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From the contemplative to the unbalanced intellect: Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Piaget

Do intelecto contemplativo ao desequilibrado: Schopenhauer, Nietzsche e Piaget

Tristan Guillermo Torriani

Professor Doutor do Núcleo Geral Comum (NGC) da Faculdade de Ciências Aplicadas (FCA) da UNICAMP

E-mail: tristan.torriani@fca.unicamp.br

Abstract: The discernment between good and evil can be rightfully considered the central concern of Philosophy, but its pursuit requires a complex combination of mature cognitive, linguistic and social skills. In contrast to Religion or Theology, philosophers are expected to overcome confusion by presenting tenable positions in a purely logical form that relinquishes any appeal to authority or emotions. This places high expectations upon the intellect, i.e., our ability to use discursive reason. Schopenhauer argued that Philosophy was primarily theoretical in a contemplative sense, therefore not related to guiding action or building character. While the Will was active, the intellect would be passive and instrumental. Nietzsche subordinated the intellect to the body and proposed a physiological criterion to assess philosophies. Piaget studied the development of intelligence in stages by examining the child's constructive interaction with things and persons. The intellect is in permanent disequilibrium and must struggle to adapt continually.

Keywords: Intellect; Schopenhauer; Nietzsche; Piaget; Bowlby; Herder.

Resumo: O discernimento entre o bem e o mal pode ser considerado a preocupação central da Filosofia, mas seu cultivo requer uma combinação complexa de habilidades cognitivas, linguísticas e sociais complexas. Diferentemente da religião ou da Teologia, espera-se que os filósofos superem a confusão ao apresentarem posições sustentáveis forma puramente lógica, sem apelos à autoridade ou às emoções. Isto deposita altas expectativas sobre o intelecto, a nossa habilidade de usar a razão discursiva. Schopenhauer defendia que a Filosofia seria primariamente teórica ou contemplativa, portanto não orientaria a conduta ou o caráter. Enquanto a Vontade seria ativa, o intelecto seria passivo e instrumental. Nietzsche subordinou o intelecto ao corpo e propôs um critério fisiológico para avaliar filosofias. Piaget investigou o desenvolvimento da inteligência em estádios examinando a interação construtiva da criança com coisas e pessoas. O intelecto permanece em desequilíbrio e deve se adaptar continuamente.

Palavras-chave: Intelecto; Schopenhauer; Nietzsche; Piaget; Bowlby; Herder.

Introduction

The distinction between theoretical and practical Philosophy has been drawn in many different ways throughout history, thereby generating a complicated struggle that still divides thinkers at the deepest level. On the one hand, for those convinced that cognition can, to at least a certain degree, operate autonomously in relation to passions and desires, it was important to be able to affirm the primacy of theory. On the other hand, opponents of pure contemplation have for a long time

tried to show how thought itself is unthinkable if it were not seen as an activity. However, if thinking is conceived as an act performed by persons with free will, normative and conative issues arise. Maybe there are thoughts that could, but should not, or ought not, to be thought. A practical conception of knowledge automatically suggests a normative Epistemology, whereas a theoretical view would be more akin to scientific or naturalized Epistemology.

When we look back at Plato's dialogues, it is easy to see that this confusion was at least in part caused by his weaving together several strands of discourse available at his time, ranging from poetry to mathematics. In this way, Philosophy became a hybrid genre that sought to convert the intelligentsia of the day. However, it seems fair to claim that the most burning issue was the discussion concerning the possibility of imparting virtue and excellence by instruction. Later on, the dissemination of the concept of the fall of humanity in the Bible after eating the forbidden fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil did not significantly change the centrality of this moral concern. It is generally agreed that Socrates's dominant interest was practical, but that Plato convincingly drew attention to the contribution theory could provide to its analysis. However, it was the Good that remained the supreme value, with Truth as a means, and Beauty coming in third place. *Philagathia* (love of goodness) surpassed *philalethia* (love of truth) and *philokalia* (love of beauty) because, in the end, the very act of ranking requires a value judgment that cannot be reduced to a mere ascertainment of fact, truth or valid inference. It is fairly uncontroversial that *philokalia*, if put ahead of all, would lead to the sophists's preference for rhetorical flourishes over truth or sincerity. Historically, this has assured a subaltern role for Aesthetics. The dispute between practical and theoretical Philosophy is trickier though, because it could appear that the discernment of the good (or the best) would depend on our capacity to detect the truth. One could wonder whether something is "truly good", or "good in appearance only, but not in reality". But there are several theories of truth to choose from (correspondence, coherence, consensus) and this of itself invokes a practical decision informed by evaluative attitudes. Theoretical solutions at such a fundamental level in Philosophy do not and cannot occur in a vacuum or in a compartmentalized, value-free zone, but belong to the whole fabric of an organism's life. Therefore, regardless of what theory of truth were chosen to judge something's goodness, that judgment is necessarily predicated upon a prior normative decision. The proliferation of theoretical frameworks only heightens the sense that such decisions are not value-free. Moreover, scandals in science have overwhelmingly shown that without moral character, knowledge is misused and research is distorted. Commendable as it may be as a means to discern what is good with a certain degree of commitment to objectivity, *philalethia* (i.e., the scientific way of life in which the good is identified with the useful) is unfortunately insufficient and misleading.

The growing recognition of the normative and conative character of Philosophy has several inconvenient consequences, as it compromises the notion that the logical tools used to mediate differences of opinion are neutral. But to assert the contrary would misrepresent the history of philosophical debate. Major modern philosophers from Descartes, through Kant to Hegel and beyond developed their own styles of argumentation and analysis to further their purposes. Another inconvenience is that the commitment to objectivity becomes (or rather, is admitted to be, as it has always been) a matter of personal responsibility, and post-modernity has amply shown how often the temptation to equivocate prevails when the only thing that matters is to appear to have won a debate. Regrettably, the attempt to deny the normative and conative dimensions and to seek refuge from relativism in the hard sciences is neither wholly successful nor convincing because social conflicts remain unsolved in diverse societies and they inevitably affect institutions of higher learning. A further complication derives from the fashionable position concerning the alleged impossibility of overcoming value pluralism (I. Berlin, B. Williams, Ch. Taylor). When we capitulate in face of a variety of values, we condemn ourselves to a life of disorder and confusion, which is clearly bad. Traditionally, God was asserted as a supreme value, and people had to adjust one way or the other. Theoretical doubts were dismissed by practical demands, as is naturally to be expected. From a psychological perspective, this forced the Ego to acknowledge a Generalized Other (G. H. Mead) or a Superego (Freud) as a superior authority that set limits to what was acceptable behavior. The abolition of a higher Being to which sacred reverence is due produces individuals who are inherently incapable of disciplining themselves in the quest for some kind of transcendence. No wonder life becomes meaningless, for the intellect by itself cannot handle problems that require willing and judging. Proponents of the primacy of theoretical philosophy come dangerously close to intellectualism or intellectualization, in which excessive thinking is used to suppress uncomfortable emotions or to create an illusion of control over the external world.

In the following I would like to comment on how this progressive dissolution of theory into practice (the “decline and fall of intellectualism”) can be observed in passages¹ from Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Piaget, to the point that ‘practical philosophy’ becomes a redundant expression.

Schopenhauer’s Passive Concept of Intellect

Schopenhauer distinguished between two faculties within the intellect. The understanding (*Verstand*) provided intuitive knowledge. Reason (*Vernunft*) dealt in

¹ I have chosen three quotations, one for each author, in the original language and in English translation. Unfortunately, they are somewhat long, but are needed to substantiate my commentary.

abstract cognition. The four functions of the intellect were to (a) intuitively grasp external reality; (b) construct concepts from intuitive material; (c) judge situations; and (d) connect judgments deductively. Without the intellect's operations on concepts we could not think.

From a biological (and pre-evolutionary) standpoint, Schopenhauer recognized that the intellect emerged as a brain function already in the animal kingdom. However, it is in the human species that it became most noticeable. Moreover, he noted the great variation of its individual development (ontogeny) and attributed it to anatomical and physiological causes. Differences in cognitive development could be noted already at the level of a subject's intuitive understanding. At a higher level of abstraction, speed of reasoning and clarity of expression were reliable criteria to assess intelligence. Schopenhauer also realized that excessive intellectualization could indicate a mental health problem. The purpose of the intellect was not to reveal the secrets of the universe, but to assist in individual survival and in the reproduction of the species as needs became increasingly complex. The intellect (symbolized by the head) would emerge as the Will (symbolized by the heart) objectified itself and remains its tools at the metaphysical level. The intellect was also subordinate to the practical purposes of the individual (personal) will. Schopenhauer was forthright concerning the intellect's limitations and its propensity to speculative error. He tried to explain these shortcomings by its supposedly practical purpose. However, evolutionary psychology remains unclear even today as to the selective advantages (domination over habitat and social coordination) versus the costs (harder birth, greater nutritional need, etc.) of a larger brain.

Schopenhauer radicalized Kant self-critique of reason's limitations, but he also held back the prospects of action. As Santos notes,² Schopenhauer rejected the Kantian suggestion that human action could have a meaning that led beyond possible experience towards the noumenal world of things-in-themselves. He understood Kantian ethics to be disconnected from experience because of its transcendental or metaphysical character.

This pessimism has implications for what humans can expect to achieve with Philosophy. In § 53 of the Fourth Book of *The World as Will and Representation*, Schopenhauer submitted that for him Philosophy was always primarily theoretical, in other words, descriptive, as opposed to normative. He acknowledged that practical Philosophy contained serious subject matter, but argued that the ancient Greek motivation to build character ought to be abandoned, for that depended not on the intellect's abstract concepts, but on the deepest element of human nature.

² SANTOS, *A razão prática schopenhaueriana e a ação por máximas*.

Der letzte Theil unserer Betrachtung kündigt sich als der ernsteste an, da er die Handlungen der Menschen betrifft, den Gegenstand, der Jeden unmittelbar angeht, Niemanden fremd oder gleichgültig seyn kann, ja, auf welchen alles Andere zu beziehen, der Natur des Menschen so gemäß ist, daß er, bei jeder zusammenhängenden Untersuchung, den auf das Thun sich beziehenden Theil derselben immer als das Resultat ihres gesammten Inhalts, wenigstens sofern ihn derselbe interessirt, betrachten und daher diesem Theil, wenn auch sonst keinem andern, ernsthafte Aufmerksamkeit widmen wird. – In der angegebenen Beziehung würde man, nach der gewöhnlichen Art sich auszudrücken, den jetzt folgenden Theil unserer Betrachtung die praktische Philosophie, im Gegensatz der bisher abgehandelten theoretischen, nennen. Meiner Meinung nach aber ist alle Philosophie immer theoretisch, indem es ihr wesentlich ist, sich, was auch immer der nächste Gegenstand der Untersuchung sei, stets rein betrachtend zu verhalten und zu forschen, nicht vorzuschreiben. Hingegen praktisch zu werden, das Handeln zu leiten, den Charakter umzuschaffen, sind alte Ansprüche, die sie, bei gereifter Einsicht, endlich aufgeben sollte. Denn hier, wo es den Werth oder Unwerth eines Daseyns, wo es Heil oder Verdammniß gilt, geben nicht ihre todtten Begriffe den Ausschlag, sondern das Innerste Wesen des Menschen selbst, (...) Die Philosophie kann nirgends mehr thun, als das Vorhandene deuten und erklären, das Wesen der Welt, welches in concreto, d.h. als Gefühl, Jedem verständlich sich ausspricht, zur deutlichen, abstrakten Erkenntniß der Vernunft bringen, Dieses aber in jeder möglichen Beziehung und von jedem Gesichtspunkt aus. (W I, § 53, p. 357-358)

The last part of our work presents itself as the most serious, for it relates to the action of men, the matter which concerns every one directly and can be foreign or indifferent to none. It is indeed so characteristic of the nature of man to relate everything else to action, that in every systematic investigation he will always treat the part that has to do with action as the result or outcome of the whole work, so far, at least, as it interests him, and will therefore give his most serious attention to this part, even if to no other. In this respect the following part of our work would, in ordinary language, be called practical philosophy, in opposition to the theoretical, which has occupied us hitherto. But, in my opinion, all philosophy is theoretical, because it is essential to it that it should retain a purely contemplative attitude, and should investigate, not prescribe. To become, on the contrary, practical, to guide conduct, to transform character, are old claims, which with fuller insight it ought finally to give up. For here, where the worth or worthlessness of an existence, where salvation or damnation are in question, the dead conceptions of philosophy do not decide the matter, but the inmost nature of man himself, (...) Philosophy can never do more than interpret and explain what is given. It can only bring to distinct abstract knowledge of the reason the nature of the world which in the concrete, that is, as feeling, expresses itself comprehensibly to every one. This, however, it does in every possible reference and from every point of view (W I, § 53, p. 349-350).

This is disappointing. Schopenhauer renounces here to the Socratic-Platonic challenge of promoting and sustaining virtue or excellence in society. From the logical point of view, the problem is that to do so he resorts to a normative judgment by

using a deontic operator (*sollte*, ought). His defeatism goes beyond just ascertaining some supposed fact or checking a valid inference. He puts forward a practical conclusion about what philosophers should or ought to do. And his argument that it is unreasonable to expect that practical Philosophy contribute to moral culture is not convincing. On the contrary, although ethical and aesthetic ideas may generate only a contingent effect upon society, they can and do influence attitudes considerably when promoted by persons in position of authority. A classic example would be the 1960's counterculture, in which Leftist intellectuals and professors successfully accomplished a Nietzschean inversion or transvaluation of Western values. It is legitimate for practical Philosophy to base itself on the hope that its texts may have a socially constructive and progressive effect upon readers and listeners by stimulating not only their intellectual understanding of issues, but also by exploring their emotional dimension in an articulated way. Schopenhauer's view of the relation between the passive, contemplative intellect and the Will is unidirectional, as the former is a mere tool of the latter. His conclusions may be consistent with his premises, but they are unconvincing because they contradict our usual (perhaps naive) phenomenological experience of how our personal will and intellect interact. As my understanding becomes more refined, my desires are changed as well. And as my desires change, my intellectual interests are redirected. For Schopenhauer this cognitive and conative interplay is causally determined by the Will, not by us, and its phenomenologically counter-intuitive appearance is just an instance of self-deception.

If Schopenhauer had related the discursive intellect more tightly to linguistic behavior, it would have been harder for him to maintain the separation between the concepts of bodily and mental action. While the concept of bodily action can be understood without excessive complication as pertaining to bodily movement under a person's voluntary command, the conditions for the application of the concept of a mental act are much more controversial. The autophenomenology of thought (understood as mental action) may be the result of systematic self-deception. In other words, my mental acts may not be really produced by an autonomous self-consciousness, but by my body or by Schopenhauer's Will. However, mental activity can be conceptualized as a preparation for later physical expression in verbal and/or non-verbal language. Furthermore, it is not completely clear how much thought can be regarded as a purely mental action without any bodily and linguistic connection. Perhaps a view more oriented towards intersubjective construction of shared concepts and knowledge in language (as in social epistemology) could have given Schopenhauer more confidence in the intellect's power to grasp reality as it presents itself to us while remaining independent from us (I do not mean reality "in itself").

Nietzsche's Somatology, Visceralism and Meta-Axiology

Kant's critical warning concerning the limits of speculative reason set the stage for Schopenhauer's metaphysical voluntarism, in which the intellect came to be seen as the unconscious tool of the Will. Nietzsche took this process a step further by transitioning once and for all from the mind to the body and using physiological insight to put a check on unhealthy tendencies he identified in Western European civilization. According to Volker Caysa³, Nietzsche started to give increasing importance to the human body's role by the mid-1880's. His suspicion that spirituality could be seen as a mask for physiological conditions grew steadily, to the point that in his discussion of a merry science he suggested that it would be worth considering even Philosophy as a misunderstanding of the body. This led him to reject idealistic metaphysics, ascetic versions of Christianity, as well as formalistic ethical theories.

Nietzsche tried to overcome Cartesian dualism by distinguishing between a big reason (*grosse Vernunft*), which would be the Self located in the body, and a small reason (*kleine Vernunft*), which we usually identify with the conscious "I" (as distinguished from G. H. Mead's socialized "me"). Impelled by a similar anti-Cartesian motivation, Heidegger adopted this distinction in terms of an embodied body (*leibender Leib*) and a corporeal body (*Körperleib*). The latter is the small reason, an instrumentalized body that ensues from civilized society's artificial constraints. The corporeal body understands itself in scientific, materialistic concepts, and is unaware of any forces operating behind its consciousness. The embodied body corresponds to Nietzsche's big reason, in which body (*Leib*) and soul (*Seele*) are fused, and it alone, according to Heidegger, is the source of Being (*Seyn*).

Whereas the corporeal body's I believes to exist only in and for itself, the Self of the embodied body presents itself to the I instead as its negation (non-I). When the Self is experienced as an embodied body, the I becomes aware of its distinction into corporeal body (*Körper*) and spirit (*Geist*). The self-conscious I needs the Self to be an embodied body, not just a corpse (*Körper*). The embodied body determines our life but lies beyond our conscious rational control. On the contrary, the corporeal body is scientifically objectified and remains always accessible. This causes the embodied body to appear unconscious and pre-conceptual and not to be the actual foundation of the corporeal body's self-understanding that it is. The embodied body is cognitively, linguistically, temporally and ontologically prior to its corporeal counterpart. As a foundation, it cannot be understood by the corporeal body's rational frameworks and hence seems to it irrational, inaccessible, marginal and residual. But it can also be seen as a potential for higher mode of existence, i.e., a path to the overman.

While recognizing the importance of Heidegger's interpretation, Caysa does not agree that Nietzsche criticized the small reason from the point of view of

³ CAYSA, *Nietzsche Handbuch: Leben-Werk-Wirkung*.

Romantic sentimentality. The orientation towards the bodily self is not meant to become a return to Nature à la J.-J. Rousseau, but rather a way to reveal and correct the usually unhealthy motivation behind a universal reason that presumes to be able to exert dominion over the body. Caysa notes that Nietzsche was perfectly aware that a radical separation between bodily Self and conscious I would be unhelpful without the mediation of the language of discursive, small reason. Only by verbalising the distinction could we open our conscious I to an examination of the bodily Self, tear down the artificial separation between embodied and corporeal bodies, and find a new equilibrium. This would require an inversion in the relation of foundation. Not only the body, but also reason itself would be freed from narrow, technical, small reason. Nietzsche was not an irrationalist striving to abolish rationality altogether or to free the instrumentalized body (*Körper*) from reason in general. Both parts of reason (big and small) should collaborate to overcome intellectualization, self-alienation, and disease. The work of transhumanistic evolution to the overman would require the experimental reconstruction of the body. The higher body would leave a dead version of itself behind, but could grow into something stronger and new.

Gnostic dispisers of the body serve as the perfect foil for what Nietzsche is trying to overcome. He understands that their attitude is itself the result of physiological condition, and may not be even conscious or voluntary at all. But his Zarathustra challenges them nonetheless to consider that their small reason may not be the ultimate degree of self-consciousness.

„Leib bin ich und Seele“ — so redet das Kind. Und warum sollte man nicht wie die Kinder reden? Aber der Erwachte, der Wissende sagt: Leib bin ich ganz und gar, und Nichts ausserdem; und Seele ist nur ein Wort für ein Etwas am Leibe. Der Leib ist eine grosse Vernunft, eine Vielheit mit Einem Sinne, ein Krieg und ein Frieden, eine Heerde und ein Hirt. Werkzeug deines Leibes ist auch deine kleine Vernunft, mein Bruder, die du „Geist“ nennst, ein kleines Werk- und Spielzeug deiner grossen Vernunft. „Ich“ sagst du und bist stolz auf diess Wort. Aber das Grössere ist, woran du nicht glauben willst, — dein Leib und seine grosse Vernunft: die sagt nicht Ich, aber thut Ich. Was der Sinn fühlt, was der Geist erkennt, das hat niemals in sich sein Ende. Aber Sinn und Geist möchten dich überreden, sie seien aller Dinge Ende: so eitel sind sie. Werk- und Spielzeuge sind Sinn und Geist: hinter ihnen liegt noch das Selbst. Das Selbst sucht auch mit den Augen der Sinne, es horcht auch mit den Ohren des Geistes. Immer horcht das Selbst und sucht: es vergleicht, bezwingt, erobert, zerstört. Es herrscht und ist auch des Ich's Beherrscher. Hinter deinen Gedanken und Gefühlen, mein Bruder, steht ein mächtiger Gebieter, ein unbekannter Weiser — der heisst Selbst. In deinem Leibe wohnt er, dein Leib ist er. Es ist mehr Vernunft in deinem Leibe, als in deiner besten Weisheit. Und wer weiss denn, wozu dein Leib gerade deine beste Weisheit nöthig hat? Dein Selbst lacht über dein Ich und seine stolzen Sprünge. „Was sind mir diese Sprünge und Flüge des Gedankens? sagt es sich. Ein Umweg zu meinem Zwecke. Ich bin das Gängelband des Ich's und der Einbläser seiner Begriffe.“ (...) Das schaffende Selbst schuf

sich Achten und Verachten, es schuf sich Lust und Weh. Der schaffende Leib schuf sich den Geist als eine Hand seines Willens. Noch in eurer Thorheit und Verachtung, ihr Verächter des Leibes, dient ihr eurem Selbst. Ich sage euch: euer Selbst selber will sterben und kehrt sich vom Leben ab.⁴

"Body am I, and soul"—so saith the child. And why should one not speak like children? But the awakened one, the knowing own, saith: "Body am I entirely and nothing more; and soul is only the name of something in the body." The body is a big sagacity, a plurality with one sense, a war and a peace, a flock and a shepherd. An instrument of thy body is also thy little sagacity, my brother, which thou callest a "spirit"—a little instrument and plaything of thy big sagacity. "Ego," sayest thou, and art proud of that word. But the greater thing—in which thou are unwilling to believe—is thy body with its big sagacity; it saith not "ego," but doeth it. What the sense feeleth, what the spirit discerneth, hath never its end in itself. But sense and spirit would fain persuade thee that they are the end of all things: so vain are they. Instruments and plaything are sense and spirit: behind them there is still the Self. The Self seeketh with the eyes of the senses, it hearkeneth also with the ears of the spirit. Ever hearkeneth the Self, and seeketh; it compareth, mastereth, conquereth, and destroyeth. It ruleth, and is also the ego's ruler. Behind thy thoughts and feelings, my brother, there is a mighty lord, and unknown sage—it is called Self; it dwelleth in thy body, it is thy body. There is more sagacity in thy body than in thy best wisdom. And who then knoweth why thy body requireth just thy best wisdom? Thy Self laugheth at thine ego, and its proud prancings. "What are these prancings and flights of thought unto me?" it saith to itself. "A by-way to my purpose. I am the leading-string of the ego, and the prompter of its notions" (...). The creating Self created for itself esteeming and despising, it created for itself joy and woe. The creating body created for itself spirit, as a hand to its will. Even in your folly and despising ye each serve your Self, ye despisers of the body. I tell you, your very self wanteth to die, and turneth away from life⁵.

There are at least three major takeaway points from Nietzsche's contribution. The first is the possibility of what can be called Somatology, which is the intuitive listening (somatognosis) of the embodied, un-self-estranged, revitalized body. This does not purport to be knowledge in the usual scientific sense. For example, physicians who are also researchers may have acquired cutting edge knowledge of several physiological processes but give scarce attention to messages from their own bodies. Being concerned as they are with other persons's health, they neglect their own. This is not unusual. Nietzsche's Somatology explores this underrated autophenomenological dimension of life critically by scrutinizing possibly unhealthy conditions behind over-intellectualization.

The second point is what can be called Visceralism. Recent research has shown that the enteric system in our intestines has so many neural connections that it

4 NIETZSCHE. *Also Sprach Zarathustra* I, pp. 39-40.

5 NIETZSCHE. *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, pp. 32-33.

deserves to be considered our second brain⁶. What is more, the microbiome also plays a role, particularly influencing our mood. Our mind is not located only in the brain, the pineal gland, the heart, the spine or the gut, however. It is embodied throughout the whole body to greater or lesser degree. As a frequent sufferer of digestive problems, Nietzsche was keenly aware of the physiological dimension of intellectual life. Given the importance of nutrition in the Hippocratic tradition, the digestive metaphor for the acquisition of knowledge was familiar to the ancient Greeks and was used by Socrates near the beginning of Plato's *Protagoras* (313c). However, the important point is that visceral rejection of a philosophical perspective could now be taken as a kind of refutation that need not be strictly logical in the tradition of ancient Greek dialectics. Moreover, Nietzsche believed it possible to develop an ability to sense decadent or self-transcending physiology in a writer's text.

The third point is Nietzsche's concern, particularly in his genealogy of morality, with the value of value from a multidisciplinary approach, which would best be described as a Meta-Axiology. Contrary to the widespread stereotype, Nietzsche was not opposed to scientific investigation into human issues, but envisioned a combination of perspectives (both scientific, non-scientific, and perhaps even anti-scientific) that would overcome narrow and sterile dead-ends. The philosopher should be able to take stock of current scientific knowledge and provide leadership by establishing new values if necessary. Unhealthy attitudes, particularly those based on resentment characteristic of Left and Liberal politics or asceticism typical of moral Conservatism, should be avoided. In the end, although Nietzsche chided Luther for revitalizing faith and aborting the Renaissance, it is possible that his own attempt to obliterate slavish and resentful influences in European nations may yet contribute to rebooting Christianity in face of robust competitors such as Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, Secularism and Nihilism, none of which seem conducive to their continued existence and further advancement as identifiable nations.

Piaget's Genetic Epistemology

Jean Piaget mentions Nietzsche a couple of times during his critique of Heidegger in his book, *Insights and Illusions of Philosophy*, so he would have digressed had he discussed his ideas there more in depth. On the one hand, this is a pity because Piaget appreciated what he called Literary Psychology, in particular Proust. On the other hand, it is perhaps better so because it is likely that whatever access he had to Nietzsche's writings was to pre-critical editions. Regardless, Piaget's and Nietzsche's philosophical and psychological interests overlap more than one would expect. For example, Piaget is concerned with the intellect (intelligence) and acknowledges the

⁶ CYTOWIC, *The Pit In Your Stomach is Actually Your Second Brain*.

role of the body and action in the construction of cognitive schemata. During the first two years of a baby's life, he identified a sequence of necessary developmental moments, in which intelligence coordinates sensory and motor skills (hence the name 'sensorimotor stage'). Piaget considered this stage to be foundational for all further cognitive development, and since verbal language did not play a major role at that level, he remained skeptical of its importance, even for later stages.

From the philosophical point of view, Piaget struggled to develop a third way between Empiricism, which proposed a blank slate model of the mind, and Rationalism, which claimed that cognitive abilities were largely innate or at least pre-formed. After engaging with the facts his team of researchers gathered by conducting clinical interviews and experiments, he came to the conclusion that cognitive development was the result of an adaptive process that constantly sought to re-establish equilibrium within the subject. Adaptation of the organism to the environment would be a bidirectional process. On the one hand, the organism would absorb information from the environment (assimilation), while, on the other hand, it would also perform adjustments to the environment (accommodation). To manage this balancing act, Piaget needed to understand the mind as an active participant that would construct the epistemic subject's cognitive schemata (hence the term 'constructivism'). This assumption made Empiricism untenable. However, Rationalism's assumption that cognition was innate and that its development was pre-planned contradicted the variety of observed outcomes. As is now evident, Piaget's approach to philosophical problems can be considered naturalistic in that he sought to articulate conceptual reflection with systematic observation and experimentation. Theory could be revised or discarded according to what empirical evidence suggested to be more plausible.

This give-and-take between theory and data was resisted by philosophers interested primarily in conceptual analysis. Merleau-Ponty, for example, was also deeply committed to bringing the body into the very center of Philosophy. However, Piaget pointed out that Husserl's and Merleau-Ponty's lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*, i.e. a subjective, interpersonally shared, common and pre-scientific experience at the foundation of the phenomenology of the body) cannot be convincingly said to exist, much less pre-exist, or even survive, sensorimotor and later cognitive construction. Husserl's Phenomenology and Chomsky's Transformational Generative Grammar share the nativist assumptions of Descartes' Rationalism, and this hinders their ability to account for differential development. In spite of all their talk about intersubjectivity, Husserl and Merleau-Ponty remain centered in their own subjectivity, while it should be the other way around. As G. H. Mead had already shown, intersubjectivity is given first, in the experience of an Other, which then leads to the discovery of the Self. Further interaction will allow the Self to both individuate and socialize.

In his book *Insights and Illusions of Philosophy*, Piaget makes the limitations of fact-avoiding philosophical reflection of the type practiced by metaphysicians and phenomenologists patently clear. Philosophy cannot produce knowledge because its task is to wisely coordinate values. In this, he is surprisingly close to Nietzsche. Moreover, he disowns Positivism and its attempt to reduce Philosophy to scientific methodology and epistemology. He makes a point of stating that a person who has not come in contact with Philosophy at least once during his or her education remains incomplete. As a psychologist, Piaget traces the origin of Philosophy to adolescents' discovery of reflection, their lack of scientific training at school, and P. Janet's observation that the establishment of facts requires more energy than reflection and everyday deduction.

Subjectivement, la difficulté du fait par rapport à la deduction courante (je ne parle pas de la déduction en mathématiques pures ou en physique mathéma-[p. 227]-tique) vient de ce qu'il est beaucoup plus économique de réfléchir et de déduire que d'expérimenter. C'est une des belles trouvailles de P. Janet, lorsqu'il a cherché à construire des stades du développement mental en se fondant, non pas sur l'enfant, mais sur la hiérarchie des fonctions en psychopathologie (d'après leur complexité et leur coût en énergies nécessaires), que d'avoir situé le stade de la réflexion en dessous du stade où le <<sens du réel>> permet le travail suivi et l'expérimentation: les psychasthéniques et les douteurs réfléchissent facilement, disait-il, et même beaucoup trop, tandis que leur sens du réel est touché, la fonction de réflexion qui demeure intacte étant donc plus facile. (...) Cela dit, revenons à la philosophie et rappelons d'abord que, dans beaucoup de pays, nous assistons à une inflation nette dans la production des philosophes, par rapport aux grands siècles où la philosophie n'était pas une profession mais un achèvement [p. 228] exceptionnel. On répondra qu'il en va de même dans les carrières scientifiques, mais un spécialiste de peu de talent fait encore un travail utile en un champ restreint, tandis qu'un philosophe non exceptionnel est un peu comme un romancier ou un artiste sans talent exceptionnel. Rappelons ensuite que si la philosophie porte sur la totalité du réel, on croit pouvoir préparer des spécialistes de cette connaissance totale ou de cette recherche de l'absolu sans passer par une initiation à la recherche dans le domaine des connaissances partielles ou relatives. On développe certes en eux le sens de l'histoire et le respect des textes, puisque leur seule spécialisation obligée est l'histoire de la philosophie elle-même, mais pour ce qui est des instruments de connaissance, on n'entretient que la réflexion, qui correspond par ailleurs aux tendances profondes de l'adolescence et à l'orientation naturelle de l'esprit humain. In en résulte que, lorsqu'ils n'ont pas le courage exceptionnel de se spécialiser dans l'épistémologie d'une science particulière et de pousser très avant la connaissance de celle-ci, (...), la production philosophique est, ou historique, ou réflexive au sens le plus général: en une telle situation, la connaissance des faits est détachée de la seule source qui la promeut au rang de connaissance proprement dite, c'est-à-dire de la recherche elle-même en sa technicité. Il va alors de soi que la tentation devient irrésistible, sous une forme d'ailleurs inconsciente ou implicite, de

considérer que la réflexion sur le fait, constituant [p. 229] en ce cas une démarche ultérieure et non pas antérieure à l'établissement du fait (puisque, en l'occurrence, celui-ci a déjà en général été établi par d'autres), est de nature supérieure à cet établissement et permet par conséquent d'intervenir activement en son interprétation et au besoin de la rectifier ou de la compléter⁷.

Subjectively, the difficulty in studying facts as against everyday deductive inferences (I do not speak of deduction in pure mathematics or in mathematical physics) is because it is much more economical to reflect and to deduce than to experiment. [p. 168] One of P. Janet's discoveries, when he tried to construct stages of mental development, basing it not on the child but on the hierarchy of functions in psychopathology (according to their complexity and expenditure of necessary energy), was to replace the reflective stage below that of the stage where the "sense of reality" makes systematic work and experimentation possible. He pointed out that the psychasthenics and the anxiety prone reflect easily and even too much; while their sense of reality is disturbed, their power to reflect, which remains unaffected, is hence increased. (...) Let us now return to philosophy, first noting that in many countries there is a marked increase in the number of philosophers as compared with earlier centuries when philosophy was not a profession but an exceptional achievement. It might be said that the same thing has happened with scientists. However, a mediocre scientist can still carry out useful work in a limited field, while an undistinguished philosopher is a little like an untalented artist or novelist. If then philosophy is concerned with reality as a whole, it is assumed to be possible to train specialists in this complete knowledge or search for the absolute, without their first having had some training in the field of partial or relative knowledge. It is true that they have acquired a sense [p. 169] of history and a respect for texts, since the only specialization demanded of them is the history of philosophy, but as far as methods of knowledge are concerned, only reflection is used, which, moreover, corresponds to the deep-rooted tendencies of adolescence and the natural inclination of the human mind. Hence, when they have not the exceptional courage to specialize in the epistemology of a particular science and to advance knowledge of the latter, (...) the studies engaged in by philosophers are either historical, or reflective in the most general sense. In such a situation, the knowledge of facts is divorced from that which alone can give it the character of knowledge properly so called, that is to say, from an inquiry into its technicality. There is therefore a strong temptation, moreover, under an unconscious or implicit form, to assume that reflection on fact is, in this case, subsequent and not prior to the establishment of fact (since, in the event, the latter has already in general been established by others), that it is of a higher order than the latter and consequently can intervene actively in the interpretation of fact, rectifying and completing it where necessary⁸.

Piaget's critique of theoretical Philosophy is, like Nietzsche's, psychological and physiological, but it also points towards the moral (practical) dimension. To begin

7 PIAGET, *Sagesse et illusions de la philosophie*, pp. 226-229.

8 PIAGET, *Insights and Illusions of Philosophy*, pp. 167-169.

with, he estimates philosophers's cognitive development at the adolescent level. Secondly, he mentions "the exceptional courage to specialize in the epistemology of a particular science and to advance knowledge", which raises the issue of epistemic virtues needed for science. The not-so-implicit reproach is that philosophers remain stuck at teenager-level reflection and are basically not energetic enough to acquire proper scientific research skills. Consequently, they cannot contribute to the quest for knowledge, and at best produce historical reflections about Philosophy itself. But why should anybody care about the history of Philosophy if Philosophy itself is already such a largely marginal subject? From a scientist's point of view, Piaget's critique makes perfect sense and, all in all, it is as Positivistic as it gets, notwithstanding his protestations to the contrary. Philosophers are given a choice: either man up and become a proper scientist in some specific field, or content yourself with general historical, political and aesthetic essay writing that "coordinates values" and relies on scientists for facts.

Concluding Remarks: Avoiding pessimism, skepticism and irrationality while embracing bounded rationality

In this brief journey we have revisited Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Piaget to better appreciate how the concept of the intellect transitioned from a contemplative to a practical ideal. This process seems irreversible and has serious consequences for Philosophy's credibility in the academic world. After Nietzsche and Piaget, Philosophy cannot avoid being a parascientific Axiology (i.e., a theory of value that coexists beside science). In other words, Schopenhauer's attempt to insulate Philosophy as a theoretical endeavor simply failed, notwithstanding his accuracy in other issues.

How could we respond to this situation? One possibility would be to try to ignore these developments, live in denial, and simply carry on with metaphysical discussions. Another possibility would be to embrace adversity and summon the courage to learn to navigate the wild waves of post-modern political discourse. However, what we have learned about the instability of the intellect should give us pause. In so far as science can bring us nearer to objective truth, Schopenhauer's qualms concerning the power of the intellect have been largely vindicated. In social science, Herbert A. Simon's concept of bounded rationality does justice to what several philosophers had earlier suspected was our actual condition as human beings.

But what should then we make of "value coordination"? Practical Philosophy would be the answer, provided we do not over-intellectualize, for that could lead to self-deception and the generation of counterproductive utopias. Nietzsche's move to put the body on center stage is at the root of contemporary identity politics. Looking further back, we encounter Herder's humanistic nationalism, which sought to avoid

French revolutionary abstractions and the separation between the state and the people. The dilemma is cruel. If we identify as intellectuals, what matters is ideological proximity. If we identify as bodies, what matters is similarity of genetic and phenotypic traits. Herder's solution could help us channel Nietzsche's contribution in a less explosive direction. As Caysa pointed out, Nietzsche did not want to do away with the intellect altogether, for he acknowledged that without it we could never recover the embodied Self. Vulgar identity politics is so distressing because activists lose their ability reason, to negotiate, and to consider historical perspectives that offer alternative sources and interpretations. However, it is indeed plausible that a political system built upon Gnostic denial of the body is simply not humanly feasible and is bound to collapse sooner or later. Nietzsche's and Spengler's premonition concerning the demise of Western Europe and its civilization can be easily supported by data sets related to demographic decline in particular. It is only when we look towards Eastern Europe, Russia, and particularly Far Eastern Asian nations that we encounter what could be considered healthy collectivism. Arguably the most important phenomenon of our time is the emergence of Eurasian civilization that will be based on a continuous land mass and depend less on the control of maritime routes. Contrary to conventional wisdom, individualist societies overestimate their benefits to individual development because it is easy for them to list a slew of rights they grant *de jure*. However, *de facto*, the right of free speech, for example, is restricted in a variety of unacceptable ways worldwide. This contradiction between *de jure* and *de facto* generates what Festinger called cognitive dissonance and Piaget called disequilibrium.

To make sense of Piaget's "coordination of values", it is important to take notice of theoretical developments in 1970s and 1980s.⁹ Freud's and Piaget's theories went through substantial revisions: a) focus shifted from structure to function; b) results were not claimed to be universal anymore, but just local; c) language and semiotic systems were elevated to a constitutive, not just representational, role; and d) purely individualistic monadic explanatory models were exchanged by dyadic models. In this way, whereas Freud and Piaget tried to account for individual regulation in terms of instinctual discharges or endogenous equilibration, Bowlby and Vygotsky gave prominence instead to the mother-child dyad as a self-regulating system. Every developmental function came to be understood as first occurring externally between mother and child, and only later internally in the child alone. As far as the intellect is concerned, this means that equilibration ceases to be a solely internal and individual affair, but requires external support to be overcome at least in the initial stages. Litowitz describes the resurgence of the biological reading of Freud and Piaget after the 1990s work in genetics and evolutionary theory, which helped to mitigate the excesses of social constructivism. La Taille deals with the problem of

⁹ LITOWITZ, *Freud and Piaget: une fois de plus*.

value coordination in the context of moral development and education.¹⁰ Based in Brazil, but rife with references to major international authors, his research has focused on the concept of self-respect understood as a kind of self-esteem that is subject to moral conscience. Citing Piaget's and Kohlberg's work on moral judgment, he stresses the need for intellectual virtues as well as peer cooperation to develop children's autonomy.

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¹⁰ LA TAILLE, *Formação ética: do tédio ao respeito de si*.

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