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Society as an Experiment?

Reading Nietzsche on the margins of social theory

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Abstract

This thesis explores the absent parameters of the 'social' in Nietzsche's works alongside its reception in contemporary political and social theory, responding to renewed concerns with his class racism. Departing from his unsettling ideas on a caste society, breeding and slavery, I argue that Nietzsche's contemporary reception across the left and right has to be understood as a site of dissonant rhetorical effects. Rather than technically reconstruct Nietzsche's anti-social positions, I theorize how the hierarchical organisation of the texts facilitates readers' (mis)identifications, dramatized in the figures of victory and subjugation in his writings, from the 'philosopher of the future' to the 'affirmative woman'.

This complements existing reconstructions of Nietzsche's theory of a two-caste society by centring his rhetorical forms of addressing, conjuring and mobilising his ideal readers towards the project of revaluation. I revisit the discussion on the status of the intertwined biological and social metaphors in Nietzsche's writings, which have been often sanitized in reception through hermeneutics of suspicion. While readings of Nietzsche in the post-structuralist tradition productively appropriated his suspicions of language as a site of metaphoric transference, sign chains and power relationships, they often ignore Nietzsche's concerns with degeneration and racial hygiene.

Despite Nietzsche's dangerous socio-biologism, I argue that the philosopher can be still productively used on the Marxist-left as a master of rhetoric. Drawing on Nietzsche's reception in feminist and post-colonial theory, I argue that the significance of class racism in Nietzsche's thinking should be theorised in relation to the figure of the noble as a mythical founder of the order of signs. The esoteric figure of the 'philosopher of the future' as an experimenter and tempter (*Versucher*) offers an overarching methodological device through which I delineate Nietzsche's purchase for centring the role that readers' self-identifications play in the canonisation of social theories.

Acknowledgments

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Abbreviations

AC: The Antichrist

AR: Description of Ancient Rhetoric

BGE: Beyond Good and Evil

BT: The Birth of Tragedy

D: Daybreak

EH: Ecce Homo

eKGWB: Digital version of the German critical edition of the complete works of Nietzsche edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (digital edition available at nietzschesource.org)

GM: On the Genealogy of Morality

GS: The Gay Science

GSt: The Greek State

HL: On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life

TI: Twilight of the Idols

TL: On Truth and Lies in the Non-moral Sense

UM: Untimely Meditations

WP: Will to Power

Z: Thus Spoke Zarathustra

Introduction

Friedrich Nietzsche may be the most passionately contested Western philosopher, appropriated with all kinds of intense attachments – from Georges Bataille's (2015) 'my company on earth is only Nietzsche' to Luce Irigaray's (1991) imagined love affair with the philosopher. Reflecting on the many difficulties in reconstructing Nietzsche's ideas, Stern (2020) identifies "the problem of not knowing which prejudices, faint associations, schools of interpretation, hopes and dreams or thorough-going enmities the reader brings with her or him to this man and his ideas" (p.1). Stern (2020) argues that this is particularly tricky in light of Nietzsche's exaggerations and twists of phrase, all of which make it difficult to take at face-value the philosopher's often contradictory and provocative statements. Many conclude that readers across the political spectrum simply project onto Nietzsche, blaming the heterogeneity of his incoherent style(s) for all kinds of misinterpretations.[1] In this thesis, I argue that this is neither a satisfactory answer, nor one that is faithful to Nietzsche's philosophical-political challenges. Rather, there is a complex interplay between Nietzsche's dissonant rhetoric, his philosophical methods and the readers' conflicting responses. We must examine this interplay to understand how and why Nietzsche's texts facilitate (mis)identifications among a range of readers, from queer feminists to ethnonationalists.

Despite his excessive stylings, Nietzsche has been long read in social and political theory in ways that draw out the use of his philosophical concepts for diagnostic purposes. Recent readings suggest that he offers an overarching theory of a two-caste society which would be based on a modern form of slavery (Drochon, 2016; Losurdo, 2019; Toscano, 2020). Given this scandalous idea, understanding how Nietzsche tempts, tests and implicates various readers in his rhetorically charged writings is of paramount importance. My focus on rhetoric aligns this thesis with the so-called 'continental' tradition – for the lack of a better term – which recognizes how the reader becomes entangled in the text, centring the grammars of seeing, thinking, reading and feeling as shaped in and through socio-epistemic fields of vision (Butler, 1993; Sedgwick, 2003). If the *will to power* can be understood as a heuristic of interpretation rather than a quasi-vitalist theory (Bull, 2011; Faulkner, 2010; Kofman, 1972; Markowski, 2001), where the author can win but also loose the favour and

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[1] The 'postmodern' uses of Nietzsche have been often read as a misinterpretation (Gemes, 2001). For a contemporary discussion on Nietzsche's readings across the left and right, see Babich (2020). Antonio (1995) speaks about the ways in which Nietzsche becomes a "source of inspiration, vision, and intellectual legitimation for the resurgent radical right" (p.29) after WWI, dramatized in Hans Freyer's *Revolution from the Right* (1931). Bhatt (2020) discusses Nietzsche's appeal to contemporary ethnonationalists in the context of the resurgence of claims about white extinction.

self-identification of the reader, I am interested in the embodied, affective attachments that have shaped so many passionate responses, in reading with one's own blood as Zarathustra instructs us, one's own experience, driven by certain drives rather than others – and in how this is central to Nietzsche's idea of perspectivism. We often assume that reading is a neutral, disembodied, if not mechanizable task of exegesis – as if texts could speak for themselves – but Nietzsche was interested in recruiting particular readers, writing for all and none, tortured by the idea of being misunderstood to the point of coming up with an entire crowd of imagined companions, ghosts and spirits (Hicks and Rosenberg, 2003; Ronnell; 2003).

This question about the implication of the reader in the text is significant if we suspect that Nietzsche entices us towards some sort of transformation, either of ourselves, our 'moral prejudices', or perhaps even in a wider collective sense, a transformation of society. Reading Nietzsche into the orbit of political theory, Hugo Drochon (2016) recently argued that Nietzsche's politics is not at all individualistic, but concerned with "how the artistic work of the few will be to the benefit of the whole" (p.30). In Drochon's (2016) reading – which aspires to the status of a technical reconstruction – Nietzsche's normative project would be oriented around the acceleration of the process of levelling towards a split of humanity into two castes with distinct cultural fabrics: the 'mass' consisting of paid democratic slaves, and the creative elites free from work and leisure. The latter, materially poorer yet spiritually richer, would rise to the task of 'governing' humanity.[2] This division would benefit all humanity, for the enslaved would not have to senselessly suffer from questioning life's meaning, being paid fairly for their work – they would be 'happily' enslaved.

If this is a surprising twist in intellectual history, the picture of Nietzsche that emerges on the political left today is even more puzzling. In a monumental Marxist study recently translated into English *Nietzsche, the Aristocratic Rebel*, Domenico Losurdo (2019) argued that the division lines between the 'master' 'slave' 'noble' 'plain' and 'common' that animate Nietzsche's writings need to be understood in terms of the racialized class conflict, which evolved in trans-national – that is European – context at the end of the 19th century. Nietzsche's 'aristocratic radicalism' would be part of an "anti-democratic reaction that developed (...) as a result of the June days of 1848 and the Paris Commune" (Losurdo, 2019, p.479). The reactionary politics would consist of a critique of revolution and modernity on the behalf of ancient ruling classes threatened by the rise of new financial and industrial wealth. Losurdo (2019) argued that Nietzsche's references to noble natures need to be

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[2] See Guay (2013) for a discussion of the concept of the 'order of rank' in Nietzsche's philosophy which cannot be understood in terms of a specific group of individuals that rise to the task of governance. I discuss this in more depth in Chapter 3.

understood not only across the material and spiritual registers (e.g. as nobility of the soul versus an aristocratic position), but that these would map onto his epistemic ideas on perspectivism as a site of a reactionary political ideology. While the study still awaits critical discussion, and not everyone will follow Losurdo (2019) in identifying Nietzsche's anti-socialist standpoint as a central axis of his philosophy of the future, more scholars on the left call for revisiting the classic thesis about the absent parameters of the 'socio-political' in Nietzsche's works (Landa, 2019b; Toscano, 2020).

Indeed, Nietzsche's rhetoric of decline and degenerationism has been increasingly more often interrogated in relationship to racial biology and eugenics (Bernasconi, 2017; Moore, 2002), and in terms of racial underpinnings of the vitalist conception of 'Life' in the tradition of *Lebensphilosphie* (Jones, 2010). It raised questions about the ways in which vitalism – later reinvigorated under the sign of Deleuze – became a vehicle for sanitizing complex relations between the notions of culture, 'race' and life as organically conceived.[3] Jones (2010) aptly argued that vitalism needs to be understood in terms of racial discourses underlying modernity as founded on colonialism, with a central role of Nietzschean influences on modern European and Caribbean philosophy. These elevated the 'spiritual' notion of life as irreducible to biological fitness, glorifying creative transcendence in light of material struggles.

One can sense the disquieting implications. Whether advocating for a two-caste society (Drochon, 2016), recommending that Jewish women 'crossbreed' with Prussian officers (Bernasconi, 2017), or romanticizing the Hindu caste system (Moore, 2002; Toscano, 2020), these interpretations form a disturbing and complex intellectual landscape. When faced with those multiple unsettling themes waved out from Nietzsche's moral and political philosophy, a sympathetic reader trained in existentialism and the post-structuralist tradition might feel manipulated and confused, if not entirely betrayed. It is not a Nietzsche that many are accustomed to, though one that many Marxists saw coming at least since Györgi Lukács' (1980) highly polemical *Destruction of Reason* which denounced Nietzsche as a leading philosopher of the pre-imperialist German bourgeoisie, a thinker of the enigmatic forces of 'life' which would obscure class conflicts and systematically produced crises.

Criticized for its connections to Stalinism, its outdated biology and scientific materialism, as well as for its lack of attention to the colonial context (Jones, 2010), *Destruction of Reason* still fuels suspicions of Nietzsche's hostility to the 'labour question', his disdain for socialism and fascination with slavery, even though critical affinities between

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[3] For an alternative reading of Deleuze in the tradition of naturalism see Ansell-Pearson (2016).

Nietzsche and Marx are debated today (Babich, 2019; Karzai, 2019; Landa, 2019a; Payne, 2017; Roberts, 2016).[4] While Lukács (1980) feared that Nietzsche was seducing the youth towards a superficial transformation of the soul and away from a (socialist) political project, contemporary Marxist-left readings tend to expose Nietzsche's implication in the racial ordering of modernity and in the broader anthropology of sub-humans versus super-humans, his practical-literal politics of destruction and endorsement of slavery despite the growing momentum of the abolitionist movement in the US (Bernasconi, 2017; Bull, 2011).

Perhaps none of this is surprising. After all, reception of Nietzsche often seems to oscillate between two strategies: to excuse the philosopher – whether for associations with Nazism, anti-Semitism, vitalism or post-modernism – or to blame him for all kinds of 'hyperbolic raging' that the ethnonationalists pick up today (Bhatt, 2020). The dedication of readers to emerge as 'champions against misinterpretation' (Faulkner, 2010) – is visible already prior to the WWII abuses: right after Tönnies' outrage at the immoralism of the 'Nietzsche cult' by the hedonist youth, Simmel (1897) came to his defence examining the philosopher's life-affirming philosophy as nothing less than a 'Copernican deed' in ethics. This characteristic strategy to put Nietzsche 'on trial' – to follow Derrida's (1994) description – is particularly pronounced today in light of renewed concerns with his thinking about the 'interbreeding of races' which is re-interpreted in terms of antiblackness and classism (Bernasconi, 2017; Losurdo, 2019), even though 'race' (*Rasse*), if read literally, is an indeterminate category in Nietzsche's writings (Bernasconi, 2017; Geuss, 2019).

Combined with alt-right and ethnonationalist appropriations, this understandably fuels all kinds of suspicions about Nietzsche's socio-political vision and its uses for theorizing social life. Some are ready to conclude that the philosopher was inciting readers to genocide (Beiner, 2018), and that the 'hammer' he philosophized with should be understood as a weapon of cultural supremacy by the *fin-de-siècle* reactionary aristocratic family politics threatened by the revolution (Losurdo, 2019). Jones (2010) assesses the role that Nietzsche played in the development of *Lebensphilosophie* and vitalist critiques of capitalism negatively, as an "apologist for crude biologistic thinking, an advocate for the destruction of

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[4] As Jones (2010) emphasizes, *Destruction of Reason* is a difficult text. In the broader trajectory of critical theory, it is well known that Adorno (1980) has been fiercely critical of *Destruction of Reason*. Landa (2019b), for instance, emphasizes Adorno's 'condescending' tone in critiquing Lukács, while Losurdo (2019) points to Adorno's and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (2016) as including a critical assessment of the Nietzschean division line between the 'weak' and the 'strong'. For a broader discussion of Adorno's relationship to Nietzsche, see Plass (2015) and Lemm (2010). In contemporary specialist literature on Nietzsche, Babich (2019), among others, criticizes Lukács for his "materialist idealization of science" (p.255). These are just some examples of the type of critiques which Jones (2010) reviews exploring the relationship between the politics of vitalism and racial discourses.

the idea of the possibility of true human progress, and an enthusiast for wanton cruelty" (p.61). Even if we suspend such conclusions, the racial underpinnings of his rhetoric of degenerationism alongside his positive references to slavery (*Sklaverei*) – for all of their complexity and ambivalence – raise questions about the purchase of Nietzsche for critical social theory in the post-colonial traditions by Fanon, Césaire and Said (Jones, 2010; Toscano, 2020), among others, and give rise to a challenge of how to make sense and possibly reassess his enormous influence on post-structuralism and social theory more broadly.

As we face complex questions about Nietzsche's politics, most analytic philosophers leave out concerns about the 'socio-political' outside of their scholarship, as not meaningful either on Nietzsche's own immanent terms, or that of their discipline, querying his naturalism in elaborate puzzle-solving and doctrine-building. The continental tradition is not particularly invested in re-examining Nietzsche's politics either, given his reputation as a prophet of irrationalism on the one hand, and his well-documented and extensive influence in the 'French' tradition on the other (Harcourt, 2020; Schrift, 1995). Indeed, writing on the future of critical social theory beyond the Frankfurt tradition, Bernard Harcourt (2020) recently argued in *Critique and Praxis* that Nietzsche offers diagnostics for thinking about the play of post-truth and illusion, but must be left behind in light of his "misogyny and aristocracy" (p.19). There are of course broader developments in the political and intellectual landscape which make Nietzsche suspicious, from the decolonial turn, to the debate on Heidegger's *Black Notebooks,* which fuel new approaches on for how to think about politics, the author and the historical context, increasingly more often discussed beyond the ivory towers of academia. The author is no longer 'dead' as Foucault (1997) and Barthes (1977) announced, but decentred in terms of the privileged place occupied by white heterosexual men (see Ahmed, 2017; Bhambra and Santos 2017; Go, 2017).

My thesis responds to these developments and asks in what ways can we speak about the parameters of the 'social' in Nietzsche's thinking, how would they be connected to his politics, and how to think about his reception in social theory in light of concerns around his class racism (Losurdo, 2019; Toscano, 2020).[5] To be sure, the 'socio-political' in Nietzsche's writings has been always framed as a blind-spot, omission and negative limit of his thinking. There is thus a reason why a reader might feel ill-equipped to understand different dimensions of Nietzsche's 'socio-political' imaginary in light of recent reconstructions of Nietzsche's politically conservative vision centred around an internally

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[5] Toscano (2020) distinguishes class racism drawing on Balibar's (1992) understanding of the term in response to Losurdo's (2019) distinction between transversal and horizontal class racism. See Chapters 3, 4 and 6 for a more in-depth discussion on class racism.

divided humanity. We have all been trained to read Nietzsche as an anti-social thinker, who does not speak to concerns around the social order, social bonds or political life. Reading Nietzsche as a prophet of contingency, Rorty (1989) once summarized a long-term consensus on Nietzsche in terms of the incompatibility between the equality- and justice-centred frameworks of emancipation in the public realm and the demands for self-creation, siding Nietzsche with the historicists, Foucault and Heidegger, for whom "socialization" would be "antithetical to something deep within us" (xiv). Rorty (1989) is by no means an isolated figure in reading Nietzsche as an anti-social thinker who does not theorize social processes in any meaningful sense. Danto (1965) similarly speaks of Nietzsche's 'wicked' anti-social reputation in the canonizing analytic reading.

At the same time, many readers in the orbit of sociology and social theory have been attracted to his writings, even attempted to extract 'sociological' material from his works, arguing that contemporary sociology is yet to reckon with the force of Nietzsche's thinking, in spite of the denigrating things Nietzsche had to say about Spencer's and Comte's positivistic and moralizing socio-scientific projects (Antonio, 1995; Aspers, 2007; Fong, 2020; Karzai; 2019; Piazzesi; 2013; Runciman, 2000). The ever-growing body of scholarship on Nietzsche in the Marxist tradition offers an immediate shortcut for thinking about the 'social question' in Nietzsche in relationship to specific concerns around class, 'race', property and anti-socialist discourses, often beyond his relationship to the rising 19th science of sociology and Social Darwinism. Those discussions have been shaped by Habermas' (1987) critique of Nietzsche as incompatible with the framework of critical social theory and sociology more broadly, though most appropriations move beyond the specific charges either Lukács or Habermas formulated.

While these are undoubtedly helpful, it is important to situate the Marxist tradition within broader reception of Nietzsche's political philosophy today to give readers tools for understanding the parameters of the 'social' in relationship to his project of revaluation and breeding which would be based on new measures of human worth beyond the rule of the herd animal. Nietzsche was famously critical of his contemporaries – including modern scholars working in the "factory of scholarship" (HL), in ways that have stimulated the imagination of many readers in the history of classical and contemporary social theory. Yes tracing the reception of Nietzsche's dissonant rhetoric on the margins of social theory is a complex challenge. As Babich (2020) argues, one has to read between Nietzsche and Marx to make something meaningful of their thinking about slavery, work and capitalism, but that

requires to "read between disciplines, as disciplines change" (p.227). In this sense, readers are likely to project their own understandings of inequality and subjugation into his texts.

Research aims: investigating parameters of the 'social' in Nietzsche's dissonant rhetoric

Nietzsche always provoked, misled and divided readers through his many masks, personae and signatures. Today the philosopher returns as a theorist of a caste society, at times a racist, naturalist, an apologist for slavery and forced labour. My thesis surveys these disquieting interpretations of Nietzsche's political philosophy to draw attention to his esoteric forms of addressing readers and stimulating their self-activity behind the mask of the philosopher of the future – as a tempter and experimenter (*Versucher)*. Complementing the technical reconstructions of a theory of society in his writings, my aim is to give readers tools to analyse how the 'socio-political' parameters function in his works in relationship to his demands towards his ideal readers, whom he attempts to persuade and mobilize towards the project of revaluation. I will draw attention to the hierarchical forms of address in Nietzsche's writings which implicate the reader, the unstable figures of mastery, subjugation and affirmation across what we understand as spiritual' or psychological versus material or historical registers. How we respond to Nietzsche often involves imposing modern categories on the text – for instance those of 'race' or gender, which we are likely to understand in terms of the split between nature and culture, essence versus existence, or the material and the symbolic, but that did not have such meanings over a century ago.

There is a gap in reception today between technical-reconstructive readings of Nietzsche's *great politics* and Marxist-leftist critiques which centre Nietzsche's hostility to the 'social question' understood in terms of the fight for the liberation of the subaltern, working classes. Departing from Losurdo's (2019) bold interpretation of the philosopher's 'aristocratic radicalism', I will consider how the tragic notion of 'transfiguring suffering' in Nietzsche's thinking can be understood to involve socio-political stakes, not merely existential ones as many insist (Hicks and Rosenberg, 2003). The emerging question is also whether and how Nietzsche's dangerous thinking about slavery can be understood in relation to any particular groups, castes or classes, and how it matters in terms of Nietzsche's rhetorical seductions. This requires us to revisit the long-standing debate on the status of the organic metaphor of the 'social body', as well as Nietzsche's relationship to Social Darwinism.

While my argument is that the significance of the 'social' in Nietzsche's thinking has to be understood in the biologistic sense, as linked to the discourses of degenerationism, decadence and racial biology as Moore (2002) shows, this does not immediately lead to the

conclusion that his socio-biological perspectivism betrays an 'aristocratic epistemology' (Losurdo, 2019). While reviewing these discussions, I am less interested in Nietzsche's own overarching socio-political stance, though this is also considered, and more in how we was able to mobilize readers in the orbit of sociological theory.

In this sense, my framework is more indebted to post-structuralism which queries the notion of the interpreting subject than to historical materialism. In *Anti-Nietzsche*, Bull (2011) argued that interpretations of Nietzsche often rely on reading for victory which attempt to either assimilate or reject the philosopher's provocations, whereby Nietzsche would be able to create a sense of intimacy with the reader through the very style of his writing, not least the musical twists of phrase. There is also the apparent paradox of Nietzsche's popularity among the groups that he denigrates – not least the educated middle-classes, the Jews, or women. The strategy of reading for victory can be qualified in terms of his reception in social theory which often oscillates between loud enthusiasm (e.g. Foucault) and outright rejection (e.g. Habermas) in ways that do not allow us to understand the role of the effects that Nietzsche's dissonant rhetoric facilitates among his readers.

The emerging question then is not only why we are so likely to sanitize Nietzsche's writings, read them outside of historical socio-political context, but why his texts produce such intense attachments and (mis)identifications. To understand this, we need to analyse his rhetorical forms of addressing and implicating readers. Nietzsche has a particular way of appealing to audiences against the opinion of the majority, which needs to be situated in terms of broader socio-political developments at the time, for instance in relationship to Bismarck's reforms on mass education, leadership institutions, but also the spread of anti-Semitism, fears around the degeneration of elites and the 'nervous age', as well as the emergence of worker's right ('the labour question') at the end of the 19th century (Moore, 2002). Nietzsche also conjures *future* readers, the imagined 'free spirits', 'children', 'philosophers of the future' or 'affirmative woman' who are yet to come and arrive to his texts as part of his imagined community of re-evaluators. Readers across the left and right project themselves as the true privileged addressees of Nietzsche's demands.

There are different kinds of 'we' at stake in Nietzsche's forms of address, which facilitate various forms of (mis)identifications. Yet we have surprisingly few tools to analyse them while centering the 'socio-political' stakes of his ideas, despite Nietzsche's reputation as a literary genius. One often falls back on a polarized landscape in terms of what rhetoric and metaphor means for the very *practice of philosophy*, the tension between reading literally-technically in the spirit of technical reconstruction, versus in terms of literary tropes

(Caro, 2014; Schrift, 1995; Stern, 2020). The divide between the two approaches towards Nietzsche's writings is another effect of the polarization which characterizes the field of reception today, one of the ways in which so many readers put Nietzsche 'on trial', often by pointing out his dangerous literal-practical politics behind innocent and flowery metaphors.

Understanding how Nietzsche entices, seduces and perhaps even manipulates his readers is particularly important if we recognize the promise of revaluation in his late writings, in addition to their diagnostic use.[6] Nietzsche has long been canonized as an anti-social thinker, though whether his thinking of revaluation and overcoming of the 'degeneration' of humanity can be grasped in relation to particular social groups is open to debate (Faulkner, 2010; Huddleston, 2019; Losurdo, 2019; Schacht, 2015). 'Society' as a relatively stable referent gains meanings only in the wake of Rousseau and Hobbes, and became theorized as an object of inquiry with the rise of classical sociology, so it is not surprising that many stage Durkheim into an opponent of Nietzsche in terms of their radically different visions on the (anti)moral ends of individual passions (Antonio, 1995; Bull, 2011; Roberts, 2016). Durkheim as a moralist has a positivistic vision of sociology centered around the 'social fact' as irreducible to psychology or biological sciences. In contrast, most perspectives on the 'social' today emphasize that we need to understand it as a relation, an open-ended problem to be developed rather than a black-box or a pre-defined and stable entity (Pyythinen, 2010; Saar, 2018; Savransky, 2018). What the term 'social' might entail in the wake of Nietzsche is unclear, and it seems rarely to concern philosophers, while most readers are trained to think of him as a quintessentially anti-social thinker, whether in the traditions of post-Kantian philosophy, critical theory or analytic philosophy.[7]

Central lines of inquiry

This is where my thesis makes a contribution. My aims are to: 1) clarify in what sense we might speak of the parameters of the 'social' in Nietzsche's works and 2) ask whether and how his thinking is still relevant for critical social theory today in light of his class racism. My thesis builds bridges in scholarship on Nietzsche's politics in terms of his ideas and speculations on how to think about, and even reorganize future two-caste society, and the

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[6] I borrow the term 'enticement' from Golemb (1998) who used it to unpack Nietzsche's theory of power. My aim is to emphasize the libidinal connotations in relation to readers' heartfelt attachments, departing from my overarching reading of Nietzsche as a seducer and tempter (*Versucher*).

[7] There are of course important exceptions. Saar (2018) uses Nietzsche to theorize the interconnected levels of the 'social' in terms of the order, practice and subject as discussed in Chapter 3, while Huddleston (2019) frames his reading of the notions of culture, flourishing and decadence in Nietzsche's thinking as a 'social philosophy'.

more creative – often sociological and post-structuralist – readings which explore Nietzsche's experiments with language and metaphor, his challenges to the creative impulse in morality, the psychic and epistemic life of power, and the utopian fields of signs (Butler 1993; Fanon, 1967; Spivak, 1983). This is a timely intervention considering that scholars ask questions about Nietzsche's poetics of science, the particular aesthetic-existentialist reworking of the scientific-naturalist experimental premise (Bamford, 2016; Thoma, 2016), and the interconnections between the parameters of 'race', gender, caste and class in his writings (Jones, 2010; Toscano, 2020).

One the one hand, the question is to think about the 'socio-political' parameters in Nietzsche's writings in the tradition of technical exegesis, retaining a sense of faithfulness and clarity in navigating the texts. On the other hand, one needs to take into account not only the historical context of nation-building, sociological biologism and class conflict in clarifying how the 'social' might be at stake in Nietzsche's writings, but also the affective appeal of the promise of revaluation based on new measures of human worth. We need to implicate ourselves in the text to understand what Nietzsche was trying to say, but also examine what kinds of audience is he addressing – both imagined and historical – and how his denigrations produce a sense of distance from the 'rest', as well as a sense of intimacy with the master who conjures his ideal readers as philosophers of the future. To foreground these concerns that emerge from the contemporary reception of Nietzsche's political philosophy, my thesis is organized in three parts organized around the following questions:

1) How to read Nietzsche in a way that is sympathetic to what he was trying to achieve rather than by imposing one's own parameters, standpoints and ideas on the rhetorically complex texts?

2) How to understand the 'social' and 'political' in his writings in light of renewed concerns with Nietzsche's class racism and his long-standing reception in sociological theory?

3) What are the uses of Nietzsche in and beyond the post-structuralist tradition in social theory and how to reassess his influence on the Marxist-left?

My inquiry into Nietzsche's rhetorical forms of address and his conception of language cuts across all three parts. The significance of style and rhetoric is understood very differently by philosophical and sociological practitioners – whether contemporary scholars

working on Nietzsche, post-structuralists, or Marxists. At the most general level, rhetoric is most often understood as an art of effective expression and persuasion through speech and writing, in contrast to the notion of language as based on rational impartiality and pure propositional content. It has been placed in opposition to philosophy since Plato's exclusion of the Sophists, resulting in pejorative connotations as flattery, display, demagoguery and deception (Garver, 1998, MacDonald, 2017; Thomas, 1999). Polemical weapons, for instance, are meant to humiliate opponents into intellectual submission. Some authors and orators are accused of deceiving audiences through abuses of language and rhetorical tricks in ways that obscure or deflect from the actual content of their ideas.

However, Nietzsche's literary art of persuasion has been recognised as central to his philosophical project, at least since Kaufmann's canonising reading of Nietzsche's experimental styles. In contemporary reception, Nehamas (1987) has championed an 'aesthetic' reading of Nietzsche which centers around his figurative, hyperbolic and lyrical uses of language yet retains the notion of a core unifying project. Against this trend in reception, some contemporary analytic readings focus on the philosopher's naturalism conceived in terms of logical doctrines (Leiter, 2004), where rhetoric would be conceived as a by-product of his substantive message. On the other extreme, deconstructive interpretations of Nietzsche's philosophy championed the idea that his *oeuvre* demonstrates the collapsing of boundaries between literature and philosophy. Some place Nietzsche closer to literary discourse that philosophy (Habermas, 1987).

Nietzsche himself recognized the rhetorical dimension of language, not least in his early *Lectures on Rhetoric and Language* (1989 [1972-74]). In the first lecture, he departs from observing how the competition among philosophers and orators over the correct definition of rhetoric went on throughout the whole of antiquity, while moderns usually discredit this art, once considered "the highest spiritual activity of the well-educated political man" (Nietzsche, AR p.3). In the *Oxford Handbook of Rhetorical Studies*, the editor departs precisely from this observation to argue that "rhetoric defies definition in part because of the elusiveness of its subject matter (the contingent world of signifying practices and their effects) and in part because definition itself is a rhetorical act that imposes a point of view on its subject and may even call it into being" (MacDonald, 2017, p.4). Contributions to the *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric* (2006) often refer to Nietzsche, for instance as enlivening rhetorical theory by recovering the Sophists (p.155), in relationship to the postmodern concept of irony (p.422), as critical of a narrowly defined *logos* (p.484), and as a considerable influence on

modern philosophies of metaphor and language studies (p. 513).[8] In his own analysis of ancient rhetoric, Nietzsche emphasizes the importance of tempo, corporeal gestures and bodied impressions in speech and writing, presumably endorsing a notion of rhetoric as concerned with style in the tradition of Cicero, away from the Aristotelian way of conceiving of metaphors as merely decorative or ornamental to meaning (Blair and Gilman, 1989).[9]

The significance of rhetoric in Nietzsche's later thinking beyond those early lectures has been often recognized in secondary literature (Blumenberg, 2016; Caro, 2004; de Man, 1974; Lambek, 2020; Porter, 2010; Strong, 2013), but there are different approaches to drawing out its implications for the interpretation of Nietzsche's works, pointing to the conflicting methodological assumptions about what it means to analyse literary, philosophical and philological text(s). Blair and Gilman (1989) suggest that one can "only speculate" about "the impact of rhetorical principles on Nietzsche's philosophical perspective" (xvi), and that speculation will be shaped by the grammars of interpretation that the reading subject inhabits. In this sense, it is impossible to systematize in advance all those different strands of thinking about what it means to interpret across the analytic and hermeneutic traditions. The main opposition which I would like to draw attention to is between a classical (Aristotelian) understanding of metaphor as decorative and ornamental versus an understanding of metaphoric transference as a site of new semantic meanings.

This tentative understanding of metaphor is indebted to Rorty's (1989) theory of contingency of language as a totality which is not simply representing a hidden reality either within or outside of us, but as active, figurative and performative.[3] Rorty (1989) argued that Nietzsche allows us to rethink the rhetorical force of language, productively questioning the distinction between literal and figurative meaning which so many interpreters rely on today in delineating Nietzsche's politics of destruction and re-valuation.[10] This opposition between the literal and metaphorical often produces impasses in today's scholarship on Nietzsche, in particular around questions on 'race' and class, which have been recently read at the level

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[8] Nietzsche's philosophy influenced many scholars of rhetoric, including Kenneth Burke who is often credited as one of the founding figures of modern rhetoric. See Hawhee (1999) for a critical discussion of Nietzsche's influence on Burke with a focus on the notion of perspectivism.

[9] 'Style' here would be understood between physiology and philology: "The hardest thing to translate from one language into another is the tempo of its style, which is grounded in the character of the race, or – to be more physiological – in the average tempo of its "metabolism"' (Nietzsche, BGE 28). See Porter (2010) for a discussion of Nietzsche's rhetoric as physiological and philological.

[10] Rorty (1989) develops his argument on the contingency of language drawing on Nietzsche and Davidson. His theory of metaphor moves beyond the contrast between metaphors understood either within the Platonist/positivist register (metaphors as decorative) or romantic register (metaphor as strange, mystic) (Rorty, 1989, p.17).

of practical politics of destruction and violence, against the notion of Nietzsche subverting the rhetoric of degenerationism (Bull, 2011; Losurdo, 2019, Moore, 2002).

The central emerging problematic for my thesis is about the ways in which Nietzsche's rhetorical forms of address link to his socio-political concerns, how his call for a new social hierarchy and the project of revaluation relates to and fuels inventive strategies for persuading readers, particularly those that he imagined. In other words, I am interested in interrogating the relationship between Nietzsche's addresses to and images of ideal readers and his ideas about revaluation, caste society and breeding. As my main interest is in Nietzsche's uses for social theory, I will also trace out the specific contributions of Nietzsche's ideas about the relationship between metaphoricity, truth and language to social theory. This follows a path which Baehr (2016) paved in arguing that Nietzsche offers fresh approaches to navigate "the surge of interest in the structure of sociological texts" (p.87). It is as a master of rhetoric that Nietzsche is still relevant for social theory today.

In what follows, I outline the key terms of the debates and discussions in which my contributions are embedded. Given the organization of my thesis around three interlinked questions presented above (p.18), I discuss both the key problematic in each part of my thesis, as well as the interventions made in each specific chapter. Again, it is important to emphasize that the reception landscape surveyed here is by no means exhaustive in terms of any specific mode or approach towards reading Nietzsche. Rather, I have reviewed literature most relevant for understanding 1) how Nietzsche's rhetoric facilitates dissonant receptive effects in the contemporary landscape of critical social theory, 2) how to understand the threads of the 'social' in his political philosophy, and 3) how his ongoing purchase for sociologists and social theorists can be reframed in light of his class racism.

Thesis outline

PART 1 – How to read Nietzsche: between analytic and hermeneutic approaches

Nietzsche has been long read at the intersection of analytic and hermeneutic-continental scholarship, in ways that can be often hardly reconciled, given the overarching contrast between the goals of technical reconstruction which attempts to faithfully clarify his philosophical challenges, and his excessive plural style(s) celebrated in the 'French tradition' associated with Deleuze, Derrida, Foucault and Kofman. In this sense, it is not surprising that Nietzsche continues to provoke disagreements about the basic question on *how to read and interpret*. The influential framework of hermeneutics of suspicion announced on behalf of

Nietzsche (Ricoeur, 1977) has been recently contested for obscuring his naturalism (Leiter, 2004), as well as for sanitizing his class politics (Losurdo, 2019). Chapter 1 zooms in on different premises, assumptions and techniques in reading the Nietzschean *oeuvre*, situating the key challenge in the divided field of reception today in terms of the connection between Nietzsche's rhetoric, style(s) and substance (or core) of his philosophical thinking. The aim is to show that there are a multitude of methodological difficulties in reading Nietzsche even before we begin to consider the 'socio-political' stakes of his writings, driven by different hermeneutic assumptions about what it means to interpret.

Chapter 2 departs from the controversies around Nietzsche's plural masks, styles and strategies to discuss in what ways can we distinguish *experimentalism* as Nietzsche's overall philosophical method or strategy in terms of what he was trying to achieve by writing in a particular way. It plays a central role in the organization of the whole thesis as it delineates different ways of understanding Nietzsche's future-oriented experimentalism – between the scientific-naturalistic and poetic-mythical registers. The point of departure for this distinction is Nietzsche's (BGE 2.42) announcement of the 'philosopher of the future' as a new species (*Art*), whom he hesitantly baptized as experimenters, (at)tempters, and researchers:

> A new species of philosophers is emerging: I dare to christen them with a name that is not without its dangers. As I guess them to be, as they allow themselves to be guessed – for it belongs to their nature to want to remain riddles in some respects – these philosophers of the future might have a right, maybe even a wrong to be characterized as tempters [*Versucher*]. This name itself is only an attempt [*Versuch*], and, if you will, a temptation [*Versuchung*].

This figure of the philosopher of the future has been translated into very different interpretations of Nietzsche's scientific-experimental philosophy (Gerhardt, 1998), deconstructive philosophy of friendship (Derrida, 2005), as well as aristocratic perspectivism (Losurdo, 2019), to name but a few competing readings. Nietzsche's playful style – vivified in this withdrawn announcement – has been often criticized in social theory, in particular the Marxist-leftist strands (Habermas, 1987; Losurdo, 2019, Lukács, 1980). Yet the interplay between *mythos* (images, figures, metaphors) and *logos* (reasons, concepts, propositions) in Nietzsche's writing is not merely playful and it cannot be understood as a question of aesthetic taste, or in terms of seductions that we need to guard against. The competing

understandings of the figure of the *Versucher* point to the broader stakes of the debate on how to understand the significance and the interplay between Nietzsche's rhetoric and philosophical method(s). As a withdrawn, deferred signature of an author who at times identifies with the philosopher of the future, and as an interpellation of an ideal reader, it highlights the tension between the sober practices of technical reconstruction and the Nietzschean invitation to dance, laugh and solve riddles as part of new experimental vistas. Yet it is only some readers that are invited to join Nietzsche on this adventure and join the community or re-evaluators, making it important to analyse the ways in which his rhetoric relies on esotericism, and how he reimagines the esoteric/exoteric distinction.

The philosopher of the future highlights the performative and figurative dimension to language, which does much more than represent, and cannot be simply read as one 'linguistic mode' among others (de Man, 1974). The emerging challenge is how to read Nietzsche's rhetoric as substantial for his philosophical strategies – for instance the ideal of 'experimental knowledge' as something that he dares the reader towards rather than simply presents or explicates in his writings. For my project, the image of the Nietzschean experimenter and tempter provides a helpful point as a methodological device in exploring the socio-political parameters in his philosophy in relation to his forms of addressing and conjuring his ideal readers. The device foregrounds the connections between the mythical-poetic and naturalistic-scientific registers in the Nietzschean art of seduction and experimentation, as well as the sense of adventure, risk and mistrust implicit in reading Nietzsche affectively rather than technically in a detached, neutral fashion.

Chapter 1 How to read Nietzsche: between technical reconstruction and plural styles

The first chapter provides an overview of the ongoing challenges in reading Nietzsche in light of his 'multifarious stylings', a term I borrow from Hicks and Rosenberg (2008), useful to destabilize the opposition between the technical core and marginal tropes in Nietzsche's works. The goal is to situate my approach towards Nietzsche's writings in the broader interdisciplinary context of the field of reception, which is arguably no longer simply heterogeneous, but quite starkly polarized. The fundamental tension in reading Nietzsche has long been whether texts can be a site of recovering stable and determinate meaning and 'intentions' or at least 'positions' of the author, e.g. on truth, drives, woman. The project of technical reconstruction is often at odds with the hermeneutic-continental tradition: how to theorize the relationship between Nietzsche's rhetorical styles, substantive concerns and the affective engagement of the reader – the premise of post-structuralist Nietzsche is not to be

systematic but creative, mistrustful, as active readers who operate within the orbit of the *will to power in* reading Nietzsche, pushing his thinking in different directions.

This polarization is visible already at the level of different approaches on how to navigate the gap between Nietzsche's style(s) and the substance of his philosophy, in terms of what he is trying to achieve as a philosopher 'on grounds of philology and rhetoric' (Caro, 2003). Drawing on a variety of readings which centre the importance of rhetoric to Nietzsche's writings (Caro, 2003; Hicks and Rosenberg, 2003; Solomon, 2006), I argue that it is important to read Nietzsche in a way that does not conflate between the level of *mythos* (images, figures, metaphors) and *logos* (reasons, concepts, propositions). While the analytic-technical tradition is often concerned with contradictions, puzzles and inconsistencies in Nietzsche's thinking, the more historically informed scholarship attempts to ground Nietzsche's rhetoric in relationship to particular forms of addressing readers – for instance in terms of parodying anti-Semitic prejudices (Strong, 2013). I distinguish three modes of reading Nietzsche – analytic-technical, analytic-reconstructive and continental-hermeneutic – to tentatively to illustrate different ways of thinking about the importance of rhetoric and metaphor in Nietzsche's thinking, which will crystallize in subsequent chapters.

The continental-hermeneutic tradition associated with post-structuralism and 'hermeneutics of suspicion' has been challenged for sanitizing connections between Nietzsche's politics and his class racism (Losurdo, 2019). Yet there are many layers of indeterminacy, ambivalence, figurative meanings and plurality of style(s) in Nietzsche's texts that cannot be easily mapped onto the historical-materialist understanding of philosophy as a site of class or racial struggle. In this sense, there is a key tension between the project of rational technical reconstruction which often leaves behind Nietzsche's exaggerations and hyperbolic forms of address, and speculations on how Nietzsche's rhetoric matters to what he is trying to achieve, for instance in relationship to rhetorical tropes for subverting or rehearsing the scientific racism of his contemporaries (Moore, 2002).

To foreground this tension, I extend Caro's (2004) notion of grounding Nietzsche's rhetoric of earth in more general terms, in relationship to the historical context, the formal structure of literary tropes, and his critique of modern culture – whereby Nietzsche is seducing, provoking, consoling and educating particular readers. My overarching question is whether the conceptual work of grounding rhetoric can be also understood in relationship to the unstable categories of 'race', class and caste that come to the forefront in contemporary reconstructions of his political philosophy (Drochon, 2016; Losurdo, 2019; Toscano, 2020). Different approaches towards grounding Nietzsche's rhetoric speak to the

broader clash at the heart of the polarized field of reception which concerns the nature of interpretation, the broadest of possible questions on how to read Nietzsche in the best and/or most faithful way. This is perhaps not surprising given his interest in "enhancing scientific interpretation through philological principles" (Caro, 2004, p.116). Reception has been long haunted by the promise of a true and correct reading in a way that betrays preoccupations with the authors' original intentions. Given Nietzsche's forms of addressing creative readers as his companions rather than disciples, we also face questions about what kind of interpretative approach might be most 'Nietzschean'.

The central aim of this chapter is not only to review different approaches in navigating Nietzsche's oeuvre and various assumptions about the nature of language underlying interpretative practices, but also show how Losurdo's (2019) thesis about Nietzsche's class racism is framed against hermeneutics of innocence associated with hermeneutics of suspicion, post-structuralism and deconstruction. In strands of post-hermeneutics inspired by psychoanalysis, post-structuralism and queer theory, the notion of a self-identical sovereign reading subject who has mastery over the text is destabilized, shifting attention to the effects of the readers' materially and discursively shaped affective dispositions.[11] My approach is closer to the continental-hermeneutic in recognizing the implication of the reader in the Nietzschean text, which needs to be better understood both in terms of historical (e.g. anti-Semitic) and imagined (e.g. 'free spirit') readers. However, I draw on analytic-technical readings throughout the thesis to show the effects of the polarized field of reception. These will be exemplified by different readings of class, 'race' and sex in his works which come to the forefront in in Chapters 3 and 6 in particular.

Chapter 2 The philosopher of the future: experimental masks, strategies and seductions

The second chapter takes up more directly the question about the play of masks, signatures and experimental strategies in Nietzsche's works, which has long been associated with the heterogeneity of plural styles which make it impossible to put the philosopher 'on trial' (Derrida, 1994). To foreground Nietzsche's rhetorical forms of address, this chapter explores different readings of the philosopher of the future baptized as a *Versucher* in one of his signature wordplays – a seducer, researcher and experimenter, a merger of the terms *Versuch* (attempt, experiment) and *Versuchug* (temptation, seduction), as introduced above.

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[11] The rhetorical practice of mastery over texts can be said to be linked to the projects of post-colonial violence (Singh, 2018) – a notion which centers the idea of reading with 'drives' or 'affects' (in a symbolic rather than purely biologistic sense) rather than as a neutral, technical exercise.

The aim is to connect between interpretations of this figure across analytic and hermeneutic scholarship, as a physician of culture, an empty figure of disruptive wisdom and a legislator of new values in the socio-political realm (Faulkner, 2010; Hicks and Rosenberg, 2003), dramatizing broader tensions between the diagnostic, therapeutic and prescriptive dimensions of Nietzsche's philosophy. While in deconstructive reception the *Versucher* signifies the capacity of thinking the revalued future rather than a stable normative vision (Derrida, 1994; Derrida, 2005), challenged by Marxist readings of his perspectivism as linked to aristocratic politics (Losurdo, 2019), I propose to use it as a methodological device to centre rhetorical forms of address which allowed Nietzsche to mobilize readers' heartfelt attachments and seduce readers towards the overarching project of revaluation.

This will allow me to complement the technical-historical reconstructions of Nietzsche's theory of a two-caste society which I examine in Chapters 3 and 4, by shifting attention to the various ways in which Nietzsche entangles readers, for instance through the hierarchy of 'victorious figures' in his works. These are exemplified in the case of the *Versucher* whom Nietzsche addresses as the only companion or species capable of understanding the riddle of the eternal return. I propose to read this figure as a seductive form of recruiting readers towards the *community of re-evaluators* – the few who can understand Nietzsche's philosophy – based on which one can delineate the 'social' and 'political' parameters in his thinking in terms of the two castes. It is important to do so in a way that does not compromise on the sense of the Dionysian tempter, as the mission of the philosopher of the future is all too often understood in terms of prescriptions rather than at the level of seductions and temptations, which incorporate the reader into the text.

While the 'socio-political' stakes of the philosopher of the future are increasingly more often recognized in scholarship (Drochon, 2016, Losurdo 2019; Schacht, 2015), my specific contribution to scholarship is to trace the evolution of the figure of the *Versucher* as an alter-ego of the Dionysian philosopher of the future in *Daybreak* (2011 [1881]), *Gay Science* (2001b [1882]), *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (2006a [1883]) and *Beyond Good and Evil* (2001a [1886]). Tracing Nietzsche's references to this figure which oscillate between the naturalistic-scientific register (as an experimenter) and the mythical-poetic register (as a tempter), I draw attention to the complex interplay between stylistic and substantive level in Nietzsche's thinking, asking what precisely these rhetorical forms of addressing readers are doing in the text. In putting this figure to diagnostic and therapeutic work – for instance as a physician of culture capable of curing 'social malaise' (Gooding-Williams, 2006; Huddleston, 2019) – it is important to recognize the mythical-poetic register as to not lose

on the Nietzschean sense of riddle, seduction, temptation and provocation, the sense of the 'perhaps' in the way that Nietzsche conjures their emergence in a question mark.

Like the 'free spirit', the philosopher of the future is an imagined figure, but arguably one with political implications in terms of their distinctive mission to 'create new values' (BGE 6.211). While the 'free spirits' would be "slaves of democratic taste"; or more comically – "clumsy nice fellows" with "respectable morals" – the philosophers of the future are brave experimenters who dare to critique "modern ideas", and so are "higher, greater and fundamentally different" than 'free spirits' (BGE 2.44). Nietzsche fears that many readers in Europe and America wrongly identify with the concept of the 'free spirit' he introduced in his middle writings, because they are unworthy of that name as "*levelers*" (BGE 2.44). In this sense, there are intriguing differences between those two figures not only in terms of their epistemic standpoints, as the genuine philosopher would be able to "gaze with many kinds of eyes into (...) any distance", but also in how they would relate to suffering, and the creative-legislative task of being "commanders and legislators" (BGE 6.211). While the *Versucher* is a "researcher to a point of cruelty, with uninhibited fingers for the unfathomable" (BGE 2.44), the socio-political discourses associated with the 'free spirit' represents a retreat from dangerous insights into the ways in which humanity can grow:

> What they [free-spirits] want to strive for with all their might is the universal green pasture happiness of the herd, with security, freedom from danger, comfort, and easy living for everyone; the two songs and doctrines they sing most often are called "equal rights" and "sympathy for all that suffers" – and suffering is construed by them as something that must be *abolished*. We contrarians meanwhile, (...) we surmise that harshness, violence, slavery, danger in the streets and in the heart, concealment, stoicism, the art of seduction and devilry [*Versucher-kunst*] of every kind, that everything evil, horrible, tyrannical, predatory and snakelike in human beings serves to elevate the species "human being" as well as its opposite (...).

The art of seduction and temptation is inspired by the dark arts of demons and devils. The libidinal connotations of the *Versucher* as a tempter and their respective differences from self-proclaimed 'free spirts' are rarely recognized in secondary literature. Recognizing

a subtle hierarchy within those figures of victory is important – in particular how the *Versucher* is superior to the democratic readers who wrongly identify with the image of the 'free spirit' that Nietzsche formulated in his earlier writings, beginning with *Human, All Too Human* (Schacht, 2015). The philosophers of the future affirm suffering as part of social life, in a tragic, Dionysian fashion. Nietzsche calls upon his readers to embrace their solitude, become the right kind of 'free spirit'. This allows us to shift attention to the rhetorical effects that underlie his philosophical method in terms of guarding the boundaries of the text and conjuring readers with a specific sensibility, the (mis)identifications that the text purposefully facilitates. Many commentators insist that metaphors and figures of speech for Nietzsche are not merely decorative and ornamental to pre-existing meaning (Blair and Gilman, 1989; de Man, 1974). In this sense, the *Versucher* is a methodological device: it points to the process of interpellation of readers, to how Nietzsche tests and tempts his readers against the confines of the mass public opinion, and to distinguish themselves from the liberal freethinkers in America and Western Europe.

Understanding how Nietzsche addresses and conjures his readers makes all the difference in reconstructing his suspicions of egalitarianism, democracy and 19th century sociology, as these are often packaged in a double rhetoric that aims to appeal to the mass and the few (Rosen, 2013). This rhetoric is neither simply innocent nor dangerous, it is more than that, as it attempts to recruit readers who would be positioned above of humanity and guard the boundaries of the text against the rest. The task assigned to the philosopher of the future to 'create new values' has to be understood in socio-political rather than existential or spiritual terms, as scholars argue from different disciplinary standpoints today (Drochon, 2016; Losurdo, 2019; Schacht, 2015). Therefore, we also need to understand how Nietzsche aims to seduce readers towards the promise of breaking out of the decadent, nihilistic and ascetic moral horizon by appealing to the spiritual qualities shared by the future re-evaluators. The hierarchies implicit in the text produce victorious performative (mis)identifications with the figures of victory which present excessive demands that cannot be met. We need to better understand how the text functions as a selective apparatus for the few predestined companions who can actualize his philosophy of the future.

Part II Parameters of the 'political' and the 'social' in Nietzsche's writings

The 'political' and 'social' parameters in Nietzsche's thinking have been always framed as blind-spots in the specialist philosophical scholarship on Nietzsche (Brobjer, 1998), despite the considerable attention that Nietzsche received among political theorists and

sociologists. In the second part of my thesis, I place the reception of Nietzsche in the orbit of sociological theory *vis-à-vis* recent interpretations of his political philosophy, in light of Losurdo's (2019) critique of both traditions in terms of sanitising Nietzsche's rather disquieting views on slavery and inequalities in a future two-caste system. A lot of the ground for delineating the 'political' and 'social' parameters in Nietzsche's thinking intersect because of scholars' mutual interests in reconstructing a Nietzschean 'theory of society' outside of the social contract tradition, though the literature on 'politics' is much vaster.

Solms-Laubach (2007) wrote that there is only a handful of accounts on Nietzsche's relationship to the discipline of sociology, but this becomes more extensive if one incorporates the philosophical scholarship of Nietzsche's critiques of and proximity to Social Darwinism which I draw on in this part of my thesis (Emden, 2014, Moore, 2002, Stern, 2020), in particular in Chapter 4. While Solms-Laubach (2007) argues that Nietzsche in fact misunderstood the "true potential of the new discipline" and "underestimated sociology's rightful scope, which was only to fully unfold itself later" (p.67), I am not interested in assessing the historical relationship between Nietzsche and sociology, as much as in delineating how to think about the connection between the 'social' and 'political' parameters in his writings, given renewed concerns around his class racism.

One of the questions in literature is whether one can distinguish the prisms of class, caste, 'race' in Nietzsche's thinking (Moore, 2002), especially if we understand his politics at the level of a renewal of the entire humanity in terms of his fantasy about a future community of 'nobles'. Those positions cannot be easily mapped onto existing historical socio-material positions, whether aristocratic-plebeian or white-black. However, it is important to pay attention to the biologistic connotations in the notion of the "degeneration" of humanity to the herd animal, and the important question whether that can be understood in relationship to particular groups. My overarching argument to situate the parameters of the 'social' in Nietzsche's thinking in terms of the biologistic metaphor of the social body, which gains racialized meanings if the distinction between ascending and descending life is mapped onto the historical groups in 19th century society.

The collective socio-political stakes of Nietzsche's critique of sociology become often obscured, for instance by some analytic readers of Nietzsche who focus on the individual-centered lens of psychopathology (Leiter, 2004). In navigating the emerging readings of Nietzsche as a socio-political thinker, it is important to note the powerful spell of his figures of victory which facilitate particular forms of (mis)identifications, when readers position themselves with the philosopher against the rest, at least at the unconscious affective level

of textuality. In this sense, one needs to explore the interplay between the form and the content of Nietzsche's writings to understand the power of the mythical-poetic images through which he seduces us to become his companions. It is only then that we can understand what is so seductive about Nietzsche's fantasy of a future community of experimenters that would not be based on traditional ties of the nation, kinship, or class.

Chapter 3 Two-caste society: absent parameters of class and 'race'

This chapter situates the emerging interpretations of Nietzsche's two-caste society *vis-à-vis* long-standing scholarship on Nietzsche's relationship to sociology. It is the 'legislative' mission at the heart of the philosopher of the future distinguished in Chapter 2 which brings us to the absent parameters of the 'political' and the 'social' in Nietzsche's writings, and the overarching question whether these can be faithfully reconstructed in the first place, as increasingly more scholars argue (Drochon, 2016; Huddleston, 2019; Losudo, 2019). Those interlinked parameters in Nietzsche's works came as a question mark at least since Kaufmann's (1974) canonizing reading, where he argued that Nietzsche can be hardly read "as a political or social philosopher" (p.123), concerned with the more abstract realms of art, religion and philosophy like Hegel, condemning the state as an enemy of spiritual progress. More recently, Williams (2011) argued that Nietzsche does not offer an intelligible account of modern society, an argument recently challenged by Drochon's (2016) reconstruction of Nietzsche's ideal of two-caste society.[12] Marxist and post-colonial perspectives critical of his insights on subjugation also rely on the idea that Nietzsche's writings involve some threads of the 'social' (Jones, 2010; Losurdo, 2019; Toscano, 2020).

The aim is then to clarify the connections between the parameters of the 'social' and 'political' in Nietzsche's philosophy, which have been classically conceived in terms of blind-spots and omissions. I do so by revisiting controversies around Nietzsche's admiration for a 'caste society' (*Versucher*) as well as Nietzsche's reception in sociological theory. The literatures on Nietzsche's politics and anti-sociology often intersect in terms of delineating Nietzsche's views on the "depletion of social resources" – as Antonio (1995, p.1) put it – or even a stable theory of society. Huddleston (2019) recently argued that Nietzsche's ideas about the flourishing of humanity can be understood as 'social' rather than 'political', but if this is indeed the case, it requires us to understand what these terms precisely involve.

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[12] Drochon (2016) challenges in particular Williams' reading of Nietzsche presented in *Can there be a Nietzschean politics?* which is not available to the public, relying on a private copy of the manuscript. According to Drochon (2016), the manuscript includes the thesis that Nietzsche offers no intelligible and systematic theory of modern society.

Those connections are unclear in secondary literature. If there is a 'socio-political' dimension at stake in Nietzsche's works, it is often understood in relation to his admiration of the community of ancient Greek philosophers who took pride in thinking of themselves as truly free as opposed to the enslaved others as a broad category.[13] Foster (2013), for instance, reconstructs how the Greek experience of the world as 'socio-politically oppressive' shaped Nietzsche's thinking about the 'freedom of will'. Yet it is ambiguous whether and in what sense the different versions of the *modern* 'social question' might be at stake in Nietzsche's works at all, even before we begin to qualify it in terms of any normative notions of flourishing, or any prescriptive vision for a future revalued society.

While the two parameters are often conflated, the debate on the 'political' parameters in Nietzsche's works is more sustained than that on the 'social'. This might be not only due to the specificity of the challenges that reading Nietzsche poses in terms of questions about emancipation, revolution and critique, but also because of the disciplinary organization of intellectual labour. Political theory is often paired with the abstract realms of political and moral philosophy, while social theory – including the Marxist-leftist variant – is associated with the more empirical realm of sociological practice, often said to lack a ready-made normative orientation on how society should be organized (Chernilo, 2018; Helliwell and Hindess, 2008). Literature on Nietzsche's politics has been growing at a faster pace than that of the 'social', at least since the influence of the 90's umbrella-term of 'radical democracy', whereby Nietzschean critiques of the democratic state and his opposition to modern nationalisms have been read as a basis for agonistic interpretations of his political *skepticism* (Brown, 2000; Honig, 1993; Shaw, 2017; Tuncel, 2013).

Readings of Nietzsche as an agonistic thinker rely on the premise that he did not see *modern* society in a positive sense as more than aggregation of individuals, whose creative projects would hardly bind them to one another. Nietzsche does not provide us with any normative values – an 'order of rank' (see Guay, 2003) – around on which one might organize society (e.g. principles of equality, justice), much less a stable 'table of values', like the Christian commands or a secular constitution, on which normative political authority can rest. Rather than attempt to reconstruct a political *program* from Nietzsche's philosophy, readers in political theory often attempted to recover his philosophical-historical analysis of social and cultural relations though the notion of *agon* – contest, enmity, animosity – animating community, outside of the modern parameters of ethnicity, 'race' and class. When

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[13] Huddleston (2014) contextualizes Nietzsche's thinking about slavery in relation to the 'paternalistic' views Plato and Aristotle had on slavery.

Nietzsche imagines a community of equals who contest in spectacle, love and agora alike, querying the Greek social formation, this cannot be used as a yardstick for his critique of modern politics and violence involved in modern state-making (Acampora, 2013a).

There are of course various ways of understanding why and how Nietzsche's writings do not lend themselves to any substantive conception of politics. If one derives agonism from the Greek polytheism, the notions of competing and struggling God, politics would not be a separate sphere in itself but part of that broader agonistic culture (Lemm, 2015; Tuncel, 2013). In a different vein, Brown (2000) argued that it is the genealogical form, style and content of Nietzsche's thought which does not lend itself to traditional political practices: knowledge and politics do not collapse onto one another in his philosophy of history. Badiou (2002) speaks about the very limits of politics: the *arche-political* dimension where Nietzsche is "revolutionizing the whole humanity at a more radical level than that of the calculations of politics" (quoted in Toscano, 2020, p.240), with links to the complex notion of "life" as an "organic intensity of being" (quoted in Jones, 2010, p.10). From this liminal conception of Nietzsche's arche-politics and vital becoming, to various readings of agonism, most theorists rehearse in one way or another Kaufmann's (1974) canonizing reading by arguing that Nietzsche was concerned with more 'lofty' ideas of culture and flourishing, and that the socio-political parameters are elusive.

In this sense, the question of how the social and political order is possible or how is it reproduced would be a blind-spot and an omission: 'Nietzsche provides no systematic (or even partly systematic) views about the nature of state and society" (Lanier, 2017), one can read in the *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. There are many reasons to accept this claim: Nietzsche does not even offer an overarching 'theory of drives' on which an affirmative notion of ethics could be based (Stern, 2015), so reconstructing a theory of society from his works is even more problematic – there will be always a contradictory remark and an unruly rhetorical flavour if we try to delineate how the complex notions of culture and life-affirmation link to the notion of *great politics*. Moreover, in his notes, Nietzsche (eKGWB - 1887,10[28]) explicitly rejects the category of society as a unit of analysis in favour of the "culture-complex" which would presumably encompass different civilizations across contexts, times and centuries from ancient Japan to Napoleon's France, pre-Socratic Greece to 16th century Polish democracy. To speak of a political program or a vision of modern society in his works is then inherently problematic: Nietzsche does not theorize social structures on which normative authority can rest, in terms of a new 'order of rank', nor does he formulate substantial political goals, speaking about the creative challenges which every

individual faces in light of suffering and loss of meaning, which have been differently interpreted and qualified in agonistic and vitalist traditions (Honig, 1993; Jones, 2010).

Recent readings of Nietzsche's ideal of a two-caste society in political theory and on the Marxist-left challenge this received reading of Nietzsche as a political sceptic. Departing from the questions about how the political order is legitimated, how power should be distributed in society, and how Nietzsche's philosophical-historical framework of genealogy relates to politics, increasingly more scholars attempt to distinguish between his descriptive and normative views on the state, democracy and the promise of a unified Europe (Drochon, 2016; Losurdo, 2019).[14] The overarching consensus here is that Nietzsche's politics cannot be grasped using the classical tools and concepts of political theory rooted in the social contract tradition. In attempts to ground Nietzsche's rhetoric in its historical context, the term *great politics* – as linked to peoples, fatherlands, states – recently emerged as a useful umbrella-term to capture what politics might mean for Nietzsche in the historical context of Bismarck's unification project (Babich, 2019; Bittner, 2010, Drochon, 2016).

The central tension today is what it means to read Nietzsche without detaching his vision from its socio-political roots. The historical background of Nietzsche's ideas can be qualified not only in relationship to Bismarck's politics, but in relation to aristocratic discourses among transnational intellectual elites (Losurdo, 2019), bio-medical theories of degeneration and decay (Moore, 2002), and racialized conceptions of difference (Bernasconi, 2017). In light of those tensions, how to read Nietzsche in ways that examine and take into account the complex dynamics of class and racial difference, either critically or at the level of exegesis? Can we read Nietzsche's speculations about the state, society and caste in relation to the modern concepts of class and 'race', or is this to anachronistically impose parameters which do not arise from the text? This chapter takes up these questions with a particular emphasis on the interconnections between the notions of caste, class and 'race' in his thinking in relation to his demands towards his ideal readers.

The overarching problematic is if we can understand Zarathustra's teaching of society as an "experiment" (Z On Old and New Tablets 3.25) of a prescriptive vision for how to organize social life, and how the splitting of humanity into two castes would map back onto racial and class identity markings in terms of those considered outlaws from the community of nobles. Yet it is important to remember that the notion of society as an experiment is a teaching, *Lehre*, which is directly addressed to the reader – presumably not

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[14] The distinction between normative and descriptive registers also runs through social theory (see Chernilo, 2019), especially in the critical traditions which questions the direction of society through the vocabulary of pathologies, deficiencies of reason and frames of normativity (Honneth, 2009).

a blind follower – to test and actualize its radical meanings as part of the brotherly community of re-evaluators. It is not presented as a literal-practical vision for a future utopia. In this sense, is it important to consider not only the technical content of Nietzsche's socio-political ideas, but also the rhetorical forms through which he aims to persuade and transform his readers from different social groups so that they can help him actualize his philosophy of revaluation.

Chapter 4 Decadence, degenerationism and the biological metaphor of the social organism

This chapter turns to the most disquieting aspect of Nietzsche's writings – the connection between the social/cultural and biological/physiological registers in his thinking. These were not yet antagonistic categories at the time of his writings, when sociology as a scientific discipline was only beginning to emerge, yet the philosopher's references to breeding (*Züchtung*) and theories of heredity through the lens of *dégénérescence* are likely to be disquieting for most readers. In light of the discussions on Nietzsche's class racism and anti-blackness, it is not surprising that some many scholars often attempt to detach philosopher's notions of culture and life-affirmation from his unsettling biologistic speculations on interbreeding, the herd, and colonies within a social organism. Yet at the same time, increasingly more scholars argue that the stakes of his philosophy are collective. Huddleston (2019), for instance, reconstructed Nietzsche's perfectionist ideal of 'flourishing culture' to emphasize that the philosopher is "a far more social thinker than has been appreciated by the prevalent individualist readings" (p.2). He argues that the 'social' as a proxy for 'cultural' in Nietzsche's thinking offers a better way to capture the philosopher's notions of flourishing than Drochon's (2016) full-blown 'political' reconstruction of the two-caste system, as the latter is conceived in terms of a stable and coherent political program for parties, unions and leadership institutions.

Against the backdrop of this scholarship, Losurdo's (2019) Marxist reading radically challenges the notion of the 'social' as detached from Nietzsche's ideas on cultural supremacy of the emerging community of the 'nobles', locating the ideal of a high culture (*Hochkultur)* in the context of the broader anti-democratic reactionary discourses of the aristocratic elites at the time. Losurdo (2019) argues that the aristocratic discourse based on the notion of cultural supremacy would be the overarching core of Nietzsche's philosophy, for all of his apparent endorsements of the plebeian against the universally educated class of newspaper-reading 'cultural philistines'. The most unsettling dimension of Nietzsche's thinking would concern the discourses of 'decline of races' and degenerationism which

Losurdo (2019) reads in proximity to eugenics and the notion of the outcasts as 'malformed' not only in soul, but also in the body. While the metaphors of the body, soul and society are intrinsically connected in Nietzsche's writings (Faulkner, 2013), one cannot overlook how decadence is conceived at the physiological rather than only cultural level (Losurdo, 2019).

It is important to situate Nietzsche's thinking *vis-à-vis* the emerging horizon of social science: in particular the demands he addresses towards the "future sciences of physiology, medicine, society and solitude" (D 453) in his middle writings as part of his overarching project of revaluation. These contrast with Spencer's life-denying social science which Nietzsche associates with 'decadence' (Baier, 1981, Piazzesi, 2013, Solms-Laubach, 2007). Yet Nietzsche's critique of and reliance on evolutionary biology is often misunderstood and sanitized in discussions of his historical relationship to the rising discipline of sociology. Readers draw on an overly domesticated reading of how to understand the notion of a 'healthy' social body in relation to the idea of perspectivism, in ways that have been detached from his aristocratic body politic (Antonio, 1995; Piazzesi, 2013).

In light of these controversies, I argue that the 'social' in Nietzsche's late philosophy cannot be extricated from his biologistic thinking in terms of the distinction between ascending and descending life represented in specific individuals, who would then make up different positions in the 'party of life' which wages a war on Christianity (Drochon, 2016). The test of belonging to the life-ascending community of re-evaluators is addressed to his ideal readers across the boundaries of the nation and class, who dare to affirm the teaching of the *will to power* as expansion, domination and struggle. Yet not everyone has a psychic predisposition and health necessary to belong to this predestined group of readers whom Nietzsche conjures as philosophers of the future. The most difficult question in reading Nietzsche's socio-political speculations today concerns then the rhetoric of decadence, degenerationism, health and sickness, highlighted in the contemporary impasse in reception where Nietzsche is either excused or blamed for destructive-nihilistic politics, particularly if read in light of later development of vitalism as a racial discourse (Jones, 2010).

Nietzsche is by no means unique in drawing on these discourses, but his diagnosis of decadence where "classical theorists saw progress" (Antonio, 1995, p.6) raises questions about the significance of biological semantics. One cannot ignore the bio-medical context in which he considers his own hopes for the future science of sociology and the ways in which he might have hoped to invert Spencer's 'decadent' physiological ethics and social science. While surely opposed to the Spencerian discourse about the reconciliation of altruism and egoism, Nietzsche and Spencer have more in common than many readers in the orbit of

sociology would like to admit, not least the influence of the colonial context on their vocabulary. It points us to his thinking about slavery and colonies in terms of the evolution of the social organism, not merely at the level of the individual.

Following Nietzsche's references to practices of racial and sexual hygiene, this chapter also addresses controversies around what Toscano (2020) recently described as Nietzsche's "unsavoury fixation on the 'Chandala'"(p.245), the outcasts in the Hindu system. This is where we can most starkly recognize the stakes of the discussion on the status of rhetoric in Nietzsche's reception. While these derogatory references to the "malformed" and "downtrodden" (TI Improving Humanity 3) cannot be dismissed as polemical weapons against the Judeo-Christian worldview, as they suggest that Nietzsche's *great politics* of the two-caste system relies on a Eurocentric, pre-imperialist raciology of difference, it is also important to recognize their function in mobilizing readers who aspire to be positioned above humanity – both in a temporal and spatial sense. This plays an important role in Nietzsche's double rhetoric which appeals both to the masses and the few insiders of the text, relying on a form of esotericism, as I clarify in this chapter.

Understanding the stakes of Nietzsche's socio-biologism requires us to unpack his rhetorical forms of addressing and recruiting a range of readers towards a new social hierarchy, for instance his attempt to create a distance between himself and 19th century sociologists, on behalf of an alternative physiology of power rooted in an 'ascending life'. Nietzsche's aim is not merely to transform specific individuals, as he has some ideas about a healthy social organism that animates his fantasy of revaluation. In this sense, it is important to recognize that the demands addressed towards the philosopher of the future (*Versucher*) to overcome the degeneration of the human animal are dangerously collective, rather than existential or hyper-individualistic. It is therefore important to interrogate whether and in what sense that notion of the 'degeneration of humanity' can be read as racialized.

PART 3 Nietzsche's uses and reception in social theory

The difficulties in reading the parameters of the 'social' and 'political' in Nietzsche's rhetorically-charged writings have long been separated from the question about the uses of his philosophy within the intersecting orbits of political, cultural and social theory. To the extent that the intersecting structures of gender, 'race', class and disability become meaningful as vantage points from which to explain patterns shaping social life only in the aftermath of the 20th century civil rights movements, it is not surprising that this task has been often understood outside of concerns with Nietzsche's transversal class racism. This

part of my thesis explores what it means to read Nietzsche for social theory today in terms of his diagnostic – rarely therapeutic or prescriptive – uses, in light of his conservative political imaginary and socio-biologism.

In the introduction to Losurdo's (2019) *Nietzsche, the Aristocratic Rebel*, Fluss (2019) argued that most readers 'cherry-pick' from Nietzsche's texts. Nietzsche's writings can be indeed seen as a 'lab' on which countless theories have been built, as Kaufmann (1974) influentially described it in relation to his 'superb experimentalism' explored in Chapter 2. One can think of theories about epistemes and the will to know (Foucault, 2002; Foucault, 2013), the psychic and affective life of power (Butler, 1997; Sedgwick, 2003), relations of moral economy, debt, money and punishment (Dodd, 2013; Fassin, 2018; Graeber, 2011). Those uses often rely on a broader influential hermeneutic reading of Nietzsche as a master of suspicion (Foucault, 1998b; Ricoeur, 1977), a paradigmatically *critical* philosopher who exposes illusions and falsifications of language (Felski, 2015; Harcourt, 2020).

Reimagined through creative appropriations, we often encounter a romanticized image of Nietzsche as a timeless philosopher of affirmation and overcoming, which erases the epistemic, cultural and political contexts of his thinking, and his troubling proximity to Social Darwinism. Nietzsche has been often praised for his critiques of justice, equality and human rights, even if his polemical attacks on the legacy of the French Revolution leave us with more question marks than answers (Pippin, 2006b). These testify to the remarkable plasticity of the Nietzschean vocabulary and the heterogeneity of his masks which Losurdo (2019) boldly frames his Marxist-leftist reading against.

The notions of a two-caste society and transversal class racism will be undoubtedly useful to those who do wish to situate Nietzsche's politics in the context of the times, in particular his fascination with the Hindu caste system widely spread among the intellectual elites at the time (Toscano, 2020), which has been long on the margins of scholarship. Yet despite the racialized colonial echoes in Nietzsche's vision of an internally divided humanity, which involves many counter-intuitive ideas about the relationship between suffering, labour and meaning, my argument is that one can still make productive uses of his philosophy for social theory today despite its conservative underpinnings. The question is how to read Nietzsche 'against himself' in ways that do acknowledge the tragic irony of the critical – in particular post-colonial – appropriations (Jones, 2010, Toscano, 2020).

It is in particular the post-structuralist legacy of Nietzsche as a thinker of genealogy and sign-chains which still holds many resources for rethinking the relationship between discourse, the interpreter and the *will to power u*nderstood as a semantic rather than physio-

biological principle. Nietzsche's suspicions of language as a site of moral judgments can fuel productive sociological questions about the relationship between the semiotic and material practices underlying the social order, despite Losurdo's (2019) accusations against the 'French Nietzsche' as part of the 'hermeneutics of innocence'. Rather than ground Nietzsche's rhetoric solely in terms of socio-material positions within the Marxist concern with class struggle as the driving force of history, it is also important to consider the various forms of (mis)identifications that his figures of victory facilitate among his readers across the left and right with attention to the performative dimension of textuality.

At the same time, one cannot sanitize the tensions in Nietzsche's socio-biologism as linked to the colonial-racial imaginary, as we reinterpret the cultural physician for possibilities of emancipation and critique (Scott and Franklin, 2006). The following chapters in this part of my thesis reflect these concerns. Chapter 5 interrogates Nietzsche's divisive reception in social theory as a productive resource for centring the role of rhetoric in studying the processes of canonization, while showing how various readings celebrate or reject Nietzsche's thinking Chapter 6 contextualizes the notion of transversal class racism *vis-à-vis* reception of Nietzsche's philosophy in the feminist and post-colonial traditions.

Chapter 5 Reading for victory: Nietzsche as theorist of metaphoric transference

Despite Nietzsche's socio-biologistic imaginary, social theorists from Weber to Butler made various uses of Nietzsche in developing their own conceptual vocabularies. The method of genealogy has been broadly appropriated for theorizing legacies of slavery, patriarchy and white supremacy across the humanities and social sciences outside of concerns with Nietzsche's naturalism (Deutscher, 2017; Honneth, 2009; West, 1987). It is as a master of suspicion and genealogist that most contemporary readers got to know Nietzsche. Yet the influence of hermeneutics of suspicion has been recently challenged both in the analytic-technical scholarship in terms of the dynamics of truth and illusion as presumably not faithful to Nietzsche's naturalism (Emden, 2014; Leiter, 2004), as well as on the Marxist-left on explicitly political grounds (Losurdo, 2019). Some readers in the latter tradition bleakly conclude that Nietzsche's ideal of a future two-caste 'aristocratic society' resembles the contemporary neoliberal social order sustained by the dividing lines between the creative elites and the materially enslaved others (Fluss, 2019; Landa, 1999; Toscano, 2020), and that his misogyny and aristocracy must be left behind (Harcourt, 2020).

How to re-examine the purchase of Nietzsche for critical social theory today in light of his politics? Chapter 5 argues that it is important to situate Nietzsche's reception within

the two poles of the trial – reading for victory (through assimilation or rejection) versus reading for failure – which Bull (2011) distinguished in *Anti-Nietzsche*. This allows us to recognize how the Nietzschean oeuvre implicates the readers in terms of (mis)identifications with the figures of victory, whether one reads Nietzsche to appropriate or outgrow him. In this vein, Nietzsche has been often either celebrated as a transgressive figure in terms of his thinking about power, morality and language (Butler, 1993; Foucault, 2002, Said, 2003) or entirely dismissed on grounds of his aristocratic politics and socio-biologism (Lukacs, 1981; Habermas, 1987; Losurdo, 2019). Nietzsche's divisive reception in social theory reflects the broader polarization of the reception field as examined in Chapter 1, where the tendency to put the philosopher on 'trial' concerns not only his biologistic conception of society as an aristocratic structure, but also possible uses for social theory and sociological inquiry.

In social theory, Nietzsche has been read as a precursor of postmodernity (Habermas, 1987), understood in terms of heterogenous language games which do not subsume to any overarching meta-narratives such as progress or justice (Lyotard, 1984). His thinking about truth and morality has been widely influential among continental philosophers in the 'French tradition', predominantly outside of concerns with his aristocratic politics. Post-structuralist intellectuals in particular – most notably Deleuze, Foucault and Derrida – read Nietzsche with a very different set of presumptions about links between epistemology, ethics and politics which cannot be mapped onto a Marxist-materialist conception of history (see Brown, 1993, Schrift, 1995, West, 1987). Various theorists working in the 'critical' tradition outside of the Frankfurt School translated the enigmatic challenges of revaluation and overcoming onto their own conceptual frameworks – whether in relation to epistemes (Foucault, 2002), or in querying legacies of ressentiment and internalized forms of sexual and colonial oppression (Butler, 1993, Fanon, 1967; Mbembe, 2017), pushing Nietzsche's philosophy beyond its recognizable limits.

On the pole of the trial, Habermas (1987) denounced this strand of reception as irrationalist philosophy of the subject which puts forward an unsociological, undifferentiated conception of 'power', a path associated with Bataille, Derrida and particularly Foucault, to which one might add Kofman, Césaire, Fanon, Butler, Mbembe. Losurdo's (2019) charge of transversal class racism draws on long-standing suspicions against Nietzsche's aestheticism, resonant with Habermas' critique of the unsystematic nature of Nietzsche's aphorisms and reliance on metaphor. Moreover, Losurdo (2019) rehearses many tenets of Lukács' anti-Nietzschean *Destruction of Reason*, including the argument that it is through his plural style(s) that the philosopher seduces readers towards a superficial 'cosmic' revolution

outside of calculative (socialist) politics, even as he criticizes Lukács' placement of Nietzsche *vis-à-vis* the Third Reich, rather than in its own intellectual context. According to this strand of social theory which goes against Nietzsche's apologists, style is supposed to distract readers from Nietzsche's reactionary aristocratism packaged under hyperbolic polemics. Losurdo's (2019) critique is especially powerful today in terms of Nietzsche's relationship to the abolitionist movement in the 19th century US, but it is not without its own tensions.

Losurdo's (2019) charge against 'hermeneutics of innocence' associated with Vattimo, Foucault and Derrida obscures productive nuances and tensions in Nietzsche's multi-faceted thinking about *language as intrinsically rhetorical*. Losurdo (2019) relies on an opposition between literal-practical versus rhetorical-metaphorical meaning which is often rehearsed in accusing Nietzsche of a racist and violent political vision. Yet many commentators suggest that the distinction between rhetorical and non-rhetorical use of language dissipates in Nietzsche's philosophy, and that the opposition between literal-practical versus metaphorical is simplistic (Lambek, 2020; Rorty, 1989). The Marxist-materialist conception of intellectual life (2019) assumes that there is 'only' material class politics and racial inequalities to be recovered as the target of Nietzsche's hammer, but the philosopher's thinking about truth as an 'army of metaphors' has been also productively read in relationship to the contingency of power relations shaping the socio-linguistic fied(s) of signs, as recovered by de Man (1974) and Said (2003) among others. It is important to complement Losurdo's (2019) critical balance sheet by attending to readings which do not operate with the historical-reconstructive methodology, as these can be illuminating in a different way, even if they do contribute to sanitization of its most troubling political aspects.

It is precisely Nietzsche's thinking about language and metaphor which has ongoing purchase for social theory today as mediated through his influence on post-structuralism.[15] Baehr (2016) compellingly argued that the significance of Nietzsche's thinking about language for sociological theory is yet to be recovered, as it offers an alternative both to ethno-methodology and speech-act theory. This chapter opens up the grounds for tracing this influence. It explores a Nietzschean notion of language a site of metaphoric transference and power differentials which contrasts with Habermas' (1987) notion of language as a site of consensus that can be reached through debate. We encounter here a reading of Nietzsche as a master of rhetoric – not only in the sense that he manipulates readers to guard the boundaries of the text and embody the teaching of revaluation to be found in his writings,

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[15] While post-structuralism cannot be viewed as a unified school, it is a helpful label in drawing out its relevance to sociological inquiry, which can be understood in different ways (see Decoteau, 2017).

but also as someone whose double rhetoric - addressed to the few and the mass (Rosen, 2013) - is strategically designed to appeals across the boundaries of the nation, 'race' and class. Recognizing the crucial link between Nietzsche's techniques of persuasion and the hierarchical organization of the text can help us centre the role that the readers' self-identifications play in the reception of sociological texts, and in particular how theorists aim to transform their readers selves. This is conductive for rethinking sociological practice and its categories as achieved rhetorically (Baehr, 2016, McKinnon, 2012).

This chapter also examines how Nietzsche's philosophy of language can be read as utopian in that it involves a seductive appeal to the individual outside of the herd. The task addressed to the individual to refashion shared, collective language can be understood as part of the seductions to the *Versucher* to speak their own singular truth, truth that is reserved for the 'profound' (BGE 2.44), in contrast to the crowd, the herd, and even the free-spirit. Yet rather than actualize the philosophy of the extraordinary, creative subject who creates their own metaphors and dismantles the social order, one can also read Nietzsche against the spell of his figures of victory, including that of the philosopher of the future. In order to move beyond the two poles – reading for victory through assimilation or rejection – I will next turn towards what Bull (2011) distinguished as a reading for failure which identifies explicitly with the perspective of the failed and subjugated in Nietzsche's writings.

Chapter 6 Reading for failure: sexual difference and class racism

This chapter examines appropriations of Nietzsche's philosophy in the post-colonial and feminist deconstructive traditions – his thinking about sign-chains, plural style(s) and the poisonous forces of resentment. These have been at the heart of hermeneutic-continental scholarship since Derrida's (1979) influential reading of the plural and open-ended category of 'woman' in Nietzsche's writings, as linked to the question of plural style(s), the problematic of writing from the perspective of minority in ways that challenge dominant forms of expression and intelligibility. *'Spurs': Nietzsche's Styles* (1979) paved paths for reading Nietzsche outside of the logo- and phallogocentric modes of philosophical grammar, and has been intensely criticized but also reappropriated by generations of feminist and queer readers (Gallop, 1995; Spivak, 1983). The discussion on whether Derrida is re-fetishizing or transgressing associations of femininity as linked to seduction, appearance and deception in this canonical text still continues today (Verkerk, 2017).

My argument is that the controversies around Derrida's interpretation as obscuring the socio-material reality of gender and racial inequalities needs to be reconsidered today as

readers ask how to appropriate Nietzsche in the post-colony (Jones, 2010; Naicker, 2019; Toscano, 2020). The scope of feminist and post-colonial appropriations of Nietzsche is remarkable for a thinker rendered to be a virulent misogynist starkly opposed to the abolition of slavery and women's liberation: one can think of Wright, Césaire, Fanon, Irigaray, Butler, Said, Spivak, Mbembe, among others. In the post-structuralist tradition alone, Nietzsche's critique of the metaphysics of substance has been used to query the relationship between language, sexual difference and *écriture feminine* (Cixous; 1976; Irigaray, 1991), as well as to build performative accounts of gender (Butler, 1990).

The progressive uses of Nietzsche have often been recognized as tragically ironic, in particular by theorists of racial emancipation (Gooding-Williams, 2006; Jones, 2010; Scott and Franklin, 2006), but also given Nietzsche's broader denigrations of the subjugated (Faulkner, 2010; Schotten, 2019), most starkly expressed in his derogatory references to the figure of the outcast (Chandala) as examined in Chapter 4. There are various ways to theorize the irony at stake. Yet new interpretations of Nietzsche's political philosophy examined in Chapters 3 and 4 have been divorced from Nietzsche's long-standing feminist reception which has productively queried the notion of the 'outlaws of humanity' in Nietzsche's writings, and their broader uses for theorizing power relations alongside the intersecting structures of 'race', class, caste and gender. While the problematic of sexual difference and women's liberation have been central for over a century of feminist interpretations, these are surprisingly on the margins in recent readings of Nietzsche's two-caste politics and his class racism (Drochon, 2016; Losurdo, 2019; Toscano, 2020).

The central tension running through this chapter is how Nietzsche's anti-social philosophy of racialized breeding – as Bernasconi (2017) recently described it – can be used as an inspiration for emancipatory critical theory, and how the new interpretations of Nietzsche's class racism as intersecting with antiblackness map onto concerns with reproduction, sexual difference and mastery in Nietzsche's thinking. I am interested precisely in the tensions, ironies and ambivalences in reading Nietzsche's philosophy for the possibilities of emancipation and critique from the perspective of the subjugated. Losurdo's (2019) reading of Nietzsche's reactionary politics does not put an end to his uses for critical social theory, but rather highlights the necessity of unpacking the relationship between Nietzsche's thinking about language, sign-chains and theories of racial and sexual difference, and how his conception of resentment-fuelled 'slave morality' maps onto racialized Manichean conceptions of morality, as recovered by Mbembe (2002).

When reading Nietzsche from the perspective of the subjugated, it is his thinking about the origins of language in relation to the noble's archetypal 'right of giving names' (GM 1.2) which needs to be reconsidered. Nietzsche's narrative about the origins of master morality points to the evaluative dimension of language as its very medium rather than one of the domains, in contrast to strands of critical social theory influenced by Habermas. In addition, the link Nietzsche draws between language and master/slave morality can be productively used to query the category of 'race'. Once we understand 'race' at the material-semiotic rather than either biological or cultural levels (Bernasconi, 2017), the notion of class racism does not need to be viewed merely *vis-à-vis* material class positions (Losurdo, 2019), but also in relation to the racialized divisions as encoded into orders of grammar.

This reading comes into sharp focus with Butler's (2002) interpretation of the figure of the 'noble' in Nietzsche's genealogies as mythical, which complements the historical-reconstructive readings of the category of 'race' in relation to ethnic groups that might share physical attributes (Drochon, 2016; Moore, 2002). Butler's (2002) understanding of genealogies as 'fables' which cannot be located in time or space has important implications at the performative and imaginary level of textuality. It brings the author as much as the reader into the text, highlighting how Nietzsche's figures of speech inaugurate subjectivity, rather than simply describe socio-historical developments. In dismissing a century of feminist interpretation of Nietzsche in one paragraph, Losurdo (2019) misses out on various productive feminist and queer interpretations. Specifically, it is Nietzsche's thinking about the utopian capacity of language and the slaves' role in reinverting and destabilizing matrixes of valuation which points to the reserves in his texts which can be productively used for a critique of the phallogocentric grammars of language (Butler, 1993; Spivak, 1983).

This chapter ends by considering the question about the diagnostic uses of Nietzsche's thinking for the post-colony which recently came to the forefront of reception (Jones, 2010, Naicker, 2019; Toscano, 2020). In the aftermath of the decolonial turn, many will question whether Nietzsche can be still used at all, given a recent trend to trace the epistemic afterlives of colonialism at the level of the canon (Bhambra and Santos, 2017; Connell, 2010). My overarching argument is that one can still productively read Nietzsche against himself on the Marxist-left today in the aftermath of the post-structuralist reappropriations, though one must move away from the notion of the instability Nietzsche's texts, in which the signature of the author is constantly deferred, towards approaches which recognise the ways in which the hierarchical structure of the text relies on esoteric techniques. My analysis of the Derridian reception of the Nietzschean figures of the

'philosopher of the future' and 'affirmative women' contributes to the discussion on how techniques play a strategic role in Nietzsche's project to recruit readers towards the project of revaluation based on a particular form of breeding (Faulner, 2010; Waite, 1996).

Derrida's (2005) reading of the figure of the philosopher of the future in *Politics of Friendship* the capacity for thinking the future rather than an actual species that one might day arrive, rescue and save us. Derrida's reading is a paradigmatic example of continental approaches in which rhetoric is not viewed as the outside of philosophy. The challenge in scholarship on the political-philosophical dimension of Nietzsche's thinking is how to overcome the notion of the indeterminacy of the text, while examining how and why Nietzsche's texts entice readers to embrace uncertainty in interpretation, and what are the purposes of his images of and appeals to his ideal readers who do not belong to any community, but embrace the experimental project of overcoming humanity. This requires us to ground Nietzsche's dissonant rhetoric with attention to the receptive effects that it facilitates among readers who (mis)identify with the figures of victory in his writings, in addition to interpretative approaches which ground Nietzsche's rhetoric in relation to historical context, literary structure of tropes and its own polemical purpose.

PART I

How to read Nietzsche:

Between analytic and hermeneutic approaches

Chapter 1 How to read Nietzsche: between technical reconstruction and plural styles

Introduction

It is difficult to begin exploring the question 'how to read Nietzsche' without the ghost of Nazism haunting one's sentences. The vast scholarship on this subject is full of controversies about what it means to reconstruct Nietzsche's thought *on his own terms*, in an attempt to remain 'faithful' to his original ideas – often in response to the abuses of his thought, whether by the hedonist youth, Nazis or postmodern philosophers (Gemes, 2001; Stern, 2020). Those interpretative difficulties have been widely acknowledged at early stages of reception: at the turn of the century, Simmel (1986) warned that Nietzsche "does not posit the decisive questions in an abstract and logical form" (p.7), and so cannot be read "ex cathedra" by using classical philosophical strategies.

In the aftermath of the fascist abuses, many came to Nietzsche's defence by reading order and coherence into his work and arguing that the supposed anti-Semitic and proto-fascist strands were violently placed out of context – Deleuze (1983), for instance, conceived of Nietzsche as a philosopher in the post-Kantian critical tradition with a clear anti-fascist vision "organized around two axes" (p.x): the typology of active and reactive forces and the *will to power*. In his influential interpretation which shaped contours for many continental discussions today (Faulkner, 2010; Malabou, 2010), Nietzsche's concepts would have affective rather than purely technical meanings: Deleuze (1983) refers to a certain "atmosphere" which would be crucial for reading Nietzsche well, as to not paint him into a "nihilist, or worse, a fascist" (p.xii).

Today, analytic philosophers are not very likely to reconsider the history of fascist abuses of Nietzsche's thought, much less to take into account the affective dispositions of the readers, as they reconstruct substantive features underlying Nietzsche's philosophy that would travel across contexts, times and spaces – most prominently under the umbrella-term of naturalism (Leiter, 2013; Schacht, 2012). Yet the ghost of Nazism still haunts various scenes of reception, or the 'intellectual field' in which meanings of Nietzsche's ideas are negotiated, to borrow a term deployed by sociologists of intellectual life in the Bourdieusian tradition.[16] Most recently, those ghosts reappeared in the aftermath of the 2016 US elections, as Nietzsche has been yet again pained into one of the anti-liberal suspects, whose thought would center around regressive and elitist forms of politics (Beiner, 2018, Bhatt,

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[16] See Baert (2012) and Lundberg (2016) on the notion of an 'intellectual field' in relation to the positioning of intellectuals in broader socio-cultural and political contexts.

2020). On Beiner's (2018) reading, Nietzsche's question "Where are the barbarians of the twentieth century?" cannot be dismissed as a joke or provocation, if situated *vis-à-vis* the contemporary resurgence of ethno-nationalist claims.

Yet Nietzsche is not only a thinker of the 'alt-right': Faulkner (2010), among others, has written on how his body of work has attracted "those whom it expressly excludes: women and feminists, Jewish scholars, and theorists of the political Left" (p.4). Perhaps part of Nietzsche's appeal is then to generate ambivalence in the reader, as he recruits subjects across all identities who become his "champions against misinterpretation" (Faulkner, 2010, p.3). Most recently, he became an object of reconstruction for analytic philosophers who guard the boundaries of the 'right' philosophical readings in relationship to the overarching doctrine of methodological naturalism (Leiter, 2013). Yet it is not only in the analytic tradition that scholars are concerned with the proliferation of misreadings: reconstructing Nietzsche's influence on post-colonial theory, including Fanon, Said and Mbembe, Naicker (2019) suggests that these intellectuals have misunderstood Nietzsche's notion of ressentiment. After decades of post-structuralists insisting on the heterogeneity of the text (Barthes, 1977; Derrida, 1979; Foucault, 1977), a singular author with transparent intentions returns again.

Those various interpretations point towards key interpretative tensions: if one's goal is to reconstruct Nietzsche's thought faithfully, how important is it to take into account the historical context in which his ideas have developed *vis-à-vis* the interpretative practices and contingent methodologies of the 'interpretative communities', or the broader 'intellectual field' in which his ideas have circulated and gained specific meanings? How comes that meanings of his philosophy change so radically, depending on the scene of reception? What is it about Nietzsche's texts in particular which makes his reception so polarizing? From WWI soldiers who brought copies of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* to the warfront (Fuller, 2019), to Habermas' (1987) fierce critiques of philosophers' irrationalism, the responses to Nietzsche's thought have been not only varied but also extremely heartfelt, making for passionate, if at times maddening, attachments to the philosopher. It is as if Nietzsche wanted to "possess the readers' body and soul", as Faulkner (2010, p.12) puts it, to the point that we no longer know who he is: as times as a nihilist, postmodernist, existentialist, ethicist, other times an aristocratic rebel, naturalist, trans-humanist, or most recently – a theorist of a two-caste society.

Responding to those heterogenous patterns of reception, Stern (2014) writes: "it sometimes feels like you can order whichever Nietzsche you want" as he draws an image of the philosopher attuned to "the benefits of taking up contradictory positions" (p.2) –

something that analytic readings in the naturalist tradition are likely to resolve, while post-structuralist feminist philosophers would affirm, celebrate and radicalize. Nietzsche's use of contradictions and incoherent standpoints makes for a heterogenous field of reception which is increasingly more polarized in terms of authors who defend him versus those who accuse him of all kinds of disquieting political ideas. So if the question 'how to read Nietzsche' has more than one answer, does it make sense to distinguish a 'faithful' or 'correct' way of reading – or put Nietzsche 'on trial', particularly in terms of links between evolutionary naturalism, biologism and racism in his works which generations of 'continental' readers including Bataille, Heidegger, Deleuze and Derrida deemphasized? What kind of rules, protocols or criteria would we select to judge between more and less faithful or productive interpretations of Nietzsche before we consider the socio-political parameters in his thinking? In light of alt-right readings, shall one defend him yet again or assume that he has been heard loudly and clearly too many times, unlike other marginalized thinkers?

Nietzsche's 'multifarious stylings'

I am hinting at the history of fascist abuses among all the other masks of Nietzsche to make a simple point: the response to the question 'how to read (philosophical) texts' can have dramatic consequences – for instance whether one takes his late notebooks to reveal the true meaning of the *will to power* as a metaphysical principle as in Heidegger's political ontology (Beiner, 2018), or if we presume that Nietzsche's own (supposed) homosexual identity would have bearing for how for one might 'queer' his philosophy (Clark, 2015).[17] Yet the difficulty presents itself even before we begin to consider various socio-cultural and political contexts within which Nietzsche's ideas and concepts have travelled and continue to gain ever-new, at times dangerous, meanings. Whether we take a founding father of sociology (Simmel), postmodern thinker (Deleuze) or a contemporary expert (Stern) – thinkers whose readings I have juxtaposed above – it seems that it is Nietzsche's complex syntax, or more broadly, 'multifarious stylings' (Hicks and Rosenberg, 2008, p.2) which might make it difficult to take his confessions at face-value in terms of stable meaning to be faithfully recovered.

In other words, it is the rhetorical structure of his works which needs to be carefully explored, where rhetoric would be an integral part of what co-constitutes his substantive thought rather than the 'other' side of philosophical discourse to be dismissed as sophistry,

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[17] Rather than consider Nietzsche's own presumed sexual identity, many readers in the feminist and queer traditions consider his ideas on anti-morality and critique of the metaphysics of substance as productive (Butler, 1993; Schotten, 2019), as I discuss in more depth in Chapter 6.

conceived merely in terms of decorative effects (Rorty, 1989, Strong, 2013). The role of rhetoric is not something that all readers of Nietzsche theorize explicitly, but if understood as "an art of communicating effectively through writing" (Caro, 2003, p.101), it is part of understanding both the extraordinary reach of Nietzsche's spell and the substantive challenges of his philosophy. Strong (2013) suggests that the political-philosophical dimension of Nietzsche's thought needs to be understood precisely with attention to rhetoric. This is indeed where the starkest challenge in reception lies today, given the gap between the goals of technical reconstruction and the concern with plural style(s) which made Nietzsche so influential in the post-structuralist tradition (Derrida, 1979).

In my project, I argue that it is the rhetorical complexity of Nietzsche's works which makes his thought so broadly appealing across a wide range of theoretical landscapes, particularly in terms of his strategies for implicating a range of readers as his friends and companions in the project of revaluation. Among various characterizations of Nietzsche's rhetoric – for instance as "deliberately dissonant" (Lambek, 2020) - the notion of "multifarious stylings" (Hicks and Rosenberg, 2008, p.2) strikes me as particularly helpful because it highlights not only Nietzsche's contradictions and conflicting narratives which produce various receptive effects, but also the role of his hyperbolic tropes, philosophical figures and masks. Nietzsche used various strategies in delineating his philosophical 'theories' which need to be carefully studied in terms of the imaginary and affective level of textuality – if one can use the word 'theories' here in a sense that would go beyond rationalist system-building.[18] This is not to say that the 'real Nietzsche' hides behind those masks, but to propose an interpretative lens which pays attention to what Hicks and Rosenberg (2012) called the "interdependent relationship between *mythos* (our images, figures, metaphors) and our *logos* (reason, concepts, propositions)" (p.5).

In Nietzsche's works, the *mythos* is extraordinarily rich: animals, ghosts, plants, pale criminals, prophets and witches laugh with and at us, pushing the limits of the 'all-too-human' imagination. Many Nietzschean figures come to signify entire worldviews rather than merely propositions – as the famous image of the 'last man' (Z Prologue 5) who exemplify values that Nietzsche associated with the 'herd animal':

'What is love? What is creation? What is longing? What is a star?' –
thus asks the last human being, blinking.

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[18] For a helpful overview of the different meanings of 'theorising' and 'theory' from a sociological perspective see Abend (2008) and Krause (2016).

Then the earth has become small, and on it hops the last human being,

who makes everything small. His kind is ineradicable, like the flea beetle;

the last human being lives longest.

'We invented happiness' – say the last human beings, blinking.

They abandoned the regions where it was hard to live: for one needs

warmth. One still loves one's neighbour and rubs up against him: for one

needs warmth.

Becoming ill and being mistrustful are considered sinful by them: one

proceeds with caution. A fool who still stumbles over stones or humans!

A bit of poison once in a while; that makes for pleasant dreams. And much

poison at the end, for a pleasant death.

One still works, for work is a form of entertainment. But one sees to it

that the entertainment is not a strain. (...)

No shepherd and one herd! Each wants the same, each is the same, and

whoever feels differently goes voluntarily into the insane asylum.

'Formerly the whole world was insane' – the finest ones say, blinking.

Even this incomplete citation suggests that the image of the 'last man' is terribly complex. While the critique of hedonism and utilitarianism comes across strongly – and so does the parody of the modern work-leisure distinction – it is not clear why the 'last man' blink as they naively, or perhaps shamelessly, declare their perspective on a good life. Is this a gesture that signals complacency with the secular values and norms of the 'herd animal' such as the promise of eradicating suffering, or does the blinking invoke a sense of self-mockery, not to be taken seriously? Perhaps blinking is a protective practice, because acknowledging the truth of the human condition would lead to 'suicidal nihilism' so extreme that it would ruin this false sense of security on which the 'market place' – to invoke Zarathustra's metaphor for society – is built? While the image has been central to the reception of the Nietzschean thought of overcoming from Weber's (1930) famous appropriation in the *Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism*, to Deleuze's (1983) *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, it is unclear what kind of "non-hedonistic normative direction" (Shaw, 2014, p.18) would be at stake here. The reader has no choice but to read between the lines, and wonder why the 'last men' blink rather than smile.[19]

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[19] Drawing on Weber's reading of Nietzsche, reading the reserves between them, Shaw (2013) links the image of the 'last man' to the theodicy-demand, drawing Nietzsche's insights on the all-too-human

Recognizing the affective force of the image would then have significant implications for how to 'reconstruct' the leitmotiv of overcoming humanity that runs through Nietzsche's works, not in terms of systematic philosophical doctrines or arguments, but perhaps as parodies of the messianic hopes that run though the history of ideas (Gooding-Williams, 2001). To read Nietzsche is to become vulnerable to the affective force of his writings – to recognize oneself in the 'last man', which might induce a state of "longing for the other shore", as Zarathustra (Z Prologue 4) puts it, or generates a psychic split in the reader who wishes to identify with what Bull (2011) called "figures of victory" – like the *Übermensch* – rather than the 'last man' whom Nietzsche seems to despise. If we accept the premise that a good interpretation respects the author's intentions, or at least takes as a point of departure his actual ideas, it is also to never stop wondering what Nietzsche's own position might be. Does he want readers to recognize and overcome our pity for the 'last man', stay with the tensions that this image is bound to produce, or give up entirely on the normative prospects of enhancing humanity? Perhaps it is the premise of remaining loyal to the author as a singular and stable identity that needs to be interrogated, to recognize how the reader becomes affected by the mysterious alchemy of the text.

The promise of reconstruction

Faced with multiple difficulties in interpretating Nietzsche even before we consider its 'socio-political' dimension, the central issue at stake is whether and how one shall embrace the task of rational reconstruction, which might seem at odds with Nietzsche's disorderly and poetic mode(s) of thinking: the musical stylings, exaggerations, contradictions and the unruly syntax. Indeed, rather than formulating dry and lucid arguments in a detached and objectivist fashion one might associate with 19th century philological encyclopaedic entries – a form of analysis that drove him away from scholarly institutionalized philology (Markowski, 2001; Porter, 2000) – Nietzsche experimented with various forms of engaging the reader, from those most poetic images in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* which breaks into embodied songs and dances, to fictional fables about the 'blond beast' in *Genealogy of Morality* (2006b [1887]).[20]

To be sure, songs, myths and fables present a more challenging material to analyse than essays, treaties, aphorisms or his early meditations on classical Greek texts. Yet even

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need for justification of suffering. For Nietzsche's relationship to Weber more broadly see Turner (2011) and Solms-Laubach (2007). I discuss this more closely in Chapter 5.

[20] *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* has been described as modelled on the genre of 'opera' across the analytic and hermeneutic perspectives (see Deleuze 1983; Loeb, 2010). Gooding-Williams (2001) provides the most comprehensive interpretations of the various forms of address in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, as situated in the context of modernist experiments more broadly.

the most basic question whether one can reconstruct linear arguments, doctrines and positions from more traditional forms of writings – such as essays – remains open (Magnus and Higgins, 1996). Moreover, Nietzsche commented on aphorisms as requiring an 'art of interpretation' but characteristically did not clarify what such an art would entail other than gesturing towards the virtues of a close and patient slow reading: "An aphorism, properly stamped and molded, has not been "deciphered" when it has simply been read; rather one has then to begin its interpretation, for which is required an art of interpretation [*Auslegung*]." (GM Preface 8). I will be returning to Nietzsche's addresses to skilful interpreters and ideal readers in Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 – images of mastery over the text which contrast with the figure of the 'last man' and the 'reading idlers' who optimized life but seen to have forgotten how to read and write (Z On Reading and Writing 1).

For now, it is important to highlight that philology and rhetoric are entangled with each other in making something akin to the 'substance' of Nietzsche's philosophy that one might be tempted to reconstruct: the "art of correct reading" complements an "art of correct speaking", as Caro (2004) puts it. Therefore, the proliferation of rhetorical forms and addresses to the reader make Nietzsche's works into enormously difficult objects for exegesis – at times it can even make one give up on the premise of a neutral and technical reading that would be faithful, correct and systematic. That is because the project of reconstruction requires a certain stability and consistency on the side of the object which is to be reconstructed. Gerhardt (1998) describes this tension in terms of Nietzsche's thinking as moving in contradictions and seeking "the extreme in everything" (p.79). In this sense, "to reconstruct such thinking may seem like a bad joke to reconstructionists and Nietzscheans alike: those who have confidence in reconstructions will regard Nietzsche as an unsuitable object, and those who are sympathetic to Nietzsche will not want to see him handed over to a technical-rational method (Gerhardt, 1998, p.79).

Gerhardt (1998) does not give examples here, presuming a reader who is intimately familiar with the text. One does not have to look far for sentences that would offend our political taste like those about the 'interbreeding of races' revisited today in discussions on Nietzsche's relationship to scientific racism and colonialism (Bernasconi, 2017; Drochon, 2016; Losurdo, 2019). Nietzsche quite often goes out of his way to emphasize that philosophizing, in the way he hoped to reinvigorate the tradition, breaks with previous forms of inquiry. Whether we take Nietzsche's declarations about his preference for dancing over philosophizing in a Dionysian fashion or his famous enunciations about being a dynamite

rather than a man, his thought will surely come across as rich in exaggerations, which are often conveyed in ways that are likely to mobilize the readers' psychic attachments.[21]

Anticipating various effects of the texts on the reader, in a way not entirely sympathetic to Nietzsche, Bull (2011) comments on the last sentence: "who has not felt the sudden thrill of something explosive within themselves; or, at the very least, emboldened by Nietzsche's daring, allowed themselves to feel a little more expansive than usual?" (p.35). This kind of shift to the (mis)identifications and affects shared by the readers is important from a methodological perspective: it suggests that it is precisely this affective engagement of the reader through a variety of rhetorical strategies which makes Nietzsche into a difficult object for *any* kind of systematic, ahistorical and rationalist reconstruction, before we even consider the socio-political parameters in Nietzsche's thinking, as the texts can produce varied effects at the imaginary level of textuality.

Yet there is an important psychoanalytic twist, Faulkner (2010) agues, as one could say that it is precisely through those effects that Nietzsche invokes in the reader a desire to remain 'sympathetic' to the master – as to respond to Zarathustra's address to "fellow-creators" (Z Prologue 9). In this vein, the imperative of many Nietzscheans would be not to reconstruct something akin to arguments and doctrines in a systematic, detached and abstract manner, using Nietzsche's antipathy towards the Socratic rationalist culture to justify this more open-ended and playful approach to the text as inherently 'Nietzschean' – "I mistrust all the systematisers" (TI Arrows and Epigrams 26). To make things even more complicated, Nietzsche encourages his readers to creatively mistrust him, for instance when he announces the arrival of the philosophers of the future – who can be 'perhaps' (*vielleicht*) called experimenters, tempters, attempters (*Versucher)*, as I will clarify in Chapter 2. To mistrust is not the same as entirely dismissing Nietzsche – it will produce a variety of interpretations of Nietzsche 'against himself', particularly productive in terms of navigating his uses and challenges to social theory. Just like Nietzsche can be used for queer purposes despite the conservative political philosophy as I explore in more depth in Chapter 6, one can productively read Nietzsche more broadly from the lens of sub-humanized others, for instance from the perspective of black studies (Scott and Franklin, 2006).

For now, let me stay with the promise of a 'faithful' rather than 'mistrustful' reading – after all, every reader wants to think of themselves as good, patient and careful, wary of the numerous traps and inconsistencies that the Nietzschean *oeuvre* involves. This brings us

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[21] This is particularly the case in his last works, where the boundary between Nietzsche the writer and the thinker is increasingly more blurry, with all kinds of parodic forms of address culminating in *Ecce Homo*. See Acampora (2013b) for a critical discussion of *Ecce Homo*.

to the distinctions between the broader modes and schools of reading philosophy in today's polarized field of reception, within which the Nietzschean 'art of interpretation' is understood very differently, depending on the discipline and tradition. Reading, like any activity, would be a question of one's position in the broader landscape of knowledge-production, as one of the fundamental practices that is shaped through and shapes back the disciplinary imaginaries, revealing their naturalized boundaries.[22] My sense is that reading is always an embodied practice, which starts from certain 'drives' or 'affects' in the (social) body, through which one makes sense of the text. The practice of textuality is not only shaped through *mythos* (images, figures, metaphors*)* more than *logos* (reasons, concepts, propositions)*,* but it is also a question of the entanglement of the reading and interpreting subject in pre-existing textual networks where signs are not transparent, but rather always already carry traces of pre-existing structural positions. These need to be socially located rather than abstracted away, for instance in terms of the positions of 'race', gender and class which readers occupy in the socio-material world.[23]

Between technical core and poetic margins of Nietzsche's writings

If we accept the classic premise that the goal of philosophical reconstruction is to remain loyal to its object, how to navigate this impasse that opens up not only with Nietzsche's unruly styles but also with the demands that he places on the readers? How to read Nietzsche carefully, slowly and sympathetically, from the affectively charged position of a creative companion rather than as a blindly loyal and dogmatic follower? Is there a meta-criteria one can use to assess heterogenous readings against each other? Depending on disciplinary standpoints, interpreters of Nietzsche are more or less likely to recognize those tensions as meaningful – in the predominant analytic scholarship not many recognize the rhetorical force of his writings as significant or central, much less take into account the reader's psychic attachments, in attempts to reconstruct and clarify Nietzsche's challenges.

To help understand the contemporary landscape in which Nietzsche's philosophical ideas continue to be re-interpreted within so many different conceptual frames, and begin

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[22] Different approaches towards the boundaries of disciplines can be found in Babich (2004), Goodstein (2017) and Lepenies (1988). Goodstein uses the notion of 'naturalised boundaries' of disciplines in discussing how Simmel's thinking must be placed inbetween philosophy and social science before their separation into distinct academic studies.

[23] See Puwar (2004) for an example of how the social structures of race, gender and class bear on the practice of interpretation where the 'universal' abstract speaking position (e.g. on behalf of humanity or reason) would be coded as the domain of the white, male and heterosexual subject. This is an example of a longstanding feminist critiques of the philosophical grammars as purely 'technical' and 'neutral' which I review in Chapter 6.

to explore certain terms that I will engage in substantive chapters (e.g. decadence), it is important to map Gerhardt's (1998) distinction between 'technical-reconstructive' and 'sympathetic' readings onto the broader binary between the 'analytic' and 'continental' philosophical traditions that have shaped much of Nietzsche's reception (Babich, 2003; Mulhall, 2019). The broadest understanding of hermeneutics – as a philosophy of "interpretation of meaningful entities" (Katsafanas, 2017, p.1) – figures in the background in a double sense, as I first examine various perspectives on 'how to read Nietzsche', to then turn to the question on how Nietzsche has shaped the hermeneutic tradition.

To demonstrate how much interpretative lenses can differ, there are three modes of reading that I would like to tentatively distinguish here: analytic-technical, technical-historicist and hermeneutic-continental. I propose distinctions between those interpretative approaches with heuristic ends in mind as to shed light on the extraordinary range of different interpretations of Nietzsche, rather than as to provide any universalizable typology onto a vast body of scholarship. Unlike in the cases of Marx or Freud, no coherent and unified school of theorizing or philosophizing was founded on Nietzsche's writings, so drawing neat and systematic distinctions between various modes of reading and stretching his philosophy is impossible – the scenes of reception are too disperse. Rather than systematically distinguish among them, I hope to extend and qualify Stern's (2019) analysis of Nietzsche's influence in terms of two interpretative trends: the 'French' or 'postmodern' Nietzsche and the more recent Anglophone 'analytic' trend in Nietzsche scholarship. Those labels might seem generic, but they will help to delineate the ways through which one might reconstruct and read the interconnected parameters of the 'social' and 'political' in Nietzsche's writings.

The 'postmodern Nietzsche' would refer to "labels which cover a wide variety of different interpretations, but which usually refer to a tendency among some (...) interpreters to emphasize what they saw as Nietzsche's radically skeptical or dismissive remarks about truth and his resistance to dogmatic theorizing" (Stern, 2019, p.14) – a trend that has been more significant in terms of Nietzsche's influence on social theory, mediated through Foucault's (1998) influential uses and radicalization of Nietzsche's method of genealogy. The analytic trend, exemplified in the interpretations of Clark, Leiter and Katsafanas, who reconstruct relatively stable and determinate meanings of his works, would be partially a response to the influential 'French Nietzsche' (see Mulhall, 2019) – the more experimental and creative readings by Bataille, Foucault, Klossowski, Derrida, or indeed non-French thinkers, from Habermas to Butler, which I examine in Chapters 5 and 6.

Whether explicitly acknowledged or not, the analytic readings often share what Mulhall (2019) called "a basic hermeneutic framework" (p. 124) in which texts are made to fit into the analytic tradition, against interpretations which pay more attention to rhetorical, discursive and affective dimensions in meaning-making practices. The overarching question whether and how to read Nietzsche's style in connection to his ideas is particularly important given that Losurdo (2019) blames nothing less than 'hermeneutics of innocence' for sanitising the philosopher's class racism. In light of my interest in the rhetorical structure of Nietzsche's works, which fuels radically different interpretations, I do not follow a chronological order but introduce the more recent analytic mode of interpretation first, because here rhetoric is only at times viewed as part of his substantive message, often put aside for the sake of conceptual clarity even by those who reflexively incorporate Nietzsche's critique of philosophy into their analysis (see Mulhall, 2019). In hermeneutic-continental approaches, rhetoric often plays a central role (Lambek, 2020; Strong, 2013), though that role is rarely clarified in ways compatible with the analytic vocabulary. The key question is whether and how one can conceptualize the interplay between the substance and style(s) of Nietzsche's thinking – or form and content – without conflating between them.

Technical-rational mode of analysis

In the technical-rational mode, which I associate with classical analytic reconstructive strategies, the scholar – most often a professional philosopher – approaches the texts in a neutral, technical and disinterested manner without bringing in one's embodied subject position. The broadest aims here would be to reconstruct, contextualize and clarify relatively stable and static positions, views and ideas that can be attributed to the author – in this case, Nietzsche – that would not change depending on the context of interpretation, following the premises of analytic philosophy as a type of reasoning governed by the principles of logics, broadly ahistorical in outlook (Babich, 2003; Robertson and Owen, 2013; Stern, 2014). The *Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche* (2013) gives us a good glimpse into those kinds of reconstructive practices. As Mitchell (2015, p.270) suggests, this handbook can be viewed as an example of interpretative practices by which modern philosophical scholarship on Nietzsche now proceeds:

by comparing and contrasting Nietzsche with other major figures in the philosophical tradition (the "Historical Relations" section), close exegetical work with specific texts ("Principal Works"), and, most

prominently, exploration of distinctive thematic concerns, usually with the aim of rational reconstruction ("Values," "Epistemology and Metaphysics," and "Developments of Will to Power").

To a reader trained in analytic philosophy, this kind of rationale for explicating Nietzsche's works might seem self-evident: how else to fully appreciate the multitude of his challenges? Yet there are several things to note about this approach. In the first place, Nietzsche's thought is placed within naturalized philosophical sub-categories such as meta-ethics, as Mulhall argues (2019) – which relies on the assumption that his critique of morality can be translated onto a broader rationalist framework, in which ethical positions are often re-constructed as matters of deliberative positions.[24] While productive in terms of pushing certain puzzles in Nietzsche's thought which arise with complex relations between normativity, morality and genealogy (see Robertson and Owen, 2013), this approach reflects methodological commitments underlying an analytic practice built to some extent against the "vagueness" characterizing the historical tradition in the wake of Nietzsche, Heidegger and Sartre, as Babich (2003, p.66) puts it. With roots in the "so-called language philosophy that aspired to match the logically empiricist claims of the Vienna Circle" (Babich, 2003, p.66), the underlying premise of analytic philosophy is often to set up and then resolve puzzles, contradictions and inconsistencies – many of them are surely bound to arise if one takes at face-value Nietzsche's imprecise and rhetorically charged formulations, as reflective of systematic positions and doctrines.

This is not to say that the central premise of the analytic-technical mode is to resolve all contradictions, but it is one of the key devices through which texts are analysed, reflective of how logics functions as a meta-criteria in analysis of texts (Babich, 2003). The promise of overcoming the 'last man' for instance is often presented as a puzzle – as a notion that might seem at odds with the 'abysmal' thought of the eternal return, which induces pity, disgust and nausea in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Shepherd, 2001; Tevenar 2003). This brings us to a central puzzle: how is it that the "ceaseless return of even the last man are transformed into an affirmative vision" (Pippin, 2006a, p. xxxii). What kind of 'affirmation' might be at stake here in the first place?

Whether we understand the problematic of the last men in terms of socio-cultural critique, at the planetary level of species politics or as an existentialist imperative of self-

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[24] In contrast to the rationalist, deliberative notion of ethical life, one might also conceive of ethical choice in a way that presupposes one's position in relation to broader social structures – for instance language (see Robertson and Owen, 2013).

overcoming is of paramount importance – in the technical-reconstructive mode it is framed in terms of sets of (future) attributes, dispositions and capacities, as an example of heuristic typologies that Nietzsche's thinking relies on. Acampora (2013b), for instance, proposes to interpret Nietzschean figures as types: "The "last man" might (…) be thought a type, and the *Übermensch* could be construed as an as-yet unachieved type (human, transhuman, or more-than-human)" (p.1346). Drawing on ambiguities around the notion of affirmation, Tevenar (2003, p.1041) analyses one of the signature contradictions running through *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in a way which reveals limitations of the puzzle-solving:

> To speak of love and contempt in one breath is rather disconcerting. Hence the often-made attempt to ease its contradiction by postulating two intentional objects, such as love for the *Übermensch* and contempt for the 'last man'. But that cannot possibly be correct! (...) Consider the absence of self-contempt in the presence of too much self-love that makes the last men so small, so very contemptible! Nietzsche is quite clear: it is not a question of either love or contempt but of holding and embracing within oneself the tension of their contradiction and using their alleged incompatibility for further progress; progress understood as individual growth and elevation achieved through the ordered affirmation of all of oneself.

If the text is re-interpreted as a tragedy – Tevenar (2003) argues – Zarathustra's contradictions "become experienced as contributions to wholeness" (p.1042), rather than as contradictions that need to be resolved. It is worth noting that this kind of reading relies on deciphering and reconstructing Nietzsche's 'clear' intentions. Yet are Nietzsche's intentions ever straightforward, for instance when he writes in his late notebooks that there is 'proof' for the doctrine of eternal return? Perhaps it is a provocation which is supposed to lead the reader astray, as Nietzsche challenges us to keep on looking for evidence, in a clever move which guarantees readers do not abandon him? This brings us to the so-called 'cosmological-hypothetical' dichotomy which concerns the question whether Nietzsche 'intended' this idea as a theory about time's circularity or if it is should be understood at the hypothetical level, as a test of the affirmative attitude towards one's life within the broader project of self-

overcoming (Loeb, 2010; Rogers, 2001) – a central puzzle that has occupied scholars at least since Simmel's (1986) refutation of the doctrine from a logical perspective.[25]

In the technical-analytic mode, the central tension would be if the thought of eternal return can be ethically binding if it is logically implausible, and how this then fits with Nietzsche's broader promise of revaluation, for instance as an 'existentialist' principle of selection and cutting against life-negating values, such as pity (including pity for the 'last man' – hence the logical puzzle).[26] Exploring implications of this tension in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Tenevar (2003) concludes that the "use of poetic and musical affective seductions" in the book might be more conducive to the project of revaluation at "the deep psychological rather than intellectual level" and so the book is "not a gateway today's academic philosophers are keen to use" (p.1083) as they reconstruct rational propositions and doctrines from Nietzsche's works.[27] Perhaps we should add that it is not likely to be used by analytic readers, who usually do not recognize the rhetorical force of Nietzsche's affective seductions as meaningful part of his philosophy – though there are some interpretations of the book as central to Nietzsche's work precisely by the virtue of poetic stylings, which facilitate more intuitive understanding (Gooding-Williams, 2001).

Yet one does not even need to analyse Nietzsche's most complex and poetic work to argue that the technical-analytic mode relies on certain kind of reading practices while excluding others. It is not only the poetic-mythical registers which this approach of reading Nietzsche tends to dismiss – the historical, cultural and social context are also largely left out in favour of exegesis, not just the poetic-mythical registers. In this vein, Stern (2014) argues that there are many fundamental questions which are missing from this kind of scholarship – for instance the question how Nietzsche understands 'German identity' in relation to cultural and historical discourses. The role of the historical context is particularly significant for how to understand the interconnected notions of class, caste, and 'race', but also rhetorical figures through which Nietzsche implicates the reader, like the derogative image of 'barbaric moderns' from *On the Use and Abuse of History,* a form of addressing readers

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[25] The assumption behind the 'cosmological' interpretation is that circularity at stake in the notion of eternal return would reflect his broader understanding of scientific cosmology, against the 'hypothetical' interpretation which "degrades Nietzsche's doctrine into a life-denying thought-experiment" (Loeb, 2013, p.2380).

[26] Simmel (1986) rejects Nietzsche's notion of the eternal return from a logical perspective in *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*, though this is not the main focus of the text. See Rogers (2001) and Loeb (2010, p.13–16) for a critical assessment of the argument that the doctrine of the eternal return is conceptually incoherent.

[27] There are many readings of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* from the perspective of psychology. Gustav Karl Jung, for instance, lectured on Zarathustra and warned against its dangerous effects. See Chapelle (1993) for a critical discussion on the links between Nietzsche, psychology and psychoanalysis.

embedded within the context of nation-building, which I will interrogate more closely in Chapter 4.

In the technical-analytic approaches, the historical contexts of state reform, or discourses of degenerationism – not to mention historical class conflict – are not likely to matter for understanding Nietzsche's notions of truth, history and life-affirmation. Scholars also share certain assumptions about for what might belong to the 'distinctive thematic concerns' in his works – core ideas such as eternal return, *will to power*, revaluation – rather than more marginal issues running through Nietzsche's works, such as Germanness, health or friendship which come to the forefront in *Reading Nietzsche at the margins* (Hicks and Rosenberg, 2008). To be sure, the technical-analytic scholarship is useful in clarifying how to reconstruct specific puzzles that arise with Nietzsche's thought. Yet from a sociological lens which queries the very practices of reception that we come to inhabit, it is difficult not to notice that exegesis is presented as an activity that would be self-evident – it is not understood as something that requires careful hermeneutic clarification and care. In other words, the text is made to speak for itself, to borrow a metaphor that is often used by social scientists in relationship to data. In face of hermeneutic challenges, the classic strategy would be to distinguish the concept from its form of presentation in order to 'clear' excessive, exaggerated uses of language (Magnus and Higgins, 1996) – precisely what might make Nietzsche's thinking so difficult as an object of reconstruction, as we will see with the example of the Dionysian temptations in the next chapter.

This is not to say that analytic philosophers do not acknowledge the complex rhetorical structure of Nietzsche's works at all, but to highlight that this is usually not viewed as having consequences for how to reconstruct his most pressing concerns, challenges and ideas.[28] Nietzsche's naturalistic stance, for instance, is considered the core part of his substantive philosophical practice, in contrast to the "rhetorical strategies which he employs therapeutically" (Gemes and Richardson, 2013, p.68). In other words, the therapeutic effects of consolation that Nietzsche might offer would be a byproduct of his 'core' philosophy. With this kind of move, it is indeed the "epistemological utility of language" (Babich, 2003, p.81) which comes to determine meanings of Nietzsche's philosophy. What gets obscured here is the question of 'style' that is dismissed to have secondary, aesthetic significance – reflected

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[28] There are of course important exceptions. Janaway (2007) offers a reading of Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morality* with attention to the ways in which it taps into the reader's affective dispositions and feelings (e.g. disgust, guilt, revulsion): "rhetoric that arouses the affects is an appropriate part of Nietzsche's intended critique of morality because of the central role he assigns to the affects in his view of how we came to be attached to morality" (p.45).

in what Stern referred to as "cold, unlovely, jargoned prose" (p.1) of the analytic Nietzsche. In reconstructions of Nietzsche's naturalism (Leiter, 2013), rhetoric is most often viewed as a decorative byproduct to his substantive philosophical message at best, or as obscuring the technical meanings of his philosophy at worst, mirroring the classic Aristotelian theory of metaphors as ornamental and decorative (Rosenberg and Milchman, 2018).

In the *Oxford Handbook on Nietzsche*, the chapter on Zarathustra reflects how the poetic-mythical registers come to be erased when Tevenar (2013) argues against the common presupposition that Nietzsche's "over-rich rhetoric only adds to the general obscurity and ambiguity of the book and that Nietzsche would have been well advised to present his thought in his usual style which is, by any standard, remarkable, beautiful, and extravagant enough" (p.1082-1083). Nietzsche surely complained about being misunderstood by his contemporaries, and the book presents an enormous challenge to interpret, but to discipline him for exaggerations is one particularly bold interpretative strategy among others. It reflects on the assumptions guiding analytic reconstruction, rather than the actual role of rhetoric in Nietzsche's philosophy. In a similar vein, Babich (2003) describes the question of 'style' in term of the tension between analytic and continental modes of philosophizing, more precisely in terms of the "annexation of the philosophical themes of Continental philosophy on the part of analytic philosophy – an annexation which [...] ablates the distinction between styles altogether" (p.69). Style becomes a proxy for excessive, decorative meaning and colourful literary devices. Ultimately, Stern (2014) helpfully summarizes the analytic mode presented in the *Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche* as the "victorious mode of interpretation" (p.4), not only in light its influence but also because it does not present itself an interpretation but rather as a technical exegesis, which presents the 'best' Nietzsche for the pre-conceived purposes of contemporary analytic philosophy.

Grounding Nietzsche's rhetoric

The technical-analytic readings are of course not the only options available for anyone interested in gaining a more nuanced understanding of his complex ideas. Many scholars aim to situate Nietzsche's thinking in relation to the historical context, rather than make him fit into ready-made conceptual frameworks. While the historical, cultural and social context can be fully accounted for, placing Nietzsche's ideas *vis-à-vis* 19th century socio-biological and cultural discourses allows scholars to complement and enrich ahistorical analytic readings in many compelling ways: most recent approaches aim to give a fuller picture of the rhetoric of 'decadence' by recovering its cultural connotations in terms of the structural failure to

integrate (Huddleston, 2019); to situate the *will to power* understood as a physio-biological rather than metaphysical doctrine by drawing on Nietzsche's engagement with 19th century sciences of physiology, morphology and zoology (Emden, 2014); or to re-interpret the Nietzschean notion of 'great politics' in relation to 19th century discussions on eugenics, abolitionism and the role of the democratic state (Drochon, 2016; Losurdo, 2019).

In contrast to the technical-analytic readings, it is Nietzsche's relationship to his contemporaries such as Gobineau, Darwin, Lamarck and Wagner rather than classical figures in history of philosophy which is considered to be relevant here. While scholars who work with the historical context often take into account broader intellectual developments within which they situate Nietzsche's ideas, rather than attempt to reconstruct puzzles, contradictions and inconsistencies to then arrive at unified 'positions', this mode of reading – most often framed at the intersection of intellectual history and moral and political philosophy – still aligns with the broader methodological ambitions to clarify 'views' and 'positions' of the author on specific topics.

The promise of historical-reconstructive approaches can be seen in relation to the long-standing controversies around the notion of the *will to power*. Most technical-reconstructive readers emphasize how Nietzsche appropriated and misread Darwin in developing this idea, broadly understood in terms of expansion, conflict, antagonism, domination, at odds with the idea of 'self-preservation' of the biological organism (Moore, 2002, Stern, 2020). The heated discussion on how to understand the *will to power* – as an ethical, semantic, physio-biological, metaphysical or even socio-political principle – continues today (Emden, 2014; Gemes, 2013; Losurdo, 2019; Moore, 2002; Schacht, 2012). In order to complement the ahistorical analytic readings, scholars draw attention to the role which 19th century bio-medical frameworks played in the development of Nietzsche's thinking on ethics and power. Moore (2002) shows that the framework of the *will to power* echoes 19th century bio-cultural discourses of degenerationism, decadence and racial hygiene, pointing to the difficulties in taking at face value many statements which will strike us as disturbing today.

Nietzsche's reliance on physio-psychological discourses has been recently placed in the context of discussions on the category of 'race' as intersecting with class and caste in his thinking (Bernasconi, 2017; Jones, 2010, Losurdo, 2019, Toscano, 2020) – I will delineate the terms of this debate in Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6. For now, it is important to emphasize again the complex narrative structure of different voicings, masks and identities within which Nietzsche's ideas on morality, psycho-physiology and the *will to power* are embedded. The

distinction between 'slave' and 'master' morality has long been read as unstable as it does not refer to concrete groups but can rather be seen as technical categories in Nietzsche's diagnosis of ressentiment in the West, more recently re-read in relation to historical context (Bernasconi, 2017; Losurdo, 2019).

The notions of slave/master morality are difficult to analyse in relation to concrete historical figures or discourses. When Nietzsche refers to morality of the 'common man' underlying the Judeo-Christian worldview, readers frequently assume that he is concerned with how this type of morality became dominant, rather than any groups per se. To make it even more complicated, Nietzsche often experiments with various masks and what Pippin (2019) called "scary faces" (p.201), especially in discussing some of his most monstrous and unsettling ideas. Nietzsche's references to breeding (*Züchtung*), for example, have been placed in relation to the category of 'race', with links to eugenic interventions (Losurdo, 2019, p.780). Yet the philosopher's remarks on rank-ordering and interbreeding need to be carefully situation in relation to both historical context and the broader narrative structure of his writings. Stern (2020) emphasizes that the reference to the 'mixing up the races' (GM 1.9) "is not uttered in Nietzsche's own voice, but rather by a speaker who summarizes Nietzsche's views, but with whom Nietzsche expresses some disagreement" (p.49). That speaker is a "free thinker", who is a "democrat", which brings to mind Nietzsche's earlier critique of the European and American liberal freethinkers who believe in equality and human rights, and his insistence on a transition from the 'free spirit' to notion of the philosopher of the future, which I analyse in more depth in the next chapter. Stern (2020) makes an important point to situate Nietzsche's references to 'races' in relation to historical processes – both in terms of Nietzsche's own context and reception – yet many readers are likely to draw premature conclusions based on these kinds of passages, attributing to Nietzsche views and positions with which he engages experimentally, at times polemically.

Given the ghosts of National Socialism haunting the scene of reception, scholars often focused on Nietzsche's relationship to anti-Semitism rather than anti-blackness in clarifying the stakes of the debate on Nietzsche and 'race'. In drawing attention to the role of the multi-faceted and complex narrative structure, Strong (2013) suggests that many passages are addressed to the Christian antisemitic reader. However, Nietzsche's ambivalent references to 'Jews' across different kinds of strata are no longer considered merely in relation to Wagner's nationalism and his broader claims about the 'arynisation' of Christianity as linked to the victory of the 'slave' morality, but also in terms of the discourses around the 'decline of the races' which have circulated in the second half of the 19th century

(Holub, 2015; Moore, 2002), as well as new forms of aristocratic socio-material politics (Losurdo, 2019). Considering the role of bio-medical vocabulary at the time (Moore, 2002), this is where the most challenging work lies in terms of understanding how Nietzsche's draws on and supports specific kinds of Social Darwinism and emerging eugenic discourses. The question is how to interpret his ideas *vis-à-vis* the context of his own times, and how to understand that context (e.g. as national or trans-national) in the first place.

Within the trend of reading Nietzsche which restores the importance of the historical context, many perspectives recognize Nietzsche's stylized rhetoric as an important dimension of his philosophy rather than an extravagant "egocentric tendency", as Caro (2004, p.105) puts it. Yet interpretative difficulties are bound to arise with attempts to link between the rhetorical strategies and substantive philosophical ideas – how to connect between the two registers without conflating the two (Magnus and Higgins, 1996)? For instance, it is difficult to interpret the image of the 'last man' in a way that would not confine the affective power of the image to the rational proposition of overcoming decadence. How can the image be read as to disclose new layers of meaning rather than as simply illustrating previous propositional content? Exploring more closely how the narrative structure of Nietzsche's works functions in relationship to his forms of addressing specific readers – both imagined (e.g. philosopher of the future) and historical (e.g. anti-Semites) – helps us to navigate interpretative difficulties bound to arise with the rich *mythos* in his works.

There are different ways to characterize Nietzsche's rhetoric outside of the discussion on its socio-political stakes. Caro (2004) described it as a kind of rhetoric that "takes flight and requires grounding" (p.101), departing from Nietzsche's famous reference to the "superhuman as the meaning of the earth" (Z I On the Hinterworldly). The earth rhetoric would be not just a strand in Nietzsche's works, but a key "underlying method to Nietzsche's writings", whereby he "compels by persuasion and temptation (...) awakening in humans a natural, instinctive gratitude for the earth" (Caro, 2004, p.105).[29] The topography of this rhetoric is one of "ups and downs, of peaks and valleys" (Caro, 2004, p.107). In more general terms, Lambek (2020) speaks of Nietzsche's "dissonant rhetoric" which "aims to facilitate the arrival of new, reflexive and interpretive value-creators" (p.70). Nietzsche's rhetoric is dissonant because his writings strategically embrace indeterminacy and unresolvable tensions, and so won't be experienced by readers in the same way. At the same

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[29] Del Caro (2004) argues that the earth rhetoric is central among a variety of other styles that Nietzsche deploys: the *Übermensch* and the eternal return would be mere strands "within the grounding rhetoric of earth" (p.106). In this sense, this kind of reading relies on hermeneutically connecting the part and the whole of the text.

time, Nietzsche's aim is to shift and transform the conditions of possibility of what can be said and done, making the interpreter "more likely to be reflexive" (Lambek, 2020, p.73)

Departing from those discussions on the meaning and aims of rhetoric in Nietzsche's works, I would like to speak more broadly about the conceptual work of grounding Nietzsche's rhetoric which can be performed in different ways, depending on what kind of hermeneutic care and approach to the text is at work. Using Nietzsche's own *Lectures on Rhetoric and Language* (which I briefly discussed in the introduction), de Man (1974) argued that reading Nietzsche is primarily about "figures of speech or tropes" (p.34) such as metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche, which cannot be understood aesthetically but highlight the figurative (as opposed to representative) character of all language that the philosopher, according to this post-structuralist interpretation, embraces. Against this project of grounding rhetoric in relation to the formal structure of tropes, Porter (2010) compellingly suggests that Nietzsche's rhetoric is grounded in "nothing but its own polemical and rhetorical purpose" (p.175) which needs to be understood in relation to the philosopher's critique of contemporary culture. Porter (2010) emphasizes the physiological basis of rhythms and tempo for Nietzsche, where language would be understood as gestural in a material sense (as spoken word), and thus the body of both the orator and the audience would be the condition of possibility of rhetoric. For Porter (2010), reading Nietzsche "is like a perilous balancing act: one is forever in want of ground on which to stand" (p.191).

Grounding is a compelling point of departure for my project because it helps to mediate between the abstract matters of philosophy and the concerns that lie within the orbit of sociological and social theory, often understood in terms of the embodied identity-markings of class, 'race' and gender. I am interested in whether and how these categories matter in terms of reading Nietzsche's unstable figures of mastery and subjugation – precisely in terms of their dissonant, receptive effects on diverse audiences across different schools of social theory. The emerging question is whether the project of grounding Nietzsche's rhetoric in relation to its historical context, formal structure of tropes and its polemical purpose can be at all grasped in relation to the categories of 'race', class, gender and ability.

In this sense, attending to the role of rhetoric requires us to consider the interplay between the intentions of the author and the textual effects on the readers, who often recognize themselves and their social surroundings in some of Nietzsche's descriptions of the herd morality or life-denying, resentful earth-haters (e.g. the figure of the priest). Critical of the Judeo-Christian tradition, Nietzsche invites his audience towards a more affirmative

relation to earth and the habitat (Caro, 2004; Hicks and Rosenberg, 2003) – not least through the figurative device of the philosopher of the future, which I will trace in Chapter 2. As Nietzsche does not does clarify how a theory of rhetoric bears on the prospect of a 'correct' reading of his own works, the reader often has to fill in the blanks herself, which facilitates all kinds of (mis)identifications with the figures of victory in particular.

However, it is important to keep in mind that Nietzsche did not want to be understood by anyone but only by those with the right kind of taste. In this vein, Caro (2004) points out that some readers are more likely to be attuned to the philosopher's style: "one must have the ability to "hear" Nietzsche's rhetoric as a music" (p.110). Departing from this esoteric dimension of Nietzsche's writings, my interest is in particular in the hierarchical structure of the text and techniques of persuasion which aim to position the reader in an elevated position in relation to the rest of the humanity: the master versus the slave, 'free spirit' versus dogmatists, philosophers of the future versus scholars. Readers often assume identificatory postures in relation to what Porter (2010) describes as "appearances of Nietzsche's own text" (p.190) - which implies the central role of the readers' subjectivity - but it is unclear whether those (mis)identifications can be grasped in terms of the categories of 'race', class and gender.

How we understand the significance of grounding Nietzsche's rhetoric matters in particular in reconstructing its socio-political stakes (Strong, 2013). Moore (2002) argues that "Nietzsche's mobilisation of the tropes of racial biology and anti-Semitism" can be understood as "a rhetorical strategy which serves (...) to point up the inherent degeneracy of the Christian" (p. 140). Combining the method of historical contextualisation and literary analysis of tropes , Moore (2002) insists that many of Nietzsche's remarks on racial categories need to be contextualised in terms of his "general strategy of deliberately misapplying degenerationist categories and concepts which underpins Nietzsche's critique of modern values" (p.155), for instance when he compares 'Polish Jews' to 'first Christians' who do not smell pleasant (Nietzsche, AC 46). Losurdo (2019) is much more sceptical whether one can understand the significance of 'race' and class in Nietzsche's thinking in terms of his subversive use of rhetorical tropes. According to the Marxist-historicist interpretation, those remarks on 'Polish Jews' need to be placed in relation to Nietzsche's hostility to revolutionary socialism associated with this population (Losurdo, 2019, p.562). More generally, Losurdo (2019) argues that interpreters of Nietzsche have long obscured his concerns with racial hygiene and degenerationism, which he links to the philosopher's aristocratic radicalism.

The role of rhetoric and literary devices has been indeed often recognized as central in the so-called 'continental' scholarship on Nietzsche (de Man, 1974; Derrida, 1979). However, these readings cannot be easily squared with the interpretative premises underlying technical-historical modes of interpretation. The broad influence of this tradition on the social and human sciences through post-structuralism makes Nietzsche still broadly relevant today, outside of the debates among analytic philosophers. Let me then turn towards a brief overview of the methodological assumptions and premises guiding this tradition beyond de Man's (1974) analysis of the role of ironization as part of the rhetorical structure of Nietzsche's works.[30] While Losurdo (2019) presents his case for historical contextualization as a repudiation of the post-structuralist and critical humanist reading of Nietzsche as a thinker of literary allegory, it is important to emphasize that these traditions are at odds both with the analytic and historical-reconstructive modes of interpretation. Losurdo targets Vattimo, Foucault and Derrida as thinkers associated with 'hermeneutics of innocence' who sanitise the literal-practical meanings of Nietzsche's aristocratic, conservative politics behind the play of narrative voices, signatures and identities. 'Continental' readers of Nietzsche indeed often challenge the singularity of the author, the recovering determinate and stable positions or views based on deciphering the heterogenous text which does not have straightforward and stable boundaries.

Nietzsche as a thinker of infinite interpretations

Rhetoric has been more often recognized as significant in the continental tradition (Strong, 2013), but the specific ways in which Derrida, de Man or Foucault consider Nietzsche's ideas on language, metaphor and sign-chains to link to his political-philosophical ideas in specific are rarely clarified.[31] This field of reception is very complex. Nietzsche's ideas cannot be easily mapped here onto distinctions between traditional sub-branches such as metaphysics, politics or epistemology, but need to be placed as part of hermeneutic tradition understood as an "philosophical trend which takes as its central theme the phenomenon of interpretation" (Vattimo, 1986, p.59) – interpretation not only of speech and writing, but of all acts, gestures and expressions that make communication possible.[32]

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[30] According to de Man (1974), the taxonomy of rhetoric includes "catachresis, allegory, irony, metalepsis etc." (p. 34). One can of course add many other figures of speech and devices of amplification to this list. See *Encyclopaedia of Rhetoric* (2006) for further discussion.

[31] Brown (1993) offers the most notable attempt to delineate links between Nietzsche's conception of genealogy, knowledge-power and politics.

[32] For an exploration of the relationship between hermeneutics, phenomenology and semiotics, see Schrift (1996). Vattimo (1986) offers a helpful clarification of hermeneutic ontology as a term "better

Nietzsche has been read as a transgressive figure in the re-appropriations of the tradition of general hermeneutics, which viewed the task of interpretation not as divided into specific domains – with a privileged role of the theological interpretation of the bible – but in terms of universal principles for interpretation with a scientific basis, originally delineated by Dithley and Schleiermacher (see Schrift, 1995). For Schleiermacher, rules of interpretation center around recovering the 'original' authorial intentions – an assumption that still guides most readings – while Dithley's (1900) concept of *Verstand* emphasizes that all objectifications in human sciences are mediated through fundamental categories of consciousness, where one relates new content to what is already familiar, with the overarching role of the synthetizing intellect (Schrift, 1995). Nietzsche's philosophy inaugurates key tensions haunting modern hermeneutics which re-appropriated the 19th century tradition, when exegesis became a site of secular meaning-making practices, where it is the claims of 'man' – as Foucault put it (2002) - that ground meaning. Foucault (1997) developed his influential ideas on 'the author function' based on controversies around the boundaries of Nietzsche's corpus in relation to his post 1889 madness, challenging the notion of a singular, self-identical originator of discourse as a locus of transcendental consciousness. The author function would not "develop spontaneously as the attribution of a discourse to an individual", but rather, as "the result of a complex operation which constructs a certain rational being that we call 'author'" (Foucault, 1997, p. 110).

In Foucault's (1998b) influential description of the task of interpretation as 'always incomplete' in *Nietzsche, Freud, Marx,* this operation transposes the empirical characteristics of an author and his writings into transcendental anonymity – a space into which the writing subject disappears: "a hermeneutic that wraps itself in itself enters the domain of languages which do not cease to implicate themselves, that intermediate region of madness and pure language. It is there that we recognize Nietzsche" (1998b, p.278).[33] If we read Foucault's engagement with Nietzsche's works as an ' object of study' in developing his own methods for the study of madness, the clinic, sexuality and subject-truth relations, the encounter can be viewed precisely as methodological attempt to develop a "new possibility of interpretation" (Harcourt, 2019, p.5) – or what Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982) called 'interpretative analytics' – as Foucault navigates his own philosophical approach between structuralism, semiology and hermeneutics, with a privileged role ascribed to Nietzsche's

suited to indicate not only a technical discipline related to the exegesis and interpretation of texts, but a specific philosophical orientation" (p.59).

[33] For an exploration of madness in relation to Foucault and Nietzsche, see Evangelou (2017).

announcement of the death of God in his early works in the 1960-70s, particularly in the *Order of Things.*

It is in the wake of Foucault's re-signification of the death of God as linked to the death of man and the author that Nietzsche has been read as a 'founder of discursivity' (Baehr, 2016) whose oeuvre would dramatize and suspend rules for the formation of texts. If one critically queries the function of the author, attempts to read continuity into the work that is fragmentary and disperse raise many methodological challenges not only because of Nietzsche's famous contradictions, but also because his corpus of his works – if one includes the *Nachlass* – does not seem to have pre-defined stable boundaries. This complicates the second classical interpretative premise of reception studies, where the author's texts "constitute a finite and determinate body of work" (Baehr, 2016, p.17).

In case of Nietzsche's corpus, how we draw those boundaries is a matter of disputes that still results in controversies around the role that the volume *Will to Power* played in terms of the Nazi abuses (Holub, 2015; Losurdo, 2019), but also more broadly in terms of how to read the unpublished fragments and texts, and how to place them in relation to the published works. As Foucault (1997) put it: "how can one define a work amid the millions of traces left by someone after his death?" (p.104). The picture of Nietzsche as a thinker of infinite interpretations has been also influentially staged in Ricoeur's (1977) hermeneutics of suspicion, where the philosopher comes to signify the key difficulty in modern hermeneutics which concerns the activity of interpreting given the opacity of language. The Nietzschean problem is that "there is no general hermeneutics, no universal canon for exegesis, but only disparate and opposed theories concerning the rules of interpretation" (Ricoeur, 1977, p.26-27). This means that the "hermeneutic field is (...) internally at variance with itself" with "signs scattered around the world" (Ricoeur, 1977, p.27), rather than a transparent system to be technically decoded. The conflict of interpretations is not something to be resolved, as there are no meta-criteria to distinguish between the surface of language and hidden, distorted meaning (Schrift, 1995).

How we understand the role of the interpreting subject within the function of the author matters enormously in this complex history of reception, from Heidegger's reading which attempted to 'save' Nietzsche as a metaphysician based on unpublished notes (see Babich, 2009), to the contemporary readings which often revisit Nietzsche's early unpublished essay *The Greek State* (2006 [1872]) to reconstruct the political significance of his ideas on slavery (Drochon, 2016; Losurdo, 2019, Toscano, 2020; Waite, 1996). Since the publication of the critical edition of Nietzsche's works by Colli and Montinari, which

introduced the post 1889 notes in a chronological form, scholars have presented many versions of Nietzsche's central concerns, from animality (Lemm, 2009), to a two-caste society (Drochon, 2016). Degeneration and racial concerns have emerged as a new kind of 'core' in reading Nietzsche in relationship to socio-political concerns (Losurdo, 2019; Moore, 2002).

Most interpreters in the 'continental' tradition do not address Nietzsche's socio-political ideas as understood in the context of the 19th century, but rather push his thinking in new directions. Derrida (1979) linked Nietzsche's plural styles to the question of sexual difference, while Foucault reads the cruelty of the will to know as a site of power relations, which I will unpack more systematically in Chapters 5 and 6. Neither Foucault nor Derrida claim the 'true' Nietzsche (Schrift, 1996), using his philosophy in developing the influential frameworks of discursivity and affirmative deconstruction. Losurdo (2019, p. 1000) recently warned against these kinds of interpretative strategies, in particular the de-centring of Nietzsche's core ideas onto marginal concerns, invoking Gadamer's (1986, p. 4) warnings after the publication of Nietzsche's complete works which replaced those edited by his sister:

> It is naïve to believe that now that we know the real Nietzsche, we are finally freed from the preoccupations of previous interpreters. I illustrate my point with an example. A recent small book by Derrida, *Les épérons de Nietzsche*, devotes an entire chapter to a brief note by Nietzsche that goes: 'I have forgotten my umbrella.' Derrida writes an elegant essay about this line. Perhaps Nietzsche really did forget his umbrella. But who can know if anything important lies behind this fact? Whatever the case, the example shows that such a comprehensive edition is at the same time an excellent way of hiding essential things behind inessential things.

For Losurdo (2019), as we shall see in more detail in Chapter 3, interpretations which focus on the 'inessential' obscure the socio-political stakes of Nietzsche's writings, which he locates in relation to the discourses of class racism, degenerationism and eugenics. Not all readers will be convinced whether this is indeed the core of Nietzsche's philosophy, but it is important to understand how contemporary reception is haunted by this clash of interpretative approaches. In Chapter 6, I will argue that Nietzsche's 'forgotten umbrella' Derrida departs from in *Spurs* is a vehicle for linking the problematic of plural styles to political feminist concerns, contrary to Gadamer's (1986) charges that it solely points to the indeterminacy of the text. For now, it is important to note that Losurdo's (2019) Marxist-

historical methodology as well as analytic-technical modes of interpretations are incompatible with the premises underlying modern hermeneutics founded upon Nietzsche's heterogenous texts, most notably Foucault and Derrida.

Conclusion

This chapter centers on the immense difficulties in reading Nietzsche. It shows the extent of the clash between the technical goals of rational reconstruction most pronounced in the analytic-technical approaches, and his 'multifarious stylings' celebrated in the continental-hermeneutic tradition. There are different presumptions that animate readings of Nietzsche. Analytic readers insist on coherency and determinacy in reconstructing stable features of Nietzsche's thought and his positions on specific topics (e.g. within the overarching reading of Nietzsche as a naturalist). In contrast, post-structuralist interpretations suggest that the relationship between the order of signs and meanings is indeterminate (Derrida, 1979, Foucault, 1998b, Ricoeur, 1977). The main tension is how to ground Nietzsche's excessive rhetoric, and whether his 'multifarious stylings' are important for understanding what he has been trying to achieve, even before we begin to consider its philosophical-political meanings.

The connection between the form and content of Nietzsche's thinking is complex: "the unique features of style and expression in Nietzsche's writings are not easily detachable from the philosophical thoughts that they express" (Hicks and Rosenberg, 2008, p.2). In the most extreme case, it makes it impossible to separate philosophy and rhetoric, stylistic form and substantive content, 'mode of presentation' and the idea itself – yet recognizing those binaries strengthens the need for hermeneutic care in relationship to the texts, as challenging as it might be to separate different layers of meaning. One cannot conflate between Nietzsche's figures and concepts, for instance when discussing the 'free spirit' and the 'last man' as related to the philosopher's critiques of democracy, modernity and utilitarianism, which can be very differently understood. Readers often elevate either the technical core or poetic margins of the Nietzschean text, with a predominant tendency to clarify and put aside his exaggerations in the analytic-technical tradition.

There are of course many interpretative approaches which do recognize the complex narrative structure of Nietzsche's texts with their multiple voices, masks and identities, from which it is difficult to separate the technical ideas. The polarized character of reception is visible in different approaches on how to ground Nietzsche's rhetoric: in relationship to historical context, for instance the project of national unification (Drochon, 2016) and the rise of biomedical sciences (Moore, 2002), in formal terms of the structure of literary tropes

and devices (de Man, 1984; Lambek, 2020), or in terms of its own polemical purpose in relationship to critique of culture (Porter, 2010).

My aim to ground Nietzsche's rhetoric in terms of its esoteric and exoteric dimensions, building on the recognition that it is built to appeal both to the few and the many (Caro, 2004; Rosen, 2013), and that it is oriented towards facilitating receptive effects on diverse audiences (Faulkner, 2010; Lambek, 2020). The emerging question is whether Nietzsche's addresses to and images of ideal readers can be grasped in relationship to the categories of class and 'race'. The role of rhetoric in relation to the philosophical-political dimension of Nietzsche's writings is particularly important in light of the debate on the connections between anti-blackness and class racism presumably underlying his thinking (Bernasconi, 2017; Losurdo, 2019). Most recently, Losurdo (2019) claimed that generations of readers interpreted Nietzsche in ways curiously detached from historical-material concerns, as a thinker of literary allegory and metaphor, sanitizing his socio-political ideas – not least his unsettling diagnosis of degeneration(ism) among the racialized working classes and his advocacy for the breeding of the new master caste.

As we shall see in the next chapter, Nietzsche's plural signatures, masks and experimental strategies indeed make it particularly difficult to speak of any 'core' in his philosophy, even if conceived outside of socio-political stakes. Can we apply ready-made methodological principles in interpreting Nietzsche's works, for instance by attending to historical context as the overarching goal of technical reconstruction? While I am sympathetic to those efforts in clarifying the connections between the parameters of the 'social' and 'political' in his thinking, I believe that it is also important to recognize that Nietzsche's philosophy fuels ever-new approaches on how to interpret. Today, many readers are suspicious of post-structuralism, as exemplified in controversies around Derrida's (1979) reading of Nietzsche's plural style(s) outside of the logocentric tradition.

For Derrida, Nietzsche's 'forgotten umbrella' comes to signify broader interpretative difficulties given his plural style(s) and ways in which Nietzsche's rhetoric transgresses logocentric grammars. It is precisely as a thinker of infinite interpretations, plural style(s) and signatures that post-structuralist philosophers have pushed Nietzsche's philosophy to rethink the relationship between writing, speech and rhetoric (Schrift, 1996). While it is not surprising then that analytic readers often target the 'French' post-structuralist Nietzsche for the celebration of plural style(s) at the expense of technical core and in particular his views on truth (Emden, 2019; Gemes, 2001), the French legacy is also challenged from the Marxist-left today (Losurdo, 2019). Ironically, it is precisely the question of how to interpret that

cannot be resolved in the wake of Nietzsche, as Foucault (1998b) suggests. In the next chapter, I will focus on the challenges and promises in unpacking Nietzsche's narrative voices as exemplified in the case of a particular figure of victory: the philosopher of the future.

Chapter 2 The philosopher of the future: experimental masks, strategies and seductions

> A new species (*Art*) of philosophers is emerging: I dare to christen them
> with a name that is not without its dangers. As I guess them to be, as they
> allow themselves to be guessed – for it belongs to their nature to want to
> remain riddles in some respects – these philosophers of the future might
> have a right, maybe even a wrong to be characterized as tempters
> (*Versucher*). This name itself is only an attempt (*Versuch*), and, if you will,
> a temptation (*Versuchung*).

> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* 2.42

> Nietzsche's use of metaphors is neither aesthetic nor ornamental, even as
> they are not merely oratorical devices to trick the uninitiated, as Plato
> believed rhetoric to entail. For Nietzsche (...) metaphors are tropes of
> persuasion, his fishhooks. The forms of address or modes though which
> Nietzsche sought to communicate, his recourse to metaphor, his tropes
> of persuasion, are all aimed at provoking self-activity, are indirect, as are
> the experiments (*Versuche*) in which he shaped his communications, and
> the masks he wore in pursuit of his art.

> Rosenberg and Milchman, 2018, p.116

Introduction

In the preceding chapter, I focused on the connection between the 'technical core' of Nietzsche's writings and the peripheral 'multifarious stylings' which many analytic readers hold on to, while post-structuralist and deconstructive approaches tend to destabilise. In this chapter, I am concerned with a particular mask of Nietzsche as an experimenter and tempter (*Versucher*) who attempts to mobilize readers towards a critique of the Judeo-Christian slave morality and recruit them towards the ambivalent project of revaluation. Addressed towards the future, Nietzsche's philosophy appeals to the experimental perspective of 'life' against contemplative, abstract and sober philosophizing: "the concept of the "philosopher" is not restricted to the philosopher who writes books – or worse puts his philosophy into books" (BGE 2.39). Zarathustra addresses readers who experienced the weight of their own pen: "Of

all that is written I love only that which one writes with his blood" (Z On Reading and Writing 1). In this vein, Nietzsche often invokes a sense of 'we' as his privileged companions in the project of revaluation, opposing genealogical diagnosis of 'who we have become' with the perspective of the 'free spirits' or the philosophers of the future (Pippin, 2006a; Schacht, 2015). At times, Nietzsche implicates himself in that sense of 'we' against the 'rest of humanity', as he tempts readers to join him on the project of revaluation by misidentifying with the figures of failure such as the herd animal, rabble and the 'last man'. In contrast, the philosophers of the future emerge as victorious re-evaluators, though any sense of determinacy in interpreting this figure should be presumably resisted (Pippin, 2019).

Those forms of address bring to the forefront the relationship between the diagnostic, therapeutic and prescriptive dimensions of his philosophy, in particular when read in terms of his critiques of modernity and the 'slavish' legacies of the Enlightenment (Pippin, 2006b). If the diagnoses of a decadent Judeo-Christian culture made Nietzsche widely influential, questions about the 'affirmative' dimension of his philosophy persist, the promise of *pharmakon* symbolized by the physician of culture. Who is this philosopher of the future capable of curing culture, and what precisely would such an attempt involve? How to understand the capacity of the philosopher of the future to create 'new values'? Despite a century of reception, we still hardly understand the 'revolutionary' or 'therapeutic' capacities of this figure among other masks through which Nietzsche misled many readers, Pippin (2006b) argues. Today, when Nietzsche's fascination with the caste system, order of rank and slavery come to the forefront in reception (Bull, 2011; Drochon, 2016; Losurdo, 2019), these seductions and manipulations of readers seem significant, and the temptation to unveil a real Nietzsche behind all the personae and signatures is stronger than ever.

The longing to unmask a 'real' Nietzsche behind the play of masks and signatures is of course not new. In the wake of Nietzsche's considerable influence on the French tradition, Habermas (1987) read Nietzsche's philosophy as an 'entry-point to postmodernity' associated with the playful 'irrationalist' path in philosophy which he denounced as incompatible with a normative social theory, not least because of literary styles. Habermas' suspicions against Nietzsche's uses for theorizing the legacies of the Enlightenment targeted Derrida in particular. As we began to see in the last chapter, Derrida (2005) responded to Nietzsche not to demand grounds for new values (whether equality or justice) but radicalizing the 'dangerous perhaps' of the philosopher of the future – who can be 'maybe' called an experimenter and tempter (*Versucher)* – into the non-dogmatic practice of

deconstruction. The stakes of the philosopher of the future are not that they will one day arrive as a messianic figure but rather that they are capable of *thinking* the future.

Derrida's (2005) suspensive reading strategy reflects on a long-standing consensus in discussions on Nietzsche's figures of subjugation, where the contrast between the active mastery of the philosophers of the future and the reactive position of the slave would be unstable, irreducible to socio-material or historical positions (Pippin, 2006b). Marxist-historical readings challenge this received view, blaming the hermeneutics of innocence for sanitising disquieting connections between class, 'race' and caste in Nietzsche's thought. Losurdo (2019) argues that the perspectivism of the philosophers of the future would be not an "existential choice" but "a socially and politically conditioned or determined option pointing to a restricted and exclusive aristocracy" (p. 660). The real stakes of Nietzsche's perspectivism would be social and political, rather than existential or epistemological.

These competing interpretations of the philosopher of the future raise a number of questions about the connection between Nietzsche's rhetoric, his philosophical method(s), strategies and his plural style(s). In what ways is it possible to translate this figure into a philosophical method for capturing Nietzsche's philosophy as a whole, for instance in relation to the central notion of perspectivism? How is the very thought of the emergence or possibility of such philosophers a seduction, and what are its socio-political stakes? Can we understand the *Versucher* as a strategic form of addressing and conjuring an ideal reader, a negative limit of Nietzsche's philosophy of signatures, a description which always risks failure? What is the role of the *Versucher* within the hierarchical structure of Nietzsche's texts, which involve various figures of victory (e.g. 'free spirits', philosophers of the future) and figures of failure (e.g. scholars, 'last man', philistines)? In this chapter, I draw out how the 'experimentalism' of the philosophers of the future links to Nietzsche's broader philosophical strategies in terms of the interplay between the style (form) and substance (content) in his thought, in particular in relation to his forms of addressing a range of readers.

The main argument is that Nietzsche's rhetoric should be understood as an art of persuasion which is not merely playful and dissonant (Caro, 2004; Strong; 2013; Solomon; 2016), but is based on esotericism and aims to facilitate particular receptive effects through (mis)identifications between the reader and figures of victory and subjugation found in Nietzsche's texts. Reconstructions of the socio-political dimensions in his writings therefore need to take into account the specific forms of addressing, provoking and conjuring readers, as well as the notion that determinacy for Nietzsche is in itself is a temptation that should be resisted, as in the hesitant announcement of the philosopher of the future who can be

'maybe' called a tempter and experimenter (*Versucher*). To make this argument, I analyse the multiple ways in which the figure of the *Versucher* can be read that oscillate between the naturalistic register (as an experimenter) and the mythical register (as a tempter) – mapping onto Nietzsche's many masks as a malicious tempter, profound perspectivist, a critical educator, experimental attempter and cultural physician. The aim is to show how one of Nietzsche's most monstrous masks generates divisions between those who emerge as his privileged companions, and those who remain ignorant as unworthy readers, corresponding with a social hierarchy that can be understood in terms of a caste society based on breeding.

The discussion unfolds in three steps. First, I will illustrate how the umbrella-term of 'experimentalism' has been understood across analytic and hermeneutic scholarship beyond readings which explicitly refer to the figure of the *Versucher*, from the canonizing post-WWII translations by Kaufmann onto the Deleuzian conception of a philosopher-surfer riding – or dancing on – a wave of philosophy. This is to center the complex interplay between substance (content) and style(s) (forms) of Nietzsche's philosophy in terms of his experimental strategies. Secondly, departing from suspicions of the play of signatures and masks as sanitizing class racism underlying his works (Losurdo, 2019), I show why the hesitant signature of Nietzsche as *Versucher* is helpful if understood as a form of addressing and conjuring readers, an empty and esoteric rhetorical figure which can be filled in multiple ways, yet rests on a division line between those who know, create and even legislate for the future, and those who are excluded from the project of transforming humanity. This is based on a performative dimension of textuality, where the Nietzschean text would generate different types of readers – companions or imitators of the philosophers of the future – that fill in the steps of the physician of culture, a Dionysian artist or legislator of values. As an esoteric form of addressing readers in *Beyond Good and Evil*, it points to the hierarchies that Nietzsche's dissonant rhetoric rests on in his later philosophy more broadly, in particular his attempt to persuade and recruit readers toward the project of revaluation.

Lastly, I centre on the emerging discussion on the socio-political parameters in Nietzsche's thought in relationship to his strategies for implicating and conjuring an ideal reader: the link between the private-public experiments of those philosophers, their perspectivism and capacity to cure social ills, which might be read as dangerous temptations that require destruction and chaos on the path to creation rather than prescriptions. Yet it is important to retain the sense in which the description of the philosophers of the future invokes failure, suggesting that determinacy itself is a temptation that should be resisted by the readers of Nietzsche (Derrida, 2004; Pippin, 2019). This points to interpretative

difficulties in reconstructing the 'socio-political' dimension of Nietzsche's writings which I delineate in Chapter 3 and 4. While the discussion on experimentalism is often framed as 'a virtue' that Nietzsche would or would not endorse (Bamford, 2016, Seigfried, 1998), I am more interested in the esoteric forms of address through which he recruits the future reader to identify with the community of re-evaluators, the selected few who are in an elevated position in relation to the rest.

Experimentalism: the interplay between 'styles' and 'substance' in Nietzsche's philosophy
After many "alleged farewells to the Enlightenment" announced on behalf of Nietzsche, as Pippin (2016b) called them, an image of the philosopher as an experimentalist who inhabits and radicalizes the epochal imperative across scientific, linguistic and ethical domains might not strike us as novel. To experiment is to test, fail and overcome, not take any truths for granted, but posit new values and metaphors, a signature Nietzschean command (Rorty, 1989). It is also an invitation to draw out the meanings of his philosophy for ourselves rather than accept any ready-made answers about what Nietzsche's call for value-creation might have meant. In the aftermath of the Nazi abuses, Kaufmann (1974) famously referred to Nietzschean texts as a 'lab' on which theories will be built, based on the author's self-staging as a lover of experimental knowledge: "I approve of any form of scepticism to which I can reply, 'Let's try it!' *[Versuchen wir's!]* But I want to hear nothing more about all the things and questions that don't admit of experiment. For there courage has lost its rights" (GS 51).

Experimentalism is not just an invitation, but it pertains to the connection between the substance (content) and style(s) (form) of Nietzsche's thought. The interplay between those two poles distinguishes his extravagant yet practical philosophical method. Kaufmann (1974) read Nietzsche against the grand systematisers such as Schopenhauer or Hegel precisely by distinguishing his "superb experimentalism" (p.187) – a term that refers both to form (the text as a stylistic experiment) and content (Nietzsche writing on the subject of experimenting, attempting and testing). It becomes a proxy for the entire intellectual project, for what Nietzsche was trying to achieve in terms of refining philosophical propositions into hypotheses and at times tentative conclusions, with all kinds of necessary corrections, oscillations and accompanying failures. Kaufmann (1974) advises on how to place the poetical-musical *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* within the broader corpus of Nietzsche's works: "stylistically" it would be "an experiment in dithyrambs; philosophically, certain significant conclusions are drawn, often in veiled allegories, from the empirical data of the previous three books" (p.92). Nietzsche's experimentation throughout his intellectual

biography would culminate in *Beyond Good and Evil* and *Genealogy of Morality* written in the most sober tone, where hypotheses are explicated, though still within a complex narrative structure: the third essay from *Genealogy of Morality* alone can be read as a commentary on a single aphorism (Kaufmann, 1974; Strong, 2013).

In connecting those two registers – style and philosophical content – Kaufmann (1974) sought to overcome the prevailing image of Nietzsche as an erratic and fragmentary thinker who could be barely classified as a philosopher. One of the most influential claims he made was that aphorisms should be read as sequences of open-ended thought experiments with an embodied "existential" quality: "experimenting involves testing an answer by trying to live according to it" (p.89).[34] We can read this as a hint of what the Nietzschean "art of interpretation" I distinguished in the previous chapter would entail – not only slow and patient rumination, but an active approach, as Nietzsche grew "dissatisfied with traditional modes of expression" (p.93) in the spirit of the modernist *Zeitgeist*.

Alongside the rationalist reconstruction by Danto (1965) who famously announced Nietzsche's 'wicked anti-social reputation' in *Nietzsche as Philosopher*, Kaufmann's interpretations are part of the canonizing mode of reception, against which many interpretative claims continue to be made, not least in relationship to the political significance of 'race' and class in Nietzsche's thinking (Bernasconi, 2017; Losurdo, 2019). How we interpret Nietzsche's method – how he experimentally pushes the limits of language and metaphor – matters enormously here, as many scholars remain sceptical about whether his writings can be taken at face-value, in terms of refined propositions that can be read literally or practically (Moore, 2002; Rosenberg and Milchman, 2018; Strong, 2013).

The readings of Nietzsche's 'experimentalism' oscillate between the naturalistic-scientific and mythical-poetic registers. Many scholars still revisit Kaufmann's (1974) original formulation, sharpening the distinctions between existential and naturalistic meanings of experimentation, as they unpack various threads in Nietzsche's metaphor of 'life as an experiment' within and beyond an empiricist-scientistic framework (Bamford, 2016; Seigfried, 1989). The 'experimentation' has been often read within the naturalistic framework. Yet the key question I would like to examine here is not so much how Nietzsche poeticizes scientific premise, but in what ways the label pertains to the connection between the style(s) and substance of Nietzsche's philosophical method – something that can have different consequences, with interpreters warning against the danger of domesticating the

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[34] This is echoed in the literature on the relationship between Nietzsche and social theory. Strong (2004) considers the importance of aphoristic style as one of the axes through which Habermas influentially misreads Nietzsche.

heterogeneity of his philosophy through one particular mask or signature (Derrida, 1979), creating another '-ism' that Nietzsche would oppose (Bamford, 2016), or sanitizing the aristocratic orientation of his thought through hermeneutics of innocence (Losurdo, 2019).

The notion of 'experimentalism' with regards to the connection between the style(s) and content of philosophy has been particularly productive in the hermeneutic-continental tradition, which radicalised the Nietzschean tropes of dance, laughter, music, parody, genealogy and philology (Schrift, 1995). In a creative interpretation which many will associate with the most excessive and modes of philosophising, the duo of Deleuze and Guattari warned against domesticating and distorting Nietzsche as a 'thinker of the death of God', radicalizing the Nietzschean imperative that 'thought is creation' into the very mantra of philosophical practice. In *What is Philosophy?*, experimentation would stretch from the scientific lab to other semantic domains, to signify open-ended contexts productive of the new, rather than being confined to experiments in controlled environments, where predefined hypotheses would be tested according to a fixed protocol. As Deleuze and Guattari (1994) put it: "to think is to experiment, but experimentation is always that which is in the process of coming about – the new, remarkable, and interesting that replace the appearance of truth" (p.111).

For Deleuze and Guattari (1994), experimentation as a philosophical method would be a vehicle for the creation of new concepts in ways that suspend the boundaries between rationality and irrationality, where philosophy and science would be complementary to each, beyond the meanings that Nietzsche might have envisioned.[35] Deleuze and Guattati (1994) speak of thinking itself as "a sort of groping experimentation" which "resorts to measures that are not very respectable, rational or reasonable" but rather "belong to the order of dreams, of pathological processes, esoteric experiences, drunkenness, and excess" (p.41), to the unconscious as much as to science. The vocabulary used here breaks radically with the sober practices of the technical-reconstructive method: the notion of "dancing like Nietzsche", for example, would be not a decorative metaphor or merely a trope but a paradigmatic example of dynamic features which "enter a thought that "slides" with new substances of being, with wave or snow" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p.71).

It would be difficult to think of a less 'epistemological' use of language as the duo draws across different semantic domains to characterize the moving matter of philosophy through the dynamic features of Dionysian dithyrambs, playing on Nietzsche's performative

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[35] Deleuze and Guattari (1994) move beyond the classical post-Kantian presupposition that philosophy allows to 'clarify' the epistemic premises underlying scientific meaning-making practices. See Grosz (2008) for a critical discussion of their method.

identifications with the deity – the significance of the philosopher's famous signature as "Dionysus crucified" (p.64).[36] The Nietzschean figure of a 'dancing Dionysus' would be a vehicle for a critique of the rationalist-technical philosophical practice, rather than merely a figurative metaphor: the "conceptual personae" as a "sort of surfer riding (or dancing on) a wave of philosophy" (p.71). According to Deleuze and Guattari (1994), it is not that Nietzsche simply renounces concepts in favour of metaphors, but rather that he "creates immense and intense concepts" – like "forces", "value", "becoming", "life" – and "repulsive concepts like "*ressentiment* and "bad conscience"" (p.65). In this sense, Deleuze and Guattari do not entirely give up on the notion of reconstructing Nietzsche's philosophy, but attempt to do so in an animated way that emphasizes the vitalist meanings of philosophizing conceived in terms of thinking itself which produces a play of identity and difference.[37]

Those two canonical modes of reading by Kaufmann versus Deleuze and Guattari are good examples of what 'experimentation' in the wake of Nietzsche signifies across the analytic and continental-poststructuralist tradition. Echoing Babich's (2003) description, we can think of Nietzsche as a "kind of conceptual dynamite interior to philosophy, both continental and analytic" (p.85). The emerging question here is what the particular 'signature' of Nietzsche as an experimental philosopher enables and what it forecloses, among other alternative ways of capturing important features of his philosophy – for instance as 'thinker of the death of God', 'philosopher of power', or a 'philosopher of a two-caste society', as historical-reconstructive readings dauntingly propose today (Drochon, 2016; Losurdo, 2019). I argue that the promise of the term 'experimentalism' is in shifting the analytical focus from stable and refined technical propositions to the rhetorical techniques, strategies and forms of address through which Nietzsche is mobilizing readers and policing the boundaries of his texts against "unworthy readers", as Faulkner (2010, p.82) put it. This is a process that continues beyond his grave and the historical context of the times, pointing to the active role that the interpreter plays in the process of reading in the first place, the role of self-activity in responding to Nietzsche's dissonant rhetoric.

Just by considering the plastic connotations of the terms 'experimental', we encounter the first problem: can one use any reconstructive umbrella-term, even as open-

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[36] This points towards a famous last sentence from *Ecce Homo* – "Have I been understood? Dionysus versus the Crucified" (EH Destiny 9). It suggests that the figures of the Greek deity and the Christ are opposed to each other, where the latter would be an overall enemy in Nietzsche's denunciations of the Christian worldview.

[37] The more precise meanings of those concepts are presented in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1983 [1962]), rather than in *What is Philosophy?* (1994 [1991]) where the duo of Deleuze and Guattari present their method of philosophizing after their collective experiments.

ended as 'experimentalism', to capture what is distinctive about Nietzsche's philosophical strategy as a whole, or is this to domesticate tensions in a body of work that involves a plurality of rhetorical strategies, incoherent standpoints and thrives on suspicions against totalizing forms? While the technical-analytic and historicist readers insist that it is possible to retain a sense of accuracy and faithfulness in reconstructing Nietzsche's ideas – recently even its political-philosophical dimension – the continental-poststructuralist traditions query the 'function of the author' and the broader grammars of interpretation through which one attributes singular, stable and static meaning to a heterogenous *oeuvre*, with increasingly more suspicions of the ways through which Nietzschean figures mobilize, seduce and even subjugate readers to loyalty a century after his death (Bull, 2011; Faulkner, 2010).

Today it is suspicions of Nietzsche's politics in particular which resurface again, as linked to the mission of the philosophers of the future to create values. This might possibly hold dangerous meanings, given Nietzsche's valuation of the noble against the base and the common, which can be understood in a historical rather than spiritual or psychological sense, as linked to Nietzsche's hostility to worker's rights and plebeian worldviews (Landa, 2019a; Losurdo, 2019). Losurdo (2019) blames both the postmodern-leftist and right readings - among them Kaufmann, Derrida and Deleuze – for sanitizing the philosopher's disquieting socio-political ideas, with a tendency "to suppress Nietzsche's most repugnant statements" (p.1009). The hermeneutics of innocence, play and experimentation associated with the postmodern-leftist readings come under suspicion here, but so does Kaufmann's canonizing reading which has paved the path for Anglophone reception of Nietzsche.

In light of this clash of interpretative traditions, my thesis centres the philosopher of the future as a methodological device for reading the unstable parameters of the 'social' and 'political' in Nietzsche's philosophy with attention to his dissonant and double rhetoric, as Rosen (2013) described it. This figure is ambivalent and cannot be interpreted with a sense of determinacy – "this name itself is only an attempt (*Versuch*), and (...) a temptation (*Versuchung*)" (BGE 2.42). Why should we resist the temptation to take the philosopher of the future as more than an experiment and attempt? It points to the role of the reader in responding to Nietzsche's seductive promise of revaluation and overcoming the "degeneration and diminution of the human to the perfect herd animal" (BGE 5.203). The figure can be translated into a productive methodological device for navigating the emerging readings of Nietzsche as a political philosopher of a two-caste society with attention to the process of the interpellation of readers. This requires us to analyse Nietzsche's forms of persuading and mobilizing readers towards his philosophy of revaluation, *vis-à-vis* readers'

heartfelt responses to his rhetorical devices: "Nietzsche does not just write philosophy, that is, record his thoughts and articulate his ideas and argument. Instead, he virtually shouts at us. He cajoles us, teases us, confides in us" (Solomon, 2006, p.185).

My interpretation of the figure of the experimenter and tempter is helpful in many senses, not least in allowing us to inhabit the tension between the style(s) (form) and substance (content) of Nietzsche's philosophy, and in that it points us to the hierarchical structure of the text that facilitates dissonant receptive effects. In the next chapters, I will be returning to the interconnections between Nietzsche's rhetoric, style(s) and his methods as I clarify the parameters of the 'social' in his philosophy at the intersection of technical-historical and continental readings of his philosophy of revaluation.[38] This methodological device helps us to analyse the following problematics: how different kinds of readers might become susceptible to Nietzsche's art of persuasion, the interplay between *mythos* (images, figures, metaphors*)* and *logos* (reasons, concepts, propositions) in his writings, as well as the ways in which hierarchies of the text which facilitate his call for a new order for rank. One can even distinguish certain (mis)identifications that the *Versucher* provokes, in parallel to the figure of the 'free spirit'. It is a methodological device for reading the *whole* of Nietzsche's philosophy, which recognizes not so much the playfulness of his plural style(s), as his affectively-laden techniques for recruiting readers towards the project of revaluation.

The complexity of the connections between style and substance in Nietzsche's philosophy is pronounced in the sense of ambivalence and mystery which surrounds the philosopher of the future, interpreted as a figure of disruptive wisdom (Hicks and Rosenberg, 2003), a higher stage of spiritual progress than the 'free spirit' (Schacht, 2015), a legislator of new values, educator, attempter and physician of culture (Fulkerson-Smith, 2010), as well as a dangerous figure dramatizing the seductions of the art of temptation and experimentation (*Versucher-kunst)* in the socio-political realm (Gooding-Williams, 2006; Losurdo, 2019). The umbrella term of *Versucher-kunst* has been used by Conway (2002) to explore the relationship between the aesthetic, private experiments of the philosophers of the future and their public aims, which offers a good point of departure to query the 'socio-political' dimension of Nietzsche's thinking which will crystallise in Chapters 3 and 4. My own tracing of this figure which follows below draws attention to the hierarchical structure within which the references to the *Versucher* are invoked, as exemplifying characteristically esoteric forms of address in Nietzsche's philosophy, which guard boundaries of the text against liberal

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[38] Given the aims of my thesis, which explores for the purchase of Nietzsche for contemporary critical theory, the scope of my engagement with analytic approaches is limited.

democrats who wrongly identify with his image of the 'free spirit', as I explored in the Introduction. Lambek (2020) suggests that "Nietzsche's rhetoric aims to facilitate the arrival of new, reflexive and interpretive value-creators via the production of receptive effects oriented toward expanding the conditions of possibility." (p.70). While I agree with his characterization of Nietzsche's rhetoric as strategically dissonant, oriented towards the production of varied reception effects, my argument is that not anyone can become a value-creator, and that Nietzsche's rhetoric is therefore based on esotericism.

To unpack the productive uses of this figure as a methodological device for centring the hierarchical structure of Nietzsche's texts, it is crucial to understand why the philosopher of the future has a "right" or a "wrong" to be called a *Versucher* (BGE 42), in what ways that description is dangerous, how it risks failure as a determinate announcement of their arrival, and how is their public 'legislative' mission ambivalent. To do so, the next section traces the evolution of the figure of the *Versucher* in Nietzsche's writings which oscillates between a scientific researcher and naturalist – in proximity to the explorer (*Forscher*) – and a mythical, destructive Dionysian deity, as a tempter who cannot be trusted. In analysing passages in which Nietzsche refers to the *Versucher* in his middle and late writings, from *Daybreak* to *Ecce Homo*, I am particularly interested in unpacking the ways in which these rely on esoteric forms of address which create insiders of the text positioned in an elevated relationship to other readers and knowers, who are considered less worthy (Faulkner, 2010).

Versucher in Nietzsche's writings: naturalist-scientific and mythical-poetic registers

The term *Versucher* is not merely a playful merger of the German terms for experiment and temptation, but often it is a particular form of addressing an ideal reader, as when Zarathustra dedicates the thought of the eternal return precisely to this figure (Z On The Vision and the Riddle 3.1). In the literal sense, the German term for experiment (*Versuch*) refers to a tool of inquiry – the paradigmatic apparatus of modern Western science – but also to an 'attempt' or an 'essay'.[39] Nietzsche invoked the terms *Versuch* and *versuchen* in remarkably plastic ways throughout all of his writings, Thoma (2016) points out, from the *Birth of Tragedy* to (and beyond) *Ecce Homo*.[40] *Versuchung*, on the other hand, means temptation or seduction and can be invoked in a religious and libidinal sense, culminating in the baptism of the philosopher of the future who might be "perhaps" called *Versucher*, a

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[39] This use is highlighted for instance in Nietzsche's commentary on his first book, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1999 [1872]) entitled "Attempt at Self-Criticism" (*Versuch über Selbst*-Kritik). See Thoma (2016) for a critical discussion of Nietzsche's experimentalism with a focus on links to Emerson.

creator of values whose sense of risk distinguishes them from mediocre spirits who are "slaves of democratic taste", from "free spirits" who do have their "own solitude" (BGE 2.44).

The term *Versuch* is often used at the planetary level of the species, for instance when Nietzsche speaks of the collective experiments of culture and civilization within the human-animal-overman continuum (*Gesammt-Versuche von Zucht und Züchtung*, BGE 5.203). Drawing on an analogy between life-experience and a scientific experiment – the same term in many languages, for instance in French (*expérience*) and Polish (*doświadczenie*) – Nietzsche distinguishes rigorous observation as a basis for the formation of rational knowledge: "we others who thirst after reason, are determined to scrutinize our experiences as severely as a scientific experiment – hour after hour, day after day. We ourselves wish to be our experiments and guinea pigs" (GS 319). Characteristically, he invokes here a sense of 'we' as those few others, the few brave spirits who dare to experiment, though in this passage it is a broad and non-exclusive category, opposed only to "religious ones" (GS 319).

Unsurprisingly, it is Zarathustra, the anti-prophet, who introduces some of the more enigmatic, possibly elitist and dangerous meanings of experimentation at the planetary level of humanity. "Human society" is an "experiment [*Versuch*] rather than a contract" – he announces – which still "searches for the commander" (Z On Old and New Tablets 3.25), in contrast to his teaching of "human beings" which "were an experiment [*Versuch*]", a failed experiment the result of which is "delusion" that "dwells in our bodies" (Z On the Bestowing Virtue 1.3). Zarathustra suggests that the greatest experiment on earth is in how to overcome humanity. Yet the experiment called society has in many ways failed. Zarathustra calls upon his disciples to reconstitute 'last man's' life-denying relationships to earth as a site of recovery, yet he also warns them not to trust him.

In the 'French' reception of Nietzsche, the ambivalent teachings of the prophet have been translated into various images of the end(s) of man which would give birth either to a new epistemic formation (Foucault, 2002), a notion of new forces (Deleuze, 1988), or to an new 'style' of philosophy (Derrida, 1979).[41] Once earth, animals and plants are prepared, perhaps even an entirely new species (*Art*) might emerge. Zarathustra represents a revolutionary hope for a new stage in the development of humanity, whereby previous forms of human association and knowledge would have been a lure. Zarathustra is looking after the birth of new forms of 'life' in face of the "challenges to an affirmative habitation of the earth", as Caro (2014, p.483) puts it. The different meanings of *versuchen* are central to the mission of the prophet: "Nietzsche attempts, he experiments, he tempts, and he also visibly

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[41] For a critical discussion of Foucault's and Derrida's ideas on the end(s) of man see Schrift (1988).

and repeatedly fails – Zarathustra's fortunes are ambiguous, his triumphs short-lived and limited – Zarathustra does not resolve or reconcile the contradictions of existence, but he is a bold experimenter of life affirmation" (Caro, 2014, p.483).

The terms *Versucher* and *Versuchung* take us then beyond the scientific experimental premise as they add precisely those connotations of temptation, lure, sin and seduction which imply that the Nietzschean figures, among them the *Versucher* and Zarathustra, cannot be trusted, as many emphasize (Fulkerson-Smith; 2010; Lemm, 2009; Gooding-Williams, 2001). The *Versucher* appears thirty-five times in Nietzsche's writings: seven times in his published works, and twenty-eight times in unpublished fragments. While intelligible as a wordplay to anyone with a basic command of German, this noun is not used today, though it seems to have an afterlife beyond Nietzsche's works, for instance as a title of Erich Heckel's expressionist painting.[42] The painting brings to mind the biblical scenes of temptation of Adam by Eve, the way that God tests Hiob, or Satan's temptations of Christ – allegorical scenes traces of which one can find in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

If we interpret *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as a parody of messianic motives and theodicy-demands running through religious and philosophical texts, from the Bible to Plato's *Dialogues*, the protagonist can be read as a parodical device (Magnus and Higgins, 1996), and the figure of the *Versucher* can be read as an esoteric form of conjuring prophets' imagined companions who would be able to solve the riddle of the eternal return and thus become commanders of society. The text involves a complex web of relations and significations in terms of the relationship of concepts to various figures, from the witches to the pale criminals, the 'last man' to the serpents, with many twists of phrase when it comes to the mockery, irony and ridicule involved in parodying the revolutionary hopes for the redemption of humanity. This makes the translation between the various figures and authorial intent extremely tricky though crucial in unpacking Nietzsche's modernist experiments, as *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* can be understood as "Nietzsche's literary vehicle for exploring the possibility of value-creation" (Gooding-Williams, 2001, p.5).

Before we venture onto some of the tasks addressed to the *Versucher* in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, let me trace the evolution of this figure in *Daybreak* and *Gay Science.* Kaufmann (1974) described this text in terms of Nietzsche's mastery of the aphoristic style that consists of small experiments, to be later refined into hypotheses. The first reference to the *Versucher* figure appears in *Daybreak* in an aphorism entitled *Forscher und Versucher* which has been translated as 'Researchers and Experimenters', where Nietzsche calls upon researchers of

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[42] Heckel's painting *Tempter* can be retrieved here: https://www.moma.org/collection/works/67376

"daring morality" to "proceed experimentally with things", to be "sometimes angry and sometimes affectionate toward them" because "there is no one and only scientific method that leads to knowledge!" (D 432). The experimentation at stake here is not restricted to the realm of the lab: as an ethos of inquiry, the experimental attitude extends to all spheres of life as a quality that characterizes researchers who are compared to "conquerors, discoverers, navigators [and] adventurers" (D 432).

The examples Nietzsche gives here go beyond a romanticized sense of danger, play and risk-taking that we might associate with the sea imaginary: "a policeman", "a father confessor" and "a wanderer and curiosity seeker", Nietzsche insists, all "converse with things" in ways that can lead to valuable knowledge, as they 'see' things from multiple perspectives, and they are likely to be "considered, on the whole, evil" (D 432). This is a direct form of engaging with a variety of readers who occupy different social positions, as inclusive as one might imagine, if appealing to a sense of boldness and a taste for adventure among the experimenters. We might link it to the scientific-naturalistic pole of Nietzsche's thinking and the overarching notion of perspectivism which I consider in more depth later.

Two years later in the *Gay Science*, where Nietzsche announces the death of God, killed by some sort of 'us', the *Versucher* appears not merely an experimenter in the field of knowledge, but also as a super-natural figure that the ancients – presumably Greeks – used to believe in: "What was joy in an age when one believed in devils and tempters [*Versucher*]! (GS 3.152)". Here the *Versucher* is no longer simply an experimenter and researcher driven by different affects, someone who dares to experiment within plural scientific methods, but a figure in proximity to the devil. He is part of an age in which God(s) were not yet dead, providing a sense of meaning (colour) in all spheres of life – a time when "every injustice was experienced differently for one feared divine retribution" (GS 3.152). *Versucher* is a figure that cannot be trusted, a devil and tempter, but he is not someone to fear:

> What was passion when one saw the demons lurking nearby! What was
> philosophy when doubt was felt as a sin of the most dangerous kind, as a
> sacrilege against eternal love, as mistrust of everything that is good, lofty,
> pure, and merciful. We have given things a new colour; we keep on
> painting them – but what can we nowadays accomplish in comparison to
> the splendour of colour of that old master! I mean ancient humanity.

This form of address invokes a sense of nostalgia for ancient humanity. Nietzsche again invokes a sense of 'we' – moderns, the killers of God, who no longer believe in the super-natural figures such as the *Versucher*. He shouts at us, albeit in a friendly manner. The exclamation marks, as I read them, invoke a sense of awe for the time in which Gods gave life meaning, pointing to possible nuances in Nietzsche's critiques of the Judeo-Christian tradition *vis-à-vis* Greek polytheism. This is partly a history of madness and unreason: "Truth was formerly experienced differently because the lunatic could be considered its mouthpiece – which makes us shudder and laugh" (GS 3.152). There is a double sense of distancing from his contemporaries, those who laugh at the announcement of the death of God, and from those who laugh at the ancient lunatics. The *Versucher* is a vehicle for an increasingly more exclusive and hierarchical form of addressing the reader which will culminate in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in the central passage on the eternal return (Z On the Vision and the Riddle 3.1):

> To you, bold searchers, researchers [*Versucher*] and whoever put to terrible seas with cunning sails – to you, the riddle-drunk, the twilight-happy whose souls are lured by flutes to every maelstrom: – because you do not want to probe along a thread with cowardly hands; and because where you can guess, there you hate to deduce – to you alone I tell the riddle that I saw – the vision of the loneliest one.

This is a particularly seductive form of mobilizing those few selected readers who might dare to solve the riddle of eternal return. Considering that Nietzsche confides in the *Versucher* as the only companions who can understand Zarathustra's sickening thought of the eternal return, it has been read as a vehicle for the theme of revaluation, leading scholars in the technical-analytic tradition to engage in elaborate puzzle-solving that we have glimpsed in the previous chapter, as to how the small (last) man will be retuning eternally (Loeb, 2010). It also shaped reception in the continental tradition: the untimely figure becomes a bridge to the philosophical notions of difference, becoming and repetition which have become the very basis of French post-structuralist and deconstructive philosophy, where the notion of the eternal return has been radicalized into a 'phantom of difference' in the wake of Deleuzian and Derridian interpretations (Malabou, 2010).

Deleuze's (1983) reading of the eternal return as a "thought of the absolutely different" in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* is based precisely on this key passage where he conceives of the eternal return as a "contradiction" (p.65), linked to the promise of

overcoming the 'reactive forces of the last man'. Deleuze refers to the "temptations" and "seductions" that Zarathustra faces (p.170-171) when he steps down to earth, drawing an analogy to God who failed tests of his own design and died from pity for the 'last man'. Pity is one of the all-too-human values that leads to destruction of man and humanity, when the poisonous affects of helplessness in face of evil and suffering become internalized – in this case turning against the merciful God who created this reactive value-system in the first place. According to Deleuze, the only way to overcome this legacy of Judeo-Christian values is if "reaction becomes affirmation" (p.132) rather than a negation (of suffering) as in customary codes of morality.

If read as a prophet of affirmation, Zarathustra, unlike other Gods and deities, would not create normative commandments in which the life-denying Judeo-Christian values, such as pity, guilt and compassion become reversed or inverted, but would be able to "transmute value" (Deleuze, 1983, p.170). In other words, giving into pity for the 'last man' would be the very death of Zarathustra who – if the riddle addressed to the *Versucher* can be solved – would return to life reborn again in Part IV. To put it in more abstract terms: Deleuze conceives of being as the differentiating potential for becoming as a constitutive power of the future, marking difference between life (vitality) and death (nihilism) (Malabou, 2010). The temptation that the *Versucher* represents here illustrates the dangers of submitting to reactive and nihilist forces, perhaps necessary for the thought of affirmation to make sense in the first place. Even if the Deleuzian idea of the eternal return as chasing away its spectres might be a "dangerous vision", as Malabou (2010, p.25) puts it, where repetition would not be reduced to the identical but give rise to difference, we can see clearly how the notions of experimenting, tempting and testing allow to understand it as a principle of selection – the ultimate test – against reactive forces.

Ultimately, based on Nietzsche's references to the *Versucher* in *Daybreak*, *Gay Science* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, we can see the evolution of this figure between the naturalistic and mythical registers: at first they are scientific experimenters, later destructive devils not to be trusted, and ultimately curious and daring researchers who are riddle-drunk on the thought of the eternal return. In the key passages in *Beyond Good and Evil* where the philosopher of the future is baptized as an *Versucher*, the sense of temptation, seduction and danger are even more pronounced, as the emergence of the philosophers of the future is announced in a question mark. Perhaps it is precisely because the *Versucher* cannot be trusted, a mythical figure like the ancient gods and devils, that the philosophers of the future might have the "right" or the "wrong" to be called tempters (BGE 2.42). Humanity might be

not ready for the destructive-nihilist wisdom they bring about, making their arrival a dangerous and terrifying prospect.

Those semantics are pushed even further in the final passage of *Beyond Good and Evil*, where Nietzsche stages a dialogue with Dionysus, the Greek deity who brings chaos and destruction on the path to creation, baptizing him as *Versucher-Gott* – the God of temptation and experimentation (BGE 9.295). Dionysus as an absent God lures humans into uncomfortable places we might not have the courage to inhabit: a "genius of the heart", who shamelessly describes himself as "stronger, more evil, and more profound" than humans (BGE 9.295). This mirrors the address to the philosopher of the future who is also supposed to embrace what is "evil, horrible, tyrannical, predatory and snakelike" in human beings (BGE 2.44). One can speculate that Dionysius is stronger because he can digest all kinds of failures; more evil because he is not guided by the affects of pity; more profound in terms of his insights into tragic wisdom, unlike the 'free spirits' who are "ridiculously superficial" (BGE 2.44) in their modern belief in a social order in which no one would suffer. Nietzsche (BGE 9.295) advises us to distrust this enchanting figure of godly mastery:

> After that the tempter god smiled with his halcyon smile, as if he had just uttered an enchanting compliment. We can see here also that it is not just shame this divinity lacks; and there are in general good reasons to suppose that in some things the gods collectively could learn from us human beings. We human beings are – more human...

Figures of victory: conjuring an ideal reader as an experimenter

My analysis of the changing meanings associated with the figure of the *Versucher* points to the ways in which Nietzsche is addressing and conjuring his ideal readers, presenting his ideas in riddles and behind masks, advising us not to trust him, as if he was concealing some of his ideas strategically, not wishing to be understood by everyone. Indeed, the philosopher of the future "does not want to be misunderstood and taken for something else" (BGE 2.44). The proliferation of riddles and puzzles in Nietzsche's experimental philosophy requires the reader to carefully mediate between what Hicks and Rosenberg (2003) describe as *mythos* (images, figures, metaphors*)* and *logos* (reasons, concepts, propositions), interpreting the philosopher of the future as a 'figure of disruptive wisdom'. This wisdom functions at the level of mythical Dionysian insight into what is tragic in existence, rather than purely technical, detached understanding.

The forms of address that Nietzsche experiments with in announcing their suspended arrival might be then interpreted in terms of his broader rhetorical strategy in performatively *recruiting readers toward* the project of revaluation, rather than describing what such a radical shift in the realm of value would involve. Hicks and Rosenberg (2003) describe Nietzsche's figurative devices as a "means of parodying and disrupting the prevailing cultural horizon and as a vehicle for opening up new (nonascetic, nondogmatic) spaces of disclosure" (p.18). The philosopher of the future, like the figure of a "music-practicing Socrates" would be offering an "affirmative, nonascetic, and antinihilistic alternative to our prevailing cultural idols and societal discontents" as to "help to fashion an interpretative context in which the suffering, fragmentation, and social malaise endemic to modern society become meaningful, even transfigured" (Hicks and Rosenberg, 2003, p.10).

While overly optimistic in its claims about how Nietzsche helps to diagnose and overcome social malaise – a prospect to which I return to in Chapters 3 and 4 – this interpretation provides us with a helpful analytical framework for reading Nietzsche's forms of addressing and implicating readers in relationship to the notion of a community of re-evaluators and educators whom he imagines, consoles and confides in. This framework allows us to shift attention towards the affective engagement of the reader who might recognize herself in the decadent social whole that the philosopher narrates, or desire the states and ideals associated with particular figures of victory, such as the 'free spirit', the noble and the philosopher of the future. Depending on what kind of ideals the reader might find questionable, Nietzsche is likely to comment on them in a characteristically poignant fashion. He tries to implicate all kinds of readers in some sort of 'we', whether the universal 'we' of experimenters who break with religious prejudices as in the passage analysed above, or the elitist 'we' of the few spirits who can understand the riddle of eternal return.

In this sense, the esoteric layers of the text which only the predestined insiders can grasp co-exist with exoteric forms of address. The ideal reader predisposed to understand Nietzsche's philosophy must distance themselves from the common reader. The latter would be unable to understand hidden and concealed meanings of the riddle of the eternal return addressed to the *Versucher*. Nietzsche (GS 5.381) commented on the importance of securing the boundaries of the text already in his middle works, for instance in the *Gay Science*:

> One does not only wish to be understood when one writes; one wishes just as surely not to be understood. It is by no means necessarily an objection to a hook when anyone finds it incomprehensible: perhaps that

was part of the author's intention he didn't want to be understood by just 'anybody'. Every nobler spirit and taste selects his audience when he wants to communicate; in selecting it, he simultaneously erects barriers against 'the others'. All subtler laws of a style originated therein: they simultaneously keep away, create a distance, forbid 'entrance', understanding, as said above – while they open the ears of those whose ears are related to ours.

The notion of securing the boundaries of the text is pushed further in *Beyond Good and Evil*. If read as a "figurative device in the context of Nietzsche's educational project (or *Bildungsprozess*) of transforming our sensibilities" (Hicks and Rosenberg, 2003, p.25), the *Versucher* stimulates activity of the ideal reader. Reflecting on how Nietzsche's figures mobilize the readers' psychic attachments, Faulkner (2010) described the philosopher of the future – precisely to the extent that she can be only tentatively called a *Versucher* – as an "empty figure" (p.67), where it is the reader herself who has to fill in its meanings. This adds an affective layer to the technical work of grounding Nietzsche's rhetoric in relation to its polemical purposes, in particular critique of contemporary ("modern") culture (Porter, 2010). Faulkner (2010) suggests that Nietzsche "designates a class of his (ideal) readers, in their absence, as the philosophers of the future" (p.65) who might be seduced by the excess produced by the text, by its intelligibility to others who are not capable of 'hearing' and interpreting its esoteric layers. Conjuring a community of new spirits in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche (BGE 2.30) reimagines what the exoteric-esoteric distinction consists of, and how it was prevalent in highly stratified socio-political contexts:

Our highest insights must—and should!—sound like follies and sometimes like crimes when they are heard without permission by those who are not predisposed and predestined for them. The difference between the exoteric and the esoteric, formerly known to philosophers— among the Indians as among the Greeks, Persians, and Muslims, in short, wherever one believed in an order of rank and *not* in equality and equal rights—does not so much consist in this, that the exoteric approach comes from outside and sees, estimates, measures, and judges from the outside, not the inside: what is much more essential is that the exoteric approach sees things from below, the esoteric looks down from above.

(...) What serves the higher type of men as nourishment or delectation

must almost be poison for a very different and inferior type.

Here the project of educating (future) philosophers gains possibly elitist meanings – not only depending on the diagnostic or therapeutic work that one puts Nietzsche to, but also in terms of Nietzsche's hidden conservative politics of rank that would be based on the distinction between those of nobler spirit and inferior others. This brings us back to the discussion from Chapter 1 about how to best ground Nietzsche's rhetoric. Caro (2004) insists that Nietzsche reveals himself directly to readers, though often in an exaggerated fashion, where rhetoric is "like an undercurrent beneath his writings" (p.108), appealing simultaneously to the many and the few. In a more radical vein, Waite (1996) argues that the esoteric level of Nietzsche's texts "must be imagined not as something hidden "beneath" or "behind" its exoteric level as a problem of representation or reference; rather, the esoteric can flit somewhere along the material surface, between the lines or words – for all to look at and for few actually to see" (p.81). The *Versucher*, I argue, functions precisely on such terms, as everyone can see Nietzsche's signature wordplay, but few can understand the radical promise of this figure. This fits a rhetoric "whose appeal must aim simultaneously at the many and the few", meeting the demands of "two audiences whose needs and interests are mutually exclusive" (Caro, 2004, p.107), the masses and the few noble spirits.

In his own reading of the exoteric-esoteric distinction between the insiders and outsiders quoted above, Nietzsche translates it into a spatial metaphor. Waite (1996) insists that those are "terms of social hierarchy: the view up from below" is "that of slaves or other workers needed to support the noble caste or class" (p.223). In a similar way, Faulkner (2010) suggests that we can understand "the esoteric address as a means not only to police the text's borders against unworthy readers, but also to reproduce a social hierarchy that Nietzsche deemed as necessary to the health of culture." (p.82) This allows us to consider affective identifications that mediate between Nietzsche's philosophy of the future and the reader's self-activity, where revaluation becomes not so much a private aesthetic-ethical project of self-fashioning, but possibly a collective – if highly exclusive – enterprise brought about through the persuasion and education of selected (future) readers as re-valuators.

Most readers are accustomed to thinking that Nietzsche does not prescribe any values in advance, yet reconstructions of Nietzsche's philosophy of a caste-system suggest there is a normative theory of state and society underlying his thought (Drochon, 2016; Losurdo, 2019). This makes it important to analyse the role of the esoteric in Nietzsche in

relation to his ideas about how society should be organized: different interpreters, including Laurence Lampert (1993) and Stanley Rosen (2013), suggest that "his philosophical project requires and reproduces an inequality between those in the know and those who remain in ignorance, corresponding with a necessary social hierarchy" (Faulkner, 2010, p.81). In this sense, those esoteric forms of address – exemplified in the figure of the philosopher of the future as a malicious tempter (*Versucher)* – are not a coincidence, precisely in that these coexist with exoteric layers of meaning. For why can only the select few – his friends, philosophers of the future, good readers – understand the riddle of the eternal return? Who are those extraordinary, unfashionable and daring spirits who will accompany Nietzsche in the project of revaluation? The contrast between the selected few and unworthy others is central in many direct appeals to the reader, for instance in the Preface to the *Anti-Christ*. This is where Nietzsche puts forward his ideas on a caste society and degenerationism which I discuss in the next chapters, insisting that his books are not meant for a universal audience:

> This book belongs to the very few. Perhaps none of them are even alive
> yet. Maybe they are the ones who will understand my Zarathustra. These
> are my only readers, my true readers, my predestined readers: and who
> cares about the rest of them? The rest are just humanity. You need to be
> far above humanity in strength, in elevation of soul, – in contempt...

Nietzsche again uses a spatial metaphor here to describe the insiders of the text. The esoteric reader according to his definition "looks down from above" (BGE 1.30). In the *Anti-Christ*, Nietzsche's ideal reader who understands Zarathustra, is above humanity by the virtue of being a stronger spiritual type capable of contempt for the rest of humanity. Moreover, Nietzsche described himself at times as one of the few philosophers of the future, as in the preliminary draft of the key aphorism where he baptizes the *Versucher*. Yet this self-revelation – "for I belong to these coming ones" (footnote to BGE 2.42, p.367) – becomes erased from the final passage, so that we cannot quite rest assured having deciphered the final signature.[43] I will return to this play of signatures in discussing Derrida's reading of Nietzsche in Chapter 6. For now, it is important to highlight that Nietzsche creates a sense of intimacy between him and the (future) readers, manipulating us to think that the virtues of a slow and patient reading coupled with a mistrustful attitude would allow us to one day

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[43] Fulkerson-Smith (2010) suggests that Nietzsche does not identify with the philosopher of the future. However, Nietzsche identifies at times as a disciple of Dionysus whom he calls the *Versucher-Gott*: "I, the last disciple and initiate of the god Dionysus" (BGE 9.295).

understand what a radical project of revaluation entails. Yet not everyone is predisposed to decipher this technical 'content' behind the play of narrative devices, masks and signatures.

While the *Versucher* does not appear in Nietzsche's latest works beyond *Ecce Homo* – for instance in the *Antichrist* or *Twilight of the Idols* – it is a central figure in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, as a privileged companion who can understand the riddle of the eternal return. If viewed in the context of the development of Nietzsche's figurative devices, it is telling that the figure is deployed in less exclusive terms – in proximity to the 'researcher' and 'devil' – in the middle, aphoristic period in *Daybreak* and *Gay Science*, before it becomes a vehicle for a joyful, destructive Dionysian philosophy in *Beyond Good and Evil,* where Nietzsche will also announce his ideas about the reinstation of slavery, the order of rank and the rule of the noble which gain more attention today (Drochon, 2016; Losurdo, 2019; Toscano, 2020). This corresponds with the evolution of Nietzsche's styles in his post-*Zarathustra* writings: *Beyond Good and Ev*il and *Genealogy of Morality*, written in "most elegant, lucid and persuasive prose", Caro (2014, p.432) suggests, would have "valuable tips for understanding" *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, as part of the 86-87 works most "explanatory and expository in nature" (p.431), after the failed attempt to be understood in the book for everyone and no one. Caro (2004) suggests that it is Nietzsche's relation to the idea of rhetoric that transforms after his perceived failure to communicate with his audience in Zarathustra. That relationship can be grasped in terms of the device of aposiopesis, as the philosopher breaks off the speech of Zarathustra while remaining faithful to the prophet's vision: "Nietzsche elects to become a Dionysian philosopher, the philosopher of the eternally recurring mystery of life, the tempting philosopher claiming inspiration from the tempting god" (Caro, 2004, p.119).

There are many challenges in translating between the poetic stylings, teachings and songs of Zarathustra and the more practical, if dangerous, *great politics* of the philosopher of the future who might rise to the task of value-creation and lawgiving. Drawing on *Ecce Homo*, Losurdo (2019) suggests that "Nietzsche even got angry about an interpretation of *Zarathustra* that benignly viewed it as 'a superior stylistic exercise' but invited its author to 'concern [him]self with content too'" (p.705). According to this Marxist-leftist reading, the 'content' would be unmistakably political: "The word "overman", as a designation for a type that has the highest constitutional excellence, in contrast to "modern" people, to "good" people, to Christians and other nihilists" (Nietzsche, EH, Why I write such good books, quoted in Losurdo, 2019, p.75). Arguably, it is precisely the interplay between form/style and content/substance which needs to be carefully theorized with attention to the hierarchical structure of the text in order to understand how Nietzsche's philosophy gains socio-political

meanings in his late works. In Book II of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche delineates the methods and characteristics of the philosophers of the future, who will extend a hand to him in the task of revaluation. These forms of address highlight the seductive appeal to individual particularity, aiming to stimulate the imagination and activity of the reader, by simultaneously appealing to the few and everyone.

The passages in which Nietzsche narrates the characteristics of the philosophers of the future contain various esoteric layers of meaning: their "truth is not for everyone"; they do "not belong to the levelers"; for "great things are reserved for the great, abysses for the profound" (BGE 2.43). They will be even "higher, greater" than free-spirits – otherwise also an imaginary, victorious figure – who do not have "their own solitude", "belong to levelers", "as eloquent and scribble-fingered slaves of democratic taste", who are "clumsy", if "nice fellas" (BGE 2.44). Schacht (2015) clarifies that the main distinction between the 'free spirit' and the philosopher of the future is that the latter are value-creators, distinguished by "inventiveness and experimental adventureness with which they approach and pursue the task of reinterpretation of values" (p.498). Yet Nietzsche's remark on the 'free spirits' as "slaves of democratic taste" (BGE 2.44) suggests political implications, for all the comic tone: as legislators of values, they are ready to rise to the task of *great politics*. As we shall see in Chapters 3 and 4, the *great politics* can have practical-prescriptive meanings in Nietzsche's philosophy, when read in terms of his critiques of democracy and glorification of slavery, raising questions about how to read his notions of crossbreeding and racial hygiene, as hyperbolic and provocative forms of address, or as literal and dangerously practical.

Nietzsche's address to the philosophers of the future as experimenters "curious to a fault" ends with a direct address to the reader announced with a characteristic sense of uncertainty: "maybe *you* too are something of this, you coming ones? you *new* philosophers"? (BGE 2.44). The italics amplify how the philosopher aims to tap onto the reader's psyche, making it difficult for anyone to completely disentangle themselves from the call for value-creation. After all, a sympathetic reader would aspire to the status of companion, rather than a blindly faithful follower, and be likely to place themselves against their contemporaries, whom the philosopher calls the "respectable advocates of "modern ideas"" (BGE 2.44). This appeal to the heroic individual who stands above the mass (the rabble) is a characteristic move which gained more attention recently, part of the reading for victory – to borrow Bull's (2011) term – which relies on creating a sense of distance between the reader and the rest of humanity, or even god(s) – the "mediocre, the foolish, the mad" versus "the exceptional, the great" (p.36) with whom the readers (mis)identify. I will be

returning to different ways in which those division lines matter for reading Nietzsche on the margins of social theory: from Nietzsche's forms of conjuring future sociologists in Chapter 4, to the figure of 'woman who master the masters' in Chapter 6.

The most important methodological principle is to recognize these division lines as performative forms of *conjuring and mobilising an ideal future reader* rather than simply as neutral, descriptive utterances which from which one can technically reconstruct Nietzsche's positions. These need to be read as part of a dissonant, double rhetoric that aims to facilitate receptive effects, part of Nietzsche's strategy to recruit readers towards the project of revaluation. Yet it is important to remember that the *Versucher* as a malicious tempter cannot be trusted, in a similar vein to how Zarathustra tells his disciples to betray him. Nietzsche appeals to a sense of risk, mistrust, adventure and anti-dogmatism in delineating the image of an ideal reader who would come in place of the philosopher of the future, enticing us to conduct experiments in a new Dionysian sense: that is to say, not as an end sought, but as a an attitude of daring in all kinds of (re)search endeavours which might go beyond merely epistemic projects, possibly gaining dangerous political implications.

In discussing Nietzsche's experimentalism as a philosophical method, we need to take more seriously his rhetorical forms of addressing and conjuring ideal readers: "If I conjure up the image of a perfect reader, it always turns into a monster of courage and curiosity, and what's more something supple, cunning, cautious, a born adventurer and discoverer" (EH Why I Write Such Good Books 3), Nietzsche will write in his parody of an auto-biography, *Ecce Homo*, commenting yet again on the riddle of the eternal return addressed to the *Versucher.* If the experimenter who attempts is also a tempter, the underlying sense of 'courage' at stake would point not just to the virtues of doubt in the tradition of scepticism, but it would also signify a seductive appeal to the part of us which wants to join Nietzsche on this adventure.

Perspectivism of the philosophers of the future

The hierarchical, esoteric forms of address through which Nietzsche conjures his ideal readers have been rarely recognized as meaningful in the broader literature on Nietzsche's experimentalism, as helpful as various discussions have been in clarifying how Nietzsche's experimental-perspectival method moves beyond the empiricist and positivist frameworks of inquiry. Seigfried (1989), for instance, considers Nietzsche's 'radical experimentalism' to describe ways in which his philosophical-perspectival method would move beyond Kant's transcendental idealism: while for Kant the key challenge facing

philosophy was to imitate the experimental methods of the natural sciences, in order to query categories through which the world emerges as a product of our senses, Seigfried (1989) takes Nietzsche to be transforming the notion of 'anticipation' involved in the natural scientific experiments towards existentialist-affective connotations. Nietzsche, unlike Kant, would be concerned with the *creative* experience of the human beings, shifting the terms on which one might conceive of subject-object relations in epistemology, as based on the embodied passion, desire and courage of the subject of knowledge (Seigfried, 1989).

Similarly, Allen (1999) contextualizes ways in which Nietzsche attempts to recover the more esoteric understandings of why knowledge is desirable, as a tradition of "operational knowledge of effects, tested by trials and perfected through experience" (p.16), which was appropriated by 17th century experimentalists, most famously Bacon and Boyle, who demarcated the scientific method from the spheres of heresy and magic. Babich (1999) calls this the "aesthetic-existential dimension to the pursuit of knowledge" (p.16). Nietzsche's re-signification of experimental knowledge would not be confined to disciplinary demarcation, but it could invoke a more open-ended, unbounded horizon of inquiry without a strict limits, where "life itself becomes an experiment of knowledge" (Allen, 1999, p.134).

While persuasive in reconstructing Nietzsche's conception of epistemological daring which would be one of the premises underlying his perspectivism, Allen (1999) concludes in a sober anti-Nietzschean move that "the freedom to experiment, to risk error has to be tempered by a profoundly "unNietzschean" respect for consequences" (p.137) – to limit the dangers of excessive experimentation for its own sake. Yet if we take into account Nietzsche's forms of rhetorically conjuring ideal readers – exemplified in the figure of the Dionysian tempter – perhaps we do not need to treat his remarks on epistemological daring as technical content, from which one would attempt to reconstruct a stable, coherent and unified position on how knowledge is good, malicious or cruel; what affects shall drive the experimenter; or even the notion of 'perspectival knowing' – as helpful as it is to attempt to distinguish some of those threads in his conception(s) of experimentalism. To reconstruct something akin to Nietzsche's unified position on experimental knowledge would be to erase the sense of ambivalence with which Nietzsche constructs his patient readers as those daring subjects – often by provoking us to turn against his excessive and contradictory demands, as if he wanted to be betrayed, if only at the surface, as many continue to delineate the Nietzschean, anti-Nietzschean and indeed, unNietzschean.

Those forms of stimulating the activity of the predisposed and careful reader have important consequences if we consider epistemology to link to social positions, the rooting

of value judgments and perspectives in the affective and interested conditions of 'life', as in the influential umbrella-term of perspectivism ascribed to Nietzsche's philosophy. In analytic-technical readings of Nietzsche's perspectivism (Gemes, 2013), even in sociological literature which centres that term (Antonio, 1995; Aspers, 2007, Piazzesi, 2013), perspectivism is most often understood in epistemological terms, at times as a psycho-biological claim (Gemes, 2013). Scholars often point to a paradox at the heart of perspectivism. As Reginster (2001) puts it: "if every view is irretrievably bound to a perspective, how could Nietzsche advocate views in ethics and metaphysics, and indeed how could he consistently advocate perspectivism itself?" (p.271)

In analytic-technical readings, Nietzsche's ethics, epistemology and metaphysics would not carry on socio-political meanings. While perspectivism is linked to Nietzsche's notions of *will to power* and health, these are considered in terms of individual subjects rather than at the collective level of society. Gemes (2013), for instance, foregrounds perspectivism in terms of the notion of therapeutic cures: "The prescriptive component of perspectivism, the claim that a healthy life involves the maximal expression of the richest set of drives, fits in with Nietzsche's normative account of healthy life as the fullest expression of the will to powe*r*" (p.2368). Here, health and the *will to power* are conceived in apolitical terms, within the psycho-biological vocabulary of affects, drives and naturalization that would not have semantic, epistemological and metaphysical implications.

There is a different way of approaching the problem of perspectivism: not as an inconsistent claim or technical doctrine – after all, Nietzsche himself does not use that term - but alternatively as a strategy in Nietzsche's recruitment of readers towards the project of revaluation. The philosopher of the future calls for an 'order of rank' among plural and competing perspectives, where all life would be *will to power*, suggesting that perspectives of some affective subjects are more valuable than others, in the sense that they express a fuller set of drives. The collective of re-valuators consists of Nietzsche's predisposed, ideal readers. In this vein, Nietzsche's perspectivism *in Beyond Good and Evil* needs has been contextualized in terms of his ideas about "different types of souls" (Pippin, 2019, p.200) that are highlighted in his hierarchical forms of address: "There are books that have inverse values for soul and health, depending on whether they are used by the lower souls and lowlier life-forces, or by the higher and more powerful ones." (Nietzsche, BGE 1.30).

Rather than argue that perspectivism should be understood as an epistemological claim, Pippin (2019) helpfully draws attention to Nietzsche's demands on readers. He analyses how the philosopher encourages, though not doctrinally, "an interpretative finesse

or literary sensibility" (Pippin, 2019, p.207) which is necessary to understand what he is saying in the first place. Perspectivism in *Beyond Good and Evil* is then presented not as a doctrine or argument but in "a modally complex way" (Pippin, 2019, p.208) to inspire and awaken a certain desire for interrogating what truths matter. This desire, Pippin insists, cannot be created: according to Nietzsche, some readers have the psychic dispositions to free themselves from the grip of the Platonic-Christian perspective, while others do not.

Whether and how Nietzsche aims to awaken readers' desire matters in particular if perspectivism is interpreted on political terms. If the task assigned to true philosopher(s) of the future is to become "*commanders and legislators*" (BGE 5.211), their ability to gaze with many eyes and consciences can to be understood in political sense: "the contest of old and new sensibilities and values always has been and will be a political one" (Schacht, 2015, p.186). In the Marxist reception, Losurdo (2019) draws out the political stakes of this division between those who are predisposed to hear Nietzsche's philosophy, and those who do not have such predispositions. Losurdo's (2019) reading of Nietzsche maps out the perspectivism of the philosopher of the future onto the broader division lines between the plebeian/common and the aristocratic few running though his works. For Losurdo (2019), the philosophers of the future would be not "dogmatists" in the sense of holding on to a universal scientific standpoint – as this makes their judgment common – which manifests a a broader "shift in the discourse from the epistemological to the existential-political field" (p.657). Drawing precisely on *Beyond Good and Evil,* Losurdo (2019) argues that Nietzsche explicitly affirmed the "unbridgeable abyss between the higher and lower natures" (p.659), against traditional moral and political philosophy centred around the question of how to found a community based on mutual recognition. Perspectivism as reserved for higher natures and souls would be a confirmation of Nietzsche's radical aristocratism.

The key contested matter is then how and towards what aims is Nietzsche mobilizing readers and hoping to transform them – what kind of epistemology, or even politics? Scholars have asked how 'experimentalism' as an ethos of inquiry would be a moral virtue, delineating the boundaries of the experimental attitude in the pursuit of knowledge: experimentation for the sake of what, if not for the sake of itself – or so the test of a cautious reader goes. In this vein, Bamford (2016) suggests that we can conceive of experimentation as one among many plural methods through which Nietzsche encourages his readers to engage in a critique of customary morality without fixed, pre-existing scripts and protocols – so we experiment on ourselves with conditions that would "promote a less fearful, healthier, human existence" (p.24). Yet in his writings on experimentation, it is semantically linked to

seduction and temptation. The philosopher of the future calls for inhabiting "harshness, violence, slavery, danger in the streets and in the heart, concealment, stoicism, the art of seduction [*Versucher-kunst*] and devilry of every kind" (BGE 2.44). There is a dark site to experimental success at the planetary level of humanity: "everything evil, horrible, tyrannical, predatory and snakelike in human beings serves to elevate the species ‚human being' as well as its opposite" (BGE 2.44). The philosophers of the future are not afraid of pursuing and testing out dangerous truths about what might elevate humanity.

Moreover, Nietzsche's perspectival-experimental method is designed to achieve particular effects and stimulate the activity of the reader who is invited to follow into the steps of the *Versucher*, as a brave and daring researcher. My argument is that Nietzsche not only educates but also mobilizes, recruits and *tempts* readers though his figurative devices, such as the philosopher of the future, toward the project of revaluation. Deleuze (1983) commented on the different interlinked characteristics and aims of the philosophers of the future: "We can recognize the Nietzschean trinity of the "philosopher of the future": the philosopher-physician (the physician interprets symptoms), the philosopher-artist (the artist moulds types), the philosopher-legislator (the legislator determines rank, genealogy)" (p.75). It is through the notion of types that Nietzsche's philosophy starts to function at the performative level, stimulating activity among the self-proclaimed re-valuators that the text describes. While it is surely not in Nietzsche's style to offer stable criteria, principles and final grounds for the task of revaluation, his dissonant rhetoric – exemplified in the empty figure of the philosopher of the future – involves hierarchical forms of conjuring readers, perhaps even forms of "generating these types in the first place", as Faulkner (2010, p.82) suggests. Faulkner (2010, p.83) links those forms of conjuring different 'types' of philosophers – the Deleuzian trio of the physician, artist and legislator – to Nietzsche's conservative politics:

> Nietzsche's account of type attempts to shift the criteria by which
> social worth is measured, in favour of the values declared by his
> own philosophy. (...) In this context, Nietzsche's esotericism can
> be understood in terms of a program of "breeding," and not
> merely (and perhaps benignly) as a precaution against the
> persecution of "the many." Nietzsche's response to Darwinism—
> and to the slave morality from which he understands it to issue—
> was to develop a hierarchical conception of the body that would
> ground typological difference.

I will return to Nietzsche's biologistic theory of society as a social organism in Chapter 4 For now, it is important to recognize this performative dimension of textuality which follows from Nietzsche's interest in stimulating the transformation and self-activity of the predisposed readers, who are willing to overcome moral prejudices and interrogate what truths matter. We can begin to see, then, how the techniques for implicating the reader in the text – for instance trough the trope of the 'lover of knowledge', 'experimenter' and 'perspectival knowing' – are lined to a political agenda where the task of commanding and legislating might be restricted to the few who are in the know. There are various devices through which the reader is seduced to side with the philosopher against the rest of humanity and against the unworthy readers in particular, which rely on the distinction between the esoteric and exoteric layers of the text, exemplified in the case of the *Versucher*.

Perspectivism might at first seem like a democratic approach to knowledge in terms of the notion of diverse values originating from "healthy bodies and different social locations", as Antonio (1995, p.17) puts it. However, the notion of a healthy life is not value-free. Nietzsche aims to persuade readers that they are predisposed to understand what his vision of health, breeding and revaluation entails: after all, perspectival truth is not for "everyone" (BGE 2.44). The notion of those in the know and those outside of the know – the insiders and outsiders of the text - is required for the creation of a new social hierarchy that would replace the rule of the herd animal. How to understand the socio-political stakes of the project of revaluation will be the primary focus of the next part of my thesis.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates the importance of considering the hierarchical structure of Nietzsche's texts in making connections between his figurative style(s) and his broader perspectival-experimentalist philosophical method. Experimentalism centers the connection between the form (style) and content (substance) of Nietzsche's thinking, as an ethos of inquiry which is supposed to capture how he tests out not only different hypotheses, claims and ideas, but also different styles – whether sober, lyrical, hyperbolic or polemical – in his anti-dogmatic philosophy.[44] In discussing Nietzsche's experimentalism, I have focused on the

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[44] Nietzsche often commented on the evolution of his styles, for instance reflecting how in his first book, *The Birth of Tragedy*, he attempted to mimic the technical language of Kant and Schopenhauer, rather than experimenting with the more poetic teachings of a singing and dancing Dionysus. See the second Preface to *The Birth from Tragedy* (1999) called Attempt at Self-Criticism (*Versuch über Selbst-Kritik*) which was written in 1886, as Nietzsche was reassessing his early writings.

development of his signature wordplay – *Versucher* – understood as a tempter, attempter and experimenter, a form of address which invokes a sense of indeterminacy, riddle and concealed layers of meaning. This empty figure highlights how Nietzsche aims to appeal to, mobilise and even conjure his ideal readers, in their absence, as philosophers of the future (Faulkner, 2010). Ultimately, whether one can distinguish something akin to a unified practice of experimentalism from Nietzsche's remarks on the *Versucher* is less important than the open-ended task of 'commanding and legislating' addressed to the philosopher of the future. It is through this demand that the task of revaluation gains socio-political stakes.

The key argument is that it is the *reader* who has to fill in the meanings ambivalently suggested by Nietzsche's empty figurative devices, such as the *Versucher*, whose semantic connotations oscillate between the naturalistic-scientific and mythical-poetic registers. In this sense, Nietzsche's experimentalism needs to be understood at the level of receptive effects which his rhetoric facilitates, rather than purely in terms of technical, propositional content that is presented in a way that anybody can understand. The reader becomes implicated in the text with the dividing lines between Nietzsche's privileged companions – such as the philosopher of the future and the 'free spirits' - and the unworthy readers. To be sure, many scholars have argued that Nietzsche's dissonant rhetoric facilitates diverse receptive effects, demonstrated in the scope of readings and abuses of his philosophy from different angles (Lambek, 2020; Faulkner, 2010, Strong, 2013; Waite, 1996). My analysis of the figurative language of the *Versucher* highlights how Nietzsche seduces and tempts readers to become his friends, confidantes and co-conspirators positioned above of humanity, writing for the few daring and creative companions, rather than disciples, who have the philosophical imagination and literary finesse necessary to grasp the riddle of eternal return, interrogate what truths matter and how humanity can be elevated, in ways that might appear terrifying and dangerous to those outside of the know.

Paying attention to the esoteric level of the texts is particularly important in light of recent attempts to delineate the socio-political dimension of Nietzsche's writings in terms of his ideal of a two-caste aristocratic society which I will discuss in more depth in the next chapter, as well as given the importance of interrogating the relationship between his rhetoric and philosophical-political ideas (Strong, 2013). Nietzsche's esoteric forms of address to the *Versucher* point more broadly to his forms of addressing and mobilizing selected imagined readers, rather than a universal audience, in whom he wants to awaken a desire to break with customary morality and democratic politics. It is in in this sense that I will use this figure as a methodological device to analyse his forms of conjuring his ideal

readers not only in his middle, but also in his late works, paying attention to the hierarchical structure of the text. In the next chapters, we will see why and how the hierarchical structure of the text matters in terms of Nietzsche's politics of revaluation and breeding.

In this chapter, we have seen how classical readings of Nietzsche's perspectivism as an epistemological or even psycho-biological claim - which highlight that truth appears differently to subjects in different affective perspectives – often erase the complex modality of the text in reducing it to a set of principles (Pippin, 2019). There are various interpretations of Nietzsche's perspectivism, some of which point to the political stakes involved in the notion of situated epistemic standpoints rooted in diverse conditions and perspectives of life. If for some perspectivism should be understood as a methodological principle of the philosophers of the future (Fulkerson-Smith, 2010), or a philosophical modality that cannot be understood as a dogma, principle, doctrine or a claim (Pippin, 2019), for Losurdo (2019) it carries elitist socio-political meanings, because only the few privileged nobles have the predisposition to understand what can elevate humanity. Some of those truths will be dangerous, terrifying and unimaginable. As Caro (2004) puts it in describing the philosopher's rhetoric: "Nietzsche's words speak to those who have the stomach for them" (p.109).

In using the figure of the *Versucher* as a methodological device for analysing Nietzsche's forms of conjuring, persuading and mobilising future readers, my goal is neither to defend Nietzsche's ideas as strategically misleading, nor to simply hold him accountable for all kinds of violence conduced on his behalf, as some interpreters tend to (Beiner, 2018). Rather, I aim to analyse affective attachments that Nietzschean figures of victory facilitate, and how the text is designed to appeal to various readers who guard its boundaries against the rest. Most interpreters insist that knowledge offered by the philosopher of the future would be diagnostic, rather than therapeutic, detached from prescriptions for a new order of rank (Brown, 1993; Fulkerson-Smith, 2010). While many readers surely project their own imagined cures into Nietzsche's philosophy, the division between those in the know and those outside of the know aligns with his demands for the creation of a new social hierarchy (Faulkner, 2010). In this sense, Nietzsche's art of persuasion and temptation needs to be carefully examined in terms of his hierarchical forms of addressing a range of readers – both historical and imagined. In the next chapter, I will delineate the socio-political stakes of his withdrawn announcement about the possible arrival of the philosophers of the future.

PART II

Parameters of the 'social' and 'political' in Nietzsche's writings

Chapter 3 Nietzsche's two-caste society: absent parameters of class and 'race'

> Every enhancement so far in the type "human being" was the
> work of an aristocratic society – and it will be so again and again:
> a society that believes in a long ladder of rank order and value-
> difference between one person and another and in some sense
> requires slavery.
>
> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* 9.257

Introduction

In the last chapter, I argued for the significance of theorizing the interplay between the *mythos* (images, figures, metaphors) and *logos* (reasons, concepts, propositions) in Nietzsche's writings. We have analysed different masks of the philosopher of the future (*Versucher)* as an untranslatable figure with a wide range of meanings - a tempter, attempter, experimenter - and a withdrawn signature through which Nietzsche seduces readers. It pointed us to the temptation involved in filling in the ambivalent meanings of this figure, and ways in which Nietzsche conjures, confides in and tests his ideal readers, in their absence, as philosophers of the future. I suggested that readers are likely to (mis)identify with the figures of victory in his philosophy and that the boundaries of the text are secured through esoteric forms of address. Bamford (2016) argues that Nietzsche himself does not use the term 'experimentalism' as an overarching frame, and was profoundly sceptical of any -ism – whether socialism, feminism or indeed, experimentalism – which would subordinate the creative potential of human beings to an external cause. This is an example of a consensus view on how the 'social' and 'political' parameters are absent as blind-spots and limit of Nietzsche's works – challenges to which I unpack more systematically in this chapter.

This chapter centres then on a particular mask of the philosophers of the future as commanders and legislators as part of my overarching inquiry into how the 'socio-political' parameters in Nietzsche's writings can be understood, as these have been canonically read as absent, elusive and unstable (Danto, 1965; Kaufmann, 1974). My goal is to retain a sense of ambivalence with which Nietzsche conjures his ideal readers as exemplified with the figure of the *Versucher*, rather than technically reconstruct his prescriptive, practical-literal vision for society. Therefore, I rely on existing reconstructions of the parameters of the 'political' in Nietzsche's writings, as it is in relation to those parameters that I distinguish the 'social'

stakes of his philosophy of the future, specifically in relation to his recruitment of his ideal readers. The question how to posit the 'socio-political' parameters on Nietzsche's own terms is not at all straightforward. Recently, it has been read in terms of perspectivism of the philosophers of the future and the call for an 'order of rank' among plural perspectives, with ongoing discussions on how Nietzsche's ideal social order would be modelled on a caste structure, and what role slavery, 'race' and class would play here (Drochon, 2016; Losurdo, 2019; Toscano, 2020).[45] Those technical reconstructions have been largely divorced from his reception in sociology – Losurdo (2019) blames sociologists and philosophers alike for erasing the extent of Nietzsche's class racism from reception, while Drochon's (2016) reading of Nietzsche into political theory does not explicitly consider the 'social question' understood in terms of worker's rights, class conflict or subjugation and racialisation of certain groups.

Attending to the ways in which Nietzsche conjures ideal readers, this chapter also aims to situate the emerging readings of Nietzsche's two-caste society in relation to his long-standing reception on the margins of sociological theory. While recognizing the difficulties entailed in centring any static and stable vision of modern society in Nietzsche's thinking, many readers in the orbit of sociological theory have attempted to reconstruct Nietzsche's critiques of the emerging 19th century social science as 'decadent', to ask about a Nietzschean relation to the emerging 'social question', despite his proximity to Social Darwinism (Aspers, 2007; Baier, 1981; Piazzesi, 2013; Runciman, 2000; Stauth and Turner, 1988). Nietzsche's thinking about the 'social' has been often discussed as mediated through different intellectual traditions – including agonism, post-structuralism and the hermeneutics of suspicion – but also in terms of technical exegesis, for instance in terms of reconstructions of Nietzsche's ideal of a gay perspectival science (Solms-Laubach, 2007).

The most influential contribution in this long-standing (if not a mainstream) discussion has been Antonio's (1995) *Nietzsche's Antisociology: Subjectified Culture and the End of History*, which presented Nietzsche's "views about the depletion of social resources" (p.1). These would centre around an inversion of classical and modern theorists' perspectives on modernity. Nietzsche's diagnosis of decadence emerges here as a resource for a critique of the grand post-Enlightenment narratives of rationality, universalism and progress. Given

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[45] See Guay (2013) for a classic reading of Nietzsche's thinking on the order of rank, where the key idea would be that Nietzsche does not prescribe the specific rank-orderings in social life, but rather draws attention to the problem of how authority can be justified in the first place. For a close reading of Nietzsche's *great politics*, see Siemens (2008): "The critique of democracy issues in the two key tasks of transvaluation (*Umwertung*) and hierarchy (*Rangordnung*), that is: the creative legislation of new values and new goals oriented towards the affirmation of life as will to power, the proliferation of diversity and with it the enhancement of humankind; and the establishment of a hierarchy (*Rangordnung*) of human worth among diverse human life-forms" (p. 237).

the vast range of Nietzsche's suspicions when it comes to the promises of modern emancipation, from the elitist notion of the *Übermensch* to his critique of any '-ism' (socialism, feminism, anarchism), the basic problematic in reading Nietzsche *between the disciplines* would be if there is any – possibly negative – notion of the 'social relations' or 'social resources' that would be 'consistent' with the challenges, subversions and provocations of Nietzsche's philosophy. Readers have also asked whether his ideas can be mobilized towards the ends of social and cultural analysis and diagnostics, and discussions on this topic continue today (Karzai, 2019; Landa, 2019b, Roberts, 2019; Toscano, 2020), though most commentators move away from Nietzsche's literal-practical prescriptive or even therapeutic cures, centring his diagnostic-destructive insights (Brown, 1993; Toscano, 2020). Nietzsche emerges here as a contrarian, a polemicist, and at times even as a seducer.

In this chapter, I trace attempts to distinguish the question of the 'social' in Nietzsche's writings by returning to an under-appreciated essay which has originally inspired the framework of anti-sociology – Baier's (1981) *Die Gesellschaft. Ein langer Schatten des toten Gottes. Friedrich Nietzsche und die Entstehung der Soziologie aus dem Geist der Decadence* as it takes up explicitly the difficult ideas around slavery, caste and class structure which resurface in interpretations of Nietzsche today, and gestures towards the dangerous art of seduction and experimentation (*Versucher-kunst*) understood in terms of breeding a new man beyond the herd animal.[46] Baier (1981) points out that these need to be understood as philological ideals, rather than merely in practical-prescriptive terms, which speaks to my overarching inquiry into Nietzsche's rhetorical forms of address. Recovering Baier's (1981) reading which has been sanitized in the later tradition of anti-sociology allows me to focus on how 'social relations' matter in terms of the triad of society, state and (high) culture in Nietzsche's thinking about revaluation.

Reconstructions of Nietzsche's two-caste society and his class racism implicitly rely on some sort of notion of the 'social' – even if framed in contrarian, negative terms – but these are rarely clarified in scholarship (Drochon, 2016; Losurdo, 2019). My argument is that we need to understand the sense in which 'social relations' are at stake in Nietzsche's thinking before we can assess whether his political ideas transgress or reproduce reactionary discourses at the time – for instance through the lens of Marxist vocabulary. In other words, we need to unpack those terms analytically, once we assume that Nietzsche's (2006[1872]) *The Greek State* can be a basis for reconstructing his overarching theory of the state and slavery. This is what Baier's (1981) neglected perspective offers in terms of explicitly

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[46] This essay has not been translated into English. I am relying on my own translation.

foregrounding 'social relations' as linked to the quasi-vitalist movement of ascending life in Nietzsche's thinking, which has animated the framework of anti-sociology.

While today's discussions of Nietzsche's conception of society are often conducted in the spirit of technical reconstruction combined with historical contextualization, I will argue for the importance of an analytical framework which takes into account ways in which Nietzsche's rhetoric taps onto readers' affective dispositions in recruiting them toward the community of his predestined readers as re-evaluators. The significance of taking into account both historical context and Nietzsche's forms of mobilising and conjuring ideal readers is starkly dramatized in the discussion of how to understand Nietzsche's 'racial' thinking which spans across 19th discourses of physiological degeneration, but also the promise of spiritual renewal of humanity. If Nietzsche's project of revaluation is read with attention to the esoteric layer of textuality, the debate on who would belong to the caste of creative nobles needs to be reframed in terms of the (mis)identifications with the Nietzschean figures of victory that the text purposefully facilitates, rather than pre-existing socio-material positions in the external world that would be independent of the text.

Departing from the controversies around how to read the category of 'race' in Nietzsche's two-caste utopia, I will distinguish between competing readings of this category in analytic-technical and Marxist-leftist reconstructions, neither of which take into account the performative, imaginary dimension of textuality. Whether and how the notions of 'race' and class can be applied to Nietzsche's thinking needs to be posed as a question rather than taken as a given, so that we can understand both the ways in which Nietzsche's project of revaluation relies on racialization of class and anti-blackness, as increasingly more scholars argue (Bernasconi, 2017; Losurdo, 2019), and the promise of transcending those divisions in a future social order which would be based on new measures of social worth.

Readings of Nietzsche in the orbit of sociological theory

We can distinguish between at least three interpretative strategies in the literature on Nietzsche's relationship to sociological theory. The first strategy is to work directly with the philosophical 'content' of Nietzsche's writings in search of sociological themes, ideas and premises – however one defines the latter. Saar (2018), for instance, speaks of the 'social' at the interconnected levels of order, practice and subject. Those analytical levels could be of course also conceived differently – in terms of relations, processes, or at the level of economy of affects (see Pyythinen, 2010) – pointing to how vague the category of the 'social' is in the first place. Is it important to carefully distinguish between these analytical levels,

when attempting to grasp Nietzsche's thinking on the 'social' beyond merely summarizing his critiques of 19th century sociology as decadent.

The classical reading is that Nietzsche does not give us any ready-made conception of the 'social' – either in terms of a methodology for how to study social life, a theory of how the social order is reproduced and maintained, or even at the level of the subject, even if this is where he has been most often appropriated (Antonio, 1995). Indeed, when distinguishing the three different analytical levels of the 'social', Saar (2018) argues that Nietzsche has been a pre-cursor of the post-structuralist thinking about the subject as "marked through power" (p.10), relying on the Foucauldian strand of appropriation and the theories of subjectification, among other alternative conceptual frameworks.

This is in fact how most sociologists seem to appropriate Nietzsche's ideas: not only as a background in terms of intellectual history, but as a direct resource for conceptualizing social relations and practices *vis-à-vis* their own sociological frameworks. Aspers (2007), for instance, draws a connection between what he calls Nietzsche's "radical social constructivism" (p.495) – the idea that most aspects of life are conditioned by the social – and the perspectives on rationalization as developed by Weber, Berger and Luhmann. Similarly, Lanuza (2013) lists various contemporary theorists, such as Bauman and Lash, who might be said to echo Nietzsche's "nomadic sociology of knowledge" (p.213). Here the rhetorical seductions, questions marks and riddles in the Nietzschean oeuvre are subsumed under a framework which the sociologist finds most productive, more concerned about their uses, applications and relevance than with how Nietzsche himself understood the 'social'.

An instructive example of such a direct sociological appropriation is the framework developed by Max Scheler (1972), who attempted to scrutinize the notion of ressentiment as a concept that can be used in sociological analysis. Here, 'content' is clearly separated from Nietzsche's 'style', as Scheler explores Nietzsche's ideas about social life as a site of animosity in attempt to operationalize them.[47] Departing from the notion of ressentiment understood as the "self-poisoning of the mind" through re-experiencing of emotions such as "revenge, hatred, malice, envy, the impulse to detract, and spite" (p.4), Scheler (1972) illustrates how those affects shape not just individual subjectivity, but are carried into social

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[47] Scheler (1972) develops a sociology and phenomenology of ressentiment by appropriating different Nietzschean figures – for instance that of the "Christ as a vindictive 'Savior' as a "God of revenge" (p.29). See Tuinen (2018) for a critical discussion on how Scheler goes beyond merely systematizing Nietzsche. For a more contemporary discussion on the distinction between resentment and ressentiment see Fassin (2013).

relationships, practices and socio-historical roles – presumably at all interconnected levels at which Saar (2018) distinguished 'the social' in terms of the order, practice and the subject.

In a second interpretative strategy which is more common in contemporary scholarship, scholars have attempted to reconstruct Nietzsche's critique of the 19th century sociological and Social Darwinist discourses (e.g. Spencer's 'survival of the fittest') to ask about his alternative understanding of physiological ethics which would not reproduce the value system of what Nietzsche derogatively described as the 'herd animal', the 'rabble', the 'mass', and in what ways he questions the premises of a value-free science. The literature on Nietzsche's historical relationship to social science is significant, where most emphasize his derogative position to Spencer's evolutionism and Comte's positivism (Aspers, 2007; Runciman, 2000; Solms-Laubach, 2007). Piazzesi (2013) offers the most systematic list of Nietzsche's reading of original and translated works by Comte, Spencer, Mill, Fouillee and Marion, in an attempt to clarify various dimensions in Nietzsche's critique of positivist and empiricist methodologies. While it is clear that Nietzsche dismisses the rising discipline of sociology as part of a positivist culture of science, it is unclear what he means when accusing French and English sociologists of reproducing an "instinct of decay" (TI 37), and what an opposite life-enhancing ideal would entail.

Finally, theorists have recovered Nietzsche's challenges to the evolving discipline of sociology as mediated through strands of theory which have been inspired by the philosopher: e.g. Weberian theories of rationalization, vitalism, *Lebensphilosophie* and existentialism, poststructuralism, discursivity and deconstruction, radical democracy and agonism (Antonio, 1995). This third interpretative strategy points towards different methodological techniques to conceive of reception effects and indirect appropriations, uses and resonances, yet it also relies on the singular function of the author, whose ideas are pushed in various directions, or become echoed in different contexts. Here one might speak about the ways in which Nietzsche's theories have traveled and circulated across epistemic contexts relevant to sociological inquiry, rather than his own ideas on the 'social' per se.

Most often, commentators combine all three approaches in ways which leave us with a picture of Nietzsche as contrarian towards sociology and modern social theory (Antonio, 1995; Baier, 1981), yet at the same time casting him as a figure who is important for its development as a 'third science' between a 'cold naturalist science of society' and 'the primacy of feeling' that would characterize poetic modes of expression, a science that searched for its own epistemic terrain between cultural studies (*Kulturwissenschaften)* and natural sciences (*Naturwissenschaften)* (Lepenies, 1988). Even contemporary sociology, the

argument often goes, could embrace Nietzschean ideas of a value-laden perspectival science and "radical socio-ontology" which "acknowledges the researcher as co-constructor", as Aspers (2007, p.494) puts it. In a promising path I consider in more depth in Chapter 5, McKinnon (2013) recovers Nietzschean insights on how metaphors function in social life as a resource for sociology of religion.

However, considering the asystematic character of Nietzsche's writings – as well as ways in which he recruits his ideal readers toward the project of revaluation – how exactly are the first two strategies achieved when it comes to delineating Nietzsche's philosophy of the social order, before we can talk of uses, relevance, reception, influences, debts and creative appropriations? Can one easily isolate Nietzsche's ideas on 'society' and 'social relations', or are those negative blind-spots? Does the technical-reconstructive mode of reading allow us to conceive of the 'social' as a positive reference in Nietzsche's polemical attacks on his contemporaries, considering the reputation of the author as an admirer of the ancient *agon* (contest), as critical of the modern promises of progress and rationality? Those questions guide my analysis in the next section, where I clarify how to technically consider the parameters of the 'social' in Nietzsche's thinking in terms of the connections between high culture, state and society. My argument is that these need to be situated within the experimental project of overcoming the degeneration of the herd animal, a temptation addressed to Nietzsche's ideal readers as philosophers of the future (*Versucher*).

The triad of the state, high culture and society

The sharpest entry point for reconsidering the question of the 'social' in Nietzsche's philosophy is an early perspective on Nietzsche, society and sociology from a technical-reconstructive viewpoint: Baier's (1981) publication *Die Gesellschaft – ein langer Schatten des toten Gottes, Friedrich Nietzsche und die Entstehung der Soziologie aus dem Geist der Decadence*, which inspired Antonio's (1995) influential framework of anti-sociology. Departing from the metaphor of society as a shadow of the dead God, Baier (1981) attempts to reconstruct contrarian and negative contours of the 'question of society' in Nietzsche's works based on his critique of 19th century sociology as a science born out of the spirit of decadence. If the whole West no longer possesses instincts "out of which institutions" and "future grows", as Nietzsche puts it (TI 39), political and social life becomes a site of disintegration and decadence, a symptom of broader decline of the entire culture complex.

The analytical purchase of Baier's (1981) reading is to conceive of modern society in Nietzsche's thinking as "a means of state rule and expansion" (*Mittel zum Herrschaftzweck*)

(p.18). Society needs to be understood in terms of the triad between the state and high culture consisting of a new spiritual aristocracy, rather than as a sphere distinct from or counter to state power (e.g. civil society). Baier (1981) argues that Nietzsche's critiques of the category of 'exchange society' (*Industrie-Gesellschaft*) need to be placed within his critiques of democratization, the decay of the nation-state and its accompanying social transformations, from the loss of the *pathos of distance* (between the ruler and the ruled), to the emergence of labour rights, universal education and the increasing pace of modern industrialization, where all human strivings fall under common economic denominators.

Reading the article forty years after its publication, it is difficult to overlook the familiar anti-modernist and anti-capitalist tendencies in Nietzsche's writings, which depict the longing for optimization as a force that drives the European away from the horizon of excellence. Modern science, progress and universal human values emerge as a site of decadence, which relies on already exhausted categories for organizing the world (e.g. socialist, religious, sociological-scientific). This diagnosis of decadence as all-pervasive in modern society has important implications: the 'origins' of the decadent modern social order according to Nietzsche are to be found not in the Industrial Revolution or Enlightenment, but in the decline of the Greek culture after Socrates' elevation of reason to the paradigmatic faculty, at the expense of conflicting body drives (see Conway, 1988, Lemm, 2014).[48] This subordination of the body to the faculty of reason comes to define the ascetic, rationalist socio-cultural Western 19th century complex, which sociological readers later associated with a split between theory and praxis/action (Antonio, 1995; Solms-Laubach, 2007).

Sociologists often drew attention to the spirit of decadence, corruption and malaise which Nietzsche locates in place where classical social theorists diagnosed progress and transformation (Antonio, 1995; Runciman, 2000; Solms-Laubach, 2007). Antonio (1995), for instance, speaks about the ways in which "throughout the West, Socratic rationalization, in its most decadent stage, levels completely the particularities that give individuals and cultures strength and vitality" (p.12). Nietzsche's thinking about the 'social' as a site of decadence is then different not only from classical social theory, as represented most starkly by Durkheim, but also decolonial theory, which situates the origins of the modern social order in 15th century colonial conquest (Bhambra and Santos, 2019). For Nietzsche, to understand the scope of decline, we need to think about the cultural accomplishments of the pre-Hellenistic Greeks, who were not yet under the repressive spell of modern reason,

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[48] Nietzsche criticizes Socrates as a decadent in whom affects of doubt, melancholy and weariness reign supreme when he condemns life as something that needs to have value outside of itself, subjugating the life-process to the end-goal of rationality. See Conway (1988) for a critical discussion.

less alienated from their own bodies, in some sort of mastery over their conflicting drives (Antonio, 1995).[49] Decadence shapes the Western culture-complex, though this cannot be understood simply in a linear chronological sense: there have been certain 'stronger' ages such as the Renaissance, which promoted cultural achievement (Huddleston, 2019).

If Nietzsche's thinking about the social order stretches across various civilizations, there is important analytical leverage in Baier's (1981) integrative reading which points out that society in Nietzsche's thinking is essentially a vehicle of state power. Modern society can be steered in a direction envisioned by the new emerging elites. More specifically, Nietzsche speaks of 'social configurations' (*soziale Konfiguration*) and 'social processes' (*Gesellschaftsprozess*) which would mediate the relationship between the state and culture in the Greek state, as he put it in unpublished writings *The Greek State* (2006) which recently received considerable attention (Drochon, 2016; Toscano, 2020; Waite, 1996). In case of ancient Greece, when politics was subordinated to culture, social relationships (e.g. division of labour) were mobilized towards the creation of philosophical, artistic and athletic genius, not least through the labour of the slaves. With the gradual decline of the state in the post-Socratic era, the levelling of social relations results in an overall net 'loss' at the planetary level of humanity, as moderns struggle to find a justification for suffering and exploitation.

Although the Western, ascetic complex has promoted ideas and institutions detrimental to human health – exemplified in the priestly mode of domesticating instincts he describes in the *Genealogy of Morality* – Nietzsche's critique of sociology and society as decadent betrays hopes for a cultural renewal. On Baier's reading (1981), the structural affinity in Nietzsche's analysis of the ancient and modern formations reveals "a counter-movement of declining and descending 'life'" (p.18), which climbs towards higher, 'healthier' and more robust socio-cultural forms. This movement of life fuels an anti-sociology (*Gegen-Soziologie*) which uncovers power and culture relations beneath all kinds of social and cultural movements that pretrain to the enhancement of human life. This vision of anti-sociology is based on Nietzsche's late notebooks, where he proposes to take the "culture-complex" "in place of society" as his "chief interest" (eKGWB 1887,10[28]), echoing his call to replace sociology with a "theory of power structures" or "structures of domination" (*Lehre von den Herrschaftsgebilde*n) (eKGWB 1887,9[8]). This proto sketch of sociology would be part of his broader "critique of philosophy" in which traditional categories and frames of

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[49] This can be understood within the civilizational antagonism between the Apollonian (order, form, logos, sobriety) and Dionysian (myth, chaos) principles underlying various cross-cultural formations, not merely the capitalist industrial society. See Lemm (2014) for a discussion of the Apollonian and Dionysian principles in Nietzsche's thinking.

inquiry such as "moral values", "epistemology" and "metaphysics" give way to "naturalistic and affective perspectives" (eKGWB 1885,2[13]) as linked to the project of revaluation.

'Life' is understood here in the broadest sense, stretching across the psychic, biological and cultural realms, linked to the promise of affirmation outside of the question about justification of existence in face of exploitation, cruelty and suffering in the world. A Nietzschean anti-sociology would be concerned with an "seductive" and "experimental" (*versucherische)* question, which, the philosopher warns us, might come out quite "bad and nasty" (eKGWB 1885,2[13]). This is the question of whether one can overcome the herd animal in an "attempt to breed the opposite type of man" (eKGWB 1885,2[13]). It is in this context that the reinstation of the ancient practice of slavery might be necessary (eKGWB 1885,2[13]). To be sure, the role that rank-orderings and slavery might play in the project of cultural renewal will be disturbing and terrifying to many readers, if not a final proof of an anti-humanist, conservative and anti-modernist thread in Nietzsche's writings.

However, sociological readers of Nietzsche rarely reflect on how to understand his ideas about a new form of slavery and breeding of a new type of being, more interested in the leitmotif of a perspectival gay science (Aspers, 2007; Runciman, 2000; Solms-Laubach, 2007). This promise of gay science would be perspectival in consolidating different eyes and perspectives, the contradictory drives and agonistic relationships that make up the (social) body – not alongside the axis of 'race', class, gender – but in broader terms of social relationships which mediate between state, society and (higher) culture, for instance the relations of 'embodiment, reciprocity and resistance', as in Stauth's and Turner's (1990) Nietzschean social theory. This might be a sanitized notion of Nietzsche's anti-sociology if we pay attention to the more dangerous semantic connotations of the malicious tempter (*Versucher*) and the socio-political stakes of perspectivism that I explored in Chapter 2.

Baier (1981) suggests that the notion of slavery might be a philological ideal, a hint at what slavery as a broad category meant in ancient Greece, but Nietzsche's insistence that "slavery in some sense or other" (BGE 9.257) will need to be reinstated in the modern world has been also read literally-practically, in terms of his political vision for a future revalued society (Bull, 2011; Drochon, 2016; Losurdo, 2019). Scholars interested in the relationship between Nietzsche and sociology have been often blind to the ways in which notions of caste, slavery and class racism animate Nietzsche's thought. "Nietzsche was in no way an apologist for any ideas that promoted structural or racial subjugation" and "never addressed slavery in a racial or internal colonial sense", Fong (2020, p.102) argued recently, against

bleaker assessments which show how antiblack racism animates Nietzsche's thinking, in particular the racialized notion of breeding a new man (Bernasconi, 2017).

My analysis reveals then a tendency to sanitise Nietzsche's thinking in much of the sociological reception in order to make uses of his ideas and concepts for the purposes of social and cultural inquiry. Sociological readers rarely explore how Nietzsche recruits readers toward the project of revaluation through his affectively charged forms of address, conjuring ideal readers, in their absence, as philosophers of the future. Whom does Nietzsche address with his "experimental" (*versucherische*) question whether a new society can emerge from the movement of democratic levelling which erases previous measures of social worth? Rather than a literal prescription for the future utopia (technical content), it is possible to read this as a Dionysian temptation aimed at promoting experimental activity among his readers as his companions and co-conspirators in the project of revaluation. If we are to grasp what kind of transformation Nietzsche recruits his predestined readers towards, his thinking about the movement of ascending life surely must be understood outside of the myth of the consensual origins of the state and social bonds, outside of the tradition of the social contract. Instead, the 'social' in Nietzsche's thinking should be understood in terms of the relations of domination underlying state formation and state rule, relations which the philosophers of the future as experimenters and tempters will be able to transpose onto a new, modern notion of slavery – or so the test addressed to the readers goes.

Nietzsche's aristocratic two-caste society

The question how to understand social relations in Nietzsche's thinking matters enormously in light of recent re-interpretations of his political philosophy as aimed at spiritual and cultural regeneration of Europe, in particular in light of his scandalous fantasy of elites which would embrace the necessity of slavery in a future caste society (Drochon, 2016; Losurdo, 2019; Toscano, 2020). The key question here is how to understand the new criteria on which social worth would be measured in Nietzsche's future revalued society, and whether this can be at all grasped in terms of the distinctions of nation, class, 'race' and gender. In reconstructing Nietzsche's anti-sociology, Baier (1981) concludes with a much-quoted passage from the *Antichrist* which contemporary reconstructions of Nietzsche's caste politics also rely on (Drochon, 2016; Losurdo, 2019). Nietzsche (AC 57) speaks here of how the splitting of humanity into three castes is necessary for cultural achievement:

The most spiritual people, being the strongest, find their happiness where other people would find their downfall: in labyrinths, in harshness towards themselves and towards others, in trials [*Versuch*]; they take pleasure in self-overcoming: asceticism is their nature, requirement, instinct. (...) The ones who are second: these are the custodians of the law, the guardians of order and security, these are the noble warriors, this is above all the king, as the highest formula of the warrior, judge and preserver of law (...). Caste-order, order of rank, is just a formula for the supreme law of life itself, splitting off into three types is necessary for the preservation of society, to make the higher and highest types possible (...) A high culture is a pyramid: it needs a broad base, its first presupposition is a strongly and healthily consolidated mediocrity.

This passage has always created controversy in scholarship – the splitting of humanity into three 'types' has been read as a flawed philological commentary on an ancient text, a *Dharmaśāstra*, which circulated among the intellectual elites at the time (Brobjer, 1998; Elst, 2006; Smith, 2004). A long-time consensus in scholarship is that one cannot reconstruct Nietzsche's social and political ideals based on this passage – in other writings the philosopher has been critical of the Aryan and Hindu caste-order, and the citation above has been read as a rhetorical, polemical weapon against Christian morality (Brobjer, 1998).[50] This consensus has been recently challenged by readers who reconstruct Nietzsche's ideal of a future revalued caste society by placing these remarks in relation to what the philosopher said about the Greek State, Renaissance and India as less decadent cultural-complexes (Drochon, 2016), as well as slavery, socialism and worker's rights (Losurdo, 2019).

Departing from the question how power should be distributed in modern society, Drochon (2016) argues that one can should read Nietzsche's admiration for a 'natural' caste order in relation to his project of *great politics*, a vision of European unification beyond the boundaries of the nation state, as a reformulation of Bismarck's nationalistic project. There

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[50] Brobjer (1998) summarizes a long-time consensus in scholarship: "On the contextual level one ought to take note of the fact that Nietzsche's main purpose in this work is a critique of Christianity, that is, his own and his readers own tradition. When he compares Christianity negatively with other alternatives (here the laws of Manu) this does not necessarily mean that these constitute Nietzsche's ideal, or even that his view of them are as positive as it might appear. The rhetoric in such a situation exaggerates the positive sides of the alternatives" (p.307).

would be different literal-practical axis of this politics that Nietzsche apparently envisioned, for instance redistributive taxation as a means of transferring recourses, as well as the promotion of 'high culture' outside of the instrumental mission of Bismarck's *Kulturstaat*. Losurdo (2019) reads this passage on the Aryan Code of Manu in terms of the social and 'racial' conflict at the time: "the clash between the plebeian tendencies of a Christian (and Jewish) Church and an Aryan aristocratic reaction" (p.794). According to Losurdo (2019), the Aryan and Hindu models of caste inspired Nietzsche's belief in the necessity of "a drastic division of labour for the survival and development of culture" (p.928).

The debate on whether Nietzsche proposed an ideal of society rooted in a caste order cannot be easily resolved, but if we presume that there is an esoteric level of the text addressed to the selected few insiders positioned above of humanity, as I argued in chapter 2, the idea of reading between the lines gains more importance. It is instructive to analyse his forms of mobilizing and conjuring readers in this context. In the key passage cited above from which Drochon (2016) reconstructs Nietzsche's ideal of a caste society, Nietzsche observes how the highest spiritual caste finds their happiness in "labyrinths" (AC 57), which echoes how his predisposed readers have "predestination for the labyrinth" (AC Preface). Nietzsche emphasizes that the *Anti-Christ* is not meant for a universal audience, similarly to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In *Ecce Homo*, he often returns to the distinction between unworthy and ideal readers who can enter the "labyrinth of daring knowledge", invoking again the image of the riddle-drunk *Versucher* (EH Why I Write Such Good Books 3). He is particularly hostile to German readers: "The first thing I test someone on is whether his body has a feeling for distance, whether he sees rank, degree, an ordering system between people all around him, whether he makes distinctions" (EH Why I Write Such Good Books 4). It is clear that democratic Christian Germans belong to levellers deprived of an instinct for rank – he often comments on the 'deafness' of the German ear that would not be able to hear what is important – but who are Nietzsche's ideal readers?

The notion of an order of rank among plural perspectives relies on the opposition between the mediocre and the spiritually elevated few. The latter have the capacity to suffer, venture onto forbidden paths and intuitively grasp Zarathustra's riddles. Commenting on the philosophical project he began with *Daybreak*, Nietzsche speaks of the revaluation of all values as "an affirmation and trust in everything that had been forbidden, despised, cursed until now" (EH Daybreak 1). It is not a coincidence that he previously addressed his predestined readers precisely as those who have the "courage for the *forbidden*" (AC Preface). This brings us back to the esoteric rhetoric of the philosopher of the future

(*Versucher*), which implicates readers in positioning themselves as re-evaluators against the rest of humanity and the herd animal in particular, as Nietzsche's privileged companions. It points us again to the hierarchical organisation of the text – the notion of insiders who view humanity from above and guard the text's boundaries against the mediocre aligns with Nietzsche's demands for a new order of rank and a new social hierarchy.

In reconstructing the social and political parameters in Nietzsche's works, those forms of address need to be taken into account. Nietzsche's admiration for the 'natural' order of castes cannot be merely understood in terms of his polemical critique of Christianity but has to be placed in terms of the project of revaluation that he recruits his readers toward. Nietzsche often implicates his companions in that community: "Let us not underestimate the fact that *we ourselves*, we free spirits, already constitute a 'revaluation of all values', a *living* declaration of war on and victory over all old concepts of 'true' and 'untrue'" (AC 13). In this sense, it matters just as much what is the technical content of the project of revaluation, as the modality in which it is announced, how Nietzsche appeals to readers to make distinctions among different 'types' themselves, to position themselves as his co-conspirators in making "*noble* values triumph" (AC 61) against Christianity.

Nietzsche's forms of dividing readers undoubtedly point towards patterns of inequality, exploitation and difference implicit in his imaginary of life's becoming. Drochon (2016) reconstructs Nietzsche's project of revaluation as intrinsically linked to his *great politics*, distinguishing Nietzsche's party of life as a key part of his political strategy. This party would consist of transnational cultural and spiritual elites, which would ultimately wage a "war of spirits" against a party of Christianity and the Christian Reich (Drochon, 2016, p.170). This prospect raises questions about how to read Nietzsche's hope for renewal, how exactly his thinking about the future elites that would join the party of life relates to socio-historical patterns of subjugation, what kind of rank-orderings would it be based on, and in what sense the intellectual warfare would determine what man will be bred in the future. Those are precisely elements of Nietzsche's thought which have been subject to controversy from a Marxist perspective: some argue that the project of revaluation and breeding a new man would be based on reinstating the most brutal form of the division of labour that relies on the surplus of a subaltern caste of slave workers (Losurdo, 2019; Toscano, 2020).

Both readings converge in term of distinguishing two rather than three castes as a basis of Nietzsche's political utopia. For Drochon (2016), Nietzsche's commentary on the Manu Code cannot be read simply as a polemical weapon in his critique of Christianity, but if placed in the context of his writings on the Greek state, Renaissance and India (p.89), as

well as the contrast between the spheres of the masters and the slaves, it points to a pattern whereby Nietzsche prefers a two-tier caste system, both historically and in terms of his ideal for a future society (p.91). Based on reconstruction of Nietzsche's ideas in published works and his notes, Drochon (2016) argues that Nietzsche's ideal society would consist of two castes: the transnational elites which govern, corresponding to a caste of spiritual aristocracy and physical aristocracy (guardians) in the Hindu caste system, and the volatile bourgeois masses which embrace their role as enumerated slaves. Losurdo (2019), on the other hand, translates Nietzsche's admiration for a caste order sanctified by the Manu Code onto the conflict between the upper and the subaltern classes in a typically Marxist move.

Drochon's reconstruction and Losurdo's Marxist reading converge in terms of the notion of a caste/class of the few that would be free from labour, able to cultivate spiritual and cultural growth by benefitting from the labour of the lower caste. Losurdo (2019) emphasizes that Nietzsche romanticized a division of society into the idle and common already in his middle works, for instance in *Human-All-Too-Human*, where he speaks: on the one hand of "'the caste of forced labour', on the other 'the caste of free labour' or 'caste of idlers', the elite consisting of those 'capable of true leisure' and capable at the same time of suffering much more deeply than common natures" (p.847).[51] In this context, Nietzsche's forms of address to those who are capable of deep suffering and predestined for the labyrinth can be read as a strategy in recruiting the future re-evaluators: the philosophers of the future, as *Versucher*, do not believe in a society that would abolish suffering (BGE 2.44).

Absent parameters of class and 'race'

If we accept the theory of a two-caste society as Nietzsche's overarching ideal, the emerging question is who would belong to the upper caste of the spiritual nobles. Is the Nietzschean project of revaluation open to any readers irrespectively of their class and ethnicity? What are the principles of selection in the new social hierarchy? This matters in particular in light of my overarching inquiry into how Nietzsche conjures and recruits his ideal readers towards the project of revaluation, as well as my inquiry into how his figurative devices – such as the *Versucher* – are designed to facilitate (mis)identifications among his readers who guard the

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[51] Drochon (2016, p.88) also refers to this passage which Losurdo summarizes here: "a higher culture can come into existence only where there are two different castes in society: that of the workers and that of the idle" (Nietzsche, HH 439). Drochon (2016) does not theorise the upper caste as capable of suffering more deeply than the lower caste, but points out that "lack of justification for suffering makes the modern wage-making slaves experience their lives as one of distress" (p.93). The suffering of the lower classes would be justified through the cultural achievements of humanity achieved by the higher caste, where life would be "aesthetically justified" (Drochon, 2016, p.94).

boundaries of the text. If the *Anti-Christ* is dedicated to the few predestined readers, what role does the esoteric level of textuality play in terms of Nietzsche's aspiration to be understood by the right kind of audience? Does the notion of an ideal reader map onto racial and class identity-markers, or are those meaningless categories for Nietzsche? The key question is if the esoteric-exoteric distinction between those in the know and those outside of the know translates onto the prospects of belonging to the two different castes.

There are different ways to understand the socio-material distinctions in Nietzsche's ideal society in the first place, before we pay attention to the esoteric level of textuality. Drochon (2016) argues that the ruling European caste would be "transracial" (p.160), where the prospects of belonging to the new aristocracy would not be limited by previous identity-markers, such as nation, class or 'race'. Instead, membership in the party of life would be based on "whether one represents ascending, in contrast to descending, life" (p.169). Those who belong to the lower caste, the bourgeoise of the future, would lead a life of comfort and material wealth, ready for the masters, materially poorer, to rise to the task of governance. Drochon (2016) emphasizes that according to Nietzsche it is the wage-workers themselves who will call on a new higher being to provide them with meaning for their existence, which democracy fails to supply. This will correspond with a shift away from "an employment-type economy where the worker is paid for his efforts to a slave-based one where renumeration is based solely on the existence of the worker" (Drochon, 2019, p.94).

The terms of belonging to the caste of the ruling masters are much bleaker in Losurdo's (2019) Marxist interpretation. Losurdo draws attention to the class antagonism implicit in the imaginary of life's becoming and exploitation, situating Nietzsche's two-caste utopia in the context of the anti-democratic reaction by aristocratic elites in 19th century Western Europe and in the US. The 'social question' at stake in Nietzsche's thinking is situated directly in terms of historical class conflict between the aristocratic nobles and the subjugated working classes, where the latter would be construed as a different 'race' in terms of their capacity to suffer. He argues that Nietzsche's ideal of a high culture addressed to the few philosophers of the future diffuses the "power of violence and suffering experienced by a given class of individuals" (Losurdo, 2019, p.66). If Nietzsche's notion of life needs to be understood in terms of "power, conflict, insatiability and exploitation" (Stern, 2020, p.9), Marxist readings situate this notion of life as based on antagonism and conflict in relation to existing historically oppressed groups (Losurdo, 2019; Toscano, 2020).

Moreover, Losurdo (2019) places the esoteric-exoteric distinction I have explored in Chapter 2 directly in terms of racialized class politics: "the dichotomy of plebeians and

noblemen also took the form of a dichotomy of the profane and the initiated or of an opposition of 'the exoteric and the esoteric', which could be found in all higher cultures" (p.680). In contrast, Drochon does not think of the plebeian as the outsiders of the Nietzchean text, although the central goal of Nietzsche's *great politics* would be to create conditions for the production of cultural, artistic and philosophical genius, a restoration of a "genuine culture" in which "healthy philosophers" – modern Platos – "could once again appear" (Drochon, 2016, p.35). This vision leaves us with a somewhat classicist picture of Nietzsche's political philosophy, or so a sociologist – and certainly Marxist-leftist readers – might be tempted to argue. Based on Losurdo's reading, Toscano (2020) recently distinguished 'class racism' based on the distinction between the idle nobles and the insensitive, enslaved proletariat. While the caste of nobles could possibly include those who have previously been racialized outlaws of humanity, depending on their spiritual sensitivity, Drochon (2016) does not conceptualize how principles of division and difference in this utopia would map onto those in Nietzsche's imagined 19th century Germany.

The figure of the materially rich 'bourgeois slave' raises questions about Nietzsche's relationship to colonialism and capitalism, recently posed more explicitly in scholarship (Losurdo, 2019; Min Choi and Murphy, 2016; Toscano, 2020). The notions of the slave (*Sklave*), slavery and enslavement in Nietzsche's writings are complex, spanning across the material, symbolic and psychic realms – from the broad category of slavery in Plato's philosophy, labour of Greek slaves in building the state which made cultural achievement possible, to the modern profession of a doctor (Huddleston, 2014). Yet for all of Nietzsche's global references to the social orders around the world (e.g. the Indian caste system), many argue that Nietzsche's writings betray an elitist, pre-imperialist, in some ways German discourse for renewal of Europe through the creation of transnational elites (Glendinning, 2006; Losurdo, 2019; Toscano, 2020). There is a key fantasy which gives traction to Nietzsche's socio-political imagination: the seductive notion of purity of heart, souls and actions, noble souls which would be unpolluted by the forces of ressentiment.

Ressentiment thus offers a good example of a technical philosophical theme in Nietzsche's writings within which his political 'views' would be then contextualized: a spiritual, psycho-physiological poison by the virtue of which slaves compare themselves to the masters and demand "worker's rights", as Nietzsche (TI 40), outrageously from the Marxist perspective, puts it. Drochon's (2016) reading of Nietzsche's *great politics* makes use of such technical concepts – next to the ideas of death of God and master/slave morality – to reconstruct Nietzsche's substantive account of modern society on which political theory

can rest. Yet seen via a more critical Marxist sociological lens, this reading does not consider connections to the historical subjugation of particular groups.

In other words, Drochon (2016) argues that everyone would benefit from the future aristocratic social order without interrogating how this maps onto historical patterns of subjugation. The two-caste order of renumerated slaves and spiritual nobility would be mutually beneficial, Drochon (2016) argues, with a normative link between culture and genius which makes those cruel origins of the state justified in the production of the higher caste, the new few privileged "Olympian man" as in the Greek state (p.58). This raises yet again the crucial question of what the belonging to the future aristocracy is conditioned on, and how to understand the capacity to suffer spiritually and materially as a basis of one's worth and merit, which Losurdo (2019) foregrounds through a class lens. Does Nietzsche simply replace the 'aristocracy of birth' with 'aristocracy of merit', as Huddleston (2012) suggests? Nietzsche's opposition to the worker's rights and to the abolitionist movement in the US suggests a bleaker picture, at least when read through from a Marxist perspective.

The emerging puzzle is not only of how to read the texts in terms of intersecting categories of 'race' and class, but also how to read the esoteric level of the text, the forms of address to readers in the know who are positioned above of humanity in a socio-spatial sense. As I argued in Chapter 2, the latter needs to be understood in terms of the opposition to the exoteric level of the mass, the slaves, the lower castes – those who see "things from below" (BGE 1.30). The esoteric needs to be understood in terms of Nietzsche's appeal to his friends who dare to ask and think the 'forbidden', techniques of persuasion through which Nietzsche recruits particular readers towards the project of revaluation. As Faulkner (2010) argues: "The exoteric/esoteric division does not only select, but it also creates the reader who will then evaluate according to guidelines specified by Nietzsche's writings." (p.89). The key notion here is that Nietzsche does not simply describe the criteria of belonging to the lower and upper castes: the ambivalent and dissonant texts operate as a "selective apparatus by means of which the nascent human type is to be formed" (Faulkner, 2010, p.89).

This performative dimension of textuality is particularly important in the discussion on how to understand the concept of 'race' *vis-à-vis* Nietzsche's ideal of a caste society. Drochon's (2016) unsettling vision of a starkly divided humanity – presented in even bleaker terms in Losurdo's (2019) Marxist interpretation – brings to the forefront questions we might wish to leave behind: what, if any, is the role of 'race' in Nietzsche's philosophy, particularly in light of his alarming thought that all aristocratic societies need slavery, at least "in some sense" (BGE 9.257). There are two competing conceptions that came to the surface in

discussions on Nietzsche's ideal of a new aristocratic society: a canonizing view on 'race' as an indeterminate and loose category used metaphorically, and historical-Marxist reading of 'race' as interlocking with class in Nietzsche's persistent valuation of the figure of the majestic and idle nobles. In Chapter 6, I will delineate an alternative conception which needs to be understood at the semiotic level of grammar in relation to the performative dimension of Nietzsche's texts. The technical readings considered here do not pay attention to the performative dimension of textuality and ways in which Nietzsche conjures his ideal readers.

The key points in this emerging discussion on Nietzsche and 'race' are whether the notion of breeding should be read as racialized, if his concerns with morality map onto the category of 'race', and to what extent the philosopher provokes readers to interrogate their own presuppositions about minorities, from the Jews to the Chinese. There are derogative connotations in Nietzsche's description of Chinese as "industrious ants" (D 206) rarely recognized as meaningful in the secondary literature on Nietzsche's political philosophy. His comments on 'mixing up' between races poses fundamental questions about how to read these *vis-à-vis* the projects of the political and intellectual elites in 19th century Germany, in particular the prospect of pairing Prussian officers of noble rank with Jewish women which was popular at the time (Bernasconi, 2017), and which Nietzsche refers to when speaking about the "cultivation of a new caste that will rule over Europe" (BGE 8.251). Does Nietzsche reproduce 19th century stereotypes, transgress them, or twist them against each other? Readers' attachments to Nietzsche might have played a significant role in sanitizing the racialized echoes in the notion of breeding a new man. After all, members of all kinds of groups, from women to the Jews, recognize themselves in the figures of victory in Nietzsche's writings (Faulkner, 2010). Before we consider those identifications and dissonant receptive effects, let me clarify whether and how the category of 'race' applies to Nietzsche's philosophy as seen from the technical-reconstructive and Marxist-historicist angles.

Technical-reconstructive concept of 'race'

In reconstructing Nietzsche's theory of society, Drochon (2016) rehearses a dominant view in much of philosophical scholarship to date, arguing that Nietzsche's "concern with morality does not map onto his concern with race" (p.15). We can qualify this through Geuss' (2019) conceptualization of 'race' as a broad and indeterminate category, which would refer to any large group, for instance 'race of poets' or a 'race of Germans'. Yet despite the consensus view on 'race' as an unstable and loose category at the time of Nietzsche's writings, Drochon (2016) is characteristically wary of the implications one might

draw about Nietzsche's evolutionary naturalism, insisting that the 'blond beast' would denote any conquerors rather than the blond Aryans, and some 'races' in Nietzsche's examples in *Genealogy of Morality* have been 'dark-skinned' historically speaking, such the Japanese and Arabian. Rather than suspect racialized forms of supremacy echoed in Nietzsche's writings, Drochon (2016) insists that the 'blond beast of prey' is a figure of speech within Nietzsche's theory of the modern state as founded on violence, in opposition to the tradition of the social contract which emphasizes the consensual nature of social bonds.

Given Nietzsche's anti-nationalist stance, the 'blond beast' would be an excessive figure of speech with no implications for the normative dimension of his writings, i.e. how Nietzsche thought that the Greek and Roman practice of slavery shall be reinstated in the modern world. Drochon (2016) reconstructs Nietzsche's thinking on slavery *vis-à-vis* the "failure of democracy to supply meaning for existence" (p.93) – as I suggested before, a separation into two-castes with distinct cultural spheres is something that the wageworkers will apparently demand themselves. When faced with unsettling references to 'breeding' in Nietzsche's philosophy, these are situated in terms of historical forms of nationalism and racism, for instance Gobineau's vulgar theories of Aryan race's supremacy which relied on distinctions between 'White, Yellow and Black races'. Where Wagner and Gobineau would hold the mythical Aryan *ur-Volk* in high regard with starkly nationalistic outlooks, Nietzsche is said to assess the accomplishments of the Aryan 'race' as creators of the Judeo-Christian value system negatively, as creators of *ressentiment* and petty nationalism.[52]

In this sense, even though Nietzsche favours the acceleration of the process of levelling and the reinstatement of the pathos of distance between the masters and the slaves, 'race' as understood in relationship to biological essentialism would be not a determinate category, but part of the 'context' in the development of his philosophy, context that can be viewed as an unfortunate product of the times. Indeed, Drochon (2016) speaks of Nietzsche as a "prisoner of the times" (p.15), in a fashion characteristic of the historical-reconstructive scholarship, which situates the discourse of the 'decline of the races' as commonplace at the time, often painting Nietzsche as transgressing 19th century racist stereotypes, as Bernasconi (2017) documents. The references to the 'Aryan race' would be situated in the context of the discourses of degenerationism, as part of his polemical attacks on Christianity and promotion of 'interbreeding' between 'races', for instance between Jews and Prussian officers, against the vulgar racial nationalism of Wagner who viewed it as "pollution of the once-proud German-Aryan race", as Moore (2002, p.156) puts it.

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[52] See Holub (2015) for a more in-depth discussion on Nietzsche's reading of Gobineau.

Rasse in the predominant reading of Nietzsche today refers to any large group of people with some common characteristics – to the English, Poles, but also poets – and the philosopher's primary interest would lie in values and morality, so if he speaks of the 'Aryans' – only twice in his published writings, Geuss (2019, p.411) emphasizes – it would be to subvert and ironically deploy the 19th century rhetoric of degenerationism and 'decline of races' towards a critique of the Christian value-system (Moore, 2002). 'Race' for Nietzsche would be an indeterminate, broad and plastic category, with no evidence that he endorsed forms of social selection based on "hereditary determined biological differences" (Geuss, 2019, p.410). The 'blond beast of prey' is most often read as a figure of speech that came to gain unsetting meanings in the aftermath of the Nazi abuses of Nietzsche's philosophy.

Transversal class racism

Against the backdrop of technical-analytic scholarship, many readers in social theory will be less convinced whether the concepts of morality and 'race' can be so neatly separated in Nietzsche's diagnosis of degeneration, reading his underlying theory of state's violence and the loss of the pathos of distance as animating and giving traction to his critiques of values and customary morality in the first place. Since Lukács's (1980) *Destruction of Reason*, scholars on the left have been suspicious of the dividing lines between the sub- and super-humans running through Nietzsche's writings, particularly disturbing if read within the planetary geopolitics of the species (Bull, 2011), but also if one understands 'race' in pre-biologistic terms of cultural expansion, distance and segregation. As Landa (1999) argues, the "thickest of demarcation lines" in Nietzsche's oeuvre is "between the wretched, crippled, revengeful violence of the slave, and the affirmative, nonchalant, majestic operations of the master" (p.9), where the identity of the under-class of the slaves can be understood via Nietzsche's derogatory references to the Chinese workers as 'industrious ants' (D 206) who will conduct manual tasks to the benefit of the European upper classes.

While Landa (1999) does not use the category of 'race', in favour of centring Nietzsche's anti-labour stance, Losurdo (2019) argues that Nietzsche's references to the Chinese need to be understood *vis-à-vis* forms of capitalist racialized segregation: "the separation of mutually incompatible races was at the same time an international division of labour, whereby the 'barbarians' would have to be forced to carry out 'compulsory labour' to the benefit of the peoples that embodied culture" (p.320). Racial segregation for Nietzsche would be legitimated not on the premise of the purity of blood or in strictly biological terms, but as benefitting new transnational ruling classes: while in the Greek state it was the labour

of mixed-race slaves that made art possible, the philosopher thought that the modern culture will need 'new slaves': "in Europe, the Chinese would have to play a similar role to the blacks in America" (Losurdo, 2019, p.320). It is then in terms of his disquieting demand for new forms of slavery that the references to the 'interbreeding of races' should be situated, literally as a project of pairing Prussian noble officers with Jewish women in producing a master caste.[53] These should be read not at all as parodic subversions of traits associated with those groups, or merely as polemics with Wagner's anti-Semitism, in terms of a rhetorical strategy, but as evidence of Nietzsche's class racism which would favour selective reproduction of capital, spiritual strength and genius, Losurdo (2019) argues.

Slavery in Nietzsche's philosophy would be understood not in a psychological sense of enslavement of hearts and souls because of ressentiment, but in terms of his longing towards the cultural achievements made possible by the Greek slavery, the Renaissance, the Hindu Caste system and Black Atlantic slave trade, systems benefitting ruling aristocratic families, which Nietzsche contrasted with the more egalitarian Judeo-Christian worldview (Losurdo, 2019). One does not need to resort to the Marxist philosophy of history as a site of class conflict to substantiate the claim that Nietzsche's complex notion of slavery cannot be read merely as metaphorical, innocent affirmations of the master's liberation from envy and ressentiment, a purely spiritual quality with no material grounding.

Bernasconi (2017) argues that Nietzsche's references to slavery in the 1880s can be read directly *vis-à-vis* its abolition in the United States, which Nietzsche "saw in terms of a loss" (p.9), advocating for cruelty in attempts to maintain mastery over slaves in Congo. In this sense, Nietzsche's classism would interlock with anti-black racism and his contempt for the lower castes – most starkly the Hindu outcasts (Chandala) – in ways that have been sanitized in scholarship (Bernasconi, 2017, Losurdo, 2019). While Nietzsche was increasingly more opposed to the vulgar antisemitism of his contemporaries (Holub, 2015), his reference to marriage politics between Jewish women and Prussian officers of noble ranks can be understood in terms of his hopes for the breeding of a 'stronger race' or a 'new caste' that would fill in the vacuum in Europe's geopolitical landscape (BGE 8.251).

This complicates the neat picture of Nietzsche's political philosophy that Drochon (2016) presents. Reading 'race' either as a question of historical background or a figure of speech would be misleading, not least because racism has historically evolved from what

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[53] For a similar reading of these references which centers the relationship between Nietzsche's critique of anti-Semitism and his own anti-Jewish views, see Holub (2015). This discussion is outside of the concern with Nietzsche's transversal class racism but Holub (2015) offers the most extensive reading of Nietzsche's references to the Jews – both positive and negative.

Bernasconi (2017) calls a more spiritual understanding of difference, used to legitimate all kinds of made up hierarchies, onto the naturalist modern understanding which relies on a split between nature and culture, often though the notion of sub-species.[54] In the 21th century, 'race' as a category is most often used to speak of the effects of discrimination and exploitation based on skin colour, but the 17th century 'race' sciences classified bodies based on broader physiological attributes, not necessarily white versus dark skin colour (Hacking, 2005). This makes Nietzsche's possible inclusion of dark-skinned populations – such as Arabs or Turks – hardly a proof that 'race' does not matter in his critiques of values and morality, contrary to what Drochon argues. 'Race' in this sense would be linked to the strength of the nobles who conquest and rule like healthy, self-affirming barbarians: *Genealogy of Morality* elevates "the Roman, Arabic and Japanese nobility, the Homeric heroes and the Vikings", Moore (2002, p.157) documents. What distinguishes master morality would be pure strength which gives rise to their independent, proud, self-originating mode or valuation.

The anachronistic misunderstanding of 'race' as linked to skin colour reflects on the refusal to read it as a category as intersecting with the demarcations of class, especially that Nietzsche often conflates between those terms: the term *Rasse* "is often used interchangeably or in close connection with the word *Stand* (estate, class, caste), thus implying the older meaning of any group which shares a common ancestry (such as a clan or dynasty)" (Moore, 2002, p.125). This semantic link has important implications for centring Nietzsche's politics of inter-breeding as linked to the social questions around estate and reproduction, ideas which we might understand today through the notion of inter-racial marriage, if read generously in the sense that Drochon (2016) implies, or more critically as forms of forced reproductive control and even eugenics (Losurdo, 2019).

This brings us to the most urgent question concerning in what ways Nietzsche subverts, exploits, echoes or simply shares the 19th century fears about the degeneration – both moral and physical – of European 'races'. I consider this question in the next chapter. Stern (2020) points out that the much often quoted passage on the 'mixing of races' from *Genealogy of Morality* (GM 1.9) needs to be contextualized as an address to a reader with whom Nietzsche expresses some agreement. Indeed, the addressee in this passage is the figure of the *free-spirit* – whom Nietzsche previously described as 'a democrat' who cannot understand and digest some of the dangerous riddles and malicious provocations addressed to the philosophers of the future (*Versucher*) who despise the herd animal (BGE 2.44).

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[54] A similar view is presented by Geuss' (2019) contextualization of the category of 'race' in Nietzsche's writings as indeterminate, yet with no reference to the colonial context and the division of labour.

The key question is how to read then references to 'race' and breeding in terms of the esoteric level of the text, exemplified in the demands posed towards Nietzsche's ideal readers as the philosophers of the future, whom he conjures, confides in and antagonizes against the rest, in particular against democratic and socialist readers who believe in equal rights and other "modern ideas" (BGE 2.44). The notion of an ideal reader might not map directly onto the categories of nation, race, gender and class, yet Nietzsche's imagined companions are undoubtedly positioned above of humanity in terms of their power to withstand suffering, which then translates onto the prospects of belonging to the ruling caste. Rather than simply focus on the technical content of the parameters of the 'social' and 'political' in Nietzsche's thinking, this makes it all the more important to consider the power of dissonant receptive effects and performative misidentifications which the text is designed to facilitate, as various readers recognize themselves in the Nietzschean figures of victory.

Conclusion

This chapter considers the threads of the 'social' in Nietzsche's thinking which have been central in the framework of anti-sociology inspired by Baier (1981), taken up by a number of social theorists (Antonio, 1995; Aspers, 2019), yet oddly divorced from recent reconstructions of Nietzsche's *great politics* (Drochon, 2016, Losurdo, 2019; Toscano, 2020). My analysis opens up a path for bridging between these vast bodies of scholarship which do not speak to each other in the contemporary interdisciplinary literature. The framework of anti-sociology offers promising pathways for conceptualizing the 'social' in Nietzsche's thinking in terms of his hopes for the renewal of the decadent modern culture-complex, yet it often discusses Nietzsche's notions of flourishing in ways detached from how transversal class racism has animated his thinking, outside of 19th century historical context. This is at least Losurdo's (2019) diagnosis of the influence of sanitization in reception, remarkably powerful today in light of the broader political movements around racial inequalities.

The sociological readings of Nietzsche's works are fascinating to re-engage at a time when Nietzsche's complex references to slavery receive more attention. It is only once we recognize the notion of 'social relations' at the heart of Nietzsche's thinking about revaluation that we might have a meaningful discussion about the ways in which the modern parameters of 'race' and class can be at stake here. The 'social' in Nietzsche's thinking is conceived on negative terms, where modern society would be a ground for the breeding of future cultural elites which would govern in a two-caste society. Rather than attempt to resolve the debate on whether Nietzsche proposes a coherent and systematic vison for a

future revalued society, I suggested to interpret Nietzsche's thinking on the overcoming of the rule of the herd animal as malicious Dionysian temptations, addressed to his ideal readers whom he aims to persuade and recruit towards the project of revaluation. Nietzsche aims to seduce readers towards a vision of a social order based on new measures of social worth which would cut through previous distinctions of class, ethnicity, nation and religion.

There is no consensus on whether this society would be 'transracial', exemplified in the contrast between Losurdo's framework of transversal class racism and Drochon's technical reconstruction. If we recognize the notion of a two-caste society at the heart of Nietzsche's project of revaluation, it is important to ask whether and how the intersecting structures of 'race' and class come into play here, as some Marxist-left readers have recently done (Landa, 2019a, Losurdo, 2019; Toscano, 2020). The key controversy in this scholarship is how Nietzsche envisioned belonging to the transnational caste of idle nobles, and whether the new measures of social worth can be understood outside of historical patterns of subjugation in terms of an individual capacity for overcoming ressentiment and for withstanding suffering. We might find these ideas counter-intuitive from a Marxist perspective, particularly the insistence on suffering among higher rather than lower castes.

The key 'social' question is which groups or classes can become a part of the future caste of nobles, and this cannot be understood outside of the 19th century discussions on worker's rights, Nietzsche's hostility to socialism and his ambivalent relationship to capitalism that relied on racial forms of segregation (Losurdo, 2019). According to Marxist-left readings, Nietzsche thought of the working classes as a different 'race', in a way which reproduced many reactionary ideas of the aristocratic elites at the time. Ultimately, while the ancient notion of slavery in the Greek polis cannot be easily mapped onto the modern parameters of class and 'race', it no longer suffices to say that the 'social' parameters are entirely absent in Nietzsche's thinking, even if they do not function simply at the technical level of textuality that can be easily reconstructed, but become meaningful with the affective attachments of readers whom Nietzsche conjures as part of the community of re-valuators. Considering the links between the higher culture and Nietzsche's demands toward the aristocratic classes which would benefit from the surplus produced by the slave labour, this undoubtedly makes for the most scandalous element of Nietzsche's thought today. The notion of a future two-caste society divided into the spheres of idle nobles and enumerated slaves relies on specific relations between racialization, settler-colonialism and capitalism. In a Marxist perspective, the lower caste appears as dehumanized forced labour rather than as happily enslaved renumerated workers whose exploitation is no longer unjustified.

Both readings juxtaposed in this chapter place Nietzsche's politics outside of the social contract perspectives, resonant with Zarathustra's teaching of society as an 'experiment' opposed to the social contract, but Drochon's (2016) technical reconstruction does not give us sociological tools to theorize differential orderings of 'race' and class in the future two-caste society, overly optimistic in insisting that this social order would not be racialized. Drochon gestures to Nietzsche's fantasies about 'interbreeding of races' and about the migration of the Chinese as "industrious ants" (D 206) to conduct manual labour in Europe, but the frames of this political theory-building ignore difficult questions on how Nietzsche's thinking falls within the colonial binary of the West versus the 'rest' of humanity and fails to examine the role of 'race' and class as embodied, intersecting identity markers.

In contrast, Losurdo's (2019) Marxist interpretation challenges readings of Nietzsche which decontextualize his aristocratic reactionary politics, criticizing them for erasure of the question of class conflict, for omitting Nietzsche's anti-abolitionist stance, as well as for underplaying the significance of the overarching dividing line between the noble and the common in his works. I argued that this dividing line can be mapped onto the distinction between the esoteric-exoteric level of the text, seen in socio-spatial terms of the pathos of distance within an order of rank. According to Nietzsche, the esoteric sees from above, while the exoteric sees from below (BGE 1.30), in ways that corresponds to his broader demands for a new social hierarchy and an order of rank. However, it is not convincing that the exoteric-esoteric distinction maps onto the categories of 'race', class and caste in a way that would be consistent with the crudest forms of white supremacy and classism. In the next chapter, I will explore whether and how those unstable categories can be grasped in terms of the Nietzschean distinction between ascending and descending life, in particular his demands addressed towards his ideal readers - as philosophers of the future - to overcome the degeneration of humanity. The contrast between the noble/spiritual and the common/mediocre falls back on the notion of the strong and daring experimenters who can overcome illness on their way to health, versus the degenerate, malformed and unbred, which makes it all the more important to interrogate the role of Nietzsche's socio-biologism.

Chapter 4 Decadence, degenerationism and the biological metaphor of the social organism

> Slavery is necessary for the development of a higher organism, likewise castes... Obedience is compulsion, a condition of life, ultimately a stimulant to life. – Whoever has the most power to reduce others to a function, rules – the subjugated, however, have their own subjugated in turn – their perpetual struggles: their maintenance is to a certain extent condition of life for the whole.

> Nietzsche, *Nachlass*, eKGWB-1881, 11[134]

> My objection to the whole discipline of sociology in England and France is that is has only experienced the decaying forms (*Verfalls-gebilde)* of society, and innocently uses its own instinct of decay as the norm for sociological value judgments. Declining life, the loss of all the forces of organization, which is to say separation, division, subordination, and domination, is formulated as an ideal in sociology today... Our socialists are decadents, but Mr Herbert Spencer is a decadent too, – he sees something desirable in the victory of altruism!...

> Nietzsche, *Anti-Chr*ist, 37

Introduction

In the last chapter, I reviewed the literature on Nietzsche's anti-sociology as a way to complement and situate the recent reconstructions of a theory of societyin Nietzsche's political philosophy, which allowed us to tentatively formulate the absent parameters of 'the social' *vis-à-vis* the 'political' in his works. I have argued that the role of the 'social' in Nietzsche's thinking can be grasped not only at the level of the subject as Saar (2018) argues, but also in terms of processes and relations of domination – for instance (slave) labour – which animate his thinking about the renewal of the decadent cultural complex. One of the arising questions concerned the status of Nietzsche's socio-biologistic metaphors: does the

philosopher advocate for slavery and breeding in a racialized sense, or are those polemical provocations not to be taken as his socio-political ideals? Does Nietzsche conjure any specific racialized and classed populations as his ideal readers, or is his project of revaluation open to anyone who has the right sensibility and is capable of withstanding spiritual suffering?

Departing from the division in the contemporary scholarship between scholars who contextualize Nietzsche's rhetorical use of tropes (Moore, 2002), versus interpreters who hold the philosopher accountable for an organistic notion of the social body (Jones, 2010; Losurdo, 2019, Waite, 1996), I will argue that we need to embed his notions of racialized breeding and degeneration not only within the context of his times as historical-reconstructive scholarship allows us to do, but also *vis-à-vis* his forms of conjuring the ideal versus unworthy readers, where the former guard the boundaries of the text. In the last chapter, we saw that the figures of victory in Nietzsche's writings such as the philosopher of the future cannot be easily mapped onto contemporary distinctions between 'races', classes and ethnicities. At the time of Nietzsche's writings, 'race' was not understood in terms of the split between nature and culture, or biology and the social (Bernasconi, 2017; Moore, 2002), as we are likely to think in the aftermath of colonialism and WWII. At the same time, one cannot deny that the colonial imaginary of the enslaved, animalized others violently excluded as outlaws of humanity animates Nietzsche's thinking in ways that have been often sanitized in reception, not least in the tradition of anti-sociology discussed in the last chapter.

The key question in this debate is how to interpret the status of socio-biological metaphors in Nietzsche's writings, which has been largely divorced from his agonistic politics, and still needs to be more explicitly linked to frameworks which center Nietzsche's *great politics* (Babich, 2019; Bittner, 2010; Drochon, 2016). Faulkner (2013), among others, shows that Nietzsche often used the terms 'body', 'society' and 'soul' interchangeably, for instance when he speaks of "society" as "a body constructed of many souls" (BGE 1.19), reflective of how the biologistic vocabulary of drives, cells, tissues, colonies, instincts and organisms shaped his broader thinking about the individual and culture. The notion of society as a biological organism is of course not unique to Nietzsche's writing – Durkheim, among others, relied on the biological metaphors of growth and evolution, reflective of how broader bio-medical knowledge animated emerging social sciences, in particular early classical sociology (Levine, 1995; Mouton, 2009). Yet these biologistic metaphors are particularly suspicious today in light of concerns around Nietzsche's radical aristocratism and his thinking of a two-caste society based on interdependent (vital) 'parts' (Losurdo, 2019; Toscano, 2020).

This raises a key question about Nietzsche's relationship to Social Darwinism and the discourses of 'fitness'. Moore (2002) argues that Nietzsche's biologistic framework for conceiving of society as an aristocratic structure should be read in close proximity to Spencer's framework of social evolution, while the framework of anti-sociology often attempts to emphasize Nietzsche's distance from the discourse of the 'survival of the fittest' (Antonio, 1995; Aspers, 2007). This chapter argues that the discourses of fitness, degeneration and decadence are highly relevant for understanding the scope of Nietzsche's challenges towards sociology as a science that would embrace the experimental mission of overcoming humanity and the herd animal (D 543).[55] The literature on the relationship between Nietzsche and sociology often domesticates unsettling questions about the role that 19th century biological theories and metaphors play in Nietzsche's thinking about the 'social' (Aspers, 2007, Piazzesi, 2013). This brings us back to the question posed in Chapter 2, whether *perspectivism* should be understood as a psycho-biological notion (Gemes, 2013), in terms of plurality of knowledge claims (Fulkerson-Smith, 2010), or rather as linked to the socio-political discourse of aristocratic radicalism (Losurdo, 2019). The key question here is how to understand the naturalistic-scientific register of the dangerous art of temptation and experimentation (*Versucher-kunst)* which aims to overcome degeneration of humanity

Nietzsche's critique of Social Darwinism needs to be understood in this context, as his key criticism of Spencer is that it promotes "declining life" (AC 37). Recently, the distinction between ascending and declining/descending life has been read as a principle of selection to the community of the nobles in Nietzsche's hierarchical two-caste society (Drochon, 2016). The key question is then whether this distinction between ascending and descending life that underlines Nietzsche's critique of sociology can be understood at the level of groups, classes and 'races'. There is a growing chasm between scholars who argue that Nietzsche often subverts the racial cliches of his contemporaries, including the quasi-scientific discourse of degenerationism (Moore, 2002), and Marxist-leftist readings which link the organic and medical references to his reactionary conservative politics (Landa, 2019; Losurdo, 2019). The notion of life's becoming - stretches across mythical-spiritual, historical and naturalistic registers - has been often associated with vitalism, organic notions of culture and crude racial biologism (Jones, 2010; Lukács, 1981; Toscano, 2020). Yet his biological speculations – for instance on heredity - are said to be part of his "perspectivist-

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[55] Nietzsche's challenges toward sociology need to be read within his broader poeticization of the scientific premise and the promise of 'naturalizing morality'. The notion of 'naturalizing morality' is crucial in the discussion on Nietzsche's affirmative ethics (Stern, 2020), as well as explorations of Nietzsche's reliance on 19th century scientific frameworks (Emden, 2014).

experimentalist ethos" (Geuss, 2019, p.410), rather than to be taken at face-value in terms of Nietzsche's considered positions on reproductive hygiene and 'race' (Moore, 2002). Nietzsche's notion of an ascending life brings questions about the relationship between evolutionary naturalism and his politics: "when blended with racism and social Darwinism, naturalism can become an extremely potent and dangerous political ideology" (Zimmerman, 2008, p.170). While there are good reasons to believe that Nietzsche did not endorse forms of social selection based on hereditary determined biological differences, it is important to understand in what ways his ideas about the social body rely on the discourses of naturalism, degeneration and decadence.

We face here similar interpretative problems as we have seen with the tensions between the analytic-technical and hermeneutic-continental modes of reading Nietzsche in Chapters 1 and 2, yet these difficulties are only more manifold – the philosophical tradition does not offer any ready-made interpretative scripts one can follow in an attempt to read Nietzsche's 'socio-political' vision, because the question of the 'social' and 'society' are largely outside of the orbit of ahistorical and abstract philosophical inquiry. Nietzsche's writings precede the modern split between nature and culture, or the biological and the social, and so one runs the risk of imposing anachronistic categories in trying to make sense of his critique of sociology. While Nietzsche's thinking of society in biologistic terms has been situated in relationship to the bio-medical discourses at the time (Moore, 2002), this chapter considers the connections between his esoteric forms of address and his ideas on the 'social'.

Nietzsche's critique of sociology and *becoming of life*

When Nietzsche speaks of the discipline of the 19th century sociology – usually derogatively – it is an emerging formation bound to the Western nation-state which attempts to compete with political economy (Lepenies, 1988), to be demarcated from cultural and psychological sciences (Solms-Laubach, 2007). Classical sociologists pretrained to a (socio)scientific worldview outside of literary description, yet the discipline is struggling to find its 'scientific' ground as an heir of the philosophy of history (Lepenies, 1988), a discipline that Nietzsche had more patience for, partially transforming its underlying premises into a genealogical inquiry. Despite his impassioned critiques of 19th century sociology, Nietzsche captivated many readers in the orbit of sociological and social theory. Departing from Nietzsche's suspicions against Spencer's and Comte's social science, many tried to reconstruct, clarify and assess the multi-faceted conceptions of human particularity and perspectivism that run

through Nietzsche's works, most influentially under the framework of anti-sociology as we have seen in the last chapter (Antonio, 1995; Piazzesi; 2013; Solms-Laubach, 2007).

As such, this literature offers indispensable paths for querying the threads of the 'social' in Nietzsche's philosophy, neglected in the analytic-technical philosophical tradition which rarely conceives of the interconnected 'social' and 'political' parameters in Nietzsche's thinking, considered to be blind-spots. The framework of anti-sociology is particularly illumining in clarifying Nietzsche's double-fold critique of the rising science of 19th century sociology, as centered around the promise of human flourishing beyond the decadent horizon of repressive Socratic rationalization. Baier (1981), as we saw in the last chapter, understood the distinction between ascending versus declining/descending life which animates Nietzsche's critique of sociology in the context of his experimental (*versucherische)* question on how to breed a new type of being. However, scholars who contribute to this literature seem to be invested in a sanitized image of Nietzsche as a thinker of creative affirmation, aesthetic self-fashioning and a critical socio-ontology outside of his references to ascending life and breeding understood in a biologistic, evolutionary sense.

Indeed, Nietzsche often emerges as a quasi-existentialist philosopher who advocates for "open cultural competition" among creative modes of life against the "herd type of social selection", as Antonio (1995, p.19) puts it, or a "promoter of reflexivity" in all knowledge pursuits (Piazzesi, 2013). Aspers (2007) argues that Nietzsche "regards the social domain in particular as socially constructed" (p.494). While those are helpful ways to understand how Nietzsche's philosophy might speak to the threads of the 'social' through the lens of later sociological theories, those readings rarely interrogate the specificity of the 19th century political, cultural and in particular bio-medical contexts in which Nietzsche's thought is embedded, the complex meanings of 'life' across naturalist and mythical registers, which arguably cannot be easily separated from his overarching metaphor of the social body.

Most interpreters emphasize Nietzsche's opposition to the rising discipline of sociology, in particular the adaptive and decadent social science of Spencer and Comte (Antonio, 1995; Aspers, 2007). In the absence of clear counter-ideals for the rising science, readers speculate about Nietzsche's own ideals for social and cultural inquiry through the lens of later theoretical frameworks, positioning themselves as champions of a Nietzschean sociology which takes seriously his ideas on psychology and history (Antonio, 1995; Piazzesi; 2013; Runciman, 2000; Solms-Laubach, 2007). However, rather than speculate on what kind of sociology might be consistent with Nietzschean notions of power, genealogy and morality, I would like to draw attention to his own hopes for sociology - alongside medical and

physiological sciences - which come to the forefront in an unusually affirmative form of address in one of his middle works, *Daybreak*. The following aphorism (D 453) is distinctive among Nietzsche's (D 453) comments on 19th social science, as it points to the potential that he saw in the discipline of sociology which the contemporary science fell short of:

> To build anew the laws of life and behaviour – for this task our sciences of physiology, medicine, sociology and solitude are not yet sure enough of themselves: and only from them can we take the foundation stones for new ideals (if not the ideals themselves). Thus we are living either in a *preliminary* or *posterior* existence, depending on taste and talent, and it is best in this *interregnum* to be to every possible extent our own *reges* and to found little *experimental nations* [*Versuch-Staaten*]. We are experiments: let us also want to be such!

My argument is that this form of address should be read as an early sketch for the esoteric rhetoric of the philosopher of the future (*Versucher*) that we explored in Chapter 2. The reference to 'solitude' in this overlooked passage brings us directly in the orbit of the philosopher of the future rather than the *free-spirit*. It is worth to recall that the latter are "slaves of democratic taste", without their own "solitude" (BGE 2.44). In contrast, the philosophers of the future channel their experimentation towards the socio-political task of commanding, ready to rise up to the task of creating new values and ideals outside of the adaptive valuations of the herd. This form of address complements Nietzsche's critiques of sociology, as a science born "out of the spirit of decadence" – as Baier (1981, p.9) put it - with nihilistic-destructive rather than life-ascending potential. The notion of *experimental nations [Versuch-staaten]* involves an appeal to the future (social) scientists, highlighting Nietzsche's hope that bio-social sciences will someday offer grounds for new ideals.

The spatial relationship of exoteric-esoteric – where some are placed above of humanity – gains a temporal dimension in this passage. Depending on "taste and talent" (D 453), Nietzsche's companions are positioned either prior to or as executioners of the project of revaluation, understood as "the task of doing away with moral feelings and judgments" (D 453). When read as a site of the esoteric rhetoric, this passage can be understood as a form of recruiting the reader towards the community of future re-evaluators as experimenters (*Versucher*), who would be 'in the know' as to the new ideals on which new society can be

built. In Chapter 3, we saw how Nietzsche's ideal of a two-caste society in which the higher caste would be the creative legislators of humanity maps onto the socio-spatial dimension of the exoteric-esoteric distinction, based on a division between those who see from below, the caste of the slaves, and the few idle nobles who see from above.

Here the emphasis in on the ways through which the community of experimenters runs counter to the prejudices and limitations of late 19th century sciences, such as sociology, physiology and medicine, sciences which will play a crucial role in the project of revaluation. Nietzsche's demands towards future bio-social sciences cannot be met in the present and require the formation of aristocratic experimental *political* communities which would govern themselves in an interregnum. This connection brings us in proximity to the naturalistic-scientific register of the philosopher of the future (*Versucher*) who is a commander and legislator, as well as a daring and brave researcher. The genuine philosophers of the future are not only positioned above humanity in a socio-spatial sense, but also temporally, inhabiting an untimely perspective in relationship to the immature 19th century sciences.

Nietzsche's esoteric form of address relies on the broader notion of 'untimeliness' that comes into the forefront in *Unfashionable Observations*, in particular in the third essay *On The Uses and Disadvantage of History for Life*. Nietzsche asks here what it means to write history which would serve life, as he derogatively refers to moderns as "walking encyclopedias" (p.110) who merely accumulate knowledge. Nietzsche's critiques of his contemporaries in this essay have been contextualized *vis-à-vis* the Prussian state reforms at the time, including the reforms of mass education and leadership institutions, not just in relation to his critique of the Hegelian philosophy of history (Drochon, 2016; Gray, 1995).[56] Nietzsche's interest in history from the perspective of life can be understood in relationship to the questions about national German identity in the aftermath of Bismarck's 1871 victory over the French (Geuss, 2019; Gray, 1995). Once we take this historical and cultural context of nation-building into account, the philosopher's mocking of his contemporaries who consume history by strolling world exhibitions and work in the "factory of scholarship" (p.136) gains rhetorically charged meanings. Nietzsche is using ridicule to alter his German readers, so they look differently at or even break with their supposedly 'cultivated' styles of living in a mass society, positioning themselves against their own contemporaries.

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[56] Given that the essay has been written in the aftermath of the Prussian military victory over the French in 1871, it can be interpreted in terms of Nietzsche's critique of German cultural and educational institutions (Gray, 1995). Porter (2019) clarifies how "the immediate target is the excessive historicism of his age as epitomized by Leopold von Ranke in 1824, for whom the task of the historian was not 'to judge the past 'to judge the past... for the benefit (*zum Nutzen*) of times to come, but simply to describe it as it really happened" (p.64).

In this sense, Nietzsche's critique of popular culture and mediocrity can be viewed as part of his appeal to the reader to misidentify with his contemporaries, a broader persuasion technique through which he attempts to recruit an audience: "the function of Nietzsche's esoteric address must also be understood in temporal terms, as a somewhat a-historical, or more accurately untimely, perspective: a perspective not limited by the particular prejudices of its time, but instead running counter to them" (Faulkner, 2010, p.78). The temporal quality of *Unzeitgemässigkeit* has been recently translated as 'unfashionable' rather than as 'untimely' to emphasize ways in which Nietzsche as a classical philologist attempts to "stand outside or above all the cultural movements that attained currency in his time, to belong to cultural elites" (Gray, 1995, p.387). In opposing the instrumentalization of the state for the sake of nation-building (*Kulturstaat*), Nietzsche positions himself as a critic of "arrogance and self-aggrandizement" of the German elites, mobilizing his readers to despise and mock the newspaper-reading bourgeoisie whom he spitefully calls "cultivated philistines" (Gray, 1995, p.396).[57] In a Marxist interpretation, Losurdo (2019) reads this as part of the aristocratic reaction against new forms of industrial and financial wealth, where Nietzsche's hostility to the 'cultured' masses would be a site of his reactionary class politics.

Nietzsche's characteristic move in juxtaposing the healthy ancient Greek culture and mass modern society is the enigmatic appeal to the *perspective of life* for the benefit of the times to come: "the injustice peculiar to the critical form of historical knowledge consists in judging and condemning the past and the present for the sake of the becoming of future life", Lemm (2014, p.116) clarifies. It is the unfashionable angle on modern life gives traction to 'critical history' with its constructive orientation toward the future.[58] Geuss (1997) read the positive valuation of 'life' in Nietzsche's early philosophy of history in relation to the notion of genealogy as promoting a life-enhancing perspective. This points us back to the overarching distinction between ascending and degenerating/descending life which Nietzsche often relies on in discussing history, sociology, culture and individuality.

Indeed, Nietzsche's demands towards future bio-social sciences in *Daybreak* need to be placed in terms of his broader remarks on society conceived in biologistic terms as a social organism (GM 2.12). Moore (2002) reminds us that this is "a development which reflects the

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[57] This comes into the forefront in the first piece, *David Strauss the Confessor and the Writer*. What incited Nietzsche's fury was the "popular acclaim that the book and its author [Strauss] had won among the German educated public" (Gray, 1995, p.397). See Bull (2011) for an alternative reading of the figure of the 'cultivated philistine'.

[58] Nietzsche famously distinguishes between three forms of history – monumental, antiquarian and critical – which would respond to different cultural needs: the need to act and thrive, the need to preserve and the need to judge and condemn.

mutual influence of the discourses of biology and sociology at this time" (p.78). This mutual influence is visible in Nietzsche's later main charge against Spencer's sociology which promotes "declining life, loss of all the forces of organization, which is to say separation, division, subordination, and domination" (AC 37). We encounter then a broader question of how to understand the notions of ascending and declining life in relation to Nietzsche's critique of social science. If history, as all forms of knowledge, must be "put at the service of life" (Geuss, 1997, p.285), rather than studied for its own sake, how to interpret that sense of a life-enhancing versus degenerating of life-denying perspective? Or as Nietzsche puts it in reformulating the ideal of the physician of culture in *Gay Science*: how are "total health of a time, people, race or of humanity" (GS 2 Preface) the stakes of philosophizing?

Those formulations are surely seductive in promising us different epistemic grounds for the future sciences, but Nietzsche does not clarify the vantage point from which to study the historical or social world in an way that would be life-ascending, much less methods for such an inquiry. Instead, we encounter an imperative to experiment and even build aristocratic socio-political communities. If the texts are read as a site of esoteric rhetoric, which rests on the division between high and low level of rank (Lampert, 1993), it is the future reader who has to fill in the blanks in the ideal of the cultural physician surveying socio-historical phenomena through a medical lens, as we saw in Chapter 2. In light of the oscillating meanings of 'life' between the philological-mythical and naturalistic-scientific registers, many readers of Nietzsche's anti-sociology move away from his socio-biology and critique of Darwinist social science as reproducing instincts of decay (AC 37). Yet recent readings of Nietzsche as a philosopher of racialized breeding, degeneration and physiological decadence suggest that socio-biology might be more central in his overarching notion of an ascending life than one might at first assume (Bernasconi, 2017; Jones, 2010; Losurdo, 2019).

Faulkner (2010) argues that it is precisely Nietzsche's critique of Darwinism – alongside his polemics against feminism, socialism and democracy - which reveals his belief in the necessity of inequality and breeding for the health of culture, as he attempts to recruit readers who will help him "shift criteria on which social worth is measured" (p.83). Indeed, Nietzsche's texts conjure and generate rather than simply describe particular types – for instance the untimely philosophers or social scientists of the future – and his rhetoric needs to be understood as producing dissonant receptive effects. The key emerging question is whether Nietzsche has any preconceived ideas about who would belong to the community of his ideal readers as re-evaluators, for instance in terms of 'race', class and disability positions, and whether these can be mapped onto the distinction between ascending and

descending life. Let me then turn towards Nietzsche's relationship toward Social Darwinism, as this is the case on which Nietzsche's crusade against 19th century social science and 'declining life' rests, as linked to his belief in the necessity of a new social hierarchy.[59]

Spencer's administrative nihilism and *will to power*

Nietzsche's critique of Social Darwinism has often been read in relationship to his counter-ideal of the *will to power* (Aspers, 2007, Losurdo, 2019). Most interpreters emphasize Nietzsche's distance from Spencer's vision of the reconciliation of altruism and egoism (Aspers, 2006, Piazzesi, 2013), at times exploring Nietzsche's fascination with evolutionary theory (Moore, 2002; Stern, 2019). Nietzsche is said to be hostile towards what Spencer represents as a 'decadent' biologist and social scientist who popularized the discourse of 'fitness' (Antonio, 1995; Piazzesi, 2013). Moore (2002) argues that the philosopher was particularly opposed to the idea of self-preservation as the end-goal of the (social) organism or the species.[60] Spencer's theories were not merely concerned with the biological or organic level – Spencer conceived of social evolution as part of the planetary level of humanity and the cosmos (Moore, 2002). This places Nietzsche directly onto territory that emerges as social rather than purely naturalistic, in terms of implications at the level of the species, as a precursor of the vitalist stands of thinking about the body politic. These rely on racialized metaphors for conceiving of culture as achieved through the civilizing process (Jones, 2010).

Revisiting Nietzsche's description of Spencer as an 'administrative nihilist' in *Genealogy of Morality* is illuminating in light of the controversies around the biologistic metaphor of society. Originally Huxley's remark (1867), Nietzsche suggests that Spencer's reactive conception of a self-regulating social organism is "more than administration" (GM 2.12).[61] He summarizes Spencer's notion of life "as an increasingly efficient inner adaptation to external circumstances" against which he speaks of the *will to power*, as "overpowering, dominating, re-interpretation, adjustment in the development of physiological organs" (GM 2.12). This is part of a broader discussion on punishment which did not "evolve for the

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[59] Piazzesi (2013) argues that Nietzsche's critique of the scientific basis of a sociological description come into sharpest focus with his reading of Comte, the first one to speak of sociology in scientific terms. Nietzsche's reception of Comte is mediated through Mill. See Aspers (2007) for further discussion.

[60] See for instance BGE 1.13: "physiologists should think twice before positioning the drive for self-preservation as the cardinal drive of an organic being". Nietzsche's alternative conception of *the will to power* has been read in terms of his broader productive misreading of Darwin (see Emden, 2014; Grosz, 2004; Moore, 2002).

[61] My analysis here is indebted to Moore (2002) who draws attention to the rhetorical force of Nietzsche's remark.

purpose of punishing" as utilitarian philosophers might hold, but rather has been subject to "the spontaneous, aggressive, expansive, re-interpreting, re-directing and formative forces" (GM 2.12). We can see here that the notion of the *will to power* as antagonism, expansion and conflict concerns both physiological and socio-political phenomena, as Nietzsche discusses the non-linear evolution of punishment over organic history. He characteristically relies on an analogy between a "physiological organ" and a "legal institution, social custom, political usage, art form or religious rite" (GM 2.12) as subject to the *will to power.*

Spencer's normative vision invokes the image of a perfect society in which no action is purely to one's own benefit, where antagonistic parts are in peaceful harmony and punishment has only 'useful' function. For Nietzsche, this perfectly balanced, self-regulating social organism invokes a nihilistic state in which decadence and weakness become bureaucratically administered, when each part is a function of the whole, or to the benefit of others. It is not a co-incidence that Nietzsche framed the *will to power* against the "idiosyncratic democratic prejudices" underlying modern, Spencerian biology (GM 1.2).[62] Losurdo (2019) argues that the notion of the *will to power* has to be understood in terms of racialized class antagonism that Nietzsche transposes onto biology and philosophy of history. This explains suspicions against Nietzsche's socio-biologism and the cosmic, visceral imaginary of life's becoming as a site of racial discourses (Jones, 2010; Toscano, 2020).

How to understand the implicit socio-political parameters in Nietzsche's critique of Social Darwinism? While Huxley opposed Spencer's individualism, Moore (2002) argues, Huxley's negative view of the role of the state in terms of regulating nature, Nietzsche reverses the premises of Spencer's physiological ethics to conceive of individuation as a locus of ethical and social life. In doing so, he draws on the vocabulary of the battle of drives to conceive of experimental individuals (*Versuch-individuen*) who might "perish under the pressure of the internal struggle" (Moore, 2002, p.83), if they are not capable of regulating their conflicting drives. The individual would consist of instincts and drives which find new adaptations in the external social world. At the collective level, such an experimental understanding of the invidivual fuels "the tendency towards greater individualization and organic complexity" (Moore, 2002, p.83) understood in terms of an ethics of the *will to power*. The significance of physiology for Nietzsche's thinking about the self as a complex social structure consisting of multiple interacting drives is undeniable, even if his ideal of mastery over drives is impossible to reconstruct in terms of a unified position (Stern, 2015).

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[62] Piazzesi (2013) adds "anarchists, democrats, ideologists of evolution" (p.348) to the list of decadents that Nietzsche criticizes alongside Spencer, which suggests socio-political stakes, but her main focus in analysing Nietzsche's relationship to emerging social science lies in epistemology and ethics.

In contrast to the readings which emphasize individuation as a precondition for ethics of the *will to power*, Losurdo (2019) reads Nietzsche's critique of Spencer in terms of his dissatisfaction that "selection did not necessarily lead to the triumph of the best" (p.683). He locates Nietzsche's critique of Social Darwinism in proximity to eugenics which "arose and expressed itself precisely because of its anxiety about the selection in reverse underway: due to their fertility, the lower classes and the malformed were threatening to take over" (Losurdo, 2019, p.693). We will return to the image of 'malformed' later in this chapter. For now, it is important to note that it is difficult to separate Nietzsche's critique of Social Darwinism and sociology from his derogative position on socialism as a movement of the working classes – Nietzsche also thought of "a socialist utopia where 'all will be well'" as decadent (CW 4). A remarkably similar image animates Spencer's writings on a future species which would exist in a state of "perfect equilibrium, of complete internal adaptation of both their physical and social environment", as Moore (2002, p.64) puts it.

Ultimately, Nietzsche does not offer us a straightforward alternative to the figure of the life-denying sociologist who advocates for altruism and peace – in the way that he opposes a 'music-making' to a 'decadent' Socrates (see Hicks and Rosenberg, 2003). Perhaps this is why so many readers in the sociological tradition reimagine social science in his wake outside of the evolutionary framework, emphasizing instead Nietzsche's distance from Spencer's evolutionism which subscribes to teleological logics of history (Antonio, 1995; Aspers, 2007; Piazzesi, 2013). Yet as Moore (2002, p.38) compellingly argues, the significance of the biologistic metaphors in Nietzsche's speculations about society as an aristocratic structure cannot be put aside:

> Just as Nietzsche claims that every peak of cultural evolution has been the work of an aristocratic civilisation, (...) so he links biological evolution to an aristocracy of the body. The development of such 'aristocratic' hierarchies, in which the strongest parts within the organism direct and subdue the weaker ones, is for Nietzsche – and here he is (...) following Roux – the means by which specialisation of function takes place, with a more complex organic structure emerging through the subsumption of lower forms by higher ones: cells by tissues, tissues by organs and so on.

Where Spencer hoped for a future altruistic society, Nietzsche thought of individuation as a basis for social life, yet both relied on the metaphors of slavery and struggle of parts within organisms which demonstrates semantic transfers between the colonial context and the 19th century biological sciences. Nietzsche's ideals of "experimental nations" (*Versuch-staaten*) and "experimental individuals" (*Versuch-individueen*) bring us back to the art and science of experimentation (*Versucher-kunst*) which does not shy away from what is "dangerous" and "tyrannical" in human beings (BGE 2.44), not least the thought about the necessity of slavery. In this context, the charges Nietzsche formulates towards 19th century sociology as decadent cannot be separated from his broader physiological thinking about life's becoming, ethics and power. Nietzsche's demands towards sociology would go against the life-denying science of Spencer, but his own ideas about overcoming decadence are much closer to the evolutionary-biologistic framework than many would like to admit.

Physiology of decadence and the philosopher of the future as a cultural physician

Today the notion of 'decadence' is often considered outside of the physiological framework (Huddleston, 2019; More, 2018). In the broadest sense, the etymology of the term 'decadence' invokes the notions of malaise, exhaustion and disintegration, capturing the spirit of an entire *Zeitgeist* of the late 19th century society, a sense of decline, known to be as old as "civilization itself", as Moore (2002, p.116) puts it.[63] Nietzsche undoubtedly used the term in a pejorative sense: his accusations of Spencer as a decadent biologist and social scientist are mean to be insulting, and his opposition to the 19th century as decadent and immature could not be sharper. In the last chapter, we saw how the concept of decadence underlies his late philosophy, spanning across the spheres of art, physiology and even politics, as many interpreters emphasize (Losurdo, 2019; Moore, 2002; More, 2019). Under the term of 'physiology of decadence', Nietzsche considers how the moral categories of good and evil would map onto questions of diet, smell, climate, digestion, sleep and health: the interplay between the environment, physiology and evolutionary development of human psychology (Deutscher, 2005; Emden, 2014). It is in this sense that the philosopher of the future puts on a mask of a physician, diagnosing different diseases among his

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[63] Contemporary readers might have a different understanding of the term, considering its connotations with extravagance and idleness, aestheticized in the modernist traditions of Huysmans, Baudelaire and Wilde. Once a mark of cultural and physiological disintegration, the term 'decadent' gains positive meanings as we travel across centuries: it denotes a call to embrace 'life' despite what is weakening, decaying and falling apart in a culture, worldview or institution. In a sociological perspective, it has been used as a classifier for what is pathological (Sachs, 2019).

contemporaries, presumably deceived about what is good for them: whether Christian values, Wagner's *Parsifal*, alcohol, binary moral commands, or a heavy, German diet.

Decadence has been often considered as a physiological category specifically in relation to the discourses of health and sickness (Losurdo, 2019; Moore, 2002). Nietzsche's reference to the "failed, downcast, broken" (GM 3.14), for instance, has been interpreted in terms of racialized class positions, where some members of the political community would be "banished to the realm of sickness" (Losurdo, 2019, p.892). Losurdo (2019) emphasizes that Nietzsche repeatedly uses the language of physio-psychology whereby it is the sick in the body – even more than in the soul – that would be excluded and kept at a distance "from the noble and aristocratic world of Nietzsche's books" (p.889). Nietzsche often conceives of the pathos of distance necessary for a healthy culture by using the notions of illness: "it was disgusting and nauseating to have to endure the proximity or even the approach of 'something failed', to have to 'smell the bowels of a failed soul'" (Losurdo, 2019, p.889).[64]

Arguably, the physiological dimension of decadence as linked to the notions of health and illness plays a crucial role in Nietzsche's overarching distinction between descending and ascending life in his late works, which animates his critique of Spencer's social science as rooted in instincts of decay (AC 37). As we have seen in the last chapter, the counter-movement of declining and descending life gives traction to Nietzsche's fantasy about the revaluation of the cultural complex, which has been grasped in terms of an anti-sociology (Antonio, 1995; Baier, 1981). In his late works, Nietzsche (TI 33) emphasizes that the notion of ascending and descending life needs to be understood at the collective level of humanity and the species, rather than through an atomistic, individualist view of the 'social':

> Individuals can be seen as representing either the ascending or the descending line of life. (...) If they represent the ascending line then they have a really extraordinary value, - and since the whole of life advances through them, the effort put into their maintenance, into establishing their optimal conditions, might even be extreme. Of course, 'individuals', as peoples and philosophers have understood them so far, are a mistake: individuals are nothing in themselves, they are not atoms (...) -

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[64] In classical reception, Simmel (2009) draws attention to Nietzsche's comments on smell: "It is noteworthy that someone of such a fanatically exclusive individualism as Nietzsche often said openly of the type of person most hateful to him, 'they do not smell good'" (p.578). See Partyga (2016) for a more sustained exploration of Simmel's engagement with Nietzsche.

each individual is the entire single line of humanity up through himself... If he represents descending development, decay, chronic degeneration, disease (-illnesses are fundamentally consequences of decay, not its causes), then he is of little value and in all fairness he should be taking away as little as possible from those who have turned out well. He is really just a parasite on them.

The key question is whether Nietzsche's reference to the 'parasites' and 'degenerate' who exploit the life-ascending individuals are to be understood as polemical weapons against Wagner, Christianity and the Christian Reich, or whether these are related to Nietzsche's ideas on how a future revalued society should be organized. In the last chapter, we saw how the division between the upper and lower classes would correspond to the division between those in the know and those outside of the know, while here the degenerate, prarasite and the sick are obstacles in the project of revaluation. Drochon (2016) argues that the prospects of belonging to the two different castes depend precisely on whether one represents ascending or descending life (p.111), which suggests that Nietzsche's remarks on the 'degenerate' as fundamentally unequal need to be considered in terms of his *great politics* that would be oriented towards breeding a new type of being.

According to Drochon (2016), the chances of selection to the party of life depend on how one responds to the riddle of the eternal return, the question whether one wants for their life to be repeated in eternity (p.111-112). We should keep in mind that the riddle of the eternal return is addressed to the *Versucher*, suggesting that Nietzsche conjures his ideal future readers precisely as the philosophers of the future who will belong to the upper caste of the few, against those who represent descending and degenerating life – the malformed. Nietzsche often calls for an 'order of rank' among moralities, people and souls (BGE 263; BGE 228), suggesting that perspectives grounded in ascending life are more valuable than others, in the sense that they express a fuller and richer set of drives and affects. It is the capacity to suffer and overcome illness that determines the order of rank, as a distinguishing quality of the noble souls (BGE 270). The collective of re-valuators who are capable of suffering consists of philosophers who are positioned above humanity and are "able to gaze with many eyes and consciences from the heights into every distance" (BGE 5.211).

This notion of perspectivism as reserved for higher natures comes into sharp focus with Nietzsche's appeals to the philosophers of the future who are ready to act as

"commanders and legislators" (BGE 5.211): "True philosophers reach for the future with a creative hand and everything that is and was becomes a means, a tool, a hammer for them. Their "knowing" is creating, their creating is a legislating, their will to truth is – *will to power*" (BGE 5.211). In my reading, their knowledge is productive in the sense that it translates onto legislation in the socio-political realm. The philosophers of the future whom Nietzsche conjures as his ideal readers embody the principle of the *will to power*, of life as oriented towards exploitation, conflict and expansion, rather than self-preservation (BGE 1.13). At the same time, they are in the know on how to legislate, ready to rise up to the task of governing humanity. While in *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche considers the notions of breeding, physiology and degeneration without references to the parasites and the malformed, in the *Twilight of the Idols* he claims that the ascending movement of life must get rid of what is degenerate, sick and parasite, giving an example of doctors' responsibility of restricting "the right to procreate" (TI 36). These suggest that the notion of breeding a new man needs to be considered in proximity to the racialized discourses of hygienic reproduction.

However, readings of Nietzsche's counter-ideal of an life-ascending sociology have been interpreted outside of his references to the degenerate, while perspectivism is considered in relation to the situated character of all epistemic standpoints, rather than as reserved for the noble natures (Antonio, 1995; Baier, 1981; Piazzesi, 2013). Piazzesi (2013), for instance, reconstructs Nietzsche's possible contribution to sociological theory through the lens of reflexivity, arguing that his suspicions against the discipline would be against "decontextualized epistemological value" of Spencer and Comte's positivist frameworks, while he was encouraging future social scientists to "move towards an understanding of the social and the historical as 'total' and systematically diversified, rather than unitary" (p.359). This sympathetic reading of Nietzsche as someone who suspends epistemic premises underlying sociology is a good example of what Bull (2011) describes as reading for victory, which I have considered in Chapters 2 and 3. It is a kind of reading which identifies with the goals and ideals that are presented in an attractive light in the text, in this case the rebellious, daring truth-seeking of the sociologist or philosopher of the future, ignoring the ways in which Nietzsche denigrates the experiences of many groups.

In recovering the sociological reserves in Nietzsche's works, commentators are unlikely to see in themselves the objects of those derogative remarks – often emphasizing distance between 20th and 21st century sociology *vis-à-vis* Spencer's and Comte's positivist, evolutionary and moralistic frameworks: "If 19th century sociology was about sketching a way of linking psychic, social, and historical processes to one another", Piazzesi (2013)

argues, "Nietzsche exhorts sociologists to carry out such a task in an epistemological framework which is perspectivistic – that is, which requires and entails a deeply reflexive dimension for knowledge" (p. 358). Perspectivism is often interpreted as Nietzsche's potential contribution to sociology, either in terms of reflexivity (Piazzesi, 2013) or radical social constructivism (Antonio 1995; Aspers, 2007). Antonio emphasizes that perspectivism would not imply the recognition of all points of knowledge as valid, but it is directed against "the eclipse of distance" and "leveling of values", as the philosopher of the future promotes conditions for "diverse value preferences" which would "naturally arise from healthy bodies and different social locations" (p.17) - yet this discussion remains at the abstract level, without considering what is a healthy body in Nietzsche's fantasy of a revalued future.

What is rarely recognized is exploring Nietzsche's anti-sociology is that the notion of perspectivism of the philosophers of the future falls back on the distinction between ascending and descending life, which Nietzsche introduces not only in relation to the master versus slave morality, but also by drawing on the discourses of decadence, health and illness, degenerationism and racial biology. Perspectivism becomes reduced to a set of abstract and generic propositions, as if a Nietzschean sociology would simply promote the notion that "every perspective, concept, idea, value" is "not only conditioned but produced by the complex articulations and dynamics of life's striving for empowerment and self-affirmation" (Piazzesi, 2013, p.357). Yet if it is the few noble philosophers of the future who embody the *will to power* – a perspective rooted in the conditions of an ascending life – the notion of perspectivism does not necessarily look innocent, as if Nietzsche was merely advocating for a "deeply reflexive dimension to knowledge", as Piazzesi (2013, p.358) claims.

It is worth recalling here Pippin's (2019) argument considered in Chapter 2. He argued that for Nietzsche the desire for perspectival truth cannot be created – one either has the right psychic disposition to query what matters or not, and this depends on the quality of one's soul. In this sense, perspectivism is by no means democratic in terms of pointing to the situated character of all knowledge claims, to their grounding in different conditions of life. One can even go further: among different characteristics, such as an instinct for rank and capacity to overcome illness as a stimulus for health, it is the psychic disposition for perspectival orientation which determines whether one belongs to the category of the noble or the base, to the mode of evaluation represented by the life-affirming majestic masters or the resentful and crippled slaves. Losurdo (2019) argues that perspectivism is reserved for the few nobles in a way that confirms Nietzsche's exclusive aristocratism even at the level of his epistemology. The arising question here is if the notion

of an ascending life actualized by the perspectivism of the philosophers of the future should be understood in relation to 19th century fears about the degeneration of 'races' and broader concerns with sexual and racial hygiene.

Rhetoric of degenerationism, sickness and racial biology

Reconstructions of the parameters of the 'social' in Nietzsche's thinking need to take into account his late notions of breeding, decadence and degeneration which often rely on a physiological-biologistic framework (Losurdo, 2019; Faulkner, 2012, Moore, 2002). Losurdo's (2019) charges against Nietzsche's exclusive aristocratism rely on the premise that the Nietzschean imaginary of life's expansion and conflict stretches not only from the agonistic onto the scientific premise, but also onto later eugenic experiments. This would be exemplified his use of the theme of the failed, malformed and the degenerate, for instance in GM 3.14, where Nietzsche speaks of the importance of overcoming disgust with the human condition, self-contempt and compassion for the sick:

> The *sickly* are the humanity's great danger; *not* the evil, *not* the "predators." Those who from the start are failures, the downcast, the broken—it is they, it is the *weakest* who most undermine life among humans, who call into question and most dangerously poison our trust in life, in humans, in ourselves. (...) That the sick should *not* make the healthy sick—and this would be such a tenderization—that should of course be the supreme viewpoint on earth: - but this would require above all things that the healthy remain *separated* from the sick, protected against even the sight of the sick, and that they do not confuse themselves with the sick.

We can glimpse here again the role of the esoteric-exoteric level of the text, where those who identify with the re-evaluators and aspire to the role of the cultural physician are encouraged to guard the boundaries of the text – for instance by keeping distance from the sick and the rabble - while the diseased and malformed are not only excluded from that community, but the category of the human being per se (Losurdo, 2019, p.975). How we assess Nietzsche's socio- advocacy for segregation of certain groups in society depends on whether one treats philosopher's references to the discourses of degenerationism and racial biology as literal-practical or as *rhetorical*. It is not clear whether Nietzsche's deployment of

the notions of degenerationism, health and sickness can be read literally-practically in relation to specific racialised groups, which would suggest horrific consequences, or metaphorically in terms of the diseased soul of a decadent aristocracy that he hopes to shake, provoke and ultimately reform against the dangers of suicidal nihilism.

The physiological dimension of decadence with its underlying distinction between ascending and descending life creates particularly uncomfortable territory if connected to the discourses of degeneration(ism) – in particular the theory of *dégénérescence* - spreading in the German and English medical culture in the second half of the 19ᵗʰ century. Moore (2002) emphasizes that references to degeneration are common in the scientific literature at the time. The physiological thinking about power as a structure of the will is informed by scientific terms employed by Nietzsche's contemporaries, for instance by Michael Foster in *Text Book of Physiology*. Degeneration, though never clearly defined, would refer to regression and decay of populations due to various diseases such as hysteria, nervousness, melancholia and neurasthenia, at times epilepsy and other hereditary diseases, increasingly more often diagnosed by psychiatrists (Moore, 2002). Melancholy and pessimism, for instance, were often associated with a bad diet as symptoms of degeneration: a connection across the physiological and moral registers which Nietzsche exploits (Dahlkviest, 2013).

Demonstrating how the term 'degeneration' becomes a scientific-technical as well as a cultural concept, Moore (2002) documents how the French psychiatrist Benedict-Augustin Morel "first articulated *dégénérescence* in terms of a theory of human heredity" (p.116). Those medical, scientific ideas about heredity informed a broader cultural worldview according to which individuals and groups can devolve into earlier, more primitive stages of development. Such theories of descent implied a social hierarchy leading from the natives to civilized Europeans, where subaltern 'races' would be considered as "degenerate deviations from the ideal white type" (Moore, 2002, p.116). Moore (2002, p.116) emphasizes that we denounce as racist biology today was taken for granted by scientists at the time: theories of degenerationism were considered not only technical scientific knowledge but also a framework for explaining social life:

> Following the development of clinical medicine and the technology of classifying diseases, the rise of scientific empiricism, and the popularisation of racial and evolutionary biology, the perceived deterioration or retrogression of European society – manifested in the epidemics of 'social pathologies' such

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as alcoholism, sexual perversion, crime, insanity, prostitution and anarchism – was not seen as a sociological or an ethical problem, but as an empirically demonstrable medical fact, as symptomatic of a more fundamental degenerative process within the European races.

The degenerative process within the European 'races' was attributed to specific social groups – for instance the anarchists or mentally ill - whose behaviour did not conform to social norms. The upper classes often warned against the plagues of degeneration to demonise and pathologize behaviour of the lower classes, not least what they perceived as sexual deviation (Losurdo, 2019). In this way, racial biology which relied on classifications of groups and populations according to physiological attributes gained a classed dimension. According to Losurdo (2019), it is the socialist revolution itself which the philosopher of the future diagnoses as 'sick', calling upon the medicalised language of psychopathology to explain it, for instance when referring to agitation and hysteria among socialists.[65] Losurdo (2019) places Nietzsche's thinking as part of the reaction of aristocrats against the "social and political processes they perceive to be a source and expression of massification, vulgarisation, decadence and degeneration" (p.727). He argues that it is the malformed – both in spirit and in body - who are the subject of Nietzsche's late remarks on "the need to amputate the sick parts of the social organism" (Losurdo, 2019, p.598).

This brings us back to the argument that Nietzsche was not so much critical of Social Darwinism because of its untenable assumptions about organic life as oriented towards self-preservation, but rather because the "evolution then happening would tend to result in the triumph of the malformed" (Losurdo, 2019, p.635). Moore (2002) argues that Nietzsche did not advocate for any biological measures and that 'breeding' (*Züchtung*) needs to be understood in terms of his moral thinking about a physiological basis for ethics. Bernasconi (2017) is more critical, reading Nietzsche's commitment to the breeding of a new race of Europeans in the context of his fascination with Francis Galton's promotion of mixing as "the only way to secure improvement within a race" (p.6). We encounter here the question how to treat the tasks assigned to the philosophers of the future as tempters (*Versucher*) who believe that "great risks and overall experiments of culture and cultivation" are needed to

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[65] Losurdo (2019) reads proximity between Nietzsche and Comte in terms of the notions of health and illness: "Comte, Nietzsche and Le Bon ended up perpetuating a tradition of thought that saw in the upheavals in Paris the eruption of delirium or madness, of plague or smallpox, in any case of a sickness of the soul or body" (p.634).

overcome the "degeneration and diminution of the human to the perfect herd animal" (BGE 5.203). Given that fears about the physiological degeneration and 'decline of races' were widely spread in 19th century, the notion of breeding a new man gains collective, socio-political stakes. It is in this context that the notion of the degeneration of particular 'races' and classes gains disquieting connotations. It is specifically the anarchists and socialists who contribute to the "*total degeneration of humanity*", against which Nietzsche formulates the new task of revaluation addressed to the future "philosophers and commanders" (BGE 5.203), who will rise up to the task of value-creation and governing.

Losurdo (2019) also places discourses of degenerationism in proximity to Galton's programme of eugenics, pointing out that most readers will think of the Nazi ambitions to eliminate the degenerate across societies on the philosopher's behalf. In the *Will to Power* (1968), Nietzsche speaks of society as "a sick conglomerate of Chandala – a society that no longer has the strength to *excrete*" (WP 50). It is the "scum of previous society of all classes" – "the mentally ill (the artists), the criminals, the anarchists" (WP 50). The emerging modern society is "no "society", no "body"" which can regulate itself but an aggregation of "sickliness, owing to the symbiosis of centuries (WP 50).[66] With this organic metaphor for society, we encounter not so much the division between the healthy nobles and those positioned lower in the order of rank, but the idea that those who represent descending versus ascending life-processes are an obstacle to social cohesion: "there is no solidarity in a society in which there are sterile, unproductive, and destructive elements" (WP 52).[67] Even if these ideas cannot be taken for Nietzsche's position on society as a whole, formulated in the year preceding his mental collapse, they point to the significance of 19th century discourses on the degeneration of particular groups – for instance the mentally ill, the anarchists or socialists - for Nietzsche's thinking on degeneration and decay at the level of the entire social body. Moreover, Nietzsche often exploits fears around the sexual and racial degeneration of the lower classes in particular (Losurdo, 2019; Moore, 2002).

However, most scholars argue that Nietzsche did not advocate for subjugation of any specific racialised groups on behalf of a stronger humanity, even if he believed in natural inequality among humans and the necessity of creating a new order of rank. As we have been

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[66] Many scholars would argue that is important to consider the status of the *Nachlass* which includes notes, letters and drafts, in which Nietzsche not only experiments with his own views, but also documents, mocks and possibly parodies various clichés spread among his contemporaries. The volume *Will to Power* edited by Nietzsche's sister Elizabeth-Foster Nietzsche has been linked to Nazi abuses, but whether she is indeed to be blamed for the most horrific abuses of Nietzsche is being challenged today (see Holub, 2015; Losurdo, 2019).

[67] This notion of solidarity can be placed against Durkheim's sociological thesis about the complex, differentiated division of labour in modern society (see Bull, 2011; Roberts, 2019).

in the last chapter, scholars often emphasize that Nietzsche's thinking cannot be easily interpreted in relationship to contemporary racial categories (Drochon, 2016; Geuss, 2019; Moore, 2002; Stern, 2020). The figure of the 'blond beasts of prey' from *Genealogy of Morality,* for instance*,* would serve as an "emblem for the 'predatory type' in *all* cultures", as Moore (2012, p.157) puts it, rather than refer to the Aryans or any other particular ethnic group. Moreover, Moore (2002) argues that Nietzsche often mobilizes tropes from 19th century medical and scientific culture towards a critique of moral values, for instance when putting to rhetorical use the "conventional tropes of 'd*olichocephalous*' (or long-skulled) master and '*brachycephalous*' (short-skulled) slave races", as to associate the German Christian type whose Aryan ancestry "he explicitly denies" (p.158) with the anthropological discourses about the *Untermensch*. In this way, Nietzsche exploits and taps onto the fears about the lower racial types, to argue that those are dominant in the "resentful, impotent masses of Christian Europe" (Moore, 2002, p.158) that are the main object of his critique.

In contrast, Losurdo (2019) reads Nietzsche's comments on the physical and cultural distinctions between the masters and slaves *not* as a rhetorical strategy directed against the life-denying legacies of the Judeo-Christian tradition, but rather as evidence of the pervasive forms of transversal class racism operative in Nietzsche's thought. This would be a particular kind of racial ideology that does not simply posit supremacy of specific groups based on ethnic heritage (e.g. 'Aryan' or 'African'), but transverses the distinctions between 'races', ethnicities and nations as part of conservative class politics and aristocratic reactionism. Nietzsche's "future-oriented, speculative eugenic schemes imply the generation of new evaluative hierarchies and the breeding of new types" which "cut across – specifically, by way of 'crossbreeding' – received national and racial distinctions" (Toscano, 2020, p.244).

This form of transversal class racism would be possibly inspired by historical forms of anti-black racial segregation, even if Nietzsche does not envision skin colour per se to bear on one's prospects of belonging to the future caste of spiritual nobility. On Losurdo's reading, Nietzsche's comments on people of colour – for instance the Chinese – cannot be read merely as rhetoric tropes within his broader critique of decadence. Rather than "mock as 'Chinese' anything that smacks of bourgeois contentment", as Moore (2010, p.126) puts it, Losurdo (2019) reads those comments on the Chinese workers as an example of the 'racialization of class' widely spread among the intellectual elites in 19th century France and Germany, which feared that their rule is increasingly more contested. In Losurdo's (2019,p. 1000) Marxist reading, Nietzsche's philosophy rests on ideas of racial hygiene and state violence, where the 'hammer' that Nietzsche famously philosophizes with – and encourages

the philosophers of the future to use (BGE 5.211) - cannot be understood as a polemical weapon but should be read literally in relation to the following themes in his philosophy:

> the glorification of eugenics and the 'super-species', the theorising on the one hand of slavery, on the other of the 'breeding' of the 'higher species of dominant Caesaric spirits', the demand for the 'annihilation of decadent races' and of 'millions of malformed', the assertion of the need for 'a hammer with which to smash degenerating and dying races, to remove them in order to make way for a new order of life.

The 19th century discourses of decadence, illness and degenerationism would be significant here *not* in terms of rhetoric tropes through which Nietzsche subverts and exploits the medical-cultural clichés of his contemporaries, as Moore (2002) argues, but as transposed onto the broader dividing line between "well-formed and the malformed, between 'capitalists of good instincts' and spendthrifts condemned to marginalisation" (Losurdo, 2019, p.363). In this sense, Nietzsche's class racism can be hardly excused as context of the times without bearing on the substance of his philosophy: it would be a central prophetic value-judgment on the links between capital, creative genius and forms of social selection. "Nietzsche's hope for Europe", Toscano (2020) summarizes, is "a land where the order of rank could identify a transnational *Herrenvolk*, or master-race, supported by the ranks of an insensitive, enslaved sub-proletariat" (p.243). We have seen in the last chapter how the working slaves and the idle masters would belong to *two* distinct castes which define the social order (Drochon, 2016; Losurdo, 2019), rather than three or four as for Jacolliot.

The racialised figure of the Chandala

We are in a better position now to understand what is problematic about Drochon's (2016) argument we examined in the last chapter, according to which the dividing line between the nobles and slaves is not racialized. He argues that "the blond beast is a metaphor for a lion, the noble king of the jungle, and the Aryan and Celtic races just so happen to be the historical conquering races of Europe, but may take on other non- Aryan attributes (e.g. Arabian)" (p.83). This is an old argument in canonizing reception. Danto (1965) reassured readers in the 60s that the blond beast is "almost certainly a literary cliché for lion", and could have been "black rather than tawny" (p.172). Nietzsche's writings, if it

was not for his careless figures of speech, could "provide support to African rather than German nationalists" (Danto, 1965, p.172). In light of Nietzsche's loss at the abolition of slavery, and historical forms of racism based on forms of cultural and spiritual difference (Bernasconi, 2017), it is hard to understand why this dominant reading still holds.

Perhaps it is because most readers anachronistically impose a modern notion of racism as based on biological essentialism, with the split between nature and culture (Bernasconi, 2017). Drochon (2016) assesses Nietzsche's two-caste society as nothing less than an "optimistic" vision of a "new, interracial European aristocracy" (p.86), built on intermixing of Jewish money and Prussian strength into a future 'hybrid' European.[68] In contrast, Losurdo (2019) views the split into a pan-European caste of masters and enslaved subaltern classes as a site of transversal racialization which maps onto the distinction between the well-formed/malformed, noble/plebeian and Aryan/Chandala (p.768). The latter is one of Nietzsche's most problematic references – a figure of the 'untouchable' outcasts in the Hindu system – whom the philosopher appropriates in his critique of the Judeo-Christian tradition to challenge claims about its Aryan origins. Bonfiglio (2006, p.8) clarifies that the figure of the Chandala signifies outlaws of humanity as complete outsiders of the political community, positioned even lower than the slaves in the social order:

> The term originates in the Sanskrit *candāla*, which refers to the lowest class of India, the outcasts or untouchables, who actually occupied a status below that of the four formal castes of *brahma* (sacerdotal), *ksatriya* (nobility), *vaiśya* (farmer or merchant), and *śūdra* (slave). (...) The word literally means "the worst among," and is from the root canda, meaning "fierce," "violent," or "cruel." The *candāla* were literally "out-cast," in the sense of being so low as to be outside of the caste system itself.

Nietzsche's references to the social body as a 'conglomerate of Chandala' are bound to be disquieting (Toscano, 2020), especially given their racialized connotations. Jacolliot claimed that the Jews descended from the caste of Chandala. Disappointing many contemporary readers, Nietzsche did not correct this racist idea (Bonfiglio, 2006; Holub, 2015). The figure of the outcast appears in Nietzsche's writings not only in the context of the metaphor of the social body as analysed above, but also in his broader critiques of resentment-fuelled moral

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[68] For a discussion on Nietzsche's ideas on the 'future European' see Glendenning (2016).

systems in *Genealogy of Morality, Twilight of Idols and Anti-Christ*. Chandala becomes a proxy for all kinds of decadent movements and figures: "the socialist rabble, the Chandala-apostles" (AC 57). It is tempting to think that Jacolliot's claim about Judaism's Chandala origin serves as an polemical angle for Nietzsche (Elst, 2006) – an angle from which the philosopher criticizes the non-Aryan Christian religion: "the victory of Chandala values, the gospel preached to the poor and the base, the general revolt of the downtrodden, the miserable, the malformed, the failures, against anyone with 'breeding" (TI Improving Humanity 4).[69]

Can one interpret the figure as a polemical weapon? This matters in the context of the discussions on the two-caste system as based on a division between the happily enslaved mass workers and the idle elites capable of suffering, in particular the question whether and in what sense these the future social order would be racialized (Drochon, 2016; Losurdo, 2019). Developing his argument on Nietzsche's rhetoric subversions in relation to racial biology, Moore (2002) links the purported descend of Jews from the Chandala to Nietzsche's critique of Wagner's aryanisation of Christianity. In this kind of interpretation, Nietzsche would deploy the figure polemically to show that aryanism is "not a legacy of one nation" (Moore, 2002, p.158). In other words, Nietzsche's use of the figure of the outcast would be an example of numerous subversions through which he exposes the hypocrisy of the worldview represented by nationalist German Christians, who were never the noble Aryan 'races' in the first place. This would position him against anthropological theories about the superiority of this group, which Wagner nationalistically embraced (Moore, 2002).

Other scholars are more sceptical if the figure of the Chandala can be reduced to the status of a rhetoric trope. Elst (2006) offers the most sustained reading of this figure in the broader context of Nietzsche's fascination with Hindu philosophy, drawing attention to the ways in which the references to the outcasts confirm an image of Nietzsche as an "anti-egalitarian who burdened the lower classes with a caste-like inborn inferiority" (p.565). Elst (2006) insists that this is a socio-political stance "not of the racist or anti-semitic kind" (p.565), even if it makes reading Nietzsche on the Marxist-left problematic. Holub (2015) summarizes the negative connotations of the Chandala on the following terms: "The notion of the *chandala*, a lowest caste composed of products of mixed marriages, struck Nietzsche as the perfect label for the despicable, the despised, the discontent, the wretched, the lowly, the miserable" (p.199). Importantly, these signify "everything that opposes a hierarchical

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[69] See Bonfiglio (2006) for a sustained discussion of Nietzsche and Jacolliot.

social order" (Holub, 2015, p.199). It is worth recalling that Nietzsche distinguished the socio-spatial understanding of esotericism – looking down from above - as known to philosophers "wherever one believed in an order of rank and *not* in equality and equal rights" (BGE 1.20).

Ultimately, Nietzsche's project of revaluation is oriented toward preserving those who see from above within the high order of rank (Lampert, 1993, p.306), that is those who represent ascending rather than descending/declining life. Nietzsche's contemporary readers who are schooled in the esoteric – to borrow Lampert's (1993, p.227) characterization – would presumably recognize the racialized connotations in his representation of Christianity as the victory of Chandala values, even though he does not conjure his ideal readers to have any particular colour of skin or ethnicity. Against the perspective of the malformed, the philosopher tempts his readers to become his co-conspirators who would form a political party of life that will bring about a new social hierarchy based on new measures of worth. Losurdo (2019, p.998) sarcastically opposes attempts to ignore the issue of class racialization:

> In the last phase of his development, Nietzsche emphatically praised the Hindu world of castes, but was supposedly unaware of the fact that the term *varna*, 'caste', also indicated colour, and referred to the difference between the blond conquerors belonging to the higher races and the subjugated coloured peoples of the lower castes. So a trained philologist and passionate devotee of Hindu culture supposedly had no idea of what was perfectly clear to (...) the circles of Christian missionaries Nietzsche hated and despised.

Reading Nietzsche through a sociological lens, it is hard to put aside Losurdo's interpretation of the figure of Chandala as racialized, dehumanized outcasts. What does this mean for reading Nietzsche on the left today? The connections between Nietzsche's thinking about the nobles who have been 'bred', the caste system and the racialized figure of the outlaw of humanity cannot be ignored in the debate on whether Nietzsche's project of revaluation promotes a 'transracial' social order (Drochon, 2016; Losurdo, 2019; Toscano, 2020). The question whether Nietzsche explicitly called for a new social hierarchy as racialized cannot be easily resolved – that project relies on reading between the lines, in terms of associating the individuals who represent descending life with the perspective of the Chandala, and

reading the darker colour of skin as intersecting with the lower class/caste position. At the same time, it is clear that Nietzsche's writings echo anti-blackness and class racism.

In this sense, it is more important to think about the (mis)identifications that the Nietzschean figures of victory and subjugation facilitate rather than the technical content of the texts in terms of the anachronistic categories of 'race' and class that contemporary readers impose. The racialized figure of the Chandala emerges as the limit of reading Nietzsche sympathetically on the Marxist-left today. In response to these dividing lines running through Nietzsche's philosophy, Bull (2011) called for readers to identify with the failed, resentful and malformed in Nietzsche's writings – the losers rather than victors and winners. We will turn to this prospect of reading Nietzsche against himself from the perspective of the subjugated in the next part of my thesis, in particular in Chapter 6. Reading for failure rather than for victory can be a particularly fruitful strategy in recovering the possible uses of Nietzsche's philosophy of revaluation for social theory and sociology.

Conclusion

This chapter considers the themes of racial biology, illness and degeneration which have been largely ignored by readers of Nietzsche in the orbit of sociological theory. The naturalistic-scientific mask of the *Versucher* as a researcher and experimenter raises a number of questions about how to consider the intersection between the social-cultural and natural-biological registers in Nietzsche's thinking, when neither sociology nor natural sciences were unified fields of knowledge with stable categories, boundaries or methods of inquiry (Emden, 2014; Solms-Laubach, 2007). Nietzsche was critical of Spencerian and Comtian sociology, but at the same time recognized the potential of the science of society and the role that it could play in the project of revaluation. Sociological reception of Nietzsche still needs to come to grasp with the way in which he advocated for a life-ascending inquiry and how to understand that notion. While the Nietzschean ideal of an anti-sociology is often sanitized in contemporary literature in terms of the notion of perspectival, situated knowing considered as radical social constructivism (Aspers, 2007; Piazzesi, 2013), I argued that it needs to be placed *vis-à-vis* Nietzsche's deployment of the rhetoric of degenerationism, racial biology and illness. In his late thinking, Nietzsche exploits fears about the reproduction of those considered sickly and malformed, which is largely ignored by sociological readers who aim to domesticate his thinking about the body politic.

In this sense, Nietzsche's relationship to Social Darwinism is ambivalent. He inverts Spencer's physiological ethics to conceive of individuation - rather than redemption from

egoism - as a precondition for social and moral life. However, he retains an evolutionary framework for thinking about society as a biological organism, relying on the metaphors of slavery, castes and colonies, like many of his contemporaries (Moore, 2002). In this sense, the task of overcoming the 'degeneration' of the human animal addressed to the philosophers of the future should be understood at the level of the aristocratic body politic rather than in terms of physiological ethics. The promise of breeding a new type of being emerges in response to Nietzsche's diagnosis about decadence of the entire social body, where descending forces pull humanity towards the reproduction of the worldview and morality of the herd animal, while ascending forces allow for the elevation of humanity.

Depending on whether the individual represents ascending or descending life, this determines their chances of belonging to two the two different castes of the nobles and slaves in Nietzsche's future society (Drochon, 2016). However, rather than this being determined simply by how they respond to the riddle of the eternal return understood as a test of spiritual strength, I suggested that this is a question of other attributes of the philosopher of the future (*Versucher*) whom the riddle is addressed to – their ability to overcome illness as a stimulus for health, patience for trials and the labyrinth, capacity to suffer, as well as their instinct for an order of rank. In the absence of the philosophers of the future among his contemporaries, Nietzsche's texts serve as a selective apparatus for ideal readers who would be positioned above of humanity and guard the boundaries of the text against the mediocre, sickly and degenerate who are 'parasites' on the exceptional few.

In this sense, it is important to consider both the technical content of Nietzsche's ideas on illness, suffering, degeneration and life-affirmation, as well as the forms of address and modality in which those are presented. Nietzsche's strategies of persuasion often rely on esoteric forms of address, as with his demands to the philosophers and social scientists of the future who would creatively govern themselves according to ideals not recognized by the rest. Esotericism in Nietzsche's rhetoric should be understood not only in socio-spatial terms of an order of rank, but also in temporal terms, visible in Nietzsche's appeal to an untimely, unfashionable perspective which goes against the limits of the times (Faulkner, 2010), for instance the prejudices of 19th century positivistic sociologists. In this way, the Nietzschean figures of victory serve to mobilizes the future social scientist who are likely to identify themselves with the project of revaluation as the philosopher's companions and friends, rather than with the Spencerian social scientists who promote declining life.

The distinction between ascending and descending life needs to be taken into account in discussions on Nietzsche's anti-sociology and his *great politics*, especially if

reconstructions of his theory of a two-caste society aspire to the status of an integrative reading. We encounter the overarching question what to make of his frequent comments on how patterns of domination, exploitation and hierarchy are not only inescapable to the formation of communities in parallel to biological organisms, but also to their flourishing in the long-term. If 'life' in Nietzsche's thinking has to be understood in terms of conflict, expansion and antagonism in the shadow of the evolutionary sciences (Emden, 2014; Lemm, 2014; Stern, 2020), it is important to explore what kinds of social dynamics are at stake in Nietzsche's call towards the return to the 'natural' and 'healthy' order of rank within the project revaluation. This can be read through the lens of class racism (Losurdo, 2019).

The key disagreement in secondary literature is whether he uses the notions of degeneration polemically and rhetorically in his critique of the Judeo-Christian tradition (Moore, 2002), or whether these need to be understood literally and practically within his aristocratic political philosophy that relies on the subjugation of racialized groups alongside the axes of class and caste, for instance the Chinese or the Chandala (Losurdo, 2019). The limits of reading Nietzsche sympathetically comes into sharp focus with the figure of the Chandala. Nietzsche's disquieting references to the racialized figure of the outcasts should be understood neither, merely, as a polemical weapon against the Judeo-Christian tradition and egalitarianism (Elst, 2009), nor, simply, literally-practically as the politics of destruction and transversal racism (Losurdo, 2019). Rather than racialized socio-material positions, it is possible to read Nietzsche's deployment of this figure in terms of his appeal to ideal readers who will identify with the esoteric who sees from above within a new order of rank, in opposition to the broken, failed, degenerate and miserable – the Chandala. In this sense, the receptive effects that these facilitate are as important as the technical content of Nietzsche's ideas on the necessity of a new social hierarchy. We should neither simply assume that Nietzsche subverts and ironicizes tropes of racial biology and hygienic reproduction, nor immediately excuse him in analysing the role of the figures of subjugation.

The echoes of anti-blackness and class racism Nietzsche's thinking are bound to be disquieting for sociologists, testing the very limits of our contemporary sensibilities, not just on the Marxist-left where Nietzsche's radical aristocratism is reconsidered today (Losurdo, 2019, Toscano, 2020). They present an ongoing challenge in critically interrogating the intertwined legacies of 19th century sociology and philosophy as indebted to Social Darwinism. Nietzsche's ideas on degeneration and breeding are hardly understandable through the lens of our contemporary vocabularies, in particular the modern notion of 'race' as separate from caste and class, based on physiological attributes within the split between

nature and culture. The arising question concerns the remarkable appeal Nietzsche had both among those whose experience he denigrated, and as a resource for social theorizing. Perhaps it is precisely the remarkable plasticity of Nietzsche's vocabulary that made him so attractive to many social theorists despite his socio-biologism. This is the terrain onto which I turn more explicitly in the next part of my thesis. While Nietzsche's thinking about life-affirmation and degeneration stretches onto the scientific-naturalistic realm, we shall see that social theorists are more likely to appreciate his thinking about truth, illusion and language, away from the outdated 19th century notion of the social body as an organism.

Part III

Nietzsche's reception and uses in social theory

Chapter 5 Reading for victory: Nietzsche as a theorist of metaphoric transference

"No historian (and no sociologist) can afford the sublime gesture of Foucault, who, without troubling to distinguish between historical reconstruction and theoretical instrumentalisation, claimed the right to be allowed to 'deform' and 'ill use' Nietzsche's thought"

Losurdo, 2019, p.732

Introduction

In light of Nietzsche's aristocratic body politic and his class racism, this chapter surveys how Nietzsche's relevance and 'use' to social theory is understood, framed and assessed today. I argue that this is a polarized landscape, shaped by Habermas' (1987) critique of Nietzsche's undifferentiated conception of the *will to power*, at odds with Foucault's (2002; 1998c) celebration of the Nietzschean figures of the death of man, God and the author, and his influential re-appropriation of genealogy. Understanding Nietzsche's divisive reception in this field requires us to consider not only the technical content of his ideas, but also how the philosopher implicates the reader in what he narrates, in particular the history of the modern subject as poisoned by ressentiment. In the *Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche speaks of the 'nobles' as the mythical creators of the normative moral-religious belief system, a target of his sharp polemics against the Judeo-Christian tradition, which is reconsidered today in terms of controversies around his philosophy of racialized breeding (Bernasconi, 2017; Jones, 2010; Losurdo, 2019). In Chapters 3 and 4, we have seen how class racism and anti-blackness animate Nietzsche's thinking in ways that hold many paradoxes, tensions and ambivalences.

Despite the provocative imaginary of the 'blond beast of prey', Nietzsche has been widely appropriated by social theorists from Weber to Foucault, Simmel to Butler, even if often mostly on the margins of their own critical projects, rather than through sustained engagements. While many readers made productive uses of Nietzsche's philosophy beyond the particular constellations of 'race', class and the social body in his thought, turning Nietzsche into a thinker of genealogy, epistemic overcoming and psychic subjection (Brown, 2000; Butler, 1993; Fanon, 1967; Foucault, 2002), Nietzsche's naturalism has been also

placed at odds with the emancipatory and progressive projects of Marxism and critical social theory (Lukács, 1980; Habermas, 1987; Waite, 1996). In this tradition, it is the interplay between Nietzsche's plural styles and the conservative 'core' of his political-philosophical thinking which is treated with suspicion, challenging the influential post-structuralist reading of Nietzsche as a thinker of infinite interpretations which I have introduced in Chapter 1.

Indeed, Losurdo (2019) recently accused 'hermeneutics of innocence' – a philosophical trend associated with Derrida, Foucault and Vattimo – for sanitizing the socio-political stakes of Nietzsche's philosophy, including its proximity to the discourses of degenerationism, racial hygiene and eugenics. This brings us to the third overarching line of inquiry in my project: how does Nietzsche's oeuvre facilitate such different readings of his uses for the possibilities of critique and emancipation? Does Nietzsche's class racism and his aristocratic politics imply that his influence on and uses for social theory needs to be reconsidered? The most fascinating tension here regards the open-ended rhetorical structure of his texts which made him influential in the development of social theories, but also a target of impassioned accusations by an increasingly more vocal strand of anti-Nietzschean readings (Bull, 2011, Losurdo, 2011; Waite, 1996). Today many point to the philosopher's conservative and reactionary politics behind the Nietzschean play of experimental signatures, masks and plural styles.

This chapter surveys the role that Nietzsche's 'multifarious styling' play beyond the task of technically reconstructing the social and political parameters in his philosophy, understood in terms of the uses of Nietzsche in selected sites of contemporary social theory. It is a rich and multi-layered reception history from which I will only partially and selectively discuss a few key engagements to demonstrate how it has been shaped by two main affective-interpretative orientations: reading for victory and assimilation versus reading for rejection. In Chapters 2 and 4, we have already seen how Nietzsche is a master in recruiting readers towards the ambivalent project of revaluation, by creating excessive demands on the reader with his empty figures, enticing us to fill in the blanks in the figure of the philosopher of the future (*Versucher*), as Faulkner (2010) described it.

The call for overcoming degeneration of humanity often falls back on the distinction between the majestic operations of the nobles and the subjugated, malformed slaves, who reactively respond to the values posited by the former. The unstable contrast between those figures has been recently re-interpreted from a historical-materialist perspective in terms of aristocratic anti-democratic reactions in 19th century Germany and France (Losurdo, 2019). Yet many readers in social theory have made productive use of Nietzsche's diagnosis of

ressentiment underlying the decadent Western cultural complex outside of those suspicions around his politics. The epistemic and psychic effects of the cruel legacies of ressentiment come out most sharply in the post-structuralist and post-colonial readings of Nietzsche (Butler, 1997; Brown, 1993, Fanon, 1967; Mbembe, 2017), even if these interpretations rarely examine how socio-racial biology animates his writings, reading Nietzsche as a genealogist rather than a naturalist who admires the 'natural' order of castes.

My argument is that it is Nietzsche's early rethinking of the value of truth and his suspicions of language allows for produvtive appropriations on the margins of social theory, despite the disquieting socio-biologistic imaginary at the heart of his thought. Extending Bull's (2011) notion of reading for victory to selected scenes of reception in the history of social theory, I will argue that reading the philosopher sympathetically for critical theory today needs to depart from his tentative account of language as a site of falsifications, which he formulates in an early essay *On Truth and Lies in the Non-moral Sense* (1979 [1873]). Nietzsche's suspicions of the value of truth have been read very differently given the overarching tension between technical-reconstructive and post-structuralist readings, animated by different premises of interpretation, as examined in Chapter 1. The latter appropriations cannot be easily squared with the promise of historical reconstruction – Foucault, for instance, instrumentalized Nietzsche's thinking without attempting to faithfully reconstruct his concepts, which contributed to the overall sanitization of Nietzsche's concerns with racial hygiene and degenerationism in reception (Losurdo, 2019).

While it is important to recognize ways in which readings for victory domesticates the most problematic aspects of Nietzsche's political philosophy, this does not put an end to the ways in which one can productively read Nietzsche's contributions to the project of critical social theory, as mediated through post-structuralist reception (Harcourt, 2020). The notion of language as a site of falsifications and failures of individuality shifts attention to the imaginary, rather than purely technical, level of textuality. If we turn our attention towards reception effects rather than merely the authors views or positions, it turns out that Nietzsche's texts are built in a way which invites or even manipulates readers towards the promise of 'truth-speaking' outside of the valuations of the herd. If language is not a rational system to represent, describe and model the world, textuality gains a performative dimension. Language for Nietzsche is bound to produce differential outcomes because of its intrinsically rhetorical nature as a site of metaphors and power struggles, as opposed to Habermas' (1987) thinking about language as a site of consensus which inherently aims towards social engagement. The notion of metaphor-creation as a task addressed to the

individual breaks away with the notion of language as a transparent system of signs that enables logical and rational argumentation that could inform a technical debate.

The relevance of Nietzsche's conception of language as a site of metaphoric transference lies not so much in terms of his physio-biological claims about the nature of the drives within a (social) organism understood in terms of *will to power*, but as a heuristic which points to the affective genesis of all interpretation, including the reading of philosophical texts. This strand comes into sharp focus with the psychoanalytic readings of Nietzsche's philosophy as reorganizing the structure of the reader's desires and forms of identification (Faulkner, 2010). These receptive effects at the level of individual readers have important implications for discussions on sociological poetics, a recent trend in sociological theory which investigates the processes of canonization in relation to how sociological texts implicate, seduce and persuade audiences. The ways in which Nietzsche's rhetoric taps onto the body can be productively used for studying the practice of social theory as an activity achieved 'metaphorically' (Baehr, 2016; McKinnon, 2012). Nietzsche's thinking about the self as a set of drives that can be reorganized through the texts' demands points to the practice of reading and interpretation as embodied, rather than as mechanizable and neutral.

Reading for victory: assimilation and repudiation

In chapters 2, 3 and 4, we witnessed various demands Nietzsche addressed towards the philosopher of the future (*Versucher*) which I interpreted in terms of an esoteric rhetoric which appeals to readers positioned above humanity who would be in the know about what kinds of ideals and values to posit in the project of revaluation. I argued that the figures of the 'decadent sociologists' and 'cultivated philistines' can be read not only in terms of the technical content of Nietzsche's critique of 19th century social science and mass society, but also as part of of his techniques of persuasion, through which the philosopher seduces readers to position themselves within the hierarchy of the text against the 'rest of humanity', for instance German intellectual elites. In a similar vein, Bull (2011) queries how readers are persuaded and even manipulated to identify with the heroes in Nietzsche's writings – the brave scientists of the future, the 'free spirits' and the nobles – rather than the losers – the modern barbarians, cultural philistines, the degenerate, weak and malformed.

In this sense, reading Nietzsche involves affective identifications: most often a drive to assimilate the text in a way which would be consistent and compatible with oneself – the pleasurable, expansive and in some ways indulgent reading for victory (Bull, 2011, p.65). Yet if we want to liberate ourselves from Nietzsche's spell, as Faulkner (2010) also encourages

readers to do, Bull (2011) suggests identifying not with the creative value-positing nobles, but precisely with the enslaved, down-trotted and broken. When reading Nietzsche from the perspective of the subhuman, exemplified in the figure of the Chandala, the very notion of how Nietzsche wanted to be read will look less innocent, in particular his appeal to the few selected and predestined readers. In face of Nietzsche's complaints about being misunderstood by all kinds of reading idlers, one is likely to aspire towards the status of a good reader, and thus a potential member of Nietzsche's imagined community of re-evaluators who are in the know about what truths matter in elevating humanity. In Chapters 3 and 4, I considered whether and how those (mis)identifications with the figures of victory – such as the philosophers of the future - map onto the prospects of belonging to the different castes in Nietzsche's vision for a future society: the enslaved working bourgeoisie and the idle, spiritual nobility. Once we recognize the power of the esoteric layer of textuality in (re)producing the socio-spatial forms of distinction and hierarchy across the unstable categories of class, caste and 'race', assimilating Nietzsche's insights for the purposes of social theory might seem troubling given class racism and anti-blackness animating his works.

Losurdo (2019) warns us most vocally against the seductive power of the Nietzschean vocabulary which obscures racialized class politics. His most important charge is that most readers in the orbit of sociology and social theory tend to sanitise the philosopher's concerns with racial hygiene. Indeed, when mapping Nietzsche's influence on social theory, readers often present their own version of the threads of the 'social' in Nietzsche's works which would be compatible with pre-existing theoretical frameworks such as radical social constructivism, without much attention to his ideas about caste, breeding and degenerationism (Antonio, 1995; Aspers, 2007; Stauth and Turner, 1988). Others simply reject Nietzsche's thinking as a productive resource for sociology and social theory (Habermas, 1987, Lukács, 1980). In this sense, is hard to move outside of two main affective orientations in reading Nietzsche which Bull (2011) distinguished: either "assimilation of the text with one's own being" – for instance a conceptual vocabulary in the field of sociology – or the "rejection of the text as mistaken or immoral" (p.36). Assimilation and repudiation emerge as the most likely modes of reading for victory also at the broader level of reception.

Between Habermas and Foucault

Nietzsche's reception in social theory often oscillates between the two poles, where the *Übermensch* emerges as a figure of epistemic overcoming and even post-colonial liberation (Foucault, 2002, Fanon, 1967), or as an enemy of the project of emancipation and

reason (Habermas, 1987, Lukács, 1980). This is an example of the polarized landscape in reception which I pointed to in Chapter 1, where historical-technical reconstruction of Nietzsche's ideas rarely goes in hand with creative re-appropriations. The post-structuralist thinkers in particular have not been driven by the goals of technical reconstruction, using Nietzsche selectively towards their own purposes (Schrift, 1995), in ways challenged on the Marxist-left today (Losurdo, 2019). In light of the remarkable scope of readers' appropriations of Nietzsche in the history of social theory, it is important to understand what attracted them to the philosopher in the first place. It is only then that we might able to assess whether and how his philosophy can be used for (critical) social theory beyond the two poles of reading for assimilation or rejection.

Rather than his aristocratic body politic, it is Nietzsche's notions of critical history, genealogy and his suspicions of the value of truth which have explicitly shaped his reception in social theory. The field of reception has been polarized at least since the divergence between Foucault's (1977) influential, creative appropriations of genealogy and Habermas' (1987) repudation of Nietzsche. Given the proximity of the notion of the *will to power* to the 19th century Social Darwinist discourses interrogated in Chapter 3, many will assume that social theorists explored the complex dynamics of mastery and subjugation in Nietzsche's fantasy of the revalued future. However, the question how Nietzsche's metaphor of the social body would bear on patterns of racial and class difference is not at all predominant in his reception in sociological and social theory. Solms-Laubach (2007) shows that it is Nietzsche's critique of bourgeois culture, alongside his critique of morality, which have dominated sociological reception between 1890-1930, to be complemented by a recovering of the metaphysical aspects of his works in 1930s-1960s in the aftermath of Heidegger's monumental works, before the rise of what Allison (1985) described as the 'New Nietzsche' in the heydays of his influence on existentialism and post-structuralism. Rather than socio-biological naturalism or class racism, it is his critique of moral and religious values alongside his diagnosis of ressentiment which is most sharply pronounced in this field of reception.

While in classical sociology it is Georg Simmel's life-long engagement with Nietzsche which recently came to renewed attention in light of the 'life-form' dualism animating Simmel's late works (Jones, 2010; Partyga, 2016), readers might be more familiar with Max Weber's Nietzsche-themed sociology oriented around the problems of morality, and in particular the notion of 'struggling gods' formulated in dialogue with the philosopher in

Science as a Vocation (1958), as a metaphor for incommensurable value spheres.[70] The ambivalent meanings of experimentation across the scientific and existentialist registers which I explored in Chapter 2 find a strong echo in Weber's lecture. Deepening his diagnosis of disenchantment, Weber asks how an irrational sense of 'intoxication' motivates a researcher who dedicates themselves to (socio)scientific pursuits, given that science (*Wissenschaft*) cannot offer any meta-normative values, much less an overarching meaning to life. Yet where Weber might have doubted the ideal of a value-free science, he still advocated for a researcher to put aside their politics in striving towards an impartial perspective (Vandenberghe, 2017). In contrast, Nietzsche's conception of 'truth' might be said to dispense with the myth of axiological neutrality influential in classical social theory. Nietzsche's 'perspectivism' emphasizes the rooting of epistemic standpoints in particular affective conditions of life which are always interested rather than neutral, in ways that can hold socio-political implications, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 4.

Weber's complex engagement with Nietzsche points to the enormous influence of translators and interpreters on hermeneutic activities (Baehr, 2016). This is best captured in the 'traveling' of the image of the *last men* which animated Weber's analysis of inner-worldly asceticism and rationalization, erased in Parson's canonical translation of the *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. As various commentators point out (Baehr, 2016; Kent, 1983), Parson's translation of '*Stahlhartes Gehäuse*' as the 'iron cage' rather than 'shell as hard as steel' obscured its complex metaphorical Nietzschean resonances, the sense in which the *mythos* of the 'last man' links to the critique of modernity and utilitarianism. This is particularly significant in terms of the history of reception because Weber's 'iron cage' became one of the most influential narrative devices in the social sciences. It points us to the role that the processes of translation and (mis)appropriation play in reception (Baehr, 2016).

In this sense, the role of the interpreting subject in the hermeneutic field cannot be overstated. Today, theorists draw out the stakes of the mutual encounter between Weber and Nietzsche in terms of implications of the 'theodicy demand' for secular politics (Shaw, 2014), as well as in relation to the role of ressentiment in social life (Turner, 2011). In contrast, Losurdo (2019) surveys Weber's engagement of Nietzsche to demonstrate how the philosopher's reactionary aristocratic radicalism has been sanitized among classical sociologists. Weber, among others, supposedly downplayed the discourse of racial hygiene and malformation animating Nietzsche's works, his denigrations of the working classes and

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[70] Solms-Laubach (2007) places Weber's reading of Nietzsche alongside a number of engagements by Tönnies , Mayreder and Alfred Weber in recovering Nietzsche's influence on early German and Austrian sociology.

new financial elites. This can be read as another form of appropriation through pre-existing vocabularies, a way to claim Nietzsche through a particular hermeneutic framework.

Losurdo's goal to expose Nietzsche's apologists is not a new tendency in this field of reception. In the *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity,* Habermas (1987) surveys the history of post-Hegelian philosophy to negatively assess the possible contributions of Nietzsche's philosophy of the subject for early and second-wave critical theory because of his naturalism and irrationalism.[71] He situates Nietzsche's philosophy in terms of a tradition for thinking about reason which "denounces and undermines all unconcealed forms of suppression and exploitation, of degradation and alienation, only to set up in their place the unassailable domination of rationality" (Habermas, 1987, p.56).

We can see here the contours of the first pole of the trial: reading for rejection, where the text would be immoral, mistaken, unusable. There are of course different ways to qualify this, but it is an overarching interpretative strategy, whether explicitly acknowledged or not. To be sure, the second pole of reading for victory – assimilation – is also strongly represented. Against Habermas' critiques of Nietzsche's romantic, empty radical gestures, Nietzsche famously inspired Foucault, whom Habermas placed in the 'anti-humanist' tradition carried on by Bataille and Heidegger.[72] The matrix of ideas connecting these thinkers is complex.[73] Foucault initially comes to Nietzsche's writings via Bataille's thought of transgression in 1961, with numerous references to Zarathustra and the death of God across *The Order of Things*, *History of Madness* and *Archeology of Knowledge*, to return to Nietzsche in delineating the notion of genealogy in the 1970s.

The encounter has been discussed in various sites of scholarship, often an explicit target of analytic scholars who argue it is a selective, if creative, interpretation (Emden, 2019; Gemes, 2001), a main strand through which Nietzsche travels in theory today as one of the masters of suspicion alongside Freud and Marx, a thinker of infinite interpretations, play and falsifications of language (Felski, 2015; Harcourt, 2020). Among many points in Foucault's complex engagements with Nietzsche, his essay *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History* (1977c) is most often revisited in secondary literature, read *vis-à-vis* the overarching concept of power

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[71] Habermas (1987) is more sympathetic to the notion of critical effective history (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) which has been read from conservative and revolutionary projects alike throughout the history of critical theory, from Benjamin to Schmitt. See Bauer (2004), Strong (2004) and Dallmayr (2004) for critical discussions of Habermas' reading of Nietzsche. Against Habermasian critiques of the irrationalist path in philosophy, Nietzsche's experimentalism has been compellingly interpreted as a reverse of dogmatism, as an ethos of philosophical inquiry which would be directed "against received formulas or answers, remaining always open to new vistas" (Dallmayr, 2004, p.93).
[72] For a discussion of how Foucault cannot be easily classified as an anti-humanist, see Han-Pile (2005).
[73] Babich (2009) helpfully explores the matrix of ideas connecting Nietzsche, Foucault and Heidegger.

which Foucault develops in proximity to Nietzsche's notion of the will to know (Ansell-Pearson, 1995; Florent, 2012; Herrera, 2019; Sluga, 2010; Thiele and Johnson, 1991). Foucault emphasizes in particular the destructive-parodic dimension of genealogy and the injustices of the will to know, which involves relations of domination.[74]

This reappropriation of genealogy has been remarkably influential. Revising the paths available for the project of critical theory, Honneth (2014) summarizes the relevance of genealogy for social theory in terms of "the problem of describing and justifying a standard from which society and its institutional practices can be meaningfully theoretically criticized" (p.43), distinguishing the Nietzschean-Foucauldian framework as "the immanent criticism of given conditions" where "the norms or principles being claimed may long since have lost their original meaning" (p.45). The 'method' of genealogy emphasizes a sense of contingency in the development of socio-political phenomena, which cannot be read to have fixed, homogenous and static origins, but as multiple and overlapping.[75]

This is precisely where we encounter the other pole of the trial. Foucault's appropriation of the theme of genealogy into his own interpretative analytics can be seen as a paradigmatic example of what Bull (2011) describes as the mode of celebration, assimilation and victory. Indeed, Foucault (2008) initially reads the figures of the *Übermensch* and the death of God enthusiastically, as "a threshold beyond which contemporary philosophy can begin thinking again" (p.373). In his later engagement (1971), the violence and maliciousness underpinning the will to know is reformulated not as an end-point of destructive nihilism, but rather a chance to formulate new possibilities in the sphere of knowledge-power relations, new ways of understanding relations between the subject, truth and power, as well as critical methods for studying history (Han-Pile, 2005).[76] Losurdo (2019) frames the charges against 'hermeneutics of innocence' precisely *vis-à-vis* Foucault's influential re-appropriations which puts aside Nietzsche's politics.

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[74] For Nietzsche's influence on Foucault's thinking about aesthetics of the self as a site of ethics, see Rosenberg and Milchman (2018) and Ure (2007).

[75] See Geuss (1994) for a reading of genealogy in a more Nietzschean sense. Geuss (1994) argues that genealogy "won't generally exhibit unbroken lines of value-preserving succession" (p.277). One can understand that in terms of discontinuous patterns across cultural complexes, for instance between the ancient (e.g. Greek) and later socio-cultural formations (e.g. Bismarck's Germany). Genealogy does not involve meta-normative criteria other than a sense of 'vitality' that things might exhibit – the historical perspective which shows "highest value of life-enhancement" (Geuss, 1994, p.228) will be one that it worth pursuing.

[76] Soon after finishing *The Order of Things*, Foucault (1998d) admits that he has regretted granting Nietzsche an "ambiguous, utterly privileged, metahistorical status" (p.294) in his early works. Foucault abandons Nietzsche as a direct reference beyond *Lectures on the Will to Know* (1971), moving to the vocabularies of sexuality, biopolitics, governmentality most influential today.

Rather than the genealogical scenario per se, Losurdo (2019) challenges Foucault's reading of the infinity of interpretations in *Nietzsche, Freud, Marx*, in particular his thinking about the *will to power* as an undifferentiated principle where everything can be interpreted as epistemic violence. Losurdo's (2019) main charge is Foucault's radicalization of the theme of the *will to power*: "The extreme expansion of the categories of cruelty and will to power makes it impossible to condemn even the most immediate and radical forms of cruelty and of the *will to power*" (p.883). These kinds of suspicions of the Foucauldian-Nietzschean strand of thinking about the normative basis in critique are echoed in the broader discussions on the 'anti-humanist' tradition. Foucault, like Nietzsche, is often accused of an unintelligible normative stance, which oscillates between the descriptive and normative registers in terms of the value of freedom (see Chernilo, 2018; Han-Pile, 2016; Revel, 2015).[77]

This polarized use of Nietzsche is symbolic. Depending on the school of social theory, Nietzsche's thinking about ascending life and knowledge becomes a fertile ground for the conceptions of bio-power and epistemic violence, or one of his signature seductions in mobilizing readers' attachments. This is at least Habermas' (1987) famous conclusion on the irrationalist philosophy of the subject, which he draws precisely against the uses of Nietzsche by Foucault that he regarded as "utterly unsociological" (p.249). Habermas criticizes (1987) Foucault's notion of power that would involve ever-changing adversaries, where one cannot assume in advance which actors would 'hold' power at the expense of others. [78] What Losurdo (2019) adds to these critiques of the Foucauldian-Nietzschean strand of thinking about the subject as made through power is the disquieting link to the discourse of degenerationism and the rhetoric of malformation, health and sickness. As we have seen in Chapter 4, Losurdo (2019) understands decadence as a physiological category rather than in terms of critique of modernity, will to know or power relations, highlighting the role of the dividing lines between the malformed/common and the healthy/noble in Nietzsche's works.

While many readers will be sceptical whether the creative uses Foucault makes of Nietzsche can be easily mapped back onto the Marxist conception of transversal class racism (Losurdo, 2019), it is beyond doubt that the Foucauldian reworkings of genealogy failed to interrogate the most controversial aspects of Nietzsche's thinking and contributed to the

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[77] Han-Pile (2016) clarifies the stakes of the debate between Habermas and Foucault, pointing to the possible ways of rebutting Habermasian accusations that Foucault's project involves crypto-normative commitments. In contrast, Chernilo (2018) rehearses some of the suspicions against Foucault and Nietzsche as anti-humanists. See Owen (2002) and Saar (2009) for a critical discussion of the normative commitments underlying genealogy.

[78] For a helpful clarification of how this might be a productive way of conceiving of power in relation to contemporary transformations of reproductive and bio-political rights, see Deutscher (2017).

sanitization of its most troublesome aspects around the themes of racial hygiene and degeneration of particular social groups. Ultimately, this polarized landscape in interpretations reflects back on the tensions in theorising the interplay between Nietzsche's philosophical method(s) and rhetoric, often understood in terms of a blending of content and form (Losurdo, 2019, p. 855). For all of Losurdo's (2019) efforts to move beyond Lukács' ideological reading of Nietzsche, the new Marxist-left interpretation rehearses many tenants of the *Destruction of Reason,* in terms of their shared rejection of the depoliticized readings of Nietzsche as a master of literary metaphors and allegories.[79]

In Lukács' (1980) critique of irrationalism, it is Nietzsche's 'multifarious stylings' (explored in Chapter 1) which come under suspicion: metaphors, fables and aphorisms can be used to justify immediate ideological interests of the bourgeoisie. Moreover, Lukács (1980) detected decadence at the level of the text's tempo rather than only in terms of the 'content' of Nietzsche's physiology of power: "an oscillation between the most acute feeling for nuance, the keenest oversensitivity, and a suddenly erupting, often hysterical brutality" (p.315). He suggested that receptive effects produced by Nietzsche's philosophy detract from the fight for socialism, drawing out ways in which reading Nietzsche gives the bourgeois subject "a pleasant feeling" of a "'cosmic biological' revolution" which "was enticingly projected in contrast to the 'superficial', 'external' social revolution" (Lukács, 1980, p.317). While Nietzsche's critiques of art might have been revealing, Lukács (1980) argues – a diagnosis consistent with the reception patterns in the 50s (Solms-Laubach, 2007) – the Nietzschean critique of degenerationism becomes nothing less than a class weapon, and his philosophy can be seen as an intellectual legitimation of the expanding bourgeois classes. This kind of reading is still influential today (Jones, 2010).[80]

Losurdo (2019) is likewise critical of the evolution of Nietzsche's literary styles, situating his preference for the aphorism and poetry against the journalistic forms as politically and pedagogically motivated, drawing attention to the philosopher's overall ambition to "influence readers furthest from anti-democratic radicalism" (p. 858). We can see here again how Nietzsche's plural styles, dissonant rhetoric and the heterogeneity of his aphoristic thinking become either demonized or celebrated in reception. While Foucault's

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[79] Losurdo's (2019) main critique of Lukács is that the latter read Nietzsche "prophet of the mass slave labour of the Third Reich" (p.609), situating him in terms of the context of the war, rather than in its own 19th century intellectual context.

[80] See Jones (2010) and Landa (2019b) for sympathetic though not uncritical readings of *Destruction of Reason*. Lukács' (1981) critique of Nietzsche a reactionary philosopher of the bourgeoisie has been also read in terms of the relationship between Wagner and anti-Semitism. See Holub (2015) for a critical discussion on this topic.

creative appropriations can be seen as mode of victorious assimilation, extended by Derrida (1979), Butler (1997), Said (2003) as I investigate in the next chapters, the contestations of Nietzsche by Lukács, Habermas and Losurdo reflect on the other pole in Bull's (2011) mapping: "rejection of the text as mistaken or immoral" (p.36). The affective investments in Nietzsche's works finds their class projections in the latter reading of their receptive effects at the level of Marxist class struggle: the bourgeoise easily identifies with the masterful free from ressentiment, seeking for themselves "the rewards of the text" (Bull, 2011, p.24). This makes for a particularly illuminating example of the apparent paradox of Nietzsche's popularity among groups that he denigrates: the 'educated'.

Even if we put aside the notion that Nietzsche's philosophy might reflect the particular class interests of the elites as a leading thinker of the bourgeoise, Habermas' assessment of his philosophy of the subject as incompatible with the project of critical theory has been even more influential (Babich, 2004; Waite, 1996). Today, even contemporary readers more sympathetic to the anti-foundationalism and anti-universalism of Nietzsche and Foucault than to Marx or Habermas share many suspicions against the philosopher's conservative politics in relation to the parameters of 'race', class and gender. In *Critique and Praxis* (2020), Bernard Harcourt argues that Nietzsche's philosophy must be "set aside" because of "its misogyny and aristocracy" (p.19).

However, those are concerns around Nietzsche's politics as seen through an anachronistic, contemporary lens. In Chapters 3 and 4, I argued that the unstable categories of 'race' and class must be placed in the historical context of Nietzsche's thinking, as well in terms of his ambition to recruit his ideal readers towards a community of re-valuators which would shift the criteria on which social worth is measured, and the terms on which the decadent social order is organised. Harcourt (2020) also compellingly argues that the project of critique today lies closer to Nietzsche than to Marx, because of the "emphasis on illusions and values" (p.19), assimilating Nietzsche's thought in formulating an new notion of critical theory beyond the Frankfurt School and theories of recognition. Narrating the different challenges to this tradition, Harcourt (2020) distinguishes a path taken by Foucault, Deleuze, Klossowski and Kofman, who presented their confrontations "on the terrain of epistemology and pushed critical philosophy down an epistemological path— a path that Nietzsche had forged with his own radical interventions on the value of truth" (p.4). It is to that critique of truth that I would like to turn to consider how we might assess the potential contribution of Nietzsche to critical social theory today, still in the mode of reading for victory, rather than for failure, which attempts to appropriate his thinking for particular purposes.

Truth as a product of metaphoric transference

At least since Ricoeur's (1977) hermeneutics of suspicion, Nietzsche has been read as a thinker of illusion and historicity rather than a naturalist, an influential interpretation in social theory today (Harcourt, 2020; Felski, 2015). There are many sites in his writings from which one can delineate Nietzsche's suspicions of the value of truth. Nietzsche, for instance, speaks of truth as an army of metaphors (TL 83), the drive to truth as a "life-preserving error" (GS 110), and of untruth as a condition of life (BGE 1.4). In light of Nietzsche's divisive reception in social theory, it is his early influential notion of truth as 'a mobile army of metaphors' that holds fascinating tensions – even if it is not representative of his overarching views or position on truth as an epistemic virtue (Emden, 2019). In his early essay *On Truth and Lying in an Extra-moral Sense* (1979[1873]), widely influential in continental theory, from Kofman to Said, Nietzsche (p. 83) speaks about truth not as the opposite of logical error or falsity, but as an illusion reproduced below the level of consciousness in social and moral life:

> What, then, is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms, in short a sum of human relations which have been subjected to poetic and rhetorical intensification, translation, and decoration, and which, after they have been in use for a long time, strike a people as firmly established, canonical, and binding. (...) To be truthful is to employ the usual metaphors... this is the duty to lie according to a fixed convention, to lie with the herd and in a manner binding upon everyone. Now man of course forgets that this is the way things stand for him. Thus he lies in the manner indicated, unconsciously and in accordance with habits which are centuries old.

Nietzsche presents here a notion of language as based on metaphoric transference, where truth would be created, reproduced and fabricated in social relations, but also a site of physio-biology – a "life-preserving error" (TL 84) which helps to advance human species. As Emden (2019) points out, the essay has been "often read along either epistemological or rhetorical lines" (p.279), mirroring the broader clash between analytic-technical and continental-hermeneutic scholarship. It is the latter readings which have been influential in the field of social theory. Magnus and Higgins (1996) emphasize that it has resonated with "literary theorists and philosophers influenced by literary criticism" who "interpret Nietzsche

as defending a view of "truth" that treats it as an illusion foisted upon us by language" (p.30). One might qualify this in terms of Rorty's (1989) influential account of the 'contingency of language', or Said's (2003) image of the 'herd of philologists' in Nietzsche's writing which I will revisit in the next chapter.[81] De Man (1974) offers an influential reading of this quote in delineating Nietzsche's theory of rhetoric as grounded in the structure of literary ropes, arguing that Nietzsche formulates here a conception of language as intrinsically rhetorical, where what it being forgotten throughout history is the figural nature of all metaphors.

This conception of truth as a product of metaphoric transference offers a fertile ground for sociological readings of Nietzsche, particularly if we place the discipline as a 'third culture' between science and literature (Lepenies, 1988). Indeed, Lepenies' (1988) description of Nietzsche as a "poet" rather than a "thinker" (p.136) who suspends the organizing categories of the discipline is helpful here, as it allows us to probe Habermas' (1987) critique that it is ultimately the elevation of the irrational Dionysian realm of myth which annule Nietzsche's contribution to social theory. While for Habermas (1987) rhetoric has no place in sociality understood as communicative reason, where language is understood to promise technical impartiality, and the relationship between the narrator and listeners is egalitarian, many contemporary practitioners of sociology and cultural studies attuned to the ways in which power shapes the socio-material order and the processes of knowledge production would challenge the notion that language can be deployed in a neutral manner (Baehr, 2016; McKinnon, 2012; Puwar, 2004). This opens up paths for exploring Nietzsche's challenges and potential contributions to social theory as a practice achieved rhetorically, whereby authors are understood to deploy particular styles and techniques in order to "convince readers of the force and validity of an argument" (Baehr, 2016, p.87).

McKinnon (2012), for instance, reconstructed Nietzsche's early theory of metaphor that would enrich sociological inquiry of religion. What interests him as a practitioner of sociology is not the question whether the striving for truth is an anthropological capacity of the human, but what is the purchase of metaphors of nature for the study of religious life – for instance the metaphors of "God as a storm, rock or a roaring lion" (p.211).[82] McKinnon's (2012) argument is not only that metaphors matter in how one conceives of religious

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[81] Paul de Man (1974) offers an influential reading of this quote in delineating Nietzsche's theory of rhetoric. He argues that Nietzsche formulates here a conception of language as intrinsically rhetorical, where what it being forgotten is the figural nature of all metaphors, pointing to the broader illusion of selfhood.

[82] Here 'nature' is not a realm from which to derive any normative parameters as in analytic-technical readings of Nietzsche on naturalism and normativity (Emden, 2019), but a semantic domain for explaining social and religious life.

phenomena, but that metaphor-creation would be the paradigmatic sociological activity to the extent that it allows to capture ever new meaning and connect between different semantic domains in an attempt to persuade a particular audience. Nietzsche, alongside Black (1962), emerges here as the main theorist of 'transference' which underlies metaphor building.[83] Language in this sociological reading of Nietzsche's early theory is understood as a site of power struggles between the herd and the individual, a chance for re-fashioning of broader grammars which sustain the social order.[84] Rather than a proxy for relativism or constructivism, Nietzsche's metaphorical conception of truth would take into account that delusions are prevalent in human relations and might be even fundamental to one's flourishing in terms of shared fantasies sustaining social life, as many contemporary feminist scholars point out in relation to the neoliberal social order (Ahmed, 2014; Berlant, 2011).

The purchase of this theory of metaphor lies in connecting between the semiotic and material dimensions in the making of the social order (McKinnon, 2012). The Nietzschean figure of the 'liar' exemplifies how truth as an epistemic virtue is always embedded in the moral valuations of the herd: "The liar is a person who uses the valid designations, the words, in order to make something which is unreal appear to be real. If he does this in a selfish, and moreover harmful manner, society will thereby exclude him" (TL 84). Language has the power to define, sustain and reproduce social boundaries, making truth-speaking rather than truth itself into a condition of social life. "Certain sorts of deception" will have "unpleasant consequences", Nietzsche argues, if they violate ''the pyramidal order according to castes and degrees (...) a new world of laws, privileges, subordinations" (TL 84).

This theory of metaphorical transference as a site of socio-political hierarchies resonates with Danto's (1965) canonical account of Nietzsche's anti-sociality, which associated the figure of the liar who speaks outside of the conventions of the herd with the repressive moral value systems. Danto (1965) traced Nietzsche's characteristic appeal to the subjects who stands outside of community, for instance the madman, the liar or the lawbreaker, who pronounce words which will "fail to pass dully into the group idiom" (p.144), outside of the shared mental schemes. We return here to the classic understanding of a thesis about the parameters of the 'anti-social' in Nietzsche's philosophy of morality and language. "Nietzsche becomes an advocate of antisocial passions", when endorsing affects

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[83] Brown (1976) offers a helpful explanation of how metaphors cannot be treated literally, as this would result in absurd meanings: "by transferring the ideas and associations of one system or level of discourse to another, metaphor allows each system to be perceived anew" (p.175)
[84] This strand of interpretation has a longer history in the reception of Nietzsche (Kofman, 1972).

which are "out of the ordinary and not to be to tolerated" (Danto, 1965, p.127), for instance lies which do not serve the life-preserving delusions of a given group.

The classic reading is that Nietzsche romanticizes the creative capacities of the individual as a locus of ethical life: it "hardly follows that every antisocial (…) impulse is going to give rise to fresh moral horizons" (Danto, 1965, p.127). Disciplining Nietzsche for identifying of the victorious hero with the 'military type', Danto (1965) argues that Nietzsche has "no one but himself to blame for his wicked reputation" in terms of his "apologetics for and exhortations to lust, cruelty, violence, hatred, and brutality of every sort" (p.127-128). This negative view of the anti-social affects in Nietzsche's thinking finds resonance in scholarship today – for instance in Beiner's (2018) warnings against the philosopher's enticements to genocide, but also in Losurdo's (2019) critique of the *will to power* as an undifferentiated principle which slips onto cruelty, as discussed in the previous section.

In contrast, readings of Nietzsche for assimilation and victory in the orbit of sociology would not debate whether and how Nietzsche entices individuals towards law-breaking, but rather use his philosophy of metaphor as a resource for theorizing how hierarchies in social life are based on symbolic boundaries maintained through language, categories and judgments (McKinnon, 2012). The division between 'the rich and poor', for instance, would be not just a question of socio-material outcomes, but of moral judgments, as those terms carry negative connotations prior to their deployment by any subject. This symbolic aspect of language might seem common-sense for many readers today, especially those trained in post-structuralism, but the role of metaphor in sustaining and reproducing the social order is rarely drawn out in sociological theory, McKinnon (2012) argues: "we can neither ignore metaphors nor treat them as mere decoration that adorns 'real' (non-metaphorical) social forces; metaphors are an inextricable part of all social action, processes, and structures, including, of course, thought (both religious and social scientific)" (p.210).

Nietzsche's theory of metaphoric transference offers a pathway for drawing out his potential contribution to social theory if read outside of concerns with his class racism, misogyny and anti-blackness, qualifying Harcourt's (2020) reading of Nietzsche as a pre-cursor of the critical philosophy of illusion. It is in particular Nietzsche's early account of truth which has strong purchase for sociologists in shifting our attention to the processes of metaphorical transpositions underlying epistemic frames of representation. The notion of truth as a product of metaphoric transference relies on the contrast between the conceptual rigid "worlds of literal thought (science, philosophy, law)" (McKinnon, 2012, p.209), versus those that would be intuited in a more Dionysian, creative fashion by the individual. Truth,

in the shared, generic sense, would not denote an epistemic correspondence to a certain state of affairs – resonant with the naturalist understanding of truth as a condition of existence (Emden, 2019) - but it would be a "guarantee of the social order" (McKinnon, 2012, p.207), where community members come to recognize and reproduce certain norms, beliefs and states of affairs in speaking truthfully within specific frames of understanding.

This difference between the conventional descriptions of the herd and the singular truths of the individual brings us back to the mythical-poetic seductions of the tempter God, Dionysus. Lemm (2012) reconstructs Nietzsche's appeal to the 'singular' truths of the individual which would be unique in an absolute sense but inherently plural – in tune with one's intuitive understanding, as the individual reconnects to the world of myth, dreams and irrationality, against the prison of abstract concepts and mental schemas. In contrast to this Dionysian drive for metaphor creation, the concepts and schemes of the herd "attribute a deceiving generality and equality to that which is inherently unequal" (Lemm, 2009, p.117), once language becomes a site of power struggles suspectable to failures of individuality – in stark contrast to Habermas' (1987) notion of language as a site of consensus.

The realm of the Dionysian dreams brings us back to the tasks addressed to the philosopher of the future (*Versucher*) to speak their own truth against illusions of the herd, embedded in the exclusive forms of address to the 'profound' spirits: "truth is not for everyone" (Nietzsche, BGE 2.43). While truth-speaking against shared delusions is then associated with a risk of banishment from community, it is also a chance for refashioning oneself and the social world against the spell of shared deceptions – or at least it is tempting to read Nietzsche's account of language in this way, if we attempt to read him for assimilation rather than repudiation at the broader level of social theory.

As we have seen in Chapters 3 and 4, this is a self-serving and selective reading of his early philosophy of metaphor which does not come to terms with his class racism, taking Nietzsche's insights into truth, language and sociality outside of its own historical context. The call for truth-speaking outside of the valuations of the herd can be alternatively read as a site of aristocratic class politics in the context of a broader shift of discourse from epistemological to political ground in light of rising anarchism and socialism in the second half of the 19th century. From a Marxist perspective, Nietzsche's early ideas on truth as an 'army of metaphors' lay grounds for his perspectivism and anti-dogmatism which would play a key role in rejecting the ideas of equality and dignity of all humans, including the subaltern classes, an idea which the philosopher attempts to ridicule (Losurdo, 2019, p.258-60).

The affective genesis of interpretation

Rather than merely a site of racialized class politics, I proposed to read the philosopher of the future (*Versucher*) as a device which shifts attention to the imaginary, affective structure of Nietzsche's writings, once we think of ourselves as addresses of his call for truth-speaking and overcoming of humanity, where figures of excess and victory – for instance the philosopher of the future – emerge as "sites of identification for the reader" (Bull, 2011, p.34), sites of heartfelt, though often unconscious, attachments. In the absence of an audience that would respond to his demands, and the proliferation of bad readers, Nietzsche conjures his readers as co-conspirators in the project of revaluation who go against the common deceptions of mass society and intellectual elites, including 19th century sociologists. Yet the christening of the philosophers of the future as experimenters, attempters and tempters is more than a description: Nietzsche's Dionysian wordplay is an act of coining a new word which is not simply playful for its own sake but risks failure and misunderstanding, as it simultaneously undoes the possibility that it denotes: "the name itself is a mere attempt (*Versuch*), and if you will, a temptation (*Versuchung*)" (BGE 2.42)

Formally, the wordplay is an example of *paronomasia* (*annominatio* in Latin), a figure of speech which Nietzsche mentions in his lectures on ancient rhetoric (AR, p.79). Yet the notion of a temptation that should be presumably resisted points to the aspect of language that undermines itself, to the indeterminacy in the act of denoting, naming and calling into being – as if Nietzsche was encouraging readers to be aware of the risks and dangers that interpellation invokes. It is not only a rhetorical device through which the author tempts his readers as his creative companions, but also calls them to be cautious in the act of interpretation, perhaps even wary of the risks that come with demands to overcome 'degeneration of humanity'. In this sense, the wordplay points to what Hawhee (1999) described as "the generative force and inherent erroneousness of language" (p.141). The suspensive announcement of philosophers of the future as experimenters can be understood not only as an example of language as active and figurative, aimed at stimulating activity of the reader rather than as illustrating previous propositional content (Rosenberg and Milchman, 2018), but also as pointing to the limits of 'private' metaphor creation.

The opposition between the singular truth-speaking of the individual versus that of the herd – the notion of language supports illusions that shape the social order – has played a crucial role in readers' passionate and heartfelt responses to Nietzsche. Danto (1965) suggests that Nietzsche appeals to the resentful who feel their superiority is unrecognized, to the irrational anti-social affects outside of the repressive workings of customary morality

and language. It led him to speak of Nietzsche's wicked anti-social reputation, echoed more recently in Bull's (2011) investigation of Nietzsche's extraordinary bond with his readers despite his fantasy about "a master species capable of enslaving the rest" (p.45) centered around the notion of biological organisms. Yet those accounts of anti-sociality through the lens of psychopathology and socio-biologism obscure how Nietzsche is able to produce affinity between himself and his readers – not merely the military and the outcasts – by narrating the processes of subjection in the first place, linked to the utopian promise of breaking out of the shared deceptions of the herd through metaphor creation.

Nietzsche can teach us important lessons here as a master of rhetoric, particularly that he appeals even to those groups whom he insults – whether feminists, sociologists or Jews. Nietzsche's appeal among disadvantaged groups he denigrates has been so remarkably broad because the texts facilitate performative (mis)identifications: it is difficult to disentangle oneself from Nietzsche's call towards value-creation. Reading on heroic capabilities of the self-fashioning individual would be "our first intoxicating taste of the *will to power*" (Bull, 2011, p.35) – the feeling of increase in possibilities, an enhancement of life, which the text produces rather than merely describes and narrates. It suggests a performative dimension to reading, where the task of interpretation would be not a mechanizable, detached and ahistorical activity. Nietzsche implicates the subject's body and heart, encouraging us to read through our own experience, with our own blood, and at the same time remain cautious and reflexive about the role of our own desires and projections.

What might at first seem innocent – a theory of truth-speaking as linked to hierarchies underlying social life – gains potentially dangerous meanings if we recognize ways in which the esoteric dimension of the text, visible for all to see and few to grasp, strategically fuels call for a new social order as rooted in a caste system. One does not need to directly identify with the majestic operations of the master, against the crippled violence of the slave, to appreciate the notion of the *will to power* as a heuristic of interpretation, where the body would be an organism that interprets, pointing to the affective genesis of interpretation in bodily multiplicity. Porter (2010) argues that "Nietzsche tracks language to its sources beyond language into the realm of the body and this is where he finds the ultimate "rhetoric" lies" (p.170). While orators establish affective bonds through the use of gestures, tempo of speech and facial expressions, in written text the body of the reading subject becomes implicated through the process of self-identifications that the text produces.

This strand of appropriation comes out most strongly in contemporary readings of Nietzsche inspired by post-structuralism and psychoanalysis (Brown, 1993, Faulkner, 2010),

in particular the post-Foucauldian notion of the subject as shaped through power (Saar, 2018). Departing from a notion of the body as an organism that interprets, Faulkner (2010) used a Lacanian framework – centered on symbolic rather than biologistic drives – to theorize how readers, particularly those whom Nietzsche denigrates, are susceptible to his charm. Language for Nietzsche does not facilitate the possibility for equal exchange as in the Habermasian framework of communicative reason, but rather the necessity of "adhering to the fiction of similarity and exchangeability of bodies in discourse" (Faulkner, 2010, p.20). This relies precisely on the contrast between the truths of the herd versus the primordial non-verbal intuitions of the individual which Nietzsche narrates. This framework allows us to foreground the affective dimension of reading: "the reader alienates her or his "self" in the figures of identification found in Nietzsche's writing" (Faulkner, 2010, p.60).

More specifically, Faulkner (2010) argues that Nietzsche offers a rethinking of subjectivity as a synthesis between the body and language, where the emergence of an accountable and rational "I" would be at the expense of the conflicting drives within oneself, leaving an excess that the text is able to mobilize. Language and morality would be promoted a specific bodily drive – the 'herd instinct' – through which subjects take a pleasure in conforming to their own subjection, identifying with and at the same time loathing the majestic self-affirming nobles. The performative misidentifications with the figures of victory produce a sense of alienation: „the reader is caught between" on the one hand „admiration for the master type who represents strength, active force that commands, increase of power, greater perfection" and on the other hand „guilt at the prospect of inflicting suffering upon another" (Faulkner, 2010, p.60). This produces a conflict in the reader's psyche that cannot be easily resolved as it is characterized by ambivalence: a master who is libidinally attached to his guilt becomes an accomplice of their own subjection. If the project of revaluation promises an alternative notion of the master caste which is materially poorer than the slave, and where the latter are free from nihilistic suffering and exploitation (Drochon, 2016), this might relieve the subject of their guilt. On a more general level, Nietzsche aims to reorder readers' drives in order to promote a particular form of life based on a new order of rank which would be "better suited to executing the vision of culture Nietzsche's philosophy entails" (Faulkner, 2010, p.14). In a psychoanalytic reading, this happens by awakening the reader's need to be interpelled, "and so to negate and suppress whatever does not fit to the ideal promoted by his writings" (Faulkner, 2010, p.33), so a reader feels that they occupy the position assigned to the few predestined insiders of the text. In Chapters 2, 3 and 4, I

explored how this relates to the esoteric dimension of Nietzsche's writings understood both on temporal and socio-spatial terms in relation to the project of revaluation.

While Faulkner (2010) takes this in a Lacanian direction, Brown (1993) argued that the sense of identification with the 'noble/slave' can be mapped onto the cruel attachments to subjection that shape identity politics, where ressentiment produced by the discourse of equality becomes expressed as racism, misogyny or anti-statism. Brown (1993) emphasized that we can recognize the modern subject of neoliberal politics in Nietzsche's diagnosis of ressentiment – recognizing ourselves either in the description as those who win out of our own strength, being the 'cause' of our own actions, or those who fail under the gravity of external circumstances. Brown's (1993) argument is that "late modern postindustrial societies (...) accelerate and expand the conditions for the production of ressentiment" (p.403), visible in an identity structure invested in its own subjection.[85] Overcoming of resentment-based identity investments would have therapeutic uses for the individual, not for culture, so the diagnostic purchase of Nietzsche's philosophy would be outside of *his own* politics. However, the purchase of Nietzsche's thinking about the slave morality at the level of the individual is limited if we recognize the ambivalence that shapes the master morality understood as a product of the slave mode of evaluation – I will consider this in more depth in the next chapter in relation to Nietzsche's ideas on the mythical origins of language.

Rather than 'use' Nietzsche either for theorizing the individual or collective dynamics in terms of ready-made concepts, Nietzsche's post-Foucauldian reception can be instructive for thinking about the rhetorical structure of texts once we think of concepts (e.g. *will to power*) as not purely technical, but rather as sites of the affective, imaginary level of textuality. This can be useful for thinking about social theory as an activity achieved metaphorically where the goal of the writer-sociologist is to convince and persuade a specific audience, rather than to faithfully represent the social world that can be never exhaustively described in the first place (Baehr, 2016). Readers of sociological poetics pointed to the relevance of Nietzsche precisely as a master of rhetoric (Baer, 2016; McKinnon, 2012). Investigating how social theories become recognized as canonical, Baher (2016) suggested that the accuracy of conceptual vocabularies "is less important than its ability to seduce" (p.89). One can think of various influential narrative and figurative devices in the history of social theory, from Weber's 'iron cage' to Haraway's 'cyborg', Bauman's metaphor of

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[85] For a critical discussion of Brown's essay in terms of the potentialities for reading Nietzsche on the left today, in particular the possibilities for 'subverting' ressentiment (either internal or external), see Schotten (2020). For an alternative framework for conceiving of the *will to power* as a 'social and cultural diagnostic' used towards the critique of voluntarism in a queer tradition see Ahmed (2014).

liquidity to Ahmed's figure of a 'killjoy feminist', which have all captivated the imagination of readers in ways that invite a variety of appropriations and self-identifications.

The term 'sociological poetics' investigates how to understand the rhetorical and aesthetic properties that classic texts share, and what role these play in the process of canonization (Brown, 1976; McKinnon, 2012; Wolff, 2013). Attending to Nietzsche's use of a dissonant, double rhetoric can contribute to this field of study, in shifting attention to the ways in which persuasion and seduction happens at the level of the body, centering the role of the affects and drives in reading social theory. The figures of speech which facilitate self-identification are worth studying with attention to the receptive effects that those produce, and how they might transform and reorient the reader's self rather than describe and articulate what kind of positions the readers occupy. However, this is to read Nietzsche's philosophy for victory rather than failure, that is to appropriate and selectively assimilate aspects of his thinking at the level of methodologies of interpretation and theorising.

Conclusion

This chapter explores what made Nietzsche's philosophy into a fertile ground for diagnostic purposes in the field of contemporary critical theory, despite his unsettling admiration of the Hindu caste system and his class racism. The figures of the *Übermensch*, death of God and 'last man' gave rise to the influential frameworks of epistemic overcoming, will to know and psychic subjection (Foucault, 2002; Butler, 1997), outside of the metaphor of the social body as an organism through which Nietzsche draws connections between politics, culture and the individual. I argue that in making sense of Nietzsche's uses for the purposes of critical social theory, one needs to depart from Nietzsche's attempts to create intimacy with his readers and recruit them as his companions and co-conspirators in the project of revaluation. In this vein, I have appropriated Bull's (2011) framework of reading for victory which queries how readers are persuaded and often manipulated to identify with the heroes in Nietzsche's writings – the brave scientists of the future, the 'free spirits' and the nobles – rather than the losers – the modern barbarians, cultural philistines, the degenerate, weak and malformed. Nietzsche entices us to identify with him against the rest of humanity by emphasizing a sense of distinction from the herd and the rabble – even from those who abuse the name of the 'free spirit' - in ways that which has led to many celebratory readings of the affirmative potential of his writings in social theory.

At the same time, Nietzsche's thinking of the *will to power* also created much controversy in this field of reception, as an undifferentiated quasi-metaphysical biologism at

best, or a dangerous weapon of elites at worst. The key clash is what to make of Nietzsche's 'multifarious stylings' in assessing his philosophy of the subject as made through power. Habermas (1987) spoke of the clash between the left Hegelians, right Hegelians and Nietzsche on how to understand the forms of (ir)rationality and socio-pathology as basis for critique, echoed in the ongoing discussion on what normative values underlie genealogy. The framework of genealogy, re-appropriated famously by Foucault, offers an alternative to the Hegelian notion of deficiencies in reason (Honneth, 1991), but its normative underpinnings are often read as unclear, and it has been recently criticized as a sanitisation of Nietzsche's class racism (Losurdo, 2019). This contrast between Foucault's celebratory appropriation and Habermas' denunciation demonstrates a broader impasse. Readings of Nietzsche on the margins of social theory often fall within two orientations: either to assimilate Nietzsche's thinking, or to condemn and reject the philosopher, as Bull (2011) observed. Both are to read Nietzsche for victory rather than failure, by either winning the favour of the author or winning the comfort of a 'moral' position against the philosopher's dangerous seductions.

The strategy to put Nietzsche on trial – for instance in terms of his class racism - leaves the reader with limited tools to ask what are the uses of Nietzsche as a master of rhetoric who is able to persuade all kinds of readers across different political identifications. Nietzsche will not pass either the Marxist or Habermasian tests for what it means to contribute to the framework of critical social theory, but his conception of language as a site of falsifications opens up productive ways of thinking about the relationship between moral judgments, the social order and socio-material positions, starkly at odds with Habermas' notion of language as site of consensus. The notion of illusions as constitutive of human values sets Nietzsche apart *vis-à-vis* the myth of axiological neutrality which runs through the history of social theory from Weber (1917) onwards. Readings of Nietzsche's conception of truth as a guarantee of the social order offer promising paths for drawing out the purchase of Nietzsche's philosophy of language and illusion (Harcourt, 2020; McKinnon, 2012).

To the extent that the Nietzschean conception of language does not aim towards consensus, in sharp contrast to the more rationalistic strands of critical social theory emerging from the work of Habermas and speech-act theory, Baehr (2016) compellingly argues that it can offer paths to enrich our understandings of the role of rhetoric in relationship to sociological, not just literary, activity. In this sense, productive sociological readings of Nietzsche's would not aim to reconstruct his conceptions of truth and the social body, but rather use his philosophy of language and metaphor for heuristic purposes (McKinnon, 2012). Uncovering the complex rhetorical structures of Nietzsche's texts which

facilitate readers' attachments in relationship to dissonant receptive effects can be useful for discussions on sociological poetics, a trend concerned with the figurative strategies and techniques employed by the sociologist-writer to persuade readers as embodied subjects.

We return here to the affective engagement of the reader who cannot entirely detach herself from what Nietzsche describes, where interpretation cannot be abstracted away from its affective genesis in the body. Despite its links to structural functionalism, colonialism and the outdated frameworks of social evolution, Nietzsche's thinking about the body as an organism which interprets can be still productive to conceive of the ways in which readers' subjectivity – shaped by the social relations of ressentiment - come to be mirrored in and even reorganized through the text which taps into and exploits affects that it narrates (e.g. guilt). This has important implication for the discussion on sociological poetics, pointing to the power of performative (mis)identifications in reception of social theory. However, this is to appropriate selected aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy outside of his own concerns and its socio-political roots. In the next chapter, I will interrogate more closely how Nietzsche's philosophy can be read against itself for critical post-colonial and feminist social theory in a strategy of reading for failure rather than for victory.

Chapter 6 Reading for failure: sexual difference and class racism

"The pathos of nobility and distance (...), the lasting and dominating overall basic feeling of a higher ruling order in relation to a lower order, to a "below" - *that* is the origin of the opposition "good" and "bad". (The master's right to give names goes as far us to allow us conceive of the origin of language itself as an expression of power on the part of the rulers: they say "this *is* thus and such," they seal every thing and occurrence with a sound and thereby take possession of it, so to speak)."

Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, 1.2

"Nietzsche's influence on postcolonial artists (Césaire, in particular) was real; the troubling presence of Nietzsche simply cannot be wished away. One is led to the seeming paradox that an irrationalist, racially biologistic, eugenicist, and counterrevolutionary philosophical school – the very school that informed imperialist self-understanding – would appeal to colonial intellectuals seeking the rebirth of their cultures."

Jones, 2010, p.61

Introduction

Recent reconstructions of Nietzsche's aristocratic body politic give a renewed sense of urgency to the often reoccurring question: how to read the emancipatory potential of his writings for feminist and post-colonial theory? Nietzsche's philosophy famously attracted feminist readers whom he denigrates and excludes in most offensive, if not heart-breaking, ways: Zarathustra speaks of women as "cows (...) not yet capable of friendship" (Z 1 On the Friend). Post-structuralist theorists uncovered the rhetorical and performative stakes of his texts: his theory of sign-chains (Butler, 1993), figures of speech that mirror the inauguration of subjectivity (Butler, 1997; Faulkner, 2010), the complex significations of '*das Weib'* – the derogatory German term for woman (Battersby, 2017; Gallop, 1995; Spivak, 1983). In post-Derridian reception alone, the multiple figures of woman in Nietzsche's writings have been

re-interpreted in terms of the history of (un)truth as upsetting the logocentric tradition, laying grounds for feminist critiques of phallogocentrism in the 1980s.[86]

The debate on whether and how Nietzsche destabilizes the metaphysics of sex and gender continues today. The reactionary and conservative philosopher has been often ironically used 'against himself' both for queer purposes (Butler, 1990; Verkerk, 2017; Schotten, 2020), as well as in the post-colonial strand of thought (James, 2013; Jones, 2010; Naicker, 2019; Toscano, 2020).[87] The long-standing discussions on the 'feminist Nietzsche' – to put various interpretations under one umbrella term – have been curiously absent from reconstructions of Nietzsche's class racism (Losurdo, 2019), even from frameworks which 'antithetically' map the category of the enslaved proletariat directly onto Nietzsche's post-colonial reception (Toscano, 2020). The problematic of sexual difference as it links to reproduction gets lost in those readings, despite Nietzsche's complicity in the old premise running through philosophy: the notion of animalized, racialized and gendered others as incapable of rational thought and governing (Butler, 1990; Spivak, 1983; Ziarek, 2017).

As we have seen in Chapters 3 and 4, the term class racism draws attention to the dividing lines between the idle 'nobles' and working 'slaves' which cut through received national and ethnic identity-markers, pointing to Nietzsche's denigrations of the working classes within the context of class struggle. Yet the role that sexual difference plays here is not explicitly theorized. On the Marxist-left, Nietzsche's two-caste utopia has been read as an unsettling vision of cultural elites benefitting from the surplus produced by insensitive 'forced labour' (Losurdo, 2019), against more optimistic readings of the master caste as 'transracial' (Drochon, 2016), with only sparse references to gender identity markings. This chapter argues that the question of sexual difference cannot be divorced from discussions on 'race', class and caste in emerging interpretations of Nietzsche's class racism, departing from an influential tradition which theorizes those as unstable, intersectional categories which cannot be divorced from each other (Schuffe, 2001; Ziarek, 2017).

My argument is that controversies around Derrida's (1979) reading of Nietzsche's 'plural styles' in *Spurs* are particularly instructive for assessing Nietzsche's purchase for critical social theory if read in the mode of failure, rather than victory, which does not aim to

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[86] For a comprehensive discussion of the relation between Derrida and feminism, see Feder, Rawlison and Zakin (1997). The first chapter "Women in 'Spurs' and Nineties Feminism" originally published in *Diacritics* (Gallop, 1995) is particularly relevant in terms of the matrix of ideas linking Nietzsche and Derrida.

[87] The queer and post-colonial readings often rely on Foucault's re-appropriation of Nietzsche's genealogical method. For a discussion on Foucault and queer theory, see Sawicki (2010) and Deutscher (2017).

win the favour of the author or rebut his framework. Critical of the post-structuralist tendency to sanitise Nietzsche, Losurdo (2019) dismisses Derrida's essay, yet he misunderstands its main line of inquiry as centered around a supposedly playful line from Nietzsche's *Nachlass* – 'I forgot my umbrella'. This is in stark contrast to the feminist rethinking of the decentered, plural category of 'woman' precisely on the basis of the encounter between Derrida and Nietzsche, radicalized into the premise of affirmative feminist deconstruction (Spivak, 1983). Losurdo's (2019) unwillingness to engage with feminist critiques reveals the limit of the historical-materialist mode of interpretation.

Once we read the categories of caste, 'race' and class together as related to those of stand and dynasty in Nietzsche's writings (Moore, 2002), his aristocratic politics cannot be conceived outside of the prism of gender and reproduction. On the one hand, readers in the post-structuralist traditions insist that the positions of 'woman' in Nietzsche's writings cannot be read as univocal or static, but rather as a complex rhetoric trope within the post-metaphysical matrix of ideas connecting truth, illusion and castration (Derrida, 1979; Spivak, 1983).[88] On the other hand, 'race' is treated either as a loose and indeterminate category in Nietzsche's writings without any bearing for the 'content' of his philosophy (Drochon, 2016), or in the context of class struggle (Losurdo, 2019; Toscano, 2020). The latter interpretations fall back on the implicitly masculine figure of the self-making noble whose creative acts shape culture. In this chapter, I sketch out an alternative framework for thinking about the racialized figures of mastery in Nietzsche's writings, pointing to the relevance of Nietzsche's thinking about the nobles' 'privilege of giving names' (GM 1.2) as a site of racialization.

. At the same time, it is of paramount importance to recognize the fundamental 'irony' in reading Nietzsche from the perspective of the subjugated whom he excludes and offends in cruel ways (Bernasconi, 2017; Gooding-Williams, 2006; Jones, 2010; Toscano, 2020). It is important to pay attention to the paradoxes, ironies and unresolved riddles of the text, to the limits of the project of technical reconstruction. Those come to the forefront precisely with the figure of the nobles as mythical founders of language, rather than as any particular historical group (e.g. Vikings, Turks, 'Aryans') that can be said to be racialized either in terms of physiological attributes or class struggle. Rather than technically reconstruct Nietzsche's views on the relationship between morality and 'race', post-structuralist readers such as Butler (2002) tend to interpret genealogies as instances of fiction-making in regard

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[88] The concept of castration is read in a Lacanian framework. See Verkerk (2017) and Gallop (1995) for critical discussion.

to the mythical origins of values and language, fables which cannot be located socio-temporally.

Butler argues for the performative, value-creative capacity of the text, how it produces a specific reader and subject. The complex rhetorical structure of Nietzsche's texts is relevant here then not only in asking how he might be exploiting, reproducing or subverting 19th century clichés and discourses about the 'decline of the races' and degenerationism as examined in Chapter 4. We must also pay attention to the ways in which Nietzsche is entangling readers as embodied subjects in narrating the origins of language and subjectivity in the first place, as I began to examine in Chapter 5. Read via the post-structuralist feminist lens, Nietzsche's philosophy allows us to think not only about the subject but also about the structure of the signs as shaped through power relations, with a potential to be re-iterated differently (Butler, 1993). This is thus not an end-point in reading Nietzsche for queer and post-colonial critique but rather a chance to recognize the nexus of ideas on language, morality and sign-chains as relevant for theorizing racialization at the level of the semiotic order. While it is important to ground Nietzsche's rhetoric in its historical context, this chapter is then not concerned with his own misogynist, aristocratic and racist 'positions' but rather with the strategies available in reading Nietzsche on the feminist-left today which exploit and turn around the polemical purpose of Nietzsche's rhetoric against itself.

The tensions and ambivalences in reading Nietzsche for the purposes of emancipatory politics are important considering that his philosophy continues to be a resource for theorizing the legacies of ressentiment and violence in the post-colony and in relationship to the afterlives of settler colonialism (Jones, 2010; Moon, 2014; Naicker, 2019; Toscano, 2020). Discussions about Nietzsche's use for emancipatory politics need to move beyond the two camps: to accuse or excuse the philosopher. Given the prevalence of reading for victory that often sanitizes his socio-biologism, loudly challenged by Marxist readings today which I documented in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, this chapter builds on my previous discussion of the philosophical-political significance of the concept of 'race' in Nietzsche's writings. Departing from the clash between the readings of 'race' as an indeterminate concept and the notion of transversal class racism examined in Chapter 3, I formulate another way of thinking about its significance in Nietzsche's philosophy: 'racialization' in relation to the figure of the noble master as a mythical founder of the order of signs that sustain the socio-material order. This conception complements the historical-materialist approaches towards grounding Nietzsche's rhetoric in relation to 19th century discourses by taking into account the receptive effects of his philosophy of value and language.

Nietzsche's uses in feminist and post-colonial reception

Nietzsche's philosophy has been often reimagined to speak to post-colonial and feminist philosophies of emancipation. This is frequently considered ironic, given that the planetary stakes of experimentalism examined in Chapter 2 bring Nietzsche in proximity to violent colonial expansion as well as early eugenic programmes (Bernasconi, 2017; Gooding-Williams, 2006) Colonial experiments have been conducted on the bodies of racialized and animalized others considered sub-humans, historically denied belonging to the community of the nobles (Bernasconi, 2017; Bull, 2011; Gooding-Williams, 2006). This disquieting context in which Nietzsche's thought is embedded gains more attention today, particularly given his unsavoury references to prejudices encoded in the nineteenth-century medical culture, for instance on the topic of the Africans' capacity for withstanding pain (GM 2.7), as recovered by Bernasconi (2017). We have seen how the figure of the outcasts (Chandala) animates Nietzsche's late thought in Chapter 4 in ways that cannot be easily excused.

This brings us to the question how to read the figures of racial and gender subjugation in Nietzsche's works and whether his thought can be productive for any 'critical' Marxist feminist and post-colonial theory, in light of historical appropriations by Wright, Césaire, Fanon, Said, Spivak, Butler, Mbembe, among others. Arguably, it is the project of reading Nietzsche's figure of the philosopher of the future (*Versucher*) against itself which allows us to move away from reading for victory that identifies with the victorious nobles towards reading for failure from the perspective of the subjugated, the malformed, and the outcasts (Bull, 2011). Scott and Franklin (2006, p.2) used this figure in re-appropriating Nietzsche's philosophy for African-American studies, in ways that depart from the ironies, ambivalences and tensions at stake in Nietzsche's demands towards the new philosophers:

> Inspired by the Greek ideal of the cultural physician, Nietzsche strives to counteract the root causes of Europe's insidious decadence by cultivating a powerful new generation of philosophers that embodies a revitalized skeptical impulse. Dedicating themselves to what Nietzsche foreordains as a new "aristocratic" vision of cultural health, these new philosophers initially focus on unmasking and undermining all of the ideologies and ideals that impede this vision from becoming a reality. (...) Ironically, notwithstanding (...) radical difference in social aim, the affinities between Nietzschean and African American

engagements in the art of the cultural physician are both palpable
and powerful.

There are many ironies in reading Nietzsche's figure of the philosopher of the future as an experimenter (*Versucher*) – here under the mask of the cultural physician – towards the ends of anti-racist and feminist critique. First of all, postcolonial theorists have of course appropriated various aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy, not only ideas which we might consider racist, dangerous and unsettling today. While Nietzsche's ideas on the 'necessity' of reinstating slavery and racialized breeding have been largely omitted in reception (Bernasconi, 2017), his famous notion of truth as an 'army of metaphors' alongside his diagnosis of ressentiment among the subjugated received more attention. Yet these engagements are rarely sustained and systematic. Fanon, for instance, read Nietzsche in the 1940s while immersed in the "post-war French existentialism and phenomenology rather than Marxism" (Khalfa and Young, 2018, p.43), famously citing the philosopher in *White Skin, Black Masks* (1967), where he conceptualized the racialized dimension of language.[89]

It is worth to examine briefly the key terms of Fanon's appropriation of Nietzsche in this early work. Fanon (1967) explores here the colonizer's semiotic order which psycho-pathologizes the black subject: in the 'civilizing language' of metropolitan white French culture, difference and alterity is coded into highly moralized judgments on diction and terms used by the 'native' servants. Fanon describes the efforts of the black incomer to adopt the language of the European who despises 'the savage'. The psychoanalytic question at stake is "why the Antillean is so fond of speaking good French" (Fanon, 1967, p.48), which facilitates a psychic split within the identity of an alienated black subject. In outlining the stakes of a psychoanalytic examination into such complexes, Fanon (1967) famously quotes Nietzsche – or rather what he takes to be Nietzsche's words: "Man's misfortune, Nietzsche said, was that he was once a child. Nevertheless, we can never forget (…) that the fate of the neurotic lies in his own hands" (p.31).[90] Fanon (1967, p. 337) concludes with a call for action among the oppressed, which would be rooted not in ressentiment characteristic of the 'slave' mode of evaluation as a moralizing revenge of the powerless, but self-affirming in that it springs from outside of the colonialists' cultural matrix:

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[89] The scope of Fanon's explicit appropriation of Nietzsche is limited considering that he moves away from the masters of suspicion in *The Wretched of the Earth* (2005).

[90] Khalfa and Young (2018) offer a correction to the misreading with reference to Renault (2014) in one of the footnotes: "Matthieu Renault has pointed out that this observation, which Fanon attributes to Nietzsche, is in fact taken from Simone de Beauvoir who attributes it to Descartes (…)" (p.191).

Man's behavior is not only reactional. And there is always resentment in reaction. Nietzsche had already said it *in The Will to Power*. To induce man to be actional, by maintaining in his circularity the respect of the fundamental values that make the world human, that is the task of utmost urgency for he who, after careful reflection, prepares to act.

This call to revolutionary action in Fanon's radically humanist framework points towards the broader uses of Nietzsche's diagnosis of ressentiment for thinking about language as sustaining racialized divisions.[91] Fanon (1967) was concerned with cures available to overcome the effects of 'double narcissism' resulting from the cruel mastery of the European imperialists over the colonies, which can be mapped onto the broader problem that there is no 'normal' psychology available for black people in Western societies, where abnormality and failure are ascribed to the black subjects (Gordon, 2006, p.80).[92] The political relevance of Fanon's re-appropriation of Nietzsche would be in "the overcoming of the impotence of the colonized transformed into the *will to power*" (Khalfa and Young, 2008, p.106), where the possibilities for revolutionary action can be also mobilized through poetry and plays – a chance to dismantle pre-existing grammars of language.[93] Likewise, Said's (2003 [1981]) *Orientalism* influentially portrayed Nietzsche as a philologist of modernity, whose theory of metaphoric transference can be used for theorizing the transformations Orientalism. This term famously refers to the Western discourse about the East "with a wide

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[91] Fanon's Nietzsche has been analysed as echoing Césaire's Dionysian-Nietzschean poetry (Jones, 2010; Naicker, 2019; Toscano, 2020). Fanon (1967) refuses to recognize Césaire as a 'black poet' in his characteristic rejection of *Negritude*, against the association of the white norm with the universal perspective of the 'human', and the black with the 'particular'. Khalfa and Young (2018) summarize the encounter on following terms: "whilst Fanon was generally familiar with the post-war French Left reading of Nietzsche, he took from Césaire a recognition of the transformative possibilities that Nietzsche's philosophy held out for the colonized person" (p.105).

[92] Gordon (2006) reads Fanon's Nietzsche as relevant for conceptualizing American racism which is "wrought with demands for blacks to fix themselves" (p.83). Racism is inscribed into the very grammars and epistemic frames that do not allow for reciprocal self-recognition but re-inscribe white supremacy: "without a semiotic intervention, mere material reconstruction or redistribution leads to the grammar of the same. A disruption of the grammar and its significations is necessary for a radically different world" (Gordon, 2006, p.83).

[93] Fanon's call for revolutionary action finds its most subtle poetic meanings in his playwrights from 1940s which surface "a Nietzschean conception of the tragic that informed his political thinking on alienation and independence" (Khalfa and Young, 2018, p.30). This conception of the tragic is dramatized in *The Drowning Eye* which "offers a philosophical debate between Apollonian light and Dionysian darkness" (p. 106), in which abstract categories and values become worn out, as the protagonists find themselves between good and evil, white and black, light and darkness.

field of meanings, associations, and connotations" (Said, 2003, p.203). Yet the Orient is not just an innocent European fantasy: it facilitated material forms of conquest and imperial hegemony, pointing to the significance of epistemic frames within which representations of the racialized 'others' are embedded in the first place within the East-West binary.

Feminist readers of Nietzsche have been also famously attracted to the affirmative possibilities of Nietzsche's philosophy, In *Gender Trouble*, Butler (1990) famously uses his critiques of causal agency and metaphysics of substance to subvert the notion of a pre-gendered person with an innate, essential and fixed identity: if "the doer is merely a fiction added to the deed" for Nietzsche, then "gender identity is a fiction behind the expressions of gender" (p. 28) for Butler. She also theorized the utopian notion of the sign-chain, which, for Nietzsche, consists "of ever new interpretations and adaptations whose causes do not even have to be related to one another but, on the contrary, in some cases succeed and alternate with one another in a purely chance fashion" (Butler, 1993, p.77). This would be a utopian historicity where meanings can be always re-iterated and re-inscribed anew on terms which once conveyed prejudices, such as the notion of 'queerness' itself.

Said's, Fanon's and Butler's readings of Nietzsche – which I will return to later - point us to the relevance of his thought for feminist and post-colonial scholarship, reflecting on productive developments in the strand of reading for victory which I examined in Chapter 5. Arguably, if we want to sketch out the contours for Nietzsche's appeal in post-colonial reception as Toscano (2020) called for, we must think about the ways in which Nietzsche's concern with the creative impulse in morality links to his ideas about the generative force of speech-acts, and the ways in which language holds an evaluative framework. Let me then sketch a reading of the unstable concept of *'race'* in the *Genealogy of Morality* in the context of the relationship between the figure of the noble, language and master/slave morality. This builds on and complements my discussion of transversal class racism in Chapter 3.

Class racism and the mythical origins of language

In *Genealogy of Morality*, 'race' (*Rasse*) understood literally does not merely signify the colour of skin, as we are likely to assume in the 21st century, or merely physiological attributes, but it intersects with the categories of class, caste and even dynasty (Moore, 2002; Toscano, 2020). These can be understood not only in relation to the material realm (e.g. privileges of higher castes), but also at the semiotic level. In chapter 5, we have seen that language in Nietzsche's early philosophy of metaphor does not intrinsically aim towards consensus. In his more mature philosophy, Nietzsche is concerned with the origins of the

Manichean conceptions of good and evil, which arguably can be understood as racialized. This link is most pronounced in the first essay of the *Genealogy of Morality*, where Nietzsche speaks of the master's right of giving names (*Das Herrenrecht*) which "allows us to conceive of the origin of language itself as an expression of power on the part of the rulers" (GM 1.2).

The significance of power relations underlying Manichean morality has been recognized in reinterpretations of genealogy for the post-colony (Moon, 2014; Naicker, 2019). The framework of class racism considered in Chapter 3 views Nietzsche's insight that modern western morality developed through a slave revolt against the self-making valuations of the noble via the lens of class conflict as the primary axis of racialization (Losurdo, 2019). There are many points in Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morality* from which one might recover the dividing line between the plebeian, crippled slaves and the majestic, aristocratic nobles as legitimate rulers, which Losurdo (2019) reads in terms of Nietzsche's anti-egalitarianism. Nietzsche (GM 1.4) suggests that the inconvenient etymology of moral terms where 'noble' stands for 'good' and 'common' for 'bad' is obscured by his contemporaries, for instance the English psychologists under the influence of Locke and Hume. They conveniently overlook the descent of the words 'bad' as connected to 'plain' in the 16th century, influenced by the democratic movement in their empirical investigations:

> The best example (...) is the German word '*schlecht*' (bad) itself: which is identical with '*schlicht'* (plain, simple) – compare '*schlechtweg'* (plainly), '*schlechterdings'* (simply) – and originally referred to the simple, the common man with no derogatory implication, but simply in contrast to the nobility. Round about the time of the Thirty Years War, late enough, then, this meaning shifted into its current usage.

While the categories of 'common' and the 'noble' can be interpreted in terms of Nietzsche's denigrations of the working classes (Losurdo, 2019), this framework fails to specify that Nietzsche's class racism can be read as much a site of material class politics as a battle over signification. After all, the philological craft distinguishes Nietzsche's approach among his contemporaries, whom he criticizes for their blind empiricism.[94] Like the "herd of

[94] Ansell-Pearson (2006) clarifies that the group of psychologists Nietzsche refers to "has its basis in the empiricism of John Locke, and in David Hume's new approach to the mind that seeks to show that so-called complex, intellectual activity emerges out of processes that are, in truth, 'stupid', such as the vis inertiae of habit and the random coupling and mechanical association of ideas. He criticizes

philologists" in Nietzsche's writings, as Said (2003, p.131) described them, who are limited by their own prejudices, the 'English psychologists' take at face-value the valuations of the Judeo-Christian culture they inhabit (e.g. altruism, compassion), and impose those valuations onto what they study. They do not recognize that the onset of moral vocabularies comes back to the figure of the noble masters who name and act out of creative strength, as the owners of things: "they say "this *is* thus and such," they seal every thing and occurrence with a sound and thereby take possession of it, so to speak it" (Nietzsche, GM 1.2).

This account of the origins of language echoes Nietzsche's early conception of language as a site of metaphorical transference from *On Truth and Lying in the Non-moral Sense*, which I examined in Chapter 5. Metaphoric transference involves the chain of translation between the sensory perception, the image and the word – all of which becomes equalized in the concept, for instance that of a 'leaf', Spivak (2016) argues. Nietzsche considers this as a physiological process, where the relationship between words and their meanings would be arbitrary. This system of relations equates between irreducibly dissimilar things, such as when nerve-stimulus becomes transcribed into a metaphor. In *Genealogy of Morality*, this insight into physiology and philology is further built upon, when Nietzsche insists that the primordial 'right to give names' (*Herrenrecht)* would be the distinguishing characteristic of the mythical masters. It is by asserting identity between things that nobles create signs. This foundational act of creation is a celebration of the world of things over which the nobles have mastery, in contrast to the reactive slaves who will resent them.

There are important implications of this theory of language as it bears on the notion of racialization. Drochon (2016) argued that 'race' and morality do not map onto each other in Nietzsche's writings. In doing so, he missed out on how these are interwoven in *Genealogy of Morality.* Nietzsche's inquiry into morals suggests the mastery of the nobles over the generative force of language, which declares the goodness of their own actions. Language as an invention of the mythical nobles to be re-iterated and reversed by the slaves possesses an evaluative dimension (Mulhall, 2011, p.251). Moreover, Nietzsche uncovers origins of language in a way that is not purely descriptive, but polemically favours the strength of the masters, against the democratic superstitions of his contemporaries ("the moral genealogists"). The origins of language in the brute act of domination over things are forgotten and obscured when the herd gains an upper hand in the history of morals, when "*the herd instinct* (...) gets a word in" (GM 1.2). It is "as if whatever the masters had achieved

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them (...) for their lack of a real historical sense and for bungling their moral genealogies as a result, and for failing to raise questions of value and future legislation" (p.xviii).

by their initial, powerful, evaluative naming of things, these names were not (not yet, not quite) *words*, not until the slaves got their word in" (Mulhall, 2010, p. 251)

One does not need to sympathize with Nietzsche's attempt to create a distance from the herd to recognize that language, in the aftermath of the slave revolt, does not aim at forging a consensus of speaking subjects, but it is rather a site of power struggles between them: "the noble, the mighty, the high-placed and the high-minded, who saw and judged themselves and their actions as good (...) in contrast to everything lowly, low-minded, common and plebeian" (GM 1.2). This dividing line between the noble and the common can be of course mapped onto the framework of class racism (Losurdo, 2019; Toscano, 2020), or the politics of sub-species (Bull, 2011). However, in discussions on how to understand the caste of the 'masters' – as linked to social hierarchies (*Stand*) – it is important to conceptualize in what ways their initial power of naming things is a mythical act of pure strength. Contrary to dominant Marxist scholarship (Losurdo, 2019), class racism needs to be understood not only in relationship to the material (base), but also to the cultural-semiotic order (superstructure). Although the 'nobles' initially encode their mastery onto words through denoting things, that changes with the slaves revolt, with their resentment and self-hatred, and so the narrative about the origins of language and values is circular.

We can understand this insight into language in terms of Nietzsche's rejection of the tradition of the social contract, which deceptively assumes that members of society can agree on a shared, collective meaning of words, to be then able to debate the terms and values that structure the Socratic socio-cultural complex on equal terms, stepping outside of the structural positions that they occupy in the social order, and thus outside of the valuative connotations that are ascribed to those positions. For Habermas (1987), discussion in the public sphere is constrained neither by the mythical strength of the masters to equate the unequal in the process of naming, nor by the moralising language of resentful slaves. In other words, the relationship between the orator and the audience can be read as intrinsically egalitarian, as one can bracket away any power inequalities in terms of the speaker's positions. In contrast, Nietzsche recognizes that "the collective language is inherently vulnerable to the failures of individuality" (Mulhall, 2011, p.252). Nietzsche needs his own metaphor of the "herd instinct" to articulate how language involves an evaluative dimension based on power relations, rooted in the mythical struggle between the masters and the slaves, where the good noble is a product of the slave system of evaluation (Faulkner, 2010).

Ultimately, Nietzsche's insight into the origins of language in power struggles should be read as embedded in the rhetorical and polemical purpose of Nietzsche's inquiry in the

Genealogy of Morality, rather than as an actual position. In my exploration of Nietzsche's rhetoric, I have been interested in the ways in which the philosopher recruits his ideal readers towards the project of revaluation, and whether the belonging to the future aristocracy can be at all grasped in relation to the category of 'race'. In light of this account of the relationship between language and mastery, both the technical and Marxist-historical literature seem to deploy a limited conception of 'race' as linked to physiological-material attributes, divorced from Nietzsche's thinking about the mastery over the sign as the distinguishing characteristic of the rulers.

This in consequence obscures a cultural notion of 'race' that is at the heart of Nietzschean genealogies, a conception of mastery rooted in the power to actively name and denote things, prior to the process of reiteration by the slaves. While the mythical 'power to name' of the masters (*Herren)* defined the primary, mythical socio-material order, the slaves invert, reverse and oppose the valuations of the masters in a world-historical revolt. In this sense, the evaluative judgment is the very originating medium of language rather than merely a domain of language (Mulhall, 2011). One can then read the first essay of the *Genealogy of Morality* as a fictional account of the origins of values, a form of conjecture.[95] Butler (2002, p.15) offers this kind of reading of Nietzsche's genealogies:

> None of these fables can be located in space or time, and any effort to try to find the historical complement to Nietzsche's genealogies will necessarily fail. Indeed, in the place of an account that finds the origin to values or, indeed, the origin of the origin, we read fictional stories about the way that values are originated. A noble says something is the case and it becomes the case: the speech act inaugurates the value, and becomes something like an atopical and atemporal occasion for the origination of values.

Nietzsche's mythical and circular account of the origins of language as an expression of master morality suspends the distinction between the historical-literal and metaphorical-figurative registers of genealogy, as one cannot find historical 'noble races' (e.g. Vikings or Turks) that the genealogies refer to. Seen through this lens, Drochon's (2016) discussion on

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[95] The notion that genealogies should be read as fictions is of course not unique to Butler's reading of Nietzsche. See Kail (2011) for a discussion about the ways in which those fables should be read as conjectural, which invokes the possibility of a genuinely correct explanation, rather than simply "a fictional account of how account about how such valuations could have arisen" (p.233)

whether the 'master races' in Nietzsche's philosophy would be 'dark-skinned' or 'blond' does not hold much meaning, and the historical context of the decline of an aristocratic social order which Losurdo (2019) centers also comes to the background. In this sense, Butler's reading of Nietzsche's genealogy as a particular kind of fiction cuts to the heart of tensions involved in interpreting the category of 'race' in relation to actual, historical groups.

Butler's appropriation of Nietzsche points us to the role of the value-creative capacity of the text onto which readers place themselves.[96] It reveals the notion of textuality as performative, as enacting processes that it narrates: "Nietzsche's own fiction-making mirrors the very acts of inauguration that he attributes to those who make values. So he not only describes that process, but that description becomes an instance of value-production, enacting the very process that it narrates" (Butler, 2002, p.15). If we understand Nietzsche's account of the origins of values and language as performative, the interpreter cannot position herself entirely outside of the text, but is thrown into it, within its reign of operation. If genealogy is a particular kind of fiction-writing, Nietzsche's texts produce and enact rather than describe the emergence of a modern subject shaped through the slave revolt in morality, a subject who inhabits language that carries on pre-existing moral judgments that can always evolve and are not fixed according to the primary balance of power.[97]

Nietzsche's fable exploits then the impossible longing for a mythical position of the value-creating and self-involved master whose self-reinforcing language would never evolve in response to external environments, a master of denoting and defining which is never reactive. This account of the masterly origins of language is of course a myth – perhaps not far from the biblical narrative of Genesis (Mulhall, 2011, p.250). The position of mastery in terms of self-involved expressions that demonstrate pure strength does not amount to genuine speech. In this sense, a reader has no choice but to read Nietzsche for failure, identifying with the perspective of the resentful slaves in the aftermath of their revolt, who need to re-iterate the language and values posited by the masters, which "will mean tapping

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[96] For a more in depth reading of Butler's engagement of Nietzsche in her early works – in particular in the *Psychic Life of Power* – see Faulkner (2010) and Kroker (2012). Butler engages with Nietzsche throughout her work, from her PhD thesis *Subjects of Desire* onto *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005), responding to the philosopher via Foucault's re-actualization of the genealogical method, the discursive understanding of power, and her overarching notion of performativity.

[97] Those effects of textuality can be best grasped in Butler's (1997) discussion of a circular figure of speech that Nietzsche employs in the second essay of *Genealogy of Morality*, when narrating the emergence of the bad conscience: the 'will turning back on itself'. Butler (1997) argues that the fable about bad conscience cannot be located socio-temporally but symbolizes a mythical shift from the state of wilderness and adventure to the realms of society, civilization and peace, whereby the internalization of aggressive instincts gives rise to the fiction of the subject. See Kroker (2012) for further discussion.

into the creativity of that revolt, and so will require a reflexive employment of the capacity of words to invert, reverse and oppose" (Mulhall, 2011, p.252). This opens a possibility of re-significations that can destabilize the very matrixes from which valuations originate.

This insight into the creative impulse of the slave morality has been enormously productive in various strands of critical social theory outside of Habermas' reading, where language is conceived as a site of power relations rooted in unequal structural positions in the epistemic fields, whether the Eurocentric depictions of the Orient that facilitate imperial conquests (Said, 2003), or the hetero-sexual matrix which gives rise to the performances of gender that naturalise the category of sex (Butler, 1993). The utopian role Nietzsche attributes to metaphor-creation as a site of dismantling the social order in his earlier works has been also radically re-imagined from the anti-colonial poetry of Césaire and Fanon's plays, to the psychoanalytic feminism which critically queries the fantasy of a self-originating master of language that has animated Western metaphysics (Irigaray, 1991).

Figures of mastery and subjugation

We have finally arrived at the prospect of reading Nietzsche for failure from the perspective of the subjugated and enslaved rather than from the perspective of the masters, and thus the ironic uses of Nietzsche for the purposes of feminist and post-colonial theory. Given the identification of the 'noble' – literally ruling men (*Herren*) – with pure strength and value-creation, woman and the subaltern 'races' would have been coded as outlaws of humanity or considered as instruments of reproduction in reconstructions of Nietzsche's political philosophy. Yet the frameworks of class racism and Nietzsche's *great politics* discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 rarely consider the parameters of gender as intersecting with the categories of 'race', class and caste, and if they do, this is divorced from the rich feminist history of Nietzschean reception, associated with the 'hermeneutics of innocence' (Losurdo, 2019).

Indeed, in surveying Nietzsche's references to breeding as separate from his concern with morality, Drochon (2016) failed to consider the role of gender in the two-caste society, reassuring readers that "Nietzsche's call for a mixing of Prussian military officers with Jews in view of creating the good European" cannot be understood "as an endorsement of vulgar Aryanism" (p.15), reducing the significance of 'race' in Nietzsche's thinking to the Nazi abuses. Bernasconi (2017) is more critical, pointing out that Nietzsche "did not ask the obvious question about what Jewish women might think about being paired with Prussian officers" (p.6) in response to Bismarck's plans for the promotion of racial mixing. In the Marxist reception, Nietzsche's literal-practical project of "marriage politics" between Jewish

women with Prussian officers of noble rank would "reduce tensions with the upper classes" (p.125), where a dowry is understood not only in terms of capital, but also breadth of horizons and intellect, a project of crossbreeding in dangerous proximity to that of Galton.

The Marxist reading of Nietzsche's *class racism* considers Nietzsche's misogyny in conjunction with his anti-blackness. In surveying Nietzsche's aristocratic politics, Losurdo (2019) accuses the philosopher of rehearsing a comparison between women and slaves in terms of their propensity for "cunning, deception and malice" (p.920), rejecting demands for their emancipation on the path to a two-caste society and naturalizing "historically determined social relations" (p.370), such as the traditional domestic role of women and servants, which Nietzsche indeed often seems to have reaffirmed. At the same time, Losurdo (2019, p.921) dismisses a century of feminist interpretations with astonishing speed:

> The feminist interpretation of Nietzsche is very simple: for centuries, discrimination against women was based on their inability to argue in rigorously and abstractly logical terms and on their lack of courage and warrior spirit, their tendency to be guided by emotions and feelings, primarily compassion. It is enough to reverse the value judgement, and the innumerable theorists of female 'difference' (meant in a negative sense) turn if not into champions then into prophets of the cause of female 'difference' (meant this time in a positive sense). All this is quite simple, but for that very reason rather pointless.

The tone is striking, especially that readings of Nietzsche's figures of subjugation in relation to the categories of sex and gender have a richer history than that of 'race', class and stand. Importantly, all of these connect in his politics of crossbreeding and reproduction that comes to the forefront in contemporary interpretations (Bernasconi, 2017; Toscano, 2020). From early responses by German and Austrian feminists (Diethe, 1999), to contemporary queer readings (Schotten, 2019), Nietzsche's thought has been interrogated by theorists of sexual difference in most creative ways, such as a staged love letter in Irigaray's (1991) *Marine Lover*. The framework of genealogy has fuelled a radical rethinking of the gendered formation of the subject, heterosexual matrix of power, as well as the binary structures of femininity and masculinity (Butler, 1990), opening up towards new ways of understanding the relationship between sex, gender and subjectivity – and more broadly the

structure of desire of the subject of 'identity politics' (Brown, 1993), as explored in Chapter 5. What we understand by 'feminist' interpretation today is even more multi-faceted than at the time of Losurdo's writing in the early 2000s, making the inability of Marxist scholarship to engage these insightful readings regrettable, if symptomatic of that school of theory.

Among Nietzsche's suspicions, it is his critique of the metaphysics of substance in particular that has been used to query the relationship between language, sexual difference and *Écriture féminine* (Diprose, 1989; Irigaray, 1991). In this interpretative horizon, it is not merely Nietzsche's figures of 'woman' as such that emerge as a site of ambivalence and subversion, but also the broader associations between morality, power, distance, truth and illusion that run through his thought. These point towards the figure of an 'affirmative woman' – akin to the image of the 'women who master the masters' (GS 70) – as un unexpected heroine in what might at first appear like an anti-feminist body of work (Derrida, 1979). Losurdo (2019) is right to argue that feminist readers often attempted to either 'rescue' Nietzsche against the charges of misogyny or foreground other aspects of his works, faced with the cruel ways in which he has addressed us. However, Losurdo's framework fails to consider how a variety of feminist readers productively rethink Nietzsche's suspicions of language as sustaining the material-semiotic order.

Faced with the task of 'sexing' Nietzsche, scholars sketched out two main interlinked interpretative strategies (Oliver and Pearsall, 1998).[98] The first would be to critically explore Nietzsche's 'use of women'. It would necessitate reading his ambivalent references to reproductive bodies – for instance the metaphor of 'spiritual pregnancy' (GM 2.19) – as reflective of a broader rethinking of the gendered system of binaries shaping the Western philosophical system, where objectivity and reason come to be associated with the male logocentric perspective, while the body, emotions and affect would represent the 'biological' (creative womb) of the maternal.[99] We might suspect that these are the kinds of readings that Losurdo (2019) refers to when he dismissed the feminist critic of the 'cause of sexual

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[98] This is one among many edited volumes dedicated to Nietzsche and feminism. For an alternative framework, see Patton (2013) *Nietzsche, Feminism, Political Theory*, in particular Deutscher's (1993) contribution which draws out the feminist significance of Nietzsche's critiques of Rousseau.

[99] Nietzsche (GM 2.19) speaks of "bad conscience" as a sickness like "pregnancy" to highlight that it is an ambivalent phenomenon. The human animal is the only species who attaches meaning to "the senselessness of suffering" (GM 2.7) yet this development does not merely result in psychic injury and vulnerability to ressentiment, but facilitates the development "an active bad conscience", the "desire to give form to oneself as a piece of difficult, suffering, resisting matter" (GM 2.18). This is understood in parallel to "the odd cravings of pregnancy" which "must be forgotten", Nietzsche writes, if "a woman is to enjoy the child" (GM 3.2), using a reproductive metaphor for the creative process.

difference' in the social organization of (reproductive) labour, as he fails to engage feminist rethinking of the biology-nature binary.

The second strategy takes us one step further. As I began to explore in the previous section, the post-structuralist tradition radicalizes Nietzsche's theory of the sign and philology, to conceive of language as holding particular, often binary valuations – for instance as being structured to the advantage of the ruling classes, the Eurocentric depictions of the Orient, or hetero-normative values. The history of sign-chains would structure the terms of representation in the material world, but it would also be a site of re-significations that can de-stabilize the very matrixes from which the binaries originate (Butler, 1993). Here the question is neither about Nietzsche's misogyny, nor about his representations of femininity and masculinity that his writings might parody and challenge, but rather about his rethinking of the links between discourse, power and morality. These appropriations in the wake of the French re-actualisation of Nietzsche's philosophy are indeed detached from the discussion about whether Nietzsche subverts or carelessly reproduces the sexual and racial clichés of his contemporaries, and the link between the project of revaluation and a caste society.

To be sure, the use of a conservative thinker like Nietzsche for feminist-queer and post-colonial purposes is likely to raise question marks, as it assumes the counter-perspective of the subjugated outlaws of humanity, against the noble's stereotypically masculine strength, in a strategy of reading for failure (Bull, 2011). Can one read Nietzsche's figures of mastery and subjugation to rethink and perhaps even suspend the gendered and racialized binaries between strength and vulnerability, logos and embodiment, pure affirmation and vengeful moralizing? The ambivalences around the use of Nietzsche for projects of emancipation come into sharp focus with the reception of *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles* (1979), where Derrida reads Nietzsche's plural images of 'woman' as 'a question of style'. This involves writing from the perspective of a minority in the logocentric order, as Derrida is re-interpreting 'woman' in Nietzsche's writings as an archetypical, open and undecidable category, rather than a stable and unitary pre-existing referent.

Spurs has been read as an intervention into the hey-days of 'French Nietzscheanism' shaped by Heidegger's metaphysics (Malabou, 2010; Schrift, 1995), but also as a productive ground for second-wave feminism in the 1970s, in particular the debates on strategic essentialism. Spivak (1983), among others, critically responds to Derrida's text in querying the binary of the male noble master subject framed against the enslaved female outlaw that shapes philosophy, in terms of the lacking, dehumanized subjects to be yet liberated in the project of emancipation. The deconstructive operation that Derrida performs on Nietzsche's

text is said to represent the post-structuralist methodology more broadly (Waite, 1996, p.243). This strand of reception provides a productive resource which allows us to enrich the dismissive picture of the 'feminist Nietzsche' which Losurdo (2019) presents.[100]

The main target of Derrida's (1979) deconstruction is 'woman' not as a category for mobilization in relationship to identity politics as we understand it today, but rather as linked to 'style' (stylus, spur, phallus, trace), thereby dramatizing the complex, multi-faceted narrative structure of Nietzsche's writings, in relation to questions about philology, metaphors, rhetoric and interpretation. In Derrida's (1979) rereading of an influential passage from *Twilight of Idols* "How the 'true world' finally became a fable: The history of an error", he pays close attention to what Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche as a 'last metaphysician' neglects. This is "woman's inscription" (Derrida, 1979, p.59) in the text, ways in which sexual difference structures Nietzsche's historicizing of truth as a fable, in particular the notion that truth as an idea has "not always been female", but becomes so [*sie wird Weib*] with the rise of Platonism. This would be a notion of truth that is "transcendent, inaccessible, seductive" (Derrida, 1979, p.59). Based on an integrative (though never exhaustive) reading across Nietzsche's works, Derrida (1979) distinguishes three psychoanalytic value-positions of 'woman': woman as castration (lack of phallus, a figure of falsehood aspiring to the will to truth), woman as castrating ('playful' will to illusion against the 'male' metaphysical ideals) and the third, most enigmatic position: a woman who "affirms herself, in herself and in man" beyond the life-negating binaries of truth-illusion, absence-presence, inside-outside – possibly also male-female (Verkerk, 2017) – that those two reactive positions (castrated/castrating) would rest on.

Importantly, those positions are not singular, univocal or static: the values implied by each figure cannot be "decidable into a couple of oppositions as if there was a contrary to each term: for instance, for woman, truth, castration" (Derrida, 1979, p.62). In other words, Derrida suggests, Nietzschean aphorisms, metaphors and fables cannot fit into a totalizing scheme against which one would decide what the meaning of the authors' 'use' of woman would be – misogynist, phallocentric, or (anti)feminist. The Nietzschean non-figure of woman comes to dramatize a plural notion of truth would be always deferred, impossible to pin down – proliferating into truths that are "multiple, multi-coloured, contradictory", like the "crowd of mothers, daughters, sisters, old maids, wives, governesses, prostitutes, virgins, grandmothers and granddaughters" (p.63) in Nietzsche's writings. The intersections of class,

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[100] I discuss post-structuralism and deconstruction together, but of course there are complex differences between these traditions (see Decoteau, 2017, Schrift, 1995).

age, 'race', sexuality and ability more pronounced in the later framework of identity politics are under-theorised here, as Derrida traces the different openings in the category of 'woman'. This led some commentators to conclude that *Spurs* might not offer critical leverage outside of the context of its production (Gallop, 1995; Waite, 1996).

Indeed, Derrida has been accused of re-fetishizing problematic associations of femininity with seduction, appearance and deception – in ways that still need to be carefully explored *vis-à-vis* Nietzsche's images of slaves – and in doing so, displacing woman's bodies to the status of a rhetorical trope (Thomas, 1993). One can easily imagine how Derrida's (1979) text leads itself to this kind of critique, for instance when he speaks of woman as "nonidentity, nonfigure, simulacrum, the very *abyss* of distance, the distancing of distance, the stroke of spacing, distance itself" and so "distance her-self", the "veiled enigma of proximity" (p.53). More importantly, the intersections of class, 'race' and ability are indeed pushed to the background – Derrida does not consider Nietzsche's use of the terms "Frau, Weib, Frauenzimmer, and Weiblein" (Gallop, 1995; p.131, quoted in Verkerk, 2017, p.6), to which we might add the "Herrinnen von Herren" (GS 70).[101]

Deconstruction and politics of friendship

However, it is crucial to recognise the opposition between rhetoric and the materiality of the classed, racialized and gendered subjects obscures how Derrida understands metaphor to be the 'very text of philosophy', against a noun-based view of language that mirrors, represents and conveys a pre-existing and brute material reality (Bennington, 2014). For Derrida, metaphor as a philosophical concept "cannot be applied to philosophy *from the outside* by rhetoric or poetics to dominate or reduce philosophy as the human sciences might wish" (Bennington, 2014, p.91). Rhetoric and philosophy are not viewed here as mutually exclusive alternatives, where one would need to guard boundaries of the latter through attention to the manipulation of signs, but as articulated in relation to each other, to the extent that the difference between an ideal orator (outside) and philosopher (inside) turns against itself (Miller, 2017).

In deconstruction, one cannot assume the self-identity and transparency of the signs, or the notion of rhetoric as a manipulation of language, but only write under the

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[101] Derrida (1979, p.53) cites the passage where Nietzsche (GS 70) speaks of the "mistresses of masters" (*Herrinnen den Herren*) but he does not draw out its possible colonial connotations. This citation is the only reference to *Geschlecht* in *Spurs*. *Geschlecht* is an untranslatable concept which came to the forefront in discussions on Derrida, Heidegger and intersections of race and gender recently. Derrida is critical of Heidegger's concept of *Dasein* as sexless (see Krell, 2015).

erasure of the sign, detecting how texts negate themselves. Suspicions of the logos destabilise the premise of communication on equal terms: "the notion that the setting up of unitary opposites is an instrument and a consequence of "making equal," and the dissolving of opposites is the philosopher's gesture against that will to power which would mystify her very self" (Spivak, 1983, p.104). This kind of understanding of language as liberated from the signifier is often viewed as a dangerous postmodern 'metaphorization' detached from the material world which results in the sanitising of Nietzsche's political philosophy. As Bull (2011) summarizes: "Far from being metaphorical, Nietzsche's politics is eminently practical. His plan for new forms of slavery is a response to its recent abolition in the United States, and includes realistic suggestions for its implementation" (p.75).

Indeed, the debate on Nietzsche's class racism has been framed in direct opposition to the post-structuralist rethinking of the sign's historicity and its trace. When Losurdo (2019) brings in deconstruction, it is to attack the 'metaphorization' of Nietzsche's works in reception, reducing *Spurs* to a famous slogan from Nietzsche's *Nachlass*: 'I have forgotten my umbrella'. For Losurdo, the umbrella stands not for the problem of writing from the margins in a culture that encodes the phallic norms into the very grammars of language, but for sanitising Nietzsche's most disquieting ideas on degenerationism and class racism. We have seen in Chapter 1 the broader context of this discussion on Nietzsche's *Nachlass* and singular authorial intent. While there is a lot of merit in Losurdo's (2019) critique of the ways in which the controversial aspects in Nietzsche's thinking have been sanitised and domesticated in reception, he erases the question in what ways Derrida's deconstruction of the figures of woman in Nietzsche's corpus functions as a critique of phallogo-centrism and politics of the name (signature). Derrida complicates the premise that "the text's author, "Nietzsche", understood biographically or autobiographically, is responsible for his "teachings" and its often terrific and horrific consequences" (Waite, 1996, p.253).

In other words, *Spurs* dramatizes Derrida's deconstructive rethinking of the relationship between rhetoric and philosophy as seen in the case of the instability of Nietzsche's texts, in which the signature of the author is constantly deferred. Nietzsche's trouble to sign his ideas with his own name testifies to this, for instance when his signature as a philosopher of the future (*Versucher)* and disciple of Dionysus is erased from the final published version of *Beyond Good and Evil*, as discussed in Chapter 2. For Derrida, as he conceives it later in *Politics of Friendship (2004 [1994])*, Nietzsche's 'dangerous perhaps' which opens up the speech of the philosophers of the future who maybe (*vielleicht*) have a "wrong" to be characterised as tempters and experimenters demonstrates the notion of

undecidability, as the possibilization of the impossible, not just of the arrival of such figures of victory, but their very thinkability: "the unheard-of, totally new, that very experience which no metaphysician might yet have dared to think" (p.29). Derrida analyses the 'perhapses' in Nietzsche's writings "becoming a theme, almost a name, perhaps a category" (p.30), which exemplifies the notion of indeterminacy in interpretation.

This category also refers to the modality in which Nietzsche calls for the new species of philosophers of the future, that is "with an apostrophe to his addressee, asking him to join up with 'us', with this 'us' which is being formed, to join us and to resemble us, to become the friends of the friends that we are!" (Derrida, 2004, p.35). The emerging friendship involves politics that cannot be conceived through classical accounts of social ties at the level of a class, caste, or nation, but it is a community of those "without a community" (p.37). Derrida (2004, p.37) poetically clarifies what such a Nietzschean community entails:

> We are first of all, as friends, the friends of solitude, and we are calling on you to share what cannot be shared: solitude. We are friends of an entirely different kind, inaccessible friends, friends who are alone because they are incomparable and without common measure, reciprocity or equality. Therefore, without a horizon of recognition. Without a familial bond, without proximity, without oikeiôsis.

Friendship based on solitary singularity invokes a certain kind of responsibility towards other members of that imagined community, who have also rebelled against previous notions of affinity which would have determined the boundaries of a particular group. In that sense, the community of philosophers of the future is "a community of social disaggregation" (Derrida, 2004, p.35). The philosophers of the future would be made up of Nietzsche's ideal readers who are "capable of enduring the intolerable, the undecidable and the terrifying" (p.37) which metaphycians would be allergic to, though again, that is not conceived in terms of the most terrifying political ideas that Nietzsche experiments with.

If the separation between form (style) and content (substance) in Marxist scholarship is viewed as a site of dangerous seductions that result in the sanisiting of Nietzsche's class racism, Derrida's Nietzsche points to radically different deconstructive interpretation which destabilizes the reading of presence though the devices of deferral, undecidability and aporia, demonstrated precisely in the category of the 'dangerous

perhaps' of the philosophers of the future. Derrida does not read Nietzsche's critique of 'democratic taste' in formulating the demands addressed to this figure as related to the philosopher's glorification of slavery, but rather as hyperbolic critiques of those who misuse the terms of democracy, equality and human rights, as a kind of liminal polemics which does not deliver an extreme opposition (alterity). The stability of the opposition between democratic and antidemocratic is "swept away by the *perhaps* that arrives to undecide meaning at each decisive moment" (Derrida, 1994, p.40), when Nietzsche critiques 'free spirits' for being too constrained, democrats for being mediocre, friends for being enemies, destabilising the notion that what any group has in 'common' is a rarity that defines it.

Those premises of interpretation can be of course put into critique, in particular ways in which Derrida appropriates Nietzsche's anti-egalitarian ethos in formulating his cosmopolitan politics of friendship without attending to the physiological dimesion of the discourses of decadence and degenerationism. However, beyond a dismissive footnote, Losurdo (2019) fails to engage with the premises of the deconstructive method, not least Derrida's rethinking of the relationship between the singularity of the author, politics of the name and authorizations to put philosophy to use.[102] On the Marxist-left, Waite (1996) more productively criticizes Derrida for being silent "about Nietzsche's esoteric intentions, strategies and tactics" (p. 258), which I contextualised in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 in terms a textual apparatus that serves as mechanism of selection of his ideal readers as re-evaluators.

Rather than reading the figure of the philosopher of the future for victory, for instance in relation to the cosmopolitan politics of friendship based on solitude, I delineated and built upon a strand of interpretation which stresses the importance of the double esoteric/exoteric rhetoric in Nietzsche's thinking which facilitates his call for a creation of a new social hierarchy (Faulkner, 2010; Waite, 1996). While Derrida radicalizes Nietzsche's philosophy of masks, signatures and narrative voicings as not merely playful for its own sake, against what Losurdo implies, these are examples of reading for victory through assimilation, in which Nietzsche's philosophy turns into the deconstructive practice of undecidability.

In light of my overarching strategy to read Nietzsche for failure inspired by Bull (2011), which recognizes the anti-social threads that run through his works, it is important to more decidedly identify with the reactive position of the slaves who have no choice but to reactively invert and oppose masterly strength, against the philosophers of the future who create their own values that would govern their exclusive community. In feminist field of

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[102] Waite (1996) offers a reading of Derrida's *Otobiographies: The Teaching of Nietzsche and the Politics of the Proper Name* which pays attention to Nietzsche's textual politics in terms of the notion of 'authorizations' and 'signatures' as modalities of play.

reception, Spivak's (1983) *Displacement and The Discourse of Woman* offers a more productive response to Derrida's *Spurs* than Losurdo's dismissal, because her reading is not framed around the mere playfulness of Nietzsche's lost umbrella or the instability of the text.

Instead, Spivak's central line of inquiry is whether Derrida's critique can "provide us a network of concept-metaphors that does not appropriate or displace the figure of woman", against her fears that when 'woman' becomes the object of (male) philosophical discourse, her body has been "doubly displaced" a site of otherness (p.170). If Derrida's premise is that three positions assigned to women in Nietzsche's writings reveal the limits of the logocentric – in Nietzsche's words, 'dogmatic' – philosophical discourse, which he later associates with the undecidability of the philosopher of the future in *Politics of Friendship*, Spivak critically interrogates the third position, the non-figure, which becomes the 'good model' in Nietzsche, where castration through life-denying Christianity has not yet taken place.

This figure would precede the reactive slavish positions of woman aspiring to truth on male's terms (objectivity, science, truth) or simply inverting and thus overcoming the opposition (illusion, deception). Verkerk (2017) unpacks the subtle meanings of the 'third' position of a (transgender) woman through the trope of *propre* (not being): "as an appropriator, Derrida thinks that woman upsets the distinctions between giver/taker, possessed/possessor, master/slave" (p.9). In particular, it is the emphasis on 'doing', 'simulating', 'creating' which would destabilise the regime of sexual difference and propriety, radicalized into the spell of affirmation: woman as "affirmative power, dissimulating, artist, Dionysian" (p.62) beyond the Platonic horizon of phallocentric philosophy.

This is where displacement takes place: Spivak's (1983) critical move against Derrida is to analyse the pronominal genders in Nietzsche's original passage where *das Weib* stands for a woman who "affirms herself in herself and man", emphasizing how the original German pronoun is not only derogatory but "stands for neuter in gender" (p.181). When Nietzsche writes that "*Sie wird Weib*", he tells the story of the world as a story of male philosophy born from the woman's body, only to negate sexual difference altogether. Spivak (1983) suggests that while one cannot 'decide' whether Nietzsche is endorsing truth or illusion, and that this is beside the point, Derrida's omission of the gendered pronouns in the passage demonstrates how 'woman' is doubly displaced in Derrida's announcement of the 'good model' in the *Twilight of Idols*. To arrive at this non-figure, Derrida ignores that the "third psychoanalytic position emerges as a violent negation": the "displaced and neutered woman is indeed abolished" (Spivak, 1983, p.181) when Nietzsche simply points to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* with its complex rhetorical structure, rather than articulates the thought of what

that position would entail, once he has desexualised *das Weib.* One might be tempted to conclude that 'feminist philosophy' cannot be practiced, for it is a poem – *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in which we read about the prophet's fantasy of giving birth to himself.

Yet despite those double displacements in Derrida's reading of Nietzsche, Spivak (1983) reads *Spurs vis-à-vis Glas* as productive for conceptualising the project of feminist philosophizing that would not identify with the unsituated, universal 'we' of Western metaphysics. It is tempting to then think of 'woman' as a feminization of philosophy in the specific, situated and locatable, but Spivak (1983) urges feminist critics to inhabit the space of undecidability in language, to not submit to the "ego's desire to deny heterogeneity and discontinuity" (p.184), to attend to the divisions, dependencies and splits that make up the subject. The question of woman as a question of style cannot be posited on generic, totalising terms, especially those of reproduction, Spivak (1983) argues, but from within the history of splits, deviations and exclusions throughout Western metaphysics as "inseparable from political economy and from the property of man as holder of property" (p.185).

We encounter here the socio-material stakes of deconstruction: "the collective project of our feminist critic must always be to rewrite the *social* text so that the historical and sexual differentials are operated together", a recasting of the terms on which philosophy poses fundamental questions, as to subversively "operate out of displacement" of projected otherness (Spivak, 1983, p.185). The rewriting of the social text of motherhood alone cannot be an establishment of new meanings (Spivak, 1983, p.185), she continues, as this would be to accepts the logocentric narrative of women as reproductive instruments. When read to dramatize the very premises of 'affirmative' feminist deconstruction, the question of the gap between the 'male' and 'female' style speaks to the projects of re-signification of the sign within its historical chains. It is Nietzsche, for Spivak (2016), who "contributed mightily to the liberation of the signifier from its dependence or derivation with respect to the logos" (p.88), which points to the uses of deconstruction for feminist-Marxist and post-colonial critics.

If in Western philosophy "women's bodies were merely historical instruments of reproduction" (Spivak, 1983, p.184) – a case for which the Nietzschean figure of the Jewish woman about to breed super-humans speaks loudly – then post-Derridian feminist postcolonial thought reconceives the terms on which bodies and language are thought in the first place. Here the socio-material stakes are conceived together with the discursive or textual, rather than as separate registers. Butler (1993) comments on *Displacement and The Discourse of Woman* to emphasize how Spivak reveals that woman is "a mistake in relation to linguistic propriety" in a way that emphasizes how totalizations – i.e. the category of

'woman' – cannot be "terms of political analysis and mobilisation" (p.213). Nietzsche's reception takes us directly into heated contemporary discussions on the grounds for feminist and postcolonial political projects, to the ways in which language undermines itself, and to the wounded structure of identity structured by resentment which becomes a basis for politics of recognition. This is relevant not only for thinking about the wounded structure of subjectivity as invested in its own subjection (Brown, 1993; Schotten, 2020), but also in terms of recasting the universality of non-belonging – rather than subjugation, marginalisation or exclusion - as a ground for politics. This would be not an identity politics, but a kind of politics which departs from the experience of non-belonging as the primary relation to the social order in a way that destabilises the opposition between mastery and subjugation.

Conclusion

This chapter takes up the challenge of reading Nietzsche for failure from the perspective of those whom he denigrates – women, Chandala, the malformed and broken – against the temptation of identifying with the untenable position of the majestic, self-affirming nobles. I argued that this project should depart from recognizing Nietzsche's understanding of the mythical origins of language as expressions of masterly strength, against which the reactive slave opposes, inverts and reverses chains of signification, as to dismantle the grammars shaping the social order. Nietzsche's rethinking of the connection between the structure of the sign and master morality as a site of power relations challenges the notion of language as aiming towards consensus, as considered in Chapter 5. While this might be not a central thread in Nietzsche's otherwise reactive political philosophy, this diagnosis about the creative impulse in slave morality became a basis for Nietzsche's uses in the tradition of contemporary critical theory, in particular post-colonial and post-structuralist reception, despite that his thinking is haunted by anti-blackness and class racism.

This chapter also contributes to the discussion on how to understand the significance of 'race' in the political-philosophical dimension of Nietzsche's writings, as examined in Chapters 3 and 4. There is a tension between scholars who argue that 'race' does not matter as a meaningful category in his critique of morality (Danto, 1965; Drochon, 2016), and more critical approaches which centre the role of the colonial context and racial capitalism, particularly pronounced in Marxist reception of Nietzsche, as well and by philosophers of race (Bernasconi, 2017). Once we recognize ways in which Nietzsche's thought echoes the colonial, pre-imperialist discourses of degeneration and decline of 'races', we cannot merely acknowledge scientific racism as a context of the times, without to bear on his vision of *great*

politics, contrary to what Drochon (2016) argued. To the extent that Nietzsche envisioned a future that would be based on the dividing of humanity into two different castes – the enslaved working masses and the noble aristocrats – class racism can be seen as the central axis of difference that gives traction to his critique of morality and values. This is a thoroughly gendered project of revaluation in which Jewish women would play a key role in the politics of inter-breeding that will bring about a future master class, considered as mere reproductive instruments, in ways that are often omitted in contemporary reception.

However, rather than thinking of class racism as merely defined through the material positions that agents occupy in relation to class struggles, where identity-markers would cut across the categories of ethnicity an nationality (Losurdo, 2019; Toscano, 2020), I proposed to read the category of racialisation in relation to the semiotic order of the signs which carries on a history of power relations, that can be re-signified as to disrupt the matrixes from which binary valuations originate. The significance of 'race' in Nietzsche's thinking cannot be grasped either as a site of biology or culture as in modernist conceptions (Bernasconi, 2017), but should be understood in relation to the evaluative dimension of language, which points to the intrinsic link between the semiotic and material dimensions of the social order. This is where the project of selectively reading Nietzsche in the tradition of post-structuralism can be still productive, although it is important to recognize the ways in which readings of Nietzsche's insights on speech-acts and sign chains obscures and domesticates the discourse of degenerationism in his writings, which I considered in Chapter 4.

In this vein, despite romanticizing the strength of the majestic, self-affirming noble as a mythical founder of the order of signs, possibly himself a virulent and resentful misogynist, Nietzsche has been an important resource for feminist thought in terms of the historical development of second- and third-wave feminism in the 1970s onto the 1990s, in particular poststructuralist and deconstructive feminism which rethought the relationship between power, language, sexuality and discourse. Arguably, the notion of class racism needs to be considered in conversation with the with rich history of conceptualising sexual difference and subjugation in the wake of Nietzsche's thinking, rather than as opposed to that feminist history. To this end, I considered controversies and tensions around the reception of Derrida's *Spurs* as instructive for rethinking the relationship between materiality of the women's bodies, rhetoric and the notion of a textual, literary allegory.

This is not to uncritically embrace Derrida's interpretation of Nietzsche, but rather to reframe its relevance for considering the uses of Nietzsche on the Marxist-left today. While Derrida has been productively accused of displacing women's bodies in *Spurs*, in

particular in relation intersectional categories of disability, sexuality and 'race'/class, it is important to recognise that his reference to Nietzsche's 'forgotten umbrella' does not merely point to a postmodern notion of semiotic play. Instead, it points to the gap between plural styles which reveal the limits of the logocentric and phallogo-centric metaphysical discourse (Spivak, 1993). In this sense the Derridian-Nietzschean psychoanalytic triad of woman cannot be reduced to a literary trope, but gains socio-material stakes, ultimately revealing the double displacement of women in Derrida's and Nietzsche's philosophical discourse. The problem of 'style' is of writing from the position of the minority (e.g. 'woman') that is not articulable in the collective language of the masters, and subversively needs to depart from that projected otherness and slavish position in order to query the status of non-belonging as not so much reactive, but as the primary way of relating to the social order.

A Marxist reader would presumably counter-argue that the supposed instability of the Nietzschean text is precisely the problem, demonstrated with the figures of victory such as the affirmative woman or the philosopher of the future, which invite diverse and often dissonant interpretations, in which the most unsettling aspects of his thinking are put aside. Derrida indeed refuses to fill in the gap between Nietzsche's antidemocratic critique and his glorification of slavery, insisting on the undecidability of the text exemplified in the category of the 'perhaps' which carries away extreme opposition. That kind of deconstructive reading might be to fall under the Nietzschean spell, as a kind of *Versuchung* which does not condemn his class racism, misogyny and anti-blackness, but the temptation to embrace uncertainty can also produce a mistrustful attitude towards the imagine of an 'ideal reader' who has the interpretative finesse necessary to understand the riddle of the eternal return and forge the community of solitary friends as re-evaluators.

Derrida's engagement with the deferral of the signature in Nietzsche's writings allows us to critically query the role of a dissonant rhetoric in facilitating particular identifications with figures of victory. Instead of identifying with the victorious philosophers of the future as friends of solitude, I proposed to be wary of the esoteric dimension of this call, ways in which it guards the boundaries of the text against the rest of the readers who are excluded from the community of friends. This might be read as an intentional strategy if we accept that Nietzsche is promoting a reactionary political vision (Waite, 1996), or indeed as manipulating and subjugating readers towards the project of revaluation in order to promote a new social hierarchy (Faulkner, 2010). Derrida's destabilizing of the author's signature does not allow us to centre those receptive effects that the double rhetoric facilitates. Paying attention to the esoteric layer of the text, for all to see but few to grasp, is

not so much to insist that there is a 'secret' at the heart of the Nietzschean play of signatures and masks, for instance a stable and coherent vision of a two-caste society of bourgeois slaves and noble masters, but the that the readers themselves performatively enact the principles of selection found in Nietzsche's texts when we become his friends.

Reading Nietzsche for failure, we can conclude that his diagnosis of the reactive and resentful position of the slaves in relation to the semiotic-material order of language as a creation of the mythical masters is still powerful. Rather than read Nietzsche for victory, we can inhabit the position of the resentful slave who does not belong, asking for instance why society reduces certain bodies to the status of reproductive machines, and how historical practices of racialized slavery fuel violent visions of selective reproduction. Those are surely not Nietzsche's own concerns, and it makes all the difference whether one recognizes the ironies and tensions in his uses for critical feminist-queer and post-colonial scholarship (Jones, 2010; Toscano, 2020; Schotten, 2020). Nietzsche's considerable influence on those traditions needs to be the starting point for accounts of his anti-blackness and class racism, rather than dismissed as part of 'hermeneutics of innocence' in this rich history of reception.

Conclusion

Nietzsche's star has been on the rise throughout much of 20th century reception, yet he comes to be treated with increasingly more suspicion today – from a renewed concern with his class racism and philosophy of racialized breeding (Bernasconi, 2017; Losurdo, 2019), to the more long-standing debate on his anti-sociality and misogyny. My thesis has situated these criticisms around Nietzsche's aristocratic politics and socio-biologism in the context of reception of Nietzsche in sociology and critical social theory. This is a polarized interpretative landscape, shaped by the divergence between Habermas' (1987) rejection of Nietzsche as incompatible with the framework of critical social theory and Foucault's (1998c) creative appropriations of genealogy. While Nietzsche has notably been read as a transgressive figure in the hermeneutic tradition as a champion of reflexivity, his influence needs to be reassessed today in light of controversies around his class racism and anti-blackness. The post-structuralist interpreters sanitized the role of racial hygiene and degenerationism in Nietzsche's thinking, as well as the ways in which his call for a new social hierarchy is mirrored in the hierarchical organization of the text which produces ideal readers as his privileged companions who form the community of re-evaluators.

Despite the anti-modernist threads running through Nietzsche's political philosophy, I argued that his theorizing of metaphoric transference and falsifications of language can be still productively used for social theory, if we attempt to read him for victory, that is selectively assimilate aspects of his thinking which would enrich contemporary practices of critical theorizing. If read as a master of persuasion who mobilizes readers to be critical of the ways in which social worth is measured, Nietzsche's dissonant rhetoric facilitates various kinds of (mis)identifications with untimely figures of victory to be found in his writings, from the philosopher of the future to the affirmative woman. Those receptive effects – exemplified in the figure of the *Versucher* - are instructive for analysing the role of readers' self-identifications in the processes of canonization of social theories and the ways in which sociological texts reorient and transform the readers desires, rather than simply describe pre-existing positions that readers occupy in the external world. While Nietzsche's reception on the margins of social theory has been a productive resource for theorizing language as a social structure which does not aim towards consensus but rather carries on pre-existing power relationships, reading Nietzsche for failure in feminist and post-colonial reception needs to depart from identifying with the position of the slave who reactively opposes, inverts and possibly destabilizes the matrixes from which valuations originate.

My thesis has been organized around three interlinked lines of inquiry as outlined in the introduction. In Part 1 (Chapters 1 and 2), I explored what it means to read Nietzsche in a way sympathetic to what he was trying to achieve by experimenting with various stylized forms of writing, rather than by imposing contemporary parameters and standpoints on the rhetorically complex texts. I distinguished between three different ways of grounding Nietzsche's rhetoric: 1) in relation to historical context, 2) in relation to the formal structure of literary tropes, and 3) in relation to the polemical purpose of the text understood in the context of the philosopher's critique of mass society and contemporary culture. It is the last interpretative approach which has been most productive for my overarching inquiry into the ways in which Nietzsche's forms of addressing and seducing his ideal readers can be qualified in terms of the unstable categories of 'race', class, caste and gender.

Chapter 2 proposed an interpretation of the figure of the philosopher of the future (*Versucher*) as a malicious Dionysian tempter and experimenter, a figure of speech through which Nietzsche conjures and recruits his ideal readers towards the project of revaluation. Drawing on Faulkner's (2010) reading of the philosopher of the future as an empty figure, I argued that it is important to pay attention to the esoteric dimension of Nietzsche's texts dramatized in this figure, in particular the way in which the philosopher tempts readers to project themselves onto the text as his predestined companions who guard the boundaries of the text against the crowd of unworthy outsiders. The figure of the tempter and experimenter as a site of the readers (mis)identifications points to a broader tension in the project of technical reconstruction which rarely takes into account the role of Nietzsche's 'multifarious stylings', while those play a crucial role in the project of conjuring and persuading readers as his co-conspirators in the project of revaluation. The ambivalent and unstable meanings of the *Versucher* across the scientific-naturalist and mythical-poetic registers point to the indeterminacy of the socio-political stakes of Nietzsche's experimental philosophy, which gain more concrete meanings with his forms of addressing his ideal readers as philosophers of the future, as a kind of interpellation that always risks failure.

In Part 2 (Chapters 3 and 4), I argued for the significance of distinguishing the parameters of the 'social' in Nietzsche's writings in light of renewed concerns with his class racism in the field of contemporary Marxist reception. Recovering Baier's (1981) reading of the relations between the state, society and high culture in Nietzsche's philosophy, I placed discussions on Nietzsche's anti-sociology (*Gegen-soziologie*) in dialogue with contemporary scholarship on his *great politics*. It is only by a formulating an explicit conception of the parameters of the 'social' in relation to the call for overcoming the 'degeneration of

humanity' addressed to the philosophers of the future (*Versucher*) that we might be able to situate and critically assess the recent charges that class racism and anti-blackness underlie Nietzsche's thinking. From the standpoint of Marxist-leftist readings (Losurdo, 2019; Toscano, 2020), the role of caste and class in Nietzsche's body politics can be best grasped though a historical-materialist lens, under the umbrella term of transversal class racism.

In Chapter 4, I pointed to the role that the metaphor of the social organism plays in Nietzsche's thinking of the *will to power*, often sanitized in sociological reception. While critical of the ways in which Darwinist social science promoted specific ideological conceptions of fitness and social selection, Nietzsche has his own physiological-biologistic framework for conceiving of individuation as a prerequisite for moral and social life. His critique of Spencerian sociology as promoting 'declining life' needs to be understood in terms of his counter ideal of *the will to power* which points to the necessity of struggle, domination and expansion as the organizing principles of organisms which do not aim towards self-preservation. In his late works, the related distinction between ascending and descending life can be understood in relationship to the broader diagnosis of degeneration among specific groups, from socialists to the democrats, anarchists to the sick. While many readers might wish to leave these ideas behind, one cannot ignore that Nietzsche had hopes for sociology alongside other bio-medical sciences in the project of revaluation.

Part 3 (Chapters 5 and 6) focused on the purchase of Nietzsche's philosophy for social theory today. Despite his socio-biologistic naturalism and class racism, I argued for the ongoing relevance of Nietzsche's philosophy as a thinker of falsifications of language, illusion and metaphor. In Chapter 5, I examined how Nietzsche challenges sociologists and social theorists to think of truth as a product of metaphoric transference which sustains the social order. I argued that it is productive to read Nietzsche as a master of rhetoric in order to delineate his possible contributions into 'poetics of sociology', a field of research concerned with the rhetorical structure of sociological texts, in particular the narrative devices which theorists use to seduce and persuade audiences. I used Nietzsche's figure of the tempter (*Versucher*) as a methodological device which shifts attention to the interplay between the text and the readers' (mis)identifications, and in particular the affective genesis of interpretation in the body. In this context, Nietzsche's otherwise reactionary and outdated thinking about the (social) body as an organism that interprets can be still productive.

Chapter 6 opened up the grounds for reconnecting between the rich second- and third-wave feminist reception of Nietzsche and the Marxist framework of class racism. Against the backdrop of dominant readings of the category of 'race' in Nietzsche's writings

as indeterminate, I reconstructed an account of racialization through the Nietzschean figure of the noble as a mythical founder of the material-semiotic order of signs who created value through naming. This link between the origins of language and slave morality that Nietzsche narrates in the *Genealogy of Morality* comes into sharp focus with the feminist and post-colonial reception of Nietzsche's thinking about sign-chains and ressentiment, which has been largely ignored by contemporary Marxist readings opposed to the 'hermeneutics of innocence' exemplified in Derrida's appropriations.

Ultimately, while recovering Nietzsche's uses for social theory, it is of paramount significance to remain aware of the tensions, ironies and ambivalences in reading the philosopher from a feminist and post-colonial standpoint, from the perspective of those shaped by histories of oppression whom he often denigrates. Reading for failure resists the temptation to identify with the figures of victory in Nietzsche's thinking, as to win the approval of the author, and the immediate comfort of rejecting Nietzsche's insights into the relationship between power, morality and language as wrong and mistaken. Reading for failure, Bull (2011) suggests, will be far from pleasurable – "rather than being an exhilarating vision of the limitless possibilities of human emancipation, Nietzsche's texts will continually remind us of our own weakness and mediocrity" (p.37). Yet we also need to recognize that the doubt and confidence in (mis)identifying with the figures of victory in Nietzsche's writings is not equally distributed in societies shaped by systemic racism and patriarchy.

In what follows, I discuss more closely the key arguments of my thesis organised thematically, as well as the directions for future study on Nietzsche and critical social theory, which cannot be ever fully exhausted. The main contribution of my research is in terms of a method for surveying the polarized landscape of Nietzschean reception not through the devices of misreadings and abuses, which assume that there is a stable, technical 'content' of his social philosophy to be reconstructed in the same way by all readers across space and time, but rather in terms of the receptive effects that his dissonant rhetoric strategically facilitates, designed to appeal to all and none, and thus mobilise readers to embody new measures of social worth found in his texts. My argument is that Nietzsche's double rhetoric which appeals to the masses and the few can be qualified in terms of the unstable, intersectional categories of class, caste, 'race' and ability only in terms of the philosopher's interpellation of his ideal, predestined readers, whom he attempts to recruit towards the project of revaluation as his co-conspirators.

Nietzsche's double rhetoric and class racism

Throughout this thesis, I have argued that the parameters of the 'social' in Nietzsche's works have been long framed on contrarian, negative terms, even though he has been often used for diagnostic purposes in relation to socio-political phenomena. Indeed, Nietzsche has been read as an anti-social thinker already in canonizing reception (Danto, 1965; Kaufmann, 1974). Society and the state would lie outside of the orbit of his thinking, as Nietzsche was canonized as a philosopher without much to say on politics, 'race' or gender other than as an unfortunate sign of the times. This was an era in which scientific racism, supremacy of aristocratic elites and misogyny were commonplace, as echoed in Nietzsche's own writings.[103] At the same time, beginning with Bataille's (2015) *On Nietzsche* written in Paris during the Nazi occupation, the philosopher has been cleared of the Nazi abuses, and his name would come to signify neither calls to genocide nor the end of metaphysics, but the heterogeneity of interpretation and plural style(s) of writing (Derrida, 1979).

This is the background against which I have placed the emerging discussions on class racism and the two-caste society in Nietzsche's thinking. I examined how political and social theorists reconstruct Nietzsche's theory of the state and society (Drochon, 2016; Losurdo, 2019), against his reputation as an a-systematic thinker who cannot offer anything close to a 'foundation' for politics, much less a theory of modern society, suspicious of links between signs, power positions and infinitely displaced meanings. New interpretations, from Drochon's (2019) *Nietzsche's great politics* to Losurdo's (2019) *Nietzsche: Aristocratic Rebel* challenge this received view of Nietzsche as an apolitical, incoherent and playful thinker. These are often framed against the influence of the 'French Nietzsche' which famously promoted the indeterminacy of interpretation in the wake of the death of the author.

While many interpreters argued that Nietzsche's politics needs to be understood in contrast to the social contract perspective, because of his focus on unmasking the violence foundational to state-making (Ansell-Pearson, 1991; Faulkner, 2012; Drochon, 2016), the precise meanings of what the 'social' means in the context of Nietzsche's project of revaluation are rarely clarified. I argued that these parameters need to be understood in terms of Nietzsche's appeal to his ideal readers in relation to his call for a new hierarchy and an order of rank based on alternative measures of social worth, which would take into account spiritual dispositions, for instance a capacity to suffer on the path towards cultural achievement, as well as an ability to overcome illness as a stimulus for health.

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[103] As I have discussed in the Introduction, Kaufmann (1974), among others, famously argued that Nietzsche cannot be "read as a political or social philosopher" (p.123).

Conceptualizing the role of the 'social' in relation to Nietzsche's demands towards his ideal readers is particularly important today when concerns around Nietzsche's understanding of caste, slavery, class and 'race' resurface in reception (Bernasconi, 2017; Losurdo, 2019; Toscano, 2020). Therefore, I analysed a tension between two conflicting interpretations of Nietzsche's political philosophy: Drochon's (2016) optimistic reconstruction of Nietzsche's future transracial two-caste society, in contrast to Losurdo's (2019) critique of Nietzsche's transversal class racism. These interpretations are animated by radically different understanding of racial and class subjugation, as examined in Chapter 3.

While the 'social' and 'political' have been long blinds-spots in the reception of Nietzsche's philosophy, those negative capacities made them a productive ground for many sociologists and social theorists, who developed their ideas with and against the philosopher, departing precisely from the 'threads of the social' in Nietzsche's thinking (Antonio, 1995). I examined these readings in Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 5, pointing to the ongoing relevance of Losurdo's (2019) charge of sanitization in relation to this field of reception. While most sociologists appropriate Nietzsche in celebratory ways, many also argue that he fails to draw clear distinctions between physical force, social forms of domination, and the creative and libidinal power that would be necessary for the flourishing of the individual in decadent cultural-complexes. [104] Habermas (1987) summarizes this critique in terms of the arbitrary, undifferentiated conception of the *will to power*, where everything can be treated as epistemic violence with no ground to condemn expressions of cruelty, while Losurdo (2019) reads the agonistic conception of the body politic as promoting racialized class subjugation. The most controversial problem in reception is about the ways in which Nietzsche's notion of ascending life – as opposed to the descending/declining life promoted by decadent Spencerian social science – maps onto the discourses of degenerationism, health and sickness, and whether it can be understood in relation to particular social groups.

Rather than aim to reconstruct a stable and coherent vision of society in Nietzsche's thinking, I argued that the discussion on the role of slavery and caste in Nietzsche's project of revaluation needs to take into account how he aims to conjure, mobilize and transform his readers. In that sense, it is not an co-incidence that Zarathustra's address towards his brothers to think of society as an "experiment" and "*not* a contract!" (Z On Old and New Tablets 3.25) is presented in the form of a teaching (*Lehre*). There are explicit political and pedagogical stakes here, though these are presented in a highly enigmatic form, not as

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[104] Simmel (1986), among others, formulated a critique alongside these lines: "Nietzsche should have made the boundary lines clear between his will to power and bare desire for possession, showing that there is value only in the qualities of individual souls expressed in social relations" (p.159).

dogmatic preaching. This society is a "long search: but it searches for the commander" (Z On Old and New Tablets 3.25). In my reading, Zarathustra appeals here to his privileged companions predestined for commanding, which is "harder than obeying" (Z On Self-Overcoming 1) and requires solving the riddle of the eternal return understood as a test of spiritual strength, and thus affirming the notion of an eternally returning life.

In his later works, particularly *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche presents the enigmatic teachings of Zarathustra in a more sober fashion, tempting readers to imagine an alternative order based on a new form slavery and spiritual distinctions that might emerge from the decadent cultural complex. As an experiment without a conductor, modern society in a positive sense would be then a breeding ground for the production of a few extraordinary spirits – whom Nietzsche often calls the philosophers of the future (*Versucher*) - who are able to creatively legislate values for a future society. Yet he does not qualify who would belong to the few other than in terms of symbolic attributes, praising those who do not fall for any egalitarian ideology (whether democracy or feminism), have patience for the labyrinth of knowledge, and rise beyond the pursuit of material conveniences.

Nietzsche's utopia would transcend national boundaries, within a division of humanity into two distinct cultural fabrics, modelled on the caste system (Drochon, 2016; Losurdo, 2019; Toscano, 2020). In this sense, Nietzsche offers a radical challenge to democracy, contesting the strength of traditional ties linking members to community as homogenizing herd mentality. He asks us to imagine a different hierarchy not based on the ties of tribe or kin, a politics beyond nationalism. Again, the key disagreement in literature is how to understand that future utopia – as a transracial community of creative masters who benefit from the labour of the happily enslaved masses (Drochon, 2016), as a stratified system in which the few idle masters can create and govern at the expense of the rest (Losurdo, 2019), or as a cosmopolitan community of 'friends of solitude' (Derrida, 1994).

Nietzsche's demand for value-creation among the few corresponds to the hierarchical organization of the text and in particular its esoteric layer, the appeal to readers who would be socio-spatially and temporally positioned above humanity, for instance as social scientists and philosophers of the future, who are most likely to embody the principle of the *will to power*. They do so in the sense that their life expresses the richest set of drives, a healthy life-affirming perspective, and so their knowledge can ultimately serve a legislative function. My analysis has revealed the relevance of transversal class racism animating Nietzsche's thinking about a healthy life, as I read Nietzsche through the lens of unstable

categories of class, caste, stand and 'race', ability often ignored by political theorists and analytic philosophers, categories which intersect in Nietzsche's writings (Moore, 2002).

However, I argued that those categories need to be situated in terms of his demands towards his ideal readers whom he imagines and confides in, rather than as stable categories with fixed and pre-existing meanings understood in terms of socio-material positions in relation to a class system or physiological attributes. While one might argue that Nietzsche's voice represents the anti-democratic reaction by European upper classes which exuberates racialized class segregation within capitalism, rather than revolutionizing humanity in a way that breaks down rigid barriers of gender, 'race' and class (Losurdo, 2019), it is crucial to recognize that the philosopher's rhetoric aims to transform the sensibility of his readers and mobilise them towards self-activity. The success of his interpellation depends on the ways in which members of all kinds of groups can recognize themselves in the text, and thus the ambivalence of his figures of victory that aim to stimulate attachments.

What one makes of Nietzsche's fantasy of revaluation depends on an overarching conception of 'social' underlying his writings, understood precisely in relation to his demands towards his ideal readers, for instance the community of philosophers of the future who oppose the "*total degeneration of human beings (...)* to the perfect herd animal" (BGE 5.203). While the social stakes here are not formulated explicitly, as Nietzsche often repudiates existing theorizations of society as a contract or a stage in the teleological progress of humanity, his own conceptualization of the social order as an experiment is implied with the rhetorical structure of the texts, which makes it difficult to separate the technical content of Nietzsche's thinking from its stylized forms, in particular appeals to the reader as his friends, companions and fellow experimenters – those who recognize "a new *task*" (BGE 5.203). The hierarchical structure of the text – by appealing to those who aspire to be positioned above humanity - facilitates the call for a new social order. Indeed, Nietzsche encourages each individual to be critical of decadence among aristocracy, the educated masses, socialists and social scientists alike, addressing his most pressing demands towards future sciences.

The double rhetoric – which appeals to all and none, few and many - needs to be taken into account as central in reconstructing the political-philosophical dimension of Nietzsche's thinking. When reading Nietzsche as a political philosopher, we need to be wary of the role of the esoteric and exoteric layers of textuality, and ask why Nietzsche presented his ideas in ways that all can see but few will grasp – like the figure of the *Versucher*. This requires us to pay attention to the ways in which he encourages in readers a particular sensibility and a set of psychic dispositions and seduces them to identify with the community

of re-evaluators against the rest of humanity. The programme for the renewal of humanity is not open for a debate but rather to be read in-between the lines by his ideal readers.

At the same time, Nietzsche often instructs his readers to embrace indeterminacy in interpretation, exemplified with the category of the 'perhaps' of the philosopher of the future as a *Versucher*, a name which might be also a "temptation" (BGE 2.42). Lambek (2020) suggests that Nietzsche's dissonant rhetoric "challenges assumptions, provides no clear solution or singular interpretation and excites its audience to embrace uncertainty" (p. 200). Those receptive effects may be interpreted as strategic if we accept that the success of the Nietzschean interpellation depends on whether all kinds of readers across the boundaries of the nation, ethnicity and gender will recognize their social surroundings as decadent and attempt to reorganize their selves to match with the philosopher's untenable ideals.

Degenerationism, racial biology and the metaphor of the social body

When Nietzsche speaks of society, it often through the biologistic tropes of decay and degeneration, drawing on the metaphor of an 'organism' widely spread in scientific and sociological literature at the time (Antonio, 1995; Baier, 1981; Moore, 2002). Yet the category of decadence animating his writings has been often read in cultural rather than biological terms, as these come to the foreground in the last stage of his thinking, in particular with the vocabulary of *dégénérescence*. On the Marxist-left, interpreters often oppose this domestication of biologistic metaphors in Nietzsche's writings, arguing that it is important to hold him accountable for an organistic notion of the social body (Losudo, 2019; Jones, 2010). It would be a dangerously reactive metaphor close to eugenics – society as an organism that purifies itself from pollutions, blockages and waste materials.

In this context, the most difficult questions arise with Nietzsche's deployment of the rhetoric of 'degeneration(ism)' in relation to the notion of descending and ascending life that individuals represent, depending on their spiritual strength, health and *will to power* in saying 'yes' to life, where fitness would be understood in opposition to the ideals promoted by Spencer's Social Darwinism. Faced with various references to the malformed and degenerate, it is not surprising that sociologists and analytic philosophers seek to cleanse the term 'decadence' of its biologistic connotations (Huddleston, 2019), or at least to downplay this aspect of Nietzsche's thought in assessing his relationship to the discipline of sociology (Antonio, 1995; Aspers, 2007).[105] The most disturbing question here is how to read the notion

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[105] Huddleston (2019), for instance, insists that the category of 'decadence' should be understood in terms of psychic failing and structural weakness rather than in relation to physiological degeneration.

of 'breeding' (*Züchtung*) in light of his apparent admiration for the 'natural' order of castes, as a socio-political or ethical category, and whether it would be racialized (Bernasconi, 2017).

While the literature on Nietzsche's anti-sociology laid paths for an important discussion on the 'threads of the social' in his writings (Antonio, 1995; Aspers, 2007, Piazzesi, 2013), commentators are not likely to pay much attention to his socio-biologism, and if they do, it is not in relation to his aristocratic body politic as inspired by the Hindu caste system. Nietzsche has often been read as a contrarian to the emerging 19th century discipline of sociology. Nietzsche's assessments of sociology, "though they vary greatly", Lepenies (1988) summarizes, "amount in the end to declaring it culturally disqualified" (p.237) because of its implication in the homogenized modern cultural complex. Nietzsche's critique of sociology has been situated *vis-à-vis* his broader diagnosis of the spirit of decay, corruption and malaise in 19th century society (Piazzesi, 2013; Solms-Laubach, 2007). In contrast, Losurdo (2019) reads decadence not in terms of cultural diagnostics but as linked to the physiological discourse of degenerationism in relation to sick bodies, as examined in Chapter 4.

The rhetoric of degenerationism needs to be situated in the context of Nietzsche's fascination with the natural sciences which were not a unified field at the time of his writings (Emden, 2014). Nietzsche's challenges to future sociology alongside physiology and medicine in *Daybreak* point us to naturalist-scientific register of the philosopher of the future (*Versucher*), as examined in Chapter 4. To be sure, Nietzsche's fantasy of unification of natural, social and human sciences (*Wissenschaft*) is not unique to his writings – sociological readers will immediately think of Durkheim. Yet given Nietzsche's demands for the project of revaluation to be grounded in future bio-social sciences, and his notion of a life-ascending social science that can be a basis for new ideals, the stakes of his fantasy are high.

Sociologists often argue that Nietzsche radically challenges the institutionalized promises of economic and social progress based on the premise of equality (e.g. marriage, labour rights, mass education), in opposition to other classical thinkers. Yet we have an impoverished vocabulary to talk about the significance of his ideas on decadence, slavery and breeding in relationship to his interest in natural sciences and racial hygiene. Indeed, sociologists often ascribe a generic ideal of human flourishing to Nietzsche, for instance the ideal of a "new cultural complex" which "would intensify rather than suppress clashes between strongly held values, vital lived experienced, and creative personalities" (Antonio, 1995, p.20). The framework of anti-sociology has been highly productive in terms of outlining different paths through which Nietzsche's ideas might be assimilated into sociological analysis, for instance through racial social constructivism (Aspers, 2007; Piazzesi, 2013).

However, it does not query how Nietzsche's agonistic body politic relies on the legitimation of suffering and exploitation in certain parts of society, and his reliance on the metaphor of the social organism in which different 'vital' parts need to fulfil their purpose so that the whole can function.

Losurdo's (2019) framework of class racism centres precisely those dynamics. Sociologists are likely to neutralize these challenges: "Nietzsche's praise of aristocratic and noble mindsets in no way advances for aristocratic political institutions", Fong (2020, p.102) writes. In a similar vein, Antonio (1995) concludes that "racist national mythology and authoritarian politics clash directly with his antimoralist perspectivism and antinationalist affirmation of the mixing of people and cultures" (p.31). Nietzsche's comments on the cross-breeding between Prussian officers and Jewish women suggests a bleaker picture.

The most unsettling idea in this context concerns the notion of the 'interbreeding of races', as situated in the context of Bismarck's politics. Nietzsche's used the figure of the outcasts (Chandala) as a label for the wretched, sick, despicable and resentful – anyone who opposes a hierarchical social order. This has read as racialized in terms of both the colour of skin and the subaltern class position (Losurdo, 2019), raising questions about how to read the category of 'race' in Nietzsche's writings. While 'race' is a broad and indeterminate category if read literally in terms of Nietzsche's references to *Rasse* (Geuss, 2019), an integrative reading reveals that it is intertwined with the categories of class, caste and dynasty in Nietzsche's writings (Moore, 2002; Toscano, 2020). These can gain dangerous meanings in terms of practical politics.

 Indeed, the category or 'race 'has been read in terms of a literal-practical project of breeding future masters (Bull, 2011; Losurdo, 2019) - a caste of 'future Platos' as Drochon (2016) puts it – but also with attention to the formal structure of rhetoric tropes, for instance in the context of Nietzsche's polemical weapons against the nationalism and anti-Semitism of his contemporaries (Moore, 2002). In Chapter 6, I examined the controversies around Nietzsche's figure of an 'affirmative woman' as a trope for subversion of sexual difference in relation to the notions of interbreeding. This is not to excuse the complicity of Nietzsche's thought in the colonialism and his anti-blackness, which Bernasconi (2017) documents.

The framework of anti-sociology tends to ignore the complex rhetorical structure of Nietzsche's works, in particular the ways in which it creates insiders and outsiders of the text, those positioned above of humanity who see from above, versus those who see from below and represent the degeneration of humanity – the Chandala. It is important to address Nietzsche's challenges to sociology in ways attuned to the rhetorical appeal of his writings,

ways in which he conjures and mobilizes readers to oppose the decadent 19th century social sciences and aspire to be part of a community of experimenters. Those should be understood as demands placed to the future readers in relationship to the polemical purpose of the text.

Most interpretative strategies in the orbit of anti-sociology rely on what Foucault (1997) called the "sacred" function of the author, a "privileged moment of individualization in the history of ideas" (p.101), but they also point towards the possibility of overcoming the notion of a singular, self-identical subject in mastery over discourse, drawing attention to the heterogeneity of the Nietzschean text, which always hold capacities for indeterminacy and different interpretations. Aspers (2007) speaks about the ways in which Nietzsche is "breaking the spell of language" (p.493), while Antonio (1995) points out the proliferation of "unresolved riddles, ambiguities and contradictions in his texts" (p.7). This is a space of suspended reserves beyond the author's individuality on the margins of rational discourse: "a space into which the writing subject constantly disappears" (Foucault, 1997, p.101). Derrida (1985) explores this as a space of the constantly deferred signature.

In this space after the death of the author, it is important to remember that tracing afterlives of Nietzsche will be always an operation and projection which is conducted by some kind of 'us' - socially situated readers who attempt to understand, appropriate and often outgrow Nietzsche. Each reader will claim a different Nietzsche for her own ends, driven by different drives, not only to test but also to challenge, utilize and discipline – from revealing his complicity in bourgeois ideology (Graeber, 2011), all the way to the alt-right ethnonationalist readings (Bhatt, 2020). To understand how Nietzsche's dissonant rhetoric facilitates such varied receptive effects, we need to move beyond the notion of a literal-practical versus metaphorical meaning that would be transparent in the text (Rorty, 1989), as it fails to grasp those modes of attachment, as important as it is to interrogate how racial biology shapes Nietzsche's thinking – Chapters 3 and 4 outlined paths for this discussion.

Strong (2013) argues that "relatively few commentators have centered their political-philosophical readings of Nietzsche around his rhetoric" (p.513), with regrettable consequences when it comes to the discussion on the categories of 'race', class and caste. The tendency is either to excuse Nietzsche's unsavoury references as innocent figures of speech, or to blame him for racial massacres. The political-philosophical significance of 'race' in Nietzsche's *oeuvre* is often understood in this vein: as figures of speech which are irrelevant in delineating the technical core of philosophy (Drochon, 2016), or as a proxy for the aristocratic figure of the noble which ultimately reveals Nietzsche's politics of destruction (Losurdo, 2019). None of these interpretative strategies seems satisfying.

My thesis puts forward a method for surveying Nietzsche's reception in the history of social theory with attention to the receptive affects that the text purposefully facilitates. I argued for the importance of conceptualizing 'racialization' in relation to the mythical power of nobles as founders of the order of signs (Butler, 2002), in order to enrich the materialist framework of transversal class racism, departing from the apparent paradox of Nietzsche's appeal among feminist and post-colonial intellectuals. Once we recognize that Nietzsche's political philosophy echoes pre-imperialist geopolitics and voices against the abolition of slavery (Gooding-Williams, 2006; Losurdo, 2016), the philosopher's comparisons of qualities shared by slaves and woman, though common at the time, cannot be wished away by insisting on the indeterminacy of the text with its plural styles.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that the postmodern celebration of the margins of the Nietzschean oeuvre – exemplified in the famous line from his Nachlass "I have forgotten my umbrella" - is not merely playful for its own sake, contrary to what Losurdo suggests. While Derrida underplays the role of the esoteric strategies in Nietzsche's thinking, in particular how these fuel his call for a new social hierarchy, the feminist reception of *Spurs* draws attention to the socio-material stakes of deconstruction understood in terms of the problem of writing from the position of a minority, inhabiting a gap between styles.

Ultimately, the tensions and ambivalences that Nietzsche's texts produce when appropriated on the left for the projects of emancipation and critique cannot be easily resolved. In light of Nietzsche's most malicious and terrifying masks, I have extended Bull's (2011) notion of reading as losers, from the perspective of those Nietzsche denigrates – the Chandala, women, black subjects – as outcasts of humanity. This is a strategy that subversively departs from the apparent paradox of Nietzsche's popularity among the groups prone to the poisonous forces of ressentiment, those who reactively act out of the experience of oppression and subjugation to challenge, oppose and destabilise the valuations of masterly strength encoded onto the grammar shaping the social order. Before I outline how this strategy of reading Nietzsche for failure can be useful at the level of critical social theory, let me clarify in what ways the readers' self-identifications with the Nietzschean figures of mastery and subjugation matter in the practice of interpretation.

Reading for victory and failure: (mis)identifications with Nietzschean figures

In Chapters 2, 5 and 6, I examined various strategies though which Nietzsche seduces and provokes his readers to identity with the 'noble', against the downtrodden, malformed and broken. When embedded in the socio-biologistic racial discourses at the times, those

demarcation lines will of course seem dangerous, raising the question as to whether and how racial biology, animality and morality map onto one another in Nietzsche's texts. I have argued that it is important to consider this problematic not only in relation to the biologistic-physiological vocabulary of degenerationism in relation to the distinction between descending and ascending life, which determines the changes of one's belonging to the caste of the life-affirmative masters (Drochon, 2016), but also in terms of other attributes of the *Versucher* who is able to solve the riddle of the eternal return, such as capacity for suffering and overcoming illness. The empty figures of mastery in Nietzsche's work – such as the philosopher of the future – are likely to facilitate readers' passionate attachments and (mis)identifications, even among those whom he otherwise denigrates. Once we recognize that it is difficult to disentangle ourselves from Nietzsche's figures of victory (Bull, 2011), we can begin to reconsider our own techniques of reading and analysis as value-laden, affective and embodied, that is to say, as workings of the *will to power* selectively understood as a heuristic principle rather than a quasi-metaphysical theory, as outlined in Chapter 5.

Faulkner (2010) made a similar argument from the psychoanalytic perspective: she speaks of "the imaginary level of textuality" where Nietzsche's readers would "model themselves on upon a particular ideal proffered by his philosophy, from the rugged philosopher or creative artist, to the noble legislator" (p.5). The success of interpellation is contingent on the resolution of a conflict in the reader's psyche, a subject guilty upon the prospect of inflicting suffering upon another and at the same time longing for the position of active strength and mastery. That conflict cannot be easily resolved, it requires the reader to disavow aspects of their identity to save against the resulting anxiety, when one cannot meet the demands associated with the position of the majestic noble free from ressentiment (Faulkner, 2010). From a sociological perspective, it is interesting to interrogate ways in which those identifications with Nietzschean figures of mastery and subjugation relate to class, 'race' and gender positions, in particular histories of oppression and forms of cultural capital that readers of Nietzsche embody and bring into the text. The different socio-material positions and embodied identity-markers translate into the unequal distribution of doubt in identifying with the victorious perspective of the master or the untimely philosopher of the future – the possibility of identifying with the noble free from ressentiment will be in theory more likely for readers who do not experience oppression due to 'race', gender or class.[106]

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[106] Bull (2011) speaks of readers who "sometimes identify with the goals of characters who may be in many or all external respects (age, race, gender, class, etc.) dissimilar to themselves" (p. 79). This can be read psychoanalytically in terms of a 'split' that the Nietzschean text produces (Faulkner, 2010).

However, Nietzsche's philosophy has been also popular among those whom he denigrates, most starkly exemplified in the instability of the text in terms of the various positions and images of woman which Derrida's *Spurs* deconstructs. Shifting attention towards receptive effects, we encounter a multitude of possible relationships that can then emerge between the author, text (concepts and figures) and the reader, rather than stable and timeless content. This makes it important to consider modes of relating to Nietzsche rather than merely the technical content of his dissonant writings, which can be grasped for instance in terms of the two poles of assimilation and repudiation associated with reading for victory (Bull, 2011). It is important to bear in mind the elitist, aristocratic, and colonial roots of Nietzsche's philosophy, which are all too often sanitized in literature on Nietzsche and sociology, not to repudiate his thinking as immoral and mistaken, but rather to admit that we might fail in light of his demands towards the reader (Bull, 2011), and to more decidedly identify with the position of the resentful slave in the mode of reading for failure.

Among the different figures of victory, I focused on the seductive image of the philosopher-physician who stands above the crowd and can form an 'unfashionable' relationship to the modern socio-cultural formation – as the philosopher of the future (*Versucher*) capable of thinking the revalued future, a mask which I have examined in Chapters 2, 4 and 5. The complex meanings of this untranslatable figure of interpellation require new kinds of hermeneutic care that shifts attention to the affective and performative level of textuality, to the ways in which the text stimulates activity of the reader rather than describes previous propositional content. Nietzsche tempts us to imagine ourselves as his companions who give him a hand in the project of revaluation, as bold lovers of knowledge and solvers of riddles who can overcome any illness. As a withdrawn and deferred signature of the philosopher, the figure of the *Versucher* is central in understanding how Nietzsche mobilizes readers' attachments. Nietzsche's forms of addressing readers should be considered not merely as an innocent educational strategy, contrary to what Hicks and Rosenberg (2003) suggest, but also as a way to win readers' sympathies in order to recruit them towards the community of re-evaluators who might overcome the degeneration of humanity. These attachments might then gain dangerous practical-literal meanings if we read Nietzsche's vision of a two-caste system as an internally divided humanity (Drochon, 2016; Losurdo, 2019; Toscano, 2020).

When read as a site of Nietzsche's rhetorical seductions, the *Versucher* functions as a methodological device which centres the text's demand for faithful, slow, patient and loyal readers on the one hand – with a literary finesse and a particular set of predispositions

(Pippin, 2019) - and the valorisation of an active, creative and strong reader on the other. This tension is likely to fuel all kinds of readings of Nietzsche against himself. Implicating ourselves in the range of the text complicates the task of detached, technical reconstruction, pointing to the performative stakes of textuality, as outlined in Chapters 5 and 6. The key question, then, is how Nietzsche was able to mobilize such a diverse audience, from Jews to women, alt-right to Marxist-left, and that can be explained at the level of his dissonant rhetoric. Nietzsche's esoteric experimentalism – to the extent that it is semantically coupled with seduction - should be read not as a polite invitation to critique customary morality (Bamford, 2016), but rather as a strategy for subjugating readers (Faulkner, 2010), a double rhetoric through which he is able to recruit some towards the task of revaluation while excluding others – for instance by compelling us to position ourselves against our contemporaries, from the 'cultural philistines' to the 'decadent sociologists'.

In this sense, the mythical-poetic register of the *Versucher* as a tempter and seducer are as important to recognize as their role as researchers, experimenters and investigators who venture onto forbidden paths of inquiry. Ultimately, reading Nietzsche with attention to the imaginary and performative dimension of textuality is to suspend the notion of a disembodied and neutral interpreter, pointing to the affective genesis of interpretation in the body, not least the libidinal attachments that most skilful seducers are able to awaken. Reading with one's blood and soul as Zarathustra instructs us to do might be to fall for the seducer's tricks, once we think of determinacy as a temptation that should be resisted in reconstructing Nietzsche's political philosophy – as the philosopher might be strategically warning us not to trust him, not to take him at face-value, and to embrace uncertainty in interpretation. While considered a virtue in the post-structuralist and deconstructive reception of Nietzsche, the device of indeterminacy has fuelled the sanitization of Nietzsche's concerns with racial biology, exemplified in the refusal to think of the author's signature as stable and singular (Derrida, 1985). Yet even if we put aside the most terrifying of Nietzsche's masks, for instance the proposal to get rid of the declining forces of humanity represented in specific sick and degenerate individuals, there is still a temptation to identify with the untenable position of the nobles who are free from ressentiment.

Uses of Nietzsche in the tradition of critical social theory

In Chapters 5 and 6, I examined the uses of Nietzsche for critical social theory. My overarching question here was how to respond to his class racism, in light of the influential image of Nietzsche as someone whose aestheticism, anti-foundationalism and irrationality

would be at odds with the normatively oriented project of critical theory. Contemporary theorists are unlikely to consider Nietzsche's class politics in formulating the purchase of his genealogical method and diagnosis of ressentiment (Fassin, 2013; Vandenberghe, 2017, Saar, 2008), often reading Nietzsche as a philosopher of post-truth and illusion (Felski, 2015; Harcourt, 2020; McKinnon, 2012).[107] If Nietzsche is used to speak explicitly to contemporary social life, it is in ways that are detached from the historical context of his thinking and what the 'socio-political' might have meant on his own terms, as to creatively theorize the dangers of authoritarianism, populism and ressentiment-fuelled politics (Fong, 2019; Kellner, 2019).

Those eclectic uses of a 19th century philosopher for diagnostic purposes are becoming more difficult to justify in light of contemporary developments in the intellectual and political landscape. Sociologists are more attuned to the ways in which conceptual vocabularies cannot be divorced from their conditions of production (Go, 2019). No philosophy or social theory exists in a cultural or political vacuum, as most starkly exemplified in the recent decolonial movement. This suggests a new negative limit of the purchase of Nietzsche's philosophy. In this context, Losurdo's (2019) charge of class racism underlying Nietzsche's thought is important to consider in tracing his ongoing purchase for social theory. It does not, however, put an end to the use of Nietzsche on the Marxist-left.

From Fanon to Foucault, Deleuze to Butler, most influential 20th century philosophers and social theorists have appropriated Nietzschean ideas on the emergence and descent of moral values outside of the question as to how the author might have envisioned hierarchies and divisions in a future two-caste society. These readings are rarely concerned with the practical project of crossbreeding or reinstation of slavery which scholars turn to today (Bull, 2011; Losurdo, 2019; Toscano, 2020). Instead, this field of reception offers paths for theorizing the links between subjectivity, language and epistemic frames, often utilizing Nietzsche's diagnoses of the poisonous effects of ressentiment on the historically oppressed subjects as victims (Brown, 1993; Butler, 1997; Fanon, 1967).

The key question explored in Chapters 5 and 6 is whether such re-appropriations of Nietzsche's philosophy can still serve progressive purposes despite its conservative politics, or if the decolonial turn and class racism signify the negative limit of the diagnostic uses of Nietzsche's moral and political philosophy. I argued that it is important to pay attention to the different ironies, tensions and ambivalences that the text produces rather than accuse Nietzsche of enticing readers to violence, as some readers tend to today (Beiner, 2018).

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[107] There are some exceptions. Schotten (2019), for instance, departs precisely from admitting Nietzsche's conservative political imaginary as a point of departure for exploring his 'queer' uses.

Against the backdrop of scholarship which accuses the hermeneutic tradition of simply sanitizing Nietzsche's class racism (Losurdo, 2019), Chapter 5 traced Nietzsche's influence on social theory as shaped by the influential appropriations by Habermas and Foucault.

Despite Habermas' (1987) assessment of Nietzsche's philosophy as being at odds with the normatively oriented framework of critical theory, many theorists have drawn influentially on Nietzsche to theorize the forces of oppression and emancipation in terms of the psychic and epistemic lives of power, particularly among the subjugated (Butler, 1997; Fanon, 1967; Spivak, 1983).[108] Post-structuralist readings push Nietzsche in new, unanticipated directions: from the death of the God, man and the author (Foucault, 1997; Foucault, 2002), to Butler's (2002) analysis of the Nietzschean fable about the self-affirming master as a founder of values and language examined in Chapter 6. While those readings cannot be easily squared with the historical-materialist methodology because they do not aim towards a technical reconstruction or contextualization of Nietzsche's ideas, they have surely contributed to the sanitization of the most troubling aspects of his thought.

At the same time, I argued that Nietzsche's thinking about truth and falsifications of language can be indeed productive for social theory if we selectively read him for victory. Against the liberal, Habermasian notion of language as oriented towards consensus, Nietzsche's conception of language as a site of social hierarchies and power struggles suggests that the structural positions from which subjects speak cannot be bracketed away, as if all the voices were equally loud. This notion of language as a social structure which aims towards the reproduction of the values held by the herd (or tribe) fuels the Dionysian call for metaphor creation, which I traced back to the figure of the tempter (*Versucher*) speaking their own singular truths outside of the dominant order of signs. Nietzsche tempts readers to dare to fashion their own truth in their own private language against that of the herd, as readers project into his writings as companions of the philosopher of the future, a figure which only initiated insiders can grasp. In this sense, the figure of the *Versucher* points both to the generative force and erroneousness inherent to language, it is not merely a wordplay. In this sense, language is as much likely to reveal as it is to conceal and mystify meaning.

In the mode of reading for victory, assimilating Nietzsche's thinking into contemporary methodologies of theorizing, I also argued that his philosophy of metaphor

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[108] From the standpoint of Habermas (1987), reception of Nietzsche exemplifies the impasses of the postmodern philosophy of the subject. Indeed, within the Habermasian binary between the universal capacity for reason and subjective, embodied irrationality, the reception of Nietzsche in the orbit of social theory culminates in the contradictions of postmodern philosophy incapable of justifying the grounds on which its subject can be emancipated from all-pervasive workings of power.

and language has ongoing relevance for poetics of sociology. Drawing on Nietzsche's early theory of metaphor, McKinnon (2012) productively queried the role that metaphors play in connecting between different semantic domains: "how would debt, used as a metaphor for sin, change the way that those who use it think about sin?" (p.211). Rather than draw out further the purchase of Nietzsche's theory of metaphoric transference for various subfields of sociology, beyond sociology of religion, I conceptualized how Nietzsche's dissonant rhetoric implicates various readers as embodied subjects. Metaphoric transference can be partially understood as a bodily, physiological process that facilitates the reader's attachments, often manifested as anxiety produced through the ambivalence of identification with figures of victory. While Nietzsche might be attempting to reorganize the readers' drives so that they can actualize the values posited by his philosophy (Faulkner, 2010), attention to the receptive effects that his rhetoric facilitates can be instructive for research into the ways in which social theories aim not only to articulate but rather transform the reader's self. It is in particular the various influential narrative devices in the history of social theory – from the 'iron cage' to the 'cyborg' - that can be analysed through this lens.

However, this strategy draws out the uses and productive resources of the text rather than their limits. One might alternatively read Nietzsche for failure, which will be far from pleasurable. We will not be able to formulate counterarguments to his critiques of ressentiment underlying the Judeo-Christian tradition, using his philosophy for diagnostic rather than therapeutic purposes (Brown, 1993; Toscano, 2020). This strategy is particularly attractive in light of the colonialist imaginary at the heart of his writings, which is increasingly more often recognized (Gooding-Williams, 2006; Jones, 2010; Toscano, 2020). In this vein, Chapter 6 examined how Nietzsche's writings can become a lab for developing a 'post-colonial poetics' concerned with the transformation of the dehumanized subjects outside of the colonialists' matrix of power (Fanon, 1967; Said, 2003). Despite the dividing lines between the masterful and the crippled, *Genealogy of Morality* is one of Nietzsche's most broadly appropriated texts in terms of the use of genealogy as a 'method' – for instance in querying legacies of slavery, racism and plantation (Deutscher, 2017; West, 1987).

Yet again, it is important to pay attention to the distribution of doubt and confidence in identifying with the figures of victory in Nietzsche's writings, especially when reading him against himself for emancipatory purposes. Ironically, it is much more likely that those shaped by histories of gender, racial and class oppression will recognize themselves in the figures of failure and reject the untenable position of mastery, while those convinced about the supremacy of their group - for instance alt-right ethnonationalists – will claim supposed

oppression and the status of the victim to defend their anti-egalitarian belief systems as superior. In this vein, Gooding-Williams (2006) argued that Nietzsche's unsettling figure of the experimenter as a seducer (*Versucher*) is central in delineating the appeal of the philosopher for Afro-American studies which explores alternatives to the Euro-cultural legacies of white supremacy. The *Versucher* fuels black studies "richer in itself, newer to itself than before, full of new dissatisfactions" (Gooding-Williams, 2006, p.vii).[109] The figure highlights the various ironies and ambivalences in reading Nietzsche for anti-racist critique.

The uses of Nietzsche against himself in the feminist and post-colonial tradition – the two need to be conceived together – challenge Losurdo's (2019) bleak assessment of most trends in reception as 'hermeneutics of innocence' which simply sanitizes Nietzsche's concern with racial hygiene, degeneration(ism) and his class racism. While it is pivotal to expose ways in which the philosopher's writings echo racialised colonial fantasies, one can simultaneously use his insights into the relationship between language and master morality to query how valuations encoded into grammar can be opposed, inverted and destabilized in social life. Language for Nietzsche in this strand of reception would be not a transparent medium of sociality or a neutral tool, but a weapon in negotiating the terms of the Euro-American social orders shaped through slave morality, decadence and cruelty.

Ultimately, my understanding of the role of hermeneutics is more optimistic than Losurdo's diagnosis of apologetics in reception. Paying attention to the hermeneutic framework underlying any interpretative efforts highlights the importance of reflexivity, as it is impossible to interpret phenomena and entities (including texts) without any pre-existing presuppositions.[110] Felski (2015) argues that modern hermeneutics highlights the "intensive acts of deciphering, thanks to a heightened sense of the duplicity of language and the uncertain links between signs and meaning" (p.31). The underlying assumption here is that meaning can never be fully transparent to the critic, where its Nietzschean lineage in particular would emphasize the illusions and falsifications of language – ways in which language itself hides histories of power struggles, illusion and deception which need to be scrutinized by the social critic, as well as the ways in which language fails us. Sociologists are likely to qualify these in terms of broader social structures of gender, 'race', class and

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[109] The argument to read Nietzsche for African-American studies in proximity to the figure of the *Versucher* resonates with Jones' (2010) examination of how the category of 'life' central to Césaire's primitivism can be read as "both mythic and naturalistic" (p.176), arrestingly Nietzschean in poetic affirmation of existence, despite the philosopher's troubling proximity to eugenics.

[110] In the hermeneutic tradition, the key notion of the 'hermeneutic circle' concerns circularity of interpretation. Classically, reading of the whole text is achieved by appealing to its partial expressions, yet the whole is always more than a sum of its parts (see Gerhardt, 1998; Schrift, 1996).

disability, for instance when analyzing what kind of bodies are coded (not) to belong to certain spaces of power, or how language holds racialized Manichean valuations.[111]

If Nietzsche encourages us to be reflexive, it is crucial to recognize that the structural positions we occupy in the social world shape our very mode of interpreting, and vice versa, that the figures of victory and subjugation in his writings call upon the readers to embody and actualise new measures of worth found in his texts. The primary contribution of my thesis is to situate his demands towards his ideal readers in the context of the rhetorical, hierarchical structure of the text, where it is the form as much as the content of Nietzsche's thinking that fuels his call for a new order of rank. In addressing "you" in particular who needs to decide whether to embrace the project of revaluation, Nietzsche's strategically does not present his ideas on caste, slavery and breeding in a systematic fashion. Rather, he experiments with different styles to appeal to his predestined readers across the boundaries of the nation, ethnicity and gender, recruiting them to become part of a community of re-evaluators positioned above the mass in terms of contempt and spiritual strength. As a master of rhetoric able to persuade readers across the left and right, Nietzsche's reception is instructive for studying the processes of canonization of social theories not as determined by their success in truthfully representing reality but rather in seducing and altering readers.

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[111] The ongoing influence of theories of suspicion would be in terms of the role of the social critic demystifying the invisible and hidden workings of ideology, false consciousness and misrecognition. These are often understood in the Marxist-Bourdieusian traditions. For a critique of the influence of the hermeneutics of suspicion on social and cultural inquiry, see Sedgwick (2003) and Latour (2004).

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