

Nietzsche and Moral Inquiry: Posing the  
Question of the Value of our Moral Values

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Philosophy

by

Adam Leach  
Department of Philosophy  
University of Essex

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## Summary

The continued presence and importance of Christian moral values in our daily lives, coupled with the fact that faith in Christianity is in continual decline, raises the question as to why having lost faith in Christianity, we have also not lost faith in our Christian moral values. This question is also indicative of a more pressing phenomenon: not only have we maintained our faith in Christian values, we fail to see that the widespread collapse of Christianity should affect this faith.

To tackle this latter phenomenon, I claim, we have to pose the Nietzschean question of *the value of our moral values*, so as to see that *this* value can be a possible object of questioning.

In chapter one, I consider different approaches found in the history of moral philosophy that look like potential candidates for this task. I argue that, ultimately, the task requires simultaneously taking our familiarity with Christian moral values as both *sui generis* and a questionable phenomenon. In chapter two, I articulate in detail the *sui generis* nature of this familiarity with moral values, in terms of the phenomena of habituation and sedimentation. In chapter three, I consider the possibility of estrangement that is built into our familiarity with moral values, by focusing on the role of cognition. I demonstrate how cognition, in the form of self-consciousness, can disrupt the sedimented, habituated nature of our moral values through a form of ironic disruption. In chapter four, I develop this account by considering the possibility of an appeal to an alternative moral outlook. To do so, I draw upon the structural isomorphism that is present between the process of estrangement and a rite of passage.



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# Abbreviations and Translations

- A     *The Anti-Christ*, in *The Portable Nietzsche* trans. and ed. W. Kaufmann (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976)
- BGE   *Beyond Good and Evil*, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche* trans. and ed. W. Kaufmann (Random House, Modern Library Edition, 1992)
- CW    *The Case of Wagner*, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche* trans. and ed. W. Kaufmann (Random House, Modern Library Edition, 1992)
- D     *Daybreak*, ed. Maudemarie Clark and Brian Leiter, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997)
- EH    *Ecce Homo*, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche* trans. and ed. W. Kaufmann (Random House, Modern Library Edition, 1992)
- GM    *On the Genealogy of Morals*, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche* trans. and ed. W. Kaufmann (Random House, Modern Library Edition, 1992)
- GS    *The Gay Science*, trans. W. Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974)
- HH    *Human, All Too Human*, trans. M. Faber and S. Lehmann (Penguin, 1984)
- TI    *Twilight of the Idols*, in *The Portable Nietzsche* trans. and ed. W. Kaufmann (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976)
- UM    *Untimely Meditations*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983)
- WP    *The Will to Power*, ed. Walter Kaufmann, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968)
- Z     *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969)

Original German text used for translations: Nietzsche, F. W., *Werke III* ed. Schlechta, K. (Ullstein, 1981)



# Introduction

This thesis analyses the possibility of posing the question of the value of our moral values. This task is motivated by the need to face up to the implications of the loss of the Christian foundations of these values, due to a loss of faith in the Christian religion. The thesis will not consider the nature of this loss itself, however, nor the nature of the crisis that it potentially gives rise to. Instead, the specific focus will lie on how the question of the value of our moral values can be adequately posed such that *this* value comes to be seen as a questionable phenomenon.

I take it as evident and uncontroversial that Christianity over the past few hundred years has been, and still is, declining across Europe<sup>1</sup> both in terms of participation in Christian practices, such as attending church, as well as in how Europeans identify themselves and their faith.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>By ‘Europe’ I simply mean to designate the continent spanning from countries typically thought of as being in Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Scandinavia, the Mediterranean, and the Baltic Peninsula.

<sup>2</sup>Although participation and identification can vary greatly, I agree with Nienke Moor who argues for the following: “Recent statistics for the *Atlas of European Values* show that Europe as a continent is secular, but religious. Many people do not feel affiliated with a church, but consider themselves to be religious. Although the percentage of atheists has increased through time, many Europeans still believe in a higher power and feel some connection with religious tradition. Although a new tradition within the sociology of religion now focuses on the personal beliefs of people, instead of church membership and church attendance, we reason that it is still important to look at the latter. Church attendance, after all, is strongly related to the social significance of religion. If people no longer share their beliefs by going to church, religious beliefs are likely to become more diverse and personalized. From this perspective, intergenerational transmission of a ‘shared faith’ is made more difficult. Church attendance rates can therefore be considered an indicator of the religious vitality that is present within societies.” See Arts and Halman 2013, 213. Regarding Church membership, we can consider some statistics published by Brierley Consultancy in their study “UK Church Statistics No 2 2010-2020.” UK Church membership has declined from 10.6 million in 1930 to 5.5 Million in 2010, or as a percentage of the population, from about 30% to 11.2%. By 2013, this had declined further to 5.4 million (10.3%). If current trends continue, the projection is that membership will fall to 8.4% of the

At the same time, although the majority of us are no longer practising Christians, and do not identify ourselves as Christian, we still perceive the world through the lens of many Christian values. To name but a few, we find the following values widely prevalent in European-wide customs and laws: equality in the eyes of God and the law, modesty, pity, compassion, charity, humility, altruism, and to love one's neighbour.<sup>3</sup> I do not mean to claim here that these values only belong to Christianity, or that they are exhaustive of the moral values found in Europe. Rather, my point is that many fundamental values in contemporary Europe have come to us from Christianity, and, moreover, they remain essential to our way of living, notwithstanding a loss of faith in the religion.

Now, an inevitable question arises here why having lost faith in Christianity, we have also not lost our faith in these Christian, moral values. For the most part, we no longer engage in formal Christian practices, and no longer think of ourselves as Christian, and, yet, we engage in acts of charity, compassion, humility, etc., without, so to speak, as much as a second thought. We readily question the value of going to church on a Sunday, for example, but not the value of, say, compassion or pity. This is not to say that we do not, on occasion, question the value of values such as compassion and pity at particular times in particular situations, but that we do not tend to question in a probing manner their value and fundamental role in our lives.

While in this thesis I will attempt to answer this question as to why our faith in these moral values continues notwithstanding the widespread collapse in Christianity, it is rather indicative of a more pressing phenomenon: not only have we maintained our faith in Christian values, we are unable to even see that the collapse of Christianity should affect this faith. In other words, unlike, say, the custom of attending church, we do not see our moral values as objects of possible

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population by 2025.

<sup>3</sup>The prevalence is, of course, not necessarily uniform across all European countries. See Halman, Sieben, and van Zundert 2011 for a collection of survey results concerning European values from 1980s to the turn of this century.

questioning in the same manner. We do not see that the value of our Christian moral values *could* be a questionable phenomenon. On a day-to-day basis, this value simply does not show up to us in this way.

Imagine, for a moment, if one were to suggest that our moral values are in fact in a serious crisis because they have lost their Christian foundations that justify their right to existence, we might readily imagine the response: the loss of such foundations seems to have no evident bearing on our faith in moral values; indeed, these values appear to function just fine in our largely secular society. Such a response suggests that the crisis itself is not experienced. However, since our moral values have lost their Christian foundations, and, hence, also their justification for their existence, the possibility that our moral values *could be otherwise* comes to the fore. Moreover, a more troublesome question to engage with also appears: what if our moral values were, in fact, *not* good for us, but, instead, even in some sense *harmful*?<sup>4</sup>

To be able to seriously consider the latter question, we have to be in a position from which we are able to see the value of our moral values as a questionable phenomenon. By this I mean that we have to be able to bring into view this value as a possible object of questioning.

I understand this latter task as synonymous with posing the Nietzschean question: “what is the value of our moral values?” Indeed, it is in Nietzsche’s moral philosophy, I will claim, that we find a concern with, and undertaking of, such a task. The importance and influence of Nietzsche’s philosophy as a critique of European culture and the values that dominate it has been well documented.<sup>5</sup> His diagnosis of the threat of nihilism due to the “devaluation of our highest values”<sup>6</sup> and the resulting crisis facing Europe due to the collapse of Christianity

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<sup>4</sup>The position from which these moral values could be perceived as harmful will be an issue discussed throughout the thesis, and in particular in chapters 3 and 4.

<sup>5</sup>See, for example, Habermas 1987, 85-88.

<sup>6</sup>“What does nihilism mean? That the highest values devalue themselves. The aim is lacking; “why?” finds no answer” (WP, 2; 1887). Throughout this thesis, the numbers used after the abbreviated form of Nietzsche’s texts denote the aphorism. When citing other literature, the

as the foundation of those values has become an important means of our own understanding of contemporary European society.<sup>7</sup> However, the particular task of *posing the question of the value of our moral values* has generally been overlooked by commentators in the secondary literature. Typically, Nietzsche’s work is interpreted as a *response* to this question, either in the form of the positing of a positive normative ethics that accompanies a critique of moral values, or as a diagnosis of a crisis that is already somewhat evident.<sup>8</sup> In both approaches, the initial task of having to come to see that the value of our moral values is a phenomenon that can be questioned is overlooked. That there is an issue here, and that philosophical work is required to overcome it, is not appreciated. As a result, the resources that Nietzsche’s moral philosophy offers for this task are either misunderstood, or not exploited as much as they might be.

As an example of such a resource, Nietzsche offers us an interesting example of this phenomenon of the continued faith in Christian moral values notwithstanding the collapse in Christian faith. In his moral philosophy, Nietzsche often bemoans, along with Zarathustra, witnessing that Europeans “sit on the self-conceit” of professing *to know* what good and evil are (Z III 12 2, BGE 202), even after the widespread collapse of Christianity. In a telling aphorism in *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche finds an example of such self-conceit in those he calls “the English”<sup>9</sup>:

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number after the year denotes the page number. The only other exceptions to this are for both ancient texts and Wittgenstein’s works, where I follow the custom of using line numbers.

<sup>7</sup>See GS 358.

<sup>8</sup>As an example of the former, see Richardson 2004 and Leiter 2002. I discuss their positions further in chapter 1, section ‘Reductionism and Immoralism’. For the latter, see Reginster and Reginster 2009, 4: “I propose to take as the principle of organization of Nietzsche’s thought not a certain philosophical doctrine, but a particular problem or crisis. The systematicity of his philosophy, in other words, is determined not by a central philosophical doctrine, but by the requirements of his response to a particular crisis in late modern European culture, namely, the crisis of nihilism.” Cf. Owen 2014, 3, which is more acutely aware of the task of posing this question: “However, in raising the question of the value of our European Judeo-Christian moral values, the value of “morality”, Nietzsche attempts to force an awareness of the salience of this question, and, hence, of the project of the re-evaluation of moral values into the consciousness of moral philosophy.”

<sup>9</sup>The madman passage in the *Gay Science* and Nietzsche’s criticisms of the “last men” in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, both bring into view this self-conceit. See GS 125, and Z ‘Zarathustra’s prologue’ 5, respectively. I will consider the figures of the madman and Zarathustra in chapter 4.

When the English actually believe that they know intuitively what is good and evil, when they therefore suppose that they no longer require Christianity as the guarantee of morality, we merely witness the effects of the dominion of the Christian value judgement and an expression of the strength and depth of this dominion: such that the origin of English morality has been forgotten, such that the very conditional character of its right to existence is no longer felt. For the English, morality is not yet a problem.

*TI Skirmishes of an Untimely Man 5*

This passage highlights two important features of the Christian “dominion” which has been dominant in Europe. First, attempts at establishing moral knowledge philosophically, such as in the case of the English through appeal to “intuition,” in fact shows the “depth and strength” of, what I will call, our *familiarity* with moral values. The English inadvertently believe that such familiarity (i.e., their moral intuitions) is sufficient to constitute moral knowledge, notwithstanding their loss of faith in Christianity.<sup>10</sup>

Second, the strength and depth of this “dominion” is seen by the fact that the “conditional character” of our moral values’ “right to existence” is no longer “felt.” This suggests that moral values themselves have become a kind of taken-for-granted ground upon which moral knowledge can be founded.<sup>11</sup> Nietzsche talks of “the English” believing that they have moral knowledge “intuitively,” and, hence, he most likely has in mind the British intuitionist tradition that begins in the Eighteenth Century and runs through to the twentieth Century.<sup>12</sup> In this tradition, moral propositions are understood as being “self-evident,” and, as a result, are taken as foundational for moral reasoning and knowledge.<sup>13</sup>

Now, Nietzsche’s central claim in this passage is that the reason why “the English” advocate intuitionism is because they have *forgotten the origin* of their

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<sup>10</sup>Nietzsche makes a more general claim about the familiar becoming taken as known in GS 355, which I will draw upon shortly below.

<sup>11</sup>The manner in which our moral values have become foundational in our everyday lives will be discussed in chapter 2, section ‘Sedimentation’.

<sup>12</sup>See Donagan 1979, 17-25 for an overview.

<sup>13</sup>See, for example, Richard Price’s position in Raphael 1969, 187.

moral values, and, as a result, they fail to see their “conditional right to existence.” This criticism is pertinent given that in an earlier published work, Nietzsche had asserted that some Englishmen - those he calls the “English psychologists” - were, on the contrary, the ones “whom one has also to thank for the only attempts hitherto to arrive at a history of the origin of morality...” (GM I 1). While Nietzsche’s reference to “the English” here is somewhat idiosyncratic<sup>14</sup>, we can make sense of this passage if we look at how Nietzsche isolates particular characteristics or traits that he considers “English,” which he then associates with particular thinkers which need not necessarily be of that nationality.

The typically “English” characteristic that Nietzsche identifies in the *Twilight of the Idols* passage is that despite being “rid of the Christian God”, the English “now believe all the more firmly that they must cling to Christian morality...” (TI Skirmishes of an Untimely Man 5). This is in fact demonstrated rather than contradicted by the “English psychologists” who take an interest in the origins of morality in a non- (and perhaps even anti-) Christian manner through the application of Darwinian evolution, while nevertheless claiming that these origins still coincide with Christian values, such as altruism and compassion.<sup>15</sup>

Now, I suggest that what the English are unable to question despite their post-Christian concerns for origins is, the *value* of our moral values. What Nietzsche tries to show here is that they ultimately re-affirm this value (and its positive evaluative orientation, i.e., that this value is good) when they locate Christian values unconditionally at their origins. Note, however, that the issue here is not that the English seek to relocate or re-ground the value of our moral values in

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<sup>14</sup>In the *Twilight of the Idols* aphorism cited above he explicitly names George Eliot as his target, and in *On the Genealogy of Morals* he alludes to Paul Rée on several occasions. Both these targets, however, appear, for the same reason, strange given that George Eliot was immersed in the thought of the leading German thinkers of her day, and Paul Rée was not even English but himself German!

<sup>15</sup>Hence Nietzsche’s description of Rée: “the Darwinian beast and the ultramodern unassuming milksop who “no longer bites” politely link hands...” (GM preface 7). See also more contemporary writers, such as Richard Dawkins, who display the same English trait. I will consider Rée’s position in greater detail in chapter 1.



the wrong place, say in intuition rather than in reason or emotion. Rather, the very process of *re-grounding* our moral values *per se*, results in “the English” still taking the value of the moral values for granted. This specific criticism will be taken up in greater detail in chapter one. Here, I only wish to show how the appeal to intuition of “the English” demonstrates that moral values have become so familiar that their value is taken for granted, and that, moreover, they are taken as known in their familiarity. Additionally, all this occurs notwithstanding the loss of faith in Christianity, thus demonstrating the extent of its continued dominance.

Nietzsche’s criticism of “the English” for erroneously thinking that they have moral knowledge indicates not only their shortcomings, but also helps to point to the type of inquiry that will ultimately be required to engage with the phenomenon that “the English” themselves are an example of: the continued faith in moral values despite the loss of their foundations. The claim here is that “the English” ultimately take moral values as they are given in their everyday familiarity as *known*. Nietzsche makes this criticism in a much more general manner in a passage in the *Gay Science* entitled “the origins of our concept of “knowledge”:

For “what is familiar is known” [Was bekannt ist, ist erkannt]: on this they [men of knowledge] are agreed. Even the most cautious among them suppose that what is familiar is at least *more easily knowable* [leichter erkennbar] than what is strange, and that, for example, sound method demands that we start from the “inner world”, from the “facts of consciousness”, because this world is *more familiar to us*. Error of errors! What is familiar is what we are used to [Das Bekannte ist das Gewohnte]; and what we are used to is most difficult to “know” - that is, to see as a problem; that is, to see as strange, as distant, as “outside us.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Nietzsche draws on the phonetic and etymological similarity of the German words “bekannt” [familiar] and “erkannt” [known], which is entirely lost in English translation. Hegel had already made the same point in *The Phenomenology of the Spirit*: “Quite generally, the familiar, just because it is familiar, is not known [Das Bekannte überhaupt ist darum, weil es bekannt ist, nicht erkannt]. The commonest way in which we deceive either ourselves or others about understanding is by assuming something as familiar, and accepting it on that account; with all its pros and cons, such knowing never gets anywhere, and it knows not why. Subject and object, God,

Nietzsche claims here that it is an error to assume that we have knowledge of something because we are familiar with it, and that, moreover, it is mistaken to think that we know something better when we come to understand it in more familiar terms. I am not interested in the plausibility of this claim as a general claim about knowledge *per se*, but more specifically with its relevance to knowledge of our moral values. In fact, in an interpretative sense, this entire thesis can be read as a detailed exegesis of the GS 355 aphorism as it is applied to the particular phenomenon of our moral values, and as an analysis of the implications of the philosophical ideas contained therein.

My interest here is with the idea that since the foundations of our moral values have been lost due to a loss of faith in Christianity, we can no longer take our moral values as known in their familiarity. What I mean by this turn of phrase will be unpacked below, and the strength of this criticism made by Nietzsche will become more pertinent when I consider different approaches in moral philosophy in chapter one as potential ways to deal with this phenomenon.

This above passage also offers an initial insight into the type of inquiry that will be needed to pose the question of our moral values. In this thesis, I will argue that this inquiry will function as a method of *estrangement* [Entfremdung] from our moral values in order to bring into view the value of these values *as a questionable phenomenon*.<sup>17</sup> I will argue that this method is undertaken by Nietzsche himself in his moral philosophy, and that, moreover, his work attempts to facilitate his

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Nature, Understanding, sensibility, and so on, are uncritically taken for granted as familiar, established as valid, and made into fixed points for starting and stopping.” See Hegel 1977, 18, translation modified, and Hegel 1998, 26. As we shall see, Nietzsche differs from Hegel in his appeal to estrangement as a methodological tool for coming to know the familiar. Cf. Forster 2011a, 238.

<sup>17</sup>I translate the German *Entfremdung* with the English word ‘estrangement’ rather than with ‘alienation’ (unlike in Marion Faber and Stephen Lehmann’s translation of *Human all too Human*). While the German term is often translated interchangeably with either (as found, for example, in the translation of the concept in Marx’s work), I prefer ‘estrangement’ since it carries less pejorative connotations than ‘alienation.’ Moreover, in chapter one, I use the concept alienation to describe extreme cases of estrangement where familiarity is lost.

readers to achieve a position of estrangement such that they too can come to pose the question of the value of our moral values. This method of estrangement should be understood as a process in which moral *knowledge* is acquired, since it will bring into view that which we typically overlook on a day-to-day basis due to our *familiarity* with moral values.

Now, taking this as our starting point - the task of posing the Nietzschean question of the value of our moral values - has several implications which we need to be aware of. First, we cannot simply take for granted the value of our moral values as it is already given to us in its everyday familiarity. This is a mistake often made in interpretations of Nietzsche's moral philosophy, as well as of justificatory approaches that seek to reground our moral values on a philosophical basis. When this occurs, we shall see that the question of the value of our moral values is ultimately begged. I will consider these positions in chapter one.<sup>18</sup> Second, some kind of philosophical work is required in order to bring into view the value of our moral values as an object of questioning. I will consider the nature of this work in chapter three in specific relation to the role of self-consciousness in the process of estrangement, and then in chapter four, where I will look at the workings of the process itself. Third, without such work, the value of our moral values taken in its everyday familiarity remains inconspicuous. As we shall see introduced in chapter one, and unpacked in chapter two, when we become familiar with moral values, these values form a part of our everyday experience of the world in a manner that they are seen but not noticed. I shall argue that this occurs through a process of habituation and sedimentation. This will explain why we continue to have faith in our moral values notwithstanding the collapse of Christianity. Fourth, the task of moral philosophy cannot simply be to represent or faithfully capture the non-philosophical givenness of the value of our moral values. Instead,

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<sup>18</sup>For example, all interpretations of Nietzsche's critique as a direct attempt to usurp our dominant moral values with an alternative ethics make this assumption. See, for example, Cameron 2002.

moral philosophy has to work in some sense against such familiarity so that we no longer take it for granted. There is an ascetic element here, which, I shall argue, functions by bringing into view our familiar moral values as strange, in an *uncanny* movement.<sup>19</sup> In other words, we shall see that it is to render our moral values, which have become mundane, once again an object of wonder.<sup>20</sup> The possibility of achieving this will be considered in chapters three and four.

When understood correctly, we shall see that the process of estrangement, which poses the question of the value of our moral values, leads us into a paradox. We require a certain familiarity with moral values if those values, and the valuable phenomena perceived through those values, are to show up to us. As Europeans we acquire such familiarity in virtue of being brought up in European culture, and participating in its customs. I shall call this requirement the *condition of familiarity*. Yet, we shall also see that a characteristic indication that we have acquired this everyday familiarity with these values is when the value of these values becomes taken *for granted*. Our moral values are able to take on a foundational role in our everyday lives precisely because *their* value is no longer in question for us. From the position of familiarity with our moral values, we cannot simply render the value of our moral values questionable since our familiarity is predicated upon this value being taken for granted, and, hence, on *not* being an object of questioning. This would then seem to necessitate a critique of these values from *outside* of this familiarity. We have to be careful here, however, by what it means to be “outside” of our moral values. In chapter one, I will argue

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<sup>19</sup>In Jacobsen 2009, 18, the editors of the collection describe the the task of everyday life sociologies in these two ways: “On the one hand, their [everyday life sociologies] aim is – primarily via theoretical means – to transcend common-sense perceptions and our taking everyday life for granted, and to cultivate and invite a scientifically based and sometimes critical perspective on the everyday world as it is lived (what could be termed de-familiarisation - making the familiar appear strange). On the other hand, however, they also seek to make everyday life tolerable, understandable and liveable to people so they can live secure, meaningful and unalienated everyday lives (what could be called re-familiarisation – making the strange less strange).” I will argue that the task of moral inquiry here will be to achieve the former rather than the latter.

<sup>20</sup>Cf. Giles Deleuze’s account of philosophy in Deleuze 1994, 132: “It [Philosophy] would find its difference or its true beginning, not in an agreement with the pre-philosophical Image but in a rigorous struggle against this image, which it would denounce as non-philosophical.”

against the possibility of the positions of “immoralism” and “amoralism” offering a place outside of our familiar moral values from which to pose the question of the value of those values. My key claim here is that doing so would respectively reduce and eliminate the putative moral values that afford familiarity in the first place. Moreover, I will argue against the possibility of taking up a ‘view from nowhere,’ since even if such a position were possible, we would lose familiarity with moral values. The result of this would be that the moral phenomena that we see through these values, would no longer show up. The paradox can then be articulated as follows: one must be sufficiently familiar with moral values for such values, and moral phenomena in the world, to show up to us. Yet, simultaneously, one must also be sufficiently outside of this familiarity to see the value of those values as a questionable phenomenon.

I will argue that the solution to this paradox is achieved by taking up a position of *estrangement* from our familiarity, which can at once obtain sufficient distance to bring into view the value of our moral values as a questionable phenomenon, but without losing the familiarity with those values. Another way of putting it, is to understand the task as one in which we are to render our familiar moral values strange. I shall term this requirement the *condition of estrangement*. Both the condition of familiarity and the condition of estrangement together will be sufficient to acquire moral knowledge.

The argument of this thesis, then, will take the following form. In chapter one, I will bring the nature of the paradox into sharper focus. I will do this by considering what type of critique is required of moral philosophy to face up to the loss of the foundations of our moral values. The task will be, as Nietzsche puts it, to “take morality as a problem.” I will argue against different approaches found in the history of moral philosophy that look like potential candidates for this task. I will argue that taking morality as a problem requires taking our familiarity with moral values as *sui generis* as well as an object whose value is in question. In chapter two, I will articulate in detail the *sui generis* nature of not only our

familiarity with Christian moral values, but with moral values *per se*. We shall see more generally how we become familiar with moral values and the nature of our moral psychological framework. I will argue, through appeal to Aristotle and Nietzsche, that our familiarity with moral values is obtained through a process of habituation, which should in turn be understood in terms of a dynamic of command and obedience. This dynamic will be shown to function not only at the social level between individuals, but also at the level of the individual soul in an *ascetic* relation of competing forces. The phenomena of habituation and asceticism will then help to explain how the value of our moral values has become sedimented over time, such that it is no longer an object of wonder that is open to questioning.

In chapters three and four, I focus on the task of estrangement. In chapter three, I consider the possibility of estrangement that is built into our familiarity with moral values, and focus, more specifically, on the role of cognition. We shall see how cognition, in the form of self-consciousness, can disrupt the sedimented nature of our moral values so that their value can be brought into view as questionable, through a form of internal ironic disruption. I will claim that for this to occur, the value of the “totality” of our moral values, understood as a coherent moral outlook, needs to be brought into question. In chapter four, we shall see that the overall structure of the process of estrangement is isomorphic with the tripartite movement of a rite of passage: (1) separation from our familiarity with moral values and the dominant moral outlook; (2) a liminal phase of margin and reflection; (3) a final phase of aggregation back into the same outlook, but in an altered relation or position. This will help us understand how it is possible for the moral inquirer to remain familiar with Christian moral values, whilst also achieving sufficient estrangement from these values, such that, on return, they are experienced in a manner that their value is now in question.

# Chapter 1

## The Task of Taking “Morality as a Problem”

### 1.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will map out the space in which moral inquiry is to function if it is to tackle the phenomenon of the continued faith in Christian moral values notwithstanding the loss of faith in their Christian foundations, and, hence, to be able to raise the question as to whether our moral values could be harmful to us. I will bring out the force of the paradox that the inquiry faces by considering, first, an approach that seeks to face up to the loss of Christian foundations by re-grounding our moral values on a non-Christian philosophical basis. I shall refer to these approaches as ‘justificatory’, since they engage in a two-step process: to capture the principle by which our moral values hang together, and then to justify this principle philosophically.

I shall draw upon an argument made by Nietzsche that these approaches fail to genuinely engage with the loss of the foundations of our Christian moral values because they fail to take morality as a problem.<sup>1</sup> I will interpret Nietzsche’s

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<sup>1</sup>Nietzsche often repeats this need to take “morality as a problem” throughout his works, and he even goes so far as to say on occasion that he is the *first* philosopher to achieve this. See

criticism here by arguing that failing to “taking morality as a problem” means that the approaches ultimately beg the question of the *value* of our moral values. The term “morality” here then refers to our Christian moral values, and, what I will later call the wider Christian “moral outlook” that they belong to.<sup>2</sup> We shall see that these approaches satisfy the condition of familiarity - they attempt to do justice to our familiarity with moral values when they establish the moral principle - but they come up short on the condition of estrangement. They assume the value of our moral values as it is already given in its familiarity, and are unable to see it as a questionable phenomenon.

Second, I will consider attempts at taking our Christian moral values as a problem, which are better candidates for achieving a form of estrangement from our familiarity with moral values, than that of the justificatory approaches. The specific candidates that I will look at will be all the more relevant in so far as they have been, albeit erroneously, ascribed to Nietzsche’s own moral philosophy in the secondary literature on the subject. The positions I will consider are reductionism, immoralism, and amoralism. I will argue that both reductionism and immoralism risk alienation from our familiarity with moral values in so far as the former attempts to reduce our familiarity with moral values to more basic phenomena, and the latter demands a position that lies external to our familiarity with Christian moral values, and internal to an immoral alternative. In both cases, I will argue that the alienation from our familiar moral values that they involve renders estrangement from those moral values impossible.

Against the amoralist position I will argue that the elimination of moral phenomena results in the elimination of the problem of morality. I will, however, also consider a more nuanced version of this account that takes the form of moral fictionalism.<sup>3</sup> I will argue that this nuanced possibility, however, misunderstands

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GS 345, D preface 3, BGE 186 and TI Skirmishes of an Untimely Man 5.

<sup>2</sup>I shall introduce the idea of moral outlooks, of which our Christian moral outlook is an example, in chapter 2, section ‘Moral outlooks’.

<sup>3</sup>See Joyce 2005 for a contemporary account of this position. See Hussain 2007 for its



the nature of the phenomenon of valuing, and that, as a result, cannot adequately bring into view the value of our moral values. Having considered these various approaches, I will then be in a position to conclude that the task of taking morality as a problem requires that the moral inquirer takes our familiarity with moral values as a *sui generis* phenomenon that cannot be eliminated or reduced to other phenomena, but that, at the same time, he or she must bring the value of the phenomenon into view as an object of possible questioning.

## 1.2 The Justificatory Approach

In this section, I will consider approaches to moral philosophy that are motivated by the worry that our moral values are in crisis due to the collapse of Christianity, and that attempt to face up to this collapse by providing non-Christian, philosophical foundations. These approaches recognise that we can no longer take the basis of our moral values for granted, and, as a result, inquire into the ontological foundations of these values. I will begin by outlining the key features of this type of approach, namely that our moral values are to be captured within a single principle, and, that this principle is to be justified philosophically. I will then argue that these approaches fail to face up to the collapse of the foundations of our moral values and the implications and ramifications that it has, since they engage in the wrong type of questioning, and, as a result, they ultimately beg the question of the value of our moral values. We shall see that not only do these approaches fail to see the value of our moral values as a questionable phenomenon, but they actually hinder this very possibility due to their designs for justification.

I will first turn to Arthur Schopenhauer's moral philosophy, as an exemplar of this kind of justificatory approach. Schopenhauer is aware of the decline in Christian faith during his own times, and (at least a part of) his moral philosophy can

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ascription to Nietzsche.

be understood as a response to this decline through the grounding of our Christian moral values on an alternative philosophical basis.<sup>4</sup> The following passage from *The World as Will and Representation* is indicative of this awareness:

The sublime founder of Christianity had necessarily to adapt and accommodate himself, partly consciously, partly, it may be, unconsciously, to this doctrine; and so Christianity is composed of two very heterogeneous elements. Of these I should like to call the purely ethical element preferably, indeed exclusively, the Christian, and to distinguish it from the Jewish dogmatism with which it is found. If, *as has often been feared, and especially at the present time, that excellent and salutary religion should completely decline*, then I would look for the reason for this simply in the fact that it does not consist of one simple element, but of two originally heterogeneous elements, brought into combination only by means of world events. In such a case, dissolution would necessarily result through the break-up of these elements, which arises from their different relationship and reaction to the advanced spirit of the times. Yet after this dissolution, the purely ethical part would still be bound always to remain intact, because it is indestructible.

Schopenhauer 2012, 387, 388; my italics

Schopenhauer offers us a lucid articulation of the central characteristics of the justificatory approach in his prize-essay response to the question raised by the Royal Dutch Society concerning “where to look for the source and foundation of morality.”<sup>5</sup>

The *principle* or the main *fundamental proposition* of an ethical system is the shortest and concisest expression for the line of conduct prescribed by it, or, if it should have no imperative form, the line of conduct to which it attributes real moral worth. Consequently, this is its guide to virtue in general, an instruction expressed in one proposition and thus the *ο” τι* [the what] of virtue.

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<sup>4</sup>The need for this alternative basis, in Schopenhauer’s view, is further supported by his criticism of Kant’s own attempts at offering a philosophical foundation of our moral values for remaining too theological. See the first section of Schopenhauer 1995.

<sup>5</sup>Schopenhauer 1995, 38.

The *foundation* of an ethical system, on the other hand, is  $\delta \iota \acute{o} \tau \iota$  [the why] of virtue, the *ground* or *reason* for that obligation, recommendation, or praise, whether such ground be now sort in the nature of man, in the external circumstances of the world, or in anything else.”

As in *all sciences*, so in *ethics*, the  $o' \tau \iota$  [the what], should be clearly distinguished from  $\delta \iota \acute{o} \tau \iota$  [the why].

Schopenhauer 1995, 68

We can see from Schopenhauer’s description how the framework of the justificatory approach is necessarily broad in order to capture a variety of different possible content within the principle, (for example, both descriptive and imperative propositions), and a multitude of possible means of justification (in, for example, human nature, as seen earlier in the case of “intuition” for the English, in the world, or in a metaphysical realm). The essential features of this approach are (1) the depiction of the entire phenomenon of morality or ethics in a single proposition, and (2) the subsequent founding of the proposition on some kind of philosophical grounds.

While the first part of the task typically appeals to our familiarity with moral values and our everyday experience of moral worth, the second part fundamentally requires the employment of philosophical resources to provide a basis for that everyday familiarity. The idea of this approach is that our pre-philosophical familiarity with moral values - for Schopenhauer this is the indestructible “purely ethical part” of Christianity - is to be grounded on a new non-Christian basis, which requires justification through non-theological, philosophical inquiry:

It is through all these factors [the influence of Kantian philosophy, progress in the natural sciences, acquaintance with Sanskrit literature, Brahmanism and Buddhism] that the fundamental philosophical convictions of cultured Europe have undergone a revolution in the last fifty years, which many perhaps admit only reluctantly, but which cannot be denied. In consequence of such a change, the old supports of *ethics* have become rotten; yet there is left an assurance itself that ethics itself can never collapse. From this the conviction arises that there must be other supports for it, different from those provided until now, which would be suitable to the advanced views of the age.

This justificatory approach, as Schopenhauer acknowledges, surfaces in many different philosophical traditions. Immanuel Kant, for example, can be seen to take up the justificatory approach when he defines the task of moral philosophy in *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* as “the search and establishment of the supreme principle of morality.” Kant attempts to establish his principle of the categorical imperative in the “noumenal” realm.<sup>6</sup> The justificatory approach is also undertaken by neo-Kantian Wilhelm Windelband in his essay ‘Vom Prinzip der Moral’, which captures morality in the principle “Thue deine Pflicht!” [“Do your duty!”]<sup>7</sup>, and grounds it transcendently in the notion of duty. Schopenhauer grounds his principle of “neminem laede, imo omnes, quantum potes, juva” [hurt no one and help everyone as much as you can] metaphysically in the “Will”, and, Nietzsche’s once-close ally Paul Rée, takes on Schopenhauer’s principle but justifies it empirically in social utility.<sup>8</sup>

Let us take a closer look at the first part of the two-step justificatory approach. One might find it questionable as to whether a complex phenomenon like morality, broadly understood to capture all moral phenomena, could ever be adequately captured in a concise principle.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, one might be equally buoyed by the fact that many of the principles that have been formed by moral philosophers are incredibly similar.<sup>10</sup>

To challenge the very nature of this approach, I will begin by considering the following criticism of it made by Nietzsche:

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<sup>6</sup>See Kant 2007, 1197, 5. I follow Schopenhauer here in understanding Kant’s moral philosophy as (in part) an attempt to ground Christian moral values philosophically, due to the loss of the authority of religion. As seen in the above footnote, Schopenhauer criticises Kant’s attempts for remaining too theological.

<sup>7</sup>See Windelband 1915, 205.

<sup>8</sup>The justificatory approach is also highly prevalent in the Seventeenth Century in figures such as Locke, Shaftesbury and Hutcheson. See Carey 2006 for an overview.

<sup>9</sup>See Acampora and Pearson 2011, 112 and Geuss 2005.

<sup>10</sup>Schopenhauer discusses the challenge of this kind of skepticism and how to meet it in Schopenhauer 1995, 125-130.

Their [the ‘historians of morality’] usual mistaken premise is that they affirm some consensus of the nations, at least of tame nations, concerning certain principles of morals, and then they infer from this that these principles must be unconditionally binding for you and me; or, conversely, they see the truth that among different nations moral valuations are *necessarily* different and then infer from this that *no* morality is at all binding. Both procedures are equally childish.

GS 345

Whether the moral principle captures moral values that are *de facto* present among all societies, or only among a particular society, cannot help to establish whether these moral values are justified or not, and, hence, whether they should be binding. What is required is precisely a further argument or philosophical account that shows why they are justified. However, if one already has a certain means of philosophical justification, based on, for example, a metaphysical system, then the possible contents of the moral principle will be influenced by it. There is, what we might call, an interdependence between the tasks of capturing morality in a principle and of justifying it. That is to say, the criterion guiding what counts as a valid principle is necessarily dependent on the criterion of what counts as sufficient justification; and vice versa: what counts as sufficient justification is conditioned by the moral content of the principle. To return again to concrete examples, some moral philosophers, such as Schopenhauer, think that the moral principle should capture moral values that are *universally* present. This is because Schopenhauer’s means of justification seek recourse to the realm of the metaphysical. Others, such as Rée, believe that it should capture the *de facto* presence of moral values in our own society. Rée’s more modest demands are in line with his attempts at localised, empirical justification. In starker contrast, Windelband argues that the moral principle should capture *de jure* values that might not be present in our society, but which we should strive towards. This is because they are to be grounded transcendentally.

Without such interdependence, empirical analysis of the *de facto* relativity or universality of moral values cannot establish whether such values are, indeed,

justified. At first sight, this kind of argument seems to echo an argument made by the neo-Kantian Wilhelm Windelband. A brief consideration of this argument will help to distinguish Windelband's justificatory approach from the task of taking morality as a problem, and will, hence, allow further elucidation of the latter.

Windelband distinguishes between the *de facto* "psychogenetic origins" of moral values, and the *de jure* question of their validity. He puts the issue thus: "[f]or a theory of value which is to settle the question of the vindication or rationality of values, the psychogenetic origin of any particular value is entirely irrelevant and can never afford a decisive criterion."<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Nietzsche continues the *Gay Science* aphorism 345 quoted above by stating that "[e]ven if a morality has grown out of an error, the realisation of this fact would not as much as touch the problem of its value."

The negative force of Nietzsche's argument coincides with that of Windelband's in so far as empirical observation of moral values is insufficient for engaging in the task of justification. As said, one must already have designs on justification that offer criteria for how moral values are to be captured in the principle.

Windelband argues that *if* indeed we are seeking to vindicate and ground our moral values, then from the off we should be very clear and honest that this requires establishing that these values *should* be binding for us. For Windelband this demands an axiological, transcendental inquiry into the normative conditions that make moral values and moral action possible. This involves an inquiry into the *a priori* form or structure of the moral principle, with a view to ascertaining universal, *de jure* content.

Windelband's inquiry is informative, in so far as his characterisation of the moral principle as the imperative "Do your duty!" [Thue deine Pflicht!] gives us a sense of the dynamic of command and obedience, which, as we shall see in chapter two, is central for moral development, and sits at the heart of our moral

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<sup>11</sup>See Windelband 1921, 213.

psychological framework. However, when transcendental inquiry is separated from its empirical counterpart, as Windelband finds out, it becomes incredibly difficult to give any content to the moral principle. Windelband succeeds only in giving insight into the *a priori* structure of the principle, but struggles to isolate any *de jure* or *de facto* content.<sup>12</sup>

The dilemma then for the justificatory approach as set up by Windelband is that *if* it is acknowledged that justification requires an inquiry into conditions of normativity, transcendental inquiry's instruments of justification are limited to formal structures, and cannot access moral content. If, instead, inquiry is limited to the empirical, then no recourse to normative justification can be made.

However, Nietzsche's criticism of empirical approaches in GS 345 importantly differs from Windelband's since the invalid inference of the empirical approaches that Nietzsche identifies is not the move from *de facto* to *de jure* content (as found in Windelband), but from empirical knowledge of the *de facto* universality/relativity of morality and its genetic origins to claims of having touched "on the problem of its [morality's] value" (See GS 345). The problem with the latter is that the scope of the principle - i.e., whether our moral values apply locally to Europe, or whether they have greater universal scope - does not touch on the problem of *the value* of those values. Rather, to touch on this problem requires that the inquiry works with *de facto* content, (hence, Nietzsche's 'Natural History of Morals' section in *Beyond Good and Evil*), but which renders the *de jure* value of our moral values an object of possible questioning. In support of this interpretation, we can see more generally how this criticism of Nietzsche's - that attempts to capture the moral principle in relative or universal terms fail to touch on the problem of morality - applies not only to inquiries that begin from the empirical,

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<sup>12</sup>In Windelband 1915, Windelband struggles throughout the essay to articulate any content for the moral principle. When he finishes the essay he does finally attempt to articulate some content. However, we are left wondering where it came from, if not simply from the dominant moral values that we are already familiar with. Indeed, these contents include the Christian values of sympathy, *Sympathie*, benevolence, *Wohllwollen*, and truthfulness, *Wahrhaftigkeit*. See Windelband 1915, 410-411.

but to all inquiries which conduct an investigation into the nature of the moral principle under accompanying designs for justification.

Nietzsche raises this general criticism in an aphorism of *Beyond Good and Evil* in the section ‘The natural history of morals.’

What the philosophers called “a foundation [Begründung] of morality” and tried to supply was, seen in the right light, merely a scholarly variation of the common *faith* in the prevalent morality; a new means of *expression* for this faith; and thus just another fact within a particular morality; indeed, in the last analysis a kind of denial that this morality might ever be considered problematic...

*BGE 186*; translation modified<sup>13</sup>

The main target of Nietzsche’s charge in this aphorism is most likely Schopenhauer and his text *On the Basis of Morality* [Über die Grundlage der Moral], although he makes a more general attack against philosophers who have attempted to construct a foundation of morality. Nietzsche makes two claims that are of interest here. First, he argues that attempts at justifying morality remain within that morality, and express a faith in that morality. Second, he argues that as a result of this, the possibility of raising that morality as a problem is ‘denied.’ At first sight, it is not obvious how the second claim relates to the first. That justification remains within the morality in question, and expresses a faith in that morality, does not necessarily mean that morality cannot be problematised. This would be to overlook the possibility of an internal critique that seeks to render morality a problem from the inside, so to speak. Indeed, Nietzsche himself sometimes talks of his own attempts at taking morality as a problem as seeking what he calls the “self-sublimation of morality” (D preface 4).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Walter Kaufmann translates ‘Begründung der Moral’ with ‘rational foundation of morality’. However, there is no reason to restrict the type of foundation Nietzsche is interested in to rational ones only. For example, sentimentalists that found moral knowledge on moral intuition would also be susceptible to Nietzsche’s charges.

<sup>14</sup>Indeed, internal approaches are often thought to be more preferable in so far as they do not appeal to normative standards that are justified independently of the morality in question. See, for example, Honneth 2001, 6. I will consider in detail the possibilities for taking morality as a problem via an internal critique in chapters 3 and 4.



What Nietzsche more specifically claims, however, is that the expression of faith in a morality that occurs during the very process of justification, closes off the possibility of taking that morality as a problem. To understand why this occurs, we have to consider in more detail exactly what is being expressed by such a faith in morality such that possibility of taking it as a problem is “denied.”

When Nietzsche states that justification is a “scholarly variation of the common faith in the prevalent morality,” the problem cannot be that it expresses certain values; even values that belong to the Christian morality in question. This is because, as just said, internal critique remains a possibility. Instead, to make sense of this, I suggest that the faith expressed, which Nietzsche points to, is in the *value* of our moral values. Understood in this manner, Nietzsche’s criticism would be the following: these justificatory approaches take the value of our moral values for granted, in so far as they assume this value as it is pre-philosophically given. They do this when they justify our moral values philosophically. Due to this, the approaches are unable to see that this value could be questionable, and that the collapse in Christianity means that this value cannot simply be taken for granted as it is given in its familiarity. In fact, justification helps to avoid bringing into question this value since, rather than considering the implications of the loss of foundations, it readily provides *new* foundations, and, hence, removes the possibility of raising the question of the value of these values altogether.

Another way of articulating this criticism is to say that the justificatory approach expresses a knowledge of what good and evil are in the act of establishing their philosophical grounds.<sup>15</sup> The problem is not that the moral philosophers take up “the morality of their environment, their class, their church, the spirit of their time, their climate and part of the world...” (BGE 186), but that they

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<sup>15</sup>Although Nietzsche does not argue for it here, there is also the resultant effect of (certain forms of) justification strengthening our faith in our moral values. In his *History of European Morals*, also written in the latter part of the Nineteenth Century, William Lecky makes this general point. He claims that justificatory approaches “react upon and strengthen the moral tendency that elicited it” Lecky 1911, 128.

take this morality as *already* known - i.e. as already that which is “the good” - when they justify it.<sup>16</sup> They commit that “error of errors” we saw Nietzsche describe in the ‘origins of knowledge’ aphorism (GS 355) by taking “the familiar as known.” By doing so, the approach unavoidably puts the value of the justified values *beyond* questioning, begging the question of *this* value. To return briefly to Schopenhauer by way of example, his faith in the “indestructibility” of Christian morality, notwithstanding the decline in Christian faith, is highly indicative of this.

To conclude, justificatory approaches seek to justify moral values by giving these values a philosophical foundation or ground [Begründung]. When they do this, they not only express a faith in those moral values, but take the value of these moral values in its given familiarity as known. As a result, they deny that this value could be an object of possible questioning by closing it off from such an inquiry.

The justificatory approach attempts to tackle the loss of the foundations of our moral values. What it fails to perceive, and in fact denies, is that the very right of existence of our Christian moral values is at stake. It passes over this by attempting to replace these lost foundations with new philosophical foundations. Ultimately these approaches remain *too* familiar with our moral values in so far as they take the value of our moral values for granted in its familiarity. If we then return to the paradox facing moral inquiry that was explained at the end of the previous section, we can see that these justificatory approaches fail to achieve sufficient estrangement from our familiarity with moral values in order to see that

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<sup>16</sup>Campora and Ansell-Pearson argue, to the contrary, that Nietzsche’s criticism of the justificatory approach is as follows: “What reasons does Nietzsche have for opposing this effort on the part of philosophers to supply morality with a “rational foundation?” The answer is that such an approach is far too simple-minded and results in a reification of the phenomenon of morality, in the sense that it is being abstracted from its conditions of existence, which are on the one hand conditions of natural human life and on the other hand conditions relative to specific historical contexts.” Acampora and Pearson 2011, 112. This would suggest that to take morality as a problem, according to Nietzsche, would simply be to consider the conditions of existence of morality, and to avoid abstracting away from those conditions. This, however, overlooks the difficult task of bringing into view the value of our moral values as a questionable phenomenon.

their value - and, hence their right to existence - could be, and should be, made an object of questioning.

### 1.3 Reductionism and Immoralism

In the previous section I briefly suggested that empirically grounding our moral values in psycho-genetic origins is an example of the justificatory approach and that, as a result, it succumbs to begging the question of the value of our moral values. It might, however, be argued that knowledge of the genetic origins of moral values fails to engage with the problem of moral values only when such knowledge is employed with the goal of justifying those values. On the contrary, it might be claimed that an inquiry into origins need not attempt to justify our moral values based on their original inception (in the original formation of communities, for example), but rather appeal to origins in a reductionist move that seeks to question the value of our moral values by explaining moral phenomena in terms of more basic phenomena.

For example, although I have subsumed Paul Rée's moral philosophy under the remit of the justificatory approach, it might be thought that his account is more reductionist and revisionary than the likes of Schopenhauer's and Kant's. Reductionism, it might be thought, attempts to take morality as a problem better than the justificatory approach, since it draws on empirical analysis to affect the value of our moral values by reducing those values to ontologically prior phenomena. Rather than maintaining the "indestructibility" of the value of Christian moral values, the reductionist seeks to readdress the high esteem accorded to these values.

Moreover, in some cases, the reductionist approach is also accompanied by an alternative normative ethics, which is to usurp our moral values. Interestingly enough, in the Anglophone secondary literature Nietzsche is often interpreted as engaging in the same type of reductionist inquiry as Rée, albeit while also advo-

cating his own alternative ethics or “immorality” to the moral values of Europe.<sup>17</sup> In what follows, I will begin by considering Rée’s own position, and will then turn to this more nuanced interpretation of Nietzsche’s position.

Rée professes to bring the phenomenon of morality back down to earth. For too long, he tells us in the opening page of *On the Origin of Moral Sentiments*, moral phenomena have been “considered to be something supersensible - the voice of God, as theologians put it.”<sup>18</sup> Even Kant who denies the possibility of knowledge of the noumenal realm, “saw in moral consciousness something transcendent...”<sup>19</sup> Yet, with the advent of Darwinism, Rée believes it is finally possible to trace moral phenomena “back to natural causes just as much as physical phenomena: moral man stands no closer to the intelligible world than physical man.”<sup>20</sup> Rée’s intentions are not simply to re-ground our moral values, but to cause a devaluation in their value, to tackle the loss of their foundations by reducing the import that moral values should have in our lives. Thus, as opposed to justificatory approaches, such as those of Kant’s and Schopenhauer’s that seek to maintain the “majestic moral structures” and “indestructible and eternal elements” of Christianity respectively, Rée, on the contrary, seeks a devaluation of our moral values by situating them on much more humble grounds.<sup>21</sup>

Despite his explicit reference to Kant above, it is Schopenhauer who Rée has most keenly in his sights. Rée subscribes to Schopenhauer’s moral principle “neminem laede, imo omnes, quantum potes, juva” [hurt no one and help everyone as much as you can], but seeks to find its origins in social utility, rather than in metaphysical will. It has thus been reasonably claimed that Rée attempts to naturalise Schopenhauer’s moral philosophy.<sup>22</sup> He does this by attempting to re-

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<sup>17</sup>See, for example, Janaway 2007.

<sup>18</sup>Rée 2003, 87.

<sup>19</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>20</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>21</sup>See D preface for Nietzsche’s criticism of Kant’s appeal to such structures, and Schopenhauer 2012, 387, 388 quoted above, on Schopenhauer’s understanding of this ethical element in Christianity.

<sup>22</sup>Robin Small makes this claim. See Rée 2003, xx; and Small 2005, 84.

duce moral phenomena to ontologically prior phenomena. Moral phenomena are to be fully explained causally by their psycho-social origins, which are in turn to be established through recourse to evolutionary theory. These origins are objects of natural scientific inquiry, thus meaning that the scientific inquirer has better access to moral knowledge than a so-called “moralist.” This is because moral knowledge, for Rée, just is knowledge of the origins of moral values. Thus, he states that “the nature of any [moral] sensation is clear only to the extent that the history of its origin is also clear.”<sup>23</sup>

At first sight, this looks like a potential candidate for taking morality as a problem. Familiar moral values are to be subject to a genetic analysis for the acquisition of moral knowledge. The value of these moral values is raised in so far as the origins that are isolated will have a bearing on the esteem to which we hold these values. Furthermore, it is clear that Rée believes that this process of naturalisation will result in a re-assessment of the value of our moral values. They will lose their transcendent, divine status, and be limited to a utility value based on their role in social formation and progression.

I will now consider the shortcomings of Rée’s approach. First, I want to suggest that there is an important difference between an inquiry that directly bears on the esteem in which we hold our moral values, such as Rée’s, and an inquiry that brings into view the *evaluative orientation* of this value *as a questionable phenomenon*. The difference here is subtle, yet fundamental to understanding what is required to take morality as a problem. Since, as I shall argue, Rée’s account only manages to affect the esteem by which we see our moral values, it should, in fact, still be understood as falling under the justificatory banner.

Rée ultimately assumes that moral values in their familiarity are valuable, and his empirical approach attempts to *ground* their value in social utility. This is seen explicitly by the fact that he unquestionably takes up Schopenhauer’s

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<sup>23</sup>Rée 2003, 92.

moral principle “neminem laede, imo omnes, quantum potes, juva” albeit without claiming (like Schopenhauer) that it is universal in scope. Our Christian moral values do not come from a divine source, Rée argues, but from social utility. Due to this, we might say that it is still good to be good, according to Rée, just not *as* good as we perhaps thought.

Even though Rée attempts to show that our moral values should not play such a central role in our lives, he, nevertheless, fails to question whether our moral values are *good for us*, and, indeed, whether they could be in some sense *harmful*. It is this latter question which concerns the *evaluative orientation* of the value of our moral values. Rée, on the contrary, is only able to affect the esteem by which we hold our moral values; yet, what affects this esteem is precisely *the means of justification* that Rée employs. The process of justification can seek to increase this esteem (as in the case of Schopenhauer), or decrease it (as in the case of Rée). To do so, however, the inquiry already assumes that moral values *are* valuable. The possibility that they might not be valuable - and, that, hence, their right to existence may not be unconditional - is not considered at all. Rée’s approach helps to bring this out, since despite his explicit critical intentions, he takes over Schopenhauer’s moral principle fully, without consideration as to whether the content of the principle is indeed valuable. The upshot of this is that the question of the value of our moral values - understood in the sense of the evaluative orientation of this value - is not touched upon by Rée’s approach, but is, instead, *begged*.

To be clear, Rée’s appeal to scientific developments and results is not in itself misguided. However, when such knowledge is employed to bear only on the esteem by which we hold our moral values, it takes moral values as the type of phenomenon whose value cannot be raised. It does not help us to question our familiarity with moral values, but rather has the opposite effect of consolidating this familiarity. It works against helping us to see our moral values as a questionable phenomenon, since despite supposedly losing their transcendent credibility,

moral values nevertheless find their justification in the “more tangible” empirical realm of social utility.

Now, as said above, notwithstanding the divergence of Rée’s account from the task of taking morality as a problem, Nietzsche has been interpreted as engaging in a critique of our moral values that is akin to Rée’s, while, however, also forwarding an alternative ethics or “immorality” to our familiar, Christian moral values. The idea here is that Nietzsche’s approach is similar to Rée’s in so far as it inquires into the origins of moral values by drawing on scientific developments and results of the time, but instead of justifying moral values through such an appeal to origins, it attempts to attack and undermine our moral values while forwarding alternative values.

Such an approach looks like a better candidate for taking morality as a problem than reductionism alone since it might be thought that the knowledge of the origins of moral values can be effectively used to question our familiarity with our moral values through the process of reductionism, in favour of some alternative values that avoid the same fate. Moreover, if successful, those latter values could replace our Christian moral values thus overcoming the issue of the latter’s loss of foundations.

The combination of the critique of particular moral values with the advancement of a positive ethics has led to what has become known in the Anglophone secondary literature as the ‘scope problem.’<sup>24</sup> The scope problem captures the issue of how Nietzsche’s own moral philosophy can defend a position which radically criticises a particular “morality,” whilst allowing him to forward an ethics of his own.

Moreover, often in the literature the ‘scope problem’ is considered to be the problem that Nietzsche himself takes up when attempting to “take morality as a problem.” A clear example of this is given by Frank Cameron in his book,

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<sup>24</sup>See Robertson 2012 for an overview of the issue. See also the chapter with this title in Leiter 2002, and the beginning of Leiter 1995.

*Nietzsche and The 'Problem' of Morality.* At the outset Cameron states that, “[i]n this study I argue that Nietzsche presents a *positive* morality based on human flourishing, and that his *attack* on the prevailing, Christian morality can only be understood within the context of his fundamental ‘ethical’ preoccupation with exemplary individuals.”<sup>25</sup> Cameron attempts to analytically delineate Nietzsche’s supposed engagement with the scope problem by distinguishing between “Morality” (with an uppercase ‘M’) involving unconditional universal demands, and “a morality or moralities” (note the lower case ‘m’), which are invented, inherited practices. Cameron claims that this distinction affords “conceptual space by isolating Morality to oppose, and other forms of moralities to affirm.”<sup>26</sup> In this manner, Nietzsche is thought to be able to take Morality (with a capital M) as a problem.

There are, however, several shortcomings with this interpretation of Nietzsche’s moral philosophy, and this understanding of the task of taking morality as a problem. The central difficulty for such readings is to account for how Nietzsche can forward a positive ethics in light of his critique of morality. The worry is that the scope of the latter appears to leave little room for the former. After having attempted to isolate the ‘positive’ affirmation of certain values, and an attack on other values, these readings have the task of establishing how Nietzsche is *justified* in positing the former as values that we *should* strive after, in place of our Christian moral values.<sup>27</sup> An appeal to justification is important since without it, we would be left with little reason to consider seriously different values to our

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<sup>25</sup>See Cameron 2002, 1.

<sup>26</sup>*ibid.* An alternative attempt is offered by Richardson 2004, 69: “I’ll argue that we can reconcile Nietzsche’s naturalizing perspectivism with these claims to higher status for his own values, by going back to his Darwinian beginning.” Brian Leiter also claims that Nietzsche argues against what he labels “morality in a pejorative sense,” in favour of his own ethics of the “higher type.” See Leiter 2008 and Leiter 1995.

<sup>27</sup>Simon May’s raising of the issue is indicative: “what philosophical principle or psychological process could he [Nietzsche] posit to justify his core assumption that the radical devaluation of temporality or ‘becoming’ necessarily results in the stifling of human flourishing and hence in what he calls ‘descending’ or ‘d caden t’ life?” May 1999, 5.



familiar, moral values as viable alternatives.<sup>28</sup>

Appeal to justification of alternative immoral values suffers from the same problem that we have seen above in the case of the justificatory approach that deals with our Christian moral values. That is to say, attempts to justify alternative values (that are seen as “immoral” from the perspective of our Christian moral values - hence terming this position “immoralism”) make the same appeal to grounds and foundations [Begründung] as the justificatory approach. By doing so, immoralism is parasitic on this approach, and, as a result, assumes the value of the alternative immoral values. In endeavouring to ground immoral values, the inquirer endorses the value of these values, and can only touch on the esteem accorded to their value through justification. Due to this, the question of the value of these immoral values is necessarily begged.

Now, one might retort that assuming the value of immoral values is not an issue for Nietzsche’s own task because he wants to bring into question specific familiar, Christian moral values that have become dominant in Europe; values such as pity and self-denial. These are specific values that he explicitly refers to on a regular basis. Indeed, it might be the case that alternative values need justification, and their value to be begged, so that our familiar moral values can be brought into question. And it might be further thought that it is Nietzsche’s inquiry into origins that is designed to achieve this.

This response is inadequate, however. First, Nietzsche attacks *all* justificatory approaches in BGE 186 that result in the construction of foundations, and not just those that are attempted for a particular morality. This is further supported

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<sup>28</sup>It has been argued that Nietzsche offers an alternative ethics without any justification, with the sole goal that “people like him” will be influenced by it. See Leiter 1995. The problem with this is the position still gets no closer to bringing into view the value of our moral values as a questionable phenomenon. As we shall see in chapter 4, this is because it misinterprets and devalues the important function that Nietzsche’s appeal to an alternative outlook plays in his moral philosophy. I will argue that instead of forwarding a normative ethics, Nietzsche’s appeal to an alternative moral outlook is employed in a liminal phase as a part of the process of estrangement. This is a temporary phase, however, which comes to an end with a phase of aggregation or return *to* our familiar moral values.

in the *preface* of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, where Nietzsche explicitly refers to the value of pity:

This problem of the *value* of pity and of the morality of pity... seems at first to be merely something detached, an isolated question mark; but whoever sticks with it and *learns* how to ask questions here will experience what I experienced - a tremendous new prospect opens up for him, a new possibility comes over him like a vertigo, every kind of mistrust, suspicion, fear leaps up, his belief in morality, *in all morality*, falters - finally a new demand becomes audible.

*GM preface 6*; last italics mine

Although Nietzsche begins with a concern for the value of pity, he soon realises that this involves bringing into question “all morality.” Now, the manner in which Nietzsche employs terms such as “Moralität”, “Sittlichkeit” and “Moral” - translated sometimes as morality, sometimes as ethics, and even sometimes as mores in English - throughout his writings is often ambiguous, and most likely intentionally so. However, at times Nietzsche clearly has in mind Christian moral values, and at other times he refers to features that belong to *any* type of morality at all.<sup>29</sup> Yet, what is also implied in the passage above is that when one becomes familiar with moral values, one also becomes familiar with immoral values. That is to say, not only does a familiarity with moral values render salient moral phenomena in the world, but also phenomena that conflict with those values, which, hence, show up as immoral. We have not really understood what it is to act well, for example, without also having grasped what it would mean to act badly. The result of this co-dependence is that to bring into question the value of familiar moral values, is also to bring into question the value of familiar immoral values. If one were able to see the value of our moral values as questionable, then this would also render the immoral status of opposing values questionable as well from the perspective of the moral inquirer who is familiar with moral and immoral values. For example, if

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<sup>29</sup>This distinction will be brought out in detail in chapter 2, section ‘Habituation’.

I were to bring into question the positive value of, say, the familiar values of pity, compassion and charity, I would also bring into question the negative value of the familiar opposing values such as self-reverence, fortitude in the face of adversity, and emotional self-restraint. As we have just seen, however, immoralism cannot do this since by attempting to justify immoral values, it begs the question of their value.

The further result of this is a failure to adequately bring into question the value of familiar moral values. This is because an attempt to replace familiar moral values with immoral values does not so much as bring into question the former, as to replace the content of that which is to be familiar to us - i.e., that which is to count as “good” and that which is to count as “bad”. Knowledge obtained by this type of inquiry seeks to dislodge the content of familiar moral values - say to replace ‘self-denial’ with ‘self-affirmation.’ It fails, however, to bring into question the value of the values of ‘self-denial’ and ‘self-affirmation.’ It thus does not “touch on the problem of the value” of these values.<sup>30</sup>

There is an additional concern with the immoralist position. Moral values are typically interpreted as being immoral in a reversal of the value of our familiar moral values. Take, for example, the position taken up by Callicles in book II of *The Republic*, where he challenges the conventional understanding of justice by arguing that its opposite, injustice, is in fact more according to nature than its conventional counterpart.<sup>31</sup> The worry with this approach is that, due to this reversal, we would lose familiarity with our moral values - we would no longer see

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<sup>30</sup>Note that the task of taking morality as a problem is not necessarily incompatible with the possibility of forwarding and justifying a positive ethics, but the latter project is of a different nature to that of the former. Nietzsche’s moral philosophy, I am arguing, deals mainly with the former task, and his appeal to alternative moral outlooks should be interpreted as helping with this task. It should also be noted that when Nietzsche often calls his position “immoral”, he alludes to the fact that from the position of familiarity with our moral values, the task of estrangement is immoral. This is not the same as forwarding a normative un-conventional normative position. See *Daybreak* 41, 42, 43, where Nietzsche engages in a genealogy of the philosopher, and argues that by running up against tradition and custom, the philosopher is unavoidably labelled immoral. Socrates in particular would be an excellent example of this.

<sup>31</sup>See Cooper and Hutchinson 1997, 826.

the world through them - and, hence, could not bring them into question. This may not seem like a problem for the immoralist, since a part of their argument is that conventional immoral values should replace conventional moral values. However, the danger for the immoralist is that either they underestimate the nature and depth of our familiarity with moral values which they too might still be a part of,<sup>32</sup> or they remain so external to such familiarity that they can no longer perceive the world through those values. The risk here is one of alienation from familiar moral values to the point in which the world no longer shows up through them in a familiar manner. If, however, such familiarity is lost, then so is the possibility of bringing into question the value of our *familiar* moral values. To return to the paradox facing the moral inquirer, rather than satisfying the condition of estrangement here, immoralism descends into alienation, thus failing to satisfy even the condition of familiarity.

In reply to this, one might argue that there is the possibility of taking up a position that is wholly external to all values, and, thus, that no commitment to either moral or immoral values need be implicated in the inquiry. If possible, this would avoid the charge of begging the question of the value of moral and immoral values. A common way of attempting this in contemporary moral philosophy is to orient the scope problem around what Gilbert Harman calls, in his classic text *The Nature of Morality: An Introduction to Ethics*, “the problem with ethics.”<sup>33</sup> The problem is captured in contemporary metaethics as “the problem ... of finding room for morality, or placing morality within the disenchanted, non-moral order which we inhabit, and of which we are a part.”<sup>34</sup> For this position, since this non-ethical order is deemed to have been established by the natural sciences, “the problem with ethics” is the difficulty of answering the question as to whether moral

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<sup>32</sup>We shall see the nature and depth of this familiarity with moral values in detail in chapter 2, as well as the inconspicuousness of their value.

<sup>33</sup>Harman 1977.

<sup>34</sup>See Blackburn 1998, 49.

principles “can be tested and confirmed in the way scientific principles can.”<sup>35</sup>

A part of the Anglophone secondary literature argues that Nietzsche’s reductionist “naturalism” demands an investigation that is conducted outside the entire “ethical order,” and which, in some sense, follows the results and methods of the contemporary natural sciences. Despite the highly ambiguous and problematic relation between naturalism and the natural sciences, various attempts have been made to categorise Nietzsche’s naturalism, and to draw out its implications for his moral philosophy.

For example, at one extreme, Brian Leiter claims that Nietzsche is a naturalist in so far as he follows the methods of the natural sciences.<sup>36</sup> Various weaker claims have also been made, such as Janaway’s definition of Nietzsche’s naturalism in terms of the use of causal explanation akin to that employed in the natural sciences, Geuss’s understanding of Nietzsche’s (moral) philosophy as a “natural extension of the empirical sciences”, and Emden’s classification of Nietzsche as a methodological naturalist following the methods of the ‘life sciences.’<sup>37</sup>

The general idea that I wish to pursue here is the claim that Nietzsche conducts an inquiry from a ‘value-free’ position that is akin to that of the natural sciences, and which “finds room for” the entire phenomenon of morality in the “non-ethical natural scientific world order.”<sup>38</sup> It is argued, for example, that he

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<sup>35</sup>Harman 1977, 3.

<sup>36</sup>This is Nietzsche’s supposed “methodological naturalism”. Thus, Leiter claims that “[l]ike most of the great philosophical naturalists, Nietzsche’s naturalism is fundamentally *methodological*”, where methodological naturalism involves both continuity with the results and methods of the natural sciences. See Leiter 2002, 6.

<sup>37</sup>See Janaway 2007, Geuss 2005 and Emden 2014 respectively. Note that at the other end of the extreme, Christoph Cox suggests Nietzsche is a naturalist only in so far as his explanations do not employ the supernatural (Gods and ghosts, for example). See Cox 1999. I think that Cox’s suggestion is by far the most plausible. However, it is also the least informative since it does not help us to articulate any further Nietzsche’s method and his task of acquiring moral knowledge.

<sup>38</sup>Note that commentators also subscribe Nietzsche to taking a position outside of morality without associating a strong version of naturalism to him. My subsequent criticisms against ascribing to Nietzsche a ‘value-free’ position more generally also apply to these readings. Cameron is indicative: “A major component of his [Nietzsche’s] work on morality is critique which necessitates a standpoint outside of morality.” (Note again the lower-case ‘m’.) See Cameron 2002, 18.

reduces the phenomenon of morality to psycho-social-physiological phenomena that are possible objects of natural scientific inquiry. Thus, Leiter claims that “... Nietzsche, the philosophical naturalist, aims to offer theories that explain various important human phenomena (especially the phenomenon of morality), and that do so in ways that both draw on actual scientific results, particularly in psychology... but are also *modelled* on science in the sense that they seek to reveal the causal determinants of these phenomena, typically in various physiological and psychological facts about persons.”<sup>39</sup> On this ‘natural scientific’ reading, the problem is what scope Nietzsche has to forward his own ethics in light of his reduction of all morality to value-free phenomena.<sup>40</sup>

Now, an initial doubt arises with this interpretation concerning whether an moral inquiry could really be conducted from a ‘value-free’ position. Inquiries are conducted within certain institutions, under specific criteria, in a particular medium, and so on. There is what we might call a familiar, evaluative backdrop or moral outlook from which the inquiry is conducted, and through which the inquirer perceives moral salience in the world. This would suggest that, minimally, some value would necessarily be involved during the inquiry.<sup>41</sup> A potential answer to this difficulty might be to suggest that the inquiry could isolate the aspects of the moral outlook in which the inquiry is situated. This outlook could then be reduced by a separate inquiry. The worry with this suggestion is, however, that, first, if the subsequent inquiry is to bring these aspects into view it must function in a very similar, if not the same, moral outlook as the former. If a similar outlook were sufficient, there would arise the trouble of an infinite regress. Each inquiry would in turn demand an ever new inquiry into the assumed evaluative background of

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<sup>39</sup>See Leiter 2002, 6. John Richardson follows Leiter here, but argues that Nietzsche reduces values to facts that are less about individual persons than about natural and “social” selection. See Richardson 2004, 71.

<sup>40</sup>Note that this problem also besets Rée’s approach to the extent that he attempts to ground Schopenhauer’s moral principle from a ‘value-free’ position.

<sup>41</sup>Criticisms to this effect have been raised against not only the possibility of value-free moral inquiry, but also against value-free inquiry in the natural sciences. See, for example, McDowell 1994 and Kuhn 1970. For an overview of the issue, see Lacey 2005.

the previous inquiry. If, instead, the same moral outlook is employed then the same values would be assumed by each investigation. This would give these values a strange or “queer” non-reductive quality, which would be unacceptable for the reductionist.<sup>42</sup>

This, however, is not the main issue. A ‘value-free’ approach implies that moral values are the type of phenomena which are transparent to the inquirer, so that the inquirer is able to avoid them at will. In this manner, moral phenomena are brought into view by going “outside” such phenomena, and into the value-free world of scientific inquiry. The problem is, it is not at all clear that moral values are transparent in this way, and that they could be circumvented by inquiry. This is not simply because the inquiry is institutionalised, but because the inquirer might not have such direct access to his or her familiar moral values. As we shall see in chapter two, our moral values often function in the background, as a kind of foundation that affords perception of moral salience in the world: things show up *as valuable* since we see the world through those values. Although, elements of this background can sometimes come to the fore for questioning, we shall see in chapter three in particular, how this requires, nevertheless, assuming the value of the wider evaluative background, and, hence cannot be considered in any sense “value-free”.

Moreover, attempting to take up an entirely external position from our moral values might not only be an unachievable task, but it can also prove counter-productive in so far as it moves the inquirer outside of the putative evaluative phenomena that are required to perceive moral salience in the first place, and, which, hence, would enable the very possibility of inquiry. In other words, an external, value-free, position would mean a loss of familiarity with our moral values such that moral phenomena in the world would no longer be salient for us; we would become alienated from them. If, however, such familiarity is lost, then the

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<sup>42</sup>This term is first used in this context in Mackie 1977.

possibility of bringing into view the value of our familiar moral values will also be necessarily foregone.

To further bring out this point and contrast it with what it might mean to correctly take morality as a problem, we can return to the ‘Origins of Knowledge’ aphorism (GS 355) quoted earlier. There we saw Nietzsche claim that “[w]hat is familiar is what we are used to [Das Bekannte ist das Gewohnte]; and what we are used to is most difficult to “know” - that is, to see as a problem; that is, to see as strange, as distant, as “outside us.” As a close reading of Nietzsche on this point shows, estrangement from moral values does *not* mean to take up a position “outside” of morality, but rather to bring familiar moral values into view as “outside of us” [als “ausser uns”]. This is fundamental since it indicates that moral values are not a part of some world which we can easily choose to dip in and out of at will. Rather, moral values are *a part of us*, they are (as we shall see at the end of this chapter) a part of our “flesh and blood.” They are a part of who we are since, as will become evident in the next chapter, we become familiar with them through a process of habituation.

To take up an external position to our familiar, moral values then, if at all possible, would result in moral phenomena seen through *those* values no longer showing up to the inquirer. However, if the inquirer remains “inside” either familiar morality or an alternative immorality, then the task of reduction becomes an impossible one from within the (im)morality that is to be reduced. This is because the inquiry labours towards the reduction of the putative values that are required to perceive the moral salience provided by those values in the first place.

In light of Nietzsche’s consideration of “knowledge” being mistakenly taken as that which is familiar, (as seen again in ‘the origins of knowledge’ aphorism), we can see that this naturalist reading makes an appeal to the scientific world “because this world is more familiar to us.” Moral phenomena that have now become queer in an ever more familiar scientific world order are to be familiarised into this value-free order. Knowledge of origins is to help with this task, and by



doing so it makes the erroneous assumption that “what is familiar is more easily known.” It re-familiarises the phenomenon (through its attempted reduction) thus begging, and ultimately eliminating, the question of *its* value.

It is of course true that a common theme running throughout Nietzsche’s work is the analysis of moral phenomena in terms of social, psychological and physiological phenomena. To take a pertinent example, in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Christian morality is interpreted as the upshot of a revolt by a particular social class; it is analysed as a psychological by-product of this class’ inability for action; and, it is also considered as this class’ common physiological reaction to suffering. However, as we have seen in this section, these analyses should not be understood as being employed either to criticise our moral values by means of reductionism, nor should they, however, be interpreted as attempts at justifying alternative immoral values. As we shall see in chapter four, these analyses should be interpreted, instead, as functioning as part of the *process of estrangement* that attempt to bring the value of familiar values into question.

To conclude, in this section I have argued against the possibility of being able to take morality as a problem from either a reductionist or immoralist position, or from a combination of the two. The reductionist position can at best only affect the esteem with which we hold our moral values, but is unable to perceive the value of our moral values as a questionable phenomenon. As a result, in this form it is still committed to justifying values. This applies also to immoralism in so far as it assumes the value of the alternative immoral values. Moreover, the inquirer conducting the investigation is at risk of becoming alienated from his or her familiarity with moral values by attempting to take up a position that is either a “view from nowhere”, or by conducting it from an immoral perspective. Such alienation results in the inability to perceive the moral phenomena and values that are to be “taken as a problem”, and, hence, forgoes engaging with the consequences of their loss of Christian foundations.

## 1.4 Amoralism

With the reductionism of Paul Rée subsumed under the justificatory approach seen earlier, and immoralism also rejected, there is one final candidate for taking our moral values as a problem. This is amoralism, and it will be the subject of this section.

We have seen that the justificatory approach takes up our moral values in their familiarity. That is to say, it takes our moral values as they are pre-philosophically given to us, and then seeks to ground them philosophically. It thus meets the condition of familiarity. This approach, however, denies the possibility of taking morality as a problem since by justifying the given moral values it puts the value of these values beyond question. Immoralism, on the other hand, strives to question the value of our moral values through appeal to, and justification of, alternative immoral values. However, in attempting to justify those immoral values it assumes their value. Moreover, it risks losing familiarity with our moral values since it either takes up a position of immorality, or it seeks a ‘value-free’ position. In the former instance, the moral salience of the world is no longer perceived through Christian, moral values, and in the latter, moral salience *per se* is no longer seen at all. As a result, we become alienated from our familiarity with moral values, and, hence, cannot pose the question as to their value. The condition of estrangement is not met, since such familiarity is lost. The final option to consider is a position which attempts to neither justify moral values or immoral values. Instead, its task is to undermine the possibility of such justification by either eliminating moral phenomena altogether, or, in its more moderate form, by advocating a form of moral fictionalism. More radical than the reductionist project, the amoralist denies that there are moral phenomena at all in the world. As a possible candidate for taking morality as a problem, amoralism might then be thought to be able to pose the question of the value of our moral values by questioning the very nature of the value of moral phenomena. This would be an example of an extreme rejection of the very significance of the loss of the Christian

foundation of our moral values.

In contemporary metaethical literature, the amoralist position has been theoretically posed as an “error theory.”<sup>43</sup> The position argues that all moral propositions are truth-apt, and, yet, false. That is to say, our moral judgements are indeed propositions, but there is nothing in the world to which they refer. There is thus nothing in the world which motivates us to act morally.<sup>44</sup> It is this view that I will focus on here, and it is also a position that has been ascribed to Nietzsche in the secondary literature. Before turning to it, however, one might already be sceptical as to whether the broader position of amoralism is really a potential candidate for taking morality as a problem due to its eliminative intentions. I will outline this issue first, before turning to a more nuanced account that attempts to deal with this worry.

The amoralist must, by hypothesis, take up the inquiry from “outside” of the moral phenomena in question, since such phenomena are conjectured as being non-existent. The initial concern here is that from this external position, just as in the case of reductionism seen above, the moral phenomena do not come into view for the inquirer, and, hence, he or she becomes alienated from such phenomena. This is not a problem for the amoralist *per se* since he or she does not believe that there are really any moral values that would show up in any case. However, since according to the amoralist, moral values have no actual referent, there is nothing about them specifically that can be brought into question except their very existence. Now, if I challenge the existence of moral values, I certainly challenge their value in so far as if they are shown not to exist, then their value will also be eliminated. The problem with this, however, is that such a move ultimately eliminates the possibility of finding our moral values as a problem

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<sup>43</sup>See Mackie 1977.

<sup>44</sup>For the most part, the amoralist usually crops up in the broader literature as a potential counterexample to moral judgement internalism rather than as a possible metaethical position. Here, however, I am more concerned with amoralism in the latter sense, and as a possible *approach* to taking morality as a problem. For interest in the figure of the amoralist in the former sense see Bromwich 2013 for an overview.

since it eliminates the very phenomena - our moral values - that are to be brought into view as questionable. I cannot, for example, bring into question the value of pity if I reject that pity as a value actually exists at all. The very problem, we might say, is eliminated along with the phenomena.

Now, there is a more nuanced amoralist position that has been ascribed to Nietzsche in the literature, and which attempts to alleviate some of these worries. Charles Pigden, for example, argues that “moral nihilism is a minor variant of the error theory of J. L. Mackie” and claims that Nietzsche endorses it as a kind of “meta-ethical nihilism.”<sup>45</sup> Similarly to the immoralist interpretations above, Pigden also interprets Nietzsche as positing a normative ethics of his own. To keep the two tenets consistent - that of amoralism and a positive, normative ethics - he ascribes to Nietzsche a form of fictionalism. The idea is that there is a problematic tension between Nietzsche rejecting the existence of moral phenomena and yet nevertheless offering his own normative position. The solution adhered to by Pigden, and argued for in greater detail by Nadeem Hussain, is that both the moral values that Nietzsche questions and the alternative values that he proposes should be understood as having a fictional ontological status. More specifically, Hussain argues that, if we accept that Nietzsche rejects the existence of things having value in themselves, (his metaethical nihilism), and also that Nietzsche’s free spirits are to engage in value creating practices, (as a new positive, normative ethics), then some explanation is required as to how the two commitments can co-exist.

Hussain rejects as a possible answer to this, what he calls, “subjective realism” about valuing. This is the idea that something is valuable in virtue of “the object, state of affairs, what-have-you, standing in certain relations to agents.”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>See Pigden 2007. Note also that Danto 1965, Green 2002, Ansell-Pearson 1994 and Heidegger 1979 each claim that Nietzsche endorses a more radical, metaphysical nihilism, which incorporates not only moral propositions, but all propositions *tout court*. In chapter 3, I will discuss the role of language and argue that it is efficacious in our familiarity with moral values.

<sup>46</sup>See Hussain 2007, 170.

Instead, he claims that Nietzsche has a more radical error theory in mind due to his commitments to ‘theoretical nihilism’: “the belief in valuelessness, or as Nietzsche often puts it, goallessness.”<sup>47</sup> As a result, Hussain advocates an appeal to fictionalism to understand the activity of these free spirits in a goalless and valueless world.<sup>48</sup>

It should be noted that the appeal to fictionalism here is another attempt at resolving the ‘scope problem’ that was outlined earlier. In his paper ‘Honest Illusion: Valuing for Nietzsche’s Free Spirits,’ Hussain claims that this position is the best solution to what he calls the “interpretative puzzle.”<sup>49</sup> Although the puzzle centres around the meta-ethical question of the ontological status of values, it nevertheless seeks to allocate space for a positive, normative ethics, although this time it is done so in light of Nietzsche’s critique of the meta-ethical status of all values.

There is, however, the same worry with this approach that we saw facing the version of the scope problem for the immoralist approach. That is, the value of the positive, normative ethics is assumed as it is posited, and, thus, not brought into question. These positive values lie outside the scope of the critique of moral values, and thus their value is necessarily begged.

Hussain might retort that while this may be true, his account concerns how Nietzsche’s ‘free spirits’ value and the values that *they* endorse. Thus, he could argue that this is distinct from the task of bringing into question the value of moral values, and perhaps it is to come after such a task given that these ‘free

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<sup>47</sup>See Hussain 2007, 166.

<sup>48</sup>Although I cannot go into detail here, it should be noted that Hussain’s textual support for his position is limited. He draws on ambiguous passages from HH and GS to justify this more radical position of the error theory. In chapter 2, I shall argue in detail for understanding Nietzsche’s account of valuing in terms of, what Hussain might call, ‘inter-subjective realism’ - i.e. that valuing occurs and is real, but only in so far as it arises within a dynamic of command and obedience between people in a community. Understood in this manner, there is no need to go in for a form of error theory, and many of Nietzsche’s more extreme claims about the lack of value in nature can be understood as applying to nature that lies outside of this inter-subjectivity.

<sup>49</sup>Hussain 2007, 165.

spirits' are of the future. The idea would be that once the question of the value of our moral values has been posed, new values can be posited, albeit in a fictional manner.

This response is not open to Hussain, however, since to argue for his position of moral fictionalism, he draws upon Nietzsche's critique of moral values in order to establish his claim for an error-theory about those values. As a result, moral fictionalism, if correct, would affect how we understand the task of taking morality as a problem. We should thus consider in greater detail the consequences of taking up such a position.

Similarly to the justificatory approach, by questioning the *nature* of the value of moral values, the fictionalist approach touches on the question of the *esteem* that we accord to this value. For example fictionalism *de*-values our moral values by eliminating them from the world, and then reinstating them in their fictionality; yet, similarly to the justificatory approach, it is unable to pose the question as to their value. This is because it fictionalises the evaluative orientation of this value - i.e., that this value is good for us - and our familiarity with it, but does not pose its evaluative orientation as a question. This is perhaps not surprising given that the interpretative puzzle is concerned only with the meta-ethical issue of the nature of moral values, and not with bringing into view the value of particular moral values. The result, however, is that, while in the case of the standard account of amoralism, the problem of the value of our moral values disappears with the elimination of moral phenomena, in the case of fictionalism, we might say, the fictionalisation of moral values results in the fictionalisation of the problem.<sup>50</sup>

Finally, the fictional amoralist, similar to the eliminative amoralist, inquires from a position which is supposedly "outside" of the phenomenon in question. This is fundamental if the phenomenon is to be eliminated, and then reinstated

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<sup>50</sup>Note that this is not to say that fictionalisation and illusion cannot be serious or profound. See GS Preface 4 (also drawn upon by Hussain in support of his position) where Nietzsche calls the Greeks superficial "out of profundity." Rather, the point is that fictionalising the problem does not go any step further to engaging with it.

in its fictionality. This elimination is necessarily conducted from a ‘value-free’ position, where the moral phenomena that are referred to by evaluative claims appear queer. In this manner, the approach follows very closely the reductionist position. As a result, it also suffers from the same shortcomings. That is, the moral inquirer ultimately becomes alienated from the familiar phenomena, and, as a result, neither the condition of familiarity, nor the condition of estrangement, are met.

To conclude, the advocacy of an error-theory alone is not sufficient to bring into question the value of our moral values. This is because it only concerns the meta-ethical grounding of the nature of valuing and of moral values. As we have seen with the justificatory approach in particular, knowledge of the foundations of moral values, be they of the metaphysical basis or empirical origins, is unable to pose the question of the value of moral values. It only affects the estimation of the positive value already accorded to such values. Attempts at removing such justification have the same effect; they question the esteem accorded to our moral values, but they do not touch on the question of what value they have for us.

## 1.5 The Task

In this final section, I will draw some positive conclusions concerning the nature of the task of taking morality as a problem, which will then guide the subsequent chapters of the thesis.

First, the shortcomings of reductionism and amoralism show that our familiarity with moral values has to be taken as a *sui generis* phenomenon. By this I mean that the inquirer needs to approach our moral values as a phenomenon that cannot be reduced or eliminated to other phenomena. It is a phenomenon that manifests itself, and should not be taken as an appearance or representation

of some other more basic phenomenon.<sup>51</sup> In the case of moral values, this means taking moral values in their familiarity as *moral values*. While the condition of familiarity is necessary for the inquirer to have our everyday moral values (and the phenomena that show up to them) in view, approaching them as *sui generis* during inquiry is essential so that their value can be brought into question. This is because attempts to reduce and eliminate moral values demand a position “outside” of our Christian moral outlook, and, indeed outside of our entire moral, psychological framework. The result is either a misunderstanding of the very nature of our familiarity with moral values before an inquiry gets off the ground, or taking up a position in which the inquirer becomes alienated from moral values such that familiarity with them is lost.

Second, note that the justificatory approach does take our familiarity with moral values as *sui generis*. However, it does so in a manner that necessarily assumes the value of those moral values. Thus, despite satisfying the condition of familiarity, the inquiry denies that morality could be taken as a problem. It only touches on the esteem accorded to the value of moral values but cannot see the evaluative orientation of that value as questionable. Not only then must our familiarity with moral values be taken as *sui generis*, but we must also bring the value of those values into view as a questionable phenomenon. Otherwise, the condition of estrangement will not be met. This cannot be achieved by remaining familiar with the value of our moral values, but nor cannot it be realised by taking up an external position to those values.

A further way to draw the contrast between the approaches we have seen and the method that is instead required is to consider in greater detail the nature of the questioning of the value of our moral values. We have seen that the justificatory approach, immoralism, and amoralism, all seek *to question* the phenomenon of morality in a variety of ways. The justificatory approach questions the philo-

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<sup>51</sup>Heidegger makes this kind of distinction in Heidegger 1992, 113-115. A “phenomenon” is “self-showing” [sich zeigen], whereas an “appearance” points to something else.



sophical underpinnings of the given, familiar phenomenon; immoralism (in one of its forms in particular) questions the normative claims of the phenomenon from an immoral perspective, and amoralism questions the phenomenon's existence from its "external" vantage point. However, none of the approaches, we might say, perceives the phenomenon of morality *as a questionable phenomenon*. The justificatory approach perceives morality in its *sui generis*, given familiarity, but does not perceive it in its given familiarity *as questionable*. Amoralism and immoralism attempt to perceive morality as a phenomenon to be questioned but fail to take it in its *sui generis* given familiarity as a questionable phenomenon.

Now, so far I have articulated the nature of our relation to moral values in terms of "familiarity" and the "everyday." These phenomena, however, are difficult to grasp and these concepts risk either capturing too many things, or nothing at all. This is not because they are necessarily ill-defined, but because of the nature of the phenomena that the concepts attempt to capture. Philosophers have long been aware of this issue, and in contemporary sociologies of the everyday it is a point that is well-agreed upon.<sup>52</sup> Maurice Blanchot's articulation is indicative: "whatever its other aspects, the everyday has this essential trait: it allows no hold. It escapes."<sup>53</sup> Another way that this is often put is that the everyday is that which is seen but nevertheless remains unnoticed. Understanding the nature of this familiarity with our moral values - the task of chapter two - will be fundamental then to grasp the type of inquiry required. Nietzsche gives a brief insight into the task when he deliberates on the nature of originality:

*Original* - Not that we are the first to see something new, but that we see what is old, long-familiar, seen and yet overlooked by everyone *as if it were* new, is what distinguishes genuinely original minds. [Nicht dass man etwas Neues zuerst sieht, sondern dass man das Alte,

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<sup>52</sup>See, for example, Wittgenstein: "The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something - because it is always before one's eyes.)" Wittgenstein 2010, 129. See also Jacobsen 2009 for an overview of the issue in sociologies of the everyday, and their theoretical grounding in philosophical theories.

<sup>53</sup>Quoted from Jacobsen 2009, 2.

Altbekannte, von Jedermann Gesehene und Uebersehene w i e n e u sieht, zeichnet die eigentlich originalen Köpfe aus.] The first discoverer is generally that altogether ordinary and spiritless fantasist - chance.

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Here, Nietzsche sets up this dual nature of familiarity. It is that which is seen [Gesehene], and yet overlooked [Uebersehene]. He suggests that the task is not simply to see something else, but rather to see that which is *already* seen, but to see it “as if it were new.” In the ‘Knowledge of origins’ aphorism of the *Gay Science* discussed above, Nietzsche expands on this by suggesting that this task can be achieved by bringing the familiar into view “as strange”, “as outside of us.” Thus, while the condition of familiarity suggests that the method for moral philosophy should be autochthonic, and thus anchored in the familiar, we also need some form of *estrangement from* the familiar so that we do not take it as it is given and beg the question of its value. Only in this manner will we be able to pose the question of the value of our moral values. This suggests that we are not to “step outside” of our moral psychological framework altogether, (as if this were a real possibility), but rather to bring our moral values into view *in their familiarity as strange*.

We are now in a much better position to articulate the nature of the task. Our moral values must be perceived in their familiarity as *sui generis*, but, as such, they must be perceived as a questionable phenomenon. Only then can the implications of the loss of their Christian foundations be appreciated. At this stage the paradoxical nature of the task should also have become much clearer. How is the inquirer to take our familiarity with morality as a *sui generis* phenomenon *and* also perceive it as questionable? Or: how can the inquirer be sufficiently familiar with the phenomenon of our moral values whilst also taking up that familiarity estrangedly? Finally: how can the inquirer be at once a part of our moral values, and, nevertheless, perceive them as “outside” of him or herself?

In an aphorism of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche puts the issue in his own words as follows:

The “Wanderer” Speaks - If one would like to see our European morality for once as it looks from a distance, and if one would like to measure it against other moralities, past and future, then one has to proceed like a wanderer who wants to know how high the towers in a town are: he leaves the town. “Thoughts about moral prejudice”, if they are not meant to be prejudices about prejudices, presuppose a position outside morality, some point beyond good and evil to which one has to rise, climb or fly - and in the present case at least a point beyond our good and evil, a freedom from everything “European”, by which I mean the sum of the imperious value judgements that have become part of our flesh and blood. That one wants to go precisely there, up there, may be a minor madness, a peculiar and unreasonable “you must” - for we seekers for knowledge also have our idiosyncrasies of “unfree will” - the question is whether one really can get up there.

*GS 380*

The metaphor that Nietzsche employs here likens European morality with a town, and the value of our moral values with towers that belong to the town. The metaphor suggests that just as in the case when we are in the town underneath the towers we struggle to obtain a perspective on how high those towers are, when we remain within the European morality we fail to see how valuable the values of that morality are. To continue the metaphor, we have to in some sense leave that outlook if we are to be able to take up a perspective from which we can raise the question of its value.

However, the metaphor is strained by the fact that our familiarity with moral values and the perception they afford differ radically from our geographical location in a town and the perception that it affords. While I can simply change geographical location to alter my visual perspective, and leave the town if I wish, I cannot in an analogous manner simply leave my moral values. Nietzsche suggests that this is because our moral values have “become a part of our flesh and blood.” I will go into greater detail into the nature of our familiarity with moral values in chapters two and three, but for now we can notice that Nietzsche is suggesting that our familiarity with moral values has (not only as we shall see a psychological dimension, but also) a physiological dimension. This implies that even if I were to move geographical locations and find a place outside of European morality, this

would not simply mean that I would be able to take up a position outside of that morality.

Yet, as this chapter has shown, a value-free perspective is not desirable for moral inquiry. In fact, if we pay more careful attention to the metaphor, when the wanderer leaves the town he is still in an environment from which he can see the town as a town, and is able to perceive the very *same*, familiar towers, only now from a distance. Analogously, to leave our familiar, moral values, or to go, as Nietzsche often puts it, “beyond good and evil,” does not mean to leave our moral psychological framework entirely. As Nietzsche says in *The Genealogy*, the aim of going “beyond good and evil” “does *not* mean “Beyond Good and Bad” (GM I 17). It is thus not to take up a value-free view from nowhere. The task is instead to be able to take up a position from within our moral psychological framework but which can afford sufficient distance from our moral values so that they can be brought into view as a questionable phenomenon. It is to be able to pose the radical question as to whether our moral values could be harmful to us.

## 1.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to map out the space in which a critique into our moral values is to function, so that it becomes possible to face up to the fact of the loss of their Christian foundations. To do this, I have considered various potential candidates that have appeared throughout the history of moral philosophy. To show their shortcomings I have appealed to Nietzsche’s criticisms and his own articulations of the nature and difficulty of engaging in such a critique. This has been important in not only clarifying Nietzsche’s own position (given the fact that many of the potential candidates have also been mistakenly ascribed to Nietzsche), but also to see how moral inquiry will have to function.

I have argued against approaches in moral philosophy that seek to justify moral values, as well as approaches that seek to reduce or fictionalise moral values. In the former case, the value of our moral values is begged. In the latter cases, the value of

our moral values is reduced or eliminated as a possible object of inquiry. I have also criticised the idea of the need to forward an alternative normative theory to raise this question. Rather than helping in the task of critique, the alternative theory parasitically takes over the problems faced by the other justificatory approaches. Instead, to take morality as a problem requires that one take our familiarity with moral values as a *sui generis* phenomenon, i.e, as a phenomenon that cannot be either explained in terms of another phenomenon or explained away in its entirety; *and* to take morality as a *questionable* phenomenon, and, hence, not simply in its familiar givenness.

As we have seen, this leads us into a paradox. As Europeans, we already meet the condition of familiarity. As long as we maintain the *sui generis* nature of our familiarity to moral values, then we will not risk becoming alienated from them. However, to render the value of our moral values questionable, we need to estrange ourselves from such familiarity so that we can bring the value of our moral values into view as questionable. This will allow us to see that our moral values could be otherwise, and, to raise the question as to whether these values could be harmful for us. We shall see that to achieve this will require philosophical work. If we are to maintain familiarity but nevertheless find the familiar phenomenon questionable, we need to find a way of bringing into view our Christian moral values as questionable *in their familiarity*.

Finally, it should be noted that the paradoxical nature of this task cannot be correctly understood merely as a *logical* puzzle.<sup>54</sup> It is, for Nietzsche, fundamentally a practical, and moral issue, a challenge to who we are, to everything “European” about us. Nietzsche claims that our familiarity with Christian, European values runs right through our “flesh and blood”, and that, as a result, the very idea of perceiving our moral values as “outside” appears as a mad and

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<sup>54</sup>The nature of the task is then not comparable to the “scope problem” or “interpretative puzzle.” These latter problems concern issues of logical compatibility. The need for maintaining familiarity and achieving estrangement concerns our relation to our moral values and hence has a bearing on our relation to our everyday culture and our location within it.

unreasonable need that besets those who seek moral knowledge. It is through this paradox nevertheless that a critique of our moral values has to be undertaken. It will thus be the central focus of this thesis.

# Chapter 2

## Our Familiarity with Moral Values

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter will focus on how we can begin to navigate through the paradox outlined in chapter one: that we require familiarity with Christian moral values (to perceive moral phenomena in the world through them), and yet, also estrangement from such familiarity (to bring into question the value of these moral values and genuinely engage with the loss of foundations of these values).<sup>1</sup> As we have seen, this requires taking our moral values in their familiarity as a *sui generis* phenomenon in a manner that avoids begging the question of their value, whilst also achieving estrangement from such familiarity (unlike in the justificatory approaches), without, however, becoming alienated from this familiarity (as seen in the cases of immoralism and amoralism).

As a way into this, I will begin by considering the nature of our pre-philosophical familiarity with moral values. We shall see that to become familiar with moral

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<sup>1</sup>Note that while Nietzsche attempts to pose this question in his works, he never directly engages with the issues surrounding the possibility of raising this question. This and the subsequent chapter will tackle this issue.

values is not in itself a philosophical task or achievement. Our familiarity with moral values is prior to any philosophical engagement or inquiry with those values, and affords the initial and basic relation with those values prior to philosophical investigation. Estrangement, on the other hand, is of a philosophical nature for the moral inquirer. It requires a particular type of investigation, which, as so far understood, demands that our familiarity with moral phenomena be taken up in a *sui generis* manner, and, simultaneously, *as questionable*.

This chapter has two central aims. First it will show how our familiarity with moral values is *sui generis*. To do this I will not restrict the account of this familiarity to particular Christian moral values, but rather to moral values *per se*. This will allow me to articulate the nature of our broader moral psychological framework, and to show that we can be (and indeed are) familiar with more than one moral outlook. This latter possibility will be important for the task of estrangement taken up in chapter four, since an appeal to an alternative moral outlook to that of our Christian moral outlook will play an important role for the task of estrangement. The second aim of the chapter will be to explain the phenomenon touched upon in the thesis introduction: how Christian moral values have remained dominant in Europe despite the widespread decline of Christianity. This explanation will play a central role in affording us insight into the nature of inquiry needed to bring the value of these moral values into question, which will be the main concern of chapters three and four.

This chapter will begin by arguing that our familiarity with moral values is achieved through a particular process of habituation, captured by the concept *ethesin* found in Aristotle's moral philosophy. I will argue that this habituation functions via a dynamic of command and obedience that cannot be understood purely in terms of reason or nature. I will also show how it cannot be reduced to either mere mechanism or spontaneous instinct. This will be undertaken to show how our familiarity is *sui generis* due to the presence of this dynamic. I will begin by arguing for this at the social level, before showing its applicability



at the level of the individual soul. For this, I shall appeal to Nietzsche's moral philosophy, which, I claim, moves beyond that of Aristotle's by showing how the dynamic of command and obedience in the soul functions in terms of an *ascetic* relation of willing where the feeling of distance (or what Nietzsche calls the *pathos of distance*) between command and obedience affords familiarity with value.

I will then argue that ascetic habituation has led to what Edmund Husserl calls the *sedimentation* of our moral values such that they have become fixed and form a stable background upon which we are able to orient ourselves in the world. This phenomenon will show how our familiarity with moral values is predicated on taking the value of our moral values for granted. We shall see that this phenomenon of sedimentation has two effects. On the one hand, through habituation we are able to become more receptive and active to the moral demands of the situation. On the other hand, resistance and tension to such activity reduces. I will argue that this reduction is not a reduction in cognition *per se* on the part of the moral agent, as typically argued for in the secondary literature, but rather that it is a decrease in the possibility of seeing the value of our moral values as a questionable phenomenon. In other words, I will stress that what is lost due to habituation and sedimentation is a sense of wonder about the value of our moral values, rather than a loss in conscious awareness of that value. This will help explain how our Christian moral values remain dominant notwithstanding the decline in faith in Christianity. This will be further supported in chapter three when I consider more specifically the role of cognition in both our familiarity with moral values and moral inquiry.

## 2.2 Habituation

I will begin by arguing that our familiarity with our Christian moral values should be understood as a kind of habituation. However, the account of habituation that I will forward will, in fact, offer us an understanding of how we become familiar with moral values *per se*, as a part of our wider moral psychological framework. I

will show that habituation is a good candidate for understanding this familiarity because, when understood correctly, we shall see that it satisfies the condition of being a *sui generis* phenomenon. Second, whilst being *sui generis*, understanding our familiarity with moral values in this way will also not necessarily lead to denying that morality could be a problem. Rather than begging the question of the value of our moral values, it will leave open the possibility of attempting to bring the value of our moral values into view as a questionable phenomenon. As a result, the pitfalls that we saw the justificatory approach succumbing to in chapter one will be avoided. This is because, as we shall see, habituation leads to sedimentation, and although sedimentation renders inconspicuous the value of our moral values, it is the type of process that has the possibility of being disrupted and altered. This will further allow us to explain how despite a loss of faith in the Christian religion, the value of our moral values is not seen as a questionable phenomenon.

Before offering an account of our familiarity with moral values in terms of habituation, I want to first make it clear how this approach differs from the justificatory approach. It is central to note here that the type of account I will give specifically concerns our *familiarity* with moral values, and *not* with the moral values themselves. That is to say, while I will offer an explanation as to how we become familiar with moral values, I will remain neutral on the metaethical question of the metaphysical status of our moral values - i.e. whether these values are metaphysical or contingent - as well as on the question of the scope of those values - i.e. whether they are universal or relative. My interest will focus specifically on the process by which moral phenomena come to show up to us in the world.

Now, there is a *prima facie* sense in which we become habituated to moral values, which we find first articulated in systematic form in Aristotle's moral philosophy. Aristotle is the first to delineate habituation as a *distinct* area of moral philosophical inquiry. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* in particular, Aristotle forms an area of inquiry into morality called ethics [ethos] that analyses habituation

[ethesin] and the formation of character [hexis].<sup>2</sup> I will begin by outlining Aristotle's position, before then building upon it through recourse to Nietzsche's moral philosophy. The reason for this order of explanation is that Aristotle offers us an account of the phenomenon of habituation in relation to the phenomena of custom and obedience, which is underdeveloped in Nietzsche's own moral philosophy. With this in place, it will then become clearer how Nietzsche's position moves beyond Aristotle's through his development of the phenomenon of the *pathos of distance*. I will also be able to then defend the position against two potential objections that argue against locating habituation at the centre of this process of familiarity.

Aristotle argues early on in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that moral knowledge is a form of practical wisdom [phronēsis], which necessarily requires correct habituation for the constitution of virtuous character [aretē]. An account of this, Aristotle importantly claims, cannot be adequately given by inquiring into nature [physis], or reason [logos] alone. To show why this should be the case, Aristotle considers the position of a potential inquirer into moral matters:

One must begin from what is known, but this has a twofold meaning: there are things known to us, on the one hand, and things known simply, on the other. Perhaps it is necessary for us, at least, to begin from the things known to us. Hence he who will listen adequately to the noble things and the just things, and to the political things generally, must be brought up nobly by means of habituation.

*Aristotle 2011, 1095b1-7*

First, Aristotle makes the same claim that I argued for in the previous chapter, i.e. that the starting position for the inquirer is with that which is familiar to him or her, since without such familiarity, moral phenomena fail to show up. Moreover, he states that to acquire such familiarity in the first place requires being “brought

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<sup>2</sup>It is from the translation of the Greek “hexis” into the Latin “habitus” that the etymological link can be more clearly seen between the Greek and the English words. This occurred some time in the middle ages. See Carlisle 2014.

up nobly by means of habituation.” He then extrapolates this point through appeal to Hesoid:

For the “that” is a principle, and if this should be sufficiently apparent, there will be no need of the “why” in addition, and a person of the sort indicated has or would easily get hold of principles. As for him to whom neither of these is available, let him listen to the words of Hesoid:

This one is altogether best who himself understands all things  
.....  
But good in his turn too is he who obeys one who speaks well.  
But he who neither himself understands nor, in listening to another,  
Takes this to his heart, is a useless man.

*Aristotle 2011 1095b7-13*

“The that” is a first principle, obtained through upbringing, which involves having practical wisdom [phronesis] as to how to behave morally. Importantly, while there are different ways of obtaining the first principle depending on the phenomena that are to be investigated, in the case of ethics habituation is the way.<sup>3</sup> I agree with Myles Burnyeat on this point and his endorsement of the interpretation of several ancient commentators on the *Nicomachean Ethics*: “The ancient commentators are agreed that Aristotle has in mind knowledge about actions in accordance with the virtues; these actions are *the things familiar to us from which we must start*, and what we know about them is that they are noble and just.”<sup>4</sup>

Aristotle also implies here that although “the why” is necessary for “best” moral practice, it can come later. It is a contentious issue in the literature what Aristotle has in mind here by appealing to “the why.” It is well beyond the scope of this chapter and thesis, however, to consider this in any detail.<sup>5</sup> It is of

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<sup>3</sup>See 1098b3:“... and “the that” is the first thing and principle. Some principles are observed by means of induction, some by perception, some by a certain habituation, and others in other ways.”

<sup>4</sup>Burnyeat 1980, 71; my italics.

<sup>5</sup>It is a contentious issue in the literature as to whether “the why” is a part of best moral practice and, hence, whether and in what sense Aristotle is committed to a form of cognitivism and intellectualism. See Moss 2012 for a rejection of this position in favour of non-rational

relevance, though, to note that while habituation without “the why” is sufficient, in the words of Hesoid, to be “good,” (i.e. through “obeying one who speaks well”), without habituation one has nothing to further understand and is, again in the words of Hesoid, “a useless man.”<sup>6</sup> As a result, habituation is located at the centre of the process of becoming familiar with moral values.<sup>7</sup>

Aristotle also articulates the process of habituation here in terms of *obedience*. He states that one can obtain “the that” by “obeying one who speaks well.” This suggests that the process of familiarity is one of habituated obedience to someone else who is already habituated well. This is important since, as we shall see in the next section, the dynamic of command and obedience will be central to an understanding of the process of our familiarity with moral values in terms of habituation. Indeed, it will be this dynamic that will show us how habituation is a non-reducible *sui generis* phenomenon.

## 2.3 Obedience to Custom

To further build on Aristotle’s account of the role of habituation in particular I will now turn to Nietzsche’s moral philosophy. This is because, first, I wish to draw on particular arguments that Nietzsche offers against competing accounts of how we understand the nature of our familiarity with moral values. These positions are that of biological determinism and rationalism. By arguing against

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virtue. See McDowell 1998 for a reading to the contrary. It has been argued that the purpose of the *Nicomachean Ethics* is to provide such a “why” to those who already have the principle “the that”. See Burnyeat 1980. I think that this idea is broadly correct although I cannot go into further details here.

<sup>6</sup>This priority of habituation is also expressed by John Dewey in his essay ‘The place of habit in conduct’: “Only the man whose habits are already good can know what the good is” Dewey 1998, 30.

<sup>7</sup>My interpretation of *The Nicomachean Ethics* on the point that familiarity with moral values occurs through a process of habituation roughly converges with McDowell 1994, Burnyeat 1980 and Vasiliou 1996. It runs against the interpretations of Irwin 1988 and MacIntyre 1988 who claim that moral familiarity could be achieved without necessarily requiring correct upbringing. For specific criticisms against McDowell’s interpretation of Aristotle, see chapter 3, section ‘Between Dreyfus and McDowell’ of this thesis.

them, I will strengthen my claim that the process of habituation is *sui generis* by arguing that it involves a non-reducible dynamic of command and obedience that lies at the heart of our familiarity with moral values. Second, I will argue that Nietzsche's understanding of our familiarity with moral values moves beyond that of Aristotle's. Nietzsche's employment of the concept of the *pathos of distance*, as we shall see in subsequent sections, will give us a more detailed understanding of our moral psychological framework, and, will in turn help us to distinguish between different moral outlooks.

We can see a general indication as to how our familiarity with moral values should be understood according to Nietzsche if we again return to the 'origins of knowledge' aphorism of *The Gay Science* (GS 355). There, he defines the familiar in the following manner: "the familiar is that which we are used to." The English translation is somewhat less informative than the original German, which is "Das Bekannte ist das Gewohnte." The concept *Das Gewohnte* suggests not only that which 'we are used to', but also that which we become habituated to and accustomed to. This corresponds well to the concept of *ethesin* in Aristotle.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>In recent Anglophone literature, there have been two main ways that commentators have looked to Aristotle to interpret Nietzsche's moral philosophy. The first involves a consideration of Nietzsche as a possible virtue ethicist. See, for example, Swanton 2014. Cf. MacIntyre 2007. The second turns to Nietzsche for resources to construct a better account of our moral psychology than the traditional positions offered by the likes of Aristotle, Kant and Hume. See Katsafanas 2016, Knobe and Leiter 2007. More often than not, it is suggested that Nietzsche's account lies closest to that of Aristotle's. See Katsafanas 2016, Hunt 1991, cf. Knobe and Leiter 2007. Interestingly enough, in the secondary literature on the continent, it has been argued, more or less to the contrary of these Anglophone approaches, that an appeal to Aristotle offers a fundamental "corrective" or "solution" to Nietzsche's criticism and challenge to our understanding of morality, and of law and custom in particular. See P. C. Smith 2000 and Mootz 2007, who both appeal to Gadamer's appropriation of Aristotle. Mootz defends Gadamer on this issue against Derrida's "more radical Nietzschean approach." Here the idea is that recourse to Aristotle - made by the likes of Heidegger and Gadamer in particular - offers a way out of the "predicament" that Nietzsche's own position supposedly leaves us in with regards to our understanding of moral phenomena. The standard line of criticism is that Nietzsche reduces law and custom to contingent relations of power and dominance. This interpretation of Nietzsche as a "positivist" is offered by Habermas 2015, and Vining 1995. See Sedgwick 2013, however, who offers an excellent rebuttal to these interpretations. In this chapter, I will argue, on the one hand, that Nietzsche understands our familiarity with moral values as a *sui generis* process of habituation in Aristotelian terms. I will thus deny the possibility that an appeal to Aristotle might help us "overcome" Nietzsche's position. On the other hand, however, I will reject from the outset the claim that Nietzsche offers anything like a neo-Aristotelian normative virtue ethics. The reason for this is that such a normative project is essentially *justificatory* in its attempts

Nietzsche expands on this idea in particular relation to moral values as early as in *Human all too Human*, in the section entitled ‘On the history of moral sentiments’. There, he offers his first clear definition of what it means to be moral. “Being moral or ethical means obeying ancient established law or custom.” [Moralisch, sittlich, ethisch sein heisst Gehorsam gegen ein altbegründetes Gesetz oder Herkommen haben.] (HH 96). It is important to stress that Nietzsche believes this applies to all types of moralities, and not only to our Christian moral values. Moreover, Nietzsche has no intentions of making any terminological distinction of his own here between “moralisch,” “sittlich,” and “ethisch.” They should all be understood in terms of obedience to laws and customs.

Nietzsche’s adherence to this approach of understanding morality fundamentally in terms of obedience to custom and law is expressed again in his later book *Daybreak*, where this time he gives it much greater prominence. In book 1 aphorism 9 he asserts that his “fundamental proposition” [der Hauptsatz] is that “[m]orality [Sittlichkeit] is nothing other (therefore no more!) than obedience to customs [Sitten], of whatever kind they may be; customs [Sitten], however, are the conventional way [herkömmliche] of behaving and evaluating” (D 9; translation modified).<sup>9</sup> And once more, this time in *Beyond Good and Evil*, he makes the same assertion and develops it further:

What is essential in “heaven and on earth” seems to be, to say it once more, that there should be *obedience* over a long period of time and in a *single direction*: given that, something always develops and has developed, for whose sake it is worthwhile to live on earth; for example, virtue, art, music, dance, reason, spirituality - something transfiguring, subtle, mad, divine.

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at grounding particular virtues as *moral knowledge*. For criticism of this kind of justificatory approach, see chapter 1.

<sup>9</sup>The clear continuity between Nietzsche’s understanding of morality in terms of as custom from *Human all too Human* to *Daybreak* makes Leiter and Clark’s claim in their introduction to the English translation of the latter text highly implausible. They argue that Nietzsche finds a new “important role for custom in the phenomenon of morality” (D xxix) in *Daybreak* that was not present in his earlier works. Instead, I think that what we find in *Daybreak* is a more focused, book-length consideration of this chief proposition, which was nevertheless already clearly present in *Human all too Human*.

Nietzsche relates sustained and directed obedience to the development of familiarity with valuable phenomena and practices. In the same aphorism, Nietzsche claims, just like we saw Aristotle doing earlier, that this habituated obedience cannot be fully understood if it is reduced to the phenomena of either nature [physis] or reason [logos] alone. In making this argument, Nietzsche, similarly to Aristotle, identifies obedience as the feature of habituation that renders it, in my terminology, a *sui generis* phenomenon.

Every morality [Moral] is, as opposed to *laisser aller*, a bit of tyranny against “nature” [Natur]; also against “reason” [Vernunft]; but this in itself is no objection, as long as we do not have some other morality which permits us to decree that every kind of tyranny and unreason is impermissible. What is essential and inestimable in every morality [Moral] is that it constitutes a long compulsion [dass sie ein langer Zwang ist]...

First, Nietzsche claims not only that every morality is non-reducible to “nature”, but that every morality works tyrannically *against* “nature”. As we shall see, this is because every morality pits “nature” against itself when humans live together in communities. However, Nietzsche also qualifies this later in the aphorism by suggesting that morality is still a part of “nature” since, as we shall see, it should be understood as a kind of *second* nature.

Second, Nietzsche states that every morality also works in an unreasonable, tyrannical manner that functions *against* “reason”. Nietzsche argues for this by claiming along with Aristotle that humans obey more out of coercion than out of reason. Obedience is often more akin to a coercive submission to tyranny, than to compliant adherence grounded in deliberation. Moreover, many of the customs and laws that have been obeyed throughout the ages, Nietzsche claims, have been capricious and arbitrary. Again, however, Nietzsche qualifies this later in



the aphorism by stating that this sustained obedience has made possible the very development of reason by rendering humans more uniform and regular creatures.<sup>10</sup>

Now, it should be noted that in the above quoted aphorism from *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche puts both of the terms “nature” and “reason” in scare quotes. This suggests that he has particular referents in mind as to what he wishes to contrast the domain of the moral with, and that these referents may not be what he himself takes reason and nature to be. In what follows here, I will take up Nietzsche’s claims in relation to two particular positions that offer rival accounts to our understanding of our familiarity with moral values: that of biological determinism and rationalism. The aim will be to show how our familiarity with moral values is *sui generis* by arguing that this familiarity cannot be understood solely in terms of nature as understood by biological determinists, or solely in terms of reason as understood by certain rationalists. Instead, it should be understood fundamentally in terms of habitual obedience.

The biological determinist position claims that heredity factors that are fixed at birth are decisive in determining our familiarity with moral values. We are born as ready-made commanders or obeyers with a propensity for perceiving moral values and acting in a moral way due to biological inheritance of psycho-physiological traits. Learning, training, education and upbringing, it claims, have minimal bearing on this process. Knobe and Leiter 2007 argue that Nietzsche himself endorses just such a position, which they describe in the following manner:

...individuals are simply born with a certain psycho-physical package of traits (the person’s distinctive type-facts); these type-facts play a powerful role in determining one’s behavior and values, a far more powerful role than education or upbringing or conscious choice; indeed, a person’s crucial conscious choices and values are themselves explicable in terms of these type-facts. That one is a “moral” agent

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<sup>10</sup>D 18 makes this same point: “Nothing has been purchased more dearly [through ascetic self-cruelty] than that little bit of human reason and feeling of freedom that now constitutes our pride.” The aphorism continues with Nietzsche’s interesting suggestion that we fail to see this precisely due to such pride.

is explained by one's biological inheritance, the type-facts; that one is not a moral agent is similarly explained.

Knobe and Leiter 2007, 90

Now, there are two arguments that I will make against this account. The first is that familiarity with moral values requires a *process* that moves in a uniform direction, thus restricting "nature" to a particular form of development. As we shall see in much more detail later in this chapter, this does not only mean that certain behaviours of individuals are fought against within a community, but also that within an individual certain drives and desires are also attacked and restrained. The only way that this can occur, I will argue, is through an habitual *ascetic* relation of command and obedience between individuals and between competing forces of the individual soul.<sup>11</sup> This phenomenon pits "nature" against "nature" through the phenomenon of moral development. It is a *process* by which certain aspects of nature are held in check and altered.

The biological determinist might reply here that although such a process might indeed take place, it should be explained more in terms of our biological inheritance than in terms of habituation and upbringing. The retort would be that biological inheritance is the decisive factor for this process. To show why this is an insufficient response, we have to consider how this whole process of becoming familiar with moral values only occurs for human beings in virtue of growing up in a community. As I will argue in greater detail in the subsequent sections of this chapter, the dynamic of command and obedience arises and exists *between* human beings, and in a parallel manner between competing forces of the human soul. In both cases, this only arises between human beings living in a community. As Peter Sedgwick puts it, "[o]ur animality, however, is never conceivable as mere bestiality. Human animality is something that is tempered and fashioned

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<sup>11</sup>This will be developed in the sections 'The Continuum of Compulsion and the Pathos of Distance' and 'The Soul' below. See also TI 'morality as anti-nature' 1, 2, where Nietzsche describes the fight of morality against the passions through (radical) habituated obedience.

by cultural conditions inexorably associated with communal life. We are, from the outset, in our origins beings of custom.”<sup>12</sup> What the biological determinists would call a “propensity for command and for obedience” cannot be located solely in the individual’s genetic make-up. It is rather a phenomenon that only arises in the social milieu *between* human beings co-existing in a community. That is to say, it is only within such a community that anything like a commander and obeyer could come to exist.

Additionally, the central feature of the dynamic of command and obedience for familiarity with moral values is *stability*, or, as Nietzsche puts it, obedience in a particular direction over a long period of time. This is as true at the level of the soul (which I shall later come to) for the development of character [hexis] as it is for the community and the development of politics. This stability, however, has to be *achieved* through a process - a political dynamic achieved habitually - and, hence, cannot be simply given biologically.

Our familiarity with moral values then is not a phenomenon that can be reduced to “nature” when that conception of nature reduces the process of moral habituation to biological traits. The dynamic of command and obedience that arises among human beings of custom adds, we might say, a new layer to this nature, a *second* nature. This layer is still natural though in so far as it is dependent on human activity and relations for its existence and maintenance.<sup>13</sup>

Let us now turn to the relation of reason to our familiarity to moral values. In what follows, I will argue against the position that claims that our familiarity with moral values is determined fundamentally by reason rather than by habituation. This position suggests that we become familiar with moral values fundamentally through a process of reasoning, and, not through habituated obedience to custom. This position is sometimes termed “moral intellectualism,” since it ties the type

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<sup>12</sup>Sedgwick 2013, 44.

<sup>13</sup>See Siemens 2015 for an account of the conflictual relation between first and second nature, understood in terms of the distinction between law and nature.

of reasoning required to obtain familiarity with moral values to cognitive activity and propositional knowledge, in contrast to practical know-how.<sup>14</sup> Thus, this position is essentially a form of moral cognitivism, which suggests that we can obtain moral knowledge by questioning our reasons for doing that which is just and right.<sup>15</sup>

The main argument against this position that I will raise is that people, laws, and customs command, and that the nature of this command is never purely cognitive. This is because command functions via imposition that *compels* one into obedience. This occurs because, as Aristotle argues in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, customs are obeyed due to an imposition of command that is more tyrannical than reasonable. This is because we are on the whole more receptive to laws [nomoi] and customs [ētheē]<sup>16</sup> than to reason and speech [logos] alone. Thus, Aristotle writes: “[a]nd, in like manner, it is not sufficient if people when they are young attain the correct rearing and care; rather, once they have reached adulthood they must also make a practice of these things and be thus habituated. And for these matters - indeed, for life as a whole more generally - we would need laws. For the many obey the governance of necessity more than of speech [logos], and of punishments more than of what is noble.” (NE 1180a1-5). This is because we find ourselves as a part of “the many”<sup>17</sup> as akratic.<sup>18</sup>

To see how this is the case, we can consider how the enforcement of law and

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<sup>14</sup>See, for example, Williamson and Stanley 2001. See also Noë 2005 for a criticism of this position.

<sup>15</sup>This position has, for example, often been ascribed to Socrates due to his equation of virtue with knowledge. See Segvic 2006 for an overview of the arguments for and against.

<sup>16</sup>The main difference between law and custom here refers to whether it is written or unwritten, and to who the enforcer is: “But whether these laws are written or unwritten would seem to make no difference, nor whether, through them, one person or many will be educated, just as it does not matter either in the case of music or gymnastic and the other practices. For just as it is the laws and customs [ēthē] that hold sway in cities, so also it is the speeches and habits of the father that do so in households...” 1180b1-5.

<sup>17</sup>The “many” [hoi polloi] here should not be understood as reference to a political class, but rather to all those who have not arrived at ethical virtue. Barring those touched by the divine, this includes everyone.

<sup>18</sup>“So the person lacking self-restraint is like a city that votes for all that it ought to vote for and has serious laws, yet it makes use of none of them...” 1152a 15, 20. I will not be able to go directly into the issue of akrasia here. See Burnyeat 1980.

custom is often achieved violently. It does not simply function in a manner of making someone “see reason,” but rather of compelling them into obedience.<sup>19</sup> As a result, it typically involves the suffering of pain<sup>20</sup> and also its infliction. Nietzsche, for example, describes how the command of “thou shalt” has been burned into the memory via instruments of torture in previous (but not so distant) centuries in Europe.<sup>21</sup> Michel Foucault also highlights this in the introduction to *Discipline and Punish*, where he argues that in Europe we have become less barbarous not because we have become “morally better” and more reasonable, but because we have been made more uniform and regular through disciplinary mechanisms.<sup>22</sup>

Nietzsche develops this argument by considering the phenomenon of promise-making, which we shall look at in greater detail later in the chapter. We are not particularly good at keeping our promises until we become highly regulated creatures. Due to this, laws and customs need to be *en-forced* until our behaviour to them becomes habituated.<sup>23</sup> Over time, when the authority of the custom no longer becomes a question for us it is obeyed out of its own authority. Thus, in *Daybreak* Nietzsche states the following: “What is tradition? A higher authority which one obeys, not because it commands what is *useful* to us, but because it *commands*” (D 9).<sup>24</sup> At this stage, obedience to that command, even if it

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<sup>19</sup>John McDowell’s own Aristotelian account does not follow Aristotle as faithfully here as McDowell perhaps thinks, since McDowell fails to consider this violent aspect of rendering obedient. I will consider this criticism against McDowell in detail in chapter 3.

<sup>20</sup>Thus, Aristotle says that “[f]or living in a moderate and controlled way is not pleasant to the many, especially the young. Hence by means of laws, the rearing and the regular practices involved must have already been put into the proper order, for once these become habitual, they will not be painful” 1179b33. See the above footnote on how we should understand Aristotle’s use of “the many.”

<sup>21</sup>See GM II 3.

<sup>22</sup>See Foucault 2014.

<sup>23</sup>As we shall see later, this suggests that the formation of the individual is achieved *through* habituation, and, hence, through social participation. See Siemens 2006 who argues for this being Nietzsche’s position.

<sup>24</sup>Jean-Marie Guyau makes the same point: “Is it not precisely the characteristic of natural inclinations, habits, customs, to command the individual without giving any reason? Custom is respected in individual consciousness or in the state, as Pascal has said, “for this one reason that it is accepted.” And: “[t]he authority of law is sometimes based “entirely on itself” without attaching itself to any principle. “The law is law, and nothing more.”” Guyau 1898, 89.

is capricious, affords familiarity with value: “...this tyranny, this caprice, this rigorous and grandiose stupidity has *educated* the spirit. Slavery is, as it seems, both in the cruder and in the more subtle sense, the indispensable means of spiritual discipline and cultivation, too” (BGE 188).

This is not to say, however, that reason has no part to play in the process by which we become familiar with moral values. I will develop the more cognitive elements of this familiarity in chapter three in particular. Here, it can be noted that the force that compels obedience in an habitual manner is not a brute force. While customs may be “unreasonable” and “stupid”, they are also often infused with reason, in particular in the form of laws. Thus Aristotle states: “[t]he command characteristic of a father does not have such strength or compulsion behind it, nor indeed does the command of one man in general, unless he is a king or something of that sort. But the law does have a compulsory power, it being speech [logos] that proceeds from a certain prudence and intellect” (NE 1180a20). Indeed, this is further brought out by Aristotle’s characterisation of the figure of the ‘skilled legislator’: “And perhaps it is necessary also for someone who wishes to make others better through his care, whether these be many or few, to attempt to become a skilled legislator [nomothetēs], if it should be through laws [nomoi] that we become good” (NE 1180b25). The point here, however, is that we do not come to see such reasons for acting ethically well in a passive or inert manner, but rather as themselves compulsory powers.

To conclude, in this section I have claimed that the habitual process of obedience is essential for becoming familiar with moral values. I have argued against two competing accounts of this familiarity that attempt to explain the decisive factor of its acquisition either in terms of nature or in terms of reason. Instead, I have attempted to show that our familiarity only arises through the interrelation of human beings co-existing in a social dynamic of command and obedience. This is not to say that biology and reason do not have a part to play in the process, but rather that they are not determining factors on their own.

In the next section, I will lend support to the claim that this dynamic - which, as we shall see, is essentially a dynamic of command and obedience - is the defining feature of our familiarity with moral values, which renders this familiarity a *sui generis* phenomenon. I will do this by arguing that this familiarity cannot be reduced to either pure mechanism or pure spontaneity. To do so, I will expand on the notion of obedience, and I will introduce in greater detail the role of command. I will continue to draw upon Nietzsche's moral philosophy, and appeal to Aristotle's work in support when appropriate. I will claim that we should understand our familiarity with moral values as occurring on a *sui generis*, yet variable, *continuum* of compulsion. This will help us to later explain how we can become familiar with different values from different moral outlooks, and to tentatively suggest that one particular outlook - the Christian moral outlook - has become dominant in contemporary Europe.

## 2.4 The Continuum of Compulsion and the Pathos of Distance

In the previous section, I argued that force is an important part of habituation since compulsion is required to make people obey customs and laws. However, it would be reductive and erroneous to fully equate compulsion with force. One can, as the classic example goes, forcefully move or throw a stone, and do so repeatedly, but the stone will never become compelled and habituated to continue moving in such a manner.<sup>25</sup> If a legislator imposes law and custom *solely* through the use of force - if we take the notion of "tyrannical" in its most extreme sense - then in fact the legislator should no longer be understood as a legislator at all, since that which is imposed would no longer be law, but *only* force. Indeed, we might say that the sole imposition of force in relation to a living being is more akin to

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<sup>25</sup>See Aristotle 2011 1114a.

the wielding of power of a savage, than that of the skilled legislator suggested by above Aristotle. Aristotle employs the term ‘brutishness’ [thēriotēs] to capture this type of imposition, and notes that it lies outside the domain of the moral.<sup>26</sup>

Nietzsche also conceives of the extreme tyrant in terms of a savage animal. It is what he infamously terms the “blond-beast” and the “beast of prey,” who he suggests is the true ancestor of the “noble class.”<sup>27</sup> As we find in Aristotle, this beast exerts force and not legislation and acts outside the boundaries of law and custom:

Here there is one thing we shall be the last to deny: he who knows these “good men” only as enemies knows only *evil enemies*, and the same men who are held so sternly in check *inter pares* by custom, respect, usage, gratitude, and even more by mutual suspicion and jealousy, and who on the other hand in their relations with one another show themselves so resourceful in consideration, self-control, delicacy, loyalty, pride, and friendship - once they go outside, where the strange, the *stranger* is found, they are not much better than uncaged beasts of prey [...] One cannot fail to see at the bottom of all these noble races the beast of prey, the splendid *blonde beast* prowling about avidly in search of spoil and victory; this hidden core needs to erupt from time to time, the animal has to get out again and go back to the wilderness...

*GM I 11*

Nietzsche also highlights the fact that communities and social classes that are “strangers” to the “noble class” often experience the activity of that class as barbaric. This is because they do not experience the activity as a compulsion, but as an externally imposed force. Now, while the imposition of pure, tyrannical force is wielded by the savage animal and not a legislator, it is imposed on an object that is more akin to what Aristotle terms an “animate tool” rather than a subject capable of being compelled.<sup>28</sup> This is because in this case, power is

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<sup>26</sup>“Each of these conditions [due to nature, passivity, or illness] falls outside the defining boundaries of vice, as does brutishness as well” 1149a.

<sup>27</sup>See GM I 11 and GM II 17.

<sup>28</sup>“But neither is there friendship for a horse or an ox, nor for a slave in so far as he is a slave: there is nothing common, since a slave is an animate tool, and a tool an inanimate slave” NE 1161b.



exerted on an object purely for *instrumental* purposes.<sup>29</sup> This means of exerting force resolves into the dynamic that we would call causal and mechanical. That is to say, the movement of an object is affected in a causal manner based on the instrumental demands of the subject. No command or obedience is required here.

Neither the savage animal, nor the animate tool can then be said to be engaged in a dynamic of compulsion. In other words, no commanding or obeying occurs, and we are not yet in the *sui generis* domain of the moral. For there to be habituated obedience that compels action, the legislator must take the subject *as a subject* that is to be legislated for, and the subject must feel the force as a compulsion that is to be obeyed. In other words, there must be a relation of command and obedience.<sup>30</sup>

Now, the dynamic of command and obedience is not simply a fixed phenomenon that one acquires or enters into as one develops a second nature. The structure is highly variable. Indeed, I want to suggest that we should think of this dynamic as lying on a *continuum* of compulsion that is bounded by two non-inclusive extremes: that of the savage beast at one end, and that of the animate tool on the other. These extremes do not lie on the continuum since they do not involve compulsion, but instead brute force and instrumentalisation, respectively. On the continuum there is always a fluid dynamic of command and obedience; there are no *strict* oppositions between the two. However, the dynamic can still

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<sup>29</sup>Nietzsche notes that at times ruling classes can treat their subjects as instruments: "...when the ruling caste constantly looks afar and looks down upon subjects and instruments and just as constantly practises obedience and command, keeping down and keeping at a distance..." (BGE 257). Nietzsche fails, however, to make the important distinction between "subject" and "instrument" that I will make in this section. This could be because Nietzsche wants to emphasise how the ruling class can and often does descend into tyranny in relation to the ruled class.

<sup>30</sup>An interesting consequence of this, although I cannot explore it further here, is that both our relation to others and our own self-relation is mediated by this phenomenon of compulsion. See Sedgwick 2013, 45, who explains how the primitive community is the "space of law" in which "the human self emerges," and along with it, "reason" and "freedom". "To be human," Sedgwick explains, "means in the first instance to be a communal creature whose world is always already mediated by obedience and to discover oneself as an individuated being in the context of such mediation. To be human, in other words, means to be an animal which is both capable of feeling, acknowledging, and acting on the peculiar kind of compulsion that is associated with the commanding power of something that is deemed 'higher' (i.e. authority)."

vary greatly depending on the end of the continuum that is considered. For example, as will become more apparent in what follows, towards the non-inclusive bound of the savage beast the structure of command and obedience is more tyrannical and active, and towards that of the animate tool it is more receptive and passive. This image of the continuum will give us a further insight into the nature of our moral psychological framework, where by such a framework I mean to indicate the phenomena and apparatus that are studied in what is now called in contemporary philosophy, our “moral psychology.”

I want to claim here that Nietzsche moves beyond Aristotle’s position by explaining how the *distance* that opens up in this dynamic *between* command and obedience is fundamental for understanding how we become familiar with moral values. In this phenomenon of compulsion, there is a gap between the command issued, and resultant compliance to realise that command. Nietzsche claims that it is the feeling or experience of this distance that affords familiarity with moral values. This is what Nietzsche terms the *pathos of distance*. I will elucidate the nature of this, first at the level of the social - i.e., between social classes - before then considering how it functions at the level of the individual - i.e., at the location of the soul. Although we will only arrive at a more complex and nuanced account of our familiarity with moral values when we turn to the level of the individual, the dynamic at the social level will offer us the conceptual resources needed to understand the functioning of the soul.

Importantly, the pathos of distance can be felt in different ways depending on the structural relation of command and obedience that is experienced at each end of the continuum, which Nietzsche represents at the social level in terms of two contrasting social classes. The so-called ‘ruling class’, Nietzsche claims, experiences the pathos of distance from the position of command in contrast to the ruled class that is subordinate to them.

Rather it was “the good” themselves, that is to say, the noble, powerful, high-stationed and high-minded, who felt and established themselves and their actions as good, that is, of the first rank, in contradis-

inction to all the low, low-minded, common and plebeian. It was out of this *pathos of distance* that they first seized the right to create values and to coin names for values: what had they to do with utility!

GM I 2

This gives the rulers a feeling of “establishing” themselves and their actions as good in virtue of being legislators. They experience the distance as the product of their command, and they, thus, become familiar with values through a form of self-designation. The ruled class, on the contrary, experience this distance from the role of the obedient, and, thus their familiarity with values is one based on the feeling of obligation of what they *ought* to do in order to comply with the command. Their familiarity with values is thus more in tune with becoming compelled by an imposed force that is not their own. This can give rise to a *re-active* pathos, which involves the experience of distinction negatively from the position of obedience in contrast to those who command.<sup>31</sup> I will return to this reactive pathos later in the chapter.

So far in this thesis I have employed the terminology of ‘becoming familiar with moral values’ to remain neutral on the metaphysical question of the metaethical status of these values. We can now see that the phrase has to capture both the feelings (towards opposite ends of the continuum) of becoming compelled to obey externally imposed customs (as in the case of the ruled class), and the feeling of self-determining customs that are to be followed (for the ruling class).<sup>32</sup> It should also include the numerous intermittent stages between these two positions, which lie on the continuum.

To conclude this section, Nietzsche’s account suggests that for familiarity with moral values to occur at all, a political structure of command and obedience is

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<sup>31</sup>See GM II 11. I shall expand further on this reactive pathos later in the chapter. See section ‘moral outlooks’.

<sup>32</sup>Thus, with both these positions in mind, Nietzsche states that “[t]he moral discrimination of values has originated either among a ruling group whose consciousness of its difference from the ruled group was accompanied by delight - or among the ruled, the slaves and dependents of every degree” (BGE 260).

necessary. Moreover, an experience of *distance* between commander and obeyer is fundamental for becoming familiar with values.<sup>33</sup> This can occur in different ways depending on whether the distance is felt more from the position of command or more from the position of obedience.

In the next section, we shall see how this political model can shed light on the functioning of command and obedience at the level of the individual soul participating in a community. This occurs in the phenomenon better known as *willing*.

## 2.5 The Soul

Before continuing further, we might well question at this point the suitability of the terms Nietzsche introduces to capture the phenomenon of our familiarity with moral values and the broader framework of our moral psychology, such as that of the “noble,” the “ruling class,” the “slave” etc. They appear, to say the least, rather antiquated as a means to explain the nature of habituation and of our familiarity with moral values. One reason for this is that many archaic, hierarchical institutions and customs have been replaced by modern, democratic ones fundamentally based on the value of equality. Nietzsche speculatively suggests that this movement is one of the results of Christianity becoming dominant Europe,

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<sup>33</sup>This does *not* mean that Nietzsche crudely endorses slavery, as is sometimes suggested in some of his aphorisms, such as in BGE 257: “[e]very enhancement of the “human” type has so far been the work of an aristocratic society - and it will be so again and again - a society that believes in the long ladder of an order of rank and differences in value between human and human, and that needs slavery in some sense or another” (BGE 257; translation amended). See also Ansell-Pearson 1994 who suggests that here there is a “tyrannical” aspect to Nietzsche’s political thought. The point is rather that value is experienced through distinction at both the level of the nobility in relation to subjects, *and* at the level of the obedient in relation to the rulers, with, as already said, a multitude of degrees in between. Moreover, fundamental to Nietzsche’s own position is the requirement for the presence of *both* pathoses of distance for the advancement of culture, which suggests not only a “noble” class, but also a strong opposing class that battles *against* its instrumentalisation. This is expressed no more clearly than in the *epilogue* of *The case of Wagner*.

and the subsequent secularisation of Christian moral values.<sup>34</sup> I will attempt to support this speculative claim later in this chapter. The result of this movement, however, is not the loss of this dynamic of command and obedience. On the contrary, not only do we see it present in the newer democratic institutions, we also find it in many of the more traditional ones, such as in that of the family (between children and parents), the workplace (between workers and bosses), schools (between students and teachers), and hospitals (between patients and medical professionals).

Now, the explanatory force of these concepts come more sharply into view when we see that the political structure outlined above also serves to help us understand not only the development of human second nature at the level of the social, but also at the level of the soul.<sup>35</sup>

While so far we have understood the “pathos of distance” as a social pathos, i.e. as a discriminative feeling that arises in different ways on either side of a ‘class divide’, it is at the level of the soul that we find a more detailed account as to how we become familiar with moral values. In aphorism 257 of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche makes the transition from the social pathos to what I shall call the ‘soul pathos’:

Without the *pathos of distance* which grows out of the ingrained difference between strata [Stände] - when the ruling caste constantly looks afar and looks down upon subjects and instruments and just as constantly practises obedience and command, keeping down and keeping at a distance - that other, more mysterious pathos could not have grown up either - the craving for an ever new widening of distances within the soul [Seele] itself, the development of every higher, rarer, more remote, further-stretching, more comprehensive states - in brief,

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<sup>34</sup>See BGE 202, where Nietzsche claims that “the *democratic* movement is the heir of the Christian movement.”

<sup>35</sup>Nietzsche employs the term ‘Seele’ to designate the soul. We shall see here and in chapter 3 how he has in mind what we would now call the human psyche, which comes from the Greek ‘psuche’, and thus does not have the further connotations that are attached to the use of the term in Christianity. This is helpful since the notion of the human soul that I wish to develop here is part of our moral psychological framework that is not exhausted by our Christian moral values.

simply the enhancement of the “human” type, the continual “self-overcoming of the human,” to use a moral formula in a supra-moral sense.

*BGE 257*; translation modified

Nietzsche suggests that out of the “social pathos” comes a “mysterious pathos” that occurs in the individual. Here, the distance between command and obedience occurs *within* the individual soul. Nietzsche’s point in this aphorism, however, is not an historical one concerning the genesis of the different pathoses. Instead, it is *only* as a political power relation of command and obedience that anything like a soul pathos can come into being.<sup>36</sup> This is supported in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, when Nietzsche argues that the inception of the soul occurs simultaneously with the formation of communities.<sup>37</sup>

In further support of interpreting the dynamic of the soul in these political terms, Nietzsche claims that it is precisely this dynamic that we find functioning in the will:

In all willing it is absolutely a question of commanding and obeying, on the basis, as already said, of a social structure composed of human “souls.” Hence a philosopher should claim the right to include willing as such within the sphere of morals [den Gesichtskreis der Moral] - being understood as the doctrine of the relations of supremacy under which the phenomenon of “life” comes to be.<sup>38</sup>

*BGE 19*; translation modified

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<sup>36</sup>Aristotle is also acutely aware of this issue throughout the *Nicomachean Ethics*. For example: “.. and just as a child ought to live in accord with the command of his tutor, so too the desiring part [of the soul] ought to live in accord with reason” NE 1119b10. For an historical overview of this issue, including its prevalence in Plato, as well as in modern German thought pre-dating Nietzsche, see Parkes 1996 chapter VII.

<sup>37</sup>“All instincts that do not discharge themselves outwardly *turn inward* - this is what I call the *internalization* of the human being. Thus it was that humans first developed what was later called their “soul” [Seele]” (GM II 16; translation modified).

<sup>38</sup>This explains Nietzsche’s earlier evocation in *Beyond Good and Evil* that the “soul-hypothesis” should be seriously considered, albeit in terms of a political plurality. “... the way is open for new versions and refinements of the soul-hypothesis; and such conceptions as “mortal soul,” and “soul as subjective multiplicity,” and “soul as social structure of the affects,” want henceforth to have citizens’ rights in science” (BGE 12).

Understood as a political structure of willing, the soul should also be thought of as a part of the *sui generis* phenomenon of our familiarity with moral values, and, hence, to lie at the heart of our moral psychological framework. We have seen that the social pathos of distance arises out of the experience of the distance between commanding and obeying, and that this occurs between social classes of different powers. At the level of the soul, the distance occurs between competing drives and affects that form a relation of command and obedience that gives rise to a structure of willing. This will can be structured in a variety of political configurations in an analogous way to the level of the social. This renders the manner in which we become familiar with moral values more complex. The individual soul is like a *polis* of competing forces that are configured in a fluid ascetic dynamic.<sup>39</sup>

To lend plausibility to this account of willing, we can consider again the phenomenon of promise-making. At the level of the individual soul, when a promise is made, the soul becomes configured in a relation of command and obedience towards a particular goal.<sup>40</sup> If this goal is to command other competing forces of the soul then it must *compel* them to obedience. This demands a certain receptivity and activity of the subordinated forces to the end of the commanding force. This creates an *ascetic* structure, since some forces are *held in check* by others so that the promise can be realised and not betrayed.

This structure can be formed in different ways. It essentially involves, however, a compromise between a violent imposition of force on the one hand, and a “contractual” relation on the other. At the level of the state, we can think of the individual as giving a promise to participate in society and the advantage it offers. If the promise is broken, the state violently punishes the offender. At the level of

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<sup>39</sup>Note here, however, that the limits of the analogy between the social and the level are given by the fact that agency cannot be ascribed at the sub-personal level as it is at the social level.

<sup>40</sup>Nietzsche calls this the ‘ruling thought’. See BGE 19: “Therefore, just as sensations (and indeed many kinds of sensations) are to be recognised as ingredients of the will, so, secondly, should thinking also: in every act of the will there is a commanding thought - let us not imagine it possible to sever this thought from the “willing,” as if any will would then remain over!” (translation modified). We will consider the role of thinking in the dynamic of command and obedience in more detail in chapter 3.

the soul, the commanding forces that are injured as a result of the promise being broken have claims to “compensation” and “repayment” from the culpable wills. We, as we say, ‘beat ourselves up’ over having failed to keep a promise. Here, one can perceive an equivalence between the amount of pain inflicted as compensation by the hurt force of command, and the injury caused to it through a failure to maintain the promise. We are ‘harder on ourselves,’ the greater the importance we give to the promise that we break.<sup>41</sup> This, however, suggests that the violent imposition can only be inflicted in this proportionate manner because the forces of the soul are already in a relation of command and obedience of a “contractual” nature. This makes sense in so far as we might say that the competing forces of the soul are co-opted ascetically into the pledge.

Now, when this occurs, a space opens up between the command issued, and the habituated obedience required to meet the command. I have suggested earlier that the feeling of this distance - what Nietzsche calls the *pathos of distance* - is a fundamental part of becoming familiar with moral values, and, in this specific case, with the value of the particular promise being made. The further that the realisation of the promise lies away from being achieved, the greater the demand for the promise to become *fixed*. This is how asceticism functions:

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<sup>41</sup>An example from literature comes to mind that clearly brings out a case in which the infliction of pain for equivalent compensation for injury is very high. In *The Grapes of Wrath*, the character John Joad - the uncle of the protagonist Tom Joad - cyclically drinks himself to the verge of suicide due to blaming himself for the death of his wife. The promise at work here, is one of the strongest of them all - the marriage vow. After these episodes, John typically comes back into the narrative in a calmer, temporarily-satisfied manner, having vented his power (i.e. of the injured drive) on himself (i.e. on the perceived drives that caused the injury by breaking the promise). In virtue of the contractual relation between the drives, more generally speaking, compensation “consists in a warrant for and title to cruelty-” (GM II 5); and here more specifically, to ascetic *self*-cruelty. Yet, at this stage, as the example helps to bring out, there is no “moralisation” of John’s culpability, and thus no spiritualisation of the ascetic self-cruelty. The form of self-harm is direct and barbaric. This helps to shed light on why the infliction of cruelty arises within a soul composed of competing drives. The infliction of cruelty is not instrumental, but a contractually justified discharge of power. In this particular case, however, without such moralisation, the result of the infliction of cruelty is less clearly constitutive of a particular goal, and is instead more destructive. Moralisation here would require the fixing of a higher goal that the infliction of self-cruelty serves - what we shall see Nietzsche call the “spiritualisation” and “deification of self-cruelty.”



In a certain sense, the whole of asceticism belongs here: a few ideas are to be rendered inextinguishable, ever-present, unforgettable, “fixed”, with the aim of hypnotising the entire nervous and intellectual system with these “fixed ideas” - ascetic procedures and modes of life are means of freeing these ideas from the competition of all other ideas, so as to make them “unforgettable.”<sup>42</sup>

GM II 3

One might think that Nietzsche only has in mind here the particular extreme practices of asceticism that are traditionally exercised by ascetic priests. This would be a mistake, however. It should be seen that just as the ascetic priest fixes the idea of celibacy through ascetic practices such as self-mortification and self-flagellation, so too does the athlete fix the idea of running a marathon through exercises of *askēsis* such as training, diet, and sleep. The variable at play here that affects the strength of the fixing is, as said above, the felt distance between the commanded goal, and its attainment through habituated obedience.<sup>43</sup> Nietzsche’s quote of Tertullian in *On the Genealogy of Morals* brings this point out: “[f]or the faith offers us much more... *something much stronger*; thanks to the Redemption, quite other joys are at our command; in place of athletes we have our martyrs” (Citation by Nietzsche of Tertullian, quoted from GM II 15).<sup>44</sup> The movement

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<sup>42</sup>See also GM II 1 (translation modified). “To breed an animal *with the right to make promises* - is not this the paradoxical task that nature has set itself in the case of the human being? Is it not the real problem regarding the human being?” See also GM II 3 that links this with the infliction of pain: ““If something is to stay in the memory it must be burned in: only that which never ceases to *hurt* stays in the memory” - This is a main clause of the oldest (unhappily also the most enduring) psychology on earth.” GM II 3.

<sup>43</sup>It should be clear from what follows that I understand asceticism as a phenomenon that explains the development of second nature, rather than solely as a historical phenomenon. In his essay ‘A Theory of the Social Function of Asceticism,’ Richard Valantasis makes this distinction in the following manner: “The theorists understand asceticism as a large and pervasive cultural system; while the historians view asceticism as specific religious practices relating to social withdrawal, restriction of food, regulation of sexuality, and the formation of religious community. The larger cultural systems of the ascetical theorists locate asceticism at the centre of cultural, social, and individual engagement in every sphere of cultural expression; the particular religious practices of the historian locate asceticism only in the religious or philosophical arenas” Valantasis, Wimbush, Byron, and Love 1995, 544. Anglophone interpreters of Nietzsche typically interpret him as a ‘historian’. See Berry 2006, Clark 1990, Nehamas 1985. Interpreters on the continent, instead, tend to interpret him, like I do here, as a ‘theorist.’ See Foucault 1986.

<sup>44</sup>Moreover, although I cannot go into any great detail here, Nietzsche claims in the third essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals* that *all* of our ideals so far have been ascetic ideals, and, hence, not only those of the ascetic priest.

here towards Christianity is one in which the distance between the commanded goal or promise and its realisation through habituated obedience is widened, to the point where it becomes ‘spiritualised’ or ‘deified’:

Almost everything we call “higher culture” is based on the spiritualisation of *cruelty*, on its becoming more profound: this is my proposition. That “savage animal” has not really been “mortified”; it lives and flourishes, it has merely become - divine.

*BGE 229*

In the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche makes the same claim, and in parentheses asserts the constitutive nature of the self-cruelty of ascetic practices. “I pointed cautiously [in BGE 229, D18, 77, 113] to the ever-increasing spiritualisation and “deification” of cruelty which permeates the entire history of higher culture (and in a significant sense actually constitutes it)” (GM II 6).

In the next section, I will consider in greater detail this “spiritualisation” involved in Christianity, and will return specifically to the role of asceticism in two sections time to support an account as to how the dominant moral values of this outlook have become inconspicuous and sedimented, and, thus, remain dominant for us despite the widespread collapse of the Christian religion.

## 2.6 Moral Outlooks

I began this chapter with the aim of offering an account of our familiarity with Christian moral values. However, this task quickly evolved into a more general account of how we become familiar with moral values *per se*. This has demonstrated how this familiarity should be understood as a *sui generis* phenomenon essentially involving the dynamic of command and obedience, which functions on a variable continuum. Now it is possible to return to the question of the specific character of our familiarity with Christian moral values to refocus the task once again on posing the question as to their value.

First, I will outline two moral outlooks that can be extrapolated from the account of our moral psychological framework given so far in this chapter and that can be found on opposing ends of the continuum of compulsion. When this is complete, I will then attempt to support Nietzsche's speculative claim that one of these outlooks has become dominant in Europe.

In an above section, I argued that on the continuum of compulsion towards the end of the savage beast, familiarity with moral values occurs through a self-command that distinguishes itself from that which is compelled to obey. However, one of the reasons for appealing to the idea of the continuum is that it depicts the central idea of a dynamic and fluid relation of command and obedience. This is important because, while, for example, towards one end of the continuum command is more prevalent, this does not mean that obedience is absent. Indeed, in the case of the ruling class, they are a class that has their own values and customs, which they constrain each other to follow.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, it is these values and customs that are self-determined in distinction from the ruled class.<sup>46</sup>

The pathos of distance of the ruling power in contradistinction from the ruled class is fundamental here for a familiarity with value that is based on a feeling of command. ("Only people like us are capable of participating in our customs.") The task of the ruling class is to maintain a moral outlook that is readily realisable for them through customs and practices of *askēsis*, but which remains out of reach of the ruled class.

The central feature of this outlook, (which I shall call from this point on the

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<sup>45</sup>Self-restraint of the courtly nobility, for example, serves "as a prestige value, a means of distinguishing themselves from the lower groups harrying them, and they did everything in their power to prevent these differences from being effaced" Elias 1982, 387. "This explains why, in such elevated classes, affect-control and self-constraint are generally more highly developed than the lower classes: fear of loss or reduction of social prestige is one of the most powerful motive forces in the transformation of constraints by others into self-constraints." *ibid*, 296.

<sup>46</sup>The feeling of the ruling class in relation to the ruled class is highly variable. For example, the knightly caste "occupied his social position far more securely and as a matter of course than the courtly noble." As a result, Elias notes, the knightly caste felt only contempt towards the lower classes. When, however, this caste was forced to ally itself with the prince and become members of the court, they came to feel embarrassment and repugnance towards the (much closer and now threatening) lower classes. See Elias 1982, 392.

‘noble outlook’), is the cultivation of and participation in *exclusive* practices of askēsis and customs, which affords *distinction* from obedient subjects, and, most importantly, the accompanying *feeling* of such a distinction. This gives rise to a constellation of values that function in celebrating the achieved well-being of the class, by identifying, maintaining, and enhancing their attained level of “health” and “happiness” that their power affords, and that lies out of reach of the ruled class.<sup>47</sup>

If we now turn towards the other end of the continuum towards the animate tool, we find a familiarity with moral values that occurs through obedience to a quasi-externally imposed force. The relation to this force of command is fundamental in defining the nature of the outlook of the ruled class. Thus, for example, if this force is seen largely as external, then we arrive at an outlook of the ruled class described by Norbert Elias in *The Civilizing Process*:

The behaviour of these lower groups may be coarser, but it is more uniform and in a way more of a piece. They lie more vigorously in their own world without any claim to upper-class prestige, and therefore with greater scope for discharge of the affects; they live more fully in accordance with their own manners and customs. Their inferiority vis-a-vis the upper class, their gestures both of subordination and resistance, are clear and relatively unconcealed like their affects, bound by clear, definite forms.

Elias 1982, 431

If, however, the ruled class come to have designs and claims on becoming rulers then this gives rise to, as suggested earlier, a reactive pathos of distance. This is not simply a feeling of distance between the command and the compulsion to meet it, i.e., of the command as a forcefully imposed “thou shalt.” It is also accompanied by a desire to command. This is seen when the ruled class attempts to imitate the practices of askēsis and customs of the ruling class to become like

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<sup>47</sup>See also BGE 260 where Nietzsche talks of the ‘self-glorification’ of the ruling class.

them. This requires (at both the level of the social and the soul) taking up a position of command. This possibility is typically attempted by a middle class, such as that of the bourgeois in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, whose intentions to become aristocrats involved a desire to further distinguish themselves from the lower class in the same manner as the aristocracy.<sup>48</sup> This phenomenon is also described by Jacques Rancière in his account of the pleb's revolt in ancient Rome:

They [the plebs] establish another order, another partition of the perceptible, by constituting themselves not as warriors equal to other warriors but as speaking beings sharing the same properties as those who deny them these. They thereby execute a series of speech acts that mimic those of the patricians [...] In short, in Ballanche's terms, from being "mortals;" they have become "men;" that is, beings engaging in a collective destiny through words. They have become beings who may very well make promises and draw up contracts.

Rancière 1999, 24-25

There is another case, however, where a more dramatic restructuring of power occurs from the position of obedience. It is this latter option that I will explore further here since it will help us to understand Nietzsche's claim that the current, dominant moral values in Europe are Christian in nature.

As we noted Nietzsche arguing above, Christianity "deifies" the ascetic structure of willing that we find present, and often restricted to, aristocratic societies. This deification is a complex process. The central aspect of interest here is how it effectively creates practices of askēsis, which are not exclusively limited to the ruling class (and, as we saw above, functioned as an active means of distinction from the ruled class) but rendered *universal* practices of obedience to the external command of a single God; (hence their "deification").<sup>49</sup> The success of this

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<sup>48</sup>See Elias 1982.

<sup>49</sup>See for example Gal. 3:26-28 "For in Christ Jesus you are all sons (and daughters) of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, no longer male and female, for you are all one in

deification is witnessed by the dispersal of spiritualised, ascetic practices across the social classes, and in a mirroring fashion, across the competing forces of the soul.<sup>50</sup> The central feature of this outlook (from now on termed the ‘Christian moral outlook’) is thus the collapse of the hierarchical distinction (and feeling of distinction) between classes (and, hence, also between wills), in favour of a distinction and feeling of distinction between God and His obedient subjects, where the latter are all considered *equal* from this position (i.e. in the eyes of God).<sup>51</sup> This gives rise to a familiarity with a set of values that differ greatly from those of the noble outlook, say of ancient Rome. Michael Forster considers seven essentially opposing values of the two outlooks with ancient Greece and Christianity in mind. Here are three of them by way of example:

- (i) Homer, and in his train the predominant Greek and Roman tradition, had admired honor [timê] and renown [kleos], but had despised people who lacked them. By contrast, for the New Testament: “Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil,” but “Woe unto you, when men shall speak well of you” (Luke, 6:22, 26). (ii) Homer, and in his train the predominant

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Jesus Christ.” See also, for example, Mark 8:34, Matthew 12:50, John 8:31-32. See ESV et al. 2008. Isaac of Nineveh also offers an interesting example of this advocacy of equality: “Up to this mystery [the contemplation of God] there are teachers and disciples, there are greater and smaller, there are the great and the mediocre. But in the perception of grace this knowledge is equal; there is no ascent and descent in it. Then it will not be so that some will know and feel less while others will learn more or be more illuminated! Rather, all will have the complete fullness, without lacking, the complete perfection without increase or decrease. And there will be no great and no small, as it is with other revelations, but all will be raised up to the same level of perfection without variance or change. There will be no rich and no poor, no givers and no receivers.” Quoted from Hagman 2011, 42.

<sup>50</sup>Historically speaking, the spread of Christian asceticism is well documented from the 3rd and 4th centuries after Christ since it coincides explicitly with the rise of monasticism. See ‘Asceticism and monasticism, II: Western’ in Casiday and Norris 2007. It is more contested in the first two centuries after Christ. See, for example, Vaage and Wimbush 2002. Patterson’s article in particular in this volume is highly informative: “The itinerant social radicalism characteristic of the earliest sayings-tradition [found in Q and the Gospel of Thomas] is a form of *askēsis*. It is a series of performances done for others to see. The aim of these performances is to separate those who participate in them from the dominant social ethos, to create a new network of social relations in which an alternative symbolic universe might be articulated.” See Vaage and Wimbush 2002, 61.

<sup>51</sup>The bishop Cyril’s offering of the bible to the Roman prefect Orestes in Alexandria is emblematic of the extent to which Christianity had encroached on the ruling power of the nobility by AD 415. See Wessel 2004, 35.

Greek and Roman tradition, had admired the warlike and the brave but despised the weak. By contrast, for the New Testament: “Blessed are the peacemakers”; “Blessed are the poor in spirit . . . Blessed are the meek” (Matthew, 5:9, 3-5). (iii) Homer, and in his train the predominant Greek and Roman tradition, had admired the politically powerful but despised the politically weak. By contrast, for the New Testament: “Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted”; “The kings of the gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called doers of good [euergetai]. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that does serve” (Luke, 14:11, 22:25-26).

Forster 2011b, 355-356

If it now may be permitted to speculate for a moment as to which of these opposing outlooks is most present in Europe today, we can see two recurring themes. First, there is the continual overcoming of hierarchical distinctions; and, second, there is a loss of faith in God as legislator. Taking up the first theme, this marginalisation of hierarchical distinction is seen most clearly in the democratisation of political power, the growth in the middle classes, the development of a consumer-based culture, and the advocacy of universal human rights.<sup>52</sup> All these moves express at once the universalisation of contemporary customs in so far as they are open to anyone and everyone, as well as the equal footing of all who participate in them. This all points towards the dominance of the Christian moral outlook in contemporary Europe in so far as it exhibits these particular features.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>Victor Turner argues for this: “The reader will have noticed immediately that many of these properties [equality, humility, absence of rank, no distinctions of wealth, unselfishness, total obedience, etc.] constitute what we think of as characteristics of the religious life in the Christian tradition [...] What appears to have happened is that with the increasing specialization of society and culture, with progressive complexity in the social division of labor, what was in tribal society principally a set of transitional qualities “betwixt and between” defined states of culture and society has become itself an institutionalized state. But traces of the passage quality of the religious life remain in such formulations as: “The Christian is a stranger to the world, a pilgrim, a traveler, with no place to rest his head.” Transition has here become a permanent condition. Nowhere has this institutionalization of liminality been more clearly marked and defined than in the monastic and mendicant states in the great world religions.” V. Turner 1995, 106. I will return to Turner’s understanding of the ritual process and liminality in chapter 4.

<sup>53</sup>Nietzsche notes the role of the Reformation had for this in taking the power away from the Church as a *noble* institution of rule, and instead giving to the ‘plebeian’ state. See GS 358.

This is not to say, however, that noble values are no longer present in contemporary Europe. Certain noble phenomena show up to us at times, although noble values for the most part have become more marginalised. We often see, for example, values such as honour, warlike bravery, and political power expressed in the mediums of literature and film, and we still often feel a certain affinity with them. I shall come back to the presence of noble values in particular in chapter four. Nevertheless, the continual movement away from hierarchical distinction is more indicative of the dominant of values that come from the Christian outlook.

I have introduced the term “outlook” in this section to describe the constellation of values and phenomena that belong to Christianity, and which belong to a noble, ruling class. One may question at this point, however, whether it makes sense to talk of different outlooks here rather than of merely different values that co-exist, albeit sometimes in conflict, from within the same outlook. To answer this, I will unpack in greater detail exactly what I mean by the term ‘moral outlook.’

First, a moral outlook has a form of internal coherence. I follow Fabian Freyenhagen here in understanding this coherence in a broad manner, to include not only moral propositions, but also actions and dispositions that form a part of social practices and institutions.<sup>54</sup> This coherence is a form of consistency between the values, dispositions and beliefs within an outlook; as Freyenhagen puts it, together they are “mutually supportive.”<sup>55</sup> There can of course be inconsistencies within outlooks, which can be addressed internally, by, for example, testing their coherence within the wider backdrop of the values of the outlook.<sup>56</sup>

Second, the elements of a moral outlook are often unified in a manner that allows us to talk of an outlook “as a whole.” This unity can be provided by a principle, such as Aristotle’s concept of eudaemonia, or by a moral exemplar, such

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<sup>54</sup>See Freyenhagen 2013, 258.

<sup>55</sup>*ibid.*, 259.

<sup>56</sup>I will consider this form of critical reflection - what John McDowell calls ‘piecemeal reflection’ - in detail in chapter 3, section ‘Between Dreyfus and McDowell’.



as Jesus Christ. Indeed, we have seen in chapter one how philosophers engaged in the justificatory approach attempt to locate and articulate just such a principle that unites our moral values. There we saw that Schopenhauer, for example, thought the principle could be articulated as “hurt no one and help everyone as much as you can,” and Windelband as “Do your Duty!”<sup>57</sup> This feature of unity will be important when we come to consider how our dominant moral outlook can be brought into view as a whole in chapter four.

Third, it is variable as to how “closed off” an outlook can be from other outlooks. Freyenhagen gives the example of Nazism as a highly coherent and “hermetically sealed off” outlook, with a high level of internal coherence, which, however, has little overlap with other outlooks. Nietzsche argues that the Christian outlook, on the other hand, attempts to profess itself as the *only* moral outlook, leaving no space for others: “But this morality [Christian morality in Europe] resists such a “possibility,” such an “ought” [that there are and ought to be other moralities before, alongside and after this morality] with all its power: it says stubbornly and inexorably, “I am morality itself, and nothing besides is morality” (BGE 202). The noble outlook attempts to seal itself off from the ruling class, although by doing so it admits of the existence of other, albeit “inferior”, moral outlooks. I shall consider in chapter four the commensurability that exists between the Christian and noble outlooks in particular, when I look at the possibility of taking up the position of the noble outlook during the process of estrangement.

Now, it can be tentatively suggested, based on the moral psychological framework so far outlined, that the unifying principle in the Christian moral outlook is *obedience to a higher power*. To re-iterate, this form of obedience is not *pure* obedience, but involves moments of command. However, these moments are typically employed as a means by which to achieve greater obedience. The higher power,

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<sup>57</sup>Not unsurprisingly both of these principles capture much more closely the nature of the Christian moral outlook than that of the noble outlook.

here, has traditionally been God, but with the loss in faith in Christianity, faith in God has also been lost. As a result, there have been continued attempts to replace this power by another authority that is universal in scope, such as “humanity,” “compassion” or “duty,” by philosophers engaged in the justificatory approach.

Since God is no longer recognised as the legislator of our moral values, this raises an obvious question: why is the Christian moral outlook still dominant today despite the collapse of our faith in the Christian religion? And: why do our moral values still remain authoritative despite the loss of faith in God as legislator of these values? I will attempt to offer an explanation for this phenomenon in the next section.

## 2.7 Sedimentation

In this section, I will begin by arguing for the more general claim that the process of habituation which stabilises the dynamic of command and obedience results in the central values of an outlook becoming sedimented, and that due to this sedimentation, the value of these values becomes inconspicuous. I will then turn to the specific case of our Christian moral outlook to see how the value of our moral values remains inconspicuous despite the widespread loss of faith in the religion.

Ascetic practices must be performed habitually to achieve a stable dynamic of command and obedience. This is because when such habituation occurs, the commanded goal is ascetically fixed in the process. When successful, this ascetic fixing, I claim, results in the *sedimentation* of the values expressed by the commands and customs of a moral outlook. I take this concept of sedimentation from Edmund Husserl, who introduces it to describe a variety of phenomena.<sup>58</sup> In *Ex-*

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<sup>58</sup>In *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, Husserl locates the concept of sedimentation in the phenomenon of ‘retentional modification.’ See Husserl 1969, 319. In *Experience and Judgment* he locates it in the movement from ‘predicative judgments’ to ‘declarative statements.’ See Husserl 1973, 62. In the *Origin of Geometry* and *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, he

*perience and Judgment*, Husserl offers us a general definition, and in doing so, he links sedimentation to the phenomenon of habit. There, he states that sedimentation is “the continuous transformation of what has been originally acquired and has become a habitual possession and thus something non-original.”<sup>59</sup> I want to apply this to the domain of the moral by arguing that our ‘habitual possession’ of moral values - i.e., our habituated obedience to/command of values - renders them ‘non-original’ since this process of habituation (and ascetic fixing) takes us away from aspects of the phenomenon that were originally in question.

Husserl later employs the concept of sedimentation to describe specifically how the origin of the scientific discipline in geometry has become overlooked by subsequent geometers. However, he does in places suggest that the phenomenon of sedimentation extends beyond the discipline of the natural sciences. For example, in the *Crisis of the European Sciences* he writes the following:

What was lacking, and what is still lacking, is the actual self-evidence through which he who knows and accomplishes can give himself an account, not only of what he does that is new and what he works with, but also of the implications of meaning which are closed off through sedimentation or traditionalisation, i.e., of the constant presuppositions of his [own] constructions, concepts, propositions, theories.<sup>60</sup>

Husserl 1970, 52

This closing off of “the implications of meaning” through sedimentation of the

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considers it in terms of how the meaning of the origins of geometry have been taken as given by subsequent geometers. See Husserl 1970, 52, 353-378. I will be mostly interested in Husserl’s employment of the term in the latter two texts.

<sup>59</sup>Husserl 1973, 275.

<sup>60</sup>See also Husserl 1973, 71: “If in this sphere of perception, which constitutes indeed only part of the total sphere of doxic objectivating lived experiences, we are going to distinguish different structures, such as those of passive givenness and of the active orientation of the ego, of interest, of receptivity and spontaneity, then it is necessary to emphasize at the same time that such differences are not limited to the sphere of perception or even in general to the sphere of doxic lived experiences, but that these structures are to be found in all the other spheres of consciousness. Therefore, there is an original passivity not only of sensuous givens, of “sense data,” but also of feeling and, in contrast to this passivity, there is an active, objectivating orientation, not only in perception, but also in evaluation and in pleasure. In these cases, too, there are analogues of self-evidence and, therefore, of perception as well, in the original giving of values, of ends, etc., in themselves.”

presuppositions of “constructions, concepts, propositions, and theories” involves two features that I think can be applied to how we become habituated to moral values.

The first feature of sedimentation is that, due to ascetic habituation - i.e, the habitual obedience to a particular command, the latter of which is fixed ascetically by such obedience - the structure of command and obedience becomes stabilised.<sup>61</sup> This stabilisation affords the possibility of moral values becoming not only capable of being captured in a concept, (as we shall see later in chapter three), but also *solidified* through such conceptualisation. By this I mean that, while at their inception, our moral concepts are often shaky, unfixed, and perhaps even provisional, over time they become more stable, certain, and secure. We become able to take their value as given and no longer in question.

The achieved stability of our moral values through this process can be seen in how our customs and laws often have their own authority for being valuable. This was seen earlier in this chapter. Often no further appeal need be made to justify or rationalise the value of customs and laws since they are considered valuable in so far as they still command. For this to be possible, those customs and laws have to be maintained over time to the point where they, and the values that they express, become solidified. This maintenance is aided by the conceptualisation of the values into written law and custom.<sup>62</sup> We can see the result of this process of solidification in another manner when we look at how the evaluative orientation of our moral concepts have come to be taken as ‘facts’ in contemporary debates in moral philosophy.<sup>63</sup> This is seen most explicitly in the debate between moral

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<sup>61</sup>This affords the possible formation of a *hexis*, or character.

<sup>62</sup>We shall see the effect of conceptualisation on the process of sedimentation in greater detail in chapter 3, section ‘Self-consciousness’.

<sup>63</sup>Nietzsche makes this claim in the *preface of On the Genealogy of Morals*: “One has taken the *value* of these “values” as given, as factual, as beyond all question; one has hitherto never doubted or hesitated in the slightest degree in supposing “the good human” to be of greater value than “the evil human,” of greater value in the sense of furthering the advancement and prosperity of humans in general (the future of humans included).” (GM preface 6; translation modified). I will analyse this aphorism further in chapter 4.

naturalism and non-naturalism, which is grounded in the shared assumption that moral values are facts, where by the term ‘facts’ we understand an experience that is taken as true based on (self-)evidence. (I.e., the fact *that* our moral values are valuable).<sup>64</sup> The debate then centres around what type of ‘fact’ our moral values should be understood to be.<sup>65</sup>

The second feature of sedimentation is familiarisation that affords a *foundation* upon which we are able to orient ourselves in the world. Sedimentation not only affords stability for our moral concepts, it also fixes those concepts such that they can be relied upon as an unshakeable ground upon which further experience can be based.<sup>66</sup> This happens because as habituation renders our moral values stable, these values become more familiar to us. Due to this, they become something we can rely upon, something that we need no longer question; *that* they are valuable becomes something taken for granted. As a result, we take them as an *unquestionable* ground.<sup>67</sup> When this happens, things show up to us in the world as morally salient due to this foundation. The values of the outlook typically then recede into the background, and it becomes possible to act morally in a quasi-instinctive manner (with varying degrees of active command and receptive obedience depending on the nature of the outlook.)

Now, this process of sedimentation, I claim, can help us to account for how the Christian moral outlook can and indeed does remain the dominant moral outlook of contemporary Europe despite a widespread decline in faith in the Christian re-

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<sup>64</sup>As such, a ‘fact’ should not be understood as something that must be cognitive. It can also include, for example, emotivist positions that take moral utterances to be self-evident expressions of sentiment.

<sup>65</sup>See, for example, Crisp 1996.

<sup>66</sup>With reference to the experimental sciences, Steinle puts this feature in the following manner: “It is not only a process of stabilization we see here, but also of a sort of sedimentation: The now stable elements serve as an unshakable foundation, as the unquestioned ground for further research,” or, in our case, further experience in the world. See Hyder and Rheinberger 2009, 211.

<sup>67</sup>Dodd elaborates Husserl’s notion of sedimentation and describes this particular feature as follows: “Once something is familiar, thus by implication no longer strange, or a question that remains to be addressed, the result is that I am in a position to see implications that would have remained invisible were the obvious not obvious. Familiarity is solid ground on which to stand, it is something on which to rely.” Dodd 2006, 70.

ligion. To see how this is the case, first, it should be considered how the solidification and familiarisation of our moral concepts over time - i.e. their sedimentation - has the double effect of at once facilitating, strengthening and improving our moral responsiveness, whilst also removing resistance, friction and tension to such responsiveness.<sup>68</sup> Now much depends here on what we understand is being ameliorated by activity, and that which is being eliminated or overcome in the same process.<sup>69</sup> I will suggest that responsiveness is ameliorated in so far as we become more receptive to and capable of acting on the moral demands of the situation, and argue that the tension that is reduced concerns the possibility of bringing into question the value of the moral values that are expressed. This double effect of habit will help explain how as we become more familiar with Christian values we at the same time lose the possibility of taking them as objects of questioning.

The general amelioration of action due to ascetic habituation is put rather eloquently by Norbert Elias:

The more the strong constraints of individual conduct are tempered, the more violent fluctuations of pleasure or displeasure are contained, moderated and changed by self-control, the greater becomes the sensitivity to shades or nuances of conduct, the more finely attuned people grow to minute gestures and forms, and the more complex becomes their experience of themselves and their world at levels which were previously hidden from consciousness through the veil of strong affects.

Elias 1982, 419.

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<sup>68</sup>This has been termed by Félix Ravaisson the ‘double law of habit’. See Carlisle 2014 who locates the discovery of this law with Joseph Butler, and its subsequent elaboration by Ravaisson. We should perhaps be wary of calling it a ‘law’ given that I have so far understood laws as functioning on the continuum of compulsion rather than in “nature.” Here, I will call it the “double effect of habit.”

<sup>69</sup>Philosophers have articulated this double effect in many different, and often conflicting, ways. Hume, for example, suggests that custom increases active habits, and diminishes passive habits. Bichat argues that habit decreases feeling and increases judgement. Maine de Biran claims that repeated sensation fades and that movement becomes easier and more precise. See Carlisle 2014, 27-31. Neither of these contrasts capture the phenomenon of our habituated obedience to custom satisfactorily. In what follows, I will stress how the value of our moral values becomes less and less a possible *object of cognitive questioning* as we increase our ability to respond to the moral demands of the situation.

However, it is the second effect of ascetic habituation - the reduction in tension and resistance - where we find the explanation as to how we have maintained our faith in Christian values. This reduction, I claim, should be understood as a reduction in the availability of the value of our moral values to us as an object of questioning. The idea here is that as we become more habituated and responsive to the demands of the moral situation, the value of the values in play during such response becomes more and more inconspicuous. Maine de Biran describes this effect most forcefully:

Reflection, in the physical as well as in the moral sense, requires a point of support, a resistance: but the most common effect of habit is to take away all resistance, to destroy all friction... Reflect on what is habitual! Who could or would wish to begin such reflection? How should one suspect some mystery in what one has always seen, done, or felt? About what should one inquire, should one be in doubt, should one be astonished? Heavy bodies fall, movement is communicated; the stars revolve over our heads; nature spreads out before our eyes her greatest phenomena: and what subject for wonder, what subject for inquiry could there be in such familiar things?

De Biran 1929, 47<sup>70</sup>

It is important to note, however, that reflection itself can become habitual. Nietzsche makes this argument in the ‘origins of knowledge’ aphorism of the *Gay Science*: “Here is a philosopher who fancied that the world was known when he had reduced it to the “idea”: Was it not because the “idea” was so familiar to him and he was so well used to it - because he hardly was afraid of the “idea” any more? How easily these men of knowledge are satisfied!” (GS 355). The dichotomy that de Biran brings out should not be understood as a contrast between habituation and reflection, but rather it should be between habituation and *wonder*. This contrast is also made by Nietzsche in the ‘origins of knowledge’ aphorism. There he states that “[w]hat is familiar means what we are used to [das Gewohnte] so

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<sup>70</sup>A part of this citation is also quoted in Carlisle 2014.

*that we no longer marvel at it*, our everyday, some rule in which we are stuck, anything at all in which we feel at home” (GS 355; my italics). Habituation contrasts with wonder in so far as that which becomes habituated is no longer a cause for curiosity, intrigue, doubt, and fundamentally, linking all these adjectives together, *a point of question*. It is then not that our moral values become less cognitively available, but that the manner in which they appear cognitively, when they do indeed appear to us in congnition, is in an everyday, familiar manner. They show up as moral values that are morally valuable, and, hence, whose value (as a moral value) is not in question.<sup>71</sup>

Now, it is not yet clear how or why habituation has this effect of reducing the possibility of questioning, and how this relates more directly to our moral values. Indeed, that we should understand familiarisation in terms of sedimentation and a taking-for-granted of the value of our moral values, appears at this stage as more of a truism than as an explanation. Let us then consider this more closely.

It might be thought that the value of our moral values becomes less open to questioning because habituation engenders the *forgetting* of that value. There is something right about this idea in so far as when obedience becomes habitual, and hence compliant, we act out of second nature and seem to forget why the original obedience (and the customs we are obedient to) was ever an issue. Think for example of a child who initially goes through the motions of coming to obey the commands of his or her parents, before then endorsing and engaging in those very same customs once they become an adult. Or, in a parallel manner, we can think of customs that were once practised out of obedience to God, such as the giving of alms, and which are now continued despite a loss of faith in God. Much turns here, however, on how we understand the phenomenon of forgetting value

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<sup>71</sup>In chapter 3 section ‘Between Dreyfus and McDowell’ I argue in greater detail for this contrast against the dichotomy of habituation/reflection found in Hubert Dreyfus’ moral philosophy. More generally, there is a large amount of literature that argues that habituation and the development of expert know-how involves non-cognitive “flow.” See Csikszentmihalyi 1996 for the classic text on this topic.



in this context.

A potential candidate would be to understand this forgetting of value in terms of how we come to forget a piece of propositional knowledge. As an advocate of this position we can turn again to Paul Rée. Rée argues that we have forgotten the value of our moral values, but are able to continue to engage in moral practices and perform moral actions through habit. Rée locates the value of our moral values in social utility, whose origins lie in the original formation of communities. Here, he claims, a need developed to praise particular actions which benefited the group, and discourage others that harmed it. With the development of language and the linguistic designation of beneficial actions *as* morally good, an association of ideas was formed between the good and praiseworthy actions. This association was maintained and enforced through customs.<sup>72</sup> Rée's central idea that is of concern to us here is that since habituation creates these associations, it is able to maintain valuable practices even once the knowledge *that* moral values are valuable has been forgotten. That is to say, for Rée, we have forgotten that moral values are valuable since we no longer realise that they have a social utility function. However, he believes that values remain since we habitually express them due to their association with praise and blame.

The main problem with this position is that it is difficult to see how it is possible to forget *that* our moral values are valuable. Indeed, as argued above, our familiarity with values comes from a feeling of distance between command and obedience. If this feeling was forgotten, then this would instead suggest that what was once valuable had ceased being so. Since, however, our familiarity with values is typically enforced on a daily basis through obedience to customs and laws, this would imply that we could continually forget that which we experience as valuable on an everyday basis. This is highly implausible. Nietzsche makes this criticism against Rée in *On the Genealogy of Morals*:

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<sup>72</sup>See Rée 2003.

In the second place, however: quite apart from the historical untenability of this hypothesis regarding the origin of the value judgment “good,” it suffers from an inherent psychological absurdity. The utility of the unegoistic action is supposed to be the source of the approval accorded it, and this source is supposed to have been *forgotten* - but how is this forgetting *possible*? Has the utility of such actions come to an end at some time or other? The opposite is the case: this utility has rather been an everyday experience at all times, therefore something that has been underlined again and again: consequently, instead of fading from consciousness, instead of becoming easily forgotten, it must have been impressed on the consciousness more and more clearly.

GM I 3

Thinking that we could forget the value of our moral values in the manner that we forget a piece of propositional knowledge is akin to taking that value as, what contemporary philosophers would now call, a propositional attitude about our moral values. To forget *this* would render our moral actions meaningless. As seen in contemporary debates on the issue, supporters of intellectualism ascribe in the very least to implicit knowledge of propositional knowledge for the undertaking of “intelligent actions.”<sup>73</sup> The main way in which intellectualist accounts understand the intelligibility and value expressed in action is through appeal to “internal” propositional states that engage with propositional content.<sup>74</sup> However, if such propositional content is not available to the actor since it has been forgotten, then the action cannot be considered meaningful and expressive of value.

This also has repercussions for Rée’s understanding of habituation. Since habitual actions, once value has been forgotten, are devoid of meaning, they become reduced to a kind of rote habit. It is a habit that is, as Nietzsche describes, “something purely passive, automatic, reflect-like, molecular, and fundamentally

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<sup>73</sup>See, for example, Bengson and Moffett 2011, 7,8.

<sup>74</sup>See Bengson and Moffett 2011, 7 which gives a concise overview of the position in the following manner: “[I MIND] A state  $\sigma$  is a state of Intelligence if and only if  $\sigma$  is or involves a certain type of internal state of engaging propositional content. [I ACTION] An individual  $x$  exercises a state of Intelligence in performing an action  $\phi$  (i.e.,  $x$   $\phi$ -s Intelligently) if and only if  $x$   $\phi$ -s and  $x$  has some state  $\sigma$  such that (i)  $\sigma$  is or involves a certain type of internal state of engaging propositional content and (ii)  $\sigma$  is appropriately causally (or otherwise explanatorily) related to the production of  $\phi$ .”

stupid” (GM I 1). It is unable to meaningfully move anything; it is “vis inertiae” (*ibid.*).

To avoid this, we have to appreciate that the experience *that* our moral values are valuable is continually re-enforced and sedimented through our habituated obedience. These values are continually fixed through our ascetic holding in check of competing forces of the soul, to realise the expression of such values in action. It cannot be *this* aspect then that is forgotten. Instead, a better candidate is that, due to such sedimentation, what we come to forget is that the value of our moral values is a possible object of questioning. How we could come to forget such a thing, however, is not obvious. Indeed, such forgetting implies that before the sedimentation of our moral values, their conditional right to existence was experienced, and, hence that their value was not taken as given. However, for this to be the case suggests that these values could have been otherwise, and that, hence, before they became established, they were in competition with other values.

This way of understanding the nature of forgetting helps to understand how we can, and indeed do, become more cognitively receptive to morally salient phenomena in the world as we become habituated, (this is the first effect of habituation), and, yet, the demands on cognitive questioning diminish since we come to take the laws and customs as they are habitually given to us as authoritative. (This is the second effect).

We can, then, now come to see how Christian moral values remain dominant despite the widespread loss of faith in the religion. As our Christian moral values have become dominant over the past 2000 years, these values have become sedimented. This has meant that these values have become ascetically fixed, and, thus, have been rendered “unforgettable.”<sup>75</sup> Competition with alternative and opposing values has, as a result, ceased, and our moral values are taken as “facts.”

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<sup>75</sup>See GM II 3.

The value of these moral values is continually expressed through our actions and customs. What has become forgotten, however, is the possibility of bringing into question the value of these moral values. Their evaluative orientation - i.e., whether they are good for us, and not, say, harmful - is taken for granted.

Now, when we lose our faith in God as legislator due to the recent, widespread collapse in Christianity, what becomes affected is the unity of the outlook due to a loss of identification of the principle by which the outlook can be thought of as hanging together.<sup>76</sup> I have already suggested above that there have been many attempts to replace God as authoritative power, whilst maintaining the constellation of values that make up the outlook. Arguably, these have not been successful, in so far as there is no great consensus of a new principle among Europeans that they identify with. However, these attempts are indicative of the fact that the moral values themselves continue to function in a sedimented manner, such that their value remains a familiar, taken-for-granted part of everyday experience. People may understand the unity of the constellation of values in different ways, and, hence, no longer under the rubric of Christianity, but the values themselves remain familiar. In other words, the loss of God as legislator has not directly disrupted the evaluative orientation of the value of our moral values.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, even without a universal unifying principle, I will continue to talk of a moral outlook here since, as we shall see in chapter three, to bring into question our Christian moral values will mean to bring into question the value of the Christian moral outlook as a whole.

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<sup>76</sup>This helps explain the occurrence of the phenomenon of fragmentation that Max Weber discusses in 'Science as a Vocation.' See Weber 1958, 126. Unfortunately it is beyond the scope of the thesis to consider this phenomenon in further detail.

<sup>77</sup>Owen claims that Nietzsche experienced this in his contemporaries, resulting in a shift in focus in his later works: "By the time of composing Book III of *The Gay Science* it appears to him [Nietzsche] that his contemporaries, while increasingly characterised by atheism, do not understand this loss of faith to undermine the authority of Christian morality. It is not that they act in accordance with morality while no longer believing in it, but that they still believe in morality, that is, they take the authority of Christian morality to be unaffected." Owen 2014, 27.

## 2.8 Conclusion

To conclude, I will consider how understanding our familiarity with moral values in this manner can help us to see the possibility of bringing into view the value of our Christian moral values. I have argued that our familiarity with moral values is achieved through a complex process of habituation, which essentially involves a stable and ascetic dynamic of command and obedience. Through analysis of our moral psychological framework, I have argued that we can be familiar with different moral outlooks, and that towards opposing ends of the continuum of compulsion we can see two opposing outlooks in particular: a ‘noble moral outlook’ and a ‘Christian moral outlook.’ It is the latter outlook that we now find prevalent in contemporary Europe, notwithstanding the decline in Christianity. Due to the sedimentation of these Christian moral values, we no longer come to see their value as an object of questioning despite a loss of faith in God as legislator of those values.

Sedimentation, however, is not a fixed phenomenon that is unalterable. Indeed, Edmund Husserl, who introduces the concept, argues, for example, that the work of the philosopher “is to make vital again, in its concealed historical meaning, the sedimented conceptual system which, as taken for granted, serves as the ground of his private nonhistorical work.”<sup>78</sup> Sedimentation is an historical, variable phenomenon that depends on the stability of the ascetic structure of command and obedience and the feeling of distance that such a dynamic gives rise to. Habitual continuation of the dynamic to maintain such stability is essential for its perpetuation. If we are to pose the question of the value of our moral values, we will require, minimally, an engagement with such sedimentation.

On the one hand, simply showing that our values have gone through such a process of sedimentation will not be sufficient to pose the question of the value of our moral values since it has to be further shown that this value is something that

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<sup>78</sup>See Husserl 1970, 71.

is at stake for us *now*. On the other hand, the goal of moral inquiry cannot be to only disrupt this sedimentation by changing the ascetic structure of command and obedience that affords familiarity with our Christian moral values. Disruption alone would result in a loss of familiarity with our moral values, and, hence, a foregoing of the possibility of posing the question as to their value.

What is required is a type of disruption which maintains our familiarity with our Christian moral values, while, nevertheless, affording sufficient estrangement from them such that the value of these values comes into view as a questionable phenomenon. This gives rise to at least two pertinent questions. First, can this required disruption be initiated consciously by the moral inquirer? And, second, what type of disruption is required? The latter question will necessarily involve the relation of command and obedience in the soul of the inquirer as well as his or her social and political relation to others in the community. The former question concerns the possible role of cognition in moral inquiry and the type of work it is able to undertake to bring into view the value of our moral values as a questionable phenomenon.

In the next chapter, I will tackle the former question and, hence, look at the role that cognition is able to play in moral inquiry. I will analyse what type of cognition is required to initiate or cause the required disruption to sedimentation. In chapter four, I will then turn to the issue of the moral inquirer's social situation, where I will argue that estrangement should be understood as a movement that follows the structure of a 'rite of passage' that will locate the role of cognition, as a form of self-consciousness, in a liminal phase of reflection. In this phase, an aspect-shift towards an alternative and opposing moral outlook will ultimately be required as a part of achieving a temporary inversion of values, and which will play a central role in achieving estrangement from our Christian moral outlook.

## Chapter 3

# Familiarity and the Possibility of Estrangement: The Role of Cognition

### 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will focus on the cognitive aspect of moral inquiry, and the role that it is to play in bringing into question the value of our moral values. That cognition will have an important role to play in moral inquiry, has already been established in chapter one and chapter two, when I argued that the task of moral inquiry task is to see the value of our moral values as a *questionable* phenomenon, and that due to habituation and sedimentation we no longer see this value as an object of wonder. In chapter two I focused on developing a basic account of the functioning of our moral psychology. There, I emphasised the important role of force and compulsion that arises within a dynamic of command and obedience, and of habituation which affords the possibility of a stability of the soul and the possibility of willing. What was lacking, however, was precisely an account of the more cognitive elements of this structure. I will develop such an account in this chapter.

My approach will be to consider what form of cognition is minimally required in order for anything like a structure of command and obedience to be possible. I will thus build an account based on the moral psychological framework that I outlined in chapter two. The overarching aim will be to see how the possibility of estrangement is already built into our familiarity with moral values with specific concern for the role of cognition. We shall see, however, that the minimal form of cognition required for the realisation of a structure of command and obedience is insufficient for moral inquiry, since, fundamentally, it is not self-reflective. This will then lead me to consider a more complex form of cognition, that of self-consciousness. I will analyse the role that self-consciousness has in our familiarity with Christian moral values, and, finally, what scope there is to employ it for the task of moral inquiry.

It should be noted that the account I offer will be limited to understanding the highly complex phenomenon of consciousness only in terms of the dynamic of command and obedience. On the one hand, this will offer an interesting angle from which to approach this phenomenon. On the other hand, I will be unable to consider certain forms of consciousness that might still be relevant to moral experience, such as phenomenal consciousness and consciousness that arises from the senses, but which would ultimately take me too far afield.

I will develop my account by considering alternative accounts and the challenges they pose. For example, I will consider a version of the ephiphenomenalism of self-consciousness, which challenges the very possibility of moral inquiry as I have so far understood it in the thesis, as well as a cognitivist approach, which gives a privileged role to language and self-consciousness. By dealing with these positions, I will be able to establish the role that self-consciousness plays in our familiarity with moral values. I will also consider two accounts of radical, critical reflection to understand the role that self-conscious reflection will have to play in the task of estrangement. These will be two separate versions of internal critiques, one piecemeal, and the other a more radical form of ironic disruption. I



will ultimately argue against piecemeal reflection for failing to be able to bring our Christian moral outlook into view in its entirety. I will argue against ironic disruption being sufficient on its own, since it risks assimilating the experience of crisis into the Christian outlook rather than engendering a more radical break from it. Throughout, I will also further draw on Nietzsche's works in line with my appeal to his position in the previous chapter, which offered the required resources to understand our moral psychological framework.

In chapter four, I will then situate self-conscious reflection and the role it is to play in moral inquiry in the wider structure of estrangement. We shall see that it will be located in the middle phase of a tripartite movement whose structure mirrors that of the phenomenon of a rite of passage. This middle phase will be a liminal phase of reflection, where one is able to experience a radical inversion of values.

## **3.2 Minimal Consciousness**

In this section, I want to suggest that we can begin to understand the role of cognition in moral experience by looking at how it features in the moral psychological framework outlined in the previous chapter. This will mean considering what type of cognition is present in the dynamic of command and obedience. We shall see that by starting out from this framework, we do not necessarily need a strong form of cognition to arrive at a stable, ascetic structure of command and obedience. I will start by considering a minimal form of cognition that affords the basic functioning of this structure. I will then outline its limitations in particular relation to the task of moral inquiry, before turning to a stronger form of cognition, that of self-conscious reflection, which plays a more complex role in enriching this structure through concept determination, and which can play a more direct part in moral inquiry by disrupting the sedimentation of our moral values.

To obtain a dynamic of command and obedience a particular form of cognition is required. I will suggest that this cognition need not be reflective, or linguistic,

and, yet, it is also not unconscious. In the previous chapter, we have seen how the structure of the soul is a fluid dynamic of command and obedience, which can be situated on a continuum of compulsion bounded between two non-inclusive extremes, that of the savage beast and the animate tool. On the continuum there is neither pure spontaneous activity, nor pure passive mechanism. Instead, at the level of the soul in particular, we should think of there being an undecided contest of competing forces, drives and affects that ultimately gives rise to the very possibility of willing, and acts of will.

A central difference between mechanism and pure spontaneity, on the one hand, and acts of will, on the other, is the requirement for an ordered structure of the soul, where competing forces form a dynamic of command and obedience. For there to be a resultant act of will, the forces must settle into an ascetic structure such that they are compelled into obedience under a guiding command. The idea is that to settle into such a structure a minimal form of cognition is necessary. Nietzsche suggests this when he writes that “*intelligere*... is actually nothing but a certain behaviour of the instincts toward one another” (GS 333); and similarly in BGE 36: “...thinking [Denken] is merely a relation of these drives to each other...” He is even more explicit in an aphorism in *Beyond Good and Evil*: “Therefore, just as sensations (and indeed many kinds of sensations) are to be recognised as ingredients of the will, so, secondly, should thinking also: in every act of the will there is a commanding thought [kommandierenden Gedanken] - let us not imagine it possible to sever this thought from the “willing,” as if any will would then remain over!” (BGE 19; translation modified.)

Nietzsche’s formulation here can lead to confusion in so far as one might think that these drives and instincts themselves “think” at the sub-personal level. To avoid this, I will limit the claim to the idea that a minimal form of cognition should be seen as taking place within the dynamic of command and obedience. To show how this is the case, I will consider an example where I think this minimal form of consciousness is present.

Let us consider the example of young infants being brought up by their parents. Parents issue commands to infants in a variety of ways, through utterances, facial expressions, gestures, postures, and so on. The means of response of infants, even as young as 6-12 months, are typically interpreted in terms of being compliant or defiant.<sup>1</sup> Thus, before the commands of the parents become semantically meaningful to infants, the infants respond in a manner that cannot be grasped in purely causal or purely spontaneous terms. However, nor can they be grasped in terms of linguistic understanding, or self-conscious reflection, since the infants have not yet acquired mastery of a language. Infants are not simply pushed or pulled to move in a particular direction, yet, nor do they deliberate in any substantive sense on their course of action.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, they do “feel” themselves under a compulsion of command. This feeling cannot simply be a case of “pain compliance,” where painful stimuli is used to channel behaviour; it must instead be in some sense cognitive since it involves the infant experiencing the command *as* a command, i.e., as something - such as a gesture or facial expression - that has a compelling force.<sup>3</sup>

Although it is difficult to articulate this form of minimal cognition as a feeling of being compelled, we can infer that it must involve the soul of the infant be-

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<sup>1</sup>In the psychology literature on this topic, much of the discussion revolves around the role of parental caregiving in infant obedience. See Hay 1984 for an overview, and also Stayton, Hogan, and Ainsworth 1971. What is agreed upon across the literature is that infants of such an age already act in terms of compliance and defiance.

<sup>2</sup>See, for example, Cowley 2003, 232-233: “The third and fourth months of an infant’s life manifest what, following Trevarthen, is called ‘primary intersubjectivity’. Today it is beyond dispute that, behaviourally, this phase is marked by closely meshed, affectively charged infant-caregiver activity. At one level, the label identifies the consequences of a qualitative change in interaction that allows caregivers and infants to enact an interactional ‘dance’. Rhythmical bodily movements, mutual gaze and facial expression are accompanied by delicately modulated vocalization reminiscent of waltzing or falling in love [...] The coupling of infant and caregiver is seen – not in terms of signals and messages - but as driving and driven by how a child’s brain-body system responds to prompts and demands.”

<sup>3</sup>It may well be argued that as infants grow up and obtain the capacity for self-conscious reflection and language use, the dynamic of command and obedience changes. John McDowell, for example, argues that the change occurs due to the infant becoming initiated into the “space of reasons” as he or she grows up in a community and acquires a language and tradition. I will engage critically with this position later in this chapter, when the question of the role played by self-reflection and language in our familiarity with moral values becomes more salient.

coming structured into a dynamic of command and obedience in relation to the issued, parental command. It is easy to witness a slight pause on the part of the infant on reception of the command, as if he or she were “weighing up” the best course of action. Indeed, this pause is often much more exaggerated in infants than it is in children and adults since infants have undergone less habituation. We should not, however, take this “weighing up” in any thick reflective sense, but rather in a thin sense of a minimal form of cognition or “primitive thinking,” which arranges the forces of the soul of the infant into a structure that affords compliance and defiance.<sup>4</sup> The action that then follows from the infant expresses compliance or defiance, and, from this, gives an insight to the parent or observer into the structure that the infant’s soul has formed.

This minimal form of consciousness has the following features. Its contents are not linguistically structured; it is non-reflexive in the sense that it is unable to take itself or another conscious act as an object or higher order thought; and it is not unconscious since it involves a cognitive feeling of compulsion, which when unpacked involves a thin process of “weighing up,” which, however, should not be understood to involve any complex reflexive, deliberation.

It should be seen, however, that this kind of minimal cognition, as so far understood, is not adequate for the task of moral inquiry. The key feature that it lacks, which the latter task requires, is that of reflexivity. The task of bringing into view the value of our moral values will have to involve some form of meta-cognition or reflection, since it will require rendering this value as it is already experienced in its familiarity, as a further object of possible questioning. As argued in chapter two, the value of our moral values has become sedimented, and thus taken for granted in its familiarity *as valuable*. To question this will require

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<sup>4</sup>This can help us to understand why Nietzsche claims that this kind of thinking was the earliest kind of thinking among humans: “Setting prices, determining values, contriving equivalences, exchanges - these preoccupied the earliest thinking [Denken] of humans to so great an extent that in a certain sense they constitute thinking *as such*...” (GM II 8; translation modified).

a form of reflexive consciousness, since it requires taking our consciousness of the sedimented value of our moral values and disrupting such sedimentation by rendering it an object of wonder and reflection. In other words, our familiarity with moral values is to be taken up as an object of meta-cognition such that in their familiarity, these values show up as strange.

Now, the obvious candidate for providing this kind of higher order meta-cognitive thinking is that which is traditionally called *self*-consciousness. I will consider this in the next section, by analysing how it functions in the dynamic of command and obedience of the soul. Once I have done this, I will then turn to a contemporary debate in the literature to defend my account of thinking and self-consciousness against plausible alternatives.

### **3.3 Self-consciousness**

Rather than immediately looking at how self-consciousness can function in moral inquiry, I will begin by considering how it functions in moral experience, and, more specifically, how it can be efficacious in our familiarity with moral values. There are two reasons for this. First, I wish to see to what extent the possibility of estrangement is already built into our familiarity with moral values. Given that, as we have seen in chapter one, this familiarity is a necessary condition for moral knowledge, our familiarity with moral values is a good starting place to see what resources this familiarity can already offer us for the task of estrangement. Second, as we shall see in the next section, it has been argued that self-consciousness is not only absent during highly skilled moral action, but that it destroys the phenomena experienced during such action when it occurs at the same time as that action. Self-consciousness here is considered detrimental to moral expertise, and, as a result, incapable of accurately capturing the experience of such expertise. By arguing that self-consciousness has an important role in our familiarity with moral values in this section, I will be in a stronger position to reject this account in the next section, and to set up the positive role that self-consciousness can play

in moral inquiry.

The question then that I will begin with here is how self-consciousness functions in moral experience, and, more precisely, the role it plays in the dynamic of command and obedience. The topic of self-consciousness, similarly to minimal cognition considered in the previous section, is so vast that I will only seek to tackle the issue from this latter perspective, (i.e., in strict relation to this dynamic of the soul) with the ultimate aim of articulating the type of self-consciousness required for the task of estrangement.

Since it is Nietzsche who I have interpreted as offering the resources for a construction of our moral psychological framework in terms of the dynamic of command and obedience, I will begin by considering how he understands the phenomenon of self-consciousness. We shall see that he provides a useful starting point. In an aphorism on the phenomenon of consciousness in book five of *The Gay Science*, he makes the following claim: “That from the start it [consciousness] was needed and useful only between human beings (*particularly between those who commanded and those who obeyed*)” (GS 354; my italics). First, it should be noted that when Nietzsche employs the term ‘consciousness’, *Bewusstsein*, he has in mind self-consciousness, as opposed to a minimal form of cognition outlined in the previous chapter, or to other kinds of non-reflexive consciousnesses, such as phenomenal consciousness. This is seen by the fact that in the same aphorism he talks of other cognitive activities which do not come to this level of consciousness, and he also describes this consciousness as a kind of “mirror”, which suggests that this consciousness fundamentally involves a kind of reflexivity.<sup>5</sup>

Second, the parenthetical remark from the above quotation is what I will take

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<sup>5</sup>I agree with Mattia Riccardi in taking Nietzsche to be indicating a form of self-consciousness in this aphorism. See Riccardi in press: “Firstly, consider that Nietzsche describes the kind of consciousness he is dealing with as “one’s becoming conscious (Sich-bewusst-werden) of something”, a formulation which implies the kind of reflexivity we normally capture with the notion of self-consciousness. Support to this reading is also lent by Nietzsche’s “mirror” metaphor, which, too, suggests some sort of reflexivity. Self-consciousness, moreover, is such a high cognitive ability that we can easily expect it to serve as differentiating us from other animals.”

as guidance to construct an understanding of the role of self-consciousness in our familiarity with moral values. Nietzsche suggests that the utility function of self-consciousness comes from the fact that human beings find themselves in a dynamic of command and obedience, which arises due to humans coming to live together in communities.<sup>6</sup> An obvious manner in which one might think self-consciousness would offer an advantage for a community is the fact that it offers the possibility of “representing” the feelings and psychological states of individuals and groups. Nietzsche suggests this in GS 354:

That our actions, thoughts, feelings, and movements enter our own consciousness - at least a part of them - that is the result of a “must” that for a terribly long time lorded it over humans. As the most endangered animal, human beings *needed* help and protection, they needed their peers, they had to learn to express their distress and to make themselves understood; and for all of this they needed “consciousness” first of all, they needed to “know” themselves what distressed them, they needed to “know” how they felt, they needed to “know” what they thought.

*GS 354*

However, this utility of self-consciousness as a means of “self-knowledge”, which is employed for the sake of self-expression to others, only makes sense if it can be *communicated*. Nietzsche’s idea here is that self-consciousness arises between human beings simultaneously with language due precisely to this need.<sup>7</sup> Nietzsche makes this claim in GS 354:

The emergence of our sense impressions [Sinneseindrücke] into our own consciousness, the ability to fix them and, as it were, exhibit them

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<sup>6</sup>See chapter 2 on the simultaneous development of the social pathos and the soul pathos. See section ‘The Soul.’

<sup>7</sup>In Marx and Engels 1972, 51 the same claim is made: “...language, like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity, of intercourse with other men. Where there exists a relationship, it exists for me: the animal does not enter into “relations” with anything, it does not enter into any relation at all. For the animal, its relation to others does not exist as a relation. [Self-]Consciousness is, therefore, from the very beginning a social product, and remains so as long as men exist at all.” Marx and Engels, however, do not consider how it arises in the *sui generis* relation of command and obedience as I will attempt here.

externally, increased proportionately with the need to communicate them to *others* by means of signs. The human being inventing signs is at the same time the human being who becomes ever more keenly conscious of itself. It was only as a social animal that humans acquired self-consciousness.

*GS 354*; translation modified<sup>8</sup>

To lend plausibility to Nietzsche's claim here, I will consider how the co-development of self-consciousness and language are useful for human beings living in a community, but I will narrow the scope of this to its specific utility with respect to the dynamic of command and obedience at the level of both the community and the individual soul.

In the previous chapter, I argued that our moral values have become sedimented over time. We saw there that this occurs due to the fixing of our moral concepts so that they become stable, and the familiarisation of these concepts such that they become taken for granted and foundational for further experience.<sup>9</sup> This fixing occurs ascetically: a structure of command and obedience is formed where forces of the soul (desires, instincts, drives) are held in check - i.e, rendered obedient - to a commanding goal. For the solidification of this structure to reach a form of stability (of character at the level of the soul and of political stability at the level of the community) habituation is required. Now, in the previous section, I argued that a minimal form of cognition can be inferred as playing an important role in this dynamic of command and obedience. I want to suggest here that the utility of self-consciousness should be found in the same place, in its ability to help with the *fixing* of our moral values in a more powerful manner than the form of minimal cognition is capable of.

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<sup>8</sup>By "human signs" Nietzsche clearly has language in mind: "In brief, the development of language and the development of consciousness (*not* of reason but merely of the way reason enters into consciousness) go hand in hand" (GS 354). See also BGE 268: "For only this conscious thinking *takes the form of words, which is to say signs of communication*, and this fact uncovers the origin of consciousness." And: "Words are acoustical signs for concepts; concepts, however, are more or less definite image signs for often recurring and associated sensations, for groups of sensations" (*ibid*).

<sup>9</sup>See chapter 2, section 'Sedimentation'.



To give an insight into the role of language here, let us return briefly to the example of the parent and the infant raised in the previous section. The form of non-linguistic, minimal cognition seen expressed in this case remains relatively internal to and across the subjective states of the individuals - (the parent and the infant). The stability that arises occurs at once between the infant and the parent, who together briefly form a dynamic of command and obedience, as well as at the level of the soul of the infant, since the infant's soul becomes structured into a dynamic of command and obedience in response to the command of the parent. What is "in the world", so to speak, is the initial non-linguistic command issued by the parent, and the resultant act of the infant. Now, what language adds to this dynamic, as suggested by Nietzsche in the above cited aphorism, is a more powerful means of fixing the command, and, as a result, of stabilising the dynamic of command and obedience. This is achieved by *externally* fixing the command in language, which offers a medium distinct from the dynamic of command and obedience of the individuals and of the dynamic functioning between them.

This external, linguistic fixing renders self-consciousness efficacious in structuring the soul in two interrelated ways. Language can be employed, on the one hand, as an active expression of the power of command through the activity of concept *determination*. As such the possibility of this activity typically belongs to those who have this power of command. As Nietzsche explains, "[t]he 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" (GM I 2).

On the other hand, language has a role in representing the command as a duty or promise that is to be realised through obedience. The power of conceptual representation that language offers here is not simply that it can represent a command symbolically. More than this, it allows for a goal to be externally fixed much further beyond one's current state than in the case of non-linguistic

commands. In the previous chapter, I argued that there was a relation here between the fixing of the command, and the distance that the command stands from its realisation: the greater the distance, the greater the demand for the fixing of the command.<sup>10</sup> Language offers a more powerful externalisation of command that creates such a distance. This is captured most succinctly in its most extreme form in Christianity where “the Word becomes God.” This represents a difference from language as an expression of (human) power through concept determination of a ruling class.<sup>11</sup> However, this difference is one of degrees and emphasis. Concept determination is not wholly absent from the Christian moral outlook, but it is either subsumed under a means of obedience, or moved into the realm of the divine. Similarly, in the noble outlook, the externalisation of commands as duties to be obeyed are very much present, but these are subsumed under expressions of power that distinguish the nobility from a lower class. In other words, the two different ways in which language can be efficacious in our familiarity with moral values - the expression of the power of command through concept determination, and the externalisation of the command as a duty to be obeyed - are typically both present in the dynamic of command and obedience, but one aspect can subsume the other depending on which end of the continuum we consider.<sup>12</sup>

Now before expanding further on the role of self-consciousness and language in the dynamic of command and obedience by considering alternative philosophical accounts, there are a couple of basic worries that first need to be addressed.

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<sup>10</sup>See chapter 2, section ‘The continuum of compulsion and the pathos of distance.’

<sup>11</sup>Although it is beyond the scope of this chapter, it should be noted that language plays an important role in the deification of the ascetic structure discussed in chapter 2. See Harpham 1987, 12-13, and the phenomenon of, what he calls, the coinciding of “logos and theology.”

<sup>12</sup>Much of the literature on the role of self-consciousness in Nietzsche’s works, considers whether it is *causally* efficacious for moral action. My suggestion here is that its efficaciousness should not be understood in causal terms at risk of falling into a mechanical account, but rather in terms of compulsion seen at play in the dynamic of command and obedience. Commentators typically miss this because they are concerned with other forms of consciousness. Katsafanas 2005, Riccardi in press and Leiter 2001 all agree that Nietzsche endorses a causal account but disagree on whether self-consciousness is causally efficacious or epiphenomenal.

First, there is the worry that notwithstanding my attempts to show how self-consciousness has an efficacious role in our familiarity with moral values, ultimately its role in this process is superfluous, or at least that we could do without it and still be able to act morally. This is not a major concern for me given that I have not sought to argue that self-consciousness is *necessary* to achieve familiarity with moral values, but rather for the weaker claim that it *can and indeed does play an efficacious role* in how we become familiar with moral values. The reason why I have been interested in the role that self-consciousness plays is to see if we can find resources there for the task of moral inquiry. However, it is true that Nietzsche, in the same aphorism that I have leaned on heavily to offer an account of the efficacy of self-consciousness, seems to claim, in fact, that self-consciousness is entirely superfluous, and, hence, has no influence on our familiarity with moral values. It is worth then considering what Nietzsche's claim here amounts to.

Second, there is a worry that self-consciousness might in some sense distort its contents. This is another claim that Nietzsche forwards in GS 354. This is a more serious concern since if self-consciousness has a distorting effect on that which it captures, then the nature of the distortion would have to be ascertained to see what effect this would have for the possibility of moral inquiry. If, for example, the representation that self-consciousness provides of our moral values is not faithful, then this would jeopardise the possibility of faithfully bringing the value of our moral values into view as a questionable phenomenon.

To begin with the first worry, Nietzsche seems to make a claim about the superfluousness of self-consciousness in the *Gay Science* aphorism that I have been considering in detail in this section: "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" [...] The whole of life would be possible without, as it were, seeing itself in a mirror" (GS 354).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>It is also a claim that has had considerable attention from commentators. For interpretations of Nietzsche as an epiphenomenalist about self-consciousness see Leiter 2001: "The second

Note that there is the further worry that if self-consciousness functions *only* as a mirror, as Nietzsche suggests here, then it would not be able to engage in the type of *disruption* of our sedimented moral values that is required to see not simply the familiar value of our moral values, but to bring this value into view as something questionable. As a result, self-consciousness would not be able to play any part in moral inquiry.

I will, first, briefly argue against understanding Nietzsche's claim here as a broad epiphenomenal claim about the efficaciousness of self-consciousness. As the continuation of the aphorism GS 354 bears witness, Nietzsche qualifies this statement of the superfluousness of self-consciousness by claiming, albeit somewhat ambiguously, that self-consciousness is epiphenomenal only for the 'human savage' and the 'hermit'. What these two figures have in common is that they are human but live in isolation, external from human communities. What I think Nietzsche means to suggest by this is that they engage in the type of minimal cognitive thinking that we saw in the previous section, due to some exposure to human communal living during upbringing. This thinking is a minimal, necessary requirement for creating a stable dynamic of command and obedience that can bring about an act of will. That is to say, they exercise some form of self-restraint such that the phenomenon of willing arises. Hence, they are able to perform actions. Yet, they do not require self-consciousness to act since they do not live within human communities. They have no need to *communicate* their psychological states to others to form a stable dynamic of command and obedience. Human beings that do live in communities, on the contrary, do engage in and benefit from such communication. Due to this communication, self-consciousness is employed in a manner that affects our familiarity with moral values. As suggested above, it affords the use of language as an expression of the power of command, and the

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argument grows out of Nietzsche's claim that our conscious life is essentially epiphenomenal, that what rises to the level of consciousness is simply an effect of something unconscious, or perhaps even something physical" Leiter 2001, 291. See also Gemes 2009, Risse 2007.

positing of more extreme duties and promises to be realised through obedience. We might say it affords a widening of the soul that could not be achieved without it.

Let us now turn to the more serious concern of the distorting effects of self-consciousness. In the same aphorism, Nietzsche claims that *all* self-consciousness - hence, even for those living in communities - distorts its contents:

Owing to the nature of *animal consciousness*, the world of which we can become conscious is only a surface- and sign-world, a world that is made common and meaner; whatever becomes conscious *becomes* by the same token shallow, thin, relatively stupid, general, sign, herd signal; all becoming conscious involves a great and thorough corruption, falsification, reduction to superficialities, and generalisation. Ultimately, the growth of consciousness becomes a danger; and anyone who lives among the most conscious Europeans even knows that it is a disease.

*GS 354*; translation modified

This is an oft-quoted aphorism in the Nietzsche scholarship. However, most of the attention has fallen on attempting to elucidate the corrupting and falsifying nature of self-consciousness in terms of its epistemological significance, typically in terms of the conceptualisation and propositional articulation that the content of experience undergoes when it comes to the level of self-consciousness.<sup>14</sup> This overlooks, however, the central characteristic of self-consciousness that Nietzsche describes to account for its distorting nature. In this aphorism he describes consciousness as *animal* consciousness, *thierischen Bewusstseins*. At first sight, this manner of articulating the nature of the distortion appears as a *contradictio in*

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<sup>14</sup>In the Anglophone secondary literature, the distorting effects of consciousness are often taken up as an epistemological problem, and has been labelled Nietzsche's "falsification thesis." See, for example, Welshon 2014: "...the falsification thesis is an epistemological claim and not a genetic or psychological claim. The falsification thesis has to do not with how the contents of basic conscious experience are generated but with whether the contents so generated are true or false." Welshon 2014, 97. Clark 1990 first introduced and argued for Nietzsche's adherence to this "falsification thesis." See Katsafanas 2005 and Riccardi in press who take it up specifically in terms of conceptualisation.

*adjecto* given that self-consciousness is something fundamentally human, arising only in human communities.

Now, one might think that by the term ‘consciousness’ employed by Nietzsche in the above quote, Nietzsche is not referring to self-consciousness but to a type of consciousness that animals also share in. This would then make sense of Nietzsche’s qualification of its nature as animal-like. This response is untenable, however, given the way the aphorism continues. Nietzsche talks of this form of consciousness as “a net of communication *between human beings*” (GS 354; my italics) based on a complex language that animals do not have access to. It should thus still be understood as referring to a form of reflexive self-consciousness, which is the same self-consciousness that is the subject of the entire GS 354 aphorism.

Instead, I want to suggest that the “animal” nature of self-consciousness concerns the way in which language develops as a complex form of “herd signals” and “common signs”. This is supported by an aphorism from *Beyond Good and Evil*:

Which group of sensations [Empfindungen] is aroused, expresses itself, and issues commands in a soul most quickly, is decisive for the whole order of rank of its values and ultimately determines its table of goods. The values of a human being betray something of the *structure* of its soul and where it finds its conditions of life, its true need. Assuming next, that this need has only brought close to each other such human beings who could suggest with similar signs similar requirements and experiences, it would follow on the whole that easy communicability of need - which in the last analysis means the experience of merely average and *common* experiences - must have been the most powerful of all powers at whose disposal humans have been so far. The human beings who are more similar, more ordinary, have had, and always have, an advantage; those more select, subtle, strange, and difficult to understand, easily remain alone, succumb to accidents, being isolated, and rarely propagate. One must invoke tremendous counter-forces in order to cross this natural, all too natural *progressus in simile*, the continual development of the human toward the similar, ordinary, average, herdlike - *common*!

*BGE 268*; translation modified

Nietzsche suggests here that what is distorted by self-consciousness is the more “select, subtle, strange” experiences, as opposed to the more common experi-

ences shared by similar human beings. The typical answer as to why this occurs is because of some form of conceptualisation that occurs at the level of self-consciousness. I do not want to argue against this, but, as said above, I want to consider the significance of the distortion involved in terms of the role of self-consciousness in the dynamic of command and obedience. To do so, we need to distinguish between the different uses of language in our familiarity with moral values. First, it can be employed as an expression of the power of command, which is an act of concept determination that *distinguishes* between classes, individuals and forces of the soul. Second, it can represent and help linguistically fix duties and promises that lie well beyond the current state of individuals and groups, and, hence, help to bring such individuals and groups together. In the former case of concept-determination, it is true that such determination would distort the “select, subtle, strange” experiences due to the conceptualisation that it involves. Yet, it is important to note that this use of language can also have the *opposite* effect of contributing to the *progressus in simile* in so far as it seeks to *distinguish* through concept determination, rather than to bring together that which is similar. As such, this would provide a potential “counter-force” to this process, through an attempt to isolate that which diverges from the “common.”

This implies that in the above cited aphorism, Nietzsche has in mind the latter role of language as a means of externally fixing a shared command for similar human beings. This latter function has the power to externalise the command of duties and promises to render them potentially compelling to a wider audience of “similar human beings.” Language here has a greater power of bringing together similar human beings through the external articulation of a shared command. The distortion that occurs here then should not only be understood in terms of the conceptualisation of “select, subtle, strange” experiences, but also in terms of the external fixing - involved in this conceptualisation - of shared commands that are to be obeyed *en masse* by similar human beings. Self-consciousness then not only aids sedimentation, as seen above, through the fixing of moral values in linguistic

concepts, it can also function in bringing the similar together, at the expense of the unique through such fixing. Now, the distortion of the unique, here, is not a direct concern for moral inquiry since the object of concern is our moral values, and *their* value. However, the role of self-consciousness, as so far explained, raises particular problems for understanding its potential role in such inquiry. That is to say, rather than seeing how self-consciousness may help disrupt the sedimentation of our moral values, we have seen, on the contrary, how it contributes to such sedimentation.

In the next section, I will defend my account of the efficacious role of minimal cognition and self-consciousness in our familiarity with moral values against two alternative accounts. This will help, first, to clarify the role of self-consciousness in our familiarity with moral values by arguing for my above claims against plausible alternatives, and, second, to offer greater detail as to how this role of self-consciousness will be able to function in the task of moral inquiry.

### **3.4 Between Dreyfus and McDowell**

In a recent contemporary debate, the role of self-consciousness in moral experience and moral inquiry has been discussed from two distinct positions. In this section, I will situate my account between these two positions, forwarded by Hubert Dreyfus and John McDowell.

Both Dreyfus and McDowell take up contrasting positions with respect to the role of self-consciousness in moral action and in moral inquiry. Both positions have strengths that I wish to draw upon in support of my own position, and by articulating their shortcomings, the role that self-consciousness has to play in moral experience should become clearer. Moreover, we shall also see the potential that self-consciousness has for the task of moral inquiry, which is of interest here.

On the one hand, I will argue with McDowell and against Dreyfus' epiphenominalist position that self-consciousness has a fundamental role to play in our familiarity with moral values at what Dreyfus calls the "expert" level, and that



it also has a role in moral inquiry. On the other hand, I will argue with Dreyfus against McDowell, that when we become familiar with our moral values compulsion is central to the process, and, as a result, we do not simply come to have our eyes passively “opened to reason.” This will be important since it will suggest that the conceptual sphere does not go “all the way down,” as McDowell thinks. I will then ring-fence the correct position in between these two accounts.

Dreyfus offers us, what is often called, a “non-cognitive” account of moral action. To be more specific, we shall see that Dreyfus is committed to the position of, what he calls, “expert moral action” occurring without any cognitive functioning at all on the part of the moral agent, unlike merely “competent” or “proficient” actions, which, he claims, do often involve cognition.

On analogy with chess and driving it would seem that the budding moral expert would learn at least some of the ethics of his community by following strict rules, would then go on to apply contextualized maxims, and, in the highest stage, would leave rules and principles behind and develop more and more refined spontaneous moral responses.<sup>15</sup>

Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1991, 236, 237

Moreover, Dreyfus claims that at the level of the “expert”, cognition is not only absent, but that it is detrimental to highly skilled moral experience since when it occurs, it causes a breakdown of the experience. “Mindedness,” Dreyfus claims, “is the enemy of expert coping,” where expert coping is “direct and unreflective” and “nonconceptual and nonminded.”<sup>16</sup> As a result of this, according to Dreyfus, when the “expert” moral agent reflects, it is impossible for him or her to accurately take up the contents of his or her moral experience. This has the implication that for a moral inquirer, self-consciousness has no access to expertly-experienced

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<sup>15</sup>Although Dreyfus does not explicitly say that expert moral action is non-cognitive, he is committed to this position since he claims that moral action is analogous to highly skilled action, and that highly skilled action occurs non cognitively.

<sup>16</sup>Dreyfus 2007, 355.

moral content. As a direct result of this, any attempts to bring the value of moral values into view as an object of questioning by such an expert would be a non-starter. This is because any such questioning would occur on the plane of self-conscious reflection. In other words, if Dreyfus' position were to be correct, there would be no scope for the moral expert to self-consciously access his or her moral values. Dreyfus then endorses a weak form of epiphenomenalism here in so far as he admits of the presence and importance of self-consciousness for developing moral competence through the following of customs, rules and laws, but denies its presence at the highest "expert" level. In the previous section, I argued that self-consciousness has a part to play in moral experience as an expression of the power of command, and as a fixed command compelling obedience. If Dreyfus' account is right, however, then I would have at best described a person with a competence in moral matters, but who has not yet acquired the level of "expertise" described by Dreyfus. I will address this issue later in this section.

McDowell, instead, offers us a rationalist account of moral action with self-consciousness at its centre. Contrary to Dreyfus, McDowell argues that moral experience is always already conceptual, making it readily amenable to self-consciousness and reflection.<sup>17</sup> This means that the moral inquirer has direct access to the contents of moral experience through self-conscious reflection. If McDowell's account were to be correct, then moral inquiry should be a relatively straightforward affair through, what we shall see McDowell call, "radical, piecemeal reflection." Before unpacking this issue and addressing it, I will note the common starting point of both positions and the return to the individual accounts to consider them, and the challenges that they pose, in greater detail.

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<sup>17</sup>McDowell not unlike Dreyfus has a different starting point from that of moral action, but then argues that "something parallel" occurs in the case of morality: "The idea of the conceptual that I mean to be invoking is to be understood in close connection with the idea of rationality, in the sense that is in play in the traditional separation of mature human beings, as rational animals, from the rest of the animal kingdom. Conceptual capacities are capacities that belong to their subject's rationality. So another way of putting my claim is to say that our perceptual experience is permeated with rationality. I have also suggested, in passing, that something parallel should be said about our agency." McDowell 2007b, 338-339.

Both positions reject the possibility of “detached” reflection or deliberation sufficiently capturing the particulars of the moral situation or moral experience of an agent. By “detached” reflection or deliberation they both have in mind general rules and maxims that concern moral behaviour. They agree that reflection on such rules and maxims can never adequately capture the “particulars” and “specifics” that are experienced by a moral agent in a moral situation.<sup>18</sup> They both further agree that this is because a process of learning and habituation is required to become morally proficient, and that while such rules and maxims can be useful reference points during this process, they ultimately become inadequate for capturing the specifics that the moral situation affords, and that the moral agent becomes competently sensitive and responsive to.<sup>19</sup> As a result of this, the moral inquirer, like any moral agent, must be sufficiently habituated in order to be able to perceive moral salience in the world. This means that there is no way of circumventing the requirement of habituation through direct awareness of moral rules, or through an appeal to first nature.<sup>20</sup>

At this point, however, Dreyfus’ and McDowell’s positions diverge quite radically. This is seen most starkly when we consider again the position of the moral inquirer. For Dreyfus, once one has been sufficiently habituated, not only do those general rules and maxims fall away, but all of one’s nuanced responses become non-cognitive. They become *so* situation-specific that they can no longer be captured linguistically. Thus, Dreyfus states that when an expert is responding to the demands of the situation “there is no thinking subject and *there are no features to be thought.*”<sup>21</sup> He bases his argument on an analysis of the “phenomena”: “The phe-

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<sup>18</sup>McDowell in response to Dreyfus on this point states the following: “I reject the idea that the content of practical wisdom, as Aristotle understands it, can be captured in general prescriptions for conduct, determinately expressible independently of the concrete situations in which the *phronimos* is called on to act” McDowell 2007b, 340. For Dreyfus on this issue, see Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1991.

<sup>19</sup>See McDowell 2007b, 341 and Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1991.

<sup>20</sup>I argued for this myself by considering Aristotle’s moral philosophy in chapter 2. See section ‘Habituation.’

<sup>21</sup>Dreyfus 2007, 358, my italics.

nomena show that embodied skills, when we are absorbed in enacting them, have a kind of content which is nonconceptual, non-propositional, non-rational (even if rational means situation-specific,) and non-linguistic.”<sup>22</sup> This has extreme implications for the moral inquirer, since not only do moral experiences escape the possibility of being accurately articulated linguistically on Dreyfus’ account, they *a fortiori* elude any possibility of being brought into question. Moreover, as suggested above, Dreyfus argues that self-consciousness even becomes prohibitive since it destroys the particular contents of the experience that are accessed by the moral agent when in the midst of action.

McDowell argues against Dreyfus that although generalised rules and maxims are unable to capture the specifics of moral experience, such experience is conceptually structured, and, hence, can still be captured linguistically by self-consciousness.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, although McDowell concedes to Dreyfus that many of our actions often do not issue from a prior mental act of reason, the content of moral experience during the action can still be brought into view after the event precisely because they are structured conceptually. Under McDowell’s account, then, the moral inquirer, as long as he or she is correctly habituated, has the possibility of accessing even the most situation-specific contents of moral experience, *ex post facto*. Moreover, such a possibility is to be realised through recourse to language through self-consciousness.

Let me now attempt to pinpoint the central locus of divergence between the two accounts, which I will then be able to navigate between for the remainder of the section.

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<sup>22</sup>Dreyfus 2007, 360.

<sup>23</sup>“Dreyfus pictures rationality as detached from particular situations—as able to relate to particular situations only by subsuming them under content determinately expressible in abstraction from any situation. He makes a compelling case for the claim that the skills exercised in embodied coping cannot be characterized in such terms. If rationality is essentially situation-independent, that feature of embodied coping establishes that it cannot be permeated with rationality. But I think we should reject the picture of rationality as situation-independent.” McDowell 2007b, 339. Although McDowell talks of ‘rationality’ here, he states at the beginning of the paper that “conceptual capacities... belong to their subject’s rationality.” He thus clearly has language in mind.

Both positions agree that many of our actions occur without any need for a prior self-conscious state ‘behind’ the action. However - and here we start to see the fundamental difference - the absence of any such prior self-conscious cognition, according to Dreyfus, is precisely *the* mark of *expert* moral action. To engage in complex moral tasks without any cognition is a sign of high attainment. McDowell, instead, argues that the very structure exhibited by prior self-consciousness is the model that should be extended to include actions that proceed without such prior intent.<sup>24</sup> This expansion essentially involves the extension of the conceptual, rational domain of prior reasoning to those actions that are undertaken without prior reasoning.<sup>25</sup> Thus, while for Dreyfus a move away from prior reasoning to non-cognitive action shows greater competence, for McDowell this greater competence is shown by the fact that conceptual capacities still essentially function even when no prior reason is acted upon.

Now from this divergence we can start to understand how they offer different accounts of how actions come about without prior reasoning. According to Dreyfus, these expert actions are motivated by, what he calls, the “solicitations” of the situation. Importantly, Dreyfus distinguishes them from “facts” and “propositional structures.”<sup>26</sup> The moral expert obtains sufficient sensitivity to these solicitations such that they “attract and repulse” him or her into responding to the situation in a “spontaneous manner,” without the need (or even the possibility) of cognitive engagement with them. Indeed, Dreyfus argues that the very nature of such solicitations denies the possibility that they could ever be captured in propositional form: “*qua* solicitations they *cannot be made explicit* as features and data for then they wouldn’t draw us to act. In such a case, their motivating power would be lost. They can only be *solicitations* in so far as one is actually

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<sup>24</sup>“So the structure of what Aristotle offers as an account of deliberation should be relevant more widely than where action issues from reasoning” McDowell 2007b, 341.

<sup>25</sup>McDowell argues that “rationality in the strong sense” as “responsiveness to reasons as such” permeates both prior reasoning (and “standing back”) and “absorbed coping”. See McDowell 2007a, 366.

<sup>26</sup>See Dreyfus 2007, 356, 357.

responding to them.”<sup>27</sup> Here the difference between the two positions becomes most salient. Dreyfus argues that only solicitations can motivate: “[o]ne way to put my point is that openness to objective affordances may well draw on rationality but it doesn’t draw anyone to do anything.”<sup>28</sup> McDowell responds that “[t]o an engaged agent, an affordance can *be* a solicitation. And its being a solicitation does not conflict with its being a fact, something to which a rational animal can be open in operations of conceptual capacities.”<sup>29</sup>

I am now in a position to offer a first articulation of the position that I think is the correct one that lies in between McDowell’s and Dreyfus’ accounts, before I then defend it in specific dialogue with their individual positions. I will argue that solicitations cannot be ineffable forces of attraction as Dreyfus suggests, since, in the case of morality in particular, this mistakenly takes the moral expert out of the moral realm altogether, and ultimately safe-guards expert moral experience from moral inquiry. As a further result of this, which would have repercussions for the task of moral inquiry that I am concerned with here, it would be impossible to bring into question the value of our moral values, since self-consciousness and language are essential for this task. On the other hand, I will argue that solicitations cannot only be conceptually structured facts or affordances as suggested by McDowell since reason alone, as McDowell understands it, is not sufficient to compel us to moral action. Moreover, we shall see that moral inquiry cannot simply function through a form of piecemeal reflection that considers the coherence of these facts and affordances, since such a process is unable to bring into view the value of the Christian moral outlook as a whole.

The correct position that finds the middle ground between these two positions understands solicitations as *commands* that are forces, but which are nevertheless experienced *as commands*, and, hence, as compulsions. This experience of a

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<sup>27</sup>Dreyfus 2007, 357, 358.

<sup>28</sup>See Dreyfus 2007, 356, 361.

<sup>29</sup>McDowell 2007a, 369.

command as a command has a cognitive element as a part of the compulsion. It need not be linguistically structured, although it often is. This means that for moral inquiry, self-consciousness can access parts of the dynamic of command and obedience and, hence, of our familiarity with moral values, contra Dreyfus, but that to achieve a disruption of their sedimentation, reflective engagement with compulsion-free facts and affordances, which McDowell's position proffers, will not be sufficient.

To make these arguments, I will first consider Dreyfus' position in greater detail. I will focus on his commitment to the idea that self-conscious reflection destroys the moral phenomena experienced by the expert, and the result that this has for the possibility of moral inquiry.

In his paper 'Towards a Phenomenology of moral expertise' written prior to his debate with McDowell, Dreyfus suggests that the manner in which we learn to become moral experts parallels how we become experts at certain skills. He claims that the experience of an moral expert is analogous to the experience of, for example, a grandmaster chess player, or a professional athlete.<sup>30</sup> In this paper, Dreyfus offers the following example as to how the analogy is to work in the case of moral action:

To take a greatly oversimplified and dramatic example, a child at some point might learn the rule: never lie. Faced with the dilemma posed by Kant - an avowed killer asking the whereabouts of the child's friend - the child might tell the truth. After experiencing regret and guilt over the death of the friend, however, the child would move toward the realization that the rule, "Never lie," like the rule, "Shift at ten miles per hour," needs to be contextualized, and would seek maxims to turn to in different typical situations. Such a maxim might be, "Never lie except when someone might be seriously hurt by telling the truth."

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<sup>30</sup> "The rest of this paper is based on a conditional: if the skill model we have proposed is correct, then, in so far as moral comportment is a form of expertise, we should expect it to exhibit a developmental structure similar to that which we have described above. On analogy with chess and driving it would seem that the budding moral expert would learn at least some of the ethics of his community by following strict rules, would then go on to apply contextualized maxims, and, in the highest stage, would leave rules and principles behind and develop more and more refined spontaneous moral responses." Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1991, 236-237.

Of course, this maxim too would, under some circumstances, lead to regret. Finally, with enough experience, the moral expert would learn to tell the truth or lie, depending upon the situation, without appeal to rules and maxims.

Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1991, 237

Now, although it is clear that with a more contextualised and nuanced response to the situation the moral expert need no longer appeal to maxims and rules, it is not yet clear from this example whether Dreyfus thinks that cognition is present or not in this process. Dreyfus describes the response of the moral expert as “intuitive” and “spontaneous.” Yet, in this paper, Dreyfus appears to concede the possibility of reflecting on such intuitions: “Thus, when faced with a dilemma, the expert does not seek principles but, rather, reflects on and tries to sharpen his or her spontaneous intuitions by getting more information until one decision emerges as obvious.”<sup>31</sup> This looks like Dreyfus admits of a role for reflection at the expert level of moral action, and a certain access to the “intuitions” that are involved at this level.

However, first, it should be noted that the moral expert only requires to reflect on his or her intuitions when facing a dilemma or problem, as a means of getting back on track, and to return to the flow of spontaneous response. That is to say, reflection only comes on the scene, according to Dreyfus, when there is some form of breakdown of the spontaneous moral response of the expert. Reflection here is then not a part of the spontaneous moral response of the expert itself, but rather occurs only when things go wrong.

The question remains, nevertheless, as to whether this reflection during breakdown can access the content of the moral experience of the expert. In this particular paper on moral expertise, Dreyfus gives no further indication whether this is the case or not, since he fails to expand on his understanding of the nature of the intuitive, spontaneous response, and the nature of the reflection involved during

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<sup>31</sup>Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1991, 245.



breakdown. To answer the question, we have to return to Dreyfus' employment of the analogy of moral actions with highly skilled actions. Again, in this paper, Dreyfus does not offer much in the way of explanation of the intuitive, spontaneous response in highly skilled actions. He does, however, go into much greater detail concerning this phenomenon in his exchanges with McDowell. Indeed, one of his main arguments against McDowell is that during highly skilled action, or what Dreyfus also calls "absorbed coping", all forms of cognition are not only absent, but the presence of such cognition is detrimental to the performing of the highly skilled action. In fact, Dreyfus claims that whenever cognition comes on the scene, there is a 'regression' from expertise to mere competence:

If the ego were always implicitly monitoring its coping, attending to what one was doing wouldn't degrade one's performance. But in general paying attention to a solicitation as one responds to it leads to a regression from expertise to mere competence. If the expert copes is to remain in flow and perform at his best, he must respond directly to solicitations without attending to his activity or to the objects doing the soliciting. There is no place in the phenomenology of fully absorbed coping for mindfulness.

Dreyfus 2007, 374

The presence of cognition does not only "break the flow", but "produces inferior performance."<sup>32</sup> This suggests that, according to Dreyfus, any form of reflection, even that of the expert on his or her "intuitions" can never be a part of highly skilled action, but instead belongs to the period of breakdown. Moreover, reflection can never accurately capture the contents of that highly skilled experience since whenever such reflection comes on the scene, the very phenomena of expert coping is destroyed. Thus, Dreyfus says, "[m]indedness is the enemy of expert coping," where by mindedness Dreyfus employs McDowell's term to describe the presence of cognition, without the need for "standing back" or deliberating on rules and principles.<sup>33</sup> By analogy, then, there is also no cognition present during

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<sup>32</sup>Dreyfus 2007, fn 5.

<sup>33</sup>Dreyfus 2007, 355.

expert moral action, and the moral expert has no access to the content of moral experience when he or she moves to the plane of reflection.

To criticise this aspect of Dreyfus' account, it will help to appreciate how Dreyfus understands the double effect of habit - the phenomenon that I described in chapter two - that is at play in becoming an moral expert, and the repercussions that this has for understanding the role of self-consciousness in moral action and in moral inquiry. Although Dreyfus never calls it a double effect of habit, he subscribes to the position that the more highly skilled an moral agent becomes in performing moral actions, the less self-conscious the agent is to what he or she is doing. This double effect climaxes when the agent becomes an expert and no cognition at all is present during the performance of the action. In chapter two, I briefly argued against orienting the double of effect of habit around a dichotomy of habituation and reflection by claiming that an increase in habituation does not necessarily result in a decrease in reflection. Indeed, reflection too can become habituated.<sup>34</sup> Instead, I argued that an increase in habituation leads to a decrease in a sense of wonder about the contents of moral experience, which in turn leads to the sedimentation of the value of moral values. This leaves open the possibility, however, of reflection capturing the contents of moral experience, which Dreyfus closes off.

Before going into greater depth with this criticism, I will tackle a potential response that could be open to Dreyfus. One might say that since my criticism only focuses on the expert level of moral action, it misses the target since Dreyfus readily admits that self-consciousness and reflection are readily present in all other levels, ranging from the beginner to the competent moral agent. If the level of expertise were to be only an ideal, mainly unreachable by the everyday person, and, hence, not typically realised when we become familiar with moral values, then it would indeed seem that the criticism fails to hit home.

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<sup>34</sup>See chapter 2, section 'Sedimentation'.

As a retort to this, notice that Dreyfus does not set the bar particularly high for what he thinks counts as an moral expert. Indeed, in ‘Towards a Phenomenology of moral expertise’, he talks of “everyday intuitive moral expertise”<sup>35</sup>, which suggests that most adults develop such expertise in their everyday moral encounters. Moreover, as seen in the example of lying quoted above, Dreyfus suggests that one reaches expertise in this case when one “would learn to tell the truth or lie, depending upon the situation, without appeal to rules and maxims.”<sup>36</sup> The ability to “spontaneously respond” to a situation that could require lying without having to deliberate on stock rules or maxims is something which we would plausibly think a large majority of adults would be capable of. Finally, although the analogy with highly skilled actions is more ambiguous here, many examples that Dreyfus employs, are reached in our everyday behaviours, such as navigating ourselves around our environment (such as opening a door), and driving.<sup>37</sup>

Now, to return to the criticism of Dreyfus, we can note that the principle means for reaching a level of expertise is through a familiarity with successfully performing an action in certain contexts. It is this familiarity that constitutes highly skilled knowledge, and, by analogy, moral knowledge, according to Dreyfus. Thus in the case of driving, he writes that “[t]he expert driver, generally without any attention, *not only knows by feel and familiarity* when an action such as slowing down is required; *he knows how to perform the action* without calculating and comparing alternatives.”<sup>38</sup> Dreyfus thus takes that which is everyday, expertly familiar as that which is known by the expert. This, I suggest, commits Dreyfus to that “error of errors” described by Nietzsche in the ‘origins of knowledge’ passage from the *Gay Science*. Here is a selection of it again:

For “what is familiar is known”: on this they [men of knowledge] are

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<sup>35</sup>Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1991, 240.

<sup>36</sup>Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1991, 237.

<sup>37</sup>The exceptions here would be the grandmaster chess player, and the professional sportsperson.

<sup>38</sup>Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1991, 235; my italics.

agreed. Even the most cautious among them suppose that what is familiar is at least more easily knowable than what is strange, and that, for example, sound method demands that we start from the “inner world”, from the “facts of consciousness,” because this world is more familiar to us. Error of errors! What is familiar is what we are used to; and what we are used to is most difficult to “know”- that is, to see as a problem; that is, to see as strange, as distant, as “outside us.

*GS 355*

For Dreyfus, achieving the familiarity with moral values that an moral expert achieves, just *is* moral knowledge. Not only is reflection on those moral values to bring their value into question not a part of this knowledge, but it also never could be, given that reflection can never accurately capture that familiarity. As a result, Dreyfus’ position essentially attempts to safe-guard our current dominant moral values in their familiarity from inquiry. These moral values are taken in their immediate *givenness*, and, understood as such, they are removed from any possibility of being brought into question through self-conscious cognition. Now, on this particular issue, Dreyfus could just bite the bullet and accept that our everyday, expert familiarity cannot be brought into question. This becomes a serious problem, however, when our current moral values are sedimented to the point where we have obtained this expert familiarity, and, yet, their foundations have been lost due to the collapse of Christianity. Once we appreciate that our moral values could be otherwise then we are drawn to pose the question as to whether these values remain good for us. There is no scope under Dreyfus’ account to engage with this question since, on his account, it is not possible to bring into view the value of our moral values as a questionable phenomenon.

To conclude my criticism of Dreyfus’ position, Dreyfus misunderstands the nature of our familiarity with moral values at the expert level. I argued in chapter two that when our moral values become so familiar, they become sedimented. We come to take their value for granted. Dreyfus mistakenly takes this to involve an absence of cognition, rather than the absence of cognitive questioning. Rather

than this familiarity resolving into a form of responsiveness to non-cognitive and non-linguistic solicitations of attraction and repulsion, we should see it as still functioning on the dynamic of command and obedience. This leaves scope for our familiarity with moral values to still involve self-consciousness and language in the roles discussed above: as an active means of the expression of power, on the one hand, and as a means of conceptual fixing of distant commands and duties that are to be obeyed, on the other.

Let me now turn to McDowell's account. In *Mind and World*, McDowell argues that the sphere of conceptuality is unbounded. By this he means that it runs all the way down from the spontaneity of the understanding to our receptive sensibility to the world. Our spontaneous employment of "conceptual capacities" to grasp the world are already at work in the sensible world as it is presented to us. "Our conceptual capacities that belong to spontaneity," as McDowell puts it, "are in play in actualisations of sensibility."<sup>39</sup>

McDowell later claims that there is a parallel between cognition and action: "Intentional bodily actions are actualisations of our active nature in which conceptual capacities are inextricably implicated."<sup>40</sup> Just as our receptive sensibility to the world is an actualisation of the spontaneous exercise of conceptual capacities, our intentional actions are similarly also an actualisation of the spontaneous exercise of such capacities. Our moral actions then realise the conceptual capacities that spontaneity exercises *in action*.<sup>41</sup>

Importantly, the paradigmatic case of moral action for McDowell is that which involves reflective deliberation since "...unreflective action can instantiate the "I

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<sup>39</sup>McDowell 1994, 66. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to consider in any great detail McDowell's Kantian understanding of spontaneity and receptivity. See N. Smith 2002, 283: "What my project requires is that we see how spontaneity in the strong Kantian sense, although it is "freedom" in the sense of something "full-blown, reflective, self-possessing, radical," is exactly not an "emancipation from nature"."

<sup>40</sup>McDowell 1994, 90.

<sup>41</sup>"In particular, I think the way certain bodily goings-on *are* our spontaneity in action, not just effects of it, is central to a proper understanding of the self as a bodily presence in the world." McDowell 1994, 91 fn 5.

do” only because it is engaged in by a subject who on other occasions explicitly decides what to do.”<sup>42</sup> This means that, on McDowell’s account, the moral agent *always* has access to the contents of his or her moral experience by virtue of it already being the realisation of a conceptual capacity. He or she might lack the proficiency in the language to articulate it, but it is nevertheless already in conceptual form.

Now, to understand how we become initiated into conceptual capacities, McDowell draws upon the Aristotelian notion of second nature, and Gadamer’s notion of *Tradition*, which we inherit as we grow up in a community.<sup>43</sup> To understand how this complex phenomenon is assimilated, McDowell points us to language acquisition, since through language “a human being is introduced into something that already embodies putatively rational linkages between concepts, putatively constitutive of the layout of the space of reasons, before she comes on the scene.”<sup>44</sup> Language is what McDowell calls “a prior embodiment of mindedness”, as such, it offers “the possibility of an orientation in the world.”<sup>45</sup> Moreover, “[t]he feature of language that really matters is rather this: that a natural language, the sort of language into which human beings are first initiated, serves as a repository of tradition, a store of historically accumulated wisdom about what is a reason for what. The tradition is subject to reflective modification by each generation that inherits it.”<sup>46</sup>

I will consider the nature of this “reflective modification” shortly. Before this, however, I will take a closer look at the role that language plays in our familiarity with moral values in McDowell’s account. First, for McDowell, unlike for Dreyfus, the role of language as we develop our moral expertise does not diminish. On the contrary, the better we develop our conceptual capacities through language

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<sup>42</sup>Schear 2013, 55.

<sup>43</sup>See McDowell 1994, and Gadamer 2010.

<sup>44</sup>McDowell 1994, 125.

<sup>45</sup>McDowell 1994, 125.

<sup>46</sup>McDowell 1994, 126.

acquisition, the more refined and nuanced our actions will become, and the more we are able to develop a greater sensitivity to the demands of the moral situation.

At this point, however, McDowell's understanding of the process of the acquisition of a tradition misses an essential element, which has wider ramifications for his position. McDowell gives us the idea that the acquisition of a second nature is a rather easy, fluid and peaceful affair in which human beings are at once receptive to tradition and active in sharing in it.<sup>47</sup> The manner in which infants acquire their mother tongue and the social canons of appropriateness, this would suggest, is for the most part a facile process, which they tend to be remarkably proficient at.

What is missing from McDowell's account is the role of law and command, and their enforcement through *compulsion* in the assimilation of a tradition. Interestingly enough, as we have seen in chapter two, Nietzsche is much more faithful to Aristotle's account on this score than McDowell.

Customs and laws are imposed on us as commands to compel us into obedience through a variety of institutions as we grow up.<sup>48</sup> Language cannot do the work required here without such an accompanying imposition. That is to say, one does not learn what the right or reasonable thing to do is only by coming to have one's eyes "opened up to reasons" as McDowell suggests on many occasions.<sup>49</sup> The component of applied force to achieve compulsion is fundamental here as opposed

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<sup>47</sup>For example, McDowell often talks of one having one's eyes simply "opened to reasons" as when develops a second nature: "Any second nature of the relevant kind, not just virtue, will seem to its possessor to open his eyes to reasons for acting. What is distinctive about virtue, in the Aristotelian view, is that the reasons a virtuous person takes himself to discern really are reasons; a virtuous person gets this kind of thing right." McDowell 1998, 189.

<sup>48</sup>Here is Aristotle again: "But whether these laws are written or unwritten would seem to make no difference, nor whether, through them, one person or many will be educated, just as it does not matter either in the case of music or gymnastic and the other practices. For just as it is the laws and customs [ēthē] that hold sway in cities, so also it is the speeches and habits of the father that do so in households..." 1180b1-5.

<sup>49</sup>See McDowell 1994, 82: "When a decent upbringing initiates us into the relevant way of thinking, our eyes are opened to the very existence of this tract of the space of reasons." And: "If we generalise the way that Aristotle conceives the moulding of moral character, we arrive at the notion of having one's eyes opened to reasons at large by acquiring a second nature." *ibid*, 84. See also McDowell 1998, 189.

to simply receiving “a prior embodiment of mindedness” that is readily open to reflection.

It is true that McDowell never explicitly rules out the presence of compulsion in the process by which we become familiar with moral values. However, its absence in his account has implications for how we understand this familiarity. Dreyfus’ criticism of McDowell is correct on this score: that the awareness of “facts and affordances”, which language offers through the acquisition of conceptual capacities can only help us become familiar with moral values is they can compel us into obedience. This is because facts and affordances do not propel us to do anything unless we experience them as compelling. In other words, we require something like a command that we experience as a command that compels us to obey. However, this does not mean that we are left only with Dreyfus’ alternative position, which claims that the moral expert is responsive to non-conceptual and non-cognitive solicitations that “attract and repel.” Here we can navigate between McDowell’s and Dreyfus’ positions by finding the middle-ground, where solicitations can be both conceptual and expressive of the power of command, even at the expert level. While there can be commands that are non-linguistic, as seen earlier in this chapter, language itself can also be employed as a means of command, and function in the dynamic of command and obedience in the manner outlined in the previous section. That is, it can aid the fixing of commands beyond our current state in a more powerful manner than non-linguistic signs.

This criticism also has important implications for the nature of moral inquiry. I have argued that our moral values have become fixed and taken as facts through a process of ascetic habituation. And that, as a result, the value of these values has become taken for granted. Since McDowell fails to recognise the role of compulsion, and, hence, the ascetic structure of the dynamic of command and obedience, he is unable to see that, what he calls, the “prior embodiment of mindedness” that language affords is a product of this. Due to this he fails to see that *its* value could be an object of possible questioning. That this is indeed the case becomes evident



when considering the nature of critical reflection that McDowell describes. It is fundamentally a piecemeal critique that remains internal to the inherited “prior embodiment of mindedness,” and which is unable to question whether such an embodiment as a whole is good for us. Let us take a closer look.

McDowell describes the nature of this critical reflection as both radical and piecemeal. To capture these two features, he employs the metaphor of Neurath’s boat.<sup>50</sup> Similar to a person in a boat at sea repairing parts of the boat whilst remaining afloat in it, in a moral outlook one can question and alter certain aspects of that outlook whilst remaining firmly inside it. The imagery is meant to capture the “radical” nature of the critical reflection, since *any* aspect of the moral outlook can be brought into question (just like any part of the boat can be mended); and, yet, it also depicts the necessary piecemeal aspect of the process. The outlook cannot be perceived and questioned as a whole externally, just as the boat cannot be mended in its entirety whilst being on board.

Now, I do not want to argue against the fact that we often engage in this type of reflection and that it is an important feature and resource of our Christian moral outlook. Indeed, it is clearly true that in Europe we often question our moral values and sometimes even the most dominant of them.<sup>51</sup> When we do so, we typically question from within the same familiar moral outlook, by questioning the coherence of the value of the particular value in relation to the other values that belong to the outlook. This is fine when questioning the coherence of a particular value in relation to other values of the outlook.

However, this method comes up short when one wishes to question the value of an entire outlook, or “prior embodiment of mindedness.” When we bring into question a particular moral value, we necessarily do so, as the metaphor of the boat suggests, on the backdrop of the wider moral outlook. That is to say,

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<sup>50</sup>The image is introduced by Neurath in *Anti-Spengler*, and was employed before McDowell by Quine in his *Word and Object*. See Quine 2013, 3 fn.

<sup>51</sup>For example, the question of the value of free speech surfaces every so often in Britain when deciding whether to give a platform to the BNP.

when bringing into question the value of specific values, we have to necessarily assume the value of the other values that afford us an evaluative perspective from which to bring those particular values into question. This becomes problematic when we seek to question the value of our moral outlook due to the loss of its Christian foundations. The problem arises because we are not simply troubled by the coherence of particular values within an outlook, but by the legitimacy of the outlook *as a whole*.<sup>52</sup> Again, we want to ultimately pose the question as to whether our moral values could be in some sense detrimental for us. As a result, moral inquiry needs to be able to pose the question of the value of the Christian moral outlook in its entirety, and not only of particular values within that outlook. Questioning only particular values in a piecemeal manner necessarily begs the question of the value of the other values of the outlook that form part of the background upon which the questioned values are interrogated.

Instead, what is required is to bring the value of the entire moral outlook into view as a questionable phenomenon. That is to say, *its* value needs to be brought into view as a possible object of questioning. This raises several questions and difficulties with respect to the type of inquiry that could achieve this, and the position that the inquirer has to take up. I will explore these issues in the next section.

To conclude this section, I have argued with McDowell and against Dreyfus that self-consciousness has an important role to play in moral inquiry. To do so, I have attempted to show, first, that cognition including self-consciousness is not inimical to expert moral action, and that the double effect of habit occurs between increased habituation and the reduction in taking the value of our moral values as an object of possible questioning. Second, self-consciousness has an active part to play in moral action through concept determination, which functions

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<sup>52</sup>Nietzsche makes this point in *On the Genealogy of Morals* when he describes how his initial questioning of the value of pity lead him to have to question 'all morality'. See GM preface 6. See also Freyenhagen 2013 for a similar argument with regards to an entire moral outlook being considered wrong, with the example of the moral outlook of Nazi Germany.

as an expression of the power of command and the fixing of commands beyond our current state, which compel us to obedience. Dreyfus erroneously removes such activity from ‘expert’ moral action by limiting this action to a form of responsiveness to ineffable solicitations. This has the undesirable consequence of rendering self-consciousness and critical reflection epiphenomenal for the expert, and, hence, for moral inquiry at this level.

I have argued with Dreyfus against McDowell that upbringing and the development of one’s second nature does not simply open one’s eyes to reason. Customs and laws are fundamentally commands that are imposed through the use of force in order to compel action. While this force can be expressed through language, it is not always the case. McDowell misses this since he mistakenly derives the conceptual nature of habitual moral action from reflective action.<sup>53</sup>

The result of this is that we must adjust our understanding of the role of self-consciousness for moral inquiry in times of potential crisis. It cannot be limited to a form of reflection that remains within our current, dominant moral outlook and that functions via piecemeal questioning. It must instead seek to bring into view the value of the whole phenomenon of our dominant moral outlook so that we can come to see that value as an object of questioning.

### **3.5 The Role of Self-Consciousness**

The two major philosophical problems that have so far come out of this chapter can be articulated as follows. First, since our moral outlook has lost its Christian foundations, to see its value as a questionable phenomenon will require posing the question of the value of the outlook as a whole. This will mean to bring into question the value of all our moral values simultaneously, rather than in a piecemeal fashion. This seems to imply that the inquiry will have to take place

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<sup>53</sup>See Rietveld 2008, 983 for more on this specific point.

in some sense “outside” of this outlook. Or, to be more precise, the inquirer needs to come to see all the moral values of the outlook as external to him or herself. This demand, however, raises several difficulties. First, as argued in chapter one, the inquirer must remain sufficiently familiar with moral values so that moral phenomena show up to him or her in the world. If this familiarity with moral values is lost, then as a necessary consequence, it will not be possible to bring into view the value of these values. Second, as seen in chapter two, the inquirer cannot go beyond his or her moral psychological framework, since it is only within this framework that any valuing at all occurs by means of the *sui generis* dynamic of command and obedience. As a result of all of this, the inquirer must then remain within this moral psychological framework, and, yet, render moral values estranged, such that their familiarity remains, but their value is rendered conspicuous. How to achieve this will be the central topic of chapter four, although I will begin to touch upon it in this section.

Second, self-consciousness is to play a central role in moral inquiry, for the task of bringing into view the value of our moral values. Since these values have become sedimented their value has become inconspicuous to us. To disrupt this sedimentation, we need to show that our moral values have not always been sedimented in this manner; that they have a conditional right to existence; that their value can become an object of possible questioning. However, we have seen how self-consciousness has often had the opposite effect of this by contributing to the process of sedimentation by affording a more powerful means of fixing moral values through conceptualisation. This has the further effect of hiding the struggle for command that our moral values have gone through before they became sedimented. The difficulty here then is to understand how self-consciousness can be effectively employed to disrupt the process of sedimentation. I will deal with this specific problem in this section.

I have argued against the possibility of piecemeal reflection being adequate for the task of posing the question of the value of our moral values. We saw

that this is because the piecemeal approach necessarily assumes the value of other values in the moral outlook when it questions the coherence of particular values. There is, however, another form of internal critique that is more radical than this piecemeal approach since it attempts to bring into question the entire outlook from the inside. This approach has been called a form of “ironic disruption.”<sup>54</sup> I will consider it in detail here, before returning to it again in chapter four in relation to the structure of estrangement that I will offer there.

Ironic disruption functions fundamentally by attempting to loosen and open up the referent of our moral concepts. As such, it can be understood as an attempt to disrupt the sedimented nature of the values that the concepts capture. It does this by attempting to free up the concept from its referent, by rendering its fixed nature problematic. The desired result is that we lose confidence in what the concept signifies. As Jonathan Lear has stressed in his work on this subject, this is not simply a process of piecemeal reflection where one’s eyes are, as John McDowell would say, opened up to alternative reasons. Rather it instigates a violent divorce from the familiar referent, such that the inquirer becomes disoriented, and is no longer quite sure how to go on. Lear describes the experience in the following manner: “That is, an experience of standard-issue uncanniness may give us goose bumps or churn our stomachs; the experience of ironic uncanniness, by contrast, is more like losing the ground beneath one’s feet: one longs to go in a certain direction, but one no longer knows where one is standing, if one is standing, or which direction is the right direction. In this paradigm example, ironic uncanniness is a manifestation of utter seriousness and commitment... not its opposite.”<sup>55</sup> Yet, ironic disruption is also not a breakdown of the sort where moral phenomena become destroyed during the experience of the disruption, as

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<sup>54</sup>Other forms of internal critique, such as critical theory, are not the right kind of critique since they are concerned with exposing a form of “false consciousness”, as opposed to bringing into question an evaluative framework. For the major differences in these two approaches, see Owen 2003.

<sup>55</sup>Lear 2011, 19.

suggested by Hubert Dreyfus' account. The very idea of *loosening* the fixed nature of the concept is not to sever it completely from the familiar phenomena, but rather to render that phenomena more foreign, such that it appears in its familiarity as "strange" and as "outside of us" (GS 355). It is to be, as Lear says above, an experience of *uncanniness*.<sup>56</sup>

Lear considers both Kierkegaard and Socrates as exemplar philosophers who engage in ironic disruption. This is demonstrated, first, in their initial forwarding of a question, and, second, in their attempts at posing that question adequately. This question is formulated by placing the concept of the valued phenomenon in a question that is uncannily structured. Kierkegaard's question is: "among all Christians, is there a Christian?" and (one of) Socrates' question(s) is: "among all politicians (in Athens), is there a a single politician?"<sup>57</sup> Now, we can see that Nietzsche's question - "what is the value of moral values?" - also has an uncanny structure. Like those of Kierkegaard's and Socrates', it takes a familiar phenomenon - moral values - and repeats it by raising a question concerning our understanding of that same phenomenon. It is true that Nietzsche's question has a slightly different structure from that of Kierkegaard's and Socrates', and I will return to this later when the difference becomes of greater significance.

In its first instance in the question for Kierkegaard and Socrates, and its second instance for Nietzsche, the concept captures our familiar grasping of the phenomenon. That is to say, it captures what we "know" Christians, politicians and moral values to be in an everyday, pre-philosophical manner. However, this concept is then repeated in the question in a manner that disturbs, or at least demands the disturbance of this familiar referent. In Kierkegaard's and Socrates' cases, the repetition of 'Christian' and 'politician' respectively casts a direct challenge to our familiar understanding of the phenomena that we take to be captured

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<sup>56</sup>The phenomenon of "uncanniness" was first explored in detail by Freud in his 1919 essay 'The Uncanny'.

<sup>57</sup>See Lear 2011, 12, 22.

by these concepts. Lear considers the different possible ways of understanding this challenge, and I will follow his lead here.

First, he rejects the idea that all the question demands is giving a fuller account of what it is to be a politician or a Christian. By adding more or alternative conditions as to what should count as capturing a politician or Christian would keep the inquirer firmly within the familiar conception of the role of the politician and Christian. The concept would not be loosened in this case, but simply fixed in a different manner. Second, Lear considers whether the re-iteration of the concept makes an appeal to the norms of the phenomenon that are not sufficiently met by the current practices of that phenomenon. This would suggest that if we could tweak our practices then we might be able to better satisfy these norms. The problem, however, that ironic disruption engenders is not, as we shall see, that the practices fail to live up to the norms, but that the norms themselves seem to no longer fit into the totality to which they previously belonged. This is precisely the issue facing our moral values and their loss of foundations. That is to say, the worry is not that our practices fail to live up to our moral values, but that the values themselves have lost their Christian foundations, and that no change to our practices would then help to alter this loss.

Lear writes that ironic disruption is initiated by “a movement that exposes a pretense in the nonpejorative sense to be pretense in the pejorative sense.”<sup>58</sup> The movement here that Lear explains is one in which the pretense - by which Lear means that which has become familiar<sup>59</sup> - is no longer the measure of how members fit into the totality of the phenomenon of interest, be it Christianity, politics or our European moral outlook. Lear expands on this in the following manner:

That is, a social pretense already contains a pretense-laden under-

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<sup>58</sup>See Lear 2011, 23.

<sup>59</sup>Lear 2011, 16.

standing of its aspiration, but irony facilitates a process by which the aspiration seems to break free of these bounds. In each case a purported totality is interrogated as to whether any of its members actually fits the bill. So, irony interrogates a totality not for its alleged inclusiveness, but for whether it has anything at all to do with the totality it purports to be.

Lear 2011, 16

The shift that Lear describes here is from how the members measure up to the demands of the totality, to whether the members belong at all in that totality. The issue here then is not that of the coherence between members within the totality, as it is in McDowell's piecemeal position, but instead with the relation of the members to the totality itself. Let me explain this further. Before the ironic experience, the members of the totality, say the politicians, were understood as politicians (i.e. their measure was taken) from the familiar pretense of what it means to be a politician. (This is the "totality.") During ironic experience, Lear claims, this measure of what it is to be a politician breaks away from the familiar understanding, and comes to "transcend" it. The measure should be understood as transcending the familiar totality in so far as we come to question this familiar understanding: all examples of politicians show up to us as wholly inadequate. Our demands on what a politician *should* be goes beyond the familiar pretense, in so far as previous members of that pretense now all show up as deficient. Yet, as we shall see, this transcendent measure is not itself substantive, since it transcends all familiar content. Let us consider a detailed example, offered by Lear, to render this process clearer, and to understand how the disruption comes about.

So, I am sitting at home in the evening grading papers, and I begin to wonder what this has to do with actually teaching my students. For a while, this is a normal reflection in which I step back and wonder about the value of my activity. I still have a sense of what the ideal is; I am just reflecting on how well the activity of grading contributes to it. I decide to talk this over with my colleagues at a department meeting: perhaps we can figure out a better way to evaluate students, one more in line with our core function of teaching. This sort of reflection is part and parcel of inhabiting a practical identity. Thus far I am at the



level of reflection that might lead me to engage in educational reform. But then things get out of hand. I am struck by teaching in a way that disrupts my normal self-understanding of what it is to teach (which includes normal reflection on teaching). This is not a continuation of my practical reasoning; it is a disruption of it. It is more like vertigo than a process of stepping back to reflect. When it comes to previous, received understandings of teaching — even those that have been reflectively questioned and adjusted in the normal ways — all bets are off. No doubt, I can still use general phrases like “helping my students to develop”; but such phrases have become enigmatic, open-ended, oracular. They have become signifiers whose content I no longer grasp in any but the most open-ended way. I no longer know who my “students” are, let alone what it would be to “help” them develop.

Lear 2011, 17

There is a detachment of the elements of the totality from the social pretense: elements of teaching, first objects of basic reflection, become open to a more dramatic questioning. This occurs with the familiar social pretense appearing as pejorative: all the members of the totality of “teaching” are questioned as to whether they fit. Thoughts like “everything I was doing before was not in fact teaching” come to the fore. They become associated with things which now look very much unlike teaching: marking exams, evaluating students’ progress, managing behaviour, and so on. We are familiar with these as members of what it is to be a teacher, but they now appear strange to us since they no longer fit into the totality of what teaching is. Notice, importantly, that what we take the value of teaching to be now transcends that totality. Our demands of what teaching should be breaks out of our familiar understanding of it. These demands, however, remain without content in so far as they appear simultaneously with the disconnection of our previous conceptions of teaching from the familiar understanding. They represent the *absence* of what would be required to count as teaching.

I will now consider whether the resources that Lear offers in his account of ironic disruption can be employed for the task of moral inquiry, and whether they can help us to further understand the role of self-consciousness within it. To do so,

I will, first, see how applicable the account is to posing the Nietzschean question of the value of our moral values.

Nietzsche explicitly states in his account of *On the Genealogy of Morals* in *Ecce Homo* how each of the essays argues for a “pejorative sense” of the phenomenon in contrast to the familiar understanding of that which “people believe” (EH; *On the Genealogy of Morals*). Thus, the first essay explains “the birth of Christianity out of the spirit of *ressentiment*, not, as people may believe, out of the “spirit.”” The second essay argues that the conscience is not “as people may believe, “the voice of God in humans”” but self-directed cruelty. The third essay argues that the ascetic ideal does not derive its power “as people may believe, because God is at work behind the priests” but because it has had no rival.

I will focus on the first essay in particular, since it specifically concerns our moral values. In this essay Nietzsche traces our dominant moral values such as benevolence, pity, compassion and charity back to emotions of rancour, hatred and *ressentiment*. First, we can note that sentiments of rancour, hatred and deep resentment are considered pejorative from *within* the evaluative perspective of our moral values. From this perspective, they show up to us as immoral since they run counter to precisely those values of benevolence, compassion, etc.

The aim here is to detach our moral values from their familiar social pretense - the “totality” or outlook - where their value is taken for granted. They are associated with phenomena which look foreign or even contrary to that which we take to be morally good: strong, dark sentiments of rancour and hatred. The desired effect is that our familiar moral values will come into view as strange in so far as their value comes to show up as an object whose positive evaluative orientation can no longer be taken for granted. If successful, our moral values will no longer easily fit into our familiar outlook, and our notion of the good will break out of our familiar understanding of it. None of our moral values will seem to be able to live up to it.

For this to work, Nietzsche needs to set up a meaningful, evaluative contrast

by associating our moral values with these sentiments. To achieve this Nietzsche appeals to the origins of these values in a manner which involves what Ken Gemes calls “displacements of identity and temporality.”<sup>60</sup> Nietzsche employs the concepts of the central objects and characters of the genealogical inquiry in a manner that loosens up both their historical standing, and their referents. For example, in the first essay, the people that partake in “the morality of pity” - in the moral values to be brought into question - radically differ in their genre and historical positioning. Nietzsche oscillates between talking of these people as Jewish, Christian, priests, slaves, common people of ancient Greece, and of describing them as participants and supporters of the Reformation and French Revolution, as “domesticated animals”, and as contemporary European people. Through the juxtaposing of these different referents under the same concept, Nietzsche seeks to render the “ignoble origins” of moral values evaluatively relevant for the present.<sup>61</sup>

The result of this, if successful, is a complete, if only momentary, disorientation in relation to our entire Christian moral outlook. We come to experience our familiarity with moral values in their familiarity as something that cannot simply be thrown off or jettisoned at will, and, yet, our commitment to those values is compromised by other familiar phenomena that are captured under the concept. At this point, we simply come to a halt and cannot go on as usual. Our habituation breaks down, and we are no longer compelled to act.<sup>62</sup> The values which were the lens through which we perceived and acted in the world, now appear somehow as “outside of us,” as strange in their familiarity.

This standstill that ironic disruption engenders, as Lear notes, is not simply because more thought or reflection is required to get us back on track, for example,

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<sup>60</sup>Gemes 2006, 204.

<sup>61</sup>Moreover, throughout the first essay, Nietzsche switches between recounting a history of the origins of moral values, and of talking in the present about such things as the “manufacturing of idols” and the state of play in Europe today. See GM I 9, GM I 12, GM I 14. See also Janaway 2007, which describes this movement.

<sup>62</sup>Lear makes this point of us coming to a halt. His account of this occurrence to Socrates is particularly informative. See Lear 2011, 84, 85. Lear, however, does not describe it in terms of a breakdown in habituation.

by overcoming a loss of coherence among our moral values. Rather the values themselves now show up to us as strange in their familiarity. Disorientation sets in due to a loss of faith in the givenness and fixed nature of the moral concepts. We begin to feel an ignorance towards our knowledge of what is morally valuable. There is now a dearth of reference of the concept “the good.” Everything that it has meant so far in its familiarity pretense now comes to the fore, and shows up as inadequate. This inadequacy occurs simultaneously with the presence of a conception of the good that now transcends the familiar pretense. We fail to know what this good is - its contents - since it transcends all familiarity, but our commitment to it is shown by the fact that the familiar moral values all fail to live up to it. Not only do we then fail to know what to do next, but we also get a larger view of the phenomena of familiar referents that fail to compel us. The outlook in its entirety shows up as problematic as the ground, so to speak, shifts below our feet.<sup>63</sup>

This disorientation is often only momentary, since we are put back on track rather effortlessly by the imposition of our day-to-day practices and customs, and the presence of others around us participating in such activities.<sup>64</sup> Now, when we return to our daily activities and practices, we are still habituated and obedient to them, and, yet, we now have a different relation to them. Their evaluative orientation is no longer taken as given, as fixed and unalterable. We thus engage in them knowing that *they could have been otherwise*. The internal critique thus has the possibility of altering our everyday relation to familiar phenomena, especially when the critique is sustained. In fact, Lear argues that Socrates and Kierkegaard developed a capacity or disposition for irony that allowed them to engage in a form

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<sup>63</sup>Here is Lear on Socrates engaging in this kind of “balancing act”: “But, for the moment, notice that Socrates’ ironic questioning seems to maintain a weird balancing act: simultaneously (i) calling into question a practical identity (as socially understood), (ii) living that identity; (iii) declaring his ignorance of what it consists in.” Lear 2011, 24.

<sup>64</sup>Lear’s interpretation of Alcibiades’ account of Socrates on the battlefield at Potidaea captures this effectively. Socrates stands still all night having come to a halt, only moving on again when time for his morning prayer. See *Symposium* 220c–d for the story of Alcibiades, and Lear 2011, 34 for Lear’s interpretation.

of life that was essentially a sustained ironic existence.<sup>65</sup>

One might argue, as Lear in fact does, that ironic existence has its own moral import as, say, a form of human excellence,<sup>66</sup> and thus that it is a fundamental part of moral life. This may also seem to be the case with Nietzsche's approach especially if we rephrase his uncannily structured question in line with that of Lear's articulation of Kierkegaard's and Socrates' demands: "among our moral values, are any of them valuable?"

Nietzsche's question - what is the value of moral values? - clearly differs, however, from Kierkegaard's and Socrates' questions as set out by Lear. The referent of the *value* of our moral values need not be limited to our familiarity with moral values, or with our commitment to value that transcends such familiarity, and which manifests itself during ironic disruption. That is to say, Nietzsche leaves scope for a critique that lies in some sense external to our moral values, but which takes up an *alternative* measure of value. In fact, although ironic disruption, as articulated by Lear, is clearly present in Nietzsche's first essay, it is supplemented there with a form of external critique, which I shall consider in detail in the next chapter.

This supplement is important since there is a certain limitation with internal ironic disruption, which I will consider here to motivate the move to the external critique in the next chapter. The main issue with limiting moral inquiry to the form of radical, internal critique described by Lear is the worry that this disruption ultimately becomes assimilated into the moral outlook. The problem is that rather than disrupting the outlook in a manner that demands a confrontation with the implication of the loss of the foundations of that outlook, the breaking free of the measure of the totality that ironic disruption engenders risks becoming once again a feature of that totality. The totality itself becomes permeated with a kind of

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<sup>65</sup>See Lear 2011, 30.

<sup>66</sup>See Lear 2011, 32.

“reversion to crisis,” as Turner puts it.<sup>67</sup>

This risk arises in particular with the Nietzschean question of the value of our moral values. This is because when ironic disruption engenders the posing of this question, all our moral values are seen to no longer fit in to the moral outlook. This occurs simultaneously with the experience of a commitment to the good that transcends this outlook, and which these moral values fail to live up to. The conception of the good that transcends the outlook in this case belongs to the experience of ironic disruption. If, however, ironic disruption itself is cultivated as something which has moral import, then the worry is that the transcendent conception of the good that belonged to the experience of ironic disruption becomes incorporated into the familiar pretense, along with the experience itself. What we end up with here is a kind of coping strategy that deals with the loss of the foundations of our moral values by incorporating the experience of this loss into the moral outlook as *the* moral thing to do under such circumstances.

The danger here is that the critical purchase, which ironic disruption affords us, is undermined by this process. The loss of foundations is then accommodated for, rather than radically confronted.<sup>68</sup> One way of avoiding this assimilation is by taking up an external critique that poses the question of whether our moral values are harmful to us from an alternative outlook. Nietzsche raises this question in the preface to *On the Genealogy of Morals*:

One has taken the *value* of these “values” as given, as factual, as beyond all question; one has hitherto never doubted or hesitated in the slightest degree in supposing “the good human” to be of greater value than “the evil human,” of greater value in the sense of furthering the advancement and prosperity of humans in general (the future of humans included). But what if the reverse were true? What if a

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<sup>67</sup>V. W. Turner and Schechner 1988, 34.

<sup>68</sup>The demand for a more radical confrontation is made by Nietzsche in an unpublished note: “We new philosophers, however, not only do we start by describing the actual order of rank and differences in the value of people, we also desire precisely the opposite of an assimilation, an accommodation: we teach estrangement [die Entfremdung] in every sense, we open up gulfs such as have never existed before, we desire that humans should become more evil than they have ever been before” (WP 988; my translation).

symptom of regression were inherent in the “good,” likewise a danger, a seduction, a poison, a narcotic, through which the present was possibly living *at the expense of the future?*

*GM, preface 6; translation modified*

To pose this question would invoke a momentary *inversion* of our values, achieving a disruption to their sedimented value. For this to be achieved, we shall see that a kind of aspect-shift will be required, to bring into view our moral values from an opposing moral outlook. To render this outlook morally meaningful to us, self-consciousness will be actively required. Seeing how this occurs will be the topic of chapter four.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have investigated the role that cognition is to play for the task of bringing into view the value of our moral values. To do so, I have analysed how it arises within our moral psychological framework, how it functions in moral action, and how it can aid moral inquiry.

I have argued that a minimal form of cognition is at work to achieve a stable dynamic of command and obedience. This form of cognition has an important role to play to achieve the necessary stability of the soul, which is enforced through habituation, and enables the possibility of willing.

This form of cognition, however, is not sufficient for the task of moral inquiry since it is not reflexive. It is unable to take the necessary meta-intentional position to bring into view the value of our moral values, since it is not self-conscious. As a result, I considered whether self-consciousness has a part to play in our familiarity with moral values. To show that it does, I argued against epiphenomenal positions such as that of Hubert Dreyfus’ that deny the presence of self-consciousness in this (expert) familiarity. I then argued for the positive role that self-consciousness plays in our familiarity; I found that it contributes to the process of sedimentation,

by being an active expression of the power of command, as well as a conceptualised duty that is to be obeyed.

To understand whether self-consciousness could also function positively for moral inquiry by disrupting the process of sedimentation, I considered possible ways of understanding the type of critical reflection it can undertake. For this I looked at John McDowell's piecemeal reflection, before turning to the more radical internal critique of ironic disruption offered by Jonathan Lear. I argued against McDowell's account of piecemeal reflection, since it was unable to bring into view our Christian moral outlook in its entirety. We saw how Lear's account was better placed to achieve this.

In ironic disruption, self-consciousness plays a very different role than in that of piecemeal reflection, or what we typically take to be our more everyday form of "standing back." Lear describes it as a kind of questioning that induces "vertigo" in so far as it results in the ground shifting beneath our feet, as we bring into question the taken-for-granted foundations of our dominant moral outlook. To achieve this, active engagement in the association of our moral values with other phenomena is undertaken in order to loosen the referents of our moral concepts.

I argued, however, against ironic disruption doing all the work, since it risks assimilating the disruption that it occasions, rather than enforcing a rupture with the outlook. As a result, a turn to an external critique as a means of a more radical disruption will be made in the next chapter.



# Chapter 4

## The Task of Estrangement

### 4.1 Introduction

At the end of chapter three, I concluded that a more radical form of external critique of our moral values was required to supplement ironic disruption, so as to engender a more radical break with our familiar Christian moral outlook, and avoid assimilating the disruption (and the transcendent good that it engenders) into the outlook itself. I also tentatively suggested that this would involve an appeal to an alternative outlook. This demand for a critique that lies external to our familiar outlook raises several issues. First, there is the issue concerning exactly what the moral inquirer should be external to. Indeed, as articulated in chapter one, I suggested that we should see the task of estrangement as one in which we attempt to see our moral values as “outside of us”, as opposed to us stepping outside of the Christian moral outlook. This makes more sense given that in chapter two I argued that our moral values provide a foundation and lens through which we see the world, and moral phenomena within it. Rather than stepping away from this foundation, it is more apt to understand the task as one in which we need to see these moral values as not only foundational for us, but also external *to* us, in such a manner that we can take them up as an object of possible questioning. The major problem that arises here is how this can be possible without losing our familiarity with our Christian moral values. As argued

in chapter one, if we become alienated from these moral values then we will no longer see the world through them. As a result, morally valuable things will no longer show up to us in the world. Due to this, we could no longer pose the question of the value of these values. Such a question would become redundant. We must then remain familiar with our Christian moral values, whilst also coming to see them as external to us in a manner that puts their value into question. This problem is heightened by the difficulty of seeing what position the inquirer could take up in order to see moral values as “outside of him- or herself.” Indeed, it is not clear if it even makes sense to talk of an “outside” at all here.

Second, as I argued in chapter two, our familiarity with moral values *per se* is afforded by our moral psychological framework, and the *sui generis* dynamic of command and obedience that it involves. The inquirer cannot take up an external position to *this* framework, since it is only within such a framework that valuing occurs at all.

Third, we saw, contra piecemeal approaches in chapter three, that the entire Christian moral outlook must be brought into view, and not only particular members of it. A piecemeal approach is insufficient since the question of the value of the outlook as a whole needs to be posed.

The paradoxical task that presents itself then is to explain how a position of estrangement can be taken up, such that familiarity with the Christian moral outlook is maintained, and, yet, it is brought into view from a distance in its entirety as external to us, such that we see its value as a questionable phenomenon. This has to be achieved without taking up a position that is external to our moral psychological framework, and, hence, must be grounded in this framework, but not trapped within a familiarity with the dominant moral outlook that begs the question of its value. Additionally, the disruption caused by estrangement should not be assimilated back into the Christian outlook.

In this chapter, I will argue that we can find a solution to this paradox if we understand estrangement as essentially following the structure of a ‘rite of

passage' as first articulated by Arnold van Gennep, and later developed by Victor Turner. This is a tripartite structure that was first introduced in ethnographic studies, but which has since gained prominence in the field of sociological theory, with particular interest in the middle, "liminal" phase of the structure.<sup>1</sup> Although Nietzsche himself could not have been familiar with the taxonomy first introduced by van Gennep, I will argue that we can shed light on the task of estrangement by interpreting it as following the same structure.<sup>2</sup> This will offer a more nuanced understanding of the relation between the moral inquirer and the Christian moral outlook, and will show how an external appeal to an alternative moral outlook is to function. It will also help us to understand the role of Nietzsche's genealogical method for the task of estrangement, since I will argue that there is a robust sense in which Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals* seeks to evoke a transition in its readers, to compel them into a position of estrangement, and, hence, to pose the question of the value of our moral values.

I will begin by explaining the structure of estrangement in terms of the tripartite structure of a rite of passage. We shall see that it follows the three phases of separation, margin and aggregation. I will then focus on the marginal phase in particular, to understand how the critique of our Christian moral values is to function through an appeal to an alternative moral outlook. This phase is a period of reflection, and of destabilisation through such reflection, where I shall argue that a temporary inversion of values is experienced such that the question of whether our moral values could be harmful to us is posed. Nietzsche's account of the slave revolt will help us to bring into view an opposition between our Christian moral outlook and an alternative, noble outlook. It will also show how an inversion of values is possible through the kind of experience that Wittgenstein has described as an "aspect-shift." This is a radical shift in our perception of the referents that

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<sup>1</sup>See Thomassen 2009 for an overview of the concept 'liminality' and its history in different disciplines.

<sup>2</sup>Interestingly enough, as a side note, the only philosopher cited by Van Gennep in *Rites of Passage* is Nietzsche. See Van Gennep 1960, 194.

our moral concepts capture. I will then argue that this type of aspect-shift can be achieved in the liminal, marginal phase by bringing marginal experiences of an alternative, opposing outlook (to that of our dominant moral outlook) into the centre. This phase will then prime the period of aggregation and the return of the moral inquirer to the dominant moral outlook. I will conclude by considering outstanding issues that remain with the phase of aggregation, such as those posed by the spectre of Nietzsche's madman, and the 'down-going' of Zarathustra.

## 4.2 The Methodology

In this section, I will justify the methodology that I will employ in this chapter to understand the process of estrangement, and to deal with the paradox of familiarity and estrangement and the multiple problems raised in the introduction of this chapter.

There is a model developed by Arnold van Gennep in his *Rites of Passage*, which I will use to understand the structure of the process of estrangement. Van Gennep describes the rites that are involved in "human passages" in semi-civilised communities:

The life of an individual in any society is a series of passages from one age to another and from one occupation to another. Whenever there are fine distinctions among age or occupational groups, progression from one group to the next is accompanied by special acts, like those which make up apprenticeship in our trades. Among semicivilized peoples such acts are enveloped in ceremonies, since to the semicivilized mind no act is entirely free of the sacred.

Van Gennep 1960, 3

Van Gennep considers the major passages seen in many different societies such as birth, social puberty, marriage, occupational specialisation and death. By way of example, consider that of pregnancy:

Often the first rites performed separate the pregnant woman from society, from her family group, and sometimes even from her sex. They

are followed by rites pertaining to the pregnancy itself, which is a transitional period. Finally come the rites of childbirth intended to reintegrate the woman into the groups to which she previously belonged, or to establish her new position in society as a mother, especially if she has given birth to her first child or to a son.<sup>3</sup>

Van Gennep 1960, 41

Contained in this description is the tripartite taxonomy that van Gennep sees working, to differing degrees, in all rites of passage. Rites of passage form “a special category, which under further analysis may be divided into *rites of separation*, *transition rites*, and *rites of incorporation*.”<sup>4</sup> The category is “special” since these rites involve and evoke phases of transition which function in both a spatial and temporal sense.

Van Gennep often talks of the transition as a physical movement from one world to another, such as, for example, crossing a threshold between buildings or territories. The transition, however, also involves a passage in time, such that the rites of separation mark the departure from one world and prepare the way for the crossing of the threshold. The rites of incorporation, then, mark the temporal end to the transition, and the beginning of reintegration to the new world.<sup>5</sup> Due to the temporal shift that the rites mark, Van Gennep also calls the three phases pre-liminal rites, liminal rites, and post-liminal rites.<sup>6</sup>

This transition from the old world to the new world can manifest in many different forms, such as in the movement between the profane and the sacred, between the foreign and the domestic, and between childhood and adulthood.<sup>7</sup> During the transition, participants experience a kind of symbolic and conceptual change, which gives significance to the rites for the subjects and the wider

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<sup>3</sup>Van Gennep stresses that pregnancy involves other rites, and that often the many rites involved can have more than one function. See Van Gennep 1960, 41.

<sup>4</sup>Van Gennep 1960, 10-11.

<sup>5</sup>See Van Gennep 1960, 20-21.

<sup>6</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>7</sup>*ibid.*, 20.

community.<sup>8</sup>

Now, I will turn briefly to Turner's appropriation of van Gennep's taxonomy since he not only applies van Gennep's classification of rites beyond that of ethnographic studies, but also develops the theoretical underpinnings of the conceptual shift that occurs between the two worlds. He articulates Van Gennep's tripartite structure as follows:

Van Gennep has shown that all rites of transition are marked by three phases: separation, margin (or *limen*), and aggregation. The first phase of separation comprises symbolic behaviour signifying the detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure or a set of cultural conditions (a "state"); during the intervening liminal period, the state of the ritual subject (the "passenger") is ambiguous; he passes through a realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state; in the third phase the passage is consummated. The ritual subject, individual or corporate, is in a stable state once more...

V. W. Turner 1964, 47

Turner differentiates between the three types of rites by arguing that rites of separation and aggregation are "more closely implicated in social structure than rites of liminality," whereas rites of liminality offer an "interstructural situation," since this situation is fundamentally a position *between* fixed states.<sup>9</sup> By the term "state", here, Turner refers to the broad phenomenon of "a relatively fixed or stable condition," which is to include social states such as professions and ranks; culturally recognised positions such as the "state of infancy" and marriage; ecological states; and, finally, physical, mental and emotional states of individuals and groups.<sup>10</sup> Understood in such a manner, rites of separation involve a movement away from the structure of the old world, and rites of aggregation mark a

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<sup>8</sup>A key methodological aspect of van Gennep's book is to avoid isolating rites and explaining them in terms of a utility function. Instead, van Gennep analyses them in "the context which gives them meaning and reveals their position in a dynamic whole." Van Gennep 1960, 89.

<sup>9</sup>V. W. Turner 1964, 46-47.

<sup>10</sup>*ibid.*

movement towards the structure of the new world. The phase of liminality, on the contrary, “may perhaps be regarded as the Nay to all positive structural assertions, but as in some sense the source of them all, and, more than that, as a realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise.”<sup>11</sup>

Turner, thus, suggests that the liminal phase is not simply an unstructured situation of chaos<sup>12</sup>, but is, on the contrary, a phase in which the subject undergoes a *de*-structuring of the old world, and a priming for the restructuring in the new world, the latter of which occurs during the period of aggregation. Turner offers a general description of how this occurs in the liminal phase:

In discussing the structural aspect of liminality, I mentioned how neophytes are withdrawn from their structural positions and consequently from the values, norms, sentiments, and techniques associated with those positions. They are also divested of their previous habits of thought, feeling, and action. During the liminal period, neophytes are alternatively forced and encouraged to think about their society, their cosmos, and the powers that generate and sustain them. Liminality may be partly described as a stage of reflection. In it those ideas, sentiments, and facts that had been hitherto for the neophytes bound up in configurations and accepted unthinkingly are, as it were, resolved into their constituents. These constituents are isolated and made into objects of reflection for the neophytes by such processes as componential exaggeration and dissociation by varying concomitants.

V. W. Turner 1964, 53

Turner describes the possibility of rendering the foundational values and norms of the “old world” - which were “accepted unthinkingly” - as objects of reflection. The type of process Turner depicts is one in which familiar values, which were previously taken for granted by the neophytes in so far as they structured the state prior to the passage, are brought into view in the liminal phase such that

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<sup>11</sup> *ibid*, 48.

<sup>12</sup> Turner sometimes implies this when he describes the liminal phase as “betwixt and between” all the recognized fixed points in space-time of structural classification” V. W. Turner 1964, 49.

their foundational role is no longer taken for granted. Although I will discuss the workings of this process of “dissociation” in greater detail later in this chapter, I wish to stress here that the type of experience that the neophyte undergoes in the liminal period appears to be a kind of temporary *estrangement* from the familiar values of the society. That is to say, the neophyte maintains familiarity with these values, but they momentarily cease playing an inconspicuous, foundational role. Through the process of deconstructing, Turner suggests, familiar values come into view *in their familiar role* for the neophyte on the plane of reflection. The neophytes see that these values were foundational in the old world, but now see that they could be different. “Liminality here,” Turner, thus, states, “breaks, as it were, the cake of custom and enfranchises speculation.”<sup>13</sup>

In this manner, the passage experienced by the neophytes looks, on the surface, like the kind of experience required for moral inquiry. As we have seen, the moral inquirer is to bring into view the Christian moral outlook in its familiarity such that its value becomes a point of wonder and questioning.

Before extrapolating further on this, it will be important to consider first both the structural parallels between rites of passage and the task of estrangement, as well as the ways in which the two are *disanalogous*. First, I claim that there is a structural isomorphism between Van Gennep’s (and Turner’s) account of rites of passage and Nietzsche’s understanding of the process of estrangement.

To see this, consider the section entitled ‘Man alone with himself’ in *Human all too Human*, where Nietzsche offers us an account of the process of estrangement:

*Estranged [entfremdet] from the present.* There are great advantages in for once removing ourselves distinctly from our time and letting ourselves be driven from its shore back into the ocean of former world views. Looking at the coast from that perspective, we survey for the first time its entire shape, and when we approach it again, we have the advantage of understanding [zu verstehen] it better on the whole than do those who have never left it.

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<sup>13</sup>V. W. Turner 1964, 53.



Nietzsche suggests here that estrangement from the present involves three steps: (1) removing ourselves from our time to a time of “former world views”, (2) looking *back* at our time from this different view, and then (3) returning to our time. The benefit of such a process, he claims, is twofold. First, we are able to see the “entire shape” of our time when we look back at it from a distance, and, second, once we have returned, we are able to understand our time better than those who have not made the journey with us.

Now, the structural isomorphism between this process Nietzsche describes and rites of passage described by van Gennep is, on the face of it, quite evident. Nietzsche talks of (1) a removal or separation, (2) an in-between phase of looking back *on* “our time” and, (3) a return to contemporary society that nevertheless involves a change: a “better understanding” of our time as a whole. In line with this structural isomorphism, we can also see that the process of estrangement is to involve the same movement between states: (1) starting out at a stable state: the dominant moral outlook as stable at both the social level, and at the level of the soul of the moral inquirer (as seen in chapter two); (2) a phase of instability and reflection (as seen in chapter three); (3) a return once again to a form of stability. Understood in this manner, I claim, we shall be able to comprehend how familiarity with our moral values can be maintained throughout the task of estrangement, whilst, nevertheless, affording the possibility of bringing their value into view as questionable during the liminal period, and, thus, affording a different relation to the moral outlook on return.

Moreover, a second point of convergence between rites of passage and the process of estrangement is that this movement functions as a “differentiating procedure,” which occurs simultaneously at the level of the social and at that of the individual.<sup>14</sup> The rite of passage structure effectively captures this parallel

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<sup>14</sup>See Thomassen 2009.

between soul and society that I described in chapter two. There, I described it as a dynamic of command and obedience occurring at both levels in an ascetic structure. During rites of passage, the participant is differentiated from the old world that is left behind during the passage. As Turner notes, for example, the participant often becomes “invisible” to the community both physically and conceptually and typically takes on a different name.<sup>15</sup> This division is also played out at the level of the individual’s soul, since the norms and values belonging to the “old world” are differentiated in such a manner that they lose their foundational role for the individual and are taken up by him on the plane of reflection. This differentiation at the level of the individual is also important if there is to be an altered relation to the “new world” on return. We shall see how this occurs in the process of estrangement in a fundamentally *ascetic* manner later in the chapter.

Now, let us turn to the disanalogies between rites of passage and the task of estrangement. My concern is with an individual - a moral inquirer - and his relation to the dominant Christian moral outlook that is currently prevalent in Europe. The nature of this relation already implies the existence of several disanalogies with a rite of passage.

First, the scale is different. Van Gennep employs his taxonomy above all for tribal communities. While it is true that Turner has since argued that the concept of liminality in particular can be applied beyond this context to larger groups and societies,<sup>16</sup> this raises further issues for the success of such an application.

There are, for the most part, no traditional rites that occur between a moral inquirer *as moral inquirer* and the dominant moral outlook. One reason for this

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<sup>15</sup>V. W. Turner 1964, 48.

<sup>16</sup>Turner looks mainly at art and leisure in modern society as “liminoid periods” but does not venture to consider the relevance of rites of passage to the social and political sciences. This has changed more recently, however, in these fields. Indeed, Bjorn Thomassen goes so far as to claim that liminality is “now considered by some to be a a master concept in the social and political sciences writ large.” Thomassen 2009, 5. Thomassen describes the contemporary use of the concept as follows: “In recent years, the most far-reaching suggestion about liminal situations concerns the wider claim that whole societies can experience them during crises or the “collapse of order.” Horváth, Thomassen, and Wydra 2015, 50, 51.

could be the impoverished role of moral philosophers in contemporary society. A stronger reason, however, is simply that in contemporary Europe we find a distinct lack and reduction in rites and ceremonies to mark passages *per se* due to a loss of thick boundaries between the sacred and the secular. (Indeed, the sacred seems to have now all but disappeared.)

As a result, when understanding the process of estrangement, it should be seen that no actual rites of passage occur in an analogous way to those in tribal communities. For example, the first phase of separation - which Nietzsche describes above as “removing ourselves from our time” - requires no rite, ceremony or ritual to demarcate the separation. Similarly, for the moral inquirer in the other two phases - that of the liminal phase and the phase of aggregation - no rites are present. The lack of socially recognised rites and ceremonies for this process is perhaps rather inevitable given that the moral inquirer is attempting to deal with a problem that has the distinctive feature of *not being recognised as a problem* by society as a whole: i.e., that the value of our moral values could be a questionable phenomenon.

The absence of rites, however, gives rise to several further issues concerning the possibility of achieving the task of estrangement, which I will consider throughout this chapter. First, if there are no rites of separation then the question arises as to how the moral inquirer would know that they are in a position that is fully “separated” from the Christian moral outlook, so that it can be brought into view as a whole in the liminal phase.

Second, with no liminal rites, it is not clear how the moral inquirer can will himself into taking up a position of estrangement. In the case of rites of passage, there is the supra-structure of the community within which the liminal phase is already culturally embedded, and there is also a recognised master of ceremonies who guides the participants through the liminal phase. For the task of estrangement, however, this is not the case. The initiation of the process of estrangement does not occur by the community, but rather by the individual. I will argue that

we should understand Nietzsche's work as playing an important motivating and guiding role in the liminal phase to aid the moral inquirer in taking up a position of estrangement. However, unlike well-established rites of passage, the process of estrangement from our moral values is an untrodden path that precisely lacks the control and mastery that is indicative of the process of rites of passage in tribal communities.

Finally, with no rites of aggregation, how can the moral philosopher understand himself in relation to the "new world" on return? Moreover, how will society perceive him without such rites? There are two risk here that run in opposite directions. The first is that, on return, the inquirer rejoins society in more or less the same capacity that he or she left it, without any altered relation to the Christian moral outlook. Turner describes this eventuality: "But this liberty [of the liminal period] has fairly narrow limits. The neophytes return to secular society with more alert faculties perhaps and enhanced knowledge of how things work, but they have to become once more subject to custom and law."<sup>17</sup> The second is that, on return, the moral inquirer remains an outcast, or worse, is perceived as a madman, as, for example, recounted by Nietzsche in the famous parable in *The Gay Science*.

I will argue that, on return, instead of assimilating the liminal experience into the Christian moral outlook, (as seen in the case of Lear's account of ironic disruption), a more radical break with the outlook is required. However, to evoke a radical break that can have the effect of altering society, facilitating others to go through a period of estrangement, to come to see the value of our Christian moral values as questionable, will be necessary.

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<sup>17</sup>V. W. Turner 1964, 53.

### 4.3 *On the Genealogy of Morals* and the Liminal Phase

Let us first consider the pre-liminal phase of separation in view of the task of estrangement. Separation from the Christian moral outlook could mean two interrelated and, yet, distinct kinds of separation. First, it could mean separation from the society in which that outlook functions. Due to the potentially global reach of Christian morality, this separation cannot be achieved by simply moving from the Christian society in which one lives. Instead, we should understand such separation as involving a kind of withdrawal from social interaction, through, for example, a period of solitude. In this manner, the dynamic of command and obedience between the inquirer and society is interrupted: the value of Christian moral values is no longer continually expressed and re-enforced through daily encounters with others. This can facilitate the move to the liminal phase by removing obstacles that would hinder the passage, since, at least at the social level, the values that are to be brought into question would no longer be continually endorsed *as valuable* through social interaction.

Alternatively, we can think of the separation at the level of the soul as a means of rendering moral values “external to us.” As argued in chapter two, moral values play a foundational role in our everyday lives, since familiar moral phenomena show up to us in the world through these values. This is achieved when the structure of our soul forms a stable dynamic of command and obedience through habituation. To become separated from the role that moral values play here becomes a much more complex issue. Indeed, while one can temporarily withdraw from social interaction at will, the same is not so obviously true for the psychical relations of the soul.

On the one hand, this inability to easily separate at the level of the soul is important during the process of estrangement since it means that familiarity with moral values is not simply lost through temporary social withdrawal. On the

other hand, it should be noted that what it would mean to become separated from those values at the level of the soul is a more delicate issue. The type of separation required here must afford the possibility of bringing moral values into view *in their familiarity*, without becoming alienated from that familiarity. This task belongs to the liminal phase, since it requires a de-structuring of the soul of the inquirer through a differentiating process. Let us turn to it now.

I suggested above that Turner describes the liminal phase in rites of passage as one in which the participant undergoes a de-structuring from the “old world”, and a priming for a restructuring into the “new world”. As seen in a passage quoted in the previous section, Turner describes the method by which the taken-for-granted values of the neophytes are rendered objects of questioning by first reducing them to recognised “components.” After this, he claims that these components are recombined in fantastic and *monstrous* patterns and shapes. The desired result is the disassociation of the original values from both the recognised components as well as the monstrous patterns. Turner offers the following cases as examples of what he has in mind:

I have myself seen Ndembu and Luvale masks that combine features of both sexes, have both animal and human attributes, and unite in a single representation human characteristics with those of the natural landscape. One *ikishi* mask is partly human and partly represents a grassy plain. Elements are withdrawn from their usual settings and combined with one another in a totally unique configuration, the monster or dragon. Monsters startle neophytes into thinking about objects, persons, relationships, and features of their environment they have hitherto taken for granted.

V. W. Turner 1964, 53

Turner draws upon William James’ ‘law of dissociation’ to help understand this process. James puts it in his own words as follows: “What is associated now with one thing and now with another, tends to become dissociated from either, and to grow into an object of abstract contemplation by the mind. One might call

this the law of dissociation by varying concomitants.”<sup>18</sup> While the functioning of this law is relatively clear in the case of the perception of different objects, it is a much more complex issue when we consider moral values.<sup>19</sup> This is because, in the case of our moral values in particular, these values function as a foundation or lens through which we perceive the world. As a result, to render foundational values objects of questioning, such that they show up in their foundational role, a more radical means of dissociation is required. Turner claims that the use of monster- and fantasy-making is employed to this very end:

The second process, monster- or fantasy-making, focuses attention on the components of the mask and effigies, which are so radically ill-assorted that they stand out and can be thought about. The monstrosity of the configuration throws its elements into relief. Put a man’s head on a lion’s body and you think about the human head in the abstract. Perhaps it becomes for you, as a member of a given culture and with the appropriate guidance, an emblem of chieftainship; or it may be explained as representing the soul against the body; or intellect as contrasted with brute force, or innumerable other things. There could be less encouragement to reflect on heads and headship if that same head were firmly ensconced on its familiar, its all too familiar, human body.

V. W. Turner 1964, 53

Turner essentially describes here an *uncanny* movement: familiar things are thrown into relief through their association with the strange; and without such an association, they remain hidden in their familiarity. In the above example given by Turner, the man’s head still shows up in its familiarity as a man’s head, but it now shows up *as a head* in a strange manner, since it is set in relief by juxtaposing it on the body of the lion. The familiar nature of the man’s head is now

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<sup>18</sup>Quoted from V. W. Turner 1964, 52.

<sup>19</sup>James gives an example of the law at work in James 1984, 118, quoted from Dr. Martineau: “When a red ivory ball, seen for the first time, has been withdrawn, it will leave a mental representation of itself, in which all that it simultaneously gave us will indistinguishably co-exist. Let a white ball succeed to it; now, and not before, will an attribute detach itself, and the *colour*, by force of contrast, be shaken out into the foreground. Let the white ball be replaced by an egg, and this new difference will bring the *form* into notice from its previous slumber and thus that which began by being simply an object cut out from the surrounding scene becomes for us first a *red* object, then a *red round* object, and so on.”

foregrounded, as a head that is human, but as such it shows up as strange in its monstrosity, as it sits on the body of the lion. This also affords the possibility of taking up the human head in novel ways, as a symbol of intellect, of headship, etc. This process causes a de-structuring by forcing the familiar human head out of its familiar taken-for-granted role. The neophyte can no longer simply take the human head as it was previously given to him in its familiarity. It now becomes an object of wonder and questioning, to be approached in different ways.

This employment of monster-making in the liminal period can, I claim, target our moral values by engendering the same movement in order to achieve estrangement: to make our familiar moral values show up to us as strange in their familiarity, by disassociating the value of our moral values from those moral values. In fact, we can see this strategy *already* at work in Nietzsche's moral philosophy, and most explicitly in *On the Genealogy of Morals*. There, we can see Nietzsche making at least three kinds of association to achieve the required disassociation by varying concomitants.

First, as described in chapter three, Nietzsche makes an association between our moral values and rather grotesque emotional states such as rancour, hatred and *ressentiment*. These emotional states, found at the "ignoble origins" of our moral values, are considered ignoble from *within* the perspective of our Christian moral outlook. This is why such an association functions internally to the outlook and, when successful, results in the kind of ironic disruption we saw Lear describe in the previous chapter. The value of our moral values becomes disassociated from those values since it breaks out of the totality of the moral outlook.<sup>20</sup>

Second, Nietzsche associates our Christian moral values and these immoral sentiments with the development of our cognitive capacities. At the origins of our moral values, he describes a "deepened spirituality and vengefulness" (GM I 7), a "cunning", "cleverness", and "calculation" (GM I 10), and a widening of the soul

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<sup>20</sup>See chapter 3, section 'The Role of Self-Consciousness'.



which makes humans “more interesting”, more profound, and, ultimately, more capable of “evil” (GM I 6).<sup>21</sup> Again, this association seems to be functioning within the Christian moral outlook in so far as it juxtaposes valued cognitive attributes in this outlook with immoral sentiments that cause harm, resulting in a capacity for monstrous forms of evil. In this manner it aids the disassociation seen in the previous association.

Third, Nietzsche also associates our Christian moral values with ignoble vices such as impotence, oppression, and passivity (GM I 10); meekness, physical weakness, lack of material wealth and power, and lack of self-reverence (GM I 13). However, this particular association cannot simply function internally to the Christian moral outlook, since from within this outlook these attributes do not necessarily show up as immoral; on the contrary, they are often thought to coincide with positive Christian values such as humility, obedience, patience, and so on. As a result, for this association to engender a *dis*-association of the value of our moral values from those values, these attributes must show up to us as immoral from an alternative, moral outlook. This outlook is, I suggest, the noble moral outlook I considered in chapter two.<sup>22</sup> The possibility of taking up the perspective of the noble outlook in the liminal phase to make such an association will be considered in the next section.

We can note that the two previous associations need not function only internally to the Christian moral outlook. They can also be made from the perspective of the noble outlook once this opposing outlook is in play. For example, from the noble perspective, the emotional states of rancour and resentment show up negatively in that they stifle activity, spontaneity and vitality; and the increased cognitive capacities that are tied to these negative sentiments show up as a kind of profound danger.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>The process of the deification of the ascetic structure and its ability to fix more distant, spiritual goals belongs here. See chapter two, section ‘Moral Outlooks’.

<sup>22</sup>See chapter 2, section ‘Moral Outlooks’.

<sup>23</sup>For both of these evaluations formed from this association, see GM I 7.

Nietzsche's appeal to the monstrous to achieve these three forms of association and dissociation climaxes in aphorism 14 of the first essay of *The Genealogy*. Here, the reader is caught, so to speak, between *both* the Christian and the noble outlook:

- "...It seems to me one is lying; a saccharine sweetness clings to every sound. Weakness is being lied into something *meritorious*, no doubt of it - so it is just as you said" -
- Go on!
- "and impotence which does not requite into 'goodness of heart'; anxious lowliness into 'humility'; subjection to those one hates into 'obedience' (that is, to one of whom they say he commands this subjection - they call him God). The inoffensiveness of the weak man, even the cowardice of which he has so much, his lingering at the door, his being ineluctably compelled to wait, here acquire flattering names, such as 'patience,' and are even called virtue itself; his inability for revenge is called unwillingness to revenge, perhaps even forgiveness..."

...No! Wait a moment! You have said nothing yet of the masterpiece of these black magicians, who make whiteness, milk, and innocence of every blackness - haven't you noticed their perfection or refinement, their boldest, subtlest, most ingenious, most mendacious artistic stroke? Attend to them! These cellar rodents full of vengefulness and hatred - what have they made of revenge and hatred? Have you heard these words uttered? If you trusted simply to their words, would you suspect you were among men of *ressentiment*? . . .[...] "What? Do I hear aright? They call that 'the Last Judgment,' the coming of *their* kingdom, of the 'Kingdom of God' - meanwhile, however, they live 'in faith,' 'in love,' 'in hope.'"

"...Now I can really hear what they have been saying all along: 'We good men - *we are the just*' - what they desire they call, not retaliation, but 'the triumph of *justice*; what they hate is not their enemy, no! they hate 'injustice,' they hate 'godlessness'; what they believe in and hope for is not the hope of revenge, the intoxication of sweet revenge ( - 'sweeter than honey' Homer called it), but the victory of God, of the *just* God, over the godless..."

*GM I 14*

The complexity of this passage can be somewhat appreciated by considering the various associations at play within it. In the first cited exchange, there is an implicit appeal to the noble moral outlook, and the association of Christian moral values with the vices of this noble outlook: humility, for example, is identified as

impotence. (This is the third association). The second cited paragraph instead associates a certain cognitive profundity and spirituality with the grotesque sentiments: hatred is combined, for example, with “ingeniousness” and “mendacious artistry.” (This tracks the second association). Finally, the third paragraph suggests a kind of self-deception occurring from within the Christian moral outlook: justice, for example, is associated with a brutal form of retaliation. (This is an example of the first association).

Our familiar Christian moral values, such as humility, patience, goodness of heart, forgiveness and justice, are associated with monstrous configurations of weakness, impotence, rancour, spiritual vengefulness, artistry, the intoxication of sweet revenge and retaliation. The intended aim of this onslaught is to “throw” our moral values “into relief” such that they become foregrounded in their familiarity, whereby they show up as estranged from us due to their depicted monstrosity. In the liminal phase here, Christian moral values can no longer simply play their familiar role: *this* familiarity becomes a questionable phenomenon, and thus becomes an object of wonder and reflection.

Note that when understood in this manner, Nietzsche’s hyperbole and rhetoric, which manifests itself in its most exaggerated form in GM I 14, has a fundamental role to play in the liminal phase. It has a motivating and de-structuring function that lies central to the overall task of estrangement. In much of the Nietzsche scholarship on this particular issue, this role of rhetoric has been either misunderstood or entirely overlooked.<sup>24</sup> On the one hand, Nietzsche’s employment of rhetoric is downplayed in various ways either because it is thought to fail to add philosophical worth to his arguments, or because it is seen as politically dangerous.<sup>25</sup> On these readings, aphorisms like GM I 14 make for a rather embarrassing

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<sup>24</sup>On this issue, I agree with Tracy Strong, when he claims in a recent article that “[f]or the most part, however, this [attention to Nietzsche’s use of rhetoric] has remained at the level of showing that he [Nietzsche] used rhetoric, not in what what his rhetoric *does*, and especially not what the political implications are.” Strong 2013, 511.

<sup>25</sup>Leiter, for example, claims that Nietzsche’s rhetoric hinders rather than aids his philosophical arguments: “Third, and perhaps most importantly, a rhetorical tone like Nietzsche’s

read. On the other hand, when philosophical import is attributed to Nietzsche's use of rhetoric, it is usually associated with having a particular, narrow function: to appeal to his "reader's affects" in order to evoke in them an affective reorientation.<sup>26</sup> On this account, an ontological distinction is made between the affective and the epistemic, with the affective considered in some sense more basic when we are concerned with evaluative matters. This interpretation splits Nietzsche's genealogical inquiry into persuasive outbursts and rhetorical flourishes that entice affective and evaluative engagement on the one hand, and measured philosophical and scientific argument to change our beliefs about moral values and their origins, on the other. When understanding an aphorism such as GM I 14, on this reading, one should take the rhetoric as functioning for these affective purposes, and then look "behind or beside the rhetoric" for "an argument that one can construct."<sup>27</sup>

This approach, I think, is misguided. As we have seen, the use of rhetoric in the liminal phase functions as a means of rendering strange our familiarity with moral values through the association with the monstrous. This association, however, is not two-tiered. There is not, for example, reasoned argument that juxtapositions Christian values with particular phenomena, on the one hand, and rhetorical extravagance to render the association monstrous, on the other. Instead,

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- looked at in the context of his life - does not really suggest realism about the content, but rather desperation on the part of the author to reach an increasingly distant and uninterested audience." Leiter 2002, 155. The worry that Nietzsche's rhetoric is politically dangerous is seen by the "apologies based on rhetoric" made by Kaufmann and Schacht, to account for Nietzsche's appropriation by the Nazis. See Strong 2013, 512 for a discussion on this.

<sup>26</sup>David Owen and Christopher Janaway both take up this position. Owen, for example argues that "Nietzsche's rhetorical strategy shifts to accommodate the fact that he now sees that the persuasive problem posed for his project of re-evaluation is that our relationship to our moral values is not simply an epistemic issue but also, and in some respects more basically, an affective one." Owen 2014, 49. Here is Janaway: "I shall argue that a consequence of some of Nietzsche's descriptive hypotheses - would-be truths - about the mind and way that our evaluations are formed, is that an affective reorientation is required in order for his therapeutic, revaluative project to work, and that Nietzsche's way of writing is well directed to the task of such an affective reorientation." Janaway 2003, 261. Indeed, for Janaway, GM I 14 is a good example of "Nietzsche's use of artistic methods in pursuit of his diagnostic and therapeutic aims." (*ibid.* There are commentators that acknowledge Nietzsche's use of rhetoric in a more embedded manner in his philosophy, but not in relation to its function as a specific form of moral inquiry or critique (such as that of estrangement discussed here). See, for example, Strong 2013 and Babich 2006.

<sup>27</sup>See Strong 2013, 512 for a characterisation of this position in these terms.

the monstrosity of the phenomenon is a fundamental part of the association itself. Another way of explaining this would be to say that the appeal to the monstrous does not only appeal to our affects, but rather instigates the rendering strange of our Christian moral values as a foundation and lens through which we *perceive* the world. The monstrosity that the employment of rhetoric helps to bring out, thus, affects us cognitively as much as it does conatively. The rhetoric employed to bring out the monstrous association does not simply appeal to non-cognitive affects but instead gets us to *see* our Christian moral values as monstrous and to *question* whether these values are indeed *good*; and, hence, to see in a different manner the moral phenomena that we perceive through our moral values. In other words, we see this association *as* monstrous, and *not* as a logical association supplemented by Nietzsche's rhetoric, as if this rhetoric were simply to persuade us of the logical connection through an appeal to our conative natures.

The implicit distinction typically at work in these interpretations seems to be the Humean separation of "blind passions" and "cognitive reason". Rhetoric is then associated with an evaluative and affective appeal to our emotions and sentiments, and analytic argument with an appeal to our cognitive faculties. However, this distinction is erroneously applied to Nietzsche since, as we shall see, he is committed to the position that certain affective states have perceptual awareness. Although here is not the place to enter into a detailed analysis of Nietzsche's own position on this issue, it will be worth considering it briefly in the next section, to further articulate the role of rhetoric and the monstrous in the process of estrangement, and how it is attempted by Nietzsche in *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Doing so will also help to tackle the remaining issues concerning how an alternative outlook can be taken up, and how the Christian outlook can be brought into view as a questionable phenomenon in its entirety.

## 4.4 The Slave Revolt

In Nietzsche's account of the slave revolt in the first essay of the *Genealogy*, we find an appeal to the monstrous that brings out Nietzsche's understanding of the affects involved in this event and the perception that they afford. It is no surprise that we find such an account here since, as we shall see, Nietzsche's exposition of the slave revolt plays a fundamental part in the process of estrangement and in the appeal to the monstrous that I have explained above. Indeed, the slave revolt offers an account of the most extreme form of association discussed above: the association of our Christian moral values with the vices of the opposing noble outlook. This association is the most extreme since rather than functioning internally to the Christian moral outlook, it demands a momentary *inversion* of valuing, such that our familiar, Christian moral values are taken up from an opposing perspective and seen, not simply as immoral (from the Christian perspective) but ignoble (from the noble outlook). Additionally, the slave revolt offers an account of how such an inversion can occur and, indeed, has already occurred historically. Moreover, the account is a part of Nietzsche's wider attempts at *evoking* an inversion of values in the reader (albeit in the opposite direction to that of the slave revolt itself, and from the "eye of Zarathustra" rather than the "eye of *ressentiment*"), which is to function as a part of the de-structuring experienced by the inquirer in the liminal phase.

Let us begin to unpack the significance of Nietzsche's description of the slave revolt by looking at his depiction of the Greek nobility's perception of the ruled class:

One should not overlook the almost benevolent nuances that the Greek nobility, for example, bestows on all the words it employs to distinguish the lower orders from itself; how they are continuously mingled and sweetened with a kind of pity, consideration, and forbearance, so that finally almost all the words referring to the common person have remained as expressions signifying "unhappy," "pitiable" (compare *deilos*, *deilaios*, *poneros*, *mochtheros*, the last two of which properly designate the common person as work-slave and beast of burden)

- and how on the other hand “bad”, “low”, “unhappy” have never ceased to sound to the Greek ear as one note with a tone-colour [einer Klangfarbe] in which “unhappy” preponderates: this as an inheritance from the ancient nobler aristocratic mode of evaluation, which does not belie itself even in contempt...

GM I 10

The lower class here is *perceived* and conceptualised by the nobles *through* the feelings of pity and consideration, and these concepts are *heard* as reverberating a single tone of “unhappiness.” Note that it is not that the lower class are perceived and designated with certain concepts, which are then accompanied by affective states. On the contrary, the lower class shows up to the noble class *as* unhappy through the feelings of compassion and pity. Moreover, this “colouring” was the result of the noble class distinguishing itself from the slavish class, as the noble class perceived itself in the (opposing) one colour-tone as the “happy”, which equates to other characteristics in, what Nietzsche calls, the “aristocratic value-equation” [Wertgleichung]: “good = noble = powerful = beautiful = happy = beloved by God” (GM I 7). The characteristics of the slavish class is thus equated in the following manner: bad = slavish = impotent = ugly = unhappy = unloved by the gods.

Nietzsche’s description of the revolt itself further brings out the perceptive nature of certain affective states, and their role in the revolt:

This, then, is quite the contrary of what the noble man does, who conceives the basic concept “good” in advance and spontaneously out of himself and only then creates for himself an idea of “bad”! This “bad” of noble origin and that “evil” out of the cauldron of unsatisfied hatred - the former an after-production, a side issue, a contrasting shade, the latter on the contrary the original thing, the beginning, the distinctive *deed* in the conception of a slave morality - how different these words “bad” and “evil” are, although they are both apparently the opposite of the same concept “good.” But it is *not* the same concept “good”: one should ask rather precisely *who* is “evil” in the sense of the morality of *ressentiment*. The answer, in all strictness, is: *precisely* the “good man” of the other morality, precisely the noble, powerful man, the ruler, *but dyed in another colour [umgefärbt], interpreted in*

*another fashion [umgedeutet], seen in another way [umgesehn] by the venomous eye [Giftauage] of ressentiment.*

*GM I 11*; last sentence my italics

When describing the inversion of values that occurs, Nietzsche talks of the noble person becoming coloured anew, *umgefärbt*, interpreted anew, *umgedeutet*, and seen anew, *umgesehn*, all *through* the “venomous eye of *ressentiment*.” This affective state of *ressentiment* is not simply a blind affect that could be appealed to, for example by the priestly caste, in an effort to *motivate* a slavish revolt (through, say, the use of rhetoric!). Much more than this, it is the affective state through which the inversion itself occurs. This means that certain phenomena in the world - such as the “nobles” in Nietzsche’s example above - now show up in this state in a different and, indeed, inverted manner.

The noble person, who was perceived as “good” under the noble evaluation, is now perceived through the “venomous eye of *ressentiment*” as “evil”, hence Nietzsche’s talk, here, of an inversion occurring. However, the nature of this inversion does not fundamentally involve a change in the material power structure of the two classes. That is to say, the inversion is not a result of the ruling class replacing the nobles as rulers. Nietzsche’s account thus does not recount, for example, a rebellion on the streets, the toppling of the ruling class, and the diversion of wealth and power to the ruled people. If that were the case, the referent of the “good” would instead remain ultimately the same. Instead, the material power structure remains (initially at least) unaltered and the original referents of “the good” and “the bad” change. That is to say, that which the noble had taken to be “the good” - wealth, health, power, beauty, etc. - are now subsumed under the concept of “the bad”, and that which the noble saw as “the bad” - being poor, suffering, sickness, ugliness, powerlessness etc. - are now taken as “the good”.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>For evidence of the historical accuracy of this inversion see Forster 2011b, 355.



Now, on the one hand, this inversion cannot be a *complete* reversal of values, otherwise the Christian values would never take hold of the ruling class, and they could never be said to be victorious over noble values. Indeed, it would make no sense to talk of a battle occurring between these competing outlooks. Moreover, since the nobles do not experience the emotions of rancour and *ressentiment* to the same extent as the ruled class, there must be some other form of commensurability between the two outlooks for the noble to be susceptible to the inversion. Although I will go into much greater detail on this point in the next section, when considering the nature of the inversion of values that the inquirer undergoes in the liminal phase, I will at least point to Nietzsche's own account of this commensurability by way of a couple of examples. First, while the slave revolt appears to value powerlessness over having power, it in fact expresses a will to power of the slaves that transcends understanding power in terms of material wealth, and is manifested most dramatically in the positing of their "kingdom in heaven" (GM I 12, and GM III 14). Second, the inversion of the valuation of health and sickness is made out of a deeper commitment to the ruled class's well-being: "...*the ascetic ideal springs from the protective instinct of a degenerating life* which tries by all means to sustain itself and to fight for its existence" (GM III 13). More generally speaking, we can understand the inversion that Nietzsche describes in the following manner. "The good" is not simply rendered "evil," but is rendered evil out of a commitment to the good that transcends how it is understood in the noble outlook. Exactly what this "transcending" involves will be discussed later.

On the other hand, despite this minimal presence of commensurability, the slave revolt gives an insight into how the value of an *entire* outlook can become inverted. That is to say, it is not the case that only a few values are altered by the inversion, but rather the whole "value-equation" that belongs to the noble outlook becomes reversed. There is a sense here that, because the change involves noble values becoming overturned in favour of their opposites, these values stand and fall together. There is no question here of challenging the coherence of a value

within the outlook, or seeking to invert individual values. Rather, the inversion of one value demands the inversion of the whole constellation of values that belong to the outlook (and which Nietzsche puts together in the “value-equation”).

This account of the slave revolt, thus, offers us an insight into how Nietzsche thinks of emotional states having a role to play in not only affording perception of phenomena, but also affording a *novel* perception of the *same* phenomena in radically inverted manner. For the moral inquirer to undergo an inversion in the liminal phase, a similar type of experience will be required.

There is, however, an issue with taking the slave revolt as exemplary of the inversion of values that the moral inquirer is to undergo during the liminal phase. The aim of the slave revolt, as described by Nietzsche, is to ultimately *usurp* noble values with Christian values. The inversion is violent and is made through the “eye of *ressentiment*”. Any familiarity with noble values here is to be entirely replaced. This is not the case for the moral inquirer in the liminal phase since the aim is, on the contrary, to maintain familiarity with moral values, whilst bringing that familiarity into view as strange. As we shall see later, the inversion is to be seen through the estranged “eye of Zarathustra,” rather than the eye of *ressentiment*, and can be achieved through an *aspect-shift*.

As suggested above, Nietzsche’s account of the slave revolt also functions as a part of his attempt to evoke an inversion of values in his reader. (This should be thought of as part of Nietzsche’s attempts to facilitate the reader to go through the process of estrangement.) Not only does his account of the slave revolt show that such an inversion has occurred, and how it can occur, but it also motivates and evokes an inversion by, first, bringing the noble outlook into the centre as not only oppositional but also originary to our familiar, Christian moral outlook; and by, second, depicting the struggle for command that our moral values have gone through in their attempt to invert and overcome noble values. I will now return to the liminal phase and unpack these points further to see how such an inversion is to function.

## 4.5 The Inversion of Values in the Liminal Phase

I will begin by considering the possibility of experiencing an inversion of values in the liminal phase. To do so, I will briefly return to Turner's work on the subject. In *The Ritual Process*, Turner finds that the experience of value inversion is rather common in rites of passage. In fact, he suggests that there are two "types of liminality," which can be distinguished by the nature of the inversion that they involve. There are, what he calls, "rituals of status reversal," on the one hand, and "rituals of status elevation," on the other.<sup>29</sup>

Turner argues that the rites that mark important passages in life such as birth, puberty and marriage, and more generally transitions to higher social positions, typically involve a status-reversal or humbling during the liminal phase, before the new position is structurally taken up in the phase of aggregation.<sup>30</sup>

In the case of status reversal, "groups or categories of persons who habitually occupy low status positions in the social structure are positively enjoined to exercise ritual authority over their superiors."<sup>31</sup> This often occurs, Turner claims, in cyclical rituals of "a collective kind", where "at certain culturally defined points in the seasonal cycle, groups or categories of persons who habitually occupy low status positions in the social structure are positively enjoined to exercise ritual authority over their superiors; and they, in their turn, must accept with good will their ritual degradation."<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>V. Turner 1995, 167. Turner does not suggest that the classification is exhaustive, and he also notes that some passages involve both these types of liminality.

<sup>30</sup>For example: "The same processes are particularly vividly exemplified in many African installation rituals. The future incumbent of the chieftainship or headmanship is first separated from the commonalty and then must undergo liminal rites that rudely abase him before, in the reaggregation ceremonies, he is installed on his stool in final glory." V. Turner 1995, 170.

<sup>31</sup>*ibid.*, 167.

<sup>32</sup>*ibid.* For example, Bakhtin's analysis of the carnivaleque notes the presence of this form of inversion: "Another essential element [of the medieval folk festival] was a reversal of the hierarchic levels: the jester was proclaimed king, a clownish abbot, bishop, or archbishop was elected at the "feast of fools," and in the churches directly under the pope's jurisdiction a mock pontiff was even chosen. The members of this hierarchy of fools sang solemn mass. At many of these feasts kings and queens were elected for a day, as on Epiphany and on St. Valentine's day." Bakhtin 1984, 81.

The basic structures at work in both cases are understood by Turner as follows:

The liminality of those going up usually involves a putting down or humbling of the novice as its principal cultural constituent; at the same time, the liminality of the permanently structural inferior contains as its key social element a symbolic or make-believe elevation of the ritual subjects to positions of eminent authority. The stronger are made weaker; the weak act as though they were strong. The liminality of the strong is socially unstructured or simply structured; that of the weak represents a fantasy of structural superiority.

Or again, the liminality of wealth and nobility is poverty and pauperism — of poverty, ostentation and pseudohierarchy.

V. Turner 1995, 168, 200

Turner's account shows how an inversion of values is possible, and indeed often occurs, during the liminal phase. Moreover, he describes how the inversion can run both ways, from nobility to poverty, and vice versa.

However, it should be noted that the type of inversion that Turner describes in both cases here are achieved by playing out inverted social roles during the liminal period. The inversion is made possible, for example, by the poor taking up an elevated position of the rich and engaging in the latter's customs. This manner of achieving the inversion is not available to the moral inquirer for the task of estrangement, since he or she has to be able to experience an inversion without taking up a new, albeit temporary, social role. Indeed, as suggested above, the most productive means of separation for the inquirer is through some form of social withdrawal.

Before considering how the inversion is to function for the moral inquirer, there is a further issue to bear in mind that Turner notes as a repercussion of the reversal of social roles in particular: “[t]he ritual, in fact, has the long-term effect of emphasizing all the more trenchantly the social definitions of the group.”<sup>33</sup> The

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<sup>33</sup>V. Turner 1995, 172. Also: “To return to rituals of status reversal. Not only do they reaffirm the order of structure; they also restore relations between the actual historical individuals who occupy positions in that structure.” *ibid*, 177.

liminal nature of the inversion is stressed on return to structure as precisely that: a temporary reversal that does not belong to the social structure itself. As a result, the status quo before the liminal period is further strengthened on return. For the moral inquirer, such a result would be counterproductive to the very task of estrangement, since the idea of posing the question of the value of our moral values is to engender an engagement with the loss of their Christian foundations.

To begin to understand how the moral inquirer can experience an inversion of values in the liminal phase without taking up an inverted social role, I will look at the importance of the inquirer taking up an ascetic self-relation. It is in such a self-relation, I claim, that a differentiating procedure can be set in motion without the need of taking up a reversed social role. On the one hand, social withdrawal during the phase of separation is essentially an ascetic move, since it is made to work against one's habituated social engagement and customs.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, asceticism has a role to play in the liminal period as a means of "taking sides" against oneself, and more, specifically, one's familiarity with the Christian moral outlook at the level of the soul. Nietzsche describes this asceticism in the *preface to A Case of Wagner*:

For such a task [for the problem of decadence (of which the problem of "Good and Evil is one variation")] I required a special self-discipline: to take sides against everything sick in me, including Wagner, including Schopenhauer, including all of modern "humaneness." - A profound estrangement [Entfremdung], cold, sobering up - against everything that is of this time, everything timely - and most desirable of all, the eye of Zarathustra, an eye that beholds the whole fact of humankind at a tremendous distance - below. For such a goal - what sacrifice wouldn't be fitting? What "self-overcoming"? What "self-denial"?<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>I agree with Patrik Hagman that the "primary work" of the ascetic is "to avoid", at least temporarily in this instance, "taking part in the workings of society." Hagman 2011, 50. Hagman interestingly argues that traditional priestly asceticism follows the same tripartite structure of rites of passage. My interest with asceticism here, however, is with how it occurs specifically in the liminal period in a manner which will not be continued in the same manner during the phase of aggregation.

<sup>35</sup>Nietzsche argues in the third essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals* that it was only as an

Nietzsche cannot be claiming to take sides against himself *completely* here, since he has to take up a perspective *from* which he can oppose himself. He qualifies this somewhat by stating that he is taking sides against “his time” and against “modern humaneness,” leaving room for an appeal to, for example, a “former world view”. However, he also talks of beholding “the whole fact of humankind at a tremendous distance.” The latter demand seems to leave no position from which one could take sides against oneself.<sup>36</sup> I am concerned with the possibility of taking sides against our familiarity with the Christian moral outlook, which, I suggest, leaves more scope for taking sides against it, by building up an *opposing* outlook from which the Christian outlook can be brought into view.

There remains the worry that what one assumes and employs when taking sides against oneself is a part of the familiarity that needs to be brought into question. We have seen earlier in this chapter how an appeal to the monstrous is made to alleviate this worry by forming a contrast with the familiar. (The monstrous helps to set into relief that which has become too familiar and overlooked.) This is particularly important for the internal critique since it is conducted from within the Christian moral outlook. This appeal to the monstrous also has a part to play in the external critique by rendering our moral values strange from the perspective of an alternative outlook. It is also supplemented by the fact that this alternative outlook forms an *opposing* outlook, and, hence, attempts to set the familiarity of our moral values into further relief through such a contrast.

As suggested in the previous section, an important function of the slave revolt

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ascetic that the philosopher was initially able to survive and make their “first steps on earth.”: “A serious examination of history actually reveals that the bond between philosophy and the ascetic ideal is even much closer and stronger. One might assert that it was only on the leading-strings of this ideal that philosophy learned to take its first small steps on earth...” GM III 9.

<sup>36</sup>The intimation here is that one must be outside of life itself to be able to behold it in its entirety and question its value - i.e., the value of valuing *per se*. See TI Morality as anti-nature 5. Interestingly enough, although I cannot pursue it further here, Turner notes how neophytes are often considered dead by the community during the liminal phase. See V. W. Turner 1964, 48.

was not only to show how an inversion can and, indeed, does function, but also to motivate and evoke an inversion of values in the reader by bringing the noble moral outlook into the centre, as oppositional and originary to our familiar moral outlook. I will now consider how Nietzsche attempts this, and how he deals with the problem of having to render the noble moral outlook as an outlook that has relevance to us today, such that it can form an effective opposition to our familiar Christian outlook.

Nietzsche introduces the noble moral outlook in the *Genealogy* by way of etymological analysis. He begins the first essay of the *Genealogy* claiming that the “signpost to the *right* road was for me the question: what was the real etymological significance of the designations for “good” coined in the various languages?” Nietzsche makes the etymological link of our familiar concept of “the good” to that of the “superior in power”, “the rich”, “the possessors”, “the truthful”, “the men of war” (GM I 5), “the happy”, “the godlike”, “the beautiful” (GM I 6), and “the healthy” (GM I 7). It should be noted how Nietzsche draws upon values that lie in opposition to our current, familiar understanding of “the good”. For example, the value of being “warlike” lies in open opposition to the value of “pity”, and the value of superiority in power opposes that of equality.<sup>37</sup>

Nietzsche attempts to draw out the struggle for command occurring between the two outlooks that is contained within the concept of the good. I argued in chapter three that the process of sedimentation had the effect of hiding the struggle for command that our moral values have gone through by aiding the fixing of moral concepts with a particular meaning and with specific referents. With etymological analysis, Nietzsche seeks to counteract this process by showing how our moral concepts have been determined in a different manner, and even with opposing referents.<sup>38</sup> However, this etymological analysis, if it is to help

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<sup>37</sup>In chapter two, section ‘Moral Outlooks’ I drew on Michael Forster’s work to show the opposition between two moral outlooks: that of Christianity, and that of Greek nobility. See Forster 2011b, 355-356 for more contrasts.

<sup>38</sup>See, for example, Migotti 1998, 770, which notes that “our (still) current moral language

bring noble moral values together to form an outlook capable of opposing our Christian moral outlook, must be able to form an opposition, such that it can be drawn upon as a perspective from which the inquirer can “take sides” against the Christian outlook. That this is, indeed, Nietzsche’s intention, is given by the fact that the etymological claims Nietzsche makes are for the most part non-standard, and offered with no substantive supporting arguments. This is not to say that Nietzsche’s analysis is implausible, but, rather, that the success of the etymological claims lies less on their historical accuracy, and more on their ability to render evaluatively salient the marginalised, noble moral values *to us*, (and, hence, if we are to see noble phenomena in the world through them).<sup>39</sup> This latter demand is fundamental if the opposing noble outlook is to have relevance for us today, so that the struggle for command is not simply a past historical event, but meaningful in the present.<sup>40</sup>

For this to happen, Nietzsche needs to show not only that these alternative moral values have relevance for us today, but that they can form a totality from which we are able to pose the question as to whether our dominant moral outlook could be harmful. In chapter three, I already suggested this principle by which the noble values are seen to hang together: the activity of self-determination as a means of distinction.<sup>41</sup> This sets up a contrast with the Christian outlook, which hangs together on the principle of obedience to God. Much of the work done by Nietzsche when depicting the slave revolt is to render morally salient the noble outlook in contrast to our familiar Christian outlook.

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is not monolithic, but stratified.”

<sup>39</sup>See Smith’s introduction in Nietzsche 1996 on the plausibility of Nietzsche’s etymological claims. Deleuze and Kofman agree that etymology is used as a philosophical tool, although not in the manner that I argue for here. See Deleuze 2006, 70 and Kofman 1993, 86.

<sup>40</sup>As Nietzsche questions at the end of first essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals*: “Must the ancient fire not some day flare up much more terribly, after much longer preparation? More: must one not desire it with all one’s might? even will it? even promote it?” (GM I 17).

<sup>41</sup>Nietzsche suggests the same principle in *On the Genealogy of Morals*: “[w]ith regard to *our* problem, which may on grounds be called a *quiet* problem and one which fastidiously directs itself to few ears, it is of no small interest to ascertain that through those words and roots which designate “good” there frequently still shines through the most important nuance by virtue of which the noble felt themselves to be men of a higher rank” (GM I 5).



At this point, however, two worries arise. The first is that even if we acknowledge that there was once such a noble outlook that flourished, the very principle of the noble outlook - of value determination based on (the feeling of) hierarchical distinction - and the constellation of values that surround it, still repel and somewhat disgust us today. This raises the difficulty as to whether the outlook could really take hold of us. The second worry is the opposing concern as to whether we really *want* the noble outlook to take hold in any meaningful way since this could present a social and political danger on return from the liminal phase.<sup>42</sup>

Nietzsche is arguably rather successful at bringing marginal experiences of the noble outlook into the centre. We see such experiences, for example, in the reverence for the monarchy (in the UK for example), in high estimations of ‘great’ political figures such as Caesar and Napoleon, and of artists such as Goethe and Mozart. When thinking through what exactly we still find noble today in such cases, Nietzsche hits on the following explanation in the section ‘What is noble’ of *Beyond Good and Evil*:

It is not the works, it is the *faith* that is decisive here, that determines the order of rank - to take up again an ancient religious formula in a new and more profound sense: some fundamental certainty that a noble soul has about itself, something that cannot be sought, found, nor perhaps lost.

*The noble soul has reverence for itself.*

*BGE 287*

When recounting the slave revolt, Nietzsche draws on this characteristic in a variety of different ways to contrast it with the impotence, insecurity, and vengefulness of the slavish class and the priestly caste.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>A notable example of this social danger is given by the “trial of the century” of Richard Loeb and Nathan Leopold in the United States. The famous and successful defence made by Clarence Darrow during the trial argued that the boys were under the influence of “Nietzschean philosophy” when committing the murder.

<sup>43</sup>GM I 7, for example, is highly indicative of this contrast. The importance of Nietzsche’s demand that “one has first read my earlier writings and has not spared some trouble in doing so: for they are, indeed, not easy to penetrate” (GM preface 8) is important here to grasp the type of contrast being made.

Now, the danger of this noble outlook taking hold in a manner that could risk the loss of familiarity with our moral values is mitigated in various ways by Nietzsche. This can be seen in, at least, two separate ways depending on the audience of the *Genealogy* that is considered. First, as Tracy Strong suggests, a potential reader of the *Genealogy* to consider is that of the German Christian anti-Semite. While the beginnings of the first essay draw this reader in to identifying with the noble outlook and the knightly aristocracy against the “priestly people of the Jews”, GM I 7 turns this on its head by implying that Christianity, our dominant moral outlook in Europe, “inherited this Jewish revaluation.”<sup>44</sup> As a result, the original identification with the knightly caste collapses.

Another potential reader is the atheist who maintains faith in Christian moral values (such as “the English” seen in the introduction of the thesis). Their identification with the knightly caste is tempered by the full-blown depiction of the noble as a descendent of the savage. Nietzsche shows this from the perspective of our familiar moral outlook:<sup>45</sup> “they [the nobles] go *back* to the innocent conscience of the beast of prey, as triumphant monsters who perhaps emerge from a disgusting procession of murder, arson, rape, and torture, exhilarated and undisturbed of soul, as if it were no more than a student’s prank...” The implications of fully identifying with the knightly caste, here, are grotesquely brought into view.

The first essay of the *Genealogy* shifts continually between the two moral outlooks, often within the same aphorism, and even at times within the same sentence. We have seen how this is taken to its extremity in GM I 14. Another example is given by this passage from GM I 7: “It was the Jews [...] saying “the wretched alone are good; the poor, impotent, lowly alone are the good; the suffering, deprived, sick, ugly alone are pious, alone are blessed by God, blessedness is for them alone - and you, the powerful and noble, are on the contrary evil, the

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<sup>44</sup>See Strong 2013, 517-518.

<sup>45</sup>“...all this came together, in the minds of those who suffered from it, in the image of the “barbarian,” the “evil enemy”...” GM I 11.

cruel, the lustful, the insatiable, the godless to all eternity...” Here, Nietzsche takes up the voice of a Jew who has undergone the inversion of noble values, but the perspective from which the Jew articulates the inversion is that of the noble person’s perception of this inversion.

The question, then, arises as to how these momentary shifts back and forth between our familiar moral outlook and the alternative, noble outlook are possible. I think a helpful way of approaching these shifts, is to understand them as *aspect-shifts*. As suggested earlier, in the example of the slave revolt, we saw how the inversion of values involves perceiving the same phenomena “in the world” - i.e. two different political classes of slaves and masters - but, seen in a new manner - they take on a different “tone-colour” affectively and conceptually. By understanding the shift in this manner, we can see how the moral inquirer can undergo such a shift during the isolated, liminal phase of reflection, without the need to take up a new social role.

In *Seeing Wittgenstein Anew*, William Day and Victor J Krebs describe the phenomenon of aspect-seeing in this way. It is “an experience with, one might say, a double aspect. It is an experience in which, first, something changes – as it were before our eyes or ears – but in which, second, we know that nothing has changed, that is, we know that the change is not (so to speak) in the world, but (so to speak) in us.”<sup>46</sup>

Wittgenstein’s central example of this is the following: “I contemplate a face, and then suddenly notice its likeness to another. I see that it has not changed; and yet I see it differently. I call this experiencing ‘noticing an aspect’.”<sup>47</sup> The idea here is very similar to the employment of the ‘law of dissociation by varying concomitants’, which we saw in the case of internal, ironic disruption. This functioned by associating our moral values with different phenomena, to evoke a disassociation of our moral values from their value. I want to suggest that for the

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<sup>46</sup>See Day and Krebs 2010, 8.

<sup>47</sup>Wittgenstein 2003, 193c-e.

external critique to function, to take up our familiar moral values from an alternative perspective requires being able to ‘notice an aspect’ of our familiar moral values that has remained inconspicuous. This functions not through the association of our moral values with phenomena within the dominant moral outlook, but with taking up a perspective from which we come to see our moral values from a different aspect *as* harmful, as dangerous, etc.

Now, a worry with this approach might be the following. Our moral values do not seem to be the sort of phenomena with which we can engage in ‘aspect-seeing.’ That is to say, one might think that they are just not the kind of things that when perceived, are seen *as* something other than valuable. By this I mean that in our everyday lives, for example, we do not “take” our moral values as valuable, as if we could *also* take them as something *not* valuable, as dangerous, harmful, etc. Wittgenstein, for example, suggests that in ordinary perception aspect-seeing does not occur:

It would have made as little sense for me to say “Now I am seeing it as...” as to say at the sight of a knife and fork “Now I am seeing this as a knife and fork.” This expression would not be understood. - Any more than: “Now it’s a fork” or “It can be a fork too.” One doesn’t “take” what one knows as the cutlery at a meal for cutlery; any more than one ordinarily tries to move one’s mouth as one eats, or aims at moving it.

Wittgenstein 2003, 195b-c

One might think then, in a parallel manner, that we do not “take” our moral values on an everyday basis “as” moral values. However, to conclude from this that our moral values are not the type of phenomena that can be taken up from a novel aspect, would be to confuse the nature of our familiarity with moral values with our everyday experience of this familiarity. The reason why our moral values are not readily perceived as aspect-seeing phenomena is, I claim, because of the sedimented and foundational role they play in our everyday lives. As argued in chapter two, for our moral values to have become familiar to us means that we

have come to take their value as given. To take this value as given amounts to no longer being able to see our moral values from a different aspect with regards to its value; in other words it means that this value is no longer in question; this value becomes inconspicuous. If this were not the case, then this value could not play a familiar, foundational role, since it would still be an issue for us. As a result of this, sedimentation means that we become *blind* to the possibility of seeing our moral values from a different aspect.<sup>48</sup> The appeal to the monstrous, and to an alternative moral outlook should, thus, be understood as a means by which to overcome this aspect-blindness, to come to see our moral values temporarily as harmful.<sup>49</sup>

As said, however, Nietzsche seeks to shift the reader between moral outlooks, to essentially lead the reader into *aporia* about the value of our moral values, and to ignorance about what the concept of “the good” refers to. Yet, this experience of disorientation is not simply one of total confusion, monstrosity, and uncanniness. It also expresses a commitment and concern for the good in a manner that transcends both moral outlooks during the liminal phase, and offers a commensurability between the two outlooks. During the liminal phase, that is to say, the moral inquirer experiences a commitment to the good that breaks out of the familiar conception (be it noble or Christian).

In chapter three, by drawing on Lear’s account of ironic disruption, I explained how, during this internal critique, our conception of the good comes to transcend our Christian moral outlook. During ironic disruption, we experience our moral

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<sup>48</sup>Wittgenstein notes this phenomenon of “aspect-blindness”. “...the question now arises: Could there be human beings lacking in the capacity to see something - and what would that be like? What sort of consequences would it have? - Would this defect be comparable to colorblindness or to not having absolute pitch? - We will call it “aspect-blindness”...” Wittgenstein 2003, 213f.

<sup>49</sup>David Owen offers an account of how Nietzsche’s genealogy functions to release us from “aspectual captivity”, and also understands this phenomenon in Wittgensteinian terms. See Owen 2003. Owen’s understanding of aspectual-capacity offers a helpful way of understanding the process sedimentation. However, Owen is interested in how the loss of faith in God can result in us no longer understanding ourselves as agents, and how this can motivate the need for an aspect-shift (or a release from aspectual captivity, as he puts it). I, on the contrary, have been engaged with the phenomenon where no such loss of self-understanding occurs.

values (which Lear calls “members”) failing to fit into our Christian moral outlook (which Lear calls the “totality”), which results in our conception of the good breaking out from our familiarity with it (the latter of which Lear calls the “social pretense”). This conception of the good remains empty in so far as it cannot be provided with content from our familiar understanding of the good since it is this understanding that is transcended during the ironic experience.<sup>50</sup>

At this point, however, there is a final concern that needs to be dealt with. It is often argued in the secondary literature that Nietzsche appeals to a conception of the good that has both normative content and normative authority that transcends any and all moral outlooks. This is thought to be important because not only would such a conception be able to act as arbiter between competing outlooks, but it would also appear to provide an insight into the nature of the evaluation of our moral values, and, hence, also the conditions needed to be met to pose the question of the value of our moral values.

I have already argued at length earlier in this thesis against the possibility of beholding such a transcendent standard of the good from a view from nowhere - i.e. from a position free from any familiarity with moral values.<sup>51</sup> I have also shown how Nietzsche rejects the task of attempting to find common standards across moral outlooks as unhelpful and “immature,” since it fails to touch on the problem of the value of *our* familiar moral values.<sup>52</sup> It might, nevertheless, be thought that without some common ground between outlooks, where such ground informs us of what the evaluation of moral values is to look like, it would be impossible to give an adequate account of what it would take to pose the question of the value of our moral values.

Thus, in the secondary literature, we find various attempts at articulating what this common ground might be according to Nietzsche’s moral philosophy.

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<sup>50</sup>For the discussion of this, see chapter 3, section ‘The Role of Self-Consciousness’.

<sup>51</sup>See Chapter 1, section ‘Reductionism and Immoralism’ pp35-39.

<sup>52</sup>see Chapter 1, section ‘The Justificatory Approach’ pp18-22.

Paul Katsafanas, for example, claims that the “dominant interpretation” of *On the Genealogy of Morals* argues that “modern morality undermines flourishing,” where the value of flourishing is taken as the bridging standard between moral outlooks, and which can be employed as the yardstick to evaluative between such outlooks.<sup>53</sup> Under this reading, posing the question of the value of our moral values would be to assess them in terms of whether or not they afford human flourishing.

As Katsafanas notes, however, the concept of flourishing struggles to do the transcendent bridging work that is necessary here, since from the perspective of the Christian moral outlook, it is not considered normatively authoritative.<sup>54</sup> Katsafanas himself argues that flourishing should be understood in terms of Nietzsche’s concept of will to power, since power, unlike flourishing alone, “has a privileged normative status.”<sup>55</sup>

According to Katsafanas, one advantage of looking to the concept of will to power to take up this function - i.e., as a measure with transcendent, normative authority - is that it has a connection to agency, from which it obtains its normative authority. Will to power is a standard of success for action,<sup>56</sup> and as a result, it does not bear on, what Katsafanas calls “discrete, context-free evaluative judgments”, but rather on “whole systems of moral judgments, coupled with their associates classes of affects and perceptions.”<sup>57</sup> In the literature on this topic, Aaron Ridley also makes a similar stake for will to power playing this role by claiming that “self-understanding, the sense of having ‘power over oneself’, is plausibly a value that sufficiently transcends the kinds of parochial consideration I have concentrated upon, under the label ‘way of living’, as to have a claim to

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<sup>53</sup>Katsafanas 2011, 171. Katsafanas associates this reading with Janaway and Leiter. *ibid*, 172.

<sup>54</sup>*ibid*, 174: “In sum, the dominant religions teach that flourishing is *not* normatively authoritative. The fact that serving the poor, mortifying the flesh, renouncing sexuality, and so forth, conflict with flourishing is not an *objection* to these practices; it is *their point*.”

<sup>55</sup>*ibid*, 177.

<sup>56</sup>See Katsafanas 2013, chapter 9 for a detailed account of this.

<sup>57</sup>*ibid*, 177.

be an intrinsic value for human beings in general.”<sup>58</sup>

Now, first I want to note that there is some benefit to this approach by Katsafanas (and Ridley), but I will then draw upon two shortcomings that it faces. I think that it is correct to understand the content of the common ground between the noble outlook and the Christian outlook in terms of the will to power, and that Nietzsche does this in *On the Genealogy of Morals* through the use of other concepts, such as “health”, and “the good.”<sup>59</sup> This is required to see the commensurability between outlooks with opposing values. I have also considered earlier in the thesis in great detail the broader aspects of our moral psychology and the ascetic dynamic of the soul in terms of a continuum of compulsion, upon which different moral outlooks can be situated.<sup>60</sup> This account of our familiarity with values *per se* offers many resources for understanding the common ground between outlooks, and agrees with Katsafanas’ assertion that the will to power offers commensurability between evaluative orientations that involve different modes of evaluation, rather than simply between opposing values.<sup>61</sup>

However, I reject Katsafanas’ claim that there is any normative authority to the content of what Katsafanas calls the “will to power thesis” that lies outside, or transcends our moral outlooks. There are two main reasons for this. First, attempts to find normative authority for the content of will to power inevitably come from a particular outlook. Second, this search for normative authority reduces the complexity of Nietzsche’s work, and the concept of the will to power in particular. The common ground between opposing moral outlooks is something that needs to be *constructed* so that the question of the value of our moral values can be posed; it is not a transcendent normative authority to be *discovered* such

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<sup>58</sup>Ridley 2005, 173.

<sup>59</sup>I have suggested this earlier in this chapter. See page 175.

<sup>60</sup>See Chapter 2. This seems to be to some extent what Ridley has in mind with the phrase ‘having power over oneself’.

<sup>61</sup>A basic example of this (touched upon also by Katsafanas) is the novel slavish mode of evaluating that ascribes responsibility to agents, and Nietzsche’s interpretation of this move as an expression of the will to power of the weak.



that the question could then be resolved.

To begin with the first reason, I will take up Katsafanas' own example of how the will to power can be normatively authoritative. He suggests, following David Owen, that Nietzsche distinguishes between 'feelings of increased power' and 'actual increases in power'. He goes on to claim that Nietzsche endorses, as a normative criterion, that the feeling of power should track actual power. He quotes Owen on this score: "the criterion of evaluation that Nietzsche proposes is whether the feeling of power expresses and tracks power, where this criterion can be taken to be well grounded just in so far as the principle of will to power provides a compelling explanation of human behaviour... Hence the crucial question is this: under what conditions does the feeling of power *necessarily* express and track power?"<sup>62</sup>

The problem with this is that the evaluative criterion suggested itself belongs to a moral outlook. While Katsafanas acknowledges that how we experience actions expressing power is dependent on the perspective of our moral outlook, he fails to see that how we experience the feeling of power tracking the actualisation of power is *also* dependent on this perspective. That is to say, the very idea that the feeling of power should directly track the expression of power is a typical demand from the noble outlook. With this in mind, it is no wonder that the obfuscation of the connection between the feeling and the expression of power that occurs in the Christian outlook is perceived as bad from this perspective. From the Christian perspective, however, the situation is much more complex, as Nietzsche himself spends much time demonstrating. The obfuscation of the feeling of power and its actualisation is a central element in the deification of the ascetic structure and the widening of the soul.<sup>63</sup> It is this process that Nietzsche suggests has made human beings much more "profound". Now, the point that

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<sup>62</sup>Katsafanas quotes Owen here in Katsafanas 2011, 186.

<sup>63</sup>I cannot go into further detail of this process here, but note that I have considered the phenomenon in detail in Chapter 2, section 'The Soul'.

needs to be drawn out here is that the Christian conception of power demands a *novel* understanding of power that cannot be achieved from the noble perspective. From that latter perspective, the Christian conception just shows up as bad or harmful, as Katsafanas himself unwittingly expresses: “Thus, the Judeo-Christian interpretation has the result of reducing actual power.”<sup>64</sup> Instead, what Nietzsche attempts to show is that under the Christian moral outlook there has been a spiritualisation of the noble conception of power. While it is true that Nietzsche often attacks this spiritualisation, he also clearly acknowledges that without it, we would never have had the development of culture capable of producing the likes of Goethe and Beethoven.

This leads on to the second reason. That the Christian moral outlook shows up as harmful in so far as it dislocates the feeling of power from its actualisation is beneficial to the task of posing the value of our moral values, since it affords us an opposing perspective from which to gain an estranged view of those values. However, this is the *result* of finding common ground between the outlooks in terms of an explanation that employs the concept of the will to power. The important point here is that the concept of the will to power is productively involved in the *construction* of common ground between the opposing Christian and noble outlook in order to pose the question of the value of our moral values; it is not something to be *discovered* in order to resolve the question. In this sense then, it transcends both outlooks, but it simultaneously lacks any positive content.

Let us now enrich this account, by introducing the aspect-shifts between the moral outlooks just discussed above. From the perspective of the noble outlook, Christian values show up *as* potentially harmful. That is to say, not only do these values, and the mode of evaluating fail to live up to the conception of the good of the noble outlook, but they are detrimental to it. Once having seen this harmful aspect, as noted above, Nietzsche often shifts us back to the familiar aspect of

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<sup>64</sup>Katsafanas 2011, 186.

our moral values. However, when this happens, although our moral values are still familiar to us, their familiarity becomes strange, since we have just seen their potentially harmful aspect. This familiarity can no longer be taken for granted in its familiarity, and, hence, the value of our moral values becomes an object of questioning. This is all seen from the *estranged* “eye of Zarathustra”. Now, to see how this actually occurs, it should be noted that when this happens, the conception of the good (and, thus, also the conception of power just discussed) that was tied to our familiar moral outlook comes to transcend that outlook, due to our familiar moral values failing to live up to the noble conception of the good (or, again, of power). More than this, it transcends it in such a manner that it seeks to capture the noble conception of the good that rendered the members of the familiar outlook show up as harmful. However, when it does this, it cannot simply incorporate the noble conception of the good since this noble conception is completely at odds with the familiar conception. As a result of this, we end up with a conception of the good which has to transcend the social pretense of *both* the noble outlook and the Christian outlook. This affords a certain commensurability between the outlooks. However, since the conception transcends our familiar understanding of the good in both outlooks, it also remains without content. Unlike the worry with the internal critique, there is no issue of this transcendent conception becoming assimilated into the familiar outlook due to the fact that it is a product of the experience of *inverted* values.

This is why during the liminal phase, when such a transcendent conception of the good comes onto the scene, there is a de-structuring and disorienting phase of reflection, which calls the moral inquirer to a halt. What it also expresses, nevertheless, is a deeper commitment to the good and to the future of European values.

## 4.6 The Phase of Aggregation

I will now consider the final phase, that of aggregation. This phase is rather troublesome, but nevertheless fundamental to the process of estrangement. It marks the end of the liminal phase, which we must remember is only temporary. This means that the various elements of the liminal phase, such as the ascetic taking sides against oneself, the experience of the inversion of moral values, the loss of structure and experience of *aporia*, all come to an end. This occurs due to a *return* to the Christian moral outlook. This essentially signifies a return to social interaction, which was severed during the phase of separation. As said earlier, however, when considering the structural isomorphism of the process of estrangement to rites of passage, this return is not marked by any particular rites. Unfortunately, this disanalogy does not make the phase of aggregation any easier to comprehend; on the contrary, with no rites delimiting the liminal phase, the major issue with understanding the phase of aggregation is how to demarcate the duration of the liminal phase, and to know exactly when it is over. The difficulty of articulating this is seen when we attempt to consider what type of world the moral inquirer returns to. As we have seen, van Gennep suggests that it is an “incorporation into the new world,”<sup>65</sup> and Turner suggests that the phase of aggregation is a return to stability, but often in “a new achieved status” or social role for the individual.<sup>66</sup> However, this implies that the “new world” is already in place and structured, ready and waiting for the subjects who have undergone the rites of passage. This is clearly not the case for the moral inquirer who returns to the familiar dominant outlook, which is essentially the same outlook that was left. The difference here is that the inquirer has come to see that the value of our moral values is a possible object of questioning during the liminal phase. In this section, I will attempt to articulate how this experience effects the return of the

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<sup>65</sup>Van Gennep 1960, 21.

<sup>66</sup>V. W. Turner 1964, 47.

inquirer.

In Nietzsche's own work, the phase of aggregation is depicted in various troublesome ways. The most disconcerting of these is given by the figure of the madman in the famous passage of the *Gay Science*. Here is an indicative section of the speech of the madman to the people in the marketplace:

How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night continually closing in on us? Do we not need to light lanterns in the morning?

*GS 125*

At first sight, it looks like the madman is spectacularly depicting the experience undergone in the liminal phase: he describes, for example, some kind of inversion of fundamental familiar phenomena, as well as the disorientation that it engenders. This, however, is not quite correct, since the situation he depicts is one in which our moral values are in crisis due to the 'death of God,' (and, hence, due to the loss of the Christian foundations of our moral values). This, instead, suggests that the madman is in a phase of aggregation, as he returns to the people in the marketplace and offers his oration. He sees that the value of our moral values are questionable, but rather than aggregation leading to a return to stability, no such stability is available due to the madman now experiencing the loss and absence of the foundations of our moral values.

The world that the madman returns to is no longer the stable world of the dominant moral outlook prior to going through the process of estrangement. I argued in chapter two that the loss of Christian foundations is not experienced because our moral values have become sedimented, and their value inconspicuous. Once this sedimentation is disrupted in the liminal phase and the value of our

moral values becomes an object of questioning, the loss of foundations - as depicted by the madman as the death of God - becomes salient and troublesome. The value of our moral values now becomes an object of wonder. It is here that the difference between the people of the marketplace and the madman becomes apparent. The madman's audience are, as Nietzsche tells us, atheists: they do not believe in God. On this score they do not differ from the madman. Where they do differ, however, is on the significance of this loss of faith. The response of the atheists suggests that they do not see any implications or consequences for their loss of faith in God. This is because, similar to the case of 'the English' seen in the thesis introduction, the atheists take the value of their moral values as given, and do not see "morality as a problem." The value of their moral values is sedimented to the point where it is inconspicuous and, hence, does not show up as a questionable phenomenon. This is why they deride the madman for his concern for the death of God. The madman, on the contrary, sees that the value of our moral values is a phenomenon that can be brought into question, and that, due to this, the loss of the foundations of our moral values has strong ramifications for *that* value. We cannot go on as before since we see that our moral values do not have an unconditional right to continue to have a foundational role in our lives.<sup>67</sup> Note that this concern and care for the implications of the death of God also expresses the madman's commitment to "the good", which transcends the familiar dominant outlook. We also get a glimpse of it with the optimistic end to his oration: "There has never been a greater deed [the death of God]; and whoever is born after us - for the sake of this deed he will belong to a higher history than all history hitherto" (GS 125).

The madman is unable to go through the phase of aggregation since there is no

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<sup>67</sup>See TI Skirmishes of an Untimely Man 5: "We others hold otherwise. When one gives up the Christian faith, one pulls the right to Christian morality out from under one's feet. This morality is by no means self-evident: this point has to be exhibited again and again, despite the English flatheads. Christianity is a system, a *whole* view of things thought out together. By breaking one main concept out of it, the faith in God, one breaks the whole: nothing necessary remains in one's hands."

new structure awaiting him in the post-liminal phase. This is seen by the fact that no one in the marketplace can appreciate the ramifications of the death of God. For there to be a new structure, or the possibility of creating a new structure, new social relations would have to be formed. However, as Nietzsche attempts to show in this passage, such social relations cannot be created unless others undergo the process of estrangement, and, hence, are able to face up to the loss of foundations of our moral values. Precisely the opposite happens in this narrative, since the madman is mocked by his listeners and derided for being insane.

The madman is then in a position that is at once within the dominant moral outlook, but which, nevertheless, retains the experience of the liminal phase. The experience of seeing the value of our moral values as a questionable phenomenon is perpetuated by the experience of the crisis of the value of our moral values in the dominant moral outlook. The question of *this* value, which was posed in the liminal phase, cannot be settled on return since the possibility of grounding it in the Christian religion is lost.

A potential role for the madman, and, indeed, for the moral inquirer that finds him- or herself in this in-between position on return, is to attempt to motivate and evoke the process of estrangement in others. The possibility of taking up this role is a central issue for Nietzsche, and throughout this chapter I have suggested that his own work, *On the Genealogy of Morals* in particular, attempts this very task. This is supported by another figure that Nietzsche employs elsewhere in his later works who, similar to the madman, comes onto the scene in the phase of aggregation. This is the figure of Zarathustra.

In 'Zarathustra's Prologue' in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche works through the difficulties of Zarathustra's aggregation, or 'down-going' [Untergang], after a 10-year period of solitude in the mountains.<sup>68</sup> First, Zarathustra's return from

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<sup>68</sup>Nietzsche uses the same terminology to describe the philosopher leaving their 'citadel': "If he [the philosopher] were [predestined for knowledge], he would one day have to say to himself: "The devil take my good taste! but the rule is more interesting than the exception - than myself, the exception!" And he would go *down*, and above all, he would go "inside." (BGE 26).

solitude is recognised by a saint, who sees that Zarathustra is “altered.” The descent out of “a love of mankind” marks his end of the ascetic, liminal period, unlike the saint who remains a hermit in the forest. Next, as Zarathustra arrives at a village, he encounters the same problems as the madman. On arrival he is mocked by the locals, and is charged for speaking like a buffoon. He only finds complicity with a risk-taking tightrope walker, who ends up falling to his death. After this, Zarathustra makes the pledge to avoid talking to both people of the marketplace and the dead, and to, instead, seek out companions. This pledge indicates Zarathustra’s strategy to evoke a process of estrangement in these companions, and, hence, the role of the inquirer that is to be taken up on return.<sup>69</sup>

To conclude this section, I want to suggest that the nature of this return so far described is indicative of a demand for, ultimately, a radical alteration of the Christian moral outlook. In chapter three, I claimed that Jonathan Lear’s idea of the moral inquirer developing an ironic disposition within the dominant outlook was not radical enough for our task since it affords a way in which the inquirer could persist in light of the crisis of our moral values, without needing to bring about a more radical change. What is instead required is for the inquirer to seek to cultivate this ironic disposition in others, for the possibility of new social relations to arise. There is certainly scope in Lear’s account for this. However, there is a further resource, not found in ironic disruption, that is afforded by the external critique. Due to the appeal to the alternative moral outlook in the liminal phase, opposing values are brought from the margin to the centre to help with the task of bringing into view our familiar moral values as strange. Although the moral inquirer returns to the dominant moral outlook, these alternative values are involved in the transcendent conception of the good, which must incorporate and, yet, overcome both the Christian and noble values.

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<sup>69</sup>On occasion Nietzsche links the ‘eye of Zarathustra’ with the achievement of estrangement. See, for example, the quote above from *CW preface*. In BGE 56, he also alludes to Zarathustra when he talks of the “Asiatic, supra-Asiatic eye” that allows one to see ‘beyond Good and Evil.’



Whichever values come to fill the content of this commitment, and form a new stable familiarity in the new social structure, will have to go through a complex process of justification if they are to take hold. How this latter task of justification is to be achieved is a fundamental question, the answer to which, however, will require in the very least another book-length study.

## 4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that we can understand how the task of estrangement is to be achieved by noting the presence of a structural isomorphism between the process of estrangement and the phenomenon of rites of passage. This is because this isomorphism helps to show how the paradox of moral inquiry, which the demand for estrangement leads us into, can be dealt with. By dividing the process into three phases of separation, margin and aggregation, the means of achieving a position of estrangement without forgoing our familiarity with moral values can be located in the middle phase. This phase, in contrast to that of separation and aggregation is one in which structure is undermined, in order to evoke reflection and speculation. We have seen how the use of the monstrous, as a means of setting into relief the familiar as strange, functions here. This helps to achieve the disassociation of the value of our moral values from those moral values without the inquirer becoming alienated in the process.

I argued that an important feature of Nietzsche's attempts at achieving estrangement was an appeal to an alternative moral outlook, so as to be able to radically pose the question as to whether our moral values could be harmful for us. Such an attempt raises several difficulties concerning how such an outlook can be taken up. I have suggested that Nietzsche offers us an example of value inversion in his account of the slave revolt, and that, moreover, this account is part of Nietzsche's attempts to motivate and evoke a temporary inversion of values in the reader. To understand how such a temporary inversion is possible, I suggested that we can understand it as a kind of aspect-shift that helps to make our moral

values show up to us *as* harmful.

The remaining difficulty of the return to the dominant moral outlook after the liminal phase concerns the relation between the inquirer and others who have “not made the journey” with him. The initial task, on this return, I suggest is like that of Nietzsche’s, to evoke and motivate estrangement in others so as to overcome the main phenomenon of concern of this thesis - the continued faith in Christian moral values - and to face up to the loss of their foundations.

# Conclusion

In this thesis, I have argued that a certain type of moral inquiry is necessary to philosophically engage with a pervasive phenomenon in contemporary Europe. The phenomenon of interest throughout this thesis has been the continued faith in Christian moral values, notwithstanding the widespread collapse of faith in Christianity. Due to this widespread collapse, our moral values have lost their foundations and, thus, also the unquestioned right to their existence and dominance. We have seen that the value of our Christian moral values, nevertheless, fails to show up to us as an object of questioning, since it is taken for granted on an everyday basis. How to render the value of our moral values a questionable phenomenon has, therefore, been the guiding question of this thesis.

In chapters two and three, I offered a detailed account of how we become familiar with moral values. I argued that this fundamentally involves a process of habituation (which is structured in terms of the double effect of habit), the phenomenon of sedimentation, and the linguistic fixing of our moral concepts. I stressed the importance of the dynamic of command and obedience, which lies at the heart of our moral psychology, through appeal to work undertaken in this area by Aristotle and Nietzsche. I also developed an account of cognition and self-consciousness within this framework. There is, I believe, great scope for supplementary work to be undertaken in this area, especially concerning the role of the more conative and volitional elements of our moral psychology, their role in our familiarity with moral values, and within the Christian moral outlook in particular. Moreover, work in this area would help to further enrich our understanding

of the dynamic of command and obedience and moral acts of will in terms of spontaneity and activity, on the one hand, and receptivity and passivity, on the other. While much interest has been taken here in contemporary philosophy in relation to human perception and judgment, how it is to be applied to human action has been largely neglected.<sup>70</sup>

In chapter one, I established that moral inquiry must maintain this familiarity with our Christian moral values, if it is to face up to the loss of their foundations. This is because any loss of familiarity with these values results in alienation from the putative moral phenomena that are to be brought into question. However, the foundational certitude that this familiarity affords, necessarily involves the value of these values becoming inconspicuously taken as given. That is to say, only when this value no longer becomes an object of wonder and questioning can we rely on our moral values as a ground upon which we can confidently and securely stand.

We have seen how this means that to come to terms with the loss of the Christian foundations of our moral values, requires seeing that the *value* of our familiar Christian moral values is a possible object of questioning. It means to bring the familiar moral values into view *in their familiarity*. When understood in this manner, we have seen that this task is the same as *posing* Nietzsche's question of the value of our moral values. Nietzsche's moral philosophy has, thus, been an important resource for articulating this task and for framing the original problem.

However, to maintain familiarity with our Christian moral values, whilst, nevertheless, rendering their familiarity questionable, demands some kind of *disruption* of the sedimented nature of our familiar moral values. This necessarily gives rise to a paradox that faces the moral inquirer, which was described in chapter

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<sup>70</sup>This would also help to further articulate the finer differences between McDowell's and Dreyfus' positions, and, hence, also the correct account that, as I have argued, lies in between the two.

one. Articulated anew, now in a slightly different manner, we can see how our familiarity with moral values must be maintained so that we do not lose sight of those values, (and the phenomena seen through them), and, yet, this familiarity must be disrupted such that the value of our moral values can be brought into view as an object of questioning. We have seen in chapters three and four that the best way to approach this paradox is by understanding the latter requirement of disruption in terms of a form of *estrangement* from our familiar, Christian moral values. Estrangement offers an insight into how familiarity can be maintained, but a novel perspective can be taken up, such that this familiarity comes into view *in its familiarity* from an estranged position.

This occurrence of becoming estranged from the familiar is, more generally speaking, a relatively widespread phenomenon, and it has been a topic of study in many disciplines, ranging from psychology to ethnography. I have briefly considered it in chapter four in an interdisciplinary manner, when describing the structural isomorphism that exists between rites of passage and the process of estrangement from our familiar moral values. There is scope for more interdisciplinary work here, to further enrich our understanding of how estrangement arises already within cultures, how it can be evoked philosophically, psychologically and sociologically, and the critical purchase that it can afford in relation to different kinds of familiar phenomena.

In this thesis, I considered particular examples of the critical applications of estrangement from our familiar moral values. I looked at the different moments of ironic disruption, dissociation by varying concomitants, and aspect-shifts, to build up a comprehensive account of how the process of estrangement is to function for a moral inquirer. We have seen how common to all of these is a process of rendering the familiar strange through an appeal to the *monstrous*. I have attempted to complement accounts of this movement with a more radical form of external critique that evokes a temporary *inversion of values* in the moral inquirer. It is from this inverted perspective that I argued that our moral values can be

temporarily seen *as* harmful from a novel aspect.

It has been important to realise that this uncanny movement is highly present, and, yet, often overlooked or misunderstood in interpretations of Nietzsche's own works, and in *On the Genealogy of Morals* in particular. As seen in chapter four, a particular feature of Nietzsche's works that this concerns is the philosophical employment of rhetoric in the appeal to the monstrous. However, we should also take the shortcoming of several commentators on this particular point as indicative of a more basic exegetical misconstrual. Indeed, the very idea that Nietzsche's moral philosophy is oriented around the task of facilitating readers to come to see that our moral values could be objects of questioning - i.e., that the question of the value of our moral values first has to be *posed* before it can be *answered* - is typically overlooked.

This has led to further repercussions for interpretations of Nietzsche's moral philosophy. We have seen how, for example, Nietzsche's moral philosophy has been often misread as engaging in a form of naturalist reductionism, as well as how it is often taken as explicitly advocating a positive, normative ethics.

Both these examples demonstrate how the resources and explanations that Nietzsche employs for the task of posing the question of the value of our moral values - ranging from psycho-physiological explanations on the one hand, to appeals to an alternative moral outlook, on the other - are mistaken for representing and advocating standalone philosophical theories and positions. I have suggested, instead, that they should both be understood as functioning as a means of attaining a position of estrangement from our familiar moral values so that we can come to see those values as objects of questioning and wonder.

To finish, I wish to consider the critical question as to whether the philosophical work undertaken to bring the value of our moral values into view as a questionable phenomenon is itself a necessity to confront the loss of the foundations of our moral values. It might, instead, be thought that while this philosophical work can help deal with this phenomenon, the loss of Christian foundations is in some sense

catching up with us regardless of whether we directly engage philosophically with the problem or not. The basic idea here is that nihilism - the feeling that life is without meaning<sup>71</sup> - is *already* an uncanny monster or guest waiting for us on our own doorstep,<sup>72</sup> and that we do not require moral philosophy to experience it in this manner.

One might think with good reason that with the collapse of faith in Christianity, we already experience on a day-to-day basis a fragmentation of our values (as, for example, described by Max Weber), as well as the *self*-overcoming of Christian morality due to our faith in the values embodied through the period of Enlightenment and into that of modernity.<sup>73</sup>

I want to suggest that this interest in how our Christian moral outlook is changing internally due to the widespread collapse in Christian faith, runs complementary, rather than orthogonally, to the study undertaken here. I have focused on the features of our familiarity with moral values that have maintained that familiarity notwithstanding the loss of faith in Christianity. As we have seen, these features are persuasive enough to require a philosophical engagement with the phenomenon. This is not to say, however, that there are not other features of this familiarity worth studying that give an insight into the vulnerability of the outlook and a potential crisis of nihilism that awaits. What we can be sure of regarding the latter, however, is that the project of rendering salient the threat of nihilism will be much more effective if we are already in a position to see that the value of our moral values is a possible object of questioning and wonder. This, it seems to me, is a good enough reason to strive after *this* task.

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<sup>71</sup>See Reginster and Reginster 2009, 8, 9.

<sup>72</sup>See, for example, GM III 14.

<sup>73</sup>See Weber 1958 and the *preface* to *Daybreak*.





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