Nietzsche's reception of Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists



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Abstract

The goal of this thesis is to shed light on Nietzsche's reception of Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists by focusing on the theme of philology. The thesis examines how Nietzsche's understanding of philology has a profound influence on his interpretation and analysis of ancient Greek thinkers, especially Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists. The Nietzschean philological method stands in sharp contrast to the *wissenschaftlich* ('scientific') philological tradition typical of 19th German scholarship, which involves a reconstruction of the past primarily based on historical facts. The thesis argues that Nietzsche does not attempt to outline an objective interpretation of Greek culture. Rather, he develops a theory on ancient Greece to which it is possible to attribute some key features of his own philosophical views.

In his reception of both Heraclitus and Pyrrhonism, Nietzsche applies a philological method that has three distinct features. First, Nietzsche's history of philosophy is, in fact, neither objective nor scientific. Second, Nietzsche's analysis is motivated by aspects of his epistemic, biological and metaphysical doctrines, which he developed independently, such as 'perspectivism' and the 'will to power'—and he attributes these notions to Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists. Third, the goal pursued by Nietzsche, by these means, is to address questions and issues that he finds particularly interesting and compelling. These issues range from the Christian belief in anthropocentrism, to the nature of Socrates' dialectical abilities, Plato's metaphysics and Epicurus' attitude towards suffering.

The thesis concludes that an appreciation of the way in which Nietzsche conducts his history of philosophy offers a means of resolving the vexed scholarly issue as to what

significance may be attributed to the remarkable degree of similarity between many Nietzschean, Heraclitean and Pyrrhonian ideas and arguments, such as perspectivism and suspension of judgment, and the will to power and the doctrine of flux. My contribution to the field is the demonstration that Nietzsche's discussion of Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists goes further and runs deeper than a simple attempt to draw attention to such similarities: Nietzsche's discussion consists in addressing important themes that range from issues inherent to Christianity, to the beliefs of past thinkers, such as Socrates, Plato and Epicurus.

Introduction

Status quaestionis

Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*, an autobiography and one of his later works, presents an appropriate starting point from which to analyse the state of his scholarship regarding his reception of Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists. In this autobiographical work we find two particularly striking claims regarding Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists. However, it should first be noted that the fact that there are direct mentions of these ancient philosophers in Nietzsche's autobiography is somewhat remarkable. These references indicate that *Ecce Homo* is not simply the story of Nietzsche's life but rather a testament of his philosophical project, especially its development.[1] Therefore, Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists play an important part in the context of Nietzsche's thought in its entirety as well as in his intellectual development.

First, let us consider the case of Heraclitus. Speaking in the first-person, Nietzsche claims: 'I generally feel warmer and in better spirits in his [Heraclitus'] company than anywhere else' (*EH* III, *BT*, 3). In the following passages he quotes a series of doctrines which supposedly are the sources of his admiration towards Heraclitus, such as 'opposition and war', 'becoming' and 'the eternal return'. A second consideration is that, regarding the Pyrrhonists, Nietzsche recalls how he read and profited from a book written by a French historian of philosophy, Victor Brochard, called *Les Sceptiques Grecs*. It is in this context that he states: 'The Pyrrhonists were the only respectable types among the philosophical tribe' (*EH* II, 3).

However, Nietzsche's interest in ancient thinkers, including Heraclitus and the

[1] Nehamas (1985) has underlined that *Ecce Homo* is more fiction than reality. In this text Nietzsche is, in other words, inventing his own life rather than reporting it.

Pyrrhonists, takes an important degree of relevance in his early works in addition to the later phase of his philosophical career. In his youth, Nietzsche edited Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, including the 9th book regarding Pyrrhonism and Heraclitus. Moreover, during his tenure at Basel University from 1866 to 1879, Nietzsche held numerous lectures called *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers*. These lectures were incorporated into *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, which centred on the Pre-Socratics with a significant focus on Heraclitus and his ideas. The significance of Nietzsche's remarks in *Ecce Homo* are that they show how he never stopped investigating Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists. Among scholars, questions immediately arise surrounding Nietzsche's interests in these thinkers. The most notable explanation takes the comments in *Ecce Homo* at face value. Under this interpretation of Nietzsche, his admiration for Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists is attributable to the remarkable similarities between certain aspects of his own doctrines and those of Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists.

In *Nietzsche and the Greeks*, Berry (2013) examines Nietzsche's reception of both Heraclitus and Pyrrho. Berry's main claim is that the focal point of Nietzsche's interests in both Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists is defined by their similarities. She demonstrates this by discussing the numerous aspects in common between Nietzsche' doctrines on the one hand, and Heraclitus' and the Pyrrhonists' ideas and arguments on the other.

In the case of Heraclitus, Berry elucidates the nature of Nietzsche's admiration for Heraclitus' way of life. She claims that Nietzsche sees in Heraclitus a mirror image of himself, as a solitary thinker with an explicit disdain for the mob and most social conventions. Moreover, Berry's analysis details the resemblance between Nietzsche's idea of a cosmos in a state of permanent becoming and Heraclitus' doctrine of flux.[2] Nietzsche praises this particular Heraclitean concept because he sees it an antecedent of

[2] The doctrine of flux is related to the so-called 'river fragments or statements', where Heraclitus focuses on the constant flow of a river's water in order to highlight the ever-becoming nature of the cosmos.

his own critique towards notions of an eternal and unbecoming world, such as are envisaged by Plato and the Christians, with the theory of the Forms and the idea of an afterlife, respectively.

In the first-ever book on this subject, *Nietzsche and the Ancient Skeptical Tradition* (2011), Berry argues that Nietzsche can be regarded as a Pyrrhonian thinker due his view's remarkable similarity with Pyrrhonism. More broadly, Nietzsche shares with the Pyrrhonists a general opposition to Dogmatism and strongly held beliefs, especially in regard to Plato and his theory of the Forms. Specifically, there are numerous and significant similarities between Nietzsche's doctrine of 'perspectivism' (*Perspektivismus*) and the Pyrrhonian concept of 'suspension of judgement' (*ἐποχή*), especially the arguments that according to Sextus are supposed to bring about this state: the so-called '10 Mode of suspension of judgments'.[3] The common aspect held by these two notions is that they each rely on a visual analogy in order to underline certain features of our knowledge. For Nietzsche, the doctrine of perspectivism shows that all knowledge stems from and is embedded in a specific point of view. Nietzsche demonstrates this idea with a visual-knowing analogy: as seeing depends on one's background conditions, knowledge is influenced by one's prior beliefs and biases. The visual part of this thesis's analogy, Berry argues, is mirrored by the 5th Mode of suspension of judgement, which is one of numerous devices used by the Pyrrhonists to reach *epochē*.[4] The 5th Mode argues for suspension of judgement by drawing attention to how an object appears different depending on conditions and location. As we will see in more detail further below, there are numerous and important similarities between these two Nietzschean and Pyrrhonian

[3] As Bett (2020) notes, Nietzsche was aware of the general details regarding the 10 Modes, as Nietzsche had edited Diogenes' 9th book of the *Lives* and had studied Victor Brochard's work *Les Sceptiques Grecs*. However, Nietzsche never explicitly mentions Sextus' Modes in his works, and hence there may be some level of uncertainty regarding the extent to which he understood and appreciated their finer details.

[4] Most of Berry's analysis focuses on the Pyrrhonists rather than on Heraclitus given that, as will be discussed later, she is expanding her prior monograph on this subject.

concepts and arguments, besides their common reliance on the theme of visual knowledge.

Other scholars before Berry have focused on yet other aspects where a similarity between Nietzsche, Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists seems to emerge. Richardson (1996), Cox (1998) and Meyer (2014) focus on Nietzsche's understanding of Heraclitus' doctrine of flux. Richardson and Meyer make a similar claim, namely that, like Heraclitus, Nietzsche considers the world in terms of constant becoming. On this view, through Nietzsche's power ontology, the world is ultimately composed of units of 'will to power' (*der Wille zur Macht*), called 'power quanta' or 'dynamic centres', that constantly strive towards more power. The result is that the world is in a state of flux due to the continuous dynamic of forces. Cox (1998), by contrast, argues that Nietzsche's interests lie in the epistemic side of Heraclitus' flux. In a way that resembles an interpretation of Heraclitus' doctrine,[5] Nietzsche criticises the notion of objective knowledge on the basis that an all-encompassing and swift becoming makes it impossible to know what any object really is. Herschbell and Nimis (1979) focus on the similarity between Nietzsche's doctrine of 'the eternal return' (*die ewige Wiederkunft*) and Heraclitus' 'conflagration' (*ἐκπύρωσις*). Both Nietzche and Heraclitus argue that everything constantly returns in the same fashion and that this is due to the activity of what they each identify as a first principle, respectively, the will to power or fire.

Bett (2000a) focuses on Nietzsche's and the Pyrrhonists' common criticism of Dogmatism as not only a flawed teaching but also as something that has a negative impact on one's health. For Nietzsche, having strongly held ideas leads one to fanaticism, while, for the Pyrrhonists, strongly held ideas leads one to adopt a way of life that will always be in a state of turmoil. Besides the similarity of these stances, Mitchenson (2017)

[5] This rather extreme reading of Heraclitus is due to Cratylus, as we will see in chapter 4.

discusses certain aspects of Nietzsche's thought that are different to and incompatible with Pyrrhonism. Thus, Nietzsche' main philosophical project regards the creation of new values throughout the 'revaluation of values' (*die Umwerthung aller Werthe*), whereas the Pyrrhonists advocate for the lack of beliefs.[6]

My project

My project focuses on a different and thus far unexplored area of Nietzsche's reception of Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists, namely its relation to the topic of philology. I will argue that merely emphasising the similarity between Nietzschean thought and Heraclitus' and the Pyrrhonists' ideas and arguments, as is seen in the works cited above, risks overshadowing other important aspects of this topic.

I will argue that philology is an aspect that is often overlooked and that plays a key role in Nietzsche's reception of Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists. Philology influences Nietzsche's reception in that it directs him not to carry out an objective or scientific reconstruction of the past, but rather one that is driven by a series of his own independently formed doctrines, predominantly those of perspectivism and the will to power, in the case of Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists. As we will see, the goal that Nietzsche has in mind while he discusses Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists is to address certain themes that are particularly significant for him. These themes range from questions regarding Christianity to the other ancient thinkers such as Socrates, Epicurus and Plato.

[6] In my survey of the *status quaestionis* I have purposely avoided mentioning two further studies that have addressed Nietzsche's reception of Pyrrhonism. Parush (1976) draws a comparison between Nietzsche, Hume and, only tangentially, the Pyrrhonists. His claim is that Nietzsche's scepticism is different from a Humean kind due to an incongruence of the role played by the impressions. Even if interesting in its own right, this study is not relevant for the purposes of this thesis, which are focused on the Pyrrhonists. The second study is Conway and Ward (1992), which draws an interesting parallel between Nietzsche's and Sextus' use of language; the authors claim that both repeatedly use an aphoristic style designed to be self-refuting. I choose not to address this topic because I argue that Nietzsche's writing style should be compared with Heraclitus' and not with Sextus' writing style, for reasons I will explain below, in this introduction.

Among notable interpretations of philology, we find Porter (2000; 2019),[7] who claims that Nietzsche sees philology as a means of conducting cultural criticism. For Nietzsche, a philological study of ancient Greek culture presents the possibility of unmasking the representations that we have about the ancients and, moreover, of showing them for what they are, that is, as fictions. Porter's starting point is Nietzsche's critique of the *wissenschaftlich* ('scientific') tradition of philology typical of the 19th century, which involves a rational and scientific reconstruction of Greek culture. Instead, Nietzsche develops the idea that philology can diagnose the fantasies that moderns might hold about the Greeks and their culture.

The following example illustrates Porter's point. For Winckelmann and Neo-Classicism, ancient Greek statues, and by proxy ancient Greece culture, can be summarised with the formula: a 'noble simplicity and tranquil grandeur' (*edle Einfalt und stille Größe*). The Greeks, in other words, were a serene and noble people, the epitome of humanism. However, in direct contradiction to this Neo-Classical view, Nietzsche refers to the character of Achilles to emphasise how, in the archaic period, the Greeks possessed undeniable traits of cruelty, violence and destruction.

The conclusion that Porter draws from the contrast set up here is that Nietzsche wishes to shed light, through philology, on the false narrative and images held by his contemporaries about the Greeks' nature and the way in which they are described. In chapter 1, I will expand on Porter's study by analysing two further topics in connection with philology that will be especially relevant for the reception of Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists: perspectivism and the will to power.

The first topic regarding the doctrine perspectivism is a development of Porter's discussion of Nietzsche's rejection of the *wissenschaftlich* tradition of 19th century

[7] It is worth noticing that Berry (2013) makes a few remarks about Nietzsche's views on philology; these remarks do not, however, go substantially beyond what has already been advanced by Porter (2000; 2019).

philology. I will survey how Nietzsche originally starts his career as a traditional philologist and how he then departs from the notion of philology as a *Wissenschaft* ('science').

I will then argue that Nietzsche eventually develops the idea of 'perspectivism', independently from philology and contrary to Kant's idealism. Perspectivism, in short, is the theory that knowledge can never be truly objective as it must be derived from a particular point of view: we cannot completely detach ourselves from our prior beliefs and biases. If this insight from perspectivism is applied to philology, however, it immediately becomes clear that the philologists' goal, especially that of Christian and 19th century German classicists, to develop objective interpretations is impossible to achieve.

I will then outline Nietzsche's affective interpretation of perspectivism. His notion of the drives is central to this doctrine. With two different and yet related functions, the drives are, on the one hand, the loci of the interpretative process for gaining knowledge, on the other hand, the drives also contribute to enhancing extant knowledge, as a result of the combination of affective interpretations with one another to form a more coherent and complete understanding of a given topic.

The import of perspectivism for the wider context of this thesis is that it can explain Nietzsche's reception of certain aspects of the Pyrrhonists, such as the Nietzschean doctrine of M-Naturalism and the Pyrrhonian 1st Mode of suspension of judgement. In the 1st Mode, the Pyrrhonists discuss whether human beings are superior to (nonhuman) animals; they oppose arguments of equal credibility, such as the fact that both humans and animals have reasoning, to arrive first at equipollence before eventually reaching the state of the suspension of judgement. Nietzsche seems to draw from some of the notions entailed by this Mode, given that he too argues that animals are not inferior to humans in

many respects. However, we can already see in this instance that Nietzsche turns away from the Pyrrhonian arguments and towards his own notion of perspectival, of methodological naturalism (M-Naturalism), according to which objective knowledge of the world is unattainable. The concept of M-Naturalism which he developed independently, refers to the idea that we have 'to translate mankind back to nature' given that, to make sense of the human position in the cosmos, we must stop relying on metaphysical concepts. With this idea, Nietzsche does not simply argue that animals and humans are on a similar level in the hierarchy of beings, he also advances his own doctrine of what constitutes all biological phenomena: the will to power. This doctrine holds that inherent to every biological being is an instinct that directs them towards enhancing and competing for power. The motivation behind this outcome of Nietzsche's reception of Pyrrhonism is his aim to address and ultimately reject Christian anthropocentrism. Ultimately, Nietzsche's reception of the Pyrrhonian 1st Mode is not scientific or directly based on its similarities with his own views but is, rather, informed by doctrines that he developed independently, such as perspectivism and M-Naturalism.

The 'will to power' (*der Wille zur Macht*) is particularly relevant for Nietzsche's analysis of philology as well as his reception of Heraclitus and Pyrrhonism in its entirety. In the context of philology, the will to power is crucial in explaining Nietzsche's engagement in a wider polemic with Winckelmann's and the Neo-Classical interpretation of ancient Greek culture. The will to power expresses a striving towards domination, violence and power. This notion can shed light on those aspects of Greek culture that are difficult to square with the humane character that is advocated by Winckelmann, such as Achilles' violent deeds. It is worth noticing that the doctrine of the will to power is something that Nietzsche develops independently from his discussion of ancient Greece. This is especially evident from Nietzsche's relationship with Schopenhauer and his

concept of the 'the will to life' (*der Wille zum Leben*) as well as Darwinism and the 'struggle for life' it entails (*Kampft um's Leben*).

The doctrine of the will to power explains Nietzsche's reception of numerous aspects of Heraclitus' and the Pyrrhonists' views. Let us first consider the case of how the will to power can shed light on Nietzsche's reception of Pyrrho's way of life and his goal of *apatheia* (*ἀπάθεια* or 'insensibility'). Nietzsche's discussion is neither objective nor scientific. By contrast, Nietzsche reads into Pyrrho's goal a series of doctrines which he develops independently, such as the theory of the drives, nihilism and decadence. Nietzsche also has the goal of addressing and ultimately elucidating the relationships between Pyrrho and other philosophical figures such as Socrates and Epicurus. Nietzsche, however, does not entirely disregard the ancient evidence on the topic of Pyrrho's goal; we can see that he draws, even if rather freely, from Diogenes' *Life* in order to reconstruct Pyrrho's *apatheia*, understood as the abolition of suffering. Yet, Nietzsche reads further into Pyrrho's concept of *apatheia* the Buddhist nihilistic notion of a withdrawal from life and pain into nothingness. It is at this point that Nietzsche reads nihilism into Pyrrho's *apatheia*, a doctrine that he developed in the middle period of his life.

Nietzsche understands Pyrrho as a figure of Greek decadence and he draws parallelisms between him and Socrates and Epicurus. In order to accomplish this, Nietzsche uses the independently formed theory of the drives applied to the soul. According to this theory, whatever drive that rises to the position of prominence in the soul is the drive that determines the overall health of a thinker. In the case of Socrates, the prominent drive is represented by reason and dialectics. Nietzsche considered the outcome of this drive for Socrates to be extremely negative as it leads to the devaluation of life. Pyrrho, by contrast, has a deep hatred for dialectics. Nietzsche, consequently, categorises him as being a decadent figure. The parallelism Nietzsche draws with

Epicurus is instructive here. According to Nietzsche, Epicurus is a thinker whose main goal is the abolition of suffering, a path that leads to nihilism. This is because the elimination of suffering as a goal counts as an objection to life, given that a life without suffering cannot be realised in a world that is based on power. This brief excursus into Nietzsche's reception of Pyrrho can show that Nietzsche's conclusions are driven by a series of his own doctrines, most notably the will to power, decadence, and nihilism. A further aspect that this excursus reveals is that an objective of Nietzsche's discussion is to highlight the position of Pyrrho in Nietzsche's own understanding of the history of philosophy, namely as placed schematically between Socrates and Epicurus in terms of their most prominent drives.

The two doctrines of perspectivism and the will to power also illuminate Nietzsche's reception of Heraclitus, especially regarding Heraclitus's writing style and solitary way of life. Writing style is an important theme in the relationship between Nietzsche and Heraclitus.[8] Both of these thinkers wrote in an ambiguous and obscure way, despite important differences. Nietzsche adopts an ambiguous and hyperbolic writing style that stimulates the reader's affects. His goal in doing so is to foster the epistemic benefit that results from highlighting different aspects of a given topic. For instance, in order to illustrate the specific values that the Greeks held, Nietzsche shifts in and out the affects of humanism and pity on the one hand, and hatred and mastery on the other. The epistemic benefit of this writing style is that it reveals and contrasts the two respective facets of Greek culture: alongside the values of perfection and beauty, described in Winckelmann's Neo-Classicism, the Greeks also held other values, such as

[8] Nietzsche only occasionally writes in aphorisms or in short and striking remarks, such as in certain sections in *The Twilight of the Idols*, *The Antichrist* and *Beyond Good and Evil*. Most of his works are written either in plain language and exhibit a systematic structure, such as in *The Genealogy of Morality* or *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*. By contrast, the extant evidence of Heraclitus' works comprises 'aphorisms' and 'maxims', or as they were known in Greece in 5th century BC, *gnōmai* (*γνῶμαι*).

subjugation and domination, which Nietzsche elucidates. It is well-known that Heraclitus' writing style is obscure and ambiguous. I will show that Heraclitus writes riddle-like statements that have two or more meanings that are compatible and coherent with one another, and that Heraclitus motivation for using that style is to help his readers to gain the genuine wisdom that results from solving his riddles.

Rather than attempting to carry out a scientific or objective reconstruction of Heraclitus' writing style and his intentions, Nietzsche elaborates the kinship he feels towards Heraclitus. In particular, Nietzsche focuses on Heraclitus' method of writing, the specific purpose of which is to prevent misinterpretation. Nevertheless, Nietzsche believes Heraclitus' doctrine of the cosmos was misinterpreted. While Heraclitus had intended his conception of the cosmos to be understood in aesthetic terms, the Stoics interpreted it as describing a world arranged by divine Providence. In doing so, the Stoics attempted to offer an objective interpretation, which acted to foreclose the possibility of offering alternative interpretations. This view would become a forerunner for the Christian theorists and philologists. Nietzsche's analysis is, accordingly, ultimately motivated by his own doctrine of affective perspectivism and is related to his views on Christian philology.

A second example regards Heraclitus' way of life. It is known and supported by the extant evidence that Heraclitus was a solitary figure who was scornful of other human beings. Yet, when Nietzsche analyses Heraclitus' solitary attitude to life, he attributes to him the characteristics he considers to be typical of a genuine thinker. To begin with, Nietzsche stresses Heraclitus' celibacy, which he interprets as one of the correct attitudes towards solitude. Choosing a life of celibacy, in fact, according to Nietzsche allows a thinker to bring into focus his intellectual life. Moreover, Nietzsche draws a connection between the development of one's rationality and the instinct to gain more power, in line

with the biological will to power.

Another aspect that Nietzsche admires with respect to Heraclitus' solitude is his ability to reach a balance between the development of his rationality, the *logos*, and the power-instincts. This is contrary to the figure of Socrates who gave a preference to the rational abilities over the instincts and eventually reached the conclusion that life should be regarded as a sickness and thus ultimately should be rejected. Nietzsche, by contrast, presents Heraclitus as the ancient Greek thinker who chose a different path and was able to balance the biological, power instincts and the *logos*. Nietzsche, hence, advances the view that Heraclitus' strategy should be preferred over Socrates'. Therefore, in this case, we can argue that Nietzsche's reception of Heraclitus' solitude is motivated by his ideas of what constitutes a genuine thinker: the biological doctrine of the will to power and the prescription to balance reason with instinct. However, most importantly this discussion shows us how Nietzsche's goal is to reveal the differences and similarities held between Heraclitus and Socrates.

In summary, the theory I advance in this thesis is that Nietzsche has a peculiar method of conducting philology and that this method influences his discussion of ancient thinkers such Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists. Nietzsche's receptions of Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists do not aim to realise scientific, rational or objective reconstructions. A preliminary reason that supports this standpoint is that Nietzsche's choice of the material to analyse is selective: he focuses only on those aspects of Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists that resonate with him and his interests. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, Nietzsche's focus is driven and motivated by a series of his own epistemic, biological and metaphysical doctrines, which he formed independently, most predominantly his notions of perspectivism and the will to power. Therefore, Nietzsche's reception of these ancient thinkers cannot be analysed or reduced merely to be viewed in terms of the similarities

between their views. Nietzsche's goal is not simply to establish the degree to which certain of his arguments or ideas are similar to Heraclitus' or the Pyrrhonists', but rather he also attributes to them and reads into them some of his own doctrines or concepts, such as perspectivism and the will to power. As briefly highlighted above on a case-by-case basis, it is clear that Nietzsche's goals in discussing certain aspects of Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists go further than drawing attention to extant similarities. I will expand on the nature of these goals throughout the thesis, however, a constant theme present in Nietzsche's analysis is his attempt to address and ultimately solve certain wider and for him important issues, which range from his views on Christianity to other important philosophers of the past, such as Socrates, Epicurus and Plato.

1 Nietzsche and philology

Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to shed more light on Nietzsche's understanding of philology. Porter (2000; 2019) has argued that Nietzsche advances two criticisms of this discipline. The first is the traditional 19th century conception of philology as a 'scientific' (*wissenschaftlich*) discipline, that it attempts an objective reconstruction of the past, with echoes von Ranke's 'historicism' (*Historismus*). The second criticism concerns the understanding of philology as a Neo-Classicist reconstruction of Greek culture centred on values such as humanism and compassion. I will expand Porter's analysis by arguing that Nietzsche's philology is, indeed, not objective or Neo-Classical. I will argue that Nietzsche's philological analysis is driven by some of his own, independently formed, doctrines. Examples of these doctrines are his epistemic perspectivism, which is a critique of Kant's intellectual idealism, and the biological and cosmic will to power, as influenced by Schopenhauer and Darwinism.

Nietzsche's aim in his discussion of philology is to address crucial questions about the correct methods to study Greek culture and what one can learn from that culture. Nietzsche's investigation into philology is relevant to his reception of both Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists. Nietzsche's analysis of these thinkers is neither philological nor rational, but rather motivated by the same set of doctrines mentioned before, that is, perspectivism and the will to power. That is why, throughout this chapter, I will observe how and why several instances of Nietzschean perspectivism and the will to power play a role in Nietzsche's reception of Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists.

I will begin my analysis, in the first section, with Nietzsche's critique of traditional philology as an objective discipline. I will argue that Nietzsche's criticism of philology is motivated by his, independently formed, epistemic doctrine of 'perspectivism'

(*Perspektivismus*). The purpose of perspectivism is twofold. The first is to refute the notion that any form of objective knowledge is possible, especially Kant's idealist philosophy. Nietzsche's critique of Christian philology may, similarly, be understood as a rejection of a perspectival interpretation of a text. To justify their interpretation of a text, the Christians appeal to the Bible as the revealed word of God, namely as an objective truth that cannot be called into question. The second purpose of perspectivism is to show that our emotions and affects are not only the foundation for but are also a useful means of acquiring knowledge. In the wider context of the thesis, the doctrine of perspectivism is relevant to shedding light on Nietzsche's reception of the Pyrrhonian argument for the relativity of perception (the 5th Mode of suspension of judgement) as well as of Heraclitus' ambiguous writing style.

In the second section, I will address Nietzsche's discussion with Winckelmann's Neo-Classicism. Whereas Winckelmann emphasises the values of compassion and humanism in Greek culture, Nietzsche observes that, alongside those values, the Greeks also had other values, among them domination, cruelty and savagery. I will argue that Nietzsche reads into Greek culture an instinct for power which he calls the 'will to power' (*der Wille zur Macht*). The will to power accounts for all the biological phenomena in terms of power. In the context of philology, this means that Nietzsche can account for all the aspects of violence, oppression and mastery typical of Greek culture, from the archaic to even the classical times, in terms of power. Nietzsche can address numerous themes in the works of Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists in terms of the will to power. For instance, the will to power informs Nietzsche's reception of the Pyrrhonian argument regarding the superiority of humans over animals (the 1st Mode), as well as his reception of the existence of a *telos* in the universe under Heraclitus' doctrine of conflagration.

1.1 Nietzsche's critique of philology as the 'science of antiquity'

Nietzsche was trained in classical philology. He was first introduced to the study of the Graeco-Roman world at Pforta (1858-64), which at the time was one of the most selective educational institutions in Germany. After Pforta, Nietzsche attended the University of Leipzig (1865-68) to study classical philology. He quickly became a rising star in German academia. Between 1869 and 1870 Nietzsche managed to publish four papers in the prestigious academic journal *Rheinisches Museum*: one article about the poet Theognis and the remaining three about Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*.[9] For one of these publications, *De Laertii Diogenis fontibus*, Nietzsche won in 1866 the famous Leipzig prize and, as a consequence of that, gained the esteem of Friedrich Ritschl, the renowned philologist and Professor at the University of Leipzig.[10]

As a result of these outstanding achievements and a reference letter written by Professor Ritschl, Nietzsche was eventually appointed Associate Professor of Classical Philology at the University of Basel in 1869. The significance of this appointment is worth stressing. Nietzsche was only 24 and he had not yet completed his doctoral thesis making this achievement utterly unprecedented for someone appointed Professor in the German academy. Nietzsche taught at Basel for 10 years. We can trace back to his Basel experience the writing of many essays that he never published, the topics of which regard the Pre-Socratics, Homer, philology and the Greek *poleis* (*πόλεις* or 'city-states'), such as *On the Personality of Homer, Homer' Contest*, *The Greek State*, his lectures at Basel called *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers* and their further elaboration *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*. Nietzsche resigned from his academic post in 1879. However,

[9] *De Laertii Diogenis fontibus, Analecta Laertiana and Beiträge zur Quellenkunde und Kritik des Laertius Diogenes*, all of which are part of the unpublished material of the *Nachlass*.
[10] See Young (2010: 74).

his resignation did not prevent him from continuing to study ancient Greece or to benefit from his experience at Basel.

Rather, references to Greek philosophy and culture recorded in works such as *The Untimely Meditations, Beyond Good and Evil, The Genealogy of Morality, The Antichrist* and *The Twilight of the Idols* can be traced back to Nietzsche's years of teaching at Basel. As we will see, there is an ample and noticeable continuity of themes and methodological analysis between Nietzsche's published and unpublished material regarding ancient Greece from his period at Basel.

It is worth noticing, however, that caution must be taken when examining his unpublished material, as many Nietzsche commentators have argued.[11] It is not clear in what respects his remarks contained in the *Nachlass* should be considered: are they definitive positions to which Nietzsche commits himself or rather some sorts of attempts to try out new ideas and concepts? One way of solving this complex issue consists in considering Nietzsche's remarks contained in the unpublished materials as genuine only when they discuss certain themes that have been already debated in other passages of the published materials. This method, in a way, establishes that Nietzsche is interested in the same themes, even if his remarks may be somewhat different. The material of the *Nachlass* can, however, be extremely useful in this regard. The unpublished works often depart from Nietzsche's riveting, flamboyant, but also sometimes confusing writing style that is typical of his published material. Therefore, the unpublished essays are able to offer answers to many questions that arise regarding Nietzsche's published works.

Yet another important and preliminary issue to be addressed is the problem of chronology in Nietzsche's works and how his views seem to differ over time. Some of the ideas expressed in the works quoted above have significant divergences to the extent

[11] The most important surveys of this theme are Reginster (2006: 16-9) and Leiter (2002).

that it might be said that the Nietzsche who first wrote *Homer's Contest* is not to the same as the Nietzsche who penned down *Ecce Homo*. The same is true for the doctrines mentioned in those works: despite having the same names, many of these doctrines stand for and, indeed, are very different concepts. However, some such differences may be attributable not to the doctrines themselves changing but to differences in the way in which they function in the wider scheme of Nietzsche's thinking. Consider the will to power, which is referred to as a biological, metaphysical and psychological doctrine. The differences in the way the will to power is used and referred to across texts may not so much reflect Nietzsche as a thinker who is constantly changing his mind about the nature of this doctrine in different works, but about the subject matters of those works. In one case, *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche explains biological phenomena, and in another text he is considering the cosmos, such as in note 36 of *Beyond Good and Evil*. In another text still he considers psychology, such as in *The Twilight of the Idols*. Thus, as a general rule going forward, I will compare works from different periods of Nietzsche's life while being mindful of common aspects and such subtle differences in the concepts expressed there.

Nietzsche resigned from his Basel position as a result of a bitter polemic with the academic scholarship of the time. As Porter has compellingly shown, the reason for this is mostly related to Nietzsche's criticism of 19th century philology, which is the topic to which I now turn.[12] At the time, philology was often referred to as *philologia perennis* or 'everlasting philology'.[13] Philology was regarded as an ancient and venerable discipline which was passed down through the generations from time immemorial: the Alexandrian writers handed it to the Christian monks who in turn transmitted it to 19th century German

[12] See Porter (2000: 14-5) and (2019: 64-5).
[13] For an enquiry into the use of this term see Pfeiffer (1976: 171). Gildenhard (2013: 161-172) provides a useful historical background about the main scholarly figures of German philology at the time.

scholars, the last heirs of the tradition.[14] The philological study of the ancient world would appear everlasting in that it would be passed onto the coming generations from prior philologists. The continuous transmission of philology implies that the discovery of the Graeco-Roman world is an endless task.

Most importantly, however, philology was described as the 'science of antiquity' (*Altertumswissenschaft*).[15] German philologist, such as Zeller, Wilamowitz and Usener, considered philology a *Wissenschaft*, namely as 'science', a discipline that was on a par with 'natural science', despite having different methods. In other words, philology was regarded to be on the same level of sciences not only in terms of recognition and authority but also and most importantly in terms of the validity and objectivity of its findings. The idea that even a humanistic discipline can be scientific was not elaborated by the philologists, however. Rather, philologists drew inspiration from a movement that became extremely popular throughout the 19th century in Germany: 'historicism' (*Historismus*).

The programmatic aim of historicism was that the study of the past can reach conclusions that are as objective as those argued by natural science.[16] Explanations that go beyond the objective historical record were regarded as non-scientific and were banished from the study of history. An example of a non-scientific study of history was Hegelianism, according to which there is a preordained, supernatural and supra-historical design which leads history to a rational and providential telos.[17]

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[14] As it will become clear throughout this chapter, Nietzsche does not view this as a positive characterization. Rather he refers to this fact as one reason, among others, to criticise German philologists because they follow in the footsteps of their Christian counterparts, as for instance Zeller.

[15] See Gildernhard (2003: 168 and 171).

[16] For two useful surveys on historicism and its programmatic aims, see Beiser (2009: 157-79) and Jensen (2013: 97-118).

[17] See Jensen (2013: 99) who casts some light on Hegelian philosophy of history and its alternating fortunes in the 19th century. This kind of philosophy of history first achieved wide recognition but then rapidly declined after the rise of historicism and its striving for objectivity. On the other hand, Beiser (2011: 255) argues that von Ranke did not entirely discard philosophy from the realm of historical findings. One of von Ranke's goals, in fact, was to build a *Weltgeschichte*, intended as a 'history of the whole', a quasi-

The most important characteristic of historicism can be summarised with the words written in the Preface of *History of the Latin and Teutonic Nations* from 1494 to 1514 by Leopold von Ranke, universally regarded as the father of this movement. Historians, von Ranke argues, must explain the past 'as it actually happened' (*wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*): 'a strict representation of facts, be it ever so narrow and unpoetical is, beyond doubt, the first law'. Historians must, in other words, use only historical facts to make sense of the past and they should categorically avoid any reference to concepts that fall outside of history, such as a transcendental goal.

Nietzsche is critical of the goal of historicism to focus mostly, though not entirely, on facts. Therefore, Nietzsche elaborates a critique of a reconstruction of ancient Greece that leans too heavily on historicism in a series of published and unpublished works written between 1873 and 1876, especially *The Untimely Meditations, Human, All-Too-Human* and *We Philologists*. Two related passages of Nietzsche's *We Philologists* and *Human, All-Too-Human* are helpful to explain his thoughts about this topic:

> Philology as the science of antiquity (*Wissenschaft um das Alterthum*) does not, of course, endure for ever; its elements are not inexhaustible. What cannot be exhausted, however, is the ever-new adaptations of one's age to antiquity; the comparison of the two. (*WP 7*)

> When we speak of the Greeks we involuntarily speak of today and yesterday: their familiar history is a polished mirror that always radiates something that is not in the mirror itself. (*HAH* II, 218)

Philological accounts of ancient Greece are not simply explanations about the past, but about the present too. For Nietzsche, historical explanations shed a light not only on the past, but also and more importantly on the present goals and intentions of their interpreters.[18] There may be some difficulty determining the significance of these remarks taken on their own: history regards the present and not simply the past because it is carried

philosophical history.
[18] See Porter (2000: 14-5).

out by us, namely present interpreters. Nietzsche offers no further elaboration of the meaning of these remarks in these works. However, the second chapter of *The Untimely Meditations*, 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life', may be helpful at this juncture since it contains a broad articulation of Nietzsche's refutation of historicism.

For our purposes, I will focus here only on Nietzsche's refutation of monumental history. A monumental historian is someone who wants to reconstruct the past and, in particular, its rulers in order to inspire contemporary political leaders and heads of state to be virtuous and just: 'greatness that once existed was in any event once possible and may thus be possible again' is the motto of monumental history (*UM* II, 2). Monumental historians think that by outlining the virtues of the great men of antiquity, such as Alexander the Great (Alexander), they can exercise a positive influence on today's rulers. Yet the historical reconstruction of the great figures of antiquity is far from being objective; rather it is, in Nietzsche's words, a 'free poetic fiction' (*UM* II, 2). This is because monumental historians select the facts about the past that they want to display to their audience. For instance, they are likely to downplay or utterly disregard those aspects of an ancient ruler that might appear shameful or cruel, as not to encourage today's rulers to repeat those actions.

Nietzsche is aware of this tendency and draws attention to it in *Homer's Contest*, written one year before *The Untimely Meditations.* In a passage of *Homer's Contest*, Nietzsche quotes a historical episode regarding Alexander recorded by Quintus Curtius Rufus. In his *History of Alexander the Great* (IV, 26-9), Rufus reports that, after having killed Batis, the leader of Gaza, Alexander dragged him around the walls of the city. Historians, as explained earlier, are likely to downplay this episode on the basis that it might cast a negative shadow on Alexander. This, in turn, could jeopardise their efforts to make a positive exemplar out of Alexander that contemporary men of power ought to

follow.

In short, the early period of Nietzsche's career shows that his criticism of philology as a scientific discipline relies on historians' and philologists' inability to accurately reconstruct the past. The barriers to accurate reconstructions may be understood as the goals and intentions of the interpreters, who are driven to bend and misrepresent facts if doing so serves their purposes. Therefore, for Nietzsche, philology does not pass muster as a 'science of antiquity'. Nevertheless, as argued earlier, Nietzsche does not simply criticise philology. What is important for the purpose of my thesis is that Nietzsche independently develops a doctrine that rejects the existence of objective knowledge, including philology: perspectivism.

1.1.1 Perspectivism

Nietzsche articulates his doctrine of perspectivism in the middle phase of his career, around the time of the publication of *The Genealogy of Morality*, independently from his analysis of philology.[19] There is, however, as we will see, an important link between perspectivism and philology. Nietzsche's discussion of philology in the later phase of his career is driven, at least to some extent, by the idea that a good philologist should adhere to the lesson of perspectivism and not be separated from it. The critique of Christian philology as the 'art of reading badly' is understood as a rejection of any 'perspective' (*Perspektiv*) and an appeal to the Gospel as the revealed word of God is good example of this view (*A* 44).

In a passage of *The Genealogy of Morality* we can read the following articulation of the doctrine of perspectivism:

> '[P]ure reason', 'absolute spirituality', 'knowledge as such': – here we are

[19] I will not consider in my analysis the version of perspectivism argued for in *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense*. The reason is that I regard it as an underdeveloped doctrine of perspectivism which lags behind in many ways if compared to the full-fledged epistemic version of perspectivism contained in *The Genealogy of Morality*.

> asked to think an eye (*Auge*) which cannot be thought at all, an eye turned in no direction at all, an eye where the active and interpretative powers are to be suppressed, absent, but through which seeing still becomes a seeing-something, so it is an absurdity and non-concept of eye that is demanded. There is only a perspectival (*perspektivisches*) seeing, only a perspectival 'knowing'. (*GM* III, 12)

Nietzsche explains that all vision comes from a certain perspective by showing that non-perspectival seeing is impossible. This explanation, thus, draws an analogy between knowing and seeing that is designed to make us notice their common aspects.[20] Drawing on Nagel's terminology, we might call a non-perspectival kind of seeing a 'view from nowhere'.[21] The starting point to reach this conclusion is to acknowledge that vision requires a physical interaction with the world around us. For instance, we always have a certain distance between ourselves and an item in view as well as a certain angle out of which we see it; there are, in other words, some aspects that might hinder our vision of an object. Seeing an object is equal to having some physical, or spatial, relationship with it, such as observing it from a distance or up close, and with a certain angle of vision, say from above or below, under certain environmental conditions. Seeing an item from no physical point of view effectively means that there are no elements at all that might influence our view, such as distance, angle, environment and the viewers' conditions.

If there is no physical perspective, there is no physical subject that performs the activity of seeing and there is nothing to be seen. The lack of a physical point of view undermines the very concept of seeing. If there are no physical relations between the viewer and the object, it is difficult to grasp how and what type of seeing is being performed in the first place. It is, therefore, impossible to see a physical item from a 'view from nowhere'. That is why, according to Nietzsche, a view from nowhere is a concept that has no 'meaning' (*Sinn*): 'here we are asked to think an eye (*Auge*) which cannot be

[20] See Clark (1990: 129) who establishes this parallelism between the visual metaphor Nietzsche uses and knowledge.
[21] See Nagel (1986).

thought at all, an eye turned in no direction at all'. A view that originates from no place whatsoever does not belong to any eye and is by definition senseless.

Therefore, on the basis of this analogy, Nietzsche claims that our 'knowing' is perspectival. It is worth noticing that Nietzsche surrounds the term 'knowing' with inverted commas. Nietzsche does so to highlight how his kind of knowledge should, nevertheless, be viewed as knowledge, even though it is not considered as such in the traditional sense by many, such as most philosophers as I will discuss. The only difference between this and the traditional notion of knowledge is that the latter is objective, whereas Nietzsche's version is perspectival. Nietzsche further characterises the 'perspectival' (*perspektivisches*) adjective as follows. Nietzsche's perspectives are cognitive viewpoints, that is, certain epistemic aspects regarding our cognitive circumstances.[22]

A non-exhaustive list of our cognitive circumstances at a general level is: the culture in which we are born, the specific historical time in which we happen to live, our IQ, and the language in which we express ourselves. On a more specific level, we can point to our set of beliefs, our prejudices, our emotional state and our practical interests. A non-perspectival kind of knowledge is an understanding reached by a being that is impartial and that lacks any prejudices. In other words, it is a kind of knowing stemming from what we might call a God's eye view, given that it closely resembles God's epistemic position compared to us. We are partial beings, born in a specific time and place and mortal, while God is omnipresent and eternal; our knowledge is influenced by our prejudices, interests and prior beliefs, whereas God is omniscient and knows things as they truly are.

Therefore, we have to conclude that our knowledge can never be absolute. Exactly as viewing things from no place whatsoever is impossible, as is knowing something from

[22] See Leiter (2002: 219-23).

God's point of view. We are partial beings and we are bound to the time and space where we are born, in contrast to God who is outside of space and time. Moreover, the God's eye view requires absolute impartiality and it is dubious question whether we would ever be able to completely detach ourselves from our practical interests and prejudices. The most important common aspects between seeing and knowledge is that there is no cognition stemming out of a particular perspective. There is no God's eye view. There is no objective knowledge.

As noted earlier, Nietzsche develops the doctrine of perspectivism independently from his critique of philology as a scientific discipline. In fact, other philosophers and not philology more generally are the main target of Nietzsche's discussion of perspectivism in *The Genealogy of Morality* (III, 12). We can gather this important piece information not so much from this work but rather from another work *Beyond Good and Evil.*[23] In this work, we can read that philosophers usually regard themselves as individuals without interests who arrive at their beliefs in a completely rational way (*BGE* 5). However, Nietzsche notices how even the 'philosopher's conscious thought is secretly directed', especially by their instincts and interests (*BGE* 3).

This description matches the discussion in *The Genealogy of Morality*: its polemical target is Kant and, more specifically, his idea of the 'intelligible character of matter' (*intelligibler Charakter der Dinge*).[24] Kant posits the existence of a 'noumenal world' that goes beyond the phenomenal reality which, though existing in its own right, is impossible for us to reach due to our cognitive limitations.

[23] *Beyond Good and Evil* is written in 1886, which is only one year prior to Nietzsche's writing of *The Genealogy of Morality*. *The Genealogy of Morality* acts to clarify and as supplementary to *Beyond Good and Evil*. On the role played by *Beyond Good and Evil* in Nietzsche's *corpus*, see Clark and Dudrick (2012: 298).

[24] See Clark (1990: 133-4), who argues that Nietzsche's point in refuting Kant is to propose his own subjective form of perspectivism, namely that our own cognitive point of view is just an expression of our own values.

At the same time Kant, states in *Critique of Pure Reason* (93-94) that we can reach objective knowledge in the phenomenal world due to the a priori concepts called 'categories' which 'are related necessarily and a priori to objects of experience, since only by means of them can any object of experience be thought at all'. There is, therefore, a kind of knowledge that, for Kant, is objective: the categories, such as causality. Every time we try to establish a cause we are drawing inferences and conclusions that are in Kant's sense objective. Nietzsche is of a different opinion. There can be no objective knowledge or knowledge as such because there is no God's eye view, which might otherwise be used to see the 'intelligible character' of things. Therefore, objectivity understood in Kantian terms, namely as 'the thing in themselves', is impossible. Hence, Nietzsche's specific polemical target in this passage seems to be Kant. Yet, Kant is not the only philosopher to whom Nietzsche's criticism applies.[25]

Nietzsche's criticism may also be construed as a response to his reading of the Pyrrhonian Modes of suspension of judgment, including the 5th Mode, which regards the relativity of perception.[26] Sextus reports numerous cases to prove that the same object appears different from different positions and intervals. For instance, the same boat appears tiny and still when we see it from a distance, but it seems bigger in size and to be moving when we see it up close. There are some common aspects as well as differences between his perspectivism and the Pyrrhonian 5th Mode of suspension of judgement. Both arguments deal with visual perspectives while objects appear different when they are observed from different perspectives. But Nietzsche's perspectival analogy is also to

[25] As we will see in this chapter, Nietzsche's critique of perspectivism and, in particular, the 'intelligible character of matter' can be directed also against himself. Nietzsche's attempt to prove the existence of a cosmic doctrine of the will to power in *Beyond Good and Evil* (36) seems to be a violation of the perspectival doctrine outlined here. Nevertheless, as I will explain later, there may be a way to reconcile this oddity.

[26] As noted in the introduction to this thesis, Bett (2020) makes the important observation that there is no clear indication that Nietzsche had a detailed understanding of Sextus' 10 Modes.

some extent metaphorical as it shows how cognitive knowledge is also perspectival, such as our IQ, language and culture. Another notable difference regards Nietzsche's notion of 'postponing judgment' (*das Urtheil hinausschieben*), noted in the passage *The Twilight of the Idols* (VIII, 6) and Sextus' concept of 'suspension of judgement' (*ἐποχή*).

In conclusion, the function of Nietzsche's doctrine of perspectivism is to establish that knowledge has a perspectival quality as distinct from being objective, and that such knowledge is embedded into our cognitive viewpoints which are made up of our biases, prejudices and prior beliefs. The main target of this discussion is Kant; but it also applicable to the positions held by Christian philologists, which is the topic to which I now turn.

1.1.2 Christian philology

In a passage of *The Antichrist* (52) Nietzsche claims that 'another mark of a theologian is his *incapacity for philology*'. We can trace the first elaboration of a polemic with Christian philologists to a work written many years before, *Daybreak* (84), in which Nietzsche labels Christian philology as 'the art of reading badly' (*die Kunst schlecht zu lesen*). Between the two works, there is *The Genealogy of Morality* and the doctrine of perspectivism. My argument is that there is a way to connect these two related statements about philology with the doctrine of perspectivism.

Consider first Nietzsche's earliest description of Christian philologists in *Daybreak* (84), as interpreters who present 'their conjectures as boldly as if they were dogmas'. For instance, in the case of the Old Testament, Nietzsche argues, Christian philologists interpret every mention of a piece of wood as a prophetic reference to the cross—a confirmation bias applied to this text. To claim the objectivity of their interpretations, Christian classicists appeal to the authority of the Bible as the revealed word of God, a claim which Nietzsche summarises with the sentence: 'I am right, for it

is written' (*D* 84). In *The Antichrist*, Christian philologists are regarded as unable to practice good philology due to perspectivism.

In *The Antichrist* (44), we also find further articulation of the reason why Nietzsche resents Christian philology: it is an 'instinctual rejection of any *other* practice, any *other* perspective (*Perspektiv*)' (*A* 44). This statement represents the idea that Christian philology forecloses an appreciation of other perspectives: Christian philologists, in fact, argue that their interpretations are objective because they stem directly from a sacred book, the Bible, which is regarded as an absolute and unquestionable source of authority.[27]

The Christians' appeal to God as an undisputable source of justification of their interpretation of a text can easily be squared with the key concept of 'the God's eye view' mentioned in *The Genealogy of Morality*. Likewise, the reason why Nietzsche rejects Christian philology bears similar to the above: there can be no ultimate authority such as the Bible because the very concept of God's eye view as such is absurd. Christian philologists, therefore, cannot appeal to an objective kind of knowledge in order to justify their readings of ancient texts. The view from nowhere is absurd and the same holds true for any absolute justification that would supposedly make one's reading objectively true.

To the 'art of reading badly' represented by Christian philology, Nietzsche proposes 'the art of reading well' (*die Kunst gut zu lesen*), the definition of which is 'that venerable art which demands of its votaries one thing above all: to go aside, to take time, to become still, to become slow' (*A* 52; *D* Preface, 5). The good philologists' main difference from their Christian counterparts is that they should take enough time to reflect on the ancient evidence and, most importantly, should not consider their interpretations as absolute truths. Good philology is an exercise of critical thinking applied to ancient

[27] As I will show later on, Nietzsche's remark that Christian philologists foreclose the possibility of alternative readings plays an important role about his reception of Heraclitus' writing style.

evidence as well as to the appreciation of other perspectives. As Nietzsche characterises this, the most important ability of a good philologist is to be capable of looking cautiously at the evidence 'with reservations, with doors left open, with delicate eyes and fingers' (*D* Preface, 5). This kind of philology is the exact opposite of the kind practised by the Christian. On the one hand, good philology does not reject alternative perspectives and, on the other, it does not fall into the trap of confirmation bias.

Consider an example of the Christians' philology as applied to Heraclitus. In his *A History of Greek Philosophy* (47) Zeller claims that the transformation of the various elements into each other, the so-called 'fire's turnings' (*πυρὸς τροπαί*), is the product of a 'Divine Creative Reason', namely the *logos* (*λόγος*) (Clement *Strom.* V, 104, 3-5=B 31a/b). The *logos*, in other words, is interpreted by Zeller as the principle which gives origin to the entire world. It is worth noticing that the terms used by Zeller to describe Heraclitus' *logos* echo the Christian interpretation of Heraclitus. Christian theologians, in fact, read Heraclitus' *logos* as an antecedent of the first line of John's *Gospel* (1:1): 'In the beginning was the Word (*Λόγος*), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God'. Heraclitus' *logos* for the Christians is an act of creation of the world which can be compared with God's creation.

In a passage of *We Philologists* (42), Nietzsche explains the rationales behind the Christian's original interpretation of ancient thinkers as Christians *ante litteram*. The first is that theologians instrumentally use the doctrines of ancient philosophers to encourage a conversion to Christianity; the second is that ancient philosophy is exploited as 'a weapon for the intellectual protection of Christianity'. The drive to find a theoretical justification of Christianity at all costs explains the Christian philologists' interpretation. In a passage of *Beyond Good and Evil* (38), written many years later, we find further clarification of this idea. When we look for an explanation of something 'we are looking

for a chosen, preferred type of explanation', which rules out other potential accounts. We can imagine that the main drive that is active in any Christian, including a philologist, is to defend his faith. For this reason, the Christian immediately thinks of concepts like 'sin', 'faith', 'Gospel' and 'God' whenever he interprets, for instance Heraclitus. In other words, the main interpretation that comes to mind whenever a Christian philologist is interpreting a text is an absolute concept, such as God. It is, therefore, only natural that the Christian will ultimately advance interpretations that are thought of as objective and absolute and that cannot be called into question. However, for Nietzsche this is wrong as absolute concepts, such as a view from nowhere, are nonsensical given what is implied by perspectivism.

In summary, I have shown that Nietzsche's criticism of Christian philology understood an objective discipline can be explained with reference to his doctrine of perspectivism. Christian philologists cannot appeal to the Bible to justify their philological interpretations of a text. This is because a view of nowhere, which is embodied from an absolute source of knowledge, such as God, does not exist.

1.1.3 Perspectivism and the affects

There is another noteworthy aspect of Nietzsche's perspectivism that should be acknowledged here. The second goal of perspectivism is to show that the affects, namely the emotional attractiveness or repulsiveness, are not simply the basis of our knowledge. The affects are also able to contribute to the overall advancement of our understanding, provided that they are used correctly.

To explore this topic, we must turn to the following passage of *The Genealogy of Morality* (III, 12):

> But to eliminate the will completely and turn off all the affects (*Affekte*) without exception, assuming we could: well? would that not mean to *castrate* the intellect? . . .

The cognitive aspects of our knowledge have only thus far been discussed in terms of interests and biases.[28] However, such a characterisation may be reductive, leaving out important aspects, something that Nietzsche calls our 'affects' (*Affekte*).[29] To glean a full appreciation of what Nietzsche means by the affects we must first examine his theory of the drives of which the former are an integral part. The drives are for Nietzsche the essential loci where our knowledge take place. Such an idea is quite counterintuitive, however, and demands an explanation. Yet there is no exact point at which Nietzsche elaborates a clear-cut theory of the drives. What we have instead is a collection of scattered remarks contained in many works, both published and published, of different periods that mention and expand on our understanding of this topic.[30]

The 'drives' (*Triebe*), also called 'forces' (*Kräfte*) and 'instincts' (*Instinkte*), are Nietzsche's key token to explaining our psychology (e.g. *BGE* 36; *D* 119; *WP* 567; *TI* IX, 39). On the one hand, the drives allow Nietzsche to argue against incorrect beliefs regarding psychology, such as 'the atomism of the soul', namely thinking of the soul as an eternal, monolithic substance, as according to Christians, or that it is constituted by indivisible atoms, as scientists may believe (*BGE* 12). On the other hand, the drive theory also proposes a different model for understanding psychology. Under this theory, Nietzsche considers that 'thinking (*Denken*) is only a relation between these drives' (*Triebe*) (*BGE* 36; cf. *GS* 333), while he sees 'the soul (*Seele*) as a society constructed out of drives' (*Triebe*) (*BGE* 12; cf. *BGE* 19). This notion of selfhood is, thus, far from what the Christians imagine the self to be, namely an eternal and monolithic structure. Rather, on Nietzsche's view the self is constructed out of drives (*Triebe*) and affects'

[28] See Leiter (2002: 217).
[29] See Janaway (2007: 213-4).
[30] Due to this fact, Stern (2016: 287-90) argues that it is difficult to see how Nietzsche has a full-fledged theory of the drives in the first place. I think that that his concern is well-founded insofar as Nietzsche never argues for a comprehensive drive theory; however, it should be possible to bring together all of his different comments in order to examine his overall ideas about this topic, as I attempt to do in this chapter.

(*Affekte*) (*BGE* 12; cf. *BGE* 19).

The description of the drives is anthropomorphic: they have a 'goal' (*Ziel*), 'perspectives' (*Perspektiven*), 'pros and cons' (*Für und Wieder*) and a means of 'moral evaluation' (*Werthshätzung*) (e.g. *HAH* I, 32; *BGE* 6; *WP* 481; 567). It is difficult to establish the degree to which Nietzsche wants us to take literally this highly anthropomorphic description. According to a literal interpretation of the passages quoted, the drives are 'homunculi', that is, small 'pre-formed' agents.[31] The pre-formation aspect is important to consider because it stresses the fact that the drives possess a certain rudimentary form of consciousness, as well as goals, perspectives and moral evaluations, which are miniaturised versions of the defining features of full-fledged human beings.

An example that can illuminate a homuncular understanding of the drives is a parallelism with 'the hierarchy' formed by complex animals that resemble human beings in many respects, such as chimps.[32] There is no explicit requirement that the members of this animal group are completely self-conscious entities, but only that the behaviour of each one of them can be explained according to their rank within the normative order.[33] There are two important aspects that should be noticed. Thinking of the drives as homunculi does not provide any meaningful explanation of certain aspects of our psychology, such as consciousness. It is difficult to see what the benefits are of explaining consciousness in terms of some pre-formed agents which are themselves conscious; the problem of consciousness has been simply bulk-passed from full-fledge people to the drives.[34]

[31] See Clark and Dudrick (2012: 167-9) who are the main advocates of this idea. It might be useful to draw a parallelism between Nietzsche's drives and Nicolaas von Hartsoeker's representation of a small pre-formed man in sperm in order to have a conceptual idea of the homuncular theory in Nietzsche. For this illustration, see Correia (1997: 212).
[32] Cf. 'our organism is arranged in an oligarchic way (*oligarchisch*)' (*GM* II, 1).
[33] See Clark and Dudrick (2012: 199) who argue that the drives' order could be similar to that of nonhuman animals, such as chimps, who are not as self-conscious as human but that have some rudimentary form of consciousness.
[34] See Katsafanas (2016: 79-81).

Nevertheless, the drives have other important characteristics, besides having rudimentary concepts, such as goals and pros and cons, that are not reducible to the human counterparts. They can use our 'experiences' (*Erfahrungen*) to express themselves or, to put it another way, to emerge to the level of our perception. In a passage of *Daybreak* (119), Nietzsche gives a series of broad examples of the everyday activities in which the drives actively attempt to manifest themselves, such as reading the news, speaking with a friend or walking down the road. Broadly speaking, the drives can be thought of as some kinds of dispositions that induce in us affective orientations.[35]

The drives have the extraordinary ability to make pronounced or salient certain features of the world and, therefore, to influence our cognitive perception. As Nietzsche characterises this: 'Our world is coloured by them [the drives]' (KSA 12:2[95]). It is worth noticing that the distortion which we experience regarding our ability to perceive our surroundings whenever a drive expresses itself is goal-specific. We have said before that each drive has a particular orientation towards a goal. The hate drive, for instance, is oriented towards hatred, animosity and hostility, which means that the kind of salience induced by that drive is always related to those goals. A gentle pat on the back might be interpreted as a taunt; the benevolence drive, by contrast, puts emphasis on other aspects of our experience so that our perception focuses on goodwill and compassion.

Given that the hate and benevolence drives are opposite in terms of the perceptive salience they induce in us, they are particularly suitable to show in practical terms how the drives can emphasise certain aspects of the world. Take the case of mocking: a friend starts laughing at us because we accidentally wore two socks of different colours or because of our tousled hairstyle. The drives of hatred and of benevolence have completely opposite evaluative goals, which is why their affective influence on our perspective is

[35] See Katsafanas (2016: 84-5).

equally opposite. In the case of the hate drive, we perceive the mocking behaviour as a clear indication that this friend has betrayed our friendship and we react accordingly with animosity and hatred: we can, for instance, seize the moment to initiate a fight. With the benevolence drive, the perception that we have of this situation is very different. We perceive the ridicule as a joyful or kind act: the person is not laughing at us, but rather with us. The interaction with our friend is a confirmation of our longstanding friendship and of the fact that we can have a good time together.

Therefore, depending on whether the hate or benevolent drive has seized the opportunity to express itself, we perceive our surroundings in very different ways. In one case, we see mostly benevolence and friendship, in another hatred and mockery. It is worth noticing that the phenomenon that is being discussed here is fundamentally the same. In other words, there is no such a thing as a 'neutral' activity; the world we perceive is always altered by the drives' activities, to a greater or lesser extent. And it is here that the topic of the affects become especially relevant.

Nietzsche gives a very broad, general and common-sense characterisation of the affects in a passage of *Daybreak* (115), and provides the following examples of what he considers to be the 'affects': 'Anger, hatred, love, pity, desire, knowledge, joy, pain'. This list suggests that an affect may be defined as an emotional state that carries with it an impulse of aversion or attraction.[36] Affects are fundamentally the ways in which we feel the pull of particular emotional attractions and repulsions. They are described as 'pros' and 'cons' (*Für und Wieder*), that is, dislikes and attractions of some sort, and are caused by the drives in accordance with their respective goals of, say, hatred or benevolence. This description of the affects mirrors what Nietzsche claims in the passage of *The Genealogy of Morality* cited earlier.

[36] See Janaway (2007: 206-7) and *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* under the entry: 'affective'.

It is of the utmost importance at this point not to lose sight of the twofold goal that Nietzsche sets for his affective theory of perspectivism. The first of these goals is to prove that the affects are the basis of our knowledge and that, if properly used, they can provide us with an epistemic payoff for our knowledge. His second goal is to establish that the affects are important with regard to the topic of philology, in the sense of being useful for our knowledge. In a passage of *Beyond Good and Evil* (284), Nietzsche sheds light on how and why the affects can play an important role in enhancing our knowledge:

> …to freely have or not have your affects (*Affekte*), your pros and cons (*Für und Wieder*); to condescend to them for a few hours; to seat yourself on them as you would on a horse or often as you would on your ass—since you need to know how to use their stupidity as well as you know how to use their fire.

Nietzsche argues that our ability to shift in and out of our emotional dislikes and attractions can advance our knowledge about a given topic. As both Janaway and Alfano underline, there is a significant epistemic benefit in exploiting the affects that we experience while investigating a specific topic.[37] The reason is that we can have a broader perspective on the topic in question if we can examine it with a variety of feelings.

An important example that will be the subject of investigation in this chapter is ancient Greece: Nietzsche's polemical discussion with Winckelmann's Neo-Classicism. The Neo-Classical movement and its putative father, Winckelmann, argue that Greek culture held certain values, including humanism, compassion, beauty and perfection. Nietzsche, on the other hand, shifts in and out his affects, from that of humanism to other affects such as hatred and domination. Nietzsche focuses on values, such as mastery, subjugation and violence, as being typical of archaic and classical Greece. The important aspect at stake here is that Nietzsche's affective shift from a more humane to more immoral affect echoes a sentence of *Beyond Good and Evil* (129): 'The devil has the

[37] See Janaway (2007: 213-4) and Alfano (2019: 142-5).

broadest perspective (*Perspektiv*) on God, which is why he keep so far away from God:—the devil, that is, as the oldest friend of knowledge'. The goal is to have the best possible knowledge about a topic and this is why we have to shift in and out our different affects, especially between the most distant ones. A shining example is Nietzsche's and Winckelmann's discussion of ancient Greece, which we will analyse shortly.

A final noteworthy point, to be expanded upon below, concerns Nietzsche's discussion of Heraclitus' writing style. Nietzsche feels a particular kinship towards the Heraclitean writing style, despite some notable differences between it and his own. Heraclitus' fragments are entirely constituted by brief and memorable statements known as *gnōmai*, while Nietzsche only occasionally writes in aphorisms of that kind. Furthermore, Nietzsche's writing style is intended to achieve epistemic gains by means of stimulating the affects, but for Heraclitus, epistemic gains are derived from the multiple exegetical interpretations that can be attributed to his fragments. According to Nietzsche, Heraclitus' goal is to protect his teaching from relinquishing such epistemic benefits to audiences who would prefer to foreclose the possibility of alternative readings. An example of such interpreters are the Stoics, who read into the Heraclitean aesthetic concept of the world their own view of the cosmos, as arranged by divine Providence.

1.2 Nietzsche's and Winckelmann's readings of ancient Greece

Nietzsche's analysis of ancient Greece extends from his early years with *Homer's Contest* to the later phase of his career with *The Twilight of the Idols* going through the middle-period of *The Genealogy of Morality*.[38] Porter has compellingly argued that Winckelmann's Neo-Classicism presents the background context of Nietzsche's thesis that Greek culture entailed the values of cruelty and savagery. I will first address this discussion before articulating my theory, namely that Nietzsche reads into Greek culture

[38] See Porter (2019: 51-66).

his own doctrine of 'will to power' (*der Wille zur Macht*) which was developed in light of developments by Schopenhauer and due to Darwinism.

The Neo-Classical reading of Ancient Greece is centred on Winckelmann's view that Greek sculptures are the embodiment of unparalleled serenity, perfection and beauty, which are nothing but aesthetic expressions of their underlying rationality and measure.[39] In *Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks* (1765), Winckelmann gives what would become the standard definition of Neo-Classicism:

> The universal and predominant characteristic of the Greek masterpieces is a noble simplicity and tranquil grandeur (*edle Einfalt und stille Größe*), both in posture and expression […] such a soul is depicted in the fact of Laocoön and not only in his face, despite his most violent torments. (42)

The subject of this passage is the Laocoön statue group, conserved today in the Vatican Museums, which depicts a scene reported by Virgil in the *Aeneid* (II, 199-220): Laocoön, a Trojan priest, and his sons are bitten and choked by two giant serpents. In describing this statue, Winckelmann does not deny the 'powerful passions' (*Leidenschaften*) felt by Laocoön, but he argues that these feelings are not all there is about this sculpture. Certainly, Winckelmann argues, the feelings of angst and suffering are the first aspects that everyone sees when observing the Laocoön. One's attention, for example, is instantly drawn to the facial expressions of pain of Laocoön and his two sons as caused by the snakes twisting around their bodies.

Winckelmann concedes that suffering is clearly visible in Laocoön's facial expression, but he also notices that angst and outcry do not permeate his entire figure. If we focus on the entire figure rather than on the details, Winckelmann argues that a different picture of Laocoön emerges. Laocoön retains qualities such as posture and dignity, even in the face of the physical pain which is clearly present and detectable in

[39] For a useful introduction to Neo-Classicism, see Nisbet (1985: 3-10).

certain individual elements of the statue. In other words, Winckelmann argues that Laocoön suffers considerably, but that there is also a certain of kind of nobility in his ability to endure the pain. Laocoön's suffering, for example, does not convey a sense of total and utter hopelessness. There is a sense of integrity, humanity and, most importantly, heroism embedded in the figure of Laocoön. Laocoön is a heroic character due to his virtue: he withstands pain and at the same time fights with the serpents in order to release himself from their grip. Laocoön's response to angst and suffering is what makes his entire figure noble and, also, calm.

Indeed, there are 'powerful passions' (*Leidenschaften*) in the figure of the Laocoön. Laocoön does not succumb to them, however. He strives against them with heroism and determination, and that is why the statue in its entirety transmits a sense of greatness, calm, beauty and humanity. Greatness stems from Laocoön's ability to endure pain with a heroic striving to free himself from the twisting of the serpents around his body. Calmness, on the other hand, is due to Laocoön's response to suffering when it comes to his passions: he does not surrender to his fate and does not transmit a feeling of total despair as a result. Finally, beauty and humanity are the result of calmness and greatness. It is because Laocoön is tranquil and noble that he transmits a sense of a being a humane character and a beautiful figure. The Laocoön group not only depicts angst and torment, but most importantly the kind of heroism that is embedded in enduring and withstanding suffering.

The formula that Winckelmann uses to summarise his interpretation of the Laocoön is 'noble simplicity and tranquil grandeur' (*edle Einfalt und stille Größe*). Winckelmann supposes that the Greek statuaries express some powerful passions but they boldly strive against them; they are tranquil and they are humane. Furthermore, he imagines that the Greek culture and way of life is similar to the aesthetics of their statuary,

as incorporating that humanism, tranquillity and calmness.

According to Porter, Nietzsche rejects Winckelmann's reading of ancient Greece, which permeates the entire philological landscape of 19th century Germany.[40] Nietzsche believes that the characteristics associated by Winckelmann with the Greeks, such as tranquillity and humanism, are excessively idealistic and, to some extent, deceitful. Consider, for instance, the following passage from *The Twilight of the Idols* (X, 3), which summarises Nietzsche's criticism of the Neo-Classicism in the later phase of his career:

> To sense 'beautiful souls', 'golden means', or other perfections in the Greeks, admiring their ideal character, noble simplicity (*hohen Einfalt*), calm in greatness (*Ruhe in der Größe*) – I was protected from this sort of 'noble simplicity' (*edle Einfalt)* (which, in the final analysis, is a *niaiserie allemande*) by my inner psychologist.

It is Winckelmann's formula of 'noble simplicity and tranquil grandeur' (*edle Einfalt und stille Größe*), which is clearly echoed in the above passage, that is specifically referred to as a naivety. However, it is worth noticing that in this latter passage, despite the explicit mention of all the key concepts inherent to the Neo-Classical movement, we are not told why this interpretation of ancient Greece is flawed and what Nietzsche thinks comprises Greek culture. This is because here Nietzsche is summarising and is, therefore, abundantly simplifying his ideas about ancient Greece.

Therefore, in order to find Nietzsche's full and most comprehensive articulation of Greek culture, we must turn to his Basel period. In particular, there are two unpublished works, *The Greek State* (1871) and *Homer's Contest* (1872), that should form the focus of the present enquiry. This is especially because the insights from these texts would resurface many years later, although in a diluted form, in Nietzsche's works from his middle and later period, such as *The Genealogy of Morality* (1887) and *The Twilight of the Idols* (1888).

[40] See Porter (2019: 54).

When it comes to the Homeric world, which is analysed in *Homer's Contest*, Nietzsche cannot but start from the *Iliad* and the 'extraordinary artistic precision, calmness and purity of the lines' which prove Homer's significant narrative skills. However, Nietzsche notices that the golden curtain of beauty and perfection of the Homeric poem is only one side of the story. Take the case of Achilles. There is an episode of the *Iliad* which is almost universally known: Achilles accepts to return Hector's corpse to Priam so that he can receive the appropriate burial (XXIV, 552-620). This is an extraordinary gesture which, for Nietzsche, proves that even at the Homeric times the Greeks were 'the most humane (*humansten*) people of ancient time'. Thus far Nietzsche seems to agree with the picture painted by Winckelmann about Greek culture and its humane character.

Yet, for Nietzsche this episode does not overshadow Achilles other attributes, being the Homeric hero whose wrath led him also to drag Hector's corpse around the walls of Troy. Achilles' savagery and wrath proves that the Greeks also and most importantly have 'a trait of cruelty (*Grausamkeit*), of tiger-like pleasure in destruction' (*HC*, 174).[41] Achilles' human gesture towards Priam is noteworthy but it should not lead us to overlook the most significant element at stake here, the dynamic between Achilles and Priam. It is only after Achilles has killed and shamed Hector, by dragging his corpse around the city wall in order to avenge Patroclus' death, that he decides to show mercy (XXII, 367-404). In other words, there is a hierarchy of values in the Homeric world whereby the value of domination and violence is superior to mercy. Only a strong and dominant figure can show mercy, as a passage of *Beyond Good and Evil* (265) shows: 'The concept of "mercy" is senseless and noisome *inter pares*; there might be a sublime way of letting gifts fall down on you from above, as it were, and lapping them up like

[41] By contrast, Porter (2019: 53-4) highlights Nietzsche's caricature of the neo-classical characterisation of the ancient Greeks as a perfect and humane people.

raindrops'. Importantly, Achilles' kindness does not stem from humanism alone but also from a sense of mastery. It is only after what Nietzsche calls in *Homer's Contest* 'the struggle for destruction' (*Vernichtungskampf*) that Achilles shows mercy.[42] The conclusion that we should draw from this discussion is that there is an important element regarding the Homeric that the Neo-Classical interpretation that seems to have been overlooked, namely the central role of mastery in a Homeric warlord's life.

However, one could correctly argue that it is easy to overemphasise the cruel traits of Greek culture simply by selectively focusing on what is depicted in the Homeric world. This is because it is well known that this epoch is also known as the Greek 'Dark Age', as it is centred around warlords and heroic deeds in the battlefield rather than philosophy and the arts.[43] It may, then, seem to be more of a challenging task for Nietzsche to show that his reading can be squared with the classical period of Greece, universally known as the 'golden age of Greece' in virtue of the flourishing of philosophy, rhetoric and the arts. Thus, it would seem that there remains to be a way in which Winckelmann was correct in understanding an important part of ancient Greek culture, in terms of its classical period, if not in terms of its entire history.

However, I will argue that, especially in *The Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche is compelling in shedding light on how some textual evidence shows that violence and cruelty also characterised classical Greece. Nietzsche mainly appeals to the evidence recorded by Thucydides in the *History of the Peloponnesian War*, the famous chronicle of the war between Sparta and Athens for the hegemonic control of Greece.

The first episode is Thucydides' report of the military clash between Athens and Melos. The focus of the discussion is the dialogue between Athenian and Melian envoys.

[42] See Jaggard (2013: 360) who underlines how in the middle and later career Nietzsche is not in principle opposed to pity, provided that this stems from a position of strength and not weakness.
[43] For a useful survey on the Homeric epoch and the reason why it can be characterised as a dark age, see Snodgrass (2000: 1-23).

The Melians claim that the Athenians are guilty of overpowering a city, Melos, that is vastly weaker city than Athens; therefore, the Melians claim that the Athenians are committing a crime against the gods (V, 84-116). The reply of the Athenian envoys is that there is a divine 'necessity of nature' (*φύσεως ἀνάγκη*) which states that the powerful should rule over the weak. In a passage of *The Will to Power* (429), Nietzsche makes a precise reference to this episode: 'Do you suppose per chance that these little Greek free cities, which from rage and envy would have liked to devour each other, were guided by philanthropic and righteous principles? Does one reproach Thucydides for the words he put into the mouths of the Athenian ambassadors when they negotiated with the Melians on the question of destruction or submission?' In other words, Nietzsche, building his case on Thucydides' report, concludes that the Greek *poleis*, and among them especially Athens, are not guided by a sense of benevolence and altruism towards each other. Rather, there is an important and noticeable element of cruelty and envy involved in the political relations between Greek city-states. The dialogue between the Athenians and the Melians is an important historical record of this kind attitude, where the stronger rules over the weaker and the weaker must choose between submitting to the stronger party or being destroyed.

It is clear that the Athenians envoys are explicit in their determination to assert the domination of Athens over the other cities, especially those that attempt to resist their power. The kind of options that Nietzsche thinks the opposing *poleis* are presented with are harsh: either submit or be destroyed. The first example put forward by Nietzsche shows that the Winckelmann's reading of Greek culture falls short of understanding the dynamics of Athenian expansionism.

The other piece of evidence recorded by Thucydides (II, 34-46), which is mentioned by Nietzsche in the first book of *The Genealogy of Morality,* is the famous

Funeral Oration uttered by Pericles. During his speech, Pericles praises Athens as 'the school for Greece', due to the flourishing of the arts and of political and philosophical discussions among its citizens. In *Homer's Contest*, Nietzsche proves to be aware of this aspect of the Athenian culture and to cherish it. Nietzsche labels the intellectual and artistic competition that is present within the city of Athens as 'contest' (*Wettkampf*) and claims that this is best visible in the intellectual battles waged between Greek thinkers, such as Plato and Protagoras about philosophy, and Aeschylus and Euripides about tragedy.

Yet, Nietzsche shows in his discussion of ancient Greece that he is also conscious of the second part of Pericles' speech, which highlights how the position of pre-eminence of Athens in Greece, besides its cultivation of the arts and love of beauty, is also based on 'power' (*δύναμις*). According to Pericles, Athenian power does not need any poetic praise, such as what Homer might have written. The deeds of the Athenian citizens are enough proof of Athens' might: 'we have forced every land and sea to yield to our daring and we have established everywhere lasting memorials of our power for good and ill (*κακῶν τε κἀγαθῶν ἀίδια*)'. Once again it is noteworthy that Pericles places emphasis on the wicked aspects of the Athenian deeds alongside what was beneficial.

In a passage of *The Genealogy of Morality* (I, 11), Nietzsche underlines the importance of those words, as spoken by Pericles':

> Pericles singles out the *ῥαθυμία* of the Athenians for praise – their unconcern and scorn for safety, body, life, comfort, their shocking cheerfulness and depth of delight in all destruction (*Zerstören*), in all the debauches of victory and cruelty (*Grausamkeit*).

The characteristics of the Athenians that, according to Pericles, should be praised especially are their cruel deeds, their drive for mastery and their discharging of strength. Therefore, even Pericles, the ruler who has just hailed Athens as the school of Greece in virtue of its arts, also stresses and praises the harsh and domineering aspects of his fellow

citizens. For Nietzsche, this is yet further proof that the Greeks, and especially 5th century Athenians, are less humane and compassionate than many such as Winckelmann might think.

A useful formula that might be used to express the message that Nietzsche wishes to convey is *Realpolitik* or 'political realism', as Leiter phrases this.[44] The adjective 'real' refers the idea that we should not describe the relations between human beings as we would like them to be, our descriptions should be made according to how relations are in reality. Nietzsche is criticising the idealisation of the Greeks to the extent of making them unrecognisable. In order to counter this movement, Nietzsche reports Pericles' speech which goes in the exact opposite direction of Winckelmann's interpretation. Pericles emphasises concepts such as force, brutality and savagery and in doing so he shows that Winckelmann's view of the Greeks as figures of almost utter beauty, perfection and humanism is an excessive form of idealisation.

It is important to stress that this is not to say that Nietzsche knows or claims that he is laying out the real, ultimate or objective character of what Greek culture is, as for instance being savage, cruel and domineering in contrast to humane, kind and compassionate. Such a stance would be a rather obvious violation of his own theory of perspectivism and his associated critique of 19th century philology. Nevertheless, as will be discussed below, Nietzsche would read into Greek culture his own doctrine of the will to power.

1.2.1 The will to power

In the first section of this chapter, I have argued that Nietzsche is deeply critical of von Ranke's historicism, namely of the idea that it is possible to reconstruct the past,

[44] Leiter (2002: 38-9) provides a brief analysis of this passage and connects it with Nietzsche's 'political realism'. Nietzsche's praise for the culture of realism also extends to Machiavelli and his famous work *The Prince*. For a useful survey on realism in the realm of politics and international relations, see Mearsheimer (2003: 33-8).

mostly though not entirely, in objective terms. However, as I have foreshadowed, it seems that Nietzsche is not simply outlining a *pars destuens* about ancient Greece, but also a *pars costruens.* Nietzsche writes almost as someone who knows what Greek culture is; although obviously this would amount to a rejection of his prior critique of objective philology and perspective knowledge. There is a way to reconcile this apparent contradiction, however.

A possible solution is to argue that Nietzsche's discussion of ancient Greece and his wider polemic with Neo-Classicism is driven by one of his key doctrines: 'the will to power' (*der Wille zur Macht*). Nietzsche does not claim what Greek culture is objectively, yet he attributes to the Greeks an incorporation into their culture one of his own concepts. Let us see what this concept is and how and why Nietzsche connects it to Greek culture.

In a brief and rather exhaustive form, in *The Twilight of the Idols* (X, 3) we can read: 'I saw the Greeks' strongest instinct (*Instinkt*), the will to power (*der Wille zur Macht*), I saw them tremble in the face of the tremendous force of this drive'. The meaning of this passage is that, for Nietzsche, the will to power is a principle of activity, and in ancient Greece this principle fulfils a role that can explain certain phenomena in Greek culture. Yet, what is most crucial here is that, while the will to power is a doctrine that Nietzsche forms independently from his analysis of ancient Greece, it is a doctrine that can also shed light on its culture.

Over the course of his life, Nietzsche develops two versions of the will to power which articulate different, but nevertheless related, aspects of the same doctrine.[45] There is the biological doctrine, according to which power explains all organic phenomena. Next, there is the cosmic doctrine: every aspect of the world can be reduced to power. The intellectual context of the development of Nietzsche's will to power is also

[45] See the conceptual model elaborated by Young (2010: 534-47).

represented by two main concepts. The first of these is the 'the will to life' (*der Wille zum Leben*), as developed by Schopenhauer.[46] Schopenhauer notices how human beings cannot stop willing (*WWR* I, 29; 56). He attributes this to the will to life, which according to Schopenhauer forces every biological being to continue willing: 'Where there is will (*Wille*), there will be life (*Leben*) and world (*Welt*) as well' (I, 54). Moreover, the will to life is the principle to which the world in its entirety can be reduced or, to phrase this in another way, it is 'the thing in itself, the inner content, the essential aspect of the world' (I, 54). As a cosmic force, the will to life is blind and irrational (I, 57). Some concepts inherent to Darwinism influenced Nietzsche's doctrine of the will to power.[47] The fundamental idea of Darwinism is that species become and develop certain traits and that some species survive and others become extinct. The driving factor of evolution is a 'struggle for survival' (*Kampf um's Leben*) by which one creature's victory is another creature's loss. The field of application for the struggle for existence is biology: all biological phenomena can be explained in terms of survival.

In 1883, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, during the middle phase of his philosophical career, Nietzsche explicitly presents the will to power as a theory to rival to Schopenhauer's theory of the will to life. Later, in *The Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche would also cast his theory to rival the Darwinian notion of the struggle for existence.

> *Anti-Darwin.* As for the famous 'struggle for *life* (*Kampft um's Leben*)' so far it seems to me to be asserted rather than proved. It occurs but as exception; the total-aspect of life (*Leben*) is *not* distress, not huger, but rather riches, profusion, even absurd squandering—where there is struggle (*Kampf*), one struggle for *power* (*Macht*)…One should not mistake Malthus for nature. (*TI* IX, 14)
>
> Wherever I found the living (*Lebendinges*), there I found the will to power (*Wille zur Macht*) […] Only where life is, is there also will; but not will to life (*Wille zum Leben*), instead — thus I teach you — will to power! (Z II,

[46] See Reginster (2006: 124) and Janaway (2007: 150).
[47] On this topic see Richardson (2004: 19-63).

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The second statement should be read as a direct rejection of Schopenhauer's theory since, in articulating his concept, Nietzsche mirrors Schopenhauer's wording as used in *The World as Will and Representation*. The first statement above is directed against Darwinism, as its title *Anti-Darwin* makes clear. According to Nietzsche, all biological phenomena can be explained as a striving towards power, which means that there is a general tendency exhibited by each organism to grow and expand.

The two passages above are not the only places in which Nietzsche elaborates his biological theory of the will to power, rather there are numerous passages where he significantly expands on this idea, especially with the published texts of *Beyond Good and Evil* and *The Genealogy of Morality.*

Some starting points that may shed light on Nietzsche's own understanding of this concept, as it applies to biology, are the statements that power is 'a fundamental organic function' (*organische Grundfunktion*) (*BGE* 259) and that power is the 'truly basic life-instinct' (*Lebens-Grundtrieb*) (*GS* 349). The key idea that may be gleaned from these remarks is that living beings are biologically driven not by an instinct for survival as such, as the Darwinians and Schopenhauer claim, but towards the enhancement of their power. Nietzsche describes the goal of power and of its increase as the 'disposition' (*Wesen*) of 'being alive' (*Lebendigen*), which is to say that the tendency towards power and the resulting consequences of power struggles, and the overpowering and exploitation among animals, including human beings, in part at least fundamentally constitutes life itself (*BGE* 259).

Hence, for Nietzsche, the entire collection of biological phenomena does not exhibit a struggle for survival as such but a power struggle. Species do not struggle to replicate themselves into the future; rather their goal is to grow stronger and more

powerful. In this sense, Nietzsche assigns to power a structural role in his theory of biology because it is what regulates the theory of evolution and displaces the Darwinian notion of survival.[48]

Rather than referring to exploitation and domination, Nietzsche uses the term 'life' (*Leben*) as shorthand to describe these concepts. The reason for this terminological choice is explained in a passage of *Beyond Good and Evil* (259): the term exploitation as well its cognate words have been used with 'slanderous intentions from time immemorial' and this would probably result in the fact that, if called with the same terms, his principle would be likewise viewed in negative terms. The term 'life' is, therefore, likely to have a more positive reception among his readers. Yet even the term life does not fully capture the idea that Nietzsche wants to put forward. Therefore, Nietzsche looks for a 'more specific formulation (*bestimmtere Fassung*) of the concept of "life"' (*Leben*) and finds it in the concept of 'the will to power' (*der Wille zur Macht*) (*WP*, 254). What Nietzsche thinks the concept of 'the will to power' expresses and that is lacking in the term 'life' is the voluntarism at the basis of biology. This is the notion that there is a blind 'will' (*Wille*) that compels every biological phenomenon to aim at power, a concept that he borrows from Schopenhauer.

As noted earlier, although Nietzsche's will to power is developed independently, it stands to shed a light on certain aspects of Greek culture. Consider some examples of the savage, violent and brutal actions of archaic Greece. Achilles' desecration and mocking of Hector's body is his way to reaffirm his domination. The Athenian ambassadors' harsh reply to the Melians that their city should either submit to Athenian rule or face immediate destruction is, once again, an affirmation of power. All such former events can now be explained in light on Nietzsche's doctrine of the will to power.

[48] See Richardson (2004: 58-9). Whether Nietzsche succeeds in showing that this is the case or that this is even a credible doctrine is open to debate.

If all life is an expression of a power struggle, then it is only natural that certain elements of Greek culture also reflect this biological principle. In other words, Nietzsche claims that the cruel, barbaric and domineering actions typical of the archaic and classical Greeks can be understood in light of the wider context of life's tendency to grow and expand.

Furthermore, Nietzsche's analysis includes artistic or intellectual aspects of Greek culture. In fact, Nietzsche claims that the will to power, though understood at a general level, has certain characteristics that can be framed with artistic and intellectual creation. Consider that in two related passages of *Beyond Good and Evil* (257, 9) Nietzsche claims, first, that the will to power reflects 'spiritual (*seelischen*), not physical strength' and, secondly, that 'philosophy is this tyrannical drive itself, the most intellectual (*geistigste*) will to power'. Therefore, the will to power is a doctrine that can be easily framed through Nietzsche's discussion of ancient philosophers, such as Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists.

The will to power also plays an important role as a prescriptive norm. While we may effectively strive towards power, Nietzsche points out that we ought to do so because power is the fundamental standard of our value. A statement of *The Antichrist* (2) defines 'good' (*gut*) and 'bad' (*schlecht*) as everything that, respectively, enhances and hinders the quantity of power. Therefore, for Nietzsche, the will to power is what also defines the hierarchy of our values; it is, therefore, what we should strive to enhance and realise.[49]

The normative quality and function of the will to power is particularly important. Nietzsche describes the Greek philosophers as not simply theoretical, impersonal and disinterested thinkers, but rather as figures that also act as role models (*HH* I, 261).[50] Nietzsche invokes the same idea while discussing Heraclitus and Pyrrho. For instance, in the case of Heraclitus, Nietzsche argues that he is a figure that should be emulated. Heraclitus, unliked Socrates, is able to reach the correct balance between rationalism and

[49] See Hussain (2011: 146).
[50] See Panaïoti (2019: 48).

mysticism, between reason and the instincts of powers (*BT* 13; *PTAG* 5). As for Pyrrho, in note 437 of *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche argues that Pyrrho was not a wise thinker as he adopted the goal of abolishing suffering. Nietzsche's reasoning is that Pyrrho's attempt to abolish suffering would remove the conditions that foster power and, ultimately, greatness.

In addition to the biological will to power, there is also the cosmic will to power. Nietzsche mostly elaborates the cosmic version of this doctrine during the later phase of his life. We know that in 1886 Nietzsche draws a plan for a work called *The Will to Power* (*WP* 69), *The Attempt at a Revaluation of all Values.* This work, which was supposed to be a summary of Nietzsche's thought, was centred around the key doctrine of the will to power, understood as a cosmic principle, but it would never be published.[51]

After 1886, we keep finding numerous mentions of the will to power as a cosmic principle in the unpublished material. There is only one occurrence of the cosmic will to power in the published material: note 36 of *Beyond Good and Evil* (36). This passage ends with the tentative idea that 'the world (*die Welt*) seen from inside, the world determined and described with respect to its "intelligible character"—would be just this 'will to power' (*Wille zur Macht*) and nothing else'. Focusing on the passage in its entirety, Richardson notices that Nietzsche seems to link the will to power to a theory popular throughout the 17th and 18th centuries known as 'pre-formationism' (or 'pre-formism') according to which all the parts of any organism exist in a rudimentary form in the egg or in the sperm.[52] Indeed, *Beyond Good and Evil* (36) argues for the existence of:

> …a primitive form of the world of affect (*primitivere Welt der Affekte*), where everything is contained in a powerful unity before branching off

[51] See Young (2010: 534-5) for the genesis of the concept of the cosmic will to power.
[52] See Richardson (2004: 48) and *The Oxford English Dictionary*. For a graphic representation of a rudimentary form of man within human sperm, see Correira (1997).

> and organising itself in the organic process (and, of course, being softened and weakened –) […] as a kind of life of the drives, where all the organic functions (self-regulation, assimilation, nutrition, excretion, and metabolism) are still synthetically bound together – as a pre-form of life (*Vorleben*)? (cf. *WP* 688)

According to Nietzsche, the will to power plays the role of the pre-formed inorganic force that sustains a living organism by ramifying into the various organic functions. Within living beings, there is a primeval striving for power which directs all the other organic functions, including nutrition: 'hunger (*Hunger*) is a specialised and later form of the drive, an expression of a division of labour in the service of a higher drive that rules over it', which is a striving towards power (*WP* 651). Such emphasis on the existence of a primitive force that can explain the inorganic as well as the organic aspects of the world commits Nietzsche a version of essentialism: through the cosmic will to power he is claiming that he has discovered the essence of nature, in a similar way to Schopenhauer with his will to life.

Yet, as Janaway notes, it is contentious whether Nietzsche genuinely commits to a cosmic theory of the will to power.[53] Pre-formism, the underpinning cosmic doctrine that influenced Nietzsche, gradually lost its appeal in the 19th century. It seemed more and more implausible that there should be a pre-formed inorganic matter directing organic functions after it had ramified into the organism. Moreover, the hypothetical language that Nietzsche uses throughout the passage of *Beyond Good and Evil* (36) recommends caution when considering the cosmic will to power. For instance, Nietzsche begins the passage with the term 'assuming' (*Gesetzt*) and ends with the sentence that the world 'would be' (*wäre*) will to power. Thus, Nietzsche himself seems particularly cautious when proposing the thesis of the will to power as a cosmic force that would mirror the metaphysical flavour of Schopenhauer's will to life.

[53] See Janaway (2007: 154-7).

A reason that can explain this uncharacteristic caution on Nietzsche's behalf is that it could be seen as a violation of his commitment to perspectivism, which is endorsed in *Beyond Good and Evil* and *On the Genealogy of Morality.* Note 36 of *Beyond Good and Evil* ends with the specific claim that the 'intelligible character' (*intelligiblen Charakter*) of the world would be the will to power, and yet this is the same concept attributed to Kant and then criticised by Nietzsche as a violation of perspectivism. The 'intelligible character' is, in fact, similar in content as the idea that one could see the world as from 'God's eye view'. The doctrine of a cosmic will to power, thus, mirrors a similar dynamic given that it presupposes the existence of a principle to which everything can be reduced, that exists out of time and space, similar to God and is, in effect, knowable. However, Nietzsche's doctrine of perspectivism implies that it is impossible for us to know anything that falls outside our own perspective, including therefore the cosmic will to power.

It is noteworthy that Nietzsche makes numerous mentions of the will to power as a cosmic force, especially in the unpublished work of *The Will to Power*. This is because it shows how there is a sense in which the concept of the comic will to power plays a role in Nietzsche's though, even if he commits to it only hypothetically in the public material. The most important of these passages is note 1067 of *The Will to Power* which mirrors note 36 of *Beyond Good and Evil,* even the Nietzsche who pens it down is discernibly more ecstatic and less prudent:

> And do you know what "the world" (*die Welt*) is to me? Shall I show it to you in my mirror? This world: a monster of energy, without beginning, without end […] a play (*Spiel*) of forces and waves of forces (*Kraftwellen*) […] 'a becoming (*Werden*) that knows no satiety, no disgust, no weariness […] *This world is the will to power (der Wille zur Macht) — and nothing besides*! *And you yourselves are also this will to power—and nothing besides!*

In this passage, we can detect three functions of the will to power. The first is that it expresses Nietzsche's theory of becoming, including the notion that the will to power is

all-encompassing as it includes even inorganic material. For the thesis' purposes this aspect is significant because it pertains directly to the nature of Nietzsche's reception of Heraclitus. In the Basel lecture, especially in the collection of the *Pre-Platonic Philosophers* (60), Nietzsche attributes to Heraclitus the idea that the world is in a state of flux, called 'all things flow' (*πάντα ῥεῖ*). Nietzsche makes this attribution due to notion that there is a presence of unidentified 'forces' (*Kräfte*) that always strive for more power, namely 'wills to power'. For Nietzsche, this shows that Heraclitus is one of the few figures in the history of philosophy who does not believe in the metaphysical tradition which began with Plato and Socrates, and was then passed down to Christianity.

The second function of a cosmic will to power can be understood in reference to Nietzsche's critique of Christian anthropocentrism.[54] According to Christian theorists, man is 'the crown of creation' (*A* 14; 15). As it is written in the Bible, this role has been handed to him directly by God who made him the ruler of all the animals. According to Nietzsche, the theory of the will to power shows that this belief is wrong. Man is on the same level as all other animals because they are all made of the same matter: the will to power. [55] The importance of the refutation of Christian anthropocentrism is that Nietzsche projects it onto Heraclitus during his discussion of Heraclitus' conflagration near the end of the Basel lecture.

The third role that the cosmic will to power plays in Nietzsche's thought is related to his rejection of teleology. Especially in the later phase of his career, Nietzsche becomes increasingly vocal about the Christian 'imaginary teleology (*Teleologie*)', such as 'the

[54] An important *caveat* to this characterisation is that the same role can be played by the biological version of the will to power. I will attribute the biological and not the cosmic to Nietzsche's reception of the Pyrrhonists.

[55] It is worth observing, however, that there is also a sense in which man is vastly different from a blade of grass or a cat. Man has more 'spirituality' (*Geistigkeit*) which places him higher in the hierarchy of beings than animals: human beings, for instance, can practice philosophy, which is the 'most spiritual' form of the will to power (*A* 14; *BGE* 19).

kingdom of God' or 'the eternal life' (*A* 15). As we can read in the unpublished note 1067 of *The Will to Power*, the world has no 'purpose' (*Ziel*) given that it is nothing but a constant 'play' (*Spiel*) of an irrational force: power. In the Basel lectures, Nietzsche attributes to Heraclitus the idea that there is no telos in the world because of what follows from his doctrine of conflagration. Heraclitus' notion of 'play' (*παιδιά*) serves a key role: the world lacks any purpose because the activity of the Heraclitean principle of fire is a playful activity that mirrors the constant play of the Nietzschean principle of will to power (*PPP* 72-3).

In brief, Nietzsche's doctrine of the will to power has many functions in his thought. As for its biological version, it refutes the idea that living organisms aim at survival; they pursue power instead. When it comes to the cosmic will to power, this notion allows Nietzsche to shed further light on the role of the drives and, most importantly, to argue for the becoming nature of the world, to refute Christian anthropocentrism and the Christian belief in the overall existence of a goal in the world.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored Nietzsche's relationship with philology. My main argument has been that Nietzsche's understanding of philology is different from the 19th *wissenschaftlich* German tradition because it is motivated by many of his independently developed doctrines, such as the doctrine of perspectives and the will to power. Nietzsche's aim is to reflect on what it means to study the past, what are the correct methods of doing so and what we can learn from the past. Another important aspect to bear in mind, which I have emphatically underlined in the chapter, is that there are numerous instances in which the doctrines of perspectivism and the will to power are relevant to Nietzsche's reception of Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists.

In the first section of this chapter, I considered Nietzsche's discussion of philology.

I observed how Nietzsche is motivated by his epistemic doctrine of perspectivism, which I argued deepens his critique of an objective reconstruction of the past. This is due to the doctrine of perspectivism rejecting the existence of objective knowledge. While the primary target of Nietzsche's account is Kant's idealism, I also argued that another important polemical target of his doctrine is Christian philology. As Christian philologists often appeal to the Bible as the revealed word of God in order to justify their interpretations, Nietzsche's doctrine of perspectivism weighs heavily against their interpretations.

Another topic that is relevant to perspectivism and which I have discussed here is the role that the affects play in knowledge acquisition. I surveyed Nietzsche's argument that our affects are not only the basis of our knowledge, but that when properly managed also offer important epistemic benefits. The stimulation of our affects, especially those that vary significantly from each other, may bring to attention aspects of a given topic that would usually be difficult to notice. The goal that Nietzsche has in mind is to show that his idea of perspectivism and the epistemic gains it may offer are inconsistent with the impersonal and rigorous method of investigation used by 19th century philologists. As will be discussed, it is relevant to note here that perspectivism will also play a role for Nietzsche's reception of the Heraclitean writing style in addition to the Pyrrhonian argument regarding the relativity of perception.

The second section of my analysis concerned Nietzsche's view of Greek culture and how it was informed by his doctrine of the will to power. I examined Nietzsche's wider polemic with Winckelmann's Neo-Classicism and, in particular, I focused on Nietzsche's claim that Greek culture, alongside the moral values of humanism, pity and compassion, also involved other aspects such as hatred and savagery. Furthermore, I argued that this claim can be explained in light on how Nietzsche reads into Greek culture

his doctrine of the will to power, as understood in terms of the biological interpretation of that doctrine.

Nietzsche's goal was to explain how the defining characteristic of the biological interpretation of the will to power, life's fundamental tendency to enhance and grow, is instantiated in the aspects of ancient Greek culture detailed earlier, such as violence, domination and subjugation. As will be discussed below, Nietzsche's reception of Heraclitus and Pyrrhonism also seems to be influenced by his doctrine of the will to power, however, in these cases it is predominantly, though not entirely, the cosmic interpretation of that doctrine that applies. The doctrine, then, plays a role in illuminating the position of mankind in the hierarchy of being and, moreover, in addressing the question of whether there is a goal in the world.

2 The Pyrrhonists and Pyrrho

Introduction

This chapter conducts an analysis of Pyrrhonism according to the standards of modern scholarship. This involves presenting the ideas, arguments and the ways of life by which Pyrrhonism is associated on their own terms, as opposed to using such notions to advance any particular philosophical agenda. As I will observe in this chapter and in the chapters to follow, Nietzsche's and modern scholars' discussions of Pyrrhonism differ significantly in this way. Nietzsche's reconstruction of the Pyrrhonists and of Pyrrho is motivated by his own doctrines, and most predominantly his notions of perspectivism and the will to power. Nietzsche's goal is to address, and ultimately solve, certain themes, ranging from Christian philology to the ideas of past thinkers, such as Socrates and Epicurus. The themes that will be discussed here match Nietzsche's own interests regarding the Pyrrhonists ideas and arguments in order to highlight the difference, in approach and analysis, with modern scholars.

In the first section, I will focus on the Pyrrhonian topic of 'suspension of judgement' (*ἐποχή* or *epochē*), the structure of the so-called 'Modes of suspension of judgement', and the notion of equipollence. I will elucidate how these concepts are connected to each other and how equipollence plays an especially important role in bringing about the suspension of judgement. This discussion relates to points made in the next chapter, where I will show that Nietzsche coins the term *ephexis* by drawing from the concept of *epochē*. However, as I will discuss, despite the conceptual and linguistic similarity between these terms, Nietzsche reads into the concept of *epochē* the grounds for his criticism of and polemic with Christian philology, changing its original meaning and scope.

In the second section of this chapter, I will discuss the Pyrrhonian 'way of life' (*ἀγωγή*), with a main focus on Pyrrho's goal of 'insensibility' (*ἀπάθεια* or *apatheia*) as distinct from the later Pyrrhonists' notion of the 'moderation of feeling' (*μετριοπάθεια* or *metriopatheia*). Pyrrho's goal, in addition to the Pyrrhonists' notion, concerns a state in which human emotions, such as angst and psychological pain, are eliminated. I argue that Pyrrho's goal, if realised, transforms human life into an inhuman condition precisely because it involves removing the emotions that play a positive role in life. Nietzsche also discusses the topic of Pyrrho's notion of *apatheia*. However, as I will demonstrate, Nietzsche does not only attributes to Pyrrho some of his own doctrines, such as nihilism and the role of suffering and the instincts, but he also draws a comparison between Pyrrho and other philosophical figures, such as Socrates and Epicurus regarding these themes.

Finally, I will address the Pyrrhonists' 10th Mode on ethical matters and their common way of life, which consists in the passive acceptance of traditional customs and laws, and the 'everyday observances' (*βιωτικὴ τήρησις*). I will show that the Pyrrhonists' endorsement of the passive acceptance of native customs and laws results in an undesirable form of conservatism. In the next chapter, I will draw attention to the way in which Nietzsche embeds the Pyrrhonian passive acceptance of traditional habits and customs into his discussion of the revaluation of values. Nietzsche's goal is to show that the Pyrrhonian passive acceptance of traditional customs would be hard to square with his attempt to radically transform our values.

2.1 The Pyrrhonian suspension of judgement

The first topic I will discuss is the Pyrrhonian 'suspension of judgement' (*ἐποχή*) and its place within the Pyrrhonism school of thought, especially as it is related to the Modes of suspension of judgement and the concept of 'equipollence' (*ἰσοσθένεια*). In the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, which is the most comprehensive source text for the topic of

ancient Pyrrhonism, Sextus Empiricus maintains that the goal of the Pyrrhonian 'way' (*ἀγωγή*) is, as I will discuss further, a mental state of 'tranquillity' (*ἀταραξία*) that brings to an end anxiety and concerns (*PH* I, 8; 12).[56] Such state is obtained through another state, which Sextus calls 'suspension of judgement' (*ἐποχή*) on how things are (*PH* I, 26, 29-31, 205) which, in turn, is brought about by 'equipollence' (*ἰσοσθένεια*). Equipollence is the property of arguments or appearances that are the objects of undecidable, or not yet conclusively decided upon, 'controversies' (*διαφωνίαι ἀνεπικρίτοι*) (*PH* I, 31-5; III, 197-234).

The most important aspect of the chain of steps that eventually leads to the *epochē* is the philosophical investigation from which it begins.[57] Indeed, philosophical investigation presents such an important part of Pyrrhonism that we find it right at the beginning of the *Outlines* (I, 1-4). Sextus appeals to the Pyrrhonian activity of enquiry in order to distinguish the Pyrrhonists from other thinkers. In virtue of their *epochē*, the Pyrrhonists do not claim to have found 'the truth' (*τὸ ἀληθὲς*) and, therefore, continue to pursue it.[58] By contrast, the Dogmatists and the Academics, respectively, believe that they have discovered the truth, or that the truth cannot be known. Hence, inquiries ceased for both groups of thinkers. It is precisely the polemical context of the comparison with other philosophical schools that explains also Diogenes' report in the *Lives* (IX, 69-70). According to Diogenes, Pyrrhonism can be called 'investigative' (*ζητητικὴ*) due to its requiring of its followers constant investigation, it is 'suspensive' (*ἐφεκτικὴ*) as it induces a suspension of the state of mind that is obtained after enquiry, and finally, Pyrrhonism is 'aporetic' (*ἀπορητικὴ*) as it cultivates a habit of expressing doubts about everything, including a constant indecisiveness as to whether to assent or deny.

[56] Pyrrhonism shares this aim with Epicureanism cf. Epicurus (*Ad Hdt.* 82; *Ad Men.* 128).
[57] On this point see Barnes (1997: 59).
[58] See Perin (2010: 8-9) for whom this is an essential part of Pyrrhonism.

The state of mind of *epochē* follows from the philosophical investigation of conflicting views or arguments. According to Sextus' definition, Pyrrhonism is nothing but the 'ability (*δύναμις*) to set out oppositions among things which appear and are thought of in any way at all' (*PH* I, 8).[59] This is to say that Pyrrhonists are able to make explicit the conflicting nature of appearances and arguments that are the objects of philosophical investigation.

In the *Outlines*, there are numerous arguments that Sextus called, collectively, 'the Modes of Aenesidemus' the purpose of which is to induce a suspension of judgement about how things are. The 5th Mode, for instance, regards how the same object appears different depending from different 'positions and intervals and places' (*PH* I, 118-23). As far as the intervals are concerned, we can read that:

> the same colonnade appears foreshortened when seen from one end, but completely symmetrical when seen from the middle. The same boat appears from a distance small and stationary, but from close at hand large and in motion. The same tower appears from a distance round, but from close at hand square.

The meaning of the passage is rather straightforward: objects appear different depending on the perspective from which they are observed. For Sextus, we must suspend judgement as to whether they are such as they appear to be. According to Sextus, we have no reason to assign epistemic priority to one appearance over another. It is easy to see that, for Sextus, the most important reason to suspend judgement is related to the epistemic relationship between us as observers and the things that are being observed.

However, it is not merely regarding objects that Sextus believes we ought to suspend judgement. Moral views and behaviours are included within that category. For instance, the 10th Mode consists in a detailed record of conflicting moral views and behaviours from the point of view of different ways of 'acting' (*ἀγωγαὶ*), 'customs' (*ἔθη*)

[59] On this topic see Hankinson (1995: 46).

and ‘laws’ (*νόμοι*) (*PH* I, 145-63). Consider the following instances of disagreement that Sextus observes:

> Some of the Ethopians tattoo their babies, while we do not; the Persians deem it becoming to wear bright-coloured full-length dressed, while we deem it unbecoming, Indians have sex with women in public, while most other people hold that it is shameful. We oppose law to law like this: in Rome anyone who renounces his father’s property does not rely his debts, while in Rhodes he repays them come what may. (I, 148-9)

Sextus intends these examples to lead us to suspend judgement as to whether anything is good or bad. Whether we are dealing with actual objects or views, as numerous authors from Annas and Barnes to Hankinson have argued, the structure of the Mode does not change.[60] The starting point for Pyrrhonism is first and foremost an ‘ability’ (*δύναμις*), which consists in ‘set[ting] out oppositions among things which appear and are thought of in any way at all’ (*PH* I, 8). The aim of this ability is to outline the existence of ‘conflicting accounts’ (*διαφωνίαι ἀνεπικρίτοι*) that are ‘equipollent’ (*ἰσοσθένεια*), namely equally convincing. The result is to arrive at a state of *epochē*, which is identified as the withholding of denials or affirmations regarding how things are. To illustrate this, consider where *x* appears *F* relative to *A*, whereas *x* appears *F** relative to *B*.[61] Say that the two different variables, *A* and *B*, change, whether they are positions or perspectives, as in the 5th Mode, or customs or laws, in the case of the 10th Mode. The relationship between *F* and *F** must, then, be one of mutual discord: they must either openly contradict each other or represent incompatible properties. The tower, for instance, may be said to be round in one case and square in another. Similarly, different people may have completely opposite habits: the Egyptians do not think it reprehensible that their children have tattoos on their skin, whereas the Greeks are of an opposite view. For Sextus, the issue that results from objects appearing different from different locations

[60] See Annas and Barnes (1985: 156-71) and Hankinson (1995: 155-83).
[61] See Hankinson (1995: 155-83).

and views being different among different people is that there are perpetual disputes on which views are correct. Among other reasons, it is impossible to resolve such disputes because they apply to the past, the present and even the future (*PH* I, 33-4, 89; II, 40). Yet, such disputes must also be considered in light of another important aspect of Pyrrhonism. As Sextus reports, the Pyrrhonists do not investigate the appearances as such (*PH* I, 19-20). That the appearances exist is a matter that is not open to debate. Instead, the Pyrrhonists conduct careful investigations as to whether the appearances can accurately describe what they call the 'the external object' (*ὑποκειμένον*). In the *Outlines*, Sextus elucidates this with the example of the apparent sweetness of honey: 'it appears to us that honey sweetens (we concede this inasmuch as we are sweetened in a perceptual way); but whether (as far as the argument goes) it is actually sweet is something we investigate (*ζητοῦμεν*)' (*PH* I, 19-20). This description, accordingly, matches the proviso of Pyrrhonism, which is to report 'descriptively' (*ἱστορικῶς*) about what appears to them to be the case (*PH* I, 4).

Sextus emphasises, first and foremost, that two appearances that are openly in conflict with one another bring us to a state of suspension of judgement via equipollence. A question that should now be addressed regards the state of suspension of judgement and how is it is effectively invoked. We have already seen that the property of argument of equipollence plays a key role (*PH* I, 31-5). Let us now see a more concrete example of how that occurs. Consider, for instance, the topic of Providence: 'against those who seek to establish that there is Providence from the orderliness of the heavenly bodies, we oppose the view that often the good do badly while the bad do well and conclude from this that there is no Providence' (*PH* I, 32). Thus, the presence of two, conflicting accounts on the existence of divine Providence introduces doubt in either case, making each equally believable. One thus faced with the equipollence of arguments is, then, in a

state of intellectual standstill or *epochē*; one neither affirms nor denies that divine Providence exists. The question, however, is on what grounds we are forced to accept the conclusion to suspend judgement.

On first consideration, it may seem difficult to provide a clear-cut answer to this question. The Pyrrhonists articulate some arguments pro and contra some topics, which are outlined in the 10 Modes, with the aim of suspending judgement. However, the Pyrrhonists do not present arguments, as such, in favour of their conclusion for the suspension for judgement; in numerous passages of the *Outlines* (I, 100; 163) we are simply told that we 'end up (*καταλὴγομεν εις*) with suspension of judgement'. Williams and Bett, alternatively, have argued that *epochē* follows from equipollence, yet they assert that this occurs without the presence of purely rational grounds. Instead, one is driven by a psychological feeling of indecisiveness to neither assent nor deny.[62] As seen earlier, Sextus defines Pyrrhonism as the 'ability' (*δύναμις*) to bring about equipollence, an ability which is characterised in rather minimal terms, as in 'we call it an ability (*δύναμις*) not in any fancy sense, but simply in the sense of being able to' (*PH* I, 8). Such an ability to oppose a given account is not, therefore, rational in nature. This ability pertains to a 'know-how' rather than a 'know-that' sort of behaviour, given that it does not require one to act rationally in order to bring about a certain outcome. Sextus' description of the Pyrrhonists matches precisely this characterisation: 'a Pyrrhonian is someone who possesses this ability (*δύναμις*)' (I, 11). In other words, the Pyrrhonists are defined as being those who are capable of bringing about a certain result, which to say that they may generate opposing arguments out of which the state of suspension of judgement follows.

Indeed, this aligns with Sextus' from the beginning of the *Outlines* (I, 12): 'the chief constitutive principle (*ἀρχὴ*) of Pyrrhonism is the claim that to every account an

[62] See Bett (2019: 114-6 and 230) and Williams (1988: 552-5).

equal account is opposed'. The reason why equipollence takes on a high level of significance is that it is from the equal credibility of two accounts, say, of accounts of the existence or absence of divine Providence that the state of suspension of judgement comes to be induced. The state of being psychologically undecided between two options leads, then, to the result that we neither assent nor deny. The endpoint is, of course, peace of mind or, as Sextus alternatively terms this, *ataraxia*, the topic to which we now turn.

2.2 The Pyrrhonian goal

In this section, I will discuss the topic of the Pyrrhonian 'way of life' (*ἀγωγή*), which is an aspect of Pyrrhonism of critical importance. The Pyrrhonists' goal is, first and foremost, not simply a theoretical activity but also and most importantly a practical and prescriptive endeavour that describes how one ought to live.[63] Nietzsche himself analyses this particular aspect and, thus, shall be investigated here. However, as I will show in the next section, Nietzsche primarily focuses on Pyrrho's particular way of life as distinct from the Pyrrhonists'. Moreover, Nietzsche projects onto Pyrrho's goal some of his own concepts, such as nihilism and the theory of the drives, and his goal is to highlight the kind of relationship that Pyrrho has with two other philosophers, Socrates and Epicurus.

A literal translation of the Greek term 'tranquillity' (*ἀταραξία*) is 'lack of worry' or 'absence of trouble' due to the privative alpha. Therefore, the idea conveyed by the Pyrrhonian goal is a state in which one is free from psychological troubles and anxiety that generally affect the individual. Here, it is important to observe that the goal of tranquillity, or of *ataraxia*, is not unique to Pyrrho or the Pyrrhonists. The concept of tranquilly is shared by other Hellenistic schools. In the *Letters to Menoeceus* (128) and

[63] See Ioli (2003: 401–28).

Herodotus (82), for instance, Epicurus argues that tranquillity is the goal of life.[64] However, the originality of the Pyrrhonists' doctrine consists in the reason that invokes the state where one may be free from anxiety. As Sextus explains at the very beginning of the *Outlines* (I, 1-3), the difference between Pyrrhonism and its neighbouring philosophical schools is that the Pyrrhonists are 'still investigating' (*ζητοῦσι*) due to their suspension of judgement on how things are. At this point, a question is raised as to what extent Pyrrho's and Sextus' goals of tranquillity bears similarity.

Let us start by surveying Pyrrho's goal. In the *Lives* (IX, 63-6), Diogenes records numerous anecdotes concerning Pyrrho's state of mind, especially regarding his serenity and calmness. There are three different pieces of information that the accounts mentioned in the *Lives* give us about Pyrrho's state of mind. First, Pyrrho displayed 'indifference' (*ἀδιαφορία*) about many things, including when his friend Anaxarchus fell into a ditch, when he cleaned his house, washed pigs, and travelled to the marketplace to sell livestock. Second, there is Pyrrho's concept of 'insensibility' (*ἀπάθεια*). Pyrrho's state of mind is described by Cicero with the following words: 'Pyrrho, on the other hand, held that the wise man does not even perceive (*ne sentire*) these things with his senses – the name for this insensibility is *apatheia* (*ἀπάθεια*)'. Similarly, Diogenes records an anecdote in which 'septic salves and surgical and cystic remedies were applied to a wound he [Pyrrho] had sustained, he did not so much as frown' (Cicero *Acad.* II, 130 and DL IX, 66, respectively). Finally, we find in the *Lives* a colourful anecdotal story about Pyrrho's trip in a ship to an unnamed location. Surprised by storm during this trip, Pyrrho remained 'calm' (*γαληνὸς*) and he pointed to a nearby unperturbed animal signalling that this is the

[64] As for the more distant origin of the philosophical notion of tranquility, it has been claimed that both Epicureanism and Pyrrhonism have derived it from Democritus' ideas of 'cheerfulness' (*εὐθυμία*), 'imperturbability' (*ἀθαμβία*) and 'serenity' (*γαλήνη*). (cf. DK 68 B191; DL 9.45=DK 68 A1; Cicero, *Fin* 5.87=DK 68 A169). On these issues, see Sedley (1983: 21); Striker (1990: 98-10); Nussbaum (1994: 286) and Warren (2002: 29-71).

state that the 'sage' (*σοφός*) should have. According to Posidonius, this state is 'tranquillity' (*ἀταραξία*), whereas for Plutarch it is 'insensibility' (*ἀπάθεια*) (Posidonius *apud* DL IX, 66; Plutarch *Prof. virt.* 82e-f).

The common aspects of these stories is that Pyrrho has an extraordinary state of mind. Pyrrho does not seem to have human emotions, such as shame and pity or even fear and anxiety, even in the face of dangerous and distressing situations.[65] There are three aspects worth noticing about these anecdotes. First, Pyrrho does not feel the human emotion of shame and this is evident from his indifference, both in washing his livestock and then in selling them in the marketplace. These may seem as trivial points, however, they held great significance for the ancient world it was particularly unusual for someone who deemed himself a 'sage' (*σοφός*) to be involved in such professions.[66]

Yet, it is precisely for this reason that we can see how Pyrrho's peace of mind and indifference represent a state in which there are no human emotions, especially in this case shame. Pyrrho, in other words, sees an activity that would be regarded by others as emotionally charged, especially with negative connotations, as indifferent. That is why, when it comes to those activities that literally involve getting one's hands dirty, Pyrrho not only does not shy away from them, but his reactions are devoid of shame or awkwardness. There are no emotions that Pyrrho displays while performing these tasks; he does not show human feelings of shame or humiliation as would be the case for others. Therefore, Pyrrho also lacks the gripping feeling of anxiety and worry that could emerge as a result of being judged by onlookers. He is simply indifferent.

Another characteristic of Pyrrho's state of mind is an absence of fear and pity. The episode regarding Anaxarchus is particularly telling in that regard. Pyrrho does not offer

[65] See Bett (2000b: 102-3).
[66] It is noteworthy that the Pyrrhonists, unlike ancient philosophers in general, were tolerant in terms of allowing their followers to be employed in professions. Most famously, Sextus Empiricus was a medical practitioner (*M.* I, 99; V, 1-3; DL IX, 116).

any assistance to his friend Anaxarchus in the situation in which the latter fell into the ditch, which is when Anaxarchus needed it the most. Pyrrho, in other words, displays no emotional attachment towards his friend whatsoever, even to the extent that in a dangerous situation he refrains from helping Anaxarchus. Notably, even his friend Anaxarchus retrospectively praised Pyrrho for his inactive behaviour. If Pyrrho had acted to help Anaxarchus, this could have been interpreted as an indication of pity on Pyrrho's behalf and thus as a break in his indifference, which is why even Anaxarchus praised Pyrrho for his inaction. In a few words, the rather colourful Anaxarchus anecdote shows that Pyrrho lacks the human emotion of pity and displays indifference even in situations in which most people would rush to offer assistance.

A similar kind of dynamic, although one that regards the emotion of fear, is displayed in the anecdote of the boat. We are told that Pyrrho retains his peace of mind, even in the face of the prospect that the boat in which he is traveling might capsize. In this account, Pyrrho lacks fears and is, thus, capable of remaining indifferent to the psychological anxiety that might be caused by the awareness of a potentially dangerous situation. Regarding this phenomenon, Pyrrho signals that it is an animal's condition as the state that one should strive towards. The animal, which in this case is a 'little pig' (*χοιρίδιον* or *δελφάκιον*), does not feel any fear even during a situation as dangerous as a storm. Instead, the pig would continue unperturbed, to munch its food. Pyrrho held interesting reasons as to why an animal's condition represents the state that one should aim for: this is the perfect embodiment of a state in which human emotions are absent, especially strong feelings such as fear.

A further aspect of these anecdotes that should be investigated here is Diogenes' and Cicero's reports on Pyrrho's attitudes and reactions to physical pain. Pyrrho's indifference is here credited to have an effect on the feeling of physical pain, as in the

case when surgery is performed on him. If we combine the two reports of Diogenes and Cicero, we glean the following picture. Some kind of surgery is performed on Pyrrho but he remains insensible to the feeling of pain, even to the extent of not moving his eyebrows. Moreover, the state of Pyrrho's *apathia* is interpreted as the state of not 'feeling' (*sentire*). Pyrrho is insensible to the feeling of physical pain and he is indifferent to it. In other words, even in the face of physical pain Pyrrho was capable of retaining his remarkable peace of mind.

However, in the *Lives*, Diogenes reports that on some occasions Pyrrho failed to retain the state of tranquillity that usually characterised him (DL IX, 66). We are told that once Pyrrho lost his temper in an episode related to someone's mockery of his sister. On another occasion, a wild dog surprised Pyrrho who, frightened, ran away to a tree. What is important about these stories is not merely that they vividly display how Pyrrho lost his peaceful state of mind, but that the stories also detail his philosophical response to these failures. Pyrrho is confronted with the fact that he was not able to retain his goal of *apatheia* and that, at least twice, he felt human emotions such as fear or anger. Diogenes reports that Pyrrho 'answered his critic that it was not entirely easy to strip oneself of the human (*τὸν ἄνθρωπον*), but one should strive with all one's might against facts (*πράγματα*), by deeds (*τοῖς ἔργοις*) if possible and if not in words (*τῷ λόγῳ*)' (DL IX, 66). This passage shows that despite the indisputable fact that Pyrrho gave in to worry and anxiety, his ultimate goal remained to be uprooting human emotions from his way of life. Pyrrho draws a distinction between theory and praxis. We should concede that, as humans, we are inevitably subject to experience psychological turmoil in certain situations. Most of the time, it is not difficult to suppress the human tendency to have emotions such as trouble and anxiety. Some of the stories reported by Diogenes can offer us some examples in which Pyrrho himself was able to be tranquil, despite facing highly

dangerous situations, such as being on a boat during stormy weather.

Yet, there are some occasions in which our inborn human aspects overturn our state of serenity and when we experience emotions such as fear or uneasiness. It is remarkable that Pyrrho himself admits that it is impossible to be tranquil in every possible situation. The instances recoded in the *Lives* related to Pyrrho's own life are when his sister was insulted and when he was surprised by the wild dog. According to Pyrrho, in such circumstances, we should appeal to theory, given that we have failed to retain our serenity in our everyday life. We should observe that our philosophy of life is directed towards the total suppression of human emotions and make clear that the only thing that stands in the way is our inborn human character. Even if we failed to retain peace of mind here and now, we can argue that our objective is nevertheless to strive towards the state of *apatheia,* that is, of total absence of human emotions.

In the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Sextus generally describes tranquillity as 'freedom from disturbance (*ἀοχλησία*) and calmness (*γαληνότη*) of soul' (*PH* I, 25); in more specific terms, Sextus states that

> The aim (*τέλος*) of the Pyrrhonists is tranquillity (*ἀταραξία*) in matters of opinion (*ἐν τοῖς κατὰ δόξαν*) and moderation of feeling (*μετριοπάθεια*) in matters forced upon us (*ἐν τοῖς κατηναγκασμένοις*). (*PH* I, 26; cf. *PH* I, 30)[67]

The part of Sextus' definition that interests us here is related to the pragmatic side of the Pyrrhonian goal. According to Sextus, the later Pyrrhonists are not completely 'unperturbed' (*ἀοχλητος*), but are disturbed by the so-called 'forced matters' (*οἱ κατηναγκασμένοι*), that is to say the 'feelings' (*πάθη*) which are forced on them: hunger,

[67] As Grgić (2006: 141-60) and Moller (2004: 438-9) observe, questions arise as to whether Sextus can genuinely have a *telos*. The definition we are given here is drawn from Dogmatic schools, such as Stoicism and Epicureanism (Cicero *Fin.* I, 12, 42; Arius *apud* Stobaeus, *Ecl.* II, 77.16-17, 131.2-4.). Sextus is, supposedly, to suspend judgement on this definition of the goal, given that failing to do so would make Pyrrhonism indistinguishable from other dogmatic schools, which is in contrast to what Sextus claims at the beginning of the *Outlines* (I, 1-4).

thirst or cold (*PH* I, 13). This is why the later Pyrrhonists possess a state of mind called 'moderation of feelings' (*μετριοπάθεια* or *metriopatheia*): the Pyrrhonists shiver, are hungry and experience physical pain.

Another important characteristic of *metriopatheia* is related to the distinction between Pyrrhonists and laymen. Even if the Pyrrhonists could not remain undisturbed in every way, according to Sextus they , nevertheless, experienced far less 'trouble' (*ταραχή*) than ordinary people.[68] Laymen are affected twice when it comes feelings to like hunger and pain: first, by the 'feelings' (*πάθη*) themselves and, secondly, by the 'additional opinion' (*προσδοξάζειν*) that these feelings are bad by nature (*PH* I, 30). As for this topic, Sextus underlines that the main characteristic of the Pyrrhonists, in comparison with 'laymen' (*ἰδιῶται*): by shedding the 'additional opinion (*προσδοξάζειν*) that each of these things is bad in its nature, the Pyrrhonists come off more moderately (*μετριώτερον*) even in these cases' (*PH* I, 30).

There are two ways in which moderation can be understood, however.[69] The first applies to the ability to withstand physical pain. The Dogmatists, due to their belief that pain is bad, experience a more pronounced level of trouble than the Pyrrhonists. While the Pyrrhonists are affected by pain, the Dogmatists are not only affected by pain but also by the psychological turmoil caused by the belief that such pain is bad by nature. An example Sextus reports to illustrate this point regards surgery: 'an additional opinion (*προσδοξάζειν*) about something is worse than actually feeling it: sometimes patients undergoing surgery or something of the kind bear it, while the onlookers faint because of their opinion that what is happening is bad (*φαύλος*)' (*PH* III, 236). Those who observe surgery have a different reaction than the patients themselves regarding situations where

[68] See Svarvasson (2015: 209).
[69] Svarvasson (2015: 209) only discusses the first aspect of Sextus' *metriopatheia*, namely that the Pyrrhonists are better off regarding the ability to withstand pain in comparison with laymen.

physical pain is involved. Even if the onlookers experience the feeling of pain only indirectly, they faint. The reason for this is that having the opinion that pain is bad is sufficient to trigger an emotional reaction.

The second aspect regarding *metriopatheia* highlighted by Sextus is related to the idea that there could be good or bad things by nature. Sextus reports that the Dogmatists claim that 'in the presence of what they deem to be natural evils they think that they are persecuted' (*PH* III, 237). However, according to Sextus, even when the Dogmatists are in possession of the good, they experience excess thrills or become afraid of losing their acquired state of joyfulness. By contrast, the Pyrrhonists have a more temperate reaction as they do not experience extreme states of emotion, such as the feeling of despair or exhilaration. The main point of this discussion is to show that, for Sextus, the Pyrrhonists' more moderate attitude to life places them in a preferable position, when compared to the Dogmatists on ethical matters. It is noteworthy here that if we draw a comparison with the Dogmatists, as Sextus actively encourages us to do, the Pyrrhonists have emotions in both senses, even if in a lesser degree. This is because the Sextan goal of *metriopatheia* does not entail the total abolition of emotions, but rather their moderation. In other words, human emotions are present in the way of life of the later Pyrrhonists, but they play a minor role in comparison to the role emotions play to the layman. As for the comparison of the later Pyrrhonists with Pyrrho, Sextus would surely concede that they are disturbed by things such as hunger and thirst. However, Sextus would also point out that this is a regrettable second-best outcome because the goal remains to be the total elimination of human feelings in order to reach a state of peace of mind.

2.2.1 The desirability of the Pyrrhonian goal

An issue that should be addressed regarding the goal of Pyrrhonism concerns its desirability. Even if it is taken for granted that the goal of freedom from worry is

achievable, questions remain as to whether that is a desirable goal to begin with. The reason for focusing on this particular topic is that Nietzsche seems to be asking himself the same kind of question regarding Pyrrho's goal of *apatheia* or 'insensibility'. The answer that Nietzsche gives to this question, as I will show in the next chapter, is very different from the arguments of Annas and Nussbaum that will be surveyed here. Nietzsche reads into Pyrrho a series of his own doctrines, ranging from nihilism, decadence and the role that suffering plays in one's life, to address and solve this issue. The answer is ultimately in the negative: Pyrrho's goal is undesirable and Pyrrho himself is a figure that should not be emulated, being a representative of Greek decadence.

Similarly, even if for different reasons, Annas and Nussbaum also argue that there are some reasons why we should not pursue the Pyrrhonian goal.[70] Their main argument is that tranquillity is an inhuman condition in that it aims at removing human emotions. In brief, Annas and Nussbaum argue that the goal of Pyrrhonism is undesirable as the removal of emotions from our life would lead it to becoming sterile and grey.

A preliminary consideration here is the prevalence of situations we can imagine in which human beings experience a wide range of psychological troubles and anxieties. These include the fear of bad outcomes we would like to avoid, feeling shame or being angry because of a wrongdoing that we think we received. Pyrrho's solution is that we should discard our emotions, be they anger, shame or fear. As for the emotion that we generally call shame, Pyrrho shows first-hand that one should not feel ashamed of anything, not even of performing the humblest jobs. Pyrrho also claims that we should not succumb to feeling fear either, that we ought to be as he was on the ship during the storm, described above, when he remained calm and gestured to an animal condition without emotions as the ideal state to be imitated. Finally, Pyrrho argues that we should

[70] See Annas (1993: 246-8) and Nussbaum (1994: 311-5).

have no anger, such as when he became angry because someone insulted his sister. On his view, we should always strive against our inborn human tendencies that drive us towards psychological turmoil.

It is immediately apparent that Pyrrho portrays the aforementioned emotions in a negative light. Shame alone, for instance, might prevent a person from performing certain actions and earning an income, thus placing them on a path of financial hardship. Moreover, in the case of Pyrrho, it is not apparent why an ancient thinker should not be able to spend time washing livestock to sell at the marketplace or, in any case, perform a given duty. Furthermore, the feeling of fear might paralyse one's actions; fear may lead one to requiring rescuing when they might otherwise be able to help others in need, such as in the case of the ship lost in the storm. Hence, in the event of an emergency, having a panic attack could prove to have a negative effect not only on ourselves but also on those around us.

However, as Annas and Nussbaum argue to great effect, it equally possible to make the case that, as attractive as it might sound, discarding the aforementioned emotions leads to some regrettable outcomes. First, let us take the case of shame. It is true that feeling ashamed has its downsides, but it can also be surprisingly useful. Without shame, in fact, there is also no remorse. If I do not feel ashamed of the wrongdoings I have committed then it is difficult to see how I could have remorse for those actions, which would be valuable insofar is it prevents me from repeating those mistakes. Being ashamed of our mistakes, then, helps us to become better individuals by motivating us to constantly improve ourselves and, thus, to endeavour not to make similar mistakes in the future.

By contrast, if we were able to remove this emotion from our psychological makeup, the results would be deeply regrettable. We would literally become shameless. It is likely that we would behave in ways that most people would find disturbing. We

would turn, I think, our existence into an empty shell. Without the feeling of shame, it is difficult to see how humans can be anything but automata. The reason is that a shameless person would behave in a way that is deprived of the basic norms of conducts which are probably expected of him. Our behaviour, in brief, would become erratic, and it is dubious to think that anyone would like to have a friend of this sort.

As for fear, it is true that discarding this human emotion might on first reflection seem to bring about certain positive results. Consider, for instance, Diogenes' report that Pyrrho himself travelled to India alongside Alexander's army. Traveling in the ancient world was a risky endeavour and this is especially true for a trip of this sort. It is easy to imagine that removing an emotion such as fear and substituting with it indifference might prove to be useful in this particular situation. However, it is equally true that fear has many advantages and that removing it would carry numerous negative consequences. First and foremost, the emotion of fear is not entirely unpleasant, as one could be led to believe: as such, it merely indicates that something might be dangerous and potentially lethal. Fear serves an important function in emphasising for us that there is something that we should avoid, if we want to stay safe and healthy. It is, therefore, advisable to follow, if possible, our instincts of fear. Being afraid during a raging storm is perfectly normal as it is a situation in which life is at risk. Imagine, then, someone with no fear whatsoever. It is likely that such a person would be completely reckless and would expose himself to all sorts of dangers and potentially lethal situations. That person might partake in extreme behaviour, such as descending a steep cliff without proper precautions or crossing a busy street without paying attention. It is easy to see why discarding the emotions, especially that of fear, would lead to such a great number of potential disadvantages that it is even difficult to list them.

There is, however, another criticism that can be pressed against the Pyrrhonian

goal that regards the concept of egotism, and this has been outlined by Annas.[71] Annas' thesis revolves around the fact that the solution that Pyrrhonism offers to solve our inner psychological turmoil is, ultimately, undesirable. The focus of the argument is that the Pyrrhonists are egotistical figures, as I will explain below. Let us consider the episode of Anaxarchus as reported by Diogenes, which is difficult to square with altruistic behaviour: Pyrrho chose not to help Anaxarchus and Anaxarchus subsequently praised Pyrrho for his indifference.

Two key points are particularly relevant to this issue. The first is the absence of the human feeling of pity. Pyrrho lacks the basic human emotions that would allow him to feel sorry for the unfortunate situation of his friend. The second point to note here is that Pyrrho did not offer any assistance to Anaxarchus. According to Annas, there is a connection between the two: if one lacks the emotion of pity then it is difficult to see how one would be compelled to act in a humane and altruistic way towards others.[72] Pyrrho simply lacks the emotional drive that would impel him to act in an altruistic manner towards his friend; without empathy, there can be no altruism because it provides the prerequisite that triggers the emotional response that drives a person towards helping another.

Nevertheless, it remains the case that rational argument may prompt a person to coming to the aid of those in need as opposed to being motivated by an emotional response. Thus, we might help others out of belief that it is the right thing to do rather than doing so in virtue of the emotion of pity. Yet, it is difficult to determine whether such behaviour could genuinely be considered as altruistic and humane, and not simply the outcome of a form of moral calculus. In the case of Anaxarchus, it is even possible to suppose that Pyrrho was engaged in a moral calculus of his own and that he, nevertheless,

[71] See Annas (1993: 246-8).
[72] See Annas (1993: 246-8).

did not help his friend. However, there would have been benefits in helping his friend Anaxarchus, in addition to the fact that it would have been the right thing to do. Helping him would have been a greatly appreciated gesture, and Anaxarchus would have probably done the same or at least returned the favour in the future. Yet, according to Pyrrho, there would have been one great disadvantage to helping Anaxarchus: losing his typical peace of mind. If Pyrrho had helped Anaxarchus, he would have succumbed to his human emotion of pity, as occurred in other episodes noted before in which he proved to have human emotions such as anger and fear. Therefore, even from a purely rational point of view, it did not make sense for Pyrrho to act altruistically towards Anaxarchus because the outcome would have meant losing his tranquillity. Acting out of pity would have implied the return of human emotions into his life and, therefore, of psychological worries, which was precisely what Pyrrho was trying to avoid.

In the case of the Pyrrhonian lack of emotion, there might be another side of the matter to consider. Annas argues that Pyrrho's reaction to another's psychological trouble is inhuman because it lacks the humane component of expressing emotional support and sympathy towards conditions of turmoil.[73] In other words, the Pyrrhonists might appear as aloof, cold and distanced precisely when they should not be so, namely when others' need substantial emotional support due to, say, a misfortune. Instead of offering solace or consolation for an unfortunate situation, all the Pyrrhonist seems to offer is an inhuman and cold receipt, and the abandonment of the belief that what happened was actually bad.

The 'casual principle' (*ἀρχή αἰτιώδη*) is the reason why the would-be Pyrrhonist decides to join Pyrrhonism: the goal of 'becoming tranquil' (*ἀταρακτήσειν*) (*PH* I, 12; 25). A key factor for reaching the state of *ataraxia* is the suspension of judgement on how things are. In the *Outlines* (I, 27), we can read the following passage on the reason why

[73] See Annas (1993: 247).

the Pyrrhonists are tranquil, unlike those who have strong opinions such as the Dogmatists: 'for those who hold the opinion (*δοξάζων*) that things are good (*καλὸν*) or bad (*κακὸν*) by nature are perpetually troubled […] But those who make no determination about what is good and bad by nature neither avoid nor pursue anything with intensity; and hence they are tranquil (*ἀταρακτεῖ*)'. This passage elucidates how the Pyrrhonists have reached a state of tranquillity for the reason that they do not hold opinions about what is good or bad, which is also why they have a more moderate attitude towards life in comparison to other thinkers. Sextus compares the Pyrrhonists' state with that of the Dogmatists. Because of their opinions about the good held by those such as the Dogmatists and laymen, they relentlessly try to pursue it with the result that they are always psychologically troubled. If they eventually achieve the good, then the Dogmatists are mostly afraid of losing it; if, on the other hand, they have not yet acquired the good, they are worried that they will never possess it. The Pyrrhonists' solution to abandon our troubles is to abandon our beliefs as to whether something is good or bad by nature.

The Pyrrhonists regard themselves as 'philanthropists' (*φιλάνθρωποι*) because, as Sextus claims at the end of the *Outlines* (III, 280), they 'wish to cure by argument (*λόγῳ*), as far as they can, the conceit and rashness of the Dogmatists'. Sextus regards the Pyrrhonists as doctors in that they prescribe their 'arguments' (*λόγοι*) as if they are drugs and medicaments designed to cure specific kinds of maladies which are called here 'conceit and rashness'.[74] The 'conceit and rashness' referred to here are the psychological worries and turmoil that afflict the Dogmatists due to their strongly held beliefs about how things are. The arguments, on the other hand, should be understood as a loose reference to the 10 Modes, namely the two opposing arguments of equal strength. The result is that the Dogmatists are brought to equipollence and from there to a state of

[74] See Annas and Barnes (1994: xxvii).

epochē and then *ataraxia*. Suspending judgement, in fact, brings about a way of life the main characteristic of which, besides tranquillity, is moderation.

As Sextus claims in the *Outlines* (I, 27-8), the Pyrrhonists do not pursue anything with intensity and, therefore, do not give excessive weight to what happens to them. Sextus thinks that the same could apply to others, provided they embrace the recipe that Pyrrhonism prescribes, including suspending judgement on how things are. Hence, the Pyrrhonists suppose that the cause of the perpetual worry that characterises the human condition is belief about how things are. Consequently, if we abandon our beliefs, then the result is that our worries and concerns also fade away. Let us relate this to an unfortunate situation that might happen to us. The Pyrrhonists claim that our inner turmoil originates from the belief that a given situation is or could result in something bad. Indeed, as Sextus would observe in reference to his medical training, relinquishing our beliefs is a bitter medicine to take, but we, as Dogmatic patients, desperately need such treatment if we are to eradicate our anxiety once and for all. This view holds that it is only after we let go of our beliefs that our concerns and anxieties may fade for good.

Yet, we can more forcibly argue that Sextus' recipe is not, in actuality, helpful, especially in moments of sorrow and emotional fragility.[75] If I am in a state of pain and suffering and all that Sextus has to offer is to claim that what happened to me is not genuinely bad as such and that I should suspend judgement regarding such a conclusion, then his solution is not particularly appealing. There seems to be no compassion or even sympathy for my present condition: Sextus does not and cannot think that what happened to me is bad. Questions, thus, arise as to who would like to have a friend, such as Sextus, who in a moment of hardship, sorrow and pain does not show us emotional care, affection and empathy. Sextus appears cold and aloof: the only thing he seems to care about is

[75] See Annas and Barnes (1994: xxxi).

whether we can relinquish our beliefs, neglecting the place of sympathy in easing pain and sorrow.

2.3 The Pyrrhonian common way of life

The last topic I will analyse in this chapter concerns another aspect of the Pyrrhonian way of life, namely the Pyrrhonists' common way of life. I will focus on this theme because it is relevant to bring into focus Nietzsche's reception of this theory in the next chapter. Nietzsche reads into the Pyrrhonian common way of life, that is, their passive acceptance of traditions and habits, a form of opposition to his revaluation of values.

In the *Outlines* (I, 23-4), there is an interesting passage that describes how the Pyrrhonists behave in their everyday activities: 'following the appearances, we live in accordance with everyday observances (*βιωτικὴ τήρησις*), without holding opinions (*ἀδοξάστως*) – for we are not able to be utterly inactive (*ἀνενέργητοι*)'. More broadly, Sextus' passage can be read as his reply to the so-called *apraxia* charge.[76] The latter refers to an argument pressed by the Dogmatists that the Pyrrhonists, due to their *epochē* on how things are, are unable to practice even the simplest everyday activities. However, Sextus' rebuttal contends that the Pyrrhonists can live a normal way of life, even if they suspend their judgement.

In what follows, I will selectively focus on what Sextus calls 'the handing down of customs and laws' (*νόμοι τε καὶ ἐθῆ*). The reason why Sextus argues that Pyrrhonists must

[76] As Striker (1980: 63) observes, the origin of the *apraxia* charge can be traced back to Aristotle (*Meth.* Γ 1008b10-19). Despite its name, this charge does not consist in a single objection, but in many. One of its numerous versions claims that, without assent, the Pyrrhonist is doomed to live like a plant given that he has no higher-level thoughts. Hence, this is also known as the Plant charge (*PH* I, 23). Another objection states that, despite Sextus' reassurances to the contrary, the Pyrrhonist sometimes has to give his assent. This can be called the inconsistency charge (*PH* I, 19-20). Still another objection, the paralysis charge, holds that despite having higher-level thoughts, the Pyrrhonist lives in a state of paralysis and inactivity because he has no practical criterion by which to conduct his affairs (*PH* I, 23). The structure of the various objections in which the *apraxia* charge can be divided can be traced back to Vogt (2010: 166), (2012: 23) and Striker (2010: 20)

adhere to social and legal conventions is not immediately clear. There is some likelihood, however, that the Pyrrhonists could have been criticised by the Dogmatists for being impious, given that their suspension of judgement also regards the idea of god. It is significant that there are two passages in the *Outlines* (I, 32-3; III, 9-11) where Sextus addresses the topic as to whether the gods are provident towards mankind. The Hellenistic philosophers have two main views concerning Providence. Epicureanism teaches that the gods are not interested in human affairs; they blissfully live in what Cicero calls *intermundia,* namely some physical space located between the worlds (*Fin*. II, 75). The Stoic Chrysippus, by contrast, argues that there is a Providence at work in the universe. Either the wrongdoings of the wicked are or in any case will be punished through divine retribution by the hands of 'evil demons' (*δαιμόνια φαῦλα*), or each particular occurrence of evil in the world is embedded in a larger providential scheme oriented towards the good (Plutarch, *De Stoic. repugn.*, 1050F=*SVF* II, 1181[1]).[77]

In two passages of the *Outlines* (I, 32-3; III, 9-11), Sextus argues that we must suspend judgement as to whether there is such Providence or whether there are the gods. According to Sextus, there is a three-horned trilemma regarding Providence or the gods that leads to the conclusion that we must suspend judgement on these two topics. First, there is the problem of evil. The gods want and can look after everything in the universe, which implies that the gods should be able to eliminate the presence of evil in the cosmos in its entirety. However, this view is in contradiction with the facts: there are numerous instances where the wicked are not punished. Therefore, the first horn concludes that it is not true that the gods care for the universe in its entirety.

Second, there is the possibility that the gods want to provide for the world, but are unable to do so. Yet, this would mean that the gods themselves are weak, and it is difficult

[77] See Sisti (2018: 524-5) for a brief survey on the role of how 'evil demons' (*δαιμόνια φαῦλα*) play this particular role.

for the Dogmatists to imagine that the divine has this characteristic. The third and last horn of the trilemma affirms that the gods are capable of taking care of the universe in its entirety and not simply of some aspects of it, but it holds that the gods are not willing to do so. The point here is not related to their ability, the gods simply do not want to provide for the universe. Therefore, the gods themselves are evil, an attribute that the Dogmatists do not associate with the divine. The conclusion is that the three horns are equally credible and balance against each other, which brings us to a state of equipollence and from there to a suspension of judgement. Many Dogmatists, especially the Stoics who firmly believe in the idea of Providence or the existence of the gods, might have exploited the Pyrrhonian *epochē* and accused them of being impious for not believing in the traditional gods of the city. This is because Sextus's contrary view in which he clearly states that anyone who strongly holds the belief that the gods exist or provide for the universe, as such as Stoics, is impious.

Another Dogmatic critique might apply to the Pyrrhonian stance towards traditional customs and laws. In particular, the 10th Mode details how the Pyrrhonists suspend judgement on: 'ways of acting' (*ἀγωγαὶ*), 'customs' (*ἔθη*), 'laws' (*νόμοι*) and 'legendary beliefs' (*μυθικαὶ πιίστεις*) (*PH* I, 145-63).[78] Sextus' reasoning for this invokes a list of habits and beliefs that conflict with one another: the Ethiopians tattoo their children but the Greeks do not; the Indians accept the practice of public sex, whereas the Greeks regard it as shameful; the Persians accept homosexuality, whereas the Romans forbid this by law; some philosophers, such as the Stoics, claim that human affairs are directed by divine Providence, while others are of a different opinion, such as the Epicureans; in Egypt there is the custom to marry one's sister, but in Greece this behaviour is forbidden by law; if we are to listen to the poets' tales, the gods suffer

[78] See Annas and Barnes (1985: 156-71).

wounds and envy each other, whereas some thinkers regard the gods as unaffected by evils; athletes pursue glory and think that it is a good, while philosophers list glory as among what is bad. Sextus, thus, presses these instances, which represent equally credible beliefs or views about customs, laws or myths.

By means of this argument as specified in the 10th Mode, which holds that the same custom or law that is regarded as a good by some people is regarded in the exact opposite way by others, Sextus achieves a suspension of judgment as to whether a given custom or law is good or bad. We end up with the result of *epochē* due to the equipollence of the opposing arguments: we are, in fact, unable to settle the dispute as whether a custom or law is good or bad, given that they seem to be equally good or bad. Here, what interests us is not, strictly speaking the argument of the 10th Mode as such, but rather the consequences that this has for the Pyrrhonian way of life. The Pyrrhonists do not defend the status of Greek customs and law as good; on this basis, then, the Dogmatists could have accused them of being a threat to the Hellenic culture.

There were, then, two likely accusations that Pyrrhonians may have been subjected to: that they could be seen as impious, as well as a threat to Hellenic culture. These accusations explain Sextus' motivations to include in the *Outlines* a discussion of the Pyrrhonian attitude towards social traditions, including traditional customs and religious beliefs. Hence, in the *Outlines* (I, 17, 24), Sextus argues more generally that a Pyrrhonian life is not in contrast with traditional customs, religious beliefs and laws, even though the Pyrrhonists themselves suspend judgement as to whether the latter are good or bad. Consider, for instance, the following passages which substantiate this reading:

> We coherently follow, to all appearances, an account which shows us a life (*τὸ ζῆν*) in conformity with the customs of his country (*τὰ πάτρια ἔθη*), its laws (*νόμοι*) and ways of life (*ἀγωγὰι*). (*PH* I, 17)
>
> By the handing down of customs and laws, we accept, from an everyday

> point of view (*βιωτικῶς*), that piety (*εὐσεβεῖν*) is good and impiety (*ἀσεβεῖν*) bad. (*PH* I, 24)

What is striking about these two passages is that Sextus does not claim that the Pyrrhonists believe in the customs, laws and religious beliefs of their country. As we saw earlier, Sextus repeatedly claims that Pyrrhonists should suspend their judgement on those matters; the Pyrrhonists, on the other hand, follow those conventions in a 'common way' (*βιωτικῶς*). The term 'ordinary' or 'common life' (*βίος*) is interpreted by some scholars, such as Vogt and Striker, as an indication that, in the social sphere, the Pyrrhonist behaves exactly as it is expected of him.[79] In other words, the Pyrrhonists follow certain customs and not others due to their social contexts. The Pyrrhonists do not tattoo their children as the Ethiopians, wear colourful dresses as the Persians or have sex in public as the Indians because, in matters of custom and tradition, the Pyrrhonians' way of life aligns those of the other members of their own culture.[80]

However, an outcome of this position is that the Pyrrhonists' way of life is also passive: the Pyrrhonists passively accept the norms and habits of their communities; Pyrrhonists do not challenge those but rather almost idly accept what is handed to them by their cultural traditions. Perhaps, this is best characterised by describing the Pyrrhonists as conservative; not conservative for any particular ideological reasons that might support such a political standing but simply because they do not conflict with the particular culture in which they live, along with its implied habits and norms. The Pyrrhonists follow such norms simply because they were born and raised in their cultural context. If they were born and raised elsewhere, then they would surely follow other norms, as the case may be, without being convinced of the merit of those norms.

Yet, how desirable is a way of life that do not challenge, but rather idly accepts

[79] See Vogt (2010: 174) and Striker (2010: 203).
[80] See Barnes (1997: 84).

cultural traditions, practices and customs? According to Bett, there are some negative consequences which ultimately make the Pyrrhonian common way of life undesirable. For instance, Bett argues that because the Pyrrhonists accept the traditional way of life of their culture, they are not social reformers.[81] There is tension between the public and private pronouncements of the Pyrrhonists, which is especially visible in the topic of religion. In the private sphere, the Pyrrhonists suspend their judgements on the existence of Providence, in virtue of the arguments that regard the 10th Mode, described above. However, in the public sphere, the Pyrrhonists will declare that they follow the Greek religious beliefs, according to which there is some kind of providential design for the universe.

There might be an even stronger case that can be made in the contemporary political climate that would establish further this point about the undesirable character of the Pyrrhonian common way of life. Let us consider the issue of racism and, on the basis of what is described above, attempt to determine how the Pyrrhonists are likely to behave in a social environment in which the prevalent customs are racist, whether they are institutional or other forms of customs. It follows that Pyrrhonists will suspend judgement as to whether some races are inherently superior to others. It is likely that they will, conforming to the casual principle of Pyrrhonism, generate equipollent arguments on that topic. For example, some Greeks claim that the barbarians are inferior, whereas the barbarians think that they are superior to the Greeks. The result is a state of *epochē*. However, the Pyrrhonists also accept and follow the racist attitudes that pervade their culture: that is the law, and the custom embedded into their culture. Therefore, it also

[81] See Bett (2010: 192-4) and (2019: 177-8). However, it should be observed that, over time, Bett seems to have changed his opinion on this issue. Ultimately, his view has become more moderate insofar as he seems to consider that, nowadays, society is becoming too polarised and divided, at least in America between and the liberal and conservative ends of the political spectrum. Bett argues that, to some extent, having a more Pyrrhonian attitude would help to temper that political and hyper-partisan political divide. See Bett (2019: 185).

follows that, any challenge to the established cultural order of things would be avoided on the basis that it would strip the Pyrrhonists of their common observance of traditional laws and customs. The conclusion is that the Pyrrhonian common way of life would not be helpful in moving our society toward more progressive goals; rather, the Pyrrhonists' way of life would paralyse any form of reform that would attempt to challenge and substitute even negative and discriminatory customs and laws.

In conclusion, the Pyrrhonists' common way of life seems ultimately undesirable. It is even likely that a civil rights activist, who openly and vocally challenges racist cultural norms, would be opposed by the Pyrrhonists. While a civil rights activist may hold an unshakable and, therefore, Dogmatic belief that racism is wrong, the Pyrrhonists would suspend their judgement on that topic.[82] A civil rights activist, in other words, would consider that the issue of racial superiority has been settled once and for all, while the Pyrrhonists cannot share that view. Instead, their philosophy recommends that they continue to investigate the question of whether some races are superior to others. In this sense, to the Pyrrhonist's eye, any civil rights activist is nothing but a Dogmatist who cannot accept that the dispute about racism is not yet settled and, therefore, is in great need of a 'cure by argument' (*λόγῳ*), namely to suspend judgement on the topic to prompt the removal of psychological troubles (*PH* III, 280). However, if it dubious that we would genuinely require such a cure of psychological troubles, in order to live in a society where racism is pervasive, it is equally true that the Pyrrhonian common way of life is neither helpful nor desirable when it comes to challenging unjust norms and contributing to making society a better and more inclusive place for every one of its members.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed Pyrrho's and the Pyrrhonists' ideas and arguments

[82] See Svarvasson (2015: 199).

that will be relevant for considering Nietzsche's reception of Pyrrhonism. The scope of the current investigation will be defined by the aim to shed light on the differences between the objective analysis of the modern scholars and the Nietzschean interpretation, which I will outline in the next chapter. In the first section of this chapter, I analysed the concept of suspension of judgement, of equipollence, and the Modes of suspension of judgement. I argued that equipollence plays a particularly important role since the Pyrrhonists are defined by their ability to generate equipollent arguments, of which the Modes are significant example, and out of which follows the state of *epochē*.

In the second section, I focused on the Pyrrhonian way of life. I analysed Pyrrho's remarkable state of mind in which emotions are absent: Pyrrho did not feel many human emotions, such as shame, pity, anxiety, and even fear. Pyrrho did not feel fear while embarking on a ship during a storm and did not feel pity for his friend Anaxarchus when he fell into a ditch. Moreover, Pyrrho did not feel physical pain either, since he did not frown when surgery was performed on him. Questions naturally arise as to whether we should pursue Pyrrho's goal.

I argued that the totality of these features makes Pyrrho's goal especially unattractive. Discarding our emotions transforms life into an inhuman condition. Removing the emotion of fear, for instance, might result in reckless and dangerous behaviour that may stand to place lives in serious jeopardy. Moreover, the nature of the Pyrrhonists' egotistical behaviour is revealed in their attempts to function without other human feelings, such as pity. The Pyrrhonists' egoism, thus, ultimately stems from their goal of abolishing the entire set of human emotions.

Finally, in the third section of this chapter, I addressed the Pyrrhonian common way of life. I began my analysis from the Pyrrhonian 10th Mode of suspension of judgement, according to which the Pyrrhonists suspend judgement on ethical matters, as

to whether, for instance, Greek customs are superior to the Persians'. I observed that the Pyrrhonists also follow a common way of life according to which they passively adhere to the customs and habits of their culture. I argued that such passive adherence ultimately makes the Pyrrhonian common way of life undesirable. The reason for this conclusion is that the Pyrrhonists will not challenge unjust habits and customs if they are a part of the culture that they have passively received.

3 Nietzsche and the Pyrrhonists

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to explore Nietzsche's reception of the Pyrrhonists, especially in terms of the Pyrrhonian suspension of judgement, way of life and the Pyrrhonian goal. Berry (2011; 2013) and Bett (2000a) claim that the relationship between Nietzsche and the Pyrrhonists can be explained with reference to the similarity of certain aspects of their doctrines, such as the epistemic theory of perspectivism. Mitchenson (2017), by contrast, places more stress on the differences between Nietzsche and Pyrrhonism, for example on Nietzsche's notion of the revaluation of all values.

However, I will argue that we can provide a better explanation of Nietzsche's relationship with the Pyrrhonists and Pyrrho by focusing on another thus far unexplored feature. As discussed in Chapter 1, Nietzsche's selective analysis of Pyrrhonism is not philological in the traditional sense, because he attributes to the Pyrrhonists some of his own ideas and concepts independently formed, predominantly perspectivism and the will to power. I will claim that Nietzsche has particular purposes in mind when he discusses the Pyrrhonists, and I will note what these are on a case-by-case basis, as I discuss Nietzche's positions on important topics regarding Christianity and past philosophical figures, such as Socrates, Plato and Epicurus.

My analysis, in the first section, begins with the topic of Nietzsche's perspectivism and the Pyrrhonian Modes of suspension of judgement. This will first focus on Nietzsche's interests in the Pyrrhonian argument on the relativity of perception, also known as the 5th Mode, and the similarities as well as the differences between Nietzsche's view and the Pyrrhonian account. I will argue that, in drawing upon the Pyrrhonian

argument on the relativity of perception, Nietzsche's goal is to articulate further the analogy that he developed independently regarding seeing and knowing, and his notion of perspectivism. I will argue that the most important difference between these accounts lies in Nietzsche's notion of 'postponing judgment' (*das Urtheil hinausschieben*), as opposed to the Pyrrhonists' 'suspension of judgment' (*ἐποχή*). Specifically, this difference is that Nietzsche's 'postponing judgment' does not entail the end point of investigation, as is the case for the Pyrrhonists' 'suspension of judgment'. The Nietzschean postponement of judgment is, rather, a cautious and prudent precept that guides the process of perspectival seeing.

Next, I will focus on the Nietzschean and Pyrrhonian parallel arguments for the similarity between human and nonhuman animals (the 1st Mode). I will argue that Nietzsche's interests and similar ideas can be explained in light of his goal of addressing and, ultimately, refuting Christian anthropocentrism. To achieve this goal, Nietzsche does not rely on the Pyrrhonian argument of the 1st Mode, but rather he turns to his independently formed doctrines of perspectivism, M-Naturalism, and the will to power.

The second section regards Nietzsche's discussion of the Pyrrhonian 'suspension of judgement' (*ἐποχή*). First, I will address the issue of how Nietzsche coins the term *ephexis*, as inspired by *epochē*. I will show that the context of his critique of Christian philology is crucial to understanding how the meaning and scope of Nietzschean *ephexis* cannot be reduced to the Pyrrhonian *epochē.* Second, I will address how Nietzsche develops his own approach to the suspension of judgment and, more generally, scepticism. I will argue that what results from that approach is Nietzsche's doctrine of experimentalism, namely the intellectual freedom to articulate new tentative doctrines, such as, in Nietzsche's own case, the cosmic doctrine of the will to power. Finally, I will shed light on Nietzsche's discussion of the Pyrrhonian *epochē* on traditional customs and

laws and the common way of life in the context of his revaluation of values. In doing so, I will describe how Nietzsche sees the Pyrrhonists' common way of life as in opposition to his project of revaluation of all values, especially Christian values.

The third and last section examines Nietzsche's remarks on Pyrrho's way of life, especially the goal of 'insensibility' (*apatheia* or *ἀπάθεια*). I will argue that Nietzsche's analysis is driven by reading into Pyrrho his own independently formed ideas regarding nihilism, and the role of suffering and decadence, most of which are centred on the key notion of the will to power. The argument I will advance is that Nietzsche aims to establish Pyrrho's position in the history of philosophy by comparing him with other philosophical figures, such as Socrates and Epicurus.

3.1 Nietzsche's perspectivism and the Pyrrhonian Modes of suspension of judgement

As we have seen and explored at length in Chapter 1, Nietzsche was trained as a classical philologist at the very beginning his career.[83] During this time, Nietzsche carried out an extensive exegesis of Diogenes' *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* and published between 1869 and 1870 three critical editions of this text: *De Laertii Diogenis fontibus, Analecta Laertiana* and *Beiträge zur Quellenkunde und Kritik des Laertius Diogenes*. Nietzsche's edition of the *Lives* includes the 9th book about the Pyrrhonists.

In Nietzsche's autobiography, *Ecce Homo* (II, 3), we find a passage that refers to the early phase of his philological career. Nietzsche claims that there is one book that he had especially enjoyed reading in his recent years, *Les Sceptiques Grecs* written by Victor Brochard. His reason for enjoying the book is it 'puts my *Laertiana* to good use as well', namely his own critical editions of the *Lives* (*EH* II, 3). There are a number of points that

[83] See Young (2010) for a comprehensive biography on Nietzsche.

this passage indicates. First and foremost, it demonstrates that Nietzsche's knowledge of Pyrrhonism is extensive given that he produced not simply the critical editions of the *Lives* but also a monograph about the topic. Moreover, this passage shows that Nietzsche's interests in the Pyrrhonists was not limited to the early years of his career; rather, Nietzsche maintained an interest in this topic into the very latest part of his life. The Pyrrhonists were apparently so important to him that he also references them in his autobiographical work.

There is yet another part of Nietzsche's survey of Pyrrhonism mentioned in *Ecce Homo* that should be noted. It is in this context that Nietzsche states: 'the Pyrrhonists were the only *respectable* types among the philosophical tribes, tribes that generally talk out of both sides of their mouths (they would talk out of five sides if they could)!'. It is rather difficult to know what to make of this remark on the basis of its context alone. The only aspect that seems to emerge is one of admiration towards the Pyrrhonists on Nietzsche's behalf. According to Berry, the similarity between certain aspects of Nietzsche's and the Pyrrhonists' thought is the key to explaining this comment as well as the overall nature of their relationship.[84]

3.1.1 Nietzsche's seeing–knowing analogy and the Pyrrhonian 5th Mode

Berry argues that there is a remarkable level of similarity between Nietzsche's epistemic doctrine of perspectivism and the 5th Mode of suspension of judgement which, in brief, argues that we must suspend judgement as to whether things are such as they appear to be, because they appear different from different perspectives. On Nietzsche's account, perspectivism argues that our vision originates from a particular perspective, which is inevitably influenced by some background conditions. Similarly, our knowledge

[84] See Berry (2011: 120-3).

stems from our cognitive point of view, which in an analogous sense is influenced by our biases and prior beliefs.

I will argue that it is possible to reach a better understanding of this topic by focusing on a different aspect. My proposal is to shift our analysis to the later years of Nietzsche's career, especially to when his discussion is driven by the goal of elucidating further on the analogy of perspectival seeing and knowing. Consequently, Nietzsche's reception of the Pyrrhonian 5th Mode regarding the relativity of our perception, which he might have read and intellectually absorbed in the 9th book of the *Lives* or in Brochard,'s monograph *Les Sceptiques Grecs*, plays the role of further articulating the analogy of perspectival seeing and knowing.[85]

My focus will not be on Nietzsche's main argument for perspectivism in *The Genealogy of Morality* (III, 12), but on an excerpt of a later work, *The Twilight of the Idols*, for reasons that will become immediately clear when we compare it with the Sextan 5th Mode:

> Learning to *see* (*Sehen lernen*) – getting your eyes used to calm, to patience, to letting things come to you; postponing judgement (*das Urtheil hinausschieben*), learning to encompass and take stock of an individual case from all sides (*von Allem Seiten*). (*TI* VIII, 6)

This passage is not a proof of perspectival seeing, but rather it is Nietzsche's attempt to show us what it means to see something in a perspectival way. There are two aspects that should be noticed about it. First, the topic at hand is perspectival vision understood not as a static, but rather as a dynamic activity in which all one's perspectives, taken together, form a coherent whole. Consider the following examples of the dynamism of vision. Not only can we see an object from numerous points of view, but we can also change our

[85] See Bett (2020) who argues that we cannot conclusively claim that Nietzsche read or reacted to the Sextan Modes.

spatial relations to it. We can shorten or increase the distance between ourselves and the item in question; we can raise or lower our angle of vision; we can change the perspective from which we see it; and, lastly, we can employ optical instruments to enhance our vision, such as the corrective lenses embedded in our glasses. All such perspectives fit into an overall picture of a given object in which they complement each other, so that each perspective reveals a different, and yet compatible, facet of the phenomenon that is the object of perspectival vision.

Second, Nietzsche places a particular emphasis on the concept of 'postponing judgement' (*das Urtheil hinausschieben*). As I will explain further below, 'postponing judgement' is not the end point of the process of perspectival seeing, but rather a precept that guides the overall investigation. It is more properly characterised as a preliminary and temporary step of caution, prudence and foresight that is applied in perspectival seeing. According to Nietzsche, taking such a step during investigation is necessary before one can offer an informed interpretation.

We can better appreciate Nietzsche's reasoning with the help of Russell's famous example of 'the table' in *The Problems of Philosophy.* Following Nietzsche's recommendation, we should gather as many perspectives as possible about the table, bearing in mind that they must be compatible with one another. Under bright light, the colour of the table appears brown, whereas under a dim light it seems almost black. The texture of the table changes too, depending on the instruments we use to inspect it: using a microscope we can see that the table's surface has small hills, whereas without the device it appears perfectly flat. The same reasoning applies to the shape of the table. From a certain position, one side of a rectangular table seems larger than the other, but seen from the opposite perspective it is the other side that now appears larger. As these visual perspectives form a coherent whole, they must be reconciled with each other and taken

into account before one offers a theory regarding the colour, shape and texture of the table. In a passage of *The Twilight of the Idols* (VIII, 6), Nietzsche describes the 'practical application' of the postponement of judgment and the kind of attitude it entails, as it occurs during perspectival investigation: 'your learning process *in general* becomes slow, mis-trustful, reluctant'. Nietzsche, thus, supposes that his method of postponing judgment leads to prudence, subtlety and intellectual restraint in perspectival seeing. This describes how one ought to conduct, first, a careful and prudent examination of the different perspectives of an object, and how they form a coherent picture. After that preliminary and only temporary step is taken, one can then offer an informed interpretation about, say, the shape, colour and texture of the table.

In the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, we find an extensive collection of elaborated arguments, Sextus called 'the 10 Modes', which are designed to lead us to suspend judgement on every matter (I, 35-163). One of those Modes has numerous aspects in common with Nietzsche's perspectivism, especially regarding its analogy between seeing an object from a particular point of view and knowing what that object is. This is the 5th Mode and it regards how the same object appears different depending on different 'positions and intervals and places' (*PH* I, 118-23; cf. DL IX, 86). Sextus reports numerous cases to describe how the same object appears different from different perspectives, or from different distances. For instance, the same boat appears tiny and still when observed from a distance, while it appears to increase in size and may seem to be moving when observed up close. Objects also appear different depending on their locations. A straw may appear bent when it is immersed in the water but straight when it is not. Different positions may also make the same object appear different. Thus, when a picture is laid down it appears flat, whereas a change in our angle of vision may reveal the appearance of concavities.

It is worth noticing that in the passage of *The Twilight of the Idols*, cited above, Nietzsche's analysis of seeing deals with visual perspectives. Yet, Nietzsche's analysis is also to some extent metaphorical. Nietzsche's investigation does not only regard the visual properties of any object, such as its shape, colour and size, but rather to show that there is another side of the coin, so to speak; that there is at least more than one perspective. Nietzsche's goal is to show that cognitive knowledge is perspectival, following the seeing–knowing analogy he charted many years earlier in *The Genealogy of Morality* (III, 12). By contrast, in the 5th Mode, Sextus focuses only on the visual properties of objects: he deals only with the observable properties of, say, a boat or a straw, and how such objects appear different when observed from a distance or when immersed in a liquid. Therefore, as far as the 5th Mode is concerned, Sextus' focus is not on knowledge generally, as including cognitive and non-visual features, but is restricted to visual properties.

Moreover, in the passages from *The Twilight of the Idols* quoted earlier, Nietzsche argues that we must examine an object from numerous perspectives and that the attitude guiding our investigation must be one that entails 'postponing judgment' (*das Urtheil hinausschieben*). While there are linguistic and conceptual similarities between Nietzsche's and Sextus' respective notions of suspension of judgment, they are strikingly different concepts. Nietzsche's notion of postponing judgment does not denote an endpoint for our enquiry, rather, it describes the mindset that should accompany the enquiry: it is an intermediary step in which numerous perspectives may be gathered before an interpretation can be made about, say, the shape, colour and form of the table. This does not, then, involve a perpetual suspension of judgment on how things are in terms of the table and its nature, rather, Nietzsche's postponement of judgment ultimately facilitates the making of positive claims about the table. Yet, in the *Outlines*, Sextus

describes the 'suspension of judgment' (*ἐποχή*) as the 'standstill' of one's mind, the ultimate state of the Pyrrhonian investigation in which one neither affirms nor denies any fact or claim (*PH* I, 10). Indeed, Sextus' description matches the overall description of Pyrrhonism found in the *Lives* (IX, 69-70). Diogenes reports two main adjectives that describe the Pyrrhonian school of thought: it is 'suspensive' (*ἐφεκτικὴ*) because it brings about the state of *epochē* described above; and, the Pyrrhonian school of thought is 'aporetic' (*ἀπορητικὴ*), because it induces in its followers' a constant indecisiveness as to whether to affirm or deny a given claim. In conclusion, Nietzsche's and Sextus's notions of suspension of judgment serve strikingly different functions. *Epochē* is the end point of an investigation, while Nietzsche's postponement of judgment is only a temporary step guiding an investigation and which does not terminate in a state of permanent indecision.

As described earlier, Nietzsche is aware of the Sextan 5th Mode and of its argumentative details, given that he might have come in contact with it by reading the 9th book of *Lives* and the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, as quoted in Victor Brochard's book *Les Sceptiques Grecs*. This might suggest a connection between Nietzsche's discussion of visual perspectivism and the Sextan 5th Mode of suspension of judgement; it also highlights a lack of substantial similarity between the two. The goal of the comparison is rather to better illuminate Nietzsche's own analogy of perspectival seeing and knowing by means of a comparison with the Pyrrhonian 5th Mode that concerned the relativity of perception. The most noteworthy aspect of this discussion, however, is the difference between Nietzsche's and Sextus's respective notions of suspension of judgment. These are markedly different concepts. Sextus' *epochē*, as obtained by the Pyrrhonists after investigation, is a permanent state of indecisiveness as whether to affirm or deny a given fact or claim. By contrast, Nietzsche's 'postponing judgment' describes the attitude that we should adopt throughout our enquiry, so that we may conduct the necessary cautious

and prudent analysis before offering a positive interpretation.

3.1.2 Nietzsche's perspectivism, M-Naturalism and the Pyrrhonian 1st Mode

There is further evidence that connects Nietzsche's perspectivism to the Sextan Modes, in particular the 1st Mode. The main argument of the 1st Mode holds that we must suspend judgement on how an object is by nature. Sextus states that one of the preferred routes to doing so is to show that the same object appears different 'depending on the variations between animals', including humans and irrational animals. However, Sextus argues that, since we are unable to decide which one is more trustworthy between human and animal appearances, we must suspend judgement on how an object is by nature. According to Berry, the particular aspect that links Nietzsche's and Sextus' arguments is their remarkable level of similarity about the topic at stake, in addition to the conclusions they draw. The theme they both discuss is whether human beings are superior to nonhuman animals, and the conclusion they both reach is that men are equal to animals.[86] I will argue, however, that the defining feature of Nietzsche's discussion of the 1st Mode is not its similarity with Sextus' discussion. This is presented by Nietzsche's goal, which is to address and respond to the question of whether the Christians are correct to believe in anthropocentrism.

The starting point of the discussion is the passage of *The Genealogy of Morality* (III, 12): Nietzsche's criticism of objective knowledge is primarily directed towards Kant's philosophy. However, we also find, in the preface of *Beyond Good and Evil*, a work written only one year earlier, another philosopher who is mentioned and explicitly criticised for denying the perspectival nature of the world: Plato. Nietzsche argues that Plato invented concepts such as 'pure spirit' (*reine Geiste*) and 'the Good in itself' (*Guten*

[86] See Berry (2011: 68-103).

an sich), and more generally the theory of the Forms. For Nietzsche, Plato denied perspectivism and paved the way for the advent of Christianity, to the extent that Platonism is nothing but Christianity 'for the people' (*für's 'Volk'*).

In a related passage of *The Twilight of the Idols* (IX, 19), Nietzsche polemically engages with the notion of 'beauty in itself'. Nietzsche argues: '"Beauty in itself" (*an sight*) is an empty phrase, not even a concept. In beauty, human beings posit themselves as the measure of perfection […] Of course a Sceptic (*Skeptiker*) might hear a suspicious little whisper in his ear: does the world really become beautiful just because it is seen that way by human beings, of all creatures? People have humanised it: that is all. But nothing, absolutely nothing, guarantees that a human being is the standard of beauty' (*TI* IX, 19). Nietzsche's argument relies on the notion of perspectivism: there is no beauty as such because the notion of beauty depends on the perspective of the form of life making the judgement. Human beings cannot escape the perspectival nature of knowledge as their judgement on what counts as beautiful is not 'the standard of beauty'. Nietzsche is here referencing his critique of the Christian belief that man is 'the crown of creation' and that in virtue of being the centre of the universe mankind is the standard of everything, including beauty (*A* 14; 15).

Nietzsche traces the origin of the idea that human beings are different from other animals to the first book of the *Genesis*.[87] He comments that it is a notion that is rooted in our minds to the extent that the concepts he uses to draw attention to human and animal similarities, such as 'herd' and 'herd instinct', are received as distasteful and, indeed, irritating (*BGE* 202; *A* 48). However, Nietzsche holds that it is necessary to revise the 'prejudice' advocated by Christianity, according to which there is 'great gulf' between

[87] The idea that human beings are superior to nonhuman animals is also common to Greek philosophy. Nietzsche, however, seems to focus solely on Christian anthropocentrism, at least in this instance.

men and animals (*D* 31; *GS* 115). The reason for this is laid out in an important passage of *Daybreak* (26), written in 1881. Nietzsche argues that numerous phenomena which might have seemed to be unique properties of human beings are also shared with animals. For instance, humans are extremely versatile creatures: they can adapt to many different social, cultural and historical environments. Similarly, animals can alter their form in order to adapt to changing situations. Chameleons can change their colour in order to avoid detection by potential predators and possums can play dead so that they can avoid being preyed upon.

In the passage of *Daybreak* noted above, Nietzsche argues that 'even the sense for truth, which is really the sense for security, man has in common with the animals'. Humans strive for knowledge so that they can better control their surrounding environments, as do animals. For instance, some animals, particularly the herbivore, strive to understand as correctly as possible the peculiarities of their predators in order to detect imminent attacks. Finally, human beings and animals share the survival instinct and the 'fight or flight' response, which drive them to cope with dangerous situations by preparing their bodies either to run away from or confront a threat. The conclusion that Nietzsche reaches is that mankind is not at the centre of the universe, as the Church teaches. Men are not unique beings as we were erroneously led to believe; rather we are remarkably similar other animals in many respects.

The Pyrrhonists tackle a similar, though by no means equal, issue in the 1st Mode of suspension of judgement (*PH* I, 40-80). As specified above, the overall goal of this Mode is to show how we must suspend judgement as to whether an object is as it appears to be. Yet, Sextus clarifies that one way to reach this goal is to show that same object appears different, 'depending on the variations between animals', human and nonhuman animals alike.

Sextus' starting point is to observe that the Pyrrhonists compare men with animals in order to show that they are equal in the 1st Mode. In terms of our senses, even the Dogmatists concede that some animals have a better sense of smell or of vision than humans. For example, some animals, especially hunting dogs, can perceive their prey from miles away on scent alone; still others, such as owls, are able to see in the dark. These are but two examples of remarkable feats that animals are capable of over human abilities.

Moreover, some animal abilities are comparable to human reason. Dogs choose appropriate courses of action by avoiding dangerous situations or by looking for food when hungry. Sextus reports that animals are also able to take care of themselves in a way that is similar to what we might call an instinctive reaction: if wounded, a dog try to prevent infection by licking their wounds. When they fall sick due to something they have eaten, dogs eat grass in order to expel the poisonous food. Another example is a dog's perceptual ability. Consider, for instance, the famous episode when the dog Argus recognised his master Odysseus, while other human bystanders failed to do so (*Od.* XVII, 30). On the basis of such instances, Sextus concludes that human beings are similar in numerous aspects to animals.

One fundamental aspect that must be recognised and that Berry stresses is that we know that Nietzsche is familiar with the 1st Mode, which he reads in Montaigne's *Essais*.[88] This might lead us to ask the question as to whether Nietzsche has borrowed some if not all the instances mentioned in the passage of *Daybreak* (26) from Sextus.

Indeed, there seems to be numerous common aspects between the two parallel arguments made respectively by Nietzsche and Sextus. Both Nietzsche and Sextus

[88] Montaigne extensively borrows from Sextus' *Outlines* about the same theme in order to show that men and animals are not different, as the church argues (cf. *HAH* I, 101; Montaigne, *Essais* II, 12, 505; 513-4; *PH* I, 40-80). See Berry (2004: 497-514) and (2011: 68-103).

attempt to strip man of his pride to be superior to nonhuman animals and refer to many similar examples to demonstrate their point. In general, Nietzsche and Sextus agree in describing men and animals as versatile creatures that can use many of their skills, including their reasoning and perceptual abilities, to escape danger, survive and control their environment. However, due to the wide scope of the examples Nietzsche draws on to illustrate his points, it appears that Sextus and Pyrrhonism are not the sole source of his remarks on animals. This is confirmed further by the evidence that Nietzsche was interested in Darwinism and the topic of evolution.[89] The remarks from *Daybreaks* may, then, originate from a collection of different materials.

There is another reason why Nietzsche's and Sextus' discussions are not as similar as they may appear to be on first inspection. Nietzsche's endpoint is incompatible with Berry's thesis about the similarity between Nietzsche's arguments of *Daybreak* and the 1st Mode. Nietzsche's discussion is driven to address and ultimately reject the Christian belief in anthropocentrism. In order to achieve this result, however, the remarks noted above, from the passage of *Daybreak*, are insufficient to show that men and animals are equal. Nietzsche does not think that the simple claim that men and animals have a similar reasoning abilities and survival skills, as based on some generally accessible comments, can ultimately reject the Christian story of the *Genesis*. Nietzsche is aware that if he intends mount a serious challenge to Christian anthropocentrism he requires something philosophically more cogent and substantial. However, this also means that Nietzsche is aware that the similarities between his views and Pyrrhonism as far as this topic is concerned are not as significant as they appear to be. Rather, a more important side of the story is the independently formed theory of M-Naturalism. The reason is that, as we will

[89] See Richardson (2004).

see shortly, it is this doctrine and not the Pyrrhonian 1st Mode to which Nietzsche turns to challenge and reject the Christian idea that man is at the centre of the universe.

Nietzsche endorses a methodological version of naturalism which Leiter calls 'M-Naturalism'.[90] Naturalism, understood in this way, is the belief that everything can be explained with the methods that are peculiar to the natural sciences. Evidence which justifies an attribution of naturalism to Nietzsche can be found in the following passage: 'to translate humanity back into nature (*Natur*); to gain control of the many vain and fanciful interpretations and incidental meanings that have been scribbled and drawn over that eternal basic text (*Grundtext*) of *homo natura* so far' (*BGE* 230).

There are two things which this passage shows us. First, Nietzsche wants to explain a series of human phenomena in line with what 'the basic text' (*Grundtext*) of 'nature' (*Natur*) tells us about mankind, namely he wants to explain human phenomena in naturalistic terms. Second, this passage reveals Nietzsche's intention to eliminate 'vain and fanciful interpretations' about mankind which have so far prevailed among philosophers, and to substitute those interpretations with his own naturalistic accounts. Nietzsche's goal is, therefore, to liberate mankind from the faulty interpretations that have been projected onto it:

> […] to make sure that, from now on, the human being will stand before the human being, just as he already stands before the rest of nature (*Natur*) today, hardened by the discipline of science (*Wissenschaft*), — with courageous Oedipus eyes and sealed up Odysseus ears, deaf to the lures of the old metaphysical bird catchers who have been whistling to him for far

[90] See Leiter (2002: 5-6). Clark and Dudrick (2012: 17-21) also offer a description of this form of naturalism. Not every scholar accepts that Nietzsche endorses this version of naturalism, however. Richardson (1996: 16; 2004: 47), for instance, has defended an alternative view called 'S-Naturalism'. According this interpretation, Nietzsche has substantial understanding of nature whose 'essence' (*Wesen* or *Essenz*) is 'will to power' (*Der Wille zur Macht*) (*BGE* 36; 186; 259; *GM* II, 12; *WP* 1067). The assumption underlying this thesis, however, is that Nietzsche has a cosmic theory of the will to power and, further, that he proves it with the argument in note 36 of *Beyond Good and Evil*. Nevertheless, it is worth noticing that Nietzsche's refutation of Christian anthropocentrism can also be achieved with the S-Naturalism variant of his position, as I will argue in the chapter regarding Nietzsche's reception of Heraclitus.

too long: 'You are more! You are higher! You have a different origin!' (*BGE* 230)

The idea implicit in this passage is Christian anthropocentrism, which is rejected by Nietzsche on the basis that is a metaphysical conception. In order to see why, we shall start our analysis anachronistically from a later work, *The Antichrist*, where Nietzsche labels the Christian anthropocentric 'natural science' (*Naturwissenschaft*) as 'imaginary' (*A* 15). Nietzsche describes the reason why rejects this Christian belief: 'We have stopped deriving humanity from 'spirit', from 'divinity', we have stuck human beings back among the animals. [...] Humans are in no way the crown of creation; all beings occupy the same level of perfection' (*A* 14). Nietzsche's naturalism is a method of enquiry: it is the rejection of the *a priori* methods of investigation that are typical of metaphysics, which mistakenly attempt to go beyond our experience.[91] To safeguard us against such mistakes, Nietzsche places a particular emphasis on the methods of science: 'methods (*Methoden*) are the most valuable insights' (*A* 13; cf. *A* 51).[92] Therefore, rendered explicit in this analysis we can now see what was implicit in the passage above from *Beyond Good and Evil*, namely that Nietzsche rejects Christian anthropocentrism because of its metaphysical underpinnings.

The second aspect of Nietzsche's programmatic goal of naturalism is to substitute his own naturalistic accounts in the place of Christian explanations. Nietzsche's aim, in other words, is not simply to reject the Christian idea that men are superior to nonhuman animals but also to articulate his own explanation of what men are, *qua* members of the animal kingdom. To this end, Nietzsche turns to the doctrine of the will to power which, as we saw in Chapter 1, he developed independently to criticise both Schopenhauer and Darwin. In *The Genealogy of Morality* (III, 7) we find a passage that sheds light on

[91] See Clark and Dudrick (2012: 17-21).
[92] See Leiter (2002: 5-6).

Nietzsche's account of human beings: 'Every animal (*Tier*), including the *bête philosophe* ['the philosophical beast' in English], instinctively strives for an optimum of favourable conditions in which to fully release his power (*Macht*) and achieve his maximum of power-sensation'. The meaning of these remarks is that human beings are equal to animals in the sense that they, as organic beings, strive for power. There is a 'fundamental organic function (*Grundfunktion*)' regulating the behaviour of every living organism, Nietzsche says: being 'alive' (*Lebendiges*) implies striving for power (*BGE* 259). Men and animals are after power precisely because they are alive, and life is growth and expansion. Yet, we cannot attribute to Nietzsche the claim that we are equal to animals in every respect. We are also different from animals, given that we engage in many activities in which animals do not take part, such as philosophy. Nietzsche recognises this and argues that man has more 'spirituality' (*Geistigkeit*), which means more power, given that he considers 'philosophy' (*Philosophie*) as 'the most spiritual will to power' (*geistigere Wille zur Macht*) (*A* 14; *BGE* 9).

In conclusion, Nietzsche's and Sextus' arguments about the equivalence of men and animals are not as similar as one might suppose on first inspection. Nietzsche's Sextus' discussions do not revolve around similar ideas and arguments, despite there being some common themes and borrowed ideas on Nietzsche's part. On one hand, Nietzsche may not have drawn his arguments on the equivalence between humans and nonhuman animals exclusively from Sextus, he was likely also influenced by Darwinism. On the other hand, in order to fulfil his goal in rejecting Christian anthropocentrism, Nietzsche also turns to some of his own independently formed doctrines, such as perspectivism, M-Naturalism and the biological version of the will to power.

3.1.2 Nietzsche on the Pyrrhonian suspension of judgement

Some scholars, such as Berry and Mitchelson, have focused on the similarities and

differences between certain aspects of Nietzsche's thought, such as philology and the revaluation of values, and Pyrrhonism, with particular attention paid to the Pyrrhonian 'suspension of judgement' (*ἐποχή*). I will explore a different way of understanding the relationship between Nietzsche and Pyrrhonism. I will argue that we should instead focus on what motivates Nietzsche's discussion to begin with. Nietzsche's aim is to address and solve certain problems that I will analyse here on a case-by-case basis. He does so by attributing the Pyrrhonian concept of *epochē* to some of his own ideas, which he developed independently.

3.1.3 Nietzsche's *ephexis*

Consider the following passage from *The Antichrist* (52; cf. *D* Preface, 5) where Nietzsche references his term *ephexis* while discussing philology:

> Philology should be understood here in a very general sense, as the art of reading well (*die Kunst gut zu lesen*), – to be able to read facts without falsifying them through interpretations, without letting the desire to understand make you lose caution, patience, subtlety. Philology as *ephexis* in interpretation: whether it concerns books, newspaper articles, destinies, or facts about the weather, – not to mention 'salvation of the soul' . . .

There might seem to be a relation, both linguistic and conceptual, between *ephexis* and the Pyrrhonian concept of *epochē* (*ἐποχή*), or suspension of judgement. In the *Outlines* (I, 196), we can read Sextus' claim that *epochē* stems from the verb *epechein*: 'suspension of judgement (*ἐποχή*) gets its name from the fact that the intellect is suspended (*τοῦ ἐπέχεσθαι τὴν διάνοιαν*) so as neither to posit nor reject anything because of the matters being investigated'. Berry argues that Nietzsche, under the inspiration of *epochē,* coins the term *ephexis*.[93] Firm support for this view is found in the fact that the verb *epechein* can be used to construct the noun *ephexis.* As a philologist, Nietzsche would surely have known that a verb can be constructed as a noun acting as a nominal infinite. Hence, we

[93] Berry (2013: 112) and (2011: 130).

may infer that this is what Nietzsche draws from the passage from the *Outlines*, noted above, to coin the term *ephexis.*

When, in *The Genealogy of Morality* (III, 9), Nietzsche draws a list of the particular drives that a genuine thinker should have, he includes: 'his drive to doubt, his drive to deny, his drive to prevaricate (his "*ephectic*" drive), his drive to analyse, his drive to research, investigate, dare, his drive to compare and counter-balance his will to neutrality and objectivity, his will to every "*sine ira et studio*"'. In addition to reiterating the term *ephexis*, the other drives mentioned here also echo the general description that Sextus gives us for the Pyrrhonian 'way of life' (*ἀγωγή*), which can be defined as: 'investigative' (*ζητητικὴ*) because of its activity in investigation; 'suspensive' (*ἐφεκτικὴ*) due to the state of mind that is obtained after enquiry; and, 'aporetic' (*ἀπορητικὴ*) from its habit of doubting and investigating everything, from its indecision as to whether to assent or deny (*PH* I, 7; cf. DL IX, 69-70).

These points might suggest that the most important connection between *ephexis* and *epochē* is their linguistic and conceptual similarity, of which Nietzsche is aware. However, I will make the case that, although he derives the term *ephexis* from *epochē,* Nietzsche's *ephexis* has a different meaning and scope to the original *epochē*. The reason for this change is that Nietzsche's goal is to articulate a critique of Christian philology.

Nietzsche gives two definitions of philology throughout his career: 'the art of reading badly' (*die Kunst schlecht zu lesen*) versus 'the art of reading well' (*die Kunst gut zu lesen*).[94] Nietzsche associates the art of reading badly with the Christian theologians.[95] Christians tend to read a text with a mindset that leads them to bias

[94] See Porter (2000) for comprehensive survey on the theme of philology in Nietzsche.
[95] In Chapter 1, I related the topic of Christian philology to Nietzsche's epistemic doctrine. I will explore a different topic here. I will address how the phenomenon of bias confirmation might play a role in Nietzsche's analysis.

confirmation. For instance, in the unpublished work of *We Philologists* (42-3) and then in *Daybreak* (84), we find the claim that Christian philologists interpret everything in light of the so-called theory of the preparation for the Gospel. Nietzsche provides an example of the latter that regards the Old Testament. The Christian philologists interpret 'every piece of wood, a rod, a ladder, a twig, a tree, a willow, a staff' as a supposed 'prophetic allusion to the wood of the Cross'. Another instance of this phenomenon might concern Heraclitus. Many church Fathers argue that the ancient Greek works are proto-Christian and that they pave the way for the Gospel. Thus, the Christian theologians read Heraclitus' *logos* (*λόγος*) as the *ante-litteram* philosophical notion of the theological concept of the *logos* mentioned at the beginning of John's Gospel (1:1).

Nietzsche attributes certain elements of Pyrrhonism to his own ideas in order to address a certain topic connected to the theme of Christian philology. In a passage in *The Antichrist* (12), the Pyrrhonists are praised for their ability to resist 'the art of *falling for your own forgeries*'. Nietzsche is here referring to the Pyrrhonian ability to retain their 'intellectual integrity': they do not fell prey to confirmation bias, unlike Christian theologians. It is tempting to connect the description of the requirements for retaining intellectual integrity with what Nietzsche seems to consider constitutes *ephexis*. It seems that the general idea expressed in the passage of *The Antichrist*, cited above, is that *ephexis* entails 'caution', 'patience' and observing 'subtlety' in the face of ancient evidence. Hence, the message that Nietzsche is trying to convey is that *ephexis* is the ability to avoid confirming one's biases regarding the ancient material being analysed, and to advance an interpretation only after careful and attentive reflection.

In Nietzsche's preface to *Daybreak* (5), written many years before *The Antichrist*, he sheds more light on this theme, claiming that the art of reading well 'does not so easily get anything done, it teaches to read well, that is to say, to read slowly, deeply, looking

cautiously before and aft, with reservations, with doors left open, with delicate eyes and fingers' (*D* Preface, 5). We can gather from this passage that, for Nietzsche, the term *ephexis* designates a state of intellectual pause and reflection. *Ephexis* is part of the mindset of a genuine philologist who, for instance, takes time to consider all the different facets of an interpretation before drawing conclusions and advancing that interpretation, and who puts on hold his biases and prejudices before reading a text and does not rush to confirm them.

The Nietzschean concept of *ephexis* described here it not reducible to or bear too close of a similarity with the Pyrrhonian *epochē*. Nietzsche's *ephexis* is an intermediate step in a process that culminates in putting forward a positive interpretation about a given topic, whereas the Pyrrhonian *epochē* is the endpoint an enquiry (*PH* I, 10). The example of Providence will suffice to elucidate the remarkable difference between these two concepts. Sextus reports how some claim that the gods must care about mankind because the heavenly bodies are ordered, whereas others oppose this view on the basis that the wrongdoings of many go unpunished. The Pyrrhonists are, thus, faced with two opposed arguments, which are equally believable due to 'equipollence' (*ἰσοσθένεια*). For the Pyrrhonists, this induces a state of intellectual standstill, of *epochē*: they neither affirm nor deny that divine Providence exists. This example reveals the fundamental difference between the Pyrrhonian *epochē* and *ephexis*: the former suspends judgement on how things are, whereas the latter is simply an intermediary step that occurs before an endpoint in which an interpretation may be formed about how things are. This conclusively shows that Nietzsche's *ephexis* lacks close similarity with the concept of *epochē*. The two notions are not supposed to resemble each other in any ultimate sense, rather, Nietzsche coins the term in order to serve a purpose in the context of his own critique of Christian philology.

3.1.4 Nietzsche's experimentalism and the revaluation of values

Two other topics that are relevant to Nietzsche's reception of the Pyrrhonian *epochē* are his experimentalism and his notion of the revaluation of moral values.[96] In a passage of *The Antichrist* (54), Nietzsche compares the Pyrrhonists, whom he describes as great spirits, with people of the opposite kind:

> '[…] people with convictions (*Gläubigen*) have pathologically conditioned optics, which makes them into fanatics (*Fanatiker*) – Savonarola, Luther, Rousseau, Robespierre, Saint-Simon, – the antithesis of strong spirits who have become free. But the grand poses struck by these sick (*kranken*) spirits, these conceptual epileptics, can affect the great masses, – fanatics are picturesque, humanity would rather see gestures than listen to reasons . . .'

It is worth noticing that Nietzsche makes references to the fact that strongly held beliefs lead us to that kind of fanaticism that is prevalent among Church figures such as Luther and Savonarola which are expressly labelled as 'sick' (*kranken*). Sextus advances similar reasoning. Sextus considers the Dogmatists as people in need of a cure. This is because the Dogmatists strongly held beliefs, including their belief that they have found the 'truth' (*τὸ ἀληθὲς*) (*PH* I, 1), lead them to develop a high level of 'conceit and rashness', which turns them into fanatics and 'fools' (*εὐήθεις*) (DL IX, 92). These characteristics are detrimental, from the Pyrrhonian point of view, given that they lead the Dogmatists to be perpetually 'troubled', as Sextus argues throughout the *Outlines* (I, 27). It may seem, therefore, that there is some similarity between Sextus and Nietzsche on this topic, but I argue that this is not the case. The main point driving Nietzsche's entire discussion is his concern of that thinkers may be turned into fanatics who, in his eyes, are people trapped by immutable dogmas. Nietzsche regards scepticism as the solution to this problem, but his solution is by no means equivalent to what we find in the

[96] Mitchenson (2017: 75) has provided a treatment of similar issues that concern experimentalism and the revaluation of values. However, I will focus on the underlying issues regarding the philosophical questions Nietzsche attempts to address.

Outlines. Nietzsche, for instance, projects onto the Pyrrhonian notion of the suspension of judgement the idea or method of experimentation with philosophical concepts. In doing so, he attributes to Pyrrhonism a form of experimentalism:[97]

> I approve of any form of scepticism (*Skepsis*) to which I can reply, 'Let's try it!' But I want to hear nothing more about all the things and questions that don't admit of experiment (*Experiment*). (*GS* 51)

As I observed in Chapter 1, note 36 of *Beyond Good and Evil* contains a tentative argument for the cosmic will to power. I will make the case that the tentative side of this argument fits well with Nietzsche's experimentalism, namely that one should be free to experiment with one's ideas. The argument from note 36 for the cosmic will to power begins with the term 'assuming' (*Gesetz*) and ends with the conclusion that the world 'would be (*wäre*) just this 'will to power'—and nothing besides!'. The argument itself seems to be hypothetical, according to what Nietzsche claims elsewhere.[98] Nietzsche's first premise is that the 'life of the drives' is the only 'given' (*gegeben*) for us, our only 'reality' (*Realität*). With this comment, Nietzsche means that the drives represent something that we can know for certain about ourselves. This claim, however, clashes with two passages from *Beyond Good and Evil* (16; 34) in which Nietzsche argues for an opposite conclusion, namely that we can never take something about ourselves for certain because the belief in 'immediate certainties' is 'a moral naiveté'. The second premise for a cosmic will to power is that we can explain the doctrine of the will to power with reference to 'the causality of the will'; but this idea is contradicted by Nietzsche himself in a passage of *The Gay Science* (127) where he denies that kind of causal explanation.

However, in light of Nietzsche's experimentalism, I argue that it is at least in part

[97] When Nietzsche mentions the figure of genuine philosophers, he describes them as 'those who attempt' (*Versucher*) (*BGE* 42) and as 'philosophers of the dangerous perhaps (*Vielleicht*) in every sense' (*BGE* 2).
[98] In chapter 1 I have developed a different argument, but it is possible to find different reasons as to why note 36 is not regarded as a conclusive argument by Nietzsche himself, for instance following Clark (1990).

possible to explain the hypothetical nature of the cosmic argument for the will to power at stake here. In note 36 of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche seems to be engaged in precisely that type of experiment that he encourages us to perform elsewhere: 'live dangerously! Build your cities on the slopes of Vesuvius! Send your ships into uncharted seas!' (*GS* 283).

Of course, such a notion of experimentalism should be understood as playing a role in the development of Nietzsche's ideas as to what scepticism is. Nietzsche's specific views about the nature and goals of scepticism should be found, as I have argued before, in his desire to address certain underlying philosophical questions, as for instance, what happens when we are left free to experiment with our own ideas, as opposed to what happens when we are trapped by own dogmas, as he supposes occurs in Christianity.

A second important theme that is relevant to Nietzsche's reception of the Pyrrhonian suspension of judgement is present in his notion of the revaluation of values. To observe this theme, consider the following passage from Victor Brochard's monograph, *Les Sceptiques Grecs* (59), a book which Nietzsche mentions in *Ecce Homo* (II, 3) as influential in developing his views about Pyrrhonism: 'In practice the sage [the Pyrrhonist] must live like everybody, he conforms to laws, customs, to the religion of his country'.[99] In a passage of *The Will to Power* (458), Nietzsche echoes Brochard's argument, which is consistent with material that he was likely familiar with from the 9th book of the *Lives*: the 'Pyrrhonists of antiquity' (*die antiken Skeptiker*) draw a line between 'theoretical' (*theoretisch*) and 'practical' (*praktisch*) matters and they tend 'to live as the "common man" lives, to hold right and good what he holds right'. In this passage, Nietzsche demonstrates his awareness of the Pyrrhonian 10th Mode of

[99] This passage is quoted by Mitchenson (2017: 73) in the context of the Pyrrhonists' passive acceptance of the traditional customs of their community.

suspension of judgement. In this Mode, Sextus argues that one should suspend judgement as to whether 'customs' (*ἔθη*) or 'laws' (*νόμοι*) are good by nature (*PH* I, 38). To demonstrate how given customs and laws are not universally accepted but rather are relative to a given tradition or people, the Pyrrhonists compare them side by side, revealing how they are opposed to each other: 'some of the Ethiopians tattoo their babies, while we do not: the Persians deem it becoming to wear brightly coloured full-length dresses, while we deem it unbecoming […] in Rome anyone who renounces his father's property does not repay his father's debts, while in Rhodes he repays them come what may' (*PH* I, 148). The Pyrrhonists, then, draw the conclusion that, due to the equipollence induced by such opposing customs, we cannot know if a given custom is good or bad; the same custom appears good for some people and bad for others.

Yet, Nietzsche correctly identifies that the Pyrrhonists' suspension of judgement only applies to the level of theory. In terms of their everyday activities, the Pyrrhonists follow the traditional norms of their community. As Sextus explains in the *Outlines* (I, 17), a Pyrrhonist's way of life, outlined in the 'everyday observances' (*βιωτικὴ τήρησις*), revolves around the passive acceptance of 'the customs' (*ἔθη*), 'laws' (*νόμοι*) and 'ways' (*ἄγωγαι*) of their country. The Pyrrhonists did not, then, tattoo their children like the Ethiopians, wear brightly-coloured full-length dresses like the Persians or have sex in public like the Indians (*PH* I, 148). Yet, the Pyrrhonists' passive acceptance of their local customs is ultimately incompatible with Nietzsche's idea that the task suitable for genuine philosophers is to '*create values*' (*BGE* 211). This task is related to the broader theme of 'the revaluation of all values' (*die Umwerthung aller Werthe*) a main component of which is that 'we have to learn to think differently, in order at least, perhaps very late on, to attain even more, to feel differently' (*D* 103).[100] The most important aspect of Nietzsche's

[100] See Janaway (2007: 13-5).

revaluation of values consists in a radical shift of attitude regarding our highest values:

> What! Is humanity itself decadent? Has it always been? – What is certain is that it has been taught decadent values (*Décadence-Werthe*), and only *décadence* values, as the highest values (*oberste Werthe*). (*EH* IV, 7)
>
> All the values in which humanity has collected its highest desiderata (*oberste Wünschbarkeit)* are values of *décadence* (*décadence-Werthe*). (*A* 6)

In these two passages, Nietzsche connects the topic of decadence to the 'highest values' held by his contemporaries, which were Christian in the sense that 'morality' (*Moral*) in Europe was essentially Christian morality (*BGE* 202). Nietzsche talks about decadence in the two passages above, from *Ecce Homo* and *The Antichrist*. For Nietzsche, Christian morality is harmful because it is an instance of an 'anti-natural morality' (*widernatürliche Moral*), anti-natural in that it goes against the 'the instincts of life' (*Instinkte des Lebens*) which are to strive towards power (*TI* V, 4).[101] Christianity, in other words, opposes life's growth and power instincts, which are inherent to a kind of a morality that Nietzsche labels as decadent. Conversely, the revaluation of Christian values is therapeutic because it facilitates a reversal of those values, as being decadent values, into new and healthy values that promote human growth and prosperity, as Nietzsche argues in *Ecce Homo* (III *D*, 2; P, 2).[102]

The way in which Nietzsche imagines that the revaluation of all values will cure us consists of two distinct phases.[103] The first is the *pars destruens* of this doctrine or, as Nietzsche calls it, a 'living declaration of war' on our current values with the aim of

[101] See May (1999: 41) and Janaway (2007: 96).
[102] Incidentally, a noteworthy point aptly observed by Janaway (2007: 13) is that Nietzsche's revaluation can more accurately be described as a 'double reversal'. The reason for this is that a revaluation of values has already taken place with the 'slave revolt in morality' (*der Sklavenaufstand in der Moral*), which is the affirmation of values that are the opposite of those praised by the nobles (*GM* I, 7; *BGE* 195). The values established by the slaves are the values that we now have. Accordingly, when Nietzsche tries to reverse our current system of value, what he is doing is reversing a prior revaluation of values that had occurred due to the slaves.
[103] See Reginster (2006: 101-5).

destroying them (*A* 13; cf. *EH* IV, *BGE* 1; *Z* I, 9). The strategy with which Nietzsche intends to win this war is by showing that our highest values are in fact instruments of decadence, as shown by passages previously seen, such as *Ecce Homo* (IV, 7) and *The Antichrist* (*A* 6). The second phase is the *pars costruens* of revaluation or, as Nietzsche phrases this, 'new values (*Werthe*) on new tablets' (*Z* III, 26; cf. I, 9), namely laying out new healthy values that will allow us to promote man's prosperity and growth, as opposed to anti-naturalistic values.

At different times in the same work of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche argues that his ideal thinkers should be 'Sceptic' (*Skeptiker*). We can explain Nietzsche's shift in attitude by examining how he attributes to the term 'Sceptic' his own idea, as it applies to one case but not another. When Nietzsche argues that a thinker should be a Sceptic, he is invoking the attitude towards customs he believes the thinker ought to have, namely to suspend judgement on a given custom's validity. It is in this way that Sceptics stop themselves at the theoretical level of their enquiries and have a different mindset regarding moral evaluations than would a standard thinker. The reason for Nietzsche's view is clear. He attributes to the Sceptics the idea that they might participate in the *pars destruens* phase of the revaluation of values by suspending judgement on the validity of contemporary moral judgements. It is in this sense that it is consistent with his views for Nietzsche to argue, as he does in the passage of *Beyond Good and Evil* (211), that a thinker should be a 'Sceptic' (*Skeptiker*).

However, Nietzsche also states in *Beyond Good and Evil* (208) that a thinker ought not be a 'Sceptic' (*Skeptiker*). I argue that this contrary claim can be explained in light of a different role that the Sceptics might also play in Nietzsche's project of the revaluation of values. Nietzsche imagines a situation in which Sceptics would not challenge the contemporary values and norms of a society and thus fail to contribute to his project.

Nietzsche thinks that it is likely that the Sceptics will pose a fierce resistance to his revaluation, given that they fully embrace a common way of life. The fact that, at a practical level, the Sceptics accept all the norms and habits of their communities is sufficient for Nietzsche to consider them as a negative kind of thinker. It easy to see that Nietzsche's attribution to the Sceptics the role of those that who stand in the way of his revaluation is, rather, the product of Nietzsche's own imagination, as it is a role that the Sceptics do not have: taking part in the task of destroying and then creating new values is something that Nietzsche argues for and not generally by a Sceptic.

3.2 Nietzsche on Pyrrho's goal of *apatheia*

A long note in *The Will to Power* (437), written between March and June 1888, provides the most important part of Nietzsche's discussion of Pyrrho's goal of *apatheia* ('insensibility') and way of life. Broadly speaking, this note addresses Pyrrho's 'common way of life' (*die gemeine Art leben*). However, Nietzsche also takes a particular focus on Pyrrho's goal of *ἀπάθεια* (*apatheia* or 'insensibility'), quoting the term in the original Greek form in order to highlight his command of the primary sources.[104] Scattered throughout the passage we find references to some, though not all, anecdotes surrounding Pyrrho's life that are described in the 9th book of Diogenes' *Lives*, which Nietzsche edited in his youth (*EH* II, 3). The anecdotal stories that Nietzsche reports are: Pyrrho meeting with the Gymnosophists while travelling to India alongside Alexander's army; that Pyrrho lived with his sister; and, that he travelled to the marketplace to sell pigs (DL IX, 61-2). It is noteworthy that the subject of this passage is not the Pyrrhonists as a group, but rather Pyrrho himself. Sextus is usually very cautious when discussing Pyrrho even if, in the *Outlines* (I, 7) he concedes that one of the names given to the 'sceptical

[104] Nietzsche also reports the less common or known term for the Pyrrhonian goal that is used at the end of the 9th book of the *Lives*, namely 'gentleness' (*πραότης*).

persuasion' is 'Pyrrhonists' (*Πυρρώνεοι*) because 'Pyrrho appears to us to have attached himself to Scepticism more systematically and conspicuously than anyone before'. Yet, in note 437 of *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche disagrees with Sextus and does not treat Pyrrho as the figurehead of Pyrrhonism. Instead, Nietzsche considered Pyrrho to be a different kind of a thinker than the rest of the Pyrrhonists. Whereas Pyrrho's main concerns consisted of topics such as the 'way of life' and *apatheia*, the Pyrrhonists were predominantly interested in theoretical matters, such as the suspension of judgement.

First and foremost, however, it is important to bring into focus Nietzsche's interpretation of Pyrrho's *apatheia.* Nietzsche believes that *apatheia* is the same as the goal of becoming ultimately insensible. A passage of *The Gay Science* (306) will be useful for examining Nietzsche's understanding of the notion: according to Nietzsche, someone like Pyrrho is comparable to a thinker who 'trains himself to swallow stones and worms, glass shards and scorpions without nausea; he wants his stomach to be ultimately insensible to everything the chance of existence pours into him.' Nietzsche brings to mind the Arabian sect of the Assua that he once encountered in Algiers: 'like these insensible people, [Pyrrho] likes to act out his insensibility (*Unempfindlichkeit*)'. For Nietzsche, Pyrrho's goal of *apatheia* is equal, among of things, to the absence of pain and suffering.

It is important to note at this point that Nietzsche's interest in the topic of suffering developed independently of his discussion of Pyrrho's insensibility. As early his writing of *The Birth of Tragedy* (8), in 1872, Nietzsche observes that the Greeks were particularly sensible to and concerned with the topic of suffering.[105] An example of such an observation is seen in this work when Nietzsche reports the famous reply that Silenus gives to King Midas who once asked: what is the best and most desirable thing for man.

[105] See Young (2006: 14).

Silenus replied: never to have been born or, in the case that this is not possible, to die soon. According to Nietzsche, the motivation that lay behind Silenus' answer is his belief that human existence is, for the most part, constituted by suffering (*GM* III: 28; *WP* 55). The 'problem of suffering' concerns its meaning and how we choose to respond to suffering, as opposed to the mere realisation that we suffer.[106] Understanding this aspect of Nietzsche's thought is especially useful for bringing into focus Nietzsche's discussion of Pyrrho's goal. The reason for this is that the topics of suffering and the appropriate response to suffering play an important role in Nietzsche's analysis of Pyrrho's way of life and his goal of insensibility.

3.2.1 Pyrrho: a 'Buddhist for Greece'

In a passage of *The Will to Power* (437), Nietzsche describes Pyrrho with the following words:

> *Sagacious* weariness (*weise Müdigkeit*): Pyrrho. To live a lowly life among the lowly. No pride. To live in the common way; to honour and believe what all believe. On guard against science and spirit, also against all that inflates – Simple: indescribably patient, carefree, mild. *Apatheia* (*ἀπάθεια*) or rather *praoētēs* (*πραότητς*). A Buddhist for Greece (*Ein Buddhist für Greichenland*), grown up amid the tumult of the schools; a latecomer; weary; the protest of weariness against the zeal of the dialecticians; the unbelief of weariness in the importance of all things. He had seen *Alexander*, he had seen the *Indian penitents*.

As Bett has duly noted, one of the most interesting aspects of this passage is Nietzsche's observation that Pyrrho, to quote his exact words, is a 'Buddhist for Greece' (*Ein Buddhist für Greichenland*).[107] Bett argues that Nietzsche is here underlining the similarity between the views and practices of Pyrrho and Buddhism, as far as certain aspects of their thought are concerned, especially their nihilism. There is some truth to this sentiment, as we will see. In the same passage of *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche also calls Pyrrho a

[106] See May (2011: 78).
[107] See Bett (2000a: 74).

'nihilist' (*Nihilist*), and in *The Antichrist* (20), among other places, Nietzsche repeatedly labels Buddhism as a nihilist religion. Yet, I will also argue that there are further respects in which there are similarities between the views and practices of Pyrrho and Buddhism. I will make the case that Nietzsche reads into Pyrrho some ideas and concepts that he has independently developed, regarding the role of suffering and the phenomenon of nihilism – ideas and concepts that are, nevertheless, also shared with Buddhism.

The claim that Pyrrho is a 'Buddhist for Greece' contains a kernel of truth. Nietzsche reads in the 9th book of *Lives* the story that Pyrrho met with Gymnosophists while travelling alongside Alexander's army. Nietzsche takes at face value this anecdote regarding Pyrrho's life and infers that Pyrrho drew upon some aspects of the Gymnosophists' thought in forming his own views, such as their ideas about the abolition of suffering and a longing towards nothingness.[108] We can trace this attitude back to Nietzsche's early days of the Basel period. For instance, in the preface of *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, Nietzsche writes: 'nothing would be sillier than to claim an autochthonous development for the Greeks. On the contrary, they invariably absorbed other living cultures. The very reason they got so far is that they knew how to pick up the spear and throw it onward from the point where others had left it. Their skill in the art of fruitful learning was admirable'. In this passage, Nietzsche is describing how it is reasonable to suppose and is in fact likely that the Greeks drew general philosophical concepts from other cultures. Many years later Nietzsche would make similar comments regarding Pyrrho and the Gymnosophists,[109] explaining that there are certain elements of Pyrrho's thought that are similar to those of the naked Indian philosophers, which is at

[108] See Kuzminski (2008: 10ff.).
[109] The Gymnosophists, literally 'naked philosophers', pursued the famous goal of *nirväṇa* ('tranquillity'), that is a soteriological state of awareness, called *bodhi,* in which one is freed from the cyclic fashion of existence and detached from suffering. On the Gymnosophists, see the *Fundamental Wisdom* (XXV, 19).

least in part attributable to intercultural borrowing.

Given that Nietzsche simply labels the latter a 'nihilist' (*Nihilist*) without any further explanation, it may help to untangle the threads of Nietzsche's reasoning here by examining his interpretation of Buddhism and then seeing how it applies to Pyrrho. In numerous passages of a later work, *The Antichrist* (21 and 22), Nietzsche argues that the main goals of Buddhism are 'cheerfulness, quiet, and an absence of desire'. He comments further that the reason for these goals is that Buddhism belongs only to those people who are 'too sensitive to pain' and suffering, and that such characteristics typically emerge at the end of a civilisation. However, Nietzsche explicates the most important aspect of Buddhism many years earlier. In a passage of *The Genealogy of Morality* (II, 21), Nietzsche describes how Buddhism consists in 'a nihilistic turning away from existence, the desire for nothingness (*Nichts*) or a desire for the 'antithesis'. Similarly, in the preface to *The Gay Science* (3), Nietzsche claims that Buddhism is when 'we withdraw before pain into the Oriental Nothingness (*Nichts*) – called Nirvana – into mute, rigid, deaf self-surrender, self-forgetting, self-extinction'. In these two passages, Nietzsche identifies the state of Buddhist *nirvāṇa* with his independently formed concept of 'nihilism' (*Nihilismus*).

As Reginster has correctly identified, Nietzsche defines nihilism as the notion that life in general has no value at all, namely that 'all that happens is meaningless' (*alles Geschehen sinnlos*)', something that is detailed in a passage of *The Will to Power* (36).[110] Nietzsche is explicit in describing what this entails: our values are regarded as impossible to be achieved. The meaning of nihilism is, in fact, that 'the goal (*Ziel*) is lacking; "why?" finds no answer'' (*WP* 2). For Nietzsche, the concept of a 'goal' is connected to its ability

[110] See Reginster (2006: 23).

of being a source of inspiration for individuals.

Life has meaning insofar as it is imbued with meaning for us. To the extent that we start to think that it is no longer possible to realise our goals, our life loses meaning.[111] Therefore, we are left with a dilemma, there are two options both of which appear prima facie detrimental as *The Gay Science* (346) makes clear: 'either abolish your venerations or—*yourselves*! The latter would be nihilism; but would not the former also be—nihilism?—This is *our* question mark'. The meaning of this statement is that we have the option of cancelling our goals, which Nietzsche calls 'venerations' in this passage. Consequently, we can continue living, despite losing all forms of guidance with which we could otherwise use to live our lives. Alternatively, we can decide to abolish ourselves and not our goals, an option that, also, constitutes nihilism, given that this is a choice of nothingness over life. The reason why nihilism leads us to a dilemma of this sort is, as Reginster compellingly argues, due to the impossibility of realising our goals in the world.[112] In the passage of *The Gay Science* (346) quoted earlier, Nietzsche elaborates this reasoning further with the claim that, due to the impossibility of realising our goals, the world is 'worth less' than we thought. Hence, at the point of realising this, we are faced with the dilemma to abolish either our 'venerations', which are impossible to be brought about in the world, or ourselves. In the same passage, Nietzsche remarks, in passing, that the teachings of the Buddha reveal this dynamic, that is, the total and irredeemable opposition between our goals and the world.

The foregoing, thus, establishes the reason why Buddhist nihilism is defined by Nietzsche as 'a withdrawal from [life]' and 'a desire for nothingness' (*GM* II, 21). The goals held by Buddhism, on Nietzsche's view, are in opposition with the world to the extent that their bearers wish that the world itself did not exist. On the other hand, the

[111] See Reginser (2006: 25).
[112] See Reginster (2006: 31).

second passage from the preface to *The Gay Science* (3), which defines Buddhism as a withdrawal into nothingness 'before pain', may provide important insights about the goal that Buddhists find impossible to realise in the world: the absence of pain and suffering.

As seen earlier, the Buddhists' goals are first and foremost the elimination of pain and suffering, which is the reason why they withdraw into nothingness (*A* 21; 22). Nietzsche sees Pyrrho as sharing a similar kind of goal in *apatheia*, as a way of achieving the elimination of suffering. As he phrases this in the passage of *The Gay Science* (306): Pyrrho is comparable to one who 'trains himself to swallow stones and worms, glass shards and scorpions without nausea; he wants his stomach to be ultimately insensible to everything'. However, according to Nietzsche, such a goal is impossible to achieve because pain and suffering are two inescapable phenomena. As detailed earlier, this conclusion results from Nietzsche's understanding of all biology in terms of the will to power – biological phenomena is power-based – a notion that he independently develops around the middle-phase of his philosophical career.

There are two statements that reveal the extent to which Nietzsche engages in a harsh polemic with Darwinism and Schopenhauer to demonstrate that the main drive of organic beings is not survival but, rather, power. First: 'the total-aspect of life (*Leben*) is not distress, not hunger, but rather riches, profusion, even absurd squandering—where there is struggle (*Kampf*), one struggles for power (*Macht*)' (*TI* IX, 14); and second, 'Only where life is, is there also will; but not will to life (*Wille zum Leben*), instead – thus I teach you – will to power (*Wille zur Macht*)!' (*Z* II, On Self-Overcoming). Nietzsche's statements are uncomplicated. They describe how, for Nietzsche, power is the basic explainer of biology, from the simplest to the most complex forms of life. This explanation has a wider implication that should be observed. A passage of *Beyond Good and Evil* is particularly helpful in revealing what this is, especially if examine Nietzsche's

exact wording: 'life itself (*Leben selbst*) is *essentially* a process of appropriating, injuring, overpowering the alien and the weaker, oppressing, being harsh, imposing your own form, incorporating, and at least, the very least, exploiting' (*BGE* 259). According to Nietzsche, precisely because life is will to power, life is also a zero-sum game, where it follows that if someone wins, someone else must lose. Suffering and pain are inescapable phenomena, as a direct and inescapable consequence of the will to power. Moreover, if Nietzsche's view is correct, and life is will to power, then the clash of living beings is inevitable. There will be overpowering, the discharging of strength, domination, submission and destruction, all of which are doomed to reoccur ad infinitum.

From these points we can gather that, from Nietzsche's perspective, the goal of Buddhism, namely the absence of pain and suffering, is impossible to realise, given that life in its entirety is reducible to will to power. The result for Nietzsche is that Buddhists develop the idea that the world is worthless, and due to the fact that their goal is unachievable, they become nihilists. Nietzsche articulates further the kind of nihilism that belongs to Buddhism: he thinks that it is 'passive' (*passivischer*). As describes this in a passage of *The Will to Power* (23), Buddhism is 'the weary (*müde*) nihilism that no longer attacks; its most famous form, Buddhism; a passive nihilism, a sign of weak-ness. The strength of the spirit may be worn out, exhausted'. Buddhists do not actively strive to destroy the world; rather, they are resigned to the mismatch between what the world is and what they would like it to be. It seems that Nietzsche applies the same idea to Pyrrho, given that the first two adjectives he uses to describe him are 'sagacious weariness' (*weise Müdigkeit*). It is difficult to say what specific aspects of passive nihilism Nietzsche thinks are characteristic of Pyrrho. Yet, the above note from *The Will to Power* describes Pyrrho as a thinker who is patient and calm and whose main attitude to life is a sort of passive resignation. It is possible to take this as a reference to the sense of emotional surrender,

stemming from the opposition between Pyrrho's goal of *apatheia* and the impossibility of its realisation in a world that is reducible to will to power. Therefore, Pyrrho in Nietzsche's eye, would appear as a passive thinker due to his nihilism.

Besides describing him as weary, Nietzsche also claims that Pyrrho is 'wise'. This comment appears sarcastic in nature, in light of Nietzsche's understanding of Pyrrho's Buddhist nihilism and his goal of *apatheia*. Pyrrho aims to eliminate all suffering through *apatheia*, a goal that cannot be realised given that all life can be characterised as a collection of power-based phenomena. The result is that *apatheia* leads to an overall hindrance to Pyrrho's wisdom. Over time, especially in his middle period, Nietzsche independently develops the idea that suffering is beneficial. A passage of *Beyond Good and Evil* (225) give a lucid explanation of why: 'the tension that breeds strength (*Kraft*) into the unhappy soul, its shudder at the sight of great destruction, its inventiveness and courage in enduring, surviving, interpreting, and exploiting unhappiness, and whatever depth, secrecy, whatever masks, spirit, cunning, greatness it has been given: — weren't these the gifts of suffering (*Leiden*), of the disciple of great suffering?'. Nietzsche claims here that suffering is a necessary condition of achieving greatness.[113] Suffering and painful events allow us to sharpen our minds and senses, given that it is in especially harsh and uncomfortable situations that we are able to grow and enhance our intellectual power. According to Nietzsche, without suffering our wisdom cannot grow because the underlying conditions which allow it to do so are lacking. Nietzsche is apparently so convinced of the usefulness of suffering that he wishes for his true disciples nothing but 'suffering, desolation, sickness, ill-treat-ment, indignities' because these are the conditions that foster greatness and strength (*WP* 910). It is important to remember that the goal of Pyrrho, *apatheia*, is precisely to abolish the conditions that would allow us,

[113] See May (2011: 86).

on Nietzsche's view, to promote intellectual greatness. That is why Nietzsche's description of Pyrrho, as a '*sagacious* weariness', is to some extent sarcastic and satirical.

In summary, I have argued that Nietzsche's description of Pyrrho as a 'Buddhist for Greece' does not simply refer to the similarities of Pyrrho's views with Buddhism, notwithstanding Diogenes' *Lives* substantiating such similarities, as seen in note 437 of *The Will to Power*. By means of the label 'Buddhist for Greece', Nietzsche draws attention to these similarities but at the same time also attributes to Pyrrho certain doctrines which he has formed independently. Specifically, these doctrines regard Buddhist nihilism and the importance of suffering.

3.2.2 Pyrrho's decadence between Socrates and Epicurus

There is a second aspect of Pyrrho's goal of *apatheia* that will be important to explore and delineate here: its decadence. To shed further light on this notion, consider the following excerpt from note 437 of *The Will to Power*, in which Pyrrho is compared with the figures of Socrates and Epicurus in order to show what place he occupies in the history of philosophy, as imagined by Nietzsche:

> The real philosophers of Greece are those before Socrates (*die vor Sokrates*) (—with Socrates something changes) […] I have seen only one original figure (*originale Figure*) in those that came after: a late arrival (*Spätig*) but necessarily the last—the nihilist (*Nihilist*) Pyrrho:—his instinct was opposed to all that had come to the top in the meantime: the Socratics, Plato, the artist's optimism[114] of Heraclitus. […] To overcome contradiction; no contest (*Wettkampf*); no will to distinction; to deny the Greek instincts (*die griechischischen Instinkte verneinen*). […] Pyrrho, like Epicurus, two forms of Greek decadence (*zwei Formen der grieschischen decadence*): related, in hatred for dialectics (*Haß gegen die Dialektik*) and for all theatrical virtues—these two together were in those days called philosophy—; deliberately holding in low esteem that which they loved; choosing common, even despised names for it; representing a state in which one is neither sick nor well, neither alive nor dead—

[114] This word is illegible in the original text, and the reading is highly questionable as Kaufmann underlines. For this reason, I will not engage with the issue of drawing a comparison with Heraclitus, even if doing so is tempting given the purposes of this thesis.

Numerous points are worth noticing in this passage, but the important elements on which we should focus our attention are the following: the concept of the 'instinct' (*Instinkt*), the phenomenon of decadence, and the figures of Socrates and Epicurus who are, respectively, mentioned at the beginning and the end of the passage.

A starting point for considering these aspects is a passage of *The Twilight of the Idols* (X, 3), where Nietzsche attributes to the Greeks the following 'instinct' (*Instinkt*): 'I saw the Greeks' strongest instinct (*Instinkt*), the will to power (*der Wille zur Macht*). The will to power is a broader principle of activity that explains human psychology, from the activity of thinking, which is 'only a relation between these drives' (*Triebe*), to the soul that, in spite of being usually thought of as eternal and indivisible is constituted by 'drives' (*BGE* 12; 36). There is, therefore, a certain kind of order among the drives and within the soul, which is why Nietzsche often talks about a 'society' (*Gesellschaftbau*) of the 'drives' (*Triebe*) and 'instincts' within each person (*Instinkte*) (*GM* II, 1; *BGE* 19).

As seen in the previous chapters, Nietzsche often describes the drives in anthropomorphic terms when discussing their goals, pros and cons, and their perspectives (*HAH* I, 32; *BGE* 6; *WP* 481; 567). These and other terms, including his descriptions of the drives as parts of a society, should not induce us into thinking that the drives are small 'pre-formed' agents.[115] We should not take Nietzsche's language too literally here, but instead understand Nietzsche as describing the situation in a highly metaphorical way. According to this view, a drive assumes a prominent position in the soul and eventually becomes the 'rightful *master* (*Herr*) of all the other drives' (*Triebe*) (*BGE* 6; 7).

It will be helpful to begin the current investigation by considering Nietzsche's first comment about Socrates, given that this seems to guide his entire discussion about

[115] Clark and Dudrick (2012: 167-9) make this claim, but as shown before Katsafanas (2016: 79-81) argues that we have good reasons to exercise caution when doing so.

Pyrrho. Around the time in which the passage above from *The Will to Power* was written, Nietzsche also wrote *The Twilight of the Idols*, in which the figure of Socrates is of paramount importance in bringing into focus the topic of the heath of the soul, decadence and the role that the instincts play.[116] There, Nietzsche gives a brief definition of decadence: 'to have to fight the instincts (*Instinkte*) – that is the formula for decadence' (*TI* II, 11).[117] This definition sheds light on the phenomenon of decadence, even if it seems only to concern the formal notion of the integration and disintegration of the instincts.[118] The reason that this definition is illuminating is that Nietzsche often uses the metaphor of anarchy when describing the phenomenon of decadence. For instance, in a passage of *Twilight of the Idols* (II, 4), Nietzsche describes how Socrates' decadence is mainly due to 'the admitted chaos and anarchy (*Anarchie*) of his instincts (*Instinkte*)'.

First, Nietzsche illustrates how there is a social and political dimension to the instincts, which is echoed in the passaged about Pyrrho. Regarding Socrates, Nietzsche says: 'The same type of degeneration [as for Socrates] was quietly gaining ground everywhere: old Athens was coming to an end […] Everywhere, instincts were in anarchy; everywhere, people were five steps away from excess' (*TI* II, 9). The meaning of these remarks is clear, namely that the anarchy of Socrates' instincts matches his context, the social and political anarchy of 5th century Athens. Nietzsche is here expressing the idea that all individuals, including thinkers, are born of their own *Zeitgeist*. Socrates is decadent and 5th century Athens is also decadent, from a cultural and social perspective.

Nietzsche echoes this idea when he refers to Pyrrho in the passage from *The Will*

[116] See Conway (1997: 23-66).

[117] Cf. 'I understand corruption (as I am sure you have guessed by now) in the sense of decadence […] I call an animal (*Tier*), a species, an individual corrupt when it loses its instincts (*Instikte*), when it chooses, when it prefers things that will harm it' (*A* 6).

[118] See Richardson (1996: 43).

to Power quoted above. He claims that Pyrrho is 'a late arrival' (*Spätig*), which means that he is a thinker who arrives after Socrates and Plato. There is a passage in *Beyond Good and Evil* (200) that elucidates the relationships between the late Greek culture, Pyrrho, and the way in which the drives are organised in the soul. There, Nietzsche describes how it is typical of 'late cultures' (*späten Culturen*) to have conflicting drives whose organisation is chaotic. The most typical kind of thinker of this age is the Epicurean, whose mentality and way of life is directed towards 'rest, lack of disturbance, repletion, unity at last and the "Sabbath of Sabbaths"'. For Nietzsche, these goals echo the goal of total abolition of suffering preached by Buddhism, which not coincidentally is a religion belonging to 'the end and exhaustion of civilisation' *(A* 22).

In a passage of an early work, *Human, All-Too-Human* (I, 276), Nietzsche explains in more detail that there is a strong resemblance between 'macrocosm' (*Makrokosmus*) and 'microcosm' (*Mikrokosmus*), referring respectively to the resemblance between 'entire epochs' (*Zeitperioden*) and individual human beings, including the drives, of which they are made. However, Nietzsche's commitment to this idea seems scarcely conceivable. As Conway notes, Nietzsche's idea bears a strange resemblance to Plato's theory of the constitution as expressed in the *Republic*, especially regarding the democratic constitution, in which the drives as well as the political affairs are in a state of anarchy (*Rep*. VIII, 557-64).[119] Nietzsche's theory seems to suggest that there are certain periods of one's *Zeitgeist* in which the drives are destined to be in a certain state. There is, in other words, a resemblance or relationship between the state of one's drives and the age in which one lives. However, this notion does not seem to be plausible given the wider context of Nietzsche's work, and should be abandoned; we must turn to another more fruitful explanation.

[119] See Conway (1997: 30).

Huddleston is compelling in showing that Nietzsche's notion of decadence should not be understood simply in formal terms, but also and most importantly in substantive terms.[120] For Nietzsche, decadence is primarily related also to what kind of drive becomes the most prominent in the soul and is not simply attributable to a state of anarchy in the soul. Let us take the case of Socrates, as previously discussed. In *The Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche claims that Socrates' decadence is caused by the tyranny of reason, the 'hypertrophy of logic' and 'dialectics' (*Dialektik*) (*TI* II, 2; 4). Reason is a powerful and useful tool for a philosopher, as Nietzsche highlights in *The Birth of Tragedy* (12-3). However, Socrates' rational capacities are an attempt not just to understand the world around us, but also to correct it. In Nietzsche's words, Socrates gives origin to 'the archetype of theoretical man' whose overarching goal is to arrive at 'the deepest abysses of being, [so] that it is capable, not simply of understanding existence, but even of correcting it' (*BT* 13).

However, the result is for Nietzsche deeply worrying and ultimately undesirable. Socrates is the first thinker who set the standard of other philosophers of welcoming death and condemning life: 'The wisest (*weisten*) men in every age have reached the same conclusion about life: it's no good . . . Always and everywhere, you hear the same sound from their mouths, – a sound full of doubt (*Zweifel*), full of melancholy, full of exhaustion (*Müdigkeit*) with life, full of resistance to life. Even Socrates said as he died: "living – that means being sick for a long time: I owe Asclepius the Saviour a rooster." Even Socrates had had enough' (*TI* II, 1). Nietzsche, thus, interprets this famous utterance of Socrates' about Asclepius and the rooster reported by Plato in the *Phaedo* (118a7–8) as marking Socrates' excessive reliance on rationality resulting in his passive acceptance of death, and finally viewed as liberation from sickness.

[120] See Huddelston (2017: 136-7) and (2019: 85-90).

The most important aspects of this passage lie in the two concepts that characterised Socrates' attitude towards life: 'doubt' (*Zweifel*), and 'exhaustion' (*Müdigkeit*). For Nietzsche, the ultimate undesirability of Socrates as a philosophical figure does not simply lie in the anarchy of his instincts, but rather in the kind of instinct that rises to the top in his soul, namely an overdeveloped form of rationality. Nietzsche draws from his notion of the biological form of the will to power to explain what motivates the harsh judgement he has towards Socrates. Life is that which determines the value of individuals; if they represent an 'ascending' (*aufsteigende*) form of life they are of great 'value' (*Werthe*), whereas the contrary occurs if they represent a 'descending (*absteigende*) line of life' (*TI* IX, 33). Nietzsche applies the same reasoning is to philosophers in the following passage from *The Twilight of the Idols* (II, 2): 'It is an objection to a philosopher if he sees a problem with the value of life (*Leben*), it is a question mark on his wisdom, an un-wisdom (*Unweisheit*). – What? So not only were the great sages (*Weisen*) all decadents but – they weren't even sages?'. Thus, although the Pythia called Socrates 'the wisest of all Greeks' (*Ap*. 21a-b), according to Nietzsche he was not genuinely wise; Socrates denied the value of life and this ultimately turns him into a thinker who is not worth emulating.

The fact that Socrates' faculty of reasoning emerged as the most prominent drive in his soul is extremely important in the context of our discussion of Pyrrho. In the passage of *The Will to Power* we saw at the beginning of this section, Nietzsche emphasises Pyrrho's 'hatred for dialectics' (*Haß gegen die Dialektik*) and 'contest' (*Wettkampf*). This description of Pyrrho is in direct contraposition with Socrates and his highly developed sense of rationality. The idea of contest can be traced back to Nietzsche's early discussion of Greek culture, in *Homer's Contest*, which regarded the intellectual and philosophical clashes between Greek thinkers and intellectuals, such as

Plato, Protagoras, Aeschylus, Euripides. Over time, Nietzsche develops the idea of intellectual contest into the notions of 'reason' and later 'dialectic'. In sharp contrast to Socrates, Pyrrho rejects dialectics. Given what we have seen thus far regarding Nietzsche's views, it would be reasonable to expect that Nietzsche sees Pyrrho as a positive figure due to the latter's rejection of 'reason', and indeed Nietzsche does seem to hail Pyrrho for that. However, Nietzsche still regards Pyrrho, together with Epicurus', as representing 'two forms of Greek decadence [albeit] related, in hatred for dialectics'. There is, therefore, a common aspect that links together Socrates, Epicurus and Pyrrho, such that each of the three represent a form of Greek decadence.

In a passage, taken from *The Genealogy of Morality* (III: 17), Nietzsche claims that Epicurus was not only a decadent but also a nihilist figure. The words Nietzsche uses are particularly revealing:

> Nevertheless, we want to remain aware, here as with the case of 'salvation', that fundamentally, in spite of the splendour of Oriental exaggeration, the same value is expressed as that by the clear, cool, Greek—cool but suffering Epicurus: the hypnotic feeling of nothingness, the repose of deepest sleep, in short, *absence of suffering* – this may be counted as the highest good, the value of values, by the suffering and by those who are deeply depressed, it *has* to be valued positively by them and found to be *the* positive itself. (*GM* III, 17)

Nietzsche knows that Epicurus' goal of *ataraxia* (*ἀταραξία*) is a state of imperturbability, which can also be considered as an 'absence of suffering' (*Ad Hdt.* 82; *Ad Men.* 128). Nietzsche reads into this goal the wider phenomenon of nihilism, which is a longing towards nothingness. Moreover, in a passage from *The Antichrist* (30), Nietzsche adds that Epicurus is a '*typical* decadent' precisely because of his oversensitivity to pain and his inability to cope with suffering. Epicurus articulates an objection to life, in a similar vein to Socrates, despite differences in their ultimate reasons for doing so. Both philosophers argue that there is something wrong with life and they are exhausted by it. Nietzsche does not speculate further about Socrates' ultimate

motivation; we can, however, argue that Socrates may have been thus motivated precisely because existence requires correction. Socrates is, in fact, the archetype of the rational man who teaches not only to understand reality but also and most importantly to straighten it (*BT* 13). What reality might lack is, then, that it is not rational enough.

In the case of Epicurus and Pyrrho, we certainly know what they thought was the world's main flaw: it contains too much pain and suffering. Their goal, in the different forms of *ataraxia* or *apatheia*, was the abolition of suffering, which according to Nietzsche can never be brought about in this world. That is why, at least in Nietzsche's eyes, both Epicurus and Pyrrho are figures of Greek decadence, even if for different reasons than those held by Socrates. Socrates ultimately arrives at the idea that life should be devalued through dialectics and reasons, while Epicurus and Pyrrho by means of their goal that suffering and pain should be eliminated. However, for Nietzsche this is mistake, for as he states in his autobiography, *Ecce Homo* (III, *Z*, 1), 'pain is not considered an objection to life: If you do not have any more happiness to give me, well then! *You still have pain* . . .' Suffering as such is not a problem; rather, the potential for problems lies in how we choose to respond to suffering. According to Nietzsche, Pyrrho chose the wrong answer, namely *apatheia* for the purpose of the abolition and elimination of suffering. This leads Pyrrho to nihilism, decadence and the devaluation of life. Therefore, we may draw the conclusion that, according to Nietzsche, Pyrrho, like Epicurus, is a decadent thinker because of the drives' structure in his soul. The drives that takes the lead in Pyrrho's soul aims to relinquish suffering and this ultimately leads him towards the path of nihilism and decadence.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that Nietzsche's reception of Pyrrhonism cannot be fully accounted for simply by observing the similarities that are present between their

doctrines. Nietzsche discusses the Pyrrhonists in detail and seems to draw from Pyrrhonism, yet his philological analysis is not objective. Rather, Nietzsche attributes to Pyrrhonism ideas and aspects from his own doctrines, which he developed independently over the course of his philosophical career. Some notable examples that I described are the epistemic doctrine of perspectivism, the biological form of the will to power, the role of suffering, nihilism, and decadence. I argued that Nietzsche's main goal was to address themes regarding the Christian beliefs and the views of other philosophers, ranging from Socrates to Epicurus. There are, however, some specific purposes that Nietzsche had in mind when he was reading own doctrines into Pyrrhonism. I have addressed each of these purposes on an individual basis in respective sections of this chapter.

In the first section I focused on Nietzsche's epistemic doctrine of perspectivism and the Pyrrhonian Modes of the suspension of judgement. The first topic I discussed was the parallelism between Nietzsche's analogy of seeing and knowing, and the Pyrrhonian 5th Mode, which regarded the relativity of perception. I argued that this comparison can be helpful in shedding light on the meaning of Nietzsche's perspectival seeing: the ability to see an object from many perspectives, which taken together form a coherent whole. I focused on the difference between Nietzsche's notion of 'postponing judgment' and the Pyrrhonists' 'suspension of judgment'. Nietzsche's 'postponing judgment' is not the end point of investigation, as is the case for the Pyrrhonists' 'suspension of judgment'. Nietzsche's postponement of judgment is a cautious and prudent precept that guides the overall investigation.

Next, I discussed Nietzsche's interests in the Pyrrhonian 1st Mode, which concerned the equivalence of humans and nonhuman animals. I observed that the similarities between the examples used by Nietzsche and Sextus to illustrate the equivalence of animals and humans are not as significant as they may appear on first

consideration. The reason for this is that the goal of Nietzsche's discussion of the Pyrrhonian Modes is to address and to reject Christian anthropocentric beliefs. I argued, therefore, that in order to reach this goal, Nietzsche ultimately looks beyond the Pyrrhonian argument and towards some of own independently formed doctrines, such as M-Naturalism and the biological will to power. These doctrines, then, and not the Pyrrhonian argument, allow him to reject the Christian belief that man is at the centre of the universe.

The second section regards Nietzsche's discussion of the Pyrrhonian suspension of judgement. I made the case that, in order to achieve his goals, Nietzsche attributes to this concept his own ideas, thus infusing it with new meaning and function. I gave three examples to illuminate this process. First, in the context of philology, Nietzsche coins the terms *ephexis* which, despite its similarity with the Pyrrhonian 'suspension of judgement' or *epochē*, has a strikingly different meaning and scope. *Ephexis* is intended to counter the confirmation bias typical of 'the art of reading badly'—Christian philology. The second example regards Nietzsche's experimentalism. I argued that Nietzsche attributes to the Pyrrhonian suspension of judgement his own theory that concerns the benefit of not being trapped by dogmas and of having the freedom to experiment with one's ideas. The result is that one can explore different hypotheses, such as when Nietzsche advances his own tentative argument for the cosmic will to power, in note 36 of *Beyond Good and Evil*. I also addressed Nietzsche's analysis of the Pyrrhonian passive acceptance of traditional customs and laws. Nietzsche discusses this Pyrrhonian idea and concludes that it is in opposition to his project of the revaluation of values.

In the third and last section, I addressed Nietzsche's reception of Pyrrho's way of life, which is a separate area of Nietzsche's discussion of Pyrrhonian theory and practice. Nietzsche focuses on Pyrrho's goal of *apatheia* or 'insensibility', and I argued that he

projects onto the latter some his own independently developed ideas, such as nihilism, the role of suffering in one's life, and decadence. The goal of the Nietzsche's discussion of Pyrrho's way of life is to compare him with the figures of Socrates and Epicurus, who Nietzsche regards as negative to the extreme, *qua* the embodiment of Greek decadence and as receptacles of negative drives that lead to the devaluation of life.

4 Heraclitus

Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to provide a reconstruction of Heraclitus from the point of the view of modern scholarship, which involves analysing his ideas, arguments and his way of life, in their own terms. This method runs contrary to the way in which Nietzsche analyses Heraclitus. As we will see in the next chapter, Nietzsche's analysis is motivated by his desire to attribute to Heraclitus several of his doctrines, such as epistemic perspectivism and the cosmic will to power. Nietzsche's goals are to address the relationship with both Christian philology and the Platonic metaphysical tradition, as well as the Christian belief in teleology, and to compare the views of Heraclitus with those of Hesiod. The choice of the themes regarding Heraclitus' doctrines to be addressed is selective. I will focus on the topics that Nietzsche discusses in order to compare his analysis with those of modern scholars.

In the first section, I will focus on the Heraclitean *corpus*, his way of life, and his ambiguous writing style in particular. The particular characteristics of Heraclitus' writing style provide a useful example for illuminating the contrast between a contemporary scholarly analysis and a Nietzschean analysis. I will argue that the contemporary scholars agree that Heraclitean sayings have two or more meanings that are compatible and that form coherent ideas when considered together. However, as I will show, such a view stands in sharp contrast to Nietzsche's own discussion. Nietzsche feels a particular kinship with the Heraclitean writing. Nietzsche argues that the goal of such a style is to protect one's teaching from those interpreters, such as the Stoics understood as the predecessors of the Christian philologists, who might pervert it by shunning the epistemic

gain embedded into its ambiguity of language.

In the second section, I will discuss Heraclitus' the theory of flux, especially the Platonic interpretation of *panta rei* (*πάντα ῥεῖ* or 'everything flows'). I will defend the view that Plato misinterpreted the Heraclitean position, as an unrestricted flux is a key move in developing the theory of the Forms. However, I will argue that Heraclitus' genuine theory of becoming places more emphasis on a balanced and regular form of change. By contrast, when Nietzsche discusses the theory of flux, he attributes to Heraclitus his own version of power ontology. Nietzsche's goal is to highlight the relationship between Heraclitus' acceptance of the notion of becoming and the Platonic metaphysical tradition.

Moreover, I will review Heraclitus' notion of the cycle of 'elemental transformation' in the universe and the related doctrine of 'conflagration' (*ἐκπυρώσις* or *ekpyrōsis*). I will argue that conflagration is a cosmogonic theory about the origin of the world, which is constantly destroyed and then generated anew by the principle of fire. In the next chapter, however, I will show how Nietzsche results in attributing to Heraclitus his cosmic will to power to Heraclitus' conflagration. Nietzsche's analysis is driven by the desire to address three themes related to Christianity: first, whether there is a *telos* in the universe; second, whether the cosmos can be judged in moral terms; and third, whether man is the crown of all creation.

Finally, I will address Heraclitus' theory of 'strife' (*ἔρις* or *eris*) and I will show that this doctrine is an elaborated philosophical response to Homer's and Hesiod's hopes that strife should vanish from the universe. By contrast, I will emphasise how Nietzsche discusses this topic in order to demonstrate how a philosopher such as Heraclitus can address and resolve important issues about the cosmos, such as the theory of opposites, whereas a poet such as Hesiod can only address issues that are limited to Greek society,

such as the contest among Greek citizens.

4.1 Heraclitus: fragments, way of life and writing style

4.1.1 Heraclitus' extant *corpus*

The first topic that I will analyse in this chapter is a question that has puzzled modern scholarship for many decades. How should we evaluate Heraclitus' surviving fragments: did he originally design them as isolated statements or, rather, as a continuous book, the order and cohesion of which has been lost over the centuries? The answer to this question is relevant for my thesis' purposes because, as I will explain in the next chapter, Nietzsche' works can be fruitfully compared with Heraclitus' statements. In brief, it can be claimed that Nietzsche sometimes writes brief and memorable remarks and statements, especially in works such as *The Antichrist*, *The Twilight of the Idols* and *Beyond Good and Evil*, and that Heraclitus' extant fragments are sentences that strike the reader for their brevity and for the impression that they make. Yet, it will also be relevant from the point of view of modern scholarship to provide an answer to the above question, as this would shed light on the structure of Heraclitus' *corpus*.[121] In a passage of the *Lives*, Diogenes reports:

> As to the work which passes as his [Heraclitus'], it is a continuous treatise (*βιβλίον ἀπὸ τοὺ συνέχοντος*) *On Nature* (*Περὶ φύσεως*), but is divided into three discourses (*λογοί*), one on the universe, another on politics, and a third on theology (*περὶ τοῦ παντός, πολιτικός καί θεολογίας*). This book he deposited in the temple of Artemis and, according to some, he deliberately made it the most obscure in order that none but adepts (*δυνάμενοι*) should approach it, and lest familiarity should breed contempt. (DL IX, 6=A1)

Kahn and Robinson outline what one might call the cohesive thesis and argue that Diogenes' report ought to be taken at face value: Heraclitus wrote a continuous and unified work.[122] A strong argument for this thesis rests on the longest extant Heraclitean

[121] See especially Kahn (1979) and Robinson (1987).
[122] See Kahn (1979: 7-9) and Robinson (1987: 3-4).

report preserved by Sextus (Sextus Empiricus *Adv. Math*. VII, 132=B1). Sextus reports that men are 'uncomprehending (*ἀξύνετοι*)' of the *logos*, which seems to suggest that a more careful explanation of why this is the case will be carried out by Heraclitus later in his work. In the longest extant fragment, the discussion of the *logos* plays the role of a sort of preface. Moreover, in Diogenes' passage we are given many details about this alleged work: that Heraclitus lays it down in the temple of Artemis (DL IX, 3=A1), that its title is *On Nature* and, lastly and more importantly, that its 'discourses' (*λογοί*) or topics are cosmology, politics and theology.

According to the analysis of Kahn and Robinson, the fact that the Stoics are mentioned in Diogenes' passage also carries with it a certain weight, as the Stoics are the ancient thinkers that are most associated as well as most juxtaposed with Heraclitus. Chrysippus described theology as the last subject of philosophical enquiry as it reveals the mysteries of the universe, a description that matches the structure of Heraclitus' book where theology is the last topic (Plutarch *De stoic rep.* 1035A=*SVF* II, 42). Moreover, the Stoics had extensive knowledge of Heraclitus' thought as a whole. Cleanthes is credited to have written four books or 'commentaries' (*ἐξηγήσεις*) about the philosopher of Ephesus (DL VII, 174). In his *Hymn to Zeus* (Stobaues I, 1, 12=*SVF* I, 537), we find numerous traces of Heraclitean terms and concepts, such as: the notion that there is a cosmic *logos* that pervades the universe (vv. 8; cf. B 1); that Zeus, the supreme deity, can be called with many names (vv. 1-3; cf. Clement *Strom*. V, 115, 1=B 32); and, that there is a cosmic 'law' (*νόμος*) which is above all human laws (vv. 35; cf. Stobaeus III, 1, 179=B114).[123]

By contrast, Kirk and Granger hold that there are many reasons to be sceptical of

[123] See Long (1996: 46-8).

Diogenes' claim that Heraclitus wrote a continuous book.[124] First, it is difficult to deny that fragment B1, at least on first consideration, appears as a preface to a work written by Heraclitus. Yet, it cannot be inferred from this claim alone that Heraclitus' book is literally his own or that it is a 'book' in the modern sense of the word. It is, for instance, possible that this preface was written for or added to Heraclitus' scattered fragments, when they were collected and placed in the format of a book by one of his later followers (DL IX, 6=A1). Ancient books, especially in the Hellenistic time, were usually created in such a way. Hence, it is likely that this happened to Heraclitus' fragments due to his closeness with the Stoics, especially in light of the fact that they produced commentary on Heraclitus. Therefore, although Diogenes may not have been factually wrong to have claimed that Heraclitus' book had existed as a continuous book, we would make a mistake in assuming that the book he is referring to had been written only by Heraclitus and that it was not also a posthumous collection attributed to him.

There is another reason that suggests this conclusion. Heraclitus' book might not have been a 'continuous' book in the sense of physical or thematic continuity. In the ancient world, it was not the norm for a book to have physical and thematic continuity. There are several editions of some books which are very different from each other in terms of themes, tone and content. Moreover, some books were circulated when they were still *in fieri*. The 1st book of *The Republic,* for instance, has long been regarded as a later addition to the text. Let us relate this to the Heraclitean work. When Diogenes claims that Heraclitus' book was divided into sections about the universe, politics, ethics and theology, it is likely that he refers to a loose structure of this work, which means that it did not have a clear-cut and thematic unity.

[124] See Kirk (1954*:* 7) and Granger (2004: 1-19).

Second, the title 'On Nature' supplied by Diogenes and its related story that Heraclitus lies down in the temple of Artemis are clichés more than proofs of the existence of this work. Calling a book 'On Nature' is particularly common among ancient Pre-Socratic thinkers. For instance, Anaximander is also credited to have written a work called 'On Nature' (*Suda*=A2). Moreover, the story about withdrawing from society into a temple is also commonplace: Diogenes, for instance, reports that Pythagoras died of starvation in a temple (DL VIII, 40). Third, if we broaden our horizons to consider the extant fragments of Heraclitus, then it is difficult to see how all such fragments could have been included in one continuous book. From a stylistic point of view, the surviving fragments are surprisingly similar to the 'aphorisms' or 'maxims' (*γνῶμαι* or *gnōmai*) which held great popularity in Ancient Greece around the 5th century BC; as for instance the maxims, or the *gnōmai*, of the Seven Sages, which are brief, dramatic and highly memorable statements about how to live a good life.[125]

There are many striking stylistic similarities between Heraclitus' fragments and the *gnōmai* of the Seven Sages.[126] The Seven Sages as well as Heraclitus place their conclusions at the beginning of their sayings and mark the premises of their arguments with the Greek connective 'for' (*γάρ*). Consider the following statements: 'It is difficult to fight passion, for (*γάρ*) whatever it wishes it buys at the price of the soul' (Plutarch *Cor*. 22.2=B85) and, 'For (*γάρ*) I know how to submit to injustice and you do not' (DL I, 68)'. Furthermore, both Heraclitus and the Seven Sages make extensive use of the clause 'otherwise/or' (*εἰ δὲ μή*) in arguments of the structure of a *reductio ad absurdum*: 'The sun will not overstep measures. Otherwise avenging Furies, ministers of Justice, will find him out' (Plutarch *De exilio* 604a=B94) and 'Do not sit in judgement, or the one

[125] For a collection of the Seven Sages' maxims see Radice (1976). The characteristics of the *gnōmai* are described by Barnes (1983: 91-2).
[126] See Granger (2004: 8-10).

condemned will hate you' (Solon 2) (or 'Never rebuke your servants over wine, or you will appear the worse for drink' (Cleobulus 17)). These parallelisms are crystallised further in the fact that Heraclitus and the Seven Sages also express similar concerns: Chilon famously claims 'Know yourself' (Chilon 1) and Heraclitus echoes this statement with the words: 'I investigated myself' (Plutarch *Adv. Col.* 1118c=B101; cf. DL IX, 5=A1).

Moreover, as with the Seven Sages' *gnōmai,* Heraclitus' fragments are neither prose nor poetry, but something in between, having a hybrid structure. Robb has perhaps characterised this best: they are 'poetised speech[es]'.[127] Heraclitus' choice to write in this way is related to those he considers his rival figures. Heraclitus has to compete not only with some unidentified 'bards' (*ἀοιδοί*) (B104) but also with the Greek poets: 'A lot of learning (*πολυμαθίη*) does not teach understanding; it would have so taught Hesiod and Pythagoras, or for that matter Xenophanes and Hecateus' (Hippolytus *Ref.* IX, 10, 2=B 57; DL IX, 1=B42; cf. Hippolytus *Ref.* IX, 9, 5=B56) and 'For many people Hesiod is teacher (*διδάσκαλος*). They are certain he knew a great number of things—he who continually failed to recognise day and night! For they are one' (DL IX, 1=B40). Heraclitus' harsh critique is motivated by the fact that the bards and the poets are also competing for his audience. It is, therefore, reasonable for Heraclitus to turn to the highly memorable and theatrical style of the *gnōmai,* which would make his work more easily impressed in his audience's hearts and minds.

In short, it is arguable that Heraclitus did not write a continuous book. There is some evidence that this is because, in ancient Greek culture, it was acceptable that a work has a loose thematic connection rather than a continuous unity. As we have seen,

[127] See Robb (1983: 183).

moreover, the influence of the Seven Sages and the *gnōmai* also sheds light on this topic and offers further grounds against 'the cohesive thesis'.

4.1.2 Heraclitus' elitism

Nietzsche is generally interested in the way of life of ancient thinkers as well as their personality, and this interest can be traced back to his early works on Diogenes' *Lives*. However, Nietzsche's goal is not to distinguish true information from false in order to reconstruct a true image of a given thinker and to derive some insight a doctrine as it was. For instance, in the case of Heraclitus, Nietzsche has a very different objective. Nietzsche aims at addressing and ultimately solving the issue of whether Heraclitus possesses certain characteristics, such as a solitary attitude to life and a balance between reason and the instincts, that would make him worthy of emulation for other thinkers.

Modern scholars have a different objective. They aim to distinguish between trustworthy and untrustworthy information in order to bring to the surface the extent to which Heraclitus' way of life can shed a light on his doctrines. We know almost nothing about Heraclitus' life, except that his father's name was Bloson (or Blyson) and that he lived in the Ionian city of Ephesus around the 5th century BCE (DL IX, 1=A1; Suda 1= A1a; cf. Clement *Strom*. XIV, 25=A 3; Strabo XIV, 25=A3a; Aristotle *Met*. III, 984a7=A 5[1]).[128] A significant portion of the information now available is contained in Diogenes' *Life of Heraclitus*, and this is mostly anecdotal in nature and not generally considered reliable. Perhaps the best example of the low level of credibility of Diogenes' account is the bizarre story he tells about Heraclitus' death (DL IX, 3-5=A1). Diogenes reports that Heraclitus, while living in solitude, contracted 'dropsy' (*ὕδερον*) most probably because of his vegetarian diet. Due to sickness, Heraclitus turned to physicians for a cure. According to different versions of Diogenes' story, Heraclitus eventually died because

[128] See Kirk (1954), Kahn (1979) and Robinson (1987).

his request for help was ultimately denied by the doctors, or because they were unable to solve a complicated riddle put to them by the Greek thinker. The way in which Heraclitus ultimately passed away is also unclear: he either set himself on fire or he was eaten alive by dogs. The stories reported by Diogenes about Heraclitus' death seem too bizarre to be credible.

On a closer look, however, there are some aspects of the odd events surrounding Heraclitus' death that are distant echoes of his fragments. For instance, the dropsy could be a distorted reference to Heraclitus' idea that the soul is made of 'water' (*ὕδωρ*) (Clement *Strom*. VI, 17, 2=B36) and his alleged death by fire might be linked with Heraclitus' belief that 'fire' (*πῦρ*) is the principle of the world (Clement *Strom*. V, 104, 5=B31a/b). The riddle he gave his doctors might be a reference to Heraclitus' overall fondness for riddles (Hippolytus *Ref*. IX 9, 5=B56). Moreover, the doctors' refusal to cure Heraclitus' sickness might be related to Heraclitus' mockery of their profession (Hippolytus *Ref*. IX 10, 3=B58). Therefore, what is important aspect about the colourful anecdotes concerning Heraclitus' life and death is that, though derogatory and bizarre, they can be interpreted as loose references to his teaching as whole and, therefore, can be used to illuminate that teaching. Take, for instance, the case of the doctors. While Heraclitus' mockery of the medical profession is the cause of his death, Heraclitus' criticism of doctors is also related to his theory of opposites, which plays an important part in his thought in its entirety.

Heraclitus is universally recognised as the quintessential figure of solitude and misanthropy.[129] Diogenes reports that Heraclitus withdrew into the Temple of Artemis because of his contempt for mankind; the terms he uses to describe Heraclitus' character

[129] See Kahn (1979: 1-9); Robinson (1987: 1-4).

are good evidence of his hatred for most men: 'mob-reviler' (*ὀχλολοίδορος*) and 'misanthrope' (*μισάνθροπος*) (DL IX, 6=A1). Additional instances and proof of his contempt can be gathered from the derogatory terms and statements Heraclitus uses to describe human beings. Some instances are 'the many are bad (*οἱ πολλοί κακοί*) and only few are good (*ὀλιγοι δὲ ἀγαθοί*)' (Proclus, I, p. 117 Westerink=B104) and 'Many people (*οἱ πολλοί*) do not understand the sorts of things they encounter!' (Clement *Strom*. II, 8, 1=B17). However, by far the most important statement that testifies Heraclitus' elitism regards the teaching of the *logos* (*λόγος*):

> Although the *Logos* (*λόγος*) holds forever, men (*ἄνθροποι*) always prove to be uncomprehending (*ἀξυνετοι*), both before they have heard it and when once they have heard it. […] They (men) are like people with no experience, even when they experience such words and deeds I explain […] but the rest of men fail to notice what they do after they wake up just as they as they forget what they do when asleep. Therefore, it is necessary to follow the common (*ξυνὸν*), the many (*οἱ πολλοί*) live as though they had a private understanding (*ἰδια φρόωησις*) (Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Math.* VII, 132-3=B1, 2; transl. Kirk, slightly mod.).

The core of Heraclitus' elitism is the view that men do not understand the doctrine of the *logos*. The meaning of *logos* is a complex subject as there are different accounts of this concept. On first consideration, Heraclitus' *logos* seems to be an objective truth. Kirk argues that this is, the 'formula of things', namely the 'measure in becoming'.[130] For Kahn, *logos* represents 'the structure of the world itself' which also is related to Heraclitus' conception of measured becoming.[131] Long claims that *logos* should be understood as 'rationale' since this word refers to the notion of measurement also in regard to thinking.[132] Moreover, Graham renders *logos* as 'Word/Logos' because he wishes to stress the religious and oracular connotation of Heraclitus' teaching and its connection with the later Stoic and Christian doxographic tradition (e.g. Cicero *De nat.*

[130] See Kirk (1954: 39).
[131] See Kahn (1979: 98-9).
[132] See Long (2013: 215).

deor. I, 36=*SVF* I, 161; St John I, 1-4).[133] Good evidence for considering *logos* as some kind of objective formula can be found in three fragments. First, fragment B1 states that the entire world works 'in accordance to *logos*' (*κατὰ λόγον*) (B1). Such a characterisation seems to imply that there is some kind of objective formula or structure regulating the cosmos. Second, always in B2, *logos* is said to be the same as 'the common' (*ξυνὸν*), a parallelism which makes sense only if *logos* is an objective truth that pervades the whole world. Third, there is one statement that describes the elemental transformation taking place in the universe, where the term *logos* unequivocally means 'proportion' (Clement *Strom*. V, 103, 6=B30; Clement *Strom*. V, 104, 3=B31a; Clement *Strom*. V, 104, 5=B31b). In summary, Heraclitus' resentment towards mankind is founded in the notion that they do not understand the fundamental structure of reality.

However, it is also worth stressing, for reasons that will become immediately clear in the next section, that *logos* in Greek means 'discourse' and 'word'. West, Robinson and Colli argue that there seems to be something of a discursive echo embedded in Heraclitus' notion of *logos*.[134] West and Robinson translate this Greek term as 'account' and Colli as 'espressione', which is the Italian noun for 'expression/statement'. *Logos,* in fact, is described in a fragment as a phenomenon that we can 'hear' (*ἀκουσειν*) (Hippolytus *Ref.* IX, 9, 1=B50). Moreover, Sextus explicitly and straightforwardly claims that *logos* is 'an explanation' (*ἐξήγησις*), in a passage which occurs immediately after B1 and 2 (Sextus Empiricus *Adv. Math*. VII, 133=A16[1, a]). The importance of the difference in meanings of the concept of *logos* is that it plays a key role in understanding Heraclitus writing style, which will be analysed in next section.

[133] See Graham (2010: 186; 1998: 36).
[134] See West (1971: 124-5); Robinson (1987: 74-6); Colli (1980: 21).

4.1.3 Heraclitus' obscure writing style

A topic in which Nietzsche would develop a particular interest is Heraclitus' obscure writing style. As we will see, Nietzsche feels a particular kinship towards the Heraclitean writing style, which stems from Heraclitus' goal of protecting his own teaching from potential misappropriation and shunning of the epistemic gain embedded into the ambiguous meaning of his fragments. The polemical target that Nietzsche has in mind are the Stoics, who acting as predecessors of Christian philologists, misinterpret Heraclitus' aesthetic conception of the cosmic into one arranged by Providence.

However, Heraclitus' obscure writing style has stimulated the interests many thinkers and this has been true since antiquity. Among his contemporaries, Heraclitus was known as a 'man of riddles' (*αἰνικτής*) and 'the obscure' (*ὅ Σκοτεινός* and *obscurus*) (DL IX, 6=A1; Suda=A1[a]; Strabo XIV, 25=A[3a,1]; Cicero *De fin.* XI, 5, 15). In particular, two heavy weights of ancient philosophy, Socrates and Aristotle, complained about the difficulty of understanding Heraclitus' writing style. Socrates comments that it is especially challenging to get 'to the bottom' of Heraclitus' fragments (DL II, 22), while Aristotle emphatically claims that Heraclitus' writing style is ambiguous. Aristotle makes a particular reference to Heraclitus' fragment B1, regarding how it is unclear whether the word 'forever' (*αἰει*) goes with the sentence that precedes it, 'being this *logos* (*λόγος*) forever (*αἰει*)', or whether the term applies to the sentence that follows it, 'men (*ἄνθροποι*) prove to ever (*αἰει*) be uncomprehending (*ἀξύνετοι*)' (Aristotle *Rhet.* 1407b11-18).

Some prominent scholars who have addressed the topic of Heraclitus' ambiguous writing style are Kahn, Robinson and Long.[135] Kahn observes that the ambiguity of Heraclitus' statements or sayings stems from 'linguistic density' and 'resonance'. With

[135] See Kahn (1979*:* 89); Robinson (1987: 5); Long (2013: 222).

these terms, Kahn means that the words used by Heraclitus in his sayings can have multiple interpretations and, furthermore, that these interpretations are echoed in other fragments. A shining example of this phenomenon is presented by the following fragment: 'A road (*ὅδος*) up and down is one and the same road' (Hippolytus *Ref.* IX, 10, 4=B40). The concept of the road is echoed in the statement where Heraclitus describes the soul as a road that one should walk: 'one would never discover the limits of soul, should one traverse every road (*ὅδος*) – so deep a measure does it possess' (DL IX, 7=B45). Yet, there is also another saying where Heraclitus describes the notion that the transformation of the various elements into each other starts from fire and, also, ends with fire (B30; B31 a/b).

Not only did Heraclitus write ambiguous sentences, such as those mentioned before, but he was perfectly aware of their overall ambiguity. Consider the following statements which are examples of this: 'The lord whose oracle is in Delphi neither indicates (*λέγει*) clearly nor conceals (*κρύπτει*) but gives a sign (*σημαίνει*)' (Plutarch *De Pyth. Or*. 404d=B93)[136]. The Oracle of Delphi was renowned in antiquity for the obscurity of her riddles. For instance, when Zeno, the founder of Stoicism, asked what he should do in life, the oracle replied, 'take on the colour of dead men' (DL VII, 1=*SVF* I, 1). As with Heraclitus' sayings, this statement can be interpreted in many different ways. Zeno, for instance, is credited to have interpreted this riddle as an exhortation to read the ancient Greek thinkers and to profit from their teachings. Heraclitus was aware of mirroring the ambiguity of the Pythia, and was, thus, deliberate in writing his fragments in an ambiguous way. Given that the defining feature of Heraclitus's sayings is their obscurity, the question that modern scholars have attempted to answer is how this

[136] 'The Sybil according to Heraclitus uttering with raving mouth words mirthless, unadorned and unperfumed, reaches us with her voice up to a thousand years later, thanks to the god' (Plutarch *De Pyth. Or*. 397a=B92).

characteristic should be addressed.

Kahn argues that Heraclitus' obscurity is an intrinsic part of his writing style.[137] On the one hand, Heraclitus' statements, have multiple layers of interpretations, as we have seen. Yet, on the other hand, it is not possible to distinguish between correct and incorrect interpretations. According to Kahn, the result is that the framework for understanding the meaning of Heraclitus' sayings is a form of pluralism: the meaning of a given statements is the sum of all its possible interpretations, which taken together form a coherent whole. Take the case of sentence B1, where it is unclear whether the term 'forever' (*αἰει*) applies to 'being this *logos*' (*τοῦ δὲ λόγου τοῦδ'ἐόντος*) or 'men prove uncomprehending' (*ἀξύνετοι γίνοντααι ἄνθρωποι*). On the one hand, as seen above, there is evidence that the *logos* is an eternal principle. Heraclitus' *logos* is the principle of the cosmos, such that the entire world works 'in accordance to the *logos*' (*κατὰ λόγον*). Furthermore, the *logos* is also 'the common' (*ξυνὸν*), the term represents a phenomenon that is ever present in the cosmos in its entirety (B1, 2). On the other hand, one can see how the *logos* can be easily squared with Heraclitus' elitism. The *logos* is a teaching that most men do not understand because most men 'hear like the deaf. The saying is their absent while present' (Clement *Strom.* V, 115, 3=B34) and 'live as though their thinking were a private possession' (B2).

Therefore, the concept of *logos* seems to hold both meanings: it is the eternal and objective truth about the world and, at the same time, it is also something that most men can never understand. Accordingly, Kahn's translation of sentence B1 is: 'although this *logos* holds forever, men ever fail to comprehend'. As it seems to be impossible to solve the overall ambiguity of what the *logos* means, then the statement should mirror this

[137] See Kahn (1979: 92-3).

hypothesis by conveying the notion that *logos* has, in fact, both meanings.

A second and rival theory for interpreting Heraclitus' obscure writing style has been proposed by Colli.[138] He argues that the ambiguity that characterises Heraclitus' saying should be resolved by understanding that there is a meaning for a sentence that is more correct, or at least less improbable, than another. There is a story reported by Heraclitus that reveals how he thought riddles can be solved in general:

> People are deceived in the recognition of things that are obvious in much the same way Homer, who was wiser (*σοφώτερος*) than all the Greeks, was deceived. For he was decided by the words spoken to him by some boys (*παῖδες*) killing worms: 'What we saw and caught we leave behind, while what we did not see or catch we take'. (Hippolytus *Ref.* IX, 9, 5=B56)

The background to this discussion is Heraclitus' scorn for traditional Greek poets, such as Homer and Hesiod, who were accused of not being wise but rather only knowledgeable since they do not understand the nature of the divine (Hippolytus *Ref.* IX, 10, 2=B57; DL IX, 1=B42; Hippolytus *Ref.* IX, 9, 5=B56). To this remark it should be added that Homer, in particular occupied a special position in the pantheon of Greek sages. Yet, in the above passage, Heraclitus ridicules Homer's wisdom by reporting a story according to which he was unable to solve an obvious riddle put to him by some 'boys' (*παῖδες*).[139] The solution to this riddle, which Heraclitus thinks is rather easy, but that Homer was nevertheless unable to solve, is 'worms'. The boys left behind the 'worms' that they found in their clothes but still carried 'those' that they did not find. Additional evidence of the importance Heraclitus attached to this sentence is found in the *Life of Homer* (34-5), namely that Homer was so devastated by his failure to solve the riddle that he died as a result. Therefore, Heraclitus' objective in making this statement

[138] See Colli (1980: 174-5).

[139] A further element which shows Heraclitus' subtle mockery is the reference to the boys. In Ancient Greece there was a widespread agreement that boys have an imperfect kind of reason. The fact that Homer could not solve a riddle put to him by some boys, plainly reveals that Homer's wisdom is widely exaggerated.

is clear: to imply to his readership that he is wiser than Homer.

An important consequence follows from this conclusion. Heraclitus is challenging his readers not only to avoid falling prey to the riddle about the worms and the boys and not to make a fool of themselves, as Homer did, but also to solve other riddles too. There are, then, good reasons to believe that Heraclitus regards his own sayings as riddles, especially in light of his reference to the obscurity of the language used by the Pythia, as seen earlier. At this point, a question naturally arises: how should we evaluate Heraclitus' obscurity of style in light of his report about Homer and the statement of B1 concerning the *logos*? The solution might be to see that there are two or more meanings, which are both compatible and coherent. Heraclitus, however, seems to imply that the task of discerning the compatibly and coherency of the meanings of his sayings is not for everyone; for Heraclitus, that task is only for the wise. Homer, for instance, is reported to have failed. Homer could not understand that the boys left behind 'the worms' that they found in their clothes and that they still carried 'the worms' that they did not find.

Therefore, Heraclitus' ambiguity of language should be interpreted in the following way: the Heraclitean riddle-like sayings have two or more meanings that form a compatible and coherent whole which, despite being difficult to discern, can be observed by the trained eye of the wise. Being able to discern these meaning is for Heraclitus an integral part of learning a philosophical way of life: 'men who love wisdom (*φιλοσόφοι*) must be good inquirers into many things indeed', as one of his fragments reads (Clement *Strom.* V, 140, 5=B35).

4.2. Heraclitus' theory of flux

Among numerous Heraclitean doctrines, Nietzsche is particularly interested in the doctrine of flux, alternatively known as the theory of becoming. As I will show in the

next chapter, Nietzsche seems to have good knowledge of the Heraclitean fragments regarding this topic. Nietzsche's discussion is not philological, however. Nietzsche attributes his own cosmic and epistemic doctrine of the will to power to the Heraclitean doctrine of flux, having in mind the goal of shedding light on Heraclitus' relationship with Platonism. For modern scholars, by contrast, the goal is to reconstruct the original meaning of Heraclitus' doctrine of flux and deduce its relationship with the other aspects of his thought, such as elemental transformation.

Such a process starts from the so-called 'river statements', which are groups of sentences allegedly written by Heraclitus and intended to convey wider thoughts about the world and its state of flux. One of the most important river statements has been preserved by Plato and occurs in the *Cratylus*:

> Heraclitus says (*λέγει που*) somewhere that all things are in flux (*πάντα χωρεῖ*) and nothing stays put, and likening the real to the flowing of a river he says (*λέγει*) that one could not step (*ἐμβαίνειν*) twice (*δὶς*) into the same river (*αὐτὸν ποταμὸν*). (Plato *Crat.* 402a=A6[1]); cf. *Thaet.* 160d; *Crat.* 401d)

This passage is made up of two parts. On the one hand, there is Heraclitus' river statement as Plato knows it, as in 'one could not step twice (*δὶς*) into the same river (*αὐτὸν ποταμὸν*)', introduced by 'Heraclitus says (*λέγει*)'. On the other hand, there is Heraclitus' river statement as Plato understands it, that is, 'all things are in flux' (*πάντα χωρεῖ*), which is preceded by the world 'says' (*λέγει*).

For the moment, let us focus our attention on the second part of the passage from *Cratylus* which offers Plato's understanding of Heraclitus' doctrine. *Panta rei* refers to the idea that the world in its entirety is always becoming or, to put this another way, that the doctrine of flux is unrestricted and all-encompassing. *Panta rei* will become the canonical interpretation of Heraclitus' river statement throughout antiquity. Two prominent doxographical commentators, Aëtius and Theophrastus, for instance, both

strongly emphasise this view. As Aëtius explains: 'Heraclitus wished to abolish stillness and stability from the totality of things, since these are a characteristic of corpses. He was for bestowing movement (*κινήσις*) upon absolutely everything—everlasting movement on everlasting things and perishable movement on perishable things' (Aëtius I, 23, 7=*Dox. Gr*. 320=A6[2]). Similarly, as Theophrastus holds: 'These two, Hippias of Metapontum and Heraclitus of Ephesus, consider the universe one, in motion (*κινούμενον*)' (Simplicius *In Phys.* XXIII, 33=Theoprastus fragment 225=A[51]).

On first consideration, it seems likely that Heraclitus genuinely argues for the theory of flux. It is easy to observe that things in general 'become', including inanimate objects that slowly erode over time, as in the case of mountains and minerals. Yet, the idea that becoming exists seems a truism and banal, and an assertion that is unworthy of any serious thinker, especially of someone of Heraclitus' intellectual depth. To the contrary, Mondolfo and Barnes argue that Heraclitus articulates this doctrine from a philosophical point of view and not merely from a laymen's perspective.[140]

According to Heraclitus, change always take place from one opposite to another. Heraclitus explicates this idea in the following: 'as the same things in us are living and dead, waking and sleeping, young and old. For these things (*τάδε γὰρ*) having changed around (*μεταπεσόντα*) are those (*ἐκεῖνα*), and those (*κἀκεῖνα*) in turn (*πάλιν*) having changed (*μεταπεσόντα*) around are these' (*ταῦτα*) (Pseudo-Plutarch, *Cons. ad Apoll.* 106=B88). At first sight, this fragment seems to regard a chain of phenomena, which morph into their opposite: life is followed by death, waking by sleeping and youth by adulthood. [141] However, the most important aspect of this passage occurs in its second part which consists in Heraclitus' explanation as to why opposite states are connected to

[140] See Mondolfo (1960: 13) and Barnes (1982: 49).
[141] See Kahn (1979: 226); Graham (2010: 191).

each other: the link between opposites exists only if there is a continuous alternation between them.[142] What should be stressed here is that the states mentioned in the passage must be diametrical opposites, given that Heraclitus seems to imply that if the states in question were, by any chance, identical, then there could not be any change at all.[143] The kind of behaviour exhibited by opposites is reminiscent of the flowing waters referred to in the river fragment. Moreover, there is a detail which, once noticed, reveals the connection between this fragment and the identity of the river, which seems to present Heraclitus' intention in the river fragment. Change between opposite states happens in both directions: life is followed by death, but even death is followed by life. It seems very difficult to make sense of this claim, given that life does not follow from death. There might a solution to this puzzle, however: Heraclitus could be articulating the idea that there is life after death. This is the ancient Greek belief in metempsychosis: the soul survives death by reincarnating itself into another form of life, human and animal alike.[144] Becoming, in a way, is all-encompassing.

There is, in fact, little doubt that Heraclitus argued for the existence of becoming in all the universe. For instance, simplifying for a later audience, Aëtius reports in the following doxographic piece of evidence that 'Heraclitus wished to abolish stillness and stability from the totality of things, since these are a characteristic of corpus. He was for bestowing movement upon absolutely everything—everlasting movement on everlasting things (*ἀιδοι*) and perishable movement on perishable things (*φθάρτοι*)' (Aëtius I, 23, 7=A6[2]). Therefore, in a straightforward way, we are here told that Heraclitus' doctrine of becoming applies even to those things that the ancients would generally not consider as subject to change, such as the 'everlasting things' (*ἀιδοι*), namely the heavenly bodies.

[142] On this particular issue see Kahn (1979: 226).
[143] See Graham (2010: 191).
[144] See Kahn (1979: 226).

We know that astronomy is a subject that attracted Heraclitus' interests; therefore, Aëtius' report could perhaps be read as a further attempt to show how Heraclitus' doctrine of flux can be applied to his entire philosophy (Aëtius 2.21=*Dox. Gr.* 351=B3; Aristotle *Met.* 2.2.355a13=B6; Plutarch *De ex.* 604a=B94; Plutarch *Quaest. Plat.* 1007d-e=B100). Finally, there is a statement preserved by Aristotle that confirms Aëtius' testimony that, for Heraclitus, even the heavily bodies, though eternal, do change: 'The sun is […] new each day'(*Met.* II, 2, 355a13=B6). Aëtius' doxographic report, therefore, seems to be in keeping with other extant sentences from Heraclitus; they indirectly argue that change is all encompassing given that it regards not only earthy things, but also those that should be everlasting.

However, the vast majority of scholars, such as Reinhardt, Kirk, Kahn, Robinson and Long, are at least suspicious of Plato's reading of Heraclitus' flux.[145] Plato seems to offer an interpretation of the Heraclitean becoming that places an excessive emphasis on the state of flux, but in doing so neglects other more important aspects that Heraclitus considers and underlines.

Consider this passage concerning Heraclitus' analogy of the river which sheds light on the existence of becoming in the world and yet it also stresses the uniformity of change:

> On those stepping into the same rivers other and other waters flow (*ποταμοῖσι τοῖσι αὐτοῖσιν ἐμβαίνουσιν ἕτερα καὶ ἕτερα ὕδατα ἐπιρρεῖ*). (B12=Eusebius *PE* XV, 20=Arius Didymus fr. 39.2)[146]

[145] See Reinhardt (1916: 206-7); Kirk (1954: 370); Kahn (1979: 168); Robison (1984: 83); Long (2013: 205).

[146] It is important to spend a few words on the context of this river statement. It takes places in a quotation by Eusebius of Caesarea of Arius Didymus who is reporting the words of Cleanthes regarding the Zeno's theory of the soul and its similarity with Heraclitus' ideas on the same topic. We have already seen the fondness of the Stoics for Heraclitus and his philosophical ideas and their attempts to appropriate numerous aspects of his thought, such as the 'stoicising' division of Heraclitus' book (e.g. DL IX, 6). We can, however, separate Heraclitus' own ideas and concepts from Cleanthes'. The Stoic concepts are separated by the Heraclitean by 'on the one hand…on the other' (*μὲν…δὲ*) and, furthermore, the Stoic explanations

Kirk has argued that the emphasis of this river statement is on the different flow of water that is expressed by the alliteration of 'other and other water' (*ἕτερα καὶ ἕτερα ὕδατα*).[147] The idea may, thus, be that a change occurs once we have stepped into the river's water. Yet, other scholars, such as Kahn and Graham, have also noted that there is a parallel point made in this statement: the river remains 'the same' (*τοῖσιν αὐτοῖσιν*), while its waters 'change' (*ἕτερα ὕδατα ἐπιρρεῖ*).[148] If we merge these two remarks together we may glean a better idea of why Plato's interpretation of Heraclitus' is, according to these scholars, a misrepresentation of his true doctrine. The Platonic unrestricted interpretation of becoming does not fully apply to the Heraclitean doctrine of flux.

It is certainly true that the river becomes due to its changing waters. As we have seen, Heraclitus himself emphasises the constant change of the river; the waters of the river regularly and invariably become. However, a more reflective person would *a fortiori* realise that the notion of change alone does not fully capture all aspects of the phenomenon that the river presents us with. Heraclitus emphasises this point too in the river passage. Heraclitus argues that, as far as its physical structure is concerned, the river remains the same. Thus, it is true that the waters of the river change, but it is equally true that the identity of the river stays the same over time. In other words, there is a certain kind of persistence over change, and this is what Heraclitus observes with his river image and what he expresses in the river passage.

There is another group of statements that emphasise a kind of balance over becoming that Heraclitus sees in the world: those regarding elemental change (Clement *Strom*. V, 103, 6=B30; Clement *Strom*. V, 104, 3=B31a; Clement *Strom*. V, 104,

of Heraclitus' ideas about the soul are always preceded by a 'because' (*διὰ*). More importantly, the river statement at stake here is clearly signaled as a different topic, being presented as something used by Heraclitus to convey wider thoughts about the cosmos, especially about its state of flux.

[147] See Kirk (1954: 376-7).

[148] See Kahn (1979: 167-8) and Graham (2008: 190).

5=B31b). These statements will be examined in more detail below, however, it will suffice for present purposes to make the following observations here. The key term from the passage B30 is 'measures' (*μέτρα*): this implies that, even if the universe is in a state of flux, its defining feature is balance rather a lacking of limit and any such ensuing chaos. Similarly, in another phrase, B31b, we are told that the transformation of one element into another takes place according to the 'same proportion' (*ἀυτος λὀγος*). Thus, even if becoming exists in the universe, there is a constant aspect which regulates it: proportion. Once again, the adjective of measured and proportioned change does not mean or describe a lack of change in the world, but rather that the most significant characteristic of change is one of identity and regularity. The same thesis can be seen in some statements where Heraclitus argues that change is all-pervasive: 'cold things become warm, a warm thing becomes cold; a moist thing becomes dry, a parched thing becomes moist' (John Tzetzes *Scholia ad Exegesis* in Il.=B126). Even if we may not naturally associate something like an iceberg with becoming, Heraclitus thus explains that such things slowly but surely become, even if perhaps not in a way that is immediately noticeable; and yet, their becoming is balanced and regular, and not chaotic and disordered.

The question that must now be addressed regards the Platonic formulation of Heraclitus' doctrine of flux, from which we originally began our discussion: what might be the reason why Plato expresses a less nuanced version of Heraclitus' doctrine? As we have seen, Plato ignores the balance and regularity of change and simply focuses on the unrestricted and absolute aspect of becoming. This issue has been addressed by various scholars. For instance, a claim made by Long is that Plato knowingly omits the inherent notion of balance and regularity in nature from his reading of Heraclitus' flux for the reason that the former would play an important role in his epistemological proof of his

theory of Forms.[149] Consider that throughout the *Cratylus*, and especially in some key passages (401d, 402a and 439d-440c), Heraclitus' doctrine of *panta rei* is embedded in Plato's argument that there must be something fixed and constant, namely the Forms, in the face of the unrestricted and chaotic change inherent to our world. Accordingly, Long concludes that Plato deliberately misinterprets Heraclitus' doctrine as radical and extreme so that he can argue for the existence of the Forms.

However, other scholars, such as Kirk, claim that Plato does not consciously misread Heraclitus' doctrine of flux.[150] Plato simply reports what he has been taught. He obviously read the Heraclitean fragments, especially those regarding the flux, as is evident from the extensive discussion of that doctrine in the *Cratylus* and the *Theaetetus*. Testimony from Aristotle will aid to shed more light on this issue: 'In his youth Plato first became acquainted with Cratylus and the Heraclitean doctrines—that the whole sensible world is always in a state of flux (*ἀεὶ ῥεόν*) and that there is no scientific knowledge (*επιστήμη*) of it—and in after years he still held these opinions' (*Met.* A VI, 987a32-b1). The meaning of this remark is that Plato's knowledge of Heraclitus was deeply influenced by Cratylus' interpretation.[151] On this basis, one could argue that Plato's misinterpretation of Heraclitus is not strictly speaking deliberate, but rather that it follows from Cratylus' particular teaching. The following passage provides firm evidence for this theory: 'Cratylus […] criticised Heraclitus for saying that one cannot enter (*ἐμβῆναι*) the same river (*τῷ αὐτῷ ποταμῷ*) twice (*δὶς*), for (*γὰρ*) he himself held that it cannot be done even once (*ἅπαξ*)' (*Met.* Γ V, 1010a12-5). In a similar way to the passage from Plato's *Cratylus* examined earlier, this passage can be divided into two parts that are clearly signposted by 'for' (*γὰρ*). On the one hand, there is Heraclitus' river statement as Cratylus knows it:

[149] See Long (2013: 205).
[150] See Kirk (1954: 377).
[151] See Tarán (1990: 11).

'one cannot enter (*ἐμβῆναι*) the same river (*τῷ αὐτῷ ποταμῷ*) twice (*δὶς*)'. On the other, there is Cratylus' criticism of Heraclitus' doctrine which, as we will see, seems to be dependent on a prior misunderstanding.

Attempting to reconstruct Cratylus' reasoning is difficult given the thin evidence at our disposal. However, it is likely that Cratylus interpreted Heraclitus' river statement in an iterative way: the verb 'to step' is taken to imply a series of repetitive actions in that one steps into the same river once and then again and again, on a repetitive basis.[152] The river statement that Cratylus has in mind, thus, resembles the following situation: a bather who does not gradually enter into a river but rather one who attempts to make an initial step in the river multiple times. The result of this iterative stepping is that with the first step one finds that the river has a certain physical composition and that, upon any subsequent steps, one finds that the river's physical composition has changed due to the water also changing.

From this, Cratylus draws the conclusion reported by Aristotle in the above-quoted passage of *Metaphysics*: one cannot step in the same river even once. Afterwards, when he expands Heraclitus' river image to the entire world, Cratylus outlines a sort of *ante-literam* version of the *panta rei* doctrine, which is reported to us as *aei reon* ('forever becoming'). Becoming is unrestricted such that one cannot touch anything even once. For Cratylus, the consequence of this unrestricted form of becoming is that one cannot utter any true statement about reality, given that it constantly changes.

Therefore, there is no 'scientific knowledge' (*επιστήμη*) about the world and one should limit oneself to raising one's finger rather than making statements (Aristotle *Met.* Γ V, 1010a12-5). This is not, however, what Heraclitus had intended with his river

[152] See Marcovich (1974: 206).

statement. It is more probable that Heraclitus attributes to the term ‘to step’ a progressive meaning, which means that the river statement describes the situation of a bather who is gradually stepping into the same river. During this gradual immersion, the bather finds that, although the river’s waters are ever different, the river stays the same. In fact, the river is the same from the time when the bather begins stepping in the waters through to when he has completed his transition. Thus, the identity of the river is affirmed by Heraclitus and not denied in the face of change, exactly as many other of his extant fragments describe a moderate and proportionate becoming and not a chaotic and extreme form (B30; B31a/b).

Bringing together all the evidence analysed thus far, the picture that emerges is the following. Plato had an extensive knowledge of Heraclitus’ river fragments, but he was also greatly influenced by Cratylus’ interpretation of the flux doctrine. Cratylus’ view on this issue is a misinterpretation of Heraclitus’ teaching. Cratylus argues that the true meaning of Heraclitus’ flux is an unrestricted form of becoming, which would later be rendered by Plato in terms of the famous formula of *panta rei*. However, in the light of the evidence, we can infer that *panta rei* does not reflect Heraclitus’ original doctrine of flux which, despite arguing for the presence of becoming or change in the world, also stresses the regularity and balance of such change.

4.3 Heraclitus’ doctrine of conflagration

In brief, Heraclitus’ doctrine of ‘conflagration’ (*ἐκπύρωσις* or *ekpyrōsis*) is the periodic destruction and subsequent creation of the cosmos, as carried out by the element of fire. This doctrine plays an important role in Nietzsche’s reception of Heraclitus. Nietzsche does not carry out a philological analysis of this doctrine, despite his extensive knowledge of the extant evidence on the topic. He discusses it to address and ultimately

resolve three important topics: whether there is a *telos* in the universe, whether the world can be judged in moral or immoral terms, whether the belief of anthropocentrism is justified.

By contrast, modern scholarship focuses on determining whether Heraclitus' theory of conflagration is a cosmogonic theory about the origin of the world or, rather, a cosmological thesis about the universe. Let us begin this discussion by observing the following extant fragment about the world:

> The world-order (*κόσμος*), the same for all, no god or man made, but it always was, is and will be, an ever-living fire (*πῦρ ἀείζωον*), being kindled in measures (*μέτρα*) and being put out of measures. (Clement *Strom*. V, 103, 6=B30, Robinson slighltly mod.)

In Greek, the term *kosmos* refers to 'the world' understood as an 'order' of things. In this fragment, we are told that, for Heraclitus, the *kosmos* is equal to everlasting 'fire' (*πῦρ*), bringing to the former order and stability. Such an order is related to the concept of 'measures' (*μέτρα*). According to the ancient doxographic tradition, the measures at stake in this passage have a temporal meaning. For instance, consider what Simplicius says in the following passage: 'For Heraclitus says that "all things are an exchange of fire (*πῦρ*)". He also creates a certain order (*τάξις*) and bounded time (*χρόνος*) out of the universe's change' (Simplicius *In Phys*. XXIII, 33=Theophrastus B225=A5[2]).

In another report Simplicius reaches the same conclusion: 'Heraclitus too says that at one time the universe (*κόσμος*) is consumed by fire (*πῦρ*), at another time reconstituted from fire in accordance with particular cycles of time (*κατά τινας χρόνων περιόδους*), as appears from his words "being kindled in measures (*μέτρα*) and being put out of measures". To this doctrine the Stoics, too, later adhered' (Simplicius *In De Cael.* 94.4=A10[3]). On first consideration, these two *testimonia* show that the measures at stake in B30 were understood by Theophrastus as temporal boundaries which signal the

cyclical creation and destruction of the world.

There are some further noteworthy aspects of these reports. Aëtius' and Theophrastus' remarks have a Stoic flavour, and this is especially true for the latter report which is included in the *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* by von Armin (*SVF* II, 617). It is well-known that the Stoics elaborated the idea that the world is cyclically destroyed and then re-created. They call this idea 'conflagration' (*ἐκπύρωσις*). The Stoics claim that the 'spermatic fire' (*σπέρμα πῦρ*), alternatively called 'ethereal fire' (*αἰθερῶδες πῦρ*), destroys the 'substance' (*οὐσία*) of the world and then creates anew an identical cosmos, and that this cycle continues forever according to very long 'time cycles' (*περίοδοι*) (Stobaues *Ecl.* I, 171=*SVF* II, 596; Eusebius *Praep. Evang.* XV, 18, 1-3=Arius Didymyus fragment 3=*SVF* II, 596(2)). As Kahn emphasises, it is nevertheless possible that the Stoics developed their notion from a more rudimentary and embryonic Heraclitean doctrine.[153]

Aristotle confirms that Heraclitus believes that the world is periodically destroyed and created anew: for Heraclitus the universe is 'generated' (*γενόμενον*) and 'perishable' (*φθαρτὸν*) and 'this process continues in this fashion everlastingly' (*De Caelo* 94.4=A10[2]).[154] It is difficult to say whether Aristotle's testimony on this topic is reliable. Kirk and Reeve strongly deny its validity for two reasons.[155] First, they claim that the 'measures' (*μέτρα*) referred to in B30, cannot be temporal because if they were, this would contradict the eternal and uncreated character of this *kosmos*. A perishable nature of the cosmos would put in jeopardy its underlying order, because that implies that there is a point at which the principle of the universe diminishes over time.

[153] See Kahn (1979: 275).
[154] Cf. 'All things become fire (*πῦρ*) at some point' (Aristotle *Phys.* 205a3-4).
[155] See Kirk (1954: 318-24; 326-37); Reeve (1982: 302).

It is difficult to imagine how the latter outcome could have been defended by Heraclitus, given that in a series of fragments he commits to the opposite idea. For instance, Heraclitus claims that the *archē* of the universe is omnipresent: 'the totality of things (*πάντα*) is an exchange (*ἀνταμοιβή*) of fire (*πῦρ*), and fire an exchange for all things, in the way goods are in exchange for gold, and gold for goods' (Plutarch *De E apud Delphi* 338d-e=B90). In this fragment, Heraclitus draws a rather elaborate comparison between fire as the underlying principle of the world and currency, which sustains transactions in human commerce. Without a commonly valued means of trade, such as common currency, there could not be an exchange of goods. This suggests that without the principle of fire, as a means of exchange, the world could not exist. In brief, there cannot be a time at which there is no fire, no principle.

Second, a cosmogonic theory does not seem to fit with other extant fragments, such as B31a/b. These fragments relate to the topic of cosmology rather than cosmogony. Good evidence for this thesis is that the processes of elemental transformation are described by Heraclitus with terms that have a quantitative and not temporal colour, such as 'half (*ἥμισυ*)', 'poured forth' (*διαχέεται*), 'measured' (*μετρέεται*) and 'proportion' (*λόγος*). All these terms provide a general indication of Heraclitus' belief that the world is in a state of kinetic balance: each element is transformed into the quantitative corresponding amount of the other element, a phenomenon that he calls the 'turnings of fire' (*πυρὸς τροπαί*).

In opposition to Kirk's cosmological reading, there are the views of Kahn, and later Robinson and Finkelberg, who hold that the doxographic tradition should be taken at face value.[156] Kahn issues three reasons why Heraclitus offers a cosmogony in

[156] See Kahn (1979: 134-47); Robinson (1987*:* 96-102); Finkelberg (1998: 213-20).

fragments, B30 and B31a/b. First, it is difficult to imagine that, in saying B30, Heraclitus categorically denies that the *kosmos* is created in any way. This is particularly so as the intellectual context in which Heraclitus flourishes holds the opposite belief. Take, for instance, Anaximenes's conception of 'air' (*ἀήρ*) as the source out of which the world comes about through the processes of rarefaction and condensation, namely from air to fire, wind, cloud, water, earth and stone (in this order) (Simplicius *Phys.* XXIV, 24, 26-25, 1=Theophrastus fragment 226a=A5). It is clear that the elemental transformation described in that passage should be understood as cosmogonic.

Such a belief is not unique to Anaximenes. Aristotle, for instance, describes the cosmogonic milieu of the Pre-Socratics, or 'natural philosophers' (*φυσικοί*), as he calls them, by claiming that they all shared the idea that the world originated from a primeval unity: 'the source' (*ἀρχή* or *archē*) (*Meth*. Γ 1071b). It is difficult to imagine that Heraclitus departs so strongly from the intellectual atmosphere that surrounds him, and this becomes even less probable given that in Aristotle's reports on Heraclitus he is silent on this oddity.[157]

According to Kahn, Heraclitus introduces substantial innovation to Anaximenes' cosmogonic theory, in defining 'fire' (*πῦρ*) as the *archē* of the cosmos, as Aristotle and Theophrastus report (*Met.* Γ 984a7=A 5[1]); Simplicius *In Phys.* XXIII, 33=Theophrastus fragment 225=A5). One may wonder why Heraclitus chooses fire over air. There are two reasons which can account for this choice. First, fire perfectly embodies the concept of measured change or identity through becoming, which Heraclitus sees at work in the universe. Fire retains its physical structure and identity, even if its flames are ever

[157] It is important to note that Aristotle's survey of the Pre-Socratics and their philosophical doctrines is shrouded in controversy; he has been accused of misrepresenting their opinions on this theme in order to better offer a dialectical construction of his own cosmological system. For Kahn, the latter speculations on Aristotle's untrustworthiness are groundless: Aristotle had better access to Heraclitus' original fragments as well as to his intellectual environment than what we could ever reach.

becoming, and it continually emits smoke and ashes. Second, in a more symbolic way, fire represents, at least for the Greeks, the source of all the 'arts' (*τεχναί*), since it is Prometheus' gift to mankind.

Kahn recognises that, on first consideration, it is difficult to read fragments B31a/b in cosmogonic terms. A more natural reading is that the 'turnings of fire' are a series of elemental transformations taking place in the universe. Yet, Kahn observes three reasons why the cosmogonic reading should be preferred. First, Clement, who preserves fragments 31a/b, clearly advocates a cosmogonic interpretation, since these should be read as a continuation of B30. It is difficult to deny that Clement had a more comprehensive understanding of Heraclitus than we do, especially because he seems to be following Theophrastus who, in turn, draws on Aristotle. Second, there are two terms in B31a/b that are temporal designators: 'first' (*πρῶτον*) and 'before' (*πρόσθεν*). Third and last, by taking the theory of conflagration at face value, one can include in the survey of Heraclitus' thought some fragments which otherwise would be impossible to explain: namely, those fragments that describe the inner working of Heraclitus' theory about the cyclical creation and destruction of the world, more commonly known as *ekpyrōsis* (Hippolyus *Ref.* IX, 10, 7=B65; *Ref.* IX, 10, 6=B66). These fragments, B65 and B66, respectively offer two explanations: on the one hand, how annihilation by fire develops through 'need (*χρησμοσύνη*) and satiety (*κόρος*)' (B65); and, on the other, that this act is carried out on the basis of a 'judgement' (B66).

As for fragment B65, the meanings of 'need' and 'satiety' may be inferred from two passages from Plutarch and Philo, who relate them to Heraclitus' conflagration (Plutarch *De E apud Delphi* IX, 389c; Philo *De spec. legg*. I, 208). Both terms seem to have a strong conceptual connection with the phenomenon of fire: 'need' (*χρησμοσύνη*) is the craving for fuel, which leads to the creation of the world, while 'satiety' (*κόρος*)

describes the point at which fire is extinguished, a phenomenon that leads to the eventual destruction of the world.[158]

In brief, it is arguable that Heraclitus considers his notion of conflagration as a cosmogonic theory. Ancient evidence seems to confirm this, including the works of Aristotle, an important source for ancient, Pre-Socratic thinkers. Another important noteworthy element from the foregoing is that Heraclitus' cosmogonic theory of conflagration is compatible and coherent with the extant evidence that concerns elemental transformation.

4.4 Heraclitus' theory of strife

A final theory of Heraclitus to be examined here that Nietzsche analyses during his Basel lecture is the doctrine of 'strife' (*ἔρις* or *eris*). Nietzsche draws a comparison with Hesiod's earlier articulation of strife, even if not in philological terms. Nietzsche aims at showing how only a philosopher, such as Heraclitus, can explain some important aspects of the cosmos, whereas a poet, such Hesiod, can merely account for Greek society. This purpose differs from those of modern scholarship, when Heraclitus' theory of strife is discussed. Scholars and commentators aim at shedding light on the likely sources, polemical targets and meaning of Heraclitus' theory of strife. The two most important extant pieces of evidence on this topic read as follows:

> One must realise that war (*πόλεμος*) is common (*ξυνόν*), and justice strife (*ἔρις*), and that all things come to be through strife (*γινόμενα πάντα κατ'ἔριν*) and so ordained. (Origen *Contra Celsum* VI, 42=B80)

> War (*πόλεμος*) is father of all, and king (*πάντων βασιλεύς*) of all. He renders some gods, other men; he makes some slaves, others free. (Hippolytus *Ref.* IX, 9, 4=B53)

[158] In addition, a noteworthy point is that, for Heraclitus, there seems to be a link between annihilation by fire and the Greek concept of '*hybris*' (*ὕβρις*); this is linked to his idea that arrogance should be extinguished more than 'blading fire' (*πυρκαϊήν*) (DL IX, 2=B43).

There are two main ways in which scholars have interpreted these fragments: literally and metaphorically. As for the more literal reading, Kirk calls attention to the fact that fragment B53 displays a striking similarity with other fragments, where Heraclitus describes physical clashes as a separating criterion between those who attain a better 'destiny' (*μοίρα*) and those who do not (Clement *Strom.* 4.16.1=B24; Clement *Strom*. 4.49.2=B25).[159] The plausibility of this reading is thin but nonetheless significant, because Heraclitus' theory of the afterlife mentioned here is similar to Hesiod's, one of his main rivals. They both claim that after death some men attain the status of 'demons' (*δαίμονες*), namely minor gods, and that they are entrusted by the gods with the task of being 'guardians' (*φύλακες*) of mankind, that is of ensuring the realisation of justice in the human community (Hesiod *Erga* 122-7; Hippolytus *Ref.* IX, 10, 6=B63).[160]

Kahn and Robinson, by contrast, propose a more metaphorical interpretation of fragments B80 and B53.[161] They argue that, in both cases, strife and war should be understood as the embodiment of cosmic opposition, which explains the inner workings of the world. The context for the development of this doctrine is Heraclitus' intellectual milieu and, in particular, his relationship with the Greek poets Homer and Hesiod. In a famous passage from *The Iliad* (XVIII, 107), Achilles wishes that 'strife' (*ἔρις*) would vanish among men and gods alike. This is likely to have triggered a reaction from Heraclitus: if strife were to vanish, as Homer unwisely claims, then so too would 'harmony' (*ἁρμονία*) and the 'ordered world' (*κόσμος*) (Aristotle *Eud. Eth.* H I, 1235a25; Scholia A to *Iliad* XVIII, 107). The reason for this is that, for Heraclitus, it is opposition that guarantees the orderly and harmonious persistence of the world. An example of this concept is contained in saying B51, which states that the existence of 'harmony'

[159] See Kirk (1954: 246-8).
[160] For a brief survey on this specific topic, see Sisti (2018).
[161] See Kahn (1979: 205-9); Robinson (1987: 117; 132).

(*ἁρμονίη*) in the lyre is made possible only by the opposition between its two arms. This aspect is confirmed by what Heraclitus states in B80: 'all things come to be through strife' (*γινόμενα πάντα κατ'ἔριν*) which means that if strife faded away, the result would be the existence of nothing due to the absence of harmony.

Kahn explains that Heraclitus may have developed his theory of strife as a reaction to Hesiod.[162] In *On the Works and Days* (11-34), Hesiod claims that there is not only one but two kinds of 'strife' (*ἔρις*): one is praiseworthy and the other blameworthy. The more negative strife is visible in wicked acts such as 'war' (*πόλεμος*), 'conflict' (*δῆρις*) and 'murder' (*νεἰκεα*); the other type, by contrast, is regarded as 'good' (*ἀγαθὴ*) given that it fosters entrepreneurship and straight judgements. In response to this view, Heraclitus proposes his own, namely that 'war' (*πόλεμος*) and 'strife' (*ἔρις*) should be considered good aspects of strife too, given that they are equally responsible for the harmony of the universe.

For Heraclitus, it is nonsensical to attempt to separate positive from negative characteristics, given that they are intertwined with one another: 'God (*θεός*) is day and night, winter and summer, war and peace, satiety and famine…' (B67). The positive and negative aspects of everything are inseparable from another and equally contribute to the harmonious structure of the world. It is precisely because Hesiod tries to separate negative and positive aspects, 'day' and 'night' in Heraclitus' language, that he cannot be hailed as a 'teacher' (*διδάσκαλος*); he does have knowledge but it is mere 'polymathy' (*πολυμαθίη*) (Hippolytus *Ref*. IX, 10, 2=B57; B40). From Heraclitus' point of view, if Hesiod and Homer had been wise and not merely erudite, they would have been more cautious in wishing for the end of strife.

[162] See Kahn (1979: 206).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined those aspects of Heraclitus's doctrines that will be relevant to bringing into focus Nietzsche's reception of that philosopher, in order to identify how they differ and what they hold in common.

In the first section, I examined the issue of whether Heraclitus' sayings should be read as a collection of separate fragments. I focused on the similarities between Heraclitus' fragments and the utterances or *gnōmai* of the Seven Sages, especially their conceptual and linguistic similarities, and in particular, Heraclitus' obscure writing style. Heraclitus' statements are riddles, namely they can have multiple interpretations and the concepts and terms he mentions form exegetical dilemmas. By focusing on particular cases of Heraclitus' sentences, such as those regarding Homer and 'the worms' and 'the *logos*', I argued that Heraclitus' riddles-like statements have two or more meanings that form compatible and coherent wholes.

A further topic I addressed in this chapter (section 2) is Heraclitus' doctrine of flux. I argued that the goal of a scholarly study of this topic should be to establish the original meaning of Heraclitus' river statements. I focused on the river fragment reported in the *Cratylus* and the formula Plato uses to summarise Heraclitus' teaching: *panta rei*. I made the case that the Platonic interpretation is a mischaracterisation of the original Heraclitean view, which stresses the balance and regularity of becoming rather than its chaotic and unrestricted nature. This is because Plato came into contact with Heraclitus' doctrine through his teacher Cratylus. In the third section, I addressed the topic of Heraclitus' conflagration. Modern scholars' surveys regard the issue as to whether the doctrine of conflagration is a cosmogonic or cosmological theory. Drawing on the doxographic tradition as well as Aristotle's testimony I made the case that it is a cosmogonic theory.

Finally, I discussed the Heraclitean theme of strife. I focused the sources and the

reason why Heraclitus elaborates the doctrine of strife. I argued that it is a philosophical response to the less elaborate belief shared by Homer and Hesiod that strife should be abolished from the world, something that Heraclitus held would lead to the destruction of harmony in the world.

5 Nietzsche and Heraclitus

Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to explore Nietzsche's relationship with Heraclitus, especially regarding the topics of the ways of life and doctrines that he advocated. Berry (2013), Herschell and Nimis (1979), Richardson (1996) and Cox (1998) have argued that Nietzsche's reception of Heraclitus can be explained in terms of the similarity between certain elements of their thought, ways of life, ideas and arguments. On the one hand, we have the Heraclitean doctrine of flux, doctrine of conflagration, theory of strife and his elitist way of life and, on the other, there are Nietzsche's doctrines of the will to power, the eternal return and his way of life as characterised by an open disdain for the mob. By contrast, I will argue that Nietzsche's analysis of Heraclitus is driven not by such similarity. Rather, Nietzsche reads into Heraclitus some of his own epistemic, psychological and metaphysical doctrines, which he formed independently over the course of his career, predominantly the theories of perspectivism and the will to power. Attributing to Heraclitus each particular doctrine serves a specific purpose for Nietzsche, however, overall the issues that Nietzsche attempts to address and ultimately resolve regard two main themes: the relationship with Christianity and with other philosophers, such as Socrates and Plato.

I will start by focusing, in the first section, on Heraclitus' way of life and his method of practising philosophy. Nietzsche's analysis is driven by his attribution to Heraclitus not simply the use of correct reason, understood as correct *logos*, but also of the instincts and ecstatic inspiration. The endpoint of the discussion, from Nietzsche's point of view, is to show that Heraclitus stands apart from the rationalistic tradition that began with Socrates. In the second section, I will address Heraclitus' ambiguous writing

style. I will argue that Heraclitus' writing style resonates with him, despite the differences between their writing styles. Nietzsche argues that Heraclitus' use of an ambiguous writing style is an attempt to resist those readers who might relinquish the epistemic gain embedded into the exegetical dilemma of his fragments. An example of such readers are the Stoics who misinterpret the Heraclitean conception of the cosmos as an aesthetic phenomenon as a word arranged according to a divine Providence.

In the third section, I will analyse the Nietzschean reception of the Heraclitean doctrine of strife. The argument I will develop is that Nietzsche projects onto Heraclitus' theory of strife his own concept of contest. Nietzsche, then, compares and contrasts that theory with Hesiod's rival theory of strife as applied to Greek society. Nietzsche's purpose with such comparison is to remind us that a philosopher, such as Heraclitus, can explain certain aspects of the cosmos with his theory, such as strife, whereas a poet such Hesiod can only account for the nature of Greek society.

In the fourth section, I will argue that Nietzsche tackles Heraclitus' theory of becoming, reading into it his own cosmic doctrine of the will to power. Nietzsche's goal in doing so is to show the consequences that follow from attributing to Heraclitus his power ontology. In this specific case, Nietzsche wants to put Heraclitus at odds with the metaphysical tradition that began with Plato, due to the former's acceptance of becoming and rejection of being.

In the final section, I will focus on Nietzsche's discussion of Heraclitus' theory of conflagration. I will argue that Nietzsche attributes to Heraclitus the cosmic doctrine of the will to power. The goal that Nietzsche has in mind is to address and resolve some issues related to Christianity, such as whether there is a *telos* in the universe, whether the cosmos is moral or immoral, and where the position of mankind lies in the hierarchy of beings.

5.1 Nietzsche on Heraclitus' solitary way of life

In Nietzsche's autobiography, written in 1888 entitled *Ecce Homo* (III, *BT*, 3), we can read:

> *Heraclitus*; I generally feel warmer and in better spirits in his company than anywhere else. The affirmation of passing away *and destruction* that is crucial for a Dionysian philosophy, saying yes to opposition and war, *becoming* along with a radical rejection of the very concept of 'being' – all these are more closely related to me than anything else people have thought so far. The doctrine of the 'eternal return', which is to say the unconditional and infinitely repeated cycle of all things – this is Zarathustra's doctrine, but ultimately it is nothing Heraclitus couldn't have said too. At least the Stoics have traces of it, and they inherited almost all of their fundamental ideas from Heraclitus. -

The relationship that Nietzsche claims to have with Heraclitus dates back to the early days when he was teaching at Basel. Heraclitus and his fragments were analysed at length in a lecture he gave between 1872 and 1876, entitled *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers*. This was also the topic of the essay *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, written in 1873 and completed in 1874. It is noteworthy that, in Nietzsche's Basel lectures, we find an extremely detailed discussion of Heraclitus' ideas and arguments, starting from a careful exegesis of his extant fragments.

In the preface of *Philosophy in the Tragic Age*, Nietzsche pledges to focus, more generally, on a precise aspect of the Pre-Socratic philosophers, which is characterised by their 'way of life' (*Art zur Leben*), 'personal mood' (*Stimmung*) and 'personality' (*Personalität*). Nietzsche's early works on Diogenes may explain this commitment. Nietzsche follows the model used by Diogenes in the *Lives*, namely to identify various personal elements of the ancient thinkers, to use as evidence that might help to shed light on their doctrines.[163]

[163] See Barnes (1986: 21).

This model is particularly noticeable in the work from the beginning of Nietzsche's career, for instance in the *Untimely Meditations* (III, 8), where he accuses histories of ancient philosophy, as written by famous philologists such as Ritter, Brandis and Zeller, of being not only lengthy and boring, but also inaccurate. Nietzsche considers that important aspects of ancient Greek philosophers are seen not only in their doctrines, as these philologists claim, but also in their ways of life and psychology. According to Nietzsche, we should juxtapose 'a critique of words by means of other words', namely a philological understanding of ancient thinkers' philosophical theories through an enquiry into their lives and individual personalities (*UM* III, 8).

The kind of focus that Nietzsche has on a thinker's way of life and personality is particularly visible in his reception of Heraclitus. In *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks,* Nietzsche reports in detail those aspects which he thinks are important about Heraclitus' life, drawing freely from Diogenes' *Lives*. The starting point of this discussion is seen in Nietzsche's words that Heraclitus is equal to the figure of 'the wise' (*σοφός*) whose 'way of life' (*βίος*) is that of a 'proud, solitary, searcher after truth' (*PPP* 58). From these comments, it emerges early in Nietzsche's exegesis of the ancient evidence, complementary attitudes in Heraclitus' solitary approach both to life and philosophy. However, even in his early years at Basel, Nietzsche extends such a characterisation to the entire enterprise of being a philosopher: 'to walk alone along a lonely street is part of the philosopher's (*Philosoph*) nature' (*PTAG* 8; cf. *TI* I, 3). Solitude, in other words, is a necessary prerequisite to leading a genuinely philosophical existence: one cannot be a philosopher without being, at least to some extent a lonely figure. On the basis on this and other evidence, Berry argues that Nietzsche finds in Heraclitus a kindred spirit, because they shared a similar psychological make-up, having been solitary figures

throughout their lives.[164]

I will make a different claim, however. First, Nietzsche's exegesis of the ancient evidence is neither objective nor rational: he does not aim at reconstructing the precise psychological make-up of Heraclitus. Second, and most importantly, Nietzsche is motivated by the goal of shedding light on whether Heraclitus is worthy of emulation. Nietzsche projects onto Heraclitus some characteristics and doctrines, such as a solitary attitude to life and a balance between reason and the instincts, in addition to reasoning and mystic abilities that, if possessed, would make him a philosophical exemplar. The idea that solitude is a defining and key feature of excellence will also be brought into focus by Nietzsche during the middle phase of his philosophical career. In works such as *Beyond Good and Evil* (26) we can find the following sentiment: 'every choice human being strives instinctively for a citadel and secrecy where he is rescued from the crowds, the many, the vast majority where, as the exception, he can forget the human norm'. Nietzsche, thus, sheds light on the dynamic of the many versus the exception. The idea implicit here and that he is advancing is that it is only in a life of solitude and retreat that we can strive towards excellence. Great thinkers need the necessary time and peace of mind to reflect and think and, according to Nietzsche, these two requirements can only be attained in solitude.

In other works from his middle period, such as *The Genealogy of Morality*, the themes of solitude as a necessary condition for a philosophical life re-emerge, at that time in connection with the figure of Heraclitus, among other thinkers. There is a passage of *The Genealogy of Morality* (III, 8) that is particularly significant in this regard:[165]

[164] See Berry (2013: 93).

[165] This passage occurs within Nietzsche's discussion of the ascetic ideal. This might lead one to believe that Nietzsche sees Heraclitus here in a negative light. However, this need not be the case because, as May (1999: 83-90) argues, there are certain aspects of the ascetic thinkers that are valuable and life-enhancing. Solitude and celibacy are life-affirming because, as we will see, they are part of a philosophical way of life.

> The philosopher (*Philosoph*) abhors marriage (*Ehe*), together with all that might persuade him to it, – marriage as hindrance and catastrophe on his path to the optimum (*Weg zum Optimum*). Which great philosopher, so far, has been married? Heraclitus, Plato, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant, Schopenhauer – were not; indeed it is impossible to even *think* about them as married. A married philosopher belongs to *comedy*, that is my proposition: and that exception, Socrates, the mischievous Socrates, appears to have married *ironice* [‘ironically’], simply in order to demonstrate this proposition.

Nietzsche reports the curious and allegedly true anecdote that great thinkers of the past were celibate. It is noteworthy here that Heraclitus is the first philosopher that is listed among the unmarried. This emphasises Heraclitus’ importance in terms of the connection between philosophy, solitude and celibacy. There are other examples of past thinkers that were not married, most notably Plato, Spinoza and Kant. I will show that there is a key difference between Heraclitus, Plato, Socrates and Kant, however, despite the fact that they are all mentioned here together. Such a difference makes Heraclitus a positive kind of philosopher, in sharp contrast to Plato, Socrates and Kant, who, as seen before, have all been criticised by Nietzsche at some point of his career.

The only famous thinker that is singled out as being different from the group of famous celibate thinkers is Socrates. Socrates, in fact, had a wife: Xanthippe. However, even Socrates, Nietzsche argues, ‘appears to have married *ironice* [‘ironically’], simply in order to demonstrate this proposition’, namely to prove that one ought to live a life of celibacy. It is not made explicit why Socrates’ relationship with Xanthippe presents a significant argument against marriage generally. Yet, the reason for this can be found in the description of Xanthippe which Xenophon, Nietzsche’s likely source, made popular in antiquity through his *Symposium*. Xenophon puts in Socrates’ mouth the complaint that Xanthippe is ‘the hardest to get along with of all the women there are—yes, or all that ever were, I suspect, or ever will be’ (*Symp.* 10).

Reading between the lines of Socrates’ negative description of his relationship with

Xanthippe, we find the same reasoning made explicit by Nietzsche as to why celibacy is preferable to marriage if one wants to live a philosophical life. According to Nietzsche, marriage strips a thinker of his '*independence*' and 'liberty' to withdraw into his own 'desert'. Being married is equal to giving up one's solitude. However, as seen earlier, for Nietzsche a life without a certain degree of solitude is unphilosophical: it takes away many important aspects that are necessary to practising philosophy. First and foremost, for marriage we must abandon our own personal and solitary time to think and reflect, which means distraction from focusing on the task of philosophising. Furthermore, celibacy is a continuation of solitude by other means. Therefore, Nietzsche argues that famous philosophers of the past, such as Plato, Kant and Heraclitus, being aware of the downside that marriage might have had on their philosophical careers, decided against the institution.

Nietzsche elaborates further regarding the connection between solitude and philosophy, refuting the potential argument that might be brought against him that a philosopher's solitude is harmful for the philosopher. Nietzsche addresses this objection by claiming that solitude is not only useful for a philosopher but may also to some extent even be necessary. A passage from *The Genealogy of Morality* (III, 8), occurring prior to the aforementioned excerpt from the same text, demonstrates why. Here Nietzsche argues that the philosopher's life of celibacy is:

> […] *not* his path to 'happiness' (*Weg zum Glück*) I am talking about, but the path to power (*Weg zur Macht*), action, the mightiest deeds, and in most cases, actually, his path to misery (*Weg zum Unglück*).

The importance of this remark lies in its role. Nietzsche projects his independently developed theory of the will to power into his discussion about the relationship between solitude and philosophy. According to the biological version of this theory, biological beings, including philosophers, strive for power: there is a 'fundamental organic function'

(*Grundfunktion*) which compels them to discharge their strength (*BGE* 259). All biology is in a power struggle, with the result that there is a certain kind of unhappiness and suffering due to the constant clash of forces. Yet, the important aspect for our discussion is that the will to power is a constant process of expansion, growth and development. Such tendency for growth not only regards physical strength but also and most importantly concerns the intellectual kind. Philosophy is, in fact, particularly important in this picture, and is understood by Nietzsche as 'the most spiritual will to power' (*geistigere Wille zur Macht*) (*BGE* 9). Such a notion of power is expressed in the passage of *The Genealogy of Morality* (III, 8) quoted above, where we are told that the primary goal of philosophers is to develop 'the highest and boldest intellectuality' (*Geistigkeit*).

Nietzsche is aware that, for Heraclitus, *logos* (*λόγος*) is not only 'reason' but most importantly 'correct reason'; it is what distinguishes him from laymen, who he famously scorns with the words, 'what wit or understanding (*φρήν*) do they have?' (*PPP* 59; Proclus *Alcib*. I, 177=D104). However, Nietzsche does not interpret *logos* in purely rationalistic terms, but rather claims that 'Heraclitus' regal possession is his extraordinary power to think intuitively (*intuitiven Vorstellung*)' (*PTAG* 5).

The idea that inspiration is somehow superior to the power of pure reason emerges as an independent thought many years later in *Beyond Good and Evil* (5). Nietzsche accuses most philosophers, such as Kant and Spinoza who are expressly mentioned in the passage, of excessively relying on a 'cold, pure, divinely insouciant dialectic (*Dialektic*)' in order to articulate their theories. Nietzsche thinks that this is wrong because it turns philosophers into mere receptacles of their own prejudices, which are then defended *ex post* through rationalisations. In the same passage Nietzsche expresses a preference for the mystics who are labelled as 'more honest' than most philosophers. They rely on 'inspiration' (*Inspiration*) rather than on rational abilities and they even admit to doing

so, whereas most philosophers pretend that their biases are truths. In this passage, Nietzsche does not offer any explanation of what he means by inspiration or mysticism, nor does he provide clarifications on this theme in any other middle or later work.

However, we can pursue a sort of *via negativa* to shed some light on Nietzsche's understanding of this theme. As a preliminary, we can rely on a working definition of 'mysticism' as the idea, surely known by Nietzsche, that the mystic union with the divine can be reached by means of ecstatic contemplation as opposed to rational explanation.[166] Moreover, we can at least explain what Nietzsche does not admire about Socrates who is criticised, in *The Birth of Tragedy* (13) by having 'a monstrous lack of any capacity for mysticism' and for the over-development of his logical nature. This picture will resurface and will be further refined in *The Twilight of the Idols* (II, 2; 4). In the latter work, Socrates is presented as the archetype of the rationalistic and theoretical philosopher who relies primarily on reason to understand and make sense of the world.

However, for Nietzsche the emergence of the primacy of reason as the most important faculty is the symptom and sign of creeping decadence (*TI* II, 2; 4). The phenomenon of decadence is key to understanding the comparison between mysticism and rationalism and, in turn, the comparison between Heraclitus and Socrates. By Nietzsche's later period, and as elucidated in *The Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche independently develops his theory of decadence, regarding the psychological tokens of the instincts and their balance. Decadence, we are told, is 'to have to fight the instincts (*Instinkte*) – that is the formula for decadence' (*TI* II, 11). This notion is cast in the context of Nietzsche's idea that there is a 'society' (*Gesellschaftsbau*) of the drives in the soul and that there is a precise 'order' (*Ordung*) in which this society is arranged (*GM* II, 1; *BGE* 6; 7; 19). Nietzsche's main critique towards Socrates' rationalism is that it

[166] See *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*.

effectively represents a loss of balance, where reason takes a dominant role despite other instincts, leading to catastrophic results.

An example relevant to the foregoing is Nietzsche's discussion of the evolution of Heraclitus' aesthetic conception of the cosmos, in the history of philosophy. According to Nietzsche, Heraclitus thinks that the world should not and cannot be judged in moral terms, given that it is simply an aesthetic phenomenon. However, after Socrates introduces the idea that we should take the habit of 'not simply of understanding existence, but even of correcting it' (*BT* 13), the world would be judged, for instance, as ugly and bad by Christians due to the presence of evil and wrongdoings among mankind. Nietzsche, on the other hand, believes that this is the exact opposite attitude that we should have towards the world, which should not be judged according to our moral categories because it is not reducible to them. In fact, Nietzsche attributes to Heraclitus the same idea that he has, namely that the world has no *telos* and that it is, ultimately, a blind and irrational force that is beyond any form of morality or immorality.

Therefore, Nietzsche's attribution of mysticism to Heraclitus should be read under the light that he aims to establish a break with the Socratic and rationalist tradition. It is noteworthy here that Nietzsche is not simply attributing to Heraclitus a different way of practicing philosophy from a historical point of view; he is also and most importantly offering a reflection of how philosophy should be lived as a way of life.[167]

5.2 Nietzsche's epistemic writing style and Heraclitus' obscure writing style

In this section, I will argue that Heraclitus' writing style evoked a reaction in Nietzsche. Nietzsche adopts various writing styles throughout his philosophical career. In his *corpus*, we find numerous works written in plain language that exhibit a clear-cut and systematic structure, such as *The Birth of Tragedy, The Genealogy of Morality* or *The*

[167] See Panaïoti (2019: 42-4).

Pre-Platonic Philosophers. Yet, there are other works, such as *Beyond Good and Evil*, *The Antichrist* and *Twilight of the Idols*, where Nietzsche's way of writing is not systematic, but comprises short, memorable and hyperbolic remarks and statements. Occasionally, Nietzsche writes in aphorisms, as brief and pithy statements, and this style is especially distinct in the section 'Arrows and Epigrams' of *The Twilight of the Idols* and in some places at the beginning and end of *The Antichrist*.[168]

Some scholars, such as Bett, have investigated Nietzsche's more systemic writings and have drawn interesting comparisons with those works and Sextus' writing style. Like many of Nietzsche's works, Sextus' *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* is a formal treatise written in plain language, with a systematic structure to its themes.[169] However, I will focus on Nietzsche's less systematic writing, namely his short striking remarks and his aphorisms, and I will argue that it is possible to establish a connection between his statements of that form and Heraclitus' writing style.

There are some obvious differences to bear in mind. As seen in the prior chapter, Heraclitus' extant evidence is not part of a continuous book, but rather comprises brief and highly memorable statements or 'maxims' known in Ancient Greece as *gnōmai* (*γνῶμαι*) (Hippolytus *Ref*. IX, 10, 2=B 57; DL IX, 1=B 42; cf. Hippolytus *Ref*. IX, 9, 5=B 56). Nietzsche, by contrast, only occasionally writes in aphorisms, as most of the time of his works are composed of brief remarks and notes. Nevertheless, I will argue that there is also a sense in which Nietzsche sees in Heraclitus a kindred spirit, as concerns the topic of writing style, especially because of some of the peculiar characteristics and objectives

[168] See *The Oxford English Dictionary* under the entry 'aphorism'.

[169] See Bett (2000a) who additionally argues that Sextus and Nietzsche share the same goal regarding writing: converting a multiplicity of points of view without committing to any of them. It is undeniable that there is some truth to this statement. As we have seen, Nietzsche has a positive opinion of the Pyrrhonian ability to oppose one appearance with another of equal weight and, to reach equipollence and, ultimately, the state of *epochē*. However, Nietzsche's project cannot be reconciled with a continuous state of suspension of judgment, given that he issues numerous doctrines about the nature of reality, which would be impossible in such a state.

found in Heraclitus's works.

The starting point for the current investigation is the Basel lectures, where Nietzsche conducts a careful but only apparently philological – in the sense of scientific and objective – reconstruction of Heraclitus' writing style. I will argue that we cannot glean the complete picture of Nietzsche's reception of Heraclitus simply by analysing the relevant sections of the *Pre-Platonic Philosophers* and *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*. My theory is, rather, that we can shed light on this topic if we relate it to other concepts, such 'the art of reading good [and] badly' and the affects. These are concepts that Nietzsche develops independently in some of his early and middle-period works, such as *Daybreak* and *Human, All-Too-Human*. Nietzsche does not, of course, describe a fully fledged version of these ideas and concepts at the time of the Basel lectures, but focusing on how they are construed in the lectures will elucidate certain aspects of Nietzsche's reception of Heraclitus' writing style. The goal that Nietzsche has in mind is to determine how a philosopher, such as Heraclitus, should write in order to communicate his doctrines, and how through writing those doctrines could be protected from misinterpretation.

In the Basel lectures, Nietzsche begins his analysis of Heraclitus' writing style with a quotation of the following fragments (*PPP* 55):

> The lord whose oracle is in Delphi neither indicates clearly nor conceals but gives a sign. (Plutarch *De Pyt. or.* 404d=B93)
>
> The Sibyl uttering with raving mouth words mirthless, unadorned, and unperformed, reaches us with her voice up to a thousand years later, thanks to the god. (Plutarch *De Pyt. or.* 397a=B92)

As seen before, Nietzsche claims here that the obscurity of language and ambiguity characterising Heraclitus' fragments is inherent to his own writing style. Nietzsche is aware of this because he immediately observes that: 'perhaps his style makes this most

obvious, since he resembles the oracular proverbs and the language of the Sibyls' (*PPP* 55). In other words, Nietzsche comments that Heraclitus' fragments can and should be compared to the Sybil's riddles. Let us see an example that might help to untangle Nietzsche's reasoning. The story says that Croesus once asked the Pythia whether he should attack the Persian empire, and the answer he received from the oracle was: 'after crossing the Halys, Croesus will destroy a great empire'. The interpretative task which lies before us is to resolve the ambiguity of the term 'empire'; it could either refer to the Persians' or, counterintuitively, to Croesus' own empire. Legend says that Croesus eventually crossed the Halys and destroyed his own kingdom as a result. Two aspects are important to note here. First, there was a multiplicity of readings, as the term 'empire' could refer to two different empires given the context. However, there was only one correct solution to the Sybil's riddle, albeit not a obvious one, which also an admonition against Croesus' human *hybris*.

Throughout his Basel lectures, Nietzsche reports evidence that substantiates his interpretation of Heraclitus' ambiguity in style as extremely similar to that of the oracle of the Sybil. Consider, Nietzsche's quotation of the statement that is perhaps the best representation of Heraclitus' ambiguous writing style: 'although this *logos* holds forever men fail to comprehend it' (*τοῦ δὲ λόγου τοῦδε ἐόντος αἰει ἀξυνετοι γίνονται ἄνθροποι*) (Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Math.* VII, 132-3=B1). Nietzsche gives various interpretations of the latter statement. There are two horns of the exegetical dilemma offered by this fragment: one is whether the term 'forever' (*αἰει*) refers to 'this *logos* being' or to 'men are ignorant', a topic which we have examined in the previous chapter on Heraclitus. Nietzsche examines the multiplicity of meanings that can be associated to the term *logos*. For instance, he relates it to Heraclitus' elitism. In many of his fragments, Heraclitus complains that most people are ignorant of the *logos* and Nietzsche cites some of the most

relevant, such as ‘not comprehending, they hear like the deaf, the saying is their witness: absent while present’ (Clement *Strom.* V, 115, 3=B34). Nietzsche shows that one way of understanding *logos* is that it is a teaching that men do not comprehend: the term ‘forever’ should be constructed with the words ‘men fail to comprehend it’. The *logos*, thus, bears close similarity to a discourse and a teaching.

Yet, Nietzsche also shows that one can interpret the term *logos* as ‘the reason’ and ‘the law’ which oversees the entire cosmos. In support of this thesis, he cites fragments such as: ‘the wise is one, knowing the plan with it steers all things through all’ (DL IX, 1=B41); and, a quotation from Marcus Aurelius’ *Meditations* (IV, 46), now considered spurious, ‘Men are at variance with the one thing with which they are in the most unbroken communion, the reason (*λόγος*) that administers the whole universe’. This evidence, in turn, shows that the term of *logos* in fragment B1 could also plausibly be constructed with the part of the sentence reading ‘this *logos* being forever’. Heraclitus’ *logos*, if interpreted in this way, thus, seems to bear closer similarity to an eternal principle of the world rather than a discourse.

Nietzsche seems to have reached a standstill regarding Heraclitus’ intended meaning of fragment B1 and, consequently, the concept of the *logos*. Between the two horns of this exegetical dilemma, Nietzsche does not know which one to choose, that is whether the *logos* here stands for an eternal principle or, rather, a discursive teaching. However, this is not simply because Nietzsche himself is not capable of deciding between the two options. Rather, Nietzsche thinks that Heraclitus has purposefully designed his statements in such a way that they issue two equally plausible horns of an exegetical dilemma. The meaning of *logos* in Heraclitus’ thought would, then, at the same time be a discursive teaching and an eternal structure and principle of the universe.

Nietzsche seems to be aware that this is an inherent feature of Heraclitus’ writing

style. However, contrary to what one might expect, Nietzsche never complains about Heraclitus' obscurity of language. Rather, he argues that there is only a specific group of readers who claim to be dissatisfied with Heraclitus' writing style (*PTAG* 7):

> [Some] people are also responsible for the numerous complaints about the obscurity of Heraclitus' style. The fact is that hardly anyone has ever written with as lucid and as luminous a quality. Very tersely, to be sure, and for that reason obscure for readers who skim and race.

On the basis of this passage alone, it is difficult to determine why there are some who find Heraclitus to write in a way that they cannot understand, whereas others, such as Nietzsche, hold the opposite opinion. In fact, many questions remain without an answer: who are the 'reader[s] who skim and race' and what are the reasons for their antipathy towards Heraclitus' ambiguous style? And, furthermore, if Heraclitus' writing style is ambiguous and obscure, as we have seen, why does Nietzsche—quite counterintuitively—describe it as 'lucid' and 'luminous'? A work written in the early phase of Nietzsche's career, *Daybreak,* and published after the end of Nietzsche's Basel experience (1881), will be helpful here. Nietzsche's characterisation of Christian philology in this context is important: 'the art of reading badly' (*die Kunst schlecht zu lessen*) (*D* 84). Nietzsche accuses Christian classicists of reading ancient texts badly because they present 'their conjectures as boldly as if they were dogmas' (*D* 84). To put this another way, Nietzsche observes that Christians appeal to an argument from authority or, more accurately, what they construe as the ultimate authority: the Gospel as the revealed word of God. This characterisation of Christian philology also reveals the most important aspect of Nietzsche's dealing with those who complain about Heraclitus' style: the foreclosure of alternative readings.

Returning to Nietzsche's reception of Heraclitus, it is now possible to glean what he might refer to in some key passages of *Daybreak* (Preface, 5; 84), when he comments

on readers who complain about the obscurity of the Heraclitean writing style. Such 'readers' might resemble early versions of the Christian philologists, who offer interpretations that they consider objectively valid. The 'readers who skim and race' vehemently complain about Heraclitus' obscure writing style, and the reasons for their complaint might be located, as I will argue, in their belief that their interpretations cannot be called into question. As seen before, Heraclitus' obscurity and ambiguity is an inherent feature of his own writing style. This is a deliberate feature that is intended to clash with the goal that a reader who may be inclined to 'skim and race' might have of offering only one objective interpretation of the text.

Therefore, Nietzsche argues that when these readers attempt to interpret Heraclitus' fragment B1, for instance, which is purposely ambiguous regarding the meaning of *logos*, they are baffled and annoyed. Despite numerous attempts, they simply cannot determine an objective and absolute reading of Heraclitus' *logos*, given that there is another fragment which can be offered as contrary evidence to their interpretation. Nietzsche has the opposite impression when he approaches the Heraclitus' text, however. The adjectives that Nietzsche uses to describe Heraclitus' writing style are 'lucid' and 'luminous'. Nietzsche's reasons for using these terms are that Heraclitus' writing style resonates with him. Nietzsche feels a particular kinship towards Heraclitus' goal to protect one's teaching, which he relates to his doctrine of affective perspectivism.

In *Ecce Homo* (III, 4), we find the following statement: 'I have many stylistic possibilities—the most multifarious "art of style" (*Kunst des Stils*) that has ever been at the disposal of one man'. The meaning of this remark is not merely that Nietzsche can use multiple registers of language and writing styles. As Nehamas and, later, Alfano note, Nietzsche is aware of and, moreover, particularly skilled at using each such style to

summon and, importantly, channel particular 'affects' (*Affekte*) of his readership.[170] As seen earlier, under Nietzsche's view the notion of selfhood is constructed 'out of drives (*Triebe*) and affects' (*Affekte*) (*BGE* 12). Nietzsche's supposes that our affects are an emotional feature of our experience that have the quality of attracting or repelling us, and are understood in the broadest possible way, in terms of, for example, 'anger', 'hatred', 'love', 'pity', 'joy', and 'pain' (*D* 155).[171] Our affects, in other words, are ways in which we can feel attracted or repelled and Nietzsche exploits this fundamental aspect of human nature in synergy with his mastery of writing style to bring about a certain result. The claim at stake here is that Nietzsche's goal is to summon certain kinds of affects that he deems useful in a given situation and context.[172]

In *Human, All-Too-Human* (I, Preface, 6), we can read, 'you shall get control over your pro and cons and learn to display first one and then the other in accordance with your higher goal'. According to Nietzsche, if we shift in and out the two different affects and display, first, one and then the other, what we eventually obtain is an epistemic gain. We can, in other words, learn something about a topic that we would not have learnt otherwise, by observing it from two different affective perspectives. An example of the latter is Nietzsche's polemic with Winckelmann's Neo-Classicism on ancient Greek culture, as surveyed in chapter 1. Winckelmann argues that the Greek values include humanism, tranquillity and compassion, such as those displayed by Laocoön's powerful passions. During his analysis of this topic, Nietzsche shifts in and out his affects, that is, from the values of pity and humanism to those of mastery and cruelty. By shifting in and out of these affects, he invokes our abilities to take up different perspectives and, consequently, to make epistemic gains. We can now, thus, appreciate both sides of the

[170] See Nehamas (1985: 20-40) and Alfano (2019: 134-9).
[171] See Janaway (2007: 206-7) and *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* under the entry: 'affective'.
[172] See Mulhall (2011: 252) for a useful survey on how Nietzsche treats words as direct expressions of moral evaluations.

phenomenon of 'ancient Greek culture': the cruelty and power embodied by Achilles, and the Athenian imperialism, humanism and tranquillity, represented by the Laocoön.

Nietzsche's affective theory is a reliable guide to retroactively shed light on the claim that a philosopher such as Heraclitus is concerned that 'vulgar minds have an ugly familiarity for seeing in the profoundest and most pregnant utterance only they own everyday opinion' (*PTAG* 7). The 'vulgar minds' mentioned here seem to be the early versions of the interpreters who, for Nietzsche, are culpable of the 'the art of reading badly' (*die Kunst schlecht zu lesen*), such as Christian philologists (*D* Preface, 5; 84). Christian theologians think that their readings are not simply 'conjectures' but actually 'dogmas' (*D* 84). Christian philology is the foreclose of alternative readings. Nietzsche attributes the choice to write obscurely to Heraclitus as the attempt to prevent the undesirable situation in which his doctrine is misinterpreted by some subsequent thinkers in an objective way. The danger is that the epistemic gain embedded in the task of resolving a given exegetical dilemma, such as is present in fragment B1 regarding the meaning of the *logos*, were to ultimately vanish.

In his Basel lectures, Nietzsche observes that, sadly, Heraclitus' obscure writing style was not able to stand the test of time:

> Nevertheless, Heraclitus has not escaped the 'barren minds'; already the Stoics re-interpreted him on a shallow level, dragging down his basically aesthetic perception of cosmic play to signify a vulgar consideration for the world's useful ends, especially those which benefit the human race. His physics became, in their hands, a crude optimism with the continual invitation to Tom, Dick and Harry to *plaudite amici*. (*PTAG* 7)

Nietzsche argues that the Stoic interpretation is Christian *ante literam* in that it reads into the Heraclitean cosmos the existence of a 'Providence' (*πρόνοια*), according to which there is a providential design in which mankind plays the most important and central role (Plutarch, *De Stoic. repugn.* 1050f=*SVF* II, 1181[1]). Throughout the Basel lectures, Nietzsche issues a different interpretation of the Heraclitean cosmos. This

interpretation is likely intended to depict a different understanding of the world, namely as one that is reminiscent of a playing child, without a *telos* and without our moral judgments.[173] Nietzsche's interpretation of Heraclitus rivals the Stoic interpretation on the grounds that it preserves the plurality of meanings in Heraclitus' writing as well as the epistemic gains that it offers. As Nietzsche is able to appreciate these as inherent features of Heraclitus' writing style, while the Stoics and Christians do not, it is only natural that the style appears to him 'luminous' and 'lucid'.

In summary, Nietzsche's reception of Heraclitus' writing style seems to be philological, but this is misleading. In actuality, Nietzsche sees in Heraclitus a kindred spirit as concerns the topic of writing style. Nietzsche argues that Heraclitus purposefully chooses to write obscurely. The reason for this view is that, according to Nietzsche, Heraclitus' obscure and ambiguous writing style represents a way to gain an epistemic gain by shedding light on different parts of a given topic. Nietzsche thinks that Heraclitus' choice amounts to the protection of his sentences from being misinterpreted by the vulgar minds of those interpreters who would make objective and interpretations of his teaching. Such interpreters are the Stoics, who mis-interpreted his aesthetic understanding of the cosmos, as something arranged by a divine Providence.

5.3 Nietzsche's theory of contest and Heraclitus' theory of strife

During the Basel lectures, Nietzsche discusses, though not at the same length as other themes, Heraclitus' theory of strife. It is, however, interesting to examine this topic as it shows how Nietzsche discusses Heraclitus' doctrine of strife not directly, but rather in the context of Hesiod's earlier mythological theory of 'strife' (ἔρις or *eris*).[174] Moreover, we can see how Nietzsche projects onto Heraclitus' notion of strife the idea of

[173] As we will see, Nietzsche attributes to Heraclitus an early and undeveloped version of what will later become his full-fledged cosmic doctrine of the will to power.
[174] By contrast, Heschebell and Nimis (1979: 24-5) argue that Nietzsche analyses Heraclitus directly.

'contest' (*Wettkampft*), although understood as a cosmic concept. The purpose of the comparison with Hesiod, therefore, is to show that Heraclitus' theory of strife can explain certain aspects of the cosmos, whereas Hesiod's is only applicable at a societal level.

Nietzsche is aware that Heraclitus is deeply critical of Hesiod and that the latter is mocked for being 'the teacher (*διδάσκαλος*) of many', despite misunderstanding the nature of day and night, which are not separate entities but rather one (Hippolytus *Ref*. IX, 10, 2=B 57; B40). For Heraclitus, Hesiod did not possess genuine knowledge of divine, but rather 'polymathy' (*πολυμαθίη*), namely the presumption of knowing (DL IX, 10=B40).

However, Nietzsche notices that there are numerous and significant similarities between Heraclitus' and Hesiod's notions strife while there are also equally important differences. Nietzsche addresses Hesiod's theory of strife in the unpublished essay *Homer's Contest* (1872), and then in subsequent published works that span between 1876 and 1881, such as *Human, All-Too-Human* (II, 29) and *Daybreak* (38). Nietzsche reports that, for the famous Greek poet Hesiod, there are two kinds of 'envy'. *Eris* in a pejorative sense is responsible for wicked conflicts, whereas *eris* in a positive sense results in the action of the contest. The common aspect between the two is, obviously, that they make humans envious of each other. Yet, they do so in a rather different way. The pejorative kind of *eris* is embodied by the desire to denigrate someone because of his positive achievements. What can explain this desire is the attitude of *schadenfreude*, which is the deriving of pleasure from the misfortunes of others.[175]

For Nietzsche, this kind of envy results in mortal conflicts where one party wins

[175] It is worth pointing out that this envious attitude might be part of what Young (2006: 122) calls 'the ethics of envy'. These kinds of ethics reveal the attitude of creating something in a derivate way rather than in an active way. The negative outcome is that it is a process of destruction rather than active creation.

and the other is literally annihilated, which could be effectively compared to a zero-sum game. The term that Nietzsche uses to describe the outcome of *eris* in a pejorative sense is 'a struggle to the death' (*Vernichtungskampfe*). The embodiment of this kind of struggle which results in the death of one participant might be the famous physical duel between Achilles and Hector in *The Iliad*. Achilles won the fight and killed Hector. However, as his rage was not satisfied by winning, Achilles then decided to shame Hector's corpse by dragging it around the walls of Troy (XXII, 367-404). It is clear that there is something horrific to the kind of behaviour that stems from the pejorative version of *eris.*

By contrast, the other kind of *eris* is beneficial. In *Homer's Contest* (176), Nietzsche quotes an excerpt from Hesiod's *The Works and Days* (12-26): 'She drives even the unskilled man to work; and if someone who lacks property sees someone else who is rich, he likewise hurries off to sow and plant and set his house in order; neighbour competes with neighbour striving for prosperity'. It is easy to see that the kind of envy mentioned here leads men to higher achievements. If a Greek is envious of another Greek, the course of action that is suggested by this kind of *eris* is not to bring him down, but rather to overcome his achievements. The example which Nietzsche reports is that of the '*odium figulinum*' ('the potters' hatred'): the envy of one potter against another is what drives them to make more beautiful potteries. The result of this positive behaviour is called by Nietzsche a 'contest' (*Wettkampf*) and it embodies a fight where both parties benefit. Some examples of this kind of contest that are mentioned by Nietzsche include artistic achievements.

In *Philosophy of the Tragic Age* (5), Nietzsche relates Hesiod's discussion of pejorative and positive *eris* to Heraclitus' doctrine of strife:

> Everything that happens, happens in accordance with this conflict (*Streit*) […] Only a Greek was capable of finding such an idea to be the fundament of a cosmology; it is Hesiod's good Eris transformed into a cosmic

> principle (*Weltprincip*); it is the contest-idea (*Wettkampfgedanke*) of the Greek individual and the Greek State taken from the gymnasium and the palaestra, from the artist's *agon* (*Agon*) from the contest between political parties and between cities—all transformed into universal application so that now the wheels of the cosmos turn on it.

Nietzsche argues that Heraclitus draws from Hesiod the concept of 'contest' (*Wettkampft*): a beneficial kind of envy that fosters greatness between different cities and individuals. Yet, Heraclitus then refines this notion into a more philosophical concept, given that he transforms contest into 'the principle of the cosmos' (*Weltprincip*): 'One must realise that war (*πόλεμος*) is common, and justice strife, and that all things come to be through strife (*ἔρις*)' (Origen *Contra Celsum* VI, 42=B80). In the Basel lectures, Nietzsche argues that the meaning of this fragment is that strife signifies 'the continuous working out of a unified, lawful, reasonable justice'. Nietzsche is making here a reference to the following fragment: 'they do not comprehend how a thing agrees at variance with itself; it is a harmony turning back on itself (*παλίντροπος ἁρμονίη*), like that of the bow and the lyre' (Hippolytus *Ref.* IX, 9, 2=B51). Heraclitus argues there is a state of balance and harmony only insofar as there is opposition. Without the tension between the two opposing arms of the lyre, this instrument would be incapable of emitting harmonious musical tones; likewise, if there were no opposition between two sides of the bow, it would be unable to shoot its projectiles.

Nietzsche argues that a good way of summarising Heraclitus' remarks is with the concept of 'war-justice' (*Πόλεμος-δίκη*): there is a law present in the universe stating that harmony and justice are only reached by means of a constant war and opposition between things' (*PPP* 64). According to Nietzsche, there is a noticeable parallelism between the way Greek individuals continually wrestle with one another in the political arena and the constant opposition of things argued for by Heraclitus (*PTAG 5*). There is, however, an important difference between these two levels. Hesiod predominantly notices the physical

struggle occurring among Greeks.

However, it is Heraclitus, according to Nietzsche, who developed this notion further by turning it into a cosmic principle, which means that his philosophical understanding of *eris* is deeper than Hesiod's. Near the end of *Homer's Contest* (179), Nietzsche argues that if we are to take away Hesiod's good *eris* and contest among the Greeks, then the outcome would be a return to 'gruesome savagery of hatred and pleasure in destruction', namely to the Homeric world. On the other hand, Heraclitus claims that if 'strife' (*ἔρις*) were to fade away from the world as Achilles wishes in the *Iliad* (XVII, 107), the result will be the end of harmony. Yet, without harmony there would be nothing at all, given that what holds together the world is absent. This ultimately reveals that, for Nietzsche, Heraclitus' theory of strife goes deeper than Hesiod's, since it can explain certain features of the cosmos and not merely of society.

In brief, despite Nietzsche's command of the extant fragments, his analysis of both Heraclitus' and Hesiod's theories of strife is not philological. Rather, it is an attribution of his own doctrine of the contest to Heraclitus. His goal is to show that Heraclitus' theory draws from Hesiod, but in the end is superior to the latter since it explains not only Greek society but the cosmos as a whole.

5.4 Nietzsche's cosmic doctrine of the will to power and Heraclitus' doctrine of flux

In the Basel lectures, Nietzsche carries out a careful exegesis of Heraclitus' river statements, especially the version reported in the *Cratylus* (402a=A6[1]). Nietzsche quotes the Greek version of the famous Platonic formula *πάντα ῥεῖ* ('all things flow' or *panta rei*) and he also paraphrases Heraclitus' river fragment 'the river into which you step a second time is not the one you stepped into before' (*PTAG* 7).[176] All these elements

[176] On this specific point see Herschbell and Nimis (1979: 27).

might seem to suggest that Nietzsche is conducting a philological analysis of Heraclitus' theory of flux. However, as we will see, any such inference would be mistaken because Nietzsche's discussion, far from being objective or scientific, is motivated by two factors. The first is that Nietzsche attributes to Heraclitus his own cosmic theory of the will to power. The second is Nietzsche's overall goal: Nietzsche aims at showing that Heraclitus' theory of becoming, if understood from the point of view of the cosmic will to power, represents a break with the metaphysical tradition that began with Plato and continued with Christianity.

The first occurrence of Heraclitus' theory of becoming in the Basel lectures is as follows:

> His [Heraclitus'] vision has been locked into two sorts of considerations: eternal motion and the negation of all duration and persistence in the world […] All things flow (*πάντα ῥεῖ*) is a main proposition. Nowhere does an absolute persistence exist, because we always come in the final analysis to forces (*Kräfte*) whose effects simultaneously include a desire for power (*Kraftverlust*). (*PPP* 60)

As Richardson has compellingly noticed, we find here a veiled and yet clear reference to a theory that Nietzsche would fully develop many years later: the cosmic doctrine of the will to power.[177] It is worth noticing that, in the passage quoted, Nietzsche draws a connection between two different and yet related aspects. The first point that is mentioned here is the Platonic formula of *panta rei*, which refers to the idea that change and becoming are all-encompassing. The second is the theory that things can ultimately be reduced to a 'force' (*Kraft*) whose ultimate goal is a desire for more power. What seems to be a merely sketched thesis that the basic units making up the world are 'forces' (*Kräfte*) will be refined by Nietzsche over the coming years into the full-fledged theory of the drives and the will to power. The union of these two elements is that, in this passage

[177] See Richardson (1996: 76).

of the Basel lectures, Nietzsche is attributing to Heraclitus a version, if not yet a fully articulated doctrine, of the will to power, whose function is to account for the whole cosmos.

As I have argued earlier, in the public works we find only one passage where Nietzsche attempts to argue for the existence of a cosmic doctrine of the will to power: note 36 of *Beyond Good and Evil*. I will argue that the latter passage plays a key role in shedding light in a retrospective way on the meaning of the Basel passage quoted before. Let us then turn to note 36. Nietzsche's starting point is the assumption that our only 'reality' (*Realität*) is constituted by 'the drives' (*Triebe*), also known as 'power quanta' (*Machtquanta*). Next, Nietzsche argues for the existence of 'a primitive form of the world of affect' (*primitivere Welt der Affekte*) where all organic processes reach a kind of organisation before their ramifications into the organic itself, that is to say a sort of 'pre-form of life' (*Vorleben*). Finally, Nietzsche reaches the tentative conclusion that 'the world' (*die Welt*), at least if it is understood only from within, 'would' (*wäre*) be viewed as equivalent to the cosmic will to power. As seen before, the argument laid out here is far from being clear. For one thing, it appeals to the doctrine of pre-formism and its disputable claim about the ramifications of inorganic matter into the organic. Moreover, the language employed by Nietzsche to introduce the entire argument is hypothetical and this reinforces the notion that note 36 is a tentative claim about a cosmic theory of the will to power.

However, the presence of the concepts of the drives and power quanta in note 36 of *Beyond Good and Evil* might hold the key to unlock the importance of this passage for Nietzsche's reception of the Heraclitean doctrine of flux. Thus far, we have seen that the 'drives' (*Triebe*) are Nietzsche's most important token to explain human psychology, especially in his works of the earlier and middle periods, such as *Daybreak* and *Beyond*

Good and Evil. Yet, there is another element of the drives that stands to shed light on the statement quoted earlier, provided that is properly stressed. Sometimes Nietzsche describes the drives using a language that refers to them as a power-based phenomenon. The drives, in other words, are connected to concepts such as energy, dynamism and, obviously, power: they are called 'forces' (*Kräfte*), 'mastering centres' (*herrschaftlichen Centren*) or 'dynamic quanta' (*dynamische Quanta*) (*WP* 567; 635; 715). Nietzsche has a double reason for stressing the power element for the drives. The first is that the drives aim at power, that is, they are oriented 'toward' (*zu*) the goal of 'domination' (*Herrschaft*), as *Beyond Good and Evil* (6) makes clear.

However, the second reason is that the drives' striving towards their goal is a constant dynamism, a continuous and never-ending evolving process. The goal of the drives is never truly reached or satisfied.[178] As the drives aim at power, their tendency towards the goal is not simply to bring about their goal. Rather, once the goal has been achieved, the drive takes aim at power once again and repeats its striving. The result is that the satisfaction of a drives' goal is endless: a drive never ceases to aim at the goal because, once satisfied, it should be achieved once again. A term which can summarise the pattern of the drives' behaviour is 'self-overcoming' (*Selbstüberwindung*), which means that the goal should not simply be reached at any given time but rather overcome (*Z* II, 12).[179] Once the goal is achieved, then a new goal is placed at a higher and more difficult level which will also have to be overcome. In the case of, say, the drive to knowledge: once we know a certain subject, then the goal of knowledge becomes to know another subject even better and furthermore. The drives' dynamic activity is, therefore, never-ending.

[178] See Richardson (1996: 26).
[179] See Richardson (1996: 25).

Nietzsche's idea of the existence of a continuous dynamic activity or of a never-ending striving for power expressed here is similar, though, in a more extended and developed form of what we find in the Basel lectures. However, the most important aspect that we should note is that Nietzsche attributes to Heraclitus the idea that there is a constant state of flux because, at base, 'we always come in the final analysis to forces (*Kräfte*) whose effects simultaneously include a desire for power (*Kraftverlust*)'. In other words, Nietzsche projects onto Heraclitus his own independently formed cosmic doctrine of the will to power, while making accommodations for Heraclitus' version being at an early stage of development.

However, it is difficult to determine what kind of function this kind of attribution plays in Nietzsche's reception of Heraclitus, provided that one focuses one's attention only on the evidence analysed thus far. In what follows, I will articulate further the role played by Nietzsche's attribution of the cosmic will to power to Heraclitus.

My investigation will begin with a quotation from *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* (5), where Heraclitus speaks in the first person:

> Be not deceived, it is the fault of your short-sightedness, not the essence of things, if you believe you see land somewhere in the ocean of becoming and passing away. You use names for things (*Namen der Dinge*) as though they rigidly, persistently endured; yet even the stream into which you step a second time is not the one you stepped into before.

Nietzsche paraphrases the precise wording used by Plato in the *Cratylus* (402a=A 6[1]) to describe Heraclitus' river fragment, namely that 'one cannot step twice into the same river'. Yet, interestingly enough, Nietzsche does not limit himself to reporting Plato's phrasing; he also echoes the Platonic interpretation. In Nietzsche's eyes, Heraclitus' theory of 'becoming' (*Werden*) can be regarded as unrestricted in that it applies to the cosmos as a whole, as the rather ecstatic image of the impossibility of

reaching a firm point within the magnitude of an ocean.[180] On the basis of this passage and its context alone, it is highly dubious that one can reconstruct Nietzsche's motivation for putting these words in Heraclitus' mouth, or determine their more specific meaning, and this is so especially in regard to the human deception that things endure over time.

To bring into focus the Nietzschean interpretation, we can turn to a work from his early period, *The Untimely Meditations* (I, 1), where he makes more comments on Heraclitus and his doctrine of becoming:

> […] a man who [is] [...] condemned to see everywhere a state of becoming (*Werden*): such a man would no longer believe in his own being (*Sein*), would no longer believe in himself, would see everything flowing asunder in moving points and would lose himself in this stream of becoming: like a true pupil of Heraclitus, he would in the end hardly dare to raise his finger.

Nietzsche here might be drawing from two different sources. The first is Plato's *Theaetetus*, where it is claimed that, if Heraclitus' theory of flux were true, then we would be unable to know how things really are. In more detail, Plato claims that if knowledge were only perception of an object and everything were in constant flux, then we would have to claim that we could never genuinely know the true characteristics of that object (*Theaet.* 161). Take the case of a phenomenon changing its original aspect, such a body changing its shape. If the phenomenon in question has, at a given time, one aspect and, at another time, a different look, then it is difficult to see how we can grasp what are the true and genuine characteristics of that phenomenon in the first place. What is responsible for this unpleasant epistemic state of affairs, according to Plato, is the state of flux.

Another possible source from which Nietzsche might have drawn the remarks of *The Untimely Meditations* is Aristotle's *Metaphysics.* In one passage of this work, we can read that Cratylus, a follower of Heraclitus, argues that there is no 'scientific knowledge'

[180] See Cox (1998: 56).

(*επιστήμη*) of any object, given that the world is 'always in a state of flux' (*ἀεὶ ῥεόν*) (A VI, 987a32-b1). In this passage, Aristotle is reporting the lesson that, according to Cratylus, we should draw from Heraclitus' doctrine of flux. To begin with, Heraclitus' river fragment, 'one cannot step in the same river twice', should be interpreted in an iterative way, that is to say as a sequence of repetitive attempts to step into the same river. In this sense, the act of stepping in the same river is that in each step one finds a different composition of the waters making up the river. The result is that Cratylus only raised his finger in order to illustrate the meaning of Heraclitus' theory of flux: one cannot get in touch with any substance to claim what it is, say beautiful or bitter. The only solution, therefore, seems not to talk, but only to lift one's finger. According to Aristotle, Cratylus is emphasising the epistemic consequence of the Heraclitean unrestricted theory of flux, which is, in this case, that there cannot be any objective knowledge of how things are.

The combination of the likely sources of Nietzsche's remarks from *The Untimely Meditations* might shed light not only on this passage, but also on Nietzsche's reception of the Heraclitean flux as a whole, especially on its role. Even if, with some differences and looking at different pieces of evidence, both Plato and Aristotle attribute to Heraclitus a metaphysical view from which some epistemic consequences follow, I will claim that Nietzsche loosely draws from both Plato and Aristotle. Nietzsche, in other words, projects onto Heraclitus' theory of flux a metaphysical view, namely the cosmic will to power, in order to determine its epistemic consequences.

In a passage of one of his later works, *The Twilight of the Idols*, (III, 2), Nietzsche clearly sets Heraclitus apart from other philosophers. Heraclitus does not deny becoming and change but rather accepts them.[181] The first is that we can find here an echo of the

[181] In the same passage, Nietzsche briefly explains why Heraclitus reaches this conclusion: Heraclitus rejects the senses because they present to us the world as unchanging and stable, whereas other philosophers accept the senses and their depiction of the world in that way.

passage of *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* (5) about the importance of trusting our senses when it comes to the topic of becoming. The second theme is what Berry emphasises, namely that Heraclitus is for Nietzsche a different and original thinker, if compared to other, thus far unidentified, philosophers.[182] A passage of *The Twilight of the Idols* sheds additional light on this topic:

> You want to know what the philosophers' (*Philosophen*) idiosyncrasies are? ...Their lack of historical sense for one thing, their hatred of the very idea of becoming (*Werden*), their Egypticity. They think that they are showing respect for something when they dehistoricise it, *sub specie aeterni* – when they turn it into a mummy. (*TI* III, 1)

Most philosophers exhibit the tendency of denying 'becoming' (*Werden*), a theory which, as seen earlier, Nietzsche closely associates with Heraclitus. By contrast, Nietzsche argues that, generally speaking, thinkers tend to immortalise everything that they see. In the preface of an earlier work, *Beyond Good and Evil*, we can read that Nietzsche's further develops this critique. He argues that the philosophers' tendency can be traced back to Plato's dogmatic invention of 'pure spirit' (*reine Geist*), which effectively started the metaphysical tradition later inherited by Christianity, famously defined as 'Platonism for the people' (*Platonismus für's „Volk"*).

Nietzsche is here engaged in a play of lights and shadows, where Heraclitus is clearly defined in contraposition with the Platonic and Christian tradition. Plato can be described as the champion of this tradition with the philosophical concept of being, attributing an eternal substance to everything. By contrast, Heraclitus denies being and argues that everything is in a state of flux. At this point, it is worth bearing in mind that Heraclitus' theory of flux mentioned here is not simply the Platonic formula of *panta rei* that one can find in the *Cratylus.* Rather, it is Nietzsche's projection of his own independently formed cosmic doctrine of the will to power – though at an early stage in

[182] See Berry (2013: 95).

its development – as we have seen at the beginning of the present analysis.

The importance of this point cannot be overstated. It sheds light on the reason why Nietzsche draws a line between Heraclitus and the Platonic and metaphysical tradition. According to Nietzsche, Heraclitus is not part of the group of metaphysical thinkers that started with Plato and who deny life, considering it a 'sickness' (*TI* II, 1). The reason for this can be traced back to Plato's teacher, Socrates, and his excessive reliance on the reasoning abilities rather than the instincts (*TI* II, 2; 4). According to Nietzsche, Socrates and Plato, due to their attempt at devaluing life, do not represent philosophers worthy of emulation: 'Who are the only people motivated to lie their way out of reality? People who suffer from it. But to suffer from reality means that you are a piece of reality that has gone wrong...' (*A* 15). By contrast, Heraclitus is for Nietzsche a philosopher that we should emulate due his rejection of being and his acceptance of becoming.

In conclusion, Nietzsche's analysis of Heraclitus' theory of flux might at first sight seems to be philological and scientific, since he discusses the different sources and weights of their interpretations, but this is only an appearance. In fact, Nietzsche projects onto Heraclitus' theory of becoming his own theory of the cosmic will to power: thus, he claims that *panta rei* is reducible to an endless striving for more power. The reason this occurs is that Nietzsche's goal is to set Heraclitus in sharp and explicit contraposition with a philosophical tradition that he himself opposes: Platonism and its successor, Christianity.

5.5 Nietzsche's cosmic doctrine of the will to power and Heraclitus' theory of conflagration

The last topic I will analyse in this chapter is Heraclitus' theory of conflagration. It will be helpful to begin by examining what Nietzsche says about this in *Ecce Homo* (III, *BT*, 3). Nietzsche claims that the 'eternal return' (*ewige Wiederkunft*) is not only

Zarathustra's doctrine, but is also something that Heraclitus could also have espoused. The connection that Nietzsche draws between Heraclitus and Zarathustra, or Zoroaster, as this figure is alternatively known, can be traced back his early work of *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* (3-4). The idea that Ancient Greek thinkers have borrowed their most important theories form non-Greek people can be found in the first book of Diogenes' *Lives*, which mentions the Persian mages as the main source of Greek philosophy. This is likely to have been Nietzsche's source (DL I, 1-4).

However, there is another aspect of the passage from *Ecce Homo* mentioned above of greater importance that should be emphasised here*:* Nietzsche directly attributes to Heraclitus the doctrine of the eternal return. This claim has been understood by some scholars, such as Herschbell and Nimis, in the following way: the core element of Nietzsche's reception of Heraclitus' conflagration is the degree of similarity between the eternal return and conflagration.[183] However, I argue that even if there are interesting and important similarities between these two doctrines, they are insufficient to explain the entirety of Nietzsche's discussion of Heraclitus' conflagration in the Basel lectures.

There is a substantial difference between the eternal return and the doctrine of conflagration and Nietzsche is certainly aware of this, due to his careful exegesis of the latter in the Basel lectures. The theory of 'conflagration' (*ἐκπύρωσις*) is the idea that the cosmos is periodically destroyed and then created anew by the activity of 'fire' (*πῦρ*), which is also the 'principle' (*ἀρχή*) of the cosmos (Clement *Strom.* V, 103, 6=B30; Hippolyus *Ref.* IX, 10, 7=B 65; *Ref.* IX, 10, 6=B66). By contrast, the eternal return is a more specific doctrine according to which the world endlessly returns in cosmic cycles in which everything will return exactly as it is. The words used by Nietzsche in *The Gay*

[183] See Herschbell and Nimis (1979: 35).

Science (341) to express this thought are as follow: 'This life as you now live it and have lived it you will have to live once again and innumerable times again; and there will be nothing new in it […] The eternal hourglass of existence is turned over again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!'. The most accepted interpretation of the eternal return is that this is a test of strength about our attitude to life. If we accept certain aspects of life then we are affirming it; but, if reject them, then we are devaluing life.[184] There is ongoing debate as to what exactly is the element that one should affirm. Numerous interpretations have been advanced. Clark argues that the affirmation is the retroactive acceptance of all the choices one has made thus far in life. Nehamas believes that Nietzsche's test of strength is our willingness to accept that the unpleasant moments which characterise our lives are a necessary part of it. Reginster argues that we should accept the becoming nature of life which precludes the existence of the afterlife, in contrast to what has been argued by Plato or the Christians.[185]

Nietzsche is conscious of the substantial differences between his psychological version of the eternal return and Heraclitus' conflagration. Therefore, in what follows, I will not focus on the common aspects between the eternal return and the theory of conflagration. Rather, I will shed light on Nietzsche's exegesis of Heraclitus' conflagration. However, as I will argue throughout this section, Nietzsche's analysis is not objective or philological in the traditional sense, but motivated by the projection of his own cosmic doctrine of the will to power onto certain aspects of Heraclitus' conflagration. Nietzsche's goal in his discussion is to address some particular questions regarding Christianity.

[184] See Janaway (2007: 256) who summarises the scholarly consensus about the eternal return. According to the psychological reading, the affirmation of life does not depend on the truth of the cosmological claim that life endlessly returns, which might be, and probably is, false.
[185] See Nehamas (1985: 150-9); Reginster (2006; 230-4); Clark (1990: 264-9).

The starting point of our enquiry is a statement in *Philosophy in the Tragic Age* (6) which establishes the extent to which Nietzsche is acquainted with the philological details of Heraclitus' doctrine of 'conflagration' (*ἐκπύρωσις*): 'fire [is] a cosmos-creating force (*weltbildenden Kraft*) […] a periodically repeated end of the world [which is followed by] an every renewed rise of another world out of all-destroying fire'. In this passage, Nietzsche correctly identifies the key point of Heraclitus' conflagration: fire is a world-building and, at the same time, a world-destroying force, which results in an endless genesis and destruction of the cosmos. Nietzsche further notices how the conceptual basis of this doctrine can be found in a fragment preserved by Clement about the so-called 'fire's turnings' (*πυρὸς τροπαί*) (Clement *Strom.* V, 104, 3-5=B31a/b).

The turnings of fire are the transformation of the various elements, such as water and earth, into fire. From this description, Nietzsche derives that for Heraclitus 'there is no absolute cold but only degrees of warmth'. Nietzsche probably derives this view also from reading another fragment preserved by Simplicius, who reports that 'all things are an exchange of fire (*πῦρ*)' (Simplicius *In Phys.* XXIII, 33=Theophrastus B 225=A5[2]). Therefore, in the Basel lectures of the *Pre-Platonic Philosophers* (68), Nietzsche correctly defines Heraclitus' conflagration as: 'a doctrine of the regular destruction of the world. The current world shall dissolve itself in fire, bringing forth a new world from the flames: the Stoics, but not yet Heraclitus calls the destruction of the world "conflagration" (*ἐκπύρωσις*)'. In other words, Nietzsche identifies in the recurrent creation and destruction of the world the main function of Heraclitus' doctrine of conflagration.

Thus far it would seem that Nietzsche's analysis is extremely detailed and philological, given that he not only correctly identifies the main tenets of Heraclitus' conflagration but that he also provides textual evidence to support his claims. Yet, Nietzsche's exegesis immediately takes a different turn when we look at the next (middle)

section of the *Pre-Platonic Philosophers* (72-3) that regards this topic. Here, Nietzsche remarks how the most important aspect of Heraclitus' doctrine of conflagration is not what it actually is, but rather the kind of moral attitude that we can see embedded in it:

> How should we evaluate the doctrine of conflagration? […] a destruction by fire (*Untergang von Feuer*) awaits. This playful cosmic child continually builds and knocks down but from time to time begins his game anew: a moment of contentment followed by new needs. His continuous building and knocking down is a craving (*χρησμοσύνη*) as creativity is a need for the artist; his play (*παιδιά*) is a need. From time to time he has his fill of it—nothing other than fire exists there; that is, it engulfs all things. Not *hybris* but rather the newly awakened drive to play (*Spieltrieb*) now wills once more his setting into order. Rejection of any teleological view of the world reaches its zenith here. (*PPP* 72-3)

This passage is of outmost importance to understanding Nietzsche's overall reception of Heraclitus' conflagration. Nietzsche is here addressing and ultimately resolving three questions that regard not only Heracltius' *ekpyrōsis* but also and most importantly Christianity. Namely, these are: whether there is a *telos* in the universe, which is also known as the issue about teleology; whether the world can be judged in moral terms, which is the question of the morality or immorality of the universe; and lastly, whether mankind sits at top of the hierarchy of beings, which regards the belief in anthropocentrism. Nietzsche, as we will see, is projecting onto Heraclitus' theory of conflagration his own cosmic doctrine of the will to power.

Let me begin by surveying how Nietzsche understands Heraclitus' process of alternation between 'craving' (*χρησμοσύνη*) and 'satiety' (*κῦρ*ος). Heraclitus states that these are the craving for fire and the overflow of the principle, and argues that they lead to the creation and the destruction of the cosmos, respectively (Hippolyus *Ref.* IX, 10, 7=B65; *Ref.* IX, 10, 6=B66).[186] Nietzsche interprets these two Heraclitean terms as a playful game of the principle, an attribution that matches what is claimed in the passage

[186] See Herschbell and Nimis (1979: 32-3).

from the Basel lectures quoted before: the fire is described as a 'playful cosmic child'.

Nietzsche has two sources from which he is drawing when he describes Heraclitus' principle in these terms. The first is a passage from *The Iliad* (XV, 360-5), where Apollo while attempting to destroy the walls of the Trojans is described with the following words: 'a child (*πάις*) scatters the sand by the sea, first making structures of sand in his childishness, and then again destroying it with hands and feet in his play'. The second source is a fragment preserved by Hippolytus: 'lifetime (*αἰὼν*) is a child at play (*παῖς παίζων),* moving pieces in a game. Kingship (*βασιλήίη*) belongs to the child' (Hippolytus *Ref.* IX, 9, 4=B 52).[187] The combination of these two pieces of evidence provides the description that we find in the passage from the Basel lectures.

There are some important points that should be noted here. The principle of fire creates and then destroys the world, to use Nietzsche's words, under the urging of the 'drive to play' (*Spieltrieb*) but not out of '*hybris*', and does so without any form of 'teleology'. These two clarifications are extremely important for appreciating the nature of Nietzsche's attribution of the cosmic will to power to Heraclitus' conflagration, as we will see.

Let us start from the fire's 'drive to play' (*Spieltrieb*). To begin with, the way in which we should interpret the term 'drive' here is as general and as neutral as a child's game, which is something that has no purpose apart from playing for its own sake. When children play with their toys, they do not have in mind either the goal of destroying them, if and when they do so, or of being benevolent towards them, if they create them out of broken pieces. Nietzsche asks us to project this kind of mental image onto the Heraclitus' doctrine of conflagration: an activity of world-creation and destruction that has no

[187] It is interesting to notice, in passing, that Nietzsche quotes this fragment as a synonym for the entire human history in *The Genealogy of Morality* (II, 16).

inherent *telos*. There is no teleology at work in the activity of the principle. I will argue, however, that Nietzsche's rejection of the existence of a *telos* in Heraclitus' conflagration is due to the attribution to this doctrine an underdeveloped version of the cosmic doctrine of the will to power.

In *The Birth of Tragedy* (24), a published work written around the same period of the Basel lectures, we find two interesting sentences, which are as follows. First: 'only as an aesthetic phenomenon do existence and the world appear justified […] the ugly and disharmonious is an artistic game which the Will (*der Wille*) , in the eternal fullness of its delight, plays with itself (*sich selbst spielt*)'. The second sentence explains how the Will's play resembles 'Heraclitus the Obscure's comparison of the force that shapes the world (*weltbildende Kraft*) to a playing child (*Kind*) who sets down stones here, there and the next place, and who builds up piles of sand only to knock them down again'. The importance of these two remarks is that, through them, Nietzsche links together Heraclitus' theory of conflagration and an unspecified idea of 'the will which plays with itself'. I will argue that this is an undeveloped and Schopenhauerian theory of the will, which will later become the full-fledged cosmic doctrine of the will to power.[188] The function of this fully developed version of the will to power is to clarify many ideas that Nietzsche expresses about Heraclitus' conflagration and the Schopenhauerian theory of the will.

In note 1067 of *The Will to Power* written in 1885, Nietzsche gives a description of the cosmic will to power that is extremely similar not only to the will that 'plays with itsel' but also to Heraclitus' conflagration:

> And do you know what 'the world' (*die Welt*) is to me? […] a play of forces (*Spiel der Kräfte*) […] my *Dionysian* world of the eternally self-creating, the eternally self-destroying, this mystery world of the twofold

[188] The presence of the adjective Schopenhauerian is connected to the intellectual development of the will to power which is carried out against the backdrop of Schopenhauer's 'will to life' (*der Wille zum Leben*).

> voluptuous delight, my 'beyond good and evil,' (*Jenseits von Gut und Böse*) without goal (*Ziel*), unless the joy of the circle is itself a goal; without will, unless a ring feels good will toward itself—do you want a name for this world? A *solution* for all its riddles? A *light* for you, too, you best-concealed, strongest, most intrepid, most midnightly men? This world is the will to power (*der Wille zur Macht*)—and nothing besides! And you yourselves are also this will to power—and nothing besides!.

The passage of the cosmic will to power addresses and ultimately resolves the three questions mentioned before in the Basel passage. These questions regarded the Heraclitean conflagration about the existence of teleology, the morality or immortality of the cosmos and, lastly, the position of mankind in the *scala naturae*, also known as the hierarchy of beings.

As for the first question, in the passage from the Basel lectures we are told that, with his theory of conflagration, Heraclitus rejects the existence of a goal; however, Nietzsche does not inform us as to why this is the case. Similarly, in a passage written in the middle period of the *The Gay Science* (109), we can read that in the world there are 'no purposes (*Ziele*)'. In the later period of his life, Nietzsche's polemical target with his critique of teleology is Christianity. In a passage of *The Antichrist* (15), Nietzsche accuses the Christians as having what he calls an 'imaginary teleology' in the form of the Last Judgement. As we can read in Matthew's Gospel: 'For the Son of Man will come with his angels in his Father's glory, and then he will repay everyone according to his conduct' (16: 28). In other words, according to the Christian doctrine the entire human history is directed towards Christ's second coming, which will eventually bring about the judgement of the living and the dead. Nietzsche disagrees with this doctrine, given that he argues against any such purpose for human history.

The cosmic doctrine of the will to power serves as an explanation as to why Nietzsche rejects the existence of a *telos*. As we can read in note 1067 of the *Will to Power* quoted before, the world has no 'purpose' (*Ziel*). The reason for why this is the

case is that, for Nietzsche, the will to power has no 'will' (*Wille*) in terms of any other general sense of desire, other than that of 'play' (*Spiel*). It seems that Nietzsche is asking us to imagine that the will is a similar to a child who has no goal other than that of playing for playing's sake, mirroring the wordings of *The Birth of Tragedy*. At the same time, Nietzsche also offers a key idea that ultimately addresses why the will does not and most importantly cannot have any other *telos*: it is a blind and irrational force that aims only at power. By projecting on Heraclitus the cosmic doctrine of the will to power, understood as play without a purpose, Nietzsche is effectively seeing Heraclitus in the light of a philosopher with whom he can join forces in order to fight against the flawed Christian belief in a goal.

A second issue that Nietzsche addresses is whether the cosmos should be judged in moral or immoral terms, which is a question that emerges, though implicitly, in the passage of *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers* about the Heraclitean conflagration. It is worth noting that the discussion of the existence of a goal in the universe as such embeds the question of the morality or immorality of the world. In the first book of *Genesis*, we can read that God does not simply create the world. He does so due to an act of love: after completing the process of creation we are told that 'God saw how good it was'. There is an important consequence of the fact that the creation and subsequent destruction of the cosmos is carried out a without an overarching purpose.

On this basis, Nietzsche attributes to Heraclitus the view that we ought not judge the cosmos 'pathetically' (*pathetisch*) or 'moralistically' (*moralisch*) (*PTAG* 7). For Heraclitus, the cosmos is not something 'gloomy' or 'sinister', but rather it is a 'game' (*Spiel*) played by fire, and as such as it is beyond any form of morality. In *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* (7), Nietzsche thus argues that 'Heraclitus after all had no reason why he *had* to prove (as Leibniz did) that this is the best of all possible words. It

is enough for him that it is the beautiful innocent game of the aeon'. We find here a reference to the fragment of Hippolytus, quoted before, of 'eternity' (*αἰὼν*) as described as the playing cosmic child. As seen earlier, Nietzsche is here not attempting to propose a philological reconstruction but rather to project his own cosmic doctrine of the will to power on Heraclitus, in this case to address the issue about the morality or immorality about the cosmos. As for now, the passage states that Heraclitus does not believe that the world can be judged in moral terms, even if it is difficult to see why he should feel the need to do so. Similarly, it is in *The Birth of Tragedy* (24) that we find the claim that we should regard the world only as an 'aesthetic phenomenon' and that this is because of the playful activity of the will. The idea that the world is something that goes beyond our moral judgement will be gradually developed by Nietzsche during his philosophical career.

Around the middle period, in *The Gay Science*, we find two important claims: 'The Christian decision to find the world ugly and bad has made the world ugly and bad' (130) and 'how could we reproach or praise the universe! Let us beware of attributing to it heartlessness or unreason or their opposites: it is neither perfect, nor beautiful, nor noble'. Therefore, the target of Nietzsche's critique that the world is beyond our moral values are the Christians. This adds an important piece of information about the reason why Nietzsche projects a similar, though watered down and underdeveloped, version of the cosmic doctrine of the will to power to Heraclitus.

In the note 1067 of *The Will to Power* mentioned earlier, Nietzsche claims that the world is 'beyond good and evil', which it to say beyond moral values. The cosmic will to power is an endless, blind and irrational striving without any purpose other than power. As was the case with Nietzsche's criticism of the belief in teleology, the target of Nietzsche's concept of 'beyond good evil' is once again presented by the Christians.

Nietzsche sees Heraclitus's conflagration as a doctrine that can be weaponised against the idea proposed by Leibnitz that ours is the best possible world. Our world can only be judged in aesthetic terms and this is because it is constituted by will to power and nothing besides it.

The last issue that Nietzsche addresses during his discussion of Heraclitus' conflagration is man's position in the hierarchy of beings, or the *scala naturae*, as it is alternatively called. Nietzsche states that, for Heraclitus, man has a dual nature: 'insofar as humanity is fiery, it is rational: insofar as it is watery, it is irrational' (*PPP* 74). The two fragments that Nietzsche has in mind are Heraclitus' description of man with a 'moist soul' (*ὑγρή ψυχή*) as being unable to walk properly or think rationally (Stobaeus III, 5, 7=B177) and of a 'dry soul' (*ξηρή ψυχή*) as being wise (Stobeaus III, 5, 8=B118). The idea that lies behind these two fragments is that human beings are not, strictly speaking, equal: they have a different value depending on their distance from the principle of fire. If a man's soul is equal to being moist then it is the furthest from the principle of fire, whereas if it is dry, then it is the closest it possibly can be to the principle. According to Nietzsche, the most important aspect that determines the worth of a human being is fire, as he emphasises near the end of the Basel lectures (*PPP* 74): 'only by his [man's] relationship to fire does he participate in the common reason (*ξυνός λόγος*)'.

Therefore, Nietzsche interprets this claim as 'the highest form of nature is not humanity but fire', which, in other words, means that human beings are not at the centre of the universe because this place is occupied by the principle alone. Interestingly, Nietzsche is silent about the reason why he places emphasis on the Heraclitus' idea that mankind does not occupy the centre of the universe.

Around the later period of his life, Nietzsche independently develops a harsh criticism of Christian anthropocentrism. In *The Antichrist* (14; 15), he repeatedly

addresses and criticises the Christian idea that man is 'the crown of creation' and calls this anthropocentric concept of nature an 'imaginary natural science' (*Naturwissenschaft*). Nietzsche goes straight to the source of the Christian belief, which is perhaps one of the most famous passages of the *Genesis* (I, 1): 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the cattle, and over all the wild animals and all the creatures that crawl on the ground'. God handles to mankind the mastery over all the nonhuman animals and the reason for this is that he is 'made in the same image' as God. Man shares the same attributes as God, primarily a soul and reason, and this makes him qualitatively different from the other animals. Men, for instance, can acknowledge they have been created by God, whereas animals cannot.

To this picture of the world Nietzsche opposes his own, which can be called 'S-Naturalism' following Richardson's suggestion.[189] S-Naturalism refers to the idea that Nietzsche develops the view that there is a substantial understanding of cosmos, that is, the cosmic will to power. Let us turn to the passage of *The Will to Power* (1067) quoted before, whose final sentence makes clear how mankind is constituted: 'you yourselves are also this will to power (*Der Wille zur Macht*)—and nothing besides!'. It is noteworthy here that man is for Nietzsche made of power, but power is also what constitutes the entire cosmos, including other nonhuman animals. In this passage, Nietzsche proposes his own alternative theory of the *scala naturae*: 'an ebb and a flood of its [the will to power] forms (*Gestaltungen*); out of the simplest forms striving toward the most complex, out of the stillest, most rigid, coldest forms toward the hottest, most turbulent, most self-contradictory'. For Nietzsche, everything is will to power.

Nevertheless, the aspect that interests us here can be restricted to the sphere of the

[189] Richardson (1996: 16; 2004: 47).

biological version of the will to power. The function of this form of the will to power is similar to its cosmic counterpart but applied to organic phenomena: power plays the role of their 'fundamental organic function' (*organische Grundfunktion*) (*BGE* 259) and the 'truly basic life-instinct' (*Lebens-Grundtriebes*) (*GS* 349). Power, therefore, is the ultimate goal of biological beings, including human and nonhuman beings alike. The consequence, therefore, is that mankind should be considered as being at the same level as the other animals or, to quote Nietzsche's own words, we should 'translate humanity back into nature (*Natur*)' (*BGE* 230). The reason is as has been stated before, man like the other nonhuman animals is constituted by power. To this analysis, we should add one clarification. Different living organisms possess different levels of power. In fact, Nietzsche thinks that there is a difference between a dog and a man: we are capable of philosophical reflection which is defined by Nietzsche as 'the most spiritual' (*geistigere*) form of the will to power (*A* 14; *BGE* 19).

In brief, Nietzsche's discussion of Heraclitus' conflagration is not philological in the traditional sense, even if it might misleadingly appear to be so from his many exegetical remarks on the Heraclitean fragments in the Basel lectures. Rather, Nietzsche attributes to Heraclitus' conflagration his own cosmic doctrine of the will to power, even if at an earlier stage of its development. The goal that Nietzsche has in mind during his discussion is to address and answer some questions about Christianity: whether there is a goal in the universe, whether we can apply our moral evaluation to the world and, lastly, what men's position is in the hierarchy of beings.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that what links Nietzsche and Heraclitus is not only a relationship of similarity between their ways of life and doctrines. I have made the case that when Nietzsche discusses Heraclitus, he does not simply carry out a philological

exegesis, but rather it is driven by his projection onto Heraclitus doctrines some of his own ideas, predominantly the epistemic doctrine of perspectivism and the cosmic doctrine of will to power. Nietzsche's discussion of Heraclitus' way of life and doctrines offers him a chance to fulfil one overarching task, namely to address and resolve some important questions about Christianity and other philosophers. Nietzsche focuses on a range of different topics with reference to Heraclitus and each topic plays a different role in terms of allowing Nietzsche to address the aforementioned issues. Throughout this chapter, I have emphasised a few examples, which can help us to navigate Nietzsche's goal of addressing some Christian beliefs, which range from anthropocentrism to the persistence of things, and to philosophical figures, such as Socrates and Plato, and their reliance on reason or the rejection of becoming.

When, in the first section, Nietzsche discusses the Heraclitean solitary and elitist way of life the main force driving the analysis is Nietzsche's attribution to Heraclitus certain power instincts and ecstatic inspiration, alongside the correct use of reason. The purpose that Nietzsche has in mind is to establish Heraclitus' location in the history of thought, which he sees in sharp contraposition to the rationalist tradition initiated by Socrates. In Nietzsche's eyes, Heraclitus' reliance on the instincts and ecstatic inspiration rather than on rational abilities makes him a thinker that, unlike Socrates, is worthy of emulation.

Moreover, in the second section, I argued that Heraclitus' writing style resonates with Nietzsche. The reason for this should be found in Heraclitus' goal to preserve the deliberate ambiguity of his work, and to protect it from being misinterpreted by '[the] readers who skim and race'. Such readers might be understood as predecessors to or early versions of the Christian philologists, examples of whom are the Stoics, who interpreted Heraclitus' aesthetic cosmos as something arranged according to a divine providential

plan. As for Heraclitus' theory of strife, analysed in the third section, I have shown that Nietzsche attributes to the latter his own concept of the contest. Even if the analysis of Heraclitus' strife is related to Hesiod's theory of strife, in Nietzsche's eyes, the purpose of reading Heraclitus in this way is to show that a philosopher such as Heraclitus is a figure that should be preferred to a poet such as Heiod; Heraclitus can explain the cosmos, whereas Hesiod only society.

In the fourth section, I have examined Nietzsche's reception of Heraclitus' theory of flux. Despite a seemingly philological exegesis of the material, I argued that Nietzsche conducts his analysis from the perspective of his cosmic doctrine of the will to power. The goal that Nietzsche has in mind, while attributing to the Platonic formula of *panta rei* a continuous striving for power, is the following: to show how Heraclitus' rejection of being and acceptance of becoming places him at odds with the Platonic tradition.

Finally, in the fifth section, I addressed the issue of Nietzsche's reception of Heraclitus' theory of conflagration. Nietzsche displays extensive knowledge of the Heraclitean fragments about this theme. Yet, he does not carry out a philological analysis, rather he attributes his own cosmic will to power to the theory of conflagration. In doing so, Nietzsche is attempting to address and resolve three separate yet related issues regarding Christianity and the first book of *Genesis*. The first issue regards the Christian belief about the existence of a goal in the universe, the second regards the morality and immorality of a world that is created by God, and the third and last is the validity of Christian anthropocentrism. Nietzsche attributes to Heraclitus the idea that the cosmic doctrine of the will to power offers a solution to all these puzzles.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have argued that Nietzsche's reception of Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists is driven by some of his own doctrines, such as perspectivism and the will to power. The difference between this project and other scholarly works conducted thus far on this topic is its specific focus on philology. I have argued that Nietzsche's understanding of philology and its methods, which is driven by certain aspects of his own doctrines, influences the ways in which he thinks about and studies Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists. Therefore, Nietzsche's reception of Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists is not merely one of similarity but, rather, is motivated by his own doctrines. The goal that Nietzsche pursues while he discusses Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists is to address some topics and themes that Nietzsche finds especially interesting and important, such as his relationship with Christianity, the history of philosophy as a whole, and other philosophers, such as Socrates, Plato and Epicurus.

My thesis began by focusing on the idea that the Nietzschean method of philology parts company with the 19th century *wissenschaftlich* tradition of German classics, such as Zeller, Wilamowitz and Usener. I argued that when Nietzsche discusses ancient texts, including those of Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists, his goal is not to interpret them in an objective or scientific way. Rather, Nietzsche's philological analysis is driven by some of his own doctrines, which he has independently developed, predominantly perspectivism and the will to power.

I argued that perspectivism can be broken down into two different aspects. The first is the rejection of the existence of objective knowledge. One implication of this regards Kant's idealist philosophy, given that every point of view is 'perspectival', or influenced by our cognitive circumstances. Another implication of this takes direct relevance to Christian philologists and their appeal to God. This is because they exploit

the latter as a means to reject any other alternative reading of ancient texts, which is understood as the rejection of perspectivism. The second aspect of perspectivism is the doctrine of affective perspectivism. Nietzsche thinks that the affects are not simply the foundation of our knowledge, but that they can also be useful in furthering our knowledge, provided that we can use them in a suitable way. If we shift in and out of our affects regarding a given topic, we can gain an epistemic benefit, because we can explore its different facets in different ways.

As for the will to power, I have argued that there is a biological, psychological and metaphysical way of understanding this doctrine, each with its particular role in Nietzsche's thought. According to the psychological version, power is the main principle of activity of our psychology and explains all psychological phenomena. The role is to account for the health of the soul and for the relations of the drives with each other. The biological version of the will to power is an explanation of the whole of biology as power-based phenomena, including human beings as members of animal kingdom. The cosmic will to power is the theory that every aspect of the world can be reduced to power; as such, the will to power is an all-encompassing irrational and blind force which refutes the existence of teleology, among other things.

Both perspectivism and the will to power play a crucial role in Nietzsche's analysis of Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists. I argued that time and again Nietzsche discusses, each time for different purposes, one of these two doctrines in order to address and ultimately address and resolve questions that he finds particularly important to him, such as how these doctrines relate to the beliefs endorsed by Christianity or by other thinkers such as Socrates, Epicurus or Plato.

Some examples I have provided throughout the thesis reveal how Nietzsche's discussion of Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists is motivated by his doctrines such as

perspectivism and the will to power in order to address some particular themes. Let us start with two examples regarding perspectivism.

First, regarding Nietzsche and Pyrrhonism, Nietzsche discusses the 1st Pyrrhonian mode of suspension of judgement contained in Sextus' *Outlines* as well as the Pyrrhonian notions embedded within it, such as the Pyrrhonian ability to bring about equipollence and the state of *epochē.* Despite not being the primary focus of the 1st Mode, the Pyrrhonists discuss whether human beings are superior to animals and they oppose arguments of equal credibility about this topic. For instance, they draw opposing examples that suggest how both animals and men have similar abilities. For instance, dogs similarly to humans are perfectly able to look after themselves: if they are unwell, they eat grass to induce vomiting to resolve their illness. Nietzsche seems to draw from Pyrrhonism. He lists some examples that might show how humans are not superior to nonhuman animals. For instance, he reports that animals can adapt to every possible environment, such as chameleons that can alter their colours at will, which matches human survival skills; and through their sense of smell or vision, animals can recognise predators even from the distance, such as most herbivores, something that is similar to our strive for knowledge.

It is noteworthy that, despite some general similarities about an emphasis on the equality of men and animals, Nietzsche's examples are common and he could have easily drawn them from another source and not solely from Sextus' *Outlines.* However, most importantly, they do not fit Nietzsche's overall purpose of addressing the issue of Christian anthropocentrism, the theory that man is the centre of all creation and that man has a privileged position in creation, if compared to nonhuman animals. For this reason, Nietzsche turns to the independently developed doctrine of M-Naturalism, whose endpoint is 'to translate humanity back into nature (*Natur*)'. According to M-Naturalism,

mankind is part of nature, which makes men not different from other animals. Nietzsche's goal is to propose a theory as to what biological beings are in order for him to turn to the biological doctrine of the will to power, according to which the whole of biology can be accounted for in terms of power. Men, being parts of nature, are wills to power exactly like other nonhuman animals, which ultimately shows that the Christian doctrine of anthropocentrism is mistaken.

Second, regarding Nietzsche and Heraclitus, Nietzsche is interested in Heraclitus' ambiguous writing style and he analyses it in the Basel lectures. Heraclitus' writing style is ambiguous in that his statements can have multiple interpretations and, in turn, these readings are echoed in other statements. Therefore, Heraclitus writes riddle-like statements which are open to multiple interpretations, such as fragment B1, 'although this *logos* holds forever men fail to comprehend it'. In this statement, it is unclear whether the term 'forever' applies to 'being this *logos*' or 'men prove uncomprehending'. Alternatively, it is unclear whether Heraclitus' doctrine of *logos* is meant as the principle of the cosmos or, rather, as a teaching that men cannot understand.

Nietzsche's analysis focuses predominantly on a careful exegesis of the connection between Heraclitus' writing style and the riddles of the Pythia. Indeed, a riddle such as 'after crossing the Halys, Croesus will destroy a great empire' can be read in two ways: either 'empire' refers to Croesus's own empire or to the Persians, whose kingdom borders with the Halys. What Nietzsche reads into Heraclitus is a similar obscurity of language, namely that Heraclitus has purposefully designed his riddle-like statements in such a way that they propose two equally plausible horns of an exegetical dilemma. Thus, fragment B1 provides an example in which the term 'forever' equally applies to both the *logos* and to a lack of comprehension by mankind.

In Nietzsche's eyes, Heraclitus' writing style does not appear to be at all obscure,

but rather ‘lucid’ and ’luminous’. This is because Heraclitus’ writing style resonates with him. Nietzsche independently develops the idea that the affects are not simply the basis of our knowledge, but that they can be also be beneficial for advancing knowledge. The reason for this is that exploiting our ability to shift in and out of our emotional avoidances and attractions enhances our knowledge. Such an epistemic benefit derives from the fact that we can explore a different aspect of a given topic by looking at it in a different light. Nietzsche, thus, argues that his ‘art of style’ is a useful means to the end of stimulating our affects and, ultimately, enhancing our knowledge about a given topic, such as Winckelmann’s Neo-Classicism.

Even though Heraclitus’ writing style is not identical to Nietzsche’s, there are many elements within it that Nietzsche finds attractive. Heraclitus’ writing style is obscure, which is due to his phrases raising exegetical dilemmas in which two interpretations are equally credible. According to Nietzsche, the import of this obscurity of language is that Heraclitus is able to enhance our knowledge by revealing two sides of the same topic. For instance, we procure an epistemic gain by engaging with fragment B1 both by understanding the term *logos* to bear close similarity with an eternal cosmic principle as well as a teaching that men cannot understand.

At the same time, however, Nietzsche also reads into Heraclitus the idea that his reason for choosing such an ambiguous write style is that he wished to defend the epistemic gain embedded within his work from what Nietzsche refers to as ‘vulgar minds’. The rationale for this attribution to Heraclitus is that the ‘vulgar minds’, such as those of the Stoics, interpret Heraclitus’ works superficially. They relinquish the epistemic benefit associated with the affective perspectivism Heraclitus’ style affords, because they propose interpretations that not only cannot be called into question, but also and most importantly that do not foster an appreciation for alternative interpretations.

Nietzsche, by contrast, defends the epistemic benefit that lies in Heraclitus's works by offering a theory alternative to the Stoic and Christian interpretations that posit a providential design for the cosmos. Nietzsche's alternative theory preserves Heraclitus' original intention that there should be alternative readings of his work. Parting company in a stark way with the Stoic and Christian notions of providential design, Nietzsche's theory holds that the Heraclitean cosmos is comparable to a playing child, namely that the cosmos lacks a *telos* and is beyond judgement in moral terms.

There are two other instances that I have mentioned in this thesis that can shed light on how Nietzsche's reception of the ancient Greeks is motivated by the will to power. The first regards Nietzsche's comments on Heraclitus' theory of conflagration. In the Basel lectures, Nietzsche conducts what might seem to be a philological analysis of conflagration. Nietzsche skilfully navigates the extant evidence about this topic and correctly recognises that the Heraclitean conflagration is the recurrent creation and destruction of the world. However, this is only a part of Nietzsche's analysis. There is another and more important side of Nietzsche's discussion of conflagration. Nietzsche reads into Heraclitus his own doctrine of the cosmic will to power, with the aim of addressing three main questions which are related to Christianity: whether there is a *telos* in the world; whether the world can be defined in moral or immoral terms; and, finally, whether mankind is at the centre of the universe. The answer that Nietzsche attributes to Heraclitus is the result of his interpretation of the Heraclitean creation and destruction of the cosmos by the principle of fire may be compared to a playing child that builds and knocks down sandcastles in total innocence. For Nietzsche, the game of the principle should be understood as something that is done for its own sake, without any purpose other than amusement itself.

The answers that Nietzsche gives to these three questions are the result of

Nietzsche's attribution to Heraclitus his cosmic will to power, namely the theory that everything that can be explained in terms of power. Nietzsche attributes to Heraclitus a negative answer to the first question: the universe does not have a goal because the principle's activity has no inherent purpose, being comparable to the play of a child. However, this interpretation is a result of Nietzsche projecting onto Heraclitus his own idea of the will to power, which is ultimately a play of forces. The answer to the second question is also negative, given that we cannot judge the cosmos in moral, but only in aesthetic terms. The reason for this outcome is that the creation and destruction of the world is nothing but a game of the principle, which is the result of the child's activity. However, once again, Nietzsche is here attributing to Heraclitus his own doctrine of the cosmic will to power, according to which the world is 'beyond good and evil' because it is reducible to a blind and irrational force. Finally, there is the question about anthropocentrism. Nietzsche thinks that, for Heraclitus, mankind is not at the centre of the universe; at the centre there is the principle of the fire. Nietzsche reads into the Heraclitean conflagration his own hierarchy of being, which is based on the idea that everything is based on power and mankind does not have an especially favourable position in the cosmos.

Another example of how Nietzsche's reception is motivated by the doctrine of the will to power is related to the case of Pyrrho's goal of 'insensibility' (or *apatheia*). Pyrrho has a remarkable state of mind that lacks human emotions, such as fear, pity and shame. Pyrrho is also insensible to physical pain, since there is an anecdote reported by Diogenes in which Pyrrho did not flinch after someone performed surgery on him. Nietzsche is interested in Pyrrho's state of mind even if he does not, strictly speaking, analyse it in a philological way, however. First of all, Nietzsche interprets *apatheia* as the total abolition of suffering. That is why he claims that Pyrrho represents a 'Buddhist for Greece' in that

his goal is, ultimately, to eliminate suffering and physical pain. However, Nietzsche also projects onto Pyrrho's goal a series of his own doctrines, independently formed, especially the role that suffering, power instincts and nihilism.

Nietzsche projects onto Pyrrho the theory of nihilism, which according to Nietzsche stems from Pyrrho's goal of eliminating suffering; this goal is, however, impossible, given that the world is equal to the will to power which inevitably entails that there is a certain form of overpowering of the weaker by the stronger. Therefore, Nietzsche argues that Pyrrho is a nihilist thinker, because his value of the abolition of suffering cannot be brought about in the world. The label 'Buddhist' according to Nietzsche derives from the fact that Pyrrho is a passive nihilist, who indifferently accepts with resignation that his values cannot be realised in the world. The outcome is a withdrawal from life and into nothingness.

Moreover, another concept that Nietzsche projects onto Pyrrho is decadence and the theory of the psychological will to power embedded in it. The human soul is constituted by instincts, which are the basic units of the will to power; and, according to the theory of decadence, the instincts are in a state of anarchy. The goal of Nietzsche's discussion is to show that Pyrrho is decadent in two senses. On the one hand, Pyrrho is decadent because the drive that is the most prominent in his soul is reason, and similarly to Socrates, this leads to a devaluation of life. On the other hand, Nietzsche argues that Pyrrho is decadent is a similar way to Epicurus: his goal of *ataraxia* is a state of imperturbability in which suffering is abolished. In a similar way, however, Pyrrho is led to a devaluation of life.

In conclusion, Nietzsche's reception of Heraclitus' and Pyrrhonism is influenced by his notion of philology. However, it turns out that Nietzsche is a different philologist than what we might have imagined; he is neither objective nor scientific in his

reconstruction of the past in that he reads his own ideas and concepts into Greek culture. When it comes to Heraclitus and Pyrrhonism, Nietzsche's analysis is driven by a similar trend, which is to say to address and resolve certain sets of Christian beliefs, as well as the ideas and doctrines of other thinkers, such as Socrates, Epicurus and Plato, driven by ideas that are present in doctrines he has formed independently, such as perspectivism and the will to power.

The payoff that Nietzsche receives in return seems not to be purely epistemic, however. It is also related to the sphere of emotional companionship, as one can gather from the two sentences with which I originally began my thesis: 'I generally feel warmer and in better spirits in his [Heraclitus'] company than anywhere else' (*EH* III, *BT,* 3) and 'The Pyrrhonists were the only respectable types among the philosophical tribe' (*EH* II, 3). In these particular sentences, Nietzsche seems to describe his overall relationship with the Pyrrhonists and Heraclitus as almost related to the value of friendship. Heraclitus appears as a close friend of Nietzsche's and the Pyrrhonists as a respectable philosophical crowd. Precisely because he is attributing some of his own independently formed doctrines to Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists, Nietzsche no longer feels alone when addressing these difficult questions. No man is an island; and this is true even for Nietzsche with reference to his reception of Heraclitus and the Pyrrhonists.

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