# The Nietzschean Self

## *Moral Psychology, Agency, and the Unconscious*

Paul Katsafanas

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# 1

# Introduction

## 1.1 Psychology as the Path to the Fundamental Problems

Near the beginning of *Beyond Good and Evil,* Nietzsche writes, "psychology shall again be recognized as the queen of the sciences." Psychology, he continues, "is once again the path to the fundamental problems" (BGE 23). These intriguing remarks about the status of psychology raise a number of questions. What are these "fundamental problems" that psychology helps us to answer? How exactly does psychology bear on philosophy?

The recurring themes in Nietzsche's work give us a hint. His texts are centrally concerned with topics in ethics: he wants to understand how ethical claims are justified, how evaluative and normative claims structure human life, what possibilities and dangers lurk in them, and, more generally, what the possibilities for human flourishing are. How might psychology be relevant for these problems?

There is a long tradition in philosophy, present from the time of the Greeks but in eclipse in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which maintains that understanding human flourishing either requires or just consists in understanding human nature. The tradition further maintains that the central task of ethics is to specify what it is to flourish, to live well. If we want to understand morality—if we want to answer the kinds of questions that Nietzsche's texts address—then we must start with an account of human nature. Human nature, the good life, and goodness more generally are inextricably intertwined, and we won't understand one without the others.

This tradition encompasses much of ancient ethical theory. Plato and Aristotle clearly endorse it. It is by investigating the tripartite structure of the soul, Plato thinks, that we arrive at an account of the good life. And it is by examining the distinctive function of human beings that we uncover facts about what it is to live well, claims Aristotle. The British sentimentalist tradition does the same. Shaftesbury, Hutchenson, and Hume all agree that other-directed emotions are the basis on which morality rests, and, accordingly, they enjoin us to study human nature. For example, Hume says his approach to morality will be to "regard human nature as a subject of speculation; and with a narrow scrutiny examine it, in order to find those principles, which regulate our understanding, excite our sentiments, and make us approve or blame any particular

object, action, or behavior" (Hume 1777/1983, 6). In all of these thinkers, we have a specification of human nature which feeds into an articulation of an ethical theory.

Nietzsche is very much in this tradition: he hopes to arrive at an accurate picture of human nature and use it to specify a conception of human flourishing.[1] So psychology has an obvious relevance: in specifying a conception of human nature, we just are doing philosophical psychology.

Why, though, does Nietzsche say that psychology shall *once again* be the path to the fundamental problems? This suggests that although psychology *used to* be viewed as a path to the fundamental problems, it no longer is. Nietzsche has two reasons for suspecting this. First, he sees psychology as pressed into the service of morality. As he puts it, "if one would explain how the most abstruse metaphysical claims of a philosopher really came about, it is always well (and wise) to ask first: at what morality does all this (does *he*) aim?" (BGE 6). He continues, "All psychology so far has got stuck in moral prejudices and fears; it has not dared to descend into the depths" (BGE 23). So what's needed is greater honesty about human psychology: rather than letting our convictions and intuitions about morality shape our reflections on human nature, we should aspire to an unprejudiced account, letting it take us where it will. If it turns out that some of our moral beliefs cannot be sustained in light of this inquiry, so much the worse for these moral beliefs.

Second, and more controversially, Nietzsche sees eighteenth- and nineteenth-century philosophers as abandoning this quest to anchor morality in an account of human nature. Plato, Aristotle, and the British sentimentalists erred, Nietzsche thinks, because they had inadequate, morality-laden conceptions of human nature. But Kant and Bentham, he thinks, are far worse—they abandon the very aspiration to let accounts of human nature guide their ethical reflections. Kant writes:

> The basis of [moral] obligation must not be sought in the nature of man, or in the circumstances in the world in which he is placed, but *a priori* simply in the conception of pure reason . . . Thus not only are moral laws with their principles essentially distinguished from every other kind of practical knowledge in which there is anything empirical, but all moral philosophy rests wholly on its pure part. When applied to man, it does not borrow the least thing from the knowledge of man himself (anthropology), but gives laws *a priori* to him as a rational being. (*Groundwork* 4:389)

Barbara Herman explains Kant's point as follows: "morality requires an a priori foundation that can only be had in the principles of pure practical reason: the Moral Law. Because the Moral Law applies to human beings with necessity and so independently of contingent interests, the ground of obligation must 'be sought a priori solely in the concepts of pure reason' (G 389)" (Herman 1993, 232). In Kant, so interpreted, we

[1] There is an important complication, which I'll address in the following chapters: Nietzsche takes certain aspects of human nature to be historically fluid. Part of his project is revealing ways in which apparently immutable aspects of human nature are, in fact, local and contingent.

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abandon any attempt to base ethical claims in facts about human nature.[2] Instead, ethical claims are derived a priori from a conception of rationality or freedom.

This approach has been extremely influential. Many contemporary philosophers argue that ethical claims cannot have an empirical basis. For example, Michael Smith writes, "It is agreed on nearly all sides that moral knowledge is relatively a priori, at least in the following sense: if you equip people with a full description of the circumstances in which someone acts, then they can figure out whether the person acted rightly or wrongly just by thinking about the case at hand" (Smith 2004, 203). And Russ Shafer-Landau writes, "I think we must admit that ethical evidence is different in kind from the sort we find in the natural sciences. Provided we are entitled to trust our senses, scientists can rely on them to supply evidence to test a wide array of hypotheses. Ethics cannot rely on sense evidence in the same way, for any moral theory is perfectly compatible with such evidence" (Shafer-Landau 2003, 112). Although Smith and Shafer-Landau present these assertions as good common sense, in fact these claims rest on the assumption that ethics is unconstrained by facts about human nature; they presume, in other words, that Plato, Aristotle, and the sentimentalists are wrong.

Even when philosophers don't go to the extreme of denying the relevance of human nature, they do tend to ignore it. Many contemporary approaches to ethics take the form of systematizing intuitions about moral philosophy (e.g., Kamm 1993), or determining what claims we can reasonably reject (e.g., Scanlon 2000), or examining purportedly irreducible normative truths (e.g., Shafer-Landau 2003, Parfit 2011). For example, Kamm characterizes her method of doing moral philosophy as follows: she "present[s] hypothetical cases for consideration and seek[s] judgments about what may and may not be done in them" (Kamm 1993, 7). She then attempts "to construct more general principles from these data" (1993, 8). Starting with these intuitions about particular cases is "appropriate to ethics because ours is an a priori, not an empirical investigation" (1993, 8). Parfit claims that "there is a deep distinction between all natural facts and irreducibly normative reason-involving facts" (Parfit 2011, 12), which, if true, would justify our setting aside investigations into human nature. And Shafer-Landau concurs, writing "there are genuine features of our world that remain forever outside the purview of the natural sciences. Moral facts are such features . . . They tell us what we *ought* to do; how we *should* behave; what is *worth* pursuing; what *reasons* we

[2] I say "so interpreted" because there is another way of reading Kant that places him squarely in the tradition of Plato, Aristotle, and other theorists of human nature. After all, Kant does claim on three occasions that the most fundamental question of philosophy is "What is the human being?" For a reading that focuses on this aspect of Kant's theory, see for example Louden (2011). And, of course, Kant does have an interest in human nature: he did, after all, write the *Anthropology* and give lectures on anthropology every year from 1772 to 1796. But he treats this as separate from moral philosophy proper: as he puts it in the *Groundwork*, the "empirical part" of moral philosophy is anthropology, which deals with "laws of the human being's will insofar as it is affected by nature" (*Groundwork* 4:387–8). In other words, anthropology studies how human beings actually are, which is distinguished from moral philosophy, which studies how they should be.

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have; what is *justifiable* and what is not. There is no science that can inform us of such things" (Shafer-Landau 2003, 4).

In asking us to make psychology "once again" the path to the fundamental problems, Nietzsche eschews these kinds of strategy. Rather than trying to directly discern reasons, duties, prohibitions, and so forth, there's a tradition of thinking that ethics aspires to specify the good life. Understanding the good life for human beings requires understanding what we are. And this, in turn, requires philosophical psychology.

Regardless of whether Nietzsche is correct that moral philosophers ignore human nature or, perhaps less controversially, that their reflections on human nature are misled by their moral commitments, his approach is tempting: Who can deny that an unprejudiced, accurate account of human nature is a worthy object of pursuit? Even if such an account doesn't just by itself *answer* the fundamental problems of ethics, it will be a significant step in that direction.

The task of this book is to explicate and assess Nietzsche's account of human nature. In analyzing human nature, Nietzsche addresses a host of topics that are today grouped under the rubric of *moral psychology*. Put simply, moral psychology is the study of human nature, especially the aspects of human nature that are relevant for assessing the justificatory status of normative claims and determining what happens when people act on the basis of these claims. Human beings seem to be capable of a type of agency that, though perhaps not unique to our species, is at least quite rarified: we can self-consciously reflect on the considerations in favor of various courses of action, consider how these courses of action relate to the values, commitments, and projects that we embrace, and—so it seems—actuate ourselves on the basis of these self-conscious thoughts. As Parfit puts it, "we are the animals that can understand and respond to reasons. These abilities have given us great knowledge, and power to control the future of life on Earth" (Parfit 2011, 31). Moral psychology investigates the processes and capacities involved in this kind of action. Thus, it treats a set of interconnected topics. I'll mention six central ones:

(1) *Reflective vs. unreflective action*: in light of the fact that some human action involves the deployment of self-conscious thought and deliberation, whereas other action does not, we can ask whether there is a significant difference between reflective and unreflective action. Is reflection merely superadded to a stream of behavior, or does it make a philosophically significant difference?
(2) *The action/mere behavior distinction*: relatedly, might there be a significant distinction between genuine or full-fledged action and its lesser relative, mere behavior? For example, do we want to draw a distinction between a case in which, without quite realizing it, my envy of Claire leads me to be a bit short with her, and a case in which I deliberately and self-consciously decide to be rude to Claire?
(3) *Valuing and making evaluative judgments*: How do evaluative judgments manifest themselves and impact actions? More generally, what's involved in having a value? Does valuing something differ from merely desiring it, and if so how?
(4) *Motivation*: more generally, we need to investigate the structure of human motivation: How do drives, desires, urges, whims, emotions, feelings,

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thoughts, habits, character traits, and so on interact in the production of action?

(5) *Freedom*: What sense can be given to the notion of freedom or autonomy? Although it seems to us that we are free to determine our actions via choice, this raises a host of philosophical difficulties. Is there a coherent conception of freedom?

(6) *Responsibility*: we typically distinguish between events for which we are responsible and those for which we are not. How is this distinction to be drawn? Does it line up with any of the aforementioned distinctions? (For example, some philosophers think that the fact that we determine some actions via choice makes us responsible for our actions in a way that the squirrel is not responsible for its actions. Might that be correct?)

These are just the topics that occupy central positions in Nietzsche's texts. He is pervasively concerned with reflection's role in action,[3] the genuine action/mere behavior distinction,[4] the nature of evaluative judgment,[5] the structure of human motivation,[6]

[3] Nietzsche critiques our common-sense idea that self-conscious deliberation plays a crucial role in making our actions what they are, writing that an agent who self-consciously deliberates about what to do is still "secretly guided and channeled" by his non-conscious drives and motives (BGE 3). In addition, he claims that whenever an agent steps back from and reflects upon a motive, the agent's "intellect is only the blind instrument of another drive" (D 109). Thus, "everything about [an action] that can be seen, known, 'conscious,' still belongs to its surface and skin—which, like every skin, betrays something but conceals even more" (BGE 32).

[4] "'I have no idea what I am doing! I have no idea what I ought to do!'—You are right, but be sure of this: you are being done! [*du wirst gethan!*] at every moment! Mankind has in all ages confused the active and the passive: it is their everlasting grammatical blunder" (D 120). "Nothing is rarer than a personal action. A class, a rank, an environment, an accident—everything expresses itself sooner in a work or a deed, than a 'person'" [*Alles drückt sich eher noch in einem Werke oder Thun aus, als eine „Person"*.]" (KSA 12:10[59]).

[5] "It is clear that moral feelings are transmitted in this way: children observe in adults inclinations for and aversions to certain actions and, as born apes, imitate these inclinations and aversions; in later life they find themselves full of these acquired and well-exercised affects and consider it only decent to try to account for and justify them" (D 34). "You still carry around the valuations of things that originate in the passions and loves of former centuries!" (GS 57). "All experiences are moral experiences, even in the realm of sense-perception" (GS 114). "Your judgment, 'this is right' has a prehistory in your drives, inclinations, aversions, experiences, and what you have failed to experience; you have to ask, 'how did it emerge there?' and then also, 'what is really compelling me to listen to it?'" (GS 335). "Moralities are also merely a sign-language of the affects" (BGE 187). "Which group of sensations [*Empfindungen*] is aroused, expresses itself, and issues commands in a soul most quickly, is decisive for the whole order of rank of its values and ultimately determines its table of goods. The values of a human being betray something of the *structure* of his soul and where it finds its conditions of life, its true need" (BGE 268).

[6] "However far a man may go in self-knowledge, nothing however can be more incomplete than his image of the totality of drives which constitute his being. He can scarcely name even the cruder ones: their number and strength, their ebb and flood, their play and counterplay among one another, and above all the laws of their nutriment remain wholly unknown to him" (D 119). A drive "erupts from time to time as reason and passion of mind; it is then surrounded by a resplendent retinue of reasons and tries with all its might to make us forget that fundamentally it is drive, instinct, stupidity, lack of reasons" (GS 1). "People are accustomed to regarding the goal (purposes, volitions, etc.) as the *driving force,* in keeping with a very ancient error; but it is merely the *directing force*—one has mistaken the helmsman for the steam" (GS 360). "The error of false causality ... We believe that we are the cause of our own will ... Nor did we doubt that all the antecedents of our willing, its causes, could be found within our own consciousness or in our personal 'motives' ... But today ... we no longer believe any of this is true. The 'inner world' is full of phantoms and illusions: the will is one of them. The will no longer moves anything, hence does not explain anything—it merely accompanies events; it can even be absent" (TI VI.3).

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the possibility of freedom,[7] and the nature of responsibility.[8] So, when Nietzsche says that psychology is again the path to the fundamental problems, a large part of what he has in mind is that it will reorient our approach to these topics. Moreover, this account of agency will feed into our account of ethics. An ethic directed at self-conscious, free, autonomous beings will be different than one aimed at benighted creatures buffeted about by forces they neither control nor understand.

My task in this book will be to uncover Nietzsche's moral psychology. In other words, I will explicate Nietzsche's analysis of the human self. I attempt a comprehensive account of his theory, treating his distinction between conscious and unconscious mental events, the nature of a type of motivational state that Nietzsche calls the "drive" (*Trieb* or *Instinkt*), the connection between drives, desires, affects, and values, an account of willing, a notion of unity of the self, the relation of the self to its social and historical context, and an account of Nietzschean freedom.

It used to be fashionable to claim that Nietzsche eschews theoretical accounts of these topics. Nietzsche's texts can give the impression that he is a brilliant critic who shies away from providing any positive proposals of his own. After all, the bulk of Nietzsche's remarks about these topics are negative. He spends a great deal of time critiquing other philosophers' accounts of agency, value, willing, and self-consciousness. When he makes positive suggestions about what should replace them, these remarks tend to be scattered, tentative, and fragmentary. Not only that: at times his positive proposals seem overtly and unabashedly contradictory, as when he claims—in the course of several pages—that there is no such thing as a will and then proceeds to give an account of the will,[9] or when he inveighs against the very idea of freedom and then offers an account of freedom.[10]

[7] "The *causa sui* is the best self-contradiction that has been conceived so far . . . Suppose someone were thus to see through the boorish simplicity of this celebrated concept of "free will" and put it out of his head altogether, I beg of him to carry his "enlightenment" a step further, and also put out of his head the contrary of this monstrous conception of "free will": I mean "unfree will," which amounts to a misuse of cause and effect . . . The "unfree will" is mythology; in real life it is only a matter of *strong* and *weak* wills" (BGE 21). And yet Nietzsche goes on to offer his own account of freedom, claiming that we can attain a state of being "sovereign" or "autonomous" individuals. Such an individual is distinguished by the fact that he "has his own independent, protracted will" (GM II.2). In a section titled, "my conception of freedom," he claims that freedom is measured "according to the resistance which must be overcome" by an individual (TI IX.38).

[8] "Today we no longer have any pity for the concept of 'free will': we know only too well what it really is—the foulest of all theologians' artifices, aimed at making mankind 'responsible' in their sense . . . the doctrine of the will has been invented essentially for the purpose of punishment, that is, because one wanted to impute guilt" (TI VI.7)

[9] In particular, he writes, "The 'inner world' is full of phantoms and illusions: the will is one of them. The will no longer moves anything, hence does not explain anything—it merely accompanies events; it can even be absent" (TI VI.3). A few pages later, he identifies willing with the capacity "not to react at once to a stimulus, but to gain control of all the inhibiting, excluding instincts . . . the essential feature is precisely not to 'will', to be able to suspend decision. All unspirituality, all vulgar commonness, depend on an inability to resist a stimulus: one must react, one follows every impulse" (TI VIII.6).

[10] In BGE 21, he claims that (libertarian) freedom is "the best self-contradiction that has been conceived so far, it is a sort of rape and perversion of logic." In GM II.2, he speaks of the "sovereign," "autonomous" individual; in TI IX.38, entitled "my conception of freedom," Nietzsche ties freedom to power.

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A central contention of this book is that these appearances are deceptive. If we look closely at Nietzsche's remarks on moral psychology, we can uncover a positive account that is both insightful and challenging. An interpretive obstacle, though, and one that I think is responsible for some interpreters' belief that Nietzsche lacks any positive account of moral psychology, is that Nietzsche's account is *systematic.* Considered in isolation, Nietzsche's remarks on motivation, reflection, the will, and so on can seem scattered, arbitrary, undefended, and indeed indefensible. However, I show that there is a way of piecing them together into a coherent and well-supported account.

I am well aware that attributing a "system" to Nietzsche is bound to raise some objections. Isn't Nietzsche the anti-systematic thinker par excellence? After all, he does write, "I mistrust all systematizers. The will to a system is a lack of integrity" (TI I.26). But here, as elsewhere, we have to be careful to avoid hasty interpretations that proceed from assuming that our everyday associations with terms such as "system" match Nietzsche's usage. As Bernard Reginster has pointed out, when Nietzsche makes this claim, he has in mind a quite specific sense of "system" (Reginster 2006, 3). Nietzsche vehemently opposes the kind of system-building in philosophy that reaches its apogee in the nineteenth century, with figures such as Fichte, Hegel, and Schelling. This is the post-Kantian aspiration to develop an all-encompassing account of metaphysics, epistemology, logic, and ethics by deducing or deriving it from a single starting point (for example, in Fichte we allegedly get all of this content merely from the "I=I"). Nietzsche rejects *this kind* of systematic philosophy. But what he does not reject, I hope to demonstrate, is sustained inquiry into a connected set of topics.

Indeed, I think Nietzsche's account is systematic in precisely this sense: his accounts of the conscious/unconscious distinction, human motivation, the will, agency, self, and freedom are inextricably intertwined. We cannot fully understand these accounts in isolation from one another. If we attempt to do so—if, for example, we attempt to understand Nietzsche's model of willing without appreciating his drive psychology and his account of unity of the self—then we will end up with a hodgepodge of dubious and seemingly inconsistent assertions. Whereas if we see how his account of willing relies on a certain understanding of the way in which drives impact reflective thought, the model of willing becomes persuasive, insightful, and well supported.

In short: Nietzsche's account of consciousness is linked to his drive psychology, which has ramifications for his models of the will, choice, and action; this, in turn, leads him to rethink the nature of the self and freedom. My goal is to untangle these threads, revealing the force of Nietzsche's account and critically assessing its philosophical import.

## 1.2 Competing Accounts of Moral Psychology

Of course, Nietzsche isn't the only philosopher who has offered sustained reflections on moral psychology. The contemporary literature on moral psychology is largely

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driven by three camps: those inspired by Kant, Hume, and Aristotle. Each of these theories is highly complex, but each is animated by a set of central commitments that can be stated rather succinctly. The Kantian presents a picture of self-conscious agents reflecting on their affective states and rational principles, determining themselves to action by self-consciously embracing certain principles of choice. Actuation by rational principle is treated as paradigmatic, with motivation by desire and affect analyzed as departures from the ideal. The Humean sees the mind in terms of two distinct faculties, Passion and Reason: passion names all the mental states that are motivationally efficacious but not rationally assessable, whereas reason picks out all mental states that are motivationally inert but rationally assessable. This dichotomy is thought to be exhaustive, and we are led to a picture of agents as driven by motives that are assessable only in instrumental fashion. The Aristotelian wants a richer psychological vocabulary, which appeals not only to desire and reason, but also to character traits, emotions, perceptual saliences, and so forth. Using these materials, the Aristotelian endeavors to develop a notion of human flourishing that ties flourishing to the possession of certain character traits, the virtues.

These two-sentence descriptions obviously don't capture the nuances of Kantian, Humean, and Aristotelian views. That will wait for later chapters. What I want to do here is just give some preliminary indication of the way in which Nietzsche departs from these received views.

First, consider the psychological realism of Nietzsche's theory as compared with its competitors. I'll highlight a few features. We can start with the conscious/unconscious divide. Humeans are happy to speak of tacit, unnoticed, or even unconscious beliefs and desires (see, for example, Pettit and Smith 1990). Aristotelians can join them in this, relying on the presence of unconscious motivations (though these are often taken as pernicious or to be overcome; for one example, see Hursthouse 1999, 115–16). And Kant himself acknowledges the vast expanses of our minds that remain unconscious, writing:

> The field of sensuous intuitions and sensations of which we are not conscious, even though we can undoubtedly conclude that we have them, that is obscure representations in the human being (and also in animals) is immense. Clear representations, on the other hand, contain only infinitely few points of this field which lie open to consciousness; so that as it were only a few places on the vast map of our mind are illuminated. (*Anthropology* 7:135)

So the problem is not that Aristotelians, Humeans, and Kantians deny the existence of unconscious states and processes. They clearly do not. The problem is that they have inadequate accounts of what these unconscious states and processes are. The unconscious is treated as exactly analogous to the conscious, only hidden or obscured. But, I'll argue in the following chapters, that won't do. Unconscious processes have a different structure than conscious processes and are regulated in different ways. They interact with the conscious not just by providing a repository of additional beliefs, desires, and emotions, but by structuring, influencing, and constraining the conscious.

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The familiar moral psychologies simply have no account of this, whereas Nietzsche provides a developed, comprehensive model.

In emphasizing the pervasiveness, importance, and distinctiveness of unconscious mental activity, the Nietzschean model acknowledges what has become a truism in empirical psychology: that most mental activity is non-conscious. The conscious comprises only the smallest portion of our mental economy (see, for example, Hassin et al. 2005). But more importantly, empirical psychologists have increasingly come to accept a dual-process model of cognition. According to this model, there are two interacting streams of mental activity: rapid, automatic processes, that proceed without the agent's awareness; and slow, controlled, higher-order processes of which the agent is aware (for an introduction to these ideas, see Evans and Stanovich 2013). If some version of this model is correct, conscious and unconscious processes differ not just in that one is accompanied by awareness and the other is not; rather, they have different properties and proceed in different ways. Again, I'll show that this fits nicely with Nietzsche's analysis of the ways in which conscious states and processes exhibit a range of properties that differ dramatically from those of unconscious states and processes. This is something of which Aristotelians, Humeans, and Kantians have no account.

Further problems for the received theories arise when we consider their analysis of motivation. The Kantian appeals to a reflective agent who suspends and stands back from his motives. We'll see, in the following chapters, that Nietzsche argues that suspension isn't possible and that punctual moments of choice have only minor impacts on action. Moreover, we'll discuss some problems with the account of value endorsed by Kantians: the Kantian focus on individual agents assessing principles in a self-conscious fashion ignores the way in which values actually operate on individuals—by structuring their reflection, by affecting their perspectives.

For these reasons and others, I will argue that the received theories are rather flat-footed: they either disregard or conflict with empirical evidence and run afoul of philosophical arguments. The Nietzschean model, by contrast, has a compelling account of unconscious mental events, and does not rely on problematic assumptions about the independence of conscious thought or the purported ability of agents to suspend their motives by reflection.

So far, I've just mentioned these problems; the following chapters will analyze them in more depth. I will suggest that Nietzsche offers a compelling alternative to the tired debates between Kantians, Humeans, and Aristotelians. He endeavors to construct a picture of the human self that is consonant with our best empirical and philosophical views. It is informed, throughout, by the idea that the unconscious and non-conscious have received insufficient attention. Everyone agrees that we have motives and beliefs of which we're unaware, and this mere admission is thought by some to be enough—as if the unconscious were just a repository for beliefs and desires that happen to be out of view. Nietzsche wants to show that this picture is staggeringly inadequate. Attention to our mental economies reveals pervasive interactions between psychic states and events

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with quite different structures, and this demands a thorough rethinking of the core topics in moral psychology.

To account for the conscious/unconscious interaction, we need a psychological vocabulary that recognizes many more kinds of state than just beliefs and desires. We need a vocabulary that includes drives, affects, perceptual orientations, and perspectives. And we need to chart the way in which reflective, self-conscious phenomena are informed and structured by these phenomena. We need to recognize, with Kant, that self-conscious thought plays a signal role in human life, while seeing, too, the ways in which it is merely a surface. We need to analyze the ways in which values are more than reflective pronouncements or self-consciously adopted principles; we need to see the way that they structure our thoughts while themselves being based in configurations of affect and drive.

## 1.3 Outline of the Book

Those are the tasks of the following chapters. I'll offer brief summaries of the chapters here. Chapters Two and Three address Nietzsche's distinction between the conscious and the unconscious. As I've mentioned, many philosophers seem to think that the unconscious is simply the conscious pushed out of view, that the difference between a conscious state and an unconscious one is merely that the former is perceptible in a way that the latter is not. This, I'll show, is inadequate. Conscious and unconscious states and processes have different structures. Conscious states aren't simply unconscious ones with awareness superadded; they are different *kinds* of states. For Nietzsche, conscious states are linguistically or conceptually articulated, whereas unconscious states have a form of nonconceptual content.

This is no idle distinction: it has consequences of great import for moral psychology. In particular, it leads Nietzsche to the claim that conscious states are superficial, falsifying versions of unconscious ones. In making that claim, he relies on two further ideas: that concepts are generalizations from experience, and that there is no one best or most adequate conceptual scheme. Both of these claims, I'll argue, are exceedingly plausible. They lead to a problem: the way in which we experience and think about the world is influenced in deep and significant ways by the conceptual schemes that we embrace; but our awareness of these conceptual schemes is, for the most part, patchy and inadequate. This not only presents obstacles to self-understanding, but leads to a number of surreptitious influences upon our deliberations and actions.

Chapter Four introduces what is perhaps Nietzsche's most important psychological concept, the drive (*Trieb* or *Instinkt).* Here is one of the deepest differences between Nietzschean moral psychology and the three theories discussed above: while Aristotle, Hume, and Kant treat human motivation as constituted by familiar psychological states such as desires and emotions, Nietzsche introduces a kind of motive that purports to be different and more fundamental than these states. Drives are non-conscious dispositions that generate affective orientations. They take a two-part complement,

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having both an aim and an object. The aim is the drive's characteristic form of activity; the object is adventitious, a chance occasion for expression. For example, the aim of the aggressive drive is aggressive activity; its object might be a particular person, a game of football, or a spirited philosophical debate. Drives dispose the agent not to realize any particular end, but merely to engage in their characteristic form of activity. Accordingly, they are not satisfied by the attainment of their objects. Nietzsche argues that drive motivation is pervasive—all of our actions, he claims, are produced by drives. And this has a host of consequences that I'll explore in the following chapters.

Chapter Five shows how Nietzsche uses his drive psychology and conscious/unconscious distinction to develop an account of values. We typically treat values as manifest in the agent's reflective judgments. To value X is, in part, to make judgments of the form "X is valuable," to guide one's practical deliberation with principles such as "X ought to be promoted," and so forth. Yet Nietzsche seems to deny these claims: although he does devote some attention to reflectively espoused evaluative judgments, he more often focuses upon valuations inherent in pre-reflective psychological phenomena: our drives. He frequently claims both that drives *include* evaluations and that drives *explain* reflective evaluative judgments. Chapter Five analyzes this aspect of his view. I argue that non-conscious drives explain the agent's self-conscious judgments concerning what is valuable. In particular, drives structure the agent's perceptions and generate thoughts about justification, thereby strongly inclining agents to regard pursuit of the drive's end as valuable.

Chapter Six turns to Nietzsche's account of self-conscious willing. The Kantian account treats conscious choices as efficacious, causally undetermined loci of agency. It's often thought that Nietzsche adopts exactly the opposite position, treating conscious choices as causally inert, epiphenomenal, or mere symptoms of underlying processes that elude our attempts at introspection. I show that this is a mistake: Nietzsche offers a subtle critique of the Kantian account of willing, rejecting in particular the claim that we are capable of suspending the effects of our motivational states. Nonetheless, he agrees with Kant that motives do not determine choice: our motives could be the same, and yet we could choose differently. Moreover, he maintains that conscious choice plays a causal role in the production of action. He embraces what I call a "vector model" of willing: conscious choices and deliberations are one component of the vector of forces determining action. Although conscious thought does not make punctual, decisive contributions to the production of action, it does intervene in continuous streams of behavior, altering motives and sometimes transforming this behavior in profound ways.

So Nietzsche does not deny the causal efficacy of the will. Of course, it's one thing to say that the will—the agent's capacity to engage in self-conscious episodes of choice—has some causal effects, and it's quite another to offer a determinate characterization of what these effects are. It is also quite another to determine whether, if the will operates according to the vector model, there is any philosophically significant difference between willed and unwilled actions. On the Nietzschean model, actions are the

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product of a vector of forces that can include drives, affects, and conscious thoughts; when present, these conscious thoughts may play only the smallest of roles in determining the nature of the action. Why, then, should it matter whether and to what extent the conscious thoughts are present?

I turn to those questions in Chapter Seven. Nietzsche doesn't think that there is any philosophically significant difference between actions whose etiology includes an episode of conscious willing and those whose etiology does not. However, Nietzsche is interested in something that philosophers have (he thinks mistakenly) attempted to capture by speaking of conscious willing: the distinction between *genuine action* and *mere behavior*. Unlike many other philosophers, he does not align this distinction with the willed/unwilled distinction. In other words: genuine actions can be unwilled, and willed actions can be mere behavior. What then distinguishes genuine actions from mere behaviors? Nietzsche marks the distinction with his concept of *unity.* Genuine actions are those springing from unified agents. I argue that Nietzschean unity refers to a relation between drives and conscious thought: unity obtains when the agent's attitude toward her own action is stable under the revelation of further information about the action's etiology.

Chapter Eight uses these analyses of the conscious/unconscious distinction, drives, affects, values, and unity in order to analyze Nietzsche's conception of the self. How do these accounts of the psychological constituents of the person come together in an account of the self and its relation to society? Nietzsche treats selfhood as an aspirational term: we are not selves merely in virtue of being human. Rather, Nietzsche claims that selfhood is something that must be attained. So what, exactly, is involved in the transition from lacking to having a self? I argue that Nietzsche treats genuine selfhood as attained when the person reassesses dominant values or embodies a new ideal. However, it is easy to confuse Nietzsche's account with superficially similar, yet problematic, accounts. In particular, commentators have been tempted to interpret Nietzsche as endorsing the Romantic claim that the genuine self is the person who frees himself from the constraints of culture and returns to some essential, pre-social set of values or motivations. I argue that Nietzsche dismisses both the idea of pre-social drives and the assumption that we can characterize what a person is without making reference to determinate aspects of her social setting. A more promising approach would be to treat genuine selfhood as requiring critical assessment of one's values. Yet this must be distinguished from a position that Nietzsche clearly rejects: the Kantian account of autonomous self-legislation.

Chapter Nine continues this analysis by investigating Nietzsche's account of freedom. Nietzschean freedom has been interpreted as unity, self-overcoming, self-affirmation, becoming who you are, expressing maximal will to power, loving fate, being self-determining, and one could go on and on. In this chapter I sort through this interpretive tangle. I argue that Nietzschean freedom involves revaluing values. Nietzsche believes that human beings have acquired the capacity to regulate their actions via consciously adopted principles and goals. However, most human beings

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can only regulate themselves in this way by depending on external standards, customs, and sanctions. A human being counts as free when she is able to regulate her action without dependence on these kinds of external props. This is the sense in which Nietzschean freedom is self-determination. As external influences are not transparent or obvious, genuine self-determination requires self-understanding. We must track down and analyze the ways in which external factors surreptitiously influence us.

Finally, Chapter Ten summarizes the results and returns to the concerns of this Introduction: with the Nietzschean model of agency at hand, I explain how it differs from and improves upon the Kantian, Humean, and Aristotelian alternatives. I argue that the Nietzschean account enjoys several advantages over its competitors. First, it is more psychologically realistic, being in conformity with empirical results about human psychology and action. Second, it reveals the ways in which unconscious processes play a signal role in human action. Third, it avoids philosophical problems concerning the locus of agency, without committing itself to an exaggerated role for reflective thought. Fourth, and most generally, it frees itself from the often unnoticed moral assumptions that infect so many previous attempts to offer philosophical psychologies.

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