BETWEEN THE SPECIES

All Too Human: "Animal Wisdom" in Nietzsche's Account of the Good Life

ABSTRACT

In this paper I argue that a certain understanding of "animality"—or that a certain problematization of the traditional human-animal hierarchy and divide—is central to Nietzsche's account of the good life. Nietzsche's philosophical project is primarily directed against those "metaphysical oppositions of values" that traditionally structure how we think, feel and live, and in this paper I submit that, for Nietzsche, the classical opposition between the human and the animal is the most basic and the most pernicious, for it undergirds the oppositional hierarchy between rationality and irrationality that has turned human life against itself. I draw primarily from Nietzsche's second "Untimely Meditation" and from a passage from Daybreak in order to make the case that, for Nietzsche, we must reject any facile ontological opposition between human beings and non-human animals and that we must recognize and live in consonance with the "animal" conditions of our existence: human beings must recuperate and reintegrate rather than suppress their "animality" in order to thrive. For Nietzsche, we can say that virtue is a certain cultivated balance between our "humanity" and our "animality."

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> *We do not regard the animals as moral beings. But do you suppose the animals regard us as moral beings? – An animal which could speak said: 'Humanity is a prejudice of which we animals at least are free.'*
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> —Nietzsche *Daybreak*, a333

Nietzsche principally takes up a radical question: what is the *value* of our prevailing system of *values*? What are our values *really* worth? "What are our evaluations and moral tables really worth? What is the outcome of their rule? For whom? In relation to what? Answer: for life" (Nietzsche 1967, 148). Thus, for Nietzsche the only thing of real, ultimate value—the only thing that is truly an "end-in-itself"—is *life* itself; more precisely, it is the *becoming* of life (for life indeed *is* becoming); it is the unrestrained striving and growth—the self-willing and "self-overcoming"—of life, the nutritive and expressive labor of drives and instincts, the respiration of vital and creative energies, the full bloom and vigor of sensuous, animate existence. All of our values, then, are to be evaluated with respect to life: those values that serve and enhance life—those values that truly enable us to flourish, or those that enable us to live in consonance with life rather than in contradiction with it—are those that are to be affirmed and cultivated, while those that burden rather than liberate our lives and that therefore turn us against life, those that lead to exhaustion and decay—or those that are symptomatic of exhaustion and decay—are to be exposed as such and, hopefully someday, overcome. Nietzsche argues that our present values—and that the whole system of metaphysical oppositions on which they are predicated—have in fact perverted our better instincts; they have turned us against life.

Thus, I would submit that Nietzsche is primarily concerned with the conditions of *good living*, and this qualifies Nietzsche as a thinker of *virtue*, a thinker of human *flourishing* (*eudaimonia*). Here, I emphasize the term "*human,*" for any thinking of ethics—any thinking of what it means to live a good life—always presupposes an understanding of what the term "human" means, which is to say an understanding of what it means *to be* "human" in contradistinction to other forms of life. Thus, ethics always and from the very beginning draws some kind of distinction between human beings and other animals, and (following Derrida) we might go so far as to say that this very thinking of the human-animal distinction (whether or not it is ever made explicit) is not only at the basis of ethics but at the basis of philosophy itself. In short, any account of "the good life" is never, in fact, an account of "*the*" good life but always only an account of the good life *for* a particular kind of being. Philosophers have always offered accounts of "the good life," but we must always ask: the good life *for whom*? And of course the answer is usually the good life for *human beings*. Thus, how we interpret the being of the human being—and how we draw or interpret the distinction(s) between human beings and non-human beings—will always direct (and will have always already directed) our idea of morality or conception of good living.

The kind of morality that Nietzsche generally opposes—the kind of morality that privileges reflection over sensibility, calculative thinking over instinct, self-presence over "forgetfulness," abstract autonomy over "heteronomy," etc.—is essentially predicated on a *hierarchical opposition* between human beings and other animals. Once we define "man" as a "rational animal" in opposition to all other, presumably "non-rational" animals, then all the rest follows: the good life for man will

consist in the fullest development and exercise of *reason* and (since reason "obviously" cannot bear any relation to *un*reason) will be as far removed from "animality"—as far removed from everything non-rational, from everything instinctual, sensuous and unconscious—as possible. Thus, Nietzsche's moral philosophy is fundamentally directed against this opposition between "the human" and "the animal" and against all of the other metaphysical oppositions that attend to and perpetuate it.

For Nietzsche, traditional metaphysics is a "mobile army" of *hierarchical value-oppositions*, a "science" that operates according to a particular binary logic: it posits a set of two terms (say, rationality and irrationality) that appear to be mutually exclusive and then takes up the question: how can the one emerge from the other? Since these two terms are *ex hypothesi* mutually exclusive, it follows that one could not possibly emerge from the other and must have a wholly other source. Now, the terms under consideration are never "neutral": one is always tacitly valued over the other (e.g., rationality is valued over irrationality), and it is precisely this privileged term that is accorded a "higher" source and place in the order of Being. Thus, rationality, for example, could not possibly have its source in irrationality, and it then becomes *hierarchically* opposed to irrationality: irrationality refers to and follows upon everything base, everything "brute" and chaotic, everything bodily or sensible, while rationality is handed down from on high; it is the gift and signature of our Creator. As Nietzsche puts it:

> Almost all the problems of philosophy once again pose the same form of question as they did two thousand years ago: how can something originate in its opposite, for example rationality in irrationality, the sentient in the dead, logic in unlogic, disinterested contemplation

> in covetous desire, living for others in egoism, truth in error? Metaphysical philosophy has hitherto surmounted this difficulty by denying that the one originates in the other and assuming for the more valued thing a miraculous source in the very being and kernel of the 'thing-in-itself' (1996, 12).

Thus, whether we say that it is "God" or "The Form of the Good" or the "thing-in-itself," each privileged term in these pairs of oppositions is granted a *pure*, secure place in the order of things, a place that ontologically *transcends* its opposite, a place in eternity. Now, Nietzsche casts suspicion on all of the oppositions that philosophy has taken for granted. Why in fact do we assume these oppositions? Why do we suppose that rationality is opposed to irrationality? Nietzsche suggests that these oppositions do not obviously carve the world at its joints, for our *values* primarily motivate these apparently "neutral" ontological oppositions: we posit rationality as really opposed to irrationality so as to *indemnify* the former against the latter, so as to maintain the "purity" of the former.

Nietzsche's "radical" question, then, is this: why do we have these values and what are these values in the end really worth? Nietzsche argues that these value-oppositions constitute the foundation of all of our systems of morality, for these systems have traditionally elevated to divinity rationality over irrationality, disengaged calculation over sensibility, the Absolute over the situated or perspectival, etc; and for Nietzsche precisely these hierarchical oppositions have led to—and are themselves symptoms of—decline, for they essentially say "No" to everything this-worldly, "No" to everything wrapped around "this mortal coil:" "No" to everything sensuous and en-

gaged, "No" to everything grounded in the immediacies and possibilities of concrete lived experience.

In short, Nietzsche rejects oppositional thinking. We know that Nietzsche accords ontological primacy to *becoming,* and this means that reality necessarily confounds and overspills all of our conceptual binaries. Reality is organized along *ambiguous*, shifting boundaries and orders of *gradation*, *not* along clear joints of articulation or according to poles of opposition. "The fluidity of all concepts, types and species" and the "lack of any cardinal distinction between man and animal" are doctrines that Nietzsche considers to be "true but deadly" (1997a, §9, 112). Why deadly? They are "deadly" only insofar as they overturn traditional frameworks of Western thought, but these frameworks are in fact founded in forms of weakness, and I would say that for Nietzsche some "deadly truths"—perhaps like some "noble lies"—are necessary for human thriving.

Oppositional thinking fails to honor (and indeed represses and distorts) the complexities that we live; it tears into binaries what we live as fluid, ambiguous, multiple and intertwined, and indeed it does so at our own peril. Now, I do not think it is arbitrary that Nietzsche emphasizes the "lack of any cardinal distinction between man and animal," for (as I suggested above) the supposed *opposition* between human beings and non-human animals is perhaps the source of all of our other hierarchical oppositions, all of our "oppositions of values;" at the very least it is implicated in them. This is perhaps clearest in the case of the supposed opposition between rationality and irrationality, for rationality has always been considered to be an exclusively human faculty; conversely, everything "irrational" has always fallen on the side of the "animal." Nietzsche, again, repudiates any such opposition between human beings and other animals,

and in *Daybreak* (1997b, 125) he claims that rationality came into the world "irrationally." Likewise, "humanity" (as every scientist now agrees) came into existence through "animality." Irrationality always contaminates and conditions rationality, and our animality always contaminates and conditions what is "human" in us. Thus, for Nietzsche the "human" not only has its source in the "animal" but can never totally extricate itself from its animality, and it is precisely the attempt to do so that has made us human beings "sick;" it has made us not into better humans but into weak, burdened, alienated and repressed animals, into animals that have only become estranged from—and in no way superior to—our very animality; we human animals have become dangerously out of touch with the inescapable "animal" conditions of our life. Traditional moral philosophers begin from an assumed opposition between human beings and animals such that the good life for a human being is thought to be one that transcends animality. Nietzsche's idea of human flourishing, on the contrary, takes its point of departure from the fundamental *continuity* between humans and animals. For so long we have looked in the mirror and seen the image of God, and for Nietzsche it is precisely this chimera of our own divinity that needs to be exorcised.

Now, I hasten to underscore the following point: that Nietzsche rejects any *opposition* between humans and other animals does not mean he denies that there are important *differences* between them; as I will elaborate below, he certainly thinks that there are deep differences between humans and other animals; but it is wrong (and indeed dangerous or unhealthy) to drive such differences into *oppositions*; conversely, it is wrong to think that the continuity between humans and animals effaces any differences between them. Nietzsche does not (in a

reactionary and perhaps "romantic" vein) wholly privilege the "irrational" over the "rational" or the "animal" over the "human." Nietzsche truly rejects oppositional thinking, and this means that he does not simply *invert* our traditional hierarchical oppositions. Nietzsche's claim that rationality originates in "irrationality" does not reduce rationality to irrationality, nor does it elevate irrationality over rationality: it only brings rationality back down to earth. On the same score, Nietzsche's idea of human flourishing is indeed one that calls for the *recuperation* of our animality; Nietzsche calls for the cultivation of all that is non-rational (and hence of all that is, in a certain sense, "non-moral") in us, but this does not mean that he calls for a total regression to animal immediacy. Nietzsche does not argue that we should seek to retreat to some pure, prelapsarian animal "state of nature" but rather that we need to cultivate a certain *balance* between what is "animal" and what is "human" in us; he only rejects those moralities that posit the "human good" as absolutely removed from everything hitherto considered to be "animal," for such moralities naturally place "the good" beyond this world, beyond carnal life, and they therefore only devalue and repress what we always already live.

Nietzsche argues, then, that we must recuperate our animality only so that we may achieve a *healthier* balance between what is inexpugnably animal and what is distinctly human in us. Another way to put this point is that Nietzsche is not an "irrationalist," for he is only critical of *excessive* rationality, of the excesses of a kind of febrile "rational*ism*" that stifles active, involved living. I would submit that this balance between the animal and the human—which is broadly a balance between "instinct" and reflection—is precisely Nietzsche's idea of virtue (or *phronesis*). Thus, I would say that thinking *together* the continuity and differences between human beings

and other animals is central to Nietzsche's ethical project, and it is precisely this thinking—and the idea of phronesis or of human flourishing that follows from it—that Nietzsche takes up at length in his second *Untimely Meditation* ("On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life"), a meditation that opens with and proceeds from a discussion of a particular difference between human beings and other animals: *thematic* memory, or *historical* consciousness.

In the second *Untimely Meditation*, Nietzsche posits an absence of historical consciousness—which is to say, an absence of any robust, thematic sense of time and becoming—as emblematic of "the animal:"

> Consider the cattle, grazing as they pass you by: they do not know what is meant by yesterday or today, they leap about, eat, rest, digest, leap about again, and so from morn till night and from day to day, fettered to the moment and its pleasure or displeasure, and thus neither melancholy nor bored. This is a hard sight for man to see; for, though he thinks himself better than the animals because he is human, he cannot help envying them their happiness… (1997a, §1, 60).

For Nietzsche, most non-human animals are "blissfully" absorbed in the present: they are fettered to the moment, which means that they are *un*fettered to the past and future; and this also means (among other things) that reflection does not disrupt the rhythm of their of being and, moreover, that no exertion of reflection is required to carry on this rhythm; this means that here consciousness does not (and need not) interfere in the unfolding of life; it does not take it up and carry it forward, nor does it threaten to arrest or repress it. "[T]he animal," Nietzsche

writes, "lives *unhistorically*: for it is contained in the present, like a number without any awkward fraction left over" (1997a, §1, 61). When consciousness does not intervene - when reflection does not ruin the unmediated, plenary fullness of each moment - life unfolds from one moment to the next without interruption and without effort; it inhales, it exhales, it grows, it strives and it dies without *thought* (and certainly without memory); in a word, "the animal" is forever *forgetful*: it becomes without awareness of its becoming: animal-being *is* becoming, the uninhibited movement of life. Thus, the condition of the animal is emblematic of our Edenic repose in the present, of that time before we became present to ourselves and to each other and felt the first blush of shame, of that time before the power of reflection expelled us from the slumber of paradise and made us sleepless, of that time before we became "human."

For Nietzsche, living is not a problem for most forms of animal life; it is only a problem for those peculiar animals burdened with reflection and temporality, those animals who say not only "I am" but also necessarily at the same time "I have been" and "I will be," those "clever" (albeit "unhappy") animals who relate themselves to themselves, stretched between the past and the future. This is why Nietzsche begins his second *Untimely Meditation*—which is at its core a meditation on the relationship between forgetfulness (or "unhistorical feeling") and reflection (or historical knowledge) necessary for human thriving—with a discussion on precisely this difference between human beings and (presumably most) non-human animals: historical-knowing, or *awareness* of becoming. We see, then, that animality is central to Nietzsche's thinking of the good life (especially in the second *Untimely Meditation*, but in many other places as well), that Nietzsche's thinking of human flourishing is also always a thinking of "the animal," always

a thinking of the irrecusable non-rational underside of moral life. Nietzsche's attention to animality is at heart an attention to what is unthought or suppressed in what we often take for granted as clear and necessary moral and metaphysical truths.

The above distinction between the animal and the human frames Nietzsche's account of the future task of human thinking and dwelling. In the second *Untimely Meditation*, Nietzsche posits that a certain measure of forgetfulness—or that a certain capacity to "feel unhistorically"—is necessary for life and action, and this is why animal life proceeds happily, without a question mark; but we human beings have largely lost this forgetfulness and suffer from a "malady of history": an indigestible surfeit of historical consciousness or reflective knowing that arrests growth and that estranges us from the vital task of living: the task of liberated thinking and desiring, the task of self-overcoming. Thus, for Nietzsche it is precisely an *excess* of that which distinguishes us from animals that has, in a sense, sunk us lower than animals. We *know* life and cease to live it, which is to say that we know *too much*, that all of our vaunted knowledge has ceased to serve life and has turned against it. Paradoxically, we must, then, relearn how to forget in order to move forward.

To feel historically is to feel the flux of becoming; to feel unhistorically is to forget becoming, to lose oneself in immediacy. Our power to feel historically has overwhelmed (and we might say repressed) our capacity to feel unhistorically, but I hasten to underscore that for Nietzsche we cannot simply forfeit the former in order to reclaim and affirm the latter. Health and growth always require homeostasis, and Nietzsche is clear that human life requires a *balance* of recollection and forgetfulness—a balance of reflection and "blind" passion—in order to thrive.

For Nietzsche, life is indeed "higher" than knowledge, but it does not follow that we can (or ought to) abandon knowledge in order to live. A certain degree of forgetfulness is not opposed to wakefulness but is the very condition of it, for what truly opposes wakeful living is, indeed, an excessive, hyper-vigilant consciousness. Thus, Nietzsche writes that "there is a degree of sleeplessness, of rumination, of the historical sense, which is harmful and ultimately fatal to the living thing, whether this living thing be a man or a people or a culture" (1997a, §1, 62). Insomnia is not supreme wakefulness but, on the contrary, degenerate wakefulness, and it quickly takes its toll on the health of an organism. There is no real action and no real future without "forgetting." Forgetting is always "fore-getting": a pre-reflective movement toward the future. But humanity cannot simply regress to a pure kind of animal immediacy, for we have indeed been exiled from the Garden of Eden. Thus, Nietzsche is clear that human life needs an *appropriate* sense history or measure of reflection; it needs *just that measure* of knowledge and reflection that can be "digested," appropriated or "turned into blood."

For Nietzsche an excessive consciousness *arrests* and, in the end, suppresses activity and commitment; it is, indeed, a dis-ease peculiar to human beings, for only human beings can become so conscious that they repress and estrange themselves from the very "unconscious," non-rational or "animal" elements of their being. This peculiar dis-ease—this hyperpyrexia of consciousness—etiolates our instincts or saps us of our capacity to *act instinctually*. Nietzsche calls for the rehabilitation of our capacity to act instinctually, but what exactly does this mean? It does *not* mean that we simply act out our every whim. As we have seen, Nietzsche does not abandon rationality in favor of some kind of "anything goes" irrationalism: he

argues for a certain mean between reflection and forgetfulness, for without a certain measure of reflection *appropriate* action is impossible, but without a certain measure of "forgetfulness" *all* activity—and especially moral activity—is also impossible:

> As he who acts is, in Goethe's words, always without a conscience, so is he also always without knowledge; he forgets most things so as to do one thing, he is unjust towards what lies behind him, and he recognizes the rights only of that which is now to come into being and no other rights whatever (1997a, §1, 64).

For Nietzsche, an action must follow upon a certain kind of "blindness" (or "forgetfulness"); that is, every action is necessarily an "oblivion" (or exclusion) of other possibilities, and our thrust toward the future is necessarily a certain rupture with the past and present. I can never throw myself into a certain task or project if I do not leave others behind; the *instant* of every decision—and every decision is indeed a *de*-cision, which is to say a "bracketing" of other possibilities that enables one to be taken up and carried out—always happens without (or beyond) *reflection*. Reasons may often seem to precede actions, but actions never *really* follow upon reasons, for an action is only possible on the basis of a certain forgetfulness—a certain non-knowing—without which I would be stymied, or without which there would be no *clearing* or *presencing* of possibilities in the first place. This is precisely what Kierkegaard means when he says that "instant of decision if madness:" Every act is an unreflective (or pre-reflective) movement of commitment, and this means that our actions are never truly mediated by reasons, principles, calculations, or categorical imperatives; they are, in a certain sense, "unjustifiable" (hence "unjust") because they cannot be deduced from a series of premises (or precepts).

Thus, without a certain measure of forgetfulness—and let us not forget that forgetfulness is, for Nietzsche, emblematic of "animality"—we would have no freedom to act; we would be frozen in the plenum of Parmenidean Being. The human being is, indeed, always already ahead of itself, always in some way comported toward future possibilities; but this comportment toward the future requires a certain suspension of the past and the present, which is to say a certain blindness, a certain "fore-getfullness."

Nietzsche does not think that we can live entirely without reflection, but we cannot really live *reflectively* either. Thus, we need to know *when* to reflect and *when* to act – that is, we need to develop an *instinct* for appropriate action - but excessive reflection enfeebles our capacity to act and eventually immobilizes us. Excessive reflection is, again, precisely what Nietzsche resists, and Nietzsche's call for the recuperation of our ("animal") instincts is only intended to curtail the excesses of Modern rationality. We see, then, that for Nietzsche thinking can turn against, weaken and pervert the vital conditions of its own existence. Thus, excessive reflection estranges us from our instincts, and this means nothing other than that it estranges us from life itself.

Only a delusional idea of what it means to be human—only a tradition that *opposes* human rationality to everything "animal" or "instinctual" and that therefore posits human flourishing as the transcendence of everything animal or as the severe restraint of everything instinctual—leads us to think (and indeed to "live") otherwise. Such a view leads us to think *against* life. Instinctual activity, then, is not the abandonment of thought but the reintegration of thought into life; in short, it means non-rational (or pre-rational) *comportment*; it means a *skillful* or

cultivated responsiveness to the exigencies of our lived situations. Thus, Nietzsche claims that "unconsciousness belongs to any kind of perfection" (1967, 234) and that "genius resides in instinct," for "one acts perfectly only when one acts instinctively" (1967, 242). For Nietzsche, it is morally imperative that we develop and follow our vital instincts so that reflection does not become the "gravedigger" of all activity and commitment. This does not mean, again, that we forfeit reflection: it only means that reflection must serve rather than smother life, and it means that to thrive in the world—to live a truly "good" life—it is necessary not to *live* reflectively, for reflection is only ever a prelude to the time when reflection is no longer necessary.

That perfect activity is "instinctual" activity means that genuine, healthy moral agency does not need to search after or demonstrate its own justification; it need not (and must not) follow upon some sort of utilitarian, contractual or dialectical calculus; the subject's "reasons" have become so deeply in-corporated into his sensibilities that he is without "reason," which is to say without consciousness of his motivations. Modern rationality, however, has discouraged and stifled this kind of moral comportment; it defines an action as morally justified only insofar as it has been tried before a tribunal of pure reason or passed through dialectical mediation, only insofar as it has been legislated on the basis of some antecedent internal calculation. For Nietzsche, however, "real" morality—or genuine moral character—consists in instinctual comportment:

> The appearance of moral scruples (in other words: the becoming-conscious of the values by which one acts) betrays a kind of sickliness; strong ages and peoples do not reflect on their rights, on the principles by which they act, on their insights and reasons. Becoming-

> conscious is a sign that real morality, i.e., instinctive certainty in actions, is going to the devil (1967, 228).

Nietzsche argues, then, that morality *as such* is not solely based on rules or duties or on a conceptual, discursive understanding of rights, goods, and "oughts"; he argues that the incessant search for rational moral principles and categories is neither the condition nor the seal of moral development but rather the symptom of a moral *crisis*, for one only seeks or formulates principles when one no longer knows how to live at all. Socrates represents the pinnacle of such a moral crisis because he relentlessly seeks and demands universal definitions of moral concepts, and for him an action is not morally justified if it does not proceed from a conscious understanding of such definitions. Thus, it is quite natural that Socrates often "paralyzes" his interlocutors; he reduces so many of his interlocutors to *aphonia* and *aporia*, and he is therefore appropriately compared to a stingray in the *Meno* (Meno perhaps knew the nature of virtue of perfectly well—which is to say, *instinctually*—before Socrates detained and interrogated him). Like Socratic *aporia*, such excessive reflection—or the restless demand for rational mediation—incapacitates us; it arrests active living and renders us less responsive to the immediacies (or to the unmediated and immanent demands and situations) with which life confronts us.

What, then, becomes of *responsibility* and what, more precisely, does the recuperation of our instincts *entail*? As I discussed above, Nietzsche does not argue for some sort of reversion to subjectivism; on this score, he lambastes the subjectivism of those "moralists" who take "beautiful feelings" or their "heaving bosoms" for arguments (1967, 223, 232). Thus, the rehabilitation of our "instincts" does not validate any subjec-

tive, capricious "impression" we may have; it is a kind of *phronesis*: a *practice* through which we develop and hone our pre-reflective sense of which "impressions" are "valid" so that we may better comport ourselves in the world. Thus, for Nietzsche everything is certainly *not* permitted:

> It goes without saying that I do not deny—unless I am a fool—that many actions called immoral ought to be avoided and resisted, or that many called moral ought to be done and encouraged—but I think the one should be encouraged and the other avoided for *other reasons than hitherto*. We have to *learn to think differently*—in order at last, perhaps very late on, to attain even more: *to feel differently* (1997b, 103).

It is clear that Nietzsche does not embrace a kind of facile, wholesale rejection of *all* standard moral values (a la Raskolnikov); he only argues that we need to put our sound values on a new footing, that our understanding of which actions ought to be performed and which resisted needs to be restored to *instinct*, and thus our performance of right actions or resistance to wrong ones needs to become *instinctual*. Nietzsche, then, does not reject *responsibility*; he only rejects a particular (albeit entrenched) notion of it. For Nietzsche, responsibility does not consist in the rational legislation of an action, but rather in a certain cultivated or sedimented *responsiveness* to life. Responsibility means *response*-ability or appropriate, pre-reflective comportment toward lived situations and possibilities.

Thus, for Nietzsche the future task of human thinking and living is to enact a stance between the nearly total forgetfulness of "the animal" and the excessive, sleepless consciousness of the modern human being. Nietzsche, again, does not call for

a *reversion* to animality but does indeed call for a certain *recuperation* of our animal nature. We might say that the kind of forgetfulness that characterizes a certain traditional rationalism—the kind of forgetfulness that characterizes an impaired or lost capacity to forget—is precisely humanity's forgetfulness of a certain kind of "animal wisdom."

This is perhaps why we find so many animal metaphors in Nietzsche's thought, and this is why it is not arbitrary that Nietzsche employs such a metaphor in order to express the future task of human thinking. I am here referring to the "bird metaphor" that Nietzsche offers in *Daybreak* in order to prefigure the thinker to-come:

> In the midst of the ocean of becoming we awake on a little island no bigger than a boat, we adventurers and birds of passage, and look around us for a few moments: as sharply and as inquisitively as possible, for how soon may a wind not blow us away or a wave not sweep across the little island, so that nothing more is left of us! But here, on this little space, we find other birds of passage and hear of others still who have been here before – and thus we live a precarious minute of knowing and divining, amid joyful beating of wings and chirping with one another, and in spirit we adventure out over the ocean, no less proud than the ocean itself (1997b, 157).

This new breed of thinker is here compared with a migratory bird, a creature that temporarily alights on little islands amidst the "ocean of becoming," a creature that knows when to keep its place and when to take flight. For Nietzsche, the art of thinking and living involves a certain flexibility or fluidity of

thought and agency, a renewed attunement to the ebb and flow of becoming; it is an art of knowing how to remember and how to forget, how to reflect and how to act *at the right time*, and (as we have seen) this is the central idea of Nietzsche's second *Untimely Meditation*:

> Cheerfulness, the good conscience, the joyful deed, confidence in the future—all of them depend, in the case of the individual as of a nation…on one's being just as able to forget *at the right time* as to remember *at the right time*; on the possession of an *instinct* for sensing when it is necessary to feel historically and when unhistorically (1997a, §1, 63, emphasis added).

Each island on which we birds of passage alight—like an old concept or a fresh insight—is a relatively stable though always precarious and beleaguered foothold amidst the chaos—the winds and tides—of becoming. Migratory birds have no fixed abodes, no permanent attachments; indeed, should they ever take up permanent residence they would quickly perish; they must know when to settle and when to take leave in order to live; their lives have and require no absolute foundations: they follow—they move with and are moved by—the winds, the waves, and the seasons; but this does not mean that they are ever without *ground*: such migratory birds cannot, after all, remain in flight indefinitely, nor can they swim. They cannot escape into orbit or forever soar above the sea of becoming, but they also do not drown in it. They have a hold on the world, however transient and variable this hold is and must be. It must also be stressed that the courses of their settlements and flights are never capricious: such birds follow the wisdom of their instincts and the appropriately respond to the contingencies of life.

And so it is—or so it must be—with the thinker to-come. This thinker must cultivate a kind of avian wisdom; he must abandon himself to wherever thought takes him, which is to say he must hone and follow his instincts rather than repress them; he must subordinate thinking and knowing to life or sublimate thinking and knowing into living; he must learn when to stake his place and when to take wing, when to remember and when to forget. And this is precisely that flexibility I mentioned above: human beings need ground on which to stand and build, but this ground is never unassailable and can never be permanent. If humanity ever throws down roots into the earth it will surely wither away with them. All of this is to say that this new breed of thinker thinks (and lives) in *consonance* with becoming rather than against it; but this does not mean that these new thinkers simply dissolve themselves in becoming, that they submerge themselves in the sea or scatter themselves to the winds; rather, they ride the waves to new and ever farther shores. For Nietzsche, the task of thinking is to *organize* the chaos of the world and in our-selves, not to *revel* or perish in it. We might say, then, that this task really is a kind of *phronesis*: the cultivation of a *mean*, a virtue of *comportment*. The human being, again, cannot retreat from becoming: he must live *with* it (that is to say, *from* it, or *according to* it), but this does not mean that he must give all of himself over to it: the former path is barred from us, and the latter path only leads to decay. To reengage oneself with becoming is neither to escape into disengaged theoretical reflection nor to abandon oneself to abject chaos or irrationality; it is to take up and ceaselessly renew a stand amidst the flux of becoming and to "digest" this flux rather than be digested by it, to sublimate this flux into what we call knowledge and a "self." This is one sense in which human life is and must be "horizonal:" neither total forgetfulness nor absolute knowledge, but rather the one bounded by the other is

necessary for human life. Arrested in the past, there is no self to come, no future; arrested in the present, there is no self with a sense of becoming, no self with the sense of a past or future, indeed no self at all. We must, again, negotiate between total forgetfulness (absorption in the present) on the one hand, and an excess of historical knowledge and reflection (absorption in the past and the "blooming, buzzing confusion" of becoming) on the other. For Nietzsche, the cultivation of this equilibrium is the art of good living; it is culture as self-culture, and self-culture is always self-overcoming, always returning to oneself as a self yet to come.

In closing, I would not deny that other animals might in fact possess many of the features that Nietzsche reserves for human beings, but this is beside the point; the point is that philosophers have always in some way (and indeed in many ways) *opposed* human beings to the rest of the natural, animal order of things and that the idea of the good life that has followed from this opposition is one that valorizes all that is considered to be distinctly human; but this kind of view—this system of values—has only made us into sick, unhappy animals, for animals we are indeed. We do not cease to be "animal" because we oppose ourselves to animals; all we do is *repress* our "animality." The art of good, human living, then, is the cultivation of a certain balance between our "animality" and our "humanity;" it is neither the repression of the former nor the deification of the latter. For Nietzsche, ethics can no longer begin from an *opposition* between the "animal" and the "human;" this means that we must reintegrate the animal into the human, but this does *not* mean that we should reduce the human to the animal or that we should somehow withdraw into animality (for to do so is neither possible nor desirable); this only means that we must bring the "human"—that we must bring ourselves—back

down to earth. Forgetfulness (the suspension of knowledge and historical consciousness) *and* an adequate sense of history or measure of reflection are both integral to flourishing as a human being. Nietzsche does not think that we can (or should) regress to our pre-human animality, but for Nietzsche there is nevertheless something that we can learn from animals, a reserve of animal wisdom that, yes, we must not forget. Insofar as our capacity to forget is one vestige of our animality—or insofar as instinctual activity is one valence of continuity between human beings and animals—then we must become a little more animal and a little less human, for we have, indeed, become "*all too* human."

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