

Nietzsche on Natural Necessity and "the Organic": Aristotelian Reflections on David B. Allison's *Reading the New Nietzsche*

JEFF MITSCHERLING, *University of Guelph*

About a year and a month before Nietzsche's death on August 25, 1900 Hans Vaihinger presented a lecture to the Dozenten-Verein of the University of Halle, on July 29, 1899, entitled "Nietzsche als Philosoph."¹ In that lecture, Vaihinger stated his task to be the "objective" presentation of Nietzsche's philosophy, and he found it necessary at the outset to address three objections to such an undertaking. The first objection was that Nietzsche was simply a "fashionable" author: "the day before yesterday it was Schopenhauer, yesterday it was E. v. Hartmann, today it's Nietzsche, tomorrow or the day after tomorrow it's a different one." The second objection was that "Nietzsche is not at all a philosopher, for he has laid out no coherent and complete system of philosophy; it's not worth wasting one's time on his ideas, which, even if clever, are nevertheless lacking in system and full of contradiction." The third objection, which Vaihinger appears to have regarded as potentially the most telling of the three, was that "Nietzsche is a sick spirit; it's senseless to concern oneself with the products of a lunatic."²

I am opening my remarks on Allison's book by citing a work published ninety-nine years earlier in order to point out a radical difference in attitude that seems to have emerged over this last century. Vaihinger found it necessary to respond to each of these three objections and, essentially, dismiss them in order to justify his attempt to present Nietzsche's philosophy "objectively" to his audience.³ Allison, on the other hand, manages to turn the point of each of these objections into a defining feature, if not a virtue, of Nietzsche's thought. This is the "new Nietzsche" that Allison presents to us, and he does so splendidly. His Preface offers a succinct account of the evolution of Nietzsche's "style" which helps us to understand how Nietzsche may have been regarded as "fashionable" by any number of readers not only over a century ago, but today as well. Perhaps more importantly, this account explains how, and to some extent why, the four of Nietzsche's texts that he analyzes differ so radically in their style. Allison returns to this feature of Nietzsche's philosophy in an early section of his second chapter (on *The Gay Science*), entitled "Stylistic Concerns in Nietzsche's Works." Commenting on Nietzsche's "unsystematic character of expression," he there remarks that "it is arguable whether one could find a stronger single example of a thinker from the Western tradition whose distinctive style of expression so forcefully reflects the content of his concerns" (Allison, 74–5). The third objection—that Nietzsche was a sick spirit

and a lunatic—is a recurring theme of Allison's book, although he expresses the characterization somewhat differently. Allison's "new Nietzsche" was a visionary, perhaps a prophet, whose "sickness of spirit" was in large part symptomatic of the physical sickness of a person who happened to be living in a sick culture. Today we seem willing to grant not only that there does indeed exist a very fine line between genius and insanity, but also that Nietzsche clearly stepped over it—and not only with his final collapse on January 3, 1889. He appears to have taken the occasional daytrip for a long time before that. But this does not seem to bother us anymore. Indeed, we celebrate this about Nietzsche. His deliciously probing insights appear to us to be all the more profound when we regard them as being of such weight and purport that they may actually have helped drive him to insanity.⁴ In my remarks on Allison's book, I shall focus on one set of such insights that strikes me as particularly relevant both to Nietzsche and to our "newly redeemed" concept of nature as both organic and embodying necessity.

I must preface my remarks with my one serious criticism of Allison's book. As I said above, Allison does a splendid job of presenting to us the new Nietzsche. He takes us, as systematically as possible, through four of Nietzsche's most important texts. The fifty-two pages of single-spaced, small-font notes that follow the text proper provide all the bibliographical documentation any reader could ever desire, at the same time presenting a wealth of historical and biographical information presented in such a way that the notes can almost be read as a coherent commentary on their own. Yet his presentation remains incomplete in one crucial respect: He never completes the picture of Nietzsche's thought. More precisely, he refuses to take up what appear to be clear invitations to engage in a little lunatic thinking of his own. I suggest this as a criticism, but of course it is not intended to be all that negative. It is not the task of a commentator to take such creative liberty—indeed, this would have weakened Allison's book considerably. But this task does, I think, fall under the job description of a commentator on a commentator. So in what follows I shall "complete the picture" of Nietzsche's rethinking of nature, or rather I shall take a few steps over the line in that direction by elaborating on his repeated mention of "the organic." After a few more preliminary remarks, I shall focus on Allison's second chapter, which deals with *The Gay Science*.⁵

It is common in the literature on Nietzsche to regard him as having had Aristotle in mind only when he wrote on aesthetics and ethics, and to view him as having respected the latter as much as he abhorred the former. Walter Kaufmann, here as elsewhere setting an example for commentators to follow, writes:

Nietzsche's debt to Aristotle's ethics is thus considerable, and it is quite unjustifiable to infer from Nietzsche's disagreement with Aristotle's theory of tragedy that Aristotle meant little or nothing to him—or that the only Greek philosophers whom he admired were the pre-Socratics. In his own mind, he seems to have distinguished clearly between Aristotle's ethics and aesthetics; witness the following lines: 'I honor Aristotle and honor him most highly—but he certainly did not hit the nail, not to speak of hitting it on the head, when he spoke of the ultimate aim of Greek tragedy.'⁶

Nietzsche takes Aristotle to task, forcefully and repeatedly, in his criticism of the Aristotelian view of tragedy. As Allison points out:

In a note from 1888, Nietzsche expressly criticized the artificial character of Aristotle's concept of tragedy as an emotional 'catharsis' or purgation: '*What is tragic?* On repeated occasions I have laid my finger on Aristotle's great misunderstanding in believing the tragic affects to be two *depressive* affects, terror and pity. If he were right, tragedy would be an art dangerous to life; one would have to warn against it as notorious and a public danger.... One can refute his theory in the most cold-blooded way: namely, by measuring the effects of a tragic emotion with a dynamometer. And one would discover as a result what ultimately only the absolute mendaciousness of a systematizer could misunderstand—that tragedy is a *tonic*' (Allison, 56; citing *WP*, sec. 851).

This criticism of Aristotle's misunderstanding of the nature of tragedy seems to have been on Nietzsche's mind for a long time before 1888.⁷ In a letter to Rohde dated February 1–3, 1868 Nietzsche announced his goal of writing a history of literary studies in antiquity and modernity. In his notebooks covering the period from October 1867 to 1869, he mentions a "criticism of Aristotelian poetics" and names, apparently as entries or sections in his history, "development of tragedy" and "catharsis."⁸ Yet over the twenty-odd years that he was rehearsing this criticism of Aristotle's view of the cathartic nature of tragedy, he found frequent opportunity to cite favorably and make use of other Aristotelian observations, most notably those bearing on practical philosophy. For example, as Allison points out, "Nietzsche generally follows Aristotle's traditional injunction that *happiness* consists in *doing well*" (Allison, 214). The commentators have, I think correctly, tended to find Nietzsche in sympathy with central features of the practical philosophy of Aristotle.

What I would like to suggest, however, is that we acknowledge in Nietzsche a second point of agreement with Aristotelian philosophy—namely, with the

insistence they appear to share upon the necessity inherent in organic nature. I want to suggest that we place Nietzsche within the often overlooked tradition of the nonmechanical view of the cosmos that continued to guide a good deal of scientific thought from antiquity to the end of the nineteenth century, and which is beginning to reassert itself again today. If I am correct, we shall be forced to recognize Nietzsche as once again at least a hundred years ahead of his contemporaries, and this time in the area of "hard" science. It could be argued that others continued to think along similar lines regarding nature, and that we ought therefore to regard Nietzsche as simply belonging to the list of these scientific also-rans. But I want to suggest more than that. I want to maintain that Nietzsche's views on nature belong to, and are indeed an essential part of, his thinking as a whole, and that he therefore stands out as unique in presenting this organic view of nature within a comprehensive philosophy.

My attribution to Nietzsche of a "comprehensive philosophy" may appear odd. Until recently, commentators have tended to regard Nietzsche's thought, while undeniably wide-ranging, as nevertheless lacking the consistent employment of cohesive principles that might render it comprehensive in any "systematic" sense. I am suggesting that an Aristotelian view of nature underlies a good deal of Nietzsche's thought and that this Aristotelianism to some extent serves precisely this purpose of rendering his thought comprehensive.⁹ I cannot construct a compelling case for this reading of Nietzsche in one short paper, but I can call attention to what I take to be some clear indications of fundamental Aristotelian tendencies in Nietzsche's thinking on this subject which have so far gone unnoticed by the commentators. I hasten to add at the outset that I am not here trying to read Nietzsche as an Aristotelian. That Nietzsche would not have been comfortable with such an attempt is, I think, a given—despite the fact that he "honored him and honored him most highly" (high praise indeed coming from Nietzsche's pen). My chief purpose in drawing attention to these "Aristotelian tendencies" is merely to pose the question of whether we might employ this feature of his view of nature as a hermeneutic device in approaching his thought as a coherent whole.

Nietzsche presents the first clear, extended statement of the central features of his critique of modern science, along with a general outline for a new way of understanding nature and approaching physical theory, in *The Gay Science*. As Allison points out:

All natural processes—organic and inorganic—are thus active transformations, and for Nietzsche, this means that nature (and life, especially) is fundamentally affirmative in character. In developing his notion of 'will to power,' Nietzsche's understanding of physical theory

was very much influenced by his reading the eighteenth-century Jesuit mathematician Joseph Ruggiero Boscovitch's work, *A Theory of Natural Philosophy Reduced to a Single Law of the Actions Existing in Nature* (1758). Boscovitch maintained that the atom was not a solid particle, but rather, a nonmaterial center of 'force.' This *force* is the sole constituent of reality itself, or as Nietzsche would prefer to term it, stressing the innate 'activity' of the natural order, 'actuality' (Allison, 264 n. 9).

This work by Boscovich proved less influential than it was prophetic, although his contributions to modern and contemporary physics and cosmology are finally coming to be more fully appreciated.¹⁰ Among other things, he appears to have been the first modern thinker to have suggested something akin to quantum theory. He referred to what Allison calls "the center of 'force'" as a nonmaterial "point" that is in fact—in "actuality"—the marking of a confluence of natural forces that may best be conceived as acting not independently, but jointly, and as together constituting what we regard as the operations of "nature." What we call the "laws of nature" are, for Boscovich, our own mathematically articulated approximations of the natural tendencies of an organic world. As Cristoph Cox explains:

Boscovich was rescued from obscurity when, in 1844, his view was advocated by the great theorist of electromagnetism, Michael Faraday (*Experimental Researches in Electricity*, vol. 2 [New York: Dover, 1965], 290): '[T]he atoms of Boscovich appear to me to have a great advantage over the usual notion,' Faraday wrote. 'His atoms, if I understand him aright, are mere centres of forces or powers, not particles of matter, in which the powers themselves reside. If, in the ordinary view of atoms, we call the particle of matter away from the powers *a*, and the system of forces in and around it *m*, then in Boscovich's theory *a* disappears, or is a mere mathematical point, whilst in the usual notion it is a little unchangeable, impenetrable piece of matter, and *m* is an atmosphere of force grouped around it.'¹¹

This view—most obviously in its denial of the materiality of atoms and its attention to the "vitality" of such natural forces as repulsion and attraction—is indebted to Aristotle.¹² That Nietzsche would substitute the Aristotelian term "actuality" for Boscovich's "force" suggests that Nietzsche was attempting to escape from the inherent "mathematicism" of Boscovich—which was certainly well on the way to winning the day by Nietzsche's time—by returning explicitly to the organicism of Aristotle. I believe this sheds some light on Nietzsche's repeated, and often seemingly enigmatic, references to the "organic" and

to the "organic functions" of nature. We find some of his most suggestive remarks in this regard in *The Gay Science*. I shall restrict myself here to only those passages that Allison cites.¹³

In his chapter on *The Gay Science*, Allison discusses what were, for Nietzsche, the inevitable consequences of the death of God,¹⁴ and after a brief summary of these consequences he concludes with a quotation from *The Gay Science*:

The astral order in which we live is an exception; this order and the relative duration that depends on it have again made possible an exception of exceptions: the formation of the organic. The total character of the world, however, is in all eternity chaos—in the sense not of a lack of necessity but a lack of order, arrangement, form, beauty, wisdom, and whatever other names there are for our aesthetic anthropomorphisms.... [I]t is neither perfect, nor beautiful, nor noble, nor does it wish to become any of these things; it does not by any means strive to imitate man. None of our aesthetic and moral judgments apply to it (*GS*, sec. 109, p. 168).

But Allison introduces this quote by stating that "The world no longer appears as a purposive or rational order, nor does it plausibly reflect any aspect of the divine" (Allison, 100). I am not sure this does justice to what Nietzsche says here. Granted, we read that we find chaos and lack of order in the world, but these are a chaos and a disorder as defined by reason. We must note that Nietzsche does not deny necessity; indeed, he asserts it. He remains in this regard very much the Greek; even the oldest Greek poets agreed that "not even the gods strive against necessity." But more importantly, Nietzsche here affirms "the formation of the organic," the "exception of exceptions." In other words, Nietzsche explicitly acknowledges that there is something about the organic that we have to regard, speaking strictly in the language of modern science, as "miraculous."

Allison continues: "What, then, is nature? For Nietzsche, nature is at once chaos and necessity; it is profuse, luxuriant, teeming with excess and superabundance. Yet it is also cold, exact, bound to its sempiternal rhythms" (Allison, 103–4). I would respond to Allison that this is not "nature" *per se*—that is, not the nature of modern science—but living nature, the *phusis* of Aristotle, which necessarily contains (and logically entails?) both the quick and the dead as the Boscovich-like *puncta* of force/actuality. Allison certainly recognizes this when he writes, a little further on, that "[t]his is a kind of 'order' if you will, and as natural beings, we are already part and parcel of it. In the absence of any transcendent order, nature for once becomes our human dominion"

(Allison, 104). Allison adds the appropriate quotation, again from *The Gay Science*:

The living is merely a type of what is dead, and a very rare type. Let us beware of thinking that the world eternally creates new things. There are no eternally enduring substances; matter is as much of an error as the God of the Eleatics. But when shall we ever be done with our caution and care? When will all these shadows of God cease to darken our minds? When will we complete our de-deification of nature? When may we begin to 'naturalize' humanity in terms of a pure, newly discovered, newly redeemed nature? (*GS*, sec. 109, pp. 168–9).

Our attempt to "naturalize" ourselves must, according to Nietzsche, entail a new way of thinking not only about nature, but also about ourselves. This sounds obvious, of course, to anyone who has ever read Nietzsche. But what is not obvious is that this rethinking entails the acknowledgment of an ontological identity of subject and object that many readers might regard as thoroughly non-Nietzschean. But, as Allison recognizes, it is not. As he writes: "The scientific account, we are told, is the paradigm of objectivity. Hence, the individual human subject is necessarily pitted against the world and occupies a place that could only be termed as unnatural. At best, humanity seems to occupy and rule from some sort of refugee camp" (Allison, 105). Allison then quotes again from *The Gay Science*:

The whole pose of 'man *against* the world,' of man as a 'world-negating' principle, of man as the measure of the value of things, as judge of the world who in the end places existence itself upon his scales and finds it wanting—the monstrous insipidity of this pose has finally come home to us and we are sick of it. We laugh as soon as we encounter the juxtaposition of 'man *and* world,' separated by the sublime presumption of the little word 'and' (*GS*, sec. 346, p. 286).

Allison concludes from the above that "In order to become *naturalized*, in Nietzsche's sense, the individual must embrace nature, ultimately, by an act of will. He must willingly accept the natural order on its own terms. For Nietzsche, this means we must *affirm* its chaos and necessity, and, by the same token, we must destroy the little 'and' that *separates* us from nature" (Allison, 105).

I wonder whether Allison has not here fallen into precisely the same sort of error that Nietzsche repeatedly warns us against. Is Allison not suggesting that we "human subjects" are capable of becoming "freely willing" subjects?

What, after all, could it possibly mean to "willingly accept the natural order"? Given the chaos and necessity of this "order," how could we possibly do otherwise? This question strikes at a familiar target—and, indelicately construed, it whips at a horse that died long before 1889. But properly construed, it has little to do with "free will" and everything to do with the conception of nature, and the entire cosmos, as *organic*. As soon as we begin to view the cosmos—i.e., nature—along the lines of Nietzsche (and Aristotle, and Boscovich), the game changes radically, and instead of a playing field with rational rules defined by human beings, we enter the realm of quantum theory, with radical probability supplanting "causality," and "forces" supplanting material and immaterial "entities." As I said above, this "newly redeemed nature" that Nietzsche speaks of, and that we postmodern thinkers again see ourselves living in now, is fundamentally the same one spoken of by Boscovich, which was, in all "essentials," the same as that spoken of by Aristotle. It is nature regarded and investigated as organic, and comprehended as organic unity, not as a set of mechanistic "causal" relations. We human "subjects" are parts of this organic whole. What we have so long regarded as "subjective nature" operates as an essential part of this organic unity. This is an early Greek view—probably antedating the Pythagoreans as well as Plato—which the School of Aristotle embraced and attempted to elaborate. Nietzsche appears to have embraced this view as well, at least in part, and to have elaborated it at least partially in his own reflections.

I should explain this by very quickly reviewing the position of the School of Aristotle¹⁵ regarding nature and necessity. We can begin by recalling the definition of "nature" offered in *Metaphysics* Δ (1014b16–1015a19). After listing and briefly discussing five ways in which we use the term "nature," the passage concludes with a general definition that comprehends these five specific ways of speaking (1015a13–19):

From what has been said, then, it is plain that nature in the primary and strict sense is the substance of things which have in themselves, as such, a source of movement; for the matter is called the nature because it is qualified to receive this, and processes of becoming and growing are called nature because they are movements proceeding from this. And nature in this sense is the source of the movement of natural objects, being present in them somehow, either potentially or actually.¹⁶

There are two details of the larger passage that are lost to the reader who concentrates on the concluding "definition" alone, and both features are crucial to my analysis. The first specific definition of nature goes as follows

(1014b16–18): "We call nature (1) the genesis of growing things—the meaning which would be suggested if one were to pronounce the *υ* in φύσις long." The author's point is lost on the reader who does not know the Greek, and the translator offers no explanation. The point is that the word here translated "growing things" (φυομένων, *phuomenōn*) is cognate with the noun that we translate "nature" (φύσις, *phusis*); both derive from the verb "to grow, spring forth" (φύω, *phuō*). Our English word "physics" is thus the modified transliteration of the Greek word that we translate, following the Latin translation (*natura*) of the Greek, as "nature." In other words, the simple point of the Aristotelian text is that we use the word *phusis* when speaking of the genesis (the generation) of *phuomenōn*. The study of "physics," for the Peripatetics "physicists," was thus an inquiry into the conditions of the generation of the "growth" of the cosmos, with the entire cosmos regarded as itself a growing organic whole.

The second detail of this passage to which I want to call attention concerns precisely this "organicism." The third specific definition of "nature" reads as follows (1014b18–26):

(3) The source from which the primary movement in each natural object is present in it in virtue of its own essence. Those things said to grow which derive increase from something else by contact and organic unity, or organic adhesion as in the case of embryos. Organic unity differs from contact; for in the latter case there need not be anything besides the contact, but in organic unities there is something identical in both parts, which makes them grow together instead of merely touching, and be one in respect of continuity and quantity, though not of quality.

This notion of "organic unity" is what is of importance to us at the moment. An organic unity enjoys a qualitative identity distinct from any merely spatial contiguity or "material" identity of its parts. It is only when we have that difference between the Aristotelian and the modern scientist clearly before us that we can begin to understand what the former meant by "necessity" in nature.

It is by no means a coincidence that the definition in *Metaphysics* Δ immediately following that of "nature" (φύσις, *phusis*, in Chapter 4) is that of "necessary" (ἀναγκάιον, *anankaion*, in Chapter 5). For the Aristotelians, the concepts of nature and necessity are essentially interrelated. Indeed, necessity is always "by nature"—but "the natural" does not always proceed "by necessity." Necessity, that is to say, belongs to nature, but nature does not belong to necessity. In other words, nature comprehends and makes possible necessity; necessity does not exhaust the workings of nature. As

we read in Book II of *Physics* (and a mere gloss will have to suffice here), that which we refer to as necessary in nature has to do with the "matter" of nature, not with its "form." It is the task of the physicist to attend primarily to this "material" aspect of nature, while it is the task of the "metaphysician" (the "first philosopher") to attend to the "formal" aspect of nature. When regarded as material, the workings of nature are properly regarded by the physicist as precisely that—mere "workings"—and that which is necessary in nature is disclosed and analyzed as such. Yet when regarded as "formal," these "workings" are placed within a more comprehensive account that has also to consider the character of organism in the "growth" of "nature." Central to this more comprehensive account is the notion of "purposiveness," and this takes us back to Allison's new Nietzsche, with particular regard to his suggestion, mentioned above, that we "human subjects" are capable of becoming "freely willing" subjects, and that we might thereby come to "willingly accept the natural order."

This is surely one of the thornier paths to explore in Nietzsche, whose reader is met at every turn with the recurrent, nagging question of how "free will" can be at all possible for us subjects once the commonly accepted notion of subjectivity itself has been abandoned. The answer, I suggest, lies in reinterpreting the Aristotelian concept of the "purposiveness" of nature. This concept has to rank among the most commonly misunderstood tenets of Aristotelianism. The problem lies largely, as it so often does, in the connotations of the words we employ in translating the Greek terms, which sometimes enjoyed entirely different connotations. Without immersing ourselves too deeply in the philological mire surrounding technical terminological distinctions debated by the later Peripatetics—such as that between *entelecheia* and *energeia*—we can still clearly distinguish two senses of purposiveness in the Aristotelian treatment of what we refer to as "final causality." It has long been commonplace to regard the "final cause" as the "goal," or "external telos," toward which a thing is directed and/or for the sake of which a thing came into being in the first place. This is the view that we find in standard histories of philosophy and science. In *A History of the Sciences*, for example, Stephan F. Mason explains:

Potter's clay provided the material cause of a vessel whilst the formal cause lay in its design. The potter's wheel and hands were the efficient cause, and the purposes for which the vessel was intended the final cause. Aristotle himself was mainly concerned with formal and final causes. Formal causes, he believed, were inherent within all natural objects and processes. At first they were latent, but such forms became manifest during the development of the object or the creature. Ultimately

they arrived at a completion where the finished being served the purpose, or the final cause, for which it was designed.¹⁷

There are two serious problems with this brief explanation: (1) the identification of purpose with design, and (2) the suggestion that the final cause, unlike the formal, is not "inherent." These problems appear to arise as a result of the common tendency to confuse the ontological structure of artificial entities (like clay pots) with that of natural, organic entities (like trees and human beings). The final cause of an artificial entity—a product of human artifice—may most easily be conceived as the intended goal, or external telos, that motivated and guided its production. The final cause of a natural entity, on the other hand, has to be conceived as its own internal teleological structure, that is, as its own inherent purposive nature, its natural tendency toward becoming the entity that it does in fact become—or, perhaps more precisely, that it is in fact becoming. (We discern this identity in our recognition of its "essence," the *to ti ên einai*, the "that which it was to be," or the *ti esti*, the "what it is.") In other words, whereas artificial entities are granted, as it were, their "final cause" through some external agency, natural entities contain within themselves their own final cause: the final causality of a natural, organic entity lies in its own inherently purposive nature. It is in this sense that purposiveness is essential, *inherently* essential, to all organic being. We must note that this inherent purposiveness is in no way in conflict with the general "necessity" of natural development as a whole. Indeed, such purposiveness relies upon such necessity in the workings of nature: the necessity of the organism consists precisely in this purposiveness itself. When we now turn to the consideration of human nature, we see this purposiveness exhibited in our "willful" behavior. Human beings exist in such a way as always to be "willing" this or that, and indeed as *freely* willing our intended goal. But this freedom takes place, and is in fact only possible, as the expression of a necessity that belongs to nature as a whole, to human nature as a species, and to the individual person as a "freely willing subject."

I have been suggesting that we would do well to acknowledge a fundamental Aristotelian orientation in Nietzsche's thought and that such Aristotelian reflections as I have offered above may help us better to appreciate what I have referred to as Nietzsche's "organicism." But it seems that the approach I have just suggested in attempting to understand how Nietzsche could deny Cartesian subjectivity and its correlative "free will" might also help us better to understand Aristotle. In any event, the brief description of the Aristotelian account of purposiveness in nature that I have offered certainly rings unabashedly Nietzschean. If any conclusion follows from this, it is that we ought to acknowledge that Nietzsche belonged to what I referred to above as the often

overlooked tradition of the nonmechanical view of the cosmos. We might further wish to acknowledge his indebtedness to the teachings of the School of Aristotle not only in ethics and practical philosophy, but in ontology and cosmology as well. It remains an open question whether, in his vitriolic rejection of Aristotle's view of tragedy, Nietzsche was not in fact overlooking the extent to which Aristotle's treatment of the psychology of tragedy rested on Aristotelian ontology. Aristotle remarks, in *Poetics*, that "plot is the soul of tragedy," and it would seem that Nietzsche took this, as have two millennia of Aristotle commentators, as mere (linguistic) metaphor. It is curious that Nietzsche, who elaborated so forcefully his own view that language is itself the product of a deeper, physiological/ontological metaphor, chose to ignore the possibility that Aristotle might have meant what he said quite *literally*. Perhaps Aristotle was suggesting that a poetic text exhibits the same sort of organic unity, and thereby essentially the same basic ontological structure, as do we and all other natural organisms. But the discussion of this possibility will have to be the task of another study.

jmitsche@uoguelph.ca

Notes

1. (Subsequently published as) Hans Vaihinger, *Nietzsche als Philosoph* (Berlin: Verlag von Reuther & Reichard, 1902). Subsequent references to Vaihinger are to this edition. The translations are mine.
2. Ibid., 13, 14–5, 15.
3. Interestingly, in a manner suggestive of his "Philosophy of the As-If," Vaihinger begins his responses to the first two objections by suggesting, "Let us suppose that this were so."
4. But this in conjunction, of course, with an increasing decline in physical health that Allison suggests was likely brought on by a particularly insidious form of syphilis.
5. It is curious—and perhaps here comes another little criticism of Allison's book—that he opens this chapter by asserting that "Of all of Nietzsche's texts, *The Gay Science* is probably his most important" (Allison, 73). What makes this assertion curious is the length of the chapter. *The Birth of Tragedy* chapter deserves fifty-six pages, the *Zarathustra* chapter sixty-eight, and *On the Genealogy of Morals* sixty-six. Yet this "most important" of Nietzsche's texts warrants only thirty-eight pages. This short shrift might

suggest that Allison simply refused to give in to the temptation that I cannot deny—namely, to speculate on the Aristotelian character of Nietzsche's view of nature in general.

6. Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 384. Citing *GS*, sec. 80.

7. The criticism of the "systematizer" in the above quotation is, by the way, directed not at Aristotle (nor at Hegel, who is the systematizer *par excellence* for Nietzsche), but at Schopenhauer, as the larger context of the passage makes clear.

8. For details regarding cited materials, see Barbara von Reibnitz, *Ein Kommentar zu Friedrich Nietzsche. Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik* (Kapitel 1–12), (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1992). Regarding this and other early letters and notebook entries, see especially the Introduction, "Die philologischen Voraussetzungen der GT."

9. In *The Role of Dialectic in Nietzsche's Thought* (Dissertation, University of Guelph, 1994), Brian Wetstein also attacks the commonly held opinion that Nietzsche's thought is lacking in systematic cohesiveness. Wetstein argues that Nietzsche's dialectic, which he finds Nietzsche employing and developing throughout his thinking, suggests a fundamental, methodological, systematic principle.

10. As Christoph Cox notes in *Nietzsche, Naturalism, and Interpretation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 218 n.7: "Boscovich's conception of matter and force, proposed in 1769 but neglected for nearly a century, has become a central feature of contemporary physical theory (see Jonathan Powers, "Atomism," in *The Concise Encyclopedia of Western Philosophy and Philosophers*, ed. J. O. Urmson and Jonathan Reé [London: Unwin Hyman, 1989], 32, and J. D. Bernal, *Science in History*, vol. 2, *The Scientific and Industrial Revolutions* [Cambridge: MIT Press, 1954], 676)." (I continue citing this passage in my text just below.) Much earlier in his study, in his initial treatment of what he refers to as "Nietzsche's Holism," Cox adds the following helpful bibliographical note (93 n. 30): "For further discussion of Boscovich's conception of the atom and Nietzsche's fascination with it, see ... George Stack, 'Nietzsche and Boscovich's Natural Philosophy,' *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 62 (1981); and *Lange and Nietzsche* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1983); Claudia Crawford, *The Beginnings of Nietzsche's Theory of Language* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988); and Alistair Moles, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Nature and Cosmology* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 1990),

Chapter 5."

11. Cox, *Nietzsche, Naturalism, and Interpretation*, 218 n. 7.

12. We do well to remember that Boscovich was a Jesuit scholar, and his earliest training, as well as some of his first published works, had to do precisely with the elaboration of Aristotelian logic and ontology.

13. Cox lists and discusses other passages as well, including *BGE*, 17, *GM*, I, 13, and *WP*, 635. See Cox, 217–20.

14. He lists four: (1) "the *first* effect of God's death is *to remove the universal foundations of morality*"; (2) "A second and immediate effect is that we will continue to live under the shadow of the dead God, we will continue to display his raiments and trappings for some time"; (3) "A third consequence of God's death is that we enter an age of ambiguity and transition, characterized precisely by that nostalgia for the earlier age"; (4) "the fourth consequence of God's death is the *recognition of man's birth*" (96, 97, 97, 98–9).

15. The distinction between Aristotle and the School of Aristotle has been too long overlooked or downplayed. The works that are collected under the name of Aristotle (as in the standard McKeon and Barnes English-language editions) were certainly not all penned by Aristotle himself. (It is perhaps worth pointing out in this regard that Aristotle was in Athens for only twelve years after he returned to Athens and founded his Lyceum in 336/335, and that he died a year after he left Athens. Commentators who continue to remark on the Aristotelian authorship of particular passages in the transmitted Aristotelian corpus might do well to bear this in mind.) Editors and translators prior to the late twentieth century often made a point of noting this, but the importance of this "disclaimer" appears to have escaped the attention or concern of many recent editors and translators directing the text toward English-speaking students of philosophy. Scholars interested in the manuscript tradition—which means, usually, philosophers with classical training—have always recognized the distinction. My own position in this regard is informed chiefly by the research of Werner Jaeger, Etienne Gilson, Joseph Owens, and Felix Grayeff.

16. Translations of these passages from *Metaphysics* are by W. D. Ross, in Jonathan Barnes, ed., *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

17. Stephen F. Mason, *A History of the Sciences* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 44. Mason's view of Aristotle's conception of final causality leads him to contrast the approach of Theophrastus (46): "Reacting against the search for purposes and final causes in nature, Theophrastus maintained that efficient causes only were the concern of science. He suggested that the scientist should explain natural phenomena in terms of the processes observed in the mechanical arts, laying it down that 'we must in general proceed by making reference to the crafts, and drawing analogies between natural and artificial processes.'" This view is misleading in at least three respects. First, it is already stressed throughout the second book of the Aristotelian *Physics* that the physicist—i.e., the person who studies nature—must focus primarily (if not exclusively) on material and efficient causality in examining the operations of natural necessity. Second, for both Aristotle and Theophrastus (as well as for Strato and subsequent early Aristotelians), the term "science" was employed in reference to the examination of more than just the physical/material world. Third, while Theophrastus, at least in his extant work on plants, is not concerned with offering the same sort of causal accounts as Aristotle in his *Physics*, he does employ *eidōs* as a technical term in his classificatory system. The *eidōs* to which certain plants are said to belong does, on his account, specify the sorts of growth and change that may be considered as "natural" to these plants. Such "specification" might be regarded, then, not inappropriately, as a type of "formal causation."