

## Nietzsche and McDowell on The Second Nature of The Human Being

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### Abstract

The concept of second nature has a long and complex history, having been widely employed by several philosophers and even scientists. In recent times, the most famous thinker who has employed the concept of second nature, and has actually grounded his philosophical program precisely on this notion, is probably John McDowell. However, it is also possible to find some occurrences of the concept of second nature, “*zweite Natur*”, in Nietzsche’s writings, both published and unpublished. In this contribution I will develop a discussion of this important topic, the (second) nature of the human being, in Nietzsche and McDowell, and attempt to establish a comparison between them on the basis of this concept. It is the guiding idea of this article that McDowell’s “Naturalism of Second Nature”, though representing one of the most original and indeed ambitious philosophical programs today, actually suffers from some problems in defining the peculiar nature of the human being, and that referring to some of Nietzsche’s ideas on this topic may be of help in order to broaden and strengthen McDowell’s own philosophical perspective. There is almost no reference to Nietzsche in McDowell’s several philosophical works, notwithstanding his great interest in, and his careful attention to, other authors belonging to the tradition of modern German philosophy (such as Kant and Hegel, in particular), and nobody has inquired yet into the potential Nietzsche/McDowell relationship. The paper will trace the development of certain philosophical-anthropological insights from 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century German thought (Nietzsche, Scheler, Gehlen, Gadamer) up to the present age (McDowell), and provide an original and relevant contribution both to the specific field of Nietzsche studies and to the more general domain of inquiries into contemporary philosophical problems. Comparing the ideas of Nietzsche/McDowell on the question concerning the (second) nature of the human being relationship is intriguing from a philosophical point of view and may lead to a better understanding of this subject and disclose new perspectives in this field. There is a lot of philosophical insight to be gained in comparing these two figures.

**Keywords:** Friedrich Nietzsche, John McDowell, Human nature, Mind, Language, Epistemology, Philosophical anthropology, Phenomenology, Hermeneutics

And I got this running monologue  
entertaining in its outrage And I've got the air  
of an animal that's been living in a cage. Ani  
DiFranco. *Life Boat*  
Why would you wanna hurt me? So frightened  
of your pain. I'd rather be... I'd rather be  
with... I'd rather be with an animal. Pearl  
Jam. *Animal*.

The concept of second nature has a long and complex history, having been widely employed by several philosophers and even scientists (see, for instance, Edelman 2006), each of whom has understood and developed it in an original way. In recent times, the most famous thinker who has employed the concept of second nature, and has actually grounded his original and indeed ambitious philosophical program (not by chance defined as “Naturalism of Second Nature”) precisely on this notion, is probably John McDowell. However, it is also possible to find some occurrences of the concept of second nature (*zweite Natur*) in Nietzsche's writings, both published and unpublished. Beside this, it is interesting to note that there is at least another element in common between Nietzsche and McDowell, although in the form of an indirect and only mediated relationship. In fact, McDowell's intriguing use, in his 1994 masterwork *Mind and World*, of the concepts of *world* and *environment* as respectively referred to the human and the animal ways of acting, behaving and relating to the real, actually derives from a long and complex German philosophical tradition – although neither McDowell nor his main interpreters seem to be fully aware of it. One of the main representatives of this tradition is Arnold Gehlen, whose philosophical anthropology, in turn, also makes use of the concept of *second nature* and, most of all, is explicitly inspired precisely by Nietzsche.

In this contribution I will attempt to establish a comparison between Nietzsche and McDowell on the basis of the concept of second nature. I will adopt an approach that is not merely descriptive or strictly speaking philological, as it sometimes happens in the most recent developments of the *Nietzsche-Forschung*, but rather interpretive, although very scrupulous in approaching Nietzsche's published and unpublished

writings in order to avoid, from a methodological point of view, any risk to fall into some kind of “over-interpretation” (borrowing this concept from Umberto Eco).

There is almost no reference to Nietzsche in McDowell’s several works<sup>1</sup>, notwithstanding his great interest in, and his careful attention to, other authors belonging to the tradition of modern German philosophy, such as Kant and Hegel in particular. As far as I know, nobody has inquired yet into the potential Nietzsche/McDowell relationship<sup>2</sup>, so the present work will provide an original and relevant contribution both to the specific field of Nietzsche studies and to the more general domain of inquiries into contemporary philosophical problems (such as, for instance, comparative investigations of the relationship between analytic and continental approaches). I assume that investigating the Nietzsche/McDowell relationship is intriguing from a philosophical point of view because, as I will try to show, comparing the ideas of these two thinkers on the question concerning the (second) nature of the human being may lead to a better understanding of this subject and disclose new perspectives in this field. In my view, there is a lot of philosophical insight to be gained in comparing these two figures.

1. One of Nietzsche’s most famous sentences, taken from the aphorism 62 of *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), defines the human being as “*the still undetermined animal*” (KGW VI, II: 79 [BGE: 56])<sup>3</sup>. To be precise, this aphorism is placed in the third part of the book, entitled *The Religious Character*, and deals with the more general question concerning the use of religions “as means for breeding and education (*als Züchtungs- und Erziehungsmittel*)”, and the way “the two greatest religions”, i.e. Christianity and Buddhism, treat what Nietzsche calls the “*surplus of failures*” that according to him has characterized so far the development of the entire history of mankind (KGW VI, II: 79 [BGE: 55-6]). Nietzsche’s answer is that such religions “try to preserve, to keep everything living that can be kept in any way alive. In fact, they take sides with the failures as a matter of principle, as religions *of the suffering*. They give rights to all those who suffer life like a disease, and they want

to make every other feeling for life seem wrong and become impossible”: “in the final analysis”, he writes, “the religions that have existed so far (which have all been *sovereign*) have played a principal role in keeping the type ‘man’ on a lower level. They have preserved too much of *what should be destroyed*. [...] Doesn’t it seem as if, for eighteen centuries, Europe was dominated by the single will to turn humanity into a *sublime abortion*?” (KGW VI, II: 79-81 [BGE: 56]).

Abstracting here from Nietzsche’s ideas on morality and religion, and also leaving aside the question concerning their historical reliability and, so to speak, philosophical sustainability, what matters for the specific purposes of my discourse is simply the fact that Nietzsche, in discussing the relationship of humans “with every other type of animal”, introduces the category of (or, as it were, coins the definition of the human being as) “the still undetermined animal (*das noch nicht festgestellte Thier*)”. By the way, this same idea is already present in one of his posthumous fragments from the year 1884 that reads:

Grundsatz: das, was im Kampf mit den Thieren dem Menschen seinen Sieg errang, hat zugleich die schwierige und gefährliche krankhafte Entwicklung des Menschen mit sich gebracht. Er ist das noch nicht festgestellte Thier. (KGW VII, II: 25[428]: 121)

Now, this definition makes it possible to include also Nietzsche within a long and influential tradition that, despite all differences concerning the particular philosophical orientation of the various authors belonging to it, conceives of the human being, in general, as a creature characterized (in contrast to every other type of animal) by a lack of instinctive equipment, or more precisely by a peculiar vagueness and non-rigidity, i.e. flexibility, of its instincts<sup>4</sup>. According to this general view of the human being, such features represent the biological-anthropological basis of the human being’s malleability in the adaptation to the environment and compel the latter to achieve by cultural means (that is, by means of the culture, or “second nature”, that the human being develops by itself) the kind of selectivity and stability that other animals are naturally equipped with. In other words, according to this conception the peculiar nature of the human being, instead of allowing the

latter to simply adapt itself to a given *environment*, rather compels it to create its own *world* by itself, namely through its *intellectual* capacities and, above all, through its *practical* and *technical* behavior.

It is not possible here to linger on this topic in general or to critically discuss the presuppositions that such a general way of conceiving the human being implicitly rests upon: first of all, the idea of reducing the infinite variety of animal life to a unique and at least to some extent undifferentiated concept of “The Animal” in the singular form<sup>5</sup>, and, in turn, of reducing the various and plural forms of animal conduct to the mere concept of instinctive behavior. Rather, what is important for the specific purposes of the historical-philosophical *excursus* that I aim to offer here is basically the fact that, among those who mostly contributed during the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the retrieval, reintroduction and further development of the abovementioned idea of the “still undetermined” nature of the human being one must surely number such thinkers as Max Scheler and Arnold Gehlen. Namely, the thinkers who, together with Helmuth Plessner, are commonly considered to be the founding fathers of a very relevant tradition within contemporary German thought: philosophical anthropology.

The basic question at issue here concerns the distinction between human and non-human animals, and among the fundamental concepts employed by these authors in order to adequately account for this distinction we find the notions of “second nature” and “world *vs.* environment”. Now, it is extremely interesting to notice how this complex philosophical and also scientific question, that various authors have dealt with by basically employing the same abovementioned concepts, may be somehow used as a sort of *fil rouge* that allows one to connect to each other such different authors as Nietzsche, Scheler, Gehlen, Heidegger, Gadamer and, through the latter’s decisive mediation, in the final analysis also McDowell.

2. As has been noted, McDowell’s *Mind and World* is a “powerful and complexly argued book” (Bubner 2002, 209); a recent “milestone” on the question of “the relationship between mind and nature, [...] concepts and experience” (Di Francesco

2003, 11-12); an “enormously difficult book – as difficult as it is important” (Putnam 2002, 174). One of the book’s fundamental ideas is that human beings normally and, so to speak, naturally inhabit two different and indeed irreducible logical spaces. On the one hand, we move within what McDowell calls “the logical space of reasons” (borrowing this expression from Wilfrid Sellars, according to whom “the essential point is that in characterizing an episode or a state as that of knowing, we are not giving an empirical description of that episode or state; we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says” – Sellars 1997, 76) and defines as “the structure in which we place things when we find meaning in them” (McDowell 1996, 88). However, on the other hand, we also belong to “the logical space of nature”, which during the modern and contemporary age has been increasingly identified with the “ways in which the natural sciences [find] things intelligible” (namely, “by subsuming them under lawlike generalizations” – McDowell 2009b, 247), and which can thus be defined as “the realm of law”. McDowell describes this relationship as a real “contrast between two kinds of intelligibility” (McDowell 1996, 70), as a “distinction between two ways of finding things intelligible” (McDowell 2009b, 246), namely as a sort of dichotomy between the dimension of reasons, motivations and justifications, on the one hand, and that of natural causes, or better natural laws<sup>6</sup>, on the other hand.

In the first chapters of *Mind and World* McDowell exemplifies this basic theme by concentrating on the question concerning the relationship between concepts and intuitions. The Kantian idea of the indispensable cooperation and interdependence between understanding (or intellect) and sensibility serves as guides to this inquiry. In fact, As we read in Kant’s first *Critique* (A50-51/B74-75):

Our cognition arises from two fundamental sources in the mind, the first of which is the reception of representations (the receptivity of impressions), the second the faculty for cognizing an object by means of these representations (spontaneity of concepts); through the former an object is given to us, through the latter it is thought in relation to that representation (as a mere determination of the mind). Intuition and concepts therefore constitute the elements of all our cognition, so that neither concepts without intuition corresponding to them in

some way nor intuition without concepts can yield a cognition. [...] Neither of these properties is to be preferred to the other. Without sensibility no object would be given to us, and without understanding none would be thought. Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind. (Kant 1998, 193-194)

What McDowell sketches is a general view of modern philosophy as trapped in an *impasse* and somehow unable to avoid falling again and again into opposite but equally unsatisfactory perspectives, such as the two basic conceptions of the human being that he calls “rampant Platonism” and “bald naturalism”. In light of this basic opposition, the various *epistemological* problems that McDowell addresses throughout his book (most noticeably, as mentioned, in the first chapters) actually appear as instantiations, so to speak, of a wider and more general *philosophical-anthropological* question: namely, the question concerning the need for us, today, to account for the particular nature of the human being in a more adequate way. Seeking “a way to dismount from the seesaw” (McDowell 1996, 9) and to overcome the fatal tendency of modern philosophy “to oscillate between a pair of unsatisfying positions” (McDowell 1996, 24), McDowell thus advances the idea of rethinking, and most of all of broadening, the basic naturalistic view that has been predominant in our culture since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In short, what he proposes is to include second nature – i.e., providing a preliminary approximation, what we may call the domain of reason, history, and culture – in our basic conception of the human nature. McDowell defines the resulting perspective as “a naturalized Platonism” or better as “a naturalism of second nature” (McDowell 1996, 91), and he maintains that such a philosophical perspective may do justice, in a way that what he calls “rampant Platonism” and “bald naturalism” are both unable to, to the inextricable intertwining of reason and perception, spontaneity and receptivity, that characterizes our world-experience and that (in the words of McDowell’s colleague Robert Brandom) is “distinctive of us as *cultural*, and not merely *natural*, creatures” (Brandom 2000, 35).

On a philosophical-anthropological level, this perspective finally makes it possible to satisfactorily account for the fact that the capacity to inhabit a linguistically- and culturally-conditioned space of reasons does not position human beings

outside the realm of biology but simply belongs to “our mode of living” (McDowell 1996, 78), to our being “animals whose natural being is permeated with rationality” (McDowell 1996: 85). “Exercises of spontaneity belong to our mode of living”, McDowell explains, and “our mode of living is our way of actualizing ourselves as animals”; but if “exercises of spontaneity belong to our way of actualizing ourselves as animals”, this removes “any need to try to see ourselves as peculiarly bifurcated, with a foothold in the animal kingdom and a mysterious separate involvement in an extra-natural world of rational connections” (McDowell 1996, 78). McDowell’s concept of second nature thus refers to “capacities of a subject that are natural but have to be instilled through education” (Thornton 2004, 248), and postulates a continuous but *not* reductive relationship between nature and culture. In this context, language is of fundamental importance for properly understanding the acquisition of second nature, a process of “being initiated into conceptual capacities, whose interrelations belong in the logical space of reasons” (McDowell 1996, XX). As McDowell claims, human beings are distinguished indeed “from the rest of the animal kingdom” in that they are “rational animals”, “animals that occupy positions in ‘the logical space of reasons’”, and also (implicitly equating reason with the mastery of language and, in particular, with “language with which one can give expression to one’s credentials for saying things”) “language-using animals” (McDowell 2011, 9-10). In *Mind and World* he thus explains that

human infants are mere animals, distinctive only in their potential, and nothing occult happens to a human being. [...] Human beings [...] are born mere animals, and they are transformed into thinkers and intentional agents in the course of coming to maturity. This transformation risks looking mysterious. But we can take it in our stride if, in our conception of the *Bildung* that is a central element in the normal maturation of human beings, we give pride of place to the learning of language. In being initiated into a language, a human being is introduced into something that already embodies putatively rational linkages between concepts, putatively constitutive of the layout of the space of reasons, before she comes on the scene. [...] Human beings mature into being at home in the space of reasons or, what comes to the same thing, living their lives in the world; we can make sense of that by noting that the language into which a human

being is first initiated stands over against her as a prior embodiment of mindedness, of the possibility of an orientation to the world. (McDowell 1996: 123, 125)

At the end of *Mind and World* McDowell thus develops the idea that non-human animals, inasmuch as they are non-rational and non-linguistic creatures, actually live in an *environment*, while human beings alone live in a *world*. The basic distinction at issue here is that between environment and world, *Umwelt* and *Welt*: a distinction that McDowell openly admits to have borrowed from Hans-Georg Gadamer. In particular, what McDowell refers to in this specific part of *Mind and World* (McDowell 1996, 115-9) are a few particularly important pages of Gadamer's 1960 masterwork *Truth and Method* concerning the "linguisticity of the human experience of the world (*Sprachlichkeit der menschlichen Welterfahrung*)", the "human experience of the world [that] is verbal in nature" (Gadamer 2004, 444).

By doing this, McDowell thus connects the *world/environment* distinction to the more fundamental question concerning the role played by *second nature* in defining the peculiar character of the human being. Anyway, notwithstanding the great philosophical appeal of McDowell's interesting and ambitious philosophical program, it must be noticed that, from a rigorous point of view, what he calls "Gadamer's account of how a merely animal life, lived in an environment, differs from a properly human life, lived in the world" (McDowell 1996, 117), should be defined as, say, an only indirectly Gadamerian account. In fact, in claiming that he borrows "from Hans-Georg Gadamer a remarkable description of the difference between a merely animal mode of life, in an environment, and a human mode of life, in the world" (McDowell 1996, 115), McDowell does *not* seem to take notice of the fact that, just like he borrows from Gadamer the abovementioned description, Gadamer for his part borrowed it from a long and complex philosophical and even scientific tradition. In fact, in the section of *Truth and Method* that McDowell actually refers to Gadamer explicitly mentions some other authors (Jakob von Uexküll, Max Scheler, Arnold Gehlen) as sources of inspiration for his reflections on

the human/animal and world/environment distinctions (see, in particular, Gadamer 2004, 448, 489).

However, this particular form of conceptual indebtedness has passed completely unnoticed until now, inasmuch as neither McDowell nor his main interpreters have paid any attention to it. Gehlen's position is especially interesting for the particular aims of my discourse here, inasmuch as he connects his famous view of the human being as a "deficient being (*Mängelwesen*)" – whose real nature is a "second nature (*zweite Natur*)", and whose context of life, so to speak, is not a natural environment (*Umwelt*), as it happens with *all* other animals, but rather a historically-, culturally- and technologically-determined world (*Welt*) – to the conception wonderfully summarized by Nietzsche in the abovementioned sentence on "the still undetermined animal". This is confirmed by the fact that in the first chapter of his 1940 masterwork entitled *Man: His Nature and Place in the World* Gehlen explicitly cites Nietzsche's statement on the human being (or "man", as both Nietzsche and Gehlen say) as "*das noch nicht festgestellte Thier*" (Gehlen 1988, 4). As Gehlen explains, while "the *environment* is an unchanging milieu to which the specialized organ structure of the animal is adapted and within which equally specific, innate, instinctive behavior is carried out", man is instead "*world-open*". In his view, the human being is

incapable of surviving in truly natural and primitive conditions because of his organic primitiveness and lack of natural means. [...] In order to survive, he must master and re-create nature, and for this reason must *experience* the world. [...] The epitome of *nature* restructured to serve his needs is called *culture* and the *culture world* is the *human world*. There are no "natural men" in a strict sense [...]. Culture is therefore the "*second nature*" – man's restructured nature, within which he can survive. [...] The cultural *world* exists for man in exactly the same way in which the *environment* exists for an animal. For this reason alone, it is wrong to speak of an *environment*, in a strictly biological sense, for man. His *world-openness* is directly related to his unspecialized structure; similarly, his lack of physical means corresponds to his self-created "*second nature*". [...] The clearly defined, biologically precise concept of the *environment* is thus not applicable to man, for what 'environment' is to animals, "the *second nature*", or *culture*, is to man; culture has its own particular problems and concept formations which cannot be explained by the

concept of *environment* but instead are only further obscured by it. (Gehlen 1988: 27, 29, 71 – my emphasis)

Of course, far from invalidating the significance and value of McDowell's adoption of the world/environment distinction and original development of this subject, the fact of not having acknowledged in *Mind and World* and elsewhere the long and complex tradition underlying the original coinage and subsequent use of those concepts may be taken as an occasion or opportunity to develop deeper and wider investigations. The fact of finally acknowledging the actual roots of a certain concept or a certain debate makes it possible indeed: (1) to inquire into this subject with a greater historical-philosophical awareness than has been done before, and (2) to broaden the field of investigation in order to include also thinkers who have not been taken into consideration yet. One of the most important and influential points of reference for all the aforementioned 20<sup>th</sup>-century German philosophers was represented by Nietzsche (although, of course, in various different ways), and this allows us to at least ask ourselves if it is possible, from the point of view of a critical history of concepts, to outline a sort of connection between Nietzsche's "affirmative naturalism"<sup>7</sup> and paradigm of the "still undetermined animal", on the one side, and McDowell's philosophical program of "Naturalism of Second Nature", on the other side.

As I said at the beginning of my paper, there is almost no reference to Nietzsche in McDowell's several collections of papers and, as far as I know, nobody has investigated yet the potential Nietzsche/McDowell connection. To be sure, it is *not* my aim to simply pull Nietzsche's concept of *zweite Natur* together to McDowell's notion of *second nature*, hurriedly assuming that they have the same content or meaning and, so to speak, go in the same direction. In fact, this would easily and obviously lead to misunderstandings rather than to a deep, rigorous and fruitful philosophical comparison, as it is my aim to do here. Furthermore, even a quick look at the history of the notion of second nature shows that what we have to do with here is a complex and plural concept that has been employed by different philosophers (such as, for example, Hegel, Lukács, Adorno) in various ways. For this reason, it is clear that such a

concept really requires to be handled with care, so to speak. In addition to this, it is not my aim to provide here a complete account of Nietzsche's general concept of nature or even of his general view of the human/animal distinction (supposing that something like a "general concept" or "general view" of these subjects actually exists in such a fragmentary, deliberately non-systematic, and in principle "allergic-to-definitions" thinker as Nietzsche), which would clearly require a book-length investigation<sup>8</sup>. My aim here is more limited, so to speak, and has basically to do with the attempt to develop an intriguing juxtaposition of different philosophical perspectives, avoiding at the same time to give rise to any thoughtless or rash comparison – as it may sometimes happen with philosophical works conceived from a comparative point of view.

3. As far as Nietzsche's concept of *second nature* is concerned, it can be easily observed that this concept occurs in different writing belonging to different phases of his thought and that he does not always use this concept in the same way. In other words, Nietzsche does not always assign exactly the same meaning to this concept and he makes use of it in somehow heterogeneous contexts. In general, Nietzsche seems to speak of second nature in two different ways, namely sometimes referring this concept to the question concerning the growth and development of the individual, and other times referring it to the more general question concerning the "dialectic" between nature and culture (or, say, life and history) that is constitutive of the human being as such. Where, by employing here the term "dialectic", I do not necessarily aim to support what we may call a dialectical interpretation of Nietzsche (anything like the famous one proposed, for example, by Horkheimer and Adorno, according to whom Nietzsche, "like few others since Hegel, [...] recognized the dialectic of enlightenment"<sup>9</sup>), but I simply want to point out that Nietzsche's frequent emphasis on the idea of a "return to nature (*zurück zur Natur*)", despite many observations that actually seem to go in that direction, should not be interpreted as a declaration of some sort of reductive naturalism. As has been noticed,

Das “Zurück zur Natur” ist aber von vornherein mit der Idee der Kulturerneuerung bei Nietzsche verbunden. In diesem Kontext bestimmt Nietzsche den “Begriff der Kultur” als einer neuen und verbesserten Physis [...]. Dies aber hat nun zur Konsequenz, daß über den Physis-Begriff die Natur nicht, wie in der Moderne, als Gegensatz der Kultur verstanden wird, sondern daß von Nietzsche Kultur wesentlich bestimmt wird als Natur [...]. Nicht mehr die angeblich “natürliche Natur” ist bei Nietzsche Identitätsgarant, sondern die natürlich gebildete Kultur. [...] Um das Verhältnis von Kultur und Natur zu verstehen, muß nach Nietzsche grundlegend berücksichtigt werden, “dass auch jene erste Natur irgend wann einmal eine zweite Natur war und dass jede siegende zweite Natur zu einer ersten wird”<sup>10</sup>.

Anyway, both the abovementioned meanings that the expression “second nature” assumes in Nietzsche (the first one, as I said, referred to the question concerning the growth and development of the individual; the second one referred to the more general question concerning the dialectic between nature and culture that is constitutive of the human being as such) are philosophically interesting and may prove to be useful for my specific purposes here. Most of all, both interpretations of this concept are apparently tied together by at least one aspect: namely, by Nietzsche’s insistence on the element of power, constraint, discipline and self-discipline, or even “inculcation” that, for him, seems to be unavoidably connected and actually inherent to the human way of acquiring a second nature (i.e., paraphrasing *Ecce homo*’s famous subtitle, our way of “becoming what we are”). In the following, I will thus focus on various writings of Nietzsche from different periods, on several passages in which Nietzsche talks about second nature. Then, after this presentation, I will attempt to analyze his position *vis-a-vis* McDowell’s own formulation of the concept.

One of the first occurrences of the concept of second nature in Nietzsche, or perhaps even the very first one, can be found in an early unpublished writing from the period Autumn 1867/Spring 1868 entitled *Rückblick auf meine zwei Leipziger Jahre. 17 Oktober 1865 – 10 August 1867*. Here, indeed, while meditating on his future that appeared to him dark and vague at the time (“Meine Zukunft liegt mir sehr im Dunkel”), and in considering the results of his own educational or cultural development (“Bildungsgang”), the young Nietzsche claims that

sometimes recent, newly acquired habits may represent an element of disturb for the spontaneous and naive expressions of one's character ("die naiven Äußerungen des Charakters"). Anyway, he also seems to add that, if one reflects more carefully on this point, this kind of impression often proves to be a mere semblance, something merely apparent ("nur scheinbar"). So, in this context, i.e. while meditating on his own nature ("meine Natur"), Nietzsche introduces the concept of second nature and writes: "Man denke an den Fußsoldaten, der zuerst fürchtet das Gehen überhaupt zu verlernen, wenn er angeleitet wird mit Bewußtsein den Fuß zu heben und dabei seine Fehler im Auge zu behalten. Es kommt nur darauf an, ihm *eine zweite Natur* anzubilden; dann geht er ebenso frei als vorher" (KGW I, IV, 506-7 [my emphasis]).

As has been noted<sup>11</sup>, this early unpublished writing can be also connected to another early autobiographical fragment of Nietzsche, dated July/August 1864, in which he deals with his school experiences in Pforta and the peculiar tendency, so characteristic of his own personality at the time, to oscillate between the spontaneous attraction for a great variety of subjects (among which, in particular, poetry, perhaps understandable as his "first nature") and the rigour and discipline of philology (see KGW I, III, 418-9). The basic concept, then, seems to be here that of the need (arguably for purposes of self-strengthening) to "inculcate" a rule, a habit, a discipline, an attitude to the subject that is comparable to a "second nature", until this new rule or habit gradually becomes something natural, spontaneous, somehow instinctive.

A few years later, in an unpublished fragment from the early 1870s, we find a similar concept expressed through the same word, namely "second nature", but applied in a broader sense to the entire domain of culture and even of life as such. As we read, indeed:

*Imitation* is the means of all culture (*Kultur*); it gradually produces instinct (*Instinkt*). *All comparing (primordial thought) is imitation*. *Species* are formed when the first specimens, who are merely similar to one another, rigorously imitate the largest, most powerful specimen. The inculcation of a *second nature* by means of imitation (*Die Anerziehung einer zweiten Natur durch Nachahmung*). Unconscious

copying (*das unbewußte Nachbilden*) is most remarkable in the case of procreation, which is the rearing of a second nature (*das Erziehen einer zweiten Natur*). Our senses imitate nature by copying it more and more. Imitation presupposes an act of apprehending and then a perpetual translation of the apprehended image into a thousand metaphors, all of which are effective (KGW III, IV, 19[226], 77-8 [UW, 70]).

And an analogous occurrence of the concept of second nature also appears, much in the same period, in the second of Nietzsche's conferences *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions* (1872), although the concept is rather applied here to a variety of aesthetic, educational and linguistic questions. As a matter of fact, in the context of a strong critique of what he calls the typical "Formal Education" of German schools, Nietzsche claims that "the public school has hitherto neglected its most important and most urgent duty towards the very beginning of all real culture, which is the mother-tongue", emphatically defined here as "the natural, fertile soil for all further efforts at culture" (KGW III, II, 175 [FEI]). Having said this, however, Nietzsche also warns people to be "aware of the difficulties of the language", since only by means of a strong discipline (*Zucht*) it becomes possible for young men and women, for example, to "acquire that physical loathing for the beloved and much-admired 'elegance' of style of our newspaper manufacturers and novelists, and for the 'ornate style' of our literary men" (KGW III, II, 176 [FEI]). A physical loathing that is required, for Nietzsche, in order to be able to claim that someone really has what we may perhaps define, with a very general word, as "good taste". "Let no one imagine that it is an easy matter to develop this feeling", Nietzsche adds, "to the extent necessary in order to have this physical loathing; but let no one hope to reach sound aesthetic judgments along any other road than the thorny one of language, and by this I do not mean philological research (*sprachliche Forschung*), but self-discipline in one's mother-tongue (*sprachliche Selbstzucht*)" (KGW III, II, 176 [FEI]). It is precisely at this point that Nietzsche – having explicitly introduced the decisive element of discipline and self-discipline which, as I said, is always required for him in order to "become what one is" – explains his view by means of an example that reminds us of the one of the "Fußsoldat" cited in

the abovementioned early writing *Rückblick auf meine zwei Leipziger Jahre*. And it is precisely in this context that he speaks again of “second nature”. As we read, indeed:

Everybody who is in earnest in this matter will have the same sort of experience as the recruit in the army (*Soldat*) who is compelled to learn walking after having walked almost all his life as a dilettante or empiricist. It is a hard time: one almost fears that the tendons are going to snap and one ceases to hope that the artificial and consciously acquired movements and positions of the feet will ever be carried out with ease and comfort. It is painful to see how awkwardly and heavily one foot is set before the other, and one dreads that one may not only be unable to learn the new way of walking, but that one will forget how to walk at all. Then it suddenly become noticeable that a new habit (*eine neue Gewohnheit*) and a *second nature* [my emphasis] have been born of the practised movements, and that the assurance and strength of the old manner of walking returns with a little more grace: at this point one begins to realise how difficult walking is, and one feels in a position to laugh at the untrained empiricist or the elegant dilettante. Our “elegant” writers, as their style shows, have never learnt “walking” in this sense, and in our public schools, as our other writers show, no one learns walking either. *Culture* begins, however, with the correct movement of the language: and once it has properly begun, it begets that physical sensation in the presence of “elegant” writers which is known by the name of “loathing” (KGW, III, II, 176-7 [*FEI*]).

Still focusing our attention on Nietzsche’s philosophical production from the 1870s, we can find even more weighty and philosophically interesting references to the second nature of the human being in the second piece of his *Unfashionable Observations: On the Utility and Liability of History for Life* (1874). Here, more precisely in the sections 3 and 4 of this writing, while dealing with the famous question concerning the existence of three “modes of viewing the past” (namely, the monumental, the antiquarian and the critical ways of approaching history, all of which, in turn, must be “in the service of life”), Nietzsche claims that the human being, “in order to live”, must possess and sometimes employ “the strength to shatter and dissolve a past”. And, indeed, “every past is worthy of being condemned – for this is simply how it is with human affairs: human violence and weakness have always played a powerful role in them” (KGW III, I, 265 [*HL*, 106]). It is “life and life alone, that dark, driving, insatiable power that

lusts after itself”, that requires this way of dealing with the past, and “it takes great strength to be able to live and forget the extent to which living and being unjust are one and the same thing”. However, Nietzsche also adds that “at times this very life that requires forgetfulness demands the temporary suspension of this forgetfulness”, that which happens “when [the] past is viewed critically” and represents “always a dangerous process” (KGW III, I, 265-6 [HL, 106-7]).

At this point, Nietzsche observes that, with all evidence, “since we are, after all, the products of earlier generations, we are also the products of their aberrations, passions, and errors – indeed, of their crimes; it is impossible to free ourselves completely from [the] chain” from which we descend: “at best we arrive at an antagonism between our inherited, ancestral nature and our knowledge, or perhaps even at the struggle of a new, stricter discipline (*Zucht*) against what was long ago inborn and inbred. We cultivate a new habit (*eine neue Gewöhnung*)”, Nietzsche explains, “a new instinct, a second nature (*eine zweite Natur*), so that the first nature (*die erste Natur*) withers away. This is an attempt to give ourselves *a posteriori*, as it were, a new past from which we would prefer to be descended, as opposed to the past from which we actually descended”: that which, however, is “always dangerous”, “because second natures (*die zweiten Naturen*) are usually feebler than first natures (*als die ersten*)” (KGW III, I, 266 [HL, 107]). Anyway, as he adds in conclusion, “here and there a victory is nonetheless achieved, and for those [...] who make use of critical history in the service of life [...] there is one noteworthy consolation: the knowledge, namely, that even that first nature was once a second nature (*auch jene erste Natur irgend wann einmal eine zweite Natur war*), and that every victorious second nature will become a first nature (*jede siegende zweite Natur zu einer ersten wird*)” (KGW III, I, 266 [HL, 107-8]).

Just a few pages later, then, in the very next section of *On the Utility and Liability of History for Life*, Nietzsche confirms the importance of all three modes of approaching the past, inasmuch as every person, every people and every epoch actually need “a certain knowledge of the past, sometimes as

monumental, sometimes as antiquarian, and sometimes as critical history”, “but always and only” – this is the real point at issue – “for the purpose of life, and hence also always subordinate to the dominance and supreme guidance of this purpose”. This, he says, “is the natural relation (*die natürliche Beziehung*) of an age, a culture, or a people to history” (KGW III, I, 267 [HL, 108]). At this point, however, Nietzsche proposes to “take a quick look at [his] own time”, and critically observes that “all the clarity, all the naturalness and purity of that relation between life and history”, seem to have faded away or disappeared. “Today life no longer rules alone and constrains our knowledge of the past”, he says, and “as far back into the past as the process of becoming extends, as far back as infinity, all perspectives have shifted” (KGW III, I, 267-8 [HL, 108-9]). “No past generation”, Nietzsche explains,

ever witnessed an unsurveyable spectacle of the sort now being staged by the science of universal becoming, by history; but, to be sure, it is staging this spectacle with the dangerous audacity of its motto: *fiat veritas pereat vita*. [...] Historical knowledge constantly flows into him from inexhaustible sources; alien and disconnected facts crowd in upon him; his memory opens all its gates and is still not open wide enough [...]. Habituation to such a disorderly, stormy, and struggling household gradually becomes second nature (*wird allmählich zu einer zweiten Natur*), although there can be no doubt that this second nature is much weaker, much more restless, and in every way more unhealthy than the first (*diese zweite Natur viel schwächer, viel ruheloser und durch und durch ungesünder ist, als die erste*). [...] Our modern cultivation (*moderne Bildung*) is nothing living precisely because [...] it is no real cultivation (*keine wirkliche Bildung*), but rather only a kind of knowledge about cultivation (*nur eine Art Wissen um die Bildung*) (KGW III, I, 268-9 [HL, 109-10]).

Shifting now our attention from Nietzsche’s early works to his mature thought, it can be said that the concept of second nature appears in both *Dawn* (1881) and *The Gay Science* (1882). More precisely, the notion of *zweite Natur* can be found in the aphorisms 38 and 455 of *Dawn*, and seems to be generally referred here to the complex character of the relationship between instincts or drives, as well as to the (actually not simple or unambiguous) relationship between a merely apparent education and the achievement of real maturity. So, in the aphorism 455, significantly entitled *First*

*Nature*, we read: “The way we are being brought up (*erzieht*) these days we first receive a *second nature*: and we have it when the world labels us mature, of age, usable. A select few are snakes enough to shed this skin one day: at that point when under its cover their *first nature* has matured. With most people its embryo dries up” (KGW V, I, 279 [D, 232]). While the aphorism 38 of *Dawn* is entitled *Drives Transformed by Moral Judgments* and reads:

Under the influence of the reproach that custom attaches to it, the same drive (*Trieb*) may develop into either a painful feeling of *cowardice*: or, [...] into the pleasant feeling of *humility*. In other words, a good or an evil conscience is forced onto the drive! *As with every drive*, it, *per se*, has neither these nor any other moral character nor name whatsoever nor even a definite accompanying feeling of pleasure or displeasure. It acquires all this, as its second nature (*als seine zweite Natur*), only once it comes into relation to drives previously baptized as good or evil or else marked as a property of beings whom a people has already identified and evaluated as moral. – The ancient Greeks thus felt differently about envy than we do [...]. Likewise, the Greeks were different from us in their evaluation of *hope* [...]. – The Jews felt differently about *wrath* than we do and decreed it holy [...]. Measured against them, the great wrath weakers among the Europeans are, as it were, secondhand creatures (KGW V, I, 41 [D, 31-2]).

It is also possible to broaden this picture, so to speak, by adding a few references, taken from Nietzsche’s epistolary, to the abovementioned occurrences of the concept of second nature derived from his writings. Two letters, both sent from Rapallo at the beginning of December 1882, are of particular interest here. In the first one (letter n. 344), sent to Hans von Bülow, Nietzsche lingers on the changes occurred in the last six years in his way of thinking and feeling (“die veränderte Art zu denken und zu empfinden”), that he also gave expression to in his writings (“welche ich [...] auch schriftlich zum Ausdruck brachte”) and that, most of all, somehow kept him alive and gave him a decisive help in remaining healthy and reasonable (“[...] hat mich im Dasein erhalten und mich beinahe gesund gemacht”) (KSB VI, 290). Having said this, Nietzsche goes on by defining this changed or altered way of thinking and feeling as “freethinking (*Freigeisterei*)” (something which, he says, was critically judged by some of his friends as too “eccentric”), and

here he introduces the concept of second nature, as he writes to his correspondent: “Gut, es mag eine ‘zweite Natur’ sein: aber ich will schon noch beweisen, daß ich mit dieser zweiten Natur erst in den eigentlichen Besitz meiner ersten Natur getreten bin” (KSB VI, 290).

Then, in the second letter (n. 345), sent from the same place and in the very same period but this time to his friend Erwin Rohde, after having somehow generally observed that, should one not run the risk of wasting him- or herself in a multitude of things, one would have to immerse him- or herself into something unitary, entire and definite (“wir müssen uns in etwas Ganzes hineinlegen, sonst macht das Viele aus uns ein Vieles”), Nietzsche hints again at his eccentric “second nature” and writes: “Gut, ich habe eine ‘zweite Natur’, aber nicht um die erste zu vernichten, sondern um sie zu ertragen. An meiner ‘ersten Natur’ wäre ich längst zu Grunde gegangen – war ich beinahe zu Grunde gegangen. [...] Aber – wer war es doch, der sich da entschloß [*scil.* zu dem ‘excentrischen Entschluß’]? – Gewiß, liebster Freund, es war die erste Natur: sie wollte ‘leben’” (KSB VI, 291).

Finally, it is interesting to take into account in the present context the abovementioned aphorism 290 of *The Gay Science*, entitled *One Thing is Needful* and dealing with the question concerning the “great and rare art [...] to ‘give style’ to one’s character” (KGW V, II: 210 [*GS*: 163]). A question, the latter, that should not be interpreted here, however, as an aesthetic question in the strict sense (“style”) but rather in a more general, somehow philosophical-anthropological sense. In fact, Nietzsche is interested here in inquiring into the way in which the human being can, or perhaps must, rule him- or herself and shape his/her own form of life, accepting the need to undergo the hard process of coercion, constraint and self-disciplination that is required for this purpose. In this context, it is extremely interesting (perhaps even more than in the preceding, aforementioned occurrences) the introduction, by Nietzsche, of the concept of *second nature*, which acquires here a decisive synthesizing function: that is, it appears to be the most suitable concept in order to synthesize or summarize in a single word the complex process of self-shaping (or, as it were,

self-taming, self-domestication<sup>12</sup>) that I have just mentioned before. As he writes:

To “give style” to one’s character – a great and rare art! It is practised by those who survey all the strengths and weaknesses that their nature has to offer and then fit them into an artistic plan until each appears as art and reason and even weaknesses delight the eye. Here a great mass of second nature (*eine grosse Masse zweiter Natur*) has been added; there a piece of first nature (*ein Stück erster Natur*) removed – both times through long practice and daily work at it. [...] In the end, when the work is complete, it becomes clear how it was the force (*Zwang*) of a single taste that ruled and shaped (*herrschte und bildete*) everything great and small [...] It will be the strong and domineering natures who experience their most exquisite pleasure under such coercion (*Zwang*), in being bound by but also perfected under their own law; the passion of their tremendous will becomes less intense in the face of all stylized nature, all conquered and serving nature (*aller besiegt und dienenden Natur*) [...]. Conversely, it is the weak characters with no power over themselves who *hate* the constraint (*Gebundenheit*) of style: they feel that if this bitterly evil compulsion (*Zwang*) were to be imposed on them, they would have to become *commonplace* under it [...]. (KGW V, II, 210-1 [GS, 163-4])

4. At this point, the question is: Is there anything that Nietzsche’s peculiar and, as we have seen, fragmentary, non-systematic treatment of the concept of second nature can teach us today? More precisely: Is there a way in which his own treatment of this concept can be put in a fruitful and philosophically proficient mode in connection with McDowell’s “Naturalism of Second Nature”? In my opinion, definitely yes.

As we have seen, the concept of second nature, although obviously not comparable to the fundamental concepts of his overall philosophy (such as nihilism, will to power, Apollonian/Dionysian, eternal recurrence of the same, the overman, *amor fati*, etc.), plays a certain role in Nietzsche’s philosophy and must be understood, in the various writings in which it occurs, as part of a conceptual constellation that also includes the notions of rule, force, power, compulsion, instinct, “eccentricity”, expression, discipline, shaping, imitation, education, history, life, and, in particular, coercion (*Zwang*), constraint (*Gebundenheit*), discipline (*Zucht*) and self-discipline (*Selbstzucht*), domestication of impulses or drives (*Triebe*), acquisition of habits (*Gewohnheit*; *Gewöhnung*), inculcation (*Anerziehung*), culture or cultivation

(*Bildung*). In short, the general meaning or general idea that it is possible to derive from such a non-systematic, heterogeneous and “constellative” scheme centered on the notion of second nature has to do with the question concerning “the purpose and goal [and] the efficacy of *Bildung*” (Gentili 2001, 39). That is, it has basically to do with the relationship – which, in the case of such complex, problematic and “still undetermined” creatures as the human beings is actually delicate and never-to-be-taken-for-granted, but nevertheless unavoidable and irreducible – between immediacy or free, natural spontaneity, on the one side, and the strength and rigorous discipline that is essentially inherent to culture as such, on the other side. None of the two is less important or even less constitutive for the human being: this peculiar creature that, in Zarathustra’s famous and emphatic words, is a sort of “rope fastened between animal and overman (*zwischen Thier und Übermensch*)” (KGW VI, I, 10 [Z, 7]).

Should one want to broaden a little bit this discourse, thus proceeding in a more interpretive (but, in my view, not at all philologically and philosophically incorrect) way, then it might be said that, if it is true that culture, for Nietzsche, must not turn into a form of oppression or repression of nature, it is also true that culture, inasmuch as it is a “second nature” for the human beings (that is, it is a primary, original dimension for such “culturally-determined” rather than merely “naturally-determined” animals as those we are: hence it is something belonging to our very essence, although in a mediate and not in a simple or immediate way), emerges spontaneously from nature itself, although requiring great efforts and even constraint and pain. As has been noted, from Nietzsche’s point of view “being-against-nature actually represents” for the human being “the fundamental character of nature itself” (Gentili 1998, 183). In short, the idea is that we are cultural (or, say, “second-natural”) animals by our very (first) nature. It is natural for us to be cultural – although culture, of course, from a Nietzschean point of view must not turn then into something “unnatural”, into something “against life”. Or still, in Helmut Plessner’s words (another of the founding fathers of German philosophical anthropology), “man is ‘by nature’ artificial”<sup>13</sup>.

This may finally lead us back to McDowell, inasmuch as the latter's basic claim, with regard to his general concept of human nature, is precisely that "our nature is largely second nature", and it is the way it is

not just because of the potentialities we were born with, but also because of our upbringing, our *Bildung*. [...] Our *Bildung* actualizes some of the potentialities we are born with; we do not have to suppose it introduces a non-animal ingredient into our constitution. And although the structure of the space of reasons cannot be reconstructed out of facts about our involvement in the realm of law, it can be the framework within which meaning comes into view only because our eyes can be opened to it by *Bildung*, which is an element in the normal coming to maturity of the kind of animals we are. (McDowell 1996, 87-8)

In my view, it is precisely the formative and self-formative element which is strictly inherent to the concept of *Bildung* as such that may allow to establish a non-extrinsic relationship between Nietzsche and McDowell – although it must be said that the latter, in explicitly comparing his own concept of second nature with "what figures in German philosophy as *Bildung*" (McDowell 1996, 84), does not mention Nietzsche but rather refers to the tradition of German idealism, even arriving at interpreting *Mind and World* "as a prolegomenon to a reading of [Hegel's] *Phenomenology*" (McDowell 1996, IX). As a matter of fact, what is really at stake here, in general, is a conception of the human beings as somehow "bizarre" animals that can only be, or better become, what they are (i.e. really fulfill their nature) through the (cultural) world that they themselves create and then inhabit. Creatures that are compelled by their somehow "indeterminate" nature to build up themselves, cultivate themselves, discipline or "domesticate" themselves, shape themselves, inculcate to themselves new habits, and create by means of their own thoughts and actions a world (*Welt*) that is apt to their survival and strengthening, given the lack of a suitable and already-given environment (*Umwelt*) for such "unsuitable" or, in Gehlen's terms (influenced by Nietzsche, as I said), "deficient" beings.

Now, it might be argued that McDowell has perhaps surveyed a little bit too quickly, so to speak, this aspect as well as some other points. For example, he has perhaps conceived of

the human being's acquisition of a *second nature* as something simply obvious and innate, thus taking it for granted and not lingering on, for example, the natural history that stands behind this process and actually made it possible. According to Sabina Lovibond, McDowell's "account of the relation of humanity to the rest of animal nature" actually needs to be put in close relation to "the theme of evolutionary continuity" (Lovibond 2006, 265) more than he did in *Mind and World*. With regard to this, it is surely important to recall that the typical insistence of Nietzsche, for his part, on the peculiar, undetermined and somehow unique nature of the human being is *not* at odds with his well-known and strong emphasis on the natural-historical continuity between human and non-human animals. This is testified, for example, by his famous comparisons of the human beings to mosquitoes, frogs and still other animals, each of whom has its own particular perspective on the real just like the human being has its relative, not at all absolute or universal, perspective. On this topic, just to mention a single example, see for instance the famous aphorism 374 of *The Gay Science*, entitled *Our New "Infinite"*, that reads:

How far the perspectival character of existence (*Dasein*) extends, or indeed whether it has any other character; whether an existence without interpretation (*Auslegung*), without "sense" (*Sinn*), doesn't become "nonsense" (*Unsinn*); whether, on the other hand, all existence isn't essentially an *interpreting* existence (*ein auslegendes Dasein*) – that cannot, as would be fair, be decided even by the most industrious and extremely conscientious analysis and self-examination of the intellect; for in the course of this analysis, the human intellect cannot avoid seeing itself under its perspectival forms, and *solely* in these. We cannot look around our corner: it is a hopeless curiosity to want to know what other kinds of intellects and perspectives there *might* be [...]. Rather, the world has once again become infinite (*unendlich*) to us: insofar as we cannot reject the possibility *that it includes infinite interpretations* (*unendliche Interpretationen*) (KGW V, II, 308-9 [GS, 239-40]).

Still, it might be objected that McDowell has perhaps paid not enough attention to the way in which the conceptual and linguistic capacities that he equates with the notion of *Bildung* are "tied to the bodily structure that is peculiar of our species" and that actually constitutes "the background, the presupposition" and "the condition of possibility of our rationality"

(Mazzeo 2003, 42). In addition to this, it is finally important to underline that the process of acquiring a second nature or, as it were, “becoming human”, must be considered, of course, as a natural (or better, “second-natural”) process. Namely, as a process that progressively distances us from a condition of natural immediacy but does so because it is characteristic of our very nature to gradually become not-merely-natural, i.e. cultural animals. At the same time, however, this must *not* lead us to forget how much strength, effort, discipline, self-domestication and constraint it takes for all human beings to “become what they are”. As once observed by Horkheimer and Adorno (who were also inspired by Nietzsche, among others, in developing their concept of dialectic of enlightenment), it is hard to imagine, and indeed it cannot be known exactly, “how much violence preceded” and was actually required for “the habituation to even so simple an order” as that of the so-called “magical stage” of development of mankind (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 15). But if this holds true for the very first stages in the process of the human beings’ progressive acquisition of their “second nature”, then it will be even more valid and convincing for all subsequent (and progressively less “natural”, in the immediate sense of the word) stages of development of both individuals and, more in general, mankind.

In recent times, the question concerning the compelling need, for the human being, to discipline itself, and even “tame” or domesticate itself, in order to really become a human being (“an animal that can say: ‘I’”) has been emphasized, among others, by the Italian philosopher Felice Cimatti. According to him, “the human being is the particular animal that is able to [...] distance itself from its own animality”; the animal that is able “not only to live the life that it lives, but also and especially to distance itself from its own life”; the animal that is able “to relativize its own point of view”. “This operation”, defined by Cimatti as “the anthropogenic device” or “the process of anthropogenesis”, is actually “a violent and painful operation”. For him, “the main function” of, among others, such human capacities as rationality and language, “is that of ‘dominating’ or ‘controlling’ oneself” by means of

acquiring a sort of second nature: “The history of language” and the history of the human, linguistically-embedded rationality, “is the history of control or domination over one’s own behavior” (Cimatti 2013, 15-16, 25, 35, 47-49). It seems to me that this specific dimension of our process of becoming “second-natural animals” is quite absent from McDowell’s otherwise very fascinating and also convincing philosophical project. As has been observed, McDowell’s claim seems to be that

we have language because we benefit of a second nature, and that we benefit of a second nature because we have language. However, why can our species develop it and comprehend it, and other species not? And if conceptual capacities are so crucial that [*scil.* in McDowell’s view] they permeate all our intentional bodily actions, what protects us then from the danger of linguistic relativism? [...] How should we exactly conceive, then, the relationship between first and second nature? [...] *Pace* McDowell, simply relying on *Bildung* as such does not suffice. (Mazzeo 2003, 41-42)

In my view, it is precisely this aspect that can be variously – although not systematically, but only in a fragmentary way, and sometimes only implicitly – found both in Nietzsche’s intriguing observations on the second nature of the “still undetermined animals” that we are, and in the after-effects of his philosophy on such 20<sup>th</sup>-century currents of thought as German philosophical anthropology and hermeneutics. All elements, the latter, that should be taken into consideration and rethought today in light of such up-to-date philosophical programs as McDowell’s. All elements, the latter, that might be also potentially incorporated in, or integrated with, his “Naturalism of Second Nature”, in order to eventually help us to develop a broader, richer, more complex and, above all, more critical conception of the specific constitution of the human being.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, McDowell’s important collections *Mind, Value and Reality* (2002), *Having the World in View* (2009a) and *The Engaged Intellect* (2009b), in which, notwithstanding McDowell’s intriguing way of also relying on, and actually reinterpreting from his own perspective, insights originally provided by 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century German philosophies, Nietzsche is never mentioned.

<sup>2</sup> As an example, I remind the reader of the following relevant works on McDowell's philosophy, in which no one among his interpreters seems to even take into account the very possibility of putting him into relationship with Nietzsche, namely the possibility of comparing some of his concepts or theses to Nietzsche's: see Willaschek 2000, Thornton 2004, Macdonald 2006. Nietzsche is mentioned only twice, and also in an absolutely inessential way, so to speak merely *en passant*, in Smith 2002.

<sup>3</sup> In this contribution Nietzsche's works will be always cited both in their original German versions (with the following standard abbreviations: KGW = *Kritische Gesamtausgabe Werke*; KSB = *Sämtliche Briefe. Kritische Studienausgabe*) and, when available, in official English translations. Translations used are *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* (= BGE); *Dawn: Thoughts on the Presumptions of Morality* (= D); *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions* (= FEI); *The Gay Science* (= GS); *On the Utility and Liability of History for Life* (= HL); *Unpublished Writings from the Period of the "Unfashionable Observations"* (= UW); *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None* (= Z).

<sup>4</sup> I owe some insights on these and other related questions concerning the "incompleteness" and "indeterminacy" of the human nature to Galimberti 2000, in particular, 87-172.

<sup>5</sup> Perhaps no one in the contemporary philosophical scene has raised and expressed this kind of criticism with greater emphasis, strength and argumentative efficacy than Jacques Derrida (2008).

<sup>6</sup> McDowell indeed explains that, although "some followers of Sellars, notably Richard Rorty, put the contrast as one between the space of *reasons* and the space of *causes*", he actually thinks that "it is better to set the space of reasons not against the space of causes but against the space of subsumption under, as we say, natural law. Unlike Rorty's construal of the contrast, this version does not pre-empt the possibility that reasons might *be* causes. We need not see the idea of causal linkages as the exclusive property of natural-scientific thinking" (McDowell 2009b, 258).

<sup>7</sup> See Keith Ansell Pearson's brief but illuminating account of Nietzsche's own version of "affirmative naturalism", also compared to the versions developed by Bergson and Deleuze (Ansell Pearson 2015).

<sup>8</sup> The bibliography of recent works on Nietzsche is obviously rich in contributions on his particular variety (or even varieties) of naturalism and philosophy of nature. For a recent and very good review of some books and articles on this topic, see Vitali 2017 (forthcoming).

<sup>9</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 36. As is well-known, the question concerning Nietzsche's relationship to dialectical thinking in general is a very complex and much debated one. According to such distinguished interpreters as, for instance, Gilles Deleuze (1962), Nietzsche represents the non-dialectical or even anti-dialectical philosophers *par excellence*, although it might be noticed with Günter Figal (1999: 139-40) that "[man] müsste [...] der These von Deleuze (1962), Nietzsche habe nicht dialektisch gedacht, widersprechen": "Deleuze denkt auch nur an Hegels Dialektik, nicht an diejenige Platons. [...] Bei Platon gab es für das, was Nietzsche hier [*scil.* in *Human, All Too Human*] 'Wissenschaft' nennt, einen anderen Namen: Dialektik".

<sup>10</sup> Caysa 2011, 289-90. The last quotation in inverted commas is taken from the second piece of Nietzsche's *Unfashionable Observations*: "On the Utility and Liability of History for Life" (1874).

<sup>11</sup> I follow here some insights provided by Gentili 2001, 38-9.

<sup>12</sup> I borrow this concept from Cimatti 2013, 33-41.

<sup>13</sup> Plessner 1981, 199. I owe this specific reference to Plessner's conception to Shusterman 2016, 98.

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