

Idealism and Naturalism in the Nineteenth Century

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1. Introduction

The nineteenth century may be regarded as comprising the first chapter in the story, as it must appear to us now, of idealism's long-term decline and of the eventual ascent within the analytic tradition of a confident and sophisticated naturalism.¹ The chief landmarks of both developments are fairly clear. The former begins with Kant's *Critical Philosophy* and the great systems of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, a rich legacy which is re-explored continuously over the course of the century and provides the basis for myriad novel positions, leading in the final quarter of the nineteenth century to a renaissance of absolute idealism in Anglo-American philosophy. The story of the growth of naturalism may be taken to begin with Auguste Comte and to develop through John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer to Richard Avenarius and Ernst Mach, receiving an important impetus from the mid-century German materialism of Karl Vogt, Ludwig Büchner, Jacob Moleschott and Heinrich Czolbe (see Gregory 1977), as well as of course, after the publication of *The Origin of Species* in 1859, Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection, which found forceful advocates in figures such as Thomas Henry Huxley and Ernst Haeckel. The neo-Kantian development which established itself in Germany from the 1860s and 1870s onwards has a place in the trajectories of both idealism and naturalism.

Both of these narratives, sketched here in the briefest outline, require elaboration not merely through the addition of numerous other and less salient figures and movements but also through an account of their context: namely, the exponential growth of scientific knowledge witnessed in the nineteenth century, especially in physics, physiology and experimental psychology, together with the profound cultural shift accompanying the achievements and industrial applications of modern science, to which belongs the erosion of the institutional bases of Christian theism and demise of its intellectual authority. Closely bound up with these developments is the cultural dissemination of what might be called 'practical naturalism' – the view, reborn with the Enlightenment, that the true Good is of an exclusively worldly nature and its realisation fostered by scientific modernity.

What I propose to do in this chapter, in place of attempting to fill out the historical detail of each of the developments independently, is to concentrate on instances where they interact or come into significant contact. More exactly, my focus will be on philosophers of the period who did not simply and straightforwardly pursue either of the two tendencies but instead regarded the relation of natural scientific knowledge to metaphysical speculation as posing a problem not to be solved by coming down simply on

one side rather than the other and so advanced positions which responded in a creative fashion to the competing claims of idealism and naturalism, in some cases offering a kind of fusion. This approach, I will suggest, allows us to identify what it was that formed for nineteenth-century philosophy, to the extent that one can generalise over such a period, the crux of the opposition of idealism and naturalism. Because the main locus of developments at the intersection of idealism and naturalism was Germany, the figures I shall discuss belong chiefly to German philosophy. The order of discussion is loosely chronological but I shall depart from the strict historical sequence where doing so helps to give the historical territory a clearer systematic shape.

2. Nature *versus* Freedom: Classical German Philosophy

Although anticipations can be located in early modern and even ancient philosophy, the opposition of idealism and naturalism, as it was understood in the nineteenth century, had its origin in classical German philosophy. Kant famously asserts in the Introduction to the *Critique of Judgement* of 1790 that ‘there is an incalculable gulf fixed between the domain of the concept of nature, as the sensible, and the domain of the concept of freedom, as the supersensible’ (Kant [1790] 2000: 63). While conceding that something must be done by way of constructing a connecting link from the one domain to the other – the overarching aim of the third *Critique*, Kant says, is to show that ‘nature must be conceived in such a way that the lawfulness of its form is at least in agreement with the possibility of ends that are to be realised in it in accordance with the laws of freedom’ – Kant regards it as inconceivable, for human as opposed to divine reason, that Nature and Freedom should be cognised as comprising two parts of a single unified reality.

This opposition of ontological realms – or, to the extent that our concern is with representations rather than their objects, of two domains of concepts and judgement – corresponds to and underpins the opposition of idealism and naturalism as philosophical or metaphysical positions. In so far as Nature and Freedom are considered to be not contiguous, mutually cohering realities but rather – by virtue of the principles and forms of explanation which they mandate – in metaphysical competition, they provide the basis for an exclusive disjunction: *either* we take the side of Nature, yielding the thesis that all existents are subject to natural law and that all true explanation is natural scientific in form; *or* we take that of Freedom, yielding the denial that Nature, as conceived in the terms of empirical natural science, is ontologically or explanatorily comprehensive and the affirmation that human subjectivity is non-natural yet irreducibly real. A more ambitious form of idealism will add that subjectivity itself supplies the grounds, if not ontological then at least conceptual, of Nature. On each alternative, the competition of Nature and Freedom is resolved by taking one of the pair to encompass the other.

Kant himself does not draw up the philosophical geography in exactly these terms. The highest opposition of (meta)philosophical positions recognised by Kant is that of transcendental idealism, his own standpoint, to transcendental realism, whose forms are legion and of which naturalism is only one. Nor is naturalism, in the sense that the term has for us now, regarded by Kant as of special interest and importance. Kant concerns himself variously with materialism, scepticism, empiricism and other standpoints which deny validity to pure reason and so annul the reality of Freedom and he in addition recognises an entrenched tendency in human reason (at the level of natural consciousness as much as that of philosophical reflection) to assimilate all objects of thought to empirical objects, but he does not envisage a position which seeks to appropriate philosophically the epistemological prestige of the natural sciences

in the manner characteristic of naturalism as we now know it. In large part this is because Kant took his own position to accommodate as fully as can reasonably be demanded the distinctive epistemic authority of natural science: subsequent to the *Critique*, in the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* of 1786 and in the notes published as *Opus Postumum*, Kant attempted to show that his transcendental analysis of the conditions of experience could be extended to provide natural science with its basic concepts and principles.

Kant's organisation of the field of philosophical debate makes sense to the extent that one keeps in view and wishes to take issue with the huge number of 'dogmatic' but non-naturalistic pre-Kantian metaphysical positions, from Plato to Leibniz, in order to be able to present transcendental idealism as a novel, comprehensive and final solution to the problems of philosophy. But once the lesson of Kant's critique of supersensible metaphysics has been absorbed – once it has been accepted that metaphysics as an enterprise of theoretical reason is a vain endeavour, which can survive only in the attenuated form of transcendental idealism's system of principles of possible experience – and when in addition it is recognised that Kantian idealism is open to challenge from proto-naturalistic, Humean and Spinozistic quarters, as had been demonstrated in the early reception of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and *Critique of Practical Reason*, the philosophical landscape changes. We then arrive at a view according to which the philosophical options divide cleanly and exhaustively between idealism and naturalism.

This is the picture presented by Fichte, whom we find maintaining in 1797 that at the ultimate limit of philosophical reflection an opposition is confronted between 'idealism' – which, according to Fichte, is necessarily transcendental in character and treats the free non-empirical subject as the universal philosophical *explanans* – and 'dogmatism', defined by its commitment to explaining subjectivity in terms of 'things', *Sachen*, these being either empirically real natural objects or modelled closely on them (see Fichte [1797] 1994: 12–25; and Martin 1997: 36–42). Fichte argues that the choice between these two standpoints, which comprise the only ones possible, is all-decisive, that is, it determines the results that we will reach in all other contexts of philosophical reflection. And it cannot, according to Fichte, be made on grounds of theoretical reason, for it is entirely possible to construe the world on the basis of mere *Sachen* – doing so will fail to reconstruct the self-positing *Ich* affirmed by idealism, but the significance of this failure cannot, by means of purely theoretical reflection, be communicated to the dogmatic standpoint, which must consequently be granted internal consistency.

In the course of German idealism's further development, which interweaves with German Romanticism, Fichte's disjunction is held to have been overcome. Schelling's more comprehensive idealism or *Real-Idealismus* obviates the need for an original choice of standpoints by refusing to grant in the first place the coherence of the naturalist's conception of natural phenomena as *Sachen*. Within Schelling's idealism, nature is treated in terms of idealist categories, and the a priori reflection which, he holds, establishes that Nature in the sense of *natura naturans* is infinite pure activity joins seamlessly with scientific enquiry, which reveals natural phenomena, from the most basic forces of light, electricity and magnetism up to the complex functions of natural organisms, to be stages belonging to a single unified process which culminates in – for it is directed towards – the coming-into-existence of self-consciousness. The *Naturphilosophie* of Hegel's *Encyclopaedia*, although proceeding in terms of a different set of philosophical categories from Schelling – Hegel's emphasis is on the immanent rationality, in the sense defined by his *Logic*, of Nature – borrows its pattern from Schelling.

Clearly, such philosophy had gone strikingly far beyond Kant. The 'system of natural

causes' affirmed in the third *Critique* permitted judgements about nature to be *regulated* by teleological ideas, but by no means did Kant allow the very existence of Nature to be 'deduced' from Freedom: Kant's aim had been merely and modestly to coordinate Nature and Freedom, without implying their knowable ontological unity, let alone that Freedom is constitutive of Nature and that it is possible for us to explain the existence of mechanism in teleological terms.

At the time of Hegel's death in 1831 – when his system, though subject to much dispute, had no rival of equal strength – the most original, progressive and widely endorsed philosophical developments in Germany embraced, therefore, an idealistic resolution of the antinomy of Nature and Freedom. The *Naturphilosophie* of absolute idealism thus joined with the tradition of romantic science, indebted to Johann Gottfried Herder and enjoying the prestigious sanction of Goethe, pursued by such creative figures as Lorenz Oken, Franz von Baader, Karl August Eschenmayer and Gotthilf von Schubert. Had natural science in the nineteenth century followed the course projected for it by *Naturphilosophie*, the idealism/naturalism opposition would have disappeared from view and the notion that natural science threatens the reality of autonomous subjectivity would have come to be regarded as an error belonging to a more limited stage of philosophical understanding.

This was not, of course, how things turned out; the union of idealist philosophy and a posteriori enquiry into nature did not endure. It is important, however, to get this fact into focus. Romantic ideas about nature did not disappear or lose currency abruptly or at any clearly determinable point. They remained strongly influential, to such an extent that from the point of view of many nineteenth-century figures – Alexander von Humboldt, Gustav Theodor Fechner and Haeckel provide examples – the elements of their thought that we would consider genuinely 'scientific' join inseparably with those that we would call 'romantic'. This was not because the notion of a line of demarcation between science and pseudo-science was alien to the nineteenth century. Nineteenth-century thought about nature, even in the early decades, was not credulous or undisciplined and thinkers for whom the schemas and speculations of *Naturphilosophie* had intellectual appeal were not ignoring the evidence of their senses. The question of what counts as genuine empirical explanation had been a preoccupation of early modern philosophy ever since the overthrow of Aristotelianism, and Kant had affirmed the epistemological priority (for human minds) of mechanical over teleological explanation, and even laid down mathematisation as a stringent condition of natural scientific status. The extensive debates about vitalism and galvanism showed how fiercely the empirical credentials of theoretical entities could be contested. The crucial point, rather, is that even for those thinkers to whom it was as clear as it is to us now that science does not consist in grasping divine ideation and for whom the systems of German idealism represented so much verbal fabrication, the accumulated body of scientific knowledge did not determine sharply, in the way that it presumably does for us now, the scientificity of a given theoretical proposal.

That said, it remains the case that, for a variety of reasons, the notion that philosophical reflection can reach all the way down to empirical particularity and contribute to the content of natural science fell by the wayside: Hegel's system failed to retain its power of conviction for the following generation, *naturphilosophisch* forms of explanation came to seem fruitless and over the course of the century nature increasingly shook itself free of romantic attributes. In so far as nineteenth-century thinkers rejected the programme of uniting romantic speculation about nature with a theory of the Absolute and thereby abandoned the German idealist integration of Nature and Freedom, the opposition of idealism and naturalism re-presented itself.

3. After Hegel

If we ask where the earliest instance of a confrontation between idealism and naturalism is to be found, an obvious candidate is Ludwig Feuerbach, who provides an important bridging element in the transition from Hegel's idealism to Marx's materialism. In his first book, *Thoughts on Death and Immortality* of 1830, Feuerbach attacked the Christian doctrine of personal immortality, insisting on the bodily existence of the self, and naturalistic elements became increasingly prominent in the course of his critical appropriation of Hegel's thought for emancipatory humanist purposes, in particular in his introduction of the foundational concept of man's 'species-being', *Gattungswesen*.

Feuerbach's writings gave powerful encouragement to the German materialists, with whom Feuerbach later associated himself. It should be emphasised, however, that the naturalism of Feuerbach and that of the Young Hegelians more generally was of a tempered sort. It involved of course repudiation of the supernatural entities of Christian theology, but, once those had been expelled, there was little more to be gained for the purposes of radical social theory by emphasising man's embeddedness in the natural order; on the contrary, if human self-realisation constitutes the ideal for our endeavours, then man needs to be well distinguished from the rest of nature. Thus Feuerbach declared, in terms that a thorough-going naturalist would scarcely be able to accept, that: 'Man is not a particular being, like the animals, but a universal being . . . an unlimited and free being . . . this freedom and universality extend themselves over man's total being' ([1843] 1986: 69).

In addition, although foundational issues of epistemology and metaphysics were implicated in its attempt to provide an account of the conditions for human self-realisation – Feuerbach himself was committed to an unrefined empiricist identification of the real with the 'sensuous' ([1843] 1986: 49–51) – Young Hegelianism fought its battles chiefly not on the terrain of general metaphysics but rather of theology, Biblical criticism, philosophy of history and political thought. The materialist theory of history advanced by Marx, which locates man's original distinction from animals in his production of his means of subsistence and implies a strong continuity of human development with natural history, is not typical of Young Hegelianism but rather signalled his break from it (see Marx and Engels [1845–46] 1970: 37–52).

It is notable more generally that a number of the positions which pitted themselves explicitly against idealism in the first half of the nineteenth century were neither motivated by, nor pointed in the direction of, a naturalistic world-view. To take two central instances which have had lasting influence, Schelling's critique in his late 'positive' philosophy of Hegel's rationalism and Søren Kierkegaard's repudiation of the Hegelian System were both directed, on the contrary, to religious ends. Schelling and Kierkegaard both maintained the irreducibility of being to conceptuality and so affirmed that reality outstrips idealist comprehension, but for neither was being in the relevant sense a possible object of natural scientific investigation. Schelling's dark reflections on *Seyn*, inspired by Jacob Boehme, were intended to explain how the existence of Nature is related to that of God and to reconcile the unity of a necessary being with the multiplicity of the contingent phenomenal world. For Kierkegaard the value of the thought that Being eludes conceptualisation lay in the opening that it gave to recognition of the individual's 'existing subjectivity' as philosophically ultimate. The possibility of undertaking a critique of idealism without endorsing naturalism was facilitated by an identification of idealism with Hegel's system,

rejection of which was compatible with embracing other forms of (ideally inclined) anti-naturalism. Thus Schelling may be described, it has been suggested, as providing a 'self-critique of idealism', while Kierkegaard is standardly regarded as heralding twentieth-century existentialism.

4. Schopenhauer

To locate a more pointed expression of the naturalistic vision – untrammelled by emancipatory social concerns and free from any taint of Hegelian idealism – we should look before Feuerbach to Schopenhauer.

When the term German idealism is employed in its broadest sense, Schopenhauer is himself included within that movement. This has a plain justification, for the very title of his main work informs us that the world is to be regarded, in one of its two aspects, as mere 'representation', and Kant's theories are drawn on liberally by Schopenhauer in his account of phenomenal reality. But of deeper importance for the purpose of tracking long-term, underlying tendencies of philosophical development is the fact that the thought which stands at the centre of Schopenhauer's philosophical system is profoundly in accord with the outlook of modern naturalism.

The thesis that the world in its second, ontologically basic aspect is *Wille* contradicts Kant's conception of the order of things no less than it does those of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. Kant had defined 'will' as the faculty of practical reason and the final architecture of Kant's Critical system locates man, on account of his capacity for pure practical reason, that is, morality, at the very pinnacle of creation. Kant tells us in the third *Critique* that the whole of nature may be regarded as having a *telos*, as constituting 'a system in accordance with the rule of ends, to which idea all of the mechanism of nature in accordance with principles of reason must now be subordinated' (Kant [1790] 2000: 250). Schopenhauer, while agreeing that man occupies a distinctive and privileged position in the order of things, departs from Kant on two key points.

First, Schopenhauer holds that there is fundamental metaphysical continuity between human beings and other organisms, indeed, empirical entities in general. Kant had reasoned in such a way that only rational subjects come to be regarded as possessing, in addition to their 'empirical character', an 'intelligible character' falling outside the bounds of empirical causality. Schopenhauer, in contrast, asserts that all empirical entities are to be regarded as manifestations of an intelligible character (Schopenhauer [1818/1844] 1966: 1: 156): persons and stones are equally objectifications of *Wille*, differing merely in the 'adequacy' of the 'grade' of objectivity possessed by the 'Idea' which defines the natural kind to which they belong; the 'deliberate conduct of man' differs from 'blindly acting forces of nature' only in 'degree' (1: 110).

Second, although Schopenhauer accepts the teleological description of natural phenomena and even agrees with Romantic-idealist *Naturphilosophie* that the natural world in its entirety must be considered a teleological whole (1: 153–61), there can be no sense in which the existence of man or anything else instantiates genuine purposiveness for Schopenhauer, for the very nature of *Wille* is inconsistent with the ultimate reality of any *Zweck*. That nature exhibits teleological order merely reflects the fact that nature expresses 'the identity of the *one* and indivisible will in all its very varied phenomena' (1: 119) and this One Will is 'a striving without aim', *ein Streben ohne Ziel* (1: 321), the inner nature of which is not characterised by purposiveness, which presupposes determination and so is internal to the sphere of representation: 'willing as a whole has no end in

view' (1: 165). It is true therefore, as Kant says, that nature must be considered a system, but it is subordinated to no 'principle of reason'.

In accordance with this schema, Schopenhauer, recalling Hume, treats reason as a mere capacity for abstraction and man's intellect as a tool of the will, regarding human motivation in general as strictly subservient to natural drives and human action as strictly necessitated: knowledge 'enters as an expedient required at this stage of the will's objectification for the preservation of the individual and the propagation of the species' (1: 150). Schopenhauer's anticipations of Freud, with respect to the general tenor of his anthropological view as well as particular psychological hypotheses, have received frequent comment (and see Chapter 11 in this volume).

Although the final basis of the metaphysics of will is a priori, in so far as it derives from a necessary component of inner self-awareness, Schopenhauer maintains that, once we are in possession of this essential cognitive key, knowledge of the non-purposive character of *Wille* becomes available also a posteriori, through examination of the 'physiognomy' of natural phenomena (see Schopenhauer [1836] 1992), not least the quality of human experience – the predominantly painful, conflictual and pointless character of what proceeds in the phenomenal world is merely our apprehension a posteriori of the fact that purposiveness is a priori categorially alien to *Wille*.

In so far as idealism is defined less by a thesis of objects' mind-dependence than by the assertion that reality is ultimately akin to man's rational mind and therefore congenial to his exercise of capacities of freedom and reason which transcend his merely animal nature, Schopenhauer's philosophy is aggressively anti-idealistic: his system amounts to an assertion of the truth of naturalism in the language and terms of modern idealism. This becomes clear when it is reflected that all that is required in order to give Schopenhauer's metaphysics a bona fide naturalistic character is the naturalisation of *Wille*: if this ontological substrate is brought within the scope of natural science and thus the line between science and metaphysics pushed back, then the 'world as will' becomes the scientific image of a fully naturalised world and the 'world as representation' its manifest image.

Schopenhauer's philosophy did not draw attention or exert its influence until the middle of the nineteenth century and, when it did so, this consisted not in the direct fostering of naturalistic philosophical doctrine – the metaphysical idealistic character of his system ruled that out – but rather in making it an urgent topic of philosophical debate whether the nature of reality warrants optimism or pessimism. The connection with idealism and naturalism was, however, close to the surface. The genius of Schopenhauer's position lay in its suggestion that when Kantian idealism is properly thought through it agrees on fundamental points with naturalism, pace Hegel and rationalistic German idealism, just as naturalism, pushed to the limit, must acknowledge that empirical explanation needs to be completed with a metaphysical thesis; and that the upshot of this union is a practical and axiological outlook which merits the title of pessimism or, as Nietzsche later termed it, nihilism.

The challenge set by Schopenhauer was, therefore, to discover a way of sustaining optimism or at least avoiding pessimism without returning to Christianity or its Hegelian variant or subscribing to the programme of Comtean positivism, the naïvety of which Schopenhauer had exposed. Ever since the Enlightenment, the promise of naturalism, trumpeted by materialist *philosophes* such as Julien Offray de La Mettrie and Baron d'Holbach, had been to deliver unprecedented quantities of human happiness through the elimination of false supernaturalisms and the effective instrumentalisation of natural

causes. This practical dimension was regarded not as an incidental gain but as integral to the rationality of the naturalistic world-view: it is no less pronounced in nineteenth-century British figures such as Mill and Spencer and naturalists with intentions of radical social and political reform such as Marx, Mikhail Bakunin and Eugen Dühring. But if, as Schopenhauer maintains, analysis reveals the very structure of Nature in man to be counter-hedonic, then naturalism is undermined on its own axiological territory and must accordingly restrict its claims of justification to the theoretical sphere. In this respect Schopenhauer, just as he turned idealism upside down, did the same with naturalism, pitting its own metaphysical implications against its self-association with practical fulfilment.

5. Hartmann

I now turn to consider a set of thinkers from the second half of the nineteenth century who engaged with the dichotomy of idealism and naturalism.

The first of these is Eduard von Hartmann, whose reception in academic quarters was generally unfavourable, but who enjoyed extraordinary popularity with the general public after the appearance in 1868 of his *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, a work which passed through eleven editions in its author's lifetime and continued to generate commentary well into the early twentieth century.

Hartmann's overarching description of his philosophy is that of a synthesis of the philosophies of Hegel and Schopenhauer (Hartmann [1868] 1931: 1: 4–5, 27–32, 117–25). The aim of uniting the optimistic arch-rationalist Hegel with the irrationalist arch-pessimist Schopenhauer may appear an extreme case of the nineteenth century's tendency to syncretistic eclecticism, but we can begin to appreciate why Hartmann's project is not arbitrary by considering the points at which Schopenhauer's differentiation of his position from that of Hegel betrays weaknesses.

Schopenhauer's basic dualism of, on the one hand, undifferentiated, impredicable, pre-empirical *Wille* and, on the other, a realm of spatio-temporal objects individuated and locked into mechanical causal relations with one another according to principles embedded in transcendental subjectivity is insufficient for metaphysical purposes. In order to account for the actual form of organised nature, Schopenhauer needs in addition, as noted, his theory of Ideas, which determine the essence or natural kind of individual phenomena. These Ideas may be thought of, Schopenhauer tells us, as distinct 'acts' by which *Wille* becomes objectual. But how is this objectification to be thought of and why does it occur at all? It cannot be merely the result of the subject's imposition of representational form, but if its explanation does not derive from the subject then it seems that it must lie in *Wille* – in which case there must be more to *Wille* than the bare blank dynamic of striving allowed by Schopenhauer. If *Wille*'s expression in the form of a world of objects is a metaphysically real event, not merely a matter of subjective representation, then this must have its explanation, which cannot appeal to mechanical causality, since this is confined to the world as representation, and neither, if *Wille* exhausts trans-empirical reality, can it be due to some external action upon it. By elimination, then, *Wille* must contain *within itself* the ground of its disposition to self-expression and if the concept of 'will' is to retain any meaning in this context it would seem that this ground can only be an *end* which *Wille* seeks to realise through expression.

This is exactly Hartmann's inference – a purpose must be attributed to *Wille*. And with purpose comes the attribution of conceptual content, forcing the union, Hartmann claims,

of Schopenhauer with Hegel: it is precisely the Hegelian *Idee*, Hartmann suggests, that furnishes the ideational material which informs *Wille*. *Idee* gives the world its form and content, *Wille* its existence. The *telos* of the world – the ultimate realisation of which it is left as the task of humanity to complete, through collective abnegation of the will to life – is to undo the primordial metaphysical confounding of Will and Idea, restoring reality to a state of pre-lapsarian innocence. The world itself, having run its teleological course, will then disappear from existence. To that extent, Hartmann favours Schopenhauer's vision over Hegel's – salvation does not lie in rational social life – but at the same time he shows Schopenhauer's anti-teleological, anti-Hegelian conclusion to be the result of a failure to push philosophical explanation to its proper limit.

Thus far, Hartmann appears to have devised a new, baroque form of absolute idealism, one which resolves the antinomies of Hegel and Schopenhauer, optimism and pessimism, reason and will and which in that sense has to its credit a greater comprehensiveness than Hegel's system and may perhaps claim some advantage over Schelling's late philosophy, from which Hartmann borrows heavily. The associated and deeper sense in which Hartmann unites idealism with naturalism emerges when we consider his methodology.

I presented Hartmann as proceeding from the Schopenhauerian premise that the ontological substrate of the phenomenal world is *Wille*. Hartmann rejects, however, Schopenhauer's account of its epistemology and indeed all claims to a priori knowledge. The basis on which we can know the world to be *Wille*, Hartmann holds, is strictly inductive and his *Philosophy of the Unconscious* bears the sub-title: '*Speculative Results According to the Inductive Method of Physical Science*'. Hartmann describes his philosophy as one that '*takes full account of all the results of the natural sciences*' ([1868] 1931: 2: 63).² In direct contradiction to Kantian doctrine – and to the whole trajectory of modern scientific reflection – Hartmann defends the view that empirical inference warrants the positing of acts of will, which remain unconscious until the stage of animal existence is reached, as the explanatory ground of all natural events and kinds, organic and inorganic. The first two volumes of *Philosophy of the Unconscious* encompass a painstaking journey through the natural world, thick with references to contemporary scientific publications, in which Hartmann argues, with respect to everything from ganglions to gravity, that the hypothesis of an immanent will having as its content the representation of an end to be achieved enjoys the highest degree of probability. Finally, the overall unity and coherence of nature is argued to warrant a further inference, to a ground of unity of the plurality of acts of volition displayed in nature: the world, Hartmann concludes, consists of a single, cosmic *Unbewußte*.³

6. Lotze

The fact that Hartmann's reduction of mechanical causality to the teleology of volition contradicts the accepted modern view of mechanistic explanation as primary and self-sufficient is itself, arguably, no argument against his view. That said, one cannot fail to be struck by the poverty of Hartmann's case for a teleological explanation of natural phenomena and in consequence thereof the great under-motivation of the speculative by the *a posteriori* elements in his system.

The view that natural scientific explanation is exhaustively mechanistic was upheld – and indeed applied, in major contributions to medical science – by Rudolph Hermann Lotze, who was nonetheless one of the great late absolute idealists. The challenge for one who grants mechanism full sway over natural processes – and who also agrees that

reflection on human knowledge must start with the facts of experience, as Lotze does, rejecting German idealism's attempt to 'deduce' Nature – and yet wants to uphold the truth of idealism is to explain why anything more than mechanism is needed.

Lotze has an essentially simple argument for the necessary incompleteness of the mechanical view (see Lotze [1856–64] 1888: Bk. IX, Ch. I; [1883] 1884: §§38–49; and [1883] 1892: Ch. I, Sects. XIV–XXI). Ordinary experience presents a world of Things, which have properties, stand in relations with one another and effect changes in one another's states. Naturalism affirms the adequacy of this schema, which natural science fills out and elaborates. Supposing that the basic conception of a propertied thing is granted, the question arises as to how it is possible for Things to act on one another (Lotze [1883] 1884: 56; [1883] 1892: 28). The answer, Lotze argues, requires us to reject the assumption of the independence of Things: in place of 'a multiplicity of self-subsisting Things' which become 'combined subsequently' – a conception which, Lotze argues, involves the incoherent conception of relations as entities located 'between' Things – we must suppose 'the self-subsisting existence of some background, or some medium [. . .] in which the relations of one real thing to another pursue their course' ([1883] 1884: 77; see also Lotze [1856–64] 1888: Bk. IV, 443–5, Bk. IX, 602–3). Instances of efficient causality between Things must be conceived, Lotze argues, as events *internal* to a self-subsisting One, 'modifications of a single whole' ([1883] 1884: 116).

This holistic view provides Lotze with the basis for further regressive inferences. Because, Lotze argues, the only identifiable source of the conceptual forms applied in ordinary apprehension of the world lies in the experience that we have of ourselves – specifically, the relation of our selves to our mental states is the only thing that can provide the basis for our conception of the unity of a Thing with its properties ([1883] 1884: 138–42; [1883] 1892: 47) – and because in addition there is no other way of giving content to the thought that individual Things enjoy real independent existence ([1856–64] 1888: Bk. IX, 644–7; and [1883] 1884: 137–8), we must suppose the underlying character of the world to be 'spiritual', *geistig*. This thesis in turn allows a careful reintroduction of teleology: although final causes can have no place within the world of natural science, teleology may be postulated, Lotze contends, in order to complete natural scientific explanation, on the basis that nature conceived scientifically fails to account for itself in the strongest sense and on the condition that purposiveness is taken to be wholly realised in lawful efficient causation, not an alternative or supplement to it. Moreover, Lotze supposes, we can postulate the final ground of the world to be the highest Good – meaning that, although necessarily fact and value remain distinct in our apprehension of the world, the distinction can be regarded as overcome at the point where reality achieves, as Lotze argues that it must, total unity ([1856–64] 1888: Bk. III, Ch. V and Conclusion and Bk. IV, Chs I–III; [1883] 1884: 151–2; [1883] 1892: 120–31).⁴ In this way we are led to a conception which counts, in the terms of Schopenhauer and Hartmann, as unequivocally 'optimistic' and with which, Lotze argues, the central doctrines of Christian theism are consistent ([1856–64] 1888: Bk. IX, Chs IV–V; [1883] 1892: 70–1 and Chs III–VIII).⁵ That his metaphysics establishes the possibility of ethics and agrees with our extra-theoretical interests – our 'yearnings' – constitutes, Lotze maintains, a point in its favour (see Moore 1901).

Lotze's basic argument may be regarded as a novel application of the traditional objection to an atomistic metaphysics. If all existents necessarily take atomic form, exhausting the content of the world, then there must nevertheless be something – at the level of the world, a 'world-principle' – that determines this to be so. A non-aggregative, 'atomising' One must precede the atomic Many.

Lotze's major difference from the German idealists is that, while the architecture of his metaphysics is that of absolute idealism, his evaluation of the epistemic achievement of his system – the degree to which we can claim by its means to have *comprehended* reality – is tentative and closer to Kant. Though we can explain why certain metaphysical theses are forced on us – why they are at least consistent and are all that remain once the alternatives have been eliminated – we cannot regard them as establishing the Hegelian identity of Thought and Being: 'all our "thinking" by no means altogether comprehends, or in the least degree exhausts, what we could regard as the "actual constitution" and "inner Being" of Things' (Lotze [1883] 1884: 149). Because the principles to which we are ultimately led 'never admit of being "explained", "constructed", or "deduced", they cannot be 'converted into a major premise from which to deduce the sum of metaphysical truth' (Lotze [1883] 1884: 159, 153–4).

Lotze affirms, therefore, that while the Many must be traced back to the One, the reverse route cannot be followed by finite human minds ([1883] 1892: 40–1). Whether or not this asymmetry is consistent with the final stability of Lotze's system, it is clear at least that Lotze, unlike Hartmann, offers a defence of idealism which begins where naturalism begins, that is, with nature mechanistically conceived and that, if Lotze succeeds, then a non-negligible portion of the content of German idealism will have been retrieved without reliance on its famously questionable methodological apparatus ('intellectual intuition', 'the Concept', 'determinate negation' and so on).

7. Anglo-American Idealism

Lotze did not induce further attempts at absolute idealist system-building in German philosophy, which instead returned to Kant, but the idealistic movement which took hold in the last quarter of the nineteenth century in Britain and America stands under Lotze's influence and in important respects counts as his successor.

The first full study in English of Hegel's philosophy, James Hutchison Stirling's *The Secret of Hegel*, appeared in 1865 and in the 1870s Benjamin Jowett, influential at Oxford as a teacher and translator of Plato, urged that an interest be taken in German idealism. William Wallace and Edward Caird pursued this path and, along with Thomas Hill Green, who made clear the ethical and political fruitfulness of idealist ideas, completed the first, delayed wave of Anglophone assimilation of classical German philosophy, which had existed previously only on the edges of cultural life.

In 1893 Francis Herbert Bradley published *Appearance and Reality*, arguably the most deeply elaborated of the Anglophone absolute idealist systems. In Book I of the work Bradley unfolds a series of arguments claiming to show that any conception which involves the attribution of relational structure – of any sort, including that of a thing with qualities – reveals itself on analysis to be incoherent, for the reason that all attempts to explain how relations and their terms 'stand to' one another generate contradictions, absurdities or an infinite regress (Bradley [1893] 1897: 32; and see chs II–III). In light of this negative result, naturalism falls to the ground immediately: natural phenomena, being relational, cannot have absolute reality. Giving application to his thesis that the mode in which a relation is 'together' with its terms resists comprehension, Bradley underlines the metaphysical limits of natural scientific explanation:

The principles taken up are not merely in themselves not rational, but, being limited, they remain external to the facts to be explained. The diversities therefore will only *fall*,

or rather must be *brought*, under the principle. They do not come out of it, nor of themselves do they bring themselves under it. The explanation therefore in the end does but conjoin aliens inexplicably. The obvious instance is the mechanical interpretation of the world. (563; see also 353–4)

Intelligibility is not restored, Bradley argues, by declaring that certain ultimate complexes – for example, the inherence of a quality in a thing – are simply ‘given to us as facts’ (563), since these putative facts amount to mere conjunctions of elements and

no such *bare* conjunction is or possibly can be given. For the background is present and the background and the conjunction are, I submit, alike integral aspects of the fact. The background therefore must be taken as a condition of the conjunction’s existence and the intellect must assert the conjunction subject in this way to a condition. The conjunction is hence not bare but dependent and it is really a connection mediated by something falling outside it. (564)

The role of ‘background’ – the ‘something’ presupposed by, but ‘falling outside’, the allegedly given fact – is played ultimately by ‘the Absolute’, which enjoys unity without relationality.

Whereas Lotze had begun with the manifold of interacting natural objects, Bradley proceeds at a higher level of generality: Bradley’s argument for holism pertains to the absolutely basic structure of (discursive, predicative) thought and the stronger conclusion which Bradley reaches allows Lotze’s holism to be converted into a monism, the content of which is explained in Book II of *Appearance and Reality*. What keeps Bradley’s monism on the side of idealism – that is, distinct from Spinozism – is his claim that the only thing which exhibits the undifferentiated unified reality which, he has argued, must characterise the One, is ‘experience’ or ‘sentience in its widest meaning’ (555): the Absolute is ‘an all-inclusive and supra-relational experience’ (556).

Bradley evinces less concern than Lotze to accommodate the naturalistic wisdom of modernity. The rationale for Bradley’s attitude becomes clear when it is recalled that his position requires him to oppose, or at any rate to step far beyond, the naïve position of ordinary consciousness. For Bradley it is ‘out of the question’ that metaphysics should ‘approve itself to common sense’ (547) and equally, he holds, it would be a mistake to think that metaphysics could be informed by – or could inform – the results of natural science: metaphysics rightfully challenges the naturalistic presumption inspired by science, namely, the claim that science possesses absolute truth, but thereafter it disengages from all questions concerning the content and proper form of empirical explanation, the aim of which is essentially different from – more limited than – that of metaphysics (283–6). Metaphysics does not, therefore, urge the reintroduction of ends into natural science, even though its own conception of the order of nature is that of an order of degrees of perfection (496–9).

Like Lotze and many late idealists, Bradley may be regarded as having articulated in greatly clarified terms certain lines of argument which were present but obscurely formulated in German idealist writing, and many of the same issues as had occupied Fichte, Schelling and Hegel were reworked in Anglo-American idealism.

The confidence of the British and American idealist hegemony at the turn of the century can hardly be exaggerated. Taking itself to have survived the challenge of Darwinism (see, for example, Royce 1892: Lecture IX) and equipped with a large bank of metaphysical argumentation, the view arose that idealism had established itself in perpetuity and with

complete security. The Anglophone philosophical journals – *Mind* and the *Philosophical Review* in Britain and the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* in the US – were altogether dominated in the last decade of the nineteenth century and first decade of the twentieth by discussion of topics in idealist philosophy, directed to the question not of whether idealism is correct but of precisely which form of idealism is correct.⁶ When, on occasion, a confrontation is staged between the idealist and the naturalist, the naturalistic challenge seems to be entertained only so that idealism should have the opportunity of flexing its muscles. By way of illustration, consider the following, from the opening of a paper called ‘The present meaning of idealism’ delivered by Ernest Albee to the American Philosophical Association in 1909. Albee asks: ‘What, then, may we all fairly take for granted in discussing the present situation in philosophy, no matter how divergent our final conclusions may seem, or may in fact be?’ Albee answers: ‘In the first place, it seems fair to assume that, for the technical student of philosophy, materialism [used interchangeably at this period with naturalism] proper is a thing of the past.’ What defines and suffices for idealism, Albee says, is ‘the teleological standpoint, that of inner meaning or significance, which is the standpoint of philosophy itself’ (Albee 1909: 308; for further discussion, see Gardner 2007: 21–3). This makes it clear that idealism continued to conceive itself right up until the end in the terms supplied by classical German philosophy, that is, as practically and axiologically motivated and as giving metaphysical expression to what must at all costs be preserved – against modernity’s naturalistic tendency – from our theological and humanistic heritage.

8. Scientifically Orientated Neo-Kantianism

Having followed the absolute idealist tradition to its nineteenth-century conclusion – its self-proclaimed victory over naturalism – attention should now be given to a late development in the idealist tradition more receptive to naturalistic insights.

Neo-Kantianism as such was emphatically not a species of naturalism, but it constituted a broad church and one of the most important tendencies within it – represented by Hermann Cohen, Paul Natorp and Ernst Cassirer at Marburg and by Alois Riehl – exhibited an orientation towards scientific knowledge which had much in common with the outlook of naturalism and which could plausibly be claimed, for reasons noted earlier, to mirror Kant’s own intentions for transcendental philosophy.

Riehl shows how it is possible to go far in the direction of positivism while yet remaining within a doctrinal context of Kantian derivation. Riehl’s chief work, *The Principles of the Critical Philosophy* ([1887] 1894), argued that philosophy aims at a ‘general theory of the world’ – which is also the common goal of the sciences as a whole – and that ‘its method consists in the generalization of the generalizations of the sciences’ (14). The relevant theory can be derived only from the growth of scientific knowledge: a ‘theory of the world’ in the sense of metaphysics ‘is nothing more than a universal anthropomorphism’ (14–15). Nor can philosophy concern itself with the strife between optimism and pessimism, which is merely a question of ‘temperament and mood’ (15).

What establishes Riehl as a Kantian is his denial that the conditions of knowledge are objects of psychological enquiry or of a nature that would permit a Darwinian grounding in substitution for transcendental proof (77–84). Riehl insists, however, that this does not render the principles which ground knowledge merely subjective: they should be ‘thought as existing on the side both of the object and of the subject’ (80). Transcendental philosophy is thus allied by Riehl to realism.

Riehl's late nineteenth-century Kantian repudiation of metaphysics belonged to a tradition – going back to Jakob Friedrich Fries,⁷ a contemporary and vocal critic of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel – which aimed to affirm the epistemic supremacy of modern science while holding fast to Kant's insight concerning the inadequacies of classical empiricism and also without commitment to materialism. In this last regard Friedrich Albert Lange played a crucial role. Lange's influential *History of Materialism* ([1866: expanded 2nd edn 1873–5] 1950) offered a clear and powerful message, supported by critical examination of the history of materialist doctrines. Scientific materialism is led by a genuine insight concerning the empirical character of genuine knowledge, but it surrenders to the temptation to enter a metaphysical claim regarding the essence of reality which it itself cannot warrant, for the teaching of scientific enquiry – also, on Lange's naturalistic construal, that of Kant – is that all our knowledge is conditioned at base by the physiology of the human senses, creating an epistemic circle out of which we cannot hope to step.

From the neo-Kantians' standpoint, the later nineteenth-century absolute idealists, by detaching themselves from the Kantian starting point of a concern with the conditions of possible experience, saved themselves the task of overcoming subjectivism only at the cost of regressing to dogmatic pre-Critical metaphysics. Instead, it was urged, we must start with the fact of experience and since experience is necessarily conceptualised and the highest (most systematic and rational) conceptualisation of experience lies in science, this means taking our bearings from the Fact of Science. Theoretical philosophy is thus in the first instance reflection on the conditions of scientific cognition and metaphysics merely the correlate of epistemology.

A standard part of this position was a further demotion of teleology. The concept of purpose, Riehl declares, is – pace Kant – 'not a logical principle for the unification of thought, but rather a practical principle, a principle of the will', which does not belong to theoretical philosophy ([1887] 1894: 314, 342, 346).⁸ Lotze's teleological metaphysics, which interprets the connection of things according to a supersensible plan, gives according to Riehl the appearance of all-inclusive knowledge and appeals to our aesthetic sense, but is in truth merely an artefact of thought based on a personification of reason (89, 345). Relevantly similar views of teleology appear in Fries, who consigns it to the spheres of faith and aesthetic feeling (Fries [1822] 1982: 166–7, 172–3, 188–93) and in Lange, who regards teleological thinking as explanatorily idle and symptomatic of a primitive mentality (Lange [1866] 1950: Bk. II, Sect. 2, Ch. IV, 69–71).

Even further along the neo-Kantian spectrum than Riehl stands Hans Vaihinger, whose *Philosophy of 'As If'* – published in 1911, though the main part of the work was composed in 1877 – proposed a radical merger of Kantianism with naturalism. Thought, according to Vaihinger, rests on biological bedrock – it evolves as a means of negotiating physiologically grounded impulses and sensational contents. Intellectual constructions are analysed by Vaihinger, however, along the lines of Kant's notion of 'regulative' ideas: concepts in general, including those of metaphysics, natural science, teleology, ethics and religion, are one and all 'fictions', of various distinguishable types, each with their own degree and species of internal justification. Jointly they compose an "'As if" world', which lacks reality in the ordinary sense ([1911] 1949: xlvi–xlvii). On this account, thought is an 'organic function', as naturalists maintain, yet it manufactures for itself a kind of Kantian autonomy. Signalling recognition of his proximity to Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, Vaihinger allowed that his 'positivist idealism' might be classified as 'anti-rationalism or even irrationalism' (xlvii, xlvi), since it repudiates the orthodox Kantian assumption of a fixed eternal human reason without natural origin. Though not a typical neo-Kantian, Vaihinger is indicative of

how thin neo-Kantianism in its more scientific form had allowed the division between idealism and naturalism to become.

Neo-Kantians rejected the naturalisation of value as much as that of cognition. One question which therefore arose, and which Fries and others did address squarely, is that of how judgements which aspire to validity but do not satisfy the conditions of natural scientific knowledge, such as those of morality and religion, are to be regarded. The answer is that, by and large, the scientifically orientated neo-Kantians applied Kant's strategy of epistemological dualism, that is, of partitioning robust cognition from belief which has a merely subjective, albeit non-arbitrary, warrant. The particular forms of epistemological dualism vary, but the approach is exemplified in Fries's appeal to *Ahnung*, indefinite intuitive awareness, as a discrete basis for morality and religious belief (Fries [1822] 1982: esp. Dialogues VIII–X) and in Lange's conception of the 'Standpoint of the Ideal' (which Lange finds expressed in the works of Friedrich Schiller) as compensating for the limits imposed on cognition by natural science (Lange 1950: Bk. 2, Sect. 4, Ch. 4).

The net contribution of neo-Kantianism – above all the Marburg school – to the maturation of naturalism was substantial (see Friedman and Nordmann 2006). The naturalistic spirit had received in the latter half of the nineteenth century formidable encouragement. The fact that scientific practice could yield increasingly impressive results, in seeming independence from any metaphysical grounding, appeared to testify to the gratuitousness of other modes of knowledge-seeking; Darwin's success in reaching a conclusion with undeniable importance for the traditional philosophical question of the nature of man further underlined the self-sufficiency and unboundedness of scientific enquiry; empirical psychology, in particular the experimental psychology of Wilhelm Wundt, put down institutional roots in German universities and invaded the citadel of subjectivity which classical German philosophy had taken to provide a secure ground for idealism. The practical trappings of naturalism, which in the previous century had stood in the foreground, allowing campaigners like d'Holbach to represent their outlook as genuinely humanistic, now seemed inessential to the naturalistic world-view and were, to an increasing degree, left aside: the self-sufficiency on purely theoretical grounds which can be claimed for scientific knowledge transmits itself, it came to be supposed, to the philosophical standpoint which identifies with natural science.

Though neo-Kantianism insisted on qualifying this claim to self-sufficiency, its quarrel with naïve naturalism was, in the larger scheme of things, a relatively minor matter. In positive terms, what neo-Kantianism helped to add to the self-certainty of science was an improved self-understanding. Science is independent of any particular set of axioms (contra Kant, who had mistakenly supposed it to be committed to Euclidean geometry and Newtonian physics), just as it is from materialism. Nor does it involve the phenomenalist reductionism or neutral monism of Mach. It is defined by *methodological* commitments and so exists as a task, not a set of doctrines. This task presupposes, furthermore, constructive conceptual input, in a sense that the inductivist conception of science elaborated earlier in the century by Mill failed to appreciate. These lessons were absorbed thoroughly by twentieth-century philosophy of science.

9. Nietzsche

Earlier we noted the challenge, posed by Schopenhauer, to discover a means of avoiding pessimism that is not philosophically retrograde. This can hardly be said to have been met by late nineteenth-century absolute idealism, the conservative tendency of which has been

noted, nor indeed by scientifically orientated neo-Kantianism, which consigns the issue of 'life-orientations' to the domain of faith or some other second-class epistemic category.

Another feature of the full-bloodedly idealistic positions represented by Hartmann, Lotze and the Anglophone idealists meriting comment is their elimination of any properly transcendental component, which is to say that they do not regard the necessity a priori of our having to think such and such as itself – independently of any ontological claim – possessing final philosophical authority, as sufficient for any epistemic purpose or as normatively self-standing.

One nineteenth-century thinker with deep investments in both of the traditions we are concerned with, who does take Schopenhauer's challenge seriously and who reinstates the transcendental dimension of Kant's philosophy in at least the practical domain, is Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche's absorption of Kantian idealism – originally from Schopenhauer, but later through direct reading of Kant (see Hill 2003) – shows itself markedly in his earlier writings, where the notion recurs repeatedly that the arrow of cognition necessarily fails to hit its target and that the objects of experience are mere illusion, but it also survives in the 'perspectivist' doctrine of his mature writings, which (whatever its exact content as a theory of truth, a matter of dispute) has at its core the idea that the subject's conditioning of its objects is not accidental but essential to the process of cognition.

The naturalistic dimension of Nietzsche's thought, to which much recent commentary has been devoted (for example, Geuss 1997; and Leiter 2002), reveals itself first in the writings of his so-called 'positivist' phase from 1878 to 1881, where it is claimed that science (in place of art, the previous occupant of this role) furnishes a model meriting emulation in all contexts, on account of the virtues which it fosters and the ethos in the face of reality which it exemplifies; and it then appears in a different form, as an integral component in the great critiques of morality of the late 1880s, *Beyond Good and Evil* and *On the Genealogy of Morals*, above all in the latter's proto-psychoanalytic exposure of the concealed motivational roots and affective dimensions of moral belief.

The mix of idealistic and naturalistic elements in Nietzsche's writings poses an interpretative problem,⁹ to which various solutions have been proposed, one of which is to classify Nietzsche as a naturalised Kantian on the pattern of Lange and Hermann von Helmholtz. On that account, Nietzsche's position is that the facilitating conditions of cognition which Kant deems 'transcendental' are identical with and owe their special status to physiological structures which are open to empirical investigation. In support of this interpretation, it may be pointed out that Nietzsche does in fact entertain quasi-mechanistic explanations of even the most basic logical and metaphysical concepts. But this also shows what is puzzling about the naturalistic interpretation. Nietzsche saw clearly that naturalising Kantian conditions of cognition opens a wide door to the very scepticism which transcendental philosophy was designed to afford protection against; it leads not to realism but to its destruction. This leaves it obscure what position Nietzsche could have intended to occupy by arguing that the concepts of identity and being, for example, are mere side-effects of physiological processes – an epistemologically nihilistic thesis that, if it does not refute itself, undermines the sorts of positive claims that Nietzsche himself apparently wishes to make regarding, among other things, morality and human psychology.

Other candidate solutions to the problem of Nietzsche's combination of aggressive and deflationary naturalism with an idealistic epistemology have been proposed and the scale of the problem can always be reduced, either by devaluing Nietzsche's attachment to science or by arguing that the idealistic elements represent residues of his philosophical prematurity, or merely signal an attitude of fallibilist caution towards empirical truth, or

belong only to Nietzsche's rhetoric. But the question arises eventually whether the endeavour to assign Nietzsche a consistent position at the ground level of epistemology and metaphysics is well conceived.¹⁰ The alternative, which allows a different view of Nietzsche to emerge, is to accept that Nietzsche's engagement with the themes of idealism and naturalism, along with his experiments in radical scepticism, have a far-reaching non-traditional orientation.

What is beyond dispute is that Nietzsche's philosophical project has ultimately a practical end, the nature of which is hard to state without tending to the nebulous, but which pertains to the conditions of individual and collective cultural flourishing. Also clear is that Nietzsche does not regard modern science, whatever its limitations, as in any sense epistemically arbitrary, whereas the notion that an idealistic system of even Kant's relatively modest sort could either possess genuine truth or further the critically appraised ends of human beings is not on the cards for Nietzsche. If it is then observed that Nietzsche's reflections return repeatedly to the theme of a fundamental conflict between 'truth' and the conditions of life and that he affirms (explicitly in the Third Essay of the *Genealogy*) that in this respect modernity has, through its commitment to science, reached a point of acute contradiction, then we are drawn to the view that there lies at the heart of Nietzsche's philosophy a perception of the impossibility – if not universally, then at least for us now, in our actual philosophical habitat – of reconciling idealism and naturalism, to both of which we are nonetheless wedded: what is incontrovertibly correct in naturalism is its alignment of (modern) truth with modern science, while what we should not and cannot do (if we understand ourselves correctly, that is, contra Schopenhauer) is deny authority to our will to life and to the demand for value which it incorporates. This last constraint has, therefore, transcendental status: it corresponds, in a demoralised form, to what Kant called the primacy of practical reason and Fichte adopted as a foundational metaphilosophical principle and it provides Nietzsche with the justification he requires for rejecting the staple naturalistic reduction of value to states of happiness.

This interpretation promises to make sense of additional aspects of Nietzsche's philosophical outlook, including his high valuation of the aesthetic and the interest which he displays in developing metaphysical doctrines (eternal recurrence, will to power) for which it is hard to suppose he wishes to claim literal truth. The intended vector of Nietzsche's thought, on this account, falls between Hume's naturalism and idealism: Nietzsche does not suppose, with Hume, that practical consciousness, guided by Nature's providential hand, is self-stabilising and insulated from theoretical reason; but equally he rejects the Kantian-Fichtean grounding of the practical in pure Reason. What is left is a difficult balancing act, in which practical consciousness has to forge a new kind of relation with theoretical reason, which has no precedent since the tragic age of the Greeks. Hence the special value of the aesthetic, which includes for Nietzsche the aesthetic force of philosophical quasi-fictions such as eternal recurrence and will to power.

This view of the present philosophical situation as having arrived at an impasse, of inherited intellectual resources as exhausted and calling for drastic action – to be taken in a spirit oscillating between crisis, despair and fierce hope for future transformation – is witnessed elsewhere in nineteenth-century philosophy and stands in sharp contrast to the self-assured standpoints of thinkers such as Lotze and Bradley. Kierkegaard, Max Stirner and Marx in so far as he is construed as attempting to 'leave philosophy' (Brudney 1998) – all, like Nietzsche, situated by choice or necessity outside university life – exemplify a will to break radically with existing modes of philosophy. Nietzsche has, therefore, no monopoly on deep dissatisfaction with modernity, nor on the notion that philosophy

must begin to play a new kind of game in which *praxis* takes precedence over *theoria* and in which, consequently, the traditional questions which give rise to doctrines like idealism and naturalism are either relegated or abandoned altogether. What distinguishes Nietzsche, in terms of his systematic place in nineteenth-century philosophy and the specific narrative we are following, is his understanding of the modern problem as reflecting the collision of the naturalistic contraction of theoretical truth in modernity with the non-naturalistic standpoint of practical reason and thus as traceable back to the original Kantian duality of Nature and Freedom.

10. *Lebensphilosophie*

In so far as a single conception of Nietzsche's significance prevailed in the closing years of the nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth century, it consisted in an identification of the central message of Nietzsche's philosophy with an assertion of the ultimacy of the concept of Life. Nietzsche was taken to have demonstrated the fruitfulness of taking the conception of man as a living being as foundational for the traditional philosophical purpose of making visible the true nature of things and directing human action accordingly. In this *Lebensphilosophie*, Life was understood not in mechanistic or biologically reduced terms, but as comprehending the full range of distinctively human capacities displayed in man's freely developing cultural and historical being, just as the environment in which man is embedded was conceived non-materialistically and corresponded more closely to what Husserl would later call the *Lebenswelt*. Applying this conception, Wilhelm Dilthey offered a philosophical foundation for the human sciences circumventing empiricism and metaphysics, designed to secure the autonomy of the *Geisteswissenschaften* (see Dilthey [1883] 1989; and Chapter 8 in this volume). In the early twentieth century, a similar approach returns in the *philosophische Anthropologie* of Max Scheler, Helmuth Plessner and Arnold Gehlen.

The outlook of *Lebensphilosophie* is of major importance for tracking the history of the relations of idealism and naturalism and it manifests itself in thinkers whose ideas were influenced not at all or very little by Nietzsche, including Henri Bergson and John Dewey. In the latter's case, Hegel takes the place of Nietzsche as a source of influence and it is not hard to understand how the *Phenomenology of Spirit* might be read as providing a justification for taking the totality of consciousness in its social, cultural and historical setting as marking the outermost circumference of philosophical reflection.

It is difficult for us, given our acquaintance with austere forms of naturalism and sharp awareness of the need for naturalism to stay lean if it is to merit the name, to avoid classifying the approach of *Lebensphilosophie* as covertly idealistic, but it is important to appreciate that the appeal of its strategy for those persuaded by it lay in its transcendence at a stroke of the irksome and fruitless dichotomy of idealism and naturalism: if 'Life' is conceptually primary, then the categories on which idealism and naturalism are fixated may be regarded as conceptually derivative latecomers, fit only to describe parts abstracted from a prior whole. A rigorous account of what it means to treat metaphysical categories in such terms – taken to the extreme conclusion that knowledge of reality is the prerogative of sheer intuition, counterposed to discursivity – is given in Bergson, whose most influential work, *Creative Evolution*, was not published until 1907, but whose thought can be regarded as a late chapter in the nineteenth-century development.

The positing of Life as a primitive conceptual unity would serve, therefore, the same unifying purpose as the systems of classical German philosophy, but this result would be

achieved without taking a step out of the concrete natural and historical world into metaphysics or transcendental subjectivity. The critical question which arises – from the perspective of those disposed to think along more traditional Kantian lines – is whether *Lebensphilosophie*, by simply asserting the unity of Nature and Freedom, rather than labouring to construct or demonstrate it, has not availed itself of a pseudo-concept which merely conceals their antinomy.

11. Conclusion

The application of loosely defined terms to whole centuries of philosophical activity carries obvious dangers, but there can be little doubt that idealism and naturalism provide categories with genuine historical purchase which are no less essential for an understanding of nineteenth-century thought than the concept of the historical turn. It is true that nineteenth-century philosophers did not one and all line themselves up under one of the two headings like opposing football teams and that, for some, the important issues lay elsewhere. But a substantial number, including some of the century's greatest philosophers, did conceive themselves as belonging to one of the two traditions or programmes and a shared set of reference points – drawn from classical German philosophy and constructed around the original Kantian template of Nature *versus* Freedom, though also reaching back to figures and debates in the earlier modern period – gave each of the two tendencies a definite and coherent identity. Idealists and naturalists conceived themselves moreover – increasingly so over the course of the century, as the German idealist-romantic union of Nature and Freedom receded further into historical memory – as standing in a relation of opposition and the fact that the two traditions existed in close proximity while standing in logical conflict bound each to justify itself by engaging in critique of the other. It also raised the question of whether the opposition could be *aufgehoben* or in any sense mediated and the philosophers we have looked at show what different views of this matter could be taken.

Arguments between idealism and naturalism converged characteristically on the subject of teleology, the question of its scope and reality, attitudes to which served as a reliable indicator of idealistic or naturalistic orientation. This is not hard to understand, in so far as application of the concept of teleology beyond the purely human sphere provides an entry point to the broader idealist thought that reality is mind-like and not in its essence alien or indifferent to human existence.

Kant's account of the topic, shared by the German idealists, allows the tendency for arguments between idealists and naturalists to gravitate towards teleology to be explained in a more systematic way. Teleological judgement is connected conceptually by Kant with the non-naturalistic concepts of, first, wholes which determine their parts and, second, what Kant calls the 'unconditioned' or 'supersensible'. To judge that a natural object exhibits a purpose is to represent it as (as if) caused by a concept – a type of cause which must be rational, hence non-natural – and so to represent its parts as determined by (the concept of) its whole; in so far as human reason conceives and seeks to cognise nature as a whole prior to its parts, it anticipates and refers itself implicitly to 'intellectual intuition', the trans-human mode of cognition necessary and sufficient for knowledge of things in themselves and unconditioned totality. To vindicate teleology at the level of general metaphysics would be, therefore, to subordinate Nature to a supersensible reality standing in relation to it as an unconditioned One to its conditioned Many. If, at the same time, the empirical manifold, the basic fact that there exists a plurality of natural phenomena, can be

taken simply as given – if it as such presents no philosophical *explanandum* – then this central nineteenth-century argument against naturalism fails and teleological judgement, if it has any validity at all outside the context of human action, may be confined to the sphere of natural organisms and subordinated to the conditions of mechanistic explanation.

This construal of the options contrasts with our present philosophical outlook – wherever one stands – on several fronts.

In terms of the Anglophone or analytic mainstream, as remarked at the outset, not merely has the default switched from idealism to naturalism but the very notion of idealism as a deep, continuous tradition going back to Plato, which incorporates an ontological thesis concerning the grounds and underlying nature of the phenomenal world, has evaporated; to the extent that there is any unitary conception of an alternative to naturalism, it is neither identified with idealism nor thought to involve a commitment to a teleological metaphysics. The issues which now occupy those testing the limits of naturalism, such as mental content and the reducibility of normativity, although continuous with nineteenth-century debates about the analysis of cognition and psychology, had no elevated place in nineteenth-century arguments about idealism and naturalism, which were of broader scope and in which a loud echo of the earlier modern conflict of science with religion can still be heard. This reflects the fact – which belongs, as observed previously, to the legacy of the nineteenth century – that naturalism, while refining itself as a set of finely differentiated and technically elaborated positions in theoretical philosophy, has ceased to advertise itself as a practical or cultural programme.

From the standpoint of the central currents of twentieth-century European philosophy, the gap is less marked, in so far as traditions such as phenomenology, hermeneutics and post-structuralism have retained connections with Kant and German idealism, repudiated naturalism and conceived the task of philosophy in terms which, if not always humanistic, at any rate preclude its contraction to questions of theoretical reason. In the case of phenomenology, in which transcendental concerns remain very much alive and the critique of naturalism has been developed further, the continuity with nineteenth-century concerns is clear. With regard to other Continental movements, particularly in the latter half of the twentieth century, the acute sense of the antinomy of Freedom and Nature, crucial for nineteenth-century developments, does not play a determining role, making it harder to appreciate the motivation of teleological idealism. Underlying this divergence is the fact that idealism and naturalism and the problem of their dichotomy belong to the project of the Enlightenment and earlier modern philosophy and inevitably lose significance in contexts where the philosophical agenda has taken a counter-Enlightenment turn.

These differences help to account for the strangeness of many of the figures populating the landscape of nineteenth-century philosophy, study of which throws into relief, whether or not it prompts us to reconsider, our present orientations.

Notes

1. Maurice Mandelbaum, in his outstanding study of the nineteenth century (1971), identifies 'positivism' as one of its two great tendencies. Positivism and naturalism are terms by no means always employed as equivalents, but in the present context we need not choose between them, since both must be understood broadly in order to serve the relevant historical purpose and Mandelbaum's definition of positivism (1971: 11) coincides with naturalism as I here understand it.
2. Translations from this (and other untranslated German texts) are the author's own.
3. For more detailed discussion, see Gardner 2010.

4. On Lotze's reasoning, see Moore 1901: ch. 2; Thomas 1921: ch. 12.
5. Note, however, Lotze's admission that the problem of evil is insoluble ([1883] 1892: 145).
6. It should be pointed out that, for reasons of space and because it does not interact in distinctive ways with naturalism, I have not discussed the important 'personalistic' strand of late idealism represented in Germany by Immanuel Hermann Fichte and Christian Hermann Weiße and in Britain and the US respectively by Andrew Seth (a.k.a. A. S. Pringle-Pattison) and George Holmes Howison. Such ('pluralistic') idealism countered Hegel with claims for the reality of both divine and individual human personality. Lotze too differentiates himself from the German idealists on this point. This theme is of particular importance for understanding Anglo-American idealist developments after Bradley. Personalism or 'spiritualism' – with its roots in Maine de Biran and Victor Cousin and a strong relation to Catholicism – comprised also the dominant force in later nineteenth-century French philosophy. The principal figures include Charles Renouvier, Félix Ravaisson, Jules Lachelier and Émile Boutroux. Renouvier, Lachelier and Boutroux may also be classified – alongside Léon Brunschvicg – as French neo-Kantians. On Maine de Biran and Ravaisson, see inter alia Mark Sinclair's discussion in Chapter 10 of this volume.
7. See Franks 2007, an illuminating account of the post-Kantian development in its relation to the challenge of naturalism; Fries is discussed at 253–6.
8. For Riehl's full account see Riehl [1887] 1894: Part II, Ch. 5, §§3–10.
9. To give a concrete idea of the difficulty, compare the following from Nietzsche's *Nachlaß*: (1) 'When I think of my philosophical genealogy, I feel connected to the anti-teleological, i.e. Spinozistic movement of our age . . . [and] to the mechanistic movement (all moral and aesthetic questions traced back to physiological ones, all physiological ones to chemical ones, all chemical ones to mechanical ones)' (1967–: VII (2): 264; from summer to autumn 1884). (2) "Mechanical necessity" is not a fact: it is we who first interpreted it into events . . . We only invented *thinghood* on the model of the subject . . . If we no longer believe in the *effective* subject, then there also disappears belief in *effective* things, in reciprocity, cause and effect . . . The world of *effective atoms* disappears as well of course' (1967–: VIII (2): 47–8; from spring 1887).
10. Green 2002, concentrating on the tension of naturalistic and non-naturalistic elements in Nietzsche's epistemology, denies that Nietzsche had *one* considered epistemological position.

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