

NIETZSCHE ON TRUTH
A Thesis Submitted to the College of
Graduate Studies and Research
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Master of Arts
in the Department of Philosophy
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon

By
Aaron Warr

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College of Graduate Studies and Research
University of Saskatchewan
107 Administration Place
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Canada

ABSTRACT

Friedrich Nietzsche, 100 years after his death, remains a controversial figure in philosophy. Much of this controversy stems from Nietzsche's view of truth, which seems superficially hopelessly contradictory, vacillating between relativism and denial of truth on the one hand, and praise for science and “hard truths” on the other. Thus, any person wanting to defend Nietzsche's positive philosophy must first make sense of his epistemology. The solution to this puzzle regarding Nietzsche's theory of truth is the realization that Nietzsche changes his view on truth. Much like Wittgenstien, Nietzsche had an early and a late period in his epistemic views, and a middle period where he is struggling with two very different, incompatible views. The late view of truth is surprisingly straightforward: Nietzsche can be seen as an early pragmatist. Once we have a coherent truth theory, we can then start to conclude some of the more contentious arguments in Nietzsche's philosophy, such as: what is the Will to Power, and how does Nietzsche's view of truth interact with his criticism of morality? This thesis will trace the development of the former and endeavor to answer some of the latter.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without the work of my thesis adviser, Prof. Eric Dayton. His furious pragmatist hand can be seen behind every page. Thanks also go to my committee members: Prof. Phil Dwyer, Prof. Leslie Howe, and Prof. Doug Thorpe. Thanks also go to Rhonda Anderson, who turned the endlessly edited prose into something intelligible. Other people who helped during the long gestation period are Della Nykyforak (the vital practical centre of a department full of theorists,) scholars Maudemarie Clark and Robert C. Soloman, Prof. William Buschert for recommending a few very useful books (and for telling me a story about his student priest days,) and Prof. Patrick Mackenzie for giving me a roof over my head when I started doing my reading. Prof. T.Y. Henderson also deserves thanks, for saying “for the first time, I can understand why somebody would want to study Nietzsche” after my last 990 seminar.

I'd also like to thank all my friends (Mark Grover, Adam Mckenzie, Derek Postnikoff, and Adam Sopuck, among others) who helped me in ways too numerous to mention. It's a rough thing to be a graduate student in Paul Martin's (and later Steven Harper's) Canada, but you always made me feel a little better about it. Special thanks must go to Diana Heney for everything that she has done for me: a list would be difficult, and Diana knows what would be on it, anyway. Special thanks must also go to Rachel Lowen Walker and Jennifer Primmer, for much needed emotional support during the very difficult final year of writing and editing.

A note on citations: works by Nietzsche are cited by section, not by page number, and particular works are referred to by their first letters. For example, *Beyond Good and Evil* would be written as BGE, (page number). Occasionally, there will be section numbers with the name of a section after them. For example, EH (*Ecce Homo*) *The Birth of Tragedy* 3. This is because in *Twilight of the Idols* and *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche abandons his more familiar formatting, and has named sections with numbered subsections within it. Thus, noting something as EH 7 would be ambiguous, as there are many 'seven' sections in *Ecce Homo*.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the three people who made it possible for me to go to the University of Saskatchewan: Professor Daniel Ahern, my great aunt Dorothy Ford, and most especially my grandmother, Vera White.

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What are man's truths ultimately? Merely his irrefutable errors.

(*The Gay Science*, Section 265)

Chapter 1

Early Nietzsche on Truth

Of the debates surrounding Nietzsche scholarship, none are as acrimonious (or as important) as that over Nietzsche's theory of truth. The reason is simple: if Nietzsche's theory of truth is to be identified with everything he wrote on the subject, then his view of truth is well nigh incoherent. In some texts he seems to take the accepted view of truth by valuing it in both philosophical and scientific cases. Specific remarks supporting this commonplace view of truth are found throughout Nietzsche's work: "It is in the final analysis the sense for facts that is the mark of the higher culture" (*Human, All Too Human* 2). Similarly, he writes, "Knowledge, saying yes to reality, is just as necessary for the strong as cowardice and the flight from reality—as the ideal for the weak, who are inspired by weakness" (*Ecce Homo, The Birth of Tragedy* 2). As for mankind's often confused thinking on metaphysics and morality, Nietzsche says, "The Steady and Arduous progress of science, which will ultimately celebrate its greatest triumph in an ontology of thought, will deal decisively with these views" (HATH, 16). We can see in these quotations Nietzsche appealing to our ordinary conception of truth, and praising those who "have trained themselves to sacrifice all desirability to truth, every truth, even plain, harsh, ugly, repellent, unchristian, immoral truth. ---For such truths do exist..." (*Genealogy of Morals* 1).

At other times, and even in the same texts, Nietzsche appears completely skeptical of truth by denying that we could have access to anything like truth or certainty, and by asserting that we live in a psychologically constructed, thoroughly fictitious world. Nietzsche contends that "the world is *not* our idea, the laws of numbers are completely inapplicable: they are valid

only in a human world” (HATH 19), and he asks, “What are man's truths ultimately? Merely his irrefutable errors.” (*Gay Science* 265). He further declares that “truths are illusions we have forgotten are illusions” (*Truth and Lie in the Extra-Moral Sense* 84) and that “without a constant falsification of the world by means of numbers, man could not live--that renouncing false judgments would mean renouncing life and a denial of life” (*Beyond Good and Evil* 4). Nietzsche also wrote that science keeps us in a “suitably artificial, suitably constructed, and suitably falsified world” (BGE 24). Nietzsche appears in these statements to think that no statement can ever be true in the everyday sense; at some level, there is a falsification.

Given these and the many other remarks Nietzsche made concerning truth, it is difficult to see how these remarks could avoid contradicting one another. His apparent dual view of truth is a difficult problem for any philosopher, especially given that the basic standard of acceptability in any philosophical tradition is logical consistency. For the Nietzsche scholar, in particular, this problem casts doubt on many of Nietzsche's larger projects. For example, Nietzsche's criticism of morality is based on it being *true* that, at one point, there was a slave resentment in morals which was formed out of the opposite ideals of the conqueror as an act of vengeance against them. Without the commonplace sense of truth, we have difficulty seeing why we should take these ideas seriously. Indeed, it is questionable why we would take anything Nietzsche says seriously when he has appears to have such basic consistency problems.

There are two ways of overcoming these apparent inconsistencies in Nietzsche's account of truth; we can either show that a contradiction does not exist (a procedure I will call the conventional strategy) or show that Nietzsche is writing both intentionally and coherently. The conventional strategy relies on taking Nietzsche's skeptical statements and arguing either that they are restricted to a certain domain or that they are not the straightforward denials of truth they appear to be. Both variations on this approach ultimately want to emphasize Nietzsche's conventional statements, casting him as a conventional philosopher on the subject of truth. The radical interpreter will, on the other hand, take Nietzsche's skeptical statements on truth as they are, even privileging them over Nietzsche's more conventional statements on truth. The light the radical interpreter wants to cast is that Nietzsche intentionally endorses his skeptical statements

on truth, and this deliberation either trumps his more conventional statements or somehow results in a different coherence. Both strategies rely on reading Nietzsche as a unitary whole with a consistent idea about truth from the beginning of his early period to the end of his late period.¹

Although both strategies fail to render Nietzsche coherent on truth, an examination of them will be useful in showing us what problems a successful account must avoid. My position in this thesis is that Nietzsche ultimately has a coherent theory of truth, but to understand it, we must abandon the assumption that Nietzsche's view of truth is consistent and unchanging throughout his philosophical career. Given my central position, my thesis will not defend critical writings that present Nietzsche's account of truth as incoherent nor will it defend accounts that assume Nietzsche had a unitary position on truth. As our examination will show, the former must be rejected if we are to have any sort of respect for Nietzsche as a philosopher, and the latter must be rejected because it leads to the former. More crucially, evidence shows that Nietzsche changed his mind on fundamentally relevant metaphysical theses, and that these changes lead to a satisfactory theory of truth in his later works; consequently, a developmental account of Nietzsche's view of truth is both plausible and leads to a satisfactory final position on truth.

Walter Kaufmann is a prominent proponent of the conventional strategy. Kaufmann always treats Nietzsche's work as a unitary whole, and when faced with Nietzsche's early denial of truth, his strategy is to say that denials of truth in early Nietzsche are restricted to criticism of very specific types of truth, namely metaphysical truth. Kaufmann correctly points out that Nietzsche was a fierce critic of metaphysics and believed all ideas derived from such ended in error. On Kaufmann's account, Nietzsche considers metaphysics to be any value or deduction that came not from this world, but from another, more perfect world, such as Socrates' world of

¹Nietzsche's early period starts with *the Birth of Tragedy* (1872) and the publishing of *Untimely Meditations* (1873-76), and includes his unpublished essay *Truth and Lie in the Extra-Moral Sense* (1873). *Human, All Too Human* (1878) opens Nietzsche's middle period, and includes *The Dawn*, (1881) *The Gay Science*, (1882) and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. (1885) Nietzsche's late period stretches from *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) to the end of his writing career. The early period is characterized by a radical skepticism; the middle is a mix of skepticism and respect for science (and the conventional notion of truth generally.) The late period is characterized by a respect for science and truth, with none of the skepticism of Nietzsche's earlier periods.

the forms. Thus, on Kaufmann's account, Nietzsche's statements such as his "Truths are illusions that we have forgotten are illusions" are seen as a critique of metaphysical ideals and not as a criticism of empirical truth. Kaufmann's position on Nietzsche is that while Nietzsche thought no metaphysical claims are true, many empirical claims are. By recasting Nietzsche's criticisms of truth as criticisms of metaphysical truth, Kaufmann makes Nietzsche into a conventional philosopher, one concerned with exposing untrue beliefs. For example, Nietzsche's critique of religion is seen, at root, as a criticism of untrue beliefs, a set of beliefs that developed from a human, all too human, cause. Kaufmann also emphasizes Nietzsche's commitment to truth, (now understood not as a commitment to metaphysical truth but as a commitment to an ordinary kind) saying, for example, "Nietzsche was a fanatical seeker of truth and would accept no value above intellectual integrity" (Kaufmann 26).

When interpreting Nietzsche, Kaufmann always emphasizes the primacy of the published texts over the *Nachlass*. This emphasis lessens considerably the problem of Nietzsche's contradictory statements on truth because many of the more controversial statements are made in the *Nachlass*. Furthermore, BGE, a middle work, is the very last book in which Nietzsche makes skeptical statements about truth. This makes the interpretation of the problem of truth much easier for Kaufmann than for radical interpreters, since many of Nietzsche's most troublesome statements are in the *Nachlass*. With this distinction, Kaufmann can dismiss many remarks to the status of having occurred 'in the *Nachlass*'. Such remarks might be interesting, but they are not ones that Kaufmann must incorporate into his discussion of Nietzsche's philosophy.²

An advantage of the conventional approach is that most of Nietzsche's criticisms (such as his criticism of morality and religion) become claims about how such things were created, namely, created by humanity. The criticism of morality, then, is that morality is not true, at least

² Kaufmann disagrees with some interpreters of Nietzsche who treat the *Nachlass* as equivalent to the published works. It's not that Kaufmann doesn't think the *Nachlass* is useful; he thinks it is a great resource for understanding Nietzsche's thinking and how he arrived at the conclusions of his published works. Yet Kaufmann does not like it when people treat the *Nachlass* as equivalent to published works. Kaufmann believes that if Nietzsche had thought so much of a given statement, he would have said it in his published works in a more polished form. Radical interpreters, by contrast, take the *Nachlass* to be equivalent, sometimes even superior to, the published works.

not in the big “O” sense of objective truth that morality assumes. But to make this strategy work, Kaufmann must also give an account of such Nietzschean doctrines as the Will to Power and the Eternal Recurrence, which appear to fit this pattern because these doctrines certainly *appear* to be metaphysical. Kaufmann’s position is to deny their metaphysical nature and say that these are empirical claims about reality. For example, The Will to Power is, for Kaufmann, the underlying interpretation of all human action in that all human action is motivated by the pursuit of power. The Eternal Recurrence is recast as an attempt by Nietzsche to create a new value, a counterforce to the life-devaluing interpretation of the aesthetic ideal. On the traditional Christian religious view, one lives in the service of another world, such as heaven, and Nietzsche saw this as devaluing life. The religious view holds that life is a painful, flawed thing to be put up with until one can get to the next one. The Eternal Recurrence, on the other hand, is an attempt to affirm this life by saying that one should live this life as though one will repeat the same actions again eternally. The purpose of the Eternal Recurrence is to wean us off the idea of the other world so that we can learn to embrace and value the experiences of this life.

According to Kaufmann, the Eternal Recurrence is meant to be more than merely life-affirming: “[the Eternal Recurrence] was not meant to be a noble lie...on the contrary, Nietzsche thought it was the most scientific of all possible hypotheses” (Kaufmann 281). In addition to being a psychological principle and a way to cure those who live their lives for an eternal reward, Kaufmann presents the Eternal Recurrence as a statement about the nature of the universe, where a finite amount of space and energy combined with an infinite amount of time are bound to see everything reoccur. The action one takes now will literally happen again, over and over, for eternity.

For several reasons, Kaufmann’s conventional interpretation has been thrown into doubt in recent years. First, and most importantly, it is simply wrong to say that all of Nietzsche’s early statements criticizing truth are directed toward metaphysics. Nietzsche regularly describes *scientific* truth as ending in self-contradiction and even contends that basic statements about the world are unacceptable anthropomorphisms. Nietzsche “appears to deny that there are even any things and to insist that all of our so called truths are therefore really illusions since they

presuppose, state, or imply the existence of things” (Clark 6). In the *Gay Science*, Nietzsche states, “It is even less the opposition of “thing-in-itself” and appearance; for we do not “know” nearly enough to be entitled to any such distinction. We simply lack any organ for knowledge” (GS 354). In *Beyond Good and Evil*, he says, “science at its best seeks most to keep us in this *simplified*, thoroughly artificial, suitably constructed and suitably falsified world” (BGE 24). In the *Birth of Tragedy*, this radical skepticism is even more prevalent. Here, science is seen as undermining its own foundations by revealing through its pursuit of truth that it possesses no truth at all. The scientific theory was moving toward “biting off its own tail” through its own rigorous scientific methods, by demonstrating that it didn’t connect with the objective world. The importance of art in *Birth of Tragedy* underlines this suspicion of scientific claims to truth. In a world where everything is false and illusory, art is the only honest thing; it, too, is an illusion but is honest in its deception. The arts are contrasted with a supposed reality which tries to conceal the underlying metaphor and illusion rooted in all things.

Secondly, if Nietzschean doctrines are straightforward statements about reality, as the conventional interpretation takes them to be, it becomes difficult to see how Nietzsche’s own statements are not metaphysical. For example, on Kaufmann’s account of Eternal Recurrence, it is difficult to see both why the universe repeating itself should ultimately matter to those who will unknowingly repeat the same things eternally and how Nietzsche could have any empirical evidence of this. Furthermore, Kaufmann’s explanation of the Will to Power as the underlying fundamental motivation of all human activity leaves the reader asking exactly what it explains. Motives must be contrasted with each other if we are to make basic sense of what those motives are referring to. If everybody is always acting on the same motive (such as power), then nothing has been explained, since the motive “lust for power” explains all human behaviour. For example, we might say ‘he acted out of resentment’ as opposed to ‘he acted out of a deep concern’. Without this contrasting aspect, we can’t understand motive. By reducing all motive to one motive, Kaufmann has rendered his explanation Will to Power meaningless because it doesn’t explain anything.

These and other problems for Kaufmann (and the conventional interpretation) are

intractable. Although Kaufmann tries to combine all Nietzsche's published writings, his result is having Nietzsche's earlier claims grievously conflict with later claims. By trying to deal with Nietzsche's truth theory as a unitary whole rather than seeing it as a slowly developing position, Kaufmann cannot satisfactorily deal with Nietzsche's complex relation to truth.

Another conventional interpreter of Nietzsche is Martin Heidegger, of whom I will say little, save that Heidegger appears perfectly comfortable with Nietzsche being contradictory on truth. Heidegger acknowledges Nietzsche as the great critic of metaphysics but contends that, in the end, Nietzsche could not escape its influence, rendering his view on truth incoherent. Thus, a doctrine like the Will to Power or the Eternal Recurrence is, for Heidegger, a conventional metaphysical statement on what is essence. A contradiction inevitably results, according to Heidegger, due to Nietzsche's conception of truth as a metaphysical correspondence to objects. Heidegger's position is that the contradiction in Nietzsche's account of truth is there; Nietzsche got caught up in the metaphysics of his subject even as he sought to deny it. Heidegger thus sees Nietzsche's position as a crowning failure of the metaphysical tradition going back as far as Descartes, and sees the nihilism it seeks to overcome as the inevitable result of the Western Philosophical Tradition. The contradiction of truth in Nietzsche appears as the logical end point in this process. This view is satisfactory for Heidegger as it makes Nietzsche a stepping stone to a new, Heideggerian post-metaphysical standpoint. However, if we want to understand Nietzsche's view, and not understand Nietzsche's view as a jumping off point to understanding Heidegger, then this view of Nietzsche is unconvincing.

Given that Kaufmann's conventional view makes Nietzsche inconsistent and that Heidegger's view invites us to think the contradiction in Nietzsche exists and is the end result of metaphysics, no wonder alternative views have been sought. As we will see, Nietzsche's more radical interpreters, instead of downplaying the seemingly contradictory statements on truth, embrace and try to weave a coherent philosophy from them.

Arthur Danto is a good example of the radical new approach. Instead of trying to avoid skepticism on truth, he embraces it. For Danto's Nietzsche, quite simply truth does not exist and

can never exist; that we have such a concept comes first as a product of our animal intelligence (that is, the basic concepts that evolution has given creatures like us for communication and moving around the world³) and later, as a product of metaphysics. Though useful, neither commonsense truths nor metaphysical constructions can be true, though both can be elaborated upon. In addition to not being true, concepts like truth (in the commonsense or scientific use of the term) cannot be refuted because it is impossible to picture the world without these useful concepts.

An example of Nietzsche discrediting animal intelligence can be found in GS 354. Here, Nietzsche discusses how consciousness is caused by a need for communication and notes that concepts must be uniform if they are to be communicated. Since making an experience uniform strips away the uniqueness of the individual's experience, the concepts we communicate must necessarily be falsified from the individual's experience of them. We cannot reject this consciousness-falsification since to do so would be rejecting consciousness itself. On Danto's reading, we are thus hampered by our animal intelligence in that such intelligence developed with utility rather than truth in mind. Because what we call truths are conditioned by these biological interests (among other human, all too human) interests, it becomes impossible for us to know anything non-subjectively. Nietzsche, in TL, asks, "how [we] could...dare say 'the stone is hard', as if 'hard' were something otherwise familiar to us, and not merely a totally subjective stimulation" (82). Danto reads all of Nietzsche as reiterating the point that because our interests are developed by evolution, we could never know things unconditionally, even in theory; rather, we can only know anthropomorphizations and falsifications.

All philosophy (particularly Nietzsche's), according to Danto, has less to do with the truth or falsity of a given statement or doctrine, and more with providing a 'truth' in opposition, one that is just as illusory as the 'truth' it counters: "Philosophers can only oppose them (aesthetic and moral truths) with metaphysical illusions (at bottom just as untruthful.)" (Danto 68).⁴ Thus, on Danto's reading of Nietzsche's conception of truth, truth becomes merely

³ See *Truth and Lie*, p 80.

⁴ This contention makes Danto's philosophical project of opposing the standard reading of the concept of truth, the

humanity's irrefutable errors, beliefs which due to the nature of our minds as dictated by evolution, cannot be denied. Our concepts may correspond with other concepts, but none are connected with reality. In short, Danto offers an “error theory” of truth – concepts of truth make sense of a sort but are all false.

An illustration of Danto’s claim about truth can be found in his idea that the common sense view of the world is itself a metaphysical construction, in Danto’s sense of ‘metaphysical’ as a non-truth based construction, based upon the assumptions of “animal intelligence.” Although metaphysical, no argument could possibly undermine this construction. The common, everyday world is only to be thought of as an achievement of the human mind, not as the world in which people find themselves. We are, however, unable to reject this world or propose a better model for reasons already given; as a result, “In the interests of life and of survival, we are constrained to affirm the body of beliefs which passes for common sense and reject whatever conflicts with this” (Danto 73-74).⁵

The reader may ask why science and metaphysics cannot overcome the natural falsification of the senses. Danto has Nietzsche’s skepticism continue with a denial of science, stating that even science, including logic, mathematics and other, more formal, sciences, “rested on errors, accepting, (as it had to) fictions which it took for truths and metaphors which it held as

reading that holds truth as doing do useful work, corresponding to things, etc..

⁵ This understanding of Nietzsche makes clear why Danto characterizes Nietzsche's philosophy as a “Philosophy of Nihilism,” even when Nietzsche considered Nihilism his most implacable foe. Nihilism was often defined by Nietzsche as the belief that the only rational position was to believe in nothing; in Danto’s case, it is the belief that there are no true statements about the world even though Nietzsche was more worried about the death of aesthetic values and the attendant rise in what we will call value Nihilism.

description” (Danto 71). On Danto’s reading of Nietzsche, the idea that “science tells the only truths much less tells the truth at all, is a naïveté” (Danto 71). Science, like the other forms of truth already discussed, is based on irrefutable fictions and cannot be disproven. Though science can make clearer or even create more variations of the constructed human world, it never describes the world as it is because science, too, must premise ‘fictions’ that are nonetheless irrefutable. Because science can never break out of the mode of inherent falsification, like the common sense view of the world it can never make the connection with the thing in itself. In short, Danto briefly characterizes Nietzsche’s ultimate opinion of science: “Nietzsche endorses science, as long as it does not credit itself with having done more than is actually achieved. For example, discovering the truth. It has not done that. For there is none to discover” (Danto 93).

This sketch of Nietzsche’s skepticism about truth found in Danto’s discussion of science carries over to the problems of philosophy, as well. Since finding the truth of matters is officially off the table, what did Nietzsche, the philosopher, think of philosophy? Danto sees Nietzsche’s genealogy⁶ as providing the answer. By doing genealogy (as Nietzsche frequently did throughout his work on, for example, Christianity and morality) the philosopher’s job becomes uncovering the human causes of disagreements⁷ and exposing at bottom the falsity of the philosophy’s premises under examination: “Once this is clear, it no longer seems interesting or important to try to solve the problem on its own terms” (Danto 70). Danto thinks genealogy was not only Nietzsche’s way of unearthing the interests and assumptions of ‘objective’ truth like morality, but

⁶ Genealogy is Nietzsche's term for tracing [?] the history of an idea, “*Genealogy of Morals*” being a good example. Genealogy is important to his philosophy for the act of uncovering the historical roots of various ‘objective’ ideas undermines the objective idea's authority.

⁷ Here, we might think of disagreements such as a Utilitarian and a Kantian disagreeing as to what action is to be valued or disagreements about the place of firearms in modern society, and so on.

also shows how Nietzsche thought genealogy unearthed the essential falsity of truth (that is, of our concepts).⁸

Danto's account of Nietzsche does not hold up to examination. One problem can be seen in the way Danto tries to deal with a basic question about his account of Nietzsche: If nothing is true, then why should philosophers say, recognize that proper philosophy is genealogy? To put it another way, why should we accept doing X instead of Y if both are equally fictional? Danto, in order to argue anything at all (*viz.* why we should accept his reading of Nietzsche) needs some sort of alternative valuation, one that gives us a reason for choosing one thing over another. The new valuation Danto posits is that one option is more valuable than another to the development of life: "P is true and Q is false if P works and Q does not" (Danto 72). The positing of a new valuation aside from truth on which to prefer judgments is a move frequently made by radical interpreters, but just as frequently, this move runs into trouble. Generally, in setting up a new valuation, radical interpreters typically let truth in through a back door; in order to set up the new valuation, they will assume at least one implicit truth in order to establish a proper valuation.

In Danto's case, truth re-enters the equation through the vague use of the term 'work'. Is "P works" a true statement? It can't be, because Danto's project is to deny truth. Then what do we say about "P works"? If it is not true that P works, does that mean that P doesn't work? If Danto wants to adhere to the works valuation, do we say that "'P works' works?" That doesn't solve our problem: it just begs the question of what we mean by 'work'. 'Work' cannot mean internal consistency because, by Danto's account, we already have a coherent, internally consistent account. Note that Nietzsche, on Danto's account, never denies that logic, for

⁸ This makes Danto's position a little like that of Wittgenstein, who thought some philosophical questions were basically nonsense that should be dissolved instead of argued or solved.

example, is *internally consistent*; logic is just an anthropomorphization and falsification of the real world. If “works” is defined as satisfying our interests (‘interests’ being another vague term), then it is true that P satisfies our interests by working and Q does not. If “works” is defined as working in the world, then it is true that something works in the world.⁹ The “works” problem is similar to the truth problem—either Danto is making true statements about “P working” in some sense, or else “P working” is another illusion we cannot reject, which leaves us with the question why we should choose P and not Q on Danto’s account.

Danto tries to avoid these problems by contending that nothing can overcome the metaphysics of language; because we are stuck with the language and logic evolution has given us, contradictions and other problems are bound to happen. His is a weak defence, especially when his attempt to explain an alternate valuation implicitly buys into the truth he seeks to deny and is based upon arguments, presumably coherent, made by Nietzsche. If you want to say “P works” in your new valuation of truth, you must explain how your valuation does not endorse

⁹ A more modern attempt at getting around this problem is to say we pick a theory based on its psychological utility, as theories of truth have a certain utility to them, though ultimately it is the psychological utility of such a notion that has kept any particular theory of truth around. This does avoid the problem of how we might understand the statement “it is true such a thing is useful to us” because the psychological utility does not necessarily correspond to reality. However, there are two major problems with this view. Firstly, if this theory of psychological utility is to replace more conventional truth theories, then it must assume that there is no truth; otherwise, it becomes merely a theory of human behavior and thereby not good enough for those who argue that the truth does not exist. If truth does exist, then at least some decisions made by some people are decided by truth and facts rather than by psychological utility. So this theory must assume what it sets out to prove - that there is no truth - and thus fails due to the circular nature of the argument. Secondly, if we all make decisions based purely on psychological utility, then it is true that we do this; thus, there is at least one truth after all. This attempt at a solution does not remove the problem of truth for the radical interpreter; it merely moves it around. In other words, any discussion that involves an assertion necessarily presupposes truth.

that “old metaphysics” you want to criticize and still make minimal sense. You can’t have both “P works” and “P is an illusion” because the pairing violates the most basic standards of logical consistency. Danto, if he were true to his ideals, would have to face an even more absurd problem. If it were true that the innate structures of our minds *did* falsify reality, then the notion of what the reality of a given situation is would be completely incoherent and unintelligible to us. This would make talk about reality pointless, especially talk of better or truer valuations. Thus Danto would have to admit that there could be no argument, indeed, no reason, why anybody would adopt his viewpoint since clearly it lies outside human understanding, and no argument about that understanding could penetrate that web of ignorance we have woven for ourselves.

Danto’s theory of truth encounters another problem. Nietzsche’s philosophy clearly is not just a negative deconstruction of truth; he also has doctrines that he thinks are true, such as the Will to Power and the eternal recurrence. How does Danto and his error theory of truth account for these doctrines? Despite Danto’s conception of truth and his use of ‘metaphysical’ to mean illusory, both appear to be metaphysical, given that he says in his discussion of the Will to Power that “there can hardly be anything like *evidence* for the doctrine in my simple sense of evidence” (Danto 204). Note what this translates to in, say, the meaning of the Will to Power: “It is a metaphysical, or, better, an ontological concept, for “Will to Power” is Nietzsche’s answer to the question “What is there?”” (Danto 215). The Will to Power on Danto’s account is everything that is, the underlying fundamental force and substance of the universe. Much as with Kaufmann’s interpretation, The Will to Power is the fundamental striving force in the universe animating everything living and non-living to further increase its influence and power. This interpretation paints Nietzsche as engaging the philosophy of his beloved pre-Socratic philosophers. Pre-Socratics had a tendency to try and reduce the world into a single fundamental thing: fire, water, or change for example. The Will to Power, on this account, is similar in that it

tries to reduce everything to striving force.

Danto holds that the Will to Power is a metaphysical concept corresponding to reality. However, Danto's conception of truth disputes this idea. If the Will to Power corresponds to reality, it follows that there is truth in the conventional sense, albeit one that is metaphysical. There is also the problem of why this particular metaphysical concept is a truth when all other metaphysical concepts are illusions. If Danto holds that this concept is just another falsification, then it is easy to be churlish and simply ask why we should take the Will to Power—or anything Nietzsche says—seriously. Finally, if the Will to Power is a metaphysical concept, then it is difficult to see how its status is consistent with Nietzsche's opposition to the very idea of metaphysics.

Similar problems are encountered in Danto's discussion of the Eternal Recurrence. As with Kaufmann, Danto sees Eternal Recurrence as a scientific truth about the universe. Danto tries to offer a scientific justification for the principle, using physics to argue that the universe has a large but finite number of combinations, and that given an infinite amount of time, those same combinations must inevitably repeat (Danto 205-206). This argument is made despite Danto's criticism of science as never containing any truth. If nothing approaching truth can ever be achieved, it is difficult to see how this particular scientific argument is valid. The argument is built on premises that also presumably contain truth, such as the universe having a finite number of combinations, matter and energy being ultimately neither created nor destroyed, and so on. Despite Danto's denial of truth, he seems comfortable with not only metaphysical truth, but scientific truth, as well. His is a contradictory position.

Once Danto has made the move of denying all truth and all possibility of ever finding

truth, there seems little point in justifying these Nietzschean doctrines. Either they are simply further fictions or they are truths of a sort, and therefore a contradiction in Danto's larger project of explaining Nietzsche. For if it is true in any sense that the eternal recurrence is a scientific phenomenon, how can all truths be fictions? Danto repeats Kaufmann's mistake by taking Nietzsche to have a single view on truth, though unlike Kaufmann, Danto emphasizes the early Nietzsche and the *Nachlass*. In the end, despite Danto's taking an approach contrary to Kaufmann's, the problems created are equally insoluble.

Another radical interpreter who understands Nietzsche's position on truth in nihilist terms is Jacques Derrida. Like Danto, Derrida thinks that the world is an illusion, but one we cannot reject. According to Derrida, the structure of language is so laden with metaphysics that nothing can be said outside this construct. Derrida thinks the world is endlessly becoming, and no true statement can be made about the world (Clark 14). That is, because language takes a stable being as a predicate, language concepts themselves falsify the world. Similar to Nietzsche's early view on truth, Derrida thinks the concepts of our minds falsify, and these falsifications cannot be rejected.

On Derrida's Heideggerian reading, Nietzsche, similarly, could not escape this falsification of language, and despite his criticism of truth, he couldn't help but buy into this falsification. This, however, does not stop Nietzsche from thinking deeply about the problems that interest Derrida. In a reading that has influenced many radical Nietzschean interpreters, Derrida holds that this inconsistency in Nietzsche is actually consistency because it demonstrates that language ultimately destroys any attempts to undermine the fictions on which language is built. We can consider the strength of this argument by first granting the hypothesis that language falsifies and then imagining an argument which logically demonstrates this falsification of

language. If we could do this, we would undermine the argument because language is clearly being used in a way that overcomes this falsification to convey something true; such a thought experiment would also demonstrate that despite the falseness built into these concepts, they can be used to convey true things, if one knows enough about language. Instead, on Derrida's account, language, when used to undermine itself, simply breaks down and becomes self-contradictory or results in the logical problems found in Danto's account of truth.

However, in this failure, deconstructionists like Derrida see hope. For the limits of language demonstrate that while the fictions of language can never be replaced with truth, fictions can be undermined by precisely the philosophy Nietzsche is articulating with his contradictory notions of truth, a philosophy that demonstrates the contradictory nature and essential inadequacy of language.

When interpreting Nietzsche's position, Derrida treats Nietzsche's writings as equivalent in meaning to a note Nietzsche wrote in a margin of the *Nachlass*: "I've forgotten my umbrella." (Clark, 17) With textual truth and indeed, truth itself ultimately undefinable, we are liberated from institutional 'truths' and conventional interpretations. The ideal that Derrida wants to advance with the example of the umbrella as an alternative way of interpreting statements is the ideal of 'playing' with the text; with the ultimate meaning of the text undefinable, we are free to abandon the old baroque, institutional, unchanging style of truth, and instead adopt a new truth, a rococo style, a playful, less serious, more personal style toward truth. This new style will have the effect of creating a multiplicity of new interpretations for the text. (Though not in the text, naturally, since an exclusively textual meaning does not exist.) This in turn creates more new "multiplicity of meanings", more interpretations, many more than would be possible with the old, unchanging predicate style of truth. Furthermore, this play will enable more interpretations

to spring up, a good thing, since one interpretation is, in a sense, as good as another. Thus we can have fun debating whether Nietzsche did, in fact, forget his umbrella. Did he leave it on the train? Was this umbrella an umbrella of comfortable illusions he had been living under? Was it Zarathustra's umbrella? That no convincing answer develops from this sort of play is unimportant because the goal is play and the creation of new meanings, not doing something as baroque as trying to find the truth of statements.

Deconstructionists would argue that this play is, in the Heideggerian tradition, rejecting metaphysics; instead of being 'shepherds of being', they are fighting against that bad old metaphysics by undermining its authority, like a revolutionary running by and cutting off a fascist policeman's tie. However, this argument assumes that deconstructionists have the truth of the situation. In Derrida's case, the 'play' involved is engaged in undermining the serious work of those old unchanging predicates, a project he sees himself continuing from Nietzsche. Derrida also is presumably putting forth this more dynamic interpretive model of truth as somehow better if not truer than the old model. As with Danto, this solution suffers from there being no consistent way to say, for example, 'it is true that Derrida's solution is better than the unchanging predicate view of truth.'

As an interpretation of Nietzsche's theory of truth, this view suffers from major difficulties. Nietzsche's writings are not a set of unconnected fragments;¹⁰ they constantly refer to each other, both explicitly and implicitly. So, an interpretation (say, 'morality is bad') can be

¹⁰ It is, of course, not logically impossible that Nietzsche's writings are a set of unconnected fragments, or are only consistent inside the context of a particular book. However this interpretation should be a last resort to understand Nietzsche, when all else has failed. This thesis will present a coherent view of Nietzsche, and thus refute the fragments theory.

checked by looking at what Nietzsche said elsewhere in his published works. One could ask why playing with the text is better than the traditional work of finding the truth of a text. Derrida's answer is "because [playing] more closely reflects the truth of the world," but once again, truth is being assumed in the conventional sense in order to justify the interpretation. Playing as interpretation doesn't fit with much of Nietzsche's philosophy, either. Though Nietzsche is famous for occasionally making cryptic statements, he most often makes clear statements even a casual reader can understand. Setting aside the problem of truth for a moment, Nietzsche made statements, about, for instance, the development of Western Civilization, the decline of individuals into herds, and the religiosity at the bottom of atheism, that he clearly wants to convey to the reader rather than have the readers 'play' for their own amusement. In the end, Derrida's interpretation, like Heidegger's, tells us less about Nietzsche and more about the author of the interpretation of Nietzsche.

Another deconstructionist viewpoint is provided by Paul de Man. de Man's view, inspired by Derrida, holds that Nietzsche's contradictory view on truth is caused by the inherent falsification of language, and that nothing could make true these basic concepts. Unlike Derrida, De Man thinks we can demonstrate the inadequacy of language, and by extension, 'metaphysical' concepts such as truth. We can do so by making contradictory statements and then showing how statements which contradict themselves based on rhetoric and metaphor are trying to be 'true', but always failing. Thus, Nietzsche's apparently metaphysical or contradictory statements are not the product of philosophical confusion, but are, instead, an attempt to undermine statements (such as truth claims) by showing how they always end in contradiction. In his truth theory, de Man says that Nietzsche is attempting to show how all statements end in failure; the problems in Danto's account, for example, indicate what, in the end, happens to all statements. The errors and contradictions of Nietzsche's philosophy, far from undermining his philosophy, actually make

Nietzsche consistent in his revelations on truth.

While de Man tackles the “contradictory notion of truth,” Sarah Kofman tries to incorporate Nietzsche’s doctrines into the deconstructionist viewpoint. Kofman denies the metaphysical status to Will to Power that Danto wants to give it, saying instead that it is a rule about interpretations and theory in the academic and political sense. Theories, according to Kofman, want to overcome other theories, and grow dominant, expanding their power to explain (or influence) all aspects of human life. Marxism can be seen in this light. This theory begins as a political theory that expands to economics, then to history, and (at least in a communist country) comes to influence and control all aspects of human life. Christianity can also be seen through this lens of slowly expanding power and influence. Kofman, like other deconstructionists, denies truth; the Will to Power is an interpretation of interpretations, but that does not make it truth. But if it is only an interpretation, why does Nietzsche, on Kofman’s reading, prefer it to other interpretations? Because it is an interpretation that allows for “enrichment and embellishment of life” that creates more interpretations for more individual viewpoints (Clarke 15). Like Derrida, Kofman assumes that the standard interpretations are either damagingly conformist or filled with secret negative values of control from the power center in society. The Will to Power thus is a justification of being, not evidence for it. With this theory about theories understood, the Will to Power allows a multiplicity of interpretations in life, without insinuating that one way is the one true way for everyone. In Kofman’s version, a doctrine like the Will to Power underpins the life affirming aspect of Nietzsche’s philosophy. Thus, truth claims are not claims about truth in the conventional sense; instead, they are an endorsement of a particular way of living.

Yet an objection to Kofman’s position arises in that we could ask why, if the multiplicity of interpretations makes the Will to Power good, Nietzsche rejects certain manifestations of this

interpretation, like morality or religious interpretations as untrue. Kofman could claim that Nietzsche rejects such interpretations as life-devaluing, but then it would be true that a moral interpretation of life is life-devaluing. To even posit the importance of allowing a multiplicity of expressions of life so that the Will to Power can find its fullest expression is to assume that it is true that allowing such multiplicity is life-affirming and not life-denying. Like other radical Nietzsche interpreters, Kofman needs to have an alternative valuation for accepting one interpretation over another, and in so doing, the concept of truth is reintroduced. One must always assume it is true that the value one is promoting has property "X", where X is the value one is positing aside from truth. With Danto, the alternative valuation is X works, whereas Kofman assumes that X is 'life-enhancing.' Kofman's position suffers from the aforementioned problem especially because she wants to put forward her interpretation of Nietzsche as both true and life-affirming. Like Danto, her attempt to define values on some other valuation aside from truth ends in failure. de Man similarly suffers from this problem because, despite his denial of truth, he assumes his interpretation is true of Nietzsche, that is, is a correct interpretation of Nietzsche. His assumption cannot be a demonstration of the falsification of language because like Danto's, it must assume either this is another falsification that we try to undermine with language or it is a true interpretation. Saying that this contradiction is another demonstration of the corruptness of the metaphysics of language will be unhelpful because that interpretation still assumes the truth of this theory, despite the contradiction just mentioned. de Man also assumes his interpretation teaches us something that is true, that truth being the essential falsity of metaphysics and language. Both points assume truth in the conventional sense. Ultimately, Kofman, de Man, and Derrida all assume that their interpretation is true and therefore teaches us something about the world.

Both interpretive approaches, radical and conventional, thus fail. What, then, are we to

make of Nietzsche's theory of truth? Is it actually just contradictory? I will argue for the remainder of this chapter that Nietzsche's theory of truth can be made sense of, but only if one assumption made by most interpreters is abandoned. We must reject the notion that Nietzsche had the same idea of truth throughout his career. If we see Nietzsche's theory of truth as a developing position and not a unitary one, then Nietzsche's truth theory can be rendered coherent. Thus, the problem of Nietzsche's theory of truth becomes not one of explaining his position coherently, but of at least partially telling the story of what Nietzsche thought and why, and more particularly why he changed his mind regarding certain issues.

To understand why Nietzsche's early view on truth developed as it did, it is necessary to understand several interconnected points. First, the reception of Kant's philosophy was significantly different in nineteenth century Germany than it is today. The single biggest difference is that Kant was taken to be making an argument *for* idealism, not an argument against idealism (See Norman Kemp Smith, below.) Secondly, this reception colored Nietzsche's thinking on the subject. Most particularly, Nietzsche uncritically accepted several ideas, especially the idea of knowledge as correspondence between the phenomenal and the metaphysical object, and the validity of the thing in itself. (Clark, 85) Nietzsche, even when criticizing other basic concepts, accepted these prevailing ideas uncritically. Finally, even though Arthur Schopenhauer was a critical target of Nietzsche in this early period, he accepted an important aspect of his philosophy uncritically, namely, Schopenhauer's theory of perception. Schopenhauer believes that what we know is produced "out of the raw materials of a few sensations in the organs of sense." (1813, 75) This theory is an idealist theory, since according to Schopenhauer, all we know are sensations, not what those sensations are of. For example: "[it] becomes clear and certain to him that he does not know a sun and an earth, but only an eye that sees a sun, a hand that feels the earth..." (1819, 3) Together, these factors led to his early denial

of truth. A critical apparatus that places Nietzsche's claims historically will show that his claims depended on a number of views which Nietzsche took from the culture, at least some of which he later rejected.

To put it simply, Kant was generally taken in the nineteenth century by philosophers to be making a much different argument than he is taken to have made today. Today, the academic consensus on Kant holds that Kant argues for the direct perception of things and defends the scientific world view against the skepticism of David Hume. In the nineteenth century Kant was thought to be either a metaphysical realist like Descartes, but more complex, or an idealist. This nineteenth century view is due partially to what he said in the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and partially because, like Nietzsche, Kant struggled for many years on what he wanted to say on the subject of truth. In the first edition of the *Critique*, according to noted Kant scholar Kemp Smith, Kant "refutes the position of Descartes only by virtually accepting the still more extreme position of Berkeley" (304). This apparent of Kant's was something his critics (and later, his admirers) were quick to pick up on.

Adding to the confusion of eighteenth century philosophers, Kant divided idealism into several distinct types, distinguishing between the 'dogmatic idealism' of Berkeley, the 'sceptical idealism' of David Hume and the 'Transcendental idealism' that Kant claimed was his own position. That Kant never clarifies what separates these various types of idealism and their very different implications understandably created confusion, especially when Kant's position seems close to 'dogmatic idealism' in his first edition. Adding still further to the confusion is that, in his original refutation of idealism, according to Norman Kemp Smith: "Kant...wavers between two very different definitions of idealism: as being denial of *immediate* certainty and as a denial of all certainty of the existence of material bodies" (Smith, 301). For example, in the first edition, Kant

says, “We cannot be sentient of what is outside ourselves, but only of what is in ourselves, and the whole of our self consciousness therefore yields nothing save merely our own determinations” (Kant, 351). This is a far cry from the refutation of the skepticism and idealism that Kant was aiming for, and his critics and readers noticed this disjunction of purpose and argument: “Pistorius objected that in making outer appearances relative to inner consciousness which in itself appearance, Kant was reducing everything to mere illusion. Hamann came to a somewhat similar conclusion, that Kant, notwithstanding his very difficult methods of argument, is 'a Prussian Hume', in substantial agreement with his Scotch predecessor” (Smith 305).

Kant, would-be champion of empirical science, was horrified by this resulting interpretation of his views. For this reason, he explicitly refuted this idealism when he published his second edition of the *Critique*. In it, Kant adds a section entitled ‘The Refutation of Idealism’, where he demonstrates that we have experience of outer objects and argues that these objects must exist outside of us for us to have even perception of inner things, let alone outer ones. Smith notes that “Indeed, it [the refutation of idealism] proves the direct opposite of what is asserted in the first edition. The earlier Proof sought to show that, as regards immediacy of apprehension and subjectivity of existence, outer appearances stand on the same level as do our inner experiences. The proof of the second edition, on the other hand, argues that though outer appearances are immediately apprehended they must be existences distinct from the subjective states through which the mind represents them” (Smith 312). This second argument had the effect of emphasizing the phenomenal account of the world that Kant gives rather than the noumenal account, as scholars in the twentieth century have noted.¹¹ We can see how different

¹¹ Norman Kemp Smith for one, Paul Di Giovanni for another, though Di Giovanni takes the view that this misinterpretation was also due to the conflict between reason and faith that raged in German circles at the time. (Giovanni 423.)

the refutation of idealism is if we follow Smith by comparing two statements from the two different editions: “Outer objects (bodies) are mere appearances and are therefore nothing but a species of my representations, the objects of which are something only through these representations. Apart from them they are nothing’ (Kant, p346 First ed.) ‘Perception of this permanent is possible only through a *thing* outside me, and not through mere *representation* of a thing outside of me’ (Kant, p245, Sec. Ed.)”. This rejection of the first edition's view is an important point, and it applies to the reception of the first critique.

However, either because of the longstanding influence of the first edition of the *Critique* or due to the unclear distinction between idealism (all we perceive are ideas, and to postulate anything outside of that is impossible) and metaphysical realism (we perceive the sensations caused by exterior objects, but the object behind the sensation, the thing-in-itself, is forever unknown to us), Kant was taken by many in the nineteenth century to be an idealist like Berkeley or a metaphysical realist who thought that the 'real' was the noumenal. This reception created a whole generation of German Idealists who, now that Kant had seemingly disproved the physical world, were creating new philosophies to deal with this new world view supposedly discovered by Kant.¹²

It is in this environment that Nietzsche acquired several important ideas on Kant and his conception of truth; Nietzsche assumed Kant was making a metaphysical realist argument for the perception of reality, not the more phenomenological account that later scholars would emphasize. The metaphysical realist argument came with two assumptions about truth—that the thing in itself actually exists and that truth is correspondence with the thing in itself. Nietzsche

¹² See, for example, Jakob Froschammer, Immanuel Hermann von Fichte, Hermann Ulrici, and of course, Arthur Schopenhauer. (Breazeale 114n.)

would later find these ideas wanting.

Foremost among German Idealists, and influential on Nietzsche was Arthur Schopenhauer, who explicitly argued against the Refutation of Idealism: “Schopenhauer, to whom this new idea of the critical teaching was altogether anathema, the cloven hoof of the Hegelian heresies, denounced it as a temporary and ill-judged distortion of the true critical position, maintaining that it is incapable of combination with Kant’s central teaching, and that it finds no support, in the tenets, pure and unperturbed, of the first edition” (Smith 315-316). Schopenhauer explicitly rejected Kant’s clarification and pursued his idealistic philosophy with Kant’s early interpretation in mind. This influence did not make Nietzsche into an idealist; as we will see, Nietzsche believed in an external world. The main effect of this influence was Nietzsche’s adoption of Schopenhauer’s account of perception.

On Maudemarie Clark's account, Schopenhauer’s conception of truth follows Kant’s first edition in that he holds we only have perception of our internal states and never of external objects: “At his most extreme, Schopenhauer writes that we do not ‘know a sun or earth, but only an eye that sees a sun, and a hand that feels the earth.’ He means that objects we see and feel are ‘there only as representation, that is, only in reference to another thing, namely, that which represents’” (Clark 79). Schopenhauer, like Berkeley, believed that it made no sense to talk of the external world given that all we know are our internal perceptions. Also, like Berkeley, Schopenhauer thought that it was either nonsensical or a contradiction in terms to talk of objects existing independently of consciousness because if objects only exist in our perceptions, they cannot have an existence external to us. Schopenhauer thus sees all sensation as internal nerve sensation caused by unknowable outside sources. Though Nietzsche was not an idealist, the distinct scientific cast of Schopenhauer’s theory with its talk of nerve sensation is one Nietzsche

adopted with his metaphysical realist¹³ viewpoint.

Nietzsche combines Schopenhauer's theory of perception (the theory that knowledge is only of nerve sensation and our minds) and the ideas of Kant in his early thinking on truth. Combined, they had a most surprising result: since the only thing we know is sensation, and truth is not agreement with sensation but agreement with the thing in itself, truth is impossible. This is the source of Nietzsche's early skepticism on truth. Though Nietzsche never explicitly articulated his argument, Daniel Breazeale attempts to recreate the stages of Nietzsche's thinking: "1) There is no immediate knowing; knowledge always involves a transference between the different spheres of subject and object, it is therefore always indirect and mediated. 2) Truth as an ideal requires an immediate and direct grasp of the object by subject. 3) Consequently, the *truth* about things cannot be known, for this would require a self-contradictory mediated immediacy. 4) The only "truths" available to us are empty tautologies, which are true by definition" (TL Breazeale 51). Nietzsche's early skepticism of Truth is based on these four assumptions.

Nietzsche is skeptical about truth throughout his first book, *Birth of Tragedy*, but this skepticism is only made explicit in his unpublished essay "Truth and Lie in the Extra-Moral Sense" where he denies truth outright and deems statements made about the world as hopeless anthropomorphization. Given the preceding discussion, Nietzsche's talk of truth being a "metaphor twice removed" from reality makes sense. First, the metaphor for the sun contained in its light, and second, a metaphor for the image conveyed by the light when it is translated again to sensation. This idealism is not Nietzsche's position, however. Nietzsche did evidently believe

¹³ Metaphysical Realism is the view that truth as such is correspondence to the thing in itself or the world 'as it is.' This view relies on an objective view of truth, since there is some final view of the world that is totally correct. This view will be examined more closely in the next chapter.

in the external world, that is, in objects existing independently of consciousness; however, he didn't believe that we had access to these objects. Thus, saying that sensation and even language is a mere metaphor is a metaphor itself, one that contrasts the actual thing in itself with our twice removed knowledge of it. As Nietzsche wrote in *Truth and Lie*: "To begin with, a nerve stimulus is transferred into an image: first metaphor. The image, in turn, is imitated into a sound: second metaphor" (TL 82).

Could language give us truth? Not in the extra-moral sense. Nietzsche writes that 'true' statements, because they are composed of words, conform to arbitrary social conventions: "The liar is a person who uses the valid designations, the words, in order to make something which is unreal appear to be real. He says, for example, "I am rich," when the proper designation for his condition would be "poor." He misuses fixed conventions of even reversals of names" (TL 81) Nietzsche then reinforces the point: "What is a word? It is the copy in sound of a nerve stimulus". One can see again the radical skepticism of Schopenhauer at work in the phrase 'nerve stimulus', despite Nietzsche criticizing Schopenhauer in the same essay (see TL Breazeale 81n).

With skepticism applied to both sensation and linguistic concepts, it should come as no surprise that Nietzsche views *a priori* truths skeptically as well. In Nietzsche's view, these truths are only true by definition and are, otherwise, 'empty tautologies' that teach us nothing about the external world. Because they are structures in us, there is no guarantee, indeed, no reason, why they should have anything to do with the external world. With this skeptical early view Nietzsche despairs of there being a way to reach objective truth since all man's 'truths' have been developed and conditioned by the interests of man: "If I make up the definition of a mammal, and then, after inspecting a camel, declare 'look, a mammal,' I have indeed brought truth to light in this way, but it is a truth of limited value. That is to say, it is a thoroughly anthropomorphic

truth which contains not a single point which would be 'true in itself' or really and universally valid apart from man" (Breazeale 85). This anthropomorphic aspect of truth seems inescapable and suggests that "truths are fictions we have forgotten are fictions." In other words, a 'true' statement is not objective because not a correspondence with the thing in itself, and therefore, not "true" in the important sense.

Nietzsche's early view does not stand up to critical scrutiny because it encounters the same problems encountered by other radical deniers of truth, problems which have already been explained in some detail. We shall see in the next chapter that Nietzsche eventually realized this position's vulnerability and moved away from this skeptical position, criticizing the assumptions on which his skepticism was based. Even in this very early period, we can see the concern with the anthropomorphization of truth +being only 'truth in a human perspective'. Later Nietzsche, as we will see in the next chapter, regards this conditioned, perspectival aspect of knowledge as true and concludes that trying to escape this conditioning of perspectives is a fundamental misunderstanding of truth. This conclusion, along with the abandoning of the idea of the thing in itself as incoherent, becomes the cornerstone of Nietzsche's later epistemology. The dismissal of truth as 'anthropomorphic' is valid only if a non-anthropomorphic truth theory is available. As Nietzsche begins to doubt the premises of his radical skepticism, he also begins to doubt that knowledge can ever take the form of a correspondence to the thing in itself.

Chapter 2

Middle Nietzsche on Truth

As I have shown in the first chapter, interpretations of Nietzsche's theories on truth are often contradictory and confused. These difficulties arise because many interpreters have treated Nietzsche's published work, sometimes even the published works and the *Nachlass*, as a unitary whole with one point of view. Interpreters have pursued this thesis either by having Nietzsche deny truth altogether or by having Nietzsche give a straightforward interpretation of truth. Neither approach works. The former leads to contradiction no matter how the arguer defines their position, and the latter, unable to deal with Nietzsche's relativist baggage, inevitably sinks the endeavour.

The unitary position is incorrect because Nietzsche held two different theories of truth at different times that are not compatible with one another. The early position, most obvious in *The Birth of Tragedy* and the unpublished essay "Truth and Lie in the Extra Moral Sense," is that truth does not exist for humans, and humans can never escape that all truth is conditioned by human interests and perspectives. The early position relied on a set of presuppositions which Nietzsche ultimately gave up. The first presupposition held that there is such a thing as a Kantian Thing-in-Itself at the root of all perception. The second presupposition is that truth is a relation of correspondence to this Thing-in-Itself, and the third, that we can never perceive this Thing-in-Itself¹⁴ because all we know are sense perceptions received from external sources which do not

¹⁴ Nietzsche borrows a page from Schopenhauer with this interpretation. Schopenhauer believed that we never have

stand in the truth relation to the thing in itself. The consequence of these early assumptions is that truth is an impossibility for human minds. This position is ultimately not coherent, but it is at least an understandable one, once we understand Nietzsche's initial assumptions. The problem, of course, is that the assumptions cannot be true together. Nietzsche slowly abandoned both this position and the assumptions on which it is based after *Truth and Lie*. The first break in this position comes in *Human, All Too Human's* re-evaluation of the Thing-in-Itself.

Nietzsche describes the thesis of thing-in-itself in *Human, All Too Human* as a metaphysical¹⁵ thesis, one that could never be proven. While he does not deny the Thing-in-Itself could exist, he does deny that such a thing could matter, and we will see that what Nietzsche means *by* mattering will ultimately suggest to him the resources for a non-metaphysical conception of truth. But at this point in the evolution of his thinking, even with the rationale for his skepticism brought into question¹⁶, Nietzsche still often maintained a skeptical position regarding truth in one form or another, from *Human, All Too Human* up to the first section of *Beyond Good and Evil*. Even after he had given up the basis for the Thing-in-Itself, Nietzsche continued to hold that concepts still falsify intrinsically, and that we could never know something

knowledge of objects; we only know nerve impulses that are caused by these objects. (See once again, 1819, 1) Since all we know are these nerve impulses, what we know is 'twice removed' from truth.

15 Here, 'metaphysical' means 'not provable' or having an impact on the real world in any way.

16 The lynch pin of Nietzsche's skepticism is that because truth is a relation to the thing-in-itself, there is only one solution to the problem of an objective form of truth—it is necessarily inaccessible to the human mind. Nietzsche never denied that we have sensation, but he held that we can never get beyond that sensation to find out what sort of statements about the world are made true by it; in short, sense based claims are not statements of fact but "mere anthropomorphizing." With the Thing-in-Itself downgraded in importance regarding truth, indeed, in *HATH* divorced from it, one can ask (as Nietzsche eventually does) what kind of relation truth is, if not a correspondence to the Thing-in-Itself.

not conditioned by our interests. These artefacts of Nietzsche's early skepticism were only slowly abandoned between *Human, All Too Human* and the first section of *Beyond Good and Evil*, as Nietzsche came to the slow realization that without the underpinning of the Thing-in-Itself, his skepticism regarding truth had no basis.¹⁷ He would have to come to see that his understanding of perception and its falsifying character still depended on theses about the Thing-in-Itself which he had already given up.

In the previous chapter, we saw the apex of Nietzsche's skepticism regarding truth expanded in "Truth and Lie in the Extra-moral Sense." Though still treated by some interpreters as an operative form in Nietzsche's thought, he had quickly abandoned the radically skeptical position of "*Truth and Lie*." As we saw in the previous chapter, Nietzsche made several early assumptions about the nature of truth. As time went on and as he moved further away from his early influences, Wagner and Schopenhauer, he began to question these assumptions.

The most important break that happens with Nietzsche's early theory is at the start of *Human, All Too Human*, where Nietzsche reverses the radical skepticism he held in *Birth and Truth and Lie*. Here, he drives a wedge between truth in the ordinary sense and metaphysical truth, and comes to hold that it is only metaphysical truth that leads to skepticism. Instead of thinking that all truth is illusion, he has now come to venerate science as a source of truth. Truth,

¹⁷ To assume a world that is permanently falsified and never unfalsifiable, one must assume an objective world "out there" that we can have no possible access to. However, presumably there are arguments to establish the truth of this falsification, our inability to know things in themselves being one of them. But once Nietzsche sees that for the ordinary empirical sense of truth the existence of a Thing-in-Itself cannot even matter - with the Thing-in-Itself divorced even from truth in any sense that can matter - then the argument collapses, since the original argument was based on the fundamental connection between truth and the Thing-in-Itself.

far from being an indispensable fiction, becomes used in the conventional sense again and is, furthermore, highly esteemed: “It is the sign of a higher culture to esteem more highly the little, humble truths, those discovered by a strict method, rather than the gladdening and dazzling errors that originate in metaphysical and artistic ages and men” (HATH 15). Nietzsche comes to see his own philosophy as both true in the conventional sense and as a part of the larger process of science’s fight against metaphysical and ‘artistic’ truths (*i.e.*, untruths.) He says, “The steady and arduous progress of science, which will ultimately celebrate its greatest triumph as an ontology of thought, will deal decisively with those views”(HATH 24). The distinction between humble truths and inaccessible metaphysical truth opens the door to a non-skeptical view of truth, though it will still require a revision in his views on the illusory character of sensation. But it is a start. With truth possible again, the miasma of skepticism hanging over Nietzsche early philosophy has begun to evaporate.

The important point is that the Thing-in-Itself has been devalued in Nietzsche's thinking and has lost its necessary connection to truth; indeed, it is now seen as irrelevant to the larger pursuit of truth: “As soon as the origins of religion, art, and morality have been described, so that one can explain them fully without resorting to the use of metaphysical intervention at the beginning and along the way, then one no longer has as strong an interest in the purely theoretical problem of the “Thing-in-Itself” and “appearance” (HATH 18). At this point Nietzsche does not deny there could be a metaphysical world; he does deny, however, that such a thing could matter to giving a full explanation of the facts: “It is true, that there might be a metaphysical world: one can hardly dispute the absolute possibility of that....For there is nothing at all we could state about the metaphysical world except its differentness, a differentness inaccessible and incomprehensible to us. It would be a thing with negative qualities....it would be the most inconsequential of all knowledge” (HATH 18).

From these passages we can see that the Thing-in-Itself has undergone quite a change in its truth value from “Truth and Lie”. This devaluation is the result of Nietzsche looking at his initial assumptions on truth through the eyes of an inquirer after ordinary knowledge rather than through the eyes of a skeptic. The Thing-in-Itself supposedly underlies all objects and is what truth ultimately refers to. However, we only know the sensations that emanate from a given object (in short, knowledge can only be phenomenal, in Kant’s sense), not the Thing-in-Itself underlying it. Since all we know are sensations and knowing the Thing-in-Itself is impossible, even in theory, we might then talk of objects in terms of sensations rather than in terms of the Thing-in-Itself. Commonsense and scientific knowledge are then possible again, since they engage in the realm of the phenomenal, not the realm of the Thing-in-Itself. The Thing-in-Itself, in Nietzsche’s thinking, now is orphaned, disconnected from truth and knowledge.

In *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche's argument is that the religious or metaphysical values that drive us do not come from the sources they are attributed to, be it heaven or the Thing-in-Itself. Rather, they should be understood as caused by hopes and desires we have read into the world, an accumulated mass of ‘metaphysical truths’ which are actually false, though they will have a causal historical explanation in human thought. However, once we have explained metaphysics as another facet of the human, all too human, truth rather than of eternal metaphysical truth, these truths lose their glamour because the basis of that glamour was the otherworldliness of those values.¹⁸ In *Human, All too Human*, while Nietzsche does not argue

18 This analysis is an early example of Nietzsche’s genealogical method. Genealogy has the goals showing how our ideas developed in a roughly naturalistic way according to our needs and interests rather than as a endless flowering of rational expression, and showing that ideas that present themselves as objective have the same human, all too human history that all ideas do. By exposing the natural origins of ‘objective and otherworldly’ ideas, one discredits

that the Thing-in-Itself could not exist, he thinks that the existence of such a thing would be meaningless in the sense of being irrelevant to human knowledge: “Perhaps we will then recognize that the thing-in-itself is worth a Homeric laugh: that it seemed so much, indeed everything, and is actually empty, namely, empty of meaning” (HA 16).

Despite the devaluation of the Thing-in-Itself that was once the cornerstone for his radical skepticism, Nietzsche had, at this point, not abandoned his early skepticism entirely. Nietzsche retained his criticism of the essential ‘anthropomorphism’ inherent in our basic concepts of truth. In HATH, there is a curious tension caused by Nietzsche’s unworked out epistemology. On the one hand, he wishes to deny that the metaphysical world has any meaning; on the other, he retains his criticism of what he calls ‘anthropomorphic’ ideas, such as his criticism that Kantian concepts like space and time are irrefutable errors, since these are things that we read into the world and do not exist in the world itself: “Our feelings of Time and space are false, for if they are tested rigorously, they lead to logical contradictions” (HATH 19). He similarly notes that “when Kant says “Reason does not create its laws of nature, but dictates them to her,” this is perfectly true in respect to the *concept of nature* which we are obligated to apply to her (Nature = world as idea, that is, error), but which is the summation of a number of errors of reason” (HATH 19). Both statements operate under the idea that because our intuitions are judgements we cannot help but read into the world, these intuitions are necessary falsifications.

This skepticism carries over to formal systems of understanding, as well. Logic and Mathematics, like the intuitions of space and time, are un-rejectable, but because they are human structures, they must be at best an anthropomorphization, at worst a falsification. “Logic, too, them, since such ideas present themselves as objective insofar as they are somehow separate from more commonsense knowledge or as their being not of this earth.

rests on assumptions that do not correspond to anything in the real world....so (too) it is with mathematics” (HATH19). Nietzsche falls back on his earlier position in “Truth and Lie,” frequently criticizing truth both as an anthropomorphic extension of ourselves and as not anything corresponding to ‘true’: “To a world that is not our idea, the laws of numbers are completely inapplicable: they are valid only in the human world” (HATH 27). Without a human perspective to read into the world, according to Nietzsche, logic and numbers as we know them do not exist, and thus, are errors. But these views are based on the assumption that the Thing-in-Itself exists and that truth is a relation involving the Thing-In-Itself, despite Nietzsche’s earlier claims. The thesis that logic is a falsification, for example, only makes sense if there are objects in the world that can be talked about completely divorced from a human perspective.

The Gay Science and *Human, All Too Human* make for strange reading sometimes, since skeptical notions sit alongside affirmations of truth and science¹⁹ without any indication Nietzsche thinks these are contradictory. But how does science create its little unpretentious truths when time and space are merely falsifications? This tension shows us the revising process in action. It also shows that while Nietzsche is moving toward his later position, he has not completely worked out the implications of that position.

In *The Gay Science*, we see more evidence of this process of revision. Though maintaining his skepticism regarding innate forms of truth, Nietzsche develops an account that allows him to deny the Thing-in-Itself. For example, he says, “What is appearance to me now? Certainly not the opposite of some essence: what could I say about any essence except to name the attributes of its appearance! Certainly not a dead mask that one could place an unknown X or remove from it!” (GS 54) This passage is revealing as evidently X, under examination here, is

¹⁹ See, for example, HATH 15.

the Thing-in-Itself, and the Thing-in-Itself is made in Kantian terms (that is, as the underlying cause of phenomena that we can know nothing about.) The argument, then, is that if we already admit that we can know nothing about this metaphysical X, then there is no point in talking about it or considering it an object of interest. If the Thing-in-Itself is removed from the perceptual equation as superfluous, then the metaphysical scaffolding surrounding objects collapses, leaving just the object themselves. Nietzsche has now lost his last reason to be radically sceptical on the subject of truth. The championing of science found in *Human, All Too Human* continues in *The Gay Science*. For example, Nietzsche describes intellectual conscience as “that which separates the higher human being from the lower” (GS 2).

Not surprisingly, many comments in both *The Gay Science* and *Human, All Too Human* will be referred to by interpreters as examples of Nietzsche’s mature view of perspectivism. In the preface of *Human, All Too Human*, he says, “you will learn to grasp the perspective in any value judgement” (9). In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche discusses the perspectival nature of existence:

“How far the perspective character of existence extends or indeed whether existence has any other character than this; whether existence without interpretation, without “sense”, does not become “nonsense”; whether, on the other hand, all existence is not actively engaged in interpretation — that cannot be decided even by the most industrious and most scrupulously conscientious analysis and self examination of the intellect; for in the course of the analysis the human intellect cannot avoid seeing itself in its own perspectives, and *only* in these.” (374)

Clearly, with the Thing-in-Itself vanishing as a concern, Nietzsche began considering what exactly knowing could be if not a correspondence to the Thing-in-Itself. This new direction in thinking about truth would eventually answer Nietzsche's concerns about *a priori* modes of perception, since human perspective being a 'falsification' loses all validity as a criticism once perspectivism is adopted. Once it is held that it is impossible to experience the world without a perspective or a human interest, "objective" metaphysical truth becomes impossible.²⁰

That Nietzsche's perspectivist thesis is still not entirely worked out can also be seen. On page 354 of *Gay Science*, Nietzsche casts perspectivism in the mould of his radical earlier skepticism. Here, consciousness is seen as a product of evolution, one that, by definition, must falsify given the needs of communication. Communication, according to Nietzsche, developed in lockstep with consciousness, and the purpose of this development was to enable the communication of thoughts and sensations between individuals. However, in this translation from the unique and idiosyncratic experiences of a given individual to the domain of the intelligible, consciousness falsified them. Because communication, for Nietzsche, is about conveying generalities rather than aiming for correctness, the unique parts of the experience must be removed to make the sensation communicable to others. Communication, as with anything coming into the domain of consciousness, will "always succeed in becoming conscious of what is not individual but average" (GS 354). This, then, entails falsification. No communication could ever contain truth because, by necessity, it is processed by our falsifying consciousness.

²⁰ Not surprisingly, *The Gay Science* also has a formal renunciation of previous influences on Nietzsche. GS 154 has him renounce Schopenhauer and Wagner, and he does so in the spirit of Brutus and Caesar; that is, betraying a friend in order to stay true to oneself.

Owing to the nature of *animal* consciousness, the world of which we become conscious is only a surface- and sign-world, a world that is made common and meaner; whatever becomes conscious *becomes* by that same token shallow, thin, relatively stupid, general, sign, herd signal; all becoming conscious involves a great and thorough corruption, falsification, reduction to superficialities, and generalization. (GS 354)

Another example of Nietzsche's radical skepticism is clearly shown both in his aphorism, "What are man's truths ultimately? Merely his irrefutable errors" (GS 265) and in his claim that "life is no argument. The conditions of life might include error" (GS 121). *Gay Science* contains several statements of scepticism, for example, his observation that "if we had not welcomed the arts and invented this kind of cult of the untrue, then the realization of general untruth and mendaciousness that now comes to us through science — **the realization that delusion and error are conditions of human knowledge and sensation** — would be utterly unbearable" (107). Nietzsche's skepticism on truth comes from his seeing truth as an anthropomorphic principle: "We operate only with things that do not exist: lines, planes, bodies, atoms, divisible time spans, divisible spaces. How should explanation be at all possible when we first turn everything into an image, our image!" (GS 112)

This skepticism persists in Nietzsche until he successfully makes the final break with his initial assumptions about truth. This break comes early in *Beyond Good and Evil*, where Nietzsche explicitly rejects the Schopenhauerian perception argument. Here, he says that "one must insist that sense organs are *not* phenomena in idealistic philosophy; as such they could not be causes!" (BGE 15) Nietzsche gives a simple argument for this: "What? And others even say that the external world is the work of our organs? But then the body, as a part of this external

world, would be the work of our organs! But then our organs themselves would be--the work of our organs!” (BGE 15) This *reductio ad absurdum* allows Nietzsche to finally reject both Schopenhauer and his lingering skepticism about the phenomenal world bequeathed by Kant. Clearly, if Nietzsche wants to discuss an empirical account of human knowledge, he cannot assume that all sense data is generated by the organs. To pursue his larger thesis, the external world is necessary.

To cement this new epistemic direction, Nietzsche denies even the possibility of the Thing-in-Itself, calling it a contradiction in terms: “as though knowledge here gets a hold of its object purely and nakedly as “the Thing-in-Itself” without any falsification on the part of either the subject or the object. But the “immediate certainty,” as well as the “absolute knowledge” and the “Thing-in-Itself,” involves a *contradictio in adjecto* I shall repeat a hundred times; we really ought to free ourselves from the seduction of words!” (BGE 16) Through this objection to the Thing-in-Itself, Nietzsche flatly denies that the Thing-in-Itself could exist.

The essential problem with Nietzsche’s position from HATH through GS to the first section of BGE is that, throughout this period, Nietzsche never abandons the form of representationalism that he picked up from Schopenhauer. This representationalism is kept by Nietzsche partially because the idea that nerve impulses are the final domain of knowledge strikes him as scientific, but mostly because he never examines how his initial assumptions are interrelated. Without a metaphysically objective world or a Thing-in-Itself, Nietzsche has no argument for calling formal systems un-rejectable falsifications or for supporting Schopenhauer’s idealism in sense perception. As Clark puts it,

It [Schopenhauer’s representationalism] is responsible for his continued denial of

truth in GS and BGE and his failure to recognize that this denial required the positing of a “true” world. As I have argued, representationalism made idealism necessary once Nietzsche rejected the Thing-in-Itself, and that, in conjunction with his naturalized Kantian theory of knowledge, made the equation of reality with chaos of sensation seem reasonable. This, in turn seemed to provide a basis for considering illusory the non-chaotic world of which we have knowledge without committing him to a belief in a “true” world. But this position is vulnerable to the reductio Nietzsche himself explained in BGE 15. (Clark 124)

But what is truth without a Thing-in-Itself? Nietzsche’s later answer to this question is here referred to as perspectivism, and is a close relative to the classical form of American pragmatism which was developing independently at about the same time.²¹ Perspectivism can be summarized as the view that truth is an epistemic notion, a measure of success of a form of conduct or coping that always happens in a perspective (that is, belongs to a perceiver) and thereby reflects a set of interests (broadly, what kind of answers are being looked for and what constitutes an answer in a given perspective.) Explicitly anti-foundationalist, perspectivism is the result of Nietzsche seeing the collapse of the Thing-in-Itself into a metaphysical contradiction and then presenting a non-metaphysical account of knowledge as success in conduct governed by interests. Perspectivism allowed Nietzsche to offer an account of truth in the normal sense (common sense, scientific, and the other practical truths) while at the same time offering a criticism of truth understood as an objective metaphysical relation. This criticism rules out, for

²¹ Pragmatism rejects truth as a metaphysical correspondence and makes many assumptions that Nietzsche’s perspectivism also makes. For example, pragmatism holds both that the Thing-in-Itself is unimportant in truth and that knowledge is a natural phenomena with no foundationalist basis. These arguments are made explicit later in the chapter.

Nietzsche, a number of philosophical shibboleths—the concept of the Thing-in-Itself, the unconditioned object, the unconditioned or God’s eye view point, and foundationalist accounts of knowledge (or any system that seeks to establish the final principles of truth)—that could establish the final principles of all truth. Nietzsche’s Perspectivism can be classified as a kind of pragmatism because, like classical pragmatists, Nietzsche has come to see inquiry as grounded in a kind of psychobiological model²² of the human organism according to which inquiry consists in struggle to meet needs which are largely biologically determined and in which truth is successful. This section of the chapter will concern itself with an overview of Nietzsche’s perspectivism and some of its consequences.

No Thing-in-Itself: Nietzsche, after struggling with the implications of Kant’s phenomenal account of knowledge on one hand and the idealism of German philosophers on the other, initially eliminated the Thing-in-Itself as a meaningful pursuit of knowledge and later denied the existence of such a thing altogether. With the Thing-in-Itself eliminated from the equation, what, then, is the remainder? What are objects on Nietzsche’s account? An object, to borrow a phrase from Alexander Nehamas, is a sum of its effects. An object, without a Thing-in-Itself, becomes the sum of whatever we can sense from it and its associated meanings, and nothing else. Working from Kant’s phenomenal account, Nietzsche thought we perceive things, but underneath these things there is no real object in the form of a Thing-in-Itself. Like the concept in physics of an ether, a universal substance that suffuses everything but affects nothing, the Thing-in-Itself has been eliminated as superfluous. Formerly, objects were seen as having perspectival values, such as weight, that attached to the metaphysical objectiveness of the object.

²² See, for example, Robert Brandon, “The Pragmatist Enlightenment”, *European Journal of Philosophy* 12:1: 1-16, or Murray Murphy, “Kant's Children – The Cambridge Pragmatists,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* Winter 1968, Vol. 4 Issue 1: 3-31.

With the Thing-in-Itself removed, an object becomes everything that is knowable about it, and nothing else.

No God's eye view: The God's eye view is a metaphor. This metaphor suggests that there is a point of view, God's, from which everything seen is unconditioned by the features which make up a point of view. But this notion of an impartial, unlimited point of view is incoherent. In the literal sense of the term, a point of view is a physical location which affords the eye a view upon a landscape. Not everything can be seen from a point of view because some things block the view of other things, some things are not located in the direction the eye looks, and so on. This literal notion is metaphorically expanded to include other cognitive 'locations' that are also limited in a way, and these limits allow the metaphor to have traction so that a metaphorical point of view is bound by what the mind's eye can 'see'. A fox and a rabbit will not see the same things even when their eyes aim at the same terrain because they are conditioned by their interests and needs to find some features salient and others not. Extending the metaphor to God expands this notion beyond any location and any limitation, and because these limitations are what gives the metaphor its cognitive content, beyond any coherent application. The suggestion following from a God's eye view is that there is a way things are which is relevant to human purposes—and so can ground knowledge or value claims—yet utterly transcends the limitedness of the human. By rejecting the Kantian thing-in-itself (itself a retreat from a God's eye view) and offering a perspectival account of what makes cognitive claims true, Nietzsche utterly shuts the door on such a notion.

'God's Eye' truth is impossible under perspectivism. Perspectivism requires that all views are conditioned by a perspective, a viewer. Thus, no view could ever escape this limitation and become metaphysically objective (I'll call this Objectivism) in the sense philosophers have

looked for. The search for the God's eye view demonstrates a lack of understanding of what it is to have a perspective in the first place. No human view could ever fully encompass everything on a given issue, since to look at something is to see things and not see certain others. No perspective can take everything into account because a perspective and an interest necessarily involve selecting and omitting depending on position and interest. For example, a landscape can be seen from a hill or from a topographical map, but there is no final or complete view of that landscape. Indeed, the very definition of 'landscape' is perspectival; it is how the land looks from a perspective. God's eye view, the view from nowhere, is literally unintelligible because, much like Kant's categories, perspective must be assumed if the barest sense of the real world is to be made. One might as well say 'without thinking' or 'seeing without awareness' as to look for the God's eye point of view.

The two senses of "seeing" used to unpack this metaphor are perspective as literal seeing, and perspective as cognitive interest. Perspective as literal seeing is a consequence of the embodiment of the knower; that is, the knower must occupy one particular place in space and time, and will see different things depending on where she is and in what direction she looks. Consider a house. Someone can describe the house from the front by noting a front door, some flowers alongside the walk, a garage facing the road. Those on a different side of the house may see only the garage, and say they see only a large wall with a single door on the side. Both views are correct in the perspective we might call 'describe what is seen'. Certainly, no one would say that because there is no 'one' view of the house, the house must not exist, and actually, both views are objective in any ordinary sense of the word. Yet this is the view assumed by metaphysical realism as Nietzsche understands it. According to his understanding of metaphysical realism, there is one final view of the house that will satisfy all viewers of the house for the rest of time.

The second sense of perspective is that of cognitive interest. A unicorn and a sabre toothed tiger see each other in the woods. In the cognitive perspective of the unicorn, it sees something that it must run away from; the tiger sees dinner. Assuming unicorns are herd animals, if a unicorn were to see another unicorn, it would see an ally; if a sabre-toothed tiger saw another tiger, it would see a rival to drive out of its hunting territory. None of these judgements are incorrect, yet the advice they offer for successful action are relative to the cognitive interests they inform; so, too, with objects in the real world. A ball-peen hammer is a tool, a useful bludgeoning device, and Exhibit B for the prosecution, depending on whose perspective we assume. The relevant point to notice here is that the *relativity* of these perspectival judgements is completely benign and consistent with objectivity in the ordinary sense. There is no place for either skepticism or metaphysical realism to gain a vantage point for criticism. Nonhuman animals can only perceive those aspects of the world they need to represent in order to guide their behaviour. Their worlds are small and restricted because they can only attend to what is given them by their needs. Surely humans have similar limitations and can only represent what is available from within the 'human perspective'. This thought can lead to the worry that because our world is given to us by our interests, we cannot represent the objective world. But this doesn't follow. First, nonhuman perspectives cannot be so limited. There is no reason to think that when the fox perceives the rabbit in terms of its own interests or needs as food, it is getting something wrong, or that when it pounces on the rabbit, its perception of space is merely subjective. The opposite is true; if the fox couldn't get the location of the rabbit right, relative to its powers of movement, it couldn't catch the rabbit. Secondly, that a creature represents only certain things in its world does not mean it represents the world as containing only those things: "The limits of one's representation of the world is not a representation of the limits of one's

world.”²³

This raises the question of why perspectivism implies falsification for most people. This implication comes from the attractiveness of the metaphysical correspondence theory. Nietzsche's point regarding truth is very simple. He notes that even though we have always been comfortable with the two types of perspective outlined above, we have always had a tendency to assume that truth in a philosophical or scientific sense is somehow very different than this. But this assumption calls for an argument. One of the essential points of perspectivism is that all truth, even scientific truth, works in this everyday manner. Nietzsche argues that the roots of the opposite idea lie in Greek philosophy, where the eternal, unchanging forms were the ‘real truth’ whereas the world of everyday appearance was mere appearance. The Greeks’ overwhelming desire to find stable, unchanging values to base things like the concept of justice on caused them to invent another metaphysical world to give the world the meaning and value desired by philosophers.

The idea that enquiry is forever constrained by perspective and so cannot be true unless underwritten by Objective truth or a God's eye view is, quite simply, false. If it were true, knowledge would be impossible. But it is more than false; it is simply a *non sequitur*. Nietzsche was briefly attracted to the skeptical view because, as argued earlier, he took it to be a consequence of the unknowability of the Thing-in-Itself. But as he later came to see, epistemic truth functions as it always has, and it is unproblematic to make statements about objects and make theories about them in the actual world. The world of stuff and things remains unaffected

²³ Ruth Millikan, "Useless Content." In G. Macdonald and D. Papineau eds. *Teleosemantics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

by this change.²⁴

Another argument against the idea of the “one true theory,” as Hillary Putnam in *Reason, Truth and History* points out, is that there is not only no one true way to describe something, but often a polyphony of true ways to describe something (73). Putnam gives an example involving Maxwell’s theory of electromagnetic fields and the retarded potential theory of magnetic fields which acts at the speed of light, in contrast to Maxwell’s theory, who has the forces acting instantaneously:

The Maxwell Field theory and the retarded potential theory are incompatible from a metaphysical point of view, since either there are or there aren’t causal agencies (the ‘fields’) which mediate the action of separated particles on each other (a realist would say.) But the two theories are mathematically inter-translatable. So if there is a ‘correspondence’ to the noumenal things which makes one of them true, then one can define another correspondence which makes the other theory true. If all it takes to make a theory true is abstract correspondence (never mind which), then incompatible theories can be true. (Putnam 73)

If we really can have true statements about the world that are at the same time metaphysically incompatible, even inconsistent with each other, then it becomes impossible to see how any sort of ‘God’s eye’ truth could make sense. Aliens might describe the phenomena we describe as Einstein’s Relativity, but there is no guarantee, indeed, little reason to think that these Aliens

²⁴ It is not generally realized that this also functions as an attack against absolutist theories of morality. Nietzsche’s later philosophy has an epistemic argument against such accounts of morality, in addition to his more explicit arguments.

would end up with an equation like $E = mc^2$.

No foundational knowledge. The foundationalist view of knowledge, such as was assumed by Descartes, takes truth to be founded on basic beliefs which are self evident or certain. These self evident truths can justify other beliefs and even provide an interest neutral perspective from which to consider questions about what is true. Unsurprisingly, Nietzsche thought foundational knowledge impossible. The first objection is perspectival. The possibility of Foundational knowledge presupposes that real knowledge must take the form of some truth that no rational creature could object to and still be rationally justified. This presupposition is objectionable for reasons already stated. Nietzsche found this objectionable for a second reason, as well. The idea of a 'neutral corner' in foundational knowledge is exactly the sort of view without interest that perspectivism forbids. On perspectivism, truth is contextually useful in some situations but not in others. The ship of knowledge can never be beached and rebuilt from the ground up, for there is no objective land on which to beach her.

On Nietzsche's mature perspectivist account, knowledge is developed as a process. Truth and knowledge are forever conditioned by perspective, and only the perspective can decide what answers are good enough to satisfy it. Truth and knowledge are organic processes that accumulate through our interests and investigations. The tools that come out of this process can be applied to further investigations. Here, we might consider Nietzsche's theory that the Renaissance was caused by the strict discipline and intellectual tools developed in the Middle Ages. Throughout history, earlier discoveries and advances were either used as a basis for, or revealed to be inadequate for, humanity's purposes. Ptolemaic astronomy is useful for navigation if one is in the Mediterranean, but of only limited use if one is navigating the ocean. Aristotle's theory of earth, air, fire, and water was adequate physics until human beings encountered

problems with it in the context of the larger world. Classical mechanics was, for a time, so successful that Lord Kelvin described in 1900 the strange behaviour of light that classical mechanics did not account for as “one of the few 'minor clouds' in the otherwise brilliant sky of modern science.” (Dewitt, 192) The attempts to solve this problem led to Einstein's theory of relativity and quantum mechanics. In this process, the interests of humanity lead to further questions after the original question is answered, for the inadequacies of the previous theory to solve specific problems drive people to find the next one. When a theory works well enough, although enquiry in general may never come to an end, human beings are satisfied with the answers the theory offers. Classical Mechanics are still the bread and butter of engineering simply because Newtonian physics can give the accurate answers needed to build normal sized objects.

The development of truth and science on Nietzsche's conception is a drive to satisfy cognitive needs, where cognitive needs are understood as a desire to know the truth of a given situation. An example of this cognitive need in practice is the canary in the coal mine. Early coal miners faced a vexing problem in the form of odourless carbon monoxide gas. This gas would cause miners to pass out and eventually asphyxiate. Because the build-up of gas was often gradual, miners often did not notice the gas build-up until the danger of unconsciousness and death was very near. The solution was to bring a canary into the mine. Canaries, like humans, would pass out when odourless carbon monoxide built up, but because of the bird's higher metabolism, it would pass out before the miners were affected, thus allowing them to escape before the gas affected them. Thus, the need to know when carbon monoxide was in the air was satisfied. When the method was instituted, the miners only knew that an odourless gas was occasionally released when mining coal; the details of why this happened were beyond them. This method for gas detection was so successful that the canary remained in place even after the invention of more modern detectors, since the detectors gave no obvious sign when broken,

unlike the canaries. A thesis of perspectivism is revealed in this example in that the adequacy of any answer will depend on the questioner's needs and reasons.

Perspectivism holds that some perspectives on a problem are superior to others because they give us more of what we want in an answer. The practice of using canaries in coal mines remained such an effective solution to the problem of gas leaks that the canaries remained in use long after other feasible solutions were available. Also, Perspectivism does not rule out the possibility of a perspective that permanently satisfies someone's interests. Consider that while technically Einstein's physics are more accurate than Newtonian physics, Einsteinian physics are much more complicated than Newton's and only deviate meaningfully from Newton's on the subatomic and cosmic scales. For the practical problems many engineers face, Newton's physics gives the needed accuracy. This example shows us that 'coming to a satisfactory conclusion' is frequently confused with 'coming to the end of inquiry,' the idealized reference pragmatists offer in their account of the stability of truth. Here, perspectivism is again at work; when an agent's cognitive interests are satisfied (as when finding a satisfactory truth to the matter), then the agent's inquiry comes to an end because the questions asked aim at specific answers. If the answers found accomplish all that the questioner desires, then clearly there will be no further searching for an answer. What the idealized conception and the practical one have in common is that the answer found is stable and does not undergo further change.

Nietzsche's perspectivism, with its vision of building the ship of knowledge as it sails, appears to leave us with a problem. We must consider whether his mature view implies truth is merely a social convention, as Nietzsche seemed to believe in his early works, or whether truth is merely what is rationally justifiable. Over the remainder of this chapter we will examine several possible versions of this worry, and I will argue that each is an over-reaction to oversimplified

worries. So the short answer is “No, Nietzsche was not a relativist.” The aim of truth is to describe, within a context, the world in an epistemically right way, and so for any context there will be true and false, good and bad answers.

Let us begin with the statement ‘the earth is flat.’ We could ask if this statement was true when man believed it to be true. As Putnam remarks,

The statement ‘The Earth is flat’ was, very likely, rationally acceptable 3,000 years ago; but it is not rationally acceptable today. Yet it would be wrong to say that ‘the earth is flat’ is *true* 3000 years ago; for it would mean that the earth had changed its shape. (Putnam 55)

In a social perspective, the statement is true, for people did believe this and acted on this belief; however, in the epistemic perspective, it fails. The earth is round, and always has been.²⁵ This

²⁵ You can see perspective at work even in this statement. In this statement, the word ‘always’ is not technically true; once, the earth was a series of swirling, slowly coagulating lumps of rock, with slowly increasing forces of gravity making a single structure, collecting gas and other lighter elements as it went. This statement is also true but irrelevant in this context.

particular epistemic context (making statements about how the earth has always been round) has good reason for rejecting the earlier interpretation. Epistemic truth aims to describe the world as it is, and as such, there are true and false statements in that context. In the same way, there are good and bad answers for how an individual should live, and this context forms the basis for much of Nietzsche's philosophy.

At this point the reader may wonder whether Nietzsche's perspectivism is not, in the end, narrowly and circularly self-refuting, in much the same way radical scepticism was earlier seen to be self-refuting. That is, if everything is perspectival, then perhaps even perspectivism is perspectival. If perspectivism is merely perspectivally true, then it is also perspectively false from another perspective. This thought could imply that there are non-perspectival truths, that there is a foundational aspect that perspectivism tries to conceal.

There are two ways to consider these worries. Firstly, as we have seen, foundationalism is not so much a method for searching for epistemic truth as it is a set of metaphysical assumptions about what truth should look like and how it should function. Perspectivism is different because it doesn't seek to create a theory about what could be true *a priori*; rather, it seeks to delineate what could not possibly be true *a priori*. We can understand the world through perspectivism, but perspectivism is not a metaphysical platform dictating what knowledge must be about.

Secondly, we can consider the purported self refutation of perspectivism. Given the self-refutation of postmodern theories of truth seen in the previous chapter, a canny skeptic could ask if perspectivism itself is self-refuting. The claim that everything is perspectival suggests there is one thing not perspectival, that is, perspectivism. The claim is, in short, that if perspectivism is true, then there is at least the one non-perspectival truth that 'perspectivism is true'; but if there is

a non-perspectival truth, then perspectivism, which says that truth is perspectival, is false. This would be an effective argument were it not for its formulation. For perspectivism does *not* state that everything is perspectival. Instead, it states that all judgements happen, or are made from within a perspective. The latter statement is a truth about truth formation; the former is an attempt to make a metaphysical claim based on perspectivism. Perspectivism, as was said earlier, is a doctrine about the limitations of one's representation of the world; it is not a doctrine about one's representation of the limits of one's world. Perspectivism merely says that for any view one has, there *may* be another view for truth, not that there must be another view for truth. As an account of the nature of theories, perspectivism holds that every theory must always be open to the possibility of revision. But the claim that there is a possibility of an alternative view is not the same as the claim that there actually is an alternate view, and this second claim is needed to generate a destructive regress which one can only escape by moving, in the end, to a non-perspectival view. Consequently, the openness to alternatives required by perspectivism does not mean that the theses of perspectivism inevitably lead to a non-perspectival view²⁶

We can gain a better understanding of Nietzsche's mature perspectivism by examining alternate views of his perspectivism. Two important Nietzsche scholars, Richard Schacht and Alexander Nehamas, have identified Perspectivism as a vital step in understanding Nietzsche. They have distinctly different views of Nietzsche's thought, but both agree that Nietzsche was an empiricist in his approach to truth. Somewhat oddly, however, despite this claim of empiricism, and despite the marked change in Nietzsche's views on truth which I have documented in this thesis, these philosophers also say that Perspectivism falsifies, and thus, truth for Nietzsche is not ordinary, non-metaphysical truth as it has been conventionally understood. I shall argue that the views of both philosophers ultimately fail, though understanding why they fail can further our

²⁶ In other words, it does not mean there is always 'another way' to view things, i.e., a way other than perspectivism.

understanding of the view of perspectivism Nietzsche actually holds.

Richard Schacht sees perspectivism as entailing falsification, and he attempts to avoid the problems in this view that were covered in my first chapter by limiting the falsification to the perspectives of common sense and science. The truths of common sense and science, according to Schacht, are products of our drives and interests, and *thus a distortion* of what is in the world. In addition, Schacht argues that Nietzsche's perspectivism escapes this distortion. Richard Schacht is a Nietzsche scholar who believes Nietzsche's thought is unitary, and this belief allows him to incorporate the earlier, radically sceptical Nietzsche with the later Nietzsche of 'science is a noble thing'. He therefore fails to make the inference that though we can never escape the conditioning of perspectivism, we can take steps to ameliorate the impact it has on our search for truth.

At this point the shrewd reader might counter by arguing that Schacht is making a distinction between appearances and the Things-in-Themselves or some other ground of nonperspectival knowledge, despite Nietzsche's having denied both. Schacht, aware of this possible objection, qualifies his argument in two ways. First, as a counterargument to the view that one perspective is as good as another (a definite problem if all perspectives falsify), Schacht writes that Nietzsche would not say these perspectives are inadequate unless he had achieved a perspective that established this through a better perspective. Clearly, Nietzsche did think there were both truths of a sort and better perspectives; otherwise, much of his philosophical project would have never left the ground. Second, Schacht uses the definition of objectivity Nietzsche gave in *Genealogy of Morals* by defining objectivity as "a variety" of perspectives in the service of knowledge (Nietzsche GM III). By defining objectivity in this way, claims Schacht, Nietzsche makes a distinction between knowledge and perspectives as such. Nietzsche's philosophy is then

not a falsification because it employs many perspectives at once, a kind of meta perspectivism that refuses to get locked into any one perspective. Thus, common sense and science falsify because they are locked into a unitary (or single) view, while Nietzsche (and presumably, anybody using the same meta-perspectival view) will avoid falsification. By using many perspectives, that is, by adopting a meta-perspective, we can overcome the regress of self-falsification of perspectivism.

In spite of its initial attractiveness, there are a number of difficulties with this view. If perspectives falsify as such, then there *must* be a truth beyond our perspective that our senses distort, but that nonetheless serves as the condition on which what is viewed is falsified. But the basis of Schacht's assertion is obscure. In later texts Nietzsche is quite explicit about rejecting such a view. Just as problematically, by adopting multiple perspectives, as Schacht advocates, we are, at the end of the day, merely adopting another perspective. A perspective, even a meta-perspective with many different views, is still a perspective, and if perspectives are falsifying as such, it is still presumably falsifying. On the other hand, if we resist the suggestion that a meta-perspective is another perspective, then, perhaps Schacht thinks it would be like having a set of choices from which people can choose one perspective, from a set of mutually exclusive perspectives to apply in a given situation. Yet any such choice would enter into falsification again. Choosing one of a number of falsifying views that can be adopted is hardly a way to avoid falsification.

Furthermore, Schacht has not evaded the charge of presupposing the Thing-in-Itself. At one point Schacht writes of things being "Elevated from their place within some domain of discourse and human experience and elevated for inclusion in an account of the way the world is" (Schacht 112). He is not far from the thing-in-itself when he speaks of "the issue of our long

term collective interaction with **an underlying reality**, with which they are far from agreeing” (Schacht 112). Clark writes, “I believe this answer presupposes the very model of knowledge Nietzsche uses perspectivism to combat” (Clark 154). Because Schacht is not a relativist yet cannot base the value of truth in the normal everyday sense, his view defaults to metaphysical realism when discussing truth.

Alexander Nehamas's account of Nietzsche's perspectivism is more complex. Nehamas has several different formulations of how 'perspectivism falsifies' which he treats as equivalent, but these various formulations have different implications. Nehamas's view is also interestingly different from Schacht's view; indeed, he explicitly denies Schacht's premise that common sense and science falsify. But Nehamas still tries to defend the falsification thesis as an implication of perspectivism. In his book *Nietzsche Life as Literature*, Nehamas argues in the chapter called “Untruth as a Condition of Life” that while perspectivism does not deny scientific facts or truths, it falsifies such truths due to the very conditions of perspectivism, thus making untruth a condition of life (42). The reason that Nehamas gives for this is that a perspective always falsifies, but the implication of this statement changes depending on how 'falsifies' cashes out. Nehamas has three different formulations, and he evidently sees all these formulations as interchangeable.

Nehamas uses the first sense of 'falsifies' when he notes that we act only on part of relevant data, never on “all the information” or a complete set of data (Nehamas, 49).²⁷ This is

²⁷ For example, I have only met so many people, yet I make judgements about all of them on the basis of this experience. Thus my ideas must be open to revision, or even falsification based on future experiences, but as noted above, that does not make my initial beliefs false, just revisable.

true but does not necessarily entail falsification. For me to write on Alexander Nehamas's theory of perspectivism, it is by no means necessary to read everything he has ever written. Indeed, a thesis is based on the idea of selecting what is relevant and leaving the rest behind; taking into account all Nietzsche scholarship would be impossible. I can write a thesis on Nietzsche's theory of truth that is nonetheless correct; however, the facts in this context dictate that certain things be studied and certain things ignored. A decision or statement in the context of perspectivism would only be false if it ignored something relevant to the question at hand; if it gets all details in its interest correct, then it is true.

Nehamas uses the second type of falsification when he argues that there can be no final theory of anything possible, because a different perspective could propose another theory (Nehamas 51). This objection does not entail falsification either, unless the metaphysical realist view is taken,²⁸ and we have just seen that the openness to indefinite change does not entail a regress forcing one into realism. Given that perspectivism is explicitly anti-foundational, this seems to be an implication of perspectivism, but a non-objectionable one from an epistemic perspective. As we saw earlier in this chapter, Hillary Putnam gave an illustration of mutually exclusive physical theories that are nonetheless mathematically relatable as a demonstration that it does not follow from there being many ways to describe something that those descriptions are false. And once again, it is worth repeating that a theory might remain in service for a long time, even indefinitely, if it satisfied the interests of those involved.

Both types of simplification are variations on the claim that 'another view could be true'. But, of course, though this is true, it does not imply that everything we know is

²⁸ The Metaphysical realist view would insist that there is one final view to truth, and thus final theories are possible, even expected if one is on the path to truth.

falsified. However, Nehamas gives a third version of perspectivism which he evidently conflates with the first two views: that there are not only alternative theories (to the beliefs we have) that could be true; the opposite of what we believe not only could be true, but *is* true. Nehamas gives a quotation from Nietzsche to support this: “the world is only thought, or will, or war, or love, or hate...separately, all this is false: added up it is true” (Nehamas 50). This version is different from the previous statements and does imply falsification. It is one thing and quite unproblematic to assume another view aside from yours exists or that a view of yours could be falsified in the future. It is an entirely different thing, and obviously false, to say that X is concurrently true and false. Assuming a truth theory that allows such a contradiction eliminates all possibility of making intelligible statements about X. It is this view that Nehamas thinks proves untruth as a condition of life.²⁹

This view seems to be what Nehamas means when he speaks of untruth as a condition of life, but this view goes much further than defending the world of conventional truth; it leads Nehamas (and his theory about Nietzsche) into radical skepticism. If it is both true and false that Nietzsche has a coherent theory of truth, then there is by definition no truth about Nietzsche’s truth theory. The difference between this and the earlier statements is the difference between saying ‘there may be’ and ‘there is’. These two statements have very different implications in truth, since one is entirely compatible with the non-skeptical perspectivism of the later Nietzsche, whereas the other entails radical skepticism. With this version of falsification in operation, Nehamas cannot have common sense, scientific truth, or even truth about Nietzsche’s philosophy outside of a relativist context. Thus, while Nehamas can make many useful

²⁹ Nehamas thinks that this view underlies Nietzsche's doctrine of “what is good for one is bad and dangerous for another.” Instead of people having different powers, limits and capacities, Nehamas believes that one view is true in one perspective and false in another. These issues are dealt with in more depth in chapter 3.

observations about perspectivism, his third thesis of falsification does not stand up.

Neither attempt at understanding Nietzsche works because, in both cases, the philosopher in question thinks that the falsification thesis is somehow compatible with truth and science as we know it. As we have seen in this chapter and the last, any such view is doomed to failure. It is impossible to have a conception of truth while assuming our concepts or our reality are fundamentally falsified. This failure leaves untouched Nietzsche's actual (correct) view of perspectivism, the version of perspectivism that embraces commonsense and scientific truth, but denies metaphysical truth.

With Nietzsche's mature view of perspectivism finally understood, we have achieved a powerful new tool for understanding Nietzsche and his rather cryptic writings. Perspectivism allows us to understand several basic assumptions of the later Nietzsche and explore why these assumptions were made. If Nietzsche were only concerned with epistemology, then perhaps the story could end there. However, Nietzsche dedicated his understanding of epistemology to the service of understanding values and the much more important issue of how new values can be created. In the next chapter, I will examine some of Nietzsche's larger philosophy through the lens of perspectivism to see if some other obscurities in his philosophy can be understood.

Chapter 3

Nietzsche on Perspectivism and Value

Much of Nietzsche's philosophy is concerned with value: what value is, where value comes from and where value is going. This concern is motivated by Nietzsche's conviction that Western Civilization is in the middle of a crisis of value; the old values on which the western world had been built had been undermined but no new values had been created to replace them. The symptom as well as the end result of this crisis is nihilism, and much of Nietzsche's philosophy can be seen as a counter attack against the threat of nihilism. This is a hugely complicated issue, one that interlaces with practically all of Nietzsche's philosophy, and as such is beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead, this chapter will focus on a specific issue in Nietzsche's fight against nihilism, the issue of Nietzsche's perspectivism with regard to value. Now that we have examined Nietzsche's later theory of perspectivism with regard to truth, we can apply it to those problems of value Nietzsche thought were important. Furthermore, we can show how Nietzsche's perspectivism with regard to values don't fall prey to the skepticism and nihilism that he saw spreading in western culture.

According to Nietzsche, nihilism is caused by the fading of the values in our society that used to be paramount, that is, the loss of belief in the existence of absolute values. Nietzsche understood absolute values as the claims to truth of religion, objective metaphysical truth, and what we will call ascetic values. Ascetic values are, broadly, values that take their authority from another world or reality. Nietzsche's most famous statement 'God is dead' did not only proclaim the absence of God in the world; it also proclaimed the death of ascetic values. Ascetic values are explicitly non-perspectival in that they are grounded in the existence and superiority of a realm

independent of human perspective, something like the Thing-in-Itself or, at least, an objective reality serving as a foundation for truth. The connection between these religious values and non-perspectival truth is appeal to other worlds, be it the relatively straightforward other world of heaven or a perspective humans cannot achieve, such as “objectivity” in the metaphysical sense. Nietzsche took Plato's world of the forms to be the paradigmatic example of this but claimed that philosophers and other thinkers throughout history have been seduced by the appeal of ascetic forms of thinking. The statement ‘God is dead’ proclaims an end to not just religious explanation but to all *objective* value.³⁰

Without these ascetic values, Nietzsche feared, society would grow increasingly aimless and self destructive³¹, eventually culminating in nihilism for higher people³². Nietzsche’s early skepticism with regard to truth can be seen as Nietzsche following the metaphysics of truth to its logical conclusion.³³ We have seen in the discussion of the last chapter how Nietzsche’s mature perspectivism refutes Nietzsche's earlier skepticism, allowing ordinary kinds of truth and value. But while Nietzsche's later philosophy rules out the kind of skepticism and relativism underlying

30 I will italicize “objective” in the phrase “*objective* value” (“*objective* morality”, and so on) as a short hand for value metaphysically grounded in an otherworldly absolute, the sort of objectivity Nietzsche rejected. This will indicate its difference from ordinary, non-metaphysical, common-sense objectivity that simply contrasts with the subjective.

31 Ascetic values provide positive visions of the world to work toward, as well as providing interpretations for suffering. Without these two interpretations, Nietzsche thought the western world would find existence not only pointless, but unbearable, and hence turn to nihilism.

32 I beg the reader's forbearance, as here I use this term without defining it. I will be discussing higher people later in the chapter.

33 Notice how this also renders intelligible Nietzsche's criticisms of truth in *Birth of Tragedy* where he noted how science was undermining the beliefs that made life worth living.

nihilism, the pragmatism that produces this result shuts the door once and for all on the old ascetic values. While the problem of truth has been sorted, the problem of values is still in play. The problem of values, then, is much like the problem of truth discussed in the previous two chapters. We can have truth understood in perspectivism, though it specifically forbids *objective* truth. The same is true of value.³⁴

With that project in mind, we first must fully explain why these *objective* values fail, particularly *objective* moral truth. *Objective* moral truth fails for the same reasons objective truth fails: it assumes a claim to knowledge that is impossible, or at the very least, impossible for humans to know. Thus, perspectivism, examined in the last chapter, forbids *objective* moral truth, just as it forbids *objective* truth. It is important to see that Nietzsche is not criticizing morality by claiming that people never act ‘morally’, that is, in accordance with one moral system or another; rather, he claims *objective* moral actions could never have a rational foundation. Because of this, Nietzsche often uses the word ‘morality’ in a rather extended sense. There are other, broader systems Nietzsche would classify as ‘moralistic’ because perspectivism would ultimately take issue with them. Logical positivism is a good example since it proposes that one can discover the ‘final theory’ of science, of which all other science is just a subset. As noted in the last chapter, perspectivism forbids this because such knowledge would be foundational in the metaphysically pernicious sense Nietzsche has identified as problematic.

³⁴ Nietzsche's pragmatism here parts company with the developments in classical American Pragmatism, which was pervaded by a broad social optimism grounded in an alignment with the productive forces of American science and industrialism. This difference may have something to do with the very different role of religion in America in the 19th century. Because many of the Europeans who came the new world had fled because of the persecution of their own forms of Protestantism by established state religions, religion was at once more immediately personal and at the same time barred from receiving the authority of the state.

It is important for us to understand why these moral and metaphysical ideas fail, since if Nietzsche wants to create a viable alternative to such schemes, Nietzsche's values must avoid the problems of which he is critical. Nietzsche is proposing a value scheme incompatible with both absolutism and nihilism. Nihilism says that the only rational position upon discovering the failure of absolute truth is to believe in nothing. Although Nietzsche spent much of his career arguing against that idea and advocating what he thought were better types of values, the better values he championed must be understood in sharp contrast to the objective absolutist values both he and the nihilist rejected.

This point is simple but potentially confusing to the uncritical reader of Nietzsche's works. Nietzsche does not seek to deny all forms of value and then declare what is real value. That is, he does not want to criticize all morality and then advocate his own particular brand of morality. Nietzsche does not want to make his own morality by which everyone must abide nor does he deny the possibility of value. The problem here is that the term 'morality' (and, by extension, 'value') is often applied differently by different people.

Nietzsche wanted to deny what we have called *objective* morality, that is, any sort of morality claimed to be metaphysically objective or absolute. He also wanted to deny virtues and values—what we will refer to as *objective* virtue—that were formulated the same way as *objective* morality.³⁵ However, at no point does Nietzsche want to deny the possibility of good virtues for a people or an individual, or the utility of moral concepts.

³⁵ An example of this move is discussed in *Twilight* as the second great error: "The most general formula on which every religion and morality is founded is: 'Do this and that, refrain from this and that --- and you will be happy! Otherwise...'" [pg #]

This last point is often lost on those moral philosophers who assume that *objective* morality is true or that virtue must be *objective* virtue in order to be real. These people typically think morality must be *objective* morality if we are to avoid nihilism, and since nihilism is obviously false, *objective* morality must exist. I mention this because these philosophers muddy the water considerably when talking about morality; specifically, they inevitably refer to Nietzsche as a 'moral nihilist' because he denies the existence of *objective* morality or say that Nietzsche denies all virtue because he denies *objective* virtue. They forget that Nietzsche thought virtue existed, just not *objective* virtue, and there is a difference between denying *objective* virtue and denying virtue altogether. This brief discussion is meant to clarify what I write later in this chapter. For example say, by way of criticism, that something is an *objective* moral form of reasoning, I am referring to the particular sense of "moral" under examination, rather than denying the possibility of unselfish action. Nietzsche never denies the possibility of virtue or the utility of morality; rather, he wants to note the rational impossibility of *objective* morality and the empirical impossibility of *objective* virtue.

That said, we can now examine why *objective* morality and *objective* virtue fail. Consider *objective* morality. The argument against *objective* morality is a simple consequence of the truth of perspectivism. Objective morality is ruled out by perspectivism because this philosophy assumes objective truth in the form of *objective* moral facts. These facts are much like the objective truth examined in the last chapter. They are truths, but somehow 'disinterested' or 'unconditioned' truths. Some philosophers have recently taken a different tack than mere appeal to the self-evidence of the tradition to overcome the challenge of perspectivism. The search has now taken on a scientific veneer. Advocates of the moral scientific approach portray the search for *objective* moral facts as being much like any other scientific inquiry. Let us hypothetically

grant that these *objective* moral facts exist. These facts, then, are not like the other facts about us; they are imposing and unignorable in human conduct and are true for all people, regardless of perspective. If they are imposing and unignorable in human conduct in the ways a moralist would insist upon, then, for example, a marketing firm could not use those principles to sell things because they are not like other psychological principles. An agent with a different perspective could not view these moral facts as something to overcome. If *objective* moral facts are to do the work moralists need them to do, then the object of this so-called scientific enquiry turns from finding out ordinary facts, such as ‘humans have an appendix’ which is useful or not depending on context, to these very strange one-dimensional facts that only have one possible interpretation. And as we have seen, facts which have only one possible interpretation are ruled out by perspectivism because facts are used in a perspective, and the meaning of those facts is determined at least in part by the perspective in question.

Objective Virtue is a more thorny moral issue. On the one hand, Nietzsche clearly and frequently advocates certain values; he obviously thought that there were many good virtues. On the other, the concept of virtue is frequently attacked by him for being mere morals and metaphysics. This seeming contradiction can be puzzling to the casual Nietzsche reader. The key to solving this problem is to understand that *objective* virtues are commonly preached as not in a perspective; rather, they are either (1) considered useful to all persons regardless of their perspective (a claim criticized in the section above) or (2) seen as always being effective in the same way.³⁶ Both uses of the concept of values are objectionable to Nietzsche, though Nietzsche is not opposed to the concept of values altogether for he has many positive values to advocate.

³⁶ For example, consider the dubious claim that ‘the people with the positive attitude always get the best jobs’ or ‘if you work hard, you will be successful.’ By effective, I mean that performing the behaviour faithfully makes the outcome a certainty, and not just more likely.

In case (1), virtue assumes the objective view already criticized. By way of defence, an advocate of this view might say that these values are Omniperspectival rather than *objective*. That is, they encompass all perspectives, much like Schacht's view criticized in the last chapter. Omniperspectivism functions in the same way as objective truth; it presents facts as disinterested, irrefutable, or binding regardless of perspective. Under perspectivism, however, facts or values are made useful in the context of one perspective, among perspectives different from one another. The omniperspectivalists argue that underneath the subjective perspective there is a universal one, but universal, in this case, means once again objective, without interest, since such a view is necessarily divorced from the more recognizable perspectivism. Omniperspectivism assumes that we are fundamentally all the same, and this sameness grounds a master perspective which supports whatever values the omniperspectivist wishes to advocate. In the end, though, it is a misuse of the concept of perspectivism to argue for the objective.

Case (2) concerns the other form of objectionable virtue, the claim that some acts or virtues are always causal (or effective) in the same way. In essence, Nietzsche thought there were no guarantees as far as actions went, simply because the success of X action resulting in Y ignored the world's chaotic nature.³⁷ One can choose one's actions with a great deal of control, but one cannot choose the results of those actions. The view that action X will always result in Y is a moralistic one, since it turns the human will³⁸ into a magically causal force that somehow trumps all other causal forces. For example, if we use the virtue of positive thinking as an

³⁷ This is meant as a criticism of models of people's actions in the world, not a criticism of causality itself.

³⁸ Another idea Nietzsche found objectionable; we will keep it here just for clarity. Nietzsche was completely opposed to the idea of the human will as a *casa sui*, an uncaused cause. BGE 21 makes it clear that Nietzsche had no use for the free will as any sort of metaphysical concept.

example of something that guarantees success (let's say, get a job), then somehow the act of thinking positively would have to have a greater causal force than, say, living in the Great Depression. The success of human actions is never certain; uncertainty and risk can never be removed as factors because there are forces in the world that are not under our control.³⁹ The human will is one force among many and certainly not the strongest force in the universe. However, virtue theory in a moralistic formulation must offer this sort of certainty, since this certainty is the initial selling point of the theory. What makes *objective* morality and virtue attractive to the decadent is the guarantees offered and an escape from this uncertain world of ours.

Another objectionable formulation of an *objective* virtue, according to Nietzsche, would be 'it would be best'⁴⁰ if everyone were to do X' (*i.e.*, act in the same way). By now we have dealt with this argument as a form of underhanded objectivism, but there is an additional point to be made, one that meshes with the point on virtue. This third moralistic idea assumes that everyone is the same, having not only the same interests but also the same capabilities. Nietzsche strongly

³⁹ Most moralists would not argue with this; but a certain formulation of morality implicitly if not explicitly assumes this type of control; any theory that cites bootstraps is guilty of this. For example, libertarian ideas about total individual responsibility results in the claim that if we give people no support whatsoever, they will shape up and become completely responsible for themselves. This is not qualified by 'assuming certain socioeconomic conditions exist.' The assumption on the part of the libertarian is explicitly rooted in humanity having free will in the *casa sui* sense that Nietzsche found so objectionable, with the additional assumption that the human will can always trump fortune and circumstance: "Here I simply supply the psychology of all 'making responsible'" (TI The four great errors, 7).

⁴⁰ Notice how 'best' is another judgement that only works in a perspective; the values in "best" in this case are often just assumed to be the good, be it independence, the true spirit of Marxism, or wealth.

disagrees with this idea⁴¹ because he sees humanity as having different capabilities as well as different interests. This is not only a matter of perspectivism, but also a fact about humanity in general. This idea is important and will be explored later.

In Nietzsche's project, one set of values will not be binding on everyone because perspectivism recognizes that what is a useful value to one is useless, even dangerous, to others. Although this is partly a consequence of Nietzsche's arguments against perspectivism, it is also clear from Nietzsche's writings that he takes the variability of human beings to be empirically determinable. Consider that all *objective* moral systems, from an openly moral system like Christianity to a pseudo-moral system like Libertarianism, must assume a universal set of values on which to judge people either by saying 'this is right' or 'this is best regardless'. Without such a set of values, the act of praising and condemning cannot be applied to everyone, and inconsistency would take away most of the value of the system to its practitioners.⁴² Perspectivism tells us that what is useful in a perspective depends on the values and the holder of the perspective, ruling out any unitary perspective such as this. Nietzsche wants to make the point that values will be useful in a perspective, and *not objectively* universalizable⁴³ to all people.

41 For example, Nietzsche's criticism of democracy in BGE 201 has the values of the herd smothering any type of person who does not conform with the values of the herd. This is but one example of one "type" being seen as the only rational ideal doing damage to other people who do not fit the ideal.

42 "Christianity is the metaphysics of the hangman" (TI The four great errors, 7).

43 Of course there is an ordinary hypothetical sense of 'universality' which remains and is simply a consequence of the identity of indiscernables. Anything that is good (required, right) for you must equally be good (required, right) for anyone else who is relevantly similar. This is the sense of universality which rules out the (immoral) view that you are privileged or special because you are *you* rather than because you have some features in virtue of which it is good (required, right) for you .

Another argument which Nietzsche gives as to why there is no one right way for everyone to behave is that any theory that does assume *objectively* universalizable behaviour must assume a very strange (indeed, impossible) sort of person. The theory must assume we are identical in our background, situation and sometimes even our physiologies. By concealing or overlooking the differences in people, the theory gives advice that may well be disastrous rather than good for people. Nietzsche gives as an example Cornarism in *Twilight of the Idols*. Cornaro wrote a diet book, his slender diet, giving the recipe for his long and happy life, namely, eating very little. Nietzsche argues that Cornaro has actually confused his cause and effect. Cornaro lived a long life due to his extraordinary slow metabolism which, in turn, meant that he had to eat much less than most: “He was not free to eat little or too much; his frugality was not a matter of “free will”: he became sick when he ate more” (TI, The four great errors, 1). Thus, those with high metabolisms trying the same diet would cause themselves great harm; only people like Cornaro in the relevant ways can act like him and get a benefit. We can understand this potential damage as a failure to understand perspectivism. Judgements about what is good and bad must be made in a context, and when the advice concerns the actions of people, it must consider what kind of capacities they have and what they are capable of.⁴⁴

44 One interesting comparison we could make here is to Aristotle’s Golden Mean. On Aristotle’s account, what is right for some people (moderate eating) is too little for some (wrestlers.) This, I think, would appeal to Nietzsche since it bases what is good directly on the individual. On the other hand, the Golden Mean is about balancing passions, which Nietzsche saw as a mark of decadence. Nietzsche thought drives had to be harnessed and put into an order of rank, not perpetually at equilibrium. By harnessing the drives and sublimating weaker drives into stronger ones, there could be growth and strength. In contrast, peace between the drives, with self-preservation as the highest value, lead inevitably to decline and decadence. So the Golden Mean was, for Nietzsche, closer to the truth than many other theories of virtue, but fell short of the mark.

Human capacities (intellectual, physical, and so on) differ much like perspectives differ. What is good and useful for one person is bad or useless for another, depending on these capacities. When giving advice to someone and adopting values, one must consider the person as well as what interests him or her. The differences in the capabilities different people have are caused by contingent factors like experience and genetics. Nietzsche acts as a good example of this in action since, in *Ecce Homo*, he attributes his philosophical breakthroughs to the help given him by his illness: “It should be noted: it was during the years of my lowest vitality that I ceased to be a pessimist; the instinct of self-restoration forbade me a philosophy of poverty and discouragement” (EH, 2).

Personal identity is made up of a set of definite traits which makes one good for one role but unsuitable for another. The lack of certain abilities leads to the development of certain others which may, in the long run, be more useful than those lacking. Nietzsche, for example, would make a poor soldier, because his physical weakness would leave him at a severe disadvantage in a melee, but thanks to his illness, he had time to read, making him very good at textual interpretation. Here, ‘what is good’ happens in a perspective, and it is only the situations individuals find themselves in that determine if they are good warriors as opposed to good thinkers. The idea of what is good for one is bad for another may seem strange to the reader, since Nietzsche is always advocating a certain set of values. And the values he advocates are not always obvious, for example the value of risking oneself for goals,⁴⁵ or how conflict can be a way of strengthening oneself,⁴⁶ or advocating that if one is to learn to love life, one must recognize that pain and uncertainty are facts one cannot change. So the reader can reasonably ask

45 “What makes one heroic? -- Going out to meet at the same time one's highest suffering and one's highest hope” (GS 268).

46 “From life's school of war: what does not kill me makes me stronger” (TI, maxims, 8).

how this view escapes contradiction if what is good for one is bad for another.⁴⁷

This is not a contradiction of Nietzsche's view. One must recognize that Nietzsche's values are intended not for the whole world, but for Nietzsche's audience of "higher people". In Nietzsche's perspective, there are fundamentally two types of people in the world—higher and lower people.⁴⁸ This distinction is paramount to understanding Nietzsche's positive philosophy since it explains both how Nietzsche's positive values are not moralistic and for whom these values were intended. Nietzsche wrote exclusively for higher people and targeted his philosophy only to them.

The distinction between a higher person and lower people is a kind of idealization, like Aristotle's person of practical wisdom. What it comes down to is simply the ability to choose a hard truth over an easy illusion. Nietzsche thought that in practice, most people lived their lives using illusion rather than truth, and most were incapable of being honest with themselves. The story and reasoning behind this belief will occupy the rest of the chapter. The main point is that lower people, not placing a particularly high value on truth, can get their values from anywhere, including the old forms of value that are passing away, but higher people must base their values on truth. These new values will be perspectival, and must not be *objective* morality or virtue to be successful. This sort of 'A, not A' division is important to Nietzsche because his entire philosophical project is directed toward these higher people, and Nietzsche's main interest is in

⁴⁷ This is as good a place as any to remind the reader that though Nietzsche criticized objective moral values extensively and criticized many other types of values as well, Nietzsche did not think all values were a waste of time. Such a conclusion would be nihilistic, and one that Nietzsche explicitly denies with his positive philosophy.

⁴⁸ In an ambiguity typical of Nietzsche's style, he uses "higher" and "lower" and "stronger and weaker" interchangeably.

the creation and strengthening of this higher type.⁴⁹

Nietzsche thought most people better off in practice with their illusions because the truth of matters was often more than they could bear. Nietzsche, in advocating his values, is not interested in giving advice to everyone; his concern is only to give advice to people who are capable of surviving and even flourishing in the light of the hard reality of truth. He believed that without such people, society is doomed to slip further into decadence; consequently, he is advocating and is concerned about the creation of “higher” people. Higher people are defined by Nietzsche as “strong” individuals but, here, ‘strength’ has the very specific meaning of having the ability to choose a hard truth over an easy illusion. This truth is not selected because truth is good “in itself.”⁵⁰ Rather, it serves in the pursuit of goals and makes the individual more effective in the world. This is also the reason why higher people (according to Nietzsche's view) will reject all moral and religious interpretations. Religious interpretations offer merely feelings of effectiveness, and not real world effectiveness. The second and third point I wish to make about Nietzsche's values is that they are intended for the few, not the many, and the cornerstone for these values is Nietzsche's dedication to truth.

Perhaps one of the odder truths about Nietzsche's philosophy is that despite scathing (in the *Antichrist*, bordering on shrill) criticism of Christianity, he thought that most people were better off with their illusions, Christian or otherwise. Despite his criticisms, Nietzsche never denied the usefulness of these illusions for seducing people back to life and allowing them to continue living. Like many subjects close to Nietzsche's heart, he is both respectful and scornful

49 BGE 203.

50 GM III offers an extended critique of the idea that the truth is an objective good. Ultimately, such a belief is seen as the latest expression of the ascetic ideal which looks for “unlimited” goods.

of religion. Consider, as an example, a pregnant teenager with no one to turn to but a youth minister who offers her a place in the local church. Regardless of the truth of the existence of God, she may be better off joining the church, both for the real community within it (as opposed to the atomized society from which she comes) and for the positive effect of believing that there is a big irresistible force of a big guy in the sky who is, furthermore, in her corner. This can be a powerful and empowering belief, especially for one whom society has abandoned. Nietzsche criticized constantly the idea that truth was somehow the best thing (see, for example, the entire third essay of GM). Truth in the pregnant teenager's case would at best achieve nothing, at worst drive her straight into the abyss.

The philosophical reader might ask why Nietzsche didn't advocate that everyone *should* think like higher people. There are two reasons for this. First, saying that people should be something other than they are is the sign of resentment, something Nietzsche wanted to utterly purge from his new way of thinking. The facts of higher and lower people are true, and nothing he could do could change this particular aspect of the world, as inconvenient as it is for one theory or another. The second reason is more complicated and has to do with the contradiction of weak wills. Much like more mundane capacities that are not up to us, such as the ability to be six feet tall or have a good education, the strength to pick truth under discussion here is an ability not given to everyone. Further, despite strength being genetically undetermined, Nietzsche realized the terrible paradox of strength, that beneath a certain level of strength, people were incapable of choosing strength. Weak persons desire to be strong but, due to their weakness, are unable to steel themselves and pick truth over a pleasant illusion. They cannot build this capacity since to choose strength *requires* it. So they are left as they are—weak: “First principle – one must need to be strong, otherwise one will never become strong” (TI, *What Germans Lack*, 38). Contingent circumstances (*i.e.*, factors beyond their control) could conceivably bring it about

that they come to have the discipline and strength of will to choose truth over illusion, but unless that determination and discipline is initially there, the individual cannot will it into existence. Nietzsche advocated strong individuals because his analysis of recent history led him to the view that modern industrial-democratic society encouraged the formation of weak rather than strong individuals, and indeed, openly preferred them. This institutional weakness was in danger of infecting higher people who had strong character values.⁵¹

Much of Nietzsche's criticism of democracy, of rights, and of the values of the herd can be seen through this perspective. The values of the herd (that is to say, the values of Christian-democratic society) were hostile to strongly expressed individuals. Indeed, a genealogy of the herd's values, according to Nietzsche, show that they advocate values which are more useful to the herd than to the individual.⁵²

We need to address the question of why Nietzsche emphasises effectiveness. Why does Nietzsche think effectiveness is or should be the cornerstone of higher people's interests? The answer involves Nietzsche's perspectivism. Before laying out the answer, I must briefly explain two ideas, Nietzsche's concept of the *Will to Power* and *order of rank*, underpinning his perspectivism.

51 See GM, Section 12, for more discussion. This hostility against strongly expressed types was one reason behind Nietzsche's contempt for democracy. Nietzsche felt this hostility was motivated by the same hostility to stronger characters that motivated Christianity. See also BGE 201.

52 This also offers insight into the intended audience for Nietzsche's philosophical project. If the great mass of people continue to believe whatever is pleasant to them regardless of reason eroding those values, then the rational death of those values should not be a concern. To the herd, it isn't. However, to the higher man, it is, as his very existence is based upon valuing truth over pleasantness.

The Will to Power is too large a subject to deal with in full, in part because there is considerable disagreement among Nietzsche scholars on this topic. Fortunately for our purposes, to bring the Will to Power to bear on Nietzsche's philosophy as I've described it in this chapter, we must dispense with most interpretations, particularly cosmological interpretations of the Will to Power. The Cosmological Will to Power (for the reader's reference) could be summarized as the idea that that the entire world, even inanimate objects, can be reduced to a striving force or an attempt by one force to dominate another. Cosmological interpretations of the Will to Power are often explicitly metaphysical or objectively true in nature since they are either *a priori* theorizing or the "final truth" underlying reality. If Nietzsche holds either view, then it is a major inconstancy, if the reader agrees with my interpretation. Nietzsche only once discusses the Will to Power in the published works, in *Beyond Good and Evil* 36. Maudemarie Clarke argues that this appearance of the cosmological will to power is not to argue or advocate it; rather, Nietzsche includes it as a cautionary example of what he would argue if he made the same mistakes that many other philosophers make (Clarke 218). In keeping with our interpretative rule of viewing the published works as more important than the *Nachlass*, it seems the cosmological will to power can be safely ignored.

Minus cosmological formulations, the Will to Power can be seen as a psychological theory, one about what underlies our actions. Kaufmann's interpretation of the will to power is closer to what we are looking for, since Kaufmann is explicitly psychological and rejects the cosmological theory of the will to power as something that "need not be taken seriously, even in an effort to understand Nietzsche"(Kaufmann 510). Kaufmann interprets the Will to Power as the ultimate motivation behind all human action. In contrast to Darwinists of Nietzsche's time who thought that life was essentially survival, Kaufmann argues that the desire for power, desire for growth or desire for increase in strength makes more sense as the drive behind life:

“Whatever is wanted is wanted for the sake of power” (Kaufmann 511). All our individual desires and actions underlie our desire for power. This interpretation has definite advantages. It turns the Will to Power into a psychological (and hence empirical) principle and it fits with most of Nietzsche's published discussions of the Will to Power. For instance, Nietzsche frequently discusses the slave revolt in morals as being driven by the Will to Power, much as those people's initial oppression was driven by the Will to Power.

The Will to Power on Kaufmann's account, then, is a meta-motive, one that underlies such diverse activity as Viking raids, religious activity, and thesis writing. While Kaufmann can (and does) explain much in Nietzsche's philosophy with his formulation of the Will to Power, his account has two serious problems. First, this interpretation makes the Will to Power a foundational truth, as least as far as psychology is concerned. It is a final view that explains all of human behaviour and thus is anathema to the perspectivist reading of Nietzsche I've been expounding. Second, if the Will to Power is a motive that ultimately underpins all human action, it explains nothing. For a motive or cause to make sense as an explanation, it must be necessarily contrasted with other causes. If what motivates me to complete this thesis is a sense of wanting to redeem all the time spent working on it, then that is a very different motive from wanting to complete it because I have high hopes of going on to a doctoral program. Insight into my motivation is lost if the only permissible motive is a pursuit of power. Then my action of completing a thesis is a pursuit of power, much in the same way as readers are reading it for power. If all our motives are the same, then we have reduced motives to an 'empty phrase' to use Clarke's term, even if we have not reduced motive to teleology.

Though it is ultimately an unworkable interpretation, Kaufmann is on the right track. Nietzsche was one of the first thinkers to think of human psychology as a series of natural drives,

and the Will to Power, based on his comments, seems to be a drive which he attributes to many different types of activity, from the Greeks to, oddly, the ascetic priest (BG 51). The interpretation of the Will to Power I think is correct is Maudemarie Clark's view that the Will to Power is a second order desire, one that desires effectiveness.⁵³ This is defined by Clark as the improvement of "one's ability to satisfy one's first order will" (Clark 229). First order wills are those desires such as the ability to feel secure in a community or the desire to finish a thesis. This interpretation keeps Kaufmann's commitment to explaining the Will to Power in empirical and psychological terms, but makes the Will to Power consistent with Nietzsche's larger pragmatism. This interpretation of the Will to Power does not run afoul of the objections we have made against Kaufmann's formulation. Firstly, the Will to Power, on Clark's account, becomes a drive among others; consequently, motives like greed or pity do not become various manifestations of a single drive. Clark's formulation also avoids implicit foundationalism, since it is to be thought of as just another psychological drive, one that is highly useful in understanding people, but in the end, is just another psychological drive. What desires we seek to satisfy as opposed to others is decided in the context of the higher person's goals. This account can also connect the Will to Power to Nietzsche's account of higher people.

Just as we seek to satisfy our first order desires (success, financial security, even food and sex), we strive for feelings of effectiveness in our world. However, it is feelings of effectiveness that the Will to Power is satisfied by, not necessarily effectiveness in the real world. This is why much of human action could be explained through that perspective of the Will to Power. For example, a primitive tribe making a sacrifice to the rain god generates feelings of control and effectiveness on events beyond the people's control. This is also how Nietzsche deconstructs

⁵³ This section, due to space constraints, is somewhat brief; for a more detailed explanation, please see Clark's book, starting on p 211.

much of what lies underneath Christianity. Christianity gives feelings of control and effectiveness over life itself, even when that effectiveness is based on devaluing life. As we will see, this also sheds light on a further confusion in Nietzsche. It will clarify why religions were seen as motivated by Will to Power when Nietzsche often claimed his own philosophy was also motivated by Will to Power.

As an example, consider someone concerned about global warming who buys a hybrid car. Hybrid cars get slightly better mileage than comparable subcompacts and emit slightly less, but only slightly less than entirely mundane subcompacts and compacts that have been on sale for years. Yet the buyer (we'll call her Beth) gets a *feeling* of making an important contribution because cars are often demonized as the main source of pollution, despite the fact that all transportation emissions (including Transport trucks, planes, and ships) account for only 14% of total greenhouse gas emissions,⁵⁴ and restrictions on automotive emissions have become much stricter since 1966.⁵⁵ A person who wanted to move this concern beyond feelings might choose to move from the suburbs (Beth still lives there and has to drive 40 minutes to work each day) or create political initiatives that would have an effect much greater than driving a hybrid. They might get the city they live in to adopt an ordinance for evaporation-proof gas cans, adopt some sort of emissions regulations for small engines, or even get the city to enforce emissions laws on commercial vehicles. This feeling of effectiveness for lower people is always preferable to effective action in the real world because it satisfies the need lower people have for feelings of effectiveness. Thus, Beth can feel she is effectively lessening global warming (and condemn everyone who does not have a hybrid) while actually doing very little. The Hybrid car is

54 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Greenhouse_Gas_by_Sector.png

55 The LEV (Low Emitting vehicle) standard emits 93% less than a pre-regulation vehicle, and the new SULEV (super ultra low emitting vehicle) standard is 94% cleaner than an LEV.

analogous to *objective* moral practice in that it gives a feeling of effectiveness without actually changing much of anything. Since the higher person is always concerned with effectiveness, this motive gives him a reason to reject one practise in favour of something else. Nietzsche's higher people, to drive the point home, will look for real world effectiveness, for what will best help them accomplish their projects (in this case, reduce global warming) and not be distracted by feelings of effectiveness. They are concerned with effectiveness in fact.

This is why the Will to Power is described as the path “to fundamental problems” (BGE 23). Once religion is exposed by it in terms of this world effectiveness, the reason behind religion is undermined, the underlying deemphasizing of control over this world and an emphasizing of the ultimate greater importance of the next – alas, completely imaginary - world. By exposing religion's failure to gain ‘this world’ effectiveness, Nietzsche removes the motivation behind it, the attempt to devalue this world. The religious practitioner cannot say he practises religion for this world effectiveness because religion derives its power from devaluing this world and valuing another one. Positing the motivation for religion as ‘this worldly’ undermines the initial motivation. Consequently, even the lower person can be motivated by the Will to Power because those *feelings* of effectiveness need not ever intersect with the real world.⁵⁶ And this raises a question which will return us to the subject of Nietzsche's positive philosophy, the question of why the higher person is different. The Higher person's Will to Power is tempered by the Will to Truth, the desire to know the truth no matter how unpleasant it is. This will to truth is adopted ultimately because, as already said, truth is useful to pursuing dreams and goals in the real world. This returns us to why there is a focus on effectiveness. It

⁵⁶ See how many people support the war on terror or the Iraq war because it gives them feelings of safety or strength, despite the fact that the Iraq War accomplishes the opposite.

appears that the answer is relatively simple; since people with a dedicated will to truth⁵⁷ can't believe in the old ascetic and religious values anymore, they need a new source for values and a new source of interpretations for suffering⁵⁸. The answer Nietzsche gives for higher individuals is another important point about Nietzsche's positive values, one that meshes once again with perspectivism. These new interpretations and values, the things that make life worth living, higher individuals get from themselves, from their own personal dreams and goals. Working toward dreams and goals has two effects—it provides an order of rank and it dictates what things, even values, are useful to the individual and what are not.

We now need to explain Order of rank, another bit of necessary Nietzsche-speak. Drives, whichever one's they might be, are urges seeking expression. Since we have many different drives and many different types of urges, some are mutually exclusive; they must fight for dominance.⁵⁹ These drives are the product of our animal prehistory: “they are a vast confusion of contradictory valuations and consequently of contradictory drives” (WTP, 259). These drives constantly strive for expression or satiation, and these drives act as *Elixir Vitae* for individuals, since they underpin action and drive the individual forward. The individual acts as a container for these drives, though the individual has some control over what drives are expressed and

57 Will to Truth, in Nietzsche, means a desire for truth, no matter how unpleasant. As we have seen, this is the defining characteristic of the higher person.

58 Interpretations for suffering is possibly the most important purpose of religion and ascetic values since it offers a very powerful framework for giving meaning to suffering, thus making it bearable. For example, the suffering of being a slave in the Roman Empire was made bearable by the thought that once the Christian dies, he will be rewarded and his oppressors punished. Nietzsche's values for the higher person (as we shall see) must also be able to make this sort of interpretation, as giving meaning to suffering is one of the primary purposes of values.

59 This view is similar to Freud's view in that Freud views the individual as a bundle of drives. Unlike Freud, however, Nietzsche thought that these drives were not reducible to any primal drives, such as sex.

which are sublimated. On Nietzsche's account, in a weak individual no drives have dominance and one impulse fights another for domination. Because of this civil war of the drives, the individual cannot use the energy and power contained within. The lowest kind of individual is, then, the wanton—the creature who is completely ruled by its present drives and simply does whatever its drives dictate.

However, with an overriding perspective as to what a goal should be, this jumble of drives comes to have a clear order of priority, an order of rank. Its priority is determined by the individual's goals and dreams, and the concrete things that need to be done in order to achieve them. With this order of rank of the drives, the individual can control what affects are useful to the situation or, as Nietzsche put it, “here the co-ordination of the inner systems and their operation in the service of one end is best achieved” (WP 778).

It seems we have drifted far away from perspectivism, but this theory of the unity of drives explains how values work in a perspective. This highest drive works toward a goal, and values are generated from this perspective. Thus, what a person does becomes not a constant swirl of distractions and things to do but a clear path as to what must be done. In other words, drives and goals create the perspective for the individual to choose and create his own values. This works not only with actions, but also for values. For example, if an individual wants to go to medical school, she will need a university degree beforehand; if she wants to effect change in a political system, she will need to first become politically influential.

In the last chapter, we saw how a truth statement is decided in the context of a perspective, that any questions concerning truth must assume interests and perspectives. Values, too, function in the same way, especially for the higher person in that his values occur in a

focused perspective, in the service of an interest. What will be valuable to him will depend on his dreams and goals; who he is, and so on. The higher person values good and bad, not good and evil. The value of being able to think methodically is necessary for being a good doctor; the value of skepticism is necessary to be a good reporter. The person who wants to be a good reporter will have to turn away from the easier path of public relations and may go without a steady job for several years. The perspectival values that the individual adopts dictates that he not become a public relations flack, and provides him an interpretation for his suffering financial hardship. Both are necessary for becoming a good reporter. Suffering *with a purpose* is acceptable to a person, while suffering without purpose is not: “A man with a why will withstand any how” (TI, maxims, 12).

Thus, the values of a higher person are much like truth statements in perspectivism. The correct answer to the content of a person’s goals and values depends on the context, and especially in the higher person, individual *is* the context. A value can be good enough for someone as long as it meets the needs of that person (much like the canary in the coal mine referred to in the last chapter), and what those values or methods should be depend on whether one is aspiring to be a pilot or finish a master’s thesis. There are right answers for these questions but they depend entirely on the context of the individual, the situation, and individual goals. Much of Nietzsche's positive philosophy is somewhat paradoxical. On the one hand, it has many definite values which Nietzsche encourages his higher people to adopt. On the other hand, these values are intended to make strong perspectives so that the person is free to ‘become who he is,’ in other words, follow his own projects, affirm his own values, and accept himself, whether good and bad. Nietzsche is interested in strengthening the ability of people to legislate values for themselves rather than in making a moral value set for everyone. This completes the sketch of how Nietzsche's perspectivism influences his treatment of values and contributes to his fight

against nihilism. But a few issues remain.

A skeptical reader might object that this contradicts Nietzsche's criticism of the basis for moral values discussed earlier or might argue that this view of values is content-less since it does not fill in specific values. If one assumes Nietzsche had specific ideals in mind, one could understand this objection of 'not leaving the picture of values half completed.'

First, we should consider the danger of contradiction. These values are not *objective* values obviously, since they are formed under perspectivism and apply to individuals. The truth of the utility of one value over another is decided by a person or type and thus is not objectively binding on everyone. The critic has probably anticipated this reply and will suggest instead that these values run afoul of perspectivism's two other prohibitions: Either virtue is always rewarded, or it would be best if everyone were to do X. The former would clash with Nietzsche's conception of human action, and the latter would try and make humanity 'the same' in the objectionable way already examined.

If adopting Nietzschean values always guaranteed success, the formula would be *objectively* moralistic virtue since it guarantees an outcome. But Nietzsche never argues this. There is no guarantee that living life Nietzsche's way will get one what one wants or will make one more successful; Nietzsche can only guarantee that you may not achieve your dream, but you will get hurt. Trying without any guarantee of success is something that only the strong person can accept. It is a curiously stoic notion in that actions must have their value through their attempt and not through their accomplishment. Nietzsche praises attempters, those who try, rather than those who succeed. After all, lower people succeed in getting their dreams. This will not satisfy those who search for the unconditional, for those who seek guarantees of success.

Nietzsche felt that this former approach was the most honest and thus would fit what was of interest to his higher people.

The idea that everyone ought to do Nietzsche's style of thinking or philosophy is another idea that would be an *objective* virtue if Nietzsche actually thought it. But his higher/lower distinction clearly delineates who can and who cannot adopt these values. Once again, let us suppose our critic has seen that rather obvious response, and counters by noting that Nietzsche's formula nonetheless applies to a subsection of people. This sub-section still involves a large class of people. The critic will still want to know how Nietzsche's values avoid the same problems that all encompassing morality supposedly creates.

The objection falters because Nietzsche emphasizes individuality rather than singularity. Adoption of a value in an individual or a group, much like truth in a context, is permissible (and not making the 'moral mistake') because the things that make a value good or useful are spelled out in that context. This is what one set of values useful for everyone is missing—context. On Nietzsche's account of values, the adopting of good and bad principles is modified by context, not based on absolutes. Nietzsche is not advocating a single type of character in his values, though such a misreading is somewhat common. A typical misreading would have Nietzsche saying that instead of being meek Christians, one should adopt the opposite values and everyone (or at least higher people) should be Vikings, bloodthirsty savages who loved sacking villages and setting afire the local priest. This cartoon portrait of Nietzsche is unfortunately rather common but it has no basis in Nietzsche's actual views. Nietzsche did want his higher people to emulate one aspect of these barbarians. As Alexander Nehamas explains, "He [Nietzsche] admires them primarily for their lack of absolutism, for their attitudes that it is impossible for

everyone to be bound by the same rules of conduct, for their “pathos of distance”⁶⁰(GM, I, 2). The Barbarians did not totalize their values and saw no reason for everyone to adopt their values, much as Nietzsche advocated his higher types doing (Nehamas, 215).

The second criticism, that of vagueness, is one common regarding Nietzsche, since obscurity often kept his ideas from being fully examined. If he had remained a professor, his style might have been different because being forced to defend his ideas would have resulted in clarity. His lamentable lack of clarity can be seen in this chapter with the ill-chosen terms “strength” and “Higher” being synonyms of one another. The charge of vagueness regarding Nietzsche’s values is noted by many prominent interpreters of Nietzsche. Both Danto (199) and Kaufmann (253) comment on this vagueness of the intention of higher values. Nehamas, in his discussion on this issue, goes so far as to call the superficial version of Nietzsche’s values “banal.” (Nehamas 221). These concerns have mostly been addressed at this point. But one or two further points should be made in order to round out Nietzsche’s perspectivist philosophy.

First, Nietzsche is not vague about what values he is advocating. For strong people, he advocates that they strengthen their Will to Power, maintain a will to truth, develop strong characters, and embrace a love of fate.⁶¹ Nietzsche also advocated that people adopt or fashion

⁶⁰ “Pathos of Distance” is a term Nietzsche frequently uses, but only occasionally explains, though it is a fairly straightforward distinction. Nietzsche believes that healthy historical types (such as the barbarians discussed here) had healthier values simply because they saw their values as their own and not necessarily something that everyone could adopt.

⁶¹ Also called Amor Fati by Nietzsche. There is no space for a discussion of it here. I will restrict myself to a few remarks. Nietzsche, as has become clear in this chapter, thought that some things were up to us and some things were not up to us. Robert Solomon put it this way: “that we are like the oarsmen of our fate, capable of heroic self movement but also swept along a sometimes cruel but open sea” (Solomon 424). If this is the case, to affirm life and

their own values, see those values as their own and not necessarily assume that they must be adopted by everyone. Finally, he advocates understanding our own perspective at work when we make value judgements. In the context of an individual pursuing a goal, these values are concrete.

There is another reason for this lingering accusation of vagueness. Nietzsche's vagueness on these matters is, to some extent, deliberately vague or schematic. The reason is quite simple. A great individual is much like a great movie or a great work of art. If one attempts to give a stipulative definition of what this greatness is, one inevitably fails. The same holds true for individuals and their values. The concept must have a certain degree of fuzziness; otherwise, it becomes descriptive of particular great movies or individuals, and not greatness as a whole. The goal of these values makes Nietzsche a good teacher; instead of trying to impose a single type on everyone, these values seek to unlock an individual's true potential in accordance with the individual's inborn talents and limitations. Thus the values must remain a little vague, much as in perspectivism there is no way to give a single formula for universal truth. To do otherwise would be a violation of the perspectivism Nietzsche sought to advocate. These values are designed to make obvious and, more importantly, strengthen the perspectival structure that created these values.

It is clear that solving the problem of truth for Nietzsche pays great dividends. Now that we understand Nietzsche's theory of truth as ultimately pragmatic, we can make sense of much of

not grow resentful against it, we must affirm everything that happens to us, and hence, love fate. This affirming also includes accepting what we cannot control. Nietzsche in *Ecce Homo* is the perfect example of this in that he talks about the many horrible things that happened in his generally miserable life, and then affirmed them as important, even necessary steps in his intellectual development.

his positive philosophy regarding values. Perhaps, with this step, some of the debates in Nietzsche scholarship can finally be brought to a close.

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