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Hillard, D. (2002). History as a dual process: Nietzsche on exchange and power. Retrieved from <http://krex.ksu.edu>

Published Version Information

Citation: Hillard, D. (2002). History as a dual process: Nietzsche on exchange and power. Nietzsche-Studien, 31, 40-56.

.

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Digital Object Identifier (DOI): doi: 10.1515/9783110170740.40

Publisher's Link: <http://www.degruyter.com>

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History As a Dual Process: Nietzsche on Exchange and Power

"[A]lle Begriffe, in denen sich ein ganzer Prozess semiotisch zusammenfasst, entziehen sich der Definition; definierbar ist nur Das, was keine Geschichte hat." (GM II 13). This, at least, according to Nietzsche's *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (1887). If we follow the logic of Nietzsche's statement and exclude historical occurrences from the realm of the definable, we find that we are left with either natural phenomena or machines as phenomena that can be determined and delimited. Historical occurrences, on the other hand, caught up in the fluidity of reinterpretations, memory, and interest, cannot be strictly defined. Yet to conceive of history at all, those natural, structural things that we *can* define must also be present; for without autonomous structures or natural phenomena all human experience would be pure movement and difference. It is necessary to have both a relatively constant, determinant aspect and a fluid, adaptable, indeterminate one.

For Nietzsche, culture's central *definable* element is the economical procedure of "exchange." In contrast to theses contending that Nietzsche was uninterested in economy, this paper argues that exchange is at the heart of Nietzsche's concept of historical transition. This concept consists of the interaction between two heterogeneous components: a formal determinate "exchange principle" that provides a template, that is, an interpretive framework for meaningful content; and the indeterminate element of "domination," through which a current interpretation replaces one previously in existence.

Readers have devoted much attention to Nietzsche's notion of the will to power. Within the context of an implied model of history, by concentrating on exchange, I will rather discuss the interplay between exchange and power-driven reinterpretations.¹ Critics have argued that

¹ I am not the first to define the question of power in Nietzsche's thought by focusing on the replacement of interpretation by domination, rather than on the metaphysical concept of an internal will that complements it. Gilles Deleuze emphasizes that both this *will* and "the relation of force to force, understood conceptually, is one of domination: when two forces are related one is dominant and the other is dominated." Deleuze, Gilles: Nietzsche

Nietzsche was indifferent if not hostile to economics;² my aim is not to comment on whether Nietzsche was ignorant of traditional economic discourses, so as to insert him into a history of economics. It is rather to show that Nietzsche *is* an economic thinker who uniquely articulates economy not as a discourse but as a structure that is used by discourses. I will point out the degree to which Nietzsche valorizes exchange and in doing so rehabilitate it from its secondary placement when compared with the aristocratic notion of the "gift." It will be seen that Nietzsche constructs—through exchange and domination—a two-part account for historical transitions. Exchange adds to the notion of domination and eradication by power a constant, regulative feature to all displays of human activity, including thought, interpretation, punishment, morality, justice, and ethics. Without exchange, the comparable stability of cultural institutions as well as their very emergence would be impossible. In this discussion, particular attention will be paid to Nietzsche's analysis of credit, debt, and guilt in *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (1887). The most far-reaching thesis in my paper is that Nietzsche's redemptive figure Zarathustra, as the promise of a messianic coming, far from bringing the end to an economy of debt, draws us into yet another form of indebtedness.

Alan D. Schrift has argued that Nietzsche's thought displays two economic models, one based on debts and obligations ("commodity"), the other centered on seemingly aristocratic notions of generosity and gift giving. In the aristocratic concept, "gifts can be given without expectation of return and debts can be forgiven without penalty or shame."³ Favoring the aristocratic economy, Schrift argues, Nietzsche denigrates its commodity counterpart due to its "crippling effects of indebtedness" evidenced in Nietzsche's account of "modern society's

and Philosophy. New York 1983, p. 51. Michel Foucault continues with this stress on domination. Foucault, Michel: Nietzsche, Genealogy, History. In: Bouchard, Donald (ed.): Language, Counter-Memory, Practice. Selected Essays and Interviews. Ithaca 1977, pp. 139-164. Walter Kaufmann asserted the key principle of power early on (1950), arguing that it afforded Nietzsche a unitary principle to which he could ascribe all of life and no longer have to rely on the dualism of the Apollonian and the Dionysian. My thesis of Nietzsche's two-part system of exchange and power implies that the earlier dual relationship gives way not to a unitary explain-all principle centered on power, but that it is replaced by this later dual structure. Kaufmann, Walter: Nietzsche. Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist. Princeton 1974, p. 179.

² Edward Andrew views Nietzsche essentially as an aesthete unaware of traditional economic discourse. Andrew, Edward: The Genealogy of Values. The Aesthetic Economy of Nietzsche and Proust. Lanham, London 1995.

³ Schrift, Alan D: Rethinking Exchange: Logics of the Gift in Cixous and Nietzsche. In: Philosophy Today Spring (1996) pp. 197-205, p. 198.

obligations to uphold the values of tradition."⁴ The figure of Nietzsche's Zarathustra, Schrift contends, embodies an economics of generosity, in which "great care and skill is required in order to prevent feelings of indebtedness in the recipients of one's generosity," in which the participant practices the "art" of gift-giving by accepting only under the condition that she is able to give.⁵ Schrift clearly valorizes the noble, generous economy over the commodity model, because it allows for forgetting and giving without regard for returns.

Yet the gift that Schrift finds in Nietzsche—revealed in Schrift's language of defensive and preventive action taken so as not to be indebted by a gift—is still an exchange. One accepts the gift; but only when one is in a position to give in order to prevent a feeling of indebtedness. This gift business is an exchange, with the only difference being that now its give-and-take structure is less determined, less prescribed, and, furthermore, a generous nobility's trappings have papered over the unforgiving logic of equivalents and exchange. Schrift also mentions a different, stranger, one might say, romantic notion of the gift, wherein its unique status derives from its capacity to interrupt and stand outside economy. Precisely this sort of gift, truly bestowed without any expectation of return and without burdening the beneficiary with a sense of debt, is the ideal gift. Such an ideal gift—be it at all possible—would be a pure event outside any economy and would momentarily disrupt the economy with which it might come into contact.⁶ In other words, this gift is not *economical* at all. The gift that appears to be true is a sublime, ethical event. It turns out then that the gift, even the Nietzschean gift, is *either* extra-economical, in which case it is a solely ethical moment, *or* economical, in which case, however, it is always a sub-genre within the category of exchange. In either of these cases we are left not with two models but with one model that can be reinterpreted again and again and that does not allow the *One* interpretation (including that of the gift) to prevail as the authentic gold standard by which all others can be judged: exchange.⁷

⁴ Schrift: Rethinking Exchange, Ebd., p. 200.

⁵ Schrift: Rethinking Exchange, loc. cit., p. 199.

⁶ Jacques Derrida has argued that the true, ideal gift is impossible. Derrida, Jacques: Given Time. Chicago 1992.

⁷ It is not that there is no difference between the procedure of the "gift-exchange" (to distinguish it from the "ideal" gift's sublime unrepresentability) and that of other exchanges. The gift-exchange that Schrift mentions is a return to Nietzsche's earliest asserted form of exchange, the privilege of those who have the right to exchange. It is the assertion and recognition of equality, even a "limited" one, between giver and recipient. It is as if to say, this relationship is worthy enough for a gift, and also should be *normalized* and *contained*, to a degree, through the gift-exchange; for all exchange normalizes and regulates.

A Thing and Its Use

In the second essay of his *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, "*Schuld*," "*schlechtes Gewissen*" und *Verwandtes*, Nietzsche makes a famous and famously decisive distinction between structure and interpretation, both essential for history:

dass nämlich die Ursache der Entstehung eines Dings und dessen schliessliche Nützlichkeit, dessen tatsächliche Verwendung und Einordnung in ein System von Zwecken toto coelo auseinander liegen; dass etwas Vorhandenes irgendwie Zu-Stande-Gekommenes immer wieder von einer ihm überlegenen Macht auf neue Absichten ausgelegt, neu in Beschlag genommen, zu einem neuen Nutzen umgebildet und umgerichtet wird; dass alles Geschehen in der organischen Welt ein Überwältigen, Herrwerden und dass wiederum alles Überwältigen und Herrwerden ein Neu-Interpretieren, ein Zurechtmachen ist, bei dem der bisherige "Sinn" und "Zweck" nothwendig verdunkelt oder ganz ausgelöscht werden muss. (GM II 12)

Nietzsche's central distinction is that between origin and use. Succinctly presenting his assumptions about history, Nietzsche distinguishes the "cause for a thing's emergence" and its "use." We do not simply receive from authorities, such as nature or god, a collection of tools that harmoniously corresponds to pre-established uses. Rather we observe phenomena, Nietzsche maintains, differentiating one thing from another; we make use of things and concepts depending on our aim for them. If the one interpretation comes to explain resources and forms of human interaction, the relationship between a thing and its use appears given and unquestionable. Historical events then, that is, cultural reinterpretations producing and modifying institutions, when seen to explain natural (or apparently natural) phenomena, take on the air of being natural themselves. For Nietzsche, on the contrary, the link between a thing and its interpretive use is arbitrary. Natural phenomena and basic forms of communication emerge in circumstances that we cannot always account for; their *uses* are of an entirely different order. There are disinterested structures and there are interested uses, and while the one cannot determine the other, together they make history.

Cultures clash, Nietzsche argues; they clash violently. In a confrontation, one interest overpowers and replaces a previous interpretation. The history of a thing then is not its

mechanistic description or a definition of how it operates, but the changing series of its various uses and users. Driving these changes are power struggles leading to the domination of one position over another: two powers confront each other with one emerging as the stronger (*überlegen*). This stronger power will then preside over and lend its stamp to the determination of a thing's new use, its new interpretation. In other words, power, the urge to dominate by means of a new interpretation, is the prime mover of history; the new interpretation symbolizes that a stronger power has asserted itself over a weaker one. According to Nietzsche, different uses of a thing do not coexist peacefully in the form of a social set of connections, rather they experience a period of profound conflict, after which one either obscures (*verdunkeln*) or obliterates (*auslöschen*) the other. Far from peaceful, far from a reactive and almost imperceptible shift in an autonomously functioning system, the transition from one use to another is violent and radical.

Exchange

As one of Nietzsche's two principles that make up human history, replacement by force accounts for paradigm shifts in cultural practices and the discourses with which they interact.

Exchange, on the other hand, is a more or less immutable structure:

Kauf und Verkauf, samt ihrem psychologischen Zubehör, sind älter als selbst die Anfänge irgend welcher gesellschaftlichen Organisationsformen und Verbände: aus der rudimentärsten Form des Personen-Rechts hat sich vielmehr das keimende Gefühl von Tausch, Vertrag, Schuld, Recht, Verpflichtung, Ausgleich erst auf die größten und anfänglichsten Gemeinschafts-Complexen (in deren Verhältnis zu ähnlichen Complexen) übertragen. (GM II 8)

Exchange, the seeds of money, precede "the beginnings" of society (*Gesellschaft*), of people coming together in any sort of organized and, in Max Weber's terms, rationalized fashion. In monetary relationships, which form the original scene of complex human interaction, people measured themselves against one another "for the first time." The first communal human was an entrepreneur. It is unimportant who originally occupied the respective positions of creditor or debtor. Wheeling and dealing, setting prices and making measurements: these, Nietzsche asserts,

were the original forms of thinking ("dass es in einem gewissem Sinne d a s Denken ist") (GM II 8). Exchange, the field of economic transaction, is the most primitive and long-lasting phenomenon that humans have interpreted and put to use, our most durable and most pervasive practice. First there is exchange then there is the culture of business partners. Indeed, the seeds of exchange, Nietzsche maintains, its "germinating sensation" ("das keimende Gefühl"), derive from the most primitive legal assertions, "the legal rights of persons." As early as 1878 with his *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, Nietzsche argues that "der Charakter des T a u s c h e s ist der anfängliche Charakter der Gerechtigkeit" (MA I 92). That is, "Gerechtigkeit ist also Vergeltung und Austausch unter der Voraussetzung einer ungefähr gleichen Machstellung" (MA I 92). For Nietzsche's primitive community, "I have a right" is manifested in "I trade, therefore I have a right." A person or a type of person—one who dominates—asserts a legal right; exchange is the birth of an ego both economic and legal, prior to their modern differentiation. There are those who have the legal right and the power to exchange and those who do not. In other words, this sensation of exchange instantiates a privilege and an obligation, a *restraint* in the face of broad *mobility*, two features that when combined practically define culture's possibility. Exchange plus its use produces law and justice. Simply put: exchange *is* culture.

The Dialectic of History

Nietzsche's model of history, to summarize, consists of two components. The one is what I call the formal "exchange principle" that permits the quantification, absorption, and discharge of obligations—a shifting movement allowing the reorganization of power and goods (material and cultural) while preserving or reestablishing stability. The other is power, that is, the capacity for eradicating uses, meanings, and interpretations through overwhelming force. Exchange is conservative and preservative, the application of which is completely malleable, while force is both creative and abysmally destructive. Ahistorical and, in itself, beyond interpretation, exchange persists as a natural, purely synchronic technology. It allows people and cultures to rid themselves of and to absorb material and immaterial resources while preserving the framework

within which this movement occurs. Domination, on the other hand—Nietzsche's explanation for change—brings about progressive movement. Such change symbolizes that one entity (group, class, individual) has forcefully replaced a previous interpretation. As Nietzsche argues about punishment, itself a manifestation of exchange, one must distinguish between two aspects: "einmal das relativ D a u e r h a f t e an ihr, den Brauch, den Akt, das 'Drama,' eine gewisse strenge Abfolge von Prozeduren, andererseits das F l ü s s i g e an ihr, den Sinn, den Zweck, die Erwartung, welche sich an die Ausführung solcher Prozeduren knüpft" (GM II 13). Only this "Abfolge" and its relative permanence can be accounted for, defined, and determined.⁸ Fluid power, the individual meanings forced onto the framework of exchange and their imagined sum conceived as history, eludes a definition. Exchange's technology can be an object of causally informed knowledge; its meaning, however, accomplished by power, remains an object of interpretation.

This interpretation is the field of battle, the interface, where the two principles—exchange and domination—coincide. This can be demonstrated once again by turning to punishment, Nietzsche's focus in the second part of *Zur Genealogie der Moral*. Punishment is itself already an interpretation, a use of exchange, a confluence of both power and the technology of interchangeable equivalents:

Strafe als Abzahlung des Schadens an den Geschädigten, in irgend einer Form (auch in der einer Affekt-Compensation). [...] Strafe als Furchteinflößen vor Denen, welche die Strafe bestimmen und exekutieren. Strafe als eine Art Ausgleich für die Vortheile, welche der Verbrecher bis dahin genossen hat [...] Strafe als ein Gedächtnissmachen, sei es für Den, der die Strafe erleidet — die sogenannte "Besserung", sei es für die Zeugen der Exekution. Strafe als Zahlung eines Honorars, ausbedungen Seitens der Macht, welche den Übelthäter vor den Ausschweifungen der Rache schützt. Strafe als Compromiss mit dem Naturzustand der Rache, sofern letzterer durch mächtige Geschlechter noch aufrecht erhalten und als Privilegium in Anspruch genommen wird. Strafe als Kriegserklärung und Kriegsmaassregal gegen einen Feind des Friedens, des Gesetztes, der Ordnung,

⁸ See Maudemarie Clark for a different reading of the durable procedure Nietzsche mentions. She contends the durable element of punishment is an agreement that physical suffering could function to pay off a debt. My position, on the other hand, is that punishment is *already* an interpretation of the durable procedure of exchange, the mobility of equal units. Clark, Maudemarie: Nietzsche's Immoralism and the Concept of Morality. In: Schacht, Richard (ed.): Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality. Berkeley 1994, pp. 15-34.

der Obrigkeit, den man als gefährlich für das Gemeinwesen, als vertragsbrüchig in Hinsicht auf dessen Voraussetzungen [...] bekämpft. (GM II 13).

More than half the entire list of punishments that Nietzsche cites consists of exchange relationships in which authorities, individuals, or communities do violence to compensate for a prior event.⁹ A few examples in his list amount to pure violence, the instillation of fear, and the cultic rites of suffering and sacrifice (itself an exchange). Yet the others are distinguished from crude revenge, Nietzsche observes, because they assume a basic system of equivalents and exchangeability, that is, a universe in which resources of both matter and affect are quantifiable and mobile. Discourses forcefully graft one use of exchange onto the previous one, in the process, either eradicating or concealing the previous interpretation.

The events that our textual and cultural memory name history, for Nietzsche, then, occur as the results of clashes and effective reinterpretations. Rather than meaningful occurrences fitting into a determined plan that explains them, rather than occurrences deriving from an origin or progressing toward a *telos*, history is the contingent establishment of new uses for already existing structures of exchange. According to *Zur Genealogie*, then, reinterpretations of the durable procedures of exchange occur through dramatic shifts. They do not come about in a hermeneutic, consensus-oriented dialog. They do not build up agonistic, communicative networks based on mutual observation and provocation in the manner of social systems.¹⁰ Developing in a continuous chain of signs ("fortgesetzte Zeichen-Kette"), interpretations, in contradistinction to the lateral movement of exchange, symbolize that one interest has overpowered and wiped out another.¹¹ To state this once again, genealogy, in Nietzsche's conception, is a series of replacements, the manner in which the will to power is manifested, a figure for the mechanism of change. History occurs by means of violent replacements that guide the modality of the permanent technology of exchange.

⁹ The problem of punishment—I propose—provokes Nietzsche's theory of exchange. Already in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* he argued that punishment as revenge is an exchange: "So gehört ursprünglich die Rache in den Bereich der Gerechtigkeit, sie ist ein Austausch. Ebenso die Dankbarkeit" (MA I 92).

¹⁰ See Luhmann, Niklas: *Beobachtungen der Moderne*. Opladen 1992.

¹¹ Foucault articulates something similar: "Humanity does not gradually progress from combat to combat until it arrives at universal reciprocity, where the rule of law finally replaces warfare; humanity installs each of its violences in a system of rules and thus proceeds from domination to domination." Foucault: Nietzsche, loc. cit., p. 151.

It follows then that exchange has been involved numerous times in important reinterpretations. While, as we have seen, it produces the primeval sense of legal subjectivity and justice, its most famous reinterpretation is glimpsed in Nietzsche's rhetorical question-as-thesis: "daß zum Beispiel jener moralische Hauptbegriff "Schuld" seine Herkunft aus dem sehr materialen Begriff "Schulden" genommen hat?" (GM II 4). The assertion is that cultures, in a transition that cannot possibly conceal the violence at their heart, have eradicated a previous notion of credit and exchange as a rank privilege, a "Personen-Recht," replacing it with an obligation. Both debts and moral guilt get organized through the same scheme of exchange. The language of moral conscience replaces that of material debts, occurring when culture transfers the mechanism of exchange from suffering as an equivalent compensation—the notion, "dass jeder Schaden irgend worin sein Äquivalent habe und wirklich abgezahlt werden könne" (GM II 4)—to suffering as a calculated punishment for a bad moral decision (or its mere consideration). To the argument that suffering has always been a consequence of moral freedom of choice, Nietzsche responds: ""der Verbrecher verdient Strafe, weil er hätte anders handeln können" ist thatsächlich eine überaus spät erreichte, ja raffinierte Form des menschlichen Urtheilens und Schliessens" (GM II 4).

Accordingly, the failure to pay a debt was historically punished in an effort to extract an amount of suffering equivalent to the original loan. No "inner suffering" was aimed at, and neither punisher nor punished interpreted the situation in terms of recriminating memory that stretched beyond the debt's repayment. Rather one felt one was dealing "mit einem unverantwortlichen Stück Verhängnis" (GM II 14), and the party who caused the damages looked upon the suffering with the same fatalism as when facing a natural calamity, "gegen den es keinen Kampf mehr giebt" (GM II 14). The institutionalized link between punishment and one's choice of action is, for Nietzsche, arbitrary, and this link's significance is seen in precisely this sort of self-recrimination. It helps to establish a reaction to punishment in which the punished individual turns inward, seeking to find the cause of pain within the self. Instead of looking to one's environment to neutralize the punishment, one neutralizes something in the self. The association between suffering and guilt constructs a subject that concedes its faults and agrees to work on itself to measure up to expectations about what it should be in general as a human. Nietzsche's hypothesis is that the basis of monetary exchange is at the heart of morality's emergence. Morality, on the other hand, is a reinterpretation—a wide-reaching one that has not only distorted the economic structure and mechanisms of exchange, wherever they might be, but

has also prevented us from reevaluating the role of conflict and our general natural inclinations (as well as hindering the future development of the Nietzschean type of human). Morality is a *style* of narrative or script, whereby events and feelings are not attributed to nature, chance, fate, external conflict, or divine intervention, but rather to the modalities of what appear to be our particular decisions. In this reinterpretation, the exchange principle receives a humanistic, narrational inscription of moral choice.

Modernity: the Era of Debt

There are, in Nietzsche's view, several reinterpretations of exchange's durable schematic structure, including the sense of indebtedness that the individual feels toward "society" (GM II 9), that the present generation feels toward its "ancestors" (GM II 19), and that a community feels toward a "deity" (GM II 21). All these interpretations amount to a field in which force and exchange engage and bring about institutions and discourses, including rank systems, debts, money, gods, religion, and rationalized societies themselves. Through domination one society replaces *exchange as financial debt* with *exchange as moral obligation*: without exchange and the possibility of making all things (material or affective) potentially equivalent and quantifiable into mobile units, such a reinterpretation would have been impossible.

Nietzsche's main concern with the current life of exchange is its modern form of constitutive debt. In *Zur Genealogie* credit and debt become the dominant commodity structures, effectively eclipsing the larger concern with the generality of exchange. A simple exchange can be concluded without a trace; debts and guilt prolong the conclusion. The partner in a basic exchange finishes a deal and is done with it; the participant in a debt situation is saddled with long-standing obligations, the nature of which she cannot come to terms with. Even more important for Nietzsche's concept of exchange is the way in which debts and guilt produce an adjustment and fashioning of the self. This self learns to calculate, weigh options and consequences, think in terms of means and ends, and adjust habits and actions in accordance with goals and expectations. It learns to become *rationalized*, what Weber described as the hallmark of modernity.¹² Debt, of course, extends and defers exchange. The emergence of the *modern* for Nietzsche's thinking is the *extension* of a simple exchange to systems of rationalized debt—e.g., gods, organized religion, ascetic and social structures, and social contracts.

¹² Weber, Max. *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*. Tübingen 1968, p. 578.

This affective-temporal extension of exchange has its origin, Nietzsche argues, in an incident that is the inception of a modern moment. Shying away from a biological, evolutionary explanation—while using its imagery to underscore the drama—Nietzsche claims that the emergence of "schlechtes Gewissen" from the technology of exchange was not a natural, gradual, evolutionary process (GM II 17). On the contrary, the precondition for the emergence of guilt was the violent, hostile domination of one weaker group by "eine Eroberer- und Herren-Rasse, welche, kriegerisch organisirt und mit der Kraft, zu organisiren, unbedenklich ihre furchtbaren Taten auf eine der Zahl nach vielleicht ungeheuer überlegene, aber noch gestaltlose, noch schweifende Bevölkerung legt" (GM II 17). This conquering community contained and restructured the weaker group, finally restricting its freedom. Far from metaphor, as one might be tempted to conclude, this community of marauders, Nietzsche asserts, *actually* existed; the clash that it brought about is a (theoretically) historically determinable event, perhaps even the event that made history possible.¹³ Such a shift amounts to the greatest change the human species ever had to reckon with—"jener Veränderung, als er sich endgültig in den Bann der Gesellschaft und des Friedens eingeschlossen fand" (GM II 16)—a change comparable to that which creatures underwent as they first took to land. The tools of the human world, that is, "die regulierenden unbewußt-sicherführenden Triebe," were replaced by those "auf Denken, Schliessen, Berechnen, Combiniren von Ursachen und Wirkungen reduziert" (GM II 16). However, and with the greatest of consequences, "hatten jene alten Instinkte nicht mit einem Male aufgehört, ihre Forderungen zu stellen!" (GM II 16). In other words, one community's terrifying, violent, and unpredictable domination of another redirected channels of communication and action. Yet the old drives still had to feel their effect, and if they could not turn outward to the world around this new self, they would be internalized: "Alle Instinkte, welche sich nicht nach außen entladen, wende n s i c h n a c h i n n e n—dies ist das, was ich die V e r i n n e r l i c h u n g des Menschen nenne" (GM II 16). For Nietzsche, it is as a result of such a posited event of domination that organized and stable societies first emerge, in which guilt and the debt that the individual feels toward the group as creditor is broadly instilled.

To achieve a subordination of these old instincts of the human, "auf denen bis dahin seine Kraft, Lust und Furchtbarkeit beruhte" (GM II 16), the proto-state organization, Nietzsche

¹³ It would have—in Nietzsche's account—made history possible in the sense that the inward turn that this encounter occasions is the logical precondition for the complexity of memory and consciousness, and the capacity for inscribing events with meaning that is history—history as the writing of history.

maintains, turned to punishment: "Die Feindschaft, die Grausamkeit, die Lust an der Verfolgung am Überfall, am Wechsel, an der Zerstörung — Alles das gegen die Inhaber solcher Instinkte sich wendet: das ist der Ursprung des "schlechten Gewissens"" (GM II 16). Lacking external enemies, humans turned on themselves. This had the result that under attack by the organizers of the first state apparatus, a different type of freedom emerges in the newly constituted self: a freedom made of security, made "latent," an inner freedom; the freedom to make the wrong choice and be held responsible for it, the freedom of conscience, the internalized master.

It has often been argued that Nietzsche denounces economy, exchange, and particularly their modern extension of debts, guilt, and bad conscience, diagnosing them as illness. However, Nietzsche's position toward economy and modern economic extensions is hardly so one-sided; rather it is ambivalent. As Nietzsche argues in his strange, gendered comparison—guilt is an illness "wie die Schwangerschaft," that is, one whose meaning in terms of illness/health will be constructed by the observer's perspective, an experience that has an undeniably productive dimension. Critics have overlooked the degree to which Nietzsche values a productive, creative, aesthetic in debt. We should then let there be no mistake: debt ("schlechtes Gewissen" and *Schuld*) is, he argues, perhaps the greatest human accomplishment. The ascetic priest, whose early practice best manifested the inward turn of "bad conscience," produced, more than anyone else, in an affirmative sense, World: "er gerade gehört zu den ganz grossen conservirenden und Ja-schaffenden Gewalten des Lebens..." (GM III 13). Moreover, gods, heroes, and rationalized society itself, which make human existence richer and more interesting, owe themselves to debts. There is then a caution against dismissing guilt, because "diese Lust, sich selbst als einem schweren widerstrebenden leidenden Stoffe eine Form zu geben" (GM II 18), is basically "dieselbe aktive Kraft, die in jenen Gewalt-Künstlern und Organisatoren grossartiger am Werke ist" (GM II 18). Forms of "bad conscience" have presided over the "birth" of critical reflection itself; they have "als der eigentliche Mutterschooss idealer und imaginativer Ereignisse auch eine Fülle von neuer befremdlicher Schönheit und Bejahung an's Licht gebracht und vielleicht überhaupt erst die Schönheit" (GM II 18).

Inflation

Though the economy of guilt and debt are, for Nietzsche, responsible for aesthetic phenomena and social complexity, in short, for civilization, they also cast a shadow over

experience. The preceding section dealt with the turn from externally oriented debts to their inwardly directed extension as the birth of modernity, detailing how this restriction of freedom gave rise to an inner world as well as the aesthetic. Here, the "inflated" development of debt to the point that it achieves a sublime status will be examined, as well as Nietzsche's proposed solution to bad conscience, its redirection to otherworldly inclinations. Nietzsche's solution however raises the question: does not this attempted redirection generate another, even more powerful sense of indebtedness?

Nietzsche argues that the ancient legal relationship of debtor to creditor is "once more" replaced through a dominant clash, interpreted into "das Verhältnis der Gegenwärtigen zu ihren Vorfahren" (GM II 19). This relationship of forbears to ancestors was initially a juridical obligation ("juristische Verpflichtung"), an extension of the rank privilege enjoyed by ruling classes—the privilege to make deals and responsibly assume debts. According to Nietzsche's historical narrative, in exchange for the heroic deeds of a tribe's founding ancestors, the forbears would repay their ancestors through sacrifices, festivals, and their own heroic achievements. Thus the forbears acknowledged a debt. While they paid off their installments on the debt, they received something precious in return: the aura of the tribal ancestor's powerful stature that continued, so that it managed "dem Geschlechte neue Vortheile und Vorschüsse seitens ihrer Kraft zu gewähren" (GM II 19). To a degree consistent with the wax and wane of the tribe's power or fortunes, the debt owed to the creditor (ancestors) either grew or diminished. Nietzsche invites his readers to follow the logic of this reinterpretation of exchange, briefly speculating that it is "the actual origin of gods" (GM II 19). This occurred as the ancestor's stature and aura grew to the point of becoming a deity. In other words, gods have their (possible) origins in debts and responsibilities. Still, for the forbears, both their gain and debts increased in times of wealth, decreased in times of hardship. Thus, for Nietzsche, these early debtors acknowledged a debt-system in which they could discharge their debts; they could keep up with their installment plan. Their creditors—heroes or gods—were the kind that could be compensated. This equivalence in stature and debt functioned as a sort of built in mechanism to cope with inflation and scarcity, or "hard times." So while the exchange principle's procedure remains constant, its use in terms of rank privilege is obscured by a later use as ancestral debt.

In the wake of this reinterpretation, Nietzsche argues, culture, as if obliterating one standing structure to use its materials in erecting a new one, eradicates debts to ancestral, heroic demigods, replacing them with the rationalized, nascent Christian god: "Die Herkunft des

christlichen Gottes, als des Maximal-Gottes, der bisher erreicht worden ist, hat deshalb auch das Maximum des Schuldgefühls auf Erden zur Erscheinung gebracht" (GM II 20). This new creditor—theologically or philosophically, the most powerful god imaginable, the *maximum*—brings with it not only a higher debt, but also the highest human sense of indebtedness imaginable. Medieval scholastic thinkers tried to show that human capacity for thought and imagination cannot present a power greater than that of the Christian god. With this god, it is impossible to think of any sort of offering or amount that could pay off the debt, which now achieves a sublime and sacred stature. Our capacity for imagination cannot represent the idea that we have of the debt; regardless what amount we can conceive of, our idea of this amount, commensurate with the power of the god, will exceed it.

"[J]etzt soll gerade die Aussicht auf eine Ablösung-ein-für-alle-Mal sich pessimistisch zuschliessen" (GM II 21). Our debts cannot be requited; such is Nietzsche's gloomy conclusion in *Zur Genealogie*. The Christian god's stature and his actions on our behalf, our redemption, result in the impossibility of paying off our debts. One can speak of "inflation" as the cost grows beyond the debtor's means, and the debt has been foreclosed. The most recent significant replacement of the exchange principle's prior interpretations is the arrival of a general state of indebtedness. Yet this is, Nietzsche contends, not just any other reinterpretation, for it exceeds, in scope and force, the previous understanding of guilt. We are not only faced with an incalculable sense of debt but also with its conclusions: repeating the movement of 'bad conscience,' we turn inward in a self-destructive gesture. Just as one group's historically determinable domination of another gave birth to bad conscience—by walling in the mobility of the individual, forcing it to direct activity *inward*—the Christian god, by refusing any attempts at paying off the exchange, binds the modern individual to an impossible repayment through an incessant and fundamental refusal to accept natural, universally human, often destructive, drives. For Nietzsche, the refusal is extended to everything characterizing and facilitating existence, which is then defined in negative terms—our mythological ancestor, "der nunmehr mit einem Fluche behaftet wird ("Adam", "Erbsünde", "Unfreiheit des Willens")," "die Natur, aus deren Schooss der Mensch entsteht und die nunmehr das böse Princip hineingelegt wird ("Verteufelung der Natur") oder das Dasein überhaupt, das als unwerth an sich übrig bleibt" (GM II 22). The institution of the Christian god tells us how dissatisfied we should be

with our condition, that the sexual act, which gives us life, is really a morally unclean process, that nature is evil, and that human origins are really a betrayal of the father. The self, as it is and in any way that it possibly could be, is unacceptable.

As a contrast to the Christian god and its relationship to the modern self in terms of a state of internalized indebtedness, Nietzsche praises the debtors of an earlier time, "als welche in der That ihren Urhebern, den Ahnherren, (Heroen, Göttern) alle die Eigenschaften mit Zins zurückgegeben haben, die inzwischen in ihnen selbst offenbar geworden sind, die v o r n e h m e n Eigenschaften" (GM II 19). Unlike those of an ideal, Hellenic past, modernity's creditors are of the kind that will not be paid back; and when debts cannot be discharged and forgotten, debtors blame themselves. Nietzsche uses ancient Greek tragedy to argue that, while the moderns locate the source of guilt in themselves, that is, in the debtor, the Greeks ascribed the source of the worst decisions, madness, evil, and cruel turns of events to their deities, thus using these gods, "gerade um sich das "schlechte Gewissen" vom Leibe zu halten," "den Menschen bis zu einem gewissen Grade auch im Schlimmen zu rechtfertigen" (GM II 23).

There is, Nietzsche argues, a calculated solution to this state of indebtedness and the internalized conflict between creditor and debtor. Just as asceticism and the desire for an otherworldly transcendence has directed human aggression inward toward the self, toward "seine natürlichen Hänge," it may be possible to invert this aggression, redirecting it toward "die u n n a t ü r l i c h e n Hänge, alle jene Aspirationen zum Jenseitigen, Sinnenwidrigen, Instiktwidrigen, Naturwidrigen, Thierwidrigen" (GM II 24). Rather than recriminate ourselves for natural inclinations, we should turn against desires for redemption, transcendence, and asceticism—those forces from *outside* that restrict our natural freedom, which are products of this very restriction. Nietzsche does not propose that we simply wipe out *schlechtes Gewissen* altogether (this is impossible), but rather that we redirect it and with it the source of our indebtedness. In the language of Freud, we might bind it to or "cathect" it with the desire for redemption. Nature, that is to say, "World as it is," would become our creditor, leaving us with debts that we presumably could repay, while everything associated with the culture of asceticism

and redemption—the command to judge life according to otherworldly norms—would replace natural instincts as the object of blame and aggression. While Nietzsche does not offer details on how this could be achieved or state whether this redirection of aggression is more than a *Gedankenexperiment*, this is his position.

What Nietzsche does *not* advocate as the means for inverting "bad conscience" and attaining any redirection of aggression are limited, micro-critiques against the desire for an otherworldly source with which to judge the world. He does not advocate *modest* experiments at finding other ways to conceptualize the outside of natural inclinations, that is, the divine and the supersensible. He does not contend that we have, in effect, *already* achieved this inversion, and all that is left is for us to announce it, that we, through a reasoned process of discourse, discussion, and informational exchange, have now merely to *accept* our contingent, natural state and behave as if the supersensible to which we have felt indebted is sectioned off and confined to its proper, harmless sphere. Indeed, Nietzsche does not advocate micro-critiques, playful experimentation, or a vigorously argued acceptance.

Instead, to achieve the inversion that Nietzsche calls for and to reinterpret exchange once again he turns to something much less nuanced, less theoretically complex, and completely untouched by postmodern wariness about grand ambitions: a reinterpretation through dominant force. An exertion of power is necessary because we require something and someone entirely different, someone from outside the current culture to overcome the modern form of indebtedness. This someone would be a figure of power: "Es bedürfte zu jenem Ziele einer andren Art Geister, als gerade in diesem Zeitalter wahrscheinlich sind: Geister, durch Kriege und Siege gekräftigt, denen die Eroberung, das Abenteuer, die Gefahr, der Schmerz sogar zum Bedürfniss geworden ist" (GM II 24). While such a culture is not possible today, it will, Nietzsche contends, come and obliterate current interpretations of obligation and deity: "Aber irgendwann, in einer stärkeren Zeit, als diese morsche, selbstbezweiflerische Gegenwart ist,

muss er uns doch kommen, der erlösende Mensch" (GM II 24). Someday a second (and last?) redeemer will come to redeem us from our current and indebted state of redemption.¹⁴

Nietzsche then advocates emancipation from our indebtedness to redemption. Yet his plan for a redemption from redemption can be seen as a further instance of indebtedness, yet another source of "bad conscience." Nietzsche's vision of the ideal redeemer would be one more creditor whose failure to materialize, arrive, and deliver us to the salvation of our natural inclinations would become a reason for us to turn inward yet again with bad conscience and further accuse ourselves for having failed to witness his arrival. The Zarathustrian figure that, for Nietzsche, leads us to an acceptance of our natural inclinations—insofar as he does not come—also prevents us from accepting the current historical situation as a framework from which to propose imaginative and experimental counter-movements to bad conscience. The deferred and hoped for arrival of the true redeemer is a debt, up to which we cannot measure; for the creditor never arrives on the scene to accept his pay. This messiah gets us out of one irresolvable debt only to plunge us into another. And what is a future "Erlöser" if not a creditor? Nietzsche's redeemer is the future as debt, a future that we never achieve, and when we fall short of it and its redeemer, we blame ourselves. It furthermore conflicts with Nietzsche's law of reinterpretation and history, which asserts a *continuous* and *arbitrary* chain of replacement: "Damit ein Heiligthum aufgerichtet werden kann, muss ein Heiligthum zerbrochen werden" (GM II 24). In other words, with the hope of a coming redeemer, Nietzsche's text forgets its insights into the nature of historical reinterpretations. This is because in order for each *use* of exchange's definable procedure to be distinct from that *procedure*—Nietzsche's position—that specific use must not be able to transform the procedure into a determined and fated nature, which a narrative of redemption accomplishes. The redeemer would be the end of history, turning all previous reinterpretations into mere preludes to this final coming. The longing for a

¹⁴ Clark argues that the best way to view this option for overcoming the link of 'bad conscience' with natural inclinations is through the acceptance of Nietzsche's notion of 'eternal recurrence.' Either way—the acceptance of the eternal recurrence as a figure of thought or the coming of a new age—both require a transcendence of the world's here and now. Clark, Maudemarie: Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy. Cambridge 1990.

messiah to inaugurate a heroic age and a powerful obliteration of the current state of indebtedness—consistent with the logic of all messianic arrivals—contains a final prescription against further change and reinterpretations. Though they are culture's modality and mechanism for transformation, exchange and power, as Nietzsche articulates them, would, in the end, reproduce the state of indebtedness.

Like a physician, who accepts the diagnosis but disputes the proposed curative, one could, it might seem, acknowledge the truth of bad conscience yet reject Nietzsche's proposed solution and its narrative of redemption. A different solution could be sought. One evoking either a liberal agenda of inclusive politics or a program of self-experimentation could seemingly be brought to bear on the problem.¹⁵ However, such a solution is starkly incompatible with the heroic yearning—found in Nietzsche's writings—for an era of redemption from modernity's pathologies, a yearning that is in large part responsible for Nietzsche's reproachful critique of bad conscience, guilt, and an enduring state of indebtedness. In other words, Nietzsche's invention (or identification) of bad conscience is motivated by and inextricable from the desire for the aesthetic transfiguration of current society, located in his figure of the redeemer. This desire is hostile to and inconsistent with modern liberal democratic politics, as we are accustomed to define them. To put it yet another way, the very solution that Nietzsche proposes—radical, messianic transfiguration—contains and delimits, one might even say, is a precondition for, the description of bad conscience itself. Thus any attempt to fold Nietzsche comfortably into programs of liberal style democracy runs aground on the uncompromisingly messianic and destructive feature of his texts.

¹⁵ Such a different curative has been proposed by William Connolly. Connolly interprets Nietzsche's critique of "bad conscience" as a plea that people accept what cannot be recast in the image of a societal model, accept one's parents, sexual orientation, inclinations, or chastity. He finds these adjustments in such areas as diet, exercise, reading habits, and relationships. Like Connolly, Nietzsche is concerned with acceptance of contingency and self-construction. But Nietzsche emphasizes our general "natürlicherer[r] Ausweg," while Connolly views acceptance in regards to particular aspects of the self, which often seem to amount to affirming particular constructed identities reducible to the now familiar oppositions (e.g., "gay"/"straight"). Furthermore, Nietzsche's concept of instinct includes animosity, the pleasure of persecution and destruction, which he does not treat as sick by-products of repression. Such drives resist the social order and the imposed moral standards from without and thoroughly contradict an attempt to reconfigure natural inclinations toward domination into a liberal democratic contingency that we should accept. Connolly, *William Political Theory and Modernity*. Oxford, New York 1988.

However, it need not be an all or nothing predicament; Nietzsche's texts can exert other effects on his readers. There should be no mistake: Nietzsche will continue to cause perturbations in our models for conceiving the world. His thesis that history constitutes the interface of power-driven interpretations and exchange strips away our naiveté about the way in which moral prescriptions have emerged. We are then compelled to pay attention both to how different agents, languages, and concerns struggle for relative domination, and how exchange permits lateral mobility through the curious and thoroughly modern notion that material and affect can be not only quantifiable but also exchangeable. Exchange provides a necessary illusion of stability, balance of power, and equivalence in a world in which twentieth-century physics has confirmed Nietzsche's insights into reality's perspectival and transient structure. His arguments, that history is a process in which cultures frame human practices by generating new institutions, that this process does not allow us to conflate the "reinterpretation" with the "practice reinterpreted" force us to see history itself as cultural product open to contingent and complex turns.

Yet no intellectual gain is made by "repairing" Nietzsche's thought for our own heterogeneous purposes, as if it were a piece of machinery that we could remove from its singular historical situatedness and install it willy-nilly into a project of self-help or inclusive, liberal democratic identity politics. It follows then that future critics who aim to respond to and counter the recrimination and the destruction of the self for its natural drives (a reinterpretation of exchange) may look not to political inclusion or a consumer-oriented refashioning of our individual identities. Instead, they may look to experiments and possibilities within aesthetic or critical production and participation, that is, in the creative production of new creditors or "deities"—a production that, while it takes pleasure in aesthetic possibilities, does not lose sight of the artifice and playfulness involved in the endeavor. Not a ground on which to erect structures that contradict their basis, the role of Nietzsche's thought in our reflections, which take place in contexts heterogeneous to his, is something subtly yet crucially different: his texts are catalysts for our thoughtful and literary experiments.

