

**APPROACHES TO NIETZSCHE'S PERSPECTIVISM:  
TRUTH AND THE PROBLEM OF SELF-REFERENTIALITY**

by

Jeffrey W. Brown  
B.A., Brock University, 1994

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS

in the

Department of Philosophy

© Jeffrey W. Brown 1996

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY  
August 1996

All rights reserved. This work may not  
be reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy  
or any other means, without permission of the author.



National Library  
of Canada

Acquisitions and  
Bibliographic Services Branch

395 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale  
du Canada

Direction des acquisitions et  
des services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington  
Ottawa (Ontario)  
K1A 0N4

*Your file* *Votre référence*

*Our file* *Notre référence*

**The author has granted an irrevocable non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of his/her thesis by any means and in any form or format, making this thesis available to interested persons.**

**L'auteur a accordé une licence irrévocable et non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de sa thèse de quelque manière et sous quelque forme que ce soit pour mettre des exemplaires de cette thèse à la disposition des personnes intéressées.**

**The author retains ownership of the copyright in his/her thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her permission.**

**L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège sa thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.**

ISBN 0-612-16814-X

**Canada**

# APPROVAL

**Name:** Jeffrey Wayne Brown

**Degree:** Master of Arts

**Title of Thesis:** Approaches to Nietzsche's Perspectivism: Truth and the Problem of Self-Referentiality

**Examining Committee:**

**Chair:** R.E. Jennings

John Tietz  
Senior Supervisor

Bjørn Ramberg

Alan Richardson  
Examiner,  
Department of Philosophy  
University of British Columbia

**Date:** August 13, 1996

# SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY



BURNABY, BRITISH COLUMBIA, V5A 1S6  
Telephone: (604) 291-3343  
Fax: (604) 291-4443

## PARTIAL COPYRIGHT LICENSE

I hereby grant to Simon Fraser University the right to lend my thesis, project or extended essay (the title of which is shown below) to users of the Simon Fraser University Library, and to make partial or single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the library of any other university, or other educational institution, on its own behalf or for one of its users. I further agree that permission for multiple copying of this work for scholarly purposes may be granted by me or the Dean of Graduate Studies. It is understood that copying or publication of this work for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Title of Thesis/Project/Extended Essay

**Approaches to Nietzsche's Perspectivism: Truth and The Problem of Self-Referentiality**

Author

Signature

Jeffrey Wayne Brown

Name

Date

AUGUST 20 / 1996

## ABSTRACT

In this thesis I examine and discuss several current prominent interpretations of Nietzsche's perspectivism in order to show that they seriously misrepresent his position. The central points under consideration are Nietzsche's rejection of the correspondence theory, his antirealism with respect to truth and the problem of self-referentiality which may seem to arise on the basis of that antirealism; it is with respect to one or another (or all) of these key points that the interpretations in question err.

The thesis consists of three chapters. In the first chapter, I offer expositions of a pair of recent interpretations of Nietzsche's perspectivism. In the second chapter, with a discussion of Nietzsche's antirealism, I establish what I contend to be the proper context for an account of Nietzsche's perspectivism. Lastly, in the third chapter, I discuss the problems of self-reference which may arise as a result of Nietzsche's perspectivism, stressing the importance of the context established in Chapter Two and evaluating the interpretations in question. Consequently, the thrust of the thesis is primarily critical, but, given the disparity between different Nietzsche interpretations, this sort of critical project is of the utmost importance. By recognizing misrepresentative interpretations, we can better discern the prospects for more accurate accounts of Nietzsche.

## **DEDICATION**

For Brenda - this belongs to her as much as it does to me.

## PREFACE

In what follows, I attempt to identify what I take to be misinterpretations of Nietzsche's position on truth. In doing so, I set out several elements of what I argue is his actual position on truth - elements such as his antifoundationalism, his antirealism with respect to truth and his rejection of the correspondence theory. A complete characterization of Nietzsche's positive view - including a discussion of his aestheticism - however, would be the subject of a much (*much*) larger work.

Anyone who attempts a discussion of 'Nietzsche's position' on any topic, however, faces the task of coming to terms with the Nietzschean *oeuvre* itself. His published texts range from youthful, often immature works such as *The Birth of Tragedy* and the *Untimely Meditations* to transitional works such as *The Gay Science* and, finally, to more mature, accomplished works such as *Beyond Good and Evil*, *On The Genealogy of Morals* and the works of 1888 (specifically, *The Antichrist*, *Twilight of The Idols* and *Ecce Homo*). Some commentators separate from the rest of the works the enigmatic (even by Nietzsche's standards) and experimental *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and some even insist that we must differentiate between the works of 1888 and other mature works such as *Beyond Good and Evil* and *On The Genealogy of Morals*. It is sometimes insisted, that is, that the works of 1888, composed under the strain of Nietzsche's impending collapse, must be distinguished from his other mature works written previous to 1888, works which are the product of a more sound, stable mind. In addition, the role of the *Nachlass*, chiefly *The Will to Power*, continues to be the subject of much controversy. Some insist that *The Will*

*to Power* is not at all a reliable source while others, on the contrary, insist that it is the most significant of all of Nietzsche's works.

While it is true that Nietzsche's works do exhibit something of a development and while we must also be cautious - because of its unevenness and the fact that some parts of it are more carefully developed than others - about taking *The Will to Power* as a 'work', for the purposes of this thesis, I will largely overlook issues concerning the status of Nietzsche's texts. I am ultimately concerned with the 'mature Nietzsche's' position on truth, of course; as a result, I rely chiefly upon the later works and *The Will to Power*. In general, however, I treat Nietzsche's works as a whole as a single 'text', as it were - as one large body of work.

Walter Kaufmann, and, more recently, Maudmarie Clark, has argued that *The Will To Power* ought not to be enlisted as support for any interpretation of Nietzsche because it in no way represents a coherently thought-out, systematically argued 'work' (ironically, Kaufmann relies heavily on *The Will to Power*). To be sure, *The Will to Power* is not, strictly speaking, a work in any conventional sense of the word - it is a collection of Nietzsche's (polished and unpolished) notes that Nietzsche never prepared for publication. But, as Alexander Nehamas points out, "this collection has become, for better or worse, an integral part of Nietzsche's literary and philosophical work" (Nehamas, p. 9). More importantly, Nehamas suggests that "*The Will to Power*, along with the rest of the material from Nietzsche's unpublished *Nachlass*, bear roughly the same relationship to his published works as a whole that these works bear to one another" (Nehamas, p. 10). There is a great deal of unevenness in the unpublished works, yet there is a considerable



amount of unevenness as well in the published works - nor are these 'systematic' or 'conventional' works in any traditional sense - and establishing any sort of priority between Nietzsche's texts, so diverse in subject and style, may be a hopeless task.

As a result, because I treat Nietzsche's works as a single text, I do quote extensively from *The Will to Power*. Nonetheless, I think there is good reason to be somewhat suspicious of an interpretation that relies chiefly on *The Will to Power*. Moreover, any interpretation that utilizes *The Will to Power* for sole support, but which is generally disconfirmed by the published works, seems to me dubious indeed. Accordingly, I do not hesitate to quote from *The Will to Power* where it illuminates an important point which can also be supported by the published works. In large part, I follow the general method of not using the unpublished notes to support any point which cannot also be supported by the published works.

At any rate, I treat all of Nietzsche's works as one element of the entire Nietzschean text. These works are available to all interpreters, and any interpretation must stand or fall on the basis of this common source.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe a debt of gratitude to the following people, all of whom, in some way or another, played an integral role in the completion of this thesis: John Tietz, for his unflinching honesty and encouragement, and for helping me stay grounded throughout the writing of this thesis; Bjorn Ramberg, for his general enthusiasm and his insightful suggestions on earlier drafts; Allan Richardson, for agreeing to be the external examiner and for encumbering himself with a copy of my thesis on his vacation.

In addition, I would like to thank Norman Swartz for his support throughout my time spent at SFU. Thanks are due to Merrily Allanson as well - her ability to remain composed in the midst of very confused people, e.g. *me*, never ceased to amaze. Thanks to Dennis Bevington for his general problem-solving assistance and for loaning me all those CDs.

I would also like to thank Professor David Goicoechea of Brock University, whose dedication convinced me that the study of philosophy was not only something for which I might have a knack, but something that was in and of itself worth pursuing.

A big ol' thank-you to A.J. Parry: it just wouldn't of been the same without him.

Finally, I thank my entire family - my mother and father, Pat and Wayne, my sister, Kelly, and my brother, Ted - they've been behind me all through my time at university, even though they weren't always sure just what exactly I was doing.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Title page</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Approval page</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Abstract</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Dedication</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Preface</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Acknowledgments</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>Texts and Abbreviations</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter One: Nietzsche As Correspondence Theorist</b>	<b>10</b>
<i>i.</i> Truth as Correspondence	10
<i>ii.</i> A 'Minimal Correspondence' Interpretation	16
<i>iii.</i> Perspectivism and Clark's Account	31
<i>iv.</i> Cahoon's Account	39
<b>Chapter Two: Antifoundationalism and Antirealism</b>	<b>48</b>
<i>i.</i> The Question of Truth's Value	49
<i>ii.</i> Truth and Foundationalism	55
<i>iii.</i> Nietzsche's Antirealism and The Epistemological Point	59
<i>iv.</i> Relativism and The Rejection of Correspondence	73
<b>Chapter Three: The Problem of Self-Referentiality</b>	<b>80</b>
<i>i.</i> The Deconstructive Model	81
<i>ii.</i> One Version of The Problem of Self-Referentiality	92
<i>iii.</i> A Second Version of The Problem of Self-Referentiality	100
<i>iv.</i> A Nietzschean Theory of Truth?	109
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>117</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>129</b>

## TEXTS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Nietzsche's works are cited in the text by abbreviation and by section number. References to *The Portable Nietzsche* are by page number.

- AC* *The Antichrist*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, pp. 568-656.
- BGE* *Beyond Good and Evil*. Trans., Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage, 1989.
- BT* *The Birth of Tragedy*. Trans., Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage, 1966.
- EC* *Ecce Homo*. Trans., Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage, 1989.
- GS* *The Gay Science*. Trans., Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage, 1974.
- HA* *Human, All Too Human*. Trans., R.J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- GM* *On The Genealogy of Morals*. Trans., Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage, 1989.
- PN* *The Portable Nietzsche*. Ed. and Trans., Walter Kaufmann. New York: Viking Penguin Inc., 1982.
- TSZ* *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, pp. 112-439.
- TI* *Twilight of the Idols*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, pp. 464-563.
- WP* *The Will to Power*. Ed., Walter Kaufmann. Trans., Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage, 1968.

## *Introduction*

In recent years, Nietzsche's view of truth has become the subject of much debate. In Nietzsche's case, however, interpreters do not merely disagree about the finer details of his position; there are significant disagreements about even the most fundamental aspects of his view. The published works are there for all to see, of course, but key and sometimes controversial passages are interpreted in widely different, even contrary ways by the many commentators. Nietzsche's notorious remark in the *Will To Power* (481) that "facts do not exist, only interpretations" - and many others like it - lies at the heart of the debate over Nietzsche's perspectivism. For this remark applies to Nietzsche's works themselves. One central area of debate, then, concerning Nietzsche's perspectivism is whether it generates a self-referential paradox. His view that there are no facts, only interpretations, leads to the inevitable objection that if it is true, then this view must also be an interpretation. But if perspectivism is itself an interpretation, then it need not be the case that every view is merely an interpretation. Hence, on this objection, perspectivism would appear to be self-refuting.

To be sure, if we are to extract anything of value from Nietzsche's works, we must come to terms with this apparent paradox. Nietzsche is adamant in his views about such things as truth, the self, morality and history - what are we to make of these views in light of the self-referential problem generated as a result of Nietzsche's perspectivism? Has Nietzsche contradicted himself by asserting that there are no facts and yet presenting his own views on these matters as true, i.e. as corresponding to the facts? Is Nietzsche's

perspectivism self-refuting? These questions, and a number of related problems and preliminary considerations, are what I will focus on in this thesis.

The various approaches to Nietzsche exegesis have produced several distinct 'schools' of thought on Nietzsche and, among other things, his perspectivism. Commentators traditionally describe these various schools - generally locating their own interpretation somewhere among them - before embarking on their own account. With due propriety, then, I too will proceed in this manner; but I should point out from the beginning that I have certain misgivings about doing so. One can broadly distinguish between 'traditional' interpretations of Nietzsche (exemplified by Walter Kaufmann) and more 'radical' interpretations (for example, Heidegger, Derrida and Deleuze). But such rigid labels, pigeon-holing all accounts into one of two opposing categories, seem not to do justice to the full range of Nietzsche interpretations.

Nevertheless, a general sketch of the exegetical landscape will be of some use. With respect to Nietzsche's perspectivism, there seem to be (at least) three main approaches that can be followed.<sup>1</sup> Some interpreters - in what amounts to, I will argue, a misrepresentation and dilution of Nietzsche's actual views - deny that Nietzsche rejects the traditional correspondence theory of truth. The intuition underlying the correspondence theory is that truth in some way consists of a correspondence between a statement, belief, etc., and some aspect of reality; truth *is* the property of corresponding with the facts (I will discuss the correspondence theory in greater detail in Chapters One and Two). On this reading, since Nietzsche does not deny that there are facts for our

---

<sup>1</sup> In elucidating the following three approaches, I borrow from Lawrence Cahoon's discussion in Chapter Five (pp. 184-185) of *The Ends Of Philosophy*.

theories to correspond to - for our 'truths' to correspond to - there is no contradiction, no problem of self-referentiality, involved in his presenting his own theories as true (i.e. as corresponding to the facts). Maudemarie Clark, for example, maintains that Nietzsche's rejection of truth, his view that 'truths are illusions', is restricted to his earliest works, most notably the 1873 essay "On Truth And Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense." The later Nietzsche, according to Clark, abandons the view that truths are illusions, i.e. he does not reject outright the correspondence theory. Rather, he rejects the Kantian *ding an sich*, the notion of a transcendent realm of unknowable metaphysical truth, but maintains what Clark terms a "common sense version of the correspondence theory" (Clark, p. 31).

This approach, however, while successfully acquitting Nietzsche of self-contradiction, would seem to be distinctively un-Nietzschean. Clark's interpretation manages to divest Nietzsche's perspectivism of its central and most important element - the rejection of the correspondence theory - and exhibits a persistent tendency to interpret Nietzsche in terms of concepts and categories which he expressly repudiates. Moreover, there does seem to be another way (which I will discuss later) in which to interpret Nietzsche's claims such that he does not end up in a mire of self-contradiction, and this alternative approach does not have the defect of attributing to Nietzsche views which are at odds with the spirit of his thought (this latter remark, admittedly vague, I will elucidate at some length in Chapters Two and Three). The key point of contention then concerns whether Nietzsche considers his views to be 'true' in the traditional sense of corresponding to the facts - Clark, and other interpreters who take this first approach,

maintain that he does. I, in contrast, will argue that, whatever cognitive criterion Nietzsche considers his position to meet, it is certainly not 'correspondence to facts'.

A second approach that has been followed is primarily evasive, if not downright disingenuous. One can affirm that there is a problem of self-referentiality in Nietzsche's work but simply maintain that this problem does not constitute a significant element of his thought and that it thus merits no great consideration. On this account, what matters most are, for example, Nietzsche's claims about the origin of moral values and his treatment and reevaluation of various traditional problems such as the concept of the self and the concept of causality. The problem of self-referentiality is thus something which must be navigated around in an examination of Nietzsche's positive views. This route would seem to be the one followed by, for example, Arthur Danto. According to Danto, Nietzsche was almost certainly aware of the problem of self-referentiality; however, nowhere does Nietzsche provide us with any reason to believe that he has a positive approach to solving the problem. Hence Danto concludes: "I do not believe that Nietzsche ever worked [the problem of self-referentiality] out" (Danto, p. 80).

This second approach simply avoids the problems of self-reference generated by Nietzsche's perspectivism. Interpretations such as Danto's do not deny Nietzsche's perspectivism, nor do they deny Nietzsche's rejection of the correspondence theory of truth. Given that one acknowledges Nietzsche's perspectivism, then, it is incumbent upon one to deal in some way or other with the problem of self-reference; it does not seem possible to remain agnostic on this score. For after all, if it is indeed the case that Nietzsche does not work the problem out, then it would certainly seem that he does fall



prey to a self-referential paradox. This second approach thus recognizes the problem of self-referentiality but does not engage it in any significant way. For this reason, I will focus more of my attention on the first approach than on this second one (however, as pointed out, since these are not hard and fast divisions, it will not always be a simple matter to say which 'approach' a given interpretation follows).

My own interpretation falls within the compass of the third approach to Nietzsche's perspectivist problem of self-referentiality. On this approach, one acknowledges that the apparent paradox is a result of Nietzsche's positive view, that it cannot be ignored or explained away, but engages with it in such a way as to discover whether it in fact is a genuine paradox, i.e. whether or not it does in fact amount to a self-refutation. A recognition of both Nietzsche's rejection of the traditional concept of truth and his antirealism is thus the distinguishing mark of this third approach. Because of this very recognition, however, there are two routes that might be pursued here.

One may embrace what I will call a 'correspondence interpretation'. This interpretation convicts Nietzsche of self-contradiction on the basis of the claim that he does hold that there are no facts, only interpretations (i.e. he *really does* reject truth), but that he presents this position not as an interpretation but as a truth, as corresponding to facts. This sort of correspondence interpretation differs from those of the sort exemplified by Clark in that, unlike the latter, it does hold that Nietzsche claims to be an antirealist and to reject the traditional concept of truth - and, consequently, that he ultimately contradicts himself. Accounts such as Clark's, by contrast, offer a far more pedestrian

reading of Nietzsche's entire project: they interpret Nietzsche as a correspondence theorist and a realist through and through (at least in his later writings).

The correspondence interpretation offered by the third sort of approach thus recognizes the revolutionary nature of Nietzsche's various critiques of metaphysics and morality, but recognizes no way in which he can avoid a self-referential paradox. A recent book by Lawrence Cahoon, *The Ends of Philosophy*, offers just such an interpretation of Nietzsche. Cahoon's conclusion is that Nietzsche "pursued the ends of philosophy recklessly into contradiction" (Cahoon, p. 158). Nietzsche, claims Cahoon, repudiates the traditional correspondence theory of truth in favour of perspectivism; nevertheless, Nietzsche takes his views on the self, morality, etc., to be *true* (in the traditional sense). I will argue against accounts such as Cahoon's. Cahoon's account has the merit, unlike accounts which follow the first general approach described above, of acknowledging, to a certain extent, Nietzsche's unabashed rejection of truth as correspondence and his antirealism; yet it has the defect of not carrying far enough the analysis of this rejection. That is, having acknowledged that Nietzsche rejects the traditional realist framework within which theories of truth have traditionally been developed, there is no reason to suppose that the conception of truth (the *standards* of truth) that he employs thereafter appeals to that very same realist framework. Indeed, it could be to interpreters of this sort to whom Nietzsche's remark that "they are far from being *free* spirits: *for they still have faith in truth*" (*GM*, III, 24) is directed. The traditional conception of truth and its concomitant realist notions as well are subject to Nietzsche's grand 'revaluation of all values'.

My account will thus follow a model of interpretation not unlike that followed by Alexander Nehamas (and followed - in one form or another - by other interpreters as well, e.g. Deleuze, Macintyre, Winchester). This interpretive approach maintains that the apparent self-referential paradox is precisely that - *apparent*. Nietzsche does not make an illicit appeal to the very realist concept of truth he rejects in order to support his views. His view amounts to one interpretation; the standard applied to this interpretation is not a correspondence standard but if anything an *aesthetic* standard (based on aesthetic criteria). Nietzsche's writing presents us with a character, a personality, as it were. The interpretation offered by this character is to be evaluated by aesthetic standards of unity, form, etc. Particularly suggestive here is Nietzsche's claim that "one thing is needful - to 'give style' to one's character - a great and rare art" (*GS*, 290).

Although I believe that the prospects for a comprehensive account of Nietzsche's positive views depend on such an aesthetic model, it will not be my objective to offer an account of Nietzsche's aestheticism here.<sup>2</sup> My objective, rather, might be characterized as a negative one. That is, I want to establish what it is that Nietzsche *rejects* and what views he does *not* adhere to. Given the disagreement between many prominent commentators on even these most fundamental aspects of his views, such a project is both useful and required.

My primary aim in the first chapter - after a brief discussion of the correspondence theory of truth - will be to trace out the salient points of two recent interpretations of Nietzsche's perspectivism, viz. the interpretations offered by Clark and Cahoon. By

---

<sup>2</sup> Nehamas makes some important progress in this direction, but even his discussion is still far too brief and suggestive.

providing such an exposition I will, first, try to ensure that these prominent commentators are given their due, as it were, and that their views are accurately represented. Secondly, I want to provide a context within which to situate the discussions of the next chapters.

Each of the next two chapters will then present and discuss a major respect in which these two central interpretations misrepresent Nietzsche. Chapter Two will focus primarily on Nietzsche's antifoundationalism and, most importantly, his antirealism. Accordingly, the central focus here will be on the sort of interpretation offered by (among others) Clark, although the discussion of the chapter will have implications as well for the type of interpretation which Cahoone offers. The thrust of this second chapter will be to establish Nietzsche's antirealism with respect to truth and to demonstrate how profoundly this antirealism is misrepresented by 'correspondence' interpretations.

In Chapter Three I will discuss the manner in which the sorts of interpretations offered by Cahoone and Clark err with respect to the problem of self-referentiality generated by Nietzsche's perspectivism. Having established, in the second chapter, the antirealist context within which the problem of self-referentiality is to be resolved, I will present in this chapter a model with which we can interpret Nietzsche's various critiques and evaluations. If we construe Nietzsche as proceeding in accordance with the sort of model suggested, it will become evident how it is that he can present his own views - and label particular interpretations 'true' or 'false' - without thereby falling victim to a problem of self-referentiality.

It should be stressed that this thesis is primarily non-evaluative with respect to Nietzsche's position on truth and his perspectivism. That is, I do not evaluate the validity

of, for example, Nietzsche's rejection of the correspondence theory or of his deconstructive approach. My concern is to identify in what respects the commentators in question misinterpret Nietzsche; I therefore consider and discuss Nietzsche's views to the extent that it is necessary to demonstrate the faults of these commentators. Although an extensive consideration and evaluation of Nietzsche's positive views is of course of the utmost importance, such an evaluation can be carried out only after those views themselves have been set out in a comprehensive, accurate account. Although I cannot embark on such an extensive account in the present study, I do hope to have completed some of the preparatory work requisite for such an account.

## *Chapter One - Nietzsche As Correspondence Theorist*

The thrust of this first chapter is primarily expository. My objective is to set out in some detail the interpretations which will be the focus of discussion and criticism in the second and third chapters. I will not, and cannot, however, examine every aspect of the interpretations in question; rather, I will concentrate on those elements that are of immediate relevance for the questions pertaining to Nietzsche's perspectivism with which I am concerned here. Moreover, I will devote considerably more discussion to Clark's account of Nietzsche's treatment of truth since I will argue that her account in particular represents a paradigmatic misrepresentation of Nietzsche. The interpretations in question, and much of the subsequent discussion in this thesis, often make reference to the concept of truth as correspondence, hence this first chapter opens with a brief discussion of the notion of correspondence.

### *i. Truth As Correspondence*

The roots of the correspondence theory of truth can be traced back as far as the *Metaphysics* and Aristotle's famous dictum that "to say of what is that it is, or of what is not that it is not, is true" (1011b). To some extent, the various versions of the correspondence theory have all incorporated this Aristotelian notion - this correspondence intuition - as their guiding principle. Common to the various correspondence theories is the view that a statement, proposition, belief, etc. is true if what it is supposed to correspond to in fact obtains.

Throughout the history of modern philosophy, the correspondence theory has been subjected to an immense amount of criticism, and it is not entirely clear that even at present a thoroughly satisfactory development of the correspondence intuition has been offered. Two principal tasks - and problems - that present themselves to the correspondence theorist are: (1) to account for the two elements of the correspondence, i.e. to explain just what it is that is a 'fact' and just what it is that is the bearer of truth, and (2) to explain the nature of the correspondence itself. Although these two principal requirements can be distinguished for the purpose of discussion, they are in fact intimately involved one with the other - one task involves the other.

The now generally dismissed (although for years widely influential) Russellian formulation (circa 1912), for example, cites *beliefs* as the bearers of truth. Hence Russell maintains that "truth consists in some form of correspondence between belief and fact" (Russell, p. 121). Beliefs correspond to 'associated complexes' - unities consisting of the objects of the act of belief. Take, for example, Othello's (false) belief that Desdemona loves Cassio. Provided that there is a complex unity - viz. 'Desdemona's love for Cassio' - then Othello believes truly. That is, if the terms 'Desdemona' and 'Cassio' are placed in a particular order (by the relation *loving*) in a complex unity *and* the two terms are placed in the same order in the belief, then the belief is true.

The early Wittgenstein, in his 'picture' theory, agrees with much of the Russellian schema. In the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922), Wittgenstein conceives of truth as a correspondence between propositions and states-of-affairs, reality. "A proposition can be true only in virtue of being a picture of reality" (*Tractatus*, 4.06). Moreover, "what is

the case - a fact - is the existence of states-of-affairs'' (*Tractatus*, 2). On this more sophisticated formulation, the constituents of a proposition represent various entities in the world - the constituents of a (possible) fact in the world are the referents of the constituents of the proposition. Only if such a fact exists is the proposition or statement true.

Setting aside the obvious major difficulty with such correspondence theories - namely, that the *nature* of the correspondence is not at all clear - it should be noted that they involve the adherence to an ontological category of fact. If what a proposition 'depicts' is a fact existing in the world, then that proposition is true. The correspondence theorist might opt for a different approach, however. One might, as Paul Horwich puts it, "define truth in terms of reference and predicate-satisfaction without importing the notions of fact and structure [i.e. the notions involved in the Wittgensteinian 'picture' theory]" (Horwich, p. 9). The correspondence theorist might adopt, for example, the well-known Tarskian formulation in (among other papers) "The Concept of Truth in Formalized Languages" (1935) and "The Semantic Conception of Truth and the Foundations of Semantics" (1944). Tarski's formulation makes no appeal to *facts* or *logical structures*; rather, it specifies the satisfaction conditions of various predicates.

Tarski's theory - it must be noted - is not itself a 'correspondence' theory; adopting the Tarskian formulation need not necessarily commit one to a correspondence theory of truth (indeed, this has been considered one of its chief merits). I introduce it at this point, rather, as a formulation which *might* be appropriated as an element of a realist, correspondence account of truth (but it is not restricted to such accounts). Tarski offers a



definition of truth, i.e. he offers an account of what we *mean* when we say that a particular sentence is true. First of all, when defining truth, we must define it in terms of truth in some particular language (say language L). Tarski's goal then is to specify the conditions under which any sentence in a particular formal language, L, is true. One of the chief stumbling-blocks of traditional correspondence theories of truth is the preoccupation with what it is that *makes* a sentence (or whatever is the bearer of truth) true. This preoccupation is restricted in part by a concern with the question of how we can know whether a particular sentence is true. But these metaphysical and epistemological preoccupations, important in and of themselves, have been confused with the question of what truth is, or what it means to say of a sentence that it is true. This latter, semantic, question is the one that concerns Tarski.

In addition to clearing aside some of the theoretical confusion surrounding this epistemological/metaphysical/semantic distinction, a significant development made by Tarski is that he rids himself of much of the metaphysical baggage of traditional correspondence theories. Rather than attempting to offer an account of the ontologically loaded term 'correspondence', Tarski offers an account of satisfaction; he offers an account of the satisfaction conditions for sentences of a formal language. Tarski's theory is thus a theory of truth in L, as opposed to simply a 'theory of truth'. Now, "if we wish to say something about a sentence, for example that it is true, we must use the name of this sentence, and not the sentence itself" (Tarski (1944), p. 50). Hence we take an arbitrary sentence, replacing it with the letter '*p*', and we take the name of that sentence and replace it with the letter '*X*'. The question now concerns the logical relation between

the sentences 'X is true' and 'p' (cf. Tarski (1944), p. 50). The conclusion, which follows from our intuitive notion of truth, is that these sentences are equivalent. Hence we arrive at the following biconditional:

X is true if and only if p

Biconditionals of this form are Tarski's well-known T-sentences, or what Tarski dubs 'equivalences of the form T'. A set of rules which provides a T-sentence for every sentence of L, is a theory of truth for language L. Such a theory fulfils the requirements of what Tarski calls Convention T. A theory of this sort tells us what we mean by saying that a particular sentence of the object language is true.

Tarski's formulation then avoids (or, depending on one's perspective, fails to answer) the epistemological problem of how we know whether a particular sentence is true, of how particular theories of truth can be tested. Moreover, it is important to note that this formulation, on Tarski's view, is applicable only to formalized languages.<sup>1</sup> A more detailed discussion of the Tarskian account and the issues surrounding it, however, lies beyond the purview of this chapter. My goal here is simply, through this cursory discussion of the correspondence theory and Tarski's advancements on it, to make it clear what is being attributed to Nietzsche by those interpreters who dub him a correspondence theorist, or by those interpreters who maintain that he holds to a sort of Tarskian equivalence principle.

---

<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, Donald Davidson maintains that the Tarskian model for formalized languages can be appropriated in arriving at a theory of truth (or theory of meaning) for a natural language. In particular, Davidson takes issue with Tarski's claim that we would have to reform a natural language beyond recognition in order to apply to it this formal model (see, for example, "Truth and Meaning," *Synthese*, vol. 17, 1967 and *Inquiries Into Truth and Interpretation*, Oxford University Press, 1984).

Throughout the text, then, I will refer to ‘the correspondence theory’, or to ‘truth as correspondence’. With these general terms, I mean to refer to any theory (such as the ones mentioned above) which adheres to the following two claims (Horwich succinctly sets these out): “(a) that truths correspond to reality; and (b) that such correspondence is what truth essentially is” (Horwich, p. 124). Moreover, in what follows I will often make the claim that Nietzsche rejects the correspondence theory. By this claim I mean that (and I will elaborate upon the following in Chapter Two), although Nietzsche need not deny our right to locutions invoking the idea of a correspondence between our judgements and reality he does deny that we have, by such locutions, said anything informative. He is, we might say, committed to the view that correspondence *does not* constitute the essence of truth (i.e., he rejects (b) above). But ultimately, Nietzsche is not in the business of finding ‘essences’; his point is that the very realist vocabulary of the correspondence theory must be rejected. He does not repudiate the correspondence theory because it picks out the wrong thing as the essence of truth, but rather because it employs a fundamentally misguided metaphysical framework. Nietzsche’s point is that “what mankind has so far considered seriously have not even been realities but mere imaginings” (“Why I Am So Clever,” 10, *EH*). ‘Essence’, ‘fact’, ‘correspondence’, as far as Nietzsche is concerned, are no better of than ‘truth’, and he rejects the correspondence criterion of truth because it is indicative of a general framework which he seeks to overcome.

In keeping with this rejection, Nietzsche does not present his own views on morality, Christianity, the self, etc., as true in the correspondence sense. For Nietzsche,

'correspondence to the facts' has no currency as a definition of, as the essence of, 'truth'. The notion of truth is 'revaluated', the very value of truth questioned (*BGE*, 1), and Nietzsche quite happily offers theories which are not concerned with correspondence as the criterion of their acceptability. Thus we find Nietzsche proclaiming such things as: "Do you know what the 'world' is *to me*?" (*WP*, 1067), "*my truth* is terrible" and "supposing also that this is only an interpretation - Well, so much the better" (*BGE*, 22). But when Nietzsche makes statements such as the following, it is clearly the notion that the essence of truth is correspondence to facts that he is railing against: "For a philosopher to say, 'the good and the beautiful are one', is infamy; if he goes on to add, 'also the true', one ought to thrash him" (*WP*, 822). The preceding remarks, however, and similar remarks which I will make throughout this chapter, merely anticipate the more detailed discussions of Chapters Two and Three.

## ii. A 'Minimal Correspondence' Interpretation

I have dubbed accounts of Nietzsche's perspectivism such as Clark's and Cahoone's 'correspondence' interpretations for the sole reason that both types of accounts maintain that Nietzsche considers his perspectivist account of truth to be 'true' in the traditional sense of corresponding to facts. Apart from this common view, Clark's and Cahoone's accounts have very little in common. The correspondence interpretation taken by Clark holds that Nietzsche does not reject the correspondence theory of truth and that it is therefore perfectly legitimate for him to present his views as true employing a notion of truth as correspondence. By contrast, Cahoone takes Nietzsche's alleged claims about

the 'truth' of his doctrines as proof that Nietzsche enmeshes himself hopelessly in a web of self-contradiction - since Nietzsche does purport to reject the traditional notion of truth as correspondence. Clark takes Nietzsche's adherence to the correspondence theory to acquit him of self-contradiction; Cahoon cites it in order to convict him of self-contradiction.

Clark does not claim that Nietzsche maintains an allegiance to a metaphysical correspondence theory of truth. In keeping with Kaufmann's seminal interpretation of Nietzsche,<sup>2</sup> she takes Nietzsche to ultimately reject the notion of transcendent truth, since the transcendence of truth depends upon the notion of the Kantian *ding an sich*, the thing-in-itself. What Nietzsche does adhere to, however, is a '*minimal* correspondence theory'; he denies metaphysical truth but affirms empirical truth. Hence, Nietzsche's supposed denial of truth is merely a denial of metaphysical or transcendent truth - a denial of truth as correspondence to things in-themselves - and not of empirical truth or, in Kantian terms, phenomenal truth. With this interpretive model in place, we can now take Nietzsche to be presenting his views about history, the ascetic ideal, the self and so forth as true - as true in virtue of their representation of some feature of reality - *without* contradiction. Nietzsche does not undermine his own views in presenting them as true in this realist sense, since he does not deny truth as correspondence as such but, rather, only a metaphysical correspondence theory of truth.

Clark suggests that:

---

<sup>2</sup> For Kaufmann's discussion of Nietzsche's rejection of the phenomenon/noumenon distinction, see, for example, Kaufmann, pp. 107-108, p. 206, pp. 302-303 and pp. 306-309.

We have two different conceptions of truth as correspondence: the minimal version, which combines the [Tarskian] equivalence principle with common sense or ontological realism, and the metaphysical version, which combines the minimal version with metaphysical realism. (Clark, p. 41)

If one is a 'metaphysical realist', one holds that reality is something-in-itself - that it is structured independently of human beings. Truths correspond to reality in-itself and may transcend our limited cognitive capacities and hence remain independent of what we can *know* to be true (yet such truths are, in principle, available to us). However, for the metaphysical realist, truth is also independent of our cognitive interests. Truth is independent of what we could ever want from a theory of truth, "is independent not only of what *we* could in principle have reason to accept, but also of what any conceivable intelligence could have reason to accept, given *our* best standards of rational acceptability" (Clark, p. 48). The reason for this independence is that what is true corresponds to or is representative of reality in-itself; reality in-itself is not even in principle knowable by us. Even if our cognitive capacities were not limited in the way that they are, metaphysical truth would not be accessible to us since truth is also independent of our cognitive interests - the reach of our *capacities* becomes irrelevant.

A minimal correspondence theorist rejects this metaphysical realism (is opposed to metaphysical realism but is a common sense realist). Certainly, as will become evident, Nietzsche rejects metaphysical realism, hence *if* he is a correspondence theorist, the only version to which he can adhere is the minimal theory. Clark maintains that Nietzsche adheres to a common sense realism<sup>3</sup> and that he accepts the equivalence principle; thus,

---

<sup>3</sup> Clark uses the labels 'common sense realism', 'ontological realism' and 'empirical realism' interchangeably, and I follow her in this usage. These different labels then, when found in the text, should be understood in the present context as denoting the same position.

he holds to a minimal correspondence theory. But *is Nietzsche a 'common sense' realist?* The question concerning Nietzsche's alleged realism is more than a mere quibbling over terminology. A common sense realist, Clark maintains, holds that reality exists independent of us but that its nature is not "determinately constituted independently of us" (Clark, p. 41). So, for example, the concept of causality might depend upon our cognitive constitution, but the fact that it is raining outside right now is not causally dependent on me. The framework which posits a reality with a determinate ontological structure remains firmly intact. Hence, if one maintains a minimal correspondence theory, one must maintain that reality has a determinate nature in virtue of which our beliefs, propositions, etc., are true. His adherence to this common sense realism, Clark concludes, "commit[s] Nietzsche to understanding truth as correspondence" (Clark, p. 40). However, I will argue (in Chapter Two) that Nietzsche does not maintain that reality has a determinate construction or nature - in fact, he vigorously maintains quite the opposite. This does not mean that he is an idealist, however, but rather that he rejects the entire realist framework of ontological structure, representation, etc.

Nevertheless, Clark's account does have the obvious merit of presenting us with a self-consistent Nietzsche (i.e. with a Nietzsche who does not reject the correspondence theory and who is hence free to present his views as true in the realist sense of corresponding to the facts). But, it also presents us with a Nietzsche who does not understand the implications of his own positions (surely an oddity for this most self-conscious of authors). Certainly, as Clark points out, Nietzsche does reject the traditional conception of truth as correspondence in his early writings. Nietzsche's most vehement

early attack on truth can be found in the 1873 essay, “On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense” in which, for example, Nietzsche remarks that “truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are” (*PN*, p. 47). At this point, Nietzsche considers such seeming truths as mere metaphors, customary ways in which we make sense of the world; but these metaphors have become so engrained in our consciousness that we have forgotten that they are mere metaphors or representations - designated ways of categorizing the chaos of our sense data and the phenomenal world. But, claims Clark, Nietzsche cannot maintain this denial of truth if he in fact rejects metaphysics and the Kantian thing-in-itself, since his view in this early essay in fact *commits* him to the existence of metaphysical truth and the thing-in-itself.

The early Nietzsche does indeed maintain an adherence to a sort of Schopenhaurian representationalism. Our cognitive and perceptual powers are finite; we can only base our knowledge of the world upon our best theories - theories which depend upon our cognitive interests and constitution (or what Clark calls our ‘best standards for theory selection’). But because of the limitations of our finite cognitive abilities, we can never be certain that our theories are correct or true, i.e. we cannot know if they correspond to an object that, because of our finite capacities, forever remains in principle inaccessible to us. Objects themselves are thus veiled, even distorted, through our representations of them. Hence Nietzsche states that what we desire are “the agreeable life-preserving consequences of truth, but [we are] indifferent to pure knowledge, which has no consequences” (*PN*, p. 45).



Our best theories thus correspond only to these 'life-preserving consequences' and not to the object in itself. For this reason Nietzsche claims that our so-called truths are actually deceptions, illusions. For a belief to be 'true', then, it must correspond to the object hidden behind our representations - it must correspond to the thing-in-itself. So, Clark concludes, despite the claims of many interpreters, Nietzsche does not reject metaphysical truth in this early essay, although he takes himself to be doing just this, but rather commits himself to a thoroughly Kantian view of truth - a view on which actual correspondence to the *ding an sich* remains the essence of truth but on which our human preoccupation with the objects of experience characterizes the concepts of truth and representation in terms of the objectivity of experience. Nietzsche's "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense" "accepts metaphysical realism in precisely the sense in which Nietzsche would later reject it" (Clark, p. 86). Because Nietzsche rejects phenomenal truths - declares the truths of experience to be illusions - on the basis of the representationalism he adopts from Kant via Schopenhauer, he unwittingly commits himself to metaphysical realism and the metaphysical version of the correspondence theory of truth. That is, the 'falsity' of experience, of phenomenal 'truths', can be established only in relation to noumenal truth, to truth as correspondence to the *ding an sich*.

Clark then proceeds to trace out the development of Nietzsche's position on truth. The mature Nietzsche no longer maintains this Kantian position on truth; rather, the later Nietzsche holds what Clark calls a 'neo-Kantian' view of truth. Nietzsche eventually abandons his denial of phenomenal truth, according to Clark, because he recognizes that

such a denial depends upon an adherence to the existence of a thing-in-itself relative to which the phenomenal world will always be 'false'. Since the later Nietzsche denies the existence of the thing-in-itself and transcendent truth, the denial of phenomenal truth must be abandoned (i.e., he must be a common sense realist with respect to truth). In books such as *The Gay Science* and *Beyond Good and Evil* (books which represent different stages in his thought), however, Nietzsche continues to reject the traditional notion of truth<sup>4</sup> while at the same time denying the existence of the thing-in-itself. Pointing this out might appear to present a stumbling-block for Clark's account; after all, her account rests on the view that Nietzsche abandons his rejection of truth upon rejecting the notion of the thing-in-itself. Clark's response to this objection is the manifestly implausible claim that "it took Nietzsche some time to realize that his denial of truth depended on the assumption of a thing-in-itself" (Clark, p. 109).

There are several important questions that are suggested at this point. First, is it the case that one cannot reject both the traditional notion of truth *and* the notion of the thing-in-itself - are these two positions necessarily inconsistent with one another? If the answer to this first question is negative, as it would seem to be, then the second question arises whether *Nietzsche's* rejection of truth depends upon the assumption of a thing-in-itself. Certainly, the implication in his early writing is that it does; but this early essay, however suggestive, does not represent Nietzsche's mature position - and that is what we are primarily concerned with here. Is it not as plausible to claim that Nietzsche's

---

<sup>4</sup> Throughout the text, I use the label 'the traditional notion of truth'. While there is of course no *one* traditional theory of truth, I employ this admittedly vague label as short form for theories of truth which maintain any sort of adherence to the notion of truth as correspondence and which adhere to any sort of realist (metaphysical or otherwise) position with respect to truth.

'development' consisted in his realization that his position on truth had to be strengthened and clarified and that he must make it clear that he rejected the notion of the thing-in-itself, as well as the traditional (metaphysical and common sense) realist notion of truth?

Such a view would certainly explain the fact that Nietzsche maintains his rejection of truth in works in which he also repudiates the idea of the thing-in-itself. This view also presents us with the challenge of understanding what form Nietzsche's reevaluation of truth takes; what are Nietzsche's new criteria, his new standards of 'truth' (if no longer correspondence to facts)? Such an interpretation forces us to come to terms with the radical nature of Nietzsche's position; but it is surely as plausible as an interpretation which asks us to accept the view that Nietzsche's on-going denial of truth was simply a mistake - something which he really did not intend to maintain - which he merely needed some time to recognize.

Clark constructs, nonetheless, a formidable case for her correspondence interpretation. The key to Nietzsche's development, she points out, is Nietzsche's realization that the very idea of a thing-in-itself is a contradiction in terms. In *Beyond Good and Evil* 16 Nietzsche declares: "that 'immediate certainty', as well as 'absolute knowledge' and the 'thing-in-itself' involve a *contradictio in adjecto*, I shall repeat a hundred times." Although it takes Nietzsche until 1886 to make this explicit declaration, there are allusions to the self-contradictory nature of the idea of a thing-in-itself as early as 1882 in the early but transitional work, *The Gay Science*. Even as early as 1878 in *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche begins to exhibit a certain agnosticism regarding the existence of a thing-in-itself and hence regarding metaphysical realism with respect to

truth. There he states that “it is true that there might be a metaphysical world; the absolute possibility of it can hardly be disputed” (HA, 9).

In maintaining that there *might* be a metaphysically determinate world, Nietzsche still, Clark maintains, commits himself in a sense to the existence of a thing-in-itself. The implication here is that the truth might be different from our best empirical theory - that the truth might be independent of both our cognitive capacities and our cognitive interests (“in the sense that what would satisfy our best standards of rational acceptability might still be false” (Clark, p. 98)). The upshot of this view - i.e. the view that there is a thing-in-itself - is the position that all of our beliefs, our ‘truths’, might be false. But the belief in a thing-in-itself must be distinguished from the belief in a metaphysical world.<sup>5</sup> If one believes in a metaphysical world, Clark explains, one holds to the much stronger position that our best empirical theory *is* false - that the truth *does* differ from our cognitive interests and is beyond our cognitive capacities. As Clark explains it:

There is a metaphysical world only if truth differs radically from what human beings can know (empirically), whereas the world is a thing-in-itself if (as far as we can tell from our concept of truth) its true nature *might* differ radically from the best human theory of it. (Clark, p. 99)

This distinction is utilized by Clark principally to illustrate Nietzsche’s growing agnosticism with respect to his earlier rejection of truth. In “On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense,” Nietzsche maintains the existence of a metaphysical world. Belief in a metaphysical world presupposes belief in the thing-in-itself, but belief in the thing-in-itself does not entail belief in a metaphysical world. The distinction between a

---

<sup>5</sup> Although such a distinction might seem somewhat nebulous, Clark utilizes it in her account of the development of Nietzsche’s position on truth. Nothing I wish to establish turns on arguing for such a distinction - I merely discuss the distinction in order to present Clark’s interpretation.

metaphysical world and a thing-in-itself gives us a way of conceiving of “truth as correspondence to the thing-in-itself that affirms the ability of empirical science to give us truth” (Clark, p. 99). The fact, Clark argues, that Nietzsche, in *Human, All Too Human*, begins to doubt the existence of a metaphysical world shows that he is beginning to have second thoughts about his early rejection of empirical truth.

In *Human, All Too Human*, then, Nietzsche maintains a belief in a thing-in-itself but not in a metaphysical world. Nietzsche’s falsification thesis at this point thus amounts to the view that all our beliefs *might* be false - not the much stronger view (held in “On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense” as a result of Nietzsche’s adherence to the existence of a metaphysical world) that all our beliefs *are* false. Clark asserts that because he has begun to equivocate on the existence of a thing-in-itself, Nietzsche’s falsification thesis (his view that all our so-called truths are ‘illusions’) has become somewhat “watered-down.” Hence, Clark concludes, once he rejects outright the notion of a thing-in-itself, he must also abandon his denial of truth. What Nietzsche is moving towards, then - as illustrated in the progression from “On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense” to *Human, All Too Human* - is a rejection of metaphysical truth and the thing-in-itself. We might say then that, in these early stages, Nietzsche’s position on empirical truth is inversely proportional to his position on metaphysical truth - the more he doubts the possibility of metaphysical truth, the more he affirms the possibility of empirical truth.

But the position of *Human, All Too Human* “remains incompatible with the neo-Kantian rejection of metaphysical truth” (Clark, p. 99). Because he has not yet found a

way to deny outright the thing-in-itself, Nietzsche, claims Clark, cannot say for sure that there is no metaphysical world. In *The Gay Science*, however, Nietzsche reaches the point where he overcomes his agnosticism and is prepared to reject the notion of metaphysical truth and the idea of the thing-in-itself:

What is "appearance" for me now? Certainly not the opposite of some essence: what could I say about any essence except to name the attributes of its appearance! Certainly not a dead mask that one could place on an unknown *x* or remove from it! (*GS*, 54)

The argument implicit in this passage would seem to be that we can only conceive of the 'essence' of some thing in terms of its appearance - in terms of its phenomenal attributes - and that if this is the case, then we cannot conceive of the 'essence' of something *at all*. Ultimately, Nietzsche here questions the coherence of the very 'appearance/reality' distinction as it is employed in providing content to the notion of metaphysical essences. Hence the very idea of a thing-in-itself, of an essence behind the phenomenon, *and* the very dichotomy which this implies, is incoherent.

Having divested himself of the thing-in-itself, Clark concludes, Nietzsche can now affirm the existence of phenomenal truth:

Nietzsche's mature position is not Kantian, but neo-Kantian. Nietzsche rejects the conceivability of things-in-themselves and therefore rejects metaphysical realism altogether. His view of truth corresponds to Kant's view of truth about phenomenal reality. (Clark, p. 86)

Since it is not a point of contention between myself and Clark, I am willing to grant that *GS* 54 does represent an outright rejection of the thing-in-itself, of the notion of metaphysical 'essence'. It is with respect to the implications of this rejection that I disagree with Clark. As Clark points out, there is now no reason for Nietzsche to consider truth as correspondence to things-in-themselves and, thus, no reason for him to evaluate the truth or falsity of our beliefs in terms of such a correspondence. This is all

well and good; it is, however, Clark's conclusion that "Nietzsche would therefore lose the basis for TL's ["On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense"] denial of truth and should admit that many of our beliefs are true" (Clark, p. 102) with which I will take issue. I will argue against Clark's claim that Nietzsche abandons his rejection of a realist/correspondence theory of truth after rejecting the notion of the *ding an sich*.

Clark thus sets out to show that "following [*Beyond Good and Evil*], there is no evidence of Nietzsche's earlier denial of truth" and that in the later writings there is not to be found "any remnant of TL's denial of truth" (Clark, p. 103). These are strong claims indeed, but they do not stand up to a thorough examination of Nietzsche's later works. These works contain extensive expressions of his perspectivism - and the abandonment of the traditional realist notion of truth as correspondence can only be made sense of within the context of Nietzsche's perspectivism.

At any rate, Clark, in support of her account, claims that Nietzsche no longer holds to his falsification thesis; he no longer maintains that our 'truths' (for example, the principles of the various so-called hard sciences) falsify reality. In the *Antichrist*, Nietzsche actually lauds science as "the wisdom of the world" (AC, 47) and in section 59 he praises the "sense for facts," calling it the "last and most valuable sense." Exactly what insights we are to extract from such praise, however, is unclear; certainly such passages do not contradict the claim that Nietzsche rejects the traditional notion of truth. A 'sense for facts' might be of value in a variety of ways, and we need not assume that such statements represent an allegiance to a strict correspondence theory of truth and a commitment to the ontological categories of "facts," or "states of affairs."

Clark does take into consideration particular passages that seem, on the surface, to be counterexamples to her thesis. Of particular importance is the section in *Twilight Of The Idols* entitled "How the 'True World' Finally Became a Fable," a section that appears to constitute significant evidence against Clark's interpretation. In this section, Nietzsche recounts six different stages of thought concerning the 'true' world. At each stage, there is a contrast set up between the 'true' or 'real' world and the illusory world or the world of appearances. The views represented in the first three sections are those of Platonism, Christianity and Kantianism. At the end of the third stage, we have the 'world' as it is conceived of in the Kantian phenomenal/noumenal dichotomy; the thing-in-itself is set over against the world of appearance and the true world - the noumenal realm - as such is inaccessible to human cognition.

Clark's argues that the next three stages of this section represent the development of Nietzsche's own position. Indeed, there is some merit to this argument. The subsequent stages display the general questioning of this notion of a 'true world' (as opposed to an apparent world). Hence the fourth stage:

The true world - unattainable? At any rate, unattained. And being unattained, also *unknown*.  
Consequently, not consoling, redeeming, or obligating: how could something unknown obligate us?

Clark interprets this stage as corresponding to Nietzsche's position in *Human, All Too Human*, in which Nietzsche, while not rejecting metaphysical truth, at least begins to question it, and thus does not find our 'truths' to be necessarily illusory. The fifth stage - in which it is declared, "[the 'true world'], a refuted idea, let us abolish it!" - corresponds then to Clark's account of Nietzsche's position in books such as *The Gay Science* and *Beyond Good and Evil*, in which, because he does not recognize the



implications of his rejection of the thing-in-itself, Nietzsche rejects both metaphysical *and* empirical truth. Nietzsche concludes the section with the following declaration:

The true world - we have abolished. What world has remained? The apparent one perhaps? But no!  
*With the true world we have also abolished the apparent one.*

It is agreed almost without exception that Nietzsche would consider stage 6 to be an expression of his own philosophy - but how that stage itself should be understood is a more controversial matter. Stage 6, claims Clark, "brings the realization that we can consider the empirical world illusory only if we ascribe "true being" to another world" (Clark, p. 113). Clark takes Nietzsche's unequivocal rejection of a 'true', i.e. metaphysical, world to entail an abandonment of his rejection, or revaluation, of truth.

Clark's interpretation of stage 6 is compelling; but it follows only if one grants her the premise that Nietzsche's rejection of the traditional notion of truth depends on his commitment to the existence of a thing-in-itself. Certainly, *if* it is the case that Nietzsche's critique of truth depends upon the thing-in-itself, his rejection of the thing-in-itself would involve an abandonment of his critique of truth. But we need not grant Clark this premise. Indeed, I want to argue that, far from being - as Clark suggests - somewhat unsure about the implications of his own writings, it was Nietzsche's intention to reject *both* the existence of the thing-in-itself and the traditional realist concept of truth. Although obviously intimately interrelated, the two parts of this objective are not connected in the manner in which Clark suggests they are.

In discussing "How The 'True World' Finally Became A Fable," Clark makes the point that "to deny the true world is not to deny truth" (Clark, p. 114). Thus, all those interpreters who take Nietzsche's rejection of the 'true world' to be a rejection of 'truth'

as such are leaping to an unwarranted conclusion. But, and Clark does not seriously consider this, just as the 'true world' is not equivalent to 'truth', so 'truth' is not equivalent to 'corresponding to facts'. In light of this, I suggest that when, as proof of Nietzsche's abandonment of his rejection of the traditional notion of truth, Clark cites the first section of *On The Genealogy of Morals*, she is conflating 'true' and 'corresponding to the facts'. When Nietzsche rejects truth, he makes it quite clear that he rejects the traditional, correspondence theory of truth. The fact that the word 'truth' continues to appear in his writing afterwards does not therefore mean that he has contradicted himself; it suggests rather that he has submitted the concept to a revaluation - as he does many concepts - and is now using the term in a new sense. Thus, when Nietzsche states that we must sacrifice ourselves to "every truth, even plain, harsh, ugly, repellent, unchristian, immoral truth - for such truths do exist" (*GM*, I, 1) - we must pause to consider exactly what is here meant by 'truth'. That truth is now referred to as something which can be ugly, immoral, etc., suggests that we are already dealing with a different notion of 'truth' than that of either correspondence or metaphysical determinacy.

That we ought to be cautious in our understanding of Nietzsche's use of the term 'truth' seems to be attested to by his proclamation in *Ecce Homo* that "the truth speaks out of me - But *my* truth is *terrible*; for so far one has called lies truth" ("Why I Am A Destiny," 1, *EC*). It seems highly unlikely that Nietzsche's terrible 'truth' is merely that there is no thing-in-itself - Nietzsche's claims suggest something far more revolutionary than simply that. The preceding is merely an anticipation of what I shall argue later; at

this point I only wish to show that there is good reason to doubt Clark's claim that there is no remnant of his early denial of truth in Nietzsche's later work.

### *iii. Perspectivism and Clark's Account*

How then does Nietzsche's perspectivism (and the possibility, with which we are ultimately concerned, of a problem of self-referentiality) figure into Clark's interpretation of Nietzsche as a minimal correspondence theorist? It is not immediately clear how one might maintain a perspectivist position of any force or with any bite if one is committed to a correspondence theory of truth. The following passage, on which Clark focuses, contains one of Nietzsche's few explicit formulations of his perspectivism:

There 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. But to eliminate the will altogether, to suspend each and every affect, supposing we were capable of this - what would that mean but to *castrate* the intellect. (*GM* III, 12)

Clark interprets this passage as presenting us with a metaphor with which to understand Nietzsche's antifoundationalism. Certainly, Nietzsche's perspectivism involves a rejection of Cartesian foundationalism. The metaphor of seeing, of vision, here plays a central role. We might conceive of our knowing as being perspectival in the same way as our vision is perspectival. Just as we cannot have a non-perspectival, non-situational view of an object, so we cannot have knowledge which is non-perspectival or non-situational. All knowledge is thus contextual, and grounded only in beliefs pertinent to a particular situation; there can be no set of absolute beliefs that will be the basis of every judgement or belief regardless of the context. This then amounts to the position that there cannot be

a 'view from nowhere'. This much is certainly consistent with a neo-Kantian position and Clark is right about this.

Nietzsche's perspectivism thus tells us something (fairly obvious) about the justification for knowledge - that there can be no absolute Cartesian foundations for knowledge - as well as something about the nature of truth. But what it tells us about truth is not, I will argue, what Clark maintains it tells us. Nietzsche's revaluation of truth is not completely neo-Kantian. Despite Nietzsche's claim that there are no facts, Clark maintains that Nietzsche's perspectivism rejects only the metaphysical version of the correspondence theory. Non-perspectival knowledge, which Nietzsche rejects as an "absurdity and a nonsense" (*GM*, III, 12) would seem to be equivalent to knowledge of things-in-themselves; such knowledge is patently impossible (i.e., the very idea of it is incoherent, on Nietzsche's view), since it is impossible to know something other than from some perspective. We can only know an object from a variety of cognitive perspectives; the very idea of any of our beliefs corresponding to a thing-in-itself is thus nonsense.

However, this rejection of non-perspectival knowing does not mean, Clark maintains, that Nietzsche does not think that many of our beliefs are true in the sense of corresponding to the facts. This interpretation then, as pointed out, attributes to Nietzsche a neo-Kantian theory of truth; he holds the same view, more or less, of phenomenal reality as does Kant. Our cognitive constitution does determine what we can know and how we know it. But Nietzsche rejects the other half of Kantianism, viz. the noumenal realm of things in themselves. "The crux of the matter," concludes Clark, "is that

perspectivism excludes only something contradictory” (Clark, p. 134). The position Nietzsche holds concerning truth, then, might be considered to be Kantianism purged of the problematic thing-in-itself and, hence, a variety of neo-Kantianism.

Nietzsche’s perspectivism, on Clark’s reading, amounts to a fairly mundane, innocuous theory. But there is more at stake here than simply a rejection of the thing-in-itself. No doubt, as most interpreters agree, it was part of Nietzsche’s objective to do away with the notion of the thing-in-itself. But Nietzsche can accomplish this objective using the vocabulary of the correspondence theory, as Clark demonstrates. His use of the vocabulary of perspectivism signals, rather, a more radical departure from the tradition. With his perspectivism, Nietzsche takes issue with the notion of truth as correspondence itself; since there are no ‘facts’ as such, i.e. no determinate structure of a thing or state of affairs apart from the variety of cognitive perspectives on it, there are no determinate ‘facts’ or features of reality for anything to correspond to in the sense of the traditional correspondence theory of truth.

Moreover, Nietzsche takes the entire ‘cognitive perspective’ or ‘cognitive scheme’ approach of neo-Kantianism out of perspectivism. “Interpretation is itself a means of becoming master over something” (*WP*, 643). More than simply a cognitive scheme, a perspective, an interpretation, is the manifestation of the will to power, of the desire to appropriate one’s experiences into a coherent whole. Further, “all evaluation is made from a definite perspective: that of the preservation of the individual, a community, a race, a state, a church, a faith, a culture” (*WP*, 259). Perspectives are not merely Kantian cognitive schemes; rather, a perspective is comprised of a cognitive scheme *as well as* all

the drives and instincts which condition that scheme *as well as* one's personal and cultural history, one's sense of personal identity and all the factors that combine in forming one's perspective (cognitive, emotional and otherwise) on the world. Nietzsche calls into question the very dichotomies of reason and instinct, form and content, that characterize traditional concepts of truth.

It is well-known that Nietzsche was prone to hyperbole and fits of great egotism; nonetheless, this declaration in *Ecce Homo* ("Why I Am A Destiny," 2) must be taken as an expression of Nietzsche's conviction that he is doing much more than merely rejecting that which is patently contradictory:

I am by far the most terrible human being that has existed so far; this does not preclude the possibility that I shall be the most beneficial. I know the pleasure in destroying to a degree that accords with my power to destroy...I am the first immoralist: that makes me the annihilator *par excellence*.

This provocative statement, taken together with Nietzsche's claim in the first aphorism of the same section, suggests that Nietzsche is stepping outside of the entire realist framework of 'truth' - that he is not only rejecting metaphysical truth, but the entire set of categories that have heretofore been implemented in the formulation of theories of 'truth'. He rejects not only metaphysical realism but also empirical realism and, hence, neo-Kantianism. "*Revaluation of all values*: I was the first to *discover* the truth by being first to experience lies as lies" ("Why I Am A Destiny," 1, *EH*). It goes without saying that this statement can still be interpreted as an expression of Nietzsche's discovery that the propositions we have traditionally taken to be true (in the correspondence sense) are in fact false (in the correspondence sense), and that he knows the real facts. But I will argue that this statement reflects rather a metaphilosophical critique on the part of Nietzsche.

Nietzsche does not substitute for old beliefs, beliefs that he feels really do correspond to the facts (i.e. 'facts' even in the empirical realist sense); rather, he exposes the very view that there are facts, or an ontological structure of reality, to which beliefs correspond for the perspectival expression of will which it is. That is, he inquires into the status of "facts" at both the metaphysical and empirical levels.

Alexander Nehamas, among others, recognizes the antirealist implications of Nietzsche's perspectivism. If one interprets Nietzsche in the context of this antirealism, the apparent self-referential paradox involved in his perspectivism can be dealt with. Interpretations such as the one offered by Clark, by contrast, do not so much deal with the problem of self-referentiality as dissolve it by sidestepping, or misrepresenting, the Nietzschean views which give rise to it. Since, on Clark's account, Nietzsche does not reject correspondence as a standard of truth, there is no problem involved with his presenting his own views as truths in the correspondence sense. Again, I will have more to say concerning Clark's discussion of the problem of self-referentiality in Chapter Three.

Clark suggests that one of the other chief merits of her account is that it leaves open an avenue for the claim that one perspective is superior to another. "The issue," she points out, "is whether perspectivism denies the possibility that one perspective is superior to another" (Clark, p. 140). That is, does Nietzsche hold to the obviously relativist view which holds that any perspective, any interpretation, is as good as any other? Now it seems quite obvious that Nietzsche takes *his* perspective to be superior to others. As Clark recognizes, "there is every reason to assume that Nietzsche claims superiority for his perspective" (Clark, p. 14). His caustic treatment, for example, of the

ascetic ideal and the Judeo-Christian mode of valuation makes it clear that he considers these perspectives to be inferior to the one he propounds (partly because they fail to recognize, or acknowledge, themselves *as* perspectives). Hence Clark concludes that not all perspectives, on Nietzsche's view, are cognitively equivalent. But she assumes that the only possible standards for deciding between perspectives must be a correspondence standard (Clark is, of course, consistent here, since she argues that Nietzsche does not reject the correspondence theory).

Clark thus sets up a false dilemma. She points out that "an insistence on the cognitive equality of perspectives must rest on the assumption that only the thing-in-itself could provide the common or neutral standard necessary for comparing perspectives" (Clark, p. 141). As has already been demonstrated, however, Nietzsche clearly repudiates the notion of a thing-in-itself; thus, claims Clark, the standard for comparing standards cannot be a noumenal object but a minimalist correspondence standard. So when Nietzsche claims superiority for his views, he does so because he takes them to be true, in the traditional correspondence sense, whereas the old perspectives are simply false. Now the false dilemma involved here would seem to be the suggestion that *either* one maintains the existence of a thing-in-itself - and hence the view that perspectives are incommensurable<sup>6</sup> since they cannot be compared with the thing-in-itself - *or* one rejects the notion of the thing-in-itself and adopts a minimal correspondence view on which

---

<sup>6</sup> The word 'incommensurable' may seem somewhat inappropriate here, but since it is the term Clark employs, I have retained it here in discussing her position. 'Incommensurable' here simply means that perspectives cannot be evaluated against one another because the object with respect to which they are to be evaluated is inaccessible to human cognition. Since they are incommensurable, or *uncomparable* in this respect, there is no basis on which to assert that one is better than the other, and thus they are cognitively equal.



perspectives are commensurable and can be evaluated against one another on empirical grounds.

However it appears that there are other options available. For example, one can reject the existence of the thing-in-itself (and thus the incommensurability thesis) and yet not adhere to a minimal correspondence theory - i.e. one can adopt altogether different standards for evaluating perspectives or theories. Given the foundation of Clark's interpretation, it is not surprising that she presents us with this false dilemma. That is, on the basis of her characterization of Nietzsche as a neo-Kantian, she allows him only a restricted number of philosophical moves. But I will argue that such a restriction is not only question begging but doesn't adequately account for Nietzsche's central claims. If we recognize Nietzsche's rejection of truth, then it will be clear that neither side of this dilemma reflects Nietzsche's views. Nietzsche, I will argue, does reject the thing-in-itself and he does indeed feel that some perspectives are superior to others. But, contrary to Clark's view, the standard, whatever it is, that Nietzsche adopts for deciding between perspectives is not a correspondence standard. Indeed, although he takes his own views to be superior to others, Nietzsche does not consider them to be 'true' in the traditional sense.

*Beyond Good and Evil* opens with several sections (1-3) that make Nietzsche's rejection of the traditional notion of truth and the realist framework within which it is conceived quite clear. This rejection, however, does not stop Nietzsche from railing against various perspectives:

Forgive me as an old philologist who cannot desist from the malice of putting his finger on bad modes of interpretation: but "nature's conformity to law," of which you physicists talk so proudly, as though -

why, it exists only owing to your interpretation and bad 'philology'. It is no matter of fact, no "text."  
(BGE, 22)

Clearly, Nietzsche considers the perspective discussed in this passage - the perspective of the 'physicists' - to be inferior to his own perspective which itself passes judgement on this other perspective. However, in making these claims, he does not take his interpretation to be 'true' in the traditional sense of the word: "Supposing that this also is only interpretation - and you will be eager enough to make this objection? - well, *so much the better*" (BGE, 22) (my italics). Nietzsche both rejects the traditional concept of truth as correspondence *and* asserts that some perspectives, some interpretations, are preferable to others. Note that he does not claim that the interpretations of the physicists are 'false' - that they do not correspond to the facts - but rather that they are representative of 'bad modes' of interpretation. Presumably, then, Nietzsche's own perspective is indicative of a 'good mode' of interpretation. The criterion by which good modes of interpretation are distinguished from 'bad modes', however, is not the criterion of the correspondence theory of truth.

Nietzsche's thought thus presents us with the challenge, as James Winchester suggests, of carrying out "the identification of criteria that would allow Nietzsche to choose between interpretations without recourse to a [correspondence] truth standard" (Winchester, p. 125).<sup>7</sup> Because she does not recognize Nietzsche's fundamental rejection of the correspondence standard of truth, however, Clark does not recognize the possibility that the standard against which Nietzsche evaluates interpretations is, perhaps, an aesthetic one rather than a correspondence one. Working with such an interpretive model, it is no

---

<sup>7</sup> Like Nehamas, Winchester argues that these criteria are aesthetic (cf. Winchester, pp. 123-150).

surprise that Clark reaches the conclusion she does. One can grant Clark one aspect of her conclusion but deny the implications which she draws from that conclusion. That is, Clark concludes:

Because perspectivism is compatible with some (or one) perspective being cognitively superior to others, we have no reason to deny what otherwise seems obvious: that Nietzsche considers his own perspective(s) cognitively superior to competing ones. (Clark, p. 144)

Clark infers that Nietzsche considers his own perspective to be *true* in the traditional sense only because her interpretive model holds that Nietzsche does not reject the correspondence standard of truth (i.e. only on the basis of the false dilemma discussed above).

Hence if one can show that Nietzsche does reject the traditional notion of truth as correspondence to facts, then one can reject the implications Clark draws concerning his perspectivism, i.e. one can reject the false dilemma. In discussing Clark's account, I have offered some sketchy remarks intended to demonstrate just this, viz. that Nietzsche does reject the traditional notion of truth (and not just truth as correspondence to a thing-in-itself). In Chapter Two I will elaborate upon these sketchy remarks.

#### *iv.* Cahoone's Account

Interpretations such as the one offered by Clark are the most uncompromising sort of 'correspondence interpretation' of Nietzsche - for this reason, they are also the ones that I contend most thoroughly misrepresent Nietzsche's thought. Another sort of correspondence interpretation at least recognizes, to a certain extent, the nature of the *negative* elements of Nietzsche's thought. On this second sort of correspondence

interpretation, Nietzsche's antirealism, his rejection of the traditional notion of truth, is at least acknowledged. But this rejection is then utilized to convict Nietzsche of self-contradiction.

In *The Ends of Philosophy*, Lawrence E. Cahoone proposes to take Nietzsche 'at his word'. For Cahoone, taking Nietzsche at his word involves recognizing that "Nietzsche was passionately and quite traditionally devoted to the search for truth *and* he undercut the value of truth" (Cahoone, p. 158). With his perspectivism, he claims that truths are 'illusions', Nietzsche undercuts - rejects - the value of truth in the sense of correspondence to facts. Yet Nietzsche, at the same time, presents his views about the self, morality, and *truth itself* as true (in the sense of correspondence to facts). Nietzsche falls prey then to an obvious self-referential paradox: "he pursue[s] the ends of philosophy recklessly into contradiction" (Cahoone, p. 158).

The interpretation offered by Cahoone does not so much suggest that Nietzsche intentionally adheres to a correspondence theory regarding truth as suggest that he can find no manner in which he might escape the circle of realist discourse about truth. Nietzsche exhibits an intense concern for truth; he considers the inquiry over to truth to be one of the most, if not *the* most, important inquiries that any thinker can undertake. But, Cahoone argues, Nietzsche's passion for truth is such that he does not divest himself of the traditional realist framework of the correspondence theory: Nietzsche endeavours to both isolate the errors of past thinkers *and* to offer his perspective on these errors as truths in the traditional sense.

Nietzsche, on Cahoon's reading, rejects truth in favour of a sort of aesthetic naturalism. Nietzsche abandons the notion of a higher realm of transcendent truth for a view on which all our actions and beliefs are subject to nature. In support of his argument that Nietzsche rejects the traditional concept of truth, Cahoon (and this is a significant weakness in his argument) relies heavily - indeed, almost exclusively - on the early essay "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense" (1873). 'Nature' cannot be accounted for or determined by scientific laws; our scientific constructs are not equal to the inexhaustible number of natural processes. The world is nothing but nature, and nature for Nietzsche is "a monster of energy, without beginning, without end...a sea of forces flowing and rushing together, eternally changing, eternally flooding back, with tremendous years of recurrence" (*WP*, 1067). All of our 'truths', then, are simply mental constructions created to make sense of the chaos of nature. We can see the Kantian aspect of the naturalism here attributed to Nietzsche. Although he rejects the notion of a thing-in-itself, Nietzsche holds, along with the Idealist, that the world is in some way constructed by our mental representations. One may recall here the metaphors spoken of in "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense" - metaphors which allow us to order an unordered world. But these metaphors, these alleged truths, are actually mere illusions. That is to say, if by 'true' we mean correspondence to facts, then, because there are no facts - only boundless, chaotic nature - for these theories to correspond to, they are 'false', illusory 'truths'.

Nietzsche's naturalism has various pragmatic implications. Cahoon interprets Nietzsche as rejecting the notion of truth as correspondence and offering as a substitute a

pragmatic criterion: whatever advances life, affirms life, proves most successful in the context of our perspective, is what we accept, is what we dub 'true'. We prefer what is beneficial to life over that which is detrimental to, or denies, life. This reading helps to explain Nietzsche's vitriolic attacks on the 'ascetic ideal', which he takes to be the anti-life impulse *par excellence*.

I agree that there are certainly important pragmatic/naturalistic elements in Nietzsche's thought. One might question Cahoone's claim, however, that Nietzsche's aesthetic concerns are subordinate to these pragmatic/naturalistic elements. Cahoone claims that, in Nietzsche, "art, the creation of a style, culture, are so many masks and illusions that serve our natural needs, and so have pragmatic value for us" (Cahoone, p. 181). It may be that Nietzsche's aesthetic criteria are not valuable for pragmatic purposes alone. Cahoone, however, suggests that they can have certain pragmatic benefits and that it is these benefits which are then the standard of 'truth', or of 'perspective acceptance'. Yet, ultimately, positing such an opposition, for Nietzsche, between pragmatic/naturalistic criteria and aesthetic criteria may be misguided. For Nietzsche seems to spell out the notion 'life-enhancing' in aesthetic terms. Regardless of these points concerning Nietzsche's aestheticism and pragmatism, however, I will argue that it is his failure to acknowledge the full extent of Nietzsche's antirealism with respect to truth that leads Cahoone to conclude that Nietzsche ultimately contradicts himself.

It should be pointed out that Cahoone does not take (what he dubs) Nietzsche's 'performative self-contradiction' to be an error on his part. Or, at least, he considers there to be a certain validity in this self-contradiction: "Nietzsche exhibits the inescapable crisis

of philosophy, which is to say, of inquiry into truth extended to its maximum” (Cahoone, p. 188). Thus Nietzsche’s self-contradiction “achieves validity in an active sense: it does something that must be done” (Cahoone, p. 188). Nietzsche’s work, in its assertive self-contradiction, demonstrates something about the very nature of philosophic inquiry and is thus valuable in its service to the active will to life.

Cahoone’s approach, then, should be distinguished from, for example, Heidegger’s. Heidegger sees Nietzsche’s (alleged) inability to overcome the metaphysical tradition he criticizes to be emblematic of a failure on Nietzsche’s part, whereas Cahoone maintains that this is precisely the point Nietzsche seeks to demonstrate. On Cahoone’s reading, Nietzsche becomes something of a philosophical martyr, sacrificing himself and the consistency of his own project in order to show us something more important about the nature of inquiry in general. Although the goals Cahoone attributes to Nietzsche reflect Nietzsche’s actual concerns more accurately than does the position Clark attributes to him, his core claim that Nietzsche contradicts himself, I will maintain, is mistaken.

Nietzsche, then, on the one hand, rejects the traditional notion of truth. Yet, on the other hand, Cahoone claims, he puts forward his ‘refutation’ of truth with the implication that it be accepted on the basis of its truth (in the sense of corresponding to facts). For example, Cahoone maintains that “Nietzsche accepts the truth [in the correspondence sense] of his judgments about Christianity, morality, and so on” (Cahoone, p. 188). Hence the crucial question, and the crux of the problem of self-referentiality, is: “if there is no truth, how can Nietzsche propose his own view as true?” (Cahoone, p. 182). Cahoone’s answer, of course, is that Nietzsche cannot propose his own views as true - not

without self-contradiction. Cahoone is obviously correct that *if* Nietzsche proposes his views as true in precisely the sense which he claims to reject then he contradicts himself. The other premise of Cahoone's argument is that Nietzsche *does* present his views as true in this sense; thus Nietzsche is guilty of a self-contradiction. Everything turns on how we take Nietzsche to present his views, or on what we take Nietzsche to be doing when he praises a view, or labels it 'true' (or criticizes it and labels it 'false').

Cahoone does not fail, however, to consider other possible approaches to the apparent self-referential paradox. He examines and - rightly, I think - rejects Clark's interpretation. The principal reason for rejecting Clark's interpretation, as I have suggested, is that it does not recognize Nietzsche's antirealist repudiation of the correspondence standard in general. "Nietzsche's critique of truth is not restricted to metaphysical truth, but applies to empirical truth as well"- as Cahoone recognizes (Cahoone, p. 172). On Clark's reading the problem of self-referentiality simply evaporates, since Nietzsche does not mount any large-scale antirealist critique of truth in general, but only of metaphysical realism and, hence, metaphysical truth.

Initially, Cahoone's account of Nietzsche gets closer to Nietzsche's actual views than does Clark's. That is, Cahoone recognizes that Nietzsche does launch a sustained antirealist critique of the notion of truth as correspondence. But he feels that this critique presents us with something of a new problem. For, Cahoone maintains, if we do not interpret Nietzsche to propose his views on Christianity, morality, naturalism, etc., as *truths* (in the conventional sense) then he "ceases to be interesting" (Cahoone, p. 188). The suggestion seems to be that Nietzsche *requires* the contradiction if his philosophy is



to retain any force. Without the contradiction, without Nietzsche putting forth his views in realist, correspondence terms, his philosophy holds no great interest.

If we acknowledge that Nietzsche's antirealism with respect to truth permeates his entire project, so the argument goes, it is no longer incumbent on us to take it seriously. We do not have to be concerned that his claims about the origins of morality might be true, since he does not claim that they are true - hence we can dismiss his interpretations as insignificant, perhaps amusing or entertaining, artistic constructs. If we interpret Nietzsche as a thorough-going antirealist with respect to truth, "then it means that his critique of Christianity, his genealogy of moral values, and his critique of idealism [etc.] are not meant to be true" (Cahoone, p. 186). But Cahoone fails to note that these critiques of Nietzsche's are not meant to be true only in the realist sense of correctly representing reality. Again, it is not the case (as Cahoone suggests) that for Nietzsche there is no truth at all, but rather that there is no truth in the traditional realist sense. Nietzsche does not take his position to possess some sort of second rate cognitive status which, because it is not 'intended to be true', does not obligate us to engage it in the manner we would engage a position which is 'intended to be true'. The whole thrust of Nietzsche's project is to point out the absurdity of any view which purports to be true in the sense of representing reality.

Whatever our attitude towards Nietzsche's position may be, that attitude does not determine the nature of his position. But, certainly, it is not entirely clear that Nietzsche's philosophy ceases to be interesting if we acknowledge that he does not ultimately appeal to the very notion of truth as correspondence which he purports to reject. Cahoone's

argument here seems to rely on the question-begging assumption that a correspondence criterion is the only truth criterion with any cognitive validity. If the standards by which interpretations are now judged are not correspondence standards - if they are, say, aesthetic standards - would his seemingly vicious attacks on the so-called 'slave morality' and traditional modes of valuation not still incite us to engage with them, to decry them at least? Do Nietzsche's claims about Christianity and the ascetic priests become any less provocative? In the final section of *The Antichrist* Nietzsche defiantly proclaims:

I call Christianity the one great curse, the one great innermost corruption, the one great instinct of revenge, for which no means is poisonous, stealthy, subterranean, *small* enough - I call it the one immortal blemish of mankind. (AC, 62)

It does not seem that such an invective ceases to challenge us if its author does not consider it to be true in the traditional sense of corresponding to facts. Nietzsche's account tells us how we arrived at this stage of Western civilization, but it rests on no 'facts' in the traditional sense of that word. It is a history of interpretation, but an interpretation on which an identity emerged as it did. Moreover, it is not the case that Nietzsche considers other views on this matter to be 'true' and his view to be just an opinion - there are *no views* which are true in the conventional sense of that word. Nietzsche's philosophy dares us to grapple with all these matters of the greatest importance in the face of a loss of absolutes. Indeed his central criticism of Christianity is that it cannot (or does not) consider itself as a perspective - it is not in the nature of Christianity to deny its absoluteness. The very question, then, "*why not rather untruth? and uncertainty? even ignorance?*" (BGE, 1) itself demands engagement as an attack on absolutism.

At any rate, Cahoone ultimately concludes that “Nietzsche cannot be saved, nor does he want to be saved, from self-contradiction” (Cahoone, p. 176). On this reading, Nietzsche intends to present a form of expression which blatantly and brazenly violates the accepted norms of assertive thought. But Nietzsche considers his project, his inquiry, to be of such vital importance that this new form of expression is needed for him to accomplish his objective. Nietzsche wants to show us something which, he feels, to be made manifest, requires a contradiction - something which must be shown rather than asserted since it lies beyond the limits of philosophy. Cahoone does convict Nietzsche of self-contradiction, but in his eyes this is not necessarily to suggest that Nietzsche’s project is an outright failure. A significant part of Nietzsche’s enterprise consists of establishing the primacy of the pragmatic, natural level of life; what matters here is not the assertive value of a belief or view but whether or not it is beneficial to life - theories or interpretations cannot be separated from a context of action and success. Thus Nietzsche pushes assertion to its limit in order to “reveal its active function” (Cahoone, p. 191).

Considering the generally insightful comments offered by Cahoone, the conclusions he arrives at are somewhat surprising. The greatest defect of his account is that he ultimately loses sight of the broader antirealist context within which Nietzsche, in presenting his views and his numerous critiques and evaluations, operates. I want to consider this defect in greater detail, and elaborate upon what I take to be the other central inadequacies of correspondence interpretations, in the next two chapters.

## ***Chapter Two - Antifoundationalism and Antirealism.***

In this chapter, I want to show, via a discussion of antirealism and antifoundationalism, that Nietzsche does reject both correspondence as the definition or criterion of truth as well as the entire realist framework within which such correspondence theories have traditionally functioned. Moreover, it will become evident, thus anticipating the issue of self-referentiality, that Nietzsche *consistently* rejects the correspondence notion of truth and cannot be charged with self-contradiction (as he is by Cahoon) on this score.

*Prima facie*, Nietzsche's well-known claim that "facts are precisely what there is not, only interpretations" (*WP*, 481) would seem to make it abundantly clear that he is not a correspondence theorist, since he rejects outright one of the relata said to be involved in any relation of correspondence. Moreover, Nietzsche's views about reality and the character of the world suggest that he is an antirealist about truth and his antirealism is, in turn, intimately bound up with his rejection of the correspondence theory. Finally, Nietzsche's perspectivism involves an antifoundationalist view with respect to our knowledge claims. Hence, his rejection of the correspondence theory, his antirealism and his antifoundationalism, while all independent of one another, are nonetheless importantly related to each other in Nietzsche's thought.

i. The Question of Truth's Value

A natural starting point for an examination of both Nietzsche's antirealism and his antifoundationalism is a consideration of the question he raises concerning the value of truth. In *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche begins by questioning this very 'will to truth' which seems to pervade our thought: "Suppose we want truth: *why not rather* untruth? and uncertainty? even ignorance? The problem of the value of truth came before us - or was it we who came before the problem?" (*BGE*, 1). Why is it we seek truth? Is truth the highest of values? Moreover, why *is* it that the notion that truth is inherently valuable, that it is the highest of all values, has never been called into question? If we are to be truly rigorous thinkers, then surely we cannot dogmatically assume that truth is the ultimate value.

Now Nietzsche's comments in *Beyond Good and Evil* 1 might be, and sometimes are, dismissed by commentators as simply more typical Nietzschean hyperbole - empty rhetoric intended merely to capture the reader's attention. But the notion that we ought not to take Nietzsche seriously here - hyperbole or not - is misguided. Nietzsche's entire reevaluation of values rests upon his questioning of the value of truth, and, if one is in doubt of this, one need only take note of the many other passages in which Nietzsche expresses the same view as he expresses in *Beyond Good and Evil*. Throughout his works, Nietzsche questions many of the underlying assumptions upon which traditional philosophy, science, thought in general, has based itself. These assumptions are revealed to be mere presuppositions, inherited postulates appropriated uncritically, rather than

derived from indubitable foundations. For example, earlier, in *The Gay Science*,

Nietzsche states:

We see that science also rests on a faith; there simply is no science without "presuppositions." The question whether *truth* is needed must not only have been affirmed in advance, but affirmed to such a degree that the principle, the faith, the conviction finds expression: "*Nothing* is needed *more* than truth, and in relation to it everything else has only second-rate value." The unconditional will to truth - what is it? (*GS*, 344)

Even at this relatively early stage, four years before *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche raises the question of the value of truth, of whether truth is even needed. He calls the view that truth is the ultimate value a *faith*; in fact he goes on in this same section to characterize it as a 'metaphysical faith'.

In a section in *On The Genealogy of Morals* in which he discusses the new so-called 'free spirits' of philosophy, thinkers who have divested themselves of the shackles of Platonism, Christianity - of the dogmatic presuppositions of centuries of thought - Nietzsche points out that these free-spirits are still unconditional in their adherence to one particular canon. They are still committed to a rigid intellectual cleanliness; they obstinately refuse to call into question a certain element of their beliefs - namely, that element which holds unconditionally that truth is of the highest value. For these theorists, whatever else might be called into question, that truth is the highest of all values cannot be questioned. In large part, then, these 'free spirits' are iconoclasts, and insofar as they are iconoclasts, Nietzsche praises them. But he ultimately finds their refusal to question the value of truth, their obdurate realism with respect to truth - the most significant of all the presuppositions of philosophers - objectionable. Even these 'free spirits' have not liberated themselves from the core assumption of platonism, i.e. of that sort of rigid, dogmatic thought which they seek to overcome. Until these so-called free-spirits call into

question their own unconditional will to truth, they will not be wholly liberated. Hence, Nietzsche concludes, “the will to truth requires a critique - let us thus define our own task - the value of truth must for once be experimentally *called into question*”

(Nietzsche’s emphasis) (*GM*, III, 24).

Six years after *The Gay Science* and two years after *Beyond Good and Evil* and *On The Genealogy of Morals*, in *The Antichrist*, one of his last works, Nietzsche remains dedicated to this questioning of the value of ‘truth’: “Let us not underestimate this: *we ourselves*, we free spirits, are nothing less than a “revaluation of all values,” an *incarnate* declaration of war and triumph over all the ancient conceptions of “true” and “untrue” (*AC*, 13). The questioning of the value of truth, then, clearly ranges over the full spectrum of Nietzsche’s works and is not isolated to an idiosyncratic, hyperbolic statement at the beginning of one of his books. Certainly, Nietzsche often expresses himself in a hyperbolic fashion - indeed, I take this to be one of his chief methodological tools - but that fact alone is not sufficient to prove that Nietzsche’s questioning of truth is frivolous or without significance. His writings are characterized by a consistent questioning of the very value of truth.

Walter Kaufmann points out that one of the ‘characteristic motifs’ of Nietzsche’s thought is the view that “one must negate, one must renounce conformity, one must break the ancient table of values - in order to prepare for the creation of something positive” (Kaufmann, p. 146). Nietzsche questions the value of truth in order to effect just this sort of negation, this renunciation of conformity. The view that truth is the highest of values is exposed as something which can be questioned, and Nietzsche concludes that this

presupposition of the ultimate value of truth is just that - a presupposition, a blind faith or conviction.

Now what is the relevance of Nietzsche's questioning of the value of truth? In his quest to pass beyond good and evil, Nietzsche feels he must begin with the fundamental basis of all philosophies of good and evil: he describes this as the unconditional will to truth. This will to truth, this notion that truth is the greatest value, has led to the view that philosophic theories must be firmly based upon guaranteed truths, or upon a set of principles whose truth cannot be called into doubt. But if we are to be thorough, should not this basic tenet, that truth is the ultimate value, be at least considered as well? "Supposing truth is a woman," Nietzsche suggests - "what then?" (Preface, *BGE*). Of course, Nietzsche does not say that truth is a woman; he simply asks us to suppose that this is the case. Why might Nietzsche ask us to suppose this? One possibility might lie in the fact that, at the time at which Nietzsche writes, philosophers, the so-called seekers after truth in the tradition, have all been males. The suggestion here perhaps is that as males, these philosophers view truth from a certain perspective - that there are particular instincts and drives which condition this perspective. The underlying suggestion then is that, in general, theories of 'truth' are conditioned by the naturalistic interests of those generating them - that the very theories that are generated are *a product of* these interests and drives rather than a transcendence of them. Perhaps by asking us to suppose that truth is a woman, Nietzsche is attempting to expose the patriarchal foundation of traditional philosophy, in order to reveal the underlying drives and interests that have



conditioned it. In any case, he raises the question of our fundamental characterization of the nature of truth.

Nietzsche's objective is to draw our attention to this *conditionality* of truth. His complaint against the unconditional will to truth, then, is that it conceals and causes us to forget this conditionality. Nietzsche wants to point out that truth itself is a value created as the result of particular drives and interests - cultural, societal, personal and other interests. But as this value was sanctified by the religious and the philosophical traditions, it came to be considered something of value in itself, not something that is the conditional result of more basic drives and needs. Thus, truth is considered not only the highest value, but also as that which, when attained, will be revelatory of other values - 'the truth will set you free', as it were. The process of value creation - which for Nietzsche is emblematic of strong, healthy human beings - a process that originally produced the value 'truth', is forgotten and that which is conditioned by that process, 'truth', is taken as unconditional, as valuable in and of itself. This absolutism in the philosophical tradition can be traced back to Plato, and his situating of truth in the transcendent realm of the Forms. The role of truth in the tradition is that, when discovered, it will reveal values; but Nietzsche wants to point out that truth, the will to truth, is already the result of a mode of valuation:

That the definite should be worth more than the indefinite, and mere appearance worth less than "truth" - such estimates might be, in spite of their regulative importance for us, nevertheless mere foreground estimates, a certain kind of *naïserie* which may be necessary for the preservation of just such beings as we are. (BGE, 3)

Rather than consider truth the highest of all values - as valuable in and of itself - the revealer of other values, we must see that it itself is conditioned by certain drives and

instincts. The will to truth is itself the expression of these drives and instincts. While the will to truth need not be condemned because of this conditionality, it should become apparent that to maintain an unquestioned faith in the intrinsic value of truth is to remain ensnared in deception and dogmatism. Nietzsche's point is that since the value of truth is the result of a process of creation, perhaps this process itself - and the drives and natural instincts which power it - is what we should focus on and develop:

For all the value that the true, the truthful...may deserve, it would still be possible that a higher and more fundamental value for life might have to be ascribed to deception, selfishness, and lust. (*BGE*, 2)

Again, the point here is not that lying, greediness, etc. are what we should aim at in life. Rather, the point is that since deception, selfishness, lust, etc. are all also the result of a creative process just as is truth, there is no reason to suppose that any of these values is *intrinsically* of more worth than any other. Perhaps there is something in the process itself which might suggest some manner in which to judge of their worth, but to discern this we need to concentrate on that process itself, and not the values which it produces. But the unconditional will to truth, so prominent in the history of thought and philosophy, seeks to conceal this process by proclaiming its mode of valuation to be *not* a mode of valuation at all, but rather *the way* - and in so doing weakens and enslaves human beings by divesting them of, or concealing from them, these creative instincts and drives.

What is essential, then, is to recognize that Nietzsche's questioning of the value of truth is designed, first and foremost, to expose and dispel the absolutist prejudice in the philosophical tradition that exalts 'truth' and seeks to conceal its conditionality. Clearly, Nietzsche sees this unconditional will to truth as the greatest obstacle for a revaluation of all values. Hence he maintains that

“Truth” is therefore not something there, that might be found or discovered - but something that must be created and that gives a name to a process, or rather to a will to overcome that has in itself no end. (WP, 552)

It is the creative, artistic process which results in the creation of values (one of which may be ‘truth’) with which Nietzsche is concerned. In order to call attention to this process, he must expose ‘truth’ as something that is not in and of itself valuable, something that is out there for us to discover, but as something which is rather a conditional, created value.

## ii. Truth and Foundationalism

Nietzsche’s questioning of the value of truth, then, leads him to the conclusion that the uncritical acceptance of truth’s inherent value is nothing more than a blind faith, a dogma of traditional philosophy. This undermining of the value of truth hits right at the heart of traditional epistemological foundationalism. If one takes as constitutive of foundationalism the unquestioned assumption that truth is the ultimate value, then Nietzsche’s demotion, as it were, of truth’s value, already anticipates his antifoundationalism. Thus Nietzsche continues in the Preface to *Beyond Good and Evil*:

And perhaps the time is at hand when it will be comprehended again and again *how little* used to be sufficient to furnish the cornerstone for such sublime and unconditioned philosopher’s edifices as the dogmatists have built so far: any old popular superstition from time immemorial. (Preface, BGE)

If we consider essential to foundationalism the view that there is some exceptional class of judgements, principles, etc., which, due to their indubitability, can serve as the absolute foundation for all of our beliefs, and theories, then we can see the relevance of Nietzsche’s conclusion here. The foundationalist holds that certain of our judgements (or representations or elementary propositions, etc.) have an epistemic privilege which

therefore makes them suitable as an edifice upon which all our other judgements can be based. This privileged class has epistemic priority precisely because their truth is indubitable, but in rejecting the idea of truth's inherent value, Nietzsche deprives this notion of epistemic privilege of its force. If the privileged status of a class of judgements relies upon the notion that truth is inherently valuable, and the belief in the value of truth is exposed as a mere presupposition, a faith, then this notion of privilege can no longer serve as the underpinning for a foundationalist theory. As Barry Allen puts it, "Nietzsche mocks the idea of truth's inherent value" (Allen, p. 44). Hence Nietzsche, colourful as always, refers to such foundationalist theories as 'dogmatism': "Today, every kind of dogmatism is left standing dispirited and discouraged. *If it is left standing at all!*" (Preface, *BGE*).

Of course, the idea that there must be some class of judgements the truth of which is guaranteed has been rejected by many philosophers. The fallibilist foundationalist rejects Cartesian foundationalism and maintains that the judgements upon which the edifice of knowledge is to be erected need not be a class of certain, indubitable or incorrigible judgements. The class of foundational judgements, like all judgements, may be revisable and subject to change (cf. Quine). Of course, one might reject the possibility of or need for foundational judgements altogether (for example, Dewey, James, Pierce). Nonetheless, one may remain a realist about truth while adopting an

antifoundationalist stance with respect to our judgements or belief system.<sup>1</sup> To this extent, epistemology and metaphysics are independent.

However, there certainly is a philosophically significant relation here between these epistemological and metaphysical concerns. Throughout this chapter I will often shift from questions of epistemology to questions of metaphysics, mainly because the distinction is not always observed by Nietzsche himself. But the shift implies something quite significant. Cahoone suggests that foundationalism is often used “as an approach to justifying realism” (Cahoone, p. 7) and this seems to be a particularly useful manner in which to describe the situation. If one rejects foundationalism, then one may seek to ‘justify’ realism in another way. But in Nietzsche’s case, the very question - i.e. the question of the value of truth - which anticipates his antifoundationalism also anticipates his antirealism. Questioning the value of truth, as we shall see, leads Nietzsche to examine the very relation of correspondence which allegedly holds between our judgements and reality and hence to examine our very concept of a reality in virtue of which our judgements are said to be true. Questions of metaphysics and questions of epistemology overlap, then, in Nietzsche’s revaluation of truth, and a discussion of one sort of question often leads naturally to discussion of the other sort. But this overlap is not a conflation, a bit of sloppiness, on Nietzsche’s part. The overlap rather reflects Nietzsche’s view that the perspectival motivations for the epistemological concerns and

---

<sup>1</sup> I take it that this is the point that Cahoone seeks to make with his distinction between ‘foundational realism’ and ‘nonfoundational realism’ (see Cahoone, pp. 7-8). The foundational realist combines an epistemic foundationalism with realism - a classic example here being Descartes. The nonfoundationalist realist abandons the search for foundational beliefs but retains an ontological realism.

the metaphysical concerns are at bottom the same. Both are a product of the same drives, instincts and motivations which fuel all of our interpretations.

It should be evident already how an interpretation such as Clark's misrepresents Nietzsche's enterprise. Nonetheless, to see this more clearly, we must consider what Nietzsche offers in place of the now devalued concept of truth. In a word, Nietzsche's replacement is perspectivism. Zarathustra heralds this perspectivism when he proclaims that "he has discovered himself who says, 'This is *my* good and evil'; with that he has reduced to silence the mole and dwarf who say, 'Good for all, evil for all'" (Z, III, 11). Regardless of whom 'mole' and 'dwarf' are here intended to refer to (Plato? Kant?), it is clear that Nietzsche rejects any notion that there might be a privileged set of propositions which can serve as a basis for knowledge about the world. Rather, there are many 'truths', many perspectives which condition our apprehension of the world. All knowledge is contextual, conditioned by one's own drives and instincts. There is no one representation of the world, no set of 'true' beliefs, which one could even hope to discover or arrive at. "'This is *my* way; where is yours?' - thus I answered those who asked me 'the way'. For *the* way - that does not exist" (Z, III, 11). Nietzsche's comments here constitute more than an admonition of absolutism - although they certainly constitute at least that. They also reflect his antirealism with respect to truth; they reflect his rejection of the realist notion that there is one accurate depiction of - one 'way' of correctly representing - the determinate character of reality. That is, Nietzsche's perspectivism eschews both the notion of representation and the notion that there is a determinate ontological structure to reality. A more extensive discussion of Nietzsche's

perspectivism will be the topic of the next chapter; at this stage I wish merely to examine some of the negative implications of perspectivism in order to show why interpretations such as Clark's seriously misrepresent the nature of Nietzsche's thought. In general, throughout the remainder of this and the next chapter, I will focus on what Nietzsche's perspectivism is *not*, i.e. on what it rejects.

### *iii.* Nietzsche's Antirealism and The Epistemological Point

Nietzsche's perspectivism is decidedly antirealist. Before continuing, however, I will need to briefly set out what is meant in this context by 'realism' (and 'antirealism') with respect to truth. Arriving at a set definition of realism, a term employed in a wide range of contexts and subject to so many continuing debates, is no simple task.

Accordingly, I will not attempt to supply any such definition. Rather, I will survey a number of formulations of the issues involved with the realist/antirealist question in order to highlight what I take to be the salient points for consideration in the present context.

In "A Defense of Internal Realism," Hilary Putnam describes the "metaphysical realist" as a philosopher who accepts

"metaphysical realism<sub>1</sub>," (the world consists of a fixed totality of mind-independent objects), *and* accepts "metaphysical realism<sub>2</sub>" (there is exactly one true and complete description of the way the world is) *and* also accepts "metaphysical realism<sub>3</sub>," (truth involves some sort of correspondence). (Putnam, p. 50)

We can see that, on this formulation, the notion of correspondence plays an important role in metaphysical realism. Crucial also is the notion that the objects of descriptions obtain independently of that description and that, because of this, there can be only a single description of the way the world in fact is. Between the world and the descriptions of it

there is thus some sort of connection; our true descriptions of reality must refer to the actual objects which obtain independently of those descriptions.

Now it is clear that Nietzsche does not subscribe to any sort of metaphysical realism; indeed, Clark, for example, is quick to point this out. Nonetheless, she maintains that Nietzsche is a 'common sense realist' and that, in his minimal correspondence theory, this common sense realism is combined with a Tarskian equivalence principle. On this reading, although reality is not structured independently of us, it does exist independently of us and truth is a relation between these independently existing objects and judgements concerning them, concerning this ontologically determinate world.

We need, then, to focus in on what specifically is at issue. Another formulation of the realist/antirealist debate, offered by Michael Dummett, might be of some help. Rather than simply speak of 'realism' as such (and 'antirealism' as such), Dummett suggests we should speak of realism *concerning a particular subject matter*. This suggestion is the principle insight to be derived from Dummett's formulation. The realist/antirealist debate is thus a debate concerning a given class of statements, statements on a certain subject matter (e.g. material objects). Dummett's formulation then runs as follows:

Realism I characterize as the belief that statements of the disputed class possess an objective truth value, independently of our means of knowing it: they are true or false in virtue of a reality existing independently of us. The anti-realist opposes to this the view that statements of the disputed class are to be understood only by reference to the sort of thing which we count as evidence for a statement of that class. (Dummett, p. 146)

The notion of reference still seems to have something of a foothold here, as does the Tarskian equivalence principle. In matters of truth, some connection between descriptions of the world and an independently existing reality is paramount. Notice that on this formulation of the antirealist position, the antirealist does not deny the notion that reality



is intrinsically truth-making - rather, she asserts that the kind of thing we take as evidence for a statement (judgement) is necessary for an understanding of that statement; a statement's truth or falsity cannot be separated from the evidence we have for or against it. The conception of correspondence as governing truth still has some currency here insofar as the antirealist does not reject the notion that reality is productive of truth. I will have more to say regarding the Dummettian formulation below; suffice it for now to note the terms in which he sets out the realist/antirealist debate. Dummett remains committed to the sort of vocabulary that Nietzsche ultimately rejects.

Of particular use for the present discussion, at any rate, is Dummett's positive characterization of realism with respect to truth. It is important to point out that the realist need not hold to the view that reality (or pertinent features of reality) *makes* statements true or false. The point is rather that the realist still enlists the notion of a connection between our judgements<sup>2</sup> and reality (certain features of the world) in order to turn the wheels, as it were, of a theory of truth. The realist move of positing a connection between our judgements and the world may be undertaken for any number of reasons. Donald Davidson, for example, postulates a relation between language and the world because he feels such a postulation is necessary to construct a theory of truth (in Davidson's case, a semantic theory of truth).<sup>3</sup> But for Davidson this relation carries no metaphysical weight, nor does it provide any epistemic justification; it is rather a necessary postulate for any theory of truth. The significance of the relation is fully

---

<sup>2</sup> For the remainder of this chapter and the chapters that follow, I will use 'judgement' as a generic term for 'truth-value-bearer' (covering all such terms as 'description', 'belief', etc.)

<sup>3</sup> Tarski's equivalence principle also plays a central role in Davidson's theory of truth and meaning.

captured in the role it serves in an explanation of what we do when we attribute attitudes and meanings. On Davidson's reading, there is no further question about truth for philosophy to address. Davidson's realism fuels his truth-based semantics but is metaphysically innocuous.

What I am concerned to do here, then, is to avoid any quibbles over terminology. It can be granted for the moment that Nietzsche is not a metaphysical realist. The question, however, is whether Nietzsche's views on truth rely upon the view (or even the postulation) that some connection exists between our judgements and an independently existing reality in virtue of which these judgements are true. In the present context, it is over this central question (and its corollaries) that I take the realist and the antirealist to confront one another.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, I will structure my discussion of Nietzsche's antirealism around this question.

The question under consideration, then - the question which I take the realist/antirealist debate to hinge on in this context - is whether Nietzsche's conception of truth is governed by the principle that there are certain characteristics of reality, the world, in virtue of which our judgements are true (or false). In the Preface to *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche castigates those dogmatists of traditional philosophy for "standing truth on her head and denying *perspective*." Part of the explanation for this violence done to the notion of truth of course lies in the metaphysical presupposition that truth is of the highest value. Nietzsche challenges the foundationalist notion that we, on the basis of a set of privileged judgements, can set about constructing systems of knowledge which accurately

---

<sup>4</sup> One such corollary to this central question concerns whether on Nietzsche's view, as Clark maintains (Clark, p. 61), truth is 'governed by' the equivalence principle.

represent the world the way it intrinsically is. More fundamentally, by rejecting the very notion that there is some determinate ontological structure to reality, Nietzsche strikes at the very heart of the idea of truth as correspondence.<sup>5</sup> In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche minces no words in his critique of the realists:

*To the realists* - You sober people who feel well armed against passion and fantasies and would like to turn your emptiness into a matter of pride and an ornament: you call yourselves realists and hint that the world really is the way it appears to you. As if reality stood unveiled before you only, and you yourselves were perhaps the best part of it. (*GS*, 57)

As with many of Nietzsche's diatribes, this passage may at first seem to be more of *ad hominem* attack than a coherent argument. Yet an important philosophical point underlies the colourful language. This passage is certainly consistent with Nietzsche's antifoundationalist critique of those who 'deny perspective'. In claiming that the world really is the way it appears to them, the philosophers in question consider themselves to have transcended perspective, to have attained an epistemically privileged standpoint from which to judge of reality.

Yet Nietzsche continues with the antirealist suggestion which attacks the very notion that there is something, some feature of reality, in virtue of which our descriptions of it might be 'true'.

That mountain there! That cloud there! What is "real" in that? Subtract the phantasm and every human *contribution* from it, my sober friends! If you *can*! If you can forget your descent, your past, your training - all of your humanity and animality. There is no "reality" for us - not for you either, my sober friends. (*GS*, 57)

---

<sup>5</sup> For a discussion of the implications of Nietzsche's questioning of the value of truth, see, for example, Michael Weston's comparative study of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard in *Kierkegaard and Modern Continental Philosophy* (1994), pp. 58-92. Weston argues that "what is to be overcome for Nietzsche is the 'supreme value of truth' and not the notion of truth itself, provided we do not interpret this in the philosophic sense as a 'correspondence with reality'" (Weston, p. 67).

What is the nature of the reality in virtue of which we might claim that our judgements are 'true'? According to Nietzsche, there is no non-perspectival, privileged point from which the 'true' nature of the world can be apprehended. We can now see how this epistemological point dovetails with the metaphysical issue of the nature of truth. Put in epistemic terms, Nietzsche's perspectivism is the view that reality can be apprehended only from various perspectives - there can be no view outside the world from which one could have an all-encompassing perspective. Yet this, by itself, is a fairly pedestrian view (as pointed out earlier); not many thinkers would deny that knowledge acquisition is conditioned by perspective in much the same way that, say, our visual perception is conditioned by perspective.

The radical nature of Nietzsche's view emerges when we consider perspectivism as a view regarding the nature of that at which our perspectives are directed. As Nehamas points out (Nehamas, p. 49), in a "trivial sense," our perspectives are directed at a 'world' - but since there is no non-perspectival, privileged point from which the 'true' nature of the world can be apprehended, to speak of a world beyond our perspectives upon it is quite nonsensical. Rather, there *are* only perspectives; there is no determinate structure of the world which could be apprehended from a privileged epistemological vantage point, "as if a world would still remain over after one deducted the perspective!" (WP, 567).

It is this very structure (or *nonstructure*) of the world which, while precluding the possibility of a sort of epistemological foundationalism, also precludes the possibility of realist 'truth'. Recall Michael Dummett's suggestion that the realist holds to the view that

truth involves some sort of correspondence to reality. If one holds to a correspondence theory of truth, one holds that our judgements, if they are true, correspond in some way to some feature of reality, that they are true in virtue of that feature of reality. This notion of 'true in virtue of some feature of reality' is, to repeat, the notion which I take here to be the central point of contention between the realist and the antirealist. Nietzsche's perspectivism makes his position on this point quite clear. Just as the world is not structured in such a way that epistemological foundationalism would be possible, so it is also not structured in a way which allows for realist knowledge, or for a realist brand of truth.

In the section entitled "'Reason' in Philosophy" in *Twilight of The Idols*, Nietzsche admonishes the 'philosophers' of the past (whom Nietzsche does not name specifically) for "their lack of historical sense, their hatred of the very idea of becoming" ("Reason' in Philosophy," 1, *TI*). In the second aphorism of this section Nietzsche continues:

With the highest respect, I except the name of *Heraclitus*. When the rest of the philosophic folk rejected the testimony of the senses because they showed multiplicity and change, he rejected their testimony because they showed things as if they had permanence and unity...What we *make* of their testimony, that alone introduces lies; for example, the lie of unity, the lie of thinghood, of substance, of permanence...Insofar as the senses show becoming, passing away, and change, they do not lie. But Heraclitus will remain eternally right with his assertion that being is an empty fiction. ("Reason' in Philosophy," 2, *TI*)

Nietzsche approves, to a certain extent, of the Heraclitean view of the world since it at least recognizes that reality is a swirling chaos of *becoming* - of constantly changing, ephemeral phenomena - rather than a stable, unchanging unity of *being*. Hence Nietzsche clearly rejects the notion that there is any sort of determinate structure or permanence to reality, or the world; whatever our judgements might 'correspond' to, it is not something

which is stable and unchanging. But it might be suggested then that this does not rule out the possibility of the sort of truth the realist conceives of, since a world perpetually in a state of becoming is still a world with a determinate structure and, hence, a world with characteristics in virtue of which judgements concerning it might still be true.

For this reason, the Heraclitean view of a world eternally becoming and in a state of flux is a view which Nietzsche cannot entirely advocate. The Heraclitean view maintains that, in a sense, there is in fact a determinate structure to the world, i.e. that there is one way in which the world 'is' - the world is in a constant state of flux and becoming. Nietzsche, however, denies that there is even this sort of a structure to the world; he rejects the entire realist conception that reality is in some way 'truth-making'. He denies that 'being' or 'becoming' are fundamental characteristics of reality because he believes reality *has no* fundamental character. Certainly, Nietzsche can approve of a view which rejects the notion of being - a notion which amounts to nothing more than a metaphysical faith. But to even affirm that the nature of the world is that it *really is* in flux is something which Nietzsche is not prepared to do:

...for we do not "know" nearly enough to be entitled to any such distinction [i.e. between 'being' and 'becoming', 'things-in-themselves' and 'appearances', etc.]. We simply lack any organ for knowledge, for "truth." (GS, 354).

We can recognize the implications - with respect to truth - of this Nietzschean view of reality if we consider its application to the realm of morality. A realist with respect to morality will claim that there are simply certain moral facts in the world. But what, Nietzsche asks, does reality show us? "Reality shows us an enchanting wealth of types, the abundance of a lavish play and change of forms" ("Morality as Anti-Nature,"

6, *TI*). There is then nothing permanent for any of our moral judgements to correspond to; there is no determinate structure of reality which our moral judgements could reflect. It is for this reason that Nietzsche declares that “there are altogether no moral facts” (“The ‘Improvers’ of Mankind,” 1, *TI*).

What applies to moral ‘facts’ applies to ‘facts’ in general and we can now appreciate what underlies Nietzsche’s claim (in *WP* 481) that facts are ‘precisely what there is not’. Nietzsche rejects the notion that reality has any determinate character; he rejects the conception of reality as a provider of determinate objects of correspondence, metaphysical objects which are the targets of our representational efforts. For Nietzsche, there is no such thing as a ‘reality’ with, to use Richard Schacht’s phrase, “an intrinsic structural articulation and ordering” (Schacht, p. 61). The notion that there could be any feature of reality, of the world, in virtue of which our judgements could be true cannot even gain a foothold, according to Nietzsche. What Nietzsche is really taking aim at here then is the ontological category of ‘fact’ (and all such categories). That is, the vocabulary of correspondence theories, of realism, is not even informative. To be sure, he rejects the very notion of states of affairs; he denies that the ‘facts’ conceived of by the realist even exist. Consequently, with respect to the sort of vocabulary we employ in reasoning about the world, Nietzsche dismisses residual realist terms, such as ‘fact’, as vacuous.

Ultimately, Nietzsche rejects the idea that the traditional ontological categories can yield any sort of theory which would have any explanatory force. The project of attempting to subsume the world under ontological categories is, in effect, a misguided enterprise, since the world is refractory to any positive characterisation:

And do you know what the "world" is to me? Shall I show it to you in my mirror? This world: a monster of energy, without beginning, without end; a firm iron magnitude of force that does not grow bigger or smaller, that does not expend itself but only transforms itself...a play of forces and waves of forces, at the same time one and many. (WP, 1067)

The structure of the world cannot be subsumed under the ontological category of 'becoming', nor can it be subsumed under the ontological category of 'being'. Rather, as Nehamas puts it, Nietzsche "wants to show that the world has no ontological structure" (Nehamas, p. 96). The world, reality, has no determinate character *at all* - hence the realist notions which rely upon the notion that there are determinate features or characteristics of reality are essentially misguided.<sup>6</sup>

Nietzsche's view that ontological categories have no currency where the structure of reality is concerned, however, is not reducible to a mere sceptical brand of antirealism. Rather, Nietzsche's antirealism can only be properly understood in the context of his perspectivism. Admittedly, the question that I have here focused on (*viz.*, does Nietzsche hold that there are certain features of the world in virtue of which our judgements concerning it are true?) may prove to be somewhat misleading. A positive answer to this question is neutral with respect to the question of scepticism. Yet to infer from a negative response to this question a sceptical position would be, although an understandable inference, ultimately unjustified. Given the traditional framework within which the antirealist/realist debate plays itself out, however, this (unjustified) inference can at least be accounted for.

---

<sup>6</sup> This important point is not always recognized by commentators. R.J. Hollingdale, for example, in a paper entitled "Theories and Innovations in Nietzsche," suggests that Nietzsche advocates a sort of Heraclitean view of reality. What Nietzsche objects to, Hollingdale states, is "the imposition of 'being' on 'becoming'" (Hollingdale, p. 116). The implication is that Nietzsche subscribes to a view on which the world, in a sense, does have a determinate character, *viz.* that it is in a state of becoming.



Paul Horwich, for example, sums up antirealism as “the view that our commonsense conception of what we know is incoherent: the supposed character of facts of a certain type cannot be reconciled with our capacity to discover them” (Horwich, p. 58). This seems representative of the manner in which the situation is often conceived. To be sure, it is not difficult to see then why an antirealist might very well be dubbed a sceptic - the supposed facts in question, the features of reality in virtue of which our judgements are said to be true, cannot be discovered and hence we ought to doubt the possibility of realist knowledge. But the sceptic, on this reading, can agree with the realist that the intrinsic nature of reality is truth-making; the sceptic however maintains that we cannot reliably ascertain when the necessary relationship between judgement and reality obtains. Hence we may conceive of scepticism in this respect as the denial of the claim that we can know when (at least some of) our judgements correspond to reality. However, it is here where we might be misled into conflating the sceptical position and Nietzsche’s position.

Nietzsche, however, rejects the very presupposition shared by the sceptic and the anti-sceptical realist - he rejects the very notion that the essence of reality is truth-making (as well as the notion that talk of ‘essences’ is in any way informative). While the sceptical antirealist may question our ability to know when the required relation between reality and judgement obtains, she yet remains committed to the same vocabulary, the same framework, as the realist. But Nietzsche eschews the very framework employed by both the antirealist (in this sense) and the realist; he considers this very framework to be “anthropomorphic and reproachful” (*GS*, 109). He denies that the traditional ontological

categories under which it is subsumed can tell us anything informative about the world. Certainly, Nietzsche denies the existence of 'facts' ("facts are precisely what there are not" (*WP*, 481)), but in so doing, what he also denies is the explanatory value of the ontological category of 'fact'. He denies that the conceptions that turn the wheels of a realist account of truth have any value. Consider, for example, the following passage from *On The Genealogy of Morals*, in which, with reference to such conceptions, Nietzsche states:

...these always 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 *something*, are supposed to be lacking; these always demand of the eye an absurdity and a nonsense. (*GM*, III, 12)

Although common sense realism - and the sort of sceptical antirealism we have been considering - may have divested itself of the notion of a metaphysical 'world' in which reality is structured entirely independent of humans beings, it still relies upon the notion that reality is the sort of thing in virtue of which our judgements can be true (or false). But such a realist notion is not even applicable to reality; as Nehamas points out, "Nietzsche's view is simply an attack on all such realist conceptions" (Nehamas, p. 84), i.e., conceptions such as the ontological categories of fact, reference, being, becoming, structure, property, etc. Insofar as he denies that facts exist, Nietzsche also denies that the ontological category of 'fact' can be employed to tell us anything informative about reality.

The 'absurdity and nonsense', then, referred to in the above passage harks back to Nietzsche's talk of 'denying perspective' in *Beyond Good and Evil*. The realists deny perspective insofar as they maintain that our knowledge claims, when true, are true in

virtue of some feature of the structure of reality. To speak of reality as structured in a way which is detached from the perspectives upon it is absurd; that is, to speak of it as determinately structured or with any character at all is absurd.

Ultimately, to describe Nietzsche's views as 'antirealist' might be misleading. For it suggests the sceptical position; it suggests that Nietzsche's views are a mere reaction to traditional metaphysical, ontological, conceptions. That is, it suggests, along the lines of Heidegger's interpretation, that Nietzsche merely inverts the traditional categories or designations of metaphysics - that where 'being' was once posited, Nietzsche posits 'becoming'; where 'substance' is posited, Nietzsche posits 'effects' - and that he essentially remains ensnared in the traditional web of metaphysical inquiry. But, as pointed out above, Nietzsche does not merely invert the traditional categorizations of ontology, rather he *subverts* them. Rather than merely rearrange the old table of values, he breaks that table. It is for this reason that Nietzsche maintains that one must possess "the hardness of the hammer [and experience] joy *even in destroying*" ("Thus Spoke Zarathustra," 8, *EH*). Nietzsche's goal is to step out of the traditional forum in which realist/antirealist debates are staged by showing that the very categories and concepts at issue are the problem. "Precisely here one must begin to *relearn*" ("Why I Am So Clever," 10, *EH*). According to Nietzsche, we must 'relearn' the very framework within which our philosophical debates take place. Nietzsche's views are 'antirealist' in the negative sense that he rejects any of the realist conceptions in question but his real goal is to point out that the entire vocabulary of the traditional debate is empty and uninformative.

Hence, Nietzsche's brand of antirealism must be sharply dissociated from, for example, Michael Dummett's formulation of antirealism. In formulating his notion of 'antirealism concerning a certain subject-matter', Dummett remains wedded to precisely the sort of vocabulary that Nietzsche rejects. For example, Dummett points out that antirealism need not always, but often does, take the form of reductionism. The antirealist may hold - with respect to a certain subject matter - that "certain entities are not among the ultimate constituents of reality if they can be 'reduced' to entities of other types" (Dummett, p. 145). But this talk of 'types of entities' and 'ultimate constituents of reality' is emblematic of the traditional framework that Nietzsche repudiates. These notions still tacitly attribute to reality some sort of determinate structure, but, according to Nietzsche, "the total character of the world...is in all eternity chaos" (*GS*, 109). In other words, there is no character to the world: "none of our [traditional] judgements apply to it" (*GS*, 109).

Moreover, by characterizing the debate between the realist and antirealist as a debate concerning a particular subject-matter, Dummett's formulation of antirealism clearly remains committed to the presupposition that reality is intrinsically truth-making. Sometimes, he maintains, with respect to a certain subject matter, one might adopt the sceptical position, and hence take up an 'antirealist' position. In this case, one does not deny that reality is essentially truth-making; one maintains, rather, that in this particular case the truth of the judgement in question cannot be separated from the satisfaction of the criteria which we use for considering that statement true (cf. Dummett, p. 147). Dummett's antirealist, however, does not reject - as Nietzsche does - the very framework

built upon the notion that reality is truth-making and which incorporates such ontological notions as 'essence', 'constituents of reality', etc. Nietzsche's antirealism (if we insist on dubbing his position 'antirealist'), then, must be distinguished from any sort of position also called 'antirealism' which shares any of the ontological presuppositions of the realist account of truth.

The problem as conceived by Nietzsche is that "man has for long ages believed in the concepts and names of things as in *aeternae veritates*" (HA, 11). The philosopher has taken, for instance, the ontological category of 'fact' to actually pick out some determinate feature of reality. He has been led astray by his conceit, because he "was not so modest as to believe that he was only giving things designations, he conceived rather that with words he was expressing supreme knowledge of things" (HA, 11). Hence, rather than argue about whether the 'facts' or 'features of reality' in question can be discovered, Nietzsche urges us to recognize the ontological designation of 'fact' as precisely that - a designation - and to further recognize that such a designation, as an ultimate ground for a theory of truth, is useless. It is useless because it attributes to reality something which it does not possess, namely a determinate structure or character.

#### iv. Relativism and The Rejection of Correspondence.

It thus is clear that Nietzsche's view of truth is not governed by the correspondence notion that our judgements are true in virtue of some feature of reality. Hence Clark's assertion that Nietzsche maintains a common sense realism is without grounds. Just as any sort of realism is rejected by Nietzsche, so is correspondence as a

definition of truth. The only way to interpret Nietzsche as a correspondence theorist is to either ignore or misrepresent his view of reality (or, the world). And this is precisely what Clark does. Arguing that Nietzsche maintains a correspondence view, she simply “den[ies] that Nietzsche rejects the existence of ‘facts’ in the sense of ‘truths’”(Clark, p. 130). Clark attributes to Nietzsche a realist position; she suggests, by her denial of Nietzsche’s rejection of ‘facts’, that the world, for Nietzsche, *does* have various determinate features to which our judgements can correspond, or in virtue of which our judgements can be true. Hence, although she acknowledges Nietzsche’s antifoundationalism, Clark’s Nietzsche remains a realist with respect to truth.

Nietzsche, however, as we have seen, is clearly an antirealist with respect to truth and his antirealism involves the rejection of the correspondence criterion. For talk of correspondence, facts, features of reality, etc., are all conceptions representative of the very framework of which Nietzsche seeks to divest himself:

This idea permeates my writings; the world with which we are concerned is false, i.e. is not a fact but a fable and approximation...it is ‘in flux’, as something in a state of becoming, as a falsehood always changing but never getting near the truth: for - there is no ‘truth’. (WP, 616)

Nietzsche here explicitly rejects the notion that the world is the sort of thing to which we can even apply the traditional categories of philosophy - in effect, he denies that the sort of knowledge sought by traditional philosophy can be attained. The use of scare-quotes in the quoted passage is appropriate; the reference here is to the traditional concept of ‘truth’ - the realist conception of truth as, in some way, correspondence to facts, or the notion that there are determinate features of reality in virtue of which are judgements are true. Whatever defines Nietzsche’s notion of truth - a notion now deprived of its status of the

highest value - it is not 'correspondence to reality' or 'correspondence to the way the world is' (since, again, there is no *way* that the world is).

Clark suggests in support of her interpretation of Nietzsche as a common sense realist that it provides a way for him to avoid relativism. Now if, by contrast, as I have argued, Nietzsche's rejection of facts entails a rejection of the correspondence theory and an antirealism with respect to truth, it may appear that his is a relativist position. But the perspectivist thesis which incorporates an antirealism with respect to truth, that maintains that there is no one 'way' that the world is and that, hence, there can be no epistemically privileged interpretation of the world, does *not* entail the relativist thesis that any interpretation is as good as any other. Nietzsche's claim that there are only interpretations, and no facts, does not amount to the view that all interpretations are of the same value or that there is no longer any way of saying that one interpretation is better than any other. Even the most cursory reading of his work shows that Nietzsche is vehemently opposed to the notion that any interpretation is as good as the next.

Referring, in *On The Genealogy of Morals*, to the 'historians of morality' who locate the origin of the value 'good' in unegoistic actions, Nietzsche warns that we must be aware of "the way in which they have bungled their moral genealogy" (*GM*, I, 1). Some genealogies, then, are better than others, some can be 'bungled' and some - Nietzsche's own, presumably - can be executed properly. Two sections later, Nietzsche continues:

In the second place, however: quite apart from the historical untenability of this hypothesis regarding the origin of the value judgement "good," it suffers from an inherent psychological absurdity. The utility of the unegoistic action is supposed to be the source of the approval accorded it, and this source is supposed to have been *forgotten* - but how is this forgetting *possible*? (*GM*, I, 3)

And when further discussing Herbert Spencer's equating of 'good' with 'useful', a position which Nietzsche considers an improvement over the moral genealogy in question, he nonetheless concludes that "this road to an explanation is, as aforesaid, also a wrong one, but at least the explanation is in itself reasonable and psychologically tenable" (*GM*, I, 3).

I am not at present concerned with the specifics of the above critiques; I simply wish to stress that Nietzschean perspectivism does not involve the relativist notion that no interpretation is better than any other. Nietzsche does maintain that there are 'good' interpretations and 'bad' interpretations; certainly, his position may appear unconventional because the question is always "good for what?" - "good relative to which desires, goals, etc.?" Yet this is still not relativism. On the contrary, a large part of Nietzsche's project consists in identifying what he takes to be faulty interpretations. The question, rather, is: *on what basis* does Nietzsche maintain that one viewpoint, one interpretation, is superior to another? If we have given up the realist notion of correspondence to reality, of truth as some sort of relation between statements, beliefs, theories, and some feature(s) of the world, if we have eschewed the notion that there is an Archimedean point which might provide some absolute standard of the adequacy of a theory, then how can we continue with any sort of a discourse in which particular perspectives or interpretations can be in some way evaluated?



As mentioned earlier, a discussion of Nietzsche's new (possibly aesthetic<sup>7</sup>) criterion is beyond the compass of the present study. For the moment it is crucial simply to recognize that Nietzsche *does* maintain that some interpretations are superior to others, i.e. that he does not adhere to a sort of epistemic relativism which might prove self-contradictory. Certainly, Nietzsche holds to the view that our theories, our interpretations, are relative to our cultural, personal, social context, etc.; he clearly rejects absolutism and thus, in a sense, is a 'relativist'. But he also repudiates the epistemic relativism which holds that there is no interpretation which can be said to be better than any other. Rejecting an absolutist, realist notion of truth does not necessitate that one adopt a relativist position with respect to our theories and interpretations. Thus, for example, Nietzsche declares that "we must reject the Christian interpretation and condemn its 'meaning' as counterfeit" (*GS*, 357). Indeed, Nietzsche's works are rife with diatribes against interpretations and views which he considers to be inadequate or even harmful. *The Antichrist* represents a sustained repudiation of the entire Christian mode of interpretation, a repudiation culminating in such statements as: "Against this theologians' instinct I wage war....Whoever has theologians' blood in his veins, sees all things in a distorted and dishonest perspective to begin with"(AC, 9). Of course, the hyperbolic nature of Nietzsche's condemnations in *The Antichrist* is perhaps without equal in all of his works; nonetheless, despite these (to use Walter Kaufmann's expression) fireworks, it is clear that Nietzsche unequivocally rejects the Christian interpretation. And it is clear

---

<sup>7</sup> Nietzsche does appear to implement various aesthetic criteria in order to assess particular interpretations. For example, he considers the 'noble' mode of valuation of *On The Genealogy of Morals* to be superior to the 'slave' mode of valuation because it more adequately fulfils aesthetic criteria of individuality, creativity, coherence, style, etc.

that he rejects - or considers inferior or inadequate - many other views, such as the ascetic ideal (which is the subject of extensive criticism by Nietzsche, in particular in *On the Genealogy of Morals*), the traditional notion of morality (he often refers to the "lie of a moral world order" (e.g. *AC*, 26)) and the traditional conception of the self.

The relativist view, then, that holds that any interpretation is as adequate as the next is not a part of Nietzsche's perspectivism. Although the criterion (or criteria) used to assess interpretations is not the traditional realist conception of truth, Nietzsche still maintains that some perspectives are distorted and dishonest. To be sure, all of our interpretations are value laden, contextual and perspectival; but it does not follow that all perspectives or interpretations are on a par with each other. As Nehamas points out, "[Nietzsche's] perspectivism does not result in the relativism that holds that any view is as good as any other" (Nehamas, p. 72).<sup>8</sup>

My objective in this chapter, as mentioned at its outset, has been to show, via a discussion of Nietzsche's antifoundationalism and his antirealism, that any account which attributes to Nietzsche a sort of correspondence theory (and its concomitant realist conceptions) seriously misrepresents Nietzsche's position. But the negative aspects of Nietzsche's perspectivism which have been considered thus far, viz. that it denies absolutism, that it denies the realist notion of truth, that it is not relativistic, present us with a problem(s) of self-referentiality which cuts to the very heart of Nietzsche's

---

<sup>8</sup> James Winchester, too, recognizes that Nietzsche's perspectivism does not entail relativism. Like Nehamas, he seeks to attribute to Nietzsche a consistent position "without condemning him to a [correspondence] truth standard" (Winchester, p. 126). Far from branding him a relativist, Winchester's goal is to identify the "patterns in the justifications Nietzsche gives as to why he prefers some interpretations over others" (Winchester, p. 126). (cf. also p. 131)

perspectivism. What is the status of, for example, the assertion that there is no such thing as realist 'truth'? Is it true that there is no such thing as truth? When Nietzsche asserts that there is no realist truth, does this reflect the way things really are, and does Nietzsche thus contradict himself? As we have seen, Clark seeks to render Nietzsche self-consistent on this score simply by denying that he rejects the traditional realist conception of truth. But as we have seen in this chapter, Nietzsche's views on truth are thoroughly antirealist; he unequivocally rejects the conception of truth as some sort of correspondence between statements (or propositions, or theories, etc.) and reality.

However, if we acknowledge Nietzsche's antirealism and his rejection of the traditional notion of truth, what is the status of his perspectivism? Certainly, Nietzsche cannot present his perspectivism and his various critiques and polemics as true in the traditional sense without being guilty of egregious self-contradiction. Nietzsche himself is not unaware of the difficulties that this question of self-reference raises. Indeed, he seems to revel in the challenge that it poses for his readers: "Supposing that this [perspectivist view] also is only interpretation - and you will be eager enough to make this objection - well, so much the better" (*BGE*, 31). We need to make sense of this provocative (and somewhat smug) remark if we are to arrive at any sort of understanding of Nietzsche's perspectivism; accordingly, the subject of the next chapter will be an examination of this apparent problem of self-referentiality.

### *Chapter Three - The Problem Of Self-Referentiality.*

The apparent problem of self-referentiality generated by Nietzsche's antirealism and perspectivism can be formulated in a number of ways. The core of the problem is that if perspectivism is the view that there are no facts, but only interpretations, then this view itself must also be merely an interpretation, and hence it need not be true. But what then would be the status of perspectivism? For in light of the problem of self-referentiality, Nietzsche is guilty of blatant self-contradiction; according to this account, he both rejects the traditional notion of truth *and* employs it in presenting his perspectivism. Much of the discussion of this issue, consequently, centres around what Nietzsche takes himself to be doing when he labels a view or theory 'true' (or praises it) or 'false' (or criticizes it).

In what follows in this chapter, I will first present a general model with which to understand just what Nietzsche *does* purport to be doing when he offers evaluations of various interpretations. The actual problem of self-referentiality will not be considered in the presentation of this model; rather, in this first section of the chapter, I merely want to sketch out a framework within which the issue of self-referentiality can be discussed. Second, I will examine the apparent problem of self-referentiality itself in more detail and consider what I will contend to be misguided approaches to it in the work of several prominent commentators. Throughout the chapter, I will stress the importance of interpreting Nietzsche in the broader context of his antirealism with respect to truth - the context established, that is, in the discussion of the preceding chapter.

i. The Deconstructive Model

We have seen in the previous chapter that Nietzsche rejects the conventional framework in which truth has traditionally been conceived. After denying the existence of 'facts' in *The Will to Power*, 481, Nietzsche continues:

In so far as the word "knowledge" has any meaning, the world is knowable; but it *interpretable* otherwise, it has no meaning behind it, but countless meanings. - "Perspectivism."  
It is our needs that interpret the world; our drives and their For and Against. Every drive is a kind of lust to rule; each one has its perspective that it would compel all other drives to accept as a norm.

For Nietzsche, it is incoherent to speak of any 'meaning' which we might find behind various phenomena. There is no one 'meaning', no one interpretation, no determinate 'truth' that is binding on all people.

Yet if we are to cash out the word 'knowledge' in any positive way, it is in terms of interpretation. What we call 'knowledge' of the world is interpretation - interpretation based upon and informed by our particular interests, needs, wants, etc. Every interpretation, every philosophy, is a product of the naturalistic drives and instincts of the interpreter, or the philosopher.

Most of the conscious thinking of a philosopher is secretly guided and forced into certain channels by his instincts. Behind all logic and its seeming sovereignty of movement, too, there stand valuations or, more clearly, physiological demands for the preservation of a certain type of life. (*BGE*, 3)

Under perspectivism, all knowledge is radically contextual, conditioned by the contingent circumstances of one's life. All ways of thinking, all interpretations, reflect and are a product of a type of life; all interpretations are a result of the needs, the desires, as well as the cultural and social milieu of the interpreter. For this reason, every interpretation "bears decisive witness to *who* [the interpreter] *is* - that is, in what order of rank the inmost drives of his nature stand in relation to each other" (*BGE*, 6). Hence, Nietzsche's

point (in *WP* 481) concerning 'meaning' is an epistemological one and this epistemological stance informs his antifoundationalism. Because our changing, dynamic drives and needs interpret the world, no judgement or belief is stable in the sense of being certain, or unrevisable. The "correctness" of a judgement amounts to a means/end relation based on an interpretation. As our needs develop, as our perspectives shift, we see that what was once considered a foundational truth, was in fact merely a provisional postulate, or useful belief. There can be no 'foundational', or unrevisable, principles. As Nietzsche explains in a famous passage: "There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective 'knowing'" (*GM*, III, 12).

In the epistemological arena, "the conflict between different systems, including that between epistemological scruples, is a conflict between quite definite instincts (forms of vitality, decline, classes, races, etc.)" (*WP*, 423). Underlying our epistemological stances are these instincts and contextual factors; since instincts are dynamic and alter as we develop as human beings, it is impossible that there be any one indubitable set of principles that might serve as the foundation for all our other judgements. This antifoundationalist point is, of course, independent of Nietzsche's antirealist position regarding truth. At this stage he merely asserts that whatever the world, reality, might be like, we must interpret it in a manner that is compatible with the world actually being a certain way - yet such an interpretation, though compelling other drives to accept it as the norm, is not binding on all. Whatever interpretation we offer, it must be remembered that the world 'is interpretable otherwise'. This includes all norms or principles. Although Nietzsche's most frequent examples are the received moral principles of Christianity, he

intends his point quite generally to include all 'knowledge' as based on the will to truth. Against the absolutist claims of, for example, Christianity, Nietzsche maintains that there is "no limit to the ways in which the world can be interpreted: every interpretation [is] a symptom of growth or of decline" (*WP*, 600).

The above epistemological position must then be separated from Nietzsche's independent denial of the notion that the world possesses any determinate ontological structure - yet both positions are essential elements of Nietzsche's perspectivism. As I argued in the previous chapter, questions of metaphysics and epistemology do dovetail in the sense that the considerations that lead to Nietzsche's antifoundationalism also inform his antirealism. Taken together, these considerations constitute what I will describe as a 'deconstructive model'.<sup>1</sup> It is this deconstructive model that I will argue provides the key to Nietzsche's perspectivism and the solution to the apparent problem of self-referentiality.

In his treatments of various traditional philosophical theories, the traditional framework of morality, his critiques of science, etc., Nietzsche employs this deconstructive model. Of course, at no point does he explicitly formulate such a model, but interpreting his various polemics and critiques in terms of this model serves to clarify Nietzsche's fundamental objectives in mounting them. The model for this Nietzschean deconstructionism takes the following form. We have a designated object theory or domain, *Q*. The metatheory (or metastatement) *P* is that which designates this domain. *P* asserts that *Q* is in some way an untenable theory, i.e. asserts that it is nonsensical, self-

---

<sup>1</sup> I am using the term 'deconstructive' quite loosely here. In particular, none of the current connotations of this term should be imported into the present discussion. I use the term without any of the current political overtones with which it has been invested by, for example, Derrida and the French post-modernists. Nonetheless, it is of note that all these writers claim Nietzsche as a direct influence.

contradictory, that it contains no facts, or whatever the case may be. *P* describes this fact - in the trivial sense - about *Q*. For example, then, the metastatement “There are no moral facts” describes something about the object domain of ‘traditional morality’. But there are no problems of self-reference involved with this metatheory *P*. *P* describes a ‘fact’ about the object domain, namely that it contains no facts. However, the metastatement *P* is not of the same order of the statements contained in *Q*. So long as we see this model as already functioning in the wider context of Nietzsche’s antirealism, then no problems of self-reference arise. For the term ‘fact’ no longer - at the metalevel - carries with it any of the ontological weight that it carries with it in the traditional realist framework. Within this general critique of traditional morality, more specific instances of Nietzsche’s use of this deconstructive approach can be found in *GM*, II, 12 (on the origin and purpose of punishment) and 16 (on the origin of ‘bad conscience’). Before discussing in further detail the importance of the model with respect to the problem of self-referentiality, a slightly more extensive consideration of Nietzsche’s critique of traditional morality will serve to illustrate and further clarify this deconstructive model.

As Nehamas points out, “Nietzsche’s ‘deconstruction’ of morality...is simply his effort to account for morality in a naturalistic manner” (Nehamas, p. 202). Nietzsche accounts for the development of absolutist morality by tracing out the natural instincts, drives and needs which contributed to the formation of the moral interpretation. By exposing its naturalistic origins, he thereby repudiates its absolutist claims. Nietzsche’s critique of traditional morality in *On The Genealogy of Morals* (esp. the first essay) is



well-known. In section 260 of *Beyond Good and Evil* this critique is given its first explicit formulation:

Here is the place for the origin of that famous opposition of “good” and “evil”: into evil one’s feelings project power and dangerousness, a certain terrible, subtlety, and strength that does not permit contempt to develop. According to slave morality, those who are “evil” thus inspire fear; according to master morality it is precisely those who are “good” that inspire, and wish to inspire, fear, while the “bad” are felt to be contemptible. (*BGE*, 260)

Nietzsche’s deconstructive approach here employs his genealogical method. The central claims of the object domain are first considered and evaluated. In this case, Nietzsche is concerned with the absolutist claims of traditional morality, i.e. its claim to represent the ultimate values, values which have been discovered in reality itself (cf. also “On The Prejudices of the Philosophers” in *Beyond Good and Evil*, where Nietzsche discusses these values). Traditional morality purports to present not an interpretation but rather a representation of the ‘moral facts’. Nietzsche takes this as his starting point. The mini-genealogy of *Beyond Good and Evil* 260, which anticipates the more extended genealogy of morals to come, uncovers the origin of traditional morality; it uncovers “the secret of how ideals are made on earth” (*GM*, I, 14).

Traditional, absolutist morality can be traced to a “slave revolt” against a stronger ruling class. This ruling class, a “master morality,” posited a dichotomy of *good* versus *bad*. The very qualities which they exemplified - strength, creativity, indomitable will, etc. - were considered good, while that lower, slave class was considered bad because they hindered the values of the masters. But the ruling class did not fear this slave class, nor did they seek their destruction; they were rather quite egoistic and concerned with themselves, and hence their value judgements are generated from within - they are creative and active, rather than *reactive*. The opposition of ‘good’ and ‘evil’ - with all its

present-day connotations - did not arise until, from fear and hatred of the ruling class, the slave class revolted and inverted the old dichotomy. Precisely those qualities which were considered good - strength of will, hardness, creativity - were dubbed 'evil', and all those qualities which were once considered 'bad' - e.g., meekness, conformity, passivity - were labelled 'good' ("weakness is being lied into something *meritorious*" (*GM*, I, 14)).

Hence the inversion of values was complete with the slave revolt in morality.

Having traced out this general inversion of values, Nietzsche is thus equipped to offer deconstructions of other more specific ideals of absolutist morality. Hence, we have *GM*, II, 12:

Yet a word on the origin and the purpose of punishment - two problems that are separate, or ought to be separate: unfortunate! they are usually confounded. How have previous genealogists of morals set about solving these problems?

Nietzsche offers a deconstruction and genealogy of 'punishment', pointing out that we must not conflate the issue of its origin with the issue of its purpose. He takes as his point of departure, then, the genealogies of past moralists and begins with a critique of these. Nietzsche also provides a genealogy of, among other things, the 'bad conscience': "At this point I can no longer avoid giving a first, provisional statement of my own hypothesis concerning the origin of the 'bad conscience'" (*GM*, II, 16).

I am not concerned to trace out in detail Nietzsche's complete genealogy and critique of traditional morality (it would take an entire book to do it justice).<sup>2</sup> What I am concerned with here are the conclusions that Nietzsche establishes. Nietzsche objects to the absolutist claims of traditional morality (he often associates traditional morality with

---

<sup>2</sup> However, for a brief sketch of such an account, see Nehamas, chapters 4 and 7.

the Judeo-Christian religion); by exposing the origins of this morality, he thereby exposes its conditionality. In place of this absolutism and foundationalism in morality, Nietzsche urges that “whatever kind of bizarre ideal one may follow (e.g. as ‘Christian’ or as ‘free spirit’ or as ‘immoralist’), one should not demand that it be *the* ideal” (*WP*, 349). Yet this is precisely what traditional morality does - it claims to be *the* ideal. But, in order to reveal the conditionality of all interpretations, Nietzsche asks us to suppose that “nothing else were ‘given’ as real except our world of desires and passions, and we could not get down, or up, to any ‘reality’ besides the reality of our drives” (*BGE*, 36). Ideals are not given, not discovered in reality, but rather created.

The tradition at which Nietzsche’s polemic is aimed seeks to obscure its conditionality by its absolutist claims - thus it purports to have discovered the value that is inherent in things, in reality, and to represent them in its schema. Nietzsche’s genealogy - his deconstruction - of traditional morality, beginning with the question “under what conditions did man devise these value judgements good and evil?” (*GM*, Preface, 3), is aimed at this absolutist claim. The traditional moral view of the world is shown to be an interpretation of the world, a product of a creative process and natural drives, rather than a framework which is binding on all. All interpretations, the absolutist moral tradition included, are “merely foreground estimates, only provisional perspectives, perhaps even from some nook, perhaps from below, frog perspectives, as it were” (*BGE*, 2). Such provisional perspectives may be adopted at any given time, but to demand that they be adhered to by all is to resort to the absolutism that Nietzsche so vehemently objects to. As Nehamas also points out, “the most crucial flaw [Nietzsche] finds in the interpretation

that produces moral values, is the fact that moral valuation is essentially absolutist'' (Nehamas, p. 209; cf. p. 214).

Nietzsche arrives at his conclusion here via this deconstruction of traditional morality. This conclusion reflects Nietzsche's antifoundationalism and his epistemic perspectivism:

*If we should have virtues we shall presumably have only virtues which have learned to get along best with our most secret and cordial inclinations, with our most ardent needs. (BGE, 214)*

Our 'virtues', our values and moralities are products of our drives and needs - any absolutist morality must conceal this conditionality and it is this which Nietzsche cannot tolerate. If moralities are presumptuous enough to claim some sort of absolute, unconditional status, then "their presumption must be brought home to their conscience - until they finally reach agreement that it is *immoral* to say: 'what is right for one is fair for the other'" (BGE, 221).

From this epistemic perspectivism, Nietzsche's deconstructive model leads him to his antirealism with respect to morality. When Nietzsche considers the claim of traditional morality to represent the way the world is in itself - to correspond to the moral 'facts' - he determines that the values of this morality, as with all interpretations, are not discovered but rather created. Applying this sort of deconstructive model to the realist notion of correspondence, or representation, then, Nietzsche concludes that "there are altogether no moral facts" ("The 'Improvers' of Mankind," 1, *TI*). There is nothing in the character of reality itself than can be represented by a system of morality. After all, we can get to no reality other than 'the reality of our drives'; we do not discover the values inherent in the world, rather "we have *created* the world that

possesses value'' (WP, 602). We can see yet again how this point reflects Nietzsche's antirealism with respect to truth. For Nietzsche continues:

Knowing this [i.e. that we have created our values], we know, too, that reverence for truth is already the consequence of an illusion - and that one should value more than truth the force that forms, simplifies, shapes, invents. (WP, 602)

Nietzsche does not make the idealist claim that we have created the world, or reality, but, rather, that we have invented the *notion* of a world possessing values or determinate characteristics which we can simply grasp. In stating that there is no world that possesses value, no world with determinate ontological characteristics, Nietzsche points out: "I mean, not as a deception, as 'mere appearance', an 'idea' (in the sense of Berkeley and Schopenhauer) but as holding the same rank of reality as our affects" (BGE, 36).

Nietzsche does not here posit some metaphysical bifurcation in reality; rather, he argues that the notion of a 'world of values', of a determinately structured world, is already the product of more basic drives and creative processes. But his suggestion is not the naive idealist suggestion that we create reality as such, that the world is a product of our mental activity or thought. Moralities are interpretations based upon our needs, drives and instinctual desires; this in and of itself is not an objection to a particular morality. What Nietzsche objects to is "*the fiction of a world* that corresponds to our desires: pathological trick and interpretation" (WP, 584 (A)).

Nietzsche is a moral antirealist insofar as he denies that there are any moral 'facts' which can be discovered or represented in a system of morality; there can be no correspondence between moral precepts and moral facts. Moreover, he also makes the independent epistemic point that different moral interpretations can always be arrived at.

Both points, though independent of one another, hinge on this deconstructive model. Indeed, these two different elements are so intimately related that Nietzsche often runs them together (for example, *WP*, 70: “The very same milieus can be interpreted and exploited in opposite ways: there are no facts”).

The crucial point for the present discussion is that Nietzsche’s specific treatment of morality is merely an example of a more general approach. As Nehamas recognizes, “Nietzsche’s point is general and not specific to morality” (Nehamas, p. 57). Nietzsche’s antirealism with respect to morality must be seen as situated within the broader context of his antirealism with respect to truth in general - the broader context which the discussion of the previous chapter is intended to establish and sketch out. Nietzsche does not merely deny the existence of moral facts; he denies the existence of ‘facts’ - as they are conceived in realist conceptions of truth - altogether. Just as the world possesses no moral structure, there is no determinate structure *at all* to reality. For this reason “the entire domain of ‘true-false’ applies only to relations [of drives], not to an ‘in-itself’” (*WP*, 625). There are no determinate characteristics of the world which we may or may not apprehend correctly, “as if a world would still remain over after one deducted the perspective!” (*WP*, 567). Nietzsche employs the deconstructive model on the most general level and thereby arrives at his overall antirealist stance with respect to truth.

For Nietzsche, then, the cultivation of ‘knowledge’ involves remaining open to a variety of perspectives - avoiding dogmatism by not becoming myopically devoted to the circumstances, drives, etc. that condition one’s present interpretation. To cultivate knowledge, one must acknowledge that “in all correlations of Yes and No, of preference

and rejection, love and hate, all that is expressed is a perspective, an interest of certain types of life” (*WP*, 293). One will, and *must*, of course, develop one’s own interpretations and make choices; but to cleave uncritically to such an interpretation results in the sort of rigidity of perspective which can only lead to dogmatism. “As soon as any philosophy [i.e. an interpretation] begins to believe in itself...it always creates the world in its own image.... Philosophy is the tyrannical drive itself” (*BGE*, 9). What must be combatted is this ‘tyrannical’, absolutist tendency in interpretation. For this reason, Nietzsche repudiates and battles any mode of interpretation - such as the Christian/absolutist moral interpretation under consideration - that “teach[es] the *narrowing of our perspective*, and thus in a certain sense stupidity, as a condition of life and growth” (*BGE*, 188). The absolutist moral interpretation, and what Nietzsche considers its chief advocate, the priest, turns its conditional, perspectival interpretation into a stultified dogma. Or, to be more precise, it seeks to conceal and cover over its own conditionality and, by duping its followers about its origins, seeks to establish its doctrine as canonical ‘truth’. As long as this deception remains unexposed, the approach to truth will remain misguided:

As long as the priest is considered a *higher* type of man - this professional negator, slanderer, and poisoner of life - there is no answer to the question: what *is* truth? For truth has been stood on its head when the conscious advocate of nothingness and negation is accepted as the representative of “truth.” (*AC*, 8)<sup>3</sup>

Nietzsche objects to the deceptive maneuvers of the absolutist-moral interpretation more than he objects to its actual interpretation. By denying perspective, the priest

---

<sup>3</sup> And, of course, the entire third essay of *On The Genealogy of Morals* centres around a discussion of the ascetic priest and a deconstruction of ‘ascetic ideals’.

conceals and, consequently, negates and slanders the very conditions which advance life and knowledge (viz. openness to different interpretations, awareness of context, etc.). Most significantly, and problematically, this dogmatic realist conception of truth is clung to and this clinging manifests itself in the persistent faith in truth, the faith in truth as the highest of values. Hence the absolutist tradition in morals perpetuates itself - as do other absolutist traditions, e.g. science - by basing itself on the "overestimation of truth (more exactly: on the same belief that truth is inestimable and cannot be criticized)" (*GM*, III, 25) (yet again, then, we see the importance of Nietzsche's questioning of the value of truth). By deconstructing the absolutist-moral tradition, i.e. by exposing its origins, Nietzsche seeks to thereby expose the deceptions of this mode of interpretation.

The purpose of this somewhat tangential discussion of Nietzsche's critique of traditional morality, then, has been to situate that critique (and Nietzsche's other particular polemics) within the broader context of his deconstructionism and his antirealist outlook. Most discussions of problems of self-referentiality focus around Nietzsche's various critiques and polemics and, I will argue, it is precisely in their failure to recognize this broader context that these discussions err.

## *ii. One Version of The Problem of Self-Referentiality*

For the purpose of the present discussion, two versions of the problem of self-referentiality can be distinguished. The deconstructive model sketched out above applies only to the second version of the problem, since only the second version is concerned with Nietzsche's antirealism. Depending on the interpretive approach to Nietzsche's



perspectivism, one of these versions of the problem of self-referentiality may arise. There is, first of all, a version of the problem that may arise if one offers a correspondence interpretation of Nietzsche, i.e. an interpretation that denies that Nietzsche is an antirealist.

On such an interpretation, Nietzsche remains committed to a correspondence criterion of truth, and the problem of self-referentiality arises once the logical machinery of a correspondence theory kicks in. For example, let us label the view that there are only interpretations *X*. Now, if *X* is true then, of course, *X* itself is only an interpretation, and thus it need not be the case that *X* is true. But if *X* is not true, then it is not the case that there are only interpretations. Hence, *X* refutes itself by inconsistency. This sort of problem may or may not arise on a correspondence interpretation, depending on the manner in which perspectivism is formulated.

The second version of the problem arises only if one acknowledges Nietzsche's antirealism and his rejection of the correspondence criterion. This version of the problem centres principally on the question of self-contradiction, rather than on the logistics of

perspectivism as such.<sup>4</sup> I will hold off on the discussion of this second version until section *iii.*, however.

Given the general context within which I have argued Nietzsche operates, it should be clear how a view such as Clark's misrepresents his position. Real concerns about a problem of self-referentiality, I have argued, arise only after we have at least acknowledged Nietzsche's antirealism. Clark, of course, does not address *this* difficulty at all, since the second version of a problem of self-referentiality cannot arise on her interpretation. There is no problem of self-referentiality of the second sort because Nietzsche does not reject the traditional concept of truth, and hence he is free to tout his own views as true in the traditional sense.

As I pointed out on the previous page, a version of the problem of self-referentiality may arise on the basis of a correspondence interpretation; yet on Clark's *particular* interpretation, no problems of self-reference arise. Ultimately not a great deal turns on this point. I am principally concerned to show that any theory which does not acknowledge Nietzsche's antirealism - and hence his rejection of the correspondence

---

<sup>4</sup> The approaches to Nietzsche with respect to problems of self-referentiality are thus many and varied. Clark and Brian Leiter, for example, offer unequivocal correspondence interpretations (and I will explain what I mean by this in more detail below). Cahoon, while, to a certain extent, recognizing Nietzsche's antirealism with respect to truth, concludes that his perspectivism is nonetheless self-refuting. Other commentators represents a middle-point, or agnosticism of sorts, on this issue. Arthur Danto, for example, takes Nietzsche to reject the correspondence theory of truth (cf. Danto, p. 79) and to advocate a kind of pragmatism but, quite frankly, seems unsure what to do with Nietzsche beyond this point. Hence Danto, referring to Nietzsche's perspectivism and the problem of self-referentiality it seems to involve, concludes that he "do[es] not believe that Nietzsche ever worked it out" (Danto, p. 80). Michael Tanner (1994) echoes Danto's remark with the tepid claim that Nietzsche did not clearly formulate his epistemological views. Tanner, unfortunately, offers little in the way of an explanation or exegesis of Nietzsche's perspectivism and the problems it involves. At the other end of the spectrum, we have commentators (e.g. Nehamas, Winchester and Barry Allen) who maintain that Nietzsche offers a wholesale revision and reevaluation of the traditional concept of truth. As this chapter progresses, I will take up a position akin to these latter commentators, particularly Nehamas.

theory - *already* profoundly misrepresents Nietzsche's views, rather than to discuss at length the consequences of adopting such an interpretation. Nonetheless, a short discussion of this point will make evident just how seriously correspondence interpretations misrepresent Nietzsche's position.

As Clark herself points out, one of the greatest merits of her correspondence interpretation of Nietzsche's perspectivism in its avoidance of the problem of self-reference.<sup>5</sup> Clark calls interpretations which attribute to Nietzsche a rejection of the correspondence theory of truth 'radical interpretations', and proceeds to claim that "in addition to the general problem regarding truth, the problem of self-reference plagues the radical interpretation of perspectivism" (Clark, p. 151). To attribute to Nietzsche a rejection of the correspondence theory of truth, Clark seems to think, leaves him with an irresolvable problem of self-reference. This problem is explained by Brian Leiter (who, as mentioned in the footnote below, offers a reading much like Clark's) as follows: "Nietzsche criticizes certain views on their epistemic merits, and takes his own view to enjoy an epistemic privilege over those he criticizes.... At a bare minimum, then, an epistemically privileged view must be capable of being true or false" (Leiter, p. 336). But if we interpret Nietzsche as rejecting 'truth' in the sense of correspondence, then it

---

<sup>5</sup> Brian Leiter (1994) too offers what I have here dubbed a 'correspondence' interpretation of Nietzsche. Leiter, just as (if not *more*) persistently as Clark, interprets Nietzsche in terms of categories which Nietzsche expressly repudiates. Like Clark, he maintains that Nietzsche's "doctrine of perspectivism turns out to be much less radical than is usually supposed" (Leiter, p. 351). He supplies what I below refer to as a 'pedestrian' reading of Nietzsche's perspectivism - a reading upon which the problem of self-referentiality does not arise. For example, Leiter suggests that Nietzsche's perspectivism is merely the view that "knowledge of objects in any particular case is always conditioned by particular interpretive interests that direct the knower to corresponding features of the object of knowledge" (Leiter, p. 351). This reading is akin to Clark's antifoundationalist, but realist, reading of Nietzsche.

seems as though his view is hopelessly contradictory or self-refuting. Hence Leiter and Clark dismiss the suggestion that Nietzsche rejects the traditional concept of truth.

Of course, this problem of self-referentiality arises only on the assumption that when Nietzsche presents his own positive views as superior to other views, he must do so in terms of the traditional categories and concepts he elsewhere rejects. This assumption, however, under the deconstructive model I proposed in section *i.*, is mistaken. Nietzsche has destroyed what he takes to be the deceptive realist veil which has shrouded the question of truth and “no longer believes[s] that truth remains truth [i.e. that this realist conception of truth retains any currency] when the veils are withdrawn” (*GS*, Preface, 4). But if Nietzsche rejects the traditional notion of truth, then any solution to or dissolution of the apparent problem of self-referentiality can be arrived at only after this recognition has been made. Clark’s solution to, or dissolution of, the problem of self-referentiality rests upon the same misconceptions that her interpretation of Nietzsche’s view of truth rests upon.

Rather than offer a ‘radical’ interpretation of Nietzsche’s perspectivism - an interpretation on which the traditional realist conception of truth is rejected - Clark offers a very weak version of perspectivism. This watered-down perspectivism combines antifoundationalism with epistemological perspectivism and ontological or ‘common sense’ realism. Clark holds that Nietzsche rejects only the metaphysical version of the correspondence theory - i.e. the view that there are things in themselves to which our true judgements correspond - and advocates a common sense realism. Nietzsche rejects the notion of truth as correspondence to the thing-in-itself because he equates this with “pure

truth apart from consequences” (*PN*, 45). The idea of such pure, absolute truth Nietzsche considers incoherent. “A perspectivist,” claims Clark, “denies that there is any truth in this metaphysical sense” (Clark, p. 134). But, on this reading, perspectivism’s implications with respect to truth extend no further than this rejection of metaphysical realism. Interpreted as a common sense, or ontological, realist, Nietzsche still formulates a theory of truth which employs the core notion of a determinate ontological structure of reality in virtue of which our judgements are true. In the spirit of Tarski’s equivalence principle, the notion of reference falls away as a basis for truth. The common sense realist nevertheless remains committed to the notions of ontological structure, fact, and representation. Although Clark does write that “perspectivism concerns not only knowledge or justification, but also truth” (Clark, p. 133), she does not feel that it concerns truth to the extent that I have argued it does.

The upshot of Clark’s account, then, is that, apart from the denial of metaphysical realism, perspectivism is primarily an epistemological thesis, a way of reminding us of “the fact that seeing is always from a particular perspective, thus that the position of the viewer always affects the look of the thing seen” (Clark, p. 145). Our cognitive perspectives condition our knowledge of the world; knowledge is always conditioned by the constitution and/or beliefs of the interpreter. There can be no ‘view from nowhere’; this, however, amounts to a fairly pedestrian thesis. Clark still attributes to Nietzsche the view that there are certain features of the world in virtue of which our representations of it are true. She holds that Nietzsche’s perspectivism is committed to precisely the realist vocabulary and notions (e.g., ontological structure, facts, representation, etc.) which he

clearly rejects. Such a realist interpretation of Nietzsche fails to acknowledge that, according to Nietzsche, “all these concepts, ‘God’, ‘soul’, ‘virtue’, ‘sin’, ‘beyond,’ ‘truth’,” are “lies prompted by the bad instincts of sick natures” (“Why I Am So Clever,” 10, *EH*).

Nonetheless, with this watered-down version of perspectivism, no problems of self-reference arise - at least no problems which appear to be paradoxical in any way. If perspectivism is the thesis, *X*, that all theses are conditioned by perspective insofar as there cannot be a view from nowhere, then it does not seem problematic or paradoxical in any way to say that this thesis applies equally to *X* itself.

If, however, the thesis of perspectivism is given a more sophisticated and precise formulation - yet still in terms of the traditional realist framework of truth - the problem of self-reference can certainly still gain a foothold. This version of the problem is the first version outlined above. Steven Hales and Robert Welshon, for example, define perspectivism as “the claim that every statement is true in some perspective and untrue in another” (Hales and Welshon, p. 108). Furthermore, they describe the problem of self-referentiality as a tension between perspectivism and absolutism, which is the denial of perspectivism (i.e. the claim that “there is at least one statement which is either true in all perspectives or untrue in all perspectives” (Ibid., p. 108)). The problem of self-referentiality generated from this tension, then, looks something like this:

Suppose that perspectivism is true in all perspectives. If so, then, there is a statement which has the same truth value in all perspectives, viz., the thesis of perspectivism itself. But, if there is some statement which has the same truth value in all perspectives, then absolutism is true. Thus if perspectivism is true in all perspectives, absolutism is true, or, to put the matter in equivalent form, if perspectivism is true in all perspectives, then perspectivism is untrue. This conclusion is that which critics claim shows that perspectivism is self-refuting. (Hales and Welshon, p. 108)

The problem of self-referentiality so formulated is reminiscent of the 'liar's paradox' and is indeed problematic and would appear to render perspectivism self-refuting. But Hales and Welshon suggest that the formulation of perspectivism given above is a formulation of what might be called 'strong perspectivism'. The logical tangles of strong perspectivism can be avoided, however, if we substitute for it a weaker form of perspectivism in which, rather than quantification over *all* statements, there is a quantification over only *some* statements. Hales and Welshon, then, suggest the following definition of 'weak' perspectivism: "there is at least one statement such that there is some perspective in which it is true, and some perspective in which it is untrue" (Hales and Welshon, p. 112). On this weak perspectivist thesis, there are some statements that "have their truth values across all or in all perspectives" (Ibid., p. 112). The thesis of perspectivism may itself be just such an omniperspectivally true statement. The problem of self-reference is thus solved, for, to put it quite simply, (weak) perspectivism need not refer to itself, since perspectivism has been rid of quantification over *all* statements.

While Hales' and Welshon's skills in logic are admirable, and while they do in fact solve the problem of self-referentiality as formulated, their overall approach is unfortunately misguided. Regardless of whatever logical manoeuvres they employ, their entire approach rests on a correspondence interpretation of Nietzsche - a sort of interpretation that I have argued profoundly misrepresents Nietzsche's views. By a 'correspondence interpretation', again, I mean simply a view which maintains that Nietzsche in some way adheres to correspondence with reality as a standard of truth. Despite their more detailed and subtle account of Nietzsche's perspectivism, Hales and

Welshon do not recognize Nietzsche's antirealism with respect to truth. Their solution is based upon the incorrect assumption that correspondence is the measure of truth for Nietzsche and that the problem of self-referentiality plays itself out in this realist framework. But Nietzsche has exposed the realist conception of truth as "the faith in a *metaphysical* value, the absolute value of *truth*" (*GM*, III, 24) and has consequently divested himself of it and the metaphysical doctrine upon which it rests. Like Clark, they fail to recognize Nietzsche's rejection of the correspondence theory of truth; since he does reject the correspondence theory, there is no need to develop a non-paradoxical formulation of perspectivism on the basis of a correspondence criterion.<sup>6</sup>

### *iii.* A Second Version of The Problem of Self-Referentiality

Although it is the case, then, that there is a version of the problem of self-referentiality which may arise on the basis of certain correspondence interpretations of Nietzsche, this is ultimately a moot point since correspondence interpretations of Nietzsche radically misrepresent the nature of his views. The possible problem of self-referentiality with which I am concerned arises only after one acknowledges Nietzsche's rejection of the correspondence theory of truth and of other various related realist conceptions that are traditionally associated with it. What we have taken to be truths in the realist sense are exposed by Nietzsche to be "creations of value which have become

---

<sup>6</sup> It is also noteworthy that Hales and Welshon offer very little in the way of textual citations in support of their interpretation. They concede that "this is the view about truth offered on Nietzsche's behalf" (Hales and Welshon, p. 112). They argue that such an account of his view of truth has certain systematic benefits for Nietzsche. Yet nowhere does Nietzsche suggest that his perspectivism is to be understood in the manner in which Hales and Welshon understand it.



dominant and [which are] for a time called 'truths'" (*BGE*, 211). The traditional realist notions of 'truth', 'reference', 'fact', etc., can serve no explanatory purpose in this respect; rather, they can only mislead one. Hence Nietzsche rejects such realist notions. Indeed, Nietzsche goes so far as to declare that "this faith [in the traditional notion of truth], as *everybody's* faith, arouses nausea and new lust in subtler minds" (*GS*, 76).

Given his antirealism with respect to truth, if Nietzsche presents his own views - for example, his critique of absolutist morality - as true in the traditional sense, then he is guilty of blatant self-contradiction. I have suggested, against this view, that we construe Nietzsche as proceeding via a sort of deconstructive model and that, so long as we recognize that this model functions within the broader context of his antirealism with respect to truth, no problems of self-reference arise. Furthermore, Nietzsche is aware of this possible problem of self-reference and it seems unlikely that he would fall prey to such an obvious danger. Indeed, this seems to be the very problem he himself - albeit somewhat cryptically - raises in *Twilight of The Idols* when he asks: "Can an *ass* be tragic? To perish under a burden one can neither bear nor throw off? The case of the philosopher" ("Maxims and Arrows," 11, *TI*). Certainly, Nietzsche takes one of the greatest burdens of the philosopher to be the faith in absolute truth. Nietzsche, of course, cannot tolerate this faith in truth - and the tragic irony of *his* case would be his inability, despite this abhorrence of the faith in truth, to 'throw' off this very faith.

Lawrence Cahoon, for example, sees the problems that arise as a result of a rejection of the realist notion of truth as intractable; he considers Nietzsche's project as doomed to self-contradiction. Cahoon (as discussed in Chapter One) at least recognizes

Nietzsche's antirealism with respect to truth; he acknowledges Nietzsche's unabashed rejection of the correspondence theory of truth and he pays particular attention to the problem of self-reference which Nietzsche seems to face. After his repudiation of the traditional notion of truth as correspondence to reality, Nietzsche goes on, claims Cahoone, to present his views *as* true in the sense of corresponding to reality, utilizing the very notion of truth that he supposedly rejects. His perspectivism generates a self-referential inconsistency; Nietzsche is therefore guilty of a self-contradiction in practice.

Cahoone's initial recognition of Nietzsche's antirealism, however, renders his subsequent conclusion puzzling. As Cahoone recognizes, "if truth means correspondence of judgement to an independent reality, for Nietzsche there is no such thing as truth" (Cahoone, p. 170). What we take to be 'truth' is in fact deceptive, insofar as it conventionally implies the existence of an independent reality with a determinate structure to which our judgements do or do not correspond and in virtue of which our judgements are true or false. Once the deceptions of the correspondence/truth relation become socially stabilized, however, it is forgotten *that* they are deceptions, or, at best, metaphors, and they are considered rather to be canonical 'truths'.

Nietzsche's deconstructive enterprise is to expose these 'truths' for the lies that they are. Moreover, he also exposes the deceptive, absolutist tendencies of those who "pose as protectors of truth upon earth" (*BGE*, 25). We cannot actually attain the sort of knowledge sought by traditional philosophy; since he attacks the traditional conception of truth and the type of judgements supposedly based on that conception, "Nietzsche presents an antirealist view of knowledge" (Cahoone, p. 169). Yet, at the same time,

while presenting this antirealist view of knowledge - a view that rejects the traditional notion of truth - in setting forth his positive position, Nietzsche maintains a firm devotion to the traditional concept of truth. Thus, for example, we have Nietzsche criticizing Christians for being “the antagonists of what is truthful - of truth” (AC, 54). The crux of the problem then is this: “Nietzsche was passionately and quite traditionally devoted to the search for truth *and* he undercut the value of truth” (Cahoone, pp. 157-158).<sup>7</sup>

I agree with Cahoone that Nietzsche relentlessly undercuts the value of truth - indeed, the previous chapter was devoted to proving this very point. Insofar as he undercuts the value of truth, then, one might say that Nietzsche is involved in the ‘search’ for truth. However, and this is where I part company with Cahoone, Nietzsche’s treatment of truth is anything but *traditional*. To begin with, itself, the devaluation of truth is certainly intended to be *nontraditional*. More importantly, as I suggested earlier, after ‘devaluing’ truth in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche presents a view of truth in keeping with this devaluation; ‘truth’ (whatever that might now mean) is no longer the highest value - *this* is the point to which Nietzsche’s ‘search’ for truth has led him.

Rather than offer an interpretation that purports to be the one ‘true’ account of the world, Nietzsche seeks “to become master over the many vain and overly enthusiastic interpretations and connotations” (BGE, 230) that have been offered by past philosophers. Nietzsche finds an interpretation such as the traditional moral interpretation ‘vain’ because

---

<sup>7</sup> Cahoone also rightly recognizes that interpretations such as Clark’s - which nonetheless acquit Nietzsche of self-contradiction and provide a solution to the problem of self-referentiality - misrepresent Nietzsche’s position. “Nietzsche,” points out Cahoone, “takes a more radical position than Clark allows.” But he then goes on to make the claim that, once this radical position is recognized, “[Nietzsche] cannot be saved from contradiction” (Cahoone, p. 172).

it purports to be true in the sense of representing reality as it really is; he finds it 'overly enthusiastic' because of its absolutist claims to be binding on all, because it does not recognize its own conditionality. Hence, he attempts to master it by deconstructing it. But Nietzsche can still utilize the term 'true' as long as he clarifies the source he intends. The key question here is what *does* Nietzsche take himself to be doing when he praises an interpretation or labels it 'true'? Hence the importance of the deconstructive or metatheoretical model.

To return to our earlier example, Nietzsche claims that there are no moral facts. Cahoon would stress that, in claiming it to be true that there are no moral facts, Nietzsche has contradicted himself. In making such a claim, Nietzsche employs the very realist notion of truth which he purports elsewhere to reject. But one can arrive at such a conclusion only if one assumes that Nietzsche's claim about morality is of the same order as the (body of) claims at which it is directed. Such is not the case, however, and this is precisely what the deconstructive model is intended to illustrate. The metastatement *P* ('there are no moral facts') is of a different order than the statements of the object domain *Q* (the doctrine of traditional absolutist morality). The 'truth' of *P* rests on a trivial correspondence relation to a fact about *Q* as a class of statements, viz. that what they purport is nonsensical or does not have the implied referent. Traditional absolutist morality is committed to the framework of traditional realism (and thus the notion that statements are true in virtue of some characteristic of reality), but the metastatement *P* maintains no such commitments. As Nietzsche resolves in the Preface to *The Gay Science*: "No, this bad taste, this will to truth, to 'truth at any price,' this youthful

madness in the love of truth, have lost their charm for us” (*GS*, Preface, 4). Hence, after his deconstructions of traditional absolutist morality, punishment, sin and the bad conscience, Nietzsche adds:

It is plain that in this essay I proceed on a presupposition that I do not first have to demonstrate to readers of the kind I need: 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. I consider even ‘psychological pain’ to be not a fact but only an interpretation. (*GM*, III, 16)

The notion of sin as it functions in traditional morality does not express any fact - in the realist sense - about the world; rather, it is an interpretation of a natural phenomenon, namely physiological depression. ‘Sin’ represents merely one particular perspective upon this phenomenon - a perspective upon a perspective - the phenomenon, the old perspective, however, is not some sort of determinate feature of reality, but is a fact in the trivial sense of being something which can be subjected to interpretation. But to read any more into this innocuous notion of ‘fact’ would be to smuggle back in precisely the realist notions which are emblematic of only one particular perspective. Nietzsche appears to regard his own metastatements in much the same way.

Hence, we are free to say that  $P$  expresses a fact about domain  $Q$  so long as we understand this deconstructive model to function within the broader context of Nietzsche’s antirealism with respect to truth. Nietzsche repudiates the notion of ‘facts’ as they function in traditional realist conceptions of truth: “there are no ‘facts-in-themselves’, for a sense must always be projected into them before there can be ‘facts’” (*WP*, 556). He rejects the existence of facts as ontologically determinate characteristics of reality, the correct representation of which renders our judgements true. For such a conception of facts perpetuates the realist notion that truths, values, are ‘out there’, and that all we need

to do is discover them. "As if values were inherent in things and all one had to do was grasp them.... Prostration before 'facts', a kind of cult" (*WP*, 422).

Nietzsche's rejection of the ontological status of facts is a rejection of the notion of determinate states of affairs, or ontological structure, which plays so prominent a role in realist theories of truth. The scares quote in the above passages make it quite explicit that Nietzsche's reference is to a specific conception of 'facts'. Hence, the fact which the metastatement *P* asserts about domain *Q* need not be a fact of this realist sort - and so long as Nietzsche's antirealism with respect to truth is acknowledged, it is clear that it is not a fact of that sort at all. *P* does tell us something about *Q* - call it, in some trivial sense, a 'fact' - but this fact is not purported to be some determinate characteristic of reality. It is a fact about a class of statements. The term 'fact' here retains none of its realist overtones.

When we present any interpretation, any theory, we are attempting, in Nietzsche's view, to become master over, to subdue, our world - to become master over the wealth of phenomena with which we are presented in experience.

And all subduing and becoming master involves a fresh interpretation, an adaptation through which any previous 'meaning' and 'purpose' are necessarily obscured or even obliterated. (*GM*, II, 12)

Nietzsche's deconstructive approach would seem to be based on just this sort of 'subduing' and 'mastering'. His metastatements are fresh interpretations of various object domains; the previous meanings of these object domains are subsumed, 'obliterated', in being deconstructed. The fact expressed by the metastatement *P* about traditional morality is that it contains no facts in the realist sense - but the 'fact' *P* expresses concerns the traditional moral interpretation, not reality. The metastatement *P* is an

adaptation, a fresh interpretation, of the object-domain  $Q$ . But the key - and the reason that realism cannot re-enter the picture - is that the relationship here is between  $P$  and another class of statements, *not* between  $P$  and some characteristic of reality. For, on Nietzsche's view, the latter relationship is nonsensical. There may be no limits to the number of interpretations which we can generate, but to believe that any interpretation can represent the world as it 'really' is, is "to desire to deprive the world of its disturbing and enigmatic character" (*WP*, 600). As we have seen, what is disturbing and enigmatic - for the absolutist and the realist - about the world is precisely that it *has no* determinate character; it is not the sort of thing that can provide an ontological underpinning or basis for our judgements and theories. Our 'truths', then, are fresh interpretations, adaptations of other, older, perhaps misconstrued or misguided, interpretations. For Nietzsche, 'truth' is a relation between interpretations - a web, or mesh, of interpretations, as it were.<sup>8</sup> One interpretation may express something - a 'fact' - about another interpretation; but an interpretation cannot express a fact in the sense of corresponding to some determinate characteristic of reality.

There are passages in which Nietzsche explicitly points out that the metastatements of the deconstructive model are not true in any traditional sense. For example, in *Beyond Good and Evil* 22, after "putting his finger on bad modes of interpretation," Nietzsche defiantly declares: "supposing that this is also only interpretation - and you will be eager enough to make this objection? - well, so much the better." Nietzsche here explicitly

---

<sup>8</sup> For an in-depth discussion of this Nietzschean notion of a 'web' of interpretations, see Alessandra Tanesini's paper, "The 'Spider's Web' and the 'Tool': Nietzsche *vis-a-vis* Rorty on Metaphor" (1995) in Sedgwick (Ed.).

tells us that, having dismissed the notion of truth as correspondence, his own views themselves are perspectival interpretations. But neither does Nietzsche thereby attribute to his views a second-rate cognitive status. To say that judgements represent the world as it really is will be incoherent for Nietzsche, since the world has no determinate ontological structure which can be represented in any way. Nietzsche rejects the traditional vocabulary and framework of realist theories of truth because they are fundamentally misguided. He denies that in saying 'my views correspond to the way the world is' one has said something informative.

In the context of the deconstructive model, Nietzsche can say that his statements, quite trivially, tell us something about a certain subject. But he does not claim that they thereby represent the way the world really is, since such a locution holds no currency for him. Indeed, he is quite happy to affirm that his views belong to him and perhaps to him alone. "I *want* no believers...I never speak to the masses. - I have a terrible fear that one day I will be pronounced *holy*" ("Why I Am A Destiny," 1, *EH*). Presumably, if one considered one's views to represent the way the world really is, one would want 'believers'; but Nietzsche does not consider his views to be truths in this sense. Nietzsche does not want his views to be misconstrued, to be pronounced holy by the very absolutist modes of interpretations which he repudiates. And later in this same aphorism, Nietzsche writes that "my truth is *terrible*." Certainly, Nietzsche's treatment of truth will seem terrible to, and should terrify, those who maintain an allegiance to the traditional framework that he so caustically criticizes.



Moreover, epistemically speaking, the metastatement *P* does not express some fact that might be built upon to gain further knowledge about the world, and thus Nietzsche does not contradict his antifoundationalism. Again, there may be some trivial sense of correspondence between the metastatement and the object domain, but such correspondence cannot be construed transitively in a way that foundationalism might regain a foothold. *P* is not intended to function as an indubitable, or even hypothetically certain, basis for knowledge of the foundationalist sort. It is perhaps to this deconstructive model that Nietzsche refers when he proclaims in *Ecce Homo*: “now I know how, have the know-how, to *reverse perspectives*: the first reason why a ‘revaluation of values’ is perhaps possible for me alone” (“Why I Am So Wise,” 1). Nietzsche’s critique of morality is intended precisely to show that every “morality [or any interpretation] that takes itself for unconditional and addresses itself to all does not only sin against taste: it is a provocation to sins of omission, one *more* seduction under the mask of philanthropy” (*BGE*, 221). Instead, the deconstructive approach will help one to “employ a *variety* of perspectives and affective interpretations in the service of knowledge” (*GM*, III, 12). For the entire deconstructive model functions within the context of Nietzsche’s antifoundationalism and his antirealism with respect to truth. To convict Nietzsche of self-contradiction, one needs to ignore this larger context.

#### *iv.* A Nietzschean Theory of Truth?

It is quite evident by now that Nietzsche really offers nothing like a ‘theory’ of truth in any traditional sense. A recognition of this point helps to dispel the suggestion

that his perspectivism is self-contradictory in some way. In particular, Nietzsche's treatment of truth must be seen as intimately connected to his deconstructive approach. As Richard Schacht has observed, in Nietzsche's works, the term 'truth' does "not have a single sense...in all of [its] occurrences" (Schacht, p. 52). Indeed, throughout his writings, Nietzsche intentionally equivocates on the word 'truth'. This only further indicates that the truth of the statements at the metalevel of the deconstructive model are not of the same order as the alleged truth of those of the object domain. For example, Nietzsche observes that "perhaps nobody yet has been truthful enough about what 'truthfulness' is" (*BGE*, 177). The 'truthfulness' about which nobody has been truthful is the realist notion of truthfulness that Nietzsche expends so much effort in repudiating:

The most strongly believed a priori 'truths' are for me - *provisional assumptions*, e.g. the law of causality, a very well acquired habit of belief, so much a part of us than not to believe in it would destroy the race. But are they for that reason truths? What a conclusion! As if the preservation of man were a proof of truth! (*WP*, 497)

The metastatements of Nietzsche's deconstructive approach expose such supposedly *a priori* truths about the world for the conditional, perspectival interpretations that they are - interpretations which have, perhaps, proven indispensable for a particular type of life. Clearly, the truth expressed by the metastatement *P* need not be of the same order, then, as the 'truth' of the object domain. Nietzsche maintains that "*faith* [in realist truth] means not *wanting* to know what is true" (*AC*, 52). But that Nietzsche is still concerned with some notion of truth that has been stripped of its traditional realist connotations need not prove self-contradictory. The word-play on the word truth reaches its height in *The Will To Power* when Nietzsche writes:

Belief that there is no truth at all, the nihilistic belief, is a great relaxation for one who, as a warrior of knowledge, is ceaselessly fighting ugly truths. For truth is ugly. (*WP*, 598)

Certainly, however, Nietzsche is still entitled to employ the term 'true'. He can use it both as a rhetorical device and he can also use it in a different sense than it has traditionally been used, so long as it is understood that it has been stripped of both its traditional value and its traditional realist connotations - or, as Nietzsche puts it, "assuming that it is now known from the outset how very much these are after all only - *my truths*" (*BGE*, 231). Provided we keep in mind the overarching antirealist framework within which Nietzsche operates, then it is clear how he, operating with the deconstructive approach, can present claims about various subjects without thereby contradicting himself. No problems of self-reference arise, provided this context is acknowledged. Why Cahoon fails to acknowledge this antirealist context, after apparently initially recognizing it, is puzzling. Nietzsche's declaration in *Ecce Homo* seems particularly relevant here: "It would contradict my character entirely if I expected ears and hands for my truths today" ("Why I Write Such Good Books," 1, *EH*).

A key element of this broader context is Nietzsche's objection to the dogmatic, unconditional will to truth, to the faith in truth which is emblematic of the traditional approach to truth. Such an unconditional will to truth results in a kind of intellectual laziness, a denial of perspective, of the creative character of our interpretations.

"Truth" is therefore more fateful than error and ignorance, because it cuts off the forces that work toward enlightenment and knowledge. The affect of *laziness* now takes the side of "truth"...it is more flattering to think "I possess the truth" than to see only darkness around one..."truth" is truth, *for* it makes men *better*. (*WP*, 452)

The 'forces' that work toward knowledge, for Nietzsche, are the creative, interpretive powers and instincts; to subscribe to a dogmatic notion of absolute truth is to conceal and stultify these forces. Feeling that one possesses the truth involves denying these creative

forces and maintaining that truth is discovered and that, in principle, we are capable of representing the true structure of the world. One 'flatters oneself' if one adheres to a view which posits an ontological basis for our judgements, however revisable they may be. Certainly, there are those who might find such a theorist - or theory - better in some sense (and Nietzsche's facetious tone is quite evident here). But, Nietzsche maintains, this type of assured realist theory eventually leads to the sort of ossification which cripples the active, interpretive powers of thought. Such a dogmatism of perspective is expressed in one's conviction or will "*not* to see many things, to be impartial at no point, to be party through and through, to have a strict and necessary perspective in all questions of value" (AC, 54). And this strictness of perspective, this unconditional will to truth results in precisely the sort of realist notion of truth which Nietzsche rejects. But his critique of, for example, morality, is perfectly consonant with such a rejection.

Fundamentally, what must be noted is that, provided we recognize that Nietzsche is not concerned with formulating a traditional theory of truth, i.e. anything along the lines of a realist/correspondence theory of truth, then the self-referential problem which arises from his antirealism dissolves. Nietzsche does not, as Cahoon suggests, present his perspectivist view as 'true' in the traditional sense.

In a recent paper entitled "Nietzsche's Critique of Truth," Ken Gemes, recognizing Nietzsche's rejection of realist frameworks, points out that if by truth we mean 'truth as correspondence', then "for Nietzsche truth and falsity are simply not the issues." He also recognizes the close relationship between this antirealism and Nietzsche's antifoundationalism: "His own work [is] not intended to provide a body of

truths to be built upon through further research” (Gemes, p. 59). Of particular interest is Gemes’ suggestion that “Nietzsche’s interest in the [traditional] rhetoric of truth need not betoken any interest in the [traditional] notion of truth” (Gemes, p. 64). By way of analogy, we might think of an historian interested in tracing out the role of vampire folklore in various cultures without thereby being interested in or believing in vampires as such.<sup>9</sup> In just this way, Nietzsche can trace out the conditions and assumptions underlying the traditional concept of truth without thereby presenting a position which incorporates this concept as one of its elements. Such a suggestion is consistent with the deconstructive model I have presented in this chapter. Nietzsche wants to expose those who maintain an unquestioned faith in truth as “wily spokesmen for their prejudices which they baptize ‘truths’” (*BGE*, 5). But he need not be committed thereby to the very same notion of truth as are these ‘wily spokesmen’. Rather, Nietzsche remains all the more vehemently opposed to that notion: “‘Truth’? Who has forced this word on me? But I repudiate it; but I disdain this proud word: no, we do not need this; we shall conquer and come to power even without truth” (*WP*, 749). As difficult as it may be, we can only understand Nietzsche’s views by stepping, along with him, outside of the realist framework within which a correspondence criterion, some sort of notion of truth as representation, governs our evaluations of statements or theories. Nietzsche in no way appeals to this old framework in presenting his views.

---

<sup>9</sup> As Gemes points out, this sort of analogy may have its limits. But it does suffice to illustrate the central point that Nietzsche “is not offering any theory of truth” (Gemes, p. 65) in the traditional sense. For this reason, Gemes maintains that Nietzsche does not fall prey to a self-referential paradox.

Whatever sort of truth Nietzsche is concerned with, it is not a concept of truth that results from the unconditional realist dogmatism which he so consistently criticizes. Lawrence Hinman suggests that we think of Nietzsche as offering “a way of conceiving of artistic truth” (Hinman, p. 196). Other commentators, for example Nehamas and James Winchester (cf., especially, Winchester, pp. 123-147), similarly argue that the only way to properly understand Nietzsche’s position is in light of his aestheticism. An examination of Nietzsche’s aestheticism as essential to his perspectivism, however, is beyond the purview of the present discussion. Suffice it to point out that the truth with which Nietzsche is concerned is not in any way a realist notion of truth and for that reason it may very well appear quite strange, even immoral, to those who are accustomed to the traditional concept of truth. Thus Nietzsche acknowledges that he may be “at odds with all the world about the concept of ‘truth’” (“Why I Am So Clever,” 1, *EH*). Nonetheless, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, when he praises the ‘philosophers of the future’ for their conditional, undogmatic approach to truth, Nietzsche maintains that they must “sacrifice all desirability to truth, every truth, even plain, harsh, ugly, repellent, unchristian, immoral truth. - For such truths do exist” (*BGE*, 1). But, and this is the important point:

It must offend their pride, also their taste, if their truth is supposed to be a truth for everyman - which has so far been the secret wish and hidden meaning of all dogmatic aspirations. “My judgement is *my* judgement - that is what such a philosopher of the future may perhaps say of himself. (*BGE*, 43)

Unlike the alleged free spirits of *On The Genealogy of Morals*, III, 24, these philosophers are “very free spirits” (*BGE*, 44), since they have liberated themselves from the dogmatic unconditional faith in truth. They acknowledge that there can be no absolute truth, truths

that are binding on everyone, or even truths that represent the nature of reality, since there is no truth in that traditional sense. Thus, when they present their views, they are quick to point out that they are *their* views, their interpretations only.

Clearly, Nietzsche shares this liberation from the faith in truth with the philosophers of the future. He rejects any sort of absolutism which holds that there is any one perspective, any set of 'truths', that is binding on all people. Because truth itself is conditioned by perspective and contextual in character, there can be no canonical interpretation or foundational set of truths. To maintain a belief in such a foundational, absolute set of judgements is to remain ensnared in a dogmatic presupposition and to subscribe to the absolutist objective of having all other interpretations agree with one's own. Rather, Nietzsche maintains, "one must shed the bad taste of wanting to agree with many" (*BGE*, 43). As pointed out earlier, Nietzsche's perspectivism does not amount to the relativism which holds that any interpretation is as good as any other; but Nietzsche is adamantly opposed to any sort of absolutism. Thus, he does not claim that his views are binding on any one in any absolute way - there can be no one view of the world which accurately reflects or represents the nature of reality. Because of the absolutist, realist tendencies of traditional approaches to truth, Nietzsche states that "the concept 'truth' is nonsensical" (*WP*, 625).

The basis upon which Cahoone finds Nietzsche guilty of self-contradiction thus is without grounds. Nietzsche *does* reject and undercut the value of the traditional notion of truth. But he does *not* present his own interpretation(s) as true in the traditional sense. Nietzsche's central aim is to show how it is possible to philosophize in the face of a loss

of absolutes and a rejection of realist truth; Cahoone, apparently, does not recognize any way (for Nietzsche, at least) in which this can be done. Having disposed of the traditional notion of truth, Cahoone concludes, there is no way in which one can continue with the project of rational discourse without contradicting oneself. Yet if we interpret Nietzsche as proceeding via the sort of deconstructive model that I have described, and if we see this model as functioning within the overall framework of his antirealism with respect to truth, then no problem of self-referentiality threatens his project.



## *Conclusion*

I will begin this concluding section with a brief summary of the previous three chapters. As pointed out already, the thrust of this thesis is a negative one; it has been my objective to examine and expose what I have argued are errors in the interpretations of several prominent Nietzsche commentators. I do not purport, then, to have offered a comprehensive account of Nietzsche's views. Rather I have focused on three central 'negative' aspects of his thought - his rejection of the correspondence theory, his antifoundational view of knowledge and antirealism with respect to truth, and his deconstructive model.

Maudmarie Clark offers a 'minimal' correspondence account of Nietzsche; she takes Nietzsche to reject only transcendent or metaphysical truth and to embrace a sort of common sense realism with respect to truth. On this view, Nietzsche's early rejection of truth depends upon his tacit adherence to the notion of the thing-in-itself. He rejects empirical (or phenomenal) truth because truth consists in a relation between our judgements and an unknowable thing-in-itself. However, on this account, once Nietzsche rejects the notion of a Kantian *ding an sich*, he loses his grounds for the denial of empirical truth (in the correspondence sense) and hence abandons that denial. His account of truth is thus a neo-Kantian account - Kantianism purged of the problematic thing-in-itself.

Against this sort of correspondence interpretation, I have argued that Nietzsche's perspectivism rejects not only metaphysical truth, but also empirical truth (in the sense of

correspondence with reality). Nietzsche is a thorough-going antirealist with respect to truth: he rejects the ontological framework within which theories of truth have conventionally been conceived. Hence he rejects the notions of reference, representation, fact - he rejects, that is, the very idea that the character of reality is intrinsically truth-making. Reality, for Nietzsche, *has no* fundamental essence or character, and any theory of truth which preoccupies itself with postulations concerning the relation between our judgements and some features of reality is, for him, misguided.

Hence Clark's minimal correspondence reading consistently interprets Nietzsche in terms of categories and conceptions that he explicitly rejects. On this reading, however, Nietzsche does not fall victim to a problem of self-referentiality, for such a problem, Clark maintains, arises only if we interpret Nietzsche as an antirealist. Lawrence Cahoone does interpret Nietzsche as an antirealist with respect to truth, and he consequently argues that Nietzsche contradicts himself. Nietzsche, Cahoone maintains, on the one hand, rejects the traditional notion of truth - yet, on the other hand, he employs that very notion of truth in the presentation of his own views and when he praises other interpretations.

Cahoone, however, loses sight of the extent of Nietzsche's antirealism. In order to recognize the extent of this antirealism, I have suggested a 'deconstructive' model with which to better understand the manner in which Nietzsche launches his various polemics and critiques. Provided we understand Nietzsche as proceeding via this sort of model, no problems of self-reference arise; Nietzsche does not employ the very notion of truth that he rejects in the presentation of his own views. The deconstructive approach in question is perfectly consonant with Nietzsche's antirealism and with his rejection of such realist

notions as reference, fact, representation, determinate ontological structure, etc.

Ultimately, I have suggested, we ought not to see Nietzsche as presenting a theory of truth in any traditional sense; his treatment of truth rejects the framework of correspondence that has dominated western philosophy.

Indeed, it is of the utmost importance to establish the proper context within which discussions of Nietzsche's perspectivism should take place. Regardless of our account - and evaluation - of Nietzsche's positive views, if that account does not situate those views within the context of his antirealism and his rejection of the traditional notion of truth, it will profoundly misrepresent his thought. With this firmly established, I will conclude with some suggestions for the prospects of a positive account of Nietzsche's perspectivism. What follows, however, is not in any way intended to constitute an argument but, rather, merely a proposal for future study.

If Nietzsche rejects the correspondence theory of truth and is an antirealist with respect to truth, then what standard of evaluation does he employ in deciding between perspectives? What guides Nietzsche's revaluation of truth? In keeping with the account offered by Alexander Nehamas, I suggest that it is Nietzsche's aestheticism that provides the key to these questions. Of his own position, Nietzsche himself declares: "an anti-metaphysical view of the world - yes, but an artistic one" (*WP*, 1048). Or, as Nehamas observes, "Nietzsche always depended on literary and artistic models for understanding the world" (Nehamas, p. 194).

Nietzsche believes that we must acquire and develop the creativity and originality of artists; we must construct our lives, our interpretations of the world, in the way that

artists construct their works. For in their works, Nietzsche tells us, artists view things from all manners of perspectives, and they have the ability to beautify, organize and structure their works in the light of this perspectival openness. With artists, however, “this subtle power [of organizing, beautifying, etc.] comes to an end where art ends and life begins” (*GS*, 299). But, for Nietzsche, this artistic power provides the very key to both creating and comprehending the perspectival interpretations in our lives which are the expressions of our will: “but we want to be the poets of our life - first of all in the smallest, most everyday matters” (*GS*, 299). Nietzsche applies this aesthetic model to life itself, to the creative, interpretive activity which constitutes our various intellectual, cultural, and personal perspectives.

With respect to the problem of self-referentiality, Nehamas suggests that a difficulty arises only on the erroneous assumption that if something is ‘merely’ an interpretation, it must be false. For, so the argument runs, if perspectivism is itself only an interpretation, then it need not be the case that the thesis of perspectivism - viz. that there are no facts, only interpretations - is true, and hence perspectivism refutes itself. But, Nehamas counters, from the possibility that an interpretation might be false, it does not follow that it is false; yet, to show perspectivism false, we must show that some views are in fact not interpretations.

Nehamas has a point. What makes us abandon an interpretation is the emergence of a better<sup>1</sup> interpretation; the persuasion occurs with the concrete development of

---

<sup>1</sup> There are, of course, no absolute standards for a ‘better’ interpretation - and the grounds on which an interpretation is deemed more satisfactory are not aesthetic grounds alone. Each interpretation is conditioned and contextualized by the particular dynamic perspective of the interpreter, and aesthetic, as well as (for example) various pragmatic, personal and social, concerns and factors contribute to the abandonment of one interpretation and the

alternative interpretations. Yet Nehamas's argument does not take explicit issue with the conception of truth attributed to Nietzsche by his critics. The fundamental point to be made in response to the charge of self-refutation is that correspondence, for Nietzsche, no longer governs the attributions of 'true' and 'false'. Indeed, it remains a puzzling aspect of Nehamas's argument that he does not explicitly acknowledge Nietzsche's rejection of correspondence. Nevertheless, of particular help is Nehamas's suggestion that critics of perspectivism

assume that interpretation is a second-best mode of understanding and thus misunder[stand] perspectivism, which denies that there can be even in principle a mode of understanding that is better, more secure, or more accurate than interpretation. (Nehamas, p. 66-67)

This suggestion seems to get closer to the heart of the matter. The traditional designations of 'true' and 'false' (in the correspondence sense) do not even apply any longer, since there *is* nothing but interpretation; Nietzsche has rejected the notion of correspondence ("I myself have attempted an *aesthetic* justification" (WP, 416)) and hence it ought not to be employed in attempting to understand his perspectivism. As Nehamas suggests, the pejorative term '*mere* interpretation' is misplaced here, since it suggests that interpretation is a second-best mode of cognition.

The question, then, is what distinguishes a good interpretation from a bad interpretation? In praising one interpretation and criticizing another, Nietzsche proceeds by various aesthetic considerations. "The characters Nietzsche admires and the achievements he honours...are overwhelmingly literary and artistic" (Nehamas, p. 227). And, certainly, Nietzsche reserves his highest praise for figures such as Goethe (whom he

praises because, among other things, “he *created* himself” (“Skirmishes of an Untimely Man,” 49, *TI*), Beethoven, Stendhal, Balzac and above all Wagner (cf. *Beyond Good and Evil*, 256). These figures exhibit a unity of character, a self-sufficiency and completeness, which Nietzsche argues constitutes the highest human value or virtue - a dynamic, dispositional virtue with no *specific* content. Like a great work of literature or a great painting, they are complete within themselves; nothing in them is superfluous or inappropriate - all aspects of their character unite to form a complete, coherent whole. Nietzsche admires the ability to “combine all of one’s features and qualities, whatever their traditional moral value, into a controlled and coherent whole” (Nehamas, p. 227). It is presumably for this reason, then, that Nietzsche praises, for example, the noble mode of valuation: it combines all of its features into a unified whole, whereas the ‘slave’ mode of valuation is primarily reactive and is formed by external factors.

In keeping with Nietzsche’s rejection of absolutism, under this aesthetic perspectivism, “no actions and character traits...can be in themselves good or evil...[rather] their quality is the product of interpretation” (Nehamas, p. 230). The nobles of *On The Genealogy of Morals*, for example, exhibit a definite egoism and a certain indifference towards the slaves, but this does not imply that, for Nietzsche, egoism and indifference towards others, *as such*, are praiseworthy. Rather, it is only in the context of a particular perspective, within a context of action and success, that these traits are valuable.

Whatever has *value* in our world does not have value in itself, according to its nature - nature is always value-less, but has been *given* value at some time, as a present - and it was *we* who gave and bestowed it. (*GS*, 301)

The egotism and indifference of the nobles contributes to the overall self-sufficiency and coherence of their character and is praiseworthy in this context. But Nietzsche's praise of his ideal characters is situated beyond good and evil; he is concerned with the aesthetic structure of those characters and their interpretations, rather than with the specific moral content of those interpretations. Rather than posit absolute values or ideals, Nietzsche suggests that we should conceive of "darker shadows and shades of appearance - different 'values', to use the language of painters" (*BGE*, 34). Again, the reference here is to the artist, to an aesthetic conception of the world.

A mode of interpretation, or a character, which combines these aesthetic values of coherence, unity and completeness would thus constitute a praiseworthy, a 'true', mode of interpretation, an ideal character, for Nietzsche. Yet Nietzsche does not explicitly present these aesthetic criteria: "Nietzsche does not describe his ideal character, but...does produce a perfect instance of it" (Nehamas, p. 230). Nehamas suggests that, rather than describe these aesthetic criteria, Nietzsche exemplifies them by creating of himself, through his works, a character that is emblematic of these criteria of completeness, unity, coherence, etc. In this way, Nietzsche is able to avoid any problems of self-reference which may arise from an explicit formulation of these aesthetic criteria. As Nehamas observes (in a particularly clever turn of phrase): "Nietzsche wanted to be, and was, the Plato of his own Socrates" (Nehamas, p. 234). Just as Plato developed the character of Socrates in his dialogues and used that character as a vehicle to express his views, so does Nietzsche create of himself a character which is exemplary of his own aesthetic criteria.

As I have mentioned at several points throughout this thesis, I consider Nehamas's suggestions to be the most promising prospect for a thorough account of Nietzsche's positive views. Nevertheless, unfortunately, those suggestions are in general far too brief and sketchy. Nehamas suggests that, in order to avoid the absolutism he so vehemently rejects, Nietzsche must not be too specific with respect to the criteria of evaluation for characters and interpretations; consequently, Nehamas's own account must also be quite general. Nonetheless, Nehamas can offer a more detailed account of the sorts of traits Nietzsche approves of without citing specific qualities or actions. That is, Nietzsche does discuss the qualities and criteria which he feels constitute a 'well formed, coherent and unified' character or interpretation. These qualities, too, are aesthetic in nature; hence a more fully detailed account of Nietzsche's aestheticism is certainly possible. A general approach to offering a comprehensive account of Nietzsche's aestheticism and perspectivism, then, would be to set about the task of fleshing-out and elaborating upon Nehamas's suggestive but sketchy discussion.

James Winchester, for example, offers a slightly more detailed account of Nietzsche's aestheticism in *Nietzsche's Aesthetic Turn: Reading Nietzsche after Heidegger, Deleuze and Derrida*. Like Nehamas, Winchester argues that "Nietzsche's thought can be fully appreciated only in the light of his aesthetic concerns" (Winchester, p. 69). But Winchester goes further and identifies three specific aesthetic criteria that "Nietzsche repeatedly points to as distinguishing his [and other good] interpretations from others [that are bad]" (Winchester, p. 125). First of all, a good interpretation, or interpreter, creates its own values, rather than retaining and clinging to the values or the ideals of others.



“The most powerful man, the creator, would have to be the most evil, in as much as he carries his ideal against the ideals of other men and remakes them in his own image” (WP, 1026). The aesthetic value of creativity, originality, is thus of great importance. Second, for an interpretation to be praised, a good style is necessary (thus *The Gay Science* 290: “*One Thing Is Needful* - To ‘give style’ to one’s character - a great and rare art!” Cf. also “Why I Write Such Good Books,” 4, *EH*). An essential element of ‘style’ would be a willingness to experiment, a willingness to assume different ‘masks’, a diversity of personalities and characters, in order to best serve one’s interpretation and perspective - “so that one knows how to employ a *variety* of perspectives and affective interpretations” (*GM*, III, 12). Third, good interpreters pick out and enhance certain aspects of their subjects, i.e. they ‘idealize’ the objects of their interpretation through a “tremendous drive to bring out the main features so that the others disappear in the process” (“Skirmishes of an Untimely Man,” 8, *TI*).

Winchester then sets about discussing the manner in which these aesthetic criteria provide the standards by which Nietzsche distinguishes ‘good’ interpretations from ‘bad’ interpretations. These three criteria, however, are not intended to constitute an exhaustive list. Winchester’s goal is to demonstrate that Nietzsche’s aim is to show us “how to talk with one another and how to theorize and evaluate our cultural heritage once aesthetics...becomes the foundation for philosophical discourse” (Winchester, p. 150). At any rate, one can see, again, how these aesthetic criteria would provide the basis for Nietzsche’s praise of, for example, Goethe, or the noble mode of valuation of *On The Genealogy of Morals*.

The aesthetic criteria suggested by Winchester are certainly consistent with the sort of criteria Nehamas suggests. Presumably, idealization, good style, creativity would all be essential elements in the unified, coherent and complete character. But Winchester's discussion does go into greater detail than the broad strokes of Nehamas. Winchester, however, does have at least one substantive difference with Nehamas: "Nehamas's attempt to summarize Nietzsche is too neat - more concise and systematic than Nietzsche actually was" (Winchester, p. 126).

In particular, Winchester takes issue with (and I agree with him on this point) Nehamas's notion that Nietzsche's works constitute a single, 'literary' character. Rather, Winchester suggests, Nietzsche presents us with a 'carnival of characters' - "Nietzsche is not the philosopher of a mask, but rather of a plurality of masks" (Winchester, p. 137).<sup>2</sup> Hence Nietzsche tells us that "every profound spirit needs a mask" (*BGE*, 40) and that "every philosophy also *conceals* a philosophy; every opinion is also a hideout, every word also a mask" (*BGE*, 289; cf. *BGE*, 137). At various stages, Nietzsche utilizes the mask of the ironist, the humorist, the "hyperborean" (of *The Antichrist*, 1) and of Zarathustra - among others. In presenting us with a diversity of characters, Nietzsche exemplifies the good 'style', the willingness to experiment, the unity in diversity, which he praises in others and others' interpretations. There thus seems to be some credence to Winchester's claim that Nehamas's Nietzsche is too systematic, yet whether this constitutes a substantive difference between these two commentators - and whether it

---

<sup>2</sup> Sarah Kofman, too, in "Accessories" (Sedgwick, Ed.), discusses this notion of Nietzsche's use, throughout his works, of different 'masks', different characters. She argues that "the transition from the youthful Nietzsche to the Nietzsche of *Ecce Homo* required a long road to be travelled...many masks adopted" (Kofman, p. 149; cf. also, p. 145).

poses a serious difficulty for Nehamas's account - is a question which cannot be pursued here.

Certainly, there are other commentators, as well, who recognize the importance of Nietzsche's aestheticism. To be sure, the readings of Deleuze, Heidegger, and Derrida - as Winchester notes - suggest the importance of Nietzsche's aestheticism. Christopher Menke, in "Tragedy and The Free-Spirits," argues extensively for a Nietzschean "post-metaphysical aesthetic" (Menke, p. 2) and a notion of an 'artistic culture' which he claims functions throughout Nietzsche's works. Lawrence Hinman, as noted earlier, suggests a notion of 'aesthetic reference' with which to understand Nietzsche's treatment of truth. Daniel Conway, while ultimately taking a different approach than Nehamas, goes so far as to claim that "Nehamas...underestimates the scope of Nietzsche's aestheticism" (Conway, p. 47). And even Lawrence Cahoon, whose interpretation I have criticized at some length in this thesis, recognizes the importance of what he calls Nietzsche's 'aesthetic naturalism'.

The preceding is not intended to constitute anything like a substantive discussion or examination of Nietzsche's aestheticism. I merely wish to suggest a direction that might be followed once the radical nature of Nietzsche's rejection of the traditional notion of truth has been recognized. There is certainly compelling evidence suggesting that Nietzsche's concerns are ultimately aesthetic; and the accounts of commentators such as Nehamas and Winchester renders this aesthetic account all the more plausible. The risk run by any sketch such as the one I have just provided, however, is that it oversimplifies and, as a result, caricatures and ultimately discredits Nietzsche's view. Nietzsche's insight

is that in fashioning one's interpretation of the world, of one's perspective, of the chaotic diversity of one's experience, "one is much more of an artist than one knows" (*BGE*, 192). We may think that we have discovered our values, yet we actually create those values from the force of our will. We may feel that, despite our fallibility, we are struggling towards a truth which is ultimately independent of that struggling, while in fact there is nothing besides the struggling, nothing beyond our provisional interpretations. For Nietzsche, we are always already submerged in a web of cognitive, cultural and personal perspectives, none of which can ever have absolute authority or be binding on all, and out of which we, as the artists of our lives, create our interpretations. It is this fundamentally aesthetic insight to which Nietzsche's works give exquisite and comprehensive expression, and these works and this aesthetic insight warrant an equally comprehensive explanation and commentary. I hope to have helped, in some small way, in establishing the necessary basis for such a comprehensive project.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allen, Barry. *Truth in Philosophy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993
- Allinson, David B (Ed.). *The New Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation*. New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1977.
- Barker, Stephen. *Autoaesthetics: Strategies of the Self After Nietzsche*. Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1992.
- Cahoone, Lawrence E. *The Ends Of Philosophy*. Albany: State University Of New York Press, 1995.
- Clark, Maudemarie. *Nietzsche On Truth And Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Conway, Daniel W. "Literature As Life: Nietzsche's Positive Morality." *International Studies In Philosophy*, vol. 21, no. 2, 1989.
- Conway, Daniel W. "Returning to Nature: Nietzsche's *Gotterdammerung*," in Sedgewick (Ed.).
- Conway, Daniel W. "Genealogy and Critical Method," in Schacht (Ed.).
- Danto, Arthur. *Nietzsche As Philosopher*. New York: Macmillan, 1965.
- Davidson, Donald. "Truth and Meaning." *Synthese*, vol. 17, 1967.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Trans., Hugh Tomlinson. New York: Columbia University, 1983.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Spurs*. Trans., Barbara Harlow. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.
- Dummett, Michael. *Truth and Other Enigmas*. London: Duckworth, 1978.
- Gemes, Ken. "Nietzsche's Critique of Truth." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 52, no. 1, 1992.
- Hales, Steven D. and Robert C. Welshon. "Truth, Paradox, and Nietzschean Perspectivism." *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, vol. 11, no. 1, January 1994.

- Heidegger, Martin. *Nietzsche*, vol. 3. Trans., Joan Stambaugh, David Krell and Frank Capuzzi. New York: Harper, 1987.
- Hinman, Lawrence M. "Nietzsche, Metaphor, and Truth." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 43, no. 2, 1982.
- Hollingdale, R.J. "Theories and Innovations in Nietzsche: Logic, Theory of Knowledge and Metaphysics," in Sedgewick (Ed.).
- Horwich, Paul. *Truth*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1990.
- Kaufmann, Walter. *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*. Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1956.
- Kofman, Sarah. "Accessories (*Ecce Homo*, 'Why I Write Such Good Books', 'The Untimelies', 3)," in Sedgewick (Ed.).
- Leiter, Brian. "Perspectivism in Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*," in Schacht (Ed.).
- Magnus, Bernd. "Self-Consuming Concepts." *International Studies In Philosophy*, vol. 21, no. 2, 1989.
- McKeon, Richard (Ed.). *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. New York: Random House, 1941.
- Menke, Christopher. "Tragedy and the Free Spirits: On Nietzsche's Theory of Aesthetic Freedom." *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, vol. 22, no. 1, 1996.
- Nehamas, Alexander. *Nietzsche: Life As Literature*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985.
- Nehamas, Alexander. "Different Readings: A Reply to Magnus, Solomon and Conway." *International Studies In Philosophy*, vol. 21, no. 2, 1989.
- Putnam, Hilary. *Realism with a Human Face*, Ed., James Conant. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990.
- Ramberg, Bjorn. *Donald Davidson's Philosophy of Language: An Introduction*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989.
- Russell, Bertrand. *The Problems of Philosophy*. London: Oxford University Press, 1912.
- Schacht, Richard. *Nietzsche*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983.

- Schacht, Richard (Ed.). *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality*. Berkeley: University Of California Press, 1994.
- Sedgwick, Peter R. (Ed.) *Nietzsche: A Critical Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1995.
- Solomon, Robert C. "Nietzsche and Nehamas's Nietzsche." *International Studies In Philosophy*, vol. 21, no. 2, 1989.
- Tanesini, Alessandra. "The 'Spider's Web' and the 'Tool': Nietzsche *vis-a-vis* Rorty on Metaphor," in Sedgwick (Ed.).
- Tanner, Michael. *Nietzsche*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Tarski, Alfred. "The Concept of Truth in Formalized Languages" (1935) in *Logic, Semantics, Metamathematics: Papers from 1923 to 1938*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956.
- Tarski, Alfred. "The Semantic Conception of Truth and the Foundations of Semantics" (1944) in *The Philosophy of Language, Second Edition*. Ed., A.P. Martinich. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Weston, Michael. *Kierkegaard and Modern Continental Philosophy*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Winchester, James J. *Nietzsche's Aesthetic Turn: Reading Nietzsche After Heidegger, Deleuze and Derrida*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Trans., D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961.
- Young, Julian. *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Zeitlin, Irving. *Nietzsche: A Re-examination*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994.