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Fearless Findings.

Instinct and Language in Book V of *The Gay Science*

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1. The asymmetrical opposition between instinct and language

Instinct and language have been opposed to one another for a long time. Instincts were considered to be natural, involuntary, constraining and unchangeable; language, on the other hand, was seen as being spiritual, free, conscious, and adaptable. Language, emanating from reason, was supposed to be as far apart as possible from the constraints of nature. Men, possessing both language and reason, were supposed to free themselves from involuntary instincts. Drives, affects and emotions were also considered involuntary conductors of behavior, along with instincts. Drives were thought responsible for the mere satisfaction of needs; feelings, for hasty decisions both beneficial and harmful; emotions, for blind liaisons; and in contrast, the instincts, for thoughtless orientations. Reason could be harmed by all these, and was therefore meant to penetrate them, enlighten them and hinder their harmfulness. The opposition between instinct and reason was therefore in itself evaluative, establishing a valuation based on an opposition. Nietzsche attributes the powerful implementation of this valuation mainly to Plato. As for Socrates, who introduced it, Nietzsche believes him to have preserved an ironic skepticism towards its usefulness¹. A valuation so strongly asymmetric as the one between instinct and reason must have as a foundation strong instincts and needs, especially if it should remain - as it did - almost unquestioned for thousands of years and even through such difficult transformations as the transition from Greek and Roman antiquity to the Christian middle ages and then to the growing religious skepticism of Modernity. Nietzsche's hypothesis is that this semantic opposition was needed to domesticate man. If everybody was to be guided by reason, then all those who needed it (i.e. including the weakest and the most needy) would have to be able to establish their rights in every field and, thus, in the pleasure of living together, reach a peaceful agreement, whatever differences they may have had regarding other needs and instincts.

¹ Cf. BGE 191.

Therefore, that very rationality was counter-factually supposed to be shared by everyone in equal measure. Rationality was supposed to lead to the insight of the necessity of universally valid laws, and thus to the voluntary submission to a morality equally compulsory for all and, therefore, common to all. From Socrates to Kant it was believed that a non-moral logic could ground a logical morality. Nietzsche saw through this construction, and attacked it, for he expected more of men than the submission to a common morality. The moral significance of freeing human language from human instincts in metaphysics, on the one hand, and the non-moral significance of the reconnection of human language to human instincts taking place during the 18th Century, on the other, became one of Nietzsche's common topics. In his early unpublished draft, *On Truth and Lie in a Non-Moral Sense*, Nietzsche (just as Herder had done before him) closely connects language and speech to involuntary conductors of human behavior². Whereas, here, the question for Nietzsche was still how language and reason, as well as their concepts, originate in the drives and instincts³, he would later come to focus on the limits of

² Cf. Andrea Christian Bertino, "Vernatürlichung". *Ursprünge von Friedrich Nietzsches Entidealisierung des Menschen, seiner Sprache und seiner Geschichte bei Johann Gottfried Herder* (Monographien und Texte zur Nietzsche-Forschung, Bd. 58), Berlin / New York 2011. [Editors' note: See also Andrea Bertino's paper in this volume.]

³ In a draft from 1869/70, *Vom Ursprung der Sprache*, Nietzsche surveyed the history of philosophy for views on the origin of language, and concluded: "Es bleibt also nur übrig, die Sprache als Erzeugniss des Instinktes zu betrachten, wie bei den Bienen - dem Ameisenhaufen u.s.w." (KGW II/2, 188) [Editors' translation: "thus the only option that remains is to consider language as a production of instinct, as with bees and anthills, etc."]. This is how he understands "instinct" (in the language he used at that time): "Instinkt ist aber nicht Resultat bewusster Ueberlegung, nicht blosser Folge der körperlichen Organisation, nicht Resultat eines Mechanismus, der in das Gehirn gelegt ist, nicht Wirkung eines dem Geiste von aussen kommenden, seinem Wesen fremden Mechanismus, sondern eigenste Leistung des Individuums oder einer Masse, dem Charakter entspringend. Der Instinkt ist sogar eins mit dem innersten Kern eines Wesens. Dies ist das eigentliche Problem der Philosophie, die unendliche Zweckmässigkeit der Organismen und die Bewusstlosigkeit bei ihrem Entstehn" (KGW II, 2, 188) [Editors' translation: "However, instinct is *not* conscious deliberation, nor mere consequence of the bodily organization, nor the result of a mechanism that lies in the brain, nor the effect of a mechanism that comes to the spirit from the outside and is foreign to its essence, but rather the most distinctive accomplishment that springs from an individual's or a group's character. Instinct is even identical with the innermost kernel of a being. This is the actual problem of philosophy, the infinite purposiveness of organisms and the unconsciousness of their emergence"]. He invokes Herder and Kant. Later, in TL, he uses the concept of "Trieb", "drive" ("Trieb zur Wahrheit", KSA 1. 876 etc., "Trieb zur Metapherbildung", KSA 1. 887), instead of "Instinkt", "instinct"; as in Nietzsche's sources (cf. Antonie Meijers und Martin Stingelin, "Konkordanz zu den wörtlichen Abschriften und Übernahmen von Beispielen und Zitaten aus Gustav Gerber: Die Sprache als Kunst (Bromberg 1871) in Nietzsches Rhetorik-Vorlesung und in 'Ueber Wahrheit und Lüge im

philosophical knowledge itself. As Nietzsche's early concatenation of language and instinct has been widely discussed⁴, I will focus on the later stage of his thought, in which this relation would be increasingly differentiated.

2. Nietzsche's interweaving of instinct and language in Book V of *Gay Science*

In Book V of *The Gay Science*, which was added in 1887, Nietzsche once again discusses the relation between instinct and language in a new and surprising way. He deliberately dissolves the old asymmetrical oppositions or inverts their meaning⁵. On the one hand, he doesn't allow reason to remain in simple opposition to nature but connects it to nature in multiple forms, understanding both as having reciprocal

aussermoralischen Sinne", in: *Nietzsche-Studien* 17 (1988), pp. 350 - 368), the crucial concept is, however, that of "Reiz", "stimulus" (KSA 1.876 etc), as well as the equally preconscious and involuntary "Nervenreiz", "nerve stimulus" (KSA 1.878 etc). But Nietzsche uses the concept of instinct in the preceding notes. Cf. KSA 7. 63, 3 [15]= WEN, 19-20 (Nachlass 1869/1870): "Language came into being from the shout with the accompanying gesture: here the essence of the thing is expressed through the tone, the volume and the rhythm, and the accompanying idea, the image of the essence, the appearance, through the oral gesture./ An infinitely inadequate symbolism, grown in accordance with firm laws of nature: in the choice of the symbol it is not freedom but instinct that reveals itself./ A symbol that has been noticed is always a concept: one conceives what one is able to name and distinguish" (see also KSA 7. 65, 3 [18]). Afterwards, he develops the concatenation of language, image, and instinct in several of his notes from 1870 to 1873: KSA 7. 232, 8 [29], 7. 454, 19 [107]. For the variety and change in Nietzsche's use of the concept of instinct, cf. Albert Vinzens, *Friedrich Nietzsches Instinktverwandlung*, Basel, 1999. Unfortunately, this does not include a complete chronological analysis of Nietzsche's use of the concept. Such an analysis shall, however, be included in the forthcoming Volume III of the Nietzsche-Wörterbuch, edited by the Nietzsche Research Group (Nijmegen), Paul van Tongeren, Gerd Schank and Herman Siemens, 4 vols., Berlin / New York 2004 ff.

⁴ For the state of the art, see also Hans Gerald Hödl, *Nietzsches frühe Sprachkritik. Lektüren zu Ueber Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne*, Wien, 1997; Hans Gerald Hödl, "Metaphern ohne Referenten. Anmerkungen zur neueren Diskussion um Nietzsches Sprachphilosophie", in: *Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 28 (2003), pp. 183-199; Christian J. Emden, *Nietzsche on Language, Consciousness, and the Body*, Champaign, Ill., 2005; Ignace Haaz, *Nietzsche et la métaphore cognitive*, Paris 2006; Sören Reuter, *An der Begräbnisstätte der Anschauung'. Nietzsches Bild- und Wahrnehmungstheorie in Ueber Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne* (Beiträge zu Friedrich Nietzsche, Bd. 12), Basel 2009; Benedetta Zavatta, "Die in der Sprache versteckte Mythologie und ihre Folgen fürs Denken. Einige Quellen von Nietzsche: Max Müller, Gustav Gerber und Ludwig Noire", in: *Nietzsche-Studien* 38 (2009), 269-298; Joshua Andresen, "Truth and Illusion Beyond Falsification: Re-reading 'Truth and Lie'", in: *Nietzsche-Studien* 39 (2010), and Bertino, op. cit..

⁵ Cf. Vinzens, Albert, *Friedrich Nietzsches Instinktverwandlung*, Basel, 1999, pp. 110-128.

effects on each other⁶. He also creates a new semantics of reason, much closer to everyday language, for he no longer considers reason as completely transparent to itself, unitary and common to all, but rather as an unfathomable complexity (the body as a “great reason”⁷), mutable and individual⁸. On the other hand, he does no longer consider natural instincts merely as a rigid *given*, but rather as something which naturally and involuntary *becomes*, and which, through a prolonged routine or discipline or even through rational insight, may gradually become so obvious, that it involuntarily conducts behaviour and then manifests itself as natural. Thus instinct surpasses reason: it creates a new kind of freedom, the lightness of action⁹. “Everything *good* is instinctive –”, Nietzsche will write in *Twilight of the Idols* – “and consequently light, necessary, free” (TI The Four Great Errors 2); and in the *Antichrist* he observes at last that “to achieve a perfect automatism of the instinct, – this is the presupposition of every type of mastery, of every type of perfection in the art of life” (A 57)¹⁰.

In rejecting the asymmetrical valuation of reason and instinct, interweaving them instead, Nietzsche also gives speech and language a new sense. For Nietzsche, speech is voluntary (i.e. rational) and involuntary (i.e. instinctive) at the same time¹¹. We have a limited view of what we say and what we want to say and, most of the time, we follow speech routines and well practiced language-games in which, without further ado, one word leads to the next. Speech routines, which become instinctive, unburden our orientation and set it free for other things; whereas a fully reflexive speech would take up all of our attention¹². Through such speech routines, however, philosophical knowledge also becomes limited; they make things seem obvious when in fact they are not. In order to perceive and break through such limitations, philosophical knowledge must expand its own linguistic leeway but without creating a private language, as has been done until now: philosophy’s abstract terminology has always detached philosophical knowledge from the lived world creating a private fantasy world – which in turn seems to be the

⁶ Cf. BGE 3: “I kept a close eye on the philosophers and read between their lines for long enough to say to myself: the greatest part of conscious thought must still be attributed to instinctive activity, and this is even the case for philosophical thought. This issue needs re-examination. Just as the act of birth makes no difference to the overall course of heredity, neither is ‘consciousness’ *opposed* to instinct in any decisive sense – most of a philosopher’s conscious thought is secretly directed and forced into determinate channels by the instincts”.

⁷ Cf. Z I On the Despisers of the Body.

⁸ Cf. Hakaru Kodama, *Nietzsches Begriff der Vernunft*, Phil. Diss. Greifswald, forthcoming.

⁹ Cf. Olivier Ponton, *Nietzsche - Philosophie de la légèreté* (Monographien und Texte zur Nietzsche-Forschung, Bd. 53), Berlin / New York 2007.

¹⁰ Cf. KSA 13. 421, 15 [25]= WP 440 (Nachlass 1888): “Genius resides in instinct; goodness likewise. One acts perfectly only when one acts instinctively” (“Das Genie sitzt im Instinkt; die Güte ebenfalls. Man handelt nur vollkommen, sofern man instinktiv handelt”).

¹¹ For the interweaving of language and body in Nietzsche’s philosophy of language, cf. Christof Kalb, *Desintegration. Studien zu Friedrich Nietzsches Leib- und Sprachphilosophie*, Frankfurt am Main, 2000.

¹² Cf. Werner Stegmaier, *Philosophie der Orientierung*, Berlin/New York, 2008, 398-408.

“real world”¹³. Accordingly, Nietzsche refused an abstract terminology, staying faithful to the language-games of natural language, which have themselves become instinctive; he thus had no need of recurring to the theory-healing therapy, which the later Wittgenstein recommends for philosophy and especially for the philosophy of language. Instead, Nietzsche further refined the use of natural language, elevating it, in philosophy, to unprecedented artistic levels. His philosophical language does not go beyond the limits of natural language, it just shifts them — and in this way, contrary to what used to happen to the language of old reason (which was supposed to be understood by everyone, but in fact never was), Nietzsche’s language remains accessible to all, or to the majority at least, even though each one of us understands it within our own horizons and at different levels. Nietzsche’s simple language — or, as we might now say, his instinctively understandable language — is intrinsic to the core of his philosophy, and it made it more popular than any other philosophy. To put it in terms of contemporary philosophy of language: Nietzsche’s philosophy performs what it states; it shows what it says. Instinct and language are no longer connected in mutual opposition, as if they excluded each other; they are rather entangled or woven together, inasmuch as they intensify each other¹⁴.

Nietzsche’s interweaving of instinct and language, as it also occurs in his philosophical texts themselves, allows him to renounce to argumentation and demonstration, for these appeal to a form of reason equally accessible to and valid for all. Instead of this, Nietzsche wants to surprise us — a fact that adds up to the everlasting attractiveness of his philosophy. He surprises us with the power of philosophical insights that greatly broaden the possibilities of philosophical knowledge in general, thus unsettling the traditional foundations of argumentation and demonstration. It is in this way that philosophy “creates” in Nietzsche’s sense: it opens up new possibilities of understanding and shaping the world and oneself. But philosophy can only create from the available possibilities at a given moment — it must relate to them so as to broaden them, but always within specific leeways.

This broadening can, however, be painful and fearful. And it is precisely because of this that most people (including renowned philosophers) retreat when confronted with them and decide to hang on to already familiar private worlds and “hinterworlds (*Hinterwelten*)”¹⁵. The later Nietzsche increasingly sought philosophical insights capable of arousing fear; he believed their strength and rank to lie precisely in the fact

¹³ Cf. GD Wie die ‘wahre Welt’ endlich zur Fabel wurde. [*Editors’ note*: here as elsewhere, “leeway” translates *Spielraum*, a technical term in Werner Stegmaier’s work, meaning “*eine geregelte Grenze unregelmäßigen Verhaltens*”, i.e. a regulated perimeter within which unregulated behavior becomes possible: cf. Stegmaier, Werner, *Philosophie der Orientierung*, p. 221 ff..]

¹⁴ And, thus, concepts become fluctuations: cf. Werner Stegmaier, *Philosophie der Fluktuation. Dilthey und Nietzsche*, Göttingen 1992, and Werner Stegmaier, *Philosophie der Orientierung*, pp. 356-360.

¹⁵ Cf. Z I On the Hinterworldly.

that they incite fear¹⁶. Philosophical knowledge arouses fear in as much as it attacks and questions old instincts that have become self-evident, and it only overcomes this fear when it becomes equally obvious and instinctive, or (to use a Nietzschean word) when it gets incorporated (*einverleibt*)¹⁷. Nietzsche's revaluations of values cannot be achieved through a single rational insight, but only gradually; in such a way that the refinement of his language may also refine his linguistic instincts and those of his most persistent readers, so that these refined linguistic instincts become receptive to further subtleties in Nietzsche's language, as well as in their own language¹⁸.

3. The series of aphorisms 354, 355, 371 e 381 in Book V of *The Gay Science*

Nietzsche does not only perform this: he also states it; he says what he shows. And he does so in four aphorisms of Book V of *The Gay Science*, aphorisms 354, 355, 371 e 381. Each one of them deserves an exhaustive contextual interpretation¹⁹. In this brief paper, however, I can only analyze their theses; and I will have to leave out the literary form of the aphorisms — which in Nietzsche is always extraordinarily important. Aphorism 354 is preceded, temporally and thematically, by aphorism 268 of *Beyond Good and Evil*, which will also be my starting point.

3.a. The preparatory aphorism 268 of *Beyond Good and Evil*. The birth of language's violence from the needs intrinsic to living in society.

¹⁶ Cf. BGE 39: "Something could be true even if it is harmful and dangerous to the highest degree. It could even be part of the fundamental character of existence that people with complete knowledge get destroyed, — so that the strength of a spirit would be proportionate to how much of the 'truth' he could withstand — or, to put it more clearly, to what extent he *needs* it to be thinned out, veiled over, sweetened up, dumbled down, and lied about"; cf. also KSA 12.455, 10 [3]= WLN, 173 (Nachlass 1887): "*My new path to 'Yes'./ My new version of pessimism: willingly to seek out the dreadful and questionable sides of existence: which made clear to me related phenomena of the past. 'How much 'truth' can a spirit endure and dare?' — a question of its strength. The outcome of a pessimism like this could be that form of a Dionysian saying Yes to the world as it is, to the point of wishing for its absolute recurrence and eternity: which would mean a new ideal of philosophy and understanding*".

¹⁷ Cf. FW 110.

¹⁸ In "Homer und die klassische Philosophie. Ein Vortrag", 1869 (KGW II/ 1, p. 249), Nietzsche himself used the concept of "Sprachinstinkt" ("linguistic instinct"), but he later abandoned it.

¹⁹ Cf. Werner Stegmaier, *Nietzsches Befreiung der Philosophie. Kontextuelle Interpretation des V. Buchs der Fröhlichen Wissenschaft* (forthcoming) and, programmatically, Werner Stegmaier, "Nach Montinari. Zur Nietzsche-Philologie", *Nietzsche-Studien* 36 (2007), pp. 80-94 (English translation by Lisa Anderson: "After Montinari. On Nietzsche Philology", *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 38 (Fall 2009), pp. 5-19; Portuguese and French translations are forthcoming); Werner Stegmaier, "'Philosophischer Idealismus' und die 'Musik des Lebens'. Zu Nietzsches Umgang mit Paradoxien. Eine kontextuelle Interpretation des Aphorismus Nr. 372 der Fröhlichen Wissenschaft", *Nietzsche-Studien* 33 (2004), pp. 90-128; "Schicksal Nietzsche? Zu Nietzsches Selbsteinschätzung als Schicksal der Philosophie und der Menschheit (Ecce homo, Warum ich ein Schicksal bin 1)", *Nietzsche-Studien* 37 (2008), pp. 62-114.

In aphorism 268 of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche resumes a theme from *On Truth and Lie in a Non-Moral Sense*, namely the conventionalization of experience and thought through language (“the obligation to lie in accordance with firmly established convention”, TL, 146), and he develops it, quite coherently, anchoring it in a heuristics of need. Already in the second *Untimely Meditation*, Nietzsche analyzed the action of men not only according to their “goals” but also according to their “powers and needs” (UM II. 4, 77); and in the third *Meditation* his starting point was “needs, wants and wishes” (UM III. 2, 133)²⁰. He identified fundamental philosophical concepts through the needs that made them necessary; he placed, for instance, a “necessary truth” (*Nothwahrheit*) on the same level as a “necessary lie” (*Nothlüge*, UM II. 10, 118), and searched methodically for the “real needs” behind the “hollowness of those tyrannical words and concepts” of conventional language (UM IV. 5, 215). Through his heuristics of need and precisely because there is no moral merit in needs, Nietzsche achieved a non-moral perspective on language and reason, as well as on the morality that is inherent to them. In his books of aphorisms, his plan is to study “the needs of mankind” “to the last consequence”²¹. The first four books of *The Gay Science* are filled with forms of the term “need” (*Noth*), “needs” (*Nöthe*), “states of need” (*Nothstände*), “situations of need” (*Nothlagen*) and “to be necessary” (“*Noth-Tun*”). In aphorism 40, Nietzsche speaks directly of a “law of need” (*Gesetz der Noth*); in the new preface to *The Gay Science*, which he published together with Book V, he asks programmatically “whether it was not illness that inspired the philosopher” and “whether, on a grand scale, philosophy has been no more than an interpretation of the body and a *misunderstanding of the body*” (GS Preface 2); and in aphorism 370, in which he introduces his “*Dionysian pessimism*”, he states as an introduction: “every art, every philosophy can be considered a cure and aid in the service of growing, struggling life; they always presuppose suffering and the sufferers” (GS 370).

In aphorism 268 of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche traces the way in which experience and thought are conventionalized through speech back to the needs intrinsic to living in society. These needs compel us to find a quick understanding: “The greater the danger, the greater the need to agree quickly and easily about necessities” (BGE 268). Nevertheless, the language that develops from these needs only then becomes long-lasting if those that use it also use “the same words for the same species of inner experiences” (BGE 268). Within the evolution of a society, the commonly used means of speech are not selected according to the measure of individual experiences, but it is rather the other way round: individual experiences are selected according to the more commonly used means of

²⁰ [Editors' note: Holingdale translates “*Kräften und Nöthen*” (KSA 1. 271) with “energies and needs” (UM II. 4, p. 77), and “*Nöthen, Bedürfnissen und Wünschen*” (UB II. 4, p. 346) with “need, distress and desire” (UM III. 2, p. 133). However, a more literal translation of *Kräften, Bedürfnissen* and *Wünschen* is crucial here.]

²¹ KSA 9. 192, 5 [46] (Nachlass 1880), KSA 9. 636, 15 [9] (Nachlass 1881); see also: KSA 9.276. 6 [302] (Nachlass 1880).

speech. Those who, in a situation of need — which requires a quick understanding — do not follow commonly used language, are excluded, and thus, only those who experience the same with the same words remain. And only those who experience the same as others with the same words are then able to use words instinctively, without further thought. We “know”, then, what others “want” with their words; and with words, values are also shared. However, the selection of individual experiences through common words is a form of violence; it is, according to Nietzsche, “the most violent violence that has controlled people so far” (BGE 268, translation modified). It is directed against those who are “more exceptional, refined, rare, and difficult to understand” (BGE 268). Precisely those who would be able to refine language and broaden their knowledge “will easily remain alone, prone to accidents in their isolation and rarely propagating” (BGE 268). The linguistic instinct of a community hardens and solidifies — and in this way it becomes immune to being challenged. “Immense countervailing forces”, Nietzsche concludes at the end of the aphorism, “will have to be called upon in order to cross this natural, all-too-natural *progressus in simile*, people becoming increasingly similar, ordinary, average, herd-like —, increasingly *base!*” (BGE 268). He who, nonetheless, wishes to cross (*kreuzen*) and thwart (*durchkreuzen*) this process of vulgarization may easily be crucified (*gekreuzigt werden*).

3.b. Aphorism 354 of *The Gay Science*.

The birth of consciousness from the language's violence.

In aphorism 354 of *The Gay Science* —, whose title, “On ‘the genius of the species’”, evokes a parenthesis on Schopenhauer in aphorism 268 of *Beyond Good and Evil* —, Nietzsche, in a further surprising move of his heuristics of need, traces the development of consciousness (which in modernity had become the metaphysical presupposition of metaphysical reason) back to the conventionalization of experience and thought through the violence of language, a conventionalization that he understands as necessary for survival. He begins with “physiology and natural history” (GS 354). In most cases we think, feel, want, recall and “act’ in every sense of the term” without consciousness, i.e. purely instinctively, “insulting as it may sound to an older philosopher” (GS 354). The “alliance of the instincts”, which Nietzsche had already introduced in aphorism 11 of Book I of *The Gay Science*, guarantees in great part our orientation, whereas consciousness, “the latest development of the organic, and hence also its most unfinished and unrobust feature” (GS 11), is most often a danger to our orientation. Therefore, the question — which would never occur to an older philosopher — is how did consciousness become useful and why has it been preserved in evolution so far. Nietzsche’s conjecture is as follows: it developed alongside language, it was incorporated as a linguistic instinct and, thus, it remained allied with other instincts which were also developing. With the “need to communicate”, “need and distress” forced people “to communicate, to understand each other swiftly and subtly”, and also “a person’s (or animal’s) *ability to communicate*” had to intensify and

refine itself, especially from the moment this animal created “signs”: “communication signs” which could be used independently of a specific situation, and hence, with certain generality (GS 354). But precisely because the meaning of these signs, of our linguistic signs, is no longer immediately clear in a given situation, they must be used with special care and they must be consciously chosen; they require consciousness²². They can easily be misunderstood and give rise to new and heavier needs. The use of linguistic signs independent of specific situations is linked to consciousness, but only to a certain degree: it would quickly overload consciousness if new speech and language routines were not formed simultaneously – i.e. if something similar to a linguistic instinct were not to transform once again the greatest part of speech into something easy, obvious and involuntary, and to lighten consciousness. Once again, Nietzsche’s focus remains to be the problem of vulgarization, or generalization. If consciousness develops in an individual speaker along with his ability to communicate in a general language, then what we understand as individual consciousness is always already general consciousness:

“My idea is clearly that consciousness actually belongs not to man’s existence as an individual but rather to the community- and herd-aspects of his nature; that accordingly, it is finely developed only in relation to its usefulness to community or herd; and that consequently each of us, even with the best will in the world to *understand* ourselves as individually as possible, ‘to know ourselves’, will always bring to consciousness precisely that in ourselves which is ‘non-individual’, that which is ‘average; that due to the nature of consciousness — to the ‘genius of the species’ governing it — our thoughts themselves are continually as it were *outvoted* and translated back into the herd perspective” (GS 354).

3.c. Aphorism 355 of *The Gay Science*.

The everyday instinctual fear of facing the unfamiliar and a new philosophical courage to face the unfamiliar

From what we have seen above, philosophical knowledge finds itself always already associated with the “herd perspective”. According to aphorism 355, not only the “common people” but also philosophers so far have understood knowledge as the tracing back of something unfamiliar to something familiar (GS 355). It is obvious that the “fear instinct” is dominant here — the fear of going beyond the usual, beyond what is fixed and regarded as safe. Logic is what most frequently helps philosophy and science to gain security, logic and the effort to structure knowledge logically. When something new, unfamiliar, and surprising obtains a logical order, it becomes no longer new, unfamiliar, and surprising. It has found a “reason”, we can feel reassured by it, and the “feeling of security” is re-established. Natural mathematical sciences in particular proceed like this: they take “the *strange* as their object” and turn it into the object of

²² Cf.. Stegmaier, *Philosophie der Orientierung*, pp. 333-346.

objective knowledge (GS 355). But this knowledge is not only objective, but objectifying: nature as we commonly know it, with its sunrises and sunsets, landscapes of mountains and rivers, fields and woods, the colour play of flowers, variable weather conditions, the movements of the stars in the sky, etc., is reduced to abstract processes that conform to natural laws formulated by scientific knowledge itself, so that this knowledge transforms our familiar nature into an unfamiliar and constructed nature — i.e., into a strange object. For natural scientists, however, who have incorporated the language of mathematically formulated natural laws (so that these have become routine and finally instinct for them) such a strange object is no longer strange, but becomes, in a new way, familiar again. And when they reduce what is unusual and surprising in everyday, familiar nature to laws that are familiar *to them*, they are once again following the popular concept of knowledge: they are tracing something unfamiliar back to something familiar. After having turned nature into something strange, they recover it — as much as this may be possible — as a known, familiar, unsurprising nature. Here lies, according to Nietzsche, their “great security” (GS 355). Mathematical natural sciences represent the well succeeded historical experiment of a new estranging knowledge which, after having transformed the unfamiliar into the object of a new logical order, is still able of guiding itself by the old instinct of fear.

But Nietzsche further adds an enigmatic subordinate clause:

“(...) while it is nearly contradictory and absurd even to *want* to take the non-strange as one’s object...” (GS 355).

The mystery doesn’t lie in the contradiction or absurdity of taking the non-strange as an object; for the non-strange, i.e. the known, the common, the familiar, obviously requires no knowledge. What is enigmatic here is rather the italicized word “*want*” (“*wollen*”). One *wants* something absurd when one transforms that which is well-known and usual into something strange, i.e. into an object of knowledge, — and this, even though it is already well-known and usual and provides our orientation with an unquestioned sense of security. Whoever wants this does no longer aim at obtaining tranquility through knowledge, but rather exposes his/herself consciously to unrest. In German, one says that one “wants”, i.e. “wills” something when one is simply so resolute to obtain or achieve it, that one does not have any reasons or one does not intend to allege any reasons for it. “Reasons” are statements which we expect others to accept; their goal is an agreement and, therefore, they make the individual will superfluous. The sciences and philosophy, such as we know them, are based on reasons and exclude the personal will (indeed a “personal argument” is unacceptable in science). Therefore, whoever firmly *wills* something in philosophy, mistrusting its usual scientific nature, announces an unusual, unfamiliar, strange, wilfully personal way of philosophizing. This is (as the heading of Book V of *The Gay Science* indicates) the philosophizing of a “fearless” one. From the standpoint of knowledge born out of the “instinct of fear”, that is something “nearly contradictory and absurd”, but only “nearly”: renouncing all reasons can in fact make sense

in a narrower leeway, namely in the precise context of a philosophical knowledge that questions the traditional, instinctive meaning of knowledge, so as to open up new possibilities of thought and action – i.e., in the context of a “revolutionary” philosophizing that transgresses “normal” philosophizing, to use Thomas S. Kuhn’s expression. We know what such a philosophy means for Nietzsche, a philosophy that does not trace the unfamiliar back to the familiar, but, on the contrary, tries to understand the known “as a problem”, “as strange, as distant, as ‘outside of us’” (GS 355). It means to expose oneself voluntarily to fear, to challenge one’s sense of security, to jeopardize one’s routine orientation, and in this way to transform oneself into an experiment for a new humanity,— a humanity that finally wants to admit that which has already taken place a long time ago, namely that the humankind (to use Nietzsche’s favourite metaphor) drifts on the high, open sea, and from here must find totally new orientations out of its own inner strength. The meaning of philosophy, as Nietzsche understands it, could be just this: to harness one’s fear of facing the unfamiliar and to have the courage to face the unfamiliar. In his heuristics of need, which he calls “genealogy” in the period after Book V of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche provides many examples of this courage: he traced language, consciousness and knowledge back to needs that were yet to be discovered, and they remain, to most people, surprising, strange, and unacceptable.

3.d. Aphorisms 371 and 381 of Book V of *The Gay Science*.
The distinction of being misunderstood and the selection of
readers through subtler laws of style

Thus, Nietzsche consciously risks being either not understood, or misunderstood²³. He *wants* to be misunderstood by the majority; as he later writes in aphorism 371, he sees that as his “lot”, his “fate of height” and therefore a “distinction” (GS 371). He willingly accepts the consequence of such violence as is exerted in the process of generalization through language,— a process which is so easily welcomed by most people because it gives them a strong sense of security and orientation. The consequence of this is that those who are “more exceptional, refined, rare”, those who question that violence and who were mentioned in aphorism 268 of *Beyond Good and Evil*,— they must also remain the “most difficult to understand” (BGE 268). In aphorism 381 of *The Gay Science* Nietzsche once again draws the consequence of this to *his* language, to *his* philosophical writing²⁴. With his language, he consciously wants to choose his “listeners”, those with whom he “wants to communicate”, and “simultaneously” to erect “barriers against ‘the others’” (GS 381). Nietzsche wants to take charge of the selection undertaken by any language, he wants to take advantage of the violence brought about by this

²³ Cf. BGE 27 and Werner Stegmaier, *Nietzsches Zeichen*, *Nietzsche-Studien* 29 (2000), 41-69.

²⁴ For the interpretation of this aphorism, see Werner Stegmaier, “Zur Frage der Verständlichkeit. Nietzsches Beitrag zum interkulturellen Kommunizieren und Philosophieren”, in: *Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 32.2 (2007), pp. 107-119.

selection, in order to use it for his own purpose, namely to gain the courage to face surprising and unfamiliar knowledge about that very selection and violence. He sees his opportunity in using “subtler laws of style” (GS 381), in *his own* style, which is a style not merely for readers but also for “listeners” who have not only eyes for the type of reasons that beget objectivity — thus excluding all that is “other”, deviant, nuanced, or briefly, all that is individual —, but who also have “ears” for tone and rhythm, for the “music” of what is being said²⁵, i.e. for what expresses the writer’s individuality. The subtler laws of his style, as he describes them, demand a more refined ear: surprising truths emerge without any long arguments but rather in sudden and surprising ways; their effect is cold and disturbing, so frightful that one can only bear them for a very short time. And this is exactly why they select: they are apt to be misunderstood by those who cannot bear to hear them, “asses and old maids of both sexes to whom life offers nothing but their innocence” (GS 381). Nietzsche’s writings are not meant to disrupt these people’s sense of security, but to “inspire” them to be what they are and to do what they are able to do (GS 381). In this group we also find, most importantly, the “scholars”, to whom Nietzsche dedicates a whole series of aphorisms in Book V of *The Gay Science*²⁶. Those, however, who are capable of hearing his language have, according to Nietzsche, “different needs, grow differently, digest differently” (GS 381), briefly: they have different instincts. And yet, Nietzsche here no longer speaks of “instinct”, but rather of “taste”, and he refers to “a taste for independence, for quick coming and going, for wandering, perhaps for adventures”— and, finally, for something *simultaneously* voluntary and involuntary, conscious and unconscious, free and coercive, reasonable and instinctive: “dance” (GS 381). Although one can never fully be sure of understanding another person, especially someone like Nietzsche, one can dance another person’s dance, including Nietzsche’s dance — though only with our own legs and our own swing. And while instincts guide our behavior unreflectively and involuntarily (that is still their function), taste also has a feeling for nuances, for those subtleties of understanding which can no longer be captured conceptually and for those subtleties of language which can no longer be captured linguistically²⁷. In the end, as is well known, Nietzsche has said of himself: “I am a nuance”²⁸.

²⁵ Cf. Stegmaier, “‘Philosophischer Idealismus’ und die ‘Musik des Lebens’”. *Zu Nietzsches Umgang mit Paradoxien. Eine kontextuelle Interpretation des Aphorismus Nr. 372 der Fröliche Wissenschaft*, *Nietzsche-Studien* 33 (2004), pp. 90-128.

²⁶ Cf. GS 344, 348, 349, 366.

²⁷ Cf. Stegmaier, *Philosophie der Fluktuanz*, p. 348 ff..

²⁸ EH *The Case of Wagner* 4.