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## **Nietzsche and the Analytics: A Reexamination of His Critique of Truth**

Nicole K. Oestreicher

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**NIETZSCHE AND THE ANALYTICS: A REEXAMINATION OF HIS CRITIQUE OF  
TRUTH**

An honors paper submitted to the Department of Classics, Philosophy, and Religion  
of the University of Mary Washington  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Departmental Honors

Nicole K Oestreicher

April 2015

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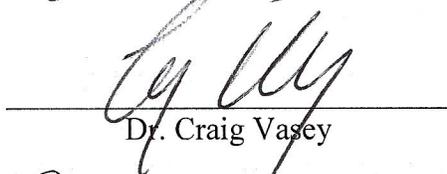
**Nietzsche and the Analytics:  
A Reexamination of His Critique of Truth**

A Thesis Presented by  
Nicole Oestreicher  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
Honors in Philosophy

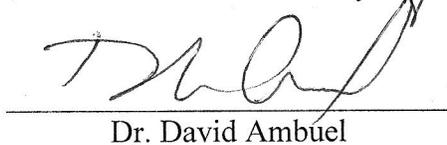
University of Mary Washington

April 30, 2015

  
Nicole Oestreicher

  
Dr. Craig Vasey

  
Dr. Nina Mikhalevsky

  
Dr. David Ambuel

  
Dr. Jason Matzke

## I. Introduction

“Every profound thinker is more afraid of being understood than of being misunderstood,” wrote Friedrich Nietzsche in *Beyond Good and Evil*. “The latter may hurt his vanity, but the former his heart, his sympathy, which always says: ‘Alas, why do *you* want to have as hard a time as I did?’”<sup>1</sup> Sure enough, there are few philosophers in the past one hundred years who have been as misunderstood as Nietzsche. Having long been associated with anti-Semitism and German militarism thanks to his Nazi sister’s posthumous assembly and promotion of *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche was often immediately dismissed by scholars and students as a reprehensible megalomaniac. The analytic<sup>2</sup> Anglo-American traditions were especially unforgiving during and after the Second World War. In 1945 Bertrand Russell decried Nietzsche as a ranting Machiavellian literary figure who preferred evil over good.<sup>3</sup> “His followers have had their innings,” said Russell, “but we may hope that it is coming rapidly to an end.”<sup>4</sup> It wasn’t until 1950, when Walter Kaufmann published the first edition of *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, that Nietzsche’s posthumous reputation was radically reversed.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> BGE 290; I will use the following abbreviations to refer to Nietzsche’s works: HH = *Human, All Too Human*; GS = *The Gay Science*; BGE = *Beyond Good and Evil*; GM = *On the Genealogy of Morality*; WP = *The Will to Power*; EH = *Ecce Homo*; AOM = *Assorted Opinions and Maxims*; TI = *Twilight of the Idols*. All numbers refer to specific passages in Nietzsche’s work, while all Roman numerals refer to books within a single work.

<sup>2</sup> “Analytic” here refers to a particular style of doing philosophy, typically associated with Anglo-American philosophers, which tends to (1) align itself with the natural sciences, (2) focus on conceptual precision and clarity, and (3) make use of systems of logic to substantiate claims. While the term “analytic” typically connotes the work and method of ordinary language philosophers and logical positivists (e.g. Quine, Russell, Wittgenstein), this paper operates on the broadest sense of the term, while also acknowledging that the methodological division between analytic and continental philosophy in scholarship today is not at all sharply defined.

<sup>3</sup> Bertrand Russell, “Nietzsche,” in *A History of Western Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1945), 762.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 773.

<sup>5</sup> Admittedly, Karl Jasper’s 1935 work *Nietzsche: An Introduction to the Understanding of His Philosophical Activity* is probably considered the earliest challenge to “the Nietzsche legend”, and is undeniably indispensable to Nietzsche scholars today. However, Kaufmann’s work is largely considered the primary gateway for Anglo-American scholarship on Nietzsche.

Kaufmann's Nietzsche is a thinker who subverts traditional philosophical practices by ruthlessly questioning foundations, and despite Nietzsche's unusual aphoristic writing style, Kaufmann argues that Nietzsche's philosophy can be studied in an analytical way. Kaufmann is in no way suggesting that Nietzsche's work "fits" with specific analytical developments associated with Wittgenstein and Russell; that is, Nietzsche does not suggest that ordinary language has some special authority.<sup>6</sup> Rather, he believed Nietzsche shared far more with the Anglo-American analytic tradition (in the broadest sense) than previously thought. For instance, "Philosophers, [Nietzsche] thought, should pay more attention to language - not in order to learn from its implicit wisdom but rather to discover how from childhood we have been misled."<sup>7</sup> While this small observation would imply that Nietzsche fits in better with continental schools of thought (e.g. existentialism, psychoanalysis) Kaufmann is quick to point out that Nietzsche was "as close to existentialism as he was to analytical philosophy," and that he neither belongs to nor can be claimed by either movement. In fact, Kaufmann says, "he may help to remind us how both movements are one-sided and partial."<sup>8</sup>

Even though Kaufmann's work represents an important starting point for contemporary Nietzsche studies, analytic scholars continue to struggle with the many paradoxes and inconsistencies in Nietzsche's books. Scholars argue over whether or not these inconsistencies should be resolved, particularly the self-referential problem in his discussion on truth. Nietzsche is known for vehemently attacking truth as an ideal: "The will to truth which will still tempt us to many a venture, that famous truthfulness of which all philosophers so far have spoken with

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<sup>6</sup> Walter Kaufmann and Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Philosophy, Psychologist, Antichrist* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 423.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

respect - what questions has this will to truth not laid before us! [...] Suppose we want truth: why not rather untruth? and uncertainty? even ignorance?" (BGE 1). This particular issue is arguably one of the most important and difficult topics in all Nietzsche scholarship because many see it as inextricably tied to the status of his other doctrines (e.g. perspectivism, will to power, eternal return). To put it simply, if Nietzsche rejects truth as an ideal while also propounding that his perspectivism or will to power are "true" things, then scholars are presented with a major interpretive dilemma: Does Nietzsche mean to be inconsistent (e.g. that we might learn something from his inconsistencies), or is the inconsistency a product of scholars misreading what he says? The former takes Nietzsche's inconsistency at face value, presenting his ideas and method as radical challenges to traditional philosophical practices. On the other hand, the latter implies the need for a more circumspect and rigorous analysis of his work, along with a whole new set of questions: How should one approach Nietzsche? How can one resolve this fundamental inconsistency? Where does one begin such an analysis? Martin Heidegger and postmodern thinkers have found relative success with the former approach. Meanwhile, the analytics, hoping to demonstrate Nietzsche's relevance to contemporary discussions of truth and epistemology, have struggled to identify a starting point for the latter approach. As a result, analytic scholars often toss Nietzsche aside and leave him in the hands of literary theorists and postmodernist thinkers. To quote John Richardson, "There is a widespread sense that he appeals to a crude and impatient taste that will not survive a rigorous training in the field."<sup>9</sup>

However, analytical approaches to Nietzsche have made a comeback in recent years, and a number of scholars have presented strong arguments for the value of Nietzsche's discussion of

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<sup>9</sup> John Richardson, "Introduction," in *Nietzsche*, ed. John Richardson and Brian Leiter (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 7.

truth and perspectivism in contemporary scholarship. Two such scholars, Maudemarie Clark and Robert Lanier Anderson, make very strong cases for the consistency of Nietzsche's position on truth and his perspectivism. In this paper I will illustrate how each of these scholars overcame the major inconsistency in Nietzsche's epistemology by taking his concerns about the status of philosophy seriously. The first section of this paper will outline what I identify as four key interpretive issues for analytics in Nietzsche scholarship. I argue that these issues stem from Nietzsche's writing style and from his critique of the practice of philosophy in general. While one will see that these two aspects of Nietzsche's writing are directly at odds with traditional analytic practices, they also illustrate his serious concerns about the dogmatic thinking he observes among philosophers, an assertion that he defends throughout his works. I believe it is possible to overcome these particular interpretive issues by taking his concerns into consideration, and by highlighting how his concerns are compatible with analytic practices and values. The second section presents a discussion of several strategies an analytic scholar can employ to begin an analysis of Nietzsche's thought without running into the issues presented in the first section. The third section delineates the nuances of the self-referential problem in Nietzsche's critique of truth, leading into Clark's and Lanier Anderson's neo-Kantian interpretations. Both of these scholars defend the neo-Kantian reading using one or more of the strategies sketched in the second section. The final section concludes with my own analysis of the self-referential problem, where I outline the necessary presuppositions one has to have in order to identify the existence of an inconsistency in Nietzsche's position on truth.

## **II. Lingering Issues for Analytic Scholars**

Nietzsche renounces a number of norms in contemporary scholarship, which heavily impacts any attempt to resolve the self-referential problem in his critique of truth. What Richardson and other philosophers may call “scholarly virtues,” Nietzsche would derisively call “the prejudices of philosophers.”<sup>10</sup> Given this fundamental opposition in values, Nietzsche’s critique of scholars seems to render his own work unsuitable for scholarly analysis: if scholars tried to approach Nietzsche with methods that he explicitly derides, they would risk falling into a interpretive trap. Drawing from the respective works of Richardson and Kaufmann, I identify four contemporary “scholarly virtues” to which Nietzsche is averse: conceptual clarity, logical argumentation, philosophy’s growing affinity with the natural sciences, and schematic thinking.

“Good” scholarship begins with analyzing claims, which are presented as statements or premises. In order to do this, however, a good scholar must first establish conceptual clarity, or be able to provide clear and distinct definitions of concepts, which are then used to either structure claims for analysis (or defense) or to deconstruct claims given in the text.<sup>11</sup> Nietzsche is clearly not a fan of this style of analysis. He criticizes philosophers for taking “common sense” conceptual constructions for granted and ignoring a concept’s historicity and evolution in meaning. In short, Nietzsche berates philosophers for lacking a historical sense:

All philosophers suffer from the same defect, in that they start with present-day man and think they can arrive at their goal by analyzing him. Instinctively they let ‘man’ hover before them as an *aeternas veritas*, something unchanging in all turmoil, a secure measure of things. But everything the philosopher asserts about man is basically no more than a statement about man within a *very limited* time span (HH 2).

Nietzsche also criticizes the “clear and distinct” criteria for conceptualization, which has dominated philosophical thought since Descartes: “[...] this is a crude confusion: like *simplex*

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<sup>10</sup> “On the Prejudices of Philosophers” just so happens to be the title of the first chapter of *Beyond Good and Evil*.

<sup>11</sup> Richardson, “Introduction,” 2.

*sigillum veri*<sup>12</sup> [...] Could it not be otherwise?” (WP 533). In his mind, despite the *prima facie* rigor of conceptual analysis, philosophers haven’t been any more in control of their concepts than their “pre-analytic” predecessors.<sup>13</sup> We too, Nietzsche says, are “seduced by grammar”<sup>14</sup> and infer “according to grammatical habit” (BGE 17). Our own meanings aren’t transparent to us because we often fail to examine the biases and foundations of our own methodology. For example, he explicitly discusses philosophers’ “conceptual ban on contradiction” in WP 516: “If according to Aristotle, the law of contradiction is the most certain of all principles, if it is the ultimate and most basic, upon which every demonstrative proof rests [...] then one should consider more rigorously what presuppositions already lie at the bottom of it” (WP 516). While most scholars general see Aristotle’s conceptual ban on contradiction as a helpful constraint, Nietzsche views it as a stifling, unexplored given. It is difficult to study or explicate Nietzsche’s conception of truth when he seems not only opposed to the analytic method, but also has no interest in controlling his own meanings.<sup>15</sup>

This opposition to conceptual analysis leads right into his dislike of logical argumentation in the Western intellectual tradition. Nietzsche himself rarely constructs his views as logical arguments, and he is deeply suspicious of logic. Ironically (or perhaps, shrewdly), his claim against Aristotle’s law of contradiction in WP 516 is in fact an argument for the subjectivity of logical argumentation and truth:

Are the axioms of logic adequate to reality or are they a means and measure for us to *create* reality, the concept ‘reality,’ for ourselves? - To affirm the former one would [...] have to have a previous knowledge of being - which is certainly not the case. The

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<sup>12</sup> Simplicity is the seal of truth.

<sup>13</sup> See BGE 20.

<sup>14</sup> See BGE 16; Nietzsche repeats this phrase throughout his works.

<sup>15</sup> Richardson, “Introduction,” 4.

proposition therefore contains no *criterion of truth*, but an imperative concerning that which *should* count as true (WP 516).

Nietzsche's premises and logical constructions here<sup>16</sup> could easily be dismissed as a series of unproven premises and false dichotomies:<sup>17</sup> his assertion that the law of contradiction is a normative statement (as opposed to a descriptive statement) presupposes an argument against metaphysical realism and *a priori* knowledge of reality, and yet Nietzsche does not provide us with one for examination. If he makes no attempt to justify his own claims, or justifies them incompletely or inconsistently, then how can scholars successfully defend what he says about truth?

Nietzsche also criticizes philosophy's growing solidarity with natural science. Citing Newton, Voltaire, and Spinoza as examples, Nietzsche claims that the scientific revolution of the past two centuries was (and is still) driven by values dating back not only to Christ, but also to ancient Greek philosophy (GS 37).<sup>18</sup> He asserts that the practice of philosophy "divorced itself from science" as soon as it concerned itself almost exclusively with human happiness, while science purports (albeit dishonestly) to pursue knowledge for its own sake (HH 6, HH 7). However, as science and philosophy began to merge during the Enlightenment, philosophy began to suffer as a discipline by losing sight of its concern for human conduct and welfare: Nietzsche decries the natural sciences as philosophy "reduced to 'theory of knowledge'" (BGE 204). Richardson, too, observes naturalism's influence over philosophy today: "In assessing philosophical claims, most will enforce the minimal condition that for a position to be viable it

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<sup>16</sup> I.e. Either the law of contradiction asserts that opposite attributes *could not* be ascribed to X (*p*) or it asserts that opposite attributes *should not* be ascribed to X (*q*).

<sup>17</sup> I.e. If *p* is true, then that implies metaphysical realism and the possibility of *a priori* knowledge of reality; *p* "is certainly not the case" ( $\sim p$ ), therefore *q*.

<sup>18</sup> Nietzsche calls these values "the three errors": (1) the desire to know the mind of God, (2) the belief that knowledge and happiness are intimately related, and (3) the desire to be sinless (i.e. science is "selfless," self-sufficient, and untainted by "the evil drives of humanity").

must be consistent with scientific findings.”<sup>19</sup> Nietzsche would not be terribly pleased with this development.

Finally, one of the biggest difficulties in providing a scholarly account of Nietzsche is his aversion to systems and schematic thinking, which is here defined as an organized set of doctrines, ideas or principles that work together as a unified whole.<sup>20</sup> For Nietzsche, schematic thinking looks suspiciously like dogmatic thinking. Kaufmann describes the similarity between the two:

A system must necessarily be based on premises that by its very nature it cannot question...The systematic thinker starts with a number of primary assumptions from which he draws a net of inferences and thus deduces his system; but he cannot, from within his system, establish the truth of his premises. He takes them for granted, and even if they should seem ‘self-evident’ to him, they may not seem so to others. They are in that sense arbitrary and reducible to the subjective make-up of the thinker.<sup>21</sup>

Nietzsche’s distrust of systems is not only exemplified by his repeated derisive statements,<sup>22</sup> but also by his aphoristic style of writing, which departs from the writing style of his immediate predecessors.<sup>23</sup> His aphorisms are at once the source of his popularity among lay audiences and students, and also the primary source of frustration among scholars. “In Nietzsche’s books,” says Kaufmann, “the individual sentences seem clear enough and it is the total design that puzzles us.”<sup>24</sup>

On the whole, it appears that Nietzsche’s vision of “good” philosophy is certainly at odds with what many consider good philosophy today: he dislikes conceptual analysis, criticizes the use of logic, distrusts philosophy’s growing affinity with the natural sciences, and bemoans

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<sup>19</sup> Richardson, “Introduction,” 5.

<sup>20</sup> This definition was taken from Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary (2015) entry for “system.”

<sup>21</sup> Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 79.

<sup>22</sup> E.g., “I mistrust all systematizers and I avoid them. The will to a system is a lack of integrity” (TI I.26).

<sup>23</sup> The German idealists immediately come to mind (Hegel, Schelling, Fichte).

<sup>24</sup> Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 72.

schematizing. The four issues discussed above only touch upon the numerous interpretive problems in Nietzsche scholarship,<sup>25</sup> but these four particular issues are interrelated. Scholars' inability to systematize Nietzsche is rooted in his style of writing and his resistance to the analytic standard of conceptual clarity, which undermines the scholar's ability to construct and analyze arguments using his concepts to evaluate the strength and soundness of his work. Just as scientists refuse to build on weak theories, many analytic philosophers dismiss Nietzsche as unsound and subsequently unworthy of further inquiry or supplementation. These four issues in particular also highlight two major themes in Nietzsche's thinking: a questioning of foundations and an aversion to dogmatism. If scholars wish to study Nietzsche in a meaningful, analytical way without "getting stuck in the mud," then they must take these concerns very seriously.<sup>26</sup> By addressing Nietzsche's concerns, I believe it is possible to overcome these issues, reconcile his work with analytic scholarly interests, and explore how his critique of truth contributes to analytical philosophical discussion.

### **III. Four Strategies for an Analytical Approach to Nietzsche**

Returning to the first issue, Nietzsche's primary reason for distrusting conceptual analysis is the absence of a historical account of the meanings of concepts. It is not enough to simply supply a definition by introspecting "what we mean."<sup>27</sup> While conceptual clarity is still necessary to conduct our analysis, a scholar must now include a genealogy of meanings in his or her

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<sup>25</sup> For instance, since Nietzsche's "rehabilitation" post-World War II, there has been much debate about how scholars should treat his unpublished notebooks; see Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 77-78.

<sup>26</sup> Even Nietzsche complains that people do not understand his work because the aphoristic style is not taken seriously (GM Preface, 8).

<sup>27</sup> Richardson, "Introduction," 8.

analysis: Nietzsche calls for “an absolute skepticism toward all inherited concepts” (WP 409). While this does make analysis far more difficult, we can certainly appreciate Nietzsche’s call for greater analytical rigor. However, the extent to which this can be done here is limited given the size and scope of this paper, nor does Nietzsche give us an outline of what such an analysis might look like, save for his work *On the Genealogy of Morality*.<sup>28</sup> In light of these limitations, it is still possible to apply a genealogy of meanings on a microcosmic scale: one can adopt “a historical sense” to some degree by examining the *historicity of Nietzsche’s own meanings*. One could begin such an examination by starting with a concept or topic in Nietzsche’s work, placing it in its historical context, and following its development throughout his writings. For example, in order for Nietzsche to embark on a fierce critique of truth, he himself would have had his own initial conception of “truth” to begin with. This particular conception is informed by a historical context, which prompted Nietzsche’s own vehement response, along with a subsequent development of his own conception of truth. Through this approach, one may see Nietzsche as a serious thinker engaging with the philosophical ideas of his time, and not just a mere culture critic.

Nietzsche’s critique of argumentation is similar to his attitude towards conceptual analysis; as such, it can be overcome in the same manner. Like conceptual analysis, Nietzsche is not renouncing argumentation altogether. Rather, as Richardson says, Nietzsche “means to shift the kind of argument we need and should want.”<sup>29</sup> As we’ve seen, Nietzsche does occasionally provide us with some logic-driven arguments, but his work is mostly comprised of *historical* arguments. Nietzsche purposefully avoids working with logical proofs because he observes that

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<sup>28</sup> One example of a genealogical analysis of concepts that comes to mind might be Hannah Arendt’s *The Life of the Mind*, which provides a rigorous analytical/historical treatment of how we think about “thinking.”

<sup>29</sup> Richardson, “Introduction,” 9.

philosophers exploit logical proofs as means of peering into a higher, “true” reality, when these proofs actually describe, posit, and perpetuate a *particular kind* of reality *for someone*.<sup>30</sup> A philosopher that assumes the reality or “truth” of his or her premises and conclusions has not only effectively imprisoned his or her thought into one system, but has also baptized his or her prejudices as ultimate truths (BGE 5). In other words, “the thinker who believes in the ultimate truth of his system, without questioning its presuppositions, appears more stupid than he is: he refuses to think beyond a certain point; and this is, according to Nietzsche, a subtle moral corruption.”<sup>31</sup> For example, in GS 110, Nietzsche argues that we deceive ourselves into believing that we’re more rational and objective than we really are as a result of the Platonic notion of insensible, absolute truth. This notion gave rise to the belief that we *ought* to be dispassionate in our pursuit of truth (i.e., if truth is dispassionate and un-egoistic, then it can only be perceived dispassionately and un-egoistically). For instance, the Eleatics “had to misconstrue the nature of the knower, deny the force of impulses in knowledge and generally conceive reason as a completely free, self-originated activity” in order to satisfy their desire for a “tranquility or a sole possession of sovereignty” (GS 110). While Nietzsche shared the Eleatic belief that the sensible world was in a state of becoming, he was fiercely opposed to *the manner* in which they believed it. In his mind, the Eleatics suggested that the sensible world was a mere appearance of an underlying eternal being or substance, and they did not acknowledge “the force of impulses” that played into the formation of this position.

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<sup>30</sup> For instance, “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. For example, 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 *niaiserie* which may be necessary for the preservation of just such beings as we are. Supposing, that is, that not just man is the ‘measure of things’ -” (BGE 3).

<sup>31</sup> Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 81.

Historical arguments like GS 110, while not as authoritative as logic-driven arguments, have a structure and a “logic” that can be analyzed: they make specific claims using premises and concepts that require clarification via a genealogy of meaning. One could say that his concepts evolve along with his arguments. To reiterate, Nietzsche is imploring the philosopher to have a historical sense, to not presume the “fixed realness” of concepts and instead be prepared “to declare himself *against* his previous opinion and to mistrust anything that wishes to become *firm* in us” (GS 296). A well-trained philologist, Nietzsche was critical of the nostalgic attitudes of his fellow academics, and strongly believed that every past was worth condemning.<sup>32</sup> Just as historians ought to readily revisit the meaning of historical narratives to reach a new understanding of the present, philosophers, too, should reexamine their conceptual foundations to better understand the nature of their present attitudes. Although the size and scope of this paper limits how much analysis can be done, one can still provide an account of how Nietzsche’s arguments developed over time.

Nietzsche’s attitude towards science is also more compatible with analytic attitudes than originally thought. Richardson notes that both Nietzsche and the analytics share a strong naturalizing impulse: they both share a desire to do away with religious dogma and supernatural/”pneumatic” explanations of phenomena (HH 8). In a way, Nietzsche wanted philosophy to become scientific, “only he had in mind the ‘gay science’ of fearless experiment and the good will to accept new evidence and to abandon previous positions, if necessary.”<sup>33</sup> This playful “experimentalism” that Nietzsche advances is both endorsed and exemplified by his

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<sup>32</sup> For an extensive discussion of Nietzsche’s call for a critical view of history, see “On the Use and Disadvantage of History for Life” (1874).

<sup>33</sup> Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 86.

own aphoristic writing style.<sup>34</sup> Kaufmann describes Nietzsche's aphorisms, and his way of thinking, as "monadologic": each aphorism is a self-sufficient microcosm of meaning, and these microcosms, when grouped together, create a "pluralistic universe" that makes sense in part, but not necessarily in the whole.<sup>35</sup> Nietzsche himself admitted that the scientific spirit is powerful in the part, not in the whole (HH 6). Such a description sheds some light on Nietzsche's perspectivism (which we shall address later) as well as his attitude towards systems.

One could argue that the absence of an apparent system or schema is hardly a reason to reject Nietzsche altogether. He is not the only thinker to not take a systematic approach. As Kaufmann observes, "Schelling and Hegel, Spinoza and Thomas Aquinas had their systems; in Kant's and Plato's case the word is far less applicable; and of the many important philosophers who very definitely did not have systems one need only mention the pre-Socratics."<sup>36</sup> A lack of a system does not necessarily make him unworthy of our attention. If anything, one could actually describe his resistance to systems as informative. As we've seen in his aphorisms, Nietzsche is not what we would call a systematic thinker: he does not deduce a system from a set of unquestionable assumptions like Spinoza,<sup>37</sup> nor does he immediately build upon any conclusions or observations made in each aphorism, as one would expect in traditional argumentation.<sup>38</sup> Rather, unimpeded by presuppositions, he engages in a kind of free play. For that reason, Kaufmann asserts, it may be helpful to view Nietzsche as a "problem-thinker":

Perhaps it is the most striking characteristic of 'dialectical' thinking from Socrates to Hegel and Nietzsche that it is a search for hidden presuppositions rather than a quest for solutions. The starting point of such a 'dialectical' inquiry is not a set of premises but a

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<sup>34</sup> Alexander Nehamas explores this assertion in depth in *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (1985).

<sup>35</sup> Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 75.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

problem situation - and Plato, of course, excelled at giving a concrete and dramatic setting to this. In the problem situation premises are involved, and some of these are made explicit in the course of inquiry. The result is less a solution of the initial problem than a realization of its limitations: typically, the problem is not solved but 'outgrown.'<sup>39</sup>

Like schematic thinkers, problem-thinkers begin with a set of premises, but those premises only emerge upon encountering a problem, hence the problem-thinker does not assume the absolute truth of his or her premises, nor does he or she attempt to establish them as true. The premises are only true "for the sake of argument," since they only appear in relation to the problem at hand. In other words, like each of Plato's dialogues, each of Nietzsche's aphorisms (and sequence of aphorisms, like those in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*) can be thought of as thought experiments. Additionally, the great number of aphorisms (experiments) in Nietzsche's work tells us something important: it reflects his belief that making only one experiment, or *adhering to only one system* in a dogmatic fashion, would be self-limiting. In that sense, one could say that all dogmatic thinking is schematic, but not all schematic thinking is dogmatic. There is a difference between adhering to a system and *playing* with many systems, and Nietzsche clearly endorses the latter: "Deeply mistrustful of the dogmas of epistemology, I loved to look now out of this window, now out of that; I guarded against settling down with any of these dogmas, considered them harmful - and finally: is it likely that a tool is *able* to criticize its own fitness?" (WP 410).<sup>40</sup> While the systems Nietzsche uses come and go, the act of experimenting itself remains constant throughout his works.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>40</sup> See also EH III.4: "[...] I have many stylistic possibilities - the most multifarious art of style that has even been at the disposal of one man."

<sup>41</sup> AOM 128 hints at this underlying unity: "Do you think that this work must be fragmentary because I give it to you in fragments?"

Thus far we have established a few ways in which scholars may approach Nietzsche's work analytically. Firstly, we can examine the genealogy of his concepts on a microcosmic level and follow their development. Secondly, we may worry less about his issues with the natural sciences and argumentation, so long as we carefully and honestly consider the origins of "the scientific spirit" and why we are so strongly persuaded by analytic arguments. Thirdly, instead of viewing Nietzsche's work as a system that has yet to be articulated as such, we may consider each of his aphorisms (and collections of aphorisms) as experiments. While his experiments are stylistically multifarious, they do have a development: we can potentially track when and where a particular problem or system has been "outgrown," to borrow Kaufmann's phrase. So, an analytical approach to Nietzsche's conception of truth and subsequent perspectivism may look something like the following. To begin, one can establish Nietzsche's initial conception of truth in its historical context by giving an account of (1) how he describes it and (2) how it relates to the historical philosophical discussion of truth. This kind of conceptual clarity satisfies Nietzsche's call for a "historical sense" while also satisfying the analytical scholar's need for clarity to conduct an analysis. One then follows this concept throughout his works by examining how he "experiments" with this conception of truth, along with a subsequent development of his own epistemological theory. The next section of this paper will examine how a developmental reading establishes greater clarity of Nietzsche's own concepts and opens up new doors in Nietzsche scholarship, particularly for those interested in understanding Nietzsche's perspectivism and resolving one of the major problems in his discussion of truth.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> The following section draws heavily from a paper of mine ("Nietzsche's Perspectivism and the Neo-Kantian Solution to the Self-Referential Problem") written in Fall 2013 under the supervision of Dr. Craig Vasey.

#### IV. Clark, Lanier Anderson, and The Neo-Kantian Solution

As we have seen, analytic scholars have had a difficult time interpreting Nietzsche: he embraces self-contradiction and his concepts elude workable definitions. Analytic philosophers have either struggled to resolve his inconsistencies or have urged their fellow academics to completely abandoned him altogether, whereas postmodernist interpreters (e.g. Heidegger, Derrida, Foucault) have rushed in where the analytics have feared to tread. However, in the past twenty years or so, we have seen a renewed analytic philosophical interest in his work as scholars find new ways of interpreting Nietzsche's thought, many of which were outlined in the previous section. In this section, I will discuss the ways in which two scholars have successfully used these strategies to go about resolving what is called the "self-referential inconsistency" in Nietzsche's discussion of truth. Both Clark and Lanier Anderson take on a neo-Kantian interpretation, arguing that Nietzsche's rejection of noumenal truth and representationalism is vital to making sense of his perspectivism and escaping the inconsistency. The neo-Kantian solution simultaneously highlights Nietzsche's naturalistic and skeptical tendencies, and clarifies Nietzsche's critique of truth, acting as a springboard for future Nietzsche scholarship and general analytical debates on the nature of knowledge. Kaufmann was arguably the first scholar to take on a neo-Kantian interpretation of Nietzsche,<sup>43</sup> which invited scholars to reconsider Nietzsche's value in epistemological discussions. According to Clark,

Kaufmann's Nietzsche denies the possibility of transcendent or metaphysical truth, which would be correspondence to the way things are in themselves, but affirms the existence of empirical truth. To affirm the existence of truth is simply to say that some statements, propositions, sentences, or utterances are true. According the Kaufmann's interpretation, then, Nietzsche denies that any metaphysical statements are true but accepts many empirical statements as true. Kaufmann can deny any inconsistency between Nietzsche's

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<sup>43</sup> See Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 88 for a glimpse of this interpretation.

theory and his practice, for he interprets Nietzsche as putting forward his own views, including the doctrines of eternal recurrence and will to power, as empirical truths.<sup>44</sup>

Despite the helpfulness of Kaufmann's basic neo-Kantian approach (which contrasted Heidegger's interpretation at the time),<sup>45</sup> there are a number of problems with his formulation. Firstly, if one interprets Nietzsche's doctrines as "straightforward claims about the nature of reality, as claims that are supposed to correspond with reality,"<sup>46</sup> then it seems that Nietzsche still adheres to the metaphysical correspondence theory of truth, even though he repeatedly derides it.<sup>47</sup> Secondly, it fails to explain the many passages in which Nietzsche outright denies the existence of truth in general. Clark believes that the neo-Kantian interpretation is still tenable, but requires a more nuanced approach than Kaufmann's, arguing that (1) Nietzsche does reject the thing-in-itself, *but not truth itself*, and (2) how that does not undermine his own practice.<sup>48</sup> Clark defends Nietzsche as a neo-Kantian using one of the strategies outlined in the first section: an evolutionary reading of Nietzsche's conception of truth. It is important to note that while Kaufmann's and Richardson's observations on Nietzsche heavily implied the need for a historical sense, Kaufmann himself did not attend to the evolution of Nietzsche's own meanings. I would argue that Clark is the first scholar to take the need for a developmental reading very seriously, which I will argue makes her work one of the more successful analytical approaches to Nietzsche in recent history. Her developmental reading of Nietzsche's conception of truth

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<sup>44</sup> Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 5.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*; According to Clark, Heidegger's interpretation argued that Nietzsche accepted the metaphysical correspondence theory of truth, and that Nietzsche's doctrines of eternal recurrence and will to power are not empirical truths, but metaphysical truths, or "answers to traditional questions of metaphysics concerning the essence and existence of what is" (*Ibid.*). However, Clark points out that Heidegger's reading fails (perhaps deliberately) to address the blatant contradictions in Nietzsche positions on truth that continue to irk many philosophers to this day.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> See, for example, BGE 16.

<sup>48</sup> Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 21.

provides what could be called a genealogy of Nietzsche's own meanings, which culminates in a clear understanding of Nietzsche's later conception of truth and a starting point for seriously examining not only his perspectivism, but his other doctrines as well. Clark's goal is to show that Nietzsche's early denial of truth is a product of his initial acceptance of the metaphysical correspondence theory, and that somewhere along the way he recognized the internal inconsistency of his early position.

Lanier Anderson's work corroborates Clark's analysis, arguing that Nietzsche's mature perspectivism rejects metaphysical realism and metaphysical correspondence. However, perspectivism is not to be equated with relativism. Just like how the compatibility of alternative visual perspectives depends on a notion of objects independent from their visual appearances, so too do differing perspectives depend on a notion of objects independent from perspective: we need to be talking about the same thing in order to express agreement or disagreement about the nature of the thing.<sup>49</sup> Without this notion, perspectivism becomes pure relativism or subjective idealism, which brings with it a whole host of different problems for Nietzsche's thought, and makes it difficult for us to take him seriously. On the other hand, the notion of perspective-independent objects looks suspiciously like metaphysical realism, which puts Nietzsche's perspectivism back into a paradoxical position. In order to find a way around the self-referential problem, there must be some middle ground between metaphysical realism and relativism.<sup>50</sup>

In summary, this section examines how Clark employs one of the major interpretive strategies in the second section to resolve a major inconsistency in Nietzsche's thought, and how Lanier Anderson's analysis highlights how the instrumental and pluralistic nature of his

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<sup>49</sup> R. Lanier Anderson, "Truth and Objectivity in Nietzsche's Perspectivism," *Synthese* 115, no. 1 (1998): 4.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

perspectivism generates an internal logic that dissolves the self-referential problem. My own brief interpretation offers reasons for the internal consistency of Nietzsche's perspectivism and the subsequent resolution of the self-referential problem, and analyzes the presuppositions underlying the formation of the self-referential problem itself. This interpretation will draw from Clark and Lanier Anderson's interpretations, and I will focus on works that establish what Clark designates as Nietzsche's "mature position on truth," such as *The Gay Science* and *Beyond Good and Evil*, as well as selections from *The Will to Power*.

#### IV.i Breaking Down the Self-Referential Problem

In his 1873 work *On Truth and Lies in an Extramoral Sense*, Nietzsche presents us with one of his first sustained discussions on the nature of truth, which he summarily characterizes as, "illusions which we have forgotten are illusions,"<sup>51</sup> amounting to "a denial that any human belief is, or could be, true."<sup>52</sup> Perspectivism is the claim that all knowledge is perspectival, or dictated by perspective.<sup>53</sup> Leading theorists, such as Brian Leiter, Clark, and Lanier Anderson interpret perspectivism as, "an epistemological thesis, roughly, the idea that no interpretations of reality are privileged, and that there is no knowledge unconditioned by particular, idiosyncratic interests."<sup>54</sup> If this is in fact Nietzsche's position (or at least a fair summary of his position), then it proves to be quite problematic. To say that truth is an illusion, or to deny truth altogether, is akin to making the statement, "truth is false": if that statement is true, then the statement is also

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<sup>51</sup> Friedrich W. Nietzsche and Walter Kaufmann. "On Truth and Lie in the Extra-Moral Sense," in *The Portable Nietzsche: Selected and Translated, with an Introduction, Prefaces and Notes* (New York: Viking Press, 1960), 47.

<sup>52</sup> Clark. *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 1.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>54</sup> Steven D. Hales, "Recent Work on Nietzsche," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (Oct 2000): 317.

false, since there is at least one truth (i.e. that there is no truth). If the statement is false, then that means that there is some truth. Steven D. Hales describes the self-referential problem this way:

What status should we ascribe to his [Nietzsche's] own claims? Does he claim to know them? Are they true? If neither, and Nietzsche is just presenting some random speculations that he thinks are no better than a midnight dorm-room bull session, then it is hard to see why we should take him seriously. On the other hand, if Nietzsche is asserting his views as true things that he knows, then this undermines his own contention that no interpretation of reality is privileged.<sup>55</sup>

One way to escape the paradox is to distinguish different kinds of truth, such as noumenal truth (i.e. truth that exists independently of the senses) and phenomenal truth (i.e. truth as it appears to the senses). In other words, the self-referential problem arises as a result of an oversimplification of Nietzsche's position on truth. Clark and Lanier Anderson agree that Nietzsche specifically targets noumenal truth in his critique. However, Lanier Anderson offers another solution in addition to the first: "Nietzsche's arguments for perspectivism depend on 'internal reasons,' which have force not only in their own perspective, but also *within* the standards of alternative perspectives."<sup>56</sup>

The neo-Kantian interpretation of Nietzsche's position on truth (and solution to the self-referential problem) focuses on the rejection of noumenal truth. This interpretation largely depends on the elaboration of the following concepts: metaphysical realism, metaphysical correspondence, representationalism, and the falsification thesis. Metaphysical realism is the notion that "the world is made up of a fixed totality of determinate, theory-independent objects, and there is a single true description of the world"<sup>57</sup> In other words, metaphysical realism holds that there is an absolute, noumenal, or metaphysical truth. Metaphysical realists contend that a

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> R. Lanier Anderson, "Truth and Objectivity in Perspectivism," 1.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

belief or theory can only be true if the posited theory aligns with the single true description of the world. This is known as the doctrine of metaphysical correspondence. Representationalism falls in line with metaphysical realism, purporting that what we experience is not the metaphysical or “real world” itself, but only a representation of it. Essentially, metaphysical realism argues that phenomena (i.e., what we experience through the senses) are actually representations of noumena, or things that exist independently of the senses. We cannot directly experience noumena, but their nature can be inferred through the experience of phenomena. Finally, the falsification thesis holds that “all of our beliefs, theories, and sentences falsify and distort reality.”<sup>58</sup> Fundamentally, a metaphysical realist holds that all of our knowledge is rooted in our experience of phenomena, but since phenomena are *merely* representations of things-in-themselves (or noumena), our so-called knowledge of the world (i.e. our beliefs, theories, and sentences) is inevitably imperfect, which would mean that our knowledge “falsifies” reality. This particular idea is an object of contention among Nietzsche scholars. If Nietzsche claims that truth is, “a moveable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms,”<sup>59</sup> then that would suggest that he subscribes to the falsification thesis, which would also mean he subscribes to metaphysical realism to some degree. But because Nietzsche has repeatedly derided metaphysical realism in many of his works, he would be contradicting himself if he accepted the falsification thesis while embracing perspectivism. Clark purports that Nietzsche eventually came to reject the falsification thesis, and by rejecting the thesis, Nietzsche is able to escape the self-referential problem.

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<sup>58</sup> Hales, “Recent Work on Nietzsche,” 317.

<sup>59</sup> Nietzsche and Kaufmann, “On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense,” 47.

#### IV.ii Clark's Developmental Reading

Clark's work attempts to resolve the self-referential problem by reconstructing Nietzsche's evolving account of truth through a developmental reading of his works. She argues that while it may appear that Nietzsche supported the falsification thesis while simultaneously criticizing metaphysical realism, he ultimately took up a neo-Kantian position (i.e. "the rejection of transcendent or metaphysical truth as a contradiction in terms")<sup>60</sup> in his later works, such as *Gay Science* and *Beyond Good and Evil*. In *On Truth and Lies in an Extramoral Sense*, Nietzsche seems to strongly defend the notion that what we call truth is a social convention that has its origins in metaphor. Metaphors, he believes, fail to adequately mirror the world.<sup>61</sup> The idea that truths are metaphors indicates a sort of separation between the description of the empirical thing and the thing-in-itself, but the two are nevertheless somehow mysteriously and intuitively connected to each other. This means that Nietzsche subscribes to the notion of truth as correspondence to something, but he bemoans our failure to "get at" the original entity (i.e. the thing-in-itself). However, Nietzsche's 1878 work, *Human, All Too Human*, marked a transition in his thought: he begins to focus less on the notion of correspondence and more on a naturalistic explanation of morals and historical philosophy (HH 1, HH 10). Clark points out that Nietzsche takes a more cautious stance to metaphysical realism, admitting that he cannot deny the *possibility* of a metaphysical world: "It is true that there might be a metaphysical world; the absolute possibility of it can hardly be disputed. We view all things through the human head and cannot cut this head off; though the question remains, what of the world would still be there if it

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<sup>60</sup> Maudemarie Clark, "The Development of Nietzsche's Later Position on Truth," in *Nietzsche*, ed. John Richardson and Brian Leiter (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 63.

<sup>61</sup> Nietzsche and Kaufmann, *The Portable Nietzsche: Selected and Translated, with an Introduction, Prefaces and Notes*, 45-47.

had been cut off?” (HH 9). Nietzsche is implying that even if the metaphysical world did exist, it still “would not provide answers that we could find cognitively useful” because “the metaphysical world differs radically from the empirical.”<sup>62</sup> Clark sums up Nietzsche’s position up to this point: “We cannot rule out the possibility that the truth differs radically from our best theory, but we cannot know whether or not it does. This means that we cannot know whether or not our truths correspond to things-in-themselves or possess metaphysical truth.”<sup>63</sup> A skeptical stance on metaphysical truth marks a significant transition from his outright dismissal of truth in the general sense, which shows us that his initial thoughts on truth have become more nuanced.

By the time he got around to publishing *Gay Science* in 1882, Clark purports that Nietzsche finally adopted the neo-Kantian stance, rejecting the conceivability of the thing-in-itself and the falsification thesis:

What is ‘appearance’ to me now! Certainly not the opposite of some essence – what could I say about any essence except name the predicates of its appearance! Certainly not a dead mask that one could put on an unknown x and probably also take off x! To me, appearance is the active and living itself (GS 54).

If appearance is the “active and living itself,” then it would appear that Nietzsche no longer sees truth as metaphor or metaphysical correspondence: the “space” implied by the separation between the description of the empirical thing and the thing-in-itself has collapsed, and appearance and essence have become one and the same. On the other hand, in that same passage, Nietzsche still cannot help but cling to the idea that the objects of consciousness are representations, as he describes himself awaking in the middle of a dream, “but only to the consciousness that I am dreaming and that I *must* go on dreaming lest I perish – as the

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<sup>62</sup> Clark, “The Development of Nietzsche’s Later Position on Truth,” 61.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

sleepwalker has to go on dreaming in order to avoid falling down” (GS 54). This puts Nietzsche in a difficult position:

If life is a dream, the objects of consciousness exist only as representations; they have no existence except in relation to the knower/dreamer. In that case, Nietzsche has only two options: Either there are independently existing things which cannot be direct objects of knowledge or only representations exist. The first option commits him to the thing-in-itself; the second amounts to subjective idealism.<sup>64</sup>

So long as Nietzsche holds on to representationalism, Nietzsche cannot be a neo-Kantian, and his critique of truth remains inconsistent. But Clark contends that Nietzsche solves this problem by arguing that knowledge is *perspectival*, not representational.<sup>65</sup> This would indicate that there is a difference between perspective and representation, and yet Nietzsche describes his perspectivism through visual metaphor, which would seem problematic, since visual metaphors deal directly with representations. How can we take his perspectivism seriously when it still seems to resort to representationalism and falsification? There must be a serious disanalogy between visual metaphor and perspective in order for Nietzsche to take on the neo-Kantian stance in earnest, and thereby resolve the self-referential problem.

The most plausible answer to this conundrum, Clark argues, is that Nietzsche is saying that our knowledge doesn't falsify metaphysical reality (for that would presuppose metaphysical correspondence and a belief in a metaphysical reality), but it *does* falsify what Nietzsche calls “the chaos of sensations.”<sup>66</sup> In WP 569, Nietzsche neatly outlines that our psychological perspective is determined by the following:

(1) that communication is necessary, and that for there to be communication something has to be firm, simplified, capable of precision... For it to be communicable, however, it must be experienced as adapted, as ‘recognizable’ The material of the senses adapted by

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>65</sup> Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 129.

<sup>66</sup> Clark, “The Development of Nietzsche’s Later Position on Truth,” 80.

the understanding, reduced to rough outlines, made similar, subsumed under related matters. Thus the fuzziness and chaos of sense impressions are, as it were, logicized; (2) the world of 'phenomena' is the adapted world which we feel to be real. The reality lies in the continual recurrence of identical, familiar, related things in their logicized character...

(3) the antithesis of this phenomenal world is not 'the true world,' but the formless unformulable world of the chaos of sensations -- *another kind* of phenomenal world, a kind 'unknowable' for us (WP 569).

This, says Clark, presents a naturalized version of Kant's theory of knowledge (i.e., a neo-Kantian theory of knowledge), and would explain why Nietzsche continued to maintain the falsification thesis in BGE and GS: "If the data of sensation constitute reality, the *a priori* features the brain's organization imposes on sensations falsify reality, making it to appear to have features it does not actually possess."<sup>67</sup> In that case, the rest of Nietzsche's dream metaphor in GS 54 makes more sense, and suggests the intersubjective nature of knowledge as informed by a plurality of perspectives: "among all these dreamers, even I, the 'knower', am dancing my dance; that the one who comes to know is a means of prolonging the earthly dance [...] and that the sublime consistency and interrelatedness of all knowledge may be and will be the highest means to sustain [...] the mutual comprehension of all dreamers." However, the status of his perspectivism remains in question: we still don't know whether or not Nietzsche claims perspectivism to be "a true thing that he knows." If it is, then he has privileged his perspective over all others without sufficient qualification; if it isn't, then what about his perspectivism prevents us from dismissing it as the product of intellectual capriciousness?

#### **IV.iii. Lanier Anderson's Naturalistic Reading**

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 81.

Although Nietzsche's use of visual metaphor is often misleading and distracting, Lanier Anderson argues that we must take Nietzsche's visual metaphor on perspective seriously in order to resolve the self-referential problem in Nietzsche's perspectivism. In its most basic sense, Nietzsche's perspectivism is best understood in terms of our visual perspective. However, as illustrated in Clark's argument and in WP 569, his visual metaphors are meant to create a parallel between visual perspective and cognitive perspective: Nietzsche wants to emphasize the impact of the latter.<sup>68</sup> Perspectives organize our experience in accordance to a self-posed scheme. These schemes are composed of our basic concepts, such as, "cause, sequence, for-each-other, relativity, constraint, number, law, freedom, motive, and purpose" (BGE 21). These schemes help us organize the world. According to Lanier Anderson, Nietzsche did not believe that our concepts came from *a priori* universals or "transcendental preconditions" as Plato and Kant asserted; rather, we adopt them "because of their contingent (and potentially variable) relation to our needs, interests, and values."<sup>69</sup> We draw upon these self-posed concepts or schemes to "construct" the phenomenal world: "As soon as we see a new picture, we immediately construct it with the help of all the old experiences we have had, depending on the degree of our honesty and justice" (GS 114).

It is important to note that one aspect of the visual metaphor does not fit with his perspectivism. While different visual perspectives can be compatible, cognitive perspectives are not always compatible: all visual perspectives conform to optical laws, but to assume that all cognitive perspectives conform to "epistemic optics" is to assume metaphysical realism, which

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<sup>68</sup> Lanier Anderson, "Truth and Objectivity in Perspectivism," 2.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

Nietzsche believes we cannot possibly justify.<sup>70</sup> Additionally, we can choose among cognitive perspectives to suit our interests and purposes. For example, when we look at the classic “rabbit-duck illusion,” we can look at the picture as a rabbit or a duck, but we cannot see both simultaneously; in order to see the rabbit, we must “un-see” the duck.<sup>71</sup> In this sense, in order to perceive anything, we must inevitably suppress certain schemas or perspectives. This idea draws a nice parallel between perspectivism and Nietzsche’s will to power.

With regard to the self-referential problem, Lanier Anderson observes that since perspectivism “is only one view (by its own standards), it seems that the perspectivist cannot offer any principled theoretical grounds for preferring her epistemology over its dogmatic competitors.”<sup>72</sup> According to metaphysical realists (the “dogmatic competitors”), a belief or theory can be true only if it corresponds to things as they are in themselves. If that is the case, then, “the perspectivist cannot offer any such claim, on pain of contradicting her own view...perspectivism prevents its adherents from offering any reasons in its defense which would be acceptable to their main opponents.”<sup>73</sup> Essentially, because of the incompatibility of cognitive perspectives, perspectivists cannot possibly assert that perspectivism is “correct” (or has privilege over other perspectives) without contradicting itself. However, there is one argumentative strategy a perspectivist could employ, according to Lanier Anderson: a perspectivist like Nietzsche must admit that conceptual schemes are not “mutually isolated, self-sufficient wholes.”<sup>74</sup> Perspectives often overlap with one another: they are not wholly incompatible, otherwise we would not express any form of agreement, let alone communicate

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 4-5

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 7-8.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 9.

agreement (i.e. “I see what you mean”). For instance, Nietzsche’s critique of Christianity in GM appeals to his beliefs in spiritual autonomy and psychological health, which the Christian ascetic ideal supposedly compromises by “turning people against themselves” as sinners (GM III.20).<sup>75</sup> But Nietzsche argues that most people *ought* to be Christians since for them the ascetic ideal “is an artifice for the *preservation* of life” (GM III.13). Lanier Anderson argues that Nietzsche had to assume that his arguments would hold no force for them, since his perspective and their perspective are incommensurable. However, Nietzsche’s arguments *are* commensurable with “those Christians or Deists who, like Kant or Rousseau, do hold the values of autonomy, integrity, and self-realization that Nietzsche thinks are undermined by the Christian morality.”<sup>76</sup> In this way, these shared values allow for the transition over from the rabbit to the duck, signifying the possibility of a perspectival shift and the recognition that Christianity is not “*the way*” but is one of many perspectives. And so, Nietzsche has opened the door for others “to employ a variety of perspectives and affective interpretations in the service of knowledge” (GM III.12).

Additionally, much like how Nietzsche criticizes Christianity but admits that “the ideas of the herd should rule in the herd” (WP 287), a perspectivist can argue that while all perspectives are equally perspectives, not all perspectives are equally good or well-suited to certain purposes. The value of a perspective depends on the purpose in adopting it. To borrow Lanier Anderson’s example, a microscope is helpful when we want to view small objects, but is rendered useless when we want to view a lake from far away.<sup>77</sup> Even the language used in this example indicates the relationship between knowledge and our interests. Perspectivism, as an

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 7.

*alternative perspective* or cognitive scheme to metaphysical realism, can provide another way (perhaps a more expansive way) of looking at the world, and provide a more nuanced explanation of the relationship between our desires and how we think about the world: “its conceptual foundations can provide a better interpretation of our cognitive practices than the views he saw as chief alternatives, viz., metaphysical realism, and Kant’s transcendental idealism.”<sup>78</sup> Again, we don’t have to *only* see the rabbit in the rabbit-duck drawing; Nietzsche has given us the “duck” alternative.

Both Clark’s and Lanier Anderson’s arguments take up a basic neo-Kantian interpretation. Although Lanier Anderson’s approach does not include a developmental reading of Nietzsche’s position on truth like Clark, each of them claim that Nietzsche’s stance on truth is an attack on metaphysical realism, noumenal truth and metaphysical correspondence. However, Clark and Lanier Anderson seem to differ in describing the manner in which Nietzsche rejects metaphysical realism. Clark’s work aims to portray Nietzsche’s stance in his later works as his “mature” position on truth, which exclusively focuses on a rejection of metaphysical realism. Clark’s developmental reading clarifies his position on truth, and her argument operates on the notion that Nietzsche did have a solid neo-Kantian stance once the difficulties with the dream metaphor/perspective analogy were resolved. Lanier Anderson’s work investigates the naturalistic aspects of Nietzsche’s thought, and for the most part, arrives at the same conclusion as Clark, while also highlighting the experimentalist nature of his perspectivism. However, his argument softens Nietzsche’s attitude toward metaphysical realism. While Clark’s Nietzsche outright rejects metaphysical realism, Lanier Anderson’s Nietzsche does not believe that metaphysical realism is defensible, but he still acknowledges its status *as a perspective*; what he

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 10.

primarily takes issue with is that metaphysical realism is a perspective that deals in absolutes, which does not provide, in his mind, the best interpretation of the world or cognition.<sup>79</sup> Both arguments do claim that Nietzsche was neither making an absolute claim about the existence of truth in any form, nor was he claiming privilege to his perspectivism; rather, Nietzsche was ultimately rejecting foundationalism, inviting us to examine the non-foundational and naturalistic nature of knowledge, and offering *a better* (as opposed to *the best*) explanation of knowledge acquisition.<sup>80</sup>

## V. Thoughts on the Self-Referential Problem

I would argue that there are problems with the self-referential problem *itself* that go beyond the oversimplification of the word “truth.” Firstly, in order to arrive at the self-referential problem, the statement “truth is false” or “there is no truth” must be tested for internal consistency (i.e. whether or not the truthiness or falseness of the statement results in a paradox). It’s fair to say that consistency is valued in the philosophical profession (particularly among the analytics): an inconsistent argument is typically thrown out, not taken seriously, or reworked according to other arguments in order to conform to a particular interpretation.<sup>81</sup> Philosophers also largely operate on predicates and assertions. One could argue that Nietzsche’s position is not paradoxical but simply *incompatible* with a perspective that privileges logical consistency above all else, hence the reason why postmodernists and deconstructionists discuss Nietzsche’s conception of truth with little self-referential difficulty. The analytic philosopher’s need for coherence dominates how he or she analyzes particular doctrines. If he or she is able to say that

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>80</sup> Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 130.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 30.

“Nietzsche is coherent,” then what Nietzsche says has suddenly gained a certain value within the scholarly community. But does the value of Nietzsche’s doctrines come from the content of each of those doctrines, or the fact that they appear to be (or have been rendered) coherent? Can we even separate the two? As Nietzsche says, “the need, not to ‘know,’ but to subsume, to schematize, for the purpose of intelligibility and calculation” overrides everything (WP 515); analytic philosophers may want to honestly reflect on what it is they’re doing and why. Moreover, Paul Horwich observes that the tendency among philosophers to fixate on statements such as “X is true” produce the misguided inference that truth has some hidden nature waiting for our discovery: “Unlike most other predicates, ‘is true’ is not used to attribute to certain entities (i.e. statements, beliefs, etc.) an ordinary sort of property - a characteristic whose underlying nature will account for its relations to other ingredients of reality.”<sup>82</sup> Using truth as a predicate, in this sense, may indicate an internalized, unconscious adherence to some form of correspondence theory, which may tempt many to internalize a metaphysical correspondence theory of truth, in which case Nietzsche has sufficient reason to be suspicious of logic. Yet again, Nietzsche could come back and say to us that regardless of our intentions, we are unwittingly “seduced by grammar.” The self-referential problem could easily be dismissed as a pseudo-problem rooted in the manner in which we habitually describe truth.

Secondly, cognitive perspectives are, by their very nature, bound to be incompatible: representations are only compatible if they are given from the same (or at least very similar) cognitive perspective. In other words, Nietzsche’s perspective (or any perspective, for that matter) is only totally compatible with itself. While the conclusion is circular, it also signifies that Nietzsche’s statement is internally consistent as a perspective, as Lanier Anderson asserts,

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<sup>82</sup> Paul Horwich, *Truth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 2.

but is *internally inconsistent as a statement or conviction* employed in a logical argument. A perspective in this case cannot be held as a conviction, because that would make perspectivism, as a perspective, privileged or absolute, which would lead to a contradiction. If Nietzsche's position on truth is reworked and formulated as the statement/conviction "there is no truth," or the question "Is it true that there is no truth?"<sup>83</sup> then that forces Nietzsche into a position where he has *no choice but to assert his view as an absolute*, regardless of the type of truth he is attacking. Nietzsche observes the dangers of absolute conviction in his later works, and even points out how science, the new epistemic trend, is wary of convictions: "only when they decide to step down to the modesty of a hypothesis, a tentative experimental standpoint, a regulative fiction, may they be granted admission and even a certain value in the realm of knowledge" (GS 344). In my mind, perspectivism, according to a perspectivist, is a *hypothesis* that advocates hypothesizing (or anti-foundationalism, as Clark would have it),<sup>84</sup> while perspectivism according to a non-perspectivist (i.e. metaphysical realist, transcendental idealist, someone who does not adhere to the internal rules of perspectivism, etc.) is a *conviction* that advocates hypothesizing. The latter interpretation results in internal inconsistency and contradiction, while the former does not.

Philosophers may not be able to resist the temptation of interpreting perspectivism as a conviction (that is, something held with a great deal of certainty or absoluteness) because of Nietzsche's polemical style, and because they are distracted by his attacks on absolute truth. It is possible for one to be "passionately provisional;" theoretical physicists would certainly qualify as "passionate provisionalists." Moreover, given Clark's developmental evidence, one might

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<sup>83</sup> Gemes, Ken, "Nietzsche's Critique of Truth," in *Nietzsche*, ed. John Richardson and Brian Leiter (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 40.

<sup>84</sup> Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 131.

argue that the man couldn't have held his own ideas as conviction given that he changed and elaborated his position on the falsification thesis over time: his final position on truth may have been inspired by his own acts of trial and error, or observing his own perspectival shifts. Nietzsche himself admits something to this effect, as mentioned earlier in the paper: "Deeply mistrustful of the dogmas of epistemology, I loved to look now out of this window, now out of that; I guarded against settling down with any of these dogmas, considered them harmful - and finally: is it likely that a tool is *able* to criticize its own fitness?" (WP 410). Additionally, a number of scholars agree (beginning with Kaufmann) that Nietzsche's stylistic pluralism is another facet of his perspectivism: "it is one of his essential weapons in his effort to distinguish himself from the philosophical condition as he conceives it, while at the same time he tries to criticize it and to offer alternatives to it."<sup>85</sup> As to whether or not we can take his ideas more seriously than a "midnight dorm-room bull session," I think Nietzsche's work demonstrates a need for progression in epistemology, which has only taken a few steps beyond metaphysical realism. Even science still has need of a will to truth, which he sees as, "hostile to life and destructive...a hidden will to death" (GS 344). Our will to truth, or our passionate drive to seek out objective truth, is a product of our will to power (i.e. our own interests and needs) that is destructively self-suppressing: the will to truth is a passion that pursues the dispassionate, a self-imposed (or culturally imposed) will to death, likely preluding what Freud would later call "the death drive." Nietzsche wants to demonstrate that this will to death is not necessary to pursue truth, so long as truth itself is no longer treated as an objective thing we must strive towards; rather, we can (and perhaps we must) shift our moral ground and treat truth as the object of passionate engagement and subject to self-authorship.

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<sup>85</sup> Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 20.

## VI. Conclusion

We have now seen how two scholars take Nietzsche's concerns seriously in order to arrive at a coherent interpretation of his position on truth. Clark takes Nietzsche's call for a historical sense very seriously in her writing, and Lanier Anderson explores the naturalistic elements of perspectivism while carefully keeping Nietzsche's aversion to dogmatism in mind. While a number of scholars will take issue with the finer details of Clark's developmental argument, many peer reviewers of Clark's work find Nietzsche's rejection of metaphysical realism to be highly plausible.<sup>86 87</sup> Given the strength of the neo-Kantian interpretation, one could say that Nietzsche's perspectivism and discussion of truth prelude the work of a number of postmodern Anglo-American thinkers.<sup>88</sup> For instance, Cornel West points out that like Richard Rorty, Nelson Goodman, and Thomas Kuhn, Nietzsche believes that facts are always theory-laden,<sup>89</sup> and he predates Goodman's pleas for a pluralism of versions of the world as manifest.<sup>90</sup> I would also venture to say that Nietzsche's implicit perspectival shifts prelude and broadly parallel Kuhn's discussion of paradigm shifts. Nonetheless, whether or not a scholar is examining his epistemology, his ethical doctrine of eternal return, or his will to power, he or she will undoubtedly find that the whole of Nietzsche's work calls for a philosophy of life, a

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<sup>86</sup> Steven D. Hales and Robert C. Welshon, "Reviewed Work: *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* by Maudemarie Clark," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 54, no. 1 (1994): 230.

<sup>87</sup> Daniel W. Conway, "Reviewed Work: *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* by Maudemarie Clark," *The Review of Metaphysics* 46, no. 1 (1992): 147.

<sup>88</sup> This is not to say that Nietzsche was what we might call a pragmatist. However, Nietzsche and the pragmatists both have their intellectual roots in Darwin and Kant, and Nietzsche shares the pragmatists' fondness of experimentalism. Moreover, Nietzsche's experimentalism predates most of the works of American pragmatists (save for Peirce), so it would not be wholly inaccurate to say that his approach to epistemology precludes pragmatic thought; Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 87-89

<sup>89</sup> Cornel West, "Nietzsche's Prefiguration of Postmodern American Philosophy," in *The Cornel West Reader* (New York: Perseus Books, 1999), 193-195.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

philosophy that is concerned with the here and now, the living thing-for-itself, as opposed to the “dead” thing-in-itself that lies beyond our experience. Although Nietzsche is considered among the forefathers of existential and phenomenological thought, I hope that the broader analytic community reconsiders their attitudes towards Nietzsche’s place in their philosophical tradition and appreciate his relentless questioning of foundations, which I believe has been the guiding force of philosophy since Socrates, if not the guiding force for all thought.

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*This work is dedicated, with love, to the late Mikki Slope,  
and to all the Bears in my life.  
Temperi Omnia Est.*

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*I hereby declare on my word of honor that I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this work.*