

5 On the communication of mood in Nietzsche's *Gay Science*

As I have shown, psychological observations on religion and mood were already present and quite important in *HH* and in *D*, and the available evidence also suggests that Nietzsche did attempt to “use mood”, i.e. he put some effort into showing and leading the reader to a philosophically productive mood: a calm, detached but also joyful mood of doubt in the case of *HH* and a more expressively joyful mood of doubt and expectation in the case of *D*. The insights that Nietzsche gained from these experiments arguably developed into something far more radical in *GS*.

This chapter presents a novel reading of Nietzsche's *Gay Science* based on the thesis that insofar as one can speak of *GS* as a unified whole, the work is held together by its playful, joyful mood. In other words, the reading seeks to show that mood is central to the project of *GS*. Moreover, and this follows from recognizing the centrality of mood to the entire conception of a joyful science, I argue that scholarly interpretations of *GS* that are concerned with elucidating the text must take account of Nietzsche's attempt to communicate mood, and that philosophical interpretations that seek to build on the aphorisms of the work ignore this at their own peril. Placing mood at the centre of the investigation opens new and fruitful perspectives on key issues that have troubled interpreters since the first publication of the book in 1882, not least those aphorisms that concern religion (“God is dead”).

If paying attention to mood is so crucial to the understanding of *GS* as I have suggested, one might question how novel this reading can be, as surely scholars and philosophers cannot altogether have overlooked anything so central? Indeed, I am more than willing to concede that I am not the first to point to the importance of mood, but there is a significant difference between pointing towards that importance and actually placing mood at the centre of investigation; not to say rereading the work and its key aphorisms in a light that recognizes mood. In her monograph-study on the aesthetics of mood [*Stimmung*], Friederike Reents suggests that Nietzsche's *GS* should be read as an attempt to reorient affect [*Umstimmungsversuch*] (Reents 2015, 236–238 and 240; cf. Reents 2014). In a similar vein, Bernard Williams has emphasized that *GS* is meant to “convey a certain spirit” that could “defy the ‘spirit of gravity’” (Williams 2006, 314). Both, to mention but two interesting examples, assert that one misses the point of *GS* if one looks only for “philosophical content”, for philosophical arguments in the work. However, neither Williams nor Reents do much more than to point at the laughter [*Heiterkeit*], that they see in the work. Although they certainly point in the right direction, mere suggestions based primarily on subjective experiences of reading (Williams 2006) and/or on simplifying interpretations of Nietzsche's project of affective reorientation (Reents 2015)¹ do not

1 Reents problematically fails to situate her discussion on mood [*Stimmung*] in Nietzsche's works

suffice. To establish that communicating a mood indeed is an essential element of the philosophical aims of GS requires more robust evidence.

A thorough reading of Nietzsche's "use of mood" in GS is still lacking. What is required is a contextual interpretation, a close reading that pays careful attention to evidence and problems related to what evidence is admissible. That which to some scholars seems to be all too obvious, the joy of the joyful science, might turn out to be more demanding, problematic and multidimensional than assumed. Next, I explain why GS is of utmost importance to understanding Nietzsche's philosophy and his philosophy of religion in particular. Then I lay the groundwork of my interpretation in dialogue with scholarship on GS in the following sections. After that I proceed with the reading itself.

5.1 The need for a contextual reading of GS

Nietzsche's GS is essential reading, if one wishes to come to terms with the philosopher's reflections on religion. Indeed, the book contains one of the most famous passages in his entire oeuvre,² the proclamation of the death of God through the mouth of a Madman. One should however not be fooled by the fact that this single passage seems to provoke endless commentary. Despite the success of the Madman, GS has suffered (philosophical) neglect in Anglophone academia according to its champions.³ I concur; the proliferation of questionable interpretations of GS 125 seems to have gone hand in hand with a certain neglect of the book as a whole, especially when compared to Nietzsche's other major works. Still, the real problem is this: what is lacking is quality not quantity. This problem is sadly not limited to publications on Nietzsche written in English, but seems to be universal.⁴

GS most certainly deserves careful attention in its own right. Nietzsche's thinking on religion in GS, not least the Madman-passage, can only be understood contextu-

within Nietzsche's broader psychological thinking. Given that her work is a history of the literary aesthetics of mood [*Stimmung*], it is especially problematic that she overestimates the importance of the early unpublished essay "On Moods" from 1864 (cf. Reents 2015, 239–240) for Nietzsche's understanding of mood and fails to mention that the concept disappears from Nietzsche's published writings after GS. Otherwise, her discussion on Nietzsche's affective reorientation [*Umstimmung*] draws far too much on a one-sided reading of GS that only emphasizes the communication of laughter as a corrective to too much seriousness.

2 GS 125 is: "perhaps the most famous passage in all of Nietzsche" (Pippin 2010, 47; cf. Franco 2011, 133).

3 See Schacht 1988, Abbey 2000 and Franco 2011. These eloquent apologies seek to defend and elaborate the philosophical merits of GS, but with the exception of Franco do not provide substantial interpretations of the most difficult questions.

4 Thus, it is the rule rather than the exception for serious scholars, irrespective of background, to lament out-of-context interpretations of key passages such as GS 125 (cf. Pippin 2010, 47 and 50; Hödl 2009, 363; Gentili 2010, 236).

ally. The philosophical monographs of Higgins (2003), Langer (2010) and Stegmaier (2012), to which I shall return in sections 5.1.2 and 5.1.3, point in the right direction insofar as they (claim to) recognize the importance of context and therefore treat *GS* as a unified whole. I will argue that a properly contextual approach requires more than paying attention to the context of each interpreted passage within the whole of the book, and that one cannot be content with an understanding of the historical and personal context in which the book was created. Instead, one has to see how Nietzsche's thinking on mood permeates the whole (for what a contextual approach should look like, see section 5.3 and the ensuing reading). Such an approach is especially fruitful when it comes to understanding those passages concerned with religious questions.

What I aim to achieve is to clarify the place of *GS* 125, the parable of the Madman, in relation to the whole of *GS* and the whole of Nietzsche's criticism of religion. What makes this aphorism so important for the understanding of Nietzsche's entire critical project is that it suggests, as numerous scholars have noted, that Nietzsche is not just one in a line of 19th-century thinkers who simply reduce religion to man and think that all else will stay the same (e.g. Pippin 2010, 50). Precisely how this rejection of a specific form of unbelief is to be understood is the crucial question. Does Nietzsche through the Madman, and in his later madness, recognize in himself an otherwise repressed desire for the Christian God (e.g. Düsing 2010)? Or does Nietzsche call for a new form of pantheistic religiosity (e.g. Young 2006)? Or does he rather call for a more radical atheism? Perhaps an atheism that is rooted in the instincts, i.e. an incorporated atheism, which bears a life-affirming mood? The answers to these questions depend to a great degree on how one interprets *GS* 125. Before I proceed with the reading, certain questions concerning the editions and unity of *GS* need to be sorted out. In the meantime, it will become clear how the reading that I propose differs from previous scholarship.

5.1.1 The two editions of *GS*

The fact that there are two differing editions of *GS*, both of which were published while Nietzsche was still alive, has created some unnecessary confusion in scholarship. This confusion stems from the rather unfortunate tendency of not specifying which edition is under discussion (e.g. Reents 2015). More alarmingly, even scholars who do specify which edition is being used seldom provide reasons for their choice (e.g. Langer 2010). In this regard, Stegmaier (2012) is the most notable exception in that he carefully argues for his choice.

This is no trivial matter, because there are differences between the editions which influence the interpreter's vision of *GS* as a whole. The first edition, published in 1882, begins with a motto, a quote extracted from Emerson, and a prelude of rhymes (63 poems), which is followed by four books of aphorisms. The back cover of the first edition states that *GS* is the last in a line of works beginning with *HH*,

which aim to create “a new image and ideal of the free spirit” (Franco 2011, ix; cf. KGB III/1, Bf. 251). The second edition, published in 1887, has a new subtitle (“*la gaya scienza*”), an added foreword, begins with an additional motto written by no other than the author himself, a fifth book, and ends with a collection of poems, the *Songs of Prince Vogelfrei*. In effect, the 1887 edition is a work of the late Nietzsche; published in the same year as *On the Genealogy of Morals* and only one year before the last authorized publications. As Wolfram Groddeck put it: there are after 1887 two different works with the same title.⁵

The second edition has hitherto received far more attention than the first. The simplest explanation is that this is the version that the reader is presented with in the KSA. It might also reflect the fact that philosophers have been more interested in Nietzsche’s later philosophy than in that of the middle period (e.g. Stegmaier 2012). Of the most important scholars who have written on *GS* only Higgins consistently keeps to the first edition in her analysis, while Franco deserves praise for clearly separating the two in his study (Higgins 2000; Franco 2011, 106). There are very good reasons to follow their example and focus on the first edition on its own. To my mind, there is one reason above others that should give the sceptic pause, and this is it: the 1882 edition best captures Nietzsche’s original vision!

I will discuss the nature of Nietzsche’s vision in more detail in section 5.1.2. In the case of Nietzsche-scholarship, authorial intention is generally considered to be of utmost importance, wherefore I find it unnecessary to provide a lengthy defence of the foundation of my approach to *GS*.⁶ It suffices to note that whenever a scholar writes that “Nietzsche writes/claims/argues” he or she at least implicitly accepts some understanding of authorial intention. Critical questions rather concern how to discern authorial intention and specifically what evidence should be relied on as the discussions on the work of Jacob Golomb and Rebecca Bamford have shown. In this case, emphasizing the original vision of *GS* is a necessity, simple because of the possibility that this vision is transformed by the time of the publication of the second edition. Despite privileging the first edition in my reading, I am more than willing to concede that the second edition can be considered a unified work in itself, i.e. that one might argue that Nietzsche aspires toward unity in both editions. At the end of the chapter, I will consider if and to what extent the second edition changes the interpretation that is here advanced with regard to the first edition.

Now that we have decided on using the first edition, on the ground that it captures Nietzsche’s original vision, a short summary of the content of the aphoristic books contained in this edition is required before we can proceed. The first book engages questions concerning teleology and morality, in the context of historical and scientific knowledge and Darwinian ideas in particular. The second book focuses

⁵ “*Es gibt nach 1887 zwei ‘Fröhliche Wissenschaften’.*” (Groddeck 1997, 185)

⁶ For a defence of authorial intention in the context of Anglophone scholarship see Higgins 2003, 9–11.

on art, artists and women, the third on religion and science. The fourth is more personal in character, discussing primarily the contemplative life and science, and ends with the appearance of Zarathustra. Stated this way, *GS* truly seems to discuss themes that seem to have little or nothing to do with each other. Strictly speaking, there is also no unity of form, as the “aphorisms” that make of the bulk of the work differ greatly in length; from sentences to pages. So without even mentioning the poems that are also an integral part of the work, *GS* appears as a mixture of disconnected themes and forms. This appearance begs the question: Is *GS* a unified work and if so, in what sense?

5.1.2 Coherence and unity in *GS* in the light of previous scholarship

Is *GS* a coherent, unified work? This question is of great importance because the answer determines how one should approach the work. To put it simply, there are two alternatives. If the work can't be considered a unified whole, one can freely pick and choose aphorisms for interpretation as one wishes. If, on the other hand, *GS* is a unified whole, one must pay close attention to the composition of the book and how selected passages relate to the whole. From the latter perspective, the first approach must be condemned for engendering out-of-context interpretations, while from the former the second approach insists on a unity that is not to be found.

At one extreme are approaches to Nietzsche that see his texts as exemplary precisely because of their ability to resist attempts at systematic interpretation (e.g. Derrida 1979 and Kofman 1993, 115–116). In this view, *GS* shows “little overall sense of organization, thematic development, or extended philosophical argument” (Allison 2001, xi). It should come as no surprise that few Nietzsche-scholars who focus on *GS* support Allison's statement or other expressions of the sentiment it embodies. Indeed, the approach is often derisively branded “postmodern” or “deconstructionist” and dismissed without further reflection. As we will see, scholars convinced of the coherence of *GS* should be careful to avoid the opposite danger, i.e. overstating their case.

Scholars who have emphasized the coherence of *GS* have done so with strong words, so much so that it raises doubts. Some scholars swear on the “fundamental coherence” (Schacht 1988, 70; Langer 2010, xvii) of *GS*, and more recently the book has been called “a profoundly imagined artistic and philosophical whole” (Franco 2011, 106). Efforts to prove this supposed coherence do not strike me as entirely convincing. The most obvious reason is that each interpreter, irrespective of edition used, tends to see the coherence and unity of *GS* in a different way. Monika Langer's monograph is a good place to start the discussion, since Langer places such weight on the coherence of *GS* as to include the assumption in the title of her study *Nietzsche's Gay Science: Dancing Coherence* (Langer 2010). Langer contends that the coherence in question has been perceived as a coherence of themes, and she seeks to refine this heritage (Langer 2010, xiv). While it is certainly true that interpreters

of the work tend to concentrate on a few themes, it is not quite clear to me to what extent this reveals a deeper methodological commitment to thematic unity as Langer suggests. Even if one ignores the possibility that there could be other ways of reading the scholarly literature, one cannot deny that there are exceptions, i.e. scholars who do not think that the unity of the work is to be found on the level of themes. Still Langer is correct in a certain sense: the unity of *GS* most often appears in scholarship to be guaranteed by the coherence of its themes.⁷ Therefore, I find Langer's claim useful and worth interrogating. What themes have scholars identified as being of central importance in the composition of *GS*?

Surveying the themes identified by scholars as central, one is immediately struck by the fact that there are subtle yet clearly noticeable differences. These differences cannot be overlooked. For Richard Schacht the unity of *GS* derives from its reflection on two connected themes; "what we are" and "what we might become" as individuals (Schacht 1988, 71). Julian Young's claim about the "systematic central argument" of *GS* is superficially similar to Schacht's, but he emphasizes what he takes to be the collective nature of Nietzsche's endeavour. According to Young, *GS* concerns the cultural health of a people; what cultural health is for a people, where "we" are now as a people and how to lead the people in the right future direction (Young 2010, 327). These views can be contrasted with Franco's, who identifies the notion of incorporation as being at the heart of the book's argument, an argument that advances as a chain of thoughts and which deals with the possibility of a science that enhances life (Franco 2011, xi and 102).

Langer's own approach differs only superficially from that of her predecessors and the approaches of Young and Franco outlined above, in that she does not extract a few chosen themes from the aphorisms for further elaboration, but instead works through the entire 1887 edition from beginning to end and tries to pay close attention to the interconnections between the aphorisms. This approach is especially problematic, since the 1887 edition begins with the foreword written years after the following four books. The interpretation of the foreword, which "introduces the *Gay Science*'s main themes" (Langer 2010, 1) unduly influences the interpretation of the whole. As a result of this procedure Langer herself identifies three interconnected themes that account for the coherence of the book. These are de-deification, naturalization and beautification. (Langer 2010, xv)

Langer's frank admission that her themes do not appear explicitly throughout the text brings us to the core of the problem, which applies to all attempts to think of the unity of *GS* as being based on thematic coherence (cf. Langer 2010, xiv–xv). One simply cannot identify a theme or even a number of interconnected themes that would run through the entire text; there are simply far too many aphor-

⁷ E.g. in his article introducing *GS* in the *Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche* Christopher Janaway asserts that the book will "never cohere into a single storable philosophical position and cannot be 'summed up'", and then simply proceeds to discuss the "book's themes" (Janaway 2013, 252–253).

isms that do not fit in. Nonetheless, one can unreservedly agree with Langer that Nietzsche often eschews direct communication and that many aphorisms implicitly rely on and relate to others. This is however not always the case nor is it a convincing argument for the specific themes identified by Langer or other scholars for that matter. It would certainly be misleading to say that various themes laboriously identified by scholars play no part in the composition of *GS*. Indeed, it is hard not to identify one theme or some themes as central at the expense of others.⁸ A charitable reading of the scholarly literature might conclude that even as scholars approach *GS* through different eyes and therefore emphasize different themes, they all contribute to the understanding of the underlying unity of the work. There is nevertheless good reason to question the emphasis on the thematic coherence of the work; not because it instead would contain a “discussion of everything under the sun” (Young 2006, 88 and 2010, 326), but rather because thematic coherence is not the only way to create unity within a book. This is especially important to keep in mind, when the book in question is as much a work of art as a work of science and philosophy.

In fact, not a few of the scholars mentioned above seem to suggest that *GS* is characterized by an underlying structure. They notice a movement from here to there, from reality to possibility. This might be considered the hard core behind the talk of an “argument of *GS*” by Young and Franco (Young 2010, 327 and Franco 2011, xi). While a certain motion of back and forth between realities and possibilities is certainly present in the book, there is no clear linear development connecting the beginning of the book to the end, i.e. no straightforward narrative structure. Reality and possibility, as in desirable and undesirable possibilities and realities, alternate and need not be seen as moving in any definite direction. Therefore, looking at the structure of *GS* also does not provide a satisfying solution to the problem of unity.

The related idea that the unity of *GS* is based on interconnected chains of thought is equally problematic, even though it has been thought to find some support in Nietzsche's own notes and letters.⁹ The same criticism applies to the idea as to those views emphasizing thematic coherence. The chains of thought do not

⁸ E.g. when Stegmaier asserts that the book has no basic theme he directly adds that the artistic and joyful reinterpretation of science and philosophy might itself be considered the basic theme: *GS* “*hat kein Grundthema ... es sei denn die künstlerisch-fröhliche Selbstaufklärung der Wissenschaft und Philosophie*” (Stegmaier 2012, 52).

⁹ E.g. “*Eine Sentenz ist ein Glied aus einer Gedankenkette; sie verlangt, dass der Leser diese Kette aus eigenen Mitteln wiederherstelle: diess heisst sehr viel verlangen. Eine Sentenz ist eine Anmaassung. – Oder sie ist eine Vorsicht: wie Heraclit wusste.*” (NL 1876–77, 20[3], KSA 8, 361) On the basis of this early note it is certainly possible to suggest that Nietzsche leaves it to the reader to make out the unity in the chains of thought that characterize his aphoristic works. However, one has to stretch the meaning of the note beyond recognition in order to come to the conclusion that the aphoristic works themselves would form wholes that the reader should recreate in a similar manner. Cf. the discussion on *Sentenz* and *Aphorismus* by Joel Westerdale (Westerdale 2013, 23–24), as well as his strong criticism of attempts to read coherence (in the sense of interconnected chains of thought) into the works of Nietzsche's middle period (Westerdale 2013, 85–96).

form a sensible whole on their own, nor are the interconnections between the chains particularly strong. On top of that, there are always aphorisms that are hard to fit into any chain of thought. I have mentioned these two possibilities of thinking about the unity of GS, i.e. underlying structure and organization as chains of thought, because they prepare us to look at the book as an artistic whole rather than as a straightforward philosophical argument.

A bit closer to the approach pursued here is Higgins who, contrary to what Langer claims (Langer 2010, xiv), does not take a thematic approach to the unity of GS. Despite initially suggesting that the unity of GS is to be found in thematic coherence (Higgins 2003, viii), Higgins is primarily interested in the “vision which unifies the original work” (Higgins 2003, 5). Higgins has taken to heart that one has to pay as much if not more attention to the *how* as to the *what*, i.e. Nietzsche’s mode of presentation in relation to the thoughts presented.¹⁰ According to her, GS cannot be considered systematic in any traditional sense but it is nevertheless “very carefully orchestrated” (Higgins 2003, 8). Taking her cue from Eugen Fink, Higgins notes that this orchestration functions in the manner of “leitmotifs” (Higgins 2003, 11–13). In the resulting view, GS is seen as purposively theatrical for dramatic effect: tragic and comic perspectives take turns to force the reader into experientially encountering the thoughts presented (cf. Higgins 2000, 5–13).

How does this flow from tragic to comic and back again create the unity which Higgins (e.g. Higgins 2003, 50) implies it does? The perspectives are supposedly complementary but reading Higgins’ work one cannot escape the impression that one has to choose between the tragic and the comic. This is exactly what Higgins herself does, choosing to focus on the comical aspects of the book, since scholars have according to her already emphasized the tragic aspects too much (Higgins 2003, 6–7). It is certainly a correct observation that tragic readings of GS abound, but the underlying implication that there are clearly distinct comic and tragic aspects in the work is questionable. One might ask if it is not rather the case that the reader interprets the text as comic or tragic, and that readers might disagree on which aphorisms are comic and which tragic. In any case, the apparent need to choose between emphasizing comedy or tragedy leaves the prospect of unity in tatters, giving place to an alternation of tragic and comic perspectives without any greater purpose.

Against this view, I argue the thesis that Nietzsche in GS upholds the possibility of uniting his aphoristic experiments in a higher mood; one which is beyond comedy and tragedy.¹¹ Tragic and comic perspectives could then be viewed as expressions of the same underlying joyful mood. They could both be seen as nothing but surface

¹⁰ In Anglophone scholarship, the importance of this hermeneutic principle was first and most forcefully argued by Alexander Nehamas (cf. Nehamas 1985, 39). While it might be argued that more recent “analytic” work on Nietzsche does not fully appreciate the significance of this principle, most scholars at least pay lip service to it (e.g. Clark and Dudrick 2012).

¹¹ Cf. “*Es giebt Höhen der Seele, von wo aus gesehen selbst die Tragödie aufhört, tragisch zu wirken*” (BGE 30, KSA 5, 48).

phenomena that the creative artist disposes of as he pleases, as he plays. Perhaps only understood with reference to the possibility of this peculiar mood do the aphorisms and chains of thought emerging from them make sense, take their proper place and form a sensible whole. For it might be argued that Nietzsche thinks that this ideal mood unites art and science into serving the task of philosophy, and the task to become who one is. Furthermore, it might be argued that Nietzsche's conception of this mood draws on and seeks to combine experiences that are characteristic of both science, art, and even the history of religion, which would explain why these three "themes" are all discussed in *GS*. Only from within this mood can (what Nietzsche means by) joyful science, perhaps, be fully understood. Fortunately, the text of *GS* does not presuppose a joyful scientist as reader, but seeks to communicate a sense of this joyful mood; it shows a sceptical, playful mood that among other things suggests the possibility of a yet higher mood.¹² These claims, which will be backed up with evidence in the ensuing reading, importantly require no claims about Nietzsche as person, only as artist.

Again, it is necessary to recall the distinction between Nietzsche as author and *Herr Nietzsche*, the person. The thesis advanced here should not be misconstrued as some naïve claim about the state in which Nietzsche wrote *GS*, e.g. that Nietzsche wrote each and every aphorism in the same mood. Quite to the contrary, the thesis is not in the least touched by the fact that the writing of *GS* coincided with a turbulent period in Nietzsche's life. His mood was anything but constant, despite the fact that most of the work that went into *GS* preceded his acquaintance and tempestuous affair with Lou von Salomé.¹³ He was namely at the time engaged in a constant struggle for physical health as evinced by his search for beneficial climatic conditions and a fitting diet. Julian Young is most probably right to suspect that Nietzsche's self-doctoring was not always beneficial to his physical health and to emphasize that what mattered even more to him was spiritual health, and that in this but only this regard things were starting to look better for Nietzsche since his arrival in Sils-Maria in 1881 (Young 2010, 316–317). One is therefore tempted to provisionally accept Stegmaier's assertion that Nietzsche was able to keep the basic tone of the work joyful despite the extreme changes that his mood underwent during the creation process.¹⁴ However, even this statement is problematic if read in the sense that there would generally

¹² Werner Stegmaier notes that Nietzsche never defines the joyfulness of *GS*, that it is rather a *Stimmung* that must show itself (Stegmaier 2012, 46). He does not connect this idea to that of the unity of *GS* nor does he follow up on it to the extent that one would wish in his commentary on the aphorisms of book five. Nevertheless, Stegmaier's work is currently the most significant contribution to the discussion of *Stimmung* in *GS*.

¹³ In a letter to Köselitz, Nietzsche assures his friend that *GS* essentially took shape before his acquaintance with Lou [vor meiner Bekanntschaft mit L(ou)], though he does see a premonition [Vorahnung] of that relationship in the work (KGB III/1, Bf. 272).

¹⁴ "Trotz der extremen Stimmungswechsel während der Entstehungszeit hat er den Grundton heiter gehalten." (Stegmaier 2012, 52)

have to be a close connection between the mood of a work of art and the mood of its creator. Precisely as artist, Nietzsche is able to suggest and express moods that he himself need not have had more than a distant premonition of. I will therefore here assume a more modest and cautious proposal as starting point: The composition of *GS* suggests the possibility of a mood, which could unite art and science as well as philosophy into a new endeavour. Thus, the text presents a joyful science pondering its own possibility.

Next, I will review the evidence that relates to the question of authorial intention under the assumption that it might provide a good foundation for the reading of *GS* and some initial support for the thesis that mood is central to the conception of a joyful science. A general methodological problem with most if not all of the approaches to the unity of *GS* hitherto covered is that they try to find the answer to the question concerning unity by going straight to the text; to find that which creates unity without considering other evidence than the text itself. This is especially problematic if one also assumes that one can interpret authorial intention by looking only at the text, as the preceding discussions about *HH* and *D* have already shown. To put the discussion about authorial intention on a more solid footing, I begin by examining letters that pertain to the question.

5.2 Authorial intentions

There is strong evidence to support the view that Nietzsche himself wanted to present the 1882 edition of *GS* as a unified work. There are, however, serious problems with the ways in which evidence in favour of such an interpretation of authorial intention has hitherto been presented by scholars. I will here engage the issue in dialogue with previous scholarship. In doing so I seek to emphasize where prior scholarly efforts point in the right direction, in order to build a solid foundation for the reading of the text proper. As I have already suggested, a particularly fruitful starting point for the task at hand is to be found in the oft repeated assertion that one must pay as much attention to the *how* as to the *what* when approaching Nietzsche's writings and that consequently *GS* should be viewed as much as an artwork as a work of philosophy (cf. Franco 2012, 106). When one examines the assertion with the question of authorial intention in mind, the key question takes this form: what did Nietzsche himself think about the unity of *GS*?

First of all, Nietzsche considered unity essential for an artwork. Marco Brusotti thus sums up Nietzsche's view of a successful artwork in the period prior to and around the publication of *GS*: a work only becomes a lasting monument if it is a whole and expresses a mood, a passionate state, in its entirety.¹⁵ Essentially, art is

15 "Zu einem Denkmal wird ein Werk erst, wenn es ein Ganzes ist und eine Stimmung, einen Leidenschaftlichen Seelenzustand in seiner Ganzheit mitteilt." (Brusotti 1997, 21) Brusotti curiously writes that

in this view expression of mood. Secondly, and more importantly, Nietzsche's concern with unity is seen in his letters from the period before and after publication. The letters show that Nietzsche applied the same aesthetic criterion to his own works. I will now turn to examine the evidence provided by these letters in detail, because they have all too often been misused. In this regard, one letter from the period prior to the publication of *GS* deserves particular attention. Indeed, this letter cannot be overlooked, since it has caused a great deal of confusion in scholarship.

5.2.1 A deceptive letter

In an intriguing letter to Paul Rée from late August 1881, Nietzsche mentions an unspecified unpublished work, the identification of which is the cause of the scholarly confusion referred to above. He writes in joy that in the same year that Köselitz's, i.e. Peter Gast's, opera *Scherz, List und Rache* was completed, another great work is yet to be completed. The year, he goes on, will still bring forth another work, which due to its unity, its perfection of form, will make him forget about his fragmentary philosophy (KGB III/1, Bf. 144).¹⁶ In Anglophone scholarship one comes across the view that this "other work" would refer to Nietzsche's own work in progress, i.e. a work Nietzsche himself intended to publish (e.g. Bishop and Stevenson 2005, 75). Franco goes the furthest, identifying the work in question with *GS* and using the letter to bolster his claims concerning the unity of the work. According to Franco the letter expresses Nietzsche's hope to finally create a unified work with *GS*, a hope that was fulfilled as the book forms a "profoundly imagined artistic and philosophical whole" (Franco 2011, 106).¹⁷ Not only do said interpretations fail to provide reasons for their identification of the "other work" with a work of Nietzsche's, they also fail to take account of a conflicting interpretation with a long tradition.

Both the context of the passage quoted above and a long line of scholarship speak against the interpretation according to which the "other work" should be attributed to Nietzsche. Let us first examine the letter more closely. After addressing Rée as his dear, dear friend [*lieber, lieber Freund*], Nietzsche expresses joyful surprise at the sudden intellectual flowering of both Rée and Köselitz [*bei Ihnen und bei unserem Freunde Köselitz*]. Then Nietzsche briefly praises the new opera of the latter, only to return to Rée, naming Rée his fulfiller [*Vollender*] directly after speaking of

the clearest expression of this view is to be found in a note from 1876–7 (NL 1876–77, 23[104], KSA 8, 440). This is problematic because the time Nietzsche wrote down the note is not exactly close to the publication of *GS* nor does the note have anything to say about the role of mood [*Stimmung*]. In my view, Nietzsche's letters provide better evidence that mood is of utmost importance to Nietzsche's understanding of the artwork, so I will therefore in the following discussion focus more on them.

¹⁶ "soll nun auch das Andre Werk an's Licht bringen, an dem ich im Bilde des Zusammenhanges und der goldnen Kette meine arme stückweise Philosophie vergessen darf!" (KGB III/1, Bf. 144)

¹⁷ Needless to say, this scholarly blunder does not fatally compromise Franco's entire reading.

that other work, which is to appear. From the context, it is clear enough that Nietzsche speaks of Rée as if his friend were bringing to completion a work that reflects not only the nature of its author but also that of Nietzsche: reading Rée's work allows Nietzsche to forget his own disparate thoughts and to see his own nature reflected in an elevated form.¹⁸ Furthermore, he attests to being incapable of a comparable feat and even calls himself an impossible and incomplete aphoristic philosopher. (KGB III/1, Bf. 144)

Nietzsche's exercise in self-deprecation cannot be overlooked. It would make no sense for him to first announce that a new work of his will provide an image of coherence and to liken this coherence with a golden chain and simultaneously in the very same letter complain about his inability to create coherent works. To this can be added that he had no plans to either publish or finish anything more in 1881, having already gone through the painful process of getting *Daybreak* published.¹⁹ That Nietzsche himself does not identify the work in question, e.g. by mentioning a title or even something about its contents, can be explained by the circumstance that the letter can with reasonable certainty be presumed to be a reply to a letter by Rée, in which Rée must have hinted at a possible publication or at least written about his work-in-progress. Unfortunately, the letter of Rée, to which Nietzsche is responding, has not been preserved. There is nevertheless enough historical evidence to identify the "other work".

This interpretation, that the "other work" refers to a work by Rée, is supported by historical scholarship (cf. Stummann-Bowert 1998, 98; Brusotti 1997, 22–23). It is of no small importance that the first interpreter to explicitly mention and make a point out of this connection was herself intimately acquainted with both Rée and Nietzsche. For it was none other than Lou von Salomé who first identified the work in question with Rée's *Die Entstehung des Gewissens*, which he was working on at the time the letters were written (Andreas-Salomé 1894, 140). On Salomé's account, Rée had let Nietzsche know that he intended to complete his work before the end of the year. Eventually, as it happens, that book was not published before the year 1885, i.e. almost four years after the letter was sent. According to Salomé, Nietzsche expressed great interest in Rée's work and she directly connects this interest to what she interprets as Nietzsche's own desire to devote himself to studies of a more systematic character; studies that might eventually lead him beyond the limitations of the aphoristic form (cf. Andreas-Salomé 1894, 140–141). While Salomé can be considered unreliable precisely as an interpreter of Nietzsche's desires, her closeness to Rée even after the break with Nietzsche must be taken into account when it comes to the bare facts of the matter. Most importantly, Salomé had access to at least some of the letters Nietzsche wrote to Rée in the period that is of concern here. This is

¹⁸ Cf. the similar words in a letter to Köselitz (KGB III/1, Bf. 143).

¹⁹ That Nietzsche after the publication of *D* planned to add more books to the work (see KGB III/1, Bf. 180; also KGB III/1, Bf. 190) has no bearing on this matter. There is no evidence that he had any plans to publish anything more in 1881.

apparent from the fact that she not only quotes letter Nr. 144 (Andreas-Salomé 1894, 16 and 140), but a great many of Nietzsche's letters to Rée (e.g. Andreas-Salomé 1894, 99–100). It is not unreasonable to assume that she discussed these letters with Rée. In any case, there is no reason to challenge her identification of the "other work". In lack of contrary evidence, her version about the facts of the case must therefore be judged the most trustworthy.

It should be clear by now that this particular letter (Nr. 144) cannot be used to argue the thesis that Nietzsche aspires toward unity in his works or in *GS* in particular; not at least in the way as it has been used in Anglophone scholarship. The greatest confusion surrounding the letter having been dispelled, it is worth asking what if anything can be gained from it for our endeavour, for without a doubt it is an intriguing letter. Interestingly, Salomé herself opens this possibility by connecting the letter to Nietzsche's declared plans to re-enter the academic world as a student of the natural sciences and by interpreting these plans as expressions of a desire to form his own thoughts into a coherent philosophical system (Andreas-Salomé 1894, 141). Even though one might want to question Salomé's interpretation of Nietzsche's plans, it is certainly useful to follow her attempt to interpret the letter as having something to say about Nietzsche's desires. In this regard, it could indeed be argued that the letter reveals an important value-judgement; the judgement that unity is a desirable quality in a philosophical work. Rather than confirming Nietzsche's confidence in his ability to create a unified work, as Franco would have it, the letter, among other things, expresses Nietzsche's frustration of being incapable of creating such a whole. Compared to his own fragmentary efforts, Rée's writing appears to him as a golden chain.²⁰ That Nietzsche expresses himself in such strong words has justly raised the questions whether he is absolutely serious (cf. Brusotti 1997, 23), but his choice of words is wholly understandable against the background of the letter. Although the correspondence cannot be reconstructed, Nietzsche's own letter contains a striking clue for interpretation.

Nietzsche's letter to Rée indicates that his friend was having a hard time in 1881 (cf. KGB III/1, Bf. 144): an earlier letter that Nietzsche sent to Köselitz shows Nietzsche's concern for the health of his friend and reveals that Rée was suffering from the loss of his father and that his mother was sick (KGB III/1, Bf. 83). He had also lost a foster sister, which further weakened his and his mother's health (cf. Janz 1978 II, 51). This circumstance certainly puts Nietzsche's words of praise for Rée's work in a more clear light; perhaps they should best be interpreted as encouragement? (cf. Stummann-Bowert 1998, 98) Though Nietzsche's words of praise for Rée should at least partially be interpreted as a compliment to his friend, there are good enough reasons to assume that Nietzsche is being sincere, especially when it

²⁰ A letter to Köselitz from the same month is written in the same spirit. Here Nietzsche describes himself as a suffering, incomplete aphoristic human [*Aphorismusmensch*] and states that his own writings at best suggest unity and allow the reader to intuit the need for unity (KGB III/1, Bf. 143).

comes to his doubts about his own abilities. That there is more than a grain of truth behind his complaint is apparent, given the composition of his previous works.²¹ Nietzsche in no way here or elsewhere denies the desirability of unity; that it is something worth striving for. To the contrary, one might go as far as to claim that Nietzsche expresses the wish to create a unified work. Namely, Nietzsche expresses the wish to create an own sun to shine over Rée.²² While this might be nothing more than a friendly wish, it can also be interpreted as expressing his desire to be able to create a work for Rée which would serve the same function he thinks his friends work does for him. But does Nietzsche's wish imply creating a unified work? Could the metaphor of a golden chain be used to describe Nietzsche's own writing?

5.2.2 Nietzsche's writing: A golden chain?

I think this is a case where one must be especially careful of words. The temptation is near at hand to link Nietzsche's metaphor of a golden chain with the chains of thought that are characteristic of his aphoristic works. Such a move would be misleading if perhaps not completely mistaken. Only once more in his entire oeuvre does Nietzsche employ the metaphor. Brusotti has drawn attention to the remarkable circumstance that only a couple of months after writing the letter to Rée, Nietzsche uses the very same metaphor of a golden chain; this time referring to himself (Brusotti 1997, 23). The big problem with this note from the *Nachlass* is that the golden chain does not in this case refer to the form or composition of a specific book or any other work of art or science for that matter. Instead, the "artwork" is here the self and the question the unification of the self.²³ The note does suggest that for

21 Brusotti states that he leaves the question open, to what if any extent Nietzsche's words in the letter to Rée and in other letters lamenting his inability to create unity are to be understood as ironic (Brusotti 1997, 23). I think Brusotti underestimates the importance of solving the question for interpreting Nietzsche's intentions. There is certainly some irony in his complaints, but does it serve any other purpose than to distance himself from his fear of failure? I think that what really is decisive is that Nietzsche most certainly was insecure as to whether he was able to communicate the unity that he sought to create in his works, and not only a sense of the need for unity.

22 "eine eigne Sonne schaffen können, die über Ihnen und dem Wachsthum Ihres Gartens allein zu scheinen hätte" (KGB III/1, Bf. 144).

23 "Werde fort und fort, der, der du bist – der Lehrer und Bildner deiner selber! Du bist kein Schriftsteller, du schreibst nur für dich! So erhältst du das Gedächtniß an deine guten Augenblicke und findest ihren Zusammenhang, die goldne Kette deines Selbst! So bereitest du dich auf die Zeit vor, wo du sprechen muß! Vielleicht daß du dich dann des Sprechens schämst, wie du dich mitunter des Schreibens geschämt hast, daß es noch nöthig ist, sich zu interpretiren, daß Handlungen und Nicht-Handlungen nicht genügen, dich mitzuthellen. Ja, du willst dich mittheilen! Es kommt einst die Gesittung, wo viel-Lesen zum schlechten Tone gehört: dann wirst du auch dich nicht mehr schämen müssen, gelesen zu werden; während jetzt jeder, der dich als Schriftsteller anspricht, dich beleidigt; und wer dich deiner Schriften halber lobt, giebt dir ein Zeichen, daß sein Takt nicht fein ist, er macht eine Kluft zwischen sich und dir – er ahnt gar nicht, wie sehr er sich erniedrigt, wenn er dich so zu erheben glaubt. Ich

Nietzsche this unification of the self takes place through the work on texts, but Brusotti goes on to use the note to make a far more radical claim. Through a rather convoluted procedure, he arrives at the conclusion that Nietzsche aspired to unity in his writings of the free-spirit period. Before we look closer at the claim, and in order to be able to evaluate it properly, it is necessary to provide some further background as to why the note is worth any attention at all.

The note deserves special attention, and not only because it contains an early expression of that Pindarian motif (cf. Hödl 2009, 532), “become, who you are”, which perhaps more than any other sentence could be said to summarize Nietzsche’s entire philosophy. According to Brusotti, the note shows that Nietzsche ascribed to himself the ability to make himself complete though Brusotti admits it is still unclear whether the unification is accomplished through the entirety of his works or through a single work (Brusotti 1997, 23). On the grounds that Nietzsche in an unrelated letter to Erwin Rohde (KGB III/1, Bf. 345) writes that one must put oneself into a whole in order not to become divided,²⁴ Brusotti then concludes that for Nietzsche to form a unified self is only possible by creating a work that is itself a whole. Brusotti furthermore asserts that this conception would have informed the creation of *GS* (Brusotti 1997, 24).

While Brusotti’s interpretation is suggestive, its underlying logic is oddly circular and not entirely sound. To simplify, the interpretation is based on a set of interrelated claims:

- 1) Nietzsche ascribed to himself the ability to unify his self.
- 2) Unification of self can in Nietzsche’s case only happen through writing.
- 3) The writing that unifies the self must itself form a unity: an artwork has to be a unified whole.

Combining such statements, Brusotti makes the inference that Nietzsche aspires to unity in his writing. First of all, one might ask if Nietzsche really ascribes to himself the ability to unify his self: is it not rather the case that Nietzsche presents unification as a task for himself [*werde der, der du bist*]. Even more problematic is the sudden shift by Brusotti from 2) to 3), from creating works that allow one to become complete to the idea that only complete works can make one complete. There is no justification for the interpretation that Nietzsche would accept premise 3) within the *Nachlass*-note. Brusotti’s interpretation is a bit more palatable when one takes account of the fact that Nietzsche in his letters seems to connect Rée’s ability to create complete works with his being one of the “whole and complete natures” [*die ganzen und vollständigen Naturen*] (KGB III/1, Bf. 144) and his own inability to do so with being an aphoristic nature (KGB III/1, Bf. 143). Yet accepting this view only results in a

kenne den Zustand der gegenwärtigen Menschen, wenn sie lesen: Pfui! Für diesen Zustand sorgen und schaffen zu wollen!” (NL 1881, 11[297], KSA 9, 555–556)

²⁴ “Wir müssen uns in etwas Ganzes hineinlegen, sonst macht das Viele aus uns ein Vieles.” (KGB III/1, Bf. 345)

paradox: If only a complete nature can create complete works, then Nietzsche's aspiration to form a unified self through his writing is bound to end in disappointment. What matters in the end is of course Nietzsche's intention. While I agree in principle that Brusotti's interpretation points in the right direction, it certainly requires more evidence. Saying anything definitive about Nietzsche's authorial intention regarding GS requires a more robust defence than Brusotti provides. It requires a defence that takes into account the ambiguity in Nietzsche's thinking. Brusotti does not pay enough attention to the ambiguity of the note, and therefore too hastily proceeds with his argument.

There is something almost uncanny in this glaringly contradictory note, in which Nietzsche writes to himself in you-form [*du*] and exhorts himself to write for none other than himself. He seems to be concerned about what writing for himself means for the value of his writing but comforts himself that it does have value; namely, it has value for himself. Through writing, Nietzsche contends that he can connect the good moments of his life into a golden chain, into a unified self. There is no suggestion that what Nietzsche himself writes would have to be a unified whole in any traditional sense, as long as he himself can make out the whole and gather the good moments of his life in his memory. In this sense, however, Nietzsche's writings would be little more than self-help for himself. That is hardly a satisfactory conclusion, and one that Nietzsche apparently would reject. If we look closer at the note we find that the very reason for his "resolution" to write only for himself lies in his distaste with and rejection of what he takes to be the role of an author [*Schriftsteller*] in his time, a role he associates with writing for a specific kind of reader, with whom he associates a specific state. Nietzsche does not describe this state but there is no better expression of his disgust at it than the exclamation [*Pfui!*] at the end.²⁵ This idea of writing only for himself and his concomitant rejection of the role of author is half-hearted to say the least, because he most certainly has future readers in mind: "Yes, you want to communicate" [*Ja, du willst dich mittheilen*], he affirms. (Cf. NL 1881, 11[297], KSA 9, 555–556.)

5.2.3 Nietzsche's desire to communicate and the question of mood

It is best to leave talk of golden chains behind and instead follow another lead from the note, namely Nietzsche's desire to communicate. After the publication of GS,

²⁵ It is near at hand to connect the state that Nietzsche writes of with boredom and the will to be entertained. Nietzsche would later similarly complain about Z being presented to the world as entertainment. He writes to Köselitz that no one can save him anymore from becoming associated with popular writers [*Belletristen*]. The "*Pfui!*" has become a "*Pfui Teufel!*" (KGB III/1, Bf. 401). To Overbeck he likewise writes to assure "*wie unsäglich fern ich mit diesem Z(arathustra) von allem eigentlich Literarischen bin*" (KGB III/1, Bf. 473). In other words, Nietzsche feared to be read in the wrong way as much as he feared not being read at all, as proven by his attempts to give instructions to his friends.

Nietzsche writes to his erstwhile mentor Jacob Burckhardt, having sent him a copy of his new book. This curious letter echoes the playful mood of the book. After first imploring Burckhardt to approach the work with an anticipated goodwill, Nietzsche lets his esteemed friend know that he has reached the point where he lives as he thinks. The decisive part comes next as he follows up his assertion with a more sceptical suggestion that he perhaps also has learned how to express what he thinks. Therefore, he asks about his ability to communicate his thoughts, and specifically asks Burckhardt to read book four of *GS*, *Sanctus Januarius*, with the question of unity in mind (KGB III/1, Bf. 277).²⁶ What is relevant here is not to what extent Nietzsche is honestly suspicious whether he really has learned to express his thoughts in a unified manner or whether the sentiment is feigned. No amount of scholarship can give any definite answer to such a question. It is in any case worth noting that Nietzsche was interested in hearing Burckhardt's answer to his question.²⁷ From the discussion on *HH*, we know that Burckhardt was one of those readers who Nietzsche presented as capable of hearing his words (cf. KGB II/5, Bf. 723). Still, the most interesting question is rather why Nietzsche would single out *Sanctus Januarius*. Notably, Nietzsche here speaks above all of *Sanctus Januarius* as an intended whole: there is no word of *GS* in its entirety forming a whole. So the question why he singles out that book is so interesting, because of what the answer can tell about in what sense if any he thought of *GS* as a whole. Another letter goes a long way towards answering the question.

The answer can be found in a letter to Köselitz. This letter is already important for the reason that it indicates that Nietzsche made revisions to the preceding books after finishing *Sanctus Januarius*. This further proof serves to cement the perception that Nietzsche actively sought to form a whole out of *GS*. Even more important than that is how the letter connects the unity of *GS* with mood. After recommending his friend to take a look at the 2nd and 3rd books, to which he has made some final changes, Nietzsche asks the crucial question about unity as a question of mood and once again he singles out *Sanctus Januarius*, asking if that particular book can be understood (KGB III/1, Bf. 282).²⁸ The first lines of the question provide as clear an indication as there is to find that Nietzsche wanted to present *GS* as forming a whole in its entirety. Moreover, Nietzsche's emphasis on mood [*Stimmung*] strongly suggests that a specific mood had something to do with it being a whole. In its turn, Nietzsche's question concerning *Sanctus Januarius* indicates that the fourth book takes a special place in this regard.

On the basis of the letters referred to above, one can cautiously surmise that in Nietzsche's own understanding there is a strong connection between the mood of the

26 "ich wünschte namentlich, daß Sie den *Sanctus Januarius* (Buch IV) im Zusammenhang lesen möchten, um zu wissen, ob er als Ganzes sich mittheilt. – Und meine Verse?" (KGB III/1, Bf. 277)

27 "In Hinsicht hierauf höre ich Ihr Urtheil als einen Richterspruch" (KGB III/1, Bf. 277).

28 "Und auch über das Ganze und die ganze Stimmung: theilt sie sich wirklich mit? Namentlich: ist *Sanctus Januarius* überhaupt verständlich?" (KGB III/1, Bf. 282)

whole of *GS* and that of *Sanctus Januarius*. Perhaps what Nietzsche is trying to accomplish through *GS*, if indeed that has something to do with communicating a specific mood, relies on *Sanctus Januarius* to be understood? Perhaps it could be argued that of the four books that comprise the work *Sanctus Januarius* most embodies the mood of joyful science?²⁹ These questions, with the bolder interpretations they suggest, can only conclusively be settled through an engagement with the work proper. For now, it is enough to give a provisional answer to the problem at hand, i.e. why Nietzsche asks his friends (both Burckhardt and Köselitz) specifically about *Sanctus Januarius*. The most plausible answer is that the *Stimmung* of *GS* is most easily recognizable in *Sanctus Januarius*. Why then is this mood so important to what he wanted to communicate? Anything close to a final answer can only be provided through a reading of *GS*, but one can and should provisionally note that Nietzsche insisted that the book tells about himself; something about himself that he wanted to communicate.

In a letter to Rée following the publication of *GS*, Nietzsche for the first time calls *GS* the most personal of his books, a claim that he is to repeat (cf. KGB III/5, Bf. 1050), and specifically bids Rée to read *Sanctus Januarius* as a whole because of what it tells about himself (KGB III/1, Bf. 292). It is remarkable how Nietzsche here, after the break with Lou and Rée, uses *Sanctus Januarius* as a justification of his own actions. To be precise, Nietzsche writes that *Sanctus Januarius* reveals his private morality [*Privat-moral*], which stipulates that there is only one “thou shalt” for him, if he wills himself [*falls ich mich selber will*] (KGB III/1, Bf. 292). In other words, Nietzsche justifies his break with Rée with the maxim “*become, who you are*”; if he is to become who he is, he can do nothing else. It cannot be emphasized enough that what Nietzsche wants Rée to understand about himself is not his mundane self, but the ideal towards which he strives, the vision of a supremely joyful and productive mood. Not without a hint of sarcasm, Nietzsche in fact suggests that he already dwells above all petty human quarrels when he quotes the motto of *GS* and wishes Rée that he too might come to see all events as profitable, all days as holy, all humans as divine (KGB III/1, Bf. 292).

Likewise, Nietzsche writes that his books speak about himself in a letter to Carl von Gersdorff. He specifically asks Gersdorff to read *Sanctus Januarius* with that in mind.³⁰ Gersdorff’s reaction to Nietzsche’s letter is quite intriguing. Having read *GS*, Gersdorff writes that there is a mood in the work that reminds him of the air

²⁹ Werner Stegmaier has identified the fifth book of *GS* as expressing the mood of *Gay Science* at its most mature (Stegmaier 2012, 46). I see no reason to object to this claim, as long as one distinguishes the most mature expression of the mood from its most evident expression. Since the fifth book was published later, Stegmaier could hardly object to the thesis that of the four original books the fourth contains not only the clearest but the most mature expression thus far.

³⁰ “*Im Übrigen ist Briefschreiben Unsinn für mich, das weißt Du ja! Dafür erzählen meine Bücher so viel von mir, als hundert Freundschafts-Briefe nicht könnten. Lies namentlich den Sanctus Januarius in diesem Sinne.*” (KGB III/1, Bf. 294)

of a clear and beautiful September day.³¹ Is it a mere coincidence that Gersdorff emphasizes this mood of *GS* and describes it in terms that Nietzsche himself might have used? Arguably, Nietzsche's enthusiasm for clear air, and an autumnal mood suggesting the ripening of fruits (of the mind) cannot have escaped Gersdorff. Be that as it may, these letters again point to the intriguing yet hardly penetrable connection between self and mood in Nietzsche, between communicating himself and communicating a specific mood.

Following Brusotti, one could argue that Nietzsche is in letters such as these eager to hear whether he has been able to put himself into a whole and thus to become complete. This interpretation would certainly give even more gravity to Nietzsche's pleas to his friends to read specifically *Sanctus Januarius* as a whole. For if *Sanctus Januarius* is the most personal of the books of *GS*, it would more than any of the other books testify of Nietzsche's ability to form himself into a whole, his ability to express his most own mood. While the letters can be read to support Brusotti's conclusion, such a reading remains highly speculative. By noting what role mood had for Nietzsche's original vision of *GS*, I nevertheless maintain that Brusotti hits the nails head, even if he doesn't present conclusive evidence. Brusotti, however, does not go on to reflect on the implications for readings of *GS*, i.e. how one should approach the work, given that mood is central to its functioning as a whole. Nor does Brusotti provide a reading of *GS* showing exactly how this mood is expressed in the text. This is understandable since his primary interest is the conceptual history of Nietzsche's idea of passion for knowledge (cf. Brusotti 1997). As far as I know, no one has explicitly reflected on the hermeneutic implications of acknowledging the centrality of mood for readings of *GS*, nor has a reading attentive to mood been attempted. That is the direction we turn next. Inspired by Brusotti's insightful work, I take his conclusion about the central role of *Stimmung* for *GS* as the starting point for my reading: "Also *The Gay Science* and specifically its fourth book are despite the aphoristic style meant to communicate Nietzsche's mood as a whole."³² For this is arguably a fruitful starting point as long as one keeps in mind that it is the mood of the Nietzsche of the text that matters, and not that of the all too human person.

5.3 Towards a contextual interpretation of *GS*

Whatever unity is to be found in *GS*, it does not primarily derive from the coherence of the book's themes or a sustained philosophical argument. The work is not coherent in any traditional philosophical sense, yet it can be argued that it forms a unified whole. Returning to the claim that *GS* forms a "profoundly imagined artistic and phil-

31 "Es ist eine Stimmung darin, die mich anmuthet wie die Luft eines schönen klaren Septembertages, wo man sich gerne sonnt und dem Lichte nicht mehr ausweicht." (Reich 2013, 575; KGB III/2, Bf. 142)

32 Own translation of: "Auch die fröhliche Wissenschaft und insbesondere deren viertes 'Buch' soll dem aphoristischen Stil zum Trotz Nietzsches Stimmung als ein Ganzes mitteilen." (Brusotti 1997, 21)

osophical whole” (Franco 2011, 106), one can at least wholeheartedly agree that this was attempted, and that the means to the goal were artistic. Nietzsche sought to unite his sceptical, aphoristic experiments and fragmented thoughts in a joyful mood, and thereby suggest a union of philosophy, art and science. One can of course ask, whether Nietzsche succeeds or fails in his endeavour to create a unified whole with *GS*. After all, Nietzsche’s letters certainly express a nervousness about his ability to communicate or at the least a nervousness whether his contemporaries are able to hear him. I will return to the sceptical question about Nietzsche’s communication of mood through a discussion of the 1887 edition of *GS* (see section 5.8). Now, however, the most pressing and most important question is rather how *GS* should be approached when one recognizes that whatever unity there is in the work, it depends on the possibility of a unifying mood.

What does it then mean to interpret *GS* contextually? It is not enough to note that the aphoristic text forms chains of thought or that many aphorisms relate to and rely on each other. The same can be said about noting intertextual references and researching sources, however valuable clues this might yield. These are important tasks, but only if one treats *GS* as a whole, as a specific attempt at communication, can one speak of a truly contextual interpretation. However, and this is critical, it still does not suffice to be attentive to how parts relate to the whole, if the whole is understood to be made up of themes, ideas or arguments. Instead, the crucial issue is to be attentive to how Nietzsche’s understanding of a joyful mood of affirmation permeates the text of *GS* and how the most important aphorisms relate to the overriding mood.

To conclude, it remains to be shown that paying attention to mood gives a privileged background from which to approach *GS*. The crucial test in this regard is whether this approach can cast more light on the most difficult interpretative issues that the text of *GS* confronts the reader with; above all that aphorism that has caused most trouble for interpretation, *GS* 125, *the Madman*. I will however begin by discussing the title of *GS*, move onward to the motto, from there to the collection of poems and only then will I approach the aphoristic text, because these are arguably not trivial additions but play an important role in the composition of *GS*.

5.3.1 The title “*Gay Science*”

What job does a title perform? A title gives an impression of a book, all the more important as it is a first impression. A title can suggest what to expect from a book. These expectations in turn can influence how one approaches a book and therefore how one interprets it. Nietzsche himself suggested as much when discussing the title of *Daybreak* (KGB III/1, Bf. 83). There is no comparable discussion about the title of *GS*, but Nietzsche’s plea to Burckhardt that he approach the work in a sympathetic frame of mind can be read as an indication that Nietzsche still was very concerned about the manner in which one approaches his text. It is worth noting that what came to be *GS* was originally not planned as an independent work but as a contin-

uation of *D*. It is not possible to say exactly when Nietzsche changed his plans and came up with the title for his next work (cf. Kaufmann 2015, 9–10). In January 1882, Nietzsche still speaks of having finished writing books 6, 7 and 8 and planning to work on the 9th and 10th books of *Daybreak* (KGB III/1, Bf. 190 and KGB III/1, Bf. 192), but already in May he writes to his publisher Schmeitzner that he has almost finished a new work entitled *The Gay Science* (KGB III/1, Bf. 224). This means that he chose the title after his experience of health in January 1882, which again indicates that the entire work is best seen in the light of the mood that is above all expressed in *Sanctus Januarius*.³³ In any case, there is no reason to assume that Nietzsche had completely changed his mind about the importance of choosing a fitting title. Since there still is no evidence about what effect Nietzsche intended the title to have, the only way forward in this line of inquiry is to ask what effect the title has had on scholars. Gersdorff attests that the title and motto put him in a joyful mood (Reich 2013, 575; cf. KGB III/2, Bf. 142), but what about contemporary scholars?

The effect of the title on scholars seems to be one of bewilderment. Commentaries invariably point out that it is not at all clear what the joyful science means.³⁴ Scholars have noted Emerson's use of the phrase "joyful science" and investigated the connection to the *gaya scienza*³⁵ of the troubadours. Besides far-fetched conjectures, many interesting and enlivening details have been uncovered this way (e.g. Pippin 2000 and Babich 2006), but in the end the search for precursors and models has not provided any definitive answers as to the nature of the title nor has it given clues that could guide the interpretation of the work.³⁶ It is certainly understandable

33 This claim can be supported by drawing on scholarship, in which Nietzsche's plans for titles are discussed. Building on the work of Figl, who analysed Nietzsche's title-sketches for unpublished *Nachlass*-notes and found that the titles evolve as the work on the notes evolves (Figl 1982, 39), Hödl argues that since Nietzsche considered many different titles his final choice of title reflects his most mature intentions about the program of the work: that the title gathers the work as a whole as a kind of summarizing aphorism (Hödl 2009, 516–519). While this is a quite speculative interpretation, as Hödl is aware (cf. Hödl 2009, 519), it is very instructive in the case of *GS*, as it fits the evidence about the change of plans that led to there being a *Gay Science* instead of more books of *Daybreak*.

34 For a summary of approaches to the title of *GS*, consult Stegmaier 2012, 47–49.

35 Nietzsche added the subtitle ("*la gaya scienza*") to the second edition to make the connection to the troubadours more apparent. He also sought to emphasize this connection in *EH* (cf. KSA 6, 333). What is most interesting about this matter is how Nietzsche thinks of the troubadour as a unity of singer, knight and free spirit in one, i.e. one who can unite his multifaceted nature in one spirit or mood.

36 The same conclusion can be drawn about Nietzsche's own discussions that link joy and science in his previous works. The most interesting aphorism that would seem to prefigure *GS* is certainly *The allurements of knowledge*, where Nietzsche speaks of the glad tidings [*frohe Botschaft*] of science and exemplifies what he means by quoting Marcus Aurelius to the effect that "Let delusion vanish! Then 'woe is me!' will vanish too; and with 'woe is me!' woe itself will be gone." (Hollingdale transl. Clark and Leiter 1997, 189; D 450, KSA 3, 273) Though one might claim that this aphorism has not received the attention it deserves, it too provides no key to the title, since the characterization of the joy

that scholars would exhaust all possibilities of determining possible influences on the title; after all, here's something to grab and expound, an opportunity to practice some conceptual archaeology and detective work. There is however a real danger here that such historical investigations divert attention from the fundamental orientation toward the future which is so characteristic of Nietzsche's joyful science.

Another slightly more fruitful approach to the title is to compare it with the titles of Nietzsche's other publications. This approach is taken by Stegmaier who asserts that Nietzsche's titles are not only more poetic than descriptive, but also inherently irritating and that of all the titles *GS* is the most irritating (Stegmaier 2012, 41–43). Indeed, many of Nietzsche's titles both irritate and fascinate, and thus above all raise expectations. In the case of *GS*, Stegmaier perceptively draws attention to the grounds of the irritation that he claims the title raises. The irritation stems from a historical constellation worth looking into. What strikes Stegmaier as particularly irritating about *GS* is that the title combines two terms that appear to be almost mutually exclusive in the European tradition. Science deals with truth and is therefore grave and serious. Consequently, science has little or nothing to do with joy, which is associated with play, light-heartedness and carelessness. Not only in the context of 19th-century science would freedom from care suggest irresponsibility. Ever since its philosophical foundations in antiquity, the pursuit of truth has been indissociable from a specific seriousness that at least in part stems from knowledge of death and a peculiar relation to death, exemplified in Socrates' willingness to die for truth (cf. Stegmaier 2012, 43–47). To this could be added that the experiences of the 20th century, and the self-destructive possibilities opened up by physics and biochemistry, have only served to strengthen the association of science with an ethic and pathos of seriousness.

The apparent, and perhaps merely apparent, incompatibility of science and joy is an important issue, one that recurs in the text of *GS* and in Nietzsche's *Nachlass*-reflections. In a sketch for the foreword to the second edition of *GS* Nietzsche later noted about the reception of his work that some scholars took offence at the combination of the words joy and science.³⁷ It could then be argued that one of the main goals of the work was precisely to untangle the connection between science and scientific seriousness, and that the title refers to this intention. One could think of scientific seriousness as a moral ideal that gives gravity to the search of truth. In this vein, one could see Nietzsche as trying to reinvigorate the search for truth on the basis of a different, more joyful relation to truth. An intellectual shift in perspective is not enough; what is also required is an affective change. I find Nietzsche's contention in *HH I*, that "we" are unable to fully understand, that is feel, combinations of feeling that were known in the past, very instructive in this regard (cf. *HH I* 112,

of science is purely negative, as absence of woe. If Nietzsche had meant only this by joyful science, he would not have had to write *GS* at all.

37 "sie gaben mir zu verstehen, Das sei 'fröhlich' vielleicht, sicherlich aber nicht 'Wissenschaft'" (NL 1885/86, 2[166], KSA 12, 151).

KSA 2, 116). Reasonably, the same logic applies to the future and emerging affective constellations: we are unable to fully understand combinations that will be felt and thought of as natural by following generations. Against this background, Nietzsche's *GS* can be read as an intervention in the history of emotion *and* science. Such a reading would show how far beyond the tradition Nietzsche aimed with his conception of a joyful science. It suffices to take Nietzsche's ambition seriously, and to admit the possibility of such a reading, in order to reject Stegmaier's suggestion that the title must remain irritating out of necessity (cf. Stegmaier 2012, 45). When one takes account of Nietzsche's understanding of the historical nature of emotions and his orientation to the future, the title (though perhaps still irritating) no longer seems so startling, so surprising, so irritating.

That Nietzsche's writings are indeed marked by a fundamental orientation to the future can be established as a fact by an overview of the content of his philosophical works. From *BT* to the very last writings, Nietzsche's primary concern is to open up the present to future possibilities. This opening of possibilities of course also serves the present or emphatically the earthly present, as there is no escapism, no "other world" involved. After all, in what light the present moment and the past are seen and life is lived depends in great part on expectations, on the future horizon and specifically on what kind of futures are opened. Whether Nietzsche is really more concerned with the changes of perspective and affect that visions of both desirable and detestable futures have for this life or is genuinely concerned with future lives is an interesting problem of interpretation, but one that is not of concern to us here. What matters here is Nietzsche's praxis of opening possibilities through his writings. In *BT* Nietzsche bids farewell of philological-historical research and turns to future-oriented philosophy. What is at stake is not primarily the correct historical interpretation of the development of tragedy in Ancient Greece but the possibility of a birth of tragedy in his own time. The untimely meditations follow the pattern established by *BT*.³⁸ Nietzsche's turn to science in *HH* can be interpreted as a revaluation of scientific thinking as providing the most promising model on the path to a higher culture. *Daybreak* expects a new dawn. With the culmination of the free spirit -period in *GS* Nietzsche's play with expectations reaches a new height, only to be outmatched by the future-drunken rhetoric of the prophetic Zarathustra. This fundamental orientation is in no way weakened by the sobering up that followed the pathos of *Z*. The book that is entitled *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* is a case in point. Even the genealogy of morality is no mere historical work, but serves the future. The last writings explicitly affirm this orientation, as exemplified by his

³⁸ E.g. Nietzsche's fierce rejection of David Friedrich Strauss' later thinking derives in large part because Nietzsche finds there a rival ideal and idea of the future. In an unsent draft of a letter to an unknown recipient, dated August 1885, Nietzsche calls his untimely meditations promises ("*Versprechungen*", KGB III/3, Bf. 617), and adds that he has ever since been fulfilling his promises, which should perhaps be interpreted in the sense that he has been reaching for his "higher self" and that his books are testaments of his development.

bold statements that he writes for future readers, by which he means both temporally distant readers in a time yet to come as well as readers with future in them (A Foreword, KSA 6, 167; cf. KSA 6, 298).

To conclude, Nietzsche's GS is above all concerned with the future. Because of this fundamental orientation, Emerson and the troubadours serve Nietzsche at best only as precursors. Looking to the past does not help to fathom the joyful science. Instead, we should look to the radically new in Nietzsche's conception. Put differently: the text interprets the title (cf. Hödl 2009, 518). The combination of the words joyful/gay [*fröhlich*] and science [*Wissenschaft*] gains meaning only through the text. What should be pursued further, however, is not Nietzsche's use of these words in the text, but how the text as a whole embodies his understanding of joyful science. The next logical step is therefore to move forward to the motto.

5.3.2 The Emersonian motto

“Dem Dichter und Weisen sind alle Dinge befreundet und geweiht, alle Erlebnisse nützlich, alle Tage heilig, alle Menschen göttlich.” – Emerson (as Nietzsche quotes him in the motto, GS Title page, KSA 3, 343)

“To the poet, to the philosopher, to the saint, all things are friendly and sacred, all events profitable, all days holy, all men divine.” – Emerson (the original, from Emerson's essay “History”, cf. Emerson 1979, 8)

Why does Nietzsche open the joyful science with such a motto? What purpose does it serve? Perhaps it is enough to hear the question properly to find the answer. For is not the answer there? Does the motto not open the “joyful science”; its meaning and goal? A joyful mood of affirmation. Be that as it may, let us not jump to conclusions.

Following the tradition of Nietzsche-scholarship, the first thing to do is to turn to the source of the motto. As was the case with the pairing of the words joy and science, one can and must also in this case refer to Nietzsche's reading of Emerson. Although no certain clues can be gained thus, two issues about Nietzsche's relation to Emerson strike me as in need of further clarification. The first has received ample attention in scholarship, while the second has received none. Firstly, it is worth pointing out that the motto is not an exact rendering of the original. According to Brusotti, the differences are not insignificant; the most important difference being that instead of Emerson's three figures (poet, philosopher and saint), Nietzsche presents us with one figure, who is both poet [*Dichter*] and sage [*Weiser*]. Brusotti furthermore suggests that the merging of these two figures represents the union of joy (art) and science in the title, and that this explains why Nietzsche did not mention the saint (Brusotti 1997, 382). Given the resulting union of joy and science and considering the disparaging portrayal of saints in *HH* and *D*, it is tempting to think that Nietzsche intentionally chose not to replicate the exact wording and to leave the saint unmentioned instead. Though the difference is minimal, it is striking. If indeed GS is to a

great degree an attempt to establish the possibility of a post-Christian, post-religious mood of affirmation, then the exclusion makes even more sense. The motto could then be read as suggesting a possibility open only to those who, like Nietzsche, are willing to break new ground. Since the exact circumstances will forever remain unknown, there is not enough evidence to conclude with absolute certainty that Nietzsche's wording was intentional. After all, it might just as well have been a lapse of memory.³⁹ Whether or not one considers the omission of the saint in Nietzsche's motto significant, the inexactness is once again a reminder to be alert to the radically new in Nietzsche's appropriation of his sources.

Secondly, and this might add plausibility to the contention that the motto is "about" mood both in the sense that the motto speaks of an ideal mood and that this speaking of is meant to raise mood, Emerson had a highly original understanding of mood that guided his essayistic writing. Indeed, it is an understatement to say that mood played a major role in his thinking.⁴⁰ The decisive question is to what extent Nietzsche not only understood but was inspired by Emerson's thinking on mood through his intensive reading of the American thinker.⁴¹ Again, it is impossible even to reconstruct to what extent Nietzsche understood the specifics of the Emersonian conception of mood, as expressed most clearly in the essay "Experience", namely what has been called his "epistemology of moods" (Cavell 2003b, 11). All that is certain is that Nietzsche found Emerson related to him in the same way as he found the Upper Engadine, as a note from autumn 1881 attests. In this note he writes that he has never felt so at home in a book as with Emerson's essays.⁴² That this judgement was more than an exaggerated outburst of joy is proven by the fact that even when he has in 1883 become sceptical of Emerson's worth as thinker he still recognizes a brother-soul in the American (KGB III/1, Bf. 477). Suffice it to say that the Emersonian

39 In a note dated February–March 1882, Nietzsche quotes Emerson and does not fail to mention the saint: "*Emerson sagt mir nach dem Herzen: Dem Poeten dem Philosophen wie dem Heiligen sind alle Dinge befreundet und geweiht, alle Ereignisse nützlich, alle Tage heilig, alle Menschen göttlich.*" No far-reaching conclusions can be made on the basis of this note. On the one hand Nietzsche writes that Emerson speaks "*mir nach dem Herzen*", which suggests that Nietzsche endorses the entire sentence, but on the other hand the note is to be found under the title "*500 Aufschriften / auf Tisch und Wand / für Narrn / von / Narrenhand*" (NL 1882, 18[5], KSA 9, 673).

40 Cf. Stanley Cavell's characterization, which also is a masterpiece of understatement: "Emerson may be said to be a philosopher of moods" (Cavell 2003a, 26). In fact, Cavell places Emerson alongside Heidegger and himself as the only philosophers to have seriously considered the foundational role that moods play in understanding reality and consequently as the only philosophers to have understood the role that moods play in doing philosophy (Cavell 2003b, 11). What I suggest in this study is that one should at least consider adding Nietzsche to the list.

41 Nietzsche read both the first and second series of Emerson's essays in the German compilation and translation *Versuche* (Essays) by G. Fabricius, published in 1858. Nietzsche lost his first copy of the work, but bought another one in 1874, and in this surviving copy, all essays except "*Liebe*" are heavily annotated (Brobjer 2008, 119).

42 "*Emerson / Ich habe mich nie in einem Buch so zu Hause und in meinem Hause gefühlt als – ich darf es nicht loben, es steht mir zu nahe.*" (NL 1881, 12[68], KSA 9, 588)

view that all experience is filtered through moods⁴³ certainly has its parallels in Nietzsche's psychological thinking about felt experience and the perspectival nature of all knowledge. Besides that, both Emerson and Nietzsche understand their thinking as striving for a higher self, which is defined by a mood of supreme affirmation. In Emerson's essays, this idea of a higher self is the focus of the essay "Self-Reliance", but it also appears in the essay from which Nietzsche extracted the motto of GS. In that essay, entitled "History", that which all wisdom (all history, all nature) speaks of is the "unattained but attainable self" (Emerson 1979, 5). Finally, Emerson like Nietzsche, considered playfulness essential to his ideal: his genius "knows how to play" with the changing forms of life (Emerson 1979, 8). When one takes account of these parallels, one might be tempted to read the motto as expressing Nietzsche's agreement with the Emersonian ideal, yet that is precisely what one should not do. The motto is certainly an admission of kinship with Emerson, yet the ideal mood that Nietzsche has in mind cannot be equated with Emerson's, because his playfulness is something quite different from Emerson's. That which in my view most attests to the Emersonian background of the motto, yet also hints of this darker and more sinister playfulness, is how it begs the question: is that supreme state of affirmation really attainable, and if yes, at what cost?

At first glance, the motto might precisely for this reason seem unreasonable to one unaccustomed to Nietzsche's philosophy. But even a newcomer to Nietzsche should be able to note that there is more going on here than mere rhetorical embellishment: the motto is an invitation to entertain the possibility that there is a perspective, experience or mood, through which everything appears divine, and to read the work with this possibility in mind. The seasoned reader acquainted with the secondary literature, on the other hand, might think of Nietzsche's notorious use of hyperbole and then especially of self-aggrandizing hyperbole. Indeed, much of Nietzsche's writing relies on the skilled use of hyperbole, of exaggeration: his philosophy is "*essentially* hyperbolic" as Alexander Nehamas would have it (Nehamas 1985, 31) and this is nowhere more clear than in his self-depictions (cf. Hödl 2009). In this regard, one might question whether Nietzsche in the motto presents an ideal worth striving for or simply announces that this is the perspective, experience or mood that he has attained and from within which he writes. Precisely in this in-between movement, which continues in the text of GS, one can detect an element of play that comes close to mockery. The motto certainly has a playfulness to it that seems to shout: "be on your guard!"

Despite or rather because of this playfulness, the motto demands to be taken as seriously as anything in the book. In interpreting the motto, there are two credible options. Firstly, it can be read as a statement concerning a special, blessed moment in

⁴³ See e.g. the oft-quoted passage: "Life is a train of moods like a string of beads, and, as we pass through them, they prove to be many-colored lenses which paint the world their own hue, and each shows only what lies in its focus." (Emerson 1983, 30)

which the world appears perfect, without blemish. One could think of this as a momentary enlightenment, as an epiphany or even as a transportation into Dionysian ecstasy. Secondly, it can be read as referring to a (at least in principle) lasting perspective, felt as a life-affirming mood, inhabited by the one in whom joy and science are united. *GS* itself does not provide an unambiguous answer in the form of a decisive statement; one might even go as far as to claim that there is a conflict on this point in Nietzsche's thinking more generally.⁴⁴ I think the safest answer is that the two need not be thought of as mutually exclusive. Provisionally it is worth holding open the possibility that the motto speaks about more than a singular moment of affirmation, a blessed point in time. Such moments certainly play a role in Nietzsche's philosophy, but they too have value only insofar as they change one's being. In other words, it is plausible to assume provisionally that Nietzsche holds out a lasting change as possibility, though this need not be thought of as a constant habitation of a high mood. The motto certainly seems to suggest that striving towards such change is what the joyful science is about. As we shall soon see, one of the questions raised by the text itself is whether and under what conditions such a mood is attainable.

5.3.3 "Joke, Cunning and Revenge"

What role do the poems that follow the opening motto serve? As with the motto, one cannot avoid really thinking through the question why Nietzsche would include a collection of poems in a work that ostensibly has to do with science. As I have indicated earlier with respect to the title, traditions of scholarship strong in Nietzsche's day and arguably even stronger in ours predispose one to view the inclusion as problematic. One might think of the poems as added to the main body of the text as if they were not an important part of the text. Philosophers who write on *GS* tend to ignore the poems, and this is certainly reasonable if one is interested only in extracting and discussing particular ideas expressed in *GS*. If on the other hand one is interested in a contextual interpretation of the work or aspects of the work, the poems cannot be overlooked. In what way should the poems be recognized? There is reason to caution against taking the poems all too seriously in the sense of thinking that their value lies in their philosophical content.⁴⁵ Having sent some rimes (including

⁴⁴ See the entry "Augenblick/Moment" in the *Nietzsche-Wörterbuch* (Nietzsche Research Group 2004, 181–216; cf. Brusotti 1997, 522–523)

⁴⁵ E.g. Langer only focuses on the supposed philosophical content and symbolism of the poems (cf. Langer 2010, 14–25) Higgins is quite exceptional among Anglophone interpreters in her willingness to engage the poems as a special form of communication. Although she also comes close to treating the poems as arguments, she finally compares them to nursery rhymes and concludes that their aim is to lead the reader to a childlike state, a state of openness. The idea would seem to be that the reader first has to be lead back to a childlike state before being ready to embrace Nietzsche's philosophy (Higgins 2003, 14–41). While Higgins' reading is suggestive, and does pay attention to Nietzsche's

poem 13) to Köselitz, Nietzsche writes that he amuses himself with such things on his walks.⁴⁶ If the value of the poems is perhaps not to be found primarily in the philosophical content that they can be seen to express, might their value be found in the way they set the tone in which the aphorisms that compose the rest of the work are to be approached?

In the perspective opened up by the above question: the jocular poems serve as attunement, and in doing so they prepare the reader for the aphorisms that make up the rest of GS. They are an introduction,⁴⁷ in the musical sense. Just as a prelude [*Vorspiel*] of Wagner prefigures the dramatic action of the operatic acts, Nietzsche's introductory poems are filled with intratextual references to the aphorisms that follow. There is however even more to the prelude than that. One need but remind oneself that the German word for play is *Spiel*. In this sense, the poems are arguably not only to be seen as lighthearted play before start of the serious philosophizing, but as foretaste of the play proper. They give the reader a taste of things to come, of the style one is to expect. From this perspective, the aphoristic style of the following text appears as a continuation of the poetic. Although one might argue that the playfulness is more pronounced in the poems than in most of the aphorisms, it is hard to deny that the poems and the aphorisms partake of the same spirit, express the same sense of freedom that is indissociable from a certain fascination with irresponsibility and display the same self-conscious arrogance that borders on the insane. The first poem, entitled *Invitation* [*Einladung*], exemplifies this mood.

Take a chance and try my fare;
It will grow on you, I swear;
Soon it will taste good to you.
If by then you should want more,
All the things I've done before
Will inspire things quite new.
(Kaufmann 1974, 41; cf. GS Prelude, KSA 3, 353)

The mocking tone of the poem is evident from the start as it challenges the reader to dare to consume that which has been prepared. It is implied that the reader might not be quite up to the task (cf. Higgins 2003, 26; Langer overlooks this hint: Langer 2010, 15). Yet the reader might get used to the food being served, the diet prepared by Nietzsche, in which case there shall be more of it! What then, one is tempted to ask,

metaphors one might object to the direction that she leads these metaphors in her own argument by asking: does a child have a good bite in the sense that Nietzsche demands of his reader? (Cf. Poem 54, GS Prelude, KSA 3, 365.) Is a child independent?

⁴⁶ "Mit dergleichen unterhalte ich mich auf meinen Spaziergaengen." (KGB III/1, Bf. 202)

⁴⁷ In a letter to Salomé Nietzsche writes: "Ich bringe die Einleitung mit nach Berlin, welche als Überschrift hat 'Scherz, List und Rache' Vorspiel in deutschen Reimen." (KGB III/1, Bf. 241) Nietzsche wanted to present the poems as an introduction [*Einleitung*] literally leading into the aphorisms. They arguably do this as much if not more by leading into a mood than by introducing themes.

if one dares to taste Nietzsche's delicacies? Could it be that if one eats and manages to digest the food one can come to that all-embracing perspective that the motto speaks of, or at least approach it? Perhaps so, but is it not also the case that the reaction to food as to knowledge varies from individual to individual, i.e. that not everyone can digest everything? That some might be allergic to Nietzsche's goods? This recognition is the dark undercurrent of the joyful science; that which makes understanding the mood (joy) of the joyful science so crucial to understanding his critical project. Only when approached through a joyful mood does Nietzsche's project make sense. The element of play appears in a clearer light, when one takes into account Nietzsche's belief that the ingredients of his food can also lead to utter horror, repulsion and finally suicide (e.g. GS 107, KSA 3, 464; cf. HH I 34, KSA 2, 53–55). Therefore, the poem is mocking in an even more significant way. Nietzsche tempts the reader to dangerous experiments with himself, and in this sense Nietzsche here appears more as tempter than in any of his previous writings.

Invitation is not the only poem that builds on metaphors of consumption, food and digestion. Poems 1, 8, 24, 35, 39 and 54 all deal with such issues in one way or another. On the surface of it, these poems do not have much in common. However, they can all be read as referring intratextually to the idea of incorporation. Incorporation has rightly been identified as one of the most important philosophical issues in GS, specifically as the question to what extent one can incorporate knowledge in a way that allows life to flourish (cf. Franco 2011, 101–102). I will discuss incorporation in more detail in the next section. For now it suffices to note that Nietzsche requires of his readers the capacity to incorporate his message, namely to take time to read him carefully, to reread, to digest his words. Poem 54, *To my reader*, is directly addressed to the reader. Once again, the tone is mocking: Good teeth and a good stomach is what Nietzsche wishes his reader. This does not mean following Nietzsche blindly, as poems 7 and 23 make clear, but to turn Nietzsche's food into a source of energy for one's own development. If one thinks about the issue from the perspective of incorporation one comes to the conclusion that merely to ape Nietzsche, to do no more than repeat his words without thinking, does not speak of successful incorporation. It is not a sign of good digestion. In short, it is akin to throwing up.

Although Nietzsche thus suggests that successful incorporation does not lead to the creation of a cult of Nietzsche-followers, this does not mean that there would be no common effects to the incorporation of Nietzsche's thinking. One such effect is arguably the purification of feeling, which was an important goal in *D*. Since each individual has a different history and emotional constitution, this goal will result in widely differing trajectories. Therefore, the only fitting morality for those who accept Nietzsche's invitation to an experimental life is the star morals [*Sternen-Moral*] of poem 63, which concludes the poems: "But one command is yours: be pure!" (Kaufmann 1974, 69; GS Prelude, KSA 3, 367) The journey to one's own self, though it differs from the journey of all others who pursue their own selves, will perhaps eventually lead to a high mood of joyful affirmation, and though the exact nature of the mood will differ from person to person, all of Nietzsche's descriptions of

such a state suggest that it is in every case associated with a heightened feeling of power.

Now, we can conclude the preliminary examination and begin approaching the aphoristic text itself. As the main focus of the reading is on religion, the third book of *GS* is granted most attention. However, I will begin the examination with a broader overview starting from aphorism 1 and the notion of incorporation, which the preliminary investigation has suggested is important to the work as a whole.

5.4 On incorporation and joyful science

The very first aphorism of *GS*, entitled *The teachers of the purpose of existence*, not only contains the first mention of “incorporation” but also of “joyful science”. Undoubtedly, this coincidence can be used to defend the centrality of the notion of incorporation to the work. Yet it must not be overlooked that the first mention of “incorporation” appears suddenly and without further clarification in the context of a sarcastic discussion of those “teachers” who would have one believe that all of existence has a definite preordained *telos*. The perspective entertained by Nietzsche subsumes all efforts to direct human action toward a single goal under a drive to preserve the species [*Trieb der Arterhaltung*]. Nietzsche jokingly suggests that whatever in us that could really harm the species has perhaps already died out, and that therefore even the most life-denying teachings cannot but help serving this drive. Now the main concern of the aphorism is clearly not with providing unshakeable evidence for this “truth”, but rather to show what would follow if we were to accept this truth and let it guide our being; if this truth were to become conscious in us. If all of humanity would take this thought to heart, and would have incorporated⁴⁸ the idea that “the species is everything, *one* is always none”, then Nietzsche surmises that there might perhaps only be “gay science” left. (Kaufmann 1974, 73–76; *GS* 1, KSA 3, 369–372)

The suggestion is that if laughter and wisdom were to be united into a new mood, which might follow from the incorporation of a single shocking idea, then indeed all events would appear profitable, and a joyful irresponsible experimentation would be made possible. So the aphorism establishes a connection between the incorporation of specific ideas and joyful science. There is nevertheless not much to be learned about incorporation on the basis of the first aphorism: indeed, if the notion were not present in other aphorisms, it would remain entirely mysterious. The only certain conclusion that can be drawn is that Nietzsche ascribes incorporated ideas the power to change affect. So even if all purposive human behaviour would in fact serve the preservation of the species, the incorporation of at least some ideas can shape mental life in a dramatic way. The aphorism begs the question: Is the sen-

48 “*sich der Menschheit einverleibt hat*” (*GS* 1, KSA 3, 370).

tence “the species is everything, *one* is always none” what Nietzsche really wants humanity to incorporate? Is this what GS is about?

There is something curious and playful, if not outright inconsistent, about the way in which Nietzsche presents the idea of incorporation in the first aphorism. Even as Nietzsche mocks those who teach that life has a *telos*, he presents his critique within a teleological framework; namely within an objective teleology of species-preservation [*Arterhaltung*].⁴⁹ Of course, Nietzsche insists that such preservation happens by itself and without final goal (GS 1, KSA 3, 371), simply because preserving the species is the oldest of our drives. So it would seem that what Nietzsche is doing here is to replace misinterpretations of the drive to preserve the species with a more scientific interpretation, in the spirit of *HH* and *D*. This impression is complicated by Nietzsche's assertion that misinterpretations of said drive by ethical teachers has made humans “fantastic animals” that have developed a “need” for such teachers (GS 1, KSA 3, 372), a need for answers about ultimate questions regarding the purpose of existence. Importantly, Nietzsche does not even raise the question whether this presumably incorporated need is something that humanity can be rid of. Instead, he emphasizes that the need is not felt constantly, but takes hold of humanity from time to time. Furthermore, he identifies interpretations that give individual existence purpose as tragic, and interpretations of the human condition that do not as comic. On the one hand there is comic irresponsibility, on the other tragic seriousness. The result, with which the aphorism ends, is a vision of an ebb and flood of tragic and comic interpretations of existence (GS 1, KSA 3, 372).

Because Nietzsche presents his vision of a historical ebb and flood of tragic and comic interpretations in the opening aphorism, the idea has taken root in scholarship that GS itself would oscillate between tragic and comic perspectives. Not only do such interpretations ignore the fact that Nietzsche is speaking of entire historical epochs, they also fail to note how Nietzsche defines tragedy and comedy in the aphorism. Unlike interpreters who see an ebb and flood of tragic and comic perspectives within GS (Franco 2011, 109 and 127; Higgins 2003, 50), I do not think that one can contest the claim that the entirety of GS is comic following Nietzsche's understanding of comedy in aphorism 1.⁵⁰ Nietzsche is simply not in the business of providing ultimate goals for existence. As I will show, the first aphorism rather serves as a prime example of what could be called Nietzsche's “what if-style” in GS, which is closely related to the mood of the work. What characterizes this style is that there are no final answers to be found, and that one might be well advised to place a question mark even after those statements, where he himself does not. Instead of giving the reader clear directions or a sense of solid foundations, he bids the reader to provisionally inhabit perspectives that might provide fruitful, but which must be thrown

⁴⁹ Cf. Nietzsche's critique of *unnecessary* teleological principles (BGE 13, KSA 5, 27–28).

⁵⁰ One can of course even interpret GS as tragic through and through but then one has to employ an understanding of tragedy that differs greatly from Nietzsche's.

away once they have served their purpose. Werner Stegmaier has diligently and convincingly argued for the importance of this style for the entirety of *GS* and described how Nietzsche brings this method of questioning and tempting to perfection in the fifth book of *GS* (Stegmaier 2012). I here follow Stegmaier's lead when examining what Nietzsche seeks to achieve through his discussion of incorporation.

Nietzsche's "what if-style" is apparent in aphorism one, where one encounters the perspective of a narrative I, who again and again qualifies his words with a cautionary, yet tempting perhaps [*vielleicht*]. So instead of concluding that Nietzsche seriously suggests that the sentence "the species is everything, *one* is always none" should be incorporated, it is more plausible that he merely provisionally bids the reader, as a starting point, to entertain a perspective that allows one to view human life in a non-moral way.⁵¹ There could perhaps be many other ways to "gay science", other ways to the feeling of freedom that is required.⁵² Be that as it may, it is important to examine Nietzsche's use of the notion of incorporation carefully, in order to ascertain what function it serves in the critical project of *GS*. First, it is of course necessary to establish that the notion of incorporation indeed plays an important role in *GS*.

I emphasized that the idea of incorporation appears "out of the blue", suddenly and without clarification. In no way do I by that mean to suggest that the idea would be unimportant. Quite to the contrary, I find it plausible that the manner in which the idea is introduced reflects the importance Nietzsche attached to it. Instead of forcing the idea upon the reader through a sustained discussion at the start, Nietzsche is careful to introduce the idea gradually; to let the reader chew on it. Perhaps the rationale behind this manner of presenting has to do with an intuition on Nietzsche's part that one first has to accept the premise that ideas have such power before one is ready for all the implications that follow. In any case, the notion of incorporation reappears in aphorism 11; now as a grand task to incorporate knowledge (*GS* 11, KSA 3, 382–383). After this Nietzsche returns to the question now and then in book one. Besides aphorisms explicitly mentioning the notion (*GS* 21, KSA 3, 392 and *GS* 43, KSA 3, 410) other aphorisms express the same idea in other words (*GS* 9, KSA 3, 381 and *GS* 54, KSA 3, 417) or implicitly rely on the idea to make sense (e.g. *GS* 18, KSA 3, 389–390 and *GS* 44, KSA 3, 410–11). What has been said about book one also applies to book two. Aphorism 57, the opening aphorism of book two, provides the foundation for the remainder of the book with its discussion of the proper way to engage incorporated errors (*GS* 57, KSA 3, 421–422). The reader has to wait until book

51 Higgins also suggests that Nietzsche merely provisionally presents that perspective but gives no convincing explanation why the aphorism should be read that way, other than that it is an example of Nietzsche's perspectivism (cf. Higgins 2003, 45–46).

52 Arguably, art is precisely for this reason an important ally and component of joyful science. In aphorism 107, Nietzsche writes of his indebtedness to all joyful arts, because he sees in art the same freedom of rising above morality: "*Freiheit über den Dingen ... welche unser Ideal von uns fordert*", specifically "*über der Moral stehen können*" (*GS* 107, KSA 3, 465).

three for a more revealing elaboration of the notion: this is accomplished in aphorisms 110, 111 and 113 (GS 110, KSA 3, 469–471; GS 111, KSA 3, 471–472; GS 112, KSA 3, 472–473). It is also in book three that the idea is at its most important; many an aphorism can only be misunderstood if one doesn't take the notion of incorporation into account. This is most importantly the case with the parable of the Madman (GS 125, KSA 3, 480–482), which I discuss in detail in section 5.5. While the notion is not as present in book four as in the previous books, it returns with force in aphorism 341 with the challenge to incorporate the idea of Eternal Recurrence (GS 341, KSA 3, 570).

In light of this evidence, it has to be concluded that incorporation plays an important role in *GS*, but one should be careful not to exaggerate the originality of the notion.⁵³ The ideas that go into the concept of incorporation are nothing new for Nietzsche: the idea of incorporation is not what is special about *GS*. Essentially, Nietzsche's discussion of incorporation is a continuation of his thinking in *HH* and *D* about the power of historical forces to shape our lives. As such, the concept is nevertheless of great interest to the question of affective reorientation. I therefore provisionally treat incorporation as a key to the text. There is also another reason to consider incorporation a key to *GS*: Nietzsche's discussions of incorporation can be interpreted as a commentary on the text within the text, i.e. as meta-commentary. Through his discussions of incorporation, Nietzsche reminds the reader of the possibility to incorporate the knowledge that he presents in his text. A case in point would be the thought of "Eternal Recurrence", which I discuss in section 5.6. Besides being invaluable as a key to understanding *GS*, the possibility of incorporation is intriguing in itself as a new metaphor to grasp the relation between conscious thought and the body. Neither *HH* nor *D* provided any clear answers on that issue, so it is worth paying attention to how Nietzsche's thinking has advanced in *GS*.

Aphorism 11, *Consciousness*, at first sight presents us with a puzzle. Consciousness, Nietzsche claims, is weak. As the most recent development of organic nature, its power is very limited indeed compared to the instincts (= drives), many of which it is implied have structured our lives for countless years. However, the task to incorporate knowledge is presented as a task that is dependent on developing and utilizing consciousness. There is a tension between these statements, but there is no fundamental contradiction here. In fact, the aphorism itself provides the necessary clues to solve the puzzle. For the task which is described as requiring requires conscious effort and involves "making knowledge instinctive" is also presented as a task that is as of yet only grasped by an avantgarde, who perceive that only errors have been incorporated thus far. Thus far, Nietzsche muses, the organism has protected itself from the dangers inherent in the development of consciousness.⁵⁴ In a move not lacking

⁵³ Arguably, this is what Paul Franco does (cf. Franco 2011, 101–102).

⁵⁴ Nietzsche here relies on the idea that any specific function is a danger to the organism until it is fully developed, "*ausgebildet und reif*" (GS 11, KSA 3, 382).

irony, Nietzsche particularly singles out pride as having served this protective function. Pride in being conscious, in possessing consciousness, has led to overestimating the power of consciousness and thus prevented humanity from feeling a need to actively develop consciousness (GS 11, KSA 3, 382–383).

That too much consciousness too soon could have catastrophic consequences in the sense that it would not serve life is an assertion that forms the background of the more informative aphorisms in book three. In aphorism 110, *Origin of knowledge*, Nietzsche explicitly states that the key question of thinking life is now to what extent truth can be incorporated (GS 110, KSA 3, 471). Are there truths that cannot be incorporated? Are some errors necessary? To answer what Nietzsche specifically had in mind when raising such questions one has to look beyond his hyperbolic statement that only errors have been incorporated thus far. What are the errors like that have been incorporated? Nietzsche identifies a handful of basic errors [*Grundirrhümer*] that the intellect has produced, among them: “that there are enduring things, that there are equal things, that there are things, substances, and bodies, that a thing is what it appears, that our will is free, that what is good for me is also good absolutely” (Kaufmann 1974, 169; GS 110, KSA 3, 469). He then advances what could be called an evolutionary explanation: errors are incorporated insofar as they serve the survival of the species and those errors, which prove their value over generations, become a part of us. Nietzsche provides an example of such incorporation in the following aphorism, which deals with the origin of logic. There he speculates that those individuals who did not perceive change acutely had an advantage over those who saw everything as flux (GS 111, KSA 3, 472).

The point is that even errors can serve life, but Nietzsche’s talk of errors should not be taken without a grain of salt. Far more than making factual claims, Nietzsche is in these aphorisms trying to cultivate a certain sensibility; a sceptical awareness. This is clear from the emphasis of aphorism 121, in which Nietzsche lists phenomena such as cause and effect or movement and rest as articles of faith [*Glaubensartikel*] that serve life. The emphasis is here not on the supposed errors but on the conclusion that it could be the case that such errors are a necessary condition of life as we know it (GS 121, KSA 3, 477–478).⁵⁵ The word “could” [*könnte*], must not be overlooked. Nietzsche’s extreme examples about perception are apt to raise the question: if our perception of nature is so distorted, what about our cherished values? In this sense, Nietzsche’s historical narrative tempts the reader to embark on a philosophical journey to himself. According to Nietzsche, the pursuit of knowledge and truth arises only later against the background of error; and only becomes a powerful force once it proves that it too can serve life. It is now in the thinker that the life-preserving errors and the equally life-advancing drive for truth clash; hence the task to incorporate knowledge and the question to what extent truth stands [*verträgt*] to be incorporated (GS 110, KSA 3, 470–471).

55 “unter den Bedingungen des Lebens könnte der Irrthum sein” (GS 121, KSA 3, 477–478).

If Nietzsche indeed would seek to replace the kind of incorporated errors he has described with truths, on what grounds could he possibly base his task? If our everyday perceptions are always already shaped by past incorporated errors, how could truth be distinguished from error? An important clue can be found in aphorism 112, which immediately follows the discussion on incorporation in the preceding aphorisms. There, amidst a discussion of cause and effect, Nietzsche writes that it is enough to consider science an attempt to provide as good a picture of the world as it appears to humans (GS 112, KSA 3, 473),⁵⁶ which at least allows us to describe ourselves better. Nietzsche seems to suggest that there is no way to correct the basic errors that influence perception, but there could be a path leading to a more true perspectival understanding of ourselves and the world. To pursue this idea further, it is best return to book two, which contains the clearest statements in this direction.

The critique of realists, in aphorism 57, the opening of book two, is instructive in this regard (GS 57, KSA 3, 421–422). Nietzsche's target is a kind of common-sense realism in the sense of a sober view on the world. Some scholars have sought to specify the target of Nietzsche's criticism, and indeed it is near at hand to mention the realist trend in literature and the arts, but such efforts essentially lead nowhere. There were certainly a great many men and almost as many women in the 19th century who considered themselves realists and this is what Nietzsche aims at.⁵⁷ So Nietzsche in his playfully mocking way puts the self-understanding of those who deem themselves realists to the test. This he does by suggesting that for all their love of truth and all their desire to see reality as it is, these realists remain trapped in the passions, errors and valuations of past centuries. It is above all else in the love of reality, a love which Nietzsche assumes animates even the most sober realist, that the real trouble lies; the trouble with the real. This love is an archaic drunkenness, which colours every sensation, every perception of the realist (GS 57, KSA 3, 421). This point is phenomenological: our reality is a felt reality, our very sense of reality is always shaped by our affects. There is no escape from this condition, unless it were possible to shed the entire history of one's animality and humanity, which Nietzsche of course does not think is the case, as his mocking challenge to the realists reveals: if only they could arrive at pure knowledge! [*Ja, wenn ihr das könntet!*] Where does this lead Nietzsche? The comparison with common-sense realism is not meant to be a mere feast of mockery, but is crucially meant to point out the direction of his own project of incorporation. The final sentences of the aphorism are revealing in this regard, as they contend that perhaps the will to move beyond a drunken love of reality should be considered as venerable as the realist's belief of being incapable of any drunkenness (GS 57, KSA 3, 422). How should this will be understood?

⁵⁶ "möglichst getreue Anmenschlichung der Dinge" (GS 112, KSA 3, 473).

⁵⁷ "ihr nennt euch Realisten und deutet an, so wie euch die Welt erscheine, so sei sie wirklich beschaffen" (GS 57, KSA 3, 57).

It should be clear by now that Nietzsche's task of incorporating knowledge should not be envisaged as an attempt to view reality "as it is" by stripping away illusions and replacing them with a "realistic" picture of the world. Admittedly, an important first step in the process is to become aware of the extent to which basic errors might shape our sense of "truth". Perhaps one could go as far as to venture the claim that it is a call to cultivate a conscious way of being in which the world as it appears to us is not taken for granted as a solid foundation for knowledge. This is already a heroic task. The incorporation of knowledge would however not be the key task of the *gaya scienza* if it were also not a joyful task. The destruction of one's basic trust in the world as it appears in one's consciousness is only the beginning. Only as creators, Nietzsche insists, can we destroy (GS 58, KSA 3, 422). To simplify: instead of only taking illusions away from a thing, one has to put something new into it. He presents this general argument in a manner that allows him to draw on his philological expertise. He specifically pays attention to the way we speak of things and compares the words we use to designate things to clothes that do not necessarily fit. The name itself might already reveal a valuation; in the way we speak about things different words carry a different weight. As language is transmitted from generation to generation, Nietzsche claims that it is as if valuations become a part of the thing itself. He then concludes that giving new names, attaching new valuations to names, associating words with new probabilities will in due time produce new "things" (GS 58, KSA 3, 422).

In other words, one cannot do away with reality by pointing to the distant and dubious origins of our current understanding of reality. What is required is creative reinterpretation, more fitting descriptions, out of which new "things" are born. Creative reinterpretations, whether they are of a scientific, moral or artistic character, must be incorporated in order to survive. While neither Nietzsche's own elaborations nor the scholarly literature (e.g. Pippin 2010, Brusotti 1997, Franco 2011) are of much help in determining how exactly the task of incorporating knowledge is to be understood, Nietzsche's own examples that I have been discussing imply a long-term process of cultural transmission over generations. At times he does however use the term incorporation in a far less demanding sense, e.g. he speaks of translations of literature as attempts at incorporation (GS 83, KSA 3, 438–439). All in all, it is questionable whether Nietzsche wants us to think that incorporating knowledge can have any significant impact on the basic errors that supposedly distort perception, because those errors could be argued to be part of our "nature" in a different sense than specific names for things. Instead of once more raising the question about Nietzsche's possible Lamarckianism, I find it more useful to return to the first aphorism and the question, what use Nietzsche makes of the notion of incorporation.

In aphorism 1, Nietzsche is concerned with the incorporation of a specific idea for its putative effect; it might enable a union of laughter and wisdom. Nietzsche uses the notion of incorporation insofar as it supports a specific joyful mood, through which the idea of life as an experiment appears eminently desirable. Nietzsche is not concerned with incorporation in itself and therefore it is no wonder

that no theory can be drawn from his discussion. It is not a theoretical interest that guides his discussion, but a practical one. Nietzsche is above all concerned with incorporation, when it facilitates affective reorientation. Therefore, it is only to be expected that he concentrates more on errors that are easier to be rid off than the basic errors, but still make a big difference. One need only be alert to how the discussion of incorporated errors in book three seamlessly turns from the domain of nature to questions of morality and from there to religion, a transition which I will reflect on in more detail in the following section, to see that Nietzsche in fact follows such a strategy. Incorporation is just another word that Nietzsche uses to describe the power of historical forces. As such, the notion is certainly of utmost importance for a proper understanding of Nietzsche's criticism of religion and specifically his attack on Christianity. Since Nietzsche thinks that Christianity has been incorporated, his criticism of religion takes the peculiar form that it does in book three of *GS*.

5.5 Book three and the Madman

The third book of *GS* is well-known for its criticism of religion; which focuses specifically on European Christianity and its legacy in atheism. As such, book three might mistakenly be taken to be "dead serious". There is no small risk that "tragic" interpretations of the parable of the Madman and the death of God are allowed to inform the reading of the entire book. In this sense, Paul Franco characterizes the book as a "return from art and gaiety to science and tragedy" (Franco 2011, 127). While book three might at first sight seem graver in comparison with the preceding book, it does remain playful throughout (cf. Higgins 2000, 95). In other words, the playful element is not only present in the latter part of the book, which begins with aphorism 153 and consists of shorter aphorisms, but is rather constitutive of Nietzsche's style of presentation. More importantly, book three is comic in the sense of aphorism 1, as Nietzsche evidently does not seek to provide human life with any general meaning. That this is indeed the case is clear from the nature of the task presented in the opening aphorism,⁵⁸ which for the first time mentions that God is dead:

108. *New struggles*. – After Buddha was dead, his shadow was still shown for centuries in a cave – a tremendous, gruesome shadow. God is dead; but given the way of men, there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown. – And we – we still have to vanquish his shadow, too. (Kaufmann 1974, 167; *GS* 108, KSA 3, 467)

Whether one considers Nietzsche's imagery comic in the more common sense of the word is a matter of taste. What is of greater significance is that the task to defeat the

⁵⁸ One can say that the first aphorism presents the program of book three, in the sense that the entire book is best read as being about the fight against the shadows of God (Schellong 1989, 343; cf. Hödl 2009, 407).

shadows of God is above all the task to fight against attempts to replace God with a new instance that would give objective meaning to existence. In aphorism 109, *Let us beware*, Nietzsche explicitly warns against treating the world as if there were more meaning in it than that which humans put into it, i.e. as if there were objective meaning in it. Imbuing the world with objective meaning, Nietzsche insists, is akin to divinizing nature. There is undoubtedly something comic in the manic tempo in which Nietzsche lists a great variety of misleading metaphors through which we view the chaos that is the world, though it is hard to say if the comic effect is intentional. One example must suffice to illustrate how far Nietzsche goes in his criticism: He writes that we should beware of speaking of laws of nature as there is no lawgiver in nature, only necessity. Nietzsche's problem with such metaphors would seem to be that they contain evaluations, either praise or blame. Such metaphors are in his words shadows of God, and it is clear from his litany that he sees them everywhere. The discussion in the following aphorisms on incorporation does suggest that there might be errors that are necessary for life, but Nietzsche nowhere suggests that seeing purpose in nature is one of them. Instead, he ends the aphorism by looking forward to a time when this new view of nature bereft of meaning will be used to naturalize "us humans" (GS 109, KSA 3, 467–469).

Much has been made of Nietzsche's choice of words; of the fact that he speaks of naturalizing humanity.⁵⁹ It follows from the context of his use of the word that he is here primarily referring to the task of removing excess meaning from "the human". Nietzsche's task could thus be understood as a logical extension of the scientific picture of nature that he has painted to the picture that is humanity. As there is no absolute meaning in the universe, there is no absolute meaning in human life (cf. Schellong 1989, 343). Consequently, there is also no absolute certainty. Least of all is there certainty in moral or religious matters. Though Nietzsche rhetorically asks when that time will come when one is allowed to start naturalizing humanity, he himself doesn't wait (for permission), but quickly moves on to anthropological questions. It is as if the mere suggestion of nature as chaos without a higher purpose is enough to begin the task.

Indeed, it is worth noting the structure of the discussion that leads up to the Madman's announcement that God is dead, which in dramatic form confronts the reader with the new meaningless world by juxtaposing it to the orientation that used to be provided by God. Initially Nietzsche gives a foretaste of that which is to come in the opening aphorism of book three, in which he suggests that there are new battles to be fought. After the discussion on incorporation that follows the thematization of the shadows of God, Nietzsche stealthily turns the discussion to morality through aphorism 114 and those aphorisms that follow it. Here we finally seem

⁵⁹ E.g. Nietzsche's words about naturalizing humanity here and in his other writings are used by Brian Leiter as justification for his view that Nietzsche was a naturalist who thought that all human action should ideally be explained in terms of type-facts (Leiter 2002, 6–8 and 26).

to approach the main target of Nietzsche's discussion of the incorporation of errors, namely Christian morality and belief in God. In other words, there is a steady progression from nature to a naturalized morality and finally to the announcement by the Madman that God is dead.

Nietzsche effectively pauses the preceding discussions on nature and morality in aphorism 124, in order to show where the search of knowledge has led, where the free spirit stands, which is *In the horizon of the infinite*. The free spirit is faced with an open horizon, with an endless sea. Here begins the test of the character of the free spirit, as Nietzsche suggests that there will come a time when the free spirit who had felt so free realizes that there is nothing as terrible as infinity, and feels his freedom diminished. Nietzsche does not specify what is so terrible about infinity, but it is plausible to think that he wants to draw attention to how his or the free spirit's thirst for knowledge will never be stilled, his quest never comes to an end, there is no harbour in which to dock – and this might be felt as being compelled to move onward – as lack of freedom, not as a freely chosen movement. That this is indeed the case, and that it is a test of character is proven by Nietzsche's final words of mockery: "Woe when you feel homesick for the land as if it had offered more freedom – and there is no longer any 'land.'"⁶⁰ (Kaufmann 1974, 180–181; GS 124, KSA 3, 480)

Against this background, GS 125 might fruitfully be approached as another test.⁶¹ For there the reader is confronted with the thought of what used to be infinity, what used to be the horizon and consequently with the question, whether his journey truly is taking him towards heightened feelings of freedom and power or whether he will not fall into despair when he fully understands what he has lost. In this regard, it is tempting to think of the aphorism not as a free-standing oddity but as a direct continuation of the preceding discussions and the test that GS 124 presents. Such a perspective would also reveal a new connection between GS 125 and the greatest of the tests in the whole work; namely the test that is the thought of Eternal Recurrence (GS 341).⁶² Be that as it may, there is still something about these tests that has to be clarified before moving on to the Madman. Why does Nietzsche test himself and the reader thus? That Nietzsche devises such tests is only fully understandable when one takes account of the role that mood plays in Nietzsche's thinking and in the composition of GS. One could think of them as experiments, which allow himself

⁶⁰ This is one of those cases where Kaufmann's translation (nearly) fails to capture Nietzsche's sense, as the original final sentence ends with an exclamation mark (!), i.e. a more clear challenge to the reader.

⁶¹ Dieter Schellong has emphasized that the passage is meant to provoke and that the words of the Madman should be read as a challenge to the reader (cf. Schellong 1989, 341). I will here refine this idea.

⁶² Hödl has in some detail explored what he interprets as a thematic connection between GS 125 and Eternal Recurrence from the perspective of their history of creation [*Entstehungsgeschichte*], which means that Hödl shows, by drawing mostly on unpublished notes and plans, that the announcement that God is dead is intimately related to Nietzsche's reflections on the possibility of a new kind of teaching that enhances life without relying on absolute authority (Hödl 2009, 400–408).

and the reader to test to what extent they are capable of affirming their free spirited existence, to what extent they are carried onward by a mood of joyful affirmation towards yet higher moods.

5.5.1 Introduction to GS 125, *The Madman*

“Have you not heard of that Madman”, are the opening words of GS 125, *The Madman* [*Der tolle Mensch*] (GS 125, KSA 3, 480). One should mark these first words carefully, for they do not simply invite the reader to listen to a story. They also draw the reader into a fictional situation, in which the reader listens to a narrative as if he or she were a contemporary of the narrator. The narrative voice is part of the world of the Madman, but is it the Madman himself who recounts his story? The opening words certainly suggest a subtle difference between the voice of the narrator and that of the Madman, but more important than establishing a clear difference is to note the fictionality of the narrative voice. It is of course ultimately Nietzsche who speaks, but through a mask. Any interpretation that does not take the fictionality of the situation into account necessarily becomes a retelling or continuation of the story. To a certain extent all interpretation are continuations of the story, but there is a fundamental difference between the meta-perspective of a properly critical approach that recognizes the narrative as narrative fiction (cf. Hödl 2009, 363)⁶³ and more direct or naïve approaches. With this in mind, we are ready to move on through a summary of the original story in GS:

The Madman goes to the market place and cries, “I seek god! I seek god!”, and as it happens there are quite a few of those present who do not believe in God. These respond mockingly to the Madman’s cry, they make fun of his search for God, until he jumps right into their midst and interrupts their fun by launching into a pathetic speech in which he most importantly 1) accuses his hearers and himself of having murdered God, 2) seeks to affect his hearers with a sense of loss and finally 3) hints at what is to be done to move onward and falls silent. At this point his hearers also fall silent. Thereupon the Madman announces that his time has not yet come, and the narrator recounts that it is told [*Man erzählt noch*] that the Madman broke into churches on that day to sing his *Requiem aeternam Deo*. When thrown out, the Madman reportedly answers by asking what all churches are now other than graves of God. (GS 125, KSA 3, 480 – 482)

⁶³ Much has been made of the sources Nietzsche potentially used in crafting the narrative. Once again, no single source provides a key to the interpretation of the passage, nor does dwelling on passages in Nietzsche’s earlier works that purportedly express the thought that God is dead through narrative fiction (cf. Hödl 2009, 394) lead to any significant clues (cf. Hödl 2009, 400 and Brusotti 1997, 389). In this regard, it is arguably far more instructive to carefully follow the general trajectory of Nietzsche’s criticism of religion and read the passage in that context.

The secondary literature has rightly paid much attention to the dramatic tension between the Madman and the atheists of the marketplace. Unfortunately, there has also been an obsession to identify both the atheists and the Madman to make them more graspable. The atheists are most often read as representing enlightenment atheism (Pippin 2010, 51). Perhaps a bit more true to Nietzsche, Higgins writes that the atheists represent “contemporary atheistic society” or simply “modern” men (Higgins 2003, 101–102). All of these attempts to specify who the atheists are, to give them an identity, involve overinterpretation.⁶⁴ I think it is far more fruitful to respect the fictional character of the atheists and to analyse what role they play in the story. So let us simply call them the marketplace atheists and see how Nietzsche himself portrays them. As has been pointed out by scholars, the Madman directs his words at an audience with which one does not need to argue whether God is dead or not (Schellong 1989, 341; cf. Hödl 2009, 462). What is important to the narrative is that there is still something that is lacking in these atheists, but precisely what that is can only be answered through an analysis of that enigmatic figure who through his deeds make their lack apparent. The decisive moment in this regard is when the atheists fall silent and look at the Madman with bewildered eyes. What is the lack that the Madman has made apparent? Is it perhaps the lack of God and a hidden desire for God that the Madman has made them feel with his invocation of the search for God? Or is it perhaps a deficient understanding of the consequences of the death of the Christian God? The only certain thing is that it is suggested that a mere denial of the existence of God is not satisfactory.

It is even more problematic when one does not recognize the fictionality of the figure of the Madman. “The Madman is Nietzsche and expresses Nietzsche’s inmost thoughts.” Thus, scores of readers have without a doubt reasoned when faced with the words of the Madman.⁶⁵ I here intend to show that equating the Madman to Nietzsche in any straightforward manner is to make things easier than they are and that accepting that presupposition does away with much of the challenge involved in interpreting the passage. Specifically it goes against the grain of contextual interpretation. Consequently, I will argue that interpretations that are premised on the interchangeability of Nietzsche and the Madman ignore the context of *GS* 125 within the work and therefore suffer from distortion. To be absolutely clear, I do not mean to deny that scholars who have made such claims have made important contributions to the discussion about the passage. To the contrary, much can be gained by taking interpretations that do not distinguish the Madman and Nietzsche seriously. I will therefore emphasize what I take to be the relative merits of two theses of the kind alluded to above.

⁶⁴ To be strict, even using the word atheist is questionable, since it is only spoken of people who do not believe in God. I take it to be fairly uncontroversial to use that term, as long as one leaves the precise identity unspecified.

⁶⁵ Karl Jaspers espoused this view (Jaspers 1981, 431) and it echoes forth in scholarship to this day (e.g. Janz 1978 II, 108 and Düsing 2010, 44–45).

I will begin by examining a thesis that most blatantly contradicts my own interpretation; namely that the Madman's words are an expression of Nietzsche's desire for God. Then I will examine a more subtle thesis that also rests on the premise that the Madman speaks directly for Nietzsche; namely the thesis that GS 125 expresses his desire to be God. Though these theses have much in common and are often presented in tandem,⁶⁶ they can be presented as rivals, so I will treat them separately in their pure forms. Only after having weighed the merits and drawbacks of these related theses, will I finally present an alternative interpretation, premised on the fictional nature of the narrative and centred on the claim that Nietzsche strategically uses the "death of God" as a test.

5.5.2 Nietzsche, the Madman and desire for God

The Madman, as Nietzsche presents him, does indeed appear to be an agitated being. On a not uncommon reading, the Madman expresses Nietzsche's sincere devastation at having lost God (e.g. Düsing 2010, 44–45). Karl Jaspers explicitly speaks of the cry "God is dead!" as an expression of Nietzsche's shock [*Ausdruck seiner Erschütterung*] (Jaspers 1981, 431). This devastation is then linked with desire for God, for in the view that is of concern here there can be no other explanation for the sense of loss that the Madman embodies than a strong yet frustrated desire for God. Again, Jaspers provides a good albeit extreme example of this point of view when he writes that even when Nietzsche resists the impulse toward transcendence, he in fact cannot help but seek transcendence (Jaspers 1981, 432). Based on this assertion, Jaspers finally concludes that Nietzsche's atheism is the expression of a search for God that no longer recognizes itself for what it really is (Jaspers 1981, 433).⁶⁷ Such interpretations, according to which Nietzsche was and remained a God-seeker [*Gottsuchender*], can for textual support point to the Madman's cry "I seek God! I seek God!" on the one hand, and his evocation of a sense of loss that culminates in his *Requiem aeternam Deo* on the other. One can of course question whether the emphasis on these aspects of the passage at the expense of others is justified, but the most important critical question is whether the presuppositions about Nietzsche and the Madman's condition that the interpretation relies on are defensible.

There are two major problems with the "Desire for God-interpretation". The first and most serious problem is that the interpretation is inextricably tied to a strong claim about Nietzsche as person. Though scholars who support the interpretation invariably refer to Nietzsche's biography, there are reasons to question whether the claim can be based on biographical facts. Note that it would not be enough to estab-

⁶⁶ E.g. a presumed desire to be God can be read as misinterpreted desire for God (e.g. Düsing 2010, 64–65).

⁶⁷ "Daher ist Nietzsches Gottlosigkeit die sich steigende Unruhe eines sich vielleicht nicht mehr ver-
stehenden Gottsuchens." (Jaspers 1981, 433)

lish that Nietzsche now and then felt a longing to return to the faith of his youth or anything of that sort. The claim presupposes a much stronger affective orientation,⁶⁸ if it is to do the work required of it, i.e. if it is to guide the interpretation of GS 125 in particular and Nietzsche's philosophy of religion in general. Just how problematic interpretations of the passage that rely on the idea that the Madman expresses Nietzsche's desire for God are, can be seen when one instead of basing one's interpretation on that idea asks the question: Did mister Nietzsche have an acute desire for God that defines his philosophical pursuits? The only scholarly answer that can be given to the question is that this cannot be known for sure, since it is ultimately a question of interpreting Nietzsche's inmost desires. In this case it is not even of much use to point out that neither Nietzsche's philosophical writings nor his own self-interpretations suggest that his philosophizing could be subsumed under a religious impulse, if Jaspers really is onto something when he claims Nietzsche no longer recognized his driving impulse for what it was. In that case, nothing that Nietzsche himself writes about issues relevant to the question really matters in the end. Therefore, what one has to ask is this: is Jaspers a better interpreter of Nietzsche's desires than Nietzsche himself? Though Jaspers might be right, after all that possibility cannot be excluded, his assumption is unwarranted. The primary issue would here not seem to be whether the available evidence supports his interpretation or not, but whether any amount of evidence could either verify or falsify it. His hermeneutical procedure is rather reminiscent of certain philosophical and theological perspectives that see desire for God in each and every human action. Or as Nietzsche himself bluntly put it: through a false psychology one can turn everything into metaphysical need (NL 1877, 22[107], KSA 8, 399).

If the decision that grounds Jaspers' interpretation and other interpretations that rest on the same premise is such a fundamental philosophical commitment that it seems to be, how should we who are concerned with the interpretation of GS 125 move onward? If the question cannot be settled by referring to Nietzsche's writings, it would seem that an engagement with Jasper's claim falls outside the domain of Nietzsche-scholarship proper. There is, however, no need to start a fundamental discussion concerning philosophical anthropology. Instead of rejecting such interpretations of GS 125 on philosophical grounds, however untenable their foundations seem to us, one can ask about their consequences for understanding the rest of GS. More than any other approach, this strategy is apt to show that interpretations that identify Nietzsche with the Madman and diagnose both with a misunderstood desire for God are implausible. Before I advance an alternative contextual interpretation of GS 125, I will engage a second significant problem with the desire for God -interpretation.

⁶⁸ Although Düsing also refers to Nietzsche's biography, she seems to be aware that this is not enough to ground the claim. To supplement biographical trivia, she asserts that Nietzsche's desire for God must have been mostly unconscious and actively repressed by him until it finally broke through simultaneously with his madness (cf. Düsing 2010, 65).

The second major problem with the “Desire for God-interpretation” concerns the exact nature of the devastation that the cry “God is dead!” is associated with, and the link between this presumed devastation and desire for God. Could there not be a better explanation for the pathos of the Madman than that it is an expression of Nietzsche’s own devastation and desire for God? On what grounds can the Madman’s response be associated with desire for God in the first place, irrespective of whether one identifies the figure with Nietzsche or not? Can there be no reason to be alarmed at some of the consequences of the death of God even if one is not moved by desire for God? Perhaps there are other alternatives, but let us entertain the thought that there are not, for a while, and begin by looking more closely at the Madman’s condition. For whether we do or do not take the Madman to express Nietzsche’s own devastation, the task to describe its nature is an important one for any interpretation. It is after all possible that scholars who see desire for God in the Madman’s behaviour have diagnosed the Madman correctly, even if they then too quickly identify the Madman with Nietzsche. Therefore, the task commands our attention.

5.5.2.1 A story of loss and grief?

Though much of the pathos of the Madman’s speech derives from his claim that he and those he directs his words at have murdered God, the accent is still squarely placed on the loss and not on the murder. This is clear when the Madman asks how on earth the murder was committed, as he then goes on to impart a sense of loss on his hearers through rich metaphors that all express the centrality that the notion of God once had; especially for orientation (cf. Hödl 2009, 428). The key metaphors here are the sea, which has been drunk dry, the sun, from the gravity of which the earth has liberated itself, and the horizon, which has been wiped away. The Madman concludes this litany by one last time emphasizing that the holiest and mightiest that belonged to the world has bled to death (GS 125, KSA 3, 481). Whereas the Madman fails to describe how God was murdered, he does not fail to communicate a sense of loss (cf. Hödl 2009, 447). To this can be added that the ending of the passage (*Requiem aeternam Deo*) at least suggests the possibility of rituals of mourning for the dead God (GS 125, KSA 3, 482). It is therefore understandable that the passage has been read as a story of grief. To mention one prominent and telling example, even Higgins who otherwise emphasizes the comic aspects of book three reads Nietzsche/the Madman as calling for a “period of grieving” following the death of God (Higgins 2000, 95). If the passage is read as a story of loss and grief, how should the grief of the Madman be understood? Does Nietzsche actively call for a period of grieving or will those confronted by the knowledge of the Madman inevitably fall into grief? Is the response represented by the Madman paradigmatic for all of humanity or only one alternative among others?

In order to cast light on the scholarly discussion about the Madman’s grief, I will draw on contemporary research on loss, grief and resilience. The point is not to advance some anachronistic claim about Nietzsche’s intentions, but to problematize

what has been written about the Madman's response to the death of God. The most important finding of the scientific study of grief is that there are many ways that humans respond to loss (Bonanno 2004, 20; cf. Bonanno, Westphal and Mancini 2011). Crucially there is no such thing as an ideal pattern of coping with loss, which would set off with shock and move through a set of stages until grief is slowly but surely overcome. The story used to be that the death of a loved one is always a devastating loss: not only grieving too much but showing too little grief was deemed rare and pathological. However, most people simply do not respond to the death of a significant other in the way that a vast pop-psychological industry would have us believe (Bonanno 2004, 21). Quite to the contrary, many or perhaps even a majority of those who are faced with a potentially debilitating loss such as the death of a loved one manage to continue their lives without any serious disruptions (Bonanno 2004, 23). These individuals have a capacity to thrive in the face of loss and other adverse events. This is called resilience, and it is a healthy response that has nothing to do with a failure to recognize loss. Those who exhibit resilience are not unaffected by loss, but the loss nevertheless has no long-term negative psychological consequences on them, such as depressed mood (Bonanno 2004, 23–24). Researchers in the field emphasize that taking account of resilience is not to deny that some people grieve over a period of years before recovering and that some never fully recover and instead develop chronic grief, which is indistinguishable from depression. What makes resilience so interesting is rather, besides it being surprisingly common, that it forms a distinct trajectory from grief, i.e. that it is different from recovery (Bonanno 2004, 20–21). Most interestingly, the available evidence strongly suggests that one of the ways resilient individuals cope is through positive emotion and laughter, and that instead of necessarily representing an unhealthy denial of reality, such a response can be a sign of health (Bonanno 2004, 26; cf. Bonanno, Westphal and Mancini 2011, 1.12). This is good to keep in mind when one approaches what has been written about GS 125 and responses to the death of God, for quite a few interpreters have read the aphorism as a story about a loss comparable to the loss of a loved one. Specifically it has been read as a loss that, for reasons seldom articulated, requires a response akin to grief.

Nietzsche never explicitly thematizes the death of God in terms of grief [*Trauer*] nor does that term appear in GS 125. There are indeed good reasons to differentiate the Madman's condition from grief, at least of the kind of grief that passes by of its own accord, i.e. the grief-pattern known as recovery. This is in fact what the more perceptive commentators who emphasize the loss evoked by the Madman have done. Reinhard Gasser has proposed that what the Madman is meant to express is not temporary grief [*Trauer*], but more akin to melancholia as defined and theorized by Freud (Gasser 1997, 498). As opposed to the presumed passivity and reactivity of grief, Freudian melancholia is characterized by the active despair of destruction. So interpreting the Madman as expressing melancholia fits in neatly with his ravings about murder. Gasser is careful to point out that his interpretation involves imposing a Freudian framework on Nietzsche's text, but one can agree with Gasser that this

framework casts light on the passage at least insofar as it helps rule out that the Madman would express any common form of grief and instead points in the direction that the Madman's condition is perhaps something more pathological. Still one might ask whether diagnosing the Madman with melancholia does not create more problems than it solves.

On philosophical grounds one might object that the Freudian framework can hardly be reconciled with a 21st-century scientific understanding of grief (e. g. Bonanno 2004), which in this case means that adopting it threatens what one might want to see as the enduring relevance of GS 125. This is not to say that a contemporary understanding of responses to loss should instead be applied, and that one should speak of the chronic grief of the Madman. To the contrary, outside perspectives can only aid interpretation, not guide it. I merely want to draw attention to this drawback to viewing the Madman's actions in terms of Freudian melancholia. Needless to say, the wish to find the passage relevant even in our day is no admissible reason to reject Gasser's interpretation. One might rather, on philological grounds, question Gasser's claim that Nietzsche thinks that the melancholic reaction of the Madman is paradigmatic for the reaction of all men [*Reaktion des Menschen*] (Gasser 1997, 498), until a new type of human eventually arises after a process of revaluation spanning several centuries (Gasser 1997, 498–551). The problem is not primarily that Gasser places Nietzsche's thinking within a fairly rigid historical schema, because such ideas are certainly to be found in the corpus. That aspect of Gasser's interpretation actually fits Nietzsche's psychological thinking about incorporated ideals and historically inculcated emotions perfectly. The problem is rather that he fails to note that revaluation can itself be a joyful project, especially for those who would prepare the way toward that future in which the old ideals have been overcome. For is that not what the joyful science is all about? If and when the open horizon seems so enticing, abandoning the old ideals need not appear as a melancholic necessity but as a joyful destruction.

As the entire issue is of secondary importance to his scholarly goals, Gasser himself does not argue for his interpretation in great detail, but fortunately Edith Düsing has expanded on Gasser's insights. Unlike Gasser, Düsing emphasizes that Nietzsche counts with at least three different responses to the "melancholic darkening of horizons" that is the death of God:

- 1) a passive grief, in which no hope nor love nor desire is possible any more, 2) a despairing liberation of destructive energies (represented by the Madman) and 3) finally and ideally a slow but steady overcoming of grief through revaluation (Düsing 2010, 57).

Although she places all reactions within a melancholic framework, Düsing is careful to distinguish the Madman's condition from melancholia of any known kind, i.e. melancholia as response to any other loss. Instead, she writes of a "new kind of mel-

anchoy".⁶⁹ There are indeed good reasons to assume that what the Madman is meant to express is a new feeling. Though Düsing does not draw on Nietzsche's sketches for GS 125 to support her interpretation, it is noteworthy that Nietzsche in the notebooks of 1881 specifically writes of the feeling that humanity has murdered God as a new feeling.⁷⁰ In the final version that we know from the published work, the identification of the state of the Madman with a new feeling is lacking.

Did Nietzsche radically change his mind about the state of the Madman? It is more plausible to assume that Nietzsche sought to give expression to this imagined feeling, instead of naming it. The result is less analytic and more visceral. Of course, Nietzsche's strategical choice makes it harder to identify the exact components of the feeling than if he had named them too. I concur with Düsing's reading that the new feeling is composed both of pain and exultation [*Schmerz und Jubel*] (Düsing 2010, 47; cf. Brusotti 1997, 409). The pain of loss which is heightened by a sense of guilt at having caused the loss is inextricable from a heightened sense of power, i.e. it also betrays a pride. While the pain of the Madman might reasonably be thought to spring from desire for God, how does such exultation fit into the picture? Düsing solves the problem by asserting that the Madman's joy derives from getting rid of God as judge, whereas his melancholy derives from losing the God of love that he still seeks (Düsing 2010, 47). Though this explanation is hardly plausible,⁷¹ one might just as well concede that the Madman, as Nietzsche presents him, appears still to be bound to the religious tradition and to the God that he would mourn in the churches into which he forces his way. The main reason for this is that the guilt of the Madman, expressed in his questions implying the need for rituals of purification (GS 125, KSA 3, 481), certainly seems to be religious (cf. Franco 2011, 135). Be that as it may, there is no reason to deny that Nietzsche thought that the Madman's response, or the response the Madman performs, to the death of God is one possible alternative. The question is rather what emphasis is to be put on this alternative and how it fits into the general picture of GS.

5.5.2.2 A non-melancholic response?

Though it is not quite clear to what extent Düsing follows Gasser in thinking that people will generally react to the death of God in a way that does not differ greatly from that of the Madman, she certainly emphasizes that the loss is dramatic and that all alternative reactions will be in one way or another melancholic (cf. Düsing 2010, 57). The initial response would always be what in contemporary research is called

⁶⁹ "neue Art der Melancholie" (Düsing 2010, 39).

⁷⁰ "Dies Gefühl, das Mächtigste und Heiligste, was die Welt bisher besaß, getötet zu haben, wird noch über die Menschen kommen, es ist ein ungeheures neues Gefühl!" (NL 1881, 14[26], KSA 9, 632)

⁷¹ Nietzsche's comments on God and love (GS 140 and GS 141, KSA 3, 489) do point to the contradiction between loving and judging but in no way suggest that Nietzsche would only have a problem with God as judge.

chronic grief, which encompasses a variety of pathological forms of grief. In other words, the reaction to the death of God cannot be done away with through a “period of grieving” (Higgins 2000, 95). According to Düsing, what is instead required is therapy (Düsing 2010, 31 and 59). There is a strong hint in Düsing’s elaborations, which above all concentrate on the ideas of Eternal Recurrence and the *Übermensch*, that this therapy necessarily amounts to a godless divinization of the human (Düsing 2010, 47); a divinization which involves a misdirection of religious desire for God (Düsing 2010, 64–65).⁷² Although one might instantly object that such divinization seems to blatantly contradict Nietzsche’s project of naturalizing man (cf. GS 109, KSA3, 469), I will for now ignore this latter claim about desire to be God and concentrate on the idea that the death of God requires therapy.

A crucial unexamined presupposition behind Düsing’s reading is that all possible responses to the death of God are best interpreted within the framework of a novel form of melancholia, the paradigmatic example of which is given by the Madman. What if there is an affective response to the death of God that doesn’t start with devastation? What I am suggesting is that there could be an entirely different trajectory, analogous to the way in which resilience has been found to differ from recovery in scientific research on grief. In the following, I will argue that Nietzsche in fact held such a response both possible and desirable.

Among the most interesting issues that has emerged from scholarly commentary on GS 125 is that Nietzsche most probably meant the Madman to express a new feeling (e.g. Düsing 2010, 47 and Brusotti 1997, 409). While the Madman’s response is perhaps best described as melancholic and pathological, one might ask if the death of God doesn’t also make other new feelings possible. After all, Nietzsche’s first reflections on mountain air in the latter half of the 1870s suggested precisely that possibility (see sections 4.2.7 and 4.2.8). Shouldn’t the feelings associated with “joyful science”, feelings of free air and open horizons, be read this way? In this sense, Franco contrasts the “terrified, guilt-obsessed response of the madman” with the “cheerful response of the free-spirited seeker after knowledge”, which he perhaps also too quickly⁷³ identifies with Nietzsche’s own response (as a biographical matter, see Franco 2011, 140). As a whole, GS is a testament to this joyful response, though book four can be claimed to most embody it, as I will seek to show soon enough (cf. section 5.6). The Madman’s ravings, if read in the tragic key that they so often are read, seem to be wholly out of tune with this general mood of GS.

I have already suggested that directly identifying the Madman with Nietzsche and diagnosing both with desire for God can hardly be reconciled with the rest of

⁷² “*Gottlose Vergöttlichung des Menschen*” (Düsing 2010, 47). Düsing’s own standpoint is clearly articulated in her monograph study, in which she presents a return to Jesus, to the love of Christ, as the only viable therapy for nihilism (Düsing 2006, 553).

⁷³ Because that which matters is not Mister Nietzsche’s own response, but the response he presented as desirable or in other words as an ideal throughout his writings. So what matters again is the “Nietzsche” constructed within the text.

GS. Likewise, the most important reason to reject the idea that Nietzsche wants to infect the reader with the Madman's melancholy has to do with the consequences of that idea for interpreting GS as a whole. If one places much stress on GS 125 and the Madman's devastation and supposed desire for God, it would seem to me that the inevitable consequence is that the entire project of GS is obscured. In order to give a definite interpretation of GS 125 in that direction, one has to sacrifice the rest of GS. What is gained in clarity when approaching this single passage, is lost when one moves either backward or forward in the pages, because the whole of GS simply cannot be made to conform with interpretations of that kind. From the point of view of contextual interpretation, the interpretation that both equates Nietzsche with the Madman and interprets the Madman's condition as expressing desire for God has to be deemed implausible.

I am willing to concede that emphasizing the devastation of the Madman need not lead to a rigid view on GS as tragic at its core. A case in point would be the interpretation of Curt Paul Janz. Janz, who equates Nietzsche and the Madman ([*Der tolle Mensch – Nietzsche*], Janz 1978 II, 108), and assumes that the aphorism expresses sincere devastation is careful to point out that this regret represents only one side of the philosopher's experience, the stronger side being one of affirmation (Janz 1978 II, 108–109). The problem with this view is that it renders GS oddly inconsistent; one simply has to accept that GS 125 is out of tune with the rest of the work. The critical question can be formulated thus: Is there perhaps a way of reading the passage which does not contradict the mood of joyful science? To begin with, I will show through a discussion of the most relevant passages from book three that there is no basis in the rest of the text of GS for the interpretation that the Madman expresses Nietzsche's own devastation, and that neither does the assertion that the driving force of the project of GS would be desire for God find any support. In the following, I am not concerned with Nietzsche's inmost desire, but with the Nietzsche that emerges from the text, i.e. the Nietzsche that is of consequence.

5.5.2.3 Metaphysical need, aesthetic taste and desire for God

If Nietzsche/humanity is left with desire for God, but there is no God or intellectual integrity forbids worshipping a God, then the result might indeed be despair. That there is no textual support for the view that Nietzsche held such a dismal prospect to be inevitable, and that interpretations that claim otherwise are unfounded, can be shown by carefully heeding what he has to say about the "metaphysical need" in GS:

151. "*Of the origin of religion*". – The metaphysical need is not the origin of religions, as Schopenhauer supposed, but merely a late offshoot. Under the rule of religious ideas, one has become accustomed to the notion of "another world (behind, below, above)" – and when religious ideas are destroyed one is troubled by an uncomfortable emptiness and deprivation. From this feeling grows once again "another world," but now merely a metaphysical one that is no longer religious. But what first led to a positing of "another world" in primeval times was not some im-

pulse or need but an error in the interpretation of certain natural events, a failure of the intellect. (Kaufmann 1974, 196; GS 151, KSA 3, 494–495)

The consequence of Nietzsche's claim that the metaphysical need is not the immutable source of religion is that it too will pass away. There is nothing in the aphorism to suggest that Nietzsche would have revised his understanding in this respect, which means we are dealing with "an acquired and consequently also a transitory need" (Handwerk 1997, 99; HH I 131, KSA 2, 124). In fact, Nietzsche goes even further than in *HH* and *D* when he now more confidently claims that religion does not have its origins in any one drive or need but in misinterpretation (GS 151, KSA 3, 495). It is important to note that this claim does not amount to denying that the misinterpretation in positing another world was and is guided by affect, but that there is not one single, innate and immutable metaphysical need that would explain all religion and metaphysical philosophy. Metaphysical philosophy must in this view instead be understood as a late flower that grows when religious ideas have been refuted or can no longer be believed. Since religious belief in another world has been incorporated, i.e. one has become accustomed to the idea of another world, parting from it is not necessarily easy. It can be felt as loss. Metaphysical philosophy offers an easy replacement, a metaphysical idea of another world. Consequently, there is reason to assume that Nietzsche's willingness to move beyond metaphysical philosophy necessarily requires overcoming those feelings of lack and loss that sustain metaphysics.⁷⁴ Nietzsche's thematizations of loss, above all through the Madman, could thus be read as pointing to a condition that is undesirable to say the least, against which the alternative opportunities presented by Nietzsche appear more desirable. It could of course be objected that the aphorism referred to above advances a general theoretical claim and nothing more. It tells us nothing about Nietzsche's personal struggles. Be that as it may, an earlier aphorism that is both as "personal" and as philosophically illuminating as it gets speaks a harsh language about Nietzsche's rejection of the religious tradition he was brought up in:

132. *Against Christianity*. What is now decisive against Christianity is our taste, no longer our reasons. (Kaufmann 1974, 186; GS 132, KSA 3, 485)

There are very good reasons to think that this kind of rejection is not merely an intellectual pose and instead goes to the heart of the issue. These reasons, which I will shortly present, are strong enough to utterly reject Janz's view that Nietzsche's aestheticization entails a devaluation of the existential question of belief in God. Janz writes that it is a terrible devaluation, when Nietzsche "reduces" the question of faith to an

⁷⁴ Carlo Gentili has similarly argued that precisely in the rejection of an absolute need for God one finds the meaning of gay science (Gentili, 2010, 242–243).

aesthetic judgement.⁷⁵ Instead of representing a devaluation, I argue that Nietzsche's statement is best interpreted as reflecting the maturity of his philosophical rejection of Christianity.⁷⁶ Read against the background of what Nietzsche writes about metaphysical need it should be clear that what is at stake is not an aesthetic judgement in any trivial sense, but rather a more general affective orientation; or "wishes of the heart". As I have already shown (see chapter 2, section 2.2), Nietzsche inherited and radicalized an already existing tradition of thinking about religion in aesthetic terms. If Nietzsche's judgement of taste against Christianity is to be seen as a devaluation of a serious existential question, the real culprit is Schleiermacher, who defined religion as feeling and taste for the infinite.⁷⁷ In this context, Nietzsche's aesthetic rejection of Christianity is above all feeling and taste for the earth. As such, Nietzsche's philosophy represents a tremendous revaluation of matters of taste and of aesthetics broadly conceived.⁷⁸ That Nietzsche thinks of religion in aesthetic terms follows naturally from his privileging the perspectives of this life, which are the only perspectives left once one abandons the idea of a universal perspective (a God's eye view).

A good example of Nietzsche's revaluation of taste can be gained from what he says about changes in taste in *GS*; namely, that changes in (general) taste are far more important than the change of opinions (*GS* 39, *KSA* 3, 406–407). To justify his claim, Nietzsche suggests that aesthetic and moral opinions are merely symptoms and that instead the real causes are most often a matter of physiology. In short, differences in ways of living result in differences in taste (*GS* 39, *KSA* 3, 407). While the physiological language in which Nietzsche tries to make his point is characteristically hyperbolic, the aphorism need not be read in a manner that undermines Nietzsche's efforts to consciously change tastes. Perhaps the most important claim undergirding Nietzsche's talk about incorporation is after all that incorporating ideas can cause physiological changes. In fact, Nietzsche's elaborations in *GS* 39 support that view: when a new taste is successfully introduced, people first have to become accus-

75 "Die furchtbarste Abwertung vollzieht er damit, dass er das ganze Problem auf ein ästhetisches Urteil reduziert" (Janz 1978 II, 108).

76 Dieter Schellong has also argued that Nietzsche's judgement of taste reflects an advance in understanding. His interpretation that Nietzsche thinks Christianity is no longer a living faith, i.e. only a shadow, and that Nietzsche therefore finds no reason to argue against Christianity, is nevertheless questionable. The main problem is that it ascribes to Nietzsche the view that one cannot argue about matters of taste (Schellong 1989, 343–344).

77 The aestheticist tradition as a whole can and has of course been criticized for its anthropocentrism, e.g. for trivializing Christianity, but even critics should and often do acknowledge that Schleiermacher's influence on Protestant theology was immense and that he left a legacy that all later attempts to ground theology in the modern world have to contend with. In other words, what matters most to us here is that Schleiermacher was at the forefront of serious philosophical and theological thinking that dared to confront the challenge of modernity.

78 As Nietzsche has his Zarathustra say to those who deem matters of taste not worth fighting about: "But all of life is a dispute over taste and tasting!" (Parkes 2005, 101; *KSA* 4, 150)

tomed to it, but finally they feel it as a necessity. Thus, the new taste becomes a need [*Bedürfnis*] (GS 39, KSA 3, 407). Nietzsche gives no examples in that aphorism of how a taste becomes a need, but in a discussion about learning to love new things Nietzsche gives a phenomenological description of how one first learns to tolerate a piece of music, then becomes accustomed to it and finally feels that one has to hear it again and again (GS 334, KSA 3, 559–560). One could also think of the process by which a style of clothing is adopted. First a few individuals dare to challenge the reigning style, then people slowly adopt the new style and finally feel that you have to wear it as a matter of respectability. In any case, a presupposition for there being changes in taste is that there are always individuals who feel differently about the reigning taste, but that is in no way enough. Those who feel differently about matters of taste have to be alert to their feelings, listen closely to them and have the courage to stick to their judgement in order to be able to resist the force of the general taste and potentially change it (GS 39, KSA 3, 407).

Listening to one's feelings is a matter of interpretation, which means that Nietzsche's elaborations are in no way bound to a view that only recognizes basic physiological impulses. Read thus, the aphorism can be fruitfully employed to understand what Nietzsche is trying to say when he presents himself as rejecting Christianity on grounds of taste. Nietzsche listens to his own impulses, interprets his desires, and concludes that Christian faith is out of the question for him. In other words, his taste rejects Christianity. What remains is to live up to this feeling and to make it known. In this light, Nietzsche would aspire to be one of those mighty individuals, who without feeling shame proclaim their judgement of taste, their "*hoc est ridiculum, hoc est absurdum*", and thus influence the general taste in a population (cf. GS 39, KSA 3, 406–407).

Contrary to what Janz's interpretation suggests, the question is about what is decisive, not about devaluing other than aesthetic grounds to reject Christianity. Walter Kaufmann's translation expresses this perhaps with even greater clarity than the original German: "What is now decisive against Christianity is our taste, no longer our reasons." (Kaufmann 1974, 186) To be absolutely clear, this does not mean that Nietzsche would have no reasons against Christianity, but that taste has become more important. He presents himself as having reached a new stage: only now does he fully dare to confront the tradition where it is most strong. He no longer needs to rely solely on rational grounds to reject Christianity, but can count on the judgement of his taste. What an overcoming he presents this to be becomes apparent, when one compares this judgement of taste with what he has to say about the free spirit in *HH*. There, the free spirit is still under the thrall of those religious/metaphysical feelings [*Stimmungen*] that he encounters in the arts, and such experiences almost prompt him to wish that someone might lead him back to religion (*HH* I 153, KSA 2, 145). That is clearly no longer the case. Henceforth, the attack on faith becomes more direct: as if he had gained in confidence, Nietzsche utters judgements of taste against Christianity in increasingly harsh words.

This is the Nietzsche that emerges from the text of GS and from his later writings. In the end, it doesn't matter that much, what Nietzsche's personal reaction to the "death of God" was. Enough doubt has been cast on the interpretation that Nietzsche's writings could fruitfully be approached through the thesis that they speak of his personal desire for God. Therefore, we can return to the question: What did Nietzsche intend when writing the fictional narrative about the Madman? The most plausible answer to be found in the scholarly literature is that Nietzsche aims to draw attention to his view that the death of God presents a unique historical opening of possibilities. Following Hödl, the narrative about the Madman is best read as part of Nietzsche's strategic communication concerning the possibilities opened up by the death of God, possibilities that first and foremost concern what humans can be.⁷⁹ In this sense, the Madman is a warning example, though also one who warns about what might come. That the Madman does not represent Nietzsche's ideal is all too apparent, but the decisive question here is whether or not the Madman hints at this ideal, when he asks if "we" do not have to become Gods now that God is dead. Is the possibility that interests Nietzsche most perhaps after all an expression of his desire to be God?

5.5.3 Nietzsche, the Madman and desire to be God

Though there are good grounds to emphasize the Madman's evocations of loss, and no small number of scholars have done so, it is also possible to read GS 125 with murder in mind. In other words, the accent can be placed on the murder of God instead of on loss. Though the Madman does not give reasons for the deed, reasons can arguably be interpreted into his words. This is especially the case with the question "must we not ourselves become Gods to appear worthy of it?" (Kaufmann 1974, 181). Could it be that this is the true message of the Madman, what Nietzsche meant to communicate?

The thesis that this is indeed the message of the Madman and more significantly also that of Nietzsche was first put forward by Lou von Salomé (Andreas-Salomé 1894, 38–40). In her classical formulation, however, Nietzsche does not want to murder God but becomes convinced that God is dead, is consequently devastated and finds no other way out of this feeling other than to direct all his power to the task to become (a) God. In his influential polemic *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*, Henri de Lubac takes the darker view alluded to above; that Nietzsche was out to

⁷⁹ Referring to the anthropological focus of Nietzsche's criticism of religion, Gerald Hödl writes: "In diesem Kontext wird die Thematisierung des Todes Gottes als eines epochalen Verlustes strategisch dazu eingesetzt auf die neuen Möglichkeiten, die damit eröffnet sind, hinzuweisen, aber die Gefahren zu betonen, die in einer Abspannung der durch das alte Ideal angespannten Kräfte, ohne sich nach den neuen Möglichkeiten hin zu orientieren, liegen." (Hödl 2009, 463) Schellong also cursorily notes that the passage points to such possibilities (Schellong 1989, 341).

kill God (de Lubac 1983, 49–50) in order to put Man on the quest to become God. Though these interpretations have different starting points, they converge in the conclusion that Nietzsche's mature philosophizing was driven by a desire to be God. Though no scholars have to my knowledge more recently argued in favour of a strong version of the thesis that the Madman expresses Nietzsche's desire to be God one does find echoes of it here and there. As we have seen, Edith Düsing comes close to suggesting that the death of God in Nietzsche's view necessarily leads to a divinization of man (Düsing 2010, 47). Likewise, Stephen Mulhall asserts that both Nietzsche and his Madman cannot help repeating Christian structures of thought and that a desire to be God might be the ultimate truth of Nietzsche's philosophizing (Mulhall 2005, 44–45 and 120–122). It is therefore important to examine the evidence that bears on the matter, if only to rule out the possibility that the interpretation has found the key to GS 125.

The most obvious place to look for evidence is book four, where Nietzsche presents enticing future possibilities. In aphorism 300, Nietzsche envisions enjoying the self-sufficiency of a God as such a possibility. In the perspective that Nietzsche bids the reader to entertain, the entire history of religion could be cherished as means to a sublime end, specifically “the strange means to make it possible for a few single individuals to enjoy the whole self-sufficiency of a god and his whole power of self-redemption” (Kaufmann 1974, 240; GS 300, KSA 3, 539). It is indeed near at hand to read the aphorism in the context of the death of God, as Nietzsche speaks from a point of view where the history of religion is effectively understood to have come to its conclusion if not to an end. Could such a vision be enough to inspire the murder of God or enough to let a devastated Nietzsche forget what he has lost and mourns? Perhaps so, yet it is the case that Nietzsche nowhere suggests that the longed-for self-sufficiency would be anything else than a feeling. What is presented as an alluring possibility is a god-like mood, not actually being a god in the sense of wielding the powers of a god; other than that of self-redemption.

One has to look for evidence outside GS in order to find a stronger statement that might be interpreted as expressing desire to be god. Zarathustra's “confession” that he “could not stand not being a god, if there were gods” is as good as it gets in Nietzsche's published writings.⁸⁰ The sceptical reader might ask, why this quote extracted from Z should be considered in any way relevant to the interpretation of GS 125. It could then be argued that drawing on it is justified, because Nietzsche originally planned to have Zarathustra go to the marketplace and announce the death of God (cf. KSA 14, 256). Two preliminary issues about using the sketch [*Vorstufe*] as evidence have to be dealt with before drawing any far-reaching conclusions. Firstly, one cannot overlook the fact that Nietzsche eventually decided not to let Zarathustra appear until the very last aphorism of GS. Therefore, it is problematic to conclude that

⁸⁰ “Aber dass ich euch ganz mein Herz offenbare, ihr Freunde: wenn es Götter gäbe, wie hielte ich's aus, kein Gott zu sein! Also giebt es keine Götter.” (KSA 4, 110)

the Madman is Zarathustra, not to speak of continuing that the Madman is Zarathustra is Nietzsche. Secondly, Zarathustra is not exactly a character whose words and deeds are to be taken at face value (cf. Zittel 2011). To think that Nietzsche must be dead serious when he speaks as Zarathustra leads only to a labyrinth of contradictions and is therefore an unforgivable error. In this sense, introducing Zarathustra only complicates the picture further, and arguably lessens the plausibility of the “desire to be God” interpretation.

What better proof of this contention, that introducing Zarathustra is no solution, could there be than the fact that Zarathustra in the very same speech in which he makes his admission also cautions against striving for the impossible. He asks his hearers, whether they can think or create a God and teaches them that they should not desire something to be that they do not have the power to create; in short they should focus on what really is possible (KSA 4, 109–110). Additionally, he says that since he had a vision of the *Übermensch* gods are no longer of any concern to him (KSA 4, 112). I would therefore suggest that what Zarathustra is jealous of is precisely the feeling that he associates with being a god, not actually being a god, and definitely not being God. Nietzsche's writings do not suggest that he is interested in possessing the attributes of the Christian God, but only that he strives for a mood that is perhaps best described as god-like. This is an important distinction, to which I will return in chapter 7, about Nietzsche's late affective ideal. So if Nietzsche is above all interested in a state [*Zustand*], the possibility to dwell in a god-like state, this is yet another reason to question whether the Madman directly speaks for Nietzsche. After all, the Madman does pose his question in the form “must we not become gods...?”.

5.5.4 GS 125 as a test

126. *Mystical explanations.* – Mystical explanations are considered deep. The truth is that they are not even superficial. (Kaufmann 1974, 182; GS 126, KSA 3, 482)

That so many differing interpretations of GS 125 have been presented over the years seems to suggest that there is something mysterious about the passage (cf. Pippin 2010, 47). However, the simplest explanation for the proliferation of interpretations is not that there is something mysterious about the passage but that it is carefully crafted to provoke an affective response in the reader and therefore to be open to a great variety of readings. In other words, GS 125 might best be read as a test.

The surface of the aphorism, its character as fictional narrative, cannot be emphasized enough. Announcing that God is dead through the mouth of a Madman, within a fictional narrative, allows Nietzsche to step back from view, but still forces the reader to react to the Madman's words. In this regard, it is worth remembering that Nietzsche is not concerned with proving that God is dead (cf. Schellong 1989, 341), whatever that might mean. Instead, he simply has the Madman announce that this is a tremendous event that is yet to be heard, which forces the reader to

try to hear it. In other words: the aphorism does not aim to impart propositional knowledge, but to compel an affective reaction. The reaction that the aphorism provokes is necessarily affective, because there is no objective point of view from which to judge to what extent the dramatic picture that the Madman paints is more than the painting of his fear. Some might see the “same” event as a magnificent opportunity. All depends on in what mood one is able to see the possibilities that the death of God opens. What speaks in favour of this interpretation is first and foremost that that it not only fits neatly into the context of the preceding discussion in book three, but also goes well together with the joyful, playful mood of GS, and of course with the general trajectory of Nietzsche’s criticism of religion. It therefore only remains to be shown that this interpretation also makes better sense of the characters of the narrative and the central interaction between the Madman and the atheists of the marketplace.

In emphasizing the fictionality of the narrative about the Madman and consequently its broader context in Nietzsche’s strategy of communication, my interpretation aligns with and provides further support for recent interpretations that argue on both philosophical and philological grounds that the Madman’s response cannot be Nietzsche’s position (Pippin 2010, 47–54 and Sommer 2010, 18). In the view I defend, the spectacle acted out by the Madman of the story represents one possible interpretation of that event [*Ereignis*] that God is dead. Though the Madman is called mad for a reason, one need not deny that there is some reason in his madness. Irrespective of whether the Madman is deemed nostalgic of the religious past or not,⁸¹ he does draw attention to something that Nietzsche thought was crucial about the European situation: Fully recognizing the death of the Christian God closes off certain possibilities of feeling, while it opens up others. In his own mad manner, the Madman has recognized that God is dead, but he is far better at invoking a sense of loss than at speaking of new possibilities, as everything he says about the future is coloured by a sense of loss. What is lost is that which guaranteed a sense of absolute certainty, the basic trust that Being triumphs over Nothingness, and consequently the sense that human life is meaningful becomes questionable. The Madman certainly feels in his own way, what a note of Nietzsche from autumn 1881 speaks of: that unless “we” use the opportunity to make overcoming ourselves a constant struggle, we will have suffered a loss.⁸² But coming from Nietzsche this note, which never found its way into the published work, reads better as an exhortation to fight against the incorporated tendency to interpret one’s experiences religiously, to fight against the temptation to see more meaning in life than what one out of one’s own power puts into life, to fight against

⁸¹ Brusotti is perhaps too quick to claim that there is no religious nostalgia in the Madman’s passion since there is no evidence that could decide the question either way. Similarly, Brusotti’s talk of the Madman’s intention [*Absicht*] is misleading to say the least if the Madman cannot be identified with Nietzsche (Brusotti 1997, 418).

⁸² “Wenn wir nicht aus dem Tode Gottes eine großartige Entsagung und einen fortwährenden Sieg über uns machen, so haben wir den Verlust zu tragen.” (NL 1881, 12[9]; KSA 9, 577)

all shadows of God (cf. Brusotti 1997, 418), than as a statement of fact. The loss that the note speaks of is a possibility. The death of God is in itself neither purely loss nor gain, but an event that opens up future possibilities: all depends on what possibilities one is able to see and this, my interpretation suggests, depends to a great deal on mood. What about the atheists at the marketplace, then? What is it that they lack?

In the light of this interpretation, the error of the atheists is not that they laugh at and mock the Madman, that they are incapable of feeling his pain. Rather, they lack the mood through which they could see the event that the Madman speaks of as profitable; in other words, they lack an understanding of the death of God as opportunity for themselves, to become what they are. That this might indeed be what they most lack is indicated in their reaction when the Madman is done with his tirade invoking the loss that he and they have suffered, done with accusing them and himself of killing God, and done with his insane suggestions of what must be done. They fall silent and seem bewildered, as if they had witnessed something mysterious. It is as if all their confidence, with which they had mocked the Madman, had been swept away. Had they been joyful scientists, they would perhaps have laughed heartily at this spectacle. Support for this interpretation need not be sought from outside the original edition of *GS*, but can be found aplenty in book four.

5.6 Book four and heightened mood

Book four is above all a demonstration of that (kind of) life-affirming mood that Nietzsche considers an ideal response to the message that “God is dead”. I claim no originality for the general picture that I present, since it has already been suggested that the goal of the book is to put philosophizing in a new mood.⁸³ This view has however not yet been sufficiently recognized in scholarship; therefore, it would be misleading to claim that it is well established. What originality there is to be found in my defence and development of this thesis lies in the detail of the presentation, which on the one hand follows from the analytic distinction between the mood that is generated through the text and Nietzsche's statements about an emi-

⁸³ E.g. Wotling: “*In der Hauptsache zielt das Buch also auf die Darstellung einer neuen affektiven Tonart und will zeigen, wie diese das philosophische Unterfangen verändert.*” (Wotling 2015, 107) Wotling also does not fail to connect this endeavour to the possibilities opened by the experience that God is dead (cf. Wotling 2015, 109 and 112). However, Wotling does not thematize Nietzsche's doubts about his abilities to communicate this new mood nor does he focus enough on the evidence about these moods, which means that the thesis requires a more robust defence.

nently desirable mood,⁸⁴ and on the other from a strict focus on the evidence concerning these moods.

Book four draws much of its inspiration from the experience of health that Nietzsche had in January 1882 in Genoa, where the ships sail to sea. All the available evidence also suggests that he at least began work on the fourth book that same month, though he made corrections to the text until the final publication of GS (cf. Kaufmann 2015, 9). For Nietzsche, Genoa is the city from whence Columbus hailed; the Columbus who eventually set sail toward the New World.⁸⁵ The symbolism is all too apparent, even though that name is never explicitly mentioned in the book, as Nietzsche draws heavily on metaphors of open seas, of new lands or islands to explore and to claim (e.g. GS 289, KSA 3, 529–530). This is not to say that these metaphors would have supplanted those of the heights, of his beloved mountain air (cf. GS 293, KSA 3, 533–534), which here is felt in the wind that would move the ships towards the unknown.

The opening poem praising “*Januarius*” already places the following discussions under the banner of that which is eminently desirable, the “highest hope”, towards which the soul of the philosopher hurries (KSA 3, 521). What is this highest hope? It is near at hand to connect it to a higher way of being made possible by the death of God as the poem associates moving closer towards the goal with an ever higher, lighter and healthier feeling [*heller stets und stets gesunder*].⁸⁶ It is here necessary to distinguish the desired state from the mood in which it is approached. Whatever the goal is, the key issue to note is that the movement towards this goal is expressed as a joy in itself. The poem would then reflect what I take to be the defining characteristic of book four; namely, that Nietzsche seeks to communicate the possibility of the highest affirmation through a mood that he considers conducive to such affirmation. In other words, there are two levels of mood. On the one hand there is the vision of a high and supremely healthy mood that is presented as a goal, on the other a mood of expectation through which the philosopher bids the reader approach the yet higher mood. Traces of this same strategy can certainly be found scattered throughout the entire work,⁸⁷ but it is most apparent in book four. Indeed, one

84 The two are of course intertwined in the sense that Nietzsche’s discussion about an eminently desirable mood contributes to creating the joyful mood of the text and can thus also be read as part of his strategy to create mood.

85 In his letters Nietzsche makes this identification of Genoa with Columbus known; he even goes as far as to claim that for him Genoa is above all the city of Columbus (e.g. KGB III/1, Bf. 474 and KGB III/5, Bf. 475 A). Besides that, he connects his own endeavours to Columbus’ fate to be a discoverer of a new world (KGB III/1, Bf. 294 and KGB III/1, Bf. 490).

86 In a letter to Köselitz from 6 April 1883 Nietzsche identifies the “highest hope” with becoming the father of Zarathustra, i.e. with creating Zarathustra (KGB III/1, Bf. 401). This fits well into the picture that Nietzsche’s ideal mood is one that makes productive, enables creativity in following one’s own path. Like his father, Zarathustra is presented as a being of the heights, as mountain air incarnate (cf. KSA 4, 375).

87 Arguably, the motto begins this story.

need not look far for additional support that such a strategy of communication is at work in book four.

One can begin by noting that it is in a mood of expectation that Nietzsche in the first aphorism, *For the new year*, presents his wish to be nothing but a yea-sayer. To be able to see beauty in necessity, to make things that are the way they are beautiful; that is the formula of *amor fati* (GS 276, KSA 3, 521). Instead of interpreting *amor fati* as an abstract philosophical doctrine, it is more fruitful to read it precisely as a wish and as an expression of a mood of affirmation. When read contextually the objection that it is impossible to affirm the most painful and disagreeable states of mind in the moment that they occur loses much of its sting. Of course, one can and should read *amor fati* as a wish to dwell in a state that can at best overpower any pain. In this sense, *amor fati* is directly related to the motto of GS and that super-human mood in which every experience appears as sacred. Nevertheless, Nietzsche's main concern in book four is not to give a phenomenology of such a state but to present joyful striving towards it in a mood of expectation. In what sense this joyful striving itself is an approximation of the mood that gives the power to interpret everything for the best is shown in the next aphorism.

Nietzsche describes how it seems to the free spirit, who has reached a certain high point in life, as if all experiences that he goes through are for the good, whether he interprets them as good or ill in the moment they happen. Here, Nietzsche is only concerned with the interpretation of events after the fact. Nevertheless, the free spirit has reached a new height and the danger is great that he will fall. In order not to lose the freedom that has led him to these new heights, the free spirit has to resist the temptation to interpret his feeling that all events eventually are good for himself as proof of personal providence, i.e. that some God or spirit is watching over his fate. Instead, the assumption must suffice that his own power of interpretation has reached a new peak. (GS 277, KSA 3, 521–522)

Nietzsche still seems to fear, as he did in *HH* and *D*, that the experience of high moods and of overflowing joy might lead to a return to metaphysics or a turn to some kind of false religiosity. How and why does Nietzsche seek to guard himself and the reader from such a fate? The textual evidence supports the answer that Nietzsche explicitly ties his vision of a higher way of being to a strict rejection of religious customs and metaphysical ideals. In other words, a feeling of freedom is indissociable from Nietzsche's affective ideal. Any return to religion or metaphysics would hinder the attempt to move ever higher. To persuade the reader, Nietzsche can do nothing but instill a mood of expectation in the reader, since the reader has to feel in himself an increase of freedom in order to be convinced. The most perfect example of this strategy is to be found in aphorism 285, *Excelsior!*, which more directly than any other aphorism valorizes striving ever higher.

A voice, distinguished by quotation marks, tells what the free spirit who seeks to live without God must renounce. He must never pray, never worship and never feel absolute certainty. He cannot expect any absolute justice nor does he have the right to assume a higher reason in what goes on in the world. Above all, there is no place

for his heart to rest, no final goal, where all striving comes to an end. Instead, he must will the Eternal Recurrence of war and peace. The voice then calls the free spirit an ascetic [*Mensch der Entsagung*], questions the viability of the renunciation in question and states that as of yet no one yet had the power to live like that. After this statement that ends the quote, Nietzsche presents a vision of a lake that does not allow its water to flow away, but raises a dam and from that moment rises ever higher. Finally, Nietzsche suggests that a similar fate perhaps awaits the human [*der Mensch*], when s/he no longer flows into a God. (GS 285, KSA 3, 527–528) Importantly, Nietzsche does not directly challenge the voice about what the free spirit has to leave behind. In other words, he strategically agrees that the situation of the free spirit can be viewed as a renunciation. The point would rather be that if one must view the free spirit as one who renounces the consolations of religion, the renunciation itself generates a new feeling of power. Through this feeling of power, man can rise ever higher, when his hopes and wishes are not spent on illusory ideals. It is in this daring final suggestion that the meaning of the passage breaks through in full force: the suggestion effects a radical shift from the language of renunciation to that of affirmation. For what is the renunciation demanded of the free spirit compared to the enticing vision of a higher way of being? As the following *Interruption* [*Zwischenrede*], which refers as much to all of book four and perhaps even to the entirety of GS as to the directly preceding aphorism, states: “Here are hopes”. Here indeed are hopes, but can these hopes be communicated?

286. *Interruption*. – Here are hopes; but what will you hear and see of them if you have not experienced splendor, ardor, and dawns in your own souls? I can only remind you; more I cannot do. To move stones, to turn animals into men – is that what you want from me? Oh, if you are still stones and animals, then better look for your Orpheus. (Kaufmann 1974, 230; GS 286, KSA 3, 528)

The strictest possible reading of this aphorism would lead to the conclusion that only those who have had similar experiences as Nietzsche, only those who are already acquainted with high moods (cf. GS 288, KSA 3, 528), can understand his newfound joy. Nevertheless, even this strictest interpretation does not speak against the interpretation of GS as involving an attempt to communicate mood. Rather, it supports the argument that this indeed is the case once one discards the idea that this communication is meant to reach everybody. Nietzsche has put the stakes high, and perhaps he fears he has put them too high; all depends on communicating mood. Perhaps the choice to let the reader approach the “highest hope” through a more easily accessible mood of expectation is best understood against this background of doubt? He is fully aware that even thus not everyone will be able to open up to his message, yet the message that God is dead can only be misunderstood if one disregards this context. Therefore, Nietzsche suggests that those who do not hear his words and see what he means must first find their own Orpheus. That Orpheus here stands as a metaphor for perfect affective communication needs no further proof than what is evident from within the aphorism. Nietzsche ascribes Orpheus the power to effect radical transfor-

mations though his art; the power to have himself heard by animals and even inanimate matter. In short, it is Orpheus's power to communicate that Nietzsche denies himself. To conclude, Nietzsche's apparent scepticism about his ability to communicate his experience solidifies the contention that the composition of GS is based on a poetics of mood and that the philosophical content relies on affective communication.

Not only does Nietzsche voice scepticism about his power to have his words heard but he also comes close to admitting that it is dangerous to raise expectations about the future. He has the Wanderer state to his Shadow that he loves ignorance about the future and doesn't want to perish from impatience and from tasting promised things (GS 287, KSA 3, 528).⁸⁸ Such cryptic references to promised things of course only raise more expectations. Indeed, there are no reasons to take a literal reading of the aphorism as a guide to interpreting what follows. After all, neither this professed preference of living in ignorance of the future nor the complaint that it appears to him as if most people would not even believe in high moods prevent Nietzsche in the following aphorism from presenting an enticing vision of a future in which a constant high mood is the rule rather than the exception (cf. GS 288, KSA 3, 528).

In the aphorism entitled *Elevated moods* [*Hohe Stimmungen*] Nietzsche goes as far as to envision a human being, who would be the embodiment of a single great mood. The experience of such a soul would be "a continual ascent as on stairs and at the same time a sense of resting on clouds" (Kaufmann 1974, 231; GS 288, KSA 3, 528). More remarkable than Nietzsche's familiar metaphors of heights is how his understanding of this possible mood combines the joyful movement of constant striving with an image of inner peace. Peace is not sought in rest or in some final goal, but is realized within the movement of striving. Although Nietzsche concedes that all of human history provides no certain examples of such a being, he contends that it is very well possible that such a being were born under the right circumstances. Most likely because of this reference to history and what might be history one day, the aphorism has been read in conjunction with what Nietzsche has to say about "historical sense" in aphorism 337 of GS (cf. Brusotti 1997, 476–478). Such a procedure is justified insofar as both aphorisms present enticing visions of future possibilities, visions that are hard not to read as promises of heightened feeling.

Aphorism 337, *The humaneness of the future* [*Die zukünftige "Menschlichkeit"*], attempts to convince the reader that though it would seem that the historical sense that has been growing in Europe is a sign of old age, of the weakening of all old feelings, it is in fact itself a sign and symptom of a new feeling that is growing from generation to generation (GS 337, KSA 3, 564). This feeling grows from an ever-increasing capacity to feel all of human history as one's own. Some day, Nietzsche suggests, the his-

⁸⁸ "Ich liebe die Unwissenheit um die Zukunft und will nicht an der Ungeduld und dem Vorwegkosten verheissener Dinge zu Grunde gehen." (GS 287, KSA 3, 528)

torical sense will open up the possibility of subsuming the experiences of the most remote past together with all present hopes into one feeling. This would according to Nietzsche result in a god-like joy:

the happiness of a god full of power and love, full of tears and laughter, a happiness that, like the sun in the evening, continually bestows its inexhaustible riches, pouring them into the sea, feeling richest, as the sun does, only when even the poorest fisherman is still rowing with golden oars! This godlike feeling would then be called-humaneness. (Kaufmann 1974, 268–269; GS 337, KSA 3, 565)

To fully understand what Nietzsche is up to here, it is useful to return to that other aphorism in book four, in which Nietzsche speaks of a divine, godlike feeling; namely aphorism 300, *Preludes of science*. There Nietzsche suggests that had not magicians, alchemists, astrologists and others of their ilk promised knowledge about hidden and forbidden powers, the human lust for knowledge would never have grown so strong as to enable the birth and development of science (GS 300, KSA 3, 539). Irrespective of whether Nietzsche is onto something on that point or not, his narrative can be used to explain his own manner of presenting his own conception of the experimental life as desirable. Nietzsche is engaged in the same game of promising knowledge as well as feelings of freedom and power for those who take to the seas, who leave all certainties behind, to become who they are.

In aphorism 300, Nietzsche suggests that some day in the distant future the entire history of religion might be viewed as an exercise and means so that there might be human beings who enjoy all the self-sufficiency of a God. Here too the emphasis is not on that high mood but on the striving for such a state and the subtle suggestion that had not religion implanted a desire that there be gods or super-human powers, humans would never have learned to feel hunger for oneself, to become who one is. Nietzsche's final question, as to whether Prometheus first had to believe that he stole the light and pay the price for that only to finally see he had created the light and God as well as humans through his own desire, provides the final clue for interpreting the passage (GS 300, KSA 3, 539). In effect, Nietzsche radically suggests that all desire that there be gods, all desire for God, can now be interpreted as misunderstood desire for one's self. Just as feelings have a history, so too does the desire to become who one is. In this perspective, Nietzsche is able to view the history of religion in a less hostile light,⁸⁹ as a necessary error, a comic misunderstanding that must be abandoned to move forward. Nietzsche quite openly guides the reader in

⁸⁹ Arguably, Nietzsche's elaborations do not concern monotheistic religion, and thus not the whole history of religion. In aphorism 143, Nietzsche longs for a time when each individual can give free rein to his self-desire [*Selbstsucht*], his desire to express his very own ideal. In this context he praises polytheism that at least allowed a multitude of ideals in the realm of the Gods, and harshly attacks monotheistic religions as premised on the idea that there is a common human [*Normalmensch*] for whom a common God [*Normalgott*] suffices, which in Nietzsche's view means that monotheism is directly opposed to the desire to become who one is (cf. GS 143, KSA 3, 490–491).

this direction, through his promises. His promises concern the future possibilities opened up to those who embrace the knowledge that God is dead. Again and again, he seeks to convince the reader (and perhaps also himself) to dare to live experimentally for the sake of new or "promised" lands, to set sail for a realm that is one's own (GS 289, KSA 3, 529–530).

As Nietzsche himself draws attention to what he sees as the religious prehistory of his striving, it is important to further clarify the relation between his striving and that striving for truth which characterizes the more recent religious past. Let us therefore ask one last time: Is Nietzsche a seeker, perhaps really a God-seeker [*Gottsuchender*], who only misunderstands himself?⁹⁰ Nietzsche's text answers: "What I want is more; I am no seeker. I want to create for myself a sun of my own." (Kaufmann 1974, 254; GS 320, KSA 3, 551)⁹¹ Nietzsche does not want to bask in the light of another sun, irrespective of whether that sun is a God or a general philosophical justification of existence, but to create an own ideal. One takes to the seas to create an ideal for oneself, not to find a universal ideal (cf. GS 289, KSA 3, 529–530). Nietzsche's description of Kant in aphorism 335 illustrates Nietzsche's rejection of such a striving for universal truth. Nietzsche treats Kant as a failed free spirit, as a fox who after having broken out of the cage that is metaphysical philosophy into a new freedom, loses his way and crawls back to the cage (cf. GS 335, KSA 3, 562).⁹² In Kant's Categorical imperative, Nietzsche finds a trace of that desire for a self [*Selbstsucht*] that he would give free rein, namely in the feeling that one's own judgement is a universal judgement. Yet, Nietzsche claims, this is a lowly form of that desire, which shows that one has not come up with an own ideal.⁹³ For if one would have an own ideal, and feel that it is one's own, one would not think that everyone must follow it. In other, words Nietzsche suggests that Kant did not go far enough in self-knowledge.

This individualism, this immoralism of each pursuing an own ideal, is not the only thing about Nietzsche's striving that puts it into opposition to most if perhaps not all (e.g. Satanist) religious paths of salvation known in the history of religion. What else differentiates Nietzsche's call to become who one is from the teachings of founders of religions is above all its experimental character. The paradigm is the scientific experiment, and the thirst for knowledge, the thirst for self-knowledge, is emphatically not a thirst for wonders, reincarnations or other things that go against reason (GS 319, KSA 3, 550–551; cf. GS 335, KSA 3, 563–564). As interpreters of experience, the free spirits must be strict as scientists (GS 319, KSA 3, 551). When

⁹⁰ Though I have repeatedly suggested that the question is misdirected, I have also sought to show that it can be useful insofar as it forces to better characterize Nietzsche's position.

⁹¹ "Ich will mehr, ich bin kein Suchender. Ich will für mich eine eigene Sonne schaffen." (GS 320, KSA 3, 551)

⁹² "sich wieder zu 'Gott', 'Seele', 'Freiheit' und 'Unsterblichkeit' zurückverirrte" (GS 335, KSA 3, 562).

⁹³ "sie verräth, dass du dich selber noch nicht entdeckt, dir selber noch kein eigenes, eigenstes Ideal geschaffen hast" (GS 335, KSA 3, 562).

one reads these aphorisms in the light of what Nietzsche writes about high moods, the message is clear: he insists that all his enticing visions are within the bounds of the possible, and that precisely the experimental life can be a privileged path to moods of joyful affirmation. When one takes this into account it is unsurprising that he suggests a life in pursuit of knowledge need not be a life of melancholy toil, but can, when conducted in a certain way, be a life of joy and laughter (cf. GS 324, KSA 3, 552–553).

At the end of book four, in the second-last aphorism, the joy of the free spirit is put to a final test. Given that GS is a book of joyful science, it is fitting that joy itself becomes the object of experiments in the pages of the book. This last experiment is the most radical that Nietzsche devised. What if, the narrator asks, a demon would creep into your solitude and tell you that you have to live this very same life over and over again, how would you then react? Nietzsche is in fact careful to distinguish the voice of the demon from that of the narrator by quotation marks: once the demon has whispered the thought of Eternal Recurrence, which is not named here, it is the narrator who again takes over and asks the reader how he would respond. The narrator offers three alternative responses.⁹⁴ Initially the narrator asks 1) if one would not despair, rage and curse the demon who speaks thus, but then directly asks the reader 2) if he or she has not experienced such a moment in which one would greet the demon's words with joy and proclaim: "you are a god and never have I heard anything more divine!" After claiming that the thought of Eternal Recurrence, irrespective of how one initially responds to the demon, would change or perhaps crush the person over whom it gains power, i.e. the person who incorporates it, the narrator 3) presents the final alternative of responding to the demon's challenge: "Or", he begins, "how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life to crave nothing more fervently than this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal?" (Kaufmann 1974, 273–274, GS 341, KSA 3, 570)

Nietzsche himself arguably emphasized this question by letting it finish the aphorism and specifically marked out the words "to crave nothing more" in cursive. Thus, he suggests that even if one were not fully able to accept Eternal Recurrence at the moment that one is confronted with the thought, one need not despair, but one can instead strive to live so that one would long for nothing as much as for the repetition of one's life. Here again, one hears his call to become who one is and again one notes that striving for the highest possible affirmation in some sense already partakes of that affirmation.

GS ends with the appearance of *Zarathustra*. Through *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche dramatizes his own striving to come to terms with his "experience" of Eternal Recur-

⁹⁴ So it is not the case as all too often presented that "the Daemon offers two alternatives" (Parkes 2005, xxiv) of responding, since it is the narrator and not the Demon who asks the question of how one would respond, and there are arguably three responses.

rence, his attempt to incorporate the idea. That one has to ask about the mood of *Z* is therefore a foregone conclusion.

5.7 Conclusion and concluding excursus on the 1887 edition

The evidence surveyed supports the thesis that *GS* and specifically its fourth book aim to put philosophizing in a new mood. Throughout the text Nietzsche presents many reasons why a mood of joyful affirmation is philosophically productive, though never explicitly as answer to such a question. He rather shows that the mood of his book is conducive to philosophical tasks: It gives the courage to face difficult problems, to dare to question inherited assumptions, to ask questions that should or should not remain unasked. This it does in a manner that recognizes that there will be no final answers, no end-goal and final resting place for the philosopher. It is a scepticism that does not despair of never reaching solid ground – rather it is precisely in groundlessness, in the high air, that both the joy and the danger resides. It gives the freedom to pursue truth; one's own truth. In this regard, one can go so far as to speak of a liberation of philosophy (cf. Stegmaier 2012). Of course, Stegmaier, who has forcefully argued in favour of a joyful philosophizing, insists that the most mature expression of this mood is to be found in book five (Stegmaier 2012, 46). This of course raises the question, in what sense the character of the mood changes. In what sense is the mood of book five more mature?

5.7.1 The character of Nietzsche's communication of mood in the second edition of *GS*

How does the 1887 edition of *GS* alter the interpretation that has been advanced about the original 1882 edition? How do the foreword and the fifth book fit into the picture that I have drawn of Nietzsche's communication of mood and its relation to his criticism of religion? Do they challenge or provide further support for the reading? Perhaps the most pressing question is, whether Nietzsche has become more doubtful about communicating mood and if the answer is yes how that shapes the work. Nietzsche's attempt to clarify and explain himself in the foreword to the second edition is the best place to start the examination of the evidence.

Nietzsche's doubts about whether *GS* is understandable at all go a long way towards explaining the specifically philosophical need for a foreword in 1887. Nietzsche already voiced scepticism as to his ability to communicate his vision in the period around the original publication, for example when he asked Köselitz whether *Sanctus Januarius* can be understood at all. More significant than the question itself is his admission that his doubt about the issue of understandability is huge (Nietzsche in fact goes as far as to use the word monstrous [*ungeheuer*], cf. KGB III/1, Bf. 282). This scepticism he takes to a new height in the foreword, in which he spe-

cifically questions the communicability of the experience that grounds the joyful science. For this is what Nietzsche basically says: if one hasn't had such an experience as he has one cannot begin to understand what the book is about, nor does writing a foreword help (cf. GS Preface 1, KSA 3, 345). What is remarkable is not this scepticism *per se*, but that he despite everything still tries to make his work understandable.

What Nietzsche provides is what he himself might have called a physiological description of the experience which found expression in GS. It is, however, crucial to examine carefully what Nietzsche is in fact talking about, precisely when he seems to be at his most "physiological", as here. In this case his emphasis is as much on spiritual as bodily health, as he blames an unfitting spiritual diet [*geistige Diät*] (esp. romanticism) for much of his suffering, and again justifies his withdrawal from the intellectual circles of his earlier days, a self-imposed exile into loneliness, as an attempt to cure his condition (GS Preface 1KSA 3, 346). In this sense, he writes of GS as resulting from the experience of suddenly being overwhelmed by hope; specifically the hope of health. In itself it is a joyful state, which he compares to a drunkenness [*Trunkenheit der Genesung*], but it is also much more as Nietzsche emphasizes its orientation to the future: it is a feeling of future, of new mornings and open seas, and last but not least a feeling that there are goals worth striving for (GS Preface 1, KSA 3, 345–346). This description fits well the thesis that I have advanced about the two levels of mood: on the one hand there is the joyful mood of the text and on the other the vision of a supremely joyful and healthy mood. Because Nietzsche employs the metaphor of drunkenness, one might nevertheless ask: how lasting can this joy be?

What remains of the mood of GS now that Nietzsche has become healthy (GS Preface 2, KSA 3, 347)?

Despite insisting that the philosopher can only ever translate his state of being [*Zustand*] into philosophy (GS, KSA 3, 349), Nietzsche emphasizes the lasting value of what he has learned from his varied experiences of sickness and health. In this regard, it is not unimportant that he speaks of having acquired a distaste of the "spiritual pleasures" [*geistigen Genüssen*] that he thinks the educated of his time seek to induce through literature, music and alcohol [*geistiger Getränke*] (GS Preface 4, KSA 3, 351), since the distinction between high moods and artificially induced ecstatic states is arguably of great importance in both his mature and late thinking on mood (see chapters 6 and 7). Even more importantly, however, he describes how he has through his experiences found a new joy, a joy at even the most disturbing problems that always is stronger than any anxious uncertainty (GS Preface 4, KSA 3, 350–351).⁹⁵ That the text of the fifth book of GS does not superficially display as much joyful playfulness as the fourth book therefore need not mean that

⁹⁵ "Der Reiz alles Problematischen, die Freude am X ist aber bei solchen geistigeren, vergeistigteren Menschen zu gross, als dass diese Freude nicht immer wieder wie eine helle Gluth über alle Noth des Problematischen, über alle Gefahr der Unsicherheit, selbst über die Eifersucht des Liebenden zusammen schläge. Wir kennen ein neues Glück..." (GS Preface 3, KSA 3, 350–351)

Nietzsche has abandoned his attempt to communicate a mood that he thinks is particularly conducive to the advancement of free spirits. It is instead best explained by referring to Stegmaier's suggestion that the mood of *GS* is expressed in its most mature form in the fifth book. Put differently, there are good reasons to assume that Nietzsche did attempt to communicate mood in the fifth book of *GS*, but that this communication is perhaps not as apparent on the surface as in the preceding books, and instead has to be drawn out.

Before moving on, it is worth noting that similar doubts that explain the need for the foreword can be found within the text of the fifth book. In this regard, aphorism 371, *We incomprehensible ones* (GS 371, KSA 3, 622–623), as well as aphorism 381, *On the question of being understandable* (GS 381, KSA 3, 633–635), are especially instructive. While Nietzsche in these passages expresses the view that his books are not for everyone, they also express his confidence that his communication will reach those for whom it is meant. These are of course the free spirits (of the future) and once again they are characterized in polemical contrast with religious believers. Thus, the opening aphorism that according to its title sets out to “explain” the spiritedness [*Heiterkeit*] of the joyful science, explicitly addresses the free spirits and confronts them once again with the idea that God is dead.

5.7.2 The death of God and the joy of the free spirit

In order to explain/show what the joy of the free spirit is like, Nietzsche first tries to explain what “God is dead” means. In Nietzsche's own words, this means nothing else than that faith in the Christian God has become unbelievable or unworthy of belief [*unglaubwürdig*]. Now, however, Nietzsche insists that the real significance of this event has not yet been grasped, except perhaps by a few who have foreseen the collapse of faith and with it the collapse of what hitherto was European morality. Even while he paints his dark picture of a monstrous logic of horror [*ungeheuren Logik von Schrecken*] and asks who could already know enough about what is to come in order to act as its teacher and prophet, he turns his attention to the joy of the free spirit. Instead of a dark future, the free spirit experiences the words that God is dead as heralding a new dawn and as the promise of open seas to explore. (GS 343, KSA 3, 573–574)

The question with which Nietzsche challenges his reader is whether the free spirit merely deceives himself; whether he is blinded by the immediate consequence that the message that God is dead has for him, namely his joy, and fails to see the horrific long-term consequences of the decline of Christian religion. In other words, Nietzsche returns to the question how one is to react to the message that God is dead. Within this one aphorism, he basically re-enacts the contrast between the dark visions of the Madman and the joy of *Sanctus Januarius*. Thus, Nietzsche once again tests the joy of the free spirit. In this regard, it is especially interesting to note, how Nietzsche in the first part of aphorism 343 employs a vocabulary sug-

gesting inevitability when describing the perspective of the few who already have seen the vision of a future governed by a logic of horrors, whereas he in the final part describing the perspective of the free spirits employs metaphors suggesting an open and desirable future (e.g. open seas). Crucially, Nietzsche's own perspective seems to go beyond either of the two perspectives, and this again supports Stegmaier's thesis that the mood of GS has become more mature in the fifth book. If the joy of the free spirit at its best truly is a joy even in the face of the most disturbing problems, the aphorism can be viewed in a different light; not so much as a choice between two incommensurable perspectives, but as a demonstration of a joy, which dares to confront an uncertain future. Following this thought, the aphorism is arguably itself a prime example of joy at that which is problematic and uncertain.⁹⁶

This interpretation is supported by the central content of Nietzsche's criticism of religion in the fifth book, which follows and builds on that of the first four books and fits perfectly in to the general trajectory of his criticism. Once again, Nietzsche's argument is built on the irreconcilable opposition between the free spirit and the religious, specifically Christian, type, and again he targets the supposed need for religion (cf. Stegmaier 2012, 216). On this point, Nietzsche clarifies his position. Nietzsche concedes that in general, the Europeans of his time are not ready for the uncertainty that leaving Christianity behind necessarily entails: "Christianity, it seems to me, is still needed by most people in old Europe even today; therefore it still finds believers" (Kaufmann 1974, 287; GS 347, KSA 3, 581). These men and women he then contrasts with the idea of free spirits *par excellence*, who are characterized precisely by their ability to dwell in a state of uncertainty and to find joy in this uncertainty (GS 347, KSA 3, 583).

Just as in *Sanctus Januarius*, the joy that the text of book five is meant to exemplify is related to a yet higher joy. Similarly, the philosopher's health is related to his ideal of great health. Following this strategy, Nietzsche tempts the reader at the end of book five with the ideal of a spirit that is supremely healthy, and therefore in Nietzsche's view necessarily beyond good and evil (cf. GS 382, KSA 3, 635–637).⁹⁷ Here, perhaps more clearly than anywhere in the preceding books of GS, Nietzsche expresses the view that giving up Christian moral feelings and reorienting one's affects is a precondition for experiencing the supreme mood of affirmation that (alone)

⁹⁶ Stegmaier has similarly noted that Nietzsche does not really explain his joy in the aphorism, as the title might lead one to think, but instead shows what it is like through the composition of the aphorism (cf. Stegmaier 2012, 118–120). How one interprets aphorism 343 depends to a great extent on whether the focus is put on the putative "explanation" that the aphorism provides of the joy of the free spirit or on the "exemplification" of this joyful mood in the aphorism. In this regard, I follow Stegmaier in emphasizing Nietzsche's exemplification. Hödl also argues that the structure of the aphorism suggests that Nietzsche writes strategically to celebrate the perspectives open to the free spirit (Hödl 2009, 439).

⁹⁷ "das Ideal eines menschlich-übermenschlichen Wohlseins und Wohlwollens, das oft genug unmenschlich erscheinen wird". In Nietzsche's words, this spirit plays with all that has been considered good, holy and untouchable (cf. GS 382, KSA 3, 637).

is worth striving for after religious ideals have become unbelievable. In the following chapters, I will follow the development of Nietzsche's thinking until a clear picture about the nature of this new ideal emerges.