

Techniques of Self-Knowledge in Nietzsche and Freud

Introduction

For Nietzsche and for Freud, whose publishing career blooms just as Nietzsche's collapse put an end to his productive life, achieving self-knowledge presents a challenge. Nietzsche declares that:

We are unknown to ourselves, we knowers: and with good reason. We have never looked for ourselves, - so how are we supposed to *find* ourselves? [...] like somebody divinely absent-minded and sunk in his own thoughts who, the twelve strokes of midday having just boomed into his ears, wakes with a start and wonders 'What hour struck?', sometimes we too, *afterwards* rub our ears and ask, astonished, taken aback, 'What did we actually experience then?' or even, 'Who *are* we, in fact?' and afterwards, as I said, we count all twelve reverberating strokes of our experience, of our life, of our *being* - oh! And lose count... We remain strange to ourselves out of *necessity*, we do not understand ourselves, we *must* confusedly mistake who we are, (*GM P I*).ⁱ

For Nietzsche, a new method is needed to address this problem of who we are. We need to pay attention to our experiences, and overcome the causal explanations that we currently apply to them after the fact, which conceal the complex activity involved in them. For Freud too, much of the self and its activity are currently unknown to us, and we are in need of a technique to navigate this uncharted

territory. Freud describes psychoanalysis as “a procedure for the investigation of mental processes which are almost inaccessible any other way” (*SE* 18, p. 235).ⁱⁱ

Both Nietzsche and Freud employ a notion of dynamic drives, which take shape and develop in historical processes, in their explanations of human belief, reasoning, and behavior. Thus, central to their projects of self-knowledge is the task of revealing and understanding the activity of our drives. While there are various aspects to the challenge of self-knowledge in both authors, it is their techniques of uncovering and exploring drive activity that is the focus of this article.ⁱⁱⁱ

The full complexity of their different methods of exploring the drives, and understandings of the obstacles this exploration faces, which both thinkers develop and augment across their careers, cannot be detailed here. One important point of contrast in their approaches, however, serves to illustrate a methodological difficulty that needs to be addressed if we are interested in self-knowledge; namely, the limitations in taking either a solitary or a dialogical approach. For Nietzsche, as I will argue further below, solitude appears as a crucial dimension to any attempt to better know the self, while for Freud the project of revealing the hidden depths of the self is transplanted from the loneliness of the desert to the intimacy of the consulting room.

Nietzsche himself suggests that every philosophy is a “confession of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir.” (*BGE* 6) Thus, we might be tempted to provide a retrospective analysis of Nietzsche’s methodological justifications for escaping relationships with others as a necessary stage in a project of self-knowledge in terms of his own psychology. Whatever the various

motivations at work, however, the demand for a period of enforced exile and a capacity for solitude, is at least in part motivated by Nietzsche's insights into obstacles to self-understanding that immersion in and dependence on society creates. At the same time, while we might be able to point to various non-epistemic interests that the psychotherapeutic relationship serves, the insistence on the relational elements in the process of psychoanalysis does have methodological justifications. Exploring why, in their attempts to reveal and understand the drive process at work within us, Nietzsche considers solitude to be a necessary practice while Freud takes dialogue, which I am using in the broad sense of communicating with and relating to another, to be indispensable, serves to clarify a genuine tension that an effective method of self-knowledge must navigate.

I will proceed by first discussing the notion of drives as underlying our beliefs, conscious thoughts and feelings, and behaviors, which is present in both thinkers. The aim here is to show that despite significant differences in their understanding of drives and how they relate to the subject,^{iv} there is sufficient similarity in this respect to allow a comparative assessment of their means of knowing the activity of these drives. I will then address why, for both Nietzsche and Freud, these drives have remained unknown, before exploring how, for Nietzsche, the practice of solitude and, for Freud, the relational phenomenon of transference allow them to be explored. Their opposing methodological motivations show the limitations in both solitary and dialogical approaches. An awareness of this tension allows us to navigate the pitfalls of operating either in solitude or in the context of relationships. I argue that the limitations of a purely solitary or dialogical approach

to self-knowledge point to the need to employ both solitude and dialogue in our attempt to know ourselves. Self-knowledge will require combining the capacity to endure solitude with the capacity to engage with others and become aware of how they shape our self-understanding.

Drives and their vicissitudes

Both Freud and Nietzsche explain our psychology and behavior in terms of the activity of dynamic drives. Nietzsche claims that “Our waking life is an interpretation of inner drive processes” (KSA 9:6[81]), while on Freud’s understanding, drives are the “ultimate cause of all activity” (SE 23, p. 48). In the standard translation Freud’s use of the term *Trieb* and his much less frequent use of the German *Instinkt* are problematically both rendered as instinct. I have adjusted the translation so that *Trieb* is rendered as drive, which better reflects the notion of a force or push that its derivation from the verb *treiben* [to push], would suggest. As Graham Parkes has pointed out, the use of this term in discussions of human psychology has a significant presence in the 18th century German thought that forms a common intellectual heritage for both Nietzsche and Freud.^v

So to what extent does this common heritage underpin a conceptual similarity in their use of the term?^{vi} Ultimately, for Nietzsche all drives are wills to power: “our drives can be reduced to the will to power” (KSA 11:40[61]). That is they can all be characterized in terms of “spontaneous, aggressive, expansive, re-interpreting, re-directing and formative forces” (GM II: 12). All drives share the

tendency to grow, expand, and assert their interpretation against other drives or wills to powers. Yet while they are all of the same character we can still talk of multiple wills to power. Nietzsche understands “*man as a multiplicity of ‘wills to power’: each one with a multiplicity of means of expression and forms*” (KSA 12:I[58]). For different drives, or wills to power, this fundamental need to feel power takes different aims. We have a drive to truth, and a drive to conceal for example, both seeking to assert their dominance (BGE 230).

For Freud too, the drive stimulus could be termed a “need” (SE 14, p. 119). On Freud’s understanding this is a need for satisfaction, understood as the removal of the stimulus at the drive’s source:

The simplest and likeliest assumption as to the nature of drives would seem to be that in itself a drive is without quality, and, so far as mental life is concerned, is only to be regarded as a measure of the demand made upon the mind for work. What distinguishes the drives from one another and endows them with specific qualities is their relation to their somatic sources and to their aims. The source of a drive is a process of excitation occurring in an organ and the immediate aim of the drive lies in the removal of this organic stimulus. (SE 7, p. 168)

Somatic sources refer to the place a drive originates from, or where the unknown somatic process from which it originates occurs, including the erotogenic zones.^{vii} Thus, for Freud the motivating drive is explicitly an internal rather than an external stimulus, “a drive stimulus does not arise from within the world but from within the organism itself” (SE 14, p. 118).^{viii} The aim on one level is always satisfaction,

understood as the removal of the stimulation at the drive's source, but this requires different actions, depending on the somatic source. For example the oral drive has the aim of sucking,^{ix} the child "proceeds to find this satisfaction by sucking rhythmically at some part of the skin or mucous membrane" (*SE* 7, p.181). Hence for Freud, as for Nietzsche, there are many different drives with different aims.

Thus, while they characterize the fundamental character of drives differently, both Nietzsche and Freud recognize the existence of multiple drives, which are differentiated according to their aims. Freud always remains committed to a characterization of these multiple drives in terms of a dualistic division, replacing the opposition between ego, or self-preservation, and libido, or sexual, drives in his early work with the suggested dualism between the death and life drives: "Our views have from the very first been *dualistic*, and to-day they are even more definitely dualistic than before- now that we describe the opposition as being, not between ego drives and sexual drives but between life drives and death drives." (*SE* 18, p. 53) Nietzsche, on the other hand, emphasizes the opposition between the individualizing Apollonian drive and the disintegrating effects of the Dionysian drive in *The Birth of Tragedy*, but later pictures a non-dualistic, changing hierarchy (*GS* 290, *HH I P* 7). Regardless of this significant difference regarding the nature of the drives' interaction, however, Freud and Nietzsche share the fundamental assumption that in order to investigate human behavior and experience we need to investigate the interaction of multiple drives.

Further, for both thinkers these drives are not stable but undergo what Freud would call 'vicissitudes' (*SE* 14, p. 123). Thus, the attempt to understand the

activity of the drives involves tracing not only the history of their interaction, but the history of their emergence and development, on a social or an individual level. The differentiation of drives is an historical process.

On Freud's account, the intermediate aims, or actions, that a drive impels us towards, not only vary according to the drive's source, but can change during a drive's history. By the time of writing 'Drives and their Vicissitudes', it is clear that Freud believes that while the ultimate aim of satisfaction, through the removal of the state of stimulation, is constant, the intermediary aims can change (*SE* 14, pp. 117-140). Freud suggests that "although the ultimate aim of each drive remains unchangeable, there may yet be different paths leading to the same ultimate aim; so that a drive may be found to have various nearer or intermediate aims, which are combined or interchanged with one another." (*SE* 14, p. 122) Drives can come to acquire new intermediate aims, which "may be changed any number of times in the course of the vicissitudes which the drive undergoes during its existence" (*SE* 14, pp. 122-123). Freud lists various types of vicissitudes:

Reversal into opposite.

Turning round upon the subject's own self.

Repression.

Sublimation. (*SE* 14, p. 126)

For example, the movement from sadism to masochism involves a reversal from activity to passivity, the active aim to torture becoming the passive aim to be tortured.

This transformation is associated with a change in the object: “The object is given up and replaced by the subject’s self. With the turning round upon the self the change from an active to a passive instinctual aim is also effected.” (*SE* 14, p. 127) Hence, Paul Katsafanas’ claim that in Freud “the drive itself is indifferent to the object” is misleading. ^x Changes in the object a drive aims at are connected to a change in the nature of the drive. To overlook this exaggerates the stability of the drives in Freud and in using Freud to help elucidate the concept of drives in Nietzsche Katsafanas underplays the extent to which drives can change for Nietzsche too.

Indeed, in Nietzsche, this process of change is even less constrained than in Freud. Here the ultimate aim is always characterized by a will towards power, but without Freud’s mechanical model, which ties a drive’s aim to its original somatic source, the vicissitudes which a given drive can take in the expression of this aim are endless. For example, we see how the drive to truth begins as a drive to fix and make stable as a prerequisite for the language and rules on which our social existence depends (*TL*). Nietzsche suggests that we then came to compare different possible accounts, and ultimately to question the errors that once counted as truths. Thus what ‘truth’ is as the aim of the ‘drive for truth’ is not stable, but moves from the aim of creating convictions to questioning them: “every kind of drive took part in the fight about the ‘truths’; the intellectual fight became an occupation, attraction, profession, duty, dignity- knowledge and the striving for the truth finally took their place as a need among the other needs. Henceforth, not only faith and conviction, but also scrutiny, denial suspicion, and contradiction were a *power*” (*GS*

110). Hence, when Ken Gemes, who rightly stresses that the dominance of any given drive is not stable and that weaker drives can be sublimated in the service of the aim of a master drive, talks of a drive having a 'determinate aim', this is problematic if we read 'determinate' as fixed.^{xi} The aim of a drive for Nietzsche is itself subject to change. Thus, not only do Nietzschean drives co-opt each other and form new unities, as Gemes describes, their very aim and character can also change in this process. In addition to the alignments of drives undergoing vicissitudes, the nature of a given drive undergoes a process of historical development in Nietzsche as in Freud.

Clearly, Freud has a physical account of drives related to the individual's body, which is very different from Nietzsche's notion of forces which can be understood as prior to and beyond individuals. We can see, however, that for both thinkers, the form a drive takes, as well as its interactions with other drives, and thus the role it will play in explaining our behavior and conscious experiences, is historical, contingent and changeable. Thus, explaining our conscious experiences in terms of drive activity, involves tracing the historical formation, development and interaction of these drives. This means that the approaches they take in attempting to explore and justify their hypotheses of the character of the drives, can be taken to be mutually informative even while these hypotheses differ in significant ways.

The need for an art of interpretation

Why then is knowing the drives a problem? A central tenant in the work of both Nietzsche and Freud is that our conscious mental activity is only a small part of the activity that makes up the self. To think that consciousness “constitutes the *kernel* of man” or see it “as ‘the unity of the organism’” is, according to Nietzsche, a “ridiculous overestimation and misapprehension of consciousness” (*GS* 11). In fact “The greatest part of our being is unknown to us.” (*KSA* 8:32[8]) What is immediately available to consciousness is not the sum of who we are but just the surface ripples from which we hope to decipher what goes on in the depths. Nietzsche suggests that “there is, with all actions, much unconscious intentionality, and what comes into the foreground as “will” and “purpose”, is often open to interpretation [*ausdeutbar*] and in itself only a symptom.” (*KSA* 12:1[76]) Elsewhere he writes: “The so-called ‘motive’: another error. Merely a surface phenomenon of consciousness, an accompaniment to an act, which conceals rather than exposes the *antecedentia* of the act.” (*TI* The Four Great Errors 3) Thus, the self in Nietzsche involves much that is unconscious, though it is not clear he would extend this to concepts or ideas as Freud does.

For Freud the treatment of patients required the postulation of a dynamic unconscious. “The mind of the hysterical patient is full of active and yet unconscious ideas; all her symptoms proceed from such ideas. It is in fact the most striking character of the hysterical mind to be ruled by them.” (*SE* 12, p. 262) Psychoanalytic therapy involves bringing these ideas into consciousness. What Richard Wollheim suggests is increasingly the focus of Freud’s interest^{xiii} is what Freud calls “the living forces which oppose themselves to” the “reception” of such

unconscious ideas. (*SE* 12, 264) That is, he is as much concerned with the forces, which will be explained in terms of the interactions of drives, that keep these ideas from becoming conscious as with the unconscious ideas themselves.

Thus, with both Nietzsche and Freud, the claim that our mental activity is not synonymous with what is conscious introduces a problem of self-knowledge, in so far as we can no longer take our mental life to be transparent to introspection, but must attempt to decipher this activity by examining the thoughts, feelings, and actions that are immediately available to observation as signs of further, ultimately drive, activity that is not. Both employ the notions of interpretation and translation to describe the task of bringing to light the activity of our drives. Freud describes psychoanalysis as involving an “art of interpretation” (*SE* 18, p.239), while Nietzsche’s genealogical investigation provides an alternative interpretation to that of the “bad arts of interpretation” that he criticizes, and which fail to bring us to an understanding of what we are (*BGE* 22). This interpretation of experiences and behavior in terms of the unconscious activity of our drives, confronts a problem of translation. Freudian therapy relies on the “translation of what is unconscious into what is conscious” (*SE* 16, p. 435), while Nietzsche is committed to the “extravagant task” which is “to translate man back into nature”, digging beneath the “gold-dust of unconscious human vanity” in order to discern the “terrible basic text [*schreckliche Grundtext*] *homo natura*” (*BGE* 230). Freud frames the act of translation as making conscious what is currently unconscious, where Nietzsche sets up the task as the need to translate our existing, conscious self-interpretation into the language of the drives that lie behind it. The notion of translation, however, runs both ways in both

thinkers. They aim to consciously understand the unconscious activity of the drives, in order to be able to better understand our conscious experiences. Thus, they aim to translate what is currently conscious into the terms of drive activity, but to do this we must be able to become conscious of and talk about unconscious drive activity.

Further, for both writers there are reasons why we fail to translate the conscious signs of our drive activity accurately. I will now turn to how their arts of interpretation are designed to overcome these obstacles.

Nietzschean solitude

For Nietzsche error and simplification are part of who we are. There are various “erroneous articles of faith, which were passed on by inheritance further and further, and finally almost became part of the basic endowment of the species,” (GS 110). Simplification, denial and forgetfulness have thus been part of our survival and development.

Forgetfulness is no mere *vis inertiae*, as the superficial believe; it is rather an active – in the strictest sense positive – inhibiting capacity... The temporary shutting of the doors and windows of consciousness; guaranteed freedom from disturbance by the noise and struggle caused by our underworld of obedient organs as they co-operate with and compete against one another. (GM II, 1)

Our very sense of self, and our capacity to communicate and function in a group depend on denying the reality of the constant activity of our drives. We invent stable concepts that allow us to develop language, give promises, assign blame and punishment and then account for our actions in these simplified terms which deny the presence of multiple drives. These inventions form the horizons of our existence: "A living thing can be healthy, strong and fruitful only within a horizon." (*UM II*, 1, p. 63)^{xiii}

If we are to confront the multiplicity of drives within us, and translate our current understanding of ourselves, our actions and relationships into terms which acknowledge this activity, we have to be capable of questioning the horizons that our existence depends on. Thus, for Nietzsche, an honest self-investigation cannot occur if we are too attached to our current form of existence.

An inability to endure solitude is a symptom of such attachment. Nietzsche asks "who today knows what *solitude* is?" (*HH I P 3*) He claims of "the herd animals and apostles of equality wrongly called 'free spirits'" that "not a single one [...] *would be able to endure loneliness.*" (*KSA 12:3[13]*) His point is that those who think themselves radical would not dare to follow their investigations to the point where they would have no common beliefs to bind them to the fellowship of mankind. Even if they celebrate their independence of thought, they will shy away from findings that threaten their social existence by exposing its presuppositions as illusions. For instance, Nietzsche's understanding of the various drives that operate behind our concept of punishment, and behind our justification of punishment in terms of justice, are undermining of this practice (*GM II*, 4). Similarly his account of

the origins of bad conscience, suggest this “torture-chamber” has developed in a contingent historical process (*GM II*, 16). This challenges the necessity of the guilt that helps regulate our social existence.^{xiv} An unconstrained investigation may undermine further practices, and leave us isolated from the community they depend on. Solitude is necessary because it is needed to remove the limitations on the pursuit of truth of caring about the opinions of others and of being attached to the shared set of ‘herd’ beliefs, and to our current existence which is held together by these beliefs.

We also need solitude in order to be able to pay better attention to the drives which are covered over in society. “We are afraid that when we are alone and quiet something will be whispered into our ear, and so we hate quietness and deafen ourselves with sociability.” (*UM Schopenhauer as Educator* 5) Part of the difficulty with dealing with solitude is being afraid of what we will discover about ourselves. We need the chance to ‘hear’ other drives than those that are engaged in social interaction. Or as Parkes puts it, lack of intercourse with other people will “allow the persons of the psyche to present themselves all the more clearly”.^{xv} Through solitude we can become attuned to the internal dialogue that occurs between different drives or wills to power within us.

Solitude need not be a permanent condition. As Michael Ure argues we can view solitude as a stage to be passed through, after which new kinds of society and relationships may be possible.^{xvi} Freedom from society is not the goal of transformation but a necessary part of a method of transformation. It is required

for the pursuit of a critical and honest investigation that will lead to a new self-knowledge. Zarathustra declares:

Truthful – thus I call the one who goes into Godless deserts and has broken his reverential heart.

In the yellow sun and burned by the sun he will squint thirstily at the islands rich in springs, where living beings repose beneath dark trees.

But his thirst does not persuade him to become like those comfortable creatures: for where there are oases there are also images of idols.

Ravenous, violent, solitary, Godless: thus does the lion-will want itself.

Free from the happiness of vassals, redeemed from Gods and adorations, fearless and fearsome, great and solitary: such is the will of him who is truthful [*Wahrhaftigen*]. (Z II On the Famous Wise Men)

For Nietzsche, a truthful investigation thus involves setting oneself apart from other, comfortable creatures, and the idols that they share, and being prepared to endure alienation from our fellow members of society.

The limitation to Nietzsche's attempt to overcome social constraints in his pursuit of translating the text of *homo natura* is that at least some of the activity of our drives concerns other subjects. The aim of some drives, and thus the history of that drive's activity and development, can only be interpreted in relation to the objects they aim at, which in many cases are other people. For example, we have

sexual drives, and drives to be recognized and admired, or, as seems to be suggested by Nietzsche's own *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, a drive to give, or share.

For Nietzsche, knowledge of the drives requires engaging with them, and not simply observing them from the outside. He is opposed to “‘contemplation’ [Anschauung] without interest” (which is, as such, a non-concept and an absurdity)” and suggests instead the need for “*having in our power* the ability to engage and disengage our ‘pros’ and ‘cons’” (GM III 12). Nietzsche's methodology of engagement suggests, therefore, that with these other directed drives we must engage with their directedness, and this includes engaging with the people they are directed towards.

Nietzsche in fact does advocate learning about oneself indirectly, in terms of the outward expressions of one's drives, or projections. He spends a great deal of time discussing figures whom he has admired, or feels the need to combat, including Goethe, Plato, Schopenhauer, and of course Wagner, with whom he had a personal relationship. He is aware that his changing attitude to Schopenhauer and Wagner, whom he once greatly admired but comes to so harshly criticize, relates to what he, or his drives, have needed at different times. In *Ecce Homo* he assesses his early *Untimely Meditations*, claiming that:

Now, when I look back from a distance at the circumstances of which these essays are a witness, I would not wish to deny that fundamentally they speak only of me. The essay ‘Wagner in Bayreuth’ is a vision of my future; on the other hand in ‘Schopenhauer as Educator’ it is my innermost history, my *evolution* that is inscribed. (EH The Untimely Essays 3)

The emphasis, however, is on breaking and getting distance on one's attachments in order to understand them, not on exploring them in dialogue with others. Nietzsche's break with Schopenhauer and Wagner allows him to assess what had previously drawn him to them, and how he had hidden behind them.

Thus, given his own insights into the need to engage with, or "*live in*" the drives (KSA 9:11[141], p.494) there is still a potential limitation in Nietzsche's approach, because even while Nietzsche explores phenomenon such as projection and transference, he is trying to understand the relational, object-orientated character and development of drives in abstraction from this relational activity. If we are to understand the activity and emergence of our drives, surely we have to explore them in their activity and development, which means in the context of the relationships they work and are formed in? We cannot understand relational activity by excluding ourselves from relationships. Nor is it enough to remember our past relationships. Where we have misunderstood, concealed or denied the nature of our drives, we have to have a way of examining their activity outside of these disguised operations. For Nietzsche this involves distance from the obscuring factors of the relationships, but this only allows us to remember and reflect on the activity of a drive that is other regarding not fully engage with it.

Freudian transference

The need to explore drives in relationships with others is a fundamental tenet of Freud's psychoanalytic method, in which the occurrence of transference in

the relationship between patient and doctor, or analysand and analyst is essential. “Classically, the transference is acknowledged to be the terrain on which all the basic problems of a given analysis play themselves out: the establishment, modalities, interpretation and resolution of the transference are in fact what define the cure.”^{xvii} Transference in simple terms is the transference of feelings and desires, both positive and negative, from earlier relational experiences onto the figure of the doctor. Transference when positive can serve a helpful function of facilitating the patient’s willingness to cooperate and to listen to the doctor’s suggested interpretations. Despite the functional use of a positive transference ultimately, however, both positive transference, and the negative transference it often gives way to, indicate a resistance to the therapy.

Resistance can take different forms and is a concept that undergoes ongoing development and revision in Freud’s work. It underpins the various ways an analysand resists analysis. The idea of resistance is based on the assumption that it is not just the case that some things happen to be unconscious. The unconscious contains that which, as Wollheim put it, “was not only unadmitted but inadmissible to consciousness”.^{xviii} Various representations bound to a drive are repressed and prevented from becoming conscious because to satisfy the drive would provoke displeasure or threaten self-preservation. Repression thus “lies at the root of the constitution of the unconscious”.^{xix}

Psychoanalytic method is, therefore, focused around combating the forces of repression: “By carrying what is unconscious on into what is conscious, we lift the repressions, we remove the preconditions for the formation of symptoms, we

remove the pathogenic conflict into a normal one for which it must be possible somehow to find a solution.” (SE 16, p.435) The forces of repression, however, resist the discovery of what is repressed. “The resistance accompanies the treatment step by step.” (SE 12, p. 103) In his late work, Freud holds that the repressed itself offers no resistance, but the same defensive forces which carried out repression remain operative. “Resistance during treatment arises from the same higher strata and systems of the mind which originally carried out repression.” (SE 18, p. 19) The aim of therapeutic practice is summarized thus by Freud: “Descriptively speaking, it is to fill in gaps in memory; dynamically speaking it is to overcome resistances due to repression.”(SE 12, p.148)

Transference is the “strongest weapon of resistance” (SE 12, 104). It distracts the patient. For example, where they profess love to the analyst, this comes to dominate the session, or, in the negative forms, justifies a refusal to listen to the analyst. In general, identifying resistances is an important part of the analyst’s progress is getting to the root of their patient’s symptoms, but the transference not only indicates that the analyst is approaching the site of repressed conflict but does the “service of making the patient’s hidden and forgotten erotic impulses immediate and manifest.” (SE 12, p. 108) This is because it actualizes the childhood conflict, “the patient does not say he remembers that he used to be defiant and critical towards his parent’s authority; instead he behaves that way to the doctor.” (SE 12, p. 150)

A ‘transference neurosis’ is thus formed, which Freud claims is “the essential subject of psychoanalytic study” (SE 18, p. 52). Because “one cannot overcome an

enemy who is absent or not within range" (*SE* 12, p. 152), transference is necessary to bring the repressed into range. It allows this because it offers a contained environment in which it can operate and its activity can thereby be explored:

'We render the compulsion harmless, and indeed useful, by giving it the right to assert itself in a definite field. We admit it into the transference as a playground in which it is allowed to expand in almost complete freedom and in which it is expected to display to us everything in the way of pathogenic instincts that is hidden in the patients mind. [...] The transference thus creates an intermediate region between illness and real life through which the transition from the one to the other is made. The new condition has taken over all the features of the illness; but it represents an artificial illness which is at every point accessible to our intervention. (*SE* 12, p. 154)

Thus, the transference opens the repressed activity of the drives to understanding and neurotic conflicts to resolution. The analyst aims to force the transference neurosis out of the realm of the repetition of conflict and into memory, but before it can be conceptually recognized it needs to be experienced in the therapeutic context. The aim is to turn "a drive conflict which is at the moment latent into one which is currently active" (*SE* 23, p. 231). At the height of the transference resistance the drives that feed it can be discovered (*SE* 12, p. 155). The transference relationship particularly favors the return of the "affects belonging to the repressed material" (*SE* 23, p. 258) It then becomes possible to "attack" at the "point made accessible" through the transference (*SE*, 16, p. 436). Thus "in the hands of the physician it [the transference] becomes the most powerful therapeutic instrument

and it plays a part scarcely to be over-estimated in the dynamics of the process of cure." (*SE* 18, p. 247)

That transference turns out to be the most powerful form of resistance and thus the most powerful tool of the analyst in unmasking the forces of repression involved in resistance is, Freud believes, informative of the nature of the drives and their activity, supporting his claim for the prominence of sexual drives:

If further proof is needed of the truth that the motive forces behind the formation of neurotic symptoms are of a sexual nature, it would be found in the fact that in the course of analytic treatment a special emotional relation is regularly formed between the patient and physician. This goes far beyond rational limits. It varies between the most affectionate devotion and the most obstinate enmity and derives all of its characteristics from earlier erotic attitudes of patients which have become unconscious. (*SE* 18, p. 247)

Hence, the transference is informative not only of individual histories and neurosis but of Freud's broader theory of the drives.

Thus, unlike solitary self-examination which can only recall or imagine relational activity, Freud's psychoanalytic method allows drives that have others as their objects to be exposed and re-examined as they operate and are experienced in relation to another. This is not to say that self-examination has not played an important role in the development of psychoanalytic theory. For Freud, as for Nietzsche, simple introspection is inadequate for self-understanding, given key aspects of the self are unconscious, but Freud attempts to decipher the activity of his unconscious through the analysis of his own dreams. His self-analysis was not

undertaken entirely alone, however. During his self-analysis Freud met with and wrote frequent letters to his one time close friend and “understanding critic” Wilhelm Fleiss, often discussing his own dreams, as well as his patients and his theoretical developments.^{xx} Further, in these letters Freud suggests that his self-analysis depended on insights reached in treating his patients: “I have realized why I can analyze myself only with the help of knowledge obtained objectively (like an outsider). True self-analysis is impossible; otherwise there would be no [neurotic] illnesses. Since I am contending with some kind of puzzle in my patients, this is bound to hold me up in my self-analysis as well”.^{xxi} Freud’s self-analysis was not, therefore, a solitary activity. Given, however, his self-analysis did not involve a transference relationship between analysand and analyst, while it was sufficient to help in the development of his theory of the drives, the psychoanalytic methodology he subsequently refined might have revealed his own self-analysis as incomplete had he undertaken analysis with another analyst.

What then are the problems that this relational approach engenders? Firstly, Freud comments that study of the transference neurosis yields knowledge of the sexual, object oriented drives, but he himself seems to acknowledge that there are other drives that remain a comparative mystery. “The analysis of the transference neuroses forced upon our notice the opposition between the ‘sexual drives’, which are directed towards an object, and certain other drives, with which we were very insufficiently acquainted and which we described provisionally as the ‘ego-drives’ [*Ichtriebe*].” (*SE* 18, p. 51) Attempting to know the ego instincts has been a process of “groping in the dark” (*SE* 18, p. 51). Freud admits “these ‘ego-drives’ remain

strange” and that “The difficulty remains that psychoanalysis has not enabled us hitherto to point to any [ego-] drives other than the libidinal ones.” (*SE* 18, p. 53) So one concern is that the transference method will only yield up the activity of object orientated drives. As Freud says, a lack of any revelation of non libidinal drives “is no reason for our falling in with the conclusion that no others in fact exist.” (*SE* 18, p. 53)

There is a second Nietzschean concern that the relationship with the analyst, both with its transference effects which resonate with past relationships, and with feelings that may be germane to this new relationship, could operate as a limit for enquiry. The desire to gain approval, share beliefs, or simply sustain the relationship, may prevent some drives from being acknowledged that would threaten this particular relationship, and the pre-requisites for social interactions in general.

Finally, there is the particular concern of the power dimensions that are in play. The needs and aims of the analyst’s own drives could determine the content of what is discovered. That is, when the analyst interprets our conscious experiences in terms of the unconscious activity of our drives, this interpretation may be directed by the unconscious activity of their own drives. In Nietzschean terms, the wills to power of the analyst need expression and dominance and will seek to find them through the analyst’s work, asserting their interpretation in the interpretation of the patient’s drive activity.

This can operate at various levels. We could talk about the will to power of analysts, as Nietzsche talks about the will to power of priests (*GM* I: 7), in terms of

the consolidation of their own power position as healers, in which they have power over their patients and power in society. This secures the satisfaction of their general will to power as individuals. The expression of their will to power through their power as respected analysts, requires them to find evidence for their theories, and for their own necessity as interpreters. This relates to Michel Foucault's analysis of the repressive hypothesis, which suggests the very idea of a hidden sexuality is used to support practices of uncovering this sexuality, which would include the practice of psychoanalysis.^{xxii}

We also need to recognize the possibility that particular wills to power within the analyst, seek their particular satisfactions through the process of interpreting the drive activity of another. For example, the priests in Nietzsche's analysis benefit from the Christian interpretation because it gives them power in their role as priests, but particular drives within them, such as a drive to cruelty, will also use Christianity as a vehicle for their expression. Thus a relational method of discovering the drives has to contend with the relational operation of drives, which may shape what is discovered.

The methodological dilemma

There is then a general methodological difficulty present in either method, which is inherent to the nature of all methodological assumptions, that they will favor the discovery of particular evidence, and the further problematic that

relationships with others may limit or shape the content of our investigations because of the nature of these relationships.

To consider first the general problem, it is clear that a method that involves relationships with others will reveal activity of drives involving others as their objects, but might at the same time tend to overlook the possibility of other drives or forms of drive activity. A purely solitary approach, on the other hand, will be able to pay attention to what is covered over or drowned out when we are absorbed in engagements with others, but may give a very partial understanding of drive activity that is other regarding. Of course, solitary reflection does not have to ignore other regarding drives, but by examining them in abstraction it assumes that we can understand drives when their objects are other people in the same way that we can understand drives when their objects are passive, and fails to explore the interaction of our drives with the drives of others.

Any investigation that makes assumptions in its method may reinforce those assumptions. Both Freud and Nietzsche are clear that assumptions are unavoidable and their awareness that they are employing assumptions, such as the death drive or the will to power, that may need to be revised is a crucial step to mitigating the problem. For Freud, it is important that definitions should not be treated as rigid, and he refers to his original dualistic categorization of the instincts as a “working-hypothesis”, which may be, and indeed in ‘Beyond the Pleasure Principle’ is, replaced (*SE* 14, pp. 117, 123, *SE* 18, pp. 7-65). For Nietzsche, in turn, thinking through whether everything can be understood in terms of the “reality of our drives” is described as an “experiment” (*BGE* 36). Crucially, they are both aware of

the status of their assumptions as assumptions, which may come to be revised (*SE* 18, p. 51). They both also conduct their investigations with a sensitivity to the inevitability that their own perspective will tend towards reinforcing itself. Nietzsche in particular aims to cultivate a capacity to expand and move between perspectives to avoid becoming entrenched in any one interpretation of experience. We must learn “to look into the world through as *many* eyes as possible, to *live in* drives and activities *so as* to create eyes for ourselves” (*KSA* 9:11[141], p.494).

In addition to an awareness of the hypothetical status of any assumptions, varying the methodological approach taken could help avoid the general problem that theories tend towards self-validation. Widening the set of practices used to investigate the unknown self to include both solitary and engaged moments could potentially widen the sphere of what is investigated. Given solitary approaches will tend to overlook or misunderstand any drives that are operating relationally, while a relational approach may exclude the recognition of drives that fall outside relationships, or those that threaten the very relationship it depends on, conducting both solitary and relational investigations will allow a broader recognition of drives and the nature of their activity than either method will allow if pursued exclusively. This suggests that it is advantageous to use both solitary and dialogical approaches.

If then, a purely solitary approach risks missing important aspects of drive activity, it is worth addressing whether the additional concerns that a dialogical approach introduces can be overcome. In relation to Nietzsche’s concern that our dependence on relationships may limit our investigations, preventing us from

reaching conclusions that would leave us isolated by forcing us to reject the beliefs that bind us into a community, what is really required is an attitude of, or capacity for, solitude. The need to obtain the capacity for solitude does not rule out that part of our investigation into the subterranean activity of the self might be carried out in the context of relationships. Literal solitude might perhaps be employed to cultivate this capacity, as well as to heighten an awareness of the operation of intra rather than inter subjective drive activity, but need not be a permanent condition.

Nietzsche's method requires a capacity for both attachment and detachment, he advocates a kind of skepticism that is not symptomatic of disinterest, or a failure to fully embrace or occupy a belief or perspective, but rather an ability to move between and let go of any belief or perspective. One must even be careful not to "cleave to one's own detachment" (*BGE* 41). He declares that "Freedom from convictions of any kind, the *capacity* for an unconstrained view *pertains* to strength." (*A* 54) It is perhaps the same kind of capacity to engage and disengage, which he advocates in relation to our beliefs, that would need to be cultivated in respect to relationships. What matters is that we have a capacity to endure solitude which means we do not shy away from exploring our drives to the point where they may undermine existing relationships and forms of relationships. This does not preclude entering into relationships as part of a broader process of self-knowledge.

Whether we are talking about our beliefs or relationships, it may be alleged that this detachment means that one does not fully believe, or does not fully engage in the relationship, and thus does not completely experience the nature of belief or

relating. Nietzsche does not want us to only superficially engage. Rather, the aim in the Nietzschean method is to engage with but not to cling to a belief, or another person, out of a need for belief or relationships in general. Nietzsche's contention would be that where there is such dependence, the need to believe, or to relate, works to cover over its own role in supporting the belief or the relationship and limits our self-understanding of why we believe or feel something. A proper understanding of a belief or relationship therefore, requires combining engagement with a capacity for detachment.

The role of transference in the psychoanalytic method does seem to be in tension not just with a requirement for actual solitude, which could be limited to phases, but with this requirement for detachment. Transference seems to require that the actual *need* to relate in certain ways be actively lived through in order for it to be understood. If transference really does reveal drives, or drive activity, that would be inaccessible without the very dependence that Nietzsche would see as acting as a limit on enquiry, then are the limits it places on our enquiry unavoidable?

Nietzsche does not think we can operate without limits to our enquiry. Rather, his aim is that these limits are ones that we can *become* sufficiently detached from to be able revise or redraw the horizons, given that "for humans alone among the animals there are no eternal horizons and perspectives." (GS 143) For him, this ongoing process of detachment is one that solitude is crucial to, we start with limits to where our investigation could take us because of who we are, but by developing the ability to endure isolation we move the boundaries that

originally defined what self-knowledge was possible. If we return to the role of transference in psychoanalysis we find that while it does involve the kind of dependence that would seem to be in tension with the Nietzschean project, the explicit aim in the analytic process is to overcome this dependence. The success of psychoanalysis is measured by the resolution of the transference, which is “one of the main tasks of the treatment” (*SE* 12, p. 118), not its continuation. Thus, transference could be used as a stage within a project of self-knowledge that involves its own self-overcoming. Solitude might then extend this project into territory that we could not enter in the context of dependency on others, and we might return to relational contexts free from dependence, to make new discoveries in turn.

There remains the further problem, however, of the influence of the other that the relational process introduces. If the goal were to step beyond interpretations, it would certainly be a fundamental flaw that relying on another in the process of interpreting our drives will always involve the interpretations of this other. Once, however, we accept, as Nietzsche would, that we cannot help but interpret according to some perspective, it seems no more inherently problematic that their drives will influence the results of understanding our drives than that ours will. What matters in both cases is an awareness that this is occurring, which is part of the understanding of the drives that we are aiming at.

Discussions of counter-transference in psychoanalytic literature, acknowledge the need to cultivate this awareness. Freud insists that in order to be fully aware of counter transference, where the analyst’s own unresolved drive

complexes become involved in their interactions with the patient and interpretations of the material under analysis, an analyst must have had successful analysis: "he should have undergone a psychoanalytic purification and have become aware of those complexes of his own which would be apt to interfere with his grasp of what the patient tells him." (*SE* 12, p. 116) Donald Winnicott observes that an analyst can have feelings of love and hate towards their patient both for reasons to do with the patient and to do with the analyst. To manage feelings of hate it is necessary that "through his own analysis he has become free from vast reservoirs of unconscious hate belonging to the past and to inner conflicts".^{xxiii} Later analysts have recognized the possibility of using counter-transference in the analytic process. Paula Heimann suggests: "The analyst's counter-transference is an instrument of research into the patient's unconscious."^{xxiv} She argues that the aim is not a lack of feeling but the ability to subordinate feelings in the analytic task. Heimann suggests that by noticing their own feelings in response to the patient, analysts can learn about the patient through their own unconscious reactions as well as their conscious interpretation of the material, as the counter-transference is a reaction to the patient's activity. The analyst needs to pay attention to his or her own feelings, and aided by having worked through their own conflicts should be able to avoid imputing to the patient what belongs to him or herself. Addressing the existence of counter-transference through psychoanalytic methods does not, of course, challenge the paradigms of psychoanalytic theory, but it does show that built into the methodological approach is an awareness of the inevitability that the analyst's own make up will influence the interpretation, and that this can only be

mitigated against by acknowledging this and exploring it as part of an ongoing project of self-knowledge on the analyst's as well as on the analysand's part.

We may, however, have a particular concern that it is not only the case that the perspective of the other influences the interpretation we arrive at with another, but that power strategies may have a distorting effect, for example by suggesting a self-understanding that supports a particular power dynamic. Clearly, in the case of analysis it is in the interests of the analyst to reinforce psychoanalytic theory and their own indispensability. This does not, however, mean that the results of their investigations are not genuinely illuminating of the analysand's unconscious life. Even if we discover that relationships always involve power strategies, this does not mean that we would want to forsake the potential joys and benefits of all relationships. In the case of self-knowledge, we can choose to accept the risk that power strategies may influence our discoveries, for the possible benefit of revealing aspects of the self that require engaging with others.

In assessing if this risk is worthwhile we need to consider whether in the case of projects of self-knowledge the involvement of power dynamics is particularly problematic. A concern, explored in the work of Foucault, is that this process of producing self-knowledge is productive of a subjugated self. However, as Foucault himself suggests, if existing hierarchies operate through the production of a particular type of self, then challenging them requires a project of forming an alternative self. To attempt such a task is urgent "if it is true after all that there is no first or final point of resistance to political power other than in the relationship one has to oneself."^{xxv} A pre-requisite to this form of resistance is to understand how

the self has been shaped according to power strategies and in ways that reinforce existing power structures. Thus, if we use psychoanalysis, and other relational contexts, as a path of self-knowledge, we need to use them not only to discover our other regarding drives but also to discover the ways in which our relationships, including their power dynamics, shape these drives, their interactions and our knowledge of them.

In addition to cultivating an awareness of the presence of power dynamics in all relationships, we can also mitigate their having a limiting effect on our enquiry by not relying exclusively in our self-exploration on this relational situation. That is, if there are vested interests in the particular relationship involved in psychoanalysis, it is important that we also explore ourselves in other ways in order to provide alternative perspectives. This can be through both solitary exploration and through alternative relationships with different power dynamics. Just as it is important to move between perspectives for Nietzsche, it is important to be able to move in and out of relational contexts and between different types of relationships.

Conclusion

We cannot step beyond relationships if we are to understand what is relational in us, and therefore we cannot but interact with the aims of the other's drives in a broad project of self-knowledge. What we must aspire to, therefore, is deepening our awareness of the effects of the aims of the other's drives on the

process of enquiry. This awareness needs to be developed both through solitude and through dialogue. Commitment to pursuing self-knowledge without limitations requires us to step away and get distance on our relationships, cultivating an independence and detachment that allows the pursuit of knowledge even at the cost of the destruction of our relationships. We also need to explore the nature of drives in their relational activity, observing how they interact and shape each other, which requires a capacity to engage with others.

Thus, the limitations of both solitude and dialogue as methods of achieving self-knowledge point to the need to use both in the process of understanding our drives. Further, by contrasting them we highlight dangers present in both approaches, allowing us to cultivate an awareness, which mitigates some of their distorting effects. Ultimately we may also have to accept a certain modesty, acknowledging that the project of self-knowledge will never be complete, and that an exploration of the distortions that are part of our attempts to gain self-knowledge are themselves informative of who we are.^{xxvi}

ⁱ When quoting from Nietzsche's published works I have used the following translations: *Human, all too Human*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); *Untimely Meditations*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, ed. Daniel Breazeale Daniel (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, trans. Ronald Speirs, ed. Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); *Gay Science: with a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff, ed.

Bernard Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. R. J Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 2003); *Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ*, trans. R. J Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 2003); *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is*, trans. R. J Hollingdale (London: Penguin Books, 2004); *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: a Book for Everyone and Nobody*, trans Graham Parkes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); *On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. Carol Diethe, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

ⁱⁱ Freud's writings are cited from the Standard Edition translated from the German under the general editorship of James Strachey, in collaboration with Anna Freud, assisted by Alix Strachey and Alan Tyson (London: Hogarth, 1956-1974). Citations give the Standard Edition volume number followed by page number.

ⁱⁱⁱ My discussion is based on Freud and Nietzsche's own writings rather than subsequent developments in therapeutic practice inspired by their work, though I do refer to some later psychoanalytic theory where I feel it usefully draws out aspects of Freud's method. Psychoanalytic theory and practice has taken various, sometimes critical, paths of development out of Freudian theory. For an introductory overview of the key post-Freudian schools of psychoanalysis and discussions of developments in psychoanalytic practice, including greater emphasis on counter-transference in the analytic relationship, see Stephen Frosh, *A Brief Introduction to Psychoanalytic Theory* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). Therapeutic practice has also been influenced by Nietzsche's work, for example see Emmy van Deurzen-Smith, "What is Existential Analysis," *Journal of the Society for Existential Analysis* 1[1990]."

^{iv} For example see Ken Gemes discussion of their different accounts of drive sublimation (“Freud and Nietzsche on Sublimation,” *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 38 [2009]: 38-59). There is much more than could be explored regarding the different relationship of the drives to the self in Nietzsche and Freud, and the implications of these differences for techniques of self-knowledge and therapeutic practice.

^v Graham Parkes, *Composing the Soul: Reaches of Nietzsche’s Psychology* (Chicago; London: Chicago University Press, 1994), 256-272.

^{vi} For a detailed discussion of the question of the extent to which Freud was influenced by Nietzsche’s work, either through directly reading it despite his claims to the contrary, or through discussions and correspondence with friends who were well acquainted with Nietzsche’s ideas, as well via talks at the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, see Ronald Lehrer’s *Nietzsche’s Presence in Freud’s Life and Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995). Lehrer also considers common intellectual influences on both figures that may explain some of their points of convergence. Paul-Laurent Assoun also addresses whether Freud absorbed any of Nietzsche’s thought in his comparative study *Freud and Nietzsche*, as well as considering their conceptual similarities and differences, and the problems of making such comparisons (*Freud and Nietzsche*, trans. Richard L. Collier [London: Continuum, 2000]).

^{vii} Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Hogarth Press, 1973), 424.

viii This is a point of contrast with Nietzsche, for whom such a clear division between the external and the internal in the constitution of the subject is not possible. Nietzsche does, nevertheless, employ a notion of a subject, however unstable, of whose professed motivations, and whose drives underlying them, we can speak, even if these drives cannot necessarily be said to belong to someone in the strong sense of originating within them as they can for Freud.

ix Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Hogarth Press, 1973), 22.

x Paul Katsafanas, "Nietzsche's Philosophical Psychology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*, ed. Ken Gemes and John Richardson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 727-755, 747.

xi Ken Gemes, "Freud and Nietzsche on Sublimation," *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 38 [2009]: 38-59, 51.

xii Richard Wollheim, *Freud* (London: Fontana Press, 1991), xiv.

xiii Translation modified.

xiv A comparative study on the relationship between bad conscience in Nietzsche and the superego in Freud would be welcome.

xv Graham Parkes, *Composing the Soul: Reaches of Nietzsche's Psychology* (Chicago; London: Chicago University Press, 1994), 287.

xvi Ure argues that solitude is in fact a pre-requisite for successful friendship and that the basis for a respectful relationship is to be able to process or digest one's affects rather than force them onto others. Thus, for Ure, it is by cultivating a capacity to endure solitude that one is better able to have true companionship

without dependency. Michael Ure, *Nietzsche's Therapy: Self-Cultivation in the Middle Works* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008), 215.

^{xvii} Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Hogarth Press, 1973), 455, 457.

^{xviii} Richard Wollheim, *Freud* (London: Fontana Press, 1991), xiii.

^{xix} Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Hogarth Press, 1973), 390.

^{xx} Jeffrey Mousaieff Masson, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess 1887-1904*, (Cambridge, MA; London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985), 273.

^{xxi} *Ibid*, 281.

^{xxii} Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: The Will to Knowledge*, trans. Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 1978).

^{xxiii} Donald Winnicott, "Hate in the Counter Transference," *Journal of Psychotherapy, Practice and Research*, 3,4 (1994): 350-356, 351.

^{xxiv} Paula Heimann, "On Counter-Transference," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 31 (1950): 81-84, 81.

^{xxv} Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France 1981-1982*, trans. G Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 252.

^{xxvi} I would like to thank the referees for *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies* for their suggestions in revising this article.