

# A Genetic History of Thought

Friedrich Nietzsche

‘The thinker’, Nietzsche writes, ‘regards everything as having evolved . . . he asks: whence does it come? what is its purpose?’ (WS, §43). This programmatic statement encapsulates the triad of naturalism, genealogy, and pragmatism in Nietzsche’s thought that forms the focus of this chapter. From the naturalistic standpoint from which everything is seen as having evolved, understanding is sought by inquiring into the origins and purposes of things. After Darwin, this became the standard approach to the traits of living things. Nietzsche’s contribution lies in systematically extending it to *concepts*. He is the first genealogist to explicitly envisage a systematic deployment of the genealogical method across the entire range of thought, calling on scientists and scholars to draw on the ‘physiology and history of the evolution of organisms and concepts’ in order to celebrate their ‘highest triumph in a *genetic history of thought*’ (HA, §16).

There is reason to think that this project of offering a genetic history of thought can also be fruitfully viewed through the prism of pragmatic genealogy. From the 1870s onwards, Nietzsche makes sense of metaphysics-inviting concepts that appear unconditioned by history and mundane practical concerns as the historical outgrowths of human needs: ‘Unsere Begriffe sind von unserer *Bedürftigkeit* inspirirt’ (eKGWB, 1885, 2[77])—our concepts are inspired by our need. If we look at the ‘*true genesis of concepts*’, we shall find that they stem from the ‘practical sphere’ (eKGWB, 1887, 8[2]).

Reading the early Nietzsche in light of the pragmatic genealogical framework throws several neglected aspects of his work into relief. First, we find that he already sketches genealogical explanations of truthfulness and justice during his Basel period (1869–79). Second, these genealogies are not primarily documentary, subversive, and revelatory of contingency, as Foucault’s reading of Nietzsche would lead one to expect. Rather, they are primarily imaginary, vindictory, and revelatory of practical necessity.<sup>1</sup> Third, this brings the early Nietzsche much closer to the ‘English genealogists’ than his tirade against them at the beginning

<sup>1</sup> I say ‘primarily’ because the contrast—drawn in one form or another in Paden (2003, 566), Jenkins (2006, 164), Hoy (2009, 225), Koopman (2009), and Millgram (2009, 163n23)—between genealogies that are documentary, subversive, and revelatory of contingency and genealogies that are imaginary, vindictory, and revelatory of practical necessity is not best treated as an exclusive one. Nietzsche’s oeuvre alone combines all these aspects in varying proportions over his lifetime.

of *On the Genealogy of Morality* would encourage one to think.<sup>2</sup> Genealogies in this 'English' style, the mature Nietzsche tells us, seek to naturalize values through functionalist hypotheses about why they might have originated: they start out from a hypothesis about the original function of a certain way of valuing, and then suggest that while the valuation solidifies through habit, its function is forgotten, so that it is unjustifiably extended beyond the boundaries of its original functionality (*GM*, I, §2). We will see that it is along just these lines that Nietzsche himself proceeds in his early genealogies of truthfulness and justice. Pragmatic genealogy thus turns out to have as much of a claim to being of Nietzschean descent as the better-known Foucauldian variety.

An advantage of viewing Nietzschean genealogy through the prism of pragmatic genealogy is that it accounts for his lack of historical references. Most interpreters tend to read Nietzschean genealogy as being in effect some form of historiography; yet the problem for these interpretations is that they have a hard time accounting for what can only appear, in a trained philologist, as a poor effort at writing history. This problem, real enough in the *Genealogy*, is even more acute in his earlier genealogies: the only historical reference in his genealogy of justice, for example, is to a situation in which questions of justice precisely *failed* to arise. If, by contrast, we read Nietzsche as trying to identify the point of justice using a fictional model comparable to what other pragmatic genealogists call a 'state of nature', his failure to engage with history becomes comprehensible.

I begin by showing how Nietzsche's genealogical method can be seen as a corrective to what he saw as philosophers' deplorable tendencies towards dehistoricization and denaturalization before focusing on Nietzsche's application of the genealogical method to concepts. I argue that he is concerned to present seemingly unconditioned concepts as being in fact conditioned by the contingencies of history and the demands of human needs. I then offer a detailed examination of two of Nietzsche's early genealogies, his genealogy of justice and his genealogy of truthfulness, and highlight the distinctive contributions Nietzsche makes to the tradition of pragmatic genealogy.

<sup>2</sup> In the First Treatise of the *GM*, Nietzsche repeatedly refers to the 'English psychologists', and in Höfding's *Psychologie in Umrissen auf Grundlage der Erfahrung* (1887, 56, 61, 195), which Nietzsche drew on, 'English psychology' refers to a school of psychology that privileges mechanistic explanations in terms of association and habit (Sommer 2019, 88–90). In the *GM*'s Preface, moreover, Nietzsche presents his book as an answer to Paul Rée and other 'English genealogists of morality', which may be a reference to the protagonists of W. E. H. Lecky's *History of European Morals* (1869), of which Nietzsche owned a translation he annotated extensively. In the chapter entitled 'A Natural History of Morals', Lecky outlines the views of Bain, Bentham, Hartley, Hobbes, Hume, Hutcheson, Locke, Mandeville, Mill, Paley, Shaftesbury, Smith, Spencer, and others—see Thatcher (1989, 588) and Brobjer (2008a, b). The term 'English' in Nietzsche's usage seems to refer primarily to an intellectual style, since it covers both Hume (who was Scottish) and Rée (who was German). Juxtaposed with Rée's, Nietzsche's book comes off as an attempt to improve on it point by point, which suggests that Rée was foremost on Nietzsche's mind (Hufendiek 2019; Janaway 2007, 78).

### 5.1 Philosophers' Dehistoricizing and Denaturalizing Tendencies

Philosophers, Nietzsche finds, suffer from two idiosyncrasies that are detrimental to philosophy: they tend to *dehistoricize* and *denaturalize* what they respect. Each idiosyncrasy can express itself in three different ways. The tendency to dehistoricize can take the form of (a) insensitivity to historicity, (b) the perception of historicity as a defect in what one respects, or (c) the desire to veil historicity by thinking of what one respects in ahistorical terms. The tendency to denaturalize, meanwhile, characteristically gives rise to such convictions as (d) that the lesser cannot give rise to the greater, (e) that the greater must be made sense of in terms that demand more material, such as theological or metaphysical stories of creation or revelation, or (f) that the greater must arise out of itself, as a *causa sui*.

Writing downstream of the advent of historicism and Darwinian naturalism, Nietzsche seeks to correct these twin tendencies towards dehistoricization and denaturalization with his genealogical method. Historicization and naturalization are sometimes conceived of as mutually exclusive movements of thought; but Nietzsche's genealogical method unproblematically combines the two: it is historicizing in its recognition of the need for historical understanding, in its acknowledgement of the omnipresence of change, and in its re-historicization of what has been dehistoricized; and it is naturalizing in that it explains how the lesser can give rise to the greater, thereby making appeals to revelation, creation or self-causation redundant, and rendering intelligible how highly abstract, highly complex, or highly valued cultural formations have their roots in natural drives and needs. Let us take a closer look at what Nietzsche has to say about each tendency.

#### 5.1.1 The Tendency to Dehistoricize

The dehistoricizing tendencies of philosophers are denounced by Nietzsche already in 1878: 'Lack of a historical sense is the hereditary defect of philosophers ... So what is needed from now on is *historical philosophizing*, and with it the virtue of modesty' (HA, §2). There is considerable irony in this formulation, since historical sense is precisely what is required to recognize something as a *hereditary* defect ('*Erbfehler*'). To the extent that it must itself be conceived of in historical terms, lack of historical sense will therefore tend to be self-concealing, leaving those most afflicted by it least qualified to perceive their own shortcomings. Consequently, lack of historical sense has incrustated itself as an 'idiosyncrasy' of philosophers:

You want to know what the philosophers' idiosyncrasies are? ... Their lack of historical sense for one thing, their hatred of the very idea of becoming, their

Egyptianism. They think they are showing *respect* for something when they dehistoricize it, *sub specie aeterni*,—when they turn it into a mummy. For thousands of years, philosophers have been using only mummified concepts; nothing real makes it through their hands alive. (*TI*, Reason, §1)

As this passage indicates, the tendency to dehistoricize has three aspects. The first is the lack of historical sense, which blinds one to historicity and leads one to dehistoricize out of ignorance. It is not just the ‘English psychologists’ (*GM*, I, §1) who lack historical sense on his view, but also the German philosophers of his time. ‘Philosophers’, Nietzsche observes, ‘all think *essentially* ahistorically’ (*GM*, I, §2). Chiding Schopenhauer for thinking that the history of morality could be traced to a single origin in pity, he writes that this was possible only ‘for a thinker who was robbed of all historical instinct and who had in the strangest way even escaped that strong schooling in history that the Germans have been through from Herder to Hegel’ (*eKGWB*, 1885, 2[188]). Nietzsche even blames Schopenhauer’s rants against Hegel for causing ‘the whole of the last generation of Germans to break off its ties to German culture, a culture that, all things considered, represented a supreme and divinatory refinement of the *historical sense*’ (*BGE*, §204).

Apart from expressing itself in a lack of historical sense, however, philosophers’ tendency to dehistoricize is also evinced in their ‘hatred of the very idea of becoming’, which is an evaluative attitude towards historicity: philosophers see ‘death, change, and age, as well as procreation and growth’ (*TI*, Reason, §1) as objections, flaws, imperfections to be avoided. If being subject to change and becoming are flaws, it follows that truly respectable concepts must be exempt from such flaws: ‘all the highest concepts, Being, the Unconditioned, the Good, the True, the Perfect—none of these could have become’ (*TI*, Reason, §4). The best and highest should not be subject to change at all.

The third aspect of the tendency to dehistoricize is what Nietzsche dubs *Egyptianism*: the tendency to express one’s respect for concepts by *mummifying* them. Concept mummification consists in the attempt to deny the historicity of concepts by treating them as eternal and unchanging—one develops ahistorical *conceptions* of what are in fact historical concepts. Mummification involves a form of self-deception: one deceives oneself into thinking of what one respects as something eternal, thus suppressing or silencing its historicity.

For Nietzsche, these three aspects of the dehistoricizing tendency of philosophers have fuelled a denial of the historical world accessible to the senses and a striving for an ahistorical, unconditioned and eternal world beyond it:

What is, does not *become*; what becomes, *is* not . . . So they all believe, desperately even, in being. But since they cannot get hold of it, they look for reasons why it is kept from them. ‘There must be some deception here, some illusory level of appearances preventing us from perceiving things that have being: where is the

deceiver?'—'We've got it!' they shout in ecstasy, 'it is sensibility! These senses *that are so immoral anyway*, now they are deceiving us about the *true* world. Moral: get rid of sense-deception, becoming, history, lies—history is nothing but a belief in the senses, a belief in lies'. (*TI*, Reason, §1)

From Plato's eternal Forms through the Christian God to the noumenal world and the thing in itself—all of them, Nietzsche thinks, have served as timeless realities, homes to 'higher' things relative to which the 'lower' historical world of the senses along with its perceived imperfections could be demoted to the status of a mere 'illusion' or 'lie'. Nietzsche in effect agrees that the unconditioned ideals envisaged by the philosophical tradition are incompatible with the characteristics of the historical world. But while his predecessors took this as an objection to the historical world, he takes it as an objection to their ideals: 'In a world of becoming in which everything is conditional, the assumption of the unconditional... can only be error' (*eKGWB*, 1885, 35[51]).

### 5.1.2 The Tendency to Denaturalize

If one idiosyncrasy of philosophers is their conviction that the highly complex and highly regarded should not change or grow at all, the other, Nietzsche tells us, is that it should certainly '*not* grow out of the lowest' (*TI*, Reason, §4). But *can* something emerge from its opposite, at least in the weak sense in which X emerges from non-X? This is a question at the heart of Nietzsche's concerns, and he takes it to have been at the heart of philosophy itself for the past 2,000 years. Accordingly, he opens not only *Human, All Too Human* but also *Beyond Good and Evil* with precisely this question. The issue is fundamentally that of the merits of *naturalism*: can we find a place for such abstract and ethereal phenomena as rationality, life, logic, altruism, truthfulness, and justice in the natural world by explaining how they could have emerged out of the rough-and-tumble of a reality originally devoid of these things?

Philosophers, Nietzsche finds, have tended to answer this question in the negative.<sup>3</sup> Instead of trying to explain how a highly valued X could emerge from a lesser non-X, 'metaphysical philosophy has hitherto surmounted this difficulty by denying that the one originates in the other' (*HA*, §1). This attitude, which Nietzsche dubs 'the metaphysicians' basic faith, *the faith in the opposition of values*' (*BGE*, §2), leaves the origins of higher things shrouded in mystery, satisfying 'the demand in the souls of all religious people and metaphysicians (in those of the artists, too, when they are also thinkers)' that the unexplained be

<sup>3</sup> See Nietzsche (*HA*, §1; *TI*, Reason, §5).

‘altogether inexplicable, the inexplicable altogether unnatural, supernatural, miraculous’ (HA, §136). Attempts to trace back the ‘supposedly miraculous’ to the ‘complex, the multiply caused’ (HA, §136) are resisted on the principle that *the lesser cannot give rise to the greater*.

Allegiance to this principle is the first and central aspect of the tendency to denaturalize. Philosophers consider it an objection for the greater to come from the lesser, because ‘it casts doubt on its value’ (TI, Reason, §2)—or so they think.<sup>4</sup> Again, Nietzsche thinks that ‘this is just their way of showing respect’ (TI, Reason, §4).

If the highly abstract, complex, or valued cannot be accounted for in terms of lesser material because a bottom-up direction of explanation is excluded on the grounds of being disrespectful, this leaves only two other directions of explanation: top-down explanations in terms of something even more highly abstract, complex, or valued, or circular explanations in terms of the explanandum itself. It is to these remaining strategies that the second and third aspect of the tendency to denaturalize correspond.

The second aspect consists in explaining the origins of the greater in terms that demand even more material than it itself provides. This is what drives theological or metaphysical revelation stories tracing things to Divine Commands, God-given Tables of Values, or Platonic Forms. It long seemed natural to assume that exalted things could only have derived from even more exalted things—this, Nietzsche argues, is how people ultimately got the idea of the highest and most real of things, the *ens realissimum*, ‘their stupendous concept of “God”’ (TI, Reason, §4).

Since the idea of the *ens realissimum* leaves top-down explanations no more material to work with, this leads to the strategy of explaining the greater in terms of itself, which is the third aspect of denaturalization. It consists in the circular strategy of *causa sui* accounts. Such denaturalization occurs not only with the idea of God, Nietzsche thinks, but whenever one takes what in fact emerged only at the end of a long process of development and projects it back to the beginning, seeing it as unfolding through time but in principle always already present and not brought into being by anything other than itself (TI, Reason, §4). All three aspects of the tendency to denaturalize stem from confusing ‘what comes first with what comes last’ (TI, Reason, §4): what comes first in the *order of value* is put first in the *order of causation*, when in fact what comes first in the order of value tends to come last in the order of causation.

In sum, Nietzsche takes there to be two ways of expressing respect which are typical of philosophers but detrimental to philosophy: one is to think that exalted things should not have *become* at all. The other is to think that *if* they have become, they should *not* have become out of lesser things.

<sup>4</sup> What Nietzsche himself thinks about how ‘low’ origins should affect our perception of value is the topic of Queloz and Cueni (2019).

## 5.2 Concepts Conditioned by History and Functionality

Acting as a corrective to the twin tendencies to dehistoricize and denaturalize, Nietzsche's genealogies reveal concepts we think of as *unconditioned* by history and functionality to be in fact thus conditioned: they have emerged and developed, and they have done so in response to certain needs and interests.

In presenting concepts as conditioned by history and functionality, Nietzsche took himself to do for concepts what Darwin had done for organisms. 'If there is something new in Nietzsche's use of genealogy', Maudemarie Clark writes, 'it is the suggestion that concepts are formed in the same way as other living things' (2015a, 31). There is even a fragment in the *Nachlass* in which Nietzsche explicitly models concepts on living things, comparing them in particular to cells.<sup>5</sup> Drawing on the knowledge of cytology he acquired through his reading of Wilhelm Roux's *Der Kampf der Theile im Organismus* (1881), Nietzsche comes to think of concepts as having a firm core and a more fluid body:

Concepts are living things, and hence they may grow at one time and shrink at another: many concepts have died a miserable death. They are comparable to cells, with a cell core encased in a body which is not solid...

(eKGWB, 1885, 40[51])

For living things, a useful trait's emergence will often be accidental (a random mutation); but its stability and spread through a population will often be non-accidental: it will endure and spread because it makes a useful difference.

Nietzsche accounts for the spread of concepts by the same logic: there is variation of cultural formations in the course of history, and the usefulness of a given formation explains its retention. Although Nietzsche repeatedly describes concepts as 'falsifying' reality because they originate in the obfuscation of differences—a 'concept', he writes, 'is an invention which nothing corresponds to *wholly* but many things *slightly*'—he also takes these abstractions from the individuality and inconstancy of the flux of becoming to be life-serving, because 'with this invented and rigid world of concepts and numbers, man gains a means

<sup>5</sup> Nietzsche left behind an extensive corpus of unpublished material at the time of his mental collapse in 1889. Against his wish to have these notes destroyed, his sister published a tendentious and heavily 'edited' selection of them under the title of *The Will to Power*, presenting them as Nietzsche's long-planned *magnum opus*. While Nietzsche had indeed worked on a book of that title, there is reason to think that he abandoned the project before his descent into madness—though see Huang (2019) for a nuanced discussion. Some of the ideas he retained found their way into the *Anti-Christ* (Young 2010, 534–49). The material in the notebooks therefore does not contain the unpublished *summa* of his thought; nor can it claim to be as authoritative as the material he chose to publish. But it would be an overreaction to deny that if used judiciously, this rich corpus of sometimes more cogent because less compressed and stylized notes can shed light on Nietzsche's published writings in a variety of ways. See Reginster (2006, 16–20) for a compelling defence of this view.

of seizing by signs, as it were, huge quantities of facts and inscribing them in his memory' (*eKGWB*, 1885, 34[131]). Depending on what our needs are and how the world is at any given time, some concepts will be more serviceable than others. Over time, the concepts that pay rent will persist and spread, while those that do not will go out of business: 'the *most useful* concepts have remained; however wrong their origin may have been' (*eKGWB*, 1885, 34[63]).

On the basis of this pragmatist picture of concepts, Nietzsche seeks genealogical explanations that explain how the greater could emerge out of the lesser and render both *causa sui* accounts and metaphysical or theological top-down explanations superfluous, thus nipping in the bud the temptation to denaturalize. As Bertrand Russell said of witchcraft: it was never refuted, but it ceased to be interesting.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Nietzsche does not refute explanations in terms of self-causation or in terms of metaphysical or theological revelation, but he undermines the explanatory need for them by offering more parsimonious counterproposals (*D*, §95).

Nietzsche's ambition to add as little explanatory material as possible—either on the objective side of what the world contains or on the subjective side of agents' capacities of foresight and comprehension—forms one of his enduring methodological tenets: the 'law of parsimony' (*eKGWB*, 1872, 23[30]). 'Method', he maintains in *Beyond Good and Evil*, 'must essentially be the economy of principles' (*BGE*, §13). He already meditates at length on the law of parsimony in his 1872 notebooks: 'the hypothesis which deploys the smallest number of presuppositions and means to explain the world takes precedence over all rivals' (*eKGWB*, 1872, 23[30]). Explanations in terms of 'simpler and better understood forces, especially of the mechanical sort' (*eKGWB*, 1872, 23[30]), should be given precedence over explanations in terms of more complex or less understood forces.

What shines through here is Nietzsche's naturalism: the genealogies of his Basel years answer to a nineteenth-century naturalist's concern that, without metaphysical postulates, some topics of discourse are hard to make sense of in naturalistic terms. Genealogy remedies this by offering a diachronic translation back into nature of what appeared to be beyond the naturalist's grasp. As Williams observed in his classic paper 'Nietzsche's Minimalist Moral Psychology' (2006c), Nietzsche's is an attractive brand of naturalism. Williams himself subscribes to it (1995d, 204), as will become evident in Chapter 7; but I believe it offers a good articulation of the naturalism animating pragmatic genealogies more generally. What is attractive about this brand of naturalism is that it avoids the difficulty that many articulations of naturalism have, of being either too restrictive or too accommodating. It manages to avoid this difficulty because it does not work from the '-ism' down, but rather from the concrete phenomenon up: instead of

<sup>6</sup> The line is attributed to Russell by Williams (2014b, 378).



starting from a sharp delimitation of *the realm of nature* into which respectable phenomena must be shown to fit, or from some litmus-test-like *doctrine* of naturalism that yields contradictions with other beliefs and thus marks them out as unpalatable for the naturalist, Nietzsche's naturalism involves taking up a particular *stance* towards phenomena—in Van Fraassen's (2002) sense of approaching phenomena in a way that is expressive of one's evaluative attitudes and epistemic preferences and strategies as well as of one's beliefs.

We can characterize Nietzsche's naturalistic stance—drawing on a variety of dispersed but suggestive remarks of Williams's (1995d, 2000, 2002, 2006c)—as consisting notably of two epistemic-cum-evaluative attitudes, which we can label *minimalism* and *realism*:

*Minimalism:*

Explain X as far as possible in terms used anyway elsewhere;

*Realism:*

Appeal first to terms that an experienced, scientifically informed, perceptive, truthful, and unoptimistic interpreter would use.

Nietzsche's minimalism does not carry with it the demand that the material in terms of which explanations are given be the same in every case, as it would be if we tried to explain everything in terms of physics. Rather, what one takes as given in one's genealogical explanation will *change from one case to the next*: moral psychology is explained in terms of non-moral psychology, conscious processes in terms of non-conscious processes, psychology in terms of physiology. Williams later called this the *creeping barrage* conception of naturalism, in reference to the WWI battle tactic whereby the barrage of artillery fire would creep along with the advancing infantry, veiling it behind a thick curtain of smoke and staying just ahead of it in order to avoid a potentially lethal time-lag between the covering fire and the infantry attack (2000, 150; 2002, 23). On the creeping barrage conception of naturalism, the class of *explanantia* moves along with the class of *explananda*, so that one class of things is explained in terms of the next lower class rather than in terms of a fixed base-level class such as 'entities recognized by fundamental physics'; moreover, what acts as *explanans* in one genealogy can act as *explanandum* in another.

By itself, however, minimalism does not offer enough guidance to steer clear of vacuity and reductionism. If we seek to explain an aspect of human behaviour in terms we use anyway for the rest of human behaviour, what terms will be available will in turn depend on one's interpretation of human behaviour, and that interpretation might be, in Nietzsche's marvellous phrase, an expression of 'noble childishness' (*BGE*, P)—or it might be scientifically reductive, mystical, ascetic, or Panglossian. This is why even the roughest characterization of a naturalistic

stance requires a second attitude. We need 'some guiding sense of what materials we should use in giving our economical explanations' if we are to decide whether minimalism is meant to be 'blandly accommodating, or fiercely reductive, or something in between' (Williams 2006c, 306–7). It will be blandly accommodating if it permits the understanding of phenomena such as morality in terms that they themselves invite but which apply only to themselves: among morality's self-conceptions, for instance, is the idea that humans are naturally able to intuit the structure of moral reality. This provides an economical explanation of morality, but it renders puzzling its relation to the rest of nature. If this is what minimalism means, it excludes too little. If, however, we require the terms in which the explanation is given to apply equally to every other domain of nature, minimalism becomes fiercely reductive: we are led towards describing everything in the terms of physics. If this is what minimalism means, it excludes too much.

Hence the second epistemic-cum-evaluative attitude, which, following Williams (2006c, 302), I have called *realism*: the idea that in explaining a particular aspect of human behaviour, one should appeal first to what an experienced, scientifically informed, perceptive, truthful, and unoptimistic interpreter might make of human behaviour. This is of course not a formula. It 'invites one into a perspective, and to some extent a tradition' (2006c, 302) marked by such authors as Thucydides, Diderot, and Stendhal. This is the streak in Nietzsche's writings that attracts the application of Ricoeur's phrase, 'the hermeneutics of suspicion'. It is a component of the naturalistic stance that is motivated not so much by a desire for parsimony as by the sense that there is reason for suspicion—'that stories human beings tell themselves about the ethical tend to be optimistic, self-serving, superstitious, vengeful, or otherwise not what they seem to be' (Williams 1995d, 204). To renounce the metaphysicians' faith in the opposition of values is to recognize that the higher and the lower intermesh, and that the latter will help us understand the former, even if it unflatteringly undermines our picture of ourselves as purely selfless or radically unlike other animals.

In making sense of concepts that seem to transcend quotidian practical concerns by revealing those concepts to have developed in answer to such concerns, Nietzsche's genealogical method thus expresses a naturalistic stance. The concepts of a community are explainable in terms of its needs, and *differences* in concepts are explainable in terms of differences in needs:

Wherever we encounter a morality, we find an evaluation and ranking of human drives and actions. These evaluations and rankings are always the expression of the needs of a community and herd. . . . Since the conditions for preserving one community have been very different from those of another community, there have been very different moralities; and in view of essential changes in herds and communities, states and societies that are yet to come, one can prophesy that there will yet be very divergent moralities. (GS, §116)

To put it cursorily: Nietzsche seeks to naturalize seemingly unconditioned concepts by presenting them as functional entities conditioned by our needs, and these needs in turn as conditioned by historical circumstances. We can see how this would have led Nietzsche to something like the pragmatic genealogical method as a way of reverse-engineering the practical origins of our concepts in our needs.

### 5.3 Nietzsche's Vindictory English Genealogies

The clearest examples of pragmatic genealogies in Nietzsche's work are his early genealogical explanations of justice and truthfulness from the 1870s. While the latter genealogy is scattered over many passages, the former is succinctly encased in a section of *Human, All Too Human*, so let us begin with the genealogy of justice.

#### 5.3.1 Nietzsche's Early Genealogy of Justice

In a chapter entitled 'Of the History of the Moral Sensations', we find what both the declared theme of the chapter and the section heading suggest is a genealogy of justice:

*Origin of justice.*—Justice (fairness [*Billigkeit*]) originates between parties of approximately *equal power*, as Thucydides correctly grasped (in the terrible colloquy between the Athenian and Melian ambassadors): where there is no clearly recognizable superiority of force and a contest would result in mutual injury producing no decisive outcome the idea arises of coming to an understanding and negotiating over one another's demands: the characteristic of *exchange* is the original characteristic of justice [*Der Charakter des Tauschs ist der anfängliche Charakter der Gerechtigkeit*]. Each satisfies the other, inasmuch as each acquires what he values more than the other does. One gives to the other what he wants to have, to be henceforth his own, and in return receives what one oneself desires. Justice is thus requital and exchange under the presupposition of an approximately equal power position: revenge therefore belongs originally within the domain of justice, it is an exchange. Gratitude likewise.—Justice goes back naturally to the viewpoint of reasonable self-preservation, thus to the egoism of the reflection: 'to what end should I injure myself uselessly and perhaps even then not achieve my goal?'—so much for the *origin* of justice. Since, in accordance with their intellectual habit, humans have *forgotten* the original purpose of so-called just and fair actions, and especially because children have for millennia been trained to admire and imitate such actions, it has gradually

come to appear that a just action is an unegoistic one: but it is on this appearance that the high value accorded it depends; and this high value is, moreover, continually increasing, as all valuations do: for something highly valued is striven for, imitated, multiplied through sacrifice, and grows as the worth of the toil and zeal expended by each individual is added to the worth of the valued thing.—How little moral would the world appear without forgetfulness! A poet could say that God has placed forgetfulness as a doorkeeper on the threshold of the temple of human dignity. (HA, §92)

As Nietzsche's dashes indicate, this section is divided into four parts:

(1) *The Emergence and Original Function of Justice*: The first step in Nietzsche's approach is so obvious as to be easily missed, but it already does some of the work—it is to *ask* after the origin of justice, and thereby to historicize a notion that, most evidently in the natural law tradition, presents itself as ahistorical. Against this tradition, Nietzsche maintains that 'there is no such thing as eternal justice' (HA, §53). Justice has origins, and Nietzsche's aim is to explain these origins so 'that it can be perfectly understood without the postulation of *meta-physical interference*' (HA, §10). Justice is, as the book's programmatic title has it, *human, all too human*. 'It is', as he later puts it, we 'who really and continually *make* something that is not yet there' (GS, §301). Accordingly, Nietzsche's investigation into the origin of justice centres on human agents and the practical imperatives that drove them to develop the concept of justice.

The concept of justice, Nietzsche tells us, has its origins in the concurrence of the following conditions:

- (C1) *Equilibrium of Power*: two parties *A* and *B* under circumstances *C* are so well matched that outright pugnacity would result in a drawn-out feud and mutual harm, leaving the victor so badly mauled as to render the spoils of victory useless.
- (C2) *Conflict of Interests*: two parties *A* and *B* under circumstances *C* have interests such that neither party can freely pursue its interests without frustrating those of the other.

When these two conditions are met, the most reasonable resolution of the situation is a *settlement* through exchange. This requires the identification of the specific exchange in which 'each satisfies the other, inasmuch as each acquires what he values more than the other does'. Nietzsche's suggestion is that the concept of justice is rooted in this need to negotiate a settlement between equally powerful parties: justice is originally trade-like, taking the form of an exchange that is satisfactory to both parties. On this account, the original function of justice is to resolve stand-offs between parties of equal power in a manner advantageous

to both. Lack of satisfaction might then generate a demand for *restorative justice* towards the injured party and *retributive justice* towards the injuring party. Hence Nietzsche's suggestion that 'revenge therefore belongs originally within the domain of justice, it is an exchange', and 'gratitude likewise': gratitude arises when one is given *more* than would be just, the desire for revenge when one is given *less*. This explains why Nietzsche goes on to write that justice is not only 'exchange' but also 'requital'.

If (C2) is not met because *A* and *B* have non-conflicting interests, there can be no question of identifying an exchange that is acceptable to both parties, since they can satisfy their interests without it. Similarly, if (C1) is not met, the stronger party will take what it wants and the weaker will have to put up with it. This is the force of Nietzsche's reference to Thucydides: Thucydides describes how Athens sought to conquer the island of Melos (2013, V 84–116). The Athenians sent emissaries to the rulers of Melos and offered them an ultimatum: surrender and pay tribute to Athens, or be destroyed. The Athenians refused to argue over the justice of the situation, because 'in the human sphere judgements about justice are relevant only between those with an equal power to enforce it ... the possibilities are defined by what the strong do and the weak accept' (2013, 5.89). Justice cannot have originated in interactions between parties of unequal power, because, as Richard Crawley rendered the same passage in his 1874 translation, 'the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must' (1998, V 89).

In the second volume of *HA*, Nietzsche goes on to sketch a reason to think that (C1) will usually be met. He calls it the *principle of equilibrium*: fear of dangerous neighbours will systematically drive individuals to form a community and to 'bring its power of defence and attack up to precisely the point at which the power possessed by its dangerous neighbour stands and then to give him to understand that the scales are now evenly balanced'; the community, on this picture, 'is originally the organization of the weak for the production of an *equilibrium* with powers that threaten it with danger', and this equilibrium 'is the basis of justice' (*WS*, §22).

This Thucydidean insight presumably also underlies Nietzsche's remark in the *Genealogy* that equilibrium is the presupposition of all contracts (*GM*, I, §4). Justice originates 'as a settlement between approximately equal powers' (*GM*, I, §4), as a means of preserving equilibrium instead of engaging in a costly fight. But *when* did it emerge? Nietzsche's only historical reference is to a case where issues of justice failed to arise. Clearly, Nietzsche is not primarily interested in the specifics of the historical situation in which justice first arose. He is concerned to identify the practical needs at the root of justice, and to this end, he operates with an imaginary, generic situation that functions like the 'state-of-nature' fiction in Hume's genealogy of justice.

(2) *The Original Motive to Justice*: What makes it reasonable for both parties to negotiate is the need for self-preservation. As Nietzsche implies by speaking of

'reasonable' self-preservation (*einsichtige Selbsterhaltung*), both parties must be reasonable enough to recognize that an exchange is their best bet. Suicidal agents would presumably forfeit the opportunity to resolve conflicts of interests through exchange, and so would non-suicidal agents too unreasonable to assess the situation correctly. Tracing justice to self-preservation makes the account non-circular: the motive from which the two parties in the genealogy originally settle for what come to be regarded as 'just' terms of exchange is not that they value justice, but that they desire their own self-preservation. This does not mean that Nietzsche equates this original motive with the motive that *now* motivates just acts, as he makes clear in a revealing passage he dictated to Heinrich Köselitz:

General happiness or general love of one's neighbour are *results*, which *may* (or may not!) be attainable through the continual growth of morality. Not to let go of any human achievements and to hold on to the current heights of humanity, this may be a *consequence* of general morality (a side-effect); but what drives people to moral acts, *drives* them now, is not those results, and much less these consequences; neither is it what originally generated recognition of moral predicates. The origin of morality cannot lie in the domain of the moral. One must therefore distinguish: *first*, the results of morality, *second*, the consequences of morality, *third*, the motives of moral acts, *fourth*, the motives of the genesis of moral concepts. (eKGWB, 1880, 3[122])

Nietzsche's insistence that the origin of morality cannot lie in the domain of the moral echoes Hume's non-circularity requirement. Moreover, by presenting justice as emerging out of a drive to self-preservation he takes to be effective in the rest of the animal kingdom as well, Nietzsche heeds the demands of parsimony in a way that Hume would have approved of: 'The beginnings of justice', Nietzsche writes, 'are *animal*: a consequence of that drive which teaches us to seek food and elude enemies' (D, §26).

(3) *Emergence of Further Motives and Loss of Connection to Self-Preservation*: The third part of HA §92 describes how justice comes to be sustained by further motives as children are taught to admire and imitate just acts while the original connection to self-preservation is forgotten. Nietzsche describes this process more fully in the second volume of HA:

The same actions that within primitive society were first performed with a view to common utility have later been performed by other generations from other motives: out of fear or reverence of those who demanded and recommended them, or out of habit, because one had seen them done all around one from childhood on, or out of benevolence, because their performance generally produced joy and approving faces, or out of vanity, because they were commended.

Such actions, whose basic motive, that of utility, has been forgotten are then called moral actions. (WS, 40)

Over generations, just acts come to be performed out of motives that have nothing to do with self-preservation, and people forget the original connection to self-preservation. This removes a limitation on the scope of justice, since the motive of self-preservation makes the exercise of justice conditional on its having beneficial consequences. Once freed of this limitation, justice may be sought even in encounters between parties of unequal power. Socialized into seeking and admiring just exchanges and forgetting their practical origins, people come to value just exchanges independently of their value for self-preservation.

The resemblance of Nietzsche's genealogy of justice to 'English'-style genealogies that Nietzsche distances himself from in the *Genealogy* is striking. 'English' genealogies, he remarks there, start from a hypothesis about the original function of a certain way of valuing, before suggesting that the valuation solidifies through habit and its function is forgotten, so that the valuation is unjustifiably extended beyond the boundaries of its original functionality (GM, I, §2).

(4) *The Importance of Forgetfulness*: Nietzsche leaves us with the gnomic claim that the world would be a lot less moral without forgetfulness, that 'doorkeeper on the threshold of the temple of human dignity'. On the reading of this passage encouraged by the Foucauldian expectation that genealogies will be disabliging, Nietzsche means that forgetfulness about the practical origins of non-egoistic or moral behaviour—such as being just even when it does not serve self-preservation—is *essential* to our exhibiting such non-egoistic behaviour: justice is unmasked as being nothing but a means to an egoistic end, and if we exhibit it even when it does not align with self-interest, it is only because we are forgetful. Were we not so forgetful, we would be more consistently egoistic, and the world would see a lot less non-egoistic or moral behaviour, i.e. less of the behaviour regarded as expressive of 'human dignity'. On this reading, Nietzsche's genealogy subversively and reductively identifies the product with its practical origins: all justice, even now, is self-preservation at best and an unwarranted product of collective amnesia at worst.

But there is also a different reading of the genealogy on which it is not reductive. Nietzsche's conclusion that the world would be a lot less moral without forgetfulness could mean that the emancipation from practical origins achieved by forgetfulness was a *causally necessary* step in the development of non-egoistic behaviour, but without being an essential constituent of the product—much as scaffolding can be necessary to erecting a house, but where this had better not entail that the resulting construction will crumble to pieces once the scaffolding is removed. Nietzsche can then acknowledge that justice is now much more than it originally was—as the genealogy itself shows, we have acquired further motives for being just besides the one we originally had, and there is nothing in the story to

suggest that only prudential motives count as *bona fide* motives. Consequently, the genealogy need not be subversive if it allows that the new motives and valuations encouraging justice are genuine. These may precisely warrant being just even beyond the confines of self-preservation. Nietzsche's point is only that much of the non-egoistic behaviour commonly regarded as constitutive of human morality and dignity would never have arisen had we always concentrated on the motive at its practical origin. Forgetfulness about practical origins is a way of severing the intimate connection between justice and self-preservation, thereby allowing justice to develop into something potentially far removed from its practical origins.

There remains a question as to how seriously we should take the idea that the practical origins of our conceptual practices were literally *forgotten*—Nietzsche for one came to think that this was psychologically absurd (*GM*, I, §3). But the insight that the genealogist seeking to naturalize moral ideas by tracing them to practical needs must account for the fact that these ideas emancipated themselves from narrowly individualistic and prudential considerations remains a valuable one, which will occupy us further in later chapters.

### 5.3.2 Nietzsche's Early Genealogy of Truthfulness

Another early genealogy of Nietzsche's which fits the pragmatic genealogical model is his genealogy of truthfulness. Sketches towards such a genealogy appear as early as 1872 and reappear throughout later notebook entries, but particularly notable is the 1873 essay 'Über Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne' (translated, in the English edition I use here, as 'On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense').<sup>7</sup> This essay has received much attention from post-modernists for its discussion of the metaphorical nature of language and thought and the doubt it casts on our ability to achieve truth as correspondence with the world as it is in itself. But these Neo-Kantian doubts will not be my concern here, except to note that they help explain why Nietzsche is led to inquire into the origins of truthfulness. It is precisely the realization that the notion of truth as correspondence with the world as it is in itself is beset with difficulties that invites the question *why* we ever came to be so obsessed with truth. Nietzsche's genealogy is thus not so much a *how-possibly* explanation as a *why-ever* explanation. If we do not have access to the truth anyway, what is the point of truthfulness? Although the human intellect may now be thought of as a means of discovering truths, Nietzsche hypothesizes that in a bellicose 'state of nature' ('*in einem natürlichen Zustande der Dinge*'), it would primarily be used for deception (*TL*, §1). He thus rejects the Aristotelian

<sup>7</sup> For a detailed study of the genesis of 'On Truth and Lies', see Scheibenberg (2016).



premise that humans naturally seek the truth: ‘Man does not by nature exist in order to know’ (*eKGWB*, 1872, 19[178]). ‘Deception, flattering, lying, deluding, talking behind the back’, Nietzsche writes, is ‘so much the rule and the law among humans that there is almost nothing which is less comprehensible than how an honest and pure drive to truth could have arisen among them’ (*TL*, §1). What, then, is ‘the value of this will’ (*TL*, §1) to truth?

Nietzsche’s early genealogy of truthfulness answer this question by showing that truthfulness has practical origins in the exigencies of social life.<sup>8</sup> What we call ‘truths’ may seem to fall short of corresponding to the ‘world as it is in itself’—at least when that phrase is taken in the elusive metaphysical sense given to it by Neo-Kantians like Friedrich Lange, who so impressed Nietzsche during his studies (Blue 2016, 237); when measured by that standard, our ‘truths’ appear to be only ‘illusions’ and ‘lies’.<sup>9</sup> But the practical demands on coexisting human beings force them to draw some contrast between descriptions of the apparent world that are misleading and dangerous and those that are less so. It is from this pressure that our concern with truth stems. It has its origin not in an epistemological contrast between truth and falsity, but in a deontological contrast between truth and lies.

Nietzsche uses a variety of related terms in speaking of truthfulness—‘truthfulness’, ‘the will to truth’, ‘the love of truth’, ‘the pathos of truth’, ‘honesty’, ‘the drive to truth’. What unifies them is that they express human concern with the truth, expressed most basically in one’s making an effort to see things as they are, undistorted by wishful thinking, lies, and deception.<sup>10</sup> Nietzsche sometimes uses these terms in connection with dispositions to *seek* the truth (*eKGWB*, 1872, 19 [175–7]), and sometimes in connection with dispositions to *tell* the truth (*eKGWB*, 1872, 19[207]). We can therefore distinguish between truthfulness as *truth-seeking* and truthfulness as *truth-telling*. Nietzsche’s genealogy of how the dispositions of truthfulness arose involves six steps:

(1) *Entry into Society and Language*: The first is the entry into society and language. Nietzsche tells us that man, ‘from boredom and necessity’, wishes to ‘exist socially and with the herd; therefore, he needs to make peace and strives accordingly to banish from his world at least the most flagrant *bellum omni contra omnes*’ (*TL*, §1). This peace treaty

<sup>8</sup> One of the few interpreters to note this aspect of ‘On Truth and Lies’ is Alexander Nehamas, who writes that the essay presents the origin of truthfulness as ‘profoundly practical’—it ‘locates the origin of the drive for truth and knowledge in our need for social organization’ (2012, 32).

<sup>9</sup> Later, Nietzsche became more critical towards the claim that we do not have access to the world as it really is (Clark 1990; *TI*, True World). He came to see that the idea that the True World is systematically being falsified by our constitution-laden descriptions of it incoherently presupposes a comparison with an unintelligible standard: ‘The antithesis of the apparent world and the true world is reduced to the antithesis “world” and “nothing”’ (*eKGWB*, 1888, 14[184]).

<sup>10</sup> See Nietzsche (*GS*, P, §4; *BGE*, §§9, 230).

brings in its wake something which appears to be the first step toward acquiring that puzzling truth drive: that which from now on shall count as 'truth' is established. A uniformly valid and binding designation is invented for things, and this legislation of language likewise establishes the first laws of truth. For the contrast between truth and lie arises here for the first time. The liar is a person who uses the valid designations, the words, in order to make something which is unreal appear to be real. (TL, §1)

(2) *Emergence of a Prototypical Form of Truth-Seeking*: The second step is the emergence of the prototypical form of the 'will not to let oneself be deceived' (GS, §344), i.e. the disposition to seek out the truth and get one's beliefs right. Nietzsche argues that the will not to let oneself be deceived, which now grounds the scientific pursuit of truth, originally emerged out of a much narrower concern with the *consequences* of deception. Truth-seeking originally arises for instrumental reasons, as a means of satisfying human beings' need to avoid 'not deception itself, but rather the unpleasant, adverse consequences of certain kinds of deception'; it is 'in a similarly restricted sense that human beings now want nothing but truth: they desire the pleasant, life-preserving consequences of truth; they are indifferent to pure knowledge if it has no consequences' (TL, §1). Prudence and mistrust are the motives that originally drive humans to truthfulness as truth-seeking.

As Nietzsche's notebooks make clear, this includes mistrust towards oneself. An inaccurate grasp of one's needs or fears can be as harmful as deception by others. 'In dealing with what lies outside, danger and caution demand that one should be on one's guard against deception: as a psychological preconditioning for this, also in dealing with what lies within'. 'Mistrust', he writes, is 'the source of truthfulness' (eKGWB, 1885, 40[43]). Considerations of utility thus drive the emergence of truthfulness insofar as they drive the cultivation of a prudential disposition to seek out and acquire truths.

(3) *Emergence of a Prototypical Form of Truth-Telling*: The third step is the emergence of the prototype of what Nietzsche calls the 'will *not to deceive*' (GS, §344), i.e. the disposition honestly to tell what one takes to be the truth. Here the individualistic approach pursued so far runs into an obstacle: from a purely instrumental point of view, truth-telling must appear mostly unattractive, since its value largely consists in its value to others. Hence, the reasons one might give in answer to the question 'But why not deceive?' must lie in 'a completely different area' from those one might give when asked 'But why not let oneself be deceived?' (GS, §344).

Already in 1872, Nietzsche's solution to the problem of truth-telling's emergence is to switch from the *individual* to the *social* point of view. Though the individual has little reason to cultivate truth-telling, there is a *collective need* to do so within society as a whole. This aspect of truthfulness 'makes its appearance as a

social need' (*eKGWB*, 1872, 19[175]); 'necessity produces truthfulness as a society's means of existence' (*eKGWB*, 1872, 19[177]). Truth-telling is necessary to society's existence because social cohesion and cooperation would break down in the face of a general fear of being deceived. In one of his earliest notes on the origin of truthfulness, Nietzsche writes: 'One anticipates the unpleasant consequences of reciprocal lying. From this there arises the *duty of truth*' (*eKGWB*, 1872, 19[97]). As he puts it in *Truth and Lies*, there is 'a duty to be truthful which society imposes in order to exist' (*TL*, §1). What one has a duty to do, in particular, is to conform to linguistic convention in order to represent things as one takes them to be. If someone 'misuses fixed conventions by means of arbitrary substitutions or even reversals of names', and 'does this in a selfish and moreover harmful manner, society will cease to trust him and will thereby exclude him' (*TL*, §1). The threat of ostracism in turn gives the individual a prudential reason to tell the truth.<sup>11</sup>

In a later note, Nietzsche spells out the imperative that society addresses to the individual thus:

You shall be knowable, express your inner nature by clear and constant signs—otherwise you are dangerous: and if you are evil, your ability to dissimulate is the worst thing for the herd. We despise the secret and unrecognizable.—Consequently you must consider yourself knowable, you may not be concealed from yourself, you may not believe that you change. (*eKGWB*, 1883, 24[19])

This last sentence opens up a vista on two further, and connected, thoughts. One is that "I do not want to deceive myself" is included as a special case under the generalization "I do not want to deceive" (*GS*, §344), because a self-deceived informant is as unhelpful as a lying one. The other is that 'the demand for truthfulness presupposes the knowability and stability of the person' (*eKGWB*, 1883, 24[19]). How so? Nietzsche's answer seems to be that truth-telling can only have practical value insofar as finding out what individuals *really* believe or desire possesses *predictive value*, and this is only the case if these beliefs and desires display a certain degree of stability. Part of the reason why others want to know what I believe and desire is that they want to rely on that information in predicting how I will behave, and they can only do that insofar as my beliefs and desires exhibit some stability. This is an application of Nietzsche's point that rendering the individual fit for coexistence in society involves '*making*' the individual 'to a certain degree necessary, uniform, like among like, regular, and accordingly predictable' (*GM*, II, §2). Moreover, the sincere expression of one's beliefs and desires *must* exhibit a minimal amount of stability over time if it is to *count* as a

<sup>11</sup> Pettit (2018, ch. 2) gives a notably similar story about how truth-telling emerges out of the fear of ostracism.

sincere expression at all. The cultivation of truthfulness as truth-telling requires the cultivation, *to a certain degree*—Nietzsche is clear that full-blown essentialism is not called for—of a belief in the relative constancy of human beings: ‘it is the object of education to create in the herd member a *certain degree of belief* in the essence of man: it is *only at this point that this belief is generated*, so that “truthfulness” can then be demanded’ (eKGWB, 1883, 24[19]). Since Nietzsche holds that it is with the help of the *Sittlichkeit der Sitte* that ‘man was made truly calculable’, this suggests that truth-telling already formed part of the *Sittlichkeit der Sitte*, and thus of the ‘true work of man on himself for the longest part of the duration of the human race, his entire *prehistoric* work’ (GM, II, §2).

But if it is practical demands—first at the level of the individual, and then at the level of society—that explain the emergence of truthfulness, these practical demands also impose limits on what forms of truthfulness are practically warranted: limits concerning *whom* one needs to be truthful towards and *how much* information one needs to convey. For example, it is not clear that one should be truthful towards people outside one’s community: ‘Within a herd, within any community, that is to say *inter pares*, the overestimation of truthfulness makes good sense’, namely as a ‘mutual obligation between peers!’ (eKGWB, 1885, 40 [43]). He spells this out later: ‘One says what one thinks, one is “truthful”, only under certain conditions: namely, that one is understood (*inter pares*), and understood charitably (once again *inter pares*). One conceals oneself in presence of the unfamiliar’ (eKGWB, 1886, 7[6]). The social imperative to be truthful is originally restricted to encounters among community members (as Don Corleone puts it in *The Godfather*, never let anyone outside the family know what you are thinking). Even then, there is still a question about how far one must disclose one’s thoughts to satisfy the requirements of truthfulness. Clearly, Nietzsche did not think that truthfulness implies complete disclosure: ‘the demand that one should *denude oneself* with every word one says is a piece of naiveté’ (eKGWB, 1886, 7[6]).

Originally, then, it stands with truthfulness much as it stands with deceit: it has limited application, and what value it has is the practical value it derives from its consequences. Truthfulness is useful from the point of view of the individual as a means of controlling the world, of avoiding deception, of communicating effectively, and of avoiding exclusion from society; and it is useful from the point of view of society as a means of securing social cohesion, cooperation, and stability. In each case, a calculus of utility explains, sustains, and justifies truthfulness.

Yet our attitude towards truth is not conditional on its possessing instrumental value for us. We are, as Nietzsche puts it, *unconditionally* truthful. How did such an unconditional drive to truth emerge?

Where might science get the unconditional belief or conviction on which it rests, that truth is more important than anything else, than every other conviction? Precisely this conviction could never have originated if truth *and* untruth had

constantly made it clear that they were both useful, as they are. So, the faith in science, which after all undeniably exists, cannot owe its origin to such a calculus of utility; rather, it must have originated *in spite of* the fact that the disutility and dangerousness of the 'will to truth' or 'truth at any price' is proved to it constantly. (GS, §344)

Nietzsche stresses the disutility of unconditional truthfulness, and one might think he overdoes it a little. Truthfulness that is unconstrained by considerations of utility—and thus unconditional in the weak sense of not being directly subservient to further aims—has its uses. It is, for instance, one argument for pure as opposed to applied research that the scientific enterprise proves more useful in the long run if it is not always guided by the potential for useful application.

But the attitude that takes truth to be 'more important than anything else' and strives for truth 'at any price' (GS, §344) is unconditional in a further and stronger sense: it considers truth to be not merely an end in itself, but an end to be realized *under any conditions*. We can thus distinguish three forms of truthfulness:

- (i) *Conditional truthfulness*: truth is valued only instrumentally, as a means to an end.
- (ii) *Unconditional truthfulness as a pro tanto reason*: truth is valued in itself as providing a *pro tanto* reason for action.
- (iii) *Unconditional truthfulness as an overriding reason*: truth is valued in itself as providing an overriding reason for action—a reason that, even all things considered, trumps every other reason.

Unconditional truthfulness as an overriding reason is what Nietzsche gives voice to when he writes: '*Nothing is more necessary than truth; and in relation to it, everything else has only secondary value*' (GS, §344). Such an attitude, he thinks, cannot be vindicated by considerations of utility, because 'there is no pre-established harmony between the furthering of truth and the well-being of humanity' (HA, §517). Nietzsche was fond of quoting a line of Byron's on this point: 'The tree of knowledge is not that of life' (HA, §109). How, then, could such an unconditional and overriding form of truthfulness have arisen?

(4) *Forgetting the Original Function of Truthfulness*: The fourth step in Nietzsche's genealogy is that truthfulness' original function is forgotten. As we saw, forgetfulness about practical origins is a tendency that Nietzsche also invokes in his account of the origins of justice, and he seems to regard it as a general human tendency. People are truthful 'in accordance with centuries-old habits' (TL, §1), and forget *why* it was originally cultivated. This loss of the conscious connection to individual and social needs clears the ground for truthfulness to emancipate itself from its practical origins.

(5) *Moralization of Truthfulness*: The fifth step is the development of truthfulness from an instrumental into an *independently motivating* reason for action. One is truthful not because doing so has beneficial consequences, but just because that is the kind of action it is. It is thanks to the fact that the prudential motives to truthfulness have moved out of sight with the forgetting of truthfulness' original function that the socially imposed duty to be truthful can generate what Nietzsche calls *moral* motives:

precisely because of this unconsciousness, precisely because of this forgetting, one arrives at the feeling of truth. From the feeling that one is obliged to designate one thing as 'red', another as 'cold', and a third as 'mute', there arises a moral impulse in regard to truth; from its opposite, the liar whom no one trusts and all exclude, human beings demonstrate to themselves just how honourable... truth is. (TL, §1)

The habit of truthfulness, heretofore understood only as a *prudentially motivated* disposition, is given a moral gloss and becomes a virtue: 'our habits become virtues', Nietzsche suggests, because we 'include inviolability within the concept' of the behavioural patterns we are in the habit of engaging in—'because we consider their inviolability to be more important than our own particular welfare' (eKGWB, 1872, 19[185]). This is the 'recoining of habit as virtue, of *Sitte* as *Sittlichkeit*', which Nietzsche dubs a 'fine old—age-old—piece of counterfeiting' (eKGWB, 1882, 3[1]). The Hegelian phrase *Sittlichkeit der Sitte*, an enduring element in Nietzsche's later thought, points to the normative force of habits and the weight of precedent, which comes into play whenever the fact that particular patterns of behaviour have been unbroken in the past itself becomes a reason not to break them: '*Sitte* represents the experiences of men of earlier times as to what they supposed useful and harmful—but *the feeling for the Sitte* (*Sittlichkeit*) applies, not to these experiences as such, but to the age, the sanctity, the indiscussability of the *Sitte*. And so this feeling hinders the acquisition of new experiences and the correction of *Sitten*' (D, §19).<sup>12</sup> Useful dispositions arise because they are useful; but they are held in place by ties that are less conditional than those of prudence: those of moral feeling. It is when habits become anchored in feelings of inviolability that with truthfulness we '*stand on moral ground*' (GS, §344).

(6) *Metaphorical Extension of Truthfulness' Domain of Application*: The sixth and final step in Nietzsche's genealogy is the *metaphorical extension* of truthfulness'

<sup>12</sup> *Sitte* and *Sittlichkeit* are often translated as 'custom' and 'morality', but this obscures the way in which Nietzsche takes the etymological connection between them as a guide to their more substantive connection: *Sitte* breeds *Sittlichkeit* which in turn stabilizes *Sitte*.

domain of application. It is the coupling of the moral notion of truthfulness with what Nietzsche considers to be a 'fundamental human drive'—the 'drive to form metaphors' (*TL*, §2). It is this synthesis that produces the unconditional and disinterested drive to truth or knowledge:

Under certain circumstances, necessity produces truthfulness as a society's means of existence. Through frequent practice, this drive is reinforced and is now, by means of metastasis, unjustifiably transferred. It becomes an inclination in itself. A quality [i.e. truthfulness] develops out of a practice [developed] for specific cases.—Now we have the drive to knowledge. This generalization takes place by means of the intervening *concept*. This quality begins with a *false* judgment:—to be true [i.e. truthful] means to be true [i.e. truthful] *always*. From this arises the inclination to live without lies: elimination of all illusions. . . . Two qualities, each required for a different purpose, have produced the inclination to truth—*truthfulness*—and *metaphor*. Thus the intellectual drive is produced by an aesthetically generalized moral phenomenon.

(eKGWB, 1872, 19[177–8])

Having been brought into existence by individual fear of deception, augmented by a social imperative not to deceive others and transformed by forgetfulness and the force of habit into a moral notion, the concept of truthfulness acquires a significance that is independent of individual or social exigencies. This in turn leads to its being applied to circumstances beyond those that drove its emergence. Having made its 'appearance as a social need', 'by means of a metastasis, it is then applied to everything, where it is not required' (eKGWB, 1872, 19[175]). Nietzsche's talk of 'metastasis' and 'metaphor' indicates that a *transfer* has taken place from the sphere of application in which truthfulness originally had its home and was instrumentally justified to spheres of application where it is no longer instrumentally justified (hence the transfer's description as 'unjustifiable'). It is an *aesthetic* generalization because 'between two absolutely different spheres . . . there is no causality, no correctness, no expression, but at most an *aesthetic* way of relating' (*TL*, §1)—that is, the generalization is not *rationally intelligible*, but is driven only by associative or analogical thinking.

Among the contingent extensions of truthfulness, Nietzsche suggests, was the transfer of truthfulness from the *social* to the *natural* sphere. It came to be expected not only that other people would be truthful towards oneself, but also that nature would follow suit: one would be granted access not only to the real opinions of other people, but also to the world as it really is—when 'man sets up truthfulness as a law for himself, he also believes in the truthfulness of nature towards him' (eKGWB, 1872, 19[207]). He 'transfers his inclination to truth to the world and believes that the world must in turn be true towards him' (eKGWB, 1872, 19[177]). This rather blankly psychological assertion finally bridges the gap

to the question we started out from—of why, as the Nietzsche of the early 1870s still believed, humans self-importantly imagine themselves to be discovering the world as it really is when they have access only to illusions. We have come full circle.

With this reconstruction of Nietzsche's genealogy of truthfulness in place, we are in a position to draw out its resemblance to 'English'-style genealogy, which is even more pronounced than that of his genealogy of justice. Following just the pattern he outlines in *GM*, I, §2, Nietzsche's genealogy of truthfulness starts out from a hypothesis about the original function of truthfulness, and then suggests that while it solidifies through habit, its function is forgotten, so that it is erroneously extended beyond its original domain of application. The puzzling truth drive is thus 'an extension or a solidification of a way of thinking and acting which was necessary in certain cases' (*eKGWB*, 1872, 19[178]).

This licenses the conclusion that at least two of Nietzsche's own genealogies were in the 'English' style, explaining the emergence of practices in terms of their original functionality and invoking forgetfulness as the mechanism by which they could subsequently outgrow a merely functional understanding and develop a life of their own.

## 5.4 Hypertrophy: Taking a Good Thing Too Far

How are Nietzsche's early genealogies supposed to bear on the value of their object? Contrary to Nietzsche's reputation as a genealogical debunker, these genealogies clearly possess vindicatory aspects. Much like Hume's genealogies, they *vindicate* justice and truthfulness against the suspicion that they might be metaphysical *ignes fatui*, explaining how they could naturally have arisen and displaying their practical value in satisfying individual and social needs. In this respect, the genealogies are representative of Nietzsche's treatment of virtues in general: 'All virtues', he remarks already in 1872, 'arise from pressing needs' (*eKGWB*, 1872, 19[175]). He shares Hume's methodological assumption—further encouraged by the Darwinian revolution—that what we deem virtuous is non-coincidentally related to what helps us to live, and a pragmatic and naturalistic genealogical explanation that exploits this connection will in the first instance prove vindicatory. Fifteen years later, Nietzsche still conceives of virtues in practical terms as contributing to the effective operation of society: 'I attempt an *economic* justification of virtue.—The task is to make man as useful as possible and to approximate him, as far as possible, to an infallible machine: to this end he must be equipped with the virtues of the machine'; and because the states in which he is useful are not those he would be drawn to out of self-interest, 'he must learn to experience the states in which he works in a mechanically useful way as the supremely valuable states'—they must be 'enveloped in a higher charm' (*eKGWB*,



1887, 10[11]).<sup>13</sup> As a phrase in the *Nachlass* has it, there is a 'point' to 'society's myopic perspective with regard to usefulness' (*eKGWB*, 1888, 12[1]). In its functionalist derivation of non-functionalist ways of thinking, these and similar passages (*eKGWB*, 1887, 10[8, 10, 57]) prefigure the idea that we later find fleshed out in Williams's genealogy: that intrinsic values—charms higher than the allure of the instrumentally valuable—have their uses. It can be more useful in the long run to cultivate a mindset that focuses myopically on the immediate value of doing things for their own sake rather than on their long-term usefulness. This initially vindictory account of virtues as 'economically justified' does not prevent Nietzsche from going on to criticize how these virtues stifle the creativity of exceptional individuals. On the contrary, it provides a foundation for that critique by explaining why the stifling forces are there in the first place and why they really would be stifling.

Nietzsche thus differs from Hume in his sensitivity to the fact that while pragmatic genealogies are in the first instance vindictory, this does not entail that they are vindictory all things considered, i.e. once one takes into account the historical and social elaboration of conceptual practices and the differences in concept-users' needs and capacities. Nietzsche's genealogy of truthfulness exemplifies this: although it shows that truthfulness originally responds to practical exigencies, even this early genealogy already identifies pragmatically unmotivated elaborations of truthfulness. As both the value and the scope of truthfulness are inflated to the point where it is demanded always and 'at any price' (*GS*, P, §344; *eKGWB*, 1872, 19[97]), it becomes a 'hypertrophic virtue' (*eKGWB*, 1873, 30[2]): a good thing has been taken too far, because its sphere of application or its normative weight goes beyond what makes practical sense for us. Truthfulness should not be pursued under *any* circumstances or at *any* price. The hypertrophic form of truthfulness expressed in the motto '*fiat veritas pereat vita*' (*UM*, II, §4), let truth prevail though life perish, has clearly turned an originally life-promoting idea into a life-denying one.<sup>14</sup>

The problematic historical elaborations of the prototype of truthfulness come to the fore in Nietzsche's later work, particularly in the *Genealogy*. While his early genealogy explained the emergence of truthfulness as an overriding reason by appeal to a metaphorical drive and our natural forgetfulness, this explanation in terms of natural propensities is abandoned in the *Genealogy* in favour of an explanation in terms of asceticism's nefarious influence. In what can be read as a revision of the later stages of his 1870s genealogy of truthfulness, Nietzsche writes that if a moralized distinction between truthfulness and lying is available in a socially unequal society, as the earlier parts of his genealogy suggest it would be, that distinction will be harnessed by the upper caste to articulate their superiority.

<sup>13</sup> See also Nietzsche (*TI*, Skirmishes, §29).

<sup>14</sup> See Nietzsche (*GM*, III, §7; *eKGWB*, 1873, 29[8]).

They will describe themselves as ‘the truthful ones’, as ‘distinct from the *lying* common man’ (GM, I, §5).<sup>15</sup> It is this development—rather than some propensity to overgeneralization—that entrains the transformation of truthfulness into something potentially life-denying. For while the ‘priestly’ types in the upper caste flourish best by cultivating and disseminating ascetic values of self-restraint and self-abnegation, what is life-promoting for priestly types is not necessarily life-promoting for other types;<sup>16</sup> and as Nietzsche argues in the Third Treatise of the *Genealogy*, the influence of priestly asceticism has rendered truthfulness dangerously hypertrophic, so that he must take his fellow scholars to task for practising a form of self-restraint and self-abnegation in the name of truth and objectivity that rivals the most life-denying asceticism.<sup>17</sup>

This is a condemnation of a specific elaboration of truthfulness rather than a wholesale rejection of it. Nothing in the *Genealogy* touches on Nietzsche’s earlier insights into the practical value of more modest forms of truthfulness, suggesting that his later critique coexists with—indeed builds on—his earlier pragmatic vindication. What the earlier genealogy does not yield are reasons for regarding truthfulness as an overriding reason for action that licenses the attitude of *fiat veritas, pereat vita*, and it is this hypertrophic form of truthfulness that Nietzsche warns against in the *Genealogy*.

Reading Nietzsche’s later critique of truthfulness as rooted in an earlier pragmatic vindication of it helps explain why truthfulness survives the revaluation which, on Nietzsche’s view, ushers in Slave morality. The ‘fear-inspiring consistency’ with which the ‘aristocratic value equation (good = noble = powerful = beautiful = happy = beloved of God)’ was inverted to suggest that the good and blessed in God are the ‘miserable’, ‘poor’, ‘powerless’, ‘suffering’, and ‘ugly’ (GM, I, §7) did not go so far as to invert the rank order between truthfulness and lying.<sup>18</sup> Nietzsche does not account for this exemption, but our reconstruction of his earlier thoughts on the matter makes it clear that truthfulness is held in place by *practical exigencies*. Which particular form truthfulness takes is a matter of historical elaboration, but Nietzsche’s genealogy has shown that *some* form of truthfulness is necessary to the satisfaction of both individual and social needs. The prototypical form of truthfulness he has outlined is part of the minimal ethical consciousness that renders social coexistence possible in the first place.

This also helps explain why some form of truthfulness survives a second revaluation of values, namely that envisaged by Nietzsche himself. Nietzsche

<sup>15</sup> Shapin (1994) lends historical support to this idea.

<sup>16</sup> Nietzsche, following Lecky (1869, 156–7) and other authors of his time, distinguishes different character types in his theorizing. See Leiter (1998; 2015, 6, 54, 72, 128, 252) for an influential discussion.

<sup>17</sup> See Gemes (1992, 2006). Daston and Galison (1992, 83, 121–2) describe the asceticism involved in nineteenth-century science.

<sup>18</sup> For a historical study of the rise of Christian morality that offers a lot of grist to Nietzsche’s mill, see Holland (2019).

praises, and remains committed to, a stringent sort of truthfulness—though not as stringent and certainly not as unquestioning as the attitude of *fiat veritas, pereat vita*.<sup>19</sup> Nietzsche's early thought tells us little about why he later valued truthfulness *to the extent* that he did—truthfulness, he later notes, requires 'greatness of soul' (AC, §50), and he takes how much truth a spirit can endure to be 'the real measure of value' (EH, P, §3). But it does tell us something about why the later Nietzsche continued to hold on to truthfulness in *some* form. David Owen (2007) has offered one explanation along these lines, suggesting that Nietzsche was implicitly concerned with reflective stability: 'unless truthfulness is an intrinsic value for Nietzsche, his project of re-evaluation will not possess the right kind of reflective stability' (2007, 70). It is true that Nietzsche would be sawing off the branch that supports his genealogical inquiry if he were to renounce truthfulness altogether. Yet in light of the above, we can add a second rationale for Nietzsche's enduring commitment to some form of truthfulness: he was well aware that the need for truthfulness forms a corollary of the demand for *social* as much as for reflective stability. His earlier derivation of non-hypertrophic truthfulness from basic individual and social needs had made it clear to him that truthfulness was something we could not do without.

### 5.5 Thinking Historically

We can now see that Nietzsche's rebuke of the 'English genealogists' contains a non-negligible dose of self-criticism: abandoning his earlier explanation in terms of natural propensities towards metaphorical extensions and forgetfulness, the mature Nietzsche recognizes the explanatory importance of *local* needs. Needs can be local both in the sense of being specific to certain character types and in the sense of being specific to certain cultures and epochs, because they are needs that were 'implanted' (eKGWB, 1886, 5[71]) in us by socio-historical developments. In describing the elaboration of truthfulness in his own socio-historical situation, for example, Nietzsche invokes the historical impact of Christianity and the local needs of priestly types. But does this recognition of the importance of history amount to an *amendment* or an *abandonment* of his earlier method of pragmatic genealogy?

Some have felt that recognizing the historicity of our ideas precludes a functionalist treatment of them. Alexander Prescott-Couch, for example, has argued that acknowledging the role of history in shaping our ideas forecloses the possibility of explaining them in terms of their function, because that history suggests that there no longer is such a thing as *the* function served by an idea:

<sup>19</sup> See Owen (2003, 2007), Reginster (2013), Jenkins (2016).

When trying to assess the value of the Catholic Church, it would be misguided to proceed by first attempting to determine its function and then evaluating that function. This procedure would be misguided because there is no one such function.... One crucial purpose of genealogical investigation into morality's origins is to demonstrate that approaches to assessing morality by first inquiring into its functional role in social life are similarly misguided.

(Prescott-Couch 2015b, 107)<sup>20</sup>

It is certainly true that Nietzsche is sensitive to the fact that needs and functions are in principle subject to change. Conceptual practices get repurposed. We cannot simply assume that we can infer from original to current function or *vice versa* (GM, II, §12).<sup>21</sup> This is why Nietzsche criticizes the English genealogists for ignoring vast stretches of history when they equate current with original function. It is also true that Nietzsche contrasts 'English hypothesizing *into the blue*' with genealogizing that looks to the 'real *history of morality*', the 'grey', that which 'can be documented, which can really be ascertained, which has really existed' (GM, P, §7).

But Nietzsche's problem with English genealogists is not that they ask the wrong question or that they formulate hypotheses about functions at all. His fire is directed at hypothesizing that completely ignores and remains unconstrained by history:

I had no doubt that [Dr. Rée] would be pushed by the very nature of his questions to a more correct method of attaining answers.... My wish... was to turn so sharp and disinterested an eye in a better direction, the direction of the real *history of morality* and to warn him while there was still time against such English hypothesizing *into the blue*. It is of course obvious which colour must be a hundred times more important to a genealogist of morality than blue: namely *grey*, which is to say, that which can be documented, which can really be ascertained, which has really existed, in short, the very long, difficult-to-decipher hieroglyphic writing of the human moral past! *This* was unknown to Dr. Rée; but he had read Darwin:—and thus in his hypothesizing we have, in a manner that is at least entertaining, the Darwinian beast politely joining hands with the most modern, unassuming moral milquetoast who 'no longer bites'....

(GM, P, §7)

A reading of the later Nietzsche as rejecting functional hypothesizing altogether misses three noteworthy points in this passage. First, Nietzsche sees the need for a

<sup>20</sup> See also Prescott-Couch (2014, 2015a).

<sup>21</sup> Nietzsche also highlights further distinctions in this passage, such as that between the causes of the first emergence of something and the reasons for its retention.

turn towards history as arising out of Rée's *own* question, which is a question about practical origins. Second, the emphases suggest that Nietzsche takes issue not with hypothesizing *per se*, but with unconstrained hypothesizing *into the blue*; such free roaming of the imagination is to be constrained by looking *towards* real history—*informing* rather than replacing hypothesizing by real history. Third, the passage is generally comparative and corrective rather than contrastive: it is a matter of giving the same eye a *better* direction; Rée's method would be *more correct* if it displayed greater awareness of real history; the grey of documented facts should be *more important* to the genealogist than the blue of the merely hypothesized. This is neither a wholesale rejection of Rée's question and method nor of hypothesizing. It is the complaint that Rée ignores the history that lies between the Darwinian beast and the modern milquetoast—they are lumped together as fundamentally similar, while on Nietzsche's view they could not be more different, and there is a complex story to be told about how we got from one to the other. To take this story into account, however, is not to jettison Rée's functionalist hypothesizing wholesale, but rather to acknowledge that functional hypothesizing must be 'hardened and sharpened under the hammer-blow of historical knowledge' (HA, I, §37). What Nietzsche says and does in the *Genealogy* suggests that he advocates *historically informed functional hypothesizing*. In the terminology of Chapter 3, he advocates pragmatic genealogy tailored to socio-historical situations.

This is evidenced in the *Genealogy* by the fact that needs are increasingly localized in both epochs and character types. For example, Nietzsche distinguishes the needs of the strong from the needs of the weak (GM, I, §4), or the needs of the knightly-aristocrats from those of the priestly-nobles (GM, I, §6). The historical fact that a new 'manner of valuation branches off from the knightly-aristocratic' (GM, I, §7) is incorporated into the genealogical narrative and modelled as a reversal of values driven by *ressentiment* (GM, I, §§7–10). The contest between various instantiations of these two manners of valuations ('good and bad' and 'good and evil') is then—however roughly—situated in history: it pits the Roman ideal against the Judaeo-Christian ideal, the 'privilege of the few' against the 'privilege of the masses', the Renaissance against the Reformation, the French of the *Âge Classique* against the French of the *Revolution*, and Napoleon against Europe (GM, I, §16). Such vague references might make sense as markers or placeholders for the historical developments that his dynamic models are being tailored to accommodate—but they would be absurdly noncommittal if understood as attempts at documentary history.

Even when interpreted as dynamic models, however, these sketches towards a genealogy of morality can feel overly compressed and vague when compared to the more focused, piecemeal genealogies of values exemplified by his earlier treatments of justice and truthfulness. For his grand genealogical synthesis, Nietzsche employs what might be called the *carriage return method* of narration:

he separates in his genealogical narrative what goes together in reality, sequentially recounting developments that actually run in parallel. Each treatise focuses on the fusion, development and branching off of different strands which all come together in the ‘moral in a narrow sense’ (BGE, §32)—the socio-historically localized constellation of values associated, in particular, with Christianity. Nietzsche goes back and forth between these strands, pursuing one and then returning to pick up another, just as the carriage return goes back and forth on a typewriter. This method grows naturally out of an earlier insight that Nietzsche formulated in connection with his analysis of saintliness and asceticism: ‘almost everywhere, within the physical world as well as in the moral, the supposedly miraculous has successfully been traced back to the complex, to the multiply caused. Let us therefore venture first to isolate individual drives in the soul of the saint and ascetic and then conclude by thinking of them entwined together’ (HA, §136). The *Genealogy* proceeds along similar lines. In a postcard to Franz Overbeck, his colleague and housemate in Basel who specialized in the secular origins of Christianity,<sup>22</sup> Nietzsche explains that ‘it was necessary, for the sake of clarity, to isolate artificially the different roots of the complex structure that is called morality’ (eKGWB, BVN 1888, 971). The book indeed isolates such roots in the way in which the pathos of distance, the instincts of freedom, and the preservation and healing instincts express themselves in certain types under certain circumstances, and then sketches their elaboration and combination issuing in the constellation we actually find. The result has proven to be a powerful and enduringly fascinating book. But as far as exemplifying a genealogical *method* is concerned, Nietzsche’s ambition to genealogize the whole of morality in twenty days (the time he said elapsed between its conception and completion) and fewer than 50,000 words leaves us with a work which, ironically, is far more methodologically ambiguous than his earlier genealogies.<sup>23</sup> Despite—and indeed also because of—the methodological reflections at the beginning and midway through the book, Nietzsche’s later genealogical method can seem rather underdetermined by its application.

As a result, there is plenty of room for a reading on which Nietzsche is not abandoning pragmatic genealogy, but improving on it by its own lights, encouraging it to *look* to history without *giving way* to history. The *Genealogy* remains, after all, a far cry from the patiently documentary history that Foucault (1971) envisages. But it does mark an advance over Nietzsche’s earlier genealogies in its insistence that genealogists should *think historically*—an injunction that must appear pleonastic if genealogy is equated with history, but which is very much

<sup>22</sup> For a discussion of how Overbeck’s research on early Christianity relates to Nietzsche’s genealogical method, see Sommer (2003).

<sup>23</sup> See Sommer (2019, 3–9) for a detailed account of the genesis of the text, which does seem to have been sent off to the publisher less than two months after its conception.

to the point if addressed to pragmatic genealogists. To achieve what it sets out to achieve—to understand what our values *do* for us—functional hypothesizing should be informed and constrained by history.

On this reading, Nietzsche's call to heed the grey is an *internal* critique of pragmatic genealogy. This makes sense in particular if he is himself no stranger to English genealogy, and one of the findings of this chapter has indeed been that Nietzsche himself comes to the grey from the blue—he develops his historically informed genealogical method out of his own attempts at ahistorical functional hypothesis-mongering, and even a cursory reading of the *Genealogy* suggests that he does not abandon the imagined for the documented, but rather mixes the two in a greyish blue.

It is perhaps more easily accepted that a genealogy combines the vindictory and the subversive than that it combines the blue and the grey, the imagined and the documented. But drawing on imagined situations need not make a genealogy *purely* hypothetical in the way that justificatory fictions about nasty, brutish, and short lives in the state of nature perhaps are. Instead of classifying genealogies according to whether they involve imagined or documented elements, we can distinguish genealogies from each other and from more orthodox historiography in terms of the *questions* to which they form an answer. In Nietzsche's case, the question is: What is the value of a given way of valuing? As David Owen has emphasized (2007, 142–3), it is unsurprising that a genealogy seeking to answer that question will be tailored to demands of salience, perspicuity, and persuasiveness that are quite different from the demands on answers to more Hobbesian or Foucauldian questions. Such demands might be met by offering a model constructed out of a range of resources—not only ascertained facts, but also hypotheses about how the genealogized item relates to human needs and psychology. And perhaps these relations are best represented using simplifications and distortions. In combining the documented and the imagined in this way, genealogy is no different from art, whose creative liberties can render it more truthful, or science, whose idealizing and distorting assumptions can have the same effect. Like art and science, genealogy reminds us that there is such a thing as truthful imagination.

The conclusion we reach is that Nietzsche can be brought into the fold of pragmatic genealogy, and that consequently, pragmatic genealogy can claim a genuinely Nietzschean pedigree. His distinctive contributions to the method of pragmatic genealogy are that he highlights the possibility of the originally functional growing into something hypertrophic and dysfunctional, and that he emphasizes the need for pragmatic genealogists to think historically. Functions and needs change, not only from one epoch to the next, but also from one type of individual to the other. In emphasizing this, Nietzsche helps us see why paradigm-based explanation and similarly ahistorical approaches must be insufficient to understand the accumulated multi-purposiveness and perspectival

nature of the value of our conceptual practices. To master these complexities, we need historically informed pragmatic genealogy.

It follows that some later attempts at 'English' genealogy turn out to have a more genuinely Nietzschean pedigree than previously supposed. One such attempt, to which we now turn, is Edward Craig's *Knowledge and the State of Nature* (1990).<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> In *Knowledge and the State of Nature*, Craig mentions neither Nietzsche nor genealogy; but see Craig (2007).