relations, one that is fundamentally process-based, traces a continuity through all the way to human society and the grandest political ideals. I have already discussed in the last chapter the central role of change (*bian*) as the constituent of these processes, and its central description in the *Yijing*. We can now look at some of the underlying ontological assumptions surrounding this work. One very important assumption is of different ontological categorization of the world: ancient Greek philosophy's tendency towards atomism and particulars can be contrasted with the ancient Chinese tendency to conceive the world through a part-whole model. As Chad Hansen writes, regarding this model: 'Reality is not a multitude of independent, fixed objects, but a ground out of which a linguistic community *carves* distinctions and marks them with names. Each part-whole assignment is relative to some presupposed standard and purpose. A part, in turn, has parts. Any whole can be a part of some larger whole' (Hansen 1992, p. 50). Thus, to use Hansen's view to contrast, Greek philosophy aimed at a view of the world in

which the notion of objecthood is fundamental: there are objects and it is the task of the perceiver to categorize those objects according to some conceptual scheme, to classify an object as belonging to a particular type. As Hansen writes, objecthood in Chinese ontological categorization is not fundamental, it is derivative: '[t]he primitive particular objects of Western ontology emerge as a result of dividing stuffs into smaller (and incidentally, contiguous) clusters for some purposes' (ibid.) Reality can thus be "carved up", or categorized, in a variety of ways different to Western categorization, and the manner in which parts are related to the whole: '[w]e can discuss individuals of human-stuff, families of human stuff, and cities or states of human-stuff' (ibid.), where we might say that these are distinctly different objects according to the Western general philosophical conceptual scheme. However, it is only once we have individuated "stuff" into smaller and smaller groups that the notion of 'object' emerges within the Chinese model of categorization. Also important is that, compared with the Greek-type ontologies of substances and particular objects (the "building blocks"), these distinctions in Chinese thought of the period are not considered ultimately real in the same manner. They are instead a matter of relative pragmatism. Richard Nisbett has offered a sociological theory for why both traditions develop as they do, draw on the social and economic conditions that prevail behind both types of philosophy. Nisbett claims that the city-state type of political environment in Greece fostered a strong sense of both personal agency and individualism for Greek citizens, and he highlights the points that citizens could travel between cities (and indeed, that certain prestigious individuals were attracted to certain cities) (Nisbett 2003, pp. 30-32).. Likewise, the ecology surrounding the Greek way of life itself influenced Greek thought: because economic activities in which wide-scale co-operation were not strictly necessary (namely, hunting, fishing, herding and trade) were predominant before the arrival of agriculture, Nisbett claims that Greeks 'were therefore able to act on their own to a greater extent than were the Chinese. Not feeling it necessary to maintain harmony with their fellows at any cost, the Greeks were in the habit of arguing with one another in the marketplace and debating one another in the political assembly' (Nisbett 2003, p. 35).

In contrast, the general terrain of China favoured agriculture, and hence drew more on centralized control and co-operation. This ecology inculcated a strong focus on harmony and relation, and as Nisbett suggests 'provided both the chief constraint in their lives and the primary source of opportunities. The habit of looking toward

the social world could have carried over to a tendency to look to the field in general; and the need to attend to social relations could have extended to an inclination to attend to relations of all kinds' (ibid. p. 35). Sivin echoes this characterization in his estimation of the ancient Chinese political situation, claiming that 'The Chinese ideal, during the anomic and violent period from the late Zhou through the first phase of the Western Han, as well as the period of expansion and grandiose projects from the middle of the second century to the first quarter of the first, remained unifying and central. In the Warring States period the yearning for a stable order was overriding; from the Qin on, union seemed a feasible goal' (Sivin 1995, p. 32). These social and economic factors can be claimed to significantly influence the development of what is succinctly called the "folk metaphysics" embodied in the two philosophical traditions we are discussing. The folk metaphysics of Chinese culture might be speculated to arrive at its focus on relationality and continuity of processes because the social and economic conditions involved in strong centralized rulership and reliance on co-operative agriculture influence the sense of self, which in turn influences the manner in which one theorizes about one's world: 'Causality would be seen as being located in the field or in the relation between the object and the field. Attention to the field would encourage recognition of complexity and change, as well as of contradiction among its many and varied elements' (ibid). Likewise, the Greek city-state politic with its emphasis on isolated trade and resource practices produce a greater sense of autonomy and individuality, allowing certain citizens to more freely do things like planning harvests, travelling to cities or cultural events, or investigate the profitability of a particular commodity, all without necessarily consulting significantly with others. Sivin echoes this sentiment by writing that '[g]iven the diversity of Greek states, constitutions, and political tastes, the cosmos might be seen as a single order, a balance of opposed powers, or a state of strife. There was no shared ideal to build on, and no hope of a consensus' (Sivin 1995, p. 32). The focus on particulars that these circumstances inspired, Nisbett claims, 'might have made it natural for the Greeks to focus on the attributes of objects with a view toward categorizing them and finding the rules that would allow prediction and control of their behaviour. Causality would be seen as due to properties of the object or as the result of one's own actions in relation to the object. Such a view of causality could have encouraged the Greek assumptions of stability and permanence as well as an assumption that change in the object was under their control' (ibid.). It is worth



noting that Nisbett's analysis is not without significant criticisms. Geoffrey Lloyd has criticized this account at length: 'Nisbett's account of ancient Greek thought—their mentality, as he calls it—is full of oversimplifications and plain errors. While I have been at pains to point out that there are different foci of interest, and styles of enquiry, among different Greek writers, as indeed also among Chinese ones, Nisbett ignores the major differences between Aristotle, say, and Democritus, or the Stoics and the Epicureans, and writes as if all Greeks shared the same basic atomist ontology' (Lloyd 2007, p. 161). Lloyd is eminently correct in pointing out that Nisbett oversimplifies throughout his account. Clearly, however, Nisbett is not primarily concerned with providing a comprehensive understanding of the different schools and systems of doctrinal thought within Greek and Chinese culture, he is more concerned with making evident two different and conditioned modes of reasoning. Nisbett's point in this description of the development of these modes of reasoning does not appear to be simply that both modes are composed of structures of thought with elements that are completely foreign to either mode. As many commentators have shown, both Chinese and Greek thought share elements of thought (the Mohist school, for example is held to be a consummate example of thought approximating logical reasoning in the West). The point appears to be rather that a fundamental tendency towards certain elements that shape those modes of reasoning in important ways, enough to form the dominant character of thought. In this sense Sivin does well to remind us that '[t]he Hellenistic world was not, of course, Athens in the heyday

of Plato. Intellectual, social, and political authority had been realigned. That is not to say that forms of technical discourse are simple products of social forces' (Sivin 1995, p. 34), and likewise that '[i]n China general agreement was more common. Even so, a consensus on broad principles does not imply that doctrines were standardized. To take an example from medicine, yin-yang, the Five Phases, and the Six Warps [...] in the Inner Canon and later doctrinal works provided sophisticated alternative languages for describing changes in the somatic microcosm' (ibid. 35). The usefulness of the material provided here does not hang on whether Nisbett's extended studies<sup>45</sup> of Asians and Westerners are right or wrong nor to what

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<sup>45</sup> The core of Nisbett's research focuses rather on establishing whether, generally speaking, Asians differ to Westerners in terms of sensitivity to others and feelings of group solidarity versus

degree both traditions of thought are generalized, it is rather concerned with whether the material provides a reasonable understanding of how thought in both cultures developed the tendencies that they have, and what can be gained from such understanding for the project of developing a comparative process ontology.

With some explanation of the differences between cultures of thought hypothesized, we can examine the consequences of these differences. The consequences of these different factors engender a significant change in the philosophical pre-occupations of ancient Chinese and Greek thought: many conceptual problems over metaphysics or categorization are either radically different in nature or absent from one tradition compared to the other. For our purposes, as an example, the traditionally conceived Heraclitean problem of flux, of how something can remain the same while its formative stuff is constantly changing, is absent in the Chinese conception of change: ‘No philosophical problem arises from the mere fact that change takes place in a *part-whole* ontology. Stuff changes. But that observation, by itself, raises no philosophical difficulty’ (Hansen 1992, p. 50.). Instead of being an ontological problem, Hansen’s strongly linguistic reading of Chinese philosophy locates philosophical pre-occupations with practices in language, pragmatics and semantics, and how it is used to partition reality<sup>46</sup>. This pre-occupation with practical categorization extends even to the Daoist understanding of a great Dao, regarding which Angus Graham writes that ‘the purpose of seeking the one behind the many [the Dao] is to find, not something more real than what appears to the senses, but a constant Way behind the changing and conflicting ways of life and government claimed by competing schools as the Way of the sage kings’ (Graham 1990, p. 223), which in Daoism will be a Way based, in fact, on non-discrimination and non-differentiation, while in Confucianism may be a guiding discourse based on tradition and appeal to roles, and in Mohism may be based on utility and universal love.

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individualism. These are separate studies to a socio-psychological account of the tendencies of each culture’s thought.

<sup>46</sup> Again, it is highly important to remember that when discussing language we are not describing a model of language or reality in which a subject imposes language upon an external world, as in traditional correspondence-style views of language and reality. This will be explored further in the next chapter.

This then, provides some explanation as to how Chinese thought of the Warring States period, as a process-based structure of thought, differs from the concerns we have seen in examining Nietzsche's philosophy as a process philosophy: our formulations of perspectivism and epistemology in the latter are ineluctably shaped by the folk metaphysics of Greek thought (atomism, substance thought), which itself heavily influenced Cartesian thought, and led to the transcendental idealism of Kant with its subject-object and noumenal/phenomenal distinctions that Nietzsche is reacting to in his critical philosophy. The character of Nietzsche's processual philosophy, considered through the formulation of will to power and perspectivism, can be considered an attempt to re-situate Western philosophy within a Heraclitean tradition that is stalled by the arrival of Parmenidean philosophy, and the principles and pre-occupations of Chinese philosophy can provide some clues as to what that re-situation might have partially resembled had it been more fully formulated. The idea of perspectivism as post-epistemological, or as a re-conceptualization of the ends of epistemology, can be compared with the pragmatic concerns of Chinese schools we have just described, in which the disputation between schools is analogous in many respects to a contest between perspectives that is not grounded by the framework of correspondence to a true or external, transcendental world, yet is similarly not subject to the complaints of idealism or sceptical relativism because of an underlying cosmology of change. It is particularly the absence of this framework in the Chinese tradition that demonstrates that for comparative process ontology that it is unnecessary to philosophize in a manner that necessarily demands reaction to the above dichotomies. This has the consequence of giving us two conclusions, 1) within commentary on Nietzsche's work, it may go some way to demonstrating that a treatment of his epistemological and ontological views need not be in the vein of trying to reconcile them with conventional approaches in Western philosophy (whether these be either Analytic or Continental philosophy), 2) more generally for a comparative process ontology, it demonstrates key points about its theorization, namely that a common starting point may be from the inter-relation between a process-based cosmology and pragmatic epistemology. Having established the relation between becoming, power and perspectivism in this chapter, I will now pursue its consequences in an area of human thought that is still strongly embedded in a real-apparent correspondence view, language.

### **Chapter 3: Re-Thinking Language through Comparative Process Thought**

We have so far covered two key areas in a tentative comparative process ontology that are central: ontology and (broadly speaking) epistemology, and we now have a beginning framework with which to analyse several case studies, both theoretical and practical. I will examine practical issues of technology, economics and socio-political efficacy in the last chapters of this work. Regarding the former, I will now apply what has been outlined in previous chapters to the issues of language (in this chapter), as a general theoretical question, and appearance and reality (in the next chapter), as a conventional philosophical question. The conclusion that is hoped to be reached is that the application of the comparative process ontology outlined will provide an informative alternative to contemporary and classical approaches to these issues. While the focus in this chapter will be on Nietzsche's philosophy, I briefly consider a several perspectives on language within Warring States period Chinese philosophy, focalized through several structural features, in order to suggest a further basis for comparative work along these lines.

As with previous chapters, it will be necessary to set some interpretive groundwork before addressing the issue of language and meaning head on. I will therefore offer an extended study of Nietzsche's considerations of language, running through the early period, to speculating on how language and meaning could be conceived in his later philosophy drawing on perspectivism and will to power. Although Nietzsche considered the issue in various ways throughout his developing philosophy, language and meaning understood in their conventional correspondence sense present themselves as a significant barrier to understanding the full implications of his later philosophy of will to power and the insights of a perspectival understanding. These implications involve how one relates to the world, understood as the will to power, a prospective relation that is unmediated by representation. Thus, this chapter could be seen as a follow-on of the previous chapter, in the sense that I am attempting to show how the conception of language according to Nietzsche's philosophy overcomes the traditional noumenal/phenomenal distinction in the realm of language, and what its consequences are. Nietzsche recognised that human experience was necessarily perspectival and anthropocentric, but the degree of anthropocentrism imposed by a

representational understanding of language and meaning hinders the conclusions of a prospective comparative ontology by re-instating traditional distinctions at the level of language. If the implications of the comparative ontology-evaluation continuity dealt with in prior chapters are to be considered possible or coherent, it will be necessary to follow the conclusions reached there through to the relationship of language and meaning with respect to the frameworks previously drawn on: will to power and perspectivism on the Western side of comparison, which will then be briefly compared with the folk metaphysical assumptions of language in Warring States period Chinese philosophy. Will to power and perspectivism will provide a holistic and naturalistic methodology with which to consider the genesis of language and meaning, both of which are shown to be unmediated expressions of force as will to power, while the considerations of Chinese philosophy will serve as an alternative perspective through which to demonstrate that a comparative process ontology need not adhere to classical theoretical demands.

I will make a number of points. First, I explain how a representational, mediated understanding of language is a problem for comparative process ontology: it hinders the fullest appreciation of the consequences of the ontology and how individuals can relate to the world by instantiating a form of idealism. I then provide an analysis of two major works relating to language by Nietzsche: *On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense* and *On the Genealogy of Morals*, both of which are works that stand on opposite ends of the progression of Nietzsche's thought. I show that while these texts establish key aspects of Nietzsche's understanding of language, it is only through the additional, speculative final considerations provided by will to power and perspectivism that the break with traditional conceptions of language can be fully discerned. In the last section of the Western side of comparison, I analyse the consequences of an ontological reading of will to power and perspectivism for language, specifically in semiotic terms.

### **3.1 - The Problem of Language: Semiotics and Representation**

Firstly, what is understood by a representational understanding of meaning, and what is the problem that it poses for a holistic relation to nature? A brief

recapitulation of the dominant direction of philosophical theories on language is required in order to answer the first of these questions. Through aspects of Platonism, Christianity, and Cartesian thought, the structure of relating to nature in language has traditionally foundered on two extremes, either conceiving language as referring to things in themselves (strict correspondence or nomenclaturism) or mediated to a potentially alienating degree by the role of the subject, making language 'arbitrary'. I will focus on the latter variety of these two approaches, as it is the view that has more influence in contemporary theory. Indeed, much of western thought cannot in good conscience conceive of a relation to nature or 'external' phenomena that is unmediated by forms of representation or symbol, a relation effected by the subject-object distinction. This is not without reason: often, correspondence or nomenclaturist views on language are considered irreducibly anthropocentric, and at the very least, that they fail to recognise the human contribution to the interpretation of a phenomenon, and the shaping forces of body, culture and society on that interpretation. In contrast, language, while not something that may be totally mind-independent itself, has come to be seen primarily in a mediatory sense, mediating the experience of the subject.

In the humanities, a predominant, contemporary form of understanding this mediation has come to be theorised in terms of semiotics, the study of signs or representations. A sign, generally understood, is what represents something other than itself. For our purposes, semiotics will be important in its study of how representations 'construct' reality, and what role ontology has in such a process. The contemporary field of semiotics is mostly derived from two major thinkers, Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce. Both figures have inspired greatly divergent lines of thought in semiotics. Saussure's influence is key in continental thinkers of critical theory such as Barthes, Kristeva, Foucault, Derrida and Baudrillard, and in the general movements of structuralism and post-structuralism. Peirce's writings (along with those of other major figures like Jakob von Uexküll and C.W. Morris), on the other hand, greatly influenced work devoted to the extension and comprehension of semiotics beyond distinctly human language as a general theory or methodology. This influence is palpable in authors like Sebeok (who expands semiotics to include non-human signalling and communication systems, or *zoosemiotics*), Kull (whose work argues that sign processes characterise

all living systems and life in general, *biosemiotics*), and Deely (who claims that the action of signs extends past life to permeate the universe, *physiosemiosis*).

Inheritors of both traditions have arrived at fundamentally distinct conclusions about language and its relation to the world. In order to show this, I'll briefly summarise the differing conceptions of semiotics in both the Saussurean and Peircean foundations, before I interpret the most relevant conclusions of the Saussurean system in the work of Derrida and Baudrillard. I will then briefly sketch out the conclusions of the Peircean aspects of semiotics in John Deely's work, before returning to Deely again in the latter section of this chapter.

The key difference between the basic systems of signs in Saussure and Peirce is that while Saussure conceives of the system as a *dyadic* relationship, that of signifier (the form a sign takes) and signified (the concept a sign represents), Peirce considers it a *triadic* relationship between representamen (roughly equivalent in function to the signifier), interpretant (the sense made of the sign, not, as the word suggests, an interpreter, also similar to the signified), and object (what the sign refers to). The fundamental difference relevant to this chapter is the inclusion in Peirce's system of the *object*. What the object achieves, in Peirce's system, is to maintain some form of relation to an 'objective reality', where Saussure's system is further abstracted from such a relation. By no means, of course, is the Peircean system merely a form of nomenclaturism, of direct correspondence or reference: the object also stipulates reference to 'subjective' aspects like concepts and fictional entities. In the Peircean system, experience is also mediated by signs. The implementation of this third aspect does, nonetheless, have the function of initially extending the possible field of semiotics (what later thinkers indeed did) and the degree of input outside specifically human semiotics, in contrast to the Saussurean model, which conventionally locates its analyses in the area of human language and culture<sup>47</sup>. Peirce's legacy in semiotics, through zoosemiotics, biosemiotics, and physiosemiotics, thus vastly expands the field of study of signs and what counts as a sign. There are two fundamental philosophical questions that must be considered here. The first is whether such a system might run the risk of slipping into strict,

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<sup>47</sup> Some properly consider the Saussurean system a 'semiology', more limited in its purely cultural approach than what is taken as the broader term of 'semiotic(s)', which encompasses a greater degree under the study of signs .

fallibilistic anthropocentrism or correspondence in its positing of an object of reality to which signs are relation. The second is whether this system of semiotics, extended to phenomena in the furthest, results in a form of 'semiotic idealism' in which signs are taken as an ontology. I will address these concerns in the latter stages of the chapter, when I explicitly compare Nietzsche's perspectivism and will to power with contemporary semiotician John Deely's theory of the semiotic; both are views which stress the interrelation of perspectival interpretation on a basic ontological level without a strict subject-object dualism.

In any case, this second criticism of the Peircean system concerning semiotic idealism may also be made of the Saussurean system. This problem of idealism relates to the *pars-pro-toto* fallacy that Saussurean semiology is charged with<sup>48</sup>, that of mistaking the part (human semiotics, or *anthroposemiotics*) for the whole. Due to the dyadic conception in Saussurean semiology the relation between connected signs and interpreters and any grounding object in the relation between them is capable of being effaced. Deely writes:

"Things in the sense of objects signified, as, for example, when ordering a steak prepared medium rare in restaurant, and then being satisfied or unsatisfied with the steak finally presented (as it were) "in the flesh": that was no part of the signifié in Saussure's sense. Objects signified as things had no formal place in the Saussurean semiology/semiotics system' (Deely, 2009: 1)

If objects signified as things<sup>49</sup> have no place in the semiotic system then, to extend the theory, their importance in relation to grounding an ontology is diminished. In this sense the Saussurean system reflects what Deely suggests is 'at worst a last gasp of modern philosophical idealism' (ibid. 3). Deely is surely correct in linking the two, along with his analysis of how, with the onset of Modernity, through to Kant and onwards, the development of the Cartesian subject and the thing-in-itself distinction has restricted language to *ens rationis* (objects which have no dimension outside of human society and thought) and has wholly separated it from *ens reale*,

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. Deely, "Pars Pro Toto from Culture to Nature." *The American Journal of Semiotics* 25.1/2 (2009): 167-192.

<sup>49</sup> A radical sceptic about the boundaries of language will may debate the degree to which there can be a difference in language between objects and things in such instances. In any case, Deely is not here suggesting the object as an 'object-in-itself'. His use of the term 'object' aligns with the sense in which Nietzsche considers how a phenomenon is constituted not in-itself but inter-perspectively. This will be elaborated in the latter stages of the essay.



the world of nature, two fundamentally linked notions from the Latin age that Deely draws on to highlight a discontinuity with Modernity in the history of semiotics<sup>50</sup>. This discontinuity is preserved in certain undercurrents of twentieth century post-structuralist thought that draws on the Saussurean tradition, and has culminated in (among other things) what Dieter Freundlieb has termed 'semiotic idealism'. This, Freundlieb (1988, p. 807) writes, is an “epistemological assumption that linguistic signs or certain other linguistic or discursive structures are not representations of an extra-linguistic reality but that these signs are somehow constitutive of reality, i.e., that reality cannot be known as it is but only in the form it appears to us through language”. Freundlieb's characterisation of this idealism concerns epistemic possibility, but this will not be our primary concern. Rather, according to Nietzsche's genealogical understanding of idealism (as expressive of a particular will to power, in this case the will to deny life), what will be highlighted is a strong evaluational aspect, wherein the dualistic, transcendental tendencies of conventional Judeo-Christian thought and certain forms of metaphysics are expressions of a nihilistic will deemed dangerous for life. What crucially distances Nietzsche's philosophical position from 'semiotic idealism', as with other similar idealisms, is the latter's tendency towards a dualism that implicitly devalues the immanent, apparent world.

This tendency, by no means explicit, may be discerned in certain undercurrents of post-structuralist thought derived from the Saussurean tradition (itself, as Deely writes, carrying its own elements of idealism). Two different forms of consequences resulting from this idealist aspect of Saussurean semiotics may be seen in elements of the work of Derrida and Baudrillard. The pervasiveness of (semiotic) idealism derived from Saussurean semiology is such that although Derrida is critical of the metaphysical tradition, Saussure, and the ideology of structuralism, his account of meaning exacerbates the idealism of the Saussurean system of language and meaning through stressing the dis-unity of signifying difference and the lack of any tangible origin underlying that difference<sup>51</sup>. While there are surely aspects of Nietzsche's thought that are sympathetic with his own position, Derrida's

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<sup>50</sup> Cf. Deely, John. "The primary modeling system in animals." *La Filosofia del Linguaggio come arte dell'ascolto: Sulla ricerca scientifica di Augusto Ponzio* [Philosophy of Language as the Art of Listening: On Augusto Ponzio's Scientific Research], Bari: Edizione dal Sud (2007).

<sup>51</sup> Derrida is certainly aware of the 'closure imposed by this system' (Derrida, 1973:141), but his use of the 'trace' in the production of difference appears less of a way out of this system than a recapitulation, given that it is 'no more an effect than a cause' (ibid.).

conception of language and meaning is at odds with Nietzsche's later understanding of language, specifically in his use of *différance* in claiming that 'every concept is necessarily and essentially inscribed in a chain or a system, within which it refers to another and to other concepts, by the systematic play of differences. [...] (Derrida 1973, p. 139). Insofar as this represents Derrida's stance on language, he is not in the same company as Nietzsche. Nietzsche, as Gary Shapiro argues, is more in line with the views of the other central figure of semiotics, C. S. Peirce:

'[...] Nietzsche's view of semiotic history, or at least of this portion of it, more closely resembles that of C. S. Peirce than it does that of Jacques Derrida. Derrida frequently cites Nietzsche in behalf of his idea that all writing refers back to an earlier writing and so on *ad infinitum*; he believes that an infinite regress of writings implies that in following back the chain of texts and interpretations we will never reach a point prior to the writing process itself. Peirce on the other hand makes a crucial distinction between the continuity of the sign-process and its indefinite or infinite extension. According to him the sign process is continuous in that it has no absolute first or last term. But there are many cases of continuous series which are not indefinitely or infinitely extended-such as a line segment. We can consistently conceive of a sign-process beginning (or ending) at some point in time, even though it makes no sense to talk of the absolutely first (or last) sign in the series.' (Shapiro 1981, p. 132)

If there is affinity between Derrida's notion of *différance* and Nietzsche's philosophy, it is not at the level of language, the genealogical origins of which Nietzsche eventually aims to uncover. It is rather at the ontological level of becoming in Nietzsche's philosophy that *différance* has significant affinities<sup>52</sup>. Becoming more properly instantiates the endless, affirmative play that Derrida describes, which has no origin, and this is what distinguishes it from the ordered process of human language. As Shapiro writes, 'Both Peirce and Derrida see the impossibility of a Cartesian account of meaning which would found all meaning on the intuitive presence of clear and distinct ideas, a first sign. Every sign is also an

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<sup>52</sup> Christoph Cox has already properly located these areas of continuity: 'Derrida's neologism (or neographism) is perhaps a better name for the complex notion of "becoming" [...]. It captures both senses of "becoming" [...] at work in Heraclitus and Nietzsche: becoming as "self-change" and as "aspect-change." As "self-change," *différance* designates difference within "the order of the same": the one that, in time, becomes-other, postponing any definitive characterization' (Cox 1999, p. 203).

interpretation, as Nietzsche and Peirce would agree. But it does not follow that the process is without beginnings, ends, or limits' (ibid. 133). To posit total difference at the level of language is therefore premature, and potentially undermines the link between ontology and language. Similarly, if language is understood foremost as mediated by signs or representation, the possibility arises wherein the object (and considered as a whole, the ontology or world) outside of signification becomes irrelevant in our theoretical (and ultimately practical) considerations, leading to a form of semiotic idealism in which language, and ultimately reality<sup>53</sup>, is constituted only by the play of signs between themselves, with no interstitial object. As with Derrida, one may contend that a semiotic idealism is covertly advanced in radical theories such as Baudrillard's, which claim that contemporary society and its values are dominated by signs which now increasingly refer only to and between themselves<sup>54</sup>. A position like this is one of the severe possible consequences that follows from privileging representation and interpretation in the Saussurean system and neglecting the object. It will therefore be necessary to highlight how Nietzsche theorizes language apart from this basis. When Nietzsche approaches the problem of meaning in language, it appears to be in relation to overarching concerns as a part of conscious language, itself a major issue for Nietzsche, and as an existential issue relating both to nihilism and the affirmation of life. Truth also figures largely in his concerns with language and meaning. I will minimise my treatment of these themes over the course of this chapter because they have been dealt with at length by various commentators. I will instead focus on language itself and its origins, and what can be related to it from what Nietzsche has written in key texts.

### 3.2 – Language in *On Truth and Lies*

*On Truth and Lies* is an early, unpublished work by Nietzsche that anticipates the subordinate role he will later ascribe to conscious, socialised language. This is

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<sup>53</sup> The thesis extends to reality insofar as it can be combined with two related theses: 1) denial of the appearance/reality dichotomy, and most importantly, 2) rejection of substance ontology. The rejection of a substance ontology often leads to an ontology in terms of force, for example. In such ontologies, strictly speaking, signs, insofar as they exist in any respect, have no essential difference as force in their causal power with any other form of human action and can therefore be considered just as constitutive of reality. Ideas, under certain interpretations, can thus be 'real' in the same way that material objects are in their causal power.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Baudrillard, *Simulations and Simulacra* (1994)

understood in *OTL* through the degeneration of intensity from metaphor to concepts. For the purposes of this analysis, what is of foremost interest is not the conception of truth that Nietzsche considers, but the naturalistic explanation he offers concerning the role and status of concepts in language, how language develops. To begin with, Nietzsche claims that language is not nomenclaturist (it does not represent things-in-themselves), we merely 'believe that we know something about the things themselves when we speak of trees, colors, snow, and flowers; and yet we possess nothing but metaphors for things -- metaphors which correspond in no way to the original entities' (*OTL* I 83). Although Nietzsche here recognises that while language does not refer to things-in-themselves, it is neither wholly self-generated nor self-referential in its origin. Nietzsche describes a hierarchical understanding of language in which concepts as generalised, standardised models, are derived from metaphors, bodily translations of sensory states:

'To begin with, a nerve stimulus is transferred into an image: first metaphor. The image, in turn, is imitated in a sound: second metaphor. And each time there is a complete overleaping of one sphere, right into the middle of an entirely new and different one.' (*OTL* I 82)

According to Nietzsche, this is a process that entails aspects of falsification and degeneration. Falsification occurs in the transference between the nerve stimulus and 'image'<sup>55</sup>, an interpretation which Nietzsche here understands in terms of a metaphor. The imitation of this image (as a perception) expressed in sound is a second metaphor, an interpretation of an interpretation, and so 'the genesis of language does not proceed logically in any case, and all the material within and with which the man of truth, the scientist, and the philosopher later work and build, if not derived from never-never land, is at least not derived from the essence of things' (*OTL* I 83). There is a fundamental break in falsification with the 'essence of things' in the genesis of language: the form interpreting the image is itself not in the imagistic form, it is rather interpreted through a subordinate form.

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<sup>55</sup> It seems adequate, in order to avoid pictorial connotations, to describe what an 'image' consists of here as Sousa does in his reading of this text, as a 'pre-conceptual perception of a thing' (Sousa 2012, p. 51)

This process is also thereby one of degeneration. What begins with the potency of a 'unique and entirely original individual experience' (ibid.) is diminished and made 'less colorful, cooler' (ibid. 84). This degeneration initially occurs for the purposes of adaptation and communication, producing a generalised concept that effaces individual differences and distinguishing features, equalising the unequal. What makes this a degeneration, qualitatively speaking, is that it supplants a primal, unique experience with one manufactured from a conceptual framework, a self-produced simulation: 'we produce these representations in and from ourselves with the same necessity with which the spider spins. If we are forced to comprehend all things only under these forms, then it ceases to be amazing that in all things we actually comprehend nothing but these forms ' (ibid. 87). Our comprehension of things under our particular forms of perception therefore ceases to be edifying not simply for the recognition that it is only *our* forms we are perceiving, but because those degenerated forms were developed out of a spirit of necessity and inadequacy.

For Nietzsche, a related mechanism in degeneration is a capacity for *forgetfulness* in the human being: 'It is only by means of forgetfulness that man can ever reach the point of fancying himself to possess a "truth" of the grade [of an adequate expression of reality]' (*OTL* I 81). This first occurs at the level of the perception, where individual differences are 'forgotten' in order to facilitate survival of the organism. Nietzsche suggests that our language proceeds in a similar manner: 'Just as it is certain that one leaf is never totally the same as another, so it is certain that the concept "leaf" is formed by arbitrarily discarding these individual differences and by forgetting the distinguishing aspects' (*OTL* I 83). A further extension of this sense of forgetfulness is found on the cultural level in *On the Use and Abuse of History*, where Nietzsche refers to forgetfulness in terms of the ability to live and feel 'unhistorically'. On one end of the spectrum, an 'unhistorical' life is equated with the life of animals, where there is total forgetfulness and therefore the possibility for continuous, simple pleasures. However, this comes at the cost of 'historical' conditions of complexity in the individual and society from which higher states and types may emerge. Contrasted with this is a state of life that is too 'historical', where the weight of history and culture bears down on both individual and culture, paralysing them: 'he who cannot sink down on the threshold of the moment and forget all the past [...] will never know what happiness is – worse, he will never do

anything to make others happy' (*UAH* I 62). The healthy, sustainable mean between the two poles is what Nietzsche terms the 'plastic power' of individuals and culture. This power consists in 'the capacity to develop out of oneself in one's own way, to transform and incorporate into oneself what is past and foreign, to heal wounds, to replace what has been lost, to recreate broken moulds' (*ibid.*)<sup>56</sup>.

If the genesis of language in the human being represents both a falsification and a degeneration, then according to Nietzsche's thought in the essay, there is a novel process of complexification indicated in *On Truth and Lies*, in which humans 'place [their] behaviour under the control of abstractions' (*OTL* I 84), when humans increasingly act according to the frameworks or schemata they have developed through the generalisation and de-intensification of images into 'less colorful, cooler concepts' (*ibid.*). Nietzsche recognises two effects of this process. On the one hand humans are alienated from a more powerful, more 'authentic' mode of existence implied in a life of metaphors and pre-conceptual experience. Also, as noted earlier, human experience is stripped of its potency and sense of awe when it is understood to be a fabrication necessitated by a weakness. In a process similar to that described in *The Birth of Tragedy*, humans are distanced from the primal, immediate experience of the way of things by nature, a Dionysian unity. However, as Nietzsche writes,

'something is possible in the realm of these schemata which could never be achieved with the vivid first impressions: the construction of a pyramidal order according to castes and degrees, the creation of a new world of laws, privileges, subordinations, and clearly marked boundaries- a new world, one which now confronts that other vivid world of first impressions as more solid, more universal, better known, and more human than the immediately perceived world, and thus as the regulative and imperative world' (*ibid.* 84)

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<sup>56</sup> Note Confucianism, for example, a philosophy with a tremendous degree of 'plastic power', wherein one develops oneself in one's own way by incorporating and elaborating pre-existing cultural rituals that constitute the structure under which such self-development is meaningful. As a significant author puts it, '[Rituals] are formal structures which, to be efficacious, must be personalized and reformulated to accommodate the uniqueness and the quality of each participant. In this sense, ritual actions are a pliant body of actions for registering, developing, and displaying one's own sense of importance' (Ames 1993, p. 153).

A conceptual framework in language creates the conditions under which a complexification of lived experience can occur, an idea that Nietzsche will return to in describing the onset of bad conscience in the *Genealogy of Morals*. Nietzsche's conditional praise for such a complexification is grounded in this essay on the sense of human beings having established their framework, in contrast to the bee who 'builds with wax he gathers from nature' (ibid. 85), with their own 'far more delicate material which [they] first have to manufacture from [themselves] (ibid.). The human being here displays a relative superiority to the bee in the sense that he/she produces the materials through which he/she will function, extend themselves, and ostensibly dominate their environment. However, the material out of which they build appears much more delicate and intricate, and susceptible to catastrophe, than the wax a bee collects. Nietzsche accords the human being praise on this account, noting as he does in other contemporary works (*UAH I*) that such a conceptual framework is subject to a precarious balance over the abyss of the primitive, dangerous natural world of constant change.

The power of forgetfulness is again an indispensable element of such construction, furnishing the ability to build in 'repose, security, and consistency' (ibid. 86). Whereas in the primal experience of dionysian intoxication one's identity with the whole is affirmed, in the contrasting activity of conceptual creation the human being's overt role must be effaced. The stage of conceptual production in language is a degenerated response to the powerful force of experience, 'the primitive world of metaphor' (ibid.). The strength of originary experience is too much for human perception to bear. It is bearable only through a subordinated interpretation, and in order to be productive, the subordination and degeneration inherent in the interpretation must be 'forgotten'. The nature of the force constituting conceptual production is, in the first place, that it 'forgets' its nature. In terms of the active/reactive distinction it is reactive, as that which understands itself in response to something else<sup>57</sup>. Thus, the form of 'forgetting' inherent in conceptual activity is a

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<sup>57</sup> Gilles Deleuze has incisively characterized this understanding of the reactive, insofar as it can be considered a consistent idea in Nietzsche's philosophy. Consider, for example, his claim that 'we can only grasp reactive forces for what they are [...] if we relate them to what dominates them but is not itself reactive' (Deleuze 1983, p. 41) and that '[t]he reactive is a primordial quality of force but one which can only be interpreted as such in relation to and on the basis of the active' (ibid. 42).

product of reactive forces in relation to the wholly active force of pre-conceptual experience.

Similarly related to such a state of affairs is the status of the human as the '*artistically creating* subject' (ibid.) who must 'forget' his role in production or as artist in order to continue to produce. Nietzsche's emphasis on the artistic in this essay is strongly influenced by how he understands the relation in language between humans and things-in-themselves. Having denied that language refers to things-in-themselves, and that the reference we assume is in fact arbitrary in its origins, he posits that, in lieu of some sort of prior connection, 'between two absolutely different spheres, as between subject and object, there is no causality, no correctness, and no expression; there is, at most, an aesthetic relation' (*OTL* I 86), also translated as behaviour or disposition. Nietzsche characterizes the relation in terms of arbitrariness, in the sense that signs, as mediatory units of meaning, are not grounded by any direct relation to the preceding experience. The relation is also described ultimately as an aesthetic one, however, and here a question might arise as to how positing the relation itself as aesthetic is arbitrary.

Nevertheless, the imposed limitations of humans' perspectives are the conditions under which they can produce a conceptual framework in order to live and extend themselves in the world. The radical extension or breach of those limitations, as Nietzsche points out both in this essay and *The Birth of Tragedy*, constitute a corresponding limitation on the ability to act or live: 'If but for an instant [the human] could escape from the prison walls of this faith [in his own perspective], his "self consciousness" would be immediately destroyed. It is even a difficult thing for him to admit to himself that the insect or the bird perceives an entirely different world from the one that man does' (ibid. 86). There is thus a tension in the text between two polarities of human life. It is necessary for humans to erect the barriers of a conceptual framework, beneficial in its own right, in order to live and flourish in an uncertain, dangerous world of flux. However, such barriers inhibit our ability to engage the world non-anthropocentrically, they fundamentally disturb the possibility of an intuitive relation to the 'essence' of things. A return to the undifferentiated flux of pre-conceptual experience would be suicidal, but the structure of conceptual language vastly constrains and impoverishes the human perspective.



How does Nietzsche resolve this tension? He delineates a drive in humans for the formation of metaphors, 'the fundamental human drive, which one cannot for a single instant dispense with in thought, for one would thereby dispense with man himself' (ibid. 89). This description of the fundamental human drive and its activities is the section of *OTL* most consonant with Nietzsche's later, more holistic philosophical thought. Anticipating the human being as an expression of the will to power, what is fundamentally human is here considered as a drive to metaphor<sup>58</sup>. While we have encompassed a great deal of our experience in conceptualisation, Nietzsche maintains that our metaphorical production continues unobstructed in the areas of myth and art, where the more vital, primal aspects of life are once again appreciated and tolerated. Similarly, the complexity of intellectual thought that conceptual framework enables is co-opted by the fundamental drive for metaphor. The drive is allowed full expression, even though its expression threatens to undermine the conceptual framework, through entertainment: 'man has an invincible inclination to allow himself to be deceived and is, as it were, enchanted with happiness when the rhapsodist tells him epic fables as if they were true [...]. So long as it is able to deceive without injuring, that master of deception, the intellect, is free; it is released from its former slavery and celebrates its Saturnalia' (ibid. 89-91). Those more primal, experiential aspects of the drive are conditionally allowed a greater degree of free play through sublimation. The expression of the metaphor-making drive leads to an aestheticisation of life, a beautiful and illusory disguising of life through art. Further, art, through its shared expression of the drive to metaphor, impinges on the anthropocentrism that frames the human perspective. The intelligibility of the 'language' of other forms of life is made possible through expression of the metaphor drive, as Sarah Kofman has pointed out:

'When a poet makes a tree speak like a nymph, by thus transgressing the natural order he indicates the possibility of speaking according to a different order than the one created by our habits. Letting vegetation speak when it 'ought' not to be able to signifies that the absence of words conceals another system of metaphors, 'proper' to the plant, and unmasking our language, too, as metaphorical' (Kofman 1993, p. 78)

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<sup>58</sup> As Kofman writes, 'The drive which urges man to make metaphors, repressed in one area, is displaced and manifests itself elsewhere: it is indestructible, for it coincides with life itself' (Kofman 1993, pp. 74-75)

The insights Nietzsche displays here regarding the intelligibility of language in other forms will be developed much further in his later work. There are nonetheless a number of points that make the human as an expression of the drive to metaphor discontinuous with Nietzsche's later understanding of the human as an expression of will to power. Most immediately, if Nietzsche demonstrates how humans have developed the web of conceptual framework like spiders, he also shows how much we are now entangled in it. Del Caro notes that '[t]he grim tone of the essay of 1873, with its tendency to reduce human activity to the formation of metaphors and concepts, is made even more grim by Nietzsche's own use of metaphors to make his point – this has the effect of underscoring the hollowness of the human stance in relation to the earth' (Del Caro 2004, p. 39)<sup>59</sup>.

Then, methodologically, Nietzsche's claims about the role of reference in language come into conflict with each other throughout the essay. He argues that our language does not correspond to things-in-themselves, 'further inference from the nerve stimulus to a cause outside of us is already the result of a false and unjustifiable application of the principle of sufficient reason' (*OTL* I 81), but neither is language merely self-contained, because Nietzsche describes how concepts are derived from interpretations of nerve stimuli. Nietzsche concludes that this sort of indirect reference cannot establish whether our language is a correct or incorrect representation of the world. Nonetheless, it seems as though there are two senses in which this sort of relation does represent the world. The relation in the interpretation of a nerve stimulus may only be concluded as 'arbitrary' in two qualified senses: a) in the naturalistic sense of being nothing more than the determinations of selection processes in the organism which vary according to circumstances, and b) the sense that the nature of the relation is fundamentally (i.e. beyond the naturalistic sense to the level of primal experience) aesthetic, and in being aesthetic, the relation is derived from primal experience.

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<sup>59</sup> J. Hillis Miller has similarly argued that in this essay '[Nietzsche] too is entangled in the situation he is attempting to clarify. He can by no effort survey that situation as if from above, in a species of aerial photography of the human predicament. Nietzsche's language is neither purely conceptual nor purely metaphorical, neither scientific nor artistic. It is an example of that perpetual casting of figurative constructions over the mysterious X which the figures attempt to describe. This torsion makes of the essay as a whole an extended example of what I call "the linguistic moment." It attempts the impossible task of defining in unambiguous signs the functioning of signs' (Miller 1981, pp. 46-47)

Both of these senses constitute the formation of language in different ways. The naturalistic sense shows how concepts are formed according to biological aspects; forgetfulness is shown to be a major biological mechanism for the formation of concepts, for example. The nature of the relation as aesthetic is expressed through the drive to metaphor, which bypasses the more thoroughly degenerated conceptual framework in language. In describing the transference from stimulus to image Nietzsche claims that 'there is a complete overleaping of one sphere, right into the middle of an entirely new and different one.' (*OTL* I 82) but the naturalistic and aesthetic aspects of the relation undermine, if not contradict, this idea. These aspects show that there is no 'overleaping' in language, there is actually continuity, albeit through interpretive degeneration and falsification of experience. This seeming contradiction is evident in the essay because Nietzsche is drawing on, as Sousa explains, 'an idealism based on a full-fledged naturalism, which is in fact the natural development of Schopenhauer's view on the intellect as a natural product' (Sousa 2012, p. 56). The relation between language and primal experience appears inadequate due to Nietzsche's continued recourse to the idea of the thing-in-itself in the essay.

Thus, for example, any sort of relation between nature and language is precluded by Nietzsche in the first section when he claims that 'we believe that we know something about the things themselves when we speak of trees, colors, snow, and flowers; and yet we possess nothing but metaphors for things— metaphors which correspond in no way to the original entities' (*OTL* I 83). The notion of a noumenon lurking in 'things themselves' and 'original entities' totally precludes a continuous relation between language and a natural state. If, however, we subtract the idea of a thing-in-itself against which to contrast pre-conceptual experience and the metaphors that interpret it (as Nietzsche mostly does in section 2 of *OTL*), then this relation is in fact tenable, in a qualified sense. Both the naturalistic and aesthetic aspects of the relation show how a continuity is maintained between originary experience and language, albeit with the contribution of (falsified) interpretation and degeneration. The greatest (i.e. least degenerated and falsified) continuity with pre-conceptual experience is retained in the drive to form metaphors, which proceeds unabated in art and myth, as Nietzsche shows in section 2.

In section 2, however, the possibility for an unmediated connection to the world through language is further obstructed by the sense that any such relation would be untenable. The capacity of art and myth to furnish such a relation is described by Nietzsche as requiring it as a deception in order to live. Section 1 presents a problem in relating language to nature through the positing of noumena. Section 2, however, problematizes any relation by maintaining a view of nature and world, or the essential way of things, that renders the possibility of lived, human experience irreconcilable with an unmediated relation to nature. This view is evident in several of Nietzsche's important early works. In *UAH*, for example, Nietzsche presents two analogous examples that show that an unmediated, holistic relation to nature is unbearable: the man 'who did not possess the power of forgetting at all' (*UAH* 1) and the true pupil of Heraclitus who recognises the essence of the world as becoming, who can 'hardly dare to raise his finger' (ibid.). A life needs the necessary illusions of adaptive perceptual and conceptual stability in order to persist in the face of unliveable flux.

This view of the nature of things is similarly present earlier in *The Birth of Tragedy*. It may be seen in both section 2 and *The Birth of Tragedy* that Nietzsche presents an originary relation to the world which requires mediation through the development of an aesthetic perspective, 'under the influence of the Apolline drive (*Trieb*) for beauty, the Olympian divine order of joy developed out of the original, Titanic divine order of terror in a series of slow transitions, in much the same way as roses burst forth from a thicket of thorns' (*BT* II 23). Not only is the originary state of things, in ontological terms, an unliveable flux which must be mediated by an alienated perceptual apparatus, it is also, once structured, as a primal, tragic state of existence that must be mediated by the deceptive drive to aestheticize. Insofar as one is capable of achieving an unmediated relation to nature, it is when '[n]ature expresses itself with its highest energy in Dionysiac intoxication' (*DWV* I 122-123) so that it ' [...] binds individual creatures together again, and it makes them feel that they are one with each other, so that the *principium individuationis* appears, so to speak, to be a perpetual state of weakness of the Will. The more degenerate the Will is, the more everything fragments into individual elements; the more selfish and arbitrary the development of the individual, the weaker is the organism which it serves' (ibid.). Such a position problematically frames the possibility of an authentic

relation to nature. This relation, according to the conception of nature that Nietzsche has at his disposal in the earlier works, must be self-destructive by its inherent logic. A dionysian relation to nature is only possible through the complete and irreversible effacing of the individual. As long as there is a self present to recognise the fact of having had a dionysian experience it is not a totally dionysian experience, it is still tempered by the apollonian drive. The prospects for relating to nature are grim in either case: nature must either be aestheticized, falsified, in order to live in it, or one must destroy oneself to achieve an unmediated relation. We will see that Nietzsche's later thought gives him the fundamental insights that allows him to posit a relation to ontology through language that avoids either unhappy conclusion, and this is achieved through a consideration of how language intervenes between human beings and nature.

### 3.3 – Language in *On the Genealogy of Morals*

By the time of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche has developed an account of the origins of language that fundamentally differs from the one contained in *OTL*. There is the same emphasis on language as derived in and through nature, a naturalistic understanding of language, but this understanding embraces the positive, life-affirming aspects of Nietzsche's genealogical method. This method is coupled with a greater holistic picture of the world developed through the teaching of will to power and a fuller understanding of the multiplicity of perspectives. In *OTL* Nietzsche's concern is a denunciation of a correspondence-type understanding of language and truth, with the effect that the human alienates himself from the overwhelming totality of nature in order to live and prosper. In Nietzsche's later philosophy, will to power now also factors in as the holistic aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy<sup>60</sup>, and this restructures the question of how language develops less as a critical response to historical conceptions of truth and reality and more as an issue of competing interpretations and evaluations understood on the basis of power<sup>61</sup>.

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<sup>60</sup> Richard Schacht similarly argues that the unity of apollonian and Dionysian in the early work becomes the overhuman and will to power (Schacht 1983, p. 482)

<sup>61</sup> Hence, as Alan Schrift neatly summarises the transition, 'Nietzsche's theory of language functions as an essential aspect of his later thinking. Insofar as language is a mere semiotic, a simplified, falsified, man-made sign-system, and insofar as all thinking is possible only in and through the means which language provides, the "knowledge" and "truth" which are derived from language are seen by

Although brief in length, the essay provides evidence of a new stance on an evaluative origin of language, both positive and negative. The positive conception of language is here developed in relation to the 'pathos of distance' of the higher type: 'The right of the masters to confer names extends so far that one should allow oneself to grasp the origin of language itself as the expression of the power of the rulers: they say "this *is* such and such", they put their seal on each thing and event with a sound and in the process take possession of it' (*OGM* I 2, 13). According to Nietzsche, originary language may be understood foremost here as an expression of power, a sizeable, but not discontinuous, development from seeing language emerging simply as a process of transference (e.g. from nerve stimulus to image). As Tracy B. Strong highlights:

'The very ability to give names- to extend the control of language over the world- must then be a masterly trait, for it consists of saying what the world is. To name is to define and bring under control; the allocation of names creates the world in the image of he who names. Such creations are properly termed meta-phors, they are artifacts which *carry* an intellectual process beyond the *mind* into the world' (Strong 1976, p. 256)<sup>62</sup>

Naming is 'masterly' because it is auto-generative: it is an interpretation borne from itself which feels itself both as good and as the only interpretation. However, because it is a relatively narrow interpretation or perspective, it cannot sustain itself. Hence, this originary, affirmative production of language by the masters is then succeeded by a 'herd-instinct' that emerges with the decline of the aristocratic

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Nietzsche to fail to do the job which they are thought to perform. Thus, Nietzsche concludes that "knowledge" is merely a collection of perspectival illusions which, while necessary for the preservation of the human species, stands as a function not of truth but of power.' (Schrift 1995, p. 389)

<sup>62</sup> What is specifically understood by 'naming', and any differences between 'naming' and language is hard to gauge. Strong's reading is problematic for it claims that to name is 'to define and bring under control'. But definition is surely a later phenomenon in language that proceeds 'naming', which seems more like a brute expression of power or an imposition of perspective. The need to define something arises out of a (conceptual) ambiguity which is not present at 'masterly' stage. Nietzsche explicitly discusses definition later in the *Genealogy* by saying that all concepts in which an entire process is semiotically concentrated elude definition; only that which has no history is definable' (*OGM* 2 13, 57). Kofman similarly presents a troublesome reading when she suggests that '[...] imposing a name is enough to make one believe one possesses a thing in its essentiality, or to change its meaning: thus, thanks to a simple change of name, the priests were able to perform the veritable conjuring trick of making what had until then been hated appear beneficial' (Kofman 1993, p. 83). But surely at the 'masterly' stage one imposes a name because one already assumes one possesses a thing (although perhaps without concern for its essentiality), as the 'masters' do. It seems rather that it's with the priests that the imposition of a name is equated with power, possession (and essentiality).

determination of language and values. A well-known aphorism on consciousness in the fifth book of *The Gay Science*, published in the same time-frame (1887) as *OGM*, elaborates the sense in which Nietzsche thinks that conscious, socialised language degenerates: '[...] everything which enters consciousness thereby becomes shallow, thin, relatively stupid, general, a sign, a herd-mark; that all becoming conscious involves a vast and thorough corruption, falsification, superficialization, and generalization.' (*GS* 354). As with *On Truth and Lies*, the sense of degeneration from more a vital, fundamental experience is maintained. However, in *OGM* this degeneration is focalized in the distinct field of human types and values:

'what was the real etymological significance of the designations for "good" coined in the various languages? I found they all led back to the *same conceptual transformation*- that everywhere "noble," "aristocratic" in the social sense, is the basic concept from which "good" in the sense of "with aristocratic soul," noble," [...] necessarily developed: a development which always runs parallel with that other in which "common" "plebeian," "low" are finally transformed into the concept "bad"' (*OGM* I 4, 27-28)

Both accounts of language, from *OTL* to *GM*, appear to be continuous insofar as Nietzsche is describing transformations at two different levels. The former transformation is a transference from stimulus to metaphor in the organism, which effects a degeneration in terms of force: the organism is unable to bear the totality of primal experience, becoming, and therefore develops a weaker interpretation of it in static forms. Language, from the outset, is a weakened interpretation. The latter transformation then occurs on a later, more developed anthropocentric level within the 'order of rank' of types: the 'naming' of the masters is pre-conceptual, consisting of 'spontaneous, aggressive, and conquering forces which are usurpatory and which never cease to give new exegeses and new directions' (Kofman 1993, p. 87), and is therefore more 'active' (but by no means wholly 'active', as the nature of the initial transference implies) in its expression than the later development in language of concepts. The major contribution of *GM* to Nietzsche's understanding of language is to show that an equivalent degeneration occurs at the stage of concepts and values, that 'weak wills can impose their meanings only by reaction, by inverting, disfiguring, and displacing the meaning attributed by the strong' (*ibid.*). In the

process of emphasizing the power of the masters to produce their own meanings, to 'take possession' of an event, Nietzsche says little about the natural context on which this possession depends and takes place in. For the masters, it is not simply an issue of designating something 'as it is' in nature, it is an issue of an active interpretation of that thing or relation, to put a 'seal' on that thing or relation as an expression of will to power. This expression is both an affinity and discontinuity with the natural: the expression is itself felt as a natural act and is therefore an affinity with nature inasmuch as it is what is done 'naturally'. However, the narrowness of the masterly interpretation prevents a fuller, deeper relation with nature. Of the masters' perspective Richardson points out that its 'wholeness or single-mindedness makes it hard for the master even to understand or empathize with other drives' (Richardson 1996: 56). In this sense the masters are 'ignorant' of the difference between their active interpretation and the underlying interpretation of nature.

In their conceptions of language, neither contrasted works in the spectrum of Nietzsche's philosophy by themselves appear to furnish the possibility for a satisfying conception of a relation to nature and world unmediated by language. *On Truth and Lies* cuts the human off from the natural through the process of falsification and degeneration through metaphor transference; the 'thing-in-itself' can never be ascertained due to necessary, limited conceptual frameworks that produce falsifications, allowing the human to live and flourish in the world. The closest humans get to an authentic relation is problematically framed in terms of a self-effacing dionysiac intoxication; if there is any hope for a closer relation to nature it is through the resurgence of the drive to metaphor in art and myth, which maintain a more direct relationship with nature than otherwise possible.

The *Genealogy of Morals* focuses on the evaluative development of types, where language develops as an interpretation or expression of the will to power in the originary act of masterly 'naming', the product of an active, if narrow perspective. This perspective comes to be subverted by the priestly mode of aristocracy, but the human is thereby ultimately complexified to a more 'interesting' state through the reversal of values effected: 'it was on the soil of this *essentially dangerous* form of human existence, the priestly form, that man first became *an interesting animal*, that only here did the human soul in a higher sense acquire *depth* and become *evil-and*



these are the two basic respects in which man has hitherto been superior to other beasts!' (*OGM* I 6 33)<sup>63</sup>. This complexification ultimately comes at the cost, historically, of the human becoming less 'natural' by being 'sick'. Thus, in *OGM*, an unmediated relation to nature is initially inhibited insofar as the narrowness of masterly interpretation is too much of an anthropocentrism, and slavely complexification 'de-naturalises' the human. This is not a pessimistic evaluation by any means. The task that thus emerges in philosophy, for Nietzsche, is to undo the sickness that has befallen the human animal in the process of his magnificent complexification, and to re-naturalise the human once more on this basis. This naturalisation is not a process of regression; it isn't the case that the human is to become more of an animal once more, more 'narrow-minded', nor is Nietzsche advocating a form of primitivism. Rather, the complexification that has occurred in the human creates the conditions under which a deeper, fuller relation to nature can be achieved, the conditions which Nietzsche thinks are necessary for the development of future philosophers<sup>64</sup>.

### 3.4 - Language Through Perspectivism and Will to Power

I will now argue that a non-correspondence, non-representation relation to world through language can be better discerned in Nietzsche's philosophy through an interconnected understanding of perspectivism and will to power, and this relation, contrasted against those views taken to facilitate idealism (of the pernicious variety Nietzsche critiques). This has two significant consequences: firstly, it makes a comparative process ontology further realizable in the sense that potential difficulties relating its ontology to language are resolved. Secondly, this account of how language relates to perspectivism and will to power may itself help to further make Nietzsche's own philosophy of the future realizable even in principle. On this second

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<sup>63</sup> Consider also an important aphorism in the earlier *HAH* that describes a similar process: 'the danger in [...] strong communities, founded on similar, steadfast individual members, is an increasing, inherited stupidity, which follows all stability like a shadow. In such communities, spiritual progress depends on those individuals who are less bound, much less certain, and morally weaker' (*HAH* § 5 224)

<sup>64</sup> Note *BGE* 203: 'The conditions that one would have partly to create and partly to exploit for their genesis, the probable ways and tests that would enable a soul to grow to such a height and force that it would feel the compulsion for such tasks; a revaluation of values under whose new pressure and hammer a conscience would be steeled, a heart turned to bronze, In order to endure the weight of such responsibility' (trans. Kaufmann)

point, this is because both of these aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy provide the necessary scope to develop an account of meaning in language that is unmediated to the extent that it is a direct extension of the more fundamental drives of nature and world, tracing its genealogy through the vegetal, animal and mineral drives that constitute and precede the human being<sup>65</sup>. Both notions, when fully appreciated, will allow us to see how the origin of language, how language itself, can be conceived within Nietzsche's philosophy as an extension of the will to power (understood in conjunction with perspectivism) as implied in *OGM*, an extension of will to power that is not essentially anthropocentric<sup>31</sup> nor mediated by representation. Throughout my description I will also draw on comparisons between these concepts and the semiotic theory of John Deely. In doing so, I hope to show the confluence between Nietzsche's philosophy and holistic semiotics as it is currently developing outside of the Saussurean system. Deely's theory in particular stresses the inextricability of human language and signs from the 'inert' processes of the world, while also aiming to be a holistic methodological doctrine, similar to the will to power (as discussed explicitly in *BGE* 36).

Again, it is necessary firstly to understand perspectivism in its broadest sense as the play of a multiplicity of perspectives, a play of interpretations described in terms of ever-changing forces (the power-process ontology, or becoming). In *The Gay Science*, for example, Nietzsche asks whether 'all existence is not essentially actively engaged in interpretation' (GS 374). In contrast to the dominant subject/object model of epistemology and experience traditionally posited in western philosophy, Nietzsche advocates necessarily inter-related processes of interpretation as the site of experience, rather than any one atomic entity. As described in the previous chapter, perspectivism also forms a rejection of the noumenal/phenomenal distinction, as perspectives are never constituted in and of themselves. Like Indra's net, they are constituted by a network of interpretive activity that, given their holistic interdependence, preclude at any point the role of a noumenon.

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<sup>65</sup> See Parkes, Graham (1994, pp. 157-249) for an extended discussion on the metaphors of the natural world and their importance in Nietzsche's philosophy.

Roughly speaking, in a conventional understanding of language there is an out-standing phenomenon (text or work, specifically in the literary or aesthetic traditions) from which we derive ostensibly subjective meanings; we typically ask, for example, what the 'meaning' of a text or event is, and thus imply a text or event in itself apart from these various interpretations. Nietzsche attacks this assumption more generally in an unpublished note from 1885-1886:

'A "thing-in-itself" just as perverse as a "sense-in-itself," a "meaning-in-itself." There are no facts-in-themselves," for a sense must always be projected into them before there can be "facts." The question "what is that?" is an imposition of meaning from some other viewpoint. "Essence," the "essential nature," is something perspectival and already presupposes a multiplicity. At the bottom there always lies "what is that for *me*?" (for us, for all that lives, etc.)' (WTP 556).

In contrast, Perspectivism establishes that there is no object or text in itself against which a mediation of interpretation can occur. The insights of perspectivism specifically applied to language hold that, instead of a text or object 'meaning to' me something that is in the process mediated by subjective representation, it is that the totality of drives that constitute me engage in a play of interpretation, or express themselves as will to power, by 'interpreting' (expressing force) on a contesting interpretation (the 'object' or text). Similar notions about language that draw heavily on Nietzsche's thought may be found in post-structuralist debates about textual interpretation, ideology and the role of the author, but few authors are willing to maintain the characteristic qualitative and originary aspect of genealogy that Nietzsche stresses<sup>66</sup>.

Similar to the ground of Nietzsche's perspectivism, the semiotician John Deely stipulates an inter-related model of cognition where the subject is inextricable from environment as part of his semiotic theory. Instead of an anthropocentric, realist understanding of experience (i.e. to consider that a cloud mimics this or that animal), or a purely subjective view (the mimicking as an aspect of cognitive

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<sup>66</sup> As Gemes points out, this constitutes a key difference in Nietzsche, who develops (with the necessary aid of a genealogy that traces the drives) 'his vision of the architect of the future as one who constructs a unifying goal, as one puts the pieces into a highly structured whole under a singular vision [which] runs counter to the whole postmodern appropriation of Nietzsche as celebrating a fragmentary decentered world' (Gemes 2001, p. 348-349)

experience imposed on a phenomenon), there is, Deely states, the possibility for conceiving

"data" or "impressions" of external sense, semiotically, [...] neither as intrinsic properties of physical things nor as mere modifications of the subjective faculties ("effects" wholly within the cognitive organism), but precisely as features or properties exhibiting how things are *in their action here and now* on an organism possessed of this determinate range of sensitivities [...] i.e., as "properties" neither of "things in themselves" nor of "knowers of their subjectivity," but of the situation of interaction as co-determined by the structure of the stimulating source on the one side and of the receiving organs and organism on the other side' (Deely 1982, p. 115).

According to Deely, this understanding would retain the relativeness of interpretation without wholly confining it to subjective experience: 'The initial contact between cognizing organism and environment, on this view, is indistinctly subjective and objective. The world appears thus [...] only to a subject, but it really *is* that way *given that totality of conditions*' (ibid.).

This emphasis on the totality of conditions is crucial. Perspectival interpretation appears "subjective", singular, but it is simultaneously constituted by all other perspectives, and vice-versa. The cloud really *does* mimic this or that animal according to my perspective, because my perspective (being sufficiently developed) is interwoven with and acting on other perspectives. This claim about the world is not reducible only to my perspective as subjective interpretation; rather, it is an instantiated interpreting<sup>67</sup> or acting on of other perspectives, while it is simultaneously interpreted and acted on by others. But my perspective is not totalisable either: it is only given the totality of perspectives or conditions relative to my own, and the limited depth and development of my perspective, that it can be said that the cloud mimics this or that. Outside of this totality, such a claim does not universally obtain; the cloud isn't only a mimicking thing. In an unpublished note, Nietzsche makes a similar point about definition: 'A thing would be defined once all creatures had asked "what is that?" and had answered their question. Supposing one

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<sup>67</sup> I understand the process of interpretation throughout the remainder of this chapter foremost as the expression of force.

single creature, with its own relationships and perspectives for all things, were missing, then the thing would not yet be "defined." (WTP 556). Accordingly, the fullest "definition" or interpretation for Nietzsche would thus be one that most appreciates the totality of the web of perspectives, not just a localized totality within that web. Nietzsche acknowledges that while our particular interpretation is an inescapably human, localized perspective, its depth of appreciation can certainly be extended: 'today we are at least far from the ridiculous immodesty that would be involved in decreeing from our corner that perspectives are permitted only from this corner' (GS 374). In other words, we can recognize our unique contribution to the interpretive process on the one hand, but also recognize that this process is not one wholly encompassed by our own perspective.

Hence, we see that both Nietzsche's perspectivism and the basis of Deely's semiotic theory develop an understanding of interpretation on the basis of an inseparable cognitive resonance between perceiver and perceived, treating the effects of an interpretation as fundamentally 'real', part of the world and not just the interpreter, without establishing a nomenclaturism that would assume those effects as *the* only possible ones or interpretations. Further, in response to the direct issue of how a phenomenon can be (interpreted) as two things at once, even contradictory things, Nietzsche's perspectivism favors a greater holistic perspective under which these differing, subordinate interpretations can be appreciated. By delineating no essential distinction between perspective and interpretation, or cognition and environment, Nietzsche's perspectivism and Deely's semiotic theory establish from the beginning an inherent continuity that is essential to understanding how human language will emerge as a direct, unmediated expression (and unique development) of pre-existing natural forces. What remains is to explicate how human language proper develops itself as a unique expression of these forces without becoming essentially anthropocentric. Although it is unique in its particular constitution, the human perspective emerges nonetheless as configuration of previous interpretations. Parkes, for example, explains the direct processual relationship between 'interpreting existence' and becoming:

'If all existence is interpreting, then all phenomena are expressing through their existence: "*This* is what it means to be" – or rather "become". A rock asserts itself as

a paradigm of elemental solidity. Where vegetation prevails is the claim: “*these* processes, we plants, are what sun and earth, water and air, really are becoming. [...] Animals supervene, intimating: *this* is what vegetation can become, as they incorporate and assimilate denizens of the plant realm. And humans, presenting themselves as the ultimate embodiment of mineral, vegetal, and animal, represent the grandest interpretation of all' (Parkes 2005, p. xxi)

In semiotics, what Deely considers to be a sign is 'anything functioning to bring something other than itself into an organism's awareness' (Deely 1982, p. 98). What can be understood in comparative terms with Nietzsche's will to power is thus that all mineral, vegetal, animal and ultimately human forms are signs of becoming. Deely argues for a similarly extensive notion of signs inhering in the basic processes of the universe,

'already at the level of their fundamentals, signs are virtually present and operative in the dyadic interactions of brute force, weaving together in a single fabric of virtual relations the future and the past of such interactions. This is semiosis, but semiosis of a specific kind. I propose that we call it *physiosemissis*, so as to bring out by the very name the fact that it is a question here of a process as broad as the physical universe itself.' (Deely, 1990: 93-94)

Deely must posit the existence of signs in the physical universe in terms of a *virtual* presence<sup>68</sup>, that from the very start these constituents have the potential for signification. For Nietzsche, however, there is no such need, because the action of signs is not fundamentally different in its nature or causal efficacy from any other process or 'interactions of force' in the world, it is simply an expression of force as the will to power. Will to power, as the will to interpretation, positions humans expressing an interpretation of all prior forms on earth. The human is the continually unfolding result of the sum of previous interpretations, of mineral, vegetal and animal origin. Humans are derived from and constituted by drives that are prior to them, they are a particular continuation of those drives, but their specifically human

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<sup>68</sup>Deely writes further that '[b]efore there are actually signs, there are signs virtually, that is, there are beings and events so determined by other beings and events that, in their own activity as so determined, they determine yet further series of beings and events in such a way that the last terms in the series represent the first terms by the mediation of the middle terms' (Deely 1990, p. 87).

contribution is a unique alteration of the directionality of the totality of drives that constitute them and continue through them.

Language is not an exceptional phenomenon when understood through the will to power. Tracing its genealogy back to a cognition which is inseparable from its environment, the origin of language is neither entirely reactive and representational (wherein language is a falsification wholly the product of a human subject) nor wholly active and auto-generative (the stamp of the masters who 'forget' nature, being too singular in their perspective to fully appreciate it). While both are significant qualitative facets constituting the shaping, production and complexification of language, they are not by themselves ultimately sufficient to explain the origin of language as a continuity with preceding natural drives. Instead, language, like any other phenomenon of will to power, manifests as an ordering process in the flux of becoming. As part of a flux, there can be no radical breaks; processes and their development are inextricable from each other at every point. Signification, which language is derived from, is not something that originates in the human, nor is it specific to the human. Rather, it is itself another interpretation proffered by the animal, vegetal and mineral drives. Language is a biological, situated development out of that basis, and is therefore a continuous expression of all prior forms of becoming.

This can be made clear especially with regard to the idea of meaning in language. According to the will to power, when I express a meaning in language, I am expressing a relation of force that is historical, genealogical, that both precedes me but is also made different through my particular appropriation at a distinct place and time. M. J. Bowles elucidates a similar understanding of meaning in Nietzsche's philosophy that emphasizes its interrelation with power: 'a concept, a precept, or an idea has meaning if and only if it has power'<sup>69</sup>. Bowles then characterizes power in terms of the 'feeling of power', it is 'an affect, something we feel, it is not to be taken as simply happiness or pleasure. For the affect that Nietzsche is indicating is that which life feels when it overwhelms other life' (ibid.)<sup>70</sup>. Rather than conceiving of

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<sup>69</sup> Bowles, M. J. "The Practice of Meaning in Nietzsche and Wittgenstein." *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, vol. 26 no. 1, 2003, p. 13. Project MUSE, doi:10.1353/nie.2003.0019

<sup>70</sup> Although Nietzsche himself characterises power in terms of 'feeling' more than once, it seems to me that any general, systemic or holistic sense of power cannot be characterized in such terms. Bowles is

power in terms of feeling or affect, power may also be considered as interpretation or expression of force. A thing would then 'mean' (Bowles states only ideas, concepts or precepts) insofar as it was a degree of expression of force, or interpretation<sup>71</sup>.

It seems that such a conception of meaning and language aligns Nietzsche's philosophy closely with the forms of semiotic idealism that were suggested at the beginning of this chapter. What is it that distinguishes Nietzsche's philosophy of will to power, in which ideas have equivalent 'reality' as expressions of will to power, from semiotic idealism (and idealism in general)? The answer may be found in Nietzsche's emphasis both on genealogy and the continuity of becoming. In Nietzsche's philosophy the ground of natural relations in the vegetal, animal and mineral drives (and ultimately the process of becoming itself) are inextricable from humanity's genealogical understanding of itself, determining both its past, present and future. The possibility of specifically human signs in human language constituting the whole, as in semiotic idealism, is therefore precluded in any philosophical appreciation of genealogy. Genealogy preserves the grounding 'object' of natural drives between human interpretation and human signs (language). Natural drives themselves are signs of becoming, and this appears to frame will to power (and perspectivism) in terms of the semiotic, as in both Deely's holistic semiotic theory, along with the aspects of semiotic idealism described in Derrida and Baudrillard. What separates will to power from Deely's semiotics is, firstly, that the semiotic is subsumed within the holism of force. To the degree that there is a difference between the semiotic and non-semiotic, it is in terms of the capacity for expression of force. More importantly, what separates will to power from idealism, in lieu of a material or theoretical distinction (again, because process ontology deflates this distinction), is the depth of relation it traces and grounds itself on. What will to power and the underlying power-perspectivism demonstrates is that idealism is not truly a distinction of the real from the unreal, the material from the idea, or

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quick to point out that the feeling of power cannot of course be likened to a state such as pleasure or happiness, but it seems to me that characterizing power as 'feeling' will inevitably call to mind a static state of some kind that clashes with Nietzsche's non-substantialist philosophy of becoming. Similarly, descriptions of power as 'feeling' renders power an irremediably anthropocentric or at least a vitalist notion: it is difficult to understand other entities like rocks or other non-living matter 'feeling' power. Power appears to be better understood through the idea of a relation rather than a state, insofar as there is a feeling derived from power, it is rather a consequence or derived interpretation of it.

<sup>71</sup> Deleuze writes similarly that 'Nietzsche's active philology has only one principle: a word only means something insofar as the speaker wills something by saying it' (Deleuze 1983, p. 74). A word therefore means only when something is willed by it, when it expresses force.



appearance from reality, all of which are effectively undermined in an immanent process or force ontology coupled with the idea of perspectivism. Rather, from the perspective of will to power, idealism is a qualitative distinction based on what sort of relations in the world are affirmed and upheld or negated and neglected. The will to power affirms a deeper, more powerful, fuller set of relations in referring and maintaining the natural drives than the diminished set of relations that are located with the specifically human in semiotic idealism.

According to will to power, then, the only legitimate, genealogical sense in which to talk about representation or signification is therefore through genealogy and force. Insofar as we can intelligibly talk about mediation, it is the mediation of specifically human conscious, socialized language. Human language is an interpretation of an interpretation, a diminished expression of the will to power but nonetheless a unique, human contribution. The holistic understanding of will to power allows us to recognize that these expressions themselves are expressions of will to power, the will to act on and interpret, and being inextricably constituted by drives that preceded them, they do not break with the natural drives, they continue as their reverberation. Insofar as there is anthropocentrism, it is not an anthropocentrism of mediated subjective representation. It is a localized anthropocentrism that consists in a novel configuration of drives (the human) which not only alters the directionality of the drives. It alters the history of the drives themselves through the most powerful expression of will to power yet, humans being thus far the 'grandest interpretation'.

### **3.5 - Conceptions of Language in Warring States Chinese Thought**

We have seen that, once more, the theoretical pre-occupation of this chapter was to present an alternative framework through which to begin to understand language, and most importantly, a framework that is not built upon the subjective/objective or noumenal/phenomenal distinctions that process ontology works to undermine. I have attempted to show that Nietzsche's doctrine of will to power and perspectival ontology, by drawing out their consequences for conceiving language, presents such a framework. It is such a framework because it reduces

language to a non-representational expression of will to power in which the ascription of meaning is interpretation, the expression of will to power of one perspective upon another. This makes language and the world fundamentally inseparable from each other, with the consequence that certain anthropocentric claims about language can be considered to be true (the claim that, for example, this or that cloud ‘mimics’ a certain animal) but are nonetheless recognized to be ‘less truthful’ (consider the argument offered in the previous chapter concerning power as equivalent to truth, and hence that there is, strictly speaking, no falsity in the world), or false by comparison, to the overarching totality of perspectives. Thus, language does not intervene or mediate between the subject’s perception of the world, resolving the prior dichotomies, but yet it likewise does not reduce the world to the subject’s perception (again because of the recognition of a totality of perspectives above and beyond human language and cognition).

Although the focus in this chapter is on a Western philosophy and conception of language, it will be productive to briefly consider the manner in which Warring States period thought in Chinese philosophy likewise holds a vision of language in which language and world are inextricably linked. This is so particularly because the present attempt to reach this goal from the Western point of this comparison has been through the route of a subject-based metaphysics. In order to understand the basis of a Chinese philosophical approach to language, it is necessary to explain several key concepts relating to language. Chinese philosophical thought of the time relating to language centers on the notion of *ming* (names). A *ming* is the smallest component of a guiding discourse (*dao*). Names can be very narrow and refer to things like places, a particular person, a kind of animal. Names can also be broad, however, and can reflect titles or roles (e.g. father, daughter, professor, minister). It is the Mohists and the School of Names within Chinese philosophy of this period that are concerned with *ming* and language in this sense, and it is this sense that is most relevant to our considerations. As Hansen writes, it is with the Mohists that a philosophical consideration of language and world arises in Chinese thinking: ‘The Mohist theories of naming moved the study of language from a pragmatic to a more semantic focus. [...] They tried to describe a realistic base of naming. They sought a reality-based answer to the question, "What is the *right* way to project distinctions in new settings?" The right way, they thought, responded to real similarities and

differences in the world' (Hansen 1992, p. 233). This semantic concern with the manner in which distinctions are established is evident in Mohist writings such as Canon B67<sup>72</sup>:

“Oxen and horses are not oxen” and “oxen and horses are oxen” are both acceptable, because the oxen and horses form a group. Suppose you deny that “oxen and horses are oxen” because some of them are not oxen, or you deny that “oxen and horses are not oxen” because some of them are oxen. You would then have to admit that “oxen and horses are oxen” because some of them are oxen. Moreover, an ox is not two, and a horse is not two, but an ox and a horse are two (so what is true of oxen need not be true of oxen and horses). Hence, even though we cannot deny that “oxen are oxen” and “horses are horses,” there is no problem with it being the case that “oxen and horses are not oxen” and “oxen and horses are not horses” (quoted in Van Norden, Bryan William 2011, p. 114)

In such a dispute, the same grounds can be offered for deeming the assertion “oxen-and-horses are not horses” impermissible as they can for deeming it permissible. The debate asks how we handle names/*ming* (e.g. oxen-and-horses) that involve more than one kind of thing? What is permissible or impermissible to be said about them?

A Western ontology of categorization might resolve such a dispute differently, but the marked distinction that Hansen believes is present is that when Chinese philosophers of the period pursued considerations of this kind they were developing a mereology rather than a conceptual substance ontology. This mereology, so it is claimed, consisted of a “stuff”-based ontology. Rather than considering, for example, 100 objects, Hansen thinks that Chinese philosophers within this school dealt with 100 nameable “stuff” kinds: ‘an ontology of noncontiguous stuffs with a part-whole structure’ (1992, p. 48). Accordingly, early Chinese thinkers considered ‘collections of things [...] as wholes of which the things that constitute the collection are parts. For instance, instead of thinking of all the horses in the world as elements of the set or class of horses, ancient Chinese philosophers thought of them as spatially scattered parts of the concrete whole that is the sum of all horses’ (Hansen, language and logic in ancient china 1981:30-32).

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<sup>72</sup> Similar linguistic quandaries have been read as evident in Gongsun Long’s ‘white horse’ dialogue as well as the ten paradoxes elaborated by Hui Shi in the *Zhuangzi*.

This is a controversial position known as the “mass noun hypothesis”, and various commentators have presented arguments against it<sup>73</sup>. Chris Fraser’s recent critique of the mass-noun hypothesis is decisive, as it shows that ‘if the mass noun argument were sound, it would establish at most that features of pre-Qin thinkers’ language could have influenced their philosophical views. It gives no reason to think these features did influence them. The argument thus does not really meet the demands of Hansen’s own holistic method.’ (Fraser 2007, p. 447). Even so, the part-whole mereology can be accepted as tenable without necessarily committing to the position that language played a core role in determining the character of early Chinese philosophical writing. This, however, is not the claim this research makes, it is rather that Chinese philosophical writing suggests an inter-relation between language and world on the one hand and a distinctly different vocabulary for conceiving the world in process terminology. In this sense, the part-whole mereology indicates as much. Likewise, the pragmatism of the mereology is reflected in what Fraser calls its behavioural nominalism:

‘Early Chinese philosophy of language is nominalistic, in that it is not committed to recognizing any entities other than words, or “names” [...] and the things that form their extensions. It does not appeal to universals, essences, concepts, meanings, Lockean ideas, or Platonic forms to explain the semantics of general terms or the relation between a particular thing and its kind. Early Chinese views of the mind are “behavioral” in that they explain thought and understanding by appeal to the ability to discriminate things and act in appropriate ways. Understanding a word (such as “horse”) is not a matter of having a certain abstract object in one’s mind, but of having the practical ability to distinguish the things denoted by the word.’ (ibid. 421)

As such, argumentation is strongly affected by this combination of mereology and nominalism. The corresponding notion for argumentation in Chinese thought of the period is *bian* (disputation or discrimination). Ancient Chinese thought explained the use of general terms, and thus communication, by speakers’ ability to distinguish (*bian*) things or “stuff” (*shi*) as of the same or different kinds (*lei*) and to apply the same name (*ming*) to all stuff of a kind. Distinguishing things

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<sup>73</sup> For a summary of these positions see Bo Mou’s *Chinese Philosophy A-Z* (2009, p. 21-23)

of the same or different kinds in order to apply the same name to all of a kind involves a process of judgement called “*shi/fei*” (*this/not-this, right/wrong*).

Different examples of such distinguishing vary according to tradition: an example within the Confucianism might be over the right cap for a ceremony, or the proper manner of bowing, the dispute being settled by appeal to tradition. Mohists *shi* (deem as “so”) the existence of spirits and *fei* (deem as “not so”) the existence of fate, argumentation being settled by the Mohist basis of utility. The School of Names, generally speaking, appeared prepared to admit that *shi/fei* distinctions have a conventional, social basis, but claim that those distinctions are then guided by similarities and differences between “stuffs” in reality (which should not be understood as mind-independent existence, but rather the greater field of the totality). Hence, the form of disputation in Chinese thought of this period is guided by analogy, and questions in disputation for the School of Names are questions about how to discriminate “stuffs” in reality appropriately. Dispute between schools is not concerned, as is often the case in the West, with whether the guiding discourse of a school corresponds to mind-independent reality, but rather with whether it is a guiding discourse that can be maintained as constant and repeatable within a cyclical and processual world. How, then is disputation further resolved within the Chinese tradition? Given its substance-based methodology, the logical framework for analysing argumentation in Western philosophy drew on theoretical debate; fallacies, absurdities and paradoxes. In the Chinese tradition, while paradoxes could be said to be present in a certain form as an argumentative foil (and also strongly present, it is arguable, in the writings of the Daoists), the core arbiters in reasoning are the notions of admissibility/permissible (*ke*) and perversity/impermissible (*bei*). “Admissibility” refers to statements that are “semantically permissible”: they could be spoken in some situation without violating semantic or pragmatic norms. “Perversity” (*bei*) refers to statements that are not “semantically permissible.” In speaking them one would be guilty of a semantic or pragmatic contradiction, inconsistency, or other error. This raises a number of significant points regarding the relation between argumentation and ontology or epistemology. Firstly, note again the strong pragmatic element involved in the structure of argumentation: one cannot resolve disputation by reference to external, conceptual or a priori truths, or an ontological ground that is prior to human beings. At the same time however, disputation is not a “closed system” relating to humans alone, it involves the greater totality of processes

outside of human experience, for the relation and reference of terms have a grounding in the greater world. As Bao Zhiming writes, language within Chinese thought forms an isomorphic fit between world and humans, in which ‘A is isomorphic with B if, for each event E(i) which affects A, there is corresponding event E(j) which affects B, and E(i) and E(j) may, but need not, be the same event’ (Zhiming 1990, p. 195). Although Zhiming draws on the language of correspondence when discussing the isomorphic fit between language and world, I believe the language of correlation may be more appropriate, particularly in virtue of the fact that Zhiming admits that an ‘isomorphic fit’ may be quite strong given that ‘it may be impossible to construct a set of all events or other entities relevant to the exposition of the relationship between language and the world’ (ibid. 215-216). Hence, instead of claiming that events in language correspond with those in the greater totality (heaven) and ‘hence [that] changes in heavenly processes will have their manifestation in human society (ibid. 196)’ and thus that ‘changes in language will lead to similar changes in reality, and vice versa’ (ibid.), it can instead be claimed that changes in language correlate with changes in reality and vice versa, which captures the interrelation of language and world on the one hand, but does not limit the relation to something that is a one-to-one direct causal relationship.

This conceptual framework described in Chinese thought of the Warring States periods goes a significant length in suggesting the shape a framework of comparative process-ontological thought may take in addressing the issue of language. There are clear commonalities on both sides of thought: language and world are fundamentally inter-related, not simply in the sense that one depends on the other, but that language is directly manifested as a process in the world, it is an expression of the will to power according to Nietzsche’s philosophy while it is an expression of the unity between heaven and man (*tian ren he yi*) in Chinese thought. This captures the basic point of nomenclaturism (that language refers to things in the world beyond subjective experience) without implying its anthropocentrism, and it achieves this in a theoretical framework outside of the subjective/objective dichotomy. Likewise, the distinction of permissibility and impermissibility within language highlight the elements of a potentially new evaluative framework for comparative process ontology and the development of its epistemology: in contrast to the requirement of reference to an objectively true state in mind-independent

reality, permissibility/impermissibility provides an evaluation of claims on the basis of their pragmatic or semantic function, which is grounded by the various *dao* (guiding discourses) in Chinese philosophy, Daoism most importantly, and which we might theorise is grounded in Nietzsche's philosophy by the adopted perspective or way of life. Importantly, these pragmatic or semantic functions are not independent of reality but are inextricably linked to it.

Through the course of this chapter I hope to have drawn out the fullest implications for language that can be seen in the features so far delineated in comparative process ontology, focusing on those present in Nietzsche's philosophy. It is evident that the fullest relation to language is achieved in Nietzsche's philosophy through a holistic understanding of will to power and perspectivism, both of which are informed by elements from his early and later works. This holistic understanding presents a view that can maintain a direct, unmediated link to nature, to the natural drives, in contrast to contemporary theories of language derived from Saussurean semiology which facilitate a semiotic idealism. The understanding of language that emerges from the holism of perspectivism and will to power is one that rejects the subject/object distinction, nor is it one that relies on a dichotomy between appearance and reality. Rather, the ground of its relation is qualitative, in that it determines what is natural through a genealogical understanding of the animal, vegetal, and mineral drives that constitute the human being. Such a picture of language raises some striking structural similarities with early Chinese thought and its relation to language, although posited through a radically different part-whole mereology. The will to power doctrine emphasises the pragmatic element of language by highlight its reducibility to expressions of force: an utterance is an expression of will to power. In a different way, language in early Chinese thought also maintains a pragmatic focus through its pre-occupation with differentiating in concrete contexts.

#### **Chapter 4 – Case Study 1 (Metaphysics), Case Study 2 (Socio-Economic overview)**

To summarize the work of this thesis so far: I have attempted to delineate a comprehensive philosophical worldview that is based on process, one that draws to a great extent on Nietzsche's philosophy but is also comparatively driven in drawing on elements within ancient Chinese thought to provide further perspective. This worldview is on one hand irreducibly perspectival, but on the other hand establishes within this overarching worldview a derivative, evaluational perspective. This is Nietzsche's doctrine of will to power, argued for as a 'higher' or 'better' perspective on the basis of its pervasiveness<sup>74</sup>, and it functions on a basis that is not amenable to conventional noumenal/phenomenal or subjective/objective philosophical analysis. Likewise, my use of warring states Chinese thought has served as a comparative foil demonstrating that such an ontology need not have to address such distinctions, as there are other traditions of process thinking which do not engage with them all. So far the character of my ontological delineation has been mainly theoretical: I sketched out the position in terms of three theoretical areas: 1) ontology, 2) epistemology-evaluation, 3) language. I now wish to use this general comparative process ontology as a heuristic basis with which to address both a conventional philosophical problem and a practical socio-political problem. I do this in order to conclude whether the comparative process ontology so outlined allows us to address these problems from an innovative or fruitful perspective. Can a comparative process philosophy pose any novel and effective solutions to philosophical problems that have continued through the western philosophical tradition? I argue that they at least provide the grounds to pursue a revitalized attempt, and I want to begin by examining one of the core philosophical problems in metaphysics: appearance and reality. After addressing this metaphysical case study, I will then turn to more applied case studies in which praxis is central. These will be in the areas of economics, politics and technology. My analyses in such areas will be less focused, but should provide a broad outline of how such areas may be further dealt with or conceived as a starting point within the ontology I have been describing.

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<sup>74</sup> As described before, the notion of pervasiveness at work here does not depend on any individual perspectival recognition. Our coming to recognise the pervasiveness of a perspective is not foremost a conscious assent but is rather embodied in how that perspective influences and guides our behaviour, practices and culture.



#### 4.1 - Case Study 1 (Metaphysics) - Appearance and reality: The *Zhuangzi*

To begin this examination, I will discuss the famous ‘butterfly dream’ story of the *Zhuangzi*, quoted in full below given its brevity:

Last night Zhuang Zhou dreamed he was a butterfly, spirits soaring he was a butterfly (is it that in showing what he was he suited his own fancy?), and did not know about Zhou. When all of a sudden he awoke, he was Zhou with all his wits about him. *He does not know* whether he is Zhou who dreams he is a butterfly or a butterfly who dreams he is Zhou. Between Zhou and the butterfly there was necessarily a dividing; just this is what is meant by the transformation of things. (Graham 1981, p. 61)

As Hans Georg-Moeller points out, the story has been interpreted and translated in a number of ways. The Giles translation that Moeller cites (Moeller 1999, p. 439) is taken to convey a Daoist insight ‘into the vanity and contingency of (human) existence’ and perhaps ‘an insight into the impermanence of all distinctions in our world, and hence into our interwoven-ness with all beings in a continuous process of change’ (ibid.). Interpreting the story in such a way brings to mind the familiar philosophical questions, specifically epistemological, that the West has struggled with: how can I ever really know whether I am dreaming or not? Am I someone else’s dream? How do I know that what appears before me is actually real and not mere appearance? As Moeller points out, these types of reading do not seem particularly Daoist in perspective, they instead risk insinuating the problems of Western Philosophy into a tradition where many of those problems would be alien. Countering such a reading, Moeller highlights that historical Chinese interpretations like the second century *xuanxue* scholar Guo Xiang’s instead lack any of the foregoing philosophical concerns. According to Guo Xiang the character Zhuang Zhou does not even remember the dream of the butterfly: ‘The not-knowing about a butterfly at this moment is not different from the not-knowing about a Zhuang Zhou during the time of the dream’ (quoted in Moeller 1999, p. 440). Likewise, the original Chinese text contains no first-person references to an “I” whereas the classical Giles translation in Western readership repeatedly draws on them. The philosophical considerations that arise in the Western interpretation appear to stem in

large part from an appeal to an underlying, continuous substance that persists between the dream-transformations of man and butterfly. When this interpretive assumption is undermined, however, no such philosophical issues persist. As both Guo Xiang (serving as the original commentator) and Moeller (serving as a comparative commentator) point out: 1) both entities are entirely and unmistakeably themselves for the duration of the stories, and 2) both existences, that of the man's and the butterfly's, are no more or less real than the other, as neither are cast into doubt by a break in the continuity of both (as there would be, for example, if one were to wake from a dream one remembered). The lesson of the butterfly dream is echoed by the general character of Daoism as a philosophical school: the search for an ultimate reality or deeper, absolute truth is not present as an ideological framework in Daoism, there is only the concern with explicating and aligning with the ground of the fundamental guiding discourse, *Dao*. As Graham points out, '[u]nlike many mystical schools (including Zen Buddhism, which continued its cult of spontaneity), Taoism does not seek an absolute, unique and final illumination different in kind from all other experiences. Its ideal state of enhanced sensitivity, nourished by withdrawal into absolute stillness, is the same in kind as more ordinary and limited sorts of spontaneous dexterity' (Graham 1990, p. 144). Likewise, in the butterfly dream there is no ultimate, transcendental reality which would serve as the ground privileging one perspective over the other as more "real". Thus, for a Western reader, if carefully read the butterfly dream story can serve not as a reinforcement of the presence of familiar epistemological questions and problems within other traditions, but rather, taken as a comparative foil, that the absence of those issues from such traditions signals the capacity to break away from those problems in one's own tradition taken as formative and inescapable.

### **4.3 – Case Study 1 (Metaphysics) - Nietzsche on Appearance and Reality**

What can this short and poignant story, so interpreted, offer for a comparative conception of process philosophical ontology? I believe that this story offers us a comparison from another philosophical perspective that will provide the resources for better conceptualizing the philosophical direction in which Nietzsche's conception of epistemology and ontology attempts to lead us. This will in turn

illuminate the features of a prospective comparative ontology of process. In one of his most well-known aphorisms concerning appearance and reality (*TI* ‘How the ‘Real World’ at last Became a Myth’), Nietzsche describes the evolution of the idea of a ‘real world’ contrasted to an ‘apparent world’ through Western philosophy, arriving at a conclusion pragmatically similar to that of the butterfly dream’s. Though sparse in detail, he traces the notion of a ‘true’ or ‘real’ world through its oldest form as higher existence, reflected in the thought of philosophers like Plato: ‘The real world, attainable to the wise, the pious, the virtuous man – he dwells in it, *he is it*’ (ibid.), through to its Judaeo-Christian interpretation as ‘more refined, more enticing, more incomprehensible’ and promised ‘to the sinner who repents’ (ibid.). He then traces the notion to its most historically relevant stages, reflected in Kant as the phenomenal-noumenal distinction (‘the real world, unattainable, undemonstrable, but even when merely thought of a consolation, a duty, an imperative’ (ibid.)). He lastly traces the notion to positivism, reflected as unknowable and without any imperatives, but thereby rendered irrelevant according to empiricism (ibid.). Nietzsche ends his broad summary of this idea’s evolution on a joyous note (‘Broad daylight; breakfast; return of cheerfulness and *bon sens*’ (ibid.)) but also, and importantly, with a famous denial of the coherence of the real/apparent distinction altogether:

‘We have abolished the real world: what world is left? The apparent world perhaps? ... But no! *With the real world we have also abolished the apparent world!*’ (ibid)

Nietzsche’s conclusion in this passage serves not only to prophesy that our cultural and moral concerns will no longer be dominated by the notion of a real-apparent world distinction, it also forces us to reconsider our philosophical and epistemological pre-occupations in the same way in which the complete absence of such pre-occupations in *Zhuangzi*’s butterfly dream segment does for Western interpreters.

Fully exploring the implications of re-conceptualising epistemology according to comparative process ontology are beyond the capacities of this dissertation. I will, however, examine one core issue that we are called upon to fundamentally re-understand: distinctly practical questions of appearance and reality.

If there is no ‘real’ world against which to contrast ‘appearances’ then how do we address the many various pragmatic situations that traditionally correspond to this distinction? How are we to philosophically understand phenomena like hallucinations if we do not have the option of pointing out that they do not correspond to the ‘real’ world? What makes a simulation less ‘real’ than its authentic originator? All such questions require a consolidated response from comparative process ontology, one that does not presuppose the real/apparent dichotomy.

To begin formulating that response, it has to be made clear what this response does not entail. It does not entail traditional epistemological concerns: the question in comparative process ontology ceases to be “how do I know  $x$  is real/apparent”. As we have previously seen, Nietzsche does not appear foremost concerned with formulating a theoretical response to epistemological scepticism. Instead, he reformulates epistemology, knowledge, as pragmatic affect. That said, Nietzsche is by no means unconcerned with the issue of discerning reality from appearance, but the means by which his writing gestures at our doing so is not fundamentally epistemological in nature (in the traditional sense of epistemology as justification of belief), it is pragmatic and evaluative. According to Nietzsche’s renewed conception of epistemology, the questions that must be addressed in the wake of Nietzsche’s implosion of the real/apparent distinction are: what motivates our rejection of idealism? Why, in the most general terms, does Nietzsche think that “real” (that is to say, transcendental) worlds are inferior (according to his will to power evaluative perspective) to the immanent world we are presented with? Nietzsche, I want to argue, ultimately proposes that we distinguish reality from appearance as a practical matter of degrees of power. We can discern that transcendental worlds, and idealism *writ large*, are false or not as “real” for Nietzsche because they are less powerful than the immanent world we are faced with. Rather, they are expressions of resentment towards the immanent world, and as such expressions they are fundamentally expressions of a sick form of life.

#### **4.4 Case Study 1 (Metaphysics) - Simulated Reality**

Robert Nozick’s famous discussion of an ‘experience machine’ may serve as an instructive grounding point for this discussion. The thought experiment, briefly

stated, asks us to imagine that we have a machine which could provide us with whatever pleasurable or desirable experiences we could want, further, the machine is somehow built in such a way as to stimulate the brain in ways that make the ‘simulated’ experience indistinguishable from the ‘true’ experience. The thought experiment, in Nozick’s original form, is employed as an intuitive example to buffer Nozick’s more precise argument against hedonism and the view that pleasure is the only or most important intrinsic value: Nozick anticipates that many of us hesitate to enter the machine because we want to concretely take the actions involved in those experiences (Nozick 1974, p. 43), we want to concretely develop as a type of person in ways unachievable in the machine (ibid.), or the simulation limits what we can achieve (ibid.).

The following discussion of the experience machine will not focus on it as an example of the value-debate specifically, it will rather use it as a focal point to discuss questions of reality and appearance, and the influence that dichotomy has on ways of life. I would now like to discuss how, drawing on his writings on appearance, reality, and power, Nietzsche might address this same scenario, as a specific example of the broader issue of simulated or artificial realities. Why is it important to discuss the area of simulated or artificial realities in this regard? At the time of writing, Nietzsche addresses the threat of idealism specifically through the vision of an ideal, ‘real’ or transcendental world. This encapsulates, for example, the Judaeo-Christian promise of heaven, which Nietzsche takes to devalue the immanent, imperfect world by promising an ideal world after death. The prospect of artificial or simulated realities may be taken to offer the same promises for many, albeit in secularized form (it might even be said that the prospect of simulated reality offers an improvement over heaven insofar as one doesn’t have to die to attain it). Given the profusion of virtual reality technologies in recent decades, even if they are still in embryonic form, we are obliged to take simulated realities seriously as an issue concerning Nietzsche’s philosophy of the future, and to hypothesize what Nietzsche’s response to it would be. If the prospect of simulated reality nonetheless seems outlandish, it may be sufficient to highlight the fact that an increasing number of humans spend an increasing amount of their time virtually, through social media, and this trend is only set to increase exponentially.

Having established what the problem is, I want to consider what resources Nietzsche offers to address it. In short, I will make the argument that Nietzsche would reject the use of artificial or simulated realities as a *de facto* way of living for those of whom he deems as healthy types, although it could be justifiable to a certain extent as a necessary part of the existence of ‘sick’ types, including many humans, because of its narcotizing effects. This can be established by appealing to the pragmatic, power-based understanding of truth we have already discussed. Returning to the ‘experience machine’ thought experiment: what must first be pointed out with the experiment is that one of its crucial premises is that we are already aware that we will be partaking in a simulated reality if we enter the machine. Hence, we already know we will not be in the “real” world and that our actions will have no effect on anything in the world outside of the machine. On this basis already, many of us will already reject the offer of the machine. So far it seems as though the problem has already been solved. However, counterarguments to the thought experiment have highlighted this premise of prior knowledge of reality as being problematic to a fair treatment of the experience machine. Joshua Greene, for example, points out that our decision is likely to be influenced by status quo bias, a preference for reality as we currently experience it<sup>75</sup>. Greene instead suggests that we reformulate the thought experiment such that instead of initially going into the machine, we *wake up from it* and from the experience of our living our lives as we have done so far:

‘you wake up in a plain white room. You are seated in a reclining chair with a steel contraption on your head. A woman in a white coat is standing over you. ‘The year is 2659,’ she explains, ‘The life with which you are familiar is an experience machine program selected by you some forty years ago. We at IEM interrupt our client’s programs at ten-year intervals to ensure client satisfaction. Our records indicate that at your three previous interruptions you deemed your program satisfactory and chose to continue. As before, if you choose to continue with your program you will return to your life as you know it with no recollection of this interruption. Your friends, loved ones, and projects will all be there. Of

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<sup>75</sup> Cf. de Lazari-Radek, Katarzyna, and Peter Singer. *The point of view of the universe: Sidgwick and contemporary ethics*. OUP Oxford, 2014. P. 357

course, you may choose to terminate your program at this point if you are unsatisfied for any reason. Do you intend to continue with your program?’ (ibid.)

If we have a different decision about this variant to what was chosen with the original, Greene claims, then it may point to a status quo bias regarding our experiences rather than our underlying intuitions about values (as is Nozick’s concern in formulating the experiment). In both Nozick’s formulation and Greene’s, one point is clear: you remain fully aware that the machine simulation is not “real”: in Nozick’s version you enter the experience machine knowing that what it offers isn’t real, whereas in Greene’s version you wake up from the experience machine to be told what you were experiencing was not real. Even with the full understanding that the machine reality is a simulation, Greene’s counter-argument is insightful in the sense that it points towards our conception of reality as a certain bias of experience, which will align with Nietzsche’s pragmatic treatment of the issue, and the reality-agnosticism of the butterfly dream. Similarly, as one might infer from Greene’s version of the thought experiment, there seems to be no reason to assume that such a bias could not change over time or even become the default standard of experience: as such, simulated reality would in such cases be more ‘real’ and familiar to machine users than external world, and they would be less motivated to choose the external world in the counter-argument.

That a simulated reality would be more ‘real’ than actual reality seems intuitively misguided, but treating the experience of reality as a certain form of experiential bias (as Greene and Nietzsche seem to do) makes this a practical possibility. How can we address this? One clear option is that many may be motivated by the insight that they have not been living “real” lives in the machine, thus motivating them to leave the machine behind and enter their new life. As described in the experiment, the prime motivation for such behaviour would be something like a desire for a “true” life, or a desire to live in proper reality. However, as is well-described in commentaries, Nietzsche is highly sceptical of a will to truth in itself, or truth for truth’s sake. He is critical, for example, firstly of the drive for truth at all costs, especially given that what may be found as truth may be dangerous for certain types of life, but also because the drive for truth taken naively may suggest a particular type of life-denying asceticism. If, for example, the simulated world could be considered as a qualitative improvement over the real

world in all aspects then a desire for the real world at all costs may be seen to be reducible to ‘the faith in a *metaphysical* value, the absolute value of *truth*,’ (OGM III 24). As Nietzsche points out, however, the will to truth can no longer be justified by appeal to a metaphysical value, a truth-in-itself. The desire to live in the “true” or “real” in contrast to the simulated one on the basis that it is “true” or “real” alone does not seem to form much of a motivation, and may even sign-post a will to deny life for some. So, if the prospect of truth in and of itself seems like an empty motivation, what can serve as a motivation? Given his contempt for idealism and the prospect of a transcendental world, it seems reasonable to hold that Nietzsche would still strongly advocate for healthy types to live in the “true” or “real” world, but we must make sense of how he does so without appeal to the will to truth (in its classical epistemological form).

As I have tried to make clear, the experience machine as described by Greene approaches the issue of appearance and reality in a manner similar to the conclusions that Nietzsche arrives at in *Twilight of the Idols*: for an individual whose life is spent in the machine, the machine experience will be more real to them than external reality, and there is no hard ontological distinction to fall back on to remedy this, simply the bias for one form of ontologically equivalent experience over another. With Nietzsche and the butterfly dream in the *Zhuangzi* we take another step and the grounding upon which both Nozick’s and Greene’s versions of the thought experiment is removed: we no longer have prior knowledge of which is the real or illusory world, and the philosophical debate concerning the true or real world itself is no longer sensible: we have no metaphysical or transcendental criteria to appeal to for resolving the debate. We are now faced with two ultimate answers to this issue from both sides of the comparison: the *Zhuangzi* does away with all pretences of establishing a qualitatively better or worse reality and instead advocates perfect efficacy beyond all distinctions. On the other hand, given his epistemological-evaluational doctrine of will to power, Nietzsche might still claim that the “real” world is preferable to the artificial one, and he could do so by appealing to the very same will to power as the pragmatic standard of truth, as we have discussed previously. Returning to what Grimm writes concerning Nietzsche’s conception of truth: ‘Nietzsche’s criterion for truth is not concerned at all with the logical content of the proposition. The content, in fact, is largely irrelevant. Its truth or falsity lies in



the degree of efficacy, in the degree of power increase or decrease, with which the proposition functions when I employ it in my behaviour' (Grimm 1977, p. 19).

Applying the insights of this conception to the case of the appearance/reality distinction, the distinction itself and the ontological status of either turn out to be irrelevant in terms of propositional content (namely, the question as to whether one or the other is the "true" world), what is important is the difference in the degree of power one instantiates compared to another. Here it must be emphasized that what is meant by "power" is not merely the experience of power, for the machine could be theorized to provide any experience of power (for example, that of being a king, general, or Olympic athlete). Such an experience would not be intuitively equivalent to its real counter-part (the real 'king' issues decrees that have effects on whole countries, while the experience of being a king changes nothing outside the simulation). Power properly understood in this context must be nothing less than the actual relation of the person as an ontological constellation of drives, all directed at furthering themselves, understood and evaluated in relation to all other such constellations. Power is thus again understood as relational: something can be more or less powerful only by comparison or contrast with other more or less powerful things<sup>76</sup>.

In an 1888 note Nietzsche emphasizes this relational aspect to power with regard to how we should understand a world of 'appearances' without reference to a world-in-itself: 'the world, apart from our condition of living in it, the world that we have not reduced to our being [...] does not exist as a world "in-itself"; it is essentially a world of relationships; under certain conditions it has a differing aspect from every point; its being is essentially different from every point [...] The measure of power determines what being possesses the other measure of power; in what form, force, constraint it acts or resists' (*WTP* 568). The same can be said for establishing the difference between the experience machine world and the 'real' world: what motivates us to give the experience machine world the status of being 'artificial,'

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<sup>76</sup> Cf. *WTP* 917: 'To feel stronger-- or in other words, joy-- always presupposes a comparison (but not necessarily with others, but with oneself in the midst of a state of growth and without one's first *knowing* in how far one is making comparisons-). Nietzsche also lists different forms of 'artificial strengthening', some of which are telling. The artificial feeling of superiority, for example is the Caliph of Morocco, who is only allowed to see globes on which his kingdoms occupy four-fifths of their surfaces. The experience machine might likewise induce the artificial feeling of superiority by limiting what the subject experiences to within the simulated world.

‘false’ or ‘illusory’ is our recognition and understanding that it has little effect on the surrounding, ‘external’ world. It can be argued that the same may be said of dream experiences: we understand our dreams as unreal because of the disparity between dream experiences and the regularity of waking life. The disparity between the sense of power in both provides a basis for distinguishing the reality of either, as hinted at by Nietzsche in an 1887 note discussing the concept of substance: ‘The degree to which we feel life and power (logic and coherence of experience) gives us our measure of “being,” “reality,” not-appearance’ (*WTP* 485).

This latter point is important to briefly address, given Nietzsche regular use of the phrase ‘feeling of power’. This presents an issue, indeed a general interpretive one, because the conscious notion of feeling is at odds with causal efficacy: a lower type may ‘feel’ powerful but not have any causal efficacy (as, for example, when an individual plays a character in a game that has a great degree of power). This, then, poses a specific problem: Could the experience machine not simply simulate the feeling of power (if the feeling of power is reducible to something like a conscious feeling), like its real equivalent? This would bypass the condition for any form of causal efficacy, as the machine would induce feelings of power without any effect on the world by the individual. Although Nietzsche’s use of the phrase is constant throughout his writing, it seems as though it should be qualified thoroughly, as Nietzsche would not grant that a lower type of human is powerful just because it feels itself as powerful. Given, also, that Nietzsche devalues the causal role of conscious feelings in the causal efficacy of the body, it is hard to accept that the phrase ‘feeling of power’ for Nietzsche means no more than a conscious feeling of power. What seems to be required in order to address this issue is to further qualify the manner in which Nietzsche sometimes uses the phrase ‘feeling of power’: what describes the feeling of power for Nietzsche may not so much be the actual conscious feelings of the individual<sup>77</sup> but rather the complex of drives that constitute the individual and are mutually influenced by the individual’s environment.

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<sup>77</sup> Nietzsche is famously critical of consciousness at different points: ‘We could think, feel, will, and remember, and we could also ‘act’ in every sense of that word, and yet none of all this would have to ‘enter our consciousness’ . . . (GS 354). There is significant debate in scholarship over whether Nietzsche assigns a causal role to consciousness, whether there is interaction between the unconscious and consciousness (interactionism) or whether he treats it as wholly epiphenomenal. I roughly follow Leiter (2014) in claiming that consciousness may be something akin to being Kind-Epiphenomenal in the sense that ‘conscious states are causally effective but in virtue of nonconscious properties or type-

The drives as such are not consciously accessible to us yet strongly direct our causal capacities in interacting with the world. If this account bears up, then it could be said that the experience machine induces a feeling of power in consciousness, the most superficial portion of the individual which is taken to lack any significant causal capacity by Nietzsche, but it does not induce a feeling of power in the drives, precisely because the drives that make up the individual are not being acted upon by the machine and in turn have nothing in the world to act upon. Take as an example the experience of being a pro weightlifter in the machine: no matter how much of a feeling of strength the machine may induce in the individual's consciousness (by providing them with the experience of cleanly pressing 200 pounds), the individual will not become stronger because the body has not been subjected to actual weight resistance. In order for the experience machine to induce the actual feeling of strength (a form of power) in the individual it would have to subject the individual's body to actual weight training: but this then is exactly what real weight training is, and it involves direct causal efficacy and interaction with one's environment. Thus, if we understand the 'feeling of power' in a broad sense, not merely to refer to the conscious feelings of the individual but to refer to a feeling that is related to the individual's drives, we can resolve the issue of whether the experience machine can simulate an equivalent reality by simulating an equivalent feeling of power. If understood as above, the experience machine cannot, because it can only stimulate the feeling of power in the individual's conscious ego. In order to stimulate the feeling of power in the drives it would have to mimic the environment and conditions that mutually affect the drives, but this is tantamount to effectively reproducing reality rather than simulating it.

There are now a number of critical issues to consider. First and foremost, what does such a position offer in response to sceptical questions about reality? In particular, those questioning whether our experience of reality is simply a dream, or an illusion of some kind. The response that Nietzsche's position offers us is to claim that we know (again, not understood in the classical epistemological sense but rather in the power-pragmatic sense) through a comparison of differences in the experience of power: we distinguish a dream from waking life on the basis of a difference in the

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facts not simply in virtue of their being conscious states' (73). It may be necessary to admit some causal role for consciousness, but in the examples I give it is the unconscious which is formative.

experience of power: waking life is much more regular and stable, for example. However, what about an experience machine or simulation in which we are no longer able to determine whether we have woken up from or entered the machine, where there is absolutely no functional difference from simulation and reality? The constraints above provide some measure of an answer: we could hold that a true experience or feeling of power on the level of the drives is only possible through mimicking the causal network through which power is expressed. In order to do that, the machine would have to reproduce that causal network, but then the reproduction would be effectively equivalent and not a simulation (as in the need for real weights in the machine to reproduce power through strength training).

Admittedly, there are many less direct examples in which it is unclear whether a reproduction of such a causal network is necessary to produce an equivalent feeling of power through the drives, and many of these are intellectually or emotionally based. For example, replicating a causal network for the experience of being a grandmaster chess player does not seem as important as a feature of the simulation as it does for chess playing, or being a virtuoso cellist, and so on. Many of these arguably central human experiences are thus still not fully defensible by appeal to causal conditions that the experience machine supposedly can't replicate without its simulations being more real. We seem forced to admit then that from Nietzsche's position that we have no way of telling reality from such a simulation. From a pragmatic point of view it may be that such a conclusion is ultimately unproblematic nonetheless because, in terms of power-pragmatism, there might be no power difference between simulation and reality and thus no grounds on which to call for a comparison. If an experience machine were to stimulate the drives of Nietzsche's higher types with experiences in a manner that was causally productive and thus significantly influential in the world, then this would seem to be a sufficient conclusion for Nietzsche on the issue of appearance and reality. The will to truth that motivates the rejection of illusion and appearance is justifiable insofar as it leads to a growth in power. However, where there is equivalence in power between appearance/simulation, and reality, then the will to truth no longer justifies the questioning of reality against appearance, it may instead be the expression of an ascetic will to declining life. Laying aside the will to truth in such cases, and dissolving the epistemological issue, we are thus entreated to engage in that same joyous affirmation of reality as it appears to us that Nietzsche describes as '[b]road

daylight; breakfast; return of cheerfulness and *bon sens*' (*TI* 'How the 'Real World' at last Became a Myth'), with a good conscience.

Given that power is relational, one last point about the real/apparent distinction must be discussed. This point concerns how different physiological types will respond to simulated realities. I have already suggested that Nietzsche would advocate life outside of simulated realities for healthy types, because there is a greater potential for the extension of power in the so-called external world over one that is contained in a simulation. Healthy types, as Nietzsche writes, are instinctively inclined to extend themselves in the world and have a capacity to bear more "truth", more of the harsh realities of the world they are confronted with (and thus to be overcome and either physically or spiritually incorporated). Sick types, Nietzsche highlights, are instead in need of constant narcosis and must be protected from the will to truth because of its danger for sicklier forms of life. In such a case, where simulated reality serves as a constraint on power for the strong, it serves as a narcosis for the sick: we might even hypothesize that, for Nietzsche, simulated reality become the de facto standard of life for sick types because it provides them with such an idealized narcosis and, by confining their actions to within a simulated environment, helps separate their sphere of influence from the healthy. With that in mind, it seems possible to conclude that Nietzsche would not denounce simulated reality out of hand: a simulated reality can be considered instrumentally, like many activities in their recreational use, such as art, literature and games. It can serve either as a tonic or as a narcotic. It will serve as a tonic when used by the strong as a momentary rest from their extension of power, while it will serve as a narcotic for the weak and exhausted, as a perpetual alleviation and escape from the pain of reality<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Consider *WTP* 851, which peripherally suggests that art can serve a different function according to type: 'What is tragic?- On repeated occasions I have laid my finger on Aristotle's great misunderstanding in believing the tragic affects to be two depressive affects, terror and pity. If he were right, tragedy would be an art dangerous to life: one would have to warn against it as notorious and a public danger. Art, in other cases the great stimulant of life, an intoxication with life, a will to life, would here, in the service of a declining movement and as it were the handmaid of pessimism, become harmful to health [...] and supposing Schopenhauer were right that one should learn resignation from tragedy [...], then this would be an art in which art denies itself. Tragedy would then signify a process of disintegration: the instinct for life destroying itself through the instinct for art. Christianity, nihilism, tragic art, physiological decadence these would go hand in hand, come into predominance at the same time, assist one another forward--downward- Tragedy would be a symptom of decline. One can refute this theory in the most cold-blooded way: namely, by measuring the effects of a tragic emotion with a dynamometer. And one would discover as a result what ultimately only the absolute mendaciousness of a systematizer could misunderstand- that tragedy is a *tonic*.'

With the question of any distinction between reality and simulation denied, we would in such cases find ourselves at the point that is the subject of the butterfly dream. It is at this point that the *Zhuangzi* advocates that the efficacious agent in such circumstances must become hinge-like in the agent's ability to adapt to and pursue courses of action in any particular situation: 'A state in which "this" (*shi*) and "that" (*fei*) no longer find their opposites is called the hinge of Way (*daoshu*). When the hinge is fitted into the socket, it can respond endlessly. Its right then is a single endlessness and its wrong too is a single endlessness. So I say, the best thing to use is clarity (*ming*)' (Watson 35). In a sense the *Zhuangzi* thus provides its own conception of post-epistemological efficacy. That is, a number of its chapters consist in undermining the capacity for knowledge of any constant guiding discourse that will forever establish the world to be the case (to set the world out in terms of *shi/fei* distinctions), what has generally been taken to be the scepticism of the *Zhuangzi*. This scepticism gives way, however, to the sentiment contained in sections like the butterfly dream and knack stories, wherein there is no fundamental confusion expressed over knowledge claims but instead only harmonious and efficacious practice. The ability to respond endlessly is thus what is prized according to the *Zhuangzi*'s recognition that the distinctions made between reality and appearance, or any other evaluative distinctions, are not tenable.

In both Zhuangzi's Daoism and Nietzsche's philosophy, their treatment of appearance and reality is fundamentally guided at the core by process thought. How is this the case? For Zhuangzi, according to Guo Xiang's commentary, the issue of appearance against reality does not even occur. The ancient Chinese cosmological basis of thinking about the world foremost in terms of processes avoids the construction of an overarching substance through which to discern realities from appearances. In the butterfly dream, such an overarching substance would be the ego self, an individual substance one identifies with above and beyond the state of being a man or the state of being a butterfly. Without this substance, one instead simply identifies with the state of existence one is immediately presented with at one moment, along with identifying with another state of existence at another point. The end result is an instantiation of the consummate adaptability that ancient Chinese philosophy emphasizes, with the underlying insight towards process being that no

one stage or part of a cycle is more or less real than any other. While Nietzsche also comes to reject the notion of an ego self as identity and is critical of the notion of substance, he is reacting to a tradition that does frame the appearance/reality distinction in substantial terms. His engagement and attempts to free his thinking from this tradition profoundly influence how the conclusions he arrives at diverge from that of Zhuangzi. The appearance/reality distinction as established by substantialist thought is re-understood through Nietzsche's process thinking as a means of differentiating in process. In some respects, this echoes Ames' cosmological study of will to power contrasted with *de* or virtuality<sup>79</sup>: Zhuangzi's Daoist philosophy works towards adaptation within processes, whereas Nietzsche's agonistic philosophy aims at differentiation and distinction within processes, not on a substantial basis, but on a processual one. We will return to this core comparison made by Ames in the following chapter.

#### **4.5 Case Study 2 (Socio-Economic Overview) - Economics, Politics and Technology in Nietzsche's Philosophy**

Economics, politics, and technology all represent areas on which it has been difficult to precisely state Nietzsche's definitive viewpoint. There are no doubt some clear reasons why this is the case: firstly, because his thought develops and changes on these issues throughout the three writing periods of his active life, and because a great deal of such writing is in aphoristic form, where any consistency and cohesiveness on these subjects must be implicitly interpreted rather than explicitly stated. With this case study, I would like to hypothesize a cohesive interpretation of Nietzsche's position on these subjects using the interpretive basis of process thought. Having argued that process thought can be seen to form a core methodological insight in Nietzsche's philosophy, it can be used to bring out further commonalities in his thinking on these subjects and thus provide a better picture of his overall perspective. Afterwards, I contrast some features of this interpretation with those of Chinese Legalist thought on socio-political institutions in order to bring out some general features of a process-ontological praxis.

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<sup>79</sup> Cf. Ames, Roger T. "Nietzsche's 'will to power' and Chinese 'virtuality' (de): A comparative study." *Nietzsche and Asian thought* (1991): 130-50.

There are few extended studies of Nietzsche's thinking on technology, although there is some amount of scholarly interpretation that specifically highlights Nietzsche's critical comments about technology. These comments concern the form of technology that precedes industrialisation and mass media. The press, for example, is a social and technological phenomenon criticised by Nietzsche because it is part of the modern crisis of values that has led to mediocrization and the diminishing of the individual in the face of herd conventionality<sup>80</sup>. A great number of commentators draw on such comments and frame Nietzsche within a tradition of criticizing mass culture, as, for example, Douglas Kellner does when he writes that 'Nietzsche would probably be appalled at the debased state of contemporary culture'<sup>81</sup> and that 'Nietzsche's negative critique cuts across and against the populist turn in cultural studies that would affirm and celebrate popular culture' (ibid). Likewise, Yunus Tuncel has recently described the problem mass culture faces for Dionysian experience:

'For Nietzsche spectacle was the core of the Dionysian forces, a festive space. Mass media along with its cohort social media, on the other hand, disrupts that communion and retain spectators in their isolated state, as it inflates the *Ersatz* experiences to the further decimation of somatic experiences. It is claimed that virtual experiences will replace physical experiences in the coming ages.'<sup>82</sup>

Tuncel writes that Nietzsche predicts the contemporary situation in which social media and the omnipresence of information, it is claimed, has devalued our grasp of knowledge<sup>83</sup>, to the point where there is no longer distinction between high and low. There are also more moderate accounts of Nietzsche's engagement with technology.

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<sup>80</sup> Nietzsche notes this as early as his writing in *The Birth of Tragedy*, where he claims that 'While the critic was seizing power in the theatre and concert hall, the journalist in schools, and the press in society, art degenerated to an object of entertainment of the lowest kind, and aesthetic criticism was used to bind together a vain, distracted, selfish, and furthermore meagre and unoriginal sociability' (BT 22). Likewise regarding technology and mass media's role in values Nietzsche writes in a note that 'Surely, one should not let "literature" and the press seduce us to think well of the "spirit" of our time: the existence of millions of spiritists and a Christianity that goes in for gymnastics of that gruesome ugliness that characterizes all English inventions are more instructive' (WTP 31).

<sup>81</sup> Kellner, Douglas. "Nietzsche's Critique of Mass Culture." *International studies in philosophy* 31.3 (1999): 77-89.

<sup>82</sup> Tuncel, Yunus. "Nietzsche, Mass/Social Media, and the Question of Education and Spectacle." *The Agonist*, p. 7.

[www.nietzschecircle.com/AGONIST/FALL\\_2013/Yunus\\_Tuncel\\_Nietzsche\\_Mass\\_Social.pdf](http://www.nietzschecircle.com/AGONIST/FALL_2013/Yunus_Tuncel_Nietzsche_Mass_Social.pdf). Accessed: 18/12/2017

<sup>83</sup> In terms of the present thesis, the use of the term 'knowledge' would rather mean 'know-how', the degree of causal power at the disposal of an individual. The omnipresence of information devaluing our grasp of knowledge would thus be read as impeding our capacity to act effectively in the world.



As McGinn highlights in an extended article on the subject, Nietzsche could also be seen to report other, positive views on technology, recognizing its growth out of a profoundly creative intellectual enterprise: 'N. unlike most philosophers, saw technology -at least modern machine technology- as an intellectually creative activity ("the highest intellectual powers"), not simply as a matter of trial and error, manual dexterity, and an intuitive talent for tinkering' (McGinn 1980, p. 681). All the same, McGinn points out Nietzsche's adroit question of to what use our technology, our machines, will be put to use to, even as they draw on the most talented individuals as cogs within their operations (682). He points out that had Nietzsche asked this question in his later period (after *Daybreak*, which is the source of many comments that McGinn draws from) his answer would perhaps have been: in terms of the will to power, which McGinn interprets as

'[T]he basic life force which, [Nietzsche] believed, continuously sought self-aggrandizement. He already contends that the modern lust for money happens to be the social medium which in modern society affords "the highest feeling of power and good conscience" [...] Thus it would not have been surprising if N. had come to see preoccupation with machines, on the part of both controllers and operators, as explicable in terms of the insatiable will to power, not simply in terms of survival benefits they provide in enabling man to adapt successfully to his environment' (ibid.).

While McGinn may raise a significant point about machines as an expression of will to power, his initial claim that money affords the highest feeling of power and good conscience may be over-stated depending on how one interprets it: certainly money is not itself something that produces the highest feeling of power and good conscience for the higher types, because it is an effect of power rather than itself a producer of power. Powerful individuals (not necessarily all of them) make money, but it is rather in their abilities (which in many cases make money) that the highest feeling of power lies, along with the good conscience in using them. However, McGinn's commentary, coupled with Nietzsche's awareness of capitalism and its will to 'Anglo-angelic shopkeeperdom' (*WTP* 944) clearly paint a picture of technology furthering the will to power of the mass as comfort and complacency. Along these lines, McGinn further emphasizes the tendency for the individual to be

instrumentally drawn on in modern technology and the centralized, bureaucratic state:

‘Given the indiscriminate use of individuals [by machine technology and the bureaucratic state], and N's conception of the unrealized wealth of human potential, he cannot possibly embrace this "teaching" of "the machine," just as he cannot support the constriction of the exceptional individual entailed by the projection of one morality for all human beings’ (683).

It may be important to add a proviso at this point: when McGinn refers to the ‘individual’, what is perhaps meant is the individual of Nietzsche’s higher types rather than individuals-in-themselves. Machine technology so described has an enormous amount of potential energy borne from its efficiency, orderliness and high organizational capacity, but it also threatens, firstly, to coarsen the spiritual and creative abilities of those involved in running the machine: ‘the worker's uniform activity on the job shapes the character of his time off the job: he attempts to drown his work-induced boredom in changeful leisure-time activity, an overcompensation apt to lead to a Don Juan ethic of experience’ (ibid.). Secondly, there is no guarantee that the productive energy liberated through industrialization will be put to good use: ‘N's attitude toward the machine thus parallels his attitude toward the liberation from the fetters of artistic convention, a development he believed was precipitated by the French Revolution and confronted the artist with a flood of artistic styles from various cultures. In this case, as in that of the machine, the liberation of energy effected did not carry with it built-in spurs to creativity or built-in forms or structures adequate to produce disciplined, excellent activity’ (ibid). In contemporary terms, an increase in leisure time has not produced an increase in self-cultivation. Although written in the 1980s, McGinn’s estimation of Nietzsche’s treatment of technology resonates with its contemporary form in the prevalent issues of automatization, virtual reality, and social media. If we go by McGinn’s estimation, it may be difficult to claim that these technological advances have produced the sort of higher types and creative geniuses that Nietzsche yearns for in his vision of society. This leaves the issue of technology in Nietzsche’s writing open, as there is no doubt that Nietzsche is highly critical towards technology in its mass form, but at the same time he envisions great potential for its use.

It is now important to speculate on this latter idea that technology offers great potential for Nietzsche, and we can examine this issue by looking at a particular subset of technology quite close to the issues at the heart of Nietzsche's philosophy: human enhancement. Contributing to a recent scholarly debate on Nietzsche's relationship to transhumanism, a subject intimately related to technology in this sense, Babette Babich (who is responding to Stefan Lorenz Sorgner, a commentator sympathetic to a relation between Nietzsche and transhumanism) similarly warns that the advances in technology in the last 20 years may bring, instead of a golden age of futuristic advances, merely another form of veiled humanism<sup>84</sup> wherein 'human enhancement may be regarded, if only for the sake of argument, as corresponding to "enhancement for all," like "micro-chips for all," or "airport security searches for all" (22). Instead of having the effect of elevating humans in any genuine sense, the extension of technology to all as it has been currently proceeding (with phenomena like the proliferation of social media) may be importantly motivated by a will to mediocrity: 'such a broad extension would lead to a society not of "enhanced" but and much rather of *leveled* or flattened out humanity' (ibid.). Ultimately, Babich argues, transhumanism fits more in line with this negative conception of technological advancement than with Nietzsche's philosophy because it is 'not at all about self-overcoming but is very much about self-preservation, self-assertion, self-advancement' (24).

As she points out, Nietzsche reminds us that it is ultimately with the exemplary qualities of individuals that the most important process of both self- and human overcoming occurs. This is perhaps one of the most significant points that Babich raises. Consumer technology such as the iPhone offer a potential improvement to the standards or quality of living of the customer who can afford it, and so in general such technology may be provisionally said to raise the standard of a general level of life. Nietzsche, however, is not foremost concerned with raising the standard of the mean or average (which is not, of course, to say that Nietzsche is not fascinated with the norm or average of humanity), because, given the emphasis he places on singular individuals in terms of creative genius, it is instead that average

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<sup>84</sup> Babich, Babette. "Nietzsche's Post-Human Imperative: On the "All-Too-Human" Dream of Transhumanism." *The Agonist* (2012).

level is derivatively raised as a consequence of the actions of the exceptions: ‘The strongest and most evil spirits have so far done the most to advance humanity: time and again they rekindled the dozing passions - every ordered society puts the passions to sleep - , time and again they reawakened the sense of comparison, of contradiction, of delight in what is new, daring, unattempted; they forced men to pit opinion against opinion, ideal model against ideal model’ (*TGS* 4). Hence, his focus is on elevating those exceptions with the consequence of also elevating the mean standard. Babich specifies a similar insight regarding this point in her criticisms of transhumanism:

‘[Nietzsche’s] project from the start to the end of his creative life was nothing other than the production of a higher culture in broad terms and on the individual level of genius, whereby Nietzsche supposed the first to require the second, i.e., that the restoration on the level of culture of a once and yet higher culture called for that same rare genius. And Nietzsche took care to emphasize and to reflect upon the significance of that same rarity. For Nietzsche, and this is perhaps his greatest distance from the transhumanist movement, this particular rarity will not because it cannot turn out to be an upgrade money can buy.’ (25)

The claim is thus that one cannot ‘manufacture’ this sort of genius in the way that much consumer technology can be manufactured in order to meet the demands of consumers. Much of the manner in which Babich addresses this issue so far appears uncontentious, insofar as we are concerned with the consumer technologies that Nietzsche criticizes. However, it is when she approaches the family resemblances of themes and technologies involved in eugenics and genetic engineering that there is ample space for consideration. Genetic engineering, both as a technology in itself, and as an instrument postulated of transhumanism, is a predictably complex point of discussion because it straddles the intersection between technology in this previous sense that has been discussed (something that would plausibly be bought and sold commercially, or rolled out as a standard, and thus be subject to the conditions of money and market exchange), but it may also, I will later contend, be a technology instrumental in facilitating the onset of the higher types that Nietzsche describes. As we have already seen, Nietzsche’s understanding of types<sup>85</sup> implies that what one

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<sup>85</sup> As Leiter points out, the core evidence for Nietzsche having a doctrine of types is derived from *D* 199, *D* 542, *GS* 6, *GS* 187, *GS* 221, *GS* 231, *GM III*:7, *GM III*:15, *TI* “Errors” 1, *TI* “Errors” 2, *TI* “Anti-nature” 6, and *TI* “Skirmishes” 37.

can and cannot achieve is crucially constrained by one's physical and psychological capabilities: a technology that alters those capabilities appears to present the possibility, in turn, for modifying what humans, higher types and lower, are physically and psychologically capable of achieving.

Firstly, however, it is necessary to explore Babich's criticisms of genetic engineering as technology in the previous capitalistic sense. She raises a number of important concerns with genetic engineering: what are the practical and social consequences of implementing genetic engineering in the market? (pp. 25 – 27). Given the expense of the technology, Babich quite reasonably assumes it will be the nearly exclusive province of the wealthy or upper class elites, and likewise, she anticipates an argument for this state of affairs based on 'the idea that capitalism advances culture, that enhancing the wealth of the wealthy, that enhancing the well-being of the wealthy is 'somehow' in the interest of everyone' (28). Likewise, she references the question of whether 'our ideal of education so far from 'enhancing' society and so far from "enhancing" the individual within that society [...] instead perpetuates a particular and not accidentally capitalist structure' (30) and instead whether 'we find only identical consumer tastes for what are only identical consumer goods in a world of limited resources, a world already set to serve the mindless profit of increasingly few' (ibid.). Lastly, and most importantly, Babich explicates her specific position against taking transhumanism to be in line with Nietzsche's philosophy. For Babich, transhumanism ultimately represents the ascetic ideal and a will to decline: 'Transhumanism turns out to be the latest [...] instantiation of the ascetic ideal. One wants life, but one does not want life as it is, with all its trouble and mess, with all its banality and its limitations. Instead one wants video-game or gaming life, one wants movie or television life: without suffering, without illness, without death (save of the redeemable, corrigible kind)' (35).

In sum, Babich provides two directions in which the criticism of transhumanism and, to a lesser extent human enhancement technology, can be understood, 1) through socio-political and economic issues (this appears to be quite broad in itself, but given the inter-relation between each it is difficult to reduce these issues singularly), issues regarding equality and status in society, and 2) deeper

evaluative issues: whether transhumanism or certain trends in technology represent the ascetic ideal and a will to decline and mediocritization. I want to address both issues, and to some extent they will intersect.

Firstly, one major worry that Babich describes is the great economic and social disparity that the onset of such technology (like genetic engineering) may introduce. I want to spend some time examining what both Babich, and Sorgner in response, have to say concerning this issue. Neither appear to explicitly base their positions to a great extent in Nietzsche's philosophy, which is surprising given that their debate takes place in *The Agonist*, a journal dedicated to Nietzsche's philosophy. Having established their positions, I will then address them by drawing further on Nietzsche's philosophy. To begin: Babich's concern is the potential for a technological movement like transhumanism to culminate in a greater socio-political totalitarianism like fascism: 'Here we note the very specific (and very popularly Nietzschean) "faith" in science and especially industrial, corporate, capitalist technology that has, if we read Sloterdijk aright, been with us since the interregnum between the two wars which is again and also to say that such a vision is fascist through and through' (17). As Sorgner points out, this characterisation may be somewhat misleading: 'fascism implies both authoritarianism and nationalism. Transhumanism clearly is no movement that could be in favor of nationalism.'<sup>86</sup> (Sorgner 2011, p.12). Sorgner does recognize the potential in transhumanism for totalitarianism, however, and also recognizes that it may contribute to divides that create 'a social order which includes a hierarchical ranking of members of different groups' (13). Sorgner, perhaps because he appears to be defending transhumanism more generally, does not spend much time discussing this issue in terms of Nietzsche's philosophy. He instead defends transhumanism against this threat by pointing out there can be different political means of regulating technological innovations, such that they do not lead to social inequalities. A key example that he draws on in terms of political and national intervention on this issue is the case of vaccination: in states like Germany vaccinations are provided for citizens, with the most relevant being free (funded by public health insurance), and others provided in relevant circumstances (likewise funded by the public), with the more specialized

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<sup>86</sup> Sorgner, Stephan. "Zarathustra 2.0 and Beyond." Further Remarks on the Complex Relationship between Nietzsche and Transhumanism. in: *The Agonist*. Vol. IV, Issue II (2012). Online publication: [http://www.nietzschecircle.com/AGONIST/2011\\_08/StefanSorgnerFinal.pdf](http://www.nietzschecircle.com/AGONIST/2011_08/StefanSorgnerFinal.pdf)

vaccinations being privately paid for. Sorgner believes that ‘Analogously future enhancement technologies can get dealt with so that all citizens can be able to have access to them, if they wish to use them’ (14). Likewise, Sorgner points out that the exclusivity of certain technologies within some periods do not necessarily lead to class divisions. He draws on the example of mobile phones to demonstrate this, pointing to their exclusive availability to highly-positioned managers initially, contrasted with their widespread use now along with their cheap availability. From this example, and presumably others like it, Sorgner thinks that ‘if an innovation is reliable, useful and functional, then the demand and production will rise such that it will also gradually get cheaper. If mobile phones have developed in this direction, it is likely that the development of successful enhancement technologies will take a similar route’ (14).

While Sorgner is right to point out that the threat of fascism in transhumanism is somewhat misleading because its focus is not inherently nationalistic, his examples do not do much to assuage concerns over its potential turn towards totalitarianism. Antibiotics and vaccinations are surely monumental advances for public health, but when examined globally they are by no means as widely available as in Sorgner’s example of Germany: when the examination is not limited merely to one state but applied globally one may see that the sort of inequalities that Babich indicates are clearly prevalent in the disparity between the quality of life of citizens in first world states like Germany compared to third world citizens. Likewise, there is growing evidence that the over-use and lack of regulation of antibiotics may lead to the resurgence of previously treatable common illnesses due to increased resistance<sup>87</sup>, thus indicating some of the unforeseen dangers of technologies even as benevolent as these. Lastly, Sorgner praises the availability of antibiotics and vaccinations in our period, claiming that ‘[he] would not wish to live without them anymore’ (15) and while this claim is not particularly controversial, it should nonetheless be qualified: what is the use in these technologies, is it merely longevity? If so, then this is not something that is by itself compatible with Nietzsche’s philosophy. I will return to this issue when addressing the deeper debate on the valuational assumptions of transhumanism compared with Nietzsche’s work.

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<sup>87</sup> Cf. Ventola CL. The Antibiotic Resistance Crisis: Part 1: Causes and Threats. *Pharmacy and Therapeutics*. 2015; 40(4):277-283.

Sorgner also admits that new technologies may bring with them new dangers (ibid.) but he spends more time discussing the “safe” examples of vaccination and antibiotics than the ones that Babich is evidently more concerned with. The same complaint may be levelled against Sorgner’s treatment of cases where individuals may be implicitly forced to use technologies without wishing to. He uses the examples of the prevalence of laptops and computers as the de facto standard for submission (14) and points out that such a state of affairs does not imply ‘morally problematic totalitarian tendencies’ (ibid.). Again, Sorgner picks examples that are relatively unproblematic and therefore not particularly rewarding to discuss; there are other cases which are more compelling, such as the prevalence of doping in sport, where athletes who wish to have any chance of competing at a high level may be forced to take performance enhancement drugs that adversely affect the body over the long term. Likewise, instead of comparing students who lack laptops for their assignments with those who have them, Sorgner could have compared students who must compete with those who have access to academic performance enhancing drugs like Adderall. Certainly by themselves, these do not present any immediate or implicit moral or totalitarian questions, but when considered through a number of complex socio-political and economic relations (such as the competition between students for university placement or work placement, in turn influencing the requirements and standards in academia or work, all of which relates to the economic and political spheres) it becomes clear that there are implicit questions or concerns about totalitarianism when the bigger picture is taken into account.

Neither Babich nor Sorgner seem to come to any decisive conclusion in their treatment of the preceding issues: Babich focuses on the potential for transhumanism to be misused as fascism, whereas Sorgner points out that transhumanism is not concerned with the sort of nationalism that fascism implies. While Sorgner nonetheless engages with these questions by raising the possibility for transhumanism to be misused as totalitarianism, he picks technological examples that are not particularly controversial when there are many other examples that are. Sorgner leaves us with the conclusion that ‘[he does not] think that the fear of a future totalitarian system, which was established because of technological innovations, is one which ought to be dominant. [He thinks] that it is useful and important to have this worry in mind so that scientists continue to progress with



great care, but [he] definitely [does not] think that this worry should stop us from making further scientific research' (15).

Both commentators also inveigh on the focal point of genetic enhancement as a case of 'selective breeding' and its relation to education. Both are particularly concerned with whether genetic enhancement can be structurally analogous to education (with both roughly working with a conception of education that captures elements of a formative process resembling *bildung*). Sorgner details the basis of this analogy by claiming that both 'procedures have in common that decisions are being made by parents concerning the development of their child, at a stage where the child cannot yet decide for himself what it should do' (Sorgner 2010, § 1.1.1). For Sorgner, the importance of this structural analogy is that such 'analogies are helpful because they enable us to have an initial tool for making a moral judgment concerning these new biotechnologies' (Sorgner 2011, p. 24). The moral judgments Sorgner described are presumably those that are already present for education, such as whether it would be morally wrong, for example, not to provide the best education one can get for one's child (which in this case involves the use of genetic enhancement for determining characteristics). Babich's approach is to raise questions about the education process itself when understood in conjunction with the greater socio-economic background: 'will an "education" correspond to nothing more than the business (emphasis on the economic or cost-based affair) of acquiring and conferring, i.e., obtaining and selling degrees and certificates—indeed and just as Sorgner suggests, all like such modules, courses, degrees, parallel to many add-ons and upgrades' (Babich *ibid*, p. 20). Such a question is entirely legitimate given its similarity to questions in the contemporary debate over privatization of the university institution and its effects on education, and the spirit of these remarks reflect those of Nietzsche's in *On The Future of Our Educational Institutions*. Sorgner is reluctant to engage with Babich on this issue, claiming that 'The concept "education", as [he employs it] [...] has not much to do with the acquisition of degrees, taking a course, or reading a book.' (Sorgner *ibid*, p. 22). However, if we consider the debate on privatization in terms of the effects on students, the issue of the institutional trend towards instrumentalization and specialization in students, hypothetical parallels in genetic enhancement seem very clear. Babich is concerned that the selection process for genetic enhancement is instrumentalized in the same

way, which may risk hindering the production of higher types in society. Ultimately, Sorgner does not pursue Babich on this issue (he instead goes on to defend the validity of the structural analogy), but likewise it is clear that he never attempts to conceive of education in the manner that Babich suggests. Sorgner instead again concludes that conceiving of education as analogous (in many important respects) to genetic enhancement appropriately positions genetic enhancement for moral consideration (and it would seem that Babich's main concern are exactly those considerations themselves rather than the analogy).

Lastly, it is especially with both commentators' concern with the values underlying transhumanism and how they relate to Nietzsche's philosophy that Sorgner and Babich provide fruitful discussion. As earlier stated, the general questions that both commentators engage with in this respect are whether the ideals of transhumanism are directed towards the levelling or mediocritization of humans rather than their elevation or self-overcoming, and whether the ascetic ideal is reflected in transhumanist ideals. Again, Babich raises the suspicion that the covert aim of transhumanism is the ascetic ideal, a rejection of life: 'one does not want life as it is, with all its trouble and mess, with all its banality and its limitations' (Babich *ibid.*, p. 35). Sorgner is very quick to defend this reading of transhumanism's ends: 'It is not the case that the majority of [transhumanists] wish to reach an eternal life in the digital realm because they know that immortality is not a goal that can be reached realistically. A central goal of many transhumanists is that the healthspan of human beings gets expanded' (Sorgner *ibid.*, p. 36). It is better here to defer to Sorgner's approximation of general transhumanists, as this gives them the most reasonable position to consider. According to Sorgner, many transhumanists aim at life extension but entirely accept the physical reality of their bodies and the world, and the finitude of both. Likewise, transhumanists are naturalists who recognize their part as animals in an evolutionary process. Aims like genetic modification are defended by Sorgner in their stead as being a matter of trying to 'create new organic forms by taking into consideration naturalistic processes, which seems to be a procedure with significant similarities to a Nietzschean way of thinking.' (35) The debate so construed is difficult to resolve satisfactorily because both commentators provide differing accounts of transhumanism: Sorgner is defending transhumanists as naturalists who wish to improve the general conditions of the human body, while

Babich is criticising transhumanists as examples of the ascetic ideal who wish to preserve and extend their lives towards immortality, and there is little immediate evidence provided to choose one reading over the other.

In what follows, I will now attempt to address the debate by examining how the processual basis of Nietzsche's philosophy offers a clue to resolving this debate, offering a renewed perspective through which to clarify these issues of technology and transhumanism in Nietzsche's philosophy. This will be done by attempting to cohere Nietzsche's thoughts on relevant political and economic issues, and showing how these thoughts are informed by process-philosophical assumptions. Both politics and economics as areas of interest in the Nietzschean corpus are an under-represented pre-occupation, even if there are a few well-respected texts devoted to Nietzsche's political thinking. Economics in particular is still an area where discussion has been fairly understated<sup>88</sup>. Nonetheless, there are some key points in Nietzsche's relevant thought that can be identified. As van Meerhaeghe (2006, p. 46) and Drochon (2016, pp. 64–67) respectively identify, Nietzsche ostensibly advocates some form of privatization in both the economic and political spheres. Specifically, Nietzsche expresses the sentiment that privatization will increase in a long aphorism in *HAH*, in which

‘distrust of all government, insight into the uselessness and destructiveness of these short-winded struggles will impel men to a quite novel resolve: the resolve to do away with the concept of the state, to the abolition of the distinction between private and public. Private companies will step by step absorb the business of the state: even the most resistant remainder of what was formerly the work of government (for example its activities designed to protect the private person from the private person) will in the long run be taken care of by private contractors’ (472).

The progress of privatization in the economic and political spheres, Nietzsche predicts, will advance to such a stage that the functions of the democratic state are superseded by private institutions. We do not receive as clear a picture of the function of economic institutions in Nietzsche's later philosophy, and as such much

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<sup>88</sup> For a comprehensive account of Nietzsche's remarks on economics, see Backhaus and Drechsler (eds.), *Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) - Economy and Society* (2006)

of what I will now detail may be taken as attempt to extrapolate an economics based on Nietzsche's economic thinking in the early period compared and contrasted with the key concepts he devises in the later periods, one of the most significant being the overhuman. As van Meerhaeghe points out (2006, p. 46), this emphasis on privatization may have been motivated by the dangers that Nietzsche saw in socialism with its own pursuit of renegotiating power for a more equal distribution across classes. The danger represented by equal distribution is a reflection of the power stasis against which Nietzsche's own dynamic philosophy fights. This struggle is most clearly appreciated in the difference between types and self-cultivation, and especially the idea of self-overcoming that Nietzsche often refers to. Zarathustra proclaims, for example, that activities like value-making are effectively cyclical and processual: 'The one who breaks their tablets of values, the breaker, the lawbreaker – but he is the creative one' (*TSZ* 'Prologue' 9). Likewise Zarathustra proclaims that fundamental self-cultivation must always involve a process of self-overcoming: 'You must want to burn yourself up in your own flame: how could you become new if you did not first become ashes!' (*TSZ* 'On the Way of the Creator'). Against these processes Nietzsche poses the epitome of societal stasis, the last humans. The relevant characteristics of the last humans are their determination to ensure safety and stability in their lives. They describe their flight from 'regions where it was hard to live' (*TSZ* 'Prologue' 5) and their terminal exhaustion in declaring that '[o]ne no longer becomes poor or rich: both are too burdensome. Who wants to rule anymore? Who wants to obey? Both are too burdensome' (*ibid.*), Zarathustra arrives at the conclusion that for the last humans there is '[n]o herdsman and one herd! Everyone wants the same thing, everyone is the same' (*ibid.*). These characteristics reflect a static or utopian political view that Nietzsche virulently rejects in favour of a view of socio-political and economic institutions structured in such a way as to promote the proliferation of higher culture and the coming of the overhuman.

First and foremost, the means of working towards the overhuman in our economic and political institutions will be through privatization rather than by means of a parental state. Privatization will furnish a system through which individuals will no longer be at the behest of a majority, the services provided by private institutions will be capable of being directed towards different types and different interests. It is unsurprising that van Meerhaeghe writes that 'Nietzsche should be attractive to a

free-market economist, given his contempt for state activity and his strong individualism' (van Meerhaeghe 2006, p. 49). However, Nietzsche's praise for privatized institutions is highly conditional and is not conducive to a free-market capitalistic reading: privatized institutions are merely a more dynamic means of achieving the sort of political state and society that Nietzsche envisions. This sort of state and society is, as Drochon elaborates, crowned by a pan-European cultural elite that is above and beyond privatized economic institutions, and may themselves enjoy distinct privileges or liberties unavailable to others. This fundamental cultural elitism distances Nietzsche from the ideology of free-market capitalism<sup>89</sup>. Likewise, against free-market capitalists, Nietzsche maintains the necessity of slavery<sup>90</sup> of the lower types as a basis for the cultural production of this elite. He simply advocates privatized institutions as the more efficacious economic forms through which this can be achieved. Hence, although Nietzsche does seem to praise the role of privatization in minimizing the influence of the state, it is difficult to extrapolate from this point to pin Nietzsche's economic thought down to a position like free market capitalism or mercantilism.

There are also more germane criticisms of privatized, free-market economics from within Nietzsche's philosophy to be considered. As McGinn writes, Nietzsche foresees a great deal of mediocritization within the economic sphere with the onset of capitalism: 'Under the reign of capitalist competition, the public is made the judge of goods. But given the proliferation and increasing complexity of production, the public must necessarily be ignorant of what constitutes real quality in most kinds of product. Hence it tends to rely on appearances in deciding which to buy, thus lending added impetus to this factor in production' (McGinn 1980, p. 684). This would seem to imply a decline of life in terms of a lack of taste in the areas of consumption. To counter these negative points, McGinn points out that the Nietzsche of this period writing these remarks hoped for 'a greater reliance on human reason as a critical factor in buying decisions, for example, in seeing through the above illusion' (p.

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<sup>89</sup> This viewpoint also distances Nietzsche from mercantilism on a national level, as Nietzsche is not interested in the preservation or strengthening of singular nation states on an economic basis.

<sup>90</sup> 'Slavery' in the highly qualified sense that individuals are deprived of their autonomy and the ability to fulfil any potential they may have by being caught in the mutually reinforcing economic systems of work and leisure entertainment. Hence note *AC* 54, 'Just think how the vast majority of people need some regulative guideline as an external principle of bondage or mooring, how compulsion, slavery in a higher sense, is the only and ultimate condition for the thriving of the weak-willed person'. Note also *D* 206.

684). I do not think that this type of optimism survives into Nietzsche's later philosophy. Given his later grim outlook on the psychological and physical facts of the majority of human beings as sick and suffering from *ressentiment*, it is unlikely for Nietzsche that a human majority will develop the informed consumer tastes so advocated: those who are mediocre will be drawn to mediocre products, in the way that those who have life denying dispositions are drawn to life denying doctrines. This is not, however, ultimately a condemnation of the system itself, because the free market, while it clearly gravitates towards serving the needs of a general majority and mediocre public, will also be open to serving the demands of higher types. What must be emphasized again is the necessity for the cultural project that Nietzsche remains adamant in projecting for the future of philosophy<sup>91</sup>, as this is what will safeguard against an entirely mediocrized form of capitalism. Hence, complementing the economic system, there must a cultural basis that preserves the flourishing and growth of higher types, who themselves will make use of the free economy in such a way that Nietzsche advocates, being able to recognize quality.

How is there a basis of process philosophy for the preceding comments about Nietzsche's political and economic philosophy? Most tellingly, in Nietzsche's mid-to-late thought, the central concept of eternal recurrence might be hypothesized to inform his ultimate political ends and is itself fundamentally a processual concept. In *HAH* (the aphorism quoted above) Nietzsche speculates on the diminishing of the state, but he also raises a guardedly optimistic question about what will come afterwards: 'the prudence and self-interest of men are of all their qualities the best developed; if the state is no longer equal to the demands of these forces then the last thing that will ensue is chaos: an invention more suited to their purpose than the state was will gain victory over the state' (ibid.). It may be that Nietzsche provided his own answer to this question with the development of his notions of eternal recurrence and the overhuman. Hugo Drochon writes that the concept of eternal recurrence, suggested by Nietzsche and read by various interpreters (either literally as a cosmological feature or in the form of a psychological schema) as the idea that all existence will return and re-enact itself cyclically, informs Nietzsche's political

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<sup>91</sup> What is meant by 'cultural project' here chiefly refers to the creation of the overhuman, as described in *TSZ* and the creation of new values and ways of living by the 'new philosophers' described in *BGE*.

thought by being fundamentally connected to the character of the overhuman. This new, higher type of being is capable of willing the eternal return where lower types of human being cannot, wanting to change the past and not being able to countenance the thought of reliving their lives in the exact same details for eternity. Relating eternal recurrence to politics, Drochon characterises it ‘as a tool to determine what caste one should belong to in Nietzsche’s positing of his future two-sphere political ideal’ (Drochon 2016, p. 111). In this sense, as Drochon also points out (110), the doctrine is a political and ethical transformation of the cosmological thought of Heraclitus, recognized as a key process philosopher. Important in this respect is the capacity to affirm constant change, the necessary co-presence of opposites, and ultimately eternal conflict between them, all of which comes to form the world as it recurs eternally. Likewise, the overhuman itself is not a fixed final state or telos: it is a process of overcoming. The basis for the form and role of the institutions that Nietzsche advocates for the future of politics and economics might be taken to reflect the key processual insight of eternal recurrence the overhuman. and the doctrinal basis for the individuals that will emerge partly within the framework of these socio-political institutions, is ultimately one of process thinking.

Having briefly elaborated some aspects of Nietzsche’s economic and socio-political position, and how process philosophy can be recognized in them, we can return to the issue of technology more fully. As seen, Babich raises the issues of whether the future technologies considered by transhumanism (cloning, genetic enhancement, cybernetics, and so on) will create great economic and social disparity, ‘[perpetuating] a particular and not accidentally capitalist structure’<sup>92</sup> backed by ‘the idea that capitalism advances culture, that enhancing the wealth of the wealthy, that enhancing the well-being of the wealthy is “somehow” in the interest of everyone.’ (28). Highly suspicious of this last idea, Babich writes that ‘as Nietzsche points out of the fantasy of an eternal reward, you’ll have to wait a long time for this. Call it trickle-down economics, or call it whatever you like, this is the economics of the scratch-card lottery and it is a fantasy.’ (ibid.). How does Nietzsche’s economic position mesh with these criticisms? First off, it is abundantly clear that Nietzsche is

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<sup>92</sup> Babette Babich, “Nietzsche’s Post-Human Imperative: On the “All-too-Human” Dream of Transhumanism” in: *The Agonist*. Vol. IV, Issue II (2012). Online publication: [http://www.nietzschecircle.com/AGONIST/2011\\_08/Dream\\_of\\_Transhumanism.html](http://www.nietzschecircle.com/AGONIST/2011_08/Dream_of_Transhumanism.html)

in accordance with Babich on the point that capitalism does not advance culture, he instead holds that it is great individuals who do so. Likewise, Nietzsche does not think that it is significant to enhance or protect those who are merely wealthy. Given these starting points, there are still some important respects in which Nietzsche's economic perspective aligns with capitalism even as Babich decries it here. For example, as discussed earlier, his view on privatization are consonant with a form of free-market capitalism. Similarly, Nietzsche is not perturbed by the possibility of there being a great economic and social disparity between classes, in some respects he encourages it by condoning a conditional form of industry-based slavery and through the ideal of a cultural elite. It is ultimately through this last goal of a cultural elite that we should attempt to situate Nietzsche's economic and technological considerations, and respond to Babich's points.

To take the specific example of genetic engineering: Babich fears that technology like genetic engineering will be the sole province of the wealthy, which may lead to the aforementioned disparities. Nietzsche would not see this as a significant problem, except insofar as it is the province of those who are "merely" wealthy, those who are only interested in accumulating wealth or proliferating the values of 'Anglo-angelic shopkeeperdom'. Such a criticism does not apply in the case of those who use their wealth in a way that furthers the development of the values Nietzsche envisions as a future higher culture. Putting aside the issue of wealth, then, what remains is the question whether a technology like genetic engineering creates or improves the conditions under which great individuals can advance culture. This will be the central question in addressing the debate between Babich and Sorgner through Nietzsche's philosophy. If the answer is yes, then we could infer that Nietzsche would advocate technology like genetic engineering. This sort of advocacy differs from Transhumanism's, however, because Transhumanism's primary goal is extending and improving the quality of human life. Nietzsche is concerned with the production of culture, great individuals and great accomplishments: life-extension and quality of life are only factors to be considered when working towards these goals rather than ends in themselves.

Does this position, as described, thus reflect what Babich criticizes as a fantasy of 'trickle-down' economics? This strongly depends on how the position is construed. Firstly, Babich is criticizing the notion of capitalism in its 'trickle-down' form as a dream or utopian future, and she is surely right in pointing out that such a



view resembles the ‘fantasy of an eternal reward’ (28) as Nietzsche criticizes it. Sorgner defends Transhumanism against this vision of capitalism by claiming that ‘successful enhancement technologies can be distributed equally either by means of the public health system or by them becoming so cheap that they become widely available’ (Sorgner, *ibid.*, p. 14). As I have illustrated, there may be some potential issues with Sorgner’s responses along these lines: we can question whether some of the more advanced technologies hypothesized can be made available to all when many third world states still lack basic facilities and resources. Nietzsche’s position in this debate lies neither with Sorgner nor Babich. His writings suggest that he would not defend a free market economy that privileges those who are merely wealthy as a ‘trickle-down’ system for improving all, nor would he defend technology and transhumanism in the way that Sorgner does by appeal to equal distribution. This does not, however, place him with Babich in the debate. Privatized (economic) institutions for Nietzsche may not be sufficient or primary in furthering the production of culture but they do play a significant role in the sense that they provide an economic basis which aids in producing the conditions out of which great types will arise. They are capable of fulfilling this role because they are conducive to individual opportunism and broaden a possibility space for both production and consumption: the spectrum of consumption and production is extended on both ends, for high and low types, and thus new possibilities for the production of culture emerge. This must be qualified by emphasizing for Nietzsche that the economic basis must necessarily be coupled with a renewed cultural basis: there must be a core of values or a cultural elite that ultimately directs the use of such an economic basis for the ends of greater flourishing. Babich’s criticisms along these lines are valid to the extent that the cultural basis is missing, and such criticisms are indeed germane to Sorgner’s arguments and to advocates of similar systems of free market of capitalism by themselves also.

Lastly, having argued that Nietzsche’s thought lends itself to the advocacy of privatized economic institutions, in a manner not equivalent to the utopian fantasy that Babich derides, there is one last issue of technology to be addressed. Future technology like genetic enhancement considered as Babich does in its ascetic form is certainly not what Nietzsche would advocate. As Babich writes, what motivates the drive to technology like this is a drive towards mediocritization and the fantasy of a

utopian future. Technologies considered as such would be employed for life extension and to make our lives more comfortable, neither of which Nietzsche takes as valuable goals in human flourishing. Sorgner's defense of transhumanism as consonant with Nietzsche's philosophy of the future (and his defense against Babich's criticisms of the movement as hiding the ascetic ideal) do not carry much weight in this regard. What he cites as a central goal of transhuman advocates, the extension of lifespan (35) by itself does not appear particularly valuable in Nietzsche's own project. Likewise, in claiming similarities with Nietzsche's way of thinking by saying that 'transhumanists create new organic forms by taking into consideration naturalistic processes' (ibid.), Sorgner does not go very far in explaining the basis of these similarities beyond a shared naturalism. By itself this does not establish enough of a similarity: for what reason are these 'new organic forms' created? If it is in the service of greater comfort or happiness then it is certainly not consonant with Nietzsche's future philosophy. While Sorgner's defense of Transhumanism fails to elicit enough similarities to Nietzsche's philosophy, Babich's criticisms are also likely to stray from Nietzsche's own position on technology. Contrary to Babich's negative portrayal of potential future technologies like genetic enhancement, such technologies, and the will to achieve them, can be argued for in a more positive light. Insofar as Babich's criticisms are to be considered from the perspective of the 'herd' types of humans, Nietzsche might be in agreement. The uses of technology by types that are given to resentment and exhaustion will reflect those same natures, and serve as narcotics with utopian promises.<sup>93</sup> Hence, a transhumanist along these sorts of lines does reflect the ascetic ideal because the potential for overcoming the body promises life extension and increased comfort. However, a transhumanist more along Nietzsche's line of thought would not reflect the ascetic ideal because the possibilities for overcoming the limitations of the body would be taken to offer greater potentials for ever-more impressive achievement and competition.

At this point I would like to finally elucidate the fundamental elements of Nietzsche's position on technology and how they can be traced back to key process

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<sup>93</sup> One could even argue that in this sense that if one is strictly committed to Nietzsche's bleak view of the necessity of human sickness and resentment, then technology as narcosis is only set to continually improve the quality of that narcosis, as technologies like virtual reality become viable.

ontological insights. We have just seen that Nietzsche would perhaps evaluate the effect of technologies like genetic enhancement on the basis of whether they offer the possibilities for greater and further overcoming and more impressive achievements. This element effectively equates to a form of the power-pragmatism that has been extensively discussed in part one of this dissertation. Given the sort of power-pragmatism that Nietzsche elucidates, technology is not an exception to this sort of understanding, and must be similarly evaluated through it. Thus, technology must be understood firstly as an extension of the will to power. Secondly, and just as importantly, it must be understood that the uses of technology are subject to different and potentially competing wills, and so any evaluation of a particular technology theoretically poses the question, just as Nietzsche poses the question in the realm of aesthetic values, ‘is it hunger or super-abundance that has here become creative?’ (GS 370). If artworks are understood as extensions of the will to power, it may be the case that, given the same underlying power ontology in Nietzsche’s philosophy, technological inventions and usages may be considered analogously. As such, the efficacious use of a technology might be considered according to whether, through them, there is (as in art) ‘the desire for *destruction*, change, and becoming [that is] an expression of an overflowing energy that is pregnant with future’ (ibid) or whether it embodies ‘the hatred of the ill-constituted, disinherited, and underprivileged’ (ibid.). Considered as such, and given that the uses of any particular technology might be multifarious, such a project is by no means simple and straight-forward.

Nonetheless, we see in Nietzsche’s writing on technology some principled clues as to how to evaluate technology in this way. Nietzsche’s writings on technology are often couched in terms of its beneficial and detrimental effects to different types. Nietzsche’s general position in this regard is that improved technology simultaneously provides greater possibilities for human achievement while at the same time creating worse possibilities for what Nietzsche terms decadence. As he writes in an unpublished note in 1888: ‘A society is not free to remain young. And even at the height of its strength it has to form refuse and waste materials. The more energetically and boldly it advances, the richer it will be in failures and deformities, the closer to decline’ (WTP 40). We can see a similar understanding at work, for example, through the manner in which the state is formed for Nietzsche in *The Genealogy of Morals*. The socialization of humans through bad

conscience makes them irrevocably ‘sick’ but thereby paves the way through a developed inner consciousness towards society proper with all of its potentialities for greater human flourishing. The human being at such a point became an ‘*an interesting animal*, [...] only here did the human soul in a higher sense acquire *depth* and become *evil-and* these are the two basic respects in which man has hitherto been superior to other beasts!’ (*OGM I 6*). This conclusion may reinforce what has been written so far in terms of the power-pragmatist standards of evaluation in the will to power: it is only from the widest possible perspective of will to power that the function of economic or technological institutions can be appreciated, and a core element of appreciation in such a way is to chart the development of these institutions as processual and fluid. That is to say, to have a grasp on technologies and economic institutions in such a way as to recognize that what may be beneficial at one point in time to a particular type (in Nietzsche’s case, higher or lower types) may change to be detrimental at another point, or that it may be both beneficial to one party and detrimental to the other. Hence, power-pragmatism allows for the evaluation of such phenomena not in terms of static ideologies but as processes of power expression, a socio-political estimation which resembles in some regards the socio-political motivations of the Chinese Legalists in the Warring States period, which were also derived from a processual world-view.

#### **4.6 Case Study 2 (Socio-Economic Overview) - Politico-Economic Thought and Process in Chinese Legalism**

Compared with the account I have given of Nietzsche’s economic thought, an economic perspective with striking similarity can be found within the work of the ancient and notorious Chinese Legalist, Han Fei. As an initial qualification Han Fei’s pre-occupations are clearly different: Nietzsche’s political preoccupations, insofar as he has them, are couched in facilitating a life-affirming philosophy of the future through a valuational critique of contemporary society, while Han Fei is directly concerned with the maintenance of the power of the Chinese sovereign, which ultimately carries over into the maintenance and expansion of the Chinese empire). Nonetheless, both of their means of addressing these political concerns bear some insightful resemblances that may be traced back to a processual worldview. One of the major problems within the petty kingdoms in the Warring States period in China

was how rulers could keep their subordinates in check, specifically their ministers. Ministers served a crucial role in the functioning of states, which were at that point becoming too large to be efficiently controlled solely by the monarchy. We can now consider a brief example of how the Legalists suggest a process-philosophical technique to address this issue. Developing the notion of administrative techniques, or *shu*, Han Fei suggests that the ruler evaluate the work of his ministers by ‘matching performance to title’ (Watson 2012, p. 31). This involves allowing the ministers in advance to propose projects to be undertaken in the state, and also allowing them to set the criteria by which the tasks undertaken will be considered to be complete. If the performance matches the task set, Han Fei writes, then the ruler is to reward the minister appropriately. If the performance does not, then the minister is punished. Han Fei is remarkably stringent on this point: a minister is punished if he exceeds the task just as much as if he fails to meet it. The important point of this technique is the ruler’s absolute restraint: the ruler does not set the tasks, because Han Fei argues that ministers will attempt to take advantage of the ruler’s needs, and opportunists with insufficient skill for the task will be attracted. Likewise, the stringency of the criteria is taken to ensure that opportunistic ministers will not promise more than they can realistically achieve, in order to avoid punishment, while at the same time ensuring that ministers will still be motivated to promise as much as they can for the rewards. Theoretically, the technique is remarkably open-ended and adaptive on the part of the ruler, who exercises complete restraint and minimizes his presence in order to produce efficiency. The technique as Han Fei advocates it can be likened to a highly prototypical form of laissez-faire economy couched within a strongly authoritarian political system<sup>94</sup>.

In order to appreciate the dynamic efficacy of such a political and economic system, and why Han Fei and other Legalists work towards advocating it, we have to examine its syncretic roots. The foremost influences (and the current example of ‘matching performance and title’) of *shu* as the Legalists conceive it can be found in both the early Daoist understanding of political efficacy in the *Daodejing* and the strategic notion of efficacy in the *Sunzi*. The understanding of political efficacy in

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<sup>94</sup> Goldin (2012, p. 9) points out that there are clear issues with performance and title as an immediate economic principle, in the sense that if the ‘call for bids’ of the ruler is motivated by self-interest alone then some systemic issues with no immediate benefit to the individual may be neglected, such as in the areas of global warming and pharmaceuticals.

the *Daodejing* is that effective political rulership involves non-interference on the part of the ruler; if the state is well-ordered then the ruler does not need to impose himself on the process of the state. Similarly, the *Sunzi* elaborates a notion of strategic efficacy that highlights the need to place oneself in an advantageous position according to which one can respond to military situations as they unfold (among the more direct examples is simply to acquire the high ground). Both of these understandings develop from a general view of the world as processual, cyclical and non-teleologically oriented. We will explore this notion of efficacy more fully in the following chapter.

The preoccupation of ancient Chinese cosmology laid with processes and changes rather than substance and particulars, hence the ideologies and conceptual tools that Chinese philosophers like the Daoists and Legalists developed were directed at manipulating and accommodating changing circumstances. Han Fei's 'matching performance and title' is just such an attempt to manipulate and accommodate change within the political context. He takes the underlying Daoist intuition that working towards a static, imposed model of rulership is misguided and argues for a technique of political rulership that has its own form of privatization: the bureaucrats compete with each other and propose their own projects. Han Fei is not alone in this dynamic way of considering the state, he is part of a tradition of Legalists who work from the same fundamental understanding. While Chinese political philosophy, whether Confucian, Legalist or Daoist, all shares this dynamic basis, Legalism is known in particular for its staunch advocacy of political adaptation and reform. In mainstream Confucian thought, the state is by default considered to be the creation of the sage kings (legendary political and ethical exemplars), with the state also being the fundamental, de facto structure of society. The legalist Shang Yang, echoing the primitivist elements of Daoism, instead hypothesizes that the state is formed through a process of different transformations, transforming over time from a harmonious primitivist society to the contemporary feudal state of the empire as necessitated by increasing populations and the normative dynamics of society develop. What this entire process described by Shang Yang emphasizes is that, contrary to Confucian orthodoxy, the formation of the state was not a single act by the sage kings but rather a protracted, constantly changing process. As Yuri Pines describes it, "From Shang Yang's point of view it is

conceivable that during a lengthy pre-state period there were no rulers, and this situation was not necessarily unmanageable—at least until the population pressure and the resultant social tensions necessitated overall adjustment of the political system’ (Pines 2012, p. 34). So described Shang Yang envisions the socio-political situation as much more adaptive and fluid than his ideological competitors. Pines proceeds to point out that Shang Yang’s adaptive conception of the state goes even further than other reformers in the ancient Chinese tradition by advocating that adequate political rulership, if it is to remain flexible and adaptive, could be broader in scope in its modifications to the state: ‘The scope of change and of the required modifications is incomparably larger than in other texts that advocate “changing with the times”: it may include modifications not only to the political but also to the social structure, and even to morality’ (ibid.). Having established that the nature of the state is changeable and responds to the conditions that prevail in society, the conditions of changing society themselves may be equally adaptive and changeable. The reflexiveness of these conditions may have influenced the degree to which Shang Yang and general Legalist reforms departed from tradition in how drastic they were: reforms that undermined the cherished Confucian role of education, learning and culture in favour of mass mobilization and food production for war and expansion. Such reforms were severe, and one of the key criticisms of the Legalist writings on political rulership is their untenability. The brutal system of rewards and punishments posed by Legalists and the general authoritarianism of their proposed regime are cited as features that cannot lend themselves to sustained rulership. As Yuri Pines argues, this criticism of Legalism as a whole may not be entirely well-founded. Pines hypothesizes that due to the radical emphasis on adaptation in Shang Yang’s conception of the state and rulership there is nothing inconsistent with a hypothetical modification to the draconian system of Legalism in an established and peaceful state. In such a case more moderate adaptations could then be considered: the brutal means Legalists advocated for attaining such political harmony would then be properly understood only as an instrumental means rather than static principles of statehood (ibid. 35).

While authority and activity is ultimately still the behest of the ruler, and hence the state, the ideal system for Han Fei, like the Daoists, is one in which the state (more specifically, the state ruler) has no overt part in maintenance. Nietzsche’s

ideal state maintains a number of similarities: the functions of the state will be increasingly privatized and the role of the state will become minimal. The key difference, of course, consists in how the state is minimized: Nietzsche's state is minimized in the functional sense having few areas of state influence, whereas Han Fei's state is minimized in terms of its direct operation on the population (it still exerts full control over the population). We are thus presented with two economic, technological and political viewpoints that are both strikingly similar and different in many respects, but are both ultimately based on the insight that the world is a process. The form of the institutions posited by Nietzsche are those which minimize state control in order to cultivate the development of higher types and culture, and his complaints regarding those political and economic systems that emphasize state control (socialism, for example) are based in the idea that the aim of equality within these systems results in mediocrity and cultural stasis. Legalists like Shang Yang and Han Fei posit radical reforms that have an adaptive form for changing circumstances: unlike previous philosophers they conceive the state from the outset as constantly changing and are therefore able to provide reforms that break from tradition.

The preceding analyses have thus led us to the most significant resultant question for comparative process praxis thinking: in what ways do both philosophies, based on process, arrive at such insights in the areas of technology and economies? We have seen that Nietzsche's economic and political thought is skewed towards a fight against nihilism and stasis in post-Christian western culture, as represented in politics and economics through the unchecked tendency towards equality. As means of combatting this tendency, he endorses as instruments in his philosophical project those political and economic structures that appear to promote dynamism, which may encompass economic and political structures resembling privatization. The core of process thinking at work in Nietzsche's philosophy encourages a reception of technology that is effectively pragmatic in outlook: a technology is justified insofar as it is used for the purposes of an increase in will to power, whether it is used in the services of an ascending form of life. Likewise, a technology may be inveighed against insofar as its use is for the purposes of resentment or a weakening form of life. Similarly, the radical Chinese Legalists advanced political reforms influenced by a tradition of process thinking that also



departed from orthodoxy. Like the Daoists, in Shang Yang's thought the state is envisioned as originally idyllic and primitivist, and as population and cultural complexity increases within that community so too does the requirement for adapting political techniques and edicts. This sets Shang Yang and the Legalists apart from the Daoists, as they do not seem to be nostalgic for a political system that fits the primitivist period. Focusing as they do on maintaining first authority of ruler and state, and second the expansion of the power of both, they devise policies and methods that are themselves highly fluid, the example covered being Han Fei's emphasis that the ruler minimize his direct influence on state affairs in order to draw out more fully the competence of his sub-ordinates ('matching performance to title').

## **Chapter 5: Socio-Political Praxis in Comparative Process Ontology**

As discussed previously, both Nietzsche's philosophy and the Chinese Daoism (as exhibiting some of the structural features of Chinese thought) subscribe, broadly speaking, to forms of process ontology: both philosophies view the world fundamentally on the basis of constantly changing processes and events, rather than discrete entities, substances or things. One of the consequences of adopting such a basis is that both forms of thought tend to interpret events on a grand scale, with a predilection towards dynamically addressing socio-political phenomena. I have already discussed this especially in the context of economics, technology and politics, where both Nietzsche and Chinese Legalists posit dynamic mechanisms as a means of working towards the political and cultural environment they envision. In this last chapter, I want to draw out some further insights along these lines and attempt to elaborate a general concept of socio-political efficacy for comparative process ontology. Simply put, what sort of understanding of effective political action does the process worldview of both philosophies provide? Likewise, what is it to be an effective political agent? Throughout this chapter, I arrive at the conclusion that the commonalities between both views point towards a conception of efficacy based on process that is non-deterministic, and this conception offers fertile ground for further development in comparative thinking. Afterwards, I will consider some potential shortcomings and problems that this comparative ontology faces, by examining some of the ways in which either philosophy fails to deal with socio-political problems effectively even on a processual basis. Having established the

aims and content of the chapter, it will now be necessary to set the ground for these practical case studies by giving a general account of efficacy within both Chinese cultural thought, more specifically within Daoism and Nietzsche's philosophy.

### **5.1 Socio-Political Praxis in Comparative Process Ontology - East/West Models of Efficacy**

François Jullien has discussed the notion of efficacy at length within Chinese philosophy. As such, some key points of his comparative discussion of East-West ideas on this topic will be extensively drawn on. As Jullien points out, efficacy in the western philosophical tradition has throughout history been guided by the substance paradigm. Coupled with underlying influences from Platonic philosophy, efficacy is often treated as the conforming of an imperfect practical phenomenon to an ideal model. This is particularly evident, for example, in the strategic theorising of Carl Von Clausewitz, as Jullien describes. Clausewitz notes that previous strategists attributed deficiencies in strategic theory in two ways: firstly, warfare was considered to be reducible in purely material terms (that warfare was a matter of appreciating mathematical or geometrical laws), or secondly, warfare was understood through the idea that military genius was an indispensable yet unexplainable element of theory. Neither were sufficient for Clausewitz. Jullien points out that for Clausewitz the fundamental element aspect of strategic theorising was its 'inevitable distance that separates the reality of it from its model' (Jullien 2004, p. 11). To properly theorise was to account for how the empirical reality of fighting in any battle fails to correspond in practice to the idealised model of symmetrical warfare in theory. What this demonstrates, Jullien thinks, is an important example of a gap between theory and practice in western philosophical thinking that has remained unbridgeable and rendered the 'practice' always necessarily deficient by comparison with the theory. In this sense, Clausewitz's theorising is reflective of a general characteristic that Jullien identifies in western thinking, that of model-making: 'a revolutionary designs the model of the city that must be built; a soldier sets out the plan of war to be followed; an economist decides on the growth curve to target; and, all of them, whatever their respective roles, operate in a similar way. Each projects upon the world an ideal plan that will then

have to be incorporated into factual reality' (ibid. 3). Science has traditionally been the most wide-ranging project that exemplifies this characteristic, and while it has been profoundly successful in transforming the environment for human ends (through the imposition of models), it raises the question, as Jullien points out (ibid. 4) of whether the technical application of models works as well within the social sphere, regarding how to manage social and political situations. As we have seen with the initial example of Clausewitz, model-making appears to produce an explanatory gap in the socio-political environment of warfare. We can more specifically talk about this gap in terms of determination; with Clausewitz's model of warfare, the concrete reality and practice of battles produces an indeterminacy that cannot be fully explained by the model. More generally, 'although science may impose its rigor on things by understanding their necessary aspects and thereby achieving technical efficacy, the situations in which our actions are performed are, for their part, indeterminate. But actions cannot eliminate their contingency, and their particularities cannot be covered by any general law' (ibid. 4).

Another example of this kind of 'practical lacuna' can be interpreted in Machiavelli's discussion of *fortuna*. The notion of fortune in political affairs is drawn on by Machiavelli primarily in the sense that it plays the role of an unaccounted-for evil in one's plannings: '[luck] shows her power in places where no *virtu* has been marshalled to resist her; she directs her onslaught to those places where embankments and dams have not been constructed to restrain her' (Machiavelli 2008, p. 363). We can only resist *fortuna*, then, by deliberate prior planning and preparation for her always unexpected arrival, usually in the form of wisdom and experience. Because *fortuna* is positioned as an unaccountable, extreme force, Machiavelli posits that it must be dealt with in a similarly extreme manner: 'I am absolutely convinced that it is better to be impetuous than circumspect, because Fortune is a woman and you must, if you want to subjugate her, beat and strike her. It is obvious that she is more willing to be subjugated that way than by men with cold tactics' (369). Again, because efficacy is conceived along the lines of a determination of plan to ideal model, the failure of the concrete plan to conform to abstract model must be accounted for as something itself non-determinate and unaccountable. Thus, an indeterminate problem of planning requires a response that itself is indeterminate: the political actor must be brash, 'impetuous' in acting, and this establishes an unaccountable element in theorising applied to practice.

By contrast, in early Chinese thought, the effective means of action, is exemplified in *shi* – disposition or potential – as a multifarious concept that captures how efficacy proceeds in a number of ways in Chinese life. Rather than adhering to a means-end logic of action, various interpretations of *shi* or efficacy in Chinese thought consist in being in an appropriate position from which to allow a course of events (a process) to unfold in its suchness, without presuming a fixed end, or imposing one's directed actions or characteristics. Some of the earliest uses of the term come from the context of warfare, with the famous Chinese military text *Sunzi* or 'The Art of War'. There the notion of *shi* (or as Roger Ames translates it in this sense, "circumstances") quite often simply refers to advantageous positioning: having the 'high ground' for example. These concrete strategic references are also occasionally complemented with uses that are more general in focus, which are translated by Ames in terms of 'disposition' or 'configuration'<sup>95</sup>. *Shi* in this latter, general sense reflects a correlative insight characteristic of process thinking in Chinese military thought: in one example, the general is encouraged to make the disposition of his troops like that of pent-up waters flowing through a gorge, or an avalanche of boulders tumbling down a slope: 'That the velocity of cascading water can send boulders bobbing about is due to its strategic advantage. That a bird of prey when it strikes can smash its victim to pieces is due to its timing. So it is with the expert at battle that his strategic advantage is channelled and his timing is precise. His strategic advantage is like a drawn crossbow and his timing is like releasing the trigger. Even amidst the tumult and the clamour of battle, in all its confusion, he cannot be confused' (Ames 1993, p. 87). Ames properly highlights this correlative aspect when he points out that '[j]ust as the flow of water is determined by the contour of the terrain, so the physical disposition of [*shi*] is determined by changing circumstances' (Ames 1994, p. 67). The other significant area where the notion of *shi* is highly influential in the Chinese tradition is with the Legalist theorists, where the notion is applied more specifically in a socio-political context. Rather than fitting the underlying process (understood here in terms of *qi* - force or energy) to a strict model and then attempting to contain that process within it or account for the

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<sup>95</sup> Hence, as the author of the *Sunzi* describes, 'Having heard what can be gained from my assessments, shape a strategic advantage from them to strengthen our position. By "strategic advantage" I mean making the most of favorable conditions and tilting the scales in our favor' (Ames 1993, p. 74)

unpredictability that emerges from such an operation, Chinese thought advocates adapting oneself to the process 'upstream' (as François Jullien terms it). In doing so, the early adaptation will engender the circumstances that are later favorable to the efficacious party. The most immediate grasp of *shi* is available in Jullien's description of it in the realm of Chinese warfare:

'a disposition is effective by virtue of its renewability; it is a *tool*. [...] What is involved is the deeper intuition that a particular disposition loses its potentiality when it becomes *inflexible* (or static). For is it not precisely the fundamental objective of all tactics to ensure that dynamism continues to operate to one's advantage (meanwhile draining the opponent of initiative and reducing him to paralysis)? And how better to reactivate the dynamism inherent in any disposition than to open it up to alternation and reversibility?' (Jullien 1999, p. 34)

It is this 'deeper intuition' of potentiality against inflexibility that characterises Chinese philosophy as offering a process-based account of socio-political efficacy. This notion of dispositional power is developed in different strands throughout ancient Chinese philosophy, most notably through both the Daoist and Legalist thinkers. The *Daodejing* in particular has been read as an extended treatise on Daoist political rulership. Rather than focusing on direct manipulation of laws or imposition of one's will on the populace, the *Daodejing* advocates that the ruler withdraw from active ruling in favour of allowing the state to manage itself with minimal interference. The framework for enacting such a significant political regime is achieved in the *Daodejing* by inculcating a situational disposition within the ruler whereby he can appreciate the underlying totality of process (*Dao*). This is reflected in a number of strategies proliferated throughout the text, such as advising the ruler to adopt situational dispositions contrary to popular tradition: taking the 'low' or feminine position instead of the typically dominant 'high' or masculine position (and ultimately attaining a situational state prior to either), learning to attune one's palette to 'bland' dishes in order to better appreciate subtlety, and so on.

From a comparative perspective, the notion of *shi* as described offers rich resources for conceiving efficacy within process philosophy. As I described initially, the general conception of efficacy in the west as argued by theorists like Jullien proceeds according to a framework of determination, underlined by a relation of

concrete planning contrasted to abstract models or ideals. As such theorists argue, this framework leads to an explanatory gap in practice: the indeterminacy of the concrete practice fails to align with the abstract model. This failure is explained by writers like Machiavelli as a matter of *fortuna*, indeterminate luck, and as a matter of practice he advocates the equally indeterminate solution of audacious action. This gap can be seen to carry over into theory more generally to the point where there are roughly two significant poles of determinacy on one end and indeterminacy on the other. Neither pole provides a truly satisfying basis for the discussion of efficacy as on the one hand determinacy has always been undermined by indeterminacy. On the other hand, the pole of indeterminacy is not satisfying due firstly, to the determinist claim that it is only due to 'hidden variables' that indeterminacy stands as a problem, but secondly (and more importantly) indeterminacy elevates the explanatory gap as a solution (an indeterminate requires an indeterminate response).

I now wish to propose that a comparative account of process ontology provides the resources with which to address this explanatory gap in a novel way. The core issue is the manner in which this explanatory gap must be dealt with: a response based on determinacy or indeterminacy may inevitably suffer the problems posed above. If this is so, we require an alternative framework to that of determinacy in order to solve the gap, and I believe this alternative framework may be glimpsed at in both Nietzsche's and Chinese philosophical accounts of efficacy and fatalism.

## **5.2 Socio-Political Praxis in Comparative Process Ontology – Legalism: A Subversion of Chinese Efficacy?**

We have so far been examining the notion of efficacy from a beneficial standpoint, but it is also necessary to highlight some potential problems that may emerge from a process-based conception of efficacy. The efficacy I have described can be compared with a similar efficacy in Legalist philosophy that exemplifies a totalitarian danger, even if it is never truly actualised. With the Legalists an understanding of *shi* emerges that is complicit in the functioning of a specifically totalitarian or authoritarian state. It is an 'extreme *depersonalization* of the sovereign [...] which reduces him to nothing but his *position*' (Jullien 1999, p. 54). In contrast to a Confucian politics that is paternalistic in its political expression and self-

cultivation, the legalists advance a politics of sovereign and state that marginalizes the input (both in terms of action and traits) of the ruler, and instils a sense of political efficacy that appears to turn in on itself. Rather than the ruler maintaining cohesion and harmony in the state through an extension of his own efficacy, the Legalists advocate an efficacy of the state, in which the state apparatus maintains its own cohesion through automated mechanisms of surveillance, rewards (*shang*) and punishments<sup>96</sup> (*xing*), a system that functions in a manner structurally similar to Jullien's comparison with the Panopticon as described by Foucault (ibid. 55).

What is most significant is, firstly, its apparent compatibility with preceding methods in the philosophical tradition and secondly, the degree of automation that the system of control acquires once it is set in motion by the ruler. As Jullien writes, such a system 'is artificial and yet operates at the same time *naturally*; and its usefulness rests on the combination of those two aspects' (ibid.). The methodology of this system proceeds according to the same conception of efficacy we have already discussed: the ruler refrains from exerting an ego-based influence on the process of governing, he simply establishes himself within the proper context and allows events in the process to unfold of their own accord, similar to the Daoists. However, unlike such a process envisioned in Daoism, where the ruler refrains from coercive action such that things emergently order themselves, the despot of legalism abstains from imposition in order to allow the instrumental, political machine to order itself<sup>97</sup>. This is achieved in part through the imposition of stern discipline and rules that are geared towards the populace policing themselves: laws were advocated by the Legalists, most notably, that allowed for the punishment for entire families for the crime of a single member. The most critical aspect of this struggle for power is that regardless of whether the despot maintains power, once the system of rulership is established in its utmost form it is capable of proceeding uninterrupted, like any dynamic process: 'the setup functions regardless of the personal moral qualities of whoever controls it, for that reason passing just as easily into other hands' (ibid.). In a seeming incoherence, then, a system is established and enacted on a basis of struggle and

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<sup>96</sup> Cf. Jullien (1999 pp. 47-57)

<sup>97</sup> 'In Han Feizi, non-action is devoid of the cosmological magic it radiates in Laozi, where it originates inside one person and is then projected outside. In the "Way of the Ruler" it is merely a question of the clever manipulation of labor' (Denecke 2010, p. 287)

conflict on a contrived level<sup>98</sup> (which is at odds with the ideal of non-imposition in efficacy) but the functioning of the system itself comes to operate and sustain itself ostensibly like any analogous natural process. There is thus an efficacy of which its character is artificial, but its form is natural. Jullien claims that, under the Legalists, the concept of *shi* 'represents an impoverishment in relation to the intuition of efficacy commonly expressed through the term *shi*, for while the Legalists certainly focused on the dimension of objective conditioning peculiar to *shi* and likewise on its automatic nature, they would end up stripping their representation of *shi* of its essential variability. By immobilizing it in this way, they rendered it sterile' (Jullien 1999, p. 273). This 'essential variability' is precisely so essential because it is what makes efficacy adaptive and responsive to changing circumstances.

The Legalist system of state governance, through the manner in which it substitutes an artificial state-mechanistic efficacy for both Confucian personal-ethical efficacy and Daoist naturalistic efficacy, makes socio-political efficacy a closed system that may regulate itself in the immediate term but not be sustainable or adaptive in the long-term. What is more threatening about this state of affairs is that Legalist efficacy clearly mimics prior forms of efficacy in terms of methodology: the Legalist ruler exercises restraint and composure just as the Daoist ruler might, and yet the difference between Legalist and Daoist ideals of socio-political efficacy is that the Legalist conception may lead to a strongly authoritarian state, while the Daoist state cautions against authoritarianism. Concerningly, however, the Legalist ruler's methods of efficacy are consistent with a Daoist framework. This, then, signals a clear problem for conceiving socio-political efficacy (at least on this side of the comparison), as an adaptive, reflexive notion of efficacy should not lead to the sort of static authoritarianism latent in the Legalist state.

There is a case to be made further that this may also be a problem when we consider the advocacy of privatized institutions as more dynamic means towards socio-political efficacy. In this respect, for example, the capacity for what appears to be an open-ended and adaptive efficacy can be effectively manipulated and reversed into practices and dispositions that are negative and harmful for individuals, as

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<sup>98</sup> The ruler, and effectively the system, 'forces solidarity on people, [and] gets them to betray individual characteristics that distinguish them, a quality that encourages denunciations' (Jullien 2004, p. 48)



Vandenberghe discusses: 'Insecurity and vulnerability are no longer seen as a perverse effect of the dismantling of rigidities, but welcomed, valued and used to increase competition among the workers (Vandenberghe 2008, p. 880). Similarly, Jullien writes that in Legalism 'opposition carried to extremes will no longer be seen as oppression but as its opposite, [...] This is the case partly because such pressure creates a long-term *habitus* that becomes second nature to the individuals subjected to it' (Jullien 1999, p. 51). Because efficacy is conceived as a fluid process with gradations, the capacity for that process to become maladaptive in any particular situation (but most importantly in the social and political environments discussed) may be harder to track. If this is the case, then it may be conceiving efficacy in processual terms leads to enforced, habitual processes of subjugation (such as those in Legalism), which may appear autonomous and self-sustaining but ultimately lead to stasis if not monitored. Again, the progression from benevolent practices in contemporary workplaces may be difficult to track according to a processual account of efficacy. The contemporary form of capitalism operates 'like complex biological systems that successfully survive in nature' (Vandenberghe 2008, p. 881): it is fluid and transformative, autonomously regulated in a manner that reflects efficacy in its ontological, processual effect. An extension of this principle is seen in how the individual aspects themselves operate in a manner that approaches efficacy: 'The good networker who treats his or her person as a marketable asset is a master in self-presentation and decorum. Promising to give himself entirely in any project, he remains in fact unattached to the job and to his self in order to remain at the disposition of any other project that might come up' (ibid.). In legalism, '[f]or the self-regulating system to work, the ruler needed to be clever rather than wise; he had to be good at striking poses of pretence rather than at radiating charisma' (Wiebke 2010, p. 300). Unlike Daoism or Confucianism, in Legalism there is no necessity for self-cultivation in the manner that both prior schools claim is vital for effective rulership. At best, the Legalist ruler must simply simulate those aspects, and this is reminiscent of the problem raised for process ontology with regard to appearance and reality. That is to say, there are no grounds for a hard distinction in determining truly efficacious practices versus those that are simulated, just as there are no hard ontological grounds for distinguishing between appearance and reality. Thus, to summarize, Legalism as a processual system raises a significant question for

efficacy, particularly with regard to the framework of how to monitor socio-political efficacy as it develops.

In spite of apparent issues with Legalism and the manner in which it problematically appropriates the traditional conception of efficacy, there have also been defences of the system. Li Ma's analysis of power legitimacy in Legalism, compared with the dominant Chinese political system of Confucianism, asserts that Confucianism may constrain individuals in a more fundamental sense than the authoritarian demands of Legalism. We have already described how Confucianism models socio-political efficacy on the self-cultivation of the ruler: the ruler, as head of state, becomes the exemplary figure through appropriate ritual behaviour and capacity to match effective behaviours to appropriate roles. There will be harmony in the Confucian state if the rest of the ruler's subjects follow the same pattern of self-cultivation. In contrast, the Legalist ruler has no such requirement: he can have an absolute lack of these qualities insofar as it is the state mechanisms that produce socio-political efficacy rather than the ruler's character. We have thus far looked upon this state of affairs as negative because it appears to undermine the traditional conception of efficacy. The Legalist conception of efficacy shares great similarities with Daoist efficacy in terms of the privileging of non-action, yet the character of both regimes are startlingly different: Legalism appears authoritarian, while Daoism appears primitivist. The key point that Li Ma highlights, one which many detractors of Legalism fail to recognize, is that on an individual level Legalism advances an element of ideological freedom that is not present in Confucianism, for example:

‘Confucianist power is very stable, thanks to its legitimacy of morality for the obtaining of obedience. On the other hand, by imposing what they must think on each subject, by means of a conditioning that begins right from childhood, the Confucianist power maintains society in a state of immobility. In spite of its legitimacy by means of virtue, this system is suffocating, leaving very little room for individual liberty. [...] The Legalist system seems more severe, because it is more based upon force for the obtaining of obedience. In spite of this, one could say that it is less coercive, even more free, in particular as concerns the private life of an individual, because it draws up the list of forbidden behaviours rather than imposing in advance a list of ritual behaviours. The Legalist power is less stable as a result of its too frequent use of force, because it is based upon a way of

functioning rather than a morality. Its legitimacy of performance and efficiency, based upon the efficiency of the institutionalised State, is nevertheless quite progressive.’ (Ma, 2000, p. 57-58)

There are some extant concerns with the account given. It is questionable to what extent we can properly talk about the ‘private life of an individual’ given the context of Chinese cultural thought of the Warring States period. Likewise, it is also questionable how much individual liberty is truly possible within the confines of the draconian laws of the Legalist state. Removed from the concrete context and considered generally, however, I think this raises a key point about Legalism. It is a less stable state, not because of its ‘too frequent use of force’ (ibid.) but because its structure itself is dynamic. Rather, its too-frequent use of force can be seen to reflect the concrete incapacity of the administration of the period to adapt the laws of Legalism to a more settled political atmosphere. As we have seen in Yuri Pine’s analysis of the Legalist narrative of state formation, this is not something that is necessarily a fixed element of Legalism itself. Legalism is dynamic because, while it sets out laws it does not inculcate an ideology or morality in the manner in which Confucianism does, in which subjects must emulate the character of the efficacious ruler. Instead, both subjects and ruler, at least in theory, should retain a capacity for individual liberty that can be construed as ‘progressive’ in the sense that it preserves a variance of private perspectives within society.

### **5.3 Socio-Political Praxis in Comparative Process Ontology – Nietzsche and Efficacy: Fate, Fatalism and Comparison**

What, on the Western side of comparison, does Nietzsche’s philosophy offer for socio-political efficacy in terms of process ontology? In order to address this, we must consider those who Nietzsche considers to be exemplary socio-political agents. Perhaps foremost among these are Napoleon Bonaparte and Cesare Borgia. For Nietzsche what basically makes these so-called higher men exemplary figures is the extremely cohesive way in which they developed themselves as humans and the

immoral way in which they pursued power<sup>99</sup>. As has been widely discussed, Nietzsche's understanding of the human is as an aggregate of competing drives, the strength of one's self being dependent on how well those drives are marshalled into one purpose and intensity. On this basis Napoleon is lauded by Nietzsche as a powerful and creative political actor on the one hand and also as a great immoralist on the other hand. Both of these features of self-cultivation and immoralism will serve to show how process thought relates to socio-political efficacy in Nietzsche's work, and how they compare with those of ancient Chinese philosophy. Self-cultivation plays a major part in determining effective political action, the severity and discipline that is involved in cohering one's drives (as Napoleon did) is described by Paul Glenn in processual terms:

'Napoleon and Goethe also embodied Nietzsche's conception of freedom. Nietzsche does not view freedom as traditional liberals do, as freedom from restraint and limitation, but instead sees it as the outcome of internal struggle. The warring affects threaten to destroy the coherent whole the higher person has fashioned of himself. The successful struggle to resist this entropic tendency marks freedom as an agonistic determination, and display of strength' Glenn 2001, p. 137).

This 'entropic tendency' of affects to diminish cohesiveness of the self is crucial to understanding any process-philosophical basis, and its resistance can be understood in terms of constant change and progression aimed at acquiring power: namely the continual development of the will to power in humans. Just as important, it becomes clear that this mechanism is the microcosmic, individual-scale equivalent of the mechanisms of that Nietzsche envisions as a requirement for progression towards his envisioned political and cultural society: resistance of entropy (in the form of equalizing social institutions) through engagement of practices and dispositions that promote dynamism (by diminishing the role of the state and facilitating privatized institutions). This is a commonality that we will also consider and develop further in early Chinese philosophical thinking.

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<sup>99</sup> 'Compared to us, a Cesare Borgia would never be positioned as a 'higher man', as a type of overman (which is what I do)' (AC 37). 'Goethe was a convinced realist [...] his greatest experience was of that *ens realissimum* that went by the name of Napoleon. Goethe conceived of a strong, highly educated, self-respecting human being, skilled in all things physical and able to keep himself in check, who could dare to allow himself the entire expanse and wealth of naturalness, who is strong enough for this freedom; a person who is tolerant out of strength and not weakness because he knows how to take advantage of things that would destroy an average nature' (AC 49)

We have thus seen that socio-political efficacy begins in the individual through a combination of self-cultivation (cohesiveness of the drives that constitute the self) and a certain immoralism. However, taking Nietzsche's general considerations on political efficacy above and beyond the individual exemplar seriously, in tandem with his diagnosis of the sickness of contemporary society, produces a definite problem: how can contemporary society and culture be revitalized in a manner that leads to the future political environment that Nietzsche envisions as conducive to the flourishing of the overhuman and higher types? Given that he diagnoses the cultural and spiritual state of contemporary society as overwhelmingly sick, such a project almost seems to demand that this society pull itself out such a sickness by its bootstraps. Democratic, progressively egalitarian states appear to have become a general ideal for westernized societies, and it is in the character of a democratic majority (a majority that is inescapably sick) through which such states are developing. Such states are not then, in principle, compatible with Nietzsche's vision of a future society. Likewise, Nietzsche could be said to abhor on the other hand the various reactionary nationalisms that have arisen as a response to this progressive movement. How, then, can Nietzsche's philosophy navigate the practical issues of contemporary society in such a way as to aim at the cultural aristocratic state that Nietzsche envisions – what sort of individual will be an efficacious socio-political actor in this context?

Don Dombowsky has highlighted the affinities of Nietzsche's political thinking with Machiavelli's writing. In highlighting that for Nietzsche (as for Machiavelli) the political form of the state is secondary to the basic function of the state as an enduring presence, Dombowski writes that such a view 'introduces an esoteric, eclectic or spectral-syncretic element into Nietzsche's political philosophy, a willingness to use whatever ideologies are at hand in the interests of deeper and more distant goals' (Dombowsky 2004, p. 136), even political perspectives or ideologies that are antithetical to Nietzsche's philosophy. On this point we have already seen a similar feature in Chinese Legalism, which itself is syncretic, but as a structure does not lend itself to any particular ideology. What differs with the Nietzschean political regime will be that efficacy will not be an overt influence over subjects. In claiming that such a view has an 'esoteric, eclectic or spectral-syncretic' element, what is it in Nietzsche's philosophy that permits the sort of spectral-syncretism and adaptability in socio-political actors? This would seem to point

towards an unexplored facet of Nietzsche's political view. Dombowski attempts to address such a lacuna by parsing the esoteric or syncretic aspects through Nietzsche's perspectivism, intertwined with will to power. As Dombowski writes, each perspective expresses a will to power (83), ultimately a will to domination. Taken as such, the esoteric element is addressed in part by appealing to perspectivism's rejection of any absolute perspective, any absolute standard, and also in part by the inherent power-pragmatism of each perspective as a will to dominate. The esoteric or syncretic aspects thus emerge in how we understand ideological perspectives. Nietzsche ultimately foregrounds the perspectival wills to power that lurk behind ideologies (this constituting the esoteric aspect) while appreciating that any particular ideology or power-play is derived from the drives of power: power plays are not explained by reference to the content of ideologies but by the interplay of wills to power (this being the syncretic aspect). We can thus imagine that the consummate political actor of Nietzsche's future philosophy appreciates all political ideologies in such a manner, fundamentally as wills to power, and is thus able to manipulate them and appropriate them from the vantage point of his own holistic perspective of the doctrine of will to power.

We can further understand socio-political efficacy for Nietzsche through likening it to Machiavelli's notion of *virtu*, which Dombowski has argued for previously (Dombowski, 2004: 139). All of the characteristic qualities of Nietzschean *virtu* are present: amorality in effective action, creative capacity, perpetual agonistic striving towards an increase in the will to power (Dombowski, *ibid.*). As François Jullien points out, Machiavellian *virtu* is a form of efficacy that is ascribed to political action. Socio-political actors with *virtu* act opportunely on a situation, and through their qualities impose their will on that situation in acting: '[t]he Prince sings the praises of an ability to take action. The matter of politics, being contingent, is-by the same token-malleable and, in consequence, also technically transformable. A man can gain a hold on it and, despite the dangers involved, can hope to give it form by imposing his own designs upon it' (Jullien 2004, p. 54). As Jullien shows, *virtu* as described portrays efficacy as a matter of individual intervention and mastery. We can now attempt to piece together both aspects of efficacy as discussed in order to form a potential picture of what the efficacious socio-political actor in Nietzsche's future philosophy might resemble. Such a socio-political actor may be a 'higher man', a type of person that has

consolidated and developed its self in a cohesive manner. Likewise, such an actor is amoral in effective action and a significant reason for this is such an actor's understanding of the world as will to power. The efficacious political actor recognises political ideologies and movements ultimately in terms of wills to power, as patterned features of a process of power acquisition and expansion. The political actor is thus capable of appropriating those ideologies without hypocrisy (what I suggest is the spectral-syncretic and esoteric element) and is able to manipulate more effectively those individual features of will to power that influence the political sphere, those such as *ressentiment*.

We have already explored how the Machiavellian conception of *virtu* perpetuates the model-ideal distinction in efficacy that Jullien describes in Clausewitz: '[f]or the very reason that action intervenes in the course of things, it is always external to it and constitutes an initiative that is intrusive. Because it impinges from outside, introducing a plan/project (ideal), it is always to some degree external to the world and is therefore relatively incompatible and arbitrary' (ibid. 54). By understanding the socio-political actor as external or apart from the situation being imposed from without, such a conception presents two problematic points: 1) it positions the socio-political actor as something that is not itself part of the unfolding situation, which may limit the capacity for effective response (as for example, Clausewitz held that the limitation of theorising war was the unpredictability of the actual battles), and 2) it draws theory towards a deterministic-indeterministic framework of thought that may similarly limit the capacities for effective socio-political theorising and action.

We can now ask whether the same criticisms may be made of a potential conception of the efficacious socio-political actor in Nietzsche's philosophy. Nietzsche is interesting with regard to the second point above because he is a philosopher sceptical of mechanistic determinism, one half of the above distinction. In a note entitled '*Against Determinism and Teleology*' Nietzsche criticizes the mechanistic conception of determinism, which relies on the external distinctions of subject and object in order to posit the equally external concepts of cause and effect of them. Nietzsche claims that '[o]nly because we have introduced subjects, "doers," into things does it appear that all events are the consequences of compulsion exerted upon subjects—exerted by whom? again by a "doer." Cause and effect—a dangerous

concept so long as one thinks of something that causes and something upon which an effect is produced' (*WTP* 552). Likewise, in the course of his criticisms on this point, Nietzsche also claims that once we give up as metaphysically necessary the concepts of subject and object we can also give up as metaphysically necessary the concept of substance. On the one hand, this reinforces the idea, along with other textual references, that Nietzsche's thought could be more-so aligned along the tradition of process thinking, but it also presents a well-recognised issue in critical commentary: Nietzsche certainly considers that humans and things generally in the world become made what they are, and do what they do, in virtue of the drives of will to power that compose them. What is difficult to determine, then, is in what way Nietzsche retains this quasi-deterministic view without actually being a determinist of the sort he criticizes.

Attempting to answer this, Brian Leiter provides a succinct summary of Nietzsche's account of individuals and their capacities in terms of the notion of type-facts. Type facts are biological, physical or psychological facts about a person: hair color, for example, or body size. The sort of type-facts a particular organism has will, to a large extent, determine its bodily and psychological capacities. Thus, someone may have the requisite physical type-facts necessary to be a professional basketball player, but may not fulfil that potential if they do not have the proper environment in which to fully develop those type-facts (through coaching, for example). Thus, we are significantly determined by our type-facts, but not wholly. This again raises the question of exactly how we are determined. Leiter sketches out three positions in terms of this issue: classical Determinism, Classical Fatalism, and Causal Essentialism. Classical determinism is the mechanistic conception of causal determinism that Nietzsche critiques, while Classical Fatalism holds that everything is fated to happen, but not in the directly causal manner of determinism. Of this latter position Leiter points out that 'Classical Fatalism involves the notion of some sort of non-deterministic, perhaps even noncausal necessity, and in that sense is a rather cryptic view' (Leiter 2014, p. 66). Lastly, there is Leiter's own interpretation that attempts to address this problem, Causal Essentialism. Causal Essentialism is 'the doctrine that for any individual substance (e.g., a person or some other living organism) that substance has "essential" properties that are causally primary with respect to the future history of that substance, i.e., they non-trivially determine the space of possible trajectories for that substance' (*ibid.*).



I now wish to more generally discuss causal essentialism, which draws on type-facts to causally explain how Nietzsche thinks humans are led to have certain characteristics or achieve certain acts. Firstly, it is clear that Nietzsche is often critical of the notion of ‘substance’, at least as a metaphysically necessary concept. It may be the case that Nietzsche thinks it is necessary that we describe humans in terms of such language as a fiction required for productive life. In such a case Leiter might be said to give us a workable terminology for doing so and capturing the sense in which Nietzsche wants to describe fatalism. There are other problems that might make us hesitant to describe Nietzsche’s fatalism in terms of causal essentialism, however. Leiter wishes to say that Nietzsche is not a classical determinist because, *pace* determinism, he thinks that not everything about an individual’s life is mechanistically determined. In order to do so, he argues that for Nietzsche type-facts are *causally primary*, which is to say that those facts play the most important part in determining the space of potential for a person, in conjunction with environmental and circumstantial factors. Firstly however, if type-facts are causally primary and determining, then are they not so in the classical determinist sense? Leiter claims not, because for Leiter classical determinism must hold across the board: everything must be classically determinist. By themselves neither type-facts nor environment are wholly determining. If correct, Leiter’s description of type-facts as causally primary would conveniently resolve the tension between determinism and fatalism within Nietzsche’s writing. However, Nietzsche is critical of classical determinism not only in its “across the board” form, but also of its methodology and the metaphysical assumptions it involves. Determinism involves the use of concepts like substance, object and subject, which Nietzsche thinks are not metaphysically necessary and therefore not truly descriptive of the way things actually are. Even so, if we assume, as before, that Nietzsche thinks these concepts, while not reflective of the real world, may be necessary human illusions that serve a pragmatic purpose, and that type-facts are causally primary but not wholly classically determined, this raises a slew of questions about the causal distinction between type-facts, environment and circumstance.

This is a particularly difficult question because Nietzsche himself offers conflicting views about how much environment and circumstance are determinative for the individual. On the one hand, he critiques the *milieu* theory, which held that environment determined the individual, against this he claims that ‘the force within

is infinitely superior; much that looks like external influence is merely its adaptation from within. The very same milieus can be interpreted and exploited in opposite ways' (*WTP* 70). Hence there is the sense that for Nietzsche individuals can overcome their environmental conditioning, and that exemplars in fact influence their environment more than it does them. At the same time, however, it is clear that for Nietzsche we are made what we are by the animal and vegetal drives that have preceded us and that we have incorporated, and that even aspects of our lives such as our diet have a profound influence on our potential. In this sense, Nietzsche seems to think that type-facts themselves are determined by circumstances or environment. The constitutive facts of a tomato plant are determined by the preceding environment out of which it genealogically developed. Likewise, humans trace their evolution back to the environment and external factors in which they developed. To highlight that our type-facts are causally primary, then, risks triviality when we recognise that those type-facts obtain and operate the way they do directly because of environment and circumstances. In fact, if we are committed to methodological naturalism in the way Leiter suggests Nietzsche is, we may find that as our ability to scientifically understand type-facts becomes increasingly fine-grained and accurate, what appears causally primarily in them may be seen to be reducible to the causes of environment and circumstances. Given such an understanding, it appears that when we claim that any particular set of type-facts are causally primary in a person's beliefs or actions we are doing nothing more than arbitrarily selecting such characteristics and assigning them causal primacy for pragmatic, practical purposes, not because they actually are. According to such a view, then, to say that a person fulfils his or her potential in the "right way"<sup>100</sup> (which according to Leiter's view, is when the type-facts are causally primary along with other natural facts) is at risk saying nothing more than that the extension of certain natural facts of environment and circumstances prevailed over others. Again, however, Nietzsche appears to want to resist claiming this. As such, causal essentialism as a basis on which to understand how individuals have efficacy in a non-deterministic manner simply seems too deterministic to be viable, even as a revisionary conception.

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<sup>100</sup> Leiter's discussion of type-facts greatly figures in the context of how autonomy is possible within Nietzsche's philosophy.

If Causal Essentialism appears to provide an inadequate explanation of Nietzsche's quasi-deterministic position, it may be helpful to re-examine his fatalism. Leiter is correct in pointing out that fatalism as far as we read it in Nietzsche's philosophy appears mysterious: it ostensibly suggests a non-causal feature that makes events necessarily happen, and evidently it is not an omnipotent being like God. Likewise, the will to power doctrine appears too causally structured to serve as such a feature. However, I believe that some of the mystery behind such a position can be addressed by drawing on both process thought as a means of understanding fatalism in Nietzsche's philosophy<sup>101</sup>, and by comparing equivalent conceptions of fatalism in Chinese philosophy. Firstly, then, how will process philosophy help us understand how fatalism works in Nietzsche's philosophy? We have already seen, as Jullien points out, that the ideal/model theoretical distinction in Western thought is conducive to reinforcing the deterministic/indeterministic dichotomy: Clausewitz arrives at a point in theory in which the careful planning of the model is faced with the unaccountable vicissitudes of the actual battleground, which escapes all determination. Likewise, Machiavelli's effective socio-political actor must take his chances against *fortuna*. If Nietzsche rejects classical determinism as a true depiction of the world, this would seem to imply that non-determinism is equally erroneous, as they are predicated on the same conceptual framework. Other key concepts may shed light on Nietzsche's position in this regard.

Although, Nietzsche's exemplary political figures share the same agonistic tendencies toward imposition that Machiavelli describes in tackling *fortuna*, to discuss Nietzsche's conception of socio-political efficacy as *virtu* is by itself to miss something crucial that sets it apart from Machiavelli's conception. We will see that in Nietzsche's thought there is a necessitarian element involved in the socio-political efficacy of Nietzsche's future exemplars, the highest of which aim in the disposition of their characters at willing that their actions and the world could not be otherwise and to affirm all prior actions as necessary. Where Machiavelli's opportunistic socio-political actor imposes on a situation and if aided with the ineradicable element of luck prevails, Nietzsche's socio-political actor wills their imposition as necessary. This necessitarian quality to socio-political efficacy distances Nietzsche's conception

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<sup>101</sup> The most relevant passage is in *EH*, where Nietzsche writes "that one wants nothing to be different, not forward, not backward, not in all eternity. Not merely to bear what is necessary [ . . . ] but to love it" (*EH*, "Why I Am So Clever," 10). This passage also elaborates Nietzsche's notion of *amor fati*, his 'formula for greatness in a human being' (*ibid.*).

from that of Clausewitz's and Machiavelli's to a certain extent. This quality is what links socio-political efficacy directly into Nietzsche's ontological philosophy. Reconsidering the original issue of conforming to a model-ideal, Nietzsche's socio-political thinking along these lines straddles a peculiar line: it does not fall squarely within the traditional of dualistic thinking like Machiavelli and Clausewitz, but proceeds within a causal framework not present in Chinese philosophy.

How do we begin to understand the necessitarian and fatalistic elements of such a socio-political efficacy? As Robert C. Solomon has pointed out, Nietzsche's concept of *amor fati* does not seem to square particularly well with Leiter's causal essentialism: 'It is to the ancients, and only rarely to contemporary (nineteenth century) science, that he appeals his fatalistic thesis, from his early *Birth of Tragedy* until his final *Ecce Homo*. "Amor fati" ("love of fate") hardly makes sense as a paean to causal essentialism' (Solomon 2002, p. 69). Solomon also makes an important point about fatalism as it is construed in Nietzsche's philosophy, that 'though fate is clearly presented as necessity, it is by no means clear that it involves anything like agency or any person's (or divinity's) purpose.' (ibid.). If the world is necessarily the way it is not because of some sort of agency, and not because of classical determinism, what makes it so in Nietzsche's philosophy?

At this point, we ought to examine on what this question itself is predicated upon. Such a question points to the capacity for human beings to consider possibilities, that things could have been otherwise. Nietzsche points out the crucial problem humans encounter with temporality and the past in their inability to 'will backwards', to change what has happened in the past. This inability, coupled with the ability to consider things as otherwise, fosters a spirit of revenge: 'this alone is revenge itself: the will's unwillingness toward time and time's "it was."' (*TSZ* 'On Redemption'). Nietzsche attempts to overcome this spirit in *TSZ* by promoting a form of necessitarianism with the requirement of not only recognising that all things are necessarily so, but affirming and loving the fact that they could not be otherwise: '[a]ll 'it was' is a fragment, a riddle, a grisly accident – until the creating will says to it: 'But I will it thus! I shall will it thus! [...] That will which is the will to power must will something higher than any reconciliation' (ibid.). As such, the overhuman must love and affirm all things as they are, ultimately willing that they could not have been otherwise. This general outlook is indeed what partially characterises the

type of overhuman. There is both a form of necessitarianism and fatalism in Nietzsche's writings. The latter, fatalism, is developed through Nietzsche's writings on individual types. Amor fati in this sense, love of fate, represents the summation of the course of one's life as necessary to being who one is, and one's deliberate willing them to be so in the form of a coherent story of the self. Nietzsche emphasizes this story-based element in his later autobiography: 'My formula for human greatness is *amor fati*: that you do not want anything to be different, not forwards, not backwards, not for all eternity. Not just to tolerate necessity, still less to conceal it—all idealism is hypocrisy towards necessity—, but to *love* it' (EH 'why I am so clever'). It is the emphasis on 'human greatness' that foregrounds a sense of story, as Nietzsche himself is recounting the story of how he came to be who he is. Robert Solomon's account of fatalism in Nietzsche argues for a similar conclusion through the idea that fate and fatalism is a narrative issue: 'the notion of fate gains respectability in our modern world, not as the expression of any mysterious agents or as an inexplicable necessity but as the larger narrative in which we see our lives' (Solomon 2003, p. 191). Fate, so understood, is intimately linked to one's character. While it is compatible with determinism in the sense that we can understand one's character in terms of causality and type-facts, determinism is explanatorily insufficient for the notion of fate because it does not 'provide a certain kind of narrative in which fatalism, in contrast to determinism, begins at the end, that is, the outcome, and considers the outcome as in some sense necessary, given the nature of the person's character' (179).

Thus, Nietzsche's fatalism proper can be understood on the one hand to lie outside of the determinate/indeterminate dichotomy simply because fate is not explained solely by reference to determination: it requires a narrative to be properly explicated. I believe that this, however, is only one side of which Nietzsche's necessitarianism forms the other. What I mean by this is not simply that one's character forms part of a narrative that could be no other way, as in fatalism, but that ultimately Nietzsche's perspective of will to power encourages a view of the world in his future exemplars that is necessitarian: they will form their conception of their selves in terms of fatalism but also favour a metaphysical view of the world as necessitarian. To be fair, this account is speculative, and there is surprisingly few accounts made that engage with Nietzsche's philosophy as necessitarian. I will argue that we can extrapolate necessitarianism from the conception of will to power, along

with a psychological explanation for why humans have access to the sort of hypothetical thinking that allows them to think the past as change-able, along with the future. Beginning with the latter, there are a number of scholars who have offered reasonable explanations as to how Nietzsche understands temporality as experienced by humans. John Richardson, for example, describes the processes of ‘original time’ and ‘human time’. Original time is effectively a structural feature of an organism, more specifically the interplay of the drives composing it: ‘Life gets its original time from this logic of drives or wills. This basic time lies in the way the meaning or reason for what the drive does is dispersed into both the future and the past of the present doing. It is dispersed there partly within the drive’s own perspective, but primarily as an external fact about that perspective’ (Richardson 2007, p. 216).

We should by no means equate original time here with the role of an objective temporality: original time for an organism may have ‘mistakes’ in the sense that it sums over the complexity of a complete moment in favour of a particular highlight (as, for example, a primitive man might only be capable of recognizing a predator in a particular moment given its immediate danger). Human time, Richardson writes, is a distortion of original time in the sense that we introduce further errors into original time as byproducts of the evolution of features of consciousness such as memory, or promising (ibid. 220). Hence, the psychological explanation of our experience of time is in line with Nietzsche’s genealogy of the human as a socialized animal: ‘our time-consciousness is originally an awareness of the past, used to stall and inhibit action by the drives. Secondly it also extends forwards: we remember the rules in order to set our sights on new goals different from the objects of our drives’ (ibid. 222). These latter features form part of what can be interpreted as a dual process theory in psychology, with the former being unconscious reasoning and the latter being conscious (part of which memory, awareness of time, conscience and other psychological features might belong).

As is known, Nietzsche castigates the role of conscious reasoning as the primary motivators of human action and privileges the unconscious action of drives. I would like to suggest that the same might be said of hypothetical thinking, another feature of conscious reasoning. Hypothetical thinking is relevant here because among many things it concerns the consideration of possibilities for action in the past, present, and future. As we have seen, the spirit of revenge is fostered by the will’s desire to ‘will backwards’, to act differently to how it acted, or to desire

different results from a previous context. This is not to say that hypothetical thinking is not beneficial, of course, but the key point is that it is a function of conscious reasoning, and conscious reasoning is a product of the drives. Hypothetical thinking, the capacity to consider alternative outcomes is thus a perspectival feature rather than a feature of reality. We can see, however, that Nietzsche seems to provisionally privilege necessitarian thought, and necessitarianism can be seen to be compatible with will to power. This is because, according to the will to power doctrine, the world is composed of perspectives which themselves are expressions of force. As such, there are no hypothetical expressions of force: all force is by nature expressed. Hypothetical thinking (the perception of alternatives or possibilities), rather than reflecting some objectively true feature of reality, is instead a tool of reasoning used by the organism to extend its power (to debatable degrees when it comes to the argument over the role Nietzsche assigns to consciousness).

Lastly, a core element that makes both elements (fatalism, necessitarianism) process philosophical is that of becoming, and the will's demand for 'redemption from the flux of things and from the punishment called existence' (*TSZ* 'On Redemption'). One of the early developments in the human organism was its ability to sum over much of a particular experience or moment for the sake of necessity<sup>102</sup>. Likewise, the capacity to appreciate and understand things as remaining still rather than constantly changing induces a conception of temporality that also inspires the spirit of revenge. Both fatalistic and necessitarian features are means by which Nietzsche attempts to reconceive temporality as a process to be affirmed rather than resented. In summary, then, I have discussed the notion of socio-political efficacy in Nietzsche's philosophy through an immediate comparison with Machiavelli's understanding of *virtu*, and briefly examined some of the historical exemplars that Nietzsche cites as great men and efficacious agents. I then examined the way in which Nietzsche's understanding of efficacy differs from Machiavelli's, focusing on the idea that there is a necessitarian element to efficacy in Nietzsche's philosophy, supported by his fatalism. Nietzsche's fatalism is non-deterministic, and lends itself to the construction of the narrative of one's self. Nietzsche's necessitarian thinking,

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<sup>102</sup> Nietzsche details this especially in *OGM* II, in which he writes that forgetfulness 'is not merely a *vis interia*, as superficial people think. Is it much rather an active capability to repress, something positive in the strongest sense, to which we can ascribe the fact that while we are digesting what we alone live through and experience and absorb into ourselves (we could call the process mental ingestion, we are conscious of what is going on as little as we are with the entire thousandfold process which our bodily nourishment goes through (so-called physical ingestion'.

however, emerges in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in which the capacity to affirm that everything could not be otherwise is linked to an underlying view of the world as process, a continual flux.

Fatalism and fate, underlined by process thinking, are thus seen to play a crucial role in socio-political efficacy in Nietzsche's thought. We may be able to find the clearest point of comparison in ancient Chinese philosophy in the *Zhuangzi*, where fate is understood as inevitable change. Lisa Raphals has previously explored this theme in the text, pointing out that 'Zhuangzi [...] describes the scope of free will not as happenstance (*jie*) but as the inevitability of change in the world (*bian hua*) and the ability of sagacious individuals to respond to it' (Raphals 2012, p. 214). Although it is not present without other passages that conflict with its outlook, the *Zhuangzi* specifies at length the manner in which exemplary characters achieve a modicum of understanding of this inevitable change. These are the 'daimonic' characters (*shen ren*). The *shen ren* are examples in the *Zhuangzi* of individuals who have attained a consummate mastery of a particular skill, such as Cook Ding (Graham, 63) or the swimmer Lu-liang (Graham 1981, p. 136). We have already seen that for Nietzsche and Machiavelli, consummate socio-political action is understood through the conceptual framework behind *virtu*. For the ancient Daoists, the practical intuition behind efficacy is expressed through *wu-wei*, or efficacious non-action, ascribing strategies that advocate withdrawal from conscious political action and imposition. *Wu-wei* is a notion significantly developed in the *Zhuangzi*. *Wu-wei* shares the same fundamental ontological insight as *shi* in that it is a practice based on allowing a process within the underlying totality of processes (*Dao*) to unfold in its suchness (*ziran*). The major development of *wu-wei* in the *Zhuangzi*, however, is the emphasis on necessary practices of conceptual negation as the ground of efficacious action, often ones that are somatic. Meditative practices such as 'fasting of the heart-mind' are employed, de-emphasizing social and conceptual consciousness and the ego self, thereby hoping to make the practitioner themselves as a socio-political agent more processual and adaptive by being more spontaneous. The practitioner transitions from a state of (overly) conscious, technical or instrumental language or activity (which itself requires a high degree of skill mastery) to a state where one acts in the form of undifferentiated process. Paired with the prerequisite high degree of skill mastery demonstrated in 'knack' examples



like Cook Ding we see a very specialised somatic practice that is grounded in a processual view of the world. To summarize, then, *wu-wei* offers, through comparison, an alternate account of how socio-political efficacy might be envisioned within a comparative process ontology: there is no idealized model set out in advance in ancient Chinese accounts of efficacy, what is instead emphasized is the continued adoption of a renewable and open-ended disposition, which is exemplified in a number of ways in thought: whether it be in the very direct sense of simply maintaining the high ground in warfare, or the more abstract sense of breaking down, through *wu-wei*, the imposed, conscious social distinctions which guide everyday thought.

If the conception of efficacy discussed above escapes the problems apparent with a determinate/indeterminate model, then it may be subject to another problem. Although ancient Chinese philosophy is by no means metaphysical in the traditional European sense, it is faced with certain methodological concerns that some authors have nonetheless deemed metaphysical. In considering the transition in *wu-wei* from practiced, instrumentally-motivated action to self-so action more in line with the undifferentiated totality of processes (*Dao*), Eske Møllgaard notes that '[h]ow the real can become an object for practical manipulation and strategic action is, of course, very hard to explain, and in trying to do so the Chinese thinkers get entangled in a whole metaphysics of action' (Møllgaard 2007, p. 41). Along this line of thought, if my practice mimics the undifferentiated totality, then it must itself be undifferentiated: it should not have any conscious goals or estimations. Evidently, however, such actions do. If this is the case then the relationship between conscious, directed activity and efficacious, non-coercive action seems to be paradoxical. The efficacious agent synchronises his intentional action with the natural unfolding of things, his action then becomes itself a natural, undifferentiated spontaneous unfolding. In doing so, the noncoercively desired results of such efficacy will naturally unfold. Møllgaard argues that it is unclear 'how [...] *a particular selfish wish* (that of the sage, the ruler, or the general), as an injunction, [can] infiltrate the order of things to the extent that it becomes pervasive, undetectable, and inevitably fulfilled [...] Chinese thought has to posit an act before actuality – a truly metaphysical figure of thought.' (ibid. 41).

If intentional action is reformulated through *wu-wei* as non-coerced, efficacious action in undifferentiated process then 'how can action take place if nothing is yet actualized? [...] How can action, even if it is understood as response (*ying*) and transformation (*hua*), take place at all if there is no thing to respond to and no thing to transform?' (ibid. 42). In submerging my intentional activity in the ceaseless flow of efficacy, I can no longer be said to have had an intentional activity in the first place, as the flow has neither beginning nor end. This also has the consequence of threatening to undermine the usefulness of *wu-wei* practice by undermining the distinction between conscious, instrumental activity versus spontaneous, *wu-wei* behaviour. Hence, from the perspective of undifferentiated totality, the process of (for example) climate change is ultimately as spontaneous as the state of an environment that hasn't been affected by humans, it's simply a different form of process. This is made possible, again, because what starts as a conscious, instrumental practice is transformed through *wu-wei* into a spontaneous, self-so process. Møllgaard thinks that, because of the possibility for positing instrumental action at the very basis of process, and therefore legitimizing in practical terms the technical manipulation and perhaps abuse of the world, it is necessary for Zhuangzi to maintain 'a split in the process of the real and shows that spontaneous self-emerging life is not available for technopolitical manipulation' (ibid. 42). The problem that emerges is that either the transition from instrumentality to spontaneity is transcendental (it is not available to the understanding for instrumentalization), or we are forced to conflate the instrumental with the spontaneous, which results in the possibility for harmful manipulation through what many would term the 'un-natural' or 'techno-political'.

As we have seen, this represents a general paradigmatic issue with theorizing process ontology in this way: we must formulate new responses to old dichotomies. The old dichotomy of appearance and reality, as discussed earlier, cannot be discussed in terms of a correspondence model of reality nor by appeal to any transcendental principle (such as the atomic self, as with the western misreading of the butterfly dream). The same problem appears to manifest itself here: we cannot draw on a transcendental principle to distinguish between a process mastered through *wu-wei* that is deemed harmful versus one deemed beneficial. As described, I have attempted to elucidate two responses to this issue: a 'therapeutic' response, as

described by reference to commentaries on the butterfly dream, in which the problem is recognized as unintelligible. There is fundamentally no problem because from the perspective of the totality there is no real distinction between harmful and benevolent processes. There is also the ‘agonistic’ response I have described from Nietzsche’s philosophy, wherein differentiation is achieved by evaluating the degree of power involved. Regarding Møllgaard’s posed problem, the same methodology may be posited to form a response. The ‘therapeutic’ approach of the *Zhuangzi* would appear to lead us in the direction of claiming that ultimately, from the point of view of the sage, there is only efficacious activity. Nonetheless, we might still say that those who act consciously are still acting efficaciously to a certain extent (when viewed holistically, from the perspective of *Dao*), but perhaps not as much as those who do so having mastered the notion of efficacious non-action, *wu-wei*. Thus, the difference would then lie in the degree of mastery: it seems reasonable to suggest that mastery of *wu-wei* in some respect discourages practices that are artificial or highly conscious. To be a consummate telecommunications marketer drawing on *wu-wei* may be inherently more difficult given that the role encourages sedimented thinking, whereas the knock stories in the *Zhuangzi* describe butchers and swimmers where the focus is on a relatively simple activity. If we understand the ‘therapeutic’ approach in this way it can be likened to the Nietzschean stance on differentiating processes described in the chapter on appearance and reality: we differentiate intentional activity from spontaneous non-action on the basis of the degree of power it entails.

#### **5.4 Socio-Political Praxis in Comparative Process Ontology – Emerging Problems: The Feminine as inadequacy in Comparative Process Ontology**

As philosophical worldviews concerning the nature of the world, both the *Daodejing* and Nietzsche's early dionysian philosophy, coupled with his later perspectival writings, present remarkably similar views in several key respects. Firstly, both take continuous change or dynamism as the basic condition of the world, and consequently consider the world not in terms of substances or things, but as forces or processes. Likewise, both stress the importance of an interdependence of contrasting perspectives in constituting the coherence of the world. In constructing a tenable philosophical worldview or ontology, a general ideal is that it should be able

to overcome (which does not mean simply to deny) one's particular anthropocentric viewpoint, and any views of the world narrowly constituted only by one's race, status, ideology or gender. Both the *Daodejing* and the Nietzsche's early Dionysian and later perspectival philosophy aim to uphold this ideal, and yet when drawn into into discussion involving the socio-political sphere, are lacking in some respects. This can clearly be seen in the treatment of the concept of the feminine. In this section, while I attempt to show that the primacy of change at the basis of either philosophies at least furnishes a ground on which both concepts of the feminine and masculine can be constructed on equitable terms, their actual treatments fall short by collapsing from a holistic view into a contextualized view. In Chinese philosophy this was the philosopher Dong Zhongshu's appropriation of the concept of the feminine for the process of state legitimization, while I focus on Nietzsche's pre-occupation with the social progress of women in *Beyond Good and Evil*. There is, of course, a significant distinction in Nietzsche's philosophy between femininity and the social movement of feminism. My claim is that Nietzsche sometimes risks conflating the two, in *EH* for example ('Why I Write Such Good Books' § 5), where Nietzsche develops his claim that he is the 'foremost psychologist of the eternal feminine' by stating that 'The emancipated [women] are basically the anarchists in the world of the "eternal feminine", the ones who turned out badly, whose nethermost instinct is for revenge'. We can see this also in *BGE* 238, where ~~where~~ Nietzsche writes about the fundamental antagonism between men and women, such that 'must always think about woman as Orientals do: he must conceive of woman as a possession, as property that can be locked, as something predestined for service and achieving her perfection in that'. What is particularly interesting in this instance is that in order to reinforce his point on this matter, Nietzsche cites 'the tremendous reason of Asia' and the manner in which 'as their culture increased along with the range of their powers, they also gradually became more severe'. We will see that this occurs within the relevant period of Chinese philosophy due to an appropriation of underlying ontological principles, potentially undermining the flexibility of those principles. If so, this would make it difficult to untangle some of Nietzsche's holistic views on femininity generally from those views he has on feminism in modernity<sup>103</sup>,

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<sup>103</sup> To be clear, there are texts in which Nietzsche conveys a markedly different and clearer view of the division between the feminine and feminism, as in *TSZ*. The issue is not whether Nietzsche

which in turn may serve to undermine the holistic principles at work in the underlying process ontology. This, however, is one of the great advantages of a process ontology, it renders qualities like masculine and feminine in a fluid, dynamic and complementary manner, and so it may be important to evaluate the socio-political uses of these terms to ascertain whether that dynamism is undermined.

If it is true that both philosophies establish a holistic perspective of process from which to evaluate socio-political events, why was it that a problematic relation to the feminine nonetheless developed out of both philosophies? Answering this, I hope to show that the open ground in either philosophy is undermined through the privileging of one difference over another in the service of immediate socio-political ends: that of political unity in the Chinese empire, and that of the critique of modernity in Nietzsche's later critical philosophy. As previously discussed, Daoist philosophy of the Warring States period and the texts covered in this work draw on a general philosophical world-view of change. Change is here understood in terms of a totality of configurations of force. Force itself in Chinese philosophy can be understood as *qi* or vital energy. Chinese cosmology distinguishes between heaven-and-earth (*tiandi*) on this basis: heaven, the sum total of processes of the world, is constituted by energy which is 'free-flowing' and dissipated (similar to the older notion of the great breath in Chinese cosmology). One means of concretely understanding this process is to consider Earth as the totality of *qi* energy in its condensed forms, what we immediately find presented to us as things and matter, conventionally speaking. In either case the nature of these processes is such that any given forms are only temporal, always changing, and only what they currently are by comparison to what has come before and what will come afterwards. As such, these continuously changing configurations of energy seamlessly shift into different forms, and can therefore be said, somewhat like Heraclitus's doctrine of co-present opposites, to be simultaneously both opposite and complementary. The perpetual functioning of these configurations is what ancient Chinese philosophy refers to as harmony (*he*), a timely complementarity between the polarities of *qi*.

The two major practical distinctions made of these processes are known as *yin* and *yang* in Chinese philosophy. Although they have a family resemblance of

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conflates feminism with femininity, it is whether his political writings about men and women in texts like *BGE* and *EH* threaten to undermine the distinction.

meanings throughout Chinese history, we can briefly summarise them as two polarities, instantiating various contrasts like hardness and softness, persistence and receptivity, and so forth. These polarities are fundamentally both cosmological and aesthetic, and come to be explicitly linked to the masculine and feminine. An important point is that these principles and their instantiations are not immutable: they imply each other through mutual dependence and give way to each other through mutual generation.

Their instantiation in the *Yijing*, an early major Chinese cosmological text, provides an adequate elaboration of this point. The *Yijing* draws on the *yin-yang* principles in order to interpret phenomena and dictate efficacious action. *Yin* and *yang* are organized into thematic structured groups to be interpreted, and proper action is determined according to whether a principle is organized in a pattern of ascendancy or decline: one thus determines one's course of action according to whether a principle is arising or declining. The principles themselves, however, have no superiority or inferiority apart from their contingent place in the structure. Based on this underlying grasp of process, the later philosophical text of the *Daodejing* advocates an efficacy of political rulership based on feminine principles, mobilised against the tumultuous masculine obstinacy of rulers in the Warring States period. The *Daodejing* emphasizes a structural complementarity of both masculine and feminine, but accords primacy of action in the political sphere with the feminine. The ruler, for example, must draw on the feminine aspects, derived from the cosmological tradition, of a 'low' innocuous position and must privilege stillness over imposed action. As Katrin Froese writes, 'Rather than extolling the masculine virtues of aggression, assertiveness, and strength, the [Daodejing] venerates receptivity, openness, and weakness—which are commonly associated with women' (2006, p. 207). It's not that a set of inherently superior principles are being advocated in the *Daodejing* over inferior ones, as should be clear from the preceding cosmology. If there are sentiments of superiority and inferiority in the *Daodejing* they most likely reside with the linking of the feminine to the totality of *Dao* in the *Daodejing*, an overarching principle above and beyond heaven-and-earth that has an inherent generative capacity. By itself, however, such a generative primacy is not taken as a dominant principle, only as one that guides efficacy. Furthermore, the Daoist understanding of a consummate individual or sage-king is ultimately one whose self-

cultivation is such that they precede the masculine-feminine distinction altogether. In the *Daodejing*, such a disposition represents the maximum of *qi* energy<sup>104</sup>.

Consummate efficacy in the sage-ruler therefore requires an open-ended state of both masculinity and femininity, where one can know or maintain either according to the circumstances. Most importantly, this is possible because both masculinity and femininity in ancient Chinese cosmology are themselves open-ended and reversible states: by adopting a disposition prior to either state the Daoist sage is in a position to flow effortlessly between either, according to the circumstances.

If *yin* and *yang* portray such an open-ended ground, as I've tried to show, why is it that there was a historical favouring of the masculine and a denigration of the feminine throughout later Chinese philosophy? Robin Wang argues that the divergent notion that *yin* and *yang* are in opposition and in a relation of inferiority or superiority is a later development that emerges most pointedly in the work of Dong Zhongshu, an early scholar famous for his integration of Confucian philosophy (and *yin-yang* cosmology) with the Chinese state during the Han Dynasty (206BC – 220AD). As Wang points out, Dong's aim of integrating these complementary aspects with the political system led to the problematic distinctions between *yin* and *yang* that are often wholesale misattributed to a general understanding of *yin-yang*. These were derived from 'a social need for a unity of ideology that would serve the authority of the emperor' (Wang 2005, p. 216). Dong imposed overtly artificial, political and contextually-motivated distinctions in order to achieve this end, with *yang* becoming an invariantly dominant principle. Following from this principle, the gender roles of emperor and father were then maintained as dominant over the feminine roles of mother and wife. The imposition of these rigid and stultifying distinctions suggests an ideological shortcoming on the part of the political system. Rather than a dynamic and adaptive system ordering itself through harmonious cultivation or efficacious non-action, as both earlier Confucianism and Daoism aimed for in different ways, unity and stability was achieved through the contrivance of an immediate, static framework. Such an approach resembles the authoritarian philosophical methodology of Legalism, with which the first Chinese empire was achieved under the Qin dynasty, a dynasty that was sustained for a mere 15 years.

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<sup>104</sup> Cf. Chapter 55

Where Chinese cosmology conceives of the masculine and feminine as a harmonious complementarity, Nietzsche perpetually stresses the conflict and opposition of these forces in his writings. I will now briefly consider how the feminine figures into Nietzsche's earlier conception of a Dionysian world-will, contrasted with the later role the feminine plays in the critical, evaluational philosophy of will to power in Nietzsche's later work. There are aspects of Nietzsche's early understanding of a Dionysian world-will in *The Birth of Tragedy* that lend themselves toward a more open-ended treatment of the feminine, similar to what we have seen in Chinese cosmology and the *Daodejing*, emphasis on opposition aside. The constant struggle of feminine and masculine is especially reflected in Nietzsche's pairing of the Apollonian and Dionysian aesthetic drives. This pairing has often been taken to be an opposed duality, with Apollo constituting the formal, masculine portion, while Dionysian sensuality and intoxication bearing resemblance to the feminine. In fact, it may be more incisive to consider this distinction as a polarity rather than a strict duality. Other mythological interpretations that skew a dualistic relation are possible. For example, the phallic is implicated in the nature of Dionysus, on the one hand, while the Dionysian cult was claimed to be female, on the other. This suggests an ambiguous relation between both masculine and feminine. More directly, one can also argue that no strictly atomic masculine or feminine aspect in this so-called duality can be reached. Picart writes that 'both entities appear to possess a reproductive duality- possessing both "masculine" (excitatory) and "feminine" (birthing) capacities within themselves, and yet require each other in order to effect birthing' (1999, p. 43). The interpenetration between both aspects here is remarkably consonant with the *yin-yang* relation in Chinese cosmology. Such an understanding of the Apollonian/Dionysian divide stands closer to the Chinese early cosmological understanding of *yin-yang*. Again, as with the *Daodejing*, if there is any resemblance of primacy it stands with the feminine, generative capacity of the Dionysian, out of which the individual is derived. Of course, this relation is more-so problematised in Nietzsche's case than in the *Daodejing*, due to the terror of existence that Nietzsche initially associates with the Dionysian will, following in Schopenhauer's footsteps. Aside from these problematic points, the upshot in Nietzsche's early Dionysian philosophy is that it is crucial that a dynamic, balanced proportion between these two productive forces is



present in the individual, that the individual be able to draw on both polarities in order to effect a healthy psyche.

The relational, polarising aspects of this understanding are well preserved in Nietzsche's later perspectival observations. Once Nietzsche has overcome his early Schopenhaurian and Kantian metaphysical difficulties concerning a thing-in-itself and the real/apparent distinction, he eventually develops the insight of the world as a web of interrelated perspectives behind which no noumenon or thing-in-itself resides. Such a view, coupled with Nietzsche's emphasis on values as polarities rather than absolutes, establishes an open-ended ground for the changeability and reversibility of masculine and feminine aspects that emerge from undifferentiated flux. The *yin-yang* evaluations in Daoism and Chinese cosmology are, to debatable degrees, reconcilable with this basic understanding of flux because of the high degree of 'open-endedness' and reversibility posited of those aspects: the aspects themselves border on the undifferentiated.

However, the holism of power-perspectivism in Nietzsche's philosophy, described in previous chapters, can be seen to be at odds with particular evaluative aspects of his own will to power perspective because they strongly differentiate. Nietzsche's will to power perspective is taken as the grandest philosophical and explanatory perspective yet, given its basis in perspectivism, and yet the evaluations Nietzsche makes within that perspective threaten to undermine that basis. We can directly see this conflict between his perspectival and evaluative philosophy crystallised like nowhere else in the 'the most abysmal antagonism and the necessity of an eternally hostile tension' (*BGE* 238) between the feminine and masculine. Having examined the structural workings of process philosophy throughout the present work, it would appear that such a remark turns against the idea that qualities like feminine and masculine in a process-based ontology are complementary rather antagonistic. Nietzsche's critical use of both masculine and feminine in his later works (especially *BGE*) to denounce what he sees as the negative social developments of modernity is linked to a philosophical project of the future that has no analogue in Daoism. For example, he draws on a negative instantiation of the feminine in his condemnation of the 'effeminate taste of a democratic century' (*BGE* 134), and he criticises the movement towards the emancipation of women in equally negative terms as an 'almost masculine stupidity' (*BGE* 239), while the move away

from traditional gender roles is criticised as a 'defeminization' (ibid.). In another aphorism, he posits scholarly inclination in women as an indication of something wrong with their sexuality (*BGE* 144). Using the feminine and masculine in this way to critique modernity, Nietzsche undermines the 'open-endedness' and transformability of either aspect by binding them within established stereotypes of the masculine and feminine, and by using traditional gender roles in his criticism of the feminist movement. Quite apart from the debate about Nietzsche's misogyny and his criticism of the feminist movement, it seems to me that a more basic complaint that can be levelled here is the unsustainability of such a strategy. The features of masculinity and femininity that Nietzsche posits in these criticisms are too ideologically contingent and artificial to be considered inherent to the earlier masculine/feminine polarity his work indicates. Drawing on the masculine and feminine as socio-political tools with which to critique the decadence of modernity, Nietzsche effaces the open ground of his earlier Dionysian philosophy and the holism of his perspectivism. The earlier oppositional interdependence and interpenetration of masculine and feminine facilitated the equitable possibility, for example, of there being women who are more active and life-affirming in their disposition than men. Nietzsche's later socio-political philosophy, however, was increasingly aware of its own contingency, given the unpopularity of Nietzsche's books. Particularly in *BGE*, we can see that Nietzsche desires on the one hand to engage with his current age, yet also to gesture towards a future philosophical age he hopes will come about. His critical pre-occupation with the present may have prompted Nietzsche to rely more and more on socio-politically contingent features of the times as means of critiquing modernity (with the political movements of the times, for example), thereby losing sight of the original ontological fluidity of the concepts of masculine and feminine being used.

This points to a broad methodological concern with comparative process ontology as I have outlined it. In their criticism of the departure of Confucianism from a gender equity inherent in both yin and yang, Wang and Kelly claim that 'a system that countenances difference is liable to come to value one of the differences above the others' (2004, p. 416). It is unavoidable that the systems of human life must countenance difference in order for human life to function and flourish. That is

to say, we must depart at some point from the holism of perspectivism or cosmology and differentiate in order to be efficacious. In this respect neither Nietzsche nor Daoism, nor Chinese cosmology in general, does away with the masculine-feminine distinction altogether (which would be purely undifferentiated), nor however do they hesitate to attribute concrete, problematic features to that distinction, however all-too timely those features may be. Given this fundamental point, it is pivotal that the maintenance and development of difference in human life within socio-political thinking does not degenerate in two important respects that Kelly and Wang highlight: 'the arbitrary elevation of differences, and unrestrained power' (ibid.). From the socio-political perspective of comparative process ontology, these two elements should guide the manner in which one necessarily discriminates a process. In both Nietzsche's later critical philosophy and Dong Zhongshu's *yin-yang* systemisation, an equitable ground for the feminine is effaced due to the elevation of one difference over the other and the subsequent imposition of artificial, contingent and unadaptive differentiations. This elevation in either case occurred due to an ideological motivation of the immediate time. In an unpublished note, Nietzsche surmises that '[t]he greater the impulse toward unity, the more firmly one may conclude that weakness is present' (WTP 655). We might therefore conclude that Chinese philosophy's misappropriation of the feminine with Dong Zhongshu's *yin-yang* systemisation was due to a contingent need for unity in the state. In Nietzsche's case, we might surmise that his break with a more holistic conception of the feminine was due to his increasing concern with the contingent political situation of modernity as an obstacle for his future philosophy. If we return to the earlier holistic philosophy, the grander interpretations in either case, however, I think we are presented with a philosophical ground for both masculine and feminine that is exceptionally dynamic and adaptable, balanced and accommodating.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to lay the ground for the development of comparative process thought, more specifically understood as comparative process ontology. I began this project by speculating some foundational points for elaborating a process world-view in Nietzsche and ancient Chinese philosophy. The central difficulty in enunciating a conception of process or becoming from a Western

perspective such as Nietzsche's is the struggle to achieve distance from the substance-metaphysical tradition. We have had to contend with the noumenal/phenomenal distinction as a barrier to discussing process (the question of whether we can conceive of a becoming-in-itself, or whether becoming is immanent), and with a language and vocabulary that is couched in substance terminology. Commentators such as Cox and Richardson provide an important response to these issues but they are likewise hindered by the above issues. In the hopes of developing a further solution I have drawn on the resources of process philosophy (in terms of an events-based vocabulary) along with those of Chinese philosophy. Ancient Chinese philosophy, particularly the correlative cosmology of the *Yijing* gives us an alternative vocabulary based on a view of the world as a totality of cyclical processes, thus presenting the possibility of considering becoming without the same metaphysical and linguistic issues we find in the Western tradition.

Having established some fundamental features of a comparative ontology or cosmology of change, I elaborated the ways in which epistemology and evaluation are reconsidered in their continuity with this ontology. This required significant interpretation on the part of Nietzsche's philosophy, and I advanced arguments for considering his perspectivism as ontological and equivalent with becoming or process, while his will to power doctrine is an evaluative perspective among other perspectives. I attempted to address the problem of how Nietzsche can claim that there is a hierarchy of perspectives (in which he favours his type of perspective) by discussing the pervasiveness of different perspectives. That is to say, the more pervasive a perspective is, the further up the order of rank of perspectives it lies. Hierarchy is not simply dependent on any particular perspective, it is a feature that emerges from the interplay of different perspectives. This establishes the manner in which epistemology and evaluation is continuous with an underlying process ontology in Nietzsche's philosophy. In order to further elaborate how we might differently conceive of this relation between ontology and evaluation, I considered the manner in which Chinese cosmology directly influences political thought, specifically the Chinese political ideal of All-Under-Heaven. I likewise considered a comparative account of how significant social and geographical differences influence the ways in which Greek and Chinese fundamental world-views developed.

Having sufficiently established an ontological or cosmological framework for how to proceed, I began to examine core issues for comparative process thought and ontology. The first necessary step in expanding upon how the insights of such a framework can be applied was to examine the issue of language. Language poses an essential element in any similar account of a comparative process ontology because it is the means by which such an ontology is elaborated, and poses a number of metaphysical questions concerning humans and their relation to the world. I argued that we can find the resources within Nietzsche's later philosophy (specifically the implications of his will to power doctrine), for a renewed conception of language as expression of force. Such an approach diminishes the importance of traditional dichotomies between language and world that have shaped our present conception of language. The different pre-occupations of ancient Chinese philosophy, as discussed in my treatment of the School of Names and the notion of disputation (and the mereology influencing Chinese philosophical accounts of language in turn) reflects a similar opportunity to consider language outside the frame of traditional metaphysical questions.

The last two chapters focused on applying and developing comparative process ontology in case studies. In the first case study I considered a classical philosophical problem in the West: appearance and reality, elaborated through Robert Nozick's 'experience machine' experiment. This presented an important issue for comparative process thought because the ontology described in previous chapters undermines the prospect of a hard distinction between appearance and reality, and so the question was raised as to how one can legitimately distinguish between relevant processes in such cases. I delineated a hypothetical response in Nietzsche's philosophy, considering how the will to power doctrine and power-perspectivism furnishes the capacity to distinguish between appearance and reality on the basis of degrees of power. This was contrasted with the 'butterfly dream' passage in the *Zhuangzi*, which appears to offer the resources for a 'therapeutic' response to the issue. Instead of attempting to elaborate a distinction, the *Zhuangzi* emphasises a practical, situational efficacy that does not distinguish in such a way. I then explored the second case study, which is a broad survey of technological, political and economic issues understood through comparative process thinking. There I suggested a potential response drawn from Nietzsche's philosophy on the issue of

technology and the debate of its future use. I suggested that Nietzsche's philosophy leads us towards a power-pragmatic understanding of the benefits and detriments of technology such as genetic engineering, where the will behind the technology must be evaluated. This pragmatism is also reflected in the sort of political institutions Nietzsche frames for the state: he favours dynamic, open-ended institutions as a means of resisting society's tendency towards herd stagnation, which is based on his dynamic view of the world. He also suggests reducing the influence of the state in favour of private institutions for this reason. Compared to such an account, I examined the social and political aims of the Chinese Legalists. The legalists, based on a view of the world as cyclical processes, likewise envision adaptive and responsive reforms for changing political climates, and like Daoists promote minimal interference of the governing ruler. I argued that the comparison reveals striking similarities and contrasts for comparative process thought.

The final chapter delved further into socio-political issues by attempting to isolate a comparative conception of socio-political efficacy: what is it that makes for an effective social and political agent? I began by considering a traditional dichotomy of practice and ideal model, as described by François Jullien, in relation to Carl Von Clausewitz's strategy. This dichotomy, as was argued, emphasizes another dichotomy of determinism/indeterminism with regard to efficacious action. This was seen in the analysis of Machiavelli's *virtu*, in which the upshot of effective political action, because it falls short of an ideal model, must involve some degree of luck or unaccountability. This was developed in terms of Nietzsche's philosophy, where I distinguished between his fatalism and his necessitarianism in order to draw out significant differences with Machiavelli's *virtu*. These differences are important because they share a similar process-based standpoint seen in ancient Chinese writing on efficacy. I pointed out that the Chinese notion of efficacy (*shi*) does not set out a model in advance, and concerns itself with situational disposition. This feeds into an understanding of fate, as seen in the *Zhuangzi* and its 'knack stories'. As part of this analysis, I also raised some potential issues with conceiving effective socio-political action. These are again related to the problem comparative process ontology faces in requiring a new framework through which to understand conventional distinctions. I pursued these problems further in the last section, where I took as my focus the issue of the feminine as conceived in Nietzsche's philosophy

and the Han philosopher Dong Zhongshu's state philosophy. I pointed out the failings in conception of the feminine with both philosophies, particularly in relation to the process thought underlying their positions. I speculated on the reasons for these failings and how they might be addressed, by maintaining a greater holism that process ontology provides instead of producing overly-artificial distinctions through which to pursue socio-political ends. This raised a question for further consideration: how and to what extent should differentiations be introduced from a comparative process ontology into a socio-political praxis? This is an important question, because such differentiations are necessary for socio-political functioning. To finally conclude, I hope to have established a ground on which to further pursue the prospect of a comparative process framework of thought, from the basic level of ontology continuously to the level of practice and implementation. As established in the introduction, such an account is by no means comprehensive: further contrasts and comparisons with other process thinkers are required, a further development of these themes are required on the Chinese side of comparison, and further responses are required for the socio-political questions so far raised. In addition, I hope to have provided an account which prospectively establishes Nietzsche as a philosopher who deserves to be considered a significant thinker of process philosophy. Although his published writings do not extensively deal with the issue of change, I hope to have shown that a world-view of change and dynamism significantly influence the direction of some of his most crucial philosophical ideas, those of perspectivism and will to power.

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