

POETICS OF
PHILOSOPHY
NIETZSCHE, WITTGENSTEIN,
AND THE ART OF LANGUAGE

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Declaration of Authorship

I Philip Mills hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

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Date: 25th August 2018

Abstract

My thesis elaborates a philosophy of poetry in two interrelated ways: a philosophical study of poetry and an exploration of the impacts of poetry on philosophical investigations. Whereas poetry was considered as one of the highest arts in the 18th and 19th century aesthetics, 20th century analytic aesthetics has left poetry aside, focusing much more on visual arts or music. The so-called 'analytic-continental divide' which has shaped the philosophical landscape in the 20th century provides an element of an answer to explain this disappearance: following the 'linguistic turn,' the dominant conception of language in the analytic tradition is the representational conception of language which fails to give an account of what happens in poetry. On the continental side, on the contrary, some philosophers such as Heidegger have gone as far as to consider philosophy as poetry. These two extremes map out two questions that a philosophy of poetry must answer: What conception of language can give an account of poetry? And how does poetry affect philosophical investigations, especially regarding the question of style? Nietzsche and Wittgenstein both offer interesting insights to answer these questions and bringing them together lead to reconsidering the analytic-continental divide and the 'quarrel between philosophy and poetry.' I approach poetry by transposing Wittgenstein's notion of 'seeing-as' to 'reading-as,' and bring this notion in relation to Nietzsche's perspectivism. Following these ideas, I consider poetry as a way creating perspectives and elaborate the notion of 'perspectival poetics' in the etymological sense of *poiesis*, creation or making. Philosophy's encounter with the language of poetry does not only entail a change in conception of language, but also a change in philosophy's own use of language. Philosophy's encounter with poetry brings the question of style to the fore and leads to reconsidering the relations between philosophy and poetry.

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List of Abbreviations

Nietzsche

- AOM—*Assorted Opinions and Maxims*
BGE—*Beyond Good and Evil*
BT—*The Birth of Tragedy*
D—*Daybreak*
DD—*Dionysus Dithyrambs*
DS—*David Strauss, the Confessor and the Writer*
EH—*Ecce Homo*
GM—*On the Genealogy of Moral*
GS—*The Gay Science*
HH—*Human, All Too Human*
NF—*Nachgelassene Fragmente* (posthumous fragments)
TI—*Twilight of the Idols*
TL—*On Truth and Lie in a Nonmoral Sense*
WS—*The Wanderer and his Shadow*
Z—*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

Wittgenstein

- BB—*Blue Book*
CV—*Culture and Value*
LA—*Lectures on Aesthetics*
LW—*Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology, Volume 1*
NB—*Notebooks 1914-1916*
PG—*Philosophical Grammar*
PI—*Philosophical Investigations*
PPF—*Philosophy of Psychology—A Fragment* (former second part of the *Philosophical Investigations*)
RFM—*Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*
RPP—*Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology, Volume 1*
T—*Tractatus Logic-Philosophicus*
Z—*Zettel*

I refer to Nietzsche's works by indicating the book title and the aphorism number as well as the *Kritische Studienausgabe* (KSA) volume and page number. When referring to the notebooks, I indicate the year and the note number as well as the KSA volume and page number. I refer to Wittgenstein's works by indicating the book title and aphorism, page or proposition number (or date in the case of the notebooks).

Introduction:

Poetry and the Question of Truth

Like a painter, [the imitative poet] produces work that is inferior with respect to truth and that appeals to a part of the soul that is similarly inferior rather than to the best part. So we were right not to admit him into a city that is to be well-governed, for he arouses, nourishes, and strengthens this part of the soul and so destroys the rational one, in just the way that someone destroys the better sort of citizens when he strengthens the vicious ones and surrenders the city to them.

Plato, The Republic, 605a-c

When Plato banishes poets from his ideal city because they tell lies which corrupt the minds even of good citizens and thus evaluates poetry negatively, he opposes the poet's task to the philosopher's search for truth and, insofar as a city should not surrender itself to the vicious citizens, philosophy should not surrender itself to poetry. His banishing poetry from the ideal city can thus be understood as a metaphor for what he calls 'an ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry:' the city is philosophy and poetry should not be admitted in it. Despite the modifications and evolutions of both the notions of poetry and of philosophy, Plato's setting of poetry as philosophy's 'other' seems to maintain an effectiveness for many philosophers in various periods in history and the latest development of this 'ancient quarrel' could be seen in the analytic-continental divide. In a schematic way, analytic philosophy would in this sense pursue Plato's ideal of removing poetry from the philosophical realm whereas continental philosophy would work against this removal by embracing poetry as a means to knowledge and by including poetic elements. We will see that this picture is far too schematic but the rejection of poetry has also and above all had an impact on the field of analytic aesthetics. Poetry is, as John Gibson suggests in his introduction to *The Philosophy of Poetry*, 'the last great unexplored frontier in contemporary aesthetics.'¹ By 'contemporary

¹ Gibson (2015), p. 1.

aesthetics,' one must understand here 'analytic aesthetics' as many continental philosophers of art have given a prime role to poetry, thus following the long tradition in which philosophers granted poetry the status of the highest art such as Kant or Hegel.

The relations between philosophy and poetry are not only one-sided: philosophy does not only observe and study poetry from an external point of view but is also affected by poetry in return. Paradoxically, Plato himself, by staging his philosophy in dialogues uses a poetic device to express his philosophy. This might already suggest that philosophy cannot escape the question of its own presentation, the question of style, and this question is closely linked to philosophy's relation to poetry. Against analytic philosophy's turn to science and logic, continental philosophy could thus be seen as embracing poetry, and Plato's distinction between the rationality of philosophy and the irrationality of poetry could therefore be transposed in terms of the logicism of analytic philosophy and the anti-logicism of continental philosophy. This picture is however quite misleading and the distinctions cannot be so easily pinned down. As I will argue, some bridges can be built between analytic and continental philosophers, especially between two of their important figures: Nietzsche and Wittgenstein.

Nietzsche is among the philosophers who reply to Plato's banishing of poetry by embracing it and, to that extent, he considers his philosophy to be an inverted Platonism: 'My philosophy is an inverted Platonism: the further something is from true being, the purer, the more beautiful, the better it is. Living in illusion as the goal.' (NF-1870-1871, 7[156] / KSA 7.199) This inversion therefore brings Nietzsche to adopt an attitude towards poetry fundamentally opposed to Plato's: rather than criticising the poet's distance from the truth, Nietzsche praises it because the whole idea of the 'Truth' is misleading according to him. His poem 'Only fool, only poet!' responds to Plato's banishing of poetry from the realm of truth and explores precisely this question of truth and poetry:

<p> 'Der <i>Wahrheit</i> Freier—du?' so höhnten sie 'nein! nur ein Dichter! ein Thier, ein listiges, raubendes, schleichendes, das lügen muss, das wissentlich, willentlich lügen muss, nach Beute lüstern, bunt verlarvt, sich selbst zur Larve, sich selbst zur Beute <i>das</i>—der <i>Wahrheit</i> Freier?... Nur Narr! Nur Dichter! Nur Buntes redend, aus Narrenlarven bunt herausredend, herumsteigend auf lügnerischen Wortbrücken, auf Lügen-Regenbogen zwischen falschen Himmeln herumschweifend, herumschleichend — <i>nur</i> Narr! <i>nur</i> Dichter!... </p>	<p> 'The free truth—you?' They scoffed 'No! Only a poet!' A nasty, robbing, and crawling animal, Who must lie, Must wisely, willingly lie, Lusting for booty, Colorfully disguised, Who is the masque, Who is the booty himself, Is <i>that</i>—the free truth?... Only fool! Only poet! Only colorful speaking, From a colourful larval fool, Climbing upon false broken Words and false rainbows Between false heavens Crawling and creeping – <i>Only</i> fool! <i>Only</i> poet!... (DD, 'Only Fool!' / KSA 6.377-378) </p>
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Nietzsche's poem stages the poet as a fool, therefore restating Plato's conception of the poet as irrational. The poet is a fool to think that she has something to do with truth. The translation of 'der Wahrheit Freier' as 'the free truth' is problematic but interesting. It is problematic because 'Freier' does not mean free and is not an adjective. This translation therefore inverts the syntactical relation between 'Wahrheit' and 'Freier.' Other translations suggest 'the suitor of truth' or 'the lover of truth' which maintain the correct grammatical relation between 'Wahrheit' and 'Freier' and present the poet as aiming towards the same goal as the philosopher. Although linguistically incorrect, the notion of freedom is however interesting as it could suggest that the poet is free from this idea of truth whereas the philosopher is still bound to it. Following these notions of love and freedom, the poet would therefore be the one who loves truth and who also frees others from it. The others however only reply 'Only fool! Only Poet!' and do not take her seriously. Two criticisms are made to poets here: first they are liars, and this

follows Plato's idea that the poet moves away from the truth, and second their words are only colourful speaking, not serious speaking. We could find an anticipation of Austin's rejection of poetic uses of language in the category of the 'non-serious' in this critique of colourful language, and the difficulties philosophy of language encounters in attempting to account for poetic uses of language originate here.

Nietzsche often uses the image of the poet as a liar, for instance in *Zarathustra*, where he considers that the poets lie too much, which causes great problems to Zarathustra's disciple:

'So what did Zarathustra once say to you? That the poets lie too much? — But Zarathustra too is a poet.'

'Now do you believe that he was telling the truth here? Why do you believe that?'

The disciple answered: 'I believe in Zarathustra.' But Zarathustra shook his head and smiled.

'Belief does not make me blessed,' he said, 'least of all belief in me.'
(Z II 'Poets' / KSA 4.163-4)

Zarathustra's disciple struggles with what could be seen as a self-contradictory statement: Zarathustra claims that 'poets lie too much' while considering himself a poet. This suggests that Zarathustra's discourse should not be taken at face value, not as a statement or a doctrine but as an allegorical speech in which the truth to be discovered does not follow the rules of 'scientific' or 'logical' truth.

By distancing herself from this logical truth, by knowingly lying, the poet might get closer to another kind of truth as Nietzsche suggests in developing the abovementioned image of the poet-liar:

Der Dichter, der lügen kann wissentlich, willentlich, der kann allein Wahrheit reden.	The poet, who can willingly and knowingly lie, can alone tell the truth. (NF-1884, 28[20] / KSA 11.306)
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This problem of truth in poetry and poetic language is an important concern in Nietzsche's works, and perhaps even more so as he considers himself as a

poet. The statement concerning Zarathustra's discourse could therefore be transposed onto Nietzsche's.

The two criticisms mentioned above—distance from truth and colourful speech—represent two rather common ideas which are still strong in philosophy and theory of poetry nowadays. If poetry is distant from truth as commonly understood, then another kind of truth must be at play in poetry, a poetic or a metaphorical truth; second, poetic language is a colourful language, that is a language somehow deviant and distant from ordinary language. These ideas have been fought by some, embraced by others, but they show that the question of truth in poetry is related to the question of language. Proponents of the truth of poetry consider poetic language as central to language *tout court*, even sometimes as the birthplace of language, whereas opponents to the truth of poetry consider poetic language as a deviance. We will see that these two types of response can be used to look at the analytic-continental divide. Nietzsche explores this distinction and develops the opposition between truth and untruth, rationality and irrationality, in terms of day and night or light and darkness:

Bei abgehellter Luft,
wenn schon des Monds Sichel
grün zwischen Pupurröthen
und neidisch hinschleicht,
— dem Tage feind,
mit jedem Schritte heimlich
an Rosen-Hängematten
hinsichelnd, bis sie sinken,
nachtsabwärts blass hinabsinken:
so sank ich selber einstmals,
aus meinem Wahrheits-Wahnsinne,
aus meinen Tages-Sehnsüchten,
des Tages müde, krank vom Lichte,
— sank abwärts, abendwärts,
schattenwärts,
von Einer Wahrheit
verbrannt und durstig
— gedenkst du noch, gedenkst du,
heisses Herz,
wie da du durstetest? —

Near an opaque sky,
The crescent moon
Crawls across crimson
And creeps enviously
- the enemy of Day,
With each secret step toward
The hanging rose gardens
Hobbling, until it sinks
With the death of the night:
So I myself once sank
From my truth and delusion,
From my Day-searching
Tired of day, sick of light,
I sank down, deepen into the shadows,
Burned and thirsty
from every truth
- Do you still remember, remember, hot heart,
How you once thirsted there?
I was banished
from all Truth!

dass ich verbannt sei
von aller Wahrheit!
Nur Narr! Nur Dichter!...

Only fool! Only poet!...
(DD, 'Only Fool!' / KSA 6.380)

Nietzsche's poet remembers the Platonic days when she was banished from the realm of truth. This image represents the poet as going down or sinking in Plato's cave, far away from the sun which represents the truth in Plato's allegory but also, interestingly, stages the poet as making this move on her own, although the term sinking is ambiguous in that regard. This could parallel Zarathustra's journey: at the beginning of the book he decides to go down from his mountain into the 'human' world and thus begins Zarathustra's 'Untergang,' usually translated as 'going under' but which also means sinking or decline.

What is at play in taking poetry seriously from a philosophical point of view is therefore that truth cannot be taken in a Platonic way, i.e. as an eternal, absolute, and context-independent truth, and that language cannot be construed in terms of representing these metaphysical truths. Taking poetry seriously breaks down the metaphysics edifice Plato and many philosophers after him have built because poetry shows that language outgrows the limits of representing eternal truths. In her song called 'The Truth,' poet-rapper Kate Tempest brings these elements together in a poetic way and stages the relativity of truth. The song begins with the line 'It's all relative, right?' and this brings her to what I think to be a good introduction to Nietzsche's perspectivism:

Is there a truth that exists
Outside of perception?
This is the question.
It's true if you believe it.
The world is the world

But it's all how you see it.²

If truths cannot be considered as eternal and absolute, they must be relative to something and Tempest suggests they are relative to perception. As we will see, Nietzsche's focus on perspective suggests a similar line of thought which modifies the hierarchies in philosophy: it does not only invert the rationalist move of considering reason over the senses (and therefore over perception), but also places aesthetics—in the etymological sense of *aisthesis*, that is sensation or perception—at the centre of philosophical concerns over metaphysics. This goes back to the original use of the word 'aesthetic' by Alexander Baumgarten who considers it as the science of sensations (in contrast to reason). As Tempest suggests, the last and only meaningful metaphysical statement is a tautology: 'The world is the world.' This notion of tautology reminds us of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* in which true statements are tautological and metaphysical statements meaningless. The important aspect in Tempest's song, however, is what comes after the metaphysical statement: 'but it's all how you see it.' This suggests a replacement of metaphysics by aesthetics: as the only meaningful metaphysical statement is a tautology which says nothing about the world, the focus must shift from the 'objective' world to the way of seeing it. What Tempest suggests with this shift from metaphysics to aesthetics is, I argue, precisely the move Nietzsche makes in advocating for his perspectivism. Another important element is that the question of truth is translated in terms of beliefs: 'It's true if you believe it.' The question is no longer: 'what is true?' but 'what do you believe in?' This comes back to Zarathustra's disciple taking Zarathustra's statements for true because she believes in him. Following Nietzsche's thought, this can be understood as the shift from the question of truth to that of the value of truth. More precisely, Nietzsche questions the value of our usual conception of truth as correspondence between a statement and a fact. This is not the only way of understanding truth and Nietzsche suggests that it might not always be the best way. What is in question is therefore not truth

² Kate Tempest, 'The Truth.'

itself, or to that extent knowledge, reason, etc., but the value we give them, the belief we put into them.

Perspectivism suggests that one should not remain enclosed within one single perspective, but rather shift from one perspective to another in order to reach, in the long run, a better picture or, in Wittgenstein's terms, a 'surveyable representation [übersichtliche Darstellung].' (PI 122) In a metaphorical way, Nietzsche suggests in another poem that one should not stand too long on one leg:

einer Tänzerin gleich, die, wie, mir scheinen will,	Is she like a dancer who for too long
zu lange schon, gefährlich lange immer, immer nur auf <i>einem</i>	Already, dangerously long, stands
Beinchen stand?	Always, always only upon <i>one</i>
- da vergass sie darob, wie mir scheinen will,	leg? - she forgotten
das <i>andre</i> Beinchen?	about the <i>other</i> leg?
	(DD, 'Daughters' / KSA 6.385)

The shift in perspective is like changing leg. This might be required in dancing, but also in philosophising, as Wittgenstein suggests with the surprisingly same image: 'In philosophizing it is important for me to keep changing my position, not to stand too long on *one* leg, so as not to get stiff.' (CV, p. 32) Not staying too long on *one* leg does not suggest that one should stand on both legs, but rather change from one leg to the other. Like a dancer, and Nietzsche often uses dance as a metaphor for thought, the philosopher should not forget the other leg, the other perspective. This metaphor should however not lead us into thinking that two perspectives suffice. On the contrary, Nietzsche argues that there are many perspectives and that one must learn to move from one to another, like the dancer moves from one leg to the other. To do so, the philosopher should always question herself and especially the grounds on which she founds her thought. Nietzsche's texts also suggest this by presenting many questions, without necessarily answering them: the questions aim at opening perspectives. In that sense, and as Wittgenstein suggests, the poet is similar to the philosopher: 'The poet

too must always be asking himself: “is what I am writing really true then?” – which does not necessarily mean: “is this how it happens in reality?” (CV, p. 46) According to Wittgenstein, the poet brings into question the notion of truth as correspondence and this, in turn, has an impact on the philosophical conception of truth. Wittgenstein’s questions bring to the fore the important metaphilosophical aspect of writing philosophy, the question of style. If truth must not necessarily be understood in terms of correspondence to reality, and this because reality itself is a problematic concept, the notion of truth in writing philosophy must be understood differently and this is where style comes into play. What poetry brings to philosophy, for good or bad, is that the ways of seeing and thinking are related to style (or ways of writing) and that the philosopher should avoid remaining in one way of seeing, should avoid standing too long, ‘dangerously long,’ on one leg.

To explore these questions, my thesis is divided in two parts. The first part establishes the conceptual and historical background against which Nietzsche and Wittgenstein can be compared and fruitfully brought together. Chapter One explores the so-called ‘analytic-continental divide’ in relation to the ‘linguistic turn’ as these notions have shaped the 20th century philosophical landscape, and therefore the reception and possibilities of linking Nietzsche’s and Wittgenstein’s thoughts. For quite some time, Nietzsche was largely ignored in the analytic field and Wittgenstein in the continental one, although both can bring interesting insights to the other tradition. The absence of poetry in the analytic field of philosophising can be explained by the rejection of continental philosophy which has been in much closer contact to poetry, and is even considered as poetry by some analytic philosophers. Although some continental and analytic philosophers share similar concerns with the end of metaphysics and with language, the notion of poetry is central to understanding the limits of their conceptions of language.

These considerations about language and metaphysics bring me, in Chapter Two, to explore an alternative way of conceptualising language as

expression and to show how this tradition, which includes Herder, Hamann and Humboldt among others, influenced both Nietzsche and Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein's shift in his conception of language between the *Tractatus* and his later works can be seen as a shift in which influences are the most important, Frege and Russell or Herder and Hamann. Although it is difficult to know what Wittgenstein read of Nietzsche and the German tradition of philosophy of language before him, his acquaintance with Fritz Mauthner's works can explain, as Janet Lungstrum argues,³ the connection to Nietzsche, the German Romantics and Herder, Hamann, and Humboldt, what Charles Taylor calls the 'HHH view.'⁴ Against the representational conception of language which fails to account for poetry, this tradition elaborates a conception of language as expression which anticipates some aspects of Wittgenstein's later works. This chapter shows that Nietzsche and Wittgenstein are not so distant from one another but can be said to belong to a similar tradition in their conceptions of language.

Chapter Three explores in details Nietzsche's and Wittgenstein's views on language, and how they can be fruitfully brought together. They both criticise metaphysics and a certain metaphysical conception of language, according to which language represents the world. Language is full of metaphysical prejudices and a critique of metaphysics cannot forego a critique of language and these embedded prejudices. Nietzsche criticises the notion of concept as 'equating the unequal' and therefore establishing some kind of ideal or metaphysical 'true world' behind the apparent one. To overcome this issue, Wittgenstein elaborates the notion of 'family resemblance concepts' which avoids the traps and downfalls of a metaphysical understanding of concepts. If concepts are no longer self-evident, this opens the door to a form of relativism. Nietzsche and Wittgenstein answer this charge of relativism by bringing the notions of interpretation and values into play. More specifically, they bring the social

³ See Lungstrum (1995)

⁴ Taylor (1985), p. 269.

aspect of language to the fore and Wittgenstein's notions of 'language-games' and 'forms of life' are central to understanding how interpretation and values come to the centre of the concerns with language.

Part Two shifts to the poetic dimension of language and philosophy. Chapter Four and Five focus on approaching poetry from a Nietzschean and Wittgensteinian perspective, exploring what is at play in poetry. In Chapter Four, Wittgenstein's notion of 'seeing-as' is applied to poetry in order to elaborate a 'reading-as' which accounts for poetic uses of language without positing them as ontologically distinct from ordinary uses. This conception brings to the fore the importance of aesthetics in philosophy, the importance of how we see and perceive the world over the metaphysical question of what the world is.

Chapter Five shifts from aesthetics to poetics, etymologically *poiesis*, creation or making. Poetry is not only a matter of seeing the world, but also of creating it by creating new perspectives. The chapter explores in more details Nietzsche's perspectivism and argues that once taken on aesthetic grounds, this notion does not encounter the self-refuting problem, namely that if all is interpretation, would perspectivism not just be an interpretation.

Chapter Six is a case study in poetics, focusing on the notion of metaphor, as many consider it to be an important dimension of poetic language. Metaphor is not only understood as a rhetorical trope, but also and above all as a way of changing perspective, as presenting a new way of seeing. Metaphor is therefore a poetic tool insofar as it invites readers to see and understand the world anew through its bringing together seemingly very distant terms.

Chapter Seven concludes the thesis by turning to the metaphilosophical impacts of this notion of poetics. Poetics does not only affect how we see the world, but also how philosophy is written. The question of style is central both for Nietzsche and Wittgenstein and the notion of 'perspectival poetics' leads to questioning the 'poetics of philosophy,' that is not only how philosophy can create perspectives, but also how philosophy has a poetic

dimension which is laid in its style. In the concluding chapter, I combine these poetic elements to reconsider the relation between philosophy and poetry.

Part One:
Setting the Stage

Chapter One:

Crossing the Analytic-Continental Divide: Metaphysics, Language, and Poetry

This has given me the greatest trouble and still does: to realize that what things are called is incomparably more important than what they are.
Nietzsche, The Gay Science, §58

Nietzsche and Wittgenstein do not appear often as a pair, especially in aesthetics, and one of the main reasons for their separation can be found in a salient feature of the 20th century philosophical landscape: the so-called analytic-continental divide. Even though, as we will see in this chapter, this divide makes only little sense once looked at carefully, one of its concrete impacts was to separate the spheres of influence of Nietzsche and Wittgenstein. In order to bring them back closer to one another and build a philosophical discourse based on both of them, it is thus necessary to understand how and why this divide can be overcome. There are points of contact between philosophers on both sides and focusing on Nietzsche and Wittgenstein will outline some of them, especially regarding metaphysics and language. It might be objected that Nietzsche and Wittgenstein are not the most representative philosophers for the continental and the analytic sides, but as Cavell argues concerning Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein: ‘while [they] may be untypical representatives of the philosophies for which I am making them stand, they are hardly peripheral to them. Any general comparison which could not accommodate these figures would also, if differently, risk irrelevance.’⁵ Their belonging to the traditional picture of continental and analytic philosophy is further attested by their rejection from the opposite side: Carnap for instance considers Nietzsche as a poet more than a philosopher and Deleuze considers Wittgenstein as ‘an assassin of philosophy.’ Wittgenstein’s shift of style and concerns between his early and

⁵ Cavell (1964), pp. 946-947.

later works however makes the picture more complex and his position within the history of philosophy is not so easy to pin down. If the *Tractatus* is considered as playing a foundational role in analytic philosophy, things become less clear with his later works. To the question 'Is Wittgenstein an analytic philosopher?', Anat Biletzki for instance answers: 'Yes, the early Wittgenstein was an analytic philosopher; no, the later was not.'⁶ But if one were to ask: 'Is Wittgenstein a continental philosopher?', very few, I guess, would answer yes, disregarding early or late, and Deleuze's criticism of Wittgenstein suggests he would not want to be associated with him. However, as Hans-Johann Glock argues, looking at the history of philosophy makes Wittgenstein's position easier to place: 'when we look at the historical criterion, Wittgenstein's membership in the analytic tradition becomes clear. He was mainly influenced by analytic philosophers (Frege, Russell, Moore), and he in turn mainly influenced analytic philosophers (Russell, Moore, logical positivism, conceptual analysis). This is not to deny that he was also influenced by (Schopenhauer, James, Spengler) and influenced (hermeneutics, postmodernism) non-analytic philosophers.'⁷ Similarly, Nietzsche's influence on many 20th century continental philosophers (Heidegger, Deleuze, Derrida) makes him an important figure in continental philosophy. Wittgenstein's complex position can however be positively seen as it reveals his possible role as point of contact between two traditions which now seem far from each other, but which arise, as we will see, from similar concerns. Once we look at this analytic-continental divide more closely, it appears to be more a misunderstanding than a clear-cut opposition between two well-defined sides.

Although we will see that the analytic-continental divide which has shaped the description of philosophy in the 20th century is slowly starting to lose its strength, it is still quite strong in aesthetics where 'analytic' and 'continental' concerns seem quite far from one another. This comes from a different

⁶ Biletzki and Matar (eds.) (1998), p. 197.

⁷ Glock (2008), pp. 226-227.

understanding of what role aesthetics plays in philosophy, and in order to elaborate a philosophy of poetry, one needs to understand how the field is set. As Roger Pouivet describes it:

Anglo-American aesthetics thus appears as a branch of other subjects and, especially, of analytic metaphysics. This has sometimes led 'continental' thinkers to find that it does not focus enough on the works themselves, that it is too far from their real history, from the sociological conditions of their appearance, from the critical judgments one can make about them. [...] This criticism seems also to rely on a contradiction concerning the general project of Anglo-American aesthetics. This project does not aim so much at reaching a global interpretation of the phenomenon of art—what one sometimes understands as 'metaphysics of art'—but at evaluating the various argumentations at play on delineated concerns.⁸

The scope of analytic aesthetics is thus, according to Pouivet, to approach and solve specific problems related to art whereas continental aesthetics would be a more generalised attempt to understand what art is. Such a description however inherits the same problems as those of the global 'analytic-continental divide' and some work can be done to overcome this distance. This difference in aims and scope of aesthetics has also prevented philosophers from connecting analytic and continental philosophers matters in aesthetics and, in this context, from connecting Nietzsche and Wittgenstein.

Despite the distance between them, Nietzsche's and Wittgenstein's influences sometimes fuse and the most representative analytic aesthetician to inherit from both influences is Arthur Danto whose aesthetics is explicitly

⁸ Pouivet (2000), p. 47, my translation: L'esthétique anglo-américaine apparaît ainsi comme une branche d'autres disciplines et, particulièrement, de la métaphysique analytique. Cela conduit parfois les 'continentaux' à trouver qu'elle se préoccupe trop peu de œuvres elles-mêmes, qu'elle est trop éloignée de leur histoire réelle, des conditions sociologiques de leur apparition, des jugement critiques qu'on peut porter sur elles. [...] Cette critique me semble aussi reposer sur un contresens concernant le projet général de l'esthétique telle qu'elle se pratique dans le monde anglo-américain. Ce projet n'est pas tant de parvenir à une interprétation globale du phénomène de l'art—ce qu'on entend parfois par 'métaphysique de l'art'—que celui d'évaluer sur des enjeux délimités les différents argumentaires en présence.

influenced by Wittgenstein and whose book on Nietzsche was influential in giving a place to Nietzsche in the analytic realm. His notion of ‘transfiguration of the commonplace’⁹ calls on both Nietzschean and Wittgensteinian ideas. Although he does not discuss poetry in that context, we will see in Chapter Four that a philosophy of poetry based on Nietzsche and Wittgenstein shares some aspects with Danto’s philosophy of art. The same can be said of continental philosophers who accept and take Wittgenstein’s influence, most notably Jean-François Lyotard whose aesthetics relies heavily on Wittgenstein’s notion of language-games. This Wittgensteinian influence is one of the reasons Richard Kearney and David Rasmussen give to justify their inclusion of Wittgenstein in their anthology *Continental Aesthetics: Romanticism to Postmodernism*: ‘[Wittgenstein’s] linguistic approach to art was of course to prove of seminal importance for the entire ‘analytic’ tradition of modern aesthetics, but its impact on a number of important ‘continental’ thinkers—notably Ricoeur, Habermas, and Lyotard—cannot be overestimated.’¹⁰ Following Kearney and Rasmussen, Wittgenstein could also be said to be a continental aesthetician. This blurring of the frontiers and this mutual influence is one way of overcoming the analytic-continental divide and aesthetics can profit from it. Within philosophy of poetry or literature, the separation in influence is quite strong, and this has something to do with the relation to language. As Peter Kivy argues, the turn to language in philosophy has not been helpful to aesthetics, quite to the contrary:

Nor was the newly emerging school of linguistic analysis, in its various forms, the savior of aesthetics. To the contrary, if anything, it passed an even harsher judgment on the discipline than did the positivists. For whereas the positivists were more or less content to give it a dismissive shrug in the direction of the “emotive,” the language analysts took special pains to exclude aesthetics, not with a whimper but with a bang.¹¹

⁹ See Danto (1981).

¹⁰ Kearney and Rasmussen (2001), p. 163.

¹¹ Kivy (2004), p. 2.

Despite the linguistic analysts' negative attitude towards aesthetics, some philosophers considered as analytic have turned their attention to art and literature. Most analytic philosophers of literature have inherited from this 'linguistic turn' and therefore consider literature from the point of view of language, focusing on aspects such as the relation between truth and fiction or the specificities of literary language. On the contrary, continental aesthetics did not focus on such linguistic problems and understood poetry as something more general, as describing a way of relating to the world rather than as being a subfield of philosophy of art. One philosopher to fruitfully overcome the divide is Stanley Cavell who, while approaching specific problems in philosophy of literature, also has a broader spectrum in mind. Moreover, taking a step back and looking at the broader picture of what a philosophy of poetry can be, one must take into account the double directionality of the genitive and give an account of the impacts of poetry on philosophy. As Cavell asks in the famous closing question to his *Claim of Reason*: 'Can philosophy become literature and still know itself?'¹²

In this chapter, I first give a brief characterisation of analytic and continental philosophy in order to show the limits of this terminology. I then focus specifically on Nietzsche and Wittgenstein and look on what grounds they have usually been compared. Two aspects arise from the comparison: a critique of metaphysics and a turn to language. In the third part, I explore how these aspects reveal a connection between philosophers from both sides and sketch a story of connections and oppositions. Although many philosophers seem to agree in saying that language is fundamental to philosophical investigations, we will see that in this brief story that the conceptions of language they rely on and offer are radically different. What this story shows moreover is the importance of poetic language in the so-called divide and why it is necessary for a philosophy of language to give an account of poetic phenomena. In that story, the philosophers categorised as

¹² Cavell (1979), p. 496.

analytic seem to give little attention to poetry whereas philosophers categorised as continental take poetry as a starting point. As I will argue in further chapters, Nietzsche and Wittgenstein, although they do not necessarily take poetic language as their starting point (this is certainly the case for Wittgenstein, it is debatable for Nietzsche), elaborate conceptions of language which encompass poetic uses. Two steps are necessary before connecting Nietzsche's and Wittgenstein's views on language: first, in this chapter, breaking the myth of the so-called analytic-continental divide by showing that both sides share similar concerns and cannot be defined as traditions, second, in Chapter Two, showing how Nietzsche and Wittgenstein belong to a similar tradition which considers language not only as representational but also as expressive.

1. The Terms of the Debate: Analytic and Continental Philosophies

It is now rather common in philosophy to distinguish between analytic and continental, and some philosophers might even use these terms to describe themselves. However, when one looks closer at this classification, it does not seem to make much sense and neither analytic nor continental philosophy seems to be a united and well-defined front. This is not to say that the picture of analytic versus continental philosophy has no effect in the philosophical world, but rather that these effects are based on a weak understanding of what philosophers on both sides try to do. The difficulties one encounters in attempting to define either analytic or continental philosophy further suggests that such a distinction might not be an adequate description of the philosophical world. Many attempts at definition fail, either because too broad or too narrow. For instance, Michael Dummett defines analytic philosophy as follows:

What distinguishes analytic philosophy, in its diverse manifestations, from other schools is the belief, first, that a philosophical account of

thought can be attained through a philosophical account of language, and secondly, that a comprehensive account can only be so attained.¹³

According to Dummett, the specificity of analytic philosophy is that it considers philosophical problems to be accounted for by language and language only. This definition, although it describes some strands of analytic philosophy, does not really account for many of the more contemporary trends in analytic philosophy. Moreover, some continental philosophers such as Heidegger or Derrida could, to some extent, satisfy this condition whereas they clearly stand opposite analytic philosophy according to the standard picture. The shift to language is not an analytic-only move but, as we will see, the attempt of philosophy to overcome metaphysics.

Against Dummett's account of analytic philosophy and other closed definitions of it, Glock's account of analytic philosophy attempts to take into consideration both historical and systematic dimensions. He thus takes into account the different historical developments of analytic philosophy and shows how the various definitions that have been given do not really cover them all. The choice of Frege as a starting point to analytic philosophy seems however quite a widely accepted claim. Most authors consider Frege and Russell as the founders of analytic philosophy, even though Russell's role is sometimes diminished. Despite their differences, Frege and Russell share the same tendency towards logicism; as Peter Hylton suggests: 'Each argued for, and tried to prove, logicism, the thesis that arithmetic can be reduced to logic, and is thus no more than logic in disguise.'¹⁴ The main contribution of Frege and Russell is thus not that of turning philosophy towards language but of turning language towards logic. Glock summarises the situation of the origins of analytic philosophy:

Analytic philosophy achieved lift-off only when the logicist programme and the Frege-Russell revolution of formal logic combined with attempts to solve problems concerning propositions,

¹³ Dummett (1996), p. 4.

¹⁴ Hylton (2010), p. 509.

concepts and facts that Moore and Russell faced in their fight against idealism. And it took a linguistic turn when the *Tractatus* linked these problems to the nature of philosophy and of logical necessity, and tried to resolve the lot by reference to linguistic representation.¹⁵

Glock notes three elements at the origins of analytic philosophy: the turn to logic, the fight against idealism, and the turn to language. Among these three elements, it is mainly around the first one that the analytic-continental divide revolves. Indeed, as Glock notes twice in *What Is Analytic Philosophy?*, some aspects of analytic philosophy are closer to Nietzsche than one might think at first glance.¹⁶ And even though the divide is still quite strong for many authors, on the analytic and on the continental sides, there is a continuity—analytic philosophy does not spring out of nowhere but is inscribed in a clear intellectual context—and there are points of contact.

Some philosophers have attempted to redefine the divide in order to overcome it, but these attempts still maintain a difference between two kinds of philosophy and inherit from the same difficulties and problems as those encountered in defining analytic and continental philosophy. Richard Rorty suggests renaming continental philosophy as conversational philosophy. According to him, conversational philosophers converse with other philosophers, without having in mind the goal of ‘getting it right’ or, rather, having abandoned the idea that it is possible of ‘getting it right’ because ‘the term “getting it right,” I would argue, is appropriate only when everybody interested in the topics draws pretty much the same inferences from the same assertions. That happens when there is consensus about the aim of inquiry in the area, and when a problem can be pinned down in such a way that

¹⁵ Glock (2008), p. 226.

¹⁶ Glock (2008), p. 118: ‘The positivists’ answer to this question is equally striking, and it owes more than a passing debt to Nietzsche’s *Lebensphilosophie* and his critique of metaphysics.’ And p. 133: ‘Mulligan sounds a note of caution. Comparisons between the analytic and continental turns to language are ‘empty,’ he maintains, since they disregard the fact that the latter are embedded in various forms of (transcendental) idealism. In my view Nietzsche and Gadamer are clear exceptions to this claim.’

everybody concerned is clear about what it would take to solve it.'¹⁷ As such a consensus is often not reached within philosophy, what is left to do is to converse about the differences. Rorty's replacement of the term continental with conversational might get rid of some of the connotations continental philosophy has but maintains a strong metaphilosophical distinction between two sides which are not better defined than analytic and continental. Although it emphasizes an important aspect of philosophy, and one especially important for Rorty, it does not solve the problem of the divide.

Similarly, the distinction between rationalism and romanticism Anat Matar develops as a replacement for the analytic-continental one reveals that analytical minds are ready to take into consideration some of the 'romantic themes' as long as they 'find their home *within* a rationalist framework, admitting the meaningfulness of philosophy and the inevitability of generality. I can think of no better candidate for developing such a vision than analytic philosophy.'¹⁸ It is safe to say that Matar takes side with analytic philosophy against continental and tries to assimilate continental philosophy to what is, in her mind, an analytic framework. Such a view poses many problems and derives from the identification of analytic philosophy with logic. The distinction Matar suggests replaces the terms but still thinks them within the framework of the analytic-continental divide as traditionally construed and does not overcome it, quite to the contrary. In order to really attempt to bridge across the divide, it is necessary to work on the common grounds, critique of metaphysics and turn to language for instance, rather than on the differences such as logic. We will see in the next section that these aspects are central to connecting Nietzsche and Wittgenstein.

¹⁷ Rorty (2007), p. 124.

¹⁸ Biletzki and Matar (eds.) (1998), p. 86.

If analytic philosophy proves rather difficult to define as a united front of thinkers and appears much more to be a family resemblance concept in which some philosophers (e.g. Wittgenstein, Russell, Frege) are more influential than others (e.g. Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger), defining continental philosophy proves to raise as many difficulties. As Simon Critchley argues, the distinction between analytic and continental philosophy 'is essentially a *professional self-description*, that is a way that departments of philosophy seek to organize their curricula and course offerings as well as signalling their broad intellectual allegiances.'¹⁹ These self-descriptions however hide, Critchley argues, broader cultural oppositions which suggest two conflictual understandings and definitions of philosophy. A wide range of oppositions can be established, and the most common ones include logicism vs. anti-logicism, scienticism vs. anti-scienticism, problems vs. proper names, ahistorical vs. historical, etc. However, even though these broad strokes paint somehow a picture of the opposition between analytic and continental philosophies, they do not precisely outline what each is. Continental philosophy contains so many different schools of thought that it might be argued that the name 'continental' only unites them in a negative way, i.e. as everything that is not analytic philosophy. When better departments of philosophy with an analytic perspective categorise and subdivide philosophy into subjects such as metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of mind, etc., continental philosophy becomes a category in which to place everything that does not enter these subdivisions.

Following a similar argumentation, Simon Glendinning considers that there is no continental tradition except as analytic philosophy positing its Other:

So taking our bearings from the discussion to this point, what then *is* Continental philosophy? Not, I would suggest, a style or method of philosophy, nor even a set of such styles or methods, but, first of all, the Other of analytic philosophy: not a tradition of philosophy that one might profitably contrast with analytic philosophy, not a distinctive way of going on in philosophy, but a free-floating

¹⁹ Critchley (1997), p. 348.

construction which gives analytic philosophy the illusory assurance that it has methodologically secured itself from 'sophistry and illusion' [...] And it is true: the primary texts of Continental philosophy are *not* works of analytic philosophy. They *are* something *other* than analytic philosophy. However, they are other to analytic philosophy without being reducible to *its* own Other.²⁰

That continental philosophy is the other of analytic philosophy does not mean that there are no differences between them, but rather that it is impossible to explore these differences as differences between two well-established traditions of thought. As seen with Glock, there is a multiplicity of trends in analytic philosophy and so could be said of continental philosophy. Moreover, some philosophers occupy some kind of middle ground, accepting and taking the influence from both sides. The divide between analytic and continental is therefore not the result of philosophical differences as there is no united front on each side, but a reification of professional self-descriptions which ultimately led to making these categories effective.

In his study of the encounters between analytic and continental philosophy, Andrea Vrahimis also argues that the reason for the divide is to be found in 'extra-philosophical factors' rather than philosophical ones:

In all of these encounters, it is not some irreconcilable clash between philosophical movements which is to be found; rather, extra-philosophical factors cause such misinterpretations. [...] This series of mistakes and omissions are caused by a drive towards picturing twentieth century philosophy as split in two, and have been instrumental in painting the haunting image of such a split. Philosophers have committed these mistakes because they were seeking some justification for this image of itself that philosophy had conjured. In the attempts to shout across the gulf, one might have expected to find an explanation for the prevailing silence. But perhaps such efforts precluded looking closely enough in order to see the flawed nature of the object of their enquiry. Thus, it is not without at least some small element of surprise or disbelief that one may discover proximity between thinkers who had been imagined to lie so far apart.²¹

²⁰ Glendinning (2006), p. 84.

²¹ Vrahimis (2013), p. 182.

Behind the 20th century depiction of philosophy as divided in two distinct traditions which conflict with one another lies a series of misunderstandings, often extra-philosophical. When one looks closer at philosophers themselves, the divide looks much thinner and both sides share much more than the word 'divide' suggests. More and more work is being done in connecting analytic and continental philosophers and some philosophers such as Rorty or Cavell seem to occupy a quite uncomfortable middle ground as they often seem too analytic for continental philosopher and too continental for analytic ones.²²

If analytic and continental turn out to be empty categories, as Glock, Glendinning, and Vrahimis seem to consider, the traditional divide should not be seen as an obstacle to connecting philosophers from both sides. On the contrary, as we will further explore, they share many more concerns than one might think at first glance and bringing philosophers from both sides into dialogue opens new possibilities for philosophy. In this framework, Nietzsche and Wittgenstein do not appear as radically opposed anymore, but as sharing some concerns regarding metaphysics and language.

2. Metaphysics and Language: Connecting Nietzsche and Wittgenstein

In the opening quotation, Nietzsche suggests a shift in focus from 'what things are' to 'what things are called.' This shift prefigures the 'linguistic turn' of 20th century philosophy. More than that, Nietzsche connects this turn to language to the end of metaphysics, to the end of questioning the essence of things because language reveals the way people relate to things. Nietzsche

²² Philosophers have explored various paths to overcome this divide. Braver (2007) for instance considers the analytic-continental divide to be analogous to the split between empiricism and rationalism and suggests that dialogue is the only way to overcome the divide. Reynolds et al. (2010) explore various ways in which analytic and continental philosophy can overcome this divide, coining the terms postanalytic and metacontinental as replacements and which are not as opposed to one another as the traditional analytic and continental. Vrahimis (2013), whom I have already mentioned, considers the whole analytic-continental divide to be a misunderstanding and a misrepresentation.

shifts his attention from metaphysics, from what a thing is, to how things are usually considered through language, and this within a historical framework. What a thing is depends not only on how I consider something now, but also on how it has been considered throughout its history. Names and words evolve through time and this evolution reflects a change in perception. This view on the genealogy and history of words and concepts must also be applied to metaphysics and understanding what metaphysics is cannot be done outside of a historical framework.

Correlatively, the 'end of metaphysics' can take various forms which, as Jürgen Habermas argues, all represent a break with the philosophical tradition.²³ Moreover, the role metaphysics plays within philosophy also changes: as we will see, 'philosophy is metaphysics'²⁴ for Heidegger whereas Ayer argues the opposite and considers that philosophy has nothing to do with metaphysics.²⁵ In attempting to account for metaphysics with a broad scope, thus encompassing both Heidegger and Ayer, Adrian Moore suggests the following definition: 'Metaphysics is the most general attempt to make sense of things.'²⁶ Although this definition is efficient to show connections among philosophers, and especially across the analytic-continental divide, the broadness of the idiom 'making sense of things' can cause some concerns, especially regarding the 20th century phenomenon of 'end of metaphysics.' If metaphysics is indeed a matter of 'making sense of things,' then philosophers should never depart from it and the 'end of metaphysics' would appear more as a cataclysm than as something one should strive for. This broad definition also downplays the role of the 'linguistic turn' in bringing metaphysics to an end since 'making sense of things' is already a very linguistic matter. Moore's definition might thus seem too broad to account specifically for the undertakings of various philosophers but is

²³ Habermas (1990), p. 52.

²⁴ Heidegger (1977), p. 374

²⁵ Ayer (1975), p. 75.

²⁶ Moore (2012), p.1.

helpful as it retrospectively connects philosophers which would seem to have at first glance little to do with one another and thus suggests a possible bridge across the analytic-continental divide. According to Moore, even critics of metaphysics as Nietzsche, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, or Derrida still take part in the same game of 'making sense of things.' Even though Moore might be quite right that even these critics still play the game of metaphysics, I will rely on a more specific definition of metaphysics as the search for the essence of things. This is mainly because Nietzsche and Wittgenstein both use the term metaphysics in such a way and because it helps clarifying the sketch of the 20th century philosophical landscape I will give in the next section. Searching for the essence of things is one way of 'making sense' by finding and defining what things really are. In this framework, one fundamental belief is the idea that things have an essence, that things can be defined in an absolute, that is context-independent, way.

Against this idea, proponents of the end of metaphysics consider, in a very schematic way, that this belief is unfounded. What is at play here for Nietzsche is a shift from considering things as determinate to considering them as ever-changing. Nietzsche suggests such a shift as one from metaphysical to historical philosophy in the opening sections of *Human, All Too Human*: 'But everything has become: there are *no eternal facts*, just as there are no absolute truths. Consequently what is needed from now on is *historical philosophizing*, and with it the virtue of modesty.' (HH 2 / KSA 2.25) More than that, Nietzsche considers that the changes are embedded in how things are called, in their names. A name is not only a signifier, but also bears many prejudices and evaluations which evolve through time. The turn to language is one way to oppose the project of metaphysics and Nietzsche takes this turn from the perspective of history (or genealogy in the later works): as meanings evolve through time and as this evolution must be taken into account as belonging to the meaning of the words, there can be no absolute, context-independent, meaning. As we will see in the following chapters, Wittgenstein's conception of 'meaning as use' suggests a similar idea: there

is no 'meaning' outside of the use we make of the words and this use is, for Nietzsche, defined historically and contextually. These two aspects: end of metaphysics and turn to language have been at the centre of philosophical attempts to connect Nietzsche to Wittgenstein. Most of these attempts revolve around the notion of language and its use in philosophical inquiry.

Janet Lungstrum for instance focuses on the agonal dimension of Nietzsche's and Wittgenstein's conceptions of language. They both criticise the metaphysical view of language and try to offer an alternative. According to her, Wittgenstein must have been influenced by Nietzsche through Fritz Mauthner readings of Nietzsche's remarks on language, and I will explore this connection with Mauthner in the next chapter. The main difference between Nietzsche's and Wittgenstein's views on language according to Lungstrum concerns the notion of rule: Nietzsche seeks 'a cyclical *destruction* and *re-creation* of the rules [whereas] Wittgenstein's program is to survey theoretical possibilities of the twists and turns of the already sayable by an ostensibly less ambitious, new "Ordnen" of "was schon offen zutage liegt."²⁷ Marco Brusotti also focuses on language and especially the 'Sprachkritik' dimension of Nietzsche's philosophy, which also brings Mauthner back into the picture.²⁸ Glen Martin compares Nietzsche to Wittgenstein not directly on the grounds of language, but through the notion of nihilism, that is the state to which the traditional philosophy leads and considers them to share the similar task of overcoming this nihilism: 'Both are ultimately looking, or hoping, for a transformation of human existence which will lead us out of the suicidal problems in which the modern world is entangled.'²⁹

Alain Badiou suggests another interesting connection between Nietzsche and Wittgenstein and specifies three aspects: first, they both criticise metaphysics, Nietzsche through nihilism and Wittgenstein through

²⁷ Lungstrum (1995), pp. 318-319.

²⁸ Brusotti (2009), p. 337.

²⁹ Martin (1989), p. 2.

nonsense; second, the hidden philosophical act is for both the 'properly *unchained* exercise of a language delivered over to the dream of not being interrupted by any rule, nor limited by any difference';³⁰ third, the announced act (by opposition to the hidden one) is archipolitical for Nietzsche and archiaesthetic for Wittgenstein. These aspects, and especially the first two, are present in the main lines of inquiry I will follow, namely the end of metaphysics and the turn to language. Badiou considers Nietzsche and Wittgenstein to be both 'antiphilosophers,' a term which contains three main elements: antiphilosophy calls for a critique of language and truth; antiphilosophy is an act rather than a statement; antiphilosophy attempts to affirmatively overcome the philosophical act, that is to offer an alternative to philosophy which does not only criticise philosophy but offers a positive answer. These various aspects show interesting connections between Nietzsche and Wittgenstein, especially in what they consider to be the philosopher's task.

Erich Heller considers that both Nietzsche and Wittgenstein take part in a critique of traditional philosophy and that this is the main point of contact:

The two philosophers could hardly be more different in the scope and object, the approach and humor, the key and tempo of their thought; and yet they have in common something which is of the greatest importance: the creative distrust of *all* those categorical certainties that, as if they were an inherited anatomy, have been allowed to determine the body of traditional thought. Nietzsche and Wittgenstein share a genius for directing doubt into the most unsuspected hiding places of error and fallacy.³¹

What Heller points out is the radical attack on traditional philosophy that Nietzsche and Wittgenstein launch and this is an aspect all commentators mention. What is specific to Heller is that his comparison is mainly an 'existential rapport between Nietzsche and Wittgenstein,'³² as Lungstrum notes. He sees Nietzsche and Wittgenstein as two philosophers who adopt a

³⁰ Badiou (2011), p. 82.

³¹ Heller (1988), p. 150.

³² Lungstrum (1995), p. 301n.

similar attitude in their philosophising. This philosophising turns to language as a central matter, and this brings Heller to consider another aspect of the relation between Nietzsche and Wittgenstein, one that the later commentators do not discuss so much as language or the critique of traditional philosophy, namely the relation between philosophy and poetry. A concern with language leads, at some point or another, to a questioning of poetry. Nietzsche's interest in and struggle with poetry is well known and acknowledged by him throughout his works. Wittgenstein's relation to poetry is however less obvious and Heller points out an interesting link between Wittgenstein's philosophy and poetry itself.

Be this as it may, Wittgenstein was not a poet but a philosopher. And philosophy enters with Wittgenstein the stage which has been reached by many another creative activity of the human mind—by poetry, for instance, or by painting: the stage where every act of creation is inseparable from the critique of its medium, and every work, intensely reflecting upon itself, looks like the embodied doubt of its own possibility. It is a predicament which Nietzsche uncannily anticipated in a sketch entitled 'A Fragment from the History of Posterity.'³³

For Heller, Wittgenstein's philosophy is poetry-like, that is, it reflects upon its own medium and its own conditions of possibility. As we will see in the next chapter, this is a concern he shares with the German Romantics and Nietzsche. In other words, philosophy turns towards metaphilosophy in order not to know how to say something true, but how to say something altogether. The possibilities of saying become a central concern and are at the basis of a new conception of language in which speaking and understanding play a central role.³⁴ This social dimension of language is central to the expressive tradition I will outline in the next chapter. This auto-reflexive dimension is what links philosophy to poetry; the characteristics of poetry

³³ Heller (1988), p. 157.

³⁴ The 'possibility of discourse' is Rush Rhees' main focus in his reading of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. He comes to this from Wittgenstein's interest in understanding ('Verstehen') and turns from Wittgenstein's conception of language as a game to language as conversation and discourse; see Rhees (2006)

enter philosophy proper and Wittgenstein surprisingly represents this turn for Heller. To put it in another way, as Ray Monk suggests: 'Wittgenstein's lecturing style, and indeed his writing style, was curiously at odds with its subject-matter, as though a poet had somehow strayed into the analysis of the foundations of mathematics and the Theory of Meaning.'³⁵

This short overview shows that connecting Nietzsche to Wittgenstein requires understanding the critique or end of metaphysics, the turn to language, and by extension the relation between philosophy and poetry. Before looking into the historical background against which Nietzsche's and Wittgenstein's philosophies arise as well as the details of Nietzsche's and Wittgenstein's critiques of language and metaphysics in the following chapters, it is first necessary to understand how these aspects—end of metaphysics, turn to language, and poetry—play an important role in shaping a picture of the analytic-continental divide. To look at this divide through the lens of the critique of metaphysics helps to reveal that, rather than there being oppositions between two well-defined traditions, there are oppositions as to what metaphysics is, how it is done, and whether philosophy should engage in it or not. There are no set positions as to how to answer these questions and we will see that oppositions arise among philosophers supposedly belonging to the same tradition as well as between traditions.

3. Metaphysics, Language, and Poetry: A Short Story in 20th Century Philosophy

Nietzsche and Wittgenstein are not the only philosophers to turn to language at the end of metaphysics and we have seen that they both do so in their own specific ways. Many philosophers in the 20th century operate such a move and disagree with one another as to how language should be construed. One point of contention is poetic language which is often considered either as the origin of language or as a deviance from the norm. In this section, I explore

³⁵ Monk (1991), p. 291.

two important encounters between analytic and continental philosophers which have somehow shaped the divide. As said above, these encounters created more misunderstandings than connections, but they nevertheless reveal important points of disagreement. It is on these points of disagreement that one must work in order to overcome the divide and I will focus specifically on the relations between philosophy, metaphysics, and poetry. In another way, these oppositions can be seen as oppositions between the spheres of influence of Nietzsche and of Wittgenstein. Despite the similarities we have mentioned above, Nietzsche and Wittgenstein have had their own spheres of influence which are often opposed to one another. This comparison in negative terms, i.e. in oppositional terms, aims at revealing the points of disagreement which need to be overcome.

The story of the critique of metaphysics in the 20th century that I will paint in this section can schematically be understood as follows: each philosopher claims to bring metaphysics to an end better than their predecessors. I follow this thread in telling the story: Heidegger criticises Nietzsche, Carnap criticises Heidegger, ordinary language philosophers such as Austin criticise Carnap and the logical positivists, Derrida criticises Austin and ordinary language philosophers, and so on. This thread also follows two of the most famous confrontations between analytic and continental philosophy: Carnap's critique of Heidegger and Derrida's critique of Austin. In a positive way, each critique of metaphysics can be understood as adding a layer and therefore enriching this critique. On another level, these oppositions also reveal the problematic relations between philosophy and poetry as some philosophers seem to embrace poetry (Heidegger or Derrida for instance) whereas others reject it (Carnap and Austin for instance). This brings to the fore one aspect of the critique of metaphysics which we have not yet discussed: the metaphilosophical question of style. The concern with metaphysics, and more specifically its end, is a background on which many philosophical questions arise in the 20th century, especially the question of (or the shift to) language as represented for instance by the linguistic turn.

As mentioned above, Habermas considers that these different conceptions of the end of metaphysics all reveal a break with the tradition and relates this to the notion of 'form' of philosophical thought:

To be sure, the destruction or overcoming of metaphysics by Nietzsche and Heidegger meant something other than the sublation [Aufhebung] of metaphysics, and the farewell to philosophy by Wittgenstein and Adorno meant something other than the realization of philosophy. And yet these attitudes point back to the break with tradition (Karl Löwith) that occurred when the spirit of the age gained ascendancy over philosophy, when the modern consciousness of time exploded the form of philosophical thought.³⁶

The many forms of critique of metaphysics all lead to a reconfiguration of philosophy which has an impact on the form of philosophical thought. This question of the form or style of philosophical thought is one of the metaphilosophical questions which Nietzsche and Wittgenstein raise and to which we will turn in Chapter Seven. The concern with form is philosophy's concern with its own language and possibilities. It is in this metaphilosophical reflection on its own language that philosophy encounters poetry and literature. But the question of style only gains in importance when philosophy turns to language. The notion of style is of great interest to shape the distinction between analytic and continental traditions as in both traditions, though in radically opposite ways, style plays a central role. Gottfried Gabriel for instance considers the analytic-continental divide (and more specifically the opposition between Carnap and Heidegger) to be explicable in terms of style or forms: 'Carnap and Heidegger, as well as the philosophical traditions founded by the two, have a common point of departure, but proceed from there in opposite directions and thus arrive at diametrically contrary forms of philosophy.'³⁷ The distinction between analytic and continental is, for Gabriel, a matter of style, tending either towards logic or towards poetry.³⁸ Michael Friedman holds a

³⁶ Habermas (1990), p. 52.

³⁷ Gabriel (2009), p. 62.

³⁸ Gabriel (2009), p. 65.

similar view in opposing Carnap and Heidegger: 'We can either, with Carnap, hold fast to formal logic as the ideal of universal validity and confine ourselves, accordingly, to the philosophy of the mathematical exact sciences, or we can, with Heidegger, cut ourselves from logic and "exact thinking" generally, with the result that we ultimately renounce the ideal of truly universal validity itself.'³⁹ It is obviously too restrictive to consider analytic philosophy as confined to exact sciences but Friedman's account brings to the fore the central issue of logic.

Although this opposition might seem valid regarding Heidegger and Carnap, we have seen that analytic and continental philosophy are not reducible to any philosopher and the matter is much more complex. The distinction in styles might seem quite obvious if we take Carnap and Heidegger, but things become more complicated when looking at Wittgenstein's works, early and late. If the *Tractatus* can be seen as a paradigm of logical writing as the numbers of the propositions indicate the relations between them, some authors have perceived an artistic form in the *Tractatus* and David Rozema even considers it as a poem.⁴⁰ The later works and their aphoristic nature seem to go against the grain of logic, or at least against the grain of an exposition following the rules of logic.

Gabriel's and Friedman's views however suggest that the questions of logic and poetry are important to approach the analytic-continental divide. In a more general way, we could say that there is an opposition between a tendency towards sciences and a tendency towards art. It is the same presupposition that underlies Matar's distinction between rationalism and romanticism. This divide however needs to be overcome because philosophical practices enrich themselves only by entering into a dialogue with others. And inasmuch as continental philosophy is analytic philosophy's 'other' (and vice versa), there is much more to learn from their

³⁹ Friedman (2000), p. 156.

⁴⁰ Rozema (2002)

dialogue than their mutual rejection. In a sense, each tradition reveals some of the shortcomings of the other. Analytic philosophy of language for instance fails at accounting for poetic or literary uses of language, continental philosophy seems too poetic. Each tradition considers the other to get too close to art or to science.

a. Heidegger

Heidegger considers that philosophy is metaphysics and that its end brings philosophers to rethink their task. For him, 'Metaphysics thinks beings as a whole—the world, man, God—with respect to Being, with respect to the belonging together of beings in Being.'⁴¹ Many aspects are at play in such a definition and I will point out two: 1) metaphysics is a globalising or totalising approach, it is an attempt at thinking the whole and the parts as parts of this whole; 2) such an approach refers to a unified principle. Metaphysics could thus be defined as an understanding of the whole under a unified principle (such as Platonic Ideas or the Hegelian 'Absolute Spirit'). This definition is not unrelated to Moore's definition we have discussed above: 'Metaphysics is the most general attempt to make sense of things.'⁴² However, unlike Moore, Heidegger considers that metaphysics has reached its end and this is because a fundamental dimension of philosophy opened by the Greeks has reached its completion: 'the development of sciences' which 'is at the same time their separation from philosophy and the establishment of their independence.'⁴³ The development of sciences and their total independence from philosophy has led metaphysics to its completion. In other words, if philosophy as metaphysics is an attempt at defining or determining what the world is, science is better at achieving such a task. Although at first one and the same, science is now separated from

⁴¹ Heidegger (1977), p. 374.

⁴² Moore (2012), p.1.

⁴³ Heidegger (1977), p. 375.

philosophy and this split marks the end of metaphysics: if philosophy is not science anymore, what is its task?

Nietzsche also brings this question to the fore, noticing the importance science takes over philosophy:

Running the risk that moralizing, even my own, will prove to be what it always has been (an unabashed *montrer ses plaies*, according to Balzac), I would like to try to argue against an unseemly and harmful hierarchical shift between science and philosophy that is now threatening to develop quite unnoticed and, it seems, in good conscience. [...] Science is abloom these days, its good conscience shining from its face, while recent philosophy has gradually sunk to its dregs, awakening distrust and despondence if not scorn and pity. Philosophy reduced to a 'theory of cognition,' really no more than a shy epochism and doctrine of renunciation; a philosophy that doesn't even get beyond the threshold, scrupulously *refusing* itself the right to enter: this is philosophy at its last gasp, an end, an agony, something to evoke pity. How could a philosophy like that—*be the master!* (BGE 204 / KSA 5.131-2)

With the rise of science, philosophy must reinvent itself. It cannot do metaphysics anymore, and should not, according to Nietzsche, follow what science does. Like Heidegger, Nietzsche considers the necessity for philosophy to find its task at the end of metaphysics and this task should not look towards science. This brings us to a question Heidegger raises in discussing the end of metaphysics: 'What task is reserved for thinking at the end of philosophy?'⁴⁴

Heidegger uses the word thinking to characterise this non-metaphysical philosophy.⁴⁵ What task remains for thinking? 'A thinking which can be neither metaphysics nor science?'⁴⁶ The task of thinking and the reflection on the task of thinking becomes one of Heidegger's main concerns. The subtitle

⁴⁴ Heidegger (1977), p. 373.

⁴⁵ In his later works, Heidegger uses the word 'thinking' rather than 'philosophy.' For Heidegger, 'philosophy' is metaphysics. Once metaphysics has been brought to its end (because of Nietzsche's inversion of Platonism), the word philosophy needs replacing. Heidegger uses 'thinking:' 'A thinking which can be neither metaphysics nor science,' Heidegger (1977), p. 378.

⁴⁶ Heidegger (1977), p. 378.

to his *Introduction to Philosophy: Thinking and Poetizing* reveals this shift in philosophical thought. Once philosophy is distinguished from metaphysics and from the natural sciences, because science is better at doing metaphysics, the task of philosophy or thinking changes. One of Heidegger's insights in this change will be to turn towards the poetic because of the linguistic nature of philosophy. One of the central elements in his reshaped philosophy is language and this will lead him to the question of poetry. Heidegger operates here a linguistic turn, which leads to a poetic turn.

Heidegger considers poetry as the original language, as the place where all language is created and thereby follows Nietzsche and the romantic tradition as we will see in the next chapter. This consideration of poetry as original language appears for instance at the end of his lectures on *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*.⁴⁷ In these lectures, he considers the study of logic (in the etymological sense of *logos*) as being essentially a study of language. More specifically, the study of logic leads to a questioning of the essence of language as 'philosophizing is nothing else than the constant being underway in the fore-field of the fore-questions.'⁴⁸ According to Heidegger, logic is a science that sprang out of philosophy, like the other sciences. The question of logic is a philosophical question and not a scientific one as 'philosophy is other than science.'⁴⁹ A questioning of logic leads to a philosophical questioning of language, which must be distinguished from a scientific questioning of it because following the ways of natural sciences does not let us out of logic itself.

Finally, the moment we attempt to ask about language, following the way of natural science, we run against the dictionary and grammar—in order, then, to ascertain that all of grammar derives itself from the Greek logic, which determines the fundamental concepts and rules of speaking and saying. We get in the strange position that we, on the

⁴⁷ Heidegger (2009), p. 145.

⁴⁸ Heidegger (2009), p. 19.

⁴⁹ Heidegger (2009), p. 18.

one hand, free ourselves from logic only to arrive, on the other hand, again in the fetters of logic.⁵⁰

The way of natural science in questioning language only brings us back to our starting point, logic. On the contrary, a philosophical inquiry leads us to a questioning of the essence of language. In the course of his lectures, the questioning of logic leads in turn to language, human being, history and poetry. From the question of logic, and because of his definition of it, Heidegger moves to the question of poetry. As we will see, this definition of logic is quite the opposite of Carnap's and, despite a common concern, their rejections of metaphysics are radically different.

In one of his other works on language, *On the Essence of Language*, which discusses Herder's *Treatise on the Origin of Language*, Heidegger agrees with Herder on turning away from logic. But according to Heidegger, although he turns away from logic, Herder misses the turning away from the metaphysics of language: '*The turning away from "logic" is certainly correct, and yet he remains stuck in the logos of reason, of the formation of marks, and supplements everything only from the economy of nature.*'⁵¹ In order to move away from this metaphysical conception of language (in which words refer to things and truth can be thought in terms of correspondence), Heidegger turns towards poetry as '*The poem has no "content."*'⁵² This lack of content calls for a rethinking of language, in other terms than metaphysics or science as Heidegger argues in *On the Way to Language*: '*But scientific and philosophical information about language is one thing; an experience we undergo with language is another.*'⁵³ This experience has something to do with poetry and through his thinking about language, Heidegger rethinks the relation between philosophy and poetry, bringing them close to one another. This opposition between scientific language and linguistic experience reflects the opposition between 'ideal language' and 'ordinary

⁵⁰ Heidegger (2009), p. 18.

⁵¹ Heidegger (2004), p. 71.

⁵² Heidegger (2004), p. 60.

⁵³ Heidegger (1982), p. 59.

language' in analytic philosophy which I will develop in the further sections. In that framework, Heidegger would rather belong to ordinary language philosophers as he opposes scientific conceptions of language. However, a crucial difference remains between Heidegger and ordinary language philosophers which can be seen in their relation to poetry. Heidegger and ordinary language philosophers take radically opposing stances with regard to poetic language: Heidegger considers poetic language to be the origin of language and ordinary language to be only the settling down of poetic language whereas ordinary language philosophers consider poetic language as a deviance.

According to Heidegger, the common ground between philosophy and poetry is language ('Sprache') and both say ('Sagen') what there is. 'Sinnen' and 'Sagen' are the two characteristics shared by both domains. In his notes towards writing 'Denken und Dichten' Heidegger formulates this link more clearly: '*Thinking and poetizing*—each time a meditation [*Sinnen*], each time a saying: the reflective word. The thinkers and the poets, the ones who reflectively speak and the ones who verbally reflect.'⁵⁴ Heidegger plays with the word 'Sinnen,' translated here as 'mediation,' that shares root with 'Sinn,' 'sense' or 'meaning,' also with a connotation of 'direction.' In his foreword to his translation, Phillip Jacques Braunstein explains the meaning of 'Sinnen' as a 'thought that pursues a certain path.'⁵⁵ Poets and philosophers alike make sense and say it. The difference between them is a matter of focus: on 'Sinnen' for philosophers and on 'Sagen' for poets. But the core matter is the same for philosophy and poetry: language. This is the reason why Heidegger considers philosophy to be closer to poetry than to any other art: 'Yet thinking and poetizing reveal an even closer relation [*Verwandtschaft*] than thinking and painting. Thinking and poetizing exist exclusively in the realm of language. Their works and only theirs are of a linguistic "nature."⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Heidegger (2011), p. 59.

⁵⁵ Heidegger (2011), p. xi.

⁵⁶ Heidegger (2011), p. 44.

Because of this common 'linguistic nature,' philosophy and poetry are two neighbouring domains which define (or in a milder way reflect about) themselves through the other. Thinking needs poetry as much as poetry needs thinking. Philosophy and poetry relate to one another and, in this relation, modify their views. The borders between these two domains are never fixed, they are always changing as they affect each other and their definitions are dialectically constructed through their relations. The aim of thinking, or in a non-Heideggerian word philosophising, is close to that of poetry as they both bring our attention to saying and by doing so to making sense ('Sinnen'). Heidegger follows the path of the poetic experience with language against the scientific study of language. This concern with art and poetry as core matters for philosophy contrasts sharply with philosophers who focus on science and logic such as the logical positivists. They offer another perspective on the relation between language and the end of metaphysics, and how metaphysics should be brought to an end.

b. Carnap and the Logical Positivists

In a very schematic way, we could say that Heidegger's turn to language operates on grounds of art, whereas the logical positivists' linguistic turn operates on grounds of science. A good example of such a turn is Carnap who adopts a very critical stance against metaphysics and claims that philosophy is a matter of logical analysis of language in his essay 'The Elimination of Metaphysics Through Analysis of Language.' In this article, Carnap criticises Heidegger (and with him a whole tradition of metaphysicians). This can seem surprising as Heidegger considers himself to be done with metaphysics. However, we could say that Carnap operates against Heidegger the same move Heidegger operates against Nietzsche. In a sense, the previous critique of metaphysics is always criticised as being still too metaphysical. The reason Carnap considers Heidegger as a metaphysician is his own definition of metaphysics: 'This term [metaphysics] is used in this paper as usually in Europe, for the field of alleged knowledge of the essence of things which transcends the realm of

empirically founded, inductive science. Metaphysics in this sense includes systems like those of Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Bergson, Heidegger. But it does not include endeavours towards a synthesis and generalization of the results of the various sciences.⁵⁷ The main characteristic of metaphysics is its non-empirical dimension. Metaphysics searches for the essence of things independently from empirical sciences and in that sense, Carnap has a starting point similar to Heidegger's: philosophy should not be concerned with metaphysics because science does the job better. However, the answer Carnap gives is quite different. Carnap's thesis is quite simple: 'logical analysis yields the negative result *that alleged statements in this domain are entirely meaningless*. Therewith a radical elimination of metaphysics is attained, which was not yet possible from the earlier antimetaphysical standpoints.'⁵⁸ Carnap claims that his critique is more radical than previous antimetaphysical attempts, like Heidegger claims to be more radical than Nietzsche. To some extent, Carnap's statement can be read as a possible answer to Heidegger's first question: what does it mean that philosophy has entered its final stage? Carnap's answer: metaphysical statements are meaningless. However, the main difference between Heidegger and Carnap is not their rejection of metaphysics but their conception thereof. If for Heidegger all philosophy is metaphysics, for Carnap it is quite the opposite: philosophy must avoid metaphysics and has nothing to do with it.

In *Language, Truth, and Logic*, Ayer, another logical positivist, also defends the thesis according to which metaphysical statements are meaningless: 'Our charge against the metaphysician is not that he attempts to employ the understanding in a field where it cannot profitably venture, but that he produces sentences which fail to conform to the conditions under which alone a sentence can be literally significant.'⁵⁹ More than considering

⁵⁷ Carnap (1959), p. 80.

⁵⁸ Carnap (1959), p. 61.

⁵⁹ Ayer (1975), p. 47.

metaphysics as meaningless, Ayer considers that philosophy has nothing to do with metaphysics: 'It is advisable to stress the point that philosophy, as we understand it, is wholly independent of metaphysics.'⁶⁰ Philosophy should therefore turn to science and Ayer considers philosophy and science to be interdependent: 'But if science may be said to be blind without philosophy, it is true also that philosophy is virtually empty without science.'⁶¹ Whereas Nietzsche and Heidegger attempt to deal with the separation between philosophy and science by distancing philosophy from science, Ayer and the logical positivists do the opposite and embrace science and scientific propositions as the only valid ones. To that extent, they are led to reject ethical and aesthetic propositions in the realm of what Wittgenstein calls the 'mystical' and these propositions should not be subject to philosophical inquiries: 'It follows, as in ethics, that there is no sense in attributing objective validity to aesthetic judgements, and no possibility of arguing about questions of value in aesthetics, but only about questions of facts.'⁶² Ayer and the logical positivists therefore turn to science to save philosophy from its end. Heidegger's second question still requires an answer: What is the task of philosophy at the end of metaphysics?

As a transformation for philosophy, Carnap offers to replace metaphysics with logical analysis of language or 'scientific philosophy.' Because meaningful statements cannot be achieved in metaphysics but only in the sciences, 'what remains [for philosophy] is not statements, nor a theory, nor a system, but only a *method*: the method of logical analysis.'⁶³ The task of philosophy thus becomes one of a method: it is to apply the method of logical analysis to sort out and clarify statements according to the rules of logic.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Ayer (1975), p. 75.

⁶¹ Ayer (1975), p. 201.

⁶² Ayer (1975), p. 150.

⁶³ Carnap (1959), p. 77.

⁶⁴ Although they advocate for a completely different method, both Nietzsche and Wittgenstein adopt a similar stance in considering philosophy as a method rather than a doctrine or theory.

This 'scientific philosophy' is the opposite of metaphysics, which Carnap likens to poetry and art. Indeed, in the last section of his paper 'Metaphysics as Expression of an Attitude toward Life,' he states that the metaphysician 'has not asserted anything, but only expressed something, like an artist.'⁶⁵ Metaphysics is art in disguise; it is useful as an expression of life (and even considered as such it should better present itself as art) but hasn't got any meaning. In a 1957 note to his article, Carnap specifies that metaphysical statements are meaningless in the sense that they haven't got any cognitive meaning. They can, and they do, have an expressive meaning, of the kind produced by artworks. Metaphysics thus have an expressive meaning but Carnap reproaches metaphysics with hiding behind a pseudo-assertive form. Philosophy should focus only on the statements which have a cognitive meaning, that is scientific statements. In this sense, Carnap's philosophy would be a philosophy which has fallen to the danger Nietzsche foresaw, becoming a mere 'theory of cognition.' We can therefore consider that if Carnap's criticises Heidegger and other so-called continental philosophers, the latter would criticise him as falling into the traps of science, into a form of scientism.

Interestingly, Carnap considers Nietzsche as a poet rather than a philosopher, and he praises him for that. From Carnap's standpoint, Nietzsche avoids falling into a metaphysical error because 'in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, he does not choose the misleading theoretical form, but openly the form of art, of poetry.'⁶⁶ According to Carl Sachs: 'Carnap understands Nietzsche as a good Kantian: his work *upholds* the distinction between science and metaphysics—a distinction that Carnap reworks into the dichotomy between the assertional (science) and the metaphorical (poetry).'⁶⁷ Sachs grounds his comparison of Nietzsche and Carnap in the post-Kantian context to which they both belong and argues that what saves

⁶⁵ Carnap (1959), p. 79.

⁶⁶ Carnap (1959), p. 80.

⁶⁷ Sachs (2011), p. 308.

Nietzsche from Carnap's criticism of metaphysics is that he does not hide his metaphysics under a veil of assertive content but under that of poetry, which is the appropriate form for metaphysics: revealing its expressive meaning as expressive meaning. This opposition between art and science can be seen as one lens through which one can look at the analytic-continental divide. Carnap's point of view, and that will be the point of view of most analytic philosophers on that matter, is that philosophy should be scientific and avoid artful downfalls, whereas continental philosophers such as Nietzsche see science, and more specifically scientism, as a danger for philosophy. But this is not the end of the story as Carnap's conception of language can also be criticised as retaining a metaphysical dimension.

c. Ordinary Language Philosophy

Inasmuch as Heidegger considers Nietzsche to be too metaphysical, and Carnap Heidegger still too metaphysical, ordinary language philosophers consider Carnap and the logical positivists to rely on a metaphysical conception of language. This can be seen for instance in Wittgenstein's shift away from and his critique of the *Tractatus* in his later works. 'A picture held us captive' he says in the *Philosophical Investigations*, and that is a picture of a metaphysical use of language. On the contrary, Wittgenstein aims to bring words back from their metaphysical use to their ordinary one. This begins with a rejection of ideal language as the solution. One of the main problems of ideal language as defended by the logical positivists is, according to P. M. S. Hacker, that it gives primacy to truth in language: 'In giving primacy to truth in their account of meaning, calculus theorists thereby also give primacy (i) to representation rather than to communication and linguistic intercourse in their account of language, and (ii) to description in their account of the function of the sentence in use.'⁶⁸ I will focus on the problem of representation in the following chapter, but the move from ideal language philosophers to ordinary language philosophers can be seen as a move from

⁶⁸ Hacker (2013), p. 132.

Saussure's idea of *langue* to that of *parole*. Ideal language philosophers rely on an idea of language as a closed and constituted entity which works solely according to the rules of logic without looking at the actual language uses at all. On the contrary, ordinary language philosophers consider language in use to be the point of focus, the idea of an ideal language being a remnant of metaphysics. Samuel Wheeler considers such conceptions of language which rely on ideal essences as 'magic' language in the sense that according to such conceptions language is unequivocal and self-interpreting.⁶⁹

If there is no ideal language to be constructed and if philosophy should focus on actual uses of language, how does one elaborate a philosophy of language? One way to consider ordinary language philosophy is to see it as a form of pragmatism. At its basis, pragmatism is not fundamentally concerned with language but rather with social practices (in a wide spectrum). The focus on ordinary language is similar to the pragmatist move as it focuses on the social practice in which language is embedded rather than on an ideal language based on logic and truth-conditions. In that sense, it follows some of the insights from Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. In this conception of language, meaning is not relative to truth-conditions but relative to its use. As it focuses on the social practices at the heart of the use of language, pragmatism draws attention to ordinary language, to language in its everyday use. Although Wittgenstein also shifts his focus to ordinary uses of language, he is usually not considered an ordinary language philosopher as Oswald Hanfling for instance argues: 'The description of Austin as an ordinary language philosopher could hardly be contested; but is the same true of Wittgenstein? Some would hesitate to describe him so, perhaps because of a reluctance to associate him too closely with the Oxford philosophy to which the label "ordinary language" came to be attached, sometimes with derogatory connotations. In a way, however, Wittgenstein's commitment to the method of "what we say" is more radical than Austin's.'⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Wheeler (2000), p. 3.

⁷⁰ Hanfling (2000), p. 39.

Wittgenstein and Austin are not necessarily related, but they share a common concern with 'what we say' and more precisely what we ordinarily say.

If we follow our focus on poetry, ordinary language philosophers such as Austin do not regard it more sympathetically than logical positivists. As we will see in Derrida's critique of Austin, the latter considers poetic or literary uses of language as non-serious:

And I might mention that, quite differently again, we could be issuing any of these utterances, as we can issue an utterance of any kind whatsoever, in the course, for example, of acting a play or making a joke or writing a poem—in which case of course it would not be seriously meant and we shall not be able to say that we seriously performed the act concerned. If the poet says "Go and catch a falling star" or whatever it may be, he doesn't seriously issue order. Considerations of this kind apply to any utterance at all, not merely to performatives.⁷¹

Austin considers that poetic utterances are not serious in the sense that an order in a poetic utterance does have the same force as an order in an ordinary context. Austin's point is that to focus on language in use means focusing on the 'ordinary' use of language or, better, that to focus on language one must first focus on ordinary uses before turning to non-serious uses. He therefore establishes a distinction between ordinary uses and non-ordinary uses. Poetic and literary utterances belong to the latter. A problem similar to that encountered by ideal language philosophers remains, namely that by separating non-ordinary uses from ordinary ones, the 'ordinary language' the philosophers look at is already somehow idealised. As Rorty argues in his introduction to *The Linguistic Turn*, ideal language and ordinary language philosophy are two perspectives which are not so different from one another: whereas ideal language philosophy attempts to clarify language (and thus to replace a faulty language with a perfect one), ordinary

⁷¹ Austin (1970), pp. 240-241. See also Austin (1962), pp. 9-10, 20-22, 104, 121. On Austin and the 'non-seriousness' of poetry, see Gaynesford (2009).

language philosophy attempts to eliminate deviant uses of language from licit language uses (and thus ends up with having an 'ordinary language' which is void from any deviance).⁷²

The opposition between ordinary language and ideal language philosophers is quite strong but some attempts are made to reconcile both types of language philosophy. One of the main figures trying to do so is Robert Brandom with his attempt to elaborate an 'Analytic Pragmatism.'⁷³ He attempts to conceptualise the 'meaning as use' pragmatist's theory within an analytic framework by showing what he calls PV and VP relations between vocabularies (V) and practices (P), between semantics and pragmatism. Brandom characterizes the 'meaning as use' conception as semantics mediated by practice. He thus aims to show that pragmatism plays a necessary role in language analysis. Pragmatism offers an interesting standpoint in the analytic-continental divide. As Hans-Johann Glock notes: 'With respect to the analytic/continental divide, pragmatism occupies an ambivalent role.'⁷⁴ Pragmatism is indeed linked to analytic philosophy but also distinct from it and sometimes even presents 'clear affinities with continental philosophy'⁷⁵ according to Glock. Pragmatism could thus be seen as a step in the bridging over of the analytic-continental divide, for it blurs the borders between them. The continental view on ordinary language philosophy is however not always sympathetic. A famous debate occurred between Derrida and Searle when the former criticised Austin's conception of language.

d. Derrida Against Ordinary Language

Derrida attempts to uncover the metaphysical prejudices of philosophical language (and this includes ordinary language philosophy). His notion of deconstruction aims precisely at revealing the metaphysical prejudices

⁷² See Rorty (1967), pp. 15-24.

⁷³ Brandom (2011), pp. 158-189.

⁷⁴ Glock (2008), p. 84.

⁷⁵ Glock (2008), p. 84.

which are laid in language. To expose some of his ideas, I will focus on the text 'Signature, Event, Context' which gave rise to the Derrida-Searle debate. This text is interesting because it is a continental point of view on an analytic philosopher and also an attempt at dialogue. This attempt however leads to a failure as Searle's understanding of Derrida is just a way of, to take the title of Searle's answer, 'reiterating the differences.' I will focus on a few elements of this text to show: the critique of metaphysics, the limit of ordinary language philosophy, and the possibility of dialogue.

Derrida's concerns with Austin's theory of performative revolves around the ideas of context and intention:

In order for a context to be exhaustively determinable, in the sense required by Austin, conscious intention would at the very least have to be totally present and immediately transparent to itself and to others, since it is a determining center of context. The concept of — or the search for — the context thus seems to suffer at this point from the same theoretical and "interested" uncertainty as the concept of the "ordinary," from the same metaphysical origins: the ethical and teleological discourse of consciousness.⁷⁶

Austin's notion of context relies, according to Derrida, on a metaphysical origin, namely the fact that conscious intention is transparent. To some extent, Derrida considers that Austin still relies on a 'magic language' in the sense that it could be transparent and self-interpreting, without doubts. Derrida wishes to get rid of metaphysics not by focusing on ordinary language, but by revealing the metaphysical construct which underlies even ordinary language. This is the task of deconstruction:

Every concept, moreover, belongs to a systematic chain and constitutes in itself a system of predicates. There is no concept that is metaphysical in itself. There is labor—metaphysical or not—performed on conceptual systems. Deconstruction does not consist in moving from one concept to another, but in reversing and displacing a conceptual order as well as the nonconceptual order with which it is articulated.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Derrida (1988), p. 18.

⁷⁷ Derrida (1988), p. 21.

What is interesting, and which reminds us of Wittgenstein, is the idea that there are some metaphysical uses of concepts, but that concepts are not as such metaphysical (for if they were, this would be a metaphysical conception of concepts). Metaphysics is a way of approaching, using, seeing, a systematic chain of concepts. The aim of deconstruction is to show that the order of this systematic chain is not absolute but can be reverted. In a sense, a metaphysical conception of language establishes hierarchies in the chains of concepts and deconstruction aims at disturbing these hierarchies by not taking them for granted.

According to Derrida, ordinary language philosophy retains a metaphysical dimension as it relies on the established hierarchies. This is revealed in what Derrida considers to be Austin's greatest problem, namely his rejection of the 'non-serious': 'Austin thus excludes, along with what he calls a "sea-change," the "non-serious," "parasitism," "etiolation," "the non-ordinary" (along with the whole general theory which, if it succeeded in accounting for them, would no longer be governed by those oppositions), all of which he nevertheless recognizes as the possibility available to every act of utterance.'⁷⁸ This category of 'non-serious' or 'non-ordinary' reveals that ordinary language is somehow a metaphysical category, and that 'non-serious' statements are deviances from this norm. For Derrida, although ordinary language philosophers make the positive move from Saussure's *langue* to his *parole*, their notion of *parole* retains a metaphysical dimension. Literary or poetic statements are, for instance, rejected from this field as deviances and therefore do not take part in the elaboration of what language is. This might be the case for Austin and Searle after him, but this does not mean that ordinary language philosophy is incapable of taking such 'deviances' into account. As we will see in a further chapter, Wittgenstein's insights into poetic uses of language open the possibility of avoiding what Derrida considers to be a metaphysical trap.

⁷⁸ Derrida (1988), pp. 15-16

Derrida does not only criticise Austin, he also opens the possibility for dialogue, as he for instance considers that Austin is closer to Nietzsche than one might think at first:

Austin was obliged to free the analysis of the performative from the authority of the truth value, from the true/false opposition, at least in its classical form, and to substitute for it at times the value of force, of difference of force (illocutionary or perlocutionary force). (In this line of thought, which is nothing less than Nietzschean, this in particular strikes me as moving in the direction of Nietzsche himself, who often acknowledged a certain affinity for a vein of English thought.)⁷⁹

By moving from the true/false opposition of statements in ideal language to values of force, Austin operates a move similar to Nietzsche when he attempts to analyse oppositions of values in terms of power. However, Derrida does not pursue this comparison further and the dialogue seems to fail, as the opening line of Searle's reply suggests: 'It would be a mistake, I think, to regard Derrida's discussion of Austin as a confrontation between two prominent philosophical traditions.'⁸⁰

In this short overview of some considerations on metaphysics and language in the 20th century, we can see that the point of disagreement regards the place of poetic language within a theory of language. Some philosophers, mostly continental, consider poetic language to be the essence of language, whereas others, mostly analytic, consider logic as the core matter. As we will see in the next chapter, this opposition reflects a broader opposition in conceptions of language: between a representational conception of language and an expressive one. Each view has its own problems: a representational conception of language fails to account for poetic uses and an expressive conception of language seems to open the door to a radical relativism in which nothing is fixed. We will see that both Nietzsche and Wittgenstein inherit from the expressivist tradition and that they share many of their concerns with this tradition.

⁷⁹ Derrida (1988), p. 13.

⁸⁰ Searle (1977), p. 198.

Chapter Two:

Representation and Expression: The 'Linguistic Turn' in German Philosophy from Herder to Wittgenstein

Well, Socrates, I've often talked with Cratylus — and with lots of other people, for that matter — and no one is able to persuade me that the correctness of names is determined by anything besides convention and agreement. I believe that any name you give a thing is its correct name. If you change its name and give it another, the new one is as correct as the old. For example, when we give names to our domestic slaves, the new ones are as correct as the old. No name belongs to a particular thing by nature, but only because of the rules and usage of those who establish the usage and call it by that name. However, if I'm wrong about this, I'm ready to listen not just to Cratylus but to anyone, and to learn from him too.

Plato, *Cratylus*, 384c-d

In *Cratylus*, Hermogenes confronts two conceptions of language which have given birth to two traditions: one according to which names are determined by the nature of the thing (or a divine instance), the other according to which they are determined only by convention or agreement. Keeping in mind the development of philosophy of language, we can read this passage as confronting two conceptions of meaning and thereby two ways of considering the relation between word and world: on the one hand, to give a natural or divine origin to names and words is to emphasise the importance of *reference* in determining meaning, on the other, to focus on convention and agreement is to emphasise meaning as *use*. Although these two trends coexist, the former is much more widely spread and, as we will see, Wittgenstein's shift between his earlier and later works can be interpreted as a move from one tradition to the other. These conceptions of meaning do not only have an impact on language, but also on the conception of truth. The basic conception of truth in a referential framework is that of correspondence: a statement is true if it corresponds to a fact. As Patricia Hanna and Bernard Harrison argue, such a theory relies on 'the existence of

semantically mediated correlations between the members of some class of linguistic entities possessing assertoric force (in some versions of the Correspondence Theory propositions, in others sentences, or bodies of sentences), and the members of some class of extralinguistic entities: “states of affairs,” or “facts,” or bodies of truth-conditions, or of assertion-warranting circumstances.’⁸¹ What determines the truth or falsity of a proposition or sentence is thus the correspondence to the ‘world,’ to a state of affair which, as Hanna and Harrison further argue, is determined by nature rather than thought. To that extent, ‘Truths—at least truths concerning the world given to us in experience—are discovered: they are not stipulated, or “constituted by convention,” or in any other way “the work of the mind.”’⁸² A correspondence theory of truth thus relies on a theory of language in which words refer to things in the world and sentences say something about the world. If Hermogenes is not convinced by Cratylus’s arguments that such a connection between word and world exists outside of convention, it is because such a conception has its limits and reference is not sufficient to determine the meaningfulness or meaninglessness of a sentence. Poetic or literary statements are for instance good examples of such problematic cases at least for two reasons: words in poetic statements might not have any referent—and we will see how fictional reference poses problems to representational conceptions of language in the first section of this chapter—and poetic statements might be patently false without being meaningless—for example Paul Eluard’s famous ‘la terre est bleue comme une orange.’

If we are not to reject these statements as deviances but to account for them and accept them within a conception of language, we must turn to another idea of truth. A tradition represented by Heidegger among others consider the notion of truth as disclosure: a statement reveals or discloses something of the world. This does not mean that correspondence disappears completely

⁸¹ Hanna and Harrison (2004), p. 21.

⁸² Hanna and Harrison (2004), p. 21.

but rather that it cannot be the only conception of truth in play. A metaphorical statement such as 'Juliet is the sun' therefore discloses something about Juliet, perhaps about the sun too, and moreover about the relation between word and world without saying that Juliet is indeed the sun. The first conception of language can be called representational and the second expressive. The representational conception of language relies on meaning as reference and truth as correspondence. It can therefore be considered as a metaphysical conception of language in which language is in direct connection to the essence of the world. We have seen that some philosophers such as Derrida criticise such conceptions by revealing their metaphysical character. Against this conception of language as mirroring the world, the expressive conception considers language and world to be interdependent. There is no longer the world on one side and language on the other with a direct connection between them, but language takes part in elaborating the world. Nietzsche and Wittgenstein inherit from these ideas which can be traced back to 18th century German philosophy of language. They both share influences and can be said to belong to a similar tradition in their conceptions of language, and this will establish the historical grounds on which they can be connected to one another. An important shared influence, and probably the first to come to mind, is Schopenhauer, who was very important not only to the young Nietzsche, but also to Wittgenstein. I will however not elaborate on this connection because the shared influence of Schopenhauer is not related to the expressive conception of language but rather on their relation to the will.⁸³ Before turning to the shared historical background in the expressive tradition of language, I first focus on the representational conception of language, because Wittgenstein's shift after the *Tractatus* can be read as a rejection of this conception of language.

⁸³ On Wittgenstein's relation to Schopenhauer, see for instance Glock (1999) who argues that Schopenhauer's influence on the later Wittgenstein is to be found in his conceptions of will and intention. On Schopenhauer's influence on Nietzsche's early theory of language, see Crawford (1988), pp. 22-36; 51-66 and 179-192.

1. 'A Picture Held Us Captive:' The Representational Conception of Language

The sentence quoted in this section's title is from Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* and to understand it, it is necessary to look at the surrounding remarks:

114. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (4.5): 'The general form of propositions is: This is how things are.'—This is the kind of proposition one repeats to oneself countless times. One thinks that one is tracing nature over and over again, and one is merely tracing round the frame through which we look at it.

115. A picture held us captive. And we couldn't get outside of it, for it lay in our language, and language seemed only to repeat it to us inexorably.

116. When philosophers use a word—'knowledge,' 'being,' 'object,' 'I,' 'proposition/sentence,' 'name'—and try to grasp the *essence* of the thing, one must always ask oneself: is the word ever actually used in this way in the language in which it is at home?—

What *we* do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use.

Even though I will focus more specifically on the later Wittgenstein's conception of language in the following chapters, these remarks set the stage for criticising a representational conception of language on metaphysical grounds. Wittgenstein begins with criticising his former theory, that of the *Tractatus* and quotes proposition 4.5. This is not unremarkable because Wittgenstein hardly ever comments on the *Tractatus* (or any other philosophical work) and it focuses on one specific point (but also perhaps the most important) of his former theory, namely that propositions are about a state of fact, 'This is how things are.' Wittgenstein comments saying that we (or his former self in this case) believe that propositions are about the world (or nature) whereas it reveals much more of language itself and of our relation to the world than of the world itself. There is a picture of language which traps us into believing that there is a direct and unquestionable connection between word and world. Wittgenstein acknowledges the

difficulty of getting out of this trap, and the past tense suggests that he somehow has managed to get out of it. The difficulty lies in the fact that this picture is one of the most common prejudices about language and that to explore it requires using language. How can one, as it were, criticise language from the inside? How can there be a linguistic critique of language?

The last remark quoted above considers this idea specifically in relation to the philosopher's, and especially the metaphysician's, use of language. The critique of representational language is justified as a critique of a metaphysical use of language. The philosophers believe that words denote not only things, but also and foremost the *essence* of things. As we will see in the following chapters, this is what Wittgenstein criticises as 'a craving for generality.' Wittgenstein suggests, and that is his way of escaping the trap or the picture that held him captive, that words should not be taken as essences but looked at in their uses. Another point to note in these remarks is the use of pronouns. In PI 114, Wittgenstein uses an impersonal form ('one thinks,' 'one repeats') while talking about his former theory. This impersonal use establishes a strong distance from his former theory. In PI 115, he shifts to 'we.' The question remains as to what 'we' refers to, but Wittgenstein includes himself (here his former self) in it. In PI 116, he begins with an impersonal form with the general category 'philosophers' and the impersonal pronoun 'one.' The question is opened as to whether he includes himself in the category 'philosophers,' but it is rather safe to say that he does not include his current self in it. The second part of the remark reintroduces the 'we' which refers here to Wittgenstein's current self. The shifts from impersonal to personal forms suggest here the evolution Wittgenstein underwent as placing his earlier self at a distance.

Before understanding on what grounds Wittgenstein's later conception of language is based, it is necessary to understand the conception of language which he adopted in the *Tractatus* and rejected in his later works. This change in focus can be analysed as a shift in influence, and especially in the influence Fritz Mauthner had on Wittgenstein. The early Wittgenstein rejects

Mauthner's criticism of language according to which, as we will see further in this chapter, language is so disconnected from the world that one cannot hope to reach any knowledge by means of language. If we consider language to be one of the principal means to knowledge, Mauthner's position leads to a radical scepticism according to which one cannot reach knowledge at all. We will see further in the chapter that the later Wittgenstein can be seen as adopting a more Mauthnerian stance (and thus getting closer to another tradition of language), as Gershon Weiler for instance suggests: 'the change that occurred in Wittgenstein's mind between the *Tractatus* and the *Blue Book* was in a Mauthnerian direction. I mean, that he came to consider ordinary language as being all right, while discarding the idea of picturing.⁸⁴ In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein opposes his project of critique of language to Mauthner's 'Sprachkritik:' 'All philosophy is a "critique of language" (though not in Mauthner's sense).' (*T*, 4.0031) Mauthner's critique of language focuses on ordinary language and does not attempt to elaborate a metaphysical or ideal language. Wittgenstein's conception in the *Tractatus* on the contrary attempts to establish such an ideal language in order to solve the problems of philosophy. To that extent, the *Tractatus* is indebted not to Mauthner but to Frege and Russell whom Wittgenstein mentions in the preface: 'I will only mention that I am indebted to Frege's great works and to the writings of my friend Mr Bertrand Russell for much of the stimulation of my thoughts.' (*T*, preface) The picture that held Wittgenstein captive was a picture built on these influences and we need to briefly turn to them in order to understand why such a shift in conception was necessary.

Frege is an important figure in the analytic tradition as he is often considered to be one of its founders. Michael Dummett considers that one of the crucial steps for philosophy to take a linguistic turn was made by Frege's *Die*

⁸⁴ Weiler (1958), p. 86.

Grundlagen der Arithmetik.⁸⁵ Hans-Johann Glock insists on the crucial role he plays in the development of formal logic which is to be an important aspect of the beginnings of analytic philosophy.⁸⁶ This focus on logic leads Frege to distinguish between the 'logical content' of signs and their 'colouring,' dismissing the latter as irrelevant to meaning. As Dummett argues: 'The sense is that part of the meaning of an expression which is relevant to the determination of the truth-value of a sentence in which the expression may occur; the colouring is that part of its meaning which is not (for instance, that which distinguishes "chap" from "guy" and from "man").'⁸⁷ From the outset, this distinction seems therefore to disdain poetic and literary uses of language which rely on such 'colouring.' However, another distinction Frege makes is much more famous, that between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*. In his famous paper, 'On *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*,' Frege elaborates a conception of meaning in which he distinguishes *sense* from *Bedeutung* (which is sometimes translated as *reference* or meaning). The main idea is that 'the regular connection between a sign, its sense and its *Bedeutung* is of such a kind that to the sign there corresponds a definite sense and to that in turn a definite *Bedeutung*, while to a given *Bedeutung* (an object) there does not belong only a single sign. The same sense has different expressions in different languages or even in the same language.'⁸⁸ This distinction is required to account either for expressions without reference or different expressions having the same reference such as Frege's famous example of the 'morning star' and the 'evening star' which both refer to Venus. Frege considers that there is an importance difference between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung* in their relation to truth. As Glock summarises: 'their meaning (*Bedeutung*), which is the object they

⁸⁵ Dummett (1993), p. 5: 'On this characterisation, therefore, analytical philosophy was born when the "linguistic turn" was taken. This was not, of course, taken uniformly by a group of philosophers at any one time: but the first clear example known to me occurs in Frege's *Die Grundlagen der Arithmetik* of 1884.'

⁸⁶ Glock (2008), p. 28: 'The watershed in the development of formal logic, however, was Gottlob Frege's *Begriffsschrift* of 1879.'

⁸⁷ Dummett (1978), p. 93.

⁸⁸ Frege (1997), p. 153.

refer to, and their sense (*Sinn*), the 'mode of presentation' of that referent. [...] The meaning of a sentence is its truth-value; its sense is the 'thought' it expresses.⁸⁹ In an expression, the bearer of the truth-value is thus the *Bedeutung* and this is why Frege requires such a notion: 'But now why do we want every proper name to have not only a sense, but also a *Bedeutung*? Why is the thought not enough for us? Because, and to the extent that, we are concerned with its truth-value. This is not always the case.'⁹⁰ In attributing truth-value to *Bedeutung*, Frege prevents any expressions without referent, that is any fictional expression, to be either true or false, without making them meaningless. Indeed, one of the problems of too straightforward a conception of meaning as reference is that expressions without reference become meaningless, and literary statements cannot be said to be meaningless although they lack reference. However, although Frege's theory allows poetic statements to have a *Sinn*, it prevents them from having any truth-value and his rejection of 'colouring' outside the realm of meaning cuts away something crucial to poetic statements.

Following Frege, Bertrand Russell is another important influence for Wittgenstein and he, too, tackles the problem of sentences without reference. A similar question thus arises, as Ayer quotes and comments on Russell: "'How can a non-entity be the subject of a proposition?'" Russell does not think that any of these difficulties can be met by having recourse to Frege's well-known distinction between sense and reference.⁹¹ To solve the problem, Russell elaborates a theory of descriptions, which attempts to give account of sentences without reference while remaining within a general conception of meaning based on reference. According to Russell's theory, meaning can be replaced by definite descriptions, words are not names in the sense of proper names which have a direct connection to the object or person, but as it were abbreviations for descriptions. As William Lycan

⁸⁹ Glock (2008), p. 29.

⁹⁰ Frege (1997), p. 157.

⁹¹ Ayer (1971), p. 30.

summarises, Russell takes Frege in the opposite way: ‘Thus names do have what Frege thought of as “senses,” that can differ despite sameness of referent, but Russell gives an analysis of these rather than taking them as primitive items of some abstract sort.’⁹² Although meant to solve the problems of fictional referents, Russell’s theory still struggles with sentences such as the famous: ‘The present king of France is bald.’ How can a sentence have a truth-value if the object does not exist? Is the sentence about the king of France true or false? It is not a meaningless sentence for it is very understandable, but from a referential perspective, it is problematic. As it has no truth-value, it cannot have a meaning. Both Frege’s and Russell’s theories attempt to solve problems that a conception of language encounters when meaning is based on reference, and such problems are the most visible when confronting such a theory to a poetic or literary work. The literary aspects of language thus appear more as problems than insights to explore further and the early Wittgenstein shows equally little concern with literary uses of language in his *Tractatus*.

Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* relies on the same presuppositions, namely that philosophy ought to clarify language, that language represents the world, and that sentences have meaning in relation to their truth-value. In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein is perhaps even more radical than Frege and Russell as he comes to consider only the propositions of science as being meaningful, although having nothing to do with philosophy: ‘The correct method in philosophy would really be the following: to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. propositions of natural science—i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy—and then, whenever someone else wanted to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had failed to give a meaning to certain signs in his propositions.’ (T, 6.53) Only the propositions of science can be said, all the rest must be kept silent because it cannot meaningfully be put into words: ‘There are, indeed, things that cannot be put

⁹² Lycan (2008), p. 35.

into words. They *make themselves manifest*. They are what is mystical' (T, 6.522) More precisely, what cannot be put into words are ethics and aesthetics as Wittgenstein suggests: 'Ethics and aesthetics are one and the same.' (T, 6.421) This rejection of ethics and aesthetics into the 'mystical' is a way of explicitly rejecting 'deviant' uses of language outside of the realm of the meaningful. To that extent, Wittgenstein makes explicit Frege's and Russell's rejection of poetic uses from the realm of philosophy of language.

These three conceptions of meaning rely on the same basic conception that language represents the world. To this presupposition is related the idea that sentences have a truth-value and that their meaning is dependent on this truth-value. Despite its failure to account for poetic or literary uses of language, this conception remains strong nowadays. Unlike Wittgenstein, who changes his conception to avoid rejecting most of the actual uses of language as mystical, many philosophers accept the rejection of 'deviant' uses of language from the basic theory. Poetic, literary, metaphorical sentences therefore reveal a weakness of representational conceptions of language. Frege denies any truth-value to such sentences, Russell elaborates a complex theory to distinguish these sentences from 'normal' sentences, and Wittgenstein rejects ethics and aesthetics as belonging to the 'mystical.' This failure or difficulty in accounting for such uses of language, which can be rather common in everyday usage as the use of metaphor is not limited to poetic works, is a hint that representational conceptions of language might not be the best suited to understand how language really works. They are conceptions of an 'ideal language,' which, like its name indicates, might never be encountered in the actual world. On positing the existence of such an ideal language, or in attempting to explicate the actual language through this ideal one, they operate a metaphysical move, similar to what Nietzsche describes in discussing Plato's positing of a 'true world' behind the 'apparent one.' I will focus on this aspect of Nietzsche's critique in the next chapter, but the metaphysical dimension of representational language is a strong argument against it. However, even some ordinary language philosophers

who focus on language in use reject such poetic uses and Austin for instance rejects the literary as non-serious and does not give an account of it.⁹³ The later Wittgenstein is less negative towards poetic language and some of his remarks go in the direction of giving an account for such uses. I will elaborate on these in Chapter Four.

We have seen that Fritz Mauthner plays an important role in understanding the shift from early to late Wittgenstein. He is important not only because, as said above, Wittgenstein moves in a Mauthnerian direction, but also and above all because in making such a move, Wittgenstein comes in contact with a tradition which has a conception of language different from that of Frege and Russell. As Nietzsche belongs to this tradition, Lungstrum suggest that Mauthner is 'an important bridge between Nietzsche and Wittgenstein.'⁹⁴ Wittgenstein's knowledge of Nietzsche's philosophy thus owes a great deal to Mauthner's works, especially his *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache*. It is in the three volumes of this work that he elaborates his critique of language. In these volumes, Mauthner traces the history of various philosophers' conceptions of language and discusses their views. The philosopher with whom he agrees most is Nietzsche and he is heavily influenced by Nietzsche's short unpublished essay *On Truth and Lie*, as Jacques Le Rider notes: 'We couldn't insist too much on the importance of Nietzsche's text *On Truth and Lie in a Nonmoral Sense* for Fritz Mauthner.'⁹⁵ Mauthner even argues that Nietzsche would have been able to undertake a critique of language such as his, had he not been so preoccupied by morality and the use of

⁹³ This is Derrida's reading of Austin and one of the points of contention in his debate with Searle as we have seen in Chapter One. Although Searle defends Austin by claiming that rejecting non-serious uses from ordinary language philosophy is a temporary and strategic move, Derrida argues that a strategic move is also a conceptual one and that keeping the distinction between serious and non-serious is keeping the metaphysical distinction between proper and non-proper. See Austin (1962), pp. 9-10, 20-22, 104, 121 and Austin (1970), pp. 240-241. See also Derrida (1988); Searle (1977)

⁹⁴ Lungstrum (1995), p. 302.

⁹⁵ Le Rider (2008), my translation: 'On ne saurait trop insister sur l'importance du texte de Nietzsche, *Vérité et mensonge au sens extra-moral*, pour Fritz Mauthner déjà.'

language. Mauthner reproaches Nietzsche with being a poet. Because of his peculiar style and use of language, Nietzsche is no critic of language: 'Nietzsche was too vain to forego the poetic expression in his aphorisms: thus he is no "Sprachkritiker."' ⁹⁶ More than Nietzsche, Mauthner is a door to a whole tradition, and according to Forster, Wittgenstein's knowledge of Mauthner's work also explains 'how Wittgenstein became acquainted with the Herder-Hamann tradition's principles.' ⁹⁷ Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin argue that Mauthner plays an important role in the context of Wittgenstein's Vienna: 'by the year 1900, the linked problems of communication, authenticity and symbolic expression had been faced in parallel in all the major fields of thought and art [...] So the stage was set for a *philosophical* critique of language, given in completely general terms.' ⁹⁸ Fritz Mauthner is the first who expressed this 'philosophical critique of language' and although Wittgenstein disagreed with him in the *Tractatus*, his later works accept this influence.

Mauthner's critique of language is linked to his conception of the essence of language. When he asks himself at the beginning of his *Beiträge* 'What is the essence of language?' his answer is quite straightforward:

The easiest answer would be: there is no such thing as 'the language.' The word is such a vague abstract thing that hardly anything concrete corresponds to it. And if human language were a reliable 'tool' for knowledge, if especially my mother tongue were a reliable tool too, I would need to give up this attempt at criticism because the object of the research is an abstract thing, an ineffective and ungraspable concept. ⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Mauthner (1901), p. 333, my translation: 'Nietzsche war zu eitel, um in seinen Aphorismen auf die dichterischen Darstellungsmittel zu verzichten: darum wurde er in der Philosophie kein Sprachkritiker.'

⁹⁷ Forster (2011), p. 269.

⁹⁸ Janik and Toulmin (1996), p. 119.

⁹⁹ Mauthner (1901), p. 5, my translation: 'Die einfachste Antwort wäre: „die Sprache“ gibt es nicht; das Wort ist ein so blasses Abstraktum, daß ihm kaum mehr etwas Wirkliches entspricht. Und wenn die menschliche Sprache als „Werkzeug“ der Erkenntnis, wenn insbesondere meine Muttersprache als Werkzeug auch zuverlässig wäre, so müßte ich den Versuch dieser Kritik von vornherein aufgeben,

Mauthner's criticism of language as 'abstract' and disconnected from the world follows ideas that Nietzsche develops in *On Truth and Lie* and which he inherits, as we will see, from Herder among others. Nietzsche's conception of language in *On Truth and Lie* considers that words and concepts are the results of various stages of equating unequal things through metaphors. To some extent, Mauthner pushes Nietzsche's theory further, especially regarding the critique of knowledge related to his conception of language. According to Mauthner, we cannot learn anything from and with language as words are only words; they do not refer to anything else. And if the meanings of the words are changing, this prevents us from elaborating anything. This critique of knowledge is a radicalisation of Nietzsche's theory and leads to a linguistic scepticism. There is no possibility to reach knowledge through language and it is ultimately impossible to reach knowledge altogether because language always stands in the way. This critique of language goes together with a critique of versions of metaphysics which rely on language because metaphysics relies on abstract concepts. In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein adopts a radically different position regarding language, as there can be, for him, a link between a statement and a fact. Wittgenstein's 'Sprachkritik' in the *Tractatus* is the opposite to Mauthner's. Indeed, Wittgenstein attempts to reform language in order to avoid philosophical problems whereas Mauthner keeps language as it is, for nothing can be done to make it better. The later Wittgenstein's views are closer to Mauthner's, as philosophy is no longer the search for an ideal language but a description of ordinary uses of language:

It is wrong to say that in philosophy we consider an ideal language as opposed to our ordinary one. For this makes it appear as though we thought we could improve on ordinary language. But ordinary language is all right. Whenever we make up 'ideal languages' it is not in order to replace our ordinary language by them; but just to remove some trouble caused in someone's mind by thinking that he has got

weil dann der Gegenstand der Untersuchung ein Abstraktum, ein unwirklicher und unfafbarer Begriff ist.'

hold of the exact use of a common word. That is also why our method is not merely to enumerate actual usages of words, but rather deliberately to invent new ones, some of them because of their absurd appearance. (*BB*, p. 28)

The ideal language is useful to specify something by isolating it from ordinary language. It is therefore useful as a tool, and to that extent the conception of language of the *Tractatus* can be an interesting tool, but should not be confused with language itself. 'Ordinary language is all right,' (*BB*, p. 28) it needs no improvement and no further conceptualisation. Wittgenstein already suggests something like this in the *Tractatus*: 'In fact, all the propositions of our everyday language, just as they stand, are in perfect logical order.' (T 5.5563) But whereas the *Tractatus* emphasises the logical order of language, the later works do not attempt to structure language on an ideal logical scheme. An ideal language usually relies on a representational conception of language but there is more to ordinary language. Some ordinary uses, such as the poetic or metaphorical ones we can find in everyday practice, outgrow the limits of a representational conception of language. In order to account for such uses, Mauthner's 'Sprachkritik' and the later Wittgenstein turn to a tradition which attempts to avoid the limitations of representational language. Let us now turn to this tradition which I take in two steps: first the shift to expression with Herder and Hamann among others and second the poetic turn with the German Romantics.

2. A Shift to Expression: Herder, Hamann, Humboldt, and Lichtenberg

As said above, the representational conception of language raises two major issues: first, it retains a metaphysical dimension, it considers language as 'magic' to borrow Wheeler's term, which both Wittgenstein and Nietzsche try to dismiss; second, it fails to account for poetic or literary uses of language. A way to avoid these issues is to turn to another conception of language, one which gains importance with what Charles Taylor calls the

'HHH view' of meaning, but which can be related to Hermogenes's position in Plato's *Cratylus*. The rejection of 'magic language' calls for a shift from a representation-based to an expression-based theory. Such a shift is at play both in continental and analytic traditions and takes root, as Taylor argues, in the 18th century German philosophy of language. Nietzsche's and Wittgenstein's views of language inherit from this tradition and their views of language can find a historical point of contact in philosophers such as Hamann or Lichtenberg. If Taylor considers this shift from a continental perspective, some analytic philosophers operate a similar shift. Robert Brandom, for instance, coins the term 'expressivism,' 'as a label not just for his own project, but for a whole philosophical tradition that encompasses thinkers as diverse as Kant, Hegel, the American pragmatists, Heidegger and Wittgenstein'¹⁰⁰ according to Nicholas Smith. Although both conceptions of expression have little—if not nothing—in common, Smith argues that Taylor's notion of expression brings to the fore aspects that Brandom's expressivism hides.

Nietzsche's and Wittgenstein's concerns with criticising metaphysics and reshaping language can be traced back to 18th century German philosophy, with thinkers such as Johann Georg Hamann (1730-1788), Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803), Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835), and Georg Christoph Lichtenberg (1742-1799). Some scholars such as Michael Forster and Herman Cloeren have already argued that analytic philosophy of language and its linguistic turn is less of a radical shift and break with tradition than a development of ideas taking their roots in 18th century German philosophy. Forster's aim for instance is to 'fill a major lacuna in Anglophone philosophy of language's knowledge of its own origins, and hence in its self-understanding.'¹⁰¹ Cloeren defends a similar thesis, but he insists on the dimension of critique of language in the 18th and 19th century German philosophy. According to him, looking back at German philosophy

¹⁰⁰ Smith (2010), p. 145.

¹⁰¹ Forster (2010), p. 2.

of language prevents philosophy from falling into the same ideas as those of the logical positivists: 'What is more, thinkers of this movement cautiously avoided the one-sided conclusions of the logical positivists, according to which linguistic analysis is the only task of philosophy, and all solvable problems are left to logicians and scientists. As I will show, the German philosophers discussed in this study wisely held onto the notion that philosophy has genuine tasks to carry out in the theory of knowledge, in the history of philosophy, and in an elaboration of the transcendental function of language.'¹⁰² It is necessary to briefly retrace the history of this critique of metaphysics and of language to establish the grounds for comparing Nietzsche and Wittgenstein.

In their own ways, Herder, Hamann, Humboldt, and Lichtenberg all argue against a metaphysical conception of language (a language in which meanings would have a fixed essence) and develop a conception of language as being historically constructed. Taylor considers the first three to form the 'HHH view' of meaning in which representation does not play the primary role. As Forster argues, they consider that 'meaning or concepts are [...] *usages of words*.'¹⁰³ If meanings are provided by usage, there is no need for a metaphysical conception of language as language is established in practice and not fixed by a divine authority. One of the main features of this critique of metaphysical language is the search for the origin of language (as we have noted in Chapter One concerning Heidegger) which should not be divine but human, in Hermogenes's term, language is defined by convention and agreement. As we will see in the next chapters, quite a few elements of this tradition will find their way into Nietzsche's and Wittgenstein's philosophies, the most striking being found in what has been epitomised as Wittgenstein's—and the ordinary language philosophers'—so-called 'meaning as use' conception. Even though there is much more to ordinary language than this mere replacement of meaning by use, this shift in focus

¹⁰² Cloeren (1988), p. 4.

¹⁰³ Forster (2010), p. 16.

from metaphysical object 'language' (whose characteristics can vary) to a practice (or a set of practices) is a central move. Such a conception leads not only to understanding language as a convention (the rules of usage) but also as a creation (language evolves and new language uses can be created). As we will see with the German Romantics, this opens the space for poetic language. Rather than being metaphysically fixed, language is considered as something dynamic, as an always-evolving practice.

To understand how language is fixed and how it can evolve, 18th century German philosophers have looked at the origin of language. When looking back at this origin, Herder expresses critical views on the development of language:

In all original languages remains of these natural sounds still resound—only, to be sure, they are not the main threads of human language. They are not the actual roots, but the juices which enliven the roots of language.

In a refined, late-invented metaphysical language, which is a degeneration, perhaps at the fourth degree, from the original savage mother [tongue] of the human species, and which after long millennia of degeneration has itself in turn for centuries of its life been refined, civilized, and humanized—such a language, the child of reason and society, can know little or nothing any more about the childhood of its first mother. But the old, the savage, languages, the nearer they are to the origin, the more of it they contain. I cannot here yet speak of the slightest *human* formation [*Bildung*] of language, but can only consider raw materials. There does not yet exist for me any word, but only sounds towards the word for a sensation.¹⁰⁴

As we will see, Nietzsche's early (and even later) views on language are very close to those of Herder, even though he expresses some dissent with them. This idea of metaphysical language is seen as a degeneration from an original language, that of sounds. Language is metaphysical in the sense that it fixes an essence for the things it designates: when language evolves, there is no longer a link between the sound and the object but only a fixed convention (Nietzsche will call it a fixation of metaphors into concepts). Language in this

¹⁰⁴ Herder (2002), p.68.

sense is a social construct and not the result of a natural development. Let us point out that, already at this time, the metaphysical conception of language is criticised and this critique is one of the central points of contact between analytic and continental philosophies. Even though analytic philosophers will not follow the view according to which language has a sensuous origin, 'ordinary language' philosophers will strongly criticise the metaphysical character of language, just as Herder does. There is something unnatural about language that is deceitful, such is Herder's claim. Nietzsche will follow it to some extent and analytic philosophers will adopt a similar stance but for other reasons. Indeed, for Wittgenstein among others, the problem does not reside in the unnaturalness of language but in its metaphysical character (these two being however quite closely related), in the fact that words are taken out of their ordinary use and employed in a metaphysical way (PI 116), that is using them as if they were able to give an account of the essence of things (whereas they are, as Herder says, refined at 'the fourth degree,' very far from the things themselves). Metaphysical language thus relies on the idea that language not only represents the world but also accounts for the essence of things.

Alongside with Herder, Hamann was a founder of philosophy's turn to language.¹⁰⁵ He offers similar views to those of Herder and brings the origin and the nature of language into question, again in relation to a critique of metaphysics. As with Herder, Hamann believes language and thought to be closely linked; he argues in his *Essay on an Academic Question* that language is defined as a way of communicating thoughts: 'Since the concept of that which is understood by "language" is of such diverse meaning, it would be best to determine it according to its purpose as the means to communicate

¹⁰⁵ The classic picture of the history of philosophy considers Herder as Hamann's follower and indeed, Hamann was Herder's teacher at some point. Regarding matters about language, Forster argues that it was Herder who influenced Hamann rather than the opposite. Whether Herder or Hamann comes first is not my concern here, the important point being that both of them hold similar views on language which have had an impact on later thoughts on language. See Forster (2010), p. 3.

our thoughts and to understand the thoughts of others.’¹⁰⁶ Underlying such a conception of language is the dependence between thought and language; thoughts cannot be expressed with any other means than language. More than only the relation between thought and language, Hamann also brings to the fore the communicative nature of language. This does not entail a conception of language as a tool, in a functionalist fashion, but that language is essentially something shared and used to share thoughts, and this goes in the direction of rejecting a private language. We can find here a basic understanding of language as a social practice which will grow into an important conception of language in the later Wittgenstein and in ordinary language philosophy.

This conception of language as a social practice entails a critique of metaphysical language. Indeed, as Hamann states in *Aesthetic in Nuce*:

To speak is to translate—from an angelic language into a human language, that is, to translate thoughts into words,—things into names—images into signs, which can be poetic or curiologial, historic or symbolic or hieroglyphic— and philosophical or characteristic. This kind of translation (that is, speech) resembles more than anything else the wrong side of a tapestry.¹⁰⁷

According to Hamann, speech is a kind of translation which can occur at different levels (names, signs, etc.). To some extent, this view of levels of translation can be linked to Herder’s conception of a metaphysical language refined ‘at the fourth degree.’ The translation creates a distance between things and names. Whereas a metaphysical language considers the link between the name and the object to be a direct one, for Hamann a translation takes place in speech. Hamann criticises what Wheeler calls a ‘magic language,’ that is a self-interpreting language in which there is no need for interpretation or, in Hamann’s words, translation. In this sense, a ‘magic language’ is transparent: everything is crystal clear, meanings and

¹⁰⁶ Hamann (2007), p. 17.

¹⁰⁷ Hamann (2007), p. 66.

interpretation are given and do not need to be found.¹⁰⁸ A 'magic language' relies on the prejudice that language is metaphysical and that there is therefore a direct link from word to thing, from meaning to essence. Hamann works against such a conception of language and the importance he gives to translation reveals the interpretative dimension of language. This translation can take different forms (poetic, historic, philosophical, etc.). This notion of translation, as Herder's notion of refinement 'at the fourth degree' will be developed by Nietzsche's notions of metaphor and concept in *On Truth and Lie*. I will discuss Nietzsche's conception extensively in the next chapter, but it is already interesting to point out the relation between translation (*Übersetzung*) and metaphor (*Metapher* but also *Übertragung*). As much as in Hamann's translation as in Nietzsche's metaphor, language is perceived as operating a shift (a move) from perception to word (and later to the concept). This shift from words to concepts appears in Hamann's later works where, even though his conception of language slightly changes, the main idea of translation remains. In the *Metacritique of Pure Reason*, he answers to Kant and argues:

Words, therefore, have an aesthetic and logical faculty. As visible and audible objects they belong with their elements to the sensibility and intuition; however, by the spirit of their institution and meaning, they belong to the understanding and concepts. Consequently, words are pure and empirical intuitions as much as pure and empirical concepts. Empirical, because the sensation of vision or hearing is effected through them; pure, inasmuch as their meaning is determined by nothing that belongs to those sensations. Words as the undetermined objects of empirical intuitions are entitled, in the original text of pure reason, aesthetic appearances; therefore, according to the endlessly repeated antithetical parallelism, words as

¹⁰⁸ To that extent, a 'magic language' is the antithesis of poetic language which is often characterised as obscure or paradoxical. Hence the difficulties for representationalist conceptions of language to account for poetic uses. The focus on use, rather than rejecting poetry as a deviance, can take it into account as a possible use in language. The relation to this use is however variable and we have seen that Heidegger considers it as fundamental whereas Austin considers it a deviance. I will argue in a later chapter that poetic and ordinary language should not be considered as two separate fixed entities for it would re-create, but at another level, a metaphysical conception of language.

undetermined objects of empirical concepts are entitled critical appearances, specters, non-words or unwords, and become determinate objects for the understanding only through their institution and meaning in usage. This meaning and its determination arises, as everyone knows, from the combination of a word-sign, which is *a priori* arbitrary and indifferent and *a posteriori* necessary and indispensable, with the intuition of the word itself; through this reiterated bond the concept is communicated to, imprinted on, and incorporated in the understanding, by means of the word-sign as by the intuition itself.¹⁰⁹

Hamann characterises words as two-sided. On the one hand, they are translations from empirical intuitions, from one form of empirical intuition (the perception of a thing) to another (the sound of the word). This is why words have an aesthetic faculty; they are objects (or sounds) with a specific form. On the other hand, they are concepts; they have a meaning which is unrelated to the original empirical intuition (or only 'at the fourth degree' as Herder states). This is the logical faculty of the word. These two faculties are bound together in words: the intuition of the world and the arbitrary word-sign that designates it. Here the idea is expressed that the meaning of a word is its usage, which the later Wittgenstein will extensively develop. Let us note as well the arbitrary character of the word-sign which will become one of the main theses of Ferdinand de Saussure.¹¹⁰ This arbitrariness of words and the lack of relation between the word-sign and the intuition lead Hamann to a critique of metaphysics:

Metaphysics abuses the word-signs and figures of speech of our empirical knowledge by treating them as nothing but hieroglyphs and types of ideal relations. Through this learned troublemaking it works the honest decency of language into such a meaningless, rutting, unstable, indefinite something = X that nothing is left but a windy sough, a magic shadow play, at most, as the wise Helvétius says, the talisman and rosary of a transcendental superstitious belief in *entia rationis*, their empty sacks and slogans.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Hamann (2007), pp. 215-216.

¹¹⁰ Saussure (2011), pp. 67-70.

¹¹¹ Hamann (2007), p. 210.

Hamann's critique of metaphysics is thus mainly focussed on the use (or abuse) of word-signs as concepts. The fixed and arbitrary meaning distances itself from the empirical intuitions and, in the end, detaches itself completely. Metaphysics considers word-signs as 'hieroglyphs,' as abstract ideas, and thus turn language into something meaningless. Behind the equation 'something = X' lies nothing but abstract ideas. Hamann's critique of metaphysics can be linked to Nietzsche's critique of the 'thing-in-itself,' even though his relation to this notion is ambiguous: he uses it in his early works but is always suspicious of it. Things are clearer in his later works where he rejects the idea of the 'thing-in-itself,' such as in the *Twilight of the Idols* chapter 'How the True World Finally Became a Fable.' Critique of metaphysics and critique of language are linked together by Hamann. Word-signs cannot give a faithful account of our 'empirical knowledge' and thus of the world.

Like Herder and Hamann from whom he inherits, Humboldt attempts to escape the representational conception of language. As James Underhill argues, Humboldt does not consider language to be a mere vehicle for thought nor a mirror of the world.¹¹² Following that, one of the main aspects of Humboldt's view of language is he 'conceptualised language not as a fixed, unchanging thing but as a living process.'¹¹³ To that extent, Humboldt pursues Herder's and Hamann's thoughts, but focuses and develops further the idea of language as an evolving process. Language is an activity which keeps evolving:

*Language, regarded in its real nature, is an enduring thing, and at every moment a transitory one. Even its maintenance by writing is always just an incomplete, mummy-like preservation, only needed again in attempting thereby to picture the living utterance. In itself it is no product (Ergon), but an activity (Energeia). Its true definition can therefore only be a genetic one.*¹¹⁴

¹¹² Underhill (2009), p. 49

¹¹³ Underhill (2009), p. 50.

¹¹⁴ Humboldt (1999), p. 49.

Like Herder and Hamann, Humboldt considers language as a practice. To that extent, he focuses on the notion of speech rather than writing (and this idea that writing is a mere recording of speech is, as Derrida argues in *Of Grammatology*, a striking feature of many conceptions of language). Whether speech is really a more fundamental mode or use of language than writing is not the main question here, and Nietzsche would certainly disagree with Humboldt on that matter. What is important is that language is an activity which is *transitory*. Language is meant to evolve and to change and is certainly not to be fixed as an eternal entity. Concepts are not '*aeternae veritates*,' as Nietzsche for instance argues in *Human, All Too Human*. A definition of language 'can therefore only be a genetic one' or, following Nietzsche's vocabulary a genealogical one: language must be grasped in its uses and in its history.

The themes developed by Herder, Hamann, and Humboldt already reveal a possible historical background to link Nietzsche and Wittgenstein. As we have seen, some concerns shared by both Nietzsche and Wittgenstein appear in Herder's, Hamann's, and Humboldt's writings. As we have seen and as Forster argues, Wittgenstein's knowledge of Herder and Hamann could come from his reading of Fritz Mauthner (who was heavily influenced by the Herder-Hamann tradition as well as by Nietzsche), but there is some evidence that Wittgenstein read Hamann.¹¹⁵ Although not discussing Hamann's conception of language, Wittgenstein mentions his name in his notebooks.¹¹⁶ Lichtenberg, another 18th century German philosopher, is a figure whose influence on both Nietzsche and Wittgenstein is attested. Wittgenstein's comments about his readings are often scarce, but, as Janik and Toulmin argue: 'One of the few philosophical writers who impressed him from early on was Georg Christoph Lichtenberg.'¹¹⁷ As for Nietzsche,

¹¹⁵ Forster (2010), p. 135.

¹¹⁶ Wittgenstein (1997), pp. 40-41.

¹¹⁷ Janik and Toulmin (1996), p. 176.

Thomas Brobjer shows that 'Georg Christoph Lichtenberg is one of the only two German philosophers and thinkers (the other being Lessing) toward whom Nietzsche had a positive attitude throughout his development.'¹¹⁸ Lichtenberg too was a critic of metaphysics and considered language as the central matter of philosophy. More than just being a shared historical source for Nietzsche and Wittgenstein, Lichtenberg also raises some important metaphilosophical questions, especially those of the aim and scope of philosophy (summarised by Heidegger in Chapter One: 'What task is reserved for thinking at the end of philosophy?') and of the writing of philosophy itself, of philosophical style.

Both Nietzsche and Wittgenstein have an interest in Lichtenberg's writings and the relation between this concern and their philosophy of language is expressed at its best in one of Lichtenberg's sentence from note 146, book H of his *Waste Books*:

Our whole philosophy is rectification of colloquial linguistic usage, thus rectification of a philosophy, and indeed of the most universal and general¹¹⁹

This sentence is important because we have evidence it was read by both Nietzsche and Wittgenstein. Indeed, Nietzsche underlines 'rectification of colloquial linguistic usage' in his copy of the book and, as Martin Stingelin notes in his study of Nietzsche's Lichtenberg reception, shares with Lichtenberg his understanding of critique of language as critique of concepts.¹²⁰ As for Wittgenstein, he quotes this sentence in section 90 of the *Big Typescript*. We thus have evidence that this notion of rectification of language was noted both by Nietzsche and Wittgenstein. The understanding of philosophy as a way of correcting language is thus not the invention of linguistic analysis but is already explicitly present in Lichtenberg's writings.

¹¹⁸ Brobjer (2008), p. 63.

¹¹⁹ Lichtenberg (1990), p. 122.

¹²⁰ Stingelin (1996), p. 103.

Lichtenberg's focus on the use of language differs from the view held by Herder and Hamann. The question is no longer about the relation of meaning to linguistic usage, but about linguistic usage itself as being in need of rectification. Lichtenberg's sentence shifts from a philosophical concern with language to a linguistic concern with philosophy. With Lichtenberg, the study of language takes a metaphilosophical turn: a concern with language leads to a concern with the nature of philosophical activity. Language is not only an object of philosophical inquiry but also the means by which this inquiry is carried out. As such, a reflection about language becomes a reflection about the linguistic nature of philosophy. This questioning about the nature of philosophical activity is obviously linked to a critique of metaphysics as traditionally conceived on the grounds of language, as Lichtenberg's critique of the Cartesian 'I think' reveals. In the fragment K 76 from *The Waste Books*, Lichtenberg considers Descartes presupposition of the 'I' in 'I think': 'We know only the existence of our sensations, representations, and thoughts. *It thinks*, we should say, just as we say, *it lightnings*. To say *cogito* is already too much if we translate it as *I think*. To assume the *I*, to postulate it, is a practical necessity.'¹²¹ Before the existence of ourselves, Lichtenberg considers that we know our 'sensations, representations, and thoughts.' He operates an inversion of Descartes's *cogito* which reconsiders the whole of Descartes's metaphysics. John Campbell compares Lichtenberg's critique of the *cogito* to Wittgenstein's 'reports of immediate experience' and considers that Wittgenstein operates a similar move.¹²² Nietzsche pursues a similar interpretation in *Beyond Good and Evil* and considers that the postulation of the 'I' is a 'grammatical habit.' (BGE 17 / KSA 5.31) Such a conception of philosophy and language requires rethinking how philosophy ought to be expressed. Lichtenberg is a perfect example of that: for him, philosophical writing involves writing as such. The 'linguistic usage' concerns Lichtenberg in two ways: in his analysis of language on the

¹²¹ Lichtenberg (2012), p. 152.

¹²² Campbell (2012), p. 368.

one hand and on his use of language, that is his style, on the other hand. Through his thinking about language, Lichtenberg brings to the fore the metaphilosophical questions of the nature and expression of philosophy.

Nietzsche and Wittgenstein share this metaphilosophical concern with Lichtenberg. As I will argue in the following chapters, Nietzsche's and Wittgenstein's ideas on language also bring metaphilosophical elements to the fore. And this shows in their specific ways of writing, in their styles, which share with Lichtenberg the aphoristic dimension. In his introduction to Lichtenberg's *Waste Books*, R. J. Hollingdale argues that one should be cautious in taking this aphoristic connection as a means to compare Lichtenberg, Nietzsche, and Wittgenstein as there are important stylistic differences among them.¹²³ However, this use of the fragmentary form reveals a shared concern with the use of language and its impact on philosophy itself. The turn to language entails a turn to the language of philosophy. By questioning the nature of philosophy, they must take into consideration the form of philosophy and thus tackle the question 'what form should philosophy take?' One element of an answer comes from the consideration of art and more specifically poetry. We have seen that Carnap praised Nietzsche for exposing his metaphysics as poetry (thus acknowledging Nietzsche as a poet and denying Nietzsche as a philosopher) and Wittgenstein stated that 'really one should write philosophy only as one *writes a poem.*' (CV, p. 28) After Herder, Hamann, Humboldt, and Lichtenberg, the German Romantics tackled these questions about the nature of philosophy and its relation to poetry.

¹²³ Lichtenberg (1990), pp. xii-xiii: 'In the present century the fragmentary philosophy of Nietzsche's notebooks and of the later Wittgenstein has encouraged the suspicion that Lichtenberg's fragmentary philosophy is of a kind similar to that of Nietzsche or Wittgenstein. For my part I think that anyone who conscientiously seeks "Lichtenberg's philosophy" in the *Sudelbücher* is not exactly wasting his time — no one who reads Lichtenberg conscientiously is wasting his time — but is certainly expending ingenuity in the wrong place: the analogy with Nietzsche or Wittgenstein is misleading, inasmuch as their thinking is only expressed in fragmentary form whereas Lichtenberg's really is fragmentary.'

3. The Poetic View: Friedrich Schlegel and the German Romantics

The German Romantics inherit from the ideas explored above and further develop the relation between language and poetry. In this section, I will focus especially on Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis as their ideas will be quite influential on Nietzsche. It is worth mentioning that Friedrich Schleiermacher develops similar ideas as well, exploring in particular the question of interpretation which plays a central role in his hermeneutics. The notion of interpretation will be central to my readings of Nietzsche and Wittgenstein in further chapters, but I will focus for now on other aspects from the romantic tradition, especially their views on the relation between philosophy and poetry as this has an impact on the form of philosophy which will be the topic of Chapter Seven. In this regard, the German Romantics continue developing the notion of fragment which was already central to Lichtenberg's ideas and which will have a strong influence on Nietzsche's philosophical thought and style.

The notion of fragment is however ambivalent as, although there is a tradition of short forms in philosophy, fragments are sometimes, as in Heraclitus's case, more of a historical contingency than a conceptual necessity. However, the fact that short forms exist in philosophical expression or that some philosophical thoughts reach us only in a fragmentary form influences the understanding of this philosophy. The question of style is, as we will see in Chapter Seven, tightly related to the possibility of understanding. The notion of fragment can be interpreted in various ways, and Hollingdale argues for instance that Nietzsche's and Wittgenstein's styles are only fragmentary in form whereas Lichtenberg's 'is really fragmentary.'¹²⁴ Whether there is really a difference here or not, the fact is that both Nietzsche and Wittgenstein present their thoughts in a fragmentary form and that this style belongs to a tradition in which Lichtenberg has his place. The German Romantics pursue Lichtenberg's

¹²⁴ Lichtenberg (1990), p. xiii.

fragmentary style and develop an aesthetics of the fragment which has a complex relation to the systematic form in philosophy, and, as Elizabeth Millan-Zaibert argues, the Romantics' concept of the fragment is a way of escaping an artificial system which would impose a structure upon a plurality of ideas.¹²⁵

To illustrate this complex relation, Schlegel holds a dual view on systems: he considers his method based on the life of thought to be a system (in the sense of an organic system) but not in the negative sense according to which 'systematic coherence is only external and specious.'¹²⁶ He distinguishes between organic systems produced and determined by life and systems built by philosophers who impose an external force to hold the things together. Nietzsche takes up this rejection of systems and systematic philosophy and his attitude towards the system is summarised in *Twilight of the Idols*: 'I mistrust all systematists and avoid them.' (TI 'Arrows' 26 / KSA 6.63) The notion of mistrust suggests that systems often hide something, that their attempt to structure reality might only be an artifice.

For both Nietzsche and Schlegel, the attack on the notion of system is related to their rejection of Hegel and the tradition of German Idealism, and especially of its systematic style. Schlegel's writing in fragments and Nietzsche's writing in aphorisms do reveal an attempt to write philosophy differently, in a radically different way from Hegel's system (Nietzsche's critique of Spinoza as a systematic writer also goes in this direction; he is against a philosophy which would not include poetry). This search for a different expression leads the German Romantics and Nietzsche to favour a

¹²⁵ Millan-Zaibert (2007), p. 12: 'Schlegel's use of the fragment is largely the result of his ambivalent relation to creating a system for his ideas. In *Athenäum* Fragment 53 he writes: 'It is just as fatal for the spirit to have a system and not to have a system. Some way of combining the two must be reached.' According to Eichner, the medium of such a combination is precisely the literary form that the early Romantics favored, the fragment. This form, because it is not *necessarily* systematic, provides the space necessary for the free play of irony and facilitates the possibility that a single idea be approached from a plurality of perspectives.'

¹²⁶ Schlegel (1855), p. 347.

literary form and, as Millan-Zaibert notes, ‘philosophers continue to underestimate the role of literary form in philosophy, which hinders an appreciation of the philosophical contributions of the early German Romantics.’¹²⁷ The inclusion of poetry and literature in the realm of philosophy reconfigures the language of philosophy itself. In contrast to the systematic form that reveals an external coherence, the literary form used by the German Romantics as well as Nietzsche reveals an internal coherence, similar to that of an organic system.

This reflection on system and the inclusion of poetry within the philosophical realm show Schlegel’s concern with language and its relation to the world. This concern also serves as ground for his questioning of the relation between philosophy, poetry, and truth—and to a larger extent the relation between art and science. His lecture ‘Philosophy of language’ focuses on the relation between language and life (and therefore art, as art is an integral part of life). His conception of language follows in part that of Herder and Hamann. Indeed, he too considers that ‘there is, then, an intrinsic connection between thought and speech, between language and consciousness.’¹²⁸ Because of this connection, language plays an important role in different domains of human activity: ‘living thought and the science thereof, can not well or easily be separated from the philosophy of language.’¹²⁹ We can already notice that this foundational role of language in another science (or another domain of philosophy) is a key element to the philosophical developments in the ‘linguistic turn.’ Following Herder and Hamann, Schlegel reinforces the place and role of language in philosophy. As we have seen with Lichtenberg, to place language back in philosophy entails rethinking the writing (or the style) of philosophy. Schlegel takes up this metaphilosophical concern and pushes it further. Denis Thouard goes as

¹²⁷ Millán-Zaibert (2007), pp. 45-46.

¹²⁸ Schlegel (1855), p. 425.

¹²⁹ Schlegel (1855), p. 425

far as saying that ‘the reflection of the textuality of philosophy becomes a philosophical problem with Schlegel.’¹³⁰ We might nuance this claim in regard to what we have said about Lichtenberg but Schlegel most certainly brings this reflection on philosophical style to the foreground.

Novalis holds a similar view of the relation between language and world. He for instance states in the *Logological Fragments*: ‘Everything we experience is a *communication*. Thus the world is indeed a *communication*—a revelation of the spirit. The age has passed when the spirit of God could be understood. The meaning of the world is lost. We have stopped at the letter. As a result of the appearance we have lost that which is appearing. Formulary beings.’¹³¹ The importance given to communication and therefore to the understanding of this communication through the understanding of language brings to the fore the metaphilosophical dimension of philosophical reflection: ‘The history of philosophy up to now is nothing but a history of attempts to discover how to do philosophy.’¹³² This metareflective character also appears in Novalis’s conception of language. In the ‘Monologue,’ he argues the whole point of language is to be concerned with itself: ‘It is amazing, the absurd error people make of imagining they are speaking for the sake of things; no one knows the essential thing about language, that it is concerned only with itself.’¹³³ Languages does not refer to things in the world, but only to itself. This conception however leads to an ironic comment from Novalis: ‘And though I believe that with these words I have delineated the nature and office of poetry as clearly as I can, all the same I know that no one can understand it, and what I have said is quite foolish because I wanted to say it, and that is no way for poetry to come about.’¹³⁴ If language only refers to itself, poetry—understood as the mastery of

¹³⁰ Thouard (2001), my translation: ‘la réflexion sur la textualité philosophique devient un problème philosophique avec lui.’

¹³¹ Novalis (1997), p. 81.

¹³² Novalis (1997), p. 47.

¹³³ Bernstein (2003), p. 214.

¹³⁴ Bernstein (2003), p. 215.

language—can only express the nature of language, and to attempt to describe the nature of poetry is therefore to attempt to describe the nature of language, a task which runs in circle.

The Romantics' and Nietzsche's distrust of systems and systematic writing comes from, among other things, Schlegel's rejection of the correspondence theory of truth, which is a feature Nietzsche will extensively develop. This rejection is linked to their critique of metaphysics and their new conception of language. If language is not 'magic,' if meanings are not given but call for interpretation, language cannot be considered as the exact representation of the world anymore. Once the direct link between language and world is taken down, the whole theory of truth as correspondence collapses as well. Truth (and meaning) cannot be considered as a matter of correspondence between a statement and a fact because the statement enters in the constitution of the fact; language takes part in elaborating the world. As Forster rightfully notes, Schlegel here 'anticipates aspects of Nietzsche's perspectivism.'¹³⁵ Andrew Bowie similarly suggests that German Romantics anticipate the Nietzschean question of truth: 'The Romantic understanding of truth both prefigures Nietzsche's question and implies that any determinate answer to it, for example, in terms of power as the ground of truth, fails to understand the real nature of truth.'¹³⁶ Nietzsche's questioning of the value we give to truth is based on his conception of language. A different conception of language (one tending towards literature and denying a 'magic language') calls for a rethinking of truth and how to express it, in a way that resembles literary expression.

In such a context, philosophy and poetry become closer to one another and Schlegel even considers that 'poetry and philosophy should be made one.'¹³⁷ This bringing together of poetry and philosophy (understood as science) is well expressed in *Anathaeum Fragments* 255:

¹³⁵ Forster (2011), p. 30.

¹³⁶ Bowie (1997), p. 73.

¹³⁷ Bernstein (2003), p. 244.

The more poetry becomes science, the more it also becomes art. If poetry is to become art, if the artist is to have a thorough understanding and knowledge of his ends and means, his difficulties and his subjects, then the poet will have to philosophize about his art. If he is to be more than a mere contriver and artisan, if he is to be an expert in his field and understand his fellow citizens in the kingdom of art, then he will have to become a philologist as well.¹³⁸

For poetry to become art to its full extent, it must include a philosophical reflection on itself. Only through philosophy can poetry become fully conscious of itself, of its ends and means, of what it ought to do and be.

This philosophical dimension is however not the only one needed: Schlegel also adds philology; not only must the poet be a philosopher, he must be a philologist as well. This notion of philology occupies the young Schlegel as his notes on *Philosophy of Philology* reveal. He attempts to rethink philology by adding a stronger critical and historical component. For Schlegel, poetry, philosophy and philology must work together and 'One has to be born for philology just as for poetry and philosophy.' This triad: poetry, philosophy, philology prefigures some of the Nietzschean developments. In Nietzsche's works as well, poetry, philosophy and philology work together. Philology is important as the art of reading well (and to this extent interpreting). As he says at the end of the preface to *Daybreak*, to read well (as a philologist) is to read slowly or to ruminate as he names this activity in *Genealogy of Morals*. The importance of poetry (and to a wider extent art) appears throughout all of Nietzsche's works and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* even takes the form of a poem (for which Carnap, as we saw, praised Nietzsche). Poetry and philology thus affect Nietzsche's conception of philosophy: poetry has an impact on his style and philology brings into focus the notion of interpretation.

Novalis understands the relation between philosophy and poetry in a similar way: 'Poetry is the hero of philosophy. Philosophy raises poetry to the status

¹³⁸ Bernstein (2003), p. 54

of a principle. It teaches us to recognize the worth of poetry. Philosophy is *the theory of poetry*. It shows us what poetry is, that is one and all.¹³⁹ What poetry brings to the fore is the idea of creation which Nietzsche will extensively develop as we will see in Chapter Five. Novalis argues that 'Writing poetry is creating,'¹⁴⁰ and this notion of creating brings to the fore the idea that poetry is not a closed category which, for instance, would refer to all versified texts (and Aristotle already suggests that Herodotus's work put into verse would still be history¹⁴¹)—it is not a subcategory of literature—but describes a more general dimension which encompasses all the arts. The use of the term 'Poesie' rather than 'Dichtung' goes back to the etymological roots of the word, the Greek 'poiesis' which means to make or to create. Rather than establishing a closed genre, the German Romantics open the notion of poetry to encompass all creative works. This notion of creation is central to Nietzsche's philosophy and in romantic terms, Nietzsche's philosophy is a poetic one insofar as it is a philosophy of creation. I will develop this in a later chapter but the Romantics' efforts to put aesthetics and poetics at the centre of philosophical concerns is an important step not only to understand Nietzsche's philosophy, but also to create a ground on which Nietzsche and Wittgenstein can meet. As mentioned in Chapter One, and as Bowie argues, there is a 'romantic connection'¹⁴² between analytic and continental philosophy and this connection can bring Nietzsche and Wittgenstein closer to one another. Friedrich Schlegel and the early German Romantics bring to the fore reflections that Nietzsche will take up in his works. One of the central aspects of the romantic enterprise is the attempt to reconfigure the relation between philosophy and poetry (and to a wider extent between philosophy and art). The poetic and the aesthetic acquire a

¹³⁹ Novalis (1997), p. 79.

¹⁴⁰ Novalis (1997), p. 55.

¹⁴¹ Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1451b, p. 32: 'For the historian and the poet differ not by speaking in metrical verse or without meter (for it would be possible to put the writings of Herodotus into meter, and they would be a history with meter no less than without it).

¹⁴² See Bowie (2000).

central role and Nietzsche will pursue these lines of inquiry. Although Wittgenstein does not explicitly follow these ideas and although the notion of creation is more or less absent from his works, some of his remarks indicate similar concerns regarding the nature and style of philosophy. As I will suggest in Chapter Seven, he for instance considers that 'really one should write philosophy only as one *writes a poem*' (CV, p. 28) and that there is a 'queer resemblance between a philosophical investigation [...] and one in aesthetics.' (CV, p. 29) Before turning to the aesthetics and the poetic in Part Three, let us now focus on Nietzsche's and Wittgenstein's conceptions of language, in order to establish the grounds on which the poetic can arise.

Chapter Three:
**Connecting Nietzsche and Wittgenstein: The ‘End of
Metaphysics,’ the ‘Linguistic Turn,’ and the Problem of
Relativism**

*Ist die Sprache der adäquate Ausdruck aller Realitäten?
Friedrich Nietzsche, On Truth and Lie, §1*

If the so-called analytic-continental divide is only a misrepresentation and insofar as neither side can be adequately defined, it should not be an obstacle to connecting Nietzsche and Wittgenstein. Quite to the contrary as the confrontation of these two philosophers, like the confrontation between philosophers supposedly belonging to one and the other tradition usually does, opens new paths of reflection. Such a confrontation is particularly germane in aesthetics, as philosophy in this field seems to still conform to the misrepresentation of the divide.¹⁴³ Before turning to aesthetic concerns—and a concern in philosophy of poetry especially—and because poetry is essentially a linguistic matter, it is necessary to explore Nietzsche’s and Wittgenstein’s views on language. As already seen in Chapter Two, Nietzsche and Wittgenstein both inherit from a similar tradition which rejects the metaphysical conception of language as representation and explores the possibilities of an expressive conception of language, what Charles Taylor calls the ‘HHH view’ and which begins in 18th century German philosophy of language. Although the direct connections between Nietzsche and Wittgenstein are scarce—we know Wittgenstein has read some of Nietzsche’s works but it is difficult to say what he thought of him—the expressive tradition of language represents an important common ground through which Nietzsche and Wittgenstein share similar concerns regarding the end of metaphysics and the role language plays in it.

¹⁴³ See for instance Roholt (2017).

The question in the opening quotation summarises Nietzsche's concerns with language and questions the capacity for a representational conception of language to give an account of the world. One of the key ideas in this quote lies in the use of the plural 'realities' rather than the singular 'reality.' Against a metaphysical view which posits the existence of 'reality' itself, Nietzsche considers reality to be plural. There is not one reality but many realities which are manifest, as we will later see, in many perspectives. To that extent, the metaphysical positing of language mirroring reality cannot be sustained anymore. The multiplicity of realities suggest that there might not be one language but a plurality of language uses. To take the end of metaphysics seriously, a reconception of language is necessary. We have seen that, with the end of metaphysics, some philosophers, both analytic and continental, turn their attention from metaphysical questions to linguistic ones or, as Nietzsche puts it, 'realize that what things *are called* is incomparably more important than what they are.' (GS 58 / KSA 3.422) If there is nothing to be found behind the world, if there is no metaphysical explanation, if in Nietzsche's words 'God is dead,' philosophers must focus on our relations to the world and one of these relations occurs by means of language. However, what is meant by language is not clear and philosophers elaborate their own conception of language in order to tackle the questions raised by this linguistic turn. We have classified these conceptions in two broad categories: representation and expression. The problem of representational conceptions of language is that they rely on a metaphysical basis whereas expressive conceptions seem to open the door to some forms of relativism.

As we have seen in Chapter One with Derrida's critique of the metaphysics underlying language, and, in a sense, Nietzsche prefigures this Derridean move, with the end of metaphysics must come the end of a metaphysical conception of language which suggests that 'through [words and concepts] we are grasping the *essence* of things.' (WS 11 / KSA 2.547) Or at least, such referential conceptions of meaning cannot remain so straightforward, and we have seen that Frege and Russell, for instance, attempt to nuance the

notion of reference in order to keep a representational conception of language valid. More than that, metaphysical conceptions of language are 'magic' in the sense Samuel Wheeler suggests, that is they see language as self-interpreting. A metaphysical conception of language considers the meaning of words to be unequivocal and explained through the relation between word and world. A critique of representational language is a critique of metaphysics, insofar as it criticises the foundations on which metaphysics is built. As already mentioned in Chapter Two, such referential conceptions of language often rely on a theory of truth as correspondence: a statement is true if and only if it corresponds to a fact. Huw Price compares representational theories of language to a child's matching game and considers that: 'Matching true statements to the world seems a lot like matching stickers to the picture; and many problems in philosophy seem much like the problems the child faces when some of the stickers are hard to place.¹⁴⁴ One domain in which 'stickers' are especially hard to place is poetry and one of the main problems of a representational conception of language is its failure to account for literary or metaphorical statements: such statements are either patently false, the sticker does not match the picture like in Magritte's famous 'ceci n'est pas une pipe,' or meaningless as they refer to nothing.

Nietzsche and the later Wittgenstein oppose such representational conceptions of language and base their critique of metaphysics on this opposition. They inherit from the 'HHH view' which defends an 'expressive' conception of language which, as Taylor puts it, 'shows us language as the locus of different kinds of disclosure. It makes us aware of the expressive dimension and its importance. And it allows us to identify a constitutive dimension, a way in which language does not only represent, but enters into some of the realities it is "about."¹⁴⁵ An expressive conception of language cannot take truth to be a matter of correspondence because language no

¹⁴⁴ Price (2013), p. 23.

¹⁴⁵ Taylor (1985), p. 273

longer only mirrors the world, but also takes part in elaborating it. Truth therefore becomes a matter of disclosure: a statement is considered true not if it matches some kind of 'reality,' but if it reveals or discloses something of the world. In other words, a true expressive statement must not necessarily correspond to a fact (a metaphorical statement might be for instance factually false and we will see in a further chapter that Donald Davidson¹⁴⁶ argues that metaphorical statements need to be either patently false or trivially true), but rather reveal something which will enrich one's understanding.

The opposition between expressive and representational conceptions of language—like the common view on the analytic-continental divide described in Chapter One—can be translated in terms of the opposition between art and science. As Tzvetan Todorov argues, while describing what happens within literature with the Romantics:

Art and poetry relate to truth, but this truth does not have the same nature as that towards which science tends. [...] Science states propositions of which we discover whether they are true or false by confronting them to the facts they try to describe. [...] It is a *truth of correspondence*. On the contrary when Baudelaire says that 'The poet resembles this prince of cloud and sky,' i.e. the albatross, it is impossible to proceed to a verification; and however, Baudelaire does not talk rubbish, he tries to reveal the identity of the poet: he aspires to a *truth of disclosure*, he attempts to reveal the nature of a being, a situation, a world. In both cases there is a link between words and the world, but the two truths do not fuse. [...] We can conclude that art does not only lead to knowledge of the world, but that it reveals at the same time the existence of this truth whose nature is different. In reality, this truth does not belong exclusively to art as it constitutes the horizon of the other interpretative discourses: history, human sciences, philosophy.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Davidson (2001), p. 259.

¹⁴⁷ Todorov (2007), pp. 59-61, my translation: 'L'art et la poésie ont bien trait à la vérité, mais cette vérité n'est pas de même nature que celle à laquelle aspire la science. [...] La science énonce des propositions dont on découvre qu'elles sont vraies ou fausses en les confrontant aux faits qu'elles cherchent à décrire. [...] Il s'agit là d'une vérité de correspondance ou d'adéquation. Lorsqu'en revanche Baudelaire dit que "le Poète est semblable au prince des nuées", c'est-à-dire à l'albatros, il est impossible de procéder à une vérification, et pourtant Baudelaire ne dit pas

Truth as correspondence would be the tool of science, whereas truth as disclosure belongs to the realms of poetry and the other arts. These truths are each linked to a specific conception of language, representational or expressive, and these conceptions of language could therefore be classified in the same way: representational conceptions of language belong to the realm of science and expressive ones to that of art. These distinctions should however not be considered as definite, but only indicate a general direction. It is important to note that, for Todorov at least, one truth is not better than the other: both say something of the world and are therefore important. What is therefore at play in Nietzsche's question quoted in the opening lines of this chapter is that language should no longer be considered as mirroring a metaphysically posited 'reality' but as shaping the world we live in. This shift from 'what things are' to 'what things *are called*' requires a critique of metaphysics and of language insofar as language is the underlying basis of metaphysics.

This chapter therefore focuses on relating Nietzsche's and Wittgenstein's critique of metaphysics to their critique of language and explores some of the consequences the end of metaphysics entail, especially regarding the question of relativism. In the first part of the chapter, I address three problems of Nietzschean and Wittgensteinian scholarship regarding the periodisation of their works, the lack of theory in their works, and the use of posthumous texts. In the second part, I focus on Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics and relate it to his conception of language in *On Truth and Lie*. In the third part I turn to Wittgenstein's critique of philosophy's craving for generality and how his views of language attempt to escape this craving. In

n'importe quoi, il cherche à nous révéler l'identité du poète; cette fois-ci, il aspire à une vérité de dévoilement, il tente de mettre en évidence la nature d'un être, d'une situation, d'un monde. A chaque fois, un rapport s'établit entre mots et monde, pourtant les deux vérités ne se confondent pas. [...] On peut conclure que non seulement l'art conduit à la connaissance du monde, mais il révèle en même temps l'existence de cette vérité dont la nature est différente. En réalité, celle-ci ne lui appartient pas exclusivement, puisqu'elle constitue l'horizon des autres discours interprétatifs: histoire, sciences humaines, philosophie.'

the fourth and final part, I explore the consequences of such views concerning Nietzsche's perspectivism and Wittgenstein's relativism.

1. Three Problems of a Nietzschean and Wittgensteinian Philosophy of Language

Before looking at their works in more details, it is necessary to briefly mention three aspects of Nietzschean and Wittgensteinian scholarships as they frame our ways of thinking about their works: the division of their works into periods, the lack of theory in their works, and the status of unpublished texts. Nietzsche's works are usually divided in three periods: the early works from the *Birth of Tragedy* to the *Untimely Meditations*, the middle works including *Human, All Too Human*, *Dawn*, and *The Gay Science*, and the late works from *Zarathustra* to his death.¹⁴⁸ Although this periodisation seems to suggest that Nietzsche's ideas underwent radical changes, most commentators acknowledge that there is a continuity and that each period is not as homogeneous as the periodisation suggests.¹⁴⁹ Similarly, Wittgenstein's works are usually divided in two parts: the early works centred around the *Tractatus* and the later works from his return to Cambridge in 1929 to his death.¹⁵⁰ Although both Nietzsche and

¹⁴⁸ See for instance Paul van Tongeren's presentation of Nietzsche in the first chapter of his introduction to Nietzsche, *Reinterpreting Modern Culture*.

¹⁴⁹ Lou Salomé was the first to suggest such a periodisation and she already acknowledges that some ideas traverse different periods. The periodisation thus is more of a scholarly tool than a suggestion that there are more than one Nietzsche, as Ruth Abbey argues in her study of Nietzsche's middle period: 'Thus it is possible to employ this schema while acknowledging that the boundaries between Nietzsche's phases are not rigid, that some of the thoughts elaborated in one period were adumbrated in the previous one, that there are differences within any single phase and that some concerns pervade his oeuvre.' Abbey (2000), p. xii.

¹⁵⁰ Although Wittgenstein acknowledges that some of his earlier views were mistaken, commentators from the *New Wittgenstein* consider that there is a continuity between the early and the later works, especially regarding the therapeutic aspects of his philosophy: 'Nevertheless, without regard to the period (or periods) of his work with which they are concerned, they agree in suggesting that Wittgenstein's primary aim in philosophy is—to use a word he himself employs in characterizing his later philosophical procedures—a therapeutic one.' Cray and Read (2000), p. 1. Other commentators suggest dividing Wittgenstein's works in

Wittgenstein cause problems of periodisation, they do not cause the same problems. Regarding Nietzsche, even though one can see an evolution in concerns, the periodisation is much more a way of grouping works together rather than establishing clear categories. The early and the late works are not opposed to one another in a strong way, but the periodisation rather shows that Nietzsche's concerns evolve without rejecting the earlier views. Quite the contrary as his 1886 prefaces to his earlier works attempt to show continuity within the whole corpus. Regarding Wittgenstein, the issue is rather different as he considers himself that his earlier work was mistaken and does not try, unlike Nietzsche's prefaces, to create a continuity. Readers of the *Tractatus* are often concerned with questions which are much different from readers of the *Philosophical Investigations*. However, as the New Wittgensteinians suggest, there is a continuity in Wittgenstein's idea that philosophy is a therapeutic activity rather than the establishment of doctrines. As we will see, Wittgenstein's criticism of the *Tractatus* in his later works corresponds to a broadening of his concerns rather than a radical rejection. The theory of language in the *Tractatus* becomes one language-game among many others in the later works. More than revealing contradictions or problems in Nietzsche's and Wittgenstein's works, these problems of periodisation show that it is not easy to pin down a position, even in a given work, because Nietzsche and Wittgenstein precisely do not write in a way for their positions to be pinned down.

This difficulty in pinning down their views is further increased by Nietzsche's and Wittgenstein's ways of thinking and writing. They do not offer a *philosophy of language* in the sense of a clearly exposed theory of how language works but, as their aphoristic style suggest, ideas on language

three periods: either considering that the works from the early 1930s represent an attempt to reconcile his early views and his newfound concerns, see for instance Stern (1991), or considering the works post *Philosophical Investigations* to focus on other concerns, see Moyal-Sharrock (2004).

which never amount to a system.¹⁵¹ Any attempt to systematise their thoughts misses the performative character of their writing and can thus be misleading. Combined with the idea of periodisation, this further suggests that there is no definite theory to be found but ideas which evolve with time and even sometimes contradict one another. It is important to keep in mind the performative dimension of their philosophies in order to avoid misinterpreting or overinterpreting some of their views.

The third aspect to keep in mind is the enormous number of posthumous fragments Nietzsche and Wittgenstein have left. This is especially the case for Wittgenstein whose *Tractatus* is his sole published book, all the rest being remarks arranged by editors after his death. This makes it difficult to establish a hierarchy among the remarks and one should be cautious not to give one remark too much importance over others. For Nietzsche, although scholarship has long relied on *The Will to Power* to take into account his posthumous notes, it has now been shown that this work is his sister's production and is thus not relevant to scholarship.¹⁵² When one knows the attention Nietzsche put in writing and editing his works, the reference to posthumous fragments should usually come to expand on something one can find in the published works rather than constitute the central element of an interpretation.

Despite this caution regarding posthumous texts, and especially regarding Nietzsche's views on language, it is difficult to avoid his short unpublished essay *On Truth and Lie in a Nonmoral sense*. As Roger Hazelton for instance already notes in his 1943 study of Nietzsche's theory of language, Nietzsche's thoughts on language are not systematically developed but rather scattered around in his various works and notes, with a strong concentration around 1872-73, time when he writes his notes for his rhetoric

¹⁵¹ Following a similar line of thought, Werner Stegmaier considers that Nietzsche offers no doctrine but only signs which point us in one direction; see Stegmaier (2006)

¹⁵² On this topic, see for instance van Tongeren (2000), pp. 45-49.

lectures in Basel and *On Truth and Lie*.¹⁵³ Without being a 'theory' of language proper, it is in this essay that Nietzsche develops his views on language in the most systematic manner and these views remain influential even in his later works. There are at least three reasons to consider *On Truth and Lie* as an important text to interpret Nietzsche's works. First, as Maudemarie Clark argues, it is 'a reworked and polished essay, it is not a mere note that Nietzsche may have thought better of the next day.'¹⁵⁴ Secondly, Nietzsche refers to it in his foreword to the second part of *Human, all too Human* and even qualifies it as a 'pro memoria' in an 1884 note, which shows that he did not change his views on the matter much.¹⁵⁵ Thirdly and finally, this text has had a heavy impact on Nietzsche's interpreters, especially those from the "linguistic turn" in French Nietzsche reception¹⁵⁶ such as Sarah Kofman or Jacques Derrida among others.

More than a 'linguistic turn,' this essay shows the impact of rhetoric on Nietzsche's works. This turn to rhetoric is not a mere 'rhetoric detour,' as Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe names it; it is not a project abandoned because unfruitful but on the contrary, rhetoric plays a foundational role in Nietzsche's conception of language in the early 1870s and we will see that his views on language remain hardly changed in his later works.¹⁵⁷ Nuancing

¹⁵³ Hazelton (1943), p. 47: 'The importance of Nietzsche's comments on the problem of language does not consist, it is true, either in a systematic statement of the problem or in a cogent declaration of its solution. These are not the sort of benefits conferred by a type of thinking which is suggestive and evocative rather than systematic or declarative. It consists rather, as we shall attempt to show, in locating and estimating a certain tension within language itself.'

¹⁵⁴ Clark (1990), p. 64.

¹⁵⁵ NF-1884, 26[372] / KSA 11.249

¹⁵⁶ Kofman (1993), p. xiv.

¹⁵⁷ Lacoue-Labarthe (1971), p. 54: 'Il [Nietzsche] a multiplié les lectures et les recherches, accumulé les notes les projets, ébauche, à plusieurs reprises, la rédaction de textes divers. Sans doute la rhétorique n'est-elle pas l'unique objet du travail produit à cette époque. Mais il n'est pas exagéré de dire, on le verra, qu'elle est bien le « centre », — aussi dérobé soit-il. Or rien de tout cela n'est achevé et surtout, du moins en apparence, il n'en reste plus aucune trace dans la production ultérieure de Nietzsche. On repère encore, ici et là, de nombreux textes sur l'éloquence, la stylistique, l'art de lire, de dire ou d'écrire, la persuasion, etc. On voit bien aussi que,

Lacoue-Labarthe's notion of 'detour,' Angèle Kremer-Marietti describes this period of Nietzsche's works as a 'rhetorical turn' which shapes Nietzsche's way of philosophising: 'Anticipating on the 19th century *critique of language* and the 20th century *linguistic turn*, his "rhetorical turn" concerns and conditions both in form and content a peculiar mode of philosophising.'¹⁵⁸ Nietzsche thus anticipates the critique of language (developed by Fritz Mauthner for instance, as we have seen in Chapter Two) and the 'linguistic turn.' However, as Kremer-Marietti notes, Nietzsche's critique of language has an impact on his way of philosophising, both in content and in form (as they are intimately linked). I will focus on these metaphilosophical consequences in further chapters but let us already note that the impact on form is one of the issues Nietzsche tackles following Friedrich Schlegel and the early German Romantics.

Against these arguments for taking *On Truth and Lie* as basis for Nietzsche's conception of language, some commentators argue that his views are heavily influenced by others at that time and would therefore not really be his own. Many have noticed the strong influence of Gustav Gerber's *Sprache als Kunst* on Nietzsche's early essay and the correspondence established by Anthonie Meijers and Martin Stingelin shows some striking similarities.¹⁵⁹ Nietzsche takes from Gerber the thesis according to which language has a metaphorical

malgré quelques changements de terminologie, l'analyse que fait Nietzsche du langage variera assez peu et qu'il s'en tiendra pratiquement toujours à l'acquis de ces premières années. Il n'est pas surtout jusqu'à cette accusation constante de la responsabilité ontologique, métaphysique du langage et de la grammaire qui ne soit en effet une résurgence de ce travail. Mais rien, semble-t-il, qui prenne l'allure d'un effort systématique ; en tout cas nul recours déclaré et suivi au lexique propre de la rhétorique. Dès les années 75, la rhétorique a cessé d'être un instrument privilégié. On dirait même que Nietzsche lui retire tous ses droits et qu'elle cesse pratiquement d'être problème.'

¹⁵⁸ Kremer-Marietti (2007), p. 9, my translation: 'Anticipant sur la Critique du langage du XIXe siècle et sur le Tournant linguistique du XXe siècle, le "tour rhétorique" de Nietzsche concerne un mode particulier de philosopher qu'il conditionne dans sa forme et dans son contenu.'

¹⁵⁹ For a detailed analysis of Gerber's influence on Nietzsche, see Meijers (1988) who also elaborated a concordance between Nietzsche's rhetoric lectures and *On Truth and Lie* with Gerber's *Sprache als Kunst*, see Meijers and Stingelin (1988)

nature, words are images for nerve stimuli. As we will see, this thesis is central in *On Truth and Lie*: ‘What is a word? It is the copy in sound of a nerve stimulus.’ (TL 1 / KSA 1.878) Meijers and Stingelin put this sentence in relation to a passage of Gerber’s *Sprache als Kunst* to show the similarities.¹⁶⁰ Meijers and Stingelin quote many other passages from Gerber to show what Nietzsche copied from him, especially this idea that words are transpositions from nerve stimuli through images. This idea can also be found in Herder’s *Treatise on the Origin of Language*, as indicated in Chapter Two.¹⁶¹ These influences are undeniable but Nietzsche’s ideas on language are not a mere copy of Gerber’s and Herder’s theories. He assimilates them (as he does quite often, including with some of the German Romantics) in order to elaborate his own views. As Claudia Crawford shows, these influences can be traced back to Kant, Schopenhauer, Lange, and Hartmann and Gerber’s *Die Sprache als Kunst* offers ‘Nietzsche a new metaphor, that of rhetoric, for a body of ideas concerning language which Nietzsche already had in place by 1871.’¹⁶² The important point is that Nietzsche does not deny this thesis of the metaphorical nature of language in his later works but keeps it underlying his other philosophical concerns. His concerns with language are especially important regarding his critique of metaphysics, because language and metaphysics are intimately linked according to Nietzsche.

2. Nietzsche, Metaphysics, and the Seduction of Language

Nietzsche summarises his critique of metaphysics in the famous *Twilight of Idols* chapter ‘How the true world finally became a fable.’ In six steps, Nietzsche presents the history of metaphysics—‘the history of an error’ as the subtitle suggests—from Plato’s posing of the philosopher’s true world

¹⁶⁰ Quoted in Meijers and Stingelin (1988), p. 368: ‘Wenn nämlich durch ein Hörbares—den Laut—ein Reiz, eine Empfindung dargestellt wird, kann diese Darstellung freilich nur ein Bild sein, wie wir schon oben (p. 157 sq.) erörterten, und insofern Empfindungslaute *Lautbilder*, aber das Bild, welches die Vorstellung entwirft, ist noch ein anderes.’

¹⁶¹ Bertino (2011) details Herder’s influence on Nietzsche, especially regarding the instinctive origin of language.

¹⁶² Crawford (1988), p. x.

against the world of appearances to the abolition of the whole dualism between true and apparent worlds: 'The true world is gone: which world is left? The illusory one, perhaps?... But no! *we got rid of the illusory world along with the true one!*' (TI 'How the True World' / KSA 6.81) This dualism between true and apparent worlds is a metaphysical error and even the 'longest error' which must be overcome. But how can Nietzsche get rid of the metaphysical errors which have been sustained for so long? Following the developments leading to the end of metaphysics exposed in Chapter One, we can understand Nietzsche as shifting from metaphysics to language: as he suggests in *Human, All Too Human*, language is the birthplace of metaphysics: 'The significance of language for the development of human culture lies in the fact that human beings used it to set up a world of their own beside the other one, a place they deemed solid enough that from there they could lift the rest of world from its hinges and make themselves its master.' (HH 11 / KSA 2.30) This idea of mastering the world is not unrelated to Descartes's idea in the *Discourse* that science would make 'ourselves as it were masters and possessors of nature.'¹⁶³ Although science and language are related for Nietzsche, and especially in this paragraph from *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche shifts the primary focus from science to language. It is with language that humankind sets up a so-called 'true world' besides the apparent one. More precisely, as Nietzsche continues, it is the belief in concepts as '*aeternae veritates*' that leads to metaphysical fallacies: the main feature of metaphysics is to make human beings believe that when they talk about a concept, they are talking about the world, so that 'they really [believe] that in language they [have] knowledge of the world.' (HH 11 / KSA 2.30) This is a critique of Plato's doctrine of ideas and the metaphysical conception of language according to which a word refers to a Platonic idea in a direct fashion.

¹⁶³ Descartes (2006), p. 51.

As the quotation from *Human, All Too Human* suggests, language is not only the place for a critique of metaphysics, it is also the place for a larger critique of culture, i.e. of all the human phenomena built on this linguistic-metaphysical fallacy: science, logic, and culture in this text, religion, art, and morality in many other. This notion of belief is central to this critique and ultimately leads to the revaluation of all values. Indeed, the high esteem towards 'serious things' has nothing natural, it comes from an excessive use or abuse of language:

Conversely, the high estimation for the 'most important things' is almost never wholly genuine: the priests and metaphysicians have admittedly gotten us completely accustomed to a hypocritically exaggerated *use of language* in these areas, and yet not changed the tune of our feeling that these most important things are not to be taken to be as important as those disdained nearby things. (WS 5 / KSA 2.541)

Nietzsche considers that the value we give to things—i.e. a high value for 'serious things' and a low one for ordinary things such as eating, drinking, etc.—comes from the system of values the metaphysician and the priest establish through their control of language. They use language in order to build a conceptual and axiological system. To criticise metaphysical uses of language is therefore for Nietzsche a way to criticise the system of values and morality.

This critique of metaphysical uses of language relies more specifically on a critique of concepts and of the relation between word and world:

The word and the concept are the most visible reason for why we believe in this isolation of groups of actions: with them, we are not simply *designating* things, we originally think that through them we are grasping the *essence* of things. So now, we are continuously misled by words and concepts to think of things as being more simple than they are, separated from one another, indivisible, each one existing in and for itself. A philosophical mythology lies concealed in *language*, which breaks forth again at every moment, however careful we may otherwise be. (WS 11 / KSA 2.547)

Words and concepts lead to a metaphysical use of language and Nietzsche's task is to reveal the whole 'philosophical mythology' underlying the use of

language and especially that of the metaphysicians. His problem with language is that it is used not only to designate, but also and above all to generalise and regroup things in categories. This idea is central to *On Truth and Lie*, in which he considers words and concepts to be the result of metaphorical transpositions: 'To begin with, a nerve stimulus is transferred into an image: first metaphor. The image, in turn, is imitated in a sound: second metaphor.' (TL 1 / KSA 1.879)

This opposition between metaphors and concepts reflects the broader opposition between expressive and representational conceptions of language: whereas metaphors are lively and unique (because they are part of a process), concepts (and words) attempt to fix and group these metaphors under labels. Concepts are therefore dead metaphors for Nietzsche: 'Whereas each perceptual metaphor is individual and without equals and is therefore able to elude all classification, the great edifice of concepts displays the rigid regularity of a Roman columbarium and exhales in logic that strength and coolness which is characteristic of mathematics.' (TL 1 / KSA 1.882) Nietzsche's reference to the 'roman columbarium' suggests that words and concepts are to be found in metaphors' graveyard. Once the perceptual metaphors become fixed (and thus lose their uniqueness), they die and become words which immediately become concepts: 'a word becomes a concept insofar as it simultaneously has to fit countless more or less similar cases.' (TL 1 / KSA 1.879) What Nietzsche criticises in concepts is their propensity towards generalisation: many perceptual metaphors must fit under one concept. In a similar way, Derrida criticises representational writing as being bearer of death in *Grammatology*: 'representative, fallen, secondary, instituted writing, writing in the literal and strict sense, is condemned in *The Essay on the Origin of Languages* (it "enervates" speech; to "judge genius" from books is like "painting a man's portrait from his

corpse," etc.). Writing in the common sense is the dead letter, it is the carrier of death. It exhausts life.¹⁶⁴

One of the main problems Nietzsche has with definite concepts is that they equate unequal things: 'Every concept arises from the equating of unequal things.' (TL 1 / KSA 1.880) Concepts are thus born from equating individual metaphors. In other words, concepts oppose metaphors like generality opposes particularity. There is however a filiation between metaphors and concepts: 'the concept [...] is nevertheless merely the *residue of a metaphor*, and that illusion which is involved in the artistic transference of a nerve stimulus into images is, if not the mother, then the grandmother of every single concept.' (TL 1 / KSA 1.882) How does this fixing happen? Mainly because we forget the metaphorical origin of all concepts:

Only by forgetting this primitive world of metaphor can one live with any repose, security, and consistency: only by means of the petrification and coagulation of a mass of images which originally streamed from the primal faculty of human imagination like a fiery liquid, only in the invincible faith that *this sun, this window, this table* is a truth in itself, in short, only by forgetting that he himself is an artistically creating subject, does man live with any repose, security, and consistency. (TL 1 / KSA 1.883)

This forgetting of the metaphorical origins of language is necessary for human beings to live because without this 'invincible faith,' without this metaphysical belief in words, there could be no communication at all. The social and scientific edifice is built on this belief in such a conceptual relation between word and world. If there were only the original metaphors (from nerve stimuli to images) and no equating of unequal things, no transformation into words, communication would be impossible for there would be nothing common to talk about. For Nietzsche, human beings must therefore abandon their artistically creative selves in order to live in community, they must abandon the original metaphors in favour of concepts. Artists on the contrary live as artistically creative subjects and art

¹⁶⁴ Derrida (1997), p. 17.

is the only place where the 'drive to form metaphors,' this 'fundamental human drive' is free. Everyday life and its necessary stability imprison this creativity. In everyday life, humans must forget their artistic ability to create new metaphors. But this forgetting also prevents humans from seeing new things and discoveries are left for the artists. In other words, 'the way men usually are, it takes a name to make something visible for them. — Those with originality have for the most part also assigned names.' (GS 261 / KSA 3.517)

Language not only mirrors the world, it is not merely representational, but takes part into elaborating the world itself. To see the world, or things in the world, is to possess the words to grasp them. To that extent, metaphor is much more than a mere transposition, it opens our ways of seeing the world.

In the later works, this conception of language remains and in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche reminds us of this conception, widening the first step from nerve stimuli to sensations: 'Words are acoustic signs for concepts; concepts, however, are more or less precise figurative signs for frequently recurring and simultaneous sensations, for groups of sensations. Using the same words is not enough to ensure mutual understanding: we must also use the same words for the same category of inner experiences; ultimately, we must have the same experience in *common*.' (BGE 268 / KSA 5.221)

Moreover, Nietzsche's insistence on 'common' puts emphasis on the conventional dimension of language. In contrast to the artistically creative subjects, that is 'uncommon' or 'extraordinary' subjects, everyday people use language as it is established by convention. This is of importance to the concepts of knowledge and truth which we will explore more in depth in the fourth section of this chapter. In *On Truth and Lie*, Nietzsche argues:

This peace treaty brings in its wake something which appears to be the first step toward acquiring that puzzling truth drive: to wit, that which shall count as "truth" from now on is established. That is to say, a uniformly valid and binding designation is invented for things, and this legislation of language likewise establishes the first laws of truth. For the contrast between truth and lie arises here for the first time. The liar is a person who uses the valid designations, the words, in order to make something which is unreal appear to be real. He

says, for example, "I am rich," when the proper designation for his condition would be "poor." He misuses fixed conventions by means of arbitrary substitutions or even reversals of names. (TL 1 / KSA 1.877)

If language and its rules are conventional, the difference between truth and untruth is therefore not a difference of fact but a difference of use, or a difference of value. Liars use words in a way which does not conform to the rules established by the community—the dominant perspective—and are therefore excluded from it. An intelligent liar however uses and interprets the rules in order to make her claims seem true (this, to some extent, is the whole point of Plato's and Socrates' critique of the Sophists). In the passage quoted above, Nietzsche exposes the correspondence theory of truth. Liars are those who say 'I am rich' when 'poor' would have been the right description. The notion of truth Nietzsche discusses here is thus entirely dependent on language and on the conventions or rules embedded in it. What is true is what conforms to the rules. A shift in language-game—and therefore a shift in rules—would lead to a revaluation of truth: something true in one game might be false in another and vice versa. Truth depends on what language-game is played and rules attribute values to things: true, false, beautiful, ugly, good, evil, etc. These values aren't absolute—hence Nietzsche's critique of absolute concepts—they are cultural. Nietzsche's critique of language is a critique of mankind's belief in a metaphysical language in which values are not relative but absolute.

This belief in a metaphysical conception of language is the result of philosophers being seduced by language. The metaphor of seduction is a recurrent feature in Nietzsche's works and the preface to *Beyond Good and Evil* compares truth to a woman whom philosophers attempt to charm. Their failure in seducing this woman might indicate that it is they who are being charmed rather than the opposite. Uncovering the 'mythology' which underlies language, Nietzsche criticises the idea of a divine origin of language. According to Richard Rorty: 'To drop the idea of language as representations, and to be thoroughly Wittgensteinian in our approach to

language, would be to de-divinize the world. Only if we do that can we fully accept the argument I offered earlier—the argument that since truth is a property of sentences, since sentences are dependent for their existence upon vocabularies, and since vocabularies are made by human beings, so are truths.¹⁶⁵ To say with Nietzsche that ‘God is dead’ is to say that language is no longer a divine creation, but a human practice. If language is a human creation, it has a history. Concepts do not fall down from ‘cloud cuckoo land,’ to borrow Nietzsche’s image in *On Truth and Lie*, but have a human origin and are subject to development. To use a Derridean term, concepts can now be deconstructed and, most importantly, so can the concept of concept.¹⁶⁶

The idea of a seduction of language appears in various notes between 1875 and 1884, but also in his published works, *Beyond Good and Evil* and *Genealogy of Morals* especially.¹⁶⁷ The seduction which holds the metaphysician captive—‘the picture which holds us captive’ to use Wittgenstein’s term—leads them to metaphysical errors. The problem is not language itself, but the metaphysician’s belief in it. Because they are seduced by it, metaphysicians do not realise that the language they believe in is ‘magic’ or metaphysical in the sense that the words are taken as referring directly to objects in the world: they take words as naming the essence of things. For Nietzsche—following the ideas explored in Chapter Two—language is a social practice established by convention and use rather than an eternal truth. Forgetting this, metaphysicians fall into the traps laid by language and one of the greatest errors they make is to believe in and to use abstract concepts such as ‘absolute knowledge’ or ‘thing-in-itself.’

¹⁶⁵ Rorty (1989), p. 21.

¹⁶⁶ Derrida undertakes such a deconstruction of the concept of concept in ‘White Mythology’ in which he returns to metaphors, following Nietzsche’s steps in *On Truth and Lie*, see Derrida (1982), pp. 207-271.

¹⁶⁷ See NF-1875, 6[39] / KSA 8.113; NF-1880, 10[D67] / KSA 9.428; NF-1884, 26[300] / KSA 11.231; BGE 16 / KSA 5.29 and GM1 13 / KSA 5.279

But I shall repeat a hundred times over that the 'immediate certainty,' like 'absolute knowledge' and the 'thing in itself,' contains a *contradiction in adjecto*: it's time people freed themselves from the seduction of words! (BGE 16 / KSA 5.29)

Nietzsche exhorts us to free ourselves from the charms of language. The 'thing-in-itself' and similar concepts are all linguistic creations and must not be taken as metaphysical categories. In order to reach knowledge, we must look into language and try unfolding all that is embedded in it. In the remaining of the aphorism, Nietzsche presents his critique of the philosophers' use of language aimed at Descartes' 'I think' and Schopenhauer's 'I will.' Nietzsche shows that by saying 'I think,' Descartes presupposes that the notion of 'I' is something simple and that 'thinking' is somehow unified. According to Nietzsche, the 'I' cannot be construed in such simplistic terms: it is a complex notion which cannot be posited in the way Descartes does and 'thinking' includes many nuances which Descartes does not take into account. As seen in Chapter Two, Nietzsche follows Lichtenberg's critique of Descartes. Metaphysical language abolishes most of the nuances which make the world we live in what it is. This critique (which is, through the reference to Descartes, a critique of how metaphysics rely on, without putting it into question, a 'magic' language) leads Nietzsche to question not only language itself, but, as in most of the first section of *Beyond Good and Evil*, the 'will to truth' and why truth should be privileged over untruth.

Even though Nietzsche's views on language do not evolve much, there are three notable differences between *On Truth and Lie* and *Beyond Good and Evil*. First, Nietzsche abandons the use of the term 'metaphor' after 1875 and, in the *Beyond Good and Evil* quotation, he only talks about words as 'acoustic signs for concepts' without there being any mention of metaphor at all. According to Sarah Kofman, this suggests a shift in vocabulary: 'If Nietzsche substitutes 'perspective' for 'metaphor,' then, it is because the meaning which is posited and transposed in things is no longer referred to an essence

of the world, a proper.'¹⁶⁸ The notion of metaphor retains a metaphysical dimension in the sense that metaphorical meaning is usually thought to be related to and distinct from the literal or proper meaning. The idea that there is such a thing as a proper meaning is a remnant metaphysics. Moreover, the visual dimension of 'perspective' works well with the idea that metaphor suggests a change in ways of seeing.

Second, Nietzsche puts the emphasis on the failure of language to account for inner experiences: 'we must also use the same words for the same category of inner experiences; ultimately, we must have the same experience in *common*.' We have already seen the negative evaluation in Nietzsche's use of the term 'common' and language would therefore fail to account for inner experiences. Language can therefore be an obstacle to describing and to knowing things, especially drives, as Nietzsche argues in *Daybreak*:

Language and the prejudices upon which language is based are a manifold hindrance to us when we want to explain inner processes and drives: because of the fact, for example, that words really exist only for *superlative* degrees of these processes and drives; and where words are lacking, we are accustomed to abandon exact observation because exact thinking there becomes painful; indeed, in earlier times one involuntarily concluded that where the realm of words ceased the realm of existence ceased also.¹⁶⁹ (D 115 / KSA 3.107)

As language is conventional, it contains many prejudices: the main one is the belief in such things as 'eternal' or 'absolute' truths. On the contrary, Nietzsche claims that truth is a cultural convention and is therefore relative. These prejudices prevent us from understanding our inner processes and drives because, as Nietzsche argues later in this paragraph from *Daybreak*, our language cannot account for the subtle differences in degrees but only renders the extremes. In other words, language operates a shift from a range of nuances (individual metaphors) to poles (definite concepts). The main

¹⁶⁸ Kofman (1993), p. 82

¹⁶⁹ See also WS 5 / KSA 2.577 and NF-1886, 5[22] / KSA 12.193. The idea that the 'realm of existence' depends on the 'realm of words' could be put in relation to Wittgenstein's famous sentence: '*The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.*' (T 5.6)

problem is that language conditions existence and that language therefore restricts the possibilities of relating to the world, and especially the 'inner world' of sensations and drives. Things exist if and only if they can be described in language and, Nietzsche argues, we stop thinking about things which we cannot put into words. This problem comes from human beings who live with their habits, who do not attempt to think things through, and who do not attempt to push language further. Interestingly, Nietzsche argues that it is not relativism which leads to the impossibility of knowledge, but precisely a conception of concepts as definite and absolute. Metaphysical language for Nietzsche is a falsification of the world insofar as it reduces it to simpler categories. This reduction prevents us from acquiring knowledge of the world, or only allows a limited knowledge of it.

Third, more important that the metaphorical nature of language is that human beings must fix these original metaphors in order to create a common language. This is according to Nietzsche the basis of community, the agreement on the words we use to describe things. But if convention transforms metaphors into words and concepts, a whole system of values is embedded in language. Using Wittgenstein's words, a form of life is embedded in language: "So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?" —It is what human beings say that is true and false; and they agree in the language they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life.' (PI 241) If language is conventional, the notion of agreement is central and at the basis of Wittgenstein's form of life or Nietzsche's community. Through their agreement—and for their agreement to make sense—words and concepts must be stable. Without this stability, if there were only metaphors, we would fall into a form of radical relativism: words could mean anything. We will explore this issue of relativism later in the chapter but let us note for now that the equating of unequal things, as

John Richardson argues, occurs both in representational and expressive languages.¹⁷⁰

According to Nietzsche, we should therefore try to escape the seduction of language and his invective to free ourselves from metaphysical conceptions embedded in language can remind us of Wittgenstein's aim to 'bring back words from their metaphysical use to their ordinary.' (PI 116) But this is not the only connection to Wittgenstein. They both undertake a task of clarifying language: Nietzsche by revealing the metaphysical and axiological prejudices embedded in language and Wittgenstein, in the *Tractatus* at least, by showing the meaninglessness of metaphysical propositions. We have seen in the last chapter that their tasks revolve around what Lichtenberg says in one of his aphorisms: 'Our whole philosophy is rectification of colloquial linguistic usage, thus rectification of a philosophy, and indeed of the most universal and general.'¹⁷¹ More than the 'colloquial use of language,' Nietzsche and Wittgenstein try to rectify the colloquial conception of language, namely that of language as representation. The later Wittgenstein does indeed consider ordinary language as being fine as it is, without willing to change it. What can be changed is the way we relate to such a language; we can try and free ourselves from the trap of metaphysical language.

3. Wittgenstein and the Traps of Language

Wittgenstein shares Nietzsche's concern with metaphysical uses of language and this is a concern which is central both to early and later works, although the answer changes. In the *Tractatus* he aims to limit language to non-metaphysical statements, ending with the famous proposition: 'Whereof we

¹⁷⁰ Richardson (2015), p. 223: 'On the one hand, language falsifies by equating with one another its referents, what it is about. Here there is a mismatch between words and things and a failure in words' referential use. On the other hand, language also falsifies what we mean to say or express, our thoughts or feelings; once again it does so by an illegitimate equating of (for instance) these feelings with one another. Here there is a mismatch between words and our own attitudes, and a failure in words' expressive use. (Of course, these two uses can run into one another: often one expresses a feeling by naming it.)'

¹⁷¹ Lichtenberg (1990), p. 122.

cannot speak we must pass over in silence.’ (T, 7) Metaphysical statements are meaningless and one should therefore not talk about them:

The correct method in philosophy would really be the following: to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. propositions of natural science—i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy—and then, whenever someone else wanted to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had failed to give a meaning to certain signs in his propositions. Although it would not be satisfying to the other person—he would not have the feeling that we were teaching him philosophy—*this* method would be the only strictly correct one. (T 6.53)

If we were to follow Wittgenstein on that path, there would not be much left to say in philosophy. And he even acknowledges that the propositions of the *Tractatus* should be abandoned as meaningless. We should however not take him too literally: in a letter to Ficker, he says that the important part of the *Tractatus* is the one which is not written and, in another letter, he describes this work as literary. The only meaningful propositions are those of natural science and Wittgenstein argues that philosophy has nothing to do with them. Philosophy should only be concerned with showing the meaninglessness of metaphysical propositions. As we have seen in Chapter One, this kind of critique of metaphysics was influential on Carnap and the logical positivists.

In Wittgenstein’s later works, the critique of metaphysics shifts because his conception of language has a radically different scope from that of the *Tractatus*. Whereas the *Tractatus* focuses on ‘ideal’ language, and thereby remains within the framework of representational language, the later works focus on the ‘ordinary’ one. The critique remains, metaphysical language must be avoided, but, rather than being kept silent, metaphysical statements should be brought back to their ordinary use. Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* remains trapped into the metaphysics of language and its critique of metaphysics therefore fails. In that sense, the later Wittgenstein is much closer to Nietzsche’s views:

When philosophers use a word—‘knowledge,’ ‘being,’ ‘object,’ ‘I,’ ‘proposition/sentence,’ ‘name’—and try to grasp the *essence* of the thing, one must always ask oneself: is the word ever actually used in this way in the language in which it is at home? –

What *we* do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use. (PI 116)

The problem with philosophers’ use of language is that they believe words to refer to metaphysical entities. For instance, when they use the word ‘being,’ they do not use it in its ordinary way, which causes no problem, but in a metaphysical one, as if by using the word ‘being’ they were getting to the essence of the thing. Wittgenstein’s point is not to reduce language to something simpler—that is what he has done in the *Tractatus*, reducing language to logic and placing boundaries to what can be said—but to avoid making it anything more than it is. Metaphysical uses of language push words out of their ordinary use and take them as directly linked to some kind of essence.

The critique of metaphysics in PI 116 follows two remarks which criticise the *Tractatus* and its conception of language:

Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus (4.5): ‘The general form of propositions is: This is how things are.’ — That is the kind of proposition one repeats to oneself countless times. One thinks that one is tracing nature over and over again, and one is merely tracing round the frame through which we look at it. (PI 114)

A *picture* held us captive. And we couldn’t get outside it, for it lay in our language, and language seemed only to repeat it to us inexorably. (PI 115)

As already seen in Chapter Two, the general form of propositions from the *Tractatus* is a misleading metaphysical statement: one believes to be talking about the nature of things when one is only building a perspective on it. This metaphysical picture—language gives us a direct relation to the nature of things—is what leads us to many philosophical confusions. This is also why Wittgenstein criticises Augustine’s picture of language in the opening sections of the *Philosophical Investigations*: ‘These words, it seems to me, give us a particular picture of the essence of human language. It is this: the words

in language name objects—sentences are combinations of such names.’ (PI 1) Augustine’s picture of language and the one Wittgenstein elaborates in the *Tractatus* are similar in the sense that they trap us into a metaphysical conception of language. This picture of language belongs to our language and that is why it is so difficult to get away from it. Wittgenstein’s aim to bring the word back from their metaphysical use to their ordinary use is an attempt at getting out of this trap. In his later works, his aim is therefore not to elaborate an ideal language, but to describe the ordinary one: ‘The task of philosophy is not to create an ideal language, but to clarify the use of existing language.’ (PG 72)

His criticism of Augustine’s theory in the opening sections of the *Philosophical Investigations* does however not reject the idea that language can be used to communicate about the world, but rather that this is only one use among many others. According to Wittgenstein, Augustine describes ‘a system of communication; only not everything that we call language is this system.’ (PI 3) For instance, poetry does not qualify as a communicative use of language: ‘Do not forget that a poem, even though it is composed in the language of information, is not used in the language-game of giving information.’ (Z 160) The Augustinian picture of language is thus not completely wrong but it is mainly incomplete and does not represent all the aspects of language.

Although a representational language as the one Augustine describes is useful as a system of communication and thus necessary to our everyday life, it does not encompass the whole spectrum of how one can use language. Nietzsche has a similar idea when he says that words and concepts are what unite a community: ‘Using the same words is not enough to ensure mutual understanding; we must also use the same words for the same category of inner experiences; ultimately, we must have the same experiences in *common*.’ (BGE 268 / KSA 5.221) Representational language is one way to unite a community, but is a limited means, and Nietzsche’s emphasis on *common* indicates also the negative aspect of it. For Nietzsche, although

community is necessary, it entails a reduction of our inner experiences to 'common' experiences. Whereas our inner experiences seem specific and unique, language as representation makes these experiences similar and common. Language as representation fixes words and concepts which ultimately limit our experiences.

In contrast to the fixed concept of language as representation, Wittgenstein develops the idea of 'language-games' to acknowledge the multiplicity of practices:

We can also think of the whole process of using words in (2) as one of those games by means of which children learn their native language. I will call these games '*language-games*' and will sometimes speak of a primitive language as a language-game.

And the processes of naming the stones and of repeating words after someone might also be called language-games. Think of certain uses that are made of words in games like ring-a-ring-a-roses.

I shall also call the whole, consisting of language and the activities into which it is woven, a 'language-game.' (PI 7)

The Augustinian picture of language in which words name things and the meaning of a word is its reference is therefore only one language-game among many others. It is not an adequate description of our whole language because there is no such thing as *the* language. On the contrary, the notion of language-games brings into focus the fact that there are various linguistic practices: each language-game brings light on one or another aspect of language, on one or another practice. Interestingly, a primitive form of representational language reveals that the meaning of a word is not its reference (at least not in all language-games) but is its use within the game: 'So, one could say: an ostensive definition explains the use—the meaning—of a word if the role the word is supposed to play in the language is already clear.' (PI 30) The meaning of a word is its use in a language-games and an ostensive definition can explain the meaning of a word only if the use of the word is already known. In other words, an ostensive definition does not

work as a primitive explanation as it presupposes that one already knows how a word can be used.

Augustine's description of the child's learning of language through ostensive definitions does therefore not correspond to the learning of a first language but, Wittgenstein argues, that of a second language on which the child can project the rules she already knows from her first language:

Augustine describes the learning of human language as if the child came into a foreign country and did not understand the language of the country; that is, as if he already had a language, only not this one. (PI 32)

The shift from meaning as reference to meaning as use brings to the fore the idea of practice: 'The use of a word *in practice* is its meaning.' (BB, p. 69) This focus on practice opens the possibility of a variety of practices in which words have different uses such as a scientific practice or a poetic one. This shows that language depends on practices and is therefore ever-changing; language is not something abstract, eternal, and never-changing. The picture that held Wittgenstein captive is the conception of language as abstract and ideal, as a divine creation. To follow Saussure's distinction between *langue* and *parole*, the early Wittgenstein was held captive by the idea of a metaphysical *langue* cut off from its grounds of emergence—a society and a culture—whereas the later Wittgenstein shifts his focus to *parole*, speech in context, with all the possible variations this includes. Wittgenstein's critique of language is therefore a critique of our belief in (or our being held captive by) the metaphysical conception of language as the only and absolute conception.

The main problem Wittgenstein sees in the metaphysical use of language is its pretension to generalisation, its 'craving for generality.' Inasmuch as Nietzsche criticises the 'equating of unequal things' through the use of concepts, Wittgenstein sees in concepts a tendency towards generalisation which causes philosophical error and confusion: 'This craving for generality is the resultant of a number of tendencies connected with particular

confusion.’ (BB, p. 17) Importantly, one of these tendencies is ‘our preoccupation with the method of science’ and the reduction necessary for it to operate. ‘This tendency is the real source of metaphysics and leads the philosopher into complete darkness.’ (BB, p. 18) Like Nietzsche and his critique of scientism, Wittgenstein does not follow science blindly. The task of philosophy is not to follow the ‘method of science’ and reduce language to what it is not, what Wittgenstein had done in the *Tractatus*: ‘it can never be our job to reduce anything to anything, or to explain anything. Philosophy really is “purely descriptive.”’ (BB, p. 18) In the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein pursues this thought: ‘Philosophy must not interfere in any way with the actual use of language, so it can in the end only describe it. For it cannot justify it either. It leaves everything as it is.’ (PI 124) The task of philosophy is not to modify language (or invent a new, better, one), but to look at, describe, and understand ordinary language (and through language, our relation to and conception of the world).

Wittgenstein’s critique of the philosophical craving for generalisation is a critique of metaphysics on the grounds of one of its key presuppositions, namely the existence of definite concepts. As Michael Forster argues, this goes against the presuppositions of Plato’s metaphysics and many of his followers: ‘One fundamental point which he is concerned to establish with his demonstration of the family resemblance character of many concepts is that a certain theory about the nature of all general concepts that was first propounded by Plato, and then taken over by Aristotle, and by many philosophers since even down to the present day, is mistaken.’¹⁷² Nietzsche too was concerned with Plato: he criticises him as the first event in the history of metaphysics in *Twilight of the Idols* and he even states in an early note that ‘My philosophy is an inverted Platonism: the further something is from true being, the purer, the more beautiful, the better it is. Living in illusion as the goal.’ (NF 1870-1871, 7[156] / KSA 7.199) Even though Nietzsche’s inversion

¹⁷² Forster (2010), p 71.

of Platonism is to be understood in the perspective of his critique of the metaphysical dualism between true and apparent worlds, Nietzsche's and Wittgenstein's critiques are not unrelated. Plato's metaphysics (and the dualism it entails) relies on a metaphysical conception of language. By criticizing Plato's conception of the nature of concepts underlying the whole tradition of metaphysics, Wittgenstein works in the same direction as Nietzsche because the metaphysical dualisms cannot stand without concepts having a definite nature.

Whereas Nietzsche does not really attempt to give a positive account of how we could work with metaphors instead of concepts (and therefore how – and whether – a language based only on metaphors could be acceptable), Wittgenstein overcomes the critique of generalisation in philosophy to produce a new understanding of concepts. To do so, he comes up with the notion of 'affinities' and 'similarities.'

Here we come up against the great question that lies behind all these considerations. – For someone might object against me: "You make things easy for yourself! You talk about all sorts of language-games, but have nowhere said what is essential to a language-game, and so to language: what is common to all these activities, and makes them into language or parts of language. So you let yourself off the very part of the investigation that once gave you the most headache, the part about the *general form of the proposition* and of language.

And this is true. – Instead of pointing out something common to all that we call language, I'm saying that these phenomena have no one thing in common in virtue of which we use the same word for all – but there are many different kinds of *affinity* between them. And on account of this affinity, or these affinities, we call them all 'languages.' I'll try to explain this. (PI 65)

In the previous paragraphs, Wittgenstein gives different examples of language-games in order to argue in favour of his conception of 'meaning as use,' showing different uses in various linguistic practices. The 'great question' to which he is now confronted is how to unite these various language-games under the name 'language.' He does not want to elaborate a concept of 'language' with sharp and closed boundaries for it would lead

him back to a metaphysical use of the word 'language' and therefore to lose the multiplicity he just described. We have seen that ultimately, there is no such thing as *the* language but only a multiplicity of practices. However, these multiple practices or language-games share some things in common. To reconcile the different language-games, Wittgenstein comes up with the notion of affinities.

There is no 'one thing in common' between different language-games but various affinities and Wittgenstein takes the example of 'games' to illustrate this: 'For if you look at [games], you won't see something that is common to *all*, but similarities, affinities, and a whole series of them at that. To repeat: don't think, but look!' (PI 66) When you look at different games—and Wittgenstein insists on *looking at* rather than thinking about, the point is to observe and describe—you cannot find a single element common to all games but you can find a 'whole series of similarities and affinities.' Rather than thinking about a common essence to classify games under the label 'games,' Wittgenstein looks at similarities and affinities between what is usually called 'games.' This means that the cluster of things united under the label 'games' is not closed and can be expanded but, correlatively, it cannot be given sharp boundaries: 'And the upshot of these considerations is: we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: similarities in the large and in the small.' (PI 66) Wittgenstein collects these similarities as 'family resemblances:'

I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than "family resemblances"; for the various resemblances between members of a family—build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, and so on and so forth—overlap and criss-cross in the same way.—And I shall say: 'games' form a family. (PI 67)

The similarities between games (and between language-games) are comparable to similarities between members of a family. Rather than focussing on essential or ontological features, Wittgenstein focuses on the idea of resemblance.

This notion of resemblance brings to the fore the idea of seeing: open concepts such as 'game' require seeing a similarity among members of a family. I will develop this notion of seeing in further chapters, but it brings to the fore the fact that Wittgenstein attempts to avoid metaphysical errors by focusing on the description of what happens in language, rather than thinking and theorising. Rather than establishing and defining a concept, Wittgenstein shows the network of affinities and similarities in a family. Against the rigidity of the metaphysical notions of category and concept, Wittgenstein develops the notion of family resemblance which can render the ever-changing and evolving character of language.

Quite surprisingly, and even though Nietzsche does not theorise this notion of concepts as family resemblance, he uses this exact term in *Beyond Good and Evil*:

That individual philosophical concepts are not something isolated, something unto themselves, but rather grow up in reference and relatedness to one another; that however suddenly and arbitrarily they seem to emerge in the history of thought, they are as much a part of one system as the branches of fauna on one continent: this is revealed not least by the way the most disparate philosophers invariably fill out one particular schema of *possible* philosophies. [...] This easily explains the strange family resemblance (*Familien-Ähnlichkeit*) of all Indian, Greek, and German philosophizing. Wherever linguistic affinity, above all, is present, everything necessary for an analogous development and sequence of philosophical systems will inevitably be on hand from the beginning, thanks to the shared philosophy of grammar (I mean thanks to being unconsciously ruled and guided by similar grammatical functions), just as the way to certain other possibilities for interpreting the world will seem to be blocked. Philosophers from the Ural-Altai linguistic zone (where the concept of the subject is less developed) will most probably look differently 'into the world' and will be found on other paths than Indo-Germans or Muslims: and in the last analysis, the spell of certain grammatical functions is the spell of *physiological* value judgements and conditions of race. This by way of rejection of Locke's superficiality concerning the origins of ideas. (BGE 20 / KSA 5.34-5)

This paragraph contains quite a few themes and ideas that we find in Wittgenstein's later works. Nietzsche considers that philosophical concepts

share a resemblance and that the family resemblance of various types of philosophising show they share something in common. Philosophy is, according to Nietzsche, a family resemblance concept because it is strongly tied to a language: philosophies in the same language will share affinities. Philosophy is however not the only domain developed in language, we have seen that science, religion, or morality, are all dependent on language. Nietzsche does not specify whether other concepts are family resemblance concepts as well, but we are strongly inclined to believe that concepts such as science, religion, and morality are. We could read the transformation process from metaphor to concept as putting together things that have a family resemblance with each other. However, Nietzsche does not develop his thoughts further on that matter and 'family resemblance' only appears this one time in all of his works. This however suggests that Nietzsche considers concepts to be relative to a language or culture, in a way similar to Wittgenstein's 'form of life.' Concepts belong to a particular language and form a system, a culture, a worldview. Moreover, the way things are seen depends on the concepts or words one has at one's disposal. In that sense, Nietzsche's remarks concerning the development of the concept of subject in the Ural-Altai linguistic zone leads to some kind of relativism close to that of Sapir-Whorf: the worldview depends on the concepts one has. In a perspectival vocabulary, the world depends on the optics through which it is seen and Wittgenstein's notion of 'form of life' could be interpreted as playing a similar role: the 'form of life' or culture we live in affects the way we see the world. Nietzsche and Wittgenstein do share the critique of definite concepts (and Nietzsche in a way more radical than Wittgenstein) but they do not offer the same solution. Nietzsche rejects rigid concepts and tries to go back to metaphor, to the uniqueness of each experience (even though he acknowledges the necessity of fixation in language for community to exist) whereas Wittgenstein develops the notion of family resemblance concepts in order to group similar things under one category while allowing some adjusting in their use.

Despite the advantages of family resemblance concepts, especially to give an account of ever-changing domains such as art or poetry as we will see in the next chapters, the loss of rigidity entails the loss of boundaries and with them the risk of relativism. What are the limits of a family resemblance concept? Wittgenstein argues that boundaries are not necessarily closed and that closed boundaries are not necessary to define or explain a word. But if there are no boundaries to a concept, it could encompass anything and be unregulated: there lies the risk of an 'anything goes' relativism. Wittgenstein considers this objection in PI 68: "But then the use of the word is unregulated—the 'game' we play with it is unregulated." — It is not everywhere bounded by rules; but no more are there any rules for how high one may throw the ball in tennis, or how hard, yet tennis is a game for all that, and has rules too.' (PI 68) Although I will explore this risk of relativism in the next section, let us already give an element of Wittgenstein's answer: the rules of a game do not operate on all of its aspects. There are no fixed boundaries and there are no rigid rules for each and every aspect of the game. There are some rules which shape the framework for the game and there is some space for adjusting.

We could call this space for adjusting a space for interpretation and Wittgenstein elaborates on this idea by comparing rules to signposts in PI 85. One of the specificities of signposts is that they sometimes need to be interpreted, just like rules. Moreover, signposts only give information concerning one or another aspect: direction, state of the road, type of road, and so on, but not on every aspect. There is always an interpretative process going on with family resemblance concepts because the classifying of this or that thing under the concept depends on the interpretation of the thing. Whereas definite concepts are somehow dogmatic, deciding what belongs to and what does not, family resemblance concepts call for interpretation, and interpretation can vary according to the interpreter or time. As we will see, to bring the notion of interpretation to the fore does not necessarily lead to

an 'anything goes' relativism because there are rules for interpretation to make sense.

4. From Logic to Relativism

We have seen that Nietzsche and Wittgenstein share the suspicion that the traditional conception of language is metaphysical and should therefore be avoided. Although their concerns are quite close, Nietzsche and Wittgenstein disagree on many aspects of the criticism of metaphysical language, and one important aspect is their relation to logic. If, for Wittgenstein, logic is a tool to reveal the meaninglessness of metaphysical propositions and therefore a tool to overcome metaphysics as Carnap elaborates it, for Nietzsche it is quite the contrary. We will however see that Wittgenstein's focus on agreements also modifies the scope of logic.

In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche acknowledges, like Wittgenstein, that we are held captive by language but suggests that one of the reasons for that is our entrapment within the bounds of rationality:

Language began at a time when psychology was in its most rudimentary form: we enter into a crudely fetishistic mindset when we call into consciousness the basic presuppositions of the metaphysics of language—in the vernacular: the presuppositions of reason. It sees doers and deeds all over: it believes that will has causal efficacy: it believes in the 'I,' in the I as being, in the I as substance, and it projects this belief in the I-substance onto all things—this is how it creates the concept of 'thing' in the first place... (TI 'Reason' 5 / KSA 6.77)

One of the reasons we are trapped into the metaphysics of language is rationality. Reason leads us to project our belief onto things because things must have an explanation. But if we follow the later Wittgenstein, philosophy can only describe (and thereby reveal), not explain. This belief in the 'I' as substance is precisely what Wittgenstein criticises in metaphysical uses of language: because philosophers aim at the essence of the 'I,' they move away from the ordinary understanding of it, from the practices in which it is embedded. For Nietzsche, the problem is that by doing so, the

philosopher eradicates the whole psychology and physiology at play in the human subject, in other words the whole context in which the word occurs, basically that my 'I' is not identical to Descartes's 'I' or Wittgenstein's 'I;' and perhaps even, following Heraclitus's saying that 'No man ever steps in the same river twice,' that my 'I' is never self-same, that as Arthur Rimbaud says 'Je est un autre.' The metaphysician's 'I' is an inanimate, abstract, and general one, whereas in language the 'I' is always particular.

Metaphysics focuses on substances and general ideas because it isolates things and opposes them: 'The metaphysicians' fundamental belief is *the belief in the opposition of values.*' (BGE 2 / KSA 5.16) The important term here is 'belief.' Metaphysical language is based on beliefs (and even reason itself is based on beliefs) and that is one of the reasons Nietzsche turns to psychology as 'the queen of the sciences.' (BGE 23 / KSA 5.39) This term of belief leads Nietzsche to compare metaphysics and language to religion: "Reason" in language: oh, what a deceptive old woman this is! I am afraid that we have not got rid of God because we still have faith in grammar... (TI 'Reason' 5 / KSA 6.78) The beliefs on which metaphysical language relies are the same as those on which religion and morality rely that Nietzsche criticises at various points in his works. This relation of language to culture is what Wittgenstein expresses through his notion of 'forms of life.' When he says that 'to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life' (PI 19), we could see it in the Nietzschean sense of imagining a range of valuation. Hence Nietzsche's attempt at a revaluation of all values calls for a revaluation of language: there can be no revolution in values without revolution in language.

With this critique of language and of the prejudices embedded in it, Nietzsche adopts a position close to Wittgenstein and other proponents of the 'linguistic analysis.' Richard Schacht, following Arthur Danto, even considers Nietzsche as both a precursor and critic of 'analytic philosophy'

understood as linguistic analysis.¹⁷³ Indeed, they consider that philosophers must free themselves from the charms of language to avoid metaphysical errors. However, and quite importantly, Nietzsche denies that logic has the power to solve the problems of metaphysical knowledge. On the contrary, logic is as problematic as language because it is based on the same belief in 'absolute truth.' Whereas the early Wittgenstein and 'linguistic analysis' use logic as an ideal language to solve the problems embedded in natural language, Nietzsche does not believe that logic can be helpful and does not elaborate, unlike Heidegger, a notion of logic which suits his needs. He does not go as far as to consider with the later Wittgenstein that ordinary language is all right, and this is certainly a point where Nietzsche and Wittgenstein strongly differ. A schematic way of seeing this opposition would be to consider Nietzsche as aiming towards creating through language whereas Wittgenstein only aims at describing this language, but this is oversimplified as we will see in Chapter Five. Nietzsche however considers that language can be of use because of its ability to express the world through metaphors and therefore to overcome the limitations of metaphysical language.

As logic is based on the same principles as metaphysical or 'magic' language, Nietzsche takes it as an object of criticism. Although propositional logic might be (as the belief in truth and language) a condition for life, it is also the basis for the formation of concepts and metaphysical forms:

Logic is merely slavery in the bonds of language. But language contains an illogical element, such as metaphor etc. The initial force causes unequal things to be equated and is thus an effect of the imagination. This is the foundation of concepts, forms, etc. (NF-1873, 29[8] / KSA 7.625)

If we relate this to *On Truth and Lie*, logic is the force which fixes metaphors. Nietzsche can compare logic to slavery because he sees logic as enslaving and 'equating unequal things' (*Gleichsetzen des Ungleichen*). Language itself possesses an illogical dimension which is represented by metaphor. This

¹⁷³ Schacht (1974), p. 154.

illogical dimension is that presented by poetry and literature for instance as they do not rely on the rules of logic. The value of logical truth must therefore also be put into question. Logical truth is only one kind of truth among others, and according to Nietzsche not the most prominent or important one. Nietzsche criticises logic on the same grounds he criticises concepts. His focus on metaphor and interpretation entails a revaluation of the conception of knowledge. Such a conception of knowledge has famously been construed as Nietzsche's perspectivism which Danto summarises in saying 'there are no facts but only interpretations.'¹⁷⁴ Many commentators consider perspectivism as problematic and Clark for instance considers that 'Although perspectivism denies metaphysical truth, it is perfectly compatible with the minimal correspondence account of truth and therefore with granting that many human beliefs are true.'¹⁷⁵ Clark's answer aims at saving Nietzsche from relativism but requires a fine distinction between two theories of truth. As I will argue in the next chapter, the main problem of Clark's account, and the main reason commentators consider perspectivism as problematic, is that she considers perspectivism as a doctrine whereas Nietzsche's texts always attempt to avoid such theorising. Moreover, perspectivism is not necessarily linked to relativism. As Babette Babich argues, relativism is always tied to an ideal (or an absolute) the relativist claims we cannot reach, whereas Nietzsche's perspectivism is tied to no absolute at all.¹⁷⁶ This however does not resolve the problem of self-contradiction which, as I will argue in the next chapter, can be avoided by relating perspectivism to poetry. Let us note already that Nietzsche does not deny truth itself, but questions the value of truth and the preference for truth over untruth as he argues in the first paragraph of *Beyond Good and Evil*: 'Given that we want truth: *why do we not prefer untruth?* And uncertainty?

¹⁷⁴ Danto (2005), p. 59.

¹⁷⁵ Clark (1990), p. 135.

¹⁷⁶ Babich (1994), p. 48.

Even ignorance? The problem of the value of truth appeared before us — or did we before it?' (BGE 1 / KSA 5.15)

Although I will develop my reading of perspectivism in relation to poetry in the next chapter, I will already mention Nietzsche's answer to this problem in *Beyond Good and Evil* as it is related both to interpretation and values.

And given that he too is just interpreting — and you'll be eager to raise that objection, won't you? — then, all the better. (BGE 22 / KSA 5.37)

Much has been said about this 'all the better.' It seems as if Nietzsche tosses the objection away, as if it were insignificant. But this is not the case as he would not be pointing out this objection were it insignificant. By pointing it out he avoids self-contradiction. And moreover, that everything is interpretation does not mean that all interpretations are equal and interchangeable. As Babich says: 'If Nietzsche claims that there is no "correct" interpretation, he does not assert that there are no faulty or false interpretations. Just the opposite.'¹⁷⁷ This 'all the better' also and above all reveals something of Nietzsche's style. This sentence ends the paragraph and except for this last part, it is constructed in a rather argumentative way. The shift occurs at the first dash where another voice comes into play and gives a dialogical dimension to the sentence. This shift reveals the performative character of Nietzsche's text. The question after the first dash comes to perform the supposition made before the dash. Once entered in this performative mode, there is no need for argumentation anymore; the text and the argument evolve on another rhetorical level. Nietzsche acknowledges that his view is an interpretation among many others. As there are different values given to different interpretations, this is not a problem for him: perspectivism is the interpretation he finds the most valuable because it is not a nihilist one, it promotes life and multiplicity rather than denying it.

¹⁷⁷ Babich (1994), p. 41.

Nietzsche's critiques of language and truth occur within his project of revaluation of all values. Nietzsche does not criticise language or truth in themselves (for it would rely on a metaphysical understanding of them and such a criticism would be impossible from within language), but criticises the value we attribute to them. His critiques of language and truth are to be understood within the larger framework of his critique of culture (and we have seen that his critique of culture and his critique of metaphysics are intimately related). A revaluation of all values means a revaluation of the foundations of our culture. As long as the philosopher (or anyone else) does not put into question her belief in or valuation of language and truth, she remains trapped in the metaphysical nets of language, to take an image from one of Nietzsche's early notes: 'The philosopher caught in the nets of *language*.' (NF-1872-1873, 19[135] / KSA 7.463)

Wittgenstein also uses this image of language as a trap, for instance in *Culture and Value*: 'Language sets everyone the same traps; it is an immense network of well kept wrong turnings. And hence we see one person after another walking down the same paths and we know in advance the point at which they will branch off, at which they will walk straight on without noticing the turning, etc., etc. So what I should do is erect signposts at all the junctions where there are wrong turnings, to help people past the danger points.' (CV, p. 25) The philosopher should be a guide in the maze of language. The task of the philosopher is therefore not to clarify language in the sense of making it simpler or idealising it, but to indicate where dangers or traps can be found in the actual language. Wittgenstein also compares language to a labyrinth in the *Philosophical Investigations*: 'Language is a labyrinth of paths. You approach from *one* side and you know your way about; you approach the same place from another side and no longer know your way about.' (PI 203) The task of the philosopher then becomes to discover the traps and to show a way to avoid them or, as Wittgenstein says: 'What is your aim in philosophy?—To show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle.' (PI 309) Nietzsche's solution involves the ideas of perspectivism and

interpretation (which brings the perceiving subject to the fore, against Descartes' primacy of the thinking I) whereas Wittgenstein replaces the metaphysical conception of 'language' with a more pragmatic multiplicity of 'language-games' which he grounds in the notion of 'form of life.'

Language is no longer a unique and definite concept but a term which encompasses various language-games. These language-games are practices which require not only players, but also a playing ground. Wittgenstein calls this ground a form of life: 'And to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life.' (PI 19) If we need to imagine a game, we need to imagine the context in which this game can be played. Imagining a language, and this is what Wittgenstein does in his examples by showing one or another practice, cannot be reduced simply to imagining words and relations between them; it must also take into account the context, the players, and their relation to the game. When Wittgenstein imagines the builders' language-game, he does not only imagine the words they use and the things they refer to, but also the builders, their relations to one another, their positions, and so on. In other words, to explain a language-game, Wittgenstein must explain the whole context of the game (who the players are, what the rules are, what the pieces are, and so on).

This context in which language occurs, this form of life, is something cultural which could be interpreted in Nietzschean terms as the value judgments or the map of values with which this game operates. Our language depends on our culture and to imagine a language is to imagine a culture in which this language can make sense:

Imagine a use of language (a culture) in which there was a common name for green and red on the one hand and yellow and blue on the other. Suppose, e.g., that there were two castes, one the patrician caste, wearing red and green garments the other, the plebeian, wearing blue and yellow garments. Both yellow and blue would always be referred to as plebeian colours, green and red as patrician colours. Asked what a red patch and a green patch have in common, a man of our tribe would not hesitate to say they were both patrician.

We could also easily imagine a language (and that means again a culture) in which there existed no common expression for light blue and dark blue, in which the former, say, was called "Cambridge," the latter "Oxford." If you ask a man of this tribe what Cambridge and Oxford have in common, he'd be inclined to say "Nothing." (BB, pp. 134-135)

Our uses of language are dependent on our culture. This means that our view of language and our family resemblance concepts are cultural and cannot pretend to universality. To understand concepts, we must understand the culture that created them. If we cannot understand the culture, we cannot understand its concepts (and vice versa). This notion of culture also involves a historical dimension and Nietzsche often insists on the necessity of taking the historical or genealogical dimension into account. Values vary in space and time and language-games are dependent on these values. This is one way of understanding Wittgenstein's remark: 'If a lion could talk, we wouldn't be able to understand it.' (PPF 327) The lion's concepts, values, and whole culture, its 'form of life,' would be so remote from ours that we would not be able to overcome the distance. The tribe Wittgenstein describes does not see that 'light blue' and 'dark blue' belong to the same family, shades of blue, but consider them as separate and distinct. They cannot see this family resemblance as they do not share our form of life.

Wittgenstein's focus on 'forms of life' brings to the fore the cultural dimension of language and goes against any essentialist understanding of it: language is a social and cultural practice which cannot be abstracted from this socio-cultural ground. In his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, Wittgenstein links once again language-game and culture: 'What belongs to a language game is a whole culture.' (LA 26) The form of life to which a language belongs thus has an important socio-cultural dimension and Peter Hacker argues that this dimension can be found in Wittgenstein's use of the notion:

§19 and §23 were concerned with emphasizing that language is a form of activity integrated in a way of living, §242 shifts focus. It is concerned with emphasizing the fact that the shared language of a

community involves a deep and unquestioned agreement on the rules for the use of expressions of the language and on *what counts* as their correct use. It is obvious enough that in order for language to be used as a means of communication, there must be agreement on what the expressions of language mean.¹⁷⁸

The first dimension brings to the fore the active side of language—language is a practice, an ordinary activity—and the second the notion of agreement which grounds linguistic practice—language is a practice shared among people and these people must agree on basic terms for the language to be functional. Indeed, if the players do not agree on the rules beforehand, they cannot play the game. If language is to be functional, speakers must agree not only on concepts and meanings, but also on values. Some language-games aim at disturbing this ordinary agreement; poetry, for instance, functions precisely by modifying the uses of language (for instance by breaking sentences into lines in versified poems, or by playing with the sound of words and not only their place in the grammatical structure).

This focus on agreement and the blurred borders of concepts however open the door to a form of conceptual relativism. If there are various forms of life and that any language-game is dependent on a form of life, then true and false are values only within one or another of these language-games. Once again, literature and poetry are places where true and false (understood in the context of a correspondence theory of truth) cannot apply. In other words, humans agree on a conceptual system or scheme which they follow. But this does not mean that the agreed conceptual scheme is the only and best possible one. Agreement is key, and I have already quoted this remark:

“So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?” —What is true or false is what human beings *say*; and it is in their *language* that human beings agree. This is agreement not in opinions, but rather in form of life. (PI 241)

Wittgenstein argues that truth and falsity only exist in language, in what humans say. Like Nietzsche, Wittgenstein nuances the notion of truth: to

¹⁷⁸ Hacker (2015), p. 8.

state that a proposition is true depends on the game which is played. To state that a proposition is true therefore reveals less of the proposition (for to attribute the value 'true' depends solely on the game) than of the game itself: it reveals one of the value judgments on which the game is built. A poetic statement such as 'la terre est bleue comme une orange' reveals less of the colour or the shape of the earth than of some idea of what poetry is.

A statement thus reveals the agreements the players have made: 'It is not only agreement in definitions, but also (odd as it may sound) agreement in judgements that is required for communication by means of language. This seems to abolish logic, but does not do so.' (PI 242) Not only must the community of players agree on the use of words in order to communicate, but also agree on judgments. The agreements—and the form of life thereby established—do not only confer meanings to words but also values. Obviously, if there are different language-games based in different forms of life, then logic might lose its primacy as a method of thinking. However, as Paul O'Grady argues, logic is not abolished but the uniqueness of the system of logic is abandoned: 'So rather than focussing on a single system of logic, Wittgenstein begins to explore the possibility that there may be quite different systems of logic.'¹⁷⁹ Just as there might be different systems of logic, there are different language-games and the most common ones reveal the most common values of a community or society. Nietzsche's revaluation of all values is, as we have seen, an attempt to change the nihilistic values on which culture is built: Nietzsche does not question truth itself but the value we agree to give to it over untruth. On the contrary, Wittgenstein does not question this value but describes its relation to our agreements, our form of life, and therefore relativises it: truth is not absolute but a value on which we agree.

The objection to Wittgenstein's pluralist view is that this variety opens the door to relativism—different forms of life might have different agreements

¹⁷⁹ O'Grady (2004), p. 318.

on values—and Wittgenstein’s problem with scepticism is certainly related to this issue. Wittgenstein can always escape this problem and rely on the agreement we share in our form of life. Truth might be dependent on our language, but inasmuch as this language is more or less fixed, as long as we agree on it, truth is not a relative notion. As O’Grady argues: ‘There is a multiplicity possible in the conceptual systems by which we think about reality—but there isn’t relativism about truth, incommensurability, or radical relativism about rationality.’¹⁸⁰ Relativism concerns the conceptual system: different contexts or different cultures are based on various conceptual systems. Within one conceptual system—once it is agreed on we could say—there is no space left for relativism. Moreover, and like with Nietzsche’s perspectivism, this does not mean that all conceptual systems are equal. Some are better suited than others to perform certain tasks. Truth, logic, and reason are not absolute in the sense that they are relative to the conceptual system in which they are used. Within the conceptual system they can be granted an absolute dimension. Wittgenstein’s moderate relativism would thus avoid some of the problems encountered by straightforward readings of Nietzsche’s perspectivism.

In other words, Wittgenstein can be considered a conceptual relativist. His relativism does not concern how language works within practices, but the choice of the preferred language-game and form of life. As Maria Baghramian argues, what is common to all conceptual relativists ‘is the rejection of realism on the one hand and cultural—or “anything goes”—versions of relativism, on the other.’¹⁸¹ The rejection of realism suggests that there is no world we can grasp outside of our conceptual scheme and the rejection of cultural relativism suggests that there is a possibility of sharing worldviews. Wittgenstein escapes the problems of more radical versions of relativism (such as cultural relativism or relativism about rationality) and Nietzsche’s perspectivism can be fruitfully read in a similar way to avoid

¹⁸⁰ O’Grady (2004), pp. 335-336.

¹⁸¹ Baghramian (2004), p. 187.

problems of self-contradiction. We have seen that Nietzsche aims at reevaluating the values we usually attribute to truth and reason for instance, and Wittgenstein's conception of language-games and their related forms of life can be interpreted as suggesting something similar.

Indeed, for Wittgenstein, values exist only within a system of thought as he notes in *On Certainty*: 'Our knowledge forms an enormous system. And only within this system has a particular bit the value we give it.' (OC 410) There is no absolute knowledge and no absolute value because they depend on a conceptual system. As Wittgenstein argues: 'When language-games change, then there is a change in concepts, and with the concepts the meanings of words change.' (OC 65) Each language-game presents a system of thought which highlights some aspects and hides some others. The choice of such or such system of thought depends on what one is looking for, in a pragmatic way. For Nietzsche, for instance, the criterion would be 'enhancing life.' He argues that many perspectives are nihilistic or decadent because they reject life. Wittgenstein does not give a criterion; he only describes the possibility of choice without expressing his choice. The possibility he gives however brings light on the fact that one should not remain enclosed within one perspective, that one should not play only one language-game, but that there is much to be learned from change. Therefore, his method is, as he claims in the *Blue Book*, 'not merely to enumerate actual usages of words, but rather deliberately to invent new ones, some of them because of their absurd appearance.' (BB, p. 28) The invention of a language-game, which, as said before, involves the invention of a form of life, is a way to propose new interpretations and understandings of the world.

A lot of what Wittgenstein tells us about language can be understood through his use of the 'game' metaphor. If language is a game, it needs to be played. But this entails that there are players for it, and ready to play according to the rules. The notion of game Wittgenstein uses to conceptualise language brings to the fore its essentially social and cultural dimensions. A chess game cannot be reduced to chess pieces on a board, the rules and the

relations between the pieces are important too. The scope is however not limited to the board itself, one must also take into account the bigger picture: the players playing the game and the aim they want to achieve, namely winning the game. The whole context in which the game is played reveals the cultural dimension of language. We have seen that, for Nietzsche, language serves to link a community together and we can find the same emphasis on the socio-cultural dimension in Wittgenstein's later works. Everyday communication is one practice among many others. Some practices reinforce values from everyday life whereas others try to bring us to change perspective. Art for instance—and poetry will be my focus in the next chapter because of its direct relation to language—aims precisely at disturbing our ordinary view and at bringing us to shift perspective.

Part Two:
Perspectival Poetics

Chapter Four:

Approaching Poetry After Nietzsche and Wittgenstein

*It's true if you believe it.
The world is the world but it's all how you see it.
Kate Tempest, 'The Truth'*

To take the end of metaphysics seriously raises the suspicion that a conception of language as representation—and its corollary conception of truth as correspondence—cannot account for all that happens in language. Such a conception is a metaphysical or ‘magic’ theory of language which Wittgenstein endorses in the *Tractatus* for instance. We have however seen that Wittgenstein quickly turns his back on such a theory and criticises Augustine’s ostensive conception of language at the beginning of the *Philosophical Investigations*: Augustine’s designative conception of language is only one aspect of language among many others, and Wittgenstein develops the notion of language-games to encompass this diversity in language: each language-game highlighting one or another aspect (or practice) of language.¹⁸² In the second half of the 18th century and in opposition to the representational theory of language, what Charles Taylor calls the ‘HHH view’¹⁸³ comes up with a conception of language as expression in which language discloses rather than represents reality and both Nietzsche and Wittgenstein inherit from this tradition. Using an analogy to the arts, we could say that the representational theory compares language to photography¹⁸⁴—hence Wittgenstein’s *picture* language theory

¹⁸² We have seen in a previous chapter that interpreters from the New Wittgenstein reject a strong distinction between Wittgenstein’s early and later works and consider there is a continuity in the sense that philosophy is seen as a therapeutic activity. As I will argue, what is usually considered as a shift in Wittgenstein’s works can be seen as a broadening of his spectrum. The *Tractatus* thus becomes one part of the larger picture and not the definite theory of language (for there cannot be any definite theory).

¹⁸³ Taylor (1985), p. 273.

¹⁸⁴ This does not mean that photography is limited to plain representation (and photography as art most certainly attempts to escape such a simple representation)

in the *Tractatus*—whereas the expressive theory compares language to music. Indeed, music is the art form *par excellence* in which expression is a key notion and Andrew Bowie argues that the changes in the conceptions of language at the end of the 18th century are closely related to changes in the conceptions of music at that time.¹⁸⁵ If comparison with music often appears in theories of language, this is even more so concerning theories of poetic language, because poetry must be heard as much as it must be read. This tension between sound and word is further explored in the 20th century with two extreme kinds of poetry: sound poetry which abandons words and focuses only on sounds and graphic poetry which follows Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés* in which typography and blanks on the page are necessary for the understanding of the poem.¹⁸⁶ In any case, poetic experiments to exclude the musical dimension of language are opposed to some more traditional conceptions of poetry in which sound is an essential aspect (as in lyric poetry for instance). As Henri Meschonnic argues: 'The major obstacle for thinking poetry remains the common representation of language through sign, with the duality-heterogeneity of its two constitutive elements, sound, and sense.'¹⁸⁷ Representational language focuses on the unit of the word, the sign, and separates sound from sense whereas such a separation is impossible in poetry. Poetry reveals that there is a tension between image and sound in language.

This tension between representation and expression can be conceptualised through Nietzsche's opposition between Apollo and Dionysus in *The Birth of*

and experiments with photographic methods can take quite some distance from representing something. However, photography has this capacity to represent in an ordinary understanding, contrary to music; hence all the people taking pictures rather than writing musical pieces to capture a moment of their lives.

¹⁸⁵ Bowie (2007), p. 48.

¹⁸⁶ Two examples of these opposite moves in poetry at the beginning of the 20th century: Hugo Ball's 'Caravan' which consists only in sounds and Apollinaire's *Caligrammes* in which the words are disposed in such a way that they draw the object.

¹⁸⁷ Meschonnic (2001), p. 31, my translation: 'L'obstacle majeur pour penser la poésie reste bien la représentation commune du langage par le signe, avec la dualité-hétérogénéité de ses deux éléments constitutifs, le son, le sens.'

Tragedy: Apollo would be the god of appearance and image, whereas Dionysus would be the god of expression and music. Nietzsche develops this idea in *Twilight of the Idols* where he considers the two types of intoxication that Apollo and Dionysus represent:

Apollonian intoxication keeps the eye in particular aroused, so that it receives visionary power. The painter, the sculptor, the epic poet are visionaries *par excellence*. In the Dionysian state, on the other hand, the whole system of the emotions is aroused and intensified: so that it discharges its very means of expression at one stroke, at the same time forcing out the power to represent, reproduce, transfigure, transform, every kind of mime and play-acting. (TI 'Skirmishes' 10 / KSA 6.117)

Apollonian art forms therefore rely on the power of vision whereas Dionysian ones force out the idea of imitation by privileging expression. Tragedy for Nietzsche must combine and balance between Apollonian and Dionysian, between representation and expression. For Nietzsche tragedy must not be limited to drama and we will see that poetry is very close to tragedy in Nietzsche's understanding of it. In a similar way, Wittgenstein's distinction and combination of two kinds of understanding (one that can be paraphrased and the other that cannot) in PI 531 opposes once again designation and expression, representation and music. Wittgenstein's attempt at combining these two kinds of understanding work towards achieving the same task: to elaborate a conception of language which can balance between the two poles, which can encompass the various language-games as a family of practices.

As briefly said in Chapter Two, in each of these conceptions of language, a different theory of truth is at work: truth as correspondence against truth as disclosure. The correspondence theory relies on a referential conception of meaning—there cannot be any correspondence if language does not represent (and therefore words denote) the world; the disclosure theory relies on an expressive conception of language—the process of expressing the world reveals something of it. Neither Nietzsche nor Wittgenstein elaborate a theory of truth as disclosure because their aim is not to construct

such a theory but to reveal the failures of existing theories and to bring this to our attention: in Wittgenstein's words, his aim in philosophy is 'to show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle' (PI 309) without forecasting what precisely will come afterwards. Here, Nietzsche's talk about values is central: he does not criticise the correspondence theory as such but our unconditional belief in it and the value we give it: 'The problem of the value of truth appeared before us.' (BGE 1 / KSA 5.15) As long as we believe that the correspondence theory is the only one, we are under the seduction of the metaphysics of language. Moreover, our belief in metaphysics relies on our belief in language as representation: 'I'm afraid we are not rid of God because we still believe in grammar...'. (TI 'Reason' 5 / KSA 6.78) The word 'belief' has its importance: the problem is not with language, metaphysics, or god, but with the values we give them and therefore the place they take in our life and worldview. But why does the representational conception fail? And which problems of the representational conception are solved by shifting to a conception of language as expression?

As already mentioned in previous chapters, one of the main criticisms of representational conceptions of language is their failure to account for poetry, literature, or any creative use of language in which what is represented does not necessarily exist. The long-lasting debates around the nature and truth of metaphor reveal the difficulty such a conception of language has in accounting for 'poetic' phenomena, and I will explore the phenomenon of metaphor in a further chapter. The end of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* reveals one of the problems of the picture language theory: much of the language we use everyday does not correspond to the ideals of language and should therefore be kept silent, following the famous last proposition of the *Tractatus*: 'What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence.' (T 7) If Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* traces the limits of what can be meaningfully said and if the only propositions which satisfy the conditions are those of science: 'say nothing except what can be said, i.e. propositions of natural science' (T 6.53), this excludes poetic uses of language and even

many ordinary uses. But, following Aimé Césaire: 'Poetic knowledge is born in the silence of scientific knowledge.'¹⁸⁸ The existence of poetry demands a conception of language which can account for it and a conception of knowledge which goes with it. One solution is to consider language only as expression, but this conception comes with its own problems: if language only expresses, there are no criteria to fix and stabilise it and such instability opens the door to relativism and to the impossibility of communication: for people to communicate, they must have something in common, and Nietzsche's views on language often insist on this 'common' character of language. We have seen that he argues that language is at the basis of community in *Beyond Good and Evil*.

Relativism is not a problem in itself but it leads, if taken in a radical way, to the impossibility of saying anything that can be intersubjectively shared. Too much certainty with a representational theory excludes many uses from language; too much uncertainty with an expressive theory carries the risks of relativism and of an 'anything goes' conception of language. We have seen that both Nietzsche and Wittgenstein can be considered as conceptual relativists as they consider that our concepts (and thereby language) takes part in elaborating our worldview, as Maria Baghramian argues: 'The world as conceived by us is not one but many, and how each of these worlds is depends on the conceptual apparatus that we bring into play.'¹⁸⁹ Their views of language oscillate between representation and expression, or rather consider that representational language is one practice among many others. We have seen that the Nietzschean notion of perspectivism is helpful in characterising their relativism: all is relative to a perspective or an interpretation, to a way of seeing the world. I will argue that they can both be considered as perspectivists and that their perspectivism is a poetic notion which can be conceptualised at best through their understanding of poetry and poetic language. Two aspects come to the fore in elaborating this

¹⁸⁸ Cook (2004), p. 276.

¹⁸⁹ Baghramian (2004), p. 186

perspectival poetics: first it places aesthetics in its etymological sense of *aesthesis*, of perceiving the world, at the centre of philosophical concerns (aesthetics takes the place of metaphysics) because the whole dualism between true and apparent world is gone; second, it places the task of poetics within this aesthetic framework and it is therefore a way not only of seeing the world but of making it.

In this chapter, I move away from an essentialist definition of poetry to a wider family resemblance concept of poetics (which could therefore be applied to other art forms than poetry) and this occurs in the specific use of language that one finds in poetry. This poetic use of language should however not be considered as distinct from ordinary language but rather as emerging from within the ordinary. These two aspects, ontology and linguistic characteristics, are those which dominate philosophical studies of poetry. These essentialist searches are problematic because poetry seems to defy definition, be it in ontological or linguistic terms. This chapter explores these questions from the perspective of Nietzsche and Wittgenstein, and therefore attempts to escape from the essentialist move. The discussion on the nature of poetry and of poetic language leads to conceptualising the notion of perspectival poetics in the next chapter.

1. What Is Poetry?

In the field of contemporary aesthetics, such a question would lead to considerations about the ontology of poetry and its specific characteristics or properties.¹⁹⁰ Following Nietzsche's and Wittgenstein's critique of

¹⁹⁰ See for instance Anna Christina Soy Ribeiro's definition of a poem as 'an intentional abstract artefact; a *type*, consisting of an *instantiation template*, whose creation is spatio-temporally located via its original token, and thus embedded in either a *declamation-based* or an *inscription-based practice*, which will dictate the kinds of ontological strictures embodied in that original token and required future tokens' Gibson (2015), pp. 130-131. Such a definition does not tell us much about what is really at play in poetry for poetry is an always evolving practice in which the context (historical, social, cultural) plays an essential role. Moreover, and like the theoreticians of reception theory have shown, not only the context of creation is important but also the context of reception, that is the context of the reader.

metaphysics and rejection of concepts as closed categories with well-defined borders, defining poetry (or any other art form) in such a way would prove impossible and vain. My question therefore aims at considering what happens in poetry rather than finding its ontology, why poetry can be considered as a case for rejecting the picture language theory, and ultimately why poetry matters to philosophy.

First, let us return to the distinction between representative and expressive theories of language from the perspective of poetry. This distinction has a rather long history as, according to Nietzsche, it was already at play in the Greeks' conceptions of language:

Here we find sketched out for us the only possible relationship between poetry and music, between word and sound: the word, the image, the concept, seeks an expression analogous to music and now feels the force of music in itself. In this sense we may distinguish two main currents in the history of language of the Greek people, according to whether language imitates the world of phenomena and images or the world of music. (BT 6, KSA 1.49)

The history of language in Ancient Greece is, according to Nietzsche, separated in two trends: one towards images, one towards music. Nietzsche links expressive language to music, and such a comparison can be found quite often in the literature on the subject. This distinction between the world of music and the world of images reflects the Apollonian-Dionysian distinction we have already mentioned. Nietzsche thus distinguishes between a theory of language based on image—language is the representation of the world—and one based on music—language is the expression of the world. As we have seen, Nietzsche criticises the representational conception of language as being too metaphysical. However, he, like Wittgenstein, does not attempt to reject language as representation completely but to focus on the fact that it is not the only way one can consider language and that we must reject the primacy we usually give to language as representation. Nietzsche takes tragedy as the best example for this dual-conception of language because it combines both

representation (through performance and text) and expression (through music and text). Nietzsche considers poetry as having this duality as well, combining images and music in the text. To analyse tragedy and its constitutive duality, Nietzsche takes Apollo as the god of representation and Dionysus as the god of expression. Tragedy comes from the union of Apollo and Dionysus, and these contrary forces must remain in an equilibrium for tragedy to exist.

In Nietzsche's conception of it, tragedy is closely related to poetry. In poetry as well, the words must both represent and express, and Schiller is a good example for a 'musical poet:' 'For [Schiller] admitted that in the preparatory state which precedes the act of writing poetry he did not have before him and within him a series of images and casually organized thoughts, but rather a *musical mood*.' (BT 5 / KSA 1.43) But a poem is not merely a musical mood, it is a succession of words which all have some kind of relation to images. In that sense, poetry cannot be seen as a purely expressive art form (for it would be music) or a purely representational one (for it would be painting). And it might be argued that even music is not only expressive and painting only representational. Moreover, it is possible to look at a poem under the scope of representation or the scope of expression, as Jacques Rancière argues:

There are only two kinds of poetics: a representational poetics which determines the genre and the generic perfection from the invention of their fable; and an expressive poetics which determines them as direct expressions of the poetic power; a normative poetics which says how poems must be made and a historical poetics which says how they are made, i.e., at the end of the day, how they express the state of things, of language, of morals which gave them birth.¹⁹¹

¹⁹¹ Rancière (2010), p. 49, my translation: 'Il n'y a que deux sortes de poétiques : une poétique représentative qui détermine le genre et la perfection générique des poèmes à partir de l'invention de leur fable ; et une poétique expressive qui les détermine comme expressions directes de la puissance poétique ; une poétique normative qui dit comment les poèmes doivent être faits et une poétique historique qui dit comment ils sont faits, c'est-à-dire, en définitive, comment ils expriment l'état des choses , du langage, des mœurs qui leur ont donné naissance.'

A representational poetics would therefore be one searching for the ontology of poetry: how to determine whether this or that poem belongs to the category 'poetry,' whereas an expressive one focuses on the relation between the poem and the world—and as this relation is neither direct nor obvious, it calls for an interpretation which is precisely the task of poetics—and on what the poem reveals of the world. In other words, inasmuch as representational language helps us name things in the world by linking objects and categories, representational poetics tells us how to classify a poem among various genres.

One important question remains however: if poetry has an expressive dimension, what is its relation to truth? We have seen that there can be no truth as correspondence when one abandons language as representation and in *On Truth and Lie*, Nietzsche's critique of truth is a critique of the correspondence theory of truth and the value we give it (i.e. believing it is the only truth, whereas Nietzsche aims to show that truth is also a socio-cultural and moral phenomenon). What truth is left once correspondence is gone? According to Nietzsche, poetry is closer to truth because it avoids the traps of metaphysical language:

The sphere of poetry does not lie outside the world, as the fantastic impossibility imagined by the brain of a poet: it wants to be the very opposite, the unadorned expression of truth, and must therefore cast off the deceitful finery of the supposed reality of the man of culture. (BT 8 / KSA 1.58)

Whereas poetry is often considered as being outside the world, as being an imaginative creation that sprang out of the poet's mind, as something maybe pleasant but never true, Nietzsche turns the relation between poetry and truth upside down and considers poetry as the expression of truth. Nietzsche's reversal of the relation between poetry and truth leads him to consider poetry as being 'the unadorned expression of truth' and representational language as deceitful. Nietzsche's use of the term 'unadorned' might seem strange as poetic language can be seen as primarily ornamental, but this suggests precisely the opposite: for Nietzsche, the

language of poetry is not ornamental but responds to a necessity of expression.

Following Nietzsche's distinction between metaphor and concept in *On Truth and Lie*, we could say that metaphors are 'unadorned expressions' whereas concepts would be deceitful. Moreover, 'For the true poet, metaphor is no rhetorical figure but rather an image which takes the place of something else, which really hovers before him in the place of a concept.' (BT 8 / KSA 1.60) Nietzsche therefore reverses the relation between art and truth: art and its expressive language is less artificial and deceitful than the representational language used by science, for instance. As he argues in *On Truth and Lie*, art and poetry are on the side of myth rather than of science. Ernst Cassirer elaborates on this distinction between scientific and mythic thought by opposing them in their use of language: science focuses on the word as sign and its relations whereas mythic thought takes things as they appear, in the uniqueness of their perception; in other words, there is a mediation in scientific thought which is not at play in mythic thought:

In discursive thought, the particular phenomenon is related to the whole pattern of being and process; with ever-tightening, ever more elaborate bonds it is held to that totality. In mythic conception, however, things are not taken for what they mean indirectly, but for their immediate appearance; they are taken as pure presentations, and embodied in the imagination. [...] For theoretical thinking, a word is essentially a vehicle serving the fundamental aim of such ideation: the establishment of relationships between the given phenomenon and others which are 'like' or otherwise connected with it according to some co-ordinating law.¹⁹²

¹⁹² Cassirer (1953), p. 56. See also pp. 32: 'The aim of theoretical thinking, as we have seen, is primarily to deliver the contents of sensory or intuitive experience from the isolation in which they originally occur. It causes these contents to transcend their narrow limits, combines them with others, compares them, and concatenates them in a definite order, in an all-inclusive context. [...] Mythical thinking, when viewed in its most elementary forms, bears no such stamp; in fact, the character of intellectual unity is directly hostile to its spirit. For in this mode, thought does not dispose freely over the data of intuition, in order to relate and compare them to each other, but is captivated and enthralled by the intuition which suddenly confronts it. It comes to rest in the immediate experience; the sensible present is so great that everything else dwindles before it.'

Cassirer opposes theoretical thinking as a totalising force and mythic thinking as relating to the immediate perception. In Nietzsche's words, theoretical thinking aims at equating the unequal—the task of the concept—whereas myth keeps the uniqueness of metaphor intact. Contrary to Nietzsche, Cassirer does not criticise science on this ground, he only observes, distinguishes, and describes different perspectives without privileging one or another. 'To put it another way,' according to Aimé Césaire on whom Nietzsche's influence is apparent, 'science rejects myth where poetry accepts it. This is not to say that science is superior to poetry. In truth myth is at one and the same time inferior and superior to the law.'¹⁹³ Poetry does not imitate but expresses the world and in that sense it is closer to truth than any conception of 'reality' crafted by the man of culture. 'Reality' is a socio-cultural and metaphysical creation from which we must take a step back; concepts are constructs which generalise and simplify phenomena. There is no such thing as 'reality,' Nietzsche will argue in his later works, and 'reality' cannot be reached according to *The Birth of Tragedy*. Poetry expresses the world and therefore offers a worldview different from that of science, 'A perspective on the world,' says Aimé Césaire, 'Yes. Science offers him a perspective on the world. But of a summary and superficial kind.'¹⁹⁴

Nietzsche searches for a culture which would not restrict itself to this 'summary and superficial' perspective on the world. He finds such a culture which follows an expressive conception of language and truth in the Greek and calls it a tragic culture in which science (as the believer in representational language *par excellence*) is no longer considered as an ideal and is replaced by wisdom:

With this knowledge a culture is introduced which I dare to describe as tragic, a culture whose most important characteristic is that wisdom replaces science as the highest goal, wisdom which, undecieved by the seductive distractions of the sciences, turns a calm

¹⁹³ Cook (2004), p. 284.

¹⁹⁴ Cook (2004), p. 276.

gaze towards the whole image of the world and seeks to grasp as its own the eternal suffering found there with a sympathetic feeling of love. (BT 18 / KSA 1.118)

When talking about poetry, Nietzsche's focus is mainly on the poet. But if the task of the poet is to express the world and reveal something of the world, it would make only little sense if there weren't a reader to understand what the poet says. And the difficulty in understanding often appears as a distinctive feature of poetic works.¹⁹⁵

Shifting our focus from the poet to the reader also shifts our attention from Nietzsche to Wittgenstein. For Wittgenstein too, the musical dimension of poetic language plays an important role: 'The way music speaks. Do not forget that a poem, even though it is composed in the language of information, is not used in the language-game of giving information.' (Z 160) There is a similarity between understanding music and understanding poetry, for they both are a particular language. Understanding a poem cannot occur on the same grounds as understanding information; as we will see, information can be paraphrased, whereas poetry cannot. This does not mean that there is some content or a message in informative uses of language and none in poetic uses, nor that in poetic uses the message is the form, but that this notion of message relies on a metaphysical conception of language in which there is a distinction between form and content. Poetry is the place *par excellence* in which form and content fuse: the form is the content or, in other words, there is no such thing as a message in poetry if by message we understand something separated from its vehicle of transmission. What poetry shows is that message and vehicle, content and form, are one, and

¹⁹⁵ See for instance Jesse Prinz' and Eric Mandelbaum's conception of *poetic opacity* as poetry's defining feature: 'In summary, we think that poetic opacity may be a mark of the poetic. Perhaps there are other marks, but poetic opacity may even prove to be *the* mark of poetry' in Gibson (2015), p. 78. See also Empson (1966) who considers ambiguity as the core element of poetry.

that such an identity is also at work in ordinary language, although to a lesser extent.¹⁹⁶

Even though language sometimes works on the grounds of representation (or rather can be seen from the perspective of representation), this is not always the case. What distinguishes poetry from representational language is not the content or the words, but only the use of these words. To understand the *Zettel* remark, it is important to grasp the distinction between language and language-game. What is a language of information? And what is a language-game of information? We see that the distinction between poetic and ordinary language does not happen at the level of language but at that of language-game, of the use and context. The distinction between poetic and ordinary is not a metaphysical distinction between two categories of language but a distinction in use. Poetic language is not purely expressive just as ordinary language is not purely representational: both representation and expression are at work in language but poetry is one of the fields in which their combination is the most visible. As Henri Meschonnic argues:

Both poetry and ordinary language realise themselves in the non-separation from sound and sense. Because the sign model misses a great part of the empiricism of language. Trivially speaking, and in all the activities of language, it is speech that comes first and not the unit word, which is the place of separation from sound and sense. And the poem only starts when the continuum of a serial semantics is at work in a speech. In a non-separation from affect and concept.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁶ Roman Jakobson considers that the poetic function of language precisely lies in the self-referentiality of the message: 'The set toward the message as such, focus on the message for its own sake, is the poetic function of language.' Jakobson (1960), p. 356. This poetic function of language is not limited to poetry but can be found to various degrees in many uses of language.

¹⁹⁷ Meschonnic (2001), p. 31, my translation: [Poésie et langage courant] se réalisent dans une inséparation du son et du sens. Parce que l'empirique du langage est en grande partie manqué par le modèle du signe. Banalement, et dans toutes les activités du langage, c'est le discours qui est premier et non l'unité mot, qui est le lieu de la séparation entre le son et le sens. Et du poème ne commence que quand le continu d'une sémantique sérielle travaille un discours. Dans une inséparation de l'affect et du concept.

The non-separation from affect and concept brings back the combination of representation and expression in language. A purely representational language can only be achieved in the dictionary, when one focuses on the word rather than the speech. The language of information is not ordinary language: it constitutes the pool of words we ordinarily know and use. The language-game of information, on the contrary, is the ordinary language, the one we use in our everyday activities.

At the level of language-games, meaning does not come from the words and their corresponding dictionary entries but from the way these words are used. A language-game, because it is a socio-cultural practice, always takes place at the level of speech and not of words. The distinction between the ordinary and the poetic language-games is therefore not a matter of words but of speech. As Joachim Schulte argues, the difference between information and poetry does not occur on the grounds of words, of vocabulary, but on those of use:

The terms 'information' and 'communication' are far too comprehensive and too vague to permit any drawing of boundaries around uses for the purpose of information or communication. I think that Wittgenstein merely wants to say that poetry, even though it employs the same building-blocks as ordinary ('prosaic') speech, is subject to different conventions from those regulating the manifold kinds of uses of language which serve to impart information and to communicate facts. And of course Wittgenstein does not want to deny that poetry can be used to communicate all sorts of information. He only reminds us of the fact that if poetry is used *as poetry* it is not (mainly) used to give information; and that if it is chiefly used to convey information it is not really used *as poetry*—it may, for instance, be employed in an, as it were, 'quotational' way.¹⁹⁸

The main task of poetry is not to communicate information; poetic language-games do not principally focus on communicating information. On the contrary, poetry includes dimensions such as the musical which are clearly not informational. Poetry uses the same words as ordinary language but not

¹⁹⁸ Gibson and Huemer (2004), pp. 154-155.

in the same way, not under the same rules. The vocabulary might be the same but the rules are not.

Poetry is thus a good example where meaning is defined by its use, and a very specific use. According to Timothy Binkley: 'The meaning of a poem, far more than the meaning of a factual report, is crucially dependent upon the way in which the poet uses his language, upon how he arranges his words and what he uses them to do in the poem, and upon the way his words are used in other (poetic and non-poetic) context.'¹⁹⁹ Language can be used to give information but it can also be used in other ways. If language is something like a tool, then it has a very practical and straightforward function. But language is not just a tool. And if it is not a tool, then the function of language is much less clear. Poetic language focuses precisely on other functions, as Richard Eldridge argues: 'The special use of language aims at the achievement of seeing, or holistic insight, or getting the sense of things. The relevant seeing, insight, or sense-getting is to be distinguished from simply understanding a message that might be communicated otherwise and from simply grasping that things are observable thus-and-so, independently of the specific invitations and guidances of imagination and attention that successful poetic language embodies.'²⁰⁰

One way of understanding this function of poetic language is to consider language as expressive: to invent a language is a way to express something. It is this expressive function that Wittgenstein brings forward regarding poetry:

But how about this: when I read a poem, or some expressive prose, especially when I read it out loud, surely there is something going on as I read it which doesn't go on when I glance over the sentences only for the sake of their information. I may, for example, read a sentence with more intensity or with less. I take trouble to get the tone exactly right. (RPP1 1059)

¹⁹⁹ Binkley (1973), p. 5.

²⁰⁰ Gibson (2015), p. 232.

Quite interestingly, what happens with expressive language happens ‘especially when I read it out loud.’ The comparison with music comes back to the fore. Expressive language has something to do with sound and tone, unlike the language of information. However, unlike what Frege suggests, sound and tone do not belong to ‘the colouring and shading which poetic eloquence seeks to give to the senses’²⁰¹ but is an essential feature of language. In poetry, words are used in a different way that calls for their sounds as well as their ordinary meanings. A poem creates a specific context in which words can take new meanings.

In the *Philosophical Investigations*, remarks 527 and following, Wittgenstein compares understanding a sentence to understanding a musical theme and opposes musical themes to sentences. Remarks 531 to 533 focus on important elements to conceptualise poetic language:

We speak of understanding a sentence in the sense in which it can be replaced by another which says the same; but also in the sense in which it cannot be replaced by any other. (Any more than one musical theme can be replaced by another.)

In the one case, the thought in the sentence is what is common to different sentences; in the other, something that is expressed only by these words in these positions. (Understanding a poem.) (PI 531)

This remark brings forward an important problem in approaching poetry and poetic meaning: the problem of paraphrase. In *Must We Mean What We Say?*, Stanley Cavell uses Wittgenstein to tackle the problem of paraphrase as inherited from Cleanth Brooks’ view in ‘The Heresy of Paraphrase’ according to which a poem cannot be paraphrased. Cavell takes the example of metaphors which can be paraphrased because they can be understood and explained. In explaining a metaphor (or to a wider extent a poem), I give a paraphrase. ‘In summary: Brooks is wrong to say that poems cannot in principle be fully paraphrased, but right to be worried about the relation between paraphrase and poem.’²⁰² The relation between paraphrase and

²⁰¹ Frege (1997), p. 155.

²⁰² Cavell (1976), p 82.

poem brings up the fact that understanding and explaining poetry is somehow different from understanding and explaining in ordinary language because there is a double understanding going on in metaphors (and poems): 'I must understand the ordinary or dictionary meaning of the words it contains, *and* understand that they are not there being used in their ordinary way, that the meanings they invite are not to be found opposite them in a dictionary.'²⁰³

This corresponds to the two possibilities Wittgenstein sees in understanding a sentence: either a sentence can be explained by another (enabling the possibility of paraphrase), as it seems to be the case in the language-game of information; or it cannot, as it seems to be the case in music. Indeed, a musical phrase cannot be explained by a different musical phrase. The phrase itself is the only possible one; the only explanation is repetition. This type of sentence is not limited to musical phrases as Wittgenstein notes in parenthesis that understanding a poem follows the same lines. We must however nuance the idea that the only possible paraphrase for a poem is its repetition as, following Cavell, interpretation (or criticism as he puts it) is a way of paraphrasing a poem, an attempt in saying what the poem means with different words. One might however argue that musical language is not only a different language-game but a different language from the language of information altogether; they do not use the same building blocks. Poetry, unlike music, is written in the language of information, Wittgenstein states. But understanding a poem does not follow the same rules as understanding a proposition. As for music, an important aspect of poetry is the place given to words; not only the place in a sentence, but also the place on the page (as for instance in Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés*). As musical phrases present these notes at these times, poetic sentences present 'these words in these positions.'

In the following remark, Wittgenstein considers 'understanding' to have the two different meanings we noted, paraphrasing and repeating: 'Then has

²⁰³ Cavell (1976), p. 79.

“understanding” two different meanings here?—I would rather say that these kinds of use of “understanding” make up its meaning, make up my *concept* of understanding. For I *want* to apply the word “understanding” to all this.’ (PI 532) There are two kinds of understanding which build up the concept of understanding. In a similar way to Nietzsche’s attempt at combining Apollo and Dionysus rather than separating them, Wittgenstein does not distinguish the concept of understanding in the everyday use from the concept of understanding in the poetic use. He does not split language into two different domains: the ordinary and the poetic. There is only one concept of understanding and it must be able to consider both information and poetry, according to the perspective taken on language. Language is not constituted by different entities (such as ordinary, poetic, or scientific), but by various perspectives which focus on one or another feature. Each language-game highlight one or another aspect of language and Wittgenstein gives a clue as to how understanding is at work in poetic language-games in the next remark:

But in the second case, how can one explain the expression, communicate what one understands? Ask yourself: How does one *lead* someone to understand a poem or a theme? The answer to this tells us how one explains the sense here. (PI 533)

Wittgenstein’s answer is another question. We already know that one type of understanding, paraphrasing, cannot provide an explanation of a poem. Wittgenstein already affirms the impossibility of paraphrasing a poem in *Philosophical Grammar*: ‘No one would believe that a poem remained *essentially unaltered* if its words were replaced by others in accordance with an appropriate convention.’ (PG 32) Similarly, a poem cannot be convincingly translated according to Wittgenstein: ‘(Who says that this English poem can be translated into German to our satisfaction?!) (Even *if* it is clear that there is in *some* sense a translation of any English sentence into German.)’ (RFM 85) And if Wittgenstein does not give a clear answer regarding how to understand a poem, he does point out something important in his question. To help someone understand a poem means to

explain its meaning. But how does one explain the meaning of a poem? One shows how to look at it. Understanding a poem is a matter of perspective; I have to look at it the right way. But if poetry is a language-game asking for a change of perspectives, what are the rules for this game?

2. What Is Poetic Language?

One needs to look at a poem in the right way in order to understand it and this notion of 'looking' brings up another of Wittgenstein's concepts: 'seeing-as.' As Wittgenstein notices, 'seeing-as' often occurs in aesthetic reflections.²⁰⁴ This is especially the case concerning visual art forms, perhaps because of the word 'seeing.' However, Wittgenstein clearly distinguishes 'seeing-as' from 'seeing' (PPF 137), the former being 'half visual experience half thought' (PPF 140). Being 'half thought,' art forms which are not primarily visual can also be grasped under this notion and Wittgenstein's remarks on music and 'hearing-as' or 'playing-as' go in this direction. This notion can also be used to conceptualise what is at play in poetry, where 'seeing-as' becomes 'reading-as.'

In his *Lecture on Aesthetics*, Wittgenstein takes up this question of how poetry should be read:

Take the question: 'How should poetry be read? What is the correct way of reading it?' If you are talking about blank verse the right way might of reading it might be stressing it correctly—you discuss how far you should stress the rhythm and how far you should hide it. A man says it ought to be read *this* way and reads it to you. You say: 'Oh yes. Now it makes sense.' [...] I had an experience with the 18th century poet Klopstock. I found that the way to read him was to stress his metre abnormally. Klopstock put ∪–∪ (etc.) in front of his poems. When I read his poems in this new way, I said: 'Ah-ha, now I know why he did this.' (LA 12)

There are ways of reading poetry which make more sense and the poet, like Klopstock, might give a few hints on how the poem should be read. Other poets on the contrary give no instructions at all, leaving the reader free to

²⁰⁴ See RPP1 1 and PPF 178

read as she likes. But this entails that there are different ways of reading: there are different interpretations. This notion of interpretation, which is central in art criticism, is, Wittgenstein suggests, related to 'seeing-as:' 'But we can also *see* the illustration now as one thing, now as another.—So we interpret it, and *see* it as we *interpret* it' (PPF 116). There is interpretation in 'seeing-as,' just as there is interpretation in 'reading-as.' But how can we know how to read? Poetry requires from the reader that she stresses the words in a way different from everyday reading. A poem makes sense only once it is read in the right way. We should not understand 'right way' as something too specific: there can be multiple right ways to read a poem, more precisely, the right way to read a poem is the one that makes sense for the reader. The meaning of the poem, or the way it makes sense, depends on the reader and how she reads it. It might make sense to read in this way but not in that way. This idea could be called 'reading-as,' following Wittgenstein's 'seeing-as:' a duck-rabbit can be seen as a duck or as a rabbit; a poem can be read as a meaningless series of words or as a meaningful whole.²⁰⁵ Another interesting aspect from this quote is the reference to Klopstock. Although the reader is free to read the poem as she likes, the poet can indicate how it should be read and Klopstock does so by indicating the rhythm. Reading a poem in one way might not make sense whereas reading it following the instructions does. In that sense, a poem is subject to interpretation. Its meaning varies according to how the readers read it. More than that, it shows a different use of language. Reading a poem and reading a newspaper both involve reading, but not in the same sense. This difference is similar to Wittgenstein's distinction between seeing and 'seeing-as.'

²⁰⁵ An important distinction to make here however is that both seeing a duck and seeing a rabbit are meaningful, are seeing something, whereas reading a poem as a meaningless series of words is not meaningful and is like reading nothing. However, we could argue that reading a poem as a meaningless series of words is like searching (and failing to find) for the rabbit while seeing the duck. A failure to understand a poem, therefore a failure to read it as something else than a meaningless series of words, is like failing to see the rabbit while looking for it.

The poetic language-game, or better the poetic language-games for there is more than one way of doing poetry, bring light on different aspects of language, aspects which are not highlighted in the ordinary communicational practice. In a way, poetry resembles Duchamp's ready-mades: Duchamp takes an everyday object and transforms its meaning by placing it in a different game, in a different context. Similarly, poets take everyday words and transform their meaning. Some examples of poems show this transformation (or transfiguration in Danto's sense) of the everyday. First is an excerpt from William Carlos Williams's poem 'Two Pendants: for the Ears:'

2 partridges
2 Mallard ducks
a Dungeness crab
24 hours out
of the Pacific
and 2 live-frozen
trout
from Denmark²⁰⁶

What is more ordinary than a grocery list? The fact that it is written by a poet and presented as a poem brings us, readers, to believe there is something more to it, to read it as a poem. I believe it could work as an autonomous text, but Williams's poem is a bit more complex than that: the grocery list is a part of the poem and is introduced as follows:

Listen, I said, I met a man
last night told me what he'd brought
home from the market:²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ Williams (2000), p. 166.

²⁰⁷ Williams (2000), p. 166.

Taken in the wider context of the whole poem, the grocery list appears as a bursting in of the ordinary in the poetic and its place within a poem makes of this all too ordinary grocery list something poetic.

The grocery list is not the only bursting in of the ordinary in Williams's poems, the apparition of a 'SODA' signboard in 'The Attic Which Is Desire' is another example of it.²⁰⁸ The word 'soda' is staged as a sign—and one could see here a play on word as sign and the signboard as sign—within the poetic discourse. This play with the ordinary appearing within the poetic is a feature of many poems, for instance T. S. Eliot's repetition of the sentence 'HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME'²⁰⁹ in *The Waste Land* is a use of an ordinary voice to bring rhythm to the discourse. This ordinary voice therefore becomes a poetic element although it appears at first glance to be an all too ordinary sentence. The ordinary therefore brings a poetic element despite its ordinary dimension. What is interesting in these apparitions of the ordinary within the poetic is not only that the ordinary becomes poetic, but also and above all that the poem stages this ordinary becoming poetic and by doing so, abolishes any essential difference between ordinary and poetic. The most ordinary words, the most ordinary sentences can become poetic in a certain context. The context of the poem transforms the ordinary grocery list into a poetic element. Williams comments on his use of a grocery list in *Paterson*: 'If you say "2 partridges, 2 mallard ducks, a Dungeness crab" —if you treat that rhythmically, ignoring the practical sense, it forms a jagged pattern. It is, to my mind, poetry.'²¹⁰ As with Wittgenstein's remark, the poetic dimension arises from rhythm in this case as well. In poetry, there always something more than the ordinary meaning, as Williams further comments: 'In prose, an English word means what it says. In poetry, you're listening to two things

²⁰⁸ Williams (2000), pp. 71-72.

²⁰⁹ Eliot (2005), pp. 61-2.

²¹⁰ Williams (1963), p. 261.

... you're listening to the sense, the common sense of what it says. But it says more. That is the difficulty.'²¹¹

Rhythm is one aspect which can change the perspective on words, another possible one being sound. In the poem 'The Crate,' Francis Ponge plays for instance on the sound of the word:

Halfway between *cage* (cage) and *cachot* (cell) the French language has *cageot* (crate), a simple openwork case for the transport of those fruits that invariably fall sick over the slightest suffocation.²¹²

Describing a very ordinary object, Ponge focuses on the sound of the word and brings other meanings in the word through sound similarities. He then plays with these meanings: 'fall sick' and 'suffocation' are here related to the idea of the cell and transposed onto the crate. The sound of ordinary words becomes the playground for the emergence of the poetic. These examples show ways in which poetry can modify the ordinary or, better, how poetry can arise or appear within the most ordinary words. An important dimension in this change of meaning is the context in which the word or the object appears. Depending on the context, the meaning changes. By displacing a sentence or a statement from an ordinary context to a poetic one, the poet, to some extent, makes the ordinary extraordinary. This idea of decontextualization can also be found in the works of the Russian Formalists, especially Viktor Shklovsky who discusses this extensively in his article 'Art as Device.' Following Tolstoy, he elaborates the notion of 'ostranenie':

The goal of art is to create the sensation of seeing, and not merely recognizing, things; the device of art is the "*ostranenie*" of things and complication of the form, which increases the duration and complexity of perception, as the process of perception is its own end in art and must be prolonged.²¹³

²¹¹ Williams (1963), p. 262.

²¹² Ponge (1972), p. 34.

²¹³ Shklovsky (2017), p. 80.

Through the 'ostranenie' or defamiliarization, art brings viewers and reader to see things differently. However, Shklovsky's theory still attempts to define poetry in essentialist terms by defining poetic language as different from ordinary language: 'Thus, we arrive at a definition of poetry as decelerated, contorted speech.'²¹⁴

The grocery list example is the inscription of an ordinary text within a poetic one. Another poem by Williams, 'This Is Just to Say,' operates a similar move but it is no longer the inscription of the ordinary within the poetic which grants a poetic status to the ordinary text, but the inscription of an ordinary text, or rather a seemingly ordinary one, as a whole in a collection of poems. 'This Is Just to Say'²¹⁵ could very well be a note hung on the fridge (here is another similarity with the grocery list), but by moving it from the fridge to the collection of poems, Williams changes its status. These examples of poems all go in the same direction, namely that there is no essential difference between ordinary and poetic language, and that the specificity of poetry is not to be found in specific words or sentence constructions, but that the poetic always lies at the heart of the ordinary language, as Stanley Fish argues: 'What philosophical semantics and the philosophy of speech acts are telling us is that ordinary language is extraordinary because at its heart is precisely the realm of values, intentions, and purposes which is often assumed to be the exclusive property of literature.'²¹⁶ Fish's idea is interesting because it breaks down the difference between ordinary and poetic language, and does not attempt to define literature as a use of language whose essential characteristics are fundamentally different from ordinary speech. What is at play in literature for Fish, and that goes in the direction of what Wittgenstein says, is that literature is a matter of context or perspective and this notion of perspective is also related to the notion of imagination.

²¹⁴ Shklovsky (2017), p. 95.

²¹⁵ Williams (2000), pp. 72-3.

²¹⁶ Fish (1980), p. 108.

'Seeing-as' brings up a new mode of comparison which does not rely on a general view of the object but on a specific perspective taken on it, namely 'noticing an aspect.' (PPF 127) 'Seeing-as' is a contextual notion depending on the perceiver: everyone can notice different aspects and according to the importance given to this or that aspect, the understanding of the object can differ completely. This specific type of seeing does however not occur all the time and one domain in which it occurs frequently, as I have mentioned above, is art. In the everyday language-game, just as we follow a rule blindly, we see 'blindly' along the everyday routine (PPF 137). 'The concept of seeing,' Wittgenstein adds:

makes a tangled impression. Well, that's how it is.—I look at the landscape; my gaze wanders over it, I see all sorts of distinct and indistinct movement; *this* impresses itself sharply on me, *that* very hazily. How completely piecemeal what we see can appear! And now look at all that can be meant by "description of what is seen!" —But this just is what is called "description of what is seen." There is not *one genuine*, proper case of such description—the rest just being unclear, awaiting clarification, or simply to be swept aside as rubbish. (PPF 160)

There can be no 'genuine descriptions' because they depend on who describes. This can be understood in a phenomenological and intentional fashion such as Husserl's noetico-noematic relation to the world according to which we project the thesis on the object when perceiving it, but Wittgenstein also draws our attention to the fact that the perceiver is 'struck.' The intentional part of 'seeing-as' is not the only one and certainly not the most important one for Wittgenstein. As we will see, 'seeing-as' is somehow linked to interpretation—a process which includes intentionality—but is not identified with it: there can be some 'seeing-as' without interpretation. If a change of aspect can follow our will (and our intention), 'it can also occur against our will.' (LW 612) A description will therefore always depend on which features struck the spectator and there can be no two identical descriptions of a landscape for instance, just as there can be no two identical paintings of this landscape. The danger in believing in a '*genuine* description'

is, according to Wittgenstein, the danger of metaphysics, the danger of believing in a reality which can be described absolutely and objectively, independently from the spectator.

The task of the painter can be to represent a landscape 'faithfully,' but it can also be to create a language-game in which her description will fit. And the task of the critic or interpreter would be to find the right perspective from which to see it.

Here it occurs to me that in conversation on aesthetic matters we use the words "You have to see it like *this*, this is how it is meant;" "When you see it like *this*, you see where it goes wrong;" "You have to hear these bars as an introduction;" "You must listen out for this key;" "You must phrase it like *this*" (which can refer to hearing as well as to playing). (PPF 178)

In painting and music, one must often see something from a certain perspective to understand the work. Wittgenstein's remark in brackets is interesting because it shows that this applies not only to the spectator but also to the artist herself. The artist sees something as, notices an aspect from her surrounding world, and brings it to the fore. She is an interpreter whose interpretation will then be subject to the spectator-reader's interpretation. According to Wittgenstein, we do not always interpret because we often see things as (in the sense of taking them for) without any reflexive act. However, understanding and meaning both depend on the context or the language-game in which an object appears. As Fish argues: 'communication occurs within situations and [...] to be in a situation is already to be in possession of (or to be possessed by) a structure of assumptions, of practices understood to be relevant in relation to purposes and goals that are already in place; and it is within the assumption of these purposes and goals that any utterance is *immediately* heard.'²¹⁷ Understanding a sentence depends on the context or situation in which the sentence is heard. But there is no interpretive act at first: the immediate understanding occurs because of the expectations I have. If my understanding is wrong, then the interpretative

²¹⁷ Fish (1980), p. 318.

process begins and I have to modify my assumptions in order to understand it. This is precisely what is at play in 'seeing-as' or 'reading-as:' when I look at the duck-rabbit, I can see a duck without any interpretation but if someone tells me it is a rabbit and not a duck, then I will have to look at it differently. The first understanding is something like an immediate interpretation (which would not be an interpretation in Wittgenstein's terms) whereas the second is a reflexive interpretation. Fish's notion of situation is similar to Wittgenstein's language-game: if two people play different language-games (or are in different situations), they will never come to an understanding. They will have to find a common ground in order to understand each other. One can see something in different ways, giving various interpretations, and these interpretations all depend on the context in which she sees this thing, or the context she creates around it:

I can imagine some arbitrary cipher—this, *ℋ* for instance, to be a strictly correct letter of some foreign alphabet. Or again, to be a faultily written one, and faulty in this way or that: for example, it might be slapdash, or typical childish awkwardness, or, like the flourishes in an official document. It could deviate from the correctly written letter in a variety of ways. —And according to the fiction with which I surround it, I can see it in various aspects. And here there is a close kinship with 'experiencing the meaning of a word.' (PPF 234)

Wittgenstein interestingly uses the word 'fiction' to name the context. When there is no given context, when an object stands out and cannot be attached back to its original background, one creates a context in which the object makes or takes sense. Of course, an object is never seen out of any context and one can usually easily attach an object to the everyday world. But it can also happen that one finds an object and does not recognise it. She will therefore build fictions in order to find the use for the object. This also applies to works of art: a painting, whether seen in a museum or in a church, can be subject to various interpretations. The same applies to a poem, whether read in its original context or in a different one (in the original anthology or in a textbook for instance).

For Wittgenstein, this importance of fiction and context links 'seeing-as' to 'experiencing the meaning of a word.' Noticing an aspect is identifying an element in a larger picture, among various other elements, just as 'experiencing the meaning of a word' is identifying its use among the many possible ones. One art form in which experiencing meanings is central is poetry, and Wittgenstein brings up this comparison:

'When I read a poem or narrative with feeling, surely something goes on in me which does not go on when I merely skim the lines for information.'—What processes am I alluding to?—The sentences have a different *ring*. I pay careful attention to intonation. Sometimes a word has the wrong intonation, stands out too much or too little. [...] I can also give a word an intonation which makes its meaning stand out from the rest, almost as if the word were a portrait of the whole thing. (And this may, of course, depend on the structure of the sentence.) (PPF 264)

Poetry, or any other 'creative' use of language, draws attention to something which does not occur in the everyday language-game. In poetry, intonation makes a word stand out from the rest; this word gains an 'outstanding' meaning which differs from its meaning in the everyday use and an 'outstanding' position which differs from that of the other words. As we have seen, Wittgenstein relates the understanding of a poem to the positions of the words in PI 531. What matters in poetry is the position of the words and one cannot change them without changing the meaning of the poem. Understanding a poem differs from understanding a sentence in the everyday language-game as we have seen: in the everyday one, it is possible to paraphrase; in poetry, the only paraphrase is repetition or, following Cavell, interpretation and criticism.

Poetry is a specific language-game in which understanding does not follow the rules of the everyday one. It is a game with language which must be understood in its context. Poetic and ordinary languages must however not be considered as two distinct entities. The poetic is a language-game, a practice which must be recognised as such. According to Peter Lamarque, the practice of poetry is governed by rules on which poets and readers agree:

'Poetry is constituted by a practice, which is grounded in convention-governed expectations among poets and readers.'²¹⁸ One limit to such a conception of poetry, and one of the reasons why poetry seems to always defy definition, is that poetry, especially in the 20th century, challenges the established conventions and expectations. In this sense, the practice of poetry would rely on the convention that it disturbs and challenges established conventions. The reader who therefore approaches the poem cannot always rely on the tools she usually uses to understand poetry, but might be brought to find new ways of approaching it, new tools, to engage into an interpretative process. In other words, and as Fish argues, the interpreter who engages in such a practice makes the poem: 'Interpretation is not the art of construing but the art of constructing. Interpreters do not decode poems; they make them.'²¹⁹ Just as I sometimes need to create a fiction around something for it to make sense, in interpreting a poem I have to create the conditions or situation for this interpretation to make sense. Interpretation is thus central in 'seeing-as' but it calls for another more creative notion: imagination: 'In other words, the concept "Now I see it as..." is related to "Now I am imagining *that*."' (PPF 254)

Poetry cannot be understood in the everyday language-game; poetry is a game which can be likened to the children's game Wittgenstein describes in PPF 205-207 in which the children take a chest for a house. We have seen that interpretation depends on a context which can be understood as the fiction created around an object. The same happens with children playing: they weave 'a piece of fancy around [the chest],' they create a context in which the meaning is not the same, in which the interpretation of the object does not follow the lines of the everyday language-game. 'Seeing-as' is to some extent similar to interpreting. But the children's game example shows another aspect of 'seeing-as:' it is also similar to imagining. To take the chest for a house does not call for interpretation but for imagination.

²¹⁸ Gibson (2015), p. 33.

²¹⁹ Fish (1980), p. 327.

Wittgenstein's discussion of imagination brings the creative dimension of 'seeing-as' to the fore and its relation to the will: 'Seeing an aspect and imagining are subject to the will.' (PPF 256) Imagination enables us not only to describe a change of aspect (as with interpretation) but to create it. This dimension reinforces the link between 'seeing-as' and the work of an artist. If a poet interprets the world to create her poem, she also needs imagination to do so. As Charles Altieri suggests, in matters of Wittgensteinian literary aesthetics, imagination is an essential feature.²²⁰

Just like the children's game, poetry is a game in which the meanings of the words are changed. Insofar as the chest becomes a house for the children, the meanings the poet uses for a word become this word's meaning. This creation of new meanings is also used in everyday language, but poetry represents a stage on which this creation is brought to a greater degree. The various language-games are not completely separated but are interrelated, and the potentialities of poetic language lie in the very heart of everyday language:

We don't notice the enormous variety of all the everyday language-games, because the clothing of our language makes them all alike. (PPF 335)

There are many language-games, but we do not notice them all. One of the characteristics of poetic language-games is that they reveal themselves as language-games, as games on or with language. This game is based on noticing aspects which can take different meanings according to which one is played. But the external appearance does not change, all language-games use the same material: words. And the meanings of these words vary according to their use, the language-game in which they appear. A poetic use of language might use a word in a yet unknown way and by doing so poetry reveals aspects of words and of the world we did not know, just as 'a good simile refreshes the intellect.' (CV, p. 3)

²²⁰ Altieri (2015), pp. 59-62.

Nietzsche and Wittgenstein thus consider poetry to be a way of opening new perspectives on the world. Before turning our attention to one of the tools the poet uses to create these perspectives, metaphor, it is necessary to focus on the creative aspect of perspectivism. Although Wittgenstein considers that philosophy has a descriptive task, Nietzsche considers it also has a creative one, in that sense similar to poetry, and we will explore this creative part in the next chapter. This focus on the creative aspect of perspectives offers an interesting insight to approach Nietzsche's perspectivism. As I will argue in the next chapter, one way to avoid the self-contradicting problem of perspectivism is to set it on aesthetic grounds and this places aesthetics as a central concern in philosophy.

Chapter Five:

Towards a Perspectival Poetics

To approach poetry, Wittgenstein's 'seeing-as' can be translated as 'reading-as' and these notions share similarities with Nietzsche's idea of perspectives. Poetry, and other art forms, by forcing us to 'noticing aspects,' ask that we look with perspective.²²¹ In the previous chapter, we have focused our attention on the reader, but the artist also plays a role in this perspectivism. Her role is a creative one and this chapter explores the poet's role in relation to Nietzsche's perspectivism. In the first part of the chapter, I focus on Nietzsche's perspectivism on aesthetic and poetic grounds. In the second part, I turn to the creative dimension of this perspectivism. This creative dimension is for instance at play in metaphor, one of the poet's favourite tools, and this notion will be the focus of the next chapter.

If both the spectator and the artist 'see as,' the artist looks at the world with her perspective. A note from *Culture and Value* brings up this notion of perspective in art:

Let's imagine a theatre, the curtain goes up & we see someone alone in his room walking up and down, lighting a cigarette, seating himself etc. so that suddenly we are observing a human being from outside in a way that ordinarily we can never observe ourselves; as if we were watching a chapter from a biography with our own eyes,—surely this would be at once uncanny and wonderful. More wonderful than anything that a playwright could cause to be acted or spoken on the stage.—But then we do see this every day & it makes not the slightest impression on us! True enough, but we do not see it from *that* point of view. [...] The work of art compels us—as one might say—to see it in the right perspective, but without art the object is a piece of nature like any other & the fact that *we* may exalt it

²²¹ Alison Denham interestingly argues that poetry does not only make us 'see as' but 'experience as,' thus including not only perceptual experience through the senses but also affective responses: 'So described, experiencing-as, like perceptual experience more generally, is not confined to the five senses, even if it occurs by way of them: affective responses such as emotions, moods, and motivational dispositions are also embodied, first-personal, and phenomenologically characterized,' in Gibson (2015), p. 184. Their idea of experiencing-as allows to consider the epistemic value of poetry regarding ethical questions for instance.

through our enthusiasm does not give anyone the right to display it to us. (CV, p. 7)

Just as everyday language does not make much impression on us, precisely because we use it every day, a scene from the everyday life does not surprise us. Once transposed on stage, however, this scene takes another dimension, just like the poet gives words a dimension they did not previously have. Some poets bring this to another level, and that is what makes them great poets: they are not only users of words but creators: 'I do not think that Shakespeare can be set alongside any other poet. Was he perhaps a *creator of language* rather than a poet?' (CV, p. 95) More than a 'creator of language,' Shakespeare and all great poets and artists are creators of perspectives which expand the scope of everyday life.

Great poets and artists give us new perspectives and only with their help can we realise that the ordinary is nothing ordinary, but that, following Shakespeare in *As You Like It*: 'All the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players.'²²² As Fish argues in his essay 'How ordinary is ordinary language?', at the heart of the ordinary lies the very possibility of the extraordinary; at the heart of our everyday language lies the possibility of literature and poetry. Artists are those who take this potentiality and make it actual. But one does not need to be a great poet with words, poetry in that sense outgrows the borders of language, one needs to be poet of one's own life as Nietzsche argues.²²³ To do so, she needs the help of great artists and poets who open perspectives and present them to her eyes:

Only artists, and especially those of the theatre, have given men eyes and ears to see and hear with some pleasure what each man *is* himself, experiences himself, desires himself; only they have taught us to esteem the hero that is concealed in everyday characters; only they have taught us the art of viewing ourselves as heroes—from a distance and, as it were, simplified and transfigured—the art of staging and watching ourselves. Only in this way can we deal with some base details in ourselves. Without this art we would be nothing but the foreground and live entirely in the spell of that perspective

²²² Shakespeare (2000), Act II, scene 7, p. 124.

²²³ See GS 299 / KSA 3.538

which makes what is closest at hand and most vulgar appear as if it were vast, and reality itself. (GS 78 / KSA 3.433-4)

The artist's strength is to show us the extraordinary dwelling at the heart of the ordinary: we all are heroes, but we need the right perspective to realise it. This passage from *The Gay Science* is somehow similar to Wittgenstein's remark on theatre, but with a shift of focus from spectator to creator: whereas Wittgenstein draws our attention on the perspective one takes when looking at a stage, Nietzsche brings to light the way artists free us from the ordinary perspective according to which our surrounding world is reality itself. The last sentence quoted in this passage has a very metaphysical feel to it: the world of appearance is close to us and reality is hidden behind it, but I think there is something more subtle than that at play here. What Nietzsche says is that we need to take some distance from ourselves to understand that we are linked to a context or a situation and that this context affects our understanding of ourselves. There is no such thing as a world of appearance as opposed to reality, but we are embedded in a context which imposes a certain perspective (through social and moral norms for instance).

In that sense, there is no such thing as 'reality,' but only interpretations and projections we make according to our situation and context, and this is the basis for Nietzsche's perspectivism:

That mountain there! That cloud there! What is 'real' in that? Subtract the phantasm and every contribution from it, my sober friends! If you *can!* If you can forget your descent, our past, your training—all of your humanity and animality. There is no 'reality' for us—not for you either, my sober friends. (GS 57 / KSA 3.421-2)

Art allows us to take another perspective on our lives and ourselves and by doing so reveals new details. In Nietzsche's perspectivism, there is no truth as correspondence but only truths as disclosure: the truth of art is to reveal something from the surrounding world. There have been many discussions of Nietzsche's perspectivism in Nietzschean literature, most of it coming to terms with perspectivism being a self-refuting claim. As I will argue, such

claims do not stand when perspectivism is taken on aesthetic and poetic grounds.

1. Nietzsche's Perspectivism

In a very concise way, Arthur Danto defines perspectivism as 'the doctrine that there are no facts but only interpretations.'²²⁴ Despite its efficiency, this definition is not completely uncontestable. More specifically, whereas one part of this definition seems to be common sense to a Nietzschean discussion of perspectivism, another is subject to interpretation. First, the uncontested aspect of this definition is that perspectivism is about interpretation and suggests replacing the notion of fact by that of interpretation, i.e. replacing the metaphysical 'true world' by perspectives. As we have seen in previous chapters, this replacement is part of Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics and suggests that the interpreter is involved in the process of understanding the world and is not a mere passive and external observer. Second, the contestable aspect of this definition is the idea that perspectivism is a doctrine. As already mentioned regarding Nietzsche's views on language, assigning any fixed and stable theory or doctrine to Nietzsche (as to Wittgenstein) is a dangerous move which misses the performative and rhetorical dimensions of his writings.

Without going as far as Werner Stegmaier who considers that Nietzsche's philosophy is not made of doctrines but only of signs indicating directions the reader can follow,²²⁵ attributing any kind of doctrine to Nietzsche can prove to be a dangerous and contradictory task. The attribution of doctrines to Nietzsche is contradictory not only because his thinking evolves with time and he reinterprets earlier works with later ideas—see for example the various prefaces written in 1886—but also and above all because the fragmentary aesthetics of his works often presents aphorisms which contradict themselves if taken as elements of a doctrine. Because of the

²²⁴ Danto (2005), p. 59.

²²⁵ See Stegmaier (2006).

poetics of his philosophy, taking Nietzsche's ideas as doctrines only leads to the poetic paradox Zarathustra's disciple faces when Zarathustra claims that 'poets lie too much' while being a poet himself. Furthermore, taking Nietzsche's philosophy as presenting doctrines opens the door to a danger of which the history of Nietzsche's reception contains many examples, namely that of an ideological and instrumental reading of Nietzsche. Against such views, the literary dimension of his writings calls for interpretation, and straightforward understandings of his aphorisms as building blocks for a doctrine leaves this aspect aside. A doctrine is always somehow absolute and tends towards universality whereas perspectivism states the opposite. In this sense, the self-refuting problem of perspectivism is a consequence of taking it as a doctrine, and especially an epistemological one as we will see.

To elaborate my reading of Nietzsche's perspectivism as an 'aesthetic perspectivism', I will proceed in two steps: first, I will contest the idea that perspectivism is an epistemological doctrine and suggest that it rather offers an alternative to traditional epistemology; second, I will show the importance of value in perspectivism and argue that this importance of value is related to the aesthetic dimension of perspectivism.

The connection between perspectivism and values is clearly stated by Nietzsche in his 1886 'Attempt at a Self-Criticism' in *The Birth of Tragedy*. In this retrospective account, Nietzsche considers *The Birth of Tragedy* to be a perspectival work '*viewing science through the optic of the artist, and art through the optic of life*' (BT 'Attempt' 2 / KSA 1.14) and to be his first revaluation of all values. These two ideas, perspectivism and revaluation of all values, are therefore connected as being two ideas necessary to understand his early work. More than a connection through a common task, we could say that the revaluation of all values calls for a change of perspective. This connection is a hint into considering perspectivism on the grounds of values rather than that of knowledge. Knowledge, for Nietzsche, should not necessarily be valued positively. He does not cast doubts on knowledge itself, but on the value we give it, on our taking knowledge as the most important (if not the

only possible) perspective. In other words, traditional epistemology is only one perspective among others. Perspectivism is therefore not another epistemological doctrine but operates at a more fundamental level in conceptualising our relation to the world. By taking perspectivism as an aesthetic and axiological matter rather than an epistemological one, we can come to a more convincing use of the notion. Perspectivism is above all a matter of vision and seeing, of the way we relate to the world, and by taking this notion back to its original ground of perception, we can not only connect it to Wittgenstein's 'seeing-as' but also to Nietzsche's early conceptions of language and metaphors.

a. Perspectivism as an Alternative to Epistemology

Many commentators in the English-speaking world consider perspectivism to be central to Nietzsche's philosophy and, more importantly, central to the use contemporary philosophy can make of Nietzsche.²²⁶ According to Maudemarie Clark, Nietzsche's perspectivism 'constitutes his most obvious contribution to the current intellectual scene, the most widely accepted Nietzschean doctrine.'²²⁷ We have already seen that making perspectivism a doctrine is somehow dangerous, but Clark's conception of Nietzsche's perspectivism relies on another aspect, namely that perspectivism is a matter of epistemology. Clark defines perspectivism as 'the claim that all knowledge is perspectival' and points out that 'Nietzsche also characterizes values as perspectival but [that she] shall be concerned here only with his perspectivism regarding knowledge.'²²⁸ Against Clark, I will explore the relation between perspectivism and values in the second part of this section.

²²⁶ Perspectivism has indeed become an important strand in contemporary epistemology but has done so by extracting itself from the Nietzschean realm. For instance, Michaela Massimi advocates for perspectivism as a 'middle ground between scientific realism and antirealism' by referring not to Nietzsche (whom she nevertheless mentions *en passant*) but to Kant, a much more common figure in epistemological research. See Massimi (2018).

²²⁷ Clark (1990), p. 127.

²²⁸ Clark (1990), p. 127.

Among the many scholars who have tackled the question of Nietzsche's perspectivism, most agree on considering it an epistemological doctrine and are therefore confronted to the so-called self-refuting problem of perspectivism. To present this problem, Steven Hales and Rex Welshon oppose 'strong perspectivism' to 'absolutism':

Recall that absolutism is the denial of strong perspectivism. Since strong perspectivism is the claim that every statement is true in some perspective and untrue in another, the following is a rendering of absolutism: there is at least one statement that is either true in all perspectives or untrue in all perspectives. [...] Suppose that strong perspectivism is true in all perspectives. If so, then there is a statement that has the same truth value in all perspectives—viz., the thesis of strong perspectivism itself. But, if there is some statement that has the same truth value in all perspectives, then absolutism is true, or, to put the matter in an equivalent form, if strong perspectivism is true in all perspectives, then strong perspectivism is untrue.²²⁹

This treatment of Nietzsche's perspectivism is precisely what leads scholars to consider it to entail a contradiction. If we consider Hales and Welshon (and with them a certain tradition of Nietzsche interpretation) to be right in opposing perspectivism to absolutism, i.e. as two opposed and distinct metaphysical-epistemological doctrines, then there is indeed a contradiction within Nietzsche's 'doctrine.' The next step for most commentators is then to find a way of avoiding this contradiction, for example by proposing a 'weak perspectivism' in the case of Hales and Welshon or by showing that, despite his criticisms, Nietzsche has a minimal conception of truth as correspondence in the case of Clark.

However, a more interesting move, and probably more consistent with Nietzsche's rhetoric, is to consider perspectivism not as opposed to absolutism but as an alternative to it. Doing so undercuts the contradiction as it moves perspectivism to another field of discussion. In other words, perspectivism would not be another epistemological doctrine, but an

²²⁹ Hales and Welshon (2000), p. 22.

alternative to traditional epistemology. It would be, as Tracy Strong suggests, an attempt at replacing epistemology.²³⁰ As we will see, this alternative suggests taking perception as a central notion rather than knowledge.

A first step towards this alternative is taken by Alan Schrift who considers that 'Nietzsche's perspectival account does not provide a theory at all; it is a rhetorical strategy that offers an alternative to the traditional epistemological conception of knowledge as the possession of some stable, eternal "entities," whether these be considered "truths," "facts," "meanings," "propositions," or whatever. As we shall see, Nietzsche views these "entities" as beyond the limits of human comprehension, and, whether or not they exist (a question Nietzsche regards as an "idle hypothesis" [see WP, 560]), he concludes that we are surely incapable of "knowing" them.'²³¹ According to Schrift, Nietzsche's philosophy should not be understood as presenting a theory of knowledge, but rather as explaining why remaining within the metaphysical framework which considers world and words as '*aeternae veritates*' leads to the impossibility of knowledge.²³²

Schrift's account of perspectivism brings us back to Danto's concise definition of it. Against the idea that there are facts (or any other stable metaphysical entity, a 'true world') of which we can reach an absolute knowledge, perspectivism suggests there are only interpretations. This notion of interpretation casts an aesthetic or literary light on perspectivism, as Christoph Cox argues: 'Unlike the notion of "perspective" —which, literally construed, generates serious epistemological difficulties—the

²³⁰ Strong (1985), p. 165.

²³¹ Schrift (1990), p. 145.

²³² Such a view is not unrelated to Wittgenstein's idea that any framework in which truth is understood as a metaphysical and absolute 'entity' can only lead to scepticism. Against this scepticism, Wittgenstein suggests going back to the ordinary. Nietzsche does not follow the same route as even ordinary language is metaphysically loaded for him but suggests understanding our relations to the world as perspectives which compete with one another.

notion of “interpretation” operates within a rich and increasingly important literary and philosophical tradition.²³³ It is not really the notion of ‘perspective’ that generates difficulty, but rather the placing of perspective in the epistemological realm. Leaving perspective in its original grounds of perception and vision avoids such difficulties. The notion of interpretation however interestingly brings to the fore the interpreter, the spectator, rather than what is seen, be it the ‘world,’ ‘reality,’ ‘facts,’ notions which all have heavy metaphysical connotations.

Perspectivism offers an alternative to traditional epistemology insofar as it relies precisely on this interpreter, on this eye that sees rather than on the ‘reality’ which is seen. This dimension of vision, which is central to the notion of perspective itself, is however completely left aside in discussions on perspectivism. For instance, Hales’ and Welshon’s book-length discussion on perspectivism contains chapters on ‘Truth,’ ‘Logic,’ ‘Ontology,’ ‘Causality,’ ‘Epistemology,’ ‘Consciousness,’ and ‘The Self’ with almost no mention of perception at all.²³⁴ In a sense, contemporary interpreters of Nietzsche remain within the traditional epistemological framework from which Nietzsche attempts to escape. The alternative to epistemology Nietzsche offers relies precisely on the notions of vision and perception. These notions are central to perspectivism and we have seen that he considers the task of philosophy to be ‘that of *viewing science through the optic of the artist, and art through the optic of life...*’ (BT ‘Attempt’ 2 / KSA 1.14).

Coming back to the etymology of aesthetics, *aisthesis*, sensation or perception, Nietzsche’s focus on vision suggests that perspectivism should be linked to aesthetic concerns rather than epistemological ones. As Kathleen

²³³ Cox (1997), p. 272.

²³⁴ The only time Hales and Welshon discuss the notion of perception in Nietzsche is in relation to Leibniz’s distinction between ‘perception,’ ‘sensation,’ and ‘apperception.’ They however do not attempt to relate their discussion of perception to perspectivism, although there might be a connection between perspectivism and Leibniz. See Hales and Welshon (2000), pp. 136-137.

Higgins argues: 'This term [aesthetic] is appropriate, I think, because it gets at the root and range of the perspectival variables that are relevant to a true picture of the situations in which we apprehend. An additional advantage of the term is that Nietzsche's images drawn from the sphere of art and aesthetics more narrowly conceived usually reverberate, illuminating features of life, broadly conceived. Nietzsche dethrones "traditional" epistemology from its queenly place in philosophy in favor of aesthetics, the study of perception and value within the perceptual sphere.'²³⁵ By bringing to the fore perception, and especially the place or situation of the perceiver, Nietzsche's perspectivism offers an alternative way to relate to the world, a way in which the seeing or perceiving is more fundamental than what is seen or perceived.

Taken as a doctrine concerning knowledge, perspectivism is a self-refuting claim: if all is perspectival, then perspectivism is only a perspective. Nietzsche is well aware of this self-refuting problem and we have seen that he responds to it in *Beyond Good and Evil* only by saying 'then, all the better' (BGE 22 / KSA 5.37). As the shift to a performative language in Nietzsche's reply to the charge of self-refutation suggests, the interpretation according to which Nietzsche's perspectivism is self-refuting misses the point of perspectivism. This claim is self-refuting only if one takes it as an epistemological or metaphysical doctrine, but perspectivism precisely aims at moving away from this epistemological-metaphysical framework. Returning to the etymological sense of aesthetics, I believe perspectivism to be an aesthetic matter, which places the aesthetic, i.e. the perceptual and the sensual, at the centre of philosophical concerns: perspectivism is a matter of perception and more precisely 'half visual experience half thought' (PPF 140) similar to Wittgenstein's 'seeing-as.'

Following Nietzsche, perspectivism would be an alternative to epistemology in a way similar to which aesthetics is an alternative to the rationalist

²³⁵ Higgins (2000), p. 52.

philosophy of the 16th and 17th centuries. Baumgarten's understanding of aesthetics as the science of sensations contests the rationalist's epistemology which relies solely on reason and suggests that the senses, too, can give us knowledge of the world. As Stefan Majetschak argues, Baumgarten's conception of aesthetics is a 'rebellion against the rationalists' narrow concept of knowledge.'²³⁶ Nietzsche's perspectivism pursues Baumgarten's rehabilitation of the senses but takes it in a completely different direction. If there are no metaphysical entities we can know, the senses are not only a supplement to reason, but all that there is. A perspective, in this framework, could be considered a 'situated perception' or, in Wittgensteinian terms, a 'seeing-as.'

In a sense, Nietzsche operates the shift Rorty calls for in criticising traditional epistemology and philosophy as being the 'mirror of nature.' Against a representational epistemology and against a representational conception of language—which both rely on the metaphysical idea that the philosopher can objectively describe the world and that her being part of it does not influence the description—Nietzsche shifts the focus from the world and what we can say about it (because we can never reach any certainty about it, Wittgenstein would argue) to the way we relate to it, to our perception, to our worldview, and to all the elements that come into play in such perceptions. Perspectivism shifts the focus from what one sees to how one sees and to the various elements (linguistic, cultural, moral, religious, historical, etc.) that modify the way of seeing. As we will see, an important element in Nietzsche's understanding of how one sees the world is language

²³⁶ See Majetschak (2007), p.13: 'mit dem seinerzeit dominanten philosophischen Rationalismus, der ausschließlich begriffliches Wissen als wahres Wissen anerkannte und gegen dessen damit einhergehende Verkennung der in den Sinnesvermögen gelegenen vernunftanalogen Kompetenzen des Menschen Baumgartens *Aesthetica* rebellierte. Diese Rebellion gegen den aus seiner Sicht verengten Erkenntnisbegriff des Rationalismus führte Baumgarten—philosophiehistorisch gesehen erstmals—dazu, die Eigengesetzlichkeit und Erkenntnisfähigkeit der Sinnesvermögen des Menschen explizit zu thematisieren.'

as our relation to the world is always mediated by language (the metaphorical process in *On Truth and Lie*). As Nietzsche says: 'The way men usually are, it takes a name to make something visible for them.' (GS 261, KSA 3.517)

This notion of seeing is also strongly present in one of the most famous of Nietzsche's text on perspectivism in *The Genealogy of Morals*:

From now on, my dear philosophers, let us beware of the dangerous old conceptual fable which posited a 'pure, will-less, painless, timeless knowing subject,' let us beware of the tentacles of such contradictory concepts as 'pure reason,' 'absolute spirituality,' 'knowledge in itself;'—for these always ask us to imagine an eye which is impossible to imagine, an eye which supposedly looks out in no particular direction, an eye which supposedly either restrains or altogether lacks the active powers of interpretation which first makes seeing into seeing something—for here, then, a nonsense and non-concept is demanded of the eye. Perspectival seeing is the *only* kind of seeing there is, perspectival 'knowing' the *only* kind of 'knowing;' and the *more* the feelings about a matter which we allow to come to expression, the *more* eyes, different eyes through which we are able to view this same matter, the more complete our 'conception' of it, our 'objectivity,' will be. (GM III 12/ KSA 5.365)

This passage condenses most of Nietzsche's critique of traditional modes of thinking and presents the main characteristics of his perspectivism. First of all, Nietzsche opposes the perspectival to the 'pure,' the 'absolute,' and the 'as such.' What Nietzsche criticises here, as we have seen in the previous chapters, is the philosophers' tendency to universalise a concept against the multiplicity of phenomena. Rather than stating his critique in terms of language and metaphysics as he does in *On Truth and Lie* for instance, he elaborates it around the notion of 'seeing.' For any seeing to occur, there necessarily must be an eye, and therefore a subject, which perceives. Nietzsche criticises philosophers who have tried to annihilate this subjectivity in order to reach absoluteness. He takes the counterpoint of his predecessors by promoting a perspectival seeing, that is a seeing by a subject who interprets. It is interesting to note that Nietzsche first talks about a 'perspectival seeing' before a 'perspectival knowing.' Perspectivism is not at

first a matter of knowledge but above all a matter of perception. If there is a perspectival knowing, it is only because in order to know something, one must first perceive it (and this often happens visually). This perception being perspectival, the knowledge built upon it can only be perspectival as well.

As already discussed in previous chapters, perspectivism does not lead to a radical relativism but to a conceptual one according to which we can never know what the world is outside of our conceptual scheme (or even if there is such a thing as 'the world') or, in a Nietzschean vocabulary, outside of our perspective. The perspective limits or frames the perception and therefore the knowledge elaborated from it. This perspectivism is mainly an attack against the objectivity science or metaphysics pretend to reach. There cannot be any non-perspectival knowledge and in opposition to the 'bad' objectivity he criticises—objectivity which eradicates subjectivity—Nietzsche calls 'objectivity' the sum of the multiple perspectives. As the multiplicity of perspectives is, if not infinite, at least indefinite, one can never reach any absolute sum, any absolute objectivity. The knowledge of a thing depends first on our perspectival seeing, then on our description of it. And one element essential to any description of a thing is, according to Nietzsche, the affects we put into our words: the more affects, the better the description.

Nietzsche's perspectivism aims to show that there can be no knowledge without context, no absolute knowledge, for there is no 'objective' perception. All perception is perspectival and linked to a perceiving subject. Whereas Wittgenstein's focus with 'seeing-as' is on the object seen, Nietzsche's perspectivism focuses on the perceiving subject. 'Seeing-as' and perspectivism both revolve around the same idea—'seeing-as' is a kind of perspectivism—but the former focuses on what is seen and the possible interpretations, whereas the latter focuses on who or what sees and the affects at play in this perspectival seeing. The main difference between Nietzsche and Wittgenstein is that Nietzsche takes perspectivism into the realm of values, therefore linking it to his critiques of morality and culture, whereas Wittgenstein's main focus with 'seeing-as' is not culture but

psychology. Of course, psychology is important for Nietzsche as well—he considers psychology as the ‘queen of the sciences’ (BGE 23 / KSA 5.39)—but Nietzsche and Wittgenstein do not operate at the same level: Wittgenstein seeks to observe and describe the effects of psychology on seeing, among other things, whereas Nietzsche focuses on the deeper and unconscious level of the influence of affects and context on psychology. Their shared concern with psychology does however lead them to connect seeing to interpreting, and therefore to language. As we have seen, ‘seeing-as’ can be linked to language-games, each language-game entailing a specific kind of seeing and for Nietzsche too, perspectivism is linked to language.

This perspectival seeing can already be seen as playing a role in Nietzsche’s conception of language in *On Truth and Lie*. Whereas most commentators take *On Truth and Lie* to contain an early version of perspectivism in which Nietzsche has not yet abandoned the thing-in-itself, I believe that we can interpret Nietzsche’s notion of metaphor as a perspectival seeing.²³⁷ Most of the critiques regarding Nietzsche’s perspectivism in *On Truth and Lie* concern its focus on the thing-in-itself, the object of perspectivism. This focus forces Nietzsche to hold a difficult metaphysical position in which he criticises truth as correspondence, metaphysical language, and the thing-in-itself, whilst using them to say what he wants. If we shift focus from the object to the subject, as Nietzsche does in his later works, there are quite a few elements which can be of use to perspectivism in *On Truth and Lie*. The main element is the notion of metaphor which is the place of the perspectival seeing. Nietzsche describes language as being the result of a double metaphorical process: ‘To begin with, a nerve stimulus is transferred into an image: first metaphor. The image, in turn, is imitated into a sound: second metaphor.’ (TL 1 / KSA 1.879) As we have seen in our discussion of *On Truth and Lie* in Chapter Three, this can be understood as some basic sense data

²³⁷ On Nietzsche’s early perspectivism, see for instance Conant (2005), pp. 40-49.

empiricism: a stimulus reaches the mind of the perceiver who creates a corresponding image in her mind.

In this sense, metaphor operates a translation and we must shift our focus from the thing (the sense data) to the perspective. If there is a translation, this means it is a process and that elements from the context (external and internal to the perceiver) can come into play. The seeing process characterised as metaphor can therefore be understood as a 'seeing-as' or an interpretation. This is Sarah Kofman's thesis mentioned in Chapter Three according to which Nietzsche replaces metaphor with perspective in his later works.²³⁸ The process Nietzsche describes concerns various metaphorical processes: the translation from stimuli to images is only the first one. The second metaphor gets closer to Wittgenstein's 'seeing-as:' the image created in the perceiver's mind is then translated into a word. The perceiver does therefore not yet understand the images: understanding calls for another metaphorical process. The image is interpreted through its translation into a word. We have seen that, for Wittgenstein, interpretation does not always play a role in 'seeing-as.' In the Nietzschean process, it would mean that the translation from image to word is sometimes immediate, without reflection, sometimes requires interpretation. As Nietzsche's theory aims at explaining the origins of language, it would mean that language is built on various 'seeing-as' and that new language can be created with new 'seeing-as,' new perspectives.

b. Perspectivism and Values

What happens between the 'seeing' and the 'seeing-as'? What happens between the first and the second metaphor? Whether there is an interpretative process or not, a whole set of values are brought into the seeing. When observing, the perceiver brings her whole system of values

²³⁸ Kofman (1993), p. 82.

with her. And language is filled with values: 'Every word is a prejudice' (WS 55 / KSA 2.577), Nietzsche argues, and every value judgment is a perspective:

You must learn how to grasp the perspectival element in every valuation—the displacement, distortion, and seeming teleology of horizons and everything else that pertains to perspectivism; and also how much stupidity there is in opposed values and the whole intellectual loss that must be paid for every For, every Against. You must learn to grasp the necessary injustice in every For and Against, injustice as inseparable from life, life itself as conditioned by perspective and its injustice. (HH 'Preface' 6 / KSA 2. 20)

In the preface to *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche explicitly relates perspectivism to values. Knowledge is perspectival in the sense that knowledge is a perspective taken on life, and it is not the only perspective. With each perspective comes a value judgment and Nietzsche uses perspectivism to show that what we usually take for granted are only perspectives and that what we take for being good or bad is only a value attached to such a perspective. The opposition between true and untrue is a perspective (or an optics) through which we look at the world. In this perspective, we attribute positive values to truth, negative ones to lies. However, and hence the title 'On Truth and Lie in a *Non-Moral Sense*,' other perspectives can be taken, with other valuations attached to them.

This casting doubts on the value we attribute to truth is the starting point of *Beyond Good and Evil*: as there is no such thing as an objective, real, or true perspective, our valuations must depend on other criteria: be it beauty, use, love, and so on. As much as the description depends on the subject who describes, the valuation depends on the person who evaluates. Perspectives and valuations are numerous, and one can change perspective at any time (just as one can focus on the duck or the rabbit in Wittgenstein's duck-rabbit example). This does not mean that changing perspective is something easy to do, on the contrary it is rather difficult and violent as one has to abandon

one's old ways of seeing.²³⁹ Because of their unconstrained imagination and their supposedly innocent gaze, children (and they are an example Wittgenstein uses a lot) are great at changing perspectives. And let us not forget that 'In a genuine man a child is hidden: it wants to play.' (ZI 'Women' / KSA 4.85) The image of the child is a recurring feature in Nietzsche's philosophy and especially in *Zarathustra*. Let us not forget that the child is the last transformation of the spirit after the camel and the lion. The child is the yes-saying spirit: 'the spirit now wills *its own* will, the one who had lost the world attains *its own* world.' (ZI 'Transformations' / KSA 4.31) The spirit transformed back into a child is the only one that can affirm the world and affirm its own world. It is the spirit that can affirm its own perspectives. Whereas the camel follows the established perspectives and collapses under the weight of old values, whereas the lion negates the old values with a negative or destructive perspective, the child is the one who can create from the debris of the old values, who can affirm positive and creative perspectives.

Following one of Heraclitus' images, Nietzsche compares the poet to the child at play. This child, according to Nietzsche's reading of Heraclitus, playfully destroys and creates perspectives.

That striving towards the infinite, the beating of the wings of longing, which accompanies the highest joy in clearly perceived reality, recall that we must recognize in both states a Dionysian phenomenon, which reveals to us again and again the playful construction and destruction of the individual world as the overflow of an original joy, in a similar way to that in which Heraclitus the Obscure compares the world-forming force to a child at play, arranging and scattering stones here and there, building and then trampling sand-hills. (BT 24 / KSA 1.153)

²³⁹ In Sophie Fiennes's documentary *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema*, Žižek analyses John Carpenter's film *They Live* and suggests a similar violence to change ideology. In this film, the main character finds glasses which show him the message behind advertising and a fight ensues his attempt to bring from his friend to use the glasses. Ideology is so embedded in us that, Žižek argues, violence is sometimes necessary to question it. See Fiennes (2006).

This child at play, this yes-saying spirit destroying and creating perspectives, is similar to the poet who offers an aesthetic interpretation of the world. The Dionysian poet, too, creates and destroys perspectives to give her interpretation of the world. At the opposite of this aesthetic interpretation is the moral one Christianity defends:

In truth, there is no greater contradiction of the purely aesthetic interpretation and justification of the world as it is taught in this book than the Christian doctrine which is and wants to be exclusively moral and, with its absolute standard—already for example with the truthfulness of God—exiles art, *each and every* art, to the realm of *lies*—that is, denies, damns, condemns it. (BT 'Attempt' 5 / KSA 1.18)

The moral perspective is opposed to the aesthetic one because the former aims at stability whereas the latter aims at movement. There are many interpretations of the world: art and religion are two perspectives (and even more as art and religion contain many different perspectives). What Nietzsche criticises in Christianity and the herd morality is its claim to be the unique interpretation of the world.

Nietzsche criticises science on similar grounds: 'A "scientific" interpretation of the world, as you understand it, might therefore still be one of the *most stupid* of all possible interpretations of the world, meaning that it would be one of the poorest in meaning.' (GS 373 / KSA 3.626) Science is only one interpretation among others and by taking it as the 'true' interpretation, we follow the mistakes of metaphysical absoluteness. More than science itself, Nietzsche criticises here scientism, the application of scientific method to all objects. Interpreting the world (and this means not only the natural world but also the cultural one) according to the sole perspective of scientific method precisely reduces the number of perspectives to a single one. Hence scientism would be the poorest in meaning because the poorest in the number of possible perspectives whereas the poetic allows for multiple perspectives to coexist. And the poetic is necessary to human life, as Richard Rorty argues:

The fear of science, of 'scientism,' of 'naturalism,' of self-objectivation, of being turned by too much knowledge into a thing rather than a person, is the fear that all discourse will become normal discourse. That is, it is the fear that there will be objectively true or false answers to every question we ask, so that human worth will consist in knowing truths, and human virtue will be merely justified true belief. This is frightening because it cuts off the possibility of something new under the sun, of human life as poetic rather than merely contemplative.²⁴⁰

Scientism is however not the only danger according to Nietzsche, a similar critique can be made to metaphysics and religion, especially Christianity as we have seen. This opposition between the plurality of perspectives and the single one promoted by Christianity can be linked to Nietzsche's conception of 'eternal recurrence:' eternal recurrence could be interpreted as the never-ending process of destroying and creating perspectives, whereas Christianity promotes a motionless eternity: eternal life is perhaps the most contradictory conception as life is nothing but moving. The eternal recurrence is opposed to eternal life as movement is opposed to stability. Morality and science work towards constructing their 'cyclopic building' (GS 7 / KSA 3.380), towards establishing their single perspective. But as Nietzsche often argues, and his critiques of morality and science occur on the same grounds as those of metaphysics and religion, to identify everything under a single perspective loses the multiplicity of life: 'Behind such a way of thinking and evaluating, which must be hostile to art, if it is at all genuine, I always sensed *hostility to life*, the wrathful and vengeful disgust at life itself: for all life is founded on appearance, art, illusion, optic, the necessity of the perspectival and of error.' (BT 'Attempt' 5 / KSA 1.18)

Religion, scientism, morality: all are hostile to life and Nietzsche considers them nihilistic. To remain enclosed within one perspective is nihilistic as it contradicts the multiplicity of life. Indeed, existence is full of different perspectives giving various meanings (and this to an infinite extent):

²⁴⁰ Rorty (1979), pp. 388-389.

How far the perspective character of existence extends or indeed whether existence has any other character than this; whether existence without interpretation, without 'sense,' does not become 'nonsense'; whether, on the other hand, all existence is not essentially engaged in *interpretation*—that cannot be decided even by the most industrious and most scrupulously conscientious analysis and self-examination of the intellect; for in the course of this analysis the human intellect cannot avoid seeing itself in its own perspectives, and *only* in these. [...] Rather has the world become 'infinite' for us all over again, inasmuch as we cannot reject the possibility that *it may include infinite interpretations*. (GS 374 / KSA 3.626-7)

Poetry and art might therefore be better at describing existence than science or religion because they allow for the multiplicity of perspectives to exist and co-exist. This is precisely Nietzsche's and Wittgenstein's move against metaphysics, against the idea that the world can be fully grasped from one unique and only perspective. Rorty describes the quarrel between philosophy and poetry in these opposing terms of unicity and multiplicity: 'To take the side of the poets in this quarrel is to say that there are many descriptions of the same things and events, and that there is no neutral standpoint from which to judge the superiority of one description over another. Philosophy stands in opposition to poetry just insofar as it insists that there is such a standpoint.'²⁴¹

2. A Poetic Worldview

*Wreckage of stars:
I built a world from this wreckage
Nietzsche, 'Through the circle of Dionysos Dithyramps'*²⁴²

Perspectivism as discussed above is both an aesthetic and poetic matter: it is an aesthetic one because it is based on the multiplicity of perceptions through which the world appears to us; it is a poetic matter because the perspectives are made or created, and that this creation is, following the etymology of poetry, *poiesis*, a poetic making. Just as there can be various interpretations of a text, there can be multiple interpretations of anything

²⁴¹ Rorty (2016), p. 20.

²⁴² Nietzsche (2010), p. 323.

happening. In that sense, the world is all that is subject to interpretation. The multiplicity of perspectives and interpretations lead to various poetic worldviews created by a subject, the 'eye' (and hence the 'I') which is always at the source of the seeing as Nietzsche argues. If a worldview is poetic, it is because it is created, made, crafted. A perspectival poetics means a making of perspectives which lead to a worldview.

In such a poetic worldview 'What I want is more; I am no seeker. I want to create myself a sun of my own.' (GS 320 / KSA 3.320) One must abandon the passive descriptive stance and become a creator (of perspectives):

Moving away from things until there is a good deal that one no longer sees and there is much that our eye has to add if we are still to see them at all; or seeing things around a corner and as cut out and framed; or to place them so that they partially conceal each other and grant us only glimpses of architectural perspectives; or looking at them through tinted glass or in the light of the sunset; or giving them a surface and skin that is not fully transparent—all this we should learn from artists while being wiser than they are in other matters. For with them this subtle power usually comes to an end where art and life begins; but we want to be poets of our life—first of all in the smallest, most everyday matters. (GS 299 / KSA 3.538)

To be poets of our life means to be creators of our life because, as in Apollinaire's description of the task of poetry: 'It is that poetry and creation are one and the same; only that man can be called poet who invents, who creates insofar as man can create. The poet is who discovers new joys, even if they are hard to bear. One can be a poet in any field: it is enough that one be adventuresome and pursue new discovery.'²⁴³ Just as the artist's perspective reveals the hero within us, we can adopt the right perspective to become poets and heroes of our life, creators of something rather than followers. Creation is Nietzsche's escape route from herd morality. But how can one become a creator?

²⁴³ Cook (2004), p. 80.

According to Nietzsche the act of creation is tightly linked to the act of destruction: to create one must destroy. And one way of creating things for the poet is to create words:

to realize that what things *are called* is incomparably more important than what they are. [...] What at first was appearance becomes in the end, almost invariably, the essence and is effective as such. How foolish it would be to suppose that one only needs to point out this origin and this misty shroud of delusion in order to *destroy* the world that counts for real, so-called '*reality*'. We can destroy only as creators.—But let us not forget this either: it is enough to create new names and estimations and probabilities in order to create in the long run new "things." (GS 58 / KSA 3.422)

In order to destroy the false belief in the metaphysical dualism between reality and appearance, the philosopher must create 'new things' to replace the 'old' ones. The creation of something new replaces the old one and therefore destroys it. In order to create these 'new things,' one must create new words to account for those not yet existing things. This calls for originality according to Nietzsche: 'What is originality? *To see* something that has no name yet and hence cannot be mentioned although it stares us all in the face. The way men usually are, it takes a name to make something visible for them.—Those with originality have for the most part also assigned names.' (GS 261 / KSA 3.261) In order to create new words, one needs originality, and an original perspective. However, Nietzsche is not saying that creating a word creates a thing, there is no such thing as a direct correspondence between language and world, but rather that the process of creating a word (the metaphorical process explored in *On Truth and Lie*) opens new perspectives which disclose something of the world and allow communicating it. The word is the product of a certain perspective taken and the creation of a word creates possibilities of interpretation. In turn, this new word allows new perspectives to be taken on the world. The process is therefore double: a perspective creates a new word and a new word creates new possibilities in interpretation, i.e. new perspectives. Let us note however that the interpretative process is not necessarily always an interpretation in

Wittgenstein's sense: interpretation can be unconscious and perspectivism is often unconscious.

This notion of unconsciousness on which Nietzsche develops quite extensively is another aspect of the critique of metaphysics and its 'magic' language as the metaphysical conceptions of language and the world are made by negating the unconscious:

This is the essence of phenomenism and perspectivism as I understand them: Owing to the nature of *animal consciousness*, the world of which we can become conscious is only a surface- and a sign-world, a world that is made common and meaner; whatever becomes conscious *becomes* by the same token shallow, thin, relatively stupid, general, sign, herd, signal; all becoming conscious involves a great art and thorough corruption, falsification, reduction to superficialities, and generalization. (GS 354 / KSA 3.593)

This process of 'becoming conscious' is what happens in the metaphorical transposition of an image into a word: we become conscious of the object through the word. But the world disclosed through this process of naming loses its uniqueness: words equate unequal metaphors. There is a whole world of which we are not conscious either because it is lost in the process of naming or has not been named yet. And this unconscious dimension of the world is not the least part of it. To some extent, Nietzsche's unconscious world is similar to Wittgenstein's 'mystical.' The unconscious is what cannot be named because there is no word to describe it.

Nietzsche's poetic worldview does not aim at returning to the Greeks' tragic culture. Like the tragic culture, however, it aims at replacing science as the highest goal. Science, morality, or Christianity cannot be the highest goal, for there is no highest goal. This is what a perspectival poetics teaches us: the poetic worldview Nietzsche suggests calls for destruction and creation or, better, destruction through creation and vice versa. This is a point on which Nietzsche's and Wittgenstein's views seem the most distant from one another as Wittgenstein considers that philosophy should remain at the level of description. However, description can lead to change as it can lead to take another perspective on a matter and might even require the creation of a

perspective which can satisfy the description, in the same sense that one might need to create a context to understand a sign. Nietzsche's process of creation of perspectives destroys the one-sided perspective we usually follow. We must overcome the absoluteness of the scientific, moral, and religious (those being linked for Nietzsche) perspectives to embrace the plurality of perspectives without privileging one or another *a priori*. Nietzsche does not want science, morality, and religion to disappear, but he wants to escape their absolute character. It is however clear that if the scientific perspective loses its absoluteness, it will not be the same perspective as the one we know (perhaps it will become the wisdom perspective from Greek culture); and the same goes for the herd morality and Christianity. The overcoming of the old perspectives should not be seen as a Hegelian 'Aufhebung' because it is not the opposition of two perspectives that give rise to a third uniting one but, as Nietzsche suggests with his conception of fight between wills to power, the constant fight between perspectives that lead to consider perspectivism as the only viable option. Nietzsche's interest is in the fight itself, not the issue (for there is no issue). Various interpretations fight each other and by doing so enrich each other. One of these fights between perspectives can be exemplified by the 'quarrel' between philosophy and poetry, two interpretations which can enrich each other.

To exemplify this overcoming of old perspectives through the fight with new perspectives, both Nietzsche and Wittgenstein use the figure of the child. The poetic worldview could very well be called a childlike worldview, in a positive sense. We have seen that, in *Zarathustra*, the third and final transformation of the spirit is in the yes-saying child, and that Wittgenstein calls for the children's imagination in order to discuss the notion of 'seeing-as.' Wittgenstein's example shows that one cannot sustain multiple interpretations at the same time: the children see the chest as a house and no longer as a chest, just as it is not possible to see both the duck and the rabbit at the same time but only to shift from one to another. In their games,

children use a different perspective and enrich the usual one. The poet, or the artist in general, has something of a child (or has preserved a childish character) and poetry or other arts all play a role in creating worldviews which we can follow or not. Using a different terminology, Nelson Goodman considers 'that the arts must be taken no less seriously than the sciences as modes of discovery, creation, and enlargement of knowledge in the broad sense of advancement of the understanding, and thus that the philosophy of art should be conceived as an integral part of metaphysics and epistemology.'²⁴⁴ Whereas I agree with Goodman that the arts should be given an importance similar to that of the sciences, I think perspectivism overcomes the distinction between philosophy of art, metaphysics, and epistemology. Once taken into account, perspectivism states that the arts, metaphysics, and epistemology are all perspectives to which we give more or less importance. With the rise and progress of science, epistemology has become the valuable perspective. But let us not forget that the multiplicity of perspectives will always be more valuable than a single one, for a problem in a perspective might be solved by shifting point of view. This is, once again, one of the reasons Nietzsche criticises science as a 'cyclopic building' whose only eye cannot account for the depth of the world. The creation of new perspectives is a way to give depth to the world. To give depth to the world is also to give depth to our lives, as mentioned before, 'we want to be poets of our life.' Why should one limit oneself to seeing only the duck in the duck-rabbit? And why should one limit oneself to viewing the world as science presents it? There are many ways of approaching and making the world and there are no reasons other than socio-cultural norms to explain why we privilege one over another.

We have seen that Nietzsche criticises scientism and religion as nihilistic perspectives which enclose within one perspective only. On the contrary, poetry—and art in general—represents a lively perspective, one in which

²⁴⁴ Goodman (1978), p. 102.

one can live. Heidegger argues towards something similar in 'Poetically Man Dwells:' 'Poetry is what really lets us dwell. But through what do we attain to a dwelling place? Through building. Poetic creation, which lets us dwell, is a kind of building.'²⁴⁵ For Heidegger, poetry understood as *poiesis* is a making, creating, building of a world in which we can live. It is an attempt at making sense of the world, a perspective from which things can take sense. If, following Nietzsche's 'death of God,' there is no given meaning to existence and that nihilistic perspectives should be avoided, poetry and art offer an element of an answer. In this perspective-building, poetry reveals something of our relation to the world which, like the language we use to describe it, does never exist out of a perspectival viewing. And when this perspectival viewing comes to one's consciousness, one realises that all seeing is not only a 'seeing-as' (intentional or not), but also a creating of such a 'seeing-as.' To that extent, poetry as *poiesis* shares quite a lot with philosophy as they both engage in the activity of creating perspectives.

In that sense, philosophy and poetry share the idea that a worldview or a perspective has a poetics: every perspective is created. Poetry, but to a wider extent art, is the place where this perspectival poetics reveals itself as such, as the creation of a worldview. If the task of philosophy is to uncover this perspectival poetics and bring it to one's consciousness, it overlaps the task of poetry and the arts. Once philosophy abandons the idea of metaphysics and adopts rather than rejects the multiplicity of perspectives as an essential feature of our relation to the world, it must find a way of expressing it. Insights can be found in poetry and other literary arts but, in the end, this means that a perspectival poetics leads to a philosophical poetics: philosophy can no longer write itself as a metaphysical system but must find a new expression, and searches for it in poetry rather than in science. The questioning of the relations between philosophy and poetry ultimately leads philosophy to the question of style, and more specifically of its own style.

²⁴⁵ Heidegger (2013), p. 213

Both Nietzsche and Wittgenstein tackle this question and their reflections on language and poetry are embodied in their stylistic activity. Before turning to more general considerations about style in philosophy in Chapter Seven, let us now focus on one specific poetic tool which is also often at play in philosophical texts: metaphor.

Chapter Six:

Metaphor: A Case Study in Poetics

The notion of perspectival poetics suggests that philosophy aims at uncovering and changing our ways of seeing by creating new perspectives. Although Nietzsche and Wittgenstein seem to disagree on the creative aspect of the philosophical task, both aim to effect change and uncover the fact that the ordinary perspective is only one among many others. We have seen that this task comes to the fore when philosophy encounters poetry and takes its challenges seriously. This does not mean that there are closed borders to the concepts of philosophy and poetry and some poetic philosophies such as Nietzsche's—philosophies which accept or take poetics as a central concern—come close to what is usually said to be poetry (and we will see in Chapter Seven that in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche even considers he 'flew a thousand miles beyond what had hitherto been called poetry' by writing *Zarathustra*).

The question however remains of how this change can be effected: how can poetry change our relation to the world and how can philosophy conceptualise this change? We have seen that the arts can change our ways of seeing by staging an object or action in a certain context: the decontextualization and recontextualization of the object or action changes our perception of it. Wittgenstein's and Nietzsche's remarks on theatre indicate the possibility of change in perspective through the staging of an action or a character, and Duchamp's ready-mades would be an example of such a recontextualisation in the realm of visual arts: the recontextualisation Duchamp operates by placing an ordinary object in a museum or an art gallery brings us to see it in a different light, brings our attention to features we might usually not notice. The same goes with language and poetry; we have seen that words in poetry are recontextualised in such a way that they signify differently. This recontextualisation can occur in various ways and

we have already seen that two possibilities to do so are plays on sound or rhythm for instance.

A more specific tool which has caused great problems to philosophy of language (and especially a philosophy of language which relies on reference and truth-conditions), and that philosophers also extensively use, is metaphor. As already mentioned, it is one of the poet's most important tools according to Nietzsche: 'For the true poet, metaphor is no rhetorical figure but rather an image which takes the place of something else, which really hovers before him in the place of a concept.' (BT 8 / KSA 1.60) Many theories of metaphor have been developed throughout the history of philosophy and I will not attempt to trace back the genealogy of these theories. My aim in this chapter is to explore how metaphor takes part in a perspectival poetics, how metaphors can be seen as ways of creating perspectives. If Nietzsche and Wittgenstein do not specifically elaborate a theory of metaphor—and we have seen that attributing any theory to either of them is a dangerous move—their remarks on this notion shed an interesting light on it, especially when it comes to the role of metaphor in philosophy. This chapter is divided in three sections: in the first, I focus on Nietzsche's conception of metaphor in his early texts to show how metaphor is not only a rhetoric trope, but above all a fundamental way of seeing and relating to the world; in the second, I shift my attention to Wittgenstein's ideas to show how metaphor can help renew our ways of thinking; in the third and last section, I discuss the role of metaphor in philosophy. These reflections on metaphor open the path to the question of style in philosophy which I will tackle in Chapter Seven and they therefore serve as a bridge from the perspectival poetics to the poetics of philosophy.

1. From a Rhetoric Trope to a Way of Seeing the World

In Nietzsche's early texts from the first half of the 1870s, the word metaphor appears many times and is even the central notion of *On Truth and Lie*. He however abandons the use of this term after 1875, the word '*Metapher*' and

its derivatives appearing only four times (out of 62 in total) after this year. Nietzsche's heavy use of the term metaphor and his abandoning of this notion after 1875 has been interpreted by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe as related to Nietzsche's 'rhetoric turn' or detour. This 'rhetoric turn' is linked to his work as a professor at the University of Basel in the early 1870's, where he gives lectures on rhetoric and rhetoric tropes. Although he considers metaphor to be an important trope in these lectures, Nietzsche follows Quintilian's classical definition of metaphor and does not give it an importance outside of the rhetorical world. A 1872-1873 note defines metaphor as follows: '*Metaphor* means treating as *equal* something that one has recognised to be *similar* in one point.' (NF-1872-1873, 19[249] / KSA 7.498) This definition relies on the rather classic idea that metaphor is a kind of simile: metaphor would be an implicit simile whereas comparison is an explicit one. A metaphor is therefore a way of acknowledging or showing a similarity between two objects.

This definition seems to conform to Aristotle's and Quintilian's definitions. Aristotle defines metaphor in section 21 of the *Poetics*: 'A metaphor is a carrying over of a word belonging to something else, from genus to species, from species to genus, from species to species, or by analogy.'²⁴⁶ The main idea of metaphor is therefore that it modifies the meaning of a word by carrying another meaning over. If comparison carries the meaning of one of the terms on the other using a comparative word, metaphor does it implicitly, without the comparative word. As Quintilian argues, following Aristotle on this point: 'On the whole *metaphor* is a shorter form of *simile*, while there is this further difference, that in the latter we compare some object to the thing which we wish to describe, whereas in the former this object is actually substituted for the thing.'²⁴⁷ Metaphor is a shortened simile and operates a substitution.

²⁴⁶ Aristotle (2006), 1457b, p. 52.

²⁴⁷ Quintilian (1921), p. 305.

If Nietzsche follows this idea in his lectures on rhetoric, there is another aspect of Aristotle's definition which comes to the fore in Nietzsche's use of the word metaphor in his other works, namely that to be able to use metaphors well is a gift, 'since to use metaphors well is to have insight into what is alike.'²⁴⁸ Metaphor requires seeing a similarity between two things and Nietzsche's use of metaphor in *On Truth and Lie* relies on this definition. There is more to metaphor than merely seeing a similarity according to Nietzsche, there is a creative force at play. As he suggests in the second part of *On Truth and Lie*, there is a metaphorical drive at the heart of the human, that is a drive to create similarities, which is exhibited especially by artists and myths. In his definition of metaphor as a handling as alike of two things which have been recognised as alike, the important part is the second – and the implicit creative task it requires. In other words, what a metaphor brings into question is: what does it mean to recognise (and also and above all create) a similarity? This focus on the recognition of the similarity is fundamental because it puts into play our ways of seeing and relating to the world. To see a similarity is, in Wittgensteinian terms, to see something as something else and I will develop the relation between metaphor and 'seeing-as' in the next section. This notion of 'seeing-as' involves, as we have seen, a creative dimension through the use of imagination among other things. Nietzsche's focus on the implicit task at play in establishing a metaphor makes it something more than a mere rhetoric trope: metaphors engage our whole way of seeing the world. To that extent, metaphors can also change our ways of seeing. The idea of the creation of metaphor must be understood in both directions of the genitive: there is a metaphor which is created by the poet and there is a creation of a way of seeing the world through the metaphorical process.

Whereas the classical conception of metaphor, that is Quintilian's interpretation of Aristotle, considers it as a shortened or implicit comparison,

²⁴⁸ Aristotle (2006), 1459a, p. 56.

Nietzsche interprets Aristotle differently and makes him say something more. Metaphor is no longer the result of a comparison; it does no longer follow this caricatural process: 'I see a similarity, I establish a comparison, I make this comparison implicit, and call it a metaphor.' The important step, the real metaphorical step of this process is, according to Nietzsche, not the making implicit of the comparison, such as classical theorists of metaphor think, but the first one, the seeing a similarity. This seeing a similarity, insofar as it is a 'seeing-as,' is also a creation or invention of a similarity. This is the conception of metaphor Nietzsche develops in *On Truth and Lie* where he speaks abundantly about metaphor without defining what it is. As we have seen, Nietzsche argues in *On Truth and Lie* that metaphors are at the origins of language and that language constitutes itself by successive metaphors. Each step transposes something into something else (perception, image, sound) and this transposition serves to establish concepts. The conceptual task is to equate unequal metaphors whereas the metaphorical task is creative and transforms something into something other. As Nietzsche says, the first metaphor is to transpose the nerve stimulus into an image and the second the image into a sound. Nietzsche never characterises these transpositions as natural ones; there is no 'natural' relation between the image and the sound, as this would precisely amount to return to a 'magic' conception of language such as that defended by Cratylus. There is an arbitrariness of the signifier according to Saussure, the relation between sound and image is a conventional one, and Nietzsche would argue that it comes from the necessity of communication, that is of building a community. What occurs within the translation from image to word is nothing less than a creation: from a nerve stimulus, an image is created; from an image, a word is created.

As already mentioned, this creative task is precisely that of poets and myths, as Nietzsche argues in the second part of *On Truth and Lie*:

That drive to form metaphors, that fundamental human drive which cannot be left out of consideration for even a second without also

leaving out human beings themselves, is in truth not defeated, indeed hardly even tamed, by the process whereby a regular and rigid new world is built from its own sublimated products—concepts—in order to imprison it in a fortress. The drive seeks out a channel and a new area for its activity, and finds it in myth and in art generally. (TL 2 / KSA 1.887)

There is a fundamental human drive to form metaphors, to see and to create similarities which outgrow those established by linguistic and scientific concepts. To that extent, Nietzsche's conception of metaphor shifts from a rhetoric (and linguistic) understanding to an aesthetic one: metaphor is not only a way to express a comparison but above all a way of expressing and seeing the world, a way of transposing nerve stimuli into images and images into sounds. We will see that the aesthetic understanding of metaphor as a way of seeing the world leads, in turn, to a poetic understanding of metaphor as a creative process.

When Nietzsche argues in *The Birth of Tragedy* that 'for the true poet, metaphor is no rhetorical figure but rather an image which takes the place of something else, which really hovers before him in the place of a concept,' (BT 8 / KSA 1.60) this means that the poet goes back to the lively process which is at the origins of language. Metaphor, for the poet, is not a mere rhetorical trope, but a fundamental way of seeing the world. As said before, by doing so, the poet shifts from the rhetoric realm to the aesthetic one. Insofar as metaphors create new ways of seeing the world, they acquire a poetic dimension in the etymological sense of *poiesis*, making or creating. Metaphor is not a comparison or a means for comparison, it is rather what the poet sees and the expression of her way of seeing. The poet does not compare two things through a metaphor but rather sees the metaphor where we see a concept.

If we come back to the classic example 'Juliet is the sun' which we have discussed in Chapter Two, it does not mean that the poet compares Juliet to the sun, or that Juliet shares characteristics with the sun, but rather that the poet sees the sun where we see Juliet. Through this metaphor, the poet

expresses her way of seeing the world and shares it with us. We could then interpret the metaphor saying for instance that Juliet is as valuable as the sun for the poet, or that Juliet shines like the sun, or that the poet could not live were Juliet not to rise anymore (and this is actually what happens). We could then consider that all these interpretations have a similar meaning and attribute this meaning to the metaphor. However, this whole interpretative process needs not necessarily be done. It is one way of interpreting a metaphor among others, and perhaps not the most fruitful one.

For the poet, metaphor therefore outgrows the mere idea of comparison: it is the way in which she constructs or creates a perspective on the world and shares it. Metaphors create ways of seeing and do not merely state similarities; they do not describe a state of affairs (and hence the problems encountered by representational conceptions of language in accounting for metaphors) but act upon our worldview by acting upon language. This conception of metaphors as creation of perspectives suggests something similar to Sarah Kofman's idea mentioned in the previous chapters according to which Nietzsche replaces the word metaphor with the notion of perspective in his later works.²⁴⁹ We have already seen that the notion of interpretation is related to perspectivism, and a metaphor, insofar as it is a perspective on the world, could be stated in terms of interpretation. Pursuing Kofman's idea, we could say that the abandon of the notion of metaphor coincides with the rise of perspectivism and the related notion of interpretation.

If we understand the shift from metaphor to perspective in this way, we can also apply to perspectives the life-death characterisation Nietzsche applies to the metaphor-concept opposition. The poetic attempt to multiply perspectives (and therefore going towards the realm of metaphor) would be lively whereas monoperspectival ways of seeing (such as science or religion) would go towards concepts and death. These monoperspectival

²⁴⁹ Kofman (1993), p. 82.

undertakings are therefore nihilistic as they promote death over life. Poets, by creating metaphors, create new and lively perspectives which enrich the reader's life, whereas concept-based forms enclose the reader-thinker within a unique perspective, and a morbid one moreover. More than escaping the 'cyclopic buildings' of science and religion, metaphors (and with them the whole poetic realm) are ways of escaping the superficiality of reality seen from the ordinary perspective:

There are no 'literal' expressions and no knowing the literal sense without metaphor. But the deception about this exists, i.e. the belief in the truth of sensory impressions. The most common metaphors, the usual ones, are now regarded as truths and as the standard by which to measure the rarer ones. Actually what prevails here is only the difference between habituation and novelty, frequency and rarity. (NF-1872-1873, 19[228] / KSA 7.491)

The ordinary world, or the ordinary language, is made of the metaphors which have been accepted and therefore turned into concepts.²⁵⁰ Knowledge gained from these ordinary metaphors is therefore a deception from which one should escape. Metaphors offer a way to do so, and even in the realm of science or philosophy. Nietzsche's attempt to return to metaphors can thus be seen as a way of returning to a perspective which promotes life. In that sense, a philosophy based on such lively perspectives would be a 'gay science,' one which promotes life rather than a nihilistic form of scientism. To explore further this relation between metaphors and thinking, let us now turn to Wittgenstein's views on metaphor.

²⁵⁰ This idea that dead metaphors become ordinary language has been pointed out by many philosophers. For instance, Max Black considers metaphors can become part of the literal sense: 'Metaphor plugs the gaps in the literal vocabulary (or, at least, supplies the want of convenient abbreviations). So viewed, metaphor is a species of *catachresis*, which I shall define as the use of a word in some new sense in order to remedy a gap in the vocabulary. Catachresis is the putting of new senses into old words. But if a catachresis serves a genuine need, the new sense introduced will quickly become part of the literal sense.' Black (1955), p. 280. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson go further in studying how a whole metaphorical structure underlies our uses of language: 'Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.' Lakoff and Johnson (2003), p. 4.

2. Metaphor 'Refreshes the Intellect'

If metaphors create new ways of seeing, as we have seen with Nietzsche, and if they are of use in the establishment of a 'gay science,' they might create new ways of thinking as well. In a remark, Wittgenstein notes that 'a good simile refreshes the intellect' (CV, p. 3) and this can be interpreted in the sense abovementioned according to which metaphors (if we take here simile to be related to metaphor) create ways of thinking which escape the traditional conceptual framework. Wittgenstein does not discuss the notion of 'metaphor' much, but if we take it within the framework of his discussions of poetry, the question arises as whether metaphors can be paraphrased or not. We have already discussed this idea in Chapter Four, but it brings an interesting insight to the discussion of metaphor.

In a remark regarding poetic language, Wittgenstein argues that poems cannot be paraphrased and that this has to do with the notion of 'secondary meaning.' Wittgenstein does not define what metaphors are, but distinguishes 'metaphorical meaning' from 'secondary meaning.' He discusses these kinds of meaning in commenting the sentence 'e is yellow,' and argues that in this sentence, 'e' is not used in a metaphorical way: 'The secondary meaning is not a "metaphorical" meaning. If I say, "For me the vowel *e* is yellow", I do not mean: "yellow" in a metaphorical meaning—for I could not express what I want to say in any other way than by means of the concept of yellow.' (PPF 278) For him, 'e is yellow' does not use the word yellow in a metaphorical way, but in a secondary way which cannot be substituted by any other. Within the classical framework of metaphor as substitution, Wittgenstein's sentence is indeed not metaphorical for we cannot find a term for which 'yellow' is the substitute. However, if we follow our discussion of metaphor above according to which metaphor is no longer related to the idea of a substitution but to a creation of perspective, the 'secondary meaning' Wittgenstein discusses can be interpreted as use of language which creates a new perspective.

Whereas Nietzsche modifies and adapts the notion of metaphor to his thoughts, Wittgenstein keeps the classical definition of metaphor and uses another notion, that of secondary meaning, to account for what Nietzsche calls metaphors. Donald Davidson's theory of metaphor and his interpretation of Wittgenstein can prove helpful in understanding this 'e is yellow.' Davidson argues:

Metaphor makes us see one thing as another by making some literal statement that inspires or prompts the insight. Since in most cases what the metaphor prompts or inspires is not entirely, or even at all, recognition of some truth or fact, the attempt to give literal expression to the content of the metaphor is simply misguided.²⁵¹

Davidson's theory of metaphor is interesting because it moves away from the idea that there is a message which the metaphor transmits. On the contrary, the meaning of the metaphor is its literal meaning and there is no specific metaphorical meaning. What the metaphor shows or reveals however is a certain way of seeing. We have noted that representational language fails to account for metaphor because there is no correspondence within metaphor. Davidson's theory brings to the fore the idea that the representational conception of language works fine with metaphors, but that they are just presenting nonsense. This presentation of nonsense is a way of expressing something which could not be said in representational language. In other words, Davidson's theory tries to balance between representation and expression within metaphor. The meaninglessness of metaphors understood from a representational perspective requires a shift to another conception of language, to an expressive conception of language. Metaphor express something, namely a point of view or perspective, and therefore reveal something from the world. In that understanding of metaphor, and inasmuch as the meaning is the literal one, metaphors cannot be paraphrased. Indeed, if the only meaning of a metaphorical statement is its literal meaning, it cannot be paraphrased: 'e is yellow' only means that 'e is

²⁵¹ Davidson (2009), p. 263

yellow' and this metaphor (in a Davidsonian sense) reveals something of the world. Following Davidson, this would mean that the literal meaning of yellow is always there, but it does not really make sense to consider a letter to have a colour. As it does not make sense, we cannot attribute to 'yellow' a metaphorical meaning which we could find by paraphrasing it.

This impossibility of paraphrase brings to the fore the idea that metaphors (and poetry in general) are specific uses of language which rely more on expression than representation. As Richard Rorty argues, discussing Davidson's theory of metaphor:

The Davidsonian claim that metaphors do not have meanings may seem like a typical philosopher's quibble, but it is not. It is part of an attempt to get us to stop thinking of language as a medium. This, in turn, is part of a larger attempt to get rid of the traditional philosophical picture of what it is to be human. The importance of Davidson's point can perhaps best be seen by contrasting his treatment of metaphor with those of the Platonist and the positivist on the one hand and the Romantic on the other. The Platonist and the positivist share a reductionist view of metaphor: They think metaphors are either paraphrasable or useless for one serious purpose which language has, namely, representing reality. By contrast, the Romantic has an expansionist view: He thinks metaphor is strange, mystic, wonderful. Romantics attribute metaphor to a mysterious faculty called the 'imagination,' a faculty they suppose to be at the very center of the self, the deep heart's core. Whereas the metaphorical looks irrelevant to Platonists and positivists, the literal looks irrelevant to Romantics. For the former think that the point of language is to represent a hidden reality which lies outside us, and the latter thinks its purpose is to express a hidden reality which lies within us.²⁵²

This opposition between positivists or Platonists and Romantics can be coined in terms of representational and expressive language. One of the characteristics of Romantic theory of language is their rejection of representation and their conception of language as expression. We have discussed this matter extensively in Chapter Two, and this shift to expression leads to a new conception of metaphor. Davidson's theory of metaphor

²⁵² Rorty (1989), p. 19.

however manages to escape this opposition and allows for both conceptions of language to coexist. The importance of metaphor does not lie within language, but within the new points of views or perspectives it creates in and by language.

Returning to Wittgenstein's discussion of 'e is yellow,' we can interpret this sentence as a specific use of language which brings us to see the world anew. Interestingly, Wittgenstein also links this idea of secondary meaning to the use of words such as 'signification' or 'to mean,' thus relating it to the language of philosophy. To what extent is philosophical language metaphorical (in a Davidsonian sense)? This is the question Wittgenstein raises: 'Why shouldn't a particular technique of employment of the words "meaning", "to mean" and others lead me to use these words in, so to speak, a picturesque, improper, sense? (As when I say that the sound *e* is yellow.)' (RPP 1062, see also 1059-1061) What metaphors reveal is a tension created by the fact that seemingly meaningless statements can make sense.

The meaninglessness of a literal reading of metaphors creates a tension which brings the reader's attention to another way of seeing and Paul Ricoeur develops a similar conception of metaphor:

The entire strategy of poetic discourse plays on this point: it seeks the abolition of the reference by means of self-destruction of the meaning of metaphorical statements, the self-destruction being made manifest by an impossible literal interpretation. But this is only the first phase, or rather the negative counterpart, of a positive strategy. Within the perspective of semantic impertinence, the self-destruction of meaning is merely the other side of an innovation in meaning at the level of the entire statement, an innovation obtained through the 'twist' of the literal meaning of the words. It is this innovation in meaning that constitutes living metaphor.²⁵³

If I read the metaphor literally, I do not understand it or, better, it makes no sense for me. This breaking down of meaning is the first step (or negative step) in metaphor. The ordinary meanings of the words are no longer helpful in understanding the metaphorical statement, but the tension thereby

²⁵³ Ricoeur (2003), pp. 271-272.

created makes sense for the statement as a whole. Words do not acquire a specific, new meaning but the meaning of the metaphorical statement is not equal to the sum of the meanings of the words used in it. A metaphor is an innovation in meaning which covers the whole statement rather than the words themselves. The patent falsity of metaphors is a way of directing our attention to something else, namely the innovation of sense thereby established.

The meaning of a metaphorical statement is therefore nothing more than its literal meaning, and this is what Davidson argues:

Metaphor runs on the same familiar linguistic tracks that the plainest sentences do; this we saw from considering simile. What distinguishes metaphor is not meaning but use—in this it is like assertion, hinting, lying, promising, or criticizing. And the special use to which we put language in metaphor is not—cannot be—to “say something” special, no matter how indirectly. For a metaphor *says* only what shows on its face—usually patent falsehood or an absurd truth. And this plain truth or falsehood needs no paraphrase—its meaning is given in the literal meaning of the words.²⁵⁴

However, this does not mean that the metaphorical statement is meaningless. It is meaningless within the framework of representational language, but it is meaningful in what it expresses of the world, in the perspective it offers on the world. Metaphors do therefore not transport a meaning or a content or a message, but rather only aim at disturbing the ordinary meaning and at bringing our attention to what can happen when ordinary language is disturbed in such a way. There is no idea of message in metaphor, just as there is no message in poetry. This idea of message still relies on the belief in a ‘magic’ language and as Samuel Wheeler argues: ‘Finally, without the magic language, traditional accounts of metaphor must collapse, since there are no words that can be taken only literally. Derrida puts these points into an analysis of “binary oppositions” that connects his discussion of philosophical analysis with structuralism and complements

²⁵⁴ Davidson (2009), p. 259.

Quine's and Davidson's discussions of dogmas of empiricism.'²⁵⁵ What remains to be discussed is how the language of philosophy survives the death of 'magic' language. Before turning to the question of style in the next chapter, let us focus on the role of metaphor in philosophy.

3. Metaphors in Philosophy

We have seen that Nietzsche argues in *The Birth of Tragedy* that metaphors are what poets see in place of concepts and that science should open up to metaphors in order to counter its nihilistic tendencies and embrace the multiplicity of perspectives. However, science usually relies on concepts—and we have seen that Nietzsche criticises science on these grounds in *On Truth and Lie*—and philosophy does too. Nietzsche suggests this in an 1872-1873 note: 'Great uncertainty as to whether philosophy is an art or a science. It is an art in its purposes and its production. But the means, i.e. representation in concepts, it has in common with science.' (NF-1872-1873, 19[62] / KSA 7.439) Similarly, Deleuze considers the task of the philosopher is that of creating concepts.²⁵⁶ We have however seen that Nietzsche is quite critical of concepts and that Wittgenstein rejects their 'craving for generality.' Nietzsche thus suggests going back to metaphors and thus brings philosophy closer to art and poetry. In a quote from the same period, Nietzsche claims that: 'In the philosopher activities proceed through metaphors.' (NF-1872-1873, 19[174] / KSA 7.473) Metaphor has therefore an important role to play for philosophers, and Nietzsche is not the only one to say so. Even Max Black, whose aims are probably very remote from Nietzsche's, claims at the end of his article 'On Metaphor' that philosophy would be limited if not using metaphors.²⁵⁷ Although Black considers

²⁵⁵ Wheeler (2000), p. 219.

²⁵⁶ Deleuze develops this idea in *What Is Philosophy?* and interestingly questions the differences between the philosophical activity of creating concepts and scientific or artistic activities: 'We always come back to the question of the use of this activity of creating concepts, in its difference from scientific or artistic activity.' Deleuze (1994), p. 8.

²⁵⁷ Black (1955), p. 294.

metaphors as dangerous and as a tool rather than a central feature of philosophical writing, they are nevertheless useful, necessary, and, most importantly, cannot be replaced by anything else. This last idea goes in the sense that metaphors cannot be paraphrased, and that philosophy's use of metaphor is therefore not ornamental. The philosophers' metaphors might be explained and analysed but cannot be replaced. The philosophical language uses a poetic tool, and this reveals the literary dimension of philosophy. Derrida explores this dimension extensively and adopts a view much closer to Nietzsche's. He considers, unlike Black, that metaphors are at the centre of philosophical writing, and that the task of philosophy is to deconstruct the concepts in order to uncover the metaphorical material from which it is built. Without entering the deconstructionist discourse, Hans-Georg Gadamer also considers that metaphors show an incoherence between meaning and context of use: '[The descriptive precision of semantic analysis] points up the incoherence that results when a realm of words is carried over into new contexts—and such incongruity often indicates that something truly new has been discovered.'²⁵⁸ This carrying over of meaning into new contexts is precisely the task of metaphors and Gadamer thus suggests that metaphors are ways of discovering something new. These metaphors however settle down and become ordinary language, thus hiding the new it had uncovered: 'Only when the word has taken root, as it were, in its metaphorical use and has lost its character of having been taken up and carried over does its meaning in the new context begin to become its "proper" meaning.'²⁵⁹ There is a metaphorical process which takes part in establishing meaning for Gadamer. This, as we will see, is not without impact on philosophical language.

Metaphor, Derrida argues, is a central element of philosophical language: 'metaphor seems to involve the usage of philosophical discourse in its

²⁵⁸ Gadamer (1976), p. 85.

²⁵⁹ Gadamer (1976), p. 85.

entirety, nothing less than the usage of so-called natural language *in* philosophical discourse, that is, the usage of natural language *as* philosophical language.²⁶⁰ Derrida is concerned with the relation between natural language and philosophical discourse. At the centre of philosophical language, and the reason why ordinary language can be philosophical, is the use of metaphor because, as Derrida argues in *On Grammatology*, metaphors take part in the process of meaning:

Metaphor must therefore be understood as the process of the idea or meaning (of the signified, if one wishes) before being understood as the play of signifiers. The idea is the signified meaning, that which the word expresses. But it is also a sign of the thing, a representation of the object within my mind. Finally, this representation of the object, signifying the object and signified by the word or by the linguistic signifier in general, may also indirectly signify an affect or a passion. [...] And it is the *inadequation of the designation* (metaphor) which *properly expresses* the passion.²⁶¹

Ordinary language has its limits and we have seen for instance that Nietzsche considers language to be incapable of accounting for inner states in *Dawn* 115. For Derrida, expressing passion requires metaphors because they bring into tension the signifier and the signified. In structuralist linguistics, following Saussure, the signifier represents the signified (and this representation is purely conventional and arbitrary). In this couple signifier-signified, a metaphor is, according to Derrida, a process of the signified rather than a game of the signifiers. The signified normally only exists inasmuch as there is a signifier which brings it to existence, which represents it, and metaphor disturbs this relation. This disturbance of the relation between signifier and signified, the metaphor, can express passion. Whereas Nietzsche states that language is incapable of accounting for inner states such as passion, Derrida suggests that metaphors are the solution for this impossibility as they create a tension between the signifier and the signified

²⁶⁰ Derrida (1982), p. 209.

²⁶¹ Derrida (1997), p. 275.

which expands the scope of ordinary language and gives it the nuances to account for passion.

If philosophy is to be concerned with life and existence, it cannot forego the discussion of passions and this can only happen if philosophy uses metaphors, because concepts miss the point of passion. This relation between metaphor and passion is however also what has caused philosophers to be cautious with metaphors, as Derrida argues:

Metaphor, therefore, is determined by philosophy as a provisional loss of meaning, an economy of the proper without irreparable damage, a certainly inevitable detour, but also a history with its sights set on, and within the horizon of, the circular reappropriation of literal, proper meaning. This is why the philosophical evaluation of metaphor always has been ambiguous: metaphor is dangerous and foreign as concerns *intuition* (vision or contact), *concept* (the grasping or proper presence of the signified), and *consciousness* (proximity or self-presence); but it is in complicity with what it endangers, is necessary to it in the extent to which the de-tour is a re-turn guided by the function of resemblance (*mimesis* or *homoiosis*), under the law of the same. The opposition of intuition, the concept, and consciousness at this point no longer has any pertinence. These three values belong to the order and to the movement of meaning. Like metaphor.²⁶²

Philosophy usually regards metaphors with caution because they challenge intuition, concept, and consciousness. Against this negative characterisation, Derrida aims to show that metaphors also take part in establishing meaning. Intuition, concept, and consciousness belong to the process of meaning and metaphor should not be excluded from this process. Metaphor is on the contrary necessary to the process of meaning because the establishing of an 'other' in place of the self (the idea of substitution) is a way of defining the self as the 'other' and therefore expanding its meaning.

To return to Wittgenstein's idea of a 'secondary meaning,' we might argue that metaphors are constitutive of meanings for they require the knowledge of the ordinary meaning: 'Here one might speak of a "primary" and

²⁶² Derrida (1982), p. 270.

“secondary” meaning of a word. Only someone for whom the word has the former meaning uses it in the latter.’ (PPF 276) As metaphors create a tension between the signifier and the signified, they also create a tension between the ordinary signifier and the metaphorical one, taking once again the ‘Juliet is the sun’ example, ‘sun’ in its ordinary use is in tension with ‘sun’ in a metaphorical use. This tension is similar to the one we encounter when an ordinary text appears within a poetic context: the grocery list as grocery list is in tension with the grocery list as a poem and, following Davidson, we could say that this tension is precisely that which brings us to see things differently. Philosophy can thus use metaphors in order to bring the reader to see things differently, but they are only one tool among many other stylistic possibilities. If philosophy shares a task with poetry, that of creating perspectives as we have seen in Chapter Five, it above all shares a similar concern with its own use of language, with its style. Both Nietzsche and Wittgenstein engage in this broader reflection on philosophical style, and their own styles incite reflection on the language of philosophy.

Chapter Seven: Style in Philosophy

At the very end of *The Claim of Reason*, Stanley Cavell asks: 'Can philosophy become literature and still know itself?'²⁶³ We have seen that the idea that philosophy should be made one with poetry is already a central topic for early German Romantics and that, with the criticism of metaphysical language, philosophy has to account for the poetics of language and thus for its own language. The notion of perspectival poetics elaborated in Chapter Five leads precisely to questioning the poetics of philosophy. Philosophical language is poetic in the sense that it poses itself both against and at the very heart of ordinary language. This concern with the poetics of philosophy, in other words with its style, can only arise in a framework rejecting metaphysical—or 'magic'—conceptions of language. Within the framework of 'magic language,' either in the metaphysical tradition or in the anti-metaphysical tradition of linguistic analysis, the language of philosophy sought to be transparent and self-interpreting, rejecting the question of style as non-pertinent to philosophical inquiry. In Roland Barthes's words, we could say that philosophers of language after the linguistic turn, especially the logical positivists, sought to reach a 'degree zero' of language.²⁶⁴ This concern with the transparency of language does not only shape a certain conception of philosophical style, but also is one of the structural differences between analytic and continental philosophy, between their responses to the end of metaphysics and the linguistic turn: analytic philosophy would search for a 'transparent' style whereas continental philosophy would be obsessed with style. We have however seen that this view is too schematic as Wittgenstein for instance does not have an 'analytic' style. In both cases, however, there is a concern with style, either in rejecting or embracing it. Style is a concern for philosophy because it involves the ways in which

²⁶³ Cavell (1979), p. 496.

²⁶⁴ See Barthes (1967).

philosophy appears and can thus be understood and it is far from a new concern as Socrates already distrusted writing as an appropriate way to transmitting thought.²⁶⁵

This apparent dichotomy reveals that style, whether rejected or embraced, represents an important concern of philosophical writing. This is because style has something to do with understanding: clarifying style eases understanding and reflecting upon it aims at understanding one's own language. This search for a clear style is however not something essentially post-metaphysical and one can think of Descartes's and other rationalists' philosophies as a search for a clear and distinct language accounting for clear and distinct ideas. However, if style is related to understanding, and if philosophy aims at understanding what 'understanding' is and means, style becomes a central concern. As Manfred Frank argues:

The language of philosophy belongs to traditions whose content can never be dissolved into transparent insight, and is influenced by a style in which ultimately a noninterchangeable individual manner of accessing the world demands a hearing. All understanding is based on this individual manner. Therefore, one does not get any closer to philosophy by extinguishing style; instead, by dispensing with style, one will be left without access to any understanding at all.²⁶⁶

The risk in rejecting style from philosophical concerns is to impair the possibilities of understanding (or being understood). Style is thus a component of philosophical investigations and even more so once philosophy focuses on language as the problems encountered in

²⁶⁵ Plato (1997), 275d-e, p. 552: 'You know, Phaedrus, writing shares a strange feature with painting. The offsprings of painting stand there as if they are alive, but if anyone asks them anything, they remain most solemnly silent. The same is true of written words. You'd think they were speaking as if they had some understanding, but if you question anything that has been said because you want to learn more, it continues to signify just that very same thing forever. When it has been written down, every discourse roams about everywhere, reaching indiscriminately those with understanding no less than those who have no business with it, and it doesn't know to whom it should speak and to whom it should not. And when it is faulted and attacked unfairly, it always needs its father's support; alone, it can neither defend itself nor come to its own support.'

²⁶⁶ Frank (1999a), p. 146.

conceptualising language must reflect on the philosopher's own use of language. This is something philosophy shares with poetry, as Donald Verene argues: 'Philosophy shares with the poetic and rhetoric a dependence on the power of the word. Whatever philosophy does or can do is accomplished in language.'²⁶⁷

Inasmuch as the language of the poet represents the limit of the philosopher's language, it also represents the limit to which philosophy can account for language and, ultimately, the world. Once the privilege of representational language is abolished, because philosophy needs to account for what poetry and literature do, philosophy can no longer hide behind it. It must confront expressive language and therefore confront poetry as a limit for its own expression. This confrontation with poetry leads to a reconceptualisation of the notion of style in philosophy. According to Frank, the difference between philosophy and poetry is not between two genres (and therefore between two distinct styles), but between two different extents of use of the creative powers of language: 'I contend that literary discourse does not differ in either principle or quality, but merely *quantitatively*, from other innovative uses of colloquial language. Creative literature is merely an extreme form of the innovative potential found in our everyday use of language.'²⁶⁸ Style is therefore a global category to describe the use of language. There is not one poetic style or one philosophical style but as many styles as uses of language. The difference between style in poetry and style in philosophy is therefore only a difference of degree and not of kind. But if poetic styles express to a greater degree the creative powers of language, what are these powers in philosophy? We have seen that poetry and philosophy aim at creating perspectives and use language in a creative way to do so. For instance, metaphors are ways to create new words or new meanings for words. As we have seen, the creating of new words is sufficient 'in order to create in the long run new "things"' (GS 58 /

²⁶⁷ Verene (2006), p. 92.

²⁶⁸ Frank (1999b), p. 275.

KSA 3.422) and the creation of new words and things creates new ways of accounting for and grasping the world. Style, understood as the individual specific use of language, can be seen as accounting for new things by creating new ways of expressing and new ways of thinking and, to that extent, style is a poetic aspect of philosophy.

In an early note from 1872, Nietzsche links philosophy not only to poetry but to art in general: 'Great dilemma: is philosophy an art or a science? Both in its purposes and its results it is an art. But it uses the same means as science—conceptual representation. Philosophy is a form of artistic invention. There is no appropriate category for philosophy; consequently, we must make up and characterize a species [for it].' (NF-1872, 19[62] / KSA 7.439) Philosophy shares characteristics with science—the use of concepts—and with art. As we have seen, Nietzsche is however also quite critical of concepts, and conceptual representation might not be the best means for philosophy. In reaction to the criticism of concepts, philosophy should maybe move towards poetry and the arts, and, as Wittgenstein says, there is a 'queer resemblance between a philosophical investigation (perhaps especially in mathematics <)> and one in aesthetics. (E.g. what is bad about this garment, how it should be, etc..)' (CV, p. 29) Philosophical and aesthetic investigations ask the same kind of questions. There is a similarity in how they present and approach a problem. Transposing Wittgenstein's idea from aesthetics to poetics, we might say that philosophy and poetry do not only share a similarity in their modes of expression, but also in their modes of questioning. That means that aesthetics, rather than being only a subcategory of philosophy defined by its object of study, art or beauty, is an essential method in philosophical practice. Inasmuch as style is essential to philosophical writing, aesthetics is essential to philosophical investigations. The importance of aesthetics is related to the idea that philosophy ought to create perspectives. By using a perspectival vocabulary, by bringing to the fore the idea of perspective and creation thereof, aesthetics becomes a central concern as it has to do with the way of seeing things. As we have seen,

philosophy aims at changing the ways of seeing, and this can be translated in terms of style as a change in ways of thinking and writing.

This notion of style can be likened to the notion of 'vocabulary' as developed by Richard Rorty and Robert Brandom after him. Brandom argues that 'Poets and revolutionary scientists break out of their inherited vocabularies to create new ones, as yet undreamed by their fellows.'²⁶⁹ Rorty's notion of vocabulary that Brandom uses here does not only concern the mere choice or range of words but involves a whole culture. Rorty develops a distinction between public and private vocabularies: public ones are shared and constitutive of a community (this goes in the sense of Nietzsche's understanding of 'what is common' in *Beyond Good and Evil*) whereas private ones require an initiation and cannot be understood immediately. Elaborating on Wittgenstein, Rorty argues that 'Every poem, to paraphrase Wittgenstein, presupposes a lot of stage-setting in the culture, for the same reason that every sparkling metaphor requires a lot of stodgy literal talk to serve as its foil.'²⁷⁰ As we have seen in Chapter Four, understanding a poem requires adopting or finding the right perspective, the right context in which it makes sense. Following this distinction between public and private vocabularies, Brandom argues: 'public discourse corresponding to common purposes, and private discourse to novel purposes. The novel vocabularies forged by artists for private consumption make it possible to frame new purposes and plans that can be appreciated only by those initiated into these vocabularies.'²⁷¹ Artists and poets—but also philosophers inasmuch as they resemble poets—create new vocabularies which require work from the reader. We could translate this notion of vocabulary in that of style: philosophers—Nietzsche and Wittgenstein are good examples—create new styles which can express something different from the common style but which also, in consequence, require work from the reader. The language of

²⁶⁹ Brandom (2011), p. 143.

²⁷⁰ Rorty (1989), p. 41.

²⁷¹ Brandom (2011), p. 145.

the philosopher is no longer to be considered as transparent and immediately accessible, but is a use of language which requires interpretation, and therefore active work from the reader.

The important point regarding style, as we will see, is that a new style—or a new use of language—is not only a new way of expressing a thought, but that style is intimately related to thought; new styles of expression are new styles of thinking. One way of relating style to thought is to consider the relation between style and method. According to Berel Lang, such a relation makes of style an important element one should analyse in philosophical works.²⁷² Style becomes a concern because of its proximity to method: if we consider method to be a central philosophical element, its proximity to style makes it one of the central components of philosophy. There would therefore be a relation between style and thought in the sense that style is the order put into thought. Lang develops this relation between style and method especially in Descartes's works, where method plays a prominent role. However, and Lang also analyses other philosophers whose styles are not necessarily linked to method as directly as Descartes's, style in philosophy can take many forms. The focus on style reveals two aspects of philosophical writing: 1) there is a relation between style and thought, between ideas and their expression, and this relation is, following the end of the privilege of 'magic language,' not only one of immediate representation; 2) related to the first point and as Lang argues, 'the "literariness" of philosophical writing is not accidental or ornamental but unavoidable.'²⁷³ There is an essential connection between style and thought which makes style more than the mere clothing for thought.

Both Nietzsche and Wittgenstein acknowledge this connection between style and thought and although they do not elaborate theories of style—and we have seen that they do not elaborate theories of anything—their reflections

²⁷² See Lang (1995).

²⁷³ Lang (1990), p. 3.

lighten up interesting areas of style in philosophy. In this chapter, I will first focus on Nietzsche's and Wittgenstein's reflections on the relation between style and thought in order to show why style matters in philosophy. In the second part I focus on their own style of writing: if style matters in philosophy, what is its impact on their own philosophies? To do so I focus on three specific aspects of their style and their reflections thereupon: the choice of words, the notion of aphorism, and rhythm or tempo. In the third part I bring the notion of style in relation to philosophical criticism: the specific styles Nietzsche and Wittgenstein adopt can be understood as an opposition to and a critique of other styles of philosophising and Nietzsche often uses style as grounds for criticising other philosophers. These reflections about style in philosophy lead me to reconsider the relation between philosophy and poetry by elaborating a poetics of philosophy in the concluding chapter.

1. Style and Thought: Why Style Matters in Philosophy

If you read German books you find not the faintest memory of the need for a technique, a teaching plan, a will to mastery in thinking—of the fact that thinking needs to be learned just as dancing needs to be learned, as a kind of dancing. [...] For you cannot subtract every form of dancing from a noble education, the ability to dance with the feet, with concepts, with words; do I still need to say that you must also be able to dance with the pen—that you must learn to write? (TI 'Germans' 7 / KSA 6.109-10)

According to Nietzsche, thinking needs to be learned in the same way writing needs to be learned and to master thinking and writing, one must learn how to dance. The metaphor of dance appears many times in Nietzsche's works and does not only concern a 'physical' dance 'with the feet,' but also a metaphorical spiritual dance 'with concepts, with words.' For Nietzsche, there is a correlation between learning to think and learning to write: it is the learning of a style, and more precisely of a dancing style.

The metaphor of dance brings to the fore the idea that 'style should live,' as Nietzsche suggests in a letter to Lou Salomé.²⁷⁴ Thinking is a dance with concepts and words. In a poem from the first section of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche expresses this idea as well:

Not with my hand alone I write
My foot wants to participate
Firm and free and bold, my feet
Run across the field and sheet
(GS 'Prelude' 52 / KSA 3.365)

The idea of dancing and writing with the feet brings to the fore the bodily dimension of thinking. Thinking should not be considered as part of the mind only, but as engaging the body as well. Inasmuch as Nietzsche attempts to overcome the metaphysical dualism between true and apparent world, he also tries to overcome the mind-body dualism through the embodiment of thought. The abolishing of the mind-body dichotomy through the idea of dancing reflects the idea that form and content should also not be considered as separate, or at least not in a metaphysical way. True and apparent worlds, mind and body, form and content, all the metaphysical dualisms should be brought to an end after the end of metaphysics. Style should therefore not be considered as a mere formal or ornamental feature but as encompassing both form and content.

Continuing the bodily metaphor to characterise writing, Nietzsche links the notion of blood to writing and understanding:

Of all that is written, I love only that which one writes with one's own blood. Write with blood, and you will discover that blood is spirit. [...] Whoever writes in blood and aphorisms does not want to be read, but rather to be learned by heart. (Z I 'Reading' / KSA 4.48)

The idea of understanding is central and Nietzsche often comments on it. In *The Gay Science* for instance, he claims: 'One does not only wish to be

²⁷⁴ See NF-1882, 1[109] / KSA 10.38.

understood when one writes; one wishes just as surely not to be understood.’ (GS 381 / KSA 3.633) This could be related as well to the subtitle of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: ‘A book for all and none.’ These remarks on understanding show that there is an intimate relation between style and thought which Nietzsche expresses in terms of improvement: ‘*Improving ideas*. — Improving the style — that means improving the ideas and nothing less! — Anyone who does not immediately concede this can also never be convinced of it.’ (WS 131 / KSA 2.610) To establish a direct relationship between style and thought means that to improve one’s style is to improve one’s thought. Bad style leads to misunderstandings and thinkers often write badly because they put too much reflection in their writings according to Nietzsche: ‘*Thinkers as stylists*. — Most thinkers write badly because they communicate to us not only their thoughts, but also the thinking of their thoughts.’ (HH 188 / KSA 2.163) Interestingly, in a previous version of this aphorism, Nietzsche had made the exact mistake he condemns, developing the aphorism and explaining the thought rather than only expressing it.²⁷⁵ The earlier version of the aphorism therefore shared not only the thought, but also the thinking of the thought. Nietzsche’s rewriting of the aphorism shows that style is not only a matter of writing but also a matter of thinking: learning to think requires learning to write. Nietzsche comments this necessity of learning to write in a paragraph on the ‘good European:’

Learning to write well. — The time of speaking well is past, because the time of civic cultures is past. [...] Therefore anyone who is European-minded must now learn *how to write well and to write better all the time*: it is no use even if he was born in Germany, where writing badly is treated as a national prerogative. Writing better, however, also means thinking better; constantly discovering things that are more worth communicating and really being able to communicate them; it means being translatable into the languages of our neighbors, making

²⁷⁵ NF-1876, 19[22] / KSA 8.336: ‘Die meisenmeisten Schriftsteller Schreiber schlecht weil sie uns nicht ihre Gedanken sondern das Denken der Gedanken mittheilen. Oft ist es Eitelkeit was die Periode so voll macht, es ist das begleitende Gegacker der Henne, welche uns auf das Ei aufmerksam machen will, nämlich auf irgend einen inmitten der vollen Periode stehenden kleinen Gedanken.’

ourselves accessible for the understanding of foreigners who learn our language, working toward making everything good into a common good and everything freely available to those who are free, and finally, *preparing* for that still far-distant state of things where their great task falls into the hands of good Europeans: the direction and oversight of the entirety of world-culture.— Anyone who preaches the opposite, *not* concerning ourselves with writing well and reading well—both virtues grow along with each other—is in fact showing people a way in which they can become more and more *nationalistic*: he is increasing the sickness of this century and is an enemy of good Europeans, an enemy of free spirits. (WS 87 / KSA 2.592-3)

Nietzsche develops the abovementioned idea according to which learning to write is learning to think and that, quite obviously, if one does not learn to write, one has no chance of being understood. He interestingly relates this to the politics of culture and we can interpret this relation through the idea of perspectivism developed in Chapter Five. A culture which is untranslatable, which is not understandable for others, isolates itself and therefore lacks the multiplicity of perspectives which makes the world richer.

The lack of perspectives induced by the incapacity of thinking (and the rejection of style) represents the sickness of European culture for Nietzsche. Against this decadence, Nietzsche suggests that we should learn the best style.

Instruction in the best style.— Instruction in style can, on the one hand, be instruction on how to find the expression that will let us convey *any* mood to the reader and hearer; or else instruction on how to find the expression for a human's most desirable mood, the one that it is therefore most desirable to communicate and convey: the mood of a human who is moved from the depths of his heart, spiritually joyful, bright and sincere, someone who has overcome his passions. This will be instruction in the best style: it corresponds to the good human being. (WS 88 / KSA 2.593)

Nietzsche distinguishes between two teachings of style: learning to express *any* style against learning to express a *joyful* style. If a teaching of style is supposed to bring life into writing and thought, as Nietzsche's letter on style to Lou Salomé suggests, such a teaching can be a remedy against the illness and decadence of culture. The best style corresponds to a joyful style because

it represents a healthy culture and we have seen that, for Nietzsche, life and health are criteria to evaluate perspectives. This joyful style is related and works towards what Nietzsche calls a *gay science*. Nietzsche's concern with style is therefore strongly related to his idea that philosophy should enhance and promote life.

Even though the concept of life plays an important role in Wittgenstein's philosophy, especially in the notion of 'form of life,' he does not use this notion to characterise style. He however insists on the relation between style and thought and relates this, in various remarks, to a difficulty in expression: 'My difficulty is only an—enormous—difficulty of expression.' (NB, 8.3.15) Wittgenstein often discusses the importance of expression in philosophy, especially of his own expression. The style of the *Tractatus* already indicates this concern with expression and Wittgenstein develops this question in his later works. The difficulty in philosophy is not only to find the right style of writing, but also the right style of thinking.

The abandonment of the metaphysical conception of language relinquishes the idea that there is thought on the one hand and style or expression of thought on the other. One way to unite style and thought is through the idiom 'style of thinking' which is central to Wittgenstein's way of doing philosophy:

I am in a sense making propaganda for one style of thinking as opposed to another. (LA 37)

How much we are doing this changing the style of thinking and how much I'm doing is changing the style of thinking and how much I'm doing is persuading people to change their style of thinking. (LA 40)

(Much of what we are doing is a question of changing the style of thinking.) (LA 41)

These three remarks from the *Lectures on Aesthetics* show the importance of this task in Wittgenstein's philosophy. To do philosophy is to bring people to see things in the right perspective (or, to the extent that 'right' can be problematic, in a different perspective) and philosophy shares this task with

poetry as we have seen in previous chapters. More than new perspectives, the ideas from the *Lectures on Aesthetics* bring to the fore the notion of style: philosophy is not only a matter of changing our ways of seeing, but also our ways or styles of thinking. This new style of thinking calls, in turn, for a new style of expressing or writing: finding the right style is like searching for the right perspective. In discussing the notion of style in Wittgenstein's philosophy, Joachim Schulte acknowledges the importance of the dimension of *Denkstil* or style of thinking: 'Under style of thinking, Wittgenstein does not only understand the way or the technique of thought, its form of expression, but also to a certain degree style as what can be found as a possible object of thought because this style marks the investigation and justification procedures.'²⁷⁶ The notion of style of thinking does not only denote the form or way the thought is presented, as we have seen that style is not only a formal feature and that the whole form-content dichotomy should be abandoned with the other metaphysical dualisms, but is at the core of the philosophical investigation.

Style of thought is for Wittgenstein a central element in conducting philosophical research, and not only in presenting it. Wittgenstein discusses further this idea of style as a core element of philosophy with the carriage on tracks metaphor.

Writing the right style means, setting the carriage precisely on the rails. (CV, p.44)

We are only going to set you straight on the track, if your carriage stands on the rails crookedly; driving is something we shall leave you to do by yourself. (CV, p. 44)

In these two remarks, Wittgenstein uses the metaphor of a carriage on tracks to express the idea of style of writing and thinking. Writing in the right style

²⁷⁶ Schulte (1990), pp. 60-61, my translation: 'Unter dem Stil des Denkens versteht Wittgenstein nicht nur die Art und Weise oder die Technik der Überlegung bzw. die Form ihrer Darstellung, sondern der in diesem Sinne aufgefasste Stil bestimmt in gewissem Masse auch, was als möglicher Gegenstand des Denkens vorkommen kann, denn dieser Stil prägt die Verfahrensweisen des Untersuchens und Begründens.'

aims at setting the reader's thought on the right tracks. This is the task of Wittgenstein's philosophy: to show a way or style of thought which then brings the reader to a better understanding. To use another of Wittgenstein's metaphor describing the task of philosophy as aiming 'To show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle' (PI 309), we could say that the task is to set the fly on the right tracks, in the direction of the exit. It is important to note that Wittgenstein considers that his task is only to set someone on the right tracks, and not to guide her along these tracks because his philosophy does not aim at establishing doctrines or truths and therefore at bringing someone to a specific point, be it the world of ideas, the absolute spirit, or a logical certainty, but at showing someone a different way of thinking, at bringing her to change her way of thinking.²⁷⁷

Judith Genova argues in this direction by considering that philosophical 'theories can not be construed as scientific hypotheses about the nature of the world, nor as explanations about why things are the way they are. Instead, they can only offer new ways of seeing, new songs.'²⁷⁸ Wittgenstein's way to bring people to new perspectives is to set them on the right tracks. The ordinary track we follow in our everyday life and routine is not the only perspective; other tracks can bring interesting insights on the world, and the task of philosophy—to that extent similar to that of art—is to bring one to change tracks, to experience other perspectives. Once someone is set on the tracks, philosophy cannot do anything more, according to Wittgenstein. Genova considers that 'Philosophers become not poets, critics, or therapists for the later Wittgenstein, but performance artists whose only aim is to effect change.'²⁷⁹ Even though Genova's distinction between poets, critics, and therapists on the one hand and performance artists on the other is contestable—poetry, critique, and therapy are important dimensions of

²⁷⁷ To that extent, what Stegmaier says about Nietzsche's philosophy as giving signs rather than doctrines could also be applied to Wittgenstein. See Stegmaier (2006).

²⁷⁸ Genova (1995), p. 5.

²⁷⁹ Genova (1995), p. 5.

Wittgenstein's philosophy and they all possess a performative character—the interesting point in this quote is the idea that philosophers aim to effect change. This change occurs by changing one's way of seeing, by setting one on different tracks. To do so, the philosopher needs to find the right expression. If the task of philosophy is to set the reader on the right tracks, it must also set itself on the right tracks to achieve that. We can notice here, once again, the importance of the two faces of the philosopher—or the poet as we have seen—who must first find the right perspective in order to change other people's perspective. This search for a right perspective can be construed in terms of style and expression. One of the ways to create perspectives is metaphor, a tool the poet and the philosopher both use as we have seen, but other aspects come into play regarding style and they can all be construed in relation to understanding—and we have already mentioned that understanding is at the centre of stylistic concerns.

2. Nietzsche's and Wittgenstein's styles

If style is related to thinking and understanding, how should a philosopher write? Nietzsche and Wittgenstein are both critic of how philosophy as metaphysics has been written and many of Nietzsche's criticisms of other philosophers occur on this ground. Before turning to the use of style as a means to criticism in Nietzsche's works, I will focus in this section on the positive remarks regarding style: how do Nietzsche and Wittgenstein consider philosophy should be written and how do they write? I will focus on three intertwined aspects of their styles: words, aphorisms, and rhythm. We have seen in Chapter Five that the poetic dimension of language uses words in a specific way in order to create and destroy meanings. The choice of words is therefore a central component of poetry, but also of philosophy. Aphorism is a form which has a long tradition in philosophy and both Nietzsche and Wittgenstein follow it, thus inheriting, as we have seen, from Lichtenberg and the German Romantics. Rhythm is central to poetry—and to read poetry as poetry according to Wittgenstein's reading of Klopstock in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*—and we will see that Nietzsche and Wittgenstein

both give great importance to the notion of rhythm. These aspects all aim at one thing: being understood or not.

Although Nietzsche and Wittgenstein inscribe themselves in a tradition which has a long history in philosophy, that of aphorisms and remarks, they both aim at bringing philosophy to a new expression, to a new language, one which is not metaphysical. This search for a different language is what Wittgenstein does when he says he aims 'to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use' (PI 116). The rejection of metaphysical language is a way to reject the system of values based on this metaphysical ground for Nietzsche: his revaluation of values can only take place within the framework of a revaluation of language, and it is precisely this aspect which is the 'strangest about [his] new language' (BGE 4 / KSA 5.18) The elaboration of such a new language is not easy and Nietzsche criticises his own writing style in *The Birth of Tragedy* for instance because he considers to have borrowed the language of another rather than used or invented his own:

How much I now regret that at that time I lacked sufficient courage (and arrogance?) to allow myself to express such personal and risky views throughout in my *own personal language*—that instead I laboured to express in the terms of Schopenhauer and Kant new and unfamiliar evaluations, which ran absolutely counter the spirit, as well as the taste, of Schopenhauer and Kant!' (BT, 'Attempt,' 6)

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche considers having used a language inappropriate to his thoughts by expressing them in the language of another. In his later works, Nietzsche overcomes this difficulty and expresses himself in a new language, the language of his thought.

We have seen that Wittgenstein also considers having difficulties in expression and in a remark from *Culture and Value* he describes his style as 'bad musical composition.' This remark however contains two statements, the first one evaluates his style as bad, the second compares his style to musical composition. This second aspect is interesting to the extent that it shows Wittgenstein's intention not to conform to a metaphysical and

systematic style, but rather to bring philosophical expression close to art and music especially. This idea of composition is important in Wittgenstein's conception of style and he also compares philosophical writing to poetic composition in a remark from *Culture and Value* (CV, p. 28). We have also seen that understanding a poem is similar to understanding a musical theme.

The idea of composition operates at two levels of style: 1) in the choice of words and 2) in the arranging and rearranging of remarks. In *Culture and Value*, Wittgenstein contrasts three kinds of style: 'It's possible to write in a style that is unoriginal in form—like mine—but with well chosen words; or on the other hand in one that is original in form, freshly grown from within oneself. (And also of course in one which is botched together just anyhow out of old furnishings.)' (CV, p. 60) Within style, there are three possible points of focus: focus on words, focus on form, or, one that Wittgenstein seems to value negatively, using old words and forms together. Wittgenstein considers himself to have an unoriginal form. He does not consider his style to be original to the extent that remarks (or aphorisms, maxims, sentences, etc.) are a rather common form in philosophy. The focus of his style is not form, but the choice of words. This can be understood in terms of composition: Wittgenstein composes with words rather than forms. The specificity of his composition—to the extent that all texts are compositions of words—is, as we will see, that it can be characterised as musical or poetic. One important point to note is that style is not limited to form. In other words, style is not a formalist notion because with the end of metaphysical dualisms, the form-content distinction cannot be sustained. Style is therefore a notion that bridges over form and content, because form cannot be thought without content (and vice versa).

A compositional style does not operate only in the choice of words, but also in the arranging of remarks. In the preface to *The Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein describes his arrangement as an album:

I have written down all these thoughts as remarks, short paragraphs, and sometimes in longer chains about the same subject, sometimes

jumping, in a sudden change, from one to another. — Originally it was my intention to bring all this together in a book whose form I thought of differently at different times. But it seemed to me essential that in the book the thoughts should proceed from one subject to another in a natural, smooth sequence. After several unsuccessful attempts to weld my results together into such a whole, I realized that I should never succeed. The best that I could write would never be more than philosophical remarks; my thoughts soon grew feeble if I tried to force them along a single track against their natural inclination. — And this was, of course, connected to the very nature of the investigation. For it compels us to travel criss-cross in every direction over a wide field of thought. — The philosophical remarks in this book are, as it were, a number of sketches of landscapes which were made in the course of these long and meandering journeys. The same or almost the same points were always being approached afresh from different directions, and new sketches made. Very many of these were badly drawn or lacking in character, marked by all the defects of a weak draughtsman. And when they were rejected, a number of half-way decent ones were left, which then had to be arranged and often cut down, in order to give the viewer an idea of the landscape. So this book is really just an album. (PI, Preface)

Wittgenstein acknowledges his original intention of writing up the remarks in the form of a book, which he defines as thoughts proceeding ‘from one subject to another in a natural, smooth sequence.’ This is Wittgenstein’s understanding of what philosophical books traditionally are, and he claims to be incapable of writing in such a manner. Such an incapability is however not the consequence of an inability to write, but is ‘connected to the very nature of the investigation.’ If, as argued above, style and thought are closely related, thoughts cannot be expressed in any style, but style proceeds from the thoughts themselves. Edward Kanterian considers this dimension in Wittgenstein’s style an important one:

The style answers in part to an aesthetic ideal, in part is justified by philosophical reasons pertaining to what is investigated, our conceptual scheme. This conceptual scheme is logically independent of the style and can be described in various other ways, but it lends itself in a natural way to an album-type investigation, just as much as a certain landscape can be captured by a series of loosely related

sketches. But also by a “linear” series of loosely connected sketches, or by a single wide-format panorama.²⁸⁰

Style intertwines aesthetic and conceptual aspects, and what might appear as a formal or ornamental feature is in fact related to the investigation itself. Although there is an independence between the conceptual scheme and style for Kanterian, Wittgenstein’s conceptual scheme ‘lends itself in a natural way’ to his specific style. Bringing Wittgenstein’s conceptual scheme in another style would somehow go against its nature and force it into being something it is not.

Wittgenstein’s description of his style (both of thinking and writing) as criss-crossing in every direction reminds us of his understanding of family resemblance concepts as ‘similarities overlapping and criss-crossing.’ (PI 66) To that extent, the ‘book’ as whole can be seen as a family resemblance concept in which each remark is connected to another as family members, without necessarily having one essential and definitory feature in common. Wittgenstein’s remarks are sketches of a landscape approached from many points of view or perspectives and constitute an album. These notions of album and of landscape bring to the fore the compositional dimension of Wittgenstein’s style: he composes not only with words, but also with his remarks. In a sense, his style is similar to Montaigne’s who likes a writing ‘à sauts et à gambades.’ The idea of essay, as Montaigne considers it, resembles Wittgenstein’s remarks which jump from one subject to another. This idea of jumps brings back to the fore the idea of dance we have already discussed in Nietzsche’s works. Such a dance is not only a dance with words, but also a dance with remarks, essays, or aphorisms.

Inasmuch as Wittgenstein’s style is compositional both in words and remarks, so is Nietzsche’s, and he acknowledges this double aspect in his writing of aphorisms. When describing his own style, Nietzsche considers words as central:

²⁸⁰ Kanterian (2012), p. 129.

My feeling for style, for the epigram as style, was stirred almost the moment I came into contact with Sallust. [...] One will recognize in me, even in my Zarathustra, a very serious ambition for Roman style, for the 'aere perennius' in style.—My first contact with Horace was no different. To this day I have never had the same artistic delight in any poet as I was given from the start by one of Horace's odes. In certain languages, what is achieved here cannot even be desired. This mosaic of words, in which every word radiates its strength as sound, as place, as concept, to the right and to the left and over the whole, this minimum in the range and number of its signs, the maximum which this attains in the energy of the signs—all this is Roman and, if I am to be believed, noble par excellence. All the rest of poetry becomes, in comparison, something too popular—a mere emotional garrulousness. (TI 'Ancients' 1 / KSA 6.154-5)

Nietzsche inscribes his style in the tradition of epigrams, and we will discuss the notion of aphorism later. Like Wittgenstein's style, Nietzsche's is not original in form inasmuch as it belongs to a long tradition, going back to the Romans and even before them. His style also focuses on words and his ideal of style, Horace, makes the words radiate in many ways. The words are central for they carry the possibility of radiating to the other words. The meaning of a word can affect another, radiate on another as it were, and therefore modify its meaning. The French philosopher Henri Maldiney elaborates on this use of words in poetry and how it functions differently from the ordinary use: 'If words in language have no neighbours, if in discourse they are in mutual servitude along the co-ownership regime of the sentence, in the poetic sequence their relations are of pure neighbourhood.'²⁸¹ According to Maldiney, words in poetry are autonomous, they are not ruled by the grammatical necessity of syntax. In an everyday sentence, the relation between two words is defined by their grammatical functions: subject, object, verb, etc. In contrast, in poetry the relation between words is independent of grammar, it is a 'relation of pure neighbourhood' in the sense that it is the proximity between two words which creates an association, which makes sense, which creates meaning, rather than their grammatical

²⁸¹ Maldiney (2012), p. 57, my translation: 'Si les mots en langue sont sans voisinage, si dans le discours ils sont en servitude mutuelle selon le régime de la copropriété de la phrase, dans la séquence poétique leurs rapports sont de pur voisinage.'

functions. Poetry brings to the fore this aspect of language, according to which there is a radiation of meaning from every word. A word in a poem radiates and, by doing so, irradiates its neighbours.

This is what I would call a ‘semantic contamination:’ the meaning of a word in poetry contaminates its neighbours. Although Maldiney considers this contamination to be a feature specific to poetic language only, I would argue that ordinary language also presents such a contamination: puns, jokes, and many aspects of our everyday use of language are examples of it. It is a feature of language altogether which poets use to a wider extent, but which is at work in our everyday use of language. Inasmuch as poetic language is not separate from ordinary language, ‘semantic contamination’ belongs to both poetic and ordinary uses of language. Such a contamination is sometimes a ground for misunderstanding and it is also, I believe, what is at play in Max Black’s interactionist view of metaphor: in a metaphor words interact in such a way that one word’s meaning modifies the other, and his understanding of metaphor is not limited to poetic language but also appears in everyday idioms.²⁸² The radiation of words in every direction makes us perceive the words differently, gives them a different meaning, brings us to another interpretation. Although Nietzsche is rather critical of words and concepts in *On Truth and Lie*, this does not mean that he cannot use words to overcome these critical aspects. On the contrary, Nietzsche—and the poet of whom he attempts to recreate the style—uses words in order to create new meanings and values. Words are therefore not only considered negatively as they can be used in a creative way, but the blind following of the ordinary use of words—that is for Nietzsche the following of the established moral and social order—needs to be overcome. The creative use of words, like in poetry, is a way to contest the ordinary order. Many avant-garde art movements for instance contest the established order by contesting the established language. Hugo Ball’s critique of the words in his Dada

²⁸² See Black (1955).

Manifesto is a perfect example of it: 'I don't want words that other people have invented. All the words are other people's inventions. I want my own stuff, my own rhythm, and vowels and consonants too, matching the rhythm and all my own.'²⁸³ Ball considers that the words have been contaminated because they help sustaining the bourgeois order, and thus the bourgeois definition of art he aims to disturb. The creation of new words and new uses for words is a way for him to overcome this established bourgeois order and its related definition of art.

The creative use of words is poetic in the sense developed in Chapter Five and such a use overcomes the limitations of representational language. We have seen that Nietzsche considers language to be incapable of representing drives and, in *Ecce Homo*, he describes his style as aiming precisely at communicating these inner states:

At the same time I'll say something about my art of style in general. Communicating a state, an inner tension of pathos through signs, including the tempo of these signs—that is the point of every style; and considering that in my case the multiplicity of inner states is extraordinary, in my case there are many stylistic possibilities—altogether the most multifarious art of style anyone has ever had at their disposal. (EH 'Books' 4 / KSA 6.304)

A 'multifarious art of style' is necessary if one aims at communicating these inner states and all that representational language cannot communicate. Through his creative use of language, Nietzsche considers himself a poet: 'Before me, people did not know what can be done with the German language—what can be done with language tout court.—The art of grand rhythm, the grand style of the period expressing an immense rise and fall of sublime, superhuman passion was first discovered by me; with a dithyramb like the last in the Third Part of Zarathustra, entitled "The Seven Seals," I flew a thousand miles beyond what had hitherto been called poetry.' (EH 'Books' 4 / KSA 6.304-5) Nietzsche claims to push the limits of poetry in his *Zarathustra*, that he created something not only in the philosophical realm

²⁸³ Ball (2011), p. 128.

but in the poetic one as well. Without judging the quality of Nietzsche's text—Nietzsche himself considers it as 'the greatest gift to mankind' whereas some commentators, Aaron Ridley for instance, consider it a failure²⁸⁴—*Zarathustra* can be read as a parody, or at least an imitation of an older form. In this sense and as with Wittgenstein, Nietzsche's style is not original in form but plays with established categories. Nietzsche uses existing forms in order to create something inasmuch as the poet uses existing words to create new meanings. This reflects the choice of Zarathustra as main character: Nietzsche chooses the founder of morality as the figure to overcome it. The poetic—in the sense of creative—dimension of Nietzsche's text often appears in 'The Seven Seals: 'creative breath,' 'creative lightning,' and 'creative new words.' This creative dimension is acquired through a creative use of language or, according to Nietzsche, 'creative new words.' Let us now turn to the form Nietzsche and Wittgenstein most often use in their writings: aphorisms and remarks.

In a note from *Culture and Value*, Wittgenstein compares his remarks to Kraus's aphorisms through a strange metaphor: 'Raisins may be the best part of a cake; but a bag of raisins is not better than a cake; & someone who is in a position to give us a bag full of raisins still cannot bake a cake with them, let alone do something better. I am thinking of Kraus & his aphorisms, but of myself too & my philosophical remarks. A cake is not as it were: thinned out raisins.' (CV, p. 76) For Wittgenstein, aphorisms and remarks are like raisins in a cake, and raisins alone are not sufficient to bake a cake. Wittgenstein expresses here the same problems of expression as those from the preface to the *Philosophical Investigations*: his incapability to write a book. The remarks he writes do not amount to a book in the sense already discussed of thoughts that 'proceed from one subject to another in a natural, smooth sequence.' This does not mean however that aphorisms and remarks cannot form a coherent whole. Wittgenstein spends quite some time

²⁸⁴ Ridley (2007), p. 112.

arranging and rearranging his remarks and Nietzsche has similar concerns with his collection of aphorisms. Collections of aphorisms are compositions in which the meaning of an aphorism will influence another. The same 'semantic contamination' occurs between aphorisms as it does between words. Such a contamination occurs within Nietzsche's collection of aphorisms, and Wittgenstein's description of his remarks as 'jumping' from one another in the preface to the *Philosophical Investigations* is a way of saying that the organisation of the remarks functions by making meanings jump from one remark to another. However, as Wittgenstein did not publish any collection of remarks himself, it is difficult to apply such a conception to his works.

That the meaning of aphorisms and remarks is related to the surrounding ones brings the notion of interpretation to the fore. Indeed, it is the interpretative task which reveals the connections between aphorisms. This notion of interpretation is central to Nietzsche's understanding of the aphorism as he describes it in the preface to *The Genealogy of Morals*:

In other cases, the aphoristic form presents problems: this stems from the fact that nowadays this form is not taken seriously enough. An aphorism, honestly cast and stamped, is still some way from being 'deciphered' once it has been read; rather, it is only then that its interpretation can begin, and for this an art of interpretation is required. In the third essay of this book I have offered a model for what I mean by 'interpretation' in such a case—the essay opens with an aphorism and is itself a commentary upon it. Admittedly, to practise reading as an art in this way requires one thing above all, and it is something which today more than ever has been thoroughly unlearned—a fact which explains why it will be some time before my writings are 'readable'—it is something for which one must be practically bovine and certainly not a 'modern man:' that is to say, rumination... (GM Preface 8 / KSA 5.255-6)

An aphorism cannot be read quickly, the reader needs to 'decipher' it, to interpret it, in order to understand it. A specific style, a specific writing calls for a specific reading. Similarly to what we have said about reading poetry as poetry in Chapter Four, aphorisms need to be read as aphorisms. One cannot run through the aphorism if one aims to understand it. Digesting

aphorisms takes time and this digesting process is one of interpretation. The right style calls for the right reader and the right reading. For Nietzsche, aphorisms require slow readers who are ready to actively engage with the text, interpreting it, rather than receiving it passively. Wittgenstein too asks for slow readers who do not rush through the text: 'Really I want to slow down the speed of reading with continual punctuation marks. For I should like to be read slowly. (As I myself read.)' (CV, p. 77) For Wittgenstein, the purpose of punctuation is to slow down the readers. The form he uses, that of remarks, could be seen as inviting a fast reading, jumping from one remark to another as the remarks themselves jump from one theme to another. If one did so, many of Wittgenstein's remarks would appear rather trivial and uninteresting. Another aspect of careful reading is that it directs the reader's attention to the words themselves, and we have already discussed this aspect of Nietzsche's and Wittgenstein's styles. If the choice is important, this means that aphorisms cannot be paraphrased or, rather, that a paraphrase does not have the same value as the original. As already seen in a previous chapter, the impossibility of paraphrase is a characteristic of poetry, as Wittgenstein argues in *Philosophical Grammar*: 'No one would believe that a poem remained essentially unaltered if its words were to be replaced by others in accordance with an appropriate convention.' (PG 32)

There is a correlation between the tempo of reading and possibility of understanding: 'Sometimes a sentence can be understood only if it is read at the right tempo. My sentences are all to be read slowly.' (CV, p. 65) If one reads a sentence too fast, one will pass over important information and not really understand the sentence, not noticing some aspects of it; at best, one would have a superficial understanding. The opposite is true as well: if one reads too slowly, one might attach too much importance to one word or another, block on it, and therefore fail to follow the flow of the argumentation. Too much flow might lead the reader to a superficial reading, not enough might lead her to over-interpret and therefore misinterpret the text. As the words must be stressed correctly in order to

understand a poem and as rhythm plays a central role in understanding a poem, so does rhythm in understanding philosophical aphorisms or remarks. Nietzsche adds: 'How many Germans have the knowledge—and expect it of themselves—that there is an art in every good sentence—art that must be perceived if the sentence is to be understood! Misunderstand its tempo, for example, and the sentence itself is misunderstood.' (BGE 246 / KSA 5.189) One must perceive the poetic in the sentence in order to understand it; understanding the tempo means understanding the rhythm with which the sentence must be read.

Wittgenstein and Nietzsche both ask for slow readers and write in a slow tempo. Tempo is an important component of style, one which Nietzsche considers hard to translate: 'The hardest thing to translate from one language to another is the tempo of its style; this style has its basis in the character of the race or to speak more physiologically, in the average tempo of the race's "metabolism."' (BGE 28 / KSA 5.46) Although Nietzsche roots this difficulty in distinctions of race and metabolism, which can be problematic in some interpretations, what is at play here is, I believe, that tempo is related to style inasmuch as each language has its own tempo. Because a language is embedded in a cultural context, it is linked to a specific tempo which is difficult to translate. In Wittgenstein's words, the tempo of a language is related to the metabolism of its form of life and one cannot so easily shift from one tempo to another. Reading is not only an intellectual act; it involves the body and the whole culture in which this body develops. This physiological aspect of reading—that Nietzsche for instance discusses with the metaphor of digestion—reflects the physiological aspects of writing we have discussed in considering dance as metaphor for style. Let us now turn to another aspect of style in Nietzsche's works, namely the critical role it can play.

3. Style as Critique

Because of his ideal of style as lively or dancing, Nietzsche adopts a poetic style which relies on short forms of writing, thus following some of the German Romantics' insights. For another reason, namely his difficulty of expression and his incapacity to write philosophy in the form of a book, Wittgenstein also adopts a short form of writing. We will see in the concluding chapter that this style might be related to his idea that 'really one should write philosophy only as one *writes a poem*' (CV, p. 28), but both Nietzsche's and Wittgenstein's adoption of short form in philosophy also reveals a rejection of a certain style or way of doing philosophy. Inasmuch as they reject the metaphysical style of thinking, they also reject the metaphysical style of writing (for both are related once we step out of the metaphysical form-content dualism). This rejection of metaphysical style is related to the rejection of metaphysical language and insofar as the poetic turn in philosophy of language leads to rejecting the representational and metaphysical model of language as the only possible model, similarly, the stylistic turn in philosophy leads to rejecting metaphysical style as the only style in philosophy, and, ultimately, style becomes a ground for criticising metaphysics and metaphysical language. Nietzsche's search for a new language and Wittgenstein's return to ordinary language show that metaphysical language is inappropriate to their conceptions of philosophy and, because of that, the way philosophers write becomes a point of criticism. Nietzsche especially uses style as a ground for criticising many philosophers. As we will see, Nietzsche establishes a relation between style and the philosopher which is not without reminding us of the relation between style and the man that Buffon suggests in his famous sentence: 'Style is the man.' Although Wittgenstein does not criticise the style of other philosophers (and he does not criticise many philosophers directly), he considers that there is a relation between style and the man by commenting on Buffon's sentence in *Culture and Value*: "Le style c'est l'homme." "Le style c'est l'homme même." The first expression has a cheap epigrammatic brevity. The second, correct,

one opens a quite different perspective. It says that style is the *picture* of the man.’ (CV, p. 89) This relation between style and the man opens the possibility to criticise the man on stylistic grounds and Nietzsche does so with philosophers in many of his works, early and late.

For instance, in *Twilight of the Idols*, he criticises Plato for stylistic reasons:

Plato, it seems to me, mixes up all stylistic forms, which makes him a *first* stylistic *decadent*: he has on his conscience something similar to the Cynics who invented the *satira Menippea*. The Platonic dialogue, that dreadfully self-satisfied and childish kind of dialectics, can only have a stimulating effect if one has never read any good Frenchman—Fontenelle, for example. Plato is boring. (TI ‘Ancients’ 2 / KSA 6.155)

From a stylistic perspective, Nietzsche considers Plato to be boring. Plato is the ‘first stylistic decadent,’ and this coincides with him being the first metaphysician. Nietzsche does not elaborate here on such a connection between decadent style and metaphysics, which would be a decadent philosophy, but other texts offer a critique of metaphysics through a critique of style. With Plato, according to Nietzsche, something happens to philosophy which leads it onto its decadent slope, a decadence Nietzsche tries to stop and reverse by showing what a ‘philosopher of the future’ should be.

The stylistic criticism of philosophers is not specific to Nietzsche, for instance Aristotle criticises Heraclitus on these grounds,²⁸⁵ but Nietzsche uses it to a larger extent. Nietzsche’s critique of Spinoza pursues the same line of thought and establishes a relation between a critique of metaphysics and a stylistic critique:

Or take that hocus-pocus of mathematical form in which Spinoza armoured and disguised his philosophy (‘the love of *his* wisdom’ ultimately, if we interpret the word correctly and fairly), to intimidate

²⁸⁵ Aristotle (2007), 1407b11–18, p. 208: ‘What is written should generally be easy to read and easy to speak—which is the same thing. Use of many connectives does not have this quality, nor do phrases not easily punctuated, for example, the writings of Heraclitus. To punctuate the writings of Heraclitus is a difficult task because it is unclear what goes with what, whether with what follows or with what precedes.’

at the outset the brave assailant who might dare to throw a glance at this invincible virgin and Pallas Athena—how this sickly hermit's masquerade betrays his own timidity and assailability! (BGE 5 / KSA 5.19)

Once again, Nietzsche criticises the form which disguises Spinoza's 'love of his wisdom.' If we were still working within the metaphysical framework of the form-content dualism, Nietzsche's critique would only have little impact as criticising the style would not necessarily criticise the content. However, as we have seen, Nietzsche is suspicious of such dualisms and precisely aims at abolishing them. One can therefore not separate form from content and Nietzsche uses style as a means to criticise not only the form, but also the content of Spinoza's philosophy. The disguise is as important as the philosophy and Nietzsche further argues for such a relation when he says that 'every philosophy also conceals a philosophy.' (BGE 289 / KSA 5.234)

Following this remark on Spinoza, Nietzsche states that 'every philosophy is the unconscious memoir of its author.' (BGE 6 / KSA 5.19) From this perspective, a stylistic critique of philosophy is also and above all a critique of the philosopher who elaborates it. This idea is not specific to Nietzsche's later works, in the first of the *Untimely Meditations* he already criticises Hegel and his idea that '*What is rational is actual and what is actual is rational*'²⁸⁶ on stylistic grounds:

A philosophy which chastely concealed behind arabesque flourishes the philistine confession of its author invented in addition a formula for the apotheosis of the commonplace: it spoke of the rationality of the real, and thus ingratiated itself with the cultural philistine, who also loves arabesque flourishes but above all conceives himself alone to be real and treats his reality as the standard of reason in the world. (DS 2 / KSA 169-70)

The two ideas mentioned above—'every philosophy also conceals a philosophy' and every philosophy is 'the unconscious memoir of its author's love of his wisdom'—are combined in the idea that a philosophy is a concealed 'philistine confession of its author.' Nietzsche's critique of Hegel

²⁸⁶ Hegel (2008), p. 14.

is based on the idea that his style conceals something and is therefore some kind of lie. Hegel's style is closely related to an attitude towards the world, to a perspective according to which 'his reality [is] the standard of reason in the world.' The stylistic critique is a way of introducing a critique of the whole worldview to which it is related.

In *Dawn*, Nietzsche pursues this critique of Hegel in stylistic terms:

Of the celebrated Germans, none perhaps possessed more esprit than Hegel—but he also possessed so great a German fear of it that this fear was responsible for creating the bad style peculiar to him. For the essence of his style is that a kernel is wrapped round and wrapped round again until it can hardly peep through, bashfully and with inquisitive eyes as 'young women peep through their veils,' to quote the ancient misogynist Aeschylus—but this kernel is a witty, often indiscreet inspiration on the most intellectual subjects, a daring and subtle phrase-coinage such as is appropriate to the society of thinkers as a condiment to science—but swathed in its wrapping it presents itself as the abstrusest of sciences and altogether a piece of the highest moral boredom! (D 193 / KSA 3.166-7)

The critique is similar to the one from the *Untimely Meditations*: Hegel's style conceals something, wraps something up to make it look like something different. The core of his philosophy is so wrapped up in layers of style that it evades gaze. Inasmuch as the metaphysical 'true world' diverted the attention from the 'apparent world' (just like the Christian promoting of the afterlife hides the actual life in Nietzsche's sense), style can be read as parallel to this critique of metaphysics: as metaphysics attempts to hide the 'apparent world' behind the 'true world,' metaphysics hides its emptiness behind stylistic features. Hegel's style is, according to Nietzsche, a way of diverting the eye, of hiding something under layers of 'subtle phrase-coinage.' This is why Nietzsche considers systematists to lack integrity as he says in *Twilight of the Idols*: 'I mistrust all systematists and avoid them. The will to system is a lack of integrity.' (TI 'Arrows' 26 / KSA 6.63)

Let us note that, as for Plato, Hegel's style is boring. Although it might seem at first glance as a matter of personal taste, Nietzsche's characterisation of Plato's and Hegel's styles as boring reveal something of the philosophical

project he has in mind. If creation is central to Nietzsche's works, we can understand this idea of boredom as claiming that Hegel does not create anything, does not produce a philosophy, but rather only reproduces the dominant moral system. Hegel's style and philosophy would therefore only be justifications for pursuing the normal moral order whereas Nietzsche promotes precisely the opposite. Plato and Hegel are boring in the sense that their philosophies only establish a metaphysical system which justifies the traditional moral order, without aiming at any change. We have however seen that to effect change is one of the tasks Nietzsche attributes to philosophy and in order to accomplish it, philosophers must create new perspectives rather than justifying the existing ones. This creation requires a new language and a new style.

Nietzsche's critique of Hegel's and Spinoza's styles serves as examples for his critique of systematic style in philosophy which, ultimately, amounts to a critique of metaphysics:

In the desert of science.—To a scientist engaged in his modest and arduous travels, which often enough must involve journeys through the desert, there appear those gleaming mirages that we call 'philosophical systems:' with the magical power of illusion, they show the solution to all riddles and the coolest drink of the true water of life to be near at hand; the heart revels in this and the weary traveller practically touches with his lips the goal of all scientific perseverance and peril, so that he involuntarily pushes onward. Admittedly, those of a different nature remain standing still, as if stunned by the beautiful illusion: the desert swallows them and they are dead for science. Those of yet another nature, who have often experienced those subjective consolations before, become extremely annoyed and curse the salty taste that those apparitions leave in their mouths, from which a raging thirst arises—without one having thereby come even a single step closer to any spring. (AOM 31 / KSA 2.393)

Philosophical systems are mirages and illusions of which we must be careful. They are a danger to the development of science (and human culture altogether) because they offer a fake solution. Nietzsche's critique of the generality of concepts in *On Truth and Lie* is transposed here to philosophical

systems: they give an illusory general understanding of the world but are unable to account for individual events. If one pursues this mirage, one ends up dead. Inasmuch as the concepts are metaphors' graveyards, philosophical systems are scientific graveyards. This quote shows Nietzsche's ambiguous relation to science. Especially in *Human, All Too Human*, science seems to be an interesting solution for Nietzsche, but the danger of scientism lies within all sciences. If science considers itself as 'the coolest drink of the true water of life,' it becomes the end of science, the end of the search for an answer. In science and philosophy, the important element is the search, the process, because there is no absolute goal which can be reached. Philosophical systems like Hegel's are illusions which we must avoid: they give a pretence of an answer but are in the end empty. For Nietzsche, the task of philosophy is not to justify the established order by elaborating a conceptual edifice, but to create new values.

It is this aspect of creation of values which brings philosophy in close relationship to poetry and art. This closeness reflects on Nietzsche's own style which he also criticises, for instance when looking back onto *The Birth of Tragedy*: 'It should have *sung*, this "new soul" – rather than spoken! What a pity that I did not dare to say what I had to say then as a poet: I might have managed it!' (BT 'Attempt' 3 / KSA 1.15) We have seen that Nietzsche already criticises his style in *The Birth of Tragedy* because he used the language of others (Kant and Schopenhauer) and he adds here a second aspect to his criticism: his language was not singing enough. In other words, Nietzsche criticises his failure to write as a poet, to make his words sing, and this, as we have seen, also suggests that he does not overcome the 'spoken' philosophical style in *The Birth of Tragedy*. To write philosophy as poetry is thus the task Nietzsche assigns himself in his retrospective look onto his early work and this is central to his later works, especially in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. This writing philosophy as poetry is, as we have argued, not only a matter of form but also of content or, better, a matter which overcomes the form-content dualism. Nietzsche thus aims at overcoming the

metaphysical dualisms inherited from Plato: between philosophy and poetry, form and content, mind and body, true and apparent worlds. If philosophy is a matter of creating perspectives and if style follows this task, philosophical stylistics studies the poetics of philosophy. This poetics of philosophy suggests a reevaluation of the relations between philosophy and poetry, and this will be our focus in the concluding chapter.

Conclusion:
**Poetics of Philosophy (Or Philosophy and Poetry
reconsidered)**

The Gay Science, Prelude 56: 'Poet's Vanity'
*Give me glue and in good time
I'll find wood myself. To crowd
Sense into four silly rhymes
Is enough to make one proud.*

The Gay Science, Prelude 59: 'The Pen Is Stubborn'
*The pen is stubborn, sputters-hell!
Am I condemned to scrawl
Boldly I dip it in the well,
My writing flows, and all
I try succeeds. Of course the spatter
Of tormented night
Is quite illegible. No matter:
Who reads the stuff I write?*

When philosophy encounters poetry, the latter appears both as a mirror and a limit. A mirror because both share a similar task and a limit because the language of philosophy seems at first to be incompatible with poetry. Connecting Nietzsche and Wittgenstein around the question of poetry has however given us elements for reconsidering the relations between philosophy and poetry, and thereby the creative dimension of philosophical investigations. Although Nietzsche and Wittgenstein seem to consider the poetics of philosophy in two different ways, Wittgenstein wants 'to bring words back to the ordinary' whereas Nietzsche is more openly poetic and criticises the ordinary as the common, and if we consider the poetic to arise from the ordinary, these two aspects might be less sharply opposed to one another. Another way to consider this opposition is to consider that the task of philosophy for Wittgenstein is description whereas it is creation for Nietzsche. However, as we have seen, Wittgenstein's description and Nietzsche's creation both aim at effecting change and it is this change which we consider to be the poetic aspect of their thoughts. As we have seen in Chapters Two and Three, to achieve this change, they need to reject the

representational use of language which usually prevails in metaphysics and suggest a different view of language, one which inherits from the expressive tradition of Herder, Hamann, Humboldt and others. If there is a poetics of philosophy and if philosophy and poetry therefore share a similar task as I have argued in Part Two, the notion of creation must play a central role.

In this concluding chapter and in order to bring the various elements together, I focus on the notion of creation to reconsider the relations between philosophy and poetry. This focus on creation should however not hide that parts of Nietzsche's and Wittgenstein's philosophies are opposed to this creative dimension, especially Nietzsche's focus on fate with his notions of eternal recurrence and *amor fati*, and Wittgenstein's focus on description, two aspects which I have only briefly discussed. My focus on poetry has led me to consider the creative side more than other aspects of their philosophies in relation to language, and especially their creation of language in their styles.

Nietzsche often discusses his new language and describes it as strange: 'We do not object to a judgment just because it is false; this is probably what is strangest about our new language.' (BGE 4 / KSA 5.18) The new language is strange because it does not rely on the metaphysical dualisms and therefore accounts for the world in a new way, shifting from representation to expression. Truth as correspondence is no longer held as an absolute and therefore even a 'false' judgment might bring insights on the world. The creation of a new language is a way of creating new values and, to the extent that 'we can only destroy as creators,' a way of destroying old values and perspectives. Nietzsche suggests this idea of creation of a new language in *Zarathustra*: 'New ways I walk now, a new talk comes to me: weary have I grown, like all creators, of the old tongues. No longer does my spirit want to wander on worn-out soles.' (Z II 'Child' / KSA 4.106-7) This notion of creation is central to Nietzsche's understanding of poetry and of a poetic language in philosophy. Although Nietzsche writes poems as well, he does not argue for an identification of philosophy with poetry. Rather than identifying or categorising philosophy as poetry, Nietzsche's claim shows

that philosophy can be enriched from poetry. This goes against the idea of a generic difference between philosophy and poetry and following this line of thought, Manfred Frank 'contends that literary discourse does not differ in either principle or quality, but merely *quantitatively*, from other innovative uses of colloquial language. Creative literature (*Dichtung*) is merely the extreme form of the innovative potential found in our everyday use of language.'²⁸⁷ Poetry uses the innovative possibilities of our language to its maximal capacity according to Frank, but philosophy can use them as well. By accepting poetry within the philosophical realm—thus making the opposite move to Plato's banishing of poetry from his ideal city—Nietzsche attempts to create a philosophy of the future. By turning to a poetic style, a creative style in the sense of *poiesis*, philosophy can acquire a creative dimension.

An important aspect of this creative use of language in philosophy is its focus on expression, in contrast to representation. Nietzsche's metaphors of laughter and dance which appear often in *Zarathustra* for instance are good examples of this shift to expression. As we have seen, dance is a metaphor for an expressive language and brings to the fore the bodily dimension of writing and reading. Similarly, laughter has a bodily dimension and represents an expressive burst. Dance and laughter are two modes of expression Nietzsche uses as metaphors. A third one appears quite often as well: singing. As we have seen, in his 'Attempt at self-criticism,' Nietzsche criticises his own style, considering that 'It should have *sung*, this "new soul"—rather than spoken!' (BT 'Attempt' 3 / KSA 1.15) In the shorter version from *Zarathustra*: 'Sing! Speak no more!' (Z III 'Seals' 7 / KSA 4.291) This opposition between speaking and singing reflects the opposition between prose and poetry. Songs would belong to the realm of poetry, and let us not forget for instance that Nietzsche's *Gay Science* is subtitled with a Provençal translation: 'la gaya scienza' which refers to the art of

²⁸⁷ Frank (1999b), p. 275.

troubadours. Moreover, *The Gay Science* is followed by an appendix of songs. One of the aspects which unites poetry and music is the idea of rhythm. We have seen that rhythm is an essential component of both Nietzsche's and Wittgenstein's styles and that it is related to the possibility of understanding. In *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche claims: 'Thoughts in poems. — The poet leads his thoughts along festively, upon the chariot of rhythm: usually because they cannot walk on their own feet.' (HH 189 / KSA 2.164) If thoughts in poetry cannot walk, does this mean they can dance? The idea of a bodily expression comes back as a metaphor for the poetics of philosophy. This idea of expression, especially in relation to music, can also be found in Wittgenstein who, as said before, considers his style to be 'bad musical composition' (CV, p. 45). Even though it is *bad* musical composition, it is musical nonetheless and Wittgenstein acknowledges the importance of the expressive dimension in the writing of philosophy. According to Marjorie Perloff, his attention to the choice of words make him some kind of poet: 'Or perhaps the "uniqueness" in our postromantic age is less a matter of authenticity of individual *expression* than of sensitivity to the language pool on which the poet draws in re-creating and redefining the world as he or she has found it. It is in this context that Wittgenstein himself can be considered a poet.'²⁸⁸

In a famous remark from *Culture and Value*, Wittgenstein compares philosophy to poetic composition:

I believe I summed up where I stand in relation to philosophy when I said: really one should write philosophy only as one writes a poem. That, it seems to me, must reveal how far my thinking belongs to the present, the future, or the past. For I was acknowledging myself, with these words, to be someone who cannot quite do what he would like to be able to do. (CV, p. 28)

Wittgenstein introduces a direct relation between philosophy and poetry: philosophy should be written as poetry. Whereas the first sentence of this

²⁸⁸ Perloff (1996), p. 187.

remark is often quoted and has been commented rather intensively, most commentators do not discuss the rest of the remark. The last sentence can be linked to Nietzsche's self-criticism in *The Birth of Tragedy*: like Nietzsche, Wittgenstein was unable to express his thought in the right way. This failure to write philosophy as it should be written reveals all that still needs to be done. A philosophy written as poetry would be, taking Nietzsche's words, a 'philosophy of the future.' We can therefore understand the middle sentence: if philosophy can be written as poetry, it can look towards the future. Poetry points out what still needs to be done, what still needs to be created. Poetry appears as representing the future, as an aim towards which Wittgenstein—and philosophy—strives. Philosophy should be like poetry in the sense that it should always look forward, look towards using the creative powers at its disposal.

The idea of creation is one of the main features of a philosophy of the future, but what should such a philosophy create? Philosophy considered as poetry aims at creating new perspectives, but these new perspectives, according to Nietzsche, amount more precisely to create new values:

I must insist that we finally stop mistaking philosophical workers or learned people in general for philosophers—in this regard especially, we should give strictly 'to each his own,' and not too much to the former or too little to the latter. The education of the true philosopher may require that he himself once pass through all the stages at which his servants, the learned workers of philosophy, remain—*must* remain. Perhaps he even needs to have been a critic and a sceptic and a dogmatic and an historian, and in addition a poet and collector and traveller and puzzle-solver and moralist and seer and 'free spirit' and nearly all things, so that he can traverse the range of human values and value-feelings and *be able* to look with many kinds of eyes and consciences from the corners into every wide expanse. But all these are only the preconditions for his task: the task itself calls for something else—it calls for him to *create values*. It is the task of those philosophical workers in the noble mould of Kant and Hegel to establish and press into formulae some large body of value judgments (that is, previous value-*assumptions*, value-creations that have become dominant and are for a time called 'truths'), whether in the realm of *logic* or of *politics* (morals) or of *aesthetics*. [...] *But true philosophers are commanders and lawgivers*. They say, 'This is the way it

should be!' Only they decide about mankind's Where to? and What for? and to do so they employ the preparatory work of all philosophical workers, all subduers of the past. With creative hands they reach towards the future, and everything that is or has existed becomes their means, their tool, their hammer. Their 'knowing' is creating, their creating is law-giving, their will to truth is—will to power. (BGE 211 / KSA 5.144-5)

This quote from *Beyond Good and Evil* contains many elements and I will point a few ideas, always keeping in mind the poetics of philosophy, that is its creative dimension.

1. The task of the philosopher is once again compared to that of the poet, although not exclusively. The philosopher needs to have been a poet among many other things, 'nearly all things' Nietzsche says. To become a philosopher of the future, one must go through many stages and one of them is the poetic stage. We can translate this idea of stages in terms of perspectives and the poetic perspective precisely shows the creation that is at play in accounting for the world.

2. Related to the first point, the necessity to go through many stages parallels the idea that one should experience as many perspectives as possible in order to reach a better and more 'objective' understanding of a thing, to reach what Wittgenstein calls a 'surveyable representation [*übersichtliche Darstellung*].' (PI 122) The philosopher must 'traverse the range of human values and value-feelings and *be able* to look with many kinds of eyes and consciences from the corners into every wide expanse.' The philosopher must, one could say, have a perspectivist education and multiply the directions in which she looks. Similarly, if the philosopher is to teach something, it is this perspectivism that the poet shows.

3. This multiplicity of perspectives and stages are preliminary steps for the philosopher's real task which 'calls for him to *create values*.' This creation of values is the necessary stage for the philosopher to endorse her role, that of a commander and a lawgiver. This aspect is

central for it introduces the importance of creation within the philosopher's task. To create new perspectives on the world, the philosopher follows the poet in creating a new language which, in turn, creates new things. These new things, that is this new conception of the world, leads the philosopher to create new values.

4. The task of the philosopher is to use her creative hands in order to build something with 'the preparatory works of all philosophical workers, subduers of the past.' Nietzsche uses time notions to classify philosophers: philosophical workers are concerned with the past whereas creative philosophers are philosophers of the future. This can be linked to Wittgenstein's concern with his own philosophy: when discussing the idea that philosophy should be written as poetic composition, Wittgenstein considers: 'That, it seems to me, must reveal how far my thinking belongs to the present, the future, or the past.' We have interpreted this by affirming that the task of poetry within philosophy or, better, the impact of poetry on philosophy, is to make philosophy look towards the future. The same goes for Nietzsche who considers that it is the philosopher's creative—or poetic—powers that characterise the philosopher of the future.

5. The philosopher of the future's 'knowing is creating.' All that has been called truths are, ultimately, creations, fictions, inventions which have become dominant: the fictions upon which the people have agreed. However, the philosopher of the future's task is to overcome these dominant truths (and that is the step Nietzsche attempts to make by showing that these truths are constructions) and to propose new ones. This proposing of new truths is a creating of new values which, in turn, become new truths. For Nietzsche, metaphysics can be criticised from the standpoint that it establishes a system of values which consider truth as valuable. On the contrary, his perspectival vocabulary suggests that one should not remain enclosed within one system of values, but rather acknowledge the

perspectival and thus relative dimension of our values. The task of the philosopher of the future is thus to uncover the perspectival dimension of values and undermine the metaphysical system. Hence Nietzsche's use of the hammer as the philosophical tool: it can break, build, and, as in *Twilight of the Idols*, sound out the idols. The sounding out of the idols reveals that they are empty and this breaks down the metaphysical system. The task then remains of rebuilding, of creating. For Nietzsche, the value we give to truth is related to a question of power and hierarchy. The revaluation of values aims at reevaluating this hierarchy without establishing a new system, because this would just be repeating what Nietzsche criticises. The revaluation of values has no end, it is a never-ending process, and this might be one way of reading the eternal recurrence. The last sentence from the quote suggests a process: knowing is creating, creating is law-giving, will to truth is will to power. The passage from law-giving to will to truth can be understood in the sense that truth justifies the law and this in turn must be seen as a power justification. This process must however not have an end and the philosopher of the future always engages in this process of creating.

The philosopher, once she has encountered and experienced the poetic perspective, becomes not only a knower but a creator and a law-giver whose creations become new perspectives from which to look at the world. Inasmuch as the philosopher has to create these perspectives, she must also create herself. The idea of style does not only describe the creation of the philosopher's text and how her philosophy is expressed, it does not only describe the style of thinking as Wittgenstein says, it also concerns the philosopher's own style, her own character, as Nietzsche argues: '*One thing is needful.* — To 'give style' to one's character.' (GS 290 / KSA 3.350) Nietzsche thus embraces poetry and its creative powers in order to expand the scope both of his philosophy and of his worldview. But how does Wittgenstein fit in this picture? A straightforward interpretation would see him as quite

opposed to Nietzsche's ideal of a creating philosopher. Isn't Wittgenstein's idea that the task of philosophy is to 'leave everything as it is?' (PI 124) On the contrary, I believe that Wittgenstein's philosophy can also be interpreted in creative ways: he does not only describe uses of language but invents some, as he argues in the *Blue Book*; 'That is also why our method is not merely to enumerate actual usages of words, but rather deliberately to invent new ones, some of them because of their absurd appearance.' (BB, p. 28) We also have seen that imagination plays an important role in Wittgenstein's philosophy and this can be related to the idea of fiction.

This opposition between creation and description brings us back to the analytic-continental divide. Confronting poetry forces philosophy to rethink its task at the end of metaphysics and, rather than embracing science as the new absolute, to engage into metaphilosophical reflections about the task of philosophy, whether it is descriptive or creative. We have seen that the ideas of perspectivism and of creation of perspectives bring to the fore the transformative dimension of philosophy. This dimension is, according to Simon Critchley, a specific feature of continental philosophy:

In other words, the touchstone of philosophy in the Continental tradition might be said to be *practice*; that is to say, our historically and culturally embedded life in the world as finite selves. It is this touchstone of practice that leads philosophy towards a critique of present conditions, as conditions not amenable to freedom, and to the Utopian demand that things be otherwise, the demand for a transformative practice of philosophy, art, poetry or thinking.²⁸⁹

We have however seen with Wittgenstein that even a description can have a therapeutic—and thus transformative—dimension. Like the other criteria described in Chapter One, the transformative dimension cannot serve as dividing between two sides but, to the contrary, functions as a bridging notion. Similarly, and we have seen it with our study of Nietzsche's and Wittgenstein's styles in Chapter Seven, the notion of style cannot divide between analytic and continental. On the contrary, and inasmuch as analytic

²⁸⁹ Critchley (1997), p. 357.

or continental philosophy are family resemblance concepts, there can be no one defining trait.

Despite seemingly stark differences—and we have seen the oppositions between Carnap and Heidegger or Derrida and Austin in Chapter One—which could suggest that analytic and continental philosophy would be two rather distinct styles or ways of philosophising, they share some concerns, especially with language. Once analytic philosophers take into account the poetic aspects of language, as Wittgenstein for instance does, and continental philosopher the necessary communicative and normative aspects of language, as Nietzsche suggests it already, the differences seem to vanish. The confrontation with poetry brings Nietzsche and Wittgenstein not only to elaborate views on language which combine aspects from representational and expressive conceptions of language, but also to adopt a specific style which can be characterised as poetic. Rather than considering analytic and continental philosophy as two traditions which are completely distinct from one another—and we have seen that neither can be ultimately defined—they can be considered as perspectives or sets of perspectives, which, as with all perspectives, require work to shift from one to another.

Confronting Nietzsche's and Wittgenstein's perspectives shows that the seemingly stark contrast between transformative and descriptive philosophy, between the creative aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy and Wittgenstein's considering of philosophy as 'leaving things as they are,' is much weaker than one might initially think. As I hope to have shown, any description involves a creation and any creation requires a description. In this sense, the task of philosophy for Nietzsche and Wittgenstein aims at a redescription of the world and our traditional relation to it. This focus on redescription reveals the poetic dimension of philosophy and how philosophy can bring to see the world anew, and therefore to see oneself anew.

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