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The Passive Body and States of Nature: An Examination of the Methodological Role State of Nature Theory Plays in Williams and Nietzsche

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Abstract: In his work *Truth and Truthfulness*, Bernard Williams offers a very different interpretation of philosophical genealogy than that expounded in the secondary literature. The “Received View” of genealogy holds that it is “documentary grey”: it attempts to provide historically well-supported, coherent, but defeasible explanations for the actual transformation of practices, values, and emotions in history. However, paradoxically, the standard interpretation also holds another principle. Genealogies are nevertheless polemical because they admit that any evidence that would serve to justify a genealogical account is indexical to a perspective. In short, genealogies are not true per se. This view of genealogy leaves it vulnerable to three criticisms. I call these three: (1) the reflexive, (2) the substantive, and (3) the semantic. In contrast, Williams argues that *all* genealogies provide a functional account for the manifestation of something and further, that a State of Nature story subtends these accounts. The upshot of Williams’ approach is that it makes for strange philosophical bedfellows. For example, Nietzsche’s account for the rise of Christian morality shares methodological features with Hobbes’ functional explanation for the emergence of civilization and yet Nietzsche seems to take issue with genealogists who are hypothesis mongers gazing haphazardly into the blue. In the following article, I flesh out, more fully, how to make sense of Williams’ novel reclassification of genealogy. I show that Nietzsche’s genealogies are State of Nature stories and, just like Hobbes’ State of Nature story in chapter thirteen of *Leviathan*, are subtended by our collective corporeality. I then demonstrate how Nietzsche’s three stories in the *Genealogy*, when brought together, serve to undermine what Williams refers to as “... a new system (of reasons)—which very powerfully resists being understood in such terms ...” Finally, I explain how my reconstruction of Williams’ interpretation of the genealogy immunizes it against the three criticisms noted above.

Keywords: Williams; Nietzsche; genealogy; State of Nature; functional; Hobbes



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1. Introduction

The ruptures in that history (of science), as identified by Bachelard and Kuhn, moments in which a transition is made from one standardized understanding of what is to be rational to some other, sometimes incommensurable standardized understanding of rationality, are also secondary phenomena. For they, like the standardized orders which they divide and join, are the outcome of assemblages and confluences in the making of which distributions of power have been at work, in such a way that what appear at the surface level as forms of rationality both are, and result from, the implementation of a variety of aggressive and defensive strategies, albeit strategies without subjects. Truth and power are thus inseparable—what appear as projects aimed at the possession of truth are always willful in their exercise of power (MacIntyre 1994, p. 301).

The above rendering of genealogy by Alastair MacIntyre is as profound as it is provocative. It exemplifies and greatly clarifies the standard interpretation of genealogy in the secondary literature. Yet, for all its perspicacity, MacIntyre’s reading leaves genealogy open, perhaps intentionally, to three different criticisms. I call the first methodological (or

reflexive), the second the substantive, and the third the semantic. While it is possible to address each complaint, the purpose of this paper is to reconstruct a very different view of genealogy. It is a reconstruction that purports to avoid these kinds of critiques altogether. This new interpretation of genealogy is one hinted at by the late English moral philosopher Bernard Williams.

In his work *Truth and Truthfulness*, Williams presents a more capacious understanding of genealogy than that offered by MacIntyre's "Received View" by suggesting that Nietzsche's and Foucault's respective genealogical projects can be brought into the orbit of modern and contemporary political state theorists. Putting the point more sharply, political philosophers such as Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Rawls, and Nozick have more in common with Nietzsche and Foucault than one might initially think, for all the thinkers mentioned above may be classified as genealogists. The grouping of these thinkers under the umbrella term "genealogy" does appear strange, but the advantages of Williams' position are manifold. One which stands out, in particular, is something I already alluded to: Williams' reconstruction of genealogy, if sound, immunizes it from the substantive, methodological, and semantic kinds of criticisms that populate the current secondary literature. The issue, then, is whether this radical reclassification of genealogy is justified.

If Williams' understanding of genealogy reconstructs the standard view, as I hold, then what is its defining feature? The answer: genealogies, in all forms, are State of Nature stories. State of Nature stories provide an imaginary (or at best quasi-fictional) functional account for a phenomenon's emergence. If I am right, then such an interpretation of genealogy stands in stark contrast to the traditional reading noted above by MacIntyre and others. Genealogy, according to the traditional view neither hypothesizes about the origin of some event or thing nor utilizes a thought experiment à la Rawls' Original Position to justify some new arrangement of the political order. Genealogy instead provides a historical account of how some existing thing (e.g., a practice, institution, even a feeling) was transformed. Historically, real causal forces produced the transformation. The problem, then, is this: either Bernard Williams (arguably the most significant English moral philosopher in the last 30 years) makes an elementary mistake, as indeed some imply, or he has a very different understanding of what a state of nature is. Those who argue for the former, like C.G. Prado in his review of *Truth and truthfulness*, suggests that Williams commits a rudimentary error. He writes, "Two problems with Williams' genealogical story, are, first, that despite the prominence he gives to state-of-nature account, it does remarkably little work. But second and considerably more serious, is that William's genealogical story is not Nietzschean because intended to establish an originaive claim and Nietzschean genealogy-perhaps best exemplified in Darwin's work- is a technique for understanding how something evolved as it did not how something arose." (Prado 2004, p. 523). In contrast, I argue that Prado's reading is uncharitable.

To resolve this impasse, we need to answer the real question: What underpins these State of Nature imaginary hypotheses? The answer, or so I will demonstrate, is the body's malleability.

In the following essay, I examine how Nietzsche's presentation of the body—as an unstructured and, therefore, passive terminal for disciplinary strategies—compels readers to condemn, as Williams puts it, "... a new kind of collective reason, the shared consciousness of morality." (Williams 2002, p. 37). Williams provides a novel way of thinking about Nietzschean and Foucauldian genealogy by furnishing a different category to rethink the so-called histories of Christian morality and the carceral regime, respectively. However, Williams' retelling of genealogy's nature and purpose requires a fair bit of reconstruction on my end. It is a formidable challenge to present Williams' innovative model of genealogical investigation lucidly and systematically.

With that said, I begin, in Section 2, by articulating the three criticisms mentioned above. In the next part, I provide a general overview of what genealogies attempt to do before explaining what Williams believes they are not. In Section 4, I delve into the specific positive attributes of genealogy qua genealogy. There are two substantive and

controversial claims Williams makes about genealogy. First, genealogies are functional accounts of historical phenomena, and second that an imaginary State of Nature subtends these accounts. To augment my thesis, I examine Chapter 13 of Hobbes' *Leviathan* in Section 5. I use this chapter as a model to concretize how genealogies are imaginary hypotheses that provide a functional account for the emergence of a thing. In Section 6, I apply Hobbes' model to the three essays of *On the Genealogy of Morals*. I demonstrate that these accounts are functional *and* undergirded by assuming that the body is a terminus for disciplinary practices. Nietzsche's genealogies are powerful and provocative because they induce readers to grapple with the body's malleability. The upshot of Williams' approach in contradistinction to other readings is that Nietzsche's *Genealogy* exposes the contradictory nature of Christian morality writ large. He is not merely providing an alternative perspective or a more warranted account of the same phenomenon as the traditional interpretation has it (For truthful readings of Nietzsche's *Genealogy*, i.e., the standard account, see: (Owen 2002, 2007; Leiter 2002; Lightbody, 2019; Taylor 1984; Conway 1994, 2008; Morrisson 2014; Migotti 2006, 2016). I conclude my analysis by demonstrating how William's functional account is immune to the three criticisms I mentioned above.

The argument I supply for Nietzsche applies *ceteris paribus* for Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*. However, due to space constraints, I cannot entertain that thesis here.

2. Three Critiques of Genealogy

According to Alastair MacIntyre, the upshot of philosophical genealogy as articulated in the two most significant works on the subject, Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals* and Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, is to persuade readers that the link between rationality and power is indissoluble. Academic disciplines are both a tool for and product of *dispositifs* or power/knowledge apparatuses. Values infuse assertions, and thus, statements cannot be analyzed independently of the normative frameworks in which they are embedded. Therefore, so-called "facts" serve as instruments of power by regulating and enforcing distinct strategies while denying the legitimacy of others.

This compelling and thought-provoking reading, however, renders philosophical genealogy incoherent when applied reflexively. It would certainly appear that Nietzsche and Foucault make assertions in their respective works. However, suppose all claims are really value claims in disguise? In that case, Nietzsche's historical account for the origin of Christian morality cannot be more justified or more truthful than the traditional narrative he seeks to displace because the two value frameworks in question (Nietzsche's and the Christian's) are incommensurable. If that is right, then Habermas' articulation of the objection that genealogies count "no more and no less" than the traditional stories they seek to replace is colossally devastating (Habermas 1985, p. 281). This first criticism, which I shall call the methodological, is the most serious of the three I will briefly consider.

I will call the second criticism the substantive or the "Just so story" objection, a reference to Rudyard Kipling's children's book *Just So Stories*. Some scholars in this camp hold that Nietzsche's genealogies, at worst, are bad histories with little redemptive qualities (Dennett 1995, p. 464). In contrast, others maintain that although the hypotheses of Nietzsche's accounts are plausible, the evidence justifying them does not accurately reflect the historical or anthropological record. (See Prinz 2007, pp. 218–19; Prinz 2016, p. 194). Although Prinz's objections, it should be noted, are ably and directly answered by (Migotti 2016) and indirectly by (Lightbody 2019), if one accepts Prinz's interpretation of genealogy, as a method of historical reconstruction, it is an easy task of discovering evidence that does not support Nietzsche's contentions. Thus, an alternative way to respond to the thrust of the "Just So" objection must be tried.

The third type of criticism, I shall call semantic. Robert Brandom elucidates this objection in his Howison Lectures titled “Reason, Genealogy, and the Hermeneutics of Magnanimity”. Brandom targets Nietzsche’s account of guilt in the second essay. He claims that *On the Genealogy of Morals* offers a mechanical (quid facti) explanation for the emergence of guilt. However, according to Brandom, what is required for Nietzsche’s rendering to be meaningful is a quid juris justification (Brandom 2013, sec. 1, p. 1). As all genealogical descriptions offer purely causal accounts to explain a new concept’s emergence, their reasons for this appearance are unintelligible and, therefore, according to Brandom, semantically naïve (Brandom 2013, sec. 1, p. 3). Although I have defended Nietzsche from this line of attack in (Lightbody 2020), here I present a very different kind of defense of the genealogical method which defuses Brandom’s critique from the get-go.

In offering an alternative explanation of genealogy, I demonstrate that Williams’ approach is immune to these criticisms.

3. Williams on Genealogies: Stories That Serve Naturalism

“A genealogy is a narrative that tries to explain a cultural phenomenon by describing a way in which it came about, or could have come about, or might have come about. Some of the narrative will consist of real history, which to some extent must aim to be, as Foucault puts it, “gray meticulous, and patiently documentary.” (Williams 2002, p. 20). So writes Williams. The key point in this passage is the word “narrative”. Genealogies, fundamentally, are stories. They describe how some thing—whether a concept, practice, value, or feeling—came about. It is critical to note that a genealogical inquiry’s target of an investigation is incomprehensible if that same target is extracted from its explanatory context. Expanding on this point, Williams makes it clear that genealogy is not a species of reductive naturalism. He explains: “The genealogy gives no way of translating language that mentions the resultant item into terms that mention only the original items, nor does it claim that “justice” or “property” or “knowledge” introduces nothing over and above the original items—on the contrary, it shows what new thing is introduced, and why it is new.” (Williams 2002, p. 36). We might say that genealogies are linguistic non-reductionist types of naturalistic analysis. In explaining the rise of “justice”, “morality”, or “normalization”, we are not explaining these terms in the language of explicandum to explanans. To put the matter more forcefully, we have a license to say that genealogy is antithetical to physicalist reductionism as Williams explains: “Questions about naturalism (which Williams claims genealogy serves) like questions about individualism in the social sciences, are questions not about reduction but about explanation.” (Williams 2002, p. 23).

In parsing these quotations, we come to learn that genealogy has three characteristics: (1) it provides a story about how some new thing came to be; (2) it respects the novelty of this thing and does not attempt to reduce to it some earlier existing object or practice or value; (3) it serves the purposes of naturalism but its methodology, to repeat the above point, is anathema to reductionism. Despite having this description in hand, however, we are still told very little about the distinctiveness of genealogy itself. We will need to look deeper.

4. Functional Accounts and the State of Nature: A Williamsian Analysis of Hobbes

Williams’ explanation of genealogy is not well-highlighted in his work—a statement that could not be more untrue for the likes of Nietzsche and Foucault. In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche clearly signals to his readers the rules he extracts from his genealogical analysis. For example, in GM: II 13, Nietzsche makes a distinction between the drama and procedures of punishment. “In accordance with the previously developed major point of historical method, it is assumed without further ado that the procedure itself will be something older, earlier than its employment in punishment, that the latter (drama or meaning) is projected and interpreted into the procedure . . . ” (Nietzsche 2000, p. 515). While, for Foucault, pages 27–28 of *Discipline and Punish* delineate the four methodological hypotheses the Frenchman will implement and confirm throughout the work. “This study”

(*Discipline and Punish*) [Foucault writes], “obeys four general rules”, which I now quote in full:

1. Do not concentrate the study of punitive mechanisms on their ‘repressive’ effects alone, on their ‘punishment’ aspects alone, but situate them in a whole series of their possible positive effects, even if these seem marginal at first sight. As a consequence, regard punishment as a complex social function.
2. Analyse punitive methods not simply as consequences of legislation or as indicators of social structures, but as techniques possessing their own specificity in the more general field of other ways of exercising power. Regard punishment as a political tactic.
3. Instead of treating the history of penal law and the history of the human sciences as two separate series whose overlapping appears to have had on one or the other, or perhaps on both, a disturbing or useful effect, according to one’s point of view, see whether there is not some common matrix or whether they do not both derive from a single process of ‘epistemological-juridical’ formation; in short, make the technology of power the very principle of both of the humanization of the penal system and of the knowledge of man.
4. Try to discover whether this entry of the soul on to the scene of penal justice, and with it the intention in legal practice of a whole corpus of ‘scientific’ knowledge, is not the effect of a transformation of the way in which the body is invested by power relations.)

In short, try to study the metamorphosis of punitive methods on the basis of a political technology of the body in which might be read a common history of power relations and object relations (Foucault 1977, pp. 27–28).

In contrast, Williams’ elucidation of genealogy is introduced with little fanfare. Only a few passages in chapter two explicate, in any considerable detail, his conception of genealogy. Thus, the heavy lifting of articulating Williams’ reconstruction genealogy must be performed by the reader. I extract two components of Williams’ reconstrual of genealogy from this chapter. The first is genealogy’s reliance on a State of Nature story. On this point, Williams writes: “Craig’s example, like my own State of Nature story, is an example of what I shall call an “imaginary genealogy”—“imaginary,” because, as I said at the beginning of this chapter, there are also historically true genealogies. Imaginary genealogies typically suggest that a phenomenon can usefully be treated as functional which is not obviously so.” (Williams 2002, p. 32). The second component of genealogy concerns its functionality. Williams explains what he means by functional in the following: “Second, the account is functional because the relation between the derived, more complex, reason and the simpler, “more primitive,” reasons or motivations is rational, in the sense that in the imagined circumstances people with the simpler motivations would welcome, and, if they could do so, aim for, a state of affairs (i.e., one other than a State of Nature) in which the more complex reasons would operate.” (Williams 2002, pp. 33–34). Pinning down a robust articulation of genealogy involves distilling three additional essential features from these passages and adding them to the description above. These three features are: (1) a genealogy provides a functional account for the emergence of a new thing in history; (2) a State of Nature story subtends this account; (3) the actors in our imaginary State of Nature story *are rational*, and we as readers of the genealogy are rational too: we can understand and judge the actions and reasons of so-called “primitive agents” in this State of Nature story. This last point connects the functionality of the genealogy and the normative consequences that follow, from the account. It is because we can judge the behavior of the inhabitants of these State of Nature stories that we may condemn or vindicate their respective decisions.

5. Bringing out the Three Features of Genealogy

To bring the above three features to light, it is fruitful, at this juncture, to examine Hobbes' functional account of society as articulated in his monumental work, *Leviathan*. A Socratic attempt at defining community might proceed by describing civilization as a collection of individuals who are motivated by their self-interests and who then interact with one another in an uncoerced and free manner to achieve those interests. However, this conceptual understanding of "society" is limited because it does not capture the structural features responsible for affording the pursuit of those same interests. To bring out the above point more clearly, a conceptual analysis of society fails to answer the following question: What social, economic, or political arrangements need to be in place before uncoerced and mutually beneficial interaction can take place? A purely conceptual approach does not consider the causal mechanisms that must be operative to order human behavior in this way. An adequate definition of society, at minimum, must explain this ordering.

However, there is a second problem with the above explanation: it presupposes a rather robust view of agency. It is assumed that individuals are driven in toto by self-interest, can understand what their self-interests are, and, more critically, it does not explain how those very self-interests came to be. This last point needs to be fleshed out in greater detail. Let me explain.

Suppose I am challenged with giving an account of the origins of society. I cannot begin with a description that already provides the organizational structures that explain how subjects may pursue those interests they already find important to them. Such a "justification" would be circular. Thus, the account I provide must be rational to those agents who preceded me: they must hold that it is in their self-interest to enter into social bonds according to *their* reasons. This process either continues ad infinitum, or we reach a ground that underpins rational self-interest writ large.

However, there is a trick that must be turned, given Williams' anti-reductionism. Williams has no interest in a just-so evolutionary story. A genealogy, so Williams evinces, is not a brute naturalism: "These circumstances are standardly identified in the literature as the environment of our Pleistocene hunter-gatherer ancestors. It is important to the argument of this book that this is not what I mean when I offer the abstract representation of certain human activities and capacities which I call the State of Nature. My story is not intended as a speculation in evolutionary biology or as a contribution to prehistory." (Williams 2002, p. 30). This last aspect attempts to explain the fecundity and novelty of self-interests. In that respect, Hobbes' account travels together with Williams' because they seek to answer the following question: How can one explain the rich and varied self-interests individuals develop in society without reducing the origin of these self-interests to an anthropological or biological substratum that pre-existed the structural matrix which allowed those very interests to be?

Hobbes offers neither a conceptual nor reductive explanation to clarify the well-spring of society. In Chapter XIII of *Leviathan*, he provides a highly warranted operational story that answers these questions in full. For Hobbes, the functioning of society can be distilled as follows: "Hereby it is manifest, that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such war as is of every man, against every man. For WAR consisteth not in battle only or the act of fighting; but in a tract of time, wherein the will to contend by battle is sufficiently known . . . " (Hobbes 1966, p. 100). As Hobbes further explains, war, understood as an ongoing temporal event where it becomes impossible to discern when it might end, is characterized by the *absence* of material and intellectual products along with the interaction between agents that would necessitate the pursuit of these objects. As Hobbes further explains:

In such condition there is no place for industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving and removing such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time, no arts, no letters, no

society, and, which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death, and the life of man solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short. (Hobbes 1966, p. 100)

According to Hobbes, the pursuit of self-interest is possible only if a sovereign who is authorized to establish laws (and is capable of enforcing them) is in place.

From these passages, it becomes clear why Hobbes' functional approach is so powerful. Hobbes' account achieves two things: (1) It provides a functional understanding of how I can pursue my self-interests and (2) it vindicates the key structures of society which allow me to pursue these very interests. The pursuit of my more complex and nuanced self-interests (such as the accumulation of wealth or self-respect, advancement of career, etc.) may only be afforded in a society, and cannot be conducted if I am concerned with my personal safety. Thus, the social covenant can only be safeguarded, so Hobbes argues, through citizens' acknowledgment of a sovereign who is authorized to punish malefactors who would put the safety of individuals into question.

There is something important to notice about the conclusion Hobbes reaches, so argues Williams. Notice that it affords a limited degree of rationality to the members of this State of Nature story but one that does not beg the question of the very rationale of the hypothesis. This hypothesis, if we recall, was to establish a genealogy that provides an account of how I can pursue my self-interests, no matter if these very interests are ones engendered by the particular society in which I find myself. The conclusion Hobbes attains does not force us to project such sophisticated thinking to those working through this time of war " ... because it represents as functional a concept, reason, motivation, or other aspect of human thought and behaviour, where that item was perhaps not previously seen as functional; the explanation of the function is unmysterious, because in particular it does not appeal to intentions or deliberations or (in this respect) already purposive thought; and the motivations that are invoked in the explanation are ones that are agreed to exist anyway." (Williams 2002, p. 24). To recast William's phrasing, imagine that in contrast to peace, where peace is defined as acknowledging that this sovereign's power is to legislate and enforce said legislation, there is war. In that case, all bets are off—I cannot be sure that I will be alive tomorrow to pursue distal intentions. Thus, I am relegated to gratifying my natural instincts: food, shelter, and, most importantly, bodily integrity. For what I fear, most, as Hobbes powerfully puts it is, "Death and wounds" (Hobbes 1966, p. 81). If I find myself in a perpetual state of war where threats, whether real or imaginary, to my body are likely, then I am in a State of Nature. Finding myself in such a state would entail that I, too, would trade some of my freedoms for personal security, just like the fictional, unsophisticated inhabitants of the story. Reason demands nothing less.

Before examining how Hobbes' discussion helps us to understand Nietzsche's *Genealogy*, there is one final consideration: the underpinning to the State of Nature hypothesis. Hobbes' functional approach rings true because it is in our collective and individual best interest to adopt peace, as Hobbes defines it. The establishment of an authority figure who, through laws and enforcement, legislates peace is to our advantage because we are vulnerable by nature. "Even the strongest must sleep; even the weakest might persuade others to help him kill another" (Hobbes 1966, p. 98). For Hobbes, we are equally vulnerable, no matter how strong or healthy we appear, because of our shared corporeality. We each have the capacity to be wounded and wound. The body's vulnerability provides the platform for Hobbesian subjectivity and, therefore, political society writ large. (This close connection between vulnerability and Hobbes' conception of subjectivity is more forcefully made by (Whitney 2011).

Nietzsche's State of Nature story is also one that is subtended by the body. However, where Hobbes highlights our anatomical vulnerability as subjects, what Nietzsche underscores, in contrast, is the body's malleability. Why does this different emphasis matter? To answer this question, we must return to Hobbes. The Hobbesian State of Nature, according to Williams, is vindicatory. Hobbes absolves the sins of civilization, namely, unfreedom. Hobbes defends the security of the body and, consequently, the protection of planned self-interest and development, a good that can surely only be afforded by civilization.

Rational agents in a Hobbesian State of Nature story, would prefer to have “... a visible power who keeps them in awe and ties them by fear of punishment to the performance of their covenants ...” [because without this power] “... such covenants are mere words and of no strength to secure a man at all.” (Hobbes 1966, p. 129). In contrast, Nietzsche condemns society. Nietzsche criticizes the price paid for said security, namely humankind’s domestication. The body, for Nietzsche, is a vehicle for disciplinary practices. These practices come to reformat one’s very agency. This difference will be explored as I turn to Nietzsche’s functional explanation for Christianity and later, Western morality.

6. Nietzsche’s Functional Explanation for the Rise of Christian Morality

To make sense of what Williams describes as Nietzsche’s functional account of moral reasoning, we need, firstly, to examine the purpose of each story in the *Genealogy of Morals* and then, secondly, to demonstrate how the core characteristics of morality explained by Nietzsche’s functional stories, become co-constitutive components for a system of new reasons. The question is not whether Nietzsche presents a more justified or more warranted account of how a new value system arose. A critical statement regarding the differences between history and genealogy by Williams is vital to bear in mind as we examine Nietzsche’s operational explanation for the origin and development of morality: “Genealogy keeps historical fact and functionalist abstraction in their places.” (Williams 2002, p. 35). As Williams further relates, “The fiction is uniquely useful because—so far from confusing genuine history and fiction—it enables us to keep count of what is history and what is abstraction, and it helps us to avoid two errors.” (Williams 2002, p. 35). The real question is what intrinsic epistemic value does a functional yet quasi-fictional story, explaining some phenomenon’s emergence, provide? Williams raises this question, but he passes over it in silence. (Williams 2002, p. 30) I, too, will leave this question for another time.

I shall now provide a brief examination of Nietzsche’s three interrelated accounts in *On the Genealogy of Morals* which, when taken together, explain morality from a functional point of view, so Nietzsche evinces. The first essay explicates the emergence of slave morality. Slave morality is predicated on two elements: a feeling (*ressentiment*) and a disposition (reaction) (Nietzsche 2000, GM I:10, pp. 472–73). In terms of activity, slave morality is parasitic; it is an inverted response to noble values. Noble values are instinctual, active impulses.

Moreover, slave morality is marked by an unconscious feeling of impotence; one is resentful that one cannot be like the nobles they despise. For the slave, however, good and evil values are subtended by the illusion of a singular unified free subject: the slaves argue that they are agents and responsible for their actions. They then unknowingly project their reactive, impotent values onto the nobles (Nietzsche 2000, GM I:11, pp. 475–77). The slaves judge that the nobles too are free, and therefore, they also are subject to evaluation. Again, it follows that the nobles should be held accountable and subsequently punished for their crimes, just as the slave is.

The second essay explains the origin of guilt. Guilt begins as the bad conscience—an instinctual, simian response to the internalization of primal violent and sexual drives. As Nietzsche explains, “All instincts that do not discharge themselves outwardly (*Aussen*) turn inward—this is what I call the internalization (*Verinnerlichung*) of man: thus it was that man first developed what was later called his “soul.” (*Seele*) The entire inner world, originally as thin as if it were stretched between two membranes, expanded and extended itself, acquired depth, breadth and height, in the same measure as outward discharge was inhibited.” (Nietzsche’s italics) (Nietzsche 2000, GM II: 16, p. 520). I call this process the “Internalization Hypothesis”. It is found again in GM: II, 22. Nietzsche there writes, “That will to self-tormenting (*Selbstpeinigung*), that repressed cruelty (*Grausamkeit*) of the animal-man (*Thierrnischen*) made inward and scared back into himself, the creature imprisoned in the ‘state’ so as to be tamed, who invented the bad conscience in order to hurt himself after the more natural vent for his desire to hurt had been blocked ...” (Nietzsche 2000,

GM II: 22, p. 528). The idea is that negatively charged affects such as guilt, anxiety, and self-loathing were once externally expressed, instinctual affects that underwent a transformation because their natural outlets for manifestation are now jammed. The affect is initially impeded, then reinterpreted, and correspondingly subverted. It loses its positive value (namely, one of affirmation and will to power) and becomes negative (life-denying, i.e., the diminishment of power). The feeling is then re-released, internally, carving out a subjectivity from the inside.

The development of how bodily drives and affects become housed in a “psyche” begins with civilization’s roots. In Sections 16–18 of GM: II, Nietzsche presents a functional interpretation of “civilization”. The creators of civilization were “blond beasts of prey”, who laid their “terrible claws upon a populace” (Nietzsche 2000, GM: II 17, p. 522). It was these warrior-artists—as Nietzsche calls them—that laid the tracks for the formation of the modern human (Nietzsche 2000, GM: II 17, p. 522). They created civilization by erecting walls, writing laws (the first “Thou Shalt Nots”), and inflicting punishment (torture) for those who dared to break free from their newfound enclosures. Nietzsche’s provocative suggestion is that the natural, animal-like instincts of the body turned inward due to the “hammer blows” and artistic violence of this “terrible artist’s egoism” (Nietzsche 2000, GM: II 17, p. 523). These fearful tyrants of the first state “... went on working until this raw material of people and semi-animals was at last not only thoroughly kneaded and pliant but also *formed*.” (Nietzsche’s italics) (Nietzsche 2000, GM: II 17, p. 522). Nietzsche’s explanation for the emergence of the bad conscience arises from his functional interpretation of civilization.

Guilt is a later manifestation of bad conscience and becomes both a marker and driver of ethical action. Guilt motivates and appraises the actions of a doer. More perspicuously put, guilt is the engine for so-called moral action and endorses one’s valuation of action.

However, guilt originated before slave morality. It initially emerged as an internalized response to the creditor/debtor relationship, the earliest form of exchange in ancient society, so Nietzsche speculates (Nietzsche 2000, GM, II: 4, pp. 498–99). However, it becomes deeply intertwined with slave morality: moral agents have a voice of conscience that directs them to do the “right thing” where the right thing is a slave value. One may either choose to listen to the voice or not. If not, then one is morally culpable for one’s actions because, as an agent, one could have acted otherwise as per the tenet of freewill examined in essay one. If one does not hear the voice at all, then one is beyond the pale of morality itself and deemed evil. Values and feelings are tethered to each other and serve to justify one another. Those who perform good actions alleviate their guilt—those who perpetrate evil acts either suffer from guilt or do not experience it at all.

The third essay explains the emergence of the ascetic ideal. The ascetic ideal manifests itself in many forms: religiously, artistically, philosophically, and scientifically. The purpose of the ascetic ideal is to stave off the horror vacui: the unbearable thought that life is without meaning. We would, Nietzsche argues, rather “will nothingness than not will” (Nietzsche 2000, GM, III: 1, p. 533 and GM, III: 28, p. 599). However, what does Nietzsche mean by not willing?

To answer this question, we must return to Nietzsche’s quasi-fictional story about the dawn of civilization. The ascetic ideal is the lynchpin fastening the main takeaways of GM I to GM II. Turning to the earlier story of GM II, our ancestors were domesticated by the “blonde beasts of prey”, those warrior-artists whom Nietzsche mentions in GM II (Nietzsche 2000, GM, II: 17, p. 522). The result of our breeding by these conquerors who were “too terrible to behold” was a new creature: a human being, the sick animal. We are ill because our primal instincts for hunting, adventure, and war cannot be pursued in their natural form. Yet, these drives must be quenched, nonetheless, so Nietzsche argues. Unable to find the primitive targets for these pursuits, the urges turn inward, carving out new pathways causing much suffering in their wake (Nietzsche 2000, GM, II: 16, p. 521). That is the moral of essay two.

GM I begins where GM II ended. In essay one, Nietzsche tells us about the nobles as birds of prey who feed upon the lambs (the plebeians). Slaves suffer at the hands of their oppressive overlords, the progeny of those warrior artists, the blonde beasts of prey of GM II (Nietzsche 2000, GM, I: 13, pp. 480–81). The suffering of the slave caste would have reached a bloody yet self-destructive fever-pitch if not for the priestly type. The priestly class saves the slaves from mounting a full-scale and suicidal war against the nobles. They use two means to transform plebeian retribution. First, they acknowledge that nobles should pay for their crimes. They preach a religion of revenge (which they will come to weaponize later). However, they next claim that the nobles are evil-doers and will be punished for their transgressions in the afterlife. The consequence of this apocalyptic preaching has a calming, soporific effect on the slave psyche: the slaves conclude it is not up to them to carry out retaliation against their noble overlords in the Here and Now—God will exact revenge on their behalf.

Second, the priests then demonstrate how to release the orgy of feelings lying dormant within the body. However, because the natural ends of these primitive urges are blocked, as explained by Nietzsche's Internalization Hypothesis, these powerful drives must find a new target—the slave himself (Nietzsche 2000, GM III: 13–20, pp. 556–75). Ultimately, the ascetic ideal is an attempt by Life to preserve the herd from being destroyed outright at the nobles' hands. However, in this process, the ascetic ideal becomes transformed from the only means for heavenly salvation to the sole method of realizing absolute objective truth, the unquestioned transcendent goal of all inquiry (Nietzsche 2000, GM, III: 25–28, pp. 589–99).

There is one last puzzle remaining: how does the ascetic ideal form the lynchpin connecting GM I and GM II, thereby creating a new system of valuation? To answer this question, we need to examine the core of the ascetic ideal. This core is the ideal's sanctification of the hunt for objective *stasis*, which we might colloquially call truth. The pursuit of science at all cost is the most recent incarnation of the ascetic ideal, Nietzsche demonstrates.

It should be noted, however, that Nietzsche does not reject science *tout court*. For instance, in Section 112 of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche praises science writing: "Our descriptions are better (those of science) . . . we have uncovered a manifold one after another where the naïve man and inquirer of older cultures saw two separate things." (Nietzsche 1974, GS sec. 112 p. 172). No, what he objects to is scientism, which posits absolute transcendent truths unconditioned by human perspectives and which are believed to be known conclusively via an infallible scientific method. What we see, according to Nietzsche, is an expansion of Christian virtues recloaked as science. William James, a staunch critic of scientism himself, notices the same connection between asceticism and scientific knowledge in a well-known passage that has come to reflect the nineteenth-century conception of the scientific spirit well:

When one turns to the magnificent edifice of the physical sciences, and sees how it was reared; what thousands of disinterested moral lives of men lie buried in its mere foundations; what patience and postponement, what choking down of preference, what submission to the icy laws of outer fact are wrought into its very stones and mortar; how absolutely impersonal it stands in its vast augustness,—then how besotted and contemptible seems every little sentimentalist who comes blowing his voluntary smoke-wreaths, and pretending to decide things from out of his private dream! (James 1907, p. 7)

Why does Nietzsche have a problem with this new value system? Why should it be condemned? The issue Nietzsche has with scientism has to do with its absolute valuation of the "beyond": the transcendent, unchanging reality that grounds the world of everyday concern. This fidelity to scientism, Nietzsche writes in *Gay Science*, " . . . affirms another world than the world of life, nature, and history; and insofar as they affirm this "other world"—look, must they not by the same token negate its counterpart, this world, our world?" (Nietzsche 1974, GS Sec. 344, pp. 282–83). Put in other terms, focusing on a static

beyond neglects and reorients us away, in the words of Foucault, from the aspiration of self-transformation.

However, there is another, more powerful reason for Nietzsche (and by extension, us, *Genealogy's* readers) to reject Christian morality in its many incarnations. Nietzsche's functional analysis demonstrates a profound contradiction entrenched in the very marrow of Western ethics itself. I highlight this contradiction by examining the four aspects of Christian values Nietzsche brings out in his analysis: (1) the goal (e.g., God, Truth); (2) the method (the ascetic ideal); (3) the indicative affect (guilt); and (4) the norm (duty). Once these four pillars of morality are erected, they form a defined enclosure, a thinking, feeling, acting and reasoning "square" from which a subject cannot escape or see beyond. As Williams explains, "... Nietzsche's functional account is applied to a system of reasons—in this case, literally a new system—which very powerfully resists being understood in such terms ... " (Williams 2002, p. 38).

This valuational enclosure both restrains and conditions the subject whom it encages. In Foucault's words, it constitutes a "limit-attitude" preventing subjects from discovering a way out from their very own reasoning (Foucault 1984, p. 350). However, the real question is this: How does Nietzsche's genealogy break us out from these pens of morality? My answer to this question, in broad brushstrokes, is that Nietzsche's functional analysis demonstrates that the connection linking Christian morality to the ascetic ideal, and later truth is one that is historical, arbitrary, and contingent. It is not logically necessary.

To flesh out my answer, I now examine what precisely this new system of collective reasoning entails. Williams to his fault, does not provide explicit details in this regard and thus, his explanation is significantly underdetermined. However, we can comprehend this novel and powerful network of rationality by examining each essay's central tenets. I then demonstrate how GM III forms the lynchpin between GM I and GM II. In effect, GM III merges the "truths" of each essay and, in so doing, creates a new reasoning–feeling amalgam, a new system of reasons, as Williams puts it above, that is nearly immune to critical scrutiny.

The tenets of GM 1:

1. We are free moral agents: we can choose otherwise.
2. Moral agents either already know (or at least can come to reason) what is objectively right or wrong.
3. These standards of valuation are transcendent.
4. Therefore, one is responsible for the evil choices one makes (Premises 1,2,3).
5. Because one is responsible for one's actions (premise 4) and there is a standard of transcendent values (premise 3), one can test how one's actions measure up to this standard.

Therefore: Because one can gauge how one's own actions measure up to these evaluative standards, one can judge and either vindicate or condemn others' actions.

The tenets of GM: II

1. The formation of the bad conscience signifies the creation of the sick animal (the human being).
2. Bad conscience becomes fused with taking responsibility for one's actions (premise 5) via the transformation of the earlier practice of taking responsibility for one's debt (Schuld/Schulden).
3. Bad conscience and reflexive responsibility for one's bad feelings is guilt.
4. Guilt functions as a truthful indicator when an agent has sinned.
5. Furthermore, the guiltier one feels, the more sinful the person is.
6. The more sinful a person is, the further away he is from God.
7. Only through God and, more specifically, the death of His Son, Jesus Christ, can we absolve our sin.
8. Therefore, if I become closer to God, I will be less sinful.

The fusion of GM: I and GM: II

1. The ascetic ideal decreases one's feeling of guilt.
2. Practicing asceticism brings us closer to God (Premises GM II 6–8).
3. The ascetic ideal is the only means of reaching God.
4. The ascetic ideal is utilized by other types (the artist, philosopher and scientist).
5. The goal of the ascetic ideal changes: one now attempts to reach transcendent truths.
6. One can attain these truths (i.e., artistic, philosophical, and scientific) if and only if one practices the corresponding rendering of the ascetic ideal required for achieving those truths the ascetic wishes to realize.
7. One is solely responsible for reaching these truths (a genealogical transformation of premise 4).
8. Therefore, such truths must be sought after via the ascetic ideal. Those like scientists and philosophers who do not follow this model are morally guilty of neglecting their responsibility of pursuing the truth.

My argument is that Nietzsche's State of Nature stories' true purpose is to challenge the foundational beliefs of morality itself. Consequently, the new system of reasoning that emerges from the cocoon that is the ascetic ideal, namely, the search for absolute, objective truth, should be discarded as irrational. Let me explain.

In GM I, Nietzsche provides a functional interpretation of freewill, thus undercutting a deductive logical chain of inferences that follow from it. In GM II, Nietzsche's operational account of guilt, as a fusion of bad conscience and the recognition and thus, responsibility to pay one's debt, demolishes yet another pillar of the system, namely that guilt is a truthful indication of one's sinful nature. In short, Nietzsche's stories explain how the above principles may become intimately interwoven and yet remain logically distinct. The posts of morality forming, what I described above as a new enclosure of reasoning, are not self-justifying. And, therefore, neither are the chains of inference that "follow" from them.

However, Nietzsche's criticism does not end there. By the time the reader reaches the ascetic ideal in GM III, there is a "snowballing effect". Essay three combines the principles of the other two essays. However, since these foundational principles and their implications are unwarranted, it becomes even more apparent that there is a logical disconnect between the ascetic ideal and truth. What Nietzsche wants his readers to consider via his functional analysis are two things. First, that the unconscious forces of the body can be manipulated such that one's ability to rationalize is severely vitiated. Second, he then asks us to ponder whether our beliefs in transcendent truths, values, or the means to attain them, should be condemned if his functional explanation makes sense of them. Williams does not explain any part of the argument I am developing in detail, but the justification for this second point seems to be this: while the explanation proffered by priests, philosophers, and scientists may be used to justify, as Williams calls it, a "new system of morality", other paths may produce the same conclusions each practitioner of the ascetic ideal reaches. These pathways, however, are judged to be irrational by Nietzsche's readers because they stem from the primal (yet manipulated) instincts of the body. Thus, any system that is derived from these alternative pathways should be condemned, so the reasoning of Nietzsche's readers demand. However, if this conclusion follows, then the respective methods priests, philosophers, or scientists utilize to present their findings are not reliable indicators of rational decision making, for they are consistent with the conclusions derived from the irrational pathways mentioned above. The upshot of Nietzsche's analysis is that truths, moral or otherwise, are not arrived at solely through following the ascetic ideal; they may be attained through illogical means and methods. Thus, the attentive reader is rationally compelled to reject truth and morality. Their reasoning demands nothing less.

7. Returning to the Three Criticisms

I suggest that my reconstruction of Williams' interpretation of Nietzschean genealogy inoculates it from the three criticisms mentioned at the beginning of this paper. Nietzsche's functional approach is not guilty of conflating a *causa facti* approach with a *quid juris* one, as Brandom suggests. Brandom argues that Nietzsche is a naïve semanticist (Brandom 2013, sec 1, p. 1). Nietzsche holds that value terms may be accounted for by physical means of torture: complex concepts such as guilt emerge from raw, painful sensations. According to Brandom, Nietzsche's stories attempt to clarify how feelings and the attendant concepts that go with them, have been bred up from primal animal pain/pleasure stimulation.

To be sure there is evidence to support Brandom's reading. For example, Nietzsche, in GM II, 2 writes: "The task of breeding [heranzuzüchten] an animal with the right to make [darf] promises evidently embraces and presupposes as a preparatory task that one first makes men to a certain degree necessary, uniform, like among like, regular, and consequently calculable" (Nietzsche 2000, pp. 494–95). The task is accomplished through torture, so Brandom evinces. However, as is clear, Brandom assumes that Nietzsche's stories are veridical. Brandom's analysis is warranted only insofar as we accept that Nietzsche's Internalization Hypothesis, as articulated in GMII:16–18, is meant to be an *accurate* history of human development. It is not. What Nietzsche provides is a *functional* interpretation to explain the emergence of a new system of morality. The real power of the three stories of the *Genealogy* stems from their functionality, not their truthfulness. Their authority emanates from their underpinning, namely, the malleability of the body.

Nietzsche hypothesizes that our reasoning, actions, and values may be explained functionally by causal forces one cannot filter critically. Nietzsche's functional story, albeit with quasi-fictional elements, demonstrates that the foundation for our ethical value system, namely transcendent values and as later interpreted, transcendent truths, may be explained by centuries upon centuries of bodily discipline. If they can, in theory, be described as expressions of tortuous physical practices, then such truths and values are detachable from reason itself. Thus, by adopting moral values consistent with an irrational explanation, one cannot freely and rationally choose them.

The above same explanation helps Nietzsche maneuver his way around the just-so objection. Since Nietzsche's accounts are not factual but, at best, quasi-fictional, one cannot attack them by offering a point-by-point refutation of each so-called "fact" Nietzsche mobilizes to bolster his account. "Nietzsche's genealogy, [Williams reminds us], is by no means meant to be entirely fictional. It has something to do with history, though it is far from clear what history . . ." (Williams 2002, p. 29).

Nietzsche offers a convincing explanation for the seeming cogency and the systematicity of morality. It is a story underpinned by the body's pliability—a fact that no reasonable person would deny. Our agency is embodied and, therefore, the very tool which effectuates our agency, rationality, may be shaped, altered, even disfigured because of the body's inherent plasticity. To reject Nietzsche's account, as a whole, one must object to its functionality, not its factuality.

The final criticism is the reflexive objection. This criticism holds that genealogy, as a practice, seeks to impugn the methods and principles of rational discourse by demonstrating that rationality is a product of power. In proving this thesis, genealogists rely on the same tools they disparage: genealogists gather evidence for their hypotheses, provide a coherent framework to explain this evidence, challenge counter-hypotheses by demonstrating their incoherence, and present their findings as objective assertions. According to the standard view, the *Genealogy* challenges its readers to reconsider their values because of the work's intrinsic justificatory force. Yet, said justification is, nevertheless, a strategy of domination, so the genealogist admits. The practice of genealogy, then, is inconsistent with the claims it makes. Genealogists are guilty of committing a performative contradiction.

If we think of Williams' account of genealogy as a functional one, however, we find that this objection fails to gain traction. Nietzsche does not engage in a performative contradiction as some would have it because it is up to readers, as full-blooded rational agents,

to assess the cogency of Nietzsche's explanation for themselves. Whether Nietzsche's tracking of the transformation of irrational, unconscious drives to form the so-called "rational" subject is correct is beside the point. Nietzsche's project is not to demonstrate that agency is simply a collection of animal impulses as the standard interpretation holds but rather to redirect our critical engagement with the conventional narrative of agency itself. In viewing morality and truth through a functional lens, readers see that the link between truth and reason is contingent; it is not a modally necessary connection. Truth may not be the goal of reason because "truths" may be arrived at through alternative but irrational means. However, if two processes (the moral explanation for the emergence of the ascetic ideal on the one hand and Nietzsche's functional, genealogical account on the other) arrive at the same destination, then clearly, reason must rule out both methods along with the product thereof. Truth may be decoupled from reason without contradiction. Indeed, the above conclusion follows from a more robust practice of reasoning itself.

In reconstructing Williams' novel classification of genealogy, I attempted to make sense of Williams' illuminating albeit inchoate insights. Arguing, as Williams does, that genealogy provides a functional account (i.e., a State of Nature story) that both *explains and judges* the emergence of some phenomenon effectively immunizes it from the three criticisms that haunt the genealogical method in the secondary literature. Moreover, a functional explanation of Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* is more potent than standard interpretations of the text. In contrast to MacIntyre's "Received View", adopting a functional approach to the *Genealogy* reveals the inherent contradictions seeded into morality's deepest core. The relationship between reason, otherworldly values, and transcendent truths is not modally necessary but arbitrary and contingent. Upon reaching the end of the *Genealogy*, any rational moral agent must deny and condemn the search for absolute truth. Failing to do so dismantles the very sense of self-identity qua agent.

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