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Knowledge, truth and the life-affirming ideal in Nietzsche's perspectivism

Joakim Olsson

Department of Philosophy

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Supervisor: Elinor Hållén

Examiner: Pauliina Remes

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Introduction

In this thesis, I am going to explore the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche’s (1844-1900) epistemology through his concept of perspectivism. From being regarded to have had a main influence on the Nazis with his strongly opinionated views on humanity he has since the 1960s generally been considered “a certain sort of philosophical sceptic about truth, knowledge and meaning” (Leiter 2002, 291). When reading quotes like “nothing is true, everything is permitted” (Nietzsche 1998, 109) together with his repetitive reference to interpretation and perspective, one could perhaps see why. As ‘The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy’ indeed writes:

[Nietzsche] bluntly rejects the idea, dominant in philosophy at least since Plato, that knowledge essentially involves a form of objectivity that penetrates behind all subjective appearances to reveal the way things really are, independently of any point of view whatsoever (Anderson, 2017).

This quote is stated specifically about Nietzsche’s perspectivism, which argues that all knowing is perspectival—that just as in visual matters, we all know the world from our very limited personal perspective (Nietzsche 1998, 85). According to the sceptical reading this means that

Nietzsche thus rejects the possibility for us to share a common foundation for knowledge and truth.

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate into the meaning of perspectivism to find out if it is compatible with the possibility of knowledge and truth. My hopes are that I by the end have proven that this is in fact so, and that perspectivism perhaps instead could help us better understand that just because we perceive the world subjectively, that does not mean we must succumb to solipsism, scepticism or relativism.

To do this I will enlist the help of more recent commentators who have challenged the sceptical reading. With their help, I will argue that Nietzsche's criticism of truth is part of his criticism of Christian morality and its, as Nietzsche puts it, indisputable valuation of truth as God. Instead I will show how he rather cherished truth, honesty, a strive for knowledge and empirical science, and how his perspectivism is a strategy for his life-affirming ideal, *a way of thinking about truth and knowledge* rather than a denial of either.

I will conclude that perspectivism indeed rejects the traditional concept of objectivity since it argues that we cannot rid ourselves from our own drives and affects in our pursuit of knowledge. But this is not the same thing as saying that knowledge or truth is unreachable. No, I believe perspectivism instead offers a solution for how we best could acquire knowledge in light of our being locked in our perspectives—and so, reach closer to “objectivity” (which in Nietzsche's view more resembles full knowledge, than a view from nowhere)—namely, by acquiring, combining and critically judging different perspectives.

To do this I will investigate into what causes us to form different perspectives. This will ultimately show that the term perspective can be understood in many ways, namely as a common human perspective, a personal (or individual) perspective, or as perspectives within one and the same individual which are formed by different and sometimes conflicting drives, affects and interests that ultimately form our point of view on the world. Understood this way, I believe we could see perspectivism as a guide away from solipsism, scepticism and relativism, as a strategy for how to think about knowledge, a call for intersubjective collaboration and dialog, and a call for the development of an intellectual conscience with a good judgement and self-reflection that challenges us to see things differently and to question the familiar in order to form a unified coherent network of knowledge, both within ourselves, and between us all.

In the end, I hope to show the relevance of this view today by discussing it in the light of our current issues with knowledge and truth. Last year (2016) Oxford Dictionaries voted the term ‘post-truth’ the most popular ‘word of the year,’ and defined it as: “relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief” (Midgley, 2016). We live in a time where truth and knowledge has begun to lose its traditional value in favour of individual “perspectives.” I would like to investigate if this dichotomy is warranted, and whether perspectivism could help us to understand this situation better, and perhaps even if it can show us a way out of it.

In chapter I of this thesis I intend to give a background to Nietzsche’s view on values, science, reality, morality and metaphysics which constitutes the foundation for his perspectivism and his understanding of (the value of) truth and knowledge, mostly with the help of Clark (1990). In the second chapter, I will introduce the concept of perspectivism as an epistemological extrospective doctrine, by comparing Clark (1990) and Leiter (2002). Chapter III will add an alternative introspective interpretation of perspectivism, through Gemes (2009), that highlights the possible therapeutic and psychological aspects of Nietzsche’s philosophy in relation to his normative life-affirming ideal and his concern with our inner conflicting selves. Lastly, I will engage in a reflection in the fourth chapter where I will consider the possible benefits of a combined reading of these commentators’ remarks in relation to post-truth.

Methodologically I have taken inspiration from my secondary sources, who mostly seem to come from the analytic tradition, basing their readings on text analysis and interpretation through clear argumentation. (Clark especially tries to translate Nietzsche’s language into modernised analytical terms.) But, since Nietzsche himself was neither analytical nor very clear in his writing I will try to acknowledge the many ways his works allows for interpretation by comparing the three non-sceptical readings which themselves almost forms a dialectic relationship to each other (Gemes (2009) reacting to the position of Leiter (2002) reacting to Clark (1990)).¹ From Gemes (2009) I have borrowed the idea of reading Nietzsche “locally,” meaning I will, when possible, avoid to read Nietzsche as a philosopher of universal truths and grand metaphysical schemes by trying to understand the specific reasons behind his arguments

¹ According to Leiter it was Clark (1990) who pioneered the movement of non-sceptical readings of Nietzsche’s material (2002, 291). Leiter himself follows in Clark’s footsteps, and so, I will argue, does Gemes (2009), although in a rather different manner.

(reasons often based in morality), and “psychologically,” meaning I will try to account for Nietzsche’s interest in the psychology behind our reasoning and behaviour. I will use Leiter’s (2002) naturalistic interpretation to read Nietzsche as a philosopher of “human nature,” to justify his trust in science and the senses. I will also adopt Leiter’s “pragmatic” approach towards certain topics when possible. This means that if something problematic, which is not directly related to the topic, can be avoided, I will try to do so. Although I will begin with a discussion of metaphysics, my goal is to find a way to avoid such topics to focus on knowledge itself, and more specifically, the knower. It might be argued that these interpretations are incompatible with each other; in some ways they are, and I intend to discuss those inconsistencies when they occur. However, I hope to show that some general aspects from all of these readings could be adopted to form a unified coherent picture which could show a *helpful* way of looking at perspectivism, a way which might give us an opportunity to reap the benefits of Nietzsche’s insights without having to surrender to solipsism, scepticism or relativism.

Notes on bibliography and delimitation of scope

In attempting this thesis, I have used the help of three secondary sources: Maudemarie Clark’s *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* (1990), Brian Leiter’s *Nietzsche on Morality* (2002) and Ken Gemes’ article named *Janaway on perspectivism* (2009).

Out of Nietzsche’s bibliography I have decided to limit my use to what is necessary, which means I will draw mainly from two short passages in his book *Twilight of the Idols*, the third book of his work *On the Genealogy of Morality*, and at times, certain parts of his books *Beyond Good and Evil* and *The Gay Science*. This selection is mostly chosen in relation to the commentary from my secondary sources. Since it is argued that Nietzsche changed his views on truth rather radically through his years (Clark 1990, 114; Leiter 2002, 14) I have chosen to focus on his later position (although I do discuss some quotes from *The Gay Science* and *Beyond Good and Evil*, who both could be argued to belong to Nietzsche’s middle period). From these later works I have limited my use to what has been deemed minimally necessary for my argument. The same applies to the use of secondary sources.

Considering the already extensive scope, some further delimitations has to be made concerning certain topics and questions. Here are some examples. (1) The sceptical reading will be

discussed and argued against indirectly but I will not have the opportunity to fully give it justice by summarising its view from its original source. This might entail that there are arguments for a sceptical reading of Nietzsche that will not be addressed here. (2) Although the investigation will discuss metaphysics and objectivity, there will not be room to discuss whether Nietzsche's conception of objectivity and reality excludes all forms of metaphysics. Instead, Nietzsche's own conception of metaphysics will be used in order to make his overall understanding of the issues comprehensible. (3) Similarly, although this thesis is primarily about epistemology, no hard definition will be given to the meaning and constitution of knowledge, and the line between knowledge and belief will sometimes be blurred to the point where they are discussed as a combined entity of enquiry. (4) Perspectivism will primarily be discussed in relation to knowledge although it could be discussed similarly in relation to values. This topic will be briefly mentioned at times, but will not be of primary focus.

Lastly, a note on referencing. When quoting Nietzsche's works in text I will make some adjustments for the sake of clarity. First, I will use an abbreviation of the book's title. Secondly, I will refer to chapter, if there are chapters in the specific book. Thirdly, I will reference paragraph, and fourthly, I will write the page of the specific translation used. A typical example of this could be: '(GM 3, §12: 85),' which means: *On the Genealogy of Morality*, chapter 3, paragraph 12, page 85 (of my translation). However, *Twilight of the Idols* will only be referred to by page number as their chapters and paragraphs are not numbered. If one has trouble finding my translation of this book, one could look to the chapters "'Reason' in Philosophy" and "How the 'True World' Finally Became a Fable;" they are the only passages used in this thesis.

Abbreviations

BGE	Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future (<i>Jenseit von Gut und Böse: Vorspiel einer Philosophie der Zukunft</i>) 1886
GM	On the Genealogy of Morality: A Polemic (<i>Zur Genealogie der Moral: Eine Streitschrift</i>) 1887
GS	The Gay Science (<i>Fröhliche Wissenschaft</i>) 1882

Chapter I: Nietzsche and truth—a background

In this chapter I intend to explain and defend the claim that “[t]o deny the true world is not to deny truth” (Clark 1990, 114), and I want to explain why Nietzsche would like to do the former but not the latter. The purpose of this introductory chapter is to create a foundation for understanding Nietzsche’s perspectivism, which will be discussed in the following chapters.

The general problem with Nietzsche and truth is that he quite often seems to want to deny its existence while at the same time making assertions of facts that he argues to be true himself (Clark 1990, 4). Examples of his criticism of truth can be found all over his works. So how can one explain them? One way of interpreting could perhaps be to read Nietzsche ironically, as a ridiculing sceptic who has no intention of supplying any factual substance. This sceptical “postmodern” position is perhaps defensible (Clark mentions its possibility (Clark 1990, 2), but argues against it, and Leiter goes to lengths to disprove it (Leiter 2002)). Perhaps it is the true story of Nietzsche. It seems, however, improbable that a life work of such poignant moral critiques was created just to titillate an audience into scepticism and nihilistic frustration, especially since nihilism was one of the main antagonists of his own philosophy (more on this later). And then, of course, as Clark points out, there is the paradoxical issue with the very statement of denying truth: if one argues that truth does not exist, then is not that person through this very statement asserting a truth (Clark 1990, 3)? So, instead of trying to defend what I believe to be an unproductive position, I intend to show that what Nietzsche denies (especially in his later works) is not truth itself, but the belief in a metaphysical truth, a belief in a ‘true world’ beyond the world of “appearances” that we experience, and that this denial is a part of his moral critique against the Christian ‘ascetic ideal’ and its ‘will to truth.’

In doing this I will follow the purpose of Leiter’s (2002) book to provide a *naturalistic* reading of Nietzsche. More specifically, Leiter distinguishes him as a *methodological* “M-Naturalist”—one who holds that philosophy “should be continuous with empirical inquiry in the sciences”—but not as a stricter *substantive* “S-Naturalist”—who basically holds that all facts should be reduced to natural, or physical facts (a position reminiscing of scientism, or materialism) (Leiter

2002, 2-5).² This distinction would, according to Leiter, simultaneously explain Nietzsche's praise of the scientific *method* and his disdain for materialism, which he sees as an attempt to reduce human beings to "mechanical relations" of "material or physical facts" (Leiter 2002, 7, 24). According to Leiter, Nietzsche's naturalistic *methodology* "runs as follows: a person's theoretical beliefs are best explained in terms of his moral beliefs; and his moral beliefs are best explained in terms of *natural facts* about the type of person he is" (Leiter 2002, 9, emphasis added). We should hopefully be able to see how this methodology is realised in Nietzsche's philosophy, e.g. in his analysis of the 'ascetic ideal.' But, considering Clark's exhaustive and ambitious work's apparent high status in contemporary literature on Nietzsche (Leiter 2002, 291), I will base this chapter primarily on her argumentative progression.

In one of Nietzsche's latest works, *Twilight of the Idols* (TI), the author outlines what he calls: "How the 'true world' finally became a fable" and a "history of an error" (TI, 171) in six steps. These are the first three:

1. The true world attainable for a man who is wise, pious, virtuous, – he lives in it, *he is it*. (Oldest form of the idea, relatively coherent, simple, convincing. Paraphrase of the proposition 'I, Plato, am the truth.')
2. The true world, unattainable for now, but promised to the man who is wise, pious, virtuous ('to the sinner who repents'). (Progress of the idea: it gets trickier, more subtle, less comprehensible, – *it becomes female*, it becomes Christian ...)
3. The true world, unattainable, unprovable, unpromisable, but the very thought of it a consolation, an obligation, an imperative. (Basically the old sun but through fog and scepticism; the idea become elusive, pale, Nordic, Königsbergian.) (TI, 171)

The three main figures in this story are Plato, Christianity and Kant (the "Königsbergian").³ According to Nietzsche, Plato is responsible for creating a dualistic understanding of reality by separating the 'true world' from the one we normally experience, making it intelligible only to the few; in Christianity this world of truth becomes unreachable in this world as it is transferred to God and the promised afterlife; and through Kant it turns into the forever unattainable thing-in-itself, but is still the 'true world' behind and beyond the one we experience. Every one of these stages are, according to Nietzsche, denying the *value* of the

² If this distinction is unclear one could perhaps propose that the M-version wants philosophy to *work with science*, and the S-version that philosophy should be *reduced to science*, although this is probably too much of a simplification.

³ It should be noted that this thesis in no way equates these philosophies with the presentation Nietzsche gives them. Hopefully the reader will understand this as they read along, that the main criticism for Nietzsche is towards what he believes to be the *result* of these "doctrines" and mainly towards Christian morality and the 'ascetic ideal,' which he believes has left us longing for another, truer, better world. I therefore believe we should be able to follow his argument as long as we recognise these philosophies as Nietzsche's conception of them, even if they perhaps are not justly represented by his view.

world we live in because they value this other world as the true reality. In the preceding passage of TI he provides four propositions in which the fourth argues that “to divide the world into a ‘true’ half and an ‘illusory’ one, whether in the manner of Christianity or in the manner of Kant (an *underhanded* Christian, at the end of the day), is just a sign of decadence, – it is a symptom of life *in decline*” (TI, 170). But why would human kind need to deny its own existence and choose such a “life in decline?” In other words, how could such a “fable” become reality in the first place? Why would we choose to believe it? Why should it even be considered a “life in decline?” The short answer to this is provided in the previous section of TI where he argues that we have created this fantasy of the “‘better’ life to *avenge* ourselves on [this] life” (TI, 170). So, because we do not like this life, we imagine a better one. I believe we can find the longer answer in Nietzsche’s *On the Genealogy of Morality* (GM), where he describes this development through the ‘ascetic ideal’ and its ‘will-to-truth.’ So, I think there is reason to briefly explain these concepts before we move on to discuss the next three steps in his historical picture.

In GM Nietzsche criticises the development of Christian morality and its ‘ascetic ideal’—which “is the idealization of asceticism, the belief that the best human life is one of self-denial” (Clark 1990, 160)—where heaven after life is the ultimate goal of life. But the development and nature of this ideal seem peculiar and self-contradictory. How could life (i.e. human beings) choose an ideal that denies itself? Nietzsche in turn denies this to be the full story. He sees the ‘ascetic ideal’ as a defence mechanism created by humanity to preserve life in a world where everything is impermanent and degenerative (GM 3, §13: 86). To prevent us from turning to nihilism and despair it has saved our will by turning it against life itself and towards the nothingness that is the idea of the ‘true world’ where life no longer is limited by the boundaries of our existence (GM 3, §28: 117-118). So, we suffer and we die, and to give meaning to all this suffering and death, *in life*, the ‘ascetic ideal’ creates the idea of another world, a metaphysical reality that stretches beyond the fragility and temporality of our existence. In doing so it prolongs life and places being in eternity.

How does this relate to truth? Nietzsche dismisses the idea that there could be such a thing as knowledge for its own sake (an “impulse to knowledge” as he calls it). Even if there might be extraordinary exceptions to this Nietzsche thinks most drives for knowledge is founded in more personal interests (such as family, money-making or politics) (BGE 1, §6: 4). And so, he argues that inherent in the ‘ascetic ideal’ is a personal drive for knowledge of the ‘true world’ as we

want to come closer to God. This drive is what Nietzsche calls the ‘will to truth’ which, to him, “is the *belief in the ascetic ideal itself*, [...] it is the belief in a *metaphysical value*, a value *in itself of truth* as it is established and guaranteed by that ideal alone (it stands and falls with that ideal)” (GM 3, §24: 109-110). So, our search for truth is a part of this ‘ascetic ideal.’ But the aim of this ideal is not just any truth, it is the metaphysical truth of the ‘true world’ beyond our own, a truth of the *essence* of things.

But what about science, says Nietzsche, does it not provide the opposing ideal to the ascetic? No, he says, science is “rather *its most recent and noblest form*” (GM 3, §23: 107), since science still believes in this metaphysical, indisputable *value* of truth:

There is, strictly speaking, absolutely no science “without presuppositions,” the thought of such a science is unthinkable, paralogical: a philosophy, a “belief” must always be there first so that science can derive a direction from it, a meaning, a boundary, a method, a *right* to existence (GM 3, §24: 110).

Science does not create values on its own and it cannot stand on its own since it needs a foundation of values to give it directions. Therefore, it cannot provide an opposing ideal. Instead, since science values truth above all else, Nietzsche thinks it has inherited the ‘will to truth’ from the ‘ascetic ideal,’ and he argues that we can see this influencing the scientific practice which has become an unhuman, lifeless machinery (GM 3, §25: 111). What Nietzsche wants to illuminate here is that “truth at any cost” can become a life-denying practice. But there is also the risk that truth itself cannot guarantee value as a result. In *Beyond Good and Evil* (BGE) Nietzsche writes that “[a] thing could be *true*, although it were in the highest degree injurious and dangerous; indeed, the fundamental constitution of existence might be such that one succumbed by a full knowledge of it” (BGE 2, §39: 28). So, instead of turning our aim towards truth, Nietzsche thinks we primarily ought to aim towards life-affirmation (BGE 1, §4: 3). According to Leiter, this is a reason why Nietzsche held the Greeks, especially the Presocratics, in such high regard: they knew the value of life was higher than the value of truth (Leiter 2002, 267-268). The crux here is that we cannot guarantee that either the scientific search for truth or the resulting truth itself will benefit us in life. Therefore, we should prioritise life above truth, since it ought to be more valuable.

Nietzsche now relates the topic back to Plato’s idealism and its effects on history which has lead us to our search for truth today:

It is still a *metaphysical* belief on which our belief in science rests—we knowers today, we godless

ones and anti-metaphysicians, we too still take *our* fire from that great fire that was ignited by a thousand-year old belief, that belief of Christians, which was also Plato's belief, that God is truth, that truth is *divine* ... But what if precisely this is becoming ever more implausible, if nothing proves to be divine any longer, unless perhaps error, blindness, lie—if God himself proves to be our *longest lie*? (GM 3, §24: 110).

Ever since the 'ascetic ideal' has ruled, "truth was simply not *permitted* to be a problem," but "from the moment belief in the god of the 'ascetic ideal' is negated, *there is also a new problem*: that of the *value* of truth" (GM 3, §24: 110). So, according to Nietzsche true atheism is necessarily incompatible with the traditional *belief* in truth, since it stems from a belief in God. This is where Nietzsche believes we are today—meaning, of course, back then when he wrote this book in 1887—in a state of *contradiction*, where this 'will to truth' is not just the last remnant of the 'ascetic ideal,' but its very core; which means that even atheists are still living in, and according to, the Christian ideal, as long as the value of truth remains indisputable:

Unconditional honest atheism [...] is accordingly *not* in opposition to that ideal, as appearance would have it; it is rather only one of its last stages of development, one of its final forms and inner logical consequences—it is the awe-inspiring *catastrophe* of a two-thousand-year discipline in truth, which in the end forbids itself the *lie involved in belief in God*. [...] Asking in all strictness, *what actually triumphed* over the Christian god? [...] "Christian morality itself, the ever more strictly understood concept of truthfulness" (GM 3, §27: 116).

Nietzsche's issue is that we are blind to the fact that we still inherit our values from Christianity. And since he believes it to be a life-denying doctrine of values he thinks we need to replace them. Therefore, he declares his future mission to write a new work titled "***The Will to Power, Attempt at a Re-valuation of All Values***" (GM 3, §27: 116) in service of a new life-affirming ideal. He never truly finished this work, but I believe we can find bits and pieces of his attempts at forming a new life-affirming ideal in the works he did publish during his lifetime.

Eventually one must assume that, according to Nietzsche's picture, the 'will to truth' will begin to question, not just God, but truth itself (as it is God). It surely seems as if this is what Nietzsche wants us to do, and it seems it is this interpretation we find in the sceptical readings of Nietzsche. The question, however, is whether the issue has been correctly understood if we decide to stop here. Is it really *truth itself* Nietzsche is attacking (or we ought to attack)? As I have already said, I believe it is not so. What he attacks is rather our *conception and valuation of truth* and the metaphysical foundation on which this concept and value is based. So, let us now come back to the progression *he* envisioned, and discuss the implications in its wake.

In the last three stages of Nietzsche's "history of an error", he argues that we have moved away

and beyond this belief in a ‘true world,’ away from the error initially created by Plato, followed by Christianity, and eventually mystified by Kant:

4. The true world – unattainable? At any rate, unattained. And as unattained also *unknown*. Consequently not consoling, redeeming, obligating either: how could we have obligations to something unknown? ... (Gray morning. First yawn of reason. Cockcrow of positivism.)
5. The ‘true world’ – an idea that is of no further use, not even as an obligation, - now an obsolete superfluous idea, *consequently* a refuted idea: let’s get rid of it! (Bright day; breakfast; return of *bon sens* and cheerfulness; Plato blushes in shame; pandemonium of all free spirits.)
6. The true world is gone: which world is left? The illusory one, perhaps? ... But no! *we got rid of the illusory world along with the true one!* (Noon; moment of shortest shadow; end of longest error; high point of humanity; INCIPIT ZARATHUSTRA.) (TI, 171)

In response to this Clark discusses Nietzsche’s own development and mirrors it to these last three steps of what one might perhaps call his “enlightenment.” She states that Nietzsche in his earlier works was in stage 4 which “argues that the ‘true world’ plays no cognitive, and therefore, no practical role, but does not deny its existence (Clark 1990, 112), and she later argues that:

To deny the true world is not to deny truth. Instead, stage 6 overcomes Nietzsche's denial of truth. In [earlier works] Nietzsche's characterization of truths as illusions or fictions amounts to calling the empirical world, the world accessible through common sense and science, illusory or fictitious. His history of the "true" world indicates that he gives up ascribing reality to any world other than the empirical world (stage 5), *and* that he recognizes that this requires him to relinquish his claim that the empirical world is illusory (stage 6) (Clark 1990, 114, emphasis added).

So, according to Clark, Nietzsche eventually realised that there is no need to question truth as long as he abandons⁴ the platonic, Christian, Kantian idea of the ‘true world’ *and* consequently also the conception of the world we experience as a world of illusions. In Clark’s terms this means that Nietzsche in the fourth step held on to ‘the metaphysical correspondence theory’ which states that “all truth is metaphysical, that is, is correspondence to things as they are in themselves” (Clark 1990, 22). This, in turn, would then force him to accept ‘the falsification thesis,’ which means that human knowledge of the world we experience through our perception necessarily falsifies the true reality. She argues that Nietzsche, since he by the fifth step abandons ‘the metaphysical correspondence theory,’ finally in the sixth step of his development realised that the ‘falsification thesis’ could be abandoned completely since there is no metaphysical reality to falsify to begin with. By accepting that the world we experience is the

⁴ A deeper discussion on the meaning of this “abandonment” will be discussed in chapter II in relation to Leiter’s discussion on Nietzsche’s perspectivism. While Leiter agrees with Clark’s remarks that “Nietzsche’s epistemological views *evolved* quite dramatically during his philosophical career” (Leiter 2002, 14), and that this development is mirrored in the last three steps of the section referenced from TI (Leiter 2002, 15), he draws a different conclusion regarding the meaning of that fifth step’s “abandonment.”

only world and that it exists independently of us Nietzsche can then accept ‘the minimal correspondence theory’ which means that we can accept statements such as: “‘snow is white’ corresponds to the world iff snow is white” (Clark 1990, 40), which makes facts of this world possible. Basically, this means that we can put trust in our senses’ and our reason’s ability to gain knowledge that correspond with reality, as long as we consider reality to be *this* world. Clark summarises: “Nietzsche's last six books therefore provide no evidence of his commitment to the falsification thesis, no reason to deny his commitment to the possibility of truth in science, nor to the truth of his own theories” (Clark 1990, 108-109).⁵ Since this world is the only world we can *know*, it can no longer be a distorted version of reality, a world of appearances, or illusions. It *is* the real world, and truth resides *in* it.

This seems to fit Nietzsche’s position by the time of GM. He even begins the book by admitting that truths exist: “plain, harsh, ugly, unpleasant, unchristian, immoral truth ... For there are such truths” (GM 1, §1: 10). As said, Clark believes Nietzsche realised this in his later works, where proof of his belief in truth resides in his praise of science and empirical knowledge, which consequently grew with admiration. Even when criticising science of being a last remnant of the ‘ascetic ideal’ in GM, he pauses himself to admit that: “there is so much that is useful that needs doing precisely there. I won’t contradict; least of all do I want to ruin the pleasure these honest workers take in their craft: for I enjoy their work” (GM 3, §23: 107). Leiter adds that this must entail that science can be life-affirming, and practiced in a “‘non-ascetic’ way insofar as it does not pursue truth ‘at any price’” (Leiter 2002, 267). In TI, we can see Nietzsche reasoning similarly:

We have science these days precisely to the extent that we have decided to *accept* the testimony of the senses, – to the extent that we have learned to sharpen them, arm them, and think them through to the end. Everything else is deformity and pre-science: I mean metaphysics, theology, psychology, epistemology. *Or* formal science, a system of signs: like logic and that application of logic, mathematics. They do not have anything to do with reality, not even as a problem; they are equally distant from the question of whether a sign-convention like logic has any value at all (TI, 168).

Clark argues that this paragraph proves that Nietzsche believed that as long as sciences and doctrines of knowledge were based on the senses (i.e. “on an empirical basis”), then they would be concerned with truths of this world. Psychology and epistemology are not yet sciences

⁵ One could assume that this abandonment of metaphysical truths should cause problems for Nietzsche’s apparently metaphysical theories of ‘will to power’ and ‘eternal recurrence.’ To deflect this worry Clark argues that Nietzsche defends these theories “not on the grounds of their truth, but rather on the grounds that they offer a new ideal, the needed alternative to the ascetic ideal” (Clark 1990, 24). For a deeper discussion, see chapter 7 and 8 in Clark (1990).

because they do not have this empirical foundation. Metaphysics and theology do not even strive for it, since they are by nature incompatible with observation. And since “he treats logic and mathematics as formal sciences that make no claims about reality, Nietzsche must surely abandon his earlier claim that they falsify reality” (Clark 1990, 105). Another example of this can be found in BGE where Nietzsche states that:

natural philosophy is only a world-exposition and world-arrangement (according to us, if I may say so!) and *not* a world-explanation; but in so far as it is based on belief in the senses, it is regarded as more, and for a long time to come must be regarded as more – namely, as an explanation (BGE 1, §14: 10).

This argument contains two aspects. First, it states that we should base our knowledge primarily on the senses; only then can we begin to try to explain the nature of reality. Secondly, it criticises any other attempts which does not follow this rule. This second criticism seems to run through his general disagreement with science’s belief in its own value and ability, which would explain his sometimes-aggressive approach towards it. In *The Gay Science* (GS) he criticises the “materialistic natural scientists” for wanting to “demote existence in this way to an exercise in arithmetic and an indoor diversion for mathematicians” (GS, 5, §373: 238), which seem to also explain why he criticises the “formal sciences” mathematics and logic for not dealing with reality. He is sceptical of our reason’s capability to explain the totality of our world, and concludes that:

an essentially mechanistic world would be an essentially *meaningless* world! Suppose one judged the value of a piece of music according to how much of it could be counted, calculated, and expressed in formulas – how absurd such a ‘scientific’ evaluation of music would be! (GS 5, §373: 239)

First, in the terms of Leiter I believe this is further proof of him being an ‘M-naturalist’ but not an ‘S-naturalist’ since Nietzsche indeed seem to admire the scientific method (when it is researching the world through the senses) but does not think we can explain, or account for, everything with science (especially if it bases its proofs on concepts that are not anchored in the world). Secondly, this concludes something which has been growing beneath the surface of the discussion up until this point. It suggests that some knowledge is ungraspable to science and reason, that we are not solely rational beings, and thus that there are other factors besides scientific explanations that influence our subjective judgements. This is an aspect which we cannot neglect in our search for knowledge. As we shall see in the next chapter, it is an aspect that is crucial to Nietzsche’s perspectivism.

To summarise, this is how I believe we should read Nietzsche’s critique of truth, by separating

truth from its metaphysical connotations. Through the interpretative agreement between Clark and Leiter I have concluded that Nietzsche does not deny the possibility of truth, but rather that his analysis is fundamentally concerned with our values. His criticism is directed towards the ‘ascetic ideal’ and its ‘will to truth’ with its aim towards the ‘true world.’ He challenges us to break free from, what he calls, the old, platonic, Christian, Kantian conception of truth because he does not like the set of morals on which it was founded, since he deems them to be life-denying, built on asceticism and a longing for this other world. He wants us to think differently about truth, knowledge and reality because he wants a new life-affirming ideal to move humanity forward. However, this does not mean that he is sceptical about everything science has concluded, nor about truth in general, since we have seen that he admires the scientific method and its results. What he does want is for us to value life above truth; this question of value is at the heart of his reasoning. Whether he is right in every aspect of his critique should perhaps be left unjudged, but I hope this chapter has proven where his desire for criticism comes from. In the next chapters I will show a path on which we can stay, so to speak, “agnostic” towards metaphysics in general, when we explore the epistemological and therapeutic aspects of Nietzsche’s perspectivism: the part of truth that is more concerned with the *knower* rather than the *known*.

Chapter II: Nietzsche’s perspectivism—an epistemological extrospective reading

[W]hat do the people actually take knowledge to be? what do they want when they want ‘knowledge’? Nothing more than this: something unfamiliar is to be traced back to something familiar. [...] Take the philosopher who imagined the world to be ‘known’ when he had reduced it to the ‘idea’; wasn’t it precisely because the ‘idea’ was so familiar to him and he was so used to it? Because he no longer feared the ‘idea’? – How little these men of knowledge demand! (GS 5, §355: 214)

This view certainly differs from the more traditional question of how to justify knowledge. But, on the other hand, this statement seems more focused on the *strive* for knowledge than with knowledge itself. Nietzsche views this striving as an egocentric will to always see things from one’s own familiar perspective. So how do we gain more knowledge? By daring to truly understand the unfamiliar, the unknown. By incorporating other perspectives.

In paragraph 12 of the third chapter of GM, Nietzsche presents his concept of ‘perspectivism.’ The paragraph follows the discussion on the ‘ascetic ideal’ and the ‘will to truth.’ It begins with a criticism of the philosopher who have turned their back on reality by claiming that “there is a realm of truth and being, but precisely reason is *excluded* from it” (GM 3, §12: 85).⁶ This follows his critique of a history of philosophy which has been too concerned with the concept of the ‘true world’ as separate from the one we experience. Although he stands by this criticism, Nietzsche quickly turns it around to thank his “rivals” when he argues for the benefits of thinking differently. This leads us to the following passage, which is the main source on Nietzsche’s perspectivism. It is to be considered the foundation for this thesis, so it deserves to be quoted at length:

Finally let us, particularly as knowers, not be ungrateful toward such resolute reversals of the familiar perspectives and valuations with which the spirit has raged against itself all too long now, apparently wantonly and futilely: to see differently in this way for once, *to want* to see differently, is no small discipline and preparation of the intellect for its future “objectivity”—the latter understood not as “disinterested contemplation” (which is a non-concept and absurdity), but rather as the capacity to have one’s pro and contra *in one’s power*, and to shift them in and out: so that one knows how to make precisely the *difference* in perspectives and affective interpretations useful for knowledge. For let us guard ourselves better from now on, gentlemen philosophers, against the dangerous old conceptual fabrication that posited a “pure, will-less, painless, timeless subject of knowledge”; let us guard ourselves against the tentacles of such contradictory concepts as “pure reason,” “absolute spirituality,” “knowledge in itself”: here it is always demanded that we think an eye that cannot possibly be thought, an eye that must not have any direction, in which the active and interpretive forces through which seeing first becomes seeing-something are to be shut off, are to be absent; thus, what is demanded here is always an absurdity and non-concept of an eye. There is *only* a perspectival seeing, *only* a perspectival “knowing”; and *the more* affects we allow to speak about a matter, *the more* eyes, different eyes, we know how to bring to bear on one and the same matter, that much more complete will our “concept” of this matter, our “objectivity” be. But to eliminate the will altogether, to disconnect the affects one and all, supposing that we were capable of this: what? would that not be to *castrate* the intellect? (GM 3, §12: 85)

In this passage Nietzsche asserts two things. First, he refutes the idea that we as human beings could ever experience the world objectively (that is outside of any perspective), devoid of will and subjectivity, since this would require that we rid ourselves of ourselves, so to speak, which would be an absurd idea.⁷ Leiter relates this back to the ‘will to truth’ by arguing that this will thus is a “will to *non-perspectival* truth” (Leiter 2002, 268). In the last chapter, we concluded that Nietzsche’s critique of the ‘will to truth’ was its aim towards a metaphysical reality and the

⁶ Here Leiter argues that Nietzsche is specifically referring to Kant who, by placing reality (the noumenal world, the thing-in-itself) out of reach for the human mind, denies our senses and our reason’s capability of grasping truths of it, which consequently is life-denying since this amounts to a denial of our world (Leiter 2002, 269).

⁷ A more detailed analysis of this critique would mention its more direct criticism of Schopenhauer’s idea of the ‘pure, will-less, painless, timeless subject of knowledge’ and the ‘aesthetic consciousness,’ as they are presented in the third book of his work *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (The World as Will and Representation) from 1819. In it Schopenhauer proposes the possibility to *see* objectively, without interference from the will, and thus to actually experience Kant’s noumenal world (or as Schopenhauer calls it ‘the world as will’) and the platonic ideas that underlie every object in it.

belief that the search for knowledge (in science and elsewhere) could ever be conducted on a value-free foundation. Nietzsche then wrote: “[t]here is, strictly speaking, absolutely no science ‘without presuppositions’” (GM 3, §24: 110). In Leiter’s quoted translation the word ‘science’ is replaced with the more generalised word ‘knowledge’⁸ and he concludes that Nietzsche means that ‘knowledge without presuppositions’ is an impossibility (Leiter 2002, 268). Now, in this section on perspectivism, Nietzsche says that there is no such thing as a non-perspectival subject of knowledge who can grasp the true metaphysical reality, freed of any subjective affects (i.e. free from will). So, knowledge without presupposition would be the same as non-perspectival knowing, hence *the ‘will to truth’ is a ‘will to non-perspectival truth,’* which “is really the will to *know* truths that can never be known by creatures like us” (Leiter 2002, 278).

Besides refuting the possibility for us to have such non-perspectival knowledge, this claim also furthers the idea introduced in the end of the last chapter that since we are human beings with personal drives, affects, interests we need to involve these parts of our being into our discussion about knowledge. Our judgments cannot be purely factual, objective, rational. We could question whether e.g. “knowing a piece of music” ultimately ought to be called knowledge in the strict sense we normally use, but we cannot neglect the subjective irrational, emotional, human aspects that influence the way we make judgements, especially considering that such aspects in the next step strongly influences the choices we make based on these judgements. I will come back to this again as it is a crucial part of what perspectivism might teach us today.

Secondly then, in the process of explaining this, Nietzsche creates an analogy between seeing and knowing. In seeing we experience the world perspectivally. Each of us see the world from our own perspective. To know more of a visual object, we can try to see it from as many perspectives as possible. But it is impossible to see the world from all perspectives, or from no perspective at all. And since we are limited to our perspective, there is also the possibility that our particular perspective can be wrong (e.g. if we try to argue that the table is oval, because it looks that way from our perspective, although it is round).

Let us imagine a more developed scenario. You and I are sitting chained to chairs on opposite sides of a round table. On the table is a water bottle. Between us, to the left and right, are two

⁸ In German ‘science’ is ‘Wissenschaft’ and ‘knowledge’ simply ‘Wissen,’ so perhaps the interpretations of Nietzsche’s words suffer from the same interpretative risk of mixing the two words, just as translations of the Greek word ‘episteme’ sometimes is translated into ‘science’ and sometimes into ‘knowledge.’

more people sitting chained to their side of the table. Our mission is to describe the water bottle. If I were to begin I would describe the way the water bottle looks from my perspective: its form and texture, what colours and shades it projects from the light, its label and any other information written on it etc. When it is your turn you would do the same from your position. From this exercise, it would be quite obvious that we would give two different descriptions of the same water bottle, since we see one object from two different perspectives (some aspects would be similar, like its shape, while other's would contradict, such as its labelling). However, this would not necessarily mean that any or both of our views tell the/a truth, but rather that both tell part of the truth. That is, unless any or both views get distorted from other circumstances (like the light showing off a distorted colour of the bottle for one person, or that both of us experience the bottle in a dark room, thus distorting its colours completely). Now, if I would like to know more about the bottle, or reassure the truthfulness of my perspective, I could consult our friends on each side of the table. The result from this would be three collaborating point of views which would give a *broader perspective* compared to yours, and thus likely a more truthful description of the object in question. As such, my perspective could become better than yours. But, since both you and I are locked into our perspectives, it is at the same time impossible for either of us, even with consultation, to see all angles of the bottle simultaneously. Also, there is the issue of our social, historical and biological conditioning which along with our current condition would create personal interests that would alter the way we see the bottle. (Say, for example, that you come from a part of the world which has never seen a water bottle, or that I am aware of the environmental issues with plastics, or that one is extremely thirsty etc.—all such possible factors would affect how we would experience the bottle.) So, even if we were to be released from our chains to be able to see from each other's visual perspectives, it seems we would not be able to subjectively understand every aspect of each other's way of experiencing the bottle. As Nietzsche states in GS: “we cannot reject the possibility that [the world] includes infinite interpretations” (GS 5, §375: 239-240). According to perspectivism, there is no way for an individual human being to see the bottle from every perspective, or from no perspective at all, and thus to see the bottle's true essence, as it were. Recall Nietzsche's critique against Plato and Christianity in the last chapter; here the non-perspectival view strongly reminisces of a Godlike point of view, a view no human being has ever achieved or will ever achieve. Nietzsche seems to equate this point of view with the point of view that succeeds in seeing the true essence, or the ideas (forms) behind the particulars in the world by erasing oneself from the equation so as to experience objectively. This latter would be the Platonist or Schopenhauerian view to Nietzsche (although that is not to say that they are

alike, or that his understanding of these philosophies is correct). He thinks such a possibility can only ever become wishful thinking, and that it is therefore something we must get rid of. However, this does not deny us the possibility of truthfully describing the bottle from as many perspectives as possible and so to reach as close to a full description as possible from a limited human perspective. And neither does it hinder us from investigating why some of us view the bottle a certain way and others differently; that is to seek out the cause for the perspective each of us have of the bottle—even if we never can step into someone else’s shoes, so to speak. This is one example of how I believe perspectival seeing might be explained in more detail. Next I will, with the help of Clark (1990) and Leiter (2002), try to explain why Nietzsche thinks our knowing works in similar ways.

Clark reads Nietzsche’s comparison between knowing and seeing metaphorically—since she argues that it would be an absurdity to compare them literally; ‘perspective’ literally belongs to the visual just as ‘interpretation’ literally belongs to the textual, so in a literal sense neither belongs to knowing which would make a literal reading an absurdity. To her, this metaphor is a model for *how to think about* knowing. She concludes that the result of this interpretation will amount to an “obvious and non-problematic doctrine” of knowledge (Clark 1990, 129-135). In short, this is how she reasons:

Clark’s non-metaphorical interpretation would need something that, similar to our eyes, gives our knowing a “perspectival” outlook. To her, our *beliefs* seems a fitting choice. Through the “eyes” of our individual beliefs we interpret the world differently. Perspectivism thus rejects “Cartesian foundationalism,” which insists that there are self-justifiable beliefs that all human beings necessarily accept. If all beliefs are perspectival that means “all justification is contextual.” There is no foundation of beliefs shared by us all which we could use to justify our other beliefs, which also means that we must admit the possibility that our beliefs could be false, and that they must be subjected to revision and critique (Clark 1990, 130-131). These are some rather radical claims, since it seems this could mean that perspectivism leads us to inevitable solipsism and epistemological relativism if there is no way for us to know for certain that our beliefs are true and that we all share the same core beliefs. However, this need not be the case if we could argue that we still *share the world* which would give us the context and possibility for agreed-upon justification, as Nietzsche indeed does in the sixth step of TI when he abandons both the ‘true world’ and the ‘illusory world’ in favour of one shared reality. On the other hand, what it does say is that to argue that “everyone must believe as I do!” would be

indefensible. So, instead perhaps this problem could show a need for humility (a call for self-awareness and self-criticism) as well as a need for us to work collectively, to trust in the most plausible intersubjective beliefs available, if we are to create a sound epistemological foundation for our knowledge. I will come back to this later in this chapter.

Then there is this: the rejection of “Cartesian foundationalism” only concerns “justification and certainty, not truth and falsity. [...] Absence of certainty does not entail absence of truth. The fact that our beliefs could be false does not entail that they are false” (Clark 1990, 131). Clark argues against the general sceptical interpretation that “perspectivism entails that human knowledge distorts or falsifies reality” (Clark 1990, 127), since Nietzsche by now has abandoned his belief in a metaphysical reality (which would necessitate the ‘metaphysical correspondence theory’), which would leave no other reality to be falsified (and thus make the ‘falsification thesis’ redundant—remember her reasoning from the last chapter). She wants to argue that perspectivism is yet another example of this abandonment of the true world (as it is mirrored in the ‘fable’ from TI). Again, this is reasonable if we accept Nietzsche as claiming that the world left after both the “true” and the “illusory” are abandoned is the one shared world we experience collectively, which seems to be his claim in the sixth step of TI. So, just because justification and certainty is problematized that does not mean truth itself is unreachable.

If truth is supposed to correlate with a metaphysical reality, how things are in themselves, then knowledge of this truth seems impossible according to perspectivism. But Clark argues that this very passage denies the concept of a metaphysical reality since knowing things-in-themselves would be the same thing as seeing from no perspective. Just as an object’s visual characteristics are determined by the way it is visually perceived from a certain perspective, so is the object’s capability to be known dependent on the possibility that someone has the cognitive ability of knowing it. This knowing must then come from a certain perspective, which makes the known and the knower co-dependent in a way (without a knower there is nothing known) (Clark 1990, 132-133). This is Clark’s inconceivability claim which means that since we cannot conceive of the idea that something can be known from no perspective, this means such a scenario must be an impossibility. Leiter criticises this final verdict, which we come back to in short. But first, what are the consequences of Clark’s interpretation?

She sees Nietzsche’s perspectivism as an “obvious and non-problematic doctrine” of knowledge. Granted there is evidence, she suggests that Nietzsche provides a minimalist

epistemological doctrine (my statement that ‘snow is white’ is true iff snow is white, which would require evidence that this is the case, e.g. visual evidence by pointing at snow). The main point, however, is that no human being will be able to know all there is to know about the world. We are limited beings with limited time to acquire knowledge which means that each perspective will be limited in turn by what knowledge it has come to acquire during its lifetime. The interests of each individual will steer us in different directions in life, and so our knowledge and our beliefs will be determined by these interests (Clark 1990, 135).

Leiter agrees with Clark’s interpretation up to and including her interpretation of Nietzsche’s intellectual development as mirrored in the passage quoted from TI. And he seems to agree with many of Clark’s concluding remarks on knowing in Nietzsche’s perspectivism. However, there are two points on which he disagrees with Clark: (1) he regards Clark’s claim that Nietzsche denies the possibility of a metaphysical reality based on its “inconceivability” as too strong; and (2) he points out that Nietzsche in his perspectivism talks primarily about affects (drives) and not beliefs. I will try to explain them in order.

First, as we have seen, Clark argues that both the last steps from TI and the passage on perspectivism denies the possibility of a metaphysical reality based on its inconceivability. However, Leiter points out that this seems “to conflate *inconceivability* with *impossibility*: could not something exist even though we cannot intelligibly conceive of it?” (Leiter 2002, 19) He admits that perhaps the two are connected in this case since the thing in itself is a purely conceptual matter, and perspectivism seem to argue that it is conceptually inconceivable, which would make it impossible. He does not exclude the possibility that such reading could be correct, which would make Clark’s theory solid (Leiter 2002, 19).⁹ However, since he reads Nietzsche abandonment in TI quite differently (as we will see below), and considering the complexity of the subject of inconceivability, Leiter suggests an alternative reading, “which allows us to remain, as it were, agnostic on some of the more difficult metaphysical questions” (Leiter 2002, 277), when we judge perspectivism.

⁹ This issue of how we could interpret Nietzsche’s abandonment of the ‘true world’ based on its inconceivability is a complex subject. Leiter himself has a hard time explaining it comprehensibly (in my view); he admits that “Nietzsche’s view [...] is extremely difficult to state in a way that is satisfyingly clear” (Leiter 2002, 20), but he suggests that both his reading and Clark’s avoid the issue of scepticism, since they both abandon the ‘true world’ in a plausible way. Unfortunately, I will not have the opportunity to elaborate on Clark’s view at any further depth here, so for a deeper discussion on the possible inconceivability of a metaphysical reality, I will have to refer to Leiter (2002, 17-20, 276-278) and Clark (1990, 46-51, 95-125). My hopes are that Leiter’s “pragmatic” view, which will be developed in the following passages, will leave this question open for discussion, and let us discuss perspectivism primarily in reference to knowledge, rather than truth (metaphysical or not).

Leiter helps us to point out the fact that Nietzsche's reason for abandoning the 'true world' in TI was based on its *usefulness*, not its inconceivability (Leiter 2002, 277). Remember the fifth step of Nietzsche's "history of an error": "The 'true world' – an idea that is of no further use, not even as an obligation, – now an obsolete superfluous idea, *consequently* a refuted idea: let's get rid of it!" (TI, 171) Since the thing in itself is unattainable, it "is of no further use" and this is why we, according to Nietzsche, should abandon it. So, the reasoning behind Nietzsche's abandonment is more pragmatic than logical.

Now, in relation to both the "fable" in TI and to perspectivism in GM, Leiter concludes that, since Nietzsche's discussion about perspectives says nothing about metaphysics, "[p]erhaps, the pragmatic response says, there is a way things really are as seen from no perspective at all; but the possibility of such a world makes no difference to us, since we can know nothing about it" (Leiter 2002, 277-278). Consider this. It is possible that our way of comprehending reality (i.e. through perspectives) is not the only way. But, even if things-in-themselves exist as metaphysical entities, there is, because of our perspectival outlook, no way for us to know either *how* these things would be or *that* they even exist in the first place. So, we should not rule out this possibility, but since we cannot confirm it either, it should not concern us; we should be concerned with what we *can* know. This does indeed seem to capture the spirit of Nietzsche's claims in both TI and GM.

So, in comparison to Clark, who argues that perspectivism concerns truth, not because she argues that truth is perspectival, but because perspectivism says that metaphysical truths are inconceivable (which in her view entails that they are impossible), Leiter's "pragmatic" reading instead judges perspectivism solely "as a doctrine about knowledge, i.e., an epistemological doctrine, and *not* as a semantic doctrine about truth or a metaphysical doctrine about how things really are" (Leiter 2002, 275-276). One could perhaps question why Leiter here inserts a statement regarding the "semantic" theory of truth without explanation. It is possibly a critique against Clark's way of discussing Nietzsche's stance towards truth in terms of, for example, the 'minimal correspondence theory.' However, the statement in this case is not in direct reference to Clark, so the easy answer would probably be that Nietzsche simply lived before such semantic theories even existed, and that is why Leiter thinks we should not read him in relation to such theories of truth.

The second difference between Clark and Leiter is that Leiter acknowledges that Nietzsche's perspectives in knowing are caused by our "interests and 'affects'" (Leiter 2002, 272), rather than our *beliefs* as Clark argued.¹⁰ This is literally accurate. Remember Nietzsche writes: "There is *only* a perspectival seeing, *only* a perspectival 'knowing'; and *the more* affects we allow to speak about a matter, *the more* eyes, different eyes, we know how to bring to bear on one and the same matter, that much more complete will our 'concept' of this matter, our 'objectivity' be;" after which he concludes that ridding oneself of all *affects* would equal a "[castration of] the intellect" (GM 3, §12: 85); he mentions 'affects' twice but there is no reference to 'beliefs.' What difference does it make? If we assume that personal motives such as interests, affects and drives cause us to have certain beliefs and knowledge (as both Clark and Leiter does), then it seems more reasonable to discuss the cause than the effect. Even if our beliefs and our knowledge forms us as individuals, and thereby help form our perspectives on the world, we are more concerned with what happens before this occurs. Considering Nietzsche's discussion about affects, this seems to be his concern as well.

Let us recall the example of perspectival seeing made earlier. Leiter now argues that just as we necessarily "see an object from a particular perspective" so do we necessarily "know an object from a particular perspective: that is, from the standpoint of particular interests and 'affects.'" And while more perspectives can give us a better understanding, we can never "exhaust all possible perspectives" in either vision or knowledge, since "there are infinite interpretative interests" (Leiter 2002, 272). Besides the mentioning of affects, this is very similar to Clark's interpretation which should help affirm these consequences of Nietzsche's view.

Leiter also concludes that the perspectival doctrine in no way denies the *possibility* that our perspectives could be wrong, and consequently can give us a distorted picture of reality (meaning *this* reality, since it is the only reality we can know) (Leiter 2002, 21). This is very close to Clark's discussion about contextual justification and her conclusion that the lack of foundational beliefs means that we cannot be certain of our beliefs from a solely subjective

¹⁰ Even though Clark primarily focus on beliefs, she does admit that "[g]iven my reading of the metaphor, we can understand cognitive perspectives as constituted not only by beliefs, but also by those factors on the side of the subject responsible for beliefs, such as cognitive capacities and practical interests" (Clark 1990, 133). So perhaps one could argue that she is talking about interests and affects as well, if they are supposed to be the cause of our beliefs. There seems to be an important problem of distinction and definition here: what are the differences between our affects, drives and interests, and how are they all related? Unfortunately I have no opportunity to delve into this problem here. I will, however, later discuss the possible meaning behind Nietzsche's reference to our affects, when I enquire into the therapeutic aspect of Nietzsche's perspectivism with the help of Gemes (2009) in chapter III.

standpoint. So, my perspective is not necessarily true just because I believe it. I can still be wrong and have a false understanding of things, just as I can see things wrong visually.

To elaborate on the epistemological consequences of his interpretation, Leiter creates an analogy with a geographical map of a town (Leiter 2002, 273). I would like to borrow his analogy but make it my own. Imagine that we let people add information to a map based on their interests in a town. Since people would have different interests in the area (some would want to see museums while others would want to mark out the parks etc.) we would have more information about the town if we let as many people as possible add their interests. The total amount of information available would grow as more perspectives (interests) were added. We could try to fill the map with as much information as possible so as to represent the town as fully and truthfully as possible: *the more* affects we allow to speak about a matter, *the more* eyes, different eyes, we know how to bring to bear on one and the same matter, that much more complete will our ‘concept’ of this matter, our ‘objectivity’ be” (GM 3, §12: 85); but we would never be able to add every possible fact to the map, since it is probable that there are unlimited interests and facts available. Neither could we expect to create an objective representation via some kind of non-perspectival map that turns of all affects, since if no interests were present there would simply be no reason to create a map, and hence no information available at all through the map. I believe this helps explain why Nietzsche argues that “to eliminate the will altogether, to disconnect the affects one and all, supposing that we were capable of this: what? would that not be to *castrate* the intellect?” (GM 3, §12: 85) So, instead, in an ideal situation, what we would have in the end, is a map that represents as many interests as possible, which would provide us with as much information as possible.

This, however, still accepts the possibility that some false information could be added to the map. Let’s say that someone who added information on all the museums’ locations was not aware that one museum had closed or changed its location since they last were there, or that they mistook a library for a museum, or that the person’s understanding of the term ‘museum’ included all second-hand stores that stored items older than 20 years—you see the point: all of these misconceptions and misunderstandings would lead to a map with false information. This means that an individual perspective could be wrong, meaning that they thought they knew but did not know where something was located and therefore added wrong information to the map. Thus, the picture presented in the map could become a distorted representation of reality. But it also goes the other way in allowing the possibility that the one gathering information from

the map is not a very good at reading maps, which would mean that the risk of misunderstanding the information is ever present. This makes it easy to see that if we would try to map something more complex, like every stone's location in the area, or every citizen's daily movement, we would naturally have a huge challenge in front of us, which seems almost impossible to finish. So, the more complex the subject, the bigger the risk that we would represent false information.

If we assume that information such as this can provide us with knowledge, that is, if gathering information from a map qualifies as acquiring knowledge about the area, then perhaps this analogy can help us understand the difficulties that we should expect from trying to collect, categorise and communicate knowledge in general. This could possibly explain why more complex topics in philosophy, history, science, sociology, politics etc. are so hard to explain, or describe, or know the true (complete) answers to. However, difficulty does not mean impossibility. Considering Nietzsche's conclusion in the sixth step in TI, which leaves only the world we experience as *the* world to acquire knowledge from, we should assume that he considers this world shared between us, which should allow the possibility to collect and communicate shared knowledge, even if it is hard. Since Nietzsche argues that more perspectives will give more knowledge he also seems optimistic that a collective effort has a bigger chance at providing a correct representation of world, as in the map case. There is also no doubt directed towards the possibility for one person to acquire truth, if that person has made the effort to truly strengthen their perspective. So, some perspectives should be able to provide the general picture with knowledge. Although, the question of how to judge and decide which perspectives are right and which are false is still unanswered, so it is a question we will have to come back to.

Based on the complex structure of our universe and the multiplicity of interests of it that exists within it Leiter argues that the goal of having a "final theory" in science ought to be an impossibility, since we could never exhaust all possible interests in every possible subject concerning the world. He writes: "[t]here might be a theory that is 'final' relative to a very particular set of interests; but there are always additional interests which might turn the 'cognizing' eye in new directions, and so in that sense there is no 'final' theory of the whole" (Leiter 2002, 274). This final theory for the whole seem to regard the whole universe. But even on a smaller level, this should prove to be a challenge. We could state truths such as 'snow is white' based on the evidence that snow is white, but to give an exhaustive factual description of (what) snow (is), based on every possible perspective, demands a lot. Even if we think we

know what snow is, there is always the possibility that future scientific research will prove today's conception wrong. As Leiter says, "there are always additional interests;" this seem to be an important aspect of perspectivism, one both Leiter and Clark seem to agree upon.

This brings us back full circle to the question of 'objectivity.' When can we argue that what we have is objective knowledge? Is it even possible in a perspectival epistemology? Leiter argues yes:

[i]t bears emphasizing that there is *nothing* in the optical analogue Nietzsche invokes, and nothing in his opposition to the Kantian/Schopenhauerian view, that requires him to deny the existence or possibility of objective knowledge: after all, GM III:12 is, itself, a passage about the right way to think of both 'knowing' and 'objectivity,' not a repudiation of either (Leiter 2002, 274).

Nietzsche's trust in the reliability of the empirical world is, according to Leiter, incompatible with scepticism, since to trust that the world can give us truths would deflect the worry that there are no truths. To him, Nietzsche's naturalistic ("empiricist") claims proves that he must accept the possibility for objective truths and objective knowledge to exist (Leiter 2002, 14). However, Leiter later admits that "[i]t is true, to be sure, that the characterization of our epistemic situation that arises from Nietzsche's perspectivism alters the sense in which knowledge is objective and the sense in which we can say some other perspective is 'false' to the way things are" (Leiter 2002, 274). So, in what way can knowledge still be objective?

Nietzsche defines "'objectivity' [...]" as the capacity to have one's pro and contra *in one's power*, and to shift them in and out: so that one knows how to make precisely the *difference* in perspectives and affective interpretations useful for knowledge" (GM 3, §12: 85). But the "objectivity" he defines here is not objectivity in its traditional sense. Remember the statement from 'The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy' in the introduction which stated that Nietzsche rejects the traditional idea that knowledge requires a kind of objectivity that is independent of individual perspectives (Anderson, 2017). So far we have learned that Nietzsche believes this to be impossible since it would demand a Godlike point of view we cannot inhabit. He argues that the reason that this belief in objective knowledge exists in the first place is a moral consequence that stems from a wish to overcome the suffering and limitations that characterises our existence. The will to know objective reality is the will to know the 'true world' in order to escape our own, which leads us to value truth over life itself.

By rejecting the traditional conception Nietzsche instead seems to regard "objectivity" more

like “full” knowledge. Remember he concludes that “*the more* eyes, different eyes, we know how to bring to bear on one and the same matter, that much more complete will our ‘concept’ of this matter, our ‘objectivity’ be” (GM 3, §12: 85). I therefore believe we should be careful when, where and how we employ the word ‘objectivity’ in reference to perspectivism and knowledge, since the use of the word would cause for some rather important counter questions, like: what then constitutes objective knowledge? If all knowledge is perspectival—and Nietzsche does not count mathematical or logical truths as objective facts about the world¹¹ — how then can we argue that what truths we have are objective? These are questions I believe a perspectivist would like to avoid.

Just because we choose not to speak in terms of objectivity it should not mean that we must accept scepticism about truth in general or must speak only in terms of subjective knowledge, which would lead us to some form of epistemological relativism. We have already concluded several reasons for this. First, Nietzsche’s last step in TI accepts the fact that there is only one world, and thus one world we all share. In a sense this should mean that we can talk about an objective world, even if we do not talk about objective knowledge in the same way. We experience the same world and the same objects within it, but the way we experience them is different since we come from different perspectives. Hence, we need to judge the way we experience them thoroughly. Secondly, perspectivism in no way argues against the possibility that we can acquire knowledge or truth from these experiences (directly) or from others’ perspectives and their experiences (indirectly, think of the map). Thirdly, it does not suggest that any subjective standpoint is equally true to any other, since some can be distorted or misinformed. I believe this is how Nietzsche would justify the truth of his own knowledge (or beliefs, perhaps)—by arguing that he has a better perspective than everyone else, not by arguing that he has reached some objective understanding of the matters at hand. One could, of course, question whether he truly has the better perspective in each case, but it is just that kind of questioning that perspectivism allows. This leaves the question: how do we know when one perspective is false or that a certain perspective is better than another? Nietzsche says that more

¹¹ Remember, Nietzsche does not regard objective truths in mathematics or logic as direct knowledge of the world. Whichever way they may help us to understand the world, or “arrange it,” “make it familiar,” as Nietzsche probably would say, by presupposing certain theoretical rules etc. it seems he would still argue that true knowledge comes from the senses. And he would probably argue that no matter how objective such strategies are, they are still caused by a human cognitive perspective on the world, and so could not tell us anything about some type of non-perspectival metaphysical reality. Whether this is true or not, however, would prove an interesting question for another time. I believe some would have strong arguments against such a view, and for the possibilities that mathematics and logic create for objectivity in knowledge, which would be interesting to hear.

eyes are better but he also says that we need to learn how to judge and choose between these perspectives. However, he does not give an explicit answer as to how this judging ought to work in practice. By looking at how science could work with this in mind we might get an idea of how we could learn how to judge and compare different perspectives by comparing them with the whole.

If “objectivity” is regarded as the goal of having full knowledge about a matter, it seems to resemble our modern scientific search for knowledge, where intersubjective research is used to add as many perspectives (plausible theories) as possible to reach the truth about the world. Just because we cannot know with certainty that the theories we rely on are absolutely, objectively true, that does not mean we should disregard them as false and give up our search. Leiter references to Quine and “Neurath’s boat” to prove this very point. We are like sailors out at sea, trying to rebuild a boat; since we cannot step outside the boat we need to rely on the steadiest planks while we rebuild the others, step by step (Leiter 2002, 274-275). So, argues Leiter (through Quine and Neurath), is our epistemological situation:

we necessarily stand firm on certain “planks” in our theoretical conception of the world (e.g., certain hypotheses, empirical claims, epistemic norms, etc.), while evaluating or “rebuilding” others. In epistemological matters, we simply have no other way to proceed: we are “at sea” within a particular theory of the world, and we can not climb out of that theory and rebuild the whole thing at once (Leiter 2002, 275).

We have a complex network of theories constantly judging and correcting each other in our progress towards greater knowledge. No theory is on its own true, but must be compatible with the whole. This sounds very close to Clark’s concluding remarks on justification and certainty as she writes that “justification is contextual, dependent on other beliefs held unchallengeable for the moment, but themselves capable of only similarly contextual justification” (Clark 1990, 130). Therefore, argues Leiter, is perspectivism suggesting that we should work towards greater knowledge, towards our “objectivity,” through a better understanding of all the different perspectives (“affective interpretations”) we have at our disposal. There is no way for us to step outside, to see non-perspectivally, so we must work from the combination of perspectives responsible for “the best-going theories” we have, and count those as the foundation for our knowledge. This is how Leiter argues that the perspectival view finds its “epistemic bearings,” how it can argue for the possibility of truth and knowledge (Leiter 2002, 275). This description of perspectivism gives us a theory of knowledge that resembles coherentism. What we need to justify a certain perspective as true is that it is coherent, or compatible, with the overall picture and with our best-going theories to date. If this is possible, then the same must be applicable on

a personal level, and I see no reason why this should not be so, even if the task might prove more difficult for the individual considering our limited possibility to acquire and compare as much knowledge in a lifetime as we could hope to do collectively. Nonetheless, the same critical procedure should to some extent be applicable for us as individuals when we strive for knowledge. I believe Leiter's picture does a fine job explaining perspectivism in this sense, however, I would still be cautious with the term "objective knowledge," unless it is framed in quotation marks.

In the end, perspectivism, as both Clark and Leiter understands it, leaves us with several questions as to what constitutes truth and knowledge. Can we speak of them in strict terms without reference to objectivity? Are we truly justified in rejecting the possibilities that mathematics, logic and semantics offer in this area? Perhaps perspectivism is more concerned with beliefs, rather than knowledge. Nietzsche does not really make a distinction here, and perspectivism should therefore not be understood as an exhaustive epistemological investigation into the meaning of knowledge in this sense. What it says is rather something quite commonsensical about the way we experience the world and form our world views, how we come to acquire knowledge and beliefs from our interests, drives, affects etc., how we rely on contextual evidence for justification, and how we could possibly improve our search to become better knowers through collaboration and comparison of different perspectives (theories).

In summary, Clark and Leiter draw similar conclusions regarding the general aspects of Nietzsche's perspectivism. They disagree with the sceptical reading because they do not find Nietzsche being that radical. Perspectivism does indeed criticise the old conception of objective knowledge by arguing that we view the world from different perspectives which gives us different pictures of the world depending on our individual interests and desires. This has consequences for how we can talk about epistemology and objectivity. However, Nietzsche does not stop here, which seems to be what the sceptics believe. He proposes a strategy for how to improve our epistemological situation from this standpoint by arguing that we can: (1) accumulate perspectives to gain more knowledge; and (2) critically judge perspectives by comparing them with each other. The reason this is not so radical is that it seems to propose a guide to knowledge that in the end functions very similar to how science actually goes about doing this today. The big difference is that perspectivism says that we need to account for our interest, drives and desires as causes and reasons for our knowledge, beliefs and behaviour.

Finally, regarding how we should interpret Nietzsche's abandonment of the 'true world,' I believe Leiter "pragmatic" reading best captures Nietzsche's general philosophy when he writes that: "[o]nly knowable truths matter, on this pragmatic picture, and so the possible existence of unknowable truths simply should not concern us," (Leiter 2002, 278) since this seems to agree with Nietzsche's general approach towards knowledge and its possible benefits for life.

I would now like to turn to a third reading of Nietzsche's perspectivism to question how our personal perspectives take form and how this discussion more closely can relate to his goal of life-affirmation.

Chapter III: Nietzsche's perspectivism—a therapeutic introspective reading

There is *only* a perspectival seeing, *only* a perspectival "knowing"; and *the more* affects we allow to speak about a matter, *the more* eyes, different eyes, we know how to bring to bear on one and the same matter, that much more complete will our "concept" of this matter, our "objectivity" be (GM 3, §12: 85).

Remember the above quote from Nietzsche's passage on perspectivism in the last chapter (it should be stuck in memory by now). To this, Leiter at one point writes "as we multiply *interests* we can expect to know more about the object of knowledge" (Leiter 2002, 21). But what does this mean? Can it have multiple meanings? Ken Gemes (2009)¹² summarizes what I believe might be an answer to what Leiter means. He writes: "[t]ypically Nietzsche's perspectivism is treated as a general epistemological thesis to the effect that the more points of view we entertain the more objective or the fuller our knowledge will be" (Gemes 2009, 101). This seems to imply that "more eyes" mean more eyes from more people's point of views on a subject, as I have tried to exemplify in the last chapter. Gemes believes this is a misguided view, and he offers an alternative "non-epistemological" interpretation which argues that Nietzsche's perspectivism is primarily "therapeutic" in nature (Gemes 2009, 106), which would mean that the "affects" and "eyes" discussed should not come from others, but from within oneself.

¹² Gemes writes his article in response to another scholarly text by Christopher Janaway. I will avoid any comparison with Janaway in the following and focus mainly on Gemes' own arguments so as to avoid the risk of moving too far away from the progression of this thesis and its relation to the interpretations of Clark and Leiter. Any confusion that this might bring might be solved by a closer reading of Gemes (2009), although I hope this exclusion will pass unnoticed.

Gemes bases his reading of Nietzsche on two interpretative heuristics (which I have adopted and mentioned in the introduction to this thesis). First, he argues that we should read Nietzsche as a “local” rather than a “global” philosopher. This means that whatever Nietzsche is saying about e.g. truth, we should read this not as a “grand timeless thes[is],” but rather as a local analysis, where truth is seen in a certain aspect in conjunction with a certain situation (e.g. truth in relation to the ‘ascetic ideal’) which Nietzsche discusses or criticises (Gemes 2009, 101). This should in general move us away from such interpretations as Clark’s towards those more similar to Leiter’s pragmatic approach which leaves us agnostic to “the more difficult metaphysical questions” (Leiter 2002, 277). To argue for this would certainly seem reasonable considering that Nietzsche openly confesses his normative goals (and so repeatedly constructs his arguments to fit this goal). In fact, he argues that all philosophers have their own moral agenda, even if they do not expressively admit it. In BGE he criticises the very idea of knowledge for its own sake. In it he writes that “every great philosophy” is but a “confession of its originator, and a species of involuntary and unconscious auto-biography,” and that “to understand how the abstrusest metaphysical assertions of a philosopher have been arrived at, it is always well (and wise) to first ask oneself: ‘What morality do they (or does he) aim at?’” (BGE 1, §6: 4) So, it would seem advisable to turn this question around and ask the same of Nietzsche himself (which is a big part of what has already been done through this thesis). By looking at the goal, which to Nietzsche is the construction of a life-affirming ideal, we could perhaps better understand where he is going with such theories as perspectivism.

Secondly, Gemes argues that Nietzsche is more interested in psychology than epistemology (Gemes 2009, 102).¹³ The whole purpose of GM is to understand the foundation on which Christian morality has found its hegemonic position. In it he analyses such mass-psychological phenomena as guilt, belief, societal ideals and the basis for our conceptions of good and evil etc. So, Gemes argues that we should “[l]ook for a psychological interpretation of the matter Nietzsche is discussing” (Gemes 2009, 103). I believe he is right in this as well.

¹³ Of course, as with many other statements by and regarding Nietzsche, there seem to be self-contradictory arguments to be found on almost every topic. If we remember, we have already quoted Nietzsche saying that psychology is only “pre-science” (TI, 168). So, is this an argument against an attempt at a psychological interpretation? I do not think so. There are other passages arguing otherwise. In BGE he does indeed state that “[a]ll psychology hitherto has run aground on moral prejudices and timidities, it has not dared to launch out into the depths,” but later concludes that if it dared “psychology shall once more be recognised as the queen of sciences, for whose service and equipment the other sciences exist,” and it seems, in the same passage, as if he deemed himself capable of being the one to accept this task (BGE 1, §23: 17). As with most other things, he criticises psychology because of its moral foundation which he deems life-denying, and he believes a new morality can rectify the situation and give it better possibilities to evolve beyond its current state.

Just as Leiter, Gemes points out the fact that what Nietzsche is discussing in GM is the affects (our feelings and their causal drives)¹⁴ rather than beliefs or truths (Gemes 2009, 103). But he argues that the general understanding of the *causal* connection between these affects and our knowledge (that different interests lead to knowledge of different things) is too trivial to concern the whole of Nietzsche's purpose. He argues, therefore, that there must be something in addition to this that Nietzsche is arguing, or that he means something else entirely. So, he discusses the possibility that these affects would also play a *constitutive* role in our knowledge, meaning that without affects knowledge would be impossible. But to Gemes this constitutive claim is too strong since it would dismiss the possibility that "a highly developed but unfeeling robot, or a person who due to brain bisection has lost the ability to have feelings, would be incapable of having any knowledge" (Gemes 2009, 106).¹⁵ He would choose another path in line with his two interpretative heuristics and his claim that Nietzsche's writing is, at its core, therapeutic:

The fundamental therapeutic problem is that we have become, as Nietzsche says in the preface to GM, 'strangers to ourselves': we are split off from ourselves in that we repudiate, and repress parts of ourselves. It is this that has made us the sick animal *par excellence* according to Nietzsche. I suggest then that we read perspectivism as Nietzsche's remedy to this malady (Gemes 2009, 106).

This is in line with what we have already discussed: Nietzsche wants to reevaluate all values because he believes the ideal we have is life-denying; he wants to locate a life-affirming alternative. He attacks truth (or rather our excessive valuation of truth as God) because he believes it has an undeserved primacy over life. "What he ultimately values is health, which for Nietzsche is the fullest expression of the drives" (Gemes 2009, 106-107). Remember, Nietzsche

¹⁴ Gemes dedicates a chapter to discuss the difference between 'affects' and 'drives,' and argues that it is more plausible that Nietzsche talks about the latter. While he makes some interesting points in this regard, I will have no opportunity to consider them here. Hence, I will use 'affects' and 'drives' interchangeably. I hope that this will not affect the trajectory of my text in any major way, and beg for forgiveness if this proves to be a mistake.

¹⁵ It is perhaps possible to find counterarguments against Gemes here by trying to better define the claim: what if a person was *born* without feelings, or drives, so that it is not just a matter of *having lost* this ability? The discussion seems similar to the one concerning proofs of AI's ability to gain consciousness by completing the Turing test. Perhaps there needs to be an evolutionary drive in place for one to *attach meaning* to knowledge, which could therefore play a constitutive role in the process of acquiring knowledge. Perhaps there is a difference between having access to information and having knowledge. It seems as if a denial of the constitutive claim would risk arguing against the epistemological reading of Nietzsche (as it is presented by Leiter and Clark), since that reading suggests that all knowledge is perspectival, and since Nietzsche explicitly states that "to eliminate the will altogether, to disconnect the affects one and all, supposing that we were capable of this: what? would that not be to *castrate* the intellect?" (GM 3, §12: 85) Such claims seem to argue that affects are necessary for knowledge, which would be an argument for the constitutive claim. Leiter explicitly argues that it is necessary for the non-sceptical epistemological reading of perspectivism to entail both the causal and the constitutive claim (Leiter 2002, 272-273). So, I would like to leave this possibility open, even if I cannot spend any more time defending it here.

does not believe in ‘knowledge for its own sake.’ There might be cases where someone has an actual “impulse for knowledge” as the core drive towards some scholarly pursuit. But in most cases Nietzsche thinks there are other drives that steer us towards certain goals in life, like a drive towards money, success, family, fame etc. (BGE 1, §6: 4) And he believes this is a central part of life: “[i]s not living valuing, preferring, being unjust, being limited, endeavouring to be different? (BGE 1, §9: 5)

Gemes argues that perspectivism is a call for us to *look inwards* to our respective individual drives, to know them, to control them, and to nourish them in times when the ‘ascetic ideal’ would want us to repress them. How can we justify this inward-looking interpretation in the quote from GM? Nietzsche begins by referring to the different perspectives from philosophers who have helped us to see things differently. Here it seems Nietzsche is talking about outer perspectives, from other people, adding to our personal knowledge, which would support the epistemological reading. However, in the middle of the paragraph Nietzsche writes about “the capacity to have one’s pro and contra *in one’s power*, and to shift them in and out: so that one knows how to make precisely the *difference* in perspectives and affective interpretations useful for knowledge” (GM 3, §12, 85). If we read this as a personal “capacity” this sounds more like an inner process of choosing between perspectives one has within oneself, that is, the different ways one can interpret depending on what drives or affects are at work at any given moment. But it could also mean to learn how to judge different external perspectives, different ways of viewing a matter that one perhaps is not aware of oneself, somewhat like judging different arguments from different sources. So, which interpretation is right? As I have said, my intention is to fuse these two readings to show that they both can teach us about the meaning of perspectivism. How can this be done? If we allow for a looser definition of the word ‘perspective’ we could understand it either as an individual perspective (my personal perspective versus yours and so on), or we could understand it as a common human perspective (as opposed to e.g. a bat’s perspective on the world), *or* we could understand each drive, interest, affect etc. and consequently each belief or knowledge as giving separate perspectives on their own within one and the same subject. The first two should work with the epistemological reading, while the third seems to be Gemes’ understanding of the term. I do not see why we should not be able to talk about perspectives in this loose sense and allow all of these definitions to exist. The upside of allowing this is that we can talk about different drives causing different perspectives within a person, which then in turn creates that person’s individual perspective. This would explain why and how an individual perspective can be

internally conflicting although it forms a singular perspective in a person (this is something I will come back to in my reflection). Ultimately then the human perspective we all share is constituted by those human features that create the way we experience the world as human beings. So, in summary, while the epistemological reading teaches us about external perspectives, I believe Gemes can teach us to dig deeper within ourselves, to see the conflicting drives and interests as perspectives themselves which then accumulate to form a whole as our fragmented, sometimes contradicting individual perspectives. This would explain why Gemes believes Nietzsche's goal to be the creation of a "unified self," which can only be reached by letting "as many drives as possible be actively expressed" (Gemes 2009, 111). Although an honest investigation into the meaning of this would demand a much more thorough reading (of both Nietzsche's and Gemes' account) than is possible here, I want to show that this might be an important aspect of the idea of perspectivism, one which could better help us understand the cause of our individual perspectives, and why these individual perspectives themselves can be so complex.

In BGE Nietzsche on several occasions discusses the fragmented "spirit" of the human being. He criticises the Cartesian idea of thinking self by exclaiming "that a thought comes when 'it' wishes, and not when 'I' wish," and that "[o]ne thinks: but that this 'one' is precisely the famous old 'ego,' is, to put it mildly, only a supposition, an assertion, and assuredly not an 'immediate certainty'" (BGE 1, §17: 12). He asks how we would *know* "that it is *I* who think," "that there is an 'ego,'" that we even "*know* what thinking is" (BGE 1, §16: 11). He goes on to direct this same critique against the Schopenhauerian idea of the unified will which he sees as "above all something *complicated*," "a plurality of sensations," an act where "there is a ruling thought," so that the will is "a complex of sensation and thinking" but then, in the end, "above all an *emotion*" (BGE 1, §19: 12-13). This complexity of the forces working *within* us results according to him in a position where "we are at the same time the commanding *and* the obeying parties" (BGE 1, §19: 13). He consequently argues that it is time to leave the old Christian idea of the unified soul behind in order to instead regard it as "'mortal soul', and 'soul of subjective multiplicity,' and 'soul as social structure of the instincts and passion'" (BGE 1, §12: 9). Nietzsche's point in all these criticisms seem to be that we too drastically have tried to explain what and who we are—a thinking thing, a willing thing, a rational being, a soul etc.—when in reality we are very complex beings. By recognising this, we should try to understand the whole of this being, instead of trying to explain it through some simple theory of existence. And it seems as if Nietzsche thinks the only way to do this is to get to know all aspects of ourselves

and to let all possible perspectives of ourselves be manifested, to let all our drives and affects be known and expressed.

At this point Nietzsche's argument for what is necessary for a life-affirming ideal becomes fascinatingly self-aware. He admits that in order to affirm life, one might need to accept the importance of "negative" emotions, which might cause one to suffer. While he accepts this realisation as "dangerous knowledge," which one perhaps should avoid if one can (BGE 1, §23: 17), he argues that one who aims to live a truly life-affirming life must accept that "suffering itself" might play an important part in it (BGE 2, §44: 31). This creates an interesting tension in Nietzsche's idea of what ought to be considered life-affirming. On the one hand, he argues that some knowledge (some aspects of the conditions of life) could be dangerous (e.g. if it ultimately causes despair and a willingness to life-denial or "suicidal nihilism" as Nietzsche writes in GM (3, § 28: 118)), and therefore that such knowledge should be avoided and put secondary to a life-affirming life. But on the other hand, he argues that such knowledge (or such truths about the nature of ourselves and the world) could be necessary for the creation of a unified self, which is similarly part of his life-affirming ideal.

It seems he believes that only some individuals can live up to the most life-affirming ideal. Perhaps this is why these tensions are not uncommon in his works. We have a similar situation, as the one we see here between truth and health, in his analysis of the very 'ascetic ideal' he is criticising in GM. Just as truth sometimes can be harmful to life, but necessary for greatness (which to him seem to be the highest form of life-affirmation), so does he seem to believe that the ascetic ideal—however life-denying it *can* be for those who use it to escape life—could just as well play an important role for "all great fruitful inventive spirits" to create "the truest and most natural conditions of their *best* existence, of their *most beautiful* fruitfulness" (GM 3, §8: 76), which is perhaps why he later says: "[a]ll my reverence to the ascetic ideal, *as long as it is honest!*" (GM 3, §26: 114)

Whether or not this reflection is a true representation of Nietzsche's reasoning, I believe this type of self-investigation is what Gemes is addressing when he argues that we should see perspectivism "not primarily as a thesis about the nature of knowledge and objectivity but as a normative injunction to a certain ideal of health" (Gemes 2009, 107). And I believe he has a point which is important to acknowledge: via introspection we might learn more about our own differing perspectives depending on what interests and drives are at force in any given situation

where we take a stance or choose to act a certain way. Thus, we can become more conscious of our own individual nature, so as to find the optimal circumstances for us to create the best possible version of ourselves, that is a (hopefully) unified personal perspective we can answer to and feel proud to represent.

Chapter IV: Reflection—a call for a synthesis of perspectives

Perspectivism works on many levels. We can talk about a human perspective, a personal perspective, or of perspectives within one personal perspective. I have tried to cover some of the major consequences Nietzsche's view can have on each level. This has taken the discussion to many topics, but perhaps most importantly I believe we need to acknowledge that Nietzsche's philosophy is essentially centred on the individual. True, his moral critique e.g. towards the 'ascetic ideal' is directed towards a social phenomenon, but it nevertheless ends up discussing the individual's emancipation from (or perhaps, in some cases, mastering of) this ideal. His social critique is not political. It is personal. Perhaps then, it is important to judge his critique of truth and his perspectivism as a personal matter, as something concerning our personal relationship with truth and knowledge. In this reflection, I would like to take this into account and consider what Nietzsche's thoughts about perspectives can teach us today in the post-truth world we seem to inhabit and how we personally can adjust to such a world.

Nietzsche was born into a time with a long Christian heritage. During his lifetime, he saw the Christian faith falter, so he pondered the consequences of an 'ascetic ideal' without a goal and thought it would lead us towards nihilism (GM 3, §28: 118). While he believed that Christian morality and the 'ascetic ideal' was life-denying, he thought that at least it gave our lives meaning. But, he saw the 'will to truth' beginning to question itself and wondered what would be left when "in us this will to truth has come to a consciousness of itself as a problem" (GM 3, §27: 117). He could only see how this would lead Christian morality to its own downfall, and he wondered what would happen to the capital-T Truth when this finally occurred. To cope with such circumstances, he proposed a new ideal and a philosophy to help us once again avoid turning towards nihilism. He wanted to give us the tools to handle a world where truth no longer has the authority it once had.

We now live in a time which some consider *post-truth*, and in many ways, this world resembles the world Nietzsche predicted. He did not think science could give us the meaning religion had provided, and he thought truth would lose its value as a result of this. While he thought that this development was indeed both inescapable and necessary, he wanted to provide an alternative. In TI we have seen Nietzsche's own development from scepticism to ridding himself of a dualistic conception of reality to finally accepting that this world is the only world, and even though we experience it from different perspectives, it is still a shared world in which common knowledge can reside. In many ways, I believe Nietzsche would argue that some of us today are stuck in the fourth stage of his historical picture, where the ultimate truth is considered unattainable, which has led us to relativism and scepticism. Others, he would probably argue, are stuck at an even earlier stage, trying to replace God with science, but failing to convince the rest of their convictions. So, we have two camps, one filled with "rational" people who believe reason and science can give us all the answers we need, and then we have the "irrational," emotionally driven side where people claim personal truths and both unconsciously and sometimes consciously decline the most plausible explanations as the basis for their world view. Considering recent political developments and the term *post-truth*'s popularity, the latter seem to be winning.

Rhetoric has in a certain way won over logic in the western world. Perhaps it is philosophy's job to figure out and clarify how this could be. Nietzsche's philosophy would probably argue that both camps are approaching the problem in the wrong way. His perspectivism, as it has been described in this thesis, seem to suggest a middle way, or perhaps a synthesis from which both could learn in order to take the necessary steps to reach the sixth level of his historical picture. Nietzsche would argue that science cannot replace faith when it comes to giving meaning to our lives. But as we have seen, he would also argue that science cannot explain every part of life, or every aspect of experiencing and knowing the world as a human being. Scientism cannot account for our drives, affects, interest and values and it seems this could be part of the problem that this side has when trying to understand the other camp's devotion to the personal, emotional perspective. This other camp, on the other hand, needs to be convinced of the opposite, that just because they have their perspective, that does not mean it is the most truthful perspective.

Considering this, I believe perspectivism provides us with a helpful strategy for discussing truth in quotidian matters where different opinions rule depending on their capability for public

acceptance, where what is commonly *held as true* risks ruling over something more plausible, in other words, where we are more concerned with *doxa* and *belief* than actual knowledge. As when scientific discoveries are questioned by public opinion because they differ from our indoctrinated belief templates. Or when personal “truths” (meaning beliefs, meaning perspectives) cause people to disregard all evidence arguing against their position. It is here I believe that perspectivism could even help us counter the development of a ‘post-truth’ society of nihilism, scepticism and relativism.

First, it needs to be remembered that the opinion of the majority does not automatically portray a collection of many personal perspectives. We need to remember here that perspective does not always mean personal perspective since we do not consider the world to be relativistic. It is a shared world where people can share beliefs and knowledge based on commonalities in their perspectives. Thus, it could be the case that when a majority holds a certain opinion that this is precisely because they have *not* tried to see the matter from different perspectives. Most likely in many cases it is a group of people with exactly the same perspective on a certain matter, one that they affirm amongst each other, but never challenge by turning their attention to other sources. In this sense, a perspective in a certain situation can simply mean an opinion held by many people. This is itself a certain kind of perspective. And it needs to be thoroughly examined and questioned like every other perspective. I believe we can see this happening all the time today where people adopt a point of view on a matter solely from following a certain news channel, or update themselves from certain specific websites, and so on. It surely brings to mind a certain president who only acquires information from one news outlet where it so happens that this news outlet constantly affirms his perspective which leaves no room for self-critique or self-awareness.

Secondly, in cases where we want to confirm our beliefs, or when others allude to personal “truths” which to us seem incompatible with the best-going theory, we should ask ourselves: what perspectives, interests, drives, beliefs could cause such resistance to the most plausible explanation, and am I myself taking these into consideration when forming my own position? Perspectivism allows us to understand knowledge and belief as influenced by many other factors than just truth. If we try to understand perspectives by looking at the many different ways they could form, then perhaps it will be easier for us first to understand why the most plausible explanation is rejected, and secondly to know how we could try to adjust this position—or in cases with other people, learn how to communicate with this person, this other

perspective, in their “language.” Nietzsche specifically argues for the importance of having “the capacity to have one’s pro and contra *in one’s power*, and to shift them in and out: so, that one knows how to make precisely the *difference* in perspectives and affective interpretations useful for knowledge” (GM 3, §12: 85). This could mean knowing when to choose to follow a certain drive or interest depending on what outcome each inner personal perspective might provide us with. But it could also mean knowing how to approach someone with a completely different perspective. If we know their arguments and reasons for them having the perspective they have, it might make it easier for us to “shift” these arguments and reasons and different perspectives “in and out” in order to be able to communicate with others, to find a common ground on which we could discuss our problems. This could teach us to know when and where to listen to which perspective. Sometimes, it might be the case that a scientific explanation might not be able to explain a phenomenon (take music for example). In such cases, we might need to look to those parts of our perspective that know how to best understand this phenomenon. Sometimes knowing the drives behind our reasoning can be more enlightening than having a scientific explanation for this reasoning. Of course, arguing this way can be risky since it could be used to argue for personal, emotional “truths” over scientific facts in cases where the latter truly has the best explanation. But I believe this is precisely what Nietzsche is trying to tell us. We need to learn when to listen to what reason depending on the situation. This might not be easily adoptable in practice, but, as said before, difficulty does not mean impossibility. Instead I believe we need to listen to the following advice:

But why do you *listen* to the words of your conscience? And what gives you the right to consider such a judgement true and infallible? For this belief – is there no conscience? Do you know nothing of an intellectual conscience? A conscience behind your ‘conscience’? Your judgement ‘that is right’ has a prehistory in your drives, inclinations, aversions, experiences, and what you have failed to experience (GS 4, §335: 187).

Nietzsche challenges us to challenge ourselves. Do we really know what we think we know, and what makes us think we deserve to believe we know what we think we know? He argues that our judgement draws hasty conclusions based on beliefs created by our natural conditioning (our drives and affects), and our social conditioning (a conceptual framework of unexamined beliefs imprinted culturally since birth) (GS 4, §335: 188), that most of what we believe to be true is the result of a passive, unconscious indoctrination of ideas, and he challenges us to break free to create our own conscious judgements. So, what we must do if we want to assure our beliefs—to figure out which planks to stand on—is to question them thoroughly by comparing them with others, learning how to assess which one gives the best explanation and perhaps most importantly learning how to adjust to new evidence, that is, new perspectives. We should

always ask ourselves: why do I hold this belief? Is it reasonable to keep if I consider other perspectives and the whole? Can it be explained otherwise, and if so, is that explanation better? Such questions should help show whether our personal perspectives are incompatible with the best-going theories, or whether perhaps we even have contradicting beliefs within ourselves. It is not uncommon, at least for me, that I find myself having a certain belief based on a certain interest that eventually shows itself to be incompatible with some other belief I hold. In such cases I believe the coherentist understanding of perspectivism could help us examine both ourselves and our collective knowledge in order to point out inconsistencies with the goal of creating a unified self respectively an “objective” unified collective picture (even if a self-justified unified final theory might never be possible).

In a sense our current scientific method should be able to help us when we form our own strategy for comparing and judging perspectives (even if we need to include other aspects than scientific explanations as evidence). We can always recall Neurath’s boat if we need to remind ourselves of how we ought to judge and compare the coherence of different views. If we learn how to understand more perspectives (no matter how much actual truth they convey) we should generally be more capable of comprehending the reality of the situation, and consequently be more capable of finding a way to defend the most truthful and coherent perspective (or combination of perspectives). By seeing different opinions and beliefs as coming from different perspectives (themselves caused by different inner factors) we should be able to begin to discuss different perspectives or judgements instead of “different truths” in order to preserve a certain value for knowledge and truth as the idealistic goal of any collective and personal enquiry. As Nietzsche argues, the negative realisation that we are locked in our perspectives should lead us to realise that we should do whatever we can “to see differently [...], *to want to see differently*” and to allow “*more eyes, different eyes*” to speak of their view (GM 3, §12: 85), which might mean that, in some cases, our purpose is to try and show others the way towards this realisation. I believe the most fundamental lesson of Nietzsche’s perspectivism is a call for dialog and an open mind towards new ways of understanding, which is a question about having the intention to form an intellectual conscience that is willing to question the familiar, and perhaps above all that this procedure requires hard and vigorous work from those to attempt it.

Ultimately we need to remember that Nietzsche believes that there exists no knowledge without presuppositions. By acknowledging our affects, drives and interests as causes for what we believe and know, we should find that we also could judge the value of each cause. This is what

I mean by knowing when to choose a perspective depending on the outcome. We need to come to terms with what we value in the long run. In a post-truth world, this might be more important than ever. I am thinking of those cases where different short-term and long-term interests cause people to reason in different ways, for example in election times or in relation to personal life goals which determine their overall behaviour. In such cases, we need to judge and choose which interests are worth promoting in each case. It is possible that perspectivism could help us to create a theoretical foundation for judging values, but this is ultimately another question. I could choose to judge my interests according to *my* ethical beliefs. It is likely that some of the knowledge we acquire if we follow the advice given here could help us at least form a unified and explanatory account for the values we hold by clearing out inconsistencies. By rejecting relativism, it could hopefully help us towards striving for a common understanding of the issues as well. However, as concluded earlier, Nietzsche is more interested in the life-affirming ideal that concerns the individual rather than with the collective. The next step would be to discuss what ethical foundation is most reasonable and life-affirming for us all, but that is a question for another time.

In summary, Clark's, Leiter's, and Gemes' interpretations of Nietzsche ought to add important aspects to this reading of perspectivism. As they say, perspectivism is a strategy for *how to think*, not *what* to think. I believe we could benefit from such a strategy in our times, where we are constantly told by opposing opinions and world views what we ought to think and believe. If we regard the pursuit of knowledge as a critical activity, a thinking process of collaboration and investigation towards understanding how and why, instead of just a matter of "stating the facts," I believe we can become better at both communicating our beliefs and critically examine our own. I see perspectivism as a guide towards becoming a better knower in this sense.

So, I do not want to suggest which interpretation of perspectivism is the right one. Instead my attempt has been to show how all these interpretations can help provide a coherent, useful approach towards knowledge in perspectivism which I believe could be helpful to bridge a gap, to give us the opportunity to simultaneously argue for perspectival knowing and the possibility for collective knowledge and truth to exist among us. I believe the method I have used has been needed to fully understand Nietzsche's perspectivism and the aspects of knowing it is concerned with. I would even want to argue that there is some truth in the very ambiguity presented in the collection of interpretations discussed, that we can benefit from different aspects of each reading, which is what I have tried to show here.

Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis has been to investigate into the meaning of Nietzsche's perspectivism in order to find out if it is compatible with the possibility of knowledge and truth. I hope I have been able to prove that perspectivism is not only compatible with this possibility, but should show a good strategy towards the acquisition of it via the acquisition and comparison of different perspectives towards a unified whole, and that it thus in no way necessitates scepticism or relativism about truth and knowledge.

What I have concluded is that Nietzsche's philosophy is a project aimed at the creation of a life-affirming ideal and I have proposed that a reading of his perspectivism should be done in the light of this project. I have argued that his criticism of truth is based on a criticism of Christian morality and its 'ascetic ideal' which, in order to give meaning to our lives, has steered our will towards the idea of the 'true world,' a metaphysical reality separated from the world we live in. Nietzsche considers this ideal's longing for a better world as life-denying since it neglects the primacy of this world. According to him the world we know is the only world we should be concerned with since we can know nothing of the thing in itself. So, his criticism of truth is really a criticism of what he perceives to be an excessive valuation of truth as God. He believes we should value life and health and the flourishing of humanity above truth unless it can benefit a life-affirming ideal. Science and other attempts towards knowledge should therefore be directed through the help of our senses toward this world, in the service of life, not truth. No search for knowledge, in science or elsewhere, can be conducted without a moral philosophical foundation of values—it is this foundation that Nietzsche wants to criticise and reevaluate.

I have argued that Nietzsche's perspectivism is a tool, a way of thinking about truth and knowledge, enlisted in the service of his revaluation for a new life-affirming ideal. It argues that, just as our seeing is determined by our individual visual perspectives, so is our knowledge determined by our cognitive perspectives. We are living beings with affects and drives that steer us in different directions in life, towards different knowledge and beliefs of the world. There is no way for us to rid ourselves from ourselves, so to speak, in order to experience the world non-perspectivally, which means that we can never see or know the world objectively, without the influence from our subjective perspectives; we can never view the world from nowhere, in order

to see things as they are in themselves. In this way, perspectivism rejects the traditional concept of objectivity. Thus, Nietzsche argues that the goal of “objectivity” (intentionally put in quotation marks) should instead mean to know the world as fully as possible, through as many perspectives as possible. Even though such a goal is arguably unreachable—there could be an infinite amount of affective interpretations which would lead to new perspectives on all matters of knowledge—it should still count as a goal worth pursuing if we better want to understand the world and ourselves.

As a consequence of the different interpretations used in this thesis I have concluded that there are different ways of understanding what is meant by a perspective. Three different definitions have been given: (1) a perspective can mean a human perspective, which is constituted by all the features we have in common as human beings, but most often it is discussed in terms of (2) personal perspectives (my individual perspective versus yours and so on) which ultimately are constituted by (3) our inner differing drives, affects and interest that themselves create different perspectives within an individual perspective. I have argued that all three versions could help us to understand different aspects of perspectivism which ultimately then can be seen as a guide towards the creation of unity of perspectives both within the self and between us all.

The goal of accumulating perspectives also needs a critical function that helps deciding when certain perspectives are false or wrong. I have argued that we find this function if we accept a coherentist understanding of perspectivism that tells us that knowledge is reached through coherence and compatibility with the whole. If one perspective rejects the most plausible explanation based on many other perspectives, then it must be rejected. I have suggested that this understanding can use the scientific method as an example for how we could compare and judge perspectives both internally and externally by showing inconsistencies and setting the criteria that need to be met in order to count as truthful. However, since perspectivism argues that not all knowledge or beliefs can be explained scientifically, and since ultimately our drives, affects and interests are the causes of our perspectives, such aspects need to be accounted for when we search for the most truthful and coherent explanation. Sometimes knowing the drives behind your reasoning can be more enlightening than having a scientific explanation for this reasoning. In the end, relativism is unwarranted according to this view since no perspective is true on its own, just as no scientific theory of truth is true on its own; they can both give a misrepresentative view of the world. We use the current framework of knowledge to judge the

truth of new theories (or perspectives). This is how our knowledge evolves towards a greater understanding of the world, ourselves and each other.

In the end, I believe this reading should help prove that perspectivism does not reject the possibility of knowledge or truth to exist among us. While it has a negative aspect in its rejection of the traditional conception of truth and objectivity, it is just as much a positive call to want to see things differently by letting more eyes “speak” on matters and to critically judge the way we look at these matters. The point of perspectivism, as I see it, is not to prove that we are forever doomed to solipsism, scepticism or relativism; I rather see it as a strategy for how to think (not what to think) about knowledge, a call for us to put in the hard work to form an intellectual conscience that questions the familiar perspectives, and a call for intersubjective efforts, for *dialog* between people with good judgements, capable of criticising their own perspectives, as well as others’. If this is right, then we should in perspectivism find, instead of denial and scepticism, a strong tool for a life-affirming approach towards truth and knowledge which could help us in the post-truth world we currently inhabit, where many seem to think that knowledge and truth no longer have a place among us.

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