

NIETZSCHE ON TRUTH AND KNOWLEDGE

BETWEEN MODERN AND POSTMODERN: NIETZSCHE ON TRUTH AND
KNOWLEDGE

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A Thesis Submitted to the
School of Graduate Studies in
Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (2013)

(Philosophy)

TITLE: Between Modern and Postmodern: Nietzsche on Truth and Knowledge

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SUPERVISOR: Professor Barry Allen

NUMBER OF PAGES: viii, 178

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines Nietzsche's epistemology. Its main interlocutors are two previously existing attempts to explain Nietzsche's views on truth and knowledge. One of these interpretations I dub the 'postmodern' reading, held most notably by Sarah Kofman, Jacques Derrida, and Paul de Man. The other is the 'modern' reading of Walter Kaufmann, John T. Wilcox, and most prominently Maudemarie Clark and Brian Leiter. Each of these readings emphasizes one aspect of Nietzsche's thought. The postmodern reading focuses on Nietzsche's more radical pronouncements, and promotes a type of scepticism and subjectivism. The modern reading, by contrast, emphasizes Nietzsche's more traditional claims, and argues that he lauds science and preserves our ability to attain truth.

However, neither reading is entirely satisfactory. In what follows, I first critically examine both of these readings in detail. The first chapter highlights the major points of these two readings, as well as some issues in each. After detailing these positions, I then turn to a largely chronological reading of Nietzsche's works to establish an alternative account of his epistemology. Chapters two through four provide readings of Nietzsche's epistemological claims in his major works from *Human, All Too Human* (1878) until *Twilight of the Idols* (1888). I combine this chronological reading with other informative aspects of Nietzsche's thought. These other aspects include Nietzsche's reading of Roger Boscovich (1711-1787) and his adoption of force-point ontology, his ontological commitment to nominalism, his views on evolution and its role in epistemology, and his similarities with Ernst Mach (1838-1916). Finally, I also connect Nietzsche's epistemology with his critiques of morality and religion. I show that my reading is buttressed by the deep congruity between Nietzsche's epistemology and his critiques, while the modern and postmodern readings are both unable to account for this congruity in a satisfactory manner.

To Ruthann

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are a great many people whose love and support have contributed to the writing of this thesis. I would like to extend my hearty thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Barry Allen. His rigorous and penetrating comments and questions pushed me to rethink my position on a number of occasions, as well as clarify my thoughts. This thesis would not be what it is without him. I would also like to thank the other members of my committee. Dr. Stefan Sciaraffa asked some excellent questions which helped me further clarify issues, as well as gave support along the way. Dr. Brigitte Sassen also provided helpful comments, and a wonderful year teaching together. Dr. Sam Ajzenstat also deserves special mention. Although he was unable to finish this thesis officially, his probing questions and brilliant style have deeply impacted my own thinking. Over the course of many lunches he helped shape this project into what it has become. I would also like to extend my thanks to all the members of McMaster's philosophy department. They have all been friendly, welcoming, and a wonderful influence. Special thanks also go to Kim Squissato, Daphne Kilgour, and Rabia Awan, whose assistance in navigating the university administration has been invaluable. I would also like to thank the many students at McMaster who have contributed to my thinking and personal life, particularly Josh Zaslow. Thanks also go to the Ontario Graduate Scholarship for funding this project.

A great many people outside of McMaster have been instrumental as well. First and foremost I would like to thank my wife Ruthann. Her love and support kept my spirits high throughout the writing of this thesis. She also provided excellent editorial suggestions and was a great sounding board for ideas. I would also like to acknowledge a deep gratitude to my parents, Carrol and Joan. They have long encouraged me to pursue my dreams and are a continuing source of comfort and support. Thanks also go to my second family, Michael and Andrea in particular. I also thank a great many friends whose company and intelligence have been most welcome over the years. Finally, I thank Yoda for being a constant source of entertainment and for keeping things in perspective.

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Abbreviations

Nietzsche's collected works (in German):

KSA – *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe*

KGW – *Nietzsche Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*

KGB – *Nietzsche Briefwechsel: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*

Nietzsche's works (in English translation):

A – *The Antichrist*

AOM – *Assorted Opinions and Maxims*

BGE – *Beyond Good and Evil*

BT – *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*

CW – *The Case of Wagner*

D – *Daybreak, Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*

EH – *Ecce Homo*

GS – *The Gay Science*

GM – *On the Genealogy of Morals*

HH – *Human, All Too Human*

NCW – *Nietzsche contra Wagner*

TI – *Twilight of the Idols*

TL – "On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense" (referenced by page number)

UH – *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*

WP – *The Will to Power*

Z – *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

Nietzsche's works are referenced by section number, unless otherwise noted.

Certain works (TI, EH, NCW) first give an abbreviated section title followed by the relevant section number (e.g. EH, 'Books' BT 1). *On the Genealogy of Morals* first provides the essay number, followed by the relevant section number (e.g. GM, I, 12)

DECLARATION OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

This thesis first provides a critical overview of two different interpretations of Nietzsche's epistemology. It then develops an alternative reading which utilizes the best aspects of both of these interpretations. The reading of Nietzsche's epistemology developed in this thesis is also connected to his critiques of morality and religion. Connecting these two aspects of Nietzsche's thought brings both into clearer focus. The two alternative accounts of Nietzsche's epistemology surveyed cannot adequately explain this connection, while my account is buttressed by it.

Introduction: Nietzsche on Truth and Knowledge

The philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche has been a long-standing source of interpretive controversy. Due to his aphoristic writing style, and the wide range of topics his works engage with, it has proved difficult to precisely determine Nietzsche's stance on many issues. His thought touches upon topics as varied as the ancient Greeks, figures in the history of philosophy, art, music, medicine, evolution, morality, religion, language, the nature of thought, and epistemology. Arguably his views on truth and knowledge are the most important of these topics. After all, if it turns out that Nietzsche is a sceptic, who rejects any notion of truth, and holds that no claim is more justified than any other, then the rest of his views will be mere subjective preferences, which should elicit no evaluative scrutiny from his readers. On such a sceptical view, Nietzsche's works should be relegated to the field of literature rather than philosophy, and his claims viewed as rhetorical attempts to elicit responses in his readers rather than as a series of truth-apt propositions.

Such a view may be not entirely inappropriate for Nietzsche. His major fictional enterprise, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883-1885), is amenable to this view. However, we are forced to consider whether all of Nietzsche's works fit such a paradigm. Throughout his works, Nietzsche consistently engages in a practice of making assertions and attempting to convey information to his readers. In particular, his critiques of morality and religion appear to take the form of arguments. As Nietzsche claims in *Daybreak* (1881), "I deny morality as I deny alchemy, that is, I deny their premises."¹ Passages such as these surely sound argumentative, and so it is tempting to take Nietzsche's claims seriously. But when we attempt to interpret Nietzsche as a traditional philosopher providing arguments for his readers, we are again faced with passages which lend themselves to the sceptical reading, such as his claim that "all of our consciousness refers to errors!"²

This thesis is an attempt to make sense of Nietzsche's epistemological views. It provides a more satisfactory reading of his views on truth and knowledge than have been provided by two alternative groups. The first is what I label the 'postmodern' reading of Nietzsche. This reading embraces the sceptical side of Nietzsche's thought, and as a result largely ignores any claims that appear factual in his texts. In response to this sceptical reading, a largely Anglo-American 'modern' reading has arisen. This reading embraces the evaluative side of Nietzsche's thought and attempts to make sense of the sceptical passages in a way that allows him to make the factual claims that he does. A prominent, but by no means undisputed, modern reading has come from Maudemarie Clark. She has provided a developmental reading of Nietzsche that sees his scepticism rooted in a form of Kantianism, which she holds permeates his early and middle works.

¹ Nietzsche, D, 103.

² Nietzsche, GS, 11.

However, she believes that this scepticism is overcome in the later works, thus allowing Nietzsche to make the claims that he does. The details of the modern and postmodern readings, as well as their interpretive issues, are examined in the first chapter.

My reading provides a more comprehensive alternative of Nietzsche's views than either of these readings. While Nietzsche's thought is complex, and any account of it will necessarily emphasize certain aspects at the expense of others, it is only by acquiescing to a form of scepticism at the outset that we are forced to believe that no interpretation of his texts is better than any other. The account I provide brings together work on Nietzsche's ontological and epistemological views. Specifically, it draws on Nietzsche's reading and appropriation of the kinematic force-point theory of Roger Boscovich (1711-87) and connects this to Nietzsche's remarks on the theory of knowledge. By comparing Nietzsche with Ernst Mach (1838-1916), I bring perspectivism into clearer view. Perspectivism is Nietzsche's epistemological alternative to what he sees as the historically dogmatic approach to truth. In place of this tradition Nietzsche proposes an experimental substitute. The foundations of perspectivism are laid down early in Nietzsche's thinking and gain increased expression throughout his works.

A presupposition of perspectivism is nominalism. I argue that from 1873, the year Nietzsche wrote "On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense," his thought displays an ontological commitment to nominalism. While the secondary literature on Nietzsche makes reference to his claims that concepts and language fail to capture the uniqueness of reality, insufficient emphasis has been placed on this nominalist thesis. Nominalism, in Nietzsche's case, entails the rejection of abstract objects. The historical archetype of these is Plato's forms, abstract objects in virtue of which particular objects derive their fixed identity. By rejecting abstract objects Nietzsche simultaneously believes he has rejected natural kinds. Even if universals remain a constituent feature of reality, the continual change associated with objects destabilizes any form of natural identity. As a result of this destabilization, Nietzsche believes that reality does not divide itself into discrete objects or events, although it does have varying degrees of similarity, determined by the interplay of forces. The demarcation of these similarities is attributed to the process of thought. However, Nietzsche argues that human cognition is fundamentally limited in its powers. Because we are unable to account for the extreme diversity found in nature, we instead utilize certain simplifications or 'falsifications' of the world in our thought. Perspectives establish the boundaries of these simplifications. Only by taking up some perspective, which determines conditions of observation and sets domains of interests, can any thing be considered a thing at all. Often, it is assumed that if we are only able to observe and make claims within perspectives, then a variety of scepticism results. However, my account shows that Nietzsche believes that we retain objectivity within perspectives. For instance, from a biological perspective we may examine certain phenomena and attain results which may be replicated under similar

conditions. Despite fielding this epistemological alternative to the traditional dogmatism of epistemology – which Nietzsche sees as fixated on finding objective, once-and-for-all truths or on adequate representation of an object by a subject – he often takes up the language of this dogmatic epistemology to launch a rhetorical critique of it. By using the traditional language to express his new insights, Nietzsche is able to claim that we continually ‘falsify’ reality and that our consciousness refers only to ‘errors.’ However, when Nietzsche utilizes his new language, which involves a different conception of truth, he is able to coherently claim that we are able to replace our old errors with new truths about the world. These truths are perspective-dependent, as they express views about the world which remain objective only within the confines of a perspective.

The second chapter begins with an examination of Nietzsche’s early position on epistemological matters. It considers the role played by Nietzsche’s relation to Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), as well as the neo-Kantian Friedrich Albert Lange (1828-1875). Drawing on the work of James I. Porter on Nietzsche’s early thought, I largely pass over the contents of Nietzsche’s first book, *The Birth of Tragedy*. Porter’s major point is that, even during this early phase of his philosophical thinking, it is unlikely that Nietzsche took the idea of the thing-in-itself seriously. After adopting this point, I turn to the early essay “On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense” (1873). This early, unpublished essay has drawn considerable attention from Nietzsche scholars, including Clark. She concludes that the nominalism expressed in the essay is of tertiary importance, and that nominalism could not play a significant role in Nietzsche’s epistemological thinking. Contrary to this view, I show that even in this early piece Nietzsche displays a deep commitment to nominalism, although he does not address it by this name. The essay also shows a somewhat confused position on the thing-in-itself, which is at some points used in an attack on truth and science. However, the argument Nietzsche fields against science is a bad one, which he realizes by the time of writing *Human, All Too Human* (1878).

After examining Nietzsche’s position in “On Truth and Lies” I largely follow the development of his thought chronologically. I turn to his reading of Boscovich during the period 1873-1874 (and beyond), illustrating the major points of Boscovich’s work and suggest what Nietzsche took from it. Specifically, I argue that Boscovich’s kinematic theory provides a scientific foundation for Nietzsche’s nominalism. Throughout the rest of my reading, this Boscovichian force ontology resurfaces a number of times as a backdrop for Nietzsche’s claims on truth and knowledge. After detailing Nietzsche’s reading of Boscovich, I turn to the works *Human, All Too Human* and *Daybreak* (1880). I examine the epistemological views these works contain, arguing that Nietzsche’s nominalism is coupled with a developmental account of human cognition. Nietzsche’s substantive conclusion from these considerations is that no single method of acquiring knowledge should be privileged above all others. Nevertheless, he does dismiss certain modes of knowledge acquisition as simply misguided, and maintains that a hermeneutic empiricism is the only plausible method of inquiry.

This view is buttressed by Nietzsche's rejection of givenness. In detailing this rejection, I compare Nietzsche's views with those expressed by Wilfrid Sellars in his influential essay, "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind." I also explain how we can account for Nietzsche's claims that we falsify reality in *Human, All Too Human* and *Daybreak* with his positive views on ascertaining new truths, providing a better account of his views during this period than either the moderns or postmoderns have been able to do.

The third chapter turns to an examination of Nietzsche's views in *The Gay Science* (1882 and 1887) as well as his views on evolution. While Nietzsche's relation to Charles Darwin (1809-1882) is a complex affair, I show that Dirk R. Johnson's recent book *Nietzsche's Anti-Darwinism* overstates the case against Nietzsche believing in evolution at all. In doing so, I show that Johnson's view implicitly rests on the postmodern reading of Nietzsche's epistemology, and that he succumbs to the same pitfalls as the others who endorse this view. By drawing on Nietzsche's published comments on evolution, particularly those found in *The Gay Science*, I show that Nietzsche does subscribe to an evolutionary view of human cognitive development, and argue that this is important for understanding Nietzsche's views on truth and knowledge.

After establishing Nietzsche's reliance on an evolutionary narrative, I turn to a comparative analysis of Nietzsche and Mach. There has been some recent work on this comparison, but it has not sufficiently detailed the similarities between the two thinkers. I show that they share a number of methodological points, and that by examining Mach's views in his *Contributions to the Analysis of Sensations* (1886) we gain a better understanding of what Nietzsche's perspectivism entails. This discussion turns to the status of objects and events within a perspectival framework, where I argue that Nietzsche is an object anti-realist. The chapter then turns to examining the rest of Nietzsche's epistemological claims in *The Gay Science*, showing how they are congruent with the reading that I have attributed to Nietzsche thus far, which avoids saddling him with either scepticism or internal incoherence.

The fourth chapter examines some of Nietzsche's most mature works. Specifically, I show how his epistemological comments in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887), and *Twilight of the Idols* (1888) are congruent with the perspectivism of the earlier works. It becomes clear that when we keep Nietzsche's nominalism in mind, as well as the epistemological framework developed in earlier works, his comments in these later works display neither a general scepticism regarding truth or a significant shift in his views.

The fifth chapter turns to Nietzsche's critiques of morality and religion. Accounts of Nietzsche's epistemology often ignore these critiques, and focus primarily on passages that explicitly concern truth or knowledge. I find such an approach to be unwarrantedly narrow. The investigations into morality and religion are major themes in Nietzsche's works. In fact, one may be able to claim that they are *the* overriding concern of his thought. While I agree that these topics constitute major points of concern for Nietzsche, I maintain that his

epistemological views require satisfactory treatment. If, in fact, Nietzsche's thought does admit of a global scepticism, then we must read his moral and religious critiques in light of this view.

However, the account of Nietzsche's epistemological views I provide allows him to claim both that we falsify reality and that we can attain new truths. The fifth chapter examines his moral and religious critiques in light of this framework. I begin with a condensed version of Nietzsche's critiques from *Twilight of the Idols*. This work may rightly be seen mainly as a summary of his earlier views. I then turn my attention to Nietzsche's earlier works, stretching back as far as *Human, All Too Human*, to show that the kernel of these critiques is consistent throughout Nietzsche's thinking.³ The significance of this consistency lies in the fact that Nietzsche's critiques are fundamentally epistemological: Nietzsche points out historical epistemological errors, the moral and religious interpretations they have given rise to, and suggests alternatives to these mistaken views. The structure of his critiques is such that, if he did endorse a brand of global scepticism for any portion of his career from *Human, All Too Human* onwards, then his own critiques would be entirely unfounded. Such a result would be unpalatable to Nietzsche, as it would leave no principled opposition to the moral and religious views he campaigns so vigorously against in his writings. This final chapter provides an additional piece of evidence for my account by showing that it is more congruent with Nietzsche's critiques than either the modern or postmodern readings. This congruency means that my interpretation of Nietzsche's epistemological views better fits a wider range of the textual evidence than either the modern or postmodern readings.

³ Although these critiques remain essentially the same throughout these works, their details are developed more thoroughly and they become increasingly interwoven as Nietzsche progresses in his thought.

Chapter 1: Setting the Scene: Secondary Readings of Nietzsche's Epistemology

The secondary literature on Nietzsche's epistemology largely divides into two major camps. The first, which I will label the 'postmodern' reading of Nietzsche, includes the works of Sarah Kofman, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Paul de Man, among others. This reading highlights areas of Nietzsche's thought where he appears to proclaim that all truths are illusions, or that there is no truth, and that all our claims are merely interpretations of the world, not independently existing truths. This reading typically focuses on Nietzsche's unpublished works in an attempt to create an explanatory framework which is then applied to the rest of his corpus. And it is this framework that is used to try and explain away what seems like a contradiction in Nietzsche's works. On the one hand, Nietzsche tells us that there are no truths and that all claims are merely interpretations, but on the other hand he engages in the business of revealing new truths to us about modern morality, human psychology, and religious ideals. To escape this tension the postmodern reading holds that Nietzsche *really* means what he says about the subjectivity of our claims, thus making any of his other pronouncements only 'his' truths: merely expressions of his opinion and reflective of his perspective on the world, not intended to hold true for others.

But this is curious. If that is all Nietzsche really does intend, why does he go to such lengths to substantiate some of these claims? And why write in a way that appears to give us new (true) insights into various phenomena? If Nietzsche's main task is to point out the limits of human reason and our inability to attain absolute truth, thus making all of our claims the expression of individual taste, he could have just said that. Instead we find Nietzsche making numerous claims, from his earliest works to his last, which attempt to show us things that were hidden before. And Nietzsche is never one to hold back from making evaluations about all manner of things, evaluations he presumably thinks are truer, in some sense, than a mere expression of personal taste. The two best examples of this are his views on modern morality and religion, particularly Christianity. These topics are especially appropriate because of the deep interconnection that Nietzsche sees running between them. Modern morality, he contends, stems directly from Christianity, although it has attempted to throw off its theistic cloak and stand independently of religion. Two examples of this would be utilitarianism and the attempt to create a modern 'scientific' morality, which is really an attempt to buttress Christian morality with evolutionary theory.¹ But Nietzsche argues from at least *Human, All Too Human* (1878) until his last works that both modern morality and religion are motivated by the same underlying psychological motivations and aim for the same ends. Time and again Nietzsche elaborates his

¹ On the hidden Christian enterprise in evolutionary ethics see Moore, *Nietzsche, Biology and Metaphor* and Johnson, *Nietzsche's Anti-Darwinism*.

critiques of these structures in an attempt to reveal their underlying elements, which in turn undermine their initial appearances, and he develops these critiques with rational arguments that grow in refinement throughout his works.

If Nietzsche does not believe in any form of truth, other than the kind scared into quotation marks as an indication of personal sentiment, then it seems odd that he would have gone to all this trouble. It would have been much easier for Nietzsche to write in a more literary, rather than argumentative, fashion about *his* distaste for modern morality and religion rather than spend the effort crafting arguments strong enough to persuade his readers. But he does expend this extra effort, attempting to make his claims plausible to others, even if it is a select audience. And if Nietzsche really does believe that our propositional discourse can only act to reveal our personal opinions and sentiments on subjects (and never independent truth) he would be forced to acknowledge that although *he* opposes morality and religion with every fibre of his being, there is no defensible reason for doing so. This would compel him to allow those who wish to reaffirm their allegiance to morality and religion to do so without any principled opposition. In this system there is no principled difference whether one becomes the Antichrist or an evangelical preacher. They are merely two divergent paths; two different interpretations of which values are truly worthwhile, something to be decided by mere luck or a roll of the dice.

But Nietzsche would not allow this, even if the postmodern reading does resonate with some of what he has to say on truth and knowledge. Because of this tension the ‘modern’ reading of Nietzsche is also quite popular, especially among Anglo-American scholars. This account stands in contrast to the postmodern interpretation, and maintains that Nietzsche really did subscribe to (at least some) kind of independently existing truth. It is best articulated and thoroughly developed by Maudemarie Clark, and is supported to varying degrees by others including Walter Kaufmann, John T. Wilcox, and Brian Leiter. This reading maintains that the postmodern view of Nietzsche fails to capture the large evaluative portion of his thought, which can only be meant sincerely if he allowed for some sort of truth. This reading recognizes the portion of his thought emphasized by the postmoderns which discusses rhetoric and metaphor and holds that all our claims are merely interpretative and not ‘true.’ However, the moderns attempt to either explain away or compartmentalize this aspect of Nietzsche’s thought in a way that allows him to avoid self-contradiction. But this task can be quite difficult, as there are segments of Nietzsche’s works from beginning to end that support a postmodern interpretation.

As well as the explicit articulations of these two readings, both the modern and postmodern positions stand in the background to many other accounts of Nietzsche’s thought. When examining any facet of Nietzsche’s thought a reader must assume one of two positions: either Nietzsche really does maintain some claims as true, or he holds that all claims are merely personal interpretations about

the world, making his claims more literary rather than philosophical.² This problem leads us straight to Nietzsche's perspectivism and the classic issue of self-reference. Arthur Danto formulated this issue clearly in 1965, though the question has been around much longer.³ It asks whether perspectivism itself is supposed to be only a perspectival (subjective) truth, thus making it true only under certain conditions, or whether it is a trans- or supra-perspectival (objective) truth. The latter would mean that we do have at least some non-perspectival truth after all. Commentators tend either to suggest that Nietzsche does take the subjectivist leap and embrace his claims as merely his, or argue that he is committed to at least some level of objective truth. Either one of these options runs into difficulty, however, because there is good textual evidence for both readings. The alternative that I aim to provide is one that allows us to account for a broader range of passages than either the postmodern or modern readings have allowed for. This allies me with some other authors who have attempted to find a more accommodating reading of Nietzsche. However, while drawing on a number of these sources, my project aims to more clearly articulate Nietzsche's epistemological position and how it is congruent with his critiques of morality and religion. Both the postmodern and modern readings of Nietzsche highlight portions of his thought while ignoring others in an attempt to make him consistent in some fashion.⁴ My reading instead acknowledges what Nietzsche has to say regarding our interpretative practice while still allowing him to consistently make claims about morality and religion. Before further articulating this third reading, we should examine some of the key postmodern and modern works to get a better sense of what they claim.

Postmodern Readings

Kofman's account of Nietzsche, elaborated in *Nietzsche and Metaphor* (1972), is an excellent example of the postmodern position and its inherent tension and risk of extremism. She argues that Nietzsche supports infinite interpretations undertaken by the will to power, this being the original metaphorical activity of human life, and that this activity undermines the classical paradigms of truth and science. Kofman argues that Nietzsche overcomes Aristotle's distinction between concept and metaphor. On the Aristotelian view concepts are considered primary because they are tied to the essences of objects. A metaphor relies on concepts, and operates by moving from one concept or logical space to another. Kofman holds that while in his early writings Nietzsche does adhere to the philosophical tradition by believing in essences, he quickly overcomes this tradition, and his philosophy acts to upset the classical distinction between philosophy, science, and art. This distinction maintains that philosophy

² By this I mean that they only express his opinion on a given matter and are not meant to be true for anybody else.

³ Danto, *Nietzsche as Philosopher*, 62.

⁴ Even if that consistency is his lack of consistency, as the postmodern reading tends to suggest.

and science attempt to uncover the truth through proper form, while art is a free play of forms with no regard for truth. Nietzsche instead connects philosophy with art by recognizing that conceptual thinking (i.e. science) is actually a kind of metaphorical thinking, separated only by a matter of degree from artistic thought. Thus, Nietzsche's philosophy is designed to rehabilitate the status of art in modernity by obliterating "precisely the opposition between play and seriousness, dream and reality."⁵ The artistic model resulting from this recalibration of philosophy "allows the opposition between reality and appearance to be unequivocally effaced."⁶

The outcome of this revolution in philosophy is that everything now becomes a kind of art, one based on various interpretations of the world. This shift has the effect of undercutting the status of truth. In the end, "[a]rriving at the text of *homo natura* means risking the truth which the weak cannot admit, that there is no truth."⁷ Interpretation now takes the place of truth. As an early example of this, Kofman provides a reading of "On Truth and Lies" in which the Rational (scientific) man is regarded as hostile to life, being committed to finding the objective truth, whereas the Irrational (artistic) man is able to embrace the interpretive character of existence. Later, Nietzsche develops his notion of the will to power and posits this as the force behind all interpretations. This 'completes' the characterization of the Rational and Irrational men, finding the former to be a "nihilist" and the latter an "affirmative will."⁸ But Kofman argues that the will to power is not proposed as another ontological truth, contrary to what Martin Heidegger would have us believe. Instead it is "a metaphorical expression," a "hypothesis" and "interpretation," one that represents the multiplicity and irreducible complexity of life.⁹ More specifically, "[t]he will to power *designates* every force which acts."¹⁰ It affirms the numerous and divergent perspectives and interpretations of life, itself being "an interpretation," but one which recognizes our ability to genealogically decipher interpretations as "symptoms of health or sickness."¹¹

This will to power interprets a world that is an eternal chaos.¹² Because of this chaotic nature, and due to the fact that interpretation is a basic activity, there is no principled way of giving final judgments.¹³ Some commentators, such as Jean Granier, try to save Nietzsche from a "cult of unrestrained passion, of blind desire."¹⁴ Granier does this by trying to make Nietzsche affirm "rationality in the

⁵ Kofman, *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, 13-18.

⁶ Ibid., 32.

⁷ Ibid., 93.

⁸ Ibid., 79-82.

⁹ Ibid., 94.

¹⁰ Ibid., 92-94.

¹¹ Ibid., 94-96.

¹² Ibid., 138-140.

¹³ Kofman maintains that any awareness of the world is itself already an interpretation, one that is forgotten as the basic activity of the will to power and of life (ibid., 25, 91).

¹⁴ Ibid., 137.

world,” and step back from the precipice of total multiplicity and relativism.¹⁵ This amounts to the assertion that interpretations are built on an independently existing text. Kofman opposes this and claims that “[i]n fact there is no rationality in the world; the world is indeed absurd, but it lends itself to a multiplicity of interpretations.”¹⁶ She holds that a text is not a being, an independently existing entity, but is only constituted as a text when taken with its various interpretations. Otherwise the object simply remains a sort of chaos, as does all of reality when not schematized by some interpretation. Truth, and any sort of meaning along with it, exists only as an object of consciousness and not as an independent feature of reality. Because of this, “behind the interpretations there is no *absolute* text to which one can refer in order to judge the truth of interpretations.”¹⁷ This position has a number of implications.

The first of these is what has been commonly referred to as ‘the death of the author.’ In his essay by the same name, Roland Barthes argues that the traditional conception of a work having some definitive meaning – typically seen as given by authorial intention – is no longer plausible. This means that a text’s meaning always remains open, as there is no definitive way to decipher a text or close the possibilities of its meaning.¹⁸ Whereas traditional understanding held that a piece of writing had a definitive meaning, that of the author, Kofman takes Nietzsche’s view to completely undercut this. She holds that he proposes a “new reading/writing [which] destroys the traditional categories of the book as a closed totality containing a definitive meaning, the author’s; in such a way it deconstructs the idea of the author as master of the meaning of the work.”¹⁹ This deconstruction comes from the fact that the text is not an independent ontological entity capable of carrying a definitive meaning. Only a piece of work along with its various interpretations can be a text, and only then have a meaning. This lack of independent meaning leaves a text open to new interpretations, allowing for a continual transformation and development. Nietzsche’s ‘death of God’ carries the same meaning for Kofman because it represents “abolishing any proper, any absolute centre of reference...there is no longer any foundation to order, nor any exclusivity; everything becomes possible.”²⁰

Contrasting Nietzsche with the metaphysical tradition, Kofman uses the image of a tree. This image has a long history, most famously used by René Descartes as a metaphor for the structure of philosophy. Kofman points out examples of modern philosophers who attempt to stand outside of this tradition but maintain the image of the tree, such as Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, and George Bataille.²¹ Nietzsche attacks this old tree and attempts to replace it. But,

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 137-138.

¹⁷ Ibid., 138-140.

¹⁸ Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” 142-149.

¹⁹ Kofman, *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, 116.

²⁰ Ibid., 108.

²¹ Ibid., 183.

according to Kofman, his “is no longer really a tree...it grows in all directions and at all times. A fantastic tree, it is the best paradigm of the new philosopher, who affirms life in all its forms, multiplying and displacing his perspectives, without referring to any absolute and definitive centre.”²² Nietzsche is taken to embrace this new paradigm in his writing. Instead of trying to write in a traditional manner that would presume to convey one definitive meaning, Nietzsche instead writes in the aphoristic form. “The aphorism, by its discontinuous character, disseminates meaning and appeals to the pluralism of interpretations and their renewal: only movement is immortal.”²³ This style of writing best captures Nietzsche’s desire for a new form of philosophy because “the aphorism is an invitation to dance: it is the actual writing of the will to power, affirmative, light, and innocent. It is a writing which deletes the opposition between play and seriousness, surface and depth, form and content, spontaneous and considered, amusement and work.”²⁴

This new image of texts has a profound effect on philology. Thought to be the objective study of texts in order to capture their original meaning, philology was considered a science by nineteenth century German standards. But this conception must change with the understanding that a text does not carry a static meaning capable of being retrieved. Instead, Nietzsche’s philology becomes a kind of genealogy and etymology. We now recognize that every word and concept has a genealogy, a particular history of transformations that can be examined through its etymological development. A term is traced genealogically by viewing it as a symptom and sign of noble or base wills, depending on how it has been used. But these historical examinations do not attempt to live up to philology’s original goal. Nietzsche’s method realizes that no “originary, true, and accurate meaning” can be found.²⁵ As a result, if we try to move beyond the surface of a text or interpretation and fathom its depths, we will never end our journey. Although “it is possible to pass from the surface to the depths, beneath the depths one will find more depths, and so on indefinitely. Surface, depths – two opposites to be deleted as such, whether it be the one or the other which is generalized.”²⁶ This also destroys the old conception of truth as a kind of unveiling, or moving beyond the mere appearance of a thing to its reality.²⁷

This destruction of traditional truth means that science, understood as trying to uncover the objective truths of nature, must also be impossible. Because the basic character of life is the will to power, understood as the creation of interpretations and metaphors, science itself is nothing but an aspect of this metaphorical process. Scientific concepts do not stand above our interpretive activity but are simply another result of this intrinsically artistic process. Science, unlike art, tries to conceal this aspect of its nature and is unwilling to admit that it

²² Ibid., 111.

²³ Ibid., 116.

²⁴ Ibid., 115.

²⁵ Ibid., 86-87.

²⁶ Ibid., 91.

²⁷ Ibid., 175.

is one perspective amongst others. It tries to expel our anthropomorphisms, but in the end still deals only with our own human measures of reality.²⁸ And these measures are themselves only perspectival evaluations, abstractions and creations taken from the world of impressions and appearances, a world which is constantly shifting. As such the scientific edifice is actually unstable, floating “without support, subject to the whim of chance...and like becoming it is a game of chance.”²⁹ But this edifice is constructed to hide the fact that it is one perspective amongst many, and those too weak to accept this conclusion cling to this metaphysical interpretation of science for safety.³⁰

Because we are unable to access any form of objective truth, whether by means of philology or the natural sciences, our values must not rely on any ‘truth’ exterior to them. Here again Kofman fights against a rationalistic reading of Nietzsche and maintains that “value is never referred to truth, for Nietzsche, but truth is measured against value.”³¹ Instead of measuring the worth of a value by its relation to truth, we must instead genealogically treat it as a sign and symptom of the underlying will that projects it. We must remember that “[e]very evaluation is the positing of meanings which are symptomatic of the living being that has evaluated” and do not track objective features of the world.³² By remembering this we will uncover the fact that a value’s value, which “always depends on the valorization or devalorization of life, not its truth; on its ascent or its decadence, on the profusion or poverty of life in whoever is evaluating.”³³ Relating back to the Rational and Irrational man, the scientist and artist, or the negative and affirmative will, we see that for Kofman’s Nietzsche an interpretation’s ‘truth’ is not defined by any features of the world, but simply by the type of will that projects the interpretation, as this determines its content and attitude towards life, here taken as an evaluative criterion.

It is precisely here that the postmodern reading of Nietzsche cracks at the seams and straddles an untenable dichotomy. Either *every* claim is treated as a mere interpretation of this sort, whose truth or falsity rest merely on the type of will projecting it, or there are objective properties which make at least *some* claims not open to this subjectivity. This is the central problem with Nietzsche’s perspectivism and his view of knowledge. In many places Kofman appears to argue that there can be no objective truth, that science is merely a masked form of artistic creativity, and that all claims are only perspectival evaluations. In this she is not entirely misguided. There are many places where Nietzsche appears to be arguing directly for this kind of claim. But if this really is what Nietzsche is arguing for, which Kofman may have to deny to be consistent, then we run into a serious problem. If all that interpretations reveal are the type of will that is

²⁸ Ibid., 61-65.

²⁹ Ibid., 66-68.

³⁰ Ibid., 68-69.

³¹ Ibid., 124.

³² Ibid., 121.

³³ Ibid., 127.

projecting them, whether affirmative or negative, and their truth or falsity rests solely on this criterion, then the question arises as to whether the character of the will is itself something interpretively (i.e., perspectively) established.

On the one hand all claims are held to be merely interpretive, yet on the other the type of will that projects these interpretations is regarded as having an objective nature. If the character of the will were a matter for perspectival evaluation, with no objective ‘truth,’ then how could it explain evaluations? To be entirely consistent, the postmodern reading would have to maintain the position that the type of will itself is merely interpretive. But this would mean that the merits of the different types of will would also be perspectively established. If this were the case, then Nietzsche’s attacks on Christianity and morality would have to be seriously qualified with the recognition that the criticism holds only from a certain perspective and that from a Christian or moral perspective the values he attacks would remain secure and his critiques would be rebuffed.³⁴ He would also have to recognize that there is really no qualitative difference between his perspective and that of the Christian or moralist, no ‘higher’ or ‘lower’ perspective, something he seems to definitively fight against.

This issue is something that Kofman seems to recognize at times and occasionally tries to address. She admits that when one examines various perspectives in a critical manner, as Nietzsche does with religion and morality, these will be ‘staged’ through one’s own perspective. This means that although we are stuck in our own perspective, we may try to expand this perspective partially through the consideration of other points of view. But this examination of other perspectives, the moral one for instance, “is nevertheless not ‘pure’ play: the detour via morality is necessary in order for it to be overcome. But the overcoming is not a ‘pure’ inversion. The metaphorical play retains a certain sense of the seriousness of morality.”³⁵ Although we cannot make a radical leap out of our own perspective, we can develop ourselves through the serious consideration of other perspectives. In this way radically creative interpretations are somewhat undermined, as well as Kofman’s own claim that Nietzsche tries to delete “the opposition between play and seriousness.”³⁶

The scope of the interpretive is further reduced when biological and psychological conditions are considered. These claims are also taken to be objective by Kofman in at least some sense. She holds that “Nietzsche’s aim is not to describe psychological phenomena but to decipher them as significations

³⁴ For example, think of a modern evangelical preacher. If truth is established only by value, and value in turn by the underlying will that projects interpretations, then the preacher will no doubt see Nietzsche as a troubled sinner, whose claims could not be true because of the values they lack and the alternative values Nietzsche proposes. And of course these alternative values would not be seen as such by the preacher, but as a poisonous abomination intent on corrupting and destroying his flock. If Nietzsche goes the whole way on the postmodern reading, as I have presented it, then he would have no recourse against the preacher, nothing (no feature of the world) to point to as a way of rejecting the preacher’s claims and holding his own view as superior in at least some sense.

³⁵ Kofman, *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, 103-104.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 115.

referring to the signified which is the body, itself a hierarchy of forces, and the organisation of which is indicative of ‘health’ or ‘illness.’”³⁷ Despite this claim, she does not want Nietzsche’s philosophy to be mistaken for a form of “biologism.”³⁸ Even if health and sickness are defined in contextually relevant terms (e.g., healthy for person *x* at time *t*) there will still be some ‘objective’ state of affairs that does not itself rely on interpretation.³⁹ It is only by introducing this degree of objectivity into the psychological phenomena and the underlying biological conditions they supposedly signify that Kofman is able to avoid the self-undermining position described above.⁴⁰ But this minimal degree of objectivity still puts her account at odds with itself, now because she attempts to hold both that all features of the world are interpretive and that some are not.

This objectivity also influences philology and genealogy in a way at odds with the rest of her argument. She holds that “the rigorous philologist, truthful and upright, must understand simply ‘what the text intends to say but without sensing, indeed presupposing, a *second* meaning’ (HH I, 8); he must get back to the ‘literality’ of the text of nature – beyond its mystical and religious covering.”⁴¹ This assertion appears at odds with her other claim that philology cannot plumb the depths of a work and get to a primary meaning, because the meaning of a text is necessarily constituted by both its material and its interpretation. But Kofman points out that we return to the text to judge our interpretations, and these will then become part of the text, altering its meaning, and this revised meaning helps evaluate future interpretations. The difference between good and bad philology is now in how it views itself. Bad philology maintains that it reveals a truth of being, one unalterable and without interpretation. Good philology, by contrast, embraces its genealogical element and admits to tracing interpretations back to their roots.⁴² It engages in genealogical practice “by reading behind every constituted text the ultimate intentions of its author (which are in the last resort always moral); by deciphering phenomena as symptoms of health or sickness of whoever interprets them.”⁴³

Here we are confronted by two tensions. First, even if interpretation is thought to be involved in any act of reading or writing, genealogy supposedly refers to symptoms of health or sickness of the interpreting will, adding an element of objectivity that stands at odds with the rest of Kofman’s account. This

³⁷ Ibid., 121-122.

³⁸ Ibid., 123.

³⁹ For instance, it is hard to think of a situation where a human ingesting arsenic can result in better health (although this is not to rule out a priori that such a situation could occur). So if I were to ingest arsenic my resulting physical health would be worse than if I had not. This is an objective feature of the world, and the claim can only be rejected if we redefine some of its constituent terms (e.g. the meaning of ‘health’).

⁴⁰ That is the position that all features of the world, including health/sickness and the weak/strong will, are merely interpretive, which would take all the strength out of Nietzsche’s critiques.

⁴¹ Kofman, *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, 98.

⁴² Ibid., 138-141.

⁴³ Ibid., 141.

tension could be overcome by conceding the point that these symptoms and the underlying health or sickness of the will is itself, too, simply interpretation. But this concession would cause her reading to collapse into total relativism, by making the views Nietzsche opposes (especially Christian and moral ones) just as legitimate as his own position. This outcome, I believe, is not something Nietzsche would endorse, nor is there good evidence that he would concede this point. The second tension regards the ‘death of the author’: Kofman’s reading of Nietzsche implies that a text has no single meaning established by the author, and is instead constantly reformed by its interpretations. But she also holds that a properly genealogical philology shows the (objective) underlying will and physiology of the author, revealing “the ultimate intentions of [the] author” and “‘what the text intends to say but without sensing, indeed presupposing, a *second* meaning’ (HH I, 8).”⁴⁴ Here we have the full tension of the postmodern position displayed. There is an attempt to assert that Nietzsche rejects any objective ‘truth,’ and instead endorses infinite interpretations flowing out of the wills of their creators, this being another complex process in a chaotic world. This position refers ‘truths’ back to values which are established by these wills in a seemingly unchangeable and non-cognitive manner. But there is also an attempt to rescue Nietzsche from complete relativism, as this would likely deflate his moral and religious critiques as well as undermine his account of interpretive practice. While Kofman’s articulation of the postmodern reading most completely embodies this tension, the works of others in the postmodern camp adhere to it in a number of ways.

Derrida, for one, is strikingly close to Kofman in certain aspects.⁴⁵ Specifically, he endorses the notion that Nietzsche fully embraced the ‘death of the author’ and rejected the equation of truth with being. Derrida, like Kofman, sees Nietzsche engaged in promoting infinite interpretations without truth. This is the thrust of his book *Spurs: Nietzsche’s Styles*. He argues that Nietzsche never seriously believed in truth and that the nature of his writing (his style) reflects this. Derrida believes that because Nietzsche abandons the traditional model of truth he abandons truth altogether. At one point he claims that “[t]ruth’ can only be a surface. But the blushing movement of that truth which is not suspended in quotation marks casts a modest veil over such a surface.” But if this veil is suspended differently, or falls in a different way, “there would no longer be any truth, only ‘truth’ – written in quotation marks.”⁴⁶ Elsewhere he claims that “there is no such thing as a truth in itself. But only a surfeit of it.”⁴⁷ And because truth is no longer connected to being, the revelation of truth cannot show us anything of reality. Consequently, “[t]ruth, unveiling, illumination are no longer decided in

⁴⁴ Ibid., 141, 98.

⁴⁵ Arguably Kofman is close to Derrida, she being a student of his, but I am giving her preference here for the clarity her account brings to the tension in the postmodern reading.

⁴⁶ Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche’s Styles*, 59.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 103.

the appropriation of the truth of being, but are cast into its bottomless abyss as non-truth, veiling and dissimulation.”⁴⁸

In line with Kofman, Derrida believes that this abandonment of truth also means that Nietzsche has given up on any definitive meaning of a text. If truth is no longer equated with being, then there can be no independently existing meaning of a text. Nietzsche’s move of disconnecting truth from being leaves behind only “truth” in quotation marks. In place of the truth of a text or definitive meaning stands infinite interpretation. Derrida maintains that “[t]he hermeneutic project which postulates a true sense of the text is disqualified under this regime. Reading is freed from the horizon of the meaning or truth of being, liberated from the values of the product’s production of the present’s presence.”⁴⁹ The result is that “there is no such thing either as the truth of Nietzsche, or of Nietzsche’s text.”⁵⁰ This “is tantamount to saying that there is no ‘totality to Nietzsche’s text,’ not even a fragmentary or aphoristic one.”⁵¹ This is best captured by Derrida’s famous hypothesis about Nietzsche’s note, “I have forgotten my umbrella.”⁵²

This phrase is found in quotation marks in one of Nietzsche’s notebooks.⁵³ Now, while Nietzsche may have intended it to have its plain meaning, that he had an umbrella and forgot it somewhere, it is also possible that it may have had another intended meaning. Perhaps he meant it as a metaphor, or a kind of code, or a mnemonic device to remember something else. Even though Nietzsche may have meant something by it, Derrida argues that the meaning is lost to us. This is because a text always remains open. Although authors write with some intention in mind, all authors eventually die, and with them our definitive point of reference. The texts alone remain behind, and though we may have much evidence to support a given interpretation, we can still never be entirely sure that we have ascertained the original meaning. The author may have meant something ironically, or written it for mere effect, and such intentions may remain outside of any textual evidence left to us. Because truth has been freed from any connection to being, even the notion that there is some enduring, definite meaning becomes dubious. We are thus confronted with the possibility that there is no definitive meaning to any, or all, of Nietzsche’s work.⁵⁴ Derrida illustrates this with the claim that “[t]o whatever lengths one might carry a conscientious interpretation, the hypothesis that the totality of Nietzsche’s text, in some monstrous way, might well be of the type ‘I have forgotten my umbrella’ cannot be denied.”⁵⁵

As a result of this ‘loss of centre’ – by which Derrida means the loss of a definitive ground for interpretation or of a final arbiter of the truth or falsity of

⁴⁸ Ibid., 119.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 107.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 103.

⁵¹ Ibid., 135.

⁵² Ibid., 123-127.

⁵³ Ibid., 123.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 135-139.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 133.

interpretations – he believes, as does Kofman, that Nietzsche embraces a form of ‘play.’ In his essay “Structure, Sign, and Play” Derrida cites Nietzsche as one of the symbols of this loss of centre. Specifically, he believes that “the Nietzschean critique of metaphysics, the critique of the concepts of Being and truth, for which were substituted the concepts of play, interpretation, and sign (sign without present truth),” is a major step in the destruction of the centre, and of definitive meaning as such.⁵⁶ This “centre” is what limits the “play” of a given structure: it is the governing object, itself standing outside of the realm of substitutions, which sets the rules for a particular order. Derrida maintains that traditionally this centre is thought to be a presence, an object that manifests the limits of the structure.⁵⁷ For example, the Constitution of the United States governs the degree of flexibility in its political and legal systems. Certain manoeuvres within the American political and legal systems are allowed while others are excluded based on the contents of the Constitution.⁵⁸ As such, it acts as the centring object limiting the degree of play the structure may undertake, and if abandoned, the structure itself will be discarded, with a new structure taking its place.⁵⁹

Derrida discusses what he calls a “rupture” in the history of metaphysics, signalled by a number of thinkers, one of whom is Nietzsche.⁶⁰ The rupture comes about from the realization that the centre is not an entity, or being, but is instead a function, akin to the dead centre of a parabola. The centre (or focus) may be altered, changing the structure (the curve of the parabola) along with it. But the centre is not actually an existent object (it is not, and cannot be, a point on the curve). The major shift in modernity, Derrida holds, is the realization that changing or substituting the centre may be done at will, without limitation, which opens up the world of structures to the infinite play of substitutions. Derrida sees two reactions to this rupture. One is the “structuralist thematic of broken immediacy,” which is “the saddened, *negative*, nostalgic, guilty, Rousseauistic side of the thinking of play.”⁶¹ This reaction “dreams of deciphering a truth or an origin which escapes play and the order of the sign, and...lives the necessity of interpretation as an exile.”⁶² Here we have a longing for a return to the old order,

⁵⁶ Derrida, “Structure, Sign, and Play,” 280.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 278-279.

⁵⁸ Although one may argue that the contents of the Constitution can be changed, therefore making it a part of the political and legal systems rather than standing outside of these systems, such changes are still regulated processes that rely on the Constitution, which is what governs how these changes take place. As such, the Constitution remains the ‘centre’ for the American political and legal systems, because it governs the operations of these systems. For it not to be considered the centre, these systems would have to operate in opposition, or without reference, to the Constitution.

⁵⁹ For instance, when the American colonies proclaimed independence from the British Empire and established a new constitution, designed to govern their political and legal system, they developed a new political-legal structure with its own unique boundaries of play.

⁶⁰ Derrida, “Structure, Sign, and Play,” 280.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 292.

⁶² *Ibid.*

achieved by discovering some centre or truth which is able to stand firm against the chaotic flux of interpretation and becoming, and ground human interpretation in some definitive way. The second reaction is “the Nietzschean *affirmation*, that is the joyous affirmation of the play of the world and the innocence of becoming, the affirmation of a world of signs without fault, without truth, and without origin...*This affirmation then determines the noncenter otherwise than as loss of the center.*”⁶³

Instead of being disappointed and nostalgic for the old ideals of absolute presence, the Nietzschean reaction breathes a sigh of relief and exhibits an excitement at the new world of possibilities that is opened up. This loss of centre “affirms play and tries to pass beyond man and humanism, the name of man being the name of that being who, throughout the history of metaphysics...has dreamed of full presence, the reassuring foundation, the origin and the end of play.”⁶⁴ By abandoning the old ideal of a definitive centre or origin to provide a solid ground for interpretation, and fully embracing the infinite, centreless play of substitutions, Nietzsche thereby embraces infinite interpretation. And these interpretations cannot be evaluated by some independent truth, defined in relation to being, for this possibility is abandoned in the wake of the modern rupture from the old paradigm.

As is easily seen, Derrida’s account is similar to Kofman’s. In particular, both thinkers agree that Nietzsche abandons the old concept of truth as defined in relation to being and embraces a new interpretative structure outside of the ‘true/false’ dichotomy. For them, Nietzsche embraces the subjectivist, relativistic side of interpretation and does not try to provide new ‘truths,’ other than pointing out the pitfalls and problems of trying to present truths.⁶⁵ Paul de Man proposes a similar reading of Nietzsche. De Man’s reading focuses on Nietzsche’s early analysis of language, which he believes extends throughout the rest of his works. De Man bases his view in large part on *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) as well as early, unpublished texts, specifically Nietzsche’s university course on rhetoric (held 1872-1873), “On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense” (1873), and the unused notes for *The Birth*. De Man argues that Nietzsche held all language to be figural or performative and not constative or declarative. This means that language never acts to purely assert facts or transmit an independent reality into words (this being the classical view of language). Under such a traditional paradigm, rhetoric and its linguistic devices, specifically tropes, are used in an artistic manner to emphasize certain elements of speech and influence an audience. This classical paradigm presumes that language is basically constative and that tropes are a marginal, derivative phenomenon used to manipulate language and its audience toward a desired end. Contrary to this view, Nietzsche’s linguistic analysis contends that “[t]he trope is not a derived, marginal, or aberrant

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ And these observations are presumably true, at least in some sense.

form of language but the linguistic paradigm par excellence. The figurative structure is not one linguistic mode among others but it characterizes language as such.”⁶⁶ This amounts to “a full reversal of the established priorities which traditionally root the authority of the language in its adequation to an extralinguistic referent or meaning, rather than in the intralinguistic resources of figures.”⁶⁷

Although de Man’s reading is focussed on the early works, he contends that this view of language persists throughout Nietzsche’s thought. He illustrates this claim by applying the early linguistic theory to some of Nietzsche’s later notes.⁶⁸ He believes that this analysis of language is “the key to Nietzsche’s critique of metaphysics.”⁶⁹ The impact of this theory is that it unhinges language from any definitive connection to extralinguistic phenomena, freeing its meaning or truth from objects. This is the same point that Kofman and Derrida pursued. De Man points out in an analysis of one of Nietzsche’s later notes that he engages in unhinging terms typically thought to be static, reversing binary polarities that seem fixed by traditional metaphysics (e.g., inside/outside, cause/effect).⁷⁰ It is this type of play that makes de Man’s Nietzsche remarkably close to Derrida’s, as one who engages in the play of substitutions without limit.

De Man puts his reading of Nietzsche to work in an examination of *The Birth of Tragedy*. He questions the statements of the text, which appear straightforwardly constative (declarative), and seem to upset what he believes Nietzsche says elsewhere. De Man argues that Nietzsche extricates himself from this self-contradictory position by the way in which the narrative voice of *The Birth* undermines itself. The text argues against modern drama (the counterpart to the Euripidean drama) and representational music, contrasting these with the true tragic origin of music. Part of this new, rationalized, Socratic art was the institution of a prologue and epilogue, told by a trustworthy figure (usually a god). This narrator ensured that the drama was true and explained what came before and what was to come after the narrative of the drama. Nietzsche criticizes this development as a rationalization of Dionysian art which acted to further remove it from the wellspring of true tragedy. Despite this criticism, de Man notes that Nietzsche, at the beginning and end of the text, in almost Euripidean fashion, invokes Richard Wagner as the “quasi-divine figure” that ensures the truth of the narrative, and is promised in the end to succeed in a rebirth of Greek tragedy.⁷¹ This, he thinks, entitles him to submit the text of *The Birth* to the same criticism Nietzsche levels against Euripides. This calls into question the legitimacy of the claims made in *The Birth* by use of its own argument.

⁶⁶ de Man, *Allegories of Reading*, 105.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 106.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 106-109.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 109.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 107-108.

⁷¹ Ibid., 95-96.

De Man also argues that *The Birth* provides a genetic analysis in its attempt to separate the rational and tragic art forms, showing how the more recent, rational form developed out of the original tragic one. De Man holds that the various claims regarding the nature of Dionysus and Apollo within the text are incongruent with each other. Initially the two are introduced in a Schopenhauerian/Kantian fashion: Apollo is appearance and Dionysus the thing-in-itself. Additionally, Apollo is the necessary appearance, which knows itself as mere appearance and not true reality, which masks any knowledge of the Dionysian. This masking by appearance occurs because pure apprehension of this thing-in-itself (the tragic insight of life) would prove deadly. But the narrator proceeds to make (presumably) true claims about Dionysus, tragic wisdom, and the development of art. The peak of these claims is that Wagnerian opera will allow us to again access the Dionysian, tragic truth of life. These two approaches offer conflicting accounts, which undermines the narrative coherence of the text. This incoherence is exacerbated, de Man argues, when later in the text the Dionysian and Apollonian are placed in a mere quantitative relation with the Socratic, with all three evaluated by their degree of removal from some ultimate truth of reality. This quantitative evaluation serves to further undermine the antithesis of appearance/reality which serves as the narrative structure for the majority of the book.⁷²

But de Man holds that this incoherence in the main narrative structure does not serve to show that *The Birth* is merely a self-contradictory work. He maintains that *The Birth* serves as a deconstruction of itself, utilizing the linguistic tools set out within the text and the notes surrounding its production, aimed at opening up a new conceptual sphere rather than providing straightforward claims.⁷³ The opening of this new sphere is achieved by a linguistically focussed reading. As de Man claims, “[a] more rhetorically aware reading of *The Birth of Tragedy* shows that all the authoritative claims that it seems to make can be undermined by means of statements provided by the text itself.”⁷⁴ This self-undermining structure, an “allegory of errors,” turns out to be “the very model of philosophical rigor,” because it exemplifies the properly rhetorical nature of language.⁷⁵ Despite all of this, de Man denies that Nietzsche has revealed a substantial, lasting truth about language. This denial comes from the inability of the deconstruction to be carried all the way through, leaving the analysis permanently suspended.⁷⁶

This inability to complete the deconstruction arises from another seeming contradiction within Nietzsche’s texts. On the one hand, de Man notes that Nietzsche denies the law of non-contradiction, which he thinks makes any use of language a speech act, a performative action, devoid of any epistemic authority.

⁷² Ibid., 97-99.

⁷³ Ibid., 98-99.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 117.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 118.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 130.

On the other, in certain texts Nietzsche deconstructs our very ability to act at all, thus undermining the notion that all speaking is a certain performative action.⁷⁷ The result is that “[t]he differentiation between performative and constative language...is undecidable; the deconstruction leading from the one model to the other is irreversible but it always remains suspended, regardless of how often it is repeated.”⁷⁸ So in the end Nietzsche does not provide us with a new truth about language, that it is primarily rhetorical in nature and not constative.⁷⁹ Instead he leaves us hanging, unable to affirm either that language is constative or performative, stuck in the midst of an indeterminate deconstruction. And this means that Nietzsche’s own texts, with their self-contradictory nature embraced, exhibit a new form of philosophical rigor that exemplifies this lack of epistemic authority. The congruency of de Man’s reading with the works of Kofman and Derrida should be apparent from his view of Nietzsche’s attitude towards the nature of language and its relation to truth.

While other postmodern readings could be analyzed, the current discussion should suffice to establish a number of basic points.⁸⁰ The first is that Nietzsche rejects traditional notions of truth. Where the philosophical tradition held truth to be correspondence with being, Nietzsche breaks this link and endorses the endlessness of interpretation. Postmodern writers generally take this endlessness to mean that Nietzsche has rejected the traditional properties of truth, namely correspondence and objectivity. He also undermines the very concept of being by embracing an ontology of becoming, siding with Heraclitus against Plato. As a result, Nietzsche rejects the claim that science reveals more truth than other modes of thought, simply because there are no deeper truths to be revealed. Because of this limitation, science turns out to be simply another domain of discourse, whose hegemony in the truth business comes from factors other than its objectivity. This view also means that reading and writing are freed from any determinate meaning of texts, again because there is no stable, independently existing objectivity for interpretations to correspond to. Finally, because of Nietzsche’s epistemological position, his critiques boil down to an assault on those who claim objectivity, and his own positive assertions (about what is true or good) turn out to be nothing but his subjective preferences. The only ‘objective’ reason Nietzsche’s preferences are better than anyone else’s is because he recognizes the contingency and subjectivity of his own values, and he endorses the promulgation of interpretations by others.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Ibid., 120-130.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 130.

⁷⁹ Although this does appear to be starkly at odds with what de Man claims earlier in his work. Cf. de Man, *Allegories of Reading*, 105-106.

⁸⁰ For other potential postmodern readings, see: Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History;” Foucault, “Nietzsche, Freud, Marx;” Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*; Cox, *Nietzsche: Naturalism and Interpretation*.

⁸¹ Though the question remains why this would be a valuable end in itself, or stand as objectively good in some sense.

The Modern Response

The modern reading of Nietzsche has risen largely in response to the postmodern reading. This “modern” reading attempts to place Nietzsche more in line with the traditional aims of Western philosophy than the postmodern reading does, arguing that Nietzsche is committed to truth, knowledge, and science. The modern reading also holds that his claims are meant seriously, and are not just expressions of his own subjective preference.⁸² These readings pick up on the inability of the postmodern reading to satisfactorily account for all of Nietzsche’s work, as he often lauds science and his claims do not simply sound like expressions of personal preference.

Kaufmann provides one of the earliest and most influential modern accounts of Nietzsche. In his study, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (first published in 1950), Kaufmann aims to rehabilitate Nietzsche from his association with the Nazis and what he saw as a perversion of Nietzsche’s philosophy at their hands. His hope was that Nietzsche would become a legitimate topic of study for Anglo-American philosophers. To facilitate this, he produced a number of fine translations of Nietzsche’s works into English in the hopes of broadening Nietzsche’s appeal. In this effort Kaufmann largely succeeded: Nietzsche has been more or less purged of his association with Nazism in the scholarly community, and there has been a veritable explosion of English scholarship on him in the last sixty years.⁸³

Kaufmann attempts to firmly place him in the Western cannon as continuous with Socrates, Plato, Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel, and not as some “wayward disciple” of Schopenhauer or as “a lone epigone of the pre-Socratics.”⁸⁴ Unfortunately Kaufmann has a tendency to ‘whitewash’ some of the more challenging and inflammatory aspects of Nietzsche’s thought, which has the effect of making Nietzsche seem *too* continuous with the Western tradition in some respects. For instance, Kaufmann maintains that while the will to power is “the core of Nietzsche’s thought,” ‘power’ in this sense is actually a state of being, desirable in and of itself.⁸⁵ Kaufmann also maintains that Nietzsche retains the pursuit of truth as one of his highest goals and “still sees himself as a devotee

⁸² Brian Leiter is an exception here, because he believes that Nietzsche does not think his moral claims have any more epistemic merit than those of others. However, Leiter’s modern reading holds that Nietzsche *does* think that his claims about the natural world have more merit (i.e. are more true) than those of others, and that these claims can explain away what appear to be moral phenomena. See Leiter, “Nietzsche’s Metaethics: Against the Privilege Readings;” Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*.

⁸³ While the Nazi association has been combated to the extent that Nietzsche is a legitimate topic of study without informed readers automatically connecting him with Nazism, the question of some connection between the two has not been entirely closed off. See, for example: Golomb and Wistrich, *Nietzsche, Godfather of Fascism?*

⁸⁴ Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, xiii.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, xiv, 360.

of truth.”⁸⁶ He even goes so far as to claim that Socrates “is the very embodiment of Nietzsche’s highest ideal: the passionate man who can control his passions.”⁸⁷ Overall he sees Nietzsche essentially as an Enlightenment thinker, one with a consistent project and who remains a devotee to the traditional view of truth as correspondence.⁸⁸ For Kaufmann, Nietzsche is anti-racist and anti-nationalist, is in favour of the independent, free thinking ‘good European,’ and like Socrates “would rather arouse a zest for knowledge than commit anyone to his own views.”⁸⁹ While Kaufmann’s account does capture some aspects of Nietzsche’s thought, it remains simplified and tendentiously motivated by the desire to appeal to Anglo-American readers. The Anglo-American literature on Nietzsche has dealt with Kaufmann and his legacy. In particular John T. Wilcox and Maudemarie Clark identify their own projects as continuations of and improvements to Kaufmann’s position.

Wilcox’s study, *Truth and Value in Nietzsche*, is a more critical examination of the relation between Nietzsche’s epistemology and metaethics than Kaufmann was able to provide in his overarching study. Wilcox keenly picks up on the issue of the relation of Nietzsche’s epistemological thinking and his own values, the central question being “the extent to which, and the ways in which, he regarded his own values as objective.”⁹⁰ The problem facing any interpreter on this issue is the apparent incongruity of Nietzsche’s perspectivism with (what at least appear to be) his own value statements. To get out of this bind, one or the other of these two positions may be altered or sacrificed to give priority to the other, either insulating his value claims from his perspectivism, or acknowledging that he provides values that are ‘only his’ and not meant to be true for anyone else. This is the interpretive problem that the modern and postmodern readers grapple with and to which they provide alternative solutions.

Wilcox focuses his question by asking whether or not Nietzsche is a metaethical cognitivist, which would mean that he believed “that it is possible in principle to verify or falsify evaluative claims in ways open to the scrutiny of all who enquire” and “that when the facts are determined the values of the facts can be determined, too.”⁹¹ However, Wilcox does not gloss over the issue of Nietzsche’s seemingly contradictory claims. His study examines the case both for Nietzsche as a cognitivist and as a non-cognitivist, carefully examining the evidence for both views. He concludes that Nietzsche adopted a sort of ‘transcognitive’ approach in which our cognitive faculties are employed destructively, tearing down values by attacking their presuppositions, and we then create new values in some non-cognitive way. However, Wilcox does not believe that the actual union of these two approaches, or the method of creating these new

⁸⁶ Ibid., 361.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 399.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 360, 403.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 400-403.

⁹⁰ Wilcox, *Truth and Value in Nietzsche*, 3.

⁹¹ Ibid., 12.

values, is ever fully worked out by Nietzsche, and as such this question is left unanswered in the end.⁹²

Epistemologically Wilcox offers a developmental view of Nietzsche's thought. He argues that in the early works Nietzsche adopts the Kantian thing-in-itself which provides the basis for his scepticism about our ability to gain truth. However, this belief turns to agnosticism and later outright denial of the thing-in-itself in the later works.⁹³ Wilcox believes that this view made Nietzsche reject any kind of transcendent knowledge, particularly of the thing-in-itself, but not empirical knowledge. It is this position, he believes, that accounts for a significant portion of Nietzsche's claims that we cannot have any truth.⁹⁴ With Nietzsche's shift away from transcendental, metaphysical philosophy, Wilcox offers a vision of Nietzsche's more mature position. Here he argues that Kant's categories become replaced by a kind of Darwinian human development: we think the way we do because we have evolved to do so.⁹⁵ This Darwinism coupled with the abandonment of transcendental truth leaves us with a new kind of truth: a perspectival, human truth.

This new type of truth is always hypothetical and empirical, as well as simplifying.⁹⁶ It simplifies because our concepts make equivalent that which is not, as one concept may apply to a multitude of objects which are each unique.⁹⁷ This simplification also means that this new form of truth necessarily involves a kind of error. Our human truths are mired in "inescapable error," but part of Nietzsche's revaluation of values is that we must affirm this error and no longer desire something beyond (a transcendental, objectively certain truth).⁹⁸ Despite the necessity of error, Wilcox maintains that Nietzsche believes that his new form of truth allows him to make the attacks he does, for instance against Christianity. And Nietzsche's new truths may also be evaluated by a variety of standards.⁹⁹ Although Wilcox sees Nietzsche advocating the creation of new values on some non-cognitivist ground, he does maintain that this creation must be done in accordance with the new perspectival truths that we find.¹⁰⁰

There is much to admire in Wilcox's study. First, he focuses on the main nexus of problems in Nietzsche's epistemology, namely, whether or not he holds any claims to be objectively true. Wilcox's nuanced view also does not disregard Nietzsche's non-cognitivist strands. However, some problems remain. For one, there is the issue of Nietzsche's replacing Kant's categories with some kind of Darwinian explanation for the cognitive functioning of humans. While I believe

⁹² Ibid., 201.

⁹³ Ibid., 114.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 124-125.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 146-147.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 155-157.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 128-135.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 170.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 155-159. It is not clear in Wilcox's account, however, if these standards should necessarily be fixed or exchangeable. He does make clear, though, that there are many standards (158).

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 190.

that Wilcox was on the right path in this regard, recent literature seriously questions Nietzsche's relationship to Darwinism and evolution.¹⁰¹ We will return to this issue in chapter two. Another issue concerns what evaluative criteria we may use in judging interpretations. While Nietzsche does at times praise error or illusion, Wilcox concludes that on the whole "the truth-making characteristics are preferable to their opposites," and that the higher type is the one who "demands for himself an interpretation which is rigorous, comprehensive, subtle, and confirmed by the evidence of the senses."¹⁰² Although Wilcox provides a more nuanced view than Kaufmann, he still advocates a type of Enlightenment Nietzsche with a deep appreciation for the value of truth and empirical reality, and who only sometimes sees the value of illusion and error.¹⁰³ But again we are faced with the fact that throughout Nietzsche's texts we find him both affirming the value of truth while simultaneously holding that humans cannot live without error.

One major development of Wilcox's view has been Maudemarie Clark's *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*. Her study follows and builds on Kaufmann and Wilcox, who hold that Nietzsche rejects the possibility of metaphysical truth, but allows for standard empirical truths of various forms.¹⁰⁴ Clark's argument adds to this conception by providing an account of why there are so many passages where Nietzsche denies the possibility of truth and sounds akin to the postmoderns. Clark does this by presenting a developmental view of Nietzsche's epistemology and ontology.¹⁰⁵ She argues that he initially accepted a metaphysical correspondence theory of truth and a Kantian epistemology. According to this view, truth is defined as correspondence to the thing-in-itself (the way things actually are, not just how we see them), and because we are unable to access the thing-in-itself we are therefore cut off from truth altogether.¹⁰⁶ This is what Clark deems the "falsification thesis": the view that all our claims falsify reality and we never have access to truth. It is this, she claims, that is the basis for the postmodern view which holds that Nietzsche rejects truth altogether.¹⁰⁷

Clark argues that Nietzsche's early work, particularly *The Birth of Tragedy*, was heavily influenced by Schopenhauer and his Kantian views. In particular, she believes that Nietzsche adopted a form of Schopenhauer's representational theory of perception. This theory holds that we do not perceive

¹⁰¹ Richardson, *Nietzsche's New Darwinism*, and Johnson, *Nietzsche's Anti-Darwinism*.

¹⁰² Wilcox, 159.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 158.

¹⁰⁴ Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 5-6, 21. However, she argues against Wilcox's view that Nietzsche believes concepts always falsify reality, because this would undercut our ability to attain empirical truth (6-7). Her reasoning for this will be made evident below.

¹⁰⁵ As noted earlier, Wilcox provides a similar framework, arguing that throughout his works Nietzsche moved from embracing the thing-in-itself to ultimately rejecting it. Clark's reading progresses much the same way, although she does not cite Wilcox as a forbearer in this regard.

¹⁰⁶ Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 21-22.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 22-23.

objects directly. Instead, we perceive the representations of our sense organs, which are stimulated by something external.¹⁰⁸ This theory entails that we never have direct perceptions of objects themselves but instead deal only with our subjective representations. This system leaves room for the thing-in-itself as the extramental basis of our representations, but which itself is never experienced directly by the subject. This theory has two major implications. The first is that the world may be radically different from how we perceive it. If we only deal with our representations, there is no guarantee that these accurately reflect what produces them. The second implication is that all of our language refers only to these representations of the external world, not the external world itself. As such, our designations of ‘truth’ and ‘falsity’ refer to subjective representations. Unlike Schopenhauer, who believes that the notion of independently existing objects involves a contradiction, Clark argues that Nietzsche does not reject this common sense notion. Because of this difference, Clark believes that while adopting this representational theory of perception from Schopenhauer, Nietzsche simultaneously subscribes to a metaphysical correspondence theory of truth. It is this combination of views that Clark believes underpins Nietzsche’s early denial of our ability to attain truth, and grounds the postmodern reading of him.¹⁰⁹

But as Nietzsche develops, Clark believes that he changes views on these subjects. She argues that he comes to question Schopenhauer’s theory of perception and ultimately abandons it, along with his belief in the thing-in-itself. She argues that by the time of *Human, All Too Human* Nietzsche had become agnostic about the notion of a metaphysical world. By this expression she means the possibility that the world is radically different from how we conceptualize it, which requires belief in the thing-in-itself. Here Clark holds that because Nietzsche admits that “there *might* be a metaphysical world” he must also “claim that there *is* a thing-in-itself, that is, that the world’s true nature is independent of (but not necessarily different from) the best human theory.”¹¹⁰ However, this claim is overstated. Simply because Nietzsche is not willing to assert that there definitively is no metaphysical or hidden world which holds the true nature reality – independent of and possibly very different from human cognition – does not mean that he endorses the thing-in-itself. Instead, Nietzsche’s position amounts merely to agnosticism regarding the thing-in-itself. While this agnosticism leaves open the possibility that a thing-in-itself exists, it does not mean (contrary to Clark’s claim) that he endorses its existence. She maintains that his agnosticism

¹⁰⁸ This conclusion stems from the principle of causality for Schopenhauer. As he claims, “[t]here is an immediate cognizance of the alternations experienced by any animal body, i.e., they are sensed, and insofar as the effect is referred at once to its cause, there arises a perception of the latter as an *object*.” Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Presentation*, vol. 1, §4.

¹⁰⁹ Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 79-83.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 98-99.

comes from his inability to entirely reject the metaphysical world in his middle works, despite his inclination to do so.¹¹¹

A more recent development in Clark's view makes her position on this issue unclear. She defends her view (with minor modifications) in later publications. For example, she writes that the aim of *Human, All Too Human* "is to induce scepticism concerning the metaphysical world by showing it to be cognitively superfluous."¹¹² Here the developmental thesis is still central. Clark holds that from his earlier works Nietzsche's view shifts from embracing art to valuing science. It is only with this shift in *Human, All Too Human* that Nietzsche could see "that science gives us our only access to truth (apart from perception, on which it is based), the only truth that could be of any real concern to us."¹¹³ She further describes Nietzsche's move away from metaphysics and towards science:

For his rejection of metaphysics amounts to the claim that if there is a metaphysical world, a truth that differs from empirical truth, we have no way of knowing either that it is or what it is. But that leaves empirical knowledge as the only kind of human knowledge. Of course, any current empirical theory might be false, but the reasons for thinking so will be empirical reasons; *Human, All Too Human* denies that there is any external standpoint from which to undertake a cognitive critique of empirical knowledge.¹¹⁴

Given this description of Nietzsche's position, it is hard to see how the agnosticism of *Human, All Too Human* amounts to an affirmation of the thing-in-

¹¹¹ Clark's position rests on how she defines the thing-in-itself. She claims that to believe in the thing-in-itself means "to believe that truth and reality are independent not only of our capacities, but also of our cognitive interests...to believe in the thing-in-itself is to believe that our best theory *might* be not only false, but radically false, that the truth *might* differ radically from what can be manifest to us" (ibid., 98). This definition makes believing in the thing-in-itself equivalent to agnosticism about the 'true' nature of the world. But such a view is at odds with what she elsewhere claims that Nietzsche likely understood by the thing-in-itself. Citing Paul Guyer's account of Kant, Clark suggests that Nietzsche most likely understood the thing-in-itself as being outside of time and space (ibid., 57). Indeed, Nietzsche's position in TL reflects such a view when he claims that the "only things we really know" about the laws of nature are the "things which we bring to bear on them: time and space, in other words, relations of succession and number" (TL, 149). If Nietzsche did understand the thing-in-itself in this way, then to believe in the thing-in-itself should mean to believe that the 'true' nature of the world (independently of how we perceive it) *is* radically different from its appearance, and not merely that it *may* be radically different, which collapses Clark's distinction between it and the metaphysical world. I will typically use the term 'thing-in-itself' to refer to a world radically different from the one available to humans in experience, although Nietzsche's use of the term changes throughout his texts. Despite the difference in terminology between Clark and myself, I believe she is right in tracking Nietzsche's move away from the thing-in-itself, beginning with agnosticism in HH and growing to outright rejection of the coherency of the notion in later works.

¹¹² Clark, "On Knowledge, Truth, and Value," 49.

¹¹³ Ibid., 51.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 51-52.

itself. It seems clear from Clark's own account that by this time Nietzsche's position does not rely on the thing-in-itself, as he holds it to be cognitively superfluous due to its inaccessibility, if not simply an incoherent notion. Despite this discrepancy, Clark is right to note that Nietzsche's position does grow more openly hostile towards the thing-in-itself in his later works.

Clark believes that by the time of *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche has found a way to completely reject the metaphysical world. She holds that by then he has decided that the thing-in-itself is a contradiction in terms and is ultimately a hollow idea. She thinks the best argument for this comes from GS 54, where Nietzsche argues that the idea of an essence completely independent from any appearance is incomprehensible. This stands in contrast to his earlier claims that the way things actually are in their essences either are (TL), or could be (HH), radically different from how we perceive them. Clark believes that with this rejection of the thing-in-itself Nietzsche has actually lost all basis for his claim that we cannot access truth.¹¹⁵ She holds that the evidence for this change comes from the fact that the last six books intended for publication contain "no evidence of Nietzsche's earlier denial of truth: no claim that the human world is a falsification, no claim that science, logic, or mathematics falsify reality."¹¹⁶ But she also holds that it took him some time to realize this implication. In particular, she believes that Nietzsche rejects the thing-in-itself in *The Gay Science* and *Beyond Good and Evil*, but maintains the falsification thesis in these same works. Clark not only argues that Nietzsche retained the falsification thesis during these works while more strongly rejecting the thing-in-itself, but she also believes that the falsification thesis is actually strengthened. She notes that in BGE, "[i]n apparent contrast to [HH], Nietzsche now counts as falsifications not merely common sense views, but also scientific ones."¹¹⁷ If the falsification thesis is premised on the thing-in-itself in the way Clark claims, it is reasonable to expect Nietzsche to move away from this thesis while more openly rejecting the thing-in-itself. But on Clark's account the opposite happens, with Nietzsche endorsing the falsification thesis more radically while simultaneously undermining his own reasons to do so. This rejection of the thing-in-itself while holding onto the falsification thesis points to an alternative basis for the latter, and Clark holds that Nietzsche himself thought there was one. As evidence she cites GS 354 where Nietzsche explicitly denies that his description of our falsification of reality relies on the opposition between thing-in-itself and appearance.¹¹⁸

However, Clark thinks Nietzsche is actually confused about his own position in these works. She argues that the representational model of perception, which he retained during this period, actually keeps him implicitly committed to the thing-in-itself. This arises because the representational model holds that we only access our own representations of objects, and never deal directly with

¹¹⁵ Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 99-103.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 103.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 117.

objects themselves. Given this situation, we are left with two options: we may either (1) affirm the existence of independent objects, without any empirical reason for doing so (thus affirming the thing-in-itself, the inaccessible object of our perception); or (2) accept that only our own representations have existence, thus embracing subjective idealism.¹¹⁹ Clark believes that after Nietzsche denies the existence of the thing-in-itself he is forced into subjective idealism, affirming that only our representations have existence. This raises the question of what is falsified by the falsification thesis, which in these works still claims that science and logic falsify reality. Clark believes the “most plausible answer” is “that knowledge falsifies the ‘chaos of sensations.’”¹²⁰

She explains this expression by referring heavily to *The Will to Power* 569 and to GS 354. Clark argues that after rejecting the thing-in-itself, Nietzsche holds that “the data of sensation constitute[s] reality,” that it is “the only given aspect, the only thing not made up by our minds,” and that “the *a priori* features [that] the brain’s organisation imposes on sensations falsify reality, making it appear to have features it does not actually possess.”¹²¹ This is tied to Nietzsche’s explanation of the development of human consciousness, which he links to the need for communication between individuals. Consciousness, he holds, develops only from the need for communication. What becomes conscious is actually only a superficial gloss on the unique experience of the individual. These conscious states are then turned into stable communication signs designed to evoke the required responses from other individuals. This becoming conscious falsifies the chaos of sensations because the vast array of sensations are subsumed under the crude rubric of common language. The result of this simplification is many false beliefs, for instance in enduring objects. From the chaos of sensations alone we have no reason to believe that objects endure over time or unperceived. But human cognitive functioning, developed through evolution, imposes this belief on us because of its advantage for survival.¹²²

Clark believes that Nietzsche does not think that the chaos of sensations constitutes another ‘true world,’ a metaphysical world affirming the thing-in-itself, because this theory of knowledge is based on empirical evidence and evolutionary theory. However, she notes that there is a major problem with this theory, one that Nietzsche realizes and finally overcomes. For this realization she points to *Beyond Good and Evil* 15, where Nietzsche holds that to “study physiology with a clear conscience, one must insist that the sense organs are *not* phenomena in the sense of idealistic philosophy; as such they could not be causes.”¹²³ If Nietzsche is basing his theory of knowledge and the falsification thesis on the empirical sciences (particularly physiology), then he must presuppose the existence of external objects, such as the human body and the

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 118-119.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 119-120.

¹²¹ Ibid., 121-122.

¹²² Ibid., 120-123.

¹²³ Nietzsche, BGE, 15. Cited in Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 123.

objects it interacts with. This conflicts with his supposed turn to subjective idealism, and Clark believes that “[h]e did not realize (until he formulated the argument BG 15) that his empirical theory presupposed the existence of independently existing things.”¹²⁴ This means that in GS and BGE Nietzsche actually did presuppose the existence of inaccessible objects, things-in-themselves, and along with them a ‘true’ or metaphysical world. Clark maintains that the way out of this dilemma is to reject representationalism, which she argues Nietzsche does in his works after BGE.¹²⁵

There is a major problem with the textual evidence Clark uses for her developmental thesis. She bases her interpretation of Nietzsche’s falsification thesis in his mature works, after his rejection of the thing-in-itself, on GS 354. It is here, she believes, that Nietzsche argues we falsify the chaos of sensations via our evolved cognitive apparatus. But this presupposes the existence of independent objects, thus forcing Nietzsche to embrace things-in-themselves all over again. Clark holds that “he seems to have realized [this] when he writes” BGE 15, and jettisons the entire view in his later work.¹²⁶ The problem with this reading lies in the chronology. Specifically, GS 354 is contained in book five of *The Gay Science*, which was added to the original 1882 edition in 1887, while the entirety of *Beyond Good and Evil* was published 1886. This means that Nietzsche realized that an empirical account of human knowledge (as expressed in BGE 15) presupposes the existence of independent objects in 1886, but then expounded an idealistic view relying on the ‘chaos of sensations’ in 1887 that was already incoherent by his own merits. Then, within the same year (1887), on Clark’s account, Nietzsche proceeds to write and publish *On the Genealogy of Morals*, which takes the lesson of BGE to overcome the view of GS. This wrecks the developmental view and gives us a Nietzsche who appears totally confused about his own views. If, as Clark holds, Nietzsche is fully committed to subjective idealism in GS 354, then he has no justification for explaining the development of human consciousness as a response to the need to communicate with others because he would need to presuppose the existence of external objects about which we have a need to communicate. Her reading of GS 354 is problematic for this reason, which seriously undermines the plausibility of her developmental thesis.¹²⁷ Clark herself has realized some of the problems for her account. In a 1998 article she revised her position, arguing that Nietzsche had abandoned the falsification thesis as early as *Human, All Too Human*.¹²⁸ But then in 2004 she

¹²⁴ Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 124.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 124-125.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹²⁷ In addition to this problem, her thesis is implausible because it commits Nietzsche to subjective idealism for a significant period (1882-1886/7), while he violently attacks this position for most of his philosophical career.

¹²⁸ Clark, “On Knowledge, Truth, and Value,” 62-65. This essay holds that at the time of HH Nietzsche adhered to empiricism, naturalism, and value anti-realism. Clark argues that Nietzsche’s later works continue this commitment to empiricism and naturalism, and that GS re-affirms HH’s commitment that “natural science discloses ‘the true nature of the world’” (65).

revised her position again, saying that it “is implausible” that the falsification thesis is absent so early on, and so holds that it is present in the first four books of *The Gay Science* but not afterwards.¹²⁹ Despite these revisions she maintains her account of the falsification thesis as well as the claim that Nietzsche overcame it in his later works.

Clark thinks Nietzsche is right to reject his earlier position on truth because it is actually confused and internally incoherent. And when this rejection occurs she believes “that what appears as radical in Nietzsche’s position on truth [which serves as a basis for the postmodern interpretation] is actually mistaken or confused and that it disappears from his later philosophy,” including his mature perspectivism.¹³⁰ While perspectivism is normally thought to entail the falsification thesis, Clark argues that in the mature works it does not. She holds that the only statement of perspectivism in the mature works, which by her account are those only after *Beyond Good and Evil*, is in *On the Genealogy of Morals* III, 12.¹³¹

In this text perspectivism is discussed metaphorically with the image of an eye viewing an object. Clark claims that Nietzsche’s point is that while we may have many different views on an object, there is no seeing from nowhere. Clark believes that the mature formulation of perspectivism is designed to show the incoherence of the thing-in-itself, by pointing out the absurdity of a view from nowhere.¹³² She holds that at this stage Nietzsche believes that we directly perceive objects, though always in a partial and one sided way. But this partial perception does not entail falsification, because there is no hidden essence that could be radically different from any of an object’s appearances.¹³³ Clark contrasts her view with another reading of the metaphor of perspective, articulated by Bernd Magnus and shared by Wilcox, Danto, Alexander Nehamas, and Richard Schacht. This reading holds that the metaphor is designed to draw our attention to the fact that we can never access all perspectives on an object at once. Our view is always partial and to that extent incorrect. Truth and objectivity, on this view, lie in all of the possible perspectives put together. But because we are unable to access all of these simultaneously, our perspectives may be said to falsify after all.¹³⁴ Clark argues against this view by pointing out that knowledge and objectivity are separate in what she takes to be this new formulation of perspectivism. Knowledge is perspectival and objectivity is the realization that one’s own perspective(s) may not be fully adequate. Nietzsche can encourage us to take up new and better perspectives by highlighting that we are always committed to some perspective. This is not to point out that all knowledge is ‘merely’ perspectival and therefore false in some way, but to encourage us to be

¹²⁹ Clark and Dudrick, “Nietzsche’s Post-Positivism,” 384.

¹³⁰ Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 22.

¹³¹ Ibid., 128.

¹³² Ibid., 132-133.

¹³³ Ibid., 137-138.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 144-145.

flexible in what perspectives we take up. In this way she believes he avoids the falsification thesis in his mature formulation of perspectivism.¹³⁵

Clark bolsters her account by arguing that Nietzsche's mature perspectivism does not deny that perspectives can be commensurable with each other. She observes that perspectivism is often considered to entail the claim that perspectives are incommensurable with each other, and that therefore Nietzsche has no claim to the cognitive superiority of his own perspectives and evaluations.¹³⁶ Clark thinks that this view rests on a belief in the thing-in-itself, as the standard by which we would be able to evaluate perspectives against one another. But because we are cut off from this evaluative standard we are unable to properly evaluate perspectives. Clark instead maintains that when Nietzsche abandoned the thing-in-itself he also abandoned the incommensurability of perspectives. As an alternative, she suggests that whenever two perspectives conflict, it may be possible that a third perspective be taken up that is neutral with respect to the conflict and is better able to satisfy our cognitive interests. This is not to maintain a priori that there will always be a third perspective to resolve conflicts, nor that there is necessarily a single perspective cognitively superior to all the others. These possibilities must be determined empirically, and there may indeed be cases where a third perspective cannot be found, just as there may be no one perspective superior to all others. Clark thinks that Nietzsche's model is malleable in this way, but maintains that this malleability does not require him to deny our ability to attain truth and evaluate perspectives.¹³⁷

Overall, Clark's interpretation of Nietzsche provides the modern reading with one of its strongest articulations. She offers a serious attempt to allow Nietzsche to proclaim truths and establish the superiority of his own perspectives while being able to account for his radical statements against truth. Her reading is also a response to the postmodern reading, which she believes captures Nietzsche's early thought but does not account for his subsequent development. However, Clark's reading is not without its problems. The developmental thesis she proposes suffers from internal difficulties, such as the chronology of her evidence and the status of Nietzsche's commitment to the thing-in-itself, as well as his supposed commitment to a metaphysical world in his middle works. Another problem is whether or not he actually abandons the falsification thesis in the later works. Clark has come under attack since her initial publication by authors who believe that Nietzsche did not do so.¹³⁸ There is strong evidence for this view and Clark's responses have not been entirely satisfactory, despite the revisions she has made to her reading.¹³⁹ My project gives an alternative account

¹³⁵ Ibid., 148-150.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 138-140.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 140-143.

¹³⁸ Such as Hussain, "Nietzsche's Positivism," and Anderson, "Overcoming Charity: The Case of Maudemarie Clark's *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*."

¹³⁹ In response to her critics, Clark has defended her view in subsequent publications. See Clark "On Knowledge, Truth, and Value," and Clark and Dudrick, "Nietzsche's Post-Positivism."

of the falsification thesis that allows Nietzsche to maintain it through his later works in a way more congruent with the textual evidence. It also has the advantage of not committing Nietzsche to the thing-in-itself or a metaphysical world from at least the beginning of his middle works (*Human, All Too Human*) onwards, and allows him justification for his positive claims and critiques.

Brian Leiter is another major source for the modern reading. Leiter has framed his reading of Nietzsche in direct opposition to the postmodern interpretation. His first publication on Nietzsche was an attack on Nehamas's claim that Nietzsche embraced "aestheticism," which Leiter takes to be the claim that Nietzsche saw the world as akin to a literary text and that "literary texts are essentially indeterminate...[and so] admit of a plurality of conflicting interpretations," which may be incompatible but equally good.¹⁴⁰ While Leiter acknowledges that Nietzsche is committed to interpretation as a basic condition of knowledge, he denies that this results in such 'aestheticism.' Leiter argues that belief in the indeterminacy of texts is a more recent development than Nehamas believes, and that although Nietzsche does sometimes use the metaphor of texts and other artistic images, he does not suggest that the contents of these remain essentially indeterminate. Instead, Leiter holds that Nietzsche is committed to naturalism, and that he maintains that other interpretations 'falsify' the text of man, which stands in stark contrast to the aestheticist or postmodern reading.¹⁴¹

More recently, Leiter has argued that Nietzsche practices a kind of methodological naturalism.¹⁴² This means that "philosophical inquiry...should be continuous with empirical inquiry in the sciences."¹⁴³ Nietzsche is also said to have aimed "to offer theories that explain various important human phenomena...[which] both draw on actual scientific results, particularly in physiology...[and that] are also *modeled* on science in the sense that they seek to reveal the causal determinants of these phenomena."¹⁴⁴ On this reading Nietzsche's philosophy is supposed to be congruent with the natural sciences, utilizing them in his philosophical explanations of phenomena (such as morality). This approach is appealing: Leiter establishes a plausible interpretative framework that highlights much of what Nietzsche has to say in favour of the natural sciences and their methods.

However, he also rejects some of Nietzsche's more radical pronouncements. He broadly endorses Clark's developmental thesis and believes that (at least) the mature Nietzsche does not subscribe to the postmodern position on truth and knowledge because "Nietzsche's epistemological views *evolved* quite dramatically during his philosophical career."¹⁴⁵ To defend this view, Leiter

¹⁴⁰ Leiter, "Nietzsche and Aestheticism," 275-277.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 276-280.

¹⁴² Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, 7.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 3.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 8.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 14-21. Though here on Leiter's account Nietzsche went through a period of scepticism, inspired partially by Schopenhauer and Lange, regarding the power of science after *Human, All*

argues that although Nietzsche does hold that we necessarily interpret our world, this does not entail the falsification thesis or a rejection of truth. In this spirit he offers a reading of GM, III, 12, which he holds to be “[t]he primary text in his mature work in which he does offer a sustained discussion” of perspectivism and interpretation “in an epistemological context.”¹⁴⁶ This reading draws attention to the optical analogy to perspectivism that Nietzsche gives in this text. The analogy points out that just as we necessarily see an object from some vantage point, we also necessarily know an object from some perspective. While optical conditions such as distance, angle, and viewing conditions determine how we view an object, perspectival conditions such as affects and interests determine how we come to know an object.¹⁴⁷

But Leiter does not think this perspectivism entails any scepticism about truth or knowledge. It only leads to the conclusion that our knowledge is always partial and may be improved upon. He also notes that this understanding of perspectivism is a critique of positivism and idealism and their claim that there are either interpretation-free truths or that truth is determined solely by human interests.¹⁴⁸ In making this point Leiter suggests that Nietzsche is more in line with the ideas of Ludwig Wittgenstein, Donald Davidson, and Wilfrid Sellars. These thinkers reject positivism and any empiricism that does not recognize the necessity of some level of mediation of data by human thought. But despite this affirmation of mediation, they do not take the postmodern step of denying the possibility of truth or our ability to gain knowledge of the world, nor do they embrace pragmatism. Rather, they allow for a form of epistemic hierarchy, holding that some of our claims about the world are better founded than others on epistemic, and not merely pragmatic, grounds.¹⁴⁹ Leiter’s way of connecting Nietzsche to more modern non-foundational epistemologists is significant, and much of what he says about the importance of science captures a major element that many postmodern readings miss about Nietzsche. However, the connection with non-foundational epistemology has more implications than Leiter realizes, as I will show in later chapters. And his endorsement of Clark’s developmental thesis is worrisome. As detailed above, Clark’s thesis is ill supported by the textual evidence, and Leiter’s position is weakened because of his reliance on her thesis. I will show that a reading which sees Nietzsche’s thought as continuous throughout his middle and mature works better accounts for the textual evidence

Too Human. HH here is thought to be Nietzsche’s ‘positivistic’ stage, which gives way to some scepticism, but ultimately results in the rejection of any noumenal/phenomenal world distinction and embraces the “*scientific* perspective as the correct or true one” (ibid., 21). On Leiter’s support of Clark’s (1990) developmental thesis, see Leiter, “Perspectivism in Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*,” 335.

¹⁴⁶ Leiter, “Perspectivism in Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*,” 343. Leiter refers back to this discussion in *Nietzsche on Morality* and defends essentially the same view (20-21).

¹⁴⁷ Leiter, “Perspectivism in Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*,” 343-347.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 347-351.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 342, 348-349.

and shows that the connection of Nietzsche's thought with non-foundational epistemology carries more radical consequences than Leiter realizes.

While the modern reading addresses a number of issues that the postmoderns raise, it still does not provide a totally satisfactory account of Nietzsche's thought. In particular, it tends to overcompensate in its reaction to the postmoderns by maintaining that Nietzsche eventually 'gets over' the falsification thesis and comes to a sensible position on truth, knowledge, and science. But if we are to believe this developmental thesis, it calls into question Nietzsche's other claims in the works that come before his supposed maturity. If, in these earlier works, Nietzsche's epistemological position is confused, then it seems odd to take his critiques of religion and morality in those "confused" works at face value. Also, as my later discussion will confirm, the textual evidence for the developmental thesis is questionable, as well as its picture of Nietzsche's early thought.

Chapter 2: Nietzsche's Developing Epistemology

Nietzsche's Early Position: Schopenhauer, Kant, and *The Birth of Tragedy*

While the focus of this project is Nietzsche's mature epistemological position, a few words must be said on his early thought. Both the modern and postmodern readings take Nietzsche's early works to maintain a sceptical position on truth. Clark's developmental thesis maintains that these works, particularly *The Birth of Tragedy* and "On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense," were influenced by his adherence to Schopenhauer and Kant, which he eventually outgrew.¹ This story has become relatively commonplace in the Nietzsche literature, and can be rehearsed briefly.

While studying classical philology Nietzsche stumbled across a copy of Schopenhauer's magnum opus, *The World as Will and Representation*, in a bookstore in Leipzig in 1865.² After voraciously devouring the book, Nietzsche became a Schopenhauerian and began his turn away from philology and towards philosophy. He continued down this path, reading the neo-Kantian Friedrich Albert Lange's *History of Materialism* in 1866.³ Nietzsche also met Richard Wagner (a confirmed Schopenhauerian) in 1868, which reinforced his adherence to Schopenhauer and his turn away from a philological career. Nietzsche's first book, *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music* (1872), is typically situated and understood against this backdrop. Its apparent metaphysical claims are taken at face value, with Nietzsche's vision being an uneasy fusion of Schopenhauer's notion of the will, Kant's thing-in-itself, and a quasi-historical narrative regarding the origin and degeneration of tragic art in ancient Greece. His works and notes immediately following this publication, especially "On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense," are also thought to adhere to this metaphysical philosophy.

But after a waning interest in the metaphysical speculations of Schopenhauer, a breakdown in relations with Wagner, and an increasing appreciation of the natural sciences, Nietzsche abandons this position and changes postures. With the publication of the first volume of *Human, All Too Human* (1878) his thought supposedly enters a 'positivistic' phase. Here Nietzsche harshly rejects the metaphysical presumptions of his earlier works and instead lauds science, critical inquiry, reason, and truth. Precisely how long this period lasts is a matter of debate, but typically *Human, All Too Human* and *Daybreak* are included in this phase (possibly along with the first edition of *The Gay Science* in

¹ It is interesting to note that Nietzsche's knowledge of Kant appears to come primarily from secondary sources. As Brobjer highlights, the young Nietzsche only seems to have read Kant's *Critique of Judgment* in 1867-1868, and we have no definitive evidence that he ever read more of Kant's works. Despite this lack of firsthand knowledge, Nietzsche did read a number of works focussed on Kant and his philosophy, and had a number of friends with a serious interest in Kant. For a more detailed discussion see Brobjer, *Nietzsche's Philosophical Context*, 36-40.

² Brobjer, *Nietzsche's Philosophical Context*, 29.

³ Ibid.

1882).⁴ After this phase of hard-nosed empiricism, Nietzsche then makes his way back to some of the artistic appreciation he had in his early works, and creates a new fusion along with science from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* onwards. This three period model was first proposed by Lou Salomé in 1894, and has survived many incarnations in the secondary literature on Nietzsche ever since.⁵

This developmental story is key to Clark's account of Nietzsche's epistemological position, and is taken up in many other treatments as well.⁶ However, there have been alternative approaches to Nietzsche's early works which deny such a sharp break in his thinking. One of the most promising of these is by James I. Porter. Porter maintains that Nietzsche was never an uncritical philologist who only later adopted a critical philosophical viewpoint. By a laborious examination of Nietzsche's philological works, notes, and lectures – ranging from his early thesis on Theognis and an unfinished work on Democritus, through his later works as a professor of classical philology at the University of Basel – Porter shows that Nietzsche was acutely aware of the problematic nature of classical philology itself. The most important and substantiated conclusion that he draws is that Nietzsche's philological work was always primarily concerned with the present and not the ancient past. Nietzsche's main focus lay on diagnosing what the study of antiquity showed about his modern German present: "The study of classics, Nietzsche claims, is literally the study of modernity."⁷ This is so for a number of reasons.

First of all, Nietzsche recognizes that we have no unmediated access to the past. We glean an image of a distant time and culture only through the scattered textual remains that have survived through many generations. As a result, our picture of the ancient Greeks and Romans is fragmented. It is as if we have some pieces of a puzzle, the rest of which has been lost, with no one left who knows how it all fits together. There are many ways of arranging the remaining pieces. One important theme Porter highlights is the philological debate between classicism and historicism during Nietzsche's time. Classicism, along with its underlying humanism, had been influential in German philological circles from the eighteenth into the nineteenth centuries. On this approach ancient Greece, especially Athens, was taken as an ideal to be studied. Along with this image of an ideal past came a narrative of decline, leading from the zenith of Greece in the sixth and fifth centuries BCE to the present. This image of the past acted as a

⁴ See Abbey's *Nietzsche's Middle Period* for an extended analysis of Nietzsche's views during this period, which she maintains is in line with Enlightenment thought and not the easily recognizable 'aristocratic' Nietzsche of the later works (see especially chapter 6). Another recent example of this kind of thinking comes from Brobjer's *Nietzsche's Philosophical Context*, where he maintains that in the middle period Nietzsche adopted "a position that was skeptical, free-spirited, placed science above art, and praised the Enlightenment" in contrast to "his earlier enthusiasm for metaphysics, idealism, pessimism, art, and aesthetics" (61).

⁵ Andreas-Salomé, *Nietzsche*, 8.

⁶ This is especially true of the modern readings. For instance, see Leiter's "Perspectivism in Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*."

⁷ Porter, *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future*, 175.

leading thread for philological enterprises, with the implicit goal of providing an ideal myth for modernity to strive for.⁸

Historicism rose up against the classicist method of philological inquiry. This new method prided itself on its positivistic rigour. Instead of being led by the ideal of a mythic antique past, philological inquiry was to be directed only by its objects of study and not adventitious efforts to create a modern myth. In this way historicism attempted to reject the intuitionist leanings of classicism, which attempted to fit the ‘puzzle’ of antiquity together in such a way as to affirm their ideal image of the Greeks and retell the story of a lost perfection on the basis of intuition and not by pure historical evidence. However, Porter contends that historicism never truly escaped classicism, something he believes Nietzsche realized and pointed out in his early philological works. Although historicism tries to explicitly reject the image of the ideal past and escape intuitionism, it implicitly relies on both. Merely by continuing the study of antiquity it affirms that it is valuable for the present. It also retains a form of intuitionism because no matter how intense the scrutiny of historical sources, there will always be a degree of artistic freedom in how the sources are put together and in what conclusions are drawn from them. Even the notion that there is a coherent ‘antiquity’ to be studied is merely an intuition or assumption, as Porter points out, one that vanishes on closer inspection but is nevertheless affirmed even by historicist philologists. Inversely, classicism itself always contains a grain of historicism, rooted in its attempt to ground its humanistic idealism with a historical foundation.⁹ This debate is something Nietzsche was intensely aware of, as it was a much discussed issue among philologists during his studies. Porter makes a convincing case that Nietzsche’s philological works performatively highlight the tensions and paradoxes of both classicism and historicism. Particularly, Nietzsche desired to show that any study of the past is governed by the concerns of the present, and this latter period is his real object of study.¹⁰ If this reading is correct, and Porter makes a strong case that it is, it seriously undermines the traditional narrative of Nietzsche ‘awakening’ from a pre-critical, solely philological mindset before his discovery of Schopenhauer and his turn away from philological writings. This narrative is often taken as something of a given without an attempt at substantiating the point. Porter corrects this with his exegesis of the philological works.

⁸ Ibid., 251-258. This is but one example of this theme, which runs through the whole of this work.

⁹ Ibid., 171-175, 265-73.

¹⁰ Porter goes into more detail than can be reproduced here. He makes an excellent case for the analogues between the themes of philological inquiry into the past and the concerns of the modern German present, including issues of identity, race, and political unification, displayed by some of the most prominent German philologists both before and after Nietzsche’s time. To cite merely one instance, Porter argues that Nietzsche’s *Encyclopaedia of Philology* project of 1871 is “a perfectly consistent example of his earliest philological thinking, which taken as a whole is a general reflection on modern culture and its historical contradictions” (ibid., 175). For more on this, see *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future*, chapters 4 and 5.

Porter's second major thesis is that Nietzsche never wholeheartedly endorses Schopenhauer or Kant(ianism).¹¹ He points out that while *The Birth of Tragedy* is normally taken as a work of metaphysical fancy, inspired by Nietzsche's devotion to Schopenhauer and Wagner, there are other considerations which point us away from this possibility. For one, Porter points out Nietzsche's study and high praise of Lange's *History of Materialism*. In this text Lange views Schopenhauer's work as "a 'regression' from Kant into an older, uncritical metaphysics."¹² Lange agrees with Kant that access to the thing-in-itself lies beyond human ability. But in a radicalization of Kant, Lange believes that everything we deal with is mere appearance or phenomenon. This means that Kant oversteps his own boundaries in positing the thing-in-itself and the categories as objective limits to our understanding.¹³ This critique obviously applies to Schopenhauer as well: while Kant merely retains the thing-in-itself as a limit on his epistemology, supposedly devoid of any positive characteristics, Schopenhauer goes further by claiming to have intimate knowledge of it.¹⁴ But Nietzsche's enthusiasm for Lange implies that he could not take this notion of Schopenhauer's seriously. We will return to Lange and the implications of his work for Nietzsche shortly. For now, let us note that in addition to the influence of Lange, *The Birth* contains encouraging allusions to atomistic physiology, as well as a critique of Platonism, both of which are hostile to the metaphysical project of Schopenhauer.¹⁵ Because of these issues, as well as a number of internal tensions within the narrative of *The Birth*, Porter believes that Nietzsche designed the work to performatively bring the paradoxes of classical philology to the fore.¹⁶

¹¹ For instance, Porter holds that "Nietzsche gives up on the notion of any such beyond," such as that posited by Schopenhauer (Porter, *The Invention of Dionysus*, 61). He also argues that Clark is incorrect in committing the early Nietzsche to a representationalist model of cognition, underpinned by the thing-in-itself. On the contrary, Porter contends that "Nietzsche makes no positive claims about things in themselves, because he has none to make" (ibid., 184). Instead, Nietzsche engages in the project of examining how Kant and Schopenhauer have utilized the thing-in-itself, and how such a concept functions.

¹² Porter, *The Invention of Dionysus*, 5.

¹³ Ibid., 11-16, 59-60.

¹⁴ Schopenhauer doubles Kant's mistake by both personifying the thing-in-itself with "subjective predicates" from the phenomenal world and also by claiming that it is objective, standing beyond the phenomenal world. (ibid., 59-60).

¹⁵ Ibid., 5-6.

¹⁶ Although this may sound strikingly close to de Man's position, Porter critiques him, arguing that Nietzsche had a different point in mind. At one point Porter acknowledges that de Man had been heading on the right path by noting the "semantic dissonance" of *The Birth*, but argues that he incorrectly concluded that this pointed "beyond the text's own logic." To the contrary, Porter believes that the text has an intentionally "self-disrupting logic" which performatively highlights the paradoxes of philology and the myth-making characteristic of humans (*The Invention of Dionysus*, 79-80). Later, in a footnote, Porter argues against de Man's interpretation without naming him. He argues that although Nietzsche does draw attention to the use of language in *The Birth*, "[i]t would be a mistake to trivialize such characterizations [of language] by taking them as proof of the ultimate 'figurativeness' of language," which is de Man's major conclusion (Ibid., 203).

Porter's third main thesis is that Nietzsche did not believe that we could do without myths, or some form of idealization. This again comes from the influence of Lange. While he argues against the independence of Kant's thing-in-itself, he also thinks that the positing of an essence or thing-in-itself, designed to explain the appearances of the world, is a natural part of the human understanding. This process directs self-reflective consciousness to posit an essence for any phenomenon, which becomes a new appearance when uncovered. A new underlying essence is then posited and the process begun again. This means that while an essence serves to underpin one level of analysis, on another it turns out to be yet another aspect of the phenomenal world. This process is characteristic of the dissonance that marks the basic character of human thought and may be variously described, for example as the difference between sensation and imagination. Lange believes that materialism is the attempt to overcome this cognitive dissonance. The first example of this is Greek atomism, the study of which opens Lange's immense *History*, and which Nietzsche examined closely during his philological studies.¹⁷

The history of human mythology is intimately tied to this attempted unity. Porter argues that in *The Birth* Nietzsche holds that life itself is fundamentally banal. There is no realm 'beyond' appearances, and no fundamental justification for life. But this reality cannot be accepted directly, and even an intuition of it evokes disgust and horror. As such, it is part of our character to desire art, metaphysics, and mystical possibilities as ways of covering this banal reality.¹⁸ We constantly engage in projecting illusions that mask this reality and make life endurable. This desire drives us to create some essence, thing-in-itself, or beyond (all of which are myths), designed to explain the apparent world in a meaningful way. But Porter believes that Nietzsche sees all of these posits as products of the phenomenal world, more specifically the human imagination. This process is never ending, as it stems from the basic "noncoincidence of the self with itself," or seen alternatively, Lange's internal dissonance of the human understanding.¹⁹ Because of this unending process, the very idea of living without a myth is itself a myth. And this has become the guiding myth of Nietzsche's modernity.²⁰ In light of this background, Porter believes that Nietzsche could not seriously intend that *The Birth of Tragedy* delivers a fundamental insight into the metaphysical essence of being. Rather, it highlights the myth-making nature of humanity, and

¹⁷ Porter, *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future*, 49-53. Cf. *The Invention of Dionysus*, 9-15.

¹⁸ Porter, *The Invention of Dionysus*, 83-86, 125. Cf. *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future* where Porter contends that the transfiguring "mask of beauty" exhibited by the Greeks on modernity is actually a "transfiguration...of the present, of the everyday, and of the sheer banality of contemporary existence when it is bereft of all such ideality" (288).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 125.

²⁰ This guiding myth gives rise to the notions of objectivity and positivism. The critique of historicism in philology serves as a case example in *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future* (see chapter 4).

foregrounds the concealed metaphysics of the myth of mythlessness that governs modernity.²¹

Although Porter may overstate the commitments he sees in the early Nietzsche, his reading nevertheless throws the neat division between Nietzsche's early philology and later metaphysical philosophy into disarray, fundamentally undermining the developmental thesis as expounded by Clark, Wilcox, and others. However, this argument does not entirely rule out the possibility that Nietzsche's thought did undergo some major shifts. Below, I argue that *Human, All Too Human* does mark such a shift in Nietzsche's thought, signalled by a greater appreciation of the natural sciences. But given the ambivalence of the early works toward metaphysics, exhibited by Porter, we should understand this development as a shift rather than as a radical break in Nietzsche's thought. This change, I claim, will be the one major shift in Nietzsche's emphasis which will remain until his collapse in 1889.

Nietzsche and Lange's *History of Materialism*

Porter's reading suggests that before writing *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche had already abandoned his commitment to Schopenhauer and found the idea of a thing-in-itself dubious. According to Porter, this came largely from the influence Lange's *History of Materialism* had on the young Nietzsche. While Porter's reading does suggest that *The Birth's* position is ambivalent towards Schopenhauer's conception of the Will as the thing-in-itself, I will argue that Nietzsche's view on the thing-in-itself was conflicted during this early period. I will establish this from a reading of his early essay "On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense" (TL). This essay has two very important aspects. First, it contains the seeds of Nietzsche's mature position on truth and knowledge. It is here that we find him adhering to a form of nominalism regarding objects in the world, the falsifying nature of human linguistic conventions, and an analysis of the pragmatic elements that have informed popular notions of truth. Second, it also contains a metaphysical hangover, in which Nietzsche utilizes the notion of the thing-in-itself, and bases our falsification of reality on it instead of the nominalist thesis expounded in the same essay. Before establishing my account of Nietzsche's mature epistemology, it is worth examining Nietzsche's reading of Lange in more detail.

Nietzsche read Lange's *History of Materialism* in 1866, the year it was first published. How he came across it is unknown, but we do know that he reread it a number of times.²² The work itself is a survey of the history of materialism in the West from Democritus to the nineteenth century. Lange goes to great pains to illustrate the fact that materialism itself is a philosophical position, and that it "is

²¹ The internal dissonances of Nietzsche's Apollo/Dionysus narrative are supposed to highlight this fact. See *The Invention of Dionysus* 148-163 and *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future* 262-265.

²² Brobjer, *Nietzsche's Philosophical Context*, 32-34.

as old as philosophy, but not older.”²³ It is one attempt to overcome “the contradictions of Dualism and the fantasies of personification.”²⁴ A footnote to this passage in the second edition emphasizes the philosophical nature of materialism. Lange explains that his attempt to highlight its philosophical nature stands in contrast to those materialists who do not think their position is philosophical but rather reflects “sound common sense” and the evidence of the sciences.²⁵ Lange also takes a stand against the detractors of materialism who deny that it is philosophical at all. In contrast to these extremes, Lange sees materialism as the “first attempt to free ourselves” from the contradictions of dualism, which means “to comprehend the world in a uniform manner and to raise ourselves above the base appearances of the senses.”²⁶

As Lange proceeds through the work he highlights the recurring tension that a materialist position entails. This problem is how a purely material substance, devoid of sense or perception, can give rise to sensations and consciousness. The tension comes to a head in his chapter on Kant, who revolutionizes the ongoing debate surrounding materialism. Whereas the traditional materialist position is faced by the contradiction of explaining how material substance gives rise to human thought, Kant achieves his Copernican revolution by showing that all perception of material objects springs from human thought itself. While preserving the entire sphere of empirical, scientific inquiry, based on materialist suppositions, it also solidifies an alternative world where our other ideas (soul, freedom, God) can be retained without contradiction. However, by the same token, these ideas are made impossible to prove. The Kantian system removes ideas that contradict materialism from the sphere of theoretical philosophy (epistemology) and places them squarely within the realm of practical philosophy (morality).²⁷

While Lange credits Kant for realizing that all of our experience is conditioned by the human cognitive process (our ‘organisation’), he also criticizes Kant for not fully appreciating the implications of his own system. Lange thinks that Friedrich Ueberweg’s criticism of Kant in this regard highlights this incompleteness, with startling consequences which have not been appreciated thoroughly enough. Ueberweg criticizes Kant’s invocation of the thing-in-itself to explain the world of appearances. The thing-in-itself, Kant holds, is the independently existing object which underlies perception, outside any distorting influence of the human mind. It is this object which stimulates us, and our

²³ Lange, *Geschichte des Materialismus*, 3.

²⁴ Lange, *History of Materialism*, 3. The translation by Thomas is of the second, expanded edition from 1874. Where Thomas’s translations of passages are used, the English edition is cited, but has been cross-referenced with the original 1866 German edition to ensure that the relevant passages were in the first edition Nietzsche read at this time. Translations referenced to the original work are my own.

²⁵ Lange, *History of Materialism*, 3.

²⁶ Lange, *Geschichte des Materialismus*, 3.

²⁷ Lange, *Geschichte des Materialismus*, 233-237.

experience of the object (our sensations) arises by means of the transcendental aesthetic (our a priori forms, or pure intuitions, of space and time).²⁸ In addition to the transcendental aesthetic, Kant claims that there are a priori categories of the understanding which apply to our intuitions and these are the basis of all synthesis (including the synthesis of cause and effect).²⁹ These categories have absolute validity within human experience, but cannot be extended beyond them at all. This ‘beyond’ is the noumenon, home to the thing-in-itself and the true nature of reality, forever lying outside the realm of experience and the possibility of human knowledge.³⁰ Kant develops this system largely as a response to David Hume’s criticism of the concept of causality, achieved by radicalizing the empiricist methodology of his predecessors.³¹

Ueberweg’s critique concerns a tension between Kant’s categories of the understanding and the origins of our idea of the thing-in-itself. The notion of the thing-in-itself arises from applying the concept of causality to our experience. From this application we conclude that there must be an independently existing object that stimulates us, which results in our experience through the mediation of the categories. However, as Ueberweg points out, on Kant’s account our concept of causality cannot be extended outside the phenomenal realm. This means that on Kant’s own terms he cannot be entitled to the concept of the thing-in-itself, or any claim whatsoever about the noumenal realm. This objection, Lange maintains, is “strong enough to cause the downfall of the entire system.”³² Lange’s contribution to this debate lies in a further realization. If the thing-in-itself arises only from the application of our concept of causality, this must make it a product of the phenomenal world. It turns out that the thing-in-itself is only a “hidden category,” which arises as a result of our method of thinking.³³

Although Lange reduces the thing-in-itself to an element of the phenomenal world, he simultaneously preserves it in a sense. Taking Kant to his extreme, Lange realizes that “if the entire world of appearance is only a consequence of our thought, and if our mental concepts themselves are only attributed to the world of appearance, so also with inalterable necessity does the thing-in-itself belong to the world of appearance; it is, with a word, only a hidden category.”³⁴ But later on the same page Lange performs an about-face. He claims “that finally all manner of comprehension lies on the ground of a collectively

²⁸ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B33-B73, B118, B121-122.

²⁹ Ibid., B104-B106.

³⁰ Ibid., B305-312.

³¹ Ibid., B19-21.

³² Lange, *Geschichte des Materialismus*, 267. Lange provides no citation for the reference to Ueberweg. Although Lange cites Ueberweg for this critique, many other critics of Kant made similar arguments. For instance, Schopenhauer provides this same criticism of Kant in his “Critique of Kantian Philosophy,” which serves as the appendix of *The World as Will and Presentation*. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Presentation*, 514-517 (Schopenhauer’s original pagination).

³³ Lange, *Geschichte des Materialismus*, 268.

³⁴ Ibid., 267-268.

unknown essence of organisation, the thing-in-itself, in opposition to the things of appearance,” and that our understanding “is itself produced by this antagonism.”³⁵ Directly after this he again affirms that the “true nature of things, the final ground of all appearances, is not only unknown to us, but rather also the concept of it is no more and no less than the final product of the conditional opposition of our organisation, of which we know not whether it has any significance outside of our experience.”³⁶ Lange’s position here is of great interest. He attempts to simultaneously reduce the thing-in-itself to a product of the phenomenal world, which is produced by our method of thought, but also preserve the notion of an unknown essence of reality by making our thought the conditioned product of the thing-in-itself. By doing this he is torn in two directions, rejecting the thing-in-itself on the basis of the thing-in-itself, at once the unknown basis, and product, of our understanding.

Lange concludes from his investigation that because we are forced to examine ourselves from the perspective of our organisation, this organisation remains a mystery. Due to this lacuna in our knowledge, we lack a stable ground on which to secure our investigations, and a potentially infinite realm of phenomenal interpretation is possible. It is this conclusion which underwrites Porter’s analysis of Lange, and the conclusion that an essence considered differently becomes an appearance once again. While we may examine any appearance and uncover the essence that lies beneath it (an essence we necessarily posit), inevitably on closer inspection this essence turns out to be appearance yet again: another product of our unknown organisation. Lange deals a huge blow to Kant’s critique of pure reason by completely separating the noumenal realm from the phenomenal. No reflection of reason upon itself can give us anything other than phenomenal products, which are themselves conditioned by completely unknown processes. This criticism goes doubly for Schopenhauer, who claimed a positive knowledge of the noumenal. And it is precisely this sort of criticism that Nietzsche fields in his (unpublished) essay “On Schopenhauer” written between fall 1867 and spring 1868.³⁷ This short piece examines Schopenhauer’s philosophy and concludes, in an essentially Langean vein, that Schopenhauer succumbs to the above criticism of Kant. What is most interesting, Porter notes, is that Nietzsche does not criticize Schopenhauer for not going far enough past Kant with further metaphysical speculation. Instead, Nietzsche criticizes Schopenhauer for still believing this sort of speculation is possible and for not realizing that it is entirely the product of the human mind.³⁸

Lange argues that because we are eternally trapped in the phenomenal realm, and all metaphysical speculation is the product of our organisation, philosophy’s value lies in its ability to edify us, uplifting our spirits and embellishing life. In this way philosophy is very close to art, and it is this

³⁵ Ibid., 267-268.

³⁶ Ibid., 268.

³⁷ Nietzsche, KGW, I:57[51-55, 61].

³⁸ Porter, *The Invention of Dionysus*, 59-63.

conclusion that Nietzsche latches onto most firmly. In a letter to his friend Carl von Gersdorff from late August 1866, Nietzsche mentions his reading of Lange and summarizes the main points covered above. He then concludes that if philosophy is a form of art, then “one should give philosophers a free hand as long as they edify us.”³⁹ And “if philosophy should edify,” Nietzsche concludes, “I know no more edifying philosopher than our Schopenhauer.”⁴⁰ This conclusion points Nietzsche towards an odd fusion of Lange and Schopenhauer. Although his reading and approval of Lange seriously questions the sincerity of the metaphysical claims of *The Birth of Tragedy*, this is not enough to show that Nietzsche had totally rejected Schopenhauer at this point.⁴¹ Indeed, such a claim seems overwhelmed by evidence to the contrary where Nietzsche affirms the value of Schopenhauer. It would also seem bizarre given Nietzsche’s later admissions that his early philosophical views were developed with an affinity for Schopenhauer, which he later moved away from, and that his mature thinking could not be what it is without this phase of his development.⁴² Nietzsche’s early works can be understood within Lange’s framework as a form of artistic edification and cultural analysis. His second *Untimely Meditation*, “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life,” articulates precisely such a view for the analysis of history. The main target of criticism in this piece is the attempt to make history a ‘science,’ pursued for its own sake, which disassociates it with any edifying value for life.⁴³

“On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense”

Nietzsche’s (or Lange’s) position on Kant and the thing-in-itself reappears in the frequently cited essay “On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense” (1873). This work is often used to buttress postmodern readings of Nietzsche and is typically used as a basis for claims that Nietzsche denied truth, or at least the human attainability of truth, which is assumed to continue throughout his

³⁹ Cited and translated in Brobjer, *Nietzsche’s Philosophical Context*, 33. KGB I, vol. 2, letter 517.

⁴⁰ Cited and translated in Brobjer, *Nietzsche’s Philosophical Context*, 33. KGB I, vol. 2, letter 517.

⁴¹ Brobjer argues that the early essay “On Schopenhauer” alone is not enough to conclude that Nietzsche broke with Schopenhauer at this early juncture. He takes this claim too far, however, by holding “that Nietzsche’s general attitude toward Schopenhauer did not seem to change in the slightest before and after this analysis” (Brobjer, *Nietzsche’s Philosophical Context*, 30). Brobjer is right to point out that it is a leap to think Nietzsche rejected Schopenhauer wholesale at this early point, but Porter is also right in suggesting that Nietzsche did not take Schopenhauer’s metaphysics seriously by the time of *The Birth*.

⁴² Cf. Nietzsche, AOM P 1-7; GS, 370; EH, ‘Books’ BT 1, ‘Books’ HH 2-3, ‘Clever’ 6; NCW, ‘How I broke away’ 1-2; CW, P.

⁴³ Nietzsche, UH, 2. In this work Nietzsche argues that “[h]istory pertains to the living man in three respects: it pertains to him as a being who acts and strives, as a being who preserves and reveres, as a being who suffers and seeks deliverance.” These three functions are served by the three modes of history outlined in that essay (the monumental, antiquarian, and critical, respectively). History goes awry, Nietzsche argues, when pursued only for the sake of knowledge and not in relation to some higher purpose (UH, 4).

writings.⁴⁴ However, on close inspection this unpublished essay exhibits two incompatible positions on truth and language. The first position is a nominalist one, with which Nietzsche attacks typical notions of truth as correspondence.⁴⁵ The second position is that we are cut off from truth because we cannot access the thing-in-itself. This latter position is the Kantian view that Clark believes initially underwrites Nietzsche's falsification thesis. But in "On Truth and Lies" Nietzsche fields the Kantian view in contrast to the nominalist position, which is the more dominant of the two in this work.⁴⁶ While these two positions sit at odds with one another throughout the essay, the nominalist position becomes the prominent one by far in Nietzsche's later writings, beginning with *Human, All Too Human*.

The nominalist thesis in "On Truth and Lies" appears as the main axis of attack on what Nietzsche takes to be the common view of truth. Near the outset of the work Nietzsche criticizes our experience of the world. He claims that people's "eyes merely glide across the surface of things and see 'forms'; nowhere does their perception lead into truth."⁴⁷ Nietzsche points to the human body as an example of this tendency to "glide across the surface of things" without fully grasping them, for we never perceive the "twists and turns of the bowels, [or] the rapid flow of the blood stream and the complicated tremblings of the nerve-fibres."⁴⁸ Nietzsche likely chose the example of the body because it should be better understood by individuals than the external world. By arguing that we are not fully aware of our own bodies, he undercuts our ability to fully grasp the external world, experience of which is always mediated by our bodies. Nietzsche reinforces the distorting nature of perception later when he holds that the scientific researcher, in seeking truths independent of humanity, erroneously believes that "he has things directly before him, as pure objects...forgetting that the original metaphors of perception were indeed metaphors."⁴⁹ These metaphors of perception are created through our conceptual and linguistic activities.

Later in the essay Nietzsche explains how concepts are generated. He argues concepts have the same level of generality that our sense experience displays. Every word represents a concept. But a concept does not represent "the unique, utterly individualized, primary experience to which it owes its existence."⁵⁰ Instead, each concept (or word) "must fit countless other, more or

⁴⁴ Cf. Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 63-64; Kofman, *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, 79-82 (where the will to power is said to 'complete' the theory of metaphorical activity put forth in Nietzsche's early works); de Man, *Allegories of Reading*, 106-109, 118.

⁴⁵ Nominalism is the view that there are no general kinds that exist in nature, and that every thing that exists is particular and unique. Any form of classification of things is thus an artificial construction in some sense and does not reflect natural divisions in the world. However, this is not identical to the claim that reality has no defining features whatsoever, but rather that these features do not group themselves together to naturally demarcate particular entities.

⁴⁶ Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 85-86, 92-95.

⁴⁷ Nietzsche, TL, 142.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 148.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 145.

less similar cases, i.e. cases which, strictly speaking, are never equivalent, and thus [are] nothing other than non-equivalent cases.”⁵¹ As an example Nietzsche uses the concept leaf, which is made to fit every instance of a ‘leaf’ “by dropping these individual differences arbitrarily, by forgetting those features which differentiate one thing from another.”⁵² Nietzsche believes that this process of generalization is the very basis of language, which is aimed at designating “the relations of things to human beings.”⁵³ And this process is what Nietzsche refers to as the creation of metaphors in this essay.⁵⁴ This creation is an artistic activity, which makes human cognition a fundamentally artistic enterprise.⁵⁵ Only by forgetting this original artistic creativity, and believing that the stability of our concepts reflects stability in nature itself, can humans attain the peace of mind and security they require for everyday life.⁵⁶

Against the nominalist position just described Nietzsche poses a Kantian position. Before explaining the nature of concepts and concept formation, Nietzsche criticizes those who believe that language can fully and adequately capture reality.⁵⁷ This “full and adequate expression” is captured in the image of the “thing-in-itself” (which would be, precisely, pure truth, truth without consequences) [and this] is impossible for even the creator of language to grasp, and indeed this is not at all desirable.”⁵⁸ Throughout the essay Nietzsche invokes the thing-in-itself multiple times to deny our ability to access reality. At one point he holds that “the mysterious ‘X’ of the thing-in-itself appears first as a nervous stimulus, then as an image, and finally as an articulated sound.”⁵⁹ Here the thing-in-itself is the external object of perception, which is translated into language and concepts. But this external object is never accurately grasped because “it is not true that the essence of things appears in the empirical world.”⁶⁰ The relationship between the stimulating object and our nervous excitement is “not a necessary

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., 144.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 148. “Human cognition” here refers to both our conscious sense experience and a method of concept formation.

⁵⁶ Ibid. This stability is enforced by convention which fixes “that which is to count as ‘truth’...i.e. a way of designating things is invented which has the same validity and force everywhere, and the legislation of language also produces the first laws of truth, for the contrast between truth and lying comes into existence here for the first time” (ibid., 143).

⁵⁷ Ibid., 144. As evidence for this Nietzsche points out that there are numerous languages, and holds that if “full and adequate expression” [*adäquaten Ausdruck*] were the aim, this would not be the case.

⁵⁸ Ibid. Presumably this is not desirable because the purpose of language is the expression of human relations to the world to other people.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 145.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 148.

relationship.”⁶¹ It is this discontinuity between our perception and the thing-in-itself that largely grounds Nietzsche’s critique of science in this essay.⁶²

It is the apparent regularity of our “sensuous perception” which leads to the belief in the necessary connection of certain impressions with external objects.⁶³ And it is this regularity which leads us to become suspicious of idealism.⁶⁴ However, if we could only break out of our own point of view and experience the world as other creatures do (such as birds, worms, or plants), then we would see that this apparently necessary relation is actually contingent and subjective. This point would also be shown if different people had radically different experiences of the same stimulus (such as different people perceiving one stimulus as red, blue, and a sound). Because we cannot access these other forms of perception we are stuck with viewing relations from a human perspective. We do not know these relations as they are in themselves, but only through what we “bring to bear on them: time and space, in other words, relations of succession and number.”⁶⁵ Our suspicion of idealism comes only through “the rigour and universal validity of the representations of time and space” which “we produce within ourselves and from ourselves with the same necessity as a spider spins” its web.⁶⁶

Here Nietzsche is obviously invoking Kant’s transcendental aesthetic, in which it is argued that all human sense experience must take place in the forms of space and time. However, as space and time are formal conditions of human experience, they are applicable only to the phenomenal world, and not to the noumenal realm.⁶⁷ Nietzsche leans on this distinction between phenomenon and noumenon to destroy science’s claim that it undermines idealism. His distinction attributes all scientific regularity to our contributions to experience. As he says, “[a]ll the conformity to laws which we find so imposing in the orbits of the stars and chemical processes is basically identical with those qualities which we ourselves bring to bear on things, so that what we find imposing is our own activity,” and not real features of the external world.⁶⁸

⁶¹ Ibid., 149.

⁶² He also provides a second critique of science, based on the nominalist position. The critique is exemplified thus: “If I create the definition of a mammal and then, having inspected a camel, declare, ‘Behold, a mammal’, then a truth has certainly been brought to light, but it is of limited value, by which I mean that it is anthropocentric through and through and contains not a single point which could be said to be ‘true in itself’, really and in a generally valid sense, regardless of mankind” (ibid., 147). The thrust of this critique is that any ‘truth’ is premised on an artificial delineation of the world based on arbitrary criteria, rather than reflecting an independent ‘fact’ of reality. As I will show below, Nietzsche abandons this type of critique by rejecting the very coherency of independent facts, and coming to accept the value of these man-made distinctions which are used to carve up the world.

⁶³ Ibid., 149.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 149-150.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 149.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 150.

⁶⁷ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B56.

⁶⁸ Nietzsche, TL, 150.

The nominalist and Kantian positions of “On Truth and Lies” provide two separate bases for Nietzsche’s claim that we do not have the truth as defined by the philosophical tradition (truth as correspondence to reality). The nominalist position holds that we are much more actively involved in our perception than is normally assumed, and that our falsifying concepts distort the nature of reality. The Kantian position also holds that we do not have access to truth as correspondence, but bases this on the assertion that we cannot access the thing-in-itself, which is required for this kind of truth.⁶⁹ However, there remains a final uneasiness in the piece between these two positions. At one point, while reiterating the nominalist position and discussing the difference between individual and species, Nietzsche claims that “nature knows neither forms nor concepts and hence no species, but only an ‘X’ which is inaccessible to us and indefinable to us.”⁷⁰ The distinction between individual and species “is also anthropomorphic and does not stem from the essence of things,” Nietzsche claims, “although we equally do not dare to say that it does *not* correspond to the essence of things, since that would be a dogmatic assertion and, as such, just as incapable of being proved as its opposite.”⁷¹ This passage points us to the fundamental dissonance of Nietzsche’s position in this text.

Nietzsche’s first claim is that all concepts and forms are “produced by overlooking what is individual and real.”⁷² These concepts and forms are the basis for all language, and also seep into our observation of the world. This is clearly the nominalist thesis, which maintains that language cannot correspond to the world because its general structure is unable to capture the startling individuality and uniqueness of every particular thing. Nietzsche then quickly turns to the second claim, which is that “nature knows neither forms nor concepts...but only an ‘X’ which is inaccessible to us and indefinable by us.”⁷³ Here the real objects of the world are turned into things-in-themselves, inaccessible by human cognition. This provides the Kantian conclusion that we are cut off from truth because we cannot access these things-in-themselves. However, in this passage Nietzsche exhibits Lange’s influence by being agnostic about the thing-in-itself. After making the assertion that our forms and concepts do not correspond to nature, he retreats and claims that this assertion would be dogmatic because it concerns inaccessible entities. But this agnostic position, taken up from Lange, actually undermines the Kantian position on truth. If the thing-in-itself is completely inaccessible, then Nietzsche cannot use it to reject truth as correspondence to reality, or reject truth on the basis of nominalism. Because we cannot access the things-in-themselves we can never know if our forms and

⁶⁹ Of course, Kant was happy to confine truth to the phenomenal realm, but Nietzsche does not follow this here.

⁷⁰ Nietzsche, TL, 145.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

concepts correspond to them or not; we have no ‘real’ things to compare our concepts to, and thus cannot determine whether or not they falsify anything.

Clark’s interpretation of the “On Truth and Lies” essay recognizes these two major interpretative possibilities.⁷⁴ However, she views the nominalist position as secondary at best and believes that Nietzsche bases his denial of truth on the mixture of a representational theory of perception and the metaphysical correspondence theory of truth.⁷⁵ Clark believes “that only the Kantian position provides a basis for considering truths illusions,” and only this position can undermine science the way Nietzsche wishes to in the essay.⁷⁶ While I agree with Clark that it is only the Kantian position that allows Nietzsche to criticize science the way he does at certain places in “On Truth and Lies,” the nominalist position would also provide him with a sufficient argument to reject truth as correspondence as it is traditionally understood. Just this position is articulated a number of times in the essay and underpins part of Nietzsche’s discussion of language. The Kantian position on its own would not be sufficient to account for Nietzsche’s discussion of language in the work, which undermines the emphasis that Clark places on it. Instead, the evidence suggests that “On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense” is a confused work that fields at least two major lines of argument to reject truth as correspondence to reality. Both the moderns and the postmoderns tend to favour the Kantian argument, holding either that Nietzsche maintained a similar view throughout the rest of his works (postmodern), or that he later overcame this position and came around to a respectable view on truth (modern). In contrast to these positions, I maintain that it is actually the nominalist position that is the most important for Nietzsche. By the time of *Human, All Too Human* he removes any positive role for the thing-in-itself to play in truth and knowledge, and his major thoughts on these issues revolve around the nominalist thesis.⁷⁷ It is also this thesis that underwrites claims in his later works that human cognition falsifies reality. Before turning to HH we will consider one other influence on Nietzsche’s thought at this time, the late eighteenth century natural philosopher, physicist, and mathematician, Roger Boscovich (1711-87).

⁷⁴ She claims that there are actually three interpretative possibilities: Kantian (there is a thing-in-itself and transcendent truth, which corresponds to this in-itself, is of ultimate value), agnostic (we cannot be sure there is a thing-in-itself, and such an assertion would be dogmatic), and neo-Kantian or Nietzschean (that transcendent truth is “a contradiction in terms”), although the agnostic position surfaces only momentarily in the essay. Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 90-93.

⁷⁵ Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 77, 83. This is the Kantian position detailed in the discussion of Clark’s view in the first chapter.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁷⁷ Although I do agree broadly with Clark that Nietzsche’s attitude towards the thing-in-itself grew more hostile with time, I maintain that by HH he had denied it any positive role in his thinking, which will be demonstrated below.

Boscovich and Nietzsche's World of Force

Nietzsche's reading and appreciation of Boscovich has slowly become recognized in the literature on Nietzsche. Despite this, there has been no significant attempt made to connect this influence with Nietzsche's broader epistemological thinking, in particular perspectivism, which is my major aim. Nietzsche read Boscovich's *Philosophiae naturalis Theoria* (*Theory of Natural Philosophy*) in 1873-74, shortly after finishing *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872).⁷⁸ There is also evidence in Nietzsche's correspondence with his close friend and assistant Peter Gast that he was still thinking seriously about Boscovich from at least 1882 onwards, the year he published *The Gay Science*.⁷⁹ While the *Philosophiae naturalis Theoria* is a complex mathematical work, its major aim and what Nietzsche takes from it can be stated briefly.

Boscovich's aim is to build on the work of Newton and Leibniz to create a stronger natural philosophy. His first major conclusion is to reject the corpuscular atom as the basic unit of existence. This appealed to Nietzsche because he saw the atom as linked to the traditional notion of substance, something which he wished to be rid of.⁸⁰ In Boscovich's view, the universe is composed of dynamic forces, consisting of force points (*puncta*) with mass but no extension.⁸¹ Macroscopic objects are created from these by their distribution, relative oscillation and acceleration, in a way that provides a more dynamic conception of the physical world than traditional atomic theory.⁸² Boscovich's overall theory is kinematic, deriving all its conclusions from spatio-temporal relations, in contrast to the mechanistic account of Newton.⁸³ As L.L. Whyte highlights, Boscovich's system was in many senses relative. All objects and interactions depend on the relations of *puncta* with every other *punctum* in the universe.⁸⁴ Ideas of absolute motion (or rest) are excluded in Boscovich's system, and are replaced by the measurement of movements relative to some particular frame of reference. Even these measurements become dynamic in a sense, because Boscovich maintained that any alteration of an object (understood as a system of *puncta*) causes a change in the relative distribution of its *puncta*, resulting in a change (however minute) in the object itself. Because all measurement is achieved by the comparison of two objects, this makes the measurements themselves dynamic in a sense unrealized

⁷⁸ Brobjer, "Nietzsche's Reading and Knowledge of Natural Science," 32-33.

⁷⁹ Whitlock, "Roger Boscovich, Benedict de Spinoza and Friedrich Nietzsche: The Untold Story," 205.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 207.

⁸¹ Ibid., 207, 215.

⁸² Ibid., 215, 219.

⁸³ Whyte, "Boscovich's Atomism," 107.

⁸⁴ It is interesting to note in connection with TL's discussion of leaves (and the fact that each one is unique) that in the *Theoria* Boscovich discussed exactly this type of view, contending that each leaf is unique because of its different relations to all the *puncta* of the universe. Boscovich provides this discussion as a response to followers of Leibniz (Boscovich, *A Theory of Natural Philosophy*, 47).

by the mechanical view (which could view the measuring instrument as unchanged after a translation). This dynamic consequence also applies to any measurement of time.⁸⁵

Boscovich's second major conclusion was that the universe actually consists of finite force, not infinite force, which is another notion that Nietzsche adopts in his ontology.⁸⁶ In short, Boscovich's major influence on Nietzsche's thinking was the suggestion of a relational force realism. This is the view that there are dynamic forces throughout the universe (the extensionless *puncta* for Boscovich), independent of human awareness, which constitute macroscopic objects by their interactions. Furthermore, this relational force realism holds that there are no absolute standards of observation or measurement, and that all objects arise only from the constantly changing relations of extensionless centers of force.

Although there are many affinities between Boscovich's theory and Nietzsche's thinking, we should not be too quick to conclude that Nietzsche simply adopted Boscovich wholesale. A better approach is to think of the possible influence that Boscovich's work seems to have had on Nietzsche's thought. In reading Boscovich, as in reading anyone else, Nietzsche took away certain elements and transformed them into something different. Given Nietzsche's careful reading of Lange, he undoubtedly had a clear idea of the contradictions entailed by a materialist system. Most significantly, the seeming inability of a materialist system (whether it be corpuscular atoms or *puncta* force points) to account for consciousness and volition is a major shortcoming, something Nietzsche returns to in his thinking on the will to power. The major point that Nietzsche took away from Boscovich was the concept of finite force, that the corpuscular atom was not the most fundamental particle, and that a straightforward mechanistic theory could not adequately account for the basic operations of the universe. In place of this Nietzsche envisioned something much more dynamic, and to this vision he harnessed the bold spirit of Boscovich in denying the prevailing atomic theorists of his day.

Human, All Too Human

With *Human, All Too Human* Nietzsche's philosophy takes a decisive turn, though in many ways this is a fuller affirmation of the nominalist position he already expounded in "On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense." While in TL Nietzsche remained conflicted about the possibility of the thing-in-itself overthrowing our notions of truth and knowledge, in HH he takes a more decisive position against this possibility, one that will become even stronger in his later works. *Human, All Too Human* and its subsequent additions (*Assorted Opinions and Maxims* and *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, from 1879 and 1880,

⁸⁵ Whyte, "Boscovich's Atomism," 111-116.

⁸⁶ Whitlock, "Roger Boscovich, Benedict de Spinoza and Friedrich Nietzsche: The Untold Story," 208. The influence of Boscovich can be seen in Nietzsche's thinking about the eternal recurrence in his notebooks (Nietzsche, WP, 1062, 1064, 1066).

respectively) represent a kind of intellectual Saturnalia for Nietzsche. Reflecting on HH in *Ecce Homo* (written 1888), Nietzsche remarks that it “is the monument to a crisis,” and that the book was used “to liberate [him] from things that *did not belong* to [his] nature.”⁸⁷ In this book he casts aside, or transforms, what appears to be the guiding thread of much of his work up to this time: Schopenhauer, Wagner, an overriding concern with the Greeks, the nature of tragedy, the special place of art in culture, and a critique of modernity in his *Untimely Meditations* that drew on these aspects. According to *Ecce Homo*, HH marks a revaluation of Nietzsche’s own life, which spurred him to abandon philological studies and cast aside the increasingly estranged Wagner, who had become a Christian and German nationalist with the composition of *Parsifal*. An indication of this revaluation is Nietzsche’s increasing turn to the natural sciences and a broadening of his intellectual horizons.⁸⁸ Despite this major shift, HH does not completely jettison the subjects Nietzsche had been interested in before its writing, as indicated by his continued focus on many of these subjects in this work. But he frees himself from many former constraints, commenting on any issue that interested him. The adoption of the aphoristic style helps accommodate this intellectual blossoming, and allows Nietzsche to make a series of topically related comments that do not necessarily follow one particular train of thought.⁸⁹ The first section of HH contains the most relevant writings on the topics of truth and knowledge, and displays a turn away from the conflicts of TL.

The opening aphorism of HH invokes the thing-in-itself as the basis of metaphysical philosophy. This type of philosophy believes that because something cannot originate in its opposite there must be another realm, the metaphysical, which is the source of all of our most cherished notions (such as stability, rationality, sentience, logic, disinterested contemplation, altruism, and truth). This metaphysical realm is represented in modern times by Kant’s thing-in-itself, which is just the latest transformation of this other-worldly idea, whose history stretches back for millennia.⁹⁰ Historical philosophy, in contrast to metaphysical philosophy, has discovered “that there are no opposites, except in the customary exaggeration of popular or metaphysical interpretations.”⁹¹ Now that the sciences have attained a satisfactory level of rigour, we may make a detailed examination of the growth of concepts out of their ‘opposites’ by tracing their sublimations and near transformations. From this examination Nietzsche hopes to develop a “*chemistry* of the moral, religious and aesthetic conceptions and sensations.”⁹² This chemistry of concepts, combined with the sense for seeing

⁸⁷ Nietzsche, EH, ‘Books’ HH 1.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 2-4.

⁸⁹ *The Birth of Tragedy* and the *Untimely Meditations* were written in essay style. In *Human, All Too Human* Nietzsche mainly arranges the aphorisms topically, although this did not restrain him from commenting on multiple topics within any given section.

⁹⁰ This theme is developed more thoroughly in later works.

⁹¹ Nietzsche, HH, 1.

⁹² Ibid.

things in their historical contingency, is aimed at correcting the oldest error of philosophy: taking man as he currently is “as something that remains constant in the midst of all flux, as a sure measure of things.”⁹³ Overcoming this error will lead to one of our greatest realizations, that “everything has become” and that “there are *no eternal facts*, just as there are no absolute truths.”⁹⁴

When this realization takes hold people should begin to value “unpretentious truths.”⁹⁵ These are the small truths “discovered by means of rigorous method” (i.e. scientific analysis).⁹⁶ These truths will not edify people in the same way as metaphysical explanations do. As a possible origin for metaphysics Nietzsche points to the dreams of man in “the ages of barbarous primordial culture.”⁹⁷ Ancient people interpreted dreams as a second real world because they saw the dead there, and so it was assumed that those ancestors lived on in this other place.⁹⁸ Nietzsche holds that only much more recently has “rigorous logical thinking, [and] a clear perception of the nature of cause and effect” been developed and applied to such dreams.⁹⁹ Before this, dreamers simply grasped onto the first available explanation for their experience, which was a belief in a second real world.¹⁰⁰ As metaphysics developed more fully, this erroneous belief in the other world became used more widely to explain phenomena in the real world. Even today this mode of explaining natural events continues to be applied, and sometimes a remnant of this mode can be found “in the best educated circles.”¹⁰¹

Although metaphysical explanations edify us in certain ways, scientific explanations and unpretentious truths have come to be appreciated more and more thoroughly. Nietzsche thinks we are now entering a phase where these unpretentious truths can replace the satisfaction attained by the old metaphysical exaltations.¹⁰² But this change does not come easily. It is only by training in courage that individuals can be “raised to this manliness.”¹⁰³ At this point they will “finally become accustomed to valuing viable, enduring knowledge more highly and [will have] lost all faith in inspiration and the acquisition of knowledge by miraculous means.”¹⁰⁴ This transformation from metaphysical to scientific explanations will mean that one no longer interprets nature ‘pneumatologically’ (i.e. spiritually). Natural explanations will be sought instead of those spiritual ones introduced by metaphysicians. In describing this change Nietzsche invokes

⁹³ Ibid., 2.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 3.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 5.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 13.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 8.

¹⁰² Ibid., 3, 17.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 3.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

the image of the philologist as an analogue to the natural scientist: the scientist, just as the philologist, must apply the “rigorous art of elucidation” which aims to comprehend “what the text intends to say but without sensing, indeed presupposing, a *second* meaning.”¹⁰⁵ The difference between the two is that the philologist is concerned with actual texts, whereas the scientist is concerned with the ‘text’ of nature.

This shift from metaphysical to scientific explanations may cause despair and destruction. By devaluing all that has seemed worthwhile, individuals may succumb to a kind of pessimism. However, Nietzsche believes that the outcome of this transformation will rest on the temperament of the individual. If a man has the right temperament, that is, if he is “firm, mild and at bottom [a] cheerful soul,” then he may become “much simpler and emotionally cleaner.”¹⁰⁶ The final result of this process sounds remarkably Stoic: this individual will “live among men and with oneself as in *nature*, without praising, blaming, contending, gazing contentedly, as though at a spectacle, upon many things for which one formerly felt only fear.”¹⁰⁷ Although the shift from metaphysics to science may produce negative consequences, in the best cases this will be a most welcome transformation that will replace all of the benefits one formerly received from metaphysical explanations.¹⁰⁸

What is of great interest in *Human, All Too Human* is the role that the thing-in-itself is now assigned, which contrasts with the earlier essay “On Truth and Lies.” Recall that in TL the thing-in-itself served as a stumbling block for scientific endeavours. Science is based on the apparent regularity of sensations.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 8. Nietzsche’s invocation of philology here is unambiguously against the postmodern reading. It stands against Kofman’s account, which linked philology with genealogy as the attempt to uncover the will or physiology of the author (and Nietzsche appears to provide no ‘author’ of nature here). This is also contrary to de Man’s reading because here the point is not that all language is figural or performative, unable to contain literal meaning, but that the philologist must uncover “what the text intends to say.” This also supports Leiter’s defence of this facet of Nietzsche’s thought against postmodern interpreters, specifically Nehamas’s reading (Leiter, “Nietzsche and Aestheticism”).

¹⁰⁶ Nietzsche, HH, 34.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Clark recognizes this possibility in *Human, All Too Human*, and argues that Nietzsche moved away from this by the time of *The Gay Science*. She holds that in HH, Nietzsche leaves open the Stoic possibility of ‘living in accordance with nature,’ which implies living without evaluative standards. By GS, she believes that this possibility is gone, and while Nietzsche is still a value anti-realist, he now maintains that we are forced to evaluate, though the standards by which we do that are established by us (Clark, “On Knowledge, Truth, and Value,” 56-57, 66-68). However, HH 32 poses a serious obstacle to this reading. There Nietzsche argues that while all judgments are fundamentally unjust, because they are always partial and made on incomplete data, we must go on making them. As he says, “[p]erhaps it would follow from [the fact that all judgments are unjust] that one ought not to judge at all; if only it were possible to *live* without evaluating, without having aversions and partialities!” This passage strongly indicates that the Stoic-sounding formulation of HH 34 is not meant with complete sincerity, making HH more congruent with Nietzsche’s later works than Clark suggests. Cf. BGE 9 on Nietzsche’s criticism of the Stoics and their attempt to live according to nature.

But things-in-themselves do not bear any resemblance to these sensations.¹⁰⁹ If we could access other creatures' experience, or if different people had radically different experiences of the same stimuli, we would realize the contingency of our own impressions and the truth of the idealist position, which is that the true nature of reality is not encountered anywhere in experience.¹¹⁰ In HH Nietzsche realizes the problematic nature of his former critique. Science is able to function as it does because of the regularity of our experiences; the critique would undermine science only if this regularity did not exist or if we could somehow escape it in experience.¹¹¹ But these are at best hypothetical possibilities, and until they can be realized in experience they cannot serve to undermine the results of science.

The shift in Nietzsche's view from TL is reflected in HH's position on the thing-in-itself, which more fully appreciates Lange's insight. Nietzsche admits the possibility that there may be a metaphysical world (thing-in-itself). This would be the world as it is by itself, while all we can ever access is what is seen "through the human head."¹¹² Traditionally, notions like happiness and salvation have depended on some assumption about this other, metaphysical world. However, nothing whatsoever can be asserted about this realm; "it would be a thing with negative qualities."¹¹³ Here Nietzsche is surely recalling Lange's point that no knowledge of the thing-in-itself is possible, although he does not entirely embrace the conclusion that the thing-in-itself is merely the product of our own thought on the phenomenal world. However, he does hold that all knowledge is the product of the phenomenal realm.

Nietzsche restrains himself to an agnostic position on the thing-in-itself in HH. He claims that even if the metaphysical world were demonstrated to exist, knowledge of it would be entirely useless, "more useless even than knowledge of the chemical composition of water must be to the sailor in danger of shipwreck."¹¹⁴ Nietzsche goes on in the next aphorism to assert that when we account for the secular origins of religion, art, and morality (that is, without "*metaphysical interference*") "the greater part of our interest in the purely theoretical problem of the 'thing in itself' and 'appearance' ceases to exist."¹¹⁵ In other places Nietzsche points out that the "*scientific demonstration*" of the metaphysical world is so difficult that we have become increasingly sceptical of its possibility.¹¹⁶ The result of this scepticism is "by and large the same as if [the metaphysical world] had been directly refuted and one no longer had the *right* to

¹⁰⁹ Or things-in-themselves may not resemble sensations, on the minority agnostic view of TL.

¹¹⁰ I here use 'idealist' in the way Nietzsche does in TL, which holds that we cannot access the world as it is in-itself (TL, 149-50).

¹¹¹ How this regularity could be escaped is something of a mystery. Even if isolated experiences may become chaotic, such as those affected by mental conditions or drug induced hallucinations, there is still a wide-reaching regularity to the world.

¹¹² Nietzsche, HH, 9.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 10.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 21.

believe in it.”¹¹⁷ This is strikingly different than TL’s position on the thing-in-itself. There it was used as a possible basis for undermining science. Now in HH the opposite occurs: science undermines the notion of a metaphysical world, making the thing-in-itself superfluous. This should allow us to realize “that the thing in itself is worthy of Homeric laughter: that it appeared to be so much, indeed everything, and is actually empty, that is to say empty of significance.”¹¹⁸

Despite Nietzsche’s dismissal of the thing-in-itself in HH, it does occasionally resurface.¹¹⁹ For instance, at one point he contrasts “the world as idea (as error)” with “the world as thing in itself.”¹²⁰ The ‘world as idea’ is what “has made mankind so profound, tender, [and] inventive,” and has allowed us to produce the flowers of art and religion.¹²¹ However, Nietzsche believes that it is a common mistake to think that it is through art and religion that humanity gets closer to “the true nature of the world.”¹²² This is done through science, he maintains, and it is error that has actually made us profound. He thinks that “[p]ure knowledge would have been incapable” of producing such flowers because knowledge only tracks features of the world.¹²³ By contrast, it is our erroneous view that has allowed us to create art and religion. While Nietzsche’s use of ‘thing-in-itself’ here is unfortunate, he does not by any means seem to use

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 16.

¹¹⁹ Clark attempts to distinguish the thing-in-itself from the metaphysical world in HH, arguing that belief in the metaphysical world presupposes belief in the thing-in-itself. On her reading, Nietzsche’s admission that there *might* be a metaphysical world (HH 9) implies that there *is* a thing-in-itself, which our truth may or may not correspond to. And this view, she argues, holds Nietzsche back from fully embracing the neo-Kantian position on truth (that the thing-in-itself is inconceivable, and that truth cannot exceed our cognitive interests) (Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 98-99). While I accept Clark’s claim that belief in a metaphysical world presupposes belief in a thing-in-itself, I do not see how the two can be clearly distinguished. If one believes in things-in-themselves then one is committed to some form of metaphysical world (understood as a world transcendent of human cognition). Once we go beyond the possible limits of human experience and knowledge, any further distinctions seem groundless. This position better accounts for what Nietzsche says in HH, where both the thing-in-itself and the metaphysical world are dealt with in the same way (both are entirely indemonstrable, their origin in human thought can be explained secularly, and even if they did exist they would be of absolutely no consequence). I thus reject Clark’s argument that because Nietzsche leaves open the possibility of a metaphysical world he *is* accepting the thing-in-itself, because on my account these two are synonymous, so he is at best leaving open the possibility that they both exist.

¹²⁰ Nietzsche, HH, 29. I have followed Hollingdale’s translation of HH, in which he translates ‘*Vorstellung*’ as ‘idea’. It is important to note that the word *Vorstellung* has the broader implications of a presentation or performance, representation, or even an image (*Vorstellung* was Schopenhauer’s term for how the Will presents itself to itself). *Vorstellung* does not have the implications of *Erscheinung* (appearance or phenomenon, typically in contrast to reality), which was Kant’s favoured term of contrast to things-in-themselves. This again implies that Nietzsche is not maintaining a Kantian framework in HH which contrasts things-in-themselves and appearances, but is instead engaged in a different enterprise.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

the term with its full Kantian significance. Given the context, Nietzsche's world as thing-in-itself is simply the world without human errors. Its contrast, the world as idea, is the human world of meaning and value. If Nietzsche meant 'thing-in-itself' with its full Kantian connotation, this would make it the world beyond all possible human knowledge. However, this passage eliminates that possibility. Nietzsche affirms that science does allow us to get closer to "the true nature of the world and to a knowledge of it."¹²⁴ This knowledge can be "united with a practical world affirmation," as Nietzsche describes at the end of the first section of HH.¹²⁵ Elsewhere Nietzsche reinforces his claim that science (i.e. rigorous thinking and methodology) may help us see past the world as idea. In discussing the thing-in-itself and appearance, Nietzsche believes that one day science will produce a "*history of the genesis of thought*," which may very well support the conclusion that the world as we know it "is the outcome of a host of errors and fantasies which have gradually arisen and grown intertwined with one another in the course of the overall evolution of the organic being, and are now inherited by us as the accumulated treasure of the entire past."¹²⁶

In this work, then, Nietzsche believes that science can, to a limited extent, separate us from the error-ridden, human, all too human "world as idea."¹²⁷ For brief periods science may actually raise us out of this world. But, for the most part, we remain locked in these 'errors,' these "habits of feeling acquired in primeval times," which Nietzsche declares still remains desirable.¹²⁸ If Nietzsche's use of thing-in-itself in HH 29 is intended with all its Kantian implications, he would not be able to argue that we could raise ourselves out of the world of appearance (the world as idea or error) through science (rigorous examination of the phenomenal world), which he undoubtedly knew. Furthermore, Nietzsche's reading of, and enthusiasm for, Lange suggests that he could not have seriously intended his use of the thing-in-itself to convey its full Kantian meaning. The most plausible suggestion for his use of the thing-in-itself in HH 29 is that it was a readily available term, whose meaning he wished to begin subverting. This suggestion leaves open the question of what Nietzsche meant when referring to the 'errors' ingrained in humanity from primeval times. One obvious answer is that he means the evaluations that we have inscribed on the world, for example those of morality. The other major error is the generalizing character of our intellect. In TL this was seen as one possible reason why we are unable to attain truth. Now in HH this view is reinforced and it will become Nietzsche's primary reason in the rest of his writings to argue that we are cut off from truth.¹²⁹

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid. Cf. HH 34 for the description of this 'practical world affirmation'.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 16.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ I am not claiming that Nietzsche's position is that we are entirely cut off from truth altogether, as the postmoderns do. I am simply pointing out the argument that Nietzsche primarily uses when

Elsewhere in HH, while discussing the nature of language, Nietzsche rehearses a familiar objection from TL. He claims that mankind typically believes that it gains knowledge of the true nature of the world through language. The creator of language did not think he was merely designating things with arbitrary symbols, but instead believed that “with words he was expressing supreme knowledge of things.”¹³⁰ It was this erroneous belief in the effectiveness of linguistic designation, the “*belief that the truth has been found*,” which provided the greatest impetus to science.¹³¹ But in modernity it is now dawning on people “that in their belief in language they have propagated a tremendous error.”¹³² Nietzsche describes this error in a number of ways, and the common thread among them is his nominalist thesis. He maintains that the development of logic depends on the “presupposition that there are identical things” in the world, and that “the same thing is identical at different points of time.”¹³³ Additionally, he thinks mathematics would never have been developed as it has “if one had known from the beginning that there was in nature no exactly straight line, no real circle, no absolute magnitude.”¹³⁴ Science only developed because it was based on the mistaken principles just described. However, as science advanced to its present stage we realized, through it, that these presuppositions are incorrect. But Nietzsche does not draw a negative conclusion from this realization. By contrast, he says that “[h]appily, it is too late for the evolution of reason...to be again put back” in light of these errors.¹³⁵ We have only achieved our current level of scientific ability from a belief founded on error. But once this error is acknowledged we should not turn back and abandon our hard-won advances in thinking and methodology. Instead we must continue honing our abilities in this field and carry through our investigations to their conclusion.¹³⁶

Nietzsche continues to link his nominalist thesis with the generalizing nature of our thought as the cause of our pervasive errors. The limited capacity of human cognition can only account for degrees of difference and similarity. For instance, in explaining the nature of dreams, he argues that sleep reduces the brain’s capacity for memory to the level that primeval man had during waking hours. In this diminished state the brain “continually confuses one thing with another on the basis of the most fleeting similarities,” just as today in dreams we fail “to recognize correctly and erroneously [suppose] one thing to be the same as

arguing that we are cut off from truth in some fashion. Ultimately, he does think we can attain at least a kind of truth, the only type possible for us. The details of this new kind of truth will be explored in chapter three.

¹³⁰ Nietzsche, HH, 11.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ This is an early indicator of Nietzsche’s non-foundationalism, which is further developed in later works.

another.”¹³⁷ This exemplifies the generalizing nature of our perception, which, when not attended to carefully, easily mistakes two similar things as identical. Shortly after this observation Nietzsche makes a similar point that “the unity of the word is no guarantee of the unity of the thing.”¹³⁸ He makes this claim while referring to our careless observations about strong moods. These moods resonate with related sensations and moods from our memory, evoking them with great rapidity. Because of our poor comprehension of this process, we refer to these complexes of sensations and moods as unities and designate them with single terms, often as moral or religious feelings. However, through careful observation Nietzsche believes that we can recognize the various components that compose these unities.¹³⁹ Presumably, this recognition allows us to begin demarcating these sensations and moods more carefully, thus contributing to the ‘chemistry of concepts and sensations’ of HH 1 and increasing our knowledge of human psychology. This is the same point Nietzsche made in reference to dreams: although we often mistake two things as identical – perhaps even attributing a single identity to them and treating them as a unity – on careful analysis we can identify their differences and variations and increase our understanding.

One final passage from HH deserves close attention for its clear articulation of the position I ascribe to Nietzsche, and that is HH 19. This passage makes a number of important points. The first is that the laws of number are based on an error which has been dominant “from the earliest of times.”¹⁴⁰ This is the error “that there are identical things (but in fact nothing is identical with anything else),” an assumption based on the more fundamental error “that there are things (but there is no ‘thing’).”¹⁴¹ As an explanation for the radical claim that there are no ‘things’ Nietzsche argues that “here already we are fabricating beings, unities which do not exist.”¹⁴² Recalling HH 14, we can infer that Nietzsche means that when we believe we have some particular object (one ‘thing’), what we really have is a collection of some kind, grouped together by our cognitive process and regarded as a unity. The fact that there are no self-existing ‘things’ outside of the composing power of the human mind leads to the conclusion that there are no identical things (if there are no things, there can be no identical things). This claim appears buttressed by the fact that “nothing is identical with anything else.”¹⁴³ Presumably this means that any minor change in a thing, or the compilation we take as a thing, makes it different from its previous incarnation, although this point is not fully developed in this passage.¹⁴⁴ Here we have a clear

¹³⁷ Nietzsche, HH, 12.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 14.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 19.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Nietzsche does not entertain the idea that the identity of an object may be attributed to the continuity of the process which keeps it together. Presumably, he does not entertain this possibility

articulation of the nominalist position that no two things are identical, along with a constructivist thesis about objects (no objects exist in the world on their own; only our grouping and designation of some collection of *puncta* creates an object). However, this conclusion does not necessarily imply that any reference to ‘things’ or ‘objects’ is entirely misguided. As Nietzsche says, happily it is too late to reverse the gains made by logic on the presupposition of identical things. While science may lift us out of our basic errors for a time, we inevitably fall back into these errors to function in the world.¹⁴⁵

The second important point of the passage concerns Nietzsche’s claim that “[o]ur sensations of time and space are false.”¹⁴⁶ He supports this conclusion by arguing that when these sensations are “tested consistently they lead to logical contradictions.”¹⁴⁷ Up to this point of contradiction our sensations are constant, which allows us to introduce “false magnitudes,” presumably any unit of measurement within our experience.¹⁴⁸ At the final stages of science we realize that our “erroneous basic assumptions” become “incompatible with our conclusions.”¹⁴⁹ As an example of this realization Nietzsche points to the theory of atoms. He maintains that we feel compelled to continue believing “in the existence of a ‘thing’ or material ‘substratum’ which is moved, while the whole procedure of science has pursued the task of resolving everything thing-like (material) in motions.”¹⁵⁰ Here is a definite echo of Boscovich, who pursued exactly this project of resolving all ‘things’ (phenomena) into moving point-masses in his kinematic theory. Nietzsche believes that in addition to maintaining our belief in ‘things’ we continue separating the mover from the moved, based on our sensations of movement. This continued belief in ‘things,’ despite our best scientific theories, is bound up with our thinking from “time immemorial.”¹⁵¹ Here Nietzsche references Kant’s claim that we prescribe laws to nature from the formal conditions of our thought, and that our thought is not prescribed its laws from nature.¹⁵² Nietzsche agrees insofar as we prescribe laws to our “*concept of nature* which we are obliged to attach to nature (nature = world as idea, that is as error),” and this concept “is the summation of a host of errors of the understanding.”¹⁵³ He concludes that the laws of number are valid within this

because it would first require the ability to identify the object itself, even if it is understood as an on-going event, before being able to determine the process or processes which maintain it.

¹⁴⁵ Nietzsche, HH, 11, 34. Continuing on I shall continue to use terms like ‘object’ and ‘thing’. In doing so I am not ignoring Nietzsche’s nominalist and constructivist theses that no two things are identical, and that all things are unities produced by an act of our intellect. These terms may still be used in their everyday reference, while keeping these two finer points in mind.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 19.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B163-165.

¹⁵³ Nietzsche, HH, 19.

human world, nature as we conceptualize it, but that these are not applicable to the world outside of the human understanding.

There are two major differences between HH 19 and TL worth noting. The first difference is how Nietzsche treats space and time. In TL he regarded these in an essentially Kantian manner, arguing that they are a priori forms of the human intellect and are imposed on the world. This point was used as the basis for his sceptical argument against science, which held that because our observations are based on human contributions they cannot accurately disclose the nature of the world.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, it was held that if we cannot get at the nature of the world, we cannot be said to have any knowledge of it.¹⁵⁵ In place of any direct access to the world, on TL's account, all we have access to is our relations to the world. In TL these relations were considered insufficient for knowledge of the world. Also, the hypothesis was put forth that if our sensations are inconsistent, then they cannot serve as a basis for methodical inquiry.¹⁵⁶ In HH 19 Nietzsche refers to our intuitions of space and time as "false," which suggests that these are still products of our mental faculties. However, in contrast to a Kantian version of this process, Nietzsche now believes that we will discover logical contradictions when we test these intuitions consistently.¹⁵⁷ This implies that the 'falsity' of our intuitions is revealed by the results of scientific investigations and not through a critique of pure reason carried out prior to any engagement in scientific experimentation.¹⁵⁸

The second major difference HH 19 shows from TL is the significance of the relations we experience. In TL Nietzsche claimed that "all these relations refer only to one another, and they are utterly incomprehensible to us in their essential nature."¹⁵⁹ Because we are unable to access the essential nature of things outside

¹⁵⁴ Nietzsche, TL 149-150.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 144, 149-150.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 149.

¹⁵⁷ Nietzsche, HH 19.

¹⁵⁸ This possibility seems ruled out in TL, where the realist is said to argue against the idealist by pointing to the perfect uniformity of the world as revealed by science, which supposedly leads to the belief that "everything found [in science] will be in agreement and without contradiction" (TL 149). Nietzsche's decisive change of heart in HH is that science is said to reveal precisely these contradictions, which showcases the falsifications that humans have projected onto the world (in the form of our primeval assumptions) (HH 19). Kant, by contrast, declares it to be a necessity "to show that pure *a priori* principles are indispensable for the possibility of experience," because our experience could not be certain "if all the rules, according to which it proceeds, were always themselves empirical, and therefore contingent" (*Critique* B5). Kant requires that our epistemology allows for certainty somewhere in our experience, and this necessity grounds his later objections to the possibility that our thought proceeds along arbitrary subjective dispositions. If this were the case, he argues, we could not secure such things as the necessary relation between cause and effect. This would collapse our foundation for certain knowledge, along the lines Hume argued for (*Critique* B167-168). Nietzsche takes up precisely this latter position, accepting that we lose our foundation for certainty. Contrary to Kant, Nietzsche thinks this cannot be a decisive objection to such a view and accepts the consequences. Arguably, the majority of Nietzsche's philosophy is the exploration of the implications of such a view, one unwilling to bend in the face of the consequences and "deny knowledge, in order to make room for *faith*" (*Critique* Bxxx).

¹⁵⁹ Nietzsche, TL, 149.

of our intuitions of time and space, knowledge is restricted merely to these relations and never rises to the objective nature of the things-in-themselves. Now in HH a similar view is put forth, but with an important difference. Nietzsche still claims that we only experience the relations of things, for instance we experience objects within our intuitive framework of space and time. The difference is that now this is not stated pejoratively. In HH Nietzsche admits that when we introduce magnitudes (i.e. numerical division) into our sensations “these magnitudes are at least *constant*, as for example are our sensations of time and space.”¹⁶⁰ Because this is the case, “the conclusions of science acquire a complete rigorousness and certainty in their coherence with one another; one can build on them,” at least to the point where our basic errors conflict with our conclusions and we are pushed to question them.¹⁶¹ Whereas in TL the relational quality of our experience was enough to dismiss it as a basis for knowledge, in HH this relational quality is now thought to provide enough rigour and certainty for science.

Of course, it may still be objected that Nietzsche regards the world as we conceptualize it as an error, which implies that these relations we experience do not correspond to the ‘true’ world. This objection does partly remain in HH as a ‘metaphysical hangover’ from TL, but Nietzsche will move progressively away from the assumption that entails this objection in later works.¹⁶² The objection does not, however, undercut the major leap that Nietzsche has made from TL. Now our sensations are regarded as sufficiently regular for scientific investigation. It is this investigation itself which eventually reveals the ‘basic errors’ we have inherited from the primeval past, including our belief in (self-identical) objects that exist over time, our naïve beliefs about time and space, and our use of numbers and logic. This position stands in contrast to the Kantian objection of TL, which denied us the access truth supposedly requires to the noumenal realm.¹⁶³ Now the nominalist thesis clearly underpins Nietzsche’s claims that we are mired in certain ‘errors’ which interfere with our ability to attain truth, although we have the power to mitigate this interference and recognize these errors as errors. This way of formulating Nietzsche’s conclusion makes his claims essentially empirical in nature; it is by scrutinizing the world more rigorously and methodically than before that we come to realize these errors for what they are, even if they are still necessary for life.

This account of Nietzsche’s claim that we falsify reality stands in contrast to the postmodern reading as well as Clark’s developmental account. Contrary to the postmodern reading, Nietzsche does not endorse a brand of scepticism. In HH we see him praising science for its ability to reveal “the true nature of the world”

¹⁶⁰ Nietzsche, HH, 19.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² The assumption being that our world of experience is an error which falsifies some true world.

¹⁶³ At least this was required for truth on the Kantian position of TL. The nominalist position, which Nietzsche now endorses more fully, does not require this.

and leading us to “knowledge of it.”¹⁶⁴ This passage, and others like it, cannot be adequately accounted for on the postmodern view that Nietzsche abandoned any positive notion of truth. Similarly, Clark’s view is unable to satisfactorily account for such passages in HH. According to her view, Nietzsche remains similar to the postmoderns at this stage of his development.¹⁶⁵ He does this by retaining a metaphysical correspondence theory of truth and a Kantian worldview.¹⁶⁶ This theory holds that truth requires correspondence to the thing-in-itself, which, according to the Kantian thesis, we are cut off from. But Clark’s view cannot account for the truths that Nietzsche claims in HH, nor does it fit the textual evidence for Nietzsche’s claims to falsification, which are largely underwritten by his nominalism. As Clark herself admits, in HH Nietzsche does not believe the thing-in-itself has any positive role to play in our knowledge whatsoever.¹⁶⁷ When combined with Nietzsche’s more favourable remarks on our stable relations with the world, there emerges the strong likelihood that Nietzsche gave up this metaphysical correspondence theory of truth in favour of a view that truth involves perspectival stipulations and the minimal correspondence of relations. By basing the falsification thesis on Nietzsche’s nominalism and his theory of cognition, we can better account for the textual evidence, as well as his claims that we can, at least partially, correct our ancient errors. My alternative reading still allows Nietzsche to move progressively away from the thing-in-itself, as Clark’s reading highlights, but separates this move from Nietzsche’s views on truth and knowledge. But the scope and implications of this view are not entirely worked out in HH. It will take time for Nietzsche to develop these details.

Daybreak

Nietzsche’s next major work, *Daybreak* (1881), signals a turn towards the project of revaluing values. While *Human, All Too Human* deals with a broad range of content, *Daybreak* narrows this focus.¹⁶⁸ *Daybreak*’s subtitle, “Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality,” indicates that the central task of this book is an examination of morality, along with its historical partner, religion. As he says in *Ecce Homo*, “[m]y campaign against *morality* begins with this book... In *Daybreak* I first took up the fight against the morality of ‘unselfing.’”¹⁶⁹ By ‘unselfing’ Nietzsche is referring to any morality which aims at the negation of the self, which is precisely what has historically been taken *as* morality. *Daybreak*

¹⁶⁴ Nietzsche, HH, 29.

¹⁶⁵ Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 84-85, 95-102.

¹⁶⁶ Clark’s views in 1990 and 2004 hold that the falsification thesis is present in HH. Clark’s view of 1998 is more in line with my own account here.

¹⁶⁷ Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 98-99.

¹⁶⁸ This is not to say that Nietzsche becomes narrow-minded in his later works, as he still deals with an incredible breadth of topics. What I mean by this comment is that beginning with *Daybreak* Nietzsche’s writings show a distinctive focus on the topic of values (morality and religion).

¹⁶⁹ Nietzsche, EH, ‘Books’ D 1-2.

takes up this fight, Nietzsche claims, by revaluing phenomena that have been condemned as ‘bad’ and seeing them in a new light.¹⁷⁰ Alongside this project he continues to comment on issues of truth and knowledge. These comments show the increasing complexity of his thought on these issues and anticipate the development of his later perspectivism.

Section 117 of *Daybreak* is important for the book’s treatment of knowledge. Here Nietzsche argues that everyone is trapped within a certain horizon of concern which determines what sorts of things are observable and matter to them. This horizon is referred to as a kind of prison, and it is established by the physiology of the organs of sense. Nietzsche contrasts human interests with those of other creatures, who presumably view similar phenomena differently than we do (e.g. spatial distances and stretches of time). He indicates that it is this physiological constitution that interacts with the world and produces our sensations. These interactions produce the habits of our senses which, in turn, are “the basis of all our judgments and ‘knowledge.’”¹⁷¹ However, Nietzsche also refers to our sensations as “an error,” and argues that “there is absolutely no escape, no backway or bypath into the *real world!*” (*die wirkliche Welt*).¹⁷² Instead, all we are able to observe is what our physiological constitution allows. This sounds strikingly sceptical, and recalls some of the Kantian problems posed in TL. Here we have the apparent world disclosed to human sensation contrasted with the ‘real world’ which is inaccessible to us.

This passage provides two interesting considerations. The first is that Nietzsche argues that the world of sense experience is conditioned by our physical constitution. This indicates that he is operating within a realist ontology that presupposes bodies which interact with a physical world to produce sensations. It also indicates that he is working with some variation of the representational view of perception, which holds that we do not perceive the ‘real’ physical objects in the world, but some kind of mental representation of these, causally produced by physical interaction. The second interesting consideration has to do with what appears to be a lingering Kantianism, captured in Nietzsche’s comment about our inability to access the ‘real world’. One obvious connotation of this statement is that we are trapped in a world of experience produced by the conditioning of human mental processes. In contrast to Kant, these processes are now said to be conditioned by physical organs rather than the a priori forms of the understanding.¹⁷³ Despite this difference, the question of the status of this ‘real world’ remains. Are we cut off from genuine knowledge and truth (as D 117 suggests by placing ‘knowledge’ in quotation marks) because we are trapped in a conditioned world? An affirmative answer to this question would retain a form of Kantianism by creating two distinct realms (noumenal/phenomenal,

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 1.

¹⁷¹ Nietzsche, D, 117.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Something like this view has been suggested by commentators for quite some time, typically by those associated with what I have called the modern interpretation.

experience/thing-in-itself, or unconditioned/conditioned) paired with the metaphysical correspondence theory of truth, as articulated by Clark and attributed to the young Nietzsche.¹⁷⁴ This passage does suggest something like this view. But other sections of *Daybreak* challenge this view and point toward Nietzsche's mature perspectivism. This perspectival view is characterized by locating truth and knowledge within the (humanly) conditioned sphere, achieved by making the 'real' (unconditioned) world something incomprehensible and thus undermining the possibility of correspondence with it.¹⁷⁵

In section 210 of *Daybreak* Nietzsche discusses the 'in itself.' Here he argues that while in the past people thought that qualities were inherent in objects, we now realize that we assign these qualities to objects depending on the responses they elicit from us.¹⁷⁶ However, this realization should not undermine our capacity to assign qualities to objects.¹⁷⁷ While this sounds strikingly anti-realist about objects (insofar as they do not possess qualities independent of human ascription), his position is tempered to a degree. First, Nietzsche does not indicate that *every* quality is merely ascribed to objects. His examples include what is laughable, good, evil, and sublime, perhaps what we may call 'value qualities,' and not what we may refer to as 'objective' or 'physical qualities,' such as shape, extension, colour, solidity, and so on. Second, Nietzsche indicates that "there are states of soul in which we impose such [value] words upon things external to and within us."¹⁷⁸ This shows that while the qualities we assign things (both external objects and internal states) are subjective, insofar as they are attributed on the basis of our relation to the phenomena, they arise from objective states of the spirit, understood as particular states of the spirit (i.e. a particular mood or dominant drive). While this process is not fully articulated here, it indicates, in line with the realist ontology indicated at D 117, that there is a process which causes certain states within us to react to stimuli. We then apply predicates to these stimuli in accordance with these causal processes.

Elsewhere Nietzsche indicates that it still takes serious effort (i.e. the effort of thinkers, experts, and professionals) "to illuminate the *essence* of an object."¹⁷⁹ This implies that he is not a total subjectivist when it comes to the

¹⁷⁴ Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 77-83.

¹⁷⁵ Clark also holds that the mature Nietzsche moves to something like this view. However, in contrast to her, I believe that this transition happens sooner than GM, that the break is not as clear or decisive, and that it has much more radical implications than Clark is willing to admit.

¹⁷⁶ Nietzsche, D, 210.

¹⁷⁷ We see a deviation here from HH 34, where it was suggested that man could be happy as a kind of spectator in nature, contented with knowledge of the world. Now, by contrast, Nietzsche wishes for us to keep our ability to attribute qualities to nature depending on its relations with us. Cf. footnote 107 above for a discussion of HH 34.

¹⁷⁸ Nietzsche, D, 210.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 324. This is stated while discussing actors who may believe that through some form of 'clairvoyance' they may access the essences of things without the laborious effort that is actually required. Nietzsche's reference to an 'essence' [*Wesen*] here is contrasted with the surface appearances of a thing.

properties of objects, as D 210 may suggest. Later in the work a hypothetical conversation occurs in which one interlocutor worries that because all of his experience is mediated by his sense organs, all he can ever achieve is knowledge of these organs themselves which, he suggests, may imply “the impossibility of knowledge” (*Erkenntniss*).¹⁸⁰ In contrast to his own scepticism, the interlocutor hypothesizes that there may be other creatures better equipped for knowledge. While no definite conclusion is drawn from this exchange, a second interlocutor suggests that his companion is being attacked by reason (*Vernunft*), and that “tomorrow you will be again in the midst of knowledge and therewith also in the midst of unreason, which is to say in *delight* in the human.”¹⁸¹ This passage suggests two insights into Nietzsche’s views on knowledge in this work. The first is that knowledge does not necessarily have to be free of conflict with reason, and that the ‘unreasonable’ is the delight of the human.¹⁸² The second insight comes from the very end of the passage. Here, after claiming that the first interlocutor will be “in the midst of unreason” and the “*delight* in the human” again the next day, the second interlocutor suggests that the two men should go down to the sea, at which point the aphorism ends. While a sceptical position as ventured by the first interlocutor may constitute a serious danger to foundational knowledge, the second interlocutor’s response implies that this attack of reason should not cause too much worry. Rather than being concerned with such extreme scepticism, the aphorism implies that we should rather delight in the human and in nature. While both of these points sound like radical attacks against traditional notions of knowledge, they point towards Nietzsche’s alternative understanding of these notions. His alternative does not (at least not in *Daybreak*) have any specific methodological requirement and the value of knowledge remains an open question. While traditional philosophical problems attempt to root knowledge in certainty, or to determine with certainty the role of sense perception in knowledge, Nietzsche indicates here (at least tentatively) that the problem of certainty should not bother us too much.¹⁸³ Alternatively, it is suggested that there is a kind of human knowledge that is saturated in unreason, and that we should not be concerned with establishing foundational positions on how to ground knowledge, although this point is not fully explained in this section.

The lack of a method for ascertaining knowledge is further articulated in other sections of D, and points towards the development of Nietzsche’s mature

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 483.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Recall HH 29, where Nietzsche claims that “[i]t is *error* that has made mankind so profound, tender, inventive as to produce such a flower as the arts and religions. Pure knowledge would have been incapable of it...it is the world as idea (as error) that is so full of significance, profound, marvellous, and bearing in its womb all happiness and unhappiness.” D 483 suggests continuity with this view that some of the most significant human accomplishments, those in which we delight, are rooted in the ‘unreasonable.’

¹⁸³ It is interesting to note that in TL Nietzsche remarks that if we were ultimately concerned with certainty, we would not even affirm the existence of objects from the phenomena of our sensations (TL, 144).

perspectivism. Later in the book he says that “[t]here are no scientific methods which alone lead to knowledge!”¹⁸⁴ On the contrary, “[w]e have to tackle things experimentally,” in different moods and with different approaches.¹⁸⁵ To investigate, Nietzsche claims, is much the same as to conquer; a certain compulsion must push us to investigate and experiment in order to attain any kind of knowledge. While it may be tempting to see this claim as a marked departure from HH, where science was credited with disclosing the nature of the world, this is not the case. While Nietzsche says that “no scientific methods alone lead to knowledge,” he does not say that scientific methods cannot lead to knowledge at all. Instead, they must be coupled with various perspectives on an object, which will press our investigations and experimentations in different directions. However, this experimental mode of inquiry may itself be characterized as essentially scientific, because it involves various approaches and empirical inquiries into an object in order to attain knowledge of it. Of particular interest is that Nietzsche in no way indicates that some non-empirical mode of inquiry (e.g. intuition) might give us access (or at least better access than empirical inquiry) to knowledge of objects.

Elsewhere Nietzsche uses the metaphor of colours to argue that all of our observation of the world is in some sense partial.¹⁸⁶ He argues that a thinker, as analogous to an artist, “paints his world in fewer colours than *are actually there*, and is blind to certain individual colours.”¹⁸⁷ This makes the thinker’s image of the world an “approximation and simplification” which “introduces harmonies of colours *into the things themselves*,” enriching nature and making it pleasurable.¹⁸⁸ Originally, Nietzsche hypothesizes, our image of nature was painted with only “one or two colours,” but now (as a result of gradual scientific education) “many an individual works himself out of a partial colourblindness into a richer seeing and distinguishing.”¹⁸⁹ This improvement can cause us to give up certain enjoyments which we took in our previous image of nature, but may also produce new ones in the process of seeing new colours. This passage exemplifies a number of key points. First, it admits that there are colours in nature, more than the painter or thinker can utilize. This implies that there is some definite character to the world, one much more complex than any observation can capture. But this inability is not necessarily a disadvantage. Our “approximation and simplification” adds harmonies and makes the world more enticing. This recalls the nominalist thesis of TL and HH; our simplification of the world produces good consequences for us, although it distorts our perception of the world,

¹⁸⁴ Nietzsche, D, 432.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 426. Hollingdale translates ‘*das Gleichniss*’ as “metaphor” in this passage, and I have followed him. However, it should be noted that in TL Nietzsche used the term ‘*Metapher*’; ‘*Gleichniss*’ has a broader connotation of any representative likeness or analogy.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

undercutting the traditional goal of adequate representation of reality in thought. Finally, the passage also admits that we are more advanced compared to our primitive habits. We now have the ability to see the world in more colours than was possible in the past, and with this transformation comes an accompanying change in our pleasures.

Nietzsche's view that our cognitive abilities are limited is emphasized in another passage, D 119, which utilizes his notion of a 'totality of drives.'¹⁹⁰ Here Nietzsche declares that the individual is constituted by a totality of drives (*Triebe*), of which we do not have a clear picture. This totality follows some unknown rule of nutrition; the different drives all prey on experience, and act on them in some unknown process.¹⁹¹ In this passage Nietzsche argues that because of our ignorance of this process, it is by chance that particular drives are fed or deprived of nutrition, making their growth or withering an uncontrolled affair. What is most interesting is the role that Nietzsche assigns to the drives in this passage. He argues that it is the drives themselves that interpret our experience, both in dreams and while we are awake. Nietzsche ventures a supposition that drives that were unable to discharge (*Entladung*) their strength during the day are allowed a chance to make up for this deprivation in dreams by freely interpreting the body's nervous stimuli. Nietzsche refers to these stimuli as a text that the drives interpret by imagining various causes, which in turn gives rise to all of our dream images. The different results that arise from these interpretations come from the different drives satisfying their need for activity. This interpretation makes consciousness "a more or less fantastic commentary on an unknown, perhaps unknowable, but felt text."¹⁹²

Nietzsche extends this explanation to waking interpretation as well. Our drives interpret nervous stimulation while we are awake in the same fashion as when we are asleep, positing causes depending on the nature of the drive. Because the drives have different interests, they produce differing interpretations from similar stimuli. Although this process may imply that there can be no 'objective' interpretation because of this involvement of drives and their interests, there are two important considerations that this passage confirms. The first is that there are limitations to our interpretations. In dreams our drives may freely interpret stimuli according to their own interests because there are no consequences at stake. In waking life, however, the interpretations of the drives have real consequences, which act as a limitation to the freedom drives may exercise. Also, Nietzsche suggests that modern man interprets more strictly in waking life than primitive man did, and that the freedom modern man has in dreams resembles the waking

¹⁹⁰ This 'totality of drives' constitutes the self for Nietzsche, and this view is developed more fully throughout his mature works. While I will be referring to it in my examination of his position on truth and knowledge, its full articulation is not my primary concern.

¹⁹¹ Nietzsche, D, 119. This passage may show the influence of Lange, insofar as Nietzsche admits that the fundamental organisation of our being is unknown to us. However, Nietzsche does not conclude that this organisation is fundamentally unknowable.

¹⁹² Ibid.

interpretive activity of the primitive man. The second major consideration is that Nietzsche indicates that when we give our drives time to work on experience they will each produce their own interpretation of the experience. He gives an example in which a man suddenly collapsed in front of him, and because he did not have time to reflect on it he simply acted in accordance with his most prevalent drive at the time, picking the man up and attending to him. Had Nietzsche been told about the event the day before, he hypothesizes that all of his drives would have had time to anticipate and interpret the experience, which would have produced a whole range of interpretive alternatives.¹⁹³ While Nietzsche does not draw any direct conclusions at this point about the implications of this drive-interpretation, he will return to this theory later. In *On the Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche will declare that ‘objectivity’ about any phenomenon can be nothing more than the totality of interpretations of it, produced from the totality of different perspectives.¹⁹⁴ We will return to this passage and its implications later.

One final point may be made about D 119. Because our conscious experience arises as a commentary by the drives on nervous stimuli, Nietzsche concludes this passage by saying that our experiences contain “[m]uch *more* that which we put into them than that which they already contain! Or must we go so far as to say: in themselves they contain nothing? To experience is to invent?”¹⁹⁵ It is important to note that Nietzsche fields this inventiveness as a possibility here, and not as a definitive conclusion.¹⁹⁶ Despite the hypothetical nature of the claim, it strongly points towards Nietzsche’s blurring of the line between experience and reflection. This blurring became thematic in twentieth century thinkers such as Wilfrid Sellars.

In Sellars’s massively influential essay “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind” he argues against what he deems ‘The Myth of the Given.’ He notes that “[i]f the term ‘given’ referred merely to what is observed as being observed, or, perhaps, to a proper subset of things we are said to determine by observation, the existence of ‘data’ would be as noncontroversial as the existence of philosophical perplexities.”¹⁹⁷ Instead of referring merely to ‘data,’ the ‘given’ has traditionally served “to explicate the idea that empirical knowledge rests on a ‘foundation’ of non-inferential knowledge of matter of fact.”¹⁹⁸ More specifically, this foundation or non-inferential knowledge was found in the form of “authoritative nonverbal

¹⁹³ Ibid. Of course, previous to the event occurring the drives would be interpreting the imagined event, which may be different than their interpretation of the actual event were it to occur.

¹⁹⁴ Nietzsche, GM, III, 12.

¹⁹⁵ Nietzsche, D, 119. Also in *Daybreak*, Nietzsche suggests that the philosophy he has been expounding in this work may be a translation “into reason [of] a strong and constant drive” (D 553). He also allows that other creatures most likely do the same thing (the example of a butterfly is given in this passage). Nietzsche will develop and reinforce the view that philosophy is a way of translating these drives into consciousness in later works, especially in *Beyond Good and Evil*.

¹⁹⁶ This is in keeping with his mature style, which is consistent with his position that many avenues of interpretation must be explored before drawing conclusions.

¹⁹⁷ Sellars, “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind,” 127.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 128.

episodes” which are “self-authenticating.”¹⁹⁹ Propositions (what Sellars calls “verbal performances” or “*Konstatierungen*”), according to the Myth, and best captured by traditional sense-datum empiricism, are supposedly authoritative if they accurately reflect these nonverbal episodes.²⁰⁰

In contrast to this view, Sellars argues that we “could not have observational knowledge of *any* fact unless one knew many *other* things as well.”²⁰¹ For propositions to be authoritative in any sense – which they must be to qualify for knowledge, such as in reporting the colour of some object – we must already know certain things (such as the usual signification of colour words and what constitutes standard observational conditions).²⁰² While there is too much going on in his essay to be fully discussed here, Sellars’s major conclusion is directly relevant to D 119. He points out that traditionally thoughts were put in the same category as sensations, and hence were subsumed under the general concept of givenness. Sellars argues that this assimilation of the two is a mistake, and that the same lessons he draws about givenness from sensations should be applied to other internal episodes (such as thoughts) as well.²⁰³ Through several twists and turns Sellars unfolds a hypothetical myth of his own about pre-historic man, who is originally only able to converse in a Rylean language, based on publicly observable patterns of behaviour.²⁰⁴ His conclusion is that while such people could not discuss internal episodes at first, they can acquire such a capacity by introducing these episodes as theoretical posits in their language.²⁰⁵ Hence, Sellars’s major conclusion “*that instead of coming to have a concept of something because we have noticed that sort of thing, to have the ability to notice a sort of thing is already to have the concept of that sort of thing, and cannot account for it.*”²⁰⁶

Just as Sellars discredits the givenness of authoritative, self-authenticating, nonverbal episodes, he also discredits the givenness of conscious thoughts. He argues that experience is constructed from an interconnected array of beliefs. In D 119 Nietzsche claims something quite close to this, though it is different in certain respects. Nietzsche also discredits the givenness of experience. He posits an interpretive array of possibilities, the result of the interpretive activities of an individual’s drives. Even though Sellars and Nietzsche might agree that our experience is never given in the sense that it is unanalyzable, they may disagree about the outcome of this. While Sellars maintains that we may put any of our claims in jeopardy, he believes this is not done all at once, because the network of

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 167.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 168.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid., 177-178.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 178. Gilbert Ryle is most famous for his behaviourist account of the mind in his *The Concept of Mind*.

²⁰⁵ Sellars, 181-191.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 176.

our beliefs acts as a backdrop against which this change may take place.²⁰⁷ This backdrop provides a degree of consistency that should make standard claims relatively static, barring some sort of change in overall belief. By contrast, Nietzsche's vision is more radical. One of his examples in D 119 is of someone laughing at us as we go by in the marketplace. Depending on the dominant drive at the time, very different interpretations of the event may be produced, which will result in different experiences (although only one external event, the person laughing at us, has occurred).²⁰⁸ Nietzsche's position here signals a complex attitude towards our ability to garner truth or knowledge empirically because of our experiences' malleable character, based on our interpretive principles (i.e. drives). This conclusion points us towards his mature perspectivism.

A number of other passages from *Daybreak* reinforce Nietzsche's move towards his mature perspectivism, which is characterized by an attempt to decentralize the position of humans in discussions of truth and knowledge, as well as revaluating the value of truth and knowledge for human purposes. Nietzsche holds that the pursuit of knowledge has been hindered in the past by the view that "everything in the world seemed to be *accommodated to man*," which entailed that the very knowability of the world was tailored to the mental capacity of humans.²⁰⁹ This fallacious assumption resulted in a method of philosophical investigation which sought to reduce the complexity of the world to its simplest form as a single problem, and then to provide a solution to this problem that was equally simplistic. As an example of this tendency Nietzsche cites Schopenhauer, likely in reference to his 'solution' of the 'problem' of the thing-in-itself as Will, though he believes this simplifying tendency has been widespread. This method was designed to allow a human being to master knowledge of existence within the span of a single life.²¹⁰ In contrast to this anthropocentric approach, which assumes that the nature of the world must be such that humans can grasp its entirety, Nietzsche holds that "over the door of the thinker of the future" stands the inscription "[w]hat do I matter!"²¹¹ One of the greatest advances of modernity, Nietzsche believes, is freeing nature from the faith that it must be finally comprehensible. Because we are able to shake this old anthropomorphic belief, science may now advance along its paths over the course of many lifetimes without the expectation that it must produce final answers.²¹²

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 170. Sellars shares this view with other prominent twentieth century philosophers such as Otto Neurath and W.V.O. Quine.

²⁰⁸ It can be noted here that the interpretation of the event still relies on a backdrop of beliefs, such as those required to believe that someone is laughing at us. While this is true, we will see in Nietzsche's later work that perspectivism allows for more radical changes of view, which can alter even this type of more basic interpretation of experience.

²⁰⁹ Nietzsche, D, 547.

²¹⁰ Ibid. Here Nietzsche says that "[p]hilosophy was thus a kind of supreme struggle to possess the tyrannical rule of the spirit."

²¹¹ Ibid., 547. This inscription is likely a reference to Montaigne, who had "What do I know?" inscribed on the wall of his study.

²¹² Ibid.

Another old prejudice is that truth should be a consolation. Nietzsche believes that this attitude is being overcome in modernity, and that now there is a conviction that every truth must be useful to man, providing some practical effect rather than solace. This again stems from the belief that nature is tailored to the needs of man, who is seen as somehow above or outside of nature (as the “goal of nature”).²¹³ While it is still the case that many expect only benefits from the truth, Nietzsche thinks that there are individuals who are suited to seeking the truth “*as a whole* and interconnectedly,” and suggests that perhaps truth exists interconnectedly only for them.²¹⁴ These individuals require a certain disposition to be both “powerful and harmless, and full of joyfulness and peace” in order to seek truths which have no inherently beneficial results for man.²¹⁵ It is this sort of healthy people who are able to take pleasure in the “coldness, dryness and inhumanity of science.”²¹⁶ Elsewhere Nietzsche criticizes those who merely tolerate science instead of embracing or opposing it. This ambivalence comes from the lack of a “strict conscience for what is true and actual.”²¹⁷ This passage implies that science reveals what is ‘true and actual,’ and that a particular kind of character is required to engage in scientific pursuits, namely one who longs for knowledge above all.²¹⁸

The closing section of *Daybreak* carries this view forward. Here Nietzsche compares us to birds that fly out “into the farthest distance.”²¹⁹ Eventually, all of “our great teachers and predecessors have at last come to a stop,” and it will be the same for us at some point.²²⁰ However, this inevitable stopping does not deter Nietzsche, who believes that “[o]ther birds will fly farther!”²²¹ Nietzsche admits that this is an “insight and faith of ours” to believe that others will be able to carry on further than we have been able to go.²²² At the very end of this passage Nietzsche indicates that such people may even be able to go beyond any expectation that we have. An obvious connection can be made between this bird analogy and the pathos of the knower described above. The ones for whom the desire for knowledge acts as an impulse and law, and who pursue science in an effort to attain the ‘true and actual,’ are the same ones who have freed man from the faith that the world is tailored to the nature of humans. However, their view still rests on a faith that these pursuits will lead to future discoveries, representing an advance on current knowledge. While Nietzsche will subject this faith to the same critical examination which he has begun undertaking in this work on

²¹³ Ibid., 424.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 270.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 575.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid.

religion and morality, it still characterizes his thinking at this point in his philosophical development.²²³

²²³ This critical examination of the faith of pursuers of knowledge and truth is elaborated most fully in *Beyond Good and Evil* and *On the Genealogy of Morals* (especially the third essay), though it finds expression in much of Nietzsche's mature writings.

Chapter 3: Evolution, Force Points, and Perspectivism: Nietzsche's *Gay Science* and Alternative Epistemology

In the previous chapter Nietzsche's evolving views on truth and knowledge were explored up to his 1881 work *Daybreak*. From this analysis we are able to see that by the time of *Daybreak* Nietzsche's thinking on truth and knowledge carries a number of hallmarks. One is a thoroughgoing non-foundationalism. Although some methods may be better suited for finding truth or knowledge, Nietzsche holds there can be no one definitive way to get truth, so there can be no strict foundations for inquiry.¹ Despite this lack of specified methodology, a second hallmark is that Nietzsche does remain broadly an empiricist, as his one major tenant for inquiry is that it must be connected to experience in some fashion.² However, the relation to experience need not be a one-way relation, from object to passive perceiver, as thinkers in the tradition of British empiricism such as Locke and Hume believed. What Nietzsche has in mind is something much closer to twentieth century non-foundationalism and its freedom from 'givenness' articulated by Neurath, Sellars, and Quine. A way of highlighting this empiricist approach is to compare Nietzsche's thought with Ernst Mach, a scientific contemporary with whom he shared a number of methodological points. This non-foundational approach, along with the view that all truth and knowledge are perspectival, will become Nietzsche's perspectivism.³ This view has its beginnings in the earlier works discussed in chapter two, and will achieve its full articulation in the mature works considered in this chapter and the next.

Nietzsche's perspectivism has a number of repercussions. One is that science cannot be a totally certain enterprise and that it cannot answer all of our questions or satisfy all of our interests. While Nietzsche believes that science represents the most certain type of knowledge we can get, he also holds that we

¹ This does not mean that there are no methodological standards at all, but rather that there is no one definitive set of standards. Take, for instance, Nietzsche's claim in D 432 that we must deal with problems experimentally. He clearly indicates in this passage that no purely scientific method will provide us with knowledge, and we must examine while in different moods to get even more perspectives on our object of study.

² For example, in GS 51 Nietzsche declares that he "want[s] to hear nothing more about all the things and questions that don't admit of experiment. This is the limit of my 'sense of truth'; for there, courage has lost its right."

³ In this I oppose Clark and Leiter, who maintain that for Nietzsche truth is not perspectival. Rather, they view perspectivism as the claim that there can be no view from nowhere, and that we are always limited in our ability to attain truth. It is here that the modern reading of Nietzsche takes its worst turn in an attempt to sanitize his thought. For instance, Clark claims "that Nietzsche never says that truth is perspectival, only that knowing is" (Clark, "On Knowledge, Truth, and Value," 74). Leiter's discussion of perspectivism also implies that while knowledge is perspectival, because it is necessarily pursued from some set of affective interests, truth need not be perspectival in the same way. He uses the analogy of a map: while a map can only capture certain aspects of reality, based on our interests, there is an objective reality which the map captures (and can fail to capture) (Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, 264-279).

should not overstep our own abilities and fall into the trap of believing in absolute certainties. The way that Nietzsche is able to claim that all truth is perspectival, and that science represents our most certain claims, lies in how he views perspectives. In articulating how Nietzsche views perspectives, I deflate the objection that if truth is perspectival then it loses objectivity. I will bring in his ontology of force as a way of justifying his epistemic claims to show that a modern (scientific) reader should still take these claims seriously, even if we disagree on the ontological details of microscopic particles. If Nietzsche's account is correct, then we must give up any pretensions to a final epistemological position, especially one predicated on truth as correspondence to reality.

Before discussing perspectivism in detail we must review how Nietzsche's epistemological views rely on an evolutionary narrative. While recent attention has been paid to Nietzsche's relation to Darwin, it is his broader reliance on an evolutionary paradigm that does the real work for his epistemology. In examining this narrative, and how it fits with his views on truth and knowledge, I show how Dirk R. Johnson's recent work, *Nietzsche's Anti-Darwinism*, is an attempted reinvigoration of the postmodern reading against modern naturalist accounts, and how this seriously misses the mark when it comes to Nietzsche's thoughts on these matters.

Nietzsche and Evolution

Johnson's book, *Nietzsche's Anti-Darwinism*, examines Nietzsche's professed 'anti-Darwinism' more seriously than Johnson believes other scholars have. In wanting to align Nietzsche in a tolerable way with modern scientific trends, Johnson believes commentators have tried too hard to find underlying similarities between his thought and that of Darwinian evolution. He thinks those who pay too much attention to the "superficial biological markers in [Nietzsche's] works...ignore his more than ten-year *philosophical* investigation into the *moral* suppositions behind the biological discourse of his time."⁴ Johnson, by contrast, professes to take Nietzsche's stance against Darwin seriously, and to show how this provides us with a surprisingly different interpretation of his works. This reading puts Johnson's account at odds with other recent works on Nietzsche's relationship to Darwin and biology, including John Richardson's *Nietzsche's New Darwinism*, Edith Düsing's *Nietzsches Denkweg: Theologie, Darwinismus, Nihilismus* and Gregory Moore's *Nietzsche, Biology, Metaphor*.

Johnson points out that while Nietzsche almost certainly did not read Darwin himself, he most likely had a fairly good understanding of Darwin's position through the secondary literature, of which he kept abreast.⁵ With this claim, Johnson challenges Richardson (who Johnson believes is representative of the mainstream view), who argues that Nietzsche's attacks against Darwin may be

⁴ Johnson. *Nietzsche's Anti-Darwinism*, 203.

⁵ Ibid., 18-20.

(at least partially) excused because Nietzsche failed to fully understand the theory of natural selection.⁶ Johnson believes that this and similar readings typically maintain that had Nietzsche read Darwin, he would not have found himself in the precarious position of opposing the now-dominant theory of evolution, which puts him in the uncomfortable position of contravening the ‘facts’ of modern science.⁷ Johnson also traces Nietzsche’s Darwinian thinking during his ‘middle period’ works and draws three connections: “the denial of a transcendent moral universe and the belief in the relativity of values; the emphasis on naturalism and genealogical origins; and the concentration on individual biological wills and their struggle *within* nature.”⁸

Despite this concurrence, he thinks Nietzsche still finds himself at odds with Darwin. Specifically, he believes that Darwin is making the mistake of the ‘English psychologists,’ which is to assume that modern ‘English’ morality is correct, project this morality back into nature, and then seek an evolutionary, hence naturalistic explanation for it. Specifically, Nietzsche accuses Darwin of projecting the egoism-altruism debate into nature and then trying to find a natural explanation of how altruism could survive the test of natural selection, when egoism seems to be the natural victor.⁹ He also criticizes Darwin for believing in a traditional notion of the ‘self’ and of morality, seeking explanations for why free willed agents engage in the sorts of moral decision making that they do, with the faith “that a single, all-encompassing explanation for man’s development could be found” in nature.¹⁰ Nietzsche, by contrast, is said to believe that the mind is an extension of the body, itself composed of a complex of drives.¹¹ This view undercuts the traditional notion of moral decision making as an independent rational process. Instead, our moral categories become extensions of our physiological condition, which our values and conscious states express.¹² But because we are always stuck in the human perspective we can never get to the essence of nature to find a full explanation for how and why we behave the way we do.¹³ Johnson argues that Nietzsche opposes the Darwinian project of tracing a

⁶ Richardson, *Nietzsche’s New Darwinism*, 16-26.

⁷ Despite Johnson’s accusation, I believe Richardson does a commendable job recognizing Nietzsche’s antagonism towards Darwin and provides a good attempt to satisfactorily explain it, while not simply attempting to excuse Nietzsche.

⁸ Johnson, *Nietzsche’s Anti-Darwinism*, 33.

⁹ The question is why altruism, which involves some sacrifice by the individual for the sake of others, would be a benefit in the test of natural selection, which holds that those strongest and best able to adapt will survive over an extended period of time. The short version of the answer is that groups that engage in altruistic behaviour will fair better than egoistic individuals or groups who do not engage in this communal behaviour (Johnson, *Nietzsche’s Anti-Darwinism*, 34-37).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹² *Ibid.*, 37-44.

¹³ “Nietzsche rejected definitive claims about ‘nature’ as such. ‘Nature’ could not be grasped in human terms at all; it was elusive, forever inaccessible to human knowledge, logic, or intuition” (*ibid.*, 44). Here “nature” appears as a thing-in-itself for Johnson, which, given Nietzsche’s vehement attacks on the thing-in-itself, should immediately arouse our suspicion that Nietzsche

natural history of our moral development because Nietzsche supposedly thinks our values are simply projections of our constitution onto the world.¹⁴ More precisely, it is the will to power projecting these interpretations onto the world, with each ‘individual’ being nothing more than some atom of will to power, whose essence engages in this interpretative practice.¹⁵

Johnson also proposes some intriguing readings of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, and Nietzsche’s middle and later period remarks on Darwin. In particular, he argues that Z and GM should be seen as anti-Darwinian texts. While he believes Z has anti-Darwinian overtones that lie at a deep level of the text, he claims that in GM “the central argument of the first essay serves one larger purpose – and, indeed, it is the main purpose behind all three of the essays – and that is to question Darwin’s theories of ‘moral’ development and the origins of morality proposed by his many genealogical followers.”¹⁶ Johnson goes to lengths to show that GM is not Nietzsche’s attempt to provide an evolutionary genealogy of morals, as it is usually taken to be. Instead, GM, the self-described ‘polemic,’ is meant to show that such an account is impossible to give, and that Darwin and his followers are engaging in a misguided enterprise. They profess to trace the natural evolution of morality while what they are really trying to do is give a naturalistic justification of modern morality. What Nietzsche does, instead, is show that any attempt at this sort of history or science is only actually some will to power projecting its own interpretation onto reality. As Johnson puts it, Nietzsche recognizes that “[t]he ‘historical’ process which the genealogists unfold cannot, according to the will to power, be a disinterested account of an objective historical process; it must reflect the will to power of a specific type that imposes its will through interpretation *in* history; that interpretation, in turn, reveals the ‘nature’ of the instinctual will.”¹⁷

held such a view. It may be contended that Nietzsche adopted Lange’s view that we are cut off from our ultimate organisation, thus preserving the thing-in-itself in this way. This chapter will show that the mature Nietzsche did not endorse this position. Specifically, his reliance on an evolutionary narrative for his epistemology assumes that biology does have a direct role to play in our cognitive functioning, and BGE 15 launches an argument directly against a view such as Lange’s.

¹⁴ Johnson argues that, for Nietzsche, “[n]ot only is morality not inscribed into ‘nature’; it is an entirely human, psychologically based construct reflecting a specific constellation of instincts and drives and their complex relationship to one another. For Nietzsche, morality becomes an interpretation projected onto – or, alternatively, arising out of – a cluster of conflicting emotions, instincts, and drives peculiar to specific types. For that reason, he is not interested in establishing how ‘morality’ had emerged or grounding it in ‘nature’; he is intent on examining the phenomenon of distinct ‘moral’ wills in order to decode what their (moral) *interpretations* reveal about their underlying instinctual reality. His future works would merely expand on and deepen this key distinction” (Johnson, *Nietzsche’s Anti-Darwinism*, 46).

¹⁵ Ibid., 68-69. Here Johnson appears to be following Kofman, although he does not acknowledge this debt, or the host of problems that comes with it (as I have outlined in chapter one).

¹⁶ Ibid., 111.

¹⁷ Ibid., 135.

So there can be no ‘objective’ account of history (or any kind of science), instead we get the ‘subjective’ interpretations of the will to power.

The best we can garner from these interpretations, if we are psychologically astute enough, is to recognize the nature of that will to power (constituting the individual) and whether it is an active or reactive type.¹⁸ So, as it turns out, Nietzsche’s real point all along is that the will to power projects its interpretations on a neutral reality, thus revealing the will’s nature. Because of this model, no science, history, physiology, or medicine is ever really ‘true,’ and remains a mere interpretation, projecting the attitudes of its creator onto reality. As a consequence, Darwin’s theory of natural selection could not possibly be ‘true,’ but is instead just one more interpretation revealing his pessimistic outlook, captured by his notion of the ‘struggle for existence,’ the flourishing of the mediocre, and a progressivist view of history where evolution creates ever stronger and more beautiful types.¹⁹

Johnson’s reading of GM certainly does provide some serious considerations that Nietzsche scholarship will have to address in its future engagement with both this text and Nietzsche’s broader relationship with Darwin. Yet I think Johnson overstates his case by claiming that “the main purpose behind all three of the essays” of GM is to fight against Darwin and his followers.²⁰ There is just too much going on in GM, as well as in Nietzsche’s corpus as a whole and its relation GM, to claim that its primary purpose is to discredit Darwinian genealogy.²¹

There is also a deep tension in Johnson’s account of how Nietzsche undermines the Darwinian moral project, which is the primary concern his account raises. This tension revives the postmodern interpretation of Kofman et

¹⁸ Johnson acknowledges that he is influenced by Deleuze’s ‘active/reactive’ reading of Nietzsche, which is evident throughout the work (*Nietzsche’s Anti-Darwinism*, 85).

¹⁹ Ibid., 63, 77-78, 123. Johnson argues that the ‘last man’ of *Zarathustra* represents a caricature of the high point of Darwin’s natural selection, while the *Übermensch*, by contrast, is very unlikely to succeed in Darwinian terms (Ibid., 60-61).

²⁰ Ibid., 111. Keith Ansell-Pearson comes to the same conclusion that such a reductivist account of Nietzsche’s works is surely missing something (Ansell-Pearson, review of *Nietzsche’s Anti-Darwinism*, 133).

²¹ In the preface to GM Nietzsche refers us to some of his earlier works (GM, P, 4) as well as reinforces the fact that we will fail to understand GM if we have not familiarized ourselves with his other works, because these ideas have been a common thread throughout them (GM, P, 2). It seems like a stretch to argue that GM mainly represents a radical attack on Darwin and his historical method while Nietzsche simultaneously refers us back to his earlier works to understand GM, seeing as how these earlier works have some pro-Darwinian elements (as Johnson admits, *Nietzsche’s Anti-Darwinism*, 20, 22-25, 32-34). Also, Darwin and the ‘English psychologists’ largely disappear after the opening sections of GM. It seems much more plausible to regard GM as containing a number of meanings and purposes, one of which is undermining a linear development of morality (as Nietzsche believed the ‘English’, including Darwin, were attempting to do), while also pointing out the different types of morality that are possible, as well as the meaning(s) of ascetic ideals and their relation to human meaning and values.

al.²² On the one hand, Johnson wants to argue that for Nietzsche everything is simply an interpretation of the will to power, subjectively projecting itself onto the world, thus undermining any sort of objective (scientific) claim about nature or evolution. But on the other hand, Johnson and his Nietzsche still wish to use objective claims in order to explain how this process works, and in referring to the will to power itself. This tension is never satisfactorily addressed by Johnson. To illustrate this issue, let us turn to some examples of how this tension arises, and the problems it creates for his account.

For Johnson's Nietzsche, history "does not reflect any form of causal progression; rather, various wills to power clash in the eternal here and now."²³ To think that an account of history provides anything but an imprint of some will to power on the world appears naïve, and Nietzsche's 'genealogy' is meant as a rhetorical trope to undermine the Darwinian/English project of a historical account of the development of morality, revealing it for what it truly is: merely a reactive interpretation projected onto the world. This view has the effect of scaring 'history' into quotation marks, suspending its ability to act as an explanation for anything. Despite the view that there can be no accurate history, Nietzsche gives us a long account of the origins of morality that he deems 'historical.' He also appears to go to great lengths to make his account historically plausible.²⁴ Even as one reads through Johnson's account of the *Genealogy* it is hard to think that everything Nietzsche wrote was intended rhetorically.²⁵ The most striking feature of GM is that it traces the development of two types of morality and the results of their interplay in history. This is supposed to shed light on the interiorization of guilt and the 'bad conscience,' which the ascetic priests are then able to placate through their interpretations of the world. This account sounds remarkably causal, and the fact that this account is congruent with Nietzsche's observations on morality throughout his other works indicates that he meant this as an historical investigation designed to both undermine contemporary views of morality as fixed and transcendent, as well as underpin his own

²² The postmodern interpretation is also promulgated by Danto, whose view is compatible with the accounts of Kofman and Johnson: "We score the blank surface of reality with the longitudes and parallels of concepts, but the concepts and ideas are ours, and they have not the slightest basis in fact. This is his doctrine of Perspectivism. By his later declaration it was a central idea in [*The Birth of Tragedy*], and, unlike the other ideas it more famously contained, it was never repudiated by him." Danto, *Nietzsche as Philosopher*, 49.

²³ Johnson, *Nietzsche's Anti-Darwinism*, 134-135.

²⁴ Consider, for instance, Nietzsche's linguistic genealogies he provides as evidence to support his connections (GM, I, 4-5).

²⁵ And if we are to trust this view that all historical claims are merely interpretations projected onto the world by the will to power, then we should be shocked to find this claim by Johnson: "Nietzsche claims that most people...are not ready to understand and appreciate the *true* well-springs of great artists' creative energy" (*Nietzsche's Anti-Darwinism*, 180). This indicates that there is some true, historical well-spring of creative energy for artists, which stands in stark contrast to the above claim. Johnson's account also has affinities with de Man's reading which sees Nietzsche making purely rhetorical moves without any pretence of ever providing us with declarative (constative) statements.

conclusions about moral psychology. While we should heed Nietzsche's warnings not to make the 'English' mistake of taking this historical analysis as another form of linear, progressivist history meant to justify what exists, this does not mean we must abandon the notion that Nietzsche meant any of GM literally. We can instead recognize that when Nietzsche attempts to trace the genealogy of morality he is tracing its contingent, accidental, and over-determined development, without necessarily inserting any underlying 'progressivist' bias.²⁶

This tension between what I have labelled the 'subjective' and 'objective' in Johnson's account runs broader and deeper than I have so far described, and lies at the very center of the framework he attributes to Nietzsche. The interpretations projected by the will to power, or rather wills to power (Johnson points out that each individual consists of some particular will to power, itself being the outcome of a number of drives), reveal the nature of individuals.²⁷ The interpretations themselves are subjective, that is, not 'true' to reality but instead reflect the condition of their creator. But these conditions, and the beings to which they are attributed, seem to stand as objective features of the world and Nietzsche's explanatory framework. These beings are either strong/active/higher types or weak/reactive/lower types.²⁸ These types exist as timeless essences, which have no development through history or evolution. As Johnson puts it, "[r]ather than treating the human species as a stage in the larger process of organic evolution, Nietzsche holds individuals to be self-contained physiological examples of unique and unhistorical wills to power, constantly clashing in the here and now."²⁹ More still, "[t]he strong will is a fundamental, ineradicable essence" and "[f]or Nietzsche, 'strong' is a constant, a physiological essence, and does not represent a stage in man's 'historical' development."³⁰ This seems like a very strange view to attribute to Nietzsche, who extols us to "keep in mind that 'strong' and 'weak' are relative concepts" and to philosophize with a keen eye to

²⁶ Although it is tempting to attribute a bias to Nietzsche. At the end of the first essay of GM he does ask whether "must one not desire [the rise of the strong, active morality] with all one's might? even will it? promote it?" (GM, I, 17). He also hopes that his aim has been made "abundantly clear," which is the aim of the title *Beyond Good and Evil*, which does not mean "Beyond Good or Bad" (GM, I, 17). This implies that Nietzsche's aim here in the first essay has been to undermine the notion of categorical morality (good and evil) and allow us to recognize another moral possibility (good and bad). And this aim *would* be achieved by a successful genealogy showing the two types of morality throughout history. In the preface Nietzsche writes: "Let us articulate this *new demand*: we need a *critique* of moral values, *the value of these values themselves must first be called in question* – and for that there is needed a knowledge of the conditions and circumstances in which they grew, under which they evolved and changed" (GM, P, 6). As such, if this really is Nietzsche's aim in the first essay (which we have good reason to think it is), then a successful genealogy would lend support to this aim, giving us a good reason to think Nietzsche is (mostly) sincere in his claims.

²⁷ Johnson, *Nietzsche's Anti-Darwinism*, 42, 68.

²⁸ For Johnson, the various labels for each type appear to be synonymous.

²⁹ Johnson, *Nietzsche's Anti-Darwinism*, 173.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 125.

the developments of history because “everything has become: there are *no eternal facts*” to which such concepts could relate.³¹

Despite this incongruity with Nietzsche’s view, Johnson is willing to use these two eternal types as the basis of the explanatory framework for how the will to power operates, and what its interpretations reveal about the world, which is supposedly Nietzsche’s great theoretical revelation. The tension in this approach is captured perfectly by one of Johnson’s claims: “Thus, [Nietzsche] both relativizes all perspectives through the theory of the will to power and evaluates them under the rubric of whether they reflect outer-directed, affirmative will to power or emerge, rather from the defensive reaction of a weak, degenerating will, one which can only preserve itself through ascetic means.”³² Here we see both horns of the dilemma: Nietzsche “relativizes all perspectives” via the will to power, yet we can tell (objectively) what type of will we are dealing with through their projected interpretations and actions. But if all perspectives have been relativized, as the claim goes, then how could we possibly get to some objective matter of fact about the nature of these wills? Would their active or reactive nature not itself be yet one more matter for interpretation?

We do not get very far by explaining Nietzsche’s conflict with Darwin via an apparatus underwritten by the will to power projecting interpretations onto reality. The main difficulty is the fact that the will to power is never satisfactorily explained by Johnson, and when it is explained it is in a way that is in stark contrast with the claims of the theory. If all we may access are the interpretations of the will to power, then how do we ever know that we have got the will to power right? And if everything is merely an interpretation, what claim could we possibly have to the objective nature of physiological entities, such as the strong and weak types, which our interpretations are supposed to reveal? If Johnson has accurately represented Nietzsche’s theory, and it is unable to answer these questions, then it seems that we simply have another faith-based challenge to Darwin, only this time instead of faith in the story of Creation it is faith in the will to power.

Richardson’s account of Nietzsche’s relation to the evolutionary tradition is much more plausible than Johnson’s. Richardson traces Nietzsche’s similarities to and differences from Darwin and the overall role that evolutionary thought plays in Nietzsche’s writings. Richardson also recognizes that Nietzsche favoured a Lamarckian paradigm of evolution, which holds that evolution operates by a quite different mechanism than Darwinism allows. For Lamarck, learned adaptations acquired in an organism’s lifetime are inheritable by its offspring. This view broadens the range of inheritable characteristics, blurring the line between biological and social traits, as well as allowing for very rapid evolutionary changes.³³ Some of Richardson’s most interesting insights concern

³¹ Nietzsche, GS, 118; HH, 2.

³² Johnson, *Nietzsche’s Anti-Darwinism*, 174.

³³ Richardson, *Nietzsche’s New Darwinism*, 17-18, 62-63.

how Nietzsche sees the drives which constitute the individual as evolved, and how he differs from Darwin in this manner. Richardson also points out that it is through the evolutionary history of a drive that we may say that it is a drive ‘to’ something. This account provides an interesting and plausible explanation of how Nietzsche, who decries teleology, can hold that drives are ‘to’ anything without having an underlying teleology or attributing a representational consciousness to drives.³⁴ Richardson also aims to explain the connection of will to power with evolution. His conclusion is that Nietzsche both posits the will to power as a basic explainer, underlying evolutionary developments, and also considers it as evolved.³⁵ Richardson’s account is well thought out and nuanced. He does not simplify Nietzsche and try to saddle him with one single view, but is instead able to appreciate the complex relation Nietzsche has to a thinker like Darwin.

Moore’s book provides a reading of Nietzsche’s appropriation of biological and medical terminology. This examination provides a much more plausible view of Nietzsche’s attitude towards these topics than Johnson’s reading. Moore’s basic aim is “to portray Nietzsche’s rhetoric of health and sickness as taking issue with, or more often uncritically reflecting, broad currents of thought in the post-Darwinian age.”³⁶ In doing so, he examines authors whom Nietzsche read and concludes that “without exception, *all* of the biologists with whose work Nietzsche was familiar...articulated either a pre-Darwinian or non-Darwinian theory of evolution.”³⁷ Moore situates these thinkers in the ‘non-Darwinian revolution’ which occurred after the appearance of Darwin’s seminal work *On the Origin of the Species*. Only with the recovery of Mendel and the emergence of modern genetics after 1900 does a plausible mechanism for Darwinian natural selection become available. Before then, a number of alternatives were proposed that maintained the major theme of Darwin’s work, evolution by natural selection, but with all manner of variation in the mechanism that supposedly produces this selection.³⁸

Moore examines authors such as Herbert Spencer, Ernst Haeckel, William Rolph, Paul Rée, Hippolyte Taine, and Wilhelm Boelsche, among others, to showcase the number of evolutionary accounts accessible to Nietzsche. Moore illustrates how Nietzsche appropriates a number of currents from this literature into his own work, both in the published writings and the notebooks. Moore maintains that he is “not suggesting that Nietzsche advances a plausible or systematic refutation of Darwinism, let alone a consistent alternative theory of evolution.”³⁹ The topics influenced by Nietzsche’s reading on evolutionary thought cover a vast range, from straightforward biological evolution to its

³⁴ Ibid., chapter one.

³⁵ Ibid., 45-65. These two views compete with one another in Nietzsche’s thinking, according to Richardson.

³⁶ Moore, *Nietzsche, Biology, Metaphor*, 15.

³⁷ Ibid., 28.

³⁸ Ibid., 21-28.

³⁹ Ibid., 28.

connections with morality, society, aesthetics, conceptions of degeneration, eugenics, perceived differences between the sexes and races, and implications for religion (particularly Christianity). Moore does an excellent job of illustrating Nietzsche's deep interest in these issues, as well as his appropriations of them to frame his own examinations and critiques. While Nietzsche remains an independent thinker who canvassed these thinkers for concepts to deploy in original ways, Moore's analysis shows that Nietzsche's interest in these subjects was not limited to examining expressions of the will to power in scientific contexts as Johnson proposes, although Moore does acknowledge and analyze Nietzsche's deployment of biological concepts as a way of reflecting underlying value structures.⁴⁰ Despite this, Moore does not sufficiently discuss the relation of Nietzsche's evolutionary views to his epistemological thinking, which is my primary aim.

While Nietzsche's final attitude towards Darwin remains undecided, the broader aspects of his evolutionary narrative are central to his epistemological thinking. This narrative also undermines an account such as Johnson's, which sees the will to power as the ultimate explainer of all phenomena. Already in "On Truth and Lies" Nietzsche is explaining human cognitive functioning with an evolutionary narrative. His mature work further develops the (hypothetical) details of this view, which serves to explain how human cognition can function as it does. As an interesting note, this evolutionary view of the contingent development of human cognition serves as one of the alternative explanations Kant refers to in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. If the modes of human thought were contingent they would be "subjective dispositions of thought."⁴¹ Kant holds that the "decisive objection against" this is "that the *necessity* of the categories...would then have to be sacrificed."⁴² And if this were the case, we "would not then be able to say that the effect is connected with the cause in the object...necessarily, but only that I am so constituted that I cannot think this representation otherwise than as thus connected."⁴³ In this conclusion Kant is right, but Nietzsche does not shy away from the consequences of such a view. He instead embraces these consequences, premised on his evolutionary narrative which places humanity squarely back within the confines of nature.

In *The Gay Science* Nietzsche provides a more sophisticated version of his early developmental view of consciousness.⁴⁴ On this account, evolution favoured

⁴⁰ Ibid., 10-15. Moore acknowledges the postmodern reading's attention to the nuance of Nietzsche's writings, particularly how the rhetorical deployment of concepts must be read carefully. Despite this acknowledgement, he does believe that not all of Nietzsche's discussions on biological issues can be thought of as 'merely rhetorical' in a way that dismisses any endorsement of substantial views of Nietzsche's.

⁴¹ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B167. Kant provides this hypothesis premised on the idea that God provided these dispositions, not that they were contingently evolved by natural processes.

⁴² Ibid., B168.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ This developmental view is articulated both in the original 1882 edition and extended in the fifth book added in the 1887 second edition.

thoughts and language that were best able to coordinate social action, and not a method of disinterested or contemplative thinking. He provides the same kind of evolutionary account for the development of logic. A quasi-Darwinian law of selection favoured those who made crude equivalences over those who did not. Those who mistook similarity for identity, such as in the cases of nourishment and hostile animals, were better able to quickly react, with obviously beneficial results for survival. Those who maintained a cautious approach and did not make such quick inferences tended to perish. The result of this was that over time the disposition to make dubious inferences on the basis of incomplete equivalencies was selected and worked into the species. As Nietzsche claims, this “predominant disposition...to treat the similar as identical – an illogical disposition, for there is nothing identical as such – is what first supplied all the foundations for logic.”⁴⁵ Here we see the nominalist thesis at work, as well as the falsifying character of human cognition.

Nietzsche contrasts the typical function of human cognition, in this case logic, with the unique character of every stimulus. However, he does not think this typical mode of thought is the only possible way of thinking. He holds that, in the past, “innumerable beings drew inferences in a way different from that in which we do now [and] perished; nonetheless, they might have been closer to the truth!”⁴⁶ While Nietzsche’s perspectivism moves towards the view that truth can only exist within a context (perspective), and the word ‘truth’ is used to signify this perspective relativity at times in his texts, elsewhere throughout his works he still uses ‘truth’ in the sense of correspondence. Here in GS 111 ‘truth’ is used in this latter sense, implying that other creatures drew inferences in a way which were more accurate to reality. By this claim, Nietzsche means that they were much more cautious than our ancestors had been, paying much closer attention to the minute differences of every particular stimulus. While their observations may have been more accurate than those of our ancestors, it was not beneficial in terms of survival. Here we see Nietzsche using the evolutionary narrative in a subversive way. While presumably the ability to pay close attention to details and attain a more accurate understanding of nature would be beneficial for survival, Nietzsche draws the opposite conclusion that a crass way of thinking was necessary for survival.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Nietzsche, GS, 111.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Darwin, for instance, maintains in *The Descent of Man* that: “In the case of corporeal structures, it is the selection of the slightly better-endowed and the elimination of the slightly less well-endowed individuals, and not the preservation of strongly-marked and rare anomalies, that leads to the advancement of a species. So it will be with the intellectual faculties, since the somewhat abler men in each grade of society succeed rather better than the less able, and consequently increase in number, if not otherwise prevented” (Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, 133). No doubt many of the authors Nietzsche read on the subject of evolution also maintain a view that greater intelligence carries a survival benefit, thus producing ever more intelligent types. Nietzsche subverts this view by showing that it is actually a form of mediocrity and poor thinking which carries the best survival function, and that only after a large degree of stability is in place can careful thinking

Nietzsche believes this crass method of thinking practiced by our ancestors, marked by its utilization of false equivalences and rushed judgments, remains with us today and exists as a battle of drives within the subconscious. Only the results of this battle come to the surface, owing to the strength of this ingrained mechanism in our thought.⁴⁸ And these results, presumably, are the source for all the ‘principles’ of logic which do not admit of demonstration, but instead seem intuitively correct, such as the principle of non-contradiction. This evolutionary account of the development of consciousness fits with a larger evolutionary narrative Nietzsche lays out in a number of places throughout the first edition of GS.⁴⁹ For instance, in GS 11 Nietzsche explicitly states that “[c]onsciousness is the latest development of the organic, and hence also its most unfinished and unrobust feature.” Here he outlines much the same argument found in GS 111, holding that our “[c]onsciousness gives rise to countless mistakes” and that “the preserving alliance of the instincts” are the reason we have stayed alive as long as we have. These other instincts keep consciousness in check, Nietzsche argues, which has prevented it from developing too rapidly and constituting a threat to our survival. Now that we are in a much more secure position, Nietzsche believes that we are able to begin the “*task of assimilating knowledge* and making it instinctive.”⁵⁰ This task is aimed at overcoming the current state of our consciousness because “all of our consciousness refers to errors!”⁵¹

Here a large question looms: if consciousness is so thoroughly error-ridden, how can we ever overcome these errors in our thinking? The response to this question is very important because Nietzsche continues his hyperbolic rhetoric that our consciousness refers to nothing but errors for the rest of his mature intellectual career. I will here provide an answer to this issue. My response will be further substantiated by the examination of textual evidence from Nietzsche’s mature works throughout the rest of this chapter and the next. Nietzsche somewhat overstates his argument in this passage and elsewhere. While his evolutionary narrative concludes that consciousness is riddled with errors, he believes that we can correct this falsified picture in gradual steps, most typically by means of scientific inquiry.⁵² However, if truth is understood in traditional terms (as correspondence to reality), then truth can only be attained by producing an accurate account of objects. This account would have to detail the differences of any particular object from everything else. It would also have to take into

begin to emerge. Of course, if such intellectual mediocrity did carry a greater survival benefit than greater intellectual capacity, Darwin would be admit that this would be favoured by natural selection, thus accommodating the fact without necessarily jeopardizing his theory.

⁴⁸ Nietzsche, GS, 111.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 1, 4, 11, 109-111.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 11.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² In chapter two we saw how this was the case in HH and D, and this will continue to be so in the later works as well.

account the object's constantly shifting nature, which in turn is tied to its relations with all other objects.⁵³ If this is what is meant by truth (which is what Nietzsche means in passages such as GS 111 where he refers to 'truth' as correspondence), then truth would be utterly beyond the reach of the human intellect. We cannot capture all of the constantly fluctuating relations of the universe in our mind, nor is our evolved linguistic apparatus able to cope with such continuous change.

This account of Nietzsche's evolutionary narrative in the first edition of GS is complemented in its second edition. In the famous passage GS 354, Nietzsche holds that only "the shallowest, worst part" of our thinking comes to the conscious surface, while most of its functioning (our "reason," which presumably includes our logic) remains hidden in subconsciousness.⁵⁴ According to this passage the main role of consciousness lies in communication. Nietzsche claims that the "subtlety and strength of consciousness is always related to a person's (or animal's) *ability to communicate*, and the ability to communicate, in turn, to the *need to communicate*."⁵⁵ This need to communicate is described as an evolutionary outcome of natural environmental pressures. Creatures less dependent on others for their survival lack the need to communicate clearly and effectively with each other. Humans, and other herd animals, do rely on each other, so the ability to communicate and organize action was necessary to their survival.

Nietzsche argues that over time this communicative ability, developed in response to environmental and social pressures, can be 'built up' or 'accumulated.' This accumulated ability may then be squandered in many ways by those 'born late.' These squanderers include all of those who utilize this communicative ability for multifarious ends, such as the artists, orators, preachers, and writers.⁵⁶ In a number of other places Nietzsche reiterates his view that communicative ability can be accumulated over a long period of time and then unleashed by those who come later. This view constitutes a major part of his thinking on evolution generally, and is central to his comments on topics such as breeding (*Zuchtung*) and how we might develop societies for the future. I do not have the space to adequately explore this topic here, though the influence of this view on his epistemological thinking should be evident.⁵⁷

Because consciousness has evolved in direct proportion to the need to communicate, Nietzsche sees the two as nearly synonymous. Near the end of GS 354 he proclaims that although "all our actions are incomparably and utterly

⁵³ Recall Nietzsche's fascination with Boscovich, who maintains that every *punctum* is related to every other one by the interaction of their forces. And these forces are in a constant state of change, meaning that from one moment to the next an object will have undergone some kind of change, no matter how small (Boscovich, *A Theory of Natural Philosophy*, 47).

⁵⁴ Nietzsche, GS, 354.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Moore and Richardson provide good accounts of Nietzsche's views on breeding, which do seem to involve a quasi-eugenicist project (Moore, *Nietzsche, Biology, Metaphor*, 135-138, 159-164; Richardson, *Nietzsche's New Darwinism*, 190-200).

personal, unique, and boundlessly individual....as soon as we translate them into consciousness, *they no longer seem to be.*"⁵⁸ As our experiences are translated into consciousness they are replaced by conventional symbols, which by nature are general and eliminate much individual difference. Nietzsche explains that "all becoming conscious involves a vast and thorough corruption, falsification, superficialization, and generalization."⁵⁹ This falsification, in turn, is linked to his nominalist thesis about the unique nature of all our actions. The explanation for falsification in this passage is essentially the same as his explanation of our falsification of the external world earlier in GS, as well as in his preceding works: everything in the world is unique, but our consciousness (i.e., linguistic ability, which is directly tied to conscious thinking) is unable to cope with this extraordinary amount of difference, so it creates general terms which ignore much of this difference to facilitate quick thinking and action.

A final note on GS 354's closing remarks, where Nietzsche claims that "it is not the opposition between subject and object which concerns me here." This claim is interesting because the relation between subject and object is one of the defining features of modern epistemology. But Nietzsche wishes to "leave that distinction to those epistemologists who have got tangled up in the snares of grammar (of folk metaphysics)." He then explains that he is even less "concerned with the opposition between 'thing in itself' and appearance: for we 'know' far too little to even be entitled to *make* that distinction. We simply have no organ for *knowing*, for 'truth': we 'know' (or believe or imagine) exactly as much as is *useful* to the human herd, to the species." This claim reinforces the view that Nietzsche's commitment to falsification is not premised on the distinction between things-in-themselves and appearances. Taking a cue from Lange, Nietzsche claims that we are in no position to make this distinction. Here we also see him again undermining classical empiricism by claiming that we have no organ for knowing – mere experience is no proof of 'truth.'

His closing comment that we know (or believe we know) only what is useful to the human species overstates his position to a degree. It is the case, Nietzsche holds (as we have seen from TL, HH, D, and GS), that the survival of the human species has depended on taking a number of falsifications as truths. By seeing, thinking, and communicating in 'forms' or 'communication symbols' we have vastly increased our capacity for cooperation and effective interaction with the environment. Now Nietzsche is pointing out how this utility value remains the dominant criterion for truth in popular beliefs. But, as he points out earlier in GS, "[l]ife is not an argument; the conditions of life might include error."⁶⁰ Even though we may require these falsifications for our everyday functioning, that does not make them true in the sense of correspondence to reality. But, as we shall see moving forward, Nietzsche does not really believe that we are perpetually

⁵⁸ Nietzsche, GS, 354.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 121.

condemned to these errors (at least not all the time), and he will eventually come to a new understanding of truth.

It should be evident that Nietzsche's epistemological discussions do rest on an evolutionary narrative. Although his relationship with Darwin is not straightforward, Nietzsche does endorse a hypothetical theory of evolution. The narrative he provides supports what he has to say about the falsifying nature of consciousness, and the narrative itself is a plausible contender for an explanation of early human survival.⁶¹ The congruence of the evolutionary narrative and Nietzsche's epistemological thinking suggest that he takes either both or neither seriously. To argue that his comments on evolution merely constitute a rhetorical attack on Darwin, as Johnson holds, entails that Nietzsche's writings on truth and knowledge are insincere. However, arguing that everything Nietzsche has to say on these topics is rhetorical carries an extraordinarily large burden of proof, one that postmoderns such as Johnson have not been able to fulfill. The postmodern view becomes especially precarious in light of the striking similarities Nietzsche shows to some of his contemporaries, as illustrated by Moore.

Force-Points and Perspectivism: The Importance of Mach

Throughout the rest of Nietzsche's mature works we see two key features. The first is his continued insistence on our adherence to the inherited errors we utilize in most conscious thinking. One of the major reasons that these errors remain so pervasive is because the structure of our language and, along with this, our consciousness, has developed in accordance with these fundamental errors. The second feature is Nietzsche's insistence that we can recognize these errors and overcome them, at least to some degree. The postmoderns often emphasize the former aspect of Nietzsche's thought without recognizing the latter, which tends to lead them to conclude that he rejected all truth. The moderns, by contrast, tend to emphasize the latter, with interpreters such as Clark and Leiter contending that Nietzsche eventually abandons his belief in the erroneous nature of our consciousness altogether.

As I show below, Nietzsche continued to believe both that we are in a fight against long ingrained errors and that we are able to overcome these to some degree. This process of advancement continues to work in the non-foundational way he articulates in HH and D. And this process is carried out under the framework of perspectivism. Just as Nietzsche argues in his earlier works (HH and D) that we must engage an object of study from multiple angles, his mature works retain this claim and promote increased interpretive scrutiny insofar as no particular perspective is given absolute priority over the others. The overall aim of this process is an increased understanding of the world, preferably with some level of coherency. However, coherency itself is not a criterion of acceptance for a

⁶¹ Insofar as general terms, referencing similar groups of objects, used as communication symbols, perform a coordinating function which facilitates group action.

new interpretation; rather, its explanatory power within some given domain (regarding some particular topic within some particular set of perspectives) is sufficient for provisional acceptance. But just as Nietzsche wishes us to be more scientific in our thinking, interpretations always retain their provisional quality, being open to revision, and awaiting comparative analysis with other interpretations. This perspectival knowledge project takes place against the backdrop of the force ontology Nietzsche took from his reading of Boscovich, and remains concerned with the problems inherited from Lange.

The way Nietzsche is able to maintain both that we are trapped in ancient errors and that we are slowly lifting ourselves out of these is by rejecting the notion that logic reflects the basic structure of the world. This position essentially reflects the claim that epistemology and ontology are distinct: there is a world which our thought tracks (in some sense), but the operations of our thought do not necessarily correspond to the operations of the world. The details of this rejection directly come out of Nietzsche's views already discussed. By viewing the world as a continuous flux of dynamic force points, Nietzsche can maintain that our thinking and language, with its subject-predicate structure, always falsifies the world to some degree. This force-point view makes Nietzsche an object anti-realist, which he at times articulates in strong and weak varieties. When Nietzsche discusses objects, just as when he discusses truth, he does not always mean the same thing by the same term. At times he takes the stronger stance that all objects are fictions or errors, while at others he freely talks about objects without hinting at this view. The stronger version of this view I will label 'object eliminativism,' and the weaker variety 'object anti-realism.' Object eliminativism is the view that objects do not exist and only their constitutive parts (in Nietzsche's case dynamic force points) exist.⁶² Object anti-realism, which Nietzsche typically holds, is the view that the existence of the object depends on our domain of interest, or perspective.⁶³ This strips reality of any inherent demarcation of objects (which is congruent with the death of God), but still provides certain limitations on how interpretations apply to existing forces.

As we have seen, Nietzsche believes that logic has developed from false presumptions about the stability of the world, which arose from our evolutionary history. We mistook this highly conditioned history for an objective experience of the world. For instance, our perspective (determined by our biology as well as other influencing factors such as education, current interests, and which drive is dominant at some particular time) determines the types of relations we observe as important, which further determines what we are able to observe at all.⁶⁴ This

⁶² The eliminativist still holds that the most basic constitutive elements exist as objects, but refuses to regard collections of these as objects.

⁶³ Some of his more extreme proclamations reflect the object eliminativist position. However, I take these to be either rhetorical or expressing the view that, without some perspective, we cannot say there are objects at all.

⁶⁴ Recall Nietzsche's distrust of 'givenness.' Our experience is directly conditioned by our background beliefs, etc., and these can also be influenced by future analysis and experience. Also

claim is not particularly radical; the notion that human sensory capabilities are limited is a well known fact. Without the aid of scientific instruments we are only able to observe objects of certain minimum spatial and temporal dimensions. And even amongst the objects that meet these minimal criteria, there remains a whole range of ways of construing an object. Also, depending on the condition of the observer, different observations may be made about the same set of phenomena.

Let us use a car, for example. An eliminativist may claim that there is no car, only the most basic elements that make it up (atoms, force points, etc.). Object anti-realists, by contrast, will allow that a judgment about cars is valid from some perspective but not others. By this I mean that they acknowledge that the car *qua* car exists as a particular entity, and not simply as conglomeration of basic elements. For instance, on the common sense (naïve realist) conception, cars clearly exist. However, as soon as our interests lie in a more complex view, such as that of a mechanic interested in the operation of the vehicle, the car ceases to be seen as a unitary object and is instead viewed as a multiplicity of objects lying in certain relations. And of course, any particular part that the mechanic may be interested in as a single part will, in another perspective, be broken down into even more parts. The object anti-realist view concerns the relations of parts to wholes, maintaining that our evaluation of these relations depends on the perspective we take up, but this view does not dispute the existence of *something* per se (that is, the object anti-realist will not make the claim that there is *nothing* where a naïve realist will claim that there is at least *something*). The object anti-realist view also does not hold that the relations are merely subjective products of our perspectival observation.⁶⁵ Recalling Boscovich, every *punctum* in the universe is related to every other one.⁶⁶ However, we are simply unable to comprehend all of these relations at once. Hence, we are forced into dealing with a ‘falsified’ world which our cognitive apparatus has produced through simplification. Even though we can pull ourselves out of these errors in certain cases through intensive effort, the everyday world of human interests requires us to immediately slip back into these errors in order to function.

Another way to think of Nietzsche’s perspectivism is by unifying certain aspects of Rudolf Carnap’s construction theory with a phenomenology of thought. In his *Der Logische Aufbau der Welt*, Carnap outlines what he labels a ‘constructional system.’ The system’s ultimate aim is to account for all features of reality within a single framework. This framework employs multiple levels to

recall that in HH Nietzsche makes precisely the point that when there are rapid connections between feelings and thoughts we fail to experience these as complexes but instead as unities (HH 14).

⁶⁵ Nietzsche does not adopt subjective idealism in the manner of George Berkeley, who held that to be is simply to be perceived. Even the most casual reader of Nietzsche should recognize this from his attacks on various forms of idealism and his numerous claims that certain interpretations of the world are inconsistent with the facts. In chapter five we will examine his attacks on Christianity and morality and see that they are largely based on precisely this sort of epistemic criticism.

⁶⁶ Boscovich, *A Theory of Natural Philosophy*, 47.

account for different features of reality. Carnap begins with the autopsychological domain, in particular the ‘elementary experiences’ and the basic relation (the ‘recollection of similarity’) that connects these experiences.⁶⁷ From these two initial elements Carnap believes that an entire structure may be produced with different object levels, including physical, heteropsychological, and cultural objects. All of these levels may be equated with one another via construction rules. The constructional system “attempts a step-by-step derivation or ‘construction’ of all concepts from certain fundamental concepts, so that a genealogy of concepts results in which each one has its definite place. It is the main thesis of construction theory that all concepts can in this way be derived from a few fundamental concepts.”⁶⁸ By way of the construction rules, we are able to logically connect all levels of the construction system, and so create an all-encompassing logical system which preserves the extensionality of all terms.

We may think of Nietzsche’s perspectivism in similar terms. From the view of one perspective, for example that of the naïve realist, cars certainly are objects. But in a different perspective, or another level of the constructional system, we break down the unity of this object into its constituent parts. Instead of seeing one object we then see many objects in relation to one another. This nexus of components and relationships we privilege as a system, achieved by ignoring many of the other relations the nexus stands in at any one moment. By shifting perspectives once again we may attempt to consider even more relations, demarcating an even larger and more complex nexus. While Carnap was satisfied by the completeness of the constructional system, Nietzsche continually draws our attention back to the finitude of the human condition. While in our more reflective moments we may consider more extensive networks of relations, our limited cognitive resources and the pressing issues of life force us to simplify (i.e. falsify) on a regular basis. We tend to view objects simply, seeing the car as a single object. It is only when we focus our mental resources that we recognize these further relations. Nietzsche is also not as optimistic as Carnap. While Carnap’s aim is to provide a complete system in which every structure has its place, Nietzsche is generally pessimistic about the ability of humans to achieve such unity.

This object anti-realist view underwrites much of what Nietzsche says on truth and knowledge in his later works. The aim of his attack is often some version of the naïve realist view, which sees a much simpler world than science has revealed to us via the complex operations constitutive of even the most basic processes. And it is precisely this point that many modern readings fail to pay sufficient attention to.⁶⁹ For instance, Clark maintains that “Nietzsche’s last six books...provide no evidence of his commitment to the falsification thesis, no reason to deny his commitment to the possibility of truth in science, nor to the

⁶⁷ Carnap, *The Logical Structure of the World*, §106-110.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, §1.

⁶⁹ Christoph Cox has levelled similar charges against the modern reading in his intriguing study, *Nietzsche: Naturalism and Interpretation*, 120-163.

truth of his own theories,” and so evince no doubt on their author’s part as to the adequacy of “either the common sense picture of the world of relatively enduring middle-sized objects or the scientific world-view.”⁷⁰ This is a very odd claim. The modern ‘scientific world-view’ is anything but conducive to our naïve views on ‘relatively enduring middle-sized objects.’ Modern science has completely undermined our common sense views about such objects. What appears to be the stable, brown desk in front of me is a fabulously complicated and ever changing conglomeration of particles, interacting with sunlight, and a vastly complicated biological system which registers these relations. But, due to the relative crassness of this biological system’s ability to register changes of only a certain minimum magnitude, the desk appears perfectly stable to me in its current form. More radical still would be quantum or string theories which violate not only our basic notions of stability in the objects around us, but some of our basic ontological notions. Only by ignoring these scientific discoveries are we able to maintain a firm belief in the naïve realist view about ‘relatively enduring middle-sized objects.’

This object anti-realist view, in contrast to the naïve realist view, holds that all objects are the result of our construction. We construct these objects by setting particular necessary and sufficient conditions for their existence, which are often based on our (biologically conditioned) observations. However, given a different perspective, constituted from different interests (biological and/or observational conditions, background, education, needs, etc.), these conditions may very well change. This perspectivist account also reflects the deep seated philosophical problems about the necessary and sufficient conditions for life and diachronic identity. An example of the former is the raging debate about when human life begins. The latter problem is encapsulated in the long standing philosophical debate about numerical identity and the slew of answers it has generated. While some answers may provide better or worse solutions to particular issues, none can be considered strictly true in the sense of correspondence. Without some context of interest, which determines what information is and is not relevant on a given topic, all that remains is the continuous change of force points (Nietzsche’s infamous becoming).⁷¹ It is perspectives that establish the criteria of relevance for interpretations of the world. But any particular aspect of the world can become part of many different interpretations and thus take on different meanings within these varying interpretations.

We can see the preceding account of perspectivism running through Nietzsche’s mature works. Because an interpretation of the world can only take place within a perspective, Nietzsche argues that, along with the traditional

⁷⁰ Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 108-109.

⁷¹ Here it may be objected that a world of force points entirely misses the realm of consciousness. Just as Lange pointed out, materialism is unable to account for this major aspect of human life, and a Boscovich-inspired force point materialism seems to fair no better in this regard than its corpuscular predecessors.

conception of truth as correspondence, we should reject the idea that true and false are metaphysical opposites, and instead embrace a view that sees the two as poles on a continuum. While it is not entirely clear from the published works whether Nietzsche wants us to abandon the law of excluded middle or the principle of bivalence, he does make it clear that we should not assume that logic necessarily tracks reality.⁷² As discussed above, Nietzsche holds that logic is based on the assumption of enduring objects which can be the constant values of terms in logical formulae. In conjunction with the mistaken claims of identity that logic assumes, our linguistic practice encourages us to think in terms of opposites rather than differences of degree. As Nietzsche points out elsewhere, language “cannot get over its crassness and keeps talking about opposites where there are only degrees and multiple, subtle shades of gradation.”⁷³

Before returning to Nietzsche’s mature works let us momentarily turn our attention to Ernst Mach, who provides an interesting comparative case with Nietzsche on epistemological issues because of a number of similarities between the two thinkers. Because Mach more clearly articulates certain issues, he helps reveal some potential solutions to interpretive puzzles when used as an interpretive lens on Nietzsche’s writings. The comparison of Mach and Nietzsche is a relatively recent phenomenon in Nietzsche scholarship.⁷⁴ As Gori points out, a causal influence from Mach to Nietzsche cannot be definitively established because of the lack of direct references to Mach in Nietzsche’s notes. Also, many of the points of comparison between the two thinkers were already in Nietzsche’s writings before he read Mach. We do know that Nietzsche read Mach’s *Contributions to the Analysis of Sensations* (1886), and even sent him a copy of *The Genealogy of Morals* in November 1887.⁷⁵ This gesture was presumably an act of approbation, which is suggested by the close similarities between the two thinkers.

Hussain attempts to provide an account that has Nietzsche retain the falsification thesis throughout his later work while rejecting the thing-in-itself and maintaining an empirical view of knowledge.⁷⁶ Hussain develops this account as a response to Clark’s position because he finds “the claim that Nietzsche gives up on the falsification thesis [in his later works] hard to swallow.”⁷⁷ This alternative

⁷² A number of Nietzsche’s unpublished notes on this subject make his thoughts on this matter more explicit than the published works. See Nietzsche, WP, 508-522.

⁷³ Nietzsche, BGE, 24.

⁷⁴ Brobjer has mentioned Nietzsche’s reading of Mach in his broad overviews of Nietzsche’s reading: Brobjer, “Nietzsche’s Reading and Knowledge of Natural Science: An Overview,” 43-44; Brobjer, *Nietzsche’s Philosophical Context*, 91-94, 239. There have also been some recent articles detailing certain similarities between the thinkers: Hussain, “Nietzsche’s Positivism”; Gori, “‘Sounding out Idols’”; Gori, “The Usefulness of Substances, Knowledge, Science and Metaphysics in Nietzsche and Mach.”

⁷⁵ Brobjer, “Nietzsche’s Reading and Knowledge of Natural Science,” 43-44; Brobjer, *Nietzsche’s Philosophical Context*, 239.

⁷⁶ Hussain, “Nietzsche’s Positivism,” 357.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 327.

reading of Nietzsche as a Machian positivist allows him to retain the more radical claims that the postmoderns tend to focus on while also valuing science, knowledge, and truth. Hussain reaches this conclusion by arguing that Nietzsche and Mach hold very similar positions in rejecting the appearance-reality and internal-external world distinctions, and because Mach also has decidedly pro-science credentials.⁷⁸ While Hussain provides a good starting point, his aims are relatively limited in scope. A more detailed account of Mach will provide a more robust sense of just how his epistemology coheres with Nietzsche's later views. One major shortcoming of Hussain's analysis is the attribution of a kind of positivism to Nietzsche. While there are interesting similarities between Mach and Nietzsche, there is strong evidence that Nietzsche did not support any sort of positivism. This shortcoming of Hussain's analysis is pointed out by Clark in a response article, in which she drives home this criticism and further elaborates her original position. Despite this elaboration, Clark still maintains her earlier view that there is a significant shift in Nietzsche's later thought.⁷⁹ Gori details even more similarities between Nietzsche and Mach than does Hussain.⁸⁰ While Gori shows a strong resemblance between the two thinkers on a number of issues, he does not sufficiently deal with the overarching interpretive questions that concern me here, such as the role of interpretation in Nietzsche's non-foundationalism.⁸¹

Mach's position is essentially neo-Kantian. Hussain points out that in an autobiographical note Mach admits that the Kantian worldview had been very influential for him, but that he rejects the idea of the thing-in-itself as superfluous.⁸² Mach invites us to think about a particular object. He notes that we are able to individually subtract any particular constituent part of the object in thought and still retain an image that adequately represents the object. But it would be a mistake to imagine "that it is possible to subtract *all* the parts and to have something still remaining. Thus arises the monstrous notion of a *thing in itself*, unknowable and different from its 'phenomenal' existence."⁸³ With the idea of a thing-in-itself Kantian epistemology produces a theory that involves a sphere of existence that is in principle unknown and unknowable, which Nietzsche

⁷⁸ Ibid., 358.

⁷⁹ Clark and Dudrick, "Nietzsche's Post-Positivism," 369-385.

⁸⁰ Gori, "The Usefulness of Substances."

⁸¹ He does attempt to deal with these issues to some extent, but his positions on certain issues are unclear. For instance, he claims that Nietzsche "changed his opinion" on the role of the senses in his "last years of thought," with his mature position holding that the senses do not lie at all and that all falsification comes from our interpretation of sense data (Gori, "The Usefulness of Substances," 114). However, as evidence for this he cites the original publication of GS in 1882, too early to be "his last years of thought" on my account. Elsewhere, Gori has attributed a wholly pragmatic view of truth to Nietzsche, which my account contests (Gori, "Sounding out Idols," 243).

⁸² Hussain, "Nietzsche's Positivism," 345-346; Mach, *Contributions to the Analysis of the Sensations*, 23.

⁸³ Mach, *Contributions to the Analysis of the Sensations*, 5-6.

equates with the metaphysical realm in HH.⁸⁴ This epistemology gives rise to a system where “mysterious entities, which by their interaction with another, equally mysterious entity, the ego, produce sensations, which alone are accessible.”⁸⁵ Inherent in this epistemology is a traditional subject-object model of knowledge, something Mach wished to reject.

While denying the thing-in-itself, Mach accepted a sensualist epistemological view, breaking free from the traditional subject-object model. Both Gori and Hussain point out that Mach adopted a kind of neutral monism.⁸⁶ This is the view that the mental and physical realms are continuous rather than wholly distinct. Gori provides an excellent description of Mach’s version of this: “The component parts of reality acquire qualities only in relation with other body complexes; their being physical or psychical objects depends on the perspective from which we look at them, and any element can play different roles in both these areas of investigation.”⁸⁷ Mach provides this model as an alternative to both idealism and materialism.⁸⁸ Mach labels the basic constituents of his model the ‘elements.’ The interactions between the elements produce sensations, which serve as the starting point of scientific investigations. These sensations occur in a network of forces, so any particular sensation can be understood as the interaction of a complex system of forces. When we make some claim about the world, for example “I am sitting at my desk,” what we are actually describing is the connection between forces.⁸⁹ On this view bodies and subjects are constituted *out of complexes of sensations* instead of the typical picture of *sensations occurring to particular bodies*.⁹⁰ As Mach says, “[t]he elements [sensations] constitute the *I*. *I* have the sensation green, signifies that the element green occurs in a given complex of other elements (sensations, memories).”⁹¹ He also holds that “the supposed unities ‘body’ and ‘ego’ are only makeshifts, designed for provisional survey and for certain practical ends.”⁹² Once this provisional character is realized, “[t]he antithesis of ego and world, sensation (phenomenon) and thing, then vanishes, and we have simply to deal with the *connexion* of the *elements*.”⁹³

One may be tempted to begin asking metaphysical questions such as how this system of forces came into being. But Mach resists this approach, holding that “[s]cience has simply to *accept* this connexion [of elements], and to set itself aright...in the intellectual environment which is thereby furnished, without

⁸⁴ Nietzsche, HH, 1, 16.

⁸⁵ Mach, *Contributions to the Analysis of the Sensations*, 23.

⁸⁶ Gori, “The Usefulness of Substances,” 122; Hussain, “Nietzsche’s Positivism,” 328, 348.

⁸⁷ Gori, “The Usefulness of Substances,” 122.

⁸⁸ Mach, *Contributions to the Analysis of the Sensations*, 12.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁹¹ Mach, *Contributions to the Analysis of the Sensations*, 19; Hussain, “Nietzsche’s Positivism,” 345.

⁹² Mach, *Contributions to the Analysis of the Sensations*, 11; Hussain, “Nietzsche’s Positivism,” 345.

⁹³ Mach *Contributions to the Analysis of the Sensations*, 11.

attempting to explain its existence.”⁹⁴ He also makes his position quite clear in the title of the first section of his book: “Introductory Remarks. Antimetaphysical.” This is a sentiment no doubt shared by Nietzsche. Another striking similarity between the two is a common approach to what Nietzsche called perspectivism, and which Mach’s comments can help us articulate. Mach holds that our interests change depending on the point of view we take up, and this will lead to different and sometimes conflicting approaches to the world. For example, he thinks that a physicist will have a real use for the typical conception of a body, but when research in physics and psychology meets, “the ideas held in the one domain prove to be untenable in the other.”⁹⁵ Because of the disparate state of human knowledge, he believes a multi-perspectival approach provides the best account of our condition. He also makes a claim to modesty, holding that his approach should not be seen as discrediting the view of the average person (naïve realism). For practical considerations naïve realism is incredibly useful and has been biologically developed over a long span of time. But, when undertaking certain forms of inquiry we must admit that it is not an absolute perspective, and that it quickly dissolves under scrutiny. Thus, Mach argues, “[n]o point of view has absolute, *permanent* validity. Each has importance only for some given end.”⁹⁶

What Mach’s view provides is a clearer articulation of *how* perspectivism actually works than Nietzsche is often able to supply.⁹⁷ Mach outlines how the interaction of the elements works to produce the sensations that ‘we’ experience, supplying a firmly immanent account of mental phenomena. The experience of these sensations can be understood in the same way as the exchange of all other natural forces. In his view there is no divide between subject and object, a hallmark feature of traditional epistemological problems. Instead, any experience is congruent with all other natural processes. Mach also deconstructs the traditional notion of the self, holding that this concept has arisen from poor interpretations of experience.⁹⁸ Mach makes clear that the same interactions of elements, when viewed with differing interests, will result in different interpretations of events.

We can see a very similar view in the background of what Nietzsche has to say on perspectivism. The dynamic flux of force points may be substituted for Mach’s elements. With this substitution we have a picture of an ever-changing set of relations between all things. These relations may then be interpreted in numerous ways, which is the main point of perspectivism. The interpretations rely on the perspective taken up, which we may consider in two different ways. One way of construing these perspectival relations is with the mental language I have

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 25.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 25-26, 19

⁹⁷ Or perhaps Mach’s view is clearer than Nietzsche wished his to be.

⁹⁸ It is interesting to note that Carnap references both Mach and Nietzsche as “philosophers [who] agree that the self is not implicit in the original data of cognition,” citing Mach’s *Analysis of the Sensations* and Nietzsche’s *The Will to Power* (Carnap, *The Logical Structure of the World*, §65).

used thus far. A perspective is determined by the interests, background beliefs, etc., which determine the frame of reference in which sensations are interpreted. We may also construe perspectival relations with physical language. The interaction of the biological characteristics of an organism with its environment determines what sensations will be produced. Such an interaction may be described at the most basic level as the redistribution of force points, or on higher levels of complexity, such as structures made up of these points (such as biological entities, etc.). If it is the case that the mental rests solely on the physical, then all beliefs and interests are themselves determined by these distributions.⁹⁹ Such a view would be congruent with Nietzsche's claims that consciousness is merely epiphenomenal.¹⁰⁰ While a case may be made that he merely means that conscious thinking relies on subconscious thinking (which need not necessarily be biologically determined), it seems more likely that he believed this subconscious activity of the drives is biologically determined. While we need not establish a definitive answer to this question here, I may at least suggest that the deterministic view is much more in line with the overall picture Nietzsche provides us, which sees the organic as a derivative product of the inorganic, humanity as a contingent product of evolutionary processes in the natural world, and consciousness as a kind of determined activity which is the latest development of the organic.¹⁰¹

Falsification, Uncertainty, and Perspectivism in *The Gay Science*

Having laid out what I take to be Nietzsche's mature view on perspectivism, let us now return to *The Gay Science* to substantiate these claims. The above views are contained in GS, and Nietzsche's mature perspectivism (which includes the evolutionary account of cognitive functioning, his views on how we can attain truth/knowledge, and which relies on the Boscovich-inspired force ontology and his nominalist thesis) is the natural outgrowth of his earlier views. In the next chapter we will see that Nietzsche's other later works do not provide us with a substantially different account of truth and knowledge than his earlier works (contrary to Clark and Leiter's reading), and that he carves a middle path between the modern and postmodern readings in his handling of these subjects.

⁹⁹ Leiter argues that Nietzsche did not endorse a reductive account of the mental realm to the physical, which would constitute a type of substantive naturalism. Rather, Leiter sees Nietzsche endorsing a methodological naturalism, which aims to explain phenomena in naturalistic terms without necessarily assessing metaphysical attributes (e.g. mental vs. physical) (Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, 24-25). The account that I have given so far shows that Nietzsche believes that the mental realm (assuming this to be synonymous with consciousness) is a relatively late development of evolutionary processes.

¹⁰⁰ Nietzsche, GS, 354, where he claims that consciousness is "basically superfluous" and that "[a]ll life would be possible without...seeing itself in the mirror of consciousness."

¹⁰¹ Nietzsche, GS, 11, 110-111, 354.

In *The Gay Science* Nietzsche continues his attack on forms of ‘givenness.’ He does this by arguing that empirical reports are theory-laden to some degree, principally because they are formulated in language. Nietzsche attacks “realists” who claim to observe reality without any personal contribution whatsoever. He argues against those who attempt to root a theory of truth, whether scientific or otherwise, in dispassionate empirical reports as foundational grounds. He maintains that realists still carry “an old, ancient ‘love’” of reality “in every sense impression” they experience.¹⁰² Even more, they “still carry around the valuations of things that originate in the passions and loves of former centuries!”¹⁰³ This fact has a major impact for Nietzsche because he believes that “*what things are called* is unspeakably more important than what they are.”¹⁰⁴ Our evaluation of a thing “slowly [grows] onto and into the thing and has become its very body: what started as appearance in the end nearly always becomes essence and *effectively acts* as its essence!”¹⁰⁵ It is this background of theoretical beliefs that conditions all of our perceptions, even those of the ‘realists’ who believe that “the world really is the way it appears to” them, while in actuality they are infected by their evolution and education.¹⁰⁶ Merely recognizing this condition is not enough to overcome it. As Nietzsche says, “[o]nly as creators can we destroy!”¹⁰⁷ By this he means that we cannot escape the net of interpretation, somehow getting away from all of our education and background assumptions, which shape the structure of our concepts and in turn mediate our interactions and observations of the world. As an example of the importance of linguistic labels, think of how we deal with colours. While someone such as myself with a fairly mundane interest in colours will limit himself to distinguishing only a few basic varieties, and when forced simply mix these together with adjectives (e.g. a light red-orange colour), people with more sophisticated interests (such as a paint manufacturer) may use a plethora of highly discriminating names. This labelling serves not only to distinguish the colours that already exist, but mediates our very experience by providing types of objects for us to observe.¹⁰⁸

The necessity of interpretation also helps explain GS 54 in which Nietzsche declares that he is like a dreamer who “*must* go on dreaming lest I perish.”¹⁰⁹ Here he claims to have recognized “that the ancient humanity and

¹⁰² Ibid., 57.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 58.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 57.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 58.

¹⁰⁸ By this claim I mean that the use of names will create logical placeholders (object types) for types of objects which we may then experience. Recall Nietzsche’s remarks on our experience of leaves. The name ‘leaf’ creates an object type under which we subsume a plethora of stimuli. By creating additional object types, achieved by the propagation of names, we provide alternative ways for our experience to be mediated by our limited intellect.

¹⁰⁹ Nietzsche, GS, 54. Clark also interprets GS 54 in her *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*. However, she interprets this passage to support her reading that in GS Nietzsche still maintained

animality, indeed the whole prehistory and past of all sentient being, continues within me to fabulate, to love, to hate, and to infer.” This clearly coheres with what Nietzsche has said throughout his works up until this point, and what he continues to hold after the first edition of GS as well: our mode of thinking is the result of a long development, both biological and social, which has produced certain categories of thought. Nietzsche here articulates (as he will later), that although he has recognized these contingent methods of thinking as a ‘dream,’ he must go on dreaming this dream. There is no simple way of escaping the interpretive net and coming to some bare reality that is the same for all observers. This reading is further supported by the fact that in the same passage Nietzsche, drawing on his reading of Lange, says that by ‘appearance’ he does not mean “the opposite of some essence – what could I say about any essence except name the predicates of its appearance!” That an essence is merely the sum of its appearances is another thought that Nietzsche will embrace throughout the rest of his published (and unpublished) writings, and this thought becomes much clearer once we recognize Boscovich’s influence once again.

Just as all *puncta* stand in relation to all other *puncta* at all times, their identity is determined by these relations. All measurement is determined by the relative relations of an object to something else, whether these objects are force points or the macroscopic objects of everyday experience.¹¹⁰ Because everything is in a constant state of flux (becoming), there are no stable essences left to define any particular object; all that remains are the objects’ (or force points’) relations to other objects (force points). Hence, whatever can be said about an object can only be said from some perspective, which reflects these relations. While traditional paradigms of truth and knowledge postulated the adequate representation of the essence of the object by the subject, attained by overcoming any kind of distorting subjective influence, this view becomes completely incomprehensible on Nietzsche’s account. An object taken out of all its relations with everything else simply ceases to be an object; only via these relations are any properties of an object determined, and even whether or not some collection of forces is a single object at all is perspective-dependent.¹¹¹

the falsification thesis. She argues that at this point Nietzsche maintained his representational view of knowledge, but rejected the conceivability of the thing-in-itself. This move, she argues, forced him to accept a Berkeleyian style subjective idealism, which is what Nietzsche means by life being a dream in GS 54 (Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 118-120).

¹¹⁰ Albert Einstein embraces this methodology in his *Relativity*. There he indicates that all measurement must be performed by the relative comparison of two objects. This stance, combined with the relativity of trajectory (for a moving body) to a system of coordinates, and the uniform speed of light in a vacuum when measured from all coordinate systems, are the fundamental premises on which his broader theory of relativity is constructed (Einstein, *Relativity: The Special and the General Theory*, part 1, 6-24 in particular).

¹¹¹ This applies to virtually all levels of analysis. Recall Porter’s note that antiquity ceased to be a unity for Nietzsche: when examined in detail what we have is the same chaos of conflicting accounts and views from ‘antiquity’ that we have from any more recent society (Porter, *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future*, 171-175, 265-73). Just as when we discuss any modern group,

Here we also see Nietzsche's similarity with Mach, insofar as an object can only be constituted by its relations. Outside of these relations there is no object, no essence or thing-in-itself, which effectively eradicates the old correspondence ideal of adequate representation.¹¹² However, we also see potential differences between Nietzsche and Mach. The major point of divergence for the two is in how we experience sensation. For Mach sensations appear with a kind of givenness, devoid of truth value. Only our interpretations of the sensations are subjects for truth or falsity, and the sensations themselves are not mediated by our consciousness, but rather are the direct product of a physiological process.¹¹³ Nietzsche, by contrast, maintains that our very experience itself is mediated by our interpretive schema, embodied by the perspectives we take up.¹¹⁴ While the focus of this reading is Nietzsche's published material, it is worthwhile here to consider a *Nachlass* note, published in *The Will to Power*. WP 481 is the famous note which reads "[a]gainst positivism, which halts at phenomena – 'There are only facts' – I would say: No, facts is precisely what there is not, only interpretations. We cannot establish any fact 'in itself.'"¹¹⁵ This statement clearly indicates Nietzsche's disinclination for any form of givenness. Nietzsche also argues that the 'subject' who supposedly does the interpreting is itself "something added and invented and projected behind what there is."¹¹⁶ This claim also supports the monistic view that all events (sensations included) are the product of an interplay of forces, to which we have mistakenly added an enduring subject in whom these occur. One final consideration of this passage is that Nietzsche claims "[i]n so far as the word 'knowledge' has any meaning, the world is knowable; but it is *interpretable* otherwise, it has no meaning behind it, but countless meanings. – 'Perspectivism.'"¹¹⁷ This claim indicates that Nietzsche does not think knowledge is a complete impossibility, and also that he is not committed to a Kantian cleft between the world of phenomenon and noumenon.

It is the perspective-dependent nature of all properties that makes Nietzsche hold that "appearance is the active and living itself."¹¹⁸ Due to this

whether it is a national, racial, sexual, or special interest group, the group is made up of all its constituent members who have divergent views on any number of issues. And even these individuals themselves are often conflicted about their views on some particular issue.

¹¹² Mach, *Contributions to the Analysis of the Sensations*, 5-6.

¹¹³ For instance, Gori claims that for Mach the sensations can have "no truth value at all" and that "[a]ny *error* belongs to the intellect, which misinterprets sense data and transforms them into a world of fixed entities" ("The Usefulness of Substances," 115-116).

¹¹⁴ If Nietzsche is a reductive physicalist, holding that all mental processes are just physical processes, then his position may be even closer to Mach's, because our interpretations of sensations would themselves be parts of the physical process. But such a reductive view, if taken strongly enough, could eliminate the ability to discuss truth/falsity at all (as the interpretation of our sensations would itself just be another physical process, which itself could not be true or false).

¹¹⁵ Nietzsche, WP, 481.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Nietzsche, GS, 54.

perspective-dependency we lose objectivity in the traditional sense. In this the postmoderns are right. For instance, Derrida's claim that Nietzsche has realized that one centre may be substituted at will for another, thus producing a different interpretation of the same text, is an example of this postmodern reading.¹¹⁹ Changing the centre in this fashion is the equivalent of a shift in perspective. In both cases some affective interests are engaged or disengaged and produce interpretations from their interaction with the world. However, this phenomenon is not as radical as thinkers like Derrida have supposed. If we maintain a relatively consistent perspective, which engages in relatively consistent relations, we will continue to have relatively consistent results. This consistency preserves objectivity *within* perspectives.

Let us return to the example of the car. While we may switch between the naïve realist perspective of the car as a unity and the mechanic's perspective that sees the interrelation of many distinct parts, the view we get within each of these perspectives remains constant so long as no relevant changes occur in the world. Such a change would be an event such as the car exploding, being crushed, or cut in two. I have qualified the objectivity available within perspectives with the caveat that no *relevant* changes occur in either the perspective or the world. Stated positively, there must be a certain level of consistency for there to be objectivity. It may rightly be asked what defines these conditions of relevance or consistency.

To this question there is no simple or direct answer. To demand one static, objective answer that transcends all human interests is to demand something the world cannot give us. The ambivalence of the world to human interests, cognitive or otherwise, is a recurring theme throughout Nietzsche's works. More in accordance with his views in GS, BGE, and elsewhere, we should see relevance-irrelevance, consistent-inconsistent, continuity-discontinuity as poles on a continuum.¹²⁰ The extremities of this continuum will often seem painfully obvious. An obviously relevant change in the car would be the dismantling of all of its parts and melting them down, leaving none of the material from the original car in a recognizable form. At this point the car is effectively destroyed. At the opposite end of the continuum are changes which are seemingly irrelevant. The addition or subtraction of one molecule should have no effect on the car's identity.

As we approach the vast middle ground of the continuum the relevance of the changes become increasingly unclear, and we are presented with the classical paradox of Theseus's ship. Many minor changes together constitute major changes, but it is not immediately obvious how many minor changes it takes to produce a major change, nor exactly what parameters of relevance should be set. In a sense these parameters are arbitrary and established by fiat. But in another sense there are restrictions on the practical applicability of parameters. A major

¹¹⁹ Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play," 292.

¹²⁰ Nietzsche points to the (often hidden) continuity of processes, values, and appearances in opposition to the popular view that 'opposites' are intrinsically (metaphysically) opposed. Cf. GS, 112; BGE, 2, 34.

restriction is biology, a topic which Nietzsche often turns his attention to. The contingent biological makeup of human organisms sets limits to the domains of practical interest and applicability. These limits may be overcome with the assistance of tools, which serve to increase the range of action in which humans may engage, thus increasing our domain of practical (and theoretical) interest. But because we cannot use tools all the time, we ultimately are forced to switch back into our biologically conditioned, naïve realist perspective.

According to the nominalist thesis I attribute to Nietzsche all extant objects are unique.¹²¹ They are unique not merely in the banal sense that every object has some feature which will distinguish it from all other objects, such as spatio-temporal coordinates, but in the stronger sense that there are no natural kinds. Reality does not carve itself at the joints because there are no abstract objects to provide a natural identity to continuous processes. Plato's Forms are the classical paradigm of abstract objects providing physical objects with natural identity via the similarity of physical objects to the Forms. Nietzsche explicitly rejects this sort of theory which designates the abstract as more real than the concrete.¹²²

The same uniqueness applies to perspectives as well. There are no abstract perspectives to which instantiated perspectives may be compared to derive a stable identity. The identity of a perspective itself must be established perspectivally. In the same way that perspectives establish relevance parameters for what may be considered an object synchronically and diachronically, one perspective may be used to establish the relevance parameters of what constitutes a different perspective synchronically and diachronically. Each instantiation of a perspective is unique and unrepeatable. Just as a *puncta*-system will always change over time, and never be able to exactly repeat a certain distribution without all other *puncta* returning to their previous positions, so too will perspectives change over time. Much like the *puncta*-distribution of a system depends on the surrounding *puncta* which influence it, a perspective is influenced by the affects of the agent instantiating it. These affects, in turn, are determined by the physiological condition of the agent, which itself is constantly conditioned by the surrounding environment. It is because of this constantly shifting interaction of forces that the "total character of the world...is for all eternity chaos."¹²³

However, we need not be paralyzed by the chaotic nature of the world, both in regards to objects and perspectives, and accept a sceptical conclusion. Just as we are able to set parameters of similarity in the case of *puncta*-systems to

¹²¹ The possible exception are the *punta* themselves, which may be identical to each other. This result seems to come naturally from Boscovich's view, as the *puncta* are conceived as one-dimensional points, and thus do not have the ability to be differentiated from one another qualitatively. The *punta* may still be differentiated on the basis of position and velocity. Nietzsche does not seem to have anything interesting to say on this issue, nor on the topic of universals in general.

¹²² Nietzsche, TI, 'Reason' 4; WP, 572.

¹²³ Nietzsche, GS, 109.

deem one collection as an object and provide it with a single identity over time, the same may be done with perspectives. Although an individual's perspective will be constantly changing depending on their affects and physiological condition, we may deem that 'their' perspective is one perspective depending on our interests. In this case we will likely be operating under the naïve realist perspective, wishing to attribute a stable identity and point-of-view to an individual. But we may also adopt a different perspective, one framed by different interests, in which we will identify perspectives differently. When this occurs we may be interested in identifying types of perspectives, such as the 'scientific' perspective.¹²⁴ As Nietzsche articulates, this one perspective contains a number of different features which in the past were separate but are now, for the sake of economy, worth regarding as a unity.¹²⁵ Grouping features in this way gives rise to perspectives on a variety of cognitive levels which we can classify hierarchically depending on the degree of particularity they possess. The result of this sorting will be a ladder of perspectives, beginning with the most particular and arising to the most general. But such a hierarchy of descriptive power should not be confused with a hierarchy of value. Such confusion occurs often, whether the overriding value is placed on the most particular (in the case of the particle physicist) or on the most general (such as Plato's Good or the worship of God). Perspectives, like objects, may be distinguished to a greater or lesser degree, depending on our interests. But each instantiation ultimately remains unique and unrepeatable, as it is the result of the unique condition of the entity instantiating it. But for practical purposes we only need to concentrate on their rough outlines and similarities, identifying types of perspectives which may be instantiated by many individuals, or identifying individuals who may take up many types of perspectives.

It remains the case that we are *not* free to change any and all of our perspectives at will. While we may be able to adopt the perspective of the particle physicist or biologist for a time and recognize our ancient errors, we must utilize something like a perspective framed by these errors to survive.¹²⁶ This condition restricts the domain of perspectives that we may utilize, and there are other restrictions on the possible perspectives we may take up (e.g. biological or scientific restrictions on our capabilities). Ultimately it is this restriction of perspectives and the objectivity within perspectives that undermine the postmodern view.

Another instance of objectivity within perspectives arises in connection with the use of language. While it may be the case that our language refers to unities that we create, this fact remains relatively unproblematic as long as we stay within the perspective that utilizes these unities. Although de Man argues that

¹²⁴ Alternatively, we may be interested in demarcating subdivisions within what we normally consider a single perspective, such as the Freudian distinction between the Ego, Id, and Super-Ego.

¹²⁵ Nietzsche, GS, 113.

¹²⁶ Nietzsche, HH, 11, 34.

language is primarily rhetorical for Nietzsche, the nominalist ontology (premised on Boscovich-inspired force points) and the falsifying nature of consciousness (which is directly linked to our linguistic capability) fully account for what Nietzsche has to say in this area. While ‘leaf’ refers to a broad category that subsumes a vast number of particular entities by ignoring certain differences among them, this greatly facilitates our ability to coordinate group action. As long as we remain within a perspective in which the differences amongst particular leaves are not salient, we are able to engage in a practice of constative language. The command “go rake the leaves” need not be metaphorical insofar as we remain within the everyday, naïve realist perspective shared by most humans on a day-to-day operational basis. However, should we change perspectives and take up an interest in the differences amongst particular leaves, recognizing that no two are strictly identical, *then* the command takes on a figurative nature, because the words we use do not directly correspond to reality. It is this lack of correspondence which underpins all discussions of language as metaphorical. But, as I have shown, the nature of language can be explained in such a way as to alleviate the radical postmodern conclusion that all language must be metaphorical all the time.

Let us return for a moment to the favoured postmodern analogy of a text and Barthes’s argument that we are not restrained by authorial intention when interpreting a text. While the interpretive method applied to a text may be altered at will (such as in literary criticism, where many different readings of a text are performed), when we apply the same interpretive method to the same text we get very similar (if not identical) results. So while we are able to read any text (or interpret any aspect of reality) according to any methodology we choose, some of these methodologies fulfill more of our relevant interests than others. Just as we could interpret a text like *Huckleberry Finn* from a Marxist perspective, or examine a grocery list as metaphorical, we could also spend our days documenting the differences of individual leaves. The main question that concerns us, however, is what these interpretations do for us.

Typically, reading a text according to its literal meaning provides the most useful interpretation, and is almost always how we initially approach a text. Literal (or plain) meaning is what a text signifies when its terms are taken to be used in their ordinary way.¹²⁷ When used literally, the words signify (or retain the same extension as) what they are commonly thought to, such as the meanings given to them in dictionaries. While these meanings can of course change depending on time and place, we may still decipher meanings to a greater and lesser extent. Insofar as we can read a text for its plain meaning, texts can hold some definitive content. Nietzsche implies in a number of places that texts do hold some meaning, and that this meaning can be misconstrued or lost under

¹²⁷ Old metaphors may take on a literal meaning when ‘used in their ordinary way.’ This feature of language allows for some continuity of thought between TL and Nietzsche’s later works.

interpretations.¹²⁸ While our interests are important in determining what perspectives we utilize, they do not, in and of themselves, determine truth. Nietzsche is not a pragmatist when it comes to truth. There is much evidence to support such a claim, some of which we have already examined, and more of which we shall deal with shortly. Some commentators attribute a kind of pragmatism to Nietzsche, but it has become increasingly clear that his texts simply do not support such a view.¹²⁹ The view being advanced here more successfully accounts for what Nietzsche says throughout his texts.¹³⁰ It is truth as traditional correspondence (objective correspondence, free of perspectives) which Nietzsche criticizes in many places as impossible for us. We do adopt a variety of perspectives out of pragmatic interests, which in turn establish the context for a relatively objective determination of truth. But it is still the case that our ability to switch perspectives leads to much more radical conclusions than the modern reading tends to allow.

In the first chapter, I suggested that Nietzsche's non-foundationalism has more implications than Leiter realizes. I am now in a position to substantiate this claim. In Leiter's analysis of GM's optical analogy of seeing and knowing, he argues that there is a purity claim to Nietzsche's view which the postmodern reading misses. He claims that "[t]here exists a catalogue of identifiable factors that would distort our perspective on the object: for instance, we are too far away or the background conditions are poor (purity claim)."¹³¹ He further articulates his complaint against the postmodern reading, which he labels the 'Received View,' by claiming that there is a "sort of 'visual hierarchy': some visual perspectives will simply be better than others – better, that is, in virtue of their adequacy to *the real visible nature of the object*."¹³² Leiter also holds that "the object of knowledge is never constituted by [our epistemic interest] or *any other particular* interest. In that sense, it remains an independent object."¹³³ While much of what Leiter has to say about the non-foundational aspects of Nietzsche's views on truth and knowledge are accurate, here he fails to appreciate the radical nature of perspectivism.

¹²⁸ Cf. Nietzsche, D, P, 5; GS, 383; BGE, 38, 230; A, 59. Leiter provides a convincing case that Nietzsche does not wholly embrace the indeterminacy of texts in his critique of Nehamas in his "Nietzsche and Aestheticism."

¹²⁹ Danto is the classic case for attributing such a view to Nietzsche. However, such a view can still be found among some Nietzsche scholars. For instance, Gori claims that "Nietzsche tries replacing the common use of the term 'truth' as 'close to reality' with a notion that could respect human perspective; thence, he calls *true* only that thought useful for human beings winning the struggle for life" ("Sounding out Idols," 243).

¹³⁰ Again, this view is that truth does involve some correspondence, but that the relations that serve as criteria for the correspondence are determined by the perspective one adopts.

¹³¹ Leiter, "Perspectivism in Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*," 344. Leiter reiterates this account in his *Nietzsche and Morality*, 270-273.

¹³² Leiter, "Perspectivism in Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*," 345 (emphasis added).

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 350.

As I have been indicating, an object is determined by the perspective it is being observed under. While there really is a ‘world out there,’ Leiter’s implication that the object has some true nature independent of its relations is another instance of falling into the mistakes Nietzsche was attempting to point out. It is only within relations that an object has any properties at all, or even that there is an ‘object.’ This fact makes the claim that some views on an object are more adequate “to the real visible nature of the object” simply another iteration of the mistaken traditional view of truth as correspondence.¹³⁴ What must be realized is that the plurality of views that can be taken will provide different objects, and that we can only refer to the visible nature of the object in reference to some particular view. This realization requires us to abandon the belief that there are non-arbitrary methods of designating which views or perspectives are ‘truer’ than others because they are better able to capture the ‘real’ nature of the object. But the fact that there are no naturally occurring objective standards by which some perspective(s) may be abstractly favoured over others does not restrict our ability to fix our perspective(s) and so establish stable interpretation(s).

Sellars notes the necessity of fixing our perspectives in the notes added to the 1963 edition of his “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind.” In his discussion of how we can come to speak of colours, he notes that we must pay attention to the observational conditions in which we make these claims. And just as these conditions may change, so too will the relation between our experience of colour and linguistic practice, which have a complementary effect in determining how we understand the very objects which we describe as coloured.¹³⁵ While Sellars does well in pointing out the necessity of acknowledging the observation conditions “in which colour words have their primary perceptual use,” there are even more conditions that we must acknowledge to fill out an account of observation in perspectivism.¹³⁶ For example, we must also specify that it is human beings who are doing the observing, and that they have standard human eyesight, and so on. It is only within a set perspective that our words attain a fixed meaning and reference, which in turn allows for a kind of truth. However, the plurality of perspectives and their differences allow for a non-foundational reciprocation between our observations, analyses, and perspectives, which frees Nietzsche’s views from the ‘myth of the given’ that Sellars critiques. Insofar as Nietzsche’s freedom from this myth allows him to recognize the contingent character of the perspectives we utilize, he is even freer from the myth than Sellars himself.

Returning to GS, we can see that the account of perspectivism I have articulated accounts for a vast number of Nietzsche’s claims. For instance, it accounts for his critique of cause and effect in *The Gay Science*. Nietzsche argues against the explanatory power of this conception because it does not deal directly

¹³⁴ Ibid., 345.

¹³⁵ Sellars, “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind,” 140-153.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 147.

with reality but only with “our picture” of it.¹³⁷ In utilizing this picture, we find ourselves “operating only with things that do not exist – with lines, surfaces, bodies, atoms, divisible times, divisible spaces.”¹³⁸ We view these things as interacting in a sequence of cause and effect. But Nietzsche holds that “there is probably never such a duality” of cause and effect, and that “in truth a continuum faces us, from which we isolate a few pieces, just as we always perceive a movement only as isolated points, i.e. do not really see but infer.”¹³⁹ In between these isolated points “[t]here is an infinite number of processes that elude us.”¹⁴⁰ If we saw these processes as well, really “saw the stream of the event” rather than our punctuated picture of it, then we would see the division of cause and effect “as [an] arbitrary division and dismemberment.”¹⁴¹ Again we see Nietzsche’s claims that we falsify reality based on his account of human cognitive functioning. If we saw more, then we would realize that our concept of cause and effect does not reflect the nature of the world, but rather serves in organizing our experience in a more manageable way.¹⁴²

We also see that Nietzsche does not give into the sceptical assumption that we cannot have truth or knowledge, as postmodern interpreters believe and which Clark holds is still present in *The Gay Science*. Even while critiquing cause and effect, Nietzsche points out that “[w]e are better at describing” events than people have been in the past because “[w]e have uncovered a diverse succession where the naïve man and investigator of older cultures saw only two different things, ‘cause’ and ‘effect’...The series of ‘causes’ faces us much more completely in each case” than it did for them.¹⁴³ As we see here, Nietzsche does not deny our ability to enhance our knowledge, even though he rejects truth as correspondence to reality. What Nietzsche instead proposes is that we increase our knowledge by engaging in a hermeneutic analysis of our concepts and experiences, refining them both to better understand and interact with our environment.

While I will analyze what Nietzsche has to say about morality in the fifth chapter, it is here valuable to point out Nietzsche’s appeal to the sciences in his discussion of creating new personal codes of ethics in GS. The old moral world order, he believes, developed from a deep misunderstanding of the natural world. According to traditional morality of almost all stripes, there is a universal law code that applies to all actions, and to which everyone should subscribe. Against this, Nietzsche argues that anyone who believes in such a universal code, which holds that everyone should act the same in certain situations, “has [not] yet taken

¹³⁷ Nietzsche, GS, 112.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² As noted earlier, Nietzsche accepts Kant’s critique of Hume and Locke. Because our use of the schema of cause and effect is derived contingently from our needs, we are not entitled to claiming objectivity for the relation.

¹⁴³ Nietzsche, GS, 112.

five steps towards self-knowledge. For he would then know that there neither are nor can be actions that are all the same; that every act ever performed was done in an altogether unique and unrepeatable way, and that this will be equally true of every future act.”¹⁴⁴ Because of the particularity of all actions, moral codes apply only to a rough appearance or outline of actions. In place of these universal codes, based on a mistaken picture of the world, Nietzsche argues that we must create our own individual codes of conduct, based on our fallible interpretation of the world. It is for this reason that Nietzsche declares that “we must become the best students and discoverers of everything lawful and necessary in the world.”¹⁴⁵ This means studying physics, which is our ongoing attempt to create the best theory of the operation of the physical world.¹⁴⁶ It seems clear, then, that Nietzsche does not rule out our ability to increase our knowledge about the world, despite the falsifying nature of our cognitive functioning and the perspectival nature of all knowing.

Sections 108 to 114 of GS also support my account. GS 108, which introduces the famous phrase “God is dead,” has the obvious connotation that a God’s-eye perspective is no longer believable.¹⁴⁷ In the fifth book of GS, Nietzsche returns to this idea. Not only has the old immodesty of accepting interpretations from only a particular (religious) perspective become unbelievable, even our desire to deify and venerate one particular perspective has become suspect. The death of God means that “the world has once again become infinite to us: insofar as we cannot reject the possibility *that it includes infinite interpretations*.”¹⁴⁸ Of course, Nietzsche acknowledges that this plurality of interpretations may include “much devilry, stupidity, [and] foolishness of interpretation,” indicating that he does not hold all interpretations to be of equal value.¹⁴⁹ In the wake of God’s death, we are left with the shadows of God: the residue of the old interpretations of existence. Our task, Nietzsche argues, is to “defeat his shadow as well!”¹⁵⁰

In GS 109, Nietzsche indicates that a shadow of God remains in some of our ways of imagining nature. He warns us against characterizing the world as an organism or as a machine, as these characterizations will lead to attributing inappropriate properties to it, such as organic functions (feeding, growth) or the purposeful design of machines. Against these inappropriate conceptions, Nietzsche claims that “[t]he total character of the world, by contrast, is for all eternity chaos, not in the sense of a lack of necessity but of a lack of order, organization, form, beauty, wisdom, and whatever else our aesthetic

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 335.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 108.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 374.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 108.

anthropomorphism are called.”¹⁵¹ Nietzsche’s point is not that the world is eternally chaotic in an ontologically primary sense, making chaos or becoming Nietzsche’s fundamental metaphysical principle. Although his claim may be construed this way, here Nietzsche is pointing out the problems to which our misapplication of predicates may lead us. He claims that the events of the world are necessitated – his view is not that there is literally a complete chaos permeating the entire universe and that every regularity we believe we observe is an error. The mistake rather comes when we jump from our ability to observe regularities to ascribing anthropomorphic properties to the universe, which itself need not be like the contingent world of human beliefs that have been created out of it. As he says, “[i]n no way do our aesthetic and moral judgments apply to” the universe as a whole.¹⁵² Later in this same section he warns us that “[t]here are no eternally enduring substances; matter is as much of an error as the god of the Eleatics.”¹⁵³ Here again we have an echo of Boscovich, subverting the belief in enduring substances and a substratum of enduring stability underlying all observed changes in the universe. The de-deification of nature, Nietzsche argues, will result in our ability “to *naturalize* humanity with a pure, newly discovered, newly redeemed nature.”¹⁵⁴

GS 110 is more evidence for my account. Nietzsche reiterates his evolutionary narrative, claiming that certain errors “turned out to be useful and species-preserving; those who hit upon or inherited them fought their fight for themselves and their progeny with greater luck.” Because of this survival value, these errors were passed down and “finally almost became part of the basic endowment of the species.” These errors include the ideas “that there are enduring things; that there are identical things; that there are things, kinds of material, bodies; that a thing is what it appears to be; that our will is free; that what is good for me is also good in and for itself.” These errors have already been explained, so I will point to some of the other interesting aspects of the passage. All of our “higher functions, the perceptions of sense and generally every kind of sensation, worked with those basic errors that had been incorporated since time immemorial.” These errors also “became the norms according to which one determined ‘true’ and ‘untrue’ – down to the most remote areas of pure logic.” They served this function because of the great advantages they provided to survival. But against these errors, which are taken for knowledge, Nietzsche believes that “only very late did truth emerge as the weakest form of knowledge.” Here we see Nietzsche’s position that our ingrained, ancient errors have been beneficial for survival, and that our very experience is mediated by the function these errors serve in consciousness. We also see in this passage his admission that against these errors the truth may still emerge.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 109.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

Nietzsche further argues that the Eleatic image of the thinker was premised on erroneous assumptions which continue to influence us to this day. To maintain these assumptions the Eleatics “had to misconstrue the nature of the knower, deny the force of impulses in knowledge, and generally conceive reason as a completely free, self-originated activity.”¹⁵⁵ To attain this, the Eleatics had to ignore that their image of the thinker came “from a desire for tranquility or sole possession or sovereignty.”¹⁵⁶ Nietzsche here provides a historical narrative of the development of knowledge, and of all the drives and methods required for inquiry as a cultural project, including “not only faith and conviction, but also scrutiny, denial, suspicion, and contradiction.”¹⁵⁷ Eventually these drives and methods “took on the lustre of the permitted, honoured, useful and finally the eye and the innocence of the *good*.”¹⁵⁸ With this development,

knowledge became a part of life and, as life, a continually growing power, until finally knowledge and the ancient basic errors struck against each other, both as life, both as power, both in the same person. The thinker – that is now the being in whom the drive to truth and those life-preserving errors are fighting their first battle, after the drive to truth has *proven* itself to be a life-preserving power, too. In relation to the significance of this battle, everything else is a matter of indifference: the ultimate question about the condition of life is posed here, and the first attempt is made here to answer the question through experiment. To what extent can truth stand to be incorporated? – that is the question; that is the experiment.¹⁵⁹

Here Nietzsche is clearly elaborating the narrative that we have seen developing from TL onwards. While the ‘ancient basic errors’ have been of the utmost importance to the development of humanity, we are now in a position where careful analysis will reveal ever more about the world around us. However, it remains an open question to what extent we are able to incorporate this new knowledge, founded on our increasingly powerful modes of inquiry.

We have already examined GS 111. It is worth repeating that in this passage Nietzsche argues that logic operates according to the falsifying nature of the intellect by ignoring particular differences in the world. This operation occurs as a battle of many different drives within us. This capacity for simplification produces greater capacity for action, which Nietzsche’s evolutionary narrative favours for survival. This “ancient mechanism” of simplification has become so

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 110.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

refined and ingrained that we “usually experience only the outcome of the battle” within us. GS 113 provides some elaboration on this type of battle. Here Nietzsche lists the many drives that have had to come together for the creation of ‘scientific thought.’ These include the doubting, denying, waiting, collecting, and dissolving drives. Prior to their unification, these drives acted like poisons and led to the ‘sacrifice’ of a great many number of people before those drives could be arranged in a beneficial manner. These drives were likely present in the type of individual who preferred to suspend judgment and wait for more information before making decisions, cited in GS 111 as a type disfavoured by evolution. However, as has been articulated earlier, once enough stability was secured for humanity via their ingrained errors, these more accurate operations could begin taking place in an effort to correct these long held beliefs.¹⁶⁰

GS 112 examines cause and effect and maintains the same line of argument that we have seen developing up to this point. In this passage, Nietzsche argues that “[w]e are better at describing” the world than we used to be, but “we explain just as little as all our predecessors.” Where primitive man “saw only two different things, ‘cause’ and ‘effect,’” we now see “a diverse succession.” We now realize how many operations occur between the two particular events we label as cause and effect. This realization forces us to admit that “there is probably never such a duality” as cause and effect. Rather,

in truth a continuum faces us, from which we isolate a few pieces, just as we always perceive a movement only as isolated points, i.e. do not really see, but infer. The suddenness with which many effects stand out misleads us; it is a suddenness only for us. An intellect that saw cause and effect as a continuum, not, as we do, as arbitrary division and dismemberment – that saw the stream of the event – would reject the concept of cause and effect and deny all determinedness.¹⁶¹

While these comments sound cryptic and seem to imply a radical rejection of necessitation, it is actually far from the case.

When we understand these comments against the backdrop that I have described, we see that Nietzsche is not denying necessitation, which he affirmed as shortly ago as GS 109; rather, he is saying that the way we see cause and effect is inaccurate. This inaccuracy is again based on our cognitive apparatus, or, more specifically, on its evolution for survival rather than representational accuracy: “[w]e are operating only with things that do not exist – with lines, surfaces, bodies, atoms, divisible times, divisible spaces.”¹⁶² All of these are parts of our picture of the universe, used as ways of arranging the continuous flux of forces.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 112.

¹⁶² Ibid.

This continuous flux is the continuum Nietzsche refers to in this passage: if we were able to actually witness the constant changes that occur we would not divide the observed phenomenon into two separate events, because we would see that they are only the results of continuous change. However, because our biological condition only allows us to notice changes of certain magnitudes, combined with our tendency to simplify our experiences due to our limited cognitive ability, we constantly experience such divisions. Returning to this idea in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche claims that “we should use ‘cause’ and ‘effect’ only as pure *concepts*, which is to say as conventional fictions for the purpose of description and communication, *not* explanation.”¹⁶³ Here again he claims that our application of cause and effect is practically useful, but that such a division does nothing to explain the world – it is merely a way of classifying or categorizing it. This classification increases our descriptive powers, which in turn facilitates our ability to anticipate future occurrences and organize group action. However, always remembering that “[l]ife is not an argument,” Nietzsche refuses the pragmatist’s inference from such utility to “truth.”¹⁶⁴

The distinction between explanation and description by Nietzsche, specifically regarding cause and effect, requires elucidation. It may rightly be argued that the ability to describe an event in greater detail does add to explanatory power. Some commentators, such as Poellner, have argued that Nietzsche’s distinction between description and explanation stems from his adherence to a power theory of causation.¹⁶⁵ The power theory holds that causal objects have some power to produce effects. This theory arose in response to the Aristotelian view of causation, which was held throughout the medieval period and was attacked by Enlightenment figures for its dependence on occult qualities. The power theory came to be the dominant paradigm for causation during the Enlightenment and retained this distinction until the twentieth century, where it was largely replaced by versions of regularity theory that dispensed with the notion of causal powers in favour of simple reference to the regularity of event sequences. Poellner argues that “Nietzsche remains committed to causal power (hence natural necessity) as an essential component in causal explanation” and that “[n]owhere does he develop, or even advocate in a programmatic form, a *revised* account of causality along the lines of the ‘regularity’ theory that many 20th century philosophers of science have taken Hume to recommend.”¹⁶⁶ It is Nietzsche’s insistence on the causal power theory, Poellner claims, which grounds Nietzsche’s numerous attacks on the explanatory value of causal explanations because we never gain access to these powers themselves. Instead of discovering causal powers we only achieve better descriptions of phenomena. While this account does seem to capture some salient points regarding Nietzsche’s views on causation, Nietzsche does, I believe, endorse regularity theory more strongly than

¹⁶³ Nietzsche, BGE, 21.

¹⁶⁴ Nietzsche, GS, 121.

¹⁶⁵ Poellner, “Causation and Force in Nietzsche,” 287-297.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 291.

Poellner claims. I have argued for this claim already, and now will present a potential alternative to Nietzsche's distinction between explanation and description offered in GS 112 and BGE 21.

A notebook entry from 1885-1886, WP 550, is useful here.¹⁶⁷ In this note, Nietzsche revisits his attacks on the distinctions between subject and attribute, cause and effect, doer and deed (alternatively, agent and activity).¹⁶⁸ He argues that these three distinctions are ultimately signs of the same activity: artificially demarcating features of some unity. He also argues that our causal reasoning is historically linked to our distinction between doer and deed. Originally, Nietzsche holds, seeking a reason for an event meant seeking an intention behind the event. This habit of seeking intentions behind events came from projecting an interpretation based on our own activity onto the world, assuming that the rest of the world acted as we did. Nietzsche invokes the Aristotelian distinction between *causa finalis* and *causa efficiens*. He claims that when we ask "why?" an event occurred, this is "always a question after the *causa finalis*."¹⁶⁹ We seek intentions behind all events, just as we are accustomed to having intentions behind our own actions.¹⁷⁰ Nietzsche holds that "here Hume was right; habit (but not only that of the individual!) makes us expect that a certain often-observed occurrence will follow another: nothing more!"¹⁷¹ The reason that only habit makes us expect the repetition of similar events is that "[w]e have no 'sense for the *causa efficiens*.'" ¹⁷² A second note further elucidates Nietzsche's distinction in GS 112 between explanation and description. In WP 554 Nietzsche claims that when we utilize the concepts of cause and effect we are applying mathematics to the world, separating a continuous process into two events, and placing these two newly-minted events into a formula. But through this formalizing procedure "nothing is ever comprehended, but [is] rather designated and distorted." In these two notes we see Nietzsche making a similar distinction between explanation and description as he does in the published works. While our formalization of cause and effect serves to better describe or designate some aspect of the world and its alterations, this does not explain why this process acts the way it does. To 'explain' the process would require supplying the intention behind it and not merely describing it. The historically clichéd response would be that a beneficent God caused the process to act as it does. Nietzsche, of course, does not have recourse to this answer given his rejection of God as a useful or plausible hypothesis. Because God can no longer be attributed with intentionally

¹⁶⁷ WP 550 corresponds to KSA 12:2[83].

¹⁶⁸ Nietzsche's attacks on these distinctions become very frequent in his later writings, and will be further explored and explained in the next chapter.

¹⁶⁹ Nietzsche, WP, 550.

¹⁷⁰ Although Nietzsche critiques even this view in a number of places, including at the very end of WP 550, arguing that our intentions themselves are merely surface phenomena of consciousness which themselves are the effects of more deep seated processes of the human organism.

¹⁷¹ Nietzsche, WP, 550.

¹⁷² Ibid.

establishing the course of events, we are left with an unexplained natural world that we may describe to greater or lesser degrees of precision. As Nietzsche illustrates in GS 109, the natural world is devoid of purpose, and so may never truly be explained in the sense of discovering its *causa finalis*. Although this reading explains Nietzsche's distinction between explanation and description, he is not always consistent in his use of 'explanation' as requiring the revelation of an intention.

Elsewhere in GS, Nietzsche ascribes the same kind of descriptive function of cause and effect to mathematics. He urges us to "introduce the subtlety and rigour of mathematics into all sciences to the extent to which that is at all possible; not in the belief that we will come to know things this way, but in order to *ascertain* our human relation to things. Mathematics is only the means to general and final knowledge of humanity."¹⁷³ While this passage may be interpreted in a Kantian manner, which would hold that mathematics cannot capture the thing-in-itself but only the formal conditions of our understanding, an alternative reading is more plausible. Recall that at HH 11 Nietzsche claims that "if one had known from the beginning that there was in nature no exactly straight line, no real circle, no absolute magnitude," then mathematics may never have developed. It is more than likely that he retained his earlier analysis. Mathematics does not reveal the innermost nature of phenomena to us because it does not capture the object with complete accuracy. Rather, it is a useful instrument for humans to apply to objects to determine their relevant relations.

GS 114 again articulates Nietzsche's commitment against the givenness of immediate experience and the theory-laden nature of perception.¹⁷⁴ This short passage is worth reproducing in its entirety: "As soon as we see a new picture, we immediately construct it with the help of all the old experiences we have had *depending on the degree* of our honesty and justice. There are no experiences other than moral ones, not even in the realm of sense perception." The second sentence clearly indicates that Nietzsche rejects any foundational view of sense perception, as somehow lying outside of our interpretive net. The first sentence indicates that our background presuppositions help construct our reception of the picture. This point recalls TL's claim that what we typically see are forms everywhere, rather than the particularity of every individual thing.¹⁷⁵ What is of great interest here is that Nietzsche claims that this process of construction will vary "*depending on the degree* of our honesty and justice."¹⁷⁶ This implies that we *can* get a more accurate view of the picture *if* we have a sufficient amount of what he here calls honesty and justice. This varying degree of accuracy supports my earlier claim that Nietzsche rejects the dichotomy true/false in exchange for a graduated scale, which allows for more or less accuracy in our experience and

¹⁷³ Nietzsche, GS, 246.

¹⁷⁴ In BGE he will attack 'immediate certainties' of all kinds, which we will explore in the next chapter.

¹⁷⁵ Nietzsche, TL, 142.

¹⁷⁶ Nietzsche, GS, 114.

thought. Elsewhere in GS, Nietzsche reinforces the point that our experience is conditioned and not simply given by recalling the colour metaphor he used in D.¹⁷⁷ In GS he contrasts the way the ancients experienced the world with the way modern people experience it. He holds that “[t]he lighting and colours of everything have changed,” and that “[w]e have given things a new colour,” which pales “in comparison to the *splendour of the colour* of...ancient humanity.”¹⁷⁸ Once again, we see Nietzsche rejecting the notion that experience could be objective in favour of a conditioned experience determined by one’s perspective.

Before moving on to an analysis of *Beyond Good and Evil*, a final triad of passages from book five of GS should be considered. While these were added in the 1887 second edition of the work, these passages are worth considering here with the rest of GS. GS 373 is an important aphorism for my reading because of its stance on science and perspectivism. The aphorism is entitled “‘Science’ as prejudice.” In it, Nietzsche first critiques scholars for not being able “to catch sight of the truly *great* problems and question marks.” As an example, Nietzsche cites Herbert Spencer’s project of reconciling egoism and altruism.¹⁷⁹ Nietzsche argues that “a human race that adopts as its ultimate perspective such a Spencerian perspective would strike us as deserving of contempt, of annihilation!” A greater question, which Nietzsche thinks Spencer is unable to see, is that Spencer *had* to adopt such a perspective. Here we see the method of perspectivism at work: while within Spencer’s perspective there is a narrative about the reconciliation of altruism and egoism, which may be debated in numerous ways, by switching our perspective we can evaluate Spencer’s perspective and its concern with this reconciliation. This evaluation will include probing questions about *why* Spencer felt the need to set this reconciliation as his goal, and what sort of character this need reveals.

The revelation of underlying character is an aim of Nietzsche’s that is widely acknowledged in the secondary literature.¹⁸⁰ Recall the examination of Kofman in the first chapter. I agree with her that on Nietzsche’s account an analysis of someone’s interpretations (e.g. Spencer’s) may reveal much about their character. This revelation itself will be an interpretation of phenomena, conducted according to certain interests and background assumptions. While this fact makes all the results of inquiry interpretive, it still preserves the objectivity of these interpretations *within* perspectives. So an inquiry into Spencer’s underlying condition by examining his desires and goals reveals his underlying character, which remains true within the diagnostic perspective which we take up in order to do this. Viewing interpretive diagnosis in this way makes it akin to medical diagnosis: within the operating perspective our results will be true (insofar as they

¹⁷⁷ Nietzsche, D, 426.

¹⁷⁸ Nietzsche, GS, 152.

¹⁷⁹ The discussion of Spencer’s aim here implies a connection to Zarathustra’s speech of the last men in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (‘Prologue’ 5).

¹⁸⁰ Deleuze provides an interesting analysis of the active/reactive dichotomy of underlying characters that Nietzsche finds (Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, chapter 2).

accurately capture salient aspects of reality), but our results may vary when switching into a different perspective that is framed by different interests or working assumptions.

After critiquing Spencer's perspective, and his lack of ability to question his perspective as a whole, Nietzsche turns his attention to another dominant perspective: that of mechanistic materialism. Those who adopt this perspective desire "a 'world of truth' that can be grasped entirely with the help of our four-cornered little human reason."¹⁸¹ Their belief is that existence can be reduced "to an exercise in arithmetic and an indoor diversion for mathematicians."¹⁸² While this popular mechanistic doctrine professes to offer "the first and final laws on which existence may be built," Nietzsche critiques this view precisely for its rejection of perspectivism.¹⁸³ He maintains that we "shouldn't want to strip [existence] of its *ambiguous* character," and that we should have "the taste of reverence for everything that lies beyond [our] horizon!"¹⁸⁴ The mechanistic doctrine, Nietzsche holds, ignores the perspectival nature of knowing. Instead of recognizing that it can capture certain elements of reality, the mechanists hold that "the only rightful interpretation of the world should be one to which [they] have a right," and this is "a crudity and naiveté, assuming it is not a mental illness, [or] an idiocy."¹⁸⁵ This obstinate belief that the mechanistic perspective can solve all riddles is completely undermined, Nietzsche suggests, because it is unable to account for value or meaning. He uses the example of a piece of music, and concludes that "[n]othing, really nothing of what is 'music'" in the piece would be "comprehended, understood, [or] recognized" by a mechanistic analysis.¹⁸⁶ This critique of materialist mechanism displays a continuing concern with the problems Lange pointed out: that materialism is unable to account for the mental realm, including all attributions of meaning and value. Nietzsche's solution to this problem is the suggestion that changing our perspective allows us to consider different qualities of a phenomenon.

GS 374 and 375 further support Nietzsche's claim in GS 373 that no one perspective can ever be definitive because there is just too much to reality to be subsumed under one description. GS 374, entitled "Our new 'infinite,'" clearly attests to the limits imposed by perspectivism. Nietzsche claims that even "the most industrious and extremely conscientious analysis and self-examination of the intellect" cannot reveal how far the interpretive character of existence stretches, or whether there could be a non-interpretive character to existence. Here he is criticizing the German idealist tradition, beginning with Kant, for the belief that a

¹⁸¹ Nietzsche, GS, 373.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

self-reflexive critique of reason can determine its own limits.¹⁸⁷ Nietzsche claims that “[w]e cannot look around our corner: it is a hopeless curiosity to want to know what other kinds of intellects and perspectives there *might* be.”¹⁸⁸ Despite this impossibility of looking around our own corner, Nietzsche holds that we have at least moved “away from the ridiculous immodesty of decreeing from our angle that perspectives are *permitted* only from this angle. Rather, the world has once again become infinite to us: insofar as we cannot reject the possibility *that it includes infinite interpretations*.” We see that perspectivism means an opening up of possibilities and the realization that interpretations cannot be restricted by dogmatic principles, as has been the case in the past. Instead, there may remain barriers to our ability to access certain perspectives, such as biological or intellectual limitations, but we have at least come to recognize the plurality of perspectives. However, the perspectival nature of existence should not be deified and worshipped as the ‘unknown.’¹⁸⁹ Presumably, this response would betray the dogmatism which Nietzsche hopes we have overcome. This deification of the unknown is characteristic of the postmodern reading, which embraces the perspectival character of existence while recoiling from any positive conception of truth. This manoeuvre is a classic ‘baby and the bathwater’ scenario, one which Nietzsche wished to avoid.¹⁹⁰

In GS 375 Nietzsche claims that “[w]e are cautious, we modern men, about ultimate convictions; our mistrust lies in wait for the enchantments and deceptions of the conscience involved in every strong faith, every unconditional Yes and No.” He hypothesizes two possible components to this mistrust. The first comes from “the caution...of the disappointed idealist.” Presumably this claim

¹⁸⁷ Nietzsche provides a similar critique of those who rebel against the value of life in *Twilight of the Idols*. There he claims that “[e]ven to raise the problem of the *value* of life, you would need to be both *outside* life and as familiar with life as someone, anyone, everyone who has ever lived: this is enough to tell us that the problem is inaccessible to us” (TI, ‘Morality’ 5). In both of these cases Nietzsche makes the point that we cannot fully evaluate an item from within its own perspective. This makes switching perspectives a necessity in evaluating perspectives. He has a similar stance in the added 1886 preface to BT. There he claims that BT captures “a *new* problem...the *problem of science* itself, science grasped for the first time as something problematic and questionable” (BT, P, 2). The root of this problem is “located in the territory of *art* – for the problem of science cannot be recognized within the territory of science” (ibid.). The need to view a problem through a variety of perspectives leads Nietzsche to pursue his task in BT, which is “to look at science through the prism of the artist, but also to look at art through the prism of life” (ibid.).

¹⁸⁸ Nietzsche, GS, 374

¹⁸⁹ Such a deification was promoted by Herbert Spencer, one of Nietzsche’s favourite targets. See Spencer, *First Principles*, part one, “The Unknowable.”

¹⁹⁰ An interesting conflict concerning this issue has occurred between Charles Taylor and Foucault. Taylor criticizes Foucault for adopting what Taylor sees as a kind of Nietzschean neutrality. He believes Foucault does this by denying that there are corresponding notions of freedom and truth to the power structures Foucault examines through his genealogies. Taylor argues that Foucault does not see the positive, ‘yea-saying’ side of Nietzsche, and instead gets stuck in a kind of postmodern pessimism. See Taylor, “Foucault on Freedom and Truth.”

refers back to Nietzsche's own infatuation with Schopenhauer. The second and "superior component" is

the gleeful curiosity of the one who used to stand in the corner and was driven to despair by his corner and who now delights and luxuriates in the opposite corner, in the boundless, in 'the free as such'. Thus an almost Epicurean bent of knowledge develops that will not easily let go of the questionable character of things....a taste that rejects all crude, four-square oppositions and is proudly aware of its practice in entertaining doubts.

This 'Epicurean bent of knowledge' reflects the pleasure of seeking knowledge itself, of pursuing truth from any perspective. But it is also the pleasure of losing any foundation from which to engage in this pursuit: it is the delight in perspectivism itself. This delight accompanies the rejection of "all crude, four-square oppositions," such as those which act as the basis of our long-ingrained errors. And this pursuit also requires a "slight tightening of the reins as our urge for certainty races ahead."¹⁹¹ It is not *the* truth – the harbinger of a new utopian future, characteristic of many searches of truth – which Nietzsche desires. Rather, it is the individual's search for truth in 'the free as such' which constitutes the pleasure of these new Epicureans.

Elsewhere Nietzsche proposes a similar view in poetic fashion. In GS 124 Nietzsche describes "the horizon of the infinite," which recalls the imagery of the closing section of *Daybreak*.¹⁹² In the latter section Nietzsche provides the image of birds flying off into the distance. All of the birds of the past, the greatest teachers we have had, eventually had to come to a stop somewhere. This will be our fate as well. But Nietzsche also maintains a faith that "[o]ther birds will fly farther!"¹⁹³ He also uses the image of a sea, which represents the vast distance the birds fly over and perhaps wish to cross. GS 124 recalls this sea image, claiming that "it is infinite and that there is nothing more awesome than infinity." While at times the sea may roar, at others "it lies there like silk and gold and dreams of goodness."¹⁹⁴ Ultimately, it is all that remains, because "there is no more 'land'" to return to.¹⁹⁵ This infinite sea represents the world without foundations; because there is no absolute perspective which we may refer to in order to ground our investigations, we are thrown into the 'free as such.' Some people will be able to embrace this freedom and perspectivism while others will have homesickness for the land, which represents stability.

¹⁹¹ Nietzsche, GS, 375.

¹⁹² Nietzsche, GS, 124; D 575.

¹⁹³ Nietzsche, D, 575.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., GS, 124.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

The Gay Science is a major piece of evidence for Nietzsche's mature perspectivism. As I have shown here, this work carries on and elaborates the evolutionary narrative Nietzsche's epistemological views rely on. This narrative, while hypothetical, is not merely rhetorical as Johnson and others claim. Along with this evolutionary account, Nietzsche maintains a Boscovich-inspired ontology of forces, underpinning the view that the universe is in a constant state of flux. Married to this is Nietzsche's nominalist thesis that every event and object is unique in some sense. Perspectivism stands on this edifice as the always partial and contextually sensitive pattern of our thought. The comparison with Mach allows us to see how these strands fit together in a more straightforward way than Nietzsche's texts alone sometimes allow: the interaction of forces produces phenomena, which are interpreted depending on our perspective. However, Nietzsche's view of interpretation is far-reaching, as it conditions experience and recognizes that the use of any perspective as a standard is in some sense arbitrary. Our use of the naïve realist perspective fulfils many of our practical concerns, as it allows us to interact with the world in a way conducive to survival. However, this limited value does not make this perspective *the* perspective by which all others should be judged. The radical nature of perspectivism entails object anti-realism, which makes Nietzsche's view more radical than the moderns acknowledge. Yet, I have argued that Nietzsche does retain objectivity within perspectives, allowing for a real kind of truth and knowledge. This fixing of perspective also allows the possibility of using language in a literal, constative way, contrary to the postmodern reading. While from one perspective language is metaphorical, insofar as it does not take into account the differences in objects (Nietzsche's nominalism), in another perspective this language can be constative. In the next chapter we will examine some of Nietzsche's later works, specifically *Beyond Good and Evil*, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, and *Twilight of the Idols*. These works range from 1886-1888, and thus mark the most mature stage of Nietzsche's thought. I will show that these works are congruent with the reading I have so far proposed, contrary to Clark's proposal that his thinking changes significantly during this late period.

Chapter 4: Nietzsche's Mature Epistemology

In the previous chapters I examined a core cluster of ideas which characterized Nietzsche's thought during his so-called 'middle period,' including the works *Human, All-Too-Human*, *Daybreak*, and *The Gay Science*. After the publication of this last work, Nietzsche's friendship with Paul Rée and Lou Salomé broke down in a terrible fashion, leaving him personally distraught.¹ It was at this time that Nietzsche wrote *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. While this work warrants careful study in its own right, I will overlook it for two reasons. The first is that the literary style of the work requires more detailed scrutiny than can be offered here. Second, the major themes of the work find additional expression and elaboration in Nietzsche's later writings, typically in a more straightforward form.² Due to these reasons, the present chapter will examine three works from Nietzsche's last productive years, namely *Beyond Good and Evil*, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, and *Twilight of the Idols*. BGE and TI represent Nietzsche's most mature views on epistemological matters. I show that these works are continuous with the middle-period writings examined in the previous chapters and that the cluster of ideas I have articulated continue to constitute the core of Nietzsche's epistemological views until the end of his career. While GM is a work primarily concerned with morality, I will examine it briefly to show that, even here, Nietzsche's epistemological thinking has not changed, contrary to modern interpreters such as Clark and Leiter. We also see that Nietzsche's thinking runs contrary to the postmodern interpretations that deny he makes any claims to truth whatsoever.

Epistemology in *Beyond Good and Evil*

In the preface to BGE Nietzsche famously asks us to "[s]uppose that truth is a woman."³ While this claim may seem bizarre, with it Nietzsche is able to bring into sharper focus his real topic: the historical failure of dogmatism. As he points out, philosophy has historically been practiced by what he labels the dogmatic approach. This approach is characterized by a "grotesque seriousness" and "clumsy advances" towards truth, with the aim of creating "sublime and unconditional philosophical edifices." Contrary to the postmodern reading, which holds that Nietzsche never made any pretension to knowing truth, here he reveals "just *what* actually served as the cornerstone of those...unconditional philosophical edifices," namely certain epistemological errors. More specifically, he cites "some piece of folk superstition from time immemorial (like the soul-superstition that still causes trouble as the superstition of the subject or I), some

¹ For details consult Small, *Nietzsche and Rée: A Star Friendship* and Young, *Friedrich Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography*.

² Insofar as Nietzsche's expressions can ever be considered straightforward. These later works are at least not explicitly constructed as a fictional narrative.

³ Nietzsche, BGE, P.

word-play perhaps, a seduction of grammar or an over-eager generalization from facts that are really very local, very personal, very human-all-too-human.” While dogmatism deserves its due for helping to create and preserve our intellectual abilities, it is also responsible for maintaining the most dangerous and deep-seated intellectual error of modernity, one inherited from antiquity, namely the dogmatists’ error of believing in their own objectivity.⁴ As the archetype of this error Nietzsche cites “Plato’s invention of pure spirit and the Good in itself.”

Just as in HH, D, and GS, here in the preface to BGE Nietzsche claims that we have thankfully inherited “all the force cultivated through the struggle against this error.”⁵ The struggle against Platonism (as well as Christianity, which is “Platonism for the ‘people’”) “has created a magnificent tension of spirit in Europe, the likes of which the earth has never known,” which has in turn created “such a tension in our bow [that] we can now shoot at the furthest goals.” The conclusion Nietzsche draws from his epistemological analysis of dogmatism is that “talking about spirit and the Good like Plato did [means] standing truth on its head and disowning even *perspectivism* [*das Perspektivische*], which is the fundamental condition of all life.” This passage is a rare instance in the published corpus where Nietzsche explicitly endorses perspectivism as a fundamental epistemological position. We can elucidate two moments in Nietzsche’s claim here. First, the assertion that the dogmatist’s position means “standing truth on its head” clearly means that the nature of truth is not such that it can be used to construct unconditional edifices. This claim implies that Nietzsche does know something about truth, something he feels is important and should be shared with his (select) audience. Second, perspectivism is offered as an alternative to such a dogmatic vision of truth. Indeed, Nietzsche goes so far as to claim that perspectivism is the “fundamental condition of all life.” This bold claim asserts that wherever there is life there is some perspective on the world.

While BGE is a rich work, I will limit my scope to showing that the core ideas elucidated in previous chapters continue to provide the underpinning for Nietzsche’s main epistemological claims without significant variation. In particular, we will see that Nietzsche retains the Boscovichian force ontology, as BGE contains the only explicit mention of Boscovich in Nietzsche’s published works. We also see the same views on language, physiology, and evolution that have characterized the earlier works, and that the errors arising from a poor understanding of our condition continue to constitute Nietzsche’s major targets of

⁴ Here we see Nietzsche exercising his intellectual sensitivity in recognizing the many ways of evaluating a phenomenon. To instead seek a definite value would be to commit the very dogmatist’s error that he has here pointed out. This sensitivity, instantiated by the ability to deliver many evaluations on a phenomenon, can easily be mistaken for the postmodern manoeuvre of arguing that there simply are no correct or incorrect evaluations, rather than the recognition that each evaluation takes place within some particular perspective and thus according to some established set of criteria.

⁵ Nietzsche, BGE, P.

attack. Also at work is Nietzsche's perspectivism, which arises in tandem with his other epistemological claims.

Before pursuing this analysis of Nietzsche's epistemological views, I wish to at least partially bracket his discussion of the value of truth. The value of truth and the will to truth take on even more importance for the 'mature' Nietzsche than they have in his earlier thought, with extensive analyses of these in BGE and GM. However, I will largely set these issues aside with the exception of the value of truth in relation to physiological survival. This strategy will allow me to continue examining Nietzsche's view on truth's value within the nexus of epistemological issues surveyed so far, and their relation to Nietzsche's evolutionary narrative, while sidestepping the problem of how Nietzsche connects this to a much broader historical account. This broader account relates the value of truth and the will to truth to Christianity and the development of the modern sciences, which Nietzsche sees as two sides of the same coin. Barry Allen has helpfully overviewed what he considers Nietzsche's major question, which is the (classically assumed) value of truth.⁶ The very fact that Nietzsche analyzed both truth and its value strongly suggests that he maintained a relatively stable notion of truth. If he did not, it would seem odd for him to provide an analysis and critique of a subject he did not feel himself to understand clearly. And this notion of truth could not be the one Clark attributes to Nietzsche in BGE, because according to that notion we are never able to access the truth at all, making the question of its value virtually unanalyzable.

I will now thematically illustrate the continuity of BGE with Nietzsche's earlier works. First of all, Nietzsche persists in his focus on physiology and his evolutionary narrative of human development. For instance, in BGE 3 he argues that "the greatest part of conscious thought must still be attributed to instinctive activity," even in the case of philosophical thought. Concurring with claims reaching as far back as HH he holds that "behind all logic and its autocratic posturings stand valuations or...physiological requirements for the preservation of a particular type of life."⁷ Although humans have a number of requirements for their particular kind of life, which forces them to rely on determinate appearances, "these sorts of appraisals could still be just foreground appraisals, a particular type of *niaiserie*, precisely what is needed for the preservation of beings like us." However, this view "assumes that it is not man who is the 'measure of things'"⁸ With this Nietzsche is clearly invoking Protagoras's famous dictum that 'man is the measure of things,' which captures the sophist's view that all truth is relative to the human perspective. Here Nietzsche shows his reluctance to embrace anthropocentrism because of its arbitrary fixation on the needs of humanity as a final criterion of value. Only by stepping out of the human perspective may we see the contingent value of these "foreground appraisals."

⁶ Allen, "Nietzsche's Question, 'What Good Is Truth?'" ; Allen, *Truth in Philosophy*.

⁷ Nietzsche, BGE, 3.

⁸ Ibid.

In BGE 4 Nietzsche declares that “[w]e do not consider the falsity of a judgment as itself an objection to a judgment.” Rather, a judgment can be evaluated on how well it preserves, promotes, and cultivates a particular type, such as the human being. For instance, the “falsest judgments (which include the synthetic judgments *a priori*) are the most indispensable to us, and...without accepting the fictions of logic, without measuring reality against the wholly invented world of the unconditioned and self-identical, without a constant falsification of the world through numbers, people could not live.”⁹ Because of this survival value, these false judgments are to be esteemed in a way contrary to the “usual value feelings,” which award truth the highest honour. This inversion alone is enough, in Nietzsche’s view, to place a philosophy “beyond good and evil.”

Nietzsche continues to argue for the physiological value of false beliefs elsewhere in the text, but it will be more worthwhile to briefly turn to BGE 253.¹⁰ In this passage Nietzsche claims that some “truths [are] best known by mediocre minds, because they are best suited to mediocre minds.” Among these mediocre minds and their mediocre truths, Nietzsche invokes none other than Darwin and the broad fascination that characterized the reception of his theory of natural selection. These mediocre types are better suited than spirits of a higher type for these kinds of truths because of their narrow-mindedness and work ethic. As Nietzsche says, “when it comes to scientific discoveries of a Darwinian type, a certain narrowness, aridity, and diligent, painstaking care...is not a bad thing to have at your disposal.” This approbation of Darwin’s work ethic and attention to detail is hard to account for in a reading of Nietzsche such as Johnson’s, which argues that Nietzsche did not appreciate Darwin’s theory.¹¹ Instead, Nietzsche is here praising Darwin, along with John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer, three thinkers that he elsewhere critiques, for a certain narrowness that is required for

⁹ This analysis clearly resembles HH 11, where Nietzsche declares that logic “depends on presuppositions with which nothing in the real world corresponds, for example...that there are identical things, that the same thing is identical at different points of time.” It also recalls HH 19 where Nietzsche holds the similar points that the “invention of the laws of numbers was made on the basis of the error...that there are identical things.” His use of ‘false judgments’ here should be seen as a rhetorical attack on the traditional conception of truth as correspondence to reality. By pointing out the value of judgments that would be deemed ‘false’ by this criterion, Nietzsche undermines the correspondence theory of truth. This rhetorical attack does not forbid him from replacing this old version of truth with his new, perspective-dependent alternative, with which judgments may be deemed ‘true.’

¹⁰ For instance, Nietzsche argues that Kant’s synthetic *a priori* judgments need not be ‘true,’ but “must be *believed* true for the purpose of preserving beings of our type” (BGE, 11).

¹¹ Although Johnson argues that Nietzsche appreciated Darwin’s (materialist, genealogical) methods, he holds that Nietzsche rejected the accompanying theory of organic evolution for human beings (Johnson, *Nietzsche’s Anti-Darwinism*, 25-28). However, his interpretation of Nietzsche’s position does not sit comfortably with this passage. Rather, it appears that Nietzsche is approving of Darwin’s methods and results here, but accusing him of being unable to properly reevaluate values in light of his discoveries.

any good scientific or scholarly work to be done.¹² Indeed, Nietzsche holds that there is value in “having spirits *like these* prevail for the time being.” As he claims earlier in the text, “with scholars, the truly scientific people...there might really be something like a drive for knowledge, some independent little clockwork mechanism that, once well wound, ticks bravely away *without* essentially involving the rest of the scholar’s drives.”¹³ So, although Nietzsche claims that the (largely subconscious) drives are what really compel a person to do anything, he does reserve the possibility that there *is* a real drive for knowledge. And this drive can be applied in any field to produce scientific work, namely the gathering and sorting of facts to find unpretentious truths.¹⁴

A problem arises when these truths, and the taste for them, become overbearing and dogmatic. In contrast to such overbearing dogmatism, Nietzsche maintains that higher types will “have to *be* something new, *mean* something new, and *present* new values! The chasm between knowing something and being able to do it is perhaps even greater and more uncanny than it is generally thought to be” because the higher types “might need to be ignorant.”¹⁵ While mediocre minds may be best suited to the quasi-mechanical task of discovering new facts, we must not lose sight of a higher ordering of these facts and their meaning for life. This ordering is the task of philosophy and religion, the latter being, on Nietzsche’s view, a kind of diluted philosophy for the masses.¹⁶ Although in this passage Nietzsche undercuts the ability of someone like Darwin or Spencer to create new values – in line with his broader critique of BGE 252 that the English are not a philosophical ‘race’ – it is important to note that he does not here declare that Darwin is completely wrong in his work concerning evolution. This omission suggests that Nietzsche does think Darwin has something important to tell us. It is that the human species is not an unalterable given; rather, it is, and has been, in a constant state of flux, and its survival depends on its ability to successfully interact with its environment.

Here it is worth noting that Nietzsche retains his views on the physiological value of simplification. Scattered throughout the text, Nietzsche places a number of aphorisms that express the same views on making equivalences in sense perception and in language that we have seen throughout the earlier works, and which also characterize book five of GS, published the year after BGE. It is worth quickly reviewing some of these aphorisms before examining Nietzsche’s claims at the start of BGE which are in a similar vein.

¹² Nietzsche’s remarks here bear a striking similarity to his approbation of “unpretentious truths” from HH 3.

¹³ Nietzsche, BGE, 6.

¹⁴ This scientific method of fact-gathering can be easily accommodated within the perspectival view I attribute to Nietzsche. On this view a scholar will take up a fixed perspective, such the one Darwin took up on his analysis of the evolution of organic life forms, and sort empirical data according to their fixed criteria (which will itself determine what counts as empirical data).

¹⁵ Nietzsche, BGE, 253.

¹⁶ For more on the hierarchy of philosophy and science see BGE 204.

In BGE 230 Nietzsche discusses the “fundamental will of the spirit,” which he defines loosely as whatever is the “commanding element” in an individual. This element “wants to dominate itself and its surroundings.” To attain this domination it “wills simplicity out of multiplicity” and its “needs and abilities are the same ones that physiologists have established for everything that lives, grows, and propagates.” A spirit is able to dominate its surroundings, and hence survive, because it is able “to assimilate the new to the old, to simplify the manifold, to disregard or push aside utter inconsistencies: just as it will arbitrarily select certain aspects or outlines of the foreign, of any piece of the ‘external world,’ for stronger emphasis, stress, or falsification in its own interest.” In doing so it increases its feeling of growth (and strength) by classifying “new things into old classes,” and then ignoring differences it does not find important. As he explains in BGE 59, it is the “instinct of preservation [that] has taught people to be flighty, light, and false.”¹⁷ In BGE 192 he asserts that even our sense experience is most often falsified by our mode of cognition. For instance, “[g]iven some stimulus, our eyes find it more convenient to reproduce an image that they have often produced before than to register what is different and new about an impression.” He provides the example of a tree, which we do not see “precisely and completely, with respect to leaves, branches, colors, and shape.” Rather than expend the effort required to observe a tree so completely, we “find it so much easier to imagine an approximate tree instead.” Indeed, he believes that we artistically “invent most of the experience[s]” we have. The continuity of Nietzsche’s views in TL, HH, D, and GS on this subject should be obvious given the passages examined in chapters two and three.

BGE 268 articulates another similarity in Nietzsche’s view of language with his other works, especially book five of GS.¹⁸ This passage holds that sensations are the basis for concepts, which “are more or less determinate pictorial signs for sensations that occur together and recur frequently.” Words are derivative from these and serve as “acoustic signs for concepts.”¹⁹ Because of this relation, people who share similar experiences will be able to best communicate with each other. This success comes about by using the same words for the same complexes of sensations, and allowing these shared experiences to gain “an upper hand over ones that occur less frequently.” Understanding can then be achieved more rapidly, as “the history of language is the history of a process of abbreviation.” Through this process of communal abbreviation a language develops, and around this a people develops. This development allows the

¹⁷ Although here Nietzsche is discussing the artistic and religious types as being unable to come to grips with reality, and hence their instinct for self-preservation drives them to delight in appearances, this remark has a much broader scope when taken generally. As he claims in TL, “wisdom sets limits on knowledge too” (‘Arrows’ 5).

¹⁸ Published one year after BGE in 1887.

¹⁹ This is the same theory as TL, which is also essentially Schopenhauer’s view of the relation between sensations, concepts, and language as acoustic signs for concepts (Schopenhauer, *World as Will and Presentation*, vol. 1, §§8-9).

members of the community to quickly indicate danger and coordinate responses. Because the success of language depends on the ability to signify the same sorts of complexes in a variety of people, Nietzsche concludes that those “who are more alike and ordinary have always been at an advantage,” and there is thus a survival value in being as herd-like as possible. He points out that those rare individuals who are exceptional and who have different meanings for their words will be the most prone to danger because of their incompatibility with the herd. The similarity of this view to GS 354 should be clear. There, Nietzsche holds that the “subtlety and strength of consciousness is always related to a person’s (or animal’s) *ability to communicate*, and the ability to communicate, in turn, to the *need to communicate*.” He also rearticulates that the ability to quickly communicate general concepts to elicit the appropriate responses carries an immense survival value. In many ways, GS 354 can be seen as a further elaboration of BGE 268, showing continuity in Nietzsche’s views throughout both works.

With the congruity of Nietzsche’s views on simplification, perception, and language in the latter portions of BGE with his previous works thus established, let us now turn back to the earlier portions of BGE. In BGE 2 Nietzsche points out an epistemological error of ‘metaphysicians.’ These metaphysicians believe that opposites (such as truth and error or egoism and altruism) cannot possibly share an origin, and they thus hold that the objects of the highest value must have some otherworldly origin. This view recalls HH 1 and its analysis of opposites, where Nietzsche claimed that with a ‘chemistry of concepts and sensations’ we would see the common source of these supposed opposites, and how this source is sublimated into exaggerated forms which are mistaken for differences in kind instead of differences in degree. In HH 14 he states that “the unity of the word is no guarantee of the unity of the thing.” This means that although a word typically signifies some unity, it may in fact subsume a whole multiplicity of phenomena. The opposite is also true, with multiple words being able to denote the same thing. It is this lesson that Nietzsche applies to the domain of so-called metaphysical opposites. As he further explains in BGE 24, we have created a simplified, falsified world for ourselves, one in which “we have given our senses a *carte blanche* for everything superficial.” And within this falsified world our language “cannot get over its crassness and keeps talking about opposites where there are only degrees and multiple, subtle shades of gradation.” Language, by its simplification of phenomena, compartmentalizes certain aspects which are deemed significantly different enough and treats them as opposites, whereas a more detailed analysis shows the continuity between them.

This view is confirmed in BGE 34, at least in regards to truth and falsity. There Nietzsche affirms that “life could not exist except on the basis of perspectival valuations and appearances,” and that if we wished to “completely abolish the ‘world of appearances’” (if this were even a possibility), then “there would not be any of your ‘truth’ left either!” In contrast to the traditional opposition between appearance and reality, falsity and truth, Nietzsche posits that

“there are levels of appearance and, as it were, lighter and darker shades and tones of appearance.” This remark must be unsettling to anyone who wishes to argue that Nietzsche continues to philosophize in a Kantian manner.²⁰ If that were the case, and Nietzsche maintained a definitive cleft between phenomena and noumena, then it would be hard to fathom what Nietzsche could mean here by “levels of appearance.” But my account, which allows for greater and lesser degrees of accuracy depending on the perspective one takes up, and which constitutes the world of objects differently depending on the perspective, does fit this piece of textual evidence.

There are other places in BGE where Nietzsche dismisses the thing-in-itself in a manner congruent with his earlier rejections reviewed in the previous chapters. I will turn to this now, and return to the matter of perspectivism afterward. In BGE 6 Nietzsche asserts that it is not a drive to knowledge that is the characteristic “father of philosophy,” but rather the mastery of some other drive. These other drives reveal themselves as a kind of morality, which “constitute the true living seed from which the whole [philosophical] plant has always grown.” And it is this moral seed, the arrangement of drives that underlies a philosophy, which explains “the strangest metaphysical claims.” This view of the mainsprings of philosophy helps elucidate his claims in BGE 5, where he holds that Kant tries “to lure us along the clandestine, dialectical path that leads the way...to his ‘categorical imperative.’” In writing this passage Nietzsche may have had in mind GS 335, where he held that Kant “helped himself to the ‘thing in itself’” and then the “‘categorical imperative’ crept into his heart and made him stray back to ‘God’, ‘soul’, ‘freedom’, ‘immortality’, like a fox who strays back into his cage.” Kant did this even though “it had been *his* strength and cleverness that had *broken open* the cage!” It seems that in the time between 1882 and 1886 Nietzsche radicalized his view on Kant. In his initial assessment of the relation between Kant’s epistemic and moral philosophy, Nietzsche held that the moral philosophy forced Kant to backtrack and contradict himself. In BGE Nietzsche takes a more pessimistic view: the initial purpose of the critical philosophy was instead to make room for the categorical imperative, achieved by creating a realm where science could never intrude. By doing this, “Kant wanted to prove, in a way that would dumbfound the whole world, that the whole world was right...He wrote against the scholars in favour of popular prejudice, but for scholars and not for the people.”²¹ No doubt he did this by taking the “clandestine, dialectical path” to preserve the same moral presuppositions that had dominated before the rise of modern science, and with it the demise of the belief in free will.²²

Returning to Nietzsche’s perspectivism, there is an additional claim from BGE 34 to consider. This is his suggestion that “the world *that is relevant to us*” could in fact “be a fiction.” The naïve realist view, refined through the crucible of

²⁰ I mean that it is implausible that Nietzsche held a definite distinction between phenomena and noumena, not that he rejected Kant’s claim that the subject conditions its perceptions.

²¹ Nietzsche, GS, 193.

²² Nietzsche affirms this view in BGE 18-19, and 21. I will turn to these passages momentarily.

evolution and solidified in subject-predicate language and logic, is the view of the world that remains relevant to us. Even though we can see the artificiality of this world by switching perspectives, ultimately our common interests (i.e. survival) force us back into this perspective to function. But it is a faith in this naïve realist view which Nietzsche believes has infected most forms of modern thinking, leading us to epistemological errors. In particular, he thinks this stubborn faith has given cause and effect, along with atomism, too much face value, which has stopped many from questioning it as they should.

To clearly see Nietzsche's critique of causality, we must consider comments on subject-predicate language in BGE 16 and 17. In BGE 16, Nietzsche rejects all "immediate certainties," such as 'I think,' or the 'I will' which philosophers take "just as if knowledge had been given an object here to seize, stark naked, as a 'thing-in-itself,' and no falsification took place from either the side of the subject or the side of the object." While thinkers such as Descartes may appeal to these immediate certainties or "to a sort of *intuitive* knowledge," Nietzsche believes that there may still be many questions posed concerning these. BGE 16 raises such questions about the claim 'I think,' in an attempt to show that it is not as immediately certain as a thinker like Descartes may suggest. BGE 17 pursues this critical course even further. Here Nietzsche emphasizes a "fact" (*Thatsache*) that 'superstitious logicians' "are loath to admit: that a thought comes when 'it' wants, and not when 'I' want. It is, therefore, a *falsification* of the facts to say that the subject 'I' is the condition of the predicate 'think.'" And although the 'I think' may be transformed into an "it thinks," "even the 'it' contains an *interpretation* of the process [*Auslegung des Vorgangs*], and does not belong to the process itself." This interpretation arises from the "grammatical habits" of subject-predicate logic (of which the basic features come from Indo-European language) that people follow and reason in accordance with.

Nietzsche's claim that the popular view of thinking and willing, captured in the familiar subject-predicate nature of language, is mistaken, requires him to provide an alternative explanation of these processes. This alternative is provided in a number of places, but is best articulated in BGE 21. There Nietzsche discusses the belief in the freedom of will, which he sees as a variation of the idea of *causa sui*, which he labels a kind of "nonsense." While Nietzsche gives a short analysis of the motivation for people to endorse the concept of *causa sui*, it is more interesting to turn to the aphorism's dismissal of the "un-free will," which Nietzsche sees as "basically an abuse of cause and effect." Nietzsche is here indicating the determinist stance, the typical alternative to the belief in free will. Loosely characterized, the determinist stance holds that all of an agent's actions are the effect of natural causes, and so all of the agent's actions have the same necessity as any other natural occurrence. Typically, when one encounters a denial of free will such as Nietzsche's, it is assumed that the determinist stance will be endorsed. And in fact he does endorse this stance, but in a subtle way.

Nietzsche argues that worries about determinism arise from when we "erroneously *objectify* 'cause' and 'effect' like the natural scientists do...in

accordance with the dominant mechanistic stupidity which would have the cause push and shove until it ‘effects’ something.”²³ Instead of seeing ‘cause’ and ‘effect’ as two separate phenomena, Nietzsche argues that “we should use ‘cause’ and ‘effect’ only as pure *concepts* [*Begriffe*], which is to say as conventional fictions for the purpose of description and communication, *not* explanation. In the ‘in-itself’ [*An-sich*] there is nothing like ‘causal association,’ ‘necessity,’ or ‘psychological un-freedom.’” In the ‘in-itself,’ the world apart from any observer, “the ‘effect’ does *not* follow ‘from the cause,’ there is no rule of ‘law.’” Contrary to this typical causal-determinist view, Nietzsche holds that “[w]e are the ones who invented causation, succession, for-each-other, relativity, compulsion, numbers, law, freedom, grounds, purpose,” and inscribing this “onto things as an ‘in-itself’” is a way of acting “*mythologically*.”²⁴

While this view may sound incredibly strange, and could easily be mistaken for a form of Kantianism, the reading that I suggest better accounts for Nietzsche’s continued attacks on Kant and the idealist tradition. Rather than understanding Nietzsche’s claims as describing a world of appearance which does not reveal reality, we should understand him as claiming that our ways of interpreting reality carve it up differently depending on our perspective. To make this clear let us bring Boscovich back into the picture. Reality, understood as the dynamic interaction of all *puncta* with each other at every instant, is far too complex to be fully grasped by finite beings. Indeed, even understanding relatively local processes has proved to be a very long and historically difficult process. However, we are able to make better sense of reality by taking up different perspectives, constituted by different interests, which satisfy different aims. Within these perspectives we are able to utilize our ‘conventional fictions,’ such as numbers and laws, which pick out entities whose existence depends on the perspective that has been taken up.²⁵ The view of ‘cause’ and ‘effect’ that Nietzsche is criticizing here makes precisely the dogmatist’s mistake he pointed out in the preface, one that takes its terms to be wholly objective, reflecting some true, isolated property of the world, rather than as being one among many ways to interpret phenomena.

When discussing ‘laws’ in BGE 21, Nietzsche is also criticizing the view of scientists who have become infected with the democratic taste. Writing as “an old philologist” in BGE 22, he says the idea of “‘conformity of nature to law’...exists only because of your interpretation and bad ‘philology.’ It is not a matter of fact, not a ‘text,’ but instead only a naive humanitarian correction and a distortion of meaning that you use in order to comfortably accommodate the democratic instincts of the modern soul!”²⁶ Nietzsche’s point here is not the postmodern view that there is no text of nature at all, that there is no uniformity whatsoever, but rather that the interpretation of nature as obeying ‘laws’ is one

²³ Nietzsche, BGE, 21.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Recall the discussion of mereology in chapter 3.

²⁶ Nietzsche, BGE, 22.

full of democratic, herd sentiment.²⁷ What Nietzsche sees here is the desire that everything, even nature itself, should be subject to immutable laws. And this belief, he holds, is indicative of an anti-aristocratic taste. Against this view, Nietzsche believes that a different interpretation of the very same phenomena could be produced without the use of the metaphor of ‘laws,’ and that such an interpretation would produce the same consistent results (the same “‘necessary’ and ‘calculable’ course”). This alternative would interpret nature with power claims, assigning a degree of power to every object and event. Without any laws to interfere with these competing powers, “every power draws its final consequences at every moment.” Just as in a Hobbesian state of nature, every center of power would exert itself in any way it could, curtailed only by neighbouring centers of power, and not by a neutral third party who implemented laws aimed at limiting action. At the end of the aphorism Nietzsche famously quips, “[g]ranted, this is only an interpretation too – and you will be eager enough to make this objection? – well then, so much the better.” With this we see Nietzsche embracing the perspectival model he has been advocating: he is able to provide a certain interpretation of the (perspectival) facts with equal explanatory power, but with a different meaning. I will not engage in an in-depth examination of the will to power here. Such an examination would take us too far a field from my epistemological focus. However, I will note that Nietzsche indicates within his own published texts that the will to power hypothesis, while useful for certain ends, may itself become absurd.²⁸

Instead of pursuing an examination of the will to power, let us look at BGE 12, which contains the only explicit mention of Boscovich in the published works. Here Nietzsche declares that “nobody in the scholarly community is likely to be so unscholarly as to attach any real significance” to the doctrine of “materialistic atomism.”²⁹ While as a historical remark Nietzsche is clearly exaggerating, he was prescient (or lucky) enough to have identified the move

²⁷ In BGE 230 Nietzsche refers to the “eternal basic text of *homo natura*” which has “been scribbled and drawn over” by “many vain and fanciful interpretations and incidental meanings.” As Leiter points out, this type of passage is very difficult for a postmodern reading to satisfactorily account for (Leiter, “Nietzsche and Aestheticism,” 278).

²⁸ See BGE 36, where Nietzsche claims that “[m]ultiple varieties of causation should not be postulated until the attempt to make do with a single one has been taken as far as it will go (– *ad absurdum*, if you will).” There have also been a number of recent treatments of Nietzsche which argue that either the will to power is not offered as a serious ontological hypothesis, or that even if it was Nietzsche abandoned such a view later in his career. See Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, chapter 7; Leiter, “Nietzsche’s Metaethics: Against the Privilege Readings,” 286; Porter, “Nietzsche’s Theory of the Will to Power,” 548-564.

²⁹ However, Nietzsche allows that the doctrine may be retained “as a handy household tool...as an abbreviated figure of speech” (BGE 12). Here, just as in the case of numbers, logic, language, and cause and effect, Nietzsche is able to identify our practice and praise its use in certain ways while deftly pointing out its potential pitfalls. It is this considered approach that best characterizes his delicacy of taste which he implores us to adopt as well. For instance, he urges us “to read slowly, deeply, looking cautiously before and aft, with reservations, with doors left open, with delicate eyes and fingers,” and this should no doubt apply to judgments as well (D, P, 5).

away from atomism that would characterize physics well into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Nietzsche believes we have Boscovich to thank for this movement. Boscovich, along with Copernicus, “was the greatest, most successful opponent of visual evidence.” In the case of Copernicus this is obvious: by validating the heliocentric model of the universe, he was able to overcome the ‘immediate certainty’ that the Earth stood still. Boscovich achieved the opposite by teaching us “to renounce belief in the last bit of earth that *did* ‘stand still,’ ...the residual piece of earth and clump of atom [*Klumpchen-Atom*].” Here Nietzsche is referring to Boscovich’s rejection of the corpuscular atom in favour of his *puncta*. As we have already reviewed in chapter two, the *puncta* have mass but no extension, and remain in a dynamic state of tension with all other *puncta*. Nietzsche sees this as a major contrast to the corpuscular atom, a little piece of earth that ‘stands still’ and has an absolute existence independent of any of its relations with other entities or forces.

Nietzsche believes that despite the fall of the atomist doctrine there remains an “atomistic need” (*atomistischen Bedürfnisse*), no doubt a desire much like the dogmatists’ for something to stand firm. And this need characterizes the Christian soul-hypothesis. Nietzsche elucidates: “Let this expression signify the belief that the soul is something indestructible, eternal, indivisible, that it is a monad, an *atomon*: *this* belief must be thrown out of science!” Once again Nietzsche’s subtlety comes to the fore. Despite demanding that we throw out the belief in the atomistic soul, he holds that “there is absolutely no need to give up ‘the soul’ itself.” This would be the manoeuvre of clumsy “naturalists” who “barely need to touch ‘the soul’ to lose it.” Instead of jettisoning the entire concept, Nietzsche proposes that we are now in a position to entertain new and bold hypotheses regarding the nature of the individual, understood as the entity that the soul is supposed to denote. In place of the reductive, atomistic understanding of the soul propagated by Christianity, Nietzsche proposes that new concepts such as “‘the soul as subject-multiplicity’ and the ‘soul as a society constructed out of drives and affects’ want henceforth to have civil rights in the realm of science.” In this aphorism Nietzsche clearly connects Boscovich’s *puncta* with our understanding of the individual. Just as Boscovich has shown that the corpuscular atom is merely a convenient fiction cast over a much more dynamic process, so is our concept of the individual a convenient fiction thrown over a dynamic process. While the traditional view has assimilated the individual to the role played by substances, as a passive substrate full of potentiality which may be actualized in a number of ways, Nietzsche argues that we must re-envision the individual as a convenient metaphor for a number of processes. However, this new understanding does not regard the individual as a ‘mere’ fiction (or a ‘mere’ metaphor) – to do so would be to reinstitute the appearance/reality distinction once again. Rather, the difference in understanding must be attributed to what perspective is taken up. In one perspective it is salient to treat a complex of processes as a unity. In another perspective, one requiring more subtlety, the individual breaks down into a multiplicity of processes.

Recalling the comparison with Carnap, depending on our interests we may focus our perspective more intently on these processes, examining them in ever greater detail and complexity, or we may broaden our horizon of interest with a perspective which studies the interactions of numerous individuals with one another.

Let us consider two final passages from BGE before moving on to GM. BGE 15 provides a reconsideration of Lange, although he is not mentioned by name. Recall that for Lange our mental organisation remains completely unknown. Everything, including our biology and the thing-in-itself (which, for Lange, amount to the same thing), are products of the phenomenal realm. It was this conclusion, buttressed by Ueberweg's critique of Kant's inappropriate extension of the concept of causality beyond the phenomenal realm, which allowed Lange to hang onto idealism in the face of an increasingly sophisticated materialism based on physiological discoveries. Early on, Nietzsche was influenced by Lange's view (such as in his critique in "On Schopenhauer" and at least partially in TL). However, while retaining Lange's rejection of certainty for a possibly infinite number of interpretations of the world, Nietzsche does come to largely accept the physiological account of human mental organisation. In BGE 15 Nietzsche claims that to "study physiology with a good conscience, we must insist that the sense organs are *not* appearances in the way idealist philosophy uses that term: as such, they certainly could not be causes! Sensualism, therefore, at least as a regulative principle, if not as a heuristic principle."³⁰ Here we see Nietzsche undercutting Lange's banishment of our physiology, and hence method of observation, to the realm of mere appearances, leaving the noumenal realm completely unknown. After this claim, Nietzsche takes even more direct aim at Lange: "What? and other people even say that the external world is the product of our organs? But then our body, as a piece of this external world, would really be the product of our organs! But then our organs themselves would really be – the product of our organs!" This type of argument, Nietzsche believes, appears to be a "thorough *reductio ad absurdum*: given that the concept of a *causa sui* is something thoroughly absurd." However, even though Nietzsche rejects Lange's commitment to idealism in favour of a broader realism, he still maintains a taste for uncertainty. He ends the aphorism with a question: "So does it follow that the external world is *not* the product of our organs –?" Just as we have seen from previous works, Nietzsche does not see a definitive solution to the debate over the reality of a mind-independent external world. But this uncertainty is not a matter for despair, it is simply not worth worrying about. Instead, Nietzsche holds that we should adopt certain regulative principles to deal with the world as it appears to us.³¹

³⁰ Nietzsche, BGE, 15.

³¹ Clark and Hussain have debated the implications of BGE 15 for Nietzsche's stance towards Lange. Hussain argues that Nietzsche could not have actually been endorsing physiology as the basis of an empirical theory of knowledge because he endorsed Lange's *reductio* against such a view. Specifically, Lange's argument that "[p]hysiology itself undermines the reliability of the

The position of BGE 15 helps explain Nietzsche's point in BGE 14, where he claims that "physics too is only an interpretation and arrangement of the world...and *not* an explanation of the world. But to the extent that physics rests on belief in the senses, it passes for more, and will continue to pass for more, namely for an explanation, for a long time to come." The best sense that can be made of Nietzsche's remark here is that even though physics serves as a useful interpretation and arrangement of the world, it does not offer a final explanation of everything.³² But, as usual, he sees both sides of the issue. Sensualism, the regulative hypothesis Nietzsche proposes in BGE 15, offers the interpretation of physics strong support in the public eye, because it rests on what can be seen and touched. And sensualism "might be the right imperative...for a sturdy, industrious race of machinists and bridge-builders of the future." This is a different imperative than Plato's, which was to devalue the senses at all costs, and so displays a different set of evaluations, which in turn reveals a different underlying constitution and set of needs.³³

As I have illustrated above, Nietzsche's views in BGE are continuous with his earlier works. He retains a strong focus on physiology to underpin his epistemological claims, and rejects Lange's objections to such a view. At the same time, he keeps the taste for ambiguity inherited from Lange by not insisting on sensualism as an absolute epistemological method, but recognizes its value and recommends employing it as a regulative hypothesis. Furthermore, his views on logic, number, language, consciousness, and evolution remain consistent with the views worked out before BGE, as well as those found in book five of GS which was published the next year. Perspectivism is also explicitly endorsed as "the fundamental condition of all life."³⁴ Boscovich gets his only mention in Nietzsche's published corpus, and his view is endorsed as better than the theory of

evidence it is based on and thus undermines the theories of physiology themselves," which leads to his conclusion that our basic organisation remains a mysterious thing-in-itself (Hussain, "Nietzsche's Positivism," 334). Clark has rightfully rejected Hussain's reading of this passage, noting that Nietzsche would need to desire a foundational position to endorse such a *reductio*, which he does not in fact desire. Clark rightly interprets the passage as arguing "against using an empirical theory to conclude to idealism" (Clark and Dudrick, "Nietzsche's Post-Positivism," 380). However, Clark is incorrect on the continued emphasis she puts on this passage (along with BGE 14 and 16) as the basis on which Nietzsche moved away from the falsification thesis, which, as I show, is not based on a version of idealism, nor is it a doctrine that Nietzsche ever abandoned.

³² It is also possible here that when Nietzsche remarks that physics does not 'explain' anything, he means that it provides no reason (meaning, purpose) for how the world operates. For a further analysis on this notion refer back to chapter three's analysis of GS 112. The point that physics cannot be a full or final interpretation of the world was also made in GS 373, where Nietzsche claims that to evaluate music according to mechanistic criteria ("according to how much of it could be counted, calculated, and expressed in formulas") would capture "really nothing of what is 'music' in it!"

³³ For instance, in GS 372, which is titled "*Why we are not idealists*," Nietzsche suggests that perhaps "we moderns are not healthy enough to *need* Plato's idealism." Plato pursued such a philosophy from "the fear of *overpowerful* senses."

³⁴ Nietzsche, BGE, P.

corpuscular atomism. It is this Boscovichian force ontology coupled with the nominalist thesis that lies in the background of Nietzsche's perspectivism: the dynamic interaction of the *puncta* may be described in a great number of ways (according to a perspectival framework), but can never be wholly explained. To do so would be to capture all of existence in some single moment, which lies utterly beyond the limited capacity of humans. What we are confined to is always a local, limited, 'falsified' view of the world, one that depends on particular interests, but is of supreme value for survival. Understood thus, Nietzsche's revaluation of the value of truth is no surprise at all.

Epistemology in *On the Genealogy of Morals*

My concern here with GM will be limited primarily to two passages. I will return to this book in the next chapter to discuss the compatibility of Nietzsche's epistemological views with his critiques of morality. First, I will examine GM, I, 13 to show that even in his longest sustained essay on the topic of morality, the cluster of views that I have argued lie at the centre of Nietzsche's epistemological thinking reappear virtually unchanged. This fact constitutes a strong objection to the modern reading which maintains that Nietzsche changed his views during this phase of his thought. Second, I will turn to GM, III, 12, the passage which Clark and Leiter maintain holds Nietzsche's only sustained explanation of perspectivism during this final, mature phase of his thought.

In the first essay of GM, Nietzsche attempts to elucidate a genealogy of moral concepts. As he explains in the preface to the work, an "actual *history of morality*" would be a great boon to our ability to reevaluate our values.³⁵ This revaluation is the "*new demand*" of those who learn to ask the type of tough questions Nietzsche believes he has discovered. And to undertake such a revaluation requires a new perspective, one not beholden to the old values. This new perspective is taken up by discovering "a knowledge of the conditions and circumstances in which [those values] grew, under which they evolved and changed."³⁶ Nietzsche pursues this strategy based on a cluster of ideas that he dates to very early in his intellectual development. He believes that these ideas, which have grown intertwined and matured, "might have arisen in me from the first not as isolated, capricious, or sporadic things but from a common root, from a *fundamental will* of knowledge."³⁷

During the course of his account of the development of good and evil, Nietzsche turns to the famous analogy of lambs and birds of prey. The lambs

³⁵ Nietzsche, GM, P, 7.

³⁶ Ibid., P, 6.

³⁷ Ibid., P, 2. See BGE, 6 for Nietzsche's idea that there can be such a thing as a real drive to knowledge, despite his critiques of the unquestioned value of truth. His claim to be motivated by "a *fundamental will* to knowledge" here suggests that he is acting as a scholar or scientific man in the *Genealogy*. If my previous analysis of Nietzsche's views is correct, then his claims in the *Genealogy* can be taken seriously, and not as mere tropes as Johnson would have us believe.

consider the birds of prey evil because of the harm they cause the lambs. As such, the lambs consider themselves (and anyone like themselves) to be good. The birds of prey, by contrast, see things differently and “even love” the tender lambs.³⁸ Nietzsche points out that although the lambs dislike the birds of prey, they have no grounds to reproach the birds “for bearing off little lambs.” His explanation of this fact is most interesting, and is worth reproducing at some length:

To demand of strength that it should *not* express itself as strength, that it should *not* be a desire to overcome, a desire to throw down, a desire to become master, a thirst for enemies and resistances and triumphs, is just as absurd as to demand of weakness that it should express itself as strength. A quantum of force is equivalent to a quantum of drive, will, effect – more, it is nothing other than precisely this very driving, willing, effecting, and only owing to the seduction of language (and of the fundamental errors of reason that are petrified in it) which conceives and misconceives all effects as conditioned by something that causes effects, by a ‘subject,’ can it appear otherwise. For just as the popular mind separates the lightning from its flash and takes the latter for an *action*, for the operation of a subject called lightning, so popular morality also separates strength from expressions of strength, as if there were a neutral substratum behind the strong man, which was *free* to express strength or not to do so. But there is no such substratum; there is no ‘being’ behind doing, effecting, becoming; ‘the doer’ is merely a fiction added to the deed – the deed is everything. The popular mind in fact doubles the deed; when it sees the lightning flash, it is the deed of a deed: it posits the same event first as cause and then a second time as its effect. Scientists do no better when they say ‘force moves,’ ‘force causes,’ and the like – all its coolness, its freedom from emotion notwithstanding, our entire science still lies under the misleading influence of language and has not disposed of that little changeling, the ‘subject’ (the atom, for example, is such a changeling, as is the Kantian ‘thing-in-itself’).³⁹

Here Nietzsche affirms precisely the same points that have been explained in earlier texts. The ordinary use of language unconsciously commits us to the belief

³⁸ Nietzsche, GM, I, 13. The analogy is meant to portray the differences between slave and master moralities. The slaves view anyone that harms them as evil, and as a by-product they see themselves as good. The masters, by contrast, establish themselves as good in the first instance, and then define whatever opposes them as bad (but not evil, which has the pretension of believing its *designatum* to be objectively evil, or bad, for all).

³⁹ Nietzsche, GM, I, 13.

in a subject which is the doer of every deed. It is this subject, understood as a neutral substratum which may instantiate any number of properties or work any number of effects, which characterizes the widespread belief in the soul and freedom of the will. On this common understanding strong types are expected to make the free choice to not display their strength, and instead act weakly. But Nietzsche argues that this ‘self-restraint’ is impossible. The free soul is just as much a fiction as the atom and the thing-in-itself, fictions which arise from the errors entrenched in our language. In place of this picture of static, enduring entities which cause effects, Nietzsche offers his Boscovichian ontology. The world is composed of the dynamic interaction of *puncta*, which themselves are the quanta of “driving, willing, effecting.” An event, such as a flash of lightening, comes about from the particular arrangement and interaction of the *puncta* with all other forces. However, the *puncta* remain continually caught in the fluctuating exchange of forces. This fact makes even the designation of the lightning arbitrary in a sense. The fluctuation of forces leading up to the ‘event’ of the flash and the consequent interplay of forces afterwards, remain continuous. And while language urges us to posit causes for effects (doers for deeds), from another perspective the flow of forces remains totally uninterrupted, with no enduring subject that commits deeds.⁴⁰ In place of such a traditional view, Nietzsche holds that the *puncta* themselves are centres of force, drive, affect, and even will. And the *puncta* function precisely as they must, according to necessity.⁴¹

With this in mind let us examine GM, III, 12, the important passage on perspectivism for the modern view.⁴² In this passage Nietzsche admits he is grateful for ascetic ideals and their reversal of values, because the seeker of knowledge can learn from such a reversal. To change perspectives,

to see differently...[and] to *want* to see differently, is no small discipline and preparation of the intellect for its future ‘objectivity’ – the latter understood not as ‘contemplation without interest’ (which is a nonsensical absurdity), but as the ability *to control* one’s Pro and Con and to dispose of them, so

⁴⁰ This fits nicely with Nietzsche’s analysis of causality from 1882, where he claims that “in truth a continuum faces us, from which we isolate a few pieces... The suddenness with which many effects stand out misleads us; it is a suddenness only for us” (GS, 112).

⁴¹ Although Nietzsche criticizes anthropomorphisms such as ascribing ‘laws’ to nature, he still endorses a kind of determinism. Notably, something cannot be other than it is, as illustrated in GM, I, 13.

⁴² Recall that, according to Leiter, this is the “primary text in his mature work in which he does offer a sustained discussion” of perspectivism and interpretation “in an epistemological context” (Leiter, “Perspectivism in Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*,” 343; Cf. Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, 20-21). Clark claims “Nietzsche gives the most important and lengthy statement of his perspectivism in GM” (Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 128). As can be seen from the reading I have provided, the opposite is the case, with GM merely utilizing thoughts Nietzsche has elaborated elsewhere.

that one knows how to employ a *variety* of perspectives and affective interpretations in the service of knowledge.

Nietzsche warns us to “be on guard against the dangerous old conceptual fiction,” namely the subject as a free, inert substratum, as well as against “contradictory concepts” such as “‘pure reason,’ ‘absolute spirituality,’ ‘knowledge in itself’.” These conceptual fictions and contradictory concepts are misguided because they “demand that we should think of an eye that is completely unthinkable, an eye turned in no particular direction, in which the active and interpreting forces, through which alone seeing becomes seeing *something*, are supposed to be lacking.” In place of this Nietzsche holds that “[t]here is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective ‘knowing’; and the *more* affects we allow to speak about one thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our ‘concept’ of this thing, our ‘objectivity,’ be.”

Although I am largely confining my reading to the published works, one of Nietzsche’s notes published in *The Will to Power* deserves consideration here, which is WP 556.⁴³ In this note from 1885-1886 Nietzsche declares that a “‘thing-in-itself’ [is] just as perverse as a ‘sense-in-itself,’ a ‘meaning-in-itself.’ There are no ‘facts-in-themselves,’ for a sense must always be projected into them before there can be facts.” Elucidating this point, he says an “essence” or “essential nature” of any phenomenon “is something perspective and already presupposes a multiplicity.” Here Nietzsche claims that a “thing would be defined once all creatures had asked ‘what is that?’ and had answered their question. Supposing one single creature, with its own relationships and perspectives for all things, were missing, then the thing would not yet be ‘defined.’” This note expresses the same point as GM, III, 12 with different language. A thing would be defined, meaning that we would have an objective view of it, when its relations to all other things were established. But if any of these relations are missing, then our knowledge of the object remains incomplete.⁴⁴

Once again we see Nietzsche’s appropriation of Boscovich at work: all forces interact at all times, and constitute each other from their relations. In WP 556 Nietzsche also clarifies that the designation of a subject, just as much as an object, is the result of “a simplification with the object of defining the force which posits, invents, thinks, as distinct from all individual positing, inventing, thinking as such.” This is the same point as is found in GM, I, 13. While language and the habits of human cognition force us to posit a doer for a deed, all positing, inventing, and thinking are simply events within the total network of forces.⁴⁵

⁴³ WP 556 combines four consecutive notes from the KSA: 12:2[149, 150-152].

⁴⁴ WP 530 makes a similar point: “There are no isolated judgments! An isolated judgment is never ‘true,’ never knowledge; only in the connection and relation of many judgments is there any surety.” Again, we see the importance of relations between phenomena as well as judgments.

⁴⁵ We are at least forced to posit doers for deeds in the naïve realist perspective. We may step outside this perspective to undertake other investigations, which Nietzsche urges us to do, but we must also slip back into the naïve realist view for survival.

With this move Nietzsche does away with subjects and objects in any absolute sense. However, we can still make sense of subjects and objects relative to a perspective, taken up by some centre of interpretation (i.e. the individual). And, once some perspective is taken up, we will still get consistent results. This system allows for truth to be preserved within a perspective, contrary to the postmodern readings which maintain that Nietzsche gives up on truth altogether. It is worth mentioning again that Nietzsche sent Mach a copy of GM upon publication, likely as a sign of approbation.⁴⁶ The similarity of Mach's position in *Contributions to the Analysis of the Sensations* to the view I have been attributing to Nietzsche contributes to the plausibility of my account.

In GM we see Nietzsche reiterating the claims he has already made in previous works: language falsifies reality by introducing an artificial degree of stability, achieved by separating cause from effect, subject from object, doer from deed. This falsification is deeply ingrained in our thought, and causes us to atomize subjects and objects, believing it possible for them to be taken out of all relations to reveal their 'true' form, outside of the distorting apparatus of human thought.⁴⁷ In place of this Nietzsche argues that every interpretation and every perspective is an interplay of forces, the regularity of which is sufficient for humans to survive and even engage in scientific inquiry, now that we have adapted to these conditions.⁴⁸

Epistemology in *Twilight of the Idols*

Twilight of the Idols is a strong piece of evidence for my account. It exhibits the same major claims as the other works examined thus far. This is important because it was written in 1888, Nietzsche's last productive year before his breakdown in the streets of Turin on January 3, 1889. Clark has recently addressed the passages from this piece (namely those found in the section "'Reason' in Philosophy") that are troublesome for her account, which she notes is a main source of disagreement between her account and that of her critics.⁴⁹ Clark argues that in these passages Nietzsche's claims are not intended to apply to all instances of reasoning, but rather only to a certain type of faith in grammar that his own thought overcomes. In particular, she argues that Nietzsche believes that those who have faith in grammar are led by this faith to believe in another 'true world' because "the necessity of a grammatical subject for every predicate

⁴⁶ Brobjer, "Nietzsche's Reading and Knowledge of Natural Science: An Overview," 43-44; Brobjer, *Nietzsche's Philosophical Context*, 239.

⁴⁷ Nietzsche himself rhetorically undermines this by constantly using terms like 'falsification' of reality. By now it should be clear that the perspectives humans can take up are simply another way of interpreting the world, albeit these can fail to adequately grasp the relations they are in.

⁴⁸ A more appropriate way of putting this may be that the dynamic forces themselves have created humans.

⁴⁹ Clark, "Nietzsche and Green on the Transcendental Tradition," 14, 28. Clark also addressed these passages in her *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 105-109.

[seduces them] into supposing that there is a real subject that is distinct from any and all of its qualities,” which quickly leads to “the idea of an unchangeable substrate, which is the idea of *substance*.”⁵⁰ But this error, Clark argues, is only perpetrated by those who believe in “pure reason,” independent of empirical data.⁵¹ As she claims, “[t]o the extent that this belief forces us to posit being, identity, etc., we are led into error. But that belief is clearly dispensable and Nietzsche obviously urges philosophers to overcome it.”⁵² However, she also claims that “[m]ost people (maybe all people some of the time) may well fall prey to the errors Nietzsche is concerned with here, but, as I argued in 1990, this is *not* because our common sense concepts of relatively enduring empirical objects, much less our scientific concepts, necessarily falsify reality.”⁵³ But this claim, and hence Clark’s interpretation of this section of TI, is implausible given the account I have provided, namely that “common sense concepts of relatively enduring empirical objects” *do* falsify reality to some degree (assuming ‘man is not the measure of things’), although these concepts retain their value (and even truth) depending on the perspective one takes up. I will now show that this section of TI maintains the same view as his earlier works (from HH on), namely the perspectival view based on Boscovichian force points.

In the section titled ‘Reason’ in Philosophy’ Nietzsche puts forward the same sort of critique that is found in his previous works. He attacks philosophers for their hatred of becoming and the senses. Opposed to the senses, philosophers argue in favour of being and ideas, trying to view anything of importance “*sub specie aeterni*” and totally de-historicized.⁵⁴ Nietzsche makes an important exception to this critique. He allows that Heraclitus opposes this general tendency, believing that all is actually in a state of becoming, and so instead rejects the senses on the basis that they show some degree of stability, permanency, and unity. Here Nietzsche argues “[t]he senses do not lie the way the Eleatics thought they did, *or* the way Heraclitus thought they did, – they do not lie at all. What we *do* with the testimony of the senses, that is where the lies begin, like the lie of unity, the lie of objectification, of substance, of permanence...The senses are not lying when they show becoming, passing away, and change.”⁵⁵ Nor do they lie when they show that on certain levels groups of sensations exhibit a level of permanency or consistency which depends on the degree of accuracy our perspective demands.

Comparing Nietzsche with Mach again here is informative. In maintaining that our “senses do not lie” Nietzsche is affirming that sensations, in and of

⁵⁰ Clark, “Nietzsche and Green on the Transcendental Tradition,” 15.

⁵¹ Ibid., 15-16.

⁵² Ibid., 16. As an example she points to BGE 34 which labels belief in grammar as a ‘governess-belief’ and asks “isn’t it about time philosophy renounced governess-beliefs?”

⁵³ Clark, “Nietzsche and Green on the Transcendental Tradition,” 17.

⁵⁴ Nietzsche, TI, ‘Reason’ 1. Nietzsche notes philosophers’ “lack of historical sense,” just as in HH 2 “[l]ack of historical sense is the family failing of all philosophers.”

⁵⁵ Nietzsche, TI, ‘Reason’ 2.

themselves, are not true or false.⁵⁶ They are simply the product of an interplay of forces, such as the Boscovichian *puncta*. As Mach maintains, any complex of sensations that we may interpret as a body is actually some combination and interaction of forces in the natural world.⁵⁷ Where we can be led into error is through the interpretations we place on these sensations. And we are forced to do this by life itself, because our survival depends on our ability to respond to our environment. Nietzsche's comments reinforce this reading. First, he applauds the senses and argues that "[w]e have science these days precisely to the extent that we have decided to *accept* the testimony of the senses."⁵⁸ He then attacks philosophers for creating poor interpretations of our sensations, namely in confusing "what comes first with what comes last."⁵⁹ He refers to the most universal ideas, typically thought of as the highest and most powerful ideas, as the most empty and furthest from reality. The contrast to these highest ideas would obviously be more specific ideas, closely linked to reality via our sensations. He thinks philosophers combine these 'highest' ideas with their hatred of becoming. The result of this combination is that universal ideas such as "Being, the Unconditioned, the Good, the True, the Perfect" are considered *causa sui* because they must not have come out of lower ideas, an origin which would serve to debase and sully them. And the "last, emptiest, most meagre idea of all," the "stupendous concept of 'God'...is put first, as cause in itself."⁶⁰

Nietzsche makes it exceedingly clear what he thinks are our errors. While philosophers used to believe that becoming and the senses were sources of error, we now understand that this is the opposite of how things actually are. Instead, now "we see ourselves mired in error, drawn *necessarily* into error, precisely to the extent that the prejudice of reason forces us to make *use* of unity, identity, permanence, substance, cause, objectification, being; we have checked this through rigorously and are sure that this is where the error lies."⁶¹ He argues that our language developed at a time of primitive psychological understanding where the 'I' was believed to be an enduring object, a substance, able to will and create change in the world. This essence of Being was "*pushed under everything*" and the belief in enduring subjects and objects, along with the belief that the will was causally efficacious, became the foundation of language, which in turn served as the basis of logic and reason. He even claims that the projection of the ego "is how [reason] *creates* the concept of 'thing' in the first place."⁶² Nietzsche also reiterates his criticism of atomism that we recently saw in BGE, but which stretches back all the way to HH. The concept of Being, which Nietzsche

⁵⁶ Though this is not to say that our conscious experience of our sensations is unmediated in any sense. Cf. chapter three on Nietzsche's rejection of givenness.

⁵⁷ Mach, *Contributions to the Analysis of the Sensations*, 8.

⁵⁸ Nietzsche, TI, 'Reason' 3.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* Recall Nietzsche's critiques of *causa sui* in BGE 15 and 21.

⁶¹ Nietzsche, TI, 'Reason' 5.

⁶² *Ibid.*

attributes to the Eleatics, seduces even their opponents: “Democritus, for instance, [was seduced by it] when he invented his *atom*.”⁶³ This claim recalls his critique of the doer-deed dichotomy that lies at the heart of the atomic theory, which posits the atom as the enduring subject which affects other subjects (atoms) via forces. Nietzsche claims that these beliefs in enduring subjects and objects are “the basic presuppositions of the metaphysics of language – in the vernacular: the presuppositions of *reason*.”⁶⁴

This claim suggests that Clark misconstrues Nietzsche’s intentions when he places ‘reason’ in quotation marks. Rather than seeing this move as signalling that Nietzsche’s target here is merely metaphysicians and those who believe in a faculty of pure reason, his use of quotation marks should be seen as a way of pointing out the unreasonableness of reason. As he indicates in TI ‘Reason’ 5, the presuppositions of language, and hence reason and logic, involve a falsification of reality by positing enduring entities that are not delineated by nature. While reality contains relatively stable groups of *puncta*, our picking out sets of these as enduring ‘objects’ depends on the perspective we take up, determined by our interests at the time.

But these groupings are the product of the human understanding, namely the “categories of reason,” and do not exist independently in nature.⁶⁵ The error, Nietzsche concludes, comes from “a *certainty*, a subjective *assurance* in the way the categories of reason were applied.” This certainty in the categories, combined with their discord with the evidence of the senses, is naively, even unreasonably, assumed to indicate an otherworldly origin, a ‘true’ world in which humans must have resided at some point, “rather than *in a much, much lower one*: which would have been true!”⁶⁶ This claim implies Nietzsche’s endorsement of an evolutionary view of human development, or at the very least a historical development of our cognitive faculties. And even though we have realized the errors entrenched in language, Nietzsche holds that “we have not got rid of God because we still have faith in grammar.”⁶⁷

As Nietzsche indicates in a note from 1888, “[w]e cannot change our means of expression at will.”⁶⁸ This stands contrary to Clark’s claim that Nietzsche wishes us to overcome the structure of language. Despite this incongruity, her point can be retained in a limited sense. Nietzsche does want us

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Nietzsche, WP, 625 (this passage comes from a larger note, KSA 13:14[122], from spring 1888). This note is another piece of evidence for my account. While Clark discounts virtually all Nachlass material, my reading is compatible with a large number of these. For instance, WP 625 claims that “[t]he entire domain of ‘true-false’ applies only to relations, not to an ‘in-itself’ – There is no ‘essence-in-itself’ (it is only relations that constitute an essence –), just as there can be no ‘knowledge-in-itself.’” This note also reiterates that the concept of the atom arises from distinguishing between “the ‘seat of a driving force and the force itself.’”

to overcome the restrictions of language insofar as we can take up different perspectives, which allows us to jettison the structure of language to a degree. But, when our interests are different, such as our default naïve realist perspective which is useful for day-to-day survival functions, we will be forced to take up these restrictions once again. For instance, while we may see the world as a flowing of forces within one perspective, when it comes to navigating our environment or communicating with others we will be forced to reintroduce the concept of enduring objects once again, despite the fact that these objects are a falsification of reality when considered from the perspective of dynamic forces.

In trying to deny the continuity of TI with Nietzsche's earlier works, Clark has also pointed to Nietzsche's remarks that "metaphysics, theology, psychology, [and] epistemology" are deformed or pre-scientific, while only "logic and that application of logic, mathematics" are formal sciences.⁶⁹ These disciplines are contrasted with empirical science, which Nietzsche claims is based on the testimony of the senses. In particular, Clark remarks that these "passages from TI and A contain no hint of the view that human truths, science, logic, mathematics, or causality falsify reality. Instead, they exhibit a uniform and unambiguous respect for facts, the senses, and science."⁷⁰ However, Nietzsche's final comments in this passage exhibit continuity with his earlier positions. He closes by remarking that logic and mathematics "do not have anything to do with reality, not even as a problem; they are equally distant from the question of whether a sign-convention like logic has any value at all."⁷¹ This remark fits perfectly with the account that I have provided from HH onwards: logic (and mathematics) are self-contained conceptual systems which may be applied to reality by falsifying it to some degree (by ignoring minute differences in objects, hence treating them as the same, or by ignoring the differences in one object over time, attributing to it a stable identity), and this has value for our ability to interact with our environment. Although Clark treats TI as evidence for her account, my reading better accounts for what it says, especially when read in light of my reading of Nietzsche's earlier works. Clark is right, however, in pointing to TI as well as GM as evidence against the postmodern reading which denies that Nietzsche ever made any claims to truth whatsoever. A final remark regarding Clark's reading is that her claim that Nietzsche's last six books do not exhibit the falsification thesis is weaker than she believes. As I have shown, GM and TI are both continuous with Nietzsche's earlier claims that our thinking falsifies reality, although GM's focus is primarily on morality and TI is a wide ranging book despite its short length. None of the four remaining books that Nietzsche published in this last phase of his career deal extensively with epistemology. His autobiography *Ecce Homo* carries no extended discussion of epistemological matters. *Nietzsche contra Wagner* and *The Case of Wagner* both focus on Nietzsche's appraisal of Wagner. Finally, *The*

⁶⁹ Nietzsche, TI, 'Reason' 3; Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 105-109.

⁷⁰ Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 105. See below for my response regarding Clark's invocation of *The Antichrist* as evidence for her account.

⁷¹ Nietzsche, TI, 'Reason' 3.

Antichrist is primarily devoted to a critique of Christianity. Clark has pointed to A as another piece of evidence for her account, arguing that its praise of science and the senses stand in stark contrast to Nietzsche's early position. However, her reading cannot account for Nietzsche's continued musings on how we falsify reality in his notebooks of this time period. While Clark explicitly rejects the notebook material in favour of interpreting Nietzsche's books, it is hard to see why he would continue writing the way he did if his position had changed so radically.⁷² My reading accounts for this continuity, and can also accommodate *The Antichrist's* attacks on Christianity for its mistaken views. As I will show in the next chapter, these critiques are compatible with Nietzsche's epistemological thinking from HH onwards. While A may have stepped up Nietzsche's rhetorical attack on Christianity, and may even show some signs of his impending collapse, it need not be taken as evidence that Nietzsche underwent a radical change in views in the final phase of his thought.

⁷² Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 25-27.

Chapter 5: The Compatibility of Nietzsche's Epistemological Views with his Moral and Religious Critiques

This chapter overviews the compatibility of the core epistemological views I have attributed to Nietzsche with his critiques of morality and religion.¹ While my overview cannot comprehensively capture all of what Nietzsche has to say on these topics, nor even express all that could be said on the compatibility I argue is present, it will show that Nietzsche himself thought that these views were not at odds. This compatibility acts as another piece of evidence for my reading. The postmodern view holds that Nietzsche's radical epistemological claims prevented him from maintaining that he had found truths of any sort. While Clark's modern reading responds to the postmodern view by arguing that "what appears as radical in Nietzsche's position on truth is actually mistaken or confused and that it disappears from his later philosophy," this response does not account for the congruity I am about to show from HH onwards.² If Nietzsche did maintain the falsification thesis in the way Clark and others have argued in his earlier works, then he would have been unable to coherently make the claims about morality and religion that he did. And it is implausible that Nietzsche would have made such claims while denying his own ability to do so.³

In examining Nietzsche's critiques of morality and religion, I largely sidestep the question of what affirmative thoughts Nietzsche had on these topics. This strategy appears to run the risk of not being able to capture the substance of Nietzsche's critiques. If Nietzsche's positive view on morality turns out to be a form of normative subjectivism, then Nietzsche may not have the tools necessary to carry out the critiques that he does.⁴ After all, if there are no reasons to prefer one moral system to another, then Nietzsche's critiques would be self-defeating. This undesirable consequence is a natural result of the postmodern reading. My

¹ Throughout his works Nietzsche points out that modern morals retain much of their religious basis, even though they may try to mask this with a secular guise. Because of this connection, his critiques of the two phenomena largely share their central arguments. Due to their shared nature, I will often refer to the Christian-moral perspective, position, or framework.

² Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 22. Although Clark has revised her view since this initial reading, HH appears to be a continual problem for her account. Her 1998 version allowed Nietzsche to make empirical claims in HH, but in 2004 she argued that the falsification thesis was present in the 1882 edition of GS. My reading allows Nietzsche to make the claims he does from HH onwards while maintaining the falsification thesis, which is a major boon because both of these types of claims are present throughout his works.

³ It is possible to argue that Nietzsche does provide such a deep seated incoherency. However, to argue that a philosopher is so self-contradictory carries a heavy burden of proof, one that has not been fulfilled thus far.

⁴ By 'positive view' I mean what he takes a positive morality to entail. While it could be argued that Nietzsche holds that there can be no such thing as a positive morality, his own claims point to the contrary. At the end of GM, I, 17, he claims that "that dangerous slogan...*Beyond Good and Evil*...does not mean 'Beyond Good and Bad.'" This claim implies that some method of evaluation remains. And in TI he claims that there are "*healthy*" moralities, and that we are forced to continue positing values (TI, 'Morality' 4-5).

analysis shows that Nietzsche's metaethical position retains his perspectivism, thus making the validity of moral claims contingent on a perspective. However, Nietzsche is still able to consistently critique and reject Christianity and its morals via an inter- and intra-perspectival analysis. More specifically, these perspectival valuations, paired with his psychological analyses of the reasons for adopting such perspectives, show that the Christian-moral perspective is incoherent in the face of discoveries made in other perspectives.

For sake of economy, I will first examine Nietzsche's analyses in *Twilight of the Idols*. Here, in a condensed form, Nietzsche reiterates his critique of the Christian-moral nexus. This critique is mainly contained in the sections "Morality as Anti-Nature" and "The Four Great Errors." The former section details the problems Nietzsche sees with morality, and the latter section explains how these problems have arisen as the result of persistent epistemological errors. The epistemological errors that Nietzsche indicates are perfectly compatible with the reading of the falsification thesis I have proposed, and thus pose no threat to the fundamental coherency of Nietzsche's views. Once the substance of Nietzsche's critique is articulated, I will briefly introduce evidence reaching back as far as HH to show that this substance is relatively continuous throughout his work, and that it is compatible with the core epistemological claims I have attributed to him throughout this period as well.

Nietzsche's Christian-Moral Critique in *Twilight of the Idols*

In the section "Morality as Anti-Nature," Nietzsche unsurprisingly argues that "almost every morality that has been taught, revered, or preached so far" has been an "*anti-natural* morality," which is a type of negative reaction to nature.⁵ These moralities are hostile to the instincts and passions of human beings (which are included in Nietzsche's term 'life'). Nietzsche claims that historically people have fought against the passions when they prompt individuals to undertake some course of action "because the passions were so stupid."⁶ Presumably Nietzsche here means that the passions prompt immediate action contrary to the individual's longer range goals. To fight against the stupidity of the passions, Christianity promoted a type of spiritual "*castration*," namely the complete extirpation of the offending passions.⁷ While this type of reaction appears to be a form of self-overcoming, understood as mastering one's desires, Nietzsche argues that it is indicative of weakness. As he says, "[r]adical means are only indispensable for degenerates; weakness of the will or, to be exact, the inability *not* to react to a stimulus, is itself just another form of degeneration."⁸ To react in such an extreme way is a form of stupidity which is no longer admired. Nietzsche compares such a

⁵ Nietzsche, TI, 'Morality' 4. By 'nature' here I am following Nietzsche's terminology in this section, where the term stands for the whole of the natural world, including human beings.

⁶ Nietzsche, TI, 'Morality' 1.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 2.

reaction to a dentist who simply tears out a tooth that provides any trouble, rather than displaying finesse in dealing with the issue.⁹

Rather than resorting to such extreme measures as the castration or eradication of the ‘stupid’ passions, Nietzsche recommends what he here calls the “spiritualization” (*Vergeistigung*) of the passions.¹⁰ This process can only be undertaken by an individual who is already in a position of health and strength. (In the language of Nietzsche’s drives, they must already have a strong collection of drives able to handle the unruly passion.) The offending passion is spiritualized into a more advantageous form by redirecting its energies at a more desirable target. Nietzsche provides the spiritualization of hostility as an example. In order to eradicate the hostile drive of its members, the Christian church has traditionally desired the destruction of its enemies, because it was unable to control this drive within its members. By contrast, Nietzsche believes that he and “immoralists and anti-Christians” like him have spiritualized this drive, demonstrating a control over it that the Christians are unable to achieve. This spiritualized version of hostility “involves a deep appreciation of the value of having enemies.”¹¹ By spiritualizing the drive in this way, the individual is able to satisfy the urge to express it while avoiding negative consequences for the whole organism, such as self-destruction. This outcome is contrary to the Christian desideratum labelled “peacefulness of the soul,” which Nietzsche argues actually stands for a kind of exhaustion.¹²

Nietzsche claims that this exhaustion is a physiological symptom of life in decline. While he holds that it is impossible to judge the value of life *simpliciter* (because this would require us “to be both *outside* life and as familiar with life as someone, anyone, everyone who has ever lived”), he still allows that partial judgments of life’s value can be made.¹³ As he says, “life itself evaluates through us, *when* we posit values.” When values are seen this way, Nietzsche believes that “the *anti-natural morality* that understands God as the converse of life,” and finds ultimate value in this rejection of life, “is the judgment of a declining, weakened, exhausted, condemned life.”¹⁴ The judgment that life is of no value is then prescribed by the exhausted type (the priest or other moralist) to others.

Here Nietzsche critiques this practice of moralizing to others on ontological grounds. Nietzsche points out that

when a moralist picks out a single individual and says: ‘this is the way *you* should be!’, he is still making a fool of himself. An individual is a piece of fate...an individual is one more law, one more necessity imposed on everything that is coming and

⁹ Ibid., 1.

¹⁰ Ibid., 3.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 5.

¹⁴ Ibid.

going to be. To say to an individual: ‘change yourself’ means demanding that everything change, even retroactively.¹⁵

Here we see Nietzsche’s determinism at work once again, combined with his Boscovichian ontology. The universe works according to a determinate set of laws (Nietzsche’s critique of the metaphor of ‘laws’ notwithstanding), which produce everything including human action. To desire that any of this be changed requires that all of history be changed, given the interwovenness of all that happens. Because every *punctum* is connected to every other one, via the fields of force that they determine, to ask for anything to be different is to ask that everything be different. Thus, it “is no minor piece of insanity” when the moralist demands that individuals change their actions, as this demand requires the entire historical contingency of nature to be changed.¹⁶ As a contrast to this insanity, Nietzsche and his immoralists have taken on the role of being affirmative and approving of everything.¹⁷ Now, let us turn our attention to Nietzsche’s analysis of the ‘Four Great Errors’ that have permeated moral and religious beliefs thus far.

The four great errors are those of “confusing cause and effect,” “of false causation,” “of imaginary causes,” and “of free will.”¹⁸ While it may seem odd that these errors are primarily about causation, given Nietzsche’s critique of this concept in the past, this fact need not be counted as evidence against my reading. Although Nietzsche critiqued the idea of cause and effect when these terms are falsely reified, this critique in no way precludes his ability to invoke them in a relatively normal way. As he said in BGE, cause and effect should be used as “pure concepts” for dividing up reality into more manageable pieces, so our understanding can adapt to our environment.¹⁹ While we artificially separate ‘cause’ from ‘effect’, and this falsifies reality insofar as the two ‘events’ are continuous, our operation here does not completely falsify reality as long as it does not lose touch with what actually occurs. When performed correctly, the use of cause and effect terms can be beneficial to survival. The realization that the division of ‘cause’ and ‘effect’ is a human contribution allows us to take an active role in how we perform this function, which in turn allows us to appreciate the perspectival character of our results. Depending on the perspective we take up, we will dismember the stream of reality in different ways, providing different insights on the processes that contribute to a phenomenon.

¹⁵ Ibid., 6.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ I do not wish to hide the tension in Nietzsche’s works that exists between his requirement that we affirm everything and his critiques and negative evaluations of certain phenomena, such as morality, religion, democracy, socialism, feminism, and so on. Here I am merely arguing that the affirmative, yea-saying side of Nietzsche’s thinking is compatible with, if not suggested by, the core cluster of epistemological ideas I have attributed to him.

¹⁸ Nietzsche, TI, ‘Errors.’

¹⁹ Nietzsche, BGE, 21.

It is this ability to use causality in a perspectival way that allows Nietzsche to undertake his analyses of morality and religion. As he says in *Ecce Homo*, the fact that he has “a hand for switching *perspectives*” is “the first reason why a ‘revaluation of values’ is even possible, perhaps for me alone.”²⁰ For instance, in his discussion of confusing cause and effect he refers to Luigi Cornaro’s short work *Discorsi della vita sobria*.²¹ As Nietzsche describes, in this work Cornaro prescribes “his meagre diet as a recipe for a long and happy – and virtuous – life.”²² However, Nietzsche argues, such an approach confuses the cause and effect. Where Cornaro thought that the cause of his long, virtuous life was his diet, Nietzsche holds that his aptitude for such a diet was caused by his etiolated physiology. Nietzsche claims that Cornaro “was not free to eat *either* a little *or* a lot, his frugality was *not* ‘freely willed’: he got sick when he ate more.”²³ Rather than a meagre diet being the result of a free choice, which resulted in certain positive physiological effects, Nietzsche holds that the predetermined physiology was the cause of Cornaro’s dietary choices.²⁴ (Here Nietzsche invokes himself as an authority on such matters, undoubtedly in reference to his own chronic health and dietary problems.)

Nietzsche maintains that the same misunderstanding is “found in every single claim formulated by religion and morality.”²⁵ Taking the lesson learned from the physiological perspective, Nietzsche applies it to the moral and religious perspectives.²⁶ While moral and religious authorities hold that their teachings should be voluntarily followed, and that such teachings will lead to happiness and virtue, Nietzsche argues that the reverse is actually true. When someone “has turned out well,” he “*has to* perform certain acts and will instinctively avoid others, he is the physiological representative of the system he uses in dealing with people and things. In a word: his virtue is the *effect* of his happiness.”²⁷ Nietzsche sees the same mistake where religion and morality preach that vice and luxury lead to the degeneration of a people. He holds that this once again confuses cause and effect. A people (or individual) indulge in vice and luxury *because* they have already become degenerate – a healthy people (or a healthy person) would not

²⁰ Nietzsche, EH, ‘Wise’ 1.

²¹ Nietzsche, TI, ‘Errors’ 1. He invokes Cornaro, but not the book, by name. The book was initially published as *Trattato de la vita sobria* in Padua in 1558, and later as *Discorsi della vita sobria*.

²² Nietzsche, TI, ‘Errors’ 1.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Leiter makes this point as well (*Nietzsche on Morality*, 156-157).

²⁵ Ibid. Nietzsche here overstates his case. A more appropriate claim would have been this misunderstanding exists in every claim formulated by anti-natural moralities. As he indicates in TI, ‘Morality’ 4 there is such a thing as “*healthy* morality.” The master morality of GM I is likely a prime example of such a healthy morality.

²⁶ More precisely, he applies it to certain moral and religious perspectives. To argue that there is a single moral or religious perspective is far too reductionary to be compatible with Nietzsche’s perspectivism.

²⁷ Nietzsche, TI, ‘Errors’ 2.

indulge in these. This fits with his broader picture of health, which holds that one becomes sick when one can no longer fight off illness.²⁸ The healthy individual (or group of any sort – recall that the individual is a group of drives) acts instinctively: “Everything *good* is instinctive,” while it “is almost a definition of what it means to be *bad*” to be characterized by “a degeneration of the instincts...a disintegration of the will.”²⁹

By switching between the physiological, moral, and religious perspectives, Nietzsche is able to find the common ground between them. Nietzsche’s perspective is informed by these other perspectives and their interpretations of the world. Where these interpretations deal with the same phenomena, they may be compared and evaluated. The criteria of their evaluation will be a matter of choice. One criterion regards consequences. We may ask what results from a certain interpretation of phenomena. Nietzsche often uses this criterion in evaluating the consequences of Christianity and its accompanying morality, such as in the first essay of GM. Another criterion is fidelity to the world. For instance, in the cases considered above, Nietzsche finds the same confusing of effect for cause, which leads to erroneous prescriptions that people are supposed to follow. While no pure interpretation may be produced that accurately captures the world without any distortion or falsification whatsoever, there will remain varying degrees of falsification. The natural sciences judge the value of interpretations primarily according to their degree of fidelity. But even in the scientific domain different types of fidelity will be considered. For instance, biologists and physicists will be interested in different aspects of a phenomenon, and will judge the value of an interpretation according to its fidelity to the phenomenal aspects salient to their enterprise. Despite the varying types of fidelity that interpretations may possess, it still remains the case that confusing cause and effect is an egregious intellectual error.

The second error Nietzsche highlights is the error of false causation. In particular, Nietzsche believes that there have been three sources of false causation which arise from the world of ‘inner facts’: the will, consciousness, and the ‘I.’ He holds that they derive in this order, with the will arising as a phantasm from this ‘inner world.’ The will was considered the causal seat of action in the agent. Consciousness was then determined to be the realm in which the causes of action were to be found. These causes were deemed to be the motives for actions, which were necessary to hold an agent responsible for his deeds. Finally, thoughts

²⁸ For Nietzsche, health is defined by the amount of sickness one is able to withstand. Health is not a pure state, totally free from sickness. Rather, there is a constant state of struggle between the constitution of the body and the environment it interacts with. It is when the body can no longer overcome its environment, dominating it and employing it as a tool, that one becomes ‘sick.’ ‘Sickness’ is a concept relative to the peculiarity of the body, as well as the particular condition being considered. This state of struggle between a body and its environment can actually be quite beneficial, so long as the body is strong enough, because it acts as a stimulus to activity. Cf. Nietzsche, GS, 120, 382.

²⁹ Nietzsche, TI, ‘Errors’ 2.

themselves were deemed to be caused, and the I was designated as the cause of these. Here Nietzsche levels a by-now familiar critique: the will is not a causal agent, rather it accompanies processes and is generated as an additional effect. A motive is “[j]ust a surface phenomenon of consciousness, an ‘after-the-fact’ that hides the *antecedentia* of an act more than it reveals them.”³⁰ And the I “has become a fairy tale, a fiction, a play on words.” Without these three fictitious sources of mental causation, Nietzsche concludes that “[t]here are no mental causes whatsoever!” But the belief in mental causes has infected modern empiricism, which was used “to *create* the world as a world of causes, wills, and minds.” It is this created world that is home to the numerous errors that Nietzsche has pointed out time and again. For instance, this ancient psychology “considered all events to be deeds, all deeds to be the result of a will,” and this created the doer/deed dichotomy, with the notion of an enduring subject pushed under all events. This projection is why “the concept of a thing is just a reflex of the belief in the I as cause.” And this projection of the I as an enduring causal entity has given rise to belief in the atom, as well as the thing-in-itself. Ultimately, this belief in mental causes gave rise to the belief in God as the mental cause of reality itself.³¹

Although Nietzsche proceeds in a different order, it is worth now considering the error of free will. His critique of this concept closely follows his analysis of false causation. He argues that the concept of free will was created in ancient psychology in order to hold people accountable for their actions. It was the desire for responsibility that led theologians to posit free will, in an effort to make people “*dependent on them*.”³² Nietzsche is no doubt recalling his psychological analyses of the priestly type, which argues for this line of thought, most notably in the second essay of GM. By making people responsible for their actions and introducing notions such as guilt and sin, the priests were able to dominate others and make themselves indispensable. Nietzsche claims that he and his immoralists are headed in the opposite direction, attempting to jettison the concepts of guilt and sin, along with the freedom of the will, in order to restore “the innocence of becoming.”³³

When the notion of free will is rejected, it is realized that nobody is responsible for the state of the world, including all creatures within it. This realization reveals that all purposes are created because “there *are* no purposes in reality.”³⁴ By this Nietzsche clearly means that there are no natural purposes, not that there cannot be purposes at all.³⁵ Because there are no natural purposes,

³⁰ Ibid., 3.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 7.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 8.

³⁵ Ibid. For example, in the very next section of TI Nietzsche argues that morality has been part of an attempt to ‘improve’ human beings, and that this attempt has taken various forms, such as domesticating and breeding a certain species of human (TI, ‘Improving’ 2). Such a task can only

Nietzsche believes that “it is absurd to want to *devolve* human existence onto some purpose or another.”³⁶ By contrast, he holds that there is simply too much variation between humans to be able to account for them all in one reductive schema. However, humans are still necessitated and derive their identity “in the context of the whole.” But this whole cannot be judged, measured, or compared entirely, because this would require something outside of the whole to achieve this. This outside perspective was the very notion of a God’s-eye view, a notion that has collapsed with the death of God. In place of the old view, characterized by a transcendent God to judge, cause, and unify the whole of existence, the “*great liberation*” has been achieved in the realization that the world is not unified, although its course remains determined.³⁷

The final error that Nietzsche analyzes in this section is the error of imaginary causes. Essentially, this analysis builds on that of the confusion of cause and effect. Nietzsche argues that humans have a drive for comfort, and that satisfying this constitutes the main aim of most causal explanations rather than the attainment of knowledge. When humans encounter an unfamiliar phenomenon they experience it as a state of distress. Their immediate instinct is to relate it to something familiar, thus removing as much uncertainty as possible.³⁸ Any explanation that achieves this familiarization is received with a feeling of pleasure which we naively take as evidence of the explanation’s truth.³⁹ Because certain methods of explanation are best able to achieve this familiarizing effect, and thus the feeling of pleasure, they emerge as dominant. Nietzsche provides three perspective-based examples: “The banker immediately [thinks] of his ‘business’, the Christian of ‘sin’, the girl of her love.”⁴⁰ The most salient features of a perspective retain their prominence and become the focus of causal explanations. Presumably this occurs because to render the valued object irrelevant is tantamount to declaring it valueless for the present case.

The desire for causal explanations arises not only in response to fear of the unfamiliar, but from a drive to meaningfulness. For example, we look for meaning in our suffering, a desire Nietzsche analyzes in the third essay of GM, and a connection he reiterates here in TI.⁴¹ Nietzsche argues once again that humans have a tendency to cling to certain habitual causal explanations that produce positive emotional responses, rather than looking for the actual causes of their states. In the end, Nietzsche holds that “the entire realm of morality and religion

be undertaken with a purpose, even if this purpose is set subconsciously (to be congruent with Nietzsche’s claims that consciousness is merely a surface and superficial articulation of numerous more basic processes, GS 354).

³⁶ Nietzsche, TI, ‘Errors’ 8.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Nietzsche makes this claim in GS as well. There he holds that when people desire knowledge they typically only desire that “something unfamiliar is to be traced back to something *familiar*” (GS, 355).

³⁹ Nietzsche also makes this claim elsewhere. Cf. HH 30.

⁴⁰ Nietzsche, TI, ‘Errors’ 5.

⁴¹ Cf. Nietzsche, GM, III, 16 and TI, ‘Errors’ 4-6.

belongs to this concept of imaginary cause,” and that they “can be exhaustively accounted for by *the psychology of error*: in every single case, cause and effect are confused; or truth is confused with the effects of *believing* that something is true; or a state of consciousness is confused with its causes.”⁴²

As can be seen from Nietzsche’s analysis of ‘The Four Great Errors’ and of ‘Morality as Anti-Nature,’ his critiques of morality and religion are congruent with his core epistemological ideas. The mature Nietzsche sees the basis of morality and religion in the epistemological errors of believing in free will, of believing that the will, consciousness, and ultimately the ‘I’ are causally efficacious, in mistakes regarding the actual causes of phenomena, and in the postulation of fictitious causes, motivated by drives which desire pleasure and comfort rather than knowledge and discovery. With the mature Nietzsche’s critiques of the Christian-moral framework established, I will now briefly turn to his works reaching back to HH to show that these mature critiques are the culmination of a continuous train of thought that he develops during this time span, just as he indicates in the preface to GM.⁴³ The fact that these critiques run continually throughout Nietzsche’s works beginning with HH bolsters my account against both the modern and postmodern readings. It would be completely incoherent for Nietzsche to provide us with psychological analyses of cognitive errors – while pointing towards the actual processes that take place and are misinterpreted by morality and religion – if he either held that there was no such thing as truth (the postmodern view), or if he instead believed Clark’s version of the falsification thesis (that all our cognition is erroneous) for a substantial portion of his thought (the modern view).

Human, All Too Human, Daybreak, and The Gay Science

Beginning in HH Nietzsche began a sustained analysis of morality and religion, making psychological, epistemological, and evaluative critiques of their claims. My analysis of HH in chapter two showed that by this time Nietzsche was already opposed to any kind of positive metaphysical claims, but was willing and able to make standard empirical claims.⁴⁴ One need not look too far to find these sorts of claims. In HH 27 Nietzsche holds that the “Christian distress of mind that comes from sighing over one’s inner depravity and care for one’s salvation” in fact are “all conceptions originating in nothing but errors of reason and deserv[e], not satisfaction, but obliteration.”⁴⁵ In describing the need for “the origin and

⁴² Nietzsche, TI, ‘Errors’ 6.

⁴³ Nietzsche, GM, P, 2, 4, 8.

⁴⁴ This reading puts me in broad agreement with Kaufmann, Wilcox, and the Clark of 1998. By the term ‘metaphysical’ I do not include ontological claims, such as those I attribute to Nietzsche based on his reading of Boscovich. Rather, the term ‘metaphysical’ should be taken to refer to some other plain of reality, such as the Christian heaven, Kant’s thing-in-itself, or Plato’s world of forms.

⁴⁵ Nietzsche, HH, 27.

history of the so-called moral sensations,” he maintains that “it has been demonstrated in many instances how the errors of the greatest philosophers usually have their point of departure in a false explanation of certain human actions and sensations.”⁴⁶ This false explanation gives rise to “a false ethics,” such as that of unegoistic actions, and “religion and mythological monsters are then in turn called upon to buttress it, and the shadow of these dismal spirits in the end falls across even physics and the entire perception of the world.”⁴⁷ In place of this erroneous explanation, based on superficial psychological observation, Nietzsche encourages us to engage in serious psychological analysis using “countless individual observations regarding the human and all too human.”⁴⁸

Shortly after this, Nietzsche attacks the doctrine of “intelligible freedom” found in Schopenhauer (and Kant). He calls this doctrine an “erroneous conclusion,” thought by Schopenhauer to be justified by the feeling of displeasure at the thought that nobody is responsible for their actions.⁴⁹ Nietzsche’s critique here is stunningly congruent with his claims in TI. There, Nietzsche named Kant and “maybe even Plato” as circulating the “nonsense” of free will “under the rubric of ‘intelligible freedom.’”⁵⁰ In HH he critiques Schopenhauer and intelligible freedom in exactly the same way as he critiques the concept eleven years later. Schopenhauer’s view rests on the Kantian distinction between the phenomenal and noumenal realms. The phenomenal realm, the empirical world of appearances, acts in accordance to strict necessity. When an individual’s actions are considered in this respect, there is no freedom to be found. But Schopenhauer also holds that, from the feeling of guilt felt for performing certain actions, free will must exist in some sense, otherwise there would be no ground for this sense of accountability. This free will exists in the noumenal realm, outside of the causal restrictions of the phenomenal realm. This freedom allows individuals to determine their own nature, which in turn determines their actions within the phenomenal realm with strict necessity. Schopenhauer argues that an individual will react in determinate ways to given situations depending on the *esse* of their character, and it is this *esse* for which they are responsible. By being responsible for their *esse*, individuals are in turn responsible for all of their further actions, although these are determined by the interaction of the *esse* with its environment.⁵¹ Nietzsche argues that Schopenhauer’s position is a reversal of the actual process of human action.

Contrary to Schopenhauer, Nietzsche holds that all actions are completely necessitated and that to think it possible that a “deed need *not* have taken place” is

⁴⁶ Ibid., 37.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 39.

⁵⁰ Nietzsche, TI, ‘Errors’ 8. Here we see Nietzsche taking a page from Schopenhauer, who also attributes the doctrine to both Kant and Plato, albeit with differences in their exposition. Schopenhauer, *The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics*, chapter 2, §10.

⁵¹ Schopenhauer, *The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics*, chapter 2, §10.

erroneous.⁵² Nietzsche cites a historical progression of moral feelings as the source of the concept of free will. At first, deeds themselves are termed good or bad according to their “useful or harmful consequences” to others.⁵³ After this, actions are seen to be inherently good or evil “irrespective of their consequences.” But Nietzsche holds that this move commits “the same error as that by which language designates the stone itself as hard, the tree itself as green – that is to say, by taking for cause that which is effect.” Once again we see Boscovich’s influence on Nietzsche’s ontological views. Taking the stone itself to be hard – ‘hardness’ being a predicate which belongs to an enduring subject, the stone, which could be otherwise than it is – is to get the identity relation backwards. A stone is a synthetic unity of effects. For instance, ‘hardness’ is an emergent effect of a system of forces interacting with other forces. Only this hardness, combined with other properties which arise from force-relationships, are synthetically identified as an enduring object.

The same lesson applies to the value of actions. An action may only be good or bad relative to some perspective, such as that of the affected observer. This fact makes moral judgments essentially instrumental calculations, which assume some normative end that the agent already maintains (e.g., self-preservation, avoidance of harm). The move of assigning moral qualities to actions independent of their consequences is parallel to the ontological move of assigning hardness to the stone – acts, and stones, only gain their properties from their interaction with other forces.⁵⁴ As the last stage of this moral progression, Nietzsche holds that the predicates ‘good’ and ‘evil’ are assigned to the motives for action, and finally to the person as a whole, rather than to the actions themselves, which doubles the mistake of attributing absolute moral properties to actions. Nietzsche’s analysis of this moral development grows in sophistication throughout his career, but this remains the heart of his critique of the moral worldview.

It is in this final stage that Schopenhauer’s ideas about guilty feelings are introduced. While he holds that we could only feel this guilty displeasure with our actions *if* we could have acted otherwise, Nietzsche holds that we only feel guilty displeasure from our actions because we *think* we could have acted otherwise. This belief in the indeterminacy of actions is the outcome of a contingent, historically determined succession of views concerning the value of actions, which in turn gives rise to a guilty feeling for ‘evil’ acts. But this belief and this feeling are not a given, a once-and-for-all to be suffered unto eternity. Nietzsche argues that Schopenhauer believes there must be some rational, justifiable ground for this feeling, making him an adherent of the mistaken view. Against the mistaken view, Nietzsche holds that this feeling “is a very changeable thing, tied to the evolution of morality and culture and perhaps present in only a relatively

⁵² Nietzsche, HH, 39.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ They even gain their very identity from this interaction with other forces, which is precisely why all identity is seen as synthetic and perspective dependent.

brief span of world-history.”⁵⁵ As such, we can disaccustom ourselves to this feeling, and no doubt this would be an instance of what Nietzsche will come to call ‘self-overcoming’ (*Selbstüberwindung*). Here we have a perfect example of Nietzsche’s critique of morality (and by extension religion): humans have historically made certain cognitive errors, motivated by some other drive, which have given rise to mistaken interpretations of reality. But these mistakes can be overcome, and truth can be incorporated into human thought. Although we will always falsify reality to some degree by imposing our conventional fictions, depending on what interests our current perspective pursues, we can improve these perspectives by ridding them of obvious error.⁵⁶ If Nietzsche’s falsificationist claims in the first section of HH are taken to imply that he does not believe we can access truth at all, then his critiques appear baffling. If Clark’s account is correct, and Nietzsche believes we do not have access to the world as it is in-itself, then Kant may very well be right that the soul, freedom, and God may be viable hypotheses.⁵⁷ The fact that Nietzsche explicitly rejects such possibilities in his critiques supports my reading of his epistemological claims at this time.

The fact that HH exhibits both Nietzsche’s epistemological views along with his moral and religious critiques shows strong evidence for my account. I will now briefly turn to Nietzsche’s other works to show that the epistemological basis of his critiques remains consistent. In *Daybreak*, Nietzsche claims that “[i]n the same measure as the sense for causality increases, the extent of the domain of morality decreases: for each time one has understood the necessary effects and has learned how to segregate them from all the accidental effects and incidental consequences (*post hoc*), one has destroyed a countless number of *imaginary causalities* hitherto believed in as the foundations of customs,” specifically the customs of morality.⁵⁸ Reinforcing this view, Nietzsche later holds that “[o]ne drop of blood too much or too little in the brain can make our life unspeakably wretched and hard,” but it becomes even worse “when one does not even *know*

⁵⁵ Nietzsche, HH, 39.

⁵⁶ We can understand the two senses in which Nietzsche uses terms such as falsification and error. While we falsify reality by imposing quasi-arbitrary divisions upon it (our conventional fictions, designed to facilitate certain ends), and hence our thought is erroneous, this is falsification and error only insofar as it does not accurately reflect reality as it is itself. (This ‘as it is itself’ should not be mistaken as an ‘in-itself’ – the former means independent of human methods of interpretation, and not free from all relations, as Nietzsche understands Kant’s thing-in-itself.) But, once we understand that reality is constantly becoming and is deeply interconnected, we may track this becoming with our concepts and perspectives to a greater and lesser degree. ‘Error’ in this latter sense means failure to capture the salient aspects of reality that a perspective supposedly captures. For instance, the religious perspective on the Christian distress of mind purports to reflect a state of affairs in the world (sin as the cause of this distress), while no such cause exists on any level of analysis.

⁵⁷ Clark’s 1998 account is exempted from this position, but her 2004 view is not.

⁵⁸ Nietzsche, D, 10. D 9 makes clear that “morality is nothing other...than obedience to customs,” making the link with D 10 clear.

that this drop of blood is the cause” and instead believes it is the Devil or sin.⁵⁹ Later still, Nietzsche claims that “I deny morality as I deny alchemy, that is, I deny their premises.”⁶⁰ In all of these cases Nietzsche’s criticisms are epistemological – he points out a mistaken explanation of a phenomenon, and proposes that when we correct these errors (by way of truth) we come to a better understanding of the world.

The Gay Science reflects this same epistemological basis for Nietzsche’s critiques. In the very first section he analyzes the “teachers of the purpose of existence,” claiming that these moral and religious teachers take “what happens necessarily and always, by itself and without a purpose” and interpret it as if it were “done for a purpose.”⁶¹ These teachers invent “a second, different existence” by “misjudg[ing] the course of nature and [denying] its conditions.”⁶² Later in the work, Nietzsche claims that the religious belief in another world came from “an *error* in the interpretation of certain natural events, an embarrassing lapse of the intellect.”⁶³ When the religious belief itself became unbelievable, the metaphysical need arose as “a *late offshoot*,” which in turn gave rise to philosophies like that of Schopenhauer.⁶⁴

Continuing his critique of religion later in the text, Nietzsche claims that “[o]ne type of honesty has been alien to all religion-founders and such: they have not made their experiences a matter of conscience for their knowledge.”⁶⁵ Rather than engaging in a serious analysis of their experiences, religious teachers “have a thirst for things that are *contrary to reason*” and so offer alternative, metaphysical interpretations of phenomena that please them. In contrast to this type of interpretation, Nietzsche holds that “we reason-thirsty ones, want to face our experiences as sternly as we would a scientific experiment.”⁶⁶ No doubt this is because while “[m]ystical explanations are considered deep; the truth is, they are not even shallow.”⁶⁷ To create new tables of values, Nietzsche and his free spirits are to study “everything lawful and necessary in the world: we must become *physicists* in order to be creators in this sense – while hitherto all valuations and ideals have been built on *ignorance* of physics or in *contradiction* to it.”⁶⁸ Nietzsche here hails physics (“long live physics!”) as well as “what *compels* us to

⁵⁹ Nietzsche, D, 83. Shortly after this passage Nietzsche reiterates this view, arguing that Pascal tormented himself by interpreting his physical condition in a moral and religious way (D, 86).

⁶⁰ Nietzsche, D, 103.

⁶¹ Nietzsche, GS, 1.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., 151.

⁶⁴ Ibid. Nietzsche offers this as an alternative to Schopenhauer’s account that it was the metaphysical need which gave rise to religion in the first place. Once again we find Nietzsche analyzing cases of confusion regarding cause and effect and offering corrections on what he considers the mistakes of the past.

⁶⁵ Nietzsche, GS, 319.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 126.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 335.

it – our honesty!”⁶⁹ After pointing out that previous systems of value have been built on an ignorance of the natural world, Nietzsche proposes that new values may be erected on a correct understanding that replaces these errors.

The Late Works: *Beyond Good and Evil*, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, and *The Antichrist*

The continuity of Nietzsche’s epistemic claims with his moral and religious critiques proceeds in a virtually uninterrupted fashion in his later works as well. In BGE he questions whether “there is a causal relation” between “the religious neurosis” and “solitude, fasting, and sexual abstinence,” and what this relation might be.⁷⁰ He also claims that modern philosophy is “*anti-Christian*” due to its “epistemological skepticism.”⁷¹ In particular, he believes that philosophers since Descartes have been attempting to “assassinate the old concept of the soul, under the guise of critiquing the concepts of subject and predicate.”⁷² This critique questions the assumption that thinking is the product of the subject (the ‘I’ or soul), and reverses this relationship, seeing the subject as “a synthesis that only gets *produced* through thought itself.”⁷³ Nietzsche is no doubt recalling his own formulation of this very critique earlier in the text, and in this instance he is identifying himself with a broader philosophical movement, perhaps for rhetorical effect.⁷⁴ Later still, he claims that the religious interpretation of the world may be born out of “an incurable pessimism,” which in turn drives “people to be flighty, light, and false” from their “instinct of preservation.”⁷⁵ These religious people can “find pleasure in life only by intending to *falsify* its image, in a sort of prolonged revenge against life.”⁷⁶

Three other passages suggest that Nietzsche seriously wishes us to engage in a critical analysis of moral and religious phenomena. BGE 192, already touched on in the epistemological analysis of BGE in the previous chapter, claims that we are typically bad observers, and that we gloss reality without careful analysis. Indeed, Nietzsche even claims that it is “awkward and difficult for the ear to hear something new; we are bad at listening to unfamiliar music,” as well as unfamiliar languages.⁷⁷ The same holds for visual perception, where we imagine

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Nietzsche, BGE, 47.

⁷¹ Ibid., 54.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Cf. BGE 16-17. I suggest this may be for rhetorical effect because Nietzsche cites no kindred spirits in this regard, while he often gives examples of those with whom he disagrees.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 59.

⁷⁶ Ibid. The distinction made in note 53 should be kept in mind. In BGE 59 Nietzsche is discussing our ability to observe reality (to a greater or lesser degree, depending on perspective) without falsifying it out of psychological desires for comfort, pleasure, etc., not drawing a contrast between reality itself and our perspectival falsification of it.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 192.

and approximate details according to past experience to improve our often meagre observations. To engage in more detailed analysis, “to register what is different and new about an impression,” is something that “requires more strength, more ‘morality’” than our casual observations need.⁷⁸ By ‘morality’ Nietzsche here means a kind of conviction, a value placed on careful observation that makes one strive towards this end. It is important to note that he does not claim here that more careful observation is impossible.

In fact, he encourages the practice of careful observation in BGE 186. There he claims that a ‘science of morals’ can be conducted, and that to this end “collecting material, formulating concepts, and putting into order the tremendous realm of tender value feelings and value distinctions” is “provisionally correct.”⁷⁹ The result of this inquiry is a “*typology* of morals,” which is a modest descriptive project.⁸⁰ He offers this approach to studying morality as an alternative to what he sees as the common practice of grounding morality, specifically the prevalent morality ‘given’ to the inquirer. This common practice is continued because “moral philosophers had only a crude knowledge of moral *facta*,” specifically what was ready at hand in their time and place, and because they failed to better inform themselves about the variety of morals in different times and places, “they completely missed out on the genuine problems involved in morality, problems that only emerge from a comparison of many *different* moralities.”⁸¹ The next section of BGE provides Nietzsche’s provisional response to the ‘problem of morality.’ In BGE 187 Nietzsche claims that “morality is just a *sign language of the affects*!”⁸² Nietzsche concludes this from questioning what moral claims show about their creators and upholders. By pursuing this line of inquiry, Nietzsche hopes to elucidate the background conditions for the various types of moralities that have been (and are still) held, thus providing an essentially causal story about their existence.⁸³ Here Nietzsche clearly points out an epistemic failing on the part of moral philosophers, which he aims to correct. And it is precisely this correction which he aims to begin with *On the Genealogy of Morals*.

In the previous chapter I made the case that the preface to GM suggests that Nietzsche is quite serious about the claims he puts forth in this work. This reading runs contrary to Johnson’s claim that GM is meant merely as rhetorical, and that the purported historical account it provides was not something Nietzsche thought was even possible. The opening sections of the first essay reiterate

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 186.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid. In BGE 291 Nietzsche claims that “the whole of morality is a brave and lengthy falsification that makes it possible to look at the soul with anything like pleasure.” Morality acts as a kind of simplification of the human animal, one that disintegrates upon closer inspection, and with it the typical pleasurable feelings that come from this falsification. To undertake such an investigation requires a kind of cruelty towards the self (BGE, 229).

⁸² Ibid., 187.

⁸³ This causal story shows that physiology and environment are the cause of holding a specific kind of morality. It is such an account which Nietzsche provides in GM.

critiques that Nietzsche made in BGE, that those who have attempted to provide a history of morality have failed to adequately see the historical differences in morals hitherto, and have in effect merely “grounded” their own prevalent morality.⁸⁴ In the rest of the essay Nietzsche proceeds to unfold a narrative remarkably similar to his claims from earlier works.

He holds that those of noble morality are strong, active, and affirmative while those of the slave morality are weak, passive, and reactionary. This difference comes from their physiology – the weak need “external stimuli in order to act at all – [their] action is fundamentally reaction” while “[t]he reverse is the case with the noble mode of valuation” which “acts and grows spontaneously.”⁸⁵ He allows that the noble mode of “looking down from a superior height, *falsifies* the image of that which it despises,” but that this “will at any rate still be a much less serious falsification than that perpetrated on its opponent...by the submerged hatred, the vengefulness of the impotent.”⁸⁶ Nietzsche’s allowance of varying degrees of falsification here is perfectly in line with the epistemological views expressed throughout his works. Falsification takes place in degrees, ranging from convenient glosses of reality (making similar what is in fact different) to losing contact with reality all together. The nobles appear to falsify primarily in the former way. They are careless in their observations of those they disdain. Their interests lie in their active projects, making their observations of those below them glosses, sufficient enough to serve their purposes.⁸⁷ The slaves, the people of *ressentiment*, falsify reality by losing touch with it. In order to justify themselves to themselves, they must view the nobles as freely willing subjects, who are able to withhold from acting the way they do. This myth turns the weakness of the slaves into a virtue, rather than a simple, necessitated fact of their existence. And it is this falsification, the introduction of free will, housed in the soul, which commits the gross epistemological error that Nietzsche critiques on their part.⁸⁸

In the third essay of GM, which analyzes the meaning of ascetic ideals, Nietzsche supplies the type of physiological account of values he proposed in BGE 187. He claims that while psychologically considered the ascetic ideal represents “life *against* life,” physiologically considered this is contradictory, and so “it must be a kind of provisional formulation, an interpretation and psychological misunderstanding of something whose real nature could not for a long time be understood or described *as it really was* – a mere word inserted into an old *gap* in human knowledge.”⁸⁹ In place of this provisional formula, which has been a useful placeholder at this gap in our knowledge, Nietzsche offers to “replace it with a brief formulation of the facts of the matter: *the ascetic ideal*

⁸⁴ Nietzsche, GM, I, 1-4. Cf. BGE 186.

⁸⁵ Nietzsche, GM, I, 10.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, I, 13. For an explanation of the epistemological critique Nietzsche launches here, consult my previous chapter.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, III, 13.

springs from the protective instinct of a degenerating life which tries by all means to sustain itself and to fight for its existence.”⁹⁰ Here Nietzsche switches from a psychological to a physiological perspective, which results in an increase in knowledge and a better understanding of the phenomenon of the ascetic.

Later in the text, Nietzsche explains that the ascetic priest redirects the *ressentiment* of the sick and suffering. Because “every sufferer instinctively seeks a cause for his suffering,” the sick look for “some living thing upon which he can, on some pretext or other, vent his affects” as a way to anaesthetize his own pain. And “[t]his alone, I surmise, constitutes the actual physiological cause of *ressentiment*, vengefulness, and the like: a desire to *deaden pain by means of affects*.”⁹¹ However, the real cause of the sick’s suffering is their physiological condition. But the sick assume that someone is to blame for their suffering, and “this kind of reasoning...is indeed held the more firmly the more the real cause of their feeling ill, the physiological cause, remains hidden.”⁹² Nietzsche further claims that he presupposes in this essay “that man’s ‘sinfulness’ is not a fact, but merely the interpretation of a fact, namely of physiological depression – the latter viewed in a religio-moral perspective that is no longer binding on us.”⁹³ The psychological pain the sufferer feels is also “not a fact but only an interpretation – a causal interpretation – of facts that have hitherto defied exact formulation.”⁹⁴ Within this priestly perspective, which interprets suffering as punishment because it cannot find its real causes, there has actually been some good work accomplished on the psychological level. Nietzsche holds that the priests have inventively gone about the task of consolation, and that “*in countless cases they have really freed* themselves from that profound physiological depression by means of their system of hypnotics.”⁹⁵

While the real causes of suffering have remained hidden, the priestly type has in fact been a boon. However, once the real (physiological) causes of suffering are revealed, the religious perspective itself simply loses its credibility and usefulness. As we have seen from earlier texts, religious interpretations of experiences arose as the result of cognitive errors. Some phenomenon, whose cause remained unknown, was explained in a naïve way to make it more tolerable. This was often done to meet the end of some drive other than that of knowledge (e.g., pleasure, safety, preservation). But once the real causes of an event are determined, which is achieved in some other perspective (e.g., physiological, mechanistic), the religious perspective loses its credibility and utility. This loss occurs because a change in perspectives renders the religious perspective superfluous, and shows that it is premised on errors. These are the errors that Nietzsche neatly articulates in TI as ‘The Four Great Errors,’ the most important

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid., III, 15.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid., III, 16.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., III, 17.

of which is the belief in free will, without which the Christian-moral perspective collapses.

The religious perspective also loses its credibility from a historical critique. The religious perspective has been a haven for the disenfranchised as a way of venting pent up anger, *ressentiment*, and the desire to be strong themselves. In the first essay of GM, during Nietzsche's analysis of the development of the concepts good and evil, he claims that the weak have faith that "some day or other *they* too intend to be the strong...[that] some day *their* 'kingdom' too shall come – they term it 'the kingdom of God.'"⁹⁶ He cites Aquinas and Tertullian as evidence for this view. But once this desire is made salient, and the desire that weakness become strength and vice versa is shown to be incoherent, the religious perspective is shown to be merely a kind of fantasized revenge and reversing of roles.⁹⁷ As Nietzsche says in *Daybreak*, once the historical conditions of the rise of Christian religious belief are shown, no refutation of the belief is necessary, although he provides such a refutation by way of pointing out the errors involved in such a belief.⁹⁸

Finally, in *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche rearticulates the same kind of critique against religion and morality. He claims that "[i]n Christianity, morality and religion are both completely out of touch with reality."⁹⁹ Rather than deal with reality, these perspectives have invented "[c]ompletely imaginary *causes*" for "completely imaginary *effects*."¹⁰⁰ These initially arose as mistaken interpretations of natural phenomena which lacked an explanation, namely the "pleasant or unpleasant general sensations."¹⁰¹ Those who suffered from reality created a redeeming interpretation of the world to overcome their own misfortune, but this interpretation only remains tenable if certain cognitive errors remain uncorrected. And in order to hang on to these errors, Nietzsche believes that the priestly type has invented sin "to destroy people's *senses of causation*," to eradicate "the healthy concepts of cause and effect," and to replace these entirely with the imaginary causes and effects that their self-elevating perspective demands.¹⁰²

It is by switching perspectives that the religious and moral perspectives lose their credibility, and this is the basis of Nietzsche's critique. A perspective is a way of approaching reality, emphasizing certain aspects at the expense of others, and introducing regulative fictions to increase our ability to function. The problem with the religious and moral perspectives, Nietzsche holds, is that they simply lose touch with reality by making cognitive errors. Because they are

⁹⁶ Ibid., I, 15.

⁹⁷ Ibid., I, 13. This is the section where Nietzsche holds that a quantum of force cannot be otherwise than it is.

⁹⁸ Nietzsche, D, 95.

⁹⁹ Nietzsche, A, 15.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid., 49.

incompatible with aspects of reality revealed by other perspectives, they are to be jettisoned from our intellectual milieu in favour of more useful perspectives. However, Nietzsche is willing to admit the historical value that these perspectives have served during the time when our understanding of the natural world was more limited. But now that our knowledge has increased, and our provisional explanations for phenomena have been revised, these perspectives lose their value except for those people unwilling to approach matters from a variety of perspectives.¹⁰³ The people who are locked into the religious and moral perspectives in this way will be unable to correct these cognitive errors because they serve as presuppositions for their perspective. This inability will ultimately limit the intellectual range of those people, precluding them from thoughts and thus actions which require the correction of these errors.

Being locked in these perspectives can be advantageous for those simply unable to cope with the increased uncertainty perspectivism brings. Broadening one's horizons requires the 'great health,' which not everyone has. Reality does not provide objective prescriptions for us, making the ultimate choice of values a human affair. Nietzsche endorses an intellectual broadening of horizons which, when undertaken, reveals the underlying cognitive errors of the religious and moral perspectives. Once these cognitive errors are revealed, and a genealogy is conducted which shows the human, all-too-human origins of the beliefs these perspectives require, it becomes clear that believing in these perspectives is simply a symptom of an underlying condition rather than a genuine intellectual choice.¹⁰⁴ Those who value a 'true' world over the actual world in which we live degrade their own experience of this world. There are those for whom this is a necessity – those weak types that Nietzsche identifies and critiques throughout his works. But the true malaise of modernity, on Nietzsche's view, is that these perspectives have become dominant, restricting the activity of those higher types

¹⁰³ These limited perspectives have historically assisted in the preservation and enhancement of certain groups, for example the slaves of GM I. Nietzsche also appears to preserve the possibility that many people do not have the strength for switching perspectives, and so must be led by those able to engage in this practice and attain a better overall account of reality (cf. BGE 61 for how the philosopher will use religion as a tool of control over the masses). In A 44 Nietzsche claims that Christianity has an "instinctual rejection of any *other* practice, any *other* perspective on what is valuable or useful." A notebook entry from Autumn 1885-Autumn 1886 is worth noting here: "That the *world's value* lies in our interpretation (– that somewhere else other interpretations than merely human ones may be possible –); that previous interpretations have been perspectival appraisals by means of which we preserve ourselves in life, that is, in the will to power and to the growth of power; that every *heightening of man* brings with it an overcoming of narrower interpretations; that every increase in strength and expansion of power opens up new perspectives and demands a belief in new horizons – this runs through my writings. The world *which matters to us* is false, i.e., is not a fact but a fictional elaboration and filling out of a meagre store of observations; it is 'in flux', as something becoming, as a constantly shifting falsity that never gets any nearer to truth, for – there is no 'truth'" (KSA 12:2[108]).

¹⁰⁴ Nietzsche's argument that consciousness is epiphenomenal reinforces this view. Cf. Nietzsche, GS, 354.

who could do more in the world.¹⁰⁵ Nietzsche hopes that these impoverished perspectives will decline to their previous historical position as a type of slave perspective, taken up only by those who need it as a consolation for their own limited condition. If they do not, and maintain their dominant intellectual position, Nietzsche believes that nihilism will be the inevitable result.¹⁰⁶ But it is uncertain whether humanity will be able to ultimately reject these perspectives in this way: whether such a rejection is achieved will be a contingent historical outcome, one which will determine the fate of humanity, but for all that may still not occur. Nietzsche's commitment to perspectivism – the epistemological position that since no one perspective can ever completely grasp reality, no one perspective can ever reign supreme – continues uninterrupted until the end of his works, and it is this commitment that underpins his critique of morality and religion.

¹⁰⁵ For an analysis of how these higher, active types have their activity restricted, see Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, chapter two.

¹⁰⁶ Nietzsche, GM, II, 24.

Conclusion

This work has provided an alternative to the modern and postmodern readings of Nietzsche's views on truth and knowledge. As illustrated in the first chapter, the postmodern view suffers from internal incoherence. If Nietzsche is truly as sceptical as thinkers like Kofman, Derrida, and de Man claim he is, then no appeal can be made to facts of any sort (such as the ascension of life or increase of the will to power) to buttress Nietzsche's normative claims. Such a conclusion leaves Nietzsche in the unenviable position of launching critiques which have no basis, leaving the choice between Christ and the Antichrist a mere matter of preference. The modern reading of Nietzsche provides a more plausible view, but one which tends to downplay, ignore, or explain away the more radical tendencies in his thinking. In particular, the modern view espoused by Clark and Leiter relies on a developmental narrative which sees Nietzsche as essentially incoherent for at least a portion of his mature philosophical career.

My alternative provides a reading between the modern and postmodern views. As shown in the second chapter, Nietzsche's early epistemological views are not as straightforward as traditionally thought. My account highlights the shifting nature of Nietzsche's views at this time. It takes into account Nietzsche's ontological views, namely his Boscovichian force ontology and his nominalist thesis. From here my account considers the role of the given and the historical development of human thought according to Nietzsche. While Clark's developmental narrative does capture Nietzsche's move away from the thing-in-itself, beginning with a type of scepticism and moving to a full-blown dismissal of the notion as incoherent, her narrative does not satisfactorily explain Nietzsche's views on truth and knowledge.

As my analysis has shown, Nietzsche's commitment to nominalism, paired with his view of the function of human cognition, explains the vast majority of his epistemological remarks in these middle works. The early essay "On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense" contains both the nominalist and Kantian views and vacillates between these while critiquing scientific knowledge. In *Human, All Too Human* we see a distinctive shift. In this book the majority of Nietzsche's epistemological claims are based on the nominalist thesis, including his analyses of logic, mathematics, and language. There is also a distinctive shift in favour of the power of science to reveal truths about the world because of the stability of our relations to it.

We also see some lingering Kantian hangovers. While these hangovers may seem to support Clark's developmental narrative, they in fact do not. These hangovers are not dominant in the work. On the whole, Nietzsche affirms the power of science and our ability to increase our knowledge of the world through empirical means. In the places where he does give consideration to the Kantian view – that we are cut off from the thing-in-itself and therefore our 'truths' are merely of the apparent world of phenomena – these considerations are tempered

by the realization that even if this view were true, it would be completely irrelevant to us.

We can see Nietzsche's views on nominalism and Kantianism as two separate bases from which to venture epistemological hypotheses. As I have argued, nominalism is the basis for the majority of his epistemological claims in HH. In most of the aphorisms, it is nominalism, and not Kantianism of any form, that underwrites what Nietzsche has to say about logic, mathematics, and language foregrounding certain aspects of reality over others, thus undermining the traditional view of passive adequation of thought and reality as the ultimate goal of knowledge. Separate from this nominalist thesis, Nietzsche can also entertain the Kantian position. If the Kantian view is correct, and there is a thing-in-itself that we cannot access, then our cognitive operations only deal with the world of appearances. In this case, we are doubly removed from the true nature of the world, a view ventured in "On Truth and Lies." But the Kantian position is independent of nominalism: whether we have 'direct' access to reality or not, we still engage in the active selection of certain aspects of experience for our purposes. Even if the reality we are differently carving up, depending on our interests and biological capacities, is radically different from its 'true' nature (i.e. outside of space and time), this fact does not change the force of Nietzsche's nominalist analyses. As he moves away from even entertaining the Kantian position in his later works, as Clark shows, the majority of Nietzsche's epistemological views do not change, because their basis is the nominalism to which he adhered from early on. Because I do not base Nietzsche's epistemological views on his view of the thing-in-itself, I am better able to interpret the textual evidence, and am not forced to commit Nietzsche to a startling degree of self-confusion for a significant portion of his thought.

Clark's reading is guided by her explicit methodology, which is that "[r]easonable interpretation clearly demands that we attribute to a text the best position compatible with the relevant evidence about its meaning. But only what the interpreter takes to be true or reasonable can function as the standard for the best position."¹ It is admirable that Clark is forthcoming in her methodological commitment; however, it may skew her reading of Nietzsche. My account better accords with the bulk of Nietzsche's published texts than does Clark's. However, she takes nominalism to be an implausible view to attribute to Nietzsche, thus precluding it as an interpretive possibility by virtue of the principle of charity. Because of this preclusion, Clark spends little time entertaining this alternative reading. When discussing the postmodern reading of "On Truth and Lies," Clark acknowledges that nominalism is the most plausible basis for Nietzsche's claim that truths are illusions in the essay, if that claim is based on some supposed insight into the nature of language. But she finds this position implausible, and so dismisses it in a paragraph.² Clark's argument against nominalism takes this form:

¹ Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 29.

² *Ibid.*, 77.

if identity statements of the form ‘x is y’ actually only mean that ‘x is relevantly similar to y,’ then “Nietzsche has no basis for considering [these statements] either metaphorical or false.”³

Clark is essentially correct that Nietzsche has no basis for claiming that truths are illusions if identity statements only denote similarity between two objects. I have argued that it is this position that allows Nietzsche to retain truth perspectivally. Nietzsche’s point is that we have traditionally understood statements of the form ‘x is y’ as corresponding to natural distinctions in reality. On the traditional view, truth corresponds to reality because our statements adequately capture these distinctions which find their basis in natural kinds. Nietzsche’s nominalism holds that there are no natural kinds in reality, and that any such identity distinctions are actively produced by the interpreter. Once these distinctions are created by stipulating identity conditions (necessary and sufficient conditions), we have the stability required to group together relevantly similar phenomena. Nietzsche’s view does not take the more radical form of a postmodern denial of *any* natural differences in reality, as is attributed to him by Danto.⁴ The world is variegated, with a plethora of different aspects and relations, which we may group together in a multitude of different fashions depending on our interests. Nietzsche’s claims that we are unable to attain truth in his mature thinking are rhetorical attacks on the traditional conception of truth as correspondence to reality. In claiming that our language, concepts, logic, mathematics, and consciousness distort, simplify, and falsify reality, Nietzsche is pointing out the untenability of the classical ideal of truthfulness. If the classical ideal is maintained, we are forced to admit that we can never achieve truth, and that falsity is the basic necessity of all life. On the other hand, if we side with Nietzsche in adhering to a new, perspectival conception of truth and knowledge, then we may attain the only type of truth available to us, one hedged by stipulations and conventions, which are always open to revision and change.⁵

These two ways of viewing truth correspond to the two ways of construing identity claims that Clark discusses. Although Nietzsche does agree that ‘x is y’ should be understood as ‘x is similarly relevant to y,’ his remarks on the necessity of the naïve realist perspective for our basic functioning point out that we continually slip back into the ancient error of believing that x really is y, independent of our contributions as knowers. This analysis of identity claims absorbs the thrust of Clark’s dismissal of nominalism, and better accords with Nietzsche’s epistemological claims than her account does. The analysis also

³ Ibid.

⁴ Danto, *Nietzsche as Philosopher*, 49-57.

⁵ Here we see the relevance of Derrida’s discussion of the two reactions to the rupture in the history of metaphysics. There is the negative reaction which longs for the old ideal of truth as correspondence. And there is the Nietzschean reaction which affirms the loss of an absolute centre and opens a world of perspectives (Derrida, “Structure, Sign, and Play,” 292). However, as I have shown, the Nietzschean reaction does not entail the sceptical consequences that Derrida thinks that it does.

disposes of her objection to nominalism based on language, which follows essentially the same pattern. If nominalism is true, Clark argues, then no two instantiations of a word (whether written or spoken) are actually instantiations of the *same* word. Strictly speaking, this is true. But the differences between two inscriptions or enunciations of a word are irrelevant for the purposes of language, whose purpose is to facilitate communication. Language itself constitutes a perspective, one which stipulates the identity conditions for words. Once these are set we may identify similar instantiations as the same word, thus facilitating communication, thought, and action.

It is by recognizing the radical potential of perspectivism that I differ from the moderns. My reading of Nietzsche's epistemology is sympathetic to theirs in many ways. I agree that Nietzsche's break with the philosophical tradition regarding truth and knowledge does not entail scepticism, as the postmoderns believe. Nietzsche instead endorses a type of empiricism, one which excludes only certain types of truth claims, primarily those non-natural claims made by religion or rationalistic philosophies such as Plato's. I also broadly endorse Clark's account of Nietzsche's move away from the thing-in-itself. This account sees Nietzsche more boldly attacking the notion as his thought matures, eventually dismissing it as incoherent. I also agree that there are deep similarities between Nietzsche and the post-positivists of the twentieth century, such as Sellars and Quine.

However, I believe that there is a kernel of truth to the postmodern position, one which the moderns tend to pass over: the radical nature of perspectivism. This radicalism is captured in Derrida's discussion of changing the center at will, and in Kofman's image of the competing centers of will to power, each interpreting the world differently. Even de Man's account that language is always figural, never constative, has an element of truth to it. What the postmoderns identified in their reading is the radical nature of perspectivism which unsettles the old conception of truth as independent from thought. The moderns reject this radical picture when they deny that truth is independent of perspective. They believe that it is by making truth perspectival that we lose objectivity, and get lost in the postmodern quagmire of scepticism and subjectivity. When we get lost in this way, science loses its credibility, and it is put on par with poetry. I agree with the moderns that this is an unappealing conclusion: contemporary science would not be able to perform the way it does if it were no more objective than poetry. But to place truth outside of perspectives is to take the first step down the traditional road of the correspondence theory of truth, which associates truth with essence.

My reading is better able to account for these two sides of Nietzsche's thought. By situating truth squarely within perspectives, I am able to capture the radicalism of perspectivism, which is the key feature of the postmodern reading. At the same time, I am also able to account for Nietzsche's own claims to truth and his esteem of science, to which the moderns appeal against the postmodern reading. Because perspectives act as both standards of relevance (as well as

necessary and sufficient conditions), and as subjective points-of-view, we may retain objectivity and truth within perspectives.

When we take up some perspective, we organize the world in a particular way. It is this organization that places structure on the world, and it is only within some organization that we may have truth. The natural sciences preserve their objectivity within perspectives because the world has a certain degree of regularity that these perspectives capture. But the sciences do not strictly cohere with each other. This incongruity is a fact that the moderns often tend to gloss over. ‘Science’ does not provide us with an inalterable, stable paradigm. The history of science is filled with conflict, changing theories, and different points of view. Nietzsche’s perspectivism and its radicalism accounts for this phenomenon. Even though we may construe a certain type of inquiry as a single science, such as physics or biology, upon closer inspection these divisions are always open to further demarcation. The different scientific disciplines, as well as their sub-disciplines, are not always coherent with one another, although they do capture some aspect of reality. They carve the world up in various ways, and differently construe their objects of study. On Nietzsche’s account this lack of coherence is unobjectionable. We should not reject a theory or practice because it does not cohere with received knowledge. Instead, we should pursue new theories and experiments with vigour. The results of these new enterprises, if successful, will serve to reform our perspectives and give us a new outlook on the world, finding what has been otherwise passed over or ignored.

Ultimately our perspectives, and the theories that create them, encounter the world, and will have different outcomes depending on how they approach it. These differing outcomes serve as a way of evaluating perspectives for their efficacy towards particular ends. But there is no final arbiter between perspectives or between differing ends. We may utilize perspectival discoveries to improve or re-evaluate other perspectives. Nietzsche practices this approach when he re-evaluates the moral and religious perspectives. This re-evaluation shows the underlying epistemological errors of these perspectives, as well as the consequences of adopting them. Despite these errors and consequences, it may still be beneficial for some types of people to adopt these perspectives.

Nietzsche’s most forceful conclusion is that there cannot be categorical perspectives that everyone should adopt. Perspectivism destroys all monolithic structures. We are left with a world of conflicting perspectives which produce truth within the structures they impose on the world. On my account Nietzsche navigates a middle-path between the postmoderns and moderns. Against the postmoderns, Nietzsche recognizes that within perspectives we retain a degree of objectivity and truth, enough to allow us to take the natural sciences seriously. Against the moderns, Nietzsche believes that our ability to switch perspectives allows for a radical amount of difference in the way we organize the world, and thus to the truths we may have. Of course, we are limited in the perspectives we may take up, and to live we must continually revert to the naïve realist perspective. But this necessity does nothing to prove the truth of the naïve realist

perspective. Nietzsche de-anthropomorphizes truth by unhinging it from the needs of humans, putting us on par with other creatures and other ways of construing the world. This decentring also applies to human values. No value or goal can ultimately be placed above all others and we are left with a perpetual struggle between them. Contrary to what Nietzsche sees as life-denying outlooks, he embraces this struggle as the natural condition of the world. My reading better captures the implications of perspectivism than do either the modern or postmodern readings by keeping truth within perspectives while simultaneously preserving objectivity.

I largely developed this account with a chronological reading of Nietzsche's works. Chapter two argued that Nietzsche displays a coherent epistemological position in *Human, All Too Human* and *Daybreak* that does not entail scepticism. The third chapter considered the evolutionary narrative that Nietzsche uses to buttress his epistemological views. Contrary to postmodern readings like Johnson's, Nietzsche does propose this narrative as a serious contender to explain the development of human cognition. I also compared Nietzsche with Mach to clarify perspectivism. The perspectival alternative to the classic ideal of truth as correspondence, which I argue lies in Nietzsche's thinking, provides him with a stable epistemological position. By locating truth and knowledge squarely within perspectives – understood as a framework that establishes conditions for observation and relevance – Nietzsche is able to coherently provide his claims to truth while simultaneously launching his epistemological critiques. These critiques include a rhetorical attack on the dogmatic view of truth that holds it to be objective and human-transcendent. On such a view, all of our truths are 'false' because they fail to capture the uniqueness of every extant thing.

Chapter four showed that Nietzsche's later works, namely *Beyond Good and Evil*, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, and *Twilight of the Idols*, introduce no significant variation to his epistemological views. Instead, we find Nietzsche launching the same kind of attacks on the dogmatic conception of truth, as well as continuing to advocate for our ability to partially overcome our historical errors. This overcoming is tempered by our reliance on the naïve realist perspective for survival, and this reliance accounts for Nietzsche's continued insistence that falsity is necessary for life, which undermines the classically assumed value of truth.

Finally, we see that his moral and religious critiques are fundamentally epistemological in nature. Moral and religious interpretations of the world are insufficient because they are premised on cognitive errors. With these errors corrected, Nietzsche believes that new, better interpretations of the world are possible. His views here are compatible with perspectivism, as he argues that a major failing of the Christian-moral framework is its unwillingness to take up other perspectives for the comparative evaluation of phenomena. The congruency between the epistemological view I attribute to Nietzsche and his moral and religious critiques favours my account over the postmodern and modern readings.

If Nietzsche were as sceptical as the postmodern reading holds, then he would be unjustified in launching the types of critiques that he does. And if he underwent a major shift in his epistemological views at some point in his mature career, as the modern reading holds, then we should expect to see a shift in the nature of these critiques. My reading demonstrates the stability of Nietzsche's epistemological position throughout his mature works, given that his moral and religious critiques retain their basic character from *Human, All Too Human* onwards.

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