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Nietzsche's Theory of Multiperspectivism Revisited

Abstract

In this essay, I will try to answer two related questions. Adopting Nietzsche's principle of the "enhancement of life" as a kind of basic value, would truth and truth-telling have high, medial, or no significance at all? In what sense does Nietzsche think that "the falsehood of a judgment is [...] not necessarily an objection to it"?[1] In order to give a satisfactory answer to these two questions, I will first illustrate how, from his essay entitled "On Truth and Lies in an Non-Moral Sense" to the collection of aphorisms entitled Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche develops his analysis and critique of the conventional philosophical theory of truth into a full-fledged theory of multiperspectivism. Having reconstructed Nietzsche's inquiry of the conventional concept of truth and his theory of perspectivism, I will be able to give a casuistic answer to the two abovementioned questions.*

Key words

Friedrich Nietzsche, Immanuel Kant, Arthur C. Danto, theory of truth and lies, multiperspectivism

I. The Conventional Correspondence Theory of Truth

In his unpublished essay, *On Truth and Lies in the Non-Moral Sense*, Nietzsche elaborates an early version of his genealogical account of the concept of truth, as found in both everyday common-sense views and conventional philosophical theories. He ascribes four epistemological, metaphysical, and anthropological features to the concept of truth to which he is opposed:

(1) Truth is essentially one.

(2) Truth is either a relation of correspondence between knowledge and reality, be it discursive knowledge, which is expressible in linguistic statements, or intuitive knowledge, which is accessible through perceptions or sensations.

(3) Human beings play a reactive role in the scientific discovery of preexistent 'objective' truth.

(4) Truth, and more specifically the simultaneously constative and performative speech act of truth-telling, has an inherently ethical and moral relevance; therefore human beings are naturally oriented towards truth.

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Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* in: *Basic Writing of Nietzsche,* translated by W. Kaufmann, Random House, New York 1992, pp. 179–436, § 4, p. 201.

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The problem with the objections and counter-assertions Nietzsche offers against these supposedly essential features of truth is that he himself vacillates between three mutually incompatible concepts of truth. The first of these and the most dominant in the abovementioned essay is a quasi-Kantian correspondence theory of truth comparable to (3) above: Transcendent truth is both theoretically conceivable as the thing-in-itself and practically of principal value; however, the cognitive apparatus of human beings does not provide access to it. It is a completely empty thought. It is not subject to the a priori conditions of human experience. Therefore, it is not cognizable. At other times, Nietzsche takes up the position of a consistent skeptic. In accordance with Schopenhauer's theory of representation, he suggests that the world is merely subjective representation [*Vorstellung*].[2] Nevertheless, he evades the traps of subjective idealism inherent to British Empiricism particularly of the Berkeleyian type (*esse est percipi*). Notwithstanding that we refer to subjective representations and not to the objective thing-in-itself, we cannot rule out the possibility that the discursive and intuitive knowledge about our representations is not only true in itself but also in reference to the things-in-themselves. For all we know, our representations might correspond to the things-in-themselves; however, there is no way to examine the relation of correspondence. Nietzsche emphasizes the specificity of the representations over and against the generality of the essence theorized as the thing-in-itself. He maintains that

"[…] the opposition we make between individual and species […] does not stem from the essence of things, although we equally do not dare to say that it does not correspond to the essence of things, since that would be a dogmatic assertion and, as such, just as incapable of being proved as its opposite".[3]

Finally, he also expresses the nihilistic view that transcendent truth is not even theoretically conceivable. Rather, the very concept is a contradiction in terms similar to meaningless expressions such as 'square circle'. The abolishment of such metaphysical nonsense would not be a great loss; it would rather be an instance of a successful philosophical change of perspectives.

Now, which of these three predicates of truth does Nietzsche accept? Without a doubt, he rejects all absolutist theories of truth, including Platonism, Kantianism, and Hegelianism, arguing that human experience does not grant access to universal essences or generally applicable conceptual schemes. But, on the other hand, he saw the dangers of nihilism, the mentality of weakness, the denial of life inherent to philosophical pessimism (Schopenhauer), and the ascetic ideal inherent to the absolute will to truth. Hence, assuming that Nietzsche painstakingly tries to reject all types of dogmatism and foundationalism, we should note that the conventional correspondence theory of truth as well as the nihilistic abolishment of absolutist notions of truth share in common the belief in the priority of truth over falsehood – be it the affirmation of truth for the absolutist, or the negation of truth for the nihilist. As such, these two mutually contradictory views, absolutism and nihilism, cancel each other out. The negation of absolutist theories of truth is tantamount to either the skeptic or nihilist theory of truth, while the absolute negation of the nihilistic theory of truth is tantamount to either the skeptic or the absolutist theory of truth. Therefore, it seems that Nietzsche adopts the intermediary point of view on truth, namely the view of consistent skepticism, according to which, on the one hand, certain human existential and social pragmatic constraints must be put on the nihilistic theory of truth, while, on the other hand, the dogmatic fortifications of absolutist theories of truth must simultaneously be dissolved.

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It would be erroneous, if we reduced Nietzsche's philosophy to the nihilist theory of denying the existence of truth altogether only to charge him with the philosophical offense of logical self-contradiction, as Arthur C. Danto does.[4] I will return to this point later. Ultimately, Nietzsche, who is skeptic against all theories of truth, holds that theories of truth are entirely secondary to the vital efforts of philosophy.

In yet another important way, Nietzsche adopts the point of view of the consistent skeptic. He directs linguistic skepticism at the conventional correspondence theory of truth. In place of the Platonic and Kantian metaphysical distinction between the sensible phenomenal world of inconstant becoming and the supersensible noumenal world of immutable being, Nietzsche, in *On Truth and Lies in the Non-Moral Sense*, distinguishes between our virtual language and the real world, which, he claims, constitute two entirely heterogeneous spheres. His objection to the correspondence theory of truth is that representations must be expressible in language; however, linguistic expressions only inadequately capture the real world. Speculatively, he details five stages in the mental process of generating concepts. He hypothesizes (1) the thing-in-itself in the sense of the correspondence theory of truth. The thing-in-itself emanates (2) a nerve stimulus, which in turn produces (3) a mental image [*Bild*]. Then (4) a word or sound is associated with this image. Finally, words or sounds designate (5) concepts.[5] In order to sidestep positivistic fallacies and similar pitfalls, I should underscore that Nietzsche does not stipulate objective causal relation between these five genealogical necessary stages. Again, their existence and the relation between them are entirely speculative. The physical and mental connections between the thing-in-itself, nerve stimulus, mental image, word or sound, and concepts are freely imagined. At the heart of this process lies the primal experience [*Urerlebnis*], a unique, irreducible and unrepeatable experience of the individual or collective subject. The process of generating concepts is accompanied by and made possible through "forgetfulness",[6] that is, the suppression of differences and the equalization of what is not identical but merely similar. At every level of the process, Nietzsche observes metaphorical substitutions or transphenomenal conferrals. Or, linguistically speaking, for Nietzsche the system of language as a whole is metaphorical, i.e., language is a complex system of reciprocal *quid pro quo* replacements of mental images or conceptual schemes with sensual, i.e., figurative, aural, or visual, representations. Under the assump-

2
Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, translated from the German by E. F. J. Payne, 2 Vols., Dover Publications, New York 1966.

3
Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies in the Non-Moral Sense", in: *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, edited by R. Geuss & R. Speirs, translated by R. Speirs, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1999, p. 145. Compare to Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human,* translated by R. J. Hollingdale, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1996, § 9. There, in a similar trajectory, he expresses the indifference to the existence or non-existence of the "metaphysical world". However, he also makes the point that the knowledge of it would be completely use-

less for living and affirming life in the natural world, in fact, he closes the section emphatically with an expressive image: the knowledge of the metaphysical world would be "more useless even than the knowledge of the chemical composition of water must be to the sailor in danger of shipwreck".

4
Arthur C. Danto, *Nietzsche as Philosopher,* Expanded Edition, Columbia University Press, New York 2005, pp. 54–58, 61–63.

5
F. Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies in the Non-Moral Sense", p. 140.

6
Ibid., p. 143.

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tion of the metaphysical correspondence theory of truth, the metaphoricity of language and the Schopenhauerian theory of representation demonstrate that the concepts of absolute truth and primary essences are not tenable.

According to Arthur Danto's interpretation, Nietzsche's implicit statement that 'Language is metaphorical' is itself metaphorical. Nevertheless, Nietzsche, in *On Truth and Lies in the Non-Moral Sense,* subscribes to both the view of metaphysical realism (the view that things exist as extra-mental entities independently of human cognition) and the correspondence theory of truth. Hence, Danto is wrong in imputing to Nietzsche the negation of the opposite claim that 'There is no literal language'. Under the unexamined premise that truth is the predicate, or more precisely, the logical meta-predicate of statements, Danto then goes on to charge Nietzsche with the nihilistic denial of truth, expressed in the statement 'There is no truth'. Arguing that this statement itself must necessarily make a claim to truth or validity, Danto draws the conclusion that Nietzsche runs into self-contradictions.[7]

Now let us first reconstruct Nietzsche's argumentation coherently, before we try to refute Danto's interpretation which is mistaken from my point of view. It is true that Nietzsche, like Kant, denies that human beings can represent or cognize the thing-in-itself. However, in *Beyond Good and Evil,* Nietzsche also criticizes the view that the theoretical notion of the thing-in-itself represents what absolute truth *would be, if it existed*. Nietzsche is not so much interested in nihilistically denying the existence of truth than rather in criticizing the metaphysical notion of absolute truth.

In my opinion, Danto starts with the 'false' working hypothesis that Nietzsche sets out to deny the existence of metaphysical truth. The isthmus of Danto's point of view on Nietzsche belies Danto's interpretation. In addition, we should examine yet another of Danto's unexamined premises closer, namely the claim that truth is the logical meta-predicate of literal statements. This premise, as Nietzsche demonstrates in "On Truth and Lies in the Non-Moral Sense", stipulates that truth would appear in the logical form of tautology and that therefore the only adequate concept of truth would itself necessarily be tautological. Now, following Nietzsche's argumentation, every statement is a predicative judgment in which general concepts are applied to particular cases. In short, every predication is an identification of subject and predicate. Therefore, if the identification were true, it would be a tautology, or, if the statement were a synthetic judgment, it would be a 'false' or merely metaphorical claim of identity between things that are merely similar. On the one hand, the identification of identical things would be literal truth. That is precisely Danto's second unexamined premise. On the other hand, the identification of objects that are merely similar would be 'metaphorical.' Therefore, any predicative judgment would be either a tautological expression of an analytic identification or a contingent expression of an arbitrarily synthesized metaphor. There simply is no non-tautological truth which would not be metaphorical; truth, if it were literal, would be tautological, or, conversely, if it were metaphorical, it would be arbitrary. In the final analysis, language cannot ever be adequate to the thing-in-itself in the real world as encountered in the primal experience [*Urerlebnis*].

In sum, Nietzsche does not deny the existence of truth but rather the existence of non-interpreted statements that are literally expressing the one and only absolute truth. Once he debunks that all statements are metaphorical, the interpretation of statements becomes absolutely necessary and, while every interpretation is perspectival, nobody can once and for all pass an absolute

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judgment on the manifold possible interpretations for reasons yet to be il-
lustrated. Thus, various meanings of the concept of 'truth,' taken to be the
primary meaning of truth, such as the concept of absolute truth in the conven-
tional correspondence theory or the concept of literal truth in Danto, are just
as untenable as the nihilist denial of the existence of truth.

In his analysis, Nietzsche admits that the conventional correspondence theory
of truth emerged under certain social and practical conditions that determined
the anthropological exigencies of human existence and symbiosis. Moreover,
he acknowledges that the human mind and its conceptual and theoretical
creations regarding truth serve as a means of survival in a real social world.
Secondly, human symbiosis demands conformity with social and linguistic
conventions and customs in order to establish the order and make intelligi-
ble interactive and communicative exchanges between its members. Finally,
Nietzsche observes that human beings get an anthropomorphic idea of nature
and that in this way they do not only neutralize nature and natural forces alien
to society but they also integrate them into society. Thus, they reassert the
unity between human society and nature.

Nietzsche's objections to the features of what he found to be the conventional
concept of truth are assertive rather than argumentative. In reference to the
prejudice that truth is essentially one, Nietzsche suggests that there are other
kinds of truth besides conceptual truth. Amongst other things he mentions the
truth of dreams, myths, and art works. In other later works, he will also speak
of "destructive truths" and "utterly different truths", as well as "immoral
truths"[8] and "Un-Christian truths".[9] Furthermore, due to the metaphoricity of
language, there are always innumerous alternative identifications of similar
objects and the choice amongst these possibilities is absolutely arbitrary. In
reference to the metaphysical correspondence theory of truth and its distinc-
tion between the thing-in-itself and its representations, Nietzsche maintains
that language and reality, or respectively subjectivity and objectivity are two
entirely heterogeneous spheres. However, he does not, thereby, reject meta-
physical realism, the view that things exist independently from perception.
Nevertheless, by showing that the attempt at identifying any representation as
the essential quality of the extra-mental things necessarily must fail, he rejects
the concept of the thing-in-itself, which cannot be represented at any rate.
Reality, understood as the thing-in-itself, is paradoxically hidden behind our
subjective representations; the thing-in-itself is only accessible in representa-
tions which are not identical with it. Concepts are formed by arbitrary iden-
tifications of similar objects whose differences fell into oblivion. However,
Nietzsche considers human beings to be artistically productive subjects who
proactively and creatively invent and validate truths the purpose of affirming
and enhancing life, instead of discovering them, as he remarks ironically in
reference to Kant, where they had previously hidden them.

The arbitrariness of essentially metaphorical language and the ontological
dualism between language and reality eliminate the tenability of the corre-
spondence theory of truth and its central concept of the thing-in-itself. There
is no epistemological method available to establish the correspondence be-
tween language and reality; however, there is a method to demonstrate that no

7
A. C. Danto, *Nietzsche as Philosopher,* p. 62.

8
F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* § 39.

9
Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of
Morals*, in: *Basic Writing of Nietzsche,* trans-
lated by W. Kaufmann, Random House, New
York 1992, pp. 437–600, § 1.

linguistic expression adequately corresponds to the fact about the real world which it purports to express. Given two contradictory representational perceptions of the world, the determination of the more correct perception of these two would require a third perception, namely the non-representational perception accessing the thing-in-itself immediately and without representational mediation; a notion which by definition contains an internal self-contradiction. Nietzsche writes:

"The question as to which of these two perceptions of the world is more correct is quite meaningless, since this would require them to be measured by the correct perception, i.e., by a non-existent criterion. But generally it seems […] that the correct perception […] is something contradictory and impossible [*ein widerspruchsvolles Unding*]."[10]

In this passage from *On Truth and Lies in the Non-Moral Sense*, Nietzsche presents an early version of his theory of multiperspectivism. Still adhering to the concept of the thing-in-itself and the heterogeneity between subjectivity and objectivity, on the one hand, language and reality, on the other hand, he does not repudiate the conventional theory of truth as such, but all *absolutist* theories of truth, especially those which assume that the thing-in-itself can be objectively perceived without the mediation through subjective representations. In *Beyond Good and Evil,* Nietzsche starts a polemic against the Kantian notion of the 'thing-in-itself' and other related but equally untenable notions, such as 'immediate certainty,' 'absolute knowledge.' etc.[11] In *On Truth and Lies in the Non-Moral Sense*, Nietzsche had already accepted self-preservation and life-enhancement as a basic value, not only by claiming that the human intellect is an instrument or means thereof, but also by designating the function of truth in his philosophy of strength. Only in a "limited sense", he states, do human beings desire truth.

"They desire the pleasant, life-preserving consequences of truth; they are indifferent to pure knowledge if it has no consequences, but they are actually hostile to truths that may be harmful and destructive."[12]

Nietzsche does not deny the existence of truth but he points out that truth might in some cases be secondary to the efforts of life-enhancement.

II. Nietzsche's Theory of Multiperspectivism

In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche further elaborates his theory of multiperspectivism already outlined in my reconstruction of the main argument in "On Truth and Lies in the Non-Moral Sense". In a nutshell, the theory states that any judgment or belief is an interpretation of the world from a particular and limited point of view.[13] With emphasis on passages in Nietzsche's work, where he denies the existence of truth outright, some commentators like Danto, employing the traditional refutation directed at any skeptic, have argued that his claims undermine themselves self-referentially and are thus self-contradictory. The self-contradiction of the purported denial of all metaphysical truth becomes all the more problematic when Nietzsche turns around to present his own genuinely metaphysical theories such as the genealogy of master and slave morality, the ethos of honesty [*Redlichkeit*], the eternal recurrence of the same, the will to power, and so on. Here, his critics maintain, it is obvious that he does raise claims not only to logical validity but also metaphysical truth.

Now, I would like argue that the refutation by means of demonstrating self-contradictions misses the point. In my view, it simply does not apply to Ni-

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etzsche's theory of multiperspectivism, if we restate it in such a way that it
is consistent in reference to itself and thus immune against all attempts at
demonstrating internal self-contradiction. To put it most succinctly, 'Every
statement is perspectival'. If we test it for self-referential coherence, we will
immediately realize that this statement about all statements does not contra-
dict itself. It neither states a purportedly absolute truth nor does it raise any
claims to validity. It neither denies the existence of truth in general terms nor
does it deny that specific statements to the contrary are not true. The crucial
point of the statement is that the truth of any statement is always already and
time and again in question. It may be true now. But it may always turn out to
be false from a different, more 'objective' point of view.

Be that as it may. More importantly, whether or not Nietzsche denies the exist-
ence of metaphysical truth is entirely secondary to his theory of multiperspec-
tivism. He is primarily interested in overcoming the dogmas of conventional
metaphysics, epistemology, and morality. In order to understand the divorce
of the theory of multiperspectivism from the theory of truth and its moral
implications, we should elucidate Nietzsche's concepts of life and the will to
power as well as the dangers of the ascetic ideal in philosophy. For Nietzsche,
life means that human beings adopt a finite and insecure point of view on their
lives, since human life itself is finite and insecure. Furthermore, it sometimes
requires painful changes of perspective and yet the purpose of life is and
remains living life in order to enhance life. It is simply a condition of human
life that it constantly requires ever new interpretations and reinterpretations,
radical adjustments, revisions, and corrections.

"Life itself is essentially appropriation, injury, overpowering of what is alien and weaker, su-
ppression, hardness, imposition of one's own forms, incorporation and at least, at its mildest,
exploitation […]."[14]

Forgetting or ignoring this 'truth' would result in the slow disintegration and
finally the absolute negation or total annihilation of life: premature death.
The organic condition of life predetermines human beings materially, physio-
logically, and mentally. For their bodies to be proactively living bodies,

"… it will have to be an incarnate will to power, it will strive to grow, spread, seize, become
predominant – not from any morality or immorality but because it is living and because life
simply *is* will to power".[15]

Nietzsche anticipates and carefully preempts possible objections to this. Any
physiologist or psychologist, he concedes, would have to face moral and
methodological scruples before arriving at such 'truths' *beyond good and
evil*, because of "the power of moral prejudices", the "unconscious resist-
ances in the heart of the investigator" and the "distress and aversion" caused
by them.[16] However, once we realize that all interpretations always include

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10
F. Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies in the Non-
Moral Sense", p. 148.

11
F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* interim.

12
F. Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies in the Non-
Moral Sense", p. 143.

13
F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good Evil*, §§ 2, 9, 14,
and 34. See also Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will
to Power,* §§ 481, 657, 602, and 616.

14
F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good Evil*, § 259.

15
Ibid.

16
Ibid., § 23.

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"tyrannically inconsiderate and relentless enforcement of claims of power"
and the "unexceptional and unconditional aspects of all 'will to power'",[17]
we will have overcome not only our scruple but also dogmatic morality itself.
From a strictly physiological and psychological point of view, Nietzsche de-
termines the essential principle of organic existence to be the will to power.
The fundamental purpose of life is the proactive and joyful affirmation and
enhancement of life; life as an end in itself.

"A living thing seeks above all to *discharge* its strength – life itself is *will to power*; self-preser-
vation is only one of the indirect and most frequent *result*."[18]

The "instinct of self-preservation [*Selbsterhaltungstrieb*]" is a one of the
"superfluous teleological principles".[19] On the one hand, both the instinct of
self-preservation and the will to truth or "the drive to knowledge [*Trieb zur Er-
kenntnis*]"[20] are merely secondary instruments or means of the will to power.
On the other hand, the will to untruth and deception might serve the will to
power better than the will to truth and truthfulness in many particular cases.[21]
In several places, Nietzsche warns us against philosophical martyrdom, i.e.,
"the suffering for the sake of truth".[22] The problem with "the general renun-
ciation of interpretation", "the faith in truth",[23] and "the will to truth, to 'truth
at any price'",[24] is the ascetic ideal: the devaluation of the natural world and
the denial of life and more specifically "the impoverishment of life" and "the
self-belittlement of man".[25]

Multiperspectivism is fairly and simply "a basic condition of life".[26] An indi-
vidual freely chooses a cognitive point of view, which is most advantageous
to his life, will to power, and specific interests in life-enhancement. But that
does not mean that the individual abides by the chosen perspective obdurately
or rigidly. There are indefinitely many points of view to choose from on a
single object or issue. Why would one prefer a single 'immediate certainty'
if there are inexhaustibly many possibilities? The philosopher, as Nietzsche
envisions him, needs to be inquisitive to the point of "cruelty"[27] and he has
a "duty to suspicion",[28] first and foremost regarding his own prejudices and
thought process. In fact, he "will look for error precisely where the instinct of
life most unconditionally posits truth".[29] According to Nietzsche, he should
be ready for any revaluation of values or change of perspective, which might
be called for in any given situation. The theory of multiperspectivism enables
the philosopher to see any given thing or issue from ever new and different
points of view. For Nietzsche, that is precisely "the discipline and prepara-
tion of the intellect for its future 'objectivity'".[30] Nietzsche understands the
philosopher's 'objectivity' in a very unconventional way. For him, it is the
ability to weigh arguments against counter-arguments, master each of them
separately, and change from one to the other flexibly. This training will help
the philosopher to "employ a variety of perspectives and affective interpre-
tations in the service of knowledge [*Erkenntnis*]".[31] Since all knowledge is
perspectival, the more points of view we are able to adopt to understand any
given thing or issue, "the more complete will our 'concept' of this thing, our
'objectivity', be".[32] Once again, the notion of the 'correct point of view' is
nonsensical. For us to be able to determine the more correct of two given
points of view would require us to take a third point of view, from which we
would have to claim that it alone grants the exclusive access to the thing-in-
itself. However, the third point of view could always be outperformed by a
forth more 'objective' point of view and so on *ad infinitum*.

Likewise, the question as to whether human existence without perspectival
cognition would destroy the very interpretability of human existence and its

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possession of any possible meaning or whether human existence necessar-
ily always implies proactive engagement in perspectival interpretation, "can-
not be decided even by the most industrious and scrupulously conscientious
analysis and self-examination of the intellect".[33] The human intellect would
not only need to be able see its own point of view from the outside, as it were,
in order to observe its engagement in the interpretation of the thing or issue in
question from its own point of view. But, to put it paradoxically, it would also
need to abandon its own point of view altogether in order to recognize it. In
connection to this, Thomas Nagel comes up with a graphic poetic metaphor
in *The View from Nowhere*. He writes that we want to "crawl outside of our
minds".[34] However, the complete abandonment of one's own point of view
is either utterly impossible or it performs a paradoxical self-effacing act: the
pessimistic and indeed self-destructive denial of the only possible affirmative
point of view, which one can have on existence, that is, the abandonment of
one's own point of view. The cognitive perspective moves along with every
interpretative move of the intellect like a body tides its shadow.

"We cannot look around our own corner: it is a hopeless curiosity […]."[35]

This desperate and despairing disposition of the human intellect must not lead
us to conclude with the devaluation of existence and the natural world, even
if we make the terrible experience that

"… the world [has] become 'infinite' for us […], inasmuch as we cannot reject the possibility
that *it may include infinite interpretations*".[36]

The change of perspectives potentially takes place under external compulsion
or intense suffering. As for instance, Oedipus, once virtuous King of Thebes
and the glorious man, who unraveled the question of the Sphinx, must face

17
Ibid., § 22.

18
Ibid., § 13.

19
Ibid., § 23.

20
Ibid., § 6.

21
Ibid., § 1.

22
Ibid., § 25.

23
F. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, §
8 and 12, see also Friedrich Nietzsche, *The
Gay Science*, translated by W. Kaufmann,
Random House, New York 1974, § 208.

24
F. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Preface, § 4,
and V. § 344.

25
F. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, § 25.

26
F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good Evil*, Preface and
§ 35.

27
F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good Evil*, § 230.

28
Ibid., § 34.

29
F. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, §
12.

30
Ibid.

31
Ibid.

32
Ibid.

33
F. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, § 374.

34
Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*, Ox-
ford University Press, New York 1986.

35
F. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, § 374.

36
Ibid.

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the ugly truth that he is not only the murderer of his father, the husband of his mother, but also the father and brother of his mother's children. Exiled at Colonus, the old Oedipus has learned to bear the truth about him himself. By accepting his fate and the change of perspectives enforced on him by fate, he affirms life as it has become. In connection to this, Nietzsche writes in a section of *The Gay Science* entitled "In favor of criticism":

"[…] something that you formerly loved as a truth or probability strikes you as an error. […] This is no arbitrary and impersonal event. […] We negate and must negate because something in us wants to live and affirm – something that we perhaps do not know or see as yet."[37]

Then, in *Beyond Good and Evil,* he writes:

"There are heights of the soul from which even tragedy ceases to look tragic; […] It could be possible that a man of a high type, when degenerating and perishing, might only at that time acquire qualities that would require those in the lower sphere into which he had sunk to begin to venerate him like a saint."[38]

The change of perspectives occurs unconditionally. It is necessary because of the shocking personal experiences and the permanent learning process in the trial-and-error course of life. The problem with some specific collective changes of perspective Nietzsche calls for, for example the one which will lead into the "extra-moral"[39] period of humanity, is that their induction confronts the apparently immovable tradition of a ten thousand year long "pre-moral" and "moral"[40] period of cultural discipline and internalization of moral codes, through which human instincts were formed. The effects of the counteraction will occur after some time and on a similar scale.

Another important issue of Nietzsche's theory of multiperspectivism in relation to the theory of truth is the question as to whether any number of given points of view is commensurable, or, in other words, whether any given perspective can be measured against all others. Arthur Danto claims that generally speaking there is no basis for comparing points of view. He seems to deem points of view arranged in an order of rank – absolutely fortified. One might argue that Nietzsche provides the most superior point of view with his genealogical method. Its unsurpassable merit is that it puts us in a position to compare all points of view with each other, e.g., those of noble knights, priests, and plebeians as well as their respective master and slave moralities.[41] Given Nietzsche's theory of multiperspectivism and the secondary role of the will to truth, we must acknowledge that even Nietzsche's genealogical statements do not necessarily have to make claims to validity or truth. The claim that the genealogical method provides the most superior cognitive point of view reinforces a notion similar to all those notions which Nietzsche debunked as either nonsensical or belonging to the will to truth and the ascetic ideal. Nietzsche's genealogy does not pretend to satisfy the yearning for redemption from the world of appearances. What is more, if we interpret Nietzsche's theory of multiperspectivism and the genealogical method in a way including the radical pragmatist view of absolute corrigibility and constructivist tentativeness of human existence (truth may be what works, however, nothing really seems to work), then we must anticipate, with Nietzsche, that life implies an endless change of perspectives and the affirmation of the eternal recurrence of the same, without, however, denying the meaning of life – and all of this, despite the impossibility of being redeemed from the necessity of multiperspectivism as a condition of human life.

Danto's incommensurability thesis is justified in reference to those points of view which are not adaptable to others, to the extent that they require a cer-

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tain primal experience, which again, as in the case of Oedipus, might include non-discursive intuitive knowledge. Furthermore, the merit of Nietzsche's genealogical philosophy is that it pinpoints the irrationality of claims to truth and the argumentative justifications precisely to the extent that the will to power is irrational. On the other hand, the change of perspectives is a matter of disciplined training and imaginativeness, in the case of the philosopher, or fatefully suffered experience, in the case of Oedipus. Therefore, perspectives are incommensurable precisely to the extent that an individual lacks certain personal or collective experiences or cognitive flexibility; they are commensurable precisely to the extent that any number of given perspectives share in common certain primal experiences, they are commensurable precisely to the extent that subjective cognition is flexible.

Inasmuch as Nietzsche remains a philosopher of subjectivity, his theory of multiperspectivism is dissimilar to Hegel's absolute idealist dialectics of speculation for at least two reasons. First, Nietzsche relentlessly fights all "dogmatic aspirations"[42] and he also persists in the irreducibility of the individual subject and its unique perspective. "My judgment", he writes, "is *my* 'judgment': no one else is easily entitled to it".[43] Secondly, Hegel succumbs to the religious dogmas of Christianity, the aesthetic dogmas of German Romanticism and neo-classicist Hellenism as well as the political dogmas of the authoritarian Prussian state (especially the view that the dialectic of subjectivity is the elevation of the individual to its species, which comes dangerously close to subjective self-renunciation inherent to slave morality). Hegelian dialectics shares in common with the ascetic ideal its will to truth, the devaluation of the material world, the weak-willed and essentially pessimistic yearning for the redemption from the world of permanently changing appearances, and the absolute reconciliation of all differences and altercations in abstract theoretical thought.

III. Casuistic Considerations in Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to return to the initial questions and give a casuistic answer. Accepting Nietzsche's practical and pragmatic interest in the enhancement of life as a basic value – would truth as such and truth-telling in particular have high value or make sense in every given situation? Generally speaking, the "enhancement of life" does not favor truth over untruth and truth-telling over lying *per se*. Rather, the fundamental will to power engages both the will to truth and the will to untruth equally, according to its specific purposes. Therefore, casuistically speaking, all possibilities apply: truth-telling and lying might have a high, low or no moral and practical value at all. At any rate, the individual subject in question, who determines his or her purposes and values from his or her inalienable point of view, will have to take responsibility for both truth-telling and lying. Subjective conscience

37
Ibid., § 307.

38
F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good Evil*, § 30.

39
Ibid., § 32.

40
Ibid.

41
F. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*.

42
F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good Evil*, § 43.

43
Ibid.

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alone carries the weight of the decision and the eternal recurrence of the same, once he or she arrives at a decision, communicates them, or performs respective actions. On the basis of Nietzsche's theory of multiperspectivism and the eternal recurrence of the same, we can take into account the weight on subjective conscience in our discussion of a problematic example in Kantian moral philosophy. Let us assume that the state police of a totalitarian society knock at the door of an apartment in search for an 'illegal alien' in order to evict him, arrest him, and to execute 'punishment' on him. As we know, according to Kant, the tenant would have to tell the truth and deliver the alien, no matter what unjust fate the former will face.[44] Moreover, according to Kantian deontology, the tenant will not have to have any pangs of conscience, if he only fulfills his perfect duty of telling the truth. On the other hand, Nietzsche's test of conscience informed by many different points of view – under the guiding question as to what would happen if my personal decisions, communications, and actions were to return eternally – reflects the weight of the moral and practical dilemmas, which may arise even from allegedly perfect duties. Only a strong-willed individual who is ready to impose his moral and practical judgments and conceptions of truth and justice on the "erroneousness of the world"[45] will be able to defend the 'truth' that the prosecution is unjust, stand in solidarity with the unjustly prosecuted, lie in order to save him, and thus enhance his own and the other's life.

In reference to the second question as to in what sense Nietzsche thinks that "the falsehood of a judgment is not necessarily an objection to it",[46] we should take into consideration the following casuistics. Generally speaking, the falsehood of the judgment in question was either determined from the same point of view from which the judgment was originally made or from another point of view. In the first case, the subject would be employing a false judgment for the purpose of enhancing life, by either voluntarily ignoring or involuntarily forgetting the falsehood of the judgment, and deceiving or attempting to deceive others. In the second case, the subject might be convinced that his judgment is true and disagree with someone else's view from which the judgment is perceived as false. In both cases, the falsehood of the judgment would not be an objection to it, because neither truth nor falsehood influences the decision for or against this or that judgment. After all, the criterion for the tenability of a judgment is not its truth of falsehood, but rather its ability or inability to enhance life. The validity of the decision depends on the willpower of the individual subject who makes the judgment in question. In Nietzsche's theory of multiperspectivism (and his physiological and psychological reinterpretation of the subject) the cardinal instinct is the will to power to which the will to truth and the will to untruth as such are subordinated. The will to power exploits both the will to truth and the will to untruth according to its specific purposes. It enhances life trough 'truths' and 'errors' equally according to the guiding instinct of the individual subject.

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Tomislav Zelić

Nietzsches Theorie des Multiperspektivismus
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Zusammenfassung

In diesem Essay werde ich versuchen, zwei miteinander verknüpfte Fragen zu beantworten. Nimmt man Nietzsches Prinzip der Lebenssteigerung als Grundwert an, würde Wahrheit und die Wahrheit zu sagen einen hohen, mittleren oder keinen Stellenwert haben? In welchem Sinne meint Nietzsche, dass „die Falschheit eines Urteils (…) noch kein Einwand gegen ein Urteil" ist? Um eine ausreichende Antwort auf diese beiden Fragen zu geben, werde ich darstellen, wie sich auf der Grundlage der Analyse und Kritik der herkömmlichen philosophischen Wahr-heitstheorie in seinem Essay unter dem Titel „Über Wahrheit und Lüge im außermoralischen Sinne" in der Aphorismensammlung Jenseits von Gut und Böse *eine vollwertige Theorie des Multiperspektivismus entwickelt. Nachdem Nietzsches Untersuchung des herkömmlichen philo-sophischen Wahrheitsbegriffs rekonstruiert worden ist, werde ich imstande sein, eine kasuisti-sche Antwort auf die oben erwähnten Fragen zu geben.*

Schlüsselwörter

Friedrich Nietzsche, Immanuel Kant, Arthur C. Danto, Theorie der Wahrheit und Lüge, Multiper-spektivismus

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Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals,* in: *Practical Philosophy,* translated and ed-ited by M. J. Gregor, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1996, pp. 353–604, here p. 552. For Kant, truth-telling is simply a perfect duty that every human being has to himself. "For example", he writes in a casuistic re-mark about lying, "a householder has ordered his servant to say 'not at home' if a certain human being asks for him. The servant does this and, as a result, the master slips away and commits a serious crime, which would other-wise have been prevented by the guard sent to arrest him. Who (in accordance with ethical principles) is guilty in this case? Surely the servant, too, who violated a duty to himself by his lie, the results of which his own con-science imputes to him." (I. Kant, *The Meta-physics of Morals,* p. 554).

45

F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good Evil*, § 34.

46

F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good Evil*, §4., p. 201.

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revisited

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Résumé

Dans cette dissertation, nous tenterons de répondre à deux questions liées. Premièrement, si nous acceptons le principe de Nietzsche sur « l'agrandissement de la vie » (Lebenssteigerung) comme valeur principale, la vérité et l'expression de la vérité auraient-elles une signification grande, moyenne ou nulle? Dans quel sens Nietzsche soutient-il que la « fausseté d'une estimation n'est pas nécessairement son reproche »? Dans le but de donner une réponse satisfaisante à ces deux questions, il faut d'abord montrer comment Nietzsche, à partir de l'analyse et de la critique d'une théorie habituelle de la vérité (Kant), construit sa propre théorie du multiperspectivisme. Dans l'essai intitulé « Vérité et mensonge dans un sens extramoral », nous trouvons le germe de cette théorie que Nietzsche a encore développé dans le recueil d'aphorismes intitulé Par-delà le bien et le mal. *Après que nous aurons reconstruit les recherches de Nietzsche sur la théorie habituelle de la vérité et sur sa propre théorie du multiperspectivisme, nous pourrons donner une réponse casuistique aux deux questions citées ci-avant.*

Mots-clés

Friedrich Nietzsche, Immanuel Kant, Arthur C. Danto, théorie de la vérité et du mensonge, multiperspectivisme