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24 Nietzsche on Consciousness, Unity, and the Self

Introduction¹

The importance of unconscious drives is a central theme of much of Nietzsche's work. A corollary of this theme is his disparagement of the traditional high estimation of the importance of consciousness. On these issues he is clearly a follower of Schopenhauer and a precursor of Freud. These facts naturally lead to the question of how Nietzsche conceived of the relation between conscious and unconscious mental activity. In his description of the origins of 'bad conscience' in *On the Genealogy of Morality* he discussed one scenario in which the clash of consciousness and instinctual demands produced devastating results:

... the poor things were reduced to relying on thinking, inference, calculation ... that is, to relying on their "consciousness", that most impoverished and error-prone organ! ... and meanwhile, the old instincts had not suddenly ceased to make their demands! ... all those instincts of the wild, free, roving man were turned backwards, *against man himself*.... man impatiently ripped himself apart, persecuted himself, gnawed at himself.... as the result of a forcible breach with his animal past ... (GM II 16)²

This violent inner conflict memorably culminates in the fundamental self-contradiction of "the worst and most insidious illness ... man's sickness of ... *himself*" (GM II 16). This pathological state is brought about by an undue reliance on conscious thought in tandem with a repression of certain strong instincts (those of the "wild, free, roving man"). We might naturally speculate that, given the horrifying result of this rupture, Nietzsche's aim would be to overcome such inner conflict by bringing about some form of amity or reunification between conscious thought and the instincts.

¹ Thanks are due to Gudrun von Tevenar, Sebastian Gardner, Tom Stern, Paul Katsafanas, Andrew Huddleston and Mark Little for helpful comments on earlier drafts, and to Charlie Huene-mann for help with footnote 22.

² Note, some of the quoted passages from translations cited in the bibliography have been modified where the translations were deemed to be inadequate to the original German. Occasionally we have preferred literal to more stylistically elegant translations where the latter might be deemed contentious.

There is certainly evidence that the unity of the self was of great concern to Nietzsche. His hero Goethe “took as much as possible ... within himself”, yet “disciplined himself to a whole” (TI Skirmishes 49); whereas lamentably “[m]ost men present pieces and fragments of man: one has to add them up for a complete man to appear” (KSA 12: 520). Against such fragmentation Zarathustra declares that “this is all my composing and striving, that I compose into one and bring together what is fragment and riddle and cruel coincidence” (Z II Redemption).

What might this sought-after wholeness or completeness consist in? Paul Katsafanas (2011) has argued that Nietzschean unity refers to a relation of harmony between drives and conscious thought. This construal of unity might seem well-placed to offer a solution to the problem of self-division and self-persecution described in GM II 16. Katsafanas proffers this reading of unity against the prevalent interpretation, which he calls the ‘predominance model’. According to the predominance model “unity obtains when one drive predominates and imposes order on the other drives” (Katsafanas 2011: 87).³ This latter model does not seem to offer any special role to consciousness in the achievement of a unified self and may possibly even render it superfluous. On the ‘predominance’ reading, where Nietzsche talks in GM about people “relying on their ‘consciousness’”, we need not conclude that the instincts are in total abeyance here. Rather, we would suggest that in certain enervated states, particular instincts (for instance, the instincts to sociability or caution) utilise consciousness as an effective (and in biological terms, relatively recent) tool against the more primitive, aggressive animal instincts. In what follows, we aim to give our reasons for preferring this reading. In order to do this, we will first need to clarify what Nietzsche in fact means by the ‘self’ and how he characterises the role of consciousness. We will then consider his notion of the *unity* of the self and examine this notion in the context of the Nietzschean ideals of self-creation and of becoming what one is.

Part 1 below looks at how we might conceive of the Nietzschean self. It argues for a pronounced distinction between the self and the I or ego. In the

³ In the works of those authors who emphasise Nietzsche’s drive psychology, for instance Katsafanas (2011), Richardson (1996) and Gemes (2009b), there is little register of any difference between Nietzsche’s use of the terms *Instinkt* (instinct) and *Trieb* (drive). Arguably this is a reasonable position since it is not clear that Nietzsche himself uses these terms to mark a significant difference. To our modern ears the notion of instinct may have a stronger suggestion of something hard-wired and non-malleable than does the notion of a drive, for example, but more work would be needed to substantiate any claim that Nietzsche’s respective usage of the two terms picks out any such particular resonances.

extreme, Nietzsche is sceptical about the I's or ego's very existence, though we will argue that his considered view involves only scepticism about its importance for self, action and agency. It is argued that for Nietzsche the self and the core of one's agency are to be located primarily in the activity of the unconscious drives, and that Nietzsche has a largely deflationary account of the role of consciousness.

Part 2 considers what the Nietzschean self looks like through examining the two alternative models of unity referred to above: unity according to the predominance model—achieved when a 'master drive' organises or sublimates the other drives into hierarchical relations to itself—or unity as a harmony between the drives and conscious reflection. We will conclude that the predominance model best captures the Nietzschean position. On this reading Nietzsche's overriding concern is to re-establish the drives in what he took to be their rightful pre-eminent place. We go on to elaborate some implications of this view of the importance of the drives over conscious thought for mental activity such as the process of deciding between competing motives. We will argue that for Nietzsche it is always the drives rather than consciousness that are the root causal determinants of our actions and the formation of the self, and that where consciousness does have a role, it is essentially as a tool of the drives.

1 Ego, I, consciousness and self

1.1 Paradoxes of self-creation

The first question we must consider is the array of different views that Nietzsche seemingly expresses about selfhood. Sebastian Gardner (2009) has puzzled over the tension, if not outright contradiction, between Nietzsche's theoretical claims that there is no I or ego and his practical injunctions which seem to be aimed at that very I: injunctions commending self-creation, becoming what one is, and self-overcoming. If there is no I, no ego, then to whom is Nietzsche addressing these injunctions, and who is capable of fulfilling or even responding to them?

It is worth noting that in the case of self-creation it is unnecessary to go so far as to contrast the above theoretical and practical commitments to raise the spectre of paradox. The very injunction to engage in self-creation suggests a kind of paradox. If one has a self, then it is clear who is being addressed by the injunction, but its command then seems empty—for the self already exists and therefore does not need to be created. One gets a suggestion of this type of problem from Nietzsche's enigmatic phrase "become what you are". If one is already X there

seems to be no task of becoming X. Analogously, if there is a self, there is no task of becoming a self. On the other hand, if there is no self, then, again, who is being enjoined to undertake this act of self-creation? Who is being enjoined to become what one is? How would it be possible to obey these commands? This puzzle is also apparent when Nietzsche proclaims approvingly that Goethe “disciplined himself to a whole, he *created* himself ...” (TI Skirmishes 49). Here Nietzsche simultaneously invokes the ideals of wholeness *and* self-creation—suggesting that to create oneself might mean precisely to bring about this state of wholeness. Yet if one is not already whole, who is there to create a self that is whole? Prior to that creation one is presumably multiple or conflicted—and therefore not likely to be in a position to ‘discipline’ oneself, an activity which seems to require some pre-existing unity of purpose and function?

Perhaps a resolution to these paradoxes might be achieved by giving a weaker interpretation of the injunction to create a self. On such a reading, the injunction assumes that a somehow inadequate or defective self is already in play as the basis for further development, and exhorts the creation of a *better* (more cohesive) self. By the same token the injunction to become what you are would be understood as the injunction to activate some potentiality in oneself. The task would be to move from being a merely potential X, for instance a potential unified self, to becoming an actual X. Even if such a reading is provisionally accepted, the problem remains that there are various passages where Nietzsche seemingly denies the very existence of the I or ego, and also passages where Nietzsche incisively derides the supposed efficacy of consciousness. Such passages seem to leave little room for a project of conscious self-creation. This suggests that we must in all likelihood look elsewhere to understand how he conceives of the self and of self-creation.

1.2 Scepticism about the I versus scepticism about the self

Nietzsche famously debunks notions of the I. Thus he writes disparagingly of

... the metaphysics of language ... that believes in the I, in the I as being, in the I as substance ... (TI Reason 5)⁴

Such scepticism about the I is also expressed in other passages:

⁴ Note where Nietzsche uses the term *ich* in this passage and others quoted below Hollingdale typically translates it as ‘ego’. In the case of Freud there has been criticism of Strachey’s systematic translation of Freud’s term *Ich* as ‘ego’ (see Bettelheim 1982).

In Christianity ... nothing but imaginary causes ("God", "soul", I, "spirit", "free will"—or "unfree will") (A 15)

When I analyse the process that is expressed in the sentence, "I think," I find a whole series of daring assertions that would be difficult, perhaps impossible, to prove: for example, that it is I who thinks ... that thinking is an activity and operation on the part of a being who is thought of as a cause, that there is an "I" ... What gives me the right to speak of an "I", and even of an "I" as cause, and finally of an I as the cause of thought? (BGE 16)

... this multifarious thing [the will] that the common people call by one word alone. In any given case, we both command *and* obey ... we are in the habit of ignoring or overlooking this division by means of the synthetic concept I. (BGE 19)

The I is here characterised as a *synthetic* concept in opposition to the common tendency to posit a persisting 'monadic', unitary, I that autonomously generates our conscious thoughts. In place of this conventional picture Nietzsche posits a bundle of diverse forces in complex power relations of command and obedience. Our linguistic and conceptual habits gloss over the complexity and multiplicity of the forces at work. The I of conscious reflection, far from being self-evident, is for Nietzsche an artificial construct or oversimplification, one that elides the complex relations between internal forces and mislocates true causal efficacy.

Nietzsche's scepticism towards the I is of a piece with his warnings on the limitations of conscious introspection and self-knowledge:

We are none of us that which we appear to be in accordance with the states for which alone we have consciousness and words ... those cruder outbursts of which alone we are aware make us misunderstand ourselves ... we misread ourselves in this apparently most intelligible of handwriting on the nature of our self [*selbst*]. (D 115)

However far a man may go in self-knowledge, nothing however can be more incomplete than his image of the totality of drives which constitute his being [*sein Wesen*]. He can scarcely name even the cruder ones: their number and strength, their ebb and flood, their play and counterplay among one another, and above all the laws of their nutriment remain wholly unknown to him. (D 119)

For Nietzsche our self-conscious experience (what we appear to ourselves to be) is but a small part of what we actually are, and to interpret ourselves only on the basis of that self-conscious component leads to misunderstanding of the (actual) self. In D 119, he locates the lacuna in our self-knowledge: it is the *drives* that we do not have introspective access to, but "which constitute [our] being".⁵

⁵ One can of course ask (as Tom Stern notably does in a unpublished manuscript "Against Nietzsche's Theory of Drives") how Nietzsche can at one and the same time forcefully assert both our lack of knowledge about the interplay of the drives *and* notions of the self which depend on precisely that interplay. Given that following this statement in D 119 he immediately goes on to

Passages explicitly evincing scepticism towards the ego, that is passages which explicitly employ sceptical use of the term *ego* rather than *Ich*, are less common. The most notable case is the following from his unpublished notes:

The “subject” is only a fiction, there is no ego, from which one talks when one blames egoism. (KSA 12: 398)

Hereafter we will take Nietzsche’s use of the terms ‘ego’ and ‘I’ to be equivalent as we can find no textual basis for a separation. This I, or ego, is for Nietzsche the locus of consciousness.

By contrast to his I (and ego) scepticism, it is hard to find passages where Nietzsche expresses outright scepticism towards the notion of the *self* (*selbst*). There is an important reason why it would be strange for Nietzsche to reject the notion of self in an equivalent way: he is a philosopher who repeatedly calls for self-creation.⁶ It is noteworthy that he does not extol a project of creating the I or ego.⁷ What all this suggests is that rather than collapsing the notion of self on one hand and the notion of ego or I on the other, we should pay careful attention to the distinction.

From the foregoing we can expect Nietzsche’s view of the self to downplay the I that is the locus of conscious awareness and to emphasise the role of the (largely unknown) unconscious drives. In the following passage Nietzsche’s

make some very specific claims about the activity of the drives, one wonders whether perhaps he thought that his characterisation of our general ignorance did not apply to himself as psychologist *par excellence*.

6 One might also be tempted here to reference his use of the notion of self-overcoming (*Selbstüberwindung*). However, as Nietzsche uses this term not simply in the context of application to individuals, but also to morality (EH, Why I am a Fate 3) and to Europe (GM III 27), it is not clear that self-overcoming literally involves the presence of an actual self. Here the sense relayed by ‘selbst’ in ‘Selbstüberwindung’ is that of the reflexive ‘itself’, as in morality overcomes itself, where the ‘itself’ presumes no actual self. Similarly, a bridge can be self-identical or collapse on itself without it having an actual self.

7 Of course, and as emphasised by Janaway (2007), Nietzsche, in his polemics against the morality of compassion championed by both Schopenhauer and Christianity, typically commends a robust egoism. The crucial point here is that this lauded egoism does not extol or even concern the conscious I or ego that is the topic of discussion above. Rather egoism in the relevant sense is self-cultivation, as in paying proper respect to one’s own needs, one’s own drives. The opposition between compassion and egoism is for Nietzsche not the conventional opposition between a conscious care for my conscious ego (including my conscious desires) and a conscious care for the egos of others (including their conscious desires). Rather, it is an opposition between a regimen of suppression of one’s drives in order to meet the needs of others and a robust cultivation of one’s own drives. Nietzsche contrasts this healthy egoism with the pathological self-obliteration of the morality of compassion and selflessness.

mouthpiece Zarathustra specifically extols the importance of the self over the importance of the I:

Behind your thoughts and feelings, my brother, stand a mighty commander, an unknown sage [*Weiser*]—his name is Self [*Selbst*]. In your body he dwells, he is your body ... Your Self laughs at your I [*dein Ich*] and its proud leapings. “What are these leapings and soarings of thought to me?” it says to itself. “A detour to my purpose. I am the leading-string of the I [*des Ich*’s] and the prompter of its conceptions.” (Z I Despisers of the Body)

In this passage Zarathustra describes the self as standing *behind* (*hinter*) our conscious thoughts and feelings—indeed here, the self “is your body”—it is not to be equated with the I of conscious experience. What is more, Nietzsche characteristically rebukes the misplaced pride of conscious reflection; this pride is ridiculed by the self. Conscious thoughts and feelings are demoted in status, as of instrumental use to the unknown self (a ‘detour’ to its purpose) and largely determined by the self, which is the ‘leading-string’ and ‘mighty commander’.

This passage from *Zarathustra* suggests a picture where Nietzsche identifies the I, as does the modern tradition from Descartes, with conscious thoughts and feelings. However, unlike that tradition, Nietzsche rejects the identification of the *self* with the I and consciousness. It is the unknown self that is the real engine of our actions and even of our conscious thoughts. In the Cartesian tradition, the self, ego and I are identical and are fully open to conscious introspection. Nietzsche not only directly challenges the assumptions of Cartesianism, but carves out a new model of the self.⁸

1.3 The downgrading of consciousness

As we saw above, for Nietzsche we cannot deduce the nature of the self by examining only the conscious states which we are able to describe—indeed we are inevitably lured into error concerning our own nature by the *apparent intelligibility* of these states (D 115). He claims that consciousness, as a ‘surface’, has a dual character. It reveals but, more characteristically, it also *conceals*:

... do we not suspect that all of an action’s intentionality, everything that can be seen or known about it, that can be “conscious” about it, is still part of its surface and skin—which, like all skin, reveals something, but *hides* even more? (BGE 32)

⁸ Nietzsche himself realises that others before Schopenhauer, specifically Leibniz, had already claimed that “what we call consciousness constitutes only one state of our physical and spiritual world (and possibly a pathological one) and *not by any means the whole of it*” (GS 357).

At his most strident, he famously calls into question the very value of consciousness and self-consciousness:

The problem of consciousness (more correctly, of becoming self-conscious) confronts us only when we begin to comprehend how we could dispense with it ... the whole of life would be possible without, as it were, seeing itself in a mirror. Even now for that matter, the greatest part of life actually take place without this mirror effect; and this is true even of our thinking feeling and willing life; however offensive this many sound to older philosophers. For what purpose any consciousness at all when it is in the main superfluous? (GS 354; translation altered)

Here we see that Nietzsche, prefiguring Freud, allows that there is non-conscious thinking, feeling and willing. Moreover, he even claims that the majority of human mental activity is in fact unconscious.⁹ As he goes on to say in GS 354:

Man, like every living being, thinks continuously without knowing it; the thinking that rises to consciousness is only the smallest part of it – the most superficial and worst part of it.

So if (contra the Cartesian tradition) thinking, feeling and willing are not wholly the provenance of consciousness, what is it that characterises consciousness for Nietzsche? In D 115 he spoke of “the states for which alone we have consciousness and words”. This suggestive equation of consciousness with that which is available to be expressed in public language is given fuller expression in the key GS 354 passage:

⁹ Nietzsche’s conjecture that consciousness is largely ‘superfluous’ can lead to the view that he believes it is purely epiphenomenal. Such a view is developed in Leiter (2002) and defended in Riccardi (forthcoming); however the latter takes Nietzsche’s claims about the epiphenomenal nature of consciousness (*Bewusstsein*) to refer only to self-conscious mental states, that is, mental states whose objects are our own mental states. Katsafanas (2005) cogently argues against Leiter’s strong epiphenomenalist reading. The strong epiphenomenalist reading is hard to square with the drama of GM as sketched in the introduction to this paper – where over-reliance on consciousness leads to a desperately damaging alienation from, and blocking of, ‘wild’ or ‘animal’ instincts. Similarly, it is hard to square with related passages where Nietzsche writes negatively of the effects of consciousness, for instance: “in all productive men it is instinct that is the creative-affirmative force and consciousness acts critically and dissuasively” (BT 13). We would argue, then, that consciousness must have *some* causal efficacy for Nietzsche, despite the scepticism expressed in, for example, BGE 16 about I as cause, and in GS 354 towards the necessity of consciousness. Constâncio (2011) emphasises that Nietzsche repeatedly describes consciousness as a tool (*Werkzeug*); for instance D 109 emphasises that consciousness is a tool of the drives in their struggle for dominance over each other. As Constâncio observes, it is hard to reconcile the notion of a tool with the notion of having no causal powers.

I may now proceed to surmise that consciousness has developed only under the pressure of the need for communication ... Consciousness is really only a net of communication between human beings.¹⁰

Consciousness is necessitated by our need to be intelligible to one another as social beings; but in claiming that the content of our conscious thought is the “most superficial and worst part”, Nietzsche raises the provocative question of whether the development of consciousness is in fact largely detrimental to us. Part of the “problem of consciousness” lies in the fact that it is at a relatively early and unstable stage in its evolution, Nietzsche believes:

Consciousness—Consciousness is the latest development of the organic, and hence also its most unfinished and unrobust feature ... If the preserving alliance of the instincts were not so much more powerful ... humanity would have to perish with open eyes of its misjudging and its fantasising ... in short, of its consciousness ... Before a function is fully developed and mature, it constitutes a danger to the organism ... Thus, **consciousness is properly tyrannised**—and not least by one’s pride in it! One thinks it constitutes the *kernel* of man, what is abiding, eternal, ultimate, most original in him! ... One denies its growth and intermittences! **Sees it as “the unity of the organism”!** This ridiculous overestimation and misapprehension of consciousness has the very useful consequence that an all-too-rapid development of consciousness was *prevented* ... so far we have incorporated only our *errors* and ... all of our consciousness refers to errors! (GS 11; bold emphasis ours)

Nietzsche here explicitly argues that consciousness is anything but the enduring essence (‘kernel’) of the human being. Nor is it even the most powerful element in the human being; by far, that element is the “preserving alliance of the instincts”.

Nietzsche’s analysis is historically situated: he is talking about a particular stage in the evolution of consciousness, at which it is still fragile, unreliable and unfinished; *so far* we have only incorporated errors¹¹—but he does not say these are inevitable and permanent features of consciousness. In fact, he says that we have incorporated only errors *because* we have grossly overestimated conscious-

¹⁰ This might suggest that Nietzsche is committed to a specific account of the essence of consciousness; namely, a conscious state (for instance, a conscious thought) is a state that is expressed in language (perhaps in a language of thought, à la Fodor) or, alternatively, a conscious state is a state that is expressible in a public language. Katsafanas (2005) and Constâncio (2011) claim that for Nietzsche a conscious state is a conceptual state, and that unconscious states, for instance unconscious thoughts, are non-conceptual. We do not wish to attribute such fine-grained accounts as we feel the text is too thin to adequately support them. Nietzsche’s decided emphasis is on the significance rather than the constitution of consciousness.

¹¹ We do well here to recall passages such as BGE 4 where Nietzsche points out that errors, falsehoods and illusions are sometimes necessary and life-supporting.

ness to date. The intriguing question left unaddressed here, then, is that of what consciousness might be like when it is more ‘mature’, when it is fully developed (or, more immediately, when we accept a more accurate and modest estimation of it). Indeed he says that “Before a function is fully developed and mature ... it is a good thing for it to be properly tyrannised in the meantime”—which leaves some hope that when it is mature it will no longer need to be tyrannised. However, given Nietzsche’s frequent emphasis on the pernicious effects of consciousness, it seems unlikely on his view that in becoming fully developed consciousness would thereby shed all its detrimental features.

1.4 Drives and selves: Two possibilities

Whereas consciousness is largely ‘superfluous’ (GS 354), the drives (*Triebe*) seem to be the obvious contenders to be the real seat of the self: in D 119, the totality of a man’s drives “constitute his being”; in BGE 12 Nietzsche’s mission is to “kill off ... *the atomism of the soul* ... the belief that holds the soul to be something ... indivisible, a monad, an atom ...”, and promote instead the “soul as the social construct of drives and emotions”.

One possibility here is that one’s ‘self’ is simply to be identified with the totality of one’s drives, as the wording of D119 seems to suggest. We might call this the ‘egalitarian’ reading since it entails that each human’s collection of drives constitutes a self.¹² A second possibility is that the self is located in a *particular arrangement* of one’s drives. The second reading is suggested by Nietzsche’s talk of the soul as a social construct and his injunctions to self-creation. That is to say, behind Nietzsche’s injunctions may lie the convictions that most human beings are constituted by a haphazard, fragmented, or unproductive arrangement of drives; and that to self-create might be to bring about a particular, more desirable relation between those drives—a result which not everyone achieves. We might call this the ‘elitist’ reading: if the created self involves a certain configuration of drives, those human beings whose totality of drives does not constitute such an arrangement will fail to have genuine selves.

¹² In fact the text says that the totality of his drives constitutes his being (*Wesen*), not his self (*Selbst*). So one might read D 119 as simply saying that each human is constituted by their totality of drives. On this reading D 119 takes no stand on whether each human counts as a self. In fact it is the Zarathustra passage quoted above (Z I Despisers of the Body), which identifies the self with the body, that implicitly gives most credence to the egalitarian reading—though, as Andrew Hudleston has pointed out, the claim that your self is your body does not itself entail that each body constitutes a self.

In fact we know of no passage where Nietzsche explicitly says that there are humans who do not have *selves*, though Nietzsche's general disparagement of most humans as merely members of the herd and his talk of humans being mere fragments such that "one has to add them up for a complete man to appear" support the elitist reading. Further support comes from his occasional analogous claim that most humans do not constitute *persons*:

Nothing is rarer than a personal act [*Handlung*]. A state, a rank, a race, an environment, an accident—all these are expressed in a deed or doing [*einem Werke oder Thun*] rather than a person. b) One should not at all assume that most humans [*Menschen*] are "persons" [*Personen*]. Indeed, many are multiple people, and most are not people at all. Where the average qualities dominate in order that a type continues, it would be a waste or a luxury to ask for a person. They [average humans] are carriers, transmission tools. c) The person is a relatively isolated fact. (KSA 12: 491)¹³

The implication is that most actions are herd actions rather than expressive of individual identity: human beings are more or less passive vehicles for "average qualities". The genuine, unique, *creative* individual is Nietzsche's rare ideal.

The above claim from 1887 that most humans are not persons echoes an earlier claim from his notebooks:

Most humans show clearly enough that they do not regard themselves as individuals: their lives indicate this ... There are only three forms of existence in which a human remains an individual: as philosopher, saviour, and artist. But just let us consider how a scientific human bumbles his life: what has the teaching of Greek particles to do with the sense of life?—Thus we can also observe how innumerable humans merely live, as it were, as preparation for a genuine person [*eines wirklichen Menschen*]: for example, the philologist as preparation for the philosopher, who in his turn knows how to utilise his [the philologist's] ant-like work to pronounce some opinion upon the value of life. When such ant-like work

13 It is easy to focus in on the startling claim here that not even some, but *most*, humans do not qualify as persons at all. However Nietzsche makes another claim which might get overlooked in comparison: that "many are multiple people". If to fail to be a 'person' is to have a chaotic relation between drives, we might venture to characterise someone who is 'multiple people' as someone who has more than one drive of sufficient strength to 'recruit' other drives to sub-personal centres of power that are able to generate significant goals, but do not *win out* over the others to result in one overall, coherent, unifying goal. The alternative to this—where no person is present at all—would mean that no drives have emerged as relatively stable foci of power, and there is just a general inchoate struggle. If this interpretation is correct, it maintains a link between personhood (in the sense of unique individuality) and the type of organisation that prevails amongst the drives (and therefore dictates the manner of their expression).

is not carried out under any special direction the greater part of it is simply nonsense and superfluous. (KSA 8: 31–32)¹⁴

In this passage it is notable that Nietzsche equates individuality with what we might call three vocations or callings: philosopher, saviour and artist. This is a remarkably exclusive group capable of achieving authentic individuality—not even the scientist or philologist qualifies. Where the latter seem to fall short is in accepting a role that makes of them a mere means to an end, which Nietzsche links to the failure to be driven by an overall goal (a ‘special direction’) which relates to life’s *value*. This puts an extreme limitation on who can consider themselves to be a genuine individual. Note that here Nietzsche’s explicit criterion revolves, not around a particular type of internal arrangement per se, but around what one does with one’s life—one’s overarching goal or purpose. We will argue in sections 1.5 and 2.2 however that only certain internal arrangements of drives would make it possible for someone to fulfil such vocations on Nietzsche’s account.

Here we come to the heart of Nietzsche’s practical injunctions about the self:

The man who does not wish to belong to the mass needs only to cease taking himself easily; let him follow his conscience, which calls to him: “Be yourself! All you are now doing, thinking, desiring, is not you yourself.” (SE 1)

Nietzsche’s texts suggest the following picture: For many humans their doings are to be explained not by elements of their individuality but by their passive herd-like participation in some external group. Thus consider a fan participating in a crowd chant at a football match. Where some would want to say that the fan is committing the action of chanting, Nietzsche seems inclined to suggest that it is the crowd that is committing the act of chanting—the individual chanter is here just a “transmission tool” of the crowd. In a sense the individual chanter is not acting at all, as more conventional philosophers would say that when you choose to lift a book, though your hand is involved in the lifting, it is your action and not that of your hand. Arguably, the notion of agent is tied to a normative notion of causation, so that part of what is involved in describing someone or something as an agent behind a given action is giving them a special causal significance in the performance of the action.¹⁵

¹⁴ This high valuation of the philosopher, saviour and artist is not confined simply to Nietzsche’s unpublished works but also occurs in published texts, for instance SE 5.

¹⁵ Nietzsche, like Hume, is one of those philosophers who enigmatically both expresses a good deal of scepticism about causation, yet at the same time gives causal, indeed genealogical,

Nietzsche's injunctions to selfhood and self-creation are in some manner concerned with the ability to express one's own values, as opposed to those of the 'herd' or 'mass' – those who simply follow the majority, custom and tradition. The iconic GS 335 passage voices a call to this ideal:

We, however, want to *become who we are* – human beings who are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who create themselves! (GS 335)

Self-creation, becoming who we are – both formulations used, apparently interchangeably, here – involve rejecting the very concept of 'universal law' and creating personal ideals to live by. Such injunctions in themselves seem to tell us very little about the internal constitution that is necessary for self-creation. However we can link this concern with personal ideals to Nietzsche's condemnation of consciousness as being intrinsically superficial and general, precisely because of its function in facilitating communication. Consciousness arises out of our social nature, which Nietzsche distrusts as fostering in the weak majority an inauthentic, 'herd' mentality:

... In short, the development of language and the development of consciousness (*not* of reason but strictly of the way in which we become conscious of reason) go hand in hand ... only as a social animal did man learn to become conscious of himself – he is still doing it, and he is doing it more and more. [...] each of us, even with the best will in the world to *understand* ourselves as individually as possible, "to know ourselves", will always bring to consciousness precisely that in ourselves which is "non-individual", that which is "average" [...] At bottom, all our actions are incomparably and utterly personal, unique, and boundlessly individual, there is no doubt; but as soon as we translate them into consciousness, *they no longer seem to be...* [...] the world of which we can become conscious is merely a surface- and sign-world, a world turned into generalities and thereby debased to its lowest common denominator ... everything which enters consciousness thereby *becomes* shallow, thin, relatively stupid, general ... In the end, the growing consciousness is a danger; and he who lives among the most conscious Europeans even knows it is a sickness. (GS 354)

Nietzsche contends that the supposed self-knowledge that is available to consciousness actually fails to reveal who we really are specifically because the

stories of a wide range of human phenomena, including, for instance, how we come to our very understanding of causation. One way to reconcile this tension in both philosophers is to argue that their scepticism is towards wholly objectivist accounts of causation. In Hume's case that scepticism is expressed in his claim that the necessity of causation lies in a certain propensity of the mind. It may be argued that in Nietzsche's case one relevant claim concerns an essential normative dimension in judgements of causation. However this difficult issue is beyond the scope of this paper.

consequence of the partial and simplified picture provided by the conscious ‘surface-world’ is to *make that which is unique and individual appear common and general*. This line of thought also suggests that to engage successfully in self-creation or becoming what one is cannot be, at root, a conscious process.¹⁶

1.5 Consciousness’s proper role

Nietzsche wants the genuine individual to be *possible*. Indeed he even claims in GS 354 that at root our actions *already are* “boundlessly individual” – but consciousness makes it seem otherwise; it strips them of their uniqueness.¹⁷ It is striking in this passage that Nietzsche even denies that reason is the preserve of consciousness: we have only become conscious, in a particular way, *of* reason. This reflects the view presented by Zarathustra who divides a “lesser” conscious reason from a “greater” unconscious reason:

The body is a great reason, a manifold with one sense, a war and a peace, a herd and a herdsman. A tool of the body is your small reason too, my brother, which you call “spirit”, a small tool and toy of your great reason. “I” you say, and are proud of this word. But the greater thing – in which you do not want to believe – is your body and its great reason: it does not say I but it does I. (Z I Despisers of the Body).

Both GS 11 and GS 354 emphasise that relying on consciousness is inimical to the quest to understand what is personal and individual about ourselves: more

16 It might be objected that the tenor of GS 335 – its concern with self-knowledge and intellectual conscience, with “reflect[ing] more subtly”, its claim that “we must become *physicists* in order to be creators in this sense” (i.e. to be those who can create themselves and their own personal ideals) – instead points to the centrality of conscious reflection and knowledge in self-creation and becoming who you are. We would argue, however, that this reflection and knowledge need not be at a *conscious* level. As GS 333 has just asserted, “by far the greatest part of our mind’s activity proceeds unconscious”; GS 354 repeats the claim that “man ... is constantly thinking but does not know it”, and that self-knowledge is actually hampered by the process of becoming-conscious. One best develops a personal ideal *before* becoming consciously aware of it (as EH Clever 9 illustrates).

17 This might seem to point towards the egalitarian reading described in 1.4 above – selfhood simply resides in the totality of one’s (unconscious) drives – suggesting that the issue in GS 354 is not so much to do with the real nature of this totality but in the way that it appears and relates to consciousness. However, as we have said, the injunction to self-creation is a mysterious one if everyone already has a self simply in virtue of the existence of this totality; and as noted above Nietzsche says “there are only three forms of existence in which a man remains an individual” (KSA 8: 31–32). The uniqueness referred to in GS 354 is best understood as the uniqueness that separates each human from the other, but not the type of uniqueness that characterises a genuine self.

than that, growing consciousness is a danger and a sickness. We have become dangerously unbalanced, increasingly estranged from ourselves.¹⁸ This emphasis on the danger of growing consciousness actually points to an alternative to Katsafanas' formulation of the role of consciousness: *pace* Katsafanas, unity is not achieved through establishing a harmonious relation between consciousness and the drives, but rather, one in which consciousness is 'properly tyrannised' (GS 11)—so that its ability to obscure individual uniqueness is minimised. But what does 'properly tyrannised' mean here? Our suggestion is that consciousness is properly tyrannised when it is used by drives that are capable of using it to positive effect; in particular, the positive effect of integrating the other drives. Conversely consciousness is improperly tyrannised when it is used by some drives to effect the repression of other drives. It is in this pathological internalisation, the result of the improper tyrannisation of some drives by others, that Nietzsche sees consciousness as a tool for self-evisceration, hence as a danger and a sickness (as described in GM II 16—see also section 2.2 below).

This gives us a way of explaining what Nietzsche himself is trying to do in GM. Note there is a *prima facie* problem of reconciling Nietzsche's polemical ends (he subtitles GM "A Polemic") with views that downplay the significance of consciousness. Our understanding of GM is arguably a largely conscious understanding.¹⁹ But if consciousness is in itself basically ineffective and/or counter-productive how does Nietzsche hope that such understanding will have any salutary effect? One could argue that in writing GM Nietzsche cares little for such "downstream effects" and that he simply wanted to make available certain truths, truths about the historical development of morality²⁰—in which case the project would, ironically enough, be an example of the ascetic ideal in its manifestations as the will to truth (for its own sake) that Nietzsche seems bent on exposing in the third essay of GM. Alternatively, we could see GM as providing ammunition which can be used to lessen the dominance of certain drives, the drives that typically resonate with Christian morality, for instance drives towards acceptance and sociability. In the war of drives against each other, each drive attempts to grab what weapons it can, typically through its influence on the vast reservoir of our unconscious thinking—in another work Nietzsche graphically described how a "drive seized the event as its prey" (D 119). GM, then, is a weapon to be used to loosen the grips of certain drives. Nietzsche's

¹⁸ For more on this see Gemes 2006.

¹⁹ Katsafanas draws attention to this point in discussing how the genealogical method functions (2011: 107).

²⁰ However, see GM Preface 5 where he explicitly rejects this motive.

motive for wanting to loosen the grip of those drives, for instance those that have latched on to the ascetic ideal, is that, as GM itself argues, those drives have come to dominate at the price of a severe, indeed pathological, repression of other drives. Seen in this light, part of the point of GM would be to weaken the grip of those repressive drives so that other drives might come to the fore, drives which in ascendancy are more likely to ‘properly tyrannise’—that is to effect an integration, rather than suppression, of antithetical drives.²¹

Given that the role of consciousness for Nietzsche is generally harmful (for example, becoming a danger and a sickness when used as a tool of repression; promoting our ‘herd’ nature at the expense of our individuality), its role in unified selfhood by the same token seems to be a largely negative one (it is properly tyrannised). However, there are hints that its role need not be entirely detrimental:

Language and the prejudices upon which language is based are a manifold hindrance to us when we want to explain inner processes and drives ... and *yet it is they which weave the web of our character and our destiny ... Our opinion of ourself, however, which we have arrived at by this erroneous path, the so-called “I”, is thenceforth a fellow worker in the construction of our character and our destiny.* (D 115; italics added. Note the heading of the passage reads “The so-called ‘I’”.)

Our “character and destiny” are largely determined, then, by subterranean “inner processes and drives” which we cannot understand through our words and concepts. However, the “so-called ‘I’”—i.e. our misunderstanding of ourselves, brought about by the fact that we are only able to fathom ourselves on the basis of the unrepresentative, distorted and inadequate translation into conscious thought of the workings of the drives—then becomes a “*fellow worker in the construction of our character*”. This is a very suggestive passage, indicating as it does that our conscious sense of self, in spite of or perhaps in consequence of its erroneous and distorting nature, itself contributes to our ongoing self-development—interacting with the drives in some way to do so. This idea again recalls Nietzsche’s claims about the value of some errors and falsehoods. Nietzsche’s main point in the passage is that the I is not what we usually think it is; but the term ‘fellow worker’ suggests that the illusions and errors of the conscious I do not prevent it from playing some kind of potentially helpful role in shaping the nature of the individual.

There seems to be no doubt, nevertheless, that if we want to “create ourselves” or “become who we are”, to become genuine, unique persons, we

²¹ This interpretation of the function of GM is elaborated in Gemes (2006).

cannot look to our *conscious* sense of ourselves to provide the key to this. This suspicion is confirmed if we look at Nietzsche's famous description of 'how one becomes what one is', as this trajectory occurred in his own life:

... For assuming that the task, the vocation, the *destiny* of the task exceeds the average measure by a significant degree, there would be no greater danger than to catch sight of oneself *with* this task. That one becomes what one is presupposes that one does not have the remotest idea *what* one is. ... The entire surface of consciousness—consciousness is a surface—has to be kept clear of any of the great imperatives ... [there is] a danger that the instinct will “understand itself” too early. In the meantime the organising “idea” destined to rule grows and grows in the depths—it begins to command ... it prepares *individual* qualities and abilities which will one day prove themselves indispensable as a means to achieving the whole—it constructs the *ancillary* capacities one after the other before it gives any hint of the dominating task, of the “goal”, “objective”, “meaning”.... For the task of a *revaluation of values* more capacities perhaps were required than have dwelt together in one individual, above all antithetical capacities which however are not allowed to disturb or destroy one another. Order of rank among capacities; distance; the art of dividing without making inimical; mixing up nothing, “reconciling” nothing; a tremendous multiplicity ...—no trace of *struggle* can be discovered in my life....²² (EH *Clever* 9).

Consciousness again is a *surface*, but here its concealing nature is actually helpful insofar as the instinctual process must not rise to the surface too soon; the instinct's, the organising idea's, crucial work and commanding power must be well advanced long before it reaches conscious awareness. The “organising ‘idea’” here, then, is not meant in the ordinary sense of a conscious concept (hence in Nietzsche's text ‘idea’ is in quotation marks) but rather in the sense of the aim of the drive or instinct, or of an unconscious idea supplied by the rele-

²² This complex passage raises several interpretative challenges. Nietzsche's claim that there is “no trace of struggle” might seem probative in favour of the harmony interpretation of unity. But it is a highly implausible claim and arguably amounts to a rhetorical device or form of bravado on Nietzsche's part. More accurate is his private letter to Franz Overbeck in which he confesses “The daily struggle against my head trouble and the laughable complexity of my distresses demand so much attention that I am in danger of becoming *petty* in this regard” and talks of “the highflying drives that so rule me” (KSB 6: 49). See also KSB 6: 135, 138 where he refers to his daily struggles (“Jeder Tag ein Kampf”). In GS Preface 3 he tell us “[o]nly great pain, the long, slow pain that takes its time—on which we are burned, as it were, with green wood—compels us philosophers to descend into our ultimate depths”. In the *Ecce Homo* passage he says antithetical capacities do not “disturb” one another, but then neither are they to be “reconciled”—a point highlighted by Harcourt (2011: 278–279), who argues that the Nietzschean ideal of individuality centres on the “shape” of one's character, or its “form”. He considers that the notion of “form” might be interpreted as an aesthetic ideal of unity, or as an ideal of health, in which conflicting drives are not disowned or repressed. Harcourt takes this ideal to be fundamentally distinct from an ideal of harmony.

vant instinct. Indeed in his own case Nietzsche gives all credit to “the secret labour and artistic working of my instinct” (EH *Clever* 9).

Another crucial point should be noted: the task is a rare and exceptional one—it “exceeds the average measure by a significant degree”. This task is the revaluation of values,²³ and thus ‘becoming what one is’ is described chiefly in terms of the dominating *task*—again, he is not focusing explicitly on a certain internal arrangement as an end in itself, but in order to be capable of enacting a life’s goal. Thus Nietzsche presents himself as an example of that rarefied category of human being we met in the quotation given above from KSA 8: 31–32—the philosopher, artist or saviour—and in *this* sort of case he considers it crucial that an “organising ‘idea’” prepares the conditions for achieving the task below the level of consciousness before coming to ‘understand itself’. Here we also learn that the internal constitution associated with such truly creative vocations consists of an unusually diverse multiplicity of capacities which coexist and are ordered in a particular way. ‘Becoming what one is’, as described in this passage, presupposes a certain level of internal complexity, a range of capacities that, through a largely unconscious process of ordering, are put in service of an exceptional and creative goal.²⁴

23 On Katsafanas’s reading, Nietzschean freedom is related to the capacity for critical reflection. He takes it that Nietzsche’s discussions of freedom focus on “‘revaluating’, creating new values, questioning traditional values” (2011: 93): i.e. he takes freedom to be demonstrated by the ability to rise above, or at least reflectively call into question, the moral values of the society in which one is raised, and to live by new and different values. Yet in the *Ecce Homo* passage, where Nietzsche describes what makes his own “revaluation of values” possible, he takes pains to emphasise that the preconditions for achieving this task were largely unconscious and that if they had entered consciousness too soon this would have endangered the task or rendered its realisation impossible. The task is attributed instead to “the protracted secret labour ... of my instinct”. If this is a paradigm example of Nietzschean freedom, it is not a freedom primarily concerned with the ability to consciously deliberate. (See also TI *Skirmishes* 38—where “the free man is a *warrior*” in whom the *instincts* for “war and victory” have “gained mastery over the other instincts”.) Gemes (2009b) gives a less cognitive account of what Nietzschean freedom consists in.

24 One might here raise the objection that the Greek masters of GM Essay I seem fairly simple non-conflicted beings devoid of such creative goals, unless, in the words of GM I 11, “schoolboy pranks” of “a hideous succession of murder, arson rape and torture” are to count. Yet surely, runs the objection, the Greek masters count as persons, as having selves. First, it is worth noting that the masters of GM are also configured as “beasts of prey” and “blond beasts”, that is, lions (*ibid.*). Neither we, nor Nietzsche, normally equate persons with beasts—would Nietzsche be happy to equate his favourite candidate for full personhood, namely Goethe, with a beast? Second, and more to the point, the portrait of the Greek masters in GM I is a deliberately simplified caricature deployed for rhetorical purposes and not Nietzsche’s considered view of the

2 Unity and the predominance model

2.1 Two models of unity

In section 1.4 we hypothesised that given Nietzsche's views on consciousness (1.3), and his differing treatment of the (conscious) I/ego and the *self* (1.2), the arrangement of the (largely unknown, non-conscious) drives must be pivotal to his conception of the self. This led us to consider a possible 'elitist' reading concerning the desirable arrangement of the drives that is required for a genuine self, namely that this arrangement is one of *wholeness* or *unity*; on this reading, most modern human beings would be in some sense fragmented or disunified, whereas the rare few achieve a coherent organisation of the drives and their competing aims. We then related this idea to Nietzsche's views on personal uniqueness—which seem to both lend some credence to the 'elitist' interpretation, and to underline Nietzsche's problematisation of consciousness. Finally, we looked at how a coherent organisation of drives achieved through a largely unconscious process can underpin the ideal of "becoming what one is".

It remains to look more closely at how we are to understand Nietzschean unity. Gemes (2009b) argued that Nietzsche's aim is to foster the development of genuine persons, those who are unified or whole; and, furthermore, *that this occurs when the various drives are hierarchically organised under the aegis of a ruling or master drive*, which prevails over the others sufficiently to create order and direction from relative formlessness. This is the 'predominance model' challenged by Katsafanas (2011). According to this model each drive has its own aim and is constantly pressing for expression in order to attain that aim. Thus drives are brought into a power conflict with one another, insofar as they cannot all be simultaneously directly satisfied, either for merely practical reasons or—more acutely—where they are inherently contradictory in nature and so pull in opposing, incompatible directions²⁵:

ancient Greeks. In the earlier *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche gave his more considered view that in fact the ancient Greeks were incredibly complex and conflicted but through the use of tragedy they were able to reconcile, for instance, their sophisticated pessimistic realisation that life is irredeemably painful with their will to affirm life. For more on this, especially on the above-mentioned rhetorical purposes of GM, see Gemes 2006.

²⁵ The force of 'directly' here will become apparent soon enough. The point is that drives often have conflicting aims that can't simply be directly and simultaneously satisfied. For instance, the drive to dominate and the drive to be accepted by others are *prima facie* in such conflict. But if a drive can be diverted from its primary aim it may in its diverted form find a satisfaction without

... all the instincts have practised philosophy, and ... each one of them would like only too well to represent *itself* as the ultimate aim of existence and as the legitimate *master* of all other instincts. For every instinct is tyrannical ... (BGE 6)

Every drive is a kind of attempt to dominate; each has its own perspective, which it wants to force as a norm on the other drives. (KSA 12: 315)

Constituted by a number of competing drives, each human being might either be a formless chaos of conflicting impulses, or might be unified (to some degree or other) under the rule of some predominant drive—a rule which enables that drive's imperative aim to be consistently and effectively pursued. Thus in EH *Clever 9*, we learned that “the organising ‘idea’ destined to rule begins to command ... it prepares *individual* qualities and abilities ... as a means to achieving the whole”. Here, ‘becoming what one is’ seems to be characterised as involving a process of predominance.²⁶

Against the predominance model Katsafanas offers a harmony model. He argues that unity is achieved “when the parts [drives and conscious thought] relate to each other in a harmonious way, rather than when one part dominates the other parts” (2011: 102).²⁷ He claims this reading has some significant advantages over the predominance model.²⁸ Katsafanas points out that there is an

thereby impeding the satisfaction of other drives that its direct satisfaction would naturally thwart.

26 In *Z I Despisers of the Body*, Zarathustra also proclaims that “Always the Self listens and seeks: it compares, compels, conquers, destroys. It rules and is also the I’s ruler”.

27 Katsafanas (2011) is careful to acknowledge Nietzsche’s claim that “... most of a philosopher’s conscious thinking is secretly guided and channelled ... by his instincts” (BGE 3), and that Nietzsche “denies that there is any self over and above the drives” and is “deeply sceptical ... of the idea that reflective choice is anything more than a precipitate of drives” (2011: 89). Nevertheless these observations are strangely at odds with the main thrust of his central claim about Nietzschean unity, which appears to give the role of conscious reflection and judgement at least equal prominence to that of the drives.

28 Katsafanas argues against the predominance view on the basis that Nietzsche characterises Wagner as one who has diverse drives that are co-ordinated under a ruling passion or drive yet Nietzsche also characterises Wagner as being “a paradigm of *disunity*” (2011: 100). But this is in no way probative since the text that Katsafanas uses to show that Nietzsche sees Wagner as having a predominating sublimating master drive is taken from Nietzsche’s early work of 1876 “Wagner in Bayreuth”, whereas the characterisation that suggests that Wagner was a paradigm of disunity comes from a much later work of 1888, *The Case of Wagner*. In the earlier work Nietzsche was still attempting to establish Wagner as a paradigm of the great individual, the genius, who is the engine of cultural renewal; he characterises Wagner in terms of “the rule of a single inner law” (RWB 2). In stark contrast, the later work attempts to establish Wagner as a paradigm of modern sham culture; he characterises Wagner in terms of his “multiplicity, abundance and arbitrariness” (CW 10). Between the 1876 work and the 1888 work Nietzsche came to

apparent discrepancy between Nietzsche's valuing of unity, on the one hand, and his tendency to champion the cultivation of internal conflict or tension on the other—as evidenced in such passages as the following:

We adopt the same attitude towards the “enemy within” ... there too we have grasped its *value*. One is *fruitful* only at the cost of being rich in contradictions ... (TI Morality 3)

Katsafanas concludes that these Nietzschean attitudes are not mutually contradictory if we understand “fruitful” conflict as obtaining amongst the drives, while unity is a relation that should obtain between the drives *and conscious thought*:

Nietzsche is not inconsistent when he praises individuals with conflicting drives, for Nietzschean unity is *not* unity between particular drives, but unity between drives and other parts of the individual. (Katsafanas 2011: 103)

But it is not clear that this solves the problem. The question remains: unity between *which* drives and conscious thought? Given that the drives are in conflict with each other, at best a harmonious relation could presumably only exist between some subset of drives and conscious reflection on this account.

2.2 Unity through sublimation

The root problem here is that Nietzsche seems to extol both internal conflict and unity. He valorises a kind of agonal struggle between the drives, each trying to be master of all the others, yet also values a certain kind of unity. Gemes (2009a) argued that this tension is reconcilable though proper attention to the distinction between repression and sublimation:

Sublimation is what happens when a drive's primary aim is substituted for by a secondary aim that allows for expression of the drive in a manner consonant with the master drive. As John Richardson succinctly puts it, “[D]rive A rules B insofar as it has turned B towards A's own end, so that B now participates in A's distinctive activity” (1996: 33). Repression is what happens when a drive is denied its immediate aim and is then split off from other drives in the sense that its aims are not integrated with the aims of other drives and it must battle, often unsuccessfully, for any opportunity to achieve expression. (Gemes 2009a: 48)

A classic case of sublimation is where an artist reconciles his sexual drive with his drives for social acceptability and creativity by producing art with a certain

completely revise his (public) assessment of Wagner. So this provides no evidence that Nietzsche *at one and the same time* held Wagner as constituting a case of diverse drives being co-ordinated under a ruling drive and as a paradigm of disunity.

amount of erotic content. Here his sexual drive is not repressed but redirected towards an end that is both creative and socially acceptable.

Sublimation, then, allows that the unifying activity of the ruling drive will still allow other drives some (controlled, organised) expression, whilst sufficiently marshalling their energy to enable achievement of its overall goal.²⁹ This model allows for the continuing agonal struggle between drives because sublimated drives will always be disposed to return to pursue their primary aim. Given the opportunity, for instance through the weakening of a one-time predominant drive that has forced them for some time to pursue secondary aims, they will try to revert to their primary aim and, indeed, seek dominance of the formerly ascendant drive.

Arguably, then, Nietzsche does not actually understand 'unity' to mean harmony; he does not claim that the predominant drive is entering into a 'harmonious' relation with those it organises; after all it has by some means to impose and maintain its rule. What matters to Nietzsche is that the ruling drive is able to bring about a *cohesive* organisation of internal forces directed towards a clear (ideally creative) goal and without simply annihilating the competition. In GM Nietzsche is clearly concerned about the damaging effects of instinctual repression, which he presents as inimical to a flourishing life. Clearly the type of internal conflict described in GM II 16 is not desirable.³⁰ It seems safe to conclude that a suitable model of predominance is incompatible with this kind of debilitating repression. However, equally, this does not equate predominance achieved through sublimation with an absence or resolution of all internal conflict.³¹

The fact that ongoing agonal struggle is consistent with unity through sublimation may also be helpful when considering a related issue that Katsafanas

29 One might reasonably worry that, while sublimation might work in specific instances such as the case of the artist's production of work with erotic content, it is of a different order to expect that it could in practice successfully reconcile all the range of opposing instincts in a complex individual. For more on this see Le Patourel (2012).

30 For Nietzsche not all internalization of instincts is bad; after all, it is such internalization that gives us depth. Here we need to distinguish between those forms of suppression that are a step towards later integration and those forms of severe repression that Nietzsche identifies with pathological moralization. For more on this see Gemes 2009a.

31 Le Patourel (2012) similarly argues against a reading that equates Nietzschean unity with harmony, for example noting such passages as GS 266 and A 57, where Nietzsche advocates severity and even cruelty towards oneself. However Le Patourel ultimately finds it hard to reconcile Nietzsche's positions on unity and on internal conflict, and proposes that while unity remains a powerful Nietzschean ideal it is perhaps not fully realisable in the modern individual who is subject to particularly deep internal contradictions.

suggests is problematic for the predominance model, namely that the ruling drive has no particular ‘right’ to rule, i.e. does not especially express or represent the whole self (2011: 98). On the elitist reading we have outlined, however, until the ruling drive brings about the requisite internal ordering, there is no ‘self’ to represent. This would help to explain why the issue of the ruling drive’s ‘right’ to rule does not appear to trouble Nietzsche, who seems quite comfortable with the idea of a powerful drive seizing control and imposing its own aims. Indeed he often characterises our instincts as ‘tyrants’:

Our most powerful instinct, the tyrant in us, subjugates not only our reason, but also our conscience ... (BGE 158)

In BGE 6, *every instinct is tyrannical* in that it seeks power, it seeks to bend resources to its goal. Recall also that consciousness, at least in its current state, is *properly tyrannised* (GS 11).³² ‘Tyranny’ for Nietzsche has a necessary place in the dynamics of the self:

Overcoming of the affects? No, if that means their weakening and annihilation. But instead employing them; which may mean a long tyrannising of them ... At last they are confidently given freedom again: they love us as good servants and happily go wherever our best interests lie. (KSA 12: 39)

Here, a passage often cited as highlighting his concern with sublimation of the affects (they must not be annihilated) nevertheless describes an initial long *tyrannising* of them *before* they can be allowed freedom (and then, only as obedient servants – not as equals). Such a tyrannising, and the tyrannised drives’ eventual ‘freedom’ as good servants, do not suggest that these affects are able to directly pursue their own aims.

In response to Katsafanas’ concerns regarding the ‘credentials’ of the ruling drive, it is furthermore worth noting that the account of sublimation provided above is so far merely formal. It specifies sublimation as the mastery of one drive over others through redirecting those other drives to ends congruent with that of the master drive. This might suggest that any drive is capable of such mastery.³³ However, it is clearly Nietzsche’s view that some drives by the very

³² Thus, while the repression/sublimation distinction is often described in terms of ‘tyranny’ versus ‘mastery’ respectively, we should remember that Nietzsche himself does not always use ‘tyranny’ disapprovingly.

³³ Gemes (2009a and 2009b), cited in Katsafanas (2011) as exemplifying the predominance view, strongly emphasises the necessity of, not mere dominance, but ordering and organising, which can only be achieved through sublimation and not repression. The case of the recluse whose pre-

nature of their aims gain mastery though repression rather than the re-directing of other drives. A drive for sociability or a drive for contentment is a drive that typically masters at the expense of repressing rather than sublimating other drives. For Nietzsche it is clearly drives such as the drive to creativity or to philosophy that are suitable candidates for the role of a sublimating master drive.³⁴

2.3 The Nietzschean self, conscious judgement and decision-making

Nietzsche talks of a “drive to reflection” (D 119) and claims that “the largest part of conscious thinking has to be considered an instinctual activity” (BGE 3). It is the misplaced pride of consciousness that mistakenly regards itself as functioning autonomously. (Recall that Zarathustra calls the unknown self “the leading-string of the [conscious] I and the *prompter of its conceptions*”.)

Thus, Nietzsche makes the repeated claim (e.g. D 109, BGE 117) that what we usually take to be conflict between our conscious reflection and our drives is ultimately a conflict between various drives:

... inner struggles and crises in which a man is torn back and forth by various motives until he finally decides for the most powerful—as is said (in truth until the most powerful decides about us). (HH I 107)

Here Nietzsche’s aside (“in truth”) marks his considered belief that one’s decision is the product of motives over which one has little conscious control. This is of a piece with his claim

dominant drive is to collect stamps is used to argue that not any drive is suited for this role (Gemes 2009a, footnote 23).

34 Katsafanas (2011: 98) suggests that the case of a high-functioning masterful alcoholic, whose drive to drink manages to sublimate all his other drives, provides a refutation of the unity through predominance view. It seems more likely however that such a drive would achieve mastery at the cost of a severe repression of at least some of the other drives, for instance the drive to health. But if we were to accept the possibility of the sublimating alcoholic we might go one step further and think of the masterful alcoholic whose consciousness has been so dominated by his drive to consume alcohol that, after initially resisting, his conscious reflection now approves of his alcoholic inclinations. Here we would have the type of harmony between conscious reflection and drives that Katsafanas seems to approve of. Would this extra bit of dominance be sufficient to produce genuine freedom and agency? Why should we identify the so-called “voice of the agent” with this “weak overpowered element” (2011: 98) of past resistance and present compliance?

I have no idea what I am doing! I have no idea what I should do. You are right, but have no doubt: *you will be done* [du wirst gethan]. (D 120)

Here, the ‘I’ who has no idea, the ‘you’ who will be done, is presumably the ‘I’ of conscious reflection. On our interpretation, D 120 suggests that where we fail to form a satisfactory conscious conception of what we are doing, or fail to deliberate successfully so as to make a conscious decision about how to act, the drives nevertheless bring about action. The striking formulation ‘you will be done’ implies both that the source of the action remains largely unknown to consciousness, and that consciousness has a largely passive role. This characterisation is not confined to those cases where conscious deliberation evidently founders. Nietzsche’s typical formulations of selfhood—e.g. “*who he is*—that is, in what hierarchy the innermost drives of his nature are arranged” (BGE 6); the “soul as the social construct of drives and emotions” (BGE 12)—conspicuously do not depend on the role of conscious reflection. We must also remember that in Zarathustra, the self *laughed* at the pride of the conscious I; and even more strongly (as we saw in section 1.3 above) in GS 11 Nietzsche claims that “consciousness is properly tyrannised [*tüchtig tyrannisiert*]” and explicitly says that we are mistaken in seeing consciousness as “the unity of the organism”.³⁵

How does this demotion of conscious reflection fit in with the much referenced passage where Nietzsche talks of Goethe disciplining himself (TI Skirmishes 49)? A crucial point to note here is that Nietzsche does not say that Goethe *consciously* disciplined himself. A reading which conflates these two merely shows an attachment to the Cartesian view rejected by Nietzsche that the self is to be identified with the conscious I. Goethe may have fashioned himself, but that does not mean the fashioning was a self-conscious project.

With this in mind, we can consider what is happening more generally when a person decides between various conflicting motives. Consider the example of a married person who is torn between the desire to have an affair, on the one hand, and the desire to stay loyal to their spouse and keep their marriage vows, on the other. Suppose that this person judges that it is better to remain faithful and, despite powerful temptation, succeeds in doing so. We might characterise this as an admirable example of self-control and say that the person did not ‘give in’ to the temptation. Note however that if they had ‘given in’ despite the conscious judgement that staying faithful is better, we would be implying that

³⁵ To claim that consciousness *alone*, in itself, fails to constitute the unity of the organism is admittedly not the same as denying that unity could be achieved by some harmonious relation of consciousness *with* the instincts. However, it also seems undeniable that the instincts have by far the greater role to play, and that tyranny and harmony are far apart.

‘they’ were relatively passive in the face of an overwhelming desire. That is to say, however, that we would have construed the example in the standard Platonic/Kantian way. This way of viewing the matter can be so customary, so automatic, that it can be difficult to keep hold of the startling Nietzschean proposition that it need not be so construed. The conscious judgement that it would be better not to have the affair is implicitly aligned with the ‘real’ locus of the self, such that acting in accordance with that judgement, even in the face of powerful contradictory drives, is to genuinely *act*. Yet as we have seen for Nietzsche, famously, when these inner struggles take place,

While “we” believe we are complaining about the vehemence of a drive, at bottom it is one drive *which is complaining about another* ... in this entire procedure our intellect is only the blind instrument of *another drive* which is a *rival* of the drive whose vehemence is tormenting us ... (D 109)

Thus, when the married person resists having the affair, the source of this behaviour is ultimately a rival drive which is in conflict with the drive to be unfaithful—for instance, perhaps, a drive to stay within the bounds of socially acceptable behaviour or to preserve a stable relationship—and it is this rival drive which *produces* the conscious judgement that staying faithful is better. This is still ultimately a relation *between* drives (in which the intellect is only a “blind instrument”), not a relation between the drives and conscious judgement. Nietzsche does indeed say “a *struggle* is in prospect in which our intellect is going to have to take sides” (D 109). But this ‘taking sides’ is neither the definitive part of the process, nor something it does autonomously from the influence of the drives; rather, it is a reflection of the “order of rank” within our drives.

A key concern raised about the predominance model, as we saw in 2.2, is that if one allows that one may be ruled by a master drive, possibly a master drive that one does not consciously identify with, then when one does something one is being overcome by an (internal) force, rather than expressing the self. This echoes Kant’s claim that being overpowered by a drive is heteronomy, as opposed to autonomy.³⁶ On such a view, any ‘doing’ produced in such a situation is not an exhibition of true agency. Thus, if the married person in our example had actually had the affair, despite their conscious disapproval of doing so, on this view they would typically be described as having been ‘overcome’ by a strong wayward desire. Now if a drive were to assume *total* mastery then presumably no other

³⁶ Korsgaard (2009) expresses similar concerns about being overcome by an internal force as incompatible with acting as a unified whole. Gemes (2009b) explicitly argues that autonomy of a Nietzschean kind is to be explained in terms of a certain rank order of the drives.

drive would be able to supply the conscious I with an alternative motive, hence internal conflict would not occur. Of course on the predominance model defended earlier other drives can still have primary aims that are in conflict with the aim of the master drive, but as such drives would be sublimated towards a secondary aim congruent with that of the master drive, those conflicting aims would not enter into consciousness. Still, presumably, such total mastery is rare, even among great individuals. The crucial point here is that in this case we have domination *of the conscious I* by the master drive, not domination of the *self*. The view that takes this to be a case of one's not acting but being acted upon, as being merely passive, is a view that in the Cartesian and Kantian manner implicitly, if not explicitly, identifies the self with the I.³⁷ For Nietzsche your self is acting in such cases even if the conscious I is not the controlling force, or simply does not approve of the action—recall here Nietzsche's claim mentioned above, “you will be done [*du wirst gethan*]”, and likewise Zarathustra's claim “Your Self laughs at your I [*dein Ich*] and its proud leapings. ‘What are these leapings and soarings of thought to me?’ it says to itself.”³⁸ Zarathustra locates the self as the greater reason and herdsman and the I as a lesser reason and as part of the herd (*Z I Despisers of the Body*), not (like Descartes and Kant) the other way round.

As we saw with D 109, which is about “*self-mastery*”, the combating of a vehement drive is not achieved by the authority of the conscious ego, but *by another drive*. The struggle between the drives, rather than a process of conscious reflection, similarly takes centre stage in Nietzsche's discussion of “what knowing means”:

... what is this *intelligere* other than ... [a] result of the different and conflicting impulses to laugh, lament, and curse? Before knowledge is possible, each of these impulses must first have presented its one-sided view of the thing or event; then comes the fight between these one-sided views, and occasionally out of it a mean, an appeasement, a concession to all three sides, a kind of justice and contract; for in virtue of justice and a contract all these impulses can assert and maintain themselves in existence and each can finally feel it is in the right vis-à-vis all the others. Since only the last scenes of reconciliation and final accounting at the end of this long process rise to consciousness, we suppose that *intelligere* must be something conciliatory, just, and good—something that stands essentially opposed to the instincts, when in

37 Katsafanas, despite his earlier acknowledging that “Nietzsche does not accept the distinction between being an agent and being a locus of forces” (2011: 90), shows his implicit commitment to the Cartesian/Kantian view when he says of an alcoholic whose conscious judgement against drinking is overridden by his cravings that “the voice of the agent seems to reside in the weak, overpowered element of resistance” (2011: 98).

38 Note this is not to say that the self is simply the dominating drive: the self is the unity achieved under the influence of the dominating drive.

fact it is only a certain behaviour of the drives towards one another. For the longest time, conscious thought was considered thought itself. Only now does the truth dawn on us that by far the greatest part of our mind's activity proceeds unconscious and unfelt ... precisely philosophers are most easily led astray about the nature of knowledge. (GS 333)

Nietzsche is making various claims in this passage which are by now familiar: the primacy of drive activity; rejection of the idea that conscious judgement is autonomous, or more powerful and important than the instincts; each drive has its own characteristic ('one-sided') demand, and thus conflicts with and 'fights' the others; what arrives in consciousness is only the final outcome of this process. Note that when a kind of 'justice' or 'reconciliation' occurs between the drives' conflicting claims, this is not due to the adjudication of conscious judgement, and does not represent a harmony *between* the drives and conscious judgement. Conscious thought does not bring about the conciliation; we mistakenly think it does only because it is only the conciliation itself, not the underlying struggle, which rises to consciousness. Nietzsche clearly locates the decisive activity producing understanding in the conflict between drives; this *fight* is presented as the condition of the possibility of knowledge. He goes on to describe conscious thought as the "least vigorous" and "calmest" kind of thought. It is for this reason we are inclined to misconstrue conscious understanding as a form of impartial observation that transcends, reflects on and can control conflicting impulses.

Given this quintessentially Nietzschean view, with its scepticism about traditional accounts of objective knowledge, its foreshadowing of the perspectivism of GM III, its insistence on the role of unconscious conflict, it is hard to be convinced by any interpretation of Nietzschean selfhood that allocates a pivotal role to conscious reflection and places an emphasis on harmony.³⁹ The battlefield of the unconscious drives in their relentless agonal struggle is more important to Nietzsche than what presents itself belatedly in consciousness as a more or less harmonious outcome of the battle.

Conclusion

We have argued that the Nietzschean self is not to be equated with the I or ego of consciousness. Instead, the self is to be found most essentially in the interre-

³⁹ In line with the general overestimation of the role of consciousness and reflection in Nietzsche, most commentators take perspectivism to be a claim about truth or knowledge, thus assuming that perspectives concern propositions we might believe or entertain. Gemes (2013), following Richardson (1996), argues that for Nietzsche it is essentially drives that have perspectives.

lation between the drives. We discussed whether the self is simply to be identified with any given individual's collection of drives (the egalitarian version) or with only select, unified sets of drives (the elitist version). Emphasising the latter view, we argued that becoming what one is, being a genuine individual, involves having an internal order that is imposed by a predominant drive, marshalling one's capacities in the service of a creative vocation or task (one which deals in values) that is supplied by that drive. In Katsafanas's alternative model, unity hinges on conscious reflection being in harmony with the drives. We argued that Nietzsche, the champion of agonal struggle and the great sceptic of the power and function of conscious reflection, should not be domesticated in this manner as an apologist for a traditional valorisation of harmony between instincts and reason.

We have seen that Nietzsche is drawn to consider the "problem of consciousness" (GS 354), concluding that consciousness is something that belongs to the individual's "social or herd nature" and not to her "individual existence". In GM, the problem centres on internal alienation, the repression of instinctual life that can occur when conscious thought is over-privileged. In *The Gay Science*, the problem is the loss of individuality that occurs when we take at face value what we appear to be when viewed through the distorting filter of consciousness, which reduces our uniqueness to the average and the generic. While the problems in each case are different, the overestimation of consciousness is key to both. Katsafanas' account of unity might at first sight seem to offer a possible solution to the problem of consciousness by showing how it might be reconciled with the drives; we have argued that this cannot be Nietzsche's solution.

In this essay we have more or less explicitly identified a range of notions found in Nietzsche's texts—becoming what you are, having a self, becoming a genuine individual, being a person—with that of achieving a unity of drives under the sublimating hegemony of a master drive. Alternatively, one might wish to argue that such unity is for Nietzsche only a prerequisite of becoming a self and/or becoming what you are, and/or becoming a genuine individual, and/or being a person; and to provide an account that differentiates between these ideas. Or, inversely, one might claim that being a person, and/or having a self, is a precondition for establishing unity. Nietzsche's texts are arguably not precise or detailed enough to provide a definitive basis for strict distinctions of this kind. But there is an important point that needs to be made here. Wilfred Sellars has rightly observed that the notion of being a person is as much a normative as a descriptive notion—a point with which Nietzsche would presumably agree. Thus, for Sellars (1966) part of saying X is a person is to take on the commitment that X should not merely be treated as a thing (in Kant's terminology it is to recognise them as a member of the Kingdom of Ends). Given the centrality, we would say

primacy, of normative ends in Nietzsche project/s, taking an elitist stance which identifies genuine unity with the desired outcomes of being a person, having a self, being a genuine individual, becoming what you are, expressly reflects both his philosophical tone and normative commitments. Those of a more egalitarian disposition might of course say that in this case Nietzsche's use of such terms is an honorific use and that there is a perfectly acceptable, pared down, modest notion of, say, being a person that is applicable to all human beings. The crucial point here is that this "acceptability" is not a matter of descriptive fact—say, the alleged descriptive fact that even seriously disunified individuals are persons. Rather the acceptability of such modest claims itself is a matter of, a reflection of, one's own (non-Nietzschean) normative commitments.

Returning to the paradoxes of self-creation discussed at the beginning of Part 1: we have argued that it is not the conscious I or ego that does the self-creation. If anything, consciousness is typically inimical to such a task. Where it does participate in self-creation it is not an instigator but a tool or, at best, a co-worker. The real engine of self-creation is a ruling drive with the strength to create a hierarchy and an organisation of the other drives; a ruling drive that sublimates the other drives, allowing them some form of expression rather than bringing about their repression or extirpation.⁴⁰ Such a drive taken singly is no self—it lacks the requisite complexity. However, when successful, it is the instigator of rank order among the drives; it is this rank order that constitutes a self (the elitist reading). While this self exhibits unity, the lower members of the rank order are ever waiting the opportunity to struggle to improve their rank. So this unified self does not prohibit agonal struggle between the drives. The ultimate addressee of the call to self-creation, then, is neither the I of consciousness nor a pre-existent self—even if sometimes, as in the case of those who are inspired by Nietzsche's writings to find their true vocation, that message is first filtered through the conscious I.⁴¹

40 This might suggest that the master drive, indeed all drives, are for Nietzsche some kind of homunculi—a worry exacerbated by Nietzsche's talk of drives "complaining" about each other (DI09, as quoted above), drives "fighting" each other (GS 333, as quoted above), etc. While this is a real worry, Gemes (2009a) attempts to provide a non-homuncular account of how drives may function in the construction of a self. Katsafanas (2013) contains the most detailed and nuanced discussion of the nature of Nietzsche's notion of the drives, with express focus on the homunculi problem.

41 The conscious I may *filter* Nietzsche's message, but as we have said this is not equivalent to its being the addressee of the injunction to self-create. The effect of Nietzsche's texts, on this view, would be to weaken certain drives and empower others (see section 1.5 above). If the conscious I understands his message, this is understanding more in the sense of GS 333—the 'final accounting' available to conscious thought of the battle of the drives.

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