

Nietzsche on Kant and Teleology in 1868: "Life" is something entirely dark ...'

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ABSTRACT

We know from Nietzsche's *Nachlaß* and correspondence of his plan in 1868 to compose a doctoral dissertation in philosophy on the subject of teleology in nature and the concept of the organic, with reference to Kant. The bulk of my discussion (Sections 1–4) comprises an attempt to extrapolate from Nietzsche's letters and preparatory notes the view he arrived at. Since the notes do not defend explicitly any single definitive thesis, their interpretation is unavoidably conjectural. I argue that, if Nietzsche's remarks are considered with close reference to the philosophers who at that point dominated his horizons, namely Kant, Schopenhauer, and Lange, with Goethe also playing a key role, a plausible account can be given of the broad conclusions Nietzsche reached as a result of his early engagement with the problem of teleology. This outlook maintains the necessity and distinctiveness of philosophical reflection, but takes a skeptical view of its basis. In 1868 Nietzsche had no clear idea of how to proceed from this point, but in Section 5 I propose, as others have done, that Nietzsche's reflections on Kant and teleology helped to lay the ground for *The Birth of Tragedy*. In Section 6 I hypothesize that Nietzsche's later philosophy involves no change of metaphilosophical standpoint.

KEYWORDS Goethe; Kant; Lange; Nietzsche; Schopenhauer; teleology

In the spring of 1868 Nietzsche formed the intention of composing a doctoral thesis in philosophy, a project he shortly abandoned. What we know of it derives from an extensive set of notes, amounting to about thirty pages in the *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, and relevant letters from the period. The subject of Nietzsche's projected dissertation was teleology, and his primary point of reference was Kant's *Critique of Judgement*.¹

¹ References to the 1868 'Teleologie seit Kant' notes, prefixed TK and in the form Aufzeichnung, Seite, and Zeile(n), are to *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, Abteilung 1, Band 4, *Nachgelassene Aufzeichnungen. Herbst 1864 – Frühjahr 1868*, hrsg. Johann Figl, bearbeitet von Ingo W. Rath (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), Fragmentengruppe 62, 548–578.

The notes are fragmentary and interpolation is required if anything is to be made of them.² Care must be taken to avoid reading back into them ideas known to us from his later work. Considerable interpretative weight falls accordingly on our knowledge of Nietzsche's input, and his relatively limited exposure to philosophy at that period proves helpful in figuring out what his thoughts might have been in 1868. If my interpretation is accurate, the notes show Nietzsche to have already, to a surprising degree, formulated an outlook of his own, regarding philosophical issues in general. Though Nietzsche does not yet have any philosophical position as such, we can see that he has closed several doors, and there are rough indications of where he might be headed.

1. Nietzsche's horizons in 1868 and project of a doctoral dissertation in philosophy

In a letter to Paul Deussen from April or May 1868, Nietzsche says that he has more or less completed his preparatory work for a doctoral thesis on 'Der Begriff des Organischen seit Kant'. Other titles are given in the notes themselves: 'Zur Teleologie' and 'Die Teleologie seit Kant'. On the basis of the quotations contained in the notes, we can see that Nietzsche has read, in part or whole, four relevant authors: Kuno Fischer's two-volume study of Kant's philosophy (1860); the 'Critique of Teleological Judgement', the second half of Kant's *Critique of Judgement* (1790); the third volume of Ueberweg's *Grundriß der Geschichte der Philosophie von Thales bis auf die Gegenwart* (1866), from which

The text is available with (anonymous) parallel English translation, and helpful information concerning the works that Nietzsche refers to, from the Nietzsche Channel: <http://www.thenietzschechannel.com/>. References to other writings of Nietzsche's are to the *Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (1967–2006), prefixed KGW followed by Abteilung, Band and Seite(n).

² As Blue observes (2016, 288), the notes have received little attention. Previous treatments are Crawford (1988, 105–125), Hill (2003, chapter 3), Swift (2005), and Emden (2014, chapter 7).

Nietzsche culled a reading list; and at least some of Goethe's brief texts on natural science. Two ancient philosophers with whom Nietzsche was fully familiar, Democritus and Empedocles, are also referred to.³

We know of course that Nietzsche had also by this point assimilated Schopenhauer and Lange. Following his discovery of *The World as Will and Representation* in 1865, Nietzsche had acquired all of Schopenhauer's other then published writings, including his *On the Will in Nature*, a work of immediate relevance to his new doctoral project. Schopenhauer is referred to several times in the 1868 notes.⁴ Lange's seminal neo-Kantian *Geschichte des Materialismus und Kritik seiner Bedeutung in der Gegenwart* had been read by Nietzsche with intense admiration in 1866, the year it appeared,⁵ and its sobriety no doubt represented for Nietzsche a challenge and corrective to Schopenhauer's speculative freedom, which Lange censures.⁶ Lange is, oddly, not mentioned by name in the notes, but it can safely be assumed that he was to the fore in Nietzsche's mind, if only on the strength of his critical treatment of Kant's theory of teleology in his *Geschichte*, which was largely responsible for leading Nietzsche to read over the following two years, i.e. between 1866 and 1868, other commentaries on Kant, including but not confined to those mentioned above.

It may be wondered how much significance can be attached to the notes in view of their pre-maturity. They are not included in the CUP selection from the early *Nachlaß*, though it contains another set of passages – a short critique of Schopenhauer – composed

³ Nietzsche had been working on Democritus in the autumn of 1867.

⁴ See Brobjer (2008, 254).

⁵ See the letters to Mushacke, November 1866 (No. 526), and to von Gersdorff, end August 1866 (No. 517), which endorses three theses from Lange (1866, 493).

⁶ Lange gives his view of Schopenhauer in the Vorwort (1866, v–vi).

over the same period.⁷ In addition, the notes are, as said, fragmentary. They consist largely of statements from different angles of the problem posed by the appearance of teleology in nature, and of different views of the topic encountered in his reading. Since the various possible views entertained are not all consistent with one another, they cannot all be taken as representing what Nietzsche himself thinks, and the assertions in the notes which are clearly *in propria persona* do not amount to a statement of a theory. Our impression in sum is that Nietzsche is still turning over ideas. At the same time, there is an unmistakable forward development in the notes, as Nietzsche's thoughts become more defined, and in a letter to Deussen, quoted below, he claims to have reached a definite result. If Nietzsche was not exaggerating his progress to Deussen, a reasonably substantial view lies behind the notes, which we may hope to tease out.

The framework of Nietzsche's ruminations is set, as said, by Kant's 'Critique of Teleological Judgement', which Nietzsche appears to have read with care and is referred to more frequently than any other text.⁸ It is of significance in the first place that, though Nietzsche had a reasonably detailed exposure to Kant's philosophy from the various post- and neo-Kantian authors mentioned – and we know from his later practice that he was remarkably willing to rely on secondary literature for his knowledge of the history of philosophy – he now sought to glean Kant's thought at first hand. It is clear moreover that his interest lay in Kant's philosophy as a whole, not merely in his theory of teleology. The commentaries he had studied engage with Kant *in toto*, and his notes conclude with (critical) remarks on Kant's philosophy of a very general nature. But most importantly,

⁷ 'On Schopenhauer', Nietzsche (2009, 1–8), dated October 1867 to April 1868. A letter to Rohde from 8 October 1868 (No. 591) suggests that Nietzsche (following Wenkel) regards Schopenhauer and Kant as constituting a single philosophical moment, a view maintained in BT 18-19.

⁸ That Nietzsche read Kant himself – at a bare minimum, the 'Analytic of Teleological Judgement' – is testified by his page references to Rosenkranz's edition (1838).

Nietzsche's letter to Deussen leaves no doubt that he supposed himself to be *already* in a position to issue a bold, Kant-informed verdict on metaphysics as such: Nietzsche informs Deussen that by the end of the year his completed dissertation will help to explain why all *Wissen* is relative and why metaphysics can amount to nothing more than an art of conceptual imaging, the value of which can lie only in edification and artistry. The relevant passages from the letter are worth quoting in full:

[...] On this bright note let me make a suggestion. Should we not put an end to the philosophical crossfire which has occupied our letters up until now. As yet we've failed to reach agreement – so why carry on fretting endlessly about matters which set us in discord? Your last letter e.g. charges my standpoint of resignation with showing a lack of youthfulness or even decrepitude. Against that I have no defence. But what you add about resignation being justified only when it is based – as it is in Kant – on a definite conviction concerning the scope of our knowledge: this point is extremely well made. Indeed all who have an eye to the relevant paths of enquiry since Kant, especially physiology, can be in no doubt that its boundaries have been determined with such complete assurance that nobody – aside from the theologians, a few philosophy professors, and the common folk – continues to set store by such imaginary notions. The realm of metaphysics, and therewith the province of 'absolute' truth, has been irrefutably put on a par with poetry and religion. Anyone who wants to lay claim to knowledge will have to content themselves with an admission of its relativity – as do e.g. all natural scientists of any note. For some, metaphysics is a matter of psychological need, and amounts essentially to edification [*Erbauung*]: from another point of view, it counts as an art, namely that of imaging in the medium of concepts [*Kunst, nämlich die der Begriffsdichtung*];

what is for sure, is that metaphysics has nothing to do, either as religion or as art, with the so-called 'true in itself or real existence'.

By the way, when at the end of the year you receive my doctoral dissertation you'll be confronted with more that explains this end-point of the bounds of knowledge. My topic is 'The Concept of the Organic Since Kant' – half philosophy, half natural science. My preparatory work for it is pretty much done.⁹

If Nietzsche's ultimate concern was with the meaning of metaphysics, then why, of all the many sizeable chambers in the Kantian mansion, did he choose to focus on the 'Critique of Teleological Judgement', to the extent of thinking, from the evidence of his reading, that no long way round via the First and Second Critiques would be necessary? Encouragement cannot have come from Schopenhauer, whose estimate of both the *Critique of Judgement* as a whole and its teleological section is exceptionally low, nor from Lange, who considered Kant's theory of teleology mistaken. In some way yet to be clarified, Nietzsche appears to have supposed that the issue of teleology would take him directly to the heart of the matter, that is, of philosophy itself. This is hardly a standard view, either in our age or in Nietzsche's. It may also be assumed that, in embarking on a doctoral dissertation, Nietzsche supposed himself to have something new to say, that had not previously been said by Schopenhauer, Lange, or any other Kant commentator.

No further attempt to draft the dissertation was made, nor was the planned course of study followed through. Nothing in Nietzsche's circumstances at the time – especially not his obligations to philology, his enthusiasm for which had waned massively¹⁰ – accounts for the change of intention. What can be gleaned from the biographies offers no

⁹ Letter to Deussen, end April/beginning May 1868 (No. 568).

¹⁰ See, e.g., Nietzsche's letter to Rohde, 20 November 1868 (No. 601).

direct explanation for Nietzsche's desertion of his original plan.¹¹ In October 1867 Nietzsche had been conscripted into military service, interrupting his studies at Leipzig, and in the time which remained at his disposal, he resumed his philological work, which now focussed on Democritus, whose philosophical interest Lange had emphasized.¹² Janz observes an indicative shift in Nietzsche's attitude to this thinker: in place of the philological question of the authenticity of the fragments attributed to Democritus which had previously occupied him, Nietzsche began to consider Democritus in a humanistic light (as the 'Humboldt of the ancients'). The serious injury which Nietzsche sustained in March 1868, the effects of which endured until at least August, made him ineligible for military duties but in no way impaired his capacity for intellectual activity, indeed left with more time for those purposes.

The *Teleologie* notes were composed towards the beginning of his conscription, and in letters from the spring of 1868 Nietzsche reports his increasing dissatisfaction with the 'Fabrikarbeit' of philology, complaining of the way in which the historicism of philology stifles new questions. Nietzsche did not return to Leipzig, formally discharged from the regiment, until mid-October 1868. Nietzsche therefore had the opportunity, and presumably the motivation, yet did not persevere with the *Teleologie* project between April and October 1868. Why was this?

The beginnings of an explanation are suggested by a letter to Rohde from 3-4 May, where Nietzsche talks of having realized that a doctorate would not allow justice to be done to the philosophical 'Hauptsachen' that most interested him: for doctoral purposes, he tells Rohde, a narrow topic would be required, which meant a return to philology.

¹¹ Those I have consulted are Janz (1978, 228–246), Hayman (1980, 94–105), Safranski (2002, chapters 1–2), Young (2010, chapters 4–5), and Blue (2016, chapters 11–13).

¹² Lange (1866, 3–12).

This would explain why it no longer made sense for Nietzsche to compose an academic text on teleology, but not why he discontinued the philosophical project he had set himself. On the contrary, Nietzsche's intellectual motivation for doing so was as strong as ever. His philosophical development was accelerating over this period, Lange having opened up new horizons, and he had recently achieved clear awareness of the inconsistencies in Schopenhauer's metaphysics, owed in large part if not altogether to his reading of neo-Kantian critiques of Schopenhauer. Though still under the spell of Schopenhauer to the extent of seeing no superior alternative, his dissatisfaction with Schopenhauer's system considered as a body of doctrine (reflected, we will see, in the *Teleologie* notes) lead Nietzsche to redefine his valorization of Schopenhauer on the basis that Schopenhauer was, unlike Kant, a *Dichter*, and at the same time, unlike Goethe, also a *Philosoph*, and as such should be raised above both.¹³ This ought to have added impetus to the *Teleologie* project, since Nietzsche now owed an account of how philosophy can double as *Dichtung*.

The absence of external factors encourages a philosophical explanation. It can be ruled out that he no longer considered the topic of interest. My suggestion is that it was abandoned because it seemed to Nietzsche that Kant had at least succeeded in showing the limits of what can be done with the purely *conceptual* problem of teleology, making examination of the history of subsequent theories pointless, and that Nietzsche, with encouragement from Schopenhauer and Lange, took this grinding-to-a-halt as exemplary of the fate of philosophical reflection in its traditional form. Yet at the same time, in part thanks to Goethe, in ways I will discuss, Nietzsche attributed positive significance to this apparently negative result, even though he could not yet grasp how it might provide a

¹³ Nietzsche's enthusiasm for Schopenhauer endured throughout the 1860s, long after his exposure to Lange: see the letters to von Gersdorff, end August 1866 (No. 517) and 1 December 1867 (No. 554).

determinate basis for anything new. This coheres with Janz's suggestion that Nietzsche's decision to pursue an academic career in philology had a philosophical motive: indirectly it would provide him with the opportunity to engage with *Hauptsachen* whose depth, he realized, no mere doctorate in philosophy could hope to plummet, and which in any case exceeded what he was presently capable of supplying.

2. Proximity to Kant

One striking characteristic of the notes is the extent to which Nietzsche at this point appears to accept – at the outset at any rate – that teleology presents a problem demanding a purely conceptual solution. There are precious few occasions where Nietzsche can be said to be exploring a philosophical problem in recognizably traditional terms, but here Nietzsche does appear perplexed by the Kantian question of how a concept can achieve objective reality: he accepts that the application of the concept of purpose to certain objects, its gaining objective purchase, poses of itself a problem of explanation and justification. Nietzsche entertains a dozen or so possible views of teleology, in the course of which he in effect rehearses Kant's Antinomy of Teleological Judgement: he follows out lines of thought which lead to the contradictory conclusions (1) that purposiveness must, and that it cannot, have a mechanistic explanation, and (2) that teleological characterizations are necessarily inferior to, and that they are epistemically on a par with, mechanistic characterizations. Adding to the puzzle, Nietzsche presumably envisaged natural science as contributing in some way to the solution of the problem of teleology – he describes the dissertation to Deussen as 'halb naturwissenschaftlich' – but in the notes themselves we find nothing of a scientific character: the handful of strictly natural-scientific works to which he refers are all under the heading of 'to be read', and Nietzsche

gives no indication of how they might have relevance for the philosophical problem at hand. Nothing in the notes suggests that empirical enquiry can in principle resolve the puzzle.

This side-lining of natural science makes sense when we see the extent to which the notes show Nietzsche to be in agreement with Kant concerning the way in which the problem of teleology should be viewed. Nietzsche agrees with Kant, first, that the concept of an organism is not simply (in Kant's sense) an *empirical* concept: the real existence of organisms is not a plain self-accounting fact of experience. Second, Nietzsche denies that teleology can be derived from or grounded on the existence of anything *supersensible*. Schopenhauer's own supersensible solution to the problem of teleology is rejected, by implication, on two grounds, the second of which is standardly Kantian: (i) even if the singleness of the (world as) *Wille* may be held to explain, as Schopenhauer argues, the mutual accommodation of the various parts of nature to one another,¹⁴ the premise is contradicted by another *a posteriori* datum, namely the *schreckliche Kampf der Individuen*,¹⁵ which shows the world to be just as much disunified as it is unified; and (ii) in any case, Schopenhauer's metaphysical-realist Platonistic thesis, according to which Ideas give the world-as-representation what we regard as teleological form, is faulty *qua* type of inference, in the same manner as the argument from design.¹⁶

Third, Nietzsche, like Kant, denies that teleological features might be discovered to emerge from material or mechanical processes, or be explained in such terms.¹⁷ In living beings we encounter an entirely distinctive type of form or structure, which is discontinuous with inorganic nature,¹⁸ and which must remain invisible from the

¹⁴ TK [7]551.13-15.

¹⁵ TK [7]551.18-19.

¹⁶ TK [4]550.21-22.

¹⁷ TK [24]558.5-8, [24]558.13-15.

¹⁸ TK [15]554.9-13, [24]557.16-19.

standpoint of the exact natural sciences.¹⁹ Whatever supervenience of teleology on mechanism there might be, it is not something into which we can have any insight.

Fourth, Nietzsche agrees with Kant that teleology must (therefore) be accounted for in terms of the subject's dispositions: teleological form is injected into the data of experience, whereby natural objects are to some extent assimilated to ourselves.²⁰ The possibility presents itself accordingly, Nietzsche acknowledges, of simply denying the existence of organisms, but he rejects this option: Nietzsche agrees with Kant, *contra* Lange, that teleological conceptualization, despite its lack of sufficient empirical or supersensible anchoring, is *necessary* for us, even if this necessity does not have the *a priori* foundation that Kant supposes.²¹

Finally, and again in line with Kant, Nietzsche regards the problem of teleology as bound up with broader philosophical issues: that is, he agrees with Kant that identifying certain entities in nature as organisms and attributing purposes to their features, and conceiving ourselves as agents, belong to one and the same broad conceptual sphere. This raises the stakes, in so far as what we make of teleology in nature will have broader ramifications.

Thus far Nietzsche appears considerably closer to Kant than either Schopenhauer or Lange, and the fact that he rejects both of the latter's accounts of teleology signals that in his own terms he is breaking new ground. What Nietzsche nonetheless finds defective in Kant's 'Critique of Teleological Judgement' may be brought under four headings.

¹⁹ TK [23]557.2-6.

²⁰ TK [3]549.14-17, [20]556.22-25, [26]558.22, [28]560.11-13.

²¹ TK [24]558.11-12. Remarks struck out by Nietzsche, given in the Nietzsche Channel version of the text but not in the *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, located within TK [38]564.5-7, show him to have rejected eliminativism regarding teleology.

1. Nietzsche objects to what he seems to regard as Kant's maintenance of an ontology of individual substances, *Dinge*, rather than restricting himself to talk of *Form*.²² The rationale for this objection is unclear, since form is Kant's own principle of individuation for organisms, but what Nietzsche may be setting himself against is the notion that life 'itself' consists in something other than, and which lies beyond, the forms of purposiveness in which it *manifests* itself; the correct view being that not only is life visible to us only *as* form, but that purpose and form are essentially one and the *same*, '*identisch*'.²³ But, to repeat, it is not clear that Kant would disagree.

2. Much clearer is Nietzsche's objection to Kant's extrapolation from the purposiveness of individual organisms to a *system* of purposes in organic nature at large.²⁴ Nietzsche suggests that the *variety of forms* of purposiveness argues against their systematic unity: the very fact that there are so many different *ways* of being determinately purposive counts against the idea that all purposive things converge on a single telos.²⁵ What might be responsible for giving nature a false appearance of systematicity, Nietzsche suggests, is our interest in constructing hierarchies of classification for our own practical purposes.²⁶

3. In line with the rejection of a system of purposes, Nietzsche asserts that, even though life is defined by and consists in purposiveness, no *reason* for purposiveness or life itself can be given: life must be *presupposed* in order for there to be purposes, so life *itself* cannot be thought to *be* (or have) a purpose.²⁷ This sounds like an objection to Kant, and

²² TK [43]566.4-6, [46]570.18-19.

²³ TK [47]571.22-23, [47]572.2.

²⁴ TK [43]567.5-14.

²⁵ TK [46]569.20-24. This objection to Kant parallels Nietzsche's objection to Schopenhauer's inference to the singleness of will as an explanation of the natural order.

²⁶ TK [46]569.25-27.

²⁷ TK [46]570.2-4. See also TK [12]552.21 & 553.1-3, [15]554.3-6, [36]563.2-4.

Nietzsche seems to consider it as such, though again its bearing is oblique, since Kant does not hold that *Leben* is of intrinsic value. Kant's position is that nature, organic and inorganic, can and must be ascribed an actual purpose, *given* the fact of its existence, but only for pure practical purposes; since Kant denies that rational nature derives from organic existence, he can have nothing to say on the question of why the realization of the ends of reason should involve the existence of Nature in general or living beings in particular, any more than he contemplates answering the question of why there should be such a thing as *Erscheinung*. That we are organisms, and that there are any organisms at all, are for Kant simply framework-defining facts, transcendental circumstances.

Nietzsche's real disagreement with Kant at this level concerns the value of morality.

4. This leads to the fourth respect in which Nietzsche considers Kant to have gone astray. Kant claims that the attribution of purposiveness to organisms depends on an analogy drawn with our conception of rational agency, meaning (for Kant) that our conception of the organization of a living being as involving the subordination of a manifold to unity, is derived from our conception, known from our own case, of concepts (end-directed intentions) as the productive causes of objects (actions and resultant states of affairs).²⁸ Nietzsche wants to resist this thought, but he does so with hesitation,²⁹ and it is not hard to understand why this should be,³⁰ for Kant's claim is not that organisms can *in fact* be understood as the effects of a rational will. In so far as Nietzsche appears to appreciate that Kant's claim has only *als ob* status,³¹ and does not himself offer an

²⁸ TK [27]559.6-11 & 559.14-16.

²⁹ TK [3]549.14-17.

³⁰ A point reflected in Nietzsche's ambiguity in the 1868 notes between (i) affirming purposiveness-*qua*-*Leben* while rejecting teleology, and (ii) affirming teleology while rejecting Kant's account of what it consists in.

³¹ More precisely, Nietzsche becomes aware that this is Kant's view, having talked at the beginning of the notes as if Kant were on the side of an Intelligent Author of organic life:

alternative account of how we come to form, or of what it means to employ, the concept of purposiveness, or of what defines the manifold-unifying form that distinguishes living beings, the force of his criticism is indefinite.

Nietzsche does not, therefore, score many technical points against Kant, but the significance of his objections – as indicators of his own outlook – will emerge shortly.

What also emerges in the notes, though no big deal is yet made of it, is Nietzsche's rejection of the assumption that mechanistic explanation is philosophically privileged in the way that both Kant and Lange suppose.³² Since Kant and Lange offer different bases for this privilege, Nietzsche has two disagreements here. His disagreement with Kant is simple: he thinks that Lange has shown convincingly that Kant's (and therefore also Schopenhauer's) conception of *a priori* grounding (in terms of *a priori* subjective structures) is empty (a conclusion which of course many before Lange had also reached). If so, then Kant's basis for privileging mechanistic explanation as constitutive rather than merely regulative is removed.³³

Nietzsche's disagreement with Lange *vis à vis* mechanism is more complex. Lange, though critical of the philosophical naivety of materialism in its recent contemporary form, nonetheless upholds the epistemic sovereignty of the mathematically exact natural sciences, whose form of explanation is essentially mechanistic. According to Lange, our cognition is so thoroughly conditioned by our physiological apparatus and lacking in a

see TK [22]556.13-14, which repeats Kant's wording in the *Critique of Judgement*, §65 (5:375).

³² Nietzsche does accept that something is achieved by mechanism and not by teleology, but he does not accord it the same weight as do Kant and Lange. The following imply that teleology and mechanism are equally functions of our subjective constitution and epistemic limitation: TK [40]565.10-16, [30]561.16-17, [26]558.23, [30]561.16-17, [39]564.21, [40]565.1-5, [21]556.10-11, [40]565.8-10, [32]562.2-3.

³³ TK [30]561.16-17, [39]564.20-21, [40]565.8-12. Nietzsche commends Goethe's *Naturwissenschaft* for recognizing that mechanical nature is not bedrock: TK [30]561.13-18.

priori grounds that no claim to knowledge of things in themselves can be sustained, yet exact science is, *faute de mieux*, the best we can aspire to.³⁴ Concerning what formerly seemed an explanatory need for teleology, this according to Lange has been eliminated by Darwin's theory of natural selection.³⁵ This has the consequence, Lange explains, that everything of an axiological and hence supra-empirical nature – the Good, the Beautiful, and everything that Kant brings under the heading of an 'Idea' – needs to be relocated onto another (purely 'ideal') plane. Lange claims that this constitutes a gain – since it means that Value no longer suffers under the constraints of Fact – but this freedom comes at the cost of a high dose of irreality. In Lange's scheme, therefore, no place remains for teleology *in nature*, which belongs on neither side of his exhaustive divide between *Naturwissenschaft* and 'the Standpoint of the Ideal'; whatever else might remain of teleology is resolved by Lange into human aspiration.³⁶

3. Goethean elaboration

Thus far, what Nietzsche may be thought to have taken away from his encounter with Kant's 'Critique of Teleological Judgement' is the bare possibility of a view which would conserve the integrity of teleological and perhaps other axiologically significant forms of non-mechanistic conception, *contra* Lange, and without any admission of its epistemic inferiority in relation to the science of mathematically determinable matter, to that extent

³⁴ See Lange (1866, 272–274, 329–347, 491–496).

³⁵ Lange (1866, 397–405, 425). In Lange's view Darwin had brought to completion one of the great insights of ancient philosophy, namely 'die absolute Beseitigung des Zweckbegriffe' (44), chiefly attributable to Democritus but also the work of Empedocles.

³⁶ Lange's term, 'The Standpoint of the Ideal', was not introduced until the second edition (1873) of his *Geschichte*, but the idea itself, and the problems attached to it, are clear from the 1866 edition. Nietzsche's debts to Lange constitute a topic in its own right, which Stack (1983) and others have explored.

departing from Kant as well as Lange. Nietzsche's minimalistic position, so far, is simply that purposiveness is a *sui generis* species of form which some sort of subjective necessity leads us to apprehend and which does not arise from needs of explanation. The next question is of course how this notion might be developed, or rather, whether there is anything in the 1868 notes that shows Nietzsche beginning to do so.

Goethe is the only other figure from classical German philosophy whom Nietzsche discusses in the notes. Nietzsche's first reference to Goethe quotes his assertion that every living being is (at the same time) a plurality.³⁷ This is consistent with Kant's view, which Nietzsche has just rehearsed, that the individuality of an organism is not a matter of bare particularity but derives from and consists in its *organization*, the problem of teleology being to work out how unity and plurality combine in the specific case of a living being. So far, then, nothing has been added to Kant. But the note which immediately follows refers to Goethe's account of 'the origin of his [i.e. Goethe's] natural philosophy from a Kantian sentence', which Nietzsche describes as 'sehr wichtig',³⁸ gives a clue as to where Nietzsche is headed.

The 'kantischen Satze' to which Nietzsche is referring comes at the end of a two-page account of his scientific method which Goethe composed in 1817, 'Anschauende Urtheilskraft'. Goethe writes: 'Thus there was nothing further to prevent me from boldly embarking on this "adventure of reason" (as the Sage of Königsberg himself called it).'³⁹

Kant had used the phrase 'adventure of reason' in the *Critique of Judgement* in relation to Blumenbach's theory of a *Bildungstrieb*⁴⁰ – the hypothesis of a single formative force which expresses itself differentially in the order of organic forms – which Kant

³⁷ TK [22]556.18-21.

³⁸ TK [22]556.22-23.

³⁹ Goethe, 'Judgement through Intuitive Perception' [1817, pub. 1820] (1858, 425; 1995, 32).

⁴⁰ *Critique of Judgement*, 5:419n.

regards not only as consistent with his own theory of teleological judgement but also with favour, despite the fact that Blumenbach's conjecture is not provable in transcendental manner or confirmable in the manner of Newtonian physics. That Kant was willing to give Blumenbach his blessing is, as has been noted, somewhat surprising in view of Kant's decimation of a closely similar idea in his review of a work of Herder's only five years earlier. Kant had presumably come to see that the hypothesis itself (once detached from Herder's aggressive anti-Kantian naturalism) could be accommodated: Kant's view is now that there is a warrant, deriving from what he calls the 'reflective' power of judgement, for pursuing Blumenbach's hypothesis, on the condition that it is acknowledged that whatever results we might thereby reach can have only regulative status. Kant's newly introduced concept of reflective judgement bears the load of accounting for everything that falls between the *a priori* provable on the one hand, and rudimentary *a posteriori* truth on the other, and of thereby uniting these poles in our cognition. Teleological judgement, which begins with pre-scientific concepts such as that of a blade of grass, and which the new life sciences elaborate, is an exemplary instance of the reflective use of our power of judgement.⁴¹

The further details of Kant's theory need not be expanded on here. What matters is that Goethe believed that Kant, by dint of his approval of Blumenbach's 'adventure of reason', had endorsed by implication the programme of morphology to which Goethe devoted great energy (and which he, importantly, believed to be integral to the vision of creative nature that his own artistic endeavours presupposed). More precisely, what matters is that Nietzsche attached importance to this thought of Goethe's.

⁴¹ As Nietzsche records in the *Teleologie* notes, 'Zweckursache' are the subject of 'nur reflektirende Urtheile' (TK [40]565.15-16). Nietzsche employs the concept of regulative judgement at later points in the *Nachlaß*, with connotations of fictionality, hypotheticality, or merely methodological or presuppositional status: KGW VII-2.150-151 and KGW VII-2.264, both from 1884.

Now of course Nietzsche in 1868 knew full well that Goethe's *Naturwissenschaft*, measured in the terms of later and exact natural science, had not proved credible, and he cannot have supposed that the solution to the problem of teleology lay in a return to Goethe's own theories of the *Urpflanze* and so on.⁴² What Nietzsche must be attaching importance to instead is the vaguer notion that Kant's *Critique of Judgement* authorizes the *type* of aesthetically impressive world-imaging exemplified by Goethe's *Naturphilosophie* – that is, a mode of conception which is rooted in but goes beyond the rudimentary teleological judgements of ordinary understanding and is regulated in a way which answers to our interest in edification and aesthetic satisfaction as well as scientific understanding. Lest it be thought that this puts too much weight on (Nietzsche's reading of) a single stray *Satz* in Goethe, it should be noted that the short text from which the Goethe sentence comes is the direct continuation of a piece which immediately precedes it in the 1840 edition of Goethe's *Sämmtliche Werke* which Nietzsche was using, and which he cannot have overlooked, called 'Einwirkung der neuern Philosophie', which is a virtual hymn of praise to the *Critique of Judgement*, in which – here the fit with Nietzsche is especially neat – Goethe tells us that, as far he is concerned, what is of greatest interest in Kant's philosophy is contained in the *Critique of Judgement*, through which the *Critique of Pure Reason* is best approached.

Is this to say, then, that Nietzsche is in some way returning to Goethe's standpoint, even if he is not proposing to resurrect Goethe's natural science? Not quite. Or rather, by no means. Nietzsche is attracted to Goethe's idea that, when we appreciate the real meaning of the *Critique of Judgement*, new horizons open up – hence the 'sehr wichtig' – but there is

⁴² Though the possibility of something along these lines flares up at later points, e.g., GS 113.

a profound difference between the outlook which Nietzsche is beginning to formulate in 1868, and the position which Goethe had developed.

Kant supposes that in approximating to complete systematic knowledge of nature, and in conceptualizing certain products of nature as organisms, we are getting closer, albeit in some highly oblique sense, to Nature's supersensible substrate. Goethe believes that in undertaking the 'adventure of reason' licensed by Kant, we can justifiably suppose ourselves to be getting to the truth of things in a much more direct sense. That Goethe had a rigorous conception of his method in natural science, which if correct would support a realist construal of his results, is made clear in Eckart Förster's recent book on classical German philosophy.⁴³ Nietzsche indicates his appreciation of what is distinctive of Goethe's methodology, and in any case cannot have failed to recognize that Goethe believed organic life to have a deep intelligibility.⁴⁴ Goethe took the *Critique of Judgement* to have demonstrated Nature to be self-justifying and self-irradiating in a way that unites aesthetic satisfaction with scientific knowledge:

[T]he main ideas in the book were completely analogous to my earlier creations, work, and thought. The inner life of nature and art, their respective forms of activity as they arise from within – all this came to clear expression in the book [*Critique of Judgement*]. It was shown that the products of these two infinite worlds

⁴³ Förster (2012, chapter 11).

⁴⁴ Early in the notes Nietzsche refers to the possibility that teleology is explained by a force of unconscious purposiveness in nature (TK [4]550.6-8), but this supposition is later questioned (TK [18]555.3-8). Goethe's method is glossed at TK [29]560.21-24 as itself having an organic developmental character.

exist for their own sake, and that things found together may exist *for* one another, yet not through any intention.⁴⁵

And this cognitive transparency and existence-for-its-own-sake is exactly what Nietzsche believes *cannot* be found in organic nature:

Are purposive causes needed in order to explain the existence of a living being?

No, only in order to explain *how* it lives.

Do we need purposive causes in order to explain the life of some being?

No, 'life' is for us something completely dark [*etwas völlig dunkles*], on which consequently no light can be shed by means of purposive causes.⁴⁶

With reference to the last sub-clause, recall that Nietzsche told us earlier in the notes that 'Leben' cannot be detached from the *forms* of purposiveness in which it manifests itself (the two are 'identisch'). So if causation by purposes cannot dispel the complete darkness surrounding, or contained in, the concept of life, then nothing can do so, meaning that life just *is* – at least as far as its *concept* is concerned – entirely dark.

To confirm that Nietzsche means what he says – and moreover that he thinks that the darkness of life at the level of *thought* lies also at the level of *intuition*; thereby following Goethe in converting a Kantian *principle* of cognition into an *intuitive datum* – compare the above with the opening of his roughly contemporaneous notes 'On Schopenhauer':

⁴⁵ Goethe, 'The Influence of Modern Philosophy' [1817, pub. 1820] (1858, 419–421; 1995, 28–29, translation modified). The theistic conception of teleology as presupposing 'intention' to which Goethe refers is that of Wolff.

⁴⁶ TK [47]571.9-12.

An attempt to explain the world under an assumed factor.

The thing-in-itself receives one of its possible shapes.

The attempt failed.

Schopenhauer did not regard it as an attempt.

His thing-in-itself was deduced by him.

The reason why he did not see his own failure was that he did not want to sense the dark and contradictory elements [*daß er das Dunkle Widersprechende [...] nicht fühlen wollte*] in the region where individ.[uality] ends.

He distrusted his own judgement.

Passages.

The dark drive [*der dunkle Trieb*] brought under an apparatus of representation, manifests itself as world. This drive has not found a place under the *princip. indiv.*⁴⁷

What Nietzsche means by insisting on the darkness of life can be clarified by going back once again to Kant. What marks off the organic from the inorganic, Kant argues, is the manner in which certain empirical entities, beginning with blades of grass, exhibit a type of form which is *contingent* in relation to mechanism. In the notes Nietzsche returns several times to this idea of Kant's. Now when Kant speaks of 'contingency' as the mark of the organic, what he means by this is simply the negative and purely *epistemic* property just mentioned, i.e., of not being subsumable under the laws of mechanical nature; Kant's positive account of teleological form comes later. Nietzsche however reinterprets this contingency, taking it to signify, in addition to mechanical unsumability, a positive

⁴⁷ KGW I-4.418, 57[51] (2008, 1).

property, which is responsible for life's discursive impenetrability.⁴⁸ (Nietzsche characteristically uses the term, *Ausnahmefall*, instead of *Zufälligkeit*, to evoke this property.⁴⁹) So, as Nietzsche puts it, what makes life *stand out* from the rest of nature is precisely its *irrationality*, the *völlige Unvernunft* of purposiveness. The relation of organic to inorganic nature cannot, Nietzsche says, be bridged. Thus, even though we belong to Nature, we are bound to consider our emergence from it a kind of unaccountable Fall or (anti-)miracle.⁵⁰ The connection of Nietzsche's 'irrationality-of-life' thesis with his criticisms of Kant's theory of teleology – viz., his denial that natural purposes form a system, his claim that no reason can be given for the existence of life as such, and his assertion that the purposiveness of nature is not to be understood on any analogy with rational agency – should be clear.

My suggestion in sum is that Nietzsche's conception of a doctoral thesis on the problem of teleology in nature arose, not out of concern with methodology in the life sciences or the new issue of how to assimilate Darwin's discoveries philosophically, but because he thought, as Kant had claimed in the *Critique of Judgement*, that the topic of teleology holds a key to something of fundamental philosophical importance, though of course in Nietzsche's view this had not been comprehended correctly by Kant himself. What makes the 1868 notes significant, therefore, is not any specific novel thesis concerning teleology contained within them, but Nietzsche's appropriation of a Kantian idea and development of it to derive anti-Kantian conclusions. First, it allowed him to validate the general type of *dichterisch* intellectual construction which Goethe had asserted

⁴⁸ TK [7]551.20-21, [5]550.24-26, [12]553.5-11, [18]555.9-11), [24]558.9-10, [29]561.3-4, [46]569.32-33, [46]570.2-4, [52]575.10-11. The notion, or image, of man's existence as involving abrupt and incomprehensible discontinuity recurs in Nietzsche's writings, e.g., GM II, 16–17.

⁴⁹ This line of thought endures, and is intensified, in Nietzsche: see GS 109.

⁵⁰ TK [18]555.6-8.

could be derived from the *Critique of Judgement* and that Nietzsche had also found in Schopenhauer.⁵¹ Second, it allowed him to re-propound a Schopenhauerian insight, concerning the strict immanence of purposiveness, which Nietzsche had come to think the philosophical doctrines of *The World as Will and Representation* fail to encapsulate.

4. Nietzsche's philosophical outlook in 1868

The picture just given of how Nietzsche reshuffles the pack in the 1868 *Teleologie* notes – playing off Kant, Schopenhauer, Lange, and Goethe against one another – is intricate, so let me make another attempt at explaining what I take Nietzsche's view to be.

Nietzsche in 1868 found himself presented with four different stands on the problem of teleology, each of which implied a different epistemology, metaphysics, and axiology. They were, in the chronological order in which Nietzsche had encountered them: (1) Schopenhauer's realist-platonist theory of teleology, associated with an aprioristic transcendental idealism distilled from Kant, which is incompatible with Darwinism, and sub-serves an ethics of resignation. (2) Lange's repudiation of teleology, which takes encouragement from Darwin, and is accompanied by a naturalistically inflected semi-skeptical version of transcendental idealism, to which Lange appends a quasi-fictionalist theory of the 'Standpoint of the Ideal'. (3) Kant's account in the *Critique of Judgement*, which presupposes aprioristic transcendental idealism and adjures Schopenhauer's platonist realism, of the necessity of the assumption of purposiveness as an *a priori*, non-naturalizable condition of theoretical and practical cognition, which mediates the divide between Fact and Value. (4) Goethe's uptake of Kant as a basis for constructing a

⁵¹ See KGW III-3.74 from 1869, suggesting an absorption of Schopenhauer ('Wille') into Goethe (das 'Dämonische').

teleological world-image which fulfils simultaneously our *wissenschaftlich* and axiological needs, effectively identifying Fact and Value, and which aspires to see deeper into the heart of Nature than Kant believes possible, yet does not pass all the way through it and come out on its far side, in Schopenhauer's platonistic manner.

Nietzsche in the 1868 *Teleologie* notes, though still strongly sympathetic to Schopenhauer's resignationism, rejects the first and envisions a fusion of the others. On Nietzsche's account, Kant is right that teleological judgement, employment of the concept of purpose, is indispensable, *contra* Lange. To that extent Nietzsche in 1868 agrees with a central thesis of the *Critique of Judgement*.

However, Nietzsche also thinks Lange is right to reject Kant's general thesis that the necessities which govern our thinking can be known to have pure *a priori* grounds: the only type of ground that can be claimed for them is of the subjective, physiologically conditioned sort that Lange identifies as the ground of mechanistic explanation – a matter of our pre-experiential 'Organisation' or 'Ausgestaltung' or 'Einrichtung', as Lange variously calls it.⁵² From this it does not follow, however, that we can have any *insight* into the manner in which the subjective necessities of our thinking *arise* from the (physiological or other) contingencies which appear to condition them: the same skeptical considerations which, following Lange, show materialism to be philosophical naive, and thereby support a species of transcendental idealism, also count against the possibility of insight into the generation of necessities of thought out of inorganic nature. The fact that we know enough concerning the physiological conditioning of our cognition to know that we lack reason for thinking that the world we cognize has the type of independent reality

⁵² Lange does not define the relevant structures in the 1866 edition, and what he adds in a footnote to Book II, Chapter 1, in the 1873 edition, does not say what constitutes intrinsically a 'physico-psychological organisation [*die psycho-physische Einrichtung*]', but simply insists that it is at least something *phenomenal* (1950, 193–195n25).

that ordinary understanding (and dogmatic metaphysics) supposes, does not mean that our cognition can loop back on itself in such a way as to grasp its own origin or real essence.⁵³ The subjective necessities of our thought consequently remain unnaturalized, not because they are known to have inherently non-natural grounds – on that point, Lange was right and Kant wrong – but because we do not know how, or what it would be, to naturalize them. For this reason – and also because, in relation to the rest of nature, our existence has the character of an irrational, contingent, superfluous, gratuitous, even monstrous supplement – it makes no more sense to describe our cognition as a natural process than it does to conceive it as having pure *a priori* grounds.

This limit to naturalization coheres with the insight, to which Schopenhauer approximated but which Nietzsche can legitimately claim as his own, that life is inherently '*etwas völlig dunkles*'. From this it follows that teleology is no better grounded, but also no worse grounded, than mechanism, and, hence, that the two domains associated with each of these two modes of explanation, Fact and Value, need not be thought to float free of one another, and to merely coexist without contact or friction, in the problematic way proposed by Lange. Whether Fact and Value can be brought into positive connection is a separate and further matter.

If we summarize the position that Nietzsche has reached in 1868 regarding the problem of teleology, it comprises the following claims. They do not form a perfect fit, and it is not hard to see where pressure might be applied, but they hang together well enough to constitute a *prima facie* coherent outlook. (1) Living beings are in a wholly general sense ontologically dependent on the inorganic, which is governed by mechanical laws. (2) Purposiveness is, however, *irreducible to mechanism* (as *per* Kant, Schopenhauer, and

⁵³ Nietzsche had extracted this from his reading of Lange in 1866, citing his thesis that our real organization is as much unknown to us as real external things in his letter to von Gersdorff, end August 1866 (No. 517).

Goethe, and *contra* Lange). (3) The *mode* of ontological dependence of organic on inorganic nature cannot be grasped determinately. (4) Our apprehension of teleology in nature must, therefore, be regarded as grounded in a *subjective disposition* of our cognitive powers, which is determined in advance of experience, in the way Lange describes our cognition of mechanism as resting on a subjective 'Organisation'. (5) The distinctness of the subjective ground of our teleological cognition from that of our mechanical cognition is reflected in our *inability to unite* teleological and mechanical explanation. (6) The reality of teleology is *not inferior* to that of mechanism (in agreement with Schopenhauer and Goethe, and *contra* Kant and Lange).⁵⁴ (7) The domain of teleology, in addition to being ontologically dependent on the inorganic, is not axiologically self-grounding in the sense implied by Goethe's vision of Nature as existing for its own sake, as its own end-in-itself: the existence of the organic neither serves nor realizes any purpose. (8) Not only does organic nature lack the transparency and self-validation that Goethe sees in it, on the contrary it exhibits a positively dark and irrational character. Nietzsche thus agrees with Goethe that merely discursive conceptions of teleological judgement must give way to intuition, of a sort that Kant denies us, but Goethe's intuition of full illumination becomes in Nietzsche an intuition of complete darkness; whereby Nietzsche rescues an insight of Schopenhauer's from the inadequate doctrinal form he gave it.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Nietzsche later finds many further grounds for this conclusion, and for distancing himself from Lange, including (in the early 1870s) Afrikan Spir's radical rejection of the form of judgement as truth-apt. But these are not yet in play.

⁵⁵ My interpretation of the *Teleologie* notes disagrees with Emden's view (2017, chapter 7) that Nietzsche's occupation with teleology in 1868 (and later) is exhausted by the question of its 'explanatory power'. I take the following passages to imply that teleology is non-explanatory yet warranted: Teleology is *sui generis* and cannot be understood as a form of causality, at any rate, not any form of causality known to us (TK [22]556.13-14). Teleology should be conceived not as a mode of explanation but as a mode of contemplation (*Betrachtungsweise*) (TK [23]557.10). Contemplation according to purposive causes is contemplation according to forms (TK [47]570.1-3 & 571.1-25). Because the reality of purposiveness is independent of needs of explanation, teleology

This leaves a burning question: Is Nietzsche a *realist* about the darkness we intuit? For sure, as I have said, he does not *reduce* it to mere epistemic deprivation. But does he think it *really there* in the way Schopenhauer and Goethe think respectively that *Wille* and the light of Nature's self-creation are *really there*? The *Nachlaß* of the 1770s suggests that Nietzsche wanted to consider the question in some way ill-formed, or simply allow it to be left hanging,⁵⁶ and that no more definite philosophical stance can be extracted.

5. From 1868 to *The Birth of Tragedy*

Of overwhelming importance for Nietzsche, from roughly 1870 onwards, is the problem posed by Schopenhauer's conclusion that philosophical reflection demonstrates the necessity of resignation and life-denial. That this sets the general course of his philosophical development is as uncontroversial as anything gets to be in Nietzsche interpretation. The 1868 notes show Nietzsche to be aware of a connection between the topic of teleology and the existential issue which Schopenhauer put at the top of the philosophical agenda, but he does not yet pursue it in any detail,⁵⁷ and the reason for this is simply that, at that point, Nietzsche supposed himself content with Schopenhauer's

cannot be regarded as explanatorily defective: 'Ist es nöthig der Teleologie eine *erklärte* Welt entgegenzustellen? / Es ist nur eine andre Wirklichkeit auf einem abgegrenzten Gebiete nachzuweisen' (TK [14]553.19-24). Teleology is an aesthetic product (TK [17]554.21-22). Apprehension of purposive beings is continuous with aesthetic contemplation (TK [24]557.24-29). Teleology is an instance of reflective judgement (TK [36]563.15-16). Teleology has a place within human ideas and is an aesthetic product (TK [17]554.19-22). Goethe's method represents the 'right human way' of regarding teleology (TK [29]560.23-24, [30]561.14-18).

⁵⁶ See in particular KGW IV-2.445-446 [19], KGW IV-2.452-453 [19]108, and KGW IV-2.446 [19]69, from October-December 1876.

⁵⁷ Nietzsche already has a sense that what is at issue in the *Pessimismusstreit* is not subject to adjudication in traditional philosophical terms: 'Die Teleologie ist wie der Optimismus ein ästhetisches Produkt' (TK [17]554.21-22).

resignationism – though his understanding of what it consists in is sufficiently peculiar for it to be no surprise that, within a very short time, it ceases to qualify as a solution and instead comes to set Nietzsche a task.⁵⁸ And once Nietzsche had realized that what by his lights is valuable in Schopenhauer's vision is not captured in Schopenhauer's doctrines, we can see how the lesson he had taken in 1868 from the *Critique of Judgement* would have acquired fresh importance for him.

If the problem is that Schopenhauer claims to have shown, on a basis stemming from Kant's idealism and destruction of metaphysics, that systematic philosophical reflection must conclude with the negation of all end-directedness, then the thesis of the *Critique of Judgement* that purposiveness is an irrevocable condition of thought and agency allows Nietzsche to retort to Schopenhauer that our commitment to purposiveness is unconditional and as such validates life-affirmation – at least in the sense of formally entailing its necessity, whatever determinate content it might require, and whether or not we are as a matter of fact up to the job of carrying it through. The crucial difference of the Kantian thesis of the necessity of purposiveness from Schopenhauer's thesis that affirmation of the *Wille zum Leben* is (as good as) unavoidable, is that Schopenhauer's *Wille* is intrinsically contra-purposive in the sense of being in itself indifferent to purposes, whereby it irrealizes the ends that agents set themselves. Kant's thesis has the opposite implication. The primacy of *Leben-als-Zweckmäßigkeit* which (I am suggesting) Nietzsche derived from the *Critique of Judgement* makes Schopenhauer's negation of purposiveness strictly unthinkable; were the term not so heavily freighted, Nietzsche might be described as having taken on a transcendental commitment.

⁵⁸ From the outset Nietzsche's reception of Schopenhauer was highly idiosyncratic: see his letters to Mushacke, 11 July 1866 (No. 511), and 16 January 1867 (No. 536). Nietzsche's peculiarly life-affirmative reception of Schopenhauer endured into 'Schopenhauer as Educator' (1874). His abandonment of Schopenhauer was no simple doctrinal matter.

On the view that Nietzsche had formed in 1868, I suggested, the failure to comprehend life discursively is matched by an intuitive achievement, of life as *etwas völlig dunkles*. Nietzsche did not know in 1868 how to exploit this positive result of his engagement with Kant's theory of teleology, but *The Birth of Tragedy* shows he has found a way of doing so.⁵⁹ Whereas Goethe would have regarded the idea that Nature in itself is cognitively impenetrable as falsifying teleology, and even Kant would have resisted the notion, Nietzsche's strategy in *The Birth of Tragedy* inverts this standpoint: absolute darkness is now what *motivates* aesthetico-teleological speculative construction. To confront it is not simply to recognize our ignorance, rather it gives us *Stoff* to work with in our attempt to make darkness visible, in a way superior to Schopenhauer. So there is a path from the darkness of life in 1868 to the 'light-images', *Lichtbilder*, which, *The Birth of Tragedy* tells us, constitute the metaphysical world-images behind which lies the abyss of the Dionysian.⁶⁰

Here is a more detailed reconstruction of the way in which Nietzsche's thoughts in 1868 are developed in 1872. Nietzsche adverts in the *Teleologie* notes to the concept of an intuitive intellect, which Kant treats as a correlate of teleological judgement.⁶¹ The details of this concept can be left aside, the key point being that it is a mode of cognition, superior to common or garden empirical knowing, which Kant supposes we do not have, and which could only be possessed by a being that creates the very world that it cognizes, i.e. a divinity. In the text of Goethe's referred to earlier, 'Anschauende Urtheilskraft' – the one Nietzsche calls 'sehr wichtig' – it is argued, as the title implies, that we *do* possess the kind

⁵⁹ This point is made in Hill (2003, chapter 3), to which I am indebted. The *Nachlaß* from the period asserts the necessity of melding philosophy with art, while also showing Nietzsche uncertain as to what this amounts to.

⁶⁰ BT 9 (KGW III-1.61 and III-1.63).

⁶¹ Admittedly only by implication – TK [52]575.1-11 – but there is enough to show that Nietzsche grasps Kant's logic.

of cognitive capacity that Kant denies us, even though we do not create the world that we cognize.⁶² If so, then intuitive intellection is not the prerogative of a divine being. Goethe thinks that this cognitive power is what provides the ground of our aesthetic and teleological world-imaging, again *contra* Kant. Thus, whereas when Kant claims that the aesthetic and teleological can be traced back to a single source in our power of judgement, he has in mind the *principle* governing its reflective employment, Goethe translates this into the *intuitive* employment of the power of judgement, putting us in a position to understand Nature in the way that God understands it (or rather, with Goethe's Spinozism factored in, as it understands itself), a form of understanding which is also aesthetic.⁶³

Now I claimed that Nietzsche, even though he has no interest in returning to Goethe's natural science, is attracted by Goethe's idea that the *Critique of Judgement* provides a basis for launching new philosophical ventures. And he also thinks, I suggested, that there is a non-discursive intuition to be had of the darkness of life. Putting these together, we arrive at the idea that, when in *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche postulates a divine world-artist, in whose creative activity we participate by means of the Dionysian, he has pursued a line of thought stemming from Kant and Goethe, and has formed a conception of the unitary ground of the world which – in opposition to Schopenhauer's *Wille* – underwrites rather than undermines purposiveness. The intuitive intellect in Kant – the Idea that we must form of the metaphysical ground of the world-order – and the power of intuitive judgement in Goethe – the means by which we gain knowledge of the archetypes lying at the source of Nature – become in Nietzsche the creative ground of Nature and the experiential means by which we temporarily inhabit (and thereby cognize)

⁶² Again see Förster (2012).

⁶³ TK [17]554.21-22.

it.⁶⁴ *The Birth of Tragedy* has therefore elaborated two things that were present in 1868 – the (quasi-Kantian) commitment to purposiveness, and the intuition of darkness (Nietzsche's inversion of Goethe)⁶⁵ – and allowed purposiveness to enter at two points: at that of metaphysical *content*, as an essential characteristic of the real ground of Nature, and at a *metaphilosophical* level, in so far as the principle of purposiveness is what provides the warrant for Nietzsche's artist's metaphysics (a relation which is reciprocal, in so far as the metaphysics motivates in turn the metaphilosophical principle).

6. After *The Birth of Tragedy*

At the end of a lengthy discussion of what were, it may be objected, only a few thoughts scribbled down in the service of what was little more than a passing intellectual fantasy which Nietzsche's temporary removal from academia had allowed him to indulge, but which he had no real intention of following through, and which need to be squeezed hard to yield any philosophical juice – consisting thus far only in the obscure metaphysical metaphors of *BT* – we have barely reached the beginning of Nietzsche's philosophy as such. Only now, it may be said, do the real questions begin. What was Nietzsche's mature view of teleology and mechanism? Of what nature is his hypothesis of the will to power? How did Nietzsche sort out the messy position on Kant, naturalism, and questions of epistemology that he had inherited from Lange? What does his theory of drives amount to? And so on.

⁶⁴ Teleology is thereby expanded beyond the contracted form of purely 'internal' organic purposiveness that Nietzsche isolates in 1868, i.e., it is allowed to take 'external' forms.

⁶⁵ See the brief but suggestive remarks on Nietzsche (and Heidegger) in Zuckert (2007, 12n10, 266, 384, and 385n), with which my discussion is aligned.

It is widely supposed that we should draw a line somewhere in the 1870s and think of Nietzsche's early period, centred on *The Birth of Tragedy*, as not yet philosophically well-formed, and regard him as achieving philosophical order and substance only later in the day. It seems to me, however, that the reverse is closer to the truth. The early phase, I have suggested, is amenable to reconstruction. In relation to Nietzsche's historical context, we can make sense of the metaphilosophical outlook that governs his thinking. *The Birth of Tragedy* draws together and sets in equilibrium several legacies: Kantian-Schopenhauerian skepticism regarding metaphysics; a neo-Kantian epistemology that accommodates the limited truth in philosophical naturalism; the Goethean aspiration to a scientific-aesthetic world-vision; and the need to respond to the problem of pessimism, for which Schopenhauerian *Willensmetaphysik* provides a resource. The real puzzles begin thereafter, when Nietzsche has, it would seem, abandoned the philosophical practice of *The Birth of Tragedy*. That is when the need for a presiding metaphilosophical conception is keenly felt and hard to fulfil: what unifies the manifold of commitments and investments that Nietzsche continues to keep in play, and prevents them from dissolving into a patchwork?

My hypothesis, though of course I cannot begin to substantiate it here, is that Nietzsche's metaphilosophical outlook does not, in fact, alter in fundamental respects at any later point. For a period Nietzsche remained suspended between Schopenhauer's philosophy, with its imponderable depths, and the ultimately unsatisfactory, merely transitional standpoint advocated by Lange. Nietzsche's own philosophical development began in 1868 with his internalization of Kant's notion that philosophical reflection must proceed in accordance with what the *Critique of Judgement* calls the principle of purposiveness, which authorizes speculative construction on the condition that it is understood as having the same degree of validity and necessity as teleological conception and aesthetic apprehension, a species of correctness which is not, however, in the final

analysis, inferior to any other. This overarching conception is what links Nietzsche's critiques of morality and metaphysics to his notions of will to power and other constructive undertakings: the former expose obstacles to purposiveness, and the latter construct vehicles for its realization. From the very beginning, Nietzsche's understanding of purposiveness was not Kant's, but the form of his philosophical reflection bears a Kantian stamp.⁶⁶

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⁶⁶ This requires that Nietzsche not have later repudiated purposiveness in favour of mechanism. I cannot do more here than state my view, but on my account, Nietzsche does not later revisit the problem he confronted in 1868 or revise his understanding of its implications. What Nietzsche later continues to target is the *rationalization* of purposiveness, its assimilation to rational agency, i.e., the intellectualist construal of purposivity to which he objected in 1868. Exactly this is said in the *Nachlaß* from 1882, KGW VII-1.324.

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