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Embarkation for Abdera: Historicization in Nietzsche's Second Untimely Meditation[2]

Embarque hacia Abdera: Historización en la Segunda meditación intempestiva *de Nietzschee*

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Abstract: This article develops a novel reading of the threefold division of modes of historicization in Nietzsche's *Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*. It argues that Nietzsche's stance is closely matched, and indirectly responds, to specific features of the argument for progress in human history that Kant presents in *Conflict of the Faculties*. Kant had hit upon interest, boredom, publicity, and forgetting as systematic problems for the philosophy of history, and Nietzsche's thought on history takes up these concerns. I argue that Nietzsche's reaction to these Kantian problems prompted him to subtly dissociate historicization and historicity. This manoeuver allowed him to counter the conceptual challenges Kant had established and to align his notions on history with those on ethical normativity in lived life, embracing what he elsewhere rejected as a "moral ontology."

Resumen: Este artículo desarrolla una lectura novedosa de la triple división de los modos de historización en *Ventajas e inconvenientes de la historia para la vida* de Nietzsche. Se defiende que la postura de Nietzsche está estrechamente emparejada con las características específicas del argumento del progreso en la historia

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humana que Kant presenta en el *Conflicto de las Facultades* respondiendo indirectamente a ese escrito. Kant había señalado el interés, el aburrimiento, la publicidad y el olvido como problemas sistemáticos para la filosofía de la historia, y el pensamiento de Nietzsche sobre la historia retoma estas preocupaciones. Se sostiene que la reacción de Nietzsche a estos problemas kantianos le llevó a disociar sutilmente la historización de la historicidad. Esta maniobra le permitió replicar a los desafíos conceptuales que Kant había establecido y alinear sus nociones sobre la historia con las de la normatividad ética en la vida vivida, abrazando lo que en otros lugares rechazaba como una "ontología moral".

Keywords: Nietzsche, Kant, Second Untimely Meditation, boredom, historicity, historicization.

Palabras clave: Nietzsche, Kant, *Segunda meditación intempestiva*, aburrimiento, historicidad, historización.

… cuius prudentia monstrat
Summos posse viros, et magna exempla daturos
Vervecum in patria, crassoque sub aere nasci.[3]

1. Introduction

The aim of this article is to offer an argument on a certain and, at least to me, unexpected conceptual incongruence of "historicity" and "historicization." I take the latter to mean the process of rendering something historical, and the former the quality of being historical and not merely past. These widely used concepts follow a simple rationale. They serve to uphold the distinction between the past and history—in my view, the basic distinction that underpins any philosophical interest in the historical. This distinction is constitutive for any practice of historical writing, for the tacit knowledge about what is capable of being included in an account of history and what is not. A considerable portion of the philosophy of history, especially from the late nineteenth century onward, has bypassed the problem of this distinction. Instead one has focused on developing much bulkier concepts of historicity—drawing on hard-to-understand notions of subjectivity, experience, memory, the lived

[3] Juvenal X, 48. Juvenal's lines on Democritus; an approximate translation would be: "… whose prudence shows that even the highest of men, and those who are to give great examples, can be born in a fatherland of blockheads and under a dull air."

life, and so on—all of which oddly appear to fail at explaining why history is not the same as the past *tout court*.

So it seems that it would be attractive to pursue an approach to explicating the meaning of "historicity" that focuses primarily on the distinction between history and the past and avoids committing to particular philosophical doctrines. Yet, it is precisely this whittled-down approach that provides no superficially discernible reason to regard historicization as somehow independent from historicity. It would seem to be a piece of simple conceptual logic (that is to say, of the inferential potential vested in the semantic meanings of the terms) to assume that historicization means rendering something historical. One would end up with a (presumably) benign type of circularity where one would not be able to understand historicization without some prior understanding of historicity in place, while the latter would simultaneously be constituted over the course of the process of historicization. So then the notion that historicity and historicization could each make sense without the other, would be counter-intuitive, perhaps even somewhat outrageous. This appears to be true from all familiar points of view, whether they be flatly realist about the past or flatly constructivist, or anywhere in between. In a realist picture, historicization and historicity should have the same referential relation to the past; in a constructivist one, they would simply mean different aspects of the same constructive effort (process vs. result), which would also set apart history from the past as a different type or level of construction.

The only philosopher of history who appears to have had a grasp of the problem of the incongruence of historicity and historicization is, within the limited scope of my knowledge, Friedrich Nietzsche. For this reason, I will develop my argument by way of offering a few remarks on what I take to be the conceptual infrastructure of Nietzsche's *Untimely Meditation* on the *Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life* (*HL*).[4] This undertaking is hampered by the difficulty that the terminology of *HL* is different from the one I seek to explore.[5] The article accepts that the conflict between historical reconstruction and, *sit venia verbo*, systematic analysis of the semantics and inferential implications

[4] I have used Nietzsche 1997 for reference. References are given in parentheses in the main text (as *HL* followed by section and page numbers, followed by references to KSA: volume and page numbers). References to other works of Nietzsche's, where possible, are by the usual abbreviation and section number, where necessary by reference to the translation used, and to KSA (*A*: Antichrist; *BGE:* Beyond Good and Evil; *BT*: Birth of Tragedy; *GS*: Gay Science; *HaH*: Human, all-too Human; *NF*: Nachgelassene Fragmente; *SE*: Schopenhauer als Erzieher; *Za*: Also sprach Zarathustra).

[5] On the conceptual history of "historicity," see Bauer 1963. von Renthe-Fink 1968. The term, although occasionally present in the works of Hegel and others throughout the nineteenth century, including Nietzsche, became philosophically problematic only from Dilthey's work in the 1880s onward, with the interwar period as a decisive watershed.

of concepts will not be reconciled in its pages. The most obvious problem is this: although *HL* does not offer any direct evidence for it, I will seek to establish a connection between Nietzsche's writings and Kant's (1907) philosophical analysis of the concept of history in *Conflict of the Faculties*, in order to tease out the systematic points I am after. So the argument here pursued insists that there is something interesting to learn from the Nietzsche-Kant linkage on a conceptual level. The complicated intellectual history of Nietzsche's reception of Kant's works, on which the article also comments, is of lesser importance.

The article conducts several preliminary but necessary lines of argument, both in a historical and systematic vein. It comments (2) on the connections between Nietzsche's and Kant's writings on the philosophy of history; (3) on Nietzsche's basic understanding of morality and the concept of "greatness" that is indispensable for *HL*; (4) on the primary analysis of historicization as processual and plural in *HL*; and (5) on the manner in which the philosophy of history intersects with the nineteenth-century philosophical discourse on boredom as a non-obvious, yet indispensable link between Nietzsche and Kant. The article then proceeds (6) to lay out the terms of Kant's argument, (7) some concessions Nietzsche's *HL* can be seen as making to it; and (8) the way in which *HL* can be read as presenting a counterargument to Kant. In the concluding section (9), I briefly outline some of the consequences of this counterargument for the wider understanding of Nietzsche's thought on history, especially in terms of "eternal return."

2. Nietzsche and the Kantian Connection

The extent to which Nietzsche's thought on history speaks to the older tradition of "German idealist" philosophy of history strikes me as still somewhat underappreciated. Nietzsche's place in the philosophy of history has remained dubious. In the past, his work has often been dismissed as a useful, or even competent, contribution to the field (see e.g. Kittsteiner 1998). More recently, various pleas for recognizing a continuous development over the course of Nietzsche's oeuvre on matters of history have been brought forward (Schuringa 2012; Jensen 2013). The argument here pursued aligns with this tendency and stresses the thematic contiguities with other writings on the philosophy of history.

In Nietzsche's works, Kant enjoys an extended presence, perhaps still to some readers' surprise, although the point is well-established in the literature.[6]

[6] Already Salaquarda 1978 pointed out the Kantian connection via the reception of Friedrich Albert Lange; see also Porter 2000a, Himmelmann 2005.

In *HL* Kant is not explicitly mentioned, unlike Hegel; but Hegel, in this text, is merely a target of generic critique and derision. Some of the remarks on Hegel in *HL* echo an essay by Franz Grillparzer, from which Nietzsche also borrowed (part of) the title of his treatise (see Neymeyr 2020a, 535f., 538). An alleged quotation from Hegel appears to be taken from a volume by Karl Rosenkranz.[7] Similarly, Nietzsche does not exactly engage in sustained discussions of Kant's works on the basis of carefully reconstructed arguments or extended readings of the original works. Sometimes, it is even a matter of guesswork what texts he actually refers to, and his preference for using second-hand accounts, such as that of Kuno Fischer, is well-known.[8] So Nietzsche is at least partly unreliable as a reader of philosophy; but even when one takes this unreliability into account, it can still be maintained that he learned something from Kant that was decisive for his own thinking on history.

There is no doubt that Nietzsche had knowledge, on those general conditions, of the Kantian essay that, in my opinion, is crucial for the topic, the philosophy of history section in *Conflict of the Faculties*, discernible references to which occur primarily in the later works. To start at the end, in 1888-89, in *Antichrist* (A §11), Nietzsche excoriates Kant's argument as follows:

> Has not Kant seen in the French Revolution the transition from the inorganic form of the state into the *organic?* Did he not ask himself if there was an event which could not be explained otherwise than by a moral faculty in mankind, so that 'the tendency of mankind to goodness' was *proved* by it once and for all? Kant's answer: 'That is [the] [R]evolution.' The erring instinct in each and everything, antinaturalness as an instinct, German *décadence* as a philosophy—*that is Kant*! (Nietzsche 1896, 248f., translation altered)[9]

The following section adds—nestled within a resentful polemic—Nietzsche's critical point: "they," Kant and philosophers of his ilk, "regard 'fine feelings' as arguments […]" (A §12).

In *Conflict of the Faculties*, Kant takes the widespread interest and sense of involvement—*Theilnehmung*—in the French Revolution as a sign that the exercise of reason is the backbone of a progressive structure that pervades all human history and expands and enhances human freedom. Nietzsche's point

[7] Namely the formulation "Wenn der Geist einen Ruck macht […]," "When the spirit changes direction […]," *HL* 8: 108, which is quoted verbatim from Rosenkranz 1870: 145. See Neymeyr 2020a: 543f. for the passage in Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, on which the phrase is, more distantly, based.

[8] Fischer 1869.

[9] Nietzsche's familiarity with Kant's argument can also be seen from the draft in *Nachgelassene Fragmente* [=NF] 1886, 7(4).

is hardly accurate inasmuch as Kant highlights not so much his own feelings about the Revolution, but an observable behavior of large portions of society in general. More importantly, though, the passage in *Antichrist* demonstrates that Nietzsche set store by structures of philosophical argument and had a grasp of the argumentative core of this ultimate instantiation of Kant's philosophy of history; and also, that unlike most other authors who have commented on Kant's writings on the topic, Nietzsche considered the *Conflict of the Faculties* text an important statement. *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) also makes mention of it in passing (*BGE* §38), and the draft manuscripts from the same year that belong to the unfinished work on *Will to Power*, include a quotation from *Conflict of the Faculties* and another serious engagement with the argument, the greatest degree of proximity to Kant's text that can be discerned (*NF*-1886,7[4], subheading "Die Metaphysiker," KSA 12, 259-70). This draft echoes the wording of Fischer's paraphrasis, which also contains the quotation.[10] So it appears that the time around 1886 marks a return to Kantian problems via Fischer, which by the time of *Antichrist* has already receded into the background again. The point, in the *Antichrist* passage, about Kant's supposed claim of a transition from an "inorganic" to an "organic state," for instance, does not belong into *Conflict of the Faculties*. It is an inaccurate reference, a vestige of paraphrasing by memory.

Yet, the wording here also suggests a more far-reaching connection into Nietzsche's reception of Kant, since the terminology of organic/inorganic echoes the 1868 plan to write a philosophical dissertation on "Teleology after Kant."[11] While the notes for this project contain no direct reference to *Conflict of the Faculties*, they suggest one reason for why Nietzsche may have regarded this text (or what he knew about it from Fischer) as a more interesting statement on the philosophy of history than Kant's earlier pronouncements on the topic. In 1784, Kant had still relied on the positing of a natural teleology ("intent of nature," *Naturabsicht*) inherent in the human species—namely the exercise of free will—to yield certainty on the overall progressive nature of human history (Kant 1923, 17f.). On closer inspection, this argument is different from the one in *Conflict of the Faculties* precisely as regards the question of teleology.[12] After rejecting straightforward natural teleology in the 1790

[10] Fischer 1869: 525-31, here 527: "Das Gute und Böse neutralisiren sich gegenseitig," for a formulation Nietzsche reproduces verbatim, and which only resembles Kant's; and ibid. 529f. for the quotation.

[11] Nietzsche 1999. See Gentili 2010; Gardner 2019.

[12] Few readers appear to agree on the importance of Kant for Nietzsche's interventions in the philosophy of history. Jensen (2016): 122-7 recognizes the connection to Nietzsche's project of a critique of Kantian teleology, but in my view rashly equates Kant's 1784 notions with those of the *Critique of Judgment* (1790) and after. It seems quite clear that with *CJ* Kant departed from

Critique of Judgment, Kant must have felt the need to revise his stance, which he would have accomplished precisely by re-developing the argument without placing any weight on the supposed natural telos of humanity. Nietzsche, highly critical of natural teleology, may well have picked up on this shift.

This said, the question of what drew Nietzsche's attention, in Fischer's vast work, to the marginal and cursory chapter on the philosophy of history section in *Conflict of the Faculties*, is hard to answer. Fischer covers this terrain only because he covers the entirety of Kant's oeuvre; his summary is not careless, but he thinks the text is redundant within the overall oeuvre. As for Nietzsche's interest, quite possibly, it was prompted by the context of Schopenhauer's anti-Hegelian polemic Über *die Universitäts-Philosophie*, featured prominently in the third *Untimely Meditation*, *Schopenhauer as Educator* (1874).[13] For, while Schopenhauer does not make any direct reference to *Conflict of the Faculties*, he is clearly concerned with Kant's problematic of how an autonomous exercise of philosophical reason is possible within the framework of the university as an institution of government (Schopenhauer 1988). Schopenhauer's radical rejection of philosophy as state service, while targeting Hegel, also, and deliberately, inflicts collateral damage on Kant. This said, Schopenhauer does not take issue with any of Kant's arguments on the philosophy of history. Nietzsche's choice of focusing on the respective section in *Conflict of the Faculties*, as an uncommon pathway of reception, points to a realm of philosophical intuitions about arguments that defies exact historical-philological reconstruction.

3. Morality as a Process

For the purposes of the present article, it will be useful to dwell briefly on the meaning of the "untimely," the quality of being *unzeitgemäß* in Nietzsche's title for the four treatises of which *HL* was the second. The term evokes a mismatch between something and its "time," which I propose to understand primarily as a set of norms or standards from which the object in question deviates.[14] Nietzsche scorns the "pride" the present takes in its "cultivation of

earlier, more straightforward notions about natural teleology. Admittedly, this would warrant further discussion elsewhere. Nietzsche's repeated references to the 1798 text would indicate, in any case, that he saw a need to argue against this ultimate formulation of the Kantian argument. The 1784 *Idea for a Universal History*, by contrast, does not figure in his writings in a discernible way. It seems fair to say that, when Nietzsche addresses Kant's position on the philosophy of history, *Conflict of the Faculties* is the main reference. On the shift in Kant's philosophy of history see also Grünewald 2014.

[13] There is also a respective note on Schopenhauer's text in the teleology project of 1868, see Nietzsche 1999: 578.

[14] Adding a dimension, arguably, to the ones explored in Caputo 2018.

history" (*historische Bildung*) and deplores a "virtue" that has lost its measure and has become "hypertrophic." As a classical philologist, he declares himself to be a "pupil of earlier times," as feeding from a different source of *Bildung* than the modern practice of historical thought (all quotes *HL* Foreword:60, KSA 1:247). Nietzsche thus makes the concept of *Bildung* align with a classical idiom of virtue ethics. The notoriously hard-to-translate adjective *unzeitgemäß* does not primarily refer to something as elusive as anachronism. Rather, it signals a claim to a conflict of norms and deviations (some translators opted for "unfashionable"). In this context, the notion of *process* ensconced in the concept of *Bildung* is the condition of possibility of normativity. There is a virtue ethical language in place, an interest in dispositions toward normatively sanctioned behavior as forming over time (see Harcourt 2015, also Swanton 2015). And there is an echo of the manner in which one of the most foundational formulations of an ideal of *Bildung*, that of Goethe, is settled into a relation of "mutual mirroring" between the individual and his (always his) epoch (Jannidis 1996, see also still Meinecke 1936). Nietzsche, in emphasizing the "untimeliness" of his own thinking, seems to take pleasure in subverting the glibness of Goethe's assumption that the "great" life represents and simultaneously informs its epoch. The possibility of greatness *against* the times is an urgent problem that connects Nietzsche's philosophy of history with his constant belaboring of questions of self-affirmation or self-love *in dürftiger Zeit* (in indigent times, with Hölderlin's line); or, indeed, in a fatherland of fools.

For Nietzsche the condition of untimely mismatch is a tool of philosophical analysis. The refusal to speak to the present responds to the pathological condition of the present time. Although even as a philosophical subject one cannot help partaking in this condition, it is one's task to extract oneself from it gradually. As a method, the refusal of communication with the present is a process of extraction or distancing, in Nietzsche's terminology: of healing or convalescence, thus therapeutic in nature. This is a task that is imposed on the subject, or, on the level of text, on the authorial voice of the treatise, as a normative requirement, though not simply as a rationally attained imperative, but as a need. The basic condition is one of being in time. The advantage of the language of virtue in practical philosophy is that virtue ties normativity to process. Normativity is lived; it can only be understood as embedded in life, not as codified in an unchanging and universal system of rules.

The Hegelian innovation in the philosophy of history, beyond his many actual claims about the nature of world history as a process, was the projection of temporal categories into all workings of the mind and of society. On this basis, the historicity of history, as a condition of the reflexivity of history, became intelligible in a novel way. Historical thought itself was a process, and

it was itself part of the history it was seeking to understand. The knowledge that history could gain about itself was already constitutive of the progressive structure of the overall historical process. For, progress was already minimally realized if any type of knowledge or self-knowledge increased or improved. The type of reflexivity underlying this argument, as applied to history, was precisely rooted in the Kantian discussion in *Conflict of the Faculties*; and it was the target of Nietzsche's intervention in *HL*, which proposed to revise its meaning and structure. In the *Nachgelassene Fragmente* (*NF* 1886 7[4], KSA 12:265), Nietzsche remarked indignantly that Kant regarded the historical process itself as a "moral movement," a matter of "moral ontology." In a sense, at the time of *HL*, he does not seem to have thought that this contamination of ontology could be fully repaired; the question was how to live with it.

Nietzsche's persistent concern for "greatness"—to be achieved for instance in philosophical thought or artistic production, but potentially also in violent political action—is one of the most salient obsessions of *HL*. It is probably fair to say that what Nietzsche understands by greatness is something similar to what is labeled *aretē* in Ancient Greek philosophy, a type of excellence within a given domain, as a disposition successfully acquired over the life course, and that also connotes moral virtue and is in fact a crucial term of virtue ethics. It is clear that the underlying processual temporality is one that has to do with history, which, whatever it is, serves as a receptacle for the great. The great is by default selected into the sphere of the historical, no matter what else may also be granted access. One might then say that the process form of ethical normativity that produces greatness enjoys primacy over the process form of the historical. This recognition—not only that there is something primal about ethical normativity at work in the very concept of history, but also that the mode of theorization of the ethical can be a key variable of philosophies of history—is one of the major analytic breakthroughs of *HL*.

4. Nietzsche's Pluralism about Historicization

Greatness is also an indicator that Nietzsche thinks of history as by necessity selective: not everything past is historical, but the great undoubtedly is. The selectivity of history is a primary feature of all (more or less) implicit modern European concepts of historicity, all of which grapple with the ways in which the domain of the historical is established as distinct from the past in general. This very impulse also underpins e.g. phenomenological interpretations of the concept, be it in terms of the experience of time as relating to the phenomenal subject (thus not with regard to, say, unexperienced time); or be it in terms of a

sense of "belonging" (which has to be limited in reach, lest it become meaningless). The problem with interpretations of this type is that they settle from the start for a single principle of selection, which curtails the greater inferential richness vested in the concept (see also Trüper 2019 for a more extensive analysis).

Nietzsche's approach, by contrast, undercuts such settlements. *HL* does not invest the concept of historicity—or, more precisely, the conceptual position filled by the term—with philosophical significance. When four years after *HL*, in *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche discusses the "abruptness" of Greek history and the "tyranny of the spirit" in it (*HaH* I, §261), he inserts a few lines on the critique of modern history writing:

> Nowadays, to be sure, we admire the gospel of the tortoise. To think historically now means nothing more than thinking that history has always been made according to the principle: 'as little as possible in the longest possible amount of time!' […] in the step-by-step fashion of the tortoise in its race with Achilles; and that is what we call natural development

The notion of incremental, gradual development functions as a principle of reductive selection: Only that which complies with the movement pattern of the tortoise of Zeno's (fallacious) paradox would gain admittance to the status of being historical. Such a principle, Nietzsche holds, cannot do justice to "the stormy and dismal [*das Unheimliche*]" (ibid.) in Greek history. He does not care for the truism that past reality is richer than its historical representation. Rather, he aims at the more pertinent critique that the "gospel of the tortoise" is *both* empirically and ethically fraudulent. Understood as primarily aesthetic qualities, *das Stürmische und Unheimliche* here do the same work that "greatness" and other terms achieve in *HL*: They act as *legitimate* gatekeepers to the sphere of the historical, which has *no right* to institute the tortoise as a gatekeeper of its own.

Consistently, then, Nietzsche does not admit that the historical could legitimately be constituted by a criterion of selectivity of its own. For him, the sphere of the historical ought not to possess autonomy over its conditions of access, its selectivity. Instead it is greatness—and then, as it turns out, other normative criteria—that legitimately determine access. It is for this reason that Nietzsche insists that life requires (only) the service of history; and that history also has nothing more than service to offer. He then unfolds his famous schema of three different relations in which history "belongs" (*gehört*) to the sphere of the living: insofar as the living "acts and strives," "preserves and reveres," "suffers and seeks deliverance" (or, in terms that are closer to the original and less religiously infused, "requires liberation") (*HL* 2:67, KSA 1:258). Accordingly history serves as monumental, antiquarian, or critical. It incites action through the model of

greatness; it incites a sense of piety and belonging through deep knowledge of place; and it incites liberation from suffering through the critique of injustice. One of these builds up, one preserves, one destroys—it is easy to see cohesion in this arrangement. Yet Nietzsche does not care to spell out this alleged cohesion, and his indifference should be taken seriously.[15] The greatness of the monumental is already a given, not established through the work of history writing. The preservation brought about by antiquarianism is oddly selective (apparently one cannot be antiquarian about anything else than one's own deeply provincial homestead) and is not concerned with the preservation of the monumental as such. Critique can be directed against both monumental and antiquarian histories, and these latter two are both entirely uncritical; but they are also not actually in conflict with each other. Rather, they appear interested in objects of different scale. Thus, it would be odd if the triad were meant to be more than a set of alternating forms the service of history to life can take. Nietzsche's main targets in establishing the triad would then appear to be the primacy of the specific "moral ontology" of "life," and its *plural* (not simply triadic) structure. In the engagement with ancient Greek philosophies of virtuous comportment, it is significant that he rejects the type of argument that pervades Plato's so-called Socratic dialogues, in which Socrates typically reduces one virtue or another to a basic idea of the good, to knowledge, or to justice.[16] In this respect, Nietzsche's position is closer to the irreducible pluralism of virtues that marks Aristotle's ethics. This also applies to the plural process forms of historicization.

5. The Threat of Boredom and the Interest in History

It is perhaps easy to overlook the significance of one of the basic points of the text, which is Nietzsche's insistence that historical writing offers more to life than the recognition—"oriental wisdom," he says—that history is altogether unworthy of our attention. He illustrates this position with a few lines from Leopardi's *Canti* (*A se stesso*, To Himself). The position alluded to, here, is also Schopenhauer's, and as far as the concept of history is concerned, Nietzsche uses the point to tacitly distance himself from the otherwise (still)

[15] Salaquarda (1984) has shown that the development of the triad in the notes was piecemeal and somewhat happenstance. Heidegger (2003: §§32-39) was among those who, on the contrary, believed that the triad constituted a unified notion of history as grounded in temporality as such, i.e. the relation of future, past, and present, which in his view informed Nietzsche's three modes.

[16] Nietzsche explicitly attacks the Socratic equation of virtue, reason, and happiness on several occasions, e.g. in *BT* §§12, 14 (KSA 1:85, 94). By contrast, Heidegger (2003: §§77-83) imputes on Nietzsche the pursuit of a central role for justice as the "highest virtue" that somehow mediates "life" and "truth." I concur, however, with Heidegger on the centrality of lived normativity in Nietzsche's understanding of virtue.

revered master.[17] The excerpt from Leopardi ends on the following lines: "Nothing lives that is worthy / Thy agitation, and the earth deserves not a sigh. / Our being is pain and boredom and the world is dirt—nothing more. / Be calm." (*HL* 1:66, KSA 1:256) The significant aspect here is the motif of boredom (*Langeweile*; *noia* in the Italian original). Nietzsche does not dwell on the motif, which flags a major pattern of nineteenth-century discourse about disaffection, temporality, and nothingness. Instead, he swiftly changes terms to the closely related concept of a generalized *Ekel*, "nausea," which then, in the understanding that it refers to the "historical" world in general, becomes a leitmotif of *HL* (and beyond).[18] The temptation to drop oneself into the abyss of generalized nausea-boredom is the antagonist of Nietzsche's text.

In a sense the connotation of history and boredom is unsurprising. Nineteenth-century historians and philosophers of history, when they justify their writings before an imagined critical public, often reckon with boredom. They insist that history is "interesting"—Hegel (1975, 44-7, 124f.) spends quite a few lines on setting down conditions for when history is interesting, and when it is not—and the problem of interest is that of *inter-esse*, of participation. The *topos* "history is boring" is so familiar today that it is hard to recognize its historical dimension. Nonetheless, it was a significant challenge when disciplinary scholarly historical writing (re-)constituted itself at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Leopold von Ranke, for example, pits history and literary fiction in competition against each other, from which it emerges that historical sources are "more beautiful and anyway more interesting [*interessanter*] than romantic fiction. I thus turned away from it [i.e. fiction] altogether and embraced the notion that in my works I would avoid anything invented and poetic and keep strictly to the facts." (Ranke 1890, 61; translations are my own unless otherwise noted.) There is a string of assertions in these casual lines: sources are more interesting than historical fiction because the facts of the past are the ultimate carrier of interest. History as past events is interesting, and therefore history as an account of such events is interesting—this is the maximalist position. Aware of a heightened need for supporting argumentation—Toynbee pinpointed this when he criticized the defeatist "dogma that History is just 'one damned thing after another'" (Toynbee 1957, 267)[19] —Ranke calls

[17] See Neymeyr 2020a: 425-27. Neymeyr lists many other passages where the text of *HL* echoes Schopenhauer's thoughts on topics other than history.

[18] As it was already in *BT* §7 (KSA 1:57), as the "nausea of the absurd," "Ekel des Absurden" in mortal human existence, as supposedly expressed by the sylvan god Silenus: the best for humans would be never to have been born, the second best, soon to die; *BT* §3 (KSA 1:35). See also Porter 2000b, 84f.

[19] Reference borrowed from the instructive documentation at: https://quoteinvestigator.com/2015/09/16/history/ [last accessed July 12, 2019].

on the divine: "Each epoch is immediate to God and its value is not based on that which emerges from it, but on its very existence, its own identity [*ihrem eigenen Selbst*]" (Ranke 1906, 17). Value is what underpins the quality of being interesting, and value is meant to originate in the unified deity. Of course, "value" does not actually mean very much, and Ranke does not make any effort to spell out the meaning of the term. "God" is supposed to do this work for him.

Recourse to the divine is written deeply into the historical semantics of boredom. The term, whose etymology in English is unclear, belongs to a semantic field with rather a number of fossilized religious terms, most notoriously *taedium vitae* (weariness of life) and *acedia* (sloth), that connote the medical history of melancholia on one hand, and the failings of attention and intentionality in prayer, on the other (Kuhn 1976; Lepenies 1992). If especially the latter notion is still tacitly operative in Ranke's metaphor of "immediacy," then the epoch must be understood as a prayer to God. Nietzsche's discussion, in *HL*, of history as a pathology, by contrast, still carries the medical connotations of melancholia. Yet, both authors also partake in the shifts the semantic field had undergone in the later eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. Goodstein (2005) has analyzed the existential bent of newly philosophized boredom and the manifold ways in which the problem simultaneously became bound up with novel scientific disciplines. One of these, it seems to me, and a prominent one at that, was the philosophy of history in its commitment to notions of civilizational progress. Rousseau's dictum according to which the "savages are never bored" already expressed a challenge that any subsequent justification of history-as-progressive-structure had to meet (Rousseau 1762, 2:243). Voltaire (1754: 3f.) stated that his "philosophical" approach to history was meant to counter the tedium of random facts that the late Madame de Châtelet had deplored years before. If history was the progenitor of boredom, not only the nature of the overall process, but also the interest and participation of scholars in the process of history had to be placed under scrutiny and justified. A particular, apologetic reflexivity of history emerged in the context of the problems of boredom and interest. Kant's writings constitute a watershed moment in the history of the philosophy of history not least because they respond to Rousseau's innocuous challenge that the history of "civilization" only settles us with boredom.

In the following pages, one chief aim is the attempt, developed with and through Nietzsche's text, to turn a frivolous Kantian neologism, that of "abderitism," into a more serious tool of historical theorizing. By "abderitism" Kant means a hypothetical state of the absence of any significant developmental structure in history. "Abderitism" connotes the Ancient Greek city of Abdera, reputedly the birthplace of Democritus (of Abdera), whom Nietzsche, in the

beginnings of his career as a philologist, had sought to reinvent as a philosophical figure and deploy as a mask from behind which to express his own thinking on atomist metaphyiscs (Porter 2000a, chap. 1-2). Juvenal's verse on Democritus—even the great can be born in a country of blockheads, referenced prominently by Bayle (1820, 1: 38f.) in his *Dictionnaire*—was a significant source for the commonplace of Abdera as a city of fools. Another one was Lucian of Samosata, who in his treatise on the writing of history referred to the folly of the Abderites as a feverish epidemic that had prompted the citizens to speak only in tragic verse (Lucian 1798). The pranks of Wieland's *Abderites* (Wieland 2009), by contrast, are more akin to an older German literary tradition, most recognizably that of the so-called *Schildbürger*.[20] For Nietzsche, preoccupied with the "greatness" of individuals as much as with tragedy, besides providing a half-mythical literary context for Democritus himself—the only sensible citizen of Abdera in Wieland's novel, known as "the laughing philosopher" since the first century BCE—the space of connotations and allusions was ample.[21] In one tradition, also taken up by Wieland, Democritus kept laughing at the Abderites incessantly. Worried for his sanity, they sent for Hippocrates to examine him, but the latter found that it was the folly of the Abderites that was causing the problem (Rütten 1992). The question of the habitability of Abdera is, or so I hope to show, a key theme for the philosophy of history.

6. Kant's Trilemma and *Theilnehmung* in History

In the context of the present paper, this discussion is interesting and not at all boring, because Kant, in his argument in *Conflict of the Faculties*, relies heavily on a term that means both interest and participation: *Theilnehmung*, which is a matter of affect versus disaffection, with a blurred boundary toward practical activity. I find it problematic to translate this term as "sympathy" (as many translators have done, cf. Kant 1979, 152-7; Kant 2006, 155-7) seeing as Kant expressly wishes to appeal to a force that reaches beyond mere moral sentiment. In general, it may have been Kant—at least I am not aware of an

[20] Nietzsche's early familiarity with Wieland's *Abderiten*, from which Kant presumably derived the term, is evident from the formulation *Abderitenstreiche* in a letter to Erwin Rohde, 9 December 1868, *Briefe von Nietzsche*, KGWB, no. 604. Wieland had also been the prime champion and translator of Lucian.

[21] Curiously, in Nietzsche's manuscript seminar notes on Democritus from 1875-6, there is a lengthy consideration of the foundation and religious cult of Abdera that seems to be part of an effort of establishing the lineage and lifetime of the philosopher more exactly, see Nietzsche Archive, P-II-15, pp. 125-114 (written from back to front), http://www.nietzschesource.org/DFGA/P-II-15. Nietzsche's musings on Abdera as a Phoenician colony are contiguous with his idea that Democritus's atomism was "similar" to "Phoenician cosmogony," see BAW 4:85, also 51.

earlier instance—who raised the problem of the boredom of history to the level of actual argument. In the ultimate version of his philosophical-historical discussion in *Conflict of the Faculties*, history is worthy of interest (*Theilnehmung*) when it can be proven to be progressive as an overarching structure. And then it turns out that history is progressive in its structure precisely because we take an interest in it: Already the fact that we are interested in the increase of freedom is a sign that there must be a tendency toward such an increase (the knowledge generated by interest cannot but increase our freedom to act, in the long run).

This line of argument has frequently irritated its analysts, not least Nietzsche. Yet the underlying point is perhaps less complicated—and more akin to what Hegel later asserts—than has been claimed (see Kleingeld 1995, chap. 5). It seems that for Kant history is simply subject to an unintentional self-fulfilling prophecy, the tacit presence of which is indicated by the general, partisan *Theilnehmung* in matters of the French Revolution—the passion with which this event is accompanied, the particular pain with which its abuses are felt, the hopes that had accompanied its beginnings, and the fears its further fortunes provoked. *Theilnehmung* means that its subjects integrate themselves into the nexus of things historical; they are connected to the event as spectators, though not primarily as historical actors. They are "disinterested" in the sense that their *Theilnehmung* does not have anything to do with hopes for personal gain. This, for Kant, proves the moral character of the underlying mode of perception. Although this term is alien to Kant, what is at stake is a form of self-historicization: people deciding, for a moral reason, that their lives, too, are actually part of history.

This meaning underpins the notion of the *Geschichtszeichen*, the "sign of history" that Kant emphasizes centrally in the argument (see Kittsteiner 1999). The notion suggests that historicity is semiotic in structure, only available in fragments, but susceptible to interpretation on the authority of individuated, fragmentary signs. Importantly, the "sign of history" Kant champions is a sign of history-in-the-singular: it shows that *all* of history is unified as a single progressive structure. Read as such a sign, *Theilnehmung* opens up a unifying structural feature of the entire nexus of the historical (the Latin phrases Kant inserts make this clear: the sign of history is one of matters past, present, and future, all at once). The subjects that experience interest, the spectators of the French Revolution abroad, historicize themselves, and they do so for the first time: This has to do with me because it concerns everybody. Thus, the nexus of the historical expands, even drastically, and the potential of this expansion is in principle unlimited because it becomes an integral part of the illimitable public sphere. Historicity therefore applies universally to all humankind;

and it is thereby unified. Albeit implicitly, Kant had hit upon the notion that the unity of historicity required philosophical argument, since its disunity was a possibility. At the same time, his semiotic analysis of historicity set another implicit condition, according to which historicity ought to be conceived of as public in principle. Both points mark major, if widely overlooked, conceptual shifts in the philosophy of history.

Establishing the unity of historicity, in particular, is central to Kant's intervention. He intends to show that the disinterested *Theilnehmung* of the witnesses of the French Revolution demonstrates that there is moral agency among humans, in their social and political affairs. An irreversible increase in such agency is the necessary consequence of the *unforgettable* nature of the *Theilnehmung* in the events of the Revolution, which leave an indelible imprint on any future body of historical knowledge. In one possible reading, one might even say that the irreversible gain in historical knowledge itself is the "sign of history" Kant seeks to establish.

At the beginning of his discussion, Kant offers a trilemma that his argument about the "sign of history" proposes to resolve: history is progressive (*eudaimonism* or *chiliasm*), or history is retrogressive (*moral terrorism*); or history has no tendency of development at all (*abderitism*). Kant suspects that the third option—with Moses Mendelssohn as its implicit representative—is probably the majority opinion (Kant 1907, 152; see for context Kleingeld 1995, 50-4). Abderitism is the conviction that sometimes things change a little for the better, sometimes they change for the worse, but on the whole, human folly is such that progress and regress cancel each other out. Kant's strategy of argumentation is to exclude the terrorist and abderitist options and simultaneously prove the possibility and reality of the eudaemonist one. To be sure, Kant does not take the terrorist option seriously. He claims it is impossible that things only ever get worse because the human species would then eventually destroy itself (Kant 1907, 81). No kidding, some present-day readers might feel tempted to retort. However that may be, for a variety of reasons, abderitism is the only worthy opponent of eudaimonism/chiliasm Kant recognizes.

The construction of Kant's trilemma, although it may look crude on first glance and has probably attracted more derision than discussion, is actually quite solid. Eudaimonism and terrorism require a premise that history be a unified whole, as a precondition for being a comprehensive directed process, either toward the better or the worse. Abderitism, by contrast, requires no such premise (though it is also compatible with the premise of unity). Indeed, if one rejects the history-in-the-singular premise, one automatically recedes to abderitism, because in an incalculable multitude of historical processes one will never be able to identify any tendency toward either the good or the bad.

This is the reason Kant is so insistent on proving the unity of history in the "sign of history" argument: unless this unity is established, abderitism cannot be ruled out and is in fact a nigh-certainty, given the limited reach of human reason and the vastness of time. In twentieth-century historical theory, pluralist approaches to historicity have enjoyed considerable credit. Yet, Kant would always be able to respond: if there is no overarching unity of history, then, surely, we are in abderitist terrain. Some histories will offer small-scale eudaimonism, others petty terrorism. *Aren't you bored yet?* Nietzsche's conceptual arrangement, by contrast, escapes this charge.

Abderitism, however, is not even yet refuted if the unity of history can be demonstrated. There might be ways of knowing that we are simply beholden to a unified history of uselessness. In this case, since the knowledge of our uselessness would not help us escape this regrettable condition, there would be a deep disconnection between human agency—in the making of history—and humankind's ability to control its agency in the world by way of knowledge. Such a disconnection would render human reason quite feckless and inevitably condemn humankind to abderitism. Therefore, aiming at the enabling conditions of abderitism, Kant seeks to undercut the disunity of historicity, *and* he insists on the necessity of preserving the linkage between knowledge and agency in the concept of "freedom." This is what Kant's notion of the unforgettableness of *Theilnehmung* in the matters of the French Revolution is meant to achieve.

7. The Force of the Trilemma, as Conceded by Nietzsche

Only, the unsupported character of Kant's insistence on the unforgettability of *Theilnehmung* in the French Revolution is glaringly obvious: it is a simple assertion without supporting argument. Perhaps, in Kant's defense, this is actually clearer from today's perspective. Most present-day readers would probably opine that everything in history is equally capable of being forgotten. In light of the deepening of the knowledge of chronological world time since the nineteenth century, the potential stability of the historical self-consciousness of humanity today appears more questionable than was the case for the timeframes Kant imagined.[22] However that may be, unlimited historical forgettability seems to constitute a crucial failure of Kant's argument.

[22] There is clear indication that Kant did not consider himself bound to biblical chronology. Yet, his assertion of the uncertainty of the age of the earth nonetheless reckons with millennia rather than with larger numbers, see Kant 1902. The pattern of argument pursued in that study arguably recurs in the *Conflict of the Faculties* section on the philosophy of history.

Nietzsche, though, appears to recognize a hidden source of support, within the analysis of unforgettability, for Kant's stance. He asserts that, in contrast to the animal, the forgetfulness of humans is incomplete, and that this is an inevitable precondition for any discussion of the concept of history (*HL* 1:62, KSA 1:250f.). He also insists on the necessity of forgetting for human agency and thus disrupts the linkage of knowledge and agency that underpins the Kantian concept of "freedom." Yet since human forgetfulness cannot be universal it is not immediately clear whether it extends evenly to everything in the remembered human past or not.[23] If forgetfulness is uneven, who is then to say whether the structure of collective memory is not such that certain things, certain forms of greatness, are indeed unforgettable? There is a burden-of-proof question here that comes to the aid of Kant's assertion.

Kant's argument about the French Revolution is an argument about "monumental" history in Nietzsche's sense. And monumentality is interesting to Nietzsche not least because it appears to impose a limit on forgetting. The passage (*HL* 1:62f., KSA 1:251) in which he discusses the "boundary at which the past has to be forgotten" seeks to turn the argument around: greatness requires the boundary of forgetting, so as to not be "overwhelmed" by the "historical sense." The argument is important for establishing a notion of value as a motive for action based on irrational passion (a "superabundance [Überschwang] of love" for one's own course of action, *HL* 1:64, KSA 1:254). But actually, as far as the notion of forgetting and forgettability is concerned, Nietzsche engages in a diversionary manoeuver to eschew the question of whether everything past is equally forgettable. The argument about values seems to suggest that this is the case, for values should randomly be able to attach to anything and then determine what is forgotten and what is retained. Yet, if greatness resides simply in the force with which some random value is pursued and all the rest is forgotten—the extreme of an "unhistorical condition"—then greatness has conceptual priority over forgetting, and the question about the forgettability of greatness itself remains unresolved.

Nietzsche's analysis of forgettability complicates the philosophical understanding of the labor of memory. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, he returns to Kant's model case of historical greatness, the French Revolution which he scorns as a text completely overwritten and replaced by the interpretations brought forward by the "noble and enthusiastic spectators" (*BGE* §38, Niet-

[23] In *BT* § 6 (KSA 1:48), Nietzsche qualifies folksong as a "perpetuum vestigium," an eternal trace or sign, of the union of the Apollonian and Dionysian. He is thus no stranger to the notion that signs might be indelible, unforgettable. In that strange phrase of obscure provenance, perhaps one can see an echo of the "signum perpetuum" (Luther: "ewig Zeichen") in the Vulgate, in Exodus 31:17, which is the Sabbath rest. If so, it may be legitimate to add this passage also to the set of references for *Geschichtszeichen* Kittsteiner (1999) provides.

zsche 2002, 37). So memory is inevitably forgery. Only, the insistence on the falsifying impact of memory and the dynamism of remembrance Nietzsche's account makes possible is still entirely compatible with the Kantian argument, which does not actually presuppose that the memory that constitutes the "sign of history" be veracious. Rather, Kant subtly concedes that it is the spectators' interpretations, and not the historical reality, of the Revolution that is the "sign of history." Nietzsche's account of historical greatness ends up reinforcing the Kantian argument.

8. Historicization without Historicity

Ever resourceful, Nietzsche devises another line of argument against the Kantian trilemma. For this purpose, he adumbrates a distinction that—for lack of a better terminology—I propose to represent through the conceptual pair of historicization and historicity.[24] For Nietzsche, the former would be a plural practice, the latter an unchanging, epistemologically dubious, and ultimately useless and pathological relational structure. Relational structure, because in the terms *HL* introduces when discussing the inherent shortcomings of monumental history, it is clear that what is rejected here is the possibility of a fully "veracious" history that would represent the "truly historical connexus of cause and effect" (*HL* 2:70, KSA 1:261), that is to say, a totality of relations. It seems clear that in the passage Nietzsche tests the idea of a mechanist nexus of causes and effects as underpinning a concept of "true history," still not entirely the same as "past reality," but somehow programmed by (and fully mapped on) such reality. He then uses the discussion of "objectivity" and history as science further on in *HL* to dismiss this idea as actually irrelevant to what history is, in and for life. It is hardly the case that the idea of true history as determined by past reality that he pursues along these lines is thought-through and could count as anything else than tentative reliance on a philosophical cliché. It might even be to Nietzsche's credit that he does not place any argumentative weight on this flimsy structure. The work it actually does is of a different kind. It helps him to rid himself of something like "historicity" as a structural condition capable of constituting a "regime" in Hartog's (2016) sense, stable

[24] It may be mentioned in passing that Nietzsche's line of argument would also tear down the distinction, so central to Heidegger's understanding of history, of *Historie* and *Geschichte*, roughly, history as a body of knowledge and history as past reality. Heidegger's influential concept of historicity as *Geschichtlichkeit*, as opposed to "historicality" (*Historizität*, as related to the writing of history) spells out this distinction further. Heidegger (2003: §§40, 44) was aware of the lack of the distinction in Nietzsche's analysis and criticized its absence as a crippling flaw. Instead, one might begin to take this absence seriously as a conceptual challenge.

over centuries and comprehensive. Instead, Nietzsche attains a novel conceptual approach to understanding the difference between history and the past.

If Nietzsche, in *HL*, opted to counter Kant's argument for eudaimonism, the standard strategy of attacking premises and presuppositions was not going to work. To recapitulate: if the premises and presuppositions of eudaimonism were successfully disabled, the anti-eudaimonist would plunge into abderitism, *vulgo* the position of generalized nausea-boredom Nietzsche agreed with Kant was imperative to avoid. Yet, as opposed to most other critics of progressive philosophies of history, Nietzsche appears to have realized, at the time of *HL*, that there was leeway for working further with the problem of nausea-boredom; and related to this, that the concept of *Theilnehmung* was a weak point of Kant's approach that was likely to yield under pressure. In order to generate the required pressure it would be attractive to disconnect the notions of universal historicization and unified historicity that Kant's argument tacitly conflated.

The basic arrangement, the sheer structure of Nietzsche's argument about the plurality of modes of writing history indicates that he thinks, against a Kantian-style approach, that it is not sufficiently clear what interest and/or participation in history means.

In a *first* step, Nietzsche redefines interest as a matter of ownership and service. In general, humans own history and it serves them, not the other way around. Only for the antiquarian, it should be added, this relationship is reversed: "The possession of ancestral goods [*Urväter-Hausrath*, with Nietzsche's slightly sarcastic term] changes its concept in such a soul: *they* rather possess *it*" (*HL* 3:73, KSA 1:265; emphasis added by translator, translation altered). This subtle, even cursory assertion signals that historicization is not always about the historian as sovereign subject, as owner and master of the history established in the process. Historicization can also be about forgoing such sovereignty in an act of "piety" toward dead ancestors and their household effects. Such comportment, although normatively encouraged, carries its own forms of inevitable fraudulence and risks abandoning the rights of the living to the dead. More precisely, the pathology of antiquarianism consists in the perplexing effort to render the dead, in the form of those "ancestral goods," immortal after the fact of their death. Nonetheless, the theme of the relation between the living and the dead remains undeveloped. Nietzsche appears to broach it only in order to make clear that the fleshing out of the meaning of interest-participation behind any historicization is predominately a matter of relational form, and *not* of the psychological make-up of the subject of historical writing, the historian's mindset. For this reason, Nietzsche's modes of historicization must not be mistaken as simply bound up with the individual

writing projects of authorial subjects. As the case of antiquarianism shows, it is perfectly conceivable that such projects align with larger, preceding traditions of historical writing, and that they are thus collective efforts.

In a *second* step, Nietzsche then pluralizes the relation of interest-participation. The weight of the decision between singularity and plurality is shifted off the (implicit) concept of historicity, and onto the concept of interest in things past. There are multiple meanings to "interest," as in fact the semantic glissando from curiosity to enthusiasm to participation suggests already in Kant's account; which also means that there is an abundance of meanings, and interpretations, to any conceivable "sign of history." Kant's semiotic confidence lacks plausibility.

In a *third* step, Nietzsche refashions interest as process—*inter-esse*, being-among (or "being-with," if one manages to suppress the Heideggerian connotations)—and therefore itself historical, so that the reflexivity condition of history is met. The explication of interest as participation, implied in *Theilnehmung*, may then *also* be understood in terms of historicization. For, participating in interesting past events renders their participants historical, i.e. historicizes them. Yet, since interest-participation is plural in form—since there are different practices of historicization at work that are captured in the monumental, antiquarian, and critical approaches—history becomes tied up with a plural concept of historicization. The concept of historicity, as denoting a stable quality of being-historical, becomes unnecessary; and the question of its ability to supply a universal condition is rendered moot.

Instead, in a *fourth* step, the process-form is identified with that of normativity as Nietzsche appears to understand it, via *areté*-virtue and its inherent temporality (including its proclivity toward tragic failure). This sequence of steps obliges him to admit that any effort of historicization as taking an interest, or participating, in an historical past will peter out sooner or later.

Indeed, Nietzsche says as much when he insists that any of the different modes of historicization, when stabilized, become oppressive and eventually pathological. If a concept of stable historicity, no matter even whether its scope be limited, emerges in the ambit of the monumental, antiquarian, or critical, this concept becomes the site of a pathology. It might even be attractive to regard the pathological as simply the consequence of the specific type of normative charge Nietzsche invents, a charge that always carries the risk of self-induced collapse—and risk here means a probability that over time becomes a statistical certainty. Thus, the overall work of the production of historical knowledge must be conceived of, from a normative *and* generalized point of view, as a structure of abderitism. It all comes and goes and pretty much evens out. This analysis disentangles Kant's conflated idea of participation-interest in

the historical. The Kantian subject of *Theilnehmung* is moral and, as it were, desperate for seeing goodness in human affairs. Nietzsche's subject, unsurprisingly, is wayward. He is meant to be "healthy," and his subjection to the abderitist ups and downs of interest-participation in history is a sign of health.

It appears that from Nietzsche's point of view, abderitism can remain sealed off from itself becoming historicized. As one might say, historicization can take place only on the ground floor of the edifice, where there are many rooms, but not in the one-room attic. Precisely because the overarching reality of historicization is abderitist, it remains inaccessible to the normative charges of the process-form of virtue. The two-floor structure of Nietzsche's argument is most clearly visible in the pathologies of history he discusses: he describes, in rather sober terms, the ways in which virtuous modes of historicization carry the terms of their own perversion. And then he *also* attacks, on a different level of argument, without moderation, the pathology of a generalized "historical sense" that overrides the different modes of historicization and achieves a general level of historicity *qua* meta-historicization. The problem with this meta-historicization is that it cannot be a seat of virtue because it is not on a level with interest-driven historicizations, which can replace one another. Meta-historicization does not have competitors that could defeat it, and does not run out on its own. Similarly, "objectivity," which Nietzsche harshly rejects throughout *HL*, is a fake virtue that, once attained, cannot fail any longer. The seeming inconsistency of Nietzsche's critique of history in *HL*—which sometimes seems conciliatory, then radical and irate—is one of the main reasons the text has often been written off as a failed project. Yet there are actually two distinct targets of attack that correspond to the two modes of criticism—measured and immoderate—Nietzsche deploys. The seeming indecision is an integral feature of the argument.

The abderitist superstructure does not cancel the prospect that historicization always can and will entice interest, in one form or another, precisely because the structure underpinning interest is plural and open. For this reason, the notion of nausea-boredom as associated with a general notion of historicity is averted. Given Nietzsche's dismissal of the support structure that would be needed for such a concept, it is plausible to suggest that he regards Kant's option of a generalized abderitist historicity as flawed thinking. Properly understood, abderitism constitutes the superstructure that comprises plural historicizations. Yet it does not apply to the purview of any actual interest-driven body of historical knowledge that emerges from any particular process of historicization. The "facts" of the past, given that they are always tied to such processes and cannot be understood simply in some generalized "connexus," are never *per se* boring-abderitist, and they are also never stably "historical." Thus, there is actually no need for a concept of historicity. There is only historicization, which is

interesting as long as it is interesting, reaches as far as it reaches, and collapses, or turns pathological, when it does. All historicization has only limited scope because it is a process in time and meant to come to an end before starting anew, in a different vein.[25] This view of history undercuts the Kantian analysis. Successive historicizations cannot add up to a progressive, eudaimonist structure, because interest is plural, a play of projects driven by unsustainable affects. The semiotic judgment about the course of the historical future Kant was aiming for is made impossible, while at the same time history is never universally boring. If properly understood, then, history will not make life any more nauseating-boring than it is anyway. Nausea-boredom is reduced to its ordinary, existential measure.

9. Boredom and Recurrence

In a much-quoted passage from *Gay Science* (§ 42, "Work and Ennui"), Nietzsche expounds:

> For the thinker and for all inventive spirits ennui is the unpleasant 'calm' [*Windstille*, doldrums] of the soul which precedes the happy voyage and the dancing breezes; he must endure it, he must *await* the effect it has on him:—it is precisely this which lesser natures cannot at all experience! It is common to scare away ennui in every way, just as it is common to labour without pleasure. It perhaps distinguishes the Asiatics above the Europeans that they are capable of a longer and profounder repose; even their narcotics operate slowly and require patience, in contrast to the obnoxious suddenness of the European poison, alcohol (Nietzsche 1924, 79f.)[26]

So from any effort of historicization, no matter that it must unfold in an overall medium of abderitism, greatness may well emerge. Since temporalization in Nietzsche's writings tends to be spelled out in terms of musical rhythm and since he tends to opt for the slow over the "sudden" as an indicator of greatness, states of boredom and nausea form a differentiated spectrum that debases the modern European and, to some extent, honors the "Oriental." Boredom is therefore a state of the soul that *establishes* inequality among humans. It is only for the great that ennui ultimately becomes more than ennui, a

[25] This also suggests that behind every historicization, there is the motor force of desire. I have argued elsewhere (Trüper 2019) that the monotony of the desiring machine behind concepts of historicity presents a problem; it remains an open question whether Nietzsche's notion of desire, which in its guise in *HL* appears mediated by normativity, escapes this difficulty.

[26] The motif of *Windstille der Seele* echoes Cicero on the ethics of Democritus, see BAW 3:327 (also archival signature P I 4, 163).

preparatory, instrumental state that renders possible happy voyaging and work that is delightful (rather than just paid and alienated).

If one reapplies—with a certain degree of liberty, admittedly—these notions from *GS* to the problem of historicization, it becomes clear that the abderitist structure adumbrated in *HL* is hardly productive for everyone. Most historicizations will perhaps succumb to the toxin of suddenness and result in nausea. Abdera proper is elsewhere, to be traveled to, to be embarked for, and a place that interlaces folly and greatness in ways that turn it into a truly tragedic community, as in Lucian's story of the fever of boundless tragic speech and play that gripped the Abderites—in contiguity with Nietzsche's project in *BT*. This is a community that participates in the action, as an audience not stably distinguished from the choir. So much, then, for Kant's condition of publicity in interest-participation: spectatorship and active participation will always tend to become blurred, order and control are illusory. The same process also comprises the Apollinian force of individuation—recognizably a cognate concern to that of historical greatness in *HL*—which however culminates in its own Dionysian dissolution (*BT* §10, KSA 1:73).

In his early works Nietzsche explicates the specific temporal condition he imputes on virtue through the motif of the tragic. Virtues are not constituted by Socratic reason, happiness, success, or discipline, but by fate, greatness, ecstasy, excess, and self-destruction. This also ties them to the musical structure of the Dionysian studied in *BT*. *HL* continues to cling to basic features of this argument in order to explicate the specific temporality of historicization that sets apart and generates histories from past reality. One of these features is that the temporality in question also comprises a normativity of the good and bad, right and wrong, which are subjected to rhythms of coming and going. The tragic becomes a cipher, then, for the transience of the normative, its bind to the condition of "life." This also pertains to the various forms of historicization, while it excludes the all-comprehensive superstructure of historicity.

One of the strangest passages of *HL* is the one leading up to the notion that monumental history would only be interested in effects, but not in causes. This condition, properly understood, is only preliminary, Nietzsche holds; it is dictated by the requirements of simplification and inexactitude that would precede even the possibility of "learning something new straightaway" (*HL* 2:69, KSA 1:261) from the monumentality of, say, the Italian Renaissance:

> At bottom, indeed, that which was once possible could present itself as a possibility for a second time only if the Pythagoreans were right in believing that when the constellation of the heavenly bodies is repeated the same things, down to the smallest event, must also be repeated on earth […]. Only if, when the

> fifth act of the earth's drama ended, the whole play every time began again from the beginning, if it was certain that the same complex of motives the same *deus ex machina*, the same catastrophe were repeated at definite intervals, could the man of power venture to desire monumental history in full icon-like [*ikonischer*] *veracity*, that is to say with every fact depicted in its full peculiarity and singularity: but that will no doubt happen only when the astronomers have again become astrologers […] (*HL* 2:69f., translation modified; KSA 1:261)

The motifs of this passage are strikingly reminiscent of the lines of argument Nietzsche explores in later works concerning the notion of the "eternal return of the same."[27] It is all already there: the strange mixture of ancient atomism and cosmology and the half-serious ambition to restate and confirm it in the language of modern physics; the project of a concept of an eternal "world" without any opening for salvation (and the polemical reduction of religion—he specifically discusses Buddhism and Christianity in later writings, in this regard—to eschatology);[28] and the notion that the "thought" of eternal return is itself fraudulent, reliant on a process of oversimplification or "coarsening" (*Vergröberung*) that belongs to the sphere of dramatic acting and which means that thinking presupposes poetry.[29] In *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche returns to a term from *HL* when he decries the overwhelming "nausea" inspired by the thought of eternal return, which aligns it with the topic of boredom (*Za*-III-Genesende-2). The "man of power" he alludes to in *HL*, in the monumental history passage, then becomes recognizable as an earlier version of the "super-man" of *Za* and other works, whose theorization alone, Nietzsche holds, renders bearable the idea of eternal return.

What this idea adds to the Kantian notion of abderitism is precisely the idea of unequal accessibility: it is a doctrine that will only speak to the few, not the many, let alone all. In the later works, Nietzsche targets morality as such—not in the sense that there might not be prescriptive norms at all, but that such norms could apply universally, would be universally accessible, or fully public. Instead, there must be norms that apply only to one person—something that might be the case in phenomena of moral immediacy, as one might call them, such as revenge or the swearing of an oath. He also rejects his earlier reliance on the forms of tragedy (and thus virtue) as a mere first attempt to get at the matter. I will not enter into the detail of what it means, for Nietzsche, to abandon or overcome morality. Yet even superficially, it is clear that the casting off

[27] As already Lou Andreas-Salomé (1894: 226f) and Paul Mongré (2004: 897) noted; see also Neymeyr 2020a: 445f.

[28] As is well known, *HL*: §8 also pioneered the understanding of modern historical writing as secular surrogate for eschatology.

[29] For this point *NF*-1885,40[17], KSA 11: 636.

of any moral universalism entails jettisoning the possibility of achieving a universalized form of historicity from the given plurality of historicizations. Since he has bound up historicization with the normativity of virtue-*areté*, and since there is no universalism to be achieved on the one side of this combination, the same holds on the other. While the full awareness of the situation is unbearably nauseating-boring for the many, a few might manage to embrace it and journey forth from it. When Nietzsche insists, that the "origin [of historical culture] must itself be known historically, history must itself resolve the problem of history, knowledge must turn its sting against itself—this threefold must is the imperative of the 'new age' […]." (*HL* 8:103), it would seem that he means this embrace. In fact, facing the abderitist condition becomes something of a trial, a test that separates the great from the ordinary. The great, as they pass this test, will leave behind the concerns that drive historicization. So then, even if it were possible to establish, and live up to, an all-encompassing concept of historicity, this possibility would be tied to greatness; and the great would presumably abandon historicization altogether, since they would gradually move beyond its normative motivations. The Kantian hope that one's *Theilnehmung* might trigger the historicization of oneself along with, ultimately, all others, would be out of the question. The price for embracing only the concept of "historicization" while discarding "historicity" then intrudes deeply into the language of morality. The potential gain would be the habitability of abderitism. Historical theory might do well to further explore this constellation.

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