

The Method of Nature, The Crisis of Critique

The Problem of Individuation in Nietzsche's 1867/1869 Notebooks

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This is the real problem of philosophy, the unending purposiveness of organisms and the unconsciousness in their coming to be.

Nietzsche, *On the Origins of Language*

Everywhere, and even in the history of materialism, the principle holds that the straight path is not always the shortest.

Nietzsche, *Notes for an Essay on Democritus*

§1. April 1868

In the midst of a period of convalescence following a riding accident during his military service in Naumburg, the 23-year old Nietzsche undertakes a project for an academic dissertation entitled *The Concept of the Organic since Kant*.¹ By May, the project, preceded by extensive notes on Democritus and Schopenhauer, is abandoned, and gives way to a period of sustained inquiry into the field of philology, centring around the work and sources of Diogenes Laertius and the relationship between

¹ See the letters to Paul Deussen (May-April 1868) and Erwin Rohde (May 3rd or 4th) dating from this period. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Briefe in Historisch-Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Vol. II) (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1938).

philology and Homer.² One could comfortably argue that nothing has taken place; that the young Nietzsche, armed with a vague intuition regarding a hotly contested area within post-Kantian philosophy, merely fashioned a collage of quotes and fragmentary insights, never attaining anything like the groundwork of a thesis, or even a problem.³ Needless to

² The texts examined below, save the brief fragment *On the Origin of Language* (which appears in Crawford, see below), are to be found in the third volume of Friedrich Nietzsche, *Historisch-Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Beck, 1933-1940), under the heading *Philosophische Notizen*. For the purposes of this essay I have made use of the only available English translation, which appears as an appendix to Claudia Crawford's *The Beginnings of Nietzsche's Theory of Language* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988). This text also contains a very competent treatment of the notes on Kant and teleology, to my knowledge also the only one in the English language (See Crawford, Ch. 8). All page numbers in brackets within the text refer to Crawford's translations, which I have only amended in their translations of the term *Zweckmäßig*, which she renders as "expedient" and which I have changed to "purposive" in order to be consistent with current translations of Kant. I have also taken into consideration the translation and critical apparatus in the Italian edition of the *Notizen*, edited by Giuliano Campioni and Federico Gerratana: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Appunti Filosofici 1867-1869 / Omero e la Filologia Classica* (Milano: Adelphi, 1993).

³ Since he grasps the notebooks as the very exhibition of the impossibility of the philosophical act and/or discourse in Nietzsche, in Jean-Luc Nancy's reading this is ultimately the judgement passed on Nietzsche's encounter with Kant's treatment of teleology. We are faced with a veritable paradox in the interpretation which is embodied in the following two theses: 1) the 1868 notebooks are nothing but the ill-informed pastiche of an immature student, cobbled together from some neo-Kantian sources, whilst ignoring the work of Kant himself; 2) the 1868 notebooks are the dramatisation of Nietzsche's experience of the impossibility of (academic?) philosophy, exemplary of the thinker's encounter with the ineluctable limits of his supposed discipline. I would argue that the co-presence, the interweaving, of these two theses is symptomatic of the deconstructive reading's myopia, its peculiar inability to capture the individuality of the problematic deployed in Nietzsche's texts. See Jean-Luc Nancy, 'La thèse de Nietzsche sur la Téléologie' in *Nietzsche Aujourd'hui* (Paris: UGE, 1973) Vol. I [The English translation which I've used here, 'Nietzsche's Thesis on Teleology', appears in L.A. Rickels, ed., *Looking after Nietzsche* (Albany, NY: SUNY, 1990), pp. 49-66]. For my part, I shall try to show that, even if, with some reservations, we might accept thesis (1), we can nevertheless navigate between the Scylla of complete dismissal and the Charybdis of over-dramatisation by isolating in the early notebooks the threads of a very specific problematic, one that will periodically resurface in Nietzsche's work. It is blindness to this problematic (a surprising one, given Nancy's highlighting of the relationship of the thesis to work undertaken by Nietzsche on Democritus, Schopenhauer, and Lange) that finally allows Nancy to state: "The draft of 1868, in effect, does not harbour the first of Nietzsche's mature thinking; we will find nothing in it, which

say, the possibility of rebutting such an initial impression demands some sort of justification from a reading that would claim any kind of higher status for Nietzsche's early notebooks. In my view, there are three interpretive paths that could be called upon to deploy the reasons for such a claim. 1) *Internal significance*. The 1868 Notebooks read as precursors of Nietzsche's later engagement with the natural sciences, with the questions of teleology and individuation. 2) *Conjunctural significance*. The notebooks read as symptoms of a contemporary engagement with the question of teleology. Nietzsche's notes would be the distant and somewhat inexperienced trace of the debate on individuality that sustained the intercourse between the biological sciences and philosophy all throughout the German nineteenth century.⁴ 3) *Conceptual significance*. The notebooks read as a singular concatenation of three conceptual elements into a veritable philosophical problem. The three elements are *materialism*, *individuation*, and *teleology*, and the problem can be initially transposed into the general question: *What would constitute a materialist (i.e. non-anthropomorphic and non-representational) theory of individuation that would account for the evidence of teleology?* The philosophical stance indicated by such a question, which F.A. Lange baptised as that of a 'Materialism after Kant' or *materiale Idealismus* could receive a further series of names: critical materialism, materialist critique, or even transcendental materialism.

In what follows my approach will consist of a hybrid of (1) and (3). The nature of the notebooks is such that they are almost wholly tributary of F.A. Lange's own reception of the sciences of the day, so that unlike Nietzsche's later independent forays in the natural and particularly the biological sciences they afford little in the way of an original insight or even an idiosyncratic refraction of the transformations undertaken by the

might allow us to assess, laterally, some simple difference *vis-à-vis* the later texts. Something else must be at stake." [49] I hope this essay will show that Nancy's judgement is all too hasty, depending as it does on a typical dismissal of Nietzsche's post-Kantian sources, as well as what is in my view a complete disregard of the novelty that the intersection of Schopenhauer and Lange's theses on individuality brings to the becoming of Nietzsche's thought.

⁴ A masterful genealogy of this debate can be found in Andrea Orsucci's *Dalla biologia cellulare alle scienze dello spirito. Aspetti del dibattito sull'individualità nell'Ottocento tedesco*. (Bologna: il Mulino, 1992). Orsucci places both Lange and Nietzsche firmly within the biophilosophical fray, in dialogue and divergence with figures such as Trendelenburg, Virchow, and von Baer. One of the most commendable traits of Orsucci's fine book lies precisely in laying out how these debates took place in a fertile climate of indiscernibility between the speculative and the experimental.

concepts of individual and purpose in the second half of the nineteenth century. What the notebooks do register in a striking manner are the effects of two veritable events in Nietzsche's intellectual biography, taking the form of two books whose ideas, in quite heterogeneous ways, will haunt his work to the very end: Arthur Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation* and Friedrich Albert Lange's *History of Materialism*.

With regard to the former, we are all familiar with the narrative of the disciple's painful sloughing off of his educator's influence. This is an often linear narrative, beginning with Nietzsche's ultimately doomed attempt, in the *Birth of Tragedy*, at transforming the Schopenhaurian framework into the basis of a philosophy of a tragic affirmation, and is punctuated by later reflections and self-critiques in Nietzsche's work bearing on his relationship to the philosopher of the will. The dominant themes in this approach are those of pessimism and affirmation. As we shall shortly see, the unfinished draft of an essay *On Schopenhauer*, which immediately precedes the notes on Kant and teleology, is enough to problematize this received stance and to belie Nietzsche's own claim, in 'Schopenhauer as Educator' (1874), that he had never found any paradoxes in the great man's work, only minor errors.⁵ Indeed, there is something striking in seeing to what extent the reasons for the eventual divorce with Schopenhauer's metaphysics is contained *in nuce* in these very early reflections. Of course, these are reasons that will only truly emerge once questions regarding the being of becoming and individuation become much more decisive for Nietzsche and override the initial role of Schopenhauer as exemplar. For several years the embryonic insights contained in these notes will be buried, deferred by the focus on the philosophical life and on the poetizing, dramatic nature of philosophy as an affirmative art.

Within the bounds of Anglophone scholarship, there has been far less recognition of Lange's arguably equivalent formative influence on the character and development of Nietzsche's work.⁶ This is mainly to be accounted for by the relative paucity of Nietzsche's explicit references to Lange and by the fact that the nature of this influence is quite different from that of Schopenhauer. Indeed, it is only in terms of a

⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Unfashionable Observations* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p.180.

⁶ The only English text of note, one that is extremely persuasive in its case for Lange's influence, is George J. Stack, *Lange and Nietzsche* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1983).

comprehensive view of Nietzsche's work that we can recognise the long-term 'subterranean' effects that Lange's great book had on his concepts of matter, force, evolution and critique. Even when Nietzsche has put considerable distance between himself and Lange's agnostic materialism – his agnosticism *vis-à-vis* the thing in itself – traces of the positions of *The History of Materialism* can still be identified in Nietzsche's relation to authors and problematics he first encountered, thanks to Lange, in 1866.

It is in the unstable and tentative intersection of these two names, these two books, that the 1867-1869 notebooks deploy themselves, exploring Schopenhauer's paradoxes in the spirit of Lange's agnosticism and testing the limits of Lange by trying to determine an interiority in individuation (Life) that would nevertheless not fall into the muteness and sterility of the Schopenhaurian pre-individual ($x=x$). It is not surprising that insofar as the notebooks are dominated by the influence of these two eminent *traitors* of critique, they could be dismissed as not truly bearing upon Kant, even or especially when they are engaged in the project of assessing the contemporary import of Kant's theses on teleology in the notes towards *The Concept of the Organic since Kant*.⁷ It is indeed undeniable that in 1868 Nietzsche's knowledge of Kant was scanty and derivative. Lange, Schopenhauer, and Kuno Fischer (from whose book stem most of the quotations and misquotations of the *Critique of Judgment*) serving as his main sources, the *Critique of Judgment* remained, at the time of the cessation of the project on the Organic, one of the books in the list headed 'Read the Following'. Imprudent as this may be, I would counter that Nietzsche's hasty, 'opportunistic' scholarship, a trait that could be said to mark his entire work, is here accompanied by a singular insight into the philosophical nerve-centre of his age.

If read in light of his encounter with Lange and Schopenhauer, the choice of the *Organic* as the object of his dissertation is by no means arbitrary. Instead, it identifies the point at which the limits of *both* materialism and critique make themselves felt most acutely, thus allowing the question of individuation to arise as a fundamental challenge to any philosophy that would consider the fate of 'Materialism After Kant'. Whilst it is undeniable that this brief episode in Nietzsche's formative period gives us little purchase on the subtler aspects of Kant's masterful 'suspension' of the problem of teleology it does register, in its

⁷ See Nancy's dismissal in 'Nietzsche's Thesis on Teleology', *op. cit.*

treatment of the Organic, a confrontation with a problematic field which cannot but elicit our participation, as readers of Nietzsche as well as philosophers still struggling with the modernity of critique and the injunctions of materialism. The claim which commands this paper is that with regard to both critique and materialism it is in the *problem of individuation*, in its specifically modern guise, that philosophy's speculative limitations are revealed. If individuation is such an impasse, then much of Nietzsche's effort, beginning with these notebooks, can be read in terms of a transvaluation of these two great orientations of philosophical modernity, materialism and critique, into an experimental ontology that would escape the clutches of the *principium individuationis*. And thus, to begin with, from Schopenhauer's ultimately sterile paradoxes.

§2. X = X

Schopenhauer wanted to find an equation for the x : and it revealed itself out of his calculation that it = x .

Nietzsche, *On Schopenhauer*

From Schopenhauer's appropriation of Kant, Nietzsche inherits the effects of a peculiar short-circuit, the one that equates, in §23 of *The World as Will and Representation*, *objectification* with *individuation*. The consequences of this move are not to be underestimated. To begin with, they entail a generalisation of critique's original concern with the constitution of objects of knowledge to an approach that would indiscriminately cover the matter of both possible and 'impossible' experience. By the latter, I indicate precisely the *problem of the Organic*, which in Kant marks the disjunction between object (or the individuated) and individual (or self-individuating, and therefore 'chimerical',⁸ entity). As the title of Schopenhauer's *magnum opus* makes clear this equation exasperates a dichotomy that Kant negotiates with the greatest of care, into a tragic confrontation between the phantasmatic tyranny of *Vorstellung* and the foreclosed univocity of *Wille*. This confrontation

⁸ The chimerical nature of the organism or natural purposes is declared in Kant's *Opus Postumum* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993), p. 131: "[...] for the very possibility of such concepts founded on purposes would only be chimerical, were experience not to teach it [to us]."

elides the complex articulations between the many strata of critique into a philosophy in which representation is built, quite seamlessly, on the sole basis of the spatio-temporal *principium individuationis*. In Schopenhauer unilateral expression (*from Will to Representation*) is postulated, in which Ideas are degrees of the objectification of Will in Representation. Again the problematic difference in kind through which a veritable problem of individuation emerges in Kant's *Critique of Judgment* is obscured, making the *Organic* yet another link in the chain of Ideas that begins with the *principium individuationis* and passes through the other "degrees of visibility which belong to the objectification of the Will" (WWR I §25). For Schopenhauer, representation is both homogeneous and hegemonic, never encountering in *phenomenal experience* anything which would problematize its hegemony over that domain. Two further consequences result from Schopenhauer's equation. Firstly, a drastic cut is made between individuality and individuation, or, to use terms more redolent of contemporary debates, between allonomy and autonomy.⁹ As Nuno Nabais remarks, in the only essay which to my knowledge engages *philosophically* with the question of individuation in Nietzsche:

The essential incommunicability between *individuality* [*Individualität*] and *individuation* [*Individuation*] constitutes one of the central paradoxes of Schopenhaurian metaphysics and the one that posed the greatest difficulties to the autonomous development of the Nietzschean theory of the individual.¹⁰

Secondly, a parallel distinction is made, in Schopenhauer, between two types of unity: (1) *unity of a multiplicity*; (2) *unity without multiplicity*.

⁹ See Francisco Varela, *Autonomie et Connaissance* (Paris: Seuil, 1989).

¹⁰ Nuno Nabais, 'Indivíduo e Individualidade em Nietzsche' in *Metafísica do Trágico. Estudos sobre Nietzsche*. (Lisboa: Relógio D'água, 1997) The present paper was in part inspired by this fine and insightful piece. Much of what follows can be read in the way of an indirect response to the theses proposed by Nabais. Given that my divergence with these theses is carried by a reading of texts not explicitly considered by Nabais, and whose value, as I've remarked in §1, is certainly up for debate, I would at most want to aim at a problematisation of Nabais' reading of Nietzsche's inner struggle with Schopenhauer. With regard to the second, and most daring, part of his paper, on the eternal recurrence as a transformation of the problem of individuation, I have very little to contribute, save perhaps a certain disagreement with regard to the speculative impetus behind some of Nietzsche's conceptual inventions.

Or, Representation as the objectal exteriority and dissemination of the individuated and Will as the perfect interiority of a non-phenomenal One. All of the above is contained in a passage from §23 of *The World as Will and Representation*, which I here present as exemplary of the paradoxes which Nietzsche's early critique will seek to isolate.

The *will* as a thing in itself is quite different from its phenomenal appearance, and entirely free from all the forms of the phenomenal, into which it first passes when it manifests itself, and which therefore only concern its *objectivity*, and are foreign to the will itself. [...] I shall call time and space the *principium individuationis*, borrowing an expression from the old schoolmen, and I beg to draw attention to this, once and for all. For it is only through the medium of time and space that what is one and the same, both according to its nature and to its concept, yet appears as different, as a multiplicity of co-existent and successive phenomena. [...] According to what has been said, the will as thing in itself lies outside the province of the principle of sufficient reason in all its forms, and is consequently completely groundless, although all its manifestations are entirely subordinate to the principle of sufficient reason. Further, it is free from all *multiplicity*, although its manifestations in time and space are innumerable. It is itself one, though not in the sense in which an object is one, for the unity of an object can only be known in opposition to a possible multiplicity; nor yet in the sense in which a concept is one, for the unity of a concept exists only in abstraction from multiplicity; but it is one as that which lies outside time and space, the *principium individuationis*, i.e., the possibility of multiplicity.

To a considerable extent, the objections posed by Nietzsche will be familiar to anyone acquainted with critiques of Schopenhauer. However, what makes Nietzsche's stance interesting is that he is essentially caught between two responses to Schopenhauer. The first, with which we are all familiar, sees in Schopenhauer's 'discovery' of the will, in his subreption of the Kantian limits, a fundamental starting-point for any philosophy which would finally go against the Socratic and the Christian grain, wedding philosophy to art in (tragic) affirmation. The concept becomes poetic and the task of affirmation is dramatised in the struggle between the world's two halves, Will and Representation, Dionysus and Apollo.

The second response, whilst maintaining its sympathy towards Schopenhauer's indication of an inner life of the phenomenon, an interiority of the object, is ultimately cognisant of the severe limitations of its approach. It recognizes that the relationship between the domain of the pre-individual and that of the individuated-in-representation is insufficiently determined by the terms of the dichotomy between the One Will and the multiplicity of its spatio-temporal objectifications. Moreover, that the introspective immediacy which reveals the presence of this One *in us* is the most precarious of evidences. In the notebooks it is the second approach that takes precedence, revealing that Nietzsche's later and to some degree superficial faith in Schopenhauer as the exemplar of a dramatic philosophy took place *in spite of* Nietzsche's very early grasp of the speculative untenability of the philosophy of the will.

Still, Nietzsche affirms that 'Will', as a subreption of the Kantian prohibition placed upon the predication of the noumenal, is of the greatest import. Though, as he remarks:

It is a clumsily coined, very encompassing word, when with it such an important thought, going well beyond Kant, is to be labelled differently. [227]

Of course, much of Nietzsche's later philosophy can be seen as an effort at just such a different 'labelling'.¹¹ What then are the objections against this label and its implications? In the 1868 notes, Nietzsche rehearses four of them. (1) The will is a hidden category. (2) The will can only be grasped through a "poetic intuition" [228], never demonstrated. (3) The predicates of the will are merely the product of its radical opposition to representation. (4) The will presumes the identification of "the borders of individuation". It is this last objection that, for Nietzsche himself, recapitulates the other three and which ultimately exposes the severe shortcomings of Schopenhauer's position. As he writes:

Whether this world is will? – Here is the point at which we must make our fourth attack. The Schopenhaurian warp and weft gets

¹¹It is perhaps of some interest that in the beginning of his notes on Schopenhauer, Nietzsche will use the term "drive" [*Trieb*]: "The dark drive brought about through a representation mechanism reveals itself as world. This drive is not included under the *principium individuationis*".

tangled in his hands: in the smallest part as a result of a certain tactical clumsiness of its author, but mostly because the world does not let itself be so easily fastened into the system as Schopenhauer had hoped in the first inspiration of his discovery. In his old age he complained that the most difficult problem of philosophy had not been solved in his own. He meant the question concerning the borders of individuation. [229]

What is meant here by "borders of individuation"? Nietzsche is here directing us towards an essential aspect of Schopenhauer's doctrine, the *circumscription or delimiting of the domain of representation*. By posing itself as the unilaterally expressive (or asymmetrical) essence of representation, the positing of will functions to assign a determinate area upon which representation (i.e. the *principium individuationis* and the *degrees of objectification* constructed upon it) legislates. This area, of course, is both everything *and* nothing. It includes the totality of possible experience (what can be known as an object for a subject) and, at one and the same time, is radically *inessential*. Now, the impasse produced by this radical disjunction has the effect of turning the will, the interiority of being, into a completely phantasmatic entity, so much so that it can only be 'attained' via a kind of negative ontology, one which depends on founding the predicates of will on the mere negation of the predicates of representation. In Nietzsche's colourful image, this leads to

[...] a species of extremely important and hardly avoidable contradictions, which to a certain extent while still resting under their mother's heart arm themselves and, scarcely born, do their first deed by killing her. They concern themselves collectively with the borders of individuation and have their *πρωτον φευδος* in the point considered under 3. above [i.e. the merely negative or derivative character of the predicates of will, AT]. [229]

In Nietzsche's view Schopenhauer only succeeds, with "dictatorial tone", in making it so that "a completely dark and ungraspable x is draped with predicates" [230]. This constant *tracing* of the will upon the predicates of representation has two effects (or one effect with two aspects, depending on one's image of the transcendental): the "transcendental evaporates" [230] and the problem of the origin of the intellect is rendered literally incomprehensible.

The first effect concerns the fact that even the very predicate of unity, or *unity without multiplicity*, is borrowed, by way of a phantasmatic subtraction of multiplicity itself, from the *principium individuationis*. What the groundless, transcendental will is meant to ground and hence delimit turns out to be its very source. The supposed transcendental is itself conditioned or traced; "it is continually required to borrow from the world of appearance" [230]. The second effect, a corollary of the first, is that no account can be given of the genesis of the intellect, given that it precedes or presupposes itself at all times. Since "even before the appearance of the will we see the *principium individuationis* in full effect" [231], since the world of appearance equals the system of representation, we are left with two equally unsavoury and illegitimate options: (1) "the intellect must rest as a new predicate conjoined with the thing in itself", or (2) "there can be no intellect because at no time could an intellect have become" [232]. In the first case the whole edifice collapses, given that it would follow that Will = Representation. In the second, any basis for intelligibility disappears, as Will = Will (which could also be written One = One). What Nietzsche comes to realise, in his focus on the "borders of individuation", on "the dark contradictoriness in the region where individuality ceases to be" [226], is that *the Schopenhaurian Will is unable to both delimit and generate the individuated, thus collapsing into a negative ontology traced upon the domain of representation*. In Schopenhauer, the disjunction between the pre-individual instance and the individuated domain of representation results precisely in the elision of the question of individuation, or of genesis, itself. The transcendental evaporates.

The immediate effect of this analysis is clear. Having temporarily abandoned the speculative domain, Nietzsche will transform the world, understood as the untenable opposition between the One and the *principium individuationis*, into the terrain of the dramatic transfiguration of existence through the *agon* of Apollo and Dionysus. This dramatisation proving insufficient, three interlaced questions initially sketched in these very early notes on Schopenhauer will persist as a driving force behind Nietzsche's experiments in ontology. *The question of critique* : Can representation be delimited, 'bordered', and, if so, by what? *The question of production* : Can we identify a pre-individual, non-representational domain that would account for individuated representation? *The question of asymmetry* : Is there an interiority, an inner life of the will, 'behind' the mere exteriority of representation?

It is plain to see that all of these questions point to the relationship between the transcendental, the process of individuation, and the status of representation. They organize two general tendencies in Nietzsche's thought, which become indiscernible at its highest points. The first responds to the impasse of the philosophy of the will by declaring a *closure of representation*. Whilst not necessarily denying the existence of a pre-individual realm, it remains agnostic with regard to its being as well as its character. Given that, as we saw above, the delimiting of the realm of representation demands some sort of outside or other, this closure can have no truly transcendental status and ultimately results, as in Lange, in a position which makes the hold of representation and the *principium individuationis* over us a function, both relative (only *our* experience is at stake) and ineluctable (the limits are set), of our organisation. The second tendency affirms Schopenhauer's subreption of the Kantian proscription in order to seek an account of *non-representational interiority* which, whilst accounting for the origin of the intellect as a representing mechanism, would not be founded on a tracing of representation itself. Of course, the asymmetry demanded by such an account cannot be that of two *worlds*. Whilst it is true that Nietzsche will only realise much later that the realm of appearance (or representation) comes to vanish *as a separate realm* with the destitution of essence, it is nevertheless already the case that its definite, Kantian, boundaries are blurred. In fact, the very condition for an escape out of the Schopenhaurian bind is precisely *the relativisation of representation*. Representation is denied its completeness and closure in order to re-open the question of its origin. The boundaries of individuation, of which Nietzsche wrote in *On Schopenhauer*, are rendered porous, as the *principium individuationis* is demoted to the status of a physiological constant and the problem becomes not that of the *possibility*, but that of the *constitution* of individuality. This step on Nietzsche's part depends on a certain appropriation of Lange's naturalisation of the transcendental and will be the object, in our conclusion, of a treatment aimed at defining a certain critical or transcendental materialism running through Nietzsche's work and having as its source the issues confronted in these early notebooks.

§ 3. All unity is relative

Chronologically, the notes on Schopenhauer and Kant are preceded by a much more fragmentary set of notes on Democritus.¹² One could argue that here Nietzsche is engaged in testing his philological talent with regard to the indications offered by Lange's *History of Materialism*. In the latter Democritus is not only the first of the materialist philosophers, he is also their archetype. His adherence to scientific method, contempt for the merely sensual, and heretic status all contribute to a definite physiognomy, one that Nietzsche will aim to fully reconstruct in notes for an essay that could have well received the title, after Althusser's late fragment, of *Portrait of a Materialist Philosopher*. It is of some interest to see Nietzsche the philologist approach materialism by way of biography, seeing in Democritus the invention of "a new principle of life", a new mode of *scientific* existence, characterised by "nomadism" and "disquiet". Behind this portrait lies the core of the Democritean philosophy: *the denial of teleology*. It is this that for Nietzsche ultimately accounts for the (apocryphal) plan hatched by Plato to incinerate the totality of Democritus' works, as well as his treatment at the hands of medieval monks as a man possessed. Likewise, it is what, for Nietzsche, brings him close to Empedocles and Darwin, for whom purposiveness stands as an objective illusion generated by a non-intentional process. On this matter Nietzsche's sympathies will steadfastly remain with the materialist inspiration throughout his work. His objections, in these notes as elsewhere, will be directed against the uncritical *belief* in the transparency of matter, as evidenced by atomism,¹³ as well as against the attendant ethical *conservatism* produced by such a belief. It is to counter the epistemic naïveté and the ungrounded ethics that follows from such a materialism that Nietzsche will follow Lange in his general principle, that materialism must be followed by, and subjected to, critique, that

¹² In his *Che cosa ha detto Nietzsche* (Milano: Adelphi, 1999) Mazzino Montinari makes the interesting remark that in Nietzsche Democritus should be read as an "anti-Schopenhaurian cipher", a claim which, as we will see, is certainly justified in the notebooks.

¹³ At the early date of these notebooks, Nietzsche's critique of atomism, which is essential to his refutation of a transparently mechanistic materialism, is yet to make its appearance, and thus will not be discussed herein. When it will appear in later work, it will be heavily indebted both to Lange's *materiale Idealismus* and, more specifically, to the work of Ruggero Bosovich. On the latter's influence on Nietzsche's critique of atomism see Keith Ansell Pearson, 'Nietzsche's Brave New World of Force', *Pli: The Warwick Journal of Philosophy* 9 (2000), 6-35. See specifically the account of Section 12 of *Beyond Good and Evil* and Nietzsche's attack on 'materialistic atomism', p. 25ff.

each Democritus must have his Protagoras. The influence of this idea on Nietzsche can hardly be underestimated. We will return to it in §5. Rather than examine Lange's *materiale Idealismus*,¹⁴ I will immediately turn to the effects of this stance on Lange's brief treatment of individuality and individuation in the chapter of *History of Materialism* on 'Darwinism and Teleology', arguably the primary inspiration for many of Nietzsche's remarks on Kant and teleology.

Lange begins by invoking a question "which is of the highest interest in the history of Materialism, – the question of the nature of the Organic individual". It was perhaps in this very sentence that the plan for Nietzsche's eventually aborted dissertation took root, appearing as a point of convergence for his determination of the limits of materialism and for his questioning regarding the 'borders of individuation'. What follows in Lange's text is of the highest interest with regard to our object, and could be seen to accompany the long passage by Schopenhauer presented in §2 as a basic text for Nietzsche's thinking on individuality:

We have seen how ancient Materialism fell into absolute contradiction by regarding the atoms as the only existent, though they cannot be the bearers of a higher unity, because without pressure and collision no contact takes place between them. But we also saw that precisely this contradiction of manifoldness and unity is peculiar to all human thought, and that it only becomes most obvious in Atomism. The only salvation here, too, consists in regarding the opposition of manifoldness and unity as a consequence of our organisation, in supposing that in the world of things in themselves it is resolved in some way unknown to us, or rather does not exist there. In this way we escape the inmost ground of the contradiction, which lies in the assumption of absolute unities, which are nowhere given to us. If we conceive all unity as relative, if we see in unity only the combination of our thought, we have indeed not embraced the inmost nature of things, but we have certainly made possible the consistency of the scientific view. It fares ill indeed with the absolute unity of self-

¹⁴ For which I refer the reader to the extended discussion of this position in Ch. V of Stack's *Lange and Nietzsche*, entitled 'Materio-Idealism'.

consciousness, but it is not a misfortune to get rid of a favourite idea for some thousand years.¹⁵

In Schopenhauer, as we saw, the attempt to circumscribe the domain of representation, to trace, on the edges of the world of appearance, the 'borders of individuation', depended on the irreducible dichotomy of a unity *without* multiplicity and a unity *of* multiplicity. Lange's peculiar brand of neo-Kantianism, his blurring of the boundary between the physiological and the transcendental, played heavily into Nietzsche's critique of Schopenhauer.¹⁶ To begin with, rather than being delimited and subjected to the hegemony of the *principium individuationis*, the domain of representation and experience is both relativized (as a "consequence of *our* organisation") and unmoored from its dependence in the last instance on an unrepresentable and groundless unity *without* multiplicity, whether this be conceived as will or as the "absolute unity of self-consciousness". The ascription of unity becomes an objective illusion generated by a physico-transcendental constitution, but there is no actual necessity in this. There is no claim that we have here a determination of the possible *per se*; rather we are merely in the presence of a contingent property of our thought, its propensity to combine appearances into objects and count them as one. The literally utopian resolution of the binding contradiction of unity and multiplicity in a non-phenomenal realm is gestured at, as characteristically it is in all post-Kantianism, but not in favour of a Schopenhaurian unity *without* multiplicity. Instead, in the knowledge that such a unity would merely be a tracing made upon the constitutive 'illusions' of experience (the 'I', the 'object'), Lange opts for an agnosticism with regard to things-in-themselves that in the position to state that ultimately *there might be nothing to resolve*, the opposition of unity and multiplicity being a chimerical effect of 'our organisation'.

This naturalisation of the transcendental in Lange (his 'psychologism') serves to counter the Schopenhaurian impasse *vis-à-vis* the question of the genesis or origin of language. Once the domain of representation is no longer coextensive with that of possibility, once the *principium individuationis* is no longer of the order of the always already, the question of the non-representational ground of

¹⁵ Friedrich Albert Lange, *History of Materialism* (New York: Arno Press, 1974).

¹⁶ As well as into Nietzsche's later reflections on the merely adaptive or utilitarian nature of man's propensity to individuate appearances into objects.

representation, of the pre-individual sources of individuation, can once again be asked. It can be asked because the non-representational is no longer drowned in the black night of the will's immediate unity. Indeed, it even seems that the predicate of unity is to be banished from the pre-individual insofar as "all unity is relative". Are we then in the presence of an inversion? Is Lange indicating that we think that what is prior to the combinations of our intellect is multiplicity itself? This question cannot receive a positive answer. Neither Lange nor Nietzsche presents us with a concept of multiplicity *without* unity, a concept that could come to operate in a non-representational, non-objective ontology. They do however tend to reverse the Schopenhaurian stance whereby the *principium individuationis* is the *condition* of multiplicity. Instead, for Lange and for the Nietzsche of the 1867-1869 notebooks, the relativisation of unity, which depends heavily on the farewell given to that "favourite idea", self-consciousness, makes the infinite proliferation of multiplicity, its availability as the material upon which the intellect carves its relative unities, into the condition of unity itself. Thus, in what is as yet a very tentative consideration of the One and the Multiple, in light of the legacy of critique, we could summarise Lange's and Nietzsche's stance in the following dictum: *a multiplicity is a unity for another multiplicity*. Or, to introduce the problem of the Organic: *a multiplicity is an individual for another multiplicity*.

§ 4. Life Force = ?

Chance can find the most beautiful melody.

Nietzsche, *On Teleology*

The critique of Schopenhauer awoke Nietzsche to the urgency of the question of individuation, specifically configured in terms of the critical relationship between the intellect as a representational mechanism and the question of its own origin, or, in other words, the relationship between representation and production. Schopenhauer's deficient treatment of the 'borders of individuation' created a dichotomy which effectively foreclosed the question of individuation itself, by positing a non-representational One over against the hegemony of the *principium individuationis* in the phenomenal or representational realm. With Lange, as we saw, individuation is relativised by a naturalisation of the transcendental which, with Goethe and Virchow, proclaims the primacy

of multiplicity. I would now like to turn to the notes *On Teleology* understood in terms both of a convergence and an extension of the thematics arising out of Nietzsche's assimilation of Lange and Schopenhauer.

We are now in a position to see that there is nothing arbitrary in Nietzsche's intention to write a thesis on *The Concept of the Organic since Kant*. After all, it is in the problematic demand posed by the evidence of the Organic that the thought of representation first encounters the question of material production or ontogenesis, and it does so precisely in terms of a modality of individuation which is not of the order of the *principium individuationis*.¹⁷ Or, to put it in terms of Nietzsche's notebooks, it encounters the problem of *life*, of a life which is heterogeneous to the Kantian power of desire (i.e. the life of the intellect). Let us call this the *crisis of critique*. Of course, as with all crises of critique, and especially the sublime, this is a deeply functional and largely unthreatening crisis, in which the organism is employed to symbolise the unrepresentable unity of system and its supersensible destination. Nietzsche himself is deeply sensitive to this symbolic usage of organic teleology. Indeed, he will engage in a series of 'reductions' that will displace the crisis from the question of organic teleology to its true locus, that of production itself, or, as Nietzsche names it in these early notes, *life*. Thus, the problem of the Organic will first be isolated from its function within the critical system, then examined in terms of the thematics of individuation outlined above, and ultimately dissolved into the question of life as infinite productive multiplicity.

This passage, from a crisis which is internal and functional to critique, to the crisis of critique itself, takes the form of four steps, four reductions: (1) the expulsion of the theological; (2) the denial of external purposiveness; (3) the relativisation of individuality; (4) the dissolution of the antithesis of mechanism and teleology.

What I here call the expulsion of the theological concerns the symbolism which, in critique, links the problematic concept of the organism to the equally problematic concept of an entity endowed with intellectual intuition, a truly divine being for whom the organism would represent an intelligible causality, of the whole over its parts. In stark opposition is the materialist injunction which determines Nietzsche's

¹⁷ This crisis can be precisely located within Kant's work, in § 64 of the *Critique of Judgement*, entitled 'On the Character Peculiar to Things Considered as Natural Purposes'.

position: "One must sever every theological interest from the question" [239]. Now, as Nietzsche already realises, this theological referent is inseparable from an anthropomorphic analogy, an analogy specifically founded on a certain understanding of human *poiesis*. In a passage which originates in Schopenhauer and prefigures Bergson's critique of evolutionary theory, Nietzsche writes: "We are astonished then at the *complicated* and conjecture (after human analogy) a special wisdom in it" [241].¹⁸ Once this anthropomorphic propensity to isolate objects as purposive in terms of a technical analogy is suspended, so is the necessity of a reference to a *higher reason* which would account for individualities which cannot merely be ascribed to the effects of the *principium individuationis*. In a deeply materialist vein, Nietzsche will claim that there is "no question, which necessarily can be solved only through the acceptance of an intelligible world" [240]. In other words, just as the Kantian necessity to think organisms as premeditated disappears for us moderns under the influence of Darwinism, so does that of accepting the contradictions engendered by representation and viewing them as pointing to their resolution in a realm of supersensible intelligibility. The anthropomorphic foundations of a theological interpretation of teleology thus give way to "a purely human standpoint: the Empedoclean, where purposiveness appears only as an instance among many non-purposivenesses" [239]. This Empedoclean, or Darwinian, standpoint allows one to remove the presupposition of intelligibility. The polemical statement, "purposiveness is chance" [239], points once again to the denial of any analogy with the intentionality of technical production, to the need to think the production of the purposive in non-representational, non-intentional, and non-anthropomorphic terms, to think "a power which unconsciously creates the purposive" [239]. Lange's reduction of the transcendental to a question of *our* organisation allows Nietzsche to acknowledge our propensity to an anthropomorphic and consequently theological understanding of organic teleology at the same time as it points to the possibility of thinking otherwise. When Nietzsche writes that the "*necessity* of which Kant speaks [i.e. the "*necessity* [...] that we think organisms as premeditated"] no longer exists in our time" [238], he is pointing to the possibility of thinking the Organic without any reference whatsoever, not even a problematic one, to a realm of transcendent purposes and intentions. The

¹⁸ For an effective summary of Bergson's stance, see Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Henri Bergson* (Paris: P.U.F., 1959), Ch. 5: 'La Vie'.

Empedoclean essence of the Darwinian revolution in the natural sciences allows at least the speculative idea that the teleological appearance of the Organic may have been produced by what Nietzsche names "co-ordinating possibility" [*koordinierte Möglichkeit*] [240]. The latter, which unfortunately Nietzsche leaves insufficiently unexplained, can be thought of as the convergence and complexity of non-intentional, non-ideal mechanisms giving rise to the appearance of teleology.

The second 'reduction' in Nietzsche's shift of the crisis of critique from the organism to production involves a further step away from the aims of the Kantian approach. Having severed any explicit symbolism of, or reference to, a higher reason, Nietzsche proceeds to eliminate any trace of divine intelligibility by questioning the necessary postulate of external purposiveness. The general idea of co-ordinating possibility, which allows for the isolation of purposiveness as a mere instance within the enveloping context of non-purposiveness, comes to be expressed in a more specifically Darwinian concept of a non-intentional mechanism for the production of purposiveness. Indeed, the presupposition of an "overarching teleology" [239] is obviated by the very idea of a survival of the fittest. Thus, against any harmonisation of the realm of appearances by means of a Schopenhaurian will or a Kantian system of ends, against any attempt to posit an external purposiveness which would be a symbol of the purposiveness and unity of the intellect itself, Nietzsche remarks that, "the opposite to the whole theory arises in that terrible struggle of individuals [...] and the species" [239]. Once again, the attempt to find in the realm of the Organic a symbol of the unity, systematicity, and purposiveness of the intellect (or of the will) is declared illegitimate. There is no necessity in the position that posits, even problematically, an external and systemic purposiveness. Neither the demiurge of finality nor the harmony of nature has any rights over the Organic. We are thus left with the phenomenon of inner purposiveness alone. It is on this level of the Kantian problem of the Organic, and only on this level, that Nietzsche's inquiry places itself. For it is the level which cannot be easily dismissed by a sheer invocation of Darwinist materialism or science in "our times". Let us now turn to a key passage in the notes:

Teleology:
inner purposiveness. We see a complicated machine, which maintains itself and cannot devise another structure which could construct it more simply, that means only:

the machine maintains itself, thus it is purposive. A judgement about "highest purposiveness" is not ours to make. We can at best decide upon a reason, but have no right to indicate it as higher or lower.

External purposiveness is a deception.

But we are acquainted with the method of nature, how such a "purposive" body arises, a senseless method. Accordingly, purposiveness demonstrates itself only as ability to live, that is, as *cond. sine qua non*. Chance can find the most beautiful melody.

Secondly we know the method of nature which would maintain such a purposive body. With senseless frivolity.

Teleology however raises a multitude of questions which are insoluble, or have been until now.

World organism, origin of evil do not belong here.

However, for example, the origins of the intellect.

Is it necessary to oppose teleology with an *explained* world?

It is only necessary to establish another reality on a demarcated realm. [240]

Any dismissal of Nietzsche's thesis on teleology, such as Jean-Luc Nancy's, must overlook the originality of the insights proposed in passages such as this. To reduce the question of purposiveness to that of its internal variant is to place scientific materialism before a veritable problem, to test its ability to prevail precisely there, where it declares that the Kantian theses are merely anachronistic. Let us first unpack this reduction. To begin with, the Kantian stance withers away as we realise that to posit, however problematically, however critically, the idea of the whole as the necessary ground of the correlation of its parts is premature. Nietzsche separates the purposive from the supposed evidence of the Organic as a symbol of creation and brings it down to its defining, one could even say formal, characteristics. Whence the ability of the term *machine* to name the form of purposiveness.¹⁹ Nietzsche's insight, which could be said to prefigure one of the fundamental theses of contemporary complexity theory, is that there is no need to postulate the idea, the representation, of the organism as a whole, that is, to introduce a

¹⁹ Nietzsche can thus be seen to extend the realm of the purposive far beyond the organic, and perhaps indefinitely so. For example, the following prescient remark: "In fact, we are also required to ask after final causes in a forming crystal. In other words: teleological reflection and examination of organisms are not identical" [250].

representational analogue founded on the human power of desire to account for the 'unitotality' of the organism. Instead, without recourse to any transcendence of representation, we can simply state that *the organism is immediately its own idea*. No transcendent idea of totality could account for this instance of organisation for the precise reason that we "cannot devise another structure which could construct it more simply" [240]. *A fortiori*, no *representation* transcendent to the functioning of the organism itself could account for its self-maintenance (which Nietzsche here seems to equate with construction). At this point in the inquiry it can only be said that inner purposiveness, detached from any representation of totality, is reduced to the *ability to exist*. We call purposive an entity whose organisation means that it can maintain itself in existence. Having thus eliminated what seemed to be the necessary link between organisation (of self) and representation (of totality), Nietzsche is once again able to argue that there is no compulsion in thinking that the source of these products of nature needs itself to be intentional or representational. The method of nature is senseless, frivolous. That it gives rise to entities whose organisation at first seems to imply a causal role for the representation of totality is a function of our speculative limitations and not of anything which inevitably inheres in the being of an organism. What must be absolutely forestalled, and here Nietzsche is once again in the polemical thrall of a materialist injunction, is the "leap" from the evidence of organisation to the positing of a necessarily representing, or represented, cause. To do this, to *symbolise* the organism, is nothing but a "bad analogy".²⁰

²⁰ Indeed, contrary to Nancy's remark according to which Nietzsche completely ignores the problematic status given to teleology in Kant, and produces a dogmatic misreading of the third Critique, Nietzsche quotes Kant on this very point, only to conclude that this problematic status itself, based as it is on a strict dichotomy of purposive (teleological) and unpurposive (mechanical), should be put into question. The quote from Kant: "It is something different to consider a thing according to its inner form as purposive and to regard the existence of a thing as an end of nature", is followed by this reflection from Nietzsche: "Therefore there is no conflict between the unpurposive method of maintenance and reproduction of an organism with its own purposiveness" [247]. Elsewhere, he also writes: "[Kant] was right: purposiveness lies only in our idea" [251]. Once we realise that purposiveness is nothing but the ability to exist and not a product of a representation of totality acting upon a system then we are not obliged to look for a resolution in the supersensible. We do not need to postulate any relationship whatsoever between an analogue of representation and the capacity for self-maintenance.

The third moment, or aspect, of Nietzsche's reduction of purposiveness to the problem of life as production entails the relativisation of individuality, and the consequent relativisation of purposiveness itself. In §3 we dealt with Lange's influence on Nietzsche with regard to this question and will not repeat ourselves here. In line with Lange's definition of the status of the contradiction of unity and multiplicity, Nietzsche is in the position to attack the subordination of the organism to the idea of the whole as a merely *relative* imposition of the intellect over the material world. As he indicates, "[t]he simple idea is shattered in a multiplicity of parts and conditions of the organism, but remains intact in the necessary joining of parts and functions. This is accomplished by the intellect" [239]. But this necessity is itself put into question, according to the principle, stated above, that *a multiplicity is an individual for another multiplicity*. This of course entails a second principle, which is that *individuation precedes teleology*. In effect, all ascriptions of purposiveness imply the preliminary isolation of a purposive entity, of a whole, which could then be said to function according to an end. However, as Nietzsche remarks in line with Lange:

The concept of the whole however is our work. Here lies the source of the representation of ends. The concept of the whole does not lie in things, but in us.

These unities which we call organisms, are however again multiplicities.

There are in reality no individuals, rather individuals and organisms are nothing but abstractions. [244]

These reflections, in turn, are based on a passage by Goethe, quoted by Lange from Virchow (father of cellular theory and inventor of the notion of the *Cell-state*) in the *History of Materialism*, which will prove crucial for Nietzsche's ideas on teleology:

Every living thing is not a singularity, but a plurality: even though it appears to us as an individual, it remains a collection of living, independent beings. [242]

As we can see, however, there is a notable radicalisation, in Nietzsche, of Goethe's dictum. For Nietzsche, there is no reduction to cellular individuals that would ultimately ground the organism. Of course, this reduction can and does take place, but it holds no absolute status. As in

Lange, there are no absolute unities. For this very reason, purposiveness itself, which depends on the absolute nature of a certain type of unity (i.e. a self-maintaining one) is itself relative.²¹

This is the ground of the fourth reduction, the last step which takes the crisis of critique from purposiveness to production, from the organism to life. Whilst the notes on teleology often repeat the familiar Kantian position whereby we can only know mechanism, the position which legitimates considering the organism as a crisis, the three reductions outlined above lead Nietzsche ineluctably into the fourth and final reduction. This consists in declaring that *the antithesis of mechanism and teleology is false*.²² Once the two modalities of individuation which dominate these supposedly opposed realms – objects of representation in mechanism, purposive individuals in teleology – are reduced to forms of our propensity to individuate and thereby put on the same plane, that of *our* organisation, the Organic is definitively demoted as the instance of a crisis of critique. Together with “force, matter, law, atom” it is nothing but a “reflected judgement”, or, as Nietzsche remarks, “final causes as well as mechanisms are human ways of perceiving” [246]. Which returns us to the question of what in these notes, Nietzsche will repeatedly call the *method of nature*.

In another colourful use of the mother and child image already applied to Schopenhauer, Nietzsche writes: “The method of nature in the handling of things is indifferent, she is an impartial mother, equally hard with organic and inorganic children” [248]. This method is nothing but production, *life*, its children nothing but *forms*. The reduction of the difference between organic and inorganic to a difference in the habits of our intellect, that is, the denial of its status as a constitutive ontological difference, paves the way for a generalisation of the problem of individuation and a renewed concern with the pre-individual. And specifically, with the pre-individual as infinite multiplicity. That this is done in terms of a distinction between *life* and its *forms* should not lead

²¹ As Nietzsche writes “Purposiveness is no absolute, rather a very relative purposiveness: seen from other sides, often un purposiveness” [250].

²² Overcoming the antithesis between mechanism and teleology (or vitalism) was an abiding concern for Nietzsche. He perhaps only achieved the means for this overcoming in his encounter with Wilhelm Roux’s embryology and its account of self-regulation in ontogenesis. This is dealt with at length in Wolfgang Müller-Lauter’s ‘Der Organismus als innerer Kampf. Der Einfluss von Wilhelm Roux auf Friedrich Nietzsche’ *Nietzsche-Studien* 7 (1978): 189–223. See especially section 5, on ‘Mechanical and Teleological Explanations of Nature’.

us to the premature conclusion that we are here before a sort of Schopenhaurian vitalism. For two reasons. Firstly, because the concept of life is brought back to the infinite prodigality of nature’s senseless, frivolous method. Thus the limits and prejudices of representation are nullified, as Nietzsche declares that: “*Life is possible under an astonishing number of forms*” [248]. No ontological primacy is to be given to those forms that our organisation chooses to isolate in this vital sea of possibilities. Secondly, as was already noted in §3, primacy is given to multiplicity, so that life is not considered as the mere predicative negation of representation (Schopenhauer’s negative ontology) but rather as the non-representational source of representation itself. We are now in a position to introduce what is perhaps the most singular passage of the notes for *The Concept of the Organic since Kant*:

We grasp about a living thing nothing but forms. The eternally becoming is life; through the nature of our intellect we grasp forms: our intellect is too dull to recognise continuing change: what is knowable to it, it calls form. In truth there can be no form, because in each point sits infinity. Every thought unity (point) describes a line.

A concept similar to form is the concept of the individual. Organisms are called unities, goal-centres. But unities only exist for our intellect. Each individual has an infinity of living individuals within itself. It is only a coarse perception, perhaps taken from the human body.

All “forms” can be thrown out, but life! [249]

Having traversed the four reductions of the Kantian problem of the Organic, Nietzsche thus returns to the question of the borders of individuation which had dominated his earlier critique of Schopenhauer.

It is not the Organic which indicates the crisis of the critical apparatus, but rather life, understood as the infinite multiplicity of the pre-individual. This is a pre-individual arrived at through the consideration of the “method of nature”, a method which reduces inner purposiveness to a limited case, opening up the problem of individuation to the question of ontogenesis. It is precisely to the degree that it cannot but presuppose this ground of productive multiplicity, of infinite becoming, that, as Nietzsche remarks, “[t]he individual is an insufficient concept” [251]. Nevertheless, it is not enough to make the shift from the

organism and to indicate the encounter with pre-individual production as the true crisis of the critical project. When Nietzsche writes: "The organism is a form. If we look away from the form, it is a multiplicity" [243], we cannot take this as a mere denial or subreption of critique. There is no denying for Nietzsche the 'formative' efficacy of representation, the 'relative' hegemony of the *principium individuationis*. Neither can Nietzsche deny his fidelity to that aspect of critique which seeks to account, in an immanent inquiry, for the illusions of anthropomorphism and the construction of objectivity. Rather, the recourse to the concepts of life and multiplicity aims to confront the fact that representation cannot account for itself on its own terms, that its closure is unsustainable. Moreover, it aims to do this without falling into the fatal snare of negative ontology, of the pre-individual conceived of as the sterile negation of the predicates of the represented.

§5. Chladni's Sound Figures, or, A Materialism without Matter?

Nietzsche's engagement with Lange, Schopenhauer, and Kant on the question of individuation ultimately leads him to the question of the pre-individual, of life as infinite productive multiplicity. To this problem he applies what could be termed a critical or transcendental materialism, maintaining materialism's demand for an asymmetry of production – individuation as representation must be accounted for in non-representational terms – and critique's vigilance against the illusions of the anthropomorphic – the pre-individual cannot be simply reduced to matter if the latter is conceived of in line with the objective illusions which are constitutive of representation itself (e.g. the atom as *principium individuationis*). Thus, a transcendental materialism for which matter is not transparent to intellect, a paradoxical materialism without matter, will necessarily be concerned with the problem that Nietzsche saw as the foremost of those left unsolved by the reduction of teleology to production: *the origin of the intellect*. The problem of individuation as production will thus find itself caught up with the apparently circular question: How is the intellect as representing mechanism, and thus as primary agent of individuation, *itself* individuated? In the gap between individuation by the intellect and individuation as production, initially opened in Kant by the organism as the first *crisis of critique*, Nietzsche's effort, after the impasse of tragic

affirmation, of the struggle against "the pain of individuation", will be to produce an experimental ontology to address this very question, that of the origin of the intellect, *from the point of view of production*.

In his 1872 notes for an essay to be entitled *The Philosopher: Reflections on the Struggle Between Art and Knowledge*, Nietzsche encapsulates this problem with a conceptual image he was quite fond of, that of Chladni's 'sound figures'.²³ These were patterns drawn onto a sand-covered plane by an experimental device that used sound vibrations to determine the movements of a string affixed below the sand's surface. It is the asymmetry and lack of resemblance between the productive dimension of the vibrations and the represented patterns that for Nietzsche identifies the problem and the task of a non-representational account of representation, one based on a concept of individuation as ontogenesis. It is precisely because of this asymmetry at the heart of individuation that materialism can never have done with the vigilance characteristic of a certain Kantianism, with the critique of a dogmatism of matter which would be nothing other than the return of representation in disguise. Due to this insistence of critique the words *life* and *multiplicity*, as they appear in the notes on teleology, do not attain the status of veritable concepts; they remain, as Nietzsche remarks, "dark". What they do indicate, in a manner which is of great significance both for Nietzsche's later experiments in ontology and for any further reflections on the fate of materialism and critique, is the persistence of the problem of individuation at the core of any treatment of the mechanisms of representation, in the passage from the first crisis of critique, which opposed the *principium individuationis* to the individuality of the Organic, to the second crisis of critique, which discovers the method of nature, or life as infinite multiplicity, at the heart of any individuality whatsoever.

²³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Philosophy and Truth. Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870's*, ed. and trans. by Daniel Brazeale (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1979), pp. 24-25.