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Nietzsche's Recommendations for the Philosopher

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Abstract

Nietzsche's philosophical endeavor can be broadly characterized by two complementary ambitions acting throughout his corpus: a relentless critique of traditional metaphysics, epistemology, and axiology; and an effort to confront the nihilistic predicament which seems to result from these negations. Nowhere are these ideas more directly relevant and their implications more dramatic than in the discipline of philosophy itself; the task of the philosopher must be transformed by these reevaluations of its tools and subject matter. Accordingly, Nietzsche's writings ought to recommend a sort of thinker fitted to the pursuit of this task, but owing to his literary style there exists in his works no list of definite prescriptions for philosophical practice nor a simple portrait of such a philosopher. The aim of this paper is to interpret Nietzsche's writings and extract from them a coherent position on this question. I look mainly to his numerous and varied explorations of the pursuit of knowledge in order to seek out the considerations that shape his normative conception of the philosopher; these largely take the form of case studies of hypothetical truth-seekers. I do not intend to address Nietzsche's practice as a philosopher himself, only his prescriptions – in general it cannot be assumed that he obeys his own recommendations. It should also be noted that I attend to his descriptive claims only insofar as they relate to this topic, as this is a discussion of prescriptions and not ontology, psychology, etc., and that I limit myself to the published works.

KEYWORDS: Nietzsche, philosophy, metaphysics, nihilism

*I would like to thank all those who have provided their comments and suggestions over the course of this paper's development: my fellow students Greg Taylor, Emily Ayoob, and David Boehnke, and my teachers Janet Folina and Henry West.

Nietzsche's Recommendations for the Philosopher¹

Anthony Boutelle

*Are these coming philosophers new friends of "truth"?
That is probable enough, for all philosophers so far have
loved their truths. But they will certainly not be dogmatists.
Beyond Good and Evil, §43*

Introduction

Nietzsche's philosophical endeavor can be broadly characterized by two complementary ambitions acting throughout his corpus: a relentless critique of traditional metaphysics, epistemology, and axiology; and an effort to confront the nihilistic predicament which seems to result from these negations. Nowhere are these ideas more directly relevant and their implications more dramatic than in the discipline of philosophy itself; the task of the philosopher must be transformed by these revaluations of its tools and subject matter.

Accordingly, Nietzsche's writings ought to recommend a sort of thinker fitted to the pursuit of this task, but owing to his literary style there exists in his works no list of definite prescriptions for philosophical practice nor a simple portrait of such a philosopher. The aim of this paper is to interpret Nietzsche's writings and extract from them a coherent position on this question.² I look mainly to his numerous and varied explorations of the pursuit of knowledge in order to seek out the considerations that shape his normative conception of the philosopher; these largely take the form of case studies of hypothetical truth-seekers.³ I do not intend to address Nietzsche's practice as a philosopher himself, only his prescriptions – in general it cannot be assumed that he obeys his own recommendations. It should also be noted that I attend to his descriptive claims only insofar as they relate to this topic, as this is a discussion of prescriptions and not ontology, psychology, etc., and that I limit myself to the published works.⁴

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² It is not universally agreed upon that Nietzsche takes up any consistent positions of this kind. Obviously it is my belief that he does, and I hope to clarify how this may be the case, but regardless my reading ought to give insight into a distinct and significant moment of his thought.

³ Cf. the Socratic spirit (BT), the historian (ADH), the 'rational' and 'intuitive' man (TF), the philosopher of the future (BGE), the ascetic ideal (GM), and the late Nietzsche's more comprehensive concept of the will to truth.

[See bibliography for abbreviations of Nietzsche's works.]

⁴ I have chosen to exclude Nietzsche's Nachlass (despite its treatment of some issues that concern me here) both because of the questionable status of taking such unpublished and incomplete notes as genuine philosophical positions on par with other sources and because of my greater familiarity with the published texts. I make one exception to this, beginning my conclusion with a quotation which I simply could not pass up.

Nietzsche's positive idea of philosophy (as opposed to his critique) retains the form of a search for 'truth' in some sense and consequently derives its unique character from a reinterpretation of that concept, rejecting the 'dogmatic' philosopher's traditional articles of faith: the clear distinction between knowledge or truth and 'mere opinion' and the inherent value of this truth. These denials frame two major features which can be attributed to the Nietzschean philosopher.

Firstly, from the denial of an absolute truth which is distinct from other types of belief, it follows that epistemic evaluation cannot proceed by way of comparison with some ideal and abstract point of view. Nietzsche's alternative is a brand of perspectivism, which underlies his normative determination of epistemic value. Secondly, because there is no necessary identity between the true and the good, beneficial truths must be distinguished from destructive ones, and such judgment necessarily imposes valuational, ethical limits on the domain of the philosopher. These limits are defined by Nietzsche with recourse to a concept of 'value for life' ethically prior to truth; a truth, defined as such by its epistemic value, may still be condemned in this respect as destructive or antithetical to life.⁵ There are two complementary difficulties in this: to define what is meant by 'life' as a basis for value, and to see whether truth can survive this subordination at all without dissolving into relativism or nihilism. The resolution of the tension in which epistemic value stands against value as defined by the criterion of life must be found in the meaning of Nietzsche's 'life', ultimately understood in terms of the will to power.

Epistemic Value

It is helpful to first observe what the goal of the Nietzschean thinker is *not*: the transcendental, "pure ineffective truth" (TF p. 177)⁶ of the 'Thing-in-itself', 'pure reason', and 'absolute spirituality'; Nietzsche dubs the absolute rationalism of much past inquiry "metaphysical illusion".⁷ These concepts depend upon the "fiction that posited a 'pure, will-less, painless, timeless knowing subject' ... in which the active and interpreting forces, through which alone seeing becomes seeing *something*, are supposed to be lacking," and are therefore nonsense (GM III: 12). This critique of abstract reflection is closely tied to perspectivist epistemology: "There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective 'knowing'" and "to eliminate the will altogether, to suspend each and every affect," would mean "to *castrate* the intellect." Nietzsche thus takes up perspectivism, denying any possibility of justification *sub specie aeternitatis*.⁸

⁵ This aspect can be seen in Nietzsche's normative ambivalence in evaluations of the seeker for truth in many of his case studies (see note 3).

⁶ I reference Nietzsche's texts by section number and, if necessary, with an abbreviation of the work's English title (elucidated in the bibliography). "On Truth and Falsity in their Ultramoral Sense" and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* are referenced by page numbers. "P" indicates a preface. All italics within quotations are Nietzsche's or the translator's.

⁷ From the terms used in Nietzsche's list, it seems that Kant and Hegel must be among his targets here. The next quotation is aimed at Kant's transcendental subject, cf. *Critique of Pure Reason* B 427.

⁸ For discussion of Nietzsche's perspectivism as a fundamental philosophical approach, cf. Richard Schacht's "Nietzsche's kind of philosophy," esp. § III. *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*. Ed. Bernd Magnus and Kathleen M. Higgins. Cambridge UP, 1996, pp. 151-179. This article puts forward an interpretation generally in agreement with my own.

The Nietzschean philosopher is not prohibited from abstract justifications, but an acceptable methodology cannot be the *a priori* 'contemplation without interest' which Nietzsche denounces. He posits in its place a perspectival conception of objectivity understood "as the ability to control one's Pro and Con...to employ a variety of perspectives and effective interpretations in the service of knowledge." Under such a theory, knowledge is constructed, not merely found; by creating antagonisms and amalgamations from varied systems of understanding the philosopher can assimilate ever more competing perspectives and thereby increase the scope of his truth. It follows from this perspectivist view that "the more affects we allow to speak about one thing, the more complete will our 'concept' of this thing, our 'objectivity,' be" (GM III:12).¹ Nietzsche's notion of epistemic value is determined in proportion to comprehensiveness, understood as the inclusion of manifold subjective perspectives, and it is in this respect that the transcendental is rejected; a statement from *no* perspective can have no epistemic value.² Knowledge acquired perspectivally cannot be regarded as self-evident in the way that 'pure reason' might be – in Nietzsche's view such self-evidence would be only empty circularity. In order to ground truth in something external to itself Nietzsche asks that the philosopher "look at science in the perspective of the artist" – in other words, one must construct truth aesthetically (BT, P:2). By this Nietzsche means that building up knowledge from subjective experience is fundamentally creative and active: perception takes place only through interpretation, an "aesthetical relation" between the "*artistically creating* subject" and his object (TF p. 184); the philosopher must participate in "the construction of ideas" and the "artistic formation of metaphors" (p. 187). This conforms to the claim that objectivity is "a positive property" and cannot be "a pure passivity" which is merely acted upon by its objects and thereby accurately represents them in their "empirical essence" (ADH 6). To seek knowledge is to express an "impulse to art" and "weave a whole out of the isolated: everywhere with the presupposition that a unity of plan must be put into things if it is not there...[replacing] the unintelligible with something intelligible" – inquiry as art serves as a means to tame the unknown.³

The profound result of Nietzsche's condemnation of the metaphysical illusion implicit in transcendental knowledge and this unconventional notion of objectivity is that truth cannot be complete, nor is it independent of one's perspectives.⁴ Even if subjectively honest – Nietzsche recognizes a certain artistic disinterestedness – one never divorces himself from perspectives and cannot hope to comprehend everything in his understanding; the universality and privileged position claimed by the "indifferent"

¹ This perspectivism is borne out in the project of the *Untimely Meditations*, in which Nietzsche corrects for the "defect, infirmity and shortcoming of [his] age" not by retreating to a position outside history, shedding his German historical perspective in the name of transcendent objectivity, but rather by augmenting his view with the perspective of classical philology and ancient Greek civilization (ADH, P). By using this to wage an "untimely" attack on the present he hopes to cure it, or better yet contribute to a "coming age" strengthened by the conflicts generated between the two perspectives.

² My division between transcendental and perspectival kinds of knowledge resembles that made by John T. Wilcox in his argument for the possibility of truth in Nietzsche. *Truth and Value in Nietzsche*. Ann Arbor: U Michigan P, 1974. pp. 155-170.

³ It is in this sense that in *The Birth of Tragedy* we are told that the recalcitrant boundaries of scientific inquiry constitute "limits at which it must turn into art" (15).

⁴ Empirical knowledge, particularly knowledge of human affairs (e.g. history), is always limited in this way, but in at least one instance Nietzsche makes an exception for "a pure science like, say, mathematics" which is *not* subordinated to life (ADH 1).

metaphysician is unobtainable (ADH 6). Because of this, no essential difference in kind can be established to distinguish objectivity from even the most limited subjectivity, but only a difference of degree. By this stroke Nietzsche seeks to abolish the boundary between knowledge and ‘mere opinion’ upheld by dogmatic philosophers.⁵

It does not follow from this, however, that one cannot value the greater objectivity of justifications employing manifold perspectives. Ostensibly, increased comprehensiveness will resolve contradictions between less objective perspectives and guard against future contradiction, though it can never preclude it with certainty. Despite its limitations, Nietzsche certainly does find his type of objectivity to be philosophically valuable and considers it an epistemologically legitimate method for interpreting the world.

The Value of Truth for Life

Truths are not valuable, however, in themselves: “‘Knowledge for its own sake’...is the last snare of morality...”, and to Nietzsche morality is anathema (BGE 64). To maintain inquiry as a good in itself is condemned as dogmatic and moralistic in that it implies an abstract realm (Hinterwelt) other than that of experience and then values it unconditionally and absolutely.⁶ To maintain “a *metaphysical* faith” in the inherent value of truth is to “thereby affirm another world than that of life, nature, and history” (GS 344). Nietzsche considers this an unacceptably pessimistic position which conceals “a hatred of the ‘world’...a transcendence rigged up to slander mortal existence, a yearning for extinction...the most dangerous, most sinister form the will to destruction can take” (BT 11). He therefore warns against regarding the ‘unselfing’ that takes place in the approach to objectivity “as if it were the goal itself and redemption and transfiguration”; objectivity may be an instrument, but not a purpose (BGE 207). To mistake truth for an end in itself reduces philosophy to ‘theory of knowledge’, which in Nietzsche’s view weakens it and denies it access to meaning; no profundity survives this error (BGE 204). It is not the aesthetic nature of perspectival truth, either, which grants knowledge its value. Nietzsche encourages the philosopher not only to “to look at science in the perspective of the artist, but at art in that of life” (BT, P:2). ‘Life’ emerges as the purpose for the sake of which truths are constructed and the criterion for judging their value:

Now, is life to rule over knowledge, over science, or is knowledge to rule over life? ... No one will doubt: life is the higher, the ruling authority... Knowledge presupposes life and so has the same interest in the preservation of life which every being has in its own continuing existence. Thus science requires a higher supervision and guarding: a *hygiene of life* is placed close beside science... (ADH 10)

This means that, as has already been suggested, epistemic value does not imply value proper, value for life. Nietzsche takes a formula from Goethe: “instruction which fails to quicken activity [and] knowledge which enfeebles activity” ought to be “seriously hated” by the philosopher (ADH, P). This is illustrated in “On Truth and Falsity in their Ultramoral Sense”, wherein Nietzsche depicts two radically different types of truth: the

⁵ This critique has at least one particular dogmatist in mind; Nietzsche here rejoins the line divided by Plato, cf. *Republic* 509 d 6 - 511 e 5.

⁶ Once again, the paradigm of transcendental knowledge here is Plato, and this critique aimed at his world of Forms.

objectivity of the 'rational man' and the subjective caprice of the 'intuitive man', but "both desire to rule over life" and are held to its standard (p. 190). The rational man "designates only the relations of things to men" (p. 178), while the intellect of the intuitive man "is free and dismissed from his [*sic*] service as slave, so long as It [*sic*] is able to deceive without *injuring*" (p. 189); reason is of restricted scope while creative truth, when it deceives, must do so as fiction rather than a harmful lie. This is an appeal to life which defines the proper boundaries of inquiry, as both kinds of knowledge are limited to that domain in which they are helpful to human life. If these boundaries are transgressed, then truth takes on a destructive character and lacks value for life. Nietzsche emphasizes the importance of such a limit: "Cheerfulness, clear conscience, the carefree deed, faith in the future, all this depends... on there being a line which distinguishes what is clear and in full view from the dark and unilluminable"; "this is a general law: every living thing can become healthy, strong and fruitful only within a horizon..." (ADH 1).

If this is the case then the philosopher may face an "opposition between life and wisdom" wherein some truths are inimical to life and are therefore to be avoided (ADH 1). Thus the classical notion of an identity between the true and the good is destroyed: the philosopher of the future "will have little faith that *truth* of all things should be accompanied by...amusements for our feelings" (BGE 210). Truth can be a 'hypertrophic virtue', just as in history "there is a degree of insomnia, of rumination, of historical sense which injures every living thing and finally destroys it" (ADH, P; 1). An excess of truth, or a truth not fitted to the needs of its particular situation, might inspire pessimism or paralysis and thereby prevent action, as it does in the 'superhistorical man' – the philosopher must avoid that truth which would undermine his ability to act or destroy him.

This discussion of truth as hypertrophic and overgrown does not suggest that it has in any way ceased to be truth, i.e. lost its epistemic justification. It would be a mistake, then, to interpret Nietzsche as founding his concept of truth in usefulness or life-enhancement and collapsing epistemological and life-enhancing normativity; although life is presented as the ultimate value in these considerations, it is not the only one. There are two distinct types of value at play which sometimes conflict: that of truth, founded in perspectivism, and that of life. Even granting this distinction, the primacy of life in this opposition of values creates a worrying status for truth: what is the function of epistemic value if in every determination it is to be subordinated to another value? I shall return to this worry after a discussion of how the philosopher may defend himself from unhabitable truths.

Solace and Protection

One has recourse to helpful fantasies in order to escape such unlivable truths. Religion is one such consolation, but there are others which strike closer to the philosopher's concerns. In *The Birth of Tragedy* the 'theoretical man',⁷ who believes in the lie of transcendental knowledge, "like the artist...finds an infinite delight in whatever exists, and this satisfaction protects him against the practical ethics of pessimism" (15). Even the ascetic ideal of suffering and otherworldliness serves as a "*faute de mieux*"⁸ *par excellence* in which "the door [is] closed to any kind of suicidal nihilism" by affirming

⁷ 'Theoretical man' is also called the 'optimist' and identified with Socrates.

⁸ "stopgap"; used for "lack of anything better"

the philosopher's existence at the cost of the world: "*pereat mundus, fiat philosophia, fiat philosophus, fiam!*"⁹ (GM III:28,7). Although these dogmas are lies, and pessimistic ones at that, there is "metaphysical comfort" (BT P:7) provided by the transcendent other worlds they posit, and hence they may in practice preserve life.

There is also a possibility of beneficial deceptions and omissions within the domain of truth itself; knowledge is, in the perspectivist view, an artifice which is always somewhat contingent even when it is honest. Nietzsche invites us to "rejoice in our unwisdom", even to embrace our prejudices "as long as, within these prejudices, we make progress and do not stand still!" (ADH 1). The 'truths' of the rational and intuitive man find their very basis in dissimulation, but these illusions are justified as "a means for the preservation of the individual" and each is suited to different circumstances (TF pp. 174, 190-2). Similarly, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life* puts forward three distinct modes of historical inquiry, each of which is considered epistemologically valid but necessarily distorts its object to a particular end and is only appropriate within certain lived contexts – if misused, "it grows into a noxious weed" which can cause harm to life (2).

The imperative for the philosopher is to justify his perspectival truths in terms of life-enhancement, making his methodology contingent upon his specific circumstances, and this can be seen in Nietzsche's discussions of critical inquiry. Nietzsche calls his philosophers of the future "*attempters*", "and certainly they would be men of experiments" (BGE 42, 210). They could be called skeptics, but "this would still designate only one feature and *not* them as a whole"; they could be called critics, but this too would describe only part of their task, for "critics are instruments of the philosopher and for that reason, being instruments, a long way from being philosophers themselves" (BGE 210). Dangerous knowledge often comes in the form of rejecting truths one has up to now accepted. Like the critical historian, the philosopher "must have the strength, and use it from time to time, to shatter and dissolve something to enable him to live," but if this tendency dominates it "uproots the future because it destroys illusions and robs existing things of their atmosphere in which alone they can live...its judging is always annihilating" (ADH 3, 7). In order to justify himself, then, the philosopher must be motivated by a "constructive drive" and destroy only in the name of some greater creation. The same principle holds for any method: the philosopher should not seek truth to a degree that is injurious nor transgress beyond his capacities. "It is not justice which here sits in judgment...but life alone, that dark, driving, insatiably self-desiring power" (ADH 3).

Life as a value has thus far not been adequately discussed; apart from the negative assessments of pessimism and criticism it is unclear how this value is to be applied. Under a purely practical or cynical understanding of the concept 'life'¹⁰ it seems that the methods above allow one to choose the most *convenient* truths, and since helpful deceptions and even protective falsehoods may be allowed as well, the worry is all the more acute. The philosopher would need not fear overstepping his abilities nor face any difficult truths if he were to simply select the beliefs fitted to his desired life and regard this as ultimate justification. Value for life trumps truth, so he would need not concern himself with the consistency or accuracy of his views nor even maintaining them over

⁹ "Let the world perish, but let there be philosophy, the philosopher, *me!*"

¹⁰ e.g. a reading of Nietzsche as hedonist or pragmatist

time; he could simply find the best solace for every pain and persist in pleasant delusion. This is manifestly nihilistic: truth has simply disappeared, absorbed into its axiological foundations in life, and the epistemic value discussed above can count for nothing. One suspects that there has been a misreading of life in this interpretation, and this suspicion is confirmed by Nietzsche, who recognizes such a case:

If, in any sense, it is some happiness or pursuit of happiness which binds the living being to life and urges him to live, then perhaps no philosopher is closer to the truth than the cynic: for the happiness of the animal, that thorough cynic, is living proof of the truth of cynicism (ADH 1)

If happiness were the goal, then Nietzsche here suggests that the best strategy would be to forget *everything* and live as a beast unconscious of truth and lie altogether. It should also be seen that life as discussed so far has been couched in terms not of pleasure or convenience but of action and motion – the position of the cynic evokes tranquil satisfaction or mere survival, not flourishing and dynamism, and clearly this is not what Nietzsche has in mind when he writes of life and philosophy.

Enter the Will to Power

“Only where life is, there is also will: not will to life, but...will to power!” (Z p. 138). This is of utmost importance to the understanding of Nietzsche's criterion of value: to serve life is not to follow a ‘will to life’ (“He who shot the doctrine of ‘will to existence’ at truth certainly did not hit the truth: this will - does not exist!”) but rather the will *of* life, which is the will to power. It is this which prevents the Nietzschean philosopher from falling into the cynic's position. The will to power is described as a “procreating life-will’...[that] when it commands, faces ‘risk and danger’”; the will to power invokes a joy in opposition, domination and show of strength. Nietzsche makes broad cosmological claims about this idea, suggesting an infinite number of expressions of the will to power, most of which are irrelevant to this discussion; for the philosopher, the “will to power walks with the feet of [the] will to truth” (Z p. 137-8). This “impulse towards a goal, towards the higher, more distant, more manifold,” when oriented toward truth, is the constructive drive needed to justify the task of philosopher.¹¹

Truth gives the thinker mastery over the object of his thought, and as an artistic project satisfies a definition of life proffered in *Beyond Good and Evil*: “life itself is *essentially* appropriation...overpowering of what is alien...imposition of one's own forms, incorporation...” (259). Thus from life itself Nietzsche derives a desire for truth strong enough to cause the philosopher to risk even life itself in order to test the limits of his nature, preserving the role of epistemic value *as a challenge*. Life is not quite valued in itself; without the opposition of truth, life would lack value for the philosopher, for it would have no stimulus or object for action. Under this interpretation, then, epistemological value and value for life are placed in a delicately balanced complementarity.

The boundary of inquiry for a philosopher, the degree to which he can survive his objectivity, is determined by his “*plastic power*”, the strength of his *aesthetic* faculty for

¹¹ This is much like the conclusion reached by Simon May in his case study of Nietzsche's revaluation of truth: “The general end which conditions the value of truth in Nietzsche's ethic is clearly ‘life-enhancement’ – i.e. the maximization of power, sublimation and ‘form creation’...” *Nietzsche's Ethics and his War on ‘Morality’*. Oxford U P, 1999. p. 175.

“transforming and assimilating” – the greater this power, the more truth he will be able to absorb and bear without being overwhelmed (ADH 1). Put in terms of historical truth:

The stronger the roots of the inmost nature of a man are, the more of the past will he appropriate or master; and were one to conceive the most powerful and colossal nature, it would be known by this, that for it there would be no limit at which the historical sense could overgrow and harm it; such a nature would draw its own as well as every other alien past wholly into itself and transform it into blood, as it were. (ADH 1)

The will to truth, then, which cannot be understood through ‘advantage for life’ alone, is comprehended in the will to power, which gives Nietzsche his “real measure of value”: “How much truth does a spirit *endure*, how much truth does it *dare*?” (EH, P:3).

Further Problems

This account of the pursuit of knowledge insists that “the genuine philosopher...lives ‘unphilosophically’ and ‘unwisely,’ above all *imprudently*, and feels the burden and the duty of a hundred attempts and temptations of life – he risks *himself* constantly” (BGE 205). It does not seem a theoretically implausible system of values to have truth increase in life-value as it approaches the boundary of its destructive aspect, but it may be practically implausible; to be daring and imprudent seems a difficult prescription to follow, especially if Nietzsche’s dramatic rhetoric about the negative consequences of inquiry’s misuse (e.g. annihilation, pessimism, etc.) is to be taken seriously. Nietzsche’s later tendency to promote unconditional truth and a philosopher who need “never ask if the truth is useful or if it may prove [his] undoing” (A, P), taken as a maxim, seems to demand that one be sacrificed before a new dogma of truth and thus to drive Nietzsche into hopeless pessimism. If Nietzsche is consistent on this point, this must be interpreted as an ideal which orients the drive to increase one’s subjective honesty, perspectival objectivity, and capacity for truth; as a straightforward description it is more applicable to Nietzsche’s ideal types, e.g. the *Übermensch* and the philosophers of the future, than to any of the ‘human, all too human’ philosophers who have come ‘so far’.

The paradox from which these concerns emanate is one innate to the will to power, a concept that basically proclaims danger, risk, and immoderation to be goods in themselves. I cannot attempt a real critique of this central Nietzschean notion here, but a word should be said about the epistemological and axiological status of the will to power and the other positions here attributed to Nietzsche. The interpretation presented here has the benefit of avoiding any extreme sort of skepticism, which when stated as a positive claim cannot be defended coherently. The epistemology of perspectivism can account for itself: it is a theoretical perspective, and is justified as truth insofar as it itself is comprehensive (relative to other available perspectives). The will to power, in its descriptive dimension at least, must similarly be seen as a candidate for this sort of evaluation.¹²

¹² Peter Heller, who finds in Nietzsche a unity similar to that presented here, interprets the will to power as being “presumed to have the greatest vital scope” as a truth-assertion. “Multiplicity and Unity in Nietzsche’s Works and Thoughts on Thought.” *The German Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 3. (May, 1979), pp. 319-338; p. 333.

The justification behind life as a value and the will to power in its normative aspect is to be found in Nietzsche's naturalism – he seeks to affirm the instincts, whereas the ascetic ideal makes evils of them. As should be clear from the discussion above, though, Nietzsche does not admit of an interpretation that places the criterion of life and the nature of power in the service of some regress to a state of nature (presumably as biological survival and brute domination, respectively), and Nietzsche directly rejects this sort of naturalism: the 'return to nature' "is really not a going back but an *ascent...*" (TI IX:48).

In reading this naturalistic reversal of asceticism, then, one must not forget the positive aspects of that dogma; belief in a transcendental truth turns the ascetic against his instincts, but thereby his "entire inner world...expanded and extended itself, acquired depth, breadth, depth, and height" – he becomes more comprehensive and powerful, differentiating himself from unconscious animals, and wards off (personal) pessimism with his illusion. Nietzsche's project is not a turning back but a *turning against* the ascetic – Nietzsche's philosopher is an anti-ascetic, one who regains his instincts not with bestial immediacy but through his denial of the transcendental. Nietzsche employs the complexity engendered by asceticism against it, seeking to "wed bad conscience to all the *unnatural* inclinations...which are one and all hostile to life..." (GM 24). In the terms of the interpretation presented here, this objective is a constructive act of the will to power which seeks to bring the thinker to a new level of depth and objectivity. It is only in his acceptance of instinct that Nietzsche's philosopher resembles an animal; in the scope of his understanding and the very movement by which he achieves it, a reversal of previous doctrine by bad conscience, he can be seen as the ascetic overcome and taken one step further.¹³ As with his claims about truth, Nietzsche's naturalism is applicable to itself; it is not intended as an absolute account but rather as a 'truth-in-need' expressing life's will to power with a new level of comprehensiveness.

Conclusion

In the Nachlass, Nietzsche describes his task: "to show how life, philosophy, and art can have a deeper and familial relationship to each other, without philosophy becoming shallow and the life of the philosopher becoming untruthful" (KSA VIII: 104). From a unique theory of truth which denies transcendental justification and opposes the value for life to the value of truth Nietzsche produces some guidelines for philosophy: a perspectivist, aesthetic account of epistemology and objectivity and the limits within which truth is valuable in terms of life. The fundamental concept of 'life', if properly understood, must imply the will to power and hence underlie and depend upon the philosopher's will to truth. This meshes well with the artistic, interpretive nature of truth, which is a way of appropriating subjective experience and putting it to use, and the

¹³ Nietzsche here places himself firmly within the tradition of the ascetic and does not condemn him in any universal sense. This counters Conway's critique of Nietzsche's naturalism, which claims that he fails to consider himself in the naturalistic terms he uses against previous philosophers. "Returning to Nature: Nietzsche's *Götterdämmerung*." *Nietzsche: A Critical Reader*. Ed. Peter R. Sedgwick. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1995. pp. 31-52.

My interpretation of Nietzsche's naturalism is shared by Wayne Klein, who similarly finds a reading of life and related concepts as contingent and "strategic rather than ontological" necessary in order to "reconcile his critique of truth and morality." *Nietzsche and the Promise of Philosophy*. Albany: State U of New York P, 1997. p. 179.

approach toward objectivity through the incorporation of more perspectives is analogous to the injunction to take on all the truth that one can bear. Nietzsche defines life in such a way that it serves as the driving force underlying the will to truth as well as the measure and limit of its value. If risk is the good of the philosopher, then he needs nothing more than the wisdom to make his wagers and attempts; his greatest virtues will be his honesty, his courage for daring, and his adherence to the imperative “Know thyself!”, for his project requires that he recognize and define his own horizon.

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