

# Nietzsche On Memory

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Thanks to Tom Stern, who supervised this thesis.

# Declaration

I, Timothy Lawrence Short, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.



# Abstract

It is argued that Nietzsche recognises multiple types and roles for memory. These types and roles must be understood in order to grasp some of his themes. The types are Individual and Organic Memory. The Individual type is composed of Passive Memory – further divided into Imposed and Inhibitory Memory – and Active Memory. The passive aspects are associated with Nietzsche’s concept of Slave morality and reactivity. The active aspects are associated with Nietzsche’s more positively evaluated, stronger types of individual. Organic Memory is a separate type of memory also present in humans. It is unlike what we commonly understand by the term ‘memory’, for several reasons. It reaches back to past generations: some of our instincts now result from ‘memories’ of actions of our ancestors. Further, it is not restricted to humans. Two of Nietzsche’s key themes are Dionysos versus Apollo and his Doctrine of Eternal Recurrence. Both are ways of understanding our psychology and its origins. These themes are examined in the context of his typology of memory. It is argued that the *Übermensch*’s ability to affirm the Doctrine is due to his possession of more of the active type of memory. The synthesis of Dionysian and Apollonian drives to form the tragic and then the theoretical is discussed via the suggestion that an excess of Passive Memory produces the resulting deleterious aspects. The ethical project can be seen as a call to use memory more actively. Nietzsche is often invoked in the context of discussions of Collective Memory. It is shown that this is a mistake since Nietzsche does not in fact recognise such a memory type.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

“Die Entstehung des  
Gedächtnisses ist das Problem  
des Organischen. Wie ist  
Gedächtniß möglich? Die Affekte  
sind Symptome der Formation  
des Gedächtniß-Materials”  
NF-1884, 25 [514]

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My main claim is that Nietzsche has an unusual and insightful conception of memory. He sees memory as having multiple types and varied roles. There are two types of memory which I have drawn out of his writing: Individual and Organic. The first type has two aspects: passive and active, and passive memory has two subtypes: inhibitory and imposed, which can overlap. I regard both as subtypes of passive memory because both represent types of passivity. We need to understand this manifold conception of memory to grasp some of his themes, including Dionysos versus Apollo and the Doctrine Of Eternal Recurrence with his ethical project of the revaluation of all values.

This thesis has three substantial Chapters, apart from this Introduction. These three Chapters will conduct the following three tasks. Firstly, I will outline the different types and roles in Nietzsche’s conception of memory. Secondly, I will use these tools to examine how they illuminate Nietzsche’s key themes. Thirdly, I consider the topic of Collective Memory. I will now outline this Chapter breakdown in more detail.

In Chapter 2, I show how there are two types of memory for Nietzsche, discussing each in turn. The first type – Individual Memory – is closer to what we commonly understand as memory. It has two aspects. Firstly, there is a passive/reactive, externally imposed, inhibitory and negatively evaluated aspect. I will further divide this

passive aspect into two subtypes: imposed memory and inhibitory memory. On the other hand, an active element has the opposite characteristics: it promotes activity and so is not inhibitory, it is internally chosen and so not imposed and it is positively evaluated. The second major type of memory is Organic Memory. This is different to what we commonly understand by memory. We know this because Nietzsche applies it to plants as well as animals and it reaches back to previous generations of humans. Nietzsche's view of memory is thus at variance with the common view of memory which I term the 'photograph' model.

In Chapter 3, I examine two of Nietzsche's themes and their links to memory. I discuss Nietzsche's Doctrine of Eternal Recurrence and show why we need this pluralistic understanding to grasp it. This discussion will involve the distinction between types of memory and in particular the way in which memory which is active may be used to affirm the Doctrine, which represents a key element of Nietzsche's central ethical project. I will also discuss the early theme of Dionysos vs. Apollo from the perspective of memory typology.

In Chapter 4, I discuss the topic of Collective Memory. Many commentators cite Nietzsche when discussing Collective Memory, believing they find evidence that he recognises the phenomenon in various places, including when he discusses the 'historical sense' and the ancestral indebtedness of societies. This discussion is postponed to a separate Chapter, because I conclude that commentators are mistaken when they believe that Nietzsche recognises a Collective Memory type. They are confused by failing to understand that Nietzsche is sometimes referring to the obscure Organic Memory type.

The thesis presented here is of a survey character, since the topic of Nietzsche's views on memory is largely unexplored. There is no sustained discussion of Nietzsche on memory in the literature. There are no Jstor papers that include both of the terms 'Nietzsche' and 'memory' in their title. There are 238 papers listed on Jstor that include the term 'Nietzsche' in their title and 'memory' in their full text. I believe I have considered and cited here all papers within the 238 that are of significance to the topic. In the primary material, there are 176 occurrences in 136 textual units of either '*Gedächtniss*' or '*Gedächtniß*'. I find this by a search in the *Digitale Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, covering both the published material and the *Nachlaß*. However, many writers have valuable insights into memory that they give in the course of a Nietzsche discussion with another end, and I have profited from those brief discussions. All of the significant references I have found are cited here.

I will close this introductory material by giving some motivational arguments as to why memory is important for Nietzsche.

## 1.1 Importance Of Memory To Nietzsche

There are four general reasons to think that memory is important to Nietzsche, which I will outline in this section. They are as follows.

1. Memory is definitional of being human.
2. Forgetfulness, the other side of the coin, is significant and unusual because it is active and beneficial.
3. Memory is a precondition for the current constitution of society.
4. Memory is the key to Nietzsche's central ethical project.

Firstly, man is the “remembering animal”.<sup>1</sup> Nietzsche thus describes memory as what distinguishes humans from animals. This has been confirmed by several commentators. Luft notes<sup>2</sup> that for Nietzsche the ‘memory of the will’ which enabled promise making was what turned animals into a human herd. Nietzsche’s claim that memory created humanity and also every kind of human community. Nietzsche’s slogan is a deliberate echo of the Aristotelean tag that ‘man is the rational animal’; it shows that memory is of the first importance for Nietzsche since it is for him definitional of what makes us human. For this reason alone, it is surprising that the topic of Nietzsche on memory has received little specific attention in the literature. My main aim in this thesis is to supply this lack.

Secondly, we may derive reason for thinking that memory is an important phenomenon for Nietzsche, and one worth investigating, from the fact that his unusual view of forgetfulness as active and positive suggests that he will have a unique conception of memory as well. Choosing what to forget is crucial to maintaining psychic order and also effective self-creation – which is also the creation of an effective self. I will illustrate this further in §2.2.2.

Thirdly, for Nietzsche, memory allows the creation of society as it is currently constituted, which we may understand as involving a constant tension between the natural desires of humans to use violence in their own ends and the need for society to restrain those desires. He describes how memory is created by pain and punishment; Nietzsche writes: “only what does not cease *to give pain* remains in one’s memory”.<sup>3</sup> Memory is then a device for avoiding those outcomes. This reactive, imposed aspect of memory is a precondition for society with its web of agreements not to use violence, or

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<sup>1</sup>Nietzsche UM II [1, ‘On the uses and disadvantages of history for life’, §1]. Note: I will use standard abbreviations for Nietzsche’s works such as are to be found at Nietzsche GM [2, p. xxxvii], preferring ‘UM’ for ‘Untimely Meditations’. I will also use ‘KSA’ for *Kritische Studien Ausgabe* [3] and ‘WP’ for ‘The Will to Power’ [4].

<sup>2</sup>Luft [5, p. 135].

<sup>3</sup>Nietzsche GM [2, II.3].

to delegate the right to use violence to the state. Nietzsche describes these contracts as follows: “contract relationships [...] [p]recisely here are *promises* made; precisely here it is a matter of *making* a memory for the one who promises”.<sup>4</sup> Society needs to restrain violent individual impulses because otherwise it would dissolve in conflict. The creation of society is what leads to the processes Nietzsche describes in GM as leading to morality. So a passive, imposed form of memory is important to Nietzsche in his project of explaining morality. Here we see socially-bred, externally imposed memory. Prehistorical societies led to current societies via the nexus of memory and pain.

Fourthly, memory is the key to the ethical project which we may term ‘revaluation of all values’. Luft argues<sup>5</sup> that GM describes the process by which a ‘memory of values’ is created by metaphor and society so we can see how memory is directly implicated in the prevalence of groundless values which Nietzsche attacks. It is also responsible for various moral illusions which Nietzsche wishes to dispel. For one thing, people do not generally tell the truth because of a moral stricture to that effect. They do so merely since memory is a limited resource, and “because it is more convenient, as falsehood requires invention, deceit, and memory”.<sup>6</sup> Nietzsche tells us that memory is the space in which acts are given their moral colour, and we will later see that the valuable activity of the active and the strong consists in using memory actively to apply the moral colour they choose to their acts. Moreover, success or failure in a project is the way to apply the desired moral character to a deed: “That the witnesses of a deed often only measure the morality or immorality of it after the fact: no, the culprit does this himself. Because the motives and intentions are seldom clear [...] even the memory of the deed is clouded by success, so that one imputes to the deed false motives or treats unimportant motives as important. Success often gives a deed the full honourable sheen of a good conscience; failure lays the shadow of bad conscience on the most respectable action.”<sup>7</sup> We also learn here that morality of acts is and should be judged only by the actor in the case of the strong; this is another call for us not to look outside for the source of values. The final message is that motives will be ascribed and adjusted *post facto* in order to obtain the desired result for moral valency: all of this serves Nietzsche’s purposes in attacking the idea that morality – and the morality we have now – is in any way absolute and beyond question.

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<sup>4</sup>Nietzsche GM [2, II.5].

<sup>5</sup>Luft [5, p. 139].

<sup>6</sup>Nietzsche HA [6, ‘On the History of Moral Feelings’, §54].

<sup>7</sup>Nietzsche HA [6, ‘On the History of Moral Feelings’, §68].

## Chapter 2

# Types And Roles Of Memory In Nietzsche

“Der Gedanke giebt uns den  
Begriff einer ganz neuen Form der  
Realität: er ist aus Empfindung  
und Gedächtniß  
zusammengesetzt.” NF-1872, 19  
[166]

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### 2.1 Introduction

I will first set out in §2.1.1 the difference between the concepts of ‘valorisation’ and ‘evaluation’ in Nietzsche, because this will be a main element of my typology of memory argument. I will outline arguments for the existence of multiple types of memory in §2.1.2. Passive and active aspects of Individual Memory are discussed in §2.2.1 and §2.2.2 respectively. Finally I will discuss Organic Memory in §2.3.

#### 2.1.1 Valorisation

There is a distinction in Nietzsche between ‘valorisation’ and ‘evaluation’. This distinction is important to Nietzsche’s central ethical project, which is the revaluation of all values. An evaluation is the first order question as to what is the value of a behaviour, cultural practice, idea or morality. Asking about valorisation is the second order question as to what is the source of value for our values. Nietzsche’s first message is that this is a question which can be asked and indeed must be asked: it is not incoherent to ask what is the source of value for values, contra some who might object

that one can only establish value or make evaluations within a framework assuming values. Kaufmann discusses<sup>1</sup> the distinction basing it on Nietzsche's division between "philosophical labourers" and true "philosophers".<sup>2</sup> The former produce "some great fact of evaluation [or] assessments of value" while the latter – including Nietzsche – must "traverse the whole range of human values" and "create values".<sup>3</sup> Thus the "labourers" inquire as to evaluation *in the currently valorised system of values* while Nietzsche asks the more fundamental question as to what is the valorisation and is it the right one. Richardson neatly summarises<sup>4</sup> when he writes that there are hypotheses that "varies" their values – that confirm or justify them."

The difference between an evaluation and a valorisation may be elucidated with an analogy in the field of paper currency. In the past, it was agreed that gold was a store of value and paper bank notes were evaluated – their value was set – by how much gold could be exchanged for the note. Setting aside the point that gold too only has value by agreement, we might see the gold as being the valorisation of the system – being the ultimate source of value – while the notes are indirectly valuable. The notes are like our current values. It would be of no use to say that one note of one kind could be exchanged for two of another, which in turn were together worth four notes of a third kind, which in turn were backed by one note of the first kind. This sort of circular system would float free and unanchored; there would be no gold in it anywhere to be the valorisation. So Nietzsche wants us to ask where the gold is in our system of values; which first requires us to become aware that our system of values is not the only possible one just as our current morality is not the only possible one.

The primary source of value for values – the gold in Nietzsche's system – is activity or action. Activity is a positive valorisation factor. Values which are valorised by action and its promotion are positively evaluated by Nietzsche. He admires "knightly aristocratic" values that are valorised in this way; they presuppose "overflowing health" with what preserves it: "war, adventure, the hunt, dance, athletic contests and in general everything which includes strong, free cheerful-hearted activity".<sup>5</sup> This lengthy list of healthy pursuits is linked and expanded upon by the common thread of activity or action-promotion. Those possessing this health and this activity are "noble and powerful",<sup>6</sup> and are to be contrasted with the Slaves who are miserable creatures of passivity and *ressentiment*. With this background in hand, I will argue in this chapter that there is an active aspect of memory for Nietzsche which will mean that memory can be the vector of valorisation in a Nietzschean analysis of values. Thus memory can form the basis for a reevaluation of values.

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<sup>1</sup>Kaufmann [7, p. 108].

<sup>2</sup>Nietzsche BGE [8, §211].

<sup>3</sup>Nietzsche BGE [8, §211].

<sup>4</sup>Richardson [9, p. 99].

<sup>5</sup>Nietzsche GM [2, I.7].

<sup>6</sup>Nietzsche GM [2, I.7].

One risk in attempting to draw categories, types and divisions in Nietzsche is that they are hard to pin down. They are especially hard to pin down when one means of delineating the divisions relies on valorisation, as here. We see in GM how the Slaves begin as weak and passive, and ‘bad’ in the terminology of the Masters, but they end as active and ‘good’ in their own terms. However, the ‘good’ of the Slaves is depreciated by Nietzsche as derivative from the Masters. Nietzsche’s message here – beyond the difficulty of tracking valorisation through various developments – is that categories may become mixed up with one another. This does not mean though that searching for categories is fruitless. They may evolve and become intermixed, but that entails they exist, and useful points may be made about them, perhaps at different stages of their evolution.

### 2.1.2 Multiple Roles Of Memory

I turn now to the arguments for there being multiple roles of memory. One argument relies on the fact that Nietzsche sees roles for memory with both positive and negative evaluations. A playful pair of alternate aphorisms shows the positive side; while one “must have a good memory to be able to keep a given promise”,<sup>7</sup> it is also the case that “[t]he advantage of a bad memory is that one enjoys several times the same good things for the first time”.<sup>8</sup> Obviously there are many prosaic situations where memory is advantageous. It might be objected here that this is an advantage of forgetting rather than memory, but – as I will argue on p. 22 – forgetting is best seen as an aspect of memory in Nietzsche, and a positive aspect at that.

On the negative side, we have the following: “Good Memory. Many a man fails to become a thinker for the sole reason that his memory is too good”.<sup>9</sup> This is a negatively evaluated inhibitory aspect; those who can remember much do not need to think much. Stifling memory – making it more passive and inhibitory than active – is also deleterious. The pejoratively named ‘employees’ of science have filled their memories in youth,<sup>10</sup> to avoid remaining creative.

Memory is described as one of the “Dangerous Virtues”. This ‘dangerous’ epithet has both positive and negative evaluations, supporting the claims I will make below for a typology of memory initially based on value contrasts. We are told that memory plays a role in assigning social rank. A man with capacious memory “forgets nothing but forgives everything – wherefore he shall be doubly detested for he causes us double shame by his memory and his magnanimity.”<sup>11</sup>

The fact that there can be no society without memory brings both positive and

<sup>7</sup>Nietzsche HA [6, ‘On the History of Moral Feelings’, §59].

<sup>8</sup>Nietzsche HA [6, ‘Man Alone with Himself’, §580].

<sup>9</sup>Nietzsche HA [6, ‘Miscellaneous Maxims and opinions’, §122].

<sup>10</sup>Nietzsche HA [6, ‘The Wanderer and His Shadow’, §171].

<sup>11</sup>Nietzsche D [10, IV, §393].

negative evaluations. Keeping the image of terrible punishments in mind results in making negative promises to permit social coexistence. With these, members of early society agree to suppress their naturally violent instincts: “[w]ith the help of such images and processes one finally retains in memory five, six “I will nots,” in connection with which one has given one’s *promise* within the advantages of society,— and truly! with the help of this kind of memory one finally came “to reason” [...] mastery over the affects.”<sup>12</sup> This last is to be read ironically, because Nietzsche does not really believe that mastery over the affects constitutes reason, and in any case would not recommend such mastery, since the affects will drive action, which as we noted above Nietzsche evaluates positively. The association between the affects and action is made clear when Nietzsche writes that the noble “did not know how to separate activity out from happiness,— for them being active is of necessity included in happiness”.<sup>13</sup> Again this is contrasted with the “hostile and powerless” whose “happiness [...] appears as [...] relaxation [...] in short, *passively*.”<sup>14</sup> Here we see that Nietzsche has valorised through activity the happiness of the nobles and devalorised through the same route the happiness of the inactive. Note finally that the fact that there is this kind of memory means that there will be other kinds.

I will now consider the two aspects of Individual Memory in detail, and then look at the second type of memory.

## 2.2 Individual Memory

### 2.2.1 Passive/Reactive Aspects Of Individual Memory

There are two ways in which memory or its contents may be passive. It may be imposed externally in such a way that the individual is not part of the decision to have a particular memory. This is what happens to the Slaves who are required to observe the punishments of transgressors and remember those punishments. This is why the punishments are especially vivid and horrifying – Nietzsche gives a long list of public punishments including “stoning [...] breaking on the wheel [...] quartering [...] flaying [...] cutting flesh”.<sup>15</sup> No one witnessing such activities would have much choice about whether they remembered them or not, which is of course the whole point. Alternatively, these passive memories may result in inhibiting action: the Slaves who see the punishments are inhibited from carrying out the action which the person punished had carried out. So the person who has the memory is thereby discouraged from a particular action or type of action under certain circumstances. In Nietzsche’s view, as I will show below, these will often go together, but they

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<sup>12</sup>Nietzsche GM [2, II.3].

<sup>13</sup>Nietzsche GM [2, I.10].

<sup>14</sup>Nietzsche GM [2, II.1].

<sup>15</sup>Nietzsche GM [2, II.3].



need not. I might actively attain a memory which inhibits action. I will therefore identify two subtypes of the passive aspect of memory to reflect the two markers. **Throughout this thesis, I will define Imposed Memory as any memory which is imposed externally; and I will define Inhibitory Memory as any memory which tends to suppress action. I will define Passive Memory as being composed of Inhibitory Memory and Imposed Memory.**

The source for these views of Nietzsche is GM. The paradigm exemplars of those who possess Passive Memory will be the pre-revolt Slaves. They will initially have Passive Memory in both forms: Inhibitory and Imposed. This Passive Memory has its origins in pain and punishment. It is externally imposed, a store and reflection of *ressentiment*. *Ressentiment* is the empty vengefulness of the impotent, and it is the hallmark of the Slaves in the story of the origins of morality that Nietzsche gives in GM. For the man of *ressentiment*, “all experiences strike deep and memory is a festering wound”.<sup>16</sup> This aspect of memory is basically an imperfect recording facility which passively reacts to perceptual data by storing some of it. The dominant type of memory will distinguish the type of individual. In general, possession of more Passive Memory will be an indication of a weaker type negatively evaluated to some extent by Nietzsche, while possession of more of an active type of memory will be associated by Nietzsche with stronger types who are more active. Passive types will be exemplified by the pre-revolt Slaves; there are several more active types to oppose to them. The Masters in GM are the obvious opposition to the Slaves, they are stronger, more active types of individual.

However, the situation is more complicated than this since GM is the story of how the Slaves become active. Initially, we have the Slaves having Passive Memory imposed on them. This is shown by the citations I gave in §1.1. To recapitulate, Nietzsche writes: “only what does not cease *to give pain* remains in one’s memory”.<sup>17</sup> which means an imposed memory if we assume that the pain is inflicted by others. In regards to the second inhibitory aspect, Nietzsche discusses contract relationships where “[p]recisely here are *promises* made; precisely here it is a matter of *making* a memory for the one who promises”.<sup>18</sup> In this case, we have an overlap because this is both imposed memory and inhibitory memory: both aspects of Passive Memory are present.

The post-revolt Slaves continue to have Passive Memory of the Imposed subtype. But now for the complexity: do the Slaves also have Passive Memory of the second subtype, Inhibitory Memory? The answer is yes before the Revolt and no – or less so – afterwards. The pre-Revolt Slaves have not ceased to be Slaves; they are prevented from acting by observation of the painful punishments of fellow slaves. But GM is

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<sup>16</sup>Nietzsche EH [11, I.6].

<sup>17</sup>Nietzsche GM [2, II.3].

<sup>18</sup>Nietzsche GM [2, II.5].

the story of how the Slaves become active – one might say, how they become us, since Nietzsche thinks we are all decadents and Slaves. The Slaves’ Revolt inverts the order of values and this inversion is the one we still have. Here we have the first indication that memory typology will be of importance to Nietzsche in connection to his central ethical project of the revaluation of all values.

Nietzsche evaluates Inhibitory Memory negatively, because action supplies his valorisation. We learn<sup>19</sup> how an excess of historical sense is overwhelming and paralysing. I will argue later – see §4.3.1 – that historical sense is a type of memory. It is best seen as Inhibitory Memory since its primary characteristic is just that: it paralyses. One reason we know it is memory is that Nietzsche tells us that the health of a people depends on its ability to fix “limits to the memory of the past”, by which he means restrict the negative effects of historical sense. Luft remarks<sup>20</sup> that memory makes us members of the “human herd”, which can scarcely be positive. She also notes that it is memory which keeps modern humans inhibited and passive under the weight of history. Also, Bertram has proposed<sup>21</sup> that history is active image creation, rather than being a reproduction or preservation of the past. On this view, proper history for Nietzsche would be active and dynamic rather than passive and static – this is the same division and evaluation as the one that Nietzsche has for memory and for similar reasons.

A passive type of memory has been described by Deleuze<sup>22</sup> as essentially reactive, meaning that all its operations are a response to the environment. This claim is supported by noting that it explains why we cannot know what memory is capable

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<sup>19</sup>Nietzsche UM II [1, ‘On the uses and disadvantages of history for life’].

<sup>20</sup>Luft [5, p. 135].

<sup>21</sup>Bertram [12, p. 5]. I will cite Bertram a total of four times in this thesis. Since the work is somewhat controversial and dates from 1918, I will briefly defend its scholarly merits. The translator, Norton, regards it as a work which derives some of its importance from Kaufmann’s condemnation of it in [7]. Kaufmann regards part of his rehabilitatory task, writing as he was soon after the second world war, as involving the need to repudiate Bertram’s reading of Nietzsche. As Norton outlines on p. xiii of his Translator’s Introduction, there are three charges levelled by Kaufmann at Bertram. These were that Bertram was “wilfully and deceptively equivocal”; he “distorted [...] the coherent progression of Nietzsche’s thinking” and that he “violated the principles of [...] scholarly integrity”. Despite this, Norton notes on p. xii Kaufmann’s agreement that Bertram’s work “had done more than any other work to shape [Nietzsche’s] image for almost an entire generation”. Norton also convincingly defends Bertram against these charges; see esp. p. xxii. I conclude for three main reasons that it is acceptable to cite Bertram’s work in this thesis. Firstly, it is agreed on all sides that the work is important and significant. Secondly, there are defences available to the charges of obfuscation, and we need not even follow Kaufmann in his insistence on the coherence of Nietzsche’s thought; modern ‘perspectivist’ readings of Nietzsche might indeed see that potential lack as a virtue. Thirdly, my citations from Bertram are in the nature of illuminating remarks rather than involving any commitment to the grand sweep of his vision. Finally, as Norton points out on p. xv, thinkers as disparate as Heidegger, Jaspers, Hess and Mann came to the same conclusion regarding the high merits of Bertram’s work.

<sup>22</sup>Deleuze [13, p. 38].

of, since we cannot fully specify current or future environments. This can only refer to Passive Memory since it is a mere recording facility; there is no active choice of elements in the environment to retain. We might say that it is ‘imposed’ by the environment. I show in §2.2.2 how this position has some difficulties which can be resolved by employing the multiple aspects and roles of memory for which I argue. Richardson notes<sup>23</sup> that there is a type of memory which is “a retrospective drag on our activity that aligns it with the current of what’s generally done”. This neatly aligns passive memory which is both imposed and inhibitory with disvalue for Nietzsche: he everywhere deprecates herd morality and herd behaviour.

Passive Memory also results from the interaction between debt or obligation and early society. Indebtedness produces memory and requires it. Persisting personal identity is necessary to indebtedness; without that – and without remembering who I used to be – I will not repay my debts because I will not recognise the previous individual as myself. Nietzsche challenges persistence of identity of things – including persons. He does this in the course of his attack on logic, which he believes assumes persisting identity. Nietzsche writes: “[l]ogic, too, rests on assumptions that do not correspond to anything in the real world, e.g. [...] the identity of the same thing at different points of time”<sup>24</sup> in a section entitled “Language as an alleged science”. This means that logic also is an “alleged science” and one reason that this is so is that it falsely assumes the persistence of identity. There is a widespread illusion of persisting personal identity, so some mechanism is needed to supply that illusion. That mechanism is Passive Memory which stores pain associations and also provides the illusory self to be the one suffering pain. Thus through memory we create ourselves. In fact, Hales argues<sup>25</sup> that Nietzsche sees indebtedness as being responsible for “instilling memory in humanity”; and that this also leads to the illusion of persisting identity. I will return to this point about Passive Memory being responsible for the illusion of a unified self in the context of a discussion of Dionysos versus Apollo in §3.1.

### The Illusory Self

At this juncture, we need to resolve an apparent tension between Nietzsche’s denials of the reality of the self and his suggestions that we improve ourselves. If there is no self there can be nothing to improve. This is too quick however. Nietzsche has an oligarchic model of psychology in which we are all made up of competing sub-personal drives. These jockey for ascendancy and what we do at any given moment might be termed the vector sum of active drives. On this view, there is no inconsistency between the views expressed.

Nietzsche’s fictionalist view of the self has been noticed. Gardner observes that

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<sup>23</sup>Richardson [9, p. 93].

<sup>24</sup>Nietzsche HA [6, ‘Of First and Last Things’, §11].

<sup>25</sup>Hales [14, p. 832].

Nietzsche describes the term ‘I’ as a “mnemonic token, an abbreviating formula”.<sup>26</sup> A token stands for something else. A mnemonic token is a symbol in the memory. Nietzsche is saying that there is nothing to the term ‘I’ beyond its symbolisation in the memory of the self, which for him is not a single item even though it has one label. Gardner notes that the self is instead a “social structure of the drives and emotions”.<sup>27</sup>

Nietzsche’s conclusion on the self, that ‘one word does not mean one thing’, is equally true of memory. We rewrite our own history to create a fiction of a unified self acting rationally: “memory itself seems clouded by the consequences of the deed” so if an action brought ‘success’, that must have been what we were aiming for, and there must have been a self that had the aim. There can be something that Nietzsche refers to with the term ‘self’ without the word being security for the unity of the item referred to; there is only a collection of drives.

### 2.2.2 Active Aspects Of Individual Memory

I will first say what I mean by the term ‘Active Memory’. Then I will present six arguments in support of the claim that there is an active role for Individual memory in Nietzsche. These arguments are as follows.

1. It is a general rule that concepts in Nietzsche have active/positively evaluated and passive/negatively evaluated aspects.
2. Memory grants power over others and time; and power is active.
3. Bad conscience is founded on memory; there are positive and negative aspects to bad conscience and positivity correlates to activity.
4. Promise making involves a “memory of the will” and is only for the strong, who are active.
5. There are several roles in Nietzsche for contest and competition between memory and forgetting which requires active elements of both.
6. Use of Active Memory is one way to create an effective self, or self-image.

I will close this section with some brief illustrative remarks on the contrasts between Active Memory and Passive Memory.

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<sup>26</sup>Nietzsche Late Notebooks [15, p. 96]. *Nachlaß*.

<sup>27</sup>Nietzsche BGE [8, p. 44].

### What Is Active Memory?

There are two dimensions of the question requiring more clarity before it can be answered. The meaning of a type of memory must be elucidated; also there is the question as to in what the activity consists. I will discuss these questions below, but first we need a definition. The starting point for finding that definition will be that Active Memory is in some way opposed to Passive Memory. We noted on p. 17 that Passive Memory is made up of two subtypes, Inhibitory Memory and Imposed Memory. One idea then would be simply to define Active Memory as the inverse of Passive Memory i.e. being memory which is not externally imposed nor inhibitory. This approach suffers though from two difficulties. The first is that it is a negative definition and we will want to know what something is rather than what it is not. Secondly, something being the inverse of two other things makes it rather difficult to decide what it is the inverse of at any point. There is nevertheless something functionally useful about opposing Active Memory to Passive Memory, so I will retain this as a ‘framework idea’ if not a definition. Noting that the function of Active Memory is what distinguishes it suggests that a functional definition is the best approach. **Throughout this thesis, I will define Active Memory any use of memory which is both selected by the rememberer and tends to promote activity.** Since this is a definition that requires both markers to be present, Active Memory is not Inhibitory Memory and it is not Imposed Memory so it is not Passive Memory. In some sense, all memory is ‘externally imposed’ since we apparently cannot simply fabricate its input. What we can do though is select which elements are prominent and frequently recalled on the basis of what is useful to us. This will suffice on my view for Active Memory not to be externally imposed in the relevant sense.

I turn now to the two dimensions of the question ‘what is active memory?’ that require more clarity. On the former question – what is a memory type? – I do not claim that Nietzsche argued for physically separate brain areas where different memory types or aspects might be processed or different roles accommodated. Nietzsche’s distinctions are functional in nature. The purpose for which anything is used is the key to its value, so we may expect to see him making differential evaluations of different types of memory depending on their use. This is in fact what we find and the value distinction is a central aspect of my argument for multiple aspects.

On the latter question – what is the activity? – there are different stages at which activity could be exemplified. Memory involves what we think of as input, storage and output. In reality, these are poor terms because they assume a popular view we might term the ‘photograph’ model of memory. They are poor both because they assume this false model and because Nietzsche would disagree with them since he disagrees with that model. I discuss the processes involved on the modern model of

digital photography, though it could as well be film photography. I will also use the terms input, storage and output as well for the imperfect versions of those processes involved in memory, because those functions are at least what we take to be going on. On the photograph model, memory is like a photographic process with a high degree of accuracy in data transfer at each point. The input is like taking a photograph – a picture is supposedly stored which has a high degree of fidelity to the presented scene. Storage is supposedly like the retention of the data which constitutes the photograph – it is expected that the data stored on the computer remains unchanged over time. Finally, output is supposedly like the accessing of this data in order to display the photograph on the screen – this output does not add new data or cause any loss to the existing data. On this model, the photograph displayed will exhibit high fidelity to the scene originally presented.

While this may be a good account of digital photography, it is a poor account of memory because all three of these assumptions are wrong. Memory performs at all stages with a much lower degree of fidelity. The reason for this is that, contrary to the photograph model, all of these memory processes are more active and reconstructive than reproductive. Active input may be seen when someone makes a conscious effort to remember something, perhaps employing external items as an *aide mémoire*, or repeating a list several times in order to fix it. Active storage is making selected changes to already stored memories, which may include changing their emphasis, significance or frequency of recall all of which is selected to improve effectiveness. It thus bears little resemblance to maintenance which is the mere conservation of data.

**On the view I will propose here, Active Forgetfulness is best understood as an aspect of Active Memory, with that faculty being used to select memories for retention, amendment and deletion.** Active management of storage is important because it subsumes Active Forgetfulness, which we know is crucial for Nietzsche. Finally, output is an active process, more akin to construction than the mere retrieval of exactly unchanged stored data. Again, all of this is contrary to the photograph model. Rather than recall some picture of what we saw, we are much more likely to be reconstructing plausible answers to the question as to what we could have seen. As Marsden notes<sup>28</sup> “for Nietzsche, the past is that which is actively “produced” in the present according to our current quests and investments”.

Many commentators confirm this reconstructive nature of memory. Clark notes<sup>29</sup> that biological memory is not a passive encoder but a system involving constant integrative and reconstructive activity. Note that this view is consistent with some ‘good’ cases in which memory recall is accurate enough for the purpose in hand. Cases of complete fabrication do not feature in the description of the output stage;

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<sup>28</sup>Marsden [16, p. 31].

<sup>29</sup>Clark [17, p. 6].

deliberate falsehood is not a memory-related feature. Wollheim states<sup>30</sup> that error can be a legitimate part of a memory state on the grounds that it is the correct causal connection between an event and a memory which makes the memory a memory of that particular event even if the memory is inaccurate. Sutton notes<sup>31</sup> how what he terms autobiographical memory involves operations of summary, interpretation and construction on life experience. This is done in order to produce the fiction of a coherent self, on Nietzsche's view, as described above on p. 19.

We also need to consider the sense in which memory can be active. We know that forgetfulness is active for Nietzsche, and the memory could then be disconnecting the Active Forgetfulness. This would be Passive Memory. Not all memory is disconnecting the Active Forgetfulness, since some of it is actively chosen; even if it were, that does not entail that the memory is passive or reactive. The results of a disconnection cannot really be reactive – a disconnection results in a blanket omission. We are really talking about a *selection* of items in relation to which there will be a disconnection, and that selection will be active. Bertram observes<sup>32</sup> that Nietzsche values activity – in the form of selection – in forgetting as well as in memory. This is illustrated by noting that everything is forgotten in a revolution and therefore Nietzsche hates the revolutionary. What Nietzsche hates here cannot be the forgetting *per se* since we know he evaluates that positively elsewhere. His objection can only be the all-encompassing nature of the forgetting i.e. its passivity and lack of selectivity.

We know that Nietzsche is interested in all of these potentially active aspects – input, storage, output – because he uses the metaphor of a doorkeeper to describe Active Forgetfulness, which is the other side of the memory coin. Nietzsche writes that “active forgetfulness, a doorkeeper as it were” is “an upholder of psychic order, of rest, of etiquette”.<sup>33</sup> Now doorkeepers certainly bar entry, but they also expel troublemakers, or make them behave. Wollheim sees<sup>34</sup> a distinction in output between Passive and Active Memory. A distinction is drawn between an Active Memory where someone asks themselves what they did on a particular occasion, and a more passive ‘involuntary’ memory that appears unbidden, unwelcomely and is Inhibitory.

In Active Memory, there may be active management of any or all of the data items that are input, retained or retrieved. This does not commit Nietzsche to such activity being conscious. Nietzsche will have a positive evaluation for those uses of Active Memory which foster the expression of power, as I will now argue. The use of memory for storing truths will not be its most useful application. Why prefer an impotent truth to a useful fiction? Nietzsche tells us that “truth emerge[d] as the

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<sup>30</sup>Wollheim [18, p. 119].

<sup>31</sup>Sutton [19, §1.2].

<sup>32</sup>Bertram [12, p. 13].

<sup>33</sup>Nietzsche GM [2, II.1].

<sup>34</sup>Wollheim [18, p. 117].

weakest form of knowledge”.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, “the *strength* of knowledge lies not in its degree of truth, but in its age, its embeddedness, its character as a condition of life”. This means that the strong, healthy, Active Memory will select its items for storage based on their ability to serve the end of creating a strong, healthy, active character and in fact, possession of such a character consists in possessing such a memory. Memory items are evaluated for their ‘embeddedness’, which means the extent to which they play their role in strengthening the overall narrative of character and the chosen direction of that character.

The idea that Nietzsche thinks that memory is best used for storing facts is untenable. We can see this throughout his work but also by noting his inclusion of “Narrow memory” with “Brief self-awareness” in a list in the *Nachlaß* of eight items under the heading “The world of untruth”.<sup>36</sup> The *Nachlaß* is the term for material from Nietzsche’s notebooks which was not published by him. I will use it freely throughout this thesis, noting that it is *Nachlaß* material. Each item in the list is a noun associated with a vaunted capacity of humans; each is qualified with a depreciating modifier. Nietzsche thinks we over-estimate our own abilities to know facts and to retain them. This leads to another error, which is that since we mistakenly believe that there are external facts and that our memory just records them, we do not have any control over the contents of our memory. This is exactly what Nietzsche might term ‘the error of Passive Memory’. The lack of a gold standard for memory contents means we can and should use Active Memory to promote activity.

The reason it is important to elucidate the active elements of Individual Memory for Nietzsche returns to the valorisation point made above in §2.1.1. The propensity to promote action is Nietzsche’s primary route of valorisation. Use of Active Memory is the way persons can access that valorisation. Once they have, so to speak, backed their values by gold, they may become strong in ways that Nietzsche values and acquire other values he accepts as valorised since they promote action. We will thus be able to achieve a successful analysis in relation to various questions of importance for analysis of Nietzsche’s works. These questions will include which of the characters described are positively evaluated by Nietzsche and why. Without knowing that, we cannot know what Nietzsche is really recommending we should do or seek to to become. The common factor to all of Nietzsche’s strong, active, positively evaluated characters is that they all valorise their values via the use of Active Memory. One way that characters are able to achieve a positive evaluation from Nietzsche will be by becoming more active; a positive self-image is one way of using Active Memory to achieve that.

I will now turn to the arguments supporting the claim that there is an active functional role for memory, or an active aspect of memory.

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<sup>35</sup>Nietzsche GS [20, §110].

<sup>36</sup>Nietzsche Early Notebooks [21, p. 158]. *Nachlaß*.



### Arguments For Active Memory

It is a **general rule** that we must always look for active, positively evaluated and reactive, negatively evaluated aspects of concepts in Nietzsche, because for Nietzsche, active and free expression of power is the source of all valorisation. Thus everything must be evaluated through the prism of activity and the promotion of action in order to determine its value. It has been correctly observed that there will often be active and passive sides to the same concept for Nietzsche depending on the use to which it is put, the activity which it supports. Derrida claims<sup>37</sup> that there are never univocal answers as to ‘value’ in Nietzsche since *all* concepts must be evaluated for their active and passive sides. Kee notes<sup>38</sup> that Nietzsche also makes a value distinction in the case of nihilism between a positive, active form and a negative, passive form. Sommer cites<sup>39</sup> Kuhn as identifying six types of nihilism in Nietzsche of which active and passive are two. Memory is no exception to this rule. Sommer also observes<sup>40</sup> that scepticism in Nietzsche has active, positively evaluated and passive, negatively evaluated sides. Richardson distinguishes<sup>41</sup> creative and receptive aesthetic abilities, with the latter being “degrade[d] as thoroughly passive” “in comparison to the creative attitude”.

Active Memory can be developed by the noble and used to gain **power over others** and oneself. Nietzsche writes: “The binding memory. – Whoever has a high rank does well to make for himself a binding memory, that means, to mark as many good things possible about people and draw a line under it: it keeps them in a pleasant dependence. Thus can he also proceed with himself, so whether he has a binding memory or not determines in the end his own treatment of himself, the nobility, goodness, or the distrust in observing his own inclinations and intentions, and finally again on the nature of the inclinations and intentions themselves.”<sup>42</sup> This is my translation, using ‘binding’ for *verbindliche* rather than ‘courteous’ or ‘gracious’, as other translators have rendered it. ‘Mandatory’ is also a possible translation for *verbindliche*, but then it would be unclear for whom Nietzsche thinks the memory is mandatory: for the person with the memory or the person being manipulated by it. It seems clear that Nietzsche intends this type of memory to be active and thus a ‘binding’ memory on the person manipulated: they are ‘bound’ to the person with the active memory who chooses to use it for their own advantage.

The general claim is that people like to use what they see as their good qualities and allowing them to do so can be a way of manipulating them. They will become dependent on the plaudits of the ‘noble’. Nietzsche will depreciate this as an example

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<sup>37</sup>Derrida [22, p. 53].

<sup>38</sup>Kee [23, p. 53].

<sup>39</sup>Sommer [16, p. 254].

<sup>40</sup>Sommer [16, p. 263].

<sup>41</sup>Richardson [9, p. 233].

<sup>42</sup>Nietzsche D [10, IV, §278].

of passivity, of looking outside oneself for a valorisation. Moreover, such a man of high rank may also use Active Memory on himself. The strong are hard on themselves; they are viewed with distrust by the weak since the weak are soft on themselves and, perforce, in relation to others. Nietzsche is suggesting that Active Memory can be the source of power of both the self and others. This is Active Memory because the rememberer chooses that something is retained, what it is and why. It is significant that Nietzsche once again here emphasises that the strong or noble person *makes the memory for himself*. So the test we specified in the definition of Active Memory on p. 21 is passed; not only does the noble person choose the memory but he does so in order to promote activity.

There may be a problem here with the activity-promotion quality of Active Memory which we must consider. As said, Nietzsche also thinks that this binding memory can be applied to oneself. This will mean recording ‘good things’ also about oneself, and emphasising them. This will result in a positive self-image, supporting the final argument in this section about the creation of an enabling belief in a strong, effective self. The contents of the memory will be different in the case of use of Active Memory to record my own deeds, because I have access to them from the inside, as it were. This is why Nietzsche speaks of intentions and inclinations in connection with the noble person using Active Memory on themselves, while the more wide and vague term ‘good thing’ is used in connection with others. We may think we can divine the intentions of others but we can only observe their behaviour. The noble will use Active Memory to police their own intentions; their quality, intensity and the frequency with which they are put into effect. The potential problem here is that this could be seen as inhibitory. If there are inclinations that do not meet the test, then they presumably are to be inhibited. The clue to solving this conundrum is given by Nietzsche’s final sentence in the quotation: we are talking here finally about exactly which inclinations are present. The process will be to use Active Memory in such a way that eventually the noble person only has the ‘right’ inclinations and intentions. Once that has been achieved, then no further inhibition is required and all of the inclinations that occur can be acted upon.

There is a connection between power and action. As Nietzsche writes<sup>43</sup> “the optimum” for “every animal” is “its path to power, to action”. Those who act thereby express the power to act. But it is also possible to be powerful and yet inactive. An imprisoned political leader remains powerful in some senses. Thus, power is about the potential to act rather than just the act. It is key though that the choice to act or not to act is solely in the discretion of the person we are calling powerful. The imprisoned politician may choose to remain imprisoned because it is the source of power. The person with Nietzsche’s binding memory has the potential to act, or

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<sup>43</sup>Nietzsche GM [2, III.7].

equally, to cause others to act. This is why they are powerful and why there is a connection between power and action. The mechanism is that the people who have been placed in ‘pleasant dependence’ will want to repeat whatever type of action it was that first pleased the person in possession of the binding memory. The possessor of the binding memory can cause repeated actions in others, possibly without even being present. On self-application of the binding memory, I argued that all of the inclinations which eventually occur must be acted upon if one is to be called powerful. But this just is power – an absence of *ressentiment* – because, as with the Masters, inclinations and intentions do not linger unfulfilled in Inhibitory Passive Memory. Active Memory is used to control *which* inclinations they are. Once the initial task of distrust of inclinations until they are properly selected is completed, Active Memory is freed from them.

Memory grants power over time in two ways, in a straightforward way and also more technically. Since Nietzsche values power via its valorising connection with activity, seeing that this is the case will provide further arguments for there being positive active aspects of memory. In the everyday way, memory provides the bridge between willing a particular action and seeing that action take place. The sense in which this represents power is that the strong at least can ordain a part of the future: that relating to their own actions. For Nietzsche, the ability to see that one acts as one has willed is a part of strength. This aspect of his thought is linked to his views on promise making, which I discuss next in this section. In the more technical way, this power over time may also be seen through the perspective of a parallel to the Doctrine Of Eternal Recurrence, to be discussed later – see §3.2.1.

We can see an active role for memory in the following remarks of Nietzsche on **promise making**. Only strong individuals, such as one of the Masters, need Active Memory for only they will be permitted to make promises: “this necessarily forgetful animal in whom forgetting represents a force, a form of *strong* health, has now bred in itself an opposite faculty, a memory, with whose help forgetfulness is disconnected for certain cases, – namely for those cases where a promise is to be made”.<sup>44</sup> Deleuze, in the context of a discussion of ‘culture considered from the prehistoric point of view’, distinguishes<sup>45</sup> the memory of ‘traces’ from that created for promise making, which is a ‘memory of the future’. A memory of traces is memory of the past, while the future memory is oriented towards the future, involving “commitment to the future” when the promise made will be acted upon. Only a man with a memory of the future is free, powerful and active. This is because only the powerful can in fact ensure that what they promise will come to pass; they will not be buffeted by circumstance. This is the distinction between Active and Passive Memory, of at least the Inhibitory sort. Luft

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<sup>44</sup>Nietzsche GM [2, II.1].

<sup>45</sup>Deleuze [13, p. 125].

notes<sup>46</sup> how memory permits promise-making which involves ordaining the future; again being strong enough to see that the promise is fulfilled. Acampora suggests<sup>47</sup> that promise making relies on the power of memory to overpower the opposing force of forgetting. Here, the memory of the promise is actively retained, unlike reactive absorption or inscription upon the weak of adventitious events. This is Active Memory because it is chosen and promotes activity in that once the promise is made, it must be acted upon to be fulfilled.

Nietzsche uses the term “memory of the will”<sup>48</sup> to describe a type of memory. This type must be active because the will is. This type of memory represents the bridge between the initial decision ‘I will’ and its discharge – its *act*, as Nietzsche describes it – so it could hardly fail to be active, at least in its input stage. Richardson proposes<sup>49</sup> to locate the faculty of agency *tout court* in the memory. It is argued that the memory capacity is what induces the whole organism to abide by commitments. This is termed ‘effective memory’, which we may identify as our Active Memory. The capacity works by restraining some of the drives, so we may see Active Memory makes up the psyche by deciding which drives will be expressed.

This memory of the will is solely active and healthy, because it concerns itself only with promise-making, the prerogative of the strong, who are active and healthy. Staten notes<sup>50</sup> the frequent opposition in Nietzsche of active vs. reactive, strong vs. weak, noble vs. slave – with the first and second terms correlated in each case. Nietzsche in every case evaluates the reactive negatively; as Conway writes<sup>51</sup>, Nietzsche has a “well-known antipathy to the operation of reactive forces”. By contrast, Nietzsche writes<sup>52</sup> in terms we noted on p. 26 that “the optimum” for “every animal” lies in “the most powerful activity”.

There are several references to a **contest between memory and forgetfulness** which support the claim that there are active elements of both; only active forces can really engage in conflict. Passive resistance does not constitute engagement in a contest: we would not speak of a conflict arising between a man pulling on a rope tied to a heavy weight and the weight, while we could in the analogous situation of a tug of war. The contest between memory and forgetfulness provides the creative tension driving morality. Acampora sees<sup>53</sup> the whole of GM II as the story of the emergence of morality from this conflict; elsewhere, she sees<sup>54</sup> consciousness as “resulting from the struggle between forces of (active) forgetting and remembering.

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<sup>46</sup>Luft [5, p. 140].

<sup>47</sup>Acampora [24, Ch. 9].

<sup>48</sup>Nietzsche GM [2, II.1].

<sup>49</sup>Richardson [25, p. 139].

<sup>50</sup>Staten [26, p. 72].

<sup>51</sup>Conway [16, p. 532].

<sup>52</sup>Nietzsche GM [2, III.7].

<sup>53</sup>Acampora [24, Ch. 9].

<sup>54</sup>Acampora [16, p. 321].

Some moral obligations force themselves into our memory while others do not; that leads to acts and omissions which have moral valency. This analysis again requires an active role for memory, because otherwise forgetting to do something could hardly incur moral blame. When we are blamed for such omissions, it means that we are in effect being blamed for in some way ‘choosing’ to forget. Nietzsche will see strength and value in those who actively control what they choose to forget and what they choose not to perform.

It has been observed that **bad conscience is founded on memory**, while Loeb goes further<sup>55</sup> and identifies the two concepts. One support for this is to note Nietzsche’s EH remark on GM II that its topic of conscience must be understood by considering the instinct of cruelty. When modern society prevents the instinct of cruelty from being discharged outwards, it will be discharged inwards. This will create a memory because one does not remember or even experience the pain of another. So only the internalisation of cruelty results in memory; after all, externally discharged cruelty *is* discharged and therefore need not be figure in memory at all. Later, Loeb paraphrases<sup>56</sup> Nietzsche as saying that human memory is an illness like pregnancy thus identifying the two and enabling the argument that the memory–illness needs to be intensified to pass the test of the Doctrine Of Eternal Recurrence. This need not mean that they are identical but that the latter is the foundation or ground of the former. We might say at least that memory is the substrate in which bad conscience exists.

We may form a view as to Nietzsche’s positive evaluation of this form of memory by further considering Nietzsche’s comment that bad conscience is an illness like pregnancy is an illness.<sup>57</sup> The value of both pregnancy and illness depends on their issue: what is born or whether the individual is strengthened. Further evidence for equating this memory type with bad conscience may be obtained by noting that this memory has two functions. It permits the binding of the future self because it allows the future self to remember the commitment. But Poole observes<sup>58</sup> that it will also punish the bound individual for failure to honour the commitment. Thus memory *is* conscience.

Ridley argues<sup>59</sup> that we may see an active, positive aspect to both memory and bad conscience. We should again avoid accepting *prima facie* evaluations, deriving in this case from the term ‘bad’. That is unsurprising, since we have not completed the revaluation of all values. This pregnancy that is bad conscience is positively evaluated by Nietzsche, with the implication that he values what it bears: its active consequences and ability to affirm the Doctrine. In the case of the Masters, bad conscience bears

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<sup>55</sup>Loeb [27, p. 83].

<sup>56</sup>Loeb [27, p. 91].

<sup>57</sup>Nietzsche GM [2, II.19].

<sup>58</sup>Poole [28, p. 270].

<sup>59</sup>Ridley [29, p. 7].

law, society and action. Ridley further observes<sup>60</sup> that the pregnancy that is bad conscience brings forth some of Nietzsche's most laudatory words but also that the negative form of bad conscience issues in *ressentiment*. So we need both aspects of memory, positive and negative, to map on to these forms of bad conscience.

Staten notices<sup>61</sup> that there is a 'good', active form of bad conscience in the Masters and a reactive form in the Slaves. Socialisation results in precedents which the Masters are bound by even though they have created them. The Slaves experience an economy of self-cruelty and *ressentiment*. Thus are born 'good' bad conscience in the former and the bad form in the latter, or in our terminology, Active and Passive Memory. This resolves a conflict between commentators as to whether bad conscience should be positively or negatively evaluated: both evaluations apply.<sup>62</sup>

A final argument for the existence of an active role for memory may be derived from the way that **use of Active Memory creates an effective self**. Nietzsche writes: "The creative force – replicating, forming, shaping, practicing – the type we represent is one of our options – we could be many more people – we have the material for it in us. – To see our kind of life and activity as a role – including the maxims and principles – we seek to present a type – instinctively – we select from our memory, we connect and combine the facts of memory."<sup>63</sup> This is a reference to active selection of what is useful from memory. This is a two-way relationship. Who I decide I am affects what I choose to be in my Active Memory and what is there and not deleted or blocked influences who I am. Sutton notes<sup>64</sup> this two-way relation. The self concept influences memory while the memory influences the actions of the self. In particular, decision-making and attributions of significance are driven by memory. It is also noted how in some people there is stronger and more direct feedback from self-representation into behaviour, which is close to our conception of Active Memory. We can therefore see the process as a pair of ongoing feedback loops, reinforcing each other.

These processes, constantly modifying one another, could scarcely be more active and less like the photograph model of memory. A more appropriate modern term for Nietzsche's view might be the 'Wikipedia' model of memory, in which there is constant flux, a myriad of motives and a constantly varying cast of drives or potential selves who compete for dominance. This mistaken metaphor has a long history. Sutton observes<sup>65</sup> the persistence, arbitrariness and unhelpfulness of the 'photographic memory' tendency in philosophy. He notes that all external technologies for recording

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<sup>60</sup>Ridley [29, p. 7].

<sup>61</sup>Staten [26, p. 73].

<sup>62</sup>Deleuze and Owen take opposite views on this question. Ridley [29, p. 8] proposes the resolution I suggest by finding both positive and negative aspects, so that both commentators are right.

<sup>63</sup>Nietzsche KSA [3, NF – 1884, 25(362)]. *Nachlaß*, my translation.

<sup>64</sup>Sutton [19, §1.2].

<sup>65</sup>Sutton [19, §2.1].

data through wax tablets, cameras and computers are arbitrarily wheeled in as an unsupported model for memory processes.

Goldie notes<sup>66</sup> how the constructive active aspect of memory can be driven not by changing *what* is remembered but by changing *how* it is remembered. Semantic memories may take on a different significance even if their strict content – the exact events remembered – remain unchanged. These changes will be driven by my current self-conception, which we agree may well be different now than previously. Nietzsche will insist that the self-conception is likely to be different because it has no stable substrate. Nietzsche will see this type of change and its frequency in our lives as good memory-based evidence for the lack of a fixed uncreated self. As a further example of this process, and one which also goes against the common claim that there is a fixed stable self in which we believe, consider the situation of young persons obtaining many visible tattoos. This is often deprecated by others on the grounds that the others are certain that the young person will later regret having conducted an irrevocable change in appearance. This amounts to a denial of a stable self.

This post-event Active Memory modification can take place one level back and have evaluative as well as affective significance. Margalit observes<sup>67</sup> that reevaluating emotions can take the Nietzschean form of valuing an emotion differently from the way it used to be valued. This is one further level back because not only have the events remembered not altered, but the immediate affects associated with them have also not altered. The value attached to those affects has changed. For example, I may decide that pity is a misguided emotion. I may then recall a previous occasion on which I acted with pity. I may maintain my account of events and continue to regard my actions as motivated by pity but now have revalued pity. This account has consequences that will mean that Active Memory ramifies through my values as they change and as my idea of myself changes.

Successful people choose who they are by choosing what they remember. Or they may delete a memory that does not fit with their current self-image, which aids their effectiveness in the present. The key point is that all of the contents of Active Memory are selected. This phenomenon is more widespread in life than might be thought, given that people generally believe they have little influence over the contents of their memories. I will restrict myself to two examples.

Sheehan discusses<sup>68</sup> a Vietnam-era Marine Lt-General, who was originally overconfident about US progress in that conflict. This General seemed to have genuinely forgotten the role he originally played, and this forgetfulness is described as being characteristic of the busy and powerful. This means not simply that busy people do not have time for reminiscence: it is the much more interesting and Nietzschean

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<sup>66</sup>Goldie [30, p. 202].

<sup>67</sup>Margalit [31, p. 140].

<sup>68</sup>Sheehan [32, p. 342].

claim that busy and effective people *are so* because they are not hobbled by unhelpful memories, especially those about themselves.

‘Moneyball’ is the story of how physically untalented baseball players can be more successful than much more physically gifted ones due to certain mental characteristics. The physically gifted failure speaks of the physically less gifted success as follows: ‘[h]e was able to instantly forget any failure and draw strength from every success. He had no concept of failure. And he had no idea where he was. And I was the opposite.’<sup>69</sup> As I argued on p. 22, forgetting is just an operation of Active Memory. In the example, we see both factors at work. What is useful is retained and what is not useful is not retained.

### Contrasts Between Active Memory And Passive Memory

The distinction between Active and Passive Memory is neatly summed up by Nietzsche, who writes: “there are acts of love and extravagant magnanimity after which nothing is more advisable than to take a stick and give the eyewitness a thrashing and so confuse his memory. Some know how to confuse and mistreat their own memory, so as to take revenge at least on this sole confidant”.<sup>70</sup> In the first case, the Passive Memory – Imposed and Inhibitory – of the onlooker is affected by the beating administered by the protagonist who has his own aims to pursue. In the second case, the protagonist is active in relation to his memory and selects accordingly. It is interesting that Nietzsche also sees one’s own memory as potentially in the role of hostile witness to one’s own activity; that would be the case only in those dominated by Passive – Inhibitory – Memory. Nietzsche will assert the necessity of active use of memory to avoid shame and thereby to promote activity and avoid the deadening effects of extant morality.

Memory aspects mark the difference between creative and derivative artists. The latter can use memory – Passive Memory – to mimic talent. “But if the original ones are abandoned by themselves, memory renders them no assistance; they become empty.”<sup>71</sup> Active Memory will mark the creative powers of original artists. In fact, elsewhere Nietzsche confirms that the *purpose* of art is to avoid the deadening effects of Passive Memory. He writes of several “great poets” that they are “often seeking with their exaggerations forgetfulness of an all too faithful memory”.<sup>72</sup> This equates Passive Memory with a pedestrian recording capability that is of no value, creatively. The success of these great poets is contrasted with the failure of ‘psychologists’, who are described in the same section as being “afraid of [...] memory”. Only someone dominated by Passive Memory will suffer thus, because only those people will be

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<sup>69</sup>Lewis [33, p. 46].

<sup>70</sup>Nietzsche BGE [8, §40].

<sup>71</sup>Nietzsche HA [6, ‘From the Soul of Artists and Writers’, §165].

<sup>72</sup>Nietzsche BGE [8, §269].



failing to take active control of the contents and use of their memories. This failure is symptomatic of all of us, in Nietzsche's diagnosis. He writes: "unpleasant memories suddenly assert themselves and we then make great efforts, through vehement noises and gestures, to banish them from our minds: but the noise and the gestures which are going on everywhere reveal that [...] we live in fear of memory".<sup>73</sup>

The distinction between Passive and Active Memory can be further illustrated with an example from literature. We know that Nietzsche regards Dostoyevsky as the only psychologist from whom he has something to learn; Lanvrin notes<sup>74</sup> that he confirms this in TI. It is also observed that Nietzsche is familiar with Notes from the Underground. The protagonist of this work is what we might term a monster of Passive Memory, consumed by *ressentiment*. His entire being comes to revolve around seeking revenge against others, including prominently an officer who has jostled him in the street. His *ressentiment* is only increased when he takes a mild revenge and finds that the officer is indifferent – the officer is less of a creature of Passive Memory. We are even told by Dostoyevsky that the type of memory possessed by his monster is passive. He writes: "[t]he images of the previous day began of themselves, apart from my will, fitting through my memory in confusion."<sup>75</sup> This is not the only mention of memory in the book which emphasises how what it brings to conscious awareness is not under the control of the rememberer. In this case, the Passive Memory is imposed by the officer – albeit not intentionally.

## 2.3 Organic Memory

Nietzsche recognises a non-standard physiological memory. This is confirmed when Nietzsche writes: "[t]here is no separate organ of "memory": all the nerves in, for example, the legs, remember past experiences. Every word, every number is the result of a physical process, and set somewhere in the nerves. All that was organised in the nerves, lives on in them."<sup>76</sup> We do not have memory confined to the human brain therefore; and we also have a claim that Organic Memory retains everything, in a further contrast to ordinary conceptions of memory wherein as we have seen Nietzsche sets great store on forgetting. The organic type of memory may even be the mark of the organic: Staten notes<sup>77</sup> that "[e]verything organic possesses "memory [...]".

Organic Memory reaches back into the past beyond the individual. As Nietzsche writes: "Memory has nothing to do with nerves or brain. It is a primal quality. For man carries the memory of all previous generations with him. The memory *image*

<sup>73</sup>Nietzsche UM III [1, 'Schopenhauer as educator', p. 159].

<sup>74</sup>Lanvrin [34, p. 160].

<sup>75</sup>Dostoyevsky [35, p. 62].

<sup>76</sup>Nietzsche KSA [3, NF – 1880, 2(68)]. *Nachlaß*, my translation.

<sup>77</sup>Staten [16, p. 567].

is something very artificial and *rare*.”<sup>78</sup> The word translated as ‘primal quality’ is in Nietzsche’s text *Ureigenschaft*. An ‘*Eigenschaft*’ is straightforwardly a property or quality, and the ‘*Ur-*’ modifier makes it refer to something basic or original. For example, the term *Urgermanisch* means Proto-Germanic and refers to the prehistoric ancestor of Germanic languages. This emphasises how Nietzsche sees memory as basic and primordial in humans and other organisms; all organisms will carry around with them items from the Organic Memory of all their ancestors. In humans, it would go back to primordial humans and presumably further, to apes and the other animals that were on the evolutionary path to humanity.

Nietzsche also introduces here the idea of a *Gedächtnißbild* or memory-picture, which is rare – that is consistent with his claim that an expanded type of memory is what makes humans special. Note also how this quotation shows that it is possible for organisms without brains or nerves to have a memory in Nietzsche’s terms. In fact, as we will see, memory is possible without consciousness and predates consciousness. It is plausible that this is what Nietzsche means by the term ‘original’ in the quotation above. Later – p. 36 – I discuss how he introduces the Mimosa plant, which can move, has memory in Nietzsche’s terms, but is not conscious, and does not have ‘memory with pictures’. This suggests that Nietzsche sees ‘consciousness’ as ‘memory with pictures’. We might even say that consciousness is ‘putting oneself in the picture’ on Nietzsche’s view. The ability to call to mind images from the past in which one figures certainly seems to require some awareness of one’s self, and that self-consciousness could be the origin of consciousness.

We have a problem though with this quotation in that there seems to be a contradiction between the two quotations as to whether memory is connected to nerves because the previous quotation says that it is not while the present one says it is. At first it might appear helpful that the term ‘memory’ appears in quotation marks in the first quotation but not in the second; we might be able to argue that in the first quotation Nietzsche is referring to something like memory, or the Organic type only. Unfortunately this way out does not seem to be available since it seems clear that Nietzsche means Organic Memory in both cases since both make reference to the atavism which is characteristic of Organic Memory only.

The only way to produce a consistent account is to distinguish between two types of nerves. The occurrence of ‘nerves’ is associated with the legs in the first quotation and the brain in the second. We may therefore assume that in the first case, Nietzsche means simple nerves which do nothing beyond carry impulses to the legs. In the second case, Nietzsche means the central nervous system and more complex controlling nerves which can perform basic regulatory functions and have some autonomy. The effect of this reading is to have Nietzsche associating Organic Memory with the non-brain

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<sup>78</sup>Nietzsche Early Notebooks [21, p. 140]. *Nachlaß*.

nerves and disassociating it from the brain. Nietzsche says the nerves ‘remember’ everything that they do. A concept of ‘muscle memory’ is known nowadays whereby it is possible, for example, for tennis players to practice strokes without moving, and Nietzsche may have in mind something similar but relating to the drives and their physiological instantiations.

This is a second type of memory which cannot be Individual Memory for three reasons. These are: that it is not restricted to humans but extends to animals and even plants; that it is physiologically based rather than a mental phenomenon; and that it reaches back to previous generations of humans. **Throughout this thesis, I will define Organic Memory as any use of memory in which any of the following markers are present: i). it is physiologically based; or ii). it is stored via experiences of events that did not take place during the lifetime of the rememberer or iii). it is available to life beyond humanity.** Note that on at least a physicalist picture of the mind, all memory is physiologically based. The distinction here is that Nietzsche has a wider view of ‘physiological’ in the physiological basis of memory than the brain.

The term Organic Memory is not used by Nietzsche, but is suggested by the following: “The origin of memory is the problem of the organic. How is memory possible? The emotions are symptoms of the formation of memory material.”<sup>79</sup> This connects the emotions to the formation of memories, which suggests that we are speaking of a more physiological type of memory than the usual conception. It links memory directly to the organic. Another reason to employ the term Organic Memory is not only that this is the name for a theory linking memory and heredity which was popular in the nineteenth century, but also that it was espoused by Lamarck, with whose work Nietzsche was familiar. Pratt notes<sup>80</sup> that Organic Memory was the Lamarckian idea that the experiences of one individual can be inherited by later generations. Since this theory is like the one that Nietzsche is describing and we know that he was familiar with Lamarck, it seems appropriate to adopt the term Organic Memory for the type that Nietzsche is using.

There is a coded reference to Organic Memory in a text published by Nietzsche which includes this reaching back to previous generations. Nietzsche writes: “[o]ne cannot erase out of the soul of a man what his ancestors have done most eagerly and most often . . . It is not at all possible that a man should *not* have in his body the qualities and preferences of his parents and ancestors – whatever appearances may say against this.”<sup>81</sup> This tells us that there are two factors which will lead to an events leaving traces in Organic Memory. It will not just be the sources of pleasure of the ancestors which continue to be active – via the drives, we may infer – but

<sup>79</sup>Nietzsche KSA [3, NF – 1884, 25(514)]. *Nachlaß*, my translation.

<sup>80</sup>Pratt [36, p. 343], reviewing Otis.

<sup>81</sup>Nietzsche BGE [8, §264].

also the frequency of an occurrence. The implication here is that there are events which happen many times despite the fact that they are not pleasurable. Here we may see the instinctive type of behaviour whereby someone today withdraws their hand from the flame before thinking about it. We are also told that the processes of Organic Memory may not be superficially obvious; we will need to look carefully for the re-emergence of the ancestors in atavistic behaviour.

Nietzsche means this Organic Memory type to extend also to plant life. Nietzsche sees memory as predating consciousness, which we will also need if we are to have memory for non-conscious life. Nietzsche writes: “The memory preserves the reflex movements that have taken place. Consciousness commences with the sensation of causality, i.e. memory is older than consciousness. E.g. in the Mimosa, we find memory but no consciousness. Memory of course involves no *image* in the plant.”<sup>82</sup> One immediate question here is why Nietzsche chooses to discuss a Mimosa plant rather than any other. The answer to this is to note that the Mimosa has the unusual characteristic of moving in response to stimuli in the same way as the Venus fly trap. Gamble states<sup>83</sup> that it is also known as the ‘sensitive plant’ for this reason. That author also cites Lamarck for some original work and again, we know Nietzsche is familiar with Lamarckian ideas in biology. So the plant has an Organic Memory as humans do. Its ability to close its leaves when touched to make it hard for predators to eat its leaves derives from an Organic Memory resulting from events that happened to ancestors of the plant. Nietzsche’s point is that humans also have this type of memory – and naturally, more besides. One implication he can draw from this is to render less distinct the boundary between humans and other forms of life, which would serve his anti-religious and related objectives.

This Organic Memory space transcends individual humans. There is a specific type of memory at work in relation to evolution: “There are analogies; e.g., a memory analogous to our memory that reveals itself in heredity and evolution and forms.”<sup>84</sup> So, Nietzsche thinks there is a memory space whose activity can be seen in heredity. Richardson notes<sup>85</sup> that memory is burned into pre-civilised humans as we have discussed, but also that this memory is fixed not by selection of those with memory, but by the acquisition of inheritable associations with pain. We cannot remember events in prehistory, but we can withdraw our hands from the flame in a reflex reaction. This reaction is in some sense a memory of pain suffered by individuals in prehistory when they encountered flame. This must be Organic Memory because non-human animals share those sorts of reflex. Lampert sees<sup>86</sup> this social selection as Nietzsche’s key advance on Darwinism. Social selection, on this view, is not genetic but proceeds

<sup>82</sup>Nietzsche Early Notebooks [21, p. 138]. *Nachlaß*.

<sup>83</sup>Gamble [37, p. 1].

<sup>84</sup>Nietzsche WP [4, p. 343]. *Nachlaß*.

<sup>85</sup>Richardson discusses [2, II] at [38, p. 541].

<sup>86</sup>Lampert [39, p. 174], reviewing Richardson.

in a memory space involving language and consciousness.

Organic Memory operates over long timescales to lay down archetypal projections. Parkes notes<sup>87</sup> that for Nietzsche, memory operates over many generations resulting in collective structures of fantastic projection. This explains why even though we all to a large extent fabricate our own experience, we seem often to have similar experiences in similar circumstances. This form of memory must be Organic Memory since Individual Memory cannot operate over times longer than the lifetimes of individuals. These projections are arbitrary reflections of the drives. Nietzsche writes: “[o]ur waking life is an interpretation of the internal behaviour of drive processes made with the help of the memory of everything perceived and seen: an arbitrary visual language thereof, like dreaming of sensations while asleep.”<sup>88</sup> Once again, we have a reference to memory as some form of picture, with the term ‘arbitrary visual language’ though it is clear that Nietzsche thinks the ‘picture-language’ which we wilfully associate with the operation of drives within us is no more tied to external reality than imagining sensations while dreaming. Memory is the location of this self-deception.

Nietzsche writes: “One must revise one’s ideas about memory: here lies the chief temptation to assume a “soul,” which, outside time, reproduces, recognises, etc. But that which is experienced lives on “in the memory”; I cannot help it if it “comes back”.<sup>89</sup> Here the argument is that if there is to be a self in the usually understood manner, then it must be the site of the will. Since, however, memory seems to be as much outside of our conscious control as thoughts are – meaning that we can generally neither decide when or what to think or when or what to remember – then will is not part of the explanation of memory’s activity. Because it does function however to recall similar experiences, and this is an act, we falsely posit an actor, a self, to accompany the action. This illusory self was discussed on p. 19. Nietzsche places the term ‘comes’ in quotation marks to indicate that there is not really an arrival from one location to another here, or at least, that it is not the one we might think. The memory is the memory of the drives, and they may decide to bring it to ‘my’ attention. There is also a parallel here – with the way that the memory is not under the control of the rememberer – to the Dostoyevskian involuntary nature of memory mentioned on p. 33. Staten also suggests a parallel to the drives having memory when he notes<sup>90</sup> that “units of force must retain a “memory” of previous interactions with other units.”

Staten sees<sup>91</sup> Nietzsche as applying the economy of drives view in which all life is a non-moral pattern of interacting forces, to human individuals as well as human society, because the Will to Power is operative within as well as between individuals.

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<sup>87</sup>Parkes [40, p. 17].

<sup>88</sup>Nietzsche KSA [3, NF – 1880, 6(81)]. *Nachlaß*, my translation.

<sup>89</sup>Nietzsche WP [4, p. 274]. *Nachlaß*.

<sup>90</sup>Staten [16, p. 573].

<sup>91</sup>Staten [26, p. 68].

This may be made more plausible by comparing it to the physics claim that energy transactions take place both at the level of human cells and of stars. Nietzsche shares with Bergson the view that a form of memory is what distinguishes life from matter, as I will discuss further below. This is because life is the resultant of a conflict of forces – of different aspects of the Will to Power, in Nietzsche’s terms – and memory is where this conflict plays out. As Nietzsche writes: “[i]t’s necessary to reconsider everything one has learned about memory: it is the mass of all that has been lived by all organic life, which continues to live, is organised, is formed by a reciprocal action, is subject to inner struggles”.<sup>92</sup> This must be Organic Memory because it extends beyond humans. Haar argues<sup>93</sup> that the organic living body represents an “absolute memory” which is in some way the summation of the individual competing drives within an organism. Also, organic life is ‘incorporation’ for Nietzsche, and ‘incorporation’ is a Nietzsche code word for memory. Again, this cannot refer to Individual Memory since the sphere of organic life is much larger than that of humanity.

Organic Memory seems only to have a positive valuation for Nietzsche, further distinguishing it from Individual Memory. Since as I have argued above, activity is Nietzsche’s valorisation, for him to give Organic Memory a negative evaluation would involve him seeing it as inhibitory. There is no evidence for that. Bertram observes<sup>94</sup> that Nietzsche allots to memory the important aristocratic task of preserving cultural heritage. Nietzsche also views those individuals possessing the most or the strongest memory as being rulers by necessity and derives this from his theory of ‘biological memory’. The mission of those castes that conserve a people is to maintain the possibility of the rare person who embodies the most distant biological memory. The rarest people are the people with the longest inner memory. The consequence of Nietzsche’s giving primacy to biological memory is that the most atavistic person is necessarily a ruler. We may equate biological memory to Organic Memory since it is not Individual Memory that is under discussion here and also it reaches back in time beyond the individual. An atavistic person is one who exhibits characteristics of previous generations; here Nietzsche is hoping that Organic Memory will still allow persons today to have some of the character he admired in ancient civilisations.

Consciousness possesses only the illusion of being in command of the drives and the body; only a momentarily successful drive will rise to consciousness. This may be responsible for what Nietzsche sees as the unfounded belief in free will of those who have not affirmed the Doctrine Of Eternal Recurrence: the ‘ruling class’ has identified itself with the successes of the state. So we can also distinguish Organic Memory from the other types of memory by noting that Organic Memory is what allows the drives to ‘remember’; which will be necessary if they are to continue to be

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<sup>92</sup>Nietzsche KSA [3, NF – 1884, 26(94)]. *Nachlaß*, my translation.

<sup>93</sup>Haar [41, p. 78].

<sup>94</sup>Bertram [12, p. 25].

successfully expressed.

François and Lapidus ask<sup>95</sup> how both Nietzsche and Bergson were led to identify life with memory. This can only be a reference to a non-standard type of memory, because there is non-human life. François and Lapidus hold<sup>96</sup> that for both Nietzsche and Bergson, what distinguishes life from matter is that the former is memory. This tells us that Nietzsche is not alone among philosophers in ascribing a fundamental importance to memory. As Nietzsche writes: “inorganic matter, despite the fact that in many cases it was once organic, has learned nothing, it is always without a past! If it were otherwise, there could never be repetition, for something would always be born from matter, with new qualities, with a new past.”<sup>97</sup>

Here we find that inorganic matter has learned nothing, so we know that it has no memory. This strongly suggests that organic matter – i.e. life – differs from inorganic matter in that it has indeed learned something; it does have a memory. Nevertheless, this is not a feature of the exact matter involved, because this new memory feature of organic matter emerges despite the fact that organic matter contains matter that until recently was often inorganic – this again is a reference to the physical incorporation of the external, which is for Nietzsche closely related to memory. The argument for this is that if it were otherwise, reconfiguration of inorganic matter could produce an item with a new past. This would eliminate ‘repetition’, by which Nietzsche means inorganic matter configured in the same way as on a previous occasion, since that reconfiguration would produce an item with a memory – in our wider sense – which would be different so that the item would differ even from other items configured from the same matter. This repetition argument is consistent with the argument discussed in §3.2.1 supporting the Doctrine of Eternal Recurrence with the claims that matter – or energy – is finite while time is infinite.

Scott argues<sup>98</sup> that Nietzsche recognises a memory type – ‘physiological memory’ – which we may identify with our Organic Memory. This kind of memory gives dominance to a past inscribed in our languages, values and bodies, and lived in feelings of significance. These feelings are generated in physiological memory, the place of a culture’s primary transmission. Nietzsche sees these powerful memories as fictions since they undercut what we traditionally expect truth to be. They are not a basis for believing in objective facts. So the Organic Memory may in fact be said to make the past ‘dominant’ in our current experience. To this extent, our experience is fabricated or falsified; we perceive as others did. Since the drives see what they want to see, as it were, the basis of objectivity is lost.

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<sup>95</sup>François and Lapidus [42, p. 104].

<sup>96</sup>François and Lapidus [42, p. 103].

<sup>97</sup>Nietzsche KSA [3, NF – 1881,12(15)]. *Nachlaß*, François and Lapidus translation.

<sup>98</sup>Scott [43, p. 69].





## Chapter 3

# The Role Of Nietzsche's Memory Types

Von einem nicht irrenden  
Gedächtniß kann ebenso wenig als  
von einem absolut zweckmäßigen  
Handeln der Naturgesetze die  
Rede sein. NF-1872, 19 [163]

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I will argue that the memory typology I have set out allows a new understanding of some of Nietzsche's themes. Those themes are and the early ones of Dionysos and Apollo and the Doctrine of Eternal Recurrence together with the linked topics of the *Übermensch* and the revaluation of all values. The first part of the Chapter, §3.1, is an examination the themes of Dionysos and Apollo. In §3.1.1, I discuss Nietzsche's claims in BT on the topic, as they relate to memory. Then in §3.1.2 I show how an understanding of Nietzsche's memory typology throws new light on the themes. In the second half of the Chapter, I will start by outlining the Doctrine in §3.2.1. Since the Doctrine is difficult to accept, and has been questioned by many commentators, I will need to show that it is nevertheless important to Nietzsche. I will therefore address the question as to whether Nietzsche is serious about the Doctrine in that section. I will conclude that Nietzsche is serious about the Doctrine; while he does not necessarily put it forward as a truth claim, it can nevertheless be one of his important topics. It can be significant as a mythological test whether true or false, and irrespective of whether Nietzsche believes it. This permits us to take seriously Nietzsche's claims that *Z* is his most important work containing his most important themes. Also if this is so, and a memory typology elucidates it, then that typology is all the more significant. I will then outline the concept of the *Übermensch* in §3.2.2. I

discuss the importance of memory typology in understanding these themes in §3.2.3.

## 3.1 Dionysos Versus Apollo

### 3.1.1 Nietzsche's Claims In BT

BT is Nietzsche's first published work, written when he was aged 26 and still under the strong influence of Schopenhauer. It is possible then that his views on memory were different later in his career. I will argue to the contrary, by showing his memory typology is already informing his work in BT. Then I show that we can gain a new understanding of Nietzsche's discussion of the Dionysian and Apollonian drives in BT by using the typology of memory that I have developed.

Nietzsche's opening question in BT is posed in the new preface he added in 1886: he asks: “[w]hat purpose was served by Greek art?”.<sup>1</sup> His response is that it served to distract the Greeks from the nihilistic threats he sees as ever-present and that always tend to produce paralysis. These nihilistic threats are the questions that seem to suggest themselves to everyone – almost the questions that cause philosophy to be done – like asking what is the point of existence and what is the source of value. The threat is that these questions seem to have either no answers or no answers which can be justified other than by simply choosing them. While we all act as if this were not the case, we do so largely either by pretending that the problem does not exist or assigning rather arbitrarily a certain value to various pursuits. This is the same ‘valorisation’ problem we discussed in §2.1.1. These problems in ancient Greek society are of interest in themselves to Nietzsche, but his diagnosis is the same for modern society. Nietzsche's answer is also given in the new preface. His response to the problem of valorisation is, famously, that “only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* is existence and the world eternally *justified*”.<sup>2</sup> Since Nietzsche values activity, he sees the avoidance of what we might term the ‘paralysis of pointlessness’ as central to the continued development of mankind. Only art can do this, as a “saving sorceress” needed precisely “at this moment of supreme danger for the will.”<sup>3</sup> At the time of writing BT, Nietzsche was still under the spell of Wagner, and hoped that the art form which would distract and activate was music. By contrast, the particular art form that he thought distracted the Greeks and made them active was tragic art: the theatre or its precursors. Tragic art emerged from the synthesis of two opposed drives of central importance for Nietzsche. Again, while Nietzsche is in principle discussing ancient Greek society, his analysis of drives is timeless and so will apply to us as well. These drives were the Dionysian and the Apollonian; I discuss each in turn.

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<sup>1</sup>Nietzsche BT [44, p. 4].

<sup>2</sup>Nietzsche BT [44, p. 8].

<sup>3</sup>Nietzsche BT [44, p. 40].

What is Dionysian? The Dionysian drive is “best conveyed by the analogy of *intoxication*”.<sup>4</sup> We may understand this widely to include physical intoxication from psychoactive substances but also ecstatic self-obliterating mental states induced in behavioural ways. There are many examples of this to be found, in fields as varied as the military training that makes a group of persons like a machine to meditating communities of monks: in many such situations, the communal supersedes the individual. Note that it is just an *analogy* with intoxication. Nietzsche is not suggesting that it is desirable to be frequently under the influence, but he does wish to recognise the creativity that can flow from a change to a wider perspective. In ancient Greece, the Dionysian intoxication and motivation came about via the tragic chorus. Nietzsche speaks of the dithyrambic chorus, which ecstatically sings songs in honour of Dionysos in a specifically frenzied fashion, in contrast with ‘solemn processions’ dedicated to other gods like Apollo. As Nietzsche writes: “[t]he *chorus* of Greek tragedy [is] the symbol of the entire mass of those affected by Dionysian excitement”.<sup>5</sup> All citizens may participate in the chorus and thus all are immunised from asceticism.

The Apollonian drive is opposed to the Dionysian in some ways and in others similar. The two are in a creative tension. Nietzsche links dreaming to the Apollonian. He writes: “let us think of [these two drives] [...] as the separate art-worlds of *dream* and *intoxication*.”<sup>6</sup> The use of the term art – which in Nietzsche means selection and creation – is significant. Both drives are ‘selectively artistic’, so they are both active. But they act in different realms. Dreams are the active operation of fantasy or imagination. Intoxication promotes activity by being uninhibitory. Nietzsche’s claim is that the Apollonian drives give line and form and “logical causality”<sup>7</sup> to the unformed Dionysian frenzy.

The two together can result in a creative synthesis of energy and direction. We may see the opposition between the Dionysian and the Apollonian as similar to Schopenhauer’s division of the world into Will and Representation.<sup>8</sup> The world on this view is really one and unified; the appearance of separation and individuation is illusory. The Apollonian illusions are form-giving. However, under Dionysian intoxication, there is a loss of the sense of being an individual. The Greeks had art forms of both types. Choral dancing was Dionysian. Homeric epic poems were Apollonian, in that in their stories there was a proliferation of individuals, and it was the individuals who mattered: the poems had a hero. In this way, the poems moved away from unity and towards falsehood. Tragic art subsequently harmonises both and thus combines the Dionysian and the Apollonian. But Socrates requires reasons for acting, definitions, discursive individual characters: in short, deliberation is promoted over action.

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<sup>4</sup>Nietzsche BT [44, p. 17].

<sup>5</sup>Nietzsche BT [44, p. 44].

<sup>6</sup>Nietzsche BT [44, p. 14].

<sup>7</sup>Nietzsche BT [44, p. 19].

<sup>8</sup>Schopenhauer [45].

The sequence of events is that “*tragedy arose from the tragic chorus*”<sup>9</sup> and that both tragic forms result from a synthesis of the two drives. As Nietzsche writes: “every artist is an ‘imitator’, and indeed either an Apolline dream-artist or a Dionysian artist of intoxication or finally – as, for example in Greek tragedy – an artist of both dream and intoxication at once.”<sup>10</sup> Here we see how the original synthesis of the two drives is creative, artistic and active. The creativity is qualified though, since it is held to be derivative or imitative. The lack of originality is not what concerns Nietzsche. Creating the new is not the source of value – as befits the author of the Doctrine of Eternal Recurrence. Creativity and activity are the keys to value for him.

This leads to the explanation of what went wrong if the Greeks had solved the paralysing problems of nihilism. Analysis does not provide the same reassurance as tragedy; and Socrates the theoretical man supersedes the tragic man. For the theoretical man, all information is to be retained because it may improve a theory, while for the tragic man, only some information is to be selected and moulded and always with a view to its use. The approach carries over from the theatre to life. An artistic selective approach is as useful and necessary for the playwright constructing a piece as for the ordinary Greek living his life – as literature – and for the same reasons. Since, as we said earlier, life and existence can only be justified as aesthetic phenomena, and selection is to be made on aesthetic basis, the victory of the theoretical approach over the tragic approach means the loss of this justification. Nietzsche is not recommending that we dissolve ourselves into the Dionysian through, for example, being frequently intoxicated. There is nothing active about that. His call is for us to choose the tragic approach; to make an active choice to be active. Some choose to step into the tragedy.

### 3.1.2 Links To Memory

Nietzsche associates the Dionysian with forgetting. In a description of what occurs under intoxication or spring-inspired lust for life; Nietzsche writes that “Dionysiac stirrings [...] cause subjectivity to vanish to the point of complete self-forgetting”.<sup>11</sup> Note that it is partial forgetting that is mentioned – only the individual is forgotten. Later, he writes: “the Dionysian state, in which the usual barriers and limits of existence are destroyed, contains, for as long as it lasts, a *lethargic* element in which all personal experiences from the past are submerged.”<sup>12</sup> This suggests that Nietzsche

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<sup>9</sup>Nietzsche BT [44, p. 36].

<sup>10</sup>Nietzsche BT [44, p. 19].

<sup>11</sup>Nietzsche BT [44, p. 17].

<sup>12</sup>Nietzsche BT [44, p. 40]. Note that Nietzsche does not mean ‘lethargic’ to include any associations with tiredness or laziness. Instead, as Lützel [46, p. 205] writes: “Lethe” [is an] “underworldly river of forgetting”. Lützel [46, p. 206] also notes that Nietzsche favours a “throwing away of memory-ballast, an art of forgetting” (my translation) which is consistent with our claims here. Note that ‘throwing away’ is without doubt an active use of memory. Also, it will be clear to

means the process to be from the dissolution of the illusion that there is an individual self to the forgetting of the memories associated with that self. We might see the use of the metaphor of submersion in the river of forgetting as an indication that all Dionysian ‘individuals’ are submerged together; they forget their personal memories at the same time as they forget themselves because there is no longer an – illusory – individual self to which to attach those personal memories.

The particular way in which the ancient Greeks underwent self-forgetting in the chorus is also noted. Nietzsche writes: “the dithyrambic chorus is a chorus of transformed beings who have completely forgotten their civic past and their social position; they have become timeless servants of their god.”<sup>13</sup> The use of the term ‘timeless’ confirms that the Dionysian does not have a memory, as I discuss below. A self-chosen identity is all-encompassing for the moment. Nietzsche – and Schopenhauer – will see this as approaching a truth by means of divestment of an illusion. We can easily recognise a phenomenon here that continues to be seen today of persons constantly submerging themselves in groups: universities, families, churches, sports fans. They forget themselves in study, vicarious living, prayer, chanting.

Nietzsche describes the results of the Dionysian experience, and in particular the effects of returning to daily life afterwards – which we may understand now as a return to memory, since the Dionysian state involves forgetting. He writes: “as soon as daily reality re-enters consciousness, it is experienced as such with a sense of revulsion; the fruit of these states is an ascetic, will-negating mood”.<sup>14</sup> Nietzsche describes this as ‘the lesson of Hamlet’, meaning that knowledge kills action. This we may understand as ‘memory kills action’. More precisely, *Passive* Memory of at least the Inhibitory type kills action, as we discussed in §2.2.1. The use of ‘as such’ distinguishes the meaning of the sentence from what it would be without the inclusion of the phrase. Daily reality does not only produce revulsion; its evulsion is enhanced by the fact that it is daily and thus inescapable. The problem is that action becomes repulsive for “it can do nothing to change the eternal essence of things”.<sup>15</sup>

The question, as mentioned above, is why we should act at all, since nothing fundamental will be changed by it and the results of everything we do will likely be minimal. It is hard to say what of significance would have changed for the universe were the earth to be destroyed in a supernova. Some such dreary fate is doubtless the unavoidable destiny of the earth, which does indeed make Nietzsche’s question pressing: why do anything at all under such circumstances? Nietzsche must solve that problem because of the way he positively values activity. This threat is the same as the threat of nihilism that he is acutely aware of. The response is that

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Nietzsche that an art of forgetting must be active because art is selection and selection is active.

<sup>13</sup>Nietzsche BT [44, p. 43].

<sup>14</sup>Nietzsche BT [44, p. 40].

<sup>15</sup>Nietzsche BT [44, p. 40].

existence is justified only aesthetically. We may understand this to apply to our lives as well. What is required is an active artistic use of memory for selective purposes: as Nehamas suggests,<sup>16</sup> life as literature. Nietzsche even gives us himself as an example. Again in the new preface, he describes his earlier self when writing BT as having had “a memory brimming over with questions, experiences, hidden things to which the name Dionysos had been appended as one more question mark”.<sup>17</sup> This tells us exactly what the Active Memory prescription is in Nietzsche’s case. Everyone must choose – actively – their own values. For Nietzsche, his artistically selected life will be one of asking questions. He will refuse to allow Passive Memory to paralyse him with the dull insistent repetition of the pointlessness of all questions, all questioning and all things – this doctrine is true but deadly. Dionysian forgetting, the intoxication of questioning, will push him forward. We must use our own memories actively to forget the pointlessness as well.

There is a further reference to the problem of Passive Memory when Nietzsche with some approval cites Schopenhauer, on the ‘lyrical state’ – this we may identify with Nietzsche’s Dionysian state. Schopenhauer writes that entry into this state provides a short period of peaceful contemplation from which “willing, desire, the recollection of our personal aims”<sup>18</sup> will quickly remove us. This will be Passive Memory in its Imposed Memory form in accordance with the definition supplied on p. 17 – the rememberer is not choosing to leave the lyrical or Dionysian state but is forced to. Schopenhauer’s solution is negation of the will, but it is this asceticism that is directly criticised by Nietzsche. The function is from will to desires to aims via memory: I will be tormented by the aims I have not achieved that are stored in my Passive Memory. Schopenhauer seeks to break the chain by negating the first step. Nietzsche sees the chain as unavoidable and indeed will promote the will, becoming as it does in his work the Will to Power, which is active and positively expressed. He will change the chain at the other end of the process – active selection of aims in Active Memory and the use of Active Memory to forget whatever is not useful for the process of goal-creation and self-creation.

A closing reference to the value of forgetting in BT emphasises the importance in the Dionysian of the active choice of what to forget. Nietzsche links Dionysian music with the tragic myth, and holds that in the tragic myth, one may “forget that which is most painful”.<sup>19</sup> That which is most painful is the nihilistic sense that activity, life and world are all pointless. Note that this must be actively forgotten because it cannot be disproved – it is in fact true for Nietzsche. So the only possible approach is to develop accommodations which promote activity.

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<sup>16</sup>Nehamas [47, passim].

<sup>17</sup>Nietzsche BT [44, p. 6].

<sup>18</sup>Nietzsche BT [44, p. 32].

<sup>19</sup>Nietzsche BT [44, p. 115].

There is evidence in a late notebook, from 1888, that Nietzsche continues to consider the themes he addressed in BT. A section entitled “Basic insight: what is beautiful and ugly” ends with the summation “Art in the Birth of Tragedy”. Nietzsche writes: “[i]n instinct and memory a tremendous amount of material is piled up: we have a thousand different signs which betray to us the degeneracy of the type. Wherever there is an allusion to exhaustion, fatigue, weight, age, or lack of freedom, spasms, decomposition, decay, there speaks only our lowest value judgment: because man hates the ugly . . . What he hates here is always the decline of his type. This hatred is the whole philosophy of art.”<sup>20</sup>

It may appear at first as though Nietzsche means ‘type’ to refer anaphorically to ‘instinct and memory’ which are after all the subject of the sentence. Its import would then be that we have a thousand signs indicating the degeneracy of ‘instinct and memory’. A better interpretation is suggested however by the recurrence of the word type (“*Typus*”) later in the text to refer to the ‘type’ of humans i.e. a biological class. So Nietzsche is here referring not to the degeneracy of instinct and memory, but to the degeneracy of the biological type of man that is demonstrated by the piling up of useless, inactive material in instinct and Passive Memory. The central message is that all of the various negative situations that Nietzsche lists are in fact negatively valued by us at root because they are all ugly or lead to ugliness. This reminds us that active selection in memory of the beautiful – which can also mean the functional or the artistic – is what Nietzsche recommends. Again we have a reference to the aesthetic justification of life. We can also see Organic Memory playing a role here since it is the physiological type – i.e. of mankind – that is in question. This is also indicated by Nietzsche’s ability to have instinct and memory together as the subject of his sentence.

The Dionysian and the Apollonian are two opposing forces of nature which express themselves in us as instincts, and that these were successfully unified in early Greek society to produce tragic art, which is way of dealing with the terror and horror of existence. The advent of Socrates was then a backward step, because the tragic understanding was replaced by a theoretical understanding. Winfree argues<sup>21</sup> that the loss of tragedy takes place with the emergence of the book or novel, which has not only forgotten how to forget but has also forgotten this forgetting. Nietzsche takes the view that the novel as an art-form originated with Plato. The novel is a passive form of memory. While tragic art is also a form of memory, it is a more active one. And the Dionysian participation in tragic art in the form of the chorus is most definitely active. Socrates supersedes Active Memory in the form of taking part in tragedy: this recalls Nietzsche’s insistence on the crucial importance of the chorus, which blurs the distinction between audience and actor to which we are now completely acculturated.

<sup>20</sup>Nietzsche KSA [3, NF – 1888, 16(40)]. *Nachlaß*, my translation.

<sup>21</sup>Winfree [48, p. 60].

Nietzsche's point is that in a mode of life in which Active Memory dominates, *life* is itself an ongoing element of the tragic art. Indeed, we may read the victory of the theoretical man over the tragic man as being a victory of Passive Memory over Active Memory or the victory of the state via imposition of Passive Memory over the active individual using Active Memory for his own ends.

It will be too quick to identify the Dionysian with forgetting and the Apollonian with memory; we have already noted that in fact an altered function of memory is common to both. In addition, there is evidence to associate the Apollonian also with forgetting. Winfree claims<sup>22</sup> that in considering the Socratic decline that is the subject of BT, it is a matter of remembering that forgetting which is constitutive of the Apollonian, and which is forgotten with the advent of dialectic. Here the reference to 'that forgetting' is equivalent to a confirmation that there are different types of forgetting and that not all of them are to be associated with the Apollonian. What is forgotten in the Apollonian state could be the knowledge that individuation is illusory – to this extent, the Apollonian is opposed to the Dionysian in which state we remember the primitive unity. It could not be, for example, a forgetting of conventional morality, because Nietzsche places that in the Dionysian column while ethics, measure and limit fall on the Apollonian side.

It transpires that commentators have implicitly identified both active and passive types of forgetting in relation to the Dionysian state, confirming we need the typology to understand how memory and the Dionysian interact. As Kaufmann usefully suggests,<sup>23</sup> Nietzsche's message in BT is that the horrors of history – i.e. the contents of memory in the individual – will have different effects on the strong and the weak. The former will become active and creative (of beauty) while the latter will negate life. This is exactly our distinction between Active and Passive Memory. Kaufmann later conceives<sup>24</sup> BT as already involving the supra-historical perspective Nietzsche discusses in UM, and defines that as involving the consideration of historical events and figures more for symbolic value – i.e. for activity promoting qualities – than for literal accuracy.

It will be useful to establish which aspect of forgetting commentators are associating with the Dionysian. There is an active aspect to forgetting which is a reflection of the operation of Active Memory. A decision is made which has the effect of forgetting, whether this is to remember something else instead or to adjust what is 'retrieved' in order to make it more useful or less harmful. Passive forgetting is less directed but nevertheless useful. It allows us to avoid retention of the large amounts of storable input that would otherwise be overwhelming. In addition, there will be decay effects where data that has not been used much will be more susceptible to loss than

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<sup>22</sup>Winfree [48, p. 60].

<sup>23</sup>Kaufmann [7, p. 143].

<sup>24</sup>Kaufmann [7, p. 153].



otherwise.

Acampora straightforwardly links<sup>25</sup> forgetting to the Dionysian, with the implication that it is an active mode that is meant. Forgetting does not eliminate but grants experience, because too much remembering results in experience without pause and reduces the options for action. The fact that the absence of this active mode of forgetting removes possibilities for action links the Active Forgetfulness I discussed on p. 22 to activity itself. As argued previously, passive persons will not act as much as active ones, because passive persons do not use memory actively to foster activity while the opposite is true for active persons. Acampora further illustrates<sup>26</sup> the typology and the link with the observation that forgetting is an important condition for experience. Experience is made possible by taking some away and by encouraging some to fade. This amounts to an implicit specification of passive and active modes of forgetting: ‘to encourage’ something is to take action in relation to it while ‘taking something away’ allows for a passive, non-agential process in which the forgetting occurs without explicit active direction.

Gambino proposes<sup>27</sup> a complex view of memory and the Dionysian, which we can disentangle using both the passive and active modes. There is a distinction between a fragile ‘poetic memory’ and a more robust type that can underpin the state’s requirements of who the individual should be. The state sees the imposition of memory as needed because the poetic memory needs reinforcement against the powerful Dionysian drive towards forgetfulness. The state plays a role in combatting this fragility. Gambino argues<sup>28</sup> that it does so by constructing an Apollonian bulwark against the onslaught of forgetfulness. Unlike in the case of poetic memory, the state could use violence to reinforce the memory type it needs.<sup>29</sup>

We may understand this role of the polis as an imposition of either subtype of Passive Memory as in the GM account. The Apollonian is opposed to the Dionysian in terms of memory. It will be too simplistic though to align the Dionysian with forgetting and the Apollonian with remembering; not least because these oppositions are much more complex on our passive and active typology. Dionysian instincts threaten the polis as much as assist it. Gambino argues<sup>30</sup> that the Dionysian is linked to the restoration of memory as well as forgetfulness. This is because the Dionysian oneness recalls the concealed truth about the criminal and violent origins of the polis. There is a forgetting of the self in the Dionysian state. Since Nietzsche thinks the self and individuation are illusory, this will represent a closer approach to the truth or

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<sup>25</sup>Acampora [24, p. 159].

<sup>26</sup>Acampora [24, p. 159].

<sup>27</sup>Gambino [49, p. 420].

<sup>28</sup>Gambino [49, p. 421].

<sup>29</sup>Gambino holds that the type of memory imposed is a collective type, but I will deny in Chapter 4 that Nietzsche recognises such a type.

<sup>30</sup>Gambino [49, p. 429].

alternatively a renewed memory of the primal unity. Our conclusion from the views of these commentators can only be that we need to be aware of and consider both the active and passive modes of forgetting and memory to understand the Dionysian.

Thomas notes<sup>31</sup> that “neither the Apollonian nor the Dionysian have a memory” meaning that when dreaming or intoxicated, we do not consider the consequences of our actions or even remember that there will be consequences. This will represent for Nietzsche a successful escape from the paralysis of Passive Memory. The way this works is that neither dreams nor the experience of underlying unity take place in time, they transcend temporality by excluding the past. It is suggested that this allows for the emergence of ‘tragic time’ in which experience collapses into the present moment; this would be a disconnection of the entire memory problem. Since Nietzsche views the tragic outlook as superior, we can see again that the successful fusion of the Dionysian and the Apollonian is another way of addressing the paralysis induced by excessive Passive Memory.

Modern man following Socrates has forgotten how to forget: he has lost touch with both the Dionysian and the Apollonian – and also tragedy as their synthesis; he has also become a monster of Passive Memory. As mentioned above – see p. 44 – Socrates is the symbol of the theoretical man superseding the tragic man. Socrates is an appropriate adversary for Nietzsche in the field of memory. Socrates puts forward the doctrine of anamnesis, whereby all knowledge is recollection, as a “glorious truth”.<sup>32</sup> The soul: “is able to call to remembrance all that [it] ever knew about virtue, and about everything”.<sup>33</sup> Memory is also what makes the difference between true belief and knowledge in Plato’s account that that difference is akin to the fastening to a fixed location of moving statues.<sup>34</sup> We also know that this means that for Plato, memory is what provides the ‘account’ or *logos* that makes the same difference, so here we may recall Zarathustra’s saying he may not be asked for his reasons – see p. 56. Nietzsche’s account of memory and its best uses is set in opposition over against Plato’s. This all-encompassing, unselective, unartistic memory is an estrangement from nature. That is Nietzsche’s diagnosis of the diseased state of modern culture. So, since Active Forgetfulness is active use of memory, Nietzsche’s fundamental message is that lack of Active Memory is at the root of the problem of modern culture.

The claim finds support elsewhere. Wollheim sees<sup>35</sup> Active Forgetfulness of the first remembered as a central therapeutic idea in the early stages of Freud’s thought. It is claimed that when Freud regarded memory as the pathogenic factor, therapy was for him the retrieval and dissolution of memories. This could also be seen as the recovery and then the forgetting of remembered events. This reminds us that the

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<sup>31</sup>Thomas [50, p. 123].

<sup>32</sup>Plato [51, p. 56].

<sup>33</sup>Plato [51, p. 57].

<sup>34</sup>Plato [51, p. 90].

<sup>35</sup>Wollheim [18, p. 227].

repressed is not the remembered and it must first be brought to light before it can be expunged. Such therapy is supposed lead to a healthy outcome. Poole notes<sup>36</sup> that: “[f]or Nietzsche, this active form of forgetting is an expression of “robust health”.” Note that the form of forgetting is specified to be an active type – this confirms that Active Memory is at work.

## 3.2 Doctrine And *Übermensch*

### 3.2.1 Doctrine Of Eternal Recurrence

#### What Does The Doctrine Claim?

The Doctrine is the claim that we will all live our lives exactly the same in every detail an infinite number of times. This will include all of the painful and all of the pleasurable incidents in exactly the same way. The Doctrine first appears in GS where Nietzsche writes of an individual identified as *Excelsior*, or ‘the higher’, that he “will seek the eternal recurrence of war and peace”.<sup>37</sup> This is one version of the idea that all events can only be wished for together, and that these events will be valued differently by us. Nietzsche’s point is that on his deterministic view, it will not be possible to wish for one element without also wishing for the others, since they all come together. Nietzsche regards the Doctrine as a kind of test of the psychological strength and health of an individual. If they are able to affirm the Doctrine, they are of the strongest and highest type.

Nietzsche returns to the Doctrine later in GS, this time emphasising the difficulty of accepting it. He writes of a demon approaching at a lonely hour that says: “[t]his life as you now live it and have lived it you will have to live once again and innumerable times again; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unspeakably small or great in your life must return to you, all in the same succession and sequence”.<sup>38</sup> Here, the difficult aspects are specified as being the unlimited number of times that everything will be repeated; the fact that the minor, insignificant and boring will be returning as well and also that the pain will return as the inevitable concomitant of the pleasure. It is interesting that the demon also approaches during loneliness, because it suggests that social life may distract us from contemplating the Doctrine. That leads to one of Nietzsche’s main aims with the Doctrine, which is to attempt to refocus us on the current world. Wicks sees<sup>39</sup> the Doctrine as serving to draw attention away from all worlds other than the actual one, since eternal recurrence precludes escaping the world we are

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<sup>36</sup>Poole [28, p. 270].

<sup>37</sup>Nietzsche GS [20, §289].

<sup>38</sup>Nietzsche GS [20, §341].

<sup>39</sup>Wicks [52, §3].

in. There is no otherworldly afterlife. We Slaves cannot accept torments here in the hopes of reward there: we must act here and now.

That section was the original end of GS, and Nietzsche then directs us towards Z by invoking the name of Zarathustra. Again in Z the difficulty of accepting the Doctrine is made clear. It is an “abysmal thought”<sup>40</sup> which could not be endured by one less strong than Zarathustra. The section continues with an illustration of this in the form of a shepherd into whose throat a snake has crawled. The snake – which can bite its own tail – is the symbol of the Doctrine and the disgust associated with the event of its crawling into someone’s throat is the same as the disgust which would greet anyone who thought of the Doctrine, let alone affirmed it. Disgust is the emotion that Zarathustra too experiences at the thought of the Doctrine. This disgust is for all existence, populated as it is by men great and small. The greatest men are too small, but they will return – there is “eternal recurrence even for the smallest! that was my disgust at all existence”.<sup>41</sup>

Although the Doctrine is difficult to accept, the claims it relies on, that energy is finite and time unlimited, are not themselves implausible. Magnus explains<sup>42</sup> that the idea is that if those two claims are true, then all possible configurations must have arisen before and in fact must have done an infinite number of times. As an illustration, if a finite deck of cards is shuffled and dealt an infinite number of times, all possible sequences will occur an infinite number of times. As Zarathustra puts it, a “long, eternal lane runs *back*” as well as forwards; and “[m]ust not all things that *can* run have already run along this lane?”.<sup>43</sup>

So we have two ways in which the Doctrine is difficult to accept. It seems implausible as a scientific hypothesis, though defensible. Also, Nietzsche makes it clear that there is a great deal of emotional repugnance to it. This leads us to the question as to whether Nietzsche is serious about it – or more precisely, in what way is he serious.

### Is Nietzsche Serious About The Doctrine?

The Doctrine is of the highest importance to Nietzsche’s writings. Magnus gives<sup>44</sup> several *Nachlaß* citations to support the claim that Nietzsche regards the Doctrine as his most significant one. Nietzsche describes the Doctrine as the “most scientific of all possible hypotheses”, though that can be a double-edged sword in terms of being a compliment from Nietzsche. Nietzsche claims that all his later works including GM are “fish hooks” to draw readers to Z. Loeb notes<sup>45</sup> that Z contains his most important ideas. Nietzsche tells us that Z is constructive and future oriented while other books

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<sup>40</sup>Nietzsche Z [53, p. 178].

<sup>41</sup>Nietzsche Z [53, p. 236].

<sup>42</sup>Magnus [54, p. 605].

<sup>43</sup>Nietzsche Z [53, p. 178].

<sup>44</sup>Magnus [54, p. 604].

<sup>45</sup>Loeb [27, p. 70].

are destructive and present-oriented, which also suggests that Z supersedes the other books. Nietzsche begins his section on Z in EH by stating that the Doctrine is the “basic idea” of that work. We will need good reason not to take Nietzsche at face value when he makes these statements.

One reason that the Doctrine has not been accorded adequate significance in Nietzsche’s works is that it is not mentioned after Z. This may be explained though by noting that Nietzsche has chosen to write in Zarathustra’s voice because Nietzsche shares the decadence and weakness of his age – Nietzsche too is not strong enough to preach the Doctrine. All of this does not reduce the importance of the Doctrine; on the contrary it enhances it. Naturally, I do not claim that Nietzsche can avoid being a spokesman for his age – can avoid the limitations of which he himself complains – merely by writing as Zarathustra. Z is really an exercise in imagining a stronger philosopher in a stronger age who could affirm the Doctrine.

It might also be objected that Zarathustra is a somewhat ridiculous figure in some places. This however is of a piece with the general poetic nature of Z; one purpose also of Nietzsche’s, it must be remembered, is biblical parody. Zarathustra is an antichrist also in the sense that he shows how the mere writing of a book in obscure and hefty language and including a strange prophet giving prescriptions for moral lives is not an activity permitted only to those who wrote the bible. That serves to undermine any authority that text might pretend to over other texts. Making Zarathustra ridiculous is part of that purpose; Nietzsche is a subtle and confident enough philosopher to allow his most important principles to be voiced by an occasionally ridiculous figure.

Magnus points out<sup>46</sup> that there is also a suasive significance to the Doctrine. Nietzsche has chosen its characteristics to capture some of the appeal of some religious notions. Nietzsche opposes religious motivation to seek an otherworldly – or indeed, *any external* – source of values. He is aware though of the power of eternity, and how much has been wrought upon humans by the fear of eternal damnation, a thought so terrible that even those who do not fully believe in it are nevertheless affected by it. On this plausible view, the Doctrine replaces a religious picture of an eternal afterlife and is intended to be as significant in the current world as that sort of world-view has been.

For all of these reasons, we must allow that Nietzsche is indeed serious about the Doctrine. By ‘serious’, I mean that he thinks it is an important notion, even if he may not think in fact that everything really returns. Therefore any links from the Doctrine to memory typology will support my general claim that memory typology is significant in Nietzsche’s writings. I will outline those links in §3.2.3, but since the explanation will also involve the *Übermensch*, I must first outline that topic.

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<sup>46</sup>Magnus [54, p. 616].

### 3.2.2 The *Übermensch*

I will show in §3.2.3 how we need the memory typology to come to terms with the Doctrine and the *Übermensch*, for several reasons. There is an immediate question as to how, if everything returns, we cannot remember it. Also, memory is in fact the test of becoming the *Übermensch* who can use memory 'in both directions'. This use of Active Memory allows the *Übermensch* to become maximally affirmative, an important test of value for Nietzsche. There are also important points to make about memory and transitions that Nietzsche describes in Z on the way to the *Übermensch* via camels, lions and the child. Before turning to these memory-related aspects, I will in this section briefly outline the relevant aspects of the *Übermensch* for our purposes.

Everything great must overcome itself, or seek to improve itself so far that we might say that the original no longer exists. The *Übermensch* is one of Nietzsche's ideals in that "[m]an is something that should be overcome"<sup>47</sup> and the *Übermensch* is what would result if man were able to overcome himself. Man is then a transitional state between the lower and the higher: he is "a rope, fastened between animal and *Übermensch*".<sup>48</sup> This is confirmation that the *Übermensch* is one of Nietzsche's valued ideal types. The *Übermensch* is a product of Nietzsche's view that all of the value of humans resides in its most successful specimens; in contrast to democratic or egalitarian views.

The *Übermensch* is no more easy to accept than the Doctrine of which he is the herald. The difficulty would lie in the decadence of our values and the radical difference of the values that the *Übermensch* would bring – and also the requirement to set our own values. Nietzsche writes that our souls "are so unfamiliar with what is great that the *Übermensch* would be *fearful* to [us] in his goodness!"<sup>49</sup> Note that it is *his* goodness, not ours.

Nietzsche's central ethical project is the revaluation of all values. The *Übermensch* is able to complete this revaluation because he is able to set his own values. Nietzsche gives us a list<sup>50</sup> of generally held values – reason, justice, virtue, pity – which he finds questionable. The *Übermensch* is described as the "lightning" and the "madness"<sup>51</sup> that will inoculate against these unhealthy values. The *Übermensch* is able to set his own values because the *Übermensch* has gone beyond ordinary human weakness, and one form of that overcoming will be in having overcome the lack of autonomy in setting of values.

Stern plausibly suggests<sup>52</sup> that Nietzsche sees our values as dependent on our

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<sup>47</sup>Nietzsche Z [53, p. 40].

<sup>48</sup>Nietzsche Z [53, p. 43].

<sup>49</sup>Nietzsche Z [53, p. 43].

<sup>50</sup>Nietzsche Z [53, p. 43].

<sup>51</sup>Nietzsche Z [53, p. 43].

<sup>52</sup>Stern [55, p. 305].

contexts. Then, the *Übermensch* is able to overcome standard values by being the ‘child’ in Nietzsche’s three metamorphoses in *Z* from camel to lion to child. The camel bears existing values like a burden; the lion has the strength to deny existing values; but only the child/*Übermensch* can set new values. The importance of the link between the child and the *Übermensch* will be illustrated in the next section.

As discussed above, Nietzsche considers the Doctrine as providing a kind of test of the strength of an individual – one who can will to accept and affirm the Doctrine is a strong individual. The *Übermensch* is one of those who can so affirm the Doctrine. We see an immediate link between one purpose of the Doctrine and the *Übermensch* via values. This call to avoid looking to external sources – religion, society, customary morality – for the ‘value of values’ is Nietzsche’s central ethical project. This ‘this-worldly’ nature of the Doctrine shows how it is concerned with the call not to look outside for the source of values. The ability to affirm the Doctrine is the hallmark of the *Übermensch* and is the key to a successful reevaluation of all values.

### 3.2.3 Importance Of Memory

An understanding of Nietzsche’s pluralistic conception of memory, I propose, is crucial to a full understanding of the Doctrine, which itself is central to his ethical project aimed at the reevaluation of all values. The *Übermensch* is also closely involved here.

Loeb argues<sup>53</sup> that the paired concepts of memory and humanity are to be regarded as ‘pre-emptively superseded’ by the concepts of the Doctrine and the *Übermensch*. The point is that Nietzsche writes *Z* before BGE and GM, and yet the analyses in those latter works are intended to lead (back) to the views expressed in *Z*. Zarathustra’s call at the beginning of *Z* is for the *Übermensch* to emerge from humanity as humanity emerged from animals, with memory playing a key role in both transitions.

One of several difficulties in accepting the Doctrine lies with memory: if it is true that we have all lived our lives an infinite number of times, we should be able to remember that. Commentators divide at this point. Some adopt<sup>54</sup> the expedient of limiting the function of individual memory to each cycle within eternal recurrence, but that approach does suggest a difficult objection. We need to know how we can say the separate occurrences of an individual within each cycle are in fact the same individual in a meaningful sense, if common memory does not link those individuals. One way would be to say that the lives can be identical even if they have no memories shared between them. Other commentators avoid<sup>55</sup> this problem on the other hand by arguing for a more complex ‘self-cancellation’ of memory to produce a special type of forgetfulness. Memory must be turned against memory to produce what Zarathustra terms freedom and innocence. This view makes for a more comprehensible reading;

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<sup>53</sup>Loeb [27, p. 76].

<sup>54</sup>For example, Magnus [54, p. 611].

<sup>55</sup>For example, Loeb [27, p. 83].

and it requires there to be multiple types of memory because we cannot easily see how a single type could cancel itself. In fact, the view is the claim that Active Memory cancels out Passive Memory. We defined Active Memory as being chosen and activity promoting – i.e. approximately the inverse of Passive Memory – on p. 21. This self-cancellation must be active since it is both internally chosen and not inhibitory: far from it, since freedom is paired with the resulting ‘innocence’, and freedom must mean freedom to act.

One question at this point might be as to how life can be identical if memory does indeed function across cycles. The solution is that ordinary humans cannot recover the memory of previous lives without becoming the *Übermensch*, for passing this test is definitional of being that entity. There the problem is solved because we know that Zarathustra, who envisions becoming the *Übermensch*, can use memory in ‘both directions’, as I will outline below.

We see a link between memory and the Doctrine when we examine what Zarathustra says on the topic of memory. He is asked why he said that the poets lie too much. He responds: “I am not one of those who may be questioned about their Why. Do my experiences date from yesterday? It is a long time since I experienced the reasons for my opinions. Should I not have to be a barrel of memory, if I also wanted to carry my reasons, too, about with me?”<sup>56</sup>

Zarathustra is himself one of these poets, so the message here is that he is not to be taken as a source of values, because that would again fall into the religious trap of seeking values externally to ourselves. Both Zarathustra and Nietzsche claimed that they did not want disciples – this is not to be understood as meaning that they wish their works to be ignored, but that neither claim to be a source of values and that neither could be is the key message. We must make our own values. Also note how Zarathustra is using Active Memory in that he is deciding on what its contents shall be with a view to his aims. His opinions are important – they are what will take him forward and make him active. He does not also need to use memory to store the *reasons* for his opinions. We would disagree with that, but that is because we have more Passive Memory and do not believe we have much control over what is stored there. We also feel we will constantly need to justify our opinions to others, and so being able to recall the reasons for them would be important. That type of herd behaviour is deprecated by Nietzsche.

It was mentioned above – p. 55 – how the *Übermensch* is represented by the child in Nietzsche’s three Z transitions, and how Nietzsche sees our values as context-dependent. This is important because of what is said about the child. It is “innocence and forgetfulness, a new beginning”.<sup>57</sup> This is a link between the *Übermensch* and the Active Forgetfulness that we saw as a feature of Active Memory on p. 22. Stern

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<sup>56</sup>Nietzsche Z [53, p. 149].

<sup>57</sup>Nietzsche Z [53, p. 55].



argues<sup>58</sup> that the “child spirit can create freely because it is forgetful: it has forgotten the context which would otherwise determine its values”. The *Übermensch* is both free from the past and free to affirm the past as a result of Active Memory. We know that the *Übermensch* is active and affirmative because the child is a “self-propelling wheel” and “a sacred Yes”.<sup>59</sup>

Stern points out<sup>60</sup> a potential conflict between the concept of the *Übermensch* and the Doctrine which bears on memory. The conflict is that those accepting the Doctrine must affirm all of the past to pass the test. Moreover this must be done on a specific basis i.e. each event in the past must be affirmed. This requires having a memory of each past event so that it can be affirmed. But we have just agreed that the *Übermensch* possesses forgetfulness. So the *Übermensch* would not be able to remember each event, would not be able to affirm it, and would not be able to accept the Doctrine. Thus we have an apparent contradiction in Nietzsche’s views between Zarathustra’s hopes for the *Übermensch* and the Eternal Recurrence test. We can resolve this by recalling that the forgetfulness of the *Übermensch* is actually Active Forgetfulness, which as we discussed on p. 22 is actually a facet of Active Memory. This means that there is a choice made in Active Memory about what exactly to forget. It is also available to the possessor of Active Memory to decide *when* to actively forget it. This must be the case if Active Memory is to be as useful for action as Nietzsche thinks it is. Thus, a process is possible whereby an event is recalled in Active Memory, it is affirmed, and then it is forgotten. The event itself need not be recalled once it has been affirmed; it must just be clear that it has been affirmed. It can then safely be forgotten because it has been dealt with – inpsychated, incorporated, digested, we might say . . .

Once memory has been acquired by humans, they are forced to recognise their lack of power: we cannot change the past; but memory can be used against itself to achieve a ‘second innocence.’ Loeb argues<sup>61</sup> for this as above by noting that Zarathustra equates innocence with affirmation and forgetting. What has been forgotten cannot be affirmed unless it has first been remembered; this will then allow it to be properly, *deeply* forgotten. This makes sense if we understand it as being the use of Active Memory against Passive Memory. The second innocence is distinguished from a first innocence in that the latter is the innocence of the young, merely a polite term for ignorance. The second innocence results from an active choice of what is to be retained and what to be eliminated as superfluous. We may associate the strength to perform this active choosing, to permit the dominance of Active Memory with the *Übermensch*. Weaker humans allow themselves to be driven into neurotic, self-harming behaviour

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<sup>58</sup>Stern [55, p. 307].

<sup>59</sup>Nietzsche Z [53, p. 55].

<sup>60</sup>Stern [55, p. 309].

<sup>61</sup>Loeb [27, p. 83].

through their domination by Passive Memory.

We are enjoined to “unfix” the past via the Doctrine, and avoid the tyranny of the ‘it was’. Under the Doctrine, with its infinite repetition of cycles, the past is as much the future. On perfecting faculties of memory and bad conscience, the human will becomes imprisoned by the new knowledge that the past is unchangeable and beyond the reach of the will. The solution is the affirming approach of the Doctrine: we cannot now avoid memory and the knowledge that the will cannot change the past so we must instead *will* the past. The Doctrine is merely the expression of this affirmation to a higher power – not only the affirmation of the past once as it was, but the same past an infinite number of times. Thus the Doctrine becomes the solution to the problem posed by memory and solves it many times over at once.

Loeb describes<sup>62</sup> memory as the “messenger” of the Doctrine. Memory bears the news of the Doctrine to those strong enough to cope with the recovered memory of an infinite number of identical lives. Zarathustra’s Active Memory allows him to ‘live’ in the future. This means that under the Doctrine, the future is as much the past because it is merely the latter part of the previous cycle, and vice versa: from this point, the past will also be the future because the past part of this cycle will be the earlier part of the next cycle. Zarathustra is enabled to see this by the power of his memory, which recovers the past completely enough to also uncover the Eternal Recurrence. So we cannot allow that Zarathustra has much Passive Memory.

In sum, Zarathustra and the *Übermensch* will be dominant users of Active Memory and therefore active and creative. This is what is also recommended for us: if we had the strength to affirm everything that has happened to the maximum possible extent; we would have become active with respect to everything that has occurred; to everything that will occur, which is the same thing; we would have become the *Übermensch*. Staten argues<sup>63</sup> that this identification should be made by noting that saying yes to an event *is* becoming active with respect to it. Thus Active Memory will be involved in such affirmation, as the store of events to be affirmed and as the store of the act of affirmation.

Bertram observes<sup>64</sup> that Zarathustra has the longest will and the longest memory, which distinctions enable him to affirm more of the past – and the future, if Zarathustra also becomes the *Übermensch*. The *Übermensch* is the ultimately positively evaluated being because he is able through the Doctrine Of Eternal Recurrence to use Active Memory to become active and affirmative in relation to *all* events at all times.

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<sup>62</sup>Loeb [27, p. 86].

<sup>63</sup>Staten [26, p. 88].

<sup>64</sup>Bertram [12, p. 35].

## Chapter 4

# A Collective Memory Type?

Gedächtniß hat Ursachen der  
Moralität – und wir haben es  
nicht in der Hand! NB. NF-1880,  
6 [344]

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### 4.1 Introduction

The question as to whether Nietzsche recognises a Collective Memory type will be the topic of this Chapter. This is important because commentators – below I will discuss Poole, Margalit, Funkenstein, Gambino, Assmann, Czaplicka and Lattas, Richardson and Staten but there are others – invoke Nietzsche in the context of discussing Collective Memory. There seems to be some conviction that Nietzsche recognises Collective Memory. I will however deny that he does recognise Collective Memory in a meaningful way, which is why this topic has been postponed to a separate chapter. I will argue that when commentators believe that Nietzsche does in fact recognise Collective Memory, it is because they have mistakenly identified his concept that I termed Organic Memory on p. 35. This is a confusion since Organic Memory is not distinctively human while Collective Memory is. By confusing the two, we weaken one of Nietzsche's main claims which involves drawing a sharp boundary not between humans and animals but between some humans and other humans.

The first point we need to decide on is the definition of Collective Memory. Then we can decide whether Nietzsche recognises it.

## 4.2 What Is Collective Memory?

Ideas of what Collective Memory is or does tend to be hazy. It might be memories of the second world war. The majority of us, who were not there, nevertheless have ‘folk memories’ of some of the events that took place, and these memories feed into our notions of who we are in what is termed ‘concretisation of identity’. Collective Memory is not the form it is stored in: so it will not be books themselves even though plenty of the contents of Collective Memory, if it exists, could be stored in books. One idea is that Collective Memory is justified because there are certainly memories one must have if one is to be a member of a particular group. There are, certainly, groups of people which may be individuated by a memory that they share. Various items must be remembered to some extent – which does not necessarily mean believed in – in order to be a member of a particular group. Everyone who claims to be a member of the group of people who support the England football team must remember Stuart Pearce exorcising the ghost of a missed penalty in Euro 96. If they had no memory of this, they would not be accepted as a member of the group by other members. This, for some authors, suffices to establish that there is a *useful* concept of Collective Memory. However, finding the term useful as shorthand does not suffice to make Collective Memory exist as a unity. Commentators employ the term Collective Memory more often than they define it. It is certainly right, as Poole suggests<sup>1</sup> that the term Collective Memory needs to be handled with care, and to note that “there is a genuine question as to legitimacy of the notion of collective memory”.

Margalit observes<sup>2</sup> that while there are indisputable cases of individual memory, there are no indisputable cases of Collective Memory; it may just be a “doubtful extended metaphor”. It is then suggested that an ethical treatment of the past requires that Collective memory exist, because “[c]onveying the sensibility of events from the past that should be landmarks in our collective moral consciousness calls for a special agent of collective memory”.<sup>3</sup> This ‘special agent’ is some kind of ‘moral witness’. Nietzsche will have a large number of problems with this. He will doubtless begin by observing that even if you are successful in showing that your moral consciousness requires X, this is no security whatsoever that X exists, or will fulfil the role you need. He will be entirely deaf to your pleas that X ‘should’ exist because the world is not arranged for your benefit. Beyond this impressive opening defence, he will if pressed have additional resources to deploy. He may point to the circularity involved in having a moral requirement for the existence of X in order to give moral significance to something else. He may point out that you have not yet done anything at all to convince him that your morality is the right one. All of this produces an initial

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<sup>1</sup>Poole [28, p. 274].

<sup>2</sup>Margalit [31, p. 15].

<sup>3</sup>Margalit [31, p. 17].

scepticism that Nietzsche will recognise Collective Memory: what is clear is that he will not allow any weight to an argument for Collective Memory that requires it to exist to fulfil an unfounded moral requirement.

Funkenstein wishes to retain the term, even while admitting that the memories of a particular event will be different for different people who experienced it; to say nothing about the different memories of people who experienced an event and those who were informed of it. Collective Memory is “not a mistaken and misleading term” provided it is “used within clear limitations”.<sup>4</sup> An attempt is then made to define Collective Memory by analogy with language. A language is instantiated by speech acts of individuals, and also in writing. We can meaningfully speak of the existence of a language because we can sum over all of the individual occasions when someone speaks or writes English and say: that is the English language. The analogy with memory purports to be that we can sum over all of the individuals involved in what we might term ‘memory acts’ and say: that is Collective Memory. At this point, Socrates of all people will bring the fatal complaint that you are giving him examples when he asked for a definition. This again shows at most the useful nature of the idea of Collective Memory and pragmatic advantage does not suffice as an existence proof.

The obvious question underlying all of this is how can there even be a Collective Memory since only individuals have memories, as we normally understand the term. While Nietzsche has widened our perspectives as to what those individual memories can contain and how dynamic they can and should be, the extent to which these factors apply to collectives rather than the individuals remains to be seen. We have though seen, in §2.3, that Nietzsche allows the apparent commonality of fabricated experience to be a reflection of the way that we will all tend to use similar projections. Then there is also the question as to what these groups are that might have Collective Memory. Candidate groups will include nations, ethnic groups, members of a university and cricket aficionados. These groups will have different qualifying memories. Some groups one will choose to become a member of and some will be a result of biology or history. It will be immediately apparent that any individual would have a large array of overlapping collective memories, so we would be dealing with a diffuse and amorphous phenomenon.

The term Collective Memory, if it is to be meaningful, must not reduce to being a collection of individual memories. It must be greater than the sum of its parts. In other words, it must be non-compositional. If it is not, then it is merely a re-description at a more convenient level of a phenomenon that actually only takes place on an individual level. By analogy, it may be more convenient for me to say that the England cricket team performed well on the field, rather than listing each member

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<sup>4</sup>Funkenstein [56, p. 6].

of the team and stating the same in relation to each. That does not establish that the team has the same mode of existence as the men that make it up. Similarly, if Collective Memory is just a convenient way of describing common influences on individual memory, it is not a separate entity from individual memories.

It now becomes difficult to find a definition of Collective Memory that gives it actual existence – or at least, to place it on a similar footing to individual memory. After all, individual memory is not an object, so we should not set the bar any higher for Collective Memory. ‘Individual memory’ is a useful term because it refers to the observed phenomenon of persons being able to recall events in the past. It is a physical phenomenon, if physicalism is correct; in any case, it is a real ability that persons have. So we need to find what Collective Memory could be to be a real ability that persons have if we are to set the bar at the same level. Again, it cannot be a re-description such that if I and my brother can both remember the same cricket game, that suffices to establish Collective Memory. This seems to be a common influence on separate individual memories – which is not a controversial claim. So Collective Memory must add something to separate memories. Perhaps I have a memory which is incomplete in some way, either in regard to content or to significance, and it can be completed by a memory that someone else has. If we found this, we would have identified Collective Memory, because we would have found something that could not be re-described by listing the contents of individual memories, assuming such an exercise to be possible. **Throughout this thesis, I will define Collective Memory as any use of memory or its contents in which the results could not be re-described on the basis of a sum over individual memories.**

Poole proposes<sup>5</sup> to arrive at an account of Collective Memory by extending Nietzsche’s concept of ‘memory of the will’, or conative will as it is termed. This project will involve the concepts of collective identities, by which can be meant group membership or nationality, and shared responsibilities. The intention is to extend the account of conative memory from the individual to Collective Memory, and argue that if we understand the role of Collective Memory “in terms derived from” Nietzsche (and Locke), we will understand its role in the formation of collective identities and the transmission of collective responsibilities. This may not exactly be a claim that Nietzsche recognises a type of Collective Memory, but it is at least tantamount to one. It tells us that he should have recognised it or that he has provided us with the tools to do so, even if he did not do so himself.

Poole argues<sup>6</sup> that “Nietzsche’s insight was to realise that this kind of memory, and the identity associated with it, was not given by nature [...] but created by [...] social life.” We must here again be careful to avoid concluding that a memory which *is created* by a collective is *ipso facto* a Collective Memory. The argument continues by

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<sup>5</sup>Poole [28, p. 264].

<sup>6</sup>Poole [28, p. 273].

suggesting that this memory may be the type of memory that Nietzsche sees society imposing using pain on the GM account that we have considered at length. It does seem clear that society imposes these memories that I have termed passive memories as a way of enforcing commitments to society, but that does not entail that this is Collective Memory, unless we accept that general memories that are ‘the same’ in different individuals suffices to qualify those as collective memories. There is then a question as whether you and I have the numerically identical memory when we both remember that we have to pay tax; or whether some lesser criterion – perhaps different tokens or instantiations of ‘the same’ memory – will mean that we have (share?) a Collective Memory of tax obligations. I will deny this.

### 4.3 Does Nietzsche Recognise Collective Memory?

There are two elements in Nietzsche’s work which one might see as Collective Memory. These are the various types of historical sense discussed in UM II and then the GM II notion of societies feeling a sense of being indebted to their founders. I discuss each in turn.

#### 4.3.1 Historical Sense

The first question here is whether Nietzsche is referring to memory at all when he discusses the historical sense. Then we will need to decide on whether we can extend to a Collective Type. I will conclude that the historical sense is indeed a type of memory for Nietzsche, but that he does not intend it to be extended to a collective type.

#### What Is Historical Sense?

Historical sense is our sense that there has been a past and that we have a place in its narrative. It allows us to “assimilate and appropriate the things of the past”,<sup>7</sup> which gives us Nietzsche’s central question: what is it good for? It is the use of past events to aid us in our current purposes.

Historical sense has three types: “monumental”, “antiquarian” and “critical”.<sup>8</sup> I will discuss the first below – see p. 68. Antiquarian history is a excessive “scholarliness”<sup>9</sup> that leads to the mummification against which Nietzsche warns. Critical history is the use of the past by considering it and condemning it where necessary: it can form something to be usefully overcome: we must “break up and dissolve a part of the past”.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Nietzsche UM II [1, ‘On the uses and disadvantages of history for life’, pp. 62–63].

<sup>8</sup>Nietzsche UM II [1, ‘On the uses and disadvantages of history for life’, p. 77].

<sup>9</sup>Nietzsche UM II [1, ‘On the uses and disadvantages of history for life’, p. 75].

<sup>10</sup>Nietzsche UM II [1, ‘On the uses and disadvantages of history for life’, p. 75].

Historical sense is “a hypertrophied virtue”.<sup>11</sup> So Nietzsche allows that it is beneficial when kept within limits and only its overgrowth creates problems. These problems occur when the Historical Sense “no longer conserves life but mummifies it”.<sup>12</sup> The problem is one of incorrect use: inspiration for new ways of life is preferred above slavish reflection of the old. Culture, on Nietzsche’s diagnosis, is obsessed by getting to ‘the truth’ of the past and knows that it is. Nietzsche is surrounded by historians and philologists; he will tire of the latter discipline. One’s historical sense is how interested one is in the past. Nietzsche’s question is whether the level of interest is healthy; his answer is no. We might immediately wonder whether his own consuming interest in the ancient Greeks is healthy. He has one ready response – he may well not be an exemplar of health – but less glibly, he may propose that the Greeks were interested in the past in a more mythological way, in the way it could inspire action. Thus Nietzsche can claim that he is doing monumental history in a beneficial way.

### Is Historical Sense A Form Of Memory?

I will argue that historical sense is a form of memory. Note that if to the contrary Historical Sense is not memory, it is *a fortiori* not Collective Memory.

The first indication that Nietzsche is talking about memory comes from his setup of the dialectic. He begins the relevant section by speaking of the happiness of animals who are happy because they are forgetful. This is to be contrasted with the unhappy humans who are unhappy because they cannot forget. The human “clings relentlessly to the past”.<sup>13</sup> The animal, by contrast, “lives *unhistorically*”.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the animal lacks historical sense, memory and unhappiness. We might perhaps allow that animals do ‘remember’ certain things, in that they can sometimes retrieve items they have previously hidden, for example. This may just be heuristic behaviour though and in any case, it does not constitute memory of the form that humans have where, essentially, I am part of my own memories: I am in the picture. In contrast with animals, the human has historical sense, memory and unhappiness. So at least, memory and historical sense go together.

Secondly, Nietzsche uses the term ‘incorporate’, which as we saw in §2.3, is one of his code words for memory. The term occurs in his discussion of plastic power, which we will discuss again in the next section. Plastic power is defined to be “the capacity to develop out of oneself in one’s own way, to transform and incorporate into oneself what is past and foreign”.<sup>15</sup> Plastic power is in fact the power of Active Memory. This again reminds us that active transformation and incorporation is the

<sup>11</sup>Nietzsche UM II [1, ‘On the uses and disadvantages of history for life’, p. 61].

<sup>12</sup>Nietzsche UM II [1, ‘On the uses and disadvantages of history for life’, p. 75].

<sup>13</sup>Nietzsche UM II [1, ‘On the uses and disadvantages of history for life’, p. 61].

<sup>14</sup>Nietzsche UM II [1, ‘On the uses and disadvantages of history for life’, p. 61].

<sup>15</sup>Nietzsche UM II [1, ‘On the uses and disadvantages of history for life’, p. 62].



key to beneficial use of memory. The idea of plastic power is a measure of the amount of activity promotion of which memory is capable; Nietzsche evaluates such power positively and indeed thinks a lack of it will be fatal to individuals and peoples. The repetition of the triad ‘man, people, culture’ seems to be more than a stylistic trope: Nietzsche does agree that there is something like a memory that a culture can have. This is emphasised by the fact that two of the terms in the repeated triad are collective terms.

We then have a further coded but unmistakable reference to the excessive Passive Memory of the men of *ressentiment* who will “possess so little [plastic power] that they can perish from a single painful event, often and especially from a single subtle piece of injustice”.<sup>16</sup> This sounds exactly like the problem of Dostoyevsky’s protagonist, as discussed on p. 33. While Nietzsche does not use the term *ressentiment* in BT, it is interesting that he is making a reference to something like it so far ahead of GM. As we noted on p. 17, Passive Memory is either Imposed or Inhibitory and this passes both tests. The individual possessed by *ressentiment* will be able to do little about that situation and also it will have substantial inhibitory effects: were the individual able to act uninhibitedly, they would scarcely be a sufferer from *ressentiment*. Nietzsche then contrasts these individuals with those possessing more Active Memory, who “possess[] a kind of clear conscience” irrespective of “dreadful disasters [or] their own wicked acts”.<sup>17</sup> Thus once again, the Active Memory users remain positive and active via a valuable ignorance of the consequences of their acts.

There is further evidence that the historical sense and memory at least go together, when Nietzsche writes: “[i]t is not at all senseless to think that our memory of the past was lesser and that the historical sense also slept, as it slept in the historical acme of the Greeks”.<sup>18</sup> This is best interpreted by agreeing that the historical sense is a type of memory for Nietzsche.

There is a parallel between the facts that there is a typology of the Historical Sense and the claim of this thesis that there is a typology of memory. We might also note the parallels that memory as well as Historical Sense are – only loosely – truth-tracking, in that both ostensibly aim at the truth, and derive their authority from that aim. Nietzsche tells us that monumental history may be inaccurate, but that does not matter: its ability to inspire action is more important. Memory too often falls short of truth-tracking and is even distorted.

We must for all these reasons conclude that Nietzsche is indeed discussing memory, both passive and active, in this section on ‘historical sense’.

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<sup>16</sup>Nietzsche UM II [1, ‘On the uses and disadvantages of history for life’, p. 62].

<sup>17</sup>Nietzsche UM II [1, ‘On the uses and disadvantages of history for life’, p. 62].

<sup>18</sup>Nietzsche KSA [3, NF – 1873, 29(172)]. *Nachlaß*, my translation.

### Is Historical Sense Collective Memory?

I will deny that Historical Sense is Collective Memory. Anyone believing that Nietzsche recognises Collective Memory must either think that Historical Sense is Collective Memory or the indebtedness of societies which I will discuss in §4.3.2 is Collective Memory. I will therefore be denying both supporting claims in pursuit of my overall argument that Nietzsche does not recognise Collective Memory.

Nietzsche certainly sees some analogies between capacities deriving from the memory of individuals, peoples and cultures. He discusses the damage done by excess of ‘historical sense’, and says that a certain ‘*plastic power*’ is needed to recover from that excess. Nietzsche writes that the determining the degree of the historical sense which is harmful to the “*living thing, whether this living thing be a man or a people or a culture*” we need to know “how great the *plastic power* of a man, a people, a culture is”.<sup>19</sup> As shown immediately above, plastic power is another term for the power of Active Memory, so here Nietzsche is saying that the amount or strength of Active Memory possessed by an individual or a culture is the key to deciding their strength. Individuals or cultures who are strong in this way will be able to survive the dangers of Passive Memory, being an excess of historical sense.

The second question then is whether we must also conclude that there is a Collective Memory type. So far we know that the plastic power actively to incorporate can be possessed by individuals and groups, and must be if they are to survive. The fact that groups can possess it does not go any distance towards showing that it is possessed by a group *per se*; it is consistent with the different claim that a group of individuals each possess it. We know also that this plastic power means the ability to ‘incorporate’ the past and the foreign, to transform it to become useful. Yet this addition of the foreignness that must also be assimilated and the use of the incorporation metaphor for memory weakens the claim that purely memory is under discussion here in terms of what the collective should do, because assimilation of the foreign is not a function of memory. This is true whether we use a standard understanding of the term memory or even extend it to Nietzsche’s picture on which there is also a type of Organic Memory.

This is again suggested by how Nietzsche continues his analysis. While he continues to apply his findings both to a man and to society, he constantly actually discusses it in terms of the individual. Nietzsche writes: “the most powerful nature [...] would draw to itself and incorporate into itself all the past”; he also states that it is a “universal law” that a “living thing can be healthy, strong and fruitful only when bounded by a horizon”.<sup>20</sup> We have here an important distinction. It is true that Nietzsche observes common factors which apply to all living things and that these relate

<sup>19</sup>Nietzsche UM II [1, ‘On the uses and disadvantages of history for life’, p. 62].

<sup>20</sup>Nietzsche UM II [1, ‘On the uses and disadvantages of history for life’, p. 63].

to the memories of those living things. It is also true that similar requirements apply to collectives, who also need boundaries and plastic power for strength. But these points do not entail a Collective Memory type. They do not exclude it either, but the simplest interpretation of Nietzsche here is to allow that he sees that individuals and a collective of individuals will have similar requirements on them in terms of memory, strength and boundaries, but that the Collective Memory may simply be a sum of individual memories rather than a type of Collective Memory. Staten in effect notes this option. He employs<sup>21</sup> the term “cultural memory” but later notes that a practice being “the same” across different individuals does not entail “any kind of sameness in the internal representations of those individuals”.<sup>22</sup>

So for there to be a Collective Memory, there must be something that transcends the individual. If there could be a collective whole that is greater than the sum of individual parts then we would have a true Collective Memory. Otherwise we just have some separate individuals who have similar memories. So now the question becomes: how should we define Collective Memory, in order to decide whether Nietzsche recognises it? This is the question of the next section, §4.2, but first I will look at commentary purporting to link Nietzsche to Collective Memory.

### Commentary

Collective Memory is not what Nietzsche is discussing and that his opaque reference to Organic Memory which we have now elucidated have confused commentators. Nietzsche’s Organic Memory can accommodate the role commentators have allotted to Collective Memory. This is because one key element for Nietzsche of Organic Memory – that it reaches back to previous generations of humans – is sufficient to mean that all humans have it. Recall that we defined Organic Memory on p. 35 as any use of memory in which any of the following markers are present: i). it is physiologically based; or ii). it is stored via experiences of events that did not take place during the lifetime of the rememberer or iii). it is available to humans and also life more generally. Since we defined Collective Memory on p. 62 as any use of memory or its contents in which the results could not be re-described on the basis of a sum over individual memories, two types of memory could co-exist or overlap.

An indication on what we might term the compatibilist side of this question comes from discussion by Poole<sup>23</sup> of a late paper of Freud’s. In this, Freud suggests that there is a repressed collective or cultural memory in Jewish people of the murder of the original Moses. On the account, the repression of this memory leads to guilt which is identified as a feature of the Jewish religion. The memory involved here extends back further than individual memory, as Organic Memory does, but also forms part

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<sup>21</sup>Staten [16, p. 575].

<sup>22</sup>Staten [16, p. 577].

<sup>23</sup>Poole [28, p. 276].

of a culture, as Collective Memory does. Freud has extrapolated the phenomenon of repression from an individual to a collective level. Since Freud also holds that the transmission mechanism across generations is biological, he is in agreement with Nietzsche, but this again suggests that that the parallel is to Nietzsche's Organic Memory.

Funkenstein has surprisingly shown<sup>24</sup> that Hegel recognised Collective Memory since he used the term in the context of his writings on historical processes. This is significant because we know Nietzsche was familiar with Hegel and in particular was concerned to oppose his historical views. While Nietzsche is free to accept some of Hegel's views and reject others, to the extent that Collective Memory underpins Hegel's historical world-process and Nietzsche rejects that, Nietzsche is *pro tanto* committed to denying Collective Memory also. Funkenstein also allots<sup>25</sup> the credit for the first systematic study of Collective Memory to Halbwachs in work first published in 1925, and adds: "Collective Memory is, by virtue of its definition, a "monumental" history in the sense of Nietzsche – and it is nurtured by the "plastic power" of the collective that keeps it alive."

Since Nietzsche recognises 'monumental history', we would have to agree that he recognises a Collective Memory type if the claim can be made out that Collective Memory is a type of monumental history. There are grounds to resist this however. Nietzsche does not use the term Collective Memory; he speaks of monumental history. It is true that his nomenclature is somewhat confusing. The term might suggest the sort of statue or external iconography of memory that we have already discussed, but in fact Nietzsche has more in mind that the study of great personages of the past – surely their deeds not their representations – will be inspiring to those striving to become active today in that they demonstrate that greatness is possible. This might happen via the contemplation of statues but it seems unlikely and in fact Nietzsche is uninterested in the mechanism.

Nietzsche defines monumental history indirectly. Firstly, there is a chain that links "the great moments in the struggle of the human individual".<sup>26</sup> Note how we are speaking of individuals here rather than the collective. The great moments are in fact the great men in history. There is a faith that such men have existed and this faith gives encouragement to the 'untimely' in each age who also struggle against society for greatness by allowing them to believe that it is possible. This faith "finds expression in the demand for a *monumental* history".<sup>27</sup> Thus we are told one of the functions of monumental history, which serves to go some way towards defining it: it is what fulfils that role. We are then told that "greatness goes on living" through the "hard

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<sup>24</sup>Funkenstein [56, p. 5].

<sup>25</sup>Funkenstein [56, p. 9].

<sup>26</sup>Nietzsche UM II [1, 'On the uses and disadvantages of history for life', p. 68].

<sup>27</sup>Nietzsche UM II [1, 'On the uses and disadvantages of history for life', p. 68].

relay-race of monumental history”.<sup>28</sup> We may conclude then that monumental history is simply the history or mythology of great, inspiring individuals. This inspiration is to be available to the modern man – singular not plural – and the fact that the same effect may take place on several individuals remains insufficient to show that this is a Collective Memory type in Nietzsche. What would it mean for monumental history to be Collective Memory? To meet our definition, it would have to mean that these inspiring histories of great individuals are not just shared by many, but that the sum is more than the parts. This does not seem impossible, at first. The myths of the great can grow in the telling. A shared monumental history might suffice to give group membership. But there is nothing here that requires anything beyond a sum over individual memories.

### 4.3.2 Indebtedness of Societies

Nietzsche discusses indebtedness of societies and guilt in GM II. Interestingly, this is another place in Nietzsche’s work where he closes with an opaque reference to Zarathustra. As with the reference I mentioned on p. 52, the reason seems to be that Nietzsche feels himself to be too decadent to propound the view himself. This is consistent with my claim that Z is an important work of Nietzsche’s and so we will again have to take its claims seriously, including the Doctrine of Eternal Recurrence.

The chain of Nietzsche’s argument is as follows. Guilt and bad conscience arise “in the relationship between buyer and seller, creditor and debtor.”<sup>29</sup> This guilt must then be expiated and the debt redeemed. Then two forms of creditors are imagined who cannot be satisfied: ancestors and deities. Nietzsche writes that the debt: “requires a huge wholesale redemption, something immense as a repayment to the ‘creditor’.”<sup>30</sup> The idea is that societies or tribes owe something unpayable to their ancestors who founded the tribe, and similarly man owes something immense to a creating deity in return for his existence. Richardson misconceives this as Collective Memory when he writes<sup>31</sup> that “society makes a collective kind of memory” in discussing GM II.

Memory figures prominently in GM II in relation to indebtedness. As mentioned on p. 19, indebtedness produces memory and requires it. This will be Passive Memory, because it is externally imposed and inhibitory. Society or the creditor imposes it. It is inhibitory in that one of the actions which it prohibits is failing to redeem the debt, even though repayment is impossible. Thus Passive Memory becomes the locus of bad conscience and the excuse for endless self-punishment, which expresses itself in the asceticism Nietzsche objects to. It can also be Organic Memory. In GM, we have a race of Slaves being punished, which creates a memory for them. That will

<sup>28</sup>Nietzsche UM II [1, ‘On the uses and disadvantages of history for life’, p. 68].

<sup>29</sup>Nietzsche GM [2, II.8].

<sup>30</sup>Nietzsche GM [2, II.19].

<sup>31</sup>Richardson [9, p. 93].

certainly result in Organic Memory formation for the Slaves: we are just like the Mimosa which now moves when touched because it has an Organic Memory of ‘pain’ inflicted on its ancestors. If Nietzsche says that this amounts to a culture creating shared memories, then we might have to allow that he recognises Collective Memory. He does not, and everything adverted to purporting that he does can be explained by bearing in mind his concept of Organic Memory. Memory seems to be for Nietzsche only at the level of the individual, despite the fact that strictly speaking there are no individuals, since the self is illusory, as outlined on p. 19. If there is a problem for Nietzsche here, introducing Collective Memory multiplies the problem rather than solves it, but since he has told us that the drives have memory – see §2.3 – we can see the outlines of the solution.

Nietzsche writes: “[w]hen the human being considered it necessary to make a memory for himself, it never happened without blood, martyrs and sacrifices”.<sup>32</sup> We need to be clear here that this is still Passive Memory. This might be unclear because it might seem that in this quotation, Nietzsche is speaking of an individual making a memory for himself. This is the phrasing used, but that interpretation would be inconsistent with the method described. The common link between blood, martyrs and sacrifices is that they are all public spectacles designed to impress spectators. They will be ritual public occasions organised by the authorities to shore up their authority. Thus the term ‘himself’ is not strictly speaking anaphoric. It is the case that humans are referred to in both parts of the sentence, but they are different persons. In the first case it is the authorities, and in the second, the Slaves. Thus by arranging the festivals of blood, the authorities do not make memories for themselves, but for the oppressed group that observes the punishments.

We can see that there might be grounds for commentators to speak of a Collective Memory in relation to these words. There are shared memories which are collectively imposed. However, Nietzsche gives us an indication that he means this only metaphorically, by using quotation marks around the term ‘memory’ *only* when he speaks of what might appear to be a group’s Collective Memory. He writes: “[t]he worse humanity’s “memory” was, the more terrible its customs have always appeared”.<sup>33</sup> The quotation marks are an effective denial that there is any real type of Collective Memory.

### Commentary

I will argue that commentators are mistaken in seeing Collective Memory in Nietzsche. Often they are mistaking his references to his obscure Organic Memory type for references to Collective Memory.

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<sup>32</sup>Nietzsche GM [2, II.19].

<sup>33</sup>Nietzsche GM [2, II.3].

Following on from the above, Margalit suggests<sup>34</sup> that society owes a debt to a deity for having been created in his image. The consciousness of this debt is carried in Collective Memory, and forms the basis for morality. This line is an echo of Nietzsche's GM claims discussed above that societies feel that they owe a debt to their founders, that there is a further debt to the deity which is unredeemable, and that the unredeemable nature of the debt provides unlimited guilt and an excuse for indefinite self-punishment via asceticism. Once again, while this is suggestive that Nietzsche may have a concept of Collective Memory, it does not exclude that it is merely an aggregate of individual memories.

Gambino – a commentator we have already discussed in §3.1 – claims that Nietzsche recognises Collective Memory, when he writes<sup>35</sup> “[w]hile violence was necessary to form political communities out of an undifferentiated herd, it was not sufficient to generate the Collective Memory necessary for the continued existence of a political community.” This makes two claims that we deny on our picture. It identifies the memory type that Nietzsche contends is socially imposed in GM with Collective Memory. It also asserts that the contest between Dionysos and Apollo which is the central topic of BT is resolved via Collective Memory manufacture via the inculcation of state-sponsored legitimising myths of the origins of the state. On our analysis, this is Passive Memory. It is Imposed Memory because it is not chosen by the rememberer, in accordance with the test we outlined on p. 17. It is added that myth must also be used as well as violence to create Collective Memory. Gambino further claims<sup>36</sup> that when Nietzsche described in *The Greek State* the struggle and horror needed to rejuvenate memory, it is Collective Memory that he means. We may once again note that no primary reference to precisely a Collective Memory type is given and regard this as a further case of conflating acts on collectives of individual memory with individual acts on Collective Memory. This again fails the test of Collective Memory outlined on p. 62.

One indication that writers are confusing Organic Memory with Collective Memory may be seen in a discussion of Collective Memory and cultural identity, where we are told that “[a]ccording to Nietzsche, while in the world of animals genetic programmes guarantee the survival of the species, humans must find a means by which to maintain their nature consistently through generations. The solution to this problem is offered by cultural memory”.<sup>37</sup> The reference to previous generations sounds as though the authors have seen some of Nietzsche's words on Organic Memory which has that property. Why would cultures have any need to maintain consistency? Who would actually see to it that such a thing took place? Is it not true on the contrary

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<sup>34</sup>Margalit [31, p. 72].

<sup>35</sup>Gambino [49, p. 421].

<sup>36</sup>Gambino [49, p. 423].

<sup>37</sup>Assmann and Czaplicka [57, p. 126].

that people frequently think that things were completely different – and much better – earlier during their own lifetimes, let alone generations ago. The memory type operative here is Organic Memory in accordance with the tests we outlined on p. 35. This meets test ii). – i.e. the memory is stored via experiences of events that did not take place during the lifetime of the rememberer – and so we can see that Nietzsche has his Organic Memory concept in mind here. However, commentators would not thereby be licensed to take the two further steps needed for a Collective Memory type, which would be i). Organic Memory can have cultural effects – though this may well be arguable – and ii). it is sufficient for Collective Memory that persons have the same or similar Organic Memories. As per the definition of Collective Memory on p. 62, we want to see a use of memory or its contents in which the results could not be re-described on the basis of a sum over individual memories. This does not meet that test: there is no reason why human nature cannot be made consistent over generations without all of them having Collective Memory; in fact given that Nietzsche claims that just this is the function of Organic Memory, it is much more likely that it is Organic Memory that Nietzsche is referring to. There is no reason for Organic Memory to be Collective Memory.

This ‘cultural memory’ is then divided up by the authors into two types: communicative memory and objectivised culture. The former type is what people say to each other or write down about their own experiences, and will run back perhaps 100 years or more in extreme cases but usually much less.

The latter type – objectivised culture – can operate over much longer timescales because it includes any items such as books, statues, perhaps landscapes that could be seen as external stores of Collective Memory. Objectivised culture has the structure of memory, Assmann and Czaplicka suggest,<sup>38</sup> meaning that it has the same ‘concretion of identity’ feature I mentioned on p. 60 with the story about Stuart Pearce. We may understand this by the example of the statues on Whitehall of various second world war military leaders. The culture that is objectivised in these statues says something relevant to the group identity of those who see London as their capital city. Nietzsche it is claimed has recognised that this structure dissolves in historicism.<sup>39</sup>

Assmann and Czaplicka also invoke<sup>40</sup> Nietzsche in the context of his ‘constitution of horizons’. It is held that cultural memory forms group identity, and that Nietzsche believes that setting the limits – or constituting one’s horizon – to what is foreign to oneself arises from this accretion of identity. This would then presumably commit Nietzsche to Collective Memory but no primary citation is given to support this. While the authors are right to point out<sup>41</sup> that Nietzsche opposes any dissolution

<sup>38</sup> Assmann and Czaplicka [57, p. 126].

<sup>39</sup> Assmann and Czaplicka [57, p. 126] cite UM II in support of this claim.

<sup>40</sup> Assmann and Czaplicka [57, p. 130].

<sup>41</sup> Assmann and Czaplicka [57, p. 132].



of these horizons through an excess of historical sense, that also does not commit him to a Collective Memory type, since nothing he writes requires more than similar memories in separate individuals.

One further common misstep seems to be that from Nietzsche's agreed recognition of 'social memory' – being a memory created in individuals by society in order to make them more malleable – to a Collective Memory type. A memory created collectively need not be a Collective Memory in any meaningful sense. Lattas observes<sup>42</sup> Nietzsche's calls for Active Forgetfulness that I discussed on p. 22 but fails to note that collective forgetting can take place without there being any Collective Memory.

In conclusion: there is no Collective Memory type recognised by Nietzsche.

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<sup>42</sup>Lattas [58, p. 261].



## Chapter 5

# Conclusion

The starting point for this thesis was the claim that memory is of a higher importance for Nietzsche and the understanding of his work than has been hitherto recognised. I made out this claim by arguing initially that for Nietzsche, memory is what makes us human, and by also noting the importance and unusual nature of Nietzsche's picture of forgetting. Having established the significance of memory, it became clear that we need to understand what exactly Nietzsche means by the term. It became apparent that there were many uses and nuances and so it appeared valuable to separate out the various meanings into different types and subtypes of memory.

This separation generated four different types of memory. I will first recapitulate their definitions before summarising the arguments for their existence. Passive Memory was defined on p. 17 as being composed of two subtypes: Inhibitory Memory and Imposed Memory. Imposed Memory was defined as any memory which is imposed externally; and Inhibitory Memory was defined as any memory which tends to suppress action. Active Memory was defined on p. 21 as any use of memory which is both selected by the rememberer and tends to promote activity. Organic Memory was defined on p. 35 as any use of memory in which any of the following markers are present: i). it is physiologically based; or ii). it is stored via experiences of events that did not take place during the lifetime of the rememberer or iii). it is available to life beyond humanity. Collective Memory was defined on p. 62 as any use of memory or its contents in which the results could not be re-described on the basis of a sum over individual memories.

The argument for the first distinction between Passive Memory and Active Memory was driven by the way that Nietzsche sees activity as a major source of value and by his remarks to the effect that some memories were valuable and some were not. In particular, there was an identification in Nietzsche between passive and reactive memory and passive and reactive behaviour, all of which Nietzsche saw as less valuable. This led to the conclusion that some memories tended to promote activity and some

tended to inhibit it, resulting in the two types. Passive Memory was linked to the phenomenon of *ressentiment*, a complex theme of Nietzsche's which is nevertheless seen by him negatively, at least from the perspective of those experiencing it.

Passive Memory was shown to be made up of two subtypes: Inhibitory and Imposed. While they need not be identical, they will overlap quite significantly in the weak and those suffering from *ressentiment*, for those who have no control over some of what they remember will also have little freedom of action. This argument was primarily driven by the association in GM between the imposition of memories of public punishments and the inhibition of action in those who have such memories.

Active Memory was primarily argued for – see §2.2.2 – by contrasting it with Passive Memory on several axes. As mentioned, the first of these distinctions was by the valuation ascribed by Nietzsche, but distinctions were also shown in terms of power, bad conscience, the memory of the will, contest and competition, and effective self-creation.

There is a third major type of memory for Nietzsche: Organic Memory. While I claim that the first distinction between Passive Memory and Active Memory is true and useful to us today, Organic Memory is perhaps a less useful claim. Understanding what Nietzsche means by it remains an important pre-requisite for reading him however, because it can cause us to mistake useful claims about our memory with the wider concept of Organic Memory that Nietzsche also considers.

We saw that Organic Memory was a new type since Nietzsche extended it to previous generations of humans and also to the non-human world of plants. This contrasts with Passive Memory and Active Memory types in humans. It is probably beyond what we would accept today as falling within the standard meaning of the term 'memory' and reflects some of Nietzsche's interest in biological views which are no longer current.

I argued that understanding this additional memory type could give us fresh perspectives on the important themes of Dionysus vs Apollo and the *Übermensch*. In the first case, forgetting is part of the value of the drives, while in the second case the special memory abilities of the *Übermensch* were linked to his ability to affirm the Doctrine of Eternal Recurrence.

My final task was to eliminate a misunderstanding. Several authors have claimed or assumed that Nietzsche recognises a type of Collective Memory. I argued that when authors have involved Nietzsche to support existence claims for Collective memory, they were mistaken. Often this occurred because they were confused by Nietzsche's admittedly rather opaque references to the slightly strange Organic Memory type.

I conclude that understanding to which memory type Nietzsche is referring is valuable and important: it gives us better perspectives on what memory is and what Nietzsche means.

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