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Vanessa Lemm ^{a b}

^a University of New South Wales, Australia

^b Diego Portales University, Chile

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Nietzsche, *Einverleibung* and the Politics of Immunity

Vanessa Lemm

Abstract

According to the Italian philosopher Roberto Esposito, *Einverleibung* (incorporation or embodiment) is an immunization device that offers a response to both life's need for self-preservation and life's need for cultivation. Esposito claims that with Nietzsche, the category of immunization has already been completely elaborated. This article addresses the problem of immunization in late modernity through an analysis of the Nietzschean conception of *Einverleibung*. Nietzsche recurs to two different semantics to understand the process of incorporation: on the one hand a semantics of appropriation according to which *Einverleibung* reflects a process of life through which ever more powerful wholes are constituted and preserved by the annihilating and excluding incorporation of the other; and, on the other hand, a semantics of creative transformation where *Einverleibung* is driven by a receiving and hospitable force, an openness to the other that furthers the pluralization and diversification of life. While the first logic of incorporation reflects the problem of the preservation of life by means of an immunization that carries with it all the dangers inherent to what Foucault refers to as thanatopolitics, Esposito raises the question of whether it is possible to preserve life by means of immunization without thereby destroying itself. This article argues that the idea of *Einverleibung* in Nietzsche understood as a creative transformation offers an answer to the question posed by Esposito. It moreover points to a different politics of immunity, where immunity does not name the including exclusion of the other, but the openness of life to the horizon of justice and community.

Keywords: Nietzsche; Esposito; immunity; embodiment; incorporation; community

I. Introduction

In the following paper, I address the question of the relation between nature and humanity through Nietzsche's conception of *Einverleibung* (incorporation or embodiment)¹ in view of gaining insight into the Nietzschean task of translating the human being back into nature (BGE: p. 230).² In Nietzsche, the process of *Einverleibung* reflects a variety of cultural and political formations reaching from the education of the individual to the constitution of an ethical community and even to the institution of the modern state. However, it also refers to a series of

physiological and organic processes such as those of nutrition, digestion and growth which constitute the respective means of differentiation and the empowerment of biological life (KSA 10:24[14]). *Einverleibung* thus defines specifically human (cultural-political) forms of life and organic (natural) forms of life in a more general sense. Showing that these cultural processes can be traced back to organic processes and vice versa is part of the Nietzschean task of translating ‘the human being back into nature’ (BGE 230).³

What makes the notion of *Einverleibung* so interesting is that it reveals both the point of continuity and of rupture between nature and humanity.⁴ *Einverleibung* names the point of identity and difference between the individual and the species at the level of biological life, but it also names the point of continuity and of rupture, of identity and of difference between the individual and the community at the level of culture and politics. *Einverleibung*, moreover, points to that which is deeply embedded in a given form of life: its proper ground or ‘essence’.⁵ On the other hand, *Einverleibung* is located on the surface of a given form of life which names its other. Here it does not describe that which constitutes a given form of life but, rather, that which alters, alienates (*entfremdet*) and de-appropriates it (KSA 10:16[26] 10.508; KSA 12:9 [151]). Thus, *Einverleibung* is a process located at the limit: it reveals the place where the relation of life to the other is played out (KSA 13:11 [111] 13.52).

The oscillation of *Einverleibung* between two seemingly opposed poles does not end here. In the description of the process of *Einverleibung*, Nietzsche refers to two different semantics: first, the semantics of appropriation (*Aneignung*) (AOM 317) – this semantics reaches one of its fullest expressions in BGE 259; second, that of creative transformation (HL 1; KSA 8:11[182]). Whereas the former is associated with the exploitation (*Ausbeutung*), subjugation (*Unterdrückung*) and domination (*Herrschaft*) of the other, the latter is associated with the ennobling inoculation (HH 224), differentiation and pluralization of life stemming from the encounter with the other as precisely that force which cannot be incorporated, that which resists incorporation (*Einverleibung*) (KSA 11:36[22]).⁶ Furthermore, whereas in the first case the process of *Einverleibung* is understood as a process of life through which ever more powerful wholes (*Ganzheiten*) are constituted and preserved by the annihilating and excluding incorporation of the other; in the second case, *Einverleibung* is depicted as driven by a receiving and hospitable force, an openness to the other which furthers the pluralization and diversification of life.

The oscillation between nature and culture, continuity and discontinuity, depth and surface, self and other indicates that *Einverleibung* is not a process that can be ascribed either to the nature or essence of organic

life or to the conscious or willful agency of the human being. Rather, it must be understood, like the idea of the will to power, as a relational term which designates the in-between in a field of multiple forces which are in continuous struggle with and against each other. It is the site of what Nietzsche refers to as ‘competitive play [*Kampfspiel*]’ (KSA 11:36 [22]). Here the Nietzschean task of translating ‘the human being back into nature’ means tracing the cultural and political forms of life back to their original site of struggle between life forces.

However, the question remains how *Einverleibung* can be both a process of appropriation and differentiation, uniformization and pluralization, exclusion and inclusion; preservation and elevation. According to the Italian philosopher Roberto Esposito, *Einverleibung* is a device of immunization which offers a response to both life’s need for self-preservation and life’s need for elevation. For Esposito, who here follows Nietzsche, life is before all an irresistible drive to become more, to overcome itself, and to reach beyond itself. Life is an incessant striving towards the outside of life which continuously exceeds the limits of its own being (Esposito, 2004: p. 47). As such, life is that which, by definition, can never be identical with itself for it continuously negates and destroys itself in its striving to move beyond itself. Esposito writes approvingly that in Nietzsche: ‘before being in itself, the body is always against, even with respect to itself’ (Esposito, 2008: p. 84). Interestingly, and herein lies what I see as the great merit of Esposito’s philosophy of bios: he thinks this impulse of life to transcend the horizon of bare life (or *zoe*) towards the creation of a form of life (*bios*) is also a striving towards a ‘just’ and ‘common life’ (2008: p. 84), or what he refers to as *Communitas* (Esposito, 2010). But given the self-destructive potential inherent in life and its striving beyond itself towards justice and community, life needs a strategy for self-preservation which essentially protects it against its becoming other, against its alteration. This strategy of self-preservation is the strategy of immunization, or what Esposito also refers to as *Immunitas*.⁷

According to Esposito (2008: p. 47), Nietzsche was fully aware of the power of immunity to preserve life: ‘with Nietzsche, the category of immunization has already been completely elaborated’. The most prominent example of the strategy of immunization in Nietzsche is reflected in his analysis of the ‘ascetic ideal’ which simultaneously negates and preserves life (GM III). The ascetic ideal successfully manages to preserve life through the negation, suppression and subjection of the impulses of life. In other words, the ascetic ideal reflects an *Einverleibung* of what weakens or makes life sick, thereby turning them into a vehicle of health. Nietzsche praises the ascetic ideal for turning the negation (sickness) of life into an affirmation of life, for making the negative productive. But he also warns against the paradoxical and self-contradictory

nature of immunity or what Esposito (2004: pp. 124–5) calls ‘the aporetic kernel of the immunitary strategy’. In the end, the example of the ascetic ideal shows that the attempt to protect life through negation fails: instead of preserving life through sickness, it makes life sicker, ultimately destroying the life it sets out to protect (GM III: 13). The same dynamic is found in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, where the domination of nature, as an attempt to protect human life against nature, results in the destruction of human life as that which is part of nature (Lemm, 2010). Hence Esposito raises the question of whether it is possible to preserve life other than by way of immunization, by introjections of negation. I suggest that the idea of *Einverleibung* in Nietzsche, understood as productive conflict, offers an answer to this question and, moreover, points to a different politics of immunity where immunization does not name the excluding inclusion of the other but, rather, the openness of life to the horizon of justice and community.

II. (Historical) Science as a Strategy of Immunization

The notion of *Einverleibung* first occurs in the context of Nietzsche’s critique of historicism in the second untimely consideration. Nietzsche claims to have detected, in the superfluity of historical knowledge (*Erkenntnis-Überfluss*), a sickness and consuming fever which has befallen his contemporaries (HL Preface). Following Esposito’s hypothesis, Nietzsche considers all forms of knowledge, including historical knowledge, to be instances of immunization which preserve and protect life. For example, in the case of historical knowledge, the past is transformed into identifiable and stable concepts which can be assimilated to the present. As such, the historicist protects himself against the returning specters of the past, that is, against the past as that force which has the power to alter and disrupt his identity (HL 1). In the opening passage of *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben* one learns that human life (*Dasein*) is a form of life which is inherently historical because it ‘lives off [*lebt davon*] negating, consuming and contradicting itself’ (HL 1; KSA 1.249). The constitution of historical knowledge as a process of *Einverleibung* through which the human being appropriates, dominates and rules over the past reflects a strategy of immunization which protects the human being against the dangers of alteration and contradiction implied by the historicity of the human life form. Historical knowledge protects the human being, especially the one who is too weak to face the abyssal truth concealed in the past for, as Nietzsche contends, only the strong are able to bear the past. But, just as in the case of the ‘ascetic ideal’, the problem of historical knowledge is that its impulse to preserve life by

way of negation reflects an overreaction against the same life it seeks to preserve and, ultimately, ends up destroying it.

In an attempt to cure his contemporaries of the sickness of historicism, Nietzsche prescribes an increase in their awareness of the genuine necessities (*Notwendige*), needs (*Bedürfnisse*) and requirements (*Nöthe*) of life (HL 10; KSA 1.333). In other words, a cure for the sickness of historical fever requires that they reestablish a 'natural' relationship to the past and that they submit themselves to what he calls the government (*Regierung*) of life. The government of life shifts historical knowledge away from the past, towards life and action. Nietzsche's thesis is that history is needed solely for the sake of life and action; history has value only insofar as it serves and is employed in the construction of future life.

In order to account for the reorientation of historical knowledge away from the past and towards life and action, Nietzsche brings into play the idea of historical knowledge as an instantiation of the plastic force of life:

I mean by plastic force [*plastische Kraft*] the strength [*Kraft*] to grow out of oneself in one's own way [*eigenartig*], to transform and incorporate [*einzuverleiben*] into oneself what is past and foreign, to heal wounds, to replace what has been lost, to recreate broken moulds. (HL 1)⁸

When historical knowledge becomes a plastic force of life, *Einverleibung* is no longer conceived as a means of immunization which protects life against the past by way of negation, but, on the contrary, the past is received and affirmed as that material out of which life continuously forms and transforms the future.⁹ Here, historical knowledge is no longer cut off from life or negates life, but has become an expression of life. Historical knowledge reveals itself to be a representative of life,¹⁰ as that force which lives off the past (historical) but is also directed towards the future (ahistorical). It responds to a need of life and also fulfills the aspiration of life to negate the past in view of future life to come. For Nietzsche, 'an age, a culture, a nation' stands in a living relation to its past when it recovers a 'natural relationship' to the past 'evoked by hunger, regulated by the extent of its needs, held in bounds by its inherent plastic powers' (HL 4; KSA 1.271). In such a natural relationship, knowledge of the past is desired 'only in the service of the future and the present and not for the weakening of the present, for depriving a vigorous future of its roots' (HL 4; KSA 1.271). Interestingly, in Nietzsche, the idea of a 'natural relationship' is directly linked to the idea of an order of justice. When life governs (*regiert*) excessive, self-destructive desires (such as that for knowledge) are constrained and limited (*Grenzpfähle*)

are erected and respected (HL 4; KSA 1.271f). Now ‘the study of history is something salutary and fruitful for the future’ for, as ‘the attendant of a mighty new current of life’, it is now dominated and directed by the higher force of life and does not itself dominate and direct (HL 1; KSA 1.257).

III. Society and the State as Strategies of Immunization

Nietzsche further pursues his reflection on the process of *Einverleibung* in HH 224 entitled ‘Ennoblement through degeneration [*Veredelung durch Entartung*].’ This aphorism thematizes the immunizing function of society. According to Esposito’s hypothesis, Nietzsche is not only critical of the immunitary apparatus associated with modern (historical) sciences but in fact detects, behind the history of Western civilization, a history of immunization. From this critical perspective, all modern political and juridical institutions are bound up with the negative logic of immunization. Esposito directly comments on the aphorism in question by arguing correctly that it provides an example of immunization both by way of negation and by way of affirmation (Esposito, 2008: p. 105).

According to Nietzsche’s genealogical discourse, the human being had to transform itself into a herd animal, an inherently social and group-oriented being, in order to survive. The constitution of social and political forms of life coincides with the task of protecting and preserving human life in response to a need, namely, the need to overcome the relative weakness and inferiority of the human being with respect to its environment. In HH 224, Nietzsche underscores that society is particularly successful in preserving the life of the group when it fully incorporates (*einverleiben*) each individual member of the group. In fact, Nietzsche argues in a fragment from the same period that the whole ‘social instinct’ must be traced back to the individual’s insight into the necessity of incorporating (*Einverleiben*) itself into a group (*Bund*) for the sake of survival (KSA 8:19[115]). The appropriation of the individual by the group or state is complete when all individuals live according to the same ‘habitual and undiscussable principles [*gewohnten und undiscutierbaren Grundsätzen*]’ (HH 224) or, as Nietzsche will later add in a note from the *Nachlass*, when ‘the state has incorporated its morality into the individual [*der Staat hat seine Moral dem Individuum einverleibt*]’ (KSA 10:1[44]): ‘Here good sound custom grows strong, here the subordination of the individual is learned and firmness imparted to character as a gift at birth and subsequently augmented’ (KSA 10:1[44]).¹¹ *Einverleibung* is understood as an equalizing and ordering force (*gleichmachende-ordnende Kraft*) through which the exterior world (*Aussenwelt*) (KSA 12:2[92]) is subsumed under the greater whole of

society. Here incorporation is equalization: ‘*Einverleibung als Gleichmachen*’ (KSA 12:5[65]).¹²

The equalizing power of *Einverleibung* is an aspect of the immuntary strategy of education (*Erziehung*) which considers the virtuousness of the individual to be an instrument that serves the greater utility of the whole of society. In GS 21, Nietzsche claims that ‘blindly raging industriousness’, ‘this typical virtue of an instrument’, for example, is presented by the educator as the way to prosperity and honor and as the ‘the best poison [*heilsamste Gift*]’ against boredom and passion, whereas in reality it reflects a form of self-denial and self-sacrifice which is highly dangerous and disadvantageous for the individual. The immunizing function of education is fulfilled when each individual virtue constitutes ‘a public utility and a private disadvantage with respect to the higher private end’ (GS 21).

Interestingly, the same logic of the inclusive exclusion of the other (be it in the form of the individual or of nature) is also at stake in a people’s relation to their neighbors, as manifested in their laws.¹³ In GS 43 ‘What the laws betray’, Nietzsche claims ‘the laws do not betray what a people is but rather what appears to it as foreign, strange, uncanny, outlandish’ and ‘the severest punishments are for things that accord with the customs of the neighboring people’. In this sense, laws are reflections of that which cannot be assimilated other than by way of inclusive exclusion. It follows then that those who adopt their neighbors’ ways of life, not surprisingly these are mostly women, are ‘persecuted [*heimgesucht*]’ for their ‘tremendous outlandishness [*ungeheuerliche Ausländerei*]’, their ‘embodiment of the foreign [*Einverleibung des Auslandes*]’ (GS 43).

Although Nietzsche acknowledges that the process of socialization responds to a need of life, he also warns against the dangers implied in the process of *Einverleibung* as a dominating equalization. The most immediate dangers are cultural stagnation and a kind of generalized ‘spiritual stultification [*geistige Verdummung*]’ (HH 224). In response to this problem, he points towards a different politics of immunity which is not directed against the individual, but, on the contrary, sees in the irreducible singularity of the individual an occurrence of the new which enhances the cultivation of the whole. Here, the individual is not perceived as a danger to the preservation of society, but rather as an occasion for its cultural enhancement and spiritual growth.¹⁴ Nietzsche describes the kind of individual who may advance the whole of society as a weak and fragile kind of being, one who is freer and more refined (*zarter und freier*), and one who would likely perish without further notice (*ersichtliche Wirkung*) (HH 224). However, from time to time, these weak and fragile types of beings may inflict a wound upon the whole, a wound which infects the whole of society. According to Nietzsche, this contamination of the whole reflects a process of inoculation and ennobling elevation of the whole. In contrast to the negative

logic of immunization where *Einverleibung* designates a dominating equalization which includes the weak individual by means of exclusion; here, immunization designates society's openness to the other where the incorporation of the weak individual effects an inoculating alteration of the whole. Inclusion no longer means the equalization of the individual but, rather, the pluralization and diversification of the whole. Partial weakening (*theilweise Schwächung*) becomes the vehicle of greater, generalized health, just as sickness becomes a vehicle of great health (GS 382): 'Every progress of the whole has to be preceded by a partial weakening' (HH 224).¹⁵ This alternative politics of immunization is not exclusively geared towards self-preservation, but also towards cultural and spiritual growth. In this sense, it does not simply negate the negation of immunity but affirms it as an important ingredient for the development of culture.¹⁶

The same applies to the education of the individual. In contrast to the example mentioned above, here the educator must first 'imbue him with such firmness and certainty he can no longer as a whole be in any way deflected from his path' (HH 224). But then, in a second moment, one has to inflict him with wounds or use those which fate brings on him, so that when pain and need (*Schmerz und Bedürfnis*) have emerged, 'something new and noble can be inoculated into the injuries inflicted on him': 'It will be taken up [*hineinnehmen*] in the totality of his nature [*gesamte Natur*], and later the traces of its nobility will be perceptible in the fruits of his nature' (HH 224).

Another example of this double meaning of *Einverleibung* is visible in the first aphorism of *The Gay Science* entitled 'The teachers of the purpose of existence' (GS 1). Just as in HH 224, one finds in this aphorism both a negative and an affirmative politics of immunization. Nietzsche begins the aphorism with a reference to the instinct of preservation in the human species as the most incorporated of all instincts: the essence of the human herd. In their first attempt, humans pursue the aim of preservation by negation, that is, by means of a politics of separation and purification (*Säubern und Auseinanderthun*) where those who are useful and good for society are separated and split off from those who are dangerous for society. However, Nietzsche claims that this immunizing strategy will soon be given up in favor of an alternative, affirmative politics of immunity which sees its greatest advantage in the harmful [*schädliche*] individual. From the higher perspective of a politics of cultural and spiritual elevation, the inclusion of the 'harmful [*schädliche*]' individual is part of the greater economy of the preservation of the species (*Arterhaltung*).

In *Dawn* (D 202) 'The promotion of health [*Pflege der Gesundheit*]', Nietzsche pursues this analysis of the relation between the individual and the state within the context of a greater reflection on justice and

revenge. Here, the politics of immunization takes on a characteristic of a politics of revenge, where the individual is not only marginalized as sick and contagious but, moreover, is criminalized and made guilty.¹⁷ Nietzsche imagines an alternative and just ‘cultivation of health’ where the health of a society is measured according to how many parasites it can bear and where justice names society’s refraining from judgment and revenge (D 202). For such a society, the guiding principle of justice is not ‘as you do to me, I do to you [*Wie du mir so ich dir*]’ but rather ‘to give each their own [*Jedem das Seine geben*]’. In contrast to Plato’s unifying principle of justice, Nietzsche sees justice where a productive balance among a plurality of forces which resist incorporation into the whole is maintained by giving each their own (see also KSA 12:5[82] 12.221).

IV. Philosophy as a Strategy of Immunization

The final example of immunity that I would like to discuss in this article relates to the question, raised by Nietzsche, of whether truth can be incorporated.¹⁸ At stake is the immunizing function of philosophy and of thinking more generally. A first formulation of this question is found in aphorism 11 of GS entitled ‘Consciousness [*Bewusstsein*].’ Here, Nietzsche introduces human consciousness as the ‘latest development of the organic’, an organ which would expose the human being to the danger of perishing and dying were it not counter-balanced by the ‘preserving alliance of the instincts’ (GS 11; KSA 3.382). Nietzsche criticizes the vanity of the human being who overestimates the achievements of consciousness, thereby hindering its further development. For Nietzsche, instead

[t]he task of *incorporating knowledge* and making it instinctive is still quite new; it is only beginning to dawn on the human eye and is yet barely discernable – it is a task seen only by those who have understood that so far we have incorporated only our *errors* and that all of our consciousness refers to errors! (GS 11)

Nietzsche further pursues this thought in GS 110 where he insists on the idea that errors (*Irrthümer*) are advantageous and species preserving (*arterhaltend*). In comparison with the old (*uralt*), deeply incorporated life-preserving errors (*einverleibten Grundirrtümer*), truth has occurred only recently and is the least vigorous form of knowledge:

It seems that one was unable to live with it; that our organism was geared for its opposite: all its higher functions, the perception of sense and generally every kind of sensation, worked with those

basic errors that had been incorporated since time immemorial.
(GS 110)

On this account, the power of knowledge is not determined according to the degree of truth it reflects but, rather according to its age, its degree of incorporation (*Einverleibtheit*) and its character as a condition of life (*Lebensbedingung*) (GS 110; cf. KSA 11:34[247]). Against the deeply incorporated life-preserving function of error as the kind ‘truth’ which is a condition of life, the task of the philosopher who is motivated by a genuine drive towards truth and knowledge, is to show that his or her truth is more life-enhancing than the above mentioned errors and that it carries greater health than this life-preserving ‘truth’. The philosopher succeeds in this struggle against incorporated error as ‘truth’ if he or she can demonstrate that the need for ‘truth’ as a means of preservation can be overcome. Overcoming here literally means to overcome a form of life and to bring forth a new, alternative form of life, thereby proving that living according to truth is more life-enhancing than living according to the ‘truth’ that one embodies (*einverleibt*). This overcoming presupposes the affirmation of the inseparable link between truth and life: it requires affirming that truth and error are not opposites but are both inscribed in the same continuum of life: ‘The will to know [*Erkennenwollen*] and the will to error [*Irrenwollen*] are like high and low tide. When *one* of them maintains absolute rule over the other, the human being perishes; and *with it* its capacity [for knowledge]’ (KSA 9:11[162] 9.504).

The difficulty of the philosopher’s new task becomes even more apparent when one considers that the philosopher’s passion for truth produces nothing but another error, another illusion of truth and, hence, nothing ‘substantial’ to hold against ‘truth’. Furthermore, his or her ‘new insights [*neue Erkenntnis*]’ are dangerous and ‘damaging [*schädigend*]’ for life (KSA 9:11[320] 9.566). In order to solve this problem, the philosopher must believe that embodying and living according to genuine truth is possible (GS 347). In other words, he or she must become immune against the devastating consequences of affirming truth as illusion. However, Nietzsche recognizes that this strategy of immunization always also entails the danger of falling back into a dogmatic pursuit of (metaphysical) truth. In order to prevent the philosopher from falling back into shaping himself or herself like the metaphysician or, in other words, of falling back into a philosophy of immunity which conceives truth and error as opposite, he or she must give up the belief in truth as soon as enough strength has been gained (after the new knowledge [*Erkenntnis*] had to remain for a long time embryo-like-weak [*embryonal-schwach*] [KSA 9:11[320] 9.566]) to declare his or her own truth as dogmatic, perhaps metaphysical. Nietzsche sees in such a declaration an example of genuine truthfulness

(*Wahrhaftigkeit*) and honesty (*Redlichkeit*): the sign that ‘truth’ has been overcome (see also GS 231). In the end, however, this overcoming can never be final and this is why, for Nietzsche, the question of how far truth can be embodied remains an open question, an open experiment through which one simultaneously discovers and creates new forms of life.¹⁹

Considering the problem of immunity and the relation between philosophy and *Einverleibung*, interestingly, Nietzsche again distinguishes between two diametrically opposed movements of *Einverleibung*. On the one hand, we have the idea of philosophy as the tyrannical drive to recreate the world according to its own image. Here, philosophy is an expression of the will to power as a drive towards the creation of the world, exemplified by the philosophers of the Stoa who want to incorporate (*einverleiben*) and prescribe (*vorschreiben*) into Nature their own ideals and morality (BGE 9). As mentioned above, this tyrannical drive of philosophy is nothing but a reflection of the drive of life, of ‘all that which is alive’, namely to grow and to become more (BGE 230). Nietzsche identifies the ‘basic will of the spirit [*Grundwillen des Geistes*]’ as the power ‘to appropriate the foreign’. In this movement of appropriating the exterior world (*Aussenwelt*), what stands in the foreground is the equalizing power of *Einverleibung*. Just as in the constitution of society, in the spiritual constitution of the world, one recognizes a strong inclination ‘to assimilate the new to the old, to simplify the manifold, and to overlook or repulse whatever is totally contradictory’. The objective of the spirit is to incorporate (*Einverleibung*) new ‘experiences,’ ‘to file new things in old file’ (BGE 230). In other words, it aims for growth and the feeling of greater, increasing power (*Gefühl der vermehrten Kraft*). *Einverleibung* designates a means of domination through which a given form of life extends its power over the other, incorporating the foreign, new and different into an already existing whole, thereby reducing it to an instance of the known, old, equal and identical.²⁰

Interestingly, this movement of appropriation and domination rests on a seemingly opposed impulse, namely,

a suddenly irrupting decision in favor of ignorance, of deliberate exclusion, a shutting of one’s windows, an internal No to this or that thing, a refusal to let things approach, a kind of state of defense against much that is knowable, a satisfaction with the dark, with the limiting horizon, a yea and amen to ignorance.

This opposite movement reminds us, no doubt, of the active forgetfulness Nietzsche refers to at the beginning of the second essay of the *Genealogy of Morals*. In this essay, he raises the question of whether the task of breeding an animal that has the capacity to make promises is not

the main task of nature concerning the human being (GM II: 1). In both cases, *Einverleibung* refers to an unconscious movement indicating that what is active in this process is something that cannot be traced back to the agency of the human being.²¹ This is why, according to Nietzsche, what we commonly refers to as ‘knowledge’ or ‘experience’ in fact designates nothing but ‘*uralte*’, ‘*einverleibte*’ and ‘*Grundirrhümer*’, which have kept the human species alive but do not reflect genuine knowledge or truth. In much the same way, what is commonly referred to as the ‘memory of the will,’ the so-called power to make promises, by no means incorporates an actual ability to make promises, only a few deeply incorporated ‘I do not want to’s’ (GM II: 1). According to Nietzsche, the human being cannot bear the idea that all its so-called higher achievements are nothing but the expression of the deeper necessities of life. Hence, humans desire to be misled and to mislead themselves about the ‘frightening basic text of homo natura [*schreckliche Grundtext homo natura*]’ (BGE 230). By contrast, for the philosopher of the free spirit, his or her passion for truth and knowledge takes on the task reestablishing the continuity between life and truth by ‘translating the human being back into nature’ (BGE 230). His or her achievements are not strategies of immunization which aim at the domination of nature²² but, rather, show that they have become immune against ‘the siren songs of the old metaphysical bird catchers’, who impute a supposedly higher origin [*Herkunft*] to the human being.²³ Their new truth about homo natura will affect a ‘transformation of the human being’ (*Umwandlung des Menschen*, KSA 9:11[141] 9.495),²⁴ for it reveals that affirming the necessity of nature liberates the human being’s power to continuously create and re-create its own conditions of existence²⁵ beyond the struggle of self-preservation, towards a just and common life.

University of New South Wales, Australia; Diego Portales University, Chile

Notes

- 1 I am grateful to Alexander Zibis for providing me with the NWS-Belegliste ‘Leib’. The translation of ‘*Einverleibung*’ as ‘Incorporation’ or as ‘embodiment’ is, as is well known, misleading because it does not account for the German distinction between ‘*Körper*’ (body, corpus) and ‘*Leib*.’ For the importance of this distinction, see Heidegger 1992. As has already been pointed out by Keith Ansell-Pearson (2006), the literature on the notion of *Einverleibung* in Nietzsche is surprisingly sparse. While Blondel (1991) briefly touches on the question of *Einverleibung*, a systematic treatment is missing in Wotling (1995).
- 2 In this article, I rely on the following abbreviations of Nietzsche’s work: KSA=Sämtliche Schriften, Kritische Studienausgabe in 12 Bänden Colli/Mon-

tenari (references provide the volume number followed by the relevant fragment number and any relevant aphorism. In some cases I additionally provide the number of the volume followed by the page number). I also rely on the following abbreviations of books: HH=*Human all too Human*; GS=*Gay Science*; HL=*Second Untimely Consideration*; GM=*On the Genealogy of Morals*; D=*Dawn*; BGE=*Beyond Good and Evil*; AOM=*Assorted Opinions and Maxims*. Abbreviations of books are followed by the number of the aphorism.

- 3 According to Leo Strauss, this task is that of the philosopher of the future (Strauss, 1983: pp. 189–91).
- 4 On continuity, see KSA 12:7[2] and KSA 13:11[111] 13.52.
Nietzsche claims that, for example, in the case of artists, we take their talent to be a reflection of their superior nature when, in fact, their talent is nothing but the result of a long process of education: ‘an old piece of learning, appropriating, incorporating (ein älteres Stück Lernens, Aneignens, Einverleibens)’ (D: p. 540; KSA 3.309). The same holds true with respect to the ‘instinct of self-preservation,’ the most deeply incorporated instinct of the human being: ‘because within them nothing is older, stronger, more inexorable and invincible [*unüberwindlicher*] than this instinct’ and hence Nietzsche writes that this instinct ‘constitutes the essence of our species and herd [*Wesen unserer Art und Herde*]’ (GS 1; KSA 3. 369). Finally, Nietzsche claims that what we believe to be our ‘immediate feelings [*unmittelbare Gefühle*]’ are nothing but the effect of old, deeply incorporated errors (KSA 9:11[302] 9.557).
- 5 Considering the relation between the organic and the inorganic, Nietzsche defines life as ‘a continuous process of sizing up one’s strength, where the antagonists grow in unequal measure. Even in obedience a resistance subsists; one’s power is not given up. Similarly, in commanding there exists a concession that the absolute power of the rival is not defeated, not incorporated [*einverleibt*], not dissolved. “To obey” und “to command” are forms of competitive play’ (KSA 11:36[22] 11.561).
- 6 For an excellent treatment of the problem of immunity in contemporary political theory, see Cohen, 2009.
- 7 This plastic force can be found at the core of each of the three forms of history in the service of life: while the monumental expresses the power to develop out of oneself in one’s own way, the antiquarian expresses the power to transform and incorporate what is past and foreign, and the critical form of history is defined by its power to heal wounds, replace what has been lost and recreate broken forms. I further develop the relation among life, history and justice in the three forms of history for life in Lemm (2011).
- 8 For another occurrence of *Einverleibung* as a force which participates in the construction of the future, see the figure of the poet in AOM 99; KSA 2.419 and the example of the immigrating working class (*Arbeiter Stand*) who incorporate ‘much good reason and moderateness (*Billigkeit*)’, ‘much healthy suspicion (*viel gesundes Misstrauen*)’ of their mother Europe, but whose incorporated virtues turn into ‘wild and beautiful naturalness (*wilde schöne Natürlichkeit*)’ and ‘heroism’ when it comes to constructing a new future (D 206). Finally, see GS 83 where *Einverleibung* measures the historical sense of particular time, i.e. its ability to use the past as material out of which to create the new, as reflected in their translations of the great authors of another time. The idea of the becoming active (future) of the deeply embedded (past) can also be found on the level of organic life in Nietzsche’s definition of instinct: ‘By *instinct* I mean any kind of *judgment* ... which has

been incorporated to such an extent that it now acts spontaneously and does not require stimuli to be activated' (KSA 9:11[264] 9.505).

- 9 In a note from the late *Nachlass*, Nietzsche identifies justice as the representative of life where justice is associated with the activities previously related to the monumental, antiquarian and critical mode of history: 'The ways of freedom [*Die Wege der Freiheit*] ... Justice as a constructive [*bauende*] [monumental], excluding [*ausscheidende*] [antiquarian] destructive [*vernichtende*] [critical] way of thought, based on judgments of value [*Werthschätzungen*]: *the highest representative of life*' (KSA 11:25[484] 11.140f). This note is central to Heidegger's interpretation of justice in Nietzsche as truth (Heidegger, 1998, 1980).
- 10 On the logic of *Einverleibung* as appropriation in the context of Nietzsche's reflections on the state, see also AOM 317; KSA 2.507, where Nietzsche argues that property only makes the individual free to a certain degree. Property does not liberate, but rather possesses the property owner insofar as the latter is incorporated (*einverleibt*) into the state and feels morally obliged to it. Property thus turns out to be dis-appropriating. On property as an immunizing device, see Esposito, 2004.
- 11 Nietzsche speculates that 'the judgment of the equal and similar and persistent [*das Urtheil des Gleichen und Ähnlichen und Beharrenden*]' must have something to do with the satisfaction of the nutritional needs of life, i.e. with the preservation of life (KSA 9:11[269]).
- 12 On the law as a mechanism of inclusion by way of exclusion, see Agamben (1998).
- 13 In a fragment from the same period, Nietzsche describes the same process but this time from the perspective of life, in other words, from the perspective of society as a function of organic life. According to this perspective, Nietzsche insists that the free individual (*freigewordener Mensch*) does not exist prior to the formation of society but rather reflects its latest development. In this account, the human being begins as part of a whole which enables the existence of the human being as a herd. The individual is an organ of the community (*Gemeinwesen*) and has incorporated all its judgments and experiences: 'As long as we are concerned with self-preservation, the consciousness of the ego is unnecessary [*unnöthig*]' (KSA 9:11[316]). Nietzsche therefore contests the idea of the social contract understood as an agreement between individual human beings, as if the latter could exist prior to the former. Nietzsche rejects the idea of the social contract and the so-called 'state of nature' for it denies the fact that the human being is, before all, inscribed within the greater horizon of life and its conditions for preservation. Only later does the individual emerge, generally in times of corruption, when the ties of society are broken. It reflects a weak form of life which stands in need of a complete re-organization and re-creation of its own conditions of life which may in turn result in the re-organization and re-creation of the whole (KSA 9:11[182] 9.509f.; see in comparison KSA 9:11[193] 9.518 and BGE 262). On the importance of the free individual for the whole, see also KSA 9:12[90] 9.592, where Nietzsche claims: 'All wisdom and reason in our life, is the result of the development of singular individuals who slowly imposed, forced, disciplined, incorporated their wisdom and reason into humanity – in such a way that nowadays it seems as if they would have always belonged to the essence of the human being [*Alle Klugheit und Vernunft auf der unser Leben ruht, ist die Entdeckung Einzelner gewesen und ganz allmählich der Menschheit aufgedrungen, aufgezwungen, angeübt, einverleibt*

- worden – so dass es jetzt wie zum unverrückbaren Wesen des Menschen zu gehören scheint].’
- 14 This is why Nietzsche rejects the Darwinian conception of progress – the struggle of existence – where the species advances through the achievements of the strong.
 - 15 Nietzsche makes this point as follows: ‘Two things rather must come together: firstly, the augmentation of the stabilizing force through the union of minds in belief and communal feeling; then the possibility of the attainment of higher goals through the occurrence of degenerate natures and, as a consequence of them, partial weakening and injuring of the stabilizing force; it is precisely the weaker nature, as the more tender and more refined, that makes any progress possible at all. A people that becomes somewhere weak and fragile but is as a whole still strong and healthy is capable of absorbing the infection of the new and incorporating it to its own advantage’ (HH 224). According to Nietzsche, Machiavelli was fully aware of this double bind in matters of government when he assigned greater importance to the stability (duration) of rule over the form of rule (HH 224).
 - 16 See in comparison KSA 10:4[113]: ‘Now the murderer is taken to be *sick*: this is how deep moral judgments have been incorporated [Jetzt erscheint der Mörder als *krank*: so sehr sind die moralischen Urtheile einverleibt]’ (see also KSA 10:4[151] and KSA 10:5[1]177).
 - 17 See also in comparison KSA 9:11[162] 9.540f. This question has been discussed by Keith Ansell-Pearson in two essays (Ansell-Pearson, 2005). While Ansell-Pearson discusses the question of how truth can be incorporated with an emphasis on the question already raised by Heidegger (Heidegger, 2004: p. 28), namely, ‘what kind of truth is it that stands outside incorporation and that now challenges us in the manner of incorporation’, I pursue this question with an emphasis on the notion of incorporation as a strategy of immunization. From this perspective, the problem is not so much what kind of new truth or knowledge must be incorporated but, rather, how it is being incorporated, i.e. by way of an immunizing excluding inclusion or by way of an inclusion of a pluralizing openness.
 - 18 In KSA 9:11[320] 9.566, Nietzsche insists that such a process takes a long time: ‘Ideas for the most part only appear later [*Ideen treten oft spät erst in ihre Natur auf*], they need time to incorporate themselves and to grow’ after they have for a long time remained in an embryo-like weak state.
 - 19 See also KSA 9:11[134] 9.490 where Nietzsche identifies this function of *Einverleibung* as a means of compensating for the kind of weakness associated with a lower form of life. On compensation as a strategy of immunization, see also (Esposito, 2004). See also KSA 10:7[107], for the opposite meaning where *Einverleibung* is the expression of a conquering instinct, a sign of a surplus of power that molds and creates ‘its own image in forgein matter’. According to Nietzsche, the instinct to conquer the other is, for example, found in a person’s intention to communicate where the latter is a means of appropriating the other: ‘to incorporate the will of the other [*den Willen des Anderen sich einverleiben*]’ but also where ‘communication [*Verstehen*]’ denotes the recognition of the others power (KSA 10:7[173] 10.298).
 - 20 In fact, for Nietzsche, memory reflects the continuity of life: ‘all that which we have experienced is *alive*: it is digested, ordered, incorporated [*verarbeitet, zusammengeordnet, einverleibt*]’ (KSA 11:25[409] 11.119).
 - 21 On science as a means of domination of nature for the sake of nutrition, see KSA 11:26[448].

- 22 Sarah Kofman has shown that translating the human being back into nature means unmasking all metaphysical illusions (Kofman, 1983: pp. 133–45).
- 23 See also, ‘Once you incorporate the thought of thoughts [Nietzsche is refereeing to the eternal return of the same], it will transfigure you [*Wenn Du Dir den Gedanken der Gedanken einverleibst, so wird er Dich verwandeln*]’ (KSA 9:11[143] 9.496). On the relation between *Einverleibung* and eternal return, see the interesting treatment of Barbara Stiegler (Stiegler, 2005: pp. 142–77).
- 24 See in comparison KSA 10:4[80] and also KSA 12:7[9] on the difference between *Einverleibung* in the Nietzschean und *Anpassung* in the Darwinian sense.

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